

4

The Cop and the Anthem

O. Henry

SUMMARY OF THE LESSON

Soapy was a young man. He had left his home and parents. He became a vagabond. He spent his days alone in Madison Square. It was all right in summer. He made his bed warm with three newspapers. There were quite a few others like him living there.

What would happen during the winter? He started feeling uneasy. The winter was coming. He felt cold on the park-bench. He realised the need to find some cozy place. But he did not think of going to warmer regions outside the country. Just three months in the prison on Blackwell's Island was what he wanted. There he was sure of getting food and a bed every night. He would be safe from cold wind and also from fear of the police. He had been to prison for a number of times during winter.

He decided to go to prison somehow. If he goes to any other place, he would have to pay for the room and meals. He might be asked to wash their clothes and answer all of personal questions. Prison was better than all other options. He would be his own master there.

Soapy thought of easy ways to reach the prison. If he goes to eat at restaurant and then tell them he had no money they would call a cop who would arrest him. Next morning the judge would send him to jail. His face was clean and his coat was good enough. But as soon as he put his foot inside the restaurant, the waiters blocked his entry.

He next went to a shop with a glass window. He threw a big stone through the glass. A cop arrived. But the cop did not consider soapy to have done because he had not tried to run out. The cop

saw another man running, and went after him. Soapy was shocked at heart for failing two times.

Next he went to another restaurant and sat down at a table was soon eating a big dinner. When he had finished he said that he had no money. Soon he was thrown on the street outside by the waiters. His dream of being taken to prison failed again. No cop was going to arrest him.

Then he began to shout as if he had drunk too much. He danced and cried out. The cop ignored him, taking him for some noisy college boy.

Then he stole a man's umbrella, kept beside a shop door. The owner followed him. But he let Soapy go because he himself was carrying a stolen umbrella.

Soapy, at last, came to a quiet street. He stopped at his old childhood home. There was a sudden change in his soul. He felt sorry for wasting his life in such a way. He decided to pull himself out of the mud, and get a job. Soon there came a cop who arrested him for hanging around there. Next morning the judge sent Soapy to prison on Blackwell's Island for three months.

TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED

EXERCISE

(Page 29)

Answer the following questions:

1. What are some of the signs of approaching winter referred to in the text?

Ans. The signs of the approaching winter are the movement of birds to warm south, the woollens needed by people and the dead leaves covering the ground.

2. Write 'True' or 'False' against each of the following:

(i) Soapy did not want to go to prison. _____

(ii) Soapy had been to prison several times. _____

(iii) It was not possible for Soapy to survive _____
in the city through the winter.

(iv) Soapy hated to answer questions of a _____
personal nature.

Ans. (i) False (ii) True (iii) True (iv) True

3. What was Soapy's first plan? Why did it not work?

Ans. He would go to eat at restaurant and would then tell them he had no money. They would immediately call a cop who would arrest him. But as soon as he put his foot inside the restaurant, the waiters blocked his entry. Thus his first plan did not work.

4. "But the cop's mind would not consider Soapy". What did the cop not consider, and why?

Ans. The policeman did not believe that Soapy had broken the window glass. The reason was that no such criminal would stop and talk to a policeman.

5. "We have orders to let them shout." What is the policeman referring to?

Ans. The policeman means to say that he had got orders not to arrest the unruly and shouting college students.

6. Write 'True' or 'False' against each of the following:

- (i) Soapy stole a man's umbrella. _____
- (ii) The owner of the umbrella offered to give it to Soapy. _____
- (iii) The man had stolen the umbrella that was now Soapy's. _____
- (iv) Soapy threw away the umbrella. _____

Ans. (i) True (ii) True (iii) True (iv) True

7. "There was a sudden and wonderful change in his soul". What brought about the change on Soapy?

Ans. The sight of the home where Soapy had spent his childhood suddenly changed his outlook. The old memories of his mother and the sweet music revived his love for a decent life. He decided to work and become somebody in life.

Discuss the following topics in groups:

1. Suppose no cop came at the end. What would Soapy's life be like through the winter?

Ans. In case Soapy was not arrested and sent to prison he would

have started a new life. He might have taken up some job and lived like a normal gentleman. But through the winter he might have faced the icy winds.

2. Retell an episode in the story which is a good example of irony in a situation.

Ans. Soapy was keen to be sent to prison for the three cold months. He made several attempts to get arrested. But none of his plans worked. Finally, when he decided to live a decent life honestly, he was arrested. Such an episode is ironical.

□□□