

## **THE ENEMY**

### **Theme**

The story de-glorifies war and sets fellow feelings as against national loyalty. It proves that humanity is above Patriotism and therefore indirectly condemns war. It also illustrates the conflict of a person who has to make difficult choices.

### **About the lesson**

The story set during the World War deals with conflicting emotions caused by those defining moments in one's life when one is faced with difficult choices. At times one has to choose between assuming the role of emphatic human beings and while ignoring sentiments, becoming patriotic of a country and letting one's nationalist feeling dictate the action one takes.

Dr. Sadao Hoki had spent a reasonable span of time in America studying medicine and specializing in the science of keeping wounds clean. It was because of his mastery over this that he had been retained in Japan and had not been sent overseas with the troops. Also the delicate health of the old General and the possibility of his requiring medical attention was a consideration for keeping him in Japan. The latter had spent some times in America and had as a matter of fact met his wife, Hana in Professor Harley's house and had subsequently married her in accordance with the traditional Japanese customs, on their return to Japan.

One night as the two of them stood in their verandah, they saw something being washed ashore into the close proximity of their house and on closer inspection found that it was an American prisoner of war. In an unconscious state, the American seemed to have lost lot of blood due to a bullet wound. Sadao and Hana were torn between succumbing to the human instincts of bringing the American into their house and tending to him and the thought that as citizens of Japan they would be breaking rules by bringing an American prisoner of war into their home. They also realized that if they did not turn him in he would surely die. They were afraid that the servants would not approve of the latter course of action and might even give them away to the authorities.

Being a doctor, Sadao realized that the American was in need of urgent medical attention and thus prevailed upon Hana not only to allow him to bring the man into the house but also to disclose the fact to the servants. The baby's maid, Yumi,

refused to clean up a white man and Hana had no choice but to do so herself. Though Hana had never seen an operation and had never before administered anesthesia, she was able to assist her husband in the operation. Sadao successfully managed to remove the bullet that had lodged itself close to the kidney. Looking at the unconscious man,

Hana could not help wondering whether the rumors that prisoners of war underwent torture were true and hoped that he had not been tortured. It was then that she noticed the red scars on his neck. He made all efforts to keep the American alive, all the time unsure why he wanted to keep an enemy alive. When the American regained consciousness, he weeps for a moment alarmed to see the Japanese couple and was also surprised that she spoke English. The servants continued to resent the presence of an enemy in the house of the master and finally decided to leave on the seventh day. Sadao's plea was that he had been trained for so long to keep people alive and he could not possibly let this man die.

In the meantime, Hana began to get very anxious about the bold and clearly brazen step they had taken and when an official in uniform came to their door, she assumed that he had come to arrest her husband. As it happened, he had merely come to summon him to examine the old General who had fallen ill. At this point, Sadao made up his mind that for the sake of his anxious wife, he must make a concerted effort to get rid of the enemy.

He decided to use the General's dependence on his medical prowess and skills to his advantage. He reported what he had done to save the man, at the same time letting the General feel that he had the ability to save lives with the greatest skill and thus increasing the General's dependence on him at a time when he was physically weak and in need of Sadao's expert nurturing. He promised to arrange for the enemy to be killed through the process of internal bleeding so that it did not appear to be murder. He also promised to get rid of the body, at the same time assuring Sadao that he had nothing to fear and that nobody would know that he had been involved in this matter.

As the task had to be completed in the next few days, Sadao thought that it would be completely pointless to mention it to Hana. He, however, could not sleep each night thinking that it would happen that very night and would be very relieved to

see the enemy alive each morning, and recovering rapidly. Slowly the realization began to dawn that perhaps the General had forgotten his promise and in a way he was glad that it had turned out this way. This circumstance gave him the opportunity to make arrangements for the American to escape. He assisted him in all the ways that he could, giving him boat, rations, Japanese clothes and even a torchlight with which he could indicate in case his supplies ran out or if he did not find a Korean fishing boat to rescue him from the island where he was to seek refuge. In the meantime, Sadao had carefully monitored the enemy's progress and was convinced that he was strong enough to take this chance and save his life. They parted as friends and the American remarked that it was a second time that Sadao had saved his life.

Sadao reported the matter of the American's escape to the General, who apologized profusely for having neglected to keep his promise offering the explanation that having fallen so ill, he had thought only of himself and his recovery and promise to have the enemy killed had quite escaped his mind. He wanted Sadao to know that this lapse should not be mistaken for a lack of patriotic feelings on his part or the dereliction of duty and he hoped that should the matter come out into the open he would support his explanation.

Sadao understood at once that he had the General in his palm and had no cause for worry about his own role of having given refuge to an enemy. He assured the General that he did not for a minute question his loyalty to his country and his zeal to fight the enemy. Sadao noticed with satisfaction that there was no flashing light from the island which indicated that the prisoner had been rescued. At this moment he suddenly recalled all the white people he had encountered while in America and the thought of most of them filled him with revulsion and reaffirmed his feelings of superiority. The face of the American prisoner of war came to his mind and he was again filled with revulsion. This made him wonder why he had gone to such pains to save the man.

The story thus focuses on a doctor's sense of duty to save lives, as opposed to a patriotic citizen duty-bound to hand over the prisoner to the authorities. It also

focuses on the ability of humans to rise above narrow prejudices of race and country and emerge as sensitive and empathetic human beings. Regardless of the lurking dangers, and the open defiance of his hitherto loyal servants, Sadao comes across as a doctor who takes his role as a savior of lives. Sadao's wife Hana loves her husband dearly, is as sensitive to the situation before them and is a human first and Japanese later.

Conventional by nature she is also committed to support her husband in all his endeavors. She displays remarkable strength of character standing by her husband in his effort to save the American and nurturing his back to health.