Lit. Notes

Justice Unit

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Text Dependent Questions for “The Lady or the Tiger?”

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| How does the author show that the king is semi-barbaric? With support from the text, explain in one sentence how he is barbaric, and in another sentence, how he is civilized, or progressive. | The author shows that the king is barbaric by having “large, florid, and untrammeled” ideas. The king demonstrates his progressive side by his use of the public arena, in which “the minds of his subjects were refined and cultured.” |
| When the author states that the king “was greatly given to self-communing,” what does this say about the way he rules? | The author describes the king by saying, “When he and himself agreed upon any thing, the thing was done.” This shows that the king follows his own counsel, and does not rely on the democratic process. |
| Break sentence four of paragraph one into its individual parts (divided by commas and semi-colons). Explain what is being discussed in each part of the sentence and explain the purpose for the use of commas, semi-colons and conjunctions. How did this process help you to better understand the character of the king? | The author begins the sentence by explaining how the king is happy when all in his kingdom runs smoothly: *When every member of his domestic and political systems moved smoothly in its appointed course, his nature was bland and genial;*  The semi-colon and the conjunction “but,” however, shows the contrast between the first part and second part of the sentence. In the second part of the sentence, the author uses a metaphor set off by commas to describe disorder in the kingdom: *but whenever there was a little hitch, and some of his orbs got out of their orbits,*  The author then uses another comma to explain how this makes him even happier than he would be in the first instance: *he was blander and more genial still,*  Then he uses another comma and the word “for,” which is a word of explanation, to explain, once again in figurative language, how he enjoys restoring order in his kingdom: *for nothing pleased him so much as to make the crooked straight, and crush down uneven places.* This also indicates that the king likes to be in control and to mete out quick and final justice.  This process helps the reader understand that the king enjoys his position of power and especially enjoys exerting that power over others. |
| Drawing on the text, describe the king’s method of administering justice within the arena. | When the king “gave a signal, a door beneath him opened, and the accused subject stepped out into the amphitheater.” The accused “could open either door he pleased…If he opened the one, there came out of it a hungry tiger…as a punishment for his guilt…But, if the accused person opened the other door, there came forth from it a lady…and to this lady he was immediately married, as a reward of his innocence.” |
| What characteristics does the king’s daughter share with her father? | She is “as blooming as [the king’s] most florid fancies, and with a soul as fervent and imperious as his own.” |
| Describe the princess’s passion for her lover. What role does her barbarism play? | She was “well satisfied with her lover, for he was handsome and brave to a degree unsurpassed in all this kingdom; and she loved him with an ardor that had enough of barbarism in it to make it exceedingly warm and strong.” Since it wasn’t acceptable for a princess to carry on with a subject, the excitement of doing wrong might also have appealed to her barbarous nature. |
| Why doesn’t the king approve of the youth’s love for his daughter? What clues from the text make this clear? | The author states that the youth was of “a lowness of station.” This indicates that he would not be a good match for a princess. He also states that “never before had a subject dared to love the daughter of a king.” Clearly, the fact that the king cast the youth in prison and scheduled him for a trial in the arena demonstrates that the king did not approve of the love affair. |
| According to the story, “No matter how the affair turned out, the youth would be disposed of.” What does this mean? Would justice have been administered fairly? Why or why not? | The king knew that whether the youth was killed by the tiger or married off to the maiden, his affair with the princess would be ended, thus solving the king’s problem. If you believe that the arena is “an agent of poetic justice, in which crime is punished, or virtue rewarded, by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance,” then justice was administered fairly. However, if you believe that guilt or innocence should not be determined by chance, then this type of trial is definitely unjust. |
| Why do you think the young man trusts the princess to save his life? Drawing from the text, explain how he knows that she will guide him to choose the right door. | When the young man looked at the princess, he “saw, by that power of quick perception which is given to those whose souls are one, that she knew behind which door crouched the tiger, and behind which stood the lady.” Furthermore, “He had expected her to know it” because “He understood her nature, and his soul was assured that that she would never rest until she had made plain to herself this thing, hidden to all other lookers-on, even to the king.” Since he did not hesitate to choose the door she indicated to him, this shows that he trusted in her love completely to save his life. |
| The princess experiences many “grievous reveries” about the fate of her lover. How do you think these influenced her decision? | Although the princess often “covered her face with her hands as she thought of her lover opening the door on the other side of which waited the cruel fangs of the tiger!…how much oftener had she seen him at the other door!” Since she spends more time agonizing over her lover’s potential reception of the other woman (“How in her grievous reveries had she gnashed her teeth, and torn her hair, when she saw his start of rapturous delight as he opened the door of the lady!) It suggests that she might be more swayed by jealousy than by unconditional love. |
| After careful consideration of the princess’s “hot-blooded, semi barbaric” nature, what do you think came out of the door, the lady or the tiger? Support your claim using evidence from the text. | Some students might say that they believe the tiger came out of the door because the author emphasizes the princess’s barbaric nature, and he dwells on her emotional rivalry, describing “her soul at a white heat beneath the combined fires of despair and jealousy.” Other students might argue that the maiden is behind the door, noting that the princess’s last thoughts before making her decision are about the “awful tiger, those shrieks, that blood!” |