

A Triumph of Surgery

-James Alfred Wight (Pen name- James Herriot)

Question 1: Why is Mrs Pumphrey worried about Tricki?

Answer: Mrs Pumphrey was worried and distraught because Tricki would not eat anything. It even refused its favourite dishes. It had bouts of vomiting. It spent all its time lying on the rug and panting. It did not want to go for walks or do anything.

Question 2: What does she do to help him? Is she wise in this?

Answer: She called the doctor to help Tricki. Yes, her decision was wise. The doctor suggested that Tricki should be hospitalised. She swooned and wailed, but let the dog go with the doctor. Ultimately, the doctor was successful in curing Tricki.

Question 3: Who does 'I' refer to in this story?

Answer: In this story, 'I' refers to the veterinary surgeon, Mr Herriot.

Question 4: Is the narrator as rich as Tricki's mistress?

Answer: Though not clearly stated, there are instances in the story which suggest that the narrator is not as rich as Tricki's mistress, Mrs Pumphrey. While the narrator is able to provide Tricki with a warm loose box as a bed, at Mrs Pumphrey's house, Tricki has a day bed, a night bed, cushions, toys, rubber rings, a breakfast bowl, a lunch bowl, a supper bowl, a whole wardrobe of tweed coats and perhaps many more things. When he arrives to take the dog with him, Mrs Pumphrey has her entire staff at her disposal to transfer all of Tricki's belongings to the doctor's car. On hearing from the doctor about Tricki's gradual recovery, Mrs Pumphrey sends along two dozen eggs at a time, along with bottles of wine and brandy – all in order to help in Tricki's speedy recovery. Finally, when she calls upon the narrator to take her recovered dog back home, she comes in a chauffeur-driven "thirty feet of gleaming black metal" (an obvious reference to a limousine).

All these instances point to the fact that Mrs Pumphrey lived a luxurious life.

Question 5: How does he treat the dog?

Answer: The doctor gave Tricki no food, but plenty of water for two days. Slowly, the dog started showing interest in his surroundings and began mixing with the other dogs at the surgery. On the third day, the doctor saw Tricki licking the empty supper bowls of the other dogs. Next day, a separate bowl was kept for it and the doctor was pleased to note that Tricki had run to eat its food with enthusiasm. From that day onwards, its progress was rapid. It did not require medicinal treatment of any kind and recovered quite well at the end.

Question 6: Why is he tempted to keep Tricki on as a permanent guest?

Answer: Mrs Pumphrey had started bringing around eggs to build Tricki's strength. Later, even bottles of wine and brandy began to arrive. The narrator and his partners started enjoying the eggs, wine and brandy meant for Tricki. According to the narrator, they were days of deep content for them – starting with the extra egg in the morning, then the midday wine, and finally finishing the day with brandy. This was the reason why the narrator was tempted to keep Tricki on as a permanent guest.

Question 7: Why does Mrs Pumphrey think the dog's recovery is "a triumph of surgery"?

Answer: Mrs Pumphrey thought that the dog's recovery was "a triumph of surgery" because in two weeks, Tricki had recovered completely and had been transformed into a hard-muscled animal. When Tricki saw her, it leaped into her lap and licked her face. She was so excited that tears started rolling out of her eyes. She declared Tricki's recovery as a triumph of surgery to express her happiness and gratitude towards the doctor.

Question 8: What kind of a person do you think the narrator, a veterinary surgeon, is? Would you say he is tactful as well as full of common sense?

Answer: The narrator is full of common sense. He was very concerned for Tricki when he saw its appearance. He immediately told Mrs Pumphrey to stop giving it food and sweets, and to take it out for daily walks. When she called him to describe Tricki's deteriorating condition, he immediately took the dog with him to the surgery. He took good care of it all the while and helped it recover completely. He could be called tactful as he enjoyed the eggs, wine and brandy that Mrs Pumphrey had brought for the dog. He was even tempted to keep Tricki as a permanent guest in order to continue enjoying these luxuries. However, he was a good man. Thus, he called Mrs Pumphrey and told her to take the dog home when it had fully recovered.

Question 9: Do you think Tricki was happy to go home? What do you think will happen now?

Answer: Yes, Tricki was very happy to go home. It jumped out of the narrator's arms and leaped into Mrs Pumphrey's lap as soon as it saw her. It licked her and barked. After this, if Mrs Pumphrey takes good care of the dog and does not feed it a lot, it will be as healthy as it is at the end of the story.

Question 10: Do you think this is a real-life episode, or mere fiction? Or is it a mixture of both?

Answer: This story could be a mixture of both: real life episode and a mere fiction. The spoiling of the dog's health by a rich mistress is believable and could also be a real life incident. The doctor's advises also depict real life situation. However, the extremely speedy recovery of the dog could be fictitious. Also, the enjoyment of the luxuries (eggs, wine and brandy) by the narrator could be termed as a real life episode as there are people who would do so. The giving up of these luxuries because the owner of the dog would be getting worried is another episode that could be both real life and fiction. At the end, the happiness of Mrs. Pumphrey on seeing her dog healthy seems to be a real life happening. Therefore, the story is a mixture of both real life and fiction.

Question 11: This episode describes the silly behaviour of a rich woman who is foolishly indulgent, perhaps because she is lonely. Do you think such people are merely silly, or can their actions cause harm to others?

Answer: The story mentions a woman's irresponsible and careless actions towards her pet. Yes, she is lonely and has no one else to shower her love upon, but, as they say, excess of anything is bad, so is with excessive love and indulgence. Mrs. Pumphrey did not shower her love in moderation and it led to unwanted consequences. She can be called silly or just ignorant, but her actions, though unintentional, caused severe harm to the poor animal.

Question 12: Do you think there are also parents like Mrs Pumphrey?

Answer: Yes, there are many people/ parents/ grandparents like Mrs. Pumphrey in the world. I have seen many parents who spoil their children by showing too much love or giving too much of attention.

Question 13: What would you have done if you were:

- (i) a member of the staff in Mrs Pumphrey's household,
- (ii) a neighbour? What would your life have been like, in general?

Answer: i. If I were a member of the staff in Mrs. Pumphrey's household, I would give a lesser amount of food to it and would have taken it for a walk at least once a day.

ii. If I were her neighbour, I would advise her to be careful about the pet's health. In general, I would have taken care of my pet sensibly and I would not have behaved mindlessly like Mrs. Pumphrey.

Question 14: What would you have done if you were in the narrator's place?

Answer: Had I been in the narrator's place, I would have done something similar. Being a vet, I would feel my responsibility/ duty to help the poor animal and might have taken it away for saving its life. But, one thing I would not do is what the narrator did. I would return all the things that Mrs. Pumphrey sent for Tricky. I would do so to make her realise that the dog did not need all of that stuff to survive, instead her mindless behaviour was the sole reason behind Tricky's poor condition.

Principal ma'am