

ENGLISH



THREE QUESTIONS

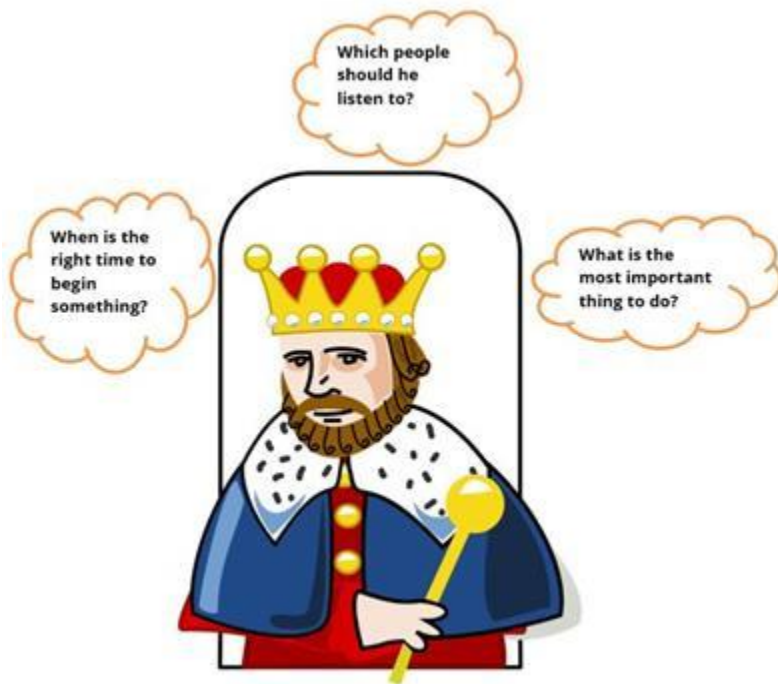
~Summary~

-by Leo Tolstoy

Three Questions is a story written originally by **Leo Tolstoy**. It has been retold for school lesson purposes. Leo Tolstoy is a famous **Russian writer** who lived from **1828-1910**. He is regarded as one of the greatest authors of all time. He received many nominations for **Nobel Prize in Literature** but **unfortunately never won once**. Out of hundreds of his novels, plays and stories, "**War and Peace**" is an all-time favourite book of millions of people.

Three Questions is the **story of a king** who is in search of answers to **three philosophical questions** in life. He struggles to find the answers to the three questions, namely:

- When is the right time to begin something?
- Which people should he listen to?
- What is the most important thing for him to do?



The king sends out **messengers** throughout his country to find the answers from wise men. He also **promises large sums of money** to the person who gives the correct answer. However, all his efforts are in vain; because every time he gets a **different answer from each person**. So he decides to meet a **wise hermit who lives in the woods**. Two incidents happen there, which **reveal the answer** to the king.

When the king reaches the hermit's hut, **the hermit seems to be digging the ground** in front of his hut. He is old, tired and breathes heavily, as he keeps digging. The king asks his questions to

the hermit, but the hermit continues to dig. The king, seeing that the hermit is struggling, **decides to help him out**. He takes the spade from the hermit's hand and starts digging. After he dug two beds, he stops digging and asks his questions. The hermit, **without replying asks him to rest now** and that he will continue digging. But **the king does not oblige, and he continues to dig**. Hours pass by, and it gets dark. He says **he will return home if the hermit cannot answer the questions**. The hermit sees someone running towards them.

They see a **bearded man**, with a bleeding wound in his stomach. The king **immediately starts dressing his wounds and carries him to bed inside the hut**. Out of exhaustion from the day's work, the king also sleeps on the floor. The next morning, when he wakes up, the **bearded man asks for forgiveness** to the king. The puzzled king asks why. The bearded man **reveals that he was an enemy of the king**, who had been defeated by the king once. The king **had taken all his property, so he had come to kill the king when he was returning alone to the kingdom**. But **since the king did not return the previous day**, the bearded man had come out of his hiding place, and the **king's bodyguard had seen and stabbed him with a knife**.

The bearded man says the king was **kind-hearted and saved my life** and that he wanted to **serve him as his servant**. The king **forgives the man and promises to return** his seized property. He is also happy that he has **made friends with the enemy easily**.

He goes to the hermit and begs for the answers to his questions. He says his **questions have already been answered**. He asks how. The hermit explains

- If the king had not helped him dig the ground, he would've left early, and the enemy (the bearded man) would have stabbed him.
- But the king did the right thing - by taking pity on the hermit, he decided to help him - that is the **most important time** that saved the king's life.
- The **most important person** at that time, to the king - was the hermit
- The **most important thing to do** - was to do the hermit some good help.

Again, the same thing happened with the bearded man also:

- The king cared for him the day before - **the most important time**
- The king dressed his wounds - **the most important thing to do**
- The king cared for the man in pain - **the most important person**

The hermit goes on to explain that, the most important time to do anything is **NOW** - because we have the **power to act only in the present moment**. The most important person is **the person who you are with, at a particular time**. No one knows what will happen in the future or whether we will meet anyone else. The **most important business is to do good deeds** because we were sent to this world only for that purpose.

~Conclusion~

The three questions were: what was the right time for every action, who were the right people to be with and what was the most important thing to do. He proclaimed that he would give a great reward to the person who can answer his three questions.