

“Clean Water Act”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

Directions: Read the story. Then answer the questions below.



Josiah Hodge collapsed in a seat at the Café du Monde restaurant in New Orleans. He put his head in his hands and let out a deep sigh.

Josiah had come to New Orleans as a public service. He had come up with the idea to develop a play for children affected by Hurricane Katrina and had secured a modest grant from the government to do so. But he hadn't accounted for the major **hindrance** he would face: blistering heat in August with no clean water to drink.

Buying water for his crew of 38 volunteers for weeks on end would be far too expensive to do on his *shoestring budget*, and he had no one to turn to on such short notice for help. Josiah feared he would have to close up the production and return home.

As he sipped on a glass of soda, he found it ironic that water, which flooded this city and left many residents without homes or hope, would now be his downfall as he tried to spread the joy of theater to its children.

“Hello, sir,” a man at the table next to him said. “What brings you to New Orleans?”

Josiah shook his head. Later, he would find it amusing that this man knew, just by looking, that Josiah was not a local. For now, he was just tired and **irritated**.

“Look, I don't mean to be rude, but I've had a bad day,” Josiah said. “I don't much feel like talking.”

“What brings you to town?” the man said, pleasantly.

Josiah **grudgingly** talked a bit about his work as a theater director in Manhattan and his dream to bring a top flight play to the children of New Orleans.

The next day, as Josiah left a blazing hot outdoor studio, he noticed the same man from the restaurant, parked on the street. A shock of fluffy white hair framed his dark face, making him look almost saintly.

“Look sir, what do you want?”

“To help.”

“How?”

“What do you need?”

“What I really need is clean water. That’s all I need.” Josiah turned and walked away. He had been rude, he knew, but he was so frustrated by this problem.

When he arrived back at his hotel room that evening, the front desk clerk handed Josiah an unmarked envelope. Inside was a check for \$2,000. The memo line read, “For water.”

Josiah was flabbergasted. Who was this man?

As he pondered his good fortune, the phone rang in his hotel room.

“Will that get you some water?” a voice said on the other end.

“Why, yes, yes it will,” Josiah said. “Thank you so much for your generosity.”

“My wife and I would like to take you to dinner.”

Josiah could not refuse! This man was his savior, and his curiosity had gotten the best of him. Who was this benefactor?

At dinner, Etienne Fanchon and his wife, Adelaide, formally introduced themselves. Mr. Fanchon never graduated from high school, but inherited 5 acres of land from his father upon his death. For years, Mr. Fanchon grew cucumbers on the land, barely making a living. One day, a neighbor offered Fanchon a bag of money if Mr. Fanchon would let him bury three old trucks at the back of his property.

Mr. Fanchon took the bag and agreed. Later, he could not believe how much money was in the bag. “And just for letting him bury some trucks!”

The next morning, Mr. Fanchon said, he woke up, picked all the cucumbers off his land and converted the 5 acres into a waste management facility. He is now one of New Orleans’ few multimillionaires.

“So, I have all this money now and live to help others,” said Mr. Fanchon. “That is why I’ve helped you.”

Questions:

1) Which best describes Josiah's mood at the beginning of this passage?

- A. tired and vindictive
- B. angry and conniving
- C. pensive and high strung
- D. frustrated and overwhelmed

2) How does Josiah's mood change when he gets the check?

- A. He is thankful and curious.
- B. He is confused and questioning.
- C. He is excited and unstable.
- D. He is suspicious and cautious.

Questions (continued):

3) Which best serves as the climax of this story?

- A. when Josiah opens the envelope
- B. when Mr. Fanchon shows up at the studio
- C. when Mr. Fanchon describes how he got so rich
- D. when Josiah accepts Mr. Fanchon's invitation to dinner

4) Mr. Fanchon is described in the passage as saintly, and as being the narrator's savior. What can you infer from this description?

▼ Check all that are correct.

- A. that he has many secrets
- B. that he has helped the narrator immensely
- C. that he helps everyone he comes in contact with
- D. that for the narrator, there is something divine about Mr. Fanchon

5) Which is the best antonym for **hindrance**?

- A. assistance
- B. obstacle
- C. profit
- D. strength

6) Using the passage as a guide, what does it mean to do something on a *shoestring budget*?

- A. to do something with little help
- B. to do something with little luck
- C. to do something with little money
- D. to do something with little patience

7) Which is the best antonym for **irritated**?

- A. acclimated
- B. bashful
- C. melancholy
- D. mollified

8) What lesson does Josiah learn in this passage?

- A. It is okay to be somewhat rude on first meeting.
- B. Help can come from the most unlikely of places.
- C. Frustration can often cloud one's judgment.
- D. Theater programs are an excellent way to help those in need.

