

Grade IX

Lesson 11 : If I Were You

Prose

Soul of the Chapter

This is a melodrama written by Douglas James. In a very lucid, interesting and humorous way, he presents two characters of the same built. The playwright, Douglas James, sustains interest, arouses curiosity and maintains the suspense till the end. It is a sensational one-act play with a happy ending.

The main character of the play is Gerrard who lives alone in a lonely cottage in the wilds Essex. An Intruder, who is a criminal, enters his cottage. He resembles Gerrard. He intends to murder Gerrard and impersonate him to escape from the police. Gerrard is very intelligent and he outwits the Intruder. He tells the Intruder that impersonating him will not help him as he himself was a criminal. He was expecting trouble any time and his bag was ready. He shows his disguise outfits containing false moustache, etc. to convince the intruder. The Intruder is convinced.

The telephone bell rings. Gerrard tells the Intruder that it might be a call from the informer. He proposes the Intruder to leave the place in his car. He agrees. He opens the door which was, in fact, the door of a cupboard. The Intruder looks in to see what it was. Just then, Gerrard gives him a push. His revolver falls. Gerrard locks the door and picks up the revolver. Then he answers the phone call and tells his friend to send the sergeant to his place at once.

Here the reader comes to know that Gerrard was a playwright. Thus, the play has a happy ending.

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NCERT Questions

Thinking About the Text

I. Answer these questions

1. "At last a sympathetic audience."

(i) Who says this?

The speaker of the given line is Gerrard.

(ii) Why does he say it?

He says it as he is asked by the intruder to speak about himself.

(iii) Is he sarcastic or serious?

He speaks the given dialogue sarcaaaastically.

2. Why does the intruder choose Gerrard as the man whose identity he wants to take on?

The intruder is similar to Gerrard in build. He looked like him. After killing Gerrard, he wanted to impersonate him and get rid of the police. So, he chose Gerrard as his target.

(i) Who says this?

Gerrard says this.

(ii) What does it mean?

It means that when things went wrong, he had used his gun to shoot someone for his escape.

(iii) Is it the truth? What is the speaker's reason for saying this?

No, it is not the truth. The speaker says this to save himself from getting shot by the intruder.

4. What is Gerrard's profession? Quote the parts of the play that support your answer.

Gerrard was a playwright. He says in the end of the play, "Sorry, I can't let you have the props in time for rehearsal. I think I'll put it in my next play."

5. "You'll soon stop being smart."

(i) Who says this?

The Intruder says this to Gerrard.

(ii) Find a word that means 'time spent in practising'.

Rehearsal

(iii) What according to the speaker will stop Gerrard from being smart?

According to the Intruder, Gerrard would stop being smart when he knew that his intention was to kill him.

6. "They can't hang me twice."

(i) Who says this?

The Intruder says this to Gerrard.

(ii) Why does the speaker say it?

The Intruder told that he had already killed someone. If he was caught after murdering Gerrard, he would be hanged only once and not twice.

7. "A mystery I propose to explain." What is the mystery the speaker proposes to explain?

Gerrard tells the Intruder that he himself was in hiding and the police was after him. He was expecting the police to raid his house any time, so he was about to leave that place soon.

8. "This is your big surprise."

(i) Where has this been said in the play?

Gerrard says this to the Intruder at the end of the play.

(ii) What is the surprise?

Gerrard was also a criminal who had murdered someone and the police were after him, was a surprise for the Intruder.

Thinking about Language

I. Consult your dictionary and choose the correct word from the pairs given in brackets.

1. The (site, cite) of the accident was (ghastly/ghostly).

The site of the accident was ghastly.

2. Our college (principle/principal) is very strict.

Our college principal is very strict.

3. I studied (continuously/continually) for eight hours.

I studied continuously for eight hours.

4. The fog had an adverse (affect/effect) on the traffic.

The fog had an adverse effect on the traffic.

5. Cezanne, the famous French painter, was a brilliant (artist/artiste).

Cezanne, the famous French painter, was a brilliant artist.

6. The book that you gave me yesterday is an extraordinary (collage/college) of science fiction and mystery.

The book that you gave me yesterday is an extraordinary collage of science fiction and mystery.

7. Our school will (host/hoist) an exhibition on cruelty to animals and wildlife conversation.

Our school will host an exhibition on cruelty to animals and wildlife conversation.

8. Screw the lid tightly onto the top of the bottle and (shake/shape) well before using the contents.

Screw the lid tightly onto the top of the bottle and shake well before using the contents.

II. Irony is when we say one thing but mean another, usually the opposite of what we say. When someone makes a mistake and you say, "Oh! That was clever!",



that is irony. You're saying 'clever' to mean 'not clever'. Expressions we often use in an ironic fashion are"

- Oh, wasn't that clever!/Oh that was clever!
- You have been a great help, I must say!
- You've got yourself into a lovely mess, haven't you?
- Oh, very funny! How funny!

We use a slightly different tone of voice when we use these words ironically. Read the play carefully and find the words and expressions Gerrard uses in an ironic way. Then say what these expressions really mean. Two examples have been given below. Write down three more such expressions along with what they really mean.

What the author says	What he means
Why, this is a surprise, Mr-er-	He pretends that the intruder is a social visitor whom he is welcoming. In this way he hides his fear.
At last a sympathetic audiences	He pretends that the intruder wants to listen to him, whereas actually the intruder wants to find out information for his own use.

What the author says

What he means

You won't kill me for a very good reason.

Gerrard is just pretending to have a 'very good reason' even though there is no such reason.

Sorry I can't let you have the props in time for rehearsal, I've had a spot of bother - quite amusing.

The 'spot of bother' that Gerrard calls 'quite amusing' is actually a life-threatening situation, where a criminal actually threatens to kill him.

You have been so modest.

Here, Gerrard means that it is immodest on the part of the intruder to know so much about him without disclosing his own identity.



Solved Question Bank

Reference-to-Context Questions

Q. Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1. Thanks a lot. You'll soon stop being smart. I'll make you crawl. I want to know a few things.

a. _____ is the speaker of the above lines.

The intruder

b. The speaker is in a _____ mood.

Bad

c. Gerrard is threatening the intruder that he will make him crawl.
(True/False)

False

d. _____ is the word in the above lines which means 'to move on hands and knees'.

'Crawl'

2. Anything you like. I know all the answers. But before we begin, I should like to change my position; you may be comfortable, but I am not.

a. 'I' in the above lines is _____.

Gerrard

b. 'You' in the passage has been used for _____.

The intruder

c. The intruder wanted to change his position in order to sit comfortably.
(True/False)

False

d. The synonym of 'cosy' in the passage is _____.

'Comfortable'



3. That's a lie. You're not dealing with a fool. I'm as smart as you are smarter, and I know you run a car. Better be careful. Wise guy!

a. According to the speaker, _____ was lying.

Gerrard

b. _____ was smarter than _____.

The intruder; Gerrard

c. The intruder knew that the man (Gerrard) possess a car.

True

d. The third degree of comparison of 'smart' is _____.

'Smartest'

4. You seen to have taken a considerable amount of trouble. Since you know so much about me, won't you say something about yourself. You have been so modest.

a. _____ is being talked to in the above lines.

The intruder

b. The intruder took a lot of _____ in collecting information about _____.

Trouble; Gerrard

c. The use of word 'modest' is a verbal irony used to please the enemy.
(True/False)

True

d. _____ in the passage means the same as 'humble'.

Modest

5. Gerrard : Your idea is to elude the police by killing me and taking on my identity?

Intruder : Yes, I like the idea.

a. The intruder's plan was to _____ the police.

Kill Gerrard and elude





b. After killing, the intruder also wanted to take _____.

His identity

c. The intruder was successful because Gerrard could not be fool him.
(True/False)

False

d. Another word for 'elude' can be _____.

'Escape'

6. I have got a man posted on the main road. He'll ring up if he sees the police, but I don't want to leave...(telephone bell rings). Come on! They're after us. Through here straight to the garage.

a. 'They' in the second line is used for _____.

Police

b. _____ on the main road will ring up in seeing the police.

A man posted

c. The speaker has an intention to lock the intruder. (True/False)

True

d. 'Stationed' means the same as _____ in the above lines.

'Posted'

7. Gerrard : Hello. Yes, speaking. Sorry I can't let you have the props in time for rehearsal, I've has a spot of bother - quite amusing. I think I'll put it in my next play. Listen, can you tell our friend the sergeant to come up here at once? You will probably find him in the Public Bar.

a. _____ will probably be found in the Public Bar.

The sergeant

b. _____ are the things used by actors to change appearances.

Props





c. The above lines show that Gerrard was a dramatist.

(True/False)

True

d. _____ in the passage means 'entertaining'.

'Amusing'

Short Answer Questions

1. Why does the intruder say, "They can't hang me twice"?

The Intruder threatens Gerrard that he will murder him. Gerrard tells him that he should not do this because he would be arrested and hanged for that crime. The intruder remarks that he has already murdered someone and would be hanged for that crime. Since he can't be hanged twice he is not afraid of killing Gerrard.

2. What did Gerrard tell the Intruder about his life?

Gerrard told the Intruder that he was not a Sunday School Teacher. He was a criminal who had murdered someone and the police were after him. It was a surprise for the Intruder who wanted to impersonate Gerrard and live a peaceful life.

3. What is Gerrard's profession? How do you know it?

Gerrard is a playwright. He is working for some theatre group. He says at the end of the play, "Sorry, I can't let you have the props in time for rehearsal. I think I'll put it in my next play."

4. A mystery I propose to explain. What is the mystery the speaker proposes to explain?

Gerrard says these words to the Intruder. He wants to tell him that he himself was a criminal and had murdered someone. He was in hiding and the police was after him. He was expecting the police to raid his house anytime so he was about to leave that place very soon.

5. Why did the Intruder say, "I don't think you'll be pleased for long?"

The Intruder says that Gerrard will not be pleased for long because he has come there with an evil design. He wants to kill Gerrard so that he can impersonate him and live peacefully forever.



6. Why was the police after the Intruder?

The Intruder was a criminal. He had murdered a policeman. He was being hunted by the police. This was the reason he intruder Gerrard's cottage. He wanted to kill Gerrard and take his place.

7. How did Gerrard convince the Intruder that his plan would fail?

Gerrard was an intelligent person. He immediately understood his plan. He told him that his plan was not successful. He would not be able to save himself from the law. He would be arrested even after impersonating as Gerrard because Gerrard himself was a criminal and was being chased by the police.

Long Answer Questions

1. How did Gerrard get rid of the Intruder in the play 'If I were you'? What would you have done if you were in his place? What is the central ideal of the play?

Gerrard lived in a lonely cottage. He was a playwright. One day an intruder entered his cottage with the intention to kill him. The intruder looked like Gerrard. He wanted to impersonate Gerrard and escape from the law. But Gerrard was smarter. He understood his motive. Gerrard told him that he himself was a criminal and was expecting trouble that night itself. He convinced the intruder to escape from there. He offered his help to save the intruder from police. He asked him to follow him towards garage. While on the way to the garage, Gerrard pushed the intruder into a cupboard and locked him inside. Thus he got rid of him. In such a condition, I would have acted in the same way. I also would have thought of such a plan. The play impresses upon us the need to be calm, composed and maintain presence of mind in times of trouble.

2. Imagine you are Gerrard. Tell your friend what happened when the intruder broke into your house. Do you agree crime cannot escape the law?

One day an Intruder made a way into my cottage. He resembled me in appearance and physique. He was dressed in a detective's dress. He spoke with an American accent. He started a conversation with me and told me his intention to impersonate me. Initially I was scared but I did not run out of ideas. I immediately made a story and convinced him that I was also a criminal like him. I told him about my plan to



leave that place as police was after me. I was successful in trapping and handing him over to the police. It is rightly said that evil begets evil. I fully agree that crime does not pay for long. No criminal can escape the hands of law. A criminal is destined to face punishment sooner or later.

3. Why did, according to you, the intruder want to know more about Gerrard? Cheating by impersonation, misappropriation of money and blackmailing have become very common crimes nowadays. But soon the offenders are caught and punished. Tell this fact to your friend by writing a letter to him. Give the example of the intruder who tried to be smart.

Dear friend.

I want to share with you an interesting incident. An intruder tried to impersonate me to escape punishment. He wanted to know more and more about me so that he might escape the punishment. But I outwitted him and got him arrested. You know cheating by impersonation, misappropriation of money and blackmailing have become very common crimes these days. The portfolio of the criminals is different from what it used to be. Now we find professionals students and highly educated people involved in crimes. But little do they realise that one day they would be caught and put behind the bars. We should never indulge in illegal activity. A rat race to make quick money should never be joined. There is no short cut to success. Smartness and manipulation never pays in long run. It is our hard work and perseverance that go a long way.

4. Do you think the intruder was smarter than Gerrard? Why/Why not? Which quality of Gerrard made him smarter than the intruder?

No, the intruder was not smarter than Gerrard. He tried to catch Gerrard's words but could not get more information from him. Gerrard told the intruder that if he was not hanged for his murder, he would be certainly hanged being Vincent Charles Gerrard. He used his presence of mind and outplayed the intruder. Gerrard was able to fool him and, finally, trapped him. Gerrard was cool and had patience, tolerance and sense of humour that proved him smarter than the intruder. I think these are the qualities that everybody should imbibe. Intruder, on the other hand, was impatient and short-sighted. He, in his hurry to escape the punishment, lost his reasoning and got trapped.





5. Presence of mind and patience are the two values that help a person at the time of adversity and danger. How did these two attributes of Gerrard help him get rid of the Intruder?

Presence of mind and patience are two attributes of Gerrard's personality that helped him at the time of adversity. He was successful in getting rid of the intruder who otherwise would have killed him. Gerrard's cool temper allowed him to make a story which trapped the intruder. He made him believe that he himself was a criminal. He offered his help to the intruder. He knew that he would not be able to save himself from the intruder. He used the weapon of his wit and patience to outsmart the intruder. It is rightly said that presence of mind and patience are the two values that help a person at the time of adversity and danger.



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