A MAN WHO HAD NO EYES

By MacKinlay Kantor

Where do the sentences fit in?

Summary
"A Man Who Had No Eyes" is the story of the unexpected meeting of two blind men who lost their eyesight in a gas explosion. One of the men is a beggar, the other a well-dressed gentleman, Mr. Parsons. The beggar tells Mr. Parsons all about his dreadful fate while trying to sell him a cigarette lighter. The beggar seems to gain Parsons' sympathy by his "bitter and studied drama of a story often told, and told for money". The surprise ending comes when Parsons reveals himself as the victim of the beggar's brutal action. For it was not the beggar who had been trampled on, but the beggar, Markwardt, who had climbed over Parsons.
At the beginning of the story Parsons does not seem at all angry at Markwardt's lies. The only hint as to the gentleman's change of mood is a slight change in the weather. The ending comes as a surprise: provoked by the beggar's lying, Parsons eventually reveals his identity. he puts the beggar in his place.
Both men have suffered the same fate, but have surmounted their difficulties in quite different ways. The contrast between them is evident in every aspect of their language and clothing.

1 when they were both working at the same chemical factory.
2 a shrewd and clever liar
3 trampling him "into the dirt".
4 Calmly but very plainly
5 behaviour

1. **Mr. Parsons: clues to his blindness**.
What clues are there that Mr. Parsons is blind, too?
9 9-10:

9 14-15:

10 2-3:

2. Characterisation
In groups or with a partner find quotations which characterise the two men.
The beggar
9 2-6:

919:

9 20:   /23

10 6:   10 28:

Mr. Parsons
9 2:

9 12-14:

9 15-17:

9 21-22:

10 2:

How does the beggar try to make people feel sorry for him? Use quotations to support your answer.

3. Personal reactions
Did you like the story? Why? Why not?

Which lines show that Mr. Parsons has a particular interest in Markwardt's story?

Unit II
Language and style
What type of language is used for the descriptive passages and for the dialogues?
The language of the descriptive passages is direct, clear and easy to understand. The sentences are short with no comparisons, metaphors or other stylistic devices.The language of the dialogues is different, depending on who is speaking: slangy, uneducated and emotional when the beggar speaks; grammatically correct, precise language for Mr. Parsons.

The peddler's grammar is sometimes wrong. Can you find examples and correct them?
Why does the author make him speak like this?

9 23:   "I ain't" –

9 23:   "I got" –

10 5:   "plenty people" –

10 19:   "They've all forgot" –

11 1:   "There wasn't nothing" –

11 2:   "would have been ... took care of -

11 5:   "They was" –

The author is trying to create a realistic impression of the way people like the peddler speak. He also pronounces "them" and "don't know" as "em" (10 15) and "dunno" (11 13), which makes it sound more realistic, too.

Which words show you that the story was written by an American, not a British person?
Where possible give the British equivalents.

9 13:   "laborer" -

9 25:   "buck"

10 2:   "gray" -

10 6:   "guy" -

10 8:   "vest" -

10 8:   "half-dollars"

10 10:   "elevator" -

11 9:   "folks" –

 11 13:   "nuts" -

Symbolism
Look at the weather at the beginning and end of the story. Why does the
author describe it like this? What function does the weather have in the story?
9 8: The air was rich with spring; sun was warm
9 15-17: The blue air of spring ... could thrill him with eagerness