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Understanding The Text**1. What was the importance of the watch to the author?****Answer:**

The watch was very important to the author as it showed the correct time and kept him punctual. It was working properly for about 18 months until the author let it run down. He had constant faith in its prediction and judgement. Until then, it worked perfectly without losing or gaining any part of it.

2. What were the attempts made by the author to get his watch repaired?**Answer:**

The author let his watch run down after keeping it for 18 months. The next day, the author had been to all the watchmakers beginning with the chief jeweller. The regulator of the watch was pushed a little hard by the head of the establishment, which exacerbated its condition. The author then gave the watch to another watchmaker, who slowed it down by keeping it for about a week. Then he gave it to another watchmaker who kept it for three days and a couple more. After spending about a thousand dollars, the watch was not fixed by any of the watchmakers. The author tried for the last time and gave it to another one who was an erstwhile watchmaker. This made the author realise that “a good horse was a good horse until it had run away once, and that a good watch was a good watch until the repairers got a chance at it.”

3. Why did the author finally give up on his watch?**Answer:**

The author had his watch repaired about seven times. He finally realised that though the cost of the watch was two hundred dollars, he had spent about two to three thousand on repairs. Despite that, the watch still did not function properly. He then went to the seventh watchmaker, who was considered to be a steamboat engineer, an old acquaintance though not a good engineer. Similar to all the other watchmakers, he delivered his verdict with the same confidence. The author recalled what William, his uncle used to say “a good horse was a good horse until it had run away once, and that a good watch was a good watch until the repairers got a chance at it.” At last, the author gave up on repairing the watch and wanted to just keep it.

4. What was Uncle Williams’ comment on the ‘tinkerers’ of the world?**Answer:**

The author provides a glimpse of his uncle William who is not present in the story. The author noticed that the repair was about two to three thousand higher than the actual cost of the watch, when he gave his watch for repair. All his attempts to get the watch repaired have been fruitless, and the watchmaker’s verdict reminds him of what his uncle William used to say “a good watch was a good watch until the repairers got a chance at it.” He understood that his uncle was familiar with it from his experience and knowledge. His uncle used to think about the shoe-makers, gunsmiths, blacksmiths and engineers who were unsuccessful in their work. It is necessary to obtain specialisation in a particular field, or else one will remain an apprentice, a tinker and not progress to a specialist.

5. Explain these lines

- a. ‘I seemed to detect in myself a sort of sneaking fellow-feeling for the mummy in the museum, and a desire to swap news with him.’
- b. ‘Within a week it sickened to a raging fever and its pulse went up to a hundred and fifty in the shade.’
- c. ‘She makes too much steam—you want to hang the monkey wrench on the safety valve!’

Answer:

a. After being regulated, cleaned and oiled for the second time, the author received the watch after a week. The author had missed his dinner and his appointments as his watch was slowed down to that extent. He felt as if he had been carried away somewhere into the past. The author had a feeling that he missed everything which happened on earth. He was lonely and left alone in the past due to his watch, which was not functioning properly. This situation of the author is compared to a mummy from an earlier age. He thought that it would be ideal to get a friendship with a mummy in the museum he had visited or an unreal one. Owing to the slow time that his watch projected, he felt that he was moving in the past, similar to a mummy.

b. When the author let his watch run down after keeping it for 18 months, he went to the chief jeweller to set the accurate time. Even after the author stopped the head of the establishment, he forcefully pushed the regulator of the watch. This provided a kick to the watch, and it shot ahead of the actual time. As days passed by, it got faster. After two months, the watch appeared to have some kind of fever with a very excessive pulse rate. From the actual date, the watch travelled thirteen days ahead, and when it was October, he said that the watch relished the November snowfall. The author was annoyed by this behaviour and wanted to get it diagnosed again.

c. The author went to the watchmaker for the seventh time and found him to be a steamboat engineer, an old acquaintance though not a good engineer. He diagnosed and delivered his verdict like the other watchmakers. The author keenly observed and judged him when he said, "She makes too much steam—you want to hang the monkey wrench on the safety valve!" The author was reminded of what his uncle William used to say and noticed that a tinker is an unsuccessful engineer and wondered "what became of all the unsuccessful tinkers" like his uncle.

Talking About The Text

Discuss in pairs or groups of four

1. Replacing old machines with new is better than getting them repaired.

Answer:

We face an important question when the old machines begin to malfunction. Should the machine be repaired or replaced? Most of the time, if the malfunctioning is minimal, it is ignored. We get the machine repaired if it creates a problem. The old machines are repaired many times to maintain them instead of purchasing a new one. But what should be considered is that, as the machines get old, they tend to get spoiled. The money spent on repairing the old machine is more than the actual price. To save money and to have a properly functioning machine, it is better to replace the old machine with a new one. This saves the cost of repairing and increases the efficiency of the machine. Hence, replacing old machines with new ones is better than getting them repaired.

2. It is difficult to part with personal items like a watch which have a sentimental value attached to them.

Answer:

We humans get attached to things which are gifted by our loved ones. We usually have these things surrounding us always. If they do not function properly, we feel pain as we are attached to them emotionally too. These things possess sentimental values, and people cannot even think of losing them. For instance, if a father gifts a doll to his daughter, she holds sentimental value as her father gave it to her. As the girl grows up and if she is asked to keep the doll away, she would find it difficult to do so. Therefore, people find it difficult to part with personal items like a watch, which have sentimental value attached to them.

Appreciation

1. How is humour employed to comment on the pains that the author took to get his watch set right?

Answer:

It is humorous how the author and his watch had to undergo the pain which was delivered by the seven watchmakers. It was futile in the end, and no good was done to his dear watch. The episodes with the seven watchmakers are funny as the watchmakers try their best to repair the watch, playing with it, exploring, operating, assembling and disassembling each part of it. The author experienced sheer pain as the watch was dear to him. Each time with strength and hope, he went to a new watchmaker; not even a single tinker was able to put it back together and make it function properly again. It was strange how the seven watchmakers could not repair the watch while they experimented and did lots of development and research on it.

2. 'The author's treatment of the subject matter makes the readers identify themselves with the experience.' Comment on this statement.

Answer:

The author, Samuel L. Clemens, or Mark Twain, has less than ten years of schooling. He worked as a printer's apprentice, a steamboat pilot, a prospector and a journalist. All this gave him varied experiences and a wide knowledge of humanity. His stories are realistic, which makes them sound believable. The situations which he explains are faced by ordinary people in their daily lives, which makes it more realistic. The readers can find themselves in these situations and connect easily to his story. For example, in this story, Samuel L. Clemens faces an ordinary issue. We would have a malfunctioning watch which has an error. The issue, rather than being solved, aggravated each time he wanted to get it repaired. This is an example of the problems faced by humans, not just with materialistic things; it can also be a simple argument or even a medical condition.

3. Identify some of the improbable images the author has used to effect greater humour.

Answer:

There are examples where the author exaggerates the situation to make the story humorous. For example, the watch slowed down when it was repaired for the second time. The explanation is a hyperbole of what actually occurred. Even if a watch is slow, it will show time as 12 hours, it cannot travel in the past. The way the author explains how the watch is enjoying the November snowfall before the arrival of the season is funny. The mention of the mummy is humorous and explains the mental state of the author.

Language Work

Make a list of the expressions that imbue the watch with human attributes.

Answer:

The list of the expressions that imbue the watch with human attributes are –

“infallible in its judgments”

“she is four minutes slow”

“it sickened to a raging fever and its pulse went up to a hundred and fifty in the shade”

“It was away into November enjoying the snow, while the October leaves were still turning.”

“it would go like the very mischief, and keep up such a barking and wheezing and whooping and sneezing and snorting”

“She makes too much steam— you want to hang the monkey-wrench on the safety-valve!”