A.J. Cronin has very well carved the idea of 'selfless help' and explained the importance of dedication towards relationships in the story Two Gentlemen of Verona. The story revolves around the two boys named Nicola and Jacopo who do numerous things to earn money only to pay for their sister's treatment who suffers from tuberculosis of the spine.

The story begins with the narrator driving down the foothills of the Alps. Here is when he first encounters the two brothers selling wild strawberries. Even after the driver forbade the narrator to buy the wild fruits, he bought the biggest basket and drove towards the town. This scene emphasises on the first step of growing intimacy between the narrator and the two boys.
Next day, the boys were found shining shoes in the public square. This amazed the narrator. Here is when they revealed the fact that they did numerous kinds of things to earn money. Here, the narrator is shown to develop a soft corner for them in his heart. He finds them to be innocent, serious, pleasant and earnest.

The boys are very useful for the narrator. They are very willing to satisfy all that the narrator required. They were also found selling newspapers by the narrator one stormy night. One day, when the narrator asked if he could help them in any way they said they would be very grateful if they got a lift to the nearby village Poleta. Although it didn’t come in the narrator’s way he took them there. The boys got down in a building and asked the author to wait in a nearby café while they would be back within an hour.

Eagerness led the narrator to follow the boys up to a place which was actually a hospital. On peeping through a room led by a nurse, he realised that the boys were talking to a girl who resembled them. He did not feel like intruding and thus asked the nurse the details about the boys. This is when the nurse told him there heart rendering story about their father being killed in a war and home being destroyed in a war and their sister suffering from tuberculosis. The brothers lived in a shelter and literally starved only so that they could pay for their sister’s treatment. Them keeping a secret and helping their sister showed that war had not shaken their spirit. They were noble and gentle and great human beings in their own special yet subtle way.

This story distinctly talks about how true the amplification says: “All that glitters is not gold,” in turn explaining the fact that appearances are deceptive.

~~Question- Answers~~

Q1: What are the qualities of a gentleman?

Answer:

- Self-Respect
- Determined
- Dignified
- Compassionate
- Well-mannered
- Caring
- Hard working
Q2: Based on your reading of the story answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

(i) The driver did not approve of the narrator buying fruit from the two boys because:

(a) the boys were untidy and poorly dressed  
(b) the strawberries were not fresh  
(c) they were asking for a heavy price  
(d) the driver did not approve of small boys who worked

**Answer:** (a) the boys were untidy and poorly dressed

(ii) The narrator was most impressed by the boys’:

(a) desire to earn money  
(b) willingness to work  
(c) ability to perform many tasks  
(d) sense of fun

**Answer:** (c) ability to perform many tasks

(iii) Nicola was not pleased when Jacopo asked the narrator to drive them to Poleta as he:

(a) did not want a stranger to become involved with their plans  
(b) preferred going to Poleta by train so that he could enjoy the scenery  
(c) did not want to ask anyone for favours  
(d) did not want to take help from someone he did not know well

**Answer:** (a) did not want a stranger to become involved with their plans

(iv) The narrator did not go inside Lucia’s room as:

(a) he did not want to intrude into their privacy  
(b) he thought that the boys would object
(c) Lucia would not welcome a stranger
(d) the boys would feel he was spying on them

**Answer:** (a) he did not want to intrude into their privacy

(v) The boys were the first to join the resistance movement against the Germans because:

(a) the Germans had hurt their sister
(b) the Germans ruled the city
(c) the Germans had ruined their family
(d) the Germans had destroyed their home

**Answer:** (d) the Germans had destroyed their home

(vi) The author did not speak to the boys on their return journey because

(a) he thought the boys would prefer to keep their secret
(b) he thought the boys were ashamed of their sister’s condition
(c) he thought they won’t tell him the truth
(d) he thought the boys might ask him for money for their sister.

**Answer:** (a) he thought the boys would prefer to keep their secret

Q3: What do you understand by the following statements

(a) *We do many things,sir,* Nicola answered seriously. He glanced at us hopefully.

**Answer:** The above statement means that both Nicola and Jacopo were trying very hard to earn their living. At the same time they were expecting that the narrator also would ask for their services, so that they could earn some money.

(b) *He coloured deeply under his sunburn, then grew pale.*

**Answer:** The statement shows that the boys were shy. Nicola felt embarrassed when the narrator enquired about their earnings and what they do with the money. He was not used
to such questions. Therefore, he grew pale.

(c) He smiled uncomfortably. "Just plans, sir," he answered in a low voice.

Answer: Nicola felt uneasy when the narrator asked whether they had plans to emigrate to the States. He was evasive and do not want to share their sufferings with anyone.

(d) Yet in both these boyish faces there was a seriousness which was far beyond their years.

Answer: Although the boys were very small, but they possess maturity in their understanding and work. They were extremely hard-working, sincere and committed to work. These qualities are very uncommon in children.

Q4: Why didn’t Luigi, the driver, approve of the two boys?

Answer: Luigi found both the boys shabby and uncouth. They had tangled hair, dark earnest eyes, brown skin and looked quiet ill-clad. They appeared to be pathetic. Moreover he thought that they might sell fruits that are not fresh.

Q5 (CBSE 2011): Why were the narrator and his companion impressed by the two boys?

Answer: They were very impressed by the boys because they were highly committed and devoted towards work at such a tender age. They were ready to do all sorts of odd jobs to earn money. They exhibited dedication, determination and sincerity while working.

Q6: Why was the author surprised to see Nicola and Jacopo working as shoeshine boys?

Answer: During his first meeting with Nicola and Jacopo, the boys were selling fruits. Next time, they were polishing shoes to earn money. So, it was a surprise for him to see that at this tender age, they were ready to do any type of work.

Q7: How were the boys useful to the author?
Answer: Nicola and Jacopo proved themselves useful. If they want a pack of american cigarrates, seats for the opera or the name of a good restaurant, Nicola and Jacopo could be relied upon to satisfy their needs.

Q8: Why were the boys in the deserted square at night? What character traits do they exhibit?
Answer: The boys were in the deserted square at night because the last bus from Padua was expected to come there at that time and they hoped to sell the bundle of unsold newspapers to the passengers in the bus. They exhibited extreme hardwork, dedication, sincerity, determination, devotion towards work, tolerance, tremendous self respect and dignity.

Q9: The narrator asks the boys," Must you work so hard? You both look rather tired." The boys reply,"We are not complaining,sir." What do you learn about the boys from their reply?
Answer: From their reply we can make out that the boys were highly committed and devoted towards work at such a tender age. They had extreme patience, endurance and tolerance. They were also extremely hard-working, they were non-complaining, rough and tough children who wanted to maintain their dignity and self-respect.

Q10: When the narrator asks the boys about their plans, they were evasive. Why don't they disclose their problems?
Answer: The boys don't disclose their problems to the narrator when the latter ask them about their plans because they do not want to lose their dignity and self-respect by not asking anyone for sympathy or financial help.

Q11: (CBSE 2011): 'When the resistance movement began secretly to form they were among the first to join. When the war was over and we had peace at last, they came back to their beloved sister.'

(a) Who are the “they” referred to here?
(b) Why did they join the resistance movement?
(c) What had happened to their sister?
Answer: (a) Here ‘they’ refers to the two brothers, Nicola and Jacopo.
They joined the resistance movement because the war waged by Germany had destroyed their family. It had killed their father. Their house had been destroyed and the war had separated them from their sister.

Their sister, Lucia, who wanted to be a singer, had tuberculosis of the spine due to cold and starvation.

Q12(CBSE): *Why didn't the two boys disclose their problems to the author?*

**Answer:** Despite leading a destitute life, the boys didn't disclose their problems to the author because they did not want their private suffering be made public. They would like to live with self-respect and had strong will power to accept responsibility for their own lives.

!! Best Tips To Crack English Exam !!

Topper Tips

In school exams and pre-boards, most students are not able to score above 90 in English, so don’t worry. If you remain focussed till the board exams you can easily score higher marks. Teachers who check board answer sheets are lenient also. I would advise you to remember some good difficult words and lines relevant to your topic of common questions. They make difference trust me.

For the **writing section**, I would advise you to maintain a notebook where you practice different questions of writing section like reports, speech, articles, etc, from different sample paper books within time limit (set some time limit for each type of writing, this would improve your speed). When you complete the question, if possible try to get it evaluated by your English teacher. He/she might help you in how to present long answers. Also if the answer is given in the sample paper book, read it and write down the important lines and words which you found in the answer in your notebook. You should regularly read this notebook and think what could you have added in the answer or how could you have presented your answer in a better manner.

For the **literature section**, I was also confused from where to read the question and answers. I remember I had four or five sources/books for the questions but none of them was perfect.
would advise you to read all chapters and poems before the exams. You can find most of the answers in the chapter text itself which contained important words and lines. You should remember the same adjectives in your answer which are used in the text to describe a scenario (I think it may be a plus point).

Practice sample papers within time limit. Decide an order of attempting the paper. (I used to attempt like section A then C then B.) Also, THINK BEFORE YOU WRITE. Try not to make any cuttings. Don’t exceed the word limit in answers you are supposed to write in 30-40 words. Teachers don’t like it and you waste your own time in writing those long answers.

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