

1. Find the characters' names.

/4

A couple of old people, Berl and Berlecha and their son, Samuel.

Find the name of the village in which the story is set.

The story is set in a Polish village called Lentshin

2. Say which of the following statements is true and justify your answer quoting from the text. Write your justification at right.

a) They understood

/3

few of the things he said

Berl and berlecha understood little....

b) The son spoke

/3

some sort of Jewish language

His yiddish was different.

3. Find the concrete facts that prove that

a) the son has always tried to help his parents. *He has regularly sent them money.*

b) he has no idea what Lentshin is like now. *He doesn't know there are no banks in Lentshin and he thinks there are thieves there.*

c) he has forgotten some of his family's religious principles. *He seems to have forgotten that one is not supposed to touch money on the Sabbath.*

d) he doesn't know his parents very well. *He didn't realise his parents wouldn't need any money from him. They lead a quiet and peaceful life and don't need any more material possessions than they already have.*

e) his parents took great care of his money. *They carefully kept all the gold coins in a boot under the bed.*

PLEASE READ TO THE END OF THE TEXT.

4. Choose the right answer

a) They didn't spend the money because

/2

they didn't really need to buy anything

b) They didn't travel because

/2

they had nowhere they really wanted to go

c) They seem to

/2

be rather poor peasants

d) They "wanted for nothing" means

/2

they didn't lack anything

5. Complete the following sentences drawing information from the text

/6

a) The garden provided them with *all the fruit and vegetables they needed.*

b) The cow and the goat provided them with *milk.*

c) The chickens provided them with *eggs and meat.*

6. Their son seems to be afraid of something.

a) What is he afraid of ?

He is afraid some thieves might try to steal the money and threaten his parents' life.

b) Is he right or wrong according to his parents ?

He is wrong. According to his father, there are no thieves in the village.

7. Complete the following sentence

/4

The parents won't ever spend the money. Instead, they will *give it back to their son.*

8. What could they have bought with the money ?

/3

They could have bought many goods, for themselves or for the house. They might also have left Lentshin and travelled.

9. Why didn't they find it essential to get these things ?

They didn't find it essential to buy material goods or do fancy things because they are totally satisfied with the simple thing they lead. They are religious, loving people with simple needs and humble expectations.

THE SON FROM AMERICA

Berl and Berlcha are Jewish. They speak Yiddish. They live in Poland. Their son, who emigrated to the USA and has a very good life there, has just come back to Poland in order to visit them.

The family ate and drank, and when it grew quiet for a while one could hear the chirping of the house cricket. The son talked a lot, but Berl and Berlcha understood little. His Yiddish was different and contained foreign words.

5 After the final blessing Samuel asked, « Father, what did you do with all the money I sent you ? »

Berl raised his white brows. « It's here. »

« Didn't you put it in a bank ? »

« There is no bank in Lentshin. »

« Where did you keep it ? »

10 Berl hesitated. « One is not allowed to touch money on the Sabbath, but I will show you. » He crouched beside the bed and began to shove something heavy. A boot appeared. Its top was stuffed with straw. Berl removed the straw and the son saw that the boot was full of gold coins. He lifted it.

« Father, this is a treasure ! » he called out.

15 « Well. »

« Why didn't you spend it ? »

« On what ? Thank God, we have everything. »

« Why didn't you travel somewhere ? »

« Where to ? This is our home. »

20 The son asked one question after the other, but Berl's answer was always the same : they wanted for nothing. The garden, the cow, the goat, the chicken provided them with all they needed. The son said, « If thieves knew about this, your lives wouldn't be safe. »

« There are no thieves here. »

25 « What will happen to the money ? »

« You take it. »

Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Son from America*.



to want for something ≈ to strongly need something

to shove ≈ to push and pull

straw = paille

Yiddish = A language spoken in Central Europe by many Jewish communities.