

**Devil And Tom Walker
Comprehension Questions
Answers**

**Devil and Tom Walker
Comprehension Questions &
Answers: A Deep Dive into**

Irving's Classic Tale

Washington Irving's "The Devil and Tom Walker" remains a captivating short story, offering rich ground for literary analysis and sparking countless comprehension questions. This article provides a comprehensive guide to understanding this classic tale, answering common comprehension questions and exploring its deeper themes.

We will delve into the story's **moral lessons**, examine the **character of Tom Walker**, analyze the **symbolism** employed by Irving, and explore the story's enduring **relevance**.

Understanding the Story's Narrative: A Synopsis and Key Themes

"The Devil and Tom Walker" tells the story of a miserly and unprincipled man who makes a pact with the devil to gain wealth.

Set in colonial New England, the story uses the dark folklore of the devil to explore themes of greed, hypocrisy, and the consequences of immoral choices. Tom Walker's journey serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the corrosive effects of avarice on the human soul. The story's setting, steeped in swampy imagery and dark legends, effectively mirrors the moral decay at its center. The story's **plot** follows a clear trajectory: encounter with the devil, the deal, the wealth, and the ultimate, tragic consequences.

The narrative unfolds with vivid descriptions of the swamp, symbolizing the moral corruption festering beneath the surface of colonial society. This **symbolism** is a key element to understanding the story, contributing to its haunting and powerful effect. The devil himself is a multifaceted character, acting as both a catalyst for Tom's downfall and a representation of the tempting nature of evil.

Devil and Tom Walker: Character Analysis and Moral Implications

Tom Walker is not a sympathetic character. He is portrayed as greedy, selfish, and utterly lacking in moral scruples. His relationship with his wife mirrors his own moral bankruptcy, showcasing their mutual greed and lack of respect for each other. This **character development** serves to highlight the story's moral message: that unchecked avarice leads to ruin. Analyzing Tom's motivations—his relentless pursuit of wealth—is crucial to understanding the narrative's central conflict.

The story's **moral lesson** is clear: the pursuit of wealth at the expense of morality and human decency leads to inevitable destruction. Irving doesn't shy away from depicting the horrific consequences of Tom's pact with the devil, underscoring the dangers of unchecked ambition and the importance of ethical behavior. This

timeless message resonates even today, reminding us of the potential pitfalls of prioritizing material gain over integrity.

Symbolism and Allegory in "The Devil and Tom Walker"

The story is rich in symbolism. The swamp itself acts as a symbolic landscape, representing the murky moral landscape of the time and the hidden dangers lurking beneath the surface of respectability. The buried pirate treasure symbolizes the seductive allure of ill-gotten gains. The **allegory** extends to the characters as well: Tom Walker represents the avaricious and morally compromised individuals of the era, while the devil embodies the seductive power of temptation.

Analyzing these **literary devices** enhances a reader's understanding and appreciation of Irving's masterful storytelling.

Comprehension Questions and Answers: A Practical Guide

Let's address some common comprehension questions about "The Devil and Tom Walker":

- **What is the main conflict in the story?** The main conflict is Tom Walker's internal struggle between his greed and his fear of the devil, culminating in his fateful bargain.
- **What is the significance of the swamp setting?** The swamp symbolizes the moral decay and hidden dangers lurking beneath the surface of colonial society.
- **How does Tom Walker change throughout the story?** Tom begins as a miserly and unprincipled man, and while he initially hesitates, his greed ultimately wins out, leading to his eventual damnation. He doesn't experience genuine remorse.

- **What is the significance of Tom's wife's disappearance?**

It highlights Tom's callousness and the destructive power of greed, foreshadowing his own fate. It also shows the lengths to which he will go for wealth.

- **What is the overall moral of the story?** The story warns against the dangers of greed, hypocrisy, and making deals with the devil (representing temptation and evil). It emphasizes the importance of integrity and ethical conduct.

- **How does Irving use foreshadowing in the story?** The initial encounter with the devil, the descriptions of the swamp, and the disappearance of Tom's wife all foreshadow Tom's ultimate fate.

Conclusion: A Timeless Tale of Greed

and Consequences

"The Devil and Tom Walker" remains a powerful and relevant story because its exploration of human greed and its consequences transcends time. Irving's masterful use of symbolism, allegory, and character development creates a cautionary tale that continues to resonate with readers. By understanding the story's intricate details, including its characters, setting, and symbolism, we gain a richer appreciation for its enduring message: that the pursuit of wealth at any cost ultimately leads to spiritual and moral ruin.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1: What genre is "The Devil and Tom Walker"? A1: It's primarily a dark romantic short story, incorporating elements of folklore, legend, and moral allegory.

Q2: What historical period does the story depict? A2: The story

is set in colonial New England during the early 18th century, drawing on the historical context of the time, including the prevalence of religious superstition and the burgeoning colonial economy.

Q3: How does Irving use irony in the story? A3: Irving uses situational irony, as Tom Walker's pursuit of wealth leads to his ultimate destruction. Dramatic irony is also present, as the reader knows the consequences of Tom's actions before Tom fully understands them.

Q4: What is the significance of the names Tom Walker and Old Scratch? A4: "Tom Walker" is a simple, common name, emphasizing the ordinariness of the man who makes a deal with the devil. "Old Scratch" is a common nickname for the devil, highlighting the familiarity and almost casual nature of the pact.

Q5: How does the story reflect the anxieties of its time? A5: The story reflects anxieties about wealth accumulation, religious

hypocrisy, and the potential for moral corruption within society.

Q6: Could the story be interpreted as an allegory for the dangers of capitalism? A6: Yes, many critics interpret the story as a critique of unchecked capitalist ambition, where the pursuit of wealth overshadows morality and human connection. Tom's relentless pursuit of riches mirrors the ruthless pursuit of profit often associated with capitalism.

Q7: What makes "The Devil and Tom Walker" a classic? A7: Its timeless themes of greed, temptation, and moral consequences continue to resonate with readers. The story's sharp prose, memorable characters, and effective use of symbolism and allegory ensure its enduring place in literature.

Q8: Are there any modern adaptations or retellings of the story? A8: While not numerous, there are several modern retellings and allusions to "The Devil and Tom Walker" in various media,

adapting the core themes to contemporary settings and exploring similar conflicts of greed and morality.

Unraveling the Mysteries | Intricacies | Secrets of "The Devil and Tom Walker": A Deep Dive into Comprehension and Analysis

Washington Irving's "The Devil and Tom Walker" is more than just a spooky | grim | supernatural tale; it's a masterclass | textbook example | showcase in allegorical storytelling, ripe with opportunities | potential | avenues for critical | in-depth | thorough comprehension and interpretation | evaluation | assessment. This article will delve into the nuances | subtleties | depths of the story, providing comprehensive | exhaustive | complete answers to common comprehension questions while also exploring the broader | wider |

larger themes | concepts | ideas at play.

Understanding the Narrative:

The story revolves around Tom Walker, a miserly and unscrupulous | ruthless | greedy man who makes a pact | deal | bargain with the Devil in exchange for Kidd's buried treasure | wealth | riches. This seemingly simple premise conceals | masks | hides a far richer | more complex | deeper meaning. The story isn't just about a Faustian | diabolical | damned bargain; it's a satire | critique | commentary on the pursuit | acquisition | accumulation of wealth, the hypocrisy of religious | spiritual | moral belief | conviction | faith, and the consequences | ramifications | results of unchecked greed | avarice | covetousness.

Common Comprehension Questions and Answers:

Many readers struggle with certain aspects | elements | features of the narrative. Let's address some common comprehension questions

and their answers:

1. **What is the significance of the setting (the swamp)?** The swamp symbolizes | represents | embodies the unseen | hidden | obscure forces of evil and the moral decay | spiritual corruption | ethical degradation that pervades | infects | afflicts Tom Walker's world. Its gloomy | dreary | desolate atmosphere reflects | mirrors | parallels Tom's own inner turmoil | conflict | struggle.
2. **Why does Tom initially refuse the Devil's offer?** Tom's initial hesitation | reluctance | reticence isn't born of morality | virtue | righteousness. He is concerned | worried | anxious about the potential implications | consequences | ramifications for his wife, demonstrating his self-serving nature and prioritizing his own gain | profit | benefit.
3. **How does the story portray the hypocrisy of Puritan society?** Irving exposes | reveals | uncovers the hypocrisy of the

Puritans through their ostensible | professed | claimed piety and their simultaneous | concurrent | coexisting engagement | involvement | participation in dubious | questionable | shady activities like usury and exploitation | oppression | abuse. Tom's own religious conversion | reformation | transformation is purely opportunistic | strategic | self-serving.

4. What is the moral | ethical | philosophical of the story? The central | main | primary message | lesson | teaching of the story is that greed | avarice | covetousness and unscrupulous | ruthless | greedy ambition ultimately lead to destruction | ruin | demise. Tom's fate | destiny | doom serves as a cautionary | warning | admonitory tale about the dangers of selling one's soul for material gain | profit | benefit.

5. What literary devices | techniques | methods does Irving use? Irving utilizes various literary | narrative | stylistic devices | techniques | methods to enhance the narrative, including irony |

satire | allegory, symbolism | metaphor | imagery, and vivid | graphic
| descriptive language to create | evoke | generate a sense of unease
| discomfort | apprehension.

Practical Application and Educational | Pedagogical | Didactic Value:

"The Devil and Tom Walker" offers numerous educational | pedagogical | didactic opportunities. Teachers can use the story to teach | instruct | educate students | learners | pupils about:

- **Allegory and symbolism:** Analyzing the story's symbols | metaphors | allegories helps students understand how authors use indirect | implicit | subtle methods to convey meaning | significance | import.
- **Character analysis:** Students can examine Tom Walker's character | personality | traits, his motivations, and his development throughout the story.

- **Historical context:** The story provides insights into the historical context | background | setting of colonial America and the cultural | social | moral norms of the time.
- **Theme analysis:** Exploring the themes | concepts | ideas of greed | avarice | covetousness, hypocrisy, and the consequences | ramifications | results of moral compromises helps students develop critical | analytical | interpretive thinking skills.

By engaging with these elements | aspects | features, students can develop | enhance | improve their comprehension | understanding | interpretation of literature and strengthen | enhance | improve their critical | analytical | interpretive thinking skills.

Conclusion:

"The Devil and Tom Walker" remains a powerful | compelling | engaging and relevant | pertinent | applicable story because its

themes | concepts | ideas resonate across generations | epochs | eras. By analyzing | examining | scrutinizing its narrative | plot | storyline, symbols | metaphors | allegories, and character | personality | traits, we gain a deeper appreciation | understanding | insight not only of the story itself but also of the enduring | lasting | perpetual human | universal | timeless condition | state | situation of greed | avarice | covetousness, hypocrisy, and the consequences of our choices | decisions | actions.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

1. Is Tom Walker a sympathetic | likable | appealing character? No, Tom is generally viewed as an unsympathetic | unlikable | unappealing character due to his greed | avarice | covetousness, hypocrisy, and lack of moral | ethical | philosophical compass.

2. What happens to Tom Walker's wife? Tom's wife is depicted

as even more greedy | avarice | covetousness than him. She disappears after venturing into the swamp to make a deal with the Devil, and Tom later infers | concludes | deduces that the Devil killed her.

3. Is "The Devil and Tom Walker" a horror | scary | frightening story? While it contains elements of the supernatural and darkness | evil | wickedness, it is more accurately described as a dark | grim | macabre satire than a straightforward horror | scary | frightening story. Its horror | fear | terror is less explicit and more implied | suggested | alluded to.

4. What is the significance | import | meaning of Tom's final | last | ultimate fate | destiny | doom? His death at the hands of the Devil serves as a stark reminder | warning | cautionary tale of the consequences | ramifications | results of a life driven | motivated | guided by unchecked greed | avarice | covetousness and a disregard for morality | virtue | ethics.

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