

THE SNAKE AND THE MIRROR

HOT Question:

How does the incident with the snake in “The Snake and the Mirror” reflect the theme of self-awareness and human vanity?

Answer: In “The Snake and the Mirror,” the protagonist’s encounter with the snake serves as a moment of profound self-awareness and a critique of human vanity. The doctor, who is initially preoccupied with his appearance and fantasies of grandeur, is brought face-to-face with his mortality when the snake coils around his arm. This sudden life-threatening situation strips away his vanity and forces him to confront his vulnerability and helplessness. The mirror in the story symbolizes self-reflection, both literal and metaphorical. Before the snake’s appearance, the doctor is engrossed in admiring himself and imagining a future filled with wealth and beauty. However, the snake’s presence shatters this illusion, making him realize the triviality of his concerns. The incident highlights how moments of crisis can prompt introspection and a re-evaluation of one’s priorities, emphasizing that human vanity is fragile and often overshadowed by the unpredictability of life.

SHORT QUESTIONS

Question 1. What circumstances prompted the doctor to live in a small, poor house?

Answer: The doctor had just started his practice and his earnings were meagre. Therefore, he lived in a small, poor house because he could not afford to rent a better and more comfortable accommodation. Besides, he was not married at that time so he could manage in a small rented room until the time he got married.

Question 2. Why did the doctor look in the mirror again and again?

Answer: The doctor had developed an admiration for his looks and he wanted to appear even more handsome. Looking into the mirror gave him a chance to assess his looks again and again. He would comb his hair carefully, and his vanity would get a boost.

Question 3. What kind of woman did the doctor decide to marry? Why?

Answer: The doctor decided to marry a wealthy woman running a good medical practice. He also wanted her to be fat so that in case he made some stupid mistake, he could run away without being chased and caught by her. However, this wish was made in a lighter vein and was not fulfilled.

Question 4. The doctor was not a man with many material possessions. Elaborate.

Answer: The doctor had just started his practice. Therefore, his earnings were meagre. He lived in a small rented room, which was not electrified. He had only sixty rupees in his bag. Apart from a few shirts and dhotis, he had one solitary black coat. His room was full of rats.

Question 5. 'I was turned to stone'. When does the doctor say so? Why?

Answer: When the doctor found a snake on his shoulder, he did not shriek, jump, or tremble. He held his breath and became as still as a stone. He knew that the snake would strike him if he made any movement since the hood of the snake was only four inches away from his face.

Question 6. How did the narrator show presence of mind when he faced with the snake?

Answer: When the doctor found a snake on his shoulder, he did not jump, tremble or cry out. He held his breath and became as still as a stone. He knew that the snake would get provoked and strike him if he made any movement since the hood of the snake was only four inches away from his face.

Question 7. How did the snake change the writer's opinion about himself?

Answer: The writer was proud of being a doctor and a handsome one at that. To boot, he was a bachelor. He was rather vain and arrogant. Coming face-to-face with the snake made him humble. He thought he was only a poor and stupid doctor who should not be proud of his profession.

Question 8. What did the doctor do as soon as he reached his friend's house? Why?

Answer: Immediately after reaching his friend's house, the doctor applied oil to his entire body, took a bath and put on fresh clothes. He did so because the snake had slithered over his back, shoulder, and arm. He wanted to get rid of his Creepy feelings and any possible ill-effects of a snake's touch.

Question 9. What did the thief leave behind? What does the narrator feel about it?

Answer: The thief had left behind his dirty vest. The vest was so dirty that even the thief did not feel like taking it. The narrator found it insulting because it appeared as the thief wanted to tell the narrator that he had a better sense of cleanliness than the doctor himself.

Question 10. Why does the doctor remark that the snake was "taken with its own beauty"?

Answer: The doctor remarks that the snake was "taken with its own beauty" because it kept looking into the mirror just like the doctor used to when he would admire his looks while in front of the mirror.