

Subject - English

Class - x

Date - 18.09.21

The Hundred Dresses II

Explanation

WHILE the class was circling the room, the monitor from the principal's office brought Miss Mason a note. Miss Mason read it several times and studied it thoughtfully for a while. Then she clapped her hands. "Attention, class. Everyone back to their seat." When the shuffling of feet had stopped and the room was still and quiet, Miss Mason said, "I have a letter from Wanda's father that I want to read to you." Miss Mason stood there a moment and the silence in the room grew tense and expectant. The teacher adjusted her glasses slowly and deliberately. Her manner indicated that what was coming — this letter from Wanda's father — was a matter of great importance. Everybody listened closely as Miss Mason read the brief note.

Listened closely- listened with attention

Everyone was having a look at the amazing drawings Wanda had drawn and admiring it when the monitor of the class brought a piece of note for Miss Mason. Miss Mason read that note multiple times as she couldn't believe what was written in it. Finally, she decided to gather the class to read it loud and clear. It was a letter from Wanda Petronski's dad. She silenced for a while which created tension in the minds of her students. She adjusted her spectacles which made it clear how important that note is. She began reading it and everyone listened carefully.

Dear Teacher:

My Wanda will not come to your school any more. Jake also. Now we move away to big city. No more holler 'Pollack'. No more ask why funny name. Plenty of funny names in the big city.

Yours truly,

Jan Petronski

The letter began with a salutation to Miss Mason. Wanda's father conveyed his intention of not sending both of his children, Wanda and Jake, to school anymore. He mentioned that they were shifting to another city, a big one where no one would care enough about their strange name, a big city with a lot of people having weird names. (Wanda's classmates thought her name was weird and funny. Wanda was a Polish immigrant to America and thus, had an unfamiliar name). A deep silence met the reading of this letter. Miss Mason took off her glasses, blew on them and wiped them on her soft white handkerchief. Then she put them on again and looked at the class. When she spoke her voice was very low. "I am sure that none of the boys and girls in Room Thirteen would purposely and deliberately hurt anyone's feelings because his or her name happened to be a long, unfamiliar one. I prefer to think that what was said was said in

thoughtlessness. I know that all of you feel the way I do, that this is a very unfortunate thing to have happened — unfortunate and sad, both. And I want you all to think about it.”

After hearing what was there in that letter, everyone was left speechless. Miss Mason, too, was stunned and thus, she cleaned her glasses, wore them again and spoke to the class in a low voice. She conveyed her disappointment to the class and asked them to ensure her that nothing was done purposefully to hurt Wanda. She gave the children benefit of doubt that everything they did, was done unintentionally. She said whatever happened was “sad” and “unfortunate”. She advised the students to introspect about it too.

The first period was a study period. Maddie tried to prepare her lessons, but she could not put her mind on her work. She had a very sick feeling in the bottom of her stomach. True, she had not enjoyed listening to Peggy ask Wanda how many dresses she had in her closet, but she had said nothing. She had stood by silently, and that was just as bad as what Peggy had done. Worse. She was a coward. At least Peggy hadn’t considered they were being mean but she, Maddie, had thought they were doing wrong. She could put herself in Wanda’s shoes.

Everyone began thinking about what was written in that letter and how each one of them made Wanda feel. In their first period, Maddie couldn’t concentrate on her studies as she felt sick for not stopping Peggy at the right time. Had she stopped Peggy from playing that dress game with Wanda, things could have been different. Although Maddie never teased Wanda, but nor did she stop Peggy from doing it, which makes her just as bad or maybe, worse. Peggy’s intentions were never to hurt Wanda and she was not aware that her game hurt her feelings. Maddie, on the other hand was aware of it’s impact, yet, she stood silent which made her a coward for not standing against what’s wrong.

Goodness! Wasn’t there anything she could do? If only she could tell Wanda she hadn’t meant to hurt her feelings. She turned around and stole a glance at Peggy, but Peggy did not look up. She seemed to be studying hard. Well, whether Peggy felt badly or not, she, Maddie, had to do something. She had to find Wanda Petronski. Maybe she had not yet moved away. Maybe Peggy would climb the Heights with her, and they would tell Wanda she had won the contest, that they thought she was smart and the hundred dresses were beautiful.

Filled with guilt and regret, Maddie wished for a chance to apologise to Wanda. Hoping Peggy would be thinking about Wanda too, she takes a look at Peg but she was busy studying. Regardless of what Peggy was thinking, Maddie decided to take some action. She hoped Wanda hadn’t yet moved away and she could tell her how sorry she was and appreciate her hundred dresses.

When school was dismissed in the afternoon, Peggy said, with pretended casualness, “Hey, let’s go and see if that kid has left town or not.” So Peggy had had the same idea! Maddie glowed. Peg was really all right. The two girls hurried out of the building, up the street toward

Boggins Heights, the part of town that wore such a forbidding air on this kind of a November afternoon, drizzly, damp and dismal.

Damp and dismal- wet and sad (here, expressing a state of hopelessness)

Forbidding- Unfriendly or threatening in nature

That day, after the school had ended, Peggy asked Maddie if they could go and check if Wanda has moved or not. Maddie was satisfied at the thought that they both had same plans of apologizing to Wanda. Both of them hurried to Boggins Heights, the place where Wanda lived in order to find her. During this season, the place was generally wet and the atmosphere was sad and hopeless.

“Well, at least,” said Peggy gruffly, “I never did call her a foreigner or make fun of her name. I never thought she had the sense to know we were making fun of her anyway. I thought she was too dumb. And gee, look how she can draw!” Maddie could say nothing. All she hoped was that they would find Wanda. She wanted to tell her that they were sorry they had picked on her, and how wonderful the whole school thought she was, and please, not to move away and everybody would be nice. She and Peggy would fight anybody who was not nice.

The two girls hurried on. They hoped to get to the top of the hill before dark.

Peggy tries to comfort herself by murmuring that at least she didn't call her a foreigner because she was an immigrant. Neither did she make her feel different for having an unfamiliar name. She was always in this delusion that Wanda had no idea that those girls were making fun of her. Above all, Wanda is such a great artist too. Maddie, on the other hand, couldn't say a word. What she hoped for is a chance to confess, make amends, appreciate her and try to stop her from moving away. In fact, she even thought of conveying her idea to protect Wanda if anyone tried to trouble her in any way. In order to reach the place before night, they hurried.

“I think that's where the Petronskis live,” said Maddie, pointing to a little white house. Wisps of old grass stuck up here and there along the pathway like thin kittens. The house and its sparse little yard looked shabby but clean. It reminded Maddie of Wanda's one dress, her faded blue cotton dress, shabby but clean. There was not a sign of life about the house. Peggy knocked firmly on the door, but there was no answer. She and Maddie went around to the back yard and knocked there. Still there was no answer.

They saw a white little house up there which they thought was the place where Wanda Petronski lived. The house and its surroundings were “shabby but clean” just like Wanda's worn-out blue dress. Thin bunches of grass grew along the path that led to the house. They resembled thin kittens. No one could be seen around the house. They knocked both at the front and backyard doors, but to their disappointment, there was no answer.

There was no doubt about it. The Petronskis were gone. How could they ever make amends? They turned slowly and made their way back down the hill. "Well, anyway," said Peggy, "she's gone now, so what can we do? Besides, when I was asking her about all her dresses, she probably was getting good ideas for her drawings. She might not even have won the contest, otherwise."

(To) make amends- to show that one is sorry by doing something else

Now, the Petronski's had gone and along with them, Maddie and Peggy's last chance to make amends too. In order to comfort herself, Peggy started saying that Wanda must have looked for drawing inspiration only after she started her dresses game. And hadn't she done that, Wanda would have never won the drawing competition.

Maddie turned this idea carefully over in her head, for if there were anything in it she would not have to feel so badly. But that night she could not get to sleep. She thought about Wanda and her faded blue dress and the little house she had lived in. And she thought of the glowing picture those hundred dresses made — all lined up in the classroom. At last Maddie sat up in bed and pressed her forehead tight in her hands and really thought. This was the hardest thinking she had ever done. After a long, long time, she reached an important conclusion. She was never going to stand by and say nothing again.

Maddie also tried to convince her after what Peggy said and that if this is the case, she doesn't have to feel so bad. But later that night, she couldn't sleep as she was thinking constantly about Wanda's little house, her faded blue dress, both shabby but clean and her glorious hundred dresses that were all lined up in the classroom, instead of the "closet". Finally, she sat in her bed and started thinking deeply, the hardest she'd ever done. She pressed her forehead tight in her hands which indicated that she was really trying to concentrate. After thinking so much and so deeply, she came to a conclusion that she will always stand against the wrongs and will never say nothing when she has to.

If she ever heard anybody picking on someone because they were funny looking or because they had strange names, she'd speak up. Even if it meant losing Peggy's friendship. She had no way of making things right with Wanda, but from now on she would never make anybody else that unhappy again.

Word meanings

Picking on someone- criticising someone.

She decided that she'd never let anyone make fun of others because of their appearance, name, clothes or where they come from. She would not shy to speak up against Peggy, even if it meant losing her friendship. She could not go in the past to make amends with Wanda no

matter how much she wanted to but from now on, she is never going to let another person feel embarrassed or unhappy again.

On Saturday Maddie spent the afternoon with Peggy. They were writing a letter to Wanda Petronski. It was just a friendly letter telling about the contest and telling Wanda she had won. They told her how pretty her drawings were. And they asked her if she liked where she was living and if she liked her new teacher. They had meant to say they were sorry, but it ended up with their just writing a friendly letter, the kind they would have written to any good friend, and they signed it with lots of X's for love. They mailed the letter to Boggins Heights, writing 'Please Forward' on the envelope.

On Saturday, both of them sat together and decided to write a letter to Wanda telling her about the contest, asking her where she is living now and how that place is. No matter how much they wanted to apologise, they couldn't summon the courage to do so and thus, ended up writing a friendly letter as if Wanda was their good friend. They mailed it to Boggins Heights with 'Please forward' written on it because they didn't know her new address.

Days passed and there was no answer, but the letter did not come back, so maybe Wanda had received it. Perhaps she was so hurt and angry she was not going to answer. You could not blame her. Weeks went by and still Wanda did not answer. Peggy had begun to forget the whole business, and Maddie put herself to sleep at night making speeches about Wanda, defending her from great crowds of girls who were trying to tease her with, "How many dresses have you got?" And before Wanda could press her lips together in a tight line, the way she did before answering, Maddie would cry out, "Stop!" Then everybody would feel ashamed the way she used to feel.

There was no reply from Wanda but they didn't also receive the letter back, thus they concluded that it must have reached Wanda but she was so upset that she didn't answer. They waited for weeks, but still, no answer. Peggy began to forget about this whole thing while Maddie used to make scenarios in her head before sleeping where she defended Wanda. She thought of scenarios where large groups of girls surrounded Wanda and would ask her, "How many dresses have you got?", and as soon as anyone could say more, Wanda would interrupt and say "stop" so that all of them could end up ashamed.

Now it was Christmas time and there was snow on the ground. Christmas bells and a small tree decorated the classroom. On the last day of school before the holidays, the teacher showed the class a letter she had received that morning.

You remember Wanda Petronski, the gifted little artist who won the drawing contest? Well, she has written me, and I am glad to know where she lives, because now I can send her medal. I want to read her letter to you."

It was winter season and there was snow everywhere on the ground. Christmas had come. They decorated their classrooms with bells and a small tree. That day, Miss Mason told the students that she had received a letter from Wanda Petronski. She is very happy to receive it because now she can send her the medal too.

Dear Miss Mason,

How are you and Room Thirteen? Please tell the girls they can keep those hundred dresses, because in my new house I have a hundred new ones, all lined up in my closet. I'd like that girl Peggy to have the drawing of the green dress with the red trimming, and her friend Maddie to have the blue one. For Christmas, I miss that school and my new teacher does not equalise with you. Merry Christmas to you and everybody.

Yours truly,

Wanda Petronski

The letter began in a very friendly tone. Wanda asked how everyone was and that they could keep her hundred dresses because in her new house, she has another lot of hundred dresses "lined up in her closet". She specifically mentioned the dress she wanted Maddie and Peggy to take home. The green dress with red trimmings was for Peggy while the blue one was for Maddie. She expressed her affection towards Miss Mason and wrote her new teacher could never replace Miss Mason. She wined up the letter by wishing everyone Merry Christmas and also wrote that she missed everyone in Room Number 13.

On the way home from school Maddie and Peggy held their drawings very carefully. All the houses had wreaths and holly in the windows. Outside the grocery store, hundreds of Christmas trees were stacked, and in the window, candy peppermint sticks and cornucopias of shiny transparent paper were strung. The air smelled like Christmas and light shining everywhere reflected different colours on the snow. "Boy!" said Peggy, "this shows she really likes us. It shows she got our letter and this is her way of saying that everything's all right. And that's that." "I hope so," said Maddie sadly. She felt sad because she knew she would never see the little tight-lipped Polish girl again and couldn't ever really make things right between them.

Cornucopias- decorative containers (usually containing flowers and fruits)

Holly- a shrub having prickly dark green leaves, small white flowers, and red berries. It is used in Christmas decorations.

It was Christmas season and all the houses were decorated. Grocery stores were stocked with Christmas trees, candy peppermint sticks and other Christmas stuff. The atmosphere was colourful and joyful. Maddie and Peggy took home the drawings very carefully when Peggy realised that this gesture implied that Wanda liked them. They also assumed that she got their

letter and everything was peaceful between them. Maddie, on the other hand, was quite sad because she would never be able to see that Polish, tight-lipped girl again. She'd never get a chance to make amends.

She went home and she pinned her drawing over a torn place in the pink-flowered wallpaper in the bedroom. The shabby room came alive from the brilliancy of the colours. Maddie sat down on her bed and looked at the drawing. She had stood by and said nothing, but Wanda had been nice to her, anyway.

As soon as Maddie reached home, she displayed her drawing on that part of the wall from where her pink-flowered wallpaper was slightly torn. Maddie's room was shabby too but the drawing made it lively. She stared at the drawing constantly and thought how nice Wanda had been to them.

Tears blurred her eyes and she gazed for a long time at the picture. Then hastily she rubbed her eyes and studied it intently. The colours in the dress were so vivid that she had scarcely noticed the face and head of the drawing. But it looked like her, Maddie! It really looked like her own mouth. Why it really looked like her own self! Wanda had really drawn this for her. Excitedly, she ran over to Peggy's

While staring at the drawing Wanda had given her, Maddie's vision got blurred from tears. She rubbed her eyes and noticed, that Wanda had actually drawn Maddie's face along with the dress. The colours of the dress were so bright and vibrant, that the face was hardly visible. Maddie got excited and ran towards Peggy to check if she had noticed it too.

"Peg!" she said, "let me see your picture." "What's the matter?" asked Peggy, as they clattered up to her room where Wanda's drawing was lying face down on the bed. Maddie carefully raised it. "Look! She drew you. That's you!" she exclaimed. And the head and face of this picture did look like Peggy.

As soon as she reached Peggy's house, she asked her for the picture. The drawing was lying upside down on the bed. Maddie raised it and yes, it was Peggy in that drawing. Both were left in shock and awe at the same time.

"What did I say!" said Peggy, "She must have really liked us, anyway." "Yes, she must have," agreed Maddie, and she blinked away the tears that came every time she thought of Wanda standing alone in that sunny spot in the school yard, looking stolidly over at the group of laughing girls after she had walked off, after she had said, "Sure, a hundred of them, all lined up."

Peggy exclaims that she was right about the thought that Wanda liked them. Maddie, whose eyes get filled with tears every time she recalled that scene where Wanda would look at the girls laughing at her, also agreed with Peggy.

Questions and Answers -

Page 74

Question 1.

What did Mr Petronski's letter say?

Answer:

Mr Petronski's letter was to inform the principal and Miss Mason that Wanda would not come to school as she was fed up of being bullied in the school. They were going to shift to a bigger place where nobody would make fun of their last name.

Question 2.

Is Miss Mason angry with the class, or is she unhappy and upset?

Answer:

Miss Mason seems to be unhappy and upset rather than angry because she had never expected such a behaviour from the students. She wants everyone to think about it and asks them not to do look down anyone in the class.

Question 3.

How does Maddie feel after listening to the note from Wanda's father?

Answer:

Maddie feels sorry and ashamed for the behaviour although she herself did not make fun of Wanda. She never tried to stop Peggy to do so and remained a silent spectator. She feels as a coward.

Question 4.

What does Maddie want to do?

Answer:

Maddie wants to amend her behaviour towards Wanda. She wants to meet her to apologise. She decides to find Wanda at her house at Boggins Heights. She also wanted to convey that all was meant in good humour and people really love her.

Page 76

Question 5.

What excuses does Peggy think of giving in justification of her behaviour? Why?

Answer:

Peggy tries to defend herself by saying that her behaviour towards Wanda inspired her to explore her drawing skills as she sketches a hundred dresses and that makes her win the drawing contest.

Question 6.

What are Maddie's thoughts as they go to Boggins Heights?

Answer:

Maddie was feeling ashamed and apologetic for being a silent spectator while Peggy humiliated Wanda. She was feeling upset and distraught for Wanda and herself. She was also repenting for not stopping Peggy for behaving badly with Wanda.

Question 7.

Why does Wanda's house remind Maddie of Wanda's blue dress?

Answer:

Wanda's house was sparse, old and laded but neat and clean like her blue dress that she wore everyday to school. Thus, Maddie was reminded of the same old blue dress.

Question 8.

What does Maddie think hard about ? What important decision does she come to?

Answer:

Maddie thinks about not to be mute spectator anymore that she had been in case of Wanda. She promised herself about not letting any injustice happen to anyone even if she would have to lose a friend in this.

Page 79

Question 9.

What did the girls write in the letter?

Answer:

Maddie and Peggy wrote a friendly letter to Wanda. They wanted to apologise for their behaviour but they ended up asking her whether she liked her new school and teacher. They informed her about her sketches winning the drawing competition. They praised her drawing skills and also told how much other students liked her art. The letter was just a usual letter one may write to a good friend.

Question 10.

Did Maddie and Peggy get a reply? Who was more anxious for a reply? How do you know?

Answer:

No, they didn't get a reply from Wanda. Maddie was more anxious for a reply than Peggy because she was very upset and feeling sad for Wanda. She had assumed that Wanda was deeply hurt so she was not replying and blamed herself for everything. Maddie used to have sleepless nights and saw frightful dreams about Wanda.

Question 11.

How did the girls know that Wanda liked them even though they had teased her?

Answer:

Both Maddie and Peggy realised that Wanda liked them although they had teased her because she had gifted them her two beautiful dresses, a green one with red trimmings to Peggy and the blue one to Maddie. She had even drawn their faces in the painting of the dresses they got.

(Page 79,80)

Question 1.

Why do you think Wanda's family moved to a different city? Do you think life there was going to be different for their family?

Answer:

Wanda's family moved to a different city due to the racist and insulting behaviour of students towards Wanda and her brother. They were teased by other students for their funny name and blue dress. Life there in a different city was going to be different because people there did not have such a narrow mind and would not tease them because of their name or status.

Question 2.

Maddie thought her silence was as bad as Peggy's teasing. Was she right ?

Answer:

Yes, Maddie thought that her silence was as bad as Peggy's teasing because it is often said that turning a blind eye to a crime is worse than committing a crime. So by being silent she indirectly encouraged Peggy to do so.

Question 3.

Peggy says, "I never thought she had sense to know we were making fun of her anyway. I thought she was too dumb. And gee, look how she can draw!" What led Peggy to believe that Wanda was dumb ? Did she change her opinion later ?

Answer:

Wanda never replied to Peggy 's misbehaviour and pranks that she faced everyday. So, her neutral face and unusual behaviour led Peggy to think that Wanda was dumb. Wanda even described the hundred dresses she said about though she wore the same old faded blue dress everyday. But later Peggy' changed her opinion after having a look on Wanda's sketches and her gesture of gifting her a beautiful drawing from her collection.

Question 4.

What important decision did Maddie make? Why did she have to think hard to do so ?

Answer:

Maddie decided to go to Wanda's house with Peggy to apologise and amend for all that had happened but Wanda had left her house with her family. She felt bad because she thought of herself as a coward who did not stop Peggy to insult Wanda. So, she decided to raise voice against injustice and bullying. She was firm of not being a mute spectator anymore.

Question 5.

Why do you think Wanda gave Maddie and Peggy the drawings of the dresses ? Why are they surprised ?

Answer:

When Maddie and Peggy wrote a letter to Wanda, she might have understood their feelings behind their letter and during the dresses game, she had observed both of them. So she requested Miss Mason to give two of her drawings to them and had taught them a lesson of life. Maddie and Peggy were surprised as she gifted them the drawings with their faces.

Question 6.

Do you think Wanda really thought the girls were teasing her ? Why or why not ?

Answer:

Wanda was aware of the misbehaviour of the girls who teased her everyday “but she remained calm. To keep them mum she fabricated a story of having a hundred dresses and sixty pairs of matching shoes in her closet. She taught them a lesson of life by the drawings of the hundred beautiful dresses she claimed to have.

Page 80,81)

Question 2.

What adjectives can we use to describe Peggy, Wanda and Maddie? You can choose adjectives from the list above. You can also add some of your own.

1. Peggy _____

2. Wanda _____

3. Maddie _____

Answer:

1. Peggy Sarcastic, thoughtless, zealous, unforgiving arrogant, cruel, haughty, proud, vain.
2. Wanda Kind, courteous, introverted, talented, lonely, determined, complacent, contented, generous, friendly, intrepid, sensitive, compassionate, creative.
3. Maddie Insipid, timid, placid, stolid.

Question 3.

Find the sentences in the story with the following phrasal verbs.

lined up, thought up, took off, stood by

Answer:

1. Lined up She thought of the glowing picture of those hundred dresses all lined up in the classroom.
2. Thought up Peggy who had thought up this game and Maddie her inseparable friend, were always ‘the last to leave.
3. Took off Miss Mason took off her glasses, blew on them and wiped them on her soft white handkerchief.
4. Stood by She had stood by silently and that was just as bad as what Peggy had done.

Question 4.

Colours are used to describe feelings, moods and emotions. Match the following 'colour expressions' with a suggested paraphrase.

1. The Monday morning blues : feel embarrassed /angry /ashamed
2. Go red in the face : feel very sick, as if about to vomit
3. Look green : sadness or depression after a weekend of fun
4. The red carpet : the sign or permission to begin an action
5. Blue-blooded : a sign of surrender or acceptance of defeat; a wish to stop fighting
6. A green belt : in an unlawful act; while doing something wrong
7. A blackguard : a photographic print of building plans; a detailed plan or scheme
8. A grey area : land around a town or city where construction is prohibited by law
9. A white flag : an area of a subject or a situation where matters are not very clear
10. A blue print : a dishonest person with no sense of right or wrong
11. Red-handed : a special welcome
12. The green light : of noble birth or from a royal family.

Answer:

1. The Monday morning blues : sadness or depression after a weekend of fun
2. To go red in the face : feel embarrassed /angry/ashamed
3. Look green : feel very sick, as if about to vomit
4. The red carpet : a special welcome
5. Blue – blooded : of noble birth or from a royal family
6. A green belt : land around a town or city where construction is prohibited by law
7. Black guard : a dishonest person with no sense of right or wrong
8. A grey area : an area of a subject or a situation where matters are not very clear.
9. A white flag : a sign of surrender or acceptance of defeat; a wish to stop fighting
10. A blue print : a photographic print of building plans; a detailed plan or scheme.
11. Red-handed : in an unlawful act; while doing something wrong
12. The green light : the sign of permission to begin an action.