

## **THE RATTRAP**

- By Selma Lagerloff

**THEME:** The trap of material benefit that most human beings are prone to fall into

**SUB-THEME:** The human tendency to redeem oneself from dishonest ways

**IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

**1. The story** -set- in the mines of Sweden-rich in iron ore.

**2. Tramp-** physical appearance: had sunken cheeks; eyes gleamed with hunger  
-led a sad & dull life

-lived in rags.

-earned his living by selling rattraps-business not profitable. -resorted to-begging & thievery.

-Philosophical thought- whole world a big rattrap-attracts people with riches, joy shelter, food, clothing just as cheese & pork attract a rat.

**3. Peddler's meeting the Crofter :**

One day-dark evening-saw little gray cottage & asked for shelter Owner old man-alone-needed company- welcomed the peddler.

Old man-Crofter at Ramsjo ironworks earlier, now-had a cow-by selling milk had earned about 30 kronor-money hung in leather bag near window frame.

crofter-hospitable- offered porridge to eat, tobacco, played cards'

next morning the tramp left - returned half an hour later-stole the money.

Walked on public highway -went to the forest- lost his way-realised caught in trap.

**4. Peddler's meeting the owner of the Iron mill:**

Owner of the mill-rich; on night inspection-saw peddler-mistook for Nils Olof(Captain von Stahle)-invited him to the Manor house-peddler refused the invitation.

**5. Owner sent his daughter Edla Willmansson:** Edla not pretty, modest, shy, compassionate.

She sensed that either the peddler has escaped from jail or stolen something.

The peddler accepted the invitation on Edla's assurance that he could go back as freely as he would come.

**6. Christmas Eve:**

Peddler-bathed, shaven, wore clean new clothes-owner realized his mistake.

Peddler confessed not being acquaintance; said he had been forced to come to the house; reacted angrily to threat of calling the police by the iron master.

Edla requested her father to allow the peddler to stay for Christmas Eve. Peddler was gifted a suit; treated with warmth, 66

## **7. Christmas Morning:**

Edla & her father went to church-heard about the theft at crofter's house by a peddler-worried-return home-peddler had left a package for Edla.

Package contained-small rattrap, three wrinkled ten kronor notes & a letter for Edla -expressing thanks for raising him to the level of Captain from an ordinary peddler&asking her to return the money to the old man.

### **CHARACTERS:**

1 Peddler: dishonest, thief, deceives people, ungrateful-later Edla's kindness & love changes him to an honest, grateful person.

2. Edla: not pretty but kind, shy, modest.

3. Iron Master: helpful, kind , loses patience quickly, loving father.

4. Crofter: friendly, loved the company of people, talkative ,hospitable, easily trusts others.

### **PRACTICE QUESTIONS:**

#### **Q.1. Answer the questions in 30-40 words each:**

(i) What do we learn about the crofter's nature from the story, "The Rattrap"?

**Value Points:** generous, loved company, loved to talk, hardworking, trusting, gullible, compassionate, lonely (any two).

(ii) How did the peddler get trapped?

(iii) Why did the peddler sign himself as Captain von Stahle?

(iv) How did the peddler prove to be an ungrateful guest? (v) What brought a change in the peddler'?

#### **Q.2. Answer the following question in 120-150 words:**

(i) Mention in detail Edla's contribution in awakening the essential goodness in the peddler.

#### **Value Points:**

Edla-a modest, kind & considerate girl.

-has more persuasive power than her father.

-her friendly nature& compassion-creates confidence in the peddler. -has better insight of human understanding.

-requests father to allow him to stay for Christmas.

-her kindness, love, sympathy have magical effect-act as trap-to awaken the essential goodness in the peddler.

-peddler rises above the evils of greed& cheating because of Edla.

### QUESTIONS BASED ON EXTRACTS

“You do preach worse than a parson,” said the iron master. “I only hope you won’t have to regret this.”

1. Who preaches like a parson?
2. Why did the iron master say that the speaker preach worse than a parson?
3. Did the speaker regret her decision in the end?
4. Who is a parson?

### **LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(i) Can a person really turn over a new leaf and can old habits really die?  
Explain in context to the story - "The Rattrap".

(ii) The peddler had an opportunity to steal twice in this story, but he succumbs to temptation only once. Elucidate.

(iii) There is a saying, "Kindness pays, rudeness never." In the story "The Rattrap" Edla's attitude towards men and matters is different from her father's attitude. How are the values of concern and compassion brought out in the story, "The Rattrap"?

(iv) The story, "The Rattrap" is both entertaining and philosophical. Do you think that the form of philosophy of the peddler still holds good in the present day world? Express your views in the form of an article.