

## Twenty Minutes with Mrs. Oakentubb

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Frank Arthur

**Q1. Explain the importance of the label on Mrs. Oakentubb's suitcase. Why does she hide it?**

**Ans.** In the melodrama 'Twenty Minutes with Mrs. Oakentubb', the male character, whose name remains unknown throughout, enters the railway waiting room and glances at the tie-on label attached to the suitcase of a lady who was already sitting there. She is Mrs. Judy Oakentubb, the very lady he is going to see in Stainthorpe. Mrs. Oakentubb killed this man's wife and daughter in a car accident and he wants to avenge their "murder". If the man had not seen the label, he would have remained oblivious of her identity and the murder would not have taken place. The development of the plot would have taken different lines. Realizing the malicious intention of the man, she deems it appropriate to hide the label so that the man might not know who she is. In addition, if she had escaped, she might have taken protective measures and her murder might never have taken place.

**Q2. What motive has the man for murdering her?**

**Ans.** Revenge was the clear motive behind the murder of Mrs. Oakentubb. As the male character in Frank Arthur's play 'Twenty Minutes with Mrs. Oakentubb', whose name remains unknown throughout, thinks that eighteen months' imprisonment was not the sufficient punishment for crushing life out of his wife and daughter. Mrs. Oakentubb's lawyer advised her to tell to the court that she had not seen them before the accident. As a matter of fact, she was drunk and driving criminally fast for a bet. One of her friends wagered her five pounds that she could not go from Stainthorpe Cross to the coast in fifteen minutes. That is why the man thinks that killing for his wife and daughter in the accident was not manslaughter, but "plain deliberate heartless cruel murder", and that the punishment for such a murder should be death "in the most painful way."

**Q3. In this melodrama, the author keeps on building up the tension and then relaxing it, until the final moment of tension when the murder is done. Briefly describe the chief moments of tension and what follows after each one?**

**Ans.** The first moment of tension comes when the man describes the death of his wife and daughter in an accident and speaks of his intention to kill Mrs. Oakentubb who was responsible for that terrible accident. The second moment of tension is when he takes out the revolver and tells the lady in the waiting room that he is going to shoot her as she herself is Mrs. Oakentubb. The last and final moment of tension is when he comes back, opens the door and finds her putting her fingers to the nose at him, takes out the revolver and shoots her dead.

**Q4. Write a brief character sketch of Mrs. Oakentubb?**

**Ans.** Mrs. Oakentubb is the central character in Frank Arthur's play 'Twenty Minutes with Mrs. Oakentubb'. She appears to be in her early middle age as she has mouse-brown hair, well streaked with grey. She is deceptively respectful. However, her villainous character is soon exposed when we come to know that her daredevil attitude has claimed two innocent lives. She was drunk when she was driving criminally fast for a

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bet. In an attempt to avoid a head-on collision, she swerved onto the pavement and killed two innocent pedestrians. Unscrupulous as she is, Mrs. Oakentubb tells a lie in court to reduce her crime to manslaughter, and gets away with only eighteen months in prison. Another sly and deceitful aspect of her personality is revealed when she keeps up the pretence of being regretful. As soon as the vengeful man leaves the room thinking that the unremitting mental anguish is her real punishment, Mrs. Oakentubb rises to her feet and puts her fingers to her nose at him. The man suddenly re-enters the waiting room, sees her offensive gesture, and shoots her. Thus, Mrs. Oakentubb is rightly punished for the wrong she did.

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