“thE Bet” – Philosophy of life assignment

In Chekhov’s story, the lawyer’s letter to his “jailer” is quite specific about his philosophy of life – what he considers important and unimportant and what freedom means to him.

As you reread the Lawyer’s letter to the Banker, follow the guide below for annotating the text:

Interpretive Notes and Symbols to be used are:

• Underline or highlight key words, phrases, or sentences that are important to understanding the work.

• Write questions or comments in the margins—your thoughts or “conversation” with the text.

• Bracket important ideas or passages.

• Use Vertical lines at the margin: to emphasize a statement already underlined or bracketed

• Connect ideas with lines or arrows.

• Use numbers in the margin: to indicate the sequence of points the author makes in developing a single argument.

 • Use a star or asterisk at the margin (use a consistent symbol): to be used sparingly, to emphasize the five or ten most important statements in the excerpt.

• Use ??? for sections or ideas you don’t understand.

• Circle words you don’t know. Define them in the margins.

• A check mark means “I understand”.

• Use !!! when you come across something new, interesting, or surprising.

Be sure to carefully read and annotate. You will be expected to be able to articulate your understanding of the Lawyer’s Philosophy of Life in both writing and during discussion.

**After annotating, paraphrase each paragraph of the Lawyer’s letter in the column on the right. You MUST ANNOTATE.**

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| **PARAPHRASE -** paraphrasing, which is to express an idea or somebody’s message in our own words, by maintaining the meaning of the original material. Paraphrase is a Greek word, paraphrasis, which means “to tell in other words.” Simply, it is to restate a statement in different words than the original text, while keeping the meaning and sense of the original source the same. |
| The banker took the page from the table and read as follows:      "To-morrow at twelve o'clock I regain my freedom and the right to associate with other men, but before I leave this room and see the sunshine, I think it necessary to say a few words to you. With a clear conscience I tell you, as before God, who beholds me, that I despise freedom and life and health, and all that in your books is called the good things of the world.  |  |
|      "For fifteen years I have been intently studying earthly life. It is true I have not seen the earth nor men, but in your books I have drunk fragrant wine, I have sung songs, I have hunted stags and wild boars in the forests, have loved women ... Beauties as ethereal as clouds, created by the magic of your poets and geniuses, have visited me at night, and have whispered in my ears wonderful tales that have set my brain in a whirl. In your books I have climbed to the peaks of Elburz and Mont Blanc, and from there I have seen the sun rise and have watched it at evening flood the sky, the ocean, and the mountain-tops with gold and crimson. I have watched from there the lightning flashing over my head and cleaving the storm-clouds. I have seen green forests, fields, rivers, lakes, towns. I have heard the singing of the sirens, and the strains of the shepherds' pipes; I have touched the wings of comely devils who flew down to converse with me of God ... In your books I have flung myself into the bottomless pit, performed miracles, slain, burned towns, preached new religions, conquered whole kingdoms ...  |  |
| "Your books have given me wisdom. All that the unresting thought of man has created in the ages is compressed into a small compass in my brain. I know that I am wiser than all of you. |  |
|      "And I despise your books, I despise wisdom and the blessings of this world. It is all worthless, fleeting, illusory, and deceptive, like a mirage. You may be proud, wise, and fine, but death will wipe you off the face of the earth as though you were no more than mice burrowing under the floor, and your posterity, your history, your immortal geniuses will burn or freeze together with the earthly globe.  |  |
|      "You have lost your reason and taken the wrong path. You have taken lies for truth, and hideousness for beauty. You would marvel if, owing to strange events of some sorts, frogs and lizards suddenly grew on apple and orange trees instead of fruit, or if roses began to smell like a sweating horse; so I marvel at you who exchange heaven for earth. I don't want to understand you.  |  |
|      "To prove to you in action how I despise all that you live by, I renounce the two million of which I once dreamed as of paradise and which now I despise. To deprive myself of the right to the money I shall go out from here five minutes before the time fixed, and so break the compact ..."  |  |

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| **Content** | **2** | **1.5** | **1 - 0** |
| **Accuracy of Information** | The paraphrase demonstrates an excellent understanding of the letter’s content.  | The paraphrase shows that almost all key elements were understood.  | There are places where it is obvious that the student did not understand the letter. |
| **Content Clarity** | A clear and harmonious paraphrase that illustrates an understanding of language and content of the Lawyer’s letter. | A decent attempt at deconstructing and paraphrasing the Lawyer’s letter. There may be a place where the paraphrase is disrupted or a misunderstanding of the content. | The paraphrase of the individual paragraph is disharmonious.  |
| **Sentence Structure and Grammar** | The structure of the original document is maintained and all grammar is correct.  | The structure and grammar is mostly maintained in the document.  | Grammar is ignored and there are gross mistakes.  |

**Now, record four views the Lawyer espouses in his letter to the Banker. Write whether you agree or disagree with the Lawyer and explain your reasoning.**

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| **Lawyer’s View** | **Do you agree or disagree?** | **Explain why you either agree or disagree with the Lawyer’s philosophy of life.** |
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**EXIT: Identify what you think is the story’s most important passage. Why? How would you interpret the theme of “the Bet?” Remember, the theme expresses a general insight about human life or human nature.**

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