

**Today you will read a passage from a short story. As you read, you will gather information about the passage and answer questions about it so you can write a narrative story.**

Read the passage from the 1842 short story “The Overcoat” by Ukrainian-born author Nikolai Gogol. Then answer questions 26 through 30.

from “The Overcoat”

*by Nikolai Gogol*

*translated by Constance Garnett*

- 1 When and how he entered the department, and who appointed him, no one could remember. However much the directors and chiefs of all kinds were changed, he was always to be seen in the same place, the same attitude, the same occupation; so that it was afterwards affirmed that he had been born in undress uniform with a bald head. No respect was shown him in the department. The porter not only did not rise from his seat when he passed, but never even glanced at him, any more than if a fly had flown through the reception-room. His superiors treated him in coolly despotic fashion. Some sub-chief would thrust a paper under his nose without so much as saying, “Copy,” or, “Here’s a nice interesting affair,” or anything else agreeable, as is customary amongst well-bred officials. And he took it, looking only at the paper, and not observing who handed it to him, or whether he had the right to do so; simply took it, and set about copying it.
- 2 The young officials laughed at and made fun of him, so far as their official wit permitted; told in his presence various stories concocted about him, and about his landlady, an old woman of seventy; declared that she beat him; asked when the wedding was to be; and strewed bits of paper over his head, calling them snow. But Akakiy Akakievitch answered not a word, any more than if there had been no one there besides himself. It even had no effect upon his work: amid all these annoyances he never made a single mistake in a letter. But if the joking became wholly unbearable, as when they jogged his hand, and prevented his attending to his work, he would exclaim, “Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?” And there was something strange in the words and the voice in which they were uttered. There was in it something which moved to pity; so much that one young man, a new comer, who, taking pattern by the

others, had permitted himself to make sport of Akakiy, suddenly stopped short, as though all about him had undergone a transformation, and presented itself in a different aspect. Some unseen force repelled him from the comrades whose acquaintance he had made, on the supposition that they were well-bred and polite men. Long afterwards, in his gayest moments, there recurred to his mind the little official with the bald forehead, with his heart-rending words, "Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?" In these moving words, other words resounded,—“I am thy brother.” And the young man covered his face with his hand; and many a time afterwards, in the course of his life, shuddered at seeing how much inhumanity there is in man, how much savage coarseness is concealed beneath delicate, refined worldliness, and even in that man whom the world acknowledges as honourable and noble.

- 3 It would be difficult to find another man who lived so entirely for his duties. It is not enough to say that Akakiy laboured with zeal: no, he laboured with love. In his copying, he found a varied and agreeable employment. Enjoyment was written on his face: some letters were even favourites with him; and when he encountered these, he smiled, winked, and worked with his lips, till it seemed as though each letter might be read in his face, as his pen traced it. If his pay had been in proportion to his zeal, he would, perhaps, to his great surprise, have been made even a councillor of state. But he worked, as his companions, the wits, put it, like a horse in a mill.
- 4 Moreover, it is impossible to say that no attention was paid to him. One director being a kindly man, and desirous of rewarding him for his long service, ordered him to be given something more important than mere copying. So he was ordered to make a report of an already concluded affair, to another department: the duty consisting simply in changing the heading, and altering a few words from the first to the third person. This caused him so much toil, that he broke into a perspiration, rubbed his forehead, and finally said, "No, give me rather something to copy." After that they let him copy on forever.

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**26. Part A**

In paragraph 1, the author describes behavior that “is customary amongst well-bred officials.” How is this description important to the passage?

- A.** It explains the narrator’s beliefs about the way Akakiy’s colleagues should treat each other.
- B.** It suggests the extent to which Akakiy has failed to perform well in his position.
- C.** It hints at the ways in which Akakiy believes his situation to be worse than it is.
- D.** It magnifies the isolation and humiliation that characterize Akakiy’s situation.

**Part B**

Which quotation has the **most** similar effect to that of the answer to Part A in how it contributes to the passage?

- A.** "When and how he entered the department, and who appointed him, no one could remember. However much the directors and chiefs of all kinds were changed, he was always to be seen in the same place, the same attitude, the same occupation; so that it was afterwards affirmed that he had been born in undress uniform with a bald head." (paragraph 1)
- B.** "The young officials laughed at and made fun of him, so far as their official wit permitted; told in his presence various stories concocted about him, and about his landlady, an old woman of seventy; declared that she beat him; asked when the wedding was to be; and strewed bits of paper over his head, calling them snow. But Akakiy Akakievitch answered not a word, any more than if there had been no one there besides himself." (paragraph 2)
- C.** "Enjoyment was written on his face: some letters were even favourites with him; and when he encountered these, he smiled, winked, and worked with his lips, till it seemed as though each letter might be read in his face, as his pen traced it. If his pay had been in proportion to his zeal, he would, perhaps, to his great surprise, have been made even a councillor of state." (paragraph 3)
- D.** "So he was ordered to make a report of an already concluded affair, to another department: the duty consisting simply in changing the heading, and altering a few words from the first to the third person. This caused him so much toil, that he broke into a perspiration, rubbed his forehead, and finally said, 'No, give me rather something to copy.' After that they let him copy on forever." (paragraph 4)

**27. Part A**

How does the introduction of the “young man, a new comer” in paragraph 2 contribute to meaning in the passage?

- A.** It allows the narrator to provide a broader commentary on what Akakiy’s mistreatment shows about people’s behavior.
- B.** It permits insight into the motivations Akakiy’s colleagues have for teasing him so mercilessly.
- C.** It suggests that the reader needs to view the events of the story from Akakiy’s perspective.
- D.** It provides insight into Akakiy’s thoughts that is not otherwise available.

**Part B**

Which quotation from paragraph 2 **most** directly supports the answer to Part A?

- A.** “But Akakiy Akakievitch answered not a word, any more than if there had been no one there besides himself.”
- B.** “. . . amid all these annoyances he never made a single mistake in a letter.”
- C.** “Some unseen force repelled him from the comrades whose acquaintance he had made, on the supposition that they were well-bred and polite men.”
- D.** “. . . many a time afterwards, in the course of his life, shuddered at seeing how much inhumanity there is in man, how much savage coarseness is concealed beneath delicate, refined worldliness . . .”

**28. Part A**

How does the description of Akakiy throughout paragraph 2 add to the development of Akakiy’s character?

- A.** It reveals his concerns beyond the workplace but shows he has no opportunity to deal with these concerns.
- B.** It reveals his physical troubles and shows how these troubles have impacted his ability to work.
- C.** It reveals his potential for advancement as a worker but shows he has no desire for advancement.
- D.** It reveals his true feelings about his work and shows why he does not feel comfortable expressing these feelings.

**Part B**

Which pair of quotations from paragraphs 2 and 3 **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A.** “It would be difficult to find another man who lived so entirely for his duties.” / “This caused him so much toil, that he broke into a perspiration, rubbed his forehead, and finally said, ‘No, give me rather something to copy.’”
- B.** “. . . it seemed as though each letter might be read in his face, as his pen traced it.” / “One director being a kindly man, and desirous of rewarding him for his long service, ordered him to be given something more important than mere copying.”
- C.** “If his pay had been in proportion to his zeal, he would, perhaps, to his great surprise, have been made even a councillor of state.” / “. . . it is impossible to say that no attention was paid to him.”
- D.** “It is not enough to say that Akakiy laboured with zeal . . . .” / “After that they let him copy on forever.”

**29. Part A**

As used in paragraph 3, what does the word **zeal** suggest about Akakiy?

- A.** He is a good-natured worker.
- B.** He executes his work with precision.
- C.** He takes pains to indicate to others that he is working.
- D.** He is extremely passionate about his work.

**Part B**

Which quotation from paragraph 3 **best** illustrates the meaning of the word **zeal** as it is used in the paragraph?

- A.** “. . . he found a varied and agreeable employment.”
- B.** “Enjoyment was written on his face . . . .”
- C.** “. . . to his great surprise . . . .”
- D.** “. . . have been made even a councillor of state.”

- 30.** Near the middle of paragraph 2, the author describes a “young man, a new comer” who shows sympathy for Akakiy. Write an imagined journal entry from the young man’s point of view as he reflects back on the situation later in life and the effects it has had on his life. Use what you have read in the passage to provide specific details relevant to the young man and Akakiy.