



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

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Worksheet No:	Topic: THE RATTRAP	

THE RATTRAP-Selma Lagerlof

The Rattrap is a story about a rattrap seller who leads a very poor life as his earnings are very low. He has to resort to thievery and begging to make both ends meet.

He is alone in this whole world and leads a miserable life. So he starts knitting up various kinds of thoughts. One of these thoughts is of supposing the whole world as a big rattrap. His views are that the world offers us various types of baits in the form of comforts of life. This in return traps us into the rattrap of the world and leads us to various types of miseries.

Every night, the peddler had to search for shelter as he has no home. One evening he was offered shelter by an old crofter. The next morning he stole the crofter's money which he had earned by selling his cow's milk. To safeguard himself, the peddler chose the path through the forest which was secluded, but soon found himself trapped in the forest as he wasn't able to find the way out of the dense forest. Later on, he finds a way to a forge and takes shelter there. Something unusual happens. The ironmaster mistakes him as an old friend and invites him to his house. The poor peddler rejects the offer due to the fear of being caught. Soon he is invited by the ironmaster's daughter. The next morning he is somehow stopped by the ironmaster's daughter for Christmas Eve even after being caught that he was a peddler and not Captain Stalhe.

The next day after Christmas, when the iron master and his daughter visit the church, they come to know that the man is a thief who had stolen money from the old crofter. The iron master and his daughter repent for sheltering a thief and wonder at what all things he would have stolen by that time. Here comes a twist as instead of stealing, the peddler gifts the ironmaster's daughter a rattrap. She finds a letter of thanks and the stolen money inside the rattrap. The peddler thanks Edla for her kindness and requests her to return the stolen money to the crofter. This story gives us the message that goodness in a human being can be awakened at any time with your own good deeds.

Short Answer questions:

1. From where did the peddler get the idea of the world being a rattrap?

Ans: The peddler was a poor man who tried to make both ends meet by selling rattraps. His mind was always occupied with the making and selling of rattraps. Hence one day, as he thought about the world, he found a similarity between the two. To him, the riches, joys, food, shelter, clothing etc. worked as baits to trap people.

2. Why was the peddler amused by the idea of the world being a rattrap?

Ans: The world had never treated the peddler kindly. Hence he was full of bitterness and

malice against it. So when he visualized the whole world to be a rattrap ready to ensnare anybody who would succumb to his temptation and touch the bait of richness and joys, he felt very amused. Many people he knew had already been ensnared and many others were still circling around the bait.

3. Why did the crofter show the thirty kronors to the peddler?

Ans: The crofter was very satisfied and happy to be able to earn thirty kronors in one month. He had no one to share his joy with, hence he took the opportunity to show the amount to the peddler and express his happiness. Moreover, he suspected that his guest did not seem to believe him.

4. What made the peddler accept Edla's invitation?

Ans: The peddler declined the ironmaster's invitation for fear of being caught for stealing the crofter's money. However, he accepted Edla's invitation as her warmth, friendliness and compassion instilled his confidence in her. He was so touched by the sincerity in her voice. He consented to ride to the manor house when Edla assured him that he would be allowed to leave as freely as he had come.

5. Why was Edla happy to see the gift left by the peddler?

Ans: Edla was happy because the peddler had respected the faith shown in him by her by retaining him in the house even after knowing his real identity. Rather than walking off with their silver ware, his gesture proved that the goodness in him had been awakened and he behaved like a real dignified captain.

6. Why did the peddler sign as Captain von Stahle?

Ans: The peddler was touched by the kind treatment Edla gave him. She had treated him like a real captain inspite of knowing his identity. It was now his turn to show Edla that the guest she had honoured was as honourable as a captain and not merely a petty thief. The latent goodness of his heart was awakened and he actually behaved in a dignified manner. So he signed as Captain von Stahle because had he not been elevated to the rank of a captain, he would not have escaped the world's rattrap.

7. What is the message of the story?

Ans. Sympathy, love , affection and a humanitarian treatment can purify a man's soul and transform him into a good human being .

8. Briefly describe the vagabond of "The Rattrap"?

Ans. The vagabond had an emaciated body, his cheeks were sunken and hunger gleamed in his eyes. His clothes were in rags and his life was sad and monotonous.

Why did the peddler resort to petty thievery?

The rattrap peddler lived mostly by selling rattraps that he himself made. At times, when his business did not go well, he had to resort to petty thievery for survival.

What was the new line of thought the peddler once came across?

The peddler was once thinking about the rattraps. Suddenly he realized that the whole world is a rattrap. The riches and luxuries and comforts are the baits. Like rats, people allow themselves to be tempted by these baits and get caught and end up their life struggling to get out.

How is the peddler's philosophy practical and true in the modern world?

The peddler found that the whole world with its riches and comforts alluring people is a rattrap. This is a practical philosophy even today. The modern world is full of alluring (attracting) things, people, places and opportunities everywhere. Humans have an unquenched thirst for all these. Instinctively, they desire to achieve them but turn out to be trapped at the end. Addictions are the best examples.

Why was the peddler happy to think of the world as a rattrap?

The peddler was a struggling man and was therefore glad to see others getting into troubles. Moreover, most people he met were heartless and showed him no generosity. He wanted them to get into troubles

in life so that they could understand the sufferings of the poor and he could be happy to see them in troubles.

5. **Why was the peddler welcomed by the crofter? How did this amaze the peddler?**

The crofter was old, lonely and was in need of someone to talk to. This amazed the peddler because it was not quite usual that anyone welcomed him so warmly and fed him so lovingly and behaved with him so friendly.

6. **'The old man was just as generous with his confidences (secrets) as with his porridge (food) and tobacco.' explain.**

The way the peddler was welcomed by the crofter was unusual. The crofter generously served him food and let him stay with him for a night. Besides, he went to the extent of sharing his secrets with the peddler and showed him his great treasure of an amount of thirty Kronors, a pretty big amount.

7. **What was the extraordinary 'bossy' of the crofter?**

The crofter was once able to support himself. But now he has become old and could not do labour as before. He is now supported and taken care of by his cow whom he considers as his boss.

8. **What made the crofter show the peddler his money pouch?**

When the crofter told the peddler that he had thirty Kronors in possession, the latter seemed to have disbelieved this. To prove himself true the crofter showed him the entire amount of thirty Kronors.

9. **Why did the peddler return to the crofter's house after half an hour?**

Even though the peddler had been generously treated by the crofter, the former was tempted to steal his thirty Kronors and therefore he returned to the crofter's house when he was away.

10. **What made the peddler take the woodland road to his destination?**

After stealing the crofter's money, the peddler began to feel insecure going the main road where he could be easily arrested by the police. To avoid any risk he took the woodland road.

11. **Having taken the crofter's money as bait, the peddler got trapped into a rattrap. What is the irony in this?**

The peddler believed his own philosophy that the whole world is a rattrap and the attractions here are baits attracting people into its deadly doors. But by taking the crofter's money, the peddler had forgotten his philosophy and took the bait and allowed himself to be caught.

12. **How did the hammer strokes rekindle the lost spirit in the peddler? Or how did the sounds from the iron mill encourage the peddler?**

Having wandered through the confusing forest and fallen down on the earth, the peddler thought that his end had approached. But as his ears lay close to the earth, the peddler heard the regular thumping of hammer strokes and guessed that was from an iron mill. He dragged himself to the direction of the sounds hoping to get himself warmed from the chilling cold and dripping water and find a way out of the forest.

13. **Why did the Ironmaster invite the peddler to his home?**

The Ironmaster, the owner of the iron mill, was once in the army. He had a close regimental friend there. His name was Nils Olof von Stahle. After his retirement what the Ironmaster last heard of von Stahle was that he too had retired from the force. The peddler had the similar looks of von Stahle and the Ironmaster took him for his lost friend therefore wanted him to come to his home.

14. **Why did the peddler refuse to go with the Ironmaster?**

Initially the peddler was glad to be acknowledged as the Ironmaster's friend, the captain, with a hope that he could get some money from this confused gentleman. But when the Ironmaster asked him to come home to his manor house, the peddler refused, suspecting some crazy intentions behind the Ironmaster's invitation.

15. **Why did the peddler agree to go with Edla?**

Edla Willmansson was the Ironmaster's daughter. She was not pretty or attractive yet was compassionate. When she came and asked the peddler to come home, he agreed and went with her because she seemed friendly and that boosted up the peddler's confidence. Besides, probably he didn't want to be disturbed again.

16. **Why did Edla intercede/request for the peddler?**

Edla Willmansson, the Ironmaster's daughter, had a soft corner for the peddler. She was sympathetic to him because she was so to all the poor and suffering people. She had understood the essential value of human beings, too. She interceded for the peddler because she had wished his presence with her family as a Christmas friend, not as his father's old regimental friend. She had believed in the true Christian values such as charity and benevolence, which are in fact the spirit of Christmas.

17. **How did the peddler celebrate his Christmas at the manor house?**

It was the first Christmas the peddler ever celebrated in his whole life so peacefully. The whole day and throughout the Christmas night he was sleeping that was interrupted only by the calls to eat at intervals.

18. **What was Edla's Christmas gift for the peddler?**

Edla Wilmansson didn't give anything apparently to the peddler. She informed him that her father's fur coat that had been given to him was not to be returned. She told him that he would be welcome to the manor house on every Christmas to spend a peaceful Christmas. But the real Christmas gift that Edla gave the peddler was the great transformation that made him a new man.

19. **Why did Edla sit dejected when she returned from the church?**

Edla and her father had left the peddler home while they went to church for Christmas celebrations. But in the church the crofter whose money the peddler had stolen earlier told everyone how and by whom he had been robbed by a man who sold rattraps. Realizing that the same man was at her home and that it was she who wanted him home and that he would have stolen everything, Edla felt dejected.

20. **How did the peddler dare to consider himself as a captain? How far is that apt?**

A captain is far refined than a peddler. When the peddler began to think and behave different from his usual tramp way, he felt a need for change in his life. Moreover, the newly awakened man in the peddler could command the old man in him to change, as a captain commands.

21. **Do you think that the peddler had really changed?**

Yes, the peddler changed his old way of life after staying with Edla and her father on a Christmas. He did not take anything from Edla's house even though he was able to. Besides, he returned the 30 Kronors that he had stolen from the old crofter. Moreover, he calls himself 'captain' in the letter for Edla. From all these, we can conclude that the peddler had changed.

22. **How were the ironmaster and his daughter different in their outlook?**

The ironmaster invited the peddler home for celebrating Christmas with his daughter and him because he thought the peddler was his old friend and that they had none to celebrate Christmas with. The ironmaster was business minded and it was not the genuine compassion that made him treat the peddler. But Edla was just the opposite. She was a fountain of true love for others. She had the same compassion and love for the peddler even after knowing that the man was not her father's regimental friend.

Some more solved questions:

Q1- How does the peddler interpret the acts of kindness and hospitality shown by the crofter, the ironmaster and his daughter?

A1- The peddler was a rattrap seller. He was leading a life of misery. He was homeless. Moreover, he didn't have enough money to survive. So, he had to depend upon begging and thievery. He was once offered shelter by an old crofter. He wanted company and showed kindness towards the peddler by sharing his porridge and tobacco. In return, the peddler betrayed him and stole his money.

The ironmaster mistook him as his old companion Captain Von Stahle; he showed his kindness to him and invited him to his house for Christmas Eve. The peddler knew that the ironmaster was making a mistake by thinking him to be his old friend but here also he did not clear the air and simply accepted the invitation. He did this so that the ironmaster may give him some money out of pity.

Elda Williamson who was the iron master's daughter invited him to their house in a very friendly way. Also, she insisted her father to let him stay for Christmas Eve even after it was revealed that he was not Captain Von Stahle. The kind nature of Elda changed the peddler and he not only thanked her by gifting a rattrap for being so kind and caring but also requested her to return the stolen money to the old crofter.

Q2- What are the instances in the story that show that the character of the ironmaster is different from that of his daughter in many ways?

A2- The character of both ironmaster and his daughter were totally different from each other.

The iron master was a proud man. When he saw the peddler, he mistook him as an old

regimental comrade and tried to help him out of his sense of pride. When he realized that he had been mistaken, he called the peddler to be dishonest and also warned him of calling the sheriff. Not only this, he worried about his silver spoons when he comes to know that peddler was a thief. On the other hand, the ironmaster's daughter was a kind lady, who really wanted to help the peddler. She treated him with respect and it was her kind nature which changed the peddler and made him a good person.

Q3- The story has many instances of unexpected reactions from the characters to others' behaviour. Pick out instances of these surprises?

A3- The story has many instances of unexpected reactions from the characters to others' behavior. For example:

One evening when the peddler knocked at the door of a little hut, he was not disappointed by the owner rather he welcomed him and tried to be a good host to him by offering him food and playing cards with him. In another instance when the peddler went inside a forge to seek shelter, there he was invited by the iron master to his house as he mistook him as one of his old regimental comrade. But when the iron master realized that he had invited some unknown person to his house, he asked him to leave. At his time, he was allowed to stay by his daughter Elda out of kindness.

Q4- What made the peddler finally change his ways?

A4- Edla Willimansson's kindness reformed the peddler. Her kindness, compassion and generosity killed the thief in him. He gifted her a rattrap. Also, he returned the three ten kronor notes that he had stolen from the crofter's house. He requested her to return the money to the old crofter. He wrote a letter to her, thanking her for treating him well just like she would have treated a real captain.

Q5- The peddler comes out as a person with a subtle sense of humour. How does this serve in lightening the seriousness of the theme of the story and also endear him to us?

A5- We can see the peddler's sense of humour when he compares the world with a rattrap. Whenever he gets caught due to his own knitted stories, he tries to prove his innocence by believing that he has fallen into the trap of this world which actually is like a rattrap. This lightens the seriousness of the story and makes the reader sympathize with him.

Additional short answer questions:

1. Briefly describe the rattrap seller.
2. How did the world treat the peddler?
3. How did the ironmaster interpret the peddler's refusal to accept his invitation to the manor house?
4. How did the tramp make his living?
5. Describe the evening that the tramp spent with the crofter.
6. Why did the peddler have to keep to the woods after leaving the cottage? How did he feel?
7. What were the peddler's feelings as night fell in the woods?
8. Who was the owner of the ironworks and what sort of a person was he?

9. Who did the ironmaster mistake the peddler to be? Why did the latter not reveal his identity? How did his true identity come to light?
10. What were the peddler's feelings as he was being taken to the manor house?

Long answer questions: (Solved)

1. How does the metaphor of the rattrap serve to highlight human predicament?

Ans: Metaphor of the rattrap reveals man's helplessness and restlessness in the face of situations that pursuit of joys and luxuries land him in. Just as the bait of cheese and pork tempt and trap a rat, the peddler yields to his temptations at the crofter's cottage and then runs like mad to escape. The only difference is that for the peddler the world is a big rattrap. Though one can't see the bars and wires, this trap ensnares individuals like him so securely that one can't escape at all. All aims and ambitions of attaining great heights remain unfulfilled and one finds himself incapable of wriggling out of pettiness and trivialities. Many a times, one is not even aware of having been trapped and thus goes on receding deeper and deeper into the trap and loses all chances of deliverance.

2. The peddler got two chances to steal ,once in the crofter's house and the other when Edla and her father went to the church for service. Why did he resist the chance of stealing in Edla's house?

Ans. Undoubtedly, the crofter was generous and offered food , shelter and warmth to the peddler , but somewhere and somehow in his speech he was boastful and talked about his own self , his cow and his earning. On the contrary , Edla did not do so. The reality about the peddler's identity was revealed before Edla BUT the crofter did not know who the peddler was. Hence, the greatness of Edla was proved before the peddler . Her request to the peddler to visit her house again the next Christmas if he wanted to take rest safely, left the peddler in boundless amazement. He was surprised to see the matchless hospitality , generosity , compassion , affection and humanitarian heart of Edla Wilmanson. That's why, despite getting a chance to steal , he resisted the temptation.

3. The story is both entertaining and philosophical. Discuss.

Ans. The entertaining points in the story are:

- The peddler's sense of humour and his tendency to philosophise, despite odds.
- The suspense created whereby every moment the reader waits for what would happen next. There are many surprising twists and turns in the tale.
- Third, the situations are comical such as the revelation of the peddler's identity after the valet had bathed him.

The philosophical points are:

- The entire theory that life is one big rattrap.
- Also, the tale tells us something about second chances, stating that everyone should get another chance.

Additional questions:

4. The story 'The Rattrap' focuses on human loneliness and the need to bond with others. Comment. (Very imp. – discuss the loneliness of ALL the characters in the story – Peddler, crofter, ironmaster and his daughter. As they are all lonely, the need to bond with others becomes pertinent.)

5. The story is both entertaining and philosophical. Discuss.

6. What are the instances in the story that show that the character of the ironmaster is different from that of his daughter in many ways?

7. Describe how the story shows that basic human goodness can be brought out by understanding and love.
8. How did the peddler get out of the rattrap he had fallen into?
9. The story 'The Rattrap' explores the idea that human beings possess the innate tendency to redeem themselves from their dishonest ways given the right motivation. Discuss.
10. Despite all odds the reader's sympathies lie with the peddler in the story. Elucidate.

Value Based Questions:

1. **The peddler in 'The Rattrap' is a thief, dishonest, but there was something gnawing his conscience. He always resented taking to evil ways, felt guilty of stealing and blamed and cursed himself. He could reform because he had the desire. When there's a will, there's a way. Keeping this in mind, write an article in 100 words on this topic.**

Value points:

- Everyone wishes to be successful in life-but in the path that leads to success one should not forget the battle
 - When we feel the dire need of something, we make all efforts to achieve it
 - If one has strong will power, no obstacles, no opposition can shake it
 - What is required is - will power coupled with optimism
 - For success one has to continuously struggle and not give up.
2. **Edla had immense faith in the goodness of man and believed that each one has a core of humanity, that can be awakened . Her faith proved true and the peddler showed an inclination to reform. It was her faith that transformed the peddler. Keeping this in mind, write an article in about 100 words on 'The Virtue of Faith'.**

Value points:

- Faith is the sum and substance of life
- It is the driving force which leads to the fulfillment of each human endeavour
- It is the only power that inspires a human being in despair
- But if a person loses faith during the period of struggle, he succumbs to unfavourable situations
- A man having faith in God has faith in himself

3. **The peddler's instance speaks on a general level to the entire society, urging for a different outlook towards those maligned individuals who can be redeemed by compassion and understanding. The rehabilitation programmes at the prisons follow the same value. In the light of the instance mentioned above, how do you think society can help juvenile delinquents from falling prey to petty crimes or bad ways?**
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