

Literature

Unit 1.3 God Sees the Truth but Waits (Short Stories)

Class 11 English Exercise

Leo Tolstoy

About Author

Name – Leo Tolstoy

Date of birth – 1828

Nationality – Russian

Death – 1910

- He was a novelist, short story writer, play writer, and essayist.
- His best works: *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*.
- His fiction includes dozens of short stories and several novellas such as *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, *Family Happiness*, and so on.

Main Theme

The main theme of this story is about the suffering of a person who has spent his Twenty-six years in prison for false conviction without any crime. He has waited for God’s decision in his lifetime.

Finally, God’s decision arrived, but it was too late, so the author wishes to convey the message that God is always evaluating our patience and attempting to teach us about life values.

Summary

This short story “God Sees the Truth but Waits” is a heart touching short story by Leo Tolstoy.

This story is about a Young Merchant whose name was Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov from Vladimir a city in Russia. He was quite a handsome man who had two shops and a house. Before marriage,

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he used to drink a lot and show his bully behavior but after marriage, he gave up drinking and lived happily with his wife and children.

One day Ivan planned to go to Nizhny Fair to sell his goods. Before setting off, his wife stopped him from going to the fair. She related that nightmare which she has dreamed. In her dream, she saw that he has returned back with grey hair. Aksionov did not believe in her dream and leaves for the journey.

On his way, he met another merchant with whom he spent his night together in an inn. The next day he got up early and continued his journey. But on his way, two local soldiers stopped him for inquiry. They informed Aksionov about the merchant murder whose dead body has been found in the inn's room with his throat cut. Aksionov trembled with fear. Soldiers took him back to the inn's room and searched his luggage where they found a blood-stained knife. So he was imprisoned despite his appeal of being innocent.

Later his wife came to visit him and asked him to tell the truth. She might suspect him because he was an alcoholic before marriage. He felt very sad thinking that his wife did not believe him.

So he thought only God knew the truth. He was severely punished and sent to Siberia. He suffered for 26 years in prison. Within the time he became a prayer of God, become humble, and had grey hair. As time passed, a new prisoner named Makar Semyonich come into prison. He behaved as if he was familiar with Aksionov and the event. One night Aksionov saw Makar was digging a hole through the prison but he did not tell the governor about the incident. So Makar felt gratitude for him and confessed that he was the real murderer of the merchant. He felt sorry for what he had done. So Makar confessed the murder to the governor. However, when his release came, Aksionov was found dead.

Analysis

- This story promotes superstitions and belief in God. It also highlights the significance of dream.

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- It gives the lesson that we should listen to the other advice because sometimes their advice might turn into something very important.
- We should carefully check up our belongings before we leave for somewhere.

God Sees the Truth but Waits- Complete Exercise

Understanding the text

Answer the following questions.

a. What bad habits did Aksionov have before his marriage?

Answer: Aksionov used to drink before his marriage and was riotous when he drank too much.

b. What can be the meaning of his wife's dream?

Answer: The meaning of his wife's dream can be the bad fortune or unlock.

c. Why did Aksionov think of killing himself?

Answer: When the Aksionov meet the real murderer of the businessman, he had lost everything. He was not getting support from the family members too, kept in prison for 26 years, grown old before time. So he thought of killing himself.

d. Why did Makar disclose that he had killed the merchant?

Answer: Makar disclosed that he had killed the merchant because he realized his mistake and thought that he should not let other be punished for his crime. He did so because he felt pity over Aksionov.

e. Why doesn't Aksionov wish to return to his family at the end of the story?

Answer: Aksionov doesn't wish to return his family his wife was dead, he didn't know about his children and lived in the name of God at the end of the story.

Reference to the context

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a. “Well, old man,” repeated the Governor, “tell me the truth: who has been digging under the wall?”

i. Who is that old man?

Answer: That old man is Aksionov.

ii. Which truth is the speaker asking about?

Answer: The speaker is asking about the truth of digging an escape hole.

iii. Which wall does the speaker mean?

Answer: The speaker means the prison’s wall.

b. Describe Aksionov’s character.

Answer: Aksionov is the protagonist of the story “God sees the truth but waits” written by Leo Tolstoy. He is a young merchant. He is a handsome, fair-haired, curly-headed fellow, full of fun and very fond of singing. He used to drink much before marriage but later on, he changed himself and became a good man. He had virtuous qualities such as faith, forgiveness, freedom, and acceptance. His comfortable life is disrupted when he is framed for a murder he didn’t commit and was sent to a Siberian prison camp. He earns a reputation as a good person among the prison officials and fellow prisoners. After finding himself imprisoned with the man who framed him, Aksionov is ready to kill himself. However, at the end of the story, he is able to forgive Semyonich. He dies shortly before the authorities order him to be released.

c. What is the theme of the story?

Answer: In the story ‘God Sees the Truth, But Waits’ by Leo Tolstoy we have the theme of guilt, forgiveness, faith, conflict, freedom and acceptance. Narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator the reader realizes after reading the story that Tolstoy may be exploring the theme of forgiveness.

If the plea of his wife to the Czar is denied, Aksionov realises that he cannot rectify his wrong. He commits himself to God to offer him that righteousness which a man cannot give him.

Aksionov becomes a modest and pious person in jail. Officials and inmates appreciate him in settling disputes for his neutrality.

Aksionov’s trust in God is so great that he thinks that he must be

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wicked to deserve God's tortured life.

After Aksionov is reluctant to report the drilling of Semyonich's tunnel, Semyonich is disturbed by the compassion of Aksionov. Aksionov eventually gives forgiveness to Semyonich.

d. Which symbols are used in the story and what do they indicate?

Answer: The most important symbols in this short story are Aksionov's house (and two shops) and the Siberian prison mine where he is sentenced to hard labor. His house and two shops represent his family, his material possessions, and his earthly affairs. The prison itself is a symbol of his suffering and his eventual spiritual transformation.

Reference beyond the text

a. What role does religion play in Aksionov's life? How does he undergo a spiritual transformation in the story?

Answer: This story is all about Aksionov who lost hope and just trusted God. Though he didn't commit any crime, he was imprisoned for 26 years. Makar revealed the truth that he was the real murderer. Aksionov forgave him for accepting the truth and attained self-realization. But when the order of his release came, he was already dead. Our weakness can only make the problem stronger. Being hopeful can make all things possible. The title means that every decision of God needs enough time. This story is for all those people who lose hope and don't believe in God. We should wait for the truth to win with a faith in God. God gives us the answer to all our problems, as the title says 'God Sees the Truth, But Waits'. At the end of the story there is a shift from materialism to spiritualism.

b. What does the story tell us about the existence of an unfair system of justice?

Answer: The story tells us that one who commits the crime must be punished and kept in prison but not the innocent one. As here in the story, Aksionov did not commit any crime but he was kept in prison whereas the real murder Makar was not punished. Thus this story depicts about the unfair system of justice.

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