

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 1: THREE QUESTIONS



THREE QUESTIONS

~Summary~

-by Leo Tolstoy

Three Questions is a story written originally by **Leo Tolstoy**. It has been retold for school lesson purposes. Leo Tolstoy is a famous **Russian writer** who lived from **1828-1910**. He is regarded as one of the greatest authors of all time. He received many nominations for **Nobel Prize in Literature** but **unfortunately never won once**. Out of hundreds of his novels, plays and stories, "**War and Peace**" is an all-time favourite book of millions of people.

Three Questions is the story of a king who is in search of answers to **three philosophical questions** in life. He struggles to find the answers to the three questions, namely:

- When is the right time to begin something?
- Which people should he listen to?
- What is the most important thing for him to do?



The king sends out **messengers** throughout his country to find the answers from wise men. He also **promises large sums of money** to the person who gives the correct answer. However, all his efforts are in vain; because every time he gets a **different answer from each person**. So he decides to meet a **wise hermit who lives in the woods**. Two incidents happen there, which **reveal the answer** to the king.

When the king reaches the hermit's hut, **the hermit seems to be digging the ground** in front of his hut. He is old, tired and breathes heavily, as he keeps digging. The king asks his questions to

the hermit, but the hermit continues to dig. The king, seeing that the hermit is struggling, **decides to help him out**. He takes the spade from the hermit's hand and starts digging. After he dug two beds, he stops digging and asks his questions. The hermit, **without replying asks him to rest now** and that he will continue digging. But **the king does not oblige, and he continues to dig**. Hours pass by, and it gets dark. He says **he will return home if the hermit cannot answer the questions**. The hermit sees someone running towards them.

They see a **bearded man**, with a bleeding wound in his stomach. The king **immediately starts dressing his wounds and carries him to bed inside the hut**. Out of exhaustion from the day's work, the king also sleeps on the floor. The next morning, when he wakes up, the **bearded man asks for forgiveness** to the king. The puzzled king asks why. The bearded man **reveals that he was an enemy of the king**, who had been defeated by the king once. The king **had taken all his property, so he had come to kill the king when he was returning alone to the kingdom**. But **since the king did not return the previous day**, the bearded man had come out of his hiding place, and the **king's bodyguard had seen and stabbed him with a knife**.

The bearded man says the king was **kind-hearted and saved my life** and that he wanted to **serve him as his servant**. The king **forgives the man and promises to return** his seized property. He is also happy that he has **made friends with the enemy easily**.

He goes to the hermit and begs for the answers to his questions. He says his **questions have already been answered**. He asks how. The hermit explains

- If the king had not helped him dig the ground, he would've left early, and the enemy (the bearded man) would have stabbed him.
- But the king did the right thing - by taking pity on the hermit, he decided to help him - that is the **most important time** that saved the king's life.
- The **most important person** at that time, to the king - was the hermit
- The **most important thing to do** - was to do the hermit some good help.

Again, the same thing happened with the bearded man also:

- The king cared for him the day before - **the most important time**
- The king dressed his wounds - **the most important thing to do**
- The king cared for the man in pain - **the most important person**

The hermit goes on to explain that, the most important time to do anything is **NOW** - because we have the **power to act only in the present moment**. The most important person is **the person who you are with, at a particular time**. No one knows what will happen in the future or whether we will meet anyone else. The **most important business is to do good deeds** because we were sent to this world only for that purpose.

~Conclusion~

The three questions were: what was the right time for every action, who were the right people to be with and what was the most important thing to do. He proclaimed that he would give a great reward to the person who can answer his three questions.

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NCERT SOLUTIONS**Questions (Page No. 10)
(Comprehension Check I)**

Question 1. Why did the king want to know answers to three questions?

Answer: The king wanted to know answers of his three questions because he wanted to be a successful ruler.

Question 2. Messengers were sent throughout the kingdom:

- a. To fetch wise men.
- b. To find answers to the questions.
- c. To look for the wise hermit.
- d. To announce a reward for those who could answer the questions.

Mark your choice.

Answer:

- b. To find answers to the questions.

**Questions (Page No. 14)
(Comprehension Check II)**

Question 1. Complete the following sentences by adding the appropriate parts of the sentences given in the box.

- a. Many wise men answered the king's questions, _____.
- b. Someone suggested that there should be a council of wise men _____.
- c. Someone else suggested that the king should have a timetable _____.

- d. The king requested the hermit _____.
- e. The king washed and dressed the bearded man's wound, _____.

Answer:

- a. Many wise men answered the king's questions, but their answers were so varied that the king was not satisfied.
- b. Someone suggested that there should be a council of wise men to help the king act at the right time.
- c. Someone else suggested that the king should have a timetable and follow it strictly.
- d. The king requested the hermit to answer three questions.
- e. The king washed and dressed the bearded man's wound but the bleeding would not stop.

Questions (Page No. 14-15) (Working with the Text)

Question 1.

- a. Why was the king advised to go to magicians?
- b. In answer to the second question, whose advice did the people say would be important to the king?
- c. What suggestions were made in answer to the third question?
- d. Did the wise men win the reward? If not, why not?
- e. How did the king and the hermit help the wounded man?
- f.
- i. Who was the bearded man?

- ii. Why did he ask for the king's forgiveness?
- g. The king forgave the bearded man. What did he do to show his forgiveness?
- h. What were the hermit's answers to the three questions? Write each answer separately. Which answer do you like most, and why?

Answer:

- a. Some of the wise men thought that in order to decide right time for doing something, one must look into the future and only magicians were able to do that. So, they advised the king to go to the magicians.
- b. In answer to the second question some people, suggested to seek advice of councillors, the priest or the doctors or the soldiers.
- c. In answer to the second question some people, suggested to seek advice of councillors, the priest or the doctors or the soldiers.
- d. No, The wise men didn't win the reward because their answers were so different from each other and king was not satisfied with their answers.
- e. The king washed the wound and covered the wound of the man with his handkerchief and kept on dressing it until the bleeding stopped completely.

The king also offered the wounded man water to drink. The hermit helped the king to bring the wounded man inside his hut and allowed the man to spend his night in the hut.

- f.
 - i. The bearded man was an enemy of the king. He wanted to take revenge of his brother's death by killing the king and taking away all his property.
 - ii. The bearded man asked for the king's forgiveness because he wanted to kill the king but the king has saved his life. He was grateful to the king now.
- g. The king showed his forgiveness by promising the man that he will send his doctor and servants to look after him and also promised to return him all his property.

- h. The most important time, the hermit said, is our present because it is the only moment when we have the power to act. The most important person at a moment is we ourselves because the future is unknown and we don't know whether we will meet anyone in the future or not.

So, we should listen to ourselves.

The most important business is to be kind and good to others because we have been sent in this world to serve this noble cause.

I liked the third answer the most because helping someone in need is like serving God. It makes us a good person and brings a sense of satisfaction and contentment.

Questions (Page No. 15-16) (Working with language)

Question 1. Match items in List A with their meanings in List B.

A	B
wounded	got up from sleep
awoke	give back
forgive	small patches of ground for plants
faithful	severely injured
pity	pardon
beds	loyal
return	feel sorry for

Use any three of the above words in sentences of your own. You may change the form of the word.

Answer:

A	B
wounded	severely injured
awoke	got up from sleep
forgive	pardon
faithful	loyal
pity	feel sorry for
beds	small patches of ground for plants
return	give back

Sentences with three words:

- Pallavi had to return the bag to her friend.
- One should be faithful to one's friends.
- The dreadful dream awoke Reshma from sleep.

Question 2. Each of the following sentences has two blanks. Fill in the blanks with appropriate forms of the word given in brackets

- The _____ said that only fresh evidence would make him change his _____.
(judge)
- I didn't notice any serious _____ of opinion among the debaters, although they _____ from one another over small points. (differ)
- It's a fairly simple question to _____, but will you accept my _____ as final?
(answer)
- It isn't _____ that _____ should always be the mother of invention. (necessary)
- Hermits are _____ men. How they acquire their _____ no one can tell. (wise)
- The committee has _____ to make Jagdish captain of the team. The _____ is likely to please everyone. (decide)
- Asking for _____ is as noble as willingness to _____. (forgive)

Answer:

- a. The judge said that only fresh evidence would make him change his judgement. (**judge**)
- b. I didn't notice any serious difference of opinion among the debaters, although they differed from one another over small points. (**differ**)
- c. It's a fairly simple question to answer, but will you accept my answer as final? (**answer**)
- d. It isn't necessary that necessity should always be the mother of invention. (**necessary**)
- e. Hermits are wise men. How they acquire their wisdom no one can tell. (**wise**)
- f. The committee has decided to make Jagdish captain of the team. The decision is likely to please everyone. (**decide**)
- g. Asking for forgiveness is as noble as willingness to forgive. (**forgive**)

Questions (Page No. 16)

(Speaking and Writing)

Question 1. Imagine you are the king. Narrate the incident of your meeting the hermit. Begin like this:

The wise men answered my questions, but I was not satisfied with their answers. One day I decided to go and meet the hermit...

Answer: The wise men answered my questions, but I was not satisfied with their answers. One day I decided to go and meet the hermit who was renowned for his wisdom. I went to him and saw him digging the earth. I asked him if he could answer the three questions I sought answers to. But he continued to dig the earth and did not respond at all. I felt that he was getting tired so I offered to help him in digging. He handed over the spade to me. I kept digging for a while. Then I repeated my questions and asked if he would answer them. Even then, there was no response from his side. Then he pointed towards a wounded man approaching us.

Question 2. Imagine you are the hermit. Write briefly the incident of your meeting the king. Begin like this:

One day I was digging in my garden. A man in ordinary clothes came to see me. I knew he was the king...

Answer: One day I was digging in my garden. A man in ordinary clothes came to see me. I knew he was the king but remained calm. He told me that he sought answers to three questions and wanted me to answer those. I politely greeted him and then continued to dig the earth. I was continuously digging and felt tired. Seeing this, the king offered me help. I accepted and handed

over the spade to him. He began to dig and after some time, he again asked me the same three questions. I still chose not to respond and offered him help if he was tired. He refused and continued to dig.

After some time, I saw a wounded man approaching us.

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