



NCERT Solutions for 10th Class English Literature: Chapter 3- The Letter



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NCERT Solutions for 10th Class English Literature: Chapter 3-The Letter

Class 10: English Literature Chapter 3 solutions. Complete Class 10 English Literature Chapter 3 Notes.

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Question 1.

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Look at the picture of the old man given below :



Working with your partner, note down the feelings of the old man.

Answer:

The old man seems to wait passionately for someone near to his heart.

- His eyes are untiringly looking for somebody.
- He is looking sad and lonely.
- He was looking worried about the well-being of the person he is waiting for.
- His posture reflects his helplessness as well as grief buried deep in his heart

Question 2.

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Can you think of reasons for these feelings? Discuss with your partner and note down possible reasons.

Answer:

There can be many reasons behind this gloomy aspect:

- Pain of separation from family.
- Realisation of past mistakes.
- Grief over losing someone dear.
- Loveliness and lack of sympathy.
- Rash and careless attitude resulting in seclusion.

Question 3.

Answer the following questions by ticking the correct options :

(a) Ali's walking to the Post Office daily even in biting cold weather shows his

(i) courage

(ii) optimism

(iii) foolishness

(iv) strength of will

Answer:

(ii) optimism

(b) The Post Office is referred to as Ali's "place of pilgrimage" as he

(i) visited it daily

(ii) came there to pray for a letter from his daughter

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(iii) went there with faith and hope

(iv) believed God would bless him if he went there

Answer:

(iii) went there with faith and hope

(c) The Post Master's rudeness to Ali reveals his

(i) lack of empathy

(ii) preoccupation with his work

(iii) preconceived notions

(iv) sensitivity

Answer:

(iii) preconceived notions

(d) Ali did not come to the Post Office for several days as

(i) he had given up hope

(ii) he was upset by the Post Master's rebuke

(iii) he was unwell and not able to walk to the Post Office

(iv) he was busy hunting

Answer:

(iii) he was unwell and not able to walk to the Post Office

(e) "Tortured by doubt and remorse, he sat down in the glow of the charcoal sigri to wait. " The Post Master was waiting for

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- (i) a letter from Miriam
- (ii) a letter from his own daughter
- (iii) a letter from Ali
- (iv) Ali to deliver Miriam's letter to him.

Answer:

- (iv) Ali to deliver Miriam's letter to him.

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Question 4.

Answer the following questions briefly:

- (a) Who was Ali ? Where did he go daily?

Answer:

Ali was an old coachman. He went to the Post Office daily with a hope to get the letter of his daughter Miriam who went away from her father after her marriage.

(b) "Ali displays qualities of love and patience." Give evidence from the story to support the statement.

Answer:

Undoubtedly, Ali displays wonderful qualities of love and patience. The title of the story itself speaks volumes of his boundless love for his daughter Miriam and his great patience which he shows for obtaining her letter. As the day dawns, he takes his way to the Post Office and sits on the bench in the corner and waits for hours together for the dark to call out his name for

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getting the letter of his daughter. It has been his daily routine. That fateful day has never appeared when he can receive a letter from Miriam. But this situational truth has neither diminished his love for his daughter nor his patience which he shows in waiting for the letter.

(c) How do you know Ali was a familiar figure at the post office?

Answer:

Ali was familiar figure at the Post Office as all the staff members of the Post Office knew him by face because he came daily to the Post Office. Everybody right from the postmaster to the peon knew and recognized Ali by face. Usually they made fun of him while talking about his abnormal behaviour. They even called him a madman who came daily to the Post Office though he never got a letter.

(d) Why did Ali give up hunting?

Answer:

Ali gave up his passion for hunting simply because he grew old and weak physically in his later days. Though he lost his youthful stamina and energy, yet the instincts of hunting were still present in him. Truthfully, the main and the most important reason for his leaving hunting was his separation from his daughter after her marriage. His loneliness made him realise that real pleasure lies in loving dear ones and living with them. Therefore, he stopped killing birds and animals because it causes separation.

(e) What impression do you form of the postmaster after reading the story, 'The Letter'?

Answer:

As a coin has two sides, the postmaster also appears to have two aspects of his character. In the first half of the story, he seems very hard-hearted

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and unsympathetic. Even the writer's comparison of his face with dull pumpkin reveals the insensitivity of his character but as the story proceeds further and he is put in the same tight corner in which poor old Ali is already husking, a sudden change appears in him. When he gets no information from his ill daughter, he gets maddened with grief and he realizes old Ali's agony and craziness to come daily to the Post Office to get his daughter's letter. Now his fatherly sentiments rise up to understand the love-lorn soul of Ali. His attitude becomes very sympathetic and kind to Ali.

(f) The postmaster says to Ali, “What a pest you are, brother !” Do you agree with the statement ? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer:

To the postmaster, Ali appears to be a pest. It is, perhaps, because he comes daily to the Post Office with a hope to get a letter of his daughter. Just as a pest is a constant source of disturbance and torture to human beings in the same way, daily presence of Ali weighs quite heavy on the minds of the postmaster and his subordinates. Otherwise old Ali is neither very aggressive in his actions nor very malignant in his behaviour that he should be called a pest. Later on the hearts of all of them melt in to pity for Ali.

(g) “Ali came out very slowly, turning after every few steps to gaze at the post office. His eyes were filled with tears of helplessness, for his patience was exhausted, even though he still had faith.” Why were Ali's eyes filled with tears of helplessness ? What had exhausted his patience but not his faith?

Answer:

Ali was not keeping well for many days. His constant sickness deprived him of all his physical strength and stamina. He was also losing hold on his patience on account of his physical ailment and weakness. He knew that it

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was impossible for him now to make a daily visit to Post Office for getting the letter of his daughter. He also realized that his days were numbered, therefore his eyes were filled with tears. Though his physical infirmities and the shadow of approaching death exhausted his patience, yet they could not crush down his spirits and firm faith that one day his daughters letter would certainly come to him. His faith won because a letter came for him in the end.

(h) “Tortured by doubt and remorse, he sat down in the glow of the charcoal sigri to wait.” Who is tortured by doubt and remorse? Why? What is he waiting for?

Answer:

The heart of the postmaster was almost laden with deep grief and agony. An element of doubt, whether in the early hours of the morning, he saw old Ali or his ghost, also crept up in his mind. He was swaying in state of great confusion mentally and he was deeply agonized at heart on account of his daughter’s illness. He is waiting for both-an information from his daughter to pacify his grief and also for old Ali to reappear to dispel his feeling of doubt which darkened his senses.

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Question 5.

The writer carefully builds up an atmosphere of loneliness and grief in the story. Working in groups, pick out words/ phrases from the story that build up the atmosphere. Copy the following table in your notebook and complete it.

Loneliness

Grief

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- An old man was walking through the town, now and again drawing his tattered clothes tighter to shield his body from the cold and biting wind
- his lonely way
- the whole town was wrapped in deathly silence.

Answer:**Loneliness**

- (a) An old man was walking through the town, now and again drawing his tattered clothes tighter to shield his body from the cold and biting wind.
- (b) His lonely way.
- (c) Now he understood the meaning of love and separation. He could no longer enjoy the pleasure of hunting and laughing at the bewildered terror of the young Partridges bereft of their parents.
- (d) A pitiable figure a century behind his time.
- (e) From some houses came the sound of grinding mills and sweet voices of women singing at their work and the sounds helped him along his lonely way.
- (f) Although the hunters instinct was in his very blood and bones, such loneliness had come into his life since the day Miriam had gone away.

Grief

- (a) The whole town was wrapped in deathly silence.
- (b)and for the last five years he had no news of his daughter for whose sake alone he dragged along a cheerless existence.

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(c) He reflected deeply and came to the conclusion that the whole universe is built up through love and that the grief of separation is inescapable. And seeing this, he sat down under a tree and wept bitterly.

Question 6.

Complete the table by explaining the following phrases/sentences in your own words :

Phrases/Sentences	Meanings
1. happy memories light up a life that is nearing its close	
2. the sounds helped him along his lonely way	
3. the cold used sleep to extend its sway over all things even as a false friend lulls his chosen victim with caressing smiles	
4. when the evening of his life was drawing in, he left his old ways and suddenly took a new turn	
5. the whole universe is built up through love and that the grief of separation is inescapable	
6. the post-master, a man with a face as sad and as inexpressive as a Pumpkin, would be seen sitting on his chair inside	
7. And so the clerk, like a worshipper of Vishnu, repeated his customary thousand names.	
8. The haughty temper of the official had quite left him in his sorrow and anxiety, and had laid bare his	

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human heart.

Answer:

1. When the life of a human being is drawing near its end, happy and pleasant memories of one's earlier life help one in removing the dark shadow of approaching death.
2. In the early hours of dawn when Ali was going to the Post Office, there was no living creature present around him. But he heard the singing of the women who were up early and the grinding noise of hand-mills, barking of dogs, the sound of foot-steps of a work-man. All these sound gave him solace and comforted him that he was not all alone. All these sound gave him solace and comforted him that he was not all alone.
3. Just as an unfaithful friend hides his evil designs under a cover of affectionate smiles when he tries to play a dirty and fraudulent game with his friend, in the same way cold weather makes people sleep longer in their comfortable beds forgetting the biting cold and wind.
4. Evening indicates the closing of the day. Many of the activities, din and noise of day-time comes to an end at evening. Ali was growing old. His end was approaching. Therefore, he gave up his sportive passions like hunting and brought a sedateness and steadiness in his life which suited his old age. Now going to the Post Office and waiting for his daughter's letter became his daily practice. This change came to him at the evening of his life.
5. Ali realized in his later years that it is perseverance, love and compassion that matter not destroying and teasing others. The existence of the entire universe is based on love. It is the element of love which has created the world. Just as the joys of love are essential for the creation of the world, in the same way, pain and grief, caused by separation of dear ones are unavoidable. These are two eternal truths of human life.

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6. The writer compares the face of the postmaster with a pumpkin. Just as a pumpkin is hardly attractive and appealing to the eyes, in the same way the face of the postmaster did not reveal any kind of joyful feeling. Only sadness was visible on his face which made the expression of his face quite hard and stony, capable of expressing no emotion.
7. At the time of distribution of letters, the clerk calls out the names of the people whose letters he comes across. This daily practice of the clerk is compared with the mode of worship adopted by a worshipper of Vishnu. The writer means to say that worshipper of Vishnu calls out various names of Vishnu while he offers prayers to his sacred deity.
8. The postmaster, who was the incharge of the Post Office, was very haughty and rude in the beginning. Later on, when his daughter fell ill and he received no information from his sick daughter, his heart was afflicted with deep grief and agony. Now his fatherly instinct compelled him to express his painful feeling and he realized miserable condition of old Ali.

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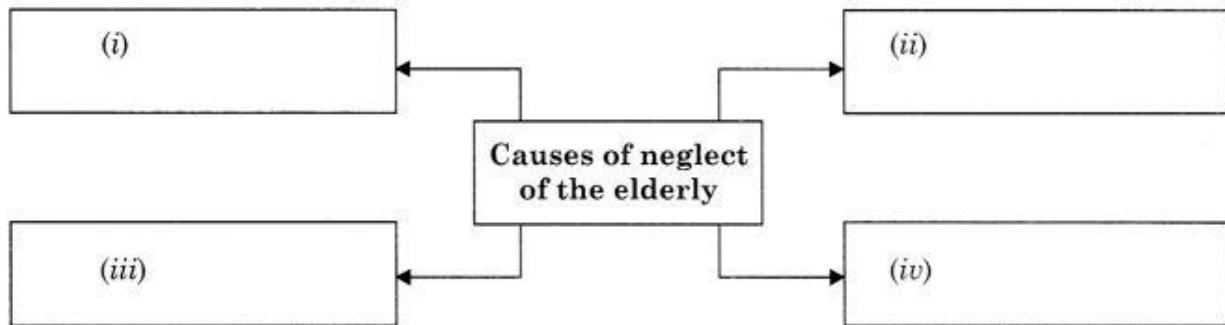
Listening Task

Question 7.

Now you are going to listen to an article about the break-up of the Joint Family system in India.

As you listen to the passage complete the boxes given below.

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Answer:

Causes of neglect of the elderly:

- (i) Diminishing concept of joint family
- (ii) Pressure of modern life
- (iii) Poor financial condition and job prospects
- (iv) Individualistic aspirations of the younger generation

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Writing Task

Question 8.

Tortured by doubt and remorse, the postmaster sits in the glow of a charcoal sigri that night, waiting for news of his daughter. As he sits, he writes his diary.

As the postmaster, write a diary entry in about 150 words outlining your feelings about the day's events.

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Answer:

Tuesday, 15th May 20XX

10:30 p.m.

Today I am filled with shame and guilt for my rude behaviour towards Ali, a poor father. Ali used to come to the Post Office daily to enquire about a letter from his daughter. Everybody laughed at him and made fun of him. I was no exception. I also insulted him and called him a pest. Today, when my own daughter is not well and I am waiting for some news from my daughter, I realise the pain, agony and suffering of Ali. I understand his fatherly concern for his daughter. I am filled with remorse and repentance for my inhuman behaviour towards Ali. In the mail, while searching for my daughter's letter, I found Miriam's letter. Poor Ali had been waiting for this letter for so long. I have taken that letter and I wish to give that letter to Ali with my own hands as soon as he reaches the Post Office. I would repent for my misbehaviour by asking forgiveness from Ali. Ali's heart and soul lie bare before me.

Speaking Task**Question 9.**

(a) The postmaster believes that he saw Ali. What do you think ? Discuss with your partner and present your views in front of the class.

(b) The postmaster was anxiously waiting for his ailing daughter's news. On not getting any news he visits his daughter's town. Now construct a dialogue between the postmaster and his daughter and enact it.

Answer:

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(a) The story was really interesting as well as touching. It has taught us a very wonderful lesson i.e. to value the sentiments of others and feel love and show patience for one another. The postmaster realized his mistake, but too late. He found himself in the same situation as Ali's and his fatherly sentiments rose up to understand Ali's state of mind. On getting Ali's letter, he realized the truth of Ali's anxiety and agony and wanted to hand over the letter to him. I think his belief that he saw Ali, stemmed from his conscience that was eager to break out the news of getting Ali's letter to him. In my opinion, that was a hallucination.

(b) The postmaster knocks at the door. His daughter opens the door and is surprised to see her father. Tears of joy came into her eyes.

Daughter: Oh! Father. How happy I am to see you here. Come Inside.

Postmaster: (Hugs his daughter) How are you, my child? I was very worried about you. You didn't even write a letter to tell me about your well-being.

Daughter: Father, I am very sorry. I can understand your feelings. But I didn't want to disturb you further by telling you about my illness.

Postmaster: (In a complaining tone) Atleast, you could have written a letter just to say that you are well.

Daughter: I wanted to come and spend a few days with you.

Postmaster: (with joy) Really! Then what are you waiting for? Pack your things and I'll ask your in-laws to send you with me. I am sure they will not object.

Daughter: Of course not. I am going to get something to eat for you; then I'll get ready to go home.

(Responses may vary)

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