

Read the following passage and answer the questions given at the end.

My father was back in work within days of his return home. He had a spell in the shipyard, where the last of the great Belfast liners, the CANBERRA, was under construction, and then moved to an electronics firm in the east of the city. (These were the days when computers were the size of small houses and were built by sheet metal workers). A short time after he started in this job, one of his colleagues was sacked for taking off time to get married. The workforce went on strike to get the colleague reinstated. The dispute, dubbed the Honeymoon Strike, made the Belfast papers. My mother told me not long ago that she and my father, with four young sons, were hit so hard by that strike, that for years afterwards they were financially speaking, running to stand still. I don't know how the strike ended, but whether or not the colleague got his old job back, he was soon in another, better one. I remember visiting him and his wife when I was still quite young, in their new bungalow in Belfast northern suburbs. I believe they left Belfast soon after the Troubles began. My father then was thirty-seven, the age I am today. My Hither and I are father and son, which is to say we are close without knowing very much about one another. We talk about events, rather than emotions. We keep from each other certain of our hopes and fears and doubts. I have never for instance asked my father whether he has dwelt on the direction his life might have taken if at certain moments he had made certain other choices. Whatever, he found himself, with a million and a half of his fellows, living in what was in all but name a civil war. As a grown up I try often to imagine what it must be like to be faced with such a situation. What, in the previous course of your life, prepares you for arriving, as my father did, at the scene of a bomb blast close to your brother's place of work and seeing what you suppose, from the colour of the hair, to be your brother lying in the road, only to find that you are cradling the remains of a woman?

(Glciiin Patterson)

Questions

- (a) From your reading of the passage what do you infer about the nature of the "Troubles" the writer mentions.
- (b) What according to the writer were the working conditions in the Electronics firm where his father worked?
- (c) Why was his father's colleague sacked?
- (d) How does the writer show that as father and son they do not know much about each other?
- (e) Explain the underlined words/phrases in the passage:

Made the Belfast papers, had a spell, dubbed, was sacked, hit hard.

(a) The "Troubles" refers to a state of civil wars in Belfast. The writer's father could not make the decision to leave Belfast in time, hence, he, along with one and a half million of his fellows, was living in a civil war. He had to suffer the tragedy of finding his brother killed in a bomb blast.

(b) At that time, computers were enormous, and the firm hired sheet metal workers to manufacture them. The firm provided no rights to the workers. One of the workers was fired because he took off time to get married. It indicates the poor working conditions in the firm.

(c) The colleague of the writer's father was fired because he took time off to get married. Against this unjust termination, the workforce of the firm went on a strike. The strike was called "The Honeymoon Strike" by the Belfast papers. The colleague, however, found a better opportunity and even bought a new bungalow.

(d) As father and son, they did not know about each other because they only talked about events. They never shared their feelings and emotions with each other. They kept from each other their fears and hopes. The writer, for example, never asked his father if he ever thought about the decisions he had taken in his life or how he felt when he found his brother killed in a bomb blast.

(d) (i) Made the Belfast papers
The strike became so famous that the newspapers of Belfast covered it.

(ii) had a spell
had a very good period

(iii) & Dubbed
The strike was called or labelled as the Honeymoon strike.

(iv) was sacked
the person was fired

(v) hit hard
to be affected severely