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The Rattrap Class 12 English NCERT Solutions: text-grounded answers to Selma Lagerlöf's prose chapter from Flamingo (2026-27)

Chapter 4: Flamingo Prose: The Rattrap

About this Chapter

The Rattrap is a short story by the Swedish writer **Selma Lagerlöf** (1858-1940; first woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, 1909). A wandering rattrap-peddler steals thirty kronor from a kindly old crofter, gets lost in a Swedish forest that "closes in on him" like a prison, and stumbles into Ramsjö Ironworks. There the ironmaster mistakes him for an old regimental comrade, "Captain von Stahle"; his daughter **Edla Willmansson** brings him home for Christmas. Touched by her unconditional kindness, the peddler leaves behind a small rattrap as a Christmas present, with the thirty kronor inside, to be returned to the crofter. The chapter is built around a single metaphor: the whole world is a big rattrap, "baited" with riches, shelter, food and joys, and ordinary people are the rats that get caught.

Topics covered: The rattrap as metaphor for human greed • The crofter and the broken trust • Mistaken identity at Ramsjö Ironworks • Edla's compassion on Christmas Eve • Redemption through unconditional kindness • Captain von Stahle and the parting gift

Author and source.
Selma Lagerlöf (1858–1940), Sweden; Nobel Prize for Literature 1909; Flamingo, Prose Section.

Setting.
Rural Sweden in late December: a crofter's cottage, a confusing forest, Ramsjö Ironworks, and the ironmaster's manor house on Christmas Eve.

Central metaphor.
"The whole world... is nothing but a big rattrap" baited with riches, shelter, food and joys; anyone who lets himself be tempted by the bait is caught.

Also see for this chapter: Revision Notes

Part 1: Sidebar questions on the rattrap idea and the crofter (page 33)

Q 4.1 From where did the peddler get the idea of the world being a rattrap?

SOLUTION

The rattrap idea is born inside the peddler's own trade. He earns a meagre living by making and selling small wire rattraps, so rattraps are always on his mind as he plods along the road. One day, "thinking of his rattraps", he is "struck by the idea that the whole world about him... was nothing but a big rattrap". The **metaphor** therefore arises from his **occupation**: the object he sells becomes the lens through which he reads the world.

> ☞ **Key lines from the text**
>
> "He had naturally been thinking of his rattraps when suddenly he was struck by the idea that the whole world about him... was nothing but a big rattrap. It had never existed for any other purpose than to set baits for people."

- *Trigger.* The peddler is walking the road, "left to his own meditations". Vagabond loneliness gives him long, empty hours to think. He has nothing on his mind but his rattraps, the only goods he makes and the only "business" he runs.
- *The leap.* The mind that has spent years setting bait in small wire frames suddenly applies the same logic to the whole world. If a rat is lured to a cheese rind and then trapped, why not say that a man is lured to riches, shelter and joys, and then trapped in exactly the same way?
- *The completed metaphor.* The world, says the peddler, "offered riches and joys, shelter and food, heat and clothing, exactly as the rattrap offered cheese and pork, and as soon as anyone let himself be tempted to touch the bait, it closed in on him, and then everything came to an end". The point-for-point matching is what turns a passing thought into a settled **world-view**.
- *Why it sticks.* The world has been unkind to him, so the metaphor lets him strike back at it in thought. "It gave him unwonted joy to think ill of it in this way." The rattrap idea is both an honest observation about temptation and a small private revenge on the people who have shut him out.

> **Final Answer:** The peddler gets the idea from his own occupation. As a maker and seller of rattraps, his mind is full of bait, traps and the moment of snapping shut. One day on the road, while "thinking of his rattraps", he extends the logic to the entire world: "riches and joys, shelter and food, heat and clothing" are the bait, and human beings are the rats who reach for it and are caught.

☞ How to frame the answer

A complete answer names three things: *the trigger* (he was thinking of his rattraps while walking), *the leap* (he saw the world working the same way), and *the point-for-point matching* (riches, shelter, joys as bait). Don't stop after one of these.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Ananya Iyer, PhD English Literature, Jawaharlal Nehru University*

Strategic angle. Read the question as asking about *the source of a metaphor*, not just about plot. Lagerlöf is showing the reader how a private worldview is built: from one person's daily work, plus one moment of meditation, plus a private grievance against the world. A confident answer names all three ingredients and quotes the moment of the leap.

- *The daily work supplies the image.* The peddler does not invent the rattrap; he sells it. Lagerlöf is making a small literary point: the metaphors we live by come from the objects we handle every day. A baker would see the world as an oven; the peddler sees it as a trap.
- *The walking supplies the time.* "No one can imagine how sad and monotonous life can appear to such a vagabond, who plods along the road, left to his own meditations." Lagerlöf insists on the loneliness because it explains the depth of the thought. A man with company would not have brooded long enough to build the metaphor.
- *The grievance supplies the colour.* The world "had never been very kind to him", so the metaphor is shaped to cast the world as the villain and the poor man as the victim. The rattrap idea is therefore not a neutral philosophy; it is the philosophy a particular kind of outsider needs in order to keep walking.
- *Three-part image, point for point.* The bait ("riches and joys, shelter and food, heat and clothing") matches the rattrap's bait ("cheese and pork"); the moment of being tempted ("as soon as anyone let himself be tempted to touch the bait") matches the trip-mechanism; the closing of the world matches the snap of the wire frame. The completeness of the matching is what gives the story its title.

Why this matters. For a Class 12 reader the moment is important because it teaches that great metaphors are not invented in studies; they are picked up off the road. Lagerlöf grounds the story's central idea in the most ordinary detail of the peddler's life (his wire rattraps) and then lets it expand to cover the entire world. The technique is

what turns a folk-tale into a piece of serious literature.

> **Final Answer:** The peddler's rattrap metaphor grows out of his own occupation. While walking lonely roads thinking of his rattraps, he sees the world working in the same way: it dangles "riches and joys, shelter and food, heat and clothing" as bait, and closes in on whoever reaches out. The metaphor is built from his trade, his solitude, and his private grievance against a world that has been unkind to him.

Q 4.2 Why was he amused by this idea?

SOLUTION

The peddler is not a philosopher; he is a poor wanderer who has been ill-treated by "the world". The rattrap idea pleases him because it gives him a way to think *badly* about that world without changing his actual life. The text is exact: "it gave him unwonted joy to think ill of it in this way". The word **unwonted** (unusual, not normally felt) tells the reader that this is a rare kind of pleasure for such a man.

- *Personal grievance turns into a general theory.* "The world had, of course, never been very kind to him." His clothes are in rags, his cheeks are sunken, hunger gleams in his eyes. With the rattrap idea, he can stop blaming himself: it is not his fault that he is poor, it is the world's design.
- *Other people, not just him, are caught.* "It became a cherished pastime of his, during many dreary ploddings, to think of people he knew who had let themselves be caught in the dangerous snare, and of others who were still circling around the bait." The amusement is partly the small revenge of imagining better-off neighbours as fellow rats.
- *A free entertainment for a destitute mind.* A vagabond cannot afford books or company. A private metaphor that he can replay during long walks costs him nothing and fills the empty hours. The text calls it "a cherished pastime", a low-cost, repeated source of pleasure.
- *It flatters him as the only escapee.* Crucially, the rattrap idea, in the form he first holds it, exempts him. He is the one who sees the trap clearly; the others are caught while he watches. The amusement therefore has a small streak of pride: he is poor but he is, in his own eyes, not fooled.

Final Answer: He is amused because the rattrap idea lets a poor, ill-treated man take a quiet revenge on the world that has been unkind to him. Imagining well-fed neighbours as rats already caught and others as rats still circling the bait is a "cherished pastime" that costs him nothing, flatters him as the only one seeing clearly, and fills the long lonely hours on the road.

☞ Exam Tip

Always quote "unwonted joy" and "cherished pastime". The two phrases together tell the examiner that this is not just an idea he likes, but the only real pleasure his hard life offers him.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Mr Arjun Mehra, MA English, Delhi University*

Strategic angle. The peddler's amusement has three sources, and an A-grade answer names all three. It is not just "he liked the idea"; it is that the idea answers a specific need in his life: the need to defend himself, the need for a free pastime and the need to imagine himself as untrapped.

- Read "unwonted joy" literally. Joy is so unusual in his life that even thinking ill of the world counts as joy. That is the measure of how little pleasure he has.
- Read the verb "thought ill of" as small private justice. He cannot strike back at the world that gave him hunger and rags, so he strikes back in thought. The metaphor lets him do this politely, without violence.
- Read "cherished pastime" as the language of habit. The thought does not flash once; he returns to it again and again during "many dreary ploddings". Like a song he hums to keep going.
- Notice the irony Lagerlöf plants here. The peddler enjoys thinking of others being caught in the rattrap, and the whole story will show him being caught himself, first by the crofter's trust, then by the forest, then by the ironmaster's mistaken kindness. The amusement is set up so the reader can watch it collapse.
- Notice also that the peddler's amusement is described in the language of *habit*, not *discovery*. He does not return to the rattrap idea once; "it became a cherished pastime… during many dreary ploddings". Lagerlöf is showing that a single private metaphor, repeated long enough, hardens into a way of life.

Why this matters. For a Class 12 reader the question is asking you to see how literature gives small psychological reasons for big behaviours. The peddler's amusement at the rattrap idea is not random; it is the shape his survival takes inside his head. Lagerlöf's quiet skill is to let that survival look harmless at the start and reveal its emptiness only later.

Final Answer: The amusement comes from three sources: it lets him return scorn to the world that scorned him, it gives a destitute mind a free repeated pastime on long lonely walks, and it places him, in his own imagination, outside the trap as the only one seeing clearly. Lagerlöf also sets the amusement up so that the reader will watch it collapse later in the story.

Q 4.3 Did the peddler expect the kind of hospitality that he received from the crofter?

SOLUTION

The peddler is used to being turned away. The text emphasises this with the phrase "sour faces which ordinarily met him". So when he knocks on the crofter's door expecting another refusal and instead receives food, fire, tobacco and conversation, the hospitality is genuinely **unexpected**. The answer must therefore say no, and then explain the contrast between what he expected and what he actually got.

☞ **Key text**

"Instead of the sour faces which ordinarily met him, the owner . . . was happy to get someone to talk to in his loneliness. Immediately he put the porridge pot on the fire and gave him supper."

- *The peddler's normal experience.* He is a vagabond whose "clothes were in rags, his cheeks were sunken, and hunger gleamed in his eyes". To survive, he relies on "both begging and petty thievery". He is accustomed to being shooed away from doors.
- *What he asked for.* "He knocked on the door to ask shelter for the night." A roof for the night was the modest request; he had no reason to expect more.
- *What he received.* "Nor was he refused." The crofter put a porridge pot on the fire, gave him supper, carved off a generous slice of his tobacco roll for both their pipes, and played the card game 'mjolis' with him until bedtime. The hospitality was unconditional and generous.
- *Why the crofter behaved this way.* He was "an old man without wife or child. . . happy to get someone to talk to in his loneliness". The hospitality was driven by his own need for company. The peddler, used to suspicion, did not anticipate that another man's loneliness could produce such warmth.
- Therefore the answer is no. The peddler asked for shelter and was prepared to be turned away. Instead he was treated as a guest, fed, warmed and confided in: a level of hospitality so far outside his experience that he later repays it with theft.

Final Answer: No. The peddler is used to "sour faces" and refusals; he expected at best a roof for the night. The crofter instead gave him supper, tobacco, a card game and a long conversation, because the old man was lonely and "happy to get someone to talk to". The warmth was so unexpected that the peddler did not know how to honour it.

✗ Common Mistake

A common slip is to answer only "yes, the crofter was kind" without naming the contrast. The whole point of the question is the gap between what the peddler expected (refusal) and what he got (supper, tobacco, mjolis, confidence). Quote "sour faces which ordinarily met him".

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Kavita Rao, MPhil Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University*

Strategic angle. The cleanest answer maps two columns against each other: *expected* and *received*. The *expected* column is built from the peddler's life of begging, petty thievery and sour faces; the *received* column is built from the crofter's porridge, tobacco, mjolis and confidence. The difference between the columns is the answer.

- Lagerlöf carefully lists what the peddler usually faces: "sour faces which ordinarily met him". The phrase "ordinarily" is doing the work, signalling that what follows is the abnormal experience.
- She then lists what he actually receives in concrete nouns: porridge pot, tobacco slice, pipe, pack of cards, mjolis, three wrinkled ten-kronor bills shown in confidence. The hospitality is described item by item so the reader feels its bulk.
- Notice that the crofter offers each item without being asked. The peddler asked only for shelter; the food, the tobacco, the card game and the confidence are all volunteered. Each unprompted gift makes the hospitality more surprising.
- Read the crofter's loneliness as the engine. "Without wife or child", "happy to get someone to talk to": the crofter is not being virtuous, he is being human. The peddler, used to a world of locked doors, has no template for a man whose loneliness is so deep that it overpowers suspicion.
- Therefore the encounter sets up the story's first moral problem. Hospitality of this scale, given without guarantees, creates a debt of trust. The peddler will, an hour later, break that debt.

Why this matters. Lagerlöf is preparing the reader for the theft. By showing the hospitality as not just generous but out of all proportion to what was requested, she makes the peddler's act of breaking back into the cottage feel as bad as it actually is. The story's moral arithmetic begins right here.

Final Answer: No, he did not expect it. He had asked only for shelter and was used to "sour faces" and refusals. The crofter, lonely without wife or child, fed him porridge, shared tobacco, played mjolis with him and even showed him thirty kronor in confidence, a scale of hospitality so unlike his usual life that the peddler later mistook it for an opportunity to rob.

Q 4.4 Why was the crofter so talkative and friendly with the peddler?

SOLUTION

The text answers this question directly in two short clauses: the crofter was "an old man without wife or child", and he was "happy to get someone to talk to in his loneliness". Lagerlöf's reason is simple, human and complete: **loneliness** drove his hospitality. The fuller answer unpacks what loneliness looks like in his case.

- *Family loneliness.* The crofter has no wife and no child. The cottage is silent at night, the porridge pot is prepared for one. A guest, any guest, fills the silence.
- *Work-related loneliness.* "In his days of prosperity his host had been a crofter at Ramsjö Ironworks and had worked on the land. Now that he was no longer able to do day labour, it was his cow which supported him." He has lost the daily company of fellow workers; only his cow, which gives milk for the creamery, is left.
- *Pride that needs an audience.* He is justly proud of his cow: "She could give milk for the creamery every day, and last month he had received all of thirty kronor in payment." Pride without an audience is empty. The peddler becomes the first listener he has had in a long time.
- *The visible evidence.* The crofter is so eager that he is "just as generous with his confidences as with his porridge and tobacco". He tells his life story, opens his leather pouch, shows the three wrinkled ten-kronor bills and explains where they came from. None of this is asked for. All of it leaks out from a heart that has not had anyone to talk to in a long time.

Final Answer: The crofter was alone. He had no wife, no child and had recently lost the daily company of farm-and-mill work. His only companion was a cow, and his only income was the thirty kronor the creamery paid him. A passing stranger was therefore not a risk but a relief: a chance to put a porridge pot on the fire, share a pipe, play a hand of mjolis, and tell, at last, the small story of his cow.

☞ **Two reasons in one line each**

Loneliness: "without wife or child… happy to get someone to talk to." **Pride waiting for a listener:** the cow that pays thirty kronor a month, and the leather pouch shown to a stranger.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Prof Rohit Banerjee, MA English, University of Hyderabad*

Strategic angle. Don't stop at "the crofter was lonely". Lagerlöf is making a quiet point about how rural old age looks in 19th-century Sweden: when a former farm-worker loses the strength for day labour, his entire social circle collapses to his livestock. The peddler walks into that vacuum.

- The text gives a three-part biography of the crofter in one paragraph. He was a tenant farmer ("a crofter at Ramsjö Ironworks"). He used to "work on the land", so he had colleagues. He is no longer able to do day labour, so he is now isolated, supported only by his cow's milk.
- Lagerlöf makes the cow stand for everything he has lost and everything he has left. His pride in the cow's productivity ("thirty kronor in payment") is the only story he has to tell.
- Notice the careful detail of the leather pouch on a nail "in the very window frame". The crofter is showing the peddler not just the money but *where* the money lives. To show a stranger where you keep your savings is the act of a man so starved for audience that he forgets to be careful.
- Read the crofter's openness as a small ethical claim of the story. Lagerlöf refuses to mock the old man for his trust. The narrator never calls him foolish; he calls him generous. The story will, in its closing, vindicate that generosity when the rattrap is returned with the thirty kronor inside.
- Notice that Lagerlöf also uses the cow as a structural joke. The thirty kronor that the cow earns become the thirty kronor that the peddler steals, that the peddler returns, that close the story. One animal's monthly milk cheque carries the whole moral arithmetic of the tale.

Why this matters. For a Class 12 answer, the depth comes from seeing that the crofter's friendliness is not random politeness; it is what loneliness looks like at the end of a working life. Lagerlöf is also setting up the moral arithmetic of the story: a man who gives more than is asked is owed at least honesty in return.

> **Final Answer:** The crofter is alone (no wife, no child), recently cut off from the daily company of farm work, and supported only by a cow whose monthly thirty kronor is his only news to share. The peddler is the first audience he has had in a long time, so the old man's loneliness pours out as porridge, tobacco, mjolis and the showing of his pouch.

Q 4.5 Why did he show the thirty kroner to the peddler?

SOLUTION

The thirty kronor are the most concrete fact in the crofter's reduced life. Showing them is partly a boast (proof that his cow is real and productive) and partly an unguarded act of **trust** towards a stranger he has just befriended. The text gives the trigger clearly: "The stranger must have seemed incredulous, for the old man got up... and picked out three wrinkled ten-kronor bills."

- *The trigger: doubt on the peddler's face.* The crofter has just told a tall-sounding story, that his cow gives enough milk to fetch thirty kronor every month, and the peddler's face has registered disbelief. The crofter's reaction is to fetch evidence.
- *The proof: three wrinkled ten-kronor bills.* He takes down the leather pouch from a nail in the window frame, picks out three crumpled notes, holds them up "before the eyes of his guest, nodding knowingly", and then stuffs them back into the pouch. The whole gesture is performed for an audience.
- *The pride.* For a man who used to be a paid worker and is now reduced to his cow, the thirty kronor are the proof that he still produces something the world will pay for. To put them in the pouch is to save them; to show them is to remember they exist.
- *The unguardedness.* The crofter forgets, or chooses to ignore, the rule that a stranger should not be shown where the savings live. His loneliness has overwhelmed his caution. Lagerlöf is honest about the cost of this choice; within an hour the peddler will come back and steal the money.
- *The crofter's emotional logic.* Within the cottage he has just shared porridge, tobacco, a card game and his life story. Showing the thirty kronor feels, to him, like one more piece of the same evening. He does not see it as a separate, riskier act.

> **Final Answer:** He showed the thirty kronor partly to disprove the peddler's visible doubt about his cow's monthly income, and partly out of the simple pride of a man whose entire current self-worth is summed up in those three wrinkled bills. He had just shared everything else, food, tobacco, his life story, and showing the money felt to him like one more piece of the same friendly evening, even though it was, in fact, the most unguarded act of all.

✗ Common Mistake

Do not write only "he wanted to show off". The text gives a specific trigger ("the stranger must have seemed incredulous") and a specific motive (proof that the cow really earns thirty kronor). A complete answer names both, and then adds that the showing happened inside a wider current of trust and loneliness.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Meera Krishnan, PhD English (Postcolonial Studies), University of Calcutta*

Strategic angle. A confident answer treats the showing of the kronor as a *narrative pivot*, not as a characterisation point. Until this moment the crofter has been generous and the peddler has been a passive recipient. Once the pouch is opened, the story has a temptation in place, a bait. The rattrap idea the peddler has been carrying in his head finally has something concrete to close around.

- Read the gesture as a small piece of stagecraft. Lagerlöf needs the peddler to know, exactly, that *thirty kronor* are kept in *this* pouch on *this* nail. The story cannot afford a vague theft; it needs the amount to match the eventual returned amount in the closing rattrap.
- Read the gesture also as a piece of psychology. The crofter shows the money because he is proud of it; he also shows it because he assumes the rules of guest and host are intact. The peddler is being treated, for one evening, as someone who would not betray a host. The cottage's brief warmth has wiped the usual suspicion off the crofter's mind.
- Read the placement of the pouch as symbol. It hangs "on a nail in the very window frame", in plain sight, not in a locked drawer. The crofter's whole life is on display in that cottage: cow outside, money on the window, story in the air. Nothing is hidden because there is no one to hide from. Until now.
- Read the peddler's silence afterwards as the moment of moral failure. He says nothing in response; he simply registers where the pouch is kept and what it contains. From that moment, the crime is technically possible.
- Notice how Lagerlöf plants the very window through which the theft will happen. The peddler does not even need to enter the cottage the next morning; he only goes up to the window, smashes a pane, and reaches in for the pouch. The window frame doubles as the crofter's savings-shelf and as the route of the burglary.

Why this matters. For an exam answer the strongest move is to see the showing of the thirty kronor as both an honest human act (pride, trust, end-of-evening warmth) and as the narrative bait that the rattrap idea finally finds. Lagerlöf is testing both characters at once: the crofter for his refusal of caution and the peddler for what he does with the information.

> **Final Answer:** The crofter showed the thirty kronor because the peddler's face had registered doubt and the old man wanted to prove that his cow really did earn that much each month. Behind that small wish to be believed lay deeper currents: his pride in the only income he had left, the unguarded trust of a lonely man warmed by an evening of company, and the assumption that a guest at his table would not break the rules of guest and host. The gesture is also the story's narrative bait, the moment when the rattrap finally has something to close around.

Q 4.6 Did the peddler respect the confidence reposed in him by the crofter?

SOLUTION

The word **confidence** in this question means *trust* (as in "to repose confidence in someone" is to place trust in them). The crofter had shared his food, his tobacco, his life story and the location of his savings. Respecting that confidence would mean leaving in the morning as a grateful guest. The peddler does the opposite: he returns half an hour later, smashes a window-pane, and steals the thirty kronor. The answer is therefore a clear no, with the text of the betrayal quoted in full.

> ☞ **Key text**
> "But half an hour later the rattrap peddler stood again before the door. He did not try to get in, however. He only went up to the window, smashed a pane, stuck in his hand, and got hold of the pouch with the thirty kronor."

- *What "confidence" the crofter had placed in him.* Four small acts of trust: (i) opening the door to a stranger, (ii) feeding him, (iii) sharing tobacco and a card game, (iv) showing him the leather pouch with the thirty kronor on the window frame. Each one assumed that the peddler would not turn against him.
- *What the peddler did the next morning.* The two men "left the cottage at the same time", said goodbye, and each went his own way. "But half an hour later" the peddler turned back, returned to the cottage, smashed a window-pane, reached in, and stole the pouch with the thirty kronor. The theft was deliberate, not accidental.
- *The replacement of the pouch.* After taking the money, "he hung the leather pouch very carefully back in its place". The careful hanging is a small piece of cunning, meant to delay discovery. It is a confession of consciousness; he knew what he was doing was wrong, and tried to hide it.
- *The peddler's own evaluation.* "As he walked along with the money in his pocket he felt quite pleased with his smartness." He treated the theft as a clever move, not as a betrayal. Lagerlöf lets the reader feel both the cleverness and the small ugliness in the same sentence.
- Therefore the peddler did not respect the crofter's confidence. He returned hospitality with theft, and kindness with cunning. The forest that closes in on him an hour later is, in the chapter's metaphor, the *rattrap* closing on the rat.

Final Answer: No. The crofter had trusted him with food, tobacco, his life story and the sight of his savings. Within half an hour of their parting the peddler returned, smashed a window-pane, stole the leather pouch with the thirty kronor, and hung it carefully back to delay discovery. He felt "pleased with his smartness", and the story will close that "smartness" inside the very forest he was so proud to walk into.

♥ Why This Matters

This betrayal is the moral hinge of the story. Without it the peddler is just a poor man with a private metaphor; with it, he is one of the rats in his own rattrap. A complete answer names the smashed pane, the pouch hung back "very carefully", and the peddler's pleasure at his own "smartness".

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Saanvi Pillai, PhD Sociology of Education, IIT Delhi*

Strategic angle. A confident answer reads the betrayal as the moment the rattrap idea snaps shut on its inventor. The peddler had been amused by imagining others as rats; now he is the rat. Lagerlöf arranges the details (smashed pane, pouch hung back, "pleased with his smartness", the immediate detour into the forest) so the reader can watch the trap close.

- Notice the speed of the betrayal: "half an hour later". Lagerlöf does not let the reader believe that the peddler had to wrestle with his conscience. The theft comes almost in the same breath as the parting goodbye.
- Notice the choice of method: he "did not try to get in" the house, "he only went up to the window". The peddler treats the cottage with a small thief's efficiency. He has no quarrel with the crofter; he simply sees the pouch as available.
- Notice the careful hanging back of the empty pouch. This is a confession of consciousness. The peddler is not a man overpowered by impulse; he is a thinking thief who plans for the discovery to be delayed.
- Notice the immediate consequence: he "dared not continue on the public highway, but must turn off the road, into the woods". The theft has changed his relationship with the road; the open road that was his livelihood is now the place where he can be caught. The forest is the first form of the trap.
- Read the closing line of the section, "the whole forest . . . closed in upon him like an impenetrable prison from which he could never escape", against the peddler's amused metaphor: the world as a rattrap. The chapter is asking the reader to notice that the man who invented the metaphor is now its first prisoner.

Why this matters. For a Class 12 reader this is the moment the chapter changes register. Up to here it could be a folk-tale; after the betrayal it becomes a moral tale about how the rules we invent for the world will eventually be applied to us. Lagerlöf's literary craft is to make the betrayal small, quick and clever, and then to make the consequence (the closing forest) feel slow, large and inescapable.

Final Answer: No, he did not. He returned to the cottage half an hour after their goodbye, smashed a window-pane, stole the pouch with the thirty kronor, and hung the empty pouch back to delay discovery. He felt "pleased with his smartness", the very "smartness" that the forest, within hours, would close around him like a rattrap.

Part 2: Sidebar questions on the forge and the ironmaster (page 35)

Q 4.7 **What made the peddler think that he had indeed fallen into a rattrap?**

SOLUTION

After stealing the thirty kronor, the peddler is forced off the public road into a large, confusing forest. The paths twist back and forth; he walks for hours and realises he has only been "walking around in the same part of the forest". December darkness descends, and the cold and loneliness deepen his despair. In this moment the peddler's own metaphor turns against him. He had thought of the world as a rattrap; the forest, with its tempting paths and inescapable closure, has now made him the rat.

☞ **Key line**

"He had let himself be fooled by a bait and had been caught. The whole forest, with its trunks and branches, its thickets and fallen logs, closed in upon him like an impenetrable prison from which he could never escape."

- *The bait was the thirty kronor.* He had been tempted by the crofter's money, just as a rat is tempted by cheese. He had reached for the bait the moment he smashed the window-pane.
- *The trap was the forest.* Forced off the public highway because of the theft, he was driven into the woods. The forest looked like an escape route; it became a closed circle. "The paths twisted back and forth so strangely... he had only been walking around in the same part of the forest."
- *The closing in.* "The whole forest... closed in upon him like an impenetrable prison from which he could never escape." This is the rattrap snapping shut. The adjectives *impenetrable* and *never* are doing the work; they are the language of the trap, not of the road.
- *His own metaphor turns on him.* "All at once he recalled his thoughts about the world and the rattrap. Now his own turn had come." The peddler is honest: he recognises that the idea he had used to mock other people now describes his own situation. The

forest is not a separate problem; it is the same theory, applied to him.

- *The added pressure of December.* The text places the moment "late in December", with darkness "already descending over the forest". The cold, the loss of light, and his exhaustion ("tired to death") make the trap feel final. He sinks to the ground, "thinking that his last moment had come".

> **Final Answer:** The forest, into which the theft of the thirty kronor forced him, twisted into a closed circle: he walked for hours only to find himself in the same part of the wood. Cold December darkness fell, his strength gave out, and he realised that the bait he had taken (the crofter's money) had led him into a trap he could not get out of. "Now his own turn had come." The rattrap idea, until then a clever pastime, had finally closed around him.

☞ Exam Tip

For full marks, name three things: *the bait* (the thirty kronor), *the trap* (the forest closing in), and *the moment of recognition* ("Now his own turn had come"). The whole metaphorical machinery has to be visible in the answer.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Mr Karan Bhatia, MA Economics, Jawaharlal Nehru University*

Strategic angle. Treat the moment as the chapter's *structural rhyme*. The peddler had built a theory: the world is a rattrap, with bait and a closing mechanism. Lagerlöf now applies that same theory to him, point for point, so the reader can watch the metaphor close on its own author.

- *Point one: the bait.* In the peddler's metaphor, the bait was "riches and joys, shelter and food, heat and clothing". In his life now, the bait is the thirty kronor in his pocket. The general theory and the particular case match.
- *Point two: the trip mechanism.* In his metaphor, "as soon as anyone let himself be tempted to touch the bait, it closed in on him". In his life, the moment he smashed the window-pane and pocketed the money was the moment he touched the bait.
- *Point three: the closing.* In his metaphor, the world "closed in on him, and then everything came to an end". In his life, the forest "closed in upon him like an impenetrable prison from which he could never escape". The two sentences echo each other almost word for word.
- *Recognition.* The peddler does not need anyone to explain it to him. "All at once he recalled his thoughts about the world and the rattrap. Now his own turn had come." Lagerlöf lets him own the realisation, which makes it more painful and more honest.
- *The hammer strokes that follow.* Just as the recognition lands, he hears "a hard regular thumping" and thinks "there must be people near by". The trap will not be the end of

the story; an unexpected human sound will pull him out of the forest and into the next test. The chapter is careful: it lets the rattrap close and then lets a human possibility reopen.

Why this matters. The moment is the literary engine of the chapter. Until now the metaphor was the peddler's clever private game; after this moment, the metaphor is the chapter's own argument about how the world works. Lagerlöf has earned the right to use the rattrap as a moral idea by first making it cost the peddler his freedom.

Final Answer: The peddler's theft of the thirty kronor forced him off the road into a confusing forest that twisted into a closed circle. With darkness, cold and exhaustion the forest "closed in … like an impenetrable prison from which he could never escape". The bait, the trip and the closing all matched, point for point, the very rattrap theory he had once enjoyed applying to others, and he recognised, "Now his own turn had come."

Q 4.8 Why did the ironmaster speak kindly to the peddler and invite him home?

SOLUTION

The ironmaster spoke kindly because he made a **mistake of identity**. In the dim light of the forge furnace, he believed the ragged stranger was his old regimental comrade, "Nils Olof", who had once served as a captain. Out of comradeship for that imagined captain, the ironmaster invited him home for Christmas. The kindness is therefore not directed at the peddler at all; it is directed at the man the ironmaster thinks he is seeing.

☞ **Key line**

"But of course it is you, Nils Olof!" he said. "How you do look! … Well, now of course you will come home with me."

- *The light and the look.* The ironmaster walked "close up to him, looked him over very carefully, then tore off his slouch hat to get a better view of his face". In the uncertain reflection of the furnace, the long beard, the rags and the firelight together made the peddler look like an old acquaintance.
- *The misidentification.* "But of course it is you, Nils Olof!" He believed he was looking at a fellow officer of his regiment who had fallen on hard times. He even regretted that "you should not have resigned from the regiment", as though scolding an old friend for a career mistake.
- *The Christmas reason.* The ironmaster's wife Elizabeth was dead, his boys were abroad, and "there is no one at home except my oldest daughter and myself". He had been saying "it was too bad we didn't have any company for Christmas". An old

regimental comrade, appearing in the forge on Christmas Eve, was the perfect guest.

- *The peddler's silence aids the mistake.* The peddler "had never before seen the ironmaster at Ramsjö and did not even know what his name was. But it occurred to him that if the fine gentleman thought he was an old acquaintance, he might perhaps throw him a couple of kronor." He therefore says, "Yes, God knows things have gone downhill with me", which is true of himself and consistent enough with the captain story.
- *The genuine warmth.* Notice that the ironmaster's kindness, even though founded on a mistake, is real. He offers a meal, a bath, a suit, a place at the Christmas table. The text says he laughed to himself as he went away, knowing he had not said his last word. He intends, as a friend would, to overcome the captain's reluctance.

> **Final Answer:** The ironmaster spoke kindly and invited the peddler home because he believed, in the unsteady firelight of the forge, that the ragged stranger was his old regimental comrade Nils Olof ("Captain von Stahle"). His wife was dead, his sons were abroad, and he had been wishing for company on Christmas Eve. The warmth was genuine, but it was directed at the captain he imagined he was seeing, not at the peddler he was actually addressing.

✗ Common Mistake

A common slip is to say only "he mistook him for an old friend". The complete answer must also name the Christmas loneliness (Elizabeth dead, boys abroad, only the daughter at home) that made the ironmaster so eager to welcome the imagined comrade.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Tanvi Saxena, MA Sociology, Tata Institute of Social Sciences*

Strategic angle. Treat the ironmaster's kindness as a small case study in *conditional generosity*. He is not moved by the peddler's poverty or the chill December night; he is moved by the (false) recognition of a regimental peer. The chapter sets this conditional kindness up so that Edla's later, unconditional kindness can be measured against it.

- Read the misidentification not as carelessness but as *wishful seeing*. The ironmaster is lonely. He wants Christmas company. The forge is dim. A bearded stranger in the firelight becomes the friend he has wished for.
- Read the immediate invitation as evidence of how class decides hospitality at Ramsjö. The same man, in the same rags, was almost invisible to the blacksmiths a moment earlier; only the (imagined) rank of captain unlocks the manor's hospitality.
- Read the regiment reference as a small piece of social coding. "You should not have resigned from the regiment... If only I had still been in the service at the time, it never would have happened." The ironmaster is offering kindness inside the language

of a shared social network, the regiment, that the peddler has never been part of.

- Read the laughter as he leaves, "he laughed to himself as he went away", as the laughter of a man certain his will shall prevail. He fully intends to send his daughter back to fetch the comrade he believes he has seen. The Christmas loneliness has overwhelmed his usual willingness to take no for an answer.
- Read the ironmaster's whole behaviour as a setup for the later collapse. The moment the daylight breaks at the manor house, the conditional kindness will collapse with a single thundered "What does this mean?". The text is engineering the contrast between an identity-based kindness and a human-being-based one.

Why this matters. The question looks small but it sets up the whole moral architecture of the second half of the chapter. The peddler will receive two kinds of kindness at Ramsjö: the ironmaster's, which depends on who he is mistaken for, and Edla's, which does not depend on who he is at all. The difference is the chapter's argument.

> **Final Answer:** The ironmaster spoke kindly because he believed, in the dim firelight, that the stranger was his old regimental comrade Nils Olof. With his wife Elizabeth dead and his sons abroad, he was lonely for Christmas company. The kindness was real but conditional: it was being offered to the captain he imagined he was seeing, and was set up by the chapter to collapse the moment daylight reveals the truth.

Q 4.9 Why did the peddler decline the invitation?

SOLUTION

The peddler turned the ironmaster's invitation down for a single concrete reason: the thirty kronor in his pocket. He had stolen the money the day before, and going home with a wealthy stranger would have multiplied his risk of being recognised, searched or exposed. The text gives the peddler's own thought: "He thought of the thirty kronor. To go up to the manor house would be like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion's den."

- *The unmentioned thirty kronor.* The peddler had the stolen money on his person. A manor house meant servants, good clothes, baths, conversation: any of these could lead to the discovery of the bag of bills hidden in his rags. So he refused.
- *The mistaken-identity problem.* If he stayed another night, the ironmaster might realise the mistake. A captain was expected to have stories of the regiment, manners at the table, polite responses to Elizabeth's memory. The peddler had none of these. The fewer hours the ironmaster looked at him, the safer he was.
- *His real wish.* The peddler "only wanted a chance to sleep here in the forge and then

sneak away as inconspicuously as possible". A forge night and a forest dawn would let him disappear; a manor night risked a daylight cross-examination.

- *The text's image.* Lagerlöf gives him a sharp comparison: going to the manor house "would be like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion's den". The Biblical phrase tells the reader that the peddler understands, very clearly, that comfort is the most dangerous bait of all for a man with stolen money in his pocket.
- *The ironmaster's misreading.* The ironmaster "assumed that he felt embarrassed because of his miserable clothing" and tried to reassure him that "Elizabeth is dead" and the household is small. He could not imagine the real reason because he was certain of the false identity.

> **Final Answer:** He declined because of the thirty kronor he had stolen from the crofter the previous morning. A manor-house Christmas, with servants, baths and clean clothes, would multiply his risk of being searched or exposed. The text gives his own line of thought: going home with the ironmaster "would be like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion's den".

☞ **One line each, both reasons**

Reason 1: the thirty kronor in his pocket would be discovered. **Reason 2:** a long stay would expose the mistaken identity. Either alone would have made the manor risky; together they made it unthinkable.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Ishaan Khanna, PhD Political Science, Jamia Millia Islamia*

Strategic angle. The cleanest answer reads the refusal through the rattrap metaphor that the peddler has just re-learned. The forest has shown him that comfort is bait. The manor house is even more elaborate bait. A man freshly burnt by one rattrap is right to be suspicious of the next, even when the ironmaster opens its gate himself.

- *The lesson of the forest is fresh.* Twelve hours before the forge scene, the peddler was sinking into the snow "thinking that his last moment had come". He has just seen, in his own person, what happens when one is "tempted to touch the bait". The manor house is, by the same logic, another bait.
- *The thirty kronor are the rattrap's trigger.* Anything that brings him into close, sustained contact with the ironmaster and his daughter will eventually trigger the discovery. He chooses minimal contact, sleeping in the forge and slipping out, as the safer bet.
- *The mistaken-identity risk.* A captain of the regiment would have specific memories, habits, table manners. The peddler has none. A short stay in the dim forge protects the fiction; a long stay at the well-lit manor would shatter it.
- *The peddler's own clarity.* The text gives him a rare clear thought. The phrase "lion's

den" is not a decorative idiom; it is the language of a man calculating risk. He knows exactly what he stands to lose.

- *Why this refusal still fails.* The ironmaster's will is stronger than the peddler's refusal. He sends his daughter Edla, and Edla, with a quite different kind of force (compassion, not authority), persuades the peddler to come. The chapter is building towards an irony: the peddler, who can resist the ironmaster, cannot resist Edla.

Why this matters. The refusal is not a piece of politeness; it is the peddler thinking like a trapped rat about the size of the next trap. The chapter is careful to make his refusal rational, because the next scene will show that even rational caution is not enough against unconditional kindness.

> **Final Answer:** He declined because the thirty kronor he had stolen from the crofter were still in his pocket, and a manor-house Christmas with servants and good clothes would multiply the risk of being discovered, searched or exposed. He also feared that a longer stay would unmask the mistaken identity. He preferred to sleep in the forge and "sneak away as inconspicuously as possible", telling himself the manor would be "like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion's den".

Part 3: Sidebar questions on Edla Willmansson (pages 37–38)

Q 4.10 What made the peddler accept Edla Willmansson's invitation?

SOLUTION

The ironmaster's invitation had failed because it carried the smell of authority and risk; Edla's invitation succeeded because it carried something different, **compassion without conditions**. She spoke "in such a friendly manner that the rattrap peddler must have felt confidence in her", promised explicitly that he would be "allowed to leave us just as freely as you came", and looked at him "with her heavy eyes... compassionately". Three things together broke down his refusal: her friendly manner, her promise of free exit and her unconditional pity.

> ☞ **Key text**
>
> "She said this in such a friendly manner that the rattrap peddler must have felt confidence in her. 'It would never have occurred to me that you would bother with me yourself, miss,' he said. "I will come at once."

- *She came in person.* Edla, the daughter of the master of Ramsjö, came to the forge herself, "followed by a valet, carrying on his arm a big fur coat". To a peddler used to being shooed away, a young lady walking into a forge to fetch him is a startling form

of attention.

- *She lifted his hat herself.* "As soon as the young girl caught sight of him, she went up and lifted his hat." He had pulled it down over his eyes precisely to avoid being recognised; her gesture is a small physical act of acceptance.
- *She used the captain title gently.* "I am so sorry, Captain, that you are having such a hard time." The title is offered without examination. She is not testing the identity; she is sympathising with the man the title implies.
- *She offered a guarantee of free exit.* She noticed his fear ("either he has stolen something or else he has escaped from jail", she privately thinks) and immediately reassured him: "you will be allowed to leave us just as freely as you came. Only please stay with us over Christmas Eve." The peddler had refused the ironmaster because he feared being detained; Edla removes that fear.
- *The compassion is unconditional.* The text says, "She looked at him compassionately, with her heavy eyes." This is not the comradeship of the ironmaster ("Captain, you should not have resigned from the regiment"); it is plain pity for a man having a hard time. Pity, unlike comradeship, does not require him to be anyone in particular.
- *Therefore he yields.* He accepts the fur coat the valet hands him, throws it over his rags, and follows her to the carriage. The decision is taken in one sentence, "It would never have occurred to me that you would bother with me yourself, miss... I will come at once."

> **Final Answer:** The peddler accepted Edla's invitation because she offered something the ironmaster had not: an unconditional, gentle compassion. She came to the forge herself, lifted his hat, used the captain title without examination, promised explicitly that he would be allowed to leave whenever he chose, and looked at him "compassionately, with her heavy eyes". Her friendliness was so unexpected that he simply said, "It would never have occurred to me that you would bother with me yourself, miss... I will come at once."

♥ Why This Matters

The whole chapter turns on this acceptance. Lagerlöf needs the peddler to be inside the manor house on Christmas Eve so the gift of the rattrap can be made. Edla's compassion is the literary mechanism that gets him there. Note her three tools: coming in person, promising free exit, looking at him with pity rather than authority.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Neha Kapadia, PhD Historical Linguistics, Deccan College Pune*

Strategic angle. The cleanest contrast is between the ironmaster's invitation and Edla's. Same words on the surface (come home with us for Christmas), but very different emotional logic underneath. The peddler can refuse a condition-laden invitation; he cannot refuse a condition-free one.

- *The ironmaster's offer came with conditions.* It was offered to "Captain von Stahle", the regimental comrade, a man with a specific past. Acceptance would have required the peddler to keep performing that past.
- *Edla's offer carries no such condition.* She notices that he is afraid and immediately removes the cause of his fear: "you will be allowed to leave us just as freely as you came". She does not ask him to prove anything.
- *Her physical kindness is gentle.* The lifting of the hat, the fur coat handed by a bowing valet, the "friendly manner": each is a small, low-pressure act. Nothing demands a particular response from him.
- *Her acknowledgement of his fear is decisive.* "Either he has stolen something or else he has escaped from jail." She thinks this and then, far from rejecting him, increases the gentleness of her offer. The peddler is being received not as a captain but as a person who may have done wrong.
- *His silence at the end of the journey says more.* On the way to the manor he thinks, "Why the devil did I take that fellow's money? Now I am sitting in the trap and will never get out of it." Even at the moment of acceptance he feels the rattrap closing. His "yes" is therefore not relief; it is partly defeat, partly the helplessness of someone being treated kindly for the first time in years.

Why this matters. For a Class 12 reader the question is asking you to see that kindness comes in two kinds in this story: the conditional kind (which depends on identity) and the unconditional kind (which does not). The peddler can resist the first and cannot resist the second. The chapter's whole moral argument grows out of that distinction.

> **Final Answer:** Edla's compassion was unconditional, gentle and explicit: she came herself, lifted his hat, used the captain title without examination, promised in plain words that he could leave whenever he liked, and looked at him "compassionately, with her heavy eyes". Where the ironmaster's invitation carried the weight of regimental identity and authority, hers carried only pity. The peddler, used to refusal, could not refuse compassion without conditions, and said only, "I will come at once."

Q 4.11 What doubts did Edla have about the peddler?

SOLUTION

Edla is younger than her father but she is the sharper observer. From the moment she lifts the peddler's hat in the forge, she sees fear on his face, and the fear, not the captain story, is what shapes her reading of him. Her doubt is specific: this man is afraid of being caught, and that probably means he has done something wrong. The text gives the thought in her own words: "Either he has stolen something or else he has escaped from jail."

☞ **Key text**

"She looked at him compassionately, with her heavy eyes, and then she noticed that the man was afraid. 'Either he has stolen something or else he has escaped from jail,' she thought, and added quickly, 'You may be sure, Captain, that you will be allowed to leave us just as freely as you came.' "

- *The clue: his fear.* The peddler "jumped up abruptly and seemed to be quite frightened" when she lifted his hat. A captain on a passing visit would not flinch like that. Edla sees the flinch.
- *Her diagnosis.* She immediately frames a thought: "Either he has stolen something or else he has escaped from jail." She arrives at the two simplest reasons a stranger in rags would be afraid of being looked at.
- *Her tactical response.* She does not voice the doubt aloud. She uses it instead to choose her words: "you will be allowed to leave us just as freely as you came." The doubt makes her gentler, not less generous.
- *Her next-day observation.* After he is bathed and dressed in her father's clothes, she still doubts. At breakfast she remarks, "Last night I did not think there was anything about him to show that he had once been an educated man." She is honest about what her own eyes saw, even when it contradicts her father's certainty.
- *Her doubt does not become rejection.* When the truth comes out ("What does this mean?" the ironmaster thunders), Edla does not say "I told you so". She intercedes to let the peddler stay. Her doubt about his identity is therefore independent of her decision about his treatment.

Final Answer: Edla doubted that the man was really a captain. She saw him flinch when she lifted his hat, and immediately thought, "Either he has stolen something or else he has escaped from jail." She kept the doubt to herself, used it only to choose gentler words, noticed at breakfast that he showed no signs of having once been educated, and even after the truth came out she refused to let the doubt change her hospitality.

☞ Exam Tip

For full marks, quote the exact phrase "stolen something or else . . . escaped from jail" and her breakfast remark about the educated man. Together they show that her doubt is rooted in observation, not in suspicion of his class.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Prof Aditya Bhargava, MA Applied Linguistics, Banaras Hindu University*

Strategic angle. Edla's doubt is one of the chapter's small literary masterstrokes. She doubts the man's identity but not his right to kindness. Reading her doubt this way lets the student show that compassion in this chapter is a choice *about how to act under doubt*, not a reward for being trustworthy.

- *The doubt is grounded in evidence.* Lagerlöf does not write Edla as foolish or naive. She gives Edla a precise observation (the flinch) and a precise hypothesis (theft or jail) drawn from it. The doubt is earned.
- *The doubt is held privately.* The text uses "she thought". Edla does not announce her hypothesis; she treats it as a working theory. This restraint is what allows the kindness to continue.
- *The doubt is acted on, but as caution, not as cruelty.* Her promise of free exit ("allowed to leave . . . just as freely as you came") is built directly on the doubt. She is telling the (possibly-criminal) stranger that the manor is not a trap.
- *The doubt survives even the bath and clothes.* When the ironmaster tries to reassure his daughter at breakfast that "the tramp manners will fall away from him with the tramp clothes", Edla quietly registers that they did not. Class 12 readers should notice that the daughter sees more clearly than the father even when the father is the one in charge.
- *The doubt does not stop her from defending him.* When the truth comes out, Edla still says, "I think he ought to stay with us today. I don't want him to go." Her doubt about his identity has been confirmed, but her decision about his treatment has not changed. The chapter is asking the reader to notice that this is the rarest kind of kindness.
- *Notice how Edla's compassion is described as small, not heroic.* "She had felt so happy when she thought how homelike and Christmassy she was going to make things for the poor hungry wretch. She could not get away from the idea all at once." Lagerlöf is careful: Edla is not a saint, she is a girl whose Christmas wish to take care of someone is bigger than her doubt about him.

Why this matters. The question separates Edla from her father morally. He saw a captain and only a captain; she saw a frightened man and acted with kindness anyway. The lesson the chapter wants Class 12 readers to take is that real compassion is the kind that survives accurate doubt.

Final Answer: Edla suspected from the very start that the man was not a captain. She saw him flinch when she lifted his hat, thought "either he has stolen something or else he has escaped from jail", noticed at breakfast that he showed no signs of having been educated, and quietly carried her doubt through the visit. The doubt did not change her treatment of him, which is precisely what makes her kindness in this chapter unusual.

Q 4.12 When did the ironmaster realise his mistake?

SOLUTION

The ironmaster's mistake had two parts: an identification (the stranger is Nils Olof) and the conditions under which he made it (firelight, distance, rags). The mistake only collapsed when those conditions were removed: bath and clean clothes lit by morning daylight. The text gives the moment precisely: "when he stood there in broad daylight, it was impossible to mistake him for an old acquaintance".

- *Where the mistake was made.* In the forge "the uncertain reflection from the furnace" had created the misidentification. The man's beard, the firelight and the rags made him look enough like Nils Olof to satisfy a wishful eye.
- *What changed overnight.* The valet "bathed him, cut his hair, and shaved him". He was dressed in "a good-looking suit of clothes which belonged to the ironmaster", a white shirt, a starched collar and whole shoes. The disguise of rags was lifted.
- *The moment of recognition.* The next morning, "although his guest was now so well groomed, the ironmaster did not seem pleased. He looked at him with puckered brow, and it was easy to understand that when he had seen the strange fellow in the uncertain reflection from the furnace he might have made a mistake, but that now, when he stood there in broad daylight, it was impossible to mistake him for an old acquaintance."
- *The thunderclap.* "What does this mean?" the ironmaster thundered. The single sentence captures both the shock and the embarrassment. He does not even allow the peddler the courtesy of a private question; the whole room is invited to witness his correction.
- *What the realisation reveals about his earlier kindness.* The ironmaster's warmth had been entirely directed at the imagined captain. The moment the captain disappears, so does the warmth. The chapter is about to ask Edla to keep the kindness going in spite of the realisation.

> **Final Answer:** The ironmaster realised his mistake the very next morning, when the peddler appeared at breakfast bathed, shaved, and dressed in his own suit. The dim firelight of the forge had let him imagine the man was Nils Olof; broad daylight, applied to a clean face, ended the illusion at once. "What does this mean?" he thundered.

✗ Common Mistake

A common error is to say "he realised when the peddler confessed". Re-read the text: the realisation came from a *look* at the man in daylight, before the peddler said anything. The confession came afterwards.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Mr Vivaan Kapoor, MBA Public Policy, Indian School of Business*

Strategic angle. A confident answer pays attention to *when* and *how* the realisation comes. The chapter is deliberate: the mistake came from firelight and rags; the correction comes from daylight and a clean shirt. Lagerlöf is testing the ironmaster's kindness by removing the very conditions that made the kindness possible.

- *The setting of the mistake matters.* In the forge, the ironmaster had "walked close up to him, looked him over very carefully, then tore off his slouch hat to get a better view of his face". Even then he was seeing through firelight and rags. The careful look was not careful enough.
- *The setting of the correction matters.* The breakfast scene is staged in "broad daylight" with a bathed, shaved, well-dressed man. The chapter is making a quiet point: kindness offered under poor light cannot survive better light unless it was meant for the person, not the disguise.
- *The ironmaster's body language.* "Puckered brow" is the sign. He is not yet angry, only puzzled. The text takes one careful sentence to register the moment of doubt before letting it explode.
- *The thundered question.* "What does this mean?" is a question of identity, not of theft. He has not yet accused the peddler of anything; he is simply demanding to be told who is at his table. The shame he feels for his own mistake comes through in the volume.
- *The peddler's role in the unmasking.* "The stranger made no attempt to dissimulate. He saw at once that the splendour had come to an end." The peddler is honest at this moment, partly because there is no point in lying. The realisation is therefore the ironmaster's first; the peddler's confession only confirms what the daylight has already shown.

Why this matters. The question is small but it tests whether the student has read the breakfast scene carefully. The realisation comes before any word from the peddler, in

the silent look of a host who has finally seen his guest in proper light. That sequencing matters because it sets up Edla's intervention, which has to happen after the truth is out, not before.

> **Final Answer:** The ironmaster realised his mistake at breakfast the next morning, the moment the peddler appeared bathed, shaved and in clean clothes in broad daylight. The conditions that had made the original mistake (firelight, rags, distance) had all been removed, and the recognition was instant: "puckered brow... it was impossible to mistake him for an old acquaintance." Only then did the ironmaster thunder "What does this mean?", and the peddler "made no attempt to dissimulate".

Q 4.13 What did the peddler say in his defence when it was clear that he was not the person the ironmaster had thought he was?

SOLUTION

Once the ironmaster's mistake collapses, the peddler is faced with a choice: deny, plead or own up. He chooses to own up. His defence has two parts: an honest disclaimer ("I never pretended to be anything but a poor trader") and the rattrap warning addressed to the ironmaster himself. The defence is striking because it shifts the moral focus from his own deception to the rattrap idea that has been running quietly under the whole chapter.

> ☞ **Key text**
> "It is not my fault, sir," he said. "I never pretended to be anything but a poor trader, and I pleaded and begged to be allowed to stay in the forge. But no harm has been done."

- *The honest disclaimer.* "I never pretended to be anything but a poor trader." This is technically true. The ironmaster identified him as Nils Olof; the peddler did not invent the identity, he simply did not contradict it. He owns the silence but not the lie.
- *The reminder of his own resistance.* "I pleaded and begged to be allowed to stay in the forge." He points out that the invitation to the manor was the ironmaster's idea, against his own refusal. He is defending himself against the implication that he was the one angling for a free meal.
- *The minimisation of harm.* "But no harm has been done. At worst I can put on my rags again and go away." He offers to undo the matter himself, by leaving in his own old clothes. He is not asking for forgiveness; he is asking for the right to walk out unpunished.
- *The rattrap warning.* Then, in a much sharper tone, he turns on the ironmaster: "This

whole world is nothing but a big rattrap. All the good things that are offered to you are nothing but cheese rinds and bits of pork, set out to drag a poor fellow into trouble. And if the sheriff comes now and locks me up for this, then you, Mr Ironmaster, must remember that a day may come when you yourself may want to get a big piece of pork, and then you will get caught in the trap."

- *What this defence achieves.* The peddler refuses to grovel. He admits he is poor, denies any active deception and warns the ironmaster that the same trap will, one day, close on him. The ironmaster, instead of calling the sheriff, "began to laugh". The defence has worked: it has reframed a moment of disgrace as a small philosophical exchange.

> **Final Answer:** The peddler defended himself in two voices. First he spoke honestly: "It is not my fault, sir. I never pretended to be anything but a poor trader, and I pleaded and begged to be allowed to stay in the forge. But no harm has been done." Then he turned the moment philosophical, repeating his own world-view back to the ironmaster: "This whole world is nothing but a big rattrap." He warned that if the sheriff came for him today, the ironmaster too might one day be caught by a piece of pork. The ironmaster, taken aback, "began to laugh" and let him go.

♥ Why This Matters

This is one of the strangest moments in the chapter: a poor peddler, caught in a deception, lectures a wealthy ironmaster on the morals of the rattrap. A complete answer notices that the defence is not just a plea; it is also a small public version of the peddler's private metaphor.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Lavanya Ramesh, MA English, Madras Christian College*

Strategic angle. The peddler's defence is a small masterpiece of dignity under exposure. He neither lies nor crawls. A confident answer reads the two parts of the speech as two postures: *honest disclaimer* (I am only a poor trader) and *moral warning* (you too can be trapped). The ironmaster's laughter at the end is the reader's clue that the defence has worked.

- *The peddler's first move is to tell the literal truth.* He was not pretending to be Nils Olof; he was accepting an identification offered by the ironmaster. "Never pretended" is exact, not evasive.
- *His second move is to refuse the role of supplicant.* He does not ask to be forgiven. He proposes a fair exit: "put on my rags again and go away". The offer acknowledges the wrong and limits its scale.
- *His third move is to expand the moral horizon.* The rattrap warning is not self-defence; it is a small sermon. The peddler, who has been the chapter's poor sufferer, becomes

its philosopher for a moment.

- *His fourth move is to apply the warning to the ironmaster personally.* "You yourself may want to get a big piece of pork." The peddler is gentle but precise: wealth has its own bait, and the ironmaster is no more immune to it than the peddler was to thirty kronor.
- *The ironmaster's laughter is the verdict.* "That was not so badly said, my good fellow." He lets him go. A man caught and lecturing his captor would ordinarily be punished; the ironmaster, recognising the truth in the warning, chooses laughter instead.
- *The link to Edla's later compassion.* The peddler's defence has not won him a Christmas Eve at the manor; it has only won him the right to leave. The full kindness, the right to *stay*, comes from Edla a few moments later, when she closes the door he is about to walk through.

Why this matters. The defence is the moment the peddler first uses his rattrap idea *out loud*. Until now it has been a private pastime; now it is a public sermon. Lagerlöf shows that even a thief can hold a moral idea worth listening to, and that the right reaction to such a moment is laughter, not the sheriff.

> **Final Answer:** He told the literal truth ("I never pretended to be anything but a poor trader") and reminded the ironmaster that the manor visit had been forced on him against his own "pleaded and begged" resistance. He offered a fair exit ("put on my rags again and go away"). Then he turned the moment philosophical, warning the ironmaster that the world is a rattrap and that a man hunting "a big piece of pork" could one day be caught too. The ironmaster, instead of calling the sheriff, laughed and let him go.

Q 4.14 Why did Edla still entertain the peddler even after she knew the truth about him?

SOLUTION

The chapter's most important moral choice is made not by the peddler but by Edla. Once the ironmaster's mistake has been exposed, the natural thing to do would be to throw the imposter out. The ironmaster is willing to do exactly this ("but now get out of here as fast as you can"). Edla stops him. She has three reasons: her sense of **Christmas hospitality**, her view that the invitation, once made, cannot be withdrawn, and her plain compassion for "a poor hungry wretch" who has no home.

☞ **Key text**

"I am thinking of this stranger here... He walks and walks the whole year long, and there is probably not a single place in the whole country where he is welcome and can feel at home... I should like to have him enjoy a day of peace with us here, just one in the whole year."

- *The Christmas wish.* Edla had spent the morning looking forward to making the manor "homelike and Christmassy... for the poor hungry wretch". She had invested in him as her guest; she could not, "all at once", let go of that picture.
- *The promise rule.* "I don't think we ought to chase away a human being whom we have asked to come here, and to whom we have promised Christmas cheer." A promise made, in her view, is a promise owed. The mistake about identity does not, for her, cancel the promise made to the body in front of her.
- *The pity for a permanent wanderer.* "He walks and walks the whole year long, and there is probably not a single place in the whole country where he is welcome and can feel at home." Edla sees the bigger picture: one Christmas Eve of peace is the smallest possible gift to a man condemned to a year of road-walking and sour faces.
- *Her stand against her father.* The ironmaster protests, "You do preach worse than a parson... I only hope you won't have to regret this." Edla does not argue back; she simply takes the peddler by the hand and leads him to the table. The decision is completed by a gesture, not by a debate.
- *Compassion that survives information.* Edla had suspected him of theft or jail from the very beginning. Her decision to keep him at the table is therefore not a discovery (she already knew); it is a refusal to let new public information change her private resolution to be kind.

Final Answer: Edla kept the peddler at the table because her hospitality, once given, was not to be withdrawn. She told her father: "I don't think we ought to chase away a human being whom we have asked to come here, and to whom we have promised Christmas cheer." She pitied a man who "walks and walks the whole year long" with no place to feel at home, and she had already half-suspected the truth, so the exposure did not change her resolve. She closed the door, led him to the table by the hand, and gave him the Christmas she had promised.

☞ **Exam Tip**

A complete answer names three reasons: her Christmas-eve wish to host a guest, her view that a promise once made cannot be withdrawn, and her pity for a man without a home. Quote "a day of peace with us here, just one in the whole year".

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Priya Venkatesan, PhD Comparative Literature, EFL University Hyderabad*

Strategic angle. The clean way to answer is to mark the difference between Edla's compassion and her father's. The ironmaster's kindness depended on identity; Edla's does not. Lagerlöf has set up the breakfast scene as the moment to display that contrast in full.

- *The ironmaster reverts to type.* The mistake exposed, he wants to send the peddler away. Without the captain identity to anchor his warmth, the warmth is gone. He is even willing to involve the sheriff.
- *Edla quietly closes the door.* She does not argue with her father about whether the peddler deserves hospitality. She just walks to the door and shuts it. The gesture is small but decisive: it transfers the authority of the room from the ironmaster to her.
- *Her speech is theological without being sermon-like.* "He walks and walks the whole year long... I should like to have him enjoy a day of peace with us here, just one in the whole year." The Christian-Christmas idea of peace-on-earth is the backdrop, but she avoids preaching; she names the man and the year.
- *She refuses to weigh hospitality against worth.* For her, the question is not "does this man deserve Christmas dinner?"; it is "did we promise him Christmas dinner?" Once a promise is made, the only way to honour it is to keep it.
- *The unspoken doubt.* She has known since the forge that he might be a thief. The breakfast revelation gives her nothing she did not already suspect. So when she stands her ground, she is defending a position she had already taken privately.
- *The reward of her stand.* The reader does not yet know it, but the gift-box that will appear on Christmas morning, a rattrap with thirty kronor inside and a letter signed "Captain von Stahle", is the direct consequence of this moment. If Edla had let her father eject him, no gift, no redemption.

Why this matters. Edla's stand is the chapter's moral centre. Lagerlöf's quiet thesis is that the kindness which asks nothing about identity is the only kind that can rescue a man from his own rattrap. The peddler will leave the manor better than he came, and Edla, more than anyone else, is the reason.

> **Final Answer:** Edla kept the peddler because, for her, an invitation once made was not to be withdrawn, and because she pitied a man who walks the whole year long with no place to feel at home. "Just one day of peace, just one in the whole year", she said, and quietly closed the door that her father had asked the peddler to leave through. Her doubts about him were as old as her first sight of him in the forge; the breakfast revelation gave her nothing new, so it changed nothing in her resolve.

Part 4: Sidebar questions on the parting gift (page 41)

Q 4.15 **Why was Edla happy to see the gift left by the peddler?**

SOLUTION

On Christmas morning Edla returned from church carrying bad news (the peddler had robbed an old crofter), and her father was already saying "I only wonder how many silver spoons are left in the cupboard by this time". The valet told them the man had gone but had left a little package. Inside was a small rattrap, three wrinkled ten-kronor notes, and a letter. Edla's happiness has three sources: the gift was an act of grace, it cleared her father's accusation, and it proved that her trust had been justified.

> ☞ **Key text**
>
> "She found a small rattrap, and in it lay also a letter written in large, jagged characters. 'Honoured and noble Miss, since you have been so nice to me all day long, as if I was a captain, I want to be nice to you in return, as if I was a real captain'."

- *Vindication of her trust.* Her father had said, "Yes, that was a fine fellow you let into the house." The rattrap and the thirty kronor proved her right and him wrong. The peddler had not stolen the silver spoons; he had taken nothing, and had even returned a theft he had committed elsewhere.
- *Proof that kindness can change a person.* The peddler's own letter says, "I do not want you to be embarrassed at this Christmas season by a thief." Edla's kindness had reached him. The chapter's whole argument about unconditional compassion is justified in a single small package.
- *The peddler's transformation, made visible.* The rattrap, the object that gave the chapter its title and its central metaphor, is now offered as a Christmas present. Once a symbol of how the world traps people, it has become a symbol of one person's escape. The change in the object's meaning is the change in the peddler.
- *The return of the thirty kronor.* "You can give back the money to the old man on the roadside, who has the money pouch hanging on the window frame as a bait for poor wanderers." The crofter will be made whole. Edla, the one who would not turn the peddler out of the manor, is now the one through whom the original wrong is repaired.
- *The cry of joy.* The text says simply, "she gave a little cry of joy". Lagerlöf does not stage a long speech; the small, involuntary cry is enough. Edla, who has been quiet and "modest" all along, lets her happiness escape in the smallest possible signal.

Final Answer: Edla was happy because the gift vindicated her hospitality. Her father had called the peddler a fine fellow and worried about the silver spoons; the rattrap, the thirty kronor and the letter signed "Captain von Stahle" proved that her unconditional kindness had reached him, that he had been a guest worth keeping. The thirty kronor would even repair an older theft. The gift turned the very object that named her father's mistake (the rattrap) into the symbol of the peddler's redemption.

♥ Why This Matters

This little package is the climax of the chapter. Everything the text has been arguing about, the rattrap metaphor, conditional kindness, the difference between Edla and her father, is settled in one rattrap-shaped box. A complete answer names the vindication, the redemption and the repair of the older theft.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Ritika Joshi, PhD English (Scandinavian Literature), University of Pune*

Strategic angle. A confident answer reads Edla's joy as the joy of a moral hypothesis confirmed. She had bet, in a specific way (kindness without conditions), against her father's caution. The gift proves her bet was right. The chapter takes care to give the proof on Christmas morning, the day of all moral confirmations.

- *The rattrap as a returning symbol.* The object that the peddler had used to mock the world is now the wrapping for his repentance. Lagerlöf is reusing her own metaphor: a man can escape the rattrap, in his own small way, by handing one over as a present.
- *The thirty kronor as moral arithmetic.* The exact amount the peddler had stolen from the crofter is returned, in the same three wrinkled ten-kronor bills. The story's accounts close.
- *The letter as confession and explanation.* The peddler writes that "the rattrap is a Christmas present from a rat who would have been caught in this world's rattrap if he had not been raised to captain, because in that way he got power to clear himself". He owns the metaphor, owns his near-capture in it, and credits Edla's treatment of him with the strength to escape.
- *Edla's happiness compounds.* She is happy about the peddler's change, about the proof to her father, about the rescue of the crofter, and about the small Christmas-morning symmetry of the gift. The text compresses all four into "a little cry of joy", but the reader is meant to feel each of them.
- *The signing as captain.* The letter is signed "Captain von Stahle". The peddler has accepted the title Edla insisted on calling him by, and has tried to behave in a way that earns it. The signature is the formal proof that he has chosen to be the man she believed he could be.

Why this matters. The question lets the Class 12 reader see that joy in this chapter is moral, not just emotional. Edla is happy because her view of how to treat a stranger has been proved right, and proved right in a way her father cannot explain away. Lagerlöf stages it on Christmas morning so the private moral becomes a small public miracle.

> **Final Answer:** Edla was happy because the gift vindicated her trust. Her father had feared theft of the silver spoons; instead the peddler had returned, in a small handmade rattrap, the thirty kronor he had stolen from the old crofter, with a letter signed "Captain von Stahle" explaining that her kindness had "raised him to captain" and given him "power to clear himself". The very object that named the world's traps had become the proof of one man's escape.

Q 4.16 Why did the peddler sign himself as Captain von Stahle?

SOLUTION

The peddler signs the letter "Captain von Stahle" because Edla had treated him as a captain "all day long, as if I was a captain", and the letter is his attempt to behave "as if I was a real captain" in return. The signature is not a continuation of the deception; it is a gesture of **moral elevation**. He is acknowledging Edla's title for him and trying to earn it.

> ☞ **Key text**
>
> "Since you have been so nice to me all day long, as if I was a captain, I want to be nice to you, in return, as if I was a real captain... The rattrap is a Christmas present from a rat who would have been caught in this world's rattrap if he had not been raised to captain, because in that way he got power to clear himself."

- *The title was Edla's gift first.* Throughout the Christmas visit she called him "Captain". She did not retract the title even after the truth came out. The peddler is signing back with the title she used.
- *The signature is a thank-you, not a continuation of the lie.* The letter is honest. He admits he is "a rat who would have been caught in this world's rattrap". He is not pretending to be a real officer; he is acknowledging that he was treated as one.
- *The captain's behaviour is the model.* An officer would protect a host's honour. He has not stolen the silver spoons. He has returned the thirty kronor to the crofter (through Edla). He is doing what a captain would do.
- *The phrase "raised to captain".* The peddler understands the social fact precisely. "If he had not been raised to captain" he would have stayed a thief; being treated as a captain "gave him power to clear himself". The signature is the sign that the

treatment had its effect.

- *The literary symmetry.* The letter closes a circle. The chapter began with a peddler imagining the world as a rattrap; it ends with a peddler signing himself with the title he was given by the only person who treated him as more than a rat. The signature is the proof that the rattrap metaphor can be broken.

> **Final Answer:** The peddler signed himself "Captain von Stahle" because that was the title Edla had used for him all day, even after the truth came out. The signature is a thank-you and a small declaration: he wants "to be nice to you in return, as if I was a real captain". By acting as a captain would (returning the thirty kronor, behaving as a guest of honour) he has earned, in his own small way, the title that was given to him by mistake.

☞ The hinge of the chapter

"Raised to captain... power to clear himself." These two phrases name the chapter's whole theory of moral change: people treated as their better selves can become a little of what they are treated as.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Mr Harsh Vardhan, MA English, Hindu College Delhi*

Strategic angle. Read the signature as the chapter's final image. The peddler is no longer the man who entered the forge. He has been called "Captain" for a day; he has chosen to act like one; he signs as one. Lagerlöf is making a careful point about the social construction of character.

- *The title started as a mistake but did not stay one.* The ironmaster called him captain by error. Edla kept using it by choice. By the end, the peddler signs it himself. The same word travels through three speakers and three meanings: error, kindness, earned title.
- *The letter's tone is humble and clear.* "I do not want you to be embarrassed at this Christmas season by a thief." He owns the word "thief" so the signature "Captain" can ring honest, not boastful.
- *The rattrap is included as a confession-object.* He sends back the bait that nearly caught him (thirty kronor) inside the trap that names the metaphor (rattrap), with a letter that uses the metaphor in the third person ("a rat who would have been caught"). Every piece of the parcel is a small piece of honesty.
- *The signature is a Christmas gift, not a political claim.* He is not asking for the captain's title to be made official. He is signing it once, as a gift to the host who first used it. The chapter is careful not to let the peddler over-claim.
- *The reader's verdict.* Lagerlöf has the peddler sign in "large, jagged characters". The handwriting is rough, the spelling careful, the title earned. Class 12 readers should read this image as the chapter's last small joke: a peddler who cannot write neatly

can still sign as a captain.

Why this matters. The signature is the chapter's theological closing. Lagerlöf has spent the whole story arguing that an unconditional act of kindness can lift a person out of his own rattrap. The signature is the moment the peddler ratifies the lift. He chooses, freely, to be named the way Edla named him, and to behave accordingly.

> **Final Answer:** He signed himself "Captain von Stahle" because Edla had used the title for him all day long, even after she knew the truth, and the signature was his attempt to behave "as if I was a real captain" in return. The letter explains the logic: he had been "raised to captain" by her kindness and so was given "power to clear himself". The signature is his thank-you and his ratification of the lift.

Part 5: Understanding the text (page 42)

Q 4.17 How does the peddler interpret the acts of kindness and hospitality shown by the crofter, the ironmaster and his daughter?

SOLUTION

The peddler meets three acts of kindness in the chapter, each from a different character, and he interprets each one in a very different way. His readings move from **cynical** (the crofter, who is kind and is robbed) through **calculating** (the ironmaster, whose kindness is mistaken identity and so a risk) to **transformed** (Edla, whose kindness changes him). The full answer charts this movement.

- *The crofter's kindness: read as opportunity.* The crofter gives him supper, tobacco, mjolis and shows him the thirty kronor. The peddler responds by stealing the money and feeling "quite pleased with his smartness". He interprets the kindness as a foolish openness that invites theft. The crofter's trust is, in his rattrap-trained eyes, bait.
- *The ironmaster's kindness: read as risk.* The ironmaster mistakes him for Nils Olof and invites him home for Christmas. The peddler immediately reads this as a trap: "To go up to the manor house would be like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion's den." Even when he is forced to go, he thinks, "Why the devil did I take that fellow's money? Now I am sitting in the trap and will never get out of it." He sees the manor's comforts as another, more elaborate rattrap.
- *Edla's kindness: read, at first, with the same suspicion.* When she comes to the forge to fetch him, he finds her kindness so unusual that he keeps his guard up. The ride to

the manor is full of dread.

- *Edla's kindness: re-read as compassion.* Over Christmas Eve her steady, unconditional treatment of him as a guest (even after the truth comes out) changes his reading. The letter he leaves uses the word "raised": "a rat who would have been caught... if he had not been raised to captain". He has re-interpreted her kindness as a lift, not a trap.
- *The final theory.* The peddler ends the chapter with a more careful theory of kindness. Some kindnesses are bait (the crofter's, in his original reading; the ironmaster's, conditional on identity), and some are rescue (Edla's, which asked nothing of him). His own gift-rattrap is the symbol of this distinction.

Final Answer: The peddler interprets each act of kindness through the rattrap lens, but the readings change: the crofter's hospitality he treats as foolish bait and repays with theft; the ironmaster's invitation he reads as a dangerous trap of mistaken identity and accepts only under his daughter's pressure; Edla's compassion, once it survives the revelation of the truth, he finally reads as a genuine rescue. The letter he leaves names her treatment as a "raising", the only act of kindness in the chapter he accepts as not-bait.

♥ Why This Matters

A clean answer charts the peddler's readings as a movement, not a fixed view. He starts cynical (everyone is bait), passes through calculating (some kindness is risk), and ends transformed (some kindness is rescue). The chapter's whole moral arc is in this movement.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Geetanjali Saha, PhD Folklore Studies, Visva-Bharati Santiniketan*

Strategic angle. Lagerlöf arranges the three acts of kindness as a small ladder. Each step gives the peddler a slightly different test, and he responds slightly less cynically each time. A confident answer maps the ladder.

- *Step one: the crofter.* The peddler arrives a thief at heart, sees bait everywhere and acts accordingly. The crofter's kindness is read as carelessness; the theft is read as cleverness.
- *Step two: the forest.* Between steps one and three, the peddler is forced to apply his own metaphor to himself. The forest closes in on him and he recognises that "now his own turn had come". His readings of subsequent kindnesses will be coloured by this private humiliation.
- *Step three: the ironmaster.* The peddler reads the invitation as a trap precisely because he has just learned what a trap feels like. The ironmaster's kindness, conditional on mistaken identity, fits the rattrap pattern too neatly to be safe.

- *Step four: Edla.* The first contact with Edla is still read with suspicion, but the ride to the manor is not refused. Once at the manor, the steady, gentle, unconditional treatment slowly displaces the rattrap reading.
- *Step five: the gift-rattrap.* The peddler completes his re-reading not in words but in a small wire object. The gift says: there are kindnesses that do not work like rattraps, and the only honest response is to give one of the rattraps back, full of returned money, and to sign as the man Edla called him.

Why this matters. The question is asking the Class 12 reader to notice that the peddler's interpretation is not fixed; it is a record of his moral growth. Lagerlöf stages three kindnesses in a row, not because she wants three character sketches, but because she wants to show how interpretation itself can change.

> **Final Answer:** The peddler reads the crofter's hospitality as foolish bait and steals the money; he reads the ironmaster's invitation as a dangerous trap of mistaken identity and accepts only under pressure; he reads Edla's compassion, after a long Christmas Eve, as a genuine rescue, the one kindness in the chapter that is not bait. The letter signed "Captain von Stahle" and the rattrap-with-thirty-kronor gift are his formal acknowledgements of this new reading.

Q 4.18 What are the instances in the story that show that the character of the ironmaster is different from that of his daughter in many ways?

SOLUTION

Lagerlöf builds the contrast between father and daughter on six specific scenes. In every one of them, the ironmaster's response is identity-bound, status-bound or authority-bound, while Edla's is human, gentle and unconditional. The full answer names each scene.

- *The first meeting in the forge.* The ironmaster "walked close up to him. . . tore off his slouch hat", decided he was Nils Olof, and offered an invitation based on regimental comradeship. Edla, sent in his place later, comes "followed by a valet, carrying on his arm a big fur coat", lifts the peddler's hat herself (gently, not roughly), uses the captain title without examining it, and offers compassion based on his visible hard time.
- *The promise of safe exit.* The ironmaster makes no such promise; he only insists. Edla, noticing the peddler's fear, says explicitly, "You may be sure, Captain, that you will be allowed to leave us just as freely as you came." She frames the visit as a free gift, not a duty.
- *The breakfast revelation.* When the ironmaster sees the bathed and dressed peddler in

daylight and realises his mistake, he thunders "What does this mean?" and wants to expel him. Edla, who had quietly doubted from the start, intercedes: "I think he ought to stay with us today. I don't want him to go." She closes the door her father has just opened for the peddler.

- *The reason for the staying.* The ironmaster, after relenting, frames it as a calculation: "You do preach worse than a parson. I only hope you won't have to regret this." Edla frames it as a human duty: he "walks and walks the whole year long, and there is probably not a single place in the whole country where he is welcome".
- *Christmas Day in church.* The ironmaster returns from church already suspecting the worst: "I only wonder how many silver spoons are left in the cupboard by this time." Edla returns hanging her head "dejectedly"; she has heard the news of the crofter's theft and is sad for the peddler, not for the spoons.
- *The opening of the gift.* Father and daughter read the same little package differently. The ironmaster has been expecting bad news; the daughter "gave a little cry of joy". He has been counting spoons; she has been counting on the man.

Final Answer: In every scene the ironmaster acts from status, identity or authority, while Edla acts from compassion. He invites the peddler based on a mistaken regimental identity; she invites him based on plain pity. He thunders when the mistake is exposed; she closes the door he wants to throw the peddler through. He returns from church counting silver spoons; she returns hanging her head dejectedly for a stranger. The chapter's whole moral architecture is built out of these paired scenes.

☞ Exam Tip

For a high-mark answer, name at least four paired scenes (forge, exit-promise, breakfast revelation, church-return) and give a one-line contrast for each. Quote at least once from each character.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Prof Lakshman Iyer, MA English, St Stephen's College Delhi*

Strategic angle. Lagerlöf is not interested in the ironmaster as a villain. He is a kind, lonely widower whose warmth depends on identity. The contrast with Edla is the contrast between identity-based kindness (good but conditional) and person-based kindness (slower, deeper, less common).

- *Ironmaster, in the forge.* The text gives him an action verb: "He walked close up to him." He moves with the certainty of authority; he tears off the hat; he decides on identity in a single sentence.
- *Edla, in the forge.* Her verbs are gentler: she "lifted his hat", "looked at him

compassionately", "added quickly". The text gives her a series of small, careful gestures. The contrast in verb-choice is deliberate.

- *Father, at breakfast.* He thunders. The text chooses a verb of weather, not of speech. He is angry at the mistake (mostly his own), and at the loss of a Christmas comrade.
- *Daughter, at breakfast.* She walks to the door and closes it. The verb is small ("closed"), but the action is decisive. She turns a verbal stand-off into a physical fact.
- *Father, at church.* His worry is for the silver spoons. The metonym is sharp: he is worried about movable property.
- *Daughter, at church.* She hangs her head "dejectedly". Her worry is for the peddler. The same situation produces opposite postures.
- *The closing gift.* The package is the chapter's verdict. The daughter, who acted from compassion, is the one who reads the package as a Christmas miracle. The father, who acted from identity, is reduced to watching his daughter open it. The chapter's authority, by the end, has migrated from his rank to her kindness.

Why this matters. For a Class 12 answer, the most sophisticated reading is that Lagerlöf is not condemning the ironmaster; she is showing that the world has many kind people of his type, and very few of Edla's. The chapter argues, gently, for raising more daughters like Edla.

> **Final Answer:** The ironmaster sees through identity (Nils Olof, regimental comrade) and acts with authority (the thundered question, the offer of silver spoons as worry). Edla sees through the person (a man having a hard time) and acts with quiet compassion (lifting the hat, promising free exit, closing the door, hanging her head for him at church). Every paired scene in the chapter is built to display this difference, and the closing gift settles the verdict in Edla's favour.

Q 4.19 The story has many instances of unexpected reactions from the characters to others' behaviour. Pick out instances of these surprises.

SOLUTION

Surprise in this chapter is almost always a moral moment: a character chooses to do something the situation does not require. The peddler, the ironmaster and Edla each provide at least one such surprise. The text supplies the list; the answer's job is to gather them.

- *The crofter's unexpected hospitality.* A stranger knocks asking for shelter for the night. The crofter does not just open the door; he puts the porridge pot on the fire, shares his tobacco, plays mjolis and confides the existence of his thirty kronor. The peddler

had expected "sour faces"; he is met with warmth instead.

- *The peddler's theft of the crofter.* The crofter had every reason to expect a grateful guest. Instead, within half an hour of their parting, the peddler returns to smash a window and steal the money. The chapter's first surprise is therefore also its first betrayal.
- *The ironmaster's mistaken-identity welcome.* The ragged stranger expects to be ignored by the powerful owner of the ironworks. Instead he is greeted as "Nils Olof" and invited home. The kindness, even if misdirected, is a surprise.
- *Edla's return to the forge.* The peddler has already refused the ironmaster's invitation. He has no reason to expect a second attempt. Edla appears, in person, with a valet and a fur coat, to fetch him. The scale of effort surprises both peddler and reader.
- *Edla's stand at breakfast.* After the truth comes out, the natural ending would be expulsion. Edla instead closes the door and insists he stay. The ironmaster mutters, "You do preach worse than a parson." Even her father is surprised.
- *The peddler's lecture to the ironmaster.* When cornered, the peddler does not grovel. Instead, he delivers a small rattrap sermon to a rich man and warns him too may one day be caught. The ironmaster's response, laughter, is another surprise.
- *The gift on Christmas morning.* Father and valet both expect the news that the peddler has stolen something. The valet announces that the man has gone and left a parcel behind. Inside is a hand-made rattrap, the stolen thirty kronor, and a letter. The whole package overturns every expectation.

Final Answer: The story is built out of surprises: the crofter's out-of-proportion welcome to a vagabond, the peddler's repayment of that welcome with theft, the ironmaster's mistaken-identity greeting and invitation, Edla's personal trip to the forge to fetch him, her stand at breakfast against her own father, the peddler's sermon to the ironmaster in his own house, and the Christmas-morning gift of a rattrap, three wrinkled ten-kronor bills, and a letter signed "Captain von Stahle". Each surprise is a moral choice; the chapter is the sum of those choices.

✗ Common Mistake

A common slip is to list only one or two surprises (usually the gift and the breakfast stand). A complete answer names at least five and shows that surprise in this chapter is consistently a moral act, not a plot twist.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Sneha Chatterjee, MA English Literature, Lady Brabourne College*

Strategic angle. A confident answer notices that "surprise" in this chapter does not mean coincidence; it means a character choosing the harder option. Lagerlöf structures each surprise as a small decision against the easy path.

- *Crofter, easy option.* Send the vagabond away. *Surprise:* share porridge, tobacco, mjolis, confidence.
- *Peddler, easy option.* Walk away from the cottage having received supper and shelter. *Surprise:* return, smash a window, steal the thirty kronor.
- *Ironmaster, easy option.* Stay polite with a ragged stranger in the forge and walk on. *Surprise:* invite him home as a regimental comrade.
- *Peddler, easy option.* Stay terrified and obedient when caught. *Surprise:* lecture the ironmaster on the rattrap nature of the world.
- *Ironmaster, easy option.* Call the sheriff. *Surprise:* laugh and let the peddler go.
- *Edla, easy option.* Side with her father and let the imposter be ejected. *Surprise:* close the door and insist he stay.
- *Peddler, easy option.* Walk out of the manor with whatever silver he can carry. *Surprise:* take nothing, leave the stolen thirty kronor, send a letter signed as the captain he had been called.

Why this matters. The chapter's machinery is built out of these chosen surprises. Lagerlöf is making a quiet argument about moral life: it is the sum of moments at which a person chooses the unexpected. The reader who lists six or seven of them is reading the chapter as a moral diagram, not as a folk-tale.

Final Answer: Surprises: the crofter's lavish hospitality; the peddler's repayment with theft; the ironmaster's mistaken-identity invitation; Edla's personal trip to the forge; the peddler's calm sermon when caught; the ironmaster's laughter instead of the sheriff; Edla's stand to keep him for Christmas Eve; and the Christmas-morning rattrap gift with the returned thirty kronor and the letter. Each surprise is a moral choice taken against the easier path.

Q 4.20 What made the peddler finally change his ways?

SOLUTION

The peddler's change is not the result of a sermon, a punishment or a religious experience. It is the result of being treated, by one person, as the better self the ironmaster had mistakenly called him. "Captain" began as an error; in Edla's hands it became a steady title; in the peddler's hands it became something to live up to. The text gives him his own explanation: he had been "raised to captain" and so was given "power to clear himself".

☞ Key text from the letter

"A rat who would have been caught in this world's rattrap if he had not been raised to captain, because in that way he got power to clear himself."

- *The treatment, not the truth, did the work.* The ironmaster's truth, made loud at breakfast, did not change him; it only embarrassed him. Edla's continued kindness after the truth did change him.
- *The continuity of the title.* Edla called him "Captain" even after she knew. "I am so sorry, Captain, that you are having such a hard time"; "You may be sure, Captain, that you will be allowed to leave us"; "I think he ought to stay with us today." The title is repeated under every kind of emotional pressure: in the forge, after the revelation, on Christmas Eve.
- *The space of a full Christmas Eve.* He is given clothes, a hot bath, a bed, three meals, a Christmas tree, and a peaceful night's sleep. "It seemed as though for many years he had not been able to sleep as quietly and safely as here at Ramsjö." The bodily rest is the precondition for the moral change.
- *The gift back.* The chapter is honest that the change cost him something. He returned the thirty kronor he had stolen from the crofter. The change is not free; it is paid for, in the exact amount of the original theft.
- *The signature.* "Captain von Stahle." By signing with the title, the peddler accepts the moral identity Edla had assigned him. The signature is the formal ratification of the change.

Final Answer: What changed him was Edla's unconditional kindness, maintained even after she knew the truth about him. She kept calling him "Captain" and treated him as a guest of honour through Christmas Eve. Given clothes, food, a peaceful night and, above all, a steady title to live up to, he was, in his own phrase, "raised to captain... and so got power to clear himself". He returned the stolen thirty kronor, left the small rattrap as a gift and signed the letter with the captain title Edla had used for him.

♥ Why This Matters

The chapter's whole theology is in this question. A complete answer names the agent (Edla), the mechanism (steady kindness-plus-title), the cost (return of the thirty kronor) and the form of ratification (signing as captain). It is a small literary case for the social shaping of character.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Bharat Singh, PhD Sociology, Delhi School of Economics*

Strategic angle. Read the change as a small experiment in identity. The peddler was given a captain to play, by mistake, and then given the same captain to play, by choice. The second offer was the one that converted him.

- *Lagerlöf refuses dramatic conversion.* The peddler does not weep, does not have a vision, does not confess at length. He simply behaves better: he sleeps, eats, says thank you, leaves a gift. The change is almost domestic in scale.
- *The cost is exact.* The thirty kronor returned match, to the bill, the thirty kronor stolen. The chapter's moral arithmetic balances; the reader can verify the closing of the books.
- *The title is doing structural work.* A title once given by mistake and then maintained by choice is, for the chapter, more powerful than a moral lecture. The peddler is shown the shape of a better self he might live in, and chooses, in one small letter, to inhabit it.
- *The chapter is honest about the limit of the change.* The peddler does not stay at the manor; he leaves. He does not promise to abandon rattrap-selling or vagabondage. He simply behaves like the captain Edla had named, once, in the act of leaving. Lagerlöf does not over-claim.
- *The reader's verdict.* The peddler walks out a different man than he walked in, but he walks out nonetheless. The world will still be a rattrap; he will still need to walk through it. Edla's gift was not to remove the rattrap but to give him "power to clear himself" inside it.

Why this matters. For a Class 12 reader the question is asking you to see that character can be changed by the right kind of attention from a single other person. Lagerlöf's quiet faith is that this kind of attention exists, and is sometimes enough.

> **Final Answer:** What changed the peddler was Edla's steady, unconditional kindness, especially her continued use of the title "Captain" even after the truth came out, set inside a full Christmas Eve of clothes, food, rest and a quiet night's sleep. The peddler took the title as a model to live up to, returned the thirty kronor he had stolen, left a hand-made rattrap as a Christmas present, and signed his thank-you letter "Captain von Stahle". He was, in his own phrase, "raised to captain" and given "power to clear himself".

Q 4.21 How does the metaphor of the rattrap serve to highlight the human predicament?

SOLUTION

The rattrap is the chapter's central **metaphor**, and like every working metaphor it has three working parts: a **vehicle** (the actual rattrap and its mechanism), a **tenor** (the human world and its temptations) and a **ground** of comparison (the way bait calls a creature to its capture). Lagerlöf uses the metaphor to highlight the human predicament: that we are repeatedly called by riches, shelter, food and joys, and are caught the moment we reach.

- *The vehicle: the actual rattrap.* A small wire frame baited with cheese and pork. When the rat reaches in for the bait, the frame closes around it. Simple, mechanical and cruel.
- *The tenor: the world.* The peddler's contribution is the leap: "the whole world about him... was nothing but a big rattrap. It had never existed for any other purpose than to set baits for people."
- *The ground of comparison: the bait list.* The world's baits are "riches and joys, shelter and food, heat and clothing", set out "exactly as the rattrap offered cheese and pork". The matching of categories is what makes the metaphor more than a pun.
- *The metaphor is tested on its own author.* The peddler is tempted by the thirty kronor (a small bait of riches), is caught in the forest (a literal closing prison) and recognises, "Now his own turn had come." Lagerlöf refuses to let her metaphor stay clever; she makes the peddler the first rat caught by it.
- *The metaphor describes the human predicament, not just one vagabond's life.* The peddler warns the ironmaster: "A day may come when you yourself may want to get a big piece of pork, and then you will get caught in the trap." Wealth has its own bait; no class is exempt. The rattrap describes everyone.
- *The metaphor is not the last word.* Edla's unconditional kindness is the chapter's other claim: kindness from one person can give another "power to clear himself" from the trap. The rattrap describes a condition; the kindness describes an escape. Both have to be in the chapter for the moral to make sense.

Final Answer: The rattrap metaphor highlights the human predicament by claiming that the world, like a baited wire trap, calls every person with food, shelter, riches and joys, and closes on whoever reaches. Lagerlöf stress-tests her own metaphor by applying it first to the peddler (caught by thirty kronor and the forest), then to the ironmaster (warned about a future piece of pork), and finally allows one escape, through Edla's unconditional kindness, which gives the peddler "power to clear himself". The metaphor is therefore both a diagnosis and a challenge: the world is a trap, and the question is whether someone in it will treat you well enough to let you out.

☞ Exam Tip

A complete answer names the three working parts of the metaphor (vehicle, tenor, ground), shows that the metaphor is tested on its own author, and ends with Edla's kindness as the chapter's counter-claim. Quote the line "riches and joys, shelter and food, heat and clothing".

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Prof Devika Nair, MA English, Calicut University*

Strategic angle. A confident answer treats the rattrap as Lagerlöf's controlling image. She does not let it sit unexamined; she carries it through every section of the chapter and finally turns it from a complaint about the world into a small token of redemption. The metaphor is doing literary work all the way through.

- *The rattrap as theory of the world.* The peddler invents the metaphor on the road. Lagerlöf gives him time and loneliness to develop it.
- *The rattrap as personal experience.* The forest applies the theory to him. The same closing pattern, from bait to capture, is acted out on his own body.
- *The rattrap as warning to others.* In the manor, he turns the metaphor into a sermon. The ironmaster is also a rat, just one currently still circling the bait. Lagerlöf is careful to make the metaphor universal, not just a poor man's grievance.
- *The rattrap as object of redemption.* The peddler's gift is a hand-made wire rattrap. The very object that named the chapter's pessimism becomes the wrapping of a small redemption. The same word, the same metal, the same shape, used in a new way.
- *The rattrap as moral pattern.* The chapter is suggesting that every kindness in the story has a rattrap-shape: it offers a person something good and then closes on them. The crofter's hospitality closed on the peddler (he was caught by his own theft); the ironmaster's closed on the peddler (mistaken identity risked exposure); Edla's closed on him too, but in a gentler way (he was caught into a Christmas Eve of rest and the obligation to live up to a title).
- *The chapter's last word.* Lagerlöf does not deny that the world is a rattrap. She only adds that within the rattrap, one person can be kind enough to give another the power to clear himself. The metaphor is therefore both diagnosis and prescription.

Why this matters. The rattrap is the chapter's controlling image and the test of whether a student has read the whole story. A reader who can describe only the metaphor ("the world is a trap") has read half. A reader who can describe both the trap and the escape ("and Edla's kindness gave one rat the power to clear himself") has read the whole.

Final Answer: The rattrap metaphor highlights the human predicament by claiming that the world, like a baited wire trap, calls every person with riches, shelter, food and joys, and closes on whoever reaches. Lagerlöf tests it on the peddler (caught by thirty kronor and the forest), broadens it as a warning to the ironmaster (a future piece of pork), and finally re-uses the same wire object as the wrapping of a redemption. The metaphor is the chapter's diagnosis; Edla's kindness is its prescription.

Q 4.22 The peddler comes out as a person with a subtle sense of humour. How does this serve in lightening the seriousness of the theme of the story and also endear him to us?

SOLUTION

A story about poverty, theft, mistaken identity and moral conversion could easily be heavy. Lagerlöf gives the peddler a **dry, philosophical humour** that keeps the chapter from becoming a sermon. The humour is in his private metaphors, in his unflinching sermon to the ironmaster and in the wry signature on the parting letter. The humour also gives the reader a human person to care about, not a thesis mannequin.

- *The rattrap idea is itself a piece of humour.* A poor man's revenge on the world is to imagine the world as a trap and everyone in it as a rat. The text calls this his "cherished pastime". Like all good humour it punches up, at the riches that elude him, and lets him laugh at his own situation in the same breath.
- *The sermon to the ironmaster.* Caught in his deception and faced with the threat of the sheriff, the peddler does not weep; he lectures. "This whole world is nothing but a big rattrap... a day may come when you yourself may want to get a big piece of pork, and then you will get caught in the trap." The image of a wealthy ironmaster reaching greedily for a piece of pork is comic, and the ironmaster's laughter ("That was not so badly said, my good fellow") proves the humour landed.
- *The letter to Edla.* The signature "Captain von Stahle" is signed in "large, jagged characters". The whole letter is funny in a small, self-aware way: a rat-trap salesman calling himself a captain, returning thirty kronor to a man who keeps his savings in a leather pouch on a window frame, and writing in big jagged letters as if he were a real officer. The humour is the peddler's way of acknowledging the absurdity of his Christmas Eve.
- *The humour shifts the chapter's register.* Without the humour, the rattrap metaphor would sound like a sermon. With it, the metaphor reads like a slightly bitter joke that becomes, by the end, a slightly hopeful one. The reader is laughing with the peddler, not at him.

- *The humour endears him to us.* A poor thief who can laugh at the world (and at himself in the world) is a more interesting and likeable character than a poor thief who only suffers. Lagerlöf lets us care about him because he is funny; we care about him before we know he will be redeemed.

> **Final Answer:** The peddler's dry, philosophical humour, the rattrap idea itself, the lecture to the ironmaster about "a big piece of pork", the signature "Captain von Stahle" in large jagged characters, lifts the chapter out of pure pathos. It lets a serious story about poverty, theft and conversion read as a small comic fable. The humour also gives the reader a person to care about: a poor man who can laugh at the world's traps, including the ones he himself walks into, is far more endearing than a man who can only suffer them.

✗ Common Mistake

A common error is to confuse "humour" with "jokes". The peddler does not crack jokes. His humour is in his world-view, his sermon and his signature. A complete answer names all three sources.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Mira Reddy, MA English (Translation Studies), University of Hyderabad*

Strategic angle. Lagerlöf's humour in this chapter is *tonal*, not verbal. There are no one-liners. The humour is built into the peddler's voice, his metaphor, his sermon and his letter. A confident answer names each of these and shows how they keep the chapter humane.

- *Voice.* The peddler is given the chapter's most memorable phrase ("the whole world is a big rattrap") and a small, knowing way of putting things. He does not whine. He observes.
- *Metaphor.* The rattrap idea is funny because it compares the cosmic ("the whole world… its lands and seas, its cities and villages") with the trivial (a wire frame baited with cheese). The disproportion is the joke.
- *Sermon.* In the breakfast confrontation he speaks gently to a rich, angry man. "Now I am going to tell you, Mr Ironmaster, how things are." The understated tone is funnier than a tantrum. The ironmaster, hearing himself diagnosed as a future rat-victim, laughs.
- *Letter.* "Honoured and noble Miss… since you have been so nice to me all day long, as if I was a captain, I want to be nice to you in return, as if I was a real captain." The repeated "as if" is the humour: the peddler is winking at himself, at her, and at the reader, all at once.
- *Effect on the reader.* The humour is the chapter's rescue from gloom. It lets the rattrap

metaphor read as a worldly observation rather than a denunciation, and lets the peddler's redemption read as a small, believable moral lift rather than as a miracle.

- *Effect on the theme.* The chapter's themes (poverty, temptation, theft, conversion) are heavy. The humour ensures the reader does not put the chapter down halfway through with the feeling of being lectured. Class 12 students should notice that Lagerlöf uses comedy here in the service of moral seriousness, not against it.

Why this matters. The humour is not decorative; it is the chapter's main tool for keeping a moral story from becoming preachy. Lagerlöf trusts the peddler with the metaphor, the sermon and the signature, and earns the right to ask the reader to take all three seriously.

> **Final Answer:** The peddler's subtle humour shows in his rattrap metaphor, his calm sermon to the ironmaster about "a big piece of pork", and his self-aware signing of the letter as "Captain von Stahle". The humour lightens an otherwise heavy theme of poverty, theft and conversion, and lets the reader care about a man who can laugh at the world even when he has been caught by it. Without the humour the chapter would be a sermon; with it, it is a small comic fable with a real moral inside.

Part 6: Talking about the text (pages 42–43)

Q 4.23 The reader's sympathy is with the peddler right from the beginning of the story. Why is this so? Is the sympathy justified?

SOLUTION

A reader's sympathy is engineered by the text. Lagerlöf works on it deliberately: she opens the chapter with the peddler's hunger, his rags and his loneliness, gives him a sad but intelligent inner life (the rattrap idea), and lets him narrate his own world. By the time he steals the thirty kronor, the reader has already been positioned to feel for him. Whether the sympathy is justified is a separate moral question, to be answered honestly.

- *Visible poverty.* "His clothes were in rags, his cheeks were sunken, and hunger gleamed in his eyes." The chapter opens with the body of a hungry man. The reader's first response is pity.
- *Invisible loneliness.* "No one can imagine how sad and monotonous life can appear to such a vagabond, who plods along the road, left to his own meditations." Lagerlöf asks the reader, in the very next paragraph, to imagine the inner life.
- *An interesting mind.* The peddler is not a simple sufferer. He builds the chapter's

central metaphor and finds in it "unwonted joy". The reader is sympathetic to him also because he is thinking, not just enduring.

- *Society's casual cruelty.* "Sour faces which ordinarily met him" establishes that the world treats him as a nuisance. The reader's sympathy turns into mild outrage on his behalf.
- *His humour.* The dry, philosophical voice keeps him from being pitiable. The reader sympathises with a man who can still laugh at the world, even when the world is unkind.
- *Is the sympathy justified?* The chapter is honest that the peddler is a thief. He steals from the crofter, the kindest character in the chapter. The sympathy is therefore not unconditional; it has to survive the theft. Lagerlöf asks the reader to feel for a man whose poverty does not excuse his crime but explains it.
- *The redemption justifies it.* By the end the peddler has returned the money, left a Christmas gift, and signed himself with the title given to him in kindness. The reader's early sympathy is rewarded; the peddler turns out to be the kind of man worth feeling for, even though the path to that worth ran through a broken window-pane in a crofter's cottage.

Final Answer: The reader's sympathy is with the peddler from the start because Lagerlöf opens with his hunger, his rags and his loneliness, gives him an interesting mind (the rattrap idea), a dry humour, and a hostile world to walk through. The sympathy is tested by the theft from the crofter (a serious wrong) and finally justified by the redemption in the manor (return of the thirty kronor, the rattrap gift, the captain signature). The chapter shows that real sympathy must survive the difficult middle in order to count.

♥ Why This Matters

This is a personal-response question that still demands evidence. Pity at first sight (rags, hunger), texture in the middle (mind, metaphor, humour) and earned at the end (theft repaid). Quote "hunger gleamed in his eyes" and "raised to captain".

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Mr Aniket Pandey, MA English, Banaras Hindu University*

Strategic angle. A confident answer separates the *engineering* of the sympathy from the *ethics* of it. Lagerlöf engineers the sympathy from the first paragraph; whether the reader is right to grant it is a question the chapter then tests with the theft.

- *The opening engineering.* Three sentences on rags, sunken cheeks and hunger; a paragraph on the loneliness of vagabond life; another on the world's lack of kindness. The chapter pre-loads the reader with compassion.

- *The texture-building.* The rattrap metaphor gives the peddler an interesting mind. The dry voice gives him a likeable manner. Lagerlöf builds a person, not a pity-object.
- *The first test.* The theft from the crofter is the moment the sympathy is supposed to break. A reader who does not flinch at the broken window-pane has not read the chapter carefully. Lagerlöf does not excuse the theft.
- *The second test.* The forest, which closes on the peddler, is the chapter's small punishment. The peddler's recognition that "now his own turn had come" is the moment the reader's broken sympathy can begin to heal.
- *The earning.* By the end, the peddler has returned the money, left the gift and signed the letter. The reader's early sympathy turns out to have been an investment in a person who, in the end, was worth it.
- *The ethics.* The chapter argues, gently, that sympathy is not the same as approval. We can feel for a man without endorsing his thefts. Lagerlöf is asking the reader to make this fine distinction and to keep feeling for the peddler even when he is wrong, because feeling, in the chapter's theology, is the precondition for the kindness that finally rescues him.

Why this matters. The question is asking the Class 12 reader to be honest. Yes, the chapter engineers the sympathy; yes, the sympathy is justified, but only because it is tested and survived. A blanket "poor man, of course we feel for him" misses the chapter's own self-criticism.

> **Final Answer:** The reader's sympathy is with the peddler from the beginning because Lagerlöf opens with hunger, rags and loneliness, gives him a thoughtful mind and a dry humour, and shows a society that meets him with sour faces. The sympathy is tested by the theft from the crofter and finally justified by the redemption at the manor: return of the thirty kronor, the small rattrap as Christmas present, and the captain signature. The chapter shows that sympathy that has been tested is the only kind worth granting.

Q 4.24 The story also focuses on human loneliness and the need to bond with others. Discuss.

SOLUTION

Loneliness is the chapter's quiet background condition. Every major character is alone in some way, and most of the chapter's moments of warmth happen when two of these lonely people meet. The need to bond, even across class and circumstance, is what makes the chapter's small acts of kindness possible.

- *The peddler's loneliness.* "No one can imagine how sad and monotonous life can

appear to such a vagabond, who plods along the road, left to his own meditations." He has no home, no family, no fixed company. His only social ritual is the door-knock, the sour face, and the moving on.

- *The crofter's loneliness.* "An old man without wife or child... happy to get someone to talk to in his loneliness." His daily company is a cow. His savings are thirty kronor in a pouch on a window frame.
- *The ironmaster's loneliness.* "Elizabeth is dead... My boys are abroad, and there is no one at home except my oldest daughter and myself. We were just saying that it was too bad we didn't have any company for Christmas." A widower, in a large manor, looking for a regimental comrade in the firelight of a forge.
- *Edla's loneliness.* The text does not say it directly, but it is visible. "Not at all pretty, ... modest and quite shy." A young woman in a widower's house with an absent set of brothers. Her wish to "make things... Christmassy... for the poor hungry wretch" is partly her own wish for the warmth of having someone to take care of.
- *The first bond: crofter and peddler.* The crofter's loneliness drives him to share porridge, tobacco and mjolis with a stranger. The peddler, who had expected sour faces, is briefly given company. The bond fails (the peddler steals), but the chapter is honest that both men needed the bond at the time.
- *The second bond: Edla and the peddler.* Edla's wish for Christmas company finds the peddler in the forge. Her kindness, kept steady through the revelation and the warning, becomes the chapter's only durable bond. The gift on Christmas morning is the proof.
- *The chapter's argument.* Loneliness is the common condition. The need to bond is the engine of kindness, and the kindness, even when it is exploited once (the crofter) and is built on a mistake another time (the ironmaster), is eventually justified by the bond Edla makes.

Final Answer: The chapter is full of lonely people: the peddler with no home, the crofter with no wife or child, the ironmaster widowed and missing his sons, Edla shy and motherless in a large house. Each act of kindness in the story (the crofter's hospitality, the ironmaster's invitation, Edla's Christmas Eve) is also an act of bonding by a lonely person. The peddler's transformation shows that real human bonds can change a person, even when earlier bonds have failed; the chapter ends with the proof of that bond, a rattrap-shaped Christmas gift and a captain signature.

☞ Exam Tip

Name the loneliness of at least three characters (peddler, crofter, ironmaster) and the bond Edla makes with the peddler. Quote "happy to get someone to talk to in his loneliness"

and “a day of peace with us here, just one in the whole year”.

EXPERT’S SOLUTION *: Dr Tara Mukherjee, PhD English (Modern European Fiction), Jadavpur University*

Strategic angle. A confident answer reads loneliness not as a sad mood but as the chapter’s structural condition. Lagerlöf is asking the reader to see that bonds are not a luxury; they are how the very poor and the very lonely keep on living. The peddler’s redemption is also Edla’s escape from her own shy isolation.

- *Loneliness as condition, not mood.* The chapter does not stage scenes of dramatic grief. Loneliness is background: the crofter’s cow, the ironmaster’s empty Christmas table, Edla’s modest silence, the peddler’s empty road. The chapter shows the texture of loneliness in the textures of everyday life.
- *Bonding as need, not virtue.* The crofter does not bond with the peddler because he is virtuous; he bonds because he is lonely. The ironmaster does not invite the captain home because he is generous; he does so because the manor is empty and Elizabeth is dead. Edla bonds with the peddler partly because she needs someone to take care of. Lagerlöf refuses sentimentality.
- *The two outcomes of bonding.* The crofter’s bond is broken by theft; Edla’s bond holds through theft and revelation. The chapter pairs the two so the reader sees that bonds are not all alike. The unconditional bond, the one Edla makes, is the kind that survives.
- *The peddler’s reciprocal need.* His amused rattrap idea is a small private substitute for company. He invents a metaphor to keep himself going on long empty walks. When a real human bond reaches him, he does not need the substitute anymore; the small rattrap, in the closing scene, becomes a gift instead of a complaint.
- *The chapter’s quiet thesis.* Loneliness explains a lot of the chapter’s behaviour, kind and unkind. The cure is not philosophy or wealth; it is one steady bond with one other person. Lagerlöf is making a small claim for the moral importance of company.

Why this matters. The Class 12 reader who can see loneliness as the chapter’s structural condition has the key to most of its scenes. The crofter’s mistakes, the ironmaster’s misidentification, Edla’s stand and the peddler’s final signature all become explicable when read in the light of how lonely each character is, and how badly they need a bond.

> **Final Answer:** The Rattrap is built on loneliness: the peddler with no home, the crofter with no wife or child, the widowed ironmaster with sons abroad, the shy Edla. Each act of kindness is also an act of bonding, and the chapter’s moral arc shows that the unconditional bond (Edla’s) is the one that survives. The peddler’s transformation, the returned thirty kronor and the captain signature are all proofs of how much a single steady human bond can change a life.

Q 4.25 Have you known or heard of an episode where a good deed or an act of kindness has changed a person's view of the world?

SOLUTION

This is a personal-response question; the text supplies the model (Edla and the peddler), and the student is asked to find a parallel from life, history or known narrative. A complete answer offers one specific example, names the act and the change, and ties it back to the chapter's own theory of "raising" someone through unconditional kindness.

- *The chapter's pattern.* A person on the wrong path is treated, by one other person, as their better self. The kindness is unconditional and survives information that would justify withdrawing it. The person changes.
- *A widely-known example: Jean Valjean and the Bishop in Victor Hugo's* Les Misérables. Valjean, an ex-convict, steals silver from a bishop who has given him food and shelter. When the police bring him back, the bishop covers for him, tells the police the silver was a gift, and even adds two silver candlesticks: "You forgot to take these." The act changes Valjean entirely; he spends the rest of the novel doing good.
- *A second example: Mahatma Gandhi's account of being given a meal in Pretoria.* As a young lawyer thrown off the Pietermaritzburg train, Gandhi later recorded several small acts of unexpected kindness from strangers, white and black, that made him believe in non-violent resistance as a workable method. A series of small kindnesses changed his view of the political possibility of compassion.
- *A school-life example.* A student who is consistently included by a single classmate often ends up with a different view of school, and of themselves, than a student who is consistently excluded. The act is small (a saved seat, a shared lunch) but, repeated, it changes the receiver's worldview.
- *The common pattern.* In each case, the kindness is unconditional (not earned by the receiver), is steady (not a single dramatic gesture only), and is addressed to the person, not to the persona. The chapter's rattrap-and-captain pattern is therefore not unique; it is a literary version of an everyday truth.
- *The cost.* In every real example, the giver pays a small cost (the bishop loses the silver, the host loses time, the classmate loses social capital). The cost is the proof that the kindness is real. Edla's father warns her she may "have to regret this"; she goes ahead anyway.

Final Answer: Yes. The most famous literary example is Bishop Myriel covering for Jean Valjean's silver theft in Hugo's *Les Misérables* and even adding the two silver candlesticks, an act that turns an ex-convict into the moral centre of the novel. Closer to lived experience, the steady inclusion of an excluded classmate, or a single act of unconditional help to a stranger in trouble, can change the receiver's view of the world. The pattern is the same as in The Rattrap: unconditional, steady, person-directed kindness, with a real cost to the giver, lets the receiver be "raised" to a better self.

☞ **Structure your example in four parts**

Name the situation, name the kind person, name the act, and name the change in worldview. A four-part answer is much stronger than a sentimental general claim.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Reema Chakrabarty, MA Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences*

Strategic angle. For a personal-response question, strength comes from *specificity*. Pick one example, name the actors, name the act, and name the shift. Then tie back to the chapter's pattern. Vague generalisations ("kindness changes people") do not score.

- *The Bishop and Jean Valjean.* The single most famous fictional case in world literature. The act (covering for the theft + adding the candlesticks) and the change (a lifetime of moral repair) are both clean enough to use in an exam answer.
- *Real-life parallel: anonymous help to commuters in distress.* A wallet returned by a stranger, a hand offered to a fallen elderly traveller, a free meal offered to a hungry student. These small acts, when unconditional and steady, do change the receiver's view of public life. They explain why some people carry, for years, a particular optimism about strangers.
- *Institutional case: midday-meal programmes that keep marginalised children in school.* The kindness is not interpersonal but structural, and the change is partly a worldview shift in the child: school becomes a place where I am cared for, not only tested.
- *Pattern: the kindness has to be steady.* A single gesture rarely changes a worldview. The bishop's gesture worked because Valjean had been treated, until then, as a permanent danger. The chapter's Edla works because her kindness held through revelation and warning. The student's example should likewise show steadiness, not just a single act.
- *Pattern: the receiver has to be ready.* Not every unconditional kindness changes its receiver. The bishop's gesture would not have changed a Valjean without the night of moral crisis afterwards. The chapter is also honest: the peddler had had his own forest experience first. A complete answer can acknowledge that timing matters too.

Why this matters. For Class 12 students, this question trains the habit of grounding

abstract claims in concrete example. The chapter is itself an argument by example: one peddler, one Edla, one Christmas Eve. The student's answer should mirror that.

> **Final Answer:** Yes. Bishop Myriel's covering of Jean Valjean's theft in Hugo's *Les Misérables* and adding two silver candlesticks turned an ex-convict into the moral hero of one of the longest novels ever written. Less famously, anonymous acts of help at railway stations, the steady inclusion of an excluded classmate, or institutional programmes such as the school midday meal change the receiver's view of the world over time. In every case the kindness is unconditional, steady, and costly to the giver, the same pattern Lagerlöf stages between Edla and the peddler.

Q 4.26 The story is both entertaining and philosophical. Discuss.

SOLUTION

A story is **entertaining** when it keeps the reader turning the page; it is **philosophical** when it makes a serious claim about the world. The Rattrap is both, because Lagerlöf has built the philosophical claim (the world is a trap; unconditional kindness is the escape) into the entertainment (mistaken identity, theft, Christmas Eve gift). A complete answer names both layers and shows how they hold each other up.

- *Entertaining: the plot.* A poor peddler thinks the world is a trap; he steals from a kindly crofter; he gets lost in a forest; he is mistaken for a captain; he is invited home for Christmas Eve; the ironmaster realises his mistake at breakfast; the daughter intercedes; the peddler leaves on Christmas morning, having returned the money and left a small gift. Every paragraph carries the plot forward.
- *Entertaining: the characters.* The dry-humoured peddler, the gruff ironmaster, the modest daughter and the lonely crofter are all sharply drawn. Each speaks in a recognisable voice. The reader cares about every one of them.
- *Entertaining: the surprises.* The chapter delivers a string of surprises (the rattrap idea, the theft, the mistaken identity, the breakfast sermon, the closing gift). None of them is gratuitous; each has a moral function.
- *Philosophical: the rattrap metaphor.* The chapter carries a serious idea about temptation: that all the good things in life double as bait, and that reaching for them too eagerly can close a man's life around him. The peddler invents the idea, tests it on himself in the forest, and warns the ironmaster of it.
- *Philosophical: the theory of kindness.* The chapter argues that unconditional kindness, of the kind Edla shows, can "raise" a person to a better self and give them "power to clear themselves". This is a moral claim about how character can be changed, not just

a sentimental wish.

- *Philosophical: the verdict on identity.* The ironmaster's identity-based kindness collapses; Edla's person-based kindness holds. The chapter is making a small argument about what kindness has to be in order to count.
- *How the two layers fit together.* The entertainment carries the philosophy. The reader gets the rattrap idea inside a moment of plot (the peddler on the road); the kindness theory inside a Christmas Eve at a manor; the verdict on identity inside a breakfast confrontation. Lagerlöf refuses to lecture; she lets the events do the arguing.

Final Answer: The Rattrap is entertaining because of its tightly plotted sequence of surprises (the theft, the lost forest, the mistaken identity, the breakfast revelation, the Christmas morning gift) and its sharply drawn characters. It is philosophical because it carries, inside that plot, two serious claims about life: that the world is a baited rattrap, and that unconditional kindness can give a trapped person "power to clear himself". Lagerlöf refuses to separate the two layers; the philosophy comes through the plot and the plot earns the philosophy.

♥ Why This Matters

A high-mark answer holds both layers in view at once and shows that they support each other. Name two entertaining elements (plot, characters or surprises) and two philosophical claims (the rattrap, the unconditional kindness theory). Quote "raised to captain... power to clear himself".

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Madhumita Sarkar, PhD English (Nordic Literature in Translation), University of Calcutta*

Strategic angle. A confident answer notices that Lagerlöf is working in the European folk-tale tradition. Folk tales are always both entertaining and philosophical; they teach through the pleasure of the story. The Rattrap is therefore not two things stitched together but one thing in two registers.

- *The folk-tale framing is announced.* The chapter's very first introduction (in the source textbook) tells the reader the story is "told somewhat in the manner of a fairy tale". The form expects both registers.
- *Plot pleasure carries the metaphor.* The reader learns the rattrap idea not in a lecture but in a moment of the peddler's walking thought. The philosophy enters the reader's mind alongside the opening paragraph's hunger.
- *Character pleasure carries the theory of kindness.* The reader gets the theory not as a sermon but as Edla closing a door, lifting a hat, promising free exit. The theory lives inside the characters' actions.

- *Surprise carries the verdict.* The breakfast revelation and the Christmas gift surprise the reader and, in surprising, prove the chapter's point. The unconditional kindness pays off in a rattrap-shaped parcel; the conditional kindness collapses in a thundered question. The reader sees the verdict before the chapter announces it.
- *The reader's pleasure is the chapter's argument.* Lagerlöf's deeper move is to make the reader enjoy the chapter's morality. The peddler's sermon to the ironmaster is funny; Edla's stand is satisfying; the gift is delightful. The chapter argues that kindness is desirable by making the kindness scene the most pleasurable scene in the story.

Why this matters. For Class 12 readers the value of the question is in noticing that "entertaining" and "philosophical" are not opposites. Great stories teach by delighting. The Rattrap is a small case of this old folk-tale art done well, and the reader who can describe the dual register is reading at a college level.

> **Final Answer:** The Rattrap is entertaining in its tightly-plotted surprises and sharply-drawn characters, and philosophical in its rattrap metaphor and its theory of unconditional kindness as moral rescue. Lagerlöf, working in the folk-tale tradition, folds the philosophy into the entertainment: the rattrap idea comes in a paragraph of walking, the theory of kindness in Edla's small gestures, and the closing verdict in a rattrap gift on Christmas morning. The two registers hold each other up; neither would carry the story alone.

Part 7: Working with words (page 43)

Q 4.27 The man selling rattraps is referred to by many terms such as "peddler, stranger" etc. Pick out all such references to him. What does each of these labels indicate of the context or the attitude of the people around him?

SOLUTION

A character can carry many **labels** in a single story; each label is the speaker's, not the character's. By collecting the labels and grouping them by tone, the reader can see how the people around the peddler are positioned towards him at each moment. The text uses about a dozen labels for the same man.

- **man who went around selling small rattraps / man with the rattraps / rattrap peddler**. Neutral, descriptive: the trade defines the man. The phrase is the narrator's default. It does not carry contempt or warmth; it states a fact.
- **vagabond / tramp**. Mildly pejorative: words for someone with no fixed home or employment. Used by the narrator at moments when she wants the reader to feel his

rootlessness. The blacksmiths "glanced only casually and indifferently at the intruder"; for them he is just one more tramp.

- **stranger**. Neutral but distant: the word marks him as unfamiliar. Used most often in the manor house scenes ("the stranger had stretched himself out on the floor") where his identity is in question. The label keeps him at arm's length.
- **guest**. Polite, social: used after the crofter and the ironmaster take him in. The label gives him, briefly, a place in another man's household, even though the underlying truth (theft, deception) does not match the politeness.
- **poor wanderer / poor fellow / poor trader**. Pitying or condescending: the adjective "poor" marks his social status. The peddler himself uses "poor trader" in his self-defence ("I never pretended to be anything but a poor trader"), accepting the label.
- **ragamuffin**. Strongly pejorative: an old word for a ragged beggar boy or shabby man. Used by the narrator at the ironmaster's first sight of him in the forge ("the tall ragamuffin who had eased his way so close to the furnace"), capturing the ironmaster's instinctive class-reading.
- **the fellow / a fine fellow / good fellow**. Familiar, sometimes ironic. The ironmaster uses "my good fellow" affectionately while the captain identity holds, and his daughter is sarcastically called the host of "a fine fellow you let into the house" after the theft news.
- **thief**. Sharp, accusing: the word the peddler himself uses in his closing letter ("I do not want you to be embarrassed at this Christmas season by a thief"), and the word the ironmaster uses at church ("the man was a thief"). The label is the chapter's first honest naming of what he had been.
- **Captain / Nils Olof / Captain von Stahle**. Honorific: the label born of mistaken identity, kept gently by Edla, and finally signed by the peddler himself at the end of the story. The label travels from error to choice to earned title.
- **a rat**. The peddler's self-label in his closing letter: "a rat who would have been caught in this world's rattrap". The chapter ends with him owning the most negative label and converting it, by signing beneath it as Captain, into the proof of his rescue.

Final Answer: The story uses many labels for the same man: neutral trade-labels (peddler, man with the rattraps), social-status labels (vagabond, tramp, stranger, ragamuffin, poor trader), roles-of-the-moment labels (guest, the fellow, good fellow), honest labels (thief), honorifics (Captain, Nils Olof, Captain von Stahle) and a self-label (a rat). Each label tells the reader how the speaker sees him at that moment, and the movement from "ragamuffin" to "Captain" (signed by the man himself) is the chapter's whole moral arc compressed into a single noun.

☞ Exam Tip

Group the labels into four tones: neutral (peddler, stranger), pejorative (vagabond, tramp, ragamuffin, thief), polite (guest, good fellow) and honorific (Captain, Nils Olof, Captain von Stahle). Show the arc from ragamuffin to Captain. Use the self-labels ("poor trader", "a rat") to mark the peddler's own evolving view of himself.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Asma Khan, MA Linguistics, Aligarh Muslim University*

Strategic angle. A confident answer notices that the labels are not random: they cluster by speaker and by scene. Tracking who calls him what, and when, is a small sociolinguistic exercise in how characters position one another.

- *The narrator's labels.* The narrator uses the trade-descriptor ("man with the rattraps") as her default, but switches to "vagabond", "tramp" and "ragamuffin" at moments when she wants to convey another character's first impression. The narrator's own voice is mostly neutral.
- *The crofter's labels.* The crofter calls him "stranger" (the door-step word) and treats him as "guest" (the household word). The labels travel the short distance from the front door to the porridge pot. They do not carry contempt.
- *The ironmaster's labels.* "Nils Olof", "Captain", "my good fellow", "you" (when thundering). The labels swing wildly with his reading of the situation, captain when he thinks he is among comrades, "fine fellow" when sarcastic at the breakfast table. His labels are the most revealing because they shift the most.
- *Edla's labels.* She uses "Captain" steadily, before, during and after the revelation. The consistency is the chapter's moral signal: she does not let new information change the title she has chosen to use.
- *The peddler's self-labels.* "Poor trader" (in his defence), "a rat" (in his letter), and "Captain von Stahle" (in his signature). The self-labels tell the same arc as the social labels: from poor trader to almost-rat to chosen captain. The chapter's redemption is named in the closing signature.
- *Class-12 reading.* The labels work as a miniature sociolinguistic experiment: how a society speaks of a poor man, how he is briefly re-classified by error, how the kindest character keeps the higher label even after the error is exposed, and how the man himself eventually signs with that higher label. Words do moral work in this chapter; the labels are the visible record.

Why this matters. For Class 12 students, the exercise trains the habit of reading vocabulary as evidence. Lagerlöf did not use ten labels for the same man by accident; she was tracking, in vocabulary, the way the world sees the same person in different roles.

Final Answer: The peddler is called man-with-the-rattraps, peddler, vagabond, tramp, stranger, ragamuffin, guest, fellow, good fellow, fine fellow, poor trader, thief, Nils Olof, Captain, Captain von Stahle and a rat. Each label is the speaker's positioning, not the man's identity. The arc from "ragamuffin" (the ironmaster's first sight) through "Captain" (Edla's steady use, even after the truth) to "Captain von Stahle" (the peddler's own signature) and "a rat" (his honest self-label) is the chapter's moral arc written in nouns.

Q 4.28 You came across the words, plod, trudge, stagger in the story. These words indicate movement accompanied by weariness. Find five other such words with a similar meaning.

SOLUTION

The chapter uses three vivid **verbs of weary movement** (*plod*, *trudge*, *stagger*). English is rich in such verbs because life on foot, in cold weather, with little food, has been the common experience of most people for most of history. A complete answer names five further verbs, briefly defines each, and shows when each would be used.

- **slog.** To walk with great effort through mud, snow, or fatigue. "He slogged through the slush for miles." The verb adds the sense of resistance under foot.
- **drag.** (intransitive or with "oneself") To move with great heaviness, as if pulling one's own body along. "He dragged himself up the stairs." The verb implies the body itself is the weight.
- **lumber.** To move heavily, slowly, and awkwardly, like a large tired animal. "The exhausted traveller lumbered into the inn." The verb adds bulk and clumsiness to the weariness.
- **shamble.** To walk with a slow, shuffling, unsteady gait. "The old man shambled along the corridor." The verb captures dragging feet and lack of grace.
- **traipse.** To walk wearily, especially over a long or pointless distance. "She traipsed all over town looking for him." The verb adds the sense of purposeless walking.

Five more, for a richer answer: trundle (move slowly with rolling or bumpy steps), **toil** (to move with great labour, esp. uphill), **wade** (to push slowly through water, snow, crowd), **stumble** (to walk unsteadily, on the verge of falling), **totter** (to walk with weak, unsteady steps, like an exhausted child or old man).

Final Answer: Five verbs of weary movement, in addition to plod, trudge and stagger: *slog* (great effort through mud or fatigue), *drag* (move one's own body as a heavy weight), *lumber* (move heavily and clumsily), *shamble* (shuffle with dragging feet), *traipse* (walk wearily over a long, often aimless distance).

☞ **How to remember the verbs**

Sort them by the source of weariness: mud (slog, wade), body weight (drag, lumber), age or illness (shamble, totter), distance (traipse, toil). The sorted list is much easier to recall than a random list.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Joshua Mathew, PhD Lexicography, EFL University Hyderabad*

Strategic angle. A confident answer not only names the verbs but also shows that each captures a slightly different texture of weariness. English's verb-richness in this field is itself a small piece of social history: the language of long-foot journeys, of poor weather, of the unprivileged on the move.

- *Effort-against-substrate verbs:* slog, wade, toil. The fatigue comes from the ground or the gradient.
- *Body-as-weight verbs:* drag (oneself), lumber, trundle. The fatigue comes from the body itself.
- *Gait verbs:* shamble, shuffle, totter. The fatigue is visible in the rhythm of the steps.
- *Distance verbs:* traipse, tramp (as a verb of weary walking, distinct from the noun), trek (with weariness, not adventure). The fatigue comes from the sheer length of the walk.
- *Unsteadiness verbs:* stumble, totter, sway. The fatigue is so deep the body cannot hold a line. Note the chapter's own use of *stagger*: "he summoned all his strength, got up, and staggered in the direction of the sound".
- *Class-12 vocabulary takeaway.* A student who can deploy five or six of these verbs precisely is already writing prose at a higher register than one who uses only *walked*. The chapter's own vocabulary models this. Lagerlöf's choice of *plod*, *trudge* and *stagger* is part of how she paints the peddler's body.

Why this matters. For Class 12 students, the question trains active vocabulary. A reader who collects ten verbs of weary movement has, in passing, learned how English carries the fine grain of physical experience in its verbs.

Final Answer: Five additional verbs of weary movement: slog (great effort through mud or snow), drag (move one's own body as a weight), lumber (heavy, clumsy, slow), shamble (shuffling gait), and traipse (a long, weary, often aimless walk). For a richer answer one can add toil, trundle, wade, stumble and totter. Each captures a slightly different texture of fatigue in English's unusually rich vocabulary of foot-borne hardship.

Part 8: Noticing form (page 43)

Q 4.29 **Notice the way reflexive pronouns are used in the story (himself, yourself, etc.): (1) "He made them himself at odd moments." (2) "He raised himself." (3) "He had let himself be fooled by a bait and had been caught." (4) "A day may come when you yourself may want to get a big piece of pork." Pick out other examples of the use of reflexive pronouns from the story and notice how they are used.**

SOLUTION

A **reflexive pronoun** (*myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves*) is one whose subject and object refer to the same person or thing. The story uses reflexive pronouns in three main ways: (a) for **emphasis** (the subject did the action without help); (b) to make a verb **reflexive** (the action returns to the doer); (c) to signal that a person acted **independently or against an expectation**.

- *Reflexive emphasis.* Examples (1) and (4) above are emphatic: "He made them *himself*" (without help) and "you *yourself*" (you, and not someone else). Other text examples in the same category include: "He felt quite pleased with his smartness" (the smartness was *his own*); "I never pretended to be anything but a poor trader" (the I-pronoun stresses the speaker himself).
- *Reflexive verbs.* Examples (2) and (3) above use the pronoun as a true object of the verb ("raised himself", "let himself be fooled"). Other text examples in the same category include: "He had let himself be tempted to touch the bait"; "he stretched himself out on the floor"; "he hung the leather pouch very carefully back in its place" (no reflexive pronoun, comparison only); "Either he has stolen something or else he has escaped from jail" (no reflexive); "She could not get away from the idea all at once".
- *Independent-action reflexive.* The reflexive sometimes signals a deliberate choice. "To go up to the manor house would be like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion's den." The word *himself* after *throwing* stresses that the action would be the peddler's own choice, not someone else's doing.

- *Reflexive that softens an action.* "He came in to warm himself in front of the fire." Strictly the verb "warm" could be used without the reflexive in modern English ("come in to warm up"), but the older reflexive form keeps the subject's responsibility for the action visible. Lagerlöf's translator preserves this.
- *Reflexive for self-revealing emotion.* "The stranger had stretched himself out on the floor" (*stretched himself out* where modern English would often write "stretched out"); "He summoned all his strength, got up, and staggered in the direction of the sound" (no reflexive). The first sentence's reflexive marks the action as something the subject did to himself.

Five further examples to quote from the story: "He made them *himself* at odd moments"; "He had let *himself* be tempted to touch the bait"; "He stretched *himself* out on the floor"; "He came in to warm *himself* in front of the fire"; "Throwing *himself* voluntarily into the lion's den".

> **Final Answer:** The story uses reflexive pronouns in three patterns: (a) for emphasis ("He made them himself"; "you yourself may want"), (b) as the object of a reflexive verb ("He raised himself"; "He had let himself be fooled"), and (c) to underline that the action is the subject's own deliberate choice ("throwing himself voluntarily into the lion's den"). Other examples include "stretched himself out on the floor" and "warm himself in front of the fire".

♥ Why This Matters

Reflexive pronouns are a small but high-value grammar topic for Class 12 boards. A complete answer separates the three uses (emphasis, reflexive verb, independent action) and gives at least one quoted example for each from the chapter itself.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Prof Anjali Krishnamurthy, PhD English (Syntax), Pondicherry University*

Strategic angle. A confident answer treats the four example sentences as a teaching set and shows that the chapter uses the reflexive in at least two distinct grammatical roles: *intensive* (emphasis) and *reflexive* (true object). The student should be able to tell which is which on sight.

- *Intensive use: identification test.* If the pronoun can be removed without breaking the sentence, and only the emphasis is lost, the pronoun is intensive. "He made them at odd moments" is still grammatical; "He made them *himself* at odd moments" just adds "and not someone else".
- *Reflexive use: identification test.* If removing the pronoun makes the sentence ungrammatical (because the verb needs an object), the pronoun is truly reflexive. "He raised himself" becomes "He raised" which is incomplete; the pronoun is needed.

- *Mixed cases.* "He had let himself be fooled by a bait" is reflexive (let needs an object; himself is that object). "A day may come when you yourself may want to get a big piece of pork" is intensive (yourself emphasises you).
- *The chapter's idiom.* Lagerlöf's English translator uses the reflexive freely, in some places where modern Indian English would drop it ("stretched himself out"). Students should recognise the form even where it is slightly archaic.
- *Application.* A Class 12 student should be able to write a short paragraph using both intensive and reflexive pronouns correctly, for example: "He woke up early himself (intensive) and prepared himself (reflexive) for the long walk to the garage".

Why this matters. For boards, the reflexive question appears almost every other year. A neat three-way taxonomy (intensive, reflexive, independent-action) backed by quoted text examples is a model answer.

> **Final Answer:** The story uses reflexive pronouns in three ways: intensive/emphatic ("He made them himself"; "you yourself may want"), truly reflexive as object of a reflexive verb ("He raised himself"; "He had let himself be fooled"), and to underline an action as the subject's deliberate choice ("throwing himself voluntarily into the lion's den"; "stretched himself out on the floor"; "warm himself in front of the fire").

Part 9: Thinking about language (pages 43–44)

Q 4.30 **Notice the words in bold in the following sentence: "The fire boy shovelled charcoal into the maw of the furnace with a great deal of clatter." This is a phrase used in the specific context of an iron plant. Pick out other such phrases and words from the story that are peculiar to the terminology of ironworks.**

SOLUTION

A **technical vocabulary** (or *jargon*) is the cluster of words and phrases that belong to a single trade or industry. The Rattrap is set partly at Ramsjö Ironworks, and the chapter's pages on the forge use a small but precise set of iron-working terms. Collecting them shows how Lagerlöf grounds her fairy-tale setting in real industrial detail.

- **Smelter.** A furnace for melting ore to extract metal. "The Ramsjö Ironworks... were... a large plant, with smelter, rolling mill, and forge."
- **Rolling mill.** A machine that rolls heated metal into sheets or bars. Listed alongside smelter and forge as one of the three core sections.
- **Forge.** The workshop where iron is heated and hammered into shape. The peddler's

whole forge scene takes place here.

- **Smith / Blacksmith / Master Smith.** The skilled worker who heats and hammers metal in the forge. "The master smith and his helper sat in the dark forge near the furnace."
- **Helper.** The blacksmith's assistant. Often managed the bellows and ran the small operations of the forge.
- **Pig iron.** The crude iron product of the smelter, cast into rough bars ("pigs"), ready for further working. "Waiting for the pig iron, which had been put in the fire, to be ready to put on the anvil."
- **Anvil.** The heavy iron block on which the smith hammers hot metal into shape. Implied in "ready to put on the anvil".
- **Furnace.** The fire-chamber where the metal is heated. "The big bellows groaned and the burning coal cracked."
- **Bellows.** The mechanism that pumps air into the furnace to raise its temperature. The text gives them a sound: "the big bellows groaned".
- **Maw of the furnace.** A figurative term for the mouth or opening of the furnace, into which charcoal is shovelled. "The fire boy shovelled charcoal into the maw of the furnace."
- **Charcoal.** The fuel of the furnace, often used in pre-coke iron-working. "Shovelled charcoal into the maw" and "charcoal still glowed in the furnace".
- **Charcoal crates.** Large open containers at the mill in which charcoal is stored. "Black from all the coal dust which sifted down from the big charcoal crates."
- **Ironmaster.** The owner-manager of an iron plant; in 19th-century Sweden, a hereditary or senior industrial position. "The Ramsjö iron mill was owned by a very prominent ironmaster."
- **Iron bar.** The long bar used to stir the glowing metal. "One of them got up to stir the glowing mass with a long iron bar."
- **Hammer strokes from an iron mill.** The rhythmic sound of metal being beaten. The peddler hears it from the forest: "a hard regular thumping . . . those are the hammer strokes from an iron mill."

Final Answer: Iron-working terms in the chapter include: *smelter*, *rolling mill*, *forge*, *ironmaster*, *master smith / blacksmith / helper / fire boy*, *pig iron*, *anvil*, *furnace*, *bellows*, *maw of the furnace*, *charcoal* and *charcoal crates*, *long iron bar* (for stirring glowing metal), and *hammer strokes from an iron mill*. Together they ground the fairy-tale opening of the chapter in the real industrial geography of 19th-century Sweden.

☞ Exam Tip

List the terms in groups: plant sections (smelter, rolling mill, forge), people (ironmaster, smith, helper, fire boy), materials (pig iron, charcoal), and equipment (furnace, anvil, bellows, iron bar). Grouped lists score higher than random ones.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Mr Ankur Saxena, MA Industrial History, IIT Kanpur*

Strategic angle. A confident answer notices that the iron-works vocabulary is doing more than naming objects. It sets up the scene physically (you can hear the bellows, smell the charcoal, see the glow) and prepares the chapter for the moment the peddler walks in. The vocabulary is the chapter's small piece of industrial reportage inside a moral fable.

- *Plant sections.* Smelter (where ore becomes molten iron), rolling mill (where the iron is shaped into bars and sheets), forge (where it is finished by hammer). The three together cover the full sequence of pre-modern iron production.
- *Hierarchy of workers.* Ironmaster (owner), master smith (skilled worker in the forge), helper (apprentice), fire boy (the lowest-grade worker, who keeps the furnace fed). The vocabulary mirrors the plant's chain of command.
- *Materials.* Pig iron (rough product of smelting), charcoal (fuel). Both are 19th-century terms; pig iron is so called because of the rough shape of the cast bars.
- *Equipment.* Furnace (the heat source), bellows (the air supply), anvil (the working surface), iron bar (the stirring tool). Each named in the chapter at the moment of use.
- *Sound vocabulary.* "The big bellows groaned and the burning coal cracked. . . shovelled charcoal into the maw of the furnace with a great deal of clatter." Lagerlöf also gives the trade its sound. The peddler hears "a hard regular thumping" from the forest, the sound of iron being beaten on the anvil.
- *Class-12 takeaway.* A small technical vocabulary, carefully placed, can ground a piece of literary prose in a real industry. Lagerlöf, the daughter of a Swedish military officer turned landowner, knew the Swedish iron trade well enough to write the forge scene from inside.

Why this matters. The vocabulary makes the fairy-tale setting feel solid. The peddler walks out of an "impenetrable" forest into a working iron plant, and the plant's vocabulary tells the reader that he is now in a place where real things happen with real tools.

Final Answer: Iron-works vocabulary in the chapter: *smelter*, *rolling mill*, *forge*, *ironmaster*, *master smith / blacksmith / helper / fire boy*, *pig iron*, *anvil*, *furnace*, *bellows*, *maw of the furnace*, *charcoal* and *charcoal crates*, the *long iron bar* for stirring the glowing mass, and the audible *hammer strokes from an iron mill*. Grouped by plant sections, workers, materials and equipment, the list shows how Lagerlöf grounds her moral fable in real industrial detail.

Q 4.31 Mjolis is a card game of Sweden. Name a few indoor games played in your region. 'Chopar' could be an example.

SOLUTION

The chapter's mention of *mjolis* is a small piece of cultural specificity: a Swedish card game named in passing. The question asks the student to provide a parallel list of Indian indoor games. A complete answer names several games from different regions, briefly explaining each.

- **Chaupar (or Chopar / Pachisi).** A cross-and-circle board game played with cowrie shells or long dice, popular across north India for centuries. The Mughal courts played a giant version of it on palace floors. Modern Ludo is its descendant.
- **Carrom.** A flat wooden board with pockets at the corners; players flick small wooden discs with a striker. Hugely popular across India in households, clubs and community spaces.
- **Ludo (Pachisi descendant).** A four-player board game with dice and tokens; nearly universal in Indian homes.
- **Snakes and Ladders.** Originally the Indian game *Moksha Patam*, a moral-instruction board game; modernised and exported worldwide; still played across India.
- **Cards.** Indian households play many card games, *Teen Patti* (three-card poker), *Rummy*, *Bridge*, *Mendicot*, *Twenty-Eight* (popular in Kerala), *Bluff*, and *Donkey* are all common.
- **Chess.** *Chaturanga*, the ancestor of modern chess, originated in India. Modern Indian children continue to learn it at home.
- **Sholo Guti / Bagh-Bandi.** Tiger-and-goats board game played in Bengal, Nepal and parts of north-east India: a hunter-and-prey strategy game on a triangular board.
- **Pallanguzhi.** A south-Indian count-and-capture game played with cowrie shells or tamarind seeds on a carved wooden board with fourteen pits. Tamil Nadu and Karnataka households still play it.
- **Gilli-Danda** (with reservations: outdoor in most regions, but indoor in long

verandahs in some). A small stick game requiring two carved pieces.

- **Antakshari.** A singing game played in groups, especially on long train journeys or family gatherings. Strictly an oral game, but a strong indoor game across India.

> **Final Answer:** Indoor games from across India include: *Chaupar / Pachisi* (the north-Indian cross-board game with cowries or long dice), *Carrom* (flick-and-pocket board), *Ludo* (modern Pachisi-descendant), *Snakes and Ladders* (from the moral game *Moksha Patam*), card games like *Teen Patti*, *Rummy*, *Twenty-Eight*, *Bluff*, *Mendicot*, *Chess* (*Chaturanga*), *Sholo Guti / Bagh-Bandi* (the tiger-and-goats game of Bengal), *Pallanguzhi* (the south-Indian count-and-capture game with tamarind seeds), and the singing game *Antakshari*.

☞ How to present your list

Group by region (north, south, east, west) and by type (board, card, count-and-capture, oral). A grouped list is much stronger than a random one.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Padma Iyer, PhD Cultural Studies, Indian Institute of Advanced Study Shimla*

Strategic angle. A confident answer goes beyond naming games to noticing what they reveal about a region: materials used (cowrie shells in coastal regions, tamarind seeds in the south, wooden boards in carrom-playing communities), structures (chase, capture, count, strategy) and social use (children's vs adults', household vs club, festival vs daily).

- *Chase and race games.* Pachisi, Ludo, Snakes and Ladders, Sholo Guti. The dice-driven pace fits large family settings.
- *Capture and strategy games.* Chess (Chaturanga), Pallanguzhi, Sholo Guti (which is both capture and chase). These suit two-player, sit-down, long-form play.
- *Skill games.* Carrom, Marbles (often indoor in courtyards). These reward steady hands and aim.
- *Card games.* Rummy, Teen Patti, Bridge, Twenty-Eight, Mendicot. The card pack reached India through Persian and European routes and was absorbed into family life over centuries.
- *Oral and group games.* Antakshari (song chain), Atya Patya (regional variants), Name-Place- Animal-Thing. These need only a paper or a tune and scale to any group size.
- *Material culture.* A region's indoor games tell you what its households kept on hand. Cowrie shells and tamarind seeds in coastal kitchens, brass and ivory chess pieces in noble houses, wooden carrom boards in middle-class homes. The peddler's mention of *mjolis* works the same way: a small clue about what Swedish crofters kept in the

cottage on long winter nights.

Why this matters. For Class 12 students the question is a small invitation to notice that culture lives in objects. Lagerlöf's mjolis grounds her crofter's cottage in real Swedish home life; the student's list of Pachisi, carrom and Pallanguzhi can do the same for the Indian home.

> **Final Answer:** Indian indoor games include the chase-and-race games (Chaupar / Pachisi, Ludo, Snakes and Ladders, Sholo Guti), strategy games (Chess / Chaturanga, Pallanguzhi), skill games (Carrom), card games (Rummy, Teen Patti, Bridge, Twenty-Eight, Mendicot, Bluff) and oral group games (Antakshari, Name-Place-Animal-Thing). Each region keeps a slightly different mix; together they fill the same role in Indian homes that mjolis fills in the crofter's cottage in Lagerlöf's Sweden.

Q 4.32 A crofter is a person who rents or owns a small farm especially in Scotland. Think of other uncommon terms for 'a small farmer' including those in your language.

SOLUTION

A **small farmer** is a person who works a small plot of land, often as tenant or smallholder. English and Indian languages have many specific words for such a person, reflecting the long agricultural histories of both worlds. A complete answer names several English and Indian terms, with a short note on each.

- **Crofter.** Scottish term; tenant of a small, often Highland, holding called a *croft*. Lagerlöf's text uses this English translation for the Swedish equivalent.
- **Peasant.** European general term; a small farmer or agricultural labourer, often a tenant of a larger landlord. Common in medieval and modern European usage.
- **Smallholder.** Modern English administrative term; a person who owns or rents a small piece of land too small to be called a farm.
- **Tenant farmer.** A farmer who works land belonging to another, paying rent in cash or share of crop.
- **Sharecropper.** An American and Asian term; a tenant farmer who pays a fixed share of the harvest as rent.
- **Yeoman (historical).** An English small independent farmer below the gentry, with his own small plot. The word is now obsolete except in ceremonial use.
- **Cottier.** Old Irish term; a labourer with the right to a small cottage and a tiny garden plot.
- **Husbandman (historical).** A small English farmer in the 16th to 18th centuries,

below the yeoman.

- **Kisan** (Hindi/Urdu). The general Indian term for a farmer. *Chhota kisan* = small farmer. Widely used in policy and political vocabulary.
- **Krishak** (Bengali, Hindi). A Sanskrit-derived term for farmer, often used in formal speech.
- **Raiyat / Ryot.** Indian Persian-derived term for a peasant landholder, especially under the *Ryotwari* settlement of colonial Madras and Bombay.
- **Kheduti / Khedut** (Gujarati). A Gujarati term for a tiller of land.
- **Vyavasayi / Karshakar / Krishi**-derived terms in south Indian languages: *Vyavasayi* (Tamil), *Karshakar* (Malayalam), *Raitu* (Telugu), *Raita* (Kannada).
- **Bargadar** (Bengal). The local term for a sharecropper, formalised in West Bengal's *Operation Barga* land reforms of the 1970s.
- **Adhiyar / Sajhedar** (Hindi). Sharecroppers who keep half (*adha*) the crop as wage.

Final Answer: English uses crofter (Scottish), peasant (general European), small-holder, tenant farmer, sharecropper, yeoman (historical small landowner), cottier (Irish), and husbandman (old English). Indian languages contribute kisan (Hindi), krishak (Bengali/Hindi), raiyat or ryot (Persian-derived, historical Indian land settlements), khedut (Gujarati), vyavasayi (Tamil), karshakar (Malayalam), raitu / raita (Telugu / Kannada), and the sharecropper-specific bargadar (Bengali) and adhiyar (Hindi). Each word carries a particular arrangement of land, rent and rights.

♥ Why This Matters

This is a vocabulary question with a serious social substructure. Each word names a different arrangement of land tenure: tenant, owner, sharecropper, cottager. A complete answer offers an Indian-language list as well as an English one, and notes that the same person may carry different names under different land systems.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Ramesh Yadav, PhD Agricultural Economics, Indian Agricultural Research Institute*

Strategic angle. A confident answer notices that the many terms for "small farmer" are not synonyms; they describe slightly different legal and economic positions. A small landowner is not a sharecropper; a sharecropper is not a labourer; a labourer is not a kisan. The vocabulary preserves distinctions the law sometimes blurs.

- *By land tenure.* Owners (small landowner, yeoman, kheduti), tenants (crofter, cottier, tenant farmer), sharecroppers (sharecropper, bargadar, adhiyar), labourers without land (agricultural labourer, *khet-mazdoor*).

- *By scale.* The word *crofter* implies a very small plot. *Smallholder* is the modern administrative term, often legally defined (e.g. land below a certain acreage). *Kisan* is the general term and is scale-neutral.
- *By historical period. Yeoman* and *husbandman* are historical English; *ryot* is colonial Indian; *kisan* is the modern Indian political category.
- *By language.* Each Indian language preserves its own terms, often Sanskrit-derived (krishak, karshakar) or Persian-derived (raiyat, kashtkar). The list is long because India's agricultural history is long.
- *Class-12 takeaway.* Vocabulary, in this question, is a window onto land arrangements. Every name carries a small piece of legal and economic history. The student who can group the names by tenure (owner, tenant, sharecropper, labourer) is reading beyond the words to the systems that produced them.

Why this matters. The chapter's mention of *crofter* is not just a translator's word; it is a specific kind of tenant. A complete answer in Class 12 should show that English and Indian languages both preserve a rich vocabulary for what looks, from a distance, like "a small farmer".

Final Answer: English terms: crofter (Scottish tenant of a *croft*), peasant, smallholder, tenant farmer, sharecropper, yeoman (historical), cottier (Irish), husbandman (historical English). Indian-language terms: *kisan* (Hindi), *krishak* (Bengali/Hindi), *raiyat / ryot* (historical), *khedut* (Gujarati), *vyavasayi* (Tamil), *karshakar* (Malayalam), *raitu / raita* (Telugu / Kannada), *bargadar* (Bengal sharecropper), *adhiyar* (Hindi sharecropper). Each word names a specific arrangement of land, rent, and rights.

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Key Takeaways

- Selma Lagerlöf (1858–1940), the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature (1909), set this story in rural Sweden's iron-mining country and told it "somewhat in the manner of a fairy tale".
- The peddler invents the rattrap metaphor on a lonely road: the whole world is a big rattrap, baited with "riches and joys, shelter and food, heat and clothing", and ordinary people are the rats.

- The crofter's unconditional hospitality (porridge, tobacco, mjolis, the showing of thirty kronor) is repaid with theft. The peddler, forced into the forest, is caught in a literal trap and recognises, "Now his own turn had come."
- At Ramsjö Ironworks, the ironmaster mistakes the peddler in the dim firelight for his old regimental comrade "Captain von Stahle / Nils Olof" and invites him home for Christmas. The kindness is real but *conditional* on the false identity.
- Edla Willmansson, the ironmaster's daughter, fetches the peddler from the forge with unconditional compassion: she promises he may leave whenever he wishes and treats him as Captain even after the breakfast revelation collapses her father's mistake.
- Themes: greed as a baited rattrap; loneliness as the common condition of crofter, peddler, ironmaster and Edla; conditional vs unconditional kindness; redemption through being treated as one's better self ("raised to captain. . . power to clear himself").
- Symbols and motifs: the rattrap (the world's traps and eventually a Christmas gift of redemption); the thirty kronor (the bait and the returned debt); Captain von Stahle (an error become a title earned); Christmas Eve (the day of unconditional welcome).
- Style: dry humour (the peddler's metaphor, his sermon, his "large, jagged characters" signature), tight plotting through surprise after surprise, and a folk- tale's careful balance of moral seriousness and narrative pleasure.

End of The Rattrap NCERT Solutions