Introduction to Literature: Short Story and Poetry

ENG401

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Lesson 1

INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE

Literature is defined as:

'Written works, e.g. fiction, poetry, drama, and criticism that are recognized as having important or permanent artistic value are referred to as literature.'
Or
'The body of written works of a culture, language, people, or period of time is called literature.'

Literature perhaps started with man discovering his ability to create. When this happened, he realized that he could not only express his emotions in writing but in the process convey messages of importance to society carefully hidden in beautiful words. He decided that he could play with words to entertain people who would read them. In the olden days, distance was of course a problem and so maintaining a history of world literature was impossible. The flip side is that we have a wide range of literature to read from. People in different parts of the world, using different languages and writing in different periods of time tackled literature differently. This has left us with books and creations that enrich our society, our heritage as a race and us. Even the most voracious reader can never hope to read all the books out there.

Literature and writing, though obviously connected, are not synonymous. Every piece of writing is not literature. The definition of literature is mainly personal and scholars have a disagreement regarding when written record-keeping became more like "literature".
Another important fact to consider is that the historical development of literature was not even-paced across the globe. The main hurdle in creating a uniform world history of literature is the disappearance of many texts over the millennia, either intentionally, by accident, or by the total vanishing of the originating culture. The earliest forms of English literature, like the earliest forms of other national literatures, have perished.

Literature includes both written and spoken material. On a broader level, 'Literature' includes anything from creative writing to more technical or scientific works, but most commonly the term refers to works of the creative imagination, i.e. poetry, drama, prose and novel.

Literature is almost similar to art, what is true in painting is true in literature. 'A novel is not an imitation or an exact copy of life as we live it; it is rather a selection of characters and events drawn from reading, observation, and experience, and woven into an entirely new story.' (p.20, How to Study English Literature by T. Sharper Knowlson)

Ezra Pound says, "Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree."

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The above statement from Pound tells us that great literature leaves us with some meaning. Meaning to what? To life. Thus literature gives answers to our questions about life. It tells us that in the journey of life, only we are not the fighters. There are millions out there striving like us to carry on with the flow of life; feeling different shades of life; enjoying life in its fullest and suffering the deepest of miseries. Literature helps us identify with others in the globe, strengthens and unites us with the rest of mankind. Reading Literature books gives us maturity and may solve the unsolved mysteries of life.

Literature helps us create an interest in life as we see it. It helps us experience life in all its colors and vastness. In our journey of exploring different literary texts, we meet different interesting characters that teach us many things; alleviate our sorrows; elevate our spirit at different levels. Humanity in all its shades is encompassed in literature: sorrows, happiness, wars, birth, death etc. Literature enriches personal experiences and adds wisdom to even ordinary events. Literary texts can even revolutionize our life by helping us grow through our literary journey and enabling us to see everyday events in a new light.

Literature portrays a culture more elaborately than historical or cultural artifacts do because it deals directly with language and people. The author's message is interpreted differently by different people. The decoding of the text varies according to use of different literary theories using a mythological, sociological, psychological, historical, or any other approach. Whatever critical standard we use for critical analysis of the literary texts, an artistic quality to the works always remains. Literature is never confined to a single culture or country. It speaks to us regardless of our race, culture or country.
English literature is the literature written in the English language, including literary works in English by writers not just from England but also from other countries. The famous writer Joseph Conrad was born in Poland, Robert Burns was Scottish, James Joyce was Irish, Dylan Thomas was Welsh, Edgar Allan Poe was American, V.S. Naipaul was born in Trinidad, and Vladimir Nabokov was Russian. English literature is as diverse as the varieties and dialects of English spoken around the world. Despite the variety of authors of English literature, the works of William Shakespeare remain paramount in all literary circles.

Literature has two major aspects, one is of simple enjoyment and aesthetic appeal to the senses, and other is of analysis and exact description of the prevailing condition of society in general and man in particular. So, studying literature with these two aspects provides us an opportunity to experience entirely new worlds. Like when a song appeals to the ear or a noble book to the heart, we discover a new world for the moment, at least, a completely new world which is very different from our own world and it seems that we are in a place of dreams and magic.

Every time we read literature, we gain something from it that we did not have before. Even reading the same text at different stages in our life offers us meanings we missed the first time. Literature is a true and beautiful expression of life; it is the written record of a person's thoughts, emotions, feelings and experiences which would never fade.

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Some of the major genres of English Literature are as under:

1. Poetry
2. Drama
3. Novel
4. Prose

Poetry
The term poetry is hard to define but we can say that poetry is an imaginative awareness of experience, expressed through meaning, sound, and rhythmic language and evokes an emotional response. Poetry mostly employs meter and rhyme, but this is not necessary. Poetry is an old form and has gone through numerous and drastic reinvention over time.
Poetry includes whatsoever of painting can be made visible to the mind's eye, and whatsoever of music can be conveyed by sound and proportion without singing or instrumentation.

Prose
Prose is distinguished from poetry because of its complete lack of any metrical structure and variety of rhythm and has a closer correspondence to the patterns of everyday speech.

Drama
Drama is a prose or verse composition, especially one that tells a serious story, intended for representation by actors who mimic the characters and perform the dialogues and actions of the written narrative.
A drama is the imitation of a complete action, adapted to the sympathetic attention of man, developed in a succession of continuously interesting and continuously related incidents, acted and expressed by means of speech and the symbols, actualities, and conditions of life.

Novel
A novel is a fictional prose narrative of significant length, typically having a plot that is unfolded by the actions, speech, and thoughts of the characters.

Why do we study Literature?

1. Literature always reflects human ideas, beliefs, and societies.
2. Literature helps us to discover ordinary human ways of understanding life.
3. While reading literature, we explore significant differences and this allows us to even experience perspectives of those separated from us by time and social barriers.
4. Getting to know the human psyche would help us discover pride in our own culture, gain respect for others, and be humble.
5. We find different human responses and reactions in poems, essays, diaries, narratives, and in the characters of narratives. Exposure to such varied responses helps us gain a greater knowledge of the human psyche and at the same time, we

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are familiarized with a greater knowledge of ourselves and our own responses because we surely compare our lives to those in literature.

6. We learn about the good and evil forces; experience the injustices prevalent in this world and it cultivates a sense of wisdom in us. Good literature assists us in becoming a better person.
7. Literature provides us with a worldview of things and gives us a mature perspective of things.
8. Literature serves as an entertainment .It also introduces us to the literary figures, movements and multi-dimensional characters.

Role of Language in Literature:

In the creation of a work of art, three main things count:

1. The writer
2. The reader
3. Language

It is impossible to pass over the subject of literature in silence. Literature cannot be segregated from language. Language is the only widely-accepted form of communication and all feelings, emotions and opinions in a piece of literature are transferred through it. The knowledge sharing in literature is done through various linguistic features. Texts have been written and frequently translated into common international languages, to be passed on to the international communities and to future generations.

In order to affect their readers, the authors play with language to create unusual new meanings and utterances. Both classic and contemporary poets, playwrights and novelists, use language play to cast a spell on readers' imagination. While writing a piece of literature, a huge emphasis is paid on imagery and it breaks the monotony of a text. Creating imagery also spares writers the trouble of writing long boring descriptions.
A separate branch of linguistics – stylistics - deals with the relationship of language and literature. The methodology of this type of study is determined by the subject's distinct nature. Literary language is language in the usual sense of the term, and style determines the artistic functions of language in literature.

The stylistics of literature explains the methods of using language in literature and of combining aesthetic and communicative functions in language. Stylistics of literature explains the means by which language becomes a work of art within literature. Researchers in the field of literary stylistics analyze various types of authorial narration; discuss various linguistic devices used in famous speeches of different literary characters; distinguish literary language from the ordinary one.

English Literature:
The mere acquisition of knowledge of literature is not what we mean by the study of literature. Pure literature addresses the soul as well as the mind. If we wish to partake of its benefits, we must pursue it according to a definite plan, i.e. by studying different ages systematically.

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English Literature was produced in England from the introduction of Old English by the Anglo-Saxons in the 5th century to the present. This is the first period in the history of English literature. The works of those Irish and Scottish authors who are closely identified with English life and letters are also considered part of English literature.
This period extends from about 450 to 1066, the year of the Norman-French conquest of England. The Germanic tribes from Europe who overran England in the 5th century, after the Roman withdrawal, brought with them the Old English, or Anglo-Saxon language, which is the basis of Modern English.

Anglo-Norman period extends from 1066-1350. The Normans were the first to bring the culture and the practical ideals of Roman civilization to home of the English people; and this at a critical time, when England had produced her best, and her own literature and civilization had already begun to decay. They brought to England the wealth of a new language and literature, and English gradually absorbed both. Besides these greater works, an enormous number of fables satires appeared in this age, copied or translated from the French, like the metrical romances.
The age of Chaucer extends from 1350-1400. The age was one of unusual stir and progress. The five main writers of this age are: Langland, Wyclif, Gower, Mandeville and above all Chaucer.

The fourth period is the revival of learning extending from 1400-1500, and it denotes, in its broadest sense, the gradual enlightenment of the human mind after the darkness of the Middle Ages. The names 'Renaissance' and 'Humanism' are often applied to the same movement. The term Renaissance is used to denote the whole transition from the Middle ages to the modern world, and is more correctly applied to the revival of art resulting from the discovery and imitation of classic models in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The Elizabethan Age ranging from 1550-1620. The main characteristic of the age was the comparative religious tolerance. The age of Elizabeth was a time of intellectual liberty, of growing intelligence and comfort among all classes, of unbounded patriotism, and of peace at home and abroad.

Edmund Spencer, Thomas Sackville, Philip Sidney, George Chapman, Michael Drayton, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher and Thomas Dekker are the minor and major writers of Elizabethan age.

William Shakespeare (baptized 26 April 1564; died 23 April 1616) was an English poet and playwright, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. His works consist of about 38 plays, sonnets, two long narrative poems, and several other poems. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.
The Puritan Age extends from 1620-1660. The Puritan movement may be regarded as a second and greater Renaissance, a rebirth of the moral nature of man following the intellectual awakening of Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Samuel Daniel,

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John Donne, Herbert, Waller, Denham, Cowley, Vaughan, Davenant, Marvell and Crawshaw are writers of this age.

The Restoration Period ranges from 1660-1700.Next comes Eighteenth Century literature which extends from 1600-1780. The major writers of this age are Pope, Swift and Daniel Defoe.

The age of Romanticism extends roughly from 1780-1850. The most famous poets of this age are William Wordsworth, S.T.Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron.
After Romanticism comes the Victorian age Victorian literature, produced during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). This age forms a link and transition between the writers of the romantic period and the next different literature of the 20th century.

The 19th century saw the novel become the leading form of literature in English. The works by pre-Victorian writers such as Jane Austen and Walter Scott showed social satire and adventure stories. These popular works increased the trend of novel reading amongst the public.
Significant Victorian novelists and poets include: Matthew Arnold, the Bronte sisters (Emily, Anne and Charlotte Bronte), Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Joseph Conrad, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Bram Stoker, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Philip Meadows Taylor, Alfred Lord Tennyson, William Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, George MacDonald, and Oscar Wilde.

Lastly comes the Modern Age and Post-Modernism. Modernism as a literary movement reached its height in Europe between 1900 and the middle 1920s.The term postmodern literature is used to describe certain characteristics of post-World War II literature.

Activities:

1. Define literature.
2. Come up with your own definition of literature.
3. How far do you agree that literature helps in your real life?
4. Can literature exist without language?
5. Give any five reasons for studying literature.
6. What is the role of literature in a society?
7. Is literature universal or is it affected by social norms?
8. Can literature help us in solving real-life problems?
9. Consult dictionary of literary terms and find out meanings and details of these terms.
   Poetry, Drama, Novel, Prose, Short Story, Epic, Sacred Scriptures, Narrative, Linguistic, Monologue, Tone, Rhyme, Imagery, Metaphor, Symbols,

10. Choose the correct option from the following:

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Literature is almost similar to _____.

1. Experience
2. Art
3. Events
4. Imitation

Charles Dickens is the writer of _____.

1. Restoration Age
2. Romanticism
3. Victorian Age
4. None of the above

_____ is a branch of linguistics that deals with the relationship of language and literature.

1. Stylistics
2. Syntax
3. Phonetics
4. Morphology

Anglo-Saxon age extends from _____ to _____.

1. 550, 1050
2. 450, 1050
3. 550, 1066
4. 450, 1066

"Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree", is a saying of:

1. Shakespeare
2. Chaucer
3. Ezra Pound
4. Wordsworth

The most characteristic feature of the Elizabethan age was

1. comparative religious tolerance
2. intellectual liberty
3. growing intelligence
4. unbounded patriotism

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Lesson 2

INTRODUCTION TO SHORT STORY

Outline:

- Short Story as a Genre
- What is a Short Story
- Origin/History
- Components of Short Story
- How to read a Short Story
- Activities

Short Story as a Genre:

The word "genre" is French for "type." Applied to literature, "genre" is a general term used to refer the types of imaginative literature. While there are many types of literature, the basic genres include short stories, poetry, drama, and novels.

The short story is the most recent genre to appear in Western Literature. Its basic forms, in fact, come from writers in the 19th century and bear their names: "Maupassant," "Chekhov," and "Poe."

What is a Short Story?

A short story is fictional work of prose that is shorter in length than a novel. The format of short story is often narrative that tends to be more pointed than longer works of fiction, such as novellas (in the 20th and 21st century sense) and novels or books. Usually a short story focuses on one incident, has a single plot, a single setting, a small number of characters, and covers a short period of time.

Edgar Allan Poe, in his essay "The Philosophy of Composition," said that “a short story should be read in one sitting, anywhere from a half hour to two hours.” In contemporary fiction, a short story can range from 1,000 to 20,000 words.

Short Story has been defined in different ways such as:

- A piece of fictional writing usually less than 5000 words that contains these basic elements: characters, setting, plot, conflict, resolution, climax, dialogue, protagonist, and antagonist.
- A short story is a brief work of fiction. The short story resembles the longer novel but generally has a simpler plot and setting. In addition, the short story tends to reveal character at a crucial moment rather than to develop it through many incidents.
- This is a form of prose fiction, a creative non-poetic kind of composition.

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Origin/History:
There are many rudimentary forms of short story, including myths, fables, legends, and parables, and the mediaeval fabliau was a clear progenitor. Boccaccio and Chaucer were masters of the art, as were such Chinese writers as Tao Qian (4th–5th-c). But the modern short story began in the mid-19th-c with Edgar Allan Poe, and was confirmed as a major genre by Maupassant in France and Turgenev and Chekhov in Russia. Many 20th-c writers (e.g. Kafka, who wrote nearly 80 short stories using a remarkable variety of length, style, theme, and technique) favoured the form on account of its concentration and atmospheric potential, such as Dutch writer J M A Biesheuvel.

The evolutionary process of Short Story is as follows:

- Short story as a form dates back to the oral tradition of the tale.
- Written tales emerge in poetic forms - Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.
- Boccaccio's Decameron (1351-1353) often cited as the precursor of the short story form, as is the French translation of The Thousand and One Nights (1704).
- Short story really begins to emerge as a form in the 19th century.
- Grimm's Fairy Tales (1824-1826) an early collection of folk stories that paved the way for the development of the genre of short stories.
- Early and mid 19th century saw the rise of the short story in America for example: Hawthorne's Twice Told Tales (1842) and Poe's Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque (1836) set a standard for one branch of short fiction - the gothic
- Mid and late 19th century saw the blossoming of the short story in Britain - Hardy's Wessex Tales (1888), first major success of a volume of short stories.
- The proliferation of literary magazines and journals in the later 25 years of the 19th century created a market demand for short fiction - stories between 3,000 - 15,000 words.
- Short story peaks as a form in the mid 20th century and while still respected, it has become less marketable than its prose cousin, the novel.
- Poe (on Hawthorne): he finds "a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out" and "he then invents such incidents - he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect ... In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to one pre established design."
- Poe on plot: "A short story in which nothing at all happens is an absolute impossibility."
- Thomas Hardy: "A story must be exceptional enough to justify its telling ... Therein lies the problem - to reconcile the average with that uncommonness which alone makes it natural that a tale of experience would dwell in the memory and induce repetition"

Components of Short Story:
A short story may have all the elements of a short novel - complete plot and developed characters – but, because of the lack of space, they tend to be structured quite differently from novels.
Some of the key components of a successful short story are:

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Integrity: It should form a coherent whole. This means that everything language, dialogue, etc should contribute to the overall effect. A novel may ramble, but a short story can't.
Economy: There cannot be a long introduction. The reader has to get involved quickly; the story's themes and mood need to be established.
Epiphany: Typically, something has to change in the course of the story - either the character(s) learn something or their lives change decisively, or we (the reader) learn something or have our perceptions challenged in some way. This moment of "showing" is what the great short story writer James Joyce called epiphany. A similar idea is the "twist in the tale."
Ending: A good short story needs to give the reader a feeling of closure, or at least a sense of having read something complete. Otherwise it's just a sketch.

A Short Story is based on the following components:

- Setting
- Plot
- Conflict
- Character
- Point of View
- Theme

Setting:
The time and location in which a story takes place is called the setting. For some stories the setting is very important, while for others it is not. There are several aspects of a story's setting to consider when examining how setting contributes to a story (some, or all, may be present in a story):

a) **Place** - geographical location. Where is the action of the story taking place?
b) **Time** - When is the story taking place? (Historical period, time of day, year, etc)
c) **Weather conditions** - Is it rainy, sunny, stormy, etc?
d) **Social conditions** - What is the daily life of the characters like? Does the story contain local colour (writing that focuses on the speech, dress, mannerisms, customs, etc. of a particular place)?
e) **Mood or atmosphere** - What feeling is created at the beginning of the story? Is it bright and cheerful or dark and frightening?

Plot:
The plot is how the author arranges events to develop his basic idea; it is the sequence of events in a story or play. The plot is a planned, logical series of events having a beginning, middle, and end. The short story usually has one plot so it can be read in one sitting. There are five essential parts of plot:

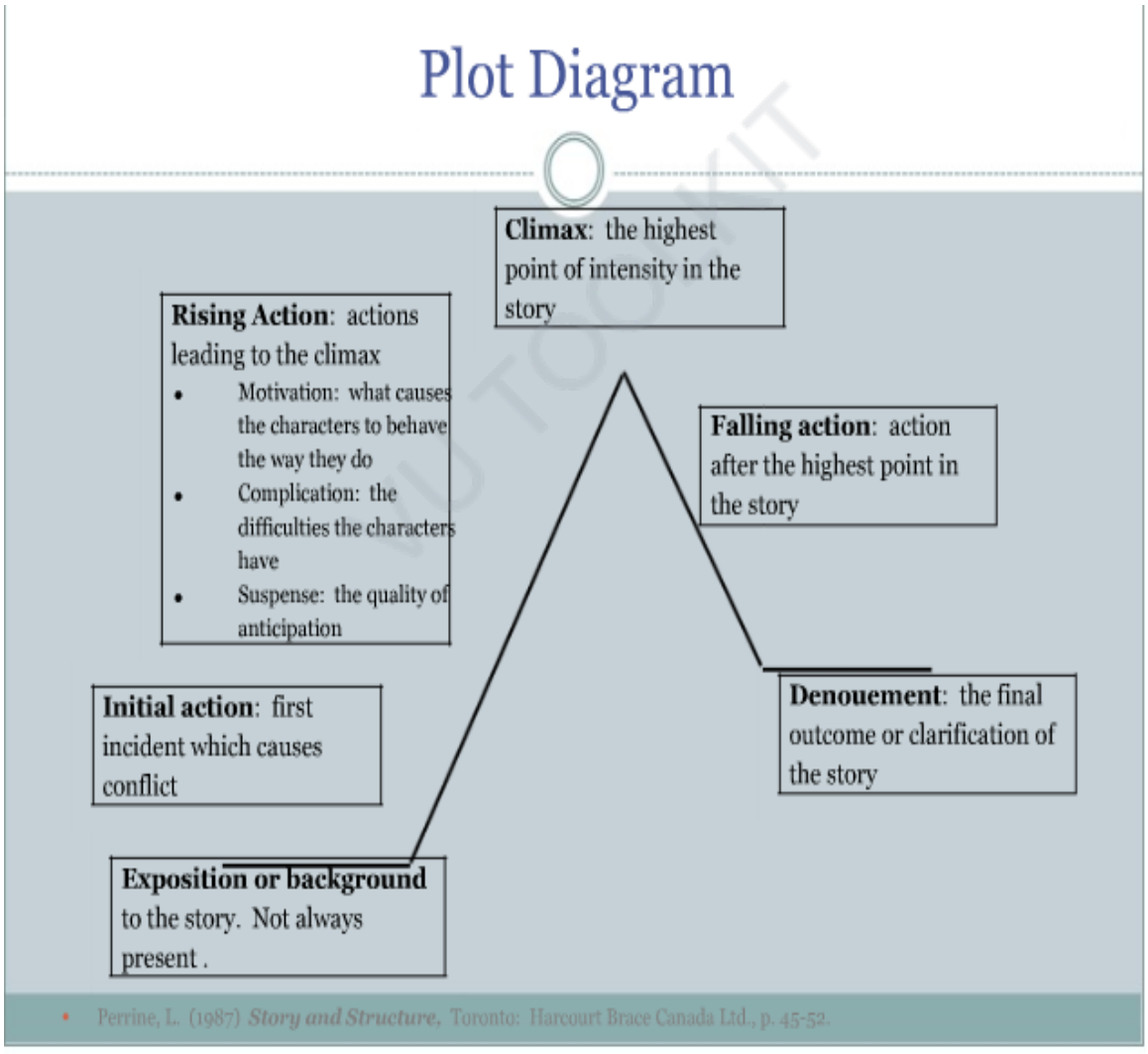
a) **Introduction** - The beginning of the story where the characters and the setting is revealed.

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b) **Rising Action** - This is where the events in the story become complicated and the conflict in the story is revealed (events between the introduction and climax).
c) **Climax** - This is the highest point of interest and the turning point of the story. The reader wonders what will happen next; will the conflict be resolved or not?
d) **Falling action** - The events and complications begin to resolve themselves. The reader knows what has happened next and if the conflict was resolved or not (events between climax and denouement).
e) **Denouement** - This is the final outcome or untangling of events in the story.

It is helpful to consider climax as a three-fold phenomenon: 1) the main character receives new information 2) accepts this information (realizes it but does not necessarily agree with it) 3) acts on this information (makes a choice that will determine whether or not he/she gains his objective).



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Conflict:
Conflict is essential to plot. Without conflict there is no plot. It is the opposition of forces which ties one incident to another and makes the plot move. Conflict is not merely limited to open arguments; rather it is any form of opposition that faces the main character. Within a short story there may be only one central struggle, or there may be one dominant struggle with many minor ones.

There are two types of conflict:
1) **External** - A struggle with a force outside one's self.
2) **Internal** - A struggle within one's self; a person must make some decision, overcome pain, quiet his/her temper, resist an urge, etc.

There are four dimensions of conflict:
1) **Man vs. Man** (physical) - The leading character struggles with his physical strength against other men, forces of nature, or animals.
2) **Man vs. Circumstances** (classical) - The leading character struggles against fate, or the circumstances of life facing him/her.
3) **Man vs. Society** (social) - The leading character struggles against ideas, practices, or customs of other people.
4) **Man vs. Himself/Herself** (psychological) - The leading character struggles with himself/herself; with his/her own soul, ideas of right or wrong, physical limitations, choices, etc.

Character:
There are two meanings for the word character:
1) The person in a work of fiction.
2) The characteristics of a person.

1). Persons in a work of fiction - Antagonist and Protagonist:
Short stories use few characters. One character is clearly central to the story with all major events having some importance to this character - he/she is the PROTAGONIST. The opposer of the main character is called the ANTAGONIST.
2).The Characteristics of a Person:
In order for a story to seem real to the reader, its characters must seem real. Characterization is the information the author gives the reader about the characters. The author may reveal a character in several ways:
a) his/her physical appearance
b) what he/she says, thinks, feels and dreams
c) what he/she does or does not do
d) what others say about him/her and how others react to him/her

Characters are convincing if they are: consistent, motivated, and life-like (resemble real people). Characters can be of different types i.e.
1. **Individual** - round, many sided and complex personalities.
2. **Developing** -dynamic, many sided personalities that change, for better or worse, by the end of the story.

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3. **Static** -Stereotype, have one or two characteristics that never change and are emphasized e.g. brilliant detective, drunk, scrooge, cruel stepmother, etc.

Point of View:
Point of view is defined as the angle from which the story is told. i.e.

1. Innocent Eye: The story is told through the eyes of a child (his/her judgment being different from that of an adult).
2. Stream of Consciousness: The story is told so that the reader feels as if he is inside the head of one character and knows all their thoughts and reactions.
3. First Person: The story is told by the protagonist or one of the characters who interacts closely with the protagonist or other characters (using pronouns I, me, we, etc). The reader sees the story through this person's eyes as he/she experiences it and only knows what he/she knows or feels.
4. Omniscient: The author can narrate the story using the omniscient point of view. He can move from character to character, event to event, having free access to the thoughts, feelings and motivations of his characters and he introduces information where and when he chooses. There are two main types of omniscient point of view:
a) Omniscient Limited: The author tells the story in third person (using pronouns they, she, he, it, etc). We know only what the character knows and what the author allows him/her to tell us. We can see the thoughts and feelings of characters if the author chooses to reveal them to us.
b) Omniscient Objective: The author tells the story in the third person. It appears as though a camera is following the characters, going anywhere, and recording only what is seen and heard. There is no comment on the characters or their thoughts. No interpretations are offered. The reader is placed in the position of spectator without the author there to explain. The reader has to interpret events on his own.

Theme:
The theme in a piece of fiction is its controlling idea or its central insight. It is the author's underlying meaning or main idea that he is trying to convey. The theme may be the author's thoughts about a topic or view of human nature. The title of the short story usually points to what the writer is saying and he may use various figures of speech to emphasize his theme, such as: symbol, allusion, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, or irony.
Some simple examples of common themes from literature, TV, and film are:
- Things are not always as they appear to be
- Love is blind
- Believe in yourself
- People are afraid of change
- Don't judge a book by its cover

Quick Checklist of Narrative Elements:
The major elements of a narrative are as follows:

- Setting is the "where" and 'when" of the story or novel.
- Characters are the "who."

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- Conflict is the "what." (What is the problem?)
- Plot is the "how." (How is the conflict developed and resolved (also known as the resolution)?)
- Theme is the "why." (The author's message and one of the reasons why the author wrote the story or novel.)

How to Read a Short Story:

Some strategies to consider…

Ease into the story.

- Think about the title and author
- Look at the back of the book for any biographical information about the author.
- Look at any illustrations and consider their connection to the title.
- Read the first page and pause.
- Consider what you know so far about the characters, setting, conflict, and point of view.

Get involved in the story.

- Be an active reader by asking questions about what is happening.
- Make predictions about what might happen.
- Put yourself in the characters' shoes.
- Form opinion about what is going on.
- Picture the events and setting in your mind.
- Write down your favorite quotations as you read.
- Make connections with what you already know.

Write about the story.

- Make jot notes to focus your thinking while you read.
- If possible, annotate a copy of the story to: highlight, underline, circle, connect with arrows, add questions, definitions, or make comments/notes in the margins.
- Underline any unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Star important passages that connect thematically.
- Perhaps draw wed diagrams to keep track of the characters.
- Sketch the setting.

Activity:

1. Define the term 'genre'.
2. When did Short Story flourish as a formal art of writing?
3. How is a Short Story different from other narrative forms?
4. What are the key elements of a Short Story?
5. Discuss the scope of the development for a Character in Short Story?
6. Can a Short Story be written without having any Plot? Comment.
7. What role does conflict play in weaving the plot of a Short Story?

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8. How far the Theme of a Short Story is different from the Plot?
9. Differentiate between Climax and Anti-climax.
10. What points should be kept in mind while reading a Short Story.
11. What type of character you would like to assume/play if you were the part of a Short Story?
12. Who is your favourite Short Story Writer?
13. If you were to write a Short Story, what will be your selection of the Theme?

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Lesson 3

O. HENRY
(1862- 1910)

O. Henry (1862- 1910), a prolific American short story writer and a master of surprise endings, was born in Greensboro, North Carolina. William Sydney Porter (pen name O. Henry) lived in extreme poverty in New York, writing short stories to support himself. His tragic life gave him a profound knowledge of human characters, especially of dwellers in big cities whose life is full of misfortunes. He is the author of over two hundred and eighty short stories, sketches and humouresques.

As a story writer, O. Henry is remarkable for his ingenuity in the use of twisted plot which leads to ironic or coincidental circumstances. His stories are famous for their surprise endings, to the point that such an ending is often referred to as 'O. Henry ending'. They are also well known for witty narration and wordplay. Fundamentally a product of his own time, his work provides one of the best examples catching the entire flavour of an age written in the English language.

Most of his stories were published in the periodicals included in the collections that were issued during his lifetime. Some of his major works include 'Four Million" (1906), "The gift of the Magi" (1906), "The Last Leaf" (1907), "Burning Lamp' (1907), "The Heart of the West" (1907), "The Voice of the City" (1908), "A Noble Knave" (1908), "Road of Destiny"(1909), "The Choice" (1909), "Business People"(1910), and "Broomrape"(1910).

The Gift of the Magi

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at $8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

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The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid $30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to $20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only $1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only $1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling—something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an $8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mne. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

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"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation—as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value—the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends--a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do—oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit for saying little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."

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The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two—and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again—you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say `Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice—what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you—sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year—what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

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White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs—the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims—just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

Commentary:

'The Gift of the Magi', a very touching, thought provoking and one of the greatest short stories written in English, is a magnificent tale of compassion, love and sacrifice. In this short story, the master of the short story genre, O. Henry, uses words with great care, and paints a private world of love's endurance among the worst of circumstances. It revolves around a young couple named Della and Jim who are unable to afford presents for each

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other on their first Christmas. They have two prized possessions, Jim's gold heirloom watch and Della's long, cascading brown hair. He sells his treasure, and she hers, each for the sake of buying a Christmas present for the other. The combs, Jim buys in exchange for his watch, will never adorn Della's hair nor will the carefully chosen chain that Della purchases in exchange for her hair ever carry Jim's watch. Each sacrifices a treasure to provide a gift for the other but, in doing so, they work at almost tragically funny cross- purposes. So, the most endearing and timeless message in story is that of giving in love and what one truly offers the other.

O. Henry being famous for his skillful plots moves the story to a quite unexpected ending for the readers. The story's opening sentences confront us right away with the problem: Della only has $1.87 to buy a Christmas present, and it is Christmas Eve. By selling her hair, Della gets the money to buy Jim a great present, eliminating the first problem through decisive action. The solution of the first problem leads to another conflict whether Jim will appreciate her act or not. When Jim arrives, he does not seem to react well: he stares at Della and cannot seem to process that her hair is gone. But it doesn't look like he is angry, as much as simply shocked. The climax occurs when Della opens Jim's present and finds combs for her hair that are gone. However, the climax doesn't fully predict the ending; it is the first half of the twist. Finally, the denouement happens when Jim after receiving his gift of watch chain calmly reveals that he has sold his watch to buy Della her combs.

The story is described in a way that is very much typical of O. Henry. Its style tends to operate as a whole: lots of short sentences that often depend on other sentences in order to work. This technique has a way of weaving together the story across individual sentences and gives it a flow that would be broken apart by writing in more complete, self-contained sentences. In the short and distinct style, O. Henry manages to bring his message in an artful and beautiful manner. O. Henry's gift is the sparse use of words and yet he tells his story in a 'familiar' manner. His words are measured for the painting of the picture, where one can 'feel' the time and characters created upon the page.

The story carries various themes: the theme of sacrifice being the major one. Each of them sacrifices in order to find the most pleasing thing for their spouse. Indeed, without revealing much of the detail, each of them picks that one present which they know the other really wants, sacrifices for it, and yet in the end learn that the present is not what they truly gave. Poverty is also a prominent theme, as Della saved her money for months to buy the platinum watch chain, but she still had to cut and sell her beautiful hair. The theme of love holds its own significance. The warm home, they make together, contrasts with the drabness of their poverty and the dreary world outside. Their love seems to know no bounds and is the most important thing in their life. The selfless love, each feels for the other, is embodied in those gifts and make their 'useless' gifts incredibly valuable.

At the end of the story, the narrator speaks of Jim and Della as "two foolish children…who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house." But he adds, "Of all who give and receive gifts, they are the wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi." There is no doubt that 'The Gift of the Magi'

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portrays a true gift of the Magi; those wise men from the East who came to adore Jesus being born in Bethlehem. They became symbols of those who brought gifts with pure love.

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

1. How much did Della save for Christmas?
2. Why did Della sell her hair?
3. Why did Jim sell the gold watch?
4. Why did Della and Jim want to exchange the gifts?
5. What did Jim bring out of his coat?
6. How beautiful was the gold watch chain?
7. How much did Della get for selling her hair?
8. Were these two the wisest?

The Last Leaf

IN A LITTLE district west of Washington Square the streets have run crazy and broken themselves into small strips called "places." These "places" make strange angles and curves. One street crosses itself a time or two. An artist once discovered a valuable possibility in this street. Suppose a collector with a bill for paints, paper and canvas should, in traversing this route, suddenly meet himself coming back, without a cent having been paid on account!

So, to quaint old Greenwich Village the art people soon came prowling, hunting for north windows and eighteenth-century gables and Dutch attics and low rents. Then they imported some pewter mugs and a chafing dish or two from Sixth Avenue, and became a "colony."

At the top of a squatty, three-story brick Sue and Johnsy had their studio. "Johnsy" was familiar for Joanna. One was from Maine; the other from California. They had met at the *table d'hote* of an Eighth street "Delmonico's," and found their tastes in art, chicory salad and bishop sleeves so congenial that the joint studio resulted.

That was in May. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy fingers. Over on the east side this ravager strode boldly, smiting his victims by scores, but his feet trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moss-grown "places."

Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman with blood thinned by California zephyrs was hardly fair game for the red-fisted, short-breathed old duffer. But Johnsy he smote; and she lay, scarcely moving, on her

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painted iron bedstead, looking through the small Dutch window-panes at the blank side of the next brick house.

One morning the busy doctor invited Sue into the hallway with a shaggy, gray eyebrow.

“She has one chance in—let us say, ten,” he said, as he shook down the mercury in his clinical thermometer. “And that chance is for her to want to live. This way people have of lining-up on the side of the undertaker makes the entire pharmacopeia look silly. Your little lady has made up her mind that she's not going to get well. Has she anything on her mind?”

“She—she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples some day,” said Sue.

“Paint?—bosh! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking about twice—a man, for instance?”

“A man?” said Sue, with a jew's-harp twang in her voice. “Is a man worth—but, no, doctor; there is nothing of the kind.”

“Well, it is the weakness, then,” said the doctor. “I will do all that science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her funeral procession I subtract 50 per cent. from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten.”

After the doctor had gone Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsy's room with her drawing board, whistling ragtime.

Johnsy lay, scarcely making a ripple under the bedclothes, with her face toward the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she was asleep.

She arranged her board and began a pen-and-ink drawing to illustrate a magazine story. Young artists must pave their way to Art by drawing pictures for magazine stories that young authors write to pave their way to Literature.

As Sue was sketching a pair of elegant horseshow riding trousers and a monocle on the figure of the hero, an Idaho cowboy, she heard a low sound, several times repeated. She went quickly to the bedside.

Johnsy's eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window and counting—counting backward.

“Twelve,” she said, and a little later “eleven”; and then “ten,” and “nine”; and then “eight” and “seven,” almost together.

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Sue looked solicitously out the window. What was there to count? There was only a bare, dreary yard to be seen, and the blank side of the brick house twenty feet away. An old, old ivy vine, gnarled and decayed at the roots, climbed half way up the brick wall. The cold breath of autumn had stricken its leaves from the vine until its skeleton branches clung, almost bare, to the crumbling bricks.

“What is it, dear?” asked Sue.

“Six,” said Johnsy, in almost a whisper. “They're falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. It made my headache to count them. But now it's easy. There goes another one. There are only five left now.”

“Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie.”

“Leaves. On the ivy vine. When the last one falls I must go, too. I've known that for three days. Didn't the doctor tell you?”

“Oh, I never heard of such nonsense,” complained Sue, with magnificent scorn. “What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well? And you used to love that vine so, you naughty girl. Don't be a goosey. Why, the doctor told me this morning that your chances for getting well real soon were—let's see exactly what he said—he said the chances were ten to one! Why, that's almost as good a chance as we have in New York when we ride on the street cars or walk past a new building. Try to take some broth now, and let Sudie go back to her drawing, so she can sell the editor man with it, and buy port wine for her sick child, and pork chops for her greedy self.”

“You needn't get any more wine,” said Johnsy, keeping her eyes fixed out the window. “There goes another. No, I don't want any broth. That leaves just four. I want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then I'll go, too.”

“Johnsy, dear,” said Sue, bending over her, “will you promise me to keep your eyes closed, and not look out the window until I am done working? I must hand those drawings in by tomorrow. I need the light, or I would draw the shade down.”

“Couldn't you draw in the other room?” asked Johnsy, coldly.

“I'd rather be here by you,” said Sue. “Besides, I don't want you to keep looking at those silly ivy leaves.”

“Tell me as soon as you have finished,” said Johnsy, closing her eyes, and lying white and still as a fallen statue, “because I want to see the last one fall. I'm tired of waiting. I'm tired of thinking. I want to turn loose my hold on everything, and go sailing down, down, just like one of those poor, tired leaves.”

“Try to sleep,” said Sue. “I must call Behrman up to be my model for the old hermit miner. I'll not be gone a minute. Don't try to move ’till I come back.”

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Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the ground floor beneath them. He was past sixty and had a Michael Angelo's Moses beard curling down from the head of a satyr along the body of an imp. Behrman was a failure in art. Forty years he had wielded the brush without getting near enough to touch the hem of his Mistress's robe. He had been always about to paint a masterpiece, but had never yet begun it. For several years he had painted nothing except now and then a daub in the line of commerce or advertising. He earned a little by serving as a model to those young artists in the colony who could not pay the price of a professional. He drank gin to excess, and still talked of his coming masterpiece. For the rest he was a fierce little old man, who scoffed terribly at softness in any one, and who regarded himself as especial mastiff-in-waiting to protect the two young artists in the studio above.

Sue found Behrman smelling strongly of juniper berries in his dimly lighted den below. In one corner was a blank canvas on an easel that had been waiting there for twenty-five years to receive the first line of the masterpiece. She told him of Johnsy's fancy, and how she feared she would, indeed, light and fragile as a leaf herself, float away when her slight hold upon the world grew weaker.

Old Behrman, with his red eyes plainly streaming, shouted his contempt and derision for such idiotic imaginings.

“Vass!” he cried. “Is dere people in de world mit der foolishness to die because leafs dey drop off from a confounded vine? I haf not heard of such a thing. No, I will not bose as a model for your fool hermit-dunderhead. Vy do you allow dot silly pusiness to come in der prain of her? Ach, dot poor leetle Miss Yohnsy.”

“She is very ill and weak,” said Sue, “and the fever has left her mind morbid and full of strange fancies. Very well, Mr. Behrman, if you do not care to pose for me, you needn't. But I think you are a horrid old—old flibbertigibbet.”

“You are just like a woman!” yelled Behrman. “Who said I will not bose? Go on. I come mit you. For half an hour I haf peen trying to say dot I am ready to bose. Gott! dis is not any blace in which one so goot as Miss Yohnsy shall lie sick. Some day I vill baint a masterpiece, and ve shall all go away. Gott! yes.”

Johnsy was sleeping when they went upstairs. Sue pulled the shade down to the window-sill, and motioned Behrman into the other room. In there they peered out the window fearfully at the ivy vine. Then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. A persistent, cold rain was falling, mingled with snow. Behrman, in his old blue shirt, took his seat as the hermit miner on an upturned kettle for a rock.

When Sue awoke from an hour's sleep the next morning she found Johnsy with dull, wide-open eyes staring at the drawn green shade.

“Pull it up; I want to see,” she ordered, in a whisper.

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Wearily Sue obeyed.

But, lo! after the beating rain and fierce gusts of wind that had endured through the livelong night, there yet stood out against the brick wall one ivy leaf. It was the last on the vine. Still dark green near its stem, but with its serrated edges tinted with the yellow of dissolution and decay, it hung bravely from a branch some twenty feet above the ground.

"It is the last one," said Johnsy. "I thought it would surely fall during the night. I heard the wind. It will fall to-day, and I shall die at the same time."

"Dear, dear!" said Sue, leaning her worn face down to the pillow, "think of me, if you won't think of yourself. What would I do?"

But Johnsy did not answer. The lonesomest thing in all the world is a soul when it is making ready to go on its mysterious, far journey. The fancy seemed to possess her more strongly as one by one the ties that bound her to friendship and to earth were loosed.

The day wore away, and even through the twilight they could see the lone ivy leaf clinging to its stem against the wall. And then, with the coming of the night the north wind was again loosed, while the rain still beat against the windows and pattered down from the low Dutch eaves.

When it was light enough Johnsy, the merciless, commanded that the shade be raised.

The ivy leaf was still there.

Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was stirring her chicken broth over the gas stove.

"I've been a bad girl, Sudie," said Johnsy. "Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me how wicked I was. It is a sin to want to die. You may bring me a little broth now, and some milk with a little port in it, and—no; bring me a hand-mirror first, and then pack some pillows about me, and I will sit up and watch you cook."

An hour later she said:

"Sudie, some day I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

The doctor came in the afternoon, and Sue had an excuse to go into the hallway as he left.

"Even chances," said the doctor, taking Sue's thin, shaking hand in his. "With good nursing you'll win. And now I must see another case I have downstairs. Behrman, his name is—some kind of an artist, I believe. Pneumonia, too. He is an old, weak man, and the attack is acute. There is no hope for him; but he goes to the hospital to-day to be made more comfortable

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The next day the doctor said to Sue: "She's out of danger. You've won. Nutrition and care now—that's all."

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay, contentedly knitting a very blue and very useless woolen shoulder scarf, and put one arm around her, pillows and all.

"I have something to tell you, white mouse," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia to-day in the hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him on the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were wet through and icy cold. They couldn't imagine where he had been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place, and some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colors mixed on it, and—look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never fluttered or moved when the wind blew? Ah, darling, it's Behrman's masterpiece—he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell."

Commentary:

'The Last Leaf', a marvelous story by O. Henry, depicts the treasury of life and the inevitability of faith to tackle the hindrances we battle through our life. The value of the life is the cynosure of the story where all things go back and revolve around it. The sequence of events is smoothly carved in with the supporting details. The story starts with a whimsical setting called the 'places' and the description of the present situation of Johnsy, the main character. The melodramatic and picturesque setting of the story connects to the negative status of Johnsy facing life and death subject matter. The setting also helps to describe the resources at hand to 'combat' the pneumonia mentioned later in the story because they are in a small district where they find themselves unable to treat it effectively with traditional methods.

The story begins as Johnsy, a little girl victimized by pneumonia, lies in bed waiting for the last leaf of an ivy vine on the brick wall she spies through her window, to fall. She watches each leaf fall. She is very pessimistic about her health and says that with the fall of the last leaf, she will die. Mr. Behrman, an old man considers himself as a frustrated but magnificent painter who is just waiting for the right opportunity to create his first masterpiece. He daubs the last leaf on the wall after the real one falls. At the end, he is able to finish his masterpiece, a real one not because it is fabulous but it serves as a tree of hope for Johnsy to fight against what many believe as an unbeatable illness. Then he catches pneumonia and dies.

'The Last Leaf' is the true depiction of O. Henry's writing traits: skillful plot and twist ending. As the story moves on, the reader cannot expect such a heroic act from Mr. Behrman who sacrifices his life and makes a special appearance in the end to show the sacrificial masterpiece. The leaf becomes his masterpiece because he paints it with the passion to save a life, the courage and determination to make an art not to prove himself but to help others prove that life is something to enjoy and fight for.

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The action of Mr. Behrman appears to be chivalric in nature, thus, forming the major theme of the story: theme of the sincere friendship and the selfless sacrifice. He risks his life for Johnsy. He sacrifices his life so that she may not die of pessimism and disbelief. Sue, friend of Johnsy, becomes the representation of sincere friendship. She always stays home and does whatever she can to keep very good care of Johnsy.

Imagery employed in "The Last Leaf" whether it is sight imagery or sound imagery go hand in go with the theme of death and dying. It helps to set the mood, and tone of the story that assists in imposing the author's theme and motive upon the reader. An example of sight imagery is how Johnsy seems to feel about the ivy vine outside her window, she feels as though the leaves on the vine are her clock to death. The sound and touch imagery is revealed when Johnsy and Sue both describe the howling wind outside as "beating rain and fierce gusts of wind that had endured through the livelong night, there yet stood out against the brick wall one ivy leaf." The images such as 'a bare, dreary yard' and 'a persistent, cold rain' enhance the effect of something unwelcoming in the situation.

O. Henry in his artistic and unique style of writing brings home the idea how a person, no matter, how hopeless he/she is, can become a symbol of hope and courage to others. Hence, 'The Last Leaf', the story of passion, hope and personal sacrifice, inculcates the spirit of selfless sacrifice and optimism in its readers.

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

1. Where did Johnsy and Sue live?
2. Which disease was Johnsy suffering from?
3. What was Mr. Behrman's masterpiece?
4. Was the last leaf real?
5. What was Sue to Johnsy?
6. Bring out two sound images described in the story.
7. Write the character sketch of Mr. Behrman briefly.
8. Write the main idea of the story.

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Lesson 4

OSCAR WILDE
(1854-1900)

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (16 October 1854 – 30 November 1900) was an Irish writer, poet, and prominent aesthete. Due to his contribution in different forms of writing throughout the 1880s, he was considered as one of the most popular playwrights' of late Victorian times. Victorian writers were very different in their style of writing. They had their own individual personality which was strongly presented in their style.

Many writes of that time had this opinion that their writing should present a moral lesson but Wilde did not agree with this point of view. He never tried to patronize his young readers rather he used to make fun of moral tales traditionally imposed on them. The main purpose of his stories was to be read with delight. Wilde used this genre to give full expression to his philosophy of art and his satirical critique of English society. Children enjoy his stories as fairy tales though adult readers may see the philosophical side of Wilde. In his own words, Wilde says: stories were written "partly for children, and partly for those who have kept the childlike faculties of wonder and joy." (Book: 'Oscar Wilde' by Peter Raby) He is master of the unpredictable. He subverts expectations with misleading titles as in the title story – the Happy Prince isn't happy.

Oscar Wilde's 'The Happy Prince and Other Stories' is a marvelous collection of short stories for children. Wilde learned storytelling from his parents, who were distinguished folklorists and writers. Though he is well known for his plays but he loved writing for kids. "The Happy Prince & Other Stories" is one of those books that can be read over and over again but never get bored, no matter how old we are. To quote Wilde himself, "If one cannot enjoy reading a book over and over again, there is no use in reading it at all." (Essay: 'The Decay of Lying: An Observation', 1889)

His successes included Lady Windermere's Fan (1892), A Woman of No Importance (1893), An Ideal Husband (1895), and The Importance of Being Earnest (1895).

The Happy Prince

High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold, for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt.

He was very much admired indeed. "He is as beautiful as a weathercock," remarked one of the Town Councilors who wished to gain a reputation for having artistic tastes; "only not quite so useful," he added, fearing lest people should think him unpractical, which he really was not.

"Why can't you be like the Happy Prince?" asked a sensible mother of her little boy who was crying for the moon. "The Happy Prince never dreams of crying for anything."

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"I am glad there is some one in the world who is quite happy," muttered a disappointed man as he gazed at the wonderful statue.

"He looks just like an angel," said the Charity Children as they came out of the cathedral in their bright scarlet cloaks and their clean white pinafores.

"How do you know?" said the Mathematical Master, "you have never seen one."

"Ah! but we have, in our dreams," answered the children; and the Mathematical Master frowned and looked very severe, for he did not approve of children dreaming.

One night there flew over the city a little Swallow. His friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind, for he was in love with the most beautiful Reed. He had met her early in the spring as he was flying down the river after a big yellow moth, and had been so attracted by her slender waist that he had stopped to talk to her.

"Shall I love you?" said the Swallow, who liked to come to the point at once, and the Reed made him a low bow. So he flew round and round her, touching the water with his wings, and making silver ripples. This was his courtship, and it lasted all through the summer.

"It is a ridiculous attachment," twittered the other Swallows; "she has no money, and far too many relations"; and indeed the river was quite full of Reeds. Then, when the autumn came they all flew away.

After they had gone he felt lonely, and began to tire of his lady- love. "She has no conversation," he said, "and I am afraid that she is a coquette, for she is always flirting with the wind." And certainly, whenever the wind blew, the Reed made the most graceful curtseys. "I admit that she is domestic," he continued, "but I love travelling, and my wife, consequently, should love traveling also."

"Will you come away with me?" he said finally to her; but the Reed shook her head, she was so attached to her home.

"You have been trifling with me," he cried. "I am off to the Pyramids. Good-bye!" and he flew away.

All day long he flew, and at night-time he arrived at the city. "Where shall I put up?" he said; "I hope the town has made preparations."

Then he saw the statue on the tall column.

"I will put up there," he cried; "it is a fine position, with plenty of fresh air." So he alighted just between the feet of the Happy Prince.

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"I have a golden bedroom," he said softly to himself as he looked round, and he prepared to go to sleep; but just as he was putting his head under his wing a large drop of water fell on him. "What a curious thing!" he cried; "there is not a single cloud in the sky, the stars are quite clear and bright, and yet it is raining. The climate in the north of Europe is really dreadful. The Reed used to like the rain, but that was merely her selfishness."

Then another drop fell.

"What is the use of a statue if it cannot keep the rain off?" he said; "I must look for a good chimney-pot," and he determined to fly away.

But before he had opened his wings, a third drop fell, and he looked up, and saw - Ah! what did he see?

The eyes of the Happy Prince were filled with tears, and tears were running down his golden cheeks. His face was so beautiful in the moonlight that the little Swallow was filled with pity.

"Who are you?" he said.

"I am the Happy Prince."

"Why are you weeping then?" asked the Swallow; "you have quite drenched me."

"When I was alive and had a human heart," answered the statue, "I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the Palace of Sans- Souci, where sorrow is not allowed to enter. In the daytime I played with my companions in the garden, and in the evening I led the dance in the Great Hall. Round the garden ran a very lofty wall, but I never cared to ask what lay beyond it, everything about me was so beautiful. My courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness. So I lived, and so I died. And now that I am dead they have set me up here so high that I can see all the ugliness and all the misery of my city, and though my heart is made of lead yet I cannot choose but weep."

"What! is he not solid gold?" said the Swallow to himself. He was too polite to make any personal remarks out loud.

"Far away," continued the statue in a low musical voice, "far away in a little street there is a poor house. One of the windows is open, and through it I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and worn, and she has coarse, red hands, all pricked by the needle, for she is a seamstress. She is embroidering passion- flowers on a satin gown for the loveliest of the Queen's maids-of- honour to wear at the next Court-ball. In a bed in the corner of the room her little boy is lying ill. He has a fever, and is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him but river water, so he is crying. Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, will you not bring her the ruby out of my sword-hilt? My feet are fastened to this pedestal and I cannot move."

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"I am waited for in Egypt," said the Swallow. "My friends are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the large lotus- flowers. Soon they will go to sleep in the tomb of the great King. The King is there himself in his painted coffin. He is wrapped in yellow linen, and embalmed with spices. Round his neck is a chain of pale green jade, and his hands are like withered leaves."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay with me for one night, and be my messenger? The boy is so thirsty, and the mother so sad."

"I don't think I like boys," answered the Swallow. "Last summer, when I was staying on the river, there were two rude boys, the miller's sons, who were always throwing stones at me. They never hit me, of course; we swallows fly far too well for that, and besides, I come of a family famous for its agility; but still, it was a mark of disrespect."

But the Happy Prince looked so sad that the little Swallow was sorry. "It is very cold here," he said; "but I will stay with you for one night, and be your messenger."

"Thank you, little Swallow," said the Prince.

So the Swallow picked out the great ruby from the Prince's sword, and flew away with it in his beak over the roofs of the town.

He passed by the cathedral tower, where the white marble angels were sculptured. He passed by the palace and heard the sound of dancing. A beautiful girl came out on the balcony with her lover. "How wonderful the stars are," he said to her, "and how wonderful is the power of love!"

"I hope my dress will be ready in time for the State-ball," she answered; "I have ordered passion-flowers to be embroidered on it; but the seamstresses are so lazy."

He passed over the river, and saw the lanterns hanging to the masts of the ships. He passed over the Ghetto, and saw the old Jews bargaining with each other, and weighing out money in copper scales. At last he came to the poor house and looked in. The boy was tossing feverishly on his bed, and the mother had fallen asleep, she was so tired. In he hopped, and laid the great ruby on the table beside the woman's thimble. Then he flew gently round the bed, fanning the boy's forehead with his wings. "How cool I feel," said the boy, "I must be getting better"; and he sank into a delicious slumber.

Then the Swallow flew back to the Happy Prince, and told him what he had done. "It is curious," he remarked, "but I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold."

"That is because you have done a good action," said the Prince. And the little Swallow began to think, and then he fell asleep. Thinking always made him sleepy.

When day broke he flew down to the river and had a bath. "What a remarkable phenomenon," said the Professor of Ornithology as he was passing over the bridge. "A

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swallow in winter!" And he wrote a long letter about it to the local newspaper. Every one quoted it, it was full of so many words that they could not understand.

"To-night I go to Egypt," said the Swallow, and he was in high spirits at the prospect. He visited all the public monuments, and sat a long time on top of the church steeple. Wherever he went the Sparrows chirruped, and said to each other, "What a distinguished stranger!" so he enjoyed himself very much.

When the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince. "Have you any commissions for Egypt?" he cried; "I am just starting."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay with me one night longer?"

"I am waited for in Egypt," answered the Swallow. "To-morrow my friends will fly up to the Second Cataract. The river-horse couches there among the bulrushes, and on great granite throne sits the God Memnon. All night long he watches the stars, and when the morning star shines he utters one cry of joy, and then he is silent. At noon the yellow lions come down to the water's edge to drink. They have eyes like green beryls, and their roar is louder than the roar of the cataract.

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "far away across the city I see a young man in a garret. He is leaning over a desk covered with papers, and in a tumbler by his side there is a bunch of withered violets. His hair is brown and crisp, and his lips are red as a pomegranate, and he has large and dreamy eyes. He is trying to finish a play for the Director of the Theatre, but he is too cold to write any more. There is no fire in the grate, and hunger has made him faint."

"I will wait with you one night longer," said the Swallow, who really had a good heart. "Shall I take him another ruby?"

"Alas! I have no ruby now," said the Prince; "my eyes are all that I have left. They are made of rare sapphires, which were brought out of India a thousand years ago. Pluck out one of them and take it to him. He will sell it to the jeweller, and buy food and firewood, and finish his play."

"Dear Prince," said the Swallow, "I cannot do that"; and he began to weep.

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "do as I command you."

So the Swallow plucked out the Prince's eye, and flew away to the student's garret. It was easy enough to get in, as there was a hole in the roof. Through this he darted, and came into the room. The young man had his head buried in his hands, so he did not hear the flutter of the bird's wings, and when he looked up he found the beautiful sapphire lying on the withered violets.

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"I am beginning to be appreciated," he cried; "this is from some great admirer. Now I can finish my play," and he looked quite happy.

The next day the Swallow flew down to the harbour. He sat on the mast of a large vessel and watched the sailors hauling big chests out of the hold with ropes. "Heave a-hoy!" they shouted as each chest came up. "I am going to Egypt"! cried the Swallow, but nobody minded, and when the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince.

"I am come to bid you good-bye," he cried.

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay with me one night longer?"

"It is winter," answered the Swallow, "and the chill snow will soon be here. In Egypt the sun is warm on the green palm-trees, and the crocodiles lie in the mud and look lazily about them. My companions are building a nest in the Temple of Baalbec, and the pink and white doves are watching them, and cooing to each other. Dear Prince, I must leave you, but I will never forget you, and next spring I will bring you back two beautiful jewels in place of those you have given away. The ruby shall be redder than a red rose, and the sapphire shall be as blue as the great sea."

"In the square below," said the Happy Prince, "there stands a little match-girl. She has let her matches fall in the gutter, and they are all spoiled. Her father will beat her if she does not bring home some money, and she is crying. She has no shoes or stockings, and her little head is bare. Pluck out my other eye, and give it to her, and her father will not beat her."

"I will stay with you one night longer," said the Swallow, "but I cannot pluck out your eye. You would be quite blind then."

"Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "do as I command you."

So he plucked out the Prince's other eye, and darted down with it. He swooped past the match-girl, and slipped the jewel into the palm of her hand. "What a lovely bit of glass," cried the little girl; and she ran home, laughing.

Then the Swallow came back to the Prince. "You are blind now," he said, "so I will stay with you always."

"No, little Swallow," said the poor Prince, "you must go away to Egypt."

"I will stay with you always," said the Swallow, and he slept at the Prince's feet.

All the next day he sat on the Prince's shoulder, and told him stories of what he had seen in strange lands. He told him of the red ibises, who stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile, and catch gold-fish in their beaks; of the Sphinx, who is as old as the world itself,

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and lives in the desert, and knows everything; of the merchants, who walk slowly by the side of their camels, and carry amber beads in their hands; of the King of the Mountains of the Moon, who is as black as ebony, and worships a large crystal; of the great green snake that sleeps in a palm-tree, and has twenty priests to feed it with honey-cakes; and of the pygmies who sail over a big lake on large flat leaves, and are always at war with the butterflies.

"Dear little Swallow," said the Prince, "you tell me of marvellous things, but more marvellous than anything is the suffering of men and of women. There is no Mystery so great as Misery. Fly over my city, little Swallow, and tell me what you see there."

So the Swallow flew over the great city, and saw the rich making merry in their beautiful houses, while the beggars were sitting at the gates. He flew into dark lanes, and saw the white faces of starving children looking out listlessly at the black streets. Under the archway of a bridge two little boys were lying in one another's arms to try and keep themselves warm. "How hungry we are!" they said. "You must not lie here," shouted the Watchman, and they wandered out into the rain.

Then he flew back and told the Prince what he had seen.

"I am covered with fine gold," said the Prince, "you must take it off, leaf by leaf, and give it to my poor; the living always think that gold can make them happy."

Leaf after leaf of the fine gold the Swallow picked off, till the Happy Prince looked quite dull and grey. Leaf after leaf of the fine gold he brought to the poor and the children's faces grew rosier, and they laughed and played games in the street. "We have bread now!" they cried.

Then the snow came, and after the snow came the frost. The streets looked as if they were made of silver, they were so bright and glistening; long icicles like crystal daggers hung down from the eaves of the houses, everybody went about in furs, and the little boys wore scarlet caps and skated on the ice.

The poor little Swallow grew colder and colder, but he would not leave the Prince, he loved him too well. He picked up crumbs outside the baker's door when the baker was not looking and tried to keep himself warm by flapping his wings.

But at last he knew that he was going to die. He had just strength to fly up to the Prince's shoulder once more. "Good-bye, dear Prince!" he murmured, "will you let me kiss your hand?"

"I am glad that you are going to Egypt at last, little Swallow," said the Prince, "you have stayed too long here; but you must kiss me on the lips, for I love you."

"It is not to Egypt that I am going," said the Swallow. "I am going to the House of Death. Death is the brother of Sleep, is he not?"

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And he kissed the Happy Prince on the lips, and fell down dead at his feet.

At that moment a curious crack sounded inside the statue, as if something had broken. The fact is that the leaden heart had snapped right in two. It certainly was a dreadfully hard frost.

Early the next morning the Mayor was walking in the square below in company with the Town Councillors. As they passed the column he looked up at the statue: "Dear me! how shabby the Happy Prince looks!" he said.

"How shabby indeed!" cried the Town Councillors, who always agreed with the Mayor; and they went up to look at it.

"The ruby has fallen out of his sword, his eyes are gone, and he is golden no longer," said the Mayor in fact, "he is little better than a beggar!"

"Little better than a beggar," said the Town Councillors.

"And here is actually a dead bird at his feet!" continued the Mayor. "We must really issue a proclamation that birds are not to be allowed to die here." And the Town Clerk made a note of the suggestion.

So they pulled down the statue of the Happy Prince. "As he is no longer beautiful he is no longer useful," said the Art Professor at the University.

Then they melted the statue in a furnace, and the Mayor held a meeting of the Corporation to decide what was to be done with the metal. "We must have another statue, of course," he said, "and it shall be a statue of myself."

"Of myself," said each of the Town Councilors, and they quarreled. When I last heard of them they were quarrelling still.

"What a strange thing!" said the overseer of the workmen at the foundry. "This broken lead heart will not melt in the furnace. We must throw it away." So they threw it on a dust-heap where the dead Swallow was also lying.

"Bring me the two most precious things in the city," said God to one of His Angels; and the Angel brought Him the leaden heart and the dead bird.

"You have rightly chosen," said God, "for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me."

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Commentary

The conversational style of the story provides a fantastic reading. Though it begins with the awesome description of the statue of the Happy Prince yet reader finds the technical use of this detail in the mid of the story when all the stones and gold leaves are stripped off one by one by the swallow. The representation of the statue can also be equated with the misery of the people that reveals the author's genuine concern for the poor people.

A number of messages have been infused in this story but such as social injustice, the redemptive power of love, and the loss of innocence.It also exposes the selfish attitude of the authorities concerned and issues an indirect message that they should strive hard to decrease the evils and sufferings of the poor people.

Without understanding the characters, it is almost impossible to understand the content. Though the character of the prince is not mature in the beginning but it develops as the story moves on. The statue of the Prince only appears as a part of the scenery of the town. Although we do not know the feelings of the Prince at this stage until swallow comes and sits between his feet and begins to talk with the Prince. After that the character of the prince is personified and the reader is able to understand his feelings.

The swallow is an insignificant and negligible being until he reaches and meets the prince. He was on a tour with his friends but he stayed behind because he was in love with a coquettish reed on the riverside. He was proud of his flight and thought that he would join his friends soon though they stepped forward. His character gained maturity as soon as he understood the prince's feeling. He traveled from physicality to spirituality when he decided to stay with the prince instead of unfavorable weather conditions. He murmured, "It is curious, but I feel quite warm now, although it is cold." He exchanged his dream of warm climates and comfort with a bigger dream, to bring help to those who are in need.

In spite of the differences in their origins and personal histories, both the prince and swallow share a mutual feeling of concern towards the misery of the poor and the intention to help them in any way. The story revolves around the development of these two characters and it ends expressing the process how, both the Prince and the Swallow are able to gain humanness for themselves.

"The Happy Prince" at first level appears an imaginary fairy tale which tells about unbelievable and supernatural incidents. The combination of modern theme embedded in an ancient form makes it a special piece of writing. At the next level, it seems to be a story of a typical ruler who lived a life of luxury and happiness. His complete detachment from common people kept him unaware of their sorrows and misfortunes. After his death, his statue was fixed high on a tower, decorated with gold and jewels, had beautiful sapphires for eyes, and a ruby attached to his sword-gilt. The placement of his statue atop a high hill allowed him to see the poor, the needy and the handicapped suffering from diseases and poverty. His heart was moved after witnessing their miserable plight and he decided to help them.

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The story gives detailed picture of how poor live in dark, shabby and narrow houses and how helpless they are that they do not even get enough to make their both ends meet. Though the story is unreal and, it was meant to entertain children, but still it perfectly portrays the conditions prevailing in that society. It uncovers the truth that how much the writer's mind was obsessed and occupied with the surroundings. So, this story is moral and social allegory of 19th century English fiction.The Happy Prince and the Swallow, who learn the humane attitude, sacrifice their life to succor the poor but the society does not change, and the Statue and the Swallow end up on the dust heap, honored only in heaven.

Consciously or unconsciously the message of love and sacrifice has been delivered through this story. It also shows that helping others brings happiness and peace of mind. The worldly concept of beauty always seems to be associated with the possession of wealth and expensive materials that the statue is adorned with. The villagers see prince no more beautiful when all his materials are absent. People can not see all the inner beauty of prince - of love, sacrifice and selflessness. The prince does not care about his external beauty as he finds himself more satisfied while giving away his precious stones and gold leaves to the poor people who can practically use them. Though Wilde was not in favour of preaching moral lessons through stories yet he teaches us that art for art's sake itself is the best teacher as one can learn from the sacrifice of the prince and swallow.

The end of the story discloses how the sacrifice of both the characters has been rewarded by God. It decreases the sorrow of Swallow's death and the Prince's ugly look. The completion of the story manifests that efforts and emotions unseen by common man are never left ignored and unnoticed by God Almighty.

Activity:

Answer the following questions.

Q1: Critically analyze the character of Happy Prince?
Q2: What does the Prince mean when he says, "There is no Mystery so great as Misery"?
Q3: Why does the swallow decide to stay with the prince forever? What kind of connection do you find between both the characters?
Q4: How far the writer is successful to justify with both the characters in the end?
Q5: Why was the Happy Prince weeping and how did the writer make you believe that a statue can cry?
Q6: Discuss the short story "The Happy Prince" as a moral and a social allegory?
Q7: How do you think that "The Happy Prince" is a representative of the society in which the writer lived?

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The Nightingale and the Rose

"She said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses," cried the young Student; "but in all my garden there is no red rose."

From her nest in the holm-oak tree the Nightingale heard him, and she looked out through the leaves, and wondered.

"No red rose in all my garden!" he cried, and his beautiful eyes filled with tears. "Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched."

"Here at last is a true lover," said the Nightingale. "Night after night have I sung of him, though I knew him not: night after night have I told his story to the stars, and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow."

"The Prince gives a ball to-morrow night," murmured the young Student, "and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose she will dance with me till dawn. If I bring her a red rose, I shall hold her in my arms, and she will lean her head upon my shoulder, and her hand will be clasped in mine. But there is no red rose in my garden, so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break."

"Here indeed is the true lover," said the Nightingale. "What I sing of, he suffers - what is joy to me, to him is pain. Surely Love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the marketplace. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold."

"The musicians will sit in their gallery," said the young Student, "and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch the floor, and the courtiers in their gay dresses will throng round her. But with me she will not dance, for I have no red rose to give her"; and he flung himself down on the grass, and buried his face in his hands, and wept.

"Why is he weeping?" asked a little Green Lizard, as he ran past him with his tail in the air.

"Why, indeed?" said a Butterfly, who was fluttering about after a sunbeam.

"Why, indeed?" whispered a Daisy to his neighbour, in a soft, low voice.

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"He is weeping for a red rose," said the Nightingale.

"For a red rose?" they cried; "how very ridiculous!" and the little Lizard, who was something of a cynic, laughed outright.

But the Nightingale understood the secret of the Student's sorrow, and she sat silent in the oak-tree, and thought about the mystery of Love.

Suddenly she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She passed through the grove like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed across the garden.

In the centre of the grass-plot was standing a beautiful Rose-tree, and when she saw it she flew over to it, and lit upon a spray.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are white," it answered; "as white as the foam of the sea, and whiter than the snow upon the mountain. But go to my brother who grows round the old sun-dial, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing round the old sun-dial.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are yellow," it answered; "as yellow as the hair of the mermaiden who sits upon an amber throne, and yellower than the daffodil that blooms in the meadow before the mower comes with his scythe. But go to my brother who grows beneath the Student's window, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing beneath the Student's window.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are red," it answered, "as red as the feet of the dove, and redder than the great fans of coral that wave and wave in the ocean-cavern. But the winter has chilled my veins, and the frost has nipped my buds, and the storm has broken my branches, and I shall have no roses at all this year."

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"One red rose is all I want," cried the Nightingale, "only one red rose! Is there no way by which I can get it?"

"There is away," answered the Tree; "but it is so terrible that I dare not tell it to you."

"Tell it to me," said the Nightingale, "I am not afraid."

"If you want a red rose," said the Tree, "you must build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with your own heart's-blood. You must sing to me with your breast against a thorn. All night long you must sing to me, and the thorn must pierce your heart, and your life-blood must flow into my veins, and become mine."

"Death is a great price to pay for a red rose," cried the Nightingale, "and Life is very dear to all. It is pleasant to sit in the green wood, and to watch the Sun in his chariot of gold, and the Moon in her chariot of pearl. Sweet is the scent of the hawthorn, and sweet are the bluebells that hide in the valley, and the heather that blows on the hill. Yet Love is better than Life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man?"

So she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She swept over the garden like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed through the grove.

The young Student was still lying on the grass, where she had left him, and the tears were not yet dry in his beautiful eyes.

"Be happy," cried the Nightingale, "be happy; you shall have your red rose. I will build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with my own heart's-blood. All that I ask of you in return is that you will be a true lover, for Love is wiser than Philosophy, though she is wise, and mightier than Power, though he is mighty. Flame- coloured are his wings, and coloured like flame is his body. His lips are sweet as honey, and his breath is like frankincense."

The Student looked up from the grass, and listened, but he could not understand what the Nightingale was saying to him, for he only knew the things that are written down in books.

But the Oak-tree understood, and felt sad, for he was very fond of the little Nightingale who had built her nest in his branches.

"Sing me one last song," he whispered; "I shall feel very lonely when you are gone."

So the Nightingale sang to the Oak-tree, and her voice was like water bubbling from a silver jar.

When she had finished her song the Student got up, and pulled a note-book and a lead-pencil out of his pocket.

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"She has form," he said to himself, as he walked away through the grove - "that cannot be denied to her; but has she got feeling? I am afraid not. In fact, she is like most artists; she is all style, without any sincerity. She would not sacrifice herself for others. She thinks merely of music, and everybody knows that the arts are selfish. Still, it must be admitted that she has some beautiful notes in her voice. What a pity it is that they do not mean anything, or do any practical good." And he went into his room, and lay down on his little pallet-bed, and began to think of his love; and, after a time, he fell asleep.

And when the Moon shone in the heavens the Nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set her breast against the thorn. All night long she sang with her breast against the thorn, and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long she sang, and the thorn went deeper and deeper into her breast, and her life-blood ebbed away from her.

She sang first of the birth of love in the heart of a boy and a girl. And on the top-most spray of the Rose-tree there blossomed a marvellous rose, petal following petal, as song followed song. Pale was it, at first, as the mist that hangs over the river - pale as the feet of the morning, and silver as the wings of the dawn. As the shadow of a rose in a mirror of silver, as the shadow of a rose in a water-pool, so was the rose that blossomed on the topmost spray of the Tree.

But the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and louder and louder grew her song, for she sang of the birth of passion in the soul of a man and a maid.

And a delicate flush of pink came into the leaves of the rose, like the flush in the face of the bridegroom when he kisses the lips of the bride. But the thorn had not yet reached her heart, so the rose's heart remained white, for only a Nightingale's heart's-blood can crimson the heart of a rose.

And the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and the thorn touched her heart, and a fierce pang of pain shot through her. Bitter, bitter was the pain, and wilder and wilder grew her song, for she sang of the Love that is perfected by Death, of the Love that dies not in the tomb.

And the marvellous rose became crimson, like the rose of the eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petals, and crimson as a ruby was the heart.

But the Nightingale's voice grew fainter, and her little wings began to beat, and a film came over her eyes. Fainter and fainter grew her song, and she felt something choking her in her throat.

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Then she gave one last burst of music. The white Moon heard it, and she forgot the dawn, and lingered on in the sky. The red rose heard it, and it trembled all over with ecstasy, and opened its petals to the cold morning air. Echo bore it to her purple cavern in the hills, and woke the sleeping shepherds from their dreams. It floated through the reeds of the river, and they carried its message to the sea.

"Look, look!" cried the Tree, "the rose is finished now"; but the Nightingale made no answer, for she was lying dead in the long grass, with the thorn in her heart.

And at noon the Student opened his window and looked out.

"Why, what a wonderful piece of luck!" he cried; "here is a red rose! I have never seen any rose like it in all my life. It is so beautiful that I am sure it has a long Latin name"; and he leaned down and plucked it.

Then he put on his hat, and ran up to the Professor's house with the rose in his hand.

The daughter of the Professor was sitting in the doorway winding blue silk on a reel, and her little dog was lying at her feet.

"You said that you would dance with me if I brought you a red rose," cried the Student. "Here is the reddest rose in all the world. You will wear it to-night next your heart, and as we dance together it will tell you how I love you."

But the girl frowned.

"I am afraid it will not go with my dress," she answered; "and, besides, the Chamberlain's nephew has sent me some real jewels, and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers."

"Well, upon my word, you are very ungrateful," said the Student angrily; and he threw the rose into the street, where it fell into the gutter, and a cart-wheel went over it.

"Ungrateful!" said the girl. "I tell you what, you are very rude; and, after all, who are you? Only a Student. Why, I don't believe you have even got silver buckles to your shoes as the Chamberlain's nephew has"; and she got up from her chair and went into the house.

"What a silly thing Love is," said the Student as he walked away. "It is not half as useful as Logic, for it does not prove anything, and it is always telling one of things that are not going to happen, and making one believes things that are not true. In fact, it is quite unpractical, and, as in this age to be practical is everything, I shall go back to Philosophy and study Metaphysics."

So he returned to his room and pulled out a great dusty book, and began to read.

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Commentary

The story revolves around the quest of love. Different approaches towards this emotion have been depicted with the help of various characters. The most romantic and loving character is of course this sweet little bird who helps a poor student to get his chance with the girl of his dreams. The nightingale is very much aware with the true emotion of love; it is not just an emotion, it is almost a way of life. This character also confirms the universality of this feeling; not only human beings but all living creatures understand the language of love.

The nightingale is a caring and affectionate being though she does not know both the characters i.e. the student and the girl, but she is ready to help. She goes far and wide in search of red rose. She requests rose trees to give her just one red rose but her plea is rejected repeatedly. The lines "he is weeping for a red rose", "give me a red rose", "and I will sing you my sweetest song." shows that the nightingale cares for the student and tries to assist the boy in acquiring a red rose, this also shows mother like characteristics in the nightingale. When she gets to know the reason of refusal, she becomes sad for the boy. Finally she gets to know the way to create red rose with her own blood. She thinks for a while but she decides to give up her life as she believes that Love is better than life.

The character of the student appears to be very romantic and passionate. This is illustrated by the lines "and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose she will dance with me till dawn." and "so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break". It seems that he will do anything to accompany his beloved in the dance party. His tears and words are evident of his deepest feelings for the girl. It is the boy's strong emotional side which motivates the nightingale to fetch a red rose. The intensity of boy's desire to be with his love causes the sacrifice of the nightingale. As soon as the rose is created and achieved by the boy, the story reveals a twist in the form of the girl's rejection. Consequently the boy's attitude towards love changes and the reader feels sympathetic and regretful for the nightingale and the rose.

The reader recalls the death scene of the nightingale. The pain of the nightingale is very obvious and intolerable. The writer has provided the details that how the bird gets closer and closer to the thorn and how each and every drop of his blood is used in the creation of the red rose. The painful voice of the nightingale is not only heard by the creatures of the garden but also by the reader. The sacrifice of the bird does not deserve such an end. It gives an impression that her life has been wasted just for nothing.

Situational Irony is very evident in "The Nightingale and the Rose". The climax of the story is completely different from the reader's expectations. From the beginning it appears as a story of a true love. The creation of the red rose gives hope that the ending will be happy as the impossible task of attaining red rose is accomplished. It is quite unexpected that instead of having a happy end, the story does not contain a single romantic moment between the boy and the girl. Rather, the girl seems indifferent saying that she wouldn't go to the ball because she doesn't like her dress and not even showing

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the smallest appreciation for the red rose she requested and which was created after the painful sacrifice of the nightingale.

This story addresses several meaningful themes with regard to human nature; one of them is blind selfishness. Both student and professor's girl are too selfish to love. The student appears to be self centered and ignorant person as he is totally focused upon himself: his own feelings, his own needs. In his obsession of getting red rose for his lover, he ignores the beautiful song of the nightingale. Hearing the lovely music as she sings for him, he takes out his notebook and arrogantly critiques her heartfelt performance. He is blind to the beauty of the gift she gives to him with her song, and he is ignorant of her devotion. The reader comes to know about his selfishness as soon as the Professor's daughter tells the student that she is now going to dance with the Chamberlain's nephew, 'he threw the rose into the street, where it fell into the gutter and a cart-wheel went over it.' and closes his heart. On the other hand, girl's refusal of accepting the gift of red rose shows her selfishness. She scoffs at the gift of the rose, and scorns him in a haughty manner. She prefers jewels over red rose that is a wrong colour for her dress. In her selfish concern for appearances and wealth, she turns away from someone who loves her. Only the nightingale appears to have understanding about the meaning of love. She exhausts herself seeking the red rose that the student needed to court his love

Activity:

Answer the following question:
Q1: Do you think the boy's character has unusual shift which has left the reader with the shock at the end?
Q2: How did the Nightingale build a red rose out of music?
Q3: Why couldn't the boy understand what the nightingale was saying to him? Did this failure to understand support the end of the story?
Q4: Compare the idea of love presented by the boy and the nightingale. Which character has a better understanding of love and how?
Q5: Do you think the end of the story is justified? What should be the end of the story according to you?
Q6: Describe the setting of the story, "The Nightingale and The Rose,
Q7: How does "The Nightingale and the Rose" highlight human selfishness?
Q8: Do you feel that in this story the writer has portrayed human beings as inferior to birds?
Q9: What moral lesson do you get from the story?

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Lesson 5

GUY DE MAUPASSANT
(1850-1893)

Guy De Maupassant (1850–1893), a popular 19th-century French writer is generally considered one of the fathers of the modern short story. Maupassant was like his mentor Flaubert (a renowned French writer who is counted among the greatest Western novelists), a native of Normandy, born near Dieppe in a middle class family. Maupassant has weaved intricate plots and strong characters that have been drawn in detail.

The decade from 1880 to 1891 was the most fertile period of Maupassant's life. During this time, he wrote some 300 short stories, six novels, three travel books, and one volume of verse. For their variety, concision, clarity of prose style, and realistic approach, Maupassant's short stories have earned him a place among the finest exponent of the genre. His short stories throw light on different attitudes and behaviours of people and interactions of society and are marked by objectivity, highly controlled style, and sometimes sheer comedy. Usually they are built around simple episodes from everyday life that reveal the hidden sides of people.
According to Maupassant, a modern novelist aims not at "telling a story or entertaining us or touching our hearts but at forcing us to think and understand the deeper, hidden meaning of events". (Bel-Ami by Guy de Maupassant)

The two stories selected for your reading are “The Necklace” and “The Devil” and are among Maupassant’s most famous and respected works. It is impossible to read these works and not be moved by his words. They linger in the imagination. Maupassant’s standing as one of the fathers of the modern short story is well deserved.

THE NECKLACE

The girl was one of those pretty and charming young creatures who sometimes are born, as if by a slip of fate, into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no way of being known, understood, loved, married by any rich and distinguished man; so she let herself be married to a little clerk of the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly because she could not dress well, but she was unhappy as if she had really fallen from a higher station; since with women there is neither caste nor rank, for beauty, grace and charm take the place of family and birth. Natural ingenuity, instinct for what is elegant, a supple mind are their sole hierarchy, and often make of women of the people the equals of the very greatest ladies.

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Mathilde suffered ceaselessly, feeling herself born to enjoy all delicacies and all luxuries. She was distressed at the poverty of her dwelling, at the bareness of the walls, at the shabby chairs, the ugliness of the curtains. All those things, of which another woman of her rank would never even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. The sight of the little Breton peasant who did her humble housework aroused in her despairing regrets and bewildering dreams. She thought of silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestry, illumined by tall bronze candelabra, and of two great footmen in knee breeches who sleep in the big armchairs, made drowsy by the oppressive heat of the stove. She thought of long reception halls hung with ancient silk, of the dainty cabinets containing priceless curiosities and of the little coquettish perfumed reception rooms made for chatting at five o'clock with intimate friends, with men famous and sought after, whom all women envy and whose attention they all desire.
When she sat down to dinner, before the round table covered with a tablecloth in use three days, opposite her husband, who uncovered the soup tureen and declared with a delighted air, "Ah, the good soup! I don't know anything better than that," she thought of dainty dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestry that peopled the walls with ancient personages and with strange birds flying in the midst of a fairy forest; and she thought of delicious dishes served on marvellous plates and of the whispered gallantries to which you listen with a sphinx like smile while you are eating the pink meat of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no gowns, no jewels, nothing. And she loved nothing but that. She felt made for that. She would have liked so much to please, to be envied, to be charming, to be sought after.

She had a friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, who was rich, and whom she did not like to go to see any more because she felt so sad when she came home.
But one evening her husband reached home with a triumphant air and holding a large envelope in his hand.

"There," said he, "there is something for you."
She tore the paper quickly and drew out a printed card which bore these words:
The Minister of Public Instruction and Madame Georges Rampouneau request the honor of M. and Madame Loisel's company at the palace of the Ministry on Monday evening, January 18th.

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation on the table crossly, muttering:

"What do you wish me to do with that?"

"Why, my dear, I thought you would be glad. You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity. I had great trouble to get it. Every one wants to go; it is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole official world will be there."
She looked at him with an irritated glance and said impatiently:
"And what do you wish me to put on my back?"

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He had not thought of that. He stammered:

"Why, the gown you go to the theatre in. It looks very well to me."

He stopped, distracted, seeing that his wife was weeping. Two great tears ran slowly from the corners of her eyes toward the corners of her mouth.
"What's the matter? What's the matter?" he answered.

By a violent effort she conquered her grief and replied in a calm voice, while she wiped her wet cheeks:

"Nothing. Only I have no gown, and, therefore, I can't go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I am."

He was in despair. He resumed:

"Come, let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable gown, which you could use on other occasions — something very simple?"

She reflected several seconds, making her calculations and wondering also what sum she could ask without drawing on herself an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally she replied hesitating:

"I don't know exactly, but I think I could manage it with four hundred francs."

He grew a little pale, because he was laying aside just that amount to buy a gun and treat himself to a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre, with several friends who went to shoot larks there of a Sunday.

But he said:

"Very well. I will give you four hundred francs. And try to have a pretty gown."
The day of the ball drew near and Madame Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious. Her frock was ready, however. Her husband said to her one evening:

"What is the matter? Come, you have seemed very queer these last three days."

And she answered:

"It annoys me not to have a single piece of jewelry, not a single ornament, nothing to put on. I shall look poverty-stricken. I would almost rather not go at all."

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"You might wear natural flowers," said her husband. "They're very stylish at this time of year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced.

"No; there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich."
"How stupid you are!" her husband cried. "Go look up your friend, Madame Forester, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You're intimate enough with her to do that."

She uttered a cry of joy:

"True! I never thought of it."
The next day she went to her friend and told her of her distress.
Madame Forester went to a wardrobe with a mirror, took out a large jewel box, brought it back, opened it and said to Madame Loisel:

"Choose, my dear."

She saw first some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian gold cross set with precious stones, of admirable workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the mirror, hesitated and could not make up her mind to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking:

"Haven't you any more?"

"Why, yes. Look further; I don't know what you like."

Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb diamond necklace, and her heart throbbed with an immoderate desire. Her hands trembled as she took it. She fastened it round her throat, outside her high-necked waist, and was lost in ecstasy at her reflection in the mirror.

Then she asked, hesitating, filled with anxious doubt:

"Will you lend me this, only this?"

"Why, yes, certainly."

She threw her arms round her friend's neck, kissed her passionately, then fled with her treasure.

The night of the ball arrived. Madame Loisel was a great success. She was prettier than any other woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling and wild with joy. All the men looked at her, asked her name, sought to be introduced. All the attaches of the Cabinet wished to waltz with her. She was remarked by the minister himself.

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She danced with rapture, with passion, intoxicated by pleasure, forgetting all in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness comprised of all this homage, admiration, these awakened desires and of that sense of triumph which is so sweet to woman's heart.
She left the ball about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been sleeping since midnight in a little deserted anteroom with three other gentlemen whose wives were enjoying the ball.
He threw over her shoulders the wraps he had brought, the modest wraps of common life, the poverty of which contrasted with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this and wished to escape so as not to be remarked by the other women, who were enveloping themselves in costly furs.

Loisel held her back, saying: "Wait a bit. You will catch cold outside. I will call a cab."
But she did not listen to him and rapidly descended the stairs. When they reached the street they could not find a carriage and began to look for one, shouting after the cabmen passing at a distance.

They went toward the Seine in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those ancient night cabs which, as though they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day, are never seen round Paris until after dark.

It took them to their dwelling in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly they mounted the stairs to their flat. All was ended for her. As to him, he reflected that he must be at the ministry at ten o'clock that morning.

She removed her wraps before the glass so as to see herself once more in all her glory.

But suddenly she uttered a cry. She no longer had the necklace around her neck!

"What is the matter with you?" demanded her husband, already half undressed.

She turned distractedly toward him.

"I have — I have — I've lost Madame Forester's necklace," she cried.

He stood up, bewildered.

"What!— how? Impossible!"

They looked among the folds of her skirt, of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere, but did not find it.

"You're sure you had it on when you left the ball?" he asked.

"Yes, I felt it in the vestibule of the minister's house."

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"But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes, probably. Did you take his number?"
"No. And you — didn't you notice it?"

"No."

They looked, thunderstruck, at each other. At last Loisel put on his clothes.

"I shall go back on foot," said he, "over the whole route, to see whether I can find it."

He went out. She sat waiting on a chair in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without any fire, without a thought.
Her husband returned about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.
He went to police headquarters, to the newspaper offices to offer a reward; he went to the cab companies — everywhere, in fact, whither he was urged by the least spark of hope.

She waited all day, in the same condition of mad fear before this terrible calamity.
Loisel returned at night with a hollow, pale face. He had discovered nothing.
"You must write to your friend," said he, "that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to turn round."
She wrote at his dictation.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope. Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:
"We must consider how to replace that ornament."
The next day they took the box that had contained it and went to the jeweler whose name was found within. He consulted his books.

"It was not I, madame, who sold that necklace; I must simply have furnished the case."
Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, searching for a necklace like the other, trying to recall it, both sick with chagrin and grief.

They found, in a shop at the Palais Royal, a string of diamonds that seemed to them exactly like the one they had lost. It was worth forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six.

So they begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days yet. And they made a bargain that he should buy it back for thirty-four thousand francs, in case they should find the lost necklace before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

He did borrow, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, took up ruinous obligations, dealt with usurers and all the race of lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risked signing a note without

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even knowing whether he could meet it; and, frightened by the trouble yet to come, by the black misery that was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and moral tortures that he was to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, laying upon the jeweler's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Madame Loisel took back the necklace Madame Forester said to her with a chilly manner:
"You should have returned it sooner; I might have needed it."

She did not open the case, as her friend had so much feared. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken Madame Loisel for a thief?

Thereafter Madame Loisel knew the horrible existence of the needy. She bore her part, however, with sudden heroism. That dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their servant; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof.
She came to know what heavy housework meant and the odious cares of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her dainty fingers and rosy nails on greasy pots and pans. She washed the soiled linen, the shirts and the dishcloths, which she dried upon a line; she carried the slops down to the street every morning and carried up the water, stopping for breath at every landing. And dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the fruiterer, the grocer, the butcher, a basket on her arm, bargaining, meeting with impertinence, defending her miserable money, sou by sou.

Every month they had to meet some notes, renew others, obtain more time.
Her husband worked evenings, making up a tradesman's accounts, and late at night he often copied manuscript for five sous a page.
This life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid everything, everything, with the rates of usury and the accumulations of the compound interest.

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become the woman of impoverished households — strong and hard and rough. With frowsy hair, skirts askew and red hands, she talked loud while washing the floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window and she thought of that gay evening of long ago, of that ball where she had been so beautiful and so admired.
What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? who knows? How strange and changeful is life! How small a thing is needed to make or ruin us!
But one Sunday, having gone to take a walk in the Champs Elysees to refresh herself after the labors of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman who was leading a child. It was Madame Forester, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

Madame Loisel felt moved. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all about it. Why not?

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She went up.
"Good-day, Jeanne."

The other, astonished to be familiarly addressed by this plain good-wife, did not recognize her at all and stammered:
"But — madame! — I do not know — You must have mistaken."

"No. I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed!"

"Yes, I have had a pretty hard life, since I last saw you, and great poverty — and that because of you!"

"Of me! How so?"

"Do you remember that diamond necklace you lent me to wear at the ministerial ball?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"What do you mean? You brought it back."

"I brought you back another exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it.

You can understand that it was not easy for us, for us who had nothing. At last it is ended, and I am very glad."

Madame Forester had stopped.

"You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine?"

"Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very similar."

And she smiled with a joy that was at once proud and ingenuous.

Madame Forester, deeply moved, took her hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste! It was worth at most only five hundred francs!"

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Commentary

The short story, "The Necklace", by Guy De Maupassant, portrays the life of a woman and her husband living in France in the early 1880's. The woman, Mathilde, appears to be very materialistic person who is not satisfied with her life as the wife of a clerk. One night, her husband returns home proudly bearing an invitation to a formal party. When he mentions the invitation, Mathilde only worries about what she will wear, how she will look and what other people will think of her without giving a shred of care about her husband's feelings regarding the invitation, or how much fun they may have at the dinner party.
She borrows a diamond necklace from a friend in an attempt to disguise her modest stature in society. After the party, she discovers that she has lost her borrowed necklace. Her husband tries to find out the necklace for hours but finds nothing. Finally, after all hope is lost of finding the vanished necklace, the couple buys a new one for thirty-six thousand francs for which they have to work and save for ten years, and the husband also gives up his inheritance to pay for the lost necklace only to discover at the end that the original necklace is just costume jewelry and not worth anything.

"The Necklace" is told by a third person narrator who seems to have unlimited access to the characters' feelings and thoughts and brings into our notice the unhappiness of the Madame Loisel because of her marrying to someone with a lower status. But for the most part, the narrator simply unfolds the happenings in the story leaving it completely up to the reader to determine the actions of the characters and to relate it according to their own perceptions.

"The Necklace" can be seen as a finest example of realist fiction, a style of writing first appearing in the mid nineteenth century that seeks to expose the coarse realities of ordinary people's lives. By revolving the plot around Mathilde - an attractive yet dissatisfied young woman, Maupassant seeks to explore the deeper meaning of everyday events. Mathilde plays the role of a round and dynamic character. Her character is drawn in greater depth and detail.

Maupassant artfully uses the character of the Mathilde in building the ironic situations that twist the story in a skilful way retaining the interest of the reader. Mathilde's world is shown beaming with petty desires and wishes. She dreams of fancy jewels and elaborate feasts. When she receives the invitation of the party, even knowing the fact that she cannot change her middle class social status, she pretends for one night to be the part of a so-called upper class. Fate interacts with her when she discovers the misfortunate disappearance of the borrowed necklace. The irony of the situation is that an unreal and untrue guise for a night drags her life into crippling poverty. The situation gets all the more ironic when after ten terrible years filled with lots of grief she discovers that the lost necklace was simply worthless. The irony of fate comes into more prominence when the reader discovers that the beauty she can actually be proud of and which is her only true possession is no more with her. In order to pretend more than she actually has, she even loses what she is naturally and generously blessed with.

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As the title of the story suggests, the most important symbol of the story is the 'Necklace' itself. Both the necklaces…the borrowed but fake necklace and the replaced but original one represent two important phases of Mathilde's life. In the first phase of her life, Mathilde behaves in a superficial manner. In her greed for a lavish and extravagant life, she ignores the simple joys that life offers. The life she is running after is as hollow and artificial as the necklace she loses. In the second phase of her life, she experiences true hardships and endures with grace whatever life throws upon her. Just like the replaced necklace she emerges as a much stronger and genuine human being. In the entire process of transformation we can see her changing entirely from a money-minded person to the one working earnestly and painstakingly for the honour of her family name. Although she loses her most valuable possession—her physical beauty and charm but this intent struggle gives her life purpose and meaning.

The theme of "The hollowness of appearances" is skillfully imbued in this well-crafted story. Mathilde though is married to a clerk who cannot afford to give her an extravagant lifestyle yet she does everything in her power to make her life appear different from how it is. The hollowness of appearances is highlighted by the borrowed necklace which appears to be made of diamonds but is actually an imitation. Moreover, the fact that the Madame Forester—in Mathilde's view, the embodiment of class and wealth—has a necklace made of fake diamonds suggests that even the rich class pretend to have more wealth than they actually have.

The change of a fake necklace into an original and expensive one simply goes unnoticed by anyone and everyone but it takes a decade-long struggle of a couple, already pressed by their material conditions.

At the end of story, through this twist of events Maupassant strongly suggests that true value of everything is ultimately dependent on our perception. Thus, one of the messages of the story is: although the glamorous life is flashy and appealing, it is ultimately fake and worthless. A truly genuine life is one where you work hard to earn your own happiness.

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

Q1: Compare and contrast the life of Mathilde before and after the loss of the necklace.
Q2: Discuss whether the Loisels chose the right course of action when they found the necklace was missing? What other choices were open to them and why were those not chosen?
Q3: Point Out the most ironic element of the story?
Q4: Can you suggest a different end to this story, assuming that either Mathilde never loses the necklace or that she finds the necklace?
Q5: Describe the major theme of 'The Necklace'?
Q6: What is meant by 'irony of fate'?

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Q7: How far 'irony of fate' is applied to 'The Necklace'?
Q8: Name the character that appears to be 'round character' in the short story.
Q9: Identify the symbolic significance of the borrowed necklace.
Q10: What is meant by third person narration?

The Devil

The peasant and the doctor stood on opposite sides of the bed, beside the old, dying woman. She was calm and resigned and her mind quite clear as she looked at them and listened to their conversation. She was going to die, and she did not rebel at it, for her time was come, as she was ninety-two.

The July sun streamed in at the window and the open door and cast its hot flames on the uneven brown clay floor, which had been stamped down by four generations of clodhoppers. The smell of the fields came in also, driven by the sharp wind and parched by the noontide heat. The grass- hoppers chirped themselves hoarse, and filled the country with their shrill noise, which was like that of the wooden toys which are sold to children at fair time.

The doctor raised his voice and said: "Honore, you cannot leave your mother in this state; she may die at any moment." And the peasant, in great distress, replied: "But I must get in my wheat, for it has been lying on the ground a long time, and the weather is just right for it; what do you say about it, mother?" And the dying old woman, still tormented by her Norman avariciousness, replied yes with her eyes and her forehead, and thus urged her son to get in his wheat, and to leave her to die alone.

But the doctor got angry, and, stamping his foot, he said: "You are no better than a brute, do you hear, and I will not allow you to do it, do you understand? And if you must get in your wheat today, go and fetch Rapet's wife and make her look after your mother; I will have it, do you understand me? And if you do not obey me, I will let you die like a dog, when you are ill in your turn; do you hear?"

The peasant, a tall, thin fellow with slow movements, who was tormented by indecision, by his fear of the doctor and his fierce love of saving, hesitated, calculated, and stammered out: "How much does La Rapet charge for attending sick people?" "How should I know?" the doctor cried. "That depends upon how long she is needed. Settle it with her, by Heaven! But I want her to be here within an hour, do you hear?"

So the man decided. "I will go for her," he replied; "don't get angry, doctor." And the latter left, calling out as he went: "Be careful, be very careful, you know, for I do not joke when I am angry!" As soon as they were alone the peasant turned to his mother and said in a resigned voice: "I will go and fetch La Rapet, as the man will have it. Don't worry till I get back."

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And he went out in his turn.

La Rapet, old was an old washerwoman, watched the dead and the dying of the neighborhood, and then, as soon as she had sewn her customers into that linen cloth from which they would emerge no more, she went and took up her iron to smooth out the linen of the living. Wrinkled like a last year's apple, spiteful, envious, avaricious with a phenomenal avarice, bent double, as if she had been broken in half across the loins by the constant motion of passing the iron over the linen, one might have said that she had a kind of abnormal and cynical love of a death struggle. She never spoke of anything but of the people she had seen die, of the various kinds of deaths at which she had been present, and she related with the greatest minuteness details which were always similar, just as a sportsman recounts his luck.

When Honore Bontemps entered her cottage, he found her preparing the starch for the collars of the women villagers, and he said: "Good- evening; I hope you are pretty well, Mother Rapet?"

She turned her head round to look at him, and said: "As usual, as usual, and you?" "Oh! as for me, I am as well as I could wish, but my mother is not well." "Your mother?" "Yes, my mother!" "What is the matter with her?" "She is going to turn up her toes, that's what's the matter with her!"

The old woman took her hands out of the water and asked with sudden sympathy: "Is she as bad as all that?" "The doctor says she will not last till morning." "Then she certainly is very bad!" Honore hesitated, for he wanted to make a few preparatory remarks before coming to his proposition; but as he could hit upon nothing, he made up his mind suddenly.

"How much will you ask to stay with her till the end? You know that I am not rich, and I can not even afford to keep a servant girl. It is just that which has brought my poor mother to this state--too much worry and fatigue! She did the work of ten, in spite of her ninety-two years. You don't find any made of that stuff nowadays!"

La Rapet answered gravely: "There are two prices: Forty sous by day and three francs by night for the rich, and twenty sous by day and forty by night for the others. You shall pay me the twenty and forty." But the, peasant reflected, for he knew his mother well. He knew how tenacious of life, how vigorous and unyielding she was, and she might last another week, in spite of the doctor's opinion; and so he said resolutely: "No, I would rather you would fix a price for the whole time until the end. I will take my chance, one way or the other. The doctor says she will die very soon. If that happens, so much the better for you, and so much the worse for her, but if she holds out till to-morrow or longer, so much the better for her and so much the worse for you!"

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The nurse looked at the man in astonishment, for she had never treated a death as a speculation, and she hesitated, tempted by the idea of the possible gain, but she suspected that he wanted to play her a trick. "I can say nothing until I have seen your mother," she replied.

"Then come with me and see her."

She washed her hands, and went with him immediately.

They did not speak on the road; she walked with short, hasty steps, while he strode on with his long legs, as if he were crossing a brook at every step.

The cows lying down in the fields, overcome by the heat, raised their heads heavily and lowed feebly at the two passers-by, as if to ask them for some green grass.

When they got near the house, Honore Bontemps murmured: "Suppose it is all over?" And his unconscious wish that it might be so showed itself in the sound of his voice.

But the old woman was not dead. She was lying on her back, on her wretched bed, her hands covered with a purple cotton counterpane, horribly thin, knotty hands, like the claws of strange animals, like crabs, half closed by rheumatism, fatigue and the work of nearly a century which she had accomplished.

La Rapet went up to the bed and looked at the dying woman, felt her pulse, tapped her on the chest, listened to her breathing, and asked her questions, so as to hear her speak; and then, having looked at her for some time, she went out of the room, followed by Honore. Her decided opinion was that the old woman would not last till night. He asked: "Well?" And the sick-nurse replied: "Well, she may last two days, perhaps three. You will have to give me six francs, everything included."

"Six francs! six francs!" he shouted. "Are you out of your mind? I tell you she cannot last more than five or six hours!" And they disputed angrily for some time, but as the nurse said she must go home, as the time was going by, and as his wheat would not come to the farmyard of its own accord, he finally agreed to her terms.

"Very well, then, that is settled; six francs, including everything, until the corpse is taken out."

And he went away, with long strides, to his wheat which was lying on the ground under the hot sun which ripens the grain, while the sick-nurse went in again to the house.

She had brought some work with her, for she worked without ceasing by the side of the dead and dying, sometimes for herself, sometimes for the family which employed her as

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seamstress and paid her rather more in that capacity. Suddenly, she asked: "Have you received the last sacraments, Mother Bontemps?"

The old peasant woman shook her head, and La Rapet, who was very devout, got up quickly:

"Good heavens, is it possible? I will go and fetch the cure"; and she rushed off to the parsonage so quickly that the urchins in the street thought some accident had happened, when they saw her running.

The priest came immediately in his surplice, preceded by a choir boy who rang a bell to announce the passage of the Host through the parched and quiet country. Some men who were working at a distance took off their large hats and remained motionless until the white vestment had disappeared behind some farm buildings; the women who were making up the sheaves stood up to make the sign of the cross; the frightened black hens ran away along the ditch until they reached a well-known hole, through which they suddenly disappeared, while a foal which was tied in a meadow took fright at the sight of the surplice and began to gallop round and round, kicking cut every now and then. The acolyte, in his red cassock, walked quickly, and the priest, with his head inclined toward one shoulder and his square biretta on his head, followed him, muttering some prayers; while last of all came La Rapet, bent almost double as if she wished to prostrate herself, as she walked with folded hands as they do in church.

Honore saw them pass in the distance, and he asked: "Where is our priest going?" His man, who was more intelligent, replied: "He is taking the sacrament to your mother, of course!"

The peasant was not surprised, and said: "That may be," and went on with his work.

Mother Bontemps confessed, received absolution and communion, and the priest took his departure, leaving the two women alone in the suffocating room, while La Rapet began to look at the dying woman, and to ask herself whether it could last much longer.

The day was on the wane, and gusts of cooler air began to blow, causing a view of Epinal, which was fastened to the wall by two pins, to flap up and down; the scanty window curtains, which had formerly been white, but were now yellow and covered with fly-specks, looked as if they were going to fly off, as if they were struggling to get away, like the old woman's soul.

Lying motionless, with her eyes open, she seemed to await with indifference that death which was so near and which yet delayed its coming. Her short breathing whistled in her constricted throat. It would stop altogether soon, and there would be one woman less in the world; no one would regret her.

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At nightfall Honore returned, and when he went up to the bed and saw that his mother was still alive, he asked: "How is she?" just as he had done formerly when she had been ailing, and then he sent La Rapet away, saying to her: "To-morrow morning at five o'clock, without fail." And she replied: "To-morrow, at five o'clock."

She came at daybreak, and found Honore eating his soup, which he had made himself before going to work, and the sick-nurse asked him: "Well, is your mother dead?" "She is rather better, on the contrary," he replied, with a sly look out of the corner of his eyes. And he went out.

La Rapet, seized with anxiety, went up to the dying woman, who remained in the same state, lethargic and impassive, with her eyes open and her hands clutching the counterpane. The nurse perceived that this might go on thus for two days, four days, eight days, and her avaricious mind was seized with fear, while she was furious at the sly fellow who had tricked her, and at the woman who would not die.

Nevertheless, she began to work, and waited, looking intently at the wrinkled face of Mother Bontemps. When Honore returned to breakfast he seemed quite satisfied and even in a bantering humor. He was decidedly getting in his wheat under very favorable circumstances.

La Rapet was becoming exasperated; every minute now seemed to her so much time and money stolen from her. She felt a mad inclination to take this old woman, this, headstrong old fool, this obstinate old wretch, and to stop that short, rapid breath, which was robbing her of her time and money, by squeezing her throat a little. But then she reflected on the danger of doing so, and other thoughts came into her head; so she went up to the bed and said: "Have you ever seen the Devil?" Mother Bontemps murmured: "No."

Then the sick-nurse began to talk and to tell her tales which were likely to terrify the weak mind of the dying woman. Some minutes before one dies the Devil appears, she said, to all who are in the death throes. He has a broom in his hand, a saucepan on his head, and he utters loud cries. When anybody sees him, all is over, and that person has only a few moments longer to live. She then enumerated all those to whom the Devil had appeared that year: Josephine Loisel, Eulalie Ratier, Sophie Padaknau, Seraphine Grospied.

Mother Bontemps, who had at last become disturbed in mind, moved about, wrung her hands, and tried to turn her head to look toward the end of the room. Suddenly La Rapet disappeared at the foot of the bed. She took a sheet out of the cupboard and wrapped herself up in it; she put the iron saucepan on her head, so that its three short bent feet rose up like horns, and she took a broom in her right hand and a tin pail in her left, which she threw up suddenly, so that it might fall to the ground noisily.

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When it came down, it certainly made a terrible noise. Then, climbing upon a chair, the nurse lifted up the curtain which hung at the bottom of the bed, and showed herself, gesticulating and uttering shrill cries into the iron saucepan which covered her face, while she menaced the old peasant woman, who was nearly dead, with her broom.

Terrified, with an insane expression on her face, the dying woman made a superhuman effort to get up and escape; she even got her shoulders and chest out of bed; then she fell back with a deep sigh. All was over, and La Rapet calmly put everything back into its place; the broom into the corner by the cupboard the sheet inside it, the saucepan on the hearth, the pail on the floor, and the chair against the wall. Then, with professional movements, she closed the dead woman's large eyes, put a plate on the bed and poured some holy water into it, placing in it the twig of boxwood that had been nailed to the chest of drawers, and kneeling down, she fervently repeated the prayers for the dead, which she knew by heart, as a matter of business.

And when Honore returned in the evening he found her praying, and he calculated immediately that she had made twenty sows out of him, for she had only spent three days and one night there, which made five francs altogether, instead of the six which he owed her.

Commentary

‘The Devil' is a touching story which revolves around provincial and simple life of a peasant home of Honore. In this short story Guy de Maupassant has completely revealed his extraordinary gift of making vivid descriptions in a simple and sensitive tale and it takes the modern reader into its grip because of its proximity with reality. The marvellous craftsmanship of Maupassant is evident the way he depicts the inevitability of death and unending cares of life that have no compassion even for a dying mother. The son of a dying woman needs to plant his crop, so he hires a peasant woman La Rapet- an old washerwoman to sit with his dying mother. But as La Rapet has been hired for a set pay, she wants the old lady to die in no time.

‘The Devil’ is a masterpiece of the art of story-telling, in which the Maupassant has shown a great sense of form, an amazing power of construction, and a superb felicity of style. He has described the chain of events with the abundance and the ease like the very great artists. ‘The Devil' is simple, direct, swift, inevitable, and inexorable in its straightforward movement.

The story revolves around a very serious subject of death. Tone of the story sets the mood where sadness envelops the entire scene and it prepares the reader to accept the hard and harsh realities of life.

Maupassant has skillfully imbibed the elements of humour with the themes of greed, impatience, selfishness, death and worldly cares by cleverly plotting a chain of events. As the story moves on the reader can have the fair idea of the upcoming action. The inevitability of death is inescapable. We cannot visualize a world without death. But

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Maupassant has daringly explored another dimension attached to death. As the life stops offering its charms, and death becomes unavoidable, at that time the only thing that matters is who is still there by your side. Honore Bontemps cannot stay by the side of his dying mother because he has to go out for wheat harvest. Desperate to gather the crop before it is ruined, he leaves his mother under the care of La Rapet. La Rapet is epitome of greed that resonates with the greed of the son for his worldly gains. The theme of greed intensifies when it finds its most clear and vivid expression in the brutal act of scaring the old lady to death by La Rapet.

Maupassant with effortless grace of a great writer and economy of style throws light on the inherent selfish nature of man. When money becomes more important than man, the value of true relations diminishes in the greed-filled eyes of even the most intimate relations. The easiest and most comfortable course for the human beings is to let the selfish side prevail when it accords with your greed for money. The true worth of a person can only come to prominence when he/she disregards the worldly benefits to provide few moments of comfort to his/her loved ones in their hour of need.

'The Devil' is a great commentary on the injustices of life, the greed and selfishness of human beings and the helplessness of a dying person. Maupassant-the father of modern short story genre explores with the intellect rather than with the emotions the flaws of human nature and investigates the meaning of love and compassion when you are truly dependent on someone. 'The Devil' is undoubtedly among the very best short stories in any language.

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

Q1. What are some of the important themes of the story?
Q2. Do you think there is a moral lesson in this story?
Q3. What is the significance of the title of the story?
Q4. Is Honore Bontemps's action justified to go for wheat harvest at the time of her mother's death?
Q5. Can you describe the dilemma of modern man keeping in view the above story?
Q6. Can you see the elements of realistic fiction in the above story?
Q7. Who is the most compassionate character of the story?
Q8. What is your favourite quote from 'The Devil'?

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Lesson 6

EDGAR ALLAN POE
(1809 –1849)

Edgar Allan Poe, an American poet, short story writer, editor and critic, is considered as one of the leaders of the American Romantics. Poe is the greatest teller of mystery and suspense tales of the 19th century. This versatile writer is widely acknowledged for the invention of macabre and detective stories and an innovator in the science fiction genre.

Poe's style is undisputedly classical. As a story teller, he has exhibited exceptional creative brilliance and varied powers of writing. His status as a short story writer can evidently be realized by his pioneering contribution to the genre and its influence on the writers all over the world. According to him, a short story should be original and should have an emotional impact on the reader.

Poe's stylistic contribution is substantial also because he has set a standard for how to write sad and frightening thoughts in really moving manner. This elevates his literary stature from a good talent to a great one.

The serene and somber beauty of "The House of Usher", "The Tell Tale Heart" and "Ligeia" by Poe with the subtle use of style, tone, point of view, subconscious motivation of character, and serious interpretive themes strongly move their reader. These writings of Poe are sufficient enough to prove him as man of genius and master of classic style. Poe has the credit to convert the traditional Gothic tale of mystery and terror into variations of the romantic tale and the modern short story. He makes a major shift from surface sensationalism and suspense to the pattern of 'under current meanings' in his short stories.

The Tell-Tale Heart

TRUE! --nervous --very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses --not destroyed --not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily --how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture --a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees --very gradually --I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

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Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded --with what caution --with what foresight --with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it --oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly --very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha! would a madman have been so wise as this, And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously-oh, so cautiously --cautiously (for the hinges creaked) --I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights --every night just at midnight --but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he has passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I felt the extent of my own powers --of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back --but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness, (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers,) and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out --"Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening; --just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief --oh, no! --it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself --"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney --it is only a

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mouse crossing the floor," or "It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. All in vain; because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel --although he neither saw nor heard --to feel the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little --a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it --you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily --until, at length a simple dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

It was open --wide, wide open --and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness --all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the sense? --now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eve. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror must have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! --do you mark me well I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me --the sound would be heard by a neighbour! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once --once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eve would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

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I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye --not even his --could have detected any thing wrong. There was nothing to wash out --no stain of any kind --no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all --ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock --still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart, --for what had I now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbour during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled, --for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search --search well. I led them, at length, to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct: --It continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definiteness --until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.

No doubt I now grew very pale; --but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased --and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound --much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath --and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly --more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men --but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what could I do? I foamed --I raved --I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder --louder --louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! --no, no! They heard! --they suspected! --they knew! --they were making a mockery of my horror!-this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! and now --again! --hark! louder! louder! louder! louder!

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"Villains!" I shrieked, "dissemble no more! I admit the deed! --tear up the planks! here, here! --It is the beating of his hideous heart!"

Commentary

"The Tell-Tale Heart" is one of the shortest short stories written by Poe. It was first published in James Russell Lowell's 'The Pioneer in January' 1843, and it appeared again in 'The Broadway Journal' on August 23, 1845.

Martha Womack says, 'when reading a story of this nature, one must be reminded not to take horror in Poe too autobiographically. The narrator's "nervousness" is a frequently used device of Poe to establish tone and plausibility through heightened states of consciousness.'(A Teacher of English and Theatre Arts at Fuqua School in Farmville, Virginia.)

The 'Tell Tale Heart' is an interesting story that pours light on the psychological side of humans. It studies the psychotic issues like behavior, paranoia, guilt and murder. In order to convey the underlying message, the writer uses language, structure, and narrative form as tools. The story not only reveals the dark side of humans but also deals with psychological realism.

The story opens by a narrator who is trying to convince the reader that though he is nervous but not mad. In order to prove himself a conscious person he tells a story how cunningly and carefully he has killed an old man. The motive behind this brutal act was nothing except dislike for the eye of the old man. As the narrator says, "Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture --a pale blue eye, with a film over it". So the old man's eye becomes unbearable to him that he has no other choice except to get rid of the old man. This shows the mental state of the narrator that he is bearing a conflict within himself that leads to insanity. This mental illness is described as an obsession (with the old man's eye), which in turn leads to loss of control and eventually results in violence.

For seven nights, he visits the old man's chamber secretly and observes the man sleeping there. The narrator tells in detail his activity of seven nights, how cautiously he opens the door and pokes his head into room, how he opens a little slot on his lantern, releasing light, to check the 'hideous eye'. Would a madman have been so cautious? Time and again the murderer insists that he is not crazy because his calculated, cunning and cool action are not that of a mad man. The reader gets the feeling of horror. The way the murderer watches the old man night after night, for hours at a time, is creepy and strange.

On the eighth night, when the narrator arrives the old man's room, he wakes up and cries out. Then the narrator heard a low, muffled sound–the beating of the man's heart! Or so he believes. The heartbeat gets louder–then louder and louder. Worried that a neighbor might hear the loud thumping, he attacks and kills the old man. He hides the corpse of the old man under floor bed.He remains composed and fearless when three police men come

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for investigation as a neighbour has heard a shriek and has indicated a foul play. “I smiled,” the narrator says, “for what had I to fear?”

The narrator brings police men into the old man’s bedroom to sit down and talk at the scene of the crime**.** “I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim,” the narrator says. It is the low thumping sound, pounding beneath the floor bed that he recognizes as the heart beat of the old man, which makes him panic and he confesses to the crime and shrieks at the men to rip up the floorboards. ....."Villains! I shrieked, "dissemble no more! I admit the deed! – tear up the planks! – here, here! – it is the beating of his hideous heart!”

The setting of the story is in a house occupied by the narrator and an old man and it covers the period of approximately eight days. The detail about the house has not been provided; the reader only knows what the narrator tells him. It has been only described that the old house was creaky and pitch black, during the midnight hours.

This story has been told in first person point of view i.e. a deranged, unreliable narrator. Like many of the other Poe’s short stories, the narrator is anonymous. There can be many possible explanations; such as, the narrator represents every human being or the person who has ever experienced a wicked act and has to pay for it.

This story revolves around the two characters, the narrator and the old man. The character of narrator or protagonist is the centre of attention of the tale. The narrator's gender is not identified because Poe uses only "I" and "me" in reference to this character. Through the portrayal of this character, Poe provides a study of paranoia and mental deterioration and how the narrator’s obsession with specific and unadorned entities: the old man’s eye, the heartbeat forced him to murder the old man. Whereas the old man appears a harmless character in the story; it is his hideous ‘evil eye’ that unnerves the narrator.

Poe’s economic style and pointed language contribute to the narrative content. Poe’s usage of chain/series of short sentences or word groups creates a rhythm like that of a heartbeat. ‘Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! Yes, it was this!’ While reading the short story the reader comes across many figures of speech used by Poe such as anaphora, simile, symbolism and irony. There is repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of a clause or another group of words to emphasise and to balance the sentence. For example: ‘I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. With what caution–with what foresight, with what dissimulation, I went to work!’

The use of simile can be seen in the comparison of the ray to the thread of the spider with the use of the word ‘like’, such as ‘So I opened it–you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily–until at length a single dim ray like the thread of the spider shot out from the crevice and fell upon the vulture eye’. In another sentence, the simile is the comparison

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of the heartbeat to a drumbeat, such as 'It increased my fury as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.'

Symbolism is an important narrative device; the key symbol is of 'Heart beat'. It signifies the internal fear of the murderer and he thinks it is coming from the heart of the old man. It is the guilty conscience that frightens the murderer the most. Another symbol is of 'venturous blue veiled eye' that signifies evil that the narrator sees in the eye that he is trying to eliminate.

The main theme of the story is that a human nature is the mixture of good and evil. It is the perverse and wicked side of the human being that can provoke him into doing evil things that have no apparent motive. Same is the case with the narrator; he has no personal grudge, jealousy or animosity against the old man. It is only the 'Evil eye' of the old man that makes the narrator's blood run cold. It is this irrational fear which evokes the dark side, and eventually leads to murder.

The other theme of the story is 'Fear of discovery can bring about discovery'. It is the fear of the narrator, that policemen might not hear the sound of the murdered man's beating heart; he confesses the murder and tells where he has hidden the dead body. So it is rightly said, what has been hidden within the self will not stay concealed

Activity:

Answer the following questions.

Q1. What does the sound of the heartbeat symbolize?
Q2. Describe the main theme of the story.
Q3. What is the basic motive behind the narrator's intention to kill the old man?
Q4. Point out the symbolic words used for the description of EYE of the old man.
Q5. 'The Tell Tale Heart' deals with psychotic issues. Discuss
Q6. What is the conflict in the story?
Q7. "No sin goes unpunished": How is this truth proven in the story "The Tell-Tale Heart"?
Q8. Is there use of irony in "The Tell-Tale Heart" and if there is, how does it work in this story?

The Oval Portrait

The Chateau into which my valet had ventured to make forcible entrance, rather than permit me, in my desperately wounded condition, to pass a night in the open air, was one of those piles of commingled gloom and grandeur which have so long frowned among the Appennines, not less in fact than in the fancy of Mrs. Radcliffe. To all appearance it had been temporarily and very lately abandoned. We established ourselves in one of the

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smallest and least sumptuously furnished apartments. It lay in a remote turret of the building. Its decorations were rich, yet tattered and antique. Its walls were hung with tapestry and bedecked with manifold and multiform armorial trophies, together with an unusually great number of very spirited modern paintings in frames of rich golden arabesque. In these paintings, which depended from the walls not only in their main surfaces, but in very many nooks which the bizarre architecture of the chateau rendered necessary- in these paintings my incipient delirium, perhaps, had caused me to take deep interest; so that I bade Pedro to close the heavy shutters of the room- since it was already night- to light the tongues of a tall candelabrum which stood by the head of my bed- and to throw open far and wide the fringed curtains of black velvet which enveloped the bed itself. I wished all this done that I might resign myself, if not to sleep, at least alternately to the contemplation of these pictures, and the perusal of a small volume which had been found upon the pillow, and which purported to criticise and describe them.

Long- long I read- and devoutly, devotedly I gazed. Rapidly and gloriously the hours flew by and the deep midnight came. The position of the candelabrum displeased me, and outreaching my hand with difficulty, rather than disturb my slumbering valet, I placed it so as to throw its rays more fully upon the book.

But the action produced an effect altogether unanticipated. The rays of the numerous candles (for there were many) now fell within a niche of the room which had hitherto been thrown into deep shade by one of the bed-posts. I thus saw in vivid light a picture all unnoticed before. It was the portrait of a young girl just ripening into womanhood. I glanced at the painting hurriedly, and then closed my eyes. Why I did this was not at first apparent even to my own perception. But while my lids remained thus shut, I ran over in my mind my reason for so shutting them. It was an impulsive movement to gain time for thought- to make sure that my vision had not deceived me- to calm and subdue my fancy for a more sober and more certain gaze. In a very few moments I again looked fixedly at the painting.

That I now saw aright I could not and would not doubt; for the first flashing of the candles upon that canvas had seemed to dissipate the dreamy stupor which was stealing over my senses, and to startle me at once into waking life.

The portrait, I have already said, was that of a young girl. It was a mere head and shoulders, done in what is technically termed a vignette manner; much in the style of the favorite heads of Sully. The arms, the bosom, and even the ends of the radiant hair melted imperceptibly into the vague yet deep shadow which formed the back-ground of the whole. The frame was oval, richly gilded and filigreed in Moresque. As a thing of art nothing could be more admirable than the painting itself. But it could have been neither the execution of the work, nor the immortal beauty of the countenance, which had so suddenly and so vehemently moved me. Least of all, could it have been that my fancy, shaken from its half slumber, had mistaken the head for that of a living person. I saw at once that the peculiarities of the design, of the vignetting, and of the frame, must have instantly dispelled such idea- must have prevented even its momentary entertainment. Thinking earnestly upon these points, I remained, for an hour perhaps, half sitting, half

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reclining, with my vision riveted upon the portrait. At length, satisfied with the true secret of its effect, I fell back within the bed. I had found the spell of the picture in an absolute life-likeliness of expression, which, at first startling, finally confounded, subdued, and appalled me. With deep and reverent awe I replaced the candelabrum in its former position. The cause of my deep agitation being thus shut from view, I sought eagerly the volume which discussed the paintings and their histories. Turning to the number which designated the oval portrait, I there read the vague and quaint words which follow:

"She was a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee. And evil was the hour when she saw, and loved, and wedded the painter. He, passionate, studious, austere, and having already a bride in his Art; she a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee; all light and smiles, and frolicsome as the young fawn; loving and cherishing all things; hating only the Art which was her rival; dreading only the pallet and brushes and other untoward instruments which deprived her of the countenance of her lover. It was thus a terrible thing for this lady to hear the painter speak of his desire to pourtray even his young bride. But she was humble and obedient, and sat meekly for many weeks in the dark, high turret-chamber where the light dripped upon the pale canvas only from overhead. But he, the painter, took glory in his work, which went on from hour to hour, and from day to day. And be was a passionate, and wild, and moody man, who became lost in reveries; so that he would not see that the light which fell so ghastly in that lone turret withered the health and the spirits of his bride, who pined visibly to all but him. Yet she smiled on and still on, uncomplainingly, because she saw that the painter (who had high renown) took a fervid and burning pleasure in his task, and wrought day and night to depict her who so loved him, yet who grew daily more dispirited and weak. And in sooth some who beheld the portrait spoke of its resemblance in low words, as of a mighty marvel, and a proof not less of the power of the painter than of his deep love for her whom he depicted so surpassingly well. But at length, as the labor drew nearer to its conclusion, there were admitted none into the turret; for the painter had grown wild with the ardor of his work, and turned his eyes from canvas merely, even to regard the countenance of his wife. And he would not see that the tints which he spread upon the canvas were drawn from the cheeks of her who sate beside him. And when many weeks bad passed, and but little remained to do, save one brush upon the mouth and one tint upon the eye, the spirit of the lady again flickered up as the flame within the socket of the lamp. And then the brush was given, and then the tint was placed; and, for one moment, the painter stood entranced before the work which he had wrought; but in the next, while he yet gazed, he grew tremulous and very pallid, and aghast, and crying with a loud voice, 'This is indeed Life itself!' turned suddenly to regard his beloved: - She was dead!

Commentary

"The Oval Portrait" by Edgar Allan Poe is a brief short story with Gothic undertone: death, romance, horror, supernatural phenomena, hallucinations, and possibly haunted locations etc. Actually this short story is a revision of an earlier Poe's story, "Life in

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Death," published in 1842. The shortened and improved version entitled “The Oval Portrait” was published for the first time in ‘The Broadway Journal’ in April 26, 1845.

The story is told by the narrator who is in a "desperately wounded condition", and seeks refuge with his valet, Pedro in an abandoned gloomy chateau in the Italy's Apennines. The reader has not been provided explanation about his wound. Though abandoned, the castle is still lavishly furnished; on the walls are tapestry, armorial trophies, and modern paintings in frames that capture the narrator’s attention. He spends his time admiring the works of art decorating the strangely shaped room and perusing a volume which "purported to criticize and describe" the paintings.

All of a sudden narrator finds out a painting and is startled by the "absolute life-likeliness" of this picture. It is a "mere head and shoulders" and shows a beautiful young girl "just ripening into womanhood," in an oval frame. He is so inspired by the work of art that for a moment he closes his eyes whether his vision has deceived him then consults the book of criticisms for an explanation of the portrait.

Narrator looks up the oval portrait in the book and finds the explanation that young lady in the portrait is the wife of the painter, who loves his art more than he loves his wife. He is so obsessed with the painting that he does not notice the “withered the health and the spirits of his bride, who pined visibly to all but him.” When he finishes the painting he is appalled at his own work, and exclaims, "This is indeed Life itself!" Then he turns to see his bride, and discovers that she has died.

Poe has used the technique of describing the story within a story. Apparently there is narrator telling the story in first person point of view but explanation about the history of the portrait is narrated by the art book

"The Oval Portrait" discusses the theme of an artist’s love for art. He is so mush wedded to his work of art that he does not notice the falling health of her wife. He does not realize that the hues he is daubing onto the canvas—the color of the cheeks, for example—comes directly from his wife. Irony of the situation is that the picture to whom he is saying ‘life itself’ has been made at the cost of her wife’s life. According to Twitchell, "The paradox the artist doesn't recognize is that the vitality of his art drains the very life-strength of the people he loves…… (Twitchell, James. "Poe's 'The Oval Portrait' and the Vampire Motif.")

So, this story highlights the concept of “art for art’s sake” that art is nothing itself, the beauty of art is everything. The writer focuses on beauty, not on his wife. To the writer, beauty is important than wife.

There are many other themes as well such as young lady’s love for her husband and her submissiveness. As the narrator reads from book that the lady “was humble and obedient, and sat meekly [for the painting] for many weeks in the dark, high turret-chamber.” But she does not complain, for she does not want to disturb the pleasure that her husband

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takes in executing the portrait, even though her husband regards her as a mere object—like a bowl of fruit or a flower—"she smiled on and still on, uncomplainingly."

The style of writing that distinguishes Poe from other writers of his age is his use of Gothic setting, startling plots, and suffering protagonists and that is very much present in "The Oval Portrait". The tapestries and strange architecture of the building, dark gloom of a deserted house, death of the wife of the artist, physical mystery of the woman, are the features of Gothic fiction.

Anspach, Silvia Simone reports that Poe's "The Oval Portrait" is "saturated with elements which refer to the sensorial world . . . . [and] nonverbal signs . . ." that are important in an analysis of the tale (17). Anspach explains how these components are essential to unlocking the meaning of the story. According to Anspach's contextual criticism, Poe reveals the tense interaction between symbols, images, and words. Pictorial elements are "more vivid and powerful than words so that the latter fail to capture the former's communicative value and only manage to translate them into feebler and more restrictive signs . . ." (17). She discusses the relevancy of the verbs Poe chose to include in "The Oval Portrait" as well as the sensorial information he incorporated into the story. By constructing the story with these particular elements, Anspach feels that Poe wanted to reveal that perception is manipulated by the object that is seen, as well as by what is seen in relation to it. [Essay: "Poe's Pictoric Writing." *Estudos Anglo-Americanos* 9-11 (1985-1987)]

'The Oval Portrait' seems to have an interesting autobiographical background, as Mollinger and Shernaz Mollinger put forth the idea that Poe, the narrator, the artist, the artist's wife, Poe's mother, and Poe's wife are all inter-connected to the tale of "The Oval Portrait." According to the authors, these parts of Poe come together and create the whole which is revealed in "The Oval Portrait." They suggest that Poe's tale describes his own an artistic dilemma, that art imitates life and that artists are destroyers as well as creators: "Artistic creation is, in a sense, murder" (152). Despite the deaths of those he loved, in fact, because of their deaths, Poe lived on and continued to create just as the artist in his tale did. Mollinger reports that this inescapable fusion of life, death, and creation is what Poe depicts in his tale. (Article: "Edgar Allan Poe's *The Oval Portrait*: Fusion of Multiple Identities.")

The central idea of the 'The Oval Portrait' revolves around the confusing relationship between art and life. The dead painting gets life from the living model by the efforts of artist who is held responsible for the cessation of model. Art and the love for art are finally depicted as killers because they take the life of young bride. Art is linked with death in the story. Poe makes the reader aware of the ambiguity of art and the paradoxical coherence of death and life in the aesthetic process of art.

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Activity:

Answer the following questions

Q1: What meaning does the short story "The Oval Portrait" by Poe convey?
Q2: How does the story explain the relationship between an artist and his subject?
Q3: How does Edgar Allan Poe convince readers that everyone has an interest in stories about death and dying?
Q4: Which painting does the narrator see when he moves the candelabrum?
Q5: Write a brief note on the setting of "The Oval Portrait"?
Q6: Who is Pedro in the short story "The Oval Portrait" by Edgar Allen Poe**?**

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Lesson 7

MARK TWAIN
(1835 to 1910)

Samuel Langhorne Clemens (November 30, 1835 – April 21, 1910), well known by his pen name Mark Twain, is an American author and humorist, Who has won universal praise and readership for his stories of youthful adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884), which has been called "the Great American Novel", and The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876).

In 'Green Hills of Africa', Ernest Hemingway writes: "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain, called Huckleberry Finn..." (Travelogue: Green Hills of Africa) Other important literary achievements include collection of letters "The Innocent abroad 1869", "Roughing it", "The Glided Age 1873", and a series of sketches: "Old Times on the Mississippi".

Mark Twain is excellent in his ability to wrap a serious thought under the cover of humor. His best work is characterized by broad, often irreverent humor or biting social satire. He has greatly influenced society of his time and even of today through his satirical writings. There is an element of realism in Twain's writings, his characters are unforgettable, and his writings highlight his hatred for hypocrisy, oppression and materialism. Twain has introduced informal and colloquial style of language through his writings. He is best known for the portrayal of the best and the worst of his age.

As an American writer, journalist and humorist, Mark Twain has written stories that unveil the sensitive skin of American society. He uncovers double standards and social evils of society very successfully. He chooses humor as the main instrument in his writings and mocks at the gentility of his day. He has a very significant role in popularizing American literature built on American themes and language. Mark Twain has convinced since his childhood that telling a story without humor is like offering a meal without salt**.** That story would not be tasty. Thus, humor made Mark Twain not a "simple fictionist but a humorous fictionist." (Walter Blair, Native American Humor, p. 161)

Cannibalism in the Cars

I visited St. Louis lately, and on my way west, after changing cars at Terre Haute, Indiana, a mild, benevolent-looking gentleman of about forty-five, or maybe fifty, came in at one of the way-stations and sat down beside me. We talked together pleasantly on various subjects for an hour, perhaps, and I found him exceedingly intelligent and

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entertaining. When he learned that I was from Washington, he immediately began to ask questions about various public men, and about Congressional affairs; and I saw very shortly that I was conversing with a man who was perfectly familiar with the ins and outs of political life at the Capital, even to the ways and manners, and customs of procedure of Senators and Representatives in the Chambers of the national Legislature. Presently two men halted near us for a single moment, and one said to the other:

"Harris, if you'll do that for me, I'll never forget you, my boy."

My new comrade's eye lighted pleasantly. The words had touched upon a happy memory, I thought. Then his face settled into thoughtfulness-- almost into gloom. He turned to me and said,

"Let me tell you a story; let me give you a secret chapter of my life-- a chapter that has never been referred to by me since its events transpired. Listen patiently, and promise that you will not interrupt me."

I said I would not, and he related the following strange adventure, speaking sometimes with animation, sometimes with melancholy, but always with feeling and earnestness.

THE STRANGER'S NARRATIVE

"On the 19th of December, 1853, I started from St. Louis on the evening train bound for Chicago. There were only twenty-four passengers, all told. There were no ladies and no children. We were in excellent spirits, and pleasant acquaintanceships were soon formed. The journey bade fair to be a happy one; and no individual in the party, I think, had even the vaguest presentiment of the horrors we were soon to undergo.

"At 11 P.m. it began to snow hard. Shortly after leaving the small village of Welden, we entered upon that tremendous prairie solitude that stretches its leagues on leagues of houseless dreariness far away toward the jubilee Settlements. The winds, unobstructed by trees or hills, or even vagrant rocks, whistled fiercely across the level desert, driving the falling snow before it like spray from the crested waves of a stormy sea. The snow was deepening fast; and we knew, by the diminished speed of the train, that the engine was plowing through it with steadily increasing difficulty. Indeed, it almost came to a dead halt sometimes, in the midst of great drifts that piled themselves like colossal graves across the track. Conversation began to flag. Cheerfulness gave place to grave concern. The possibility of being imprisoned in the snow, on the bleak prairie, fifty miles from any house, presented itself to every mind, and extended its depressing influence over every spirit.

"At two o'clock in the morning I was aroused out of an uneasy slumber by the ceasing of all motion about me. The appalling truth flashed upon me instantly--we were captives in a snow-drift! 'All hands to the rescue!' Every man sprang to obey. Out into the wild night, the pitchy darkness, the billowy snow, the driving storm, every soul leaped, with the consciousness that a moment lost now might bring destruction to us all. Shovels, hands,

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boards--anything, everything that could displace snow, was brought into instant requisition. It was a weird picture, that small company of frantic men fighting the banking snows, half in the blackest shadow and half in the angry light of the locomotive's reflector.

"One short hour sufficed to prove the utter uselessness of our efforts. The storm barricaded the track with a dozen drifts while we dug one away. And worse than this, it was discovered that the last grand charge the engine had made upon the enemy had broken the fore-and-aft shaft of the driving-wheel! With a free track before us we should still have been helpless. We entered the car wearied with labor, and very sorrowful. We gathered about the stoves, and gravely canvassed our situation. We had no provisions whatever--in this lay our chief distress. We could not freeze, for there was a good supply of wood in the tender. This was our only comfort. The discussion ended at last in accepting the disheartening decision of the conductor, viz., that it would be death for any man to attempt to travel fifty miles on foot through snow like that. We could not send for help, and even if we could it would not come. We must submit, and await, as patiently as we might, succor or starvation! I think the stoutest heart there felt a momentary chill when those words were uttered.

"Within the hour conversation subsided to a low murmur here and there about the car, caught fitfully between the rising and falling of the blast; the lamps grew dim; and the majority of the castaways settled themselves among the flickering shadows to think--to forget the present, if they could--to sleep, if they might.

"The eternal night-it surely seemed eternal to us-wore its lagging hours away at last, and the cold gray dawn broke in the east. As the light grew stronger the passengers began to stir and give signs of life, one after another, and each in turn pushed his slouched hat up from his forehead, stretched his stiffened limbs, and glanced out of the windows upon the cheerless prospect. It was cheer less, indeed!-not a living thing visible anywhere, not a human habitation; nothing but a vast white desert; uplifted sheets of snow drifting hither and thither before the wind--a world of eddying flakes shutting out the firmament above.

"All day we moped about the cars, saying little, thinking much. Another lingering dreary night--and hunger.

"Another dawning--another day of silence, sadness, wasting hunger, hopeless watching for succor that could not come. A night of restless slumber, filled with dreams of feasting--wakings distressed with the gnawings of hunger.

"The fourth day came and went--and the fifth! Five days of dreadful imprisonment! A savage hunger looked out at every eye. There was in it a sign of awful import--the foreshadowing of a something that was vaguely shaping itself in every heart--a something which no tongue dared yet to frame into words.

"The sixth day passed--the seventh dawned upon as gaunt and haggard and hopeless a company of men as ever stood in the shadow of death. It must out now! That thing which

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had been growing up in every heart was ready to leap from every lip at last! Nature had been taxed to the utmost--she must yield. RICHARD H. GASTON of Minnesota, tall, cadaverous, and pale, rose up. All knew what was coming. All prepared--every emotion, every semblance of excitement--was smothered--only a calm, thoughtful seriousness appeared in the eyes that were lately so wild.

"'Gentlemen: It cannot be delayed longer! The time is at hand! We must determine which of us shall die to furnish food for the rest!'

"MR. JOHN J. WILLIAMS of Illinois rose and said: 'Gentlemen--I nominate the Rev. James Sawyer of Tennessee.'

"MR. Wm. R. ADAMS of Indiana said: 'I nominate Mr. Daniel Slote of New York.'

"MR. CHARLES J. LANGDON: 'I nominate Mr. Samuel A. Bowen of St. Louis.'

"MR. SLOTE: 'Gentlemen--I desire to decline in favor of Mr. John A. Van Nostrand, Jun., of New Jersey.'

"MR. GASTON: 'If there be no objection, the gentleman's desire will be acceded to.'

"MR. VAN NOSTRAND objecting, the resignation of Mr. Slote was rejected. The resignations of Messrs. Sawyer and Bowen were also offered, and refused upon the same grounds.

"MR. A. L. BASCOM of Ohio: 'I move that the nominations now close, and that the House proceed to an election by ballot.'

"MR. SAWYER: 'Gentlemen--I protest earnestly against these proceedings. They are, in every way, irregular and unbecoming. I must beg to move that they be dropped at once, and that we elect a chairman of the meeting and proper officers to assist him, and then we can go on with the business before us understandingly.'

"MR. BELL of Iowa: 'Gentlemen--I object. This is no time to stand upon forms and ceremonious observances. For more than seven days we have been without food. Every moment we lose in idle discussion increases our distress. I am satisfied with the nominations that have been made--every gentleman present is, I believe--and I, for one, do not see why we should not proceed at once to elect one or more of them. I wish to offer a resolution--'

"MR. GASTON: 'It would be objected to, and have to lie over one day under the rules, thus bringing about the very delay you wish to avoid. The gentleman from New Jersey--'

"MR. VAN NOSTRAND: 'Gentlemen--I am a stranger among you; I have not sought the distinction that has been conferred upon me, and I feel a delicacy--'

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"MR. MORGAN Of Alabama (interrupting): 'I move the previous question.'

"The motion was carried, and further debate shut off, of course. The motion to elect officers was passed, and under it Mr. Gaston was chosen chairman, Mr. Blake, secretary, Messrs. Holcomb, Dyer, and Baldwin a committee on nominations, and Mr. R. M. Howland, purveyor, to assist the committee in making selections.

"A recess of half an hour was then taken, and some little caucusing followed. At the sound of the gavel the meeting reassembled, and the committee reported in favor of Messrs. George Ferguson of Kentucky, Lucien Herrman of Louisiana, and W. Messick of Colorado as candidates. The report was accepted.

"MR. ROGERS of Missouri: 'Mr. President The report being properly before the House now, I move to amend it by substituting for the name of Mr. Herrman that of Mr. Lucius Harris of St. Louis, who is well and honorably known to us all. I do not wish to be understood as casting the least reflection upon the high character and standing of the gentleman from Louisiana far from it. I respect and esteem him as much as any gentleman here present possibly can; but none of us can be blind to the fact that he has lost more flesh during the week that we have lain here than any among us--none of us can be blind to the fact that the committee has been derelict in its duty, either through negligence or a graver fault, in thus offering for our suffrages a gentleman who, however pure his own motives may be, has really less nutriment in him--'

"THE CHAIR: 'The gentleman from Missouri will take his seat. The Chair cannot allow the integrity of the committee to be questioned save by the regular course, under the rules. What action will the House take upon the gentleman's motion?'

"MR. HALLIDAY of Virginia: 'I move to further amend the report by substituting Mr. Harvey Davis of Oregon for Mr. Messick. It may be urged by gentlemen that the hardships and privations of a frontier life have rendered Mr. Davis tough; but, gentlemen, is this a time to cavil at toughness? Is this a time to be fastidious concerning trifles? Is this a time to dispute about matters of paltry significance? No, gentlemen, bulk is what we desire--substance, weight, bulk--these are the supreme requisites now--not talent, not genius, not education. I insist upon my motion.'

"MR. MORGAN (excitedly): 'Mr. Chairman--I do most strenuously object to this amendment. The gentleman from Oregon is old, and furthermore is bulky only in bone--not in flesh. I ask the gentleman from Virginia if it is soup we want instead of solid sustenance? if he would delude us with shadows? if he would mock our suffering with an Oregonian specter? I ask him if he can look upon the anxious faces around him, if he can gaze into our sad eyes, if he can listen to the beating of our expectant hearts, and still thrust this famine-stricken fraud upon us? I ask him if he can think of our desolate state, of our past sorrows, of our dark future, and still unpityingly foist upon us this wreck, this ruin, this tottering swindle, this gnarled and blighted and sapless vagabond from Oregon's hospitable shores? Never!' [Applause.]

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"The amendment was put to vote, after a fiery debate, and lost. Mr. Harris was substituted on the first amendment. The balloting then began. Five ballots were held without a choice. On the sixth, Mr. Harris was elected, all voting for him but himself. It was then moved that his election should be ratified by acclamation, which was lost, in consequence of his again voting against himself.

"MR. RADWAY moved that the House now take up the remaining candidates, and go into an election for breakfast. This was carried.

"On the first ballot--there was a tie, half the members favoring one candidate on account of his youth, and half favoring the other on account of his superior size. The President gave the casting vote for the latter, Mr. Messick. This decision created considerable dissatisfaction among the friends of Mr. Ferguson, the defeated candidate, and there was some talk of demanding a new ballot; but in the midst of it a motion to adjourn was carried, and the meeting broke up at once.

"The preparations for supper diverted the attention of the Ferguson faction from the discussion of their grievance for a long time, and then, when they would have taken it up again, the happy announcement that Mr. Harris was ready drove all thought of it to the winds.

"We improvised tables by propping up the backs of car-seats, and sat down with hearts full of gratitude to the finest supper that had blessed our vision for seven torturing days. How changed we were from what we had been a few short hours before! Hopeless, sad-eyed misery, hunger, feverish anxiety, desperation, then; thankfulness, serenity, joy too deep for utterance now. That I know was the cheeriest hour of my eventful life. The winds howled, and blew the snow wildly about our prison house, but they were powerless to distress us any more. I liked Harris. He might have been better done, perhaps, but I am free to say that no man ever agreed with me better than Harris, or afforded me so large a degree of satisfaction. Messick was very well, though rather high-flavored, but for genuine nutritiousness and delicacy of fiber, give me Harris. Messick had his good points--I will not attempt to deny it, nor do I wish to do it but he was no more fitted for breakfast than a mummy would be, sir--not a bit. Lean?--why, bless me!--and tough? Ah, he was very tough! You could not imagine it--you could never imagine anything like it."

"Do you mean to tell me that--"

"Do not interrupt me, please. After breakfast we elected a man by the name of Walker, from Detroit, for supper. He was very good. I wrote his wife so afterward. He was worthy of all praise. I shall always remember Walker. He was a little rare, but very good. And then the next morning we had Morgan of Alabama for breakfast. He was one of the finest men I ever sat down to handsome, educated, refined, spoke several languages fluently a perfect gentleman he was a perfect gentleman, and singularly juicy. For supper we had that Oregon patriarch, and he was a fraud, there is no question about it--old, scraggy, tough, nobody can picture the reality. I finally said, gentlemen, you can do as you like, but I will wait for another election. And Grimes of Illinois said, 'Gentlemen, I will wait

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also. When you elect a man that has something to recommend him, I shall be glad to join you again.' It soon became evident that there was general dissatisfaction with Davis of Oregon, and so, to preserve the good will that had prevailed so pleasantly since we had had Harris, an election was called, and the result of it was that Baker of Georgia was chosen. He was splendid! Well, well--after that we had Doolittle, and Hawkins, and McElroy (there was some complaint about McElroy, because he was uncommonly short and thin), and Penrod, and two Smiths, and Bailey (Bailey had a wooden leg, which was clear loss, but he was otherwise good), and an Indian boy, and an organ-grinder, and a gentleman by the name of Buckminster--a poor stick of a vagabond that wasn't any good for company and no account for breakfast. We were glad we got him elected before relief came."

"And so the blessed relief did come at last?"

"Yes, it came one bright, sunny morning, just after election. John Murphy was the choice, and there never was a better, I am willing to testify; but John Murphy came home with us, in the train that came to succor us, and lived to marry the widow Harris--"

"Relict of--"

"Relict of our first choice. He married her, and is happy and respected and prosperous yet. Ah, it was like a novel, sir--it was like a romance. This is my stopping-place, sir; I must bid you goodby. Any time that you can make it convenient to tarry a day or two with me, I shall be glad to have you. I like you, sir; I have conceived an affection for you. I could like you as well as I liked Harris himself, sir. Good day, sir, and a pleasant journey."

He was gone. I never felt so stunned, so distressed, so bewildered in my life. But in my soul I was glad he was gone. With all his gentleness of manner and his soft voice, I shuddered whenever he turned his hungry eye upon me; and when I heard that I had achieved his perilous affection, and that I stood almost with the late Harris in his esteem, my heart fairly stood still!

I was bewildered beyond description. I did not doubt his word; I could not question a single item in a statement so stamped with the earnestness of truth as his; but its dreadful details overpowered me, and threw my thoughts into hopeless confusion. I saw the conductor looking at me. I said, "Who is that man?"

"He was a member of Congress once, and a good one. But he got caught in a snow-drift in the cars, and like to have been starved to death. He got so frost-bitten and frozen up generally, and used up for want of something to eat, that he was sick and out of his head two or three months afterward. He is all right now, only he is a monomaniac, and when he gets on that old subject he never stops till he has eat up that whole car-load of people he talks about. He would have finished the crowd by this time, only he had to get out here. He has got their names as pat as A B C. When he gets them all eat up but himself, he always says: 'Then the hour for the usual election for breakfast having arrived; and

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there being no opposition, I was duly elected, after which, there being no objections offered, I resigned. Thus I am here.'"

I felt inexpressibly relieved to know that I had only been listening to the harmless vagaries of a madman instead of the genuine experiences of a bloodthirsty cannibal.

Commentary

In this short story, 'cannibalism' is used as a metaphor in ironic way to unveil the follies and corruption of politicians of Mark Twain's times. The literal meaning of cannibalism is eating of human flesh by other humans. Cannibalism was a common practice in primitive societies. In modern Western society, cannibalism is committed only by the deranged or by people who otherwise face death from starvation.

Mark Twain has termed the late 19th century as 'Glided age'**.** Because he is of the view that it is dazzling and shining on the surface but it is rotting underneath. It was quite popular idea about 19th century that it was an era of greed, guile, scandal, plagued politics and showy display. It is more practical to say that it was a formative period of America when an agrarian society of small producers was transformed into an urban society dominated by industrial corporations.

Mark Twain's 'Cannibalism in the Cars' is marginal work in which he satirizes the politics of the country and unveils so called sophisticated human beings. The setting of the story is rail road where conversation takes place between narrator and a passenger who later becomes narrator. The story is described in a very interesting way, reader feels horrified and curious at the same time. Snow storm, hunger, and starvation cause passengers to turn into animals by eating their fellows alive**, '**Nature had been taxed to the utmost--she must yield'. In the conversation of passengers, there are glimpses of congressional session. Mark Twain has used language to ridicule the political corruption of congressman.

The plot of the story is very interesting; there is story within story. There is a storm that threatens starvation among the passengers. After few days, the men propose cannibalism as a last resort. Cannibalism takes place and people who are eating their fellow human beings are not ashamed at all. They are taking mirth in describing people to be cannibalized and how they taste like. The description is all repulsive and disgusting. The climax of the story comes when the story teller later appears to be a congressman who has gone maniac after being caught up somewhere.

The story revolves around two main characters, which are in fact narrators. The first narrator appears in the beginning and at the end and records his comments about the story told by the second narrator. The character of second narrator contains double shades. In the start, he appears to be a harmless man who is interested in telling his tale. While telling the tale, the pleasure and mirth that people are taking by eating human flesh is ironic. Mark Twain has used congressman as a tool to uncover the political corruption of that time. Congress man and politicians through unfair means and unfair taxation were

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eating human flesh and taking pleasure in that repulsive act. The character portrayal is very interesting. There is detailed description of each man to be cannibalized, stringy, tough, tender, or nutritious according to their physical properties and characteristics.
'For supper we had that Oregon patriarch, and he was a fraud, there is no question about it--old, scraggy, tough, nobody can picture the reality'.

The language of the story is very simple and sensory, description of railway station and wind storm is gruesome. Description of every character is very detailed. Second narrator's telling of man' description is horrifying. 'Messick was very well, though rather high-flavored, but for genuine nutritiousness and delicacy of fiber, give me Harris.' In another novel, 'the Glided Age', Mark Twain highlights same themes. Stanley K. Schultz says 'Twain and Warner depict an American society that, despite its appearance of promise and prosperity, is riddled with corruption and scandal'. (American History 102: 1865 to the Present)

Major themes of the story are corruption and selfishness that were wide spread at that time. By unveiling evils of mid 19th and 20th century, Mark Twain emerges to be the strong voice of his age.

Activity:

Q1: What is the major theme of 'Cannibalism in the Cars'?
Q2: How would you relate 'Cannibalism in the Cars' to the politics of Mark Twain's time?
Q3: Who is the narrator in 'Cannibalism in the Cars'?
Q4: What does human cannibalism indicate in the short story?
Q5: Discuss the character of congressman.
Q6: Does cannibalism actually take place in this short story?
Q7: How do you see the politics of today? Do the themes of the story still hold true in present circumstances?
Q8: Comment on the language used in this short story.

A Dog's Tale

Chapter I

My father was a St. Bernard, my mother was a collie, but I am a Presbyterian. This is what my mother told me, I do not know these nice distinctions myself. To me they are only fine large words meaning nothing. My mother had a fondness for such; she liked to say them, and see other dogs look surprised and envious, as wondering how she got so much education. But, indeed, it was not real education; it was only show: she got the words by listening in the dining-room and drawing-room when there was company, and by going with the children to Sunday-school and listening there; and whenever she heard a large word she said it over to herself many times, and so was able to keep it until there

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was a dogmatic gathering in the neighborhood, then she would get it off, and surprise and distress them all, from pocket-pup to mastiff, which rewarded her for all her trouble. If there was a stranger he was nearly sure to be suspicious, and when he got his breath again he would ask her what it meant. And she always told him. He was never expecting this but thought he would catch her; so when she told him, he was the one that looked ashamed, whereas he had thought it was going to be she. The others were always waiting for this, and glad of it and proud of her, for they knew what was going to happen, because they had had experience. When she told the meaning of a big word they were all so taken up with admiration that it never occurred to any dog to doubt if it was the right one; and that was natural, because, for one thing, she answered up so promptly that it seemed like a dictionary speaking, and for another thing, where could they find out whether it was right or not? for she was the only cultivated dog there was. By and by, when I was older, she brought home the word Unintellectual, one time, and worked it pretty hard all the week at different gatherings, making much unhappiness and despondency; and it was at this time that I noticed that during that week she was asked for the meaning at eight different assemblages, and flashed out a fresh definition every time, which showed me that she had more presence of mind than culture, though I said nothing, of course. She had one word which she always kept on hand, and ready, like a life-preserver, a kind of emergency word to strap on when she was likely to get washed overboard in a sudden way—that was the word Synonymous. When she happened to fetch out a long word which had had its day weeks before and its prepared meanings gone to her dump-pile, if there was a stranger there of course it knocked him groggy for a couple of minutes, then he would come to, and by that time she would be away down wind on another tack, and not expecting anything; so when he'd hail and ask her to cash in, I (the only dog on the inside of her game) could see her canvas flicker a moment— but only just a moment— then it would belly out taut and full, and she would say, as calm as a summer's day, "It's synonymous with supererogation," or some godless long reptile of a word like that, and go placidly about and skim away on the next tack, perfectly comfortable, you know, and leave that stranger looking profane and embarrassed, and the initiated slatting the floor with their tails in unison and their faces transfigured with a holy joy.

And it was the same with phrases. She would drag home a whole phrase, if it had a grand sound, and play it six nights and two matinees, and explain it a new way every time— which she had to, for all she cared for was the phrase; she wasn't interested in what it meant, and knew those dogs hadn't wit enough to catch her, anyway. Yes, she was a daisy! She got so she wasn't afraid of anything, she had such confidence in the ignorance of those creatures. She even brought anecdotes that she had heard the family and the dinner-guests laugh and shout over; and as a rule she got the nub of one chestnut hitched onto another chestnut, where, of course, it didn't fit and hadn't any point; and when she delivered the nub she fell over and rolled on the floor and laughed and barked in the most insane way, while I could see that she was wondering to herself why it didn't seem as funny as it did when she first heard it. But no harm was done; the others rolled and barked too, privately ashamed of themselves for not seeing the point, and never suspecting that the fault was not with them and there wasn't any to see.

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You can see by these things that she was of a rather vain and frivolous character; still, she had virtues, and enough to make up, I think. She had a kind heart and gentle ways, and never harbored resentments for injuries done her, but put them easily out of her mind and forgot them; and she taught her children her kindly way, and from her we learned also to be brave and prompt in time of danger, and not to run away, but face the peril that threatened friend or stranger, and help him the best we could without stopping to think what the cost might be to us. And she taught us not by words only, but by example, and that is the best way and the surest and the most lasting. Why, the brave things she did, the splendid things! she was just a soldier; and so modest about it—well, you couldn't help admiring her, and you couldn't help imitating her; not even a King Charles spaniel could remain entirely despicable in her society. So, as you see, there was more to her than her education.

Chapter II

When I was well grown, at last, I was sold and taken away, and I never saw her again. She was broken-hearted, and so was I, and we cried; but she comforted me as well as she could, and said we were sent into this world for a wise and good purpose, and must do our duties without repining, take our life as we might find it, live it for the best good of others, and never mind about the results; they were not our affair. She said men who did like this would have a noble and beautiful reward by and by in another world, and although we animals would not go there, to do well and right without reward would give to our brief lives a worthiness and dignity which in itself would be a reward. She had gathered these things from time to time when she had gone to the Sunday-school with the children, and had laid them up in her memory more carefully than she had done with those other words and phrases; and she had studied them deeply, for her good and ours. One may see by this that she had a wise and thoughtful head, for all there was so much lightness and vanity in it.

So we said our farewells, and looked our last upon each other through our tears; and the last thing she said—keeping it for the last to make me remember it the better, I think—was, "In memory of me, when there is a time of danger to another do not think of yourself, think of your mother, and do as she would do."

Do you think I could forget that? No.

Chapter III

It was such a charming home!—my new one; a fine great house, with pictures, and delicate decorations, and rich furniture, and no gloom anywhere, but all the wilderness of dainty colors lit up with flooding sunshine; and the spacious grounds around it, and the great garden—oh, greensward, and noble trees, and flowers, no end! And I was the same as a member of the family; and they loved me, and petted me, and did not give me a new name, but called me by my old one that was dear to me because my mother had given it me— Aileen Mavourneen. She got it out of a song; and the Grays knew that song, and said it was a beautiful name.

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Mrs. Gray was thirty, and so sweet and so lovely, you cannot imagine it; and Sadie was ten, and just like her mother, just a darling slender little copy of her, with auburn tails down her back, and short frocks; and the baby was a year old, and plump and dimpled, and fond of me, and never could get enough of hauling on my tail, and hugging me, and laughing out its innocent happiness; and Mr. Gray was thirty-eight, and tall and slender and handsome, a little bald in front, alert, quick in his movements, business-like, prompt, decided, unsentimental, and with that kind of trim-chiseled face that just seems to glint and sparkle with frosty intellectuality! He was a renowned scientist. I do not know what the word means, but my mother would know how to use it and get effects. She would know how to depress a rat-terrier with it and make a lap-dog look sorry he came. But that is not the best one; the best one was Laboratory. My mother could organize a Trust on that one that would skin the tax-collars off the whole herd. The laboratory was not a book, or a picture, or a place to wash your hands in, as the college president's dog said— no, that is the lavatory; the laboratory is quite different, and is filled with jars, and bottles, and electrics, and wires, and strange machines; and every week other scientists came there and sat in the place, and used the machines, and discussed, and made what they called experiments and discoveries; and often I came, too, and stood around and listened, and tried to learn, for the sake of my mother, and in loving memory of her, although it was a pain to me, as realizing what she was losing out of her life and I gaining nothing at all; for try as I might, I was never able to make anything out of it at all.

Other times I lay on the floor in the mistress's work-room and slept, she gently using me for a foot-stool, knowing it pleased me, for it was a caress; other times I spent an hour in the nursery, and got well tousled and made happy; other times I watched by the crib there, when the baby was asleep and the nurse out for a few minutes on the baby's affairs; other times I romped and raced through the grounds and the garden with Sadie till we were tired out, then slumbered on the grass in the shade of a tree while she read her book; other times I went visiting among the neighbor dogs— for there were some most pleasant ones not far away, and one very handsome and courteous and graceful one, a curly-haired Irish setter by the name of Robin Adair, who was a Presbyterian like me, and belonged to the Scotch minister.

The servants in our house were all kind to me and were fond of me, and so, as you see, mine was a pleasant life. There could not be a happier dog that I was, nor a gratefuller one. I will say this for myself, for it is only the truth: I tried in all ways to do well and right, and honor my mother's memory and her teachings, and earn the happiness that had come to me, as best I could.

By and by came my little puppy, and then my cup was full, my happiness was perfect. It was the dearest little waddling thing, and so smooth and soft and velvety, and had such cunning little awkward paws, and such affectionate eyes, and such a sweet and innocent face; and it made me so proud to see how the children and their mother adored it, and fondled it, and exclaimed over every little wonderful thing it did. It did seem to me that life was just too lovely to—

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Then came the winter. One day I was standing a watch in the nursery. That is to say, I was asleep on the bed. The baby was asleep in the crib, which was alongside the bed, on the side next the fireplace. It was the kind of crib that has a lofty tent over it made of gauzy stuff that you can see through. The nurse was out, and we two sleepers were alone. A spark from the wood-fire was shot out, and it lit on the slope of the tent. I suppose a quiet interval followed, then a scream from the baby awoke me, and there was that tent flaming up toward the ceiling! Before I could think, I sprang to the floor in my fright, and in a second was half-way to the door; but in the next half-second my mother's farewell was sounding in my ears, and I was back on the bed again. I reached my head through the flames and dragged the baby out by the waist-band, and tugged it along, and we fell to the floor together in a cloud of smoke; I snatched a new hold, and dragged the screaming little creature along and out at the door and around the bend of the hall, and was still tugging away, all excited and happy and proud, when the master's voice shouted:

"Begone you cursed beast!" and I jumped to save myself; but he was furiously quick, and chased me up, striking furiously at me with his cane, I dodging this way and that, in terror, and at last a strong blow fell upon my left foreleg, which made me shriek and fall, for the moment, helpless; the came went up for another blow, but never descended, for the nurse's voice rang wildly out, "The nursery's on fire!" and the master rushed away in that direction, and my other bones were saved.

The pain was cruel, but, no matter, I must not lose any time; he might come back at any moment; so I limped on three legs to the other end of the hall, where there was a dark little stairway leading up into a garret where old boxes and such things were kept, as I had heard say, and where people seldom went. I managed to climb up there, then I searched my way through the dark among the piles of things, and hid in the secretest place I could find. It was foolish to be afraid there, yet still I was; so afraid that I held in and hardly even whimpered, though it would have been such a comfort to whimper, because that eases the pain, you know. But I could lick my leg, and that did some good.

For half an hour there was a commotion downstairs, and shoutings, and rushing footsteps, and then there was quiet again. Quiet for some minutes, and that was grateful to my spirit, for then my fears began to go down; and fears are worse than pains—oh, much worse. Then came a sound that froze me. They were calling me—calling me by name—hunting for me!

It was muffled by distance, but that could not take the terror out of it, and it was the most dreadful sound to me that I had ever heard. It went all about, everywhere, down there: along the halls, through all the rooms, in both stories, and in the basement and the cellar; then outside, and farther and farther away—then back, and all about the house again, and I thought it would never, never stop. But at last it did, hours and hours after the vague twilight of the garret had long ago been blotted out by black darkness.

Then in that blessed stillness my terrors fell little by little away, and I was at peace and slept. It was a good rest I had, but I woke before the twilight had come again. I was feeling fairly comfortable, and I could think out a plan now. I made a very good one;

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which was, to creep down, all the way down the back stairs, and hide behind the cellar door, and slip out and escape when the iceman came at dawn, while he was inside filling the refrigerator; then I would hide all day, and start on my journey when night came; my journey to—well, anywhere where they would not know me and betray me to the master. I was feeling almost cheerful now; then suddenly I thought: Why, what would life be without my puppy!

That was despair. There was no plan for me; I saw that; I must say where I was; stay, and wait, and take what might come—it was not my affair; that was what life is—my mother had said it. Then—well, then the calling began again! All my sorrows came back. I said to myself, the master will never forgive. I did not know what I had done to make him so bitter and so unforgiving, yet I judged it was something a dog could not understand, but which was clear to a man and dreadful.

They called and called—days and nights, it seemed to me. So long that the hunger and thirst near drove me mad, and I recognized that I was getting very weak. When you are this way you sleep a great deal, and I did. Once I woke in an awful fright—it seemed to me that the calling was right there in the garret! And so it was: it was Sadie's voice, and she was crying; my name was falling from her lips all broken, poor thing, and I could not believe my ears for the joy of it when I heard her say:

"Come back to us—oh, come back to us, and forgive—it is all so sad without our—"

I broke in with *such* a grateful little yelp, and the next moment Sadie was plunging and stumbling through the darkness and the lumber and shouting for the family to hear, "She's found, she's found!"

The days that followed—well, they were wonderful. The mother and Sadie and the servants—why, they just seemed to worship me. They couldn't seem to make me a bed that was fine enough; and as for food, they couldn't be satisfied with anything but game and delicacies that were out of season; and every day the friends and neighbors flocked in to hear about my heroism—that was the name they called it by, and it means agriculture. I remember my mother pulling it on a kennel once, and explaining it in that way, but didn't say what agriculture was, except that it was synonymous with intramural incandescence; and a dozen times a day Mrs. Gray and Sadie would tell the tale to new-comers, and say I risked my life to say the baby's, and both of us had burns to prove it, and then the company would pass me around and pet me and exclaim about me, and you could see the pride in the eyes of Sadie and her mother; and when the people wanted to know what made me limp, they looked ashamed and changed the subject, and sometimes when people hunted them this way and that way with questions about it, it looked to me as if they were going to cry.

And this was not all the glory; no, the master's friends came, a whole twenty of the most distinguished people, and had me in the laboratory, and discussed me as if I was a kind of discovery; and some of them said it was wonderful in a dumb beast, the finest exhibition of instinct they could call to mind; but the master said, with vehemence, "It's far above

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instinct; it's *reason*, and many a man, privileged to be saved and go with you and me to a better world by right of its possession, has less of it that this poor silly quadruped that's foreordained to perish"; and then he laughed, and said: "Why, look at me—I'm a sarcasm! bless you, with all my grand intelligence, the only think I inferred was that the dog had gone mad and was destroying the child, whereas but for the beast's intelligence—it's *reason*, I tell you!—the child would have perished!"

They disputed and disputed, and I was the very center of subject of it all, and I wished my mother could know that this grand honor had come to me; it would have made her proud.

Then they discussed optics, as they called it, and whether a certain injury to the brain would produce blindness or not, but they could not agree about it, and said they must test it by experiment by and by; and next they discussed plants, and that interested me, because in the summer Sadie and I had planted seeds—I helped her dig the holes, you know—and after days and days a little shrub or a flower came up there, and it was a wonder how that could happen; but it did, and I wished I could talk—I would have told those people about it and shown then how much I knew, and been all alive with the subject; but I didn't care for the optics; it was dull, and when the came back to it again it bored me, and I went to sleep.

Pretty soon it was spring, and sunny and pleasant and lovely, and the sweet mother and the children patted me and the puppy good-by, and went away on a journey and a visit to their kin, and the master wasn't any company for us, but we played together and had good times, and the servants were kind and friendly, so we got along quite happily and counted the days and waited for the family.

And one day those men came again, and said, now for the test, and they took the puppy to the laboratory, and I limped three-leggedly along, too, feeling proud, for any attention shown to the puppy was a pleasure to me, of course. They discussed and experimented, and then suddenly the puppy shrieked, and they set him on the floor, and he went staggering around, with his head all bloody, and the master clapped his hands and shouted:

"There, I've won—confess it! He's a blind as a bat!"

And they all said: "It's so—you've proved your theory, and suffering humanity owes you a great debt from henceforth," and they crowded around him, and wrung his hand cordially and thankfully, and praised him.

But I hardly saw or heard these things, for I ran at once to my little darling, and snuggled close to it where it lay, and licked the blood, and it put its head against mine, whimpering softly, and I knew in my heart it was a comfort to it in its pain and trouble to feel its mother's touch, though it could not see me. Then it dropped down, presently, and its little velvet nose rested upon the floor, and it was still, and did not move any more.

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Soon the master stopped discussing a moment, and rang in the footman, and said, "Bury it in the far corner of the garden," and then went on with the discussion, and I trotted after the footman, very happy and grateful, for I knew the puppy was out of its pain now, because it was asleep. We went far down the garden to the farthest end, where the children and the nurse and the puppy and I used to play in the summer in the shade of a great elm, and there the footman dug a hole, and I saw he was going to plant the puppy, and I was glad, because it would grow and come up a fine handsome dog, like Robin Adair, and be a beautiful surprise for the family when they came home; so I tried to help him dig, but my lame leg was no good, being stiff, you know, and you have to have two, or it is no use. When the footman had finished and covered little Robin up, he patted my head, and there were tears in his eyes, and he said: "Poor little doggie, you saved *his* child!"

I have watched two whole weeks, and he doesn't come up! This last week a fright has been stealing upon me. I think there is something terrible about this. I do not know what it is, but the fear makes me sick, and I cannot eat, though the servants bring me the best of food; and they pet me so, and even come in the night, and cry, and say, "Poor doggie—do give it up and come home; don't break our hearts!" and all this terrifies me the more, and makes me sure something has happened. And I am so weak; since yesterday I cannot stand on my feet anymore. And within this hour the servants, looking toward the sun where it was sinking out of sight and the night chill coming on, said things I could not understand, but they carried something cold to my heart.

"Those poor creatures! They do not suspect. They will come home in the morning, and eagerly ask for the little doggie that did the brave deed, and who of us will be strong enough to say the truth to them: 'The humble little friend is gone where go the beasts that perish.'"

Commentary

A Dog's Tale' written by Mark Twain first appeared in the December 1903 issue of Harper's magazine. In January 1904, it was extracted into a stand-alone pamphlet published for the National Anti-Vivisection Society. Still later in 1904, it was expanded into a book published by Harper & Brothers.

The story is told from a loyal and faithful dog's point of view. So, a dog is the narrator of the story. The feelings, sentiments of a home pet are narrated in an interesting way. Themes of valor, honor, and pride are knitted in a way that they immediately capture the attention of the reader.

It is not a simple story of a dog's life, its observations, and attitude towards life but the story also pours light on the reckless and cruel behavior of humans towards animals. The theme of man's cruelty towards his fellow human beings and animals is very common in Mark Twain's writings. In his essay "The Lowest Animal", Mark Twain writes:
"Man is the only Slave. And he is the only animal who enslaves. He has always been a slave in one form or another, and has always held other slaves in bondage under him in

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one way or another. In our day he is always some man's slave for wages, and does that man's work; and this slave has other slaves under him for minor wages, and they do his work. The higher animals are the only ones who exclusively do their own work and provide their own living**."**

Characterization is an important element of short stories, through different characters, the writer tactfully unfolds the story and gives us a chance to relate and identify with different characters and learn from them. In 'A Dog's tale' the leading character is the Presbyterian, a little dog named Aileen. The reader sees and observes other characters through the eyes and view point of the dog. The portrayal of mother dog is really interesting and comical, while discussing her, the dog comments that she loves to use new words and phrases and tells other dogs the interpretations the way she likes, 'She would drag home a whole phrase, if it had a grand sound……..,for all she cared for was the phrase; she wasn't interested in what it meant, ……she wasn't afraid of anything,…… she had such confidence in the ignorance of those creatures'. He draws attention to the artificial standards of the growing American bourgeoisie through this character.

The character sketch of mother dog is heroic and fascinating; reader feels it hilarious and fascinating at the same time. She remains an ideal figure and inspiration for Aileen through out her life. Her bravery, valor, fearlessness, and kind-hearted attitude for her fellow dogs as well as humans is not only awe-inspiring but also a satire on humans who are losing all these high attributes.

The very advice of mother dog at the time of Aileen's selling…… 'We were sent into this world for a wise and good purpose' is a lesson for humans. There are many advices of mother dog that give an indication of sublime human attributes. The farewell of puppy and mother dog is moving and heart wrenching. It gives lesson not to break hearts on separations. 'When there is a time of danger to another does not think of yourself, think of your mother, and do as she would do "is a lesson for all of us. The mother dog emerges as a heroic character. The other important character is of Mr. Grey, who stands as foil to the mother dog. He is ruthless, selfish, stone hearted and ironically devoid of all great characteristics of humans.

The language used in the story contains many shades. There are many comic lines in the story, especially the mother dog's treatment with new words and her ideas about the mental capabilities of her fellow dogs makes reader chortle. Use of different literary terms, i.e. imagery and metaphor is very appropriate and abrupt. Pathetic and heart wrenching moment of puppy's death brings tears into eyes. The climax of the story comes when the reader comes to know that the very puppy is used up for experimentation by Mr. Grey, whose mother saved the life of his child, 'When the footman had finished and covered little Robin up, he patted my head, and there were tears in his eyes, and he said: "Poor little doggie, you saved *his* child!"

Negative traits of humans that include cruelty and brutality are well depicted through the character of Mr. Grey, Who killed little puppy for his experiment and is not ashamed of it

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at all. Twain in his later year was disgusted with the idea that humans are cruel and selfish creature. So, he mocked at humans through the character of a little dog.

Activity:

Q1: Who is the narrator in 'A Dog's Tale'?
Q2: Discuss the 'mother dog' character.
Q3:'A Dog's Tale' is a comic story with serious underlying message. Comment.
Q4: 'Mr. Grey is a true embodiment of selfishness'. Comment.
Q5: Discuss the themes highlighted in 'A Dog's Tale'.
Q6: Mark Twain uses mannerism of mother dog to comment on follies of ladies of his time. Discuss.
Q7: What lesson do you get from the story?

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

The Story of the Bad Little Boy

Once there was a bad little boy whose name was Jim - though, if you will notice, you will find that bad little boys are nearly always called James in your Sunday-school books. It was strange, but still it was true that this one was called Jim.

He didn't have any sick mother either - a sick mother who was pious and had the consumption, and would be glad to lie down in the grave and be at rest but for the strong love she bore her boy, and the anxiety she felt that the world might be harsh and cold towards him when she was gone. Most bad boys in the Sunday-books are named James, and have sick mothers, who teach them to say, "Now, I lay me down," etc. and sing them to sleep with sweet, plaintive voices, and then kiss them good-night, and kneel down by the bedside and weep. But it was different with this fellow. He was named Jim, and there wasn't anything the matter with his mother - no consumption, nor anything of that kind. She was rather stout than otherwise, and she was not pious; moreover, she was not anxious on Jim's account. She said if he were to break his neck it wouldn't be much loss. She always spanked Jim to sleep, and she never kissed him good-night; on the contrary, she boxed his ears when she was ready to leave him.

Once this little bad boy stole the key of the pantry, and slipped in there and helped himself to some jam, and filled up the vessel with tar, so that his mother would never know the difference; but all at once a terrible feeling didn't come over him, and something didn't seem to whisper to him, "Is it right to disobey my mother? Isn't it sinful

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to do this? Where do bad little boys go who gobble up their good kind mother's jam?" and then he didn't kneel down all alone and promise never to be wicked any more, and rise up with a light, happy heart, and go and tell his mother all about it, and beg her forgiveness, and be blessed by her with tears of pride and thankfulness in her eyes. No; that is the way with all other bad boys in the books; but it happened otherwise with this Jim, strangely enough. He ate that jam, and said it was bully, in his sinful, vulgar way; and he put in the tar, and said that was bully also, and laughed, and observed "that the old woman would get up and snort" when she found it out; and when she did find it out, he denied knowing anything about it, and she whipped him severely, and he did the crying himself. Everything about this boy was curious - everything turned out differently with him from the way it does to the bad James in the books.

Once he climbed up in Farmer Acorn's apple-tree to steal apples, and the limb didn't break, and he didn't fall and break his arm, and get torn by the farmer's great dog, and then languish on a sick bed for weeks, and repent and become good. Oh! no; he stole as many apples as he wanted and came down all right; and he was all ready for the dog too, and knocked him endways with a brick when he came to tear him. It was very strange - nothing like it ever happened in those mild little books with marbled backs, and with pictures in them of men with swallow-tailed coats and bell-crowned hats, and pantaloons that are short in the legs, and women with the waists of their dresses under their arms, and no hoops on. Nothing like it in any of the Sunday-school books.

Once he stole the teacher's pen-knife, and, when he was afraid it would be found out and he would get whipped, he slipped it into George Wilson's cap - poor Widow Wilson's son, the moral boy, the good little boy of the village, who always obeyed his mother, and never told an untruth, and was fond of his lessons, and infatuated with Sunday-school. And when the knife dropped from the cap, and poor George hung his head and blushed, as if in conscious guilt, and the grieved teacher charged the theft upon him, and was just in the very act of bringing the switch down upon his trembling shoulders, a white-haired improbable justice of the peace did not suddenly appear in their midst, and strike an attitude and say, "Spare this noble boy - there stands the cowering culprit! I was passing the school-door at recess, and unseen myself, I saw the theft committed!" And then Jim didn't get whaled, and the venerable justice didn't read the tearful school a homily and take George by the hand and say such a boy deserved to be exalted, and then tell him to come and make his home with him, and sweep out the office, and make fires, and run errands, and chop wood, and study law, and help his wife to do household labors, and have all the balance of the time to play, and get forty cents a month, and be happy. No; it would have happened that way in the books, but it didn't happen that way to Jim. No meddling old clam of a justice dropped in to make trouble, and so the model boy George got thrashed, and Jim was glad of it because, you know, Jim hated moral boys. Jim said he was "down on them milk-sops." Such was the coarse language of this bad, neglected boy.

But the strangest thing that ever happened to Jim was the time he went boating on Sunday, and didn't get drowned, and that other time that he got caught out in the storm when he was fishing on Sunday, and didn't get struck by lighting. Why, you might look,

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and look, all through the Sunday-school books from now till next Christmas, and you would never come across anything like this. Oh no; you would find that all the bad boys who go boating on Sunday invariably get drowned; and all the bad boys who get caught out in storms when they are fishing on Sunday infallibly get struck by lightning. Boats with bad boys in them always upset on Sunday, and it always storms when bad boys go fishing on the Sabbath. How this Jim ever escaped is a mystery to me.

This Jim bore a charmed life - that must have been the way of it. Nothing could hurt him. He even gave the elephant in the menagerie a plug of tobacco, and the elephant didn't knock the top of his head off with his trunk. He browsed around the cupboard after essence of peppermint, and didn't make a mistake and drink aqua fortis. He stole his father's gun and went hunting on the Sabbath, and didn't shoot three or four of his fingers off. He struck his little sister on the temple with his fist when he was angry, and she didn't linger in pain through long summer days, and die with sweet words of forgiveness upon her lips that redoubled the anguish of his breaking heart. No; she got over it. He ran off and went to sea at last, and didn't come back and find himself sad and alone in the world, his loved ones sleeping in the quiet churchyard, and the vine-embowered home of his boyhood tumbled down and gone to decay. Ah! no; he came home as drunk as a piper, and got into the station-house the first thing.

And he grew up and married, and raised a large family, and brained them all with an axe one night, and got wealthy by all manner of cheating and rascality; and now he is the infernalist wickedest scoundrel in his native village, and is universally respected, and belongs to the Legislature.

So you see there never was a bad James in the Sunday-school books that had such a streak of luck as this sinful Jim with the charmed life.

Commentary

In the 19th century, it was a common practice to see characters through the mirror of morality and judge them accordingly. There are many novels written in 19th century where good characters always get rewarded and bad characters are penalized in the end of the story. Perhaps, it is a way to teach children and keep check on their morals. Mark Twain deviates from this practice and writes the story ‘The Story of the Bad Little Boy’ which is often paired with’ The Story Of Good Little Boy’.

It is a deviation from traditional practices, as nothing bad happens to the bad boy. It is a simple story of a little boy Jim. Like traditional stories, where little boys always have sick mother or with some ailments, it is different with Jim. His mother is quite healthy and strong. She never has any serious problem. Jim on the other hand is rascal in the real sense; he uses to do wrongs and never feels any prick of consciousness while doing wrong acts. Luck and fortunate remains on his side throughout his life.

It is a very simple story without any twist or complexity. The reader is introduced with two main characters, i.e., Jim and his mother. There is a third person narrator, who tells

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story and keeps on commenting as well. Main focus remains on Jim, his life and treatment with life. The character of his mother appears for a very little time.
No question of right and wrong arises in his mind like typical story characters. It never happens to him after doing wrong to feel sorry and be ashamed of his act. Even after beaten up from mother, he does not cry like stereotype stories characters and ask forgiveness. He is in habit of stealing apples and is never caught. Time and again there is comment that nothing bad happens with him as it used to be in moral stories. Despite all wrong acts, he is never caught, goes for boating but is not drowned at all. He even gets married and kills all his family, later on he becomes rich and enjoys a peaceful life.

The writer uses the technique of comparison and contrast in this short story. In the whole story comparison and contrast is going on. There is an element of surprise for the reader as nothing bad happens. The "bad little boy' is more a commentary than story on the character of bad boy that is usually portrayed in our fiction. It seems Mark Twain has written this story to show that it is not necessary that bad people always get punishment and good people get rewards, on the other hand, in real life situation can be reversed as happens with bad boy, who always gets best despite his wicked attitude towards people.

Mark Twain is quite disgusted with the brutal attitude of people towards life. He has written the story to give a new lesson; life is and can't be categorized into sections of good and evil as happens in fantasy world. In actual life things are different. Wicked can prosper and thrive, while honest can suffer.

Language is very simple and straight, even theme of the story is portrayed in a simple way. The story is very easy to understand. The flow of the story remains same from start till end. There are no twists and turns in the story. The climax of the story comes when the reader comes to know that despite killing his family, Jim is still living happily ever after. He is actually convinced of the idea "A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes."

Activity:

Q1: What is the main idea of the story?
Q2: How would you relate this story with the fiction you have read so far?
Q3: Discuss the character of 'Jim'.
Q4: Discuss at least two bad boy characters that you have read and also tell how life has treated them?
Q5: Do you find this story little weird and different?
Q6: Express your feelings after reading this story and also relate your real-life experience. Do you agree such characters exist in real life?
Q7: Do you think in fiction there should be concept of 'absolute judgment' or it should portray reality?

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Lesson 8

KATHERINE MANSFIELD (1888-1923)

Katherine Mansfield Beauchamp (1888-1923), a central figure in the development of modern short story, was born into a prosperous middle-class colonial family in Wellington, New Zealand. A pioneer of the avant-garde in short fiction, Mansfield created a revolutionized model for the modern short story in English. The success of Mansfield's writing established her as an outstanding talent among her contemporaries like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

Mansfield contributed three volumes of short stories "In a German Pension" (1911), "Bliss and Other Stories" (1920) and "The Garden Party and Other Stories" (1922), to English literature**.** Her first volume is renowned for its satiric commentary, distinctive wit, perceptive characterization, and effective portrayal of female psychology and the complexity of human emotions. The other two volumes include her finest short stories in the English language "Prelude," "Bliss," "Miss Brill," "The Garden Party," and "The Daughters of the Late Colonel." These works display some of Mansfield's most successful innovations, including the interior monologue, stream of consciousness, psychological acuity, and shifting perspectives. The use of these techniques also portrays poetic qualities of her prose, her ability to extract beauty and vitality from ordinary experiences, and her extensive use of symbolism and imagery. Mansfield's creative years were burdened with loneliness, illness, jealousy, and alienation – all this reflected in her work with the bitter depiction of marital and family relationships of her middle-class characters and insightful portrayals of children.

The Garden Party

And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark flat rosettes where the daisy plants had been seemed to shine. As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels.

Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the marquee.

"Where do you want the marquee put, mother?"

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"My dear child, it's no use asking me. I'm determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I am your mother. Treat me as an honoured guest."

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and she sat drinking her coffee in a green turban, with a dark wet curl stamped on each cheek. Jose, the butterfly, always came down in a silk petticoat and a kimono jacket.

"You'll have to go, Laura; you're the artistic one."

Away Laura flew, still holding her piece of bread-and-butter. It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors, and besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.

Four men in their shirt-sleeves stood grouped together on the garden path. They carried staves covered with rolls of canvas, and they had big tool-bags slung on their backs. They looked impressive. Laura wished now that she had not got the bread-and-butter, but there was nowhere to put it, and she couldn't possibly throw it away. She blushed and tried to look severe and even a little bit short-sighted as she came up to them.

"Good morning," she said, copying her mother's voice. But that sounded so fearfully affected that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl, "Oh - er - have you come - is it about the marquee?"

"That's right, miss," said the tallest of the men, a lanky, freckled fellow, and he shifted his tool-bag, knocked back his straw hat and smiled down at her. "That's about it."

His smile was so easy, so friendly that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had, small, but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling too. "Cheer up, we won't bite," their smile seemed to say. How very nice workmen were! And what a beautiful morning! She mustn't mention the morning; she must be business-like. The marquee.

"Well, what about the lily-lawn? Would that do?"

And she pointed to the lily-lawn with the hand that didn't hold the bread-and-butter. They turned, they stared in the direction. A little fat chap thrust out his under-lip, and the tall fellow frowned.

"I don't fancy it," said he. "Not conspicuous enough. You see, with a thing like a marquee," and he turned to Laura in his easy way, "you want to put it somewhere where it'll give you a bang slap in the eye, if you follow me."

Laura's upbringing made her wonder for a moment whether it was quite respectful of a workman to talk to her of bangs slap in the eye. But she did quite follow him.

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"A corner of the tennis-court," she suggested. "But the band's going to be in one corner."

"H'm, going to have a band, are you?" said another of the workmen. He was pale. He had a haggard look as his dark eyes scanned the tennis-court. What was he thinking?

"Only a very small band," said Laura gently. Perhaps he wouldn't mind so much if the band was quite small. But the tall fellow interrupted.

"Look here, miss, that's the place. Against those trees. Over there. That'll do fine."

Against the karakas. Then the karaka-trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee?

They must. Already the men had shouldered their staves and were making for the place. Only the tall fellow was left. He bent down, pinched a sprig of lavender, put his thumb and forefinger to his nose and snuffed up the smell. When Laura saw that gesture she forgot all about the karakas in her wonder at him caring for things like that - caring for the smell of lavender. How many men that she knew would have done such a thing? Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought. Why couldn't she have workmen for her friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper? She would get on much better with men like these.

It's all the fault, she decided, as the tall fellow drew something on the back of an envelope, something that was to be looped up or left to hang, of these absurd class distinctions. Well, for her part, she didn't feel them. Not a bit, not an atom ... And now there came the chock-chock of wooden hammers. Some one whistled, some one sang out, "Are you right there, matey?" "Matey!" The friendliness of it, the - the - Just to prove how happy she was, just to show the tall fellow how at home she felt, and how she despised stupid conventions, Laura took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing. She felt just like a work-girl.

"Laura, Laura, where are you? Telephone, Laura!" a voice cried from the house.

"Coming!" Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda, and into the porch. In the hall her father and Laurie were brushing their hats ready to go to the office.

"I say, Laura," said Laurie very fast, "you might just give a squiz at my coat before this afternoon. See if it wants pressing."

"I will," said she. Suddenly she couldn't stop herself. She ran at Laurie and gave him a small, quick squeeze. "Oh, I do love parties, don't you?" gasped Laura.

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"Ra-ther," said Laurie's warm, boyish voice, and he squeezed his sister too, and gave her a gentle push. "Dash off to the telephone, old girl."

The telephone. "Yes, yes; oh yes. Kitty? Good morning, dear. Come to lunch? Do, dear. Delighted of course. It will only be a very scratch meal - just the sandwich crusts and broken meringue-shells and what's left over. Yes, isn't it a perfect morning? Your white? Oh, I certainly should. One moment - hold the line. Mother's calling." And Laura sat back. "What, mother? Can't hear."

Mrs. Sheridan's voice floated down the stairs. "Tell her to wear that sweet hat she had on last Sunday."

"Mother says you're to wear that sweet hat you had on last Sunday. Good. One o'clock. Bye-bye."

Laura put back the receiver, flung her arms over her head, took a deep breath, stretched and let them fall. "Huh," she sighed, and the moment after the sigh she sat up quickly. She was still, listening. All the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices. The green baize door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud. And now there came a long, chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy piano being moved on its stiff castors. But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this? Little faint winds were playing chase, in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. And there were two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silver photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots. Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it.

The front door bell pealed, and there sounded the rustle of Sadie's print skirt on the stairs. A man's voice murmured; Sadie answered, careless, "I'm sure I don't know. Wait. I'll ask Mrs Sheridan."

"What is it, Sadie?" Laura came into the hall.

"It's the florist, Miss Laura."

It was, indeed. There, just inside the door, stood a wide, shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies - canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems.

"O-oh, Sadie!" said Laura, and the sound was like a little moan. She crouched down as if to warm herself at that blaze of lilies; she felt they were in her fingers, on her lips, growing in her breast.

"It's some mistake," she said faintly. "Nobody ever ordered so many. Sadie, go and find mother."

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But at that moment Mrs. Sheridan joined them.

"It's quite right," she said calmly. "Yes, I ordered them. Aren't they lovely?" She pressed Laura's arm. "I was passing the shop yesterday, and I saw them in the window. And I suddenly thought for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies. The garden-party will be a good excuse."

"But I thought you said you didn't mean to interfere," said Laura. Sadie had gone. The florist's man was still outside at his van. She put her arm round her mother's neck and gently, very gently, she bit her mother's ear.

"My darling child, you wouldn't like a logical mother, would you? Don't do that. Here's the man."

He carried more lilies still, another whole tray.

"Bank them up, just inside the door, on both sides of the porch, please," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Don't you agree, Laura?"

"Oh, I do, mother."

In the drawing-room Meg, Jose and good little Hans had at last succeeded in moving the piano.

"Now, if we put this chesterfield against the wall and move everything out of the room except the chairs, don't you think?"

"Quite."

"Hans, move these tables into the smoking-room, and bring a sweeper to take these marks off the carpet and - one moment, Hans - " Jose loved giving orders to the servants, and they loved obeying her. She always made them feel they were taking part in some drama. "Tell mother and Miss Laura to come here at once.

"Very good, Miss Jose."

She turned to Meg. "I want to hear what the piano sounds like, just in case I'm asked to sing this afternoon. Let's try over 'This life is Weary.'"

Pom! Ta-ta-ta Tee-ta! The piano burst out so passionately that Jose's face changed. She clasped her hands. She looked mournfully and enigmatically at her mother and Laura as they came in.

"This Life is Wee-ary, A Tear - a Sigh. A Love that Chan-ges, This Life is Wee-ary, A Tear - a Sigh. A Love that Chan-ges, And then ... Good-bye!"

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But at the word "Good-bye," and although the piano sounded more desperate than ever, her face broke into a brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile.

"Aren't I in good voice, mummy?" she beamed.

"This Life is Wee-ary, Hope comes to Die. A Dream - a Wa-kening."

But now Sadie interrupted them. "What is it, Sadie?"

"If you please, m'm, cook says have you got the flags for the sandwiches?"

"The flags for the sandwiches, Sadie?" echoed Mrs. Sheridan dreamily. And the children knew by her face that she hadn't got them. "Let me see." And she said to Sadie firmly, "Tell cook I'll let her have them in ten minutes.

Sadie went.

"Now, Laura," said her mother quickly, "come with me into the smoking-room. I've got the names somewhere on the back of an envelope. You'll have to write them out for me. Meg, go upstairs this minute and take that wet thing off your head. Jose, run and finish dressing this instant. Do you hear me, children, or shall I have to tell your father when he comes home to-night? And - and, Jose, pacify cook if you do go into the kitchen, will you? I'm terrified of her this morning."

The envelope was found at last behind the dining-room clock, though how it had got there Mrs. Sheridan could not imagine.

"One of you children must have stolen it out of my bag, because I remember vividly - cream cheese and lemon-curd. Have you done that?"

"Yes."

"Egg and--" Mrs. Sheridan held the envelope away from her. "It looks like mice. It can't be mice, can it?"

"Olive, pet," said Laura, looking over her shoulder.

"Yes, of course, olive. What a horrible combination it sounds. Egg and olive."

They were finished at last, and Laura took them off to the kitchen. She found Jose there pacifying the cook, who did not look at all terrifying.

"I have never seen such exquisite sandwiches," said Jose's rapturous voice. "How many kinds did you say there were, cook? Fifteen?"

"Fifteen, Miss Jose."

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"Well, cook, I congratulate you."

Cook swept up crusts with the long sandwich knife, and smiled broadly.

"Godber's has come," announced Sadie, issuing out of the pantry. She had seen the man pass the window.

That meant the cream puffs had come. Godber's were famous for their cream puffs. Nobody ever thought of making them at home.

"Bring them in and put them on the table, my girl," ordered cook.

Sadie brought them in and went back to the door. Of course Laura and Jose were far too grown-up to really care about such things. All the same, they couldn't help agreeing that the puffs looked very attractive. Very. Cook began arranging them, shaking off the extra icing sugar.

"Don't they carry one back to all one's parties?" said Laura.

"I suppose they do," said practical Jose, who never liked to be carried back. "They look beautifully light and feathery, I must say."

"Have one each, my dears," said cook in her comfortable voice. "Yer ma won't know."

Oh, impossible. Fancy cream puffs so soon after breakfast. The very idea made one shudder. All the same, two minutes later Jose and Laura were licking their fingers with that absorbed inward look that only comes from whipped cream.

"Let's go into the garden, out by the back way," suggested Laura. "I want to see how the men are getting on with the marquee. They're such awfully nice men."

But the back door was blocked by cook, Sadie, Godber's man and Hans.

Something had happened.

"Tuk-tuk-tuk," clucked cook like an agitated hen. Sadie had her hand clapped to her cheek as though she had toothache. Hans's face was screwed up in the effort to understand. Only Godber's man seemed to be enjoying himself; it was his story.

"What's the matter? What's happened?"

"There's been a horrible accident," said Cook. "A man killed."

"A man killed! Where? How? When?"

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But Godber's man wasn't going to have his story snatched from under his very nose.

"Know those little cottages just below here, miss?" Know them? Of course, she knew them. "Well, there's a young chap living there, name of Scott, a carter. His horse shied at a traction-engine, corner of Hawke Street this morning, and he was thrown out on the back of his head. Killed."

"Dead!" Laura stared at Godber's man.

"Dead when they picked him up," said Godber's man with relish. "They were taking the body home as I come up here." And he said to the cook, "He's left a wife and five little ones."

"Jose, come here." Laura caught hold of her sister's sleeve and dragged her through the kitchen to the other side of the green baize door. There she paused and leaned against it. "Jose!" she said, horrified, "however are we going to stop everything?"

"Stop everything, Laura!" cried Jose in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"Stop the garden-party, of course." Why did Jose pretend?

But Jose was still more amazed. "Stop the garden-party? My dear Laura, don't be so absurd. Of course we can't do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don't be so extravagant."

"But we can't possibly have a garden-party with a man dead just outside the front gate."

That really was extravagant, for the little cottages were in a lane to themselves at the very bottom of a steep rise that led up to the house. A broad road ran between. True, they were far too near. They were the greatest possible eyesore, and they had no right to be in that neighbourhood at all. They were little mean dwellings painted a chocolate brown. In the garden patches there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans. The very smoke coming out of their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great silvery plumes that uncurled from the Sheridans' chimneys. Washerwomen lived in the lane and sweeps and a cobbler, and a man whose house-front was studded all over with minute bird-cages. Children swarmed. When the Sheridans were little they were forbidden to set foot there because of the revolting language and of what they might catch. But since they were grown up, Laura and Laurie on their prowls sometimes walked through. It was disgusting and sordid. They came out with a shudder. But still one must go everywhere; one must see everything. So through they went.

"And just think of what the band would sound like to that poor woman," said Laura.

"Oh, Laura!" Jose began to be seriously annoyed. "If you're going to stop a band playing every time some one has an accident, you'll lead a very strenuous life. I'm every bit as sorry about it as you. I feel just as sympathetic." Her eyes hardened. She looked at her

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sister just as she used to when they were little and fighting together. "You won't bring a drunken workman back to life by being sentimental," she said softly.

"Drunk! Who said he was drunk?" Laura turned furiously on Jose. She said, just as they had used to say on those occasions, "I'm going straight up to tell mother."

"Do, dear," cooed Jose.

"Mother, can I come into your room?" Laura turned the big glass door-knob.

"Of course, child. Why, what's the matter? What's given you such a colour?" And Mrs. Sheridan turned round from her dressing-table. She was trying on a new hat.

"Mother, a man's been killed," began Laura.

"Not in the garden?" interrupted her mother.

"No, no!"

"Oh, what a fright you gave me!" Mrs. Sheridan sighed with relief, and took off the big hat and held it on her knees.

"But listen, mother," said Laura. Breathless, half-choking, she told the dreadful story. "Of course, we can't have our party, can we?" she pleaded. "The band and everybody arriving. They'd hear us, mother; they're nearly neighbours!"

To Laura's astonishment her mother behaved just like Jose; it was harder to bear because she seemed amused. She refused to take Laura seriously.

"But, my dear child, use your common sense. It's only by accident we've heard of it. If some one had died there normally - and I can't understand how they keep alive in those poky little holes - we should still be having our party, shouldn't we?"

Laura had to say "yes" to that, but she felt it was all wrong. She sat down on her mother's sofa and pinched the cushion frill.

"Mother, isn't it terribly heartless of us?" she asked.

"Darling!" Mrs. Sheridan got up and came over to her, carrying the hat. Before Laura could stop her she had popped it on. "My child!" said her mother, "the hat is yours. It's made for you. It's much too young for me. I have never seen you look such a picture. Look at yourself!" And she held up her hand-mirror.

"But, mother," Laura began again. She couldn't look at herself; she turned aside.

This time Mrs. Sheridan lost patience just as Jose had done.

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"You are being very absurd, Laura," she said coldly. "People like that don't expect sacrifices from us. And it's not very sympathetic to spoil everybody's enjoyment as you're doing now."

"I don't understand," said Laura, and she walked quickly out of the room into her own bedroom. There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that. Is mother right? she thought. And now she hoped her mother was right. Am I being extravagant? Perhaps it was extravagant. Just for a moment she had another glimpse of that poor woman and those little children, and the body being carried into the house. But it all seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper. I'll remember it again after the party's over, she decided. And somehow that seemed quite the best plan ...

Lunch was over by half-past one. By half-past two they were all ready for the fray. The green-coated band had arrived and was established in a corner of the tennis-court.

"My dear!" trilled Kitty Maitland, "aren't they too like frogs for words? You ought to have arranged them round the pond with the conductor in the middle on a leaf."

Laurie arrived and hailed them on his way to dress. At the sight of him Laura remembered the accident again. She wanted to tell him. If Laurie agreed with the others, then it was bound to be all right. And she followed him into the hall.

"Laurie!"

"Hallo!" He was half-way upstairs, but when he turned round and saw Laura he suddenly puffed out his cheeks and goggled his eyes at her. "My word, Laura! You do look stunning," said Laurie. "What an absolutely topping hat!"

Laura said faintly "Is it?" and smiled up at Laurie, and didn't tell him after all.

Soon after that people began coming in streams. The band struck up; the hired waiters ran from the house to the marquee. Wherever you looked there were couples strolling, bending to the flowers, greeting, moving on over the lawn. They were like bright birds that had alighted in the Sheridans' garden for this one afternoon, on their way to - where? Ah, what happiness it is to be with people who all are happy, to press hands, press cheeks, smile into eyes.

"Darling Laura, how well you look!"

"What a becoming hat, child!"

"Laura, you look quite Spanish. I've never seen you look so striking."

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And Laura, glowing, answered softly, "Have you had tea? Won't you have an ice? The passion-fruit ices really are rather special." She ran to her father and begged him. "Daddy darling, can't the band have something to drink?"

And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed.

"Never a more delightful garden-party ... " "The greatest success ... " "Quite the most ... "

Laura helped her mother with the good-byes. They stood side by side in the porch till it was all over.

"All over, all over, thank heaven," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Round up the others, Laura. Let's go and have some fresh coffee. I'm exhausted. Yes, it's been very successful. But oh, these parties, these parties! Why will you children insist on giving parties!" And they all of them sat down in the deserted marquee.

"Have a sandwich, daddy dear. I wrote the flag."

"Thanks." Mr. Sheridan took a bite and the sandwich was gone. He took another. "I suppose you didn't hear of a beastly accident that happened to-day?" he said.

"My dear," said Mrs. Sheridan, holding up her hand, "we did. It nearly ruined the party. Laura insisted we should put it off."

"Oh, mother!" Laura didn't want to be teased about it.

"It was a horrible affair all the same," said Mr. Sheridan. "The chap was married too. Lived just below in the lane, and leaves a wife and half a dozen kiddies, so they say."

An awkward little silence fell. Mrs. Sheridan fidgeted with her cup. Really, it was very tactless of father ...

Suddenly she looked up. There on the table were all those sandwiches, cakes, puffs, all uneaten, all going to be wasted. She had one of her brilliant ideas.

"I know," she said. "Let's make up a basket. Let's send that poor creature some of this perfectly good food. At any rate, it will be the greatest treat for the children. Don't you agree? And she's sure to have neighbours calling in and so on. What a point to have it all ready prepared. Laura!" She jumped up. "Get me the big basket out of the stairs cupboard."

"But, mother, do you really think it's a good idea?" said Laura.

Again, how curious, she seemed to be different from them all. To take scraps from their party. Would the poor woman really like that?

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"Of course! What's the matter with you to-day? An hour or two ago you were insisting on us being sympathetic, and now--"

Oh well! Laura ran for the basket. It was filled, it was heaped by her mother.

"Take it yourself, darling," said she. "Run down just as you are. No, wait, take the arum lilies too. People of that class are so impressed by arum lilies."

"The stems will ruin her lace frock," said practical Jose.

So they would. Just in time. "Only the basket, then. And, Laura!" - her mother followed her out of the marquee - "don't on any account--"

"What mother?"

No, better not put such ideas into the child's head! "Nothing! Run along."

It was just growing dusky as Laura shut their garden gates. A big dog ran by like a shadow. The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade. How quiet it seemed after the afternoon. Here she was going down the hill to somewhere where a man lay dead, and she couldn't realize it. Why couldn't she? She stopped a minute. And it seemed to her that kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somehow inside her. She had no room for anything else. How strange! She looked up at the pale sky, and all she thought was, "Yes, it was the most successful party."

Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. Women in shawls and men's tweed caps hurried by. Men hung over the palings; the children played in the doorways. A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. Laura bent her head and hurried on. She wished now she had put on a coat. How her frock shone! And the big hat with the velvet streamer - if only it was another hat! Were the people looking at her? They must be. It was a mistake to have come; she knew all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now?

No, too late. This was the house. It must be. A dark knot of people stood outside. Beside the gate an old, old woman with a crutch sat in a chair, watching. She had her feet on a newspaper. The voices stopped as Laura drew near. The group parted. It was as though she was expected, as though they had known she was coming here.

Laura was terribly nervous. Tossing the velvet ribbon over her shoulder, she said to a woman standing by, "Is this Mrs. Scott's house?" and the woman, smiling queerly, said, "It is, my lass."

Oh, to be away from this! She actually said, "Help me, God," as she walked up the tiny path and knocked. To be away from those staring eyes, or to be covered up in anything,

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one of those women's shawls even. I'll just leave the basket and go, she decided. I shan't even wait for it to be emptied.

Then the door opened. A little woman in black showed in the gloom.

Laura said, "Are you Mrs. Scott?" But to her horror the woman answered, "Walk in please, miss," and she was shut in the passage.

"No," said Laura, "I don't want to come in. I only want to leave this basket. Mother sent--"

The little woman in the gloomy passage seemed not to have heard her. "Step this way, please, miss," she said in an oily voice, and Laura followed her.

She found herself in a wretched little low kitchen, lighted by a smoky lamp. There was a woman sitting before the fire.

"Em," said the little creature who had let her in. "Em! It's a young lady." She turned to Laura. She said meaningly, "I'm 'er sister, miss. You'll excuse 'er, won't you?"

"Oh, but of course!" said Laura. "Please, please don't disturb her. I - I only want to leave--"

But at that moment the woman at the fire turned round. Her face, puffed up, red, with swollen eyes and swollen lips, looked terrible. She seemed as though she couldn't understand why Laura was there. What did it mean? Why was this stranger standing in the kitchen with a basket? What was it all about? And the poor face puckered up again.

"All right, my dear," said the other. "I'll thenk the young lady."

And again she began, "You'll excuse her, miss, I'm sure," and her face, swollen too, tried an oily smile.

Laura only wanted to get out, to get away. She was back in the passage. The door opened. She walked straight through into the bedroom, where the dead man was lying.

"You'd like a look at 'im, wouldn't you?" said Em's sister, and she brushed past Laura over to the bed. "Don't be afraid, my lass," - and now her voice sounded fond and sly, and fondly she drew down the sheet--"'e looks a picture. There's nothing to show. Come along, my dear."

Laura came.

There lay a young man, fast asleep - sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the

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closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy ... happy ... All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.

But all the same you had to cry, and she couldn't go out of the room without saying something to him. Laura gave a loud childish sob.

"Forgive my hat," she said.

And this time she didn't wait for Em's sister. She found her way out of the door, down the path, past all those dark people. At the corner of the lane she met Laurie.

He stepped out of the shadow. "Is that you, Laura?"

"Yes."

"Mother was getting anxious. Was it all right?"

"Yes, quite. Oh, Laurie!" She took his arm, she pressed up against him.

"I say, you're not crying, are you?" asked her brother.

Laura shook her head. She was.

Laurie put his arm round her shoulder. "Don't cry," he said in his warm, loving voice. "Was it awful?"

"No," sobbed Laura. "It was simply marvellous. But Laurie--" She stopped, she looked at her brother. "Isn't life," she stammered, "isn't life--" But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.

"Isn't it, darling?" said Laurie.

Commentary

'The Garden Party' relates the preparations and aftermath of a garden party, set in an early summer at the estate of a bourgeois family in colonial New Zealand.

The party is ostensibly organized by the daughters of the Sheridan family where Laura is supposedly the in charge of the event. Laura inspects different activities and finds herself torn between snobbery and her developing sense of moral responsibility. Her mother (Mrs. Sheridan) has ordered pink lilies to be delivered for the party without Laura's approval and fusses over the sandwiches. Her sister Meg tests the piano, and rehearses a

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comically inappropriate song. A delivery person comes in the house with the order of delicious cream puffs and also spreads the sad news of death of a carter in the neighbours. On hearing this Laura immediately suggests to cancel the party but her mother and sisters do not give any consideration to her compassionate thought. Laura's mother gives her a gift of pretty black hat and asks her to wear in the party. She puts it on and gets surprised pleasantly to see her reflection in the mirror. She admires her beauty and gets busy in the party arrangements once again. The party proves a success but towards the end Laura's father shares the news of the death of the poor Scott that occupies her heart with sympathy for the poor carter's family. She becomes more upset when her mother decides to send her to the Scotts with some party leftovers. Dressed in her beautiful party attire she crosses the road that separates the Sheridan's property from the houses of the poor. Down the broad road, in a dark lane she finds the carter's house, the widow's sister led her into the house to view the body. Peaceful beauty of the corpse and compassionate feelings suddenly overpower her. She quickly comes out of the house and on the way she finds her brother Laurie, with whom she tries to share her feelings but finds her at a loss for words.

"The Garden Party" is in limited third-person narrative style which is typical of Mansfield. It is limited because the author presents only Laura's thoughts. The actions of other characters present their position, outlook and personality traits to the reader.

The central theme of "The Garden Party" is the contrast between life and death. The Sheridan's garden represents a place of enjoyment for the bourgeois class of British society. They are least concerned about the miseries of the people working for them. They are just busy in coining pleasures for themselves. Everything is so bright and luminous with almost a frightening energy. In contrast to this blossoming life of Sheridan's, the dead carter's place is dark and oppressive surrounded by an ugly crowd. The purposeful creation of marked difference of the two abodes emphasizes the theme of the story.

The structure of the story reveals that life and death are parts of the same sphere. Just like a day that starts at dawn and ends in twilight. Laura's moment of epiphany comes when she sees the corpse in the dark room which testifies a kind of knowledge not available in the bright world of the garden party. That moment opens new horizons of thought and gives her keen insight of the worldly life. Towards the end of the story Laura's journey to the carter's place presents another theme of growth, in which a young girl gains emotional and moral maturity. Laura and Laurie's isolation from the common folk and their dwellings describes another theme of class consciousness in the story.

The imagery of light and darkness is used in the whole story. The world of the Sheridans is bright, shining, and blissful while the world of Scotts is dark and gloomy. Besides, the imagery also reflects conflicting moods of Laura as she perceives life around her. The description of the party is luminous whereas, after the party Mansfield darkens the imagery, though there are few glimmers of light depicted by the feelings and emotions of Laura. For example, "It was just growing dusky as Laura shut their garden gates. A big

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dog ran by like a shadow. The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade."

Mansfield frequently uses personification and onomatopoeia to animate her prose. For example in "spots of sun", and "little faint winds were playing chase", the word *playing*, and *spots* personifies winds, and sun respectively. "Tuk-tuk-tuk," clucked cook like an agitated hen''. Here '*tuk'* and '*clucked'* are examples of onomatopoeia.

Symbolism is another important characteristic of Mansfield's literary style. Some of the most prominent symbols used in this short story are: 'Karaka trees' stand for children, 'Desert Island' represents Sheridan estate, 'Marquee' symbolize overprotection of the parents, 'Lilies' represent the purity, innocence and vulnerability of Laura, 'Laura's hat' appears to symbolize Mrs. Sheridan's worldview–including her class-consciousness–which she has now passed on to Laura, 'The hill' suggests that the Sheridans are superior and belong to high social standing, 'The road down the hill' appears to be a symbol of Laura's journey towards maturity, 'The wide road' signifies the class barrier, and 'The Garden' appears to represent the growth of the Sheridan children as well as a kind of Eden in which their parents confine them.

The short story is written in the modernist mode, without a set structure, and with many shifts in the narrative. In her brief career Katherine Mansfield with her innovative literary style and stream of consciousness narrative gained appreciation, respect and high regard from her contemporaries like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. In "The Garden Party" one the finest example of Mansfield's works, Laura's character implicitly narrates a story taken from her childhood memoirs.

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

Q1: Write a critical note on Katherine Mansfield as a short story writer.
Q2: Describe 'The Garden Party' as an example of Mansfield's use of stream of consciousness.
Q3: If Laura had finished her question at the end of the story, what would it say?
Q4: Which passages in the story suggest that Laura is on her way to becoming more mature?
Q5: Write a psychological profile of Laura.
Q6: To what extent does the story reflect the author's experiences as a teenager?
Q7: Give a description of symbolism and imagery used in "The Garden Party".
Q8: Write a plot summary of the short story "The Garden Party".

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Miss Brill

ALTHOUGH it was so brilliantly fine–the blue sky powdered with gold and great spots of light like white wine splashed over the Jardins Publiques–Miss Brill was glad that she had decided on her fur. The air was motionless, but when you opened your mouth there was just a faint chill, like a chill from a glass of iced water before you sip, and now and again a leaf came drifting–from nowhere, from the sky. Miss Brill put up her hand and touched her fur. Dear little thing! It was nice to feel it again. She had taken it out of its box that afternoon, shaken out the moth powder, given it a good brush, and rubbed the life back into the dim little eyes. "What has been happening to me?" said the sad little eyes. Oh, how sweet it was to see them snap at her again from the red eiderdown! . . . But the nose, which was of some black composition, wasn't at all firm. It must have had a knock, somehow. Never mind–a little dab of black sealing-wax when the time came–when it was absolutely necessary . . . Little rogue! Yes, she really felt like that about it. Little rogue biting its tail just by her left ear. She could have taken it off and laid it on her lap and stroked it. She felt a tingling in her hands and arms, but that came from walking, she supposed. And when she breathed, something light and sad–no, not sad, exactly–something gentle seemed to move in her bosom.

There were a number of people out this afternoon, far more than last Sunday. And the band sounded louder and gayer. That was because the Season had begun. For although the band played all the year round on Sundays, out of season it was never the same. It was like some one playing with only the family to listen; it didn't care how it played if there weren't any strangers present. Wasn't the conductor wearing a new coat, too? She was sure it was new. He scraped with his foot and flapped his arms like a rooster about to crow, and the bandsmen sitting in the green rotunda blew out their cheeks and glared at the music. Now there came a little "flutey" bit–very pretty!–a little chain of bright drops. She was sure it would be repeated. It was; she lifted her head and smiled.

Only two people shared her "special" seat: a fine old man in a velvet coat, his hands clasped over a huge carved walking-stick, and a big old woman, sitting upright, with a roll of knitting on her embroidered apron. They did not speak. This was disappointing, for Miss Brill always looked forward to the conversation. She had become really quite expert, she thought, at listening as though she didn't listen, at sitting in other people's lives just for a minute while they talked round her.

She glanced, sideways, at the old couple. Perhaps they would go soon. Last Sunday, too, hadn't been as interesting as usual. An Englishman and his wife, he wearing a dreadful Panama hat and she button boots. And she'd gone on the whole time about how she ought to wear spectacles; she knew she needed them; but that it was no good getting any; they'd be sure to break and they'd never keep on. And he'd been so patient. He'd suggested everything–gold rims, the kind that curve round your ears, little pads inside the bridge. No, nothing would please her. "They'll always be sliding down my nose!" Miss Brill had wanted to shake her.

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The old people sat on a bench, still as statues. Never mind, there was always the crowd to watch. To and fro, in front of the flower beds and the band rotunda, the couples and groups paraded, stopped to talk, to greet, to buy a handful of flowers from the old beggar who had his tray fixed to the railings. Little children ran among them, swooping and laughing; little boys with big white silk bows under their chins, little girls, little French dolls, dressed up in velvet and lace. And sometimes a tiny staggerer came suddenly rocking into the open from under the trees, stopped, stared, as suddenly sat down "flop," until its small high-stepping mother, like a young hen, rushed scolding to its rescue. Other people sat on the benches and green chairs, but they were nearly always the same, Sunday after Sunday, and–Miss Brill had often noticed–there was something funny about nearly all of them. They were odd, silent, nearly all old, and from the way they stared they looked as though they'd just come from dark little rooms or even–even cupboards!

Behind the rotunda the slender trees with yellow leaves down drooping, and through them just a line of sea, and beyond the blue sky with gold-veined clouds.

Tum-tum-tum tiddle-um! tiddle-um! tum tiddley-um tum ta! blew the band.

Two young girls in red came by and two young soldiers in blue met them, and they laughed and paired and went off arm-in-arm. Two peasant women with funny straw hats passed, gravely, leading beautiful smoke-coloured donkeys. A cold, pale nun hurried by. A beautiful woman came along and dropped her bunch of violets, and a little boy ran after to hand them to her, and she took them and threw them away as if they'd been poisoned. Dear me! Miss Brill didn't know whether to admire that or not! And now an ermine toque and a gentleman in gray met just in front of her. He was tall, stiff, dignified, and she was wearing the ermine toque she'd bought when her hair was yellow. Now everything, her hair, her face, even her eyes, was the same colour as the shabby ermine, and her hand, in its cleaned glove, lifted to dab her lips, was a tiny yellowish paw. Oh, she was so pleased to see him–delighted! She rather thought they were going to meet that afternoon. She described where she'd been–everywhere, here, there, along by the sea. The day was so charming–didn't he agree? And wouldn't he, perhaps? . . . But he shook his head, lighted a cigarette, slowly breathed a great deep puff into her face, and even while she was still talking and laughing, flicked the match away and walked on. The ermine toque was alone; she smiled more brightly than ever. But even the band seemed to know what she was feeling and played more softly, played tenderly, and the drum beat, "The Brute! The Brute!" over and over. What would she do? What was going to happen now? But as Miss Brill wondered, the ermine toque turned, raised her hand as though she'd seen someone else, much nicer, just over there, and pattered away. And the band changed again and played more quickly, more gayly than ever, and the old couple on Miss Brill's seat got up and marched away, and such a funny old man with long whiskers hobbled along in time to the music and was nearly knocked over by four girls walking abreast.

Oh, how fascinating it was! How she enjoyed it! How she loved sitting here, watching it all! It was like a play. It was exactly like a play. Who could believe the sky at the back wasn't painted? But it wasn't till a little brown dog trotted on solemn and then slowly trotted off, like a little "theatre" dog, a little dog that had been drugged, that Miss Brill

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discovered what it was that made it so exciting. They were all on stage. They weren't only the audience, not only looking on; they were acting. Even she had a part and came every Sunday. No doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn't been there; she was part of the performance after all. How strange she'd never thought of it like that before! And yet it explained why she made such point of starting from home at just the same time each week–so as not to be late for the performance–and it also explained why she had a queer, shy feeling at telling her English pupils how she spent her Sunday afternoons. No wonder! Miss Brill nearly laughed out loud. She was on the stage. She thought of the old invalid gentleman to whom she read the newspaper four afternoons a week while he slept in the garden. She had got quite used to the frail head on the cotton pillow, the hollowed eyes, the open mouth and the high pinched nose. If he'd been dead she mightn't have noticed for weeks; she wouldn't have minded. But suddenly he knew he was having the paper read to him by an actress! "An actress!" The old head lifted; two points of light quivered in the old eyes. "An actress–are ye?" And Miss Brill smoothed the newspaper as though it were the manuscript of her part and said gently; "Yes, I have been an actress for a long time."

The band had been having a rest. Now they started again. And what they played was warm, sunny, yet there was just a faint chill–a something, what was it?–not sadness–no, not sadness–a something that made you want to sing. The tune lifted, lifted, the light shone; and it seemed to Miss Brill that in another moment all of them, all the whole company, would begin singing. The young ones, the laughing ones who were moving together, they would begin and the men's voices, very resolute and brave, would join them. And then she too, she too, and the others on the benches–they would come in with a kind of accompaniment–something low, that scarcely rose or fell, something so beautiful–moving. . . . And Miss Brill's eyes filled with tears and she looked smiling at all the other members of the company. Yes, we understand, we understand, she thought–though what they understood she didn't know.

Just at that moment a boy and girl came and sat down where the old couple had been. They were beautifully dressed; they were in love. The hero and heroine, of course, just arrived from his father's yacht. And still soundlessly singing, still with that trembling smile, Miss Brill prepared to listen.

"No, not now," said the girl. "Not here, I can't."

"But why? Because of that stupid old thing at the end there?" asked the boy. "Why does she come here at all–who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home?"

"It's her fu-ur which is so funny," giggled the girl. "It's exactly like a fried whiting."

"Ah, be off with you!" said the boy in an angry whisper. Then:

"Tell me, ma petite chère–"

"No, not here," said the girl. "Not yet."

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. . . . . On her way home she usually bought a slice of honeycake at the baker's. It was her Sunday treat. Sometimes there was an almond in her slice, sometimes not. It made a great difference. If there was an almond it was like carrying home a tiny present–a surprise–something that might very well not have been there. She hurried on the almond Sundays and struck the match for the kettle in quite a dashing way.

But to-day she passed the baker's by, climbed the stairs, went into the little dark room–her room like a cupboard–and sat down on the red eiderdown. She sat there for a long time. The box that the fur came out of was on the bed. She unclasped the necklet quickly; quickly, without looking, laid it inside. But when she put the lid on she thought she heard something crying.

Commentary

'Miss Brill'—a masterpiece by Katherine Mansfield was first published in the Athenaeum on 26 November 1920, and later reprinted in 'The Garden Party and Other Stories'(1922) is about a woman's Sunday outing to a park. The story is written in the modernist mode, third-person limited point of view, without a set structure. The story is famous for its use of stream of consciousness to reveal the Miss Brill's thoughts about others as she watches a crowd from a park bench. The story is typical of Mansfield's style; she often employs stream of consciousness technique to reveal the psychological complexity of everyday experience in her characters' lives.

The story's title provides an example of the author's ingenuity and attention to detail. One can easily realize that Miss Brill is a lonely spinster, a middle-aged English teacher in a French town. She appears in the story visiting park regularly on every Sunday where she spends time walking and sitting in the park, wearing an old but beloved fur stole. She enjoys watching and judging people around her. The band sounds 'louder and gayer' today from her 'special seat'.

The reader sees everything through the eyes of the Miss Brill, but through dramatic irony reader often sees situations differently and more accurately than she does. Miss Brill criticizes the woman in ermine toque and the gentleman in grey. The woman in her fur hat was getting on in years and it showed in "her hair, her face, even her eyes," which was "the same color as the shabby ermine." Although Miss Brill criticizes appearances of the woman yet the reader knows it more precisely that she is also of the same appearance.

The high point of the story occurs as Miss Brill fantasizes that all people in sight, including her, are actors on stage. If she had missed playing her part one Sunday, someone would have noticed! When the band resumes playing songs, Miss Brill thinks as 'whole company' might begin singing at any moment. She feels a vague sense of community with the rest of park goers.

However, she then overhears a young couple's (hero and heroine of her drama) cruel remark about herself, and the story ends with her realization that she is not required in the

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busy world, and she thinks that she heard the fur crying. Here Mansfield's personification reveals a sense of loneliness belonging to the Miss Brill for she not only develops a connection with others in the park, but also personifies her inanimate piece of fur by communicating with it as well as feeling for it.

Katherine Mansfield's works are literary gems. Like a gem cutter creates many facets of the stone to increase its luster, Katherine Mansfield brightens her literary style by using the simplest plots supplemented with detailed characterization, symbolism and perfect word selection. In "Miss Brill" the main characters are Miss Brill, the fur necklet, the woman in the ermine toque and the young couple. Loneliness, illusion versus reality, rejection and isolation are the major themes of this piece of writing.

Miss Brill is written in third person narrative that tells us about a woman who regularly visits a nearby park on Sundays. It is interior monologue of the main character 'Miss Brill' who undergoes a shock when reality breaches her fantasy and proves it as fallacy of her perception. Mansfield has used stream of consciousness technique to enhance the psychological ingenuity of the story. The use of stream of consciousness gives the reader a keen insight into the Miss Brill's thoughts. The young couple in the story reveals thoughts of other characters.

Miss Brill's behaviour shows the main theme of the short story which is alienation and loneliness. Miss Brill is the lonely character who has isolated herself from the people in her surroundings. After reading the story one comes to know that her name is never mentioned and this is probably because she has no friends. This sense of alienation touches its peak at the end of the story when she puts the fur stole in its box like she has enclosed herself in the "room like a cupboard".

Mansfield has used the fur necklet as key symbol in this short story. Fur stole is personified to throw light on different traits of the Miss Brill. The writer has given it human traits like its nose "wasn't at all firm", tail and eyes who questions the owner, "what has been happening to me"? When the young couple criticizes her appearance, Miss Brill comes home and quickly takes the fur off her neck without looking at it. With such expressions the writer symbolizes Miss Brill's failure of self recognition. At the end of the story when Miss Brill puts the fur stole in its box she thinks she has heard it crying which again symbolizes the feelings of the main character.

The writer has successfully applied the stream of consciousness narrative in this story. Miss Brill manifests a sharp contrast between appearances and reality. This contrast is presented in the thoughts of the main character. 'The play', a metaphor that was staged in the park created a moment of epiphany for the main character. The theme of contrast between appearances and reality further explains the theme of alienation—the idea that the Miss Brill is separated and rejected from her environment.

The story ends with the painful realization of views of young people about the main character of the short story. Katherine leaves the reader with a few questions like if this

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comment can ever be forgotten by Miss Brill? Will she ever be able to visit the park and enjoy the musical concert? Will her fur necklet leave the cupboard for Sunday visits?

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

Q1: What important information does the title of the story provide about the main character?
Q2: Analyze Miss Brill's Sundays in the park and describe her feelings when she is there.
Q3: Are Miss Brill's thoughts and feelings ironic about those around her? Comment.
Q4: In what ways does Miss Brill's fur analogous to her?
Q5: Describe the setting of the story.
Q6: Narrate the role of the hero and heroine (in Miss Brill's words) in the climax of the story.
Q7: What are the consequences of the Miss Brill's encounter with the hero and heroine?
Q8: Describe major themes of the short story "Miss Brill".

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Lesson 9

INTRODUCTION TO POETRY

Outline

- **What is Poetry?**
- **Definitions of Poetry by different Poets**
- **History of the English Poetry**
- **Elements of poetry**
  - Prosody
  - Rhythm
  - Meter
  - Metrical Patterns
  - Rhyme, Alliteration, Assonance
  - Rhyming schemes
  - Ottava Rima
  - Terza Rima
  - Form
  - Lines and Stanzas
  - Visual Presentation
  - Diction

- **Forms of poetry**

  - Sonnet
  - Jintishi
  - Sestina
  - Villanelle
  - Pantoum
  - Rondeau
  - Roundel
  - Tanka
  - Haiku
  - Ruba'i
  - Sijo
  - Ode
  - Ghazal
  - Acrostic
  - Canzone
  - Cinquain
  - Other forms

- **Genres**

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- Narrative Poetry
- Epic Poetry
- Dramatic Poetry
- Satirical Poetry
- Lyric Poetry
- Elegy
- Verse fable
- Prose Poetry

What is Poetry?

Poetry is a literary art in which language is used for its aesthetic qualities. Poetry suggests alternative meanings in words and arouses emotional and sensuous responses.
The use of assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, ambiguity, symbolism, irony, and other stylistic elements is common in poetry. Thus, a poem can be interpreted in a variety of ways using these stylistic elements. In the present world, due to globalization, Poets often borrow poetic styles, techniques and forms from other cultures and languages.

Definitions of Poetry

There are as many definitions of poetry as there are Poets. Some definitions of Poetry by famous Poets are:

Wordsworth defines Poetry as:
"Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings".
(Prologue to the Lyrical Ballads)

Matthew Arnold's view about Poetry:
"Poetry is at bottom a criticism of life".
(Essays on Criticism)

Sir Philip Sidney says,
"Poetry (is) a speaking picture, with this end; to teach and delight".
(The Defense of Poesy)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge defines Poetry as:
"…. Poetry (is) the best words in their best order".
(Table Talk)

John Keats's definition about poetry is:
"If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all".
(Letter to John Taylor)

Aristotle says,

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"Poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history".
(Poetics)

History of the English Poetry

The dating of the Earliest English Poetry is difficult and controversial because the earliest surviving English poetry was transmitted orally. The term English Poetry is ambiguous because it may mean the Poetry written in England or the Poetry written in the English language. The earliest Anglo-Saxon poetry was composed in the 17th Century.

The Anglo-Norman conquest of England started in 1111, and French became the language of high culture, courts, parliament and aristocracy. After some time, English language regained its prestige and it replaced French and Latin in parliament and courts of law. Chaucer was the main literary figure of the 14th Century and his 'The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales' is the major work of the English Literature of that Century.

The Renaissance and the Elizabethan period

The Renaissance period started in 1509 in England and extended up to the Restoration in 1660.The writings of the English Humanists like Thomas More and Thomas Eliot brought the ideas and attitudes associated with new learning to the English audience.

The Elizabethan period (1558 to1603) in the English poetry is very important for its themes, forms and song traditions. Thomas Campion is the greatest songwriter of the Elizabethan period. Campion made experiments with metres based on counting syllables rather than stresses. Shakespeare was the greatest dramatist and sonnet writer of the Renaissance England. The love found in Shakespeare's sonnets implies a courtly audience. Edmund Spencer's 'The Faerie Queen' and Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia' are the best examples of the court poetry of the Elizabethan period.

The 17th Century (The Metaphysical Poets)

A group of the poets emerged in the beginning of the 17th Century, who wrote in a witty and complicated style. John Donne was the most famous Metaphysical Poet. Other members of this group were 'George Herbert', 'Thomas Traherne', 'Henry Vaughan', 'Andrew Marvell', and 'Richard.John Milton in his 'Comus' also fell into this group. As compared to Metaphysical poets, 'The Cavalier poets' that include 'Ben Jonson', 'Richard Lovelace', 'Robert Herrick', 'Edmund Waller', 'Thomas Carew' and 'John Denham', wrote in a lighter, elegant and artificial style. At the end of the 18th Century, the Metaphysical Poets, went out of favour and began to be read again in the Victorian era.

The 18th Century

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The 18th Century is also called the 'Augustan age'. The Poets of this age not only adopted a polished style in an effort to excel Roman ideals but they also translated and imitated Latin and Greek verse. The important poets of this age, 'Samuel Butler', 'John Dryden', 'Alexander Pope' and 'Samuel Johnson', and the Irish poet 'Jonathan Swift', wrote in satirical verse. Their satire was against the established church and the government. Towards the end of the18th Century, poetry began to move away from the strict Augustan ideals and a new pre-romantic trend began to arise in the poetry. Now the feelings and sentiments of the poets were more important than the strict rules, and the poets were more interested in 'Nature' and other natural phenomenon. 'Thomas Gray', 'George Crabbe', 'Christopher Smart' and 'Robert Burns' and 'Oliver Goldsmith' were the leading exponents of this new trend. These poets paved the way for the Romantic Movement.

The Romantic Movement

The last quarter of the 18th Century saw social and political turbulence. In Great Britain, a movement for social change and power sharing was in progress. The Romantic Movement in the English poetry emerged against this backdrop.

The birth of the English Romanticism is dated to the publication of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's "Lyrical Ballads" in 1798, however, William Blake had been publishing since 1780. The main poets of this era were 'William Blake', 'William Wordsworth', 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge', 'Percy Bysshe Shelley', 'Lord Byron', and 'John Keats'. Shelly is famous for his "Ozymandias" and "Prometheus Unbound". Shelly's groundbreaking poem "The Masque of Anarchy" called for nonviolence during protest and political action. This movement emphasized the creative expression of an individual and the need to find and formulate new forms of expression. These poets were very close to nature. These poets got inspiration from Milton but they drew something different from that of Milton and they also put a good deal of stress on their own originality.

Victorian Poetry

This period extended from 1830 to 1900.It was a period of political, social and economic change. Rapid industrialization and mechanization led to the prolonged economic growth. 'Alfred', 'Lord Tennyson', 'Robert Browning', 'Elizabeth Barrett Browning', 'Matthew Arnold' and 'Gerard Manley Hopkins' were the important poets of this period. Tennyson was the Spencer of this age and his 'Idylls of the Kings' can be read as the Victorian version of 'The Faerie Queen'. Dramatic Monologue is the greatest innovation of 'Robert Browning' and he used it in his novel 'The Ring and the Book'. Matthew Arnold's poem 'Dover Beach' was considered as the precursor of the modernist revolution. Hopkin's unusual style left a considerable impact on the poets of the 1940s. English Poets began to take an interest in French symbolism towards the end of the century. 'Charles Swinburne', 'Oscar Wilde', 'Arthur Symons', 'Ernest Dowson', 'Lionel Johnson' and 'William Butler Yeats' were the important poets towards the end of the century.

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The 20th Century

The Victorian influence continued in the early years of the 20th century. Yeats and Thomas Hardy were the two leading representatives of these influences. The 20th Century poetry is called 'Modern Poetry'. The first half of the 20th Century saw two horrible Wars and these circumstances left deep effects upon the personalities of the poets. 'Edmund Blunden', 'Rupert Brooke', 'D.H.Lawrence', 'Siegfried Sassoon', 'Edward Thomas', 'Wilfred Owen', 'Hardy' and 'Rudyard Kipling' wrote socially-aware criticism of the 1st World War.

'Imagism' was a major trend in the poetry of this era. English Poets included in this group were 'D.H.Lawrence', 'T.E.Hulme', 'F.S.Flint', 'Allen Upward' and 'John Cournos'. After the publication of "The Waste Land", T.S.Eliot became a major figure and influence on the other English poets. In the 1930s, Surrealist poetry emerged and the main exponents were 'David Gascoyne', 'Hugh Sykes Davies', 'George Barker', and 'Philip O'Connor'.

In 1940, United Kingdom was again at War and a new generation of the poets emerged in response. 'Keith Douglas', 'Alun Lewis', 'Henry Reed' and 'F.T.Prince' are the major poets of the 40s .Their works grew out of special circumstances of life and war.

'The Movement,' 'The Group' and 'Extremist Art' were the three major groups of the poets in 1950s. 'Philip Larkin', 'Elizabeth Jennings', 'D.J.Enright' and 'Donald Davie' were the major poets of 'The Movement.' These poets were against modernism and internationalism and looked to Hardy as a model. 'Philip Hobsbaum', 'Edward Lucie-Smith', 'Martin Bell', 'Peter Porter', 'Peter George Macbeth' and 'David Wevill' were included in 'The Group'.

To describe the work of the American poet 'Sylvia Plath', the poet 'Alvarez' used the term 'Extremist Art'. 'Ted Hughes', 'Francis Berry' and 'Jon Silkin' were included in this group. These poets were sometimes compared with the Expressionist German School.

In the 1960s, the mainstream of the poetry moved to Ireland with the emergence of 'Seamus Heaney', 'Paul Muldoon', 'Tom Paulin' and others. In England, the poets were associated with the modernist traditions and the major poets associated with this movement were 'J.H.Prynne', 'Eric Mottram', 'Tom Raworth' and 'Lee Harwood'.

Performance Poetry gained popularity in the last three decades of the 20th century and the major Poets of this period were: 'Carol Ann Duffy', 'Andrew Motion', 'Craig Raine', 'Wendy Cope', 'James Fenton', 'Blake Morrison', 'Liz Loch head', 'Linton Kwesi Johnson' and 'Benjamin Zephaniah'.

'The New Generation' Movement flowered in the 1990s and early 2000s, and the major poets associated with this movement were: Don Paterson, Julia Copus, John Stammers, Jacob Polley, David Morley and Alice.

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Elements of Poetry

Prosody

The study of the meter, rhythm, and intonation is called the Prosody of a poem.

Rhythm

Rhythm is a combination of sounds and silences. These sounds and silences are kept together to create pattern of sounds and these patterns are repeated to create rhythm. Rhythm creating methods vary across languages and poetic traditions. Some languages are Syllable-timed and some are Stress-timed.English, Russian and German are stressed – timed languages. In modern English, rhythm based on meter is often founded on the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Meter

The basic rhythmic structure of a verse or line is termed as meter. Meter is based on the arrangement of poetic feet into lines. Each foot includes one stressed and two unstressed syllables in English. In English stressed syllables are pronounced with greater volume, greater length, and higher pitch and are the bases for poetic meter. In Greek Terminology, the number of metrical feet in a line is described as follows:

- dimeter – two feet
- trimeter – three feet
- tetrameter – four feet
- pentameter – five feet
- hexameter – six feet
- heptameter – seven feet
- octameter – eight feet

Metrical Patterns

The type and the way we use meter for composing a verse is termed as metrical pattern. Some patterns are regular and some are irregular. For example iambic tetrameter is regular in Russian language and irregular in English language. Some of the metrical patterns are:

- Iambic pentameter
- Dactylic hexameter
- Iambic tetrameter
- Trochaic octameter

Rhyme, Alliteration, Assonance

The repetition of similar sounds in two or more words is termed as **Rhyme**, and is mostly used in poetry and songs. English is less rich in rhyme due to its irregular word endings.

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The repetition of a particular sound in the first syllables of a series of words or phrases is called **Alliteration**. Alliteration is useful for languages with less rich rhyming structures. The repetition of accented vowel sounds in a series of words is termed as **Assonance**.e.g.Fleet feet sweep by sleeping geese.

Rhyme, alliteration, assonance and consonance are used for creating repetitive patterns of sound. They may be used as ornamental elements in a poem.

Rhyming Scheme

A regular pattern of rhyme which remains consistent throughout the poem is called Rhyme Scheme. In High Middle Ages, Rhyme entered the European poetry. Some specific languages, cultures and periods have specific rhyming schemes. While some rhyming schemes are used in all languages, cultures and periods. Letters are used to describe the rhyming schemes. Some complicated rhyming schemes have developed their own names, separate from the "a-b-c" convention, like ottava rima and terza rima.

The following short poem illustrates the labeling of a rhyme scheme:

There once was a big brown cat	a
That liked to eat a lot of mice.	b
He got all round and fat	a
Because they tasted so nice.	b

Ottava Rima

It is a rhyming scheme that uses a stanza of eight lines with an alternating a-b rhyming scheme for the first six lines followed by a closing couplet.

Terza Rima

Dante's "Divine Comedy" is written in Terza Rima scheme where each stanza has three lines, with the first and the third rhyming, the second line rhymes with the first and the third line of the next stanza (thus, a-b-a / b-c-b / c-d-c) in a chain rhyme.

Forms

Poetry is written in line, stanza or cantos. These compositions are called poetic forms.

Lines and Stanzas

On a page, poetry is separated into lines. Lines are based on metrical feet. Lines can separate, compare or contrast thoughts expressed in different units, or can highlight a change in tone. Lines are organized into stanzas and stanzas are denominated by the included number of lines. A two line collection is called a 'couplet', three lines 'triplet', four lines 'quatrain' and five lines 'a quintain' etc .By rhyme or rhythm, these lines may or may not relate to each other.

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Diction

The manner in which words or figures of speech are used in a language is called poetic diction and it deals not only with the sound and form but also with the underlying meanings of the words. Specific poetic diction is used for some languages and poetic forms. Rhetorical devices like simile and metaphor and vocal tones like irony may be the part of the diction. Modernism does not value the rhetorical devices and emphasizes the direct presentation of things and experiences and exploration of tone. Surrealists have pushed rhetorical devices to their limits, making frequent use of catachresis. Vivid imagery is also a part of poetic diction. Vivid images are endowed with symbolism.

Forms of Poetry

Following are the forms of poetry:

Sonnet

Sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines having a set rhyming scheme and logical structure. A sonnet usually follows a-b-a-b rhyme scheme. First four lines of sonnet introduce the topic. There are several different forms of sonnets. Sonnets are especially associated with love poetry and vivid imagery is used in them. The twist and turn from octave to sestet in a sonnet makes it a useful and dynamic form for many subjects.Spencerian and Shakespearian sonnets are highly notable in the English poetry.

Jintishi

A Chinese poetic form based on a series of set tonal patterns in which four tones of Middle Chinese are used in each couplet. Names of these tones are: the level, rising, departing and entering tones. The basic form of the Jintishi has eight lines in four couplets, with parallelism between the lines in the second and the third couplets. Jintishi has rich poetic diction with allusions, and can express a wide range of subjects like history and politics.

Sestina

There are six stanzas in Sestina, and each stanza comprises of six unrhymed lines. In Sestina, the ending words of the first stanza's lines reappear in a rolling pattern in the other stan**zas. The poem ends with a three line stanza.**

The Villanelle

A nineteen-line poem, made up of five triplets with a closing quatrain, is termed as 'The Villanelle'. Since the 19th Century, The Villanelle has been used regularly in the English language by poets like Dylan Thomas, H.Auden and Elizabeth Bishop.Pantoum

It is a rare form of poetry similar to The Villanelle. It is composed of a series of quatrains.

Rondeau

The Rondeau is a French form which is written on two rhymes with fifteen lines.

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Roundel

The Roundel consists of nine lines and a refrain after the third line and after the last line, the refrain becomes identical with the beginning of the first line. 'Swinburne' has devised it.

Tanka

It is a form of unrhymed Japanese poetry, with five sections totaling 31 'onji' (phonological units identical to morae), structured in a 5-7-5 7-7 pattern.Tanka is shorter than Japanese formal poetry and is used to explore personal rather than public themes. Even today it is widely written.

Haiku

Haiku is form of unrhymed Japanese poetry which evolved in the 17th Century. Generally written in a single vertical line, the Haiku contains three sections totaling 17 onji, structured in a 5-7-5 pattern.

Ruba'i

It is a four-line verse practiced by the Arabian, the Persian and the Urdu poets. The Persian poet, Omar Khayyam is famous for his rubaiyat.

Sijo

This is a short musical lyric practiced by the Korean poets. It is written in three lines, each averaging 14-16 syllables, for a total of 44-46 syllables.

Ode

A poem written for an occasion or on a particular subject is called an ode. It is dignified and more serious form of poetry. Odes were developed by the Ancient Greek and Latin Poets. Generally, an ode has three parts: a strophe, an antistrophe, and an epode. The strophe and antistrophe look at a subject often from conflicting perspectives and epode moves to a higher level for the resolving of underlying issue. With the passage of time, different forms, with considerable variations in form and structure of odes have developed.

Ghazal

The classic form of Ghazal has five to fifteen rhyming couplets. Each couplet reflects a complete thought and stands alone, and complete ghazal often reflects a theme of an unattainable love or divinity. Generally, the last couplet includes the signature of the author. The Persian poet 'Rumi' was among the masters of this form.

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Acrostic

It is a poem or other form of writing in an alphabetic script, in which the first letter, syllable or word of each line and paragraph spells out another message.

Canzone

A Canzone is an Italian song or ballad. Sometimes a simple and song like composition is designated as a Canzone if it is by a non-Italian.

Cinquain

Cinquain form is inspired by Japanese Haiku and Tanka. American poet 'Adelaide Crapsey' invented this form.

Genres of Poetry

A genre is a tradition or classification of poetry which is based on the subject matter, style, or other broader literary characteristics of poetry.

Narrative Poetry

Narrative poetry tells a story. The term "narrative poetry" is often used for smaller works, generally with more appeal to human interest. Narrative Poetry is one of the oldest forms of poetry.Many scholars are of the view that Homer's 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' are composed by the combination of many shorter narrative Poems.

Ovid, Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Alexander Pope, Robert Burns, Edgar Allan and Alfred Tennyson are notable narrative poets.

Epic Poetry

This genre of poetry is a major form of narrative literature. In a continuous manner, it recounts life and works of a heroic or mythological person or group of persons. Homer's 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey', Virgil's 'Aeneid', Gilgamesh's 'the Mahabharata', Valmiki's 'Ramayana', Nizami's 'Khamse' and Milton's 'Paradise Lost' are the notable examples of epic poetry.

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Dramatic Poetry

It is drama written in verse to be spoken or sung, and this poetry appears in related forms in many cultures. Verse drama developed out of earlier oral epics such as: the Sanskrit and Greek epics. In Persian Literature, the examples of dramatic poetry are: Nezami's 'Layla and Majnun' and Khosrow and Shirin, Ferdowsi's Rostam and Sohrab, Rumi'Masnavi.Christopher Marlow's "Doctor Faustus", Shakespeare's "Hamlet and King Lear", Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer" and Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound" are a few examples of poetic drama.

Satirical Poetry

Poetry is a powerful vehicle for satire. A satirical poem is one that makes fun of some social vice or foolishness or injustice. Satire uses gentle mockery to make its point.Poetry is a powerful vehicle for satire. The satire delivered in verse may be many times more powerful and memorable than that of the same satire, spoken or written in prose. The Romans wrote the satirical poetry for the political purposes. The English Writers also wrote satire for the political purposes. Thomas Shadwell and John Dryden are two notable writers of satire of the 17th Century. John Wilmot, another 17th Century poet, is famous for his work "A Satyr against Mankind." Alexander Pope is famous for his critical work "Essay Introduction on Criticism." For satirical poetry there is no prescribed form.

Lyric Poetry

Lyric poetry is of personal nature. Instead of depicting characters and actions, it portrays the poet's own feelings, states of mind, and perceptions. Lyric poetry is composed for reading and singing. Many court poets wrote lyric poems about war and peace and grief and loss. St. John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, John Donne, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Antonio Machado and T. S. Eliot addressed the spiritual and religious themes and experiences in their lyric poems.14 line sonnet is the most popular form of Western lyric poetry. This is the most common form of poetry as it deals with the author's own emotions and views.

Elegy

It is a mournful, melancholy poem, especially a lament for the dead or it is a funeral song. The term "elegy" describes a mourning poem. It may be classified as a form of lyric poetry.

Jorge Manrique (1476),Edmund Spenser (1595), Ben Jonson (1616), John Milton (1637), Thomas Gray (1750), Charlotte Turner Smith (1784),Percy Bysshe Shelley (1821),Alfred Tennyson (1849), Walt Whitman (1865), Antonio Machado (1903), William Butler Yeats (1916),Virginia Woolf (1927), Kamau Brathwaite (born 1930) are the major practitioners of this genre.

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Verse Fable

It is a story that features the anthropomorphized animals, plants, inanimate objects and forces of nature that illustrate a moral lesson. A variety of meter and rhyme patterns are used in verse fable. Aesop, Robert Henryson, Jean de La Fontaine, Felix Maria de Samaniego, Ivan Krylov and Anbrose Bierce are the important verse fabulists of the English literature.

Prose poetry

Prose poetry shows attributes of both prose and poetry. It is called poetry because of its conciseness, use of metaphors, and special attention to language. Prose poetry originated in France in the 19th Century and its practitioners were Aloysius Bertrand, Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud and Stephane Mallarme. Oscar Wilde, T. S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Sherwood Anderson, Allen Ginsberg, Seamus Heaney, Russell Edson and Robert Bly are the English writers of this genre. Prose Poetry has gained much popularity since the late 1980s.

Activity:

Answer the Following Questions:

Q1- Define poetry and give at least two definitions of poetry by famous poets.
Q2- Write down the stylistic elements used in poetry.
Q3- What is Epic Poetry?
Q4- In today's busy world, Epic Poetry has lost its importance. Comment
Q5- Satirical Poetry will never lose its importance. Comment
Q6- Is Rhyming Scheme necessary for all types of poetry?
Q7- What do you understand by the term 'Renaissance'?
Q8- Odes are written only for a special occasion. Comment
Q9- Romantic Movement is considered a major movement in the English Poetry. Comment

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Lesson 10

WILLIAM BLAKE
(1757-1827)

William Blake is one of the prolific English poets. Largely unknown during his life time, Blake is now regarded as an influential figure in the history of English poetry and visual arts. His visual artistry has led contemporary critics to proclaim him "far and away the greatest artist Britain has ever produced."

William Blake was the second son of James Blake and Catherine Blake. He learned to read and write at home. Blake was a visionary from his early age and claimed to have visions - first time he saw God when he was only four; God put His head to the window and set him screaming. Four years later he saw a tree filled with angels. It was soon apparent that Blake's internal world of imagination would be a prime motivator throughout his life. Noting something special in their son the Blakes were highly supportive of and encouraged his artistic creativity and thus began his education and development as an artist.

Blake is a naturalist as he deals with the simplest pleasures of life –with the instinctive life of a child, with the love of flowers, hills and streams, the blue sky and the brooding clouds. Blake regards nature as a source of wonder and creativity.

Many of Blake's best poems are found in two collections "Songs of Innocence" (1789) and "Songs of Experience" (1794). The complete collection was called "Songs of Innocence and Experience" (1794). The collection shows two contrary states of human soul, and Blake believes that these contraries are needed to make human progression possible. The poems in two sections have a difference of character between them. 'The Songs of Innocence' sets out an imaginative vision of the state of innocence and 'The Songs of Experience' shows how life challenges, corrupts and destroys it.

Blake is held in high regards by later critics for his vision and artistry. He begins by breaking the shackles of language. He is a poet of humanity and wider sympathy. He has raised the banner for the liberty and equality of man; he is also an early champion of feminism. Above all he is a complete man; his poetry is a perfect medium for expressing the eternal truth in life without distortion.

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London

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born Infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

Commentary

The poem "London", originally published in Blake's "Songs of Innocence and Experience", has been written during the times of the French Revolution and is a biting satire on the 18th Century London. The poem is a scathing attack on the contemporary society in which the under-privileged sections have been reduced to dire distress and the poor and the powerless find themselves without help and hope. It is a world of mourning and sorrow.

The poem depicts Blake's criticism of society, of the whole trend of contemporary society and of the whole trend of contemporary civilization. Blake describes the sights he sees as he walks through the streets of London. The repetition of the word "charter'd" in the first stanza stresses Blake's anger at the political times and his feelings towards the ruling class, as the rich and the ruling classes have exploited the poor and hung their prosperity on that exploitation. As the narrator wanders, he notices, the suffering population: "Marks of weakness, marks of woe". The people seem to be frustrated and broken and London presents the picture of misery and weakness.

The second stanza presents the picture of a whole society in chains, and emphasizes the feeling of imprisonment. The 'mind –forged manacles', symbolizes the fetters which the authority has imposed upon the people. It represents the effects of the civil and the moral law, which according to Blake, always creates obstacles and causes misery. Though the people cannot voice out against the authority yet it seems that their cries are audible to the poet as he walks by. There is lack of free expression and he uses the word "ban"

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which reveals how people were unable to voice their criticism on the ruling class. The words "fear", "cry", "ban", and "mind-forg'd manacles" describe people who are suffering and frightened and their feelings are imprisoned in their own minds.

The tone of anger and condemnation rises in the third verse, when Blake utilizes imagery of destruction and religion. The ‘chimney sweep’ symbolizes the destitute children while the ‘soldier’ represents the anguish of those who have to serve in the army under difficult conditions. Blake uses the religious imagery of the "black'ning church" to represent the loss of innocence, and the society's abandonment of religion. As the church building is literally "black'ning" with smoke from the chimneys, so the church as an organization, which should help the poor, is blackened, metaphorically, with shame at its failure to give that help. The "hapless soldier's sigh" symbolizes how men are drafted into war and have no choice but to serve their country.

The most poignant and brooding part of the poem is the last stanza, which describes the lot of the harlots. The society forgets that it is its own injustices, cruelty, lack of compassion and also the inhuman moral and social codes which have reduced these women to harlotry; they take to prostitution, most often to keep the world off their door. Here Blake is pointing a finger at the rich men who might use the services of prostitutes and then get married and pass on sexually transmitted diseases to their wives. The word "plagues" here suggests the sexually transmitted diseases which the "youthful harlot" would contract and pass on to others. In this way their actions affect the lives of all the innocent people involved.

The basic theme of the poem is man's lack of freedom and the causes of this lack. The poem is a powerful indictment of a society which not only tolerates but perpetuates chimney sweepers and harlots. Daring imagery has been used to depict the deformations demonstrated in child labor, militarism, and barbarity of the era. With the few strokes the poet has depicted the blighted world of slavery, exploitation and cruelty. The Chimney-sweepers, the soldiers and the harlots are Blacke’s types of the oppressed___ the victims of a system which is not based on equality but on fear and the freedom to oppress. Blake shows us the shams on which the society thrives___ and a society which poses to be a champion of freedom and fair play. The poem, gives the impression that London is a very deprived and uncaring city.

The tone of poem is obviously sorrowful and sad. In the first two stanzas, Blake utilizes alliteration and word choice to set the mournful atmosphere. The poem has a total of sixteen lines which are divided into four stanzas with a rhyming ‘ABAB’ pattern throughout the poem. Repetition is the most striking formal feature of the poem, and it serves to emphasize the prevalence of the horrors the speaker describes.

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Activity:
Q1: What effects do the poem's insistent particularity and totality have - i.e. "charter'd," "mark," every"?
Q2: Which river has been mentioned in the poem?
Q3: How will you interpret the word ‘charter'd,"’ in the first stanza of the poem?
Q4: The miseries of whom has been discussed in the second stanza of the poem?
Q5: How does the chimney-sweeper's cry blacken Church appalls? Discuss.
Q6: Whose sigh "runs in blood down Palace walls"?
Q7: Why is the reference to prostitution the most significant one to the speaker, as we see from the last stanza?
Q8: What does the term “Marriage hearse” symbolize in the poem?
Q9: Why is the poet attacking on the contemporary, political and the ruling class of his times?

A Poison Tree

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I watered it in fears
Night and morning with my tears,
And I sunned it with smiles
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright,
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine -

And into my garden stole
When the night had veiled the pole;
In the morning, glad, I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

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Commentary

"A Poison Tree" was written in 1794 by William Blake as a part of his collection of poems, "Songs of Experience". The poem is based on the fundamental human passion of love and hate .It is a scathing criticism on the suppressed elements of malice and hatred in man. The poem tells how anger can be dispelled by goodwill, or can be nurtured to become a deadly poison.

The opening of the poem depicts a contrast between love and hate, benevolence and malevolence and shows how people categorize their fellows as 'friends' or 'foes'. The speaker explains that once he was angry with 'his friend' but he told his friend about his anger and that ended the negative attitude towards the friend. But then he got angry with another person, whom the speaker considered his 'foe' because he did not talk out his wrath with the enemy, 'the wrath did grow'. The secrecy of feeling was intensified with the passage of time and enmity kept on simmering and began to grow in the form of a poisonous tree that sprouted a bright but poisonous apple. The poet's enemy was lured by the deceptive apple, ate and died due to its poisonous effects.

It is a thought provoking poem, deeply symbolic and moralizing. Wrath (anger) and desire to triumph over enemies is the basic theme of the poem. The suppressed anger and malice can make a person destructive and revengeful. The anger depicted here is not the anger we call the heat of the moment, but "wrath", one of the seven deadly sins.

The fruit that the tree bears is something terrible yet tempting. This can be compared to the story of the Garden of Eden. The Fruit of Knowledge appeared good at first, but has deceived both Adam and Eve. Likewise, the speaker seems friendly towards his foe, but has developed deceitful manners to hood-wink the enemy.

The poem emphasizes that we should not nourish anger and hatred in our hearts. Hatred grows into enmity, enmity breeds fear and fear gives rise to revenge .Therefore the poem is a symbolic representation of hatred, cunningness, hypocrisy, cleverness and other negative human traits. It projects a conflict between the good and the evil. The poet teaches us the moral lesson of great importance.

The poem has a number of contrasts, love and hatred, friend and foe, trust and distrust, fears and tears and so on. It is full of contrasting abstraction and symbols such as love, hate, apple, poisonous tree, wrath, water, tears, wiles etc.

It is a simple narrative in the form of a parable. The title of the poem is appropriate and symbolizes anger and hatred. The poem consists of 16 lines and is divided into four stanzas with the rhyme scheme AABB.

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Activity:

Q1: What does the apple symbolize and why does it kill the foe?
Q2: Why does the foe try to steal the apple?
Q3: What does the 'pole' signify in the last stanza of the poem?
Q4: What contrasts are discussed in the poem?
Q5: Pick out all the words related to hate and anger.
Q6: Is there any moral lesson in the poem? If any? Discuss.
Q7: Is the title of the poem appropriate? Discuss
Q8: Why would you consider this poem to be a 'Song of Experience'?

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The Little Black Boy

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but oh! my soul is white.
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black as if bereaved of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And, sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And pointing to the east began to say:

"Look on the rising sun, -there God does live
And gives his light, and gives his heat away;
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

And we are put on earth a little space
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

For when our souls have learned the heat to bear
The cloud will vanish, we shall hear his voice
Saying: `Come out from the grove, my love and care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice!' "

Thus did my mother say, and kissed me;
And thus I say to little English boy:
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our father's knee;
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

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Commentary

"The Little Black Boy" was published in “Songs of Innocence” in 1789, a time when slavery was still legal and the movement for the abolition of slavery was still young. Blake is a great upholder of the equality of all men. Apparently the poem establishes a spiritual unity between the Black and the White, however, Blake has a deeper message to convey to his reader through this poem. The poet is hinting at the hard life which the ‘Blacks’ in the southern wild have to lead, when he refers to the self consciousness of the little boy about his black skin.

The boy, who was born in “the southern wild” of Africa, first explains that though his skin is black, his soul is as white as that of an English child. The exclamation " And I am black, but oh! my soul is white” indicates despair and genuine longing to be accepted and understood. The child’s mother represents a natural and selfless love that becomes the poem’s ideal. She convinces him that this earthly life is but a preparation for the rewards of heaven. Therefore in this context, their skin color is but a cloud and will vanish soon and the black boy will become one with the white boy.

The black boy internalizes his mother’s lesson and applies it in his relation with the white child. The boy explains to his white friend that there is no difference between them but they will not be truly free until they are released from the constraints of the physical world. He vows that in the heaven they both will be free of their bodies and he will shade his white friend until he, too, learns to bear the heat of God’s love. Then, the black boy will be like his friend, and the white boy will love him. This statement shows that the black boy is better prepared for heaven than the white boy. This is part of the soothing vision with which his mother has prepared him and as a result his sufferings become a source of pride rather than shame. We do not know the response of the white boy as Blake’s focus is on the mental state of the black child.

The poem revolves around the theme of slavery and the slave's mentality. Here the black boy has become the mouth piece of the poet. Through this poem, Blake does not criticize God or any race, but he shows that we are all ultimately the same. The little black boy asks the questions as to why he is black instead of white. Why is he different from others?

The theme of supervision, protection, and taking care of another person, is also very prominent in the poem. This guard ship is present at three discrete levels in the poem. It begins with the little boy's mother, followed by God, and ultimately ending with the innocent little black boy himself.

The poem has total of 28 lines which are divided into 7 stanzas with the rhyming ABAB pattern throughout the poem. The language of the poem is simple yet it arouses the feelings of sympathy with the black boy. The poem ends on the note of subjugation.

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Activity:

Q1: Why does the little 'black boy' lament in the beginning of the poem?
Q2: What does "bereaved of light" indicate in the first stanza of the poem?
Q3: What does the child's mother signify?
Q4: What lesson does the black boy learn about the white and the black treatment in heaven from his mother?
Q5: Which metaphor has been used for human body in the poem?
Q6: On what note does the poem end?
Q7: Is the ending of the poem justified? Discuss.
Q8: Is there any moral lesson in the poem? If any? Discuss.
Q9: 'Blacks were marginalized at the time the poem was written', Discuss the theme of slavery keeping in view the scenario of Blake's times.

Tyger

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

VU TOOLKIT

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Commentary

This is one of the most famous and the most impressive of Blake's poems "The Tiger," originally called "The Tyger," is a lyric poem focusing on the nature of God and his creations. It was published in 1794 in a collection entitled 'Songs of Experience'. In this poem the poet questions about the Evil, and the Good, which are symbolised in the 'Tyger' and the 'Lamb', respectively. The poem begins with the poet addressing a fearsome tiger, who is 'burning bright' in the forest of night, and asks him which immortal creator has made your fearful symmetrical body?

In this poem, Blake represents the conventional idea that the nature, like the work of art, must in some way contains an indication of its creator. The tiger is remarkably beautiful yet ferocious. What type of a God, then, could design such a violent beast as the tiger? Does the existence of evil in the world tell us about the nature of God? The tiger initially appears as a stunningly sensuous image but as the poem develops, it takes on a symbolic character, and represents the spiritual and the moral problems the poem explores: perfectly striking and yet perfectly destructive.

In the beginning of the poem the tiger burns in the forests of the night. In the second stanza the fire of his eyes burns in distinct deeps or skies. The concentration of the reader is reinforced in the question, "What immortal hand or eye?" which keeps the mind of the reader on the violent aspects of the creator, as well as the tiger.

The poet has used the metaphor giving the vision of a skillful and powerful blacksmith, creating a powerful beast. He asks questions about the instruments used by God as he lists the hammer, the chain, the furnace, and the anvil. All these tools are used by an ironsmith. Thus, according to the poet, God is a kind of craftsman. After that, the poet asks two significant questions. The first one refers to God's feelings:
'Did he smile his work to see?'
In other words, was God happy with his creation? The second question is:
'Did he who made the Lamb make thee?'

The tiger is so terrifying and so shapely that seeing it along with the lamb; it appears to be an act of miracle. The reference to the lamb in the ultimate stanza provides an obvious contrast between the violence of tiger and the meekness of a lamb. Hence, this theme: humans are incapable of fully understanding the mind of God and the mystery of his handiwork runs throughout the poem.

The tiger extends into realms beyond the realm of meaning. The implications in these short six verses are vaster than in anything else**.** The concentration of cosmic distance and depth within a single fiery frame is intense. The strength of the poem depends partly on the most effective use of the rhetorical questions which invite the reader to think about. The poet leaves us to awe at the complexity of creation, the sheer magnitude of God's power, and the inscrutability of the divine will.

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The poem comprises of twenty-four lines that are divided into six stanzas with the rhyme scheme AABB. The meter is regular and rhythmic; its hammering beat is suggestive of the smithy that is the poem's central image. The poem has a string of questions all of which contribute to the articulation of a single, central idea. There are words related to the tools used by an ironsmith like, 'hammer', 'chain', 'furnace', and 'anvil'. Also, we can find the natural imagery like 'forests', 'skies', 'Tyger', 'Lamb', 'deeps' and 'skies'. The simple structure and the vocabulary help the reader to understand the main topics or concepts, which are Evil, Good, and God.

Activity:

Q1: What visual image do lines 1 & 2 create?
Q2: In line 7 what does the word 'aspire' mean and in the same line what does "he" refer to?
Q3: Discuss the imagery of 'Blacksmith' in the fourth stanza of the poem.
Q4: What is the implied concern of the poet in the question about the Lamb?
Q5: What is the answer to the question in the line 20 of the poem, "Did he who made the lamb make thee?"
Q6: Why does the speaker need to ask the question? Who is "he," i.e. the lamb's creator?
Q7: Why would you consider this poem to be a Song of Experience?
Q8: The first stanza and the last stanza appear similar, but one word changes everything. What is that one word and why is that one word significant?
Q9: What does the 'Tyger' represent? Why?
Q10: Contrasting words and images are used aptly in this poem. Comment

VU TOOLKIT

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Lesson 11

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

(1770-1850)

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) can rightly be called the early leader of romanticism in the English poetry. He enjoys the status of a great lyric poet in the history of English literature.

William Wordsworth was greatly interested in nature since his childhood. In fact, nature and revolutionary ideals had always been a source of inspiration for him. Wordsworth took great interest in the French Revolution of 1789. He was psychologically inclined towards the revolution, and it converted his whole mindset about life and its harsh realities. The effects of Wordsworth's awareness and compassion for the dilemma of the "common man" can be seen in his succeeding works. His early poetic collections appeared in 1793 with the titles, "An Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches".

William Wordsworth is a poet of nature; he adored Nature as his God. For Wordsworth, 'nature' was a greatest source of spiritual consolation and a channel of escape from all the worries and woes of this world. His attachment with life giving and life supporting nature began even in his early childhood and remained with him till his last breath.

He made the inner world of man as his subject matter i.e., the inward eye, the strife and struggle of the mind and the lofty understanding of the soul which transpires the novel facts. In order to depict the inner world, he has used clues from the outside world such as, trees become symbols, rocks and stones suggest hidden language, mountains manifest strange statements made by a creator who tries to converse with His creation. For him, this supreme being of omnipresent consciousness, the spirit of nature, can be felt every where.

Wordsworth was primarily a poet and an artist. But he was also in true sense a psychological and a philosophical poet. He "attended with care to the reports of the senses" and showed remarkable "ability to observe things with accuracy as they are in themselves". Wordsworth carefully traced in his poems "the primary laws of our nature," in an attempt to show the action and reaction of mind upon its environment. Always strongly introspective, he revealed the workings of his own mind in his poems.

He remains a radical and revolutionary poet, one whose apprehensions are not out of context in our so-called eco-sensitive age. He would always be read with pleasure and enthusiasm. The rolling rhythms and flow of his verses is the repository of an exceptional and spectacular revelation.

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To the Cuckoo

O Blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! Shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear,
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale,
Of Sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;

The same whom in my school-boy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!

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Commentary

The Poem "To the Cuckoo", written by William Wordsworth is a poem that opens in a dramatic form by addressing the Cuckoo bird. The poet, as we assume form the poem, is lying on the grass, engrosses himself in nature when he listens the sound of the Cuckoo bird. The Cuckoo bird's cry evokes emotions in him that he has not realized since his childhood. He contemplates and derives that the bird's cry has a story behind it, and affirms true implication rather than ignoring the cry as most others would do in this situation. The cry makes Wordsworth recall his childhood days when he had first listened to the bird. Its "wandering voice" guides him through the woods and valleys striving to find its origin, but he never succeeds in finding the bird. The poem depicts as how Wordsworth appreciates the bird's voice and its pleasant effects upon his memory. Wordsworth concludes the poem by commenting that the Cuckoo is a sanctified bird and deserves to be in a mythical world, where it inhabits.

The cuckoo becomes an emblem of mysterious existence, beauty, charm, innocence and childhood for the poet. The poet listens to the cuckoo song in a garden. Her song becomes a source of nostalgic reminiscence for him. He recollects, owing to this song, the golden days of his school and childhood. The poet declares the cuckoo a happy stranger. He accepts and likes her song; but the bird remains invisible. The cuckoo is more like an untraceable wandering voice than a bird to him.

Wordsworth is continuously addressing the bird in the whole poem; the poem is in fact devoted to the Cuckoo bird. "Oh blithe newcomer", Wordsworth is awarding the bird the tag of being cheerful. He marvels if he should label it as just a bird, because it appears to be bigger than the sphere of his understanding. "Wandering voice" gives the bird the "capability" to be independent and again not subject to customary human lifestyle.

The poem reveals that Wordsworth still hears the bird's voice. It appears to Wordsworth that the bird's cry is echoing twofold and striking the hills. The cuckoo's mysterious voice is passing around the vicinity, immersing him into its song.

This cuckoo narrates a story of poet's past time "visionary hours". The cuckoo's song has a close affiliation with Wordsworth's past. Wordsworth is cheerful to hail the bird and its story. The repetitive stress on the word 'Thrice' shows the zeal and zest of the poet to invite the bird into his mind. The word 'Thrice' may be a hint to his past reunions with the bird. Wordsworth has in reality never viewed the bird, and it is just a mystifying voice, yet it can still smack emotions in him. The cry, when he analyses seems to be the same he heard as a child.

Nevertheless, again the bird's cry is capable to plunge him in its echo; he becomes engrossed in its song and feels enthralled to find the bird. The bird has stirred him to seek it out. He has "often" roved and roamed in search of it, indicative of that he has a deep connection to this bird's cry and that it is more than just a beautiful and captivating melodious sound. The poet tells that he definitely loves and likes the bird and it is for this

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rationale he has kept searching for it. He has never succeeded in finding the bird but still yearns to trace it.

He illustrates that he can still listen to the cuckoo bird's song whilst lying out in a field, and is happy to generate the memories of what he assumes his "golden time". As a true and topnotch romantic, his early years as a child seem to be the best (golden) part of his life, and this Cuckoo bird is the very reason to draw those feelings for him.

Wordsworth's view on 'nature' is a fundamental theme in "To the Cuckoo" as he sits listening to the melodious song of the bird in his environs. Nature is a prime idea. In many of Wordsworths' poetical works, he exemplifies his faith in romanticism and the deeper meaning of being immersed in nature in response to the industrial revolution and the emergent cities around him.

The depiction of the bird permits Wordsworth to amalgamate his past reminiscences with the present. This theme demonstrates the greater implication of the poem; this poem expresses that how remembrance is a key aspect in preserving the joys and pleasures of being in union with a divine being through nature.

The Cuckoo's cry is momentous; because Wordsworth believes that the Cuckoo itself is an amazing creature and signifies a higher being. Owing to this fact, the Cuckoo's cry is an activating and initiating spark for him. Wordsworth is able to access and revive memories from decades of "the golden time" in his childhood by means of the message, the cuckoo transports. Wordsworth is not only striving to express the idea that the Cuckoo bird is an exceptional creature and that its cry stands for a memory trigger, but he invites the reader to understand that romantic ideas of childhood justly leave those who have faith in preserving the innocence of childhood, and no matter how many long years pass, true romanticism always survives in its believers.

'To the Cuckoo' is a poem consisting of 8 stanzas. The Poem has a regular, simple rhyme scheme of ABAB. Some critics believe that the poem is actually a Cuckoo Song, written for the Cuckoo bird to portray a better connection. The Cuckoo bird appears in various other poems of Wordworths, e.g. 'The Solitary Reaper' and 'An Evening Walk'.

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

Q1. How does Wordsworth use form, rhyme scheme and meter to convey his meaning?
Q2. What does the 'Cuckoo' bird symbolize in this poem?
Q3. What is meant by 'wandering voice' in the poem 'To the Cuckoo'?
Q4. How does the poem 'To the Cuckoo' remind Wordsworth of his childhood?
Q5. What is the main theme of 'To the Cuckoo' poem by William Wordsworth?
Q6. What do the 'visionary hours' refer to in this poem?
Q7. What does the poet mean by "Oh blithe newcomer" in this poem?
Q8. What do you understand by ''that golden time again'' in poem 'To the Cuckoo'?

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The World is too much with Us

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. - Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Commentary

During the late eighteenth Century, the Industrial Revolution emerged. The Industrial Revolution was the beginning of an industrialized economy in which machines were made to facilitate the mass production of clothes and other textiles; the Industrial Revolution changed the world. Even though, the birth of the Industrial Revolution changed the whole scenario, however, the poets in general were not happy with these rapid changes that were taking people away from nature. Wordsworth expressed his objection in the poem, "The World is Too Much with us." In this poem, Wordsworth describes his inner passions towards nature and his criticism towards the materialistic world. Wordsworth depicts his insight about the world, his perception of how the world ought to be, and his acuity for the future.

In this poem, "The World is Too Much with us," Wordsworth vocalizes his perception of the world in his times. Wordsworth sees that the people of the world have an obsession with "getting and spending". He expresses that people of the world carelessly exploit the earth without any thoughts and he believes the world is becoming greedy and lazy. Wordsworth thinks that due to human obsession of "getting and spending", "we lay waste our powers" as a result of our incompetence of upholding the bond between humans and nature. The poet is of the view that because of human's hunger for "getting and spending," the human's spirituality is lost. Wordsworth believes that "We have given our hearts away," which is an indication that humans are ignoring their natural emotions, thus getting "out of tune" with nature.

Wordsworth also mentions his observation of how the world ought to be. He writes, "Little we see in nature that is ours," which indicates that humans will develop a coexistence with nature instead of exploiting nature, humans will appreciate the beauty of the "sea that bares her bosom in the moon". Once humans appreciate the beauty of nature,

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they will become as one, their bond with nature will enable them to protect nature and in response nature will provide humans with what is needed instead of what is wanted. Wordsworth believes humans will develop an intrinsic desire for living by refusing to give their 'hearts away' and redeeming their spirituality by ridding their hunger for "getting and spending".

This poem describes Wordsworth's vision of the future. He believes that because of humans' obsession with "getting and spending," the destruction of nature will occur. In the modern world, he envisions that people have become occupied with money and forget their morale. He also envisions that the Greek sea god 'Triton' will "blow his wreathed horn" to notify humans of their exploitation of nature. Wordsworth is of the view that Triton will let humans off with their fascination with "getting and spending" because "they know not what they do" and are naive of the consequences while selfishly exploiting nature.

With his passion for nature, Wordsworth disapproved the Industrial Revolution in which mass production uses large amounts of raw materials. His view of the world reflects the outlook of the world today. "The World is Too Much with us" is a very influential poem. By not following previously established guidelines, William Wordsworth's obscure way of writing this poem leaves a major impact on the British Literature for the future generations of writers.

It is a Petrarchan sonnet by Wordsworth; the poem is modeled after the pattern of Petrarch, an Italian sonneteer of the Renaissance, who for the first time practiced the art. The Petrarchan sonnet is divided into an octave, the first eight lines and a sestet, the last six lines. The rhyme scheme usually varies from sonnet to sonnet. In the octave, the sonnet under discussion follows the rhyme scheme ABBAABBA, in sestet it is CDCDCD.

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

Q1. What is the reason behind poet's anguish in the starting lines of the poem?
Q2. Do you think Wordsworth is serious when he uses the sea and the wind as examples of inspiring natural phenomena?
Q3. Is there a way for humanity and nature to co-exist? Can we continue to evolve technologically without destroying nature?
Q4. What are the poetic devices used in "The World is Too Much with us" that enhance the meaning of the poem?
Q5. Which subject or subjects does the poem address?
Q6. What do you understand by the title of the poem "The World is Too Much with us"?
Q7. Is the speaker really moved by the nature in the poem "The World is Too Much With Us"?
Q8. Why does the poet think that being a pagan would make him less sad?
Q9. What does the poem suggest about the human experience, motivation, or condition?

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The Rainbow

My heart leaps up when I behold

A rainbow in the sky:

So was it when my life began;

So is it now I am a man;

So be it when I shall grow old,

Or let me die!

The Child is father of the Man;

I could wish my days to be

Bound each to each by natural piety

Commentary

'The Rainbow', a short lyric by Wordsworth symbolizes the life sustaining and life beneficial kindness of Nature. The sight of the striking rainbow, which he saw as a child is profoundly imprinted in his memory. The same delight that he practiced when he saw it as a child continues to stick with him through his adulthood. He wishes this childhood pleasure may continue till his old age.

The poem is the recollection of the eye-catching rainbow and its enjoyable associations with his childhood, adulthood and his old age: past, present and future. Wordsworth sums up the poem by expressing the longing that each day of his survival be linked with the next by beautiful and trouble-free natural scenes and sights like the rainbow.

The rainbow, which he observed when he was a child, becomes a manifestation of the 'objective correlative' in the literary text, which enables his mind to recall the pleasing memories connected with the beautiful rainbow.

In this poem, Wordsworth grandly proclaims that, 'the Child is the Father of the Man' (line 7). If we are to consider this claim on the basis not of its philosophical merit but rather of its personal relevance to the poet, this statement must be considered an absolute truth. Wordsworth, through his poetry, explores himself: his thoughts, motives and feelings. In short, Wordsworth's poetry is in essence an exploration of the soul not of the

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mind, and it is because of this reason that his poetry is so profound, so fluid and so romantic in nature.

Wordsworth expresses his wonder and ecstasy at the sight of rainbow in the sky. The same "natural piety" he had as a young child, he feels and deals now as a man, and he hopes never to lose this appreciation of nature as he grows old.

With the line: "The Child is father of the Man", Wordsworth conceives a number of ideas. To start, Wordsworth ponders how the child is father merely through greatness. The child falls in love with nature right from his birth, so divine love among children is inbuilt. This appreciation is both an innate trait as well as something to be acquired when the child first looks at the world in its splendor. "The Child is father of the Man" perhaps because children, to whom the admiration of nature is innate, can teach adults the same joy, and are in this sense, more prudent than adults.

Thus, in one perspective, the child is the father of man, because the child has a consideration of nature's pure vigor, while men can lose this consciousness all too easily as they get young (as they deprive of their childlike innocence). Men, who do not value nature, therefore, are in such a relapsed condition that they cannot fully understand God or what it means to attain greatness (understanding where all of God's manifestation appears in the world).

In another sense, children are inherently innocent, and this innocence is typified in understanding the worth of nature and God, in connection to the human soul. Because children are aware of the value of nature (they still have their innocence after all), they and their souls are on a higher level with God than man can attain.

Although Wordsworth is not a child now, yet he has kept his positive appreciation of nature and often takes mirth in comparing it to God, but this is in slight contradiction to his earlier idea that children can attain higher moral perfection than man. If Wordsworth can grasp the concept that nature is significant to identify the value of God in relation to the human soul, then has he regressed to a childhood state? Has he acquired human enormity just in viewing this rainbow and longing that his love for it will never fade?

That is not to say that children have attained human greatness just in being children, but rather they are more eager to understand and ultimately achieve greatness than man can ever expect to gain. Overall, this is a luminous poem that showcases some of Wordsworth's most appealing ideas.

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Activity:

Answer the following questions:

1. Why does Wordsworth consider that the childhood is the most important time of one's life?
2. How does the poet's response to the rainbow unify the poem?
3. What is meant by the phrase "natural piety"?
4. What does the writer mean by 'child is the father of man'?
5. Is Wordsworth devaluing other means of reaching human perfection in 'The rainbow', or does he purposely express just one aspect (childhood)?
6. 'Wordsworth can truly be attributed as a poet of nature'. Comment on it with reference to the poem 'Rainbow'.

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Lesson 12

JOHN KEATS
(1795-1821)

John Keats is one of the leading poetic figures in the English Romantic Movement. During his short lifetime, his works were criticized by the reviewers but they gained great popularity after his death. His significant works include 'Ode to Autumn', 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'Ode to Psyche', 'Ode on Melancholy', 'Ode on Indolence', 'Lamia', 'Endymion', 'The Eve of St. Agnes' and a few sonnets such as 'When I have Fears', 'To Sleep' and "The Human Seasons'. Without these poems no anthology of the English poetry is ever complete.

Keats is known as a poet of Beauty. The principle of beauty has a spiritual existence for him. He visualizes beauty through all of his fives senses and universalizes the concept of beauty through his poetry. Unlike Wordsworth, he does not philosophise about beauty but loves it from the core of his heart. He believes that beauty is truth as it is the ultimate reality of life. As he says in his poem 'Ode on a Grecian Urn',

Beauty is truth, truth beauty---that is all
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know.

He connects beauty with imagination, as he writes that 'whatever imagination seizes as beauty must be true'. He 'worshipped the principles of love and beauty'. He loves and worships the beauty around him in the form of natural manifestations. He is the preacher of his 'doctrine of love and beauty'.

Keats is one of the most Romantic poets of the 19th Century. His romanticism lies in his sensuousness and his desire to escape from the real world. He is influenced by Spenser's poetry which has helped him in making an ideal of nature's sensuous beauty. Another important influence on him is that of John Milton with whom he has got the poetic ambition. Both the poets have strengthened the elements of escapism in his poems. His poetry is romantic in the sense that he feels ecstatic joy in escaping from the reality of everyday life into the world of sensations and imagination. His poetry offers him relief from the sufferings of daily life and helps him lose himself into the ideal world. The reader enjoys as well as shares his flight into the imaginary world.

He presents certain conflicts in his poetry. They are mortality and immortality, pain and pleasure, life and death, transience and permanence, dream and reality, separation and connection, etc. His poem 'Ode to a Nightingale' presents the conflict of pleasure and pain, whereas love and death are discussed in the poems 'La Belle Dam Sans Merci' and 'Lamia'.

Another salient feature of Keats' poetry is sensuousness. He uses all his five senses to describe all forms of the beauty discovered by him. His poetry is characterized by

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sensuous imagery. His imagery appeals to the reader's mind and heart through all the five senses, i.e., sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste.

Audio-visual images, present in his poetry, make the reader take great delight in his descriptions. They take him into the world of imagination where he can feel all what he manifests in the poems. His major themes include life, death, contemplation of beauty, love for nature, mortality, immortality, etc.

Ode to Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'erbrimmed their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, -
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing, and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

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Commentary

'Ode to Autumn' is one of the most beautiful odes of John Keats. It was composed on 19th September 1819 and published in 1820.It has three well-composed stanzas which make the reader see, hear and feel the beauties of the season of autumn. A fabulous picture of autumn is presented with all its colours and sounds.

The poem is very rich in imagery. The whole poem revolves around the various beauties of the autumn season. In the first stanza, the speaker talks about the beauty of autumn depicting its productive quality. He provides a sensuous picture of the season in the form of images like 'mellow fruitfulness', 'close bosom-friend', 'maturing sun', 'load and bless', etc. Images like 'swell the gourd' and 'plump the hazel shells' depict the abundance and bounty of the autumn season. They appeal the reader's sense of sight by giving it a pleasing effect. The image of 'clammy cells' serves to please the reader' sense of taste, as it is mentioned that the honeycombs of the bees are overflowing with honey. In addition, the description of the vines full of grapes, apples ripe, hazels with sweet kernel all add to the sensuous appeal of the poem. The stanza provides a photographic representation of the autumn season making one imagine and feel all the activities of autumn while reading the poem.

Like the other odes, this ode also presents some conflicts before the reader. A conflict between joy and melancholy of the autumn season can be seen in the poem. The poem celebrates autumn's abundance but at the same time, there is an underlying realization of the coming loss. When the harvest is over, the fields will be bare, the swaths with the twined flowers will be cut down, the birds will stop singing and as a result, the sky will be empty. So, the speaker contrasts joy and sorrow, fruition and decay, song and silence, etc. with each other in order to make the reader accept the fact that they are interconnected.

Unlike other odes, the speaker establishes connection with the conflicting realities without losing his sensations and living in the everyday world. In the poem 'Ode to a Nightingale' the speaker is in a state of sleep where he is facing a conflict between the ideal and the real. On the contrary, in this poem there is no persona at all. So, there is no attempted flight from the real world and no escape into the world of dreams. The poem is grounded in the actual world. The poem makes the reader experience the pleasant and bitter realities of this world with all his senses fully awake.

In the second stanza, the speaker directly addresses the season of autumn. It has been assigned a variety of characters in this stanza. It is first personified as a woman then it is represented as a harvester and a gleaner respectively. All the seasonal activities of the autumn season including reaping, winnowing and gleaming are discussed in this stanza. It has been presented as a woman who is sitting carelessly on the floor of granary. The image of 'soft-lifted' depicts the beauty of the goddess's hair as well as that of the 'winnowing wind' that separates the grain from the chaff in a beautiful manner. Technically speaking, the use of alliteration is evident in this image. It makes a pleasing effect on the reader's ear. All of these images appeal to the reader's sense of vision and

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hearing. He can hear the wind blowing softly lifting the hair of autumn, whereas it is also serving the purpose of winnowing. The description of winnowing wind appeals to the reader's sense of vision. The other significant image is 'drowsed with the fume of poppies' which stimulates the sense of smell as well as the sense of sight.

The third stanza discusses the sounds and voices of the season. Description of the loud bleating of lambs, singing of hedge crickets, whistling of redbreasts, etc. pleasantly appeal to the reader's sense of hearing. A melodious effect is created by these concrete and vivid descriptions. It shows that the songs of autumn are not inferior to the songs of spring. He again addresses autumn and admonishes it for lamenting over the loss of spring songs. He assures it that though the songs of spring have ended, autumn's own music is as melodious as spring's. Conversely, this stanza also introduces the feeling of sadness. The day is dying just like the autumn season. Gloomy images like 'soft-dying day', 'wailful choir' 'small gnats mourn' depict the lamentation over the loss of the bounties of autumn season. Thus the poem ends on a note giving us the realization that production and decay, joy and sorrow, are inseparable from each other. If one is there, the presence of the other is essential.

There are contradictory views about the thematic implications of this poem. It is commonly considered an evocation of sounds and sights of autumn. Critics say that it just describes the fulfillment of the season with no message for the reader. They say that the poet himself is lost in the images, exposing the season with the fullest of its charms. Kenneth Muir says, 'To Autumn expresses the essence of the season, but it draws no lesson, no overt comparison, with the human life.' (Muir, k.1969. John Keats: A reassessment. Liverpool University press, p 74) On the contrary, some other critics are of the view that if read on a deeper level, the poem is about the whole process of life. Autumn symbolizes the maturity in human and animal life. A few instances include the 'full grown lambs', mourning of the gnats, 'the light wind that lives or dies'. The next season is winter which represents decay and old age leading to the end of life.

As far as the form is concerned, this ode is written in praise of the autumn season. It consists of three compact and well-knit stanzas. The first stanza of the poem is rhymed as ABABCDEDCCE whereas the second and the third stanzas are rhymed as ABABCDECDDE.

The slight change in rhyme scheme in the second and the third stanzas shows the change in speaker's attitude towards autumn. In the first stanza, autumn is appreciated objectively while in the last two stanzas he establishes a certain level of intimacy with it as he addresses it subjectively by the words like 'thy' , 'thee' and 'thou', etc.

The poem is rich in subject matter as well as in the form. It is a masterpiece of the pictorial quality of Keats. For these reasons, it has been the most beautiful and the most favourite of all Keats' odes.

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Activity:

Q1. Describe the various characters of the season of autumn depicted by Keats in 'Ode to Autumn'.
Q2. Describe briefly the relationship between the sun and the autumn in the first stanza of 'Ode to Autumn'.
Q3. Write a note on the rhyme scheme of the poem.
Q4. Explain the following images describing their connections with each other:

i. load and bless
ii. ripeness to the core
iii. o'erbrimmed
iv. laden head

Q5. 'Sensuousness is the highest quality of Keats's poetical genius.' Discuss with reference to the poem 'Ode to Autumn'.
Q6. Discuss the symbolic meaning of 'Autumn' suggested by Keats in this poem.
Q7. Give a brief description of the music of autumn season as described by the poet.
Q8. Can you see any difference in speaker's attitude towards the autumn in second stanza? Illustrate your answer with examples.

Ode to a Nightingale

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,--
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget

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What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain--
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard

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In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:--Do I wake or sleep?

Commentary

This ode has been written in May 1819. It is one of the five great odes of Keats. It pays homage to the song of a nightingale which provides escape from the fever and fret of the mundane reality. The sweet song of the nightingale takes the speaker away from this world of pain and miseries into the world of fantasy where the song of the nightingale gives him great pleasure. The poem presents a few conflicts which are pain and pleasure, reality and imagination, transience and permanence, youth and old age, life and death, mortality and immortality, etc. The major themes of this poem are nature, transience and mortality.

Keats's friend and roommate, Charles Brown, describes the composition of this beautiful work in the following way:
'In the spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest near my house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast-table to the grass plot under a plum-tree, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books. On inquiry, I found these scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetic feeling on the song of our nightingale. The writing was not well legible; and it was difficult to arrange the stanzas on so many scraps. With his assistance I succeeded, and this was his 'Ode to a Nightingale', a poem which has been the delight of everyone.' (Walter Jackson Bate. 1979. John Keats. Harvard University Press, p 501)

The poem starts with the words ‘my heart aches’ and this sense of pain runs through the whole poem. The poem presents certain conflicts which is in fact a hallmark of Keats’

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poetry. Here he establishes a conflict between pain and pleasure. Later it is noticed that he is 'too happy' in the happiness of the nightingale. So, this pain is due to the excessive happiness on the speaker's part. He thinks of it as if he has drunk hemlock or has taken a strong narcotic that has numbed his senses with its poisonous effect.

The other important conflict is between the world of reality and the world of imagination. The speaker wants to escape the real world and join the ideal world of the nightingale. It shows Keats' tendency towards escapism. He wishes to be away from the world of reality which is full of worries, sorrows, and transience. The speaker faces a conflict at the end when he cannot decide whether he was dreaming or waking. The contrast between mortal man and immortal bird has also been described in the poem. The poem ends with the realization that pleasure cannot last and death is an inevitable part of life. Only the song of the nightingale does not die. It is immortal and eternal because one just hears the song without knowing which nightingale is singing at the moment.

This poem is full of imagery of different kinds. Gloomy imagery can be seen in the poem. Images like 'spectre-thin', 'leaden eyed despairs', 'palsy', 'easeful Death', 'faery lands forlorn', etc, show the feelings of decay, impermanence, desolation and loneliness present in the world.

Sensuousness is one of the salient features of this poem. Sensuous images like 'drowsy numbness', 'dull opiate', 'draught of vintage', etc. appeal to the reader's senses and give a lulling effect. They also have a specific appeal to the sense of taste. Tasting of flora and country green also has a great effect on the reader's sense of taste.

Some of the images appeal to the sense of vision giving it a very pleasing effect, for example, 'the blushful Hippocrene', 'beaded bubbles', 'Queen Moon', etc. The image of 'soft incense' pleases the sense of smell whereas the image of 'sunburnt mirth' influences the sense of touch. Images like 'The Provencal song', 'melodious plot', and 'murmurous haunt of flies' attract the sense of hearing of the reader. There are many images which have an effect on multiple senses, for example, the line "With beaded bubbles winking at the brim".
These 'beaded bubbles' are of the wine, the speaker has drunk and he can see it in the form of beaded bubbles. So, it appeals to both the sense of sight and sense of taste. The use of alliteration in this expression casts a smoothening effect on the reader's ear.

Agrarian imagery has also been employed in the poem. Some of the agrarian images are 'pastoral eglantine', 'white hawthorn', 'fast fading violets', etc. They add a beautifying effect in the poem depicting Keats' aestheticism.

Repetition of the word 'fade' also hints at the sad feel of the poem, giving the impression that everything fades away with the passage of time whether it is human life or the escape from the real world. Death is unavoidable and nothing can escape it. Even the song of the nightingale fades away in the end. The acceptance of death is also depicted from the fact that the nightingale's happy song turns into a 'plaintive anthem' at the end and is 'buried deep' in the next valley-glades.

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Keats also employs personification in this poem. The speaker is in love with the 'easeful Death'. The capitalization of the first letter of the word shows that death has been viewed and treated as a person in the poem. Moon has been described as the 'Queen-Moon' whereas stars are discussed as the fairies. Imagination has been described as a 'deceiving elf'. Capitalization of the first letters of words such as 'Beauty' and 'Love' also depicts the personification of these two abstract entities. Beauty has been portrayed as a beautiful woman whose beauty is short-lived and love stands for a lover who praises her beauty but cannot do so for long as it is subject to transition.

The poem makes many references to classical mythology. In the first stanza, reference to the river 'Lethe' has been made. In Greek mythology, Lethe is a river in Hades from which dead persons are forced to drink water so that they may forget everything said and done during their life span. Then the nightingale has been personified as the 'Dryad' which is a reference towards a mythical tree 'nymph' that protects the forest and is peaceful by nature.

In the second stanza, the speaker uses the reference of the 'blushful Hippocrene'. It has been used as a metaphor for red wine which the speaker has drunk. In Greek mythology, Hippocrene is a fountain of the Muses on mount Helicon and is therefore, supposed to be a source of poetic inspiration. In the fourth stanza, it is seen that the speaker refers to 'Bacchus and his pards'. Bacchus is the Roman god of wine which is carried by a chariot drawn by the leopards. The speaker rejects the idea of reaching to the nightingale through the chariot of Bacchus. Instead of that, he uses the invisible wings of poetry to do so. In the seventh stanza, reference to the homesick Ruth has been employed. She too heard the music of the nightingale which pleased her sad heart.

Keats' negative capability is also at work in this poem. It is a well-known feature of Keats' poetry. It has the potential to cut him off from the real world temporarily. It also allows him to represent the bird while wishing strongly to lose his own identity and join the world of the nightingale. The speaker envies the nightingale for its unawareness of the fever and fret of human life. Using the wings of his poetry, he wants to fly with the nightingale to the world of fancy so that he may save himself from the worries and cares of this world.

This poem consists of eight stanzas. Like most of Keatsian odes, it is written in ten-line stanzas. On the other hand, it differs from the other Keatsian odes as the whole poem follows the same rhyme scheme whereas other odes follow a varying rhyme scheme especially in the last lines. The rhyme scheme of each stanza is ABABCDECDE.

The poem forms an organic whole. All the stanzas are connected to each other very skillfully which adds to the poetic beauty of the poem. The reader too is lost in the ideal world of the nightingale with the speaker and shares his experience. On the whole, it is a perfect specimen of art which gives the reader joy and pleasure along with the realization of the bitter realities of life.

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Activity:

Q1. Discuss the conflicts found in the poem 'Ode to a Nightingale'.
Q2. Explain the importance of the use of 'classical references' in this poem.
Q3. Bring out the salient features of Keats' poetry found in 'Ode to a Nightingale'.
Q4. Discuss the negative capability of Keats with reference to the poem 'Ode to a Nightingale'.
Q5. Explain the following images:

i. easeful Death
ii. Bacchus and his pards
iii. plaintive anthem

Q6. Write in few words your understanding of the expression 'faery lands forlorn'.
Q7. Write a brief note on personification employed in the poem.
Q8. Write a note on the idea of death prevalent in 'Ode to a Nightingale'.
Q9.How do you connect the images 'light-wingèd Dryad' and 'viewless wings of Poesy' with each other?

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Lesson 13

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
(1792 – 1822)

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) holds an important and significant place among the romantic poets of the 19th Century. He was born on 4 August 1792, in Horsham, England and was the eldest of the seven children of Elizabeth Pilfold and Timothy Shelley. Shelly was not happy with the conventional environment and institutes, where his idealism and controversial philosophies were not growing fully. He was in fact a rebel by nature and was expelled from school for expressing his atheistic views.

Shelly was influenced by William Wordsworth to write poetry including Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem (1813). Shelly participated in various political reform activities. For Shelly, Godwin was a primary source of inspiration for shaping the radical outlook of his poetry. His foremost works including 'Prometheus' 'Unbound', 'Adonais', 'The Revolt of Islam', and 'The Triumph of Life', were recognized as the leading expressions of the radical thought written during the Romantic age, while his odes and short lyrics are often considered among the greatest in the English literature. In addition, his essay 'A Defence of Poetry' is highly valued as a statement on the moral importance of poetry and of poets, whom he calls "the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

Shelly's undying belief in reforms, the equality of sexes, and the power of love and imagination are frequently expressed in his poetry. Critics declare Shelly the ideal dramatist and poet. He always wished to lighten up the candle of freedom and justice and wanted to establish such a society which is free from prejudice and violence. In this regard, he was impressed by French writers Rousseau and Voltaire.

Shelly was not acknowledged during his life time as he was thought to be misguided or even depraved genius. Nevertheless, he was admired by his contemporary poets. His style, philosophy and complex themes start gaining weigh in late 1930s. Critics have generally focused on his imagery, use of language, and technical achievements in his writing style.

Karl Marx, George Bernard Shaw, Mohan Das Karm Chand Gandhi were the great admirers of Shelley's philosophy. Gandhi often used to quote from 'Mask of Anarchy' in his speeches. For his revolutionary ideas; Shelly became so famous that it is written about his poetry:

"Shelley is as sacred as the Bible." (Jiddu. Krishanmurti).

Shelley's significance in English literature is widely acknowledged even today.

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Ode to the West Wind

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odors plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

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III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

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Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawake Ned earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Commentary

"Ode to the West Wind" is a lyric poem. This is considered to be one of the most celebrated works of Shelly. It has a universal appeal for all the humanity. This poem has been written during the autumn of 1819, in the western Italy. In his poem, 'Ode to the West Wind', Shelley shows his maturity in composition, and merges lots of ideas in a single poem.

This is a poem of deep despair, unyielding hope as well as vivid imagery. The poet straightforwardly talks about death, corpses and destruction as metaphors for autumn.

In the very first stanza, the west wind appears as a "breath of autumn's being"—to spread the dead leaves. Shelley compares the west wind and leaves to a magician and his ghosts. The phrase "Pestilence-stricken multitude" apparently refers to the leaves, which are decaying on the ground but symbolically it refers to the entire human society, which the poet thinks, is in a state of disintegration.

Here, the poet uses two similes i.e., leaves like ghosts and seeds like corpses in their beds without life, and the wind plays its part to activate them towards life. The Wind is performing the dual function of a destroyer and of a preserver.

In the second stanza, the comparison of clouds is being made with the leaves and the things associated with the phenomenon of rain and lightening. The lightening in the dark atmosphere of rain is being compared to the locks of a drunken woman:

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Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
Of some fierce Maenad;

In the third stanza, the west wind overwhelms both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic and the surrounding areas. The Mediterranean has been personified, it is stirred up by the wind, and even the old places appear as if they are trembling due to the terrific motion of the waves. This may be taken as allusions of Shelley's hope for political change. Old palaces and towers symbolize corrupt, deteriorated, old order and institutions. The poet is of the view that all these should be shattered in order to make way for a new beginning.

In the first three stanzas, Shelley tries to introduce the west wind and its manifestations in various forms. He tries to prove it as a tool for bringing change and his words are like an invocation to the wind 'O hear!' But in the fourth stanza, his feelings of association touch the climax and he comes side by side with the west wind.

He compares himself with a dead leaf, a swift cloud and a wave to join the west wind to feel like it and share its power for change. He is longing from his boyhood to go with the wind to relieve him but this is not possible, so he is asking the wind to lift him up as it lifts a wave, a leave, a cloud.

In the fifth stanza, the poet is in direct relation to the wind again. He uses words creating musical sounds like 'un-extinguished hearth', 'unawakened Earth'. He talks to the wind in a monologue type discussion that he has not the resources or powers to spread his message. He wishes to use the power of the wind to remove the worries and problems of the world and to work for the betterment of humanity. At the end of the poem, he is giving a very powerful message to all mankind through his immortal lines of unyielding hope in the face of hardships, worse conditions and abnormal circumstances:

'Be through my lips to unawakened Earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?'

'The Ode to the West Wind' consists of five sonnets, which again consist of four triplets and a final couplet, like in the English sonnet. Each sonnet uses the terza rima that is triplets with the rhyme scheme ABA BCB CDC DED.

Although this poem seems to be about nature (with abundant imagery of wind, trees, leaves, water, clouds, and so on), yet it describes the role of the poet as an agent of political and moral change as Shelley wrote in his "Defence of Poetry": "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

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Activity:
Answer the following questions:

Q1. Define the term 'lyric poem'.
Q2. What is the rhyming scheme of the poem?
Q3. Search out the similes present in the poem.
Q4. Describe the thematic aspects of the poem "Ode to the West Wind".

To the Skylark

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert -
That from Heaven or near it
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest,
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run,
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight -

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud

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The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see,
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody: -

Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aërial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingéd thieves:

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers -
All that ever was
Joyous and clear and fresh - thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,

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Matched with thine would be all
but an empty vaunt -
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest, but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet, if we could scorn
Hate and pride and fear,
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know;
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

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Commentary

“To the Skylark" is a lyrical poem by P.B. Shelley, which reveals Shelley’s spirit of balance, order and collaboration in his poetry. This poem illustrates that humanity can take shelter in nature even if all other options are closed. The Skylark may be taken here as a symbol of nature as its purity castes an overwhelming effect on the mortal beings.

The poem may be taken as the symbolic representation of Shelley’s fiery spirit. He is often called a revolutionary poet. The skylark can be taken as an embodiment of the zeal and reactionary spirit that deny each and every institution of the established norms, prevalent at that time. One can easily relate the link between the two.

The melodies of the skylark surpass the mortal music which in other words can be taken as the poet’s personal wish to spread his “melodious words” to the every corner of the world. The same notion was found in another ode “Ode to the West Wind” in which he asks the west wind to carry his thoughts far away. But here is something more, the skylark has been given the status of an immortal being that sings in happy notes, not only it sings but also it does not give any heed to the sadness and troubles of humanity. The bird itself is not mere a “winged mortal creature”, rather it is a “spirit”, “a poet hidden in the light of thought”.

The poet is envious of the freedom of the bird which can fly with liberty and his presence can be seen every where. He compares the bird with other things but at the end he proves that no object has any similarity with the skylark. He tries to invoke the philosophical questions through the bird. The description of the bird reminds the lines from ‘Ode to the Grecian Urn’ about the permanent beauty.

At this point, a comparison can be drawn between Keats’s Nightingale and Shelley’s Skylark. Both are eternal, both convey a message to humanity of being something more than mankind is. The slight difference between the two is that the nightingale is a bird of darkness that appears only in darkness, while the skylark flies up and up into the “sun gold sky” and from there sings in a full throat, scorning the shattered beliefs and norms of the disillusioned humanity. Its melodies are rapturous, having unbeatable music with no error. Having acquainted himself with this, he feels that his words will assume the same quality. The fiery, passionate and revolutionary words will teach humanity to shed the shackles which have imprisoned them through ages.

The speaker says that the skylark is a happy spirit rather than a mere “winged creature” and is more near to nature than the mortal beings are. It sings in “full throated ease” while it goes up into the sky, the sound and melody is unsurpassed. In the golden light of the sun, it flies as an embodiment of joy. The melodious voice of the bird can be heard even if the sight is lost just like the moonbeams can be felt even if it is out of sight. As the moon suddenly appears behind a cloud and lights the sky and earth, in the same manner the melodies of the bird can be heard in both.

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The speaker claims that none can guess the origin of the skylark but the only thing one can know is that it pours out more sweet songs than rainbow cloud pour water. The bird is then compared to a poet who guides humanity and to a lonely maiden in a place, who soothes and comforts by singing to herself. A comparison is then made by the speaker, of the skylark, to a golden glow worm and a rose.

The speaker requests the bird to tell him the secret of its divine music, because this music is superior to any music created in this world. The speaker gives the bird the status of being free from the sad pangs of love and of having the knowledge of eternity.

Mankind cannot enjoy happiness without the thoughts of sadness as they have a limited vision, but the skylark is an exception. It does not give any heed to these emotions. The speaker requests at the end to the skylark to give him at least half of his gladness, so that he can also become one with the bird.

The diction of the poem is simple. One can easily comprehend the main idea. The poem is divided into twenty one stanzas, each having five lines; the first four lines are metered in trochaic trimeter, the fifth in iambic hexameter. The rhyme scheme of each stanza is ABABB.

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

Q1. Describe the theme of the poem in your own words.
Q2. Explain the significance of the skylark with reference to the poem "To the Skylark".
Q3. Do you find any connection between the two poems, 'Ode to the West Wind' and 'To the Skylark'?
Q4. Write a short note on the Romantic aspects of the poem.
Q5. Write a short paragraph on the use of similes in 'To the Skylark'.

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Lesson 14

ROBERT BROWNING
(1812 -1889)

Robert Browning (7 May 1812 – 12 December 1889) was an English poet and playwright whose mastery of dramatic verse, especially dramatic monologues, made him one of the foremost Victorian poets. Robert Browning was born in South London. He was the first and extremely brilliant child of Robert and Sarah Anna Browning. At the age of fourteen, he learnt Latin, Greek, French and Italian. He got most of his education at home with the help of family library. Browning started his writing career in 1835; his first book on poetry was "Paracelsus". This book is considered as the starting point of his literary career and his life of literature.

After starting his literary career, Browning began to get great acquaintance with the most influential literary figures of that age like William Macready, who encouraged Browning to write for stage and Percy Bysshe Shelley, whose radicalism urged a rethinking of modern society in him. However, Browning's earliest works garnered him some negative attention for the expression of strong sensations and the use of morbid tone. Thus for a time, he set poetry aside to work on plays, finding in the fictional world an apt space for experimentation and development as a creative mind. Most of the plays did not find success, and Browning turned back again to verse.

The hallmark of Browning's poetry is dramatic monologue, in which the lyrics not only convey the settings and actions but also reveal the speaker's character. This quality sometimes led his poetry to misjudgment in his own times. Browning wrote a long poem 'Sordello' in 1940. He faced criticism by the critics due to the presence of obscurity in this poem. During that period, he met with Elizabeth Barrett and got married. This span of life was full of creativity for both. The publication of his long narrative poem "The King and the Book" brought a great success and worldwide fame for him.

His use of irony, his preference for indirect criticism rather than obvious moralizing, extensive learning and use of conversational rhythms have secured his reputation as the great poet of the 20th Century. He is one of the few Victorian poets who remained relevant to the modernist. Browning died in 1889 and was buried in poet's corner in West Minister Abbey.

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My Last Duchess

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)

And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,

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—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed

At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Commentary

"My last Duchess", written in 1842, is a historical poem in which the poet has described the whole picture of a specific era through the speech of the Duke of Ferrara, who lived in the16th century. The Duke is the speaker of the poem, and he is entertaining an emissary; who is send by his master to negotiate the dowry for the marriage of his daughter. This thing reveals Browning's interest in social and political issues. Apparently this poem seems to be a negotiation between two noblemen; here the Duke shows a masterpiece of a painter which was the painting of his ex-wife to the emissary. The poem starts with these lines:

That's my last duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive call
That piece a wonder,

By describing this, the Duke apparently wants to show that the portrait is a 'wonder' in the sense that the duchess on the portrait seems alive, and is smiling on the Duke. Only he can see her, because he has put a curtain on the wall which was fixed for the Duke. The element of jealously can be found as the further lines show that:

She liked what ever, she looked.
Ow, and her looks went every where

The portrait depicts a wonder for the duke because the duchess eyes are fixed only on him, while in her life she was in the habit of looking at every beautiful and charming thing. Here the theme of jealousy and possessiveness is described, because the duke was jealous of the behavior of the Duchess with others. Then further, he explains the

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characteristics of the Duchess which shows that she was kind hearted and full of joy lady, but the irony is that these characteristics led her towards her death.

I gave commands, than all similes stopped together; there she stands as if alive.

Here commands can be the orders of killing the Duchess, because he says that her smiles were for everyone. This thing also indicates that she might have affairs with other men, the Duke can not bear this, and he orders to kill her. Now the smiles are fixed only for the Duke and this thing is a source of happiness and triumph for him.

The Duke used to consider his wife as a mere object, a possession, whose only purpose is to please him. This obsession is also revealed through the diction of the poem, like there is frequent use of the possessive pronoun "my". The duke's fixation looks have the sense of possessiveness related to his wife. This phenomenon is also intensifying the theme of jealousy and possessive mindedness; it also proves the inventive skill of the poet while handling the subject matter in an accomplished way.

In the last lines of the poem, the Duke points to another art of the object:

"Neptune though taming a sea horse"

Here, the poet has given the mythical reference to 'Neptune', the Roman God of the sea, whose chariot is often shown pulled by the sea horses. Here the Duke considers himself as Neptune and the sea horse as the Duchess. This reference shows Browning's concern with the art and the architecture. The Duke's relation to this portrait shows his nature, he has killed his wife but like Neptune he wants to put his commands on the earth.

The poet has adopted the technique of dramatic monologue which allows the poet to put the distance between him and his characters in the poem. Through this technique, he presents the main character of the poem in front of the reader, and leaves it up to the reader to judge weather he is a kind or vicious person. Although the reader cannot completely understand the personality and the traits of the Duke, but they do realize that he is a vicious person.

This poem is a psychological representation of a character i.e., the Duke, who is confessing about the murder of his wife, but he never expresses his guilty in clear words. It is the trait of the Browning's characters, that they are crafty, intelligent and argumentative.

The main theme of the poem is 'women' as a mere object treated by the lords and the dukes in the 16th century. Many lines in the poem show that the Duke had treated his wife like a thing not as a human. The theme of love is also discussed beautifully, which also deepens the theme of woman merely as an object, because the Duke's love was not for the woman but for the painting.

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Another important aspect of the poem is the arrogance of the duke, which is shown through the words of the Duke, as he says, 'I choose…' This shows his haughty and superior attitude. The idea of appearance and reality is also discussed by the poet inventively. Apparently this poem seems to be the negotiation between two persons at the issue of the marriage, and the Duke's love with Duchess, but at the deeper level, it is a terrible story of ruthless power. The theme of power, influence, marriage, aristocracy and death is discussed in a beautiful way.

The diction of the poem is very conversational and style is narrative. The language of the poem justifies the subject matter of the poem. Some archaic words are also used by the writer; this gives a beautiful touch to the poem. Browning has used a simple rhyme scheme to convey various characteristics of the speaker and the situation. The poem is written in iambic pentameter with AA BB rhyme scheme.

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

Q1. Identify the speaker of the poem.
Q2. Why doesn't the Duke tell the Duchess directly that her behavior irritates him?
Q3. Which actions of the Duchess make the Duke so wild?
Q4. Identify the significance of the portrait of the Duchess, painted on the wall.
Q5. What does "spot of joy" symbolize in the line 21of the poem?
Q6. How will you define the theme of the poem?
Q7. Is there any definite physical and geographical setting of the poem? If any? Discuss.
Q8. Why does the poet give reference to two famous people i.e. "Frà Pandolf" and "Claus of Innsbruck" in the poem?
Q9. What does "Claus of Innsbruck" symbolize?

Love in a Life
(1855)

I
Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her,
Next time, herself! -not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew, -
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II

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Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune -
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest, -who cares?
But 'tis twilight, you see, -with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

Commentary

'Love in a Life' by Robert Browning is published in Men and Women, Volume I (1855), which, at first glance, talks about love as a key subject. The poem describes how the poet lives in the shadow of his love. The poem depicts an internal conflict of the poet to try and get the girl he loves i.e. a struggle between his heart and his mind.

Throughout this poem, Browning elaborates the search of the girl for whom his delicate feelings and emotions are everlasting. He depicts his search for the love by using imagery of a house. But parallel to this search, the search for knowledge, science and discovery is also implied, therefore, Browning in a very remarkable way, hides the ideas of the new explorers and scientists behind the image of the love.

The poet uses the image of searching from the very first line 'Room after room'. Moreover, in the following line he uses the word 'hunt' as a verb containing the meaning of searching. He is making utmost effort to search the love of his beloved in every corner of house. The verb "hunt" also stands for chasing animals, so it can be related to slaves. Infact, Browning as usual sets an ambiguous and complicated scene for the reader, a scene which can have two ways of interpretation. When we come to the next verb 'inhabit', this is related to animals living in an area or place.

As the poem moves forward, the fourth line has a sense of encouraging the reader to enhance individual knowledge, which was undoubtedly typical during the Victorian Age among Browning's acquaintances.

'Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her…'

As for as the following line,
'Next time, herself! -not the trouble behind her...'

It is still fostering the same idea of giving emphasis on the importance of science and knowledge, but this time the poet tries to encourage the reader, not to be afraid of these problems and various difficulties.

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Through the image of love Browning deals with the ideas of development, together with the ideas of evolution and natural laws. Therefore, in the last two lines of the first stanza he uses a metaphor to exemplify the troubles of the lover. But at the same time he is emphasizing the idea of leaving behind the closed religious explanations to the mysteries of life. Browning is a very complex figure and makes his poetry ambiguous and complicated.

This poem is a good representation of Browning's typical style of presenting things in an ambiguous and complicated way, but to some extent this poem might be appreciated for its unique philosophical style that can be interpreted in a simple and understandable way.

In the second stanza, the poet continues with the same twofold explanation of his search i.e. love and science. Here probably the most interesting lines, because of its clarity, are the three last ones. Line 13:
'Spend my whole day in the quest, -who cares?'
It invites the reader to think that there is never sufficient time spend on science. He is motivating the reader to search as there is always a new thing to discover.
But the best verse of the poem is the last one as the double image that it builds is very striking and apt.
"But 'tis twilight, you see, -with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!"

Through these last lines, the double meaning of probing and searching is evident. The use of verbs such as 'explore' or the image of a lot of things and places to be searched through, make reference to the social events and the progress which were taking place at the time. But, at the same time, these lines are speaking about love.

The poem depicts the poet's capacity to reflect a love story and the needs of his society at the same time in an intelligent way. 'Love in a Life' is a poem which can be perfectly interpreted in many ways.

The title of the poem is highly explicatory as it presents 'love' as something that can or cannot be part of life. Moreover, to emphasize such possibility in a life, the poet has used the literary device of alliteration; he uses the same liquid sound at the beginning of the two lexical items that make up the title (love, life). The poem is divided into two stanzas and it does not follow any regular metre. However, the structure of the first stanza is almost identical to the second one. The rhyme scheme is disjointed and uncomfortable which reinforces that the speaker is disjointed mentally. The poet is showing his firm determination to find the love his beloved no matter what she wants. After reading this poem, it can be said that this is a short poem by Browning but carries multidimensional explanations.

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

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Q1. What does the title of the poem signify?
Q2. Identify the speaker of the poem?
Q3. What is the poet searching for and why?
Q4. Is the speaker satisfied with this game of love?
Q5. What metaphor does the poet use in the first stanza of the poem?
Q6. What implied message does the poem convey through the image of love?
Q7. What does "with such suites to explore" symbolize?
Q8. What are the two levels on which the poem can be interpreted?

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Lesson 15

ROBERT FROST
(1874 –1963)

"I had a lover's quarrel with the world."

(Robert Frost)

Robert Frost was born in San Francisco, California on 26th March, 1874. Frost acquired his High School education from Dartmouth College. He attended Harvard University from 1897 to 1899, but withdrew from the university without receiving Degree. Later, he received an honorary degree from Harvard University.

Frost is one of the most popular and frequently quoted poets of the English literature. Frost was privileged during his lifetime for his marvelous works; he also received four Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry**.**

Although the Pastoral element is predominant and frequent in Frost's poems, yet he is a modern poet as his poetry has encompassed the consciousness of the issues and problems faced by the Modern man due to science and its latest technologies.

Frost's poetry depicts the degeneration of values in the modern time period as well as the cynicism of the modern time man in symbolical and metaphysical terms. The usual subjects of his poems are loneliness, frustrations, qualms and disappointments, which are the gifts of modern life. Frost considers that misery of the modern man is because of his being distanced away from nature.

Frost through the use of pastoral technique comments on the issues of the modern world, his realistic treatment of Nature, his implementation of symbolic and metaphysical techniques, and the consciousness of the problems of the modern society in his poetry, fairly entitle him to be considered as a Modern Poet.

Frost's poems mostly discuss the relation of man with the universe. Man's environment as viewed by Frost is quite apathetic, neither intimidating nor compassionate. In comparison to the enormity of the universe, man is alone and weak. That view of "man on earth confronting the total universe" is inexorably associated with certain themes in Frost's poetry. Basically all of Frost's poems describe the theme of human limitations.

Theme of extinction or death can also be viewed among the major themes of Frost's poetry. In many of his poems, Frost mentions "sleep" which is an associated connotation for death. 'Affirmation' is also a subject matter of his certain poems. Frost eventually considers man responsible for making the most of his life situations. Considering man's limitations, he yet desires man to explore and seek knowledge and truth. He wants man to acquire the skill of accepting things and limitations as it is optimistically and gladly.

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Frost presented a reading of his poetry at the inauguration of the President John F. Kennedy on January 20, 1961. He died on January 29th, 1963. He is buried at the Old Bennington Cemetery in Bennington, Vermont.

"**I don't go to church, but I look in the window."**

(Robert Frost)

The Road not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I marked the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
and that has made all the difference.

Commentary

The setting of the poem is pastoral as the speaker is standing in woods and observing the fork in the road. The fork is leading to two secondary minor paths or roads having different directions. These two roads are equally shabby and covered with leaves. The speaker chooses one road and assures himself that he will consider the other road on another day, although in his heart he is aware that he will not get an opportunity to do so.

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The Poet confesses that in future he will reconstruct the scene but with a slight difference, as he claims that he will take the road which is less-traveled.

The first stanza of the poem tells us about a traveler who reaches to a fork on a road, in a "yellow wood" and desires to travel both routes. Then he realizes that having a thought of traveling both roads is quite unrealistic, so he discards that idea.

The second stanza of the poem presents the inner thoughts of the traveler, he infers that the other road is perhaps much well maintained, grassy and "wanted wear" involving that this path is "less traveled by". Next moment he himself negates his inference by realizing that this road is traveled by majority of people.

In the third and the fourth stanza of the poem, the poet decides to travel that more traveled path for some other day, which may or may not come. In the end, the poet decides to travel the road which is less traveled and that decision makes all the difference, as compare to the general people who select more traveled path for them.

The poem contains a universal dilemma of "making correct decisions at correct time" experienced by human beings literally as well as figuratively in their entire life. The metaphors, "Paths in the woods and forks in roads" used in poem, are ancient and deep rooted metaphors for calamities, options and choices which we have to make in our lives. The metaphor of "Identical forks" specifically symbolizes the centre of free will and fate.

The tone of the poem is quite colloquial. The Poet depicts uncertainty and doubts, and also negates them throughout the poem. A colloquial expressiveness in this poem is shown by Frost with expressions like '*having perhaps, Though as for that, really about'.* Frost constructs a mood of changing ideas and thoughts and of re-consideration within the poem. It appears as if the speaker is in conversation with himself.

Newman quotes Frost, saying: "You can go along over these rhymes just as if you didn't know that they were there."

"The Road Not taken" has an "ABAAB" pattern rhyme scheme. The general effect of the rhyme scheme in this poem is corresponding to that of the Petrarchan sonnet.

The repetition of accented vowel sounds is quite prominent throughout the poem, like "I took the one less traveled by" where "I" and "by" produce a rhyming pattern. The rhyming occurs frequently at the end of stanzas as well as at lines, which helps us to continue through each line and stanza fluently and melodiously.

The metaphoric theme of the poem indicates the decisive choices people must make on the road of life.

The main theme of the poem is that one should not be afraid of taking a chance. The Poem also focuses upon the themes of not to follow the crowd blindly, opt for practicing novel things in life and to show steadfastness for anything in which we truly believe. In

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the poem, the speaker "took the one (road) less traveled by, and that has made all the difference" so, the poet is telling the reader that one should not be afraid of taking chances, trying fresh ideas, opting for some different things in life which have not been adopted by crowd.

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

Q1. How does Robert Frost use form, rhyme scheme and meter to convey meaning?
Q2. What is the symbol of 'Road' in this poem?
Q3. What is the setting and tone of the poem "The Road not taken"?
Q4. Do you think Frost intended the *y* in *yellow* (line 1) to suggest the diverging roads?
Q5. What is meant by "undergrowth"?
Q6. Does curiosity motivate the speaker when he makes his choice?
Q7. Write a paragraph about a time when you have chosen a less-traveled road.
Q8. Write a paragraph to interpret the last line of the poem.

Birches

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
Ice-storms do that. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust--
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
(Now am I free to be poetical?)

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I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows--
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate willfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

Commentary

Although the title of the poem is “Birches,” yet the subject is birch “swinging”. The poem ‘Birches’ reflects the scientific justification of the appearance of the birches in three parts. The first section is of the natural customs of how a branch would bend and break because of weather.

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The second section illustrates how the branches would bend because of a little boy swinging on them and riding them down time and again, until he makes the stiffness out of these branches.

In the third section, Frost expresses how the tree gets toward heaven and brings back his old childhood memories.

The poem describes the activities and efforts of little boy who without caring about the consequences just swings on birches care freely. When the poet sees bent birch trees, he thinks that the bents are because of boy's" swinging" on them. He is also aware that they are, in fact, by ice storms. Yet he wants to stick to his vision of a boy climbing a tree and then swinging at the tree's crest to the ground. Poet himself was in habit of doing same activities in his childhood, and he gets lost in the reverie of his past days. He compares birch swinging to getting "away from the earth awhile" and then coming back.

The poem is full of imagination; escape from present time, from the bitter truth and harsh realities of life. Here the 'tree' is a symbol of life, deep rooted in the ground of time. When a person climbs on that tree he may not have complete connection with earth. For climbing and leaping down accurately from this tree of life one needs to have lot of courage and experience as one cannot come back, if one goes in the wrong direction in one's life. Hence a person trailing up and down the birch is one that is "good both going and coming back." The "Truth" of the ice storm, symbolizing harsh truth and realities of life, does not hinder for long time period as the poet gazes at bent trees and envision another truth that is a guideline for how to live well.

The poem is a blank verse, with frequent variations on the existing iambic foot. In this poem there are 59 lines of blank verse, or unrhymed iambic pentameter portraying the frequent use of symbolism, metaphors and alliteration. The symbol of 'birch trees' could be an emblem of human lives. It shows that when we are young, we are tall, strong, and straight, but with the passing years we become bent and weary by experience.

The poem contains a great deal of orientational metaphor that portrays difficult times. Poet being a realist believes that it's necessary for things to break down. According to Frost, "All metaphor breaks down somewhere".

The Setting of the poem is typically like the other poems of Frost, the rural scenery of the poem suggests that it is set in New England. "Birches" is an exceedingly pictorial illustration. In "Birches" the natural objects like tree, ice crystal and pathless wood provide confirmation of the speaker's rusticity.

Although the poem is quite unembellished in language yet each line contains different themes and interpretations in it. A more deeper and allegorical connotation to "Birches" is its theme of life and death. The poem illustrates the author's ability to take what seems to be the mundane activities of life and turn it into something that holds a deeper

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meaning. The Poem also suggests that there are times when we would like to go away from earth for a while (aspiring to get escape from something “Larger”), but we manage to safely control the situation by recognizing that like birches who bear so much climbing but comes to its original position, we human also maintain to come back to our original home.

Activity:

Answer the following questions:

Q1. Write the theme of the poem.
Q2. What is the primary rhetorical purpose of the second person pronoun "you" in this poem?
Q3. What is the primary purpose of the use of the personal pronoun in three consecutive lines, beginning with "So was I once myself a swinger of birches"?
Q4. What is the primary effect of repeating the phrase "a swinger of birches" in the middle and at the end of the poem?
Q5. Explain the literary devices that are used in the poem “Birches”.

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