

3. Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions given at the end. ✓ (20)

She was one of those pretty, charming women who are born, as if by an error of Fate, into a petty official's family. She had no dowry, no hopes, nor the slightest chance of being loved and married by a rich man—so she slipped into marriage with a minor civil servant. Unable to afford jewels, she dressed simply: But she was wretched, for women have neither caste nor breeding—in them beauty, grace, and charm replace pride of birth. Innate refinement, instinctive elegance, and wit give them their place on the only scale that counts and these make humble girls the peers of the grandest ladies. She suffered, feeling that every luxury should rightly have been hers. The poverty of her rooms—the shabby walls, the worn furniture, the ugly upholstery caused her pain. All these things that another woman of her class would not even have noticed, made her angry. The very sight of the little Breton girl who cleaned for her awoke rueful thoughts and the wildest dreams in her mind. She dreamt of rooms with Oriental hangings, lighted by tall, bronze torches, and with two huge footmen in knee breeches made drowsy by the heat from the stove, asleep in the wide armchairs. She dreamt of great drawing rooms upholstered in old silks, with fragile little tables holding priceless knickknacks, and of enchanting little sitting rooms designed for tea-time chats with famous, sought-after men whose attentions all women longed for. She sat down to dinner at her round table with its three-day-old cloth, and watched her husband lift the lid of the soup tureen and delightedly exclaim: "Ah, a good homemade beef stew! There's nothing better!" She visualized elegant dinners with gleaming silver and gorgeous china. She yearned for wall hangings peopled with knights and ladies and exotic birds in a fairy forest. She dreamt of eating the pink flesh of trout or the wings of grouse. She had no proper wardrobe, no jewels, nothing. And those were the only things that she loved—she felt she was made for them. She would have so loved to charm, to be envied, to be admired and sought after.

(4 marks each)

Questions:

1. Which word best describes the actual living conditions of the couple and why?
2. Which line best demonstrates the couple's true economic standing and why?
3. According to the passage, what can be stated about the marriage of this woman?
4. What can be inferred about the values of both husband and wife?
5. What is the main idea of the passage?

(Ans 1)

The word 'petty' best describes the actual living conditions of the couple. Both belonged to a modest family. The woman was born in a financially stressed family as she had no material things to prove her worth except beauty. While the husband was a lower bureaucrat by profession. These are the reasons which best manifested the actual living conditions of couple.

(Ans 2)

The line that, both sat down for the dinner at the round table with its three-day old cloth, best demonstrates the couple's true economic conditions. As the woman used to yearn for the mercury house, but the minor profession of her husband did not allow him to afford all the elegance.

(Ans 3)

According to the passage, it can be stated about the marriage of woman that she did not want to marry in a poor family with fragile economic conditions. As she had not any possessions, she was forced to marry in a modest family. However, her beauty and simplicity placed her among the noble women.

(Ans 4)

It can be inferred about the values of both husband and wife that the former had a humble behaviour while the latter used to give importance to the material possessions. This is manifested from the fact that he was consoled with his belongings but she did not.

(Ans 5)

The main idea of the passage

is hidden in the fact that women's simplicity, elegance and internal beauty is their real worth rather than the material things like luxury houses and the dowry. Her real worth mostly welcomed and appreciated in a middle income families. Therefore, the actual happiness lies in realizing the above discussed fact.