

### Understanding the Text

1. How did Tao Ying's son influence the way she led her life?

Answer. Tao Ying's life greatly influenced Xiao Ye's life. Tao Ying was a simple person who lived a humble life and had no education for herself. She liked to be kind and charitable, setting an example for her son and making a good impression which elevated her sense of self-worth and made her feel like an aristocrat. She often altered her methods to set a good model for Xiao Ye, going to great heights to maintain her son's respect for her.

2. Pick out instances from the story to show that official rules are often arbitrary.

Answer. The instance showing official rules is often arbitrary when Tao Ying buys a ticket for Xiao Ye, yet he doesn't require one. And how the older woman's practices were shown incorrectly on purpose to make people feel better about themselves. They are showing how self-respect and standards of excellence often matter more than simple rules.

3. Tao Ying was very careful about spending money. What were her reasons for refusing the compensation offered by the temple officials?

Answer. Tao Ying was cautious about spending money as she had worked hard to save. The compensation offered by the temple officials to Tao Ying was unimportant to her as her son Xiao Ye was more important and mattered to her more than anything else in the world. Tao Ying believed in that day's happiness which cannot be bought, nor can that place have good memories for her and her son, which was above everything.

4. Why was her final vindication important to Tao Ying?

Answer. Tao Ying felt it was significant for Xiao Ye to know that she wasn't incorrect about his height and that she wasn't attempting to exempt him from a ticket intentionally. Therefore, Xiao Ye's trust in Tao Ying was more important than any compensation, and her dismissal was assumed to be understood by Xiao Ye.

### Talking about the Text

Discuss the following in pairs or in small groups.

1. The way a child looks at the world is very different from that of an adult.

Answer. Children are intelligent and quick learners. They are prompt in giving opinions and don't think as logically as adults. As a result, their perception of the world is entirely different. Children learn and discover from the world, see people, and their expectations quickly affect their minds. Being very sensitive, children can learn actively from more specific circumstances, often neglecting the events leading to them.

2. There is always a gap between what we really are and what we wish to appear to be to others.

Answer. In present circumstances, people don't show up as who they are as they fear being denied or not accepted by the world of people. We are often expected to show the best version of ourselves to be an excellent example to others. There's always some discrimination between how we represent ourselves to be and who we actually are. In the present scenario, the world may not accept a person when he presents himself in a bad way.

### Appreciation

1. Comment on the significance of the first sentence of the story to its theme.

Answer. The beginning sentence in the story shows the unpredictable nature of rules and how Tao Ying's understanding of society is based on her values, which didn't always correspond with the rules and regulations of the outside world. Tao Ying had her own set of rules which she made for herself. Thus, both the theme and the first sentence reflect the exact meaning of the arbitrariness of regulations.

2. Would you describe the author's portrayal of Tao Ying's character in the story as sympathetic, critical or realistic?

Answer. Tao Ying's character, as portrayed by the author, is realistic. She evaluates the whole situation in advance and behaves well, keeping her values in mind to make sure her values are preserved, which acts as an example for her son.

3. Identify the episodes that bring out the ambivalent attitude to ethics commonly seen in human life.

Answer. The ambivalent attitude towards ethics is commonly seen in the story when Tao Ying is paying for the bus ticket for her son, which she usually wouldn't do. The old lady's scales, which show inaccurate readings to glorify people, are a few instances from the story that illustrate the ambivalent attitude to ethics commonly seen in human life.

4. How effectively does the narrative technique adopted in this story illustrate 'unity of thought'?

Answer. As the author depicts every emotion of all the characters in the story, the readers can experience the feelings and connect to the story very closely. The narrator maintains the unity of thoughts that makes narration more interesting and connective to the readers. Thus, by using the narrative technique, the author builds up a mental picture uniting readers and the characters.

#### Stop and Think

1. What made Tao Ying decide whether to buy a ticket or not when she rode a bus alone?

Answer. When Tao Ying rode on the bus alone, she did not bother to buy a ticket as she thought that her paying or not doesn't change the routine of the bus. When the bus conductor looked like the efficient type, she would buy a ticket as soon as she got onto the bus. But if he appeared to be easygoing and irresponsible, she would not dream of paying, considering it a minor punishment for him and a little saving for herself.

2. Why did she insist on buying tickets both for herself and her son that day?

Answer. When Xiao Ye was travelling with his mother, Tao Ying, he insisted on getting a ticket for himself. Still, even though he was not eligible to need one, Tao Ying purchased one for him as a symbol of upholding his respect.

#### Stop and Think

1. Did Tao Ying really intend to cheat at the temple?

Answer. Tao Ying didn't intend to cheat at the temple, as she remembered that children under 110 centimetres did not need a ticket and were excused. She was confused. Tao Ying knew Xiao Ye was shorter than 110 centimetres and was confident about his height, so she thought he would be excluded from obtaining a ticket. However, on the scale, he measured more at the temple, which amazed her.

2. Why did Tao Ying change her intention to buy another ticket?

Answer. As a crowd gathered, everybody began to look at Tao Ying with suspicion and the young man, the ticket seller, grew impatient. Tao Ying didn't want to create a scene and knew she couldn't argue against a scale, so she decided to buy a ticket. She was also nervous at the same time as her son was watching her and thought he might think of her in the wrong way. So, she made an excuse to buy another ticket.

#### Stop and Think

1. Were the old lady's scales a reliable measure of height and weight? What convoluted logic were her measurements based on?

Answer. The old lady's scales weren't an accurate way of measuring weight and height. The lady's reasoning was that people liked to see themselves as slimmer and taller. Thus, they were complimenting the people. But, being old and incorrect, the scale showed a figure that was less than the real weight, and the lady had altered them to show more height also.

2. What was the conflict between the mother and son?

Answer. Tao Ying usually commented that Xiao Ye was so short that he could get away from paying for his tickets. But Xiao Ye didn't trust his mother and felt he was tall enough to buy a ticket. So, the argument between the son and the mother resulted in a conflict between them.

