

Dr Alfred Richter, a millionaire, is responsible for the death of fifty workers in the explosion of one of his armament factories.

One hot July afternoon as he sat working at his desk he sensed that he was not alone. He was gripped by sudden apprehension. Someone was standing in front of him and he had no desire to know who it was.

«Good afternoon, Dr Richter. »

The chilling voice was deep and sonorous. The millionaire froze at the sound of it, and continued to stare at his desktop.

« I don't know who you are and I have no wish to find out. Go away. »

« Come, come, Doctor, that's not a very polite way to treat someone who has travelled far to give you a message. »

Full of dreadful foreboding, Richter slowly raised his head and stared with amazement at the man who stood smiling before him. There could be no doubt that he was an undertaker, for he was dressed entirely in black and wore a tall top hat.

« How did you get into my house ? » he asked, rising unsteadily to his feet. « Who are you ? »

The undertaker smiled hideously. « A messenger ».

« From whom ? »

« Isn't it obvious to a man of your intellect ? »

« Your ludicrous costume reminds me of an undertaker. »

« Merely a symbol of my work. I've long ceased to be concerned with burial. My work is simply to deliver the message. »

He raised his top hat and bowed gracefully. Richter's terror became rage and he slammed his fist upon the desk.

« Damn you, man. » the shout emerged as a strangled squeak. « What message ? »

« Oh, yes, the message. » The vile-looking man smiled, glanced heavenward and put the top hat reverently to his chest. « Dr Alfred Richter, I am here to inform you that your name has been called and that on the nineteenth day, one month hence, you will have an appointment with death. »

« Another threat! » Richter screamed hysterically. « Another damn threat from the victims of that explosion. So that's why they sent you, dressed in those vulgar clothes and looking like death. You're part of the vile campaign of terror! » He grabbed a small bell and rang it furiously.

« You are wasting your time, Doctor. I have nothing to do with the people you burnt and maimed. I am merely here to inform you of the inevitable fact of your death and final judgement. Remember, one month hence. Prepare well, you have much to answer for. »

Richter turned his head as the butler entered the room. « Call the police, I want this fiend arrested. »

The butler gazed at the millionaire in astonishment. « Fiend, sir ? »

Richter turned and looked at the empty space before him...

Alan PEMBERTON, The millionaire, in Journeys of the Mind (1983). D.R.

1- Introduce the passage (origin, author, date of publication)

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2- Who are the two main characters mentioned in the passage ?

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Read from line 1 to line 18.

3- Find in the text the synonyms for :

Frightening :

To look at fixedly and for a long time :

Terrible, awful :

Great surprise :

4- Say if each of the following statements is true or false and justify by quoting the text.

(mention the line)

a- The scene takes place in winter.

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b- The scene takes place in the main character's study.

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c- Richter looks forward to knowing who is facing him.

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d- The visitor lives close to the man's house.

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e- Richter thinks that the visitor's job consists in looking after dead bodies.

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Read from line 19 to the end

5- Say if each of the following statements is true or false and justify by quoting the text.

(mention the line)

f- In fact the visitor doesn't look after corpses.

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g- Richter is extremely angry with the man.

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h- The visitor has come to announce Dr Richter's death.

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i- The visitor is a victim of the explosion that took place in Richter's factory.

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6- Line 38 « you have much to answer ». Explain what the man means (15-20 words)

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7- Line 43. « Richter turned and looked at the empty space before him. » How do you explain that when Dr Richter turned and looked he saw no-one ? (30-40 words)

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About the whole text

8- Why is the passage called « The appointment »? (20 words)

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9- In the text a few irregular verbs are used : sat (l.1), froze (l.8), became (l.25), sent (l.33), rang (l.35).

For each of them, give the infinitive, the irregular forms and the french.

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10- Line l 17 « he asked, rising unsteadily to his feet ».

a- Choose the correct answer. The word is : an adjective / a noun / a verb

b- What the root (=racine) of this word ?

c- Translate the sentence into French