



INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT
SENIOR SECTION
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
CLASS XII
VISTAS: EVANS TRIES AN O-LEVEL
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Gist: Evans a kleptomaniac was imprisoned thrice and all the time escaped from the prison. Now he was in the prison for the fourth time and all of a sudden desired to appear in O-level German Examination which also was an effort to break the prison. - The Governor takes utmost care to see that he would not be fooled. Every care was taken to make Evans prepare for the exam. - He was tutored by a German tutor for 6 months. The day before the exam the tutor wishes good luck but makes it clear that he had hardly any 'chance of getting through.' But Evans gives an ironical twist to the tutor's observation by saying - 'I may surprise everybody.' - On the day of the exam Jackson and Stephens visited Evans' cell and took away everything that may help him injure himself. It was insisted to take away the hat but Evans refused saying that it was lucky charm. - Evans' cell was bugged so that the Governor could himself listen to each and every conversation in the cell. The invigilator Rev. S. McLeery too was searched and left him to complete the task. Stephen sitting outside the cell every now and then peeped into the cell. - The exam went on smoothly.

Stephen escorted the invigilator to the main gate and looked into Evans' cell and found the invigilator (actually Evans) wounded, informed the Governor. The latter was to be hospitalized but informed that he was alright and asked them to follow Evans. Thus he escaped the prison. - When the invigilator was not found in the hospital they went to the residence of Rev. S. Mc Leery only to find him 'bound and gagged in his study in Broad Street'. He has been there, since 8.15 a.m. Now everything was clear to the Governor. - Evans escaped the prison the fourth time. But by taking the hint from the question paper the Governor reached the hotel where Evans was and captured him and came to know how he planned his escape and said that his game was over. Evans surrenders himself to the Governor. - The Governor tells Evans they would meet soon. - The moment they are rid of the Governor, the so called prison officer-a friend of Evans-unlocks the handcuffs and asks the driver to move fast and Evans tells him to turn to Newbury. Evans, thus, has the last laugh.

Short Answer Questions:

1. What kind of a person was Evans?

Evans was a 'Kleptomaniac' and had broken jail thrice. He was a master planner and was very sociable. He knew how to keep intimate contacts with people. In the words of the Governor, he was a pleasant sort of chap with no record of violence.

2. Do you think Evans' statement, 'I may surprise everybody,' has some special significance?

Evans seems to be telling his teacher that he may surprise everybody by doing well in the exam, but in reality it is a forewarning that he is going to jolt everybody by his master-minded perfect escape.

3. Who were the two visitors Evans received in the morning of the day of his exam?

The two visitors --Mr. Jackson, the senior prison officer of the prison's D Wing-- man called Stephens, who had been only recently recruited.

4. Why did the Governor instruct Jackson to search McLeery?

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The Governor asked Jackson to search McLeery, the invigilator, just in case he has brought something unwittingly which might prove to be a weapon that Evans could use and try escaping from prison.

5 .Why did Evans drape a blanket round his shoulder? What did Stephens think about it?

In between intervals of Stephens' peeping into the cell, Evans was changing into the Parson's dress to look like McLeery. So, in order to conceal his effort to keep them in place, Evans draped a blanket round his shoulder. Stephens was misled into believing that Evans was feeling cold.

7. In spite of strict vigilance, how did Evans' friend manage to give the material for disguise in the cell?

Despite all vigilance, Evans' friend disguised as McLeery, the invigilator, managed to smuggle the disguised material into the cell. He came wearing two parson's dresses with black fronts and collars. Apart from it he also brought an extra pair of spectacles.

All this was passed on to Evans when Stephens' vigilant eyes were away from the peephole.

Long Answer Questions:

1. Give an account of the blunders committed by the prison authorities which resulted in making Evans' escape-plan a success.

Prison authorities had made foolproof arrangements to foil any escape efforts by Evans – yet – escapes successfully - officers' vigilance could have checked this jail break – hatching of the escape plan starts with – German tutor's entry – nobody bothers to verify – McLeery credentials also not verified properly, Examination day – Jackson's not getting Evans' bobble hat removed – blunder – had Stephens not been shifted from the cell, the escape could have been foiled – Jackson should have searched properly McLeery – rubber ring – closer look –thorough examination of the wounded man would have checked – Superintendent Carter's complacency and the Governor's inefficiency and casual approach – unpardonable – after recapturing – Governor should have personally accompanied him to jail – rather than entrusting – to van occupants.

2. What were the precautions taken for the smooth conduct of the examination?

Evans already escaped – three earlier occasions – always a lurking fear – make another attempt to escape –all possible precautions taken – O level German Examination arranged – didn't provide – means of escape – Governor personally monitored – security arrangements – heavily guarded Recreational Block – expected to make another escape – cell thoroughly checked –Jackson – ward off the possibility of the presence of an incriminating material which might hamper the smooth conduct of the examination – nail scissors, nail file and razor – taken away –kept a strict watch on the activities of the cell during the examination – police officer Stephens posted to keep a constant vigil – invigilator – carried no objectionable material

3. Reflecting on the story, what do you feel about Evans having the last laugh?

In spite of all the precautions – Evans escape –outwits all – slips out of their hands – right from the German teacher's entry into the prison to the last encounter of the Governor and Evans in the hotel – outsmarts them – carries out all plans right under the nose of the prison officers – without arousing any suspicion – A clever and schemy prisoner far superior to all in planning – at every stage – friends who helped him – persons of superior ingenuity – after coming out of prison – Evans – The Golden

Lion in Chipping Norton – seemed to be elated over the success of his plan – shocked to see prison Governor – correction slip had led to his undoing – Governor able to decode his message and reach – accepts defeat – discloses – German teacher his man – able to procure pig’s blood from a slaughter house greatly surprises Governor – Governor feels satisfied – prison officer handcuffs – takes him away – little did he know – Evans cleverer friends had again hoodwinked him – prison officer and van driver – both Evans’ man – finally escapes from the clutches of the law –in the battle of wits – proves far superior – to prison Governor and his officers – befools everyone right under their nose – has the last laugh.

4. What were the precautions taken for the smooth conduct of the examination?

Since Evans had already escaped from the jail on three earlier occasions, there was always a lurking fear that he might make another attempt to escape. Therefore all possible precautions were taken to see that the O-level German examination arranged in the prison did not provide him with any means of escape. The Governor personally monitored all security arrangements and heavily guarded the Recreation Block from where he expected the prisoner to make another break. Evans cell was thoroughly checked by Jackson to ward off the possibility of the presence of an incriminating material which might hamper the smooth conduct of the examination. His nail-scissors, nail-file and razor were taken away; and to keep a strict watch on the activities of the cell during the examination, the Governor got it bugged. A police officer Stephens was posted to keep a constant vigil on his activities. The invigilator, too was frisked to make sure that he carried no objectionable material with him.

5. Attempt a brief character sketch of ‘Evans the Break’.

(Ans) ‘Evans the Break’ comes across to us as a highly clever, manipulative and shrewd individual. A non-violent kleptomaniac by birth, he was a jail-bird having being put in prison several times and escaping as many as three times. He was an amusing chap, good at imitations and a star at the Christmas concert. He had an unkempt physical appearance but a cheerful smile which he used for the prison officers. A cunning and resourceful person, Evans is able to use his presence of mind time and again, to his utmost advantage. He makes a request to Mr. Jackson to allow him to put on his bobble hat, but complains to the invigilator against Stephens whose presence disturbs his concentration. He is polite when he makes special requests to shut his convenience or rather when he plans to put his plan into action. He is quick to disguise himself as parson McLeery and spill blood on himself to appear injured. He is a clever manipulator and uses this quality to win the confidence of the police officers. Evans enjoys the faith, support and active cooperation of his team of dedicated comrades. They are meticulous in their planning and work out the minutest details in order to carry out their plans without any mishap. Even in the worst circumstances, Evans does not lose his cool. He has the last laugh when he is able to fool the police officers and the Governor and escapes for the fourth time.

6. Who, do you think, has the last laugh- The Governor or Evans? How?

(Ans) It is Evans who has the last laugh in the story. The two persons, i.e. driver and the silent prison officer turn out to be the accomplices of Evans. The Governor became complacent as he thought he had nabbed the prisoner and will soon put him in prison. But Evans escapes once again.

7. What did Stephens see, when he peeped through the hole of the cell of Evans after leaving McLeery at the main gate of the prison?

(Ans) Stephens thought of looking at Evans once again after leaving McLeery at the main gate. He saw a terrible sight. He saw a man with short hair presumably McLeery in a pool of blood sprawling back in Evans' chair.

8. How did McLerry want to help the police?

(Ans) The injured McLeery said that he knew where Evans was. He wanted to accompany the police in finding Evans. He insisted that he did not need to be hospitalized as he was all right. He showed the question paper to the Governor to impress upon him that Evans had befooled everybody.

9. What important clues were hidden in the German Question paper?

(Ans) There was a photocopied sheet hidden in the German question paper. It was very cleverly pasted on the last blank sheet of the question paper. It had instructions written in German. It read: follow the plan. The vital point in time was three minutes before the end of the examination. He was not to hit the person hard and overdo the scot accent. He was to move the Headington round about and then make way to Newbury.

10. Where was the real McLeery?

(Ans) The real Rev. McLeery was gagged and tied in his room since 8:15 am. The two men visited McLeery in the morning. They gagged him and tied him in his study. Since 8:15 in the morning, the real McLeery had been in his own house. It was Evans accomplice who had come as McLeery to the examination centre.

11. What was the significance of the two phone calls the Governor received after a quarter of an hour of the start of the examination?

(Ans) The first phone call was made by the Assistant Secretary of the Examination Board. It was regarding a correction slip for the German paper that Evans was writing. The word 'Golden Lion' was to be used in place of 'Golden Lowe'. The second call came from the Magistrate's Court. They needed a prison van and a couple of prison officers for a remand case.

12. How did the prison machinery swing into action? What did they overlook?

(Ans) Prison officers started shouting orders as soon as they discovered that Evans had escaped. Sirens were blown. Puzzled prisoners pushed their way along and doors were banged and bolted. Phones were ringing everywhere. Jackson and Stephens supported McLeery on either side and brought him to the prison yard. The identity of the injured 'McLeery' remained unchecked.

13. What did the Governor think of Evans and his plan after ringing up Detective Chief Inspector Bell?

(Ans) The Governor admired clever Evans and his beautifully laid plan. He also commented on Evans' carelessness in leaving behind the question paper. He said that all criminals got caught because they left important clues behind. He was sure that they would soon be able to catch Evans and put him in prison once again.

14. What two purposes did the correction slip serve? Which of them did Evans consider more important?

(Ans) The correction slip revealed the name of the hotel and its location. He had to go to 'Golden Lion'. It also contained the exact time the exam started. For Evans, it was an important thing that the phone rang just before the exam finished. Thus he was able to get the prison officers out of the way for a couple of minutes.

15. What did Evans' own hair look like? How then did he impersonate Mc Leery?

(Ans) Evans' hair was long and wavy while Mc Leery had closely clipped hair, almost next to the scalp. Jackson had removed Evans' scissors, so he had to remove his hair off with razor. After that he kept his head covered with a bobble hat to prevent being noticed.

16. How did the Governor of Oxford Prison locate the hiding place of Evans?

(Ans) The Governor told Evans that he had used the same method as Evans had done. The six figure reference 313/271 was formed by two hints- Index number 313 and centre number 271. If one takes an Ordinance Survey Map for Oxfordehire, this number lands are bang in the middle of Chipping Norton.

17. What request did the Secretary of the Examination Board receive from the Governor of Oxford Prison?

(Ans) The Governor of Oxford Prison's request was to create an examination centre in the prison for one candidate named James Roderick Evans who wanted to appear in O Level German Examination to be held on June 8.

18. What enquiry did the Secretary of the Examination Board make about Evans?

(Ans) The Secretary of the Examination wanted cursory details about the examinee regarding his nature. He wanted to know if Evans was a violent sort of a person. He was told that there was no record of violence.

19. Who met Evans on the eve of the examination? What does this brief interview reveal?

(Ans) Mr. Jackson and Mr. Stephens visited Evans on the morning of the Examination. They visited him to ensure that he did not have any weapon with him. Evans was called Evans the Break as he had escaped from Prison three times.

20. What puzzled Mr. Jackson about the contents in McLeery's suitcase?

(Ans) Jackson saw a smallish semi-inflated rubber ring. Even a young child might have to struggle into it. Jackson questioned McLeery about it. He replied that he suffered from piles.

21. Why did the Governor doubt the phone call from the Examination board for the correction in the paper? What did he do?

(Ans) The Governor doubted the phone call from the Examination board for the correction in the paper because he thought it might be a fake call. He tried to verify the call. He held the incoming call and from the other line called the Examination Board. Since the number was busy he assumed the call was a genuine one.

22. How did Stephens keep an eye on Evans? What did he notice on looking through the peep-hole in Evans' cell?

(Ans) Stephens peeped after every one minute. He found Evans sitting with his pen between his lips. He sat staring straight in front at the door. McLeery sat on his chair reading the 'Church Times'. His right index finger was hooked beneath the narrow clerical collar. The fingers of the left hand were slowly stroking the short black board.

23. How did Evans manage his final escape?

(Ans) Evans was handcuffed and made to sit in the prison van. But the Governor was complacent and it was Evans' accomplices inside the van. As the van turned to the Oxford Road, the silent prison officer who was Evans' friend unlocked the handcuffs. Evan suggested that they go towards Newbury. Evans had his final escape.

24. Give an account of the blunders committed by the prison authorities which helped Evans in escaping from the prison.

(Ans) Prison authorities made many blunders. It was only because of these mistakes that Evans could escape from the prison. The hatching of the escape plan started with the German tutor's entry. The German teacher who had been coming to take Evans' classes was Evan's accomplice. Everyone assumed that he was a teacher from the technical college. The invigilator's identify was also not verified. On the Examination day, Jackson's not getting Evans' 'bobble-hat' removed was a blunder. If Stephens had not shifted from the cell, the escape would not have been possible. Jackson should have searched McLeery thoroughly and seen the rubber ring closely. The prison staff blindly believed that the injured was the invigilator, though it was Evans playing a trick on them. When Evans was arrested, the Governor was complacent and sent him in a prison van, leaving Evans in the hands of his own accomplices. He thus, lost Evans who made his final escape

Answer the following in about 30-40 words.

1. What kind of a person was Evans?
2. Why does Evans not become conversant with German in spite of having been taught for more than six months?
3. Who were the two visitors Evans received in the morning of the day of the examination?
4. What made Evans clip his hair short?
5. Why did the Governor instruct Jackson to search McLeery?
6. McLeery had a small inflated rubber ring. What explanation does he offer about it?
7. What is the significance of the call regarding the correction slip? What did it really convey?
8. After having seen McLeery off, why did Stephens choose to have one last look at Evans? What did he see?
9. What was the purpose of the photocopied sheet that was superimposed over the last page of the question paper?
10. Who is Carter? What does the Governor want him to do?
11. 'Careless leaving that question paper behind', says the Governor. Was Evans really careless about the question paper?
12. In spite of the strict vigilance, how did Evans' friend manage to give the material for disguise in the cell?
13. How did the Governor manage to reach Evans in the hotel?
14. Who is the driver who finally drives Evans to freedom?
15. How does Evans have the last laugh?