

Chapter 11.

If I Were You

Before You Read

Q1. Gerrard lives alone in a lonely cottage. An intruder, who is a criminal, enters his cottage. He intends to murder Gerrard and take on his identity. Does he succeed?

Answer. No, the intruder does not succeed in fulfilling his plans because he is outsmarted by Gerrard's wit.

Q2. The following words and phrases occur in the play. Do you know their meanings? Match them with the meanings given, to find out.

cultured	an informal expression for a fashionable vehicle
count on	unnecessary and usually harmful
engaged	exaggerated
melodramatic	sophisticated; well mannered
to be smart	here, a tone of voice
inflection	avoid
wise guy	an unexpected opportunity for success
a dandy bus	trap
tradespeople	a Christian religious teacher who teaches on Sundays in Church
gratuitous	(American English) a person who pretends to know a lot
dodge	depend on; rely on
lucky break	(American English) an informal way of saying that one is being too clever
Sunday-school teacher	occupied; busy
frame	merchants

Answer.

cultured	sophisticated; well mannered
count on	depend on; rely on
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Thinking About The Text

Q1. Answer these questions:

1. "At last a sympathetic audience."

(i) Who says this?

(ii) Why does he say it?

(iii) Is he sarcastic or serious?

2. Why does the intruder choose Gerrard as the man whose identity he wants to take on? 3. "I said it with bullets."

(i) Who says this?

(ii) What does it mean?

(iii) Is it the truth? What is the speaker's reason for saying this?

4. What is Gerrard's profession? Quote the parts of the play that support your answer.

5. "You'll soon stop being smart."

(i) Who says this?

(ii) Why does the speaker say it?

(iii) What according to the speaker will stop Gerrard from being smart?

6. "They can't hang me twice."

(i) Who says this?

(ii) Why does the speaker say it?

7. "A mystery I propose to explain." What is the mystery the speaker proposes to explain?

8. "This is your big surprise."

(i) Where has this been said in the play?

(ii) What is the surprise?

Answer. 1. (i) Gerrard said the given line.

(ii) He said so because the intruder had asked him to talk about himself.

(iii) He was being sarcastic. The audience, i.e., the intruder was in no ways sympathetic. In fact, he told Gerard, at gunpoint, to talk about himself so that he could use the information to further his own interests.

2. The intruder chose Gerrard as the man whose identity he wanted to take on because he was of the same build as Gerrard. Also, as Vincent Charles Gerrard, he would be free to go places and do nothing. He could eat well and sleep without having to be ready to run away at the sight of a cop.

3. (i) Gerrard said the given line.

(ii) It means that when things went wrong with him, he had committed a murder and got away. Here, "I said it with bullets" means that he fired at someone to escape.

(iii) No, it was not the truth. Gerard said so because he wanted the intruder to believe that he too was dangerous. The intruder would have killed him if he had not lied about his identity. He told him that he himself was a crook; that he had also killed someone and escaped. However, his partner had been caught, and he had not burnt the papers that should have been burnt. Therefore, the cops were after him too, and this meant that the intruder would still not be safe even after taking on Gerrard's identity.

4. Gerrard could have been a theatrical artist, perhaps a playwright. There are several parts in the play which suggest that he had something to do with theatre. When he saw the intruder, he said "This is all very melodramatic, not very original, perhaps, but..." When the intruder asked him to talk about himself, he said "At last a sympathetic audience!" He also asked the intruder "Are you American, or is that merely a clever imitation?" Then, when the intruder had told him his plan of killing him and taking over his identity, he said "In most melodramas the villain is foolish enough to delay his killing long enough to be frustrated." Later, he again said "I said, you were luckier than most melodramatic villains." When he told the intruder about his false identity in order to save himself, he told him "That's a disguise outfit; false moustaches and what not". Finally, after locking him up, he picked up the phone and said "Sorry, I can't let you have the props in time for rehearsal, I've had a spot of bother — quite amusing. I think I'll put it in my next play."

5. (i) The intruder said the given line.

(ii) When Gerrard did not show any signs of being perturbed by the intruder's presence, the intruder responded by saying "Trying to be calm and ". He stopped and fumbled for words and then, Gerrard completed his sentence by saying "is your word, I think". Peeved at the smartness displayed by Gerrard, the intruder said that Gerard would stop being smart once he knew what was going to happen to him.

(iii) According to the intruder, Gerrard would stop being smart once he knew what was going to happen to him. The intruder's plan was to kill Gerard and take over his identity. He felt that when Gerrard would know this, he would stop being smart and start getting scared.

6. (i) The intruder said the given line.

(ii) The intruder had been telling Gerrard that he had murdered one man, and that he would not shy away from murdering him too. This is because the police could not hang him twice for two murders.

7. The mystery that Gerrard proposed to explain was the story he made up to dodge the intruder and escape him. The story was that Gerrard himself was a criminal like the intruder. He asked why else would he not meet any trades people and was all over different places. When things went wrong with him, he had committed a murder and got away. Unfortunately, one of his men had been arrested and certain things were found which his men should have burnt. He said that he was expecting some trouble that night and therefore, his bag was packed and he was ready to escape.

8. (i) The given line was spoken twice in the play. First, it was spoken by the intruder when he revealed to Gerrard why he was there and what he was going to do with him. On the second occasion, it was spoken by Gerrard when he was about to reveal his made-up story to the intruder.

(ii) When the intruder said this line, the surprise was that he was going to kill Gerrard and take over his identity. He told him that as Vincent Charles Gerrard, he would be free to go places and do nothing. He could eat well and sleep without having to be ready to run away at the sight of a cop. When Gerrard said this line, the surprise was his made-up story about himself. The story was that Gerrard himself was a criminal like the intruder. When things went wrong with him, he had committed a murder and got away. Unfortunately, one of his men was arrested and certain things were found, which his men should have burnt. He said that he was expecting some trouble that night and therefore, his bag was packed and he was ready to escape.

Thinking About Language

Q1. Consult your dictionary and choose the correct word from the pairs given in brackets.

- 1. The (site, cite) of the accident was (ghastly/ghostly).**
- 2. Our college (principle/principal) is very strict.**
- 3. I studied (continuously/continually) for eight hours.**
- 4. The fog had an adverse (affect/effect) on the traffic.**
- 5. Cezanne, the famous French painter, was a brilliant (artist/artiste).**
- 6. The book that you gave me yesterday is an extraordinary (collage/college) of science fiction and mystery.**
- 7. Our school will (host/hoist) an exhibition on cruelty to animals and wildlife conservation.**
- 8. Screw the lid tightly onto the top of the bottle and (shake/shape) well before using the contents.**

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QII. Irony is when we say one thing but mean another, usually the opposite of what we say. When someone makes a mistake and you say, "Oh! That was clever!" that is irony. You're saying 'clever' to mean 'not clever'.

- Oh, wasn't that clever!/Oh that was clever!
- You have been a great help, I must say!
- You've got yourself into a lovely mess, haven't you?
- Oh, very funny!/How funny!

We use a slightly different tone of voice when we use these words ironically. Read the play carefully and find the words and expressions Gerrard uses in an ironic way. Then say what these expressions really mean. Two examples have been given below. Write down three such expressions along with what they really mean.

Expressions we often use in an ironic fashion are:

- Oh, wasn't that clever!/Oh that was clever!
- You have been a great help, I must say!
- You've got yourself into a lovely mess, haven't you?
- Oh, very funny!/ How funny!

Answer. What the author says and what they mean
What he means You won't kill me for a very good reason. : Gerrard was just pretending to have a 'very good reason'. However, there was no such reason. Sorry I can't let you have the props in time for rehearsal, I've had a spot of bother — quite amusing : The 'spot of bother' that Gerrard found 'quite amusing' was actually a life-threatening situation. He had been in confrontation with a criminal. In most melodramas the villain is foolish enough to delay his killing long enough to be frustrated. You are much luckier. : Gerrard pretended that the villain, i.e., the intruder was really intelligent to have thought up a plan to take over the identity of a man who lived at such a place where the police could not reach instantly. However, the intruder was much mistaken because Gerrard was actually using this 'delay' to think up a plan to escape him.

Speaking

Q1. Imagine you are Gerrard. Tell your friend what happened when the Intruder broke into your house.

[Clues : Describe (i) the intruder — his appearance, the way he spoke, his plan, his movements, etc., (ii) how you outwitted him.]

Answer. Do attempt yourself.

Q2. Enact the play in the class. Pay special attention to words given in italics before a dialogue. These words will tell you whether the dialogue has to be said in a happy, sarcastic or ironic tone and how the characters move and what they do as they speak. Read these carefully before you enact the play.

Answer. Do attempt yourself.

Writing

Q1. Which of the words below describe Gerrard and which describe the Intruder?

smart	humorous	clever
beautiful	cool	confident
flashy	witty	nonchalant

Write a paragraph each about Gerrard and the Intruder to show what qualities they have. (You can use some of the words given above.)

Answer. The words that describe Gerrard are cool, confident, witty, nonchalant, humorous and clever. While the Intruder could be described by the words like flashy and smart. Gerrard is a cool and confident playwright. He is a witty fellow, as evident from the way he tackles a grave situation in which he finds himself face to face with a dangerous criminal. When he is asked for his personal information by the Intruder, he talks to him in a nonchalant and humorous manner. He cleverly convinces the Intruder that he too is a criminal and then manages to lock him up in his wardrobe. The Intruder enters Gerrard's premises dressed in flashy clothes. He is smart in his attempt to extract all the personal information about Gerrard, but he is outsmarted by Gerrard's wit. He fails to see through Gerrard's concocted story about himself.

QII. Convert the play into a story (150 –200 words). Your story should be as exciting and as witty as the play. Provide a suitable title to it.

Answer. On Confronting an Intruder One day, a professional playwright named Gerrard is visited by flamboyantly dressed Intruder. The Intruder points a gun at him. Even though he is alarmed, Gerrard starts a conversation with him in a nonchalant manner. In time, the Intruder reveals his plan to extract all the information from Gerrard before killing him. This he wants so that after killing him he can start living as Gerrard, freely and without the fear of being hunted and imprisoned by the police. But Gerrard cleverly concocts a story about him being a criminal like him. He says that he has a man posted on the main road who shall inform him if the police approaches. He shows him his traveling bag, fake moustaches to make the Intruder believe his story. And believe he does. Finally, Gerrard shows him a door to evil, which is actually a cupboard. He pushes and locks the Intruder inside, and picks up the fallen revolver. He then informs the sergeant of the criminal. In this way, the clever and witty playwright Gerrard manages to save himself from the Intruder.

