



CLASS X

ENGLISH LITERATURE READER

CHAPTER 7 - THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

(NORMAN MCKINNEL)

SOLUTIONS

A. From your understanding of the play, answer the following questions:

(a) The Bishop was with Marie's mother because

- (i) It was a social call.
- (ii) She wished to discuss religion with him.
- (iii) She had no money to pay her rent.
- (iv) She was feeling unwell.

Ans:- (iv) She was feeling unwell.

(b) Mere Gringoire had problems because

- (i) She was ill.
- (ii) She had money.
- (iii) Her health was failing.
- (iv) She had lost faith.

Ans:- (i) She was ill.

(c) The Bishop sold his silver salt-cellars. It showed that

- (i) He was not clever.
- (ii) He cared for people.
- (iii) He did not care for earthly things.
- (iv) He needed some money for personal use.

Ans:- (ii) He cared for people.



(d) **The convict became a convict because**

- (i) By nature, he was a devilish fellow.
- (ii) He lost hope because his wife died.
- (iii) He wanted to revenge on society.
- (iv) Circumstances forced him to be so.

Ans:- (iv) Circumstances forced him to be so.

(e) **The Bishop would not think of selling his candlesticks because**

- (i) They were symbol of love.
- (ii) They would not bring much money.
- (iii) Persome would allow him to do so.
- (iv) He liked them.

Ans:- (i) They were symbol of love.

(f) **The Bishop's door was left open till late night, because**

- (i) The Bishop forgot to close it.
- (ii) The Bishop didn't have much valuable things and he didn't care.
- (iii) So that the needy persons may drop in for help.
- (iv) The Bishop knew that the convict would come.

Ans:- (iii) So that the needy persons may drop in for help.

B. Based on your reading of the text, complete the following statements:

- (i) The Bishop did not return even after eleven o' clock because **he had gone to attend on Marie's ailing mother.**
- (ii) Mere Gringoire had no money to pay her rent and she sought help **from the Bishop.**



- (iii) According to Persome, people pretend to be ill just to have the Bishop call on them.
- (iv) The last time Persome saw Mere Gringoire she gave her such a talking that it ought to have had some effect.
- (v) As soon as the convict entered the Bishop's place, he wanted food at the point of a knife.
- (vi) The convict stole food because his wife was ill and hungry.
- (vii) The Bishop said that the convict had suffered much, because he was in prison for ten years which had made him a hardened convict.
- (viii) The convict would go to Paris because the police wouldn't find him there.

C. Answer the following questions in a sentence each:

- (i) Where were the Bishop's two candlesticks placed?

Ans:- The two candlesticks were placed on the mantelpiece .

- (ii) To whom were the silver salt-cellars sold?

Ans:- The silver salt-cellars were sold to the Monsieur Gervais.

- (iii) Why did the Bishop give his comforter to Marie?

Ans:- The Bishop gave Marie his comforter to protect her from the biting cold outside.

- (iv) According to Persome, what did people do to have the Bishop call on them?

Ans:- Persome believed that the people pretended to be ill as they wanted Bishop to visit them and also pray for them.



Ans:- The Bishop's mother told him to keep the candlesticks in remembrance of her on her death bed.

Ans:- The convict said that he hadn't eaten anything for the last three days.

Ans:- The gaoler told the convict that his wife Jeannette was dead because of hunger and illness.

Ans:- The Bishop replied that the church did not hate him.

Ans:- The convict will head for Paris from the Bishop's house.

Ans:- The property mentioned here is the candlesticks.

(i) Why was the Bishop with Marie's mother?

Ans:- One night the Bishop did not return early because he had gone to visit Marie's mother and pray for her good health as she was sick.



(ii) Why were the silver salt-cellars sold?

Ans:- An old lady Mere Gringoire was sick and bedridden. She could not pay her rent. The bailiff had ordered her to pay the rent or vacate the house. She requested the Bishop to help her but he had no money. So, he sold the silver salt-cellars to help her.

(iii) Why did the Bishop insist on Marie taking the comforter?

Ans:- The Bishop gave Marie his comforter as she was going out in the extreme cold weather. Moreover, it would protect her from the cold. So the Bishop insisted on Marie to take the comforter.

(iv) 'I'm sure Marie's mother is not so ill that' Write why Persome says so.

Ans:- Persome felt that his brother wouldn't have needed to stay out on such a cold night. She believed that those people pretended to be ill just to have the Bishop call on them.

(v) 'My dear, there is so much suffering in the world, and I can do so little (sighs), so very little'. Based on the above statement, make a comment of the Bishop's character.

Ans:- The Bishop is a very kind hearted and generous man. He is full of profound pity by the sight of sufferings. He is ever ready to help the needy and never cares about his personal comfort or needs.

(vi) "But it is ridiculous: you will soon have nothing left....." Why does Persome says so to the Bishop?

Ans:- Persome is the Bishop's sister. She is the complete opposite of her brother. She is more concerned about her brother and is insensitive to spiritual values of mercy and charity. On the other hand, the Bishop is ever ready to help the needy and the poor. He gives away anything that he has to help people in need. His savings are gone and he even sold his silver salt-cellars to help an old needy woman. He does not care for his comfort and needs. That's why Persome said so.



(vii) ‘Oh, why not? They would pay somebody’s rent, I suppose’. Why had Persome to say so?

Ans:- The Bishop had sold the silver salt-cellars to pay the rent of Mere Gringoire. Persome said that he would sell the candlesticks next, to pay somebody’s rent. It showed Persome’s concern with her belongings.

(viii) ‘Brother, I’m frightened. Why was Persome frightened?’

Ans:- When the Bishop called his sister Persome for the keys of the cupboard, she entered and found a man standing with a knife in his hand. He had a wild look in his eyes. So Persome was frightened.

(ix) Why did the Bishop leave his window unshuttered and the door unbarred?

Ans:- The doors and windows in the Bishop’s house were never bolted because he wanted anyone who was in need of shelter or foods to come and stay in his house anytime.

(x) ‘I was free, free to starve’. What does the convict mean by it?

Ans:- The convict was sentenced to imprisonment for ten years. He was inhumanly treated and chained up like a wild beast. One day they were careless and forgot to chain up the convict. He had escaped from the prison. Thus, the convict was free, free to starve. He was fed in the prison but after he escaped, he was starving.

(xi) Why was the Bishop sentimental about the candlesticks?

Ans:- The candlesticks were the gift of his mother before her dead. It was a token of love to remember her. When the candlesticks were stolen, he thought that his mother had gone from the cottage. That’s why the Bishop was sentimental and therefore broke down.



(xii) Comment on the Bishop's reaction when he found that the convict had taken the candlesticks.

Ans:- When the convict had stolen the candlesticks, the Bishop blamed himself. It was his fault. It was he who led the convict into temptation.

(xiii) 'But, but I don't understand, this gentleman is my very good friend'. Why did the Bishop say so to the sergeant speaking about the convict?

Ans:- The Bishop did not want the convict to be sent back to prison. Moreover, he thought that the convict's need was greater than his. So, he told the sergeant that the man was his friend and that he himself had given him the candlesticks.

E. Answer the following questions in about 80 words each:

(i) Comment on the importance of the scene between Persome and Marie at the beginning of the play.

Ans:- The play opens with a conversation between Marie and Persome regarding the Bishop. Persome thinks that her brother is being overstrained. Marie informs her that the Bishop has sold his silver salt-cellars to help a poor old woman. Persome feels upset, as she thinks that people are taking advantage of her brother's kindness. So, it is easily understood that Persome is an insensitive lady.

(ii) Bring out the importance of the silver salt-cellar.

Ans:- An old woman Mere Gringoire was sick and bedridden. She couldn't pay her rent. The bailiff had ordered her to pay rent or vacate the house. She requested the Bishop to help her. But he also had no money. Therefore, he sold the silver salt-cellars to help her. When Persome heard that the silver salt cellars were sold, she almost breaks down. It showed how Persome consider her belongings. So, the silver salt-cellars were very important to both Bishop and his sister.

(iii) Comment on the life of prisoners in French jails.

Ans:- Based on the experience revealed by the convict, the prison in the French jail were like hell. They chained prisoners like a wild beast and lash like a hound. The



prisoners were fed on filth and made to sleep on boards. They were often covered with vermin. They were not allowed to complain. More lashes were given to the complainants.

(iv) ‘The Temple of the living God, I’ll remember’. How does this realisation come to the convict?

Ans:- The convict had been hardened due to the cruel and inhuman treatment he had received in the prison. After his escape from the prison, he happened to face the kind hearted and benevolent Bishop who gave him food and shelter. In spite of this, he stole the Bishop’s candlesticks. He was caught and brought to the Bishop. He expected that the Bishop would be bitter and have him sent to the prison again. But the Bishop not only forgave him but also gave him the candlesticks so that he could start his life again. This generosity moved him. He again came to believe that goodness still exists in the world. It changed the convict’s heart and promised that he should not be a wild beast.

(v) Make a comparison between the character of Persome and the Bishop.

Ans:- The Bishop is a kind hearted person whereas Persome appears to be a pitiless lady. She is short tempered, rude, proud and possessive. The Bishop is full of human kindness. He is very much concerned about the sufferings, want, hunger and disease prevailing all around. He is always at the service of the people who needed his help. But Persome looks down upon the poor people. She is insensitive to other people’s need and sufferings. In this way her character is in sharp contrast to her brother the Bishop.

(vi) Write a character sketch of the Bishop.

Ans:- The Bishop is a very kind hearted, generous and charitable religious man. He is deeply filled with pity by the sight of sufferings in mankind. He is ever ready to help the needy and never cares about his personal comforts and necessities. He goes out in the cold night to attend the ailing mother of his maid. When he comes home after seeing her, he sends Marie to her mother’s side and gives his comforter to



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protect her from the biting cold outside. He sells his silver salt cellars to help a poor old woman to pay for her rent. Moreover, the Bishop is very forgiving. When the convict enters with a long knife, threatens and demands for food the Bishop not only gives him food but also provides him a comfortable bed to sleep on. When the convict runs away with his candlesticks, he again saves him from imprisonment. He forgives him and even gives him the candlesticks so that the convict can start his life afresh in Paris. He is really a man of god.

(vii) Comment on the theme of the play.

Ans:- The play, 'The Bishop's candlesticks' is based on the theme of love, kindness, charitable and redemption. This play shows a moral that punishment do not play any reformatory role in the convict's life. It is only love, sympathy and kindness that make changes to the convict's life. It also shows that circumstances can turn a man into a criminal.

In the play the convict was caught and was imprisoned for ten years for stealing. There he was chained like a wild beast and was lashed like a hound. He led a life of hell and turned into a hardened criminal.

When the convict breaks into the Bishop's house and threatens him with a long knife and demands for food, he treats him kindly and gives him food, shelter and care like his own friend. Also, when the convict runs away with his candlesticks he saves him from being sent to prison again. He forgives him and also gives him the candlesticks so that he can start his life afresh and is able to turn into a good man.



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