



INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT
SENIOR SECTION
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
CLASS IX
WORKSHEET

BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

SYNOPSIS:

The play, 'Bishop's Candlesticks' deals with a convict and a benevolent Bishop who's always ready to help anyone in distress. Bishop's sister, Persome, however, feels that the Bishop's simplicity and nobility of character is taken advantage of by the people, of the parish, who under false pretexts rob him off his belongings. The convict, on the other hand, went into prison for stealing money to buy food for his sick wife and was arrested and sentenced to rigorous punishment. He escaped one day filled with despair, hopelessness and bitterness, at his unjust treatment. He had become hard-hearted and unscrupulous. A stroke of luck, however, brought him to the Bishop's house, who treated him with kindness and provided him with food and shelter for the night, despite the suspicion and frequent threats to life by the convict. The convict however, repaid the Bishop's kindness by running away with his most cherished possession, i.e. a pair of silver candlesticks, bequeathed to him by his mother. When caught by the sergeant and brought back to the Bishop, later on, the Bishop introduced him as his friend to the sergeant. The convict was full of remorse, for what he'd done. Deeply penitent, he sought the Bishop's blessing before leaving. The noble act of the Bishop, reforms the convict to a belief, in the spirit of god, that dwells in the heart of every human being.

THEME:

There is no doubt that "Bishop's Candlesticks" unfolds inherent characteristics of Christianity. A bishop unfolds what it really means to be a Bishop. Compassion, love, being benevolent etc. are the key facets which are skillfully woven by the author. Kindness to all irrespective of class, creed and status is what goes as the bottom line. The convict wrapped in devilish thoughts and a true atheist turns into a true believer of Christianity.

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

a) Do you think the Bishop was right in selling the salt sellers? Why / Why not?

A. Aply Bishop was right in selling the salt sellers. Being benevolent is the true nature of a bishop. Indeed, the Bishop acted as a true helper to Mere Gringoire in spite of Persome's ill feeling towards her. "Service to people is service to god" has been justified when mere Grengoire, who had been in dire need of money, was helped by the Bishop. He sold the silver salt sellers to help Mere Gringoire

b) Why does Persome feel the people pretend to be sick?

A. Persome is pole asunder to her brother in characteristics. She never approved her brother's habit of being philanthropist. She even had a notion that people exploit her brother as a Bishop. They misuse the bishop's simplicity, innocence and honesty. People are of the habit to call the bishop unnecessarily pretending to be sick. They never think about the troubles of Bishop.

c) Who was Jeanette? What was the cause of her death?

A. Jeanette was the better half of the convict. Once, the convict and his family suffered from acute starvation. There had not been any work for the people. As a result the wife of the convict fell ill. Compelled by the situation, the convict had no other option but to steal. He was caught and put in the jail. And his wife died due to sickness caused by starvation.

d) The convict says, "I am told a bird to be caught with chaff". What does he mean by this statement?

A. The convict has gone through a vexatious period where he confronted only brutal treatment, merciless torture and no love and faith. When the bishop told him that he would go inside to bring the keys to give him food, he considered this to be a trick to get him caught and be arrested. He warned the bishop not to leave, as he conceded this to be a trick to get him caught.

e) Why was the convict sent to prison? What was the punishment given to him?

A. In a dire state of starvation the convict and his family had been suffering. When his wife fell seriously ill, the convict could not keep his head and stole food to save his wife. As a consequence he was caught and brought before the court of law. The authority did not concur with his feelings and reasoning and convicted him for stealing. The authority punished him for ten years. He was ordered to stay as a prisoner in a prison hulks.

f) Do you think the punishment given to the convict was justified? Why?/ Why not?

A. Considering the moral ground, the convict should have not been punished. Though there is no denying that every criminal must be punished in the court of law, the convict cannot be called as a criminal in true sense. The adverse condition the convict had been suffering from, constrained him to steal food to save his wife. He must have been pardoned considering the situation of his stealing food.

g) Before leaving, the convict asks the Bishop to bless him. What brought about this change in him?

A. Indeed, the drama adduces a transformation of an atheist into a theist. The convict at the beginning proclaimed his hatred and strong dislike towards church and preaching. But, the Bishop, with simple messages like, kindness, sympathy, love soothed his sore heart and brought back human sensibilities in him. At the end the Bishop showed the highest level of mercy and compassion and made him feel the power of love and mercy. His journey to Paris was a new beginning to him. To walk on the new path for a better life, he thought blessing from the Bishop would do him good.

Short answer type questions

Q1. What do you think are the situations that can be termed as the turning points in the convict's life?

Ans: There are many turning points in the convict's life. His arrest on having stolen the food is the first important turning point in his life. The encounter with the Bishop, his arrest for having stolen the Bishop's candlesticks and the Bishop's magnanimity in saving him from the police and gifting him his candlesticks are other tuning points in his life

Q2.What had happened to the salt cellars?

Ans. Mere Gringoire was an old lady who was unable to pay the house rent. The Bishop asked Marie to sell the salt cellar for him. He used the money to pay off the poor woman's house rent.

Q3.What does the convict tell him about his life before imprisonment?

Ans. He had a cottage with vines growing. He had a wife but she was ill. They had a bad year and there was no food to eat. He had to steal some food for her.

Q4: What treatment did the convict receive in prison?

Ans. The convict received inhuman treatment. They whipped him, fed him with unhealthy food, made him sleep on cold hard boards.

Q5: What effect did such inhuman treatment have on the convict?

Ans. The convict felt hurt and afraid. Soon they broke down his spirit. He became just a number and forgot his earlier life. He even lost the ability to pray, for he says, he lost his soul.

Q6: What happened to him after his escape from jail?

Ans. The wardens were looking for him. He had nowhere to go, no food to eat. He even had to steal the clothes that he was wearing.

Q7: How does the Bishop and Persome react when they learn that the candlesticks are stolen?

Ans. Persome reacts violently. She shouts and is very upset. The Bishop is also upset but he blames himself for exposing the convict to the temptation.

Q8: What does the Bishop tell the sergeant?

Ans. The sergeant sees the convict moving stealthily and arrests him. He brings the convict along with the stolen candlesticks to the Bishop's house. But the Bishop tells him that the convict is his friend and the silver candlesticks were a gift from him.

Q9: What significant role did the Bishop's Candlesticks play?

Ans. The candle sticks were a dying gift from the Bishop's mother. They reminded him of her. But when the convict received them as a gift, they become symbols of hope and life. The convict now believed in the goodness of life and lead a steady life

Q10: What's the character of the Bishop in the Bishop's candlesticks?

Ans. He is generous and altruist. He has unselfish attitude. He is a noble person remains always ready to help others in their hard times .He is also gentle and kind hearted. His house is always open for needy people.

Q11. Do you think the Bishop was right in selling the salt-cellars? Why / Why not?

Ans: Bishop was right in selling the salt-cellars. As an ideal priest, he could not bear the thought of an old, ailing lady to be thrown out of her house because she cannot pay the rent. He sells the salt-cellars to pay the money, to this woman so that she may pay her rent. This act of kindness beholds a priest like him. It is another thing that worldly-wise people like Persome do not approve of.

12 . Why does Persome feel the people pretend to be sick?

Ans. Persome is not as generous as her brother. She feels the people pretend to be sick in order to exploit her brother's (Bishop's) magnanimity. People want the Bishop to be near them and help them financially.

Q13. Who was Jeanette? What was the cause of her death?

Ans. Jeanette was the convict's wife. She fell ill. As the convict had no work and no money; he could not treat or even feed her. She died of starvation. The convict had almost forgotten her due to his loss of faith in all human relationships.

Q.14 The convict says, “I am too old a bird to be caught with chaff.” What does he mean by this statement?

Ans. The convict means to say that he is an experienced person. He knows how people make excuses and trap others. He cannot be taken in easily. He thinks the Bishop will play a trick on him on the excuse of going out to bring the keys of the cupboard to give him food.

Q.15. Why was the convict sent to prison? What was the punishment given to him?

Ans. The convict was sent to prison as he stole food. He had no work or no money at that time. He was sent to jail for ten years. He was often mercilessly beaten in the jail. He fed on rubbish. He slept on boards. He suffered from vermin on his body. The harsh punishment turned him into a wild beast.

Q.16. Do you think the punishment given to the convict was justified? Why / why not? Why is the convict eager to reach Paris?

Ans. The punishment given to the convict for a minor crime was too much and was unjustified. He did not commit a murder or indulge in any other major crime. His circumstances forced him to steal. He should have been given a light punishment in stead of ten years in a “hell”. The convict is eager to reach Paris and get lost in the crowd. He wants to escape from the police which would be looking for him everywhere as he has not yet completed his sentence.

Q.17. Before leaving, the convict asks the Bishop to bless him. What brought about this change in him?

Ans. The convict had lost all faith in goodness. The Bishop’s love, kindness and generosity bring about a remarkable change in him. He feels as if he were a man once again. He regains his faith in God. So he asks the Bishop to bless him.

Read the extracts given below and answer the following questions:

1) *‘Persome: Monseigneur the Bishop is a – ahem!’*

a) Why does Persome not complete the sentence?

Ans: Persome (the speaker) does not complete the sentence because it would have been derogatory. She does not want to utter rude words even when she is angry.

b) Why is she angry with the Bishop?

Ans: She is angry as the Bishop has sold his salt-cellars to help an old lady pay her rent. She feels that everybody is taking advantage of her brother’s generosity.

2) *“She sent little Jean to Monseigneur to ask for help, and” ——*

a) Who sent little Jean to the Bishop?

Ans : Mere Gringoire sent little Jean to the Bishop.

b) What did she want from him? Why?

Ans. : She wanted some help because the bailiff threatened to turn her out, if she did not pay the rent.

c) How did the Bishop arrange to fulfill her needs?

Ans: The Bishop arranged to fulfill her needs by selling his silver salt-cellars.

3) ***“I offered to take her in here for a day or two, but she seemed to think it might distress you.”***

a) Who speaks these words? Whom is he speaking to?

Ans: The Bishop speaks these lines to his sister, Persome.

b) Who is the person being spoken about?

Ans: It is Mere Gringoire, an old lady. She is ill, bed-ridden and needs care and attention.

c) Why did he wish to take her in?

Ans: He wished to take her in because she was ailing and needed care and attention.

d) Why did she think her being “taken in” might distress the person being spoken to?

Ans: She thinks her presence will distress Persome as she knows that Persome is a stingy woman and does not like her.

4) ***“You have your soul to lose, my son; it is of more value than my heart.”***

a) Who says these words and to whom?

Ans: The Bishop says these words to the convict.

b) What has the person being spoken to just threatened to do?

Ans: The convict threatens to drive his knife through the Bishop’s heart. He says that he has nothing to lose.

(c) How does the speaker save the listener’s soul?

Ans: He saves the convict’s soul by making him believe by his action that there is still hope for him and that there is still good in the world.

5. ***“Did Monseigneur the Bishop leave any message for me?”***

“No, Madam.”

“Did he tell you where he was going?”

“Yes, Madam.”

“Yes, Madam! Then why haven’t you told me, stupid?”

“Madam didn’t ask me.”

“But that is no reason for your not telling me, is it?”

a) Why is Persome angry with Marie?

Ans. Marie is by nature a little foolish. In spite of all Persome’s previous warnings, Marie is still talkative and keeps things from Persome. Persome is angry with Marie today because her brother, the bishop was out in the cold because of Marie’s mother who is said to be ill.

b) What do you understand about Persome’s and Marie’s characters?

Ans.-Persome is the bishop’s sister and Marie, her young maid. Persome appears to be the real talkative one in the opening of the play yet she blames Marie for the same. Persome is angry and miserable because her brother, the bishop was a reckless spend thrift in a sense. She plays the role of a caring sister but she is much like a mother figure.

Long Answer Type Questions-

A. Write a Character Sketch of the Bishop.

The Bishop, is a caring, forgiving and religious man. He is a religious leader and lives with his sister Persome in the early 19th century. The first example that shows his caring nature is when we learn he has sold his expensive salt- sellers to help Mere Gringoire pay her rent. Secondly, he proves his caring nature when he gives his warm blanket to their house helper Marie in order for her to stay warm. Persome, his sister, tries to convince him that he would need to keep it for himself; he insists that Maire will otherwise find it cold. These examples prove the Bishop is a caring individual. Another trait to describe the Bishop is forgiving. First, he forgives the convict for threatening him with a knife upon entering his home. The Bishop demonstrates forgiveness by offering him a place to sleep for the night once he has eaten and relaxed. Secondly, the Bishop forgives the convict for stealing his silver candlesticks. He convinces the police to let him go as well as lets him leave with the candlesticks in the end. Finally, the Bishop is religious. An example of his religious nature is when he makes the sign of the cross while bidding Persome goodnight. It is obvious that he never forgets his faith. As well, the Bishop demonstrates his religious character at the very end of the play when he bids goodbye to the convict. After the ordeal he has just been through, his first response once the convict leaves is to kneel at the window and pray; his religious nature always at the forefront. To summarize, the Bishop is a dynamic character who is caring, forgiving and religious.

B. 'The Bishop's Candlesticks' brings out some noble values that pave the path for a life of harmony, peace and prosperity. How do these values help?

'The Bishop's Candlesticks' brings forth the noble values of sympathy, kindness, charity, selflessness, forgiveness, family bonding and fair distribution of natural resources and socio-political and economic equality. The Bishop's selflessness, love for God and his fellow human- beings, makes him help the people in need and sorrow. The hardened convict finds the strength to start a new life owing to the forgiveness and kindness of the Bishop. Persome's love for her brother reveals strong bonds between family members. The drama sends a strong message of love and compassion for all. Social progress and prosperity will leave little room for sinful acts. One must hate the crime and not the criminal, for it's the situation that provokes him to commit any such heinous deeds. We must know for ourselves their turmoil and be empathetic to such people, caught in this web of misfortune and distress. Goodness, dwells in all human beings and no one is born a criminal. The Bishop's compassion and generosity, help the convict to regain his faith, in humanity, after ten years of hell. The world can become a better place, to live in, if we develop a respectful attitude, towards each other. All wealth belongs to the creator and we are the children of the same God. The convict is the product of the society he lived in, both in terms of suffering, that led him to steal, for want of food, as well as the cruel punishment, for such a meager crime. We must work to live in peace and harmony. 'Hate the sin, and not the sinner' is an age old maxim, based on the cardinal values of all religions.