

Chapter 7: Evans Tries an O-Level

NCERT · Class 12 · English · Vistas

Reading With Insight

Question 1

Reflecting on the story, what did you feel about Evans' having the last laugh?

Solution

Evans smartly devised and executed the plan for his escape. He managed to fool everyone till the end of the story. It was Evans who had the last laugh. He gave false clues to misguide the officials following him. The story describes how criminals are one step ahead of prison officials. As said earlier, Evans smartly executed his escape plan after taking extra care for the smooth handling of the Examination. Evans made all the arrangements to escape while in jail. His friends colluded with him, and Mc Leery helped him in escaping by deceiving the governor. They arranged the car where Evans could change his makeup and clothes. With his victorious escape, Evans definitely had a well-earned last laugh.

Question 2

When Stephens comes back to the cell he jumps to a conclusion and the whole machinery blindly goes by his assumption without even checking the identity of the injured 'McLeery'. Does this show how hasty conjectures can prevent one from seeing the obvious? How is the criminal able to predict such negligence?

Solution

Evans was a perceptive and smart criminal. He had evaluated the vulnerabilities of the prison staff successfully. Stephen was a new recruit to the prison setup. When he noticed the wounded Mc Leery in the cell, he was so overcome that he did not verify who he was, and neither did anyone else. Nobody cared to ask how there could be two persons, one of them in the cell and the other who had been accompanied out by Stephens. It was for this reason that buddies of Evans, who, acting as the Governor on the telephone, addressed Stephens that he should accompany the person done with his exams. The Governor and his officers led Evans out of the jail. The question paper was left behind to

deceive the Governor. This proves that the convict Evans had sufficient time to analyze the behaviour of the jail officers and prepare their strategy well.

Question 3

What could the Governor have done to securely bring back Evans to prison when he caught him at the Golden Lion? Does that final act of foolishness really prove that “he was just another good-for-a-giggle, gullible governor, that was all”?

Solution

The Governor took all the possible measures to ensure that Evans did not have any chance to escape from the prison. He even traced and caught him at the Golden Lion after his magnificent escape from jail. The final escape once again showed that he was no equal to the smart and cunning Evans. The Governor, after getting proof from the question paper, traced Evans at the Golden Lion. When he entered the room, he was stunned to see the Governor. Evans gave no action and was imprisoned. The innocent Governor rejoiced over his victory and said goodbye to him. Evans was made to sit in the police van. The Governor did not check the identity of the driver, the officer, and the van. A little more diligence could have avoided Evan's escape. If the Governor had taken Evans to the jail cell accompanied by prison officers, the criminal would not have disappeared. Their carelessness showed that he was “just another good-for-a-giggle gullible governor”.

Question 4

While we condemn the crime, we are sympathetic to the criminal. Is this the reason why prison staff often develop a soft corner for those in custody?

Solution

The reason why the jail officer develops a soft corner for those in imprisonment is that regular communication brings people closer. Convicts may not be in a position to justify their actions. Our opinions change when we see a criminal accepting his punishment. This is what happens with the jail officer. By seeing the criminal suffering in jail, they accidentally develop a soft corner for him in their hearts. They look upon him as a human being and not as a criminal. They start seeing and appreciating their skills and abilities rather than just their sin. In this story, it is said that buried somewhere in Jackson, the senior police officer, beneath all the bluster, was a tiny core of kindness, and Evans knew it. Evans knew of the sensitive side of Jackson and so hit it straight through his talk about “lucky

charm”, and managed to fool the strict and efficient staff. Even the Governor could not see through his plans when he found him in the hotel. Thus, he was not bitter or stern with Evans.

Question 5

Do you agree that between crime and punishment, it is mainly a battle of wits?

Solution

In every fight, the more powerful side wins, and this power could be mental or physical. However, after seeing the story, we can conclude that between punishment and crime, it is chiefly a battle of wits. The side which defeats the other succeeds. It is not always that a culprit gets punished. Here in the story, the police officers, though well-trained, were easily deceived by the smart Evans, who tried to escape from right under their noses. The Governor and Evans both tried to outwit each other. The Governor took all the measures, like bugging the cell during the exam. He sent Stephen to accompany Mc Leery and reached the hotel on time. Evans was also taken aback when he got to know that the receptionist in the hotel was an informer. These are examples of the battle of wits between crime and punishment.
