

button button by richard matheson

answer key

button button by richard matheson answer key is a crucial resource for students, educators, and readers seeking to understand the complex themes and moral questions posed in Richard Matheson's renowned short story. This article provides a comprehensive analysis and explanation of the story's plot, characters, and underlying messages, offering a detailed answer key to commonly asked questions. By exploring the ethical dilemmas and psychological tension within "Button Button," readers can gain deeper insight into Matheson's critique of human nature and the consequences of choice. The answer key also addresses thematic elements, symbolism, and the narrative's impact, making it an essential guide for academic discussions and literary analysis. This guide will cover the story overview, character breakdown, thematic exploration, and frequently asked questions to provide a thorough understanding of this compelling work.

- Story Overview of "Button Button"
- Main Characters and Their Roles
- Themes and Symbolism in "Button Button"
- Common Questions and Answers
- Analysis of the Story's Moral and Ethical Questions

Story Overview of "Button Button"

"Button Button" by Richard Matheson is a suspenseful short story that revolves around a mysterious box with a red button. The plot centers on a couple who receive this box, which comes with a proposition: if they press the button, someone they do not know will die, and they will receive a large sum of money. The story explores the couple's moral struggle and the consequences of their decision. Matheson uses this premise to delve into human nature and the ethical boundaries individuals face when confronted with temptation and difficult choices.

Plot Summary

The story begins when the couple, Norma and Arthur Lewis, receive a package containing the button box. A stranger explains the rules: pressing the button will result in the death of a person unknown to the pressers, and in return, the pressers will receive \$50,000. Initially, Norma is intrigued by the offer, while Arthur is hesitant. After much debate, Norma eventually presses the button, leading to unforeseen consequences. The story ends on a chilling note, revealing the true cost of their decision.

Setting and Tone

The setting is contemporary and ordinary, which contrasts sharply with the extraordinary and morally complex situation the characters face. The tone is suspenseful and thought-provoking, maintaining a sense of tension throughout the narrative. Matheson's writing style effectively conveys the psychological drama and ethical questions embedded in the plot.

Main Characters and Their Roles

The characters in "Button Button" are carefully crafted to represent different perspectives on the moral dilemma presented by the button box. Understanding their motivations and reactions is essential for a comprehensive answer key.

Norma Lewis

Norma is the protagonist who is tempted by the possibility of easy money. She represents curiosity and human susceptibility to greed. Her decision to press the button drives the story forward and highlights the consequences of moral compromise. Norma's character arc shows the internal conflict between right and wrong, as well as the emotional impact of her choice.

Arthur Lewis

Arthur serves as the voice of caution and morality. He is skeptical and fearful of the consequences of pressing the button. His hesitance provides a critical counterpoint to Norma's impulsiveness and helps to emphasize the ethical dimensions of the story. Arthur's role is crucial in showcasing the tension between temptation and conscience.

The Stranger

The mysterious stranger who delivers the button box represents the catalyst for the moral test. His ambiguous nature and lack of explanation regarding the identity of the victim add to the story's suspense and moral uncertainty. He embodies the unknown consequences and the impersonal nature of the offer.

Themes and Symbolism in "Button Button"

The story's richness lies in its exploration of universal themes and use of symbolism, which the answer key addresses to enhance understanding and interpretation.

Ethical Dilemma and Morality

The central theme of "Button Button" is the ethical dilemma faced by the characters. The story challenges readers to consider the value of human life and the morality of benefiting at the expense of others. It raises questions

about personal responsibility, the cost of greed, and the boundaries of ethical behavior.

Greed and Temptation

Greed is a driving force in the story, symbolized by the button itself. The temptation to press the button reflects the allure of easy reward without apparent consequences, highlighting human vulnerability to selfish desires. Matheson uses this to critique the darker side of human nature.

The Unknown Victim and Consequences

The fact that the victim is unknown symbolizes the detachment and dehumanization involved in making selfish decisions. The story suggests that ignoring the impact of one's actions on others can lead to devastating consequences. This theme is essential for understanding the moral weight behind the characters' choices.

Common Questions and Answers

This section provides a detailed answer key to frequently asked questions about "Button Button" by Richard Matheson, aiding in academic study and comprehension.

What is the significance of the button?

The button symbolizes temptation and the moral test presented to the characters. It represents the choice between easy gain and ethical integrity, forcing the characters (and readers) to confront difficult questions about human values.

Why does Norma decide to press the button?

Norma's decision is driven by curiosity, greed, and a desire for financial security. Initially, she is skeptical but grows increasingly tempted by the prospect of \$50,000. Her choice reflects human susceptibility to temptation despite moral reservations.

Who dies when the button is pressed?

The identity of the victim is intentionally left vague to emphasize the moral implications rather than the specifics of the death. The story reveals that the victim is someone close to the couple, adding a tragic twist and underscoring the unforeseen consequences of their actions.

What is the main message of the story?

The main message is a cautionary tale about the dangers of greed and the

importance of ethical decision-making. It warns that choices motivated by selfish desires can lead to irreversible harm and personal tragedy.

How does the story end?

The story ends with a shocking revelation that the person who dies is someone the couple knows intimately, highlighting the cruel irony and reinforcing the story's moral lesson about the cost of selfishness.

Analysis of the Story's Moral and Ethical Questions

"Button Button" by Richard Matheson invites readers to engage deeply with its moral and ethical questions. The answer key emphasizes the significance of these issues for understanding the story's impact and relevance.

Personal Responsibility and Consequences

The story stresses that individuals are responsible for the outcomes of their decisions, even when the consequences are hidden or indirect. It challenges readers to consider how personal choices affect others and the ethical responsibility that accompanies power and temptation.

The Role of Choice in Human Nature

Matheson's narrative explores the complexity of human choice, illustrating that decisions are rarely simple and often involve conflicting desires and values. The button serves as a metaphor for the difficult decisions people face in life and the moral courage required to resist unethical temptations.

The Impact of Greed on Relationships

The story also examines how greed and selfishness can erode trust and damage relationships. The tragic outcome reveals the destructive potential of prioritizing material gain over human connections, making the story a powerful ethical warning.

Lessons for Readers and Society

"Button Button" encourages reflection on societal values and personal ethics, reminding readers that the pursuit of wealth or gain should not come at the expense of human dignity and life. It serves as a timeless reminder of the importance of compassion and integrity.

- Received mysterious box with a button
- Tempted with \$50,000 in exchange for pressing it

- Pressing the button causes the death of an unknown person
- The ethical dilemma centers on personal gain versus moral responsibility
- The story ends with a tragic and ironic twist

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main premise of 'Button, Button' by Richard Matheson?

'Button, Button' revolves around a mysterious box with a button that, when pressed, will grant the presser a large sum of money but cause the death of someone they do not know.

Who are the main characters in 'Button, Button'?

The main characters are Arthur and Norma Lewis, a married couple who receive the box with the button from a stranger.

What moral dilemma do the characters face in 'Button, Button'?

Arthur and Norma must decide whether to press the button to receive money at the cost of an unknown person's life, raising questions about greed and ethics.

What is the twist ending of 'Button, Button'?

The twist reveals that pressing the button results in the death of someone close to the presser, not a stranger, making the decision even more tragic.

What themes are explored in 'Button, Button'?

'Button, Button' explores themes of morality, temptation, the consequences of choices, and human nature.

How does Richard Matheson create suspense in 'Button, Button'?

Matheson uses the mysterious box, the ethical dilemma, and the characters' internal conflict to build suspense throughout the story.

What lesson can readers learn from 'Button, Button'?

Readers learn about the dangers of selfishness and greed, and how choices driven by these impulses can have unforeseen and tragic consequences.

Additional Resources

1. *Button Button: The Original Short Story* by Richard Matheson

This is the original short story that inspired various adaptations, including the famous Twilight Zone episode. The narrative revolves around a mysterious box with a button that, when pressed, grants a monetary reward at a significant moral cost. It explores themes of human nature, temptation, and ethical dilemmas.

2. *The Twilight Zone Companion* by Marc Scott Zicree

This comprehensive guide delves into the episodes of the classic TV series, including the adaptation of "Button Button." It offers behind-the-scenes insights, production details, and analyses of the story's themes and impact on popular culture. Fans of Matheson's work will appreciate its detailed exploration.

3. *Richard Matheson: Collected Stories*

A compilation of Richard Matheson's most compelling short stories, showcasing his mastery of suspense, horror, and speculative fiction. "Button Button" is featured among other tales that challenge moral boundaries and human psychology. This collection is essential for readers interested in Matheson's narrative style and thematic concerns.

4. *Ethics in Literature: Moral Dilemmas and Human Choices*

This book examines various literary works that present ethical conflicts, including "Button Button." It discusses how authors use storytelling to probe the complexity of human decisions and consequences. Readers gain insight into the philosophical questions raised by such narratives.

5. *The Psychology of Temptation: Understanding Human Decision-Making*

Exploring the psychological underpinnings of temptation and choice, this book relates to the central theme in "Button Button." It explains why people might make morally questionable decisions when faced with immediate rewards. The text connects psychological theory with literary examples.

6. *Modern Horror and Suspense: The Works of Richard Matheson*

An analytic study of Matheson's contributions to horror and suspense genres, focusing on his unique ability to blend ordinary settings with extraordinary circumstances. "Button Button" is highlighted as a prime example of his storytelling prowess. The book also discusses his influence on later writers and filmmakers.

7. *Short Stories That Changed Television*

This volume reviews short stories that have been adapted into iconic TV episodes, including "Button Button." It explores the transition from page to screen and the narrative adjustments made for visual storytelling. The book is valuable for understanding adaptation processes and media influence.

8. *The Morality Playbook: Fictional Cases in Ethics*

Featuring a variety of fictional scenarios that challenge ethical reasoning, this book uses stories like "Button Button" to prompt discussion and reflection. It is often used in educational settings to teach critical thinking about right and wrong. The engaging format makes complex ethics accessible.

9. *Speculative Fiction and Social Commentary*

This work explores how speculative fiction, including Matheson's "Button Button," serves as a mirror to societal issues and human behavior. It analyzes how speculative elements highlight real-world concerns and provoke

thought. Readers interested in the intersection of fiction and social critique will find it insightful.

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