

FICTION: MRS. PACKLETIDE'S TIGER

SUMMARY

The story is a sarcastic remark on the artificiality prevailing in modern 'civilized' society with the depiction of the event of tiger 'hunting' undertaken by 'Nimrod' like Mrs. Packletide.

Mrs. Packletide wishes to kill a tiger out of her jealousy for her bete noire, Miss Loona Bimberton's recently achieved popularity.

She has the intention of killing two birds with the same stone by killing a tiger-gaining fame and humiliating Loona.

A manipulated tiger hunting expedition is arranged by the 'commercial instinct' villagers of a nearby village at the outskirts of which a tired, old, weak, domestic animal's dependent tiger lives.

The artificial hunting exercise is given a natural look by involving over-anxious, money minded 'paid companion' Miss Louisa Mebbin.

On the destined day of hunting, Mrs. Packletide misfires the bullet which hits the bait (a high pitched bleating goat) which dies then and there; the targeted tiger also dies because of heart failure as it could not bear the sound of the bullet.

Villagers celebrate the killing of the tiger, but Miss Mebbin draws the attention of Mrs. Packletide towards the fact that the wrong animal is killed.

Mrs. Packletide believes that she can manage everyone by using her money power but she doesn't know that she will have to pay heavily to her 'paid companion' to keep mum.

Miss Mebbin blackmails her and gets financial gains and is ultimately able to manage a week-end-cottage from her money.

Mrs. Packletide now avoids indulging herself in any new sports as she realises that 'incidental' expenses of such misadventures are very hard to bear.

CHARACTER SKETCH OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>MRS. PACKLETIDE</u></p> <p>She is competitive by nature and that is why she decides to go on a hunt to counter LoonaBimberton's achievements. She is shrewd and manipulative in her approach. She manipulates the entire hunting saga shrewdly by involving the villagers by offering them thousand rupees. She makes sure that there is no risk involved in the hunting and thus she chooses an old tiger. She has this belief that everything and everyone can be manipulated. She is jealous in nature and can go to any extent to achieve her objectives.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>MISS. LOUISA MEBBIN</u></p> <p>She is very stingy and always fascinated by the thought of saving money. She is shrewd and practical. Just like MrsPackletide she is also manipulative, as soon as she gets an opportunity of making money by exploiting a situation she moves on with purpose. She is an opportunist and self-centred. Just like MrsPackletide, she can also go to any extent to achieve her objectives.</p>
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EXTRACT BASED COMPREHENSION QUESTION EXERCISES

[A] "MrsPackletide had already arranged in her mind the lunch she would give at her house in Curzon Street, ostensibly in LoonaBimberton'shonour, with the tiger-skin rug occupying most of the foreground and all of the conversation."

- (a) What is the real intention of MrsPackletide in hosting the lunch on party?
- (b) Why is she so jealous of Miss Bimberton?
- (c) What is the meaning of the word- 'ostensibly'?

Answers. (a) The real intention of MrsPackletide in hosting the lunch on party is to humiliate Miss Bimberton.

(b) She is so jealous of Miss Bimberton because of her recently gained popularity on account of her plane journey with an Algerian pilot at an altitude of eleven miles.

(c) supposedly

[B] "The prospect of earning thousand rupees had stimulated the sporting and commercial instinct of the villagers."

- (a) Why are the villagers so excited about the tiger hunting by MrsPackletide?
- (b) Give two examples of active involvement of the villagers in tiger hunting mission?
- (c) What is the meaning of the word- 'stimulate'?

Answers.

(a) The villagers are so excited about the tiger hunting because as per the deal with MrsPackletide they are assured of thousand rupees if they help her out in hunting the tiger successfully.

(b) (i) posting of children on the outskirts of the jungle to monitor the tiger and (ii) supplying cheaper goats to satisfy the hunger of the tiger

(c) to make active or enthusiastic

[C] "With an accurately sighted rifle and a thumb-nail pack of patience cards the sportswoman awaited the coming of the quarry."

- (a) Who is referred as sportswoman and what is she waiting for?
- (b) What is so funny about the tiger hunting expedition?
- (c) What is the meaning of the word-'quarry'?

Answers.

(a) MrsPackletide is referred as sportswoman and she is waiting for the hunt-the tiger.

(b) The fact that the expedition involves relaxation, mirth, fun and comical events in place of danger, adventure, risk and excitement, make it funny.

(c) the hunt

[D]"MrsPackletide indulges in no more big game shooting. "The incidental expenses are so heavy', she confides to inquiring friends."

(a) Why does MrsPackletide show no more interest in hunting?

(b) What does she mean by-'The incidental expenses are so heavy.'?

(c) What is the meaning of the word-'confide'?

Answers.

(a) MrsPackletide is no more interested in shooting as the hunt has proved very expensive to her.

(b) MrsPackletide means that the expenses that she has to make to silent her 'paid companion', who has threatened to reveal the truth related to the tiger 'hunting'.

(c) to share any secret/ to show confidence.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

Q.1. Why does MrsPackletide wish to kill a tiger?

Ans. MrsPackletide wishes to kill a tiger to overshadow the media publicity which has been gained by her rival LoonaBimberton on account of her feat of travelling in an airplane at an altitude of eleven miles.

Q.2. 'Tiger shooting was an arranged event.' Justify the statement.

Ans. MrsPackletide comes to know about a village which has an old tiger in its neighborhood, she manages the villagers by offering them thousand rupees if they help her out in killing the tiger which they happily agree to. Thus we can conclude that it was an arranged event.

Q.3. How can you conclude that Miss Mebbin was not devoted to MrsPackletide?

Ans. Miss Mebbin was not at all devoted to MrsPackletide, in fact, she was only devoted to money and this is proved when she blackmails MrsPackletide if she fails to meet her demand by revealing the truth about the tiger 'hunting'.

Q.4. Why does Miss Mebbin plant so many tiger lilies in her garden?

Ans. Miss Mebbin plants so many tiger lilies in her garden to pay tribute to the tiger because of which she has become owner of the week-end-cottage.

VALUE BASED QUESTION WITH ANSWER

Q. How does the writer of the story expose human greed and vanity in the story 'MrsPackletide's Tiger'?

Answer. Through various incidents and characters, the writer Saki exposes the negativity and vanity of human behavior. He exposes the human exploitation of big game animals as a brutal act of violence. LoonaBimberton and MrsPackletide are examples of human lust, folly and opportunism for personal sake. He also exposes the jealous behavior on humans. To satisfy his ego man can stoop to any extent and this is evident in MrsPackletide's approach towards hunting the tiger. The story also exposes the fact that by nature man is manipulative and he plays with situations for personal gains at the cost of morality and ethics. Thus, the writer has been successfully able to expose human behavior of greed and lust in the story.

ADDITIONAL SHORT ANSWER/VALUE BASED QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE
SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS:

- Q.1. 'It was Mrs. Packletide's pleasure and intention that she should shoot a tiger'. Why was Mrs. Packletide intent on shooting a tiger?
- Q.2. What preparations were made for the shooting?
- Q.3. 'Mrs. Packletide was reasonably annoyed at the discovery'. Which discovery is referred to and What has led her to be annoyed?
- Q.4. How does MrsPackletide manipulate the tiger hunting event?
- Q.5. Who was Miss Mebbin? How did she manage the week-end cottage?
- Q.6. 'The villagers show immense devotion for the event.' How can you justify the statement?
- Q.7. Why does MrsPackletide give up hunting?

VALUE BASED QUESTIONS

- Q.1. You are Louisa Mebbin. Write a diary entry expressing how you could afford a cottage.
- Q.2. "Having a weakness for publicity sometimes leads to humorous consequences". Explain with reference to the chapter Mrs. Packletide'sTiger.
- Q.3 'Miss Mebbin was a paid companion.' Do you think that friendship can be bought? Give reasons to support your answer highlighting the qualities of a true friendship.