

Chapter 4: A Shady Plot

Q.1 Given below is a list of words related to ghosts and ghost stories with their jumbled-up meanings against them. Match the words/expressions with their correct meanings:

Apparition: a feeling of anticipation of or anxiety over a future event

Poltergeist: a reanimated corpse that is believed to rise from the grave at night to suck the blood of sleeping people

Clairvoyance: a conjurer who expels evil spirits by conjuration

Crystal Ball: a spelling board device intended to communicate with and through the spirit world, obtaining answers to questions

Eerie: beyond the range of normal experience or scientific explanation

Medium: any of a set of 22 playing cards bearing allegorical representations, used for fortune telling

Transmigration: a supernatural appearance of a person or thing, a ghost, spectre or phantom

Psychic: so mysterious, strange, or unexpected as to send a chill up the spine

Ouija Board: the supposed power to see objects or events that cannot be perceived by the senses

Exorcist: a person through whom the spirits of the dead are alleged to be able to contact the living

Premonition: a globe of quartz crystal in which images, believed to portend the future, are supposedly visible to fortune tellers.

Paranormal: to pass into another body after death: going from one state of existence or place to another

Tarot Card: capable of extraordinary mental processes, such as extrasensory perception and mental telepathy

Vampire: The German word, meaning "noisy ghost"-a troublesome spirit that announces its presence with unexplainable sounds and the creation of disorder

Ans.:

Apparition - a supernatural appearance of a person or thing, a ghost, spectre or phantom

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Q.2 The title of the story is A Shady Plot. The dictionary defines the words as:

Shady: adjective

- a. Full of shade; shaded.
- b. Casting shade: a shady grove.
- c. Quiet, dark, or concealed; hidden.
- d. Of dubious character or of questionable honesty.

plot: noun

- a. i) a small piece of ground, generally used for a specific purpose: a garden plot.
- ii) a measured area of land
- b. a ground plan, as for a building; a diagram.
- c. storyline- the plan, scheme, or main story of a literary or dramatic work, as a play, novel, or short story
- d. a secret plan to accomplish a hostile or illegal purpose; a scheme.

Based on the definitions above can you predict what the story will be about?

Make a brief note of your prediction in your notebook.

Ans.: Based on the definitions, the story could possibly involve a storyline with a dark, concealed person.

Q.3 Read the story given below. Your teacher will use a variety of techniques for different parts of the story. For example:

- Silent reading
- One student reading aloud to the whole class
- Students reading in small groups
- Dramatised reading in small groups

Ans. : Please read from the book.

Q.4A Based on your reading of the story above, answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

The narrator earns his living by

- A. writing ghost stories
- B. working as a reader for a magazine
- C. working as a stenographer
- D. working as an accountant in a lumber company

Ans.:

Q.4B Based on your reading of the story above, answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

The writer was overconfident about his ability to write ghost stories because

- A. whenever magazines wanted a ghost story, they got in touch with him
- B. he was always able to write a ghost story whenever he had to write one
- C. the readers appreciated his ghost stories
- D. he knew the ghost lady would help him write a good ghost story

Ans.:

Q.4C Based on your reading of the story above, answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

The sight of the ghost materializing in his room filled the narrator with

- A. fear
- B. excitement
- C. joy
- D. anticipation

Ans.:

Q.4D Based on your reading of the story above, answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

The ghost wanted John to

- A. stop his wife from using the Ouija board
- B. stop using the Ouija board himself
- C. stop his guests from using the Ouija board
- D. stop people from using the Ouija board

Ans.:

Q.4E Based on your reading of the story above, answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

John wants the ghost to disappear before his wife enters the room and waves his arms at the ghost with something of the motion of a beginner when learning to swim. His movement shows his

- A. fear
- B. amusement
- C. desperation
- D. anxiety

Ans.:

Q.4F Based on your reading of the story above, answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

When the narrator says his wife is never so pretty as when she's doing something she knows he disapproves of, his tone is

- A. amused

- B. ironic
- C. angry
- D. irritated

Q.4G Based on your reading of the story above, answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

The ghost says "It's all your fault. 'It' here refers to

- A. the narrator's wife's anger
- B. the ghost's anger
- C. the narrator's wife leaving him
- D. the ghost materializing in sections.

Q.4H Based on your reading of the story above, answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

Gladolia wishes to leave the narrator's house as

- A. she does not like the Ouija boards
- B. she is afraid of the ghost
- C. she is afraid of magic and hoodoo
- D. she likes Ouija boards and hoodoo

Q.5A Answer the following questions briefly.

What genre of stories does Jenkins want the narrator to write? Why?

Ans.; Jenkins wanted the narrator to write ghost stories, with a supernatural element. He wanted to give readers the horrors and the narrator's ghosts were live propositions.

Q. 5 B Answer the following questions briefly.

Does the narrator like writing ghost stories? Support your answer with evidence from the story.

Q.5C Answer the following questions briefly.

What makes Helen, the ghost, and her other co-ghosts organize The Writer's Inspiration Bureau?

Ans.: Helen and other ghosts organized The Writer's Inspiration Bureau to help ghost story writers with ideas. Especially, those with a mind soft enough to accept impression. Usually, a case is brought to the main office and then one of the ghosts is assigned the job.

Q.5D Answer the following questions briefly.

Why had Helen, the ghost been helping the narrator write ghost stories? Why was she going on strike? What condition did she place for providing continued help?

Ans.: Helen, the ghost, has been helping the narrator with ghost stories because he was keen on writing them but lacked ideas. But she was going on strike, along with other ghosts because they were fed up with the way humans treated them. They were being summoned too often and they are

forced to leave their beds. They left haunting to answer questions on the Ouija board. Helen promises to help the narrator only if he gets his friends and acquaintances to stop using the Ouija board.

Q.5E Answer the following questions briefly.

How does the ghost undermine the narrator's faith in his ability to write ghost stories?

Ans.: The narrator had confidence in his ability to write a ghost story. In fact, he was able to give Jenkins a story whenever he asked for it. He felt that ghost stories specialized in him. But the ghost undermines his faith by telling him that she had often leaned on his shoulder to give him ideas and that he asked for her help quite often to write a ghost story.

Q.5F Answer the following questions briefly.

Why does John want the ghost to disappear before his wife appears on the scene? What impression of his wife's character do you form from his words?

Ans.: John didn't want to cause any problems in his marriage and he thus wants the ghost to disappear before his wife appears. John's wife, Lavinia, is a jealous lady and John thinks that the sight of the ghost might affect her badly. Lavinia is also a joyful lady who loved to socialize and spend money.

Q.5G Answer the following questions briefly.

Why does the narrator hesitate to be a partner to Laura Hinkle during the Ouija Board Party?

Ans.: John hesitates to pair with Laura Hinkle during the Ouija Board party because he was scared about how Helen, the ghost would react to it. She had promised to help him write ghost stories only if he got his friends and acquaintances to stop using the Ouija Board.

Q.5H Answer the following questions briefly.

What message does the ghost convey to the group that had assembled in the narrator's house? What is their reaction to the message?

Ans.: Helen, the ghost gets furious about John playing the Ouija Board. He promised to get his friends and acquaintances to stop using it but he himself was doing so. She, therefore, interrupts the party by going to everyone's board and calling John a traitor. This makes everyone suspicious as they assume that John is cheating on Lavinia, but John manages to make Lavinia understand the situation.

Q.5I Answer the following questions briefly.

Do you agree with the narrator calling the assembly of women "manipulators?" Give reasons.

Ans.: Yes, the narrator was right in calling the assembly of women "manipulators". They manipulate the spirits to answer their questions through the Ouija Board. They also easily mistake the ghost's statement and suspect John of cheating on his wife.

Q.5J Answer the following questions briefly.

Why is John's wife angry? What does she decide to do?

Ans.: John's wife is angry as she believes that he is cheating on her. She, like other women at the Ouija Board Party, believe the ghost when she

calls him a traitor. She, therefore, decides to end her marriage and go to her grandmother's place.

Q.5K Answer the following questions briefly.

Why does John wish he were dead?

Ans.: John wishes he were dead because of the encounter with the ghost and the resulting situation created a mess and threatened to break his marriage. He didn't want to lose his wife over a false notion.

Q.5L Answer the following questions briefly.

When confronted by Lavinia about his flirtations over the Ouija Board, John insists that 'the affair was quite above-board, I assure you, my love'. Bring out the pun in John's statement.

Ans.: John assures Lavinia that there was nothing to worry about and that his affair with the ghost was quite above the Ouija Board. He also assures her that his encounter with the ghost was nothing at all and that he was loyal to her.

Q.5M Answer the following questions briefly.

John's apprehensions about his wife's reaction to her encounter with the ghost are unfounded. Justify.

Ans.: John thought that his wife could not handle an encounter with the ghost, but he was proved wrong. He thought that it would make his wife hysterical but quite opposite to that, she speaks confidently and is not frightened by the ghost.

Q.6A Answer the following questions in detail:

After her reconciliation with her husband, John Hallock, Lavinia writes a letter to her friend expressing how her relationship with him had almost been on the verge of breaking and what saved it. Write her letter.

Ans.:

Dear friend,

How have you been? I hope you are doing well! I have been busy dealing with issues at home, so I couldn't make time to write sooner! My apologies!

You wouldn't believe what a bizarre encounter I had. It almost costed my marriage! I am sure you have heard about Ouija Boards. Everyone is obsessed with them at the moment! So recently, I, along with my friends organized an Ouija Board party and since we needed one more person to pair with my friend, Laura, we requested John to join us. And the weirdest thing happened! A ghost named Helen tried to communicate with all of us through the boards and even called John a traitor. This got us all suspecting John and the guilty look on his face convinced me too! I was jealous and quite furious! I had decided to divorce and was even ready to leave the house! I went into his room to inform him of my decision and he tried to hide someone from me and to my surprise, it was a ghost! Can you believe it! A ghost indeed! Apparently, she has been helping John with his ghost stories and got furious because he was using the Ouija Board! It was an odd experience and I was close to John over it! I am glad that it was nothing like I suspected!

I hope to hear back from you soon!

Love,

Lavinia

Q.6B Answer the following questions in detail:

John Hallock reflects upon his experience with Helen's ghost and in retrospect, he finds it quite amusing. All the same, he is relieved that he is no longer plagued by it. Ironically, the same ghost inspires his creativity and he writes a diary entry reflecting upon the comical aspect of his experience. Write his diary entry.

Ans.: Dear diary,

The strangest thing happened this week! Jenkins wanted me to write another ghost story. So, I was trying to think of ideas for it and suddenly a ghost appeared! I couldn't believe my own eyes! Her name was Helen and she told me that all the ghosts were going on a strike! Apparently, it was her who had been helping me with my stories. She even said that if I wanted to continue helping me, then I have to get my friends to stop using the Ouija Board. She then appeared once again in front of my wife and her friends during an Ouija Board party and called me a traitor! Lavinia was furious because she thought I was cheating on her. Luckily, she walked in during my encounter with the ghost and all her questions were answered. I am so glad that things are back to normal now! So relieved!

John

Q.7 The narrator and his wife reveal something about their character in their words and actions. We also learn about them from what other people say. Can you pick out the words that describe them from the box given below? Also, pick out lines and instances from the story to illustrate your choice.

shy arrogant loyal clever overconfident manipulative protective
self-disparaging suspicious sceptical jealous fearless firm shrewd
strong gullible sly creative I loves novelty and thrills

Person	Extract from Story	What it tells us about the character
John Hallock	1 ... in the end things had always come my way....somehow I'd always been able to dig one (plot) up for him. so I'd begun to get a bit cocky as to my ability (to write stones). 2 "But my ghosts aren't a bit like you—". 3. We scout around until we find a writer without ideas and with a mind soft enough to accept impression. 4. _____ _____ _____ 5. _____ _____ _____	1. _____ 2. Sceptical 3. gullible 4. Creative 5. Protective

Lavinla Hallock	1. _____ _____ _____ 2. _____ _____ _____ 3. _____ _____ _____	1. loves novalty and thrills 2. Spendthrift 3. Suspicious
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	4. _____ _____ _____	4. Jealous
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	5. Buys the Ouija board but says it is for John's research 6. Does not flinch when she meets the ghost but talks to her casually.	5. manipulative
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Ans.:

Person	Extract from Story	What it tells us about the character
John Hallock	1. ...in the end things had always come my way.... somehow, I'd always been able to dig one (plot) up for him, so I'd begun to get a bit cocky as to my ability (to write stories). 2. "But my ghosts aren't a bit like you—". 3. We scout around until we find a writer without ideas and with a mind soft enough to accept impression. 4. A ghost story had been the first fiction I had written. Curious how that idea for a plot had come to me	1. Overconfident 2. Sceptical 3. gullible 4. Creative

	out of nowhere after I had chased inspiration in vain for months'	
	5. I threw a protecting husbandly arm about her to catch her when she should faint.	5. Protective

Lavinla Hallock	1. how on earth I was going to cure her of her alarming tendency to take every new fad that came along and work it to death. 2. You know I bought the loveliest thing this afternoon 3. Lavinia stopped and began to look at me through narrowed lids much as she had done in the library the evening before. 4. She went on, 'It is bad enough to have you flirt over the Ouija Board with that hussy...she thrust me back with sudden muscle 'I will see who's behind you! Where is that Helen?' 5. Buys the Ouija board but says it is for John's research 6. Does not flinch when she meets the ghost but talks to her casually.	1. loves novelty and thrills 2. Spendthrift 3. Suspicious 4. Jealous 5. Manipulative 6. strong
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Q.8 Gladolia, the narrator's cook, is an African. The language she speaks is different from that of the others. This is known as Dialect. A dialect

consists of words or phrases that reflect the regional variety of a language. An author often uses a regional dialect to make the dialogue more authentic. Initially a dialogue may seem a little difficult to understand. However, as you continue reading, the language will become more comprehensible.

Working in groups, write what Gladolia's words mean as shown.

Column A	Column B
• Misto Hallock • de Missus • sho thinks you are lost! • she done 'phone you dis mawnin' • fo1 de lawd's sake • not to stop to argify now • I'm gwine t' quit. • I don't like any hoodoos. • I've did lef dis place • I is	Mister Hallock

Ans.:

Column A	Column B
• Misto Hallock • de Missus • sho t'inks you's lost! • she done 'phone you dis mawnin1 • fo1 de lawd's sake • not to stop to argify now • I's gwine t' quit. • I don't like no hoodoos. • I'se done lef dis place • I is	Mister Hallock The Mistress She thinks you are lost She called you this morning For the lord's sake Do not stop to argue now I am going to quit I don't like voodoo magic I am done with this place I am

Q.9 Do you think a story has an atmosphere? Complete the following blanks to make up your ghost story by choosing the correct options.

A Ghost Story

She opened the _____ (secret door/
spaceship's hatch/door of the cottage/ cemetery gate/ door of the
castle/ cockpit) _____ (brashly/ loudly/ silently/
stupidly/ fearfully/ joyously). Standing in front of her was a
_____ (terrifying/ handsome/ smelly/ anonymous/
tiny/ huge/ bossy) _____ (policeman/ spy/ apparition/ witch/
prince/ wizard) with a _____ (wand/ rose/ rod/ knife/
scythe/ coded message) in his/ her (its)

Ans.:

A Ghost Story She opened the cemetery gate silently.
Standing in front of her was a huge apparition with a scythe
in its bony hand.