

Lesson: Dialogue and Incidents as Driving Forces of Plot and Characterization

Lesson Topic: Analyze how dialogue can change the pace of a story or drama

Question **1**

Read the following passage.

"My husband is ill!" Nellie sobbed out. The doctor was silent. He slowly sat up, propped his head on his hand, and looked at his visitor with fixed, sleepy eyes. "My husband is ill!" Nellie continued, restraining her sobs. "For mercy's sake come quickly. Make haste...Make haste!"

"Eh?" growled the doctor, blowing into his hand.

"Come! Come this very minute! Or...it's terrible to think! For mercy's sake!"

And pale, exhausted Nellie, gasping and swallowing her tears, began describing to the doctor her husband's illness, her unutterable terror. Her sufferings would have touched the heart of a stone, but the doctor looked at her, blew into his open hand, and—not a movement.

"I'll come to-morrow!" he muttered.

"That's impossible!" cried Nellie. "I know my husband has typhus! At once...this very minute you are needed!"

"I...er...have only just come in," muttered the doctor. "For the last three days I've been away, seeing typhus patients, and I'm exhausted and ill myself...I simply can't! Absolutely! I've caught it myself! There!"

-Adapted from "The Looking-Glass" by Anton Chekhov

How does the dialogue affect the pace of the story?

- The dialogue slows down the pace of the story.
- The dialogue speeds up the pace of the story.
- The dialogue does not change the pace of the story.

Question 2

But it was no use. Before I could arrest him he had sat down on the bed, and it was a melancholy ruin.

"Now what sort of a way is that to do? First you come lumbering about the place bringing a legion of vagabond goblins along with you to worry me to death and then you repay me by wrecking all the furniture you can find to sit down on. And why will you? You damage yourself as much as you do me. You have broken off the end of your spinal column, and littered up the floor with chips of your hams till the place looks like a marble yard. You ought to be ashamed of yourself—you are big enough to know better."

"Well, I will not break any more furniture. But what am I to do? I have not had a chance to sit down for a century." And the tears came into his eyes.

What does this dialogue reveal about the relationship between the narrator and the ghost?

- The narrator looks down on the ghost.
- The ghost is intimidated by the narrator.
- The ghost admires the narrator.
- The narrator is afraid of the ghost.

Question 3

Which of the following scenarios describes a character making a decision as a result of a conversation that alters the character's thought process?

- Lee had not been to the dentist in four years, and he did not plan on visiting the dentist again until his teeth were in severe pain. He told his friend Ray about this plan, and Ray reminded Lee that going to the dentist twice a year can help prevent severe pain. Lee made an appointment with the dentist.
- Lee had not been to the dentist in four years, and he did not plan on visiting the dentist again until his teeth were in severe pain. He told his friend Ray about this plan, and Ray agreed that going to the dentist was inconvenient and painful. Lee was happy he had made this decision.
- Lee had not been to the dentist in four years, and he did not plan on visiting the dentist again until his teeth were in severe pain. He told his friend Ray about this plan, and Ray told Lee about a great local dentist. Lee said that whenever he next needed to go to the dentist, he would call Ray's dentist.
- Lee had not been to the dentist in four years, and he did not plan on visiting the dentist again until his teeth were in severe pain. He told his friend Ray about this plan, and Ray said that he had not been to the dentist in five years. Lee and Ray gave each other a high five.



In this excerpt, a young girl named Rose is discussing a decision with her uncle.

Adapted from

Eight Cousins

By Louisa May Alcott

"Phebe ought to have a holiday like the rest of us. It's too bad to leave her out," thought Rose.

This thought came back to Rose several times that evening, for Phebe would have added much to the little concert they had in the moonlight, would have enjoyed the stories told, been quick at guessing the conundrums, and laughed with all her heart at the fun. The merry going to bed would have been the best of all, for Rose wanted someone to whisper and giggle and tell secrets, as girls delight to do. Alas, Phebe was a maid, and she was needed for work at the big house.

Long after the rest were asleep, Rose lay wide awake, excited by the novelty of all about her, and a thought that had come into her mind. Maybe she could take Phebe's place for a day? Rose left her tent to enjoy the evening air and ponder this idea.

Fortunately, Uncle Alec saw her before she had time to catch cold, for coming out to tie back the door-flap of his tent for more air, he beheld the small figure perched in the moonlight. Having no fear of ghosts, he quietly approached, and, seeing that she was wide awake, said, with a hand on her shining hair,

"What is my girl doing here?"

"Having a good time," answered Rose, not at all startled.

"I wonder what she was thinking about with such a sober look."

"The story you told of the brave sailor who gave up his place on the raft to the woman, and the last drop of water to the poor baby. People who make sacrifices are very much loved and admired, aren't they?" she asked, earnestly.

"If the sacrifice is a true one. But many of the bravest never are known, and get no praise. That does not lessen their beauty, though perhaps it makes them harder, for we all like sympathy," and Uncle Alec sighed a patient sort of sigh.

Rose pondered over the saying as if it pleased her, and then said, with a clear, bright look,

"A real sacrifice is giving up something you want or enjoy very much, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Doing it one's own self because one loves another person very much and wants her to be happy?"

"Yes."

"And doing it pleasantly, and being glad about it, and not minding the praise if it doesn't come?"

"Yes, dear, that is the true spirit of self-sacrifice; you seem to understand it, and I dare say you will have many chances in your life to try the real thing. I hope they won't be very hard ones."

Question 4

Prior to her conversation with Uncle Alec, what were the two courses of action that Rose was deciding between?

Check all that are true.

- staying up all night to watch the sun rise
- taking Phebe's place as a maid for a day
- returning to her house in the city
- continuing to enjoy the camping holiday

Question 5

Based on what you know about Rose, what is the best explanation of how the conversation with Uncle Alec influenced her?

- Uncle Alec convinces Rose that she should not miss the excitement of the last day of camping.
- Uncle Alec confirms Rose's desire to make a sacrifice for a friend.
- Uncle Alec convinces Rose that it's not worth making a sacrifice for a lowly maid.
- Uncle Alec gives Rose an option where both she and Phebe can enjoy a day off.

Question 6

Based on the details in the passage, why do you think Uncle Alec's argument was convincing for Rose?

- Uncle Alec confirms what Rose is already thinking.
- Uncle Alec uses an example from his own life to convince Rose.
- Uncle Alec gently explains why Rose is wrong.
- Uncle Alec uses several anecdotes to show Rose why she is wrong.