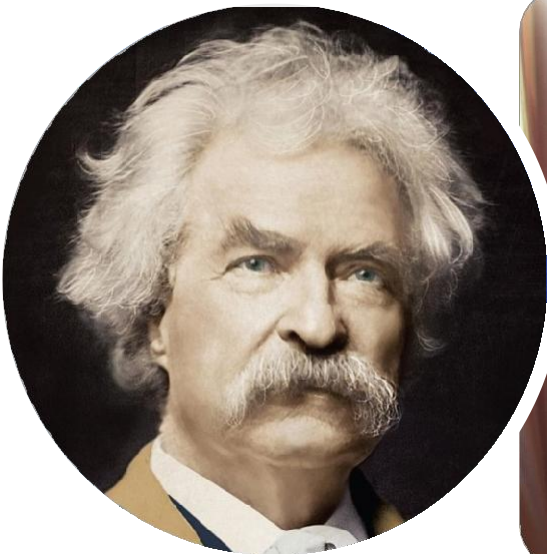


B.A. English (Hons.) ENMJ 402/ENGM204/ENGS204 Study of Short Story



Message for the Students

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University is the only state Open University, established by the Government of Gujarat by the Act No. 14 of 1994 passed by the Gujarat State Legislature; in the memory of the creator of Indian Constitution and Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. We stand at the seventh position in terms of establishment of the Open Universities in the country. The University provides more than 70 courses including various Certificates, Diplomas, UG, PG, as well as Doctoral degree, to strengthen Higher Education across the state.



On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar, the Gujarat government secured a quiet place with the latest convenience for University, and erected a building with all the modern amenities named 'Jyotirmay' Parisar. The Board of Management of the University has greatly contributed to the making of the Univer-sity and will continue to this by all the means.

Education is the perceived capital investment. Education can contribute more to improving the quality of the people. Here I remember the educational philosophy laid down by Shri. Swami Vivekananda:

"We want the education by which, the character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expand and by which one can stand on one's own feet".

In order to provide students with qualitative, skill and life-oriented education at their threshold, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University is dedicated to this very manifestation of education. The university is incessantly working to provide higher education to the wider mass across the state of Gujarat and prepare them to face day to day challenges and lead their lives with all the capacity for the upliftment of the society in general and the nation in particular.

The university, following the core motto "स्वाध्यायः परमं तपः" does believe in offering enriched curriculum to the student. The university has come up with lucid material for the better understanding of the students in their concerned subjects. With this, the university has widened scope for those students who are not able to continue with their education in regular/conventional mode. In every subject a dedicated team for Self-Learning Material, comprising of Programme advisory committee members, content writers and content and language reviewers, has been formed to cater the needs of the students.

Matching with the pace of the digital world, the university has its own digital platform Omkar-e to provide education through ICT. Very soon, the University going to offer new online Certificate and Diploma programmes on various subjects like Yoga, Naturopathy, and Indian Classical Dance etc. would be available as elective also.

With all these efforts, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University is in the process of being core centre of Knowledge and Education and we invite you to join hands to this pious *Yajna* and bring the dreams of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar of Harmonious Society come true.

Prof. (Dr.) Ami Upadhyay

Vice Chancellor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University

Ahmedabad

Block

1

UNIT 1

Introduction to The Form of Short Story

UNIT 2

'The Cask of Amontillado' Edgar Allan Poe

UNIT 3

'The Gift of Magi' by O. Henry

UNIT 4

'The Happy Prince' by Oscar Wilde

UNIT 5

'The Bet' by Anton Chekhov

UNIT 6

'The Night Train at Deoli' by Ruskin Bond

Editor

Prof. (Dr.) Ami Upadhyay

Vice Chancellor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

Programme Advisory Committee

Prof. (Dr.) Ami Upadhyay

Vice Chancellor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

Prof. (Dr.) Kamal Mehta

Saurashtra University, Rajkot

Prof. (Dr.) Darshna Trivedi

Gujarat University, Ahmedabad

Prof. (Dr.) Hetal Patel

HNGU, Patan

Dr. Rajendra Mandalia

Head, Sardar Patel University, V.V.Nagar

Reviewers

Prof. (Dr.) Ami Upadhyay

Vice Chancellor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

Dr. Dushyant Nimavat

Gujarat University, Ahmedabad

Content Writers

Dr. Vishal Bhadani

Dr. Imran Khan

Dr. Shabnam Lohani

Dr. Bhautik Limbani

Programme Coordinator

Dr. Binny Vaghela

Assistant Professor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

Publisher

Dr. Bhavin Trivedi

Registrar (I/c), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

ISBN : 978-93-91468-55-2

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph or any other means without permission in writing from Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad.



ROLE OF SELF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL IN DISTANCE LEARNING

The need to plan effective instruction is imperative for a successful distance teaching repertoire. This is due to the fact that the instructional designer, the tutor, the author (s) and the student are often separated by distance and may never meet in person. This is an increasingly common scenario in distance education instruction. As much as possible, teaching by distance should stimulate the student's intellectual involvement and contain all the necessary learning instructional activities that are capable of guiding the student through the course objectives. Therefore, the course / self-instructional material are completely equipped with everything that the syllabus prescribes.

To ensure effective instruction, a number of instructional design ideas are used and these help students to acquire knowledge, intellectual skills, motor skills and necessary attitudinal changes. In this respect, students' assessment and course evaluation are incorporated in the text.

The nature of instructional activities used in distance education self- instructional materials depends on the domain of learning that they reinforce in the text, that is, the cognitive, psychomotor and affective. These are further interpreted in the acquisition of knowledge, intellectual skills and motor skills. Students may be encouraged to gain, apply and communicate (orally or in writing) the knowledge acquired. Intellectual- skills objectives may be met by designing instructions that make use of students' prior knowledge and experiences in the discourse as the foundation on which newly acquired knowledge is built.

The provision of exercises in the form of assignments, projects and tutorial feedback is necessary. Instructional activities that teach motor skills need to be graphically demonstrated and the correct practices provided during tutorials. Instructional activities for inculcating change in attitude and behavior should create interest and demonstrate need and benefits gained by adopting the required change. Information on the adoption and procedures for practice of new attitudes may then be introduced.

Teaching and learning at a distance eliminates interactive communication cues, such as pauses, intonation and gestures, associated with the face-to-face method of teaching. This is particularly so with the exclusive use of print media. Instructional activities built into the instructional repertoire provide this missing interaction between the student and the teacher. Therefore, the use of instructional activities to affect better distance teaching is not optional, but mandatory.

Our team of successful writers and authors has tried to reduce this.

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

Divide and to bring this Self Instructional Material as the best teaching and communication tool. Instructional activities are varied in order to assess the different facets of the domains of learning.

Distance education teaching repertoire involves extensive use of self- instructional materials, be they print or otherwise. These materials are designed to achieve certain pre-determined learning outcomes, namely goals and objectives that are contained in an instructional plan. Since the teaching process is affected over a distance, there is need to ensure that students actively participate in their learning by performing specific tasks that help them to understand the relevant concepts. Therefore, a set of exercises is built into the teaching repertoire in order to link what students and tutors do in the framework of the course outline. These could be in the form of students' assignments, a research project or a science practical exercise. Examples of instructional activities in distance education are too numerous to list. Instructional activities, when used in this context, help to motivate students, guide and measure students' performance (continuous assessment)



PREFACE

We have put in lots of hard work to make this book as user-friendly as possible, but we have not sacrificed quality. Experts were involved in preparing the materials. However, concepts are explained in easy language for you. We have included many tables and examples for easy understanding.

We sincerely hope this book will help you in every way you expect. All the best for your studies from our team!



INTRODUCTION TO THE FORM OF SHORT STORY

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 What is a Short Story?
- 1.3 Components of a Short Story
 - 1.3.1 Character
 - 1.3.2 Setting
 - 1.3.3 Plot
 - 1.3.4 Conflict
 - 1.3.5 Theme
 - 1.3.6 Point of View
- 1.4 Brief Historical Background of Short Stories
- 1.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6 Key Words
- 1.7 Books Suggested

Answers

1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall

- Understand the form of a short story
- Discuss the major **components** of a short story with its historical development

After completing the unit, you should be able to

- Define a short story
- Identify the major components while reading a short story
- Explain how the short story **evolved** over a period in history

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature can be broadly categorized into two: prose and poetry. The prose includes novels, essays, short stories, etc. Each culture has preserved and passed on its heritage through the medium of stories. Sometimes, the stories take form of a tale, legend, a myth or even fictional historical event. All of us are familiar with “fairy tales” or “bed time stories” that we used to listen to during our childhood and enjoyed them thoroughly. The characters from *Panchatantra*, *Aesop’s Tales*, *Jatakas* and *Arabian Nights* are so famous that each generation of kids **relishes** them. At times, it is difficult to separate fiction from the fact due to the juicy elements of the story. No matter what it is about, stories have been enjoyed by

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

people from the times immemorial. Can you recall any story that you loved to listen to again and again in your childhood? Why did you like it so much? Just think and try to relate it to what you are going to learn today.

1.2 WHAT IS A SHORT STORY ?

A short story is an imaginary prose with a few characters and a single event. It is usually a short narrative fiction, which can be read by a single sitting. Such a definition clearly tells us that the length of a short story should be very short. Perhaps, that is why it is called a “Short” Story. However, it is not a **defining rule**. Many Russian and American short stories go beyond fifty pages. Another important aspect that we can **deduce** from the above definition is that it has a single event. It means it does not require too many characters because the very scope of the story cannot **accommodate** many of them. The short story writer aims at the single effect through the single event in the life of a character. Nonetheless, a short story can have a good description of places and characters so that the readers can imagine the event properly. Here, “imaginary prose” is a significant phrase because the incident in the story occurs somewhere in a fictional world which might look real but is not real. At times, the names and places can be real; however, a good story takes its readers to a fictional world through unusual things that can happen only there. For example, we can meet Cinderella or witness the race between the tortoise and a rabbit only in the world of stories. Lastly, it is expected that a short story needs to be completed by a single sitting because it allows very little time to get **engrossed** into the fictional world.

1.3 COMPONENTS OF A SHORT STORY

Each structure is made of small components. Likewise, when we closely look at the form of short story, we find various major components that play very significant roles in deciding whether the story appeals to the reader or not. These components include: 1) Character 2) Setting 3) Plot 4) Conflict 5) Theme and 6) Point of View. Let’s discuss each of them in detail:

1.3.1 Characters

A character is a person, an animal, or an object who/which participates in the action of the story. As we discussed, short stories have very few characters. A good short story makes a **life like** characters with which readers can easily relate themselves. Many a times, one of the characters tells the story as if all the events happened in his/her life or he/she has witnessed and partially took part in the events in the life of a major character. The main character is also called a **protagonist**. Let’s take examples of characters. In the story of Cinderella, the characters are Cinderella, her stepmother and stepsisters and the Prince Charming but Cinderella is the protagonist.

1.3.2 Setting

The time and place when the event of the story occurs is known as the setting. It is a very important component of a short story because description of a setting helps readers to visualize the story clearly. Usually, you must have heard stories beginning with the line “*Once upon a time in a village...*” which is the setting of those

stories. However, the short stories can also begin with very specific place and time. For instance, the famous short story of O. Henry called “*The Last Leaf*” begins like, “*In a little district west of Washington Square the streets have run crazy and broken themselves into small strips called places.*” The setting of the story makes the event of the story possible. For example, if the setting of a story is an on old and **abandoned** castle and the characters are moving at midnight, the readers are likely to expect some mysterious event. It is because we have heard many stories about what happens at such places when we go there at night.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:1

FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH THE CORRECT ANSWERS.

1. In ancient times, stories travelled in _____ form.
2. The short story writer targets at the _____ through the single event.
3. The main character is also called a _____.
4. Setting includes time and _____ of the story.
5. The author of the story *The Last Leaf* is _____.

1.3.3 Plot

A plot is a series of events that are linked together to make the main **conflict** work in the life of the characters. It is known as the foundation of the story because the characters and setting find a sequence or pattern of action in the plot. There are five basic elements of a plot:

- A. **Exposition or Introduction** wherein the story begins, the conflict and the main characters are introduced. (Cinderella living with a wicked stepmother.)
- B. **Rising Action** wherein the events start getting complicated and the readers feel excitement and tension. (She is treated very badly. She wants to go to the party at the palace but she is not allowed by her stepsisters.)
- C. **Climax** wherein the story takes an unusual turn, which is the moment of best emotion and interest. The readers keep rushing to see what will happen next. (The Fairy Godmother appears and helps Cinderella reach the palace where she dances with the prince. In hurry to return in a given time by the fairy, she forgets he glass shoe.)
- D. **Falling Action** wherein the story begins to **resolve** the conflict by showing the result of the action taken by the main character. (The prince is dying to marry the girl he danced with but could not find her. So he announced in the kingdom that any lady who can wear this shoe will be my wife. After everyone, Cinderella goes to try the shoe and she stakes out the fellow shoe from her pocket; the pair perfectly fitted her.)
- E. **Resolution or the Conclusion** wherein the story ends on a logical note, which could be happy, tragic or even open-, ended. (Finally, the prince was happy to find his lost princess back and both of them got married and lived happily thereafter.)

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

1.3.4 Conflict

The conflict is the struggle for something. It could be a thing, person, place or a situation. Usually, the main character is at the center of the conflict. You may find the protagonist struggling against another character (villain), animals, **destiny**, natural forces (forest, ocean, river, mountain), social systems, over his /her own feelings, decisions, or habits. In Cinderella's story, the conflict is whether her miserable life condition will ever improve and will the prince find her again or not? All the good short stories make readers engage with the conflict very tightly. In fact, when you read a story and start thinking, 'what the character would do now?' you are feeling the struggle of the character.

1.3.5 Theme

The theme is the central idea or the main belief of the story. It is a kind of **implicit** message or big idea. Quite often, the theme is universal which means it crosses the boundaries of cultures and nations. For example, if you read Leo Tolstoy's short story *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* You will find that theme of the story is 'greed' which is a **universal** human emotion which can have bad consequences. Another example is *Cinderella*, the story revolves around kindness and forgiving wrongs of others. How do you find the theme in short story? Well, there is a simple question you need to ask to yourself after reading it: what is it all about? And what you find is 'theme' in simple language.

1.3.6 Point of View

The point of view in short story refers to the narrator's position. The short story writer can write stories by four ways; first person, second person and the third person limited and the third person **omniscient** narration. Thus, the writer's choice of narration will decide her/her opinion about everything about the story. It is like a camera angel of the writer.

1. In the first person point of view, the story is told by "I". (*The Raven* – Edgar Allan Poe)
2. In the second person point of view, the story is told to "you" as if you are there as a listener (*The Haunted Mind* – Nathaniel Hawthorne).
3. In the third person limited point of view, the story is about "he/she" and the narrator is outside the story watching everything and telling. (*The Gift of Magi* – O. Henry)
4. In the third person omniscient point of view, the story is about "he/she" but the narrator can also see and tell what is happening in the minds and hearts of the characters. (*How Much Land Does a Man Need?* – Leo Tolstoy)

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:2

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

1. What is a theme ?
2. What are the basic elements of a plot ?
3. What are the types of point of view ?
4. What is the conflict in Cinderella's story ?

5. What does the short story writer do in the resolution ?

1.4 BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SHORT STORIES

The earliest forms of short story were folk tales, fables, legends and myths across the communities of the world. These tales were mostly into oral form and they were passed on from one generation to the next in the same oral tradition. However, the beginning of a short story can be traced back to the invention of the printing press, which allowed written stories to spread. The industrial revolution brought free time in the households, which made reading of novel a popular mode of entertainment. It was known as a “pocket-theatre”. However, short and crisp entertainment of a novel was packed into the stories of the magazines.

After the moral phase of the tales, the form of short story gradually developed as an artistic **genre**. The modern short story, as an artistic prose developed in the second half of the 19th century in America. Edgar Allen Poe became famous with his collection named *An MS Found in a Battle* in 1833. The story moved to Europe from America and many greatest short story writers developed it further. These writers include Maupassant, Balzac, Anton Chekhov, Leo Tolstoy etc. Their stories are classic in terms of beauty, form and appeal. The Great Britain gave the world the short story masters such as Kipling, H.G. Wells, Galsworthy, Conan Doyle, Somerset Maugham to name a few.

As the widespread printing and publication activities flourished with education across the world, more and more readers were added to the fan club of short story. The journals published in America between 1885 and 1905 increased to 6000 providing all kinds of stories to the readers, which in turn encouraged the storywriters, write more and **diverse** stories. In the UK, an exclusive magazine of short stories named *STORY TELLER* was extremely popular. During the modernist period (1910-1945), the stories were mostly based on the issues of war, dialogue with one’s mind (known as the Stream of Consciousness Technique), concerns of science and technology. We also have Indian short stories as well from Tagore, Premchand, Sarat Chandra, etc. The Post-war period (1945-1970) made the writers revisit their classic masters such as Chekhov, Poe and James Joyce. It is the time when the **science-fiction** stories became popular. The short stories of post-modern period (1970-till today) experiment with symbols, plotlessness, **negation** of single truth and reality, and fragmented language. The period includes writers like Sandra Cisneros, Leslie Marmon Silko, Joyce Carol Oates and Lorrie Moore.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:3

FIND OUT WHETHER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE.

1. Edgar Allan Poe belonged to the Great Britain.
2. Folk tales came much before the artistic form of short story.
3. Stream of consciousness means talking to one’s mind.
4. The *STORY TELLER* magazine was published from India.
5. The post-modern short stories are experimental in nature.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 4

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN DETAIL.

1. Discuss components of a short story in detail.
2. Write brief historical background of short stories.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt

- The definition and form of short story
- Major components of a short story
- Brief historical overview of the development of the form of short story

1.6 KEY WORDS

1. Components = Characteristics
2. Evolved = Developed over a period
3. Relish = Enjoy
4. Defining rule = A rule without which one cannot go further
5. Deduce = conclude/understand/derive
6. Accommodate = include
7. Engrossed = deeply involved
8. Life like = real life
9. Protagonist = the main character
10. Abandoned = not in use anymore
11. Conflict = struggle
12. Resolve = to end or solve something
13. Destiny = Fate or what is decided by God
14. Implicit = Hidden
15. Universal = Applicable to everyone in entire world
16. Omniscient = One who can see everything
17. Genre = Artistic form
18. Diverse = Various
19. Science-fiction = Stories dealing with imaginary scientific world
20. Negation = rejection

1.7 BOOKS SUGGESTED

- 1) William Boyd, *A Short History of the Short Story*
- 2) Florence Goyet, *The Classic Short Story: Theory of a Genre*
- 3) David Daiches *A Critical History of English Literature*

ANSWERS

INTRODUCTION TO THE FORM OF SHORT STORY

Check Your Progress 1

1. Oral
2. Single effect
3. Protagonist
4. Place
5. O.Henry

Check Your Progress 2

1. What is a theme?

Theme is the central idea of the story. It is the main message that the writer intends to convey.

2. What are the basic elements of a plot?

The basic elements of a plot include: 1) Exposition or Introduction, 2) Rising Action, 3) Climax, 4) Falling Action and 5) Resolution or Conclusion.

3. What are the types of point of view?

There four types of point of view:

1. First person
2. Second person
3. Third person limited
4. Third person omniscient

4. What is the conflict in Cinderella's story?

The conflict in Cinderella's story is whether her miserable life condition will ever improve and will the prince find her again or not?

5. What does the short story writer do in the resolution?

In the resolution or conclusion, the short story writer ends the story logically, which could be happy, tragic or open-ended.

Check Your Progress 3

1. False
2. True
3. True
4. False
5. True



: UNIT STRUCTURE :

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Text of the story 'The Cask of Amontillado'

2.3 Analysis of 'The Cask of Amontillado'

2.3.1 Plot

2.3.2 Setting

2.3.3 Theme

2.3.4 Prose Style

2.4 Let Us Sum Up

2.5 Key Words

2.6 Books Suggested

Answers

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall

- Discuss the plot of the story '*The Cask of Amontillado*'
- Examine the theme of '*The Cask of Amontillado*'

After completing the unit, you should be able to

- Summarize the story '*The Cask of Amontillado*'
- Analyze the setting of '*The Cask of Amontillado*'

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Anyone who loves to read short stories in English has definitely read stories of Edgar Allan Poe. He is famous for writing gothic stories of murder, revenge, insanity, being buried alive, darkness, torture, adventures in the sea and the hunt for the buried treasure etc. Largely, his collections of fiction fall under the category of "Dark Romanticism". His stories are radically different from his contemporary writers because Poe was a strong advocate of 'Art for Art's sake' movement of the 19th century European literature. Using original imagination in his stories, Poe used fantastic use of techniques and language taking readers along with the stories. Through his stories like "*The Pit and the Pendulum*," "*The Fall of the House of Usher*," "*The Tell-Tale Heart*," "*The Masque of the Red Death*," "*The Black Cat*," and "*The Cask of Amontillado*", Poe has transformed the form of scary stories by adding the elements of psychology much before they were called 'psychological issues.' The present story too is a story of a person's revenge that takes us to the depths of his intentions.

2.2 TEXT OF THE STORY ‘*THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO*’

‘THE CASK OF
AMONTILLAD’ BY
EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he **ventured** upon insult I **vowed revenge**. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that gave utterance to a threat. At length I would be **avenged**; this was a point definitely, settled—but the very **definitiveness** with which it was resolved **precluded** the idea of risk. I must not only punish but punish with **impunity**. A wrong is **unredressed** when **retribution** overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my in to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my to smile now was at the thought of his **immolation**.

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his **connoisseurship** in wine. Few Italians have the true **virtuoso** spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity, to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmary, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a **quack**, but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially;—I was skilful in the Italian **vintages** myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the **carnival** season, that I encountered my friend. He **accosted** me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore **motley**. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the **conical cap** and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him—”My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day. But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts.”

“How?” said he. “Amontillado, A **pipe**? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!”

“I have my doubts,” I replied; “and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain.”

“Amontillado!”

“I have my doubts.”

“Amontillado!”

“And I must satisfy them.”

“Amontillado!”

“As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchresi. If any one has a critical turn it is he. He will tell me—”

“Luchresi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry.”

“And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

“Come, let us go.”

“Whither?”

“To your vaults.”

“My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchresi—”

“I have no engagement; —come.”

“My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are **afflicted**. The **vaults** are insufferably damp. They are **encrusted** with **nitre**.”

“Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchresi, he cannot distinguish **Sherry** from Amontillado.”

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm; and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a **roquelaire** closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my **palazzo**.

There were no attendants at home; they had **absconded** to **make merry** in honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their **sconces** two **flambeaux**, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together upon the **damp** ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The **gait** of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he **strode**.

“The pipe,” he said.

“It is farther on,” said I; “but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls.”

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy **orbs** that distilled the **rheum** of intoxication.

“Nitre?” he asked, at length.

“Nitre,” I replied. “How long have you had that cough?”

“Ugh! ugh! ugh! —ugh! ugh! ugh! —ugh! ugh! ugh! —ugh! ugh! ugh! —ugh! ugh! ugh!”

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

“It is nothing,” he said, at last.

“Come,” I said, with decision, “we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot

be responsible. Besides, there is Luchresi —”

“Enough,” he said; “the cough’s a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough.”

“True — true,” I replied; “and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily — but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damps.

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

“Drink,” I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a **leer**. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

“I drink,” he said, “to the buried that repose around us.”

“And I to your long life.”

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

“These vaults,” he said, “are extensive.”

“The Montresors,” I replied, “were a great and numerous family.”

“I forget your arms.”

“A huge human foot d’or, in a field **azure**; the foot crushes a serpent **rampant** whose fangs are **imbedded** in the heel.”

“And the motto?”

“**Nemo me impunelacessit.**”

“Good!” he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through long walls of piled skeletons, with **casks** and **puncheons** intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

“The nitre!” I said; “see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river’s bed. The drops of moisture **trickle** among the bones. Come, we will go back here it is too late. Your cough —”

“It is nothing,” he said; “let us go on. But first, another draught of the **Medoc.**”

I broke and reached him a flagon of **De Grave**. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a **fierce** light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a **gesticulation** I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement — a **grotesque** one.

“You do not comprehend?” he said.

“Not I,” I replied.

“Then you are not of the brotherhood.”

“How?”

“You are not of the masons.”

“Yes, yes,” I said; “yes, yes.”

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

“You? Impossible! A mason?”

“A mason,” I replied.

“A sign,” he said, “a sign.”

“It is this,” I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my roquelaire a **trowel**.

“You jest,” he exclaimed, **recoiling** a few paces. “But let us proceed to the Amontillado.”

“Be it so,” I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep **crypt**, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth side the bones had been thrown down, and lay **promiscuously** upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior crypt or recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the **colossal** supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their **circumscribing** walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depth of the recess. Its **termination** the feeble light did not enable us to see.

“Proceed,” I said; “herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchresi —”

“He is an **ignoramus**,” interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In niche, and finding an instant he had reached the extremity of the **niche**, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly **bewildered**. A moment more and I had **fettered** him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a **padlock**. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much **astounded** to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

“Pass your hand,” I said, “over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is very damp. Once more let me **implore** you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power.”

“The Amontillado!” **ejaculated** my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

“True,” I replied; “the Amontillado.”

As I said these words I **busied** myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and **mortar**. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began

vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was not the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and **obstinate** silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the **furious** vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the **clanking** subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few **feeble** rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and **shrill** screams, **bursting** suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated, I trembled. **Unsheathing my rapier**, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall; I replied to the **yells** of him who **clamoured**. I re-echoed, I aided, I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that **erected** the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said—

“Ha! ha! ha! —he! he! he! —a very good joke, indeed —an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo —he! he! he! —over our wine —he! he! he!”

“The Amontillado!” I said.

“He! he! he! —he! he! he! —yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone.”

“Yes,” I said, “let us be gone.”

“For the love of God, Montresor!”

“Yes,” I said, “for the love of God!”

But to these words I **hearkened** in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud —

“Fortunato!”

No answer. I called again —

“Fortunato!”

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining **aperture** and let it fall

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old **rampart** of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. **In pace requiescat!**

2.3 ANALYSIS OF ‘*THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO*’

2.3.1 Plot

The narrator, Montresor, tells an unspecified individual, who knows him great, of the day he rendered his retribution on Fortunato (Italian for “the lucky one”), a kindred aristocrat. Furious over various wounds and some unspecified insults, Montresor plots to kill his “companion” amid Carnival, while the man is drunk.

Montresor draws Fortunato into a private wine sampling journey by disclosing to him that he has acquired a pipe (around 492 liters) of what he accepts to be an uncommon wine of Amontillado. He proposes that he can confirm from Luchesi a person who is supposed to have good knowledge of the wines. Montresor knows Fortunato will not allow Luchesi to taste the wine, as he guarantees, “he can’t tell Amontillado from Sherry”. Fortunato runs with Montresor to the wine basements of his stone palace. Montresor offers wine (first Médoc, at that point De Grave) to Fortunato so as to keep him intoxicated. Montresor warns Fortunato, who has a terrible cough, of the moistness, and proposes they return, however Fortunato demands to keep going. Amid their walk, Montresor specifies his family crest: a brilliant foot in a blue foundation pulverizing a snake whose teeth are installed in the foot’s hill, with the motto “Nobody assaults me without any potential repercussions”.

When they go to a specialty, Montresor tells his unfortunate casualty that the Amontillado is inside. Fortunato enters alcoholic and clueless and subsequently, does not avoid as Montresor rapidly fastens him with chains. Montresor uncovers block and cement, recently tucked away among the bones nearby, and continues to entombing the specialty utilizing his trowel, burying his companion alive. At first, Fortunato, who calms down quicker than Montresor foreseen, shakes the chains, attempting to get away. Fortunato then shouts for help, yet Montresor ridicules his cries, realizing no one can hear them. Fortunato laughs weakly and tries to imagine that he is the subject of a joke. Before putting the last stone, he drops a consuming the hole. He feels sick at heart, however does not show the reaction as an effect of the dampness of catacombs. In the last couple of sentences, Montresor uncovers that 50 years after the fact, Fortunato’s body still swings from its chains in the specialty where he left it. The killer finishes up: In pace requiescat! (“May he rest in peace!”).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:1

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN MAXIMUM 75 WORDS EACH.

1. Describe the beginning of the story in your words.
2. What plans did Montresor make to trap Fortunato?

3. Why do you think Montreso succeeded in taking his revenge?

2.3.2 Setting

Since ‘*The Cask of Amontillado*’ is a gothic story, it has all the elements of dark and bleak atmosphere. The entire incident takes place in Italy somewhere around a burial chamber during a carnival. Thus, apparently it is a festive mood but the catacomb makes it gloomy. The carnival indicates freedom in the beginning whereas the vault suggests confinement in the end. Thus, it is a journey from the freedom to live to the confinements of death. The gothic interior of the story makes us feel extremely aware of the deep fear that we have inside us. As the two characters are walking towards of vaults, we see the path getting narrower and darker, exactly like the fear and suspense. The presence of bones suggests any time attack of death. Their pace into the vault is but necessary to arouse greed in both the characters; for Fortunato it is for the wine of Amontillado and for Montereso it is Fortunato’s life. The reducing light in the burial is the symbol of reduced chances of life.

The final blow in the story is supported with Montresor trapping Fortunato in a man-sized crypt with no way out as he has been chained. Starting from the story, there are multiple ways in which Poe uses wine. Firstly, the characters’ love for the wine, Montresor’s use of wine to intoxicate Fortunato who is literally “dying” to get a special wine called “the wine Amontillado”. Here, intoxication suggests the blurred vision of a person who cannot see what is good or bad for him.

2.3.3 Theme

One of the most explicit themes of ‘*The Cask of Amontillado*’ is betrayal. The entire story revolves around one character’s betrayal over the other. It is the trust of Fortunato that is cheated upon and the result is his death because no betrayal is possible without breaking the trust of someone. The narrator tells readers in the beginning that “I continued, as was my in to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my to smile now was at the thought of his immolation.” It suggests that he was hiding a murder plan behind his smile which can be taken a symbol of trust.

Addiction is another theme that motivates the characters to do foolish things. For example, Fortunato’s only weakness is his addictive love for wine. Montresor uses that and it has an unfailing device to trap Fortunato to death. As we read the story, we are told about several types of wines that both the characters are enjoying. The lust of the wine of Amontillado becomes chief tool that Montresor uses to take revenge for some unspecified insults. It is perhaps because of the intoxication that both the characters behave in a foolish manner. Apparently, we feel like it is a joke and Fortunato too say it too when he uttered, “Ha! ha! ha! —he!he! he! — a very good joke, indeed —an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo —he! he! he! —over our wine —he! he! he!” However, as we find out that it was a fatal joke.

The third theme of the story is human foolishness and folly. Throughout the story, the reader keeps guessing any little punishment Montresor would probably give to Fortunato for an insult. It is very foolish of Montresor to consider burying Fortunato

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

alive to death. How lame humans can be at time! Poe’s mastery in the story is the description of the burial through which both the characters are passing, it is a symbol of deadly mind of Montresor. It also suggests that he somehow enjoys being surrounded by human bones, quiet foolishly.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:2

MATCH THE SENTENCES OF COLUMN ‘A’ WITH THEIR EQUIVALENT SENTENCES IN COLUMN ‘B’.

A	B
1. I vowed revenge.	A. Only he can sense it.
2. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine.	B. I decided to kill him
3. If anyone has a critical turn, it is he.	C. I stopped working.
4. He emptied it at a breath.	D. He was arrogant about his knowledge.
5. I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones.	E. He finished all the wine in the bottle.

2.3.4 Prose Style

The story is heavily crafted with a sense of irony. Each sentence is full of ironic impressions that characters create and leave behind. For example, when Montresor is creating a wall against Fortunato to bury and is placing the last stone, Fortunato says, “Let’s be gone”. It is very ironic because it is foolish to think that Montresor would undo all the stones and let Fortunato go away. Even Montresor’s reply is ironic when he says, “Yes, Let’s be gone.” We feel like we are in a devil’s mind secretly watching his thoughts but unable to make out what he is actually going to do.

The complexity of sentence structure in ‘*The Cask of Amontillado*’ is a very good example of how a gothic story unfolds mysteriously. Though it is very clear from the beginning that one character is going to do something to the other in a negative way, the readers become part of the planning and execution of the revenge by “listening” to the murder. And there is no way but to understand what Montresor is thinking because our moral sense makes us hope that nothing bad should happen. It is the trap that Poe creates in his stories wherein the readers keep struggling to understand meanings of each sentence and while doing so helping the story to further in its intention. As the narrator talks to the readers directly in the beginning, “You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that gave utterance to a threat.”

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 3

A. STATE WHETHER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE.

1. Montresor went to Luchresi to check the wine of Amontillado.
2. Fortunato was also expert in identifying true wine.
3. Montresor and Fortunato went to vaults of Montresor.

4. The servants were present in the home.
5. Montresor buried Fortunato dead.

B. FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH APPROPRIATE WORDS GIVEN IN THE BRACKETS BELOW.

[classic, flabbergasted, penalize, drip, troubled]

1. I must not only _____ but punish with impunity.
2. I was skilful in the Italian _____ myself.
3. I perceive you are _____.
4. The drops of moisture _____ among the bones.
5. He was too much _____ to resist.

2.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt

- the plot of ‘*The Cask of Amontillado*’
- The themes of the story
- Unique features of Poe’s prose style through ‘*The Cask of Amontillado*’

2.5 KEY WORDS

1. To ventured- To try
2. To vow- To swear
3. To revenge- The action of hurting or harming someone in return for an injury or wrong suffered at their hands.
4. To avenge- inflict harm in return for (an injury or wrong done to oneself or another).
5. Definitiveness- Certainty
6. To preclude- prevent from happening; make impossible
7. Impunity- exemption from punishment or freedom from the injurious consequences of an action.
8. Unredressed- Not corrected or compensated for
9. Retribution- Act of taking revenge
10. Immolation- Death
11. Connoisseurship- A person with expert knowledge or training
12. Virtuoso- A person highly skilled in music or another artistic pursuit.
13. Quack- A person who talks loudly and foolishly
14. Vintage- Classic
15. Carnival- Festival
16. Accost- Address someone aggressively
17. Motley- Made up of a variety of colours
18. conical cap – A cone shaped cap
19. Pipe- Large barrel

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

20. afflicted-Troubled
21. Vault- A large room or chamber used for storage, especially an underground one.
22. Encrust- cover something with a hard surface layer.
23. Nitre-Another name of potassium
24. Sherry-A fortified wine originally from Spain
25. Roquelaire- A heavy cloak, usually knee-length
26. Palazzo-A type of building, especially in Italy
27. Abscond-Escape
28. Make merry-Enjoy
29. Sconce- A candleholder that is attached to a wall with an ornamental bracket.
30. Flambeaux- a flaming torch, especially one made of several thick wicks dipped in wax.
31. Damp-Moist
32. Catacomb-Burial Chamber
33. Gait-Walk
34. Stride-Moving ahead
35. Orb-Globe
36. Rheum-A watery fluid that drips from eyes or nose
37. Leer-Grin
38. Azure-Blue
39. Rampant-Wild
40. Imbedded-Fix firmly
41. "Nemo me impunelacessit."
42. Cask-Barrel
43. Puncheon- A short post, especially one used for supporting the roof in a coal mine.
44. Trickle-Drip
45. Medoc-A type of wine
46. De Grave-A type of wine
47. Fierce-Severe
48. Gesticulation-Gesture
49. Grotesque-Strange
50. Trowel-A mason's tool to apply plaster
51. Recoil-Jump back
52. Crypt-Tomb
53. Promiscuously
54. Colossal-Huge

55. Circumscribe-Mark out
56. Termination-End
57. Ignoramus-Fool
58. Niche-Position
59. Bewildered-Confuses
60. Fetter-Bind
61. Padlock- Combination lock
62. Astounded-Amazed
63. Implore-Plead
64. Ejaculate-Release
65. Mortar-A mixture of lime with cement
66. Vigorously-Forcefully
67. Obstinate-Stubborn
68. Furious-Angry
69. Clank-Clatter
70. Feeble-Weak
71. Shrill-Sharp
72. Bursting-Full
73. Unsheathing- To pull out from covering
74. Rapier-Blade
75. Yell-Shout
76. Clamour-Scream
77. Erected-Made
78. Harken-Listen
79. Aperture-Gap
80. Rampart-Wall
81. In pace requiescat-Rest in peace

2.6. BOOKS SUGGESTED

- 1) *The Tale-Tell Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe
- 2) *Sixty-Seven Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe
- 3) *Tale of Mystery and Imagination* by Edgar Allan Poe

Check Your Progress 1

1. Let the students write in their own words. However, refer to the section one of the original story.
2. Montresor made two plans: 1) he asked the servants at home to be at home only as he was to return in the morning because he knew that they would go the carnival and the house will be safe for his plan. 2) He aroused a sense of longing for the new wine in Fortunato so that he feels desperate to go and taste it.
3. Following points are to be written:
 - Montresor’s plan worked because Fortunato was drunk and foolish.
 - Because there was no servant at present at Montresor’s home.
 - Because Montresor meticulously planned the murder using the weakness of Fortunato which was but love for wine.

Check Your Progress 2

A	B
1. I vowed revenge.	A. I decided to kill him
2. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine.	B. He was arrogant about his knowledge.
3. If anyone has a critical turn it is he.	C. Only he can sense it.
4. He emptied it at a breath.	D. He finished all the wine in the bottle.
5. I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones.	E. I stopped working.

Check Your Progress 3

A. Match the columns:

1. False
2. True
3. True
4. False
5. False

B. Fill in the blanks:

1. Penalize
2. Classic
3. Troubled
4. drip
5. Flabbergasted



'THE GIFT OF THE MAGI BY O. HENRY

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 What is Short story?

3.3 About O. Henry

3.3.1 About O. Henry's writing style

3.3.2 About the present Story – 'The Gift of the Magi'

3.4 Short story : 'The Gift of the Magi'

3.5 Brief analysis of the story

3.5.1 Philosophical aspects in the story

3.6 Let Us Sum Up

3.7 Key Words

3.8 Books/ links Suggested

Answers

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall

- Know about Short story as a literary form
- Get introduced to the Short story and its writer
- Discuss his writing style and various features of his writing
- Know about the present story and its different literary aspects

On completing the unit, you should be able to

- Know the short story and its writer
- Analyze the short story, plot and characterization

3.1 INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to define literature. It is even more difficult to say what *Good Literature* is. To answer these moot questions may take unpredictable time. Therefore, it will be easier to understand that literature is something, which mirrors life. True literature is a product prepared by a raw material of experiences of life. Literature plays an inevitable role and it touches humans' heart by a powerful communication; and this communication becomes possible in different forms of literature. Literature is mainly divided into two parts: i) Literature of Knowledge / Information and ii) Literature of knowledge. Both are different in many ways. Literature of Knowledge / Information is that which gives us knowledge or information in form of book, newspaper, magazine etc and literature of power is that which moves us, amuses us, entertains us and teaches us. Drama, short story, poem, novel etc are the literary forms.

3.2 WHAT IS SHORT STORY?

Defining short story is not as easy as telling it! As a teacher, one ought to know the difference between the ‘story’ / ‘short story’ and ‘storytelling’. Moreover, short story as a form can be better taught only if one knows what short story is *not* rather than what it is. Short story has some similarities like other genres and therefore it is necessary to know how short story is different from other forms. A teacher without knowing this difference won’t be able to deal with short story with full justice. Short story is an independent form last to have evolved and thus called ‘the youngest form’.

M.H. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* defines short story as: ‘A short story is a brief work of prose fiction, and most of the terms for analyzing the component elements, the types, and the various narrative techniques of the novel are applicable to the short story as well...’. (286)

Alison Davies in the first chapter “Once Upon a Time” in *Storytelling in the Classroom* introduces short story as: Once upon a time, there was storytelling. It’s hard to pin-point exactly when it started, although I would guess that when first began to communicate he used stories. (3) Again Maline states that there is a vast difference between ‘story’, ‘short story’ and ‘storytelling’ while storytelling is as old as man himself, the short story, as an art form, is of relatively recent vintage. Dr. R B Zala in his Ph.D Thesis *Pre Independence Gujarati and Indian English Short Story: A Comparative Study*, speaks of the present scene as: The short story is the latest literary form to evolve and yet it is the most impenetrable for the critics and the practitioners with regard to its precise elements, development, structure, techniques, regionalism, abundance influence, and relation with the age old traditions. Today it is the most practiced and published form with the largest readership yet it remains the least discussed and a highly neglected to be taken seriously as a major literary genre.

Though the short story has come of age in this century, its origins lie in fables, in anecdotes, in fairy stories, in short in folklore. In this case the emphasis, naturally, is on “telling” rather than “writing”. Here is an interesting fact – when the first settlers landed on what today is the USA, they kept moving west in search of new or unknown lands. They had lots of tales to tell about their experience, and a good story teller was called a “liar”! Mind you, there were no negative connotations attached to the word in those days.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 1

FILL IN THE BLANKS BY READING THE PASSAGE ABOVE. CHECK YOUR ANSWERS WITH THOSE GIVEN AT THE END OF THE UNIT.

1. M.H. Abrams in _____ defines short story.
2. _____ in the first chapter “Once Upon a Time” in *Storytelling in the Classroom* introduces short story.
3. _____ states that there is a vast difference between ‘story’, ‘short story’ and ‘storytelling’
4. Short story is an independent form last to have evolved and thus called _____

5. Today Short story is _____ form with the largest readership.
6. A good story teller was called _____

‘THE GIFT OF THE
MAGI BY O. HENRY

3.3 ABOUT O. HENRY

Universally known with a pseudonym O. Henry, William Sydney Porter (B. 1862-D. 1910) was an American short story writer who popularized the stories with unexpected and surprising end. As Literature mirrors life, the hardships, troubles and unexpected tests which Henry himself witnessed in his own life could never flee from his stories which influenced the rest of the world so far. Born in USA, he spent a troublesome life fighting with poverty, a sick wife and he saw the death of his first child. While working at a bank, discrepancies were discovered in the financial accounts maintained by him and for that he was arrested and imprisoned for three years. After he got released from jail, he rediscovered himself as a somber short story writer and this is when recommenced writing under a self adopted pen name Orrin Henry (one of the prison staff). By the time of his death, he had completed writing more than two hundred and fifty short stories.

3.3.1 About O. Henry’s Writing Style

Stories of Henry are featured with the touch of human nature. His stories are special in more than one manner. Henry is, of course, one of the few writers who very well knew the unique art of fusing comedy and pathos. The blend of smiles and tears, in his stories, is something, which draws him apart. Moreover, he pioneered the trend of stories with surprising and unexpected end, which was capable to arrest readers’ attention, and keeps them unmoved until they finish reach the last period. In fact, this quality of his style has earned him a universal fame indisputably.

3.3.2 About the present Story – ‘*The Gift of the Magi*’

The present story, ‘*The Gift of the Magi*’ perfectly fits in for all these features mentioned above. This story, about a poor couple Jim and Della who take great pride in two separate possessions, was first published in 1905. As the title of the story hold the word ‘Magi’ (plural form of the word ‘magus’) which means The ‘wise men’ from the East who brought gifts to the infant Jesus (Matt. 2:1), said in later tradition to be kings named Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar who brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The story picturizes the irony so powerfully that the reader is stunned with wide eyes; but in fact that is the irony which draws the colorful bonding of their love on the canvas of feelings. And that is: both Jim and Della lose their special possessions in order to please each other by giving a precious gift. Those lines, so beautifully written by Henry, show their heartfelt love for each other.

3.4 SHORT STORY: ‘*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, 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.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

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."

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.”

“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 practised 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 of saying a little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: “Please God, make him think I am still pretty.”

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.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

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.”

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 jewelled 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, 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. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 2

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN ONE OR TWO SENTENCES.

1. What is the real name of O. Henry?
2. In which year was O. Henry born and when did he die?
3. What type of short stories did O. Henry popularize?
4. How many total short stories have O. Henry completed writing by the time of his death?
5. Henry possessed an art of fusing two elements in his shot stories. Which are those two elements?
6. Give name of couple that the present story is about.
7. When was Henry’s present story ‘*The Gift of the Magi*’ first published?
8. What does the word ‘*Magi*’ mean?
9. Why did both Jim and Della lose their special possessions?

3.5 BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE STORY

Unlike all other short stories, Henry’s story catches us with its different style and plot. Plot, as Oxford Dictionary defines, is *The main events of a play, novel, film, or similar work, devised and presented by the writer as an interrelated sequence.*

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

In the words of Jonathan Beutlich , a certified educator, “A plot diagram is a common teaching tool that illustrates the main chunks of a piece of literature. There are typically 5 main chunks.

- I. The exposition/introduction,
- II. Rising action,
- III. Climax,
- IV. Falling action, and
- V. Resolution/conclusion.

“*One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all*” This is how the story opens. Technically, Henry arrests his readers’ attention right from the opening sentence. Like a film, the story in the opening scene shows Della (a married girl) who wants to purchase a Christmas gift for her husband but lack the sufficient money on the Christmas eve itself. Thus with the opening scene itself, a question springs in the readers’ mind about how Dell would manage money to purchase the gift for her husband. Moving down to the end of the story, the situation becomes more and more surprising and unpredictable (especially for the readers who get to read the story for the first time). When, in the end of the story, Della sells her hair to get \$20 in order to buy gift for Jim, Henry shows Della worried about Jim’s reaction about her cut hair.

As Henry is famous for his stories with surprising and unexpected end, present one is also not an exceptional. There are many surprising in the story right from the opening scene. Further, when Della sells her hair to buy a Christmas gift for Jim, she is thinking about Jim’s reaction. Della does not know what Jim has bought for her. O. Henry has actually very cleverly taken his readers into surprise.

3.5.1 Philosophical and Symbolical Aspects in the Story

Besides the element of surprise and unexpected end, Henry’s stories are fully dipped in sheer philosophy and symbolism. In the present story too, a careful reader will find some philosophical aspects which are conveyed either in the words of O. Henry or through his characters’ dialogues. In the opening paragraph of the story, Della is shown as a woman who struggles hard to save money and finds that the amount is still not sufficient to buy her husband’s gift on the Christmas occasion. This situation is philosophically commented on in the following paragraph, in which Henry writes,

“There was clearly nothing left 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.”

Thus, in the above lines, Henry talks not only about Della but he talks about life per se. The *moral reflection* which Henry talks about is present in everyone’s life. This is how Henry makes his stories universally appealing.

Along with philosophy, a lot of symbolism appears in Henry’s present story. Henry very smartly talks about time gone through various symbols and objectification. One such example can be seen in the following words, when Henry writes,

“In the vestibule below was a letter box into which no letter would go, and an

electrical button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining was a card bearing the name ‘Mr. James Dillingham Young.’”

‘a letter box into which not letter would go....’ and *‘and an electrical button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring....’* are two metaphors which signify the time Della and Jim had in their past life.

Both Jim and Della have lost a lot in their lives. As Henry rightly mentions during the story that both of them have only two possessions of their own.

“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 has been his father’s and his grandfather’s. The other was Della’s hair.”

This is very symbolic in itself; as by the end of the story, both Della and Jim willingly lose these two last remaining possessions of their own for which they had pride. The writer Henry intensely mystifies whether the *love* both Della and Jim had for each other was the reason for all they lost.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN ONE OR TWO SENTENCES. CHECK YOUR ANSWERS WITH THOSE GIVEN AT THE END OF THE UNIT.

1. How does Oxford Dictionary define Plot?
2. In word of Jonathan Beutlich, what is a Plot diagram?
3. What are the five main chunks of Plot?
4. How does Henry, in the present story, provoke surprise in readers?
5. Besides surprise, what are the two other elements shown in the present story?

3.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt

- About Short story as a literary form
- About the present Short story and its writer
- His writing style and various features of his writing

3.7 KEY WORDS

Magy: *The ‘wise men’ from the East who brought gifts to the infant Jesus (Matt. 2:1), said in later tradition to be kings named Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar who brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.* The story picturizes the irony so powerfully that the reader is stunned with wide eyes; but in fact that is the irony which draws the colorful bonding of their love on the canvas of feelings. And that is: both Jim and Della lose their special possessions in order to please each other by giving a precious gift. Those lines, so beautifully written by Henry, show their heartfelt love for each other.

Bulldozing: bullying

Parsimony: miserliness, being very stingy

Pier glass: tall mirror

Queen of Sheba: a famous queen in the bible who visited Solomon and gave him expensive gifts.

3.8 BOOKS/ LINKS SUGGESTED

- 1) Glimpses of Life, An Anthology of Short stories
- 2) Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary
- 3) <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/magi>
- 4) <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/plot>
- 5) <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-plot-diagram-gift-magi-127797>
- 6) <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/magi>

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) *A Glossary of Literary Terms*
- 2) Alison Davies
- 3) Maline
- 4) 'the youngest form'.
- 5) the most practiced and published.
- 6) a "liar"!

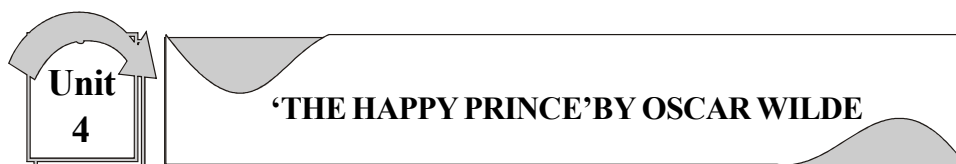
Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Universally known with a pseudonym O. Henry's real name is William Sydney Porter.
- 2) O. Henry was born in Porter 1862 and died in 1910.
- 3) O. Henry popularized the stories with unexpected and surprising end.
- 4) By the time of his death, he had completed writing more than two hundred and fifty short stories.
- 5) Henry very well knew the unique art of fusing comedy and pathos.
- 6) This story, about a poor couple Jim and Della.
- 7) The story got first published in 1905.
- 8) 'Magi' (plural form of the word 'magus') which means *The 'wise men' from the East who brought gifts to the infant Jesus.*
- 9) Both Jim and Della lose their special possessions in order to please each other by giving a precious gift on Christmas eve.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Oxford Dictionary defines, *The main events of a play, novel, film, or similar work, devised and presented by the writer as an interrelated sequence.*
- 2) In the words of Jonathan Beutlich, a certified educator, "A plot diagram is a common teaching tool that illustrates the main chunks of a piece of literature.

- 3) There are typically 5 main chunks.
 - i) The exposition/introduction,
 - ii) Rising action,
 - iii) Climax,
 - iv) Falling action, and
 - v) Resolution/conclusion.
- 4) As Henry is famous for his stories with surprising and unexpected end, present one is also not an exceptional. There are many surprising in the story right from the opening scene. Further, when Della sells her hair to buy a Christmas gift for Jim, she is thinking about Jim’s reaction. Della doesn’t know what Jim has bought for her. O. Henry has actually very cleverly taken his readers into surprise.
- 5) Besides the element of surprise and unexpected end, Henry’s stories are fully dipped in sheer philosophy and symbolism.



: UNIT STRUCTURE :

- 4.0 Objectives**
- 4.1 Introduction: ‘The Happy Prince’ by Oscar Wilde**
- 4.2 Oscar Wilde: Life and Works**
- 4.3 Text of the Story**
- 4.4 Critical Assessment**
 - 4.4.1 Themes**
 - 4.4.2 Characterization**
 - 4.4.2.1 The Swallow**
 - 4.4.2.2 ‘The Happy Prince’**
 - 4.4.3 Narrative Technique**
- 4.5 Lets Sum Up**
- 4.6 Key Words**
- 4.7 Books Suggested**

Answers

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to:

- Critically examine the short story ‘*The Happy Prince*’ by Oscar Wilde, the famous literary figure of Victorian era.
- Study the biographical sketch of the author and his significant literary works that have marked the literary scene.
- Critically evaluate the characters in the story, the underlying themes and the narrative techniques.
- Understand Oscar Wilde as an author who was critical of the age in which he lived.

4.1 INTRODUCTION: ‘THE HAPPY PRINCE’ BY OSCAR WILDE

‘*The Happy Prince*’ by Oscar Wilde tells the story of a Happy Prince who always remained happy as was he was kept away and ignorant from the suffering of the poor people in his town. After his death, his statue is placed on a raised platform in the centre of city by the local authorities. The statue is studded with gold, eyes are made of sapphires and rubies are attached to his sword. Those who passed by the statue appreciated the smile on the face of Happy Prince and the beauty of the statue as it is studded with gems and gold. But being on a raised platform at the centre of the city, the prince is no longer happy as he witnesses the suffering and agony of the poor people of the town.

Due to approaching winter, a Swallow that is flying over to Egypt comes and takes shelter near the statue of the Happy Prince. The Swallow is surprised and sorry to see tears filled in the eyes of statue of the Happy Prince. The Happy Prince talks to the Swallow about the pain he feels seeing the misery of the poor people and requests the Swallow to stay back for one night and help him. The Swallow decides to help the Happy Prince and stay back for several nights. As commanded by the Happy Prince, the swallow removes the sapphires, rubies and gold and drops it near the poor people who are in need. Both the Happy Prince and the Swallow feel happy serving the less privileged in the city.

As winter approaches, the Swallow is not able to bear the cold of the chilly winter and dies at the feet of Happy Prince’s statue. Just at the moment, the Swallow dies and falls, the statue cracks down, especially the heart that made up of lead gets snapped into two parts. This shows that the Happy Prince is not able to bear the loss of his dear friend. The statue is taken down by town counsellors, as it is no longer attractive and is sent to the foundry to melt. The entire statue melts down but the heart does not. The workmen throw away the heart of the statue where the Swallow is lying dead. God’s angels take the heart of the Happy Prince and the Swallow to the heaven, as they are the most precious things on the Earth. God is also happy seeing the heart of the Happy Prince and the Swallow and therefore gives them a place in his garden of paradise.

4.2 OSCAR WILDE: LIFE AND WORKS

Oscar Wilde was born on October 16, 1854 in Dublin. Oscar was the second child of the three born to Jane Francesca Wilde and William Wilde. Sir William Wilde (1815-1876) was a famous eye and ear surgeon. Oscar’s mother Lady Jane Francesca Wilde (1820-1896) was a renowned poetess of her time writing patriotic Irish verse. She was famously known as “Sperenza”. Oscar had an elder brother named William and younger sister named Isola who died at the age of 10. Oscar Wilde received his primary education at Portora Royal School. In 1871, he went to Trinity College, Dublin and then to Magdalen College in Oxford, England (1874-1878) to study classics. At Oxford, he got involved with the Aesthetic Movement that advocated “Art for Art’s Sake”. He was highly influenced by the critic Walter Pater’s aesthetic philosophy. At Magdalen College, he not only excelled in his studies but also started establishing his literary career and won Oxford’s Newdigate Prize for his poem “Ravenna” in the year 1878. After graduating from Oxford University, he decided to move to London and there he continued to focus on writing poetry. In 1881, he got his first collection of poems published titled *Poems*. In 1882, Wilde travelled to New York City on a tour where he delivered several lectures. There he got an opportunity to meet the leading literary figures like Walt Whitman, Oliver Holmes and Henry Longfellow. After his return from America, he lectured in England and Ireland (1883-1884). In the year 1884, Wilde married Constance Lloyd, daughter of Anglo Irish Barrister named Horace Lloyd. The couple was blessed with two sons named Cyril (1885) and Vyvyan (1886).

In 1887, Wilde started working with Woman’s World Magazine. And in 1888, he got *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* published. In 1891, two collections of

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

short story titled *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and other Stories* and *A House of Pomegranates* were published. Along with the short stories, he published his first novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. However, this novel did not receive a positive response from the literary critics as it had element of homoerotic in it and lacked the element of ethics. In 1892 he wrote a play titled *Lady Windermere's Fan* which was a great success. He even wrote *Salome* in the same year. With the success of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Wilde decided that he would move ahead with writing plays. His other famous plays include *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895).

In 1895, Wilde developed an affair with Lord Alfred Douglas. When Douglas's father, Marquis of Queensbury came to know about this, he accused Wilde of sodomy. Wilde was found guilty for the crime and was sentenced to two years of prison. In prison, he wrote a dramatic monologue and an autobiography *De Profundis*. Later when he was released in the 1897, he penned *The Ballad of Reading Goal*. After his release from the prison, he found himself physically weak and emotionally broken. He started wandering in France living in low-cost hotels. On November 30, 1900, he died of cerebral meningitis in a hotel in Paris.

4.3 TEXT OF THE STORY '*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 Councillors who wished to gain a reputation for having artistic taste; '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.'

'I am glad there is someone 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 curtsies. I admit that she is domestic,’ he continued, ‘but I love travelling, and my wife, consequently, should love travelling 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.

‘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

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

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.'

'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 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 a 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

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

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.

'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, 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

‘THE HAPPY
PRINCE’ BY OSCAR
WILDE

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?’

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.

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

'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 there 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 Councillors, and they quarrelled. 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.'

4.4 CRITICALASSESSMENT

4.4.1 Themes

The Victorian age witnessed a transition from nature to rapid industrialization, development of advanced technology and rapid colonization. It was the age where aristocrats ruled and the proletariat class suffered out of poverty and exploitation. Class division became more apparent and the lower class people became the sufferers of this class divide. Wilde belonged to this Victorian era and became critical of the age in which he lived. He could witness corruption, suffering, treachery etc. in the society. Therefore through '*The Happy Prince*' he aimed to bring to the surface the theme of nobility, charity and compassion in a world that was being corrupted and was becoming insensitive towards the suffering of the underprivileged and the needy.

Wilde's choice of characters, their actions and intentions impinges the moral and poignant side of the readers. Through the story of the selflessness and sacrifice of the Happy Prince and the Swallow, Wilde evokes emotion of compassion, pain and mercy in the readers.

Appearance versus reality is the predominant theme in Wilde's '*The Happy Prince*'. The statue of Happy Prince that was studded with rubies, sapphires and gold brought smiles on the faces of the people when they looked at his jovial face. But no one could see the agony in the heart of the Happy Prince as he witnessed suffering and anguish of poor in the town. Thus, though the Happy Prince had a smile on his face, the irony was that he was extremely unhappy with what was happening in the city. And therefore, the Happy Prince, rather than looking the way people ex-

‘THE HAPPY
PRINCE’ BY OSCAR
WILDE

pected him to look, ends up in tousel state as a result of his care and concern for the needy and the poor. Once the Happy Prince has sacrificed his rubies, sapphires and gold, he no longer appears to be attractive and happy to town people, the councilors and especially the Mayor who order to bring down the statue of the Happy Prince and replace it with his own. The Mayor and the town councilors pretend to be dedicated towards their work and the people of the town whereas the Happy Prince and the Swallow actually work for the town people and ultimately sacrifice themselves for the sake of the poor people. The responsibilities of the town councilors are carried out the Happy Prince and the Swallow.

Compassion and sacrifice for the less privileged forms another predominant theme of the story. The Happy Prince feels miserable when he witnesses the poor people’s suffering and therefore sacrifices the gold, rubies and the sapphires that embellish him for the sake of the poor people. He even does not mind giving away the sapphires from his eyes that would result in his blindness. He realizes that more than him, it is the town’s citizens that need the rubies and gold with which he is adorned and therefore becomes ready to be stripped of everything he has. Thus, the Happy Prince through his altruism becomes a source of happiness for the poor in the society. The Swallow too sacrifices his life while helping the Happy Prince. He sacrifices his life by deciding not to fly to Egypt and dies in the freezing winter.

Wilde was a devoted Christian all through his life and therefore he gives a biblical touch to the story towards the end where the sacrifice of the Happy Prince and the Swallow are rewarded by God. The angels present the hearts of the Happy Prince and the Swallow to the Lord calling them “the two most precious things in the city”. And the Lord keeps them in his garden of paradise. The Happy Prince and the Swallow have lived their life the way god wanted and therefore are blessed by God by finding a place in heaven.

The bond between human and non-human is vividly explored by Wilde in the story the Happy Prince. Wilde gives life to the statue and lets the Swallow and the Happy Prince develop a bond of trust and love with one another and this bond removes misery from the society. Swallow feels sorry for sad Prince and becomes ready to be his messenger and help him in eradicating misery from the society. The Swallow develops such an intense bond with the Happy Prince that it stays back in the chilly winter to help the Happy Prince knowing that it would die out of cold. Unable to bear the cold, the Swallow kisses the Happy Prince, falls down at the feet of the Happy Prince, and dies. The heart of the Happy Prince also breaks into two parts seeing the dead Swallow. The intensity of love and trust between the Happy Prince and the Swallow, and the way Swallow tries its best to help the needy shows that even the birds possess the feeling of compassion, love and trust for the other beings.

Wilde in his story has also explored the theme of greed, self-indulgence, inequality and poverty in the society. Wilde makes a scathing attack on self-indulgence and corruption of the town authorities and the representatives of the town who are appointed for the well-being of the society. Through the two town councilors and the Mayor who are selfish and corrupt, Wilde shows how these authorities use their power for their own welfare. They are shown in negative light when the

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

Mayor announces that the statue of the Happy Prince should be replaced by his own statue. Secondly, the watchman, who is entrusted with the role of safeguarding the society, shouts at the two hungry children who are lying under the archway of a bridge in one another's arm to keep themselves warm. He asks them to go away and the children left wandering in the rain. The inequality in society is seen when the rich are happy and making merry in their big and beautiful mansions while the beggars are sitting outside their gates and the children are dying out of starvation. Thus, through the story 'The Happy Prince', Wilde has critically presented the society of his time that was insensitive and unconcerned towards the suffering of the weaker section of society. Yet through the character of the Happy Prince and the Swallow, Wilde has shown that though there exists exploitation and suffering in the society, there are few who devote their lives for the noble cause.

4.4.2 Characterization

4.4.2.3 The Swallow

The Swallow is one of the important characters in the story '*The Happy Prince*'. Through the character of the Swallow, Oscar Wilde has presented how a selfish being can change into a selfless being through the bond of love, compassion and trust. In the beginning of the story, Wilde presents the Swallow to be selfish and self-obsessed and this becomes evident when he leaves the Reed he loves and decides to migrate to Egypt where his companions were flying off to in hope of finding a better and warm place during winter. Just like the rich Victorians, the Swallow is shown to be egotistic who thinks only of his own-self. But the Swallow undergoes metamorphosis when he comes in contact with the Happy Prince and realizes the need of compassion and mercy for the poor. He feels sad for the Happy Prince who has tears his eyes on seeing suffering of the underprivileged in the town. When the Swallow witnesses the suffering and agony of the poor and needy in the town, he too along with the Happy Prince feels pity for them and decides to stay back to help the Prince in gifting his jewels and gold to the needy. There develops a bond of trust and love between the Happy Prince and the Swallow. Towards the end of the story, the Swallow dies out of fatigue and cold and falls at the feet of the Happy Prince and makes his ultimate sacrifice. A Swallow who is selfish in the beginning of the story undergoes transformation, sacrifices his life out of love for the Prince and his concern for the poor, and as a result finds himself in paradise. Thus, the Swallow plays a vital role in the story by becoming a messenger for the Happy Prince and a source of happiness for the poor.

4.4.2.2 '*The Happy Prince*'

'*The Happy Prince*' is the protagonist in Wilde's story '*The Happy Prince*'. He becomes a representative of nobility, compassion and goodness. Towards the beginning of the story Wilde describes the Happy Prince to be very happy and jovial in his palace as he is kept away from the problems faced by people outside the palace walls. After his death, his statue is encrusted with gems and gold and is placed on the high pillar in the centre of town. Everyone appreciates the beauty of the statue and the smile on the face of the Happy Prince. But the irony is that being on a raised platform he witnesses the agony and misery in life of poor people and feels sad and helpless as he cannot do anything for the poor. The Happy Prince

takes help of the Swallow that finds shelter near his statue and with the help of the Swallow gives away all his sapphires, rubies and gold to poor people in the town to make their life better. The realization that rather than him, it is the poor who are in need of the gems and the gold changes the lives of many in town. Thus, the Happy Prince becomes the epitome of generosity, righteousness and morality. There develops a bond of love between the Happy Prince and the Swallow and on the death of the Swallow, the heart of Happy Prince also breaks into two parts. Seeing the statue of the Happy Prince in tattered state, the mayor orders it to be taken down and is sent to the foundry. But surprisingly the heart of the Happy Prince does not melt and is therefore thrown away where the Swallow is lying dead. But both the hearts of the Happy Prince and the Swallow are taken to God by the angels and God feels extremely happy with the deeds of the duo and therefore gives them a place in his paradise. Thus, the Happy Prince becomes a symbol of goodness and nobility in the world.

4.4.3 Narrative Technique

Wilde wrote this story for children and through this story he wanted to teach them the lesson of compassion and mercy for the poor. Therefore he adopted a very simple and lucid style of writing the story. The author has avoided long description in story so that the readers do not find it difficult to interpret the message behind the story.

The story is told from third person point of view where the author stays outside the story and narrates the story using pronouns like “he”, “she”, “it” and “they” to tell the story. Wilde uses the technique of presenting a story within a story also called frame narrative where he begins with the story of the Happy Prince and the Swallow and gradually inside the story tells another story of a seamstress whose son is ill, a young man who is unable to write a play for the Director of the theatre because he is hungry and suffering from cold and a match-girl whose matchsticks have fallen into the gutter and are wet and therefore her father would beat her if she returns home without taking money.

Wilde deploys the literary device of satire in the story. The story satirizes the people especially the aristocrats and the town authorities during the Victorian era. The society in spite of progressing was shallow from inside and was filled with the vices, corruption, and inequality. Irony is yet another device used by Wilde to show contrasting situation in the society. People looked at the statue of the Happy Prince and thought he was very happy but the irony was that as he was placed high pillar he could see the agony and suffering of the poor and was extremely unhappy and distressed about it. Second instance of the use of irony is when the Swallow flies over to the city, sees the rich people making merry and the poor starving outside their gates. The rich people are happy and enjoying in their big mansions but the irony is that these people are ignorant or chose to be unaware about the poor people that are dying out of hunger outside their gates.

Through the story of the compassion, charity and sacrifice of the Happy Prince and the Swallow and how they are taken to the heaven by the angles, Wilde gives an allegorical meaning to the story. Wilde brings in biblical allusions in the story towards the end when the angles bring the bird and the heart of the Happy Prince

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

to the God and how the God gives them a place in the heaven. This makes the story and its moral etched in the mind of the readers. 'The Happy Prince' is not just a story of a Happy Prince and the Swallow but it is a story of compassion and sacrifice for the well-being of the society.

4.5 LET US SUM UP

'The Happy Prince' is a gripping and heartrending tale with several themes carefully crafted through different literary devices and narrative techniques. The story through its characters and situations conveys an important lesson of nobility and compassion needed in the society. The story becomes a testimony to Wilde's concern for the society that was grappling with the issues of poverty and inequality in his time.

4.6 KEY WORDS

- 1) Irony: A literary device where the surface meaning is different from the intended meaning. It can also mean a contrast when there is difference in what is expected to happen and what actually happens.
- 2) Satire: A literary technique used by authors to criticize someone or something. It intends to bring to surface the vices, flaws and follies of the certain character, society or the situation.
- 3) Swallow: a small bird
- 4) Seamstress: a woman who earns her living by sewing

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:1

CHOOSE APPROPRIATE OPTION FROM GIVEN BELOW.

- 1) **Which gemstone was there in the eyes of the statue of the Happy Prince?**
 - a. Sapphire
 - b. ruby
 - c. amber
 - d. emerald
- 2) **The Swallow was flying over to which country before it met the Happy Prince?**
 - a. Canada
 - b. Egypt
 - c. India
 - d. Australia
- 3) **What did the Swallow see when he passed over the ghetto?**
 - a. The Jews were bargaining with each other and weighing out money in copper scales
 - b. The old Jews were eating happily
 - c. The Jews were sleeping
 - d. The Jews were praying
- 4) **What did the Professor of Ornithology do when he saw the Swallow in winter season?**
 - a. He wrote a long letter to local newspaper
 - b. He went to capture the Swallow
 - c. He built a nest for the Swallow

- d. He asked his students to search other Swallows in the city
- 5) What was the reason behind the Swallow staying back even when his companions had migrated to other country?**
- a. He was in love with the Reed
- b. He had fear of being captured
- c. He wanted to sleep
- d. He was hurt and was unable to fly
- 6) What was the problem with the little match-girl in the story?**
- a. Her matchsticks were stolen
- b. Her matchsticks were spoiled as they had fallen into the gutter and so she could not sell it. Her father would beat her if she did not take some money home.
- c. She had lost her way to her house and did not know where to go
- d. She wanted to buy medicines for herself

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:2

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

1. Where was the Swallow flying over to before it came to the statue of Happy Prince?
2. Why was the statue of the Happy Prince admired by town people?
3. What was the reason behind the tears in the eyes of the Happy Prince?
4. How did the Happy Prince and the Swallow help the seamstress?
5. What was the problem with the little match girl? How did the Happy Prince and the Swallow help her?
6. What was the reaction of the Mayor and the town councilors when they saw the statue of the Happy Prince in disheveled state?
7. What strange thing happened when the statue of the Happy Prince was taken to the foundry?
8. What does God say to his angels when they bring heart of the Happy Prince and the dead Swallow to him?
9. How did the God reward the Happy Prince and the Swallow?

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:3

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN DETAIL.

1. How did the Happy Prince and the Swallow help people of the town?
2. What all did the Swallow observe when it flew over the city?
3. Comment on the bond between the Happy Prince and the Swallow in the story ‘The Happy Prince’.
4. What happens to the Happy Prince and the Swallow at the end of the story?
5. Critically comment on the theme of compassion and sacrifice in the story ‘*The Happy Prince*’.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

6. How has Oscar Wilde presented the society of the Victorian era in the story '*The Happy Prince*'?

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:4

WRITE SHORT NOTES.

- 1) Themes in the story '*The Happy Prince*'
- 2) Character sketch of the Happy Prince
- 3) Character sketch of the Swallow
- 4) The ending of the story '*The Happy Prince*'
- 5) The conditions of the poor as observed by the Happy Prince and the Swallow
- 6) Comment on the theme of appearance v/s reality in the story '*The Happy Prince*'

4.7 BOOKS SUGGESTED

1. *Happy Prince and other stories* by Oscar Wilde
2. *The Nightingale And the Rose* by Oscar Wilde
3. *Oscar Wilde* by Richard Ellmann
4. *A Glossary of Literary Terms* by M.H Abrahams

ANSWER

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) a. Sapphire
- 2) b. Egypt
- 3) a. The Jews were bargaining with each other and weighing out money in copper scales
- 4) a. He wrote a long letter to local newspaper
- 5) a. He was in love with the Reed
- 6) b. Her matchsticks were spoiled as they had fallen into the gutter and so she could not sell it. Her father would beat her if she did not take some money home.



'THE BET' BY ANTON CHEKHOV

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 'The Bet'
- 5.3 Analysis of 'The Bet'
 - 5.3.1 Plot
 - 5.3.2 Setting
 - 5.3.3 Theme
 - 5.3.4 Prose Style
- 5.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.5 Key Words
- 5.6 Books Suggested

Answers

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall

- Discuss the plot of the story 'The Bet'
- Examine the theme of 'The Bet'

After completing the unit, you should be able to

- Summarize the story 'The Bet'
- Analyze the setting of 'The Bet'

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov is considered to be one of the classic masters of short stories from Russia. He is considered to be the direct successor of giants such as Maupassant, Tolstoy and Turgenev. He is an expert in handling prose by his treatment of characters, theme, setting and mood. Chekhov is a proponent of easy on the pocket use of language and engaging style, which brings in humor along with misery for highlighting the key aspects of life. Eventually, his techniques helped in developing the form of short story. He also contributed a technique of resolving the story, which is called "zero endings". The stories with "zero-ending" provide more realistic situations because the readers keep guessing what will happen next. Besides, Chekhov also developed "surprise endings" to challenge our predictability successfully. As readers, we can never tell how the story might end. As a result, even after a century, he is loved by the readers all over the world for his originality and freshness.

5.2 TEXT OF THE STORY 'THE BET'

It was a dark autumn night. The old banker was walking up and down his study and remembering how, fifteen years before, he had given a party one autumn evening. There had been many clever men there, and there had been interesting conversations. Among other things they had talked of **capital punishment**. The majority of the guests, among whom were many journalists and intellectual men, **disapproved** of the death penalty. They considered that form of punishment out of date, **immoral**, and unsuitable for Christian States. In the opinion of some of them the death penalty ought to be replaced everywhere by imprisonment for life. "I don't agree with you," said their host the banker. "I have not tried either the death penalty or imprisonment for life, but if one may judge *a priori*, the death penalty is more moral and more humane than imprisonment for life. Capital punishment kills a man at once, but lifelong imprisonment kills him slowly. Which executioner is the more humane, he who kills you in a few minutes or he who drags the life out of you in the course of many years?"

"Both are equally immoral," observed one of the guests, "for they both have the same object - to take away life. The State is not God. It has not the right to take away what it cannot **restore** when it wants to."

Among the guests was a young lawyer, a young man of five-and-twenty. When he was asked his opinion, he said:

"The death sentence and the life sentence are equally immoral, but if I had to choose between the death penalty and imprisonment for life, I would certainly choose the second. To live anyhow is better than not at all."

A lively discussion arose. The banker, who was younger and more nervous in those days, was suddenly carried away by excitement; he struck the table with his fist and shouted at the young man:

"It's not true! I'll bet you two million you wouldn't stay in solitary confinement for five years."

"If you mean that in earnest," said the young man, "I'll take the bet, but I would stay not five but fifteen years."

< 2 >

"Fifteen? Done!" cried the banker. "Gentlemen, I stake two million!"

"Agreed! You **stake** your millions and I stake my freedom!" said the young man.

And this wild, senseless bet was carried out! The banker, spoilt and **frivolous**, with millions beyond his **reckoning**, was delighted at the bet. At supper he made fun of the young man, and said:

"Think better of it, young man, while there is still time. To me two million is a trifle, but you are losing three or four of the best years of your life. I say three or four, because you won't stay longer. Don't forget either, you unhappy man, that voluntary **confinement** is a great deal harder to bear than compulsory. The thought that you have the right to step out in liberty at any moment will poison your whole existence in prison. I am sorry for you."

And now the banker, walking to and fro, remembered all this, and asked himself: "What was the object of that bet? What is the good of that man's losing fifteen

years of his life and my throwing away two million? Can it prove that the death penalty is better or worse than imprisonment for life? No, no. It was all nonsensical and meaningless. On my part it was the caprice of a **pampered** man, and on his part simple greed for money ...”

Then he remembered what followed that evening. It was decided that the young man should spend the years of his captivity under the strictest supervision in one of the lodges in the banker's garden. It was agreed that for fifteen years he should not be free to cross the **threshold** of the lodge, to see human beings, to hear the human voice, or to receive letters and newspapers. He was allowed to have a musical instrument and books, and was allowed to write letters, to drink wine, and to smoke. By the terms of the agreement, the only relations he could have with the outer world were by a little window made purposely for that object. He might have anything he wanted - books, music, wine, and so on - in any quantity he desired by writing an order, but could only receive them through the window. The agreement provided for every detail and every trifle that would make his imprisonment strictly **solitary**, and bound the young man to stay there *exactly* fifteen years, beginning from twelve o'clock of November 14, 1870, and ending at twelve o'clock of November 14, 1885. The slightest attempt on his part to break the conditions, if only two minutes before the end, released the banker from the obligation to pay him the two million.

< 3 >

For the first year of his confinement, as far as one could judge from his brief notes, the prisoner suffered severely from loneliness and depression. The sounds of the piano could be heard continually day and night from his lodge. He refused wine and tobacco. Wine, he wrote, excites the desires, and desires are the worst foes of the prisoner; and besides, nothing could be more dreary than drinking good wine and seeing no one. And tobacco spoilt the air of his room. In the first year the books he sent for were principally of a light character; novels with a complicated love plot, sensational and fantastic stories, and so on.

In the second year the piano was silent in the lodge, and the prisoner asked only for the classics. In the fifth year music was **audible** again, and the prisoner asked for wine. Those who watched him through the window said that all that year he spent doing nothing but eating and drinking and lying on his bed, frequently yawning and angrily talking to himself. He did not read books. Sometimes at night he would sit down to write; he would spend hours writing, and in the morning tear up all that he had written. More than once he could be heard crying.

In the second half of the sixth year the prisoner began **zealously** studying languages, philosophy, and history. He threw himself eagerly into these studies - so much so that the banker had enough to do to get him the books he ordered. In the course of four years some six hundred volumes were procured at his request. It was during this period that the banker received the following letter from his prisoner:

“My dear Jailer, I write you these lines in six languages. Show them to people who know the languages. Let them read them. If they find not one mistake I implore

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

you to fire a shot in the garden. That shot will show me that my efforts have not been thrown away. The geniuses of all ages and of all lands speak different languages, but the same flame burns in them all. Oh, if you only knew what **unearthly** happiness my soul feels now from being able to understand them!” The prisoner’s desire was fulfilled. The banker ordered two shots to be fired in the garden.

< 4 >

Then after the tenth year, the prisoner sat **immovably** at the table and read nothing but the **Gospel**. It seemed strange to the banker that a man who in four years had mastered six hundred learned volumes should waste nearly a year over one thin book easy of comprehension. **Theology** and histories of religion followed the Gospels.

In the last two years of his confinement the prisoner read an immense quantity of books quite **indiscriminately**. At one time he was busy with the natural sciences, then he would ask for Byron or Shakespeare. There were notes in which he demanded at the same time books on chemistry, and a manual of medicine, and a novel, and some treatise on philosophy or theology. His reading suggested a man swimming in the sea among the **wreckage** of his ship, and trying to save his life by greedily clutching first at one spar and then at another.

The old banker remembered all this, and thought:

“To-morrow at twelve o’clock he will regain his freedom. By our agreement I ought to pay him two million. If I do pay him, it is all over with me: I shall be utterly ruined.”

Fifteen years before, his millions had been beyond his reckoning; now he was afraid to ask himself which were greater, his debts or his **assets**. Desperate gambling on the Stock Exchange, wild **speculation** and the **excitability** which he could not get over even in advancing years, had by degrees led to the decline of his fortune and the proud, fearless, self-confident millionaire had become a banker of middling rank, trembling at every rise and fall in his investments. “Cursed bet!” **muttered** the old man, clutching his head in despair “Why didn’t the man die? He is only forty now. He will take my last penny from me, he will marry, will enjoy life, will gamble on the Exchange; while I shall look at him with envy like a beggar, and hear from him every day the same sentence: ‘I am indebted to you for the happiness of my life, let me help you!’ No, it is too much! The one means of being saved from **bankruptcy** and disgrace is the death of that man!”

< 5 >

It struck three o’clock, the banker listened; everyone was asleep in the house and nothing could be heard outside but the **rustling** of the chilled trees. Trying to make no noise, he took from a fireproof safe the key of the door which had not been opened for fifteen years, put on his overcoat, and went out of the house.

It was dark and cold in the garden. Rain was falling. A **damp cutting** wind was racing about the garden, **howling** and giving the trees no rest. The banker strained his eyes, but could see neither the earth nor the white statues, nor the lodge, nor the trees. Going to the spot where the lodge stood, he twice called the watchman.

No answer followed. Evidently the watchman had sought shelter from the weather, and was now asleep somewhere either in the kitchen or in the greenhouse.

"If I had the **pluck** to carry out my intention," thought the old man, "**Suspicion** would fall first upon the watchman."

He felt in the darkness for the steps and the door, and went into the entry of the lodge. Then he **groped** his way into a little passage and lighted a match. There was not a soul there. There was a bedstead with no bedding on it, and in the corner there was a dark cast-iron stove. The seals on the door leading to the prisoner's rooms were intact.

When the match went out the old man, trembling with emotion, peeped through the little window. A candle was burning dimly in the prisoner's room. He was sitting at the table. Nothing could be seen but his back, the hair on his head, and his hands. Open books were lying on the table, on the two easy-chairs, and on the carpet near the table.

Five minutes passed and the prisoner did not once stir. Fifteen years' imprisonment had taught him to sit still. The banker tapped at the window with his finger, and the prisoner made no movement whatever in response. Then the banker cautiously broke the seals off the door and put the key in the keyhole. The rusty lock gave a grating sound and the door **creaked**. The banker expected to hear at once footsteps and a cry of astonishment, but three minutes passed and it was as quiet as ever in the room. He made up his mind to go in.

< 6 >

At the table a man unlike ordinary people was sitting motionless. He was a skeleton with the skin drawn tight over his bones, with long curls like a woman's and a **shaggy** beard. His face was yellow with an earthy tint in it, his cheeks were hollow, his back long and narrow, and the hand on which his shaggy head was propped was so thin and delicate that it was dreadful to look at it. His hair was already **streaked** with silver, and seeing his **emaciated**, aged-looking face, no one would have believed that he was only forty. He was asleep ... In front of his bowed head there lay on the table a sheet of paper on which there was something written in fine handwriting.

"Poor creature!" thought the banker, "he is asleep and most likely dreaming of the millions. And I have only to take this half-dead man, throw him on the bed, stifle him a little with the pillow, and the most **conscientious** expert would find no sign of a violent death. But let us first read what he has written here..."

The banker took the page from the table and read as follows:

"To-morrow at twelve o'clock I regain my freedom and the right to associate with other men, but before I leave this room and see the sunshine, I think it necessary to say a few words to you. With a clear conscience I tell you, as before God, who beholds me, that I despise freedom and life and health, and all that in your books is called the good things of the world.

"For fifteen years I have been intently studying earthly life. It is true I have not seen the earth nor men, but in your books I have drunk fragrant wine, I have sung songs, I have hunted stags and wild boars in the forests, have loved women ...

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

Beauties as **ethereal** as clouds, created by the magic of your poets and geniuses, have visited me at night, and have whispered in my ears wonderful tales that have set my brain in a whirl. In your books I have climbed to the peaks of Elburz and Mont Blanc, and from there I have seen the sun rise and have watched it at evening flood the sky, the ocean, and the mountain-tops with gold and **crimson**. I have watched from there the lightning flashing over my head and **cleaving** the storm-clouds. I have seen green forests, fields, rivers, lakes, towns. I have heard the singing of the sirens, and the strains of the shepherds' pipes; I have touched the wings of **comely** devils who flew down to **converse** with me of God ... In your books I have flung myself into the bottomless pit, performed miracles, **slain**, burned towns, preached new religions, **conquered** whole kingdoms ...

< 7 >

"Your books have given me wisdom. All that the **unresting** thought of man has created in the ages is compressed into a small compass in my brain. I know that I am wiser than all of you.

"And I **despise** your books, I despise wisdom and the blessings of this world. It is all worthless, fleeting, illusory, and **deceptive**, like a mirage. You may be proud, wise, and fine, but death will wipe you off the face of the earth as though you were no more than mice burrowing under the floor, and your posterity, your history, your immortal geniuses will burn or freeze together with the earthly globe.

"You have lost your reason and taken the wrong path. You have taken lies for truth, and **hideousness** for beauty. You would marvel if, owing to strange events of some sorts, frogs and lizards suddenly grew on apple and orange trees instead of fruit, or if roses began to smell like a sweating horse; so I marvel at you who exchange heaven for earth. I don't want to understand you.

"To prove to you in action how I despise all that you live by, I renounce the two million of which I once dreamed as of paradise and which now I despise. To **deprive** myself of the right to the money I shall go out from here five hours before the time fixed, and so break the compact ..."

When the banker had read this he laid the page on the table, kissed the strange man on the head, and went out of the lodge, weeping. At no other time, even when he had lost heavily on the Stock Exchange, had he felt so great a **contempt** for himself. When he got home he lay on his bed, but his tears and emotion kept him for hours from sleeping.

Next morning the watchmen ran in with pale faces, and told him they had seen the man who lived in the lodge climb out of the window into the garden, go to the gate, and disappear. The banker went at once with the servants to the lodge and made sure of the **flight** of his prisoner. To avoid arousing unnecessary talk, he took from the table the writing in which the millions were **renounced**, and when he got home locked it up in the fireproof safe.

5.3 ANALYSIS OF 'THE BET'

5.3.1 Plot

Fifteen years back, a banker tossed a party in which he bet with a young lawyer two million rubbles that the lawyer could not remain in prison for five years. The

lawyer increased the time to fifteen years, and stayed in a garden house on the banker's garden. He had no contact with any people during this time; however had the liberty to peruse as many books he could read. The lawyer read extensively from books on literature to rationality and dialects to religious writings. Nothing more needed to be said. He enjoyed a real good time in learning the best of the knowledge of the world.

Presently, the period of fifteen years is nearly up and the banker is concerned about that. If he will pay him the promised two millions, he will be a bagger. Worried banker decides to kill the lawyer so that he does not have to pay him anything. So he secretly goes into the lawyer's room who is sleeping soundly. As the banker is going to murder him, he finds a note that clarifies that this bet has given a good opportunity to the lawyer to be wise and as a result he has decided renounce the material world. It turns out from the note that the lawyer has planned to escape from the house five hours before decided time and by that break the contract deliberately. The banker is happy finding this because he does not have to pay anything to him. Therefore, he kisses the lawyer's head, cries, and leaves. The next day the watchman reports that the lawyer ran away early. The banker takes the letter and places it into his safe.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:1

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN MAXIMUM 75 WORDS EACH.

1. Describe the bet between the banker and lawyer in your words:
2. What did the lawyer do during the first year of his confinement?
3. What did the lawyer write in the note on the last day?

5.3.2 Setting

The story begins in the same dark autumn night. However, as a master storyteller, Chekhov uses flashback as an artistic device wherein the story begins with the banker thinking about the night when he had made strange bet. It was a big party of intellectual men with their "interesting" conversations. Probably, they were all drunk because such a weird bet is only possible when people are out of their heads. However, as it turns out, they took the bet seriously because it was made in public. The rest of the setting is in the small room wherein the lawyer is kept for 15 years. We find him doing all kinds of things starting from adjusting with loneliness and frustration to playing music and drinking wine; and finally being extremely devoted to reading to be wiser.

At the end of the story, we are again brought amidst the cold night wherein the banker and the lawyer are alone in the garden house. The presence of the crowd in the beginning is sharply contrasted with the loneliness in the end. It is the loneliness that makes the banker make up his mind to kill the lawyer so that he does not have to pay him the promised two million rubble. The lawyer is fast asleep and the only man in action is the banker. It is a moment of great conflict, which makes us wonder what will happen next. However, the appearance of the note is the final twist in the story that shows the wisdom that the lawyer has earned during his jail-period. On the final counts, since the banker does not have to pay anything as per

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

the note, he is happy letting the lawyer live and returns to his house at peace.

5.3.3 Theme

The major theme of the short story is knowledge or wisdom weighs more than material achievements. From the very day the bet was made, one keeps thinking that it is for two million that the lawyer has sacrificed his freedom and has accepted the punishment of solitary confinement. Not only that, when the banker said five years, the lawyer increased the time and made it fifteen years which suggests his desperation for getting the money. However, as the story develops, the lawyer gets busier in reading more and diverse. Finally, when he writes that note, we discover that that the lawyer actually pursued knowledge to become wise and now he does not want any money.

Secondly, '*The Bet*' seems to argue that in order to get wisdom, one needs to renounce the world and embrace solitude. The loneliness makes a person to spend quality time reading and thinking. Therefore, the story has a very powerful line, 'Fifteen years' imprisonment had taught him to sit still.' It means that he has not absolute control over himself, which is a mark of a wise person.

Lastly, celebration of life is the third theme of the story '*The Bet*'. The very bet was about choosing life over death. The lawyer goes to the prison and sacrifices his freedom to make only one point: "To live anyhow is better than not at all." It is a very positive spirit that shows Chekhov's worldview about life. The result of the bet is very clear. The banker is happy because he does not have to pay anything and the lawyer is happy because now he has so much that he does not need anything.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

MATCH THE WORDS OF COLUMN 'A' WITH THEIR ANTONYMS GIVEN IN THE COLUMN 'B'.

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Freedom | A. Immoral |
| 2. Wide | B. Imprisonment |
| 3. Ethical | C. Delighted |
| 4. Sad | D. Crying |
| 5. Laughing | E. Narrow |

5.3.4 Prose Style

While reading '*The Bet*', we come across a beautiful prose style wherein Chekhov uses seven sections to describe developmental stages in the life of the character. The distinct quality of '*The Bet*' is to-the-point story, which does not allow the readers to get bored or get away their sight from the main action. Chekhov's ability to make the readers imagine all the possibilities in the life of the character's life is a real gift that a short story writer can have.

One of the striking features of Chekhov's prose style is to present all the background information first and then set the story into motion. For example, in '*The Bet*' we find the details of the characters, the setting, party and people; and then the process and result of the bet. Like his other stories, '*The Bet*' also wakes up

to the content in terms of length. In other words, he makes the story as long as the content allows it; not more or less. *The Bet* has many proverbial statements, which are so profound that we feel like using them as quotes. For example,

‘THE BET’ BY ANTON
CHEKHOV

- The State is not God.
- To live anyhow is better than not at all.
- The geniuses of all ages and of all lands speak different languages, but the same flame burns in them all.
- You have taken lies for truth, and hideousness for beauty.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 3

C. STATE WHETHER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE.

1. The time period of imprisonment was five years.
2. The lawyer drank a lot of wine in the first years.
3. The banker wanted to kill the lawyer.
4. The lawyer read religious stories in the jail.
5. The watchman saw the banker entering the garden house.

D. ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN DETAIL.

1. Why does the lawyer choose to break the bet by escaping early?
2. Write a short note on the major themes of the story.

5.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt

- Plot of the story
- The themes of the story
- Unique features of Chekhov’s prose style through *The Bet*

a. KEY WORDS

1. Capital punishment: Punishment of death
2. Disapprove: Reject
3. a priori: Based on theory
4. Restore: To bring back
5. Stake: Valuable
6. Frivolous: Playful
7. Reckoning: Thinking
8. Confinement: Jail
9. Pampered: Spoiled
10. Threshold: Boundary
11. Solitary: Lonely
12. Audible: Something you can hear
13. Zealously: Passionately

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

14. Unearthly: Heavenly
15. Immovably: fixed
16. Gospel: Teachings of Christ
17. Theology: The study of religions
18. Indiscriminately: Randomly
19. Wreckage: Breaking and sinking of ships
20. Assets: Property
21. Speculation: Assumption
22. Excitability: State of being excited
23. Muttered: Telling something softly
24. Bankruptcy: Financial failure
25. Rustle: Crackle
26. Damp: Slightly wet
27. Howling: Sound of pain
28. Pluck: Pick up
29. Suspicion: Doubt
30. Groped: Slightly go through
31. Creak: Scrape
32. Shaggy: Hairy
33. Streak: Vein
34. Emaciated: Very weak due to illness
35. Conscientious: Careful
36. Crimson: Pink
37. Ethereal: Airy
38. Cleave: Slice
39. Slain: Killed
40. Conquered: Won
41. Unresting: Restless
42. Despise: Hate
43. Deprive: Devoid
44. Deceptive: Illusionary
45. Converse: Discuss
46. Hideousness: Ugliness
47. Contempt: Dislike
48. Flight: Escaping
49. Comely: Pleasant
50. Renounced: Leaving away

5.6 BOOKS SUGGESTED

'THE BET' BY ANTON
CHEKHOV

- 1) *Ward No. 6 and Other Stories* by Anton Chekhov
- 2) *Gooseberries* by Anton Chekhov
- 3) *The Shooting Party* by Anton Chekhov
- 4) *The Story of a Nobody* by Anton Chekhov

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Let the students write in their own words. However, refer to the section one of the original story.
2. For the first year of his imprisonment, the prisoner suffered severely from loneliness and depression. The sounds of the piano could be heard continually day and night from his lodge. During this time, he read books with principally of a light character; novels with a complicated love plot, sensational and fantastic stories, and so on.
3. Refer to the last section of the story. However, following points can be written:
 - The lawyer wrote about the knowledge he got from reading various kinds of books
 - He experienced various kinds of places, people and interesting event through books
 - He also wrote that the wisdom is so much important for him that he had planned to break the bet by leaving 5 hours earlier than the decided time.

Check Your Progress 2

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. Freedom | A. Imprisonment |
| 2. Wide | B. Narrow |
| 3. Ethical | C. Immoral |
| 4. Sad | D. Delighted |
| 5. Laughing | E. Crying |

Check Your Progress 3**C. Match the columns:**

1. False
2. False
3. True
9. True
10. False

D. Answer the questions in detail:

1. The lawyer chooses to break the bet because he thinks that there is no point in getting the material wealth as compared to the knowledge and wisdom he has gained in the last fifteen years.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

Going away from the society and spending more times in gaining knowledge makes a person wiser. Therefore, if he keeps up the bet, he would end up collecting more and more wealth, which is of less importance.

2. There are three major themes of the story ‘*The Bet*’

1. Knowledge is more important than the material gains
2. In order to get wisdom, one needs to renounce the world and embrace solitude
3. Celebration of life



'THE NIGHT TRAIN AT DEOLI' BY RUSKIN BOND

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 '*The Night Train at Deoli*'
- 6.3 Analysis of '*The Night Train at Deoli*'
 - 6.3.1 Plot
 - 6.3.2 Setting
 - 6.3.3 Theme
 - 6.3.4 Prose Style
- 6.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.5 Key Words
- 6.6 Books Suggested

Answers

6.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall

- Understand the plot of the story '*The Night Train at Deoli*'
- Describe Ruskin Bond's setting
- Analyze the prose style of Ruskin Bond

After completing the unit, you should be able to

- Summarize the story '*The Night Train at Deoli*'
- Identify the theme of '*The Night Train at Deoli*'

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Ruskin Bond is known for his stories from hills and valleys. His first novel *The Room on the Roof* was first written when he was merely 17 years old and won John Llewellyn Rhys memorial prize. His stories feature themes such as love, multidimensional aspects of the Indian society, beauty of nature. One would find Bond's love of humanity while reading his stories. Often he visited his grandmother in Dehradun, which influenced many of his stories wherein we get to take a train journeys through beautiful forests, hills, and mysterious incidents. Many of these would find places in short stories like 'The Woman on Platform 8,' '*The Night Train at Deoli*,' 'Time Stops at Shamli,' 'The Tiger in the Tunnel,' and 'The Eyes Have It All,' among others. The present story too is a little piece of from that treasure of his railway journey to Dehradun.

6.2 TEXT: '*THE NIGHT TRAIN AT DEOLI*'

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

When I was at college, I used to spend my summer vacations in Dehra, at my grandmother's place. I would leave the plains early in May and return late in July. Deoli was a small station about thirty miles from Dehra; it marked the beginning of the heavy jungles of the Indian Terai.

The train would reach Deoli at about five in the morning, when the station would be dimly lit with electric bulbs and oil-lamps, and the jungle across the railway tracks would just be visible in the faint light of dawn. Deoli had only lone platform, an office for the stationmaster and a waiting room. The platform boasted a tea stall, a fruit vendor, and a few stray dogs; not much else, because the train stopped there for only ten minutes before rushing on into the forests.

Why it stopped at Deoli. I don't know. Nothing ever happened there. Nobody got off the train and nobody got in. There were never any coolies on the platform. But the train would halt there a full ten minutes, and then a bell would sound, the guard would blow his whistle, and presently Deoli would be left behind and forgotten.

I used to wonder what happened in Deoli, behind the station walls. I always felt sorry for that lonely little platform, and for the place, that nobody wanted to visit. I decided that one day I would get off the train at Deoli, and spend the day there, just to please the town.

I was eighteen, visiting my grandmother, and the night train stopped at Deoli. A girl came down the platform, selling baskets.

It was a cold morning and the girl had a shawl thrown across her shoulders. Her feet were bare and her clothes were old, but she was a young girl, walking gracefully and with dignity.

When she came to my window, she stopped. She saw that I was looking at her intently, but at first, she pretended not to notice. She had a pale skin, set off by shiny black hair, and dark, troubled eyes. And then those eyes, searching and eloquent, met mine.

She stood by my window for some time and neither of us said anything. But when she moved on, I found myself leaving my seat and going to the carriage door, and stood waiting on the platform, looking the other way. I walked across to the tea stall. A kettle was boiling over on a small fire, but the owner of the stall was busy serving tea somewhere on the train. The girl followed me behind the stall.

'Do you want to buy a basket?' she asked.

'They are very strong, made of the finest cane ...'

'No,' I said, 'I don't want a basket.'

We stood looking at each other for what seemed a very long time, and she said, 'Are you sure you don't want a basket?'

'All right, give me one,' I said, and I took the one on top and gave her a rupee, hardly daring to touch her fingers. As she was about to speak, the guard blew his whistle; she said something, but it was lost in the clanging of the bell and the hissing of the engine. I had to run back to my compartment. The carriage shuddered and jolted forward.

I watched her as the platform slipped away. She was alone on the platform and she did not move, but she was looking at me and smiling. I watched her until the signalbox came in the way, and then the jungle hid the station, but I could still see her standing there alone . . .

I sat up awake for the rest of the journey. I could not rid my mind of the picture of the girl’s face and her dark, smoldering eyes.

But when I reached Dehra the incident became blurred and distant, for there were other things to occupy my mind. It was only when I was making the return journey, two months later, that I remembered the girl.

I was looking out for her as the train drew into the station, and I felt an unexpected thrill when I saw her walking up the platform. I sprang off the footboard and waved to her.

When she saw me, she smiled. She was pleased that I remembered her. I was pleased that, she remembered me. We were both pleased, and it was almost like a meeting of old friends.

She did not go down the length of the train selling baskets, but came straight to the tea stall; her dark eyes were suddenly filled with light. We said nothing for some time but we couldn’t have been more eloquent.

I felt the impulse to put her on the train there and then, and take her away with me; I could not bear the thought of having to watch her recede into the distance of Deoli station. I took the baskets from her hand and put them down on the ground. She put out her hand for one of them, but I caught her hand and held it.

‘I have to go to Delhi,’ I said.

She nodded. ‘I do not have to go anywhere.’

The guard blew his whistle for the train to leave and how I hated the guard for doing that.

‘I will come again,’ I said. ‘Will you be here?’

She nodded again, and, as she nodded, the bell clanged and the train slid forward. I had to wrench my hand away from the girl and run for the moving train.

This time I did not forget her. She was with me for the remainder of the journey, and for long after. All that year she was a bright, living thing. And when the college term finished I packed in haste and left for Dehra earlier than usual. My grandmother would be pleased at my eagerness to see her.

I was nervous and anxious as the train drew into Deoli, because I was wondering what I should say to the girl and what I should do. I was determined that I wouldn’t stand helplessly before her, hardly able to speak or do anything about my feelings.

The train came to Deoli, and I looked up and down the platform, but I could not see the girl anywhere.

I opened the door and stepped off the footboard. I was deeply disappointed, and overcome by a sense of foreboding. I felt I had to do something, and so I ran up to the station-master and said, ‘Do you know the girl who used to sell baskets here?’

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

‘No, I don’t,’ said the station-master. ‘And you’d better get on the train if you don’t want to be left behind.’

But I paced up and down the platform, and stared over the railings at the station yard; all I saw was a mango tree and a dusty road leading into the jungle. Where did the road go? The train was moving out of the station, and I had to run up the platform and jump for the door of my compartment. Then, as the train gathered speed and rushed through the forests, I sat brooding in front of the window.

What could I do about finding a girl I had seen only twice, who had hardly spoken to me, and about whom I knew nothing — absolutely nothing — but for whom I felt a tenderness and responsibility that I had never felt before?

My grandmother was not pleased with my visit after all, because I didn’t stay at her place more than a couple of weeks. I felt restless and ill-at-ease. So I took the train back to the plains, meaning to ask further questions of the station-master at Deoli.

But at Deoli there was a new station-master. The previous man had been transferred to another post within the past week. The new man didn’t know anything about the girl who sold baskets. I found the owner of the tea stall, a small, shriveled-up man, wearing greasy clothes, and asked him if he knew anything about the girl with the baskets.

‘Yes, there was such a girl here, I remember quite well,’ he said. ‘But she has stopped coming now.’

‘Why?’ I asked. ‘What happened to her?’

‘How should I know?’ said the man. ‘She was nothing to me.’

And once again I had to run for the train.

As Deoli platform receded, I decided that one day I would have to break journey there, spend a day in the town, make enquiries, and find the girl who had stolen my heart with nothing but a look from her dark, impatient eyes.

With this thought I consoled myself throughout my last term in college. I went to Dehra again in the summer and when, in the early hours of the morning, the night train drew into Deoli station, I looked up and down the platform for signs of the girl, knowing, I wouldn’t find her but hoping just the same.

Somehow, I couldn’t bring myself to break journey at Deoli and spend a day there. (If it was all fiction or a film, I reflected, I would have got down and cleaned up the mystery and reached a suitable ending for the whole thing). I think I was afraid to do this. I was afraid of discovering what really happened to the girl. Perhaps she was no longer in Deoli, perhaps she was married, perhaps she had fallen ill . . .

In the last few years I have passed through Deoli many times, and I always look out of the carriage window, half expecting to see the same unchanged face smiling up at me. I wonder what happens in Deoli, behind the station walls. But I will never break my journey there. It may spoil my game. I prefer to keep hoping and dreaming, and looking out of the window up and down that lonely platform, waiting for the girl with the baskets.

I never break my journey at Deoli, but I pass through as often as I can.
(From *The Night Train at Deoli and Other Stories* by Ruskin Bond)

‘THE NIGHT TRAIN AT
DEOLI’ BY RUSKIN
BOND

6.3 ANALYSIS OF ‘THE NIGHT TRAIN AT DEOLI’

6.3.1 Plot

In this short story, Ruskin Bond portrays his experience amid one of his train adventures to Dehra as an eighteen-year-old. He discloses to us that he used to spend his vacations every late spring in his grandmother’s place in Dehra and needed to pass a little lonely station, Deoli in the midst of the forests in train. This station seems strange to him as nobody boarded on or off the train there and nothing happened there. He asks why the train stopped there for ten minutes normally without reason and feels sorry for the lonely station.

On one such adventure, the author happens to see a pale-looking young lady selling baskets. She seems, by all accounts, to be poor, however with grace and dignity. Her gleaming dark hair and dull, troubled eyes attracts the author. The young lady offers to sell baskets to him. He at first does not purchase and later when she demands, happens to get one with a little faltering, challenging not to touch her fingers. Then two simply look at each another for a long while, just as the seed of affection is planted in their hearts. He longs to see her, her looking and articulate eyes, again on his return journey. The meeting breaks the boredom of his journey and gets a feeling of connection and duty towards the young lady.

The second time he sees her, both of them feel happy to see each other, their smiling faces were giving a testimony to it. It looked like two very old and bosom friends were meeting. Silence rules and expresses more than words. He has a craving for taking her with him yet does not do as such. He reveals to her that he needs to go to Delhi and she answers saying she need not go anyplace, maybe communicating her helplessness. The two separate reluctantly as the train leaves the station, with the desire for meeting once more. The author spends the rest of the journey and quite a while later reasoning about her.

The following summer, not long after his college term completes, he hurries to go to Dehra, anxious to meet the young girl, his grandma being an excuse. This time she is not to be seen at the Deoli station however he sits there for quite a while. This profoundly disillusioned him and a feeling of separation beats him. On his way back to Delhi, he again holds up restlessly to see her, yet it finishes futile. On enquiry, he comes to realize that the young lady has stopped coming, and no one knows about her whereabouts. Indeed, he needs to keep running for the train and perpetually leave the station. He chooses that once he would break his journey there, go in the town, make enquiries and discover the young lady who had stolen his heart.

The next year in summer, he again strolls up and down the station wanting to see the girl, but some way or another, cannot force himself to break his journey to search for her. He is by all accounts afraid of finding about her, fearing about anything shocking that could have come to pass for her and wants to retain his sweet recollections of her and not spoil with awful occasions. The writer also proposes to his readers that he would not like to extend himself like a legend of a

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

motion picture where the hero would meet his sweetheart experiencing all hardships and prevail upon her. He likes to continue hoping and dreaming, waiting for the girl.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 1

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN MAXIMUM 75 WORDS EACH.

1. Describe the Deoli station in your words:
2. Why was the author going to Dehra? Whom did he meet at Deoli station?
3. How did the author and the young girl feel during the second meeting?

6.3.2 Setting

The entire story takes place on the lonely station of Deoli. The narrator is 18 years old with a girl is of similar age, which tells us the entire story is about the possibility of a relationship. The very beginning of the story presents a very vivid picture of the station. For example, the author says

“Deoli had only lone platform, an office for the stationmaster and a waiting room. The platform boasted a tea stall, a fruit vendor, and a few stray dogs; not much else, because the train stopped there for only ten minutes before rushing on into the forests. Why it stopped at Deoli? I don’t know. Nothing ever happened there. Nobody got off the train and nobody got in. There were never any coolies on the platform. But the train would halt there a full ten minutes, and then a bell would sound, the guard would blow his whistle, and presently Deoli would be left behind and forgotten.”

Such a setting allows can only allow a few characters to enter the story. Therefore, station provides an opportunity to the author to talk to the young girl selling baskets hold her hand in the second meeting. The time is also important; as the story says it is a nighttime when most of people are found to be at their homes, which allow a delicate feeling like love between the young lovers can flourish. Thus, Deoli station then becomes a symbol of the author’s most memorable experience in his life. The forest in the background also suggests that the characters are closer to nature and therefore closer to love.

6.3.3 Theme

The story is about how life is a constant river that never stops or waits for anyone. After the second meeting with the girl, the author tries to search her again and makes several attempts to find her. However, for some unknown reasons, the author could never meet that girl gain. Interestingly, the author is a much mature as a person as he says that if he were a fictional character of a novel or a film, he would have found her out anyhow. But he confesses that he was afraid of finding out the true reason for the sudden disappearance of the girl which might destroy the whole romantic experience. Thus, like a real world not sticking to something or someone and letting go them seem to be the major theme of the story. There are things in life, which are better kept as mystery or imagination because unfolding them might not be as good as we probably think of them. For example, what would have happened if the author had gone to the town and found that the girl got

married to someone else! Naturally, it would have made him sad. The story also indicates to the idea of brevity in love. Genuine happiness in love is its brevity because we see in the story that author meets the girl only twice and both of them feel great joy. The third and the most appealing theme is positive thinking. At the end of the story, the author says, “I prefer to keep hoping and dreaming, and looking out of the window up and down that lonely platform, waiting for the girl with the baskets.” No matter what we lose, it is important to hope that we may get it again and keep looking for it.

‘THE NIGHT TRAIN AT
DEOLI’ BY RUSKIN
BOND

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 2

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN ONE SENTENCE EACH.

1. Which two qualities of the girl does the author appreciate?
2. What is the major theme of the story?
3. What does the author wants to do instead of find the girl?

6.3.4 Prose Style

When we read the story ‘*The Night Train at Deoli*’, we find why Ruskin Bond is the most loved storyteller of all. His prose is lucid and terse. He makes his prose look more elegant by not stretching it too much and by delegating only the required portion to the dialogues and description. Throughout the story, we find very simple and succinct description to make the readers visualize the setting of the event. There are hardly a few dialogues that take place between the characters. As the form of the short story does not allow very vast span to the writers, the writers has to be concise and yet deliver the best. Since Ruskin Bond writes about nature and ordinary people around, it is very important to use the prose that suits the need. Therefore, we find great simplicity and engagement in his style. In the story, we can see that he is writing such as way as if the incident is really happening in front of us. Most of his stories have first person narrative technique making the readers empathize with the characters and the story.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 3

FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH PROPER ANSWERS GIVEN IN THE BRACKETS.

[searching, occurring, scope, simple and concise, indicates]

1. The prose style Ruskin Bond is _____ and _____.
2. The form of the short story does not allow very vast _____ to the writers.
3. We can see that he is writing such as way as if the incident is really _____ in front of us.
4. No matter what we lose, it is important to hope that we may get it again and keep _____ for it.
5. The forest in the background also _____ that the characters are closer to nature and therefore closer to love.

6.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt

- How story *The Night Train at Deoli* is written using very elegant prose style
- Ruskin Bond's style of plot construction
- The theme of the story

6.5 KEY WORDS

1. Plains -a large area of flat land with few trees.
2. Boast -Bragging, saying more than what it is
3. Halt-Stop
4. Intently- Attentively
5. Pretend-Acting
6. Eloquent-Expressive
7. Jolt-Push
8. Shudder-Shake/Tremble
9. Smoldering-Blazing
10. Sprang off-Jumped off
11. Wrench-Pull
12. Remainder-Rest of
13. Determined-Firm
14. Foreboding-Apprehension
15. Paced up-Speed up
16. Brooding-Dark
17. Tenderness-Affection
18. Ill-at-ease-Not very comfortable
19. shriveled-up – Old and withered
20. Break journey-Stop at a place while travelling for a purpose

6.6 BOOKS SUGGESTED

- 1) *The Night Train at Deoli and Other Stories* by Ruskin Bond
- 2) *The Room on the Roof* by Ruskin Bond

ANSWERS

‘THE NIGHT TRAIN AT DEOLI’ BY RUSKIN BOND

Check Your Progress 1

1. Students will write in their own words.
2. The author used to go to Dehra which was his grandmother’s place to spend his vacations in every May. When the train halted at the Deoli station, a young girl came to the author to sell baskets.
3. When they met again, they felt happy to see each other, their smiling faces were giving a testimony to it. It looked like two very old and bosom friends were meeting. They could not speak anything. The author wanted to take her with him but did not do so. He tells his plan to go to Delhi and she said she didn’t need to go anyplace. Then they separated.

Check Your Progress 2

1. The author appreciates girl’s grace and dignity.
2. The major theme of the story is to let go things and people.
3. Instead of finding the girl, the author wants to keep hoping, dreaming and waiting for the girl.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Simple and concise
2. Scope
3. Occurring
4. Searching
5. Indicates

Block

2

UNIT 7

'Eve's Diary' by Mark Twain

UNIT 8

'Rip Van Winkle' by Washington Irving

UNIT 9

'Minister's Black Veil' by Nathaniel Hawthorne

UNIT 10

'Gateman's Gift' by R. K. Narayan

UNIT 11

'The Lost Child' by Mulk Raj Anand

UNIT 12

'The Post Master' by Tagore

Editor

Prof. (Dr.) Ami Upadhyay

Vice Chancellor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

Programme Advisory Committee

Prof. (Dr.) Ami Upadhyay

Vice Chancellor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

Prof. (Dr.) Kamal Mehta

Saurashtra University, Rajkot

Prof. (Dr.) Darshna Trivedi

Gujarat University, Ahmedabad

Prof. (Dr.) Hetal Patel

HNGU, Patan

Dr. Rajendra Mandalia

Head, Sardar Patel University, V.V.Nagar

Reviewers

Prof. (Dr.) Ami Upadhyay

Vice Chancellor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

Dr. Dushyant Nimavat

Gujarat University, Ahmedabad

Dr. Ketan Gediya

Smt. S. R. Mehta Arts College, Navgujarat Campus, Ahmedabad

Content Writers

Dr. Iros Vaja

Dr. Binny Vaghela

Dr. Dhvani Vachrachani

Dr. Nikhil Joshi

Dr. Dhvani Sodha

Programme Coordinator

Dr. Binny Vaghela

Assistant Professor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

Publisher

Dr. Bhavin Trivedi

Registrar (I/c), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

ISBN : 978-93-91468-59-8

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph or any other means without permission in writing from Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad.



ROLE OF SELF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL IN DISTANCE LEARNING

The need to plan effective instruction is imperative for a successful distance teaching repertoire. This is due to the fact that the instructional designer, the tutor, the author (s) and the student are often separated by distance and may never meet in person. This is an increasingly common scenario in distance education instruction. As much as possible, teaching by distance should stimulate the student's intellectual involvement and contain all the necessary learning instructional activities that are capable of guiding the student through the course objectives. Therefore, the course / self-instructional material are completely equipped with everything that the syllabus prescribes.

To ensure effective instruction, a number of instructional design ideas are used and these help students to acquire knowledge, intellectual skills, motor skills and necessary attitudinal changes. In this respect, students' assessment and course evaluation are incorporated in the text.

The nature of instructional activities used in distance education self- instructional materials depends on the domain of learning that they reinforce in the text, that is, the cognitive, psychomotor and affective. These are further interpreted in the acquisition of knowledge, intellectual skills and motor skills. Students may be encouraged to gain, apply and communicate (orally or in writing) the knowledge acquired. Intellectual- skills objectives may be met by designing instructions that make use of students' prior knowledge and experiences in the discourse as the foundation on which newly acquired knowledge is built.

The provision of exercises in the form of assignments, projects and tutorial feedback is necessary. Instructional activities that teach motor skills need to be graphically demonstrated and the correct practices provided during tutorials. Instructional activities for inculcating change in attitude and behavior should create interest and demonstrate need and benefits gained by adopting the required change. Information on the adoption and procedures for practice of new attitudes may then be introduced.

Teaching and learning at a distance eliminates interactive communication cues, such as pauses, intonation and gestures, associated with the face-to-face method of teaching. This is particularly so with the exclusive use of print media. Instructional activities built into the instructional repertoire provide this missing interaction between the student and the teacher. Therefore, the use of instructional activities to affect better distance teaching is not optional, but mandatory.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

Our team of successful writers and authors has tried to reduce this.

Divide and to bring this Self Instructional Material as the best teaching and communication tool. Instructional activities are varied in order to assess the different facets of the domains of learning.

Distance education teaching repertoire involves extensive use of self-instructional materials, be they print or otherwise. These materials are designed to achieve certain pre-determined learning outcomes, namely goals and objectives that are contained in an instructional plan. Since the teaching process is affected over a distance, there is need to ensure that students actively participate in their learning by performing specific tasks that help them to understand the relevant concepts. Therefore, a set of exercises is built into the teaching repertoire in order to link what students and tutors do in the framework of the course outline. These could be in the form of students' assignments, a research project or a science practical exercise. Examples of instructional activities in distance education are too numerous to list. Instructional activities, when used in this context, help to motivate students, guide and measure students' performance (continuous assessment)



PREFACE

We have put in lots of hard work to make this book as user-friendly as possible, but we have not sacrificed quality. Experts were involved in preparing the materials. However, concepts are explained in easy language for you. We have included many tables and examples for easy understanding.

We sincerely hope this book will help you in every way you expect. All the best for your studies from our team!

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY



: UNIT STRUCTURE :

- 7.0 Objectives**
- 7.1 Introduction**
- 7.2 Text: ‘EVE’S DIARY’ BY MARK TWAIN**
- 7.3 Background of the Story**
- 7.4 About the Story**
- 7.5 Let Us Sum Up**
- 7.6 Key Words**
- 7.7 Books Suggested**

Answers

7.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall study the following aspects of the unit:

- Learn about the writer Mark Twain in brief,
- Some facts about the unit,
- Background of the Story and
- The story in details

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Mark Twain was born on November 30, 1835 Florida, Missouri and died on April 21, 1910. He was an American writer and humourist. Mark Twain, the pseudonym used by Samuel Langhorne Clemens, first appeared on February 3, 1863, in a piece he contributed to the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise. Prior to adopting Mark Twain as his pen name, Clemens wrote under the pen name Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass for three humorous pieces he contributed to the *Keokuk Post*.

He is known for often satirical writing that exposes hypocrisy and corruption while examining small-town life in America in the 19th century. His best works are characterized by broad, often irreverent humour or biting social satire. His writing is also known for realism of place and language, memorable characters, and condemnation of hypocrisy and oppression.

He wrote several novels, including two major classics of American literature *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). Twain explored the American soul with wit, cheerfulness, and a sharp eye for truth. He was a versatile genius, a river boat pilot, lecturer, journalist, inventor and entrepreneur. American literary critic Lionel Trilling called Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* “one of the world’s great books and one of the central documents of American culture.”

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

When British writer Rudyard Kipling interviewed Mark Twain in 1889, Kipling was still making his reputation while he was at the height of his fame. Kipling visited Twain in Elmira, New York, after leaving India, where Kipling worked as a journalist. Kipling published this interview in his collection of stories titled *From Sea to Sea* (1899). Twain received an honorary doctorate from Oxford University in 1907. Some of Mark Twain's works follows:

Novels/Fiction: (Total: 19)

1. The Gilded Age
2. 1601 humorous work
3. Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The
4. Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The
5. American Claimant, The
6. Tom Sawyer, Detective
7. Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson, The A novel, satire
8. Tramp Abroad, A novel (traveling)

Non-Fiction:

1. Chapters from My Autobiography
2. Following the Equator
3. Goldsmiths Friend Abroad Again
4. Letters of Mark Twain (complete), The
5. Life on the Mississippi

Plays:

1. Encounter With An Interviewer, An one-act short play

Poems:

1. Those Annual Bills

Essays: (Total 18)

1. As Concerns Interpreting
2. At the Shrine of St. Wagner
3. Taming the Bicycle
4. Turning-Point of My Life, The
5. What Is Man?
6. William Dean Howells
7. Concerning Tobacco
8. Death of Jean, The
9. Bee, The

Short Stories: (He wrote as many as 127 Short stories) here is the list of some of them.

1. "After" Jenkins

2. "Party Cries" In Ireland
3. About Barbers
4. About Magnanimous-Incident Literature
5. English as She is Taught
6. Entertaining Article, An
7. Esquimaux Maiden's Romance, The
8. Eve's Diary
9. Fable, A
10. Facts Concerning The Recent Resignation, The
11. Siamese Twins, The
12. Speech at The Scottish Banquet In London
13. Speech on Accident Insurance
14. Speech on The Babies
15. Speech on The Weather
16. Stolen White Elephant, The
17. Story of The Bad Little Boy, The
18. Story of The Good Little Boy
19. Switzerland, the Cradle of Liberty
20. Wit Inspirations of The "Two-Year-Olds"

Trilling called Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* "one of the world's great books and one of the central documents of American culture."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

INSTRUCTIONS:

The following details regarding the writer are to be kept in mind

- Mark Twain, the pseudonym used by Samuel Langhorne Clemens
- He was an American writer and humourist.
- He is known for often satirical writing that exposes hypocrisy and corruption while examining small-town life in America in the 19th century.
- He wrote several novels, including two major classics of American literature *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884).
- Trilling called Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* "one of the world's great books and one of the central documents of American culture."

Mark Twain, pseudonym of Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910), American writer and humorist, whose best work is characterized by broad, often irreverent humor or biting social satire. Twain's writing is also known for realism of place and language, memorable characters, and condemnation of hypocrisy and oppression.

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

Clemens was born in Florida, Missouri, on November 30, 1835, and moved with his family to Hannibal, Missouri, a port on the Mississippi River, when he was four years old. There he received a public school education and spent his childhood in contact with the people who made their living from the river. After the death of his father in 1847, Clemens was apprenticed to two Hannibal printers, and in 1851, he began setting type for and contributing sketches to his brother Orion's *Hannibal Journal*. Subsequently he worked as a printer in Keokuk, Iowa; New York City; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and other cities.

In 1857, Clemens set out for New Orleans by riverboat, with the intention of going on to South America in search of adventure. Talks with the boat's pilot, however, revived Clemens's boyhood dream of "learning the river," and he was taken on as an apprentice. He received his license as a pilot in 1859 and worked as a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi River until the American Civil War (1861-1865) brought an end to travel on the river. In 1861, Clemens served briefly as a volunteer soldier in the Confederate cavalry. Later that year he accompanied Orion to the newly created Nevada Territory, where he tried his hand at silver mining.

For almost a year, Clemens worked as a prospector in Nevada, but without much success. During that year he began contributing humorous sketches to the *Territorial Enterprise*, a newspaper published in Virginia City, Nevada, and in 1862, he became a reporter for the paper. Seeking a good pen name, he chose Mark Twain, a Mississippi riverboat phrase called out to test the water's depth; "twain," or two fathoms (12 feet) deep, meant it was safe for navigating. In May 1864, a quarrel with a rival journalist, whom he challenged to a duel, forced Twain to flee to San Francisco, California. For the next two years, he worked for various California papers. During this time he met American writers Artemus Ward and Bret Harte, who encouraged him in his work.

In 1865, Twain reworked a tale he had heard in the California gold fields, and within months the author and the story, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," had become national sensations. The story, which was published in several newspapers, is a typical example of the tall tale, or exaggerated tale of the frontier, which was the basis of much of Twain's humor.

Early in 1866, the Sacramento *Union* commissioned Twain to do a series of letters about Hawaii. Their popularity encouraged him to try a humorous lecture based on his experiences. Its enormous success marked the beginning of his career as an internationally famous and popular humorous lecturer. As a result of his Hawaiian triumph, Twain was commissioned by a San Francisco newspaper to supply a weekly newsletter on New York City. After his arrival in New York City, he saw an announcement for a Mediterranean cruise and persuaded the newspaper to send him on it.

Twain wrote of his cruise to Europe and Palestine in *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), a highly successful travel book that is a delightful combination of humor and shrewd observation. *The Innocents Abroad* shows Twain at his irreverent best, debunking the awestruck and uncritical admiration of many Americans for European civilization. Besides supplying the material for the book, the cruise brought him the friendship of Charles Langdon, whose sister Olivia married Twain in 1870.

With help from Jervis Langdon, his prosperous father-in-law, Twain bought an interest in the Buffalo, New York *Express*, intending to make journalism his career. The venture proved unhappy. Jervis Langdon died of cancer, and the Twains' son, Langdon, died in infancy. In 1871 the couple moved to Hartford, Connecticut, where their three daughters were born: Suzy in 1872, Clara in 1874, and Jean in 1880. Much of Twain's best work was written in the 1870s and 1880s in Hartford or during the summers at Quarry Farm, near Elmira, New York.

After publishing *Roughing It* (1872), an account of his early adventures as a miner and journalist, Twain wrote his first novel, *The Gilded Age* (1873), in collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner. Although not entirely successful, the book nevertheless contains some sharp and revealing insights about American political life in the 1870s. That period in United States history has often been called the Gilded Age in recognition of the novel's accurate representation of a time of greed, wealth, and corruption.

A visit from a boyhood friend reminded Twain of youthful escapades in Hannibal. After two or three false starts, Twain found the right approach and worked on *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* at intervals throughout 1874 and 1875. Published in 1876 it established Twain as a master of character and situation as well as humor. This celebration of boyhood in a town on the Mississippi River draws heavily on Twain's memories. In his words, Tom "was all the boy I ever knew." Rejecting the standard pattern of juvenile literature in which good children are rewarded and bad children are punished, he wrote a novel about real youngsters, vividly and humorously describing their impressions and their adventures.

The many colorful incidents in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* include Tom's courtship of Becky Thatcher, his plans for a pirate gang, and his escapades with his friend Huckleberry ("Huck") Finn. In one of the book's best-known scenes, Tom is ordered to whitewash a fence as his punishment for playing hooky. He gets his friends to do the work by making it seem a great honor. Much of the plot revolves around a murder, which Tom and Huck witness. Terrified, they hide on an island. When they secretly return to town, they find that the townspeople think them dead and have arranged their funeral. At the funeral, Tom and Huck are discovered to be alive. They become heroes by identifying the murderer and saving an innocent suspect.

Almost as soon as *Tom Sawyer* was completed Twain planned a companion story, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Begun in 1876 it was repeatedly put aside but finally published in 1884. With *Huckleberry Finn*, generally considered his masterpiece, Twain reach the highest level of his creativity. Especially outstanding is Twain's portrayal of the freethinking, pioneer spirit of Huck, who fights pretense and hypocrisy with good-humored common sense. Huck's adventures also provide the reader with a panorama of American life along the Mississippi before the Civil War. Twain's skill in capturing the rhythms of that life helps make the book one of the classics of American literature.

The story is narrated by Huck, a rough, good-natured boy of little education but keen intelligence, who lives with the Widow Douglas. Huck is kidnapped

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

by his shiftless father, who keeps him prisoner in an isolated cabin. The boy escapes and, together with a runaway slave, Jim, sails down the Mississippi on a raft. During their trip, Huck and Jim encounter many unusual characters, including two families involved in a senseless feud and a pair of scoundrels who swindle innocent townspeople. Their experiences bring about a strong friendship between the boy and the slave, but their adventures end when Jim is captured and held at the farm of Tom Sawyer's Aunt Sally. When Tom comes to visit his aunt, he, with Huck's reluctant help, concocts a fantastic but unsuccessful scheme to free Jim. Huck later learns that Jim has long since been granted his freedom by his former owner.

Faced with the prospect of being adopted by Aunt Sally, the self-reliant Huck decides to go West, saying: "I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before." Thus Huck becomes the symbol of untamed America, someone who will not bow to the conventions of a society that is crowding in on him. The novel is a masterpiece in its choice of episodes that reveal the conflicts of the age, in its dramatic tensions, its folklore, its varied cast of characters, and its naturalness of language.

The adventures of Huck and Jim show Huck (and the reader) the cruelty of which people is capable. Another theme of the novel is the conflict between Huck's feelings of friendship with Jim, who is one of the few people he can trust, and his knowledge that he is breaking the laws of the time by helping Jim escape. In one of the book's most powerful scenes Huck decides that, even if it means committing a sin, he won't return Jim to slavery: "All right, then, I'll go to hell."

Unlike *Tom Sawyer*, in which a mature narrator recalls his youth, *Huckleberry Finn* is told in the first person, through the mouth of a 13- or 14-year-old boy. To keep the narration plausibly within the limits of Huck's mental and emotional development was a triumph in itself. But additionally, American backwoods vernacular (everyday speech), previously used only in low-life satire, here became a literary instrument for the first time. Moreover, the vernacular is applied to a cross section of pre-Civil War Southern society, from its dregs (Huck's father) to its aristocracy. It takes numerous readings to grasp the subtlety with which social levels are differentiated and to understand that the book's true hero is Jim.

Among the books, Twain worked on, while *Huckleberry Finn* was set aside, were *A Tramp Abroad* (1880), which describes a walking trip through the Black Forest of Germany and the Swiss Alps, and *The Prince and the Pauper* (1882), a children's book that focuses on switched identities in Tudor England. *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) combines an autobiographical account of his experiences as a river pilot with a visit to the Mississippi nearly two decades after he left it. The first part of the book, about his early experiences, was originally serialized in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1875 as *Old Times on the Mississippi*. In the second part of the book, Twain records the changes he finds upon his return: Railroad competition has endangered the river trade

and the riverboat pilot is no longer a respected figure. Twain regrets the passing of a great era and protests that the train is no substitute for the elegant riverboat.

In 1884, Twain formed the firm Charles L. Webster and Company to publish his and other writers' works. At first, it was a profitable venture. The first publications were Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and *Personal Memoirs* (two volumes, 1885-1886), by American general and president Ulysses S. Grant. A disastrous investment in an automatic typesetting machine led to the firm's bankruptcy in 1894. To economize, Twain and his family went to Europe in 1891 and for the next decade had no permanent home. After the firm failed, Twain announced that he would pay all debts in full, and in 1895 began a successful worldwide lecture tour. The tour and the book based on it, *Following the Equator* (1897), paid off Twain's debts. But while Twain was touring, his daughter Suzy died of meningitis.

Twain's work during the 1890s and the 1900s is marked by growing pessimism and bitterness—the result of his business reverses and the death of his wife, Olivia, in 1904 and his daughter Jean in 1909. Twain died less than four months after Jean, on April 21, 1910, in Redding, Connecticut.

Signs of Twain's bitterness appear in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889). Intended as a satire on the cruelty and credulity of people in feudal England (*see* Feudalism), the tale veers from farce to tragedy and back again. Other significant later works are *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), a novel set in the South before the Civil War that criticizes racism by focusing on mistaken racial identities, and *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (1896), a sentimental biography. Twain's other later writings include short stories, the best known of which are "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1899) and "The War Prayer" (1905); philosophical, social, and political essays; the manuscript of "The Mysterious Stranger," an uncompleted piece that was published posthumously in 1916; and autobiographical dictations. His last, most scathing attack against "the damned human race," *Letters from the Earth*, was kept from publication by his daughter Clara until 1962.

Twain's work was inspired by the unconventional American West, and the popularity of his work marked the end of the domination of American literature by New England writers. He is justly renowned as a humorist but was not always appreciated by the writers of his time as anything more than that. Successive generations of writers, however, recognized the role that Twain played in creating a truly American literature. He portrayed uniquely American subjects in a humorous and colloquial, yet poetic, language. His success in creating this plain but evocative language precipitated the end of American reverence for British and European culture and for the more formal language associated with those traditions. His adherence to American themes, settings, and language set him apart from many other novelists of the day and had a powerful effect on such later American writers as Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner, both of whom pointed to Twain as an inspiration for their own writing.

In Twain's later years, he wrote less, but he became a celebrity, frequently speaking out on public issues. He also came to be known for the white linen suit he always wore when making public appearances. Twain received an honorary doc-

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

torate from the University of Oxford in 1907. When he died he left an uncompleted autobiography, which was eventually edited by his secretary, Albert Bigelow Paine, and published in 1924. In the mid-20th century, controversy arose regarding the teaching of *Huckleberry Finn* in schools because of the book's supposed racism. Some parents and school boards felt that the portrayal of Jim provided a negative stereotype of blacks, and they objected to Twain's use of the racial slurs of his time (Jim is called "Nigger Jim"). Yet *Huckleberry Finn* provides an indictment of racism, and many teachers believe that, if well taught, the book opens students' eyes to issues of racism, freedom, conscience, and self-definition in American society.

7.2 TEXT: 'EVE'S DIARY' BY MARK TWAIN

SATURDAY.—I am almost a whole day old, now. I arrived yesterday. That is as it seems to me. And it must be so, for if there was a day-before-yesterday I was not there when it happened, or I should remember it. It could be, of course, that it did happen, and that I was not noticing. Very well; I will be very watchful now, and if any day-before-yesterdayshappen I will make a note of it. It will be best to start right and not let the record get confused, for some instinct tells me that these details are going to be important to the historian some day. For I feel like an experiment, I feel exactly like an experiment; it would be impossible for a person to feel more like an experiment than I do, and so I am coming to feel convinced that that is what I AM—an experiment; just an experiment, and nothing more.

Then if I am an experiment, am I the whole of it? No, I think not; I think the rest of it is part of it. I am the main part of it, but I think the rest of it has its share in the matter. Is my position assured, or do I have to watch it and take care of it? The latter, perhaps. Some instinct tells me that eternal vigilance is the price of supremacy. [That is a good phrase, I think, for one so young.]

Everything looks better today than it did yesterday. In the rush of finishing up yesterday, the mountains were left in a ragged condition, and some of the plains were so cluttered with rubbish and remnants that the aspects were quite distressing. Noble and beautiful works of art should not be subjected to haste; and this majestic new world is indeed a most noble and beautiful work. And certainly marvelously near to being perfect, notwithstanding the shortness of the time. There are too many stars in some places and not enough in others, but that can be remedied presently, no doubt. The moon got loose last night, and slid down and fell out of the scheme—a very great loss; it breaks my heart to think of it. There isn't another thing among the ornaments and decorations that is comparable to it for beauty and finish. It should have been fastened better. If we can only get it back again—

But of course there is no telling where it went to. And besides, whoever gets it will hide it; I know it because I would do it myself. I believe I can be honest in all other matters, but I already begin to realize that the core and center of my nature is love of the beautiful, a passion for the beautiful, and that it would not be safe to trust me with a moon that belonged to another person and that person didn't know I had it. I could give up a moon that I found in the daytime, because I should be afraid someone was looking; but if I found it in the dark, I am sure I should find some

kind of an excuse for not saying anything about it. For I do love moons, they are so pretty and so romantic. I wish we had five or six; I would never go to bed; I should never get tired lying on the moss-bank and looking up at them.

Stars are good, too. I wish I could get some to put in my hair. But I suppose I never can. You would be surprised to find how far off they are, for they do not look it. When they first showed, last night, I tried to knock some down with a pole, but it didn't reach, which astonished me; then I tried clods till I was all tired out, but I never got one. It was because I am left-handed and cannot throw good. Even when I aimed at the one I wasn't after I couldn't hit the other one, though I did make some close shots, for I saw the black blot of the clod sail right into the midst of the golden clusters forty or fifty times, just barely missing them, and if I could have held out a little longer maybe I could have got one.

So I cried a little, which was natural, I suppose, for one of my age, and after I was rested I got a basket and started for a place on the extreme rim of the circle, where the stars were close to the ground and I could get them with my hands, which would be better, anyway, because I could gather them tenderly then, and not break them. But it was farther than I thought, and at last I had to give it up; I was so tired I couldn't drag my feet another step; and besides, they were sore and hurt me very much.

I couldn't get back home; it was too far and turning cold; but I found some tigers and nestled in among them and was most adorably comfortable, and their breath was sweet and pleasant, because they live on strawberries. I had never seen a tiger before, but I knew them in a minute by the stripes. If I could have one of those skins, it would make a lovely gown.

Today I am getting better ideas about distances. I was so eager to get hold of every pretty thing that I giddily grabbed for it, sometimes when it was too far off, and sometimes when it was but six inches away but seemed a foot—alas, with thorns between! I learned a lesson; also I made an axiom, all out of my own head—my very first one; THE SCRATCHED EXPERIMENT SHUNS THE THORN. I think it is a very good one for one so young.

I followed the other Experiment around, yesterday afternoon, at a distance, to see what it might be for, if I could. But I was not able to make [it] out. I think it is a man. I had never seen a man, but it looked like one, and I feel sure that that is what it is. I realize that I feel more curiosity about it than about any of the other reptiles. If it is a reptile, and I suppose it is; for it has frowzy hair and blue eyes, and looks like a reptile. It has no hips; it tapers like a carrot; when it stands, it spreads itself apart like a derrick; so I think it is a reptile, though it may be architecture.

I was afraid of it at first, and started to run every time it turned around, for I thought it was going to chase me; but by and by I found it was only trying to get away, so after that I was not timid any more, but tracked it along, several hours, about twenty yards behind, which made it nervous and unhappy. At last it was a good deal worried, and climbed a tree. I waited a good while, then gave it up and went home. Today the same thing over. I've got it up the

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

tree again.

SUNDAY.—It is up there yet. Resting, apparently. But that is a subterfuge: Sunday isn't the day of rest; Saturday is appointed for that. It looks to me like a creature that is more interested in resting than in anything else. It would tire me to rest so much. It tires me just to sit around and watch the tree. I do wonder what it is for; I never see it do anything.

They returned the moon last night, and I was SO happy! I think it is very honest of them. It slid down and fell off again, but I was not distressed; there is no need to worry when one has that kind of neighbours; they will fetch it back. I wish I could do something to show my appreciation. I would like to send them some stars, for we have more than we can use. I mean I, not we, for I can see that the reptile cares nothing for such things.

It has low tastes, and is not kind. When I went there yesterday evening in the gloaming it had crept down and was trying to catch the little speckled fishes that play in the pool, and I had to clod it to make it go up the tree again and let them alone. I wonder if THAT is what it is for? Hasn't it any heart? Hasn't it any compassion for those little creature? Can it be that it was designed and manufactured for such ungentle work? It has the look of it. One of the clods took it back of the ear, and it used language. It gave me a thrill, for it was the first time I had ever heard speech, except my own. I did not understand the words, but they seemed expressive.

When I found it could talk I felt a new interest in it, for I love to talk; I talk, all day, and in my sleep, too, and I am very interesting, but if I had another to talk to I could be twice as interesting, and would never stop, if desired.

If this reptile is a man, it isn't an IT, is it? That wouldn't be grammatical, would it? I think it would be HE. I think so. In that case one would parse it thus: nominative, HE; dative, HIM; possessive, HIS'N. Well, I will consider it a man and call it he until it turns out to be something else. This will be handier than having so many uncertainties.

NEXT WEEK SUNDAY.—All the week I tagged around after him and tried to get acquainted. I had to do the talking, because he was shy, but I didn't mind it. He seemed pleased to have me around, and I used the sociable "we" a good deal, because it seemed to flatter him to be included.

WEDNESDAY.—We are getting along very well indeed, now, and getting better and better acquainted. He does not try to avoid me anymore, which is a good sign, and shows that he likes to have me with him. That pleases me, and I study to be useful to him in every way I can, so as to increase his regard.

During the last day or two I have taken all the work of naming things off his hands, and this has been a great relief to him, for he has no gift in that line, and is evidently very grateful. He can't think of a rational name to save him, but I do not let him see that I am aware of his defect. Whenever a new creature comes along, I name it before he has time to expose himself by an awkward silence. In this way, I have saved him many embarrassments. I have no defect like this. The minute I set eyes on an animal, I know what it is. I don't have to reflect a moment; the right name

comes out instantly, just as if it were an inspiration, as no doubt it is, for I am sure it wasn't in me half a minute before. I seem to know just by the shape of the creature and the way it acts what animal it is.

When the dodo came along, he thought it was a wildcat—I saw it in his eye. But I saved him. And I was careful not to do it in a way that could hurt his pride. I just spoke up in a quite natural way of pleasing surprise, and not as if I was dreaming of conveying information, and said, "Well, I do declare, if there isn't the dodo!" I explained—without seeming to be explaining—how I know it for a dodo, and although I thought maybe he was a little piqued that I knew the creature when he didn't, it was quite evident that he admired me. That was very agreeable, and I thought of it more than once with gratification before I slept. How little a thing can make us happy when we feel that we have earned it!

THURSDAY.—my first sorrow. Yesterday he avoided me and seemed to wish I would not talk to him. I could not believe it, and thought there was some mistake, for I loved to be with him, and loved to hear him talk, and so how could it be that he could feel unkind toward me when I had not done anything? But at last it seemed true, so I went away and sat lonely in the place where I first saw him the morning that we were made and I did not know what he was and was indifferent about him; but now it was a mournful place, and every little thing spoke of him, and my heart was very sore. I did not know why very clearly, for it was a new feeling; I had not experienced it before, and it was all a mystery, and I could not make it out.

But when night came I could not bear the lonesomeness, and went to the new shelter which he has built, to ask him what I had done that was wrong and how I could mend it and get back his kindness again; but he put me out in the rain, and it was my first sorrow.

SUNDAY.—It is pleasant again, now, and I am happy; but those were heavy days; I do not think of them when I can help it.

I tried to get him some of those apples, but I cannot learn to throw straight. I failed, but I think the good intention pleased him. They are forbidden, and he says I shall come to harm; but so I come to harm through pleasing him, why shall I care for that harm?

MONDAY.—This morning I told him my name, hoping it would interest him. But he did not care for it. It is strange. If he should tell me his name, I would care. I think it would be pleasanter in my ears than any other sound.

He talks very little. Perhaps it is because he is not bright, and is sensitive about it and wishes to conceal it. It is such a pity that he should feel so, for brightness is nothing; it is in the heart that the values lie. I wish I could make him understand that a loving good heart is riches, and riches enough, and that without it intellect is poverty.

Although he talks so little, he has quite a considerable vocabulary. This morning he used a surprisingly good word. He evidently recognized, himself, that it was a good one, for he worked in twice afterward, casually. It was good casual art, still it showed that he possesses a certain quality of perception. Without a doubt that

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

seed can be made to grow, if cultivated.

Where did he get that word? I do not think I have ever used it.

No, he took no interest in my name. I tried to hide my disappointment, but I suppose I did not succeed. I went away and sat on the moss-bank with my feet in the water. It is where I go when I hunger for companionship, someone to look at, someone to talk to. It is not enough—that lovely white body painted there in the pool—but it is something, and something is better than utter loneliness. It talks when I talk; it is sad when I am sad; it comforts me with its sympathy; it says, “Do not be downhearted, you poor friendless girl; I will be your friend.” It IS a good friend to me, and my only one; it is my sister.

That first time that she forsook me! ah, I shall never forget that —never, never. My heart was lead in my body! I said, “She was all I had, and now she is gone!” In my despair I said, “Break, my heart; I cannot bear my life any-more!” and hid my face in my hands, and there was no solace for me. And when I took them away, after a little, there she was again, white and shining and beautiful, and I sprang into her arms!

That was perfect happiness; I had known happiness before, but it was not like this, which was ecstasy. I never doubted her afterward. Sometimes she stayed away—maybe an hour, maybe almost the whole day, but I waited and did not doubt; I said, “She is busy, or she is gone on a journey, but she will come.” And it was so: she always did. At night she would not come if it was dark, for she was a timid little thing; but if there was a moon she would come. I am not afraid of the dark, but she is younger than I am; she was born after I was. Many and many are the visits I have paid her; she is my comfort and my refuge when my life is hard—and it is mainly that.

TUESDAY.—All the morning I was at work improving the estate; and I purposely kept away from him in the hope that he would get lonely and come. But he did not.

At noon I stopped for the day and took my recreation by flitting all about with the bees and the butterflies and revelling in the flowers, those beautiful creatures that catch the smile of God out of the sky and preserve it! I gathered them, and made them into wreaths and garlands and clothed myself in them while I ate my luncheon—apples, of course; then I sat in the shade and wished and waited. But he did not come.

But no matter. Nothing would have come of it, for he does not care for flowers. He called them rubbish, and cannot tell one from another, and thinks it is superior to feel like that. He does not care for me, he does not care for flowers, he does not care for the painted sky at eventide—is there anything he does care for, except building shacks to coop himself up in from the good clean rain, and thumping the melons, and sampling the grapes, and fingering the fruit on the trees, to see how those properties are coming along?

I laid a dry stick on the ground and tried to bore a hole in it with another one, in order to carry out a scheme that I had, and soon I got an awful fright. A thin, transparent bluish film rose out of the hole, and I dropped everything and ran! I

thought it was a spirit, and I WAS so frightened! But I looked back, and it was not coming; so I leaned against a rock and rested and panted, and let my limbs go on trembling until they got steady again; then I crept warily back, alert, watching, and ready to fly if there was occasion; and when I was come near, I parted the branches of a rose-bush and peeped through—wishing the man was about, I was looking so cunning and pretty—but the sprite was gone. I went there, and there was a pinch of delicate pink dust in the hole. I put my finger in, to feel it, and said OUCH! and took it out again. It was a cruel pain. I put my finger in my mouth; and by standing first on one foot and then the other, and grunting, I presently eased my misery; then I was full of interest, and began to examine.

I was curious to know what the pink dust was. Suddenly the name of it occurred to me, though I had never heard of it before. It was FIRE! I was as certain of it as a person could be of anything in the world. So without hesitation I named it that—fire.

I had created something that didn't exist before; I had added a new thing to the world's uncountable properties; I realized this, and was proud of my achievement, and was going to run and find him and tell him about it, thinking to raise myself in his esteem—but I reflected, and did not do it. No—he would not care for it. He would ask what it was good for, and what could I answer? For if it was not GOOD for something, but only beautiful, merely beautiful—

So I sighed, and did not go. For it wasn't good for anything; it could not build a shack, it could not improve melons, it could not hurry a fruit crop; it was useless, it was a foolishness and a vanity; he would despise it and say cutting words. But to me it was not despicable; I said, "Oh, you fire, I love you, you dainty pink creature, for you are BEAUTIFUL—and that is enough!" and was going to gather it to my breast. But refrained. Then I made another maxim out of my head, though it was so nearly like the first one that I was afraid it was only a plagiarism: "THE BURNT EXPERIMENT SHUNS THE FIRE."

I wrought again; and when I had made a good deal of fire-dust I emptied it into a handful of dry brown grass, intending to carry it home and keep it always and play with it; but the wind struck it and it sprayed up and spat out at me fiercely, and I dropped it and ran. When I looked back the blue spirit was towering up and stretching and rolling away like a cloud, and instantly I thought of the name of it—SMOKE!—though, upon my word, I had never heard of smoke before.

Soon brilliant yellow and red flares shot up through the smoke, and I named them in an instant—FLAMES—and I was right, too, though these were the very first flames that had ever been in the world. They climbed the trees, then flashed splendidly in and out of the vast and increasing volume of tumbling smoke, and I had to clap my hands and laugh and dance in my rapture, it was so new and strange and so wonderful and so beautiful!

He came running, and stopped and gazed, and said not a word for many minutes. Then he asked what it was. Ah, it was too bad that he should ask such a direct question. I had to answer it, of course, and I did. I said it was fire. If it annoyed him that I should know and he must ask; that was not my fault; I had no desire to annoy him. After a pause he asked:

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

“How did it come?”

Another direct question, and it also had to have a direct answer.

“I made it.”

The fire was traveling farther and farther off. He went to the edge of the burned place and stood looking down, and said:

“What are these?”

“Fire-coals.”

He picked up one to examine it, but changed his mind and put it down again. Then he went away. NOTHING interests him.

But I was interested. There were ashes, gray and soft and delicate and pretty—I knew what they were at once. And the embers; I knew the embers, too. I found my apples, and raked them out, and was glad; for I am very young and my appetite is active. But I was disappointed; they were all burst open and spoiled. Spoiled apparently; but it was not so; they were better than raw ones. Fire is beautiful; some day it will be useful, I think.

FRIDAY.—I saw him again, for a moment, last Monday at nightfall, but only for a moment. I was hoping he would praise me for trying to improve the estate, for I had meant well and had worked hard. But he was not pleased, and turned away and left me. He was also displeased on another account: I tried once more to persuade him to stop going over the Falls. That was because the fire had revealed to me a new passion—quite new, and distinctly different from love, grief, and those others which I had already discovered—FEAR. And it is horrible!—I wish I had never discovered it; it gives me dark moments, it spoils my happiness, it makes me shiver and tremble and shudder. But I could not persuade him, for he has not discovered fear yet, and so he could not understand me.

7.3 BACKGROUND OF THE STORY

To understand the story in a better way, it is very important to understand the story of Adam and Eve. According to the Bible, Adam and Eve were the first man and woman, forerunners of the human race. The creation of human beings occurs twice in the Bible, the first account in Genesis 1:26-27 and the second account in Genesis 2:18-24. In the first account, the Hebrew common noun Adam is used as a generic term for all human beings, regardless of gender; Eve is not mentioned at all. In the second account, Adam is created from the dust of the earth, whereas Eve is created from Adam's rib and given to him by God to be his wife.

Before the beginning of the 19th century, it was commonly assumed that every species of life, human beings included, had descended from a pair of aboriginal ancestors created directly by God. In this respect, the biblical story of Adam and Eve differs only in details from many other myths of the ancient Middle East and elsewhere. Similar motifs also appear in such ancient Mesopotamian sources as the Gilgamesh epic from about 2000 BC, for example.

In some respects, however, the story of Adam and Eve is unique. The early chapters of the Book of Genesis underwent considerable editorial work, and what began as a straightforward narrative of the beginning of the human species in

general was converted into a more sophisticated exploration of the situation of men and women in relation to one another and to their environment. This is evident in the introduction of the theme of a separate creation of woman in Genesis 2:18-24, which, among other things, argues for the complementarity of the two sexes. The impulse to provide explanations can also be seen in the way the story is used to attribute the imperfections of the world to human error: It is a consequence of primordial disobedience that the earth yields its fruits grudgingly (Genesis 3:17-19) and that woman's social position is inferior to that of man (3:16). Christian interpreters have traditionally associated this dimension of the story with the doctrine of original sin.

It is the ethical concern pervading the Biblical story of human origins that constitutes the story's primary claim to consideration as a religious classic. Before the emergence of higher criticism in biblical criticism in the 19th century, it was taken for granted that the story was nothing less than sober history. This is the position still maintained by some religious conservatives who view the divine influence (inspiration) on the production of the biblical narratives as a guarantee that everything in them must be accepted as literal fact (see Fundamentalism). Most present-day biblical scholars, however, accept the story of Adam and Eve for what it appears to be: a Hebrew story of human origins having much in common with the myths of other ancient peoples as well as a good deal that is distinctive. Far from diminishing the value of the biblical story, this realization serves to underscore the unique elements in ancient Hebrew religion.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Read the story and try to understand the following issues related to the same
2. Write the answers in your own words
 - Understanding the Biblical story of Adam and Eve.
 - According to the Bible, Adam and Eve were the first man and woman, forerunners of the human race.
 - Adam is created from the dust of the earth, whereas Eve is created from Adam's rib and given to him by God to be his wife.
 - In the first account in Genesis 1:26-27, the Hebrew common noun Adam is _____

 - In the second account, Adam is created from _____

 - In the second account Eve is created from _____

7.4 ABOUT THE STORY

Eve's Diary was first published in the 1905 Christmas issue of the magazine Harper's Bazaar. It is a comic short story by Mark Twain. It was published in book format in June 1906 by Harper and Brothers publishing house. It is written in the style of a diary kept by the first woman in Christian creation story, Eve. The story of this novel revolves around the first-person account of Eve from her creation up to her burial by, her mate, Adam. It includes meeting and getting to know Adam, and exploring the world around her in the Garden of Eden i.e. paradise. It is one of Twain's best stories, in which he addresses gender equity issues, using his iconic wit and satire. This story puts a new twist on a very old story: the story of Adam and Eve from the Bible.

According to the Bible, Eve, the first woman, is created as a partner for Adam, the first man. When she tempts Adam into eating forbidden fruit of knowledge, they are thrown out of the Garden of Eden. Twain's story, however, is from Eve's point of view. It throws light on her character as fully independent with likes, dislikes, joys, and sorrows. She is separate from Adam, and the story follows as she discovers him and eventually falls in love. The writer takes the original Adam and Eve story and puts Eve in a positive light, showing her as a complete person.

As the title itself suggests, the story is arranged like a diary. The story is set at the beginning of the world, there are no dates, but there are only days of the week, seven days, starting from Saturday. The story begins on a Saturday, the day after Eve is 'born.' The story moves chronologically, as it moves forward in time as Eve lives her life.

There are no major climaxes in the story but there are a number of small conflicts found, here and there, between Adam and Eve, the two major characters of the story. Eve seems to be frustrated often by Adam's reactions to things. She is very happy. She finds life full of bliss and loves to talk and be with Adam all the time. When she comes to know that she has to live alone, without Adam, she is hurt too much. She feels very unhappy when Adam is not excited about the things that excite her.

The first and longest section of the story deals with Eve's time in the Garden of Eden. In this section, we see Eve discover new things and explore the vast beauty of the garden, which is home to a wide array of plants and animals. She is enchanted with the beauty of the Garden of Eden and this fills her heart with joy and pleasure. She is unable to express her delight in words.

The most surprising and interesting thing about the story is that Mark Twain completely skips over the actual event of Eve and Adam being kicked out of the Garden of Eden. This is the centre of the original tale of Adam and Eve, but it hardly matters to Twain's Eve at all. Eve makes it clear in the beginning itself, in a single line that there is forbidden fruit, *They are forbidden, and he says I shall come to harm...* Most of the incidents of the main story are skipped and the new section is titled *After the Fall*. The places of the first sin are just mentioned that is perhaps the main focus of the Adam and Eve tale.

To mention again, Twain skips ahead again to *Forty Years Later* after a few

paragraphs. This is only in sentences. In a comment Eve says that she still loves Adam. She also hopes she would die first because she can live without Adam.

The concluding section has only one sentence. It is entitled as *At Eve's Grave*, and Adam says *Wheresoever she was, THERE was Eden*. This finally reveals that he loved Eve as much as she loved him, and that wherever she was, that was his paradise. Paradise without Eve is not paradise at all. Eve's absence turns paradise into a desert.

'EVE'S DIARY' BY
MARK TWAIN

7.5 LET US SUM UP

At the end of the Unit, you learnt

- about the life and works of Mark Twain
- plot and theme of the story

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Keep in mind the minute details regarding the story along with its publication, characters and main themes.
2. Write the answers in your own words.
 - *Eve's Diary* was first published in the 1905.
 - *Eve's Diary* was first published in Christmas issue of the magazine Harper's Bazaar.
 - It is a comic short story.
 - *Eve's Diary* includes _____
 - The story is set at the beginning of the world, there are no dates, but there are only days of the week, seven days, starting from Saturday.
 - The most important thing about the story is that Mark Twain completely skips over the actual event of Eve and Adam being kicked out of the Garden of Eden.
 - The concluding section has only one sentence. It is entitled as *At Eve's Grave*, and Adam says *Wheresoever she was, THERE was Eden*.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

1. **Mark Twain was born on November 30, _____.**
 - a. 1835
 - b. 1853
 - c. 1935
 - d. 1953
2. **Mark Twain is known for often satirical writing that exposes hypocrisy and _____.**
 - a. Suspense
 - b. Pietism
 - c. Corruption
 - d. Uncertainty
3. **Mark Twain was a versatile genius, a riverboat pilot, lecturer, _____, inventor and entrepreneur.**
 - a. Judge
 - b. Engineer
 - c. Doctor
 - d. Journalist

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

4. Adam is created from the _____ of the earth.
- | | |
|----------|---------|
| a. Water | b. Dust |
| c. Food | d. Air |
5. It is a _____ short story by Mark Twain.
- | | |
|-----------|-------------|
| a. Comic | b. Tragic |
| c. Horror | d. Suspense |

7.6 KEY WORDS

The Bible: also called the Holy Bible, the sacred book or Scriptures of Judaism and of Christianity. The Christian Bible is in two parts, the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament.

Adam and Eve: In the Bible, the first man and woman, progenitors of the human race.

The Garden of Eden: In the Bible, the garden where Adam and Eve first lived

The forbidden fruit of knowledge: In Christian theology, original sin refers to the consequences of the disobedience of Adam and Eve in eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

7.7 BOOKS SUGGESTED

Hoffman, Andrew. *Inventing Mark Twain: The Lives of Samuel Langhorne Clemens*. Morrow, 1997. Examination of how and why Twain deliberately built his own glowing public image.

- Kaplan, Justin. *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain: A Biography*. Simon & Schuster, 1966, 1983. Classic analytical biography.
- Twain, Mark. *Eve's Diary*, Harper & Brothers, New York, London, 1906.
- Shelley Fisher Fishkin, ed. *A Historical Guide to Mark Twain*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002 (ISBN 0-19-513293-9)
- James M. Cox. *Mark Twain: The Fate of Humour*, Princeton University Press, 1966 (ISBN 0-8262-1428-2)

ANSWERS

Check your progress 1

- Mark Twain, the pseudonym used by Samuel Langhorne Clemens.
Mark Twain, the pseudonym used by Samuel Langhorne Clemens, first appeared on February 3, 1863, in a piece he contributed to the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise. Prior to adopting Mark Twain as his pen name, Clemens wrote under the pen name Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass for three humorous pieces he contributed to the *Keokuk Post*.
- He was an American writer and humourist.
- He is known for often satirical writing that exposes hypocrisy and corruption while examining small-town life in America in the 19th century.
Mark Twain is known for often satirical writing. His writings exposed hy-

pocrisy and corruption in America in the 19th century. His best works contain broad, often irreverent humour or biting social satire. His writing is characterized by realism of place and language, memorable characters, and condemnation of hypocrisy and oppression.

- He wrote several novels, including two major classics of American literature *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884).

Mark Twain wrote novels, essays, letters, speeches, plays, poems and short stories. *Innocents Abroad*, published in 1869, is the first work by Mark Twain. This book made him recognizable in literature. The book was not well received, a fact that discouraged him from pursuing the literary career that he really wanted. During the ensuing years, Twain wrote for various publications and went on lecture tours around the world.

Check your progress2

- Understanding the Biblical story of Adam and Eve.
According to the Bible, Adam and Eve were the first man and woman, forerunners of the human race. The creation of human beings occurs twice in the Bible, the first account in Genesis 1:26-27 and the second account in Genesis 2:18-24. In the first account, the Hebrew common noun Adam is used as a generic term for all human beings, regardless of gender; Eve is not mentioned at all. In the second account, Adam is created from the dust of the earth, whereas Eve is created from Adam's rib and given to him by God to be his wife.
- In the first account in Genesis 1:26-27, the Hebrew common noun Adam is ... used as a generic term for all human beings, regardless of gender.
In the second account, Adam is created from ... the dust of the earth, whereas Eve is created from Adam's rib and given to him by God to be his wife.
- In the second account Eve is created from ... Adam's rib

Check your progress3

- *Eve's Diary* includes...
Meeting and getting to know Adam, and exploring the world around her in the Garden of Eden i.e. paradise. It is one of Twain's best stories, in which he addresses gender equity issues, using his iconic wit and satire.
- The most important thing about the story is that Mark Twain completely skips over the actual event of Eve and Adam being kicked out of the Garden of Eden.

Event of Eve and Adam is the centre of the original tale of Adam and Eve, but it doesn't matter much to Twain's Eve at all. Eve makes it clear in the beginning itself, in a single line that there is forbidden fruit, *They are forbidden, and he says I shall come to harm...* Most of the incidents of the main story are skipped and the new section is titled *After the Fall*. The places of the first sin are just mentioned that is perhaps the main focus of the Adam and Eve tale.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

Check your progress 4

1. a
2. c
3. d
4. b
5. a



'RIP VAN WINKLE' BY WASHINGTON IRVING

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Washington Irving: Life and Work
- 8.3 Text: '*Rip Van Winkle*'
- 8.4 Plot
- 8.5 Theme
- 8.6 Analysis
- 8.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.8 Key Words
- 8.9 References

Answers

8.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to:

- Critically examine the short story '*Rip Van Winkle*' by Washington Irving.
- Study the biographical sketch of the author and his significant literary works that have marked the literary scene.
- Critically evaluate the characters in the story, the underlying themes.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The story starts about five or six years before the American Revolution and ends twenty years later. The action happens in a village in eastern New York, near the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains. The river was named after Englishman Henry Hudson, who investigated it in 1609. The Catskill Mountains were named after *Kaaterskill*, the Dutch word for a nearbystream, Wildcat Creek. The Catskills contain numerous streams, lakes, waterfalls, and gorges.

'*Rip Van Winkle*' is a short story; one of America's dearest, dependent on German folk stories. It was first published in a collection of Irving's works called *The Sketch Book* (1819-1820).

8.2 WASHINGTON IRVING: LIFE AND WORK

'*Rip Van Winkle*' was written by Washington Irving (1783-1859), a legal advisor who sought after a composing vocation after he found that providing legal counsel didn't intrigue him. When most Americans read British writers almost exclusively, Irving demonstrated that American authors could compete with their British counterparts. He was among the first American authors who increased a worldwide reputation by composing short stories. Irving had a unique ability for making a magical, fairy-tale quality in his stories – notably '*Rip Van Winkle*' and '*The Leg-*

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

end of Sleepy Hollow' and thus helped to shape the folklore of early America. His rich composing style, full of gentle humour and vivid descriptions, keeps on charming current readers. Almost certainly, his connection with stories will stay well known for a very long time to come.

Washington Irving (April 3, 1783 – November 28, 1859) was an American short-story author, writer, biographer, history specialist, and representative of the early nineteenth century. He is famous for his short stories '*Rip Van Winkle*' (1819) and '*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*' (1820), the both of which are included in his assortment *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* His works incorporate biographies of Oliver Goldsmith, Muhammad and George Washington, and fifteenth century Spain that manage subjects, for example, Alhambra, Christopher Columbus and the Moors.

Irving was representative of Spain from 1842 to 1846. He made his scholarly presentation in 1802 with a series of observational letters to the *Morning Chronicle*, composed under pseudonym Jonathan Oldstyle. He moved to England for the personal business in 1815 where he achieved popularity with the production of *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, serialized from 1819–1820. He continued publishing regularly throughout his life, and he completed a five-volume life story of George Washington only eight months before his passing at age 76 in Tarrytown, New York.

Irving was one of the principle American scholars to receive praise in Europe, and he guided other American creators, for instance, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Herman Melville and Edgar Allan Poe. He was moreover respected by some British writers, including Lord Byron, Thomas Campbell, Charles Dickens, Francis Jeffrey and Walter Scott. He advocated for composing as a genuine profession and contended for more grounded laws to shield American scholars from copyright encroachment.

8.3 TEXT: '*RIP VAN WINKLE*'

By Woden, God of Saxons,

From whence comes Wensday, that is Wodensday,

Truth is a thing that ever I will keep

Unto thylke day in which I creep into

My sepulchre—

CARTWRIGHT.

The following Tale was found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old gentleman of New York, who was very curious in the Dutch History of the province and the manners of the descendants from its primitive settlers. His historical researches, however, did not lie so much among books as among men; for the former are lamentably scanty on his favourite topics; whereas he found the old burghers, and still more, their wives, rich in that legendary lore, so invaluable to true history. Whenever, therefore, he happened upon a genuine Dutch family, snugly shut up in its low-roofed farmhouse, under a spreading sycamore, he looked upon it as a little clasped volume of black letter, and studied it with the zeal of a book-

worm.

The result of all these researches was a history of the province, during the reign of the Dutch governors, which he published some years since. There have been various opinions as to the literary character of his work, and, to tell the truth, it is not a whit better than it should be. Its chief merit is its scrupulous accuracy, which indeed was a little questioned on its first appearance, but has since been completely established; and it is now admitted into all historical collections, as a book of unquestionable authority.

The old gentleman died shortly after the publication of his work; and now that he is dead and gone, it cannot do much harm to his memory to say that his time might have been much better employed in weightier labours. He, however, was apt to ride his hobby his own way; and though it did now and then kick up the dust a little in the eyes of his neighbours, and grieve the spirit of some friends, for whom he felt the truest deference and affection, yet his errors and follies are remembered “more in sorrow than in anger,” and it begins to be suspected, that he never intended to injure or offend. However, his memory may be appreciated by critics, it is still held dear among many folks, whose good opinion is well worth having; particularly by certain biscuit-bakers, who have gone so far as to imprint his likeness on their new-year cakes, and have thus given him a chance for immortality, almost equal to the being stamped on a Waterloo medal, or a Queen Anne’s farthing.

WHOEVER has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of the day produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains; and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapors about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a Village, whose shingle roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists, in the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant (may he rest in peace!), and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks, brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weathercocks.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived, many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple, good-natured fellow, of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina. He inherited, however, but little of the martial character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple, good-natured man; he was, moreover, a kind neighbour, and an obedient henpecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity; for those men are apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation, and a curtain lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant wife may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing, and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

Certain it is, that he was a great favourite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles, and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighbourhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labour. It could not be for want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling piece on his shoulder, for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and uphill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbour even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man in all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone fences; the women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country; everything about it went wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some out-door work to do; so that though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst-conditioned farm in the neighbourhood.

His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son

Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits, with the old clothes, of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast-off galligaskins, which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away, in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife, so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a henpecked husband.

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much henpecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting in honourable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods—but what courage can withstand the evil-doing and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house, his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on; a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village, which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of his Majesty George the Third. Here they used to sit in the shade through a long, lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless, sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions which sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveller. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the school-master, a dapper learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary; and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junto were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun, and keep in the

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

shade of a large tree; so that the neighbors could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial. It is true, he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When anything that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth, frequent, and angry puffs; but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds, and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapor curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even this stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage, and call the members all to nought; nor was that august personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair; and his only alternative, to escape from the labour of the farm and the clamour of his wife, was to take gun in hand, and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathized as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. "Poor Wolf," he would say, "thy mistress leads thee a dog's life of it; but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!" Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master's face, and if dogs can feel pity, I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

In a long ramble of the kind, on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains. He was after his favourite sport of squirrel shooting, and the still solitudes had echoed and re-echoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage, which crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees, he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged, the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene; evening was gradually advancing; the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys; he saw that it would be dark long before he could reach the village; and he heaved a heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.

As he was about to descend, he heard a voice from a distance hallooing: "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" He looked around, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across the mountain. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry ring

through the still evening air, “Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!”—at the same time, Wolf bristled up his back, and giving a low growl, skulked to his master’s side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt a vague apprehension stealing over him; he looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure slowly toiling up the rocks, and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back. He was surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place, but supposing it to be some one of the neighbourhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

‘RIP VAN WINKLE’ BY
WASHINGTON IRVING

On nearer approach, he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger’s appearance. He was a short, square-built old fellow, with thick bushy hair, and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion—a cloth jerkin strapped round the waist—several pairs of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides, and bunch at the knees. He bore on his shoulders a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity; and mutually relieving each other, they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long rolling peals, like distant thunder, that seemed to issue out of a deep ravine, or rather cleft between lofty rocks, toward which their rugged path conducted. He paused for an instant, but supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thundershowers, which often take place in the mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky, and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time Rip and his companion had laboured on in silence; for though the former marvelled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain, yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe, and checked familiarity.

On entering the amphitheatre, new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the centre was a company of odd-looking personages playing at ninepins. They were dressed in quaint outlandish fashion; some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives in their belts, and most of them had enormous breeches, of similar style with that of the guide’s. Their visages, too, were peculiar; one had a large head, broad face, and small piggish eyes; the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was surmounted by a white sugar-loaf hat, set off with a little red cock’s tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colours. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weather-beaten countenance; he wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger, high-crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with roses in them. The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting, in the parlour of Dominie Van Schaick, the village parson, and which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was, that though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party of pleasure he had ever

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder.

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddenly desisted from their play, and stared at him with such a fixed statue-like gaze, and such strange uncouth, lack-lustre countenances, that his heart turned within him, and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents of the keg into large flagons, and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trembling; they quaffed the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

By degrees, Rip's awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when no eye was fixed upon him, to taste the beverage, which he found had much of the flavour of excellent Hollands. He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another; and he reiterated his visits to the flagon so often, that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes—it was a bright sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. "Surely," thought Rip, "I have not slept here all night." He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with the keg of liquor—the mountain ravine—the wild retreat among the rocks—the woe-begone party at ninepins—the flagon—"Oh! that flagon! that wicked flagon!" thought Rip—"what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle?"

He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean well-oiled fowling piece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel encrusted with rust, the lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten. He now suspected that the grave roysterers of the mountains had put a trick upon him, and, having dosed him with liquor, had robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him and shouted his name, but all in vain; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen.

He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening's gambol, and if he met with any of the party, to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk, he found himself stiff in the joints, and wanting in his usual activity. "These mountain beds do not agree with me," thought Rip, "and if this frolic, should lay me up with a fit of the rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle." With some difficulty, he got down into the glen: he found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended the preceding evening; but to his astonishment, a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel; and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grape vines that twisted their coils and tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path.

At length he reached to where the ravine had opened through the cliffs to the

amphitheatre; but no traces of such opening remained. The rocks presented a high impenetrable wall, over which the torrent came tumbling in a sheet of feathery foam, and fell into a broad deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog; he was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in the air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice; and who, secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man's perplexities. What was to be done? The morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and gun; he dreaded to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve among the mountains. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward.

'RIP VAN WINKLE' BY
WASHINGTON IRVING

As he approached the village, he met a number of people, but none whom he knew, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with everyone in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and whenever they cast eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of this gesture, induced Rip, involuntarily, to do, the same, when, to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long!

He had now entered the skirts of the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him, and pointing at his gray beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognized for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. The very village was altered: it was larger and more populous. There were rows of houses, which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. Strange names were over the doors—strange faces at the windows—everything was strange. His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which he had left but a day before. There stood the Kaatskill mountains—there ran the silver Hudson at a distance—there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been—Rip was sorely perplexed—“That flagon last night,” thought he, “has addled my poor head sadly!”

It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay—the roof had fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog, that looked like Wolf, was skulking about it. Rip called him by name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. This was an unkind cut indeed.—“My very dog,” sighed poor Rip, “has forgotten me!”

He entered the house, which, to tell the truth, Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order. It was empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned. This desolateness overcame all his connubial fears—he called loudly for his wife and children—the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silence.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn—but it

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

too was gone. A large rickety wooden building stood in its place, with great gaping windows, some of them broken, and mended with old hats and petticoats, and over the door was painted, "The Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle." Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore, there now was reared a tall naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red nightcap, and from it was fluttering a flag, on which was a singular assemblage of stars and stripes—all this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognized on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe, but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, "GENERAL WASHINGTON."

There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair long pipe, uttering clouds of tobacco-smoke, instead of idle speeches; or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth the contents of an ancient newspaper. In place of these, a lean, bilious-looking fellow, with his pockets full of handbills, was haranguing, vehemently about rights of citizens-elections—members of Congress—liberty—Bunker's hill—heroes of seventy-six—and other words, which were a perfect Babylonish jargon to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long, grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and the army of women and children at his heels, soon attracted the attention of the tavern politicians. They crowded round him, eying him from head to foot, with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and, drawing him partly aside, inquired, "on which side he voted?" Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear, "whether he was Federal or Democrat." Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question; when a knowing, self-important old gentleman, in a sharp cocked hat, made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed, and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm akimbo, the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul, demanded in an austere tone, "What brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and a mob at his heels; and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village?"

"Alas! gentlemen," cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, "I am a poor, quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the King, God bless him!"

Here a general shout burst from the bystanders—"a tory! a tory! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!" It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order; and having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit, what he came there for, and whom he was seeking. The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbors, who used to keep about the tavern.

“Well—who are they?—name them.”

Rip bethought himself a moment, and inquired, Where’s Nicholas Vedder?

There was a silence for a little while, when an old man replied, in a thin, piping voice, “Nicholas Vedder? why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the churchyard that used to tell all about him, but that’s rotten and gone too.”

“Where’s BromDutcher?”

“Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war; some say he was killed at the storming of Stony-Point—others say he was drowned in a squall at the foot of Antony’s Nose. I don’t know—he never came back again.”

“Where’s Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?”

“He went off to the wars, too; was a great militia general, and is now in Congress.”

Rip’s heart died away, at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand: war—Congress-Stony-Point;—he had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, “Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?”

“Oh, Rip Van Winkle!” exclaimed two or three. “Oh, to be sure! that’s Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree.”

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself as he went up the mountain; apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name?

“God knows!” exclaimed he at his wit’s end; “I’m not myself—I’m somebody else—that’s me yonder-no—that’s somebody else, got into my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they’ve changed my gun, and everything’s changed, and I’m changed, and I can’t tell what’s my name, or who I am!”

The by-standers began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper, also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief; at the very suggestion of which, the self-important man with the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh, comely woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the gray-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry. “Hush, Rip,” cried she, “hush, you little fool; the old man won’t hurt you.” The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind.

“What is your name, my good woman?” asked he.

“Judith Cardenier.”

“And your father’s name?”

“Ah, poor man, Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it’s twenty years since he went

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since,—his dog came home without him; but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl.”

Rip had but one more question to ask; but he put it with a faltering voice:

“Where’s your mother?”

Oh, she too had died but a short time since; she broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New-England pedler.

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. “I am your father!” cried he—“Young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now—Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle!”

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment exclaimed, “sure enough! it is Rip Van Winkle—it is himself. Welcome home again, old neighbour. Why, where have you been these twenty long years?”

Rip’s story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him but as one night. The neighbors stared when they heard it; some were seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their cheeks; and the self-important man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head—upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage.

It was determined, however, to take the opinion of old Peter Vanderdonk, who was seen slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighbourhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor, the historian, that the Kaatskill mountains had always been haunted by strange beings. That it was affirmed that the great Hendrick Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every twenty years, with his crew of the Half-moon; being permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon the river and the great city called by his name. That his father had once seen them in their Old Dutch dresses playing at ninepins in the hollow of the mountain; and that he himself had heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls, like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the company broke up, and returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip’s daughter took him home to live with her; she had a snug, well-furnished house, and a stout cheery farmer for a husband, whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip’s son and heir, who was the ditto of himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm; but evinced an hereditary disposition to attend to anything else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits; he soon found many of his former

cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time; and preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favour.

Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can be idle with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench, at the inn door, and was revered as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times “before the war.” It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor. How that there had been a revolutionary war—that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England—and that, instead of being a subject to his Majesty George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United States. Rip, in fact, was no politician; the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him; but there was one species of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was—petticoat government. Happily, that was at an end; he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased, without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle. Whenever her name was mentioned, however, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and cast up his eyes; which might pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

He used to tell his story to every stranger that arrived at Mr. Doolittle’s hotel. He was observed, at first, to vary on some points every time he told it, which was, doubtless, owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related, and not a man, woman, or child in the neighbourhood, but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The Old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave it full credit. Even to this day, they never hear a thunder-storm of a summer afternoon about the Kaatskill, but they say Hendrick Hudson and his crew are at their game of ninepins; and it is a common wish of all henpecked husbands in the neighborhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle’s flagon.

8.4 PLOT

‘Rip Van Winkle’ is set in the years before and after the American Revolutionary War in a town at the foot of New York’s Catskill Mountains where Rip Van Winkle, a Dutch-American resident, lives. One autumn day, Rip Van Winkle meanders into the mountains with his dog Wolf to get away from his wife’s annoying. He hears his name called out and sees a man wearing outdated Dutch garments; he is conveying a barrel up the mountain and needs support. Together, the men and Wolf continue walking to hollow in which Rip finds the source of thunderous noises: a gathering of ornately dressed, quiet, unshaven men who are playing ninepins.

Rip Van Winkle does not ask what their identity is or how they know his name. Rather, he starts to drink a portion of their alcohol and soon falls asleep. At the point when he awakens on the mountain, he finds shocking changes: his musket is

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

rotting and rusty, his beard is a foot long, and his dog is mysteriously gone. He comes back to his town, where he perceives nobody. He reached after an election, and individuals ask how he casted a ballot. Never having cast a ballot in his life, he proclaims himself a faithful subject of King George III, unconscious that the American Revolution has taken place, and about pushes himself into difficulty with the townspeople until one older lady remembers him as the long-lost Rip Van Winkle.

Ruler George's representation on the inn's sign has been supplanted with one of George Washington. Van Winkle discovers that the vast majority of his companions were killed battling in the American Revolution. He is additionally upset to discover another man called Rip Van Winkle; it is his child, grown up. Van Winkle likewise finds that his wife died before some time ago yet is not disheartened by the news. He discovers that the men whom he met in the mountains are supposed to be the ghosts of Henry Hudson's group from his boat, the *Halve Maen*. He additionally understands that he has been away from the town for 20 years. His grown daughter takes him in and he continues his typical inertness. His bizarre story is seriously acknowledged by the Dutch pilgrims, especially by the kids who state that, at whatever point thunder is heard, the men in the mountains must play ninepins.

8.5 THEME

Change with Continuity and Preservation of Tradition

After Rip awakens from his long rest and comes back to the town, he does not perceive the individuals he encounters. But, not only their faces are new as well as their styles and the vibe of the town: It is bigger, with lines of houses he had never observed. His own home is wrecked now with nobody living in it, and the motel he frequented is an inn. His wife and old Vedder are dead. Others left the town and never returned. Everything is unique, it appears; nothing is as it might have been. There has even been a revolutionary war wherein America gained its independence from England and turned into another nation. In any case, when Rip looks beyond the town, he sees that the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains are actually equivalent as they were before his rest. He additionally starts to experience individuals who knew him some time in the past: first, the old lady, after that the old man, Peter Vanderdonk, who testifies for reality of Rip's odd story about the ninepin bowlers he met in the mountains. At this point in the story, Irving's main theme begins to emerge: Although wrenching, radical changes are sometimes necessary to move society forward, such changes must not eradicate old ways and traditions entirely. Genuine, enduring change is an amalgam of the old and new. New builds on the foundations of the old. There must be continuity. So it is that old Vanderdonk, in confirming Rip's tale, says he himself has heard the thunder of ninepin bowlers, who are the crewmen of *The Half-Moon*, the ship Henry Hudson captained in his exploration of the Hudson River. It seems that their spirits return to the Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains every twenty years to keep a "watchman eye" on the river and its environs.

Hudson was an Englishman, indeed, yet his relationship with his overthrown nation does not mean the qualities he speaks to must die with the revolution. Rip

additionally observes his child, Rip II, a developed man, who looks simply like him, and is brought together with his little girl, a developed lady, who is holding a baby Rip III. However, change has come to the town; there is congruity. New ages go along that bring change, however old qualities and customs just as family lines—stay alive and flourishing. What’s more, from time to time, thunder thunders in the Catskills when Hudson and his group play ninepins.

‘RIP VAN WINKLE’ BY
WASHINGTON IRVING

The Magic of the Imagination

Irving’s story proposes that human creative mind can give society charming, humorous stories that become piece of an enduring, magical folklore. Today, the Catskill and Hudson Valley areas well recollect Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane—the hero of another Irving story, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”—as though they were genuine people. A bridge over the Hudson has even been named after Rip. Sunnyside, Irving’s Tarrytown home between 1835 and 1859, is a significant vacation spot in the Hudson Valley.

Freedom versus Tyranny

Irving conveys the theme of freedom versus tyranny throughout the story. Rip Van Winkle looks for just the opportunity to be his sort, simple self and to carry on with the inactive life he wants to live. His freedom and good nature charm him to his kindred townspeople, whom he is glad to help and to spend the time with. Rip’s assurance to be liberated to act naturally and do what he wants never changes. Different kinds of tyranny impinge on Rip to constrain his freedom. The most obvious tyrannical power is his better half, as she pesters him continually and savagely to work on their farm and support his family. Dame Van Winkle is “constantly dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he is welcoming on his family.” Dame Van Winkle speaks to domestic tyranny. Rip is tormented to “despair” by her high-pitched pestering however never surrenders to it. He sees society’s demand that he works for benefit or cash as another kind of tyranny. Rather he gets away from the two types of tyranny by escaping his wife’s presence. He would prefer to sit and talk with his companions, fish in the Hudson River, or chase in the Catskill Mountains. Irving recommends that responsibility itself is a sort of tyranny, as is being compelled to accomplish work you dislike. However, Dame Van Winkle has each option to request that Rip satisfy his duties as a spouse and a dad to youngsters portrayed as “ragged” and poor as a result of his sluggishness.

Rip rarely thinks about politics. Irving makes reference to that the early residents are the subjects of King George III, yet that reality appears to be absolutely immaterial to their lives. So, while different pioneers may have seen British domination as tyranny, the characters in the start of the story never allude to it that way. The only time Rip experiences politics as something disturbing and forcing is the point at which he comes back from his time travel on the mountain. At that point he is associated with being a “Tory” and is almost assaulted. Somehow or another, the duties of citizenship, for example, supporting a political group and competitor and casting a ballot in elections—are a kind of tyranny for Rip since they constrain his freedom to carry on with a basic life unburdened by governmental issues.

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

Toward the end, he is unconcerned with politics and looks for just the freedom to be inert and tell to the tale of his experience. Neither household nor civic responsibility interrupts Rip's deep lifelong freedom.

Constancy and Change

Irving builds up the theme of constancy and change through the activities of his hero and the powers that act up on him. Rip Van Winkle is the epitome of steadiness in the story. Despite the tremendous changes that happen around him, he continues as before gentle, inert soul—both in the early time of the story and in when he comes back to his town—a puzzling 20 years after the fact. He speaks to a sort of sentimental figure of virtue and freedom that endures regardless of what changes are going on around him. Rip continues as before man despite the fact that he spends, overnight, from the past to the future—where he continues to adhere to his actual nature and to live openly, as he sees fit.

The town itself speaks to emotional change after some time. Physical changes are obvious. In the old town, the restful hotel that Rip and his companions used to gather at is currently a bustling inn. Not only the town is changed physically—in its homes and structures—nature of the inhabitants appears to be changed. The sleepy town of the old days is stood out strongly from the crowded, politics-obsessed town of two decades later. It is practically difficult to envision anybody from the old town assaulting a neighbour for their political leanings. In those days, Rip was a “favourite” among kids and grown-ups the same. However, when Rip enters the post-revolutionary town, he is mobbed by individuals who suspect him of “breeding a riot in the town” and of being a “Tory” and a “spy.” Elections have carried a kind of uproar to the previously peaceful town since the townsfolk are residents, not subjects. So governmental issues, autonomy, and national sovereignty are agents of change.

People are likewise adjusting nature: The “incredible tree” that had shaded the quiet hotel has been chopped down and supplanted by an uncovered flagpole. The significance of shielding nature from change is additionally clear in the tradition of the ghosts of Hendrick Hudson's team, who visit the Catskills every 20 years to “guard their darling Hudson River. These changes in the normal world relate to the more business and political culture of the later time.

Volunteerism versus Work for Profit

Rip Van Winkle is glad to work, yet just when he volunteers in his work to other people. He does not enthusiastically work for his own or his family's benefit or advantage. Despite the fact that he openly helps his neighbours, he refuses to farm his own land that, if all around tended, might yield a benefit and a living for his family. Despite the fact that Rip's attitude toward work might be surprising time permitting—the reader must conclude that probably a few residents work their farms—it is strange in the town decades later.

Rip is the exemplification of early colonial tradition and its basic lifestyle. Irving permits Rip the freedom to spend his time on earth in inertness and narrating in the post-revolutionary town. However, his revolutionary of the near frenzy of resident activity and the supplanting of the hotel with lodging indicate that work for

benefit is a key to the modern culture. Irving's readers at the time the story was composed would no uncertainty comprehend that he was utilizing Rip to feature the difference between prior qualities and the increasingly intense focus on work for cash and benefit that was to turn into the sign of the country.

'RIP VAN WINKLE' BY
WASHINGTON IRVING

History and Fiction

Irving opens and shuts the narrative with the detailed promise of his story teller, Diedrich Knickerbocker, which the story speaks to historical fact. Knickerbocker clarifies that he has addressed Dutch families—"the old burghers ... further more, still more their wives" whose ancestors were alive at that point and who insist that the story is true.

Irving composed both fiction and well-researched history, and in *Rip Van Winkle* he investigates the gap among reality and fiction and the area of truth in both. He likewise analyzes the value of fiction as a complement to historical fact. Irving utilizes Knickerbocker's confirmation that the tall story is true to add a touch of humour to the story, just as to uncover to nineteenth century Americans how their ancestors' lives varied so drastically from their own.

8.6 ANALYSIS

As a preface to the narrative, the reader is told to that, the story was "found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker," an amateur historian devoted to interviewing Dutch pioneers and their relatives—huge numbers of whom have related comparable stories. This testimony, Knickerbocker claims, gives his story "scrupulous accuracy." The tone is light and playful; uncovering that Knickerbocker comprehends his story may be seen as questionable. However, his claims underscore the story's serious investigation of its subjects of opportunity and change. At its decision, the creator emphasizes that a few people trust Rip's story and some do not again raising the issue of truth versus history. In any case, in the two occurrences Knickerbocker suggests that folk tales are an important part of a country's history, regardless of whether the stories are not truly evident.

Idleness and the Tyranny of Responsibility

Rip Van Winkle demands living, as he wants to live. He is a "simple, pleasant man, a kind neighbour." The reader is informed that he is "amiable" and "an extraordinary most loved in the town" since he plays with the kids and "would never refuse to assist a neighbour even in the roughest toil." His life is one of leisure activities, for example, fishing, hunting, and idly gossiping at the hotel with his companions. This is the life Rip has picked and will not surrender.

When Rip comes back from his time-traveling mountain visit, he is sufficiently fortunate to have the option to continue the same lazy type of life he had previously. He does not work. Rather, he is bolstered by his daughter and her family. Rip spends his old age sitting on a bench in town gossiping and telling the story of his dreamlike experience.

- In the initial segment of the story, Dame Van Winkle is depicted as an un-

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

bearable nag, a “termagant” who henpecks her husband to get him to work their farm. If Rip is the hero of the story, Dame Van Winkle is without a doubt its enemy. She represents the tyranny of family responsibility. She is supposed to be “continually dinning (repeating loudly) in his ear about his idleness, his carelessness.” She berates him “morning, early afternoon, and night her tongue ... unendingly going.” All Dame Van Winkle needs is for her husband to take responsibility for his family and to provide for her and his “ragged” kids. Presumably, a decent soul like Rip thinks about his family. However when Dame Van Winkle chastises him, he just “[shrugs] his shoulders, [shakes] his head ... but [says] nothing.” Then he gets away. Rip sees any demand that he surrenders his inactive life as an unsuitable restriction on his opportunity—one that he quietly ignores.

- The tyranny of responsibility is obvious in Rip’s response to the political free for all of the townspeople when he comes back to the town after his time-traveling rest. He is “at a loss to understand” the new situation. He encounters the town as “busy, bustling, [and] disputatious.” This is absolutely not normal for the sleepy town of the past, with its “accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity.” The “bewildered” Rip pulls back from the group, the noise, and the incomprehensible “election”—whatever that is. He reasserts his way of life as a “poor, calm man” but is challenged nonetheless for shirking his civic duty to partake in the political decision. In spite of the considerable number of changes in the life of the town, when he at last settles in, Rip is able to maintain his idleness. His daughter bolsters him (however, he did not bolster her when she was a kid). Rip never twists to the tyranny of responsibility but maintains his indolent freedom.
- Note that Rip never compares the government with tyranny, despite the fact that he discovers that a lot of his companions are killed in the Revolutionary War. They saw British rule as tyranny, in spite of the fact that Rip did not. Toward the end, Rip is similarly as substance to sit under a representation of George Washington as he had been to sit underneath a resemblance of King George III. Participating in politics, elections, and voting involves a community duty—simply the thing Rip maintains a strategic distance from. Rip is “now a free resident of the United States,” however he is “politician; the changes of states and empires [make] yet little impact on him.” Instead, he is glad to be liberated from the “tyranny ... of slip government”—his wife’s nagging him to take responsibility for supporting his family.
- Critical analysis of ‘*Rip Van Winkle*’ may see the story as a kind of purposeful anecdote for the Revolutionary War, wherein case Dame Van Winkle and her steady requests may speak to the requests made upon the American colonies by the British government. Rip’s protection from his wife’s ultimatums may, along these lines, speak to the Americans’ developing disappointment with British rule—and the lead-up to the Revolutionary War. Through his misfortune in the Catskills, Rip has missed the revolution and now should adjust to its aftermath.

8.7 LET US SUM UP

The story *'Rip Van Winkle'* by Washington Irving tale with several themes carefully crafted through different literacy devices and narrative techniques. The story through its characters and situations conveys an important message of Change with Continuity and Preservation of Tradition.

8.8 KEY WORDS

Intrigue- to make somebody very interested and wanting to know more

Contend- to have to deal with a problem or a difficult situation

Lamentably- in an unfortunate or deplorable manner

Scanty- too small in size or amount

Burgher- a citizen of a town or city, typically a member of the wealthy bourgeoisie

Scrupulous- very careful or paying great attention to detail

Obsequious- making a great effort to please or agree with somebody

Sermon- a speech on a religious or moral subject that is given as part of a service in church

Assiduity- constant or close attention to what one is doing

Trudge- to walk with slow, heavy steps, for example because you are very tired

Pestilent- destructive to life; deadly

8.9 REFERENCE

Irving, Washington. *Washington Irving: History, Tales, and Sketches*. Library of America, 1983.

Liptak, Andrew. "America's First Fantasist: Washington Irving." *Kirkus Review*, 8 Nov. 2013.

Melvin, Tessa. "The Legacy of Washington Irving." *New York Times*, 3 Apr. 1983.

Roth, Marty. *Comedy and America: The Lost World of Washington Irving*. Associated Faculty, 1976.

Course Hero. "Rip Van Winkle Infographic." *Course Hero*. 3 May 2017. Web. 8 Jan. 2020. <<https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Rip-Van-Winkle/infographic/>>.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

1. Even though he was a failure as a farmer, Rip Van Winkle was a success as a human being. What were the most praiseworthy qualities that he possessed?
2. In what way does Irving's portrayal of Dame Van Winkle help to illumine Rip's character?

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

FIND OUT WHETHER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE.

1. The action of this short story happens in a village in eastern New York.
2. This story was first published in a collection of Irving's works called The Sketch Book.
3. Rip Van Winkle has been away from the town for 25 years.
4. Rip Van Winkle is a very active person.
5. Rip Van Winkle feels very sad when he comes to know about his wife's death.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

WRITE SHORT NOTES.

1. Write summary of the story '*Rip Van Winkle*'.
2. Analysis of the story '*Rip Van Winkle*'.
3. Discuss theme 'Idleness and the Tyranny of Responsibility'.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN DETAIL.

1. Write a short essay (or a paragraph or two) that uses personification and/or other figure of speech to invest with a personality the natural surroundings where you live, as Irving did in '*Rip Van Winkle*'.
2. When Rip returns to his village, he learns that Dame Van Winkle has died and that his fellow Americans liberated themselves from English rule in a revolutionary war. What do the war and the death of Rip's wife have in common, in terms of how Rip will live the rest of his life?
3. Although '*Rip Van Winkle*' is a fictional tale, it presents truths that can teach the reader. Write an essay that focuses on the truths presented in the short story.

Answers

1. True
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. false



Unit
9

**‘THE MINISTER’S BLACK VEIL’ BY
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE**

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

9.0 Objectives

9.1 Introduction

9.2 The story ‘*The Minister’s Black Veil*’

9.3 Analysis

9.4 Characters and themes

9.5 The Black Veil as a Symbol

9.6 Let Us Sum Up

9.7 Key Words

9.8 Books Suggested

Answers

9.0 OBJECTIVES

- To know about Nathaniel Hawthorne’s contribution in English literature
- To understand the short story by ‘*The Minister’s Black Veil*’ by Hawthorne
- To know the themes, characters, and symbols present in the short story
- To understand the whole story by taking into consideration various aspects about it and analyse it critically

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Nathaniel Hawthorne, born on July 4, 1804 in Salem, Massachusetts was an American short story writer and romance novelist who experimented with a broad range of styles and genres. He is best known for his short stories and two widely read novels: *The Scarlet Letter* (mid-March 1850) and *The House of Seven Gables* (1851). Along with Herman Melville and Edgar Allan Poe much of Hawthorne’s work belongs to the sub-genre of Dark Romanticism, distinguished by an emphasis on human fallibility that gives rise to lapses in judgement that allow even good men and women to drift toward sin and self-destruction. Dark Romantics tend to draw attention to the unintended consequences and complications that arise from well-intended efforts at social reform. Melville dedicated his epic novel, *Moby-Dick* to Hawthorne: “*In token of my admiration for his genius.*” Hawthorne’s lesser-known poems exemplify Dark Romanticism; some of his darkest works, including his ghost stories and tales involving the supernatural, fall within the genre of Gothic Literature.

Young Hawthorne was a contemporary of fellow Transcendentalists: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Louisa May Alcott, Hawthorne was part of this prominent circle of Massachusetts writers and philosophers. The Transcendentalists believed in the “inherent goodness of both people and nature.” You may think of them as intellectual hippies of the early 19th century (the movement sprang

forth in the 1820s and 1830s). Hawthorne was a founding member of Brook Farm, a utopian experiment in communal living — though he is not portrayed as a deep believer in its ideals. As Hawthorne matured, he drifted further and further from some of the transcendental principles. In fact, his later writing, produced after greater experience in the world, demonstrated an increasing disdain for the Transcendental Movement. He notably fictionalized the experiences of Brook Farm in his satirical novel *The Blithedale Romance* (1852).

9.2 THE STORY- ‘*THE MINISTER’S BLACK VEIL*’

The sexton stood in the porch of Milford meeting-house pulling at the bell-rope. The old people of the village came stooping along the street. Children with bright faces tripped merrily beside their parents or pretended to be as serious as adults in their Sunday clothes. Young men looked at the pretty maidens, and fancied that the Sabbath sunshine made them prettier than on weekdays. When the crowd had mostly streamed into the porch, the sexton began to toll the bell, keeping his eye on the Reverend Mr. Hooper’s door. The first glimpse of the minister’s figure was the signal for the bell to cease. “But what has good Parson Hooper got upon his face?” cried the sexton, in astonishment. All within hearing immediately turned about and beheld Mr. Hooper slowly pacing his way toward the meeting-house. As one, they gave a start, expressing more wonder than if some strange minister were coming. “Are you sure it is our parson?” inquired Goodman Gray. “Certainly,” replied the sexton. The cause of so much amazement may appear slight. Mr. Hooper, a gentleman of about thirty, though still a bachelor, was dressed as neatly as if a careful wife had starched his collar and brushed the weekly dust from his Sunday’s garb. There was but one thing remarkable in his appearance. Swathed about his forehead and hanging down over his face, so low as to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil. It consisted of two folds of thin black cloth, which entirely hid his features except the mouth and chin, but probably did not block his sight except to give a darkened shade to all living and non-living things. With this gloomy shade before him, good Mr. Hooper walked onward at a slow and quiet pace, stooping somewhat and looking on the ground, yet nodding kindly to those who still waited on the meeting-house steps. But so wonder-struck were they that his greeting hardly met with a reply. “I can’t really feel as if good Mr. Hooper’s face was behind that veil,” said the sexton. “I don’t like it,” muttered an old woman as she hobbled into the meeting-house. “He has changed himself into something awful only by hiding his face.” “Our parson has gone mad!” cried Goodman Gray, following him across the threshold. A rumour of some unexplainable phenomenon had preceded Mr. Hooper into the meeting-house and set all the congregation astir. Few could keep from twisting their heads toward the door. Many stood upright and turned directly about. Several little boys climbed upon the seats, and came down again with a terrible racket. There was a general bustle, a rustling of the women’s gowns and shuffling of the men’s feet. But Mr. Hooper appeared not to notice. He entered with an almost noiseless step, bent his head mildly, and bowed as he passed the oldest member of the church, a white-haired great-grandfather. Mr. Hooper ascended the stairs and showed himself in the pulpit, face to face with his congregation except for the black veil. The myste-

‘THE MINISTER’S
BLACK VEIL’ BY

NATHANIEL
HAWTHORNE

rious veil was never once withdrawn. It shook with his breath and there was darkness between him and the holy page as he read the Bible. While he prayed the veil lay heavily on his uplifted face. Did he seek to hide it from the dread Being whom he was addressing? Such was the effect of this simple piece of crape that more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the meeting-house. Yet perhaps the pale-faced congregation was almost as fearful a sight to the minister as his black veil to them. Mr. Hooper had the reputation of a good preacher, but not an energetic one: he strove to save his people by mild persuasion rather than by the thunders of the word. The sermon which he now delivered was marked by the same style and manner as usual, but there was something either in the sermon itself or in the imagination of the listeners which made it the most powerful speech that they had ever heard from their pastor’s lips. It was tinged more darkly than usual with the gentle gloom of Mr. Hooper’s personality. The subject was secret sin—those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would hide from our own consciousness, even forgetting that God can see them. A subtle power was breathed into his words. Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl and the man of hardened heart, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them behind his awful veil and discovered their stored-up wickedness of deed or thought. Many spread their clasped hands on their chests. There was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper said—at least, no violence. Yet the hearers quaked. They longed for a breath of wind to blow aside the veil, almost believing that a stranger’s face would be discovered, though the form, gesture and voice were those of Mr. Hooper.

At the close of the services, the people hurried out with confusion, eager to communicate their amazement, and feeling light-hearted the moment they lost sight of the black veil. Some gathered in little circles, huddled closely together, with their mouths all whispering in the centre. Some went homeward alone, wrapped in silent thought. Some talked loudly and polluted the Sabbath-day with loud laughter. A few shook their heads, hinting that they could interpret the mystery, while one or two claimed that there was no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper’s eyes were so weakened by the midnight lamp as to require a shade. After a brief time good Mr. Hooper came forth, in the rear of his flock. Turning his veiled face from one group to another, he paid due respect to the elderly, saluted the middle-aged with kind dignity as their friend and spiritual guide, greeted the young with authority and love, and laid his hands on the little children’s heads to bless them. Such was always his custom on the Sabbath-day. Strange and bewildered looks repaid him for his courtesy. None, as on former occasions, walked by their pastor’s side. Old Squire Saunders neglected to invite Mr. Hooper to his table, where the good minister used to bless the food almost every Sunday. The minister returned home, therefore, and at the moment of closing the door, looked back upon the people, all of whom had their eyes fixed upon him. A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the black veil and flickered about his mouth. “How strange,” said a lady, “that a simple black veil, such as any woman might wear on her bonnet, should become such a terrible thing on Mr. Hooper’s face!”

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

“Something must surely be amiss with Mr. Hooper’s mind,” observed her husband, the physician of the village. “But the strangest part of the affair is the effect even on a sober-minded man like myself. The black veil, though it covers only our pastor’s face, makes him ghost-like from head to foot. Do you not feel it so?” “Truly do I,” replied the lady; “and I would not be alone with him for the world. I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself.” “Men sometimes are so,” said her husband. The afternoon service was attended with similar circumstances. At its conclusion the bell tolled for the funeral of a young lady. The relatives and friends were assembled in the house and the more distant acquaintances stood about the door, speaking of the good qualities of the deceased, when their talk was interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Hooper, still covered with his black veil. It was now appropriate for the occasion. The minister stepped into the room where the corpse was laid, and bent over the coffin to take a last farewell of his deceased parishioner. As he stooped the veil hung straight down from his forehead, so that, if her eye-lids had not been closed for ever, the dead maiden might have seen his face. Could Mr. Hooper be fearful of her glance, that he so hastily caught back the black veil? Someone who watched the incident said that at the instant when the minister’s features were revealed, the corpse had slightly shuddered, rustling the burial garment, though the face retained the stillness of death. A superstitious old woman was the only witness of this wonder. From the coffin Mr. Hooper passed into the chamber of the mourners, and then to the head of the staircase, to make the funeral prayer. It was a tender and heart-dissolving prayer, full of sorrow, yet so filled with hopes of heaven that the music of a harp, plucked by the fingers of the dead, seemed faintly to be heard among the sad words of the minister. The people trembled, though they only dimly understood him, when he prayed that they and himself might be ready, as this young maiden had been, for the dreadful hour that should snatch the veil from their faces. The bearers went heavily forth and the mourners followed, saddening all the street, with the dead before them and Mr. Hooper in his black veil behind. “Why do you look back?” said one mourner to his partner. “I imagined,” replied she, “that the minister and the maiden’s spirit were walking hand in hand.” “And so did I at the same moment,” said the other. That night the handsomest couple in Milford village were to be joined in marriage. Though reckoned a melancholy man, Mr. Hooper had a quiet cheerfulness for such occasions, which often excited a smile. There was no quality of his personality, which made him more beloved than this. The company at the wedding awaited his arrival with impatience, trusting that the strange awe, which had gathered over him throughout the day, would now be gone. But such was not the result. When Mr. Hooper came, the first thing that their eyes rested on was the same horrible black veil which had added deeper gloom to the funeral and could foretell nothing but evil to the wedding. A cloud seemed to have rolled from beneath the black crape and dimmed the light of the candles. The bridal pair stood up before the minister, but the bride’s cold fingers quivered in the trembling hand of the bridegroom. Her death-like paleness caused a whisper that the maiden who had been buried a few hours before was come from her grave to be married. After performing the ceremony, Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple in a strain of mild pleasantry. At that instant,

‘THE MINISTER’S
BLACK VEIL’ BY
NATHANIEL
HAWTHORNE

catching a glimpse of himself in the mirror, he shuddered, his lips grew white, he spilt the untasted wine upon the carpet and rushed forth into the darkness, for the Earth too had on her black veil. The next day the whole village of Milford talked of little else than Parson Hooper’s black veil. That, and the mystery concealed behind it, supplied a topic for discussion between acquaintances meeting in the street and good women gossiping at their open windows. It was the first item of news that the tavern keeper told to his guests. The children babbled of it on their way to school. One little boy covered his face with an old black handkerchief, so frightening his playmates that the panic seized himself and he almost lost his wits by his own foolery. It was remarkable that, of all the busy bodies and rude people in the parish, not one ventured to ask Mr. Hooper why he did this thing. Before, whenever there appeared the slightest call for such interference, he had never lacked advisers nor hesitated to be guided by their judgment. Yet, no individual among his parishioners chose to make the black veil a subject of friendly questioning. There was a feeling of dread which caused each to shift the responsibility upon another. At length it was decided to send a small group of the church members, in order to deal with Mr. Hooper about the mystery before it should grow into a scandal. Never did a group of ambassadors perform their duties so ineffectively. The minister received them with friendly courtesy, but became silent after they were seated, leaving to his visitors the whole burden of introducing the obvious topic. There was the black veil wrapped round Mr. Hooper’s forehead and concealing every feature above his mouth, on which, at times, they could perceive a melancholy smile. But that piece of crape, to their imagination, seemed to hang down before his heart, the symbol of a fearful secret between him and them. If only the veil were cast aside, they might speak freely of it, but not till then. Thus they sat a long time, speechless, confused, and shrinking uneasily from Mr. Hooper’s eye, which they felt to be fixed upon them with an invisible glance. Finally, they returned embarrassed to their neighbours, declaring the matter to be too weighty to be handled without a council of the churches. But there was one person in the village unaffected by awe. With the calm energy of her character, she was determined to chase away the strange cloud that appeared to be settling round Mr. Hooper every moment more darkly than before. As his wife it should be her privilege to know what the black veil concealed. At the minister’s first visit, therefore, she entered upon the subject with a direct simplicity, which made the task easier both for him and her. After he took his seat, she fixed her eyes steadily upon the veil, but could see nothing of the dreadful gloom that had so awed the community. It was only a double fold of crape hanging down from his forehead to his mouth and slightly stirring with his breath. “No,” said she aloud, and smiling, “there is nothing terrible in this piece of crape, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look upon. Come, good sir. Let the sun shine from behind the cloud. First lay aside your black veil, and then tell me why you put it on.” Mr. Hooper’s smile glimmered faintly. “There is an hour to come,” said he, “when all of us shall cast aside our veils. Take it not amiss, beloved friend, if I wear this piece of crape till then.” “Your words are a mystery too,” returned the young lady. “Take away the veil from them, at least.” “Elizabeth, I will,” said he, “so far as my vow may let me. Know, then, this veil is a symbol, and I am bound to wear it forever, both in light

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

and darkness, in solitude and before the gaze of a crowd, and as with strangers, so with my friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn. This dismal shade must separate me from the world; even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it.” “What grievous harm has befallen you,” she earnestly asked, “that you should thus darken your eyes for ever?” “If it be a sign of mourning,” replied Mr. Hooper, “I, perhaps, like most other mortals, have sorrows dark enough to be expressed by a black veil.” “But what if the world will not believe that it is the sign of an innocent sorrow?” urged Elizabeth. “Beloved and respected as you are, there may be whispers that you hide your face under the knowledge of secret sin. For the sake of your holy office do away this scandal.” The colour rose into her cheeks as she hinted at the rumours that were already spreading in the village. But Mr. Hooper’s mildness did not desert him. He even smiled again—that same sad smile which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light emerging from the darkness beneath the veil. “If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough,” he merely replied; “and if I cover it for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same?” And gently but stubbornly he resisted all her pleas. At length Elizabeth sat silent. For a few moments she appeared lost in thought, considering, probably, what new methods might be tried to coax her lover from so dark a fantasy, which, was perhaps a symptom of mental disease. Though of a firmer character than his own, the tears rolled down her cheeks. But in an instant, a new feeling took the place of sorrow. Her eyes were fixed on the black veil, when like a sudden twilight in the air its terrors fell around her. She arose and stood trembling before him. “And do you feel it, then, at last?” said he, mournfully. She made no reply, but covered her eyes with her hand and turned to leave the room. He rushed forward and caught her arm. “Have patience with me, Elizabeth!” cried he, passionately. “Do not desert me though this veil must be between us here on earth. Be mine, and in heaven there shall be no veil over my face, no darkness between our souls. It is only a veil during this mortal life; it is not for eternity. Oh, you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened to be alone behind my black veil! Do not leave me in this misery for ever.” “Lift the veil but once and look me in the face,” said she. “Never! It cannot be!” replied Mr. Hooper. “Then farewell!” said Elizabeth. She withdrew her arm from his grasp and slowly departed, pausing at the door to give one long, shuddering gaze that seemed almost to penetrate the mystery of the black veil. But even amid his grief, Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a bit of material had separated him from happiness, though the horrors which it hinted at must be placed darkly between the fondest of lovers. From that time no attempts were made to remove Mr. Hooper’s black veil or to ask him about the secret which it was supposed to hide. For most people good Mr. Hooper was forever a source of dread. He could not walk the street with any peace of mind, so aware was he that the gentle and timid would turn aside to avoid him, and that others would make it a point of toughness to put themselves in his way. Their rudeness forced him to give up his customary walk. It grieved him to the very depth of his kind heart to observe how the children fled from his approach, breaking up their merriest sports while his melancholy figure was still far off. Their dread caused him to feel more strongly than anything else that an unearthly horror was interwoven with the threads of the black crape. In truth, his own dislike of the veil was known to be so great

that he never willingly passed before a mirror nor stooped to drink at a fountain lest he be frightened by himself. This was what some believe that Mr. Hooper's conscience tortured him for some great crime too horrible to be entirely concealed or openly confessed. Thus from beneath the black veil there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, a mystery of sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister, so that love or sympathy could never reach him. It was said that ghosts and fiends accompanied him. With shuddering and outward terrors, he walked continually in its shadow, groping darkly within his own soul, gazing through a thin curtain that saddened the whole world. Even the wind, it was believed, respected his dreadful secret and never blew aside the veil. But still good Mr. Hooper sadly smiled at the pale faces of his neighbours as he passed by. Among all its bad influences, the black veil had the one desirable effect of making its wearer a very effective preacher. By the aid of his mysterious emblem—for there was no other apparent cause—he became a man of awful power over souls that were in agony for sin. His converts always stated, figuratively, that before he brought them into heavenly light they had been with him behind the black veil. Its gloom, indeed, enabled him to sympathize with all dark emotions. Dying sinners cried aloud for Mr. Hooper and would not give up their breath till he appeared, though always, as he stooped to whisper comfortingly, they shuddered at the veiled face so near their own. Such were the terrors of the black veil even when Death had shown its face. Strangers came long distances to attend service at his church with the mere idle purpose of gazing at his figure because it was forbidden them to behold his face. But many were made to quake before they departed. Once, Mr. Hooper was appointed to preach the sermon for the governor's election. Covered with his black veil, he stood before the chief judge, the council, and the representatives, and made so deep an impression that the laws passed during that year were characterized by all the gloom and piety of our ancestors. In this manner Mr. Hooper spent a long life, blameless in outward action, yet cloaked in dismal suspicions; kind and loving, though unloved and dimly feared; a man apart from men, shunned in their health and joy, but summoned to their aid in their death cries. As years wore on, he acquired a name throughout the New England churches, and they called him Father Hooper. Nearly all in the community who had been of middle age when he had first settled there had been carried away by funerals: he had one congregation in the church and a more crowded one in the graveyard. Now, having worked so late into the evening and done his work so well, it was now good Father Hooper's turn to rest. Several persons were visible by the shaded candlelight in the death-chamber of the old clergyman. He had no relatives. But there was the politely grave physician, seeking only to ease the last pain of the patient whom he could not save. There were the pious members of his church. There was the nurse—no hired employee, but one whose calm affection had endured for years in secrecy, in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish even at the dying-hour. Who but Elizabeth! And there lay the white-haired head of good Father Hooper upon the death-pillow with the black veil still swathed about his brow and reaching down over his face, so that each more difficult gasp of his faint breath caused it to stir. All through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world. It had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman's love and kept him in that saddest of all

'THE MINISTER'S
BLACK VEIL' BY

NATHANIEL
HAWTHORNE

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

prisons, his own heart. And still it lay upon his face, as if to deepen the gloom of his chamber and shade him from the sunshine of eternity. For sometime his mind had been confused, wavering between the past and the present, and hovering forward into the world to come. There had been feverish turns, which tossed him from side to side and wore away what little strength he had. But in his most agonized struggles, when no other thought could influence him, he still showed an awful care lest the black veil should slip aside. Even if his bewildered soul could have forgotten, there was a faithful woman at his pillow who with averted eyes would have covered that aged face which she had last beheld in youthful manhood. At length the death-stricken old man lay quietly in mental and bodily exhaustion, with a feeble pulse and breath that grew fainter and fainter except when a long, deep breath seemed to foretell the flight of his spirit. The minister of nearby Westbury approached the bedside. "Father Hooper," said he, "the moment of your release is at hand. Are you ready for the lifting of the veil that shuts in time from eternity?" "Yea," said he, faintly, "my soul is weary until that veil is lifted." "And is it fitting," resumed the Reverend Mr. Clark, "that a man so given to prayer, of such a blameless example, holy in deed and thought, so far as anyone knows—is it fitting that a father in the Church should leave a shadow on his memory that may seem to blacken a life so pure? I pray you, my old, respected brother, let not this thing be! Allow us to be gladdened by your appearance as you go to your reward. Before the veil of eternity is lifted, let me cast aside this black veil from your face." Thus speaking, the Reverend Mr. Clark bent forward to reveal the mystery of so many years. But, exerting a sudden energy that made all the beholders stand aghast, Father Hooper snatched both his hands from beneath the bedclothes and pressed them strongly on the black veil, resolved to struggle if the minister of Westbury would fight with a dying man. "Never!" cried the veiled clergyman. "On earth, never!" "Dark old man," exclaimed the affrighted minister, "with what horrible crime upon your soul are you now passing to the judgment?"

Father Hooper's breath heaved. It rattled in his throat. But with a mighty effort grasping forward with his hands, he caught hold of life and held it back till he should speak. He even raised himself in bed, and there he sat shivering with the arms of Death around him, while the black veil hung down, awful at that last moment in the gathered terrors of a lifetime. And yet the faint, sad smile so often there now seemed to glimmer from its darkness and linger on Father Hooper's lips. "Why do you tremble at me alone?" cried he, turning his veiled face round the circle of pale spectators. "Tremble also at each other. Have men avoided me and women shown no pity and children screamed and fled only for my black veil? Only the mystery it symbolizes has made this piece of crape so awful! When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend, the lover to his best-beloved; when man does not shrink from the eye of his Creator, treasuring up the secret of his sin,—then call me a monster for the symbol beneath which I have lived and die. I look around me, and, lo! on every face I see a black veil!" While his listeners shrank from one another in mutual fright, Father Hooper fell back upon his pillow, a veiled corpse with a faint smile lingering on the lips. Still veiled, they laid him in his coffin, and a veiled corpse they bore him to the grave. The grass of many years has sprung up and withered on that grave, the burial-stone is moss-grown, and

good Mr. Hooper's face is dust; but awful is still the thought that it moldered beneath the black veil.

9.3 ANALYSIS

All humans do not know another person's life inclusively. Therefore, one is concealing numerous aspects and conducted actions, which defines his/her individuality, from the environment and the people around him/her. Despite shaking hands, greeting, and initiating a conversation, no one will justly comprehend the true character hiding underneath the bare face of an individual. Nathaniel Hawthorne portrays this concept in his short story, '*The Minister's Black Veil*', to convey that all humans harbour some sort of "secret sin" within them. This secret sin, which he explains throughout the piece, could be both exorbitant and onerous, forming an isolated and lonely life that one must endure.

With the introduction of the black veil, which hung over his face, there begins to shift in the piece of work from an accepting tone to a rejecting one. As Mr. Hooper stood facing his congregation with the veil, a woman states, "He has changed himself into something awful, only by hiding his face." The aghast and feared tone of the woman illustrates the shock and trepidation seen in the eyes of the Puritans. From the new implanted impression of the minister, Mr. Hooper begins his downfall into a lonely and segregated lifestyle, aloof from society.

At one point, the annoyance of the black veil, or secret sin, engendered the discontinuity of a once stable and secure relationship. Mr. Hooper's fiancée, Elizabeth, after engulfing the rumours spread about her fiancé, developed a desire for the minister to reveal his face to her at least once. Mr. Hooper responds, "No mortal eye will see it withdrawn even you, Elizabeth" Through the use of explicit diction, Mr. Hooper's rejection portrays how much effort one (involuntarily) puts in for the security and safety of the secret sin. With the minister's rejection of Elizabeth's access to his face, Elizabeth rejects him entirely and abandons him, even after he pleaded for her not to desert him. Furthermore, Elizabeth's rejection exemplifies the amount of sacrifices one puts in for the concealment of the secret sin.

The black veil, overall, possesses a symbolic significance, which Hawthorne tries to reveal to his audience. Even though the congregation leaves at a state of "indecorous confusion", Mr. Hooper hints at the veil's meaning as he references to "secret sin" in his sermon. Nonetheless, the author represents the idea of a mask hiding what one hides within him/her, such as his/her innermost feelings and thoughts with the use of this physical material, the veil. At the denouement of the short story, in his deathbed, Mr. Hooper inquires, "Why do you tremble at me alone?... for my black veil?" and dies exclaiming, "I look around me, and lo! On every visage a Black Veil!" This combination of rhetorical questions and profound syntax illustrates how everyone in this Puritan society possesses an indivisible mask hiding their "secret sin" from the public. In others words, Reverend Hooper is a living symbol, representing all the people and the secret sin that they hid within them. Ironically, the Puritans had "felt as if the preacher (Hooper) had crept upon them and discovered their hoarded iniquity of deed or thought" during this sermon but no one effectively grasp his preaching, even after Hooper clari-

'THE MINISTER'S
BLACK VEIL' BY

NATHANIEL
HAWTHORNE

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

fied. This obscurity and confusion demonstrates how secret sin is concealed deep inside people's mind that even their own consciousness is oblivious to it.

Likewise, previously, at a wedding ceremony, Reverend Hooper, himself, gets a little petrified after he catches a glimpse of him in a wine glass. This scene juxtaposes Hooper's character role in the piece, but it reveals the immense negative impact it will have if a secret sin is exposed overtly. The confusion he possesses over the whereabouts and harm of his sin prompts him to develop a fear towards it, akin to the phrase "fear of the unknown". When one is afraid of his/her own sin, it emphasizes the hazards and dangers it will have when it is divulged to the public.

9.4 CHARACTERS AND THEMES

The main theme of *'The Minister's Black Veil'* is secret sin. The story begins with Mr. Hooper presiding over the congregation of a Puritan town. The church-goers are horrified to see, however, that Mr. Hooper wears a veil that covers the top half of his face. This veil comes to represent the minister's sin, which remains a secret for the whole story.

Mr. Hooper initially gives a sermon about sin, and he later attends the funeral of a woman. Before the coffin is removed, however, Mr. Hooper leans over the body. The veil moves forward so that, if the corpse was still alive, she would have seen Hooper's face: "As he stooped, the veil hung straight down from his forehead, so that, if her eyelids had not been closed forever, the dead maiden might have seen his face."

Townspersons become consumed with the meaning of the veil and gossip about the secret sin that Mr. Hooper is concealing. In another scene, Mr. Hooper performs a wedding ceremony, and his black veil casts darkness over the union.

The secret sin begins to affect Mr. Hooper's personal life. His fiancée, Elizabeth, urges him to remove the veil. He refuses, and she ends the engagement. Mr. Hooper continues a life of successful preaching and eventually falls ill. Elizabeth visits him on his deathbed, where he says that everyone is wearing black veils. He dies and is buried with his veil still intact. The theme of secret sin comes out most forcefully at the end. It isn't that only Mr. Hooper has a secret sin, but rather that we all do, hidden behind non-material masks.

Like in almost all short stories, there are very few characters here. There are only two major characters: Mr. Hooper and Elizabeth. The entire story revolves around Mr. Hooper and his black veil that he never uncovers. Elizabeth is his fiancée who tries to convince him to remove the veil but he doesn't do so. Elizabeth's role in his life is for a very short time. She fails to know the reason behind his veil and to unveil his real face.

9.5 THE BLACK VEIL AS A SYMBOL

The veil can be a symbol of the ways and practices of the Puritans, as well as people today, misleading others of the sins they have committed while completely and truly facing themselves. The veil is used as a daily reminder of people's sins, undeniable truths, guilt, and secrets that they are just unwilling to admit. In his lesson, Hooper uses a parable to influence his congrega-

‘THE MINISTER’S
BLACK VEIL’ BY
NATHANIEL
HAWTHORNE

tion, and possibly even further on to Puritan society. However, he pays a high price for this parable: The community’s admiration for him turns to confusion and fear, and he is forced to live a lonely, isolated life. Many people in the congregation assume that Hooper is keeping a secret sin from them and since black veils are a sign of mourning, they thus assume death.

The black veil is a symbol of secret sin and how terrible human nature can be. This could represent the secret sin that all people carry in their hearts, or it could be a representation of Mr. Hooper’s specific sin, which some readers think to be adultery. Hooper as Everyman bearing his lonely fate in order to portray a tragic truth; and there is the implicit one of human imbalance, with Hooper’s actions out of all proportion to need or benefit.¹Edgar Allan Poe speculated that Minister Hooper may have committed adultery with the lady who died at the beginning of the story, because this is the first day he begins to wear the veil, and a crime of dark dye (having reference to the young lady) has been committed, which only minds congenial with that of the author will perceive. Minister Hooper also seems to be unable to tell his fiancée why he wears the veil due to a promise he has made, and is not willing to show his face to the lady even in death. Finally, two funeral attendees see a vision of him walking hand in hand with the girl’s spirit.

In a different view, the black veil could represent the Puritan obsession with sin and sinfulness. Puritans held beliefs of predestination and that only “God’s elect” will be saved when the day of judgement comes, and this weeding out process of finding the saved versus not saved was a large part of Puritan life. The reaction to the minister’s veil is one of annoyance and fear, “‘I don’t like it,’ muttered an old woman, as she hobbled into the meetinghouse. ‘He has changed himself into something awful, only by hiding his face. We are given no clues in the story up to this point as to how, why, or when the minister came to have the black veil over his face, it is just there, and as far as we are told the minister is doing nothing different from his normal routine. The one and only difference is a simple veil covering his face and the way his congregation thinks about him now. This is Hawthorne criticizing the overly judgmental nature of the Puritans belief on sin, for them sin was an undeniable mistake, “Hooper need not have committed any specific sin; for the hardened Puritan, his humanity was sinful enough, and he wore it the way the medieval penitent would his shirt. Anything less than absolute perfection was absolute corruption” The inclusion of an old woman used to introduce us to the Puritan’s rough ways was no mistake, Hawthorne wanted to show the most “hardened” Puritan elder and their reaction to the minister as evidence of how judgmental even the most seasoned Puritan can be.

9.6 LET US SUM UP

‘*The Minister’s Black Veils*’ centres around the black veil of Mr. Hooper. Till the end of the story it is not revealed why he wore it and didn’t ever remove it even when he was to die. Black veil as a symbol creates a lot of confusion in the minds of people of Milford as well as the readers. Black veil remains a symbol of secret sin. In Hooper’s view, there is such a black veil on everyone’s face, but it is not visible like his own. Thus, secret sin is the predominant theme.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:1

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

1. This story is set in the village named _____.
2. _____ is Mr.Hooper's fiancée.
3. Black veil symbolizes _____.
4. Does Hooper remove his black veil before he dies? Yes or No? _____
5. Hooper believes that he will attain _____ after death because he has suffered in his life like Christ did.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:2

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

- Q.1. Why has Mr.Hooper worn a black veil ?
- Q.2. What do the people of Milford think about Mr.Hooper's black veil ?
- Q.3. Why does Elizabeth break her engagement with Hooper ?
- Q.4. How does the story end ?

9.7 KEY WORDS

Isolation : Loneliness

Reluctance : Unwillingness to do something

Veil : Cover, Something hung up or spread out to hide the face or object from view

Sermon : Religious Discourse

Recognition : Awareness, acceptance as valid or true

9.8 BOOKS SUGGESTED

1. *The Hawthorne Collection* -Nathaniel Hawthorne
2. *The Minister's Black Veil* -Nathaniel Hawthorne
3. *Selected Stories by Nathaniel Hawthorne* -Terry O'Brien

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

Fill in the blanks:

Ans.1 Milford Ans.2 Elizabeth Ans.3 secret sin Ans.4 No Ans.5 Heaven

Check Your Progress 2

Descriptive Questions:

Ans.1 The reason behind Hooper's wearing the black veil is not clear neither is it revealed by Hooper. One interpretation is that he killed a young woman and that's why he wants to hide his face as he is a secret sinner. Hooper himself gives two reasons: one is, everyone has sinned and thus there are invisible veils on everyone's face, he has a visible one, second is, he wants to suffer from loneliness and go to Heaven as he believes that if he endures suffering during his earthly life, he will

attain Heaven. Thus, he believes himself to be Christ-like. Craving for Heaven is thus another reason for his veil.

Ans.2 The people of Milford feel a distance when they see their parson with black veil. They don't understand why he put it on. Earlier they were friendly to him but they no longer feel that closeness. Their minds have so many thoughts and interpretations of Hooper's unclear appearance. Even when Hooper becomes a better preacher, he is unable to appeal the townspeople as much as he could before. People fear him and take religion more seriously than before.

Que.3 Elizabeth is a loyal, honest woman. She believes in appearances and gossips and doesn't understand the abstract beliefs. She is afraid of Hooper's veil and she decides to depart from his life fearing what the veil symbolizes-sin in all human beings.

Que.4 The story ends with Hooper's death. When he is on deathbed, people want to remove his black veil. But he utters his last words thus: "lo! I see a black veil on everyone's face." And he lies as a veiled corpse. People bury him along with his veil.

'THE MINISTER'S
BLACK VEIL' BY

NATHANIEL
HAWTHORNE



: UNIT STRUCTURE :

10.0 Objectives

10.1 Introduction

10.2 The story 'Gateman's Gift'

10.3 Thematic Analysis of the story

10.4 Characters

10.5 Irony in the story

10.6 Writing Style

10.7 Let Us Sum Up

10.8 Key Words

10.9 Books Suggested

Answers

10.0 OBJECTIVES

- To know about R.K.Narayan's contribution in English literature
- To understand the short story 'Gateman's Gift' by Hawthorne
- To know the themes, characters, and symbols present in the short story
- To understand the whole story by taking into consideration various aspects about it and analyse it critically.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

R.K. Narayan, in full Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan, original name Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayanswami, (born October 10, 1906, Madras [Chennai], India—died May 13, 2001, Madras), one of the finest Indian authors of his generation writing in English.

Reared by his grandmother, Narayan completed his education in 1930 and briefly worked as a teacher before deciding to devote himself to writing. His first novel, *Swami and Friends* (1935), is an episodic narrative recounting the adventures of a group of schoolboys. That book and much of Narayan's later works are set in the fictitious South Indian town of Malgudi. Narayan typically portrays the peculiarities of human relationships and the ironies of Indian daily life, in which modern urban existence clashes with ancient tradition. His style is graceful, marked by genial humour, elegance, and simplicity.

Among the best-received of Narayan's 34 novels are *The English Teacher* (1945), *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), and *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983). Narayan also wrote a number of short stories; collections

include *Lawley Road* (1956), *A Horse and Two Goats and Other Stories* (1970), *Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories* (1985), and *The Grandmother's Tale* (1993). In addition to works of non-fiction (chiefly memoirs), he also published shortened modern prose versions of two Indian epics, *The Ramayana* (1972) and *The Mahabharata* (1978).

'GATEMAN'S GIFT' BY
R.K.NARAYAN

10.2 THE STORY 'GATEMAN'S GIFT'

WHEN a dozen persons question openly or slyly a man's sanity, he begins to entertain serious doubts himself. This is what happened to ex-gateman Govind Singh. And you could not blame the public either. What could you do with a man who carried about in his hand a registered postal cover and asked: "Please tell me what there is inside?" The obvious answer was: "Open it and see..." He seemed horrified at this suggestion. "Oh, no, no, can't do it," he declared and moved off to another friend and acquaintance. Everywhere the suggestion was the same till he thought everyone had turned mad. And then somebody said: "If you don't like to open it and yet want to know what is inside you must take it to the X-ray Institute." This was suggested by an ex-compounder who lived in the next street. "What is it?" asked Govind Singh. It was explained to him. "Where is it?" He was directed to the City X-ray Institute. But before saying anything further about his progress, it would be useful to go back to an earlier chapter in his history. After war service in 1914-18, he came to be recommended for a gatekeeper's post at Engladia's. He liked the job very much. He was given a khaki uniform, a resplendent band across his shoulder and a short stick. He gripped the stick and sat down on a stool at the entrance to the office. And when his chief's car pulled up at the gate he stood at attention and gave a military salute. The office consisted of a staff numbering over a hundred and as they trooped in and out every day, he kept an eye on them. At the end of the day, he awaited the footsteps of the General Manager coming down the stairs and rose stiffly and stood at attention, and after he left the hundreds of staff poured out. The doors were shut; Singh carried his stool in, placed it under the staircase, and placed his stick across it. Then he came out and the main door was locked and sealed. In this way, he had spent twenty-five years of service, and then he begged to be pensioned off. He would not have thought of retirement yet, but for the fact that he found his sight and hearing playing tricks on him; he could not catch the Manager's footsteps on the stairs, and it was hard to recognize him even at ten yards. He was ushered into the presence of the chief, who looked up for a moment from his papers and muttered: "We are very pleased with your work for us, and the company will give you a pension of twelve rupees for your life..." Singh clicked his heels, saluted, turned on his heel and went out of the room, with his heart brimming with gratitude and pride. This was the second occasion when the great man had spoken to him, the first being on the first day of his service. As he had stood at his post, the chief, entering the office just then, looked up for a moment and asked "Who are you?" "I'm the new gatekeeper, master," he had answered. And he spoke again only on this day. Though so little was said, Singh felt electrified on both occasions by the words of his master. In Singh's eyes, the chief had acquired a sort of Godhood, and it would be quite adequate if a god spoke to one only once or twice in a lifetime. In mo-

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

ments of contemplation, Singh's mind dwelt on the words of his master, and on his personality. His life moved on smoothly. The pension together with what his wife earned by washing and sweeping in a couple of houses was quite sufficient for him. He ate his food, went out and met a few friends, slept, and spent some evenings sitting at a cigarette shop, which his cousin owned. This tenor of life was disturbed on the first of every month when he donned his old khaki suit, walked to his old office, and salaamed the Accountant at the counter and received his pension. Sometimes if it was closing, he waited on the roadside for the General Manager to come down, and saluted him as he got into his car. There was a lot of time all around him, an immense sea of leisure. In this state, he made a new discovery about himself, that he could make fascinating models out of clay and wood dust. The discovery came suddenly, when one day a child in the neighbourhood brought to him its little doll for repair. He not only repaired it but also made a new thing of it. This discovery pleased him so much that he very soon became absorbed in it. His backyard gave him a plentiful supply of pliant clay, and the carpenter's shop next to his cousin's cigarette shop sawdust. He purchased paint for a few annas. And lo! He found his hours gliding. He sat there in the front part of his home, bent over his clay, and brought into existence a miniature universe; all the colours of life were there, all the forms and creatures, but of the size of his middle finger; whole villages and towns were there, all the persons he had seen passing before his office when he was sentry there that beggar woman coming at midday, and that cucumber vendor; he had the eye of a cartoonist for human faces. Everything went down into clay. It was a wonderful miniature reflection of the world; and he mounted them neatly on thin wooden slices, which enhanced their attractiveness. He kept these in his cousin's shop and they attracted huge crowds every day and sold very briskly. More than the sales Singh felt an ecstasy when he saw admiring crowds clustering around his handiwork. On his next pension day he carried to his office a street scene (which he ranked as his best), and handed it over the counter to the Accountant with the request: "Give this to the Sahib, please!" "All right,*" said the Accountant with a smile. It created a sensation in the office and disturbed the routine of office working for nearly half an hour. On the next pension day, he carried another model (children at play) and handed it over the counter. "Did Sahib like the last one?" "Yes, he liked it." "Please give this one to him" and he passed it over the counter. He made it a convention to carry on every pension day an offering for his master, and each time his greatest reward was the Accountant's stock reply to his question: "What did the Sahib say?" "He said it was very good." At last he made his masterpiece. A model of his office frontage with himself at his post, a car at the entrance, and the chief getting down; this composite model was so realistic that while he sat looking at it, he seemed to be carried back to his office days. He passed it over the counter on his pension day and it created a very great sensation in the office. "Fellow, you have not left yourself out, either!" People cried and looked admiringly at Singh. A sudden fear seized Singh and he asked: "The master won't be angry, I hope?" "No, no, why should he be?" said the Accountant, and Singh received his pension and went home. A week later when he was sitting on the fyol kneading clay, the postman came and said: "registered letter for you . . ." "For me! " Any letter would have upset Singh he had received

less than three letters in his lifetime, and each time it was a torture for him till the contents were read out. Now a registered letter! This was his first registered letter. "Only lawyers send registered letters, isn't it so?" "Usually," said the postman. Please take it back. I don't want it," said Singh. Shall I say 'Refused'?" asked the postman. "No, no," said Singh. "Just take it back and say you have not found me . . ." "That I can't do . . .," said the postman looking serious. Singh seemed to have no option but to scrawl his signature and receive the packet. He sat gloomily gazing at the floor. His wife who had gone out and just returned saw him in this condition and asked: "What is it?" His voice choked as he replied: "It has come." He flung at her the registered letter. "What is it?" she asked. He said: "How should I know. Perhaps our ruin . . ." He broke down. His wife watched him for a moment, went in to attend to some domestic duty and returned, still found him in the same condition, and asked: "Why not open it and see, ask someone to read it?" He threw up his arms in horror: "Woman, you don't know what you are saying. It cannot be opened. They have perhaps written that my pension is stopped, and God knows what else the Sahib has said . . ." "Why not go to the office and find out from them?" "Not I! I will never show my face there again . . .," replied Singh. "I have lived without a single remark being made against me, all my life. Now! He shuddered at the thought of it." I knew I was getting into trouble when I made that office model . . ." After deeper reflection he said: "Every time I took something there, people crowded round, stopped all work for nearly an hour . . . That must also have reached the Sahib's ears." He wandered about saying the same thing, with the letter in his pocket. He lost taste for food, wandered about unkempt, with his hair standing up like a halo an unaccustomed sight, his years in military service having given him a habitual tidiness. His wife lost all peace of mind and became miserable about him. He stood at the crossroads, clutching the letter in his hand. He kept asking everyone he came across: "Tell me, what there is in this?" "But he would not brook the suggestion to open it and see its contents. So forthwith Singh found his way to the City X-ray Institute at Race Course Road. As he entered the gate, he observed dozens of cars parked along the drive, and a Gurkha watchman at the gate. Some people were sitting on sofas reading books and journals. They turned and threw a brief look at him and resumed their studies. As Singh stood uncertainly at the doorway, an assistant came up and asked: SO GATEMAN'S GIFT "What do you want?" Singh gave a salute, held up the letter uncertainly and muttered: "Can I know what is inside this?" The assistant made the obvious suggestion. But Singh replied: "They said you could tell me what's inside without opening it." The assistant asked: "Where do you come from?" Singh explained his life, work and outlook and concluded: "I've lived without remark all my life. I knew trouble was coming." There were tears on his cheeks. The assistant looked at him curiously, as scores of others had done before, smiled, and said: "Go home and rest. You are not all right . . . Go, go home." "Can't you say what is in this?" Singh asked pathetically. The assistant took it in his hand, examined it and said: "Shall I open it?" "No, no, no," Singh cried and snatched it back. There was a look of terror in his eyes. The assembly looked up from their pages and watched him with mild amusement in their eyes. The assistant kindly put his arms on his shoulder and led him out. "You get well first, and then come back. I tell you

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

are not all right.” Walking back home, he pondered over it. “Why are they all behaving like this, as if I were a mad man?” When this word came to his mind, he stopped abruptly in the middle of the road, and cried.” OH! That’s it, is that it? Mad! Mad!” He shook his head gleefully as if the full truth had just dawned upon him. He now understood the looks that people threw at him. “Oh! Oh! “He cried aloud. He laughed. He felt a curious relief at this realization. “I have been mad and didn’t know it . . .” He cast his mind back. Every little action of his for the last so many days seemed mad; particularly the dollmaking. “What sane man would make clay dolls after 25 years of respectable service in an office?” He felt a tremendous freedom of limbs, and didn’t feel it possible to walk at an ordinary pace. He wanted to fly. He swung his arms up and down and ran on with a whoop. He ran through the Market Road. When people stood about and watched he cried: “Hey, don’t laugh at a mad man, for who knows, you will also be mad when you come to make clay dolls,” and charged into their midst with a war cry. When he saw children coming out of a school, he felt it would be nice to amuse their young hearts by behaving like a tiger. So he fell on his hands and knees and crawled up to them with a growl. He went home in a terrifying condition. His wife who was grinding chilly in the backyard looked up and asked: “What is this? “His hair was covered with street dust; his body was splashed with mud. He could not answer because he choked with mirth as he said: “Fancy what has happened!” “What is it?” “I’m mad, mad.” He looked at his workbasket in a corner, scooped out the clay and made a helmet out of it and put it on his head. Ranged on the floor was his latest handiwork. After his last visit to the office, he had been engaged in making a model village. It was a resplendent group; a dun road, red tiles, green coconut trees swaying, and the colour of the sarees of the village women carrying water pots. He derived the inspiration for it from a memory of his own village days. It was the most enjoyable piece of work that he had so far undertaken. He lived in a kind of ecstasy while doing it. “I am going to keep this for myself. A memento of my father’s village,” he declared. “I will show it at an exhibition, where they will give me a medal.’ 9 He guarded it like a treasure: when it was wet, he never allowed his wife to walk within ten yards of it.” Keep off, we don’t want your foot dust for this village . . .” Now in his madness, he looked down on it. He raised his foot and stamped everything down into a multi-coloured jam. They were still half-wet. He saw a donkey grazing in the street. He gathered up the jam and flung it at the donkey with the remark: “Eat this if you like. It is a nice village . . .” And he went out on a second round. This was a quieter outing. He strode on at an even pace, breathing deeply, with the clay helmet on, out of which peeped his grey hair, his arms locked behind, his fingers clutching the fateful letter, his face tilted towards the sky. He walked down the Market Road, with a feeling that he was the sole occupant of this globe: his madness had given him a sense of limitless freedom, strength and buoyancy. The remarks and jeers of the crowds gaping at him did not in the least touch him. While he walked thus, his eye fell on the bulb of a tall street lamp: “Bulb of the size of a Papaya fruit!” he muttered and chuckled. It had been a long cherished desire in him to fling a stone at it; now he felt, in his joyous and free condition, that he was free from the trammels of convention and need not push back any inclination. He picked up a pebble and threw it with good aim. The

shattering noise of glass was as music to his ears. A policeman put his hand on his shoulder: "Why did you do it?" Singh looked indignant: "I like to crack glass Papaya fruit, GATEMAN'S GIFT 33 that is all/ 1 was the reply. The constable said: "Come to the station." "Oh, yes, when I was in Mesopotamia they put me on half ration once," he said, and walked on to the station. He paused, tilted his head to the side and remarked: "This road is not straight ..." A few carriages and cycles were coming up to him. He found that everything was wrong about them. They seemed to need some advice in the matter. He stopped in the middle of the road, stretched out his arms and shouted: "Halt!" The carriages stopped, the cyclists jumped off and Singh began a lecture: "When I was in Mesopotamia I will tell you fellows who don't know anything about anything." The policeman dragged him away to the side, and waved to the traffic to resume. One of the cyclists who resumed, jumped off the saddle again and came towards him with: "Why! It is Singh, Singh, what fancy dress is this? What is the matter?" "Even through the haze of his insane vision Singh could recognize the voice and the person the Accountant at the office. Singh clicked his heels and gave a salute: "Excuse me sir, didn't intend to stop you. You may pass . . ." He pointed the way generously, and the Accountant saw the letter in his hand. He recognized it although it was mud-stained and crumpled. "Singh, you got our letter?" "Yes, sir, Pass. Do not speak of it. . ." "What is the matter?" He snatched it from his hand. "Why haven't you opened it?" He tore open the envelope, took out of it a letter, and read aloud: "The General Manager greatly appreciates the very artistic models you have sent, and he is pleased to sanction a reward of Rs. 100 and hopes it will be an encouragement for you to keep up this interesting hobby". It was translated to him word for word, and the enclosure, a cheque for one hundred rupees, was handed to him. A big crowd gathered to watch this scene. Singh pressed the letter to his eyes. He beat his brow, and wailed: "Tell me, sir, am I mad or not?" "You look quite well, you aren't mad," said the Accountant. Singh fell at his feet and said with tears choking his voice: "You are a god, sir, to say that I am not mad. I am so happy to hear it." On the next pension day he turned up spruce as ever at the office counter. As they handed him the envelope they asked: "What toys are you making now?" "Nothing sir. Never again. It is no occupation for a sane man . . ." he said, received his pension, and stiffly walked out of the office.

10.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE STORY

In 'Gateman's Gift' by R.K. Narayan, we have the theme of fear, paralysis, insecurity, suffering, social opinion, pride and identity. Taken from his *Malgudi Days* collection the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator and after reading the story the reader realises that Narayan may be exploring the theme of fear. Singh lives in fear of opening the registered letter that has been sent to him. So crippling is Singh's fear that he believes himself to be going mad. Though the logical thing to do would be to open the letter and discover whether the letter holds good or bad news Singh isn't able to do this. It is also interesting that Singh loses interest in his clay modelling because of the fear he feels over the letter. This loss of interest is important as it highlights just how overpowering the fear is for Singh. It is also interesting that Singh never thinks about just getting over what may be in the letter if the contents of the letter are of a bad nature. It is as though he

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

would rather not know whether the letter contains good or bad news. If anything, there is a sense of paralysis in the story. Singh is unable to move forward as long as he leaves the letter unopened. Rather he believes himself to be going mad based solely on the opinions of others. Which may suggest that Singh may be somewhat insecure about his identity. He doesn't appear to have the strength to trust his own mind and is swayed by social opinion.

The fact that some of Singh's clay models are copies of his old work environment may also be important as it suggests that Singh remembers with fondness his time as a Gateman. It may also be significant that Singh fears he may have upset his old boss by bringing the models into the pension office when Singh was collecting his pension. As this suggests that Singh still respects his old boss and does not wish to upset him. Singh's respect for his old boss is mirrored by his boss' respect for him. Something that is noticeable when the accountant opens the letter for Singh and the reader realises that Singh's old boss admires all his clay models. Admires them so much that he has given him an extra one hundred rupees. There is also no doubting that Singh suffers, because of his fear, throughout the story. However, Singh's wife also suffers and after the letter arrives and remains unopened, she is careful. So careful that she stays out of Singh's way.

It might also be a case that Narayan is exploring the theme of pride. Singh is proud of his job as a Gateman. While some critics might suggest that, his role is at the lower end of the employment scale. Singh doesn't look at things like that. He is happy to be able to be part of something. To have some responsibility and to get paid for it too. The village that Singh makes that reminds him of his father's village also appears to be the one clay model that Singh is so much proud of. It is as though the model of the village is part of Singh's identity. Yet he destroys it in a moment of madness all because of his fear to open the letter. Though it is clear that Singh is not really mad he does through stress do things that would be deemed inappropriate. One of these things is the breaking of the bulb, which results in Singh being arrested, which the reader suspects are out of character for Singh. At no other stage of the story has Singh been in trouble.

The end of the story is also interesting as Singh despite the praises of his boss, gives up making clay models. It's difficult to say for certain as to why this might be but it is possible that Singh is equating the clay modelling to the madness he went through. However, the reader is aware that the real problem for Singh was the fact that he was afraid to open the letter. Singh believes more in living a structured life than a creative one and appears to associate creativity with madness. Though some critics might suggest that there is a definable link between creativity and madness it is important to remember that prior to the letter arriving Singh was happy making clay models. If anything Singh's life at the end of the story is still full of fear. No longer is he worried about the letter instead he is afraid to be creative despite the fact that many people have told him how good he is at clay modelling. Which suggests that the paralysis Singh felt when he first received the letter also remains. Singh has retired from his job and is happy to collect his pension every week but he doesn't appear to do anything else now that he has stopped clay modelling.

Prajapati P. Shah published an essay in *Literary Criterion* in 1980, called "R.K. Narayan's 'Gateman's Gift': The Central Theme." Shah's reading focused not on the mimetic nature of the Singh's art, but on his status as a marginalized figure in the socio-economic life of the town. According to this interpretation, Singh's transgression is his presumption of a creative role discouraged by the capitalist system which has structured every aspect of his life. It's a little bit Marxist and there's more than a little truth in this interpretation.

10.4 CHARACTERS

The protagonist in the story is Govind Singh who worked as a Gatekeeper. The entire story centres on him. The second major character is the Accountant who opens the registered letter that Singh had received and misunderstood. The Accountant tells Singh what the letter says. But by that time Singh has already become almost a mad man full of fear. Minor characters include the Manager and Singh's wife. The Manager holds a Godly status in Singh's life. Singh's plan to gift the clay models to the Manager triggers the problem. The letter of appreciation from the Manager is mistaken as the letter for stopping his pension. Singh starts thinking that his gifts might have made the Manager angry. Ignorance leads to disaster. In this story, thus, there are few characters.

10.5 IRONY IN THE STORY

The irony in this story is that Singh's gift, which once used to bring hopes of a happier life turns his life upside down. He wanted to please the Manager by gifting him his creations but that becomes the reason for his own unhappiness and filled his life with an unnecessary fear. The feeling of fear is so severe that Singh even after knowing that the letter was to appreciate his talent chooses never to do clay modelling again. Thus, it is the biggest irony of Singh's post-retirement life.

10.6 WRITING STYLE

Narayan's writing technique is unpretentious with a natural element of humour about it. It focused on ordinary people, reminding the reader of next-door neighbours, cousins and the like, thereby providing a greater ability to relate to the topic. Unlike his national contemporaries, he was able to write about the intricacies of Indian society without having to modify his characteristic simplicity to conform to trends and fashions in fiction writing. He also employed the use of nuanced dialogic prose with gentle Tamil overtones based on the nature of his characters. Critics have considered Narayan to be the *Indian Chekhov*, due to the similarities in their writings, the simplicity and the gentle beauty and humour in tragic situations. Greene considered Narayan to be more similar to Chekhov than any Indian writer.[3] Anthony West of *The New Yorker* considered Narayan's writings to be of the realism variety of Nikolai Gogol.

According to Pulitzer Prize winner Jhumpa Lahiri, Narayan's short stories have the same captivating feeling as his novels, with most of them less than ten pages long, and taking about as many minutes to read. She adds that between the title sentence and the end, Narayan provides the reader something novelists

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

struggle to achieve in hundreds more pages: a complete insight to the lives of his characters. These characteristics and abilities led Lahiri to classify him as belonging to the pantheon of short-story geniuses that include O. Henry, Frank O'Connor and Flannery O'Connor. Lahiri also compares him to Guy de Maupassant for their ability to compress the narrative without losing the story, and the common themes of middle-class life written with an unyielding and unpitiful vision.

Critics have noted that Narayan's writings tend to be more descriptive and less analytical; the objective style, rooted in a detached spirit, providing for a more authentic and realistic narration.[80] His attitude, coupled with his perception of life, provided a unique ability to fuse characters and actions,[81] and an ability to use ordinary events to create a connection in the mind of the reader.[82] A significant contributor to his writing style was his creation of Malgudi, a stereotypical small town, where the standard norms of superstition and tradition apply.

Narayan's writing style has often been compared to that of William Faulkner since both their works brought out the humour and energy of ordinary life while displaying compassionate humanism. The similarities also extended to their juxtaposing of the demands of society against the confusions of individuality. Although their approach to subjects was similar, their methods were different; Faulkner was rhetorical and illustrated his points with immense prose while Narayan was very simple and realistic, capturing the elements all the same. This element of realism is absolutely evident in 'Gateman's Gift'.

10.7 LET US SUM UP

The story leaves the readers with questions like why Singh had the fear of opening the letter just because it was a 'registered' letter, why he stopped clay modelling even after getting rewarded for his past creations. To answer such questions, we may say that Singh remained merely the football of others' opinions. Singh seemed to be lacking faith in his ability. He became the victim of negative thinking that generated fear in him, which was absolutely without any reason. He could have been self-confident and had faith in what he did. He is responsible for all his suffering. Fear when beyond a limit, thus, kills our strength.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 1

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

1. Why did Singh not open the letter?
2. Discuss major themes of the story.
3. What is the end of the story?

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 2

CHOOSE APPROPRIATE OPTION FROM GIVEN BELOW.

1. Singh worked as a _____.
(a) clerk (b) accountant
(c) gateman (d) officer

2. After Singh retired, he developed his hobby of _____.
(a) clay modelling (b) painting
(c) music (d) writing
3. For Singh, the Chief Manager was like _____.
(a) father (b) brother
(c) God (d) king
4. Who opened Singh's letter finally?
(a) his wife (b) the accountant
(c) the policeman (d) his neighbour
5. _____ is the main theme of the story.
(a) Fear (b) Respect
(c) Ego (d) Doubt

10.8 KEY WORDS

1. Gateman: Gatekeeper, Watchman
2. Clay: The mineral substance made up of small crystals of silica and alumina
3. Convention: A Practice or Procedure widely observed in a group
4. Inclination: A Mental Tendency
5. Spruce: An Evergreen Tree, Wood of Spruce(the tree)

10.9 BOOKS SUGGESTED

1. *Malgudi Days* -R.K.Narayan
2. *The Very Best of R.K.Narayan: Timeless Malgudi* -R.K.Narayan
3. *A History of Indian English Literature* -M.K.Naik

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

Ans.1 Singh doesn't open the letter because it is a 'registered' letter which means it is sent by the Manager and Singh thinks the Manager is not happy with his gifts and the letter is to inform Singh that his pension would be stopped now. A registered letters generates fear in him, which doesn't allow him to open the letter.

Ans.2 The main theme that is very obvious in the story is the theme of fear. All that happens to Singh after received the registered letter is the result of his fear. He is unnecessarily afraid of something, which is not the fact. Without knowing what is the letter sent for Singh almost becomes mad. Second major theme can be Pride. Singh is proud of his creation that he can't tolerate its rejection by anyone. He expects appreciation. He just is not able to understand at first why the registered letter was sent to him, because he is afraid of rejection of his gift or a similar thing. Thus, Pride and Fear can be considered major themes.

Ans.3 In the end of the story, Narayan reveals the truth. The letter is opened by the accountant and it turns out to be what Singh had not even dreamt. It's from the Manager expressing gratitude and admiration for the gift of Singh. Manager is

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

happy with the clay models and wishes Singh progress more in this field of his interest. But Singh's fear has made him so mad that he no longer wants to touch clay modelling work. He decides to discontinue with his creative work.

Check Your Progress2

1. (c)
2. (a)
3. (c)
4. (b)
5. (a)



'THE LOST CHILD' BY MULK RAJ ANAND

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

11.0 Objectives

11.1 Introduction

11.2 About the Author

11.3 About the Story

11.4 Text: '*The Lost Child*' (Mulk Raj Anand)

11.5 Interpretation and Analysis

11.6 Let Us Sum Up

11.7 Key Words

11.8 References

11.9 Further Reading Suggested

Answers

11.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall

- learn about the author MulkrajAnand
- learn explication of the short story

By the end of the unit, you should be able to

- learn about various elements of the short story under study
- evaluate the short story

11.1 INTRODUCTION

'The Lost Child' is a story written by Indian English author Mulk Raj Anand. This story is all about the value of love and affection that a child shares with his parents. The story is set in the season of spring and the location is fun-fair where the child gets tempted by all the attractive items displayed in the fun-fair. The story deals with the price of worldly things and the value of bonding in relationship. A sudden twist in the story conveys the central idea of the story. It moves from worldly pleasures to affectionate pains. It deals with the demands of a child-psyche, which moves from the external world to internal being. Many 'wants' turned into 'longings'- that is the main shift in the story. Narrative technique has tremendously been taken care of keeping in mind the psychology of a child. The pleasures of one moment do not satisfy the child's inner thirst at another moment. Something lost makes him learn the value of it in the midst of prices of worldly matters. This is how the story ends with a very strong moral lesson.

11.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) is one of the prominent names among Indian English authors. His novels, short stories and critical essays have marked milestones

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

in the genre of Indian English writing. Anand was born on December 12, 1905 at Peshawar, India (now in Pakistan). He is renowned for realistic portrayal of the poor in India in his stories and novels. He pursued his graduation from Punjab University, Lahore in 1924 and he studied further at University of Cambridge and University College of London. During early years, he wrote *Persian Painting* (1930), *Curries and Other Indian Dishes* (1932), *The Hindu View of Art* (1933), *The Indian Theatre* (1950), and *Seven Little-Known Birds of the Inner Eye* (1978) and he earned very good reputation in literary scenario of the time. Mulk Raj Anand expanded his fame with his novels *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936), which exposed the exertion of poor people in India. By 1945 he came back to Bombay to campaign for national reforms. His other major works include *The Village* (1939), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), and *The Big Heart* (1945; rev. ed. 1980). He founded an Art Quarterly 'Marg' in 1946 and also edited magazines and journals. His autobiographical novel entitled 'Seven Ages of Man' was also published during 1951-1984 in four volumes. He has been awarded with *Sahitya Akademi Award* (1971), *Padma Bhushan* (1968), *International Peace Prize* (1953). Anand was one of the pioneer authors from India who gained international readership. His works are remarkable for his observations on Indian social structure and role of the British in India. At the age of 98, he passed away on September 28, 2004 in Pune.

11.3 ABOUT THE STORY

In the season of spring, people are out dressed in colourful attires and they are moving towards a fair. This indicates a kind of joyful atmosphere. It has been described as 'gaily clad humanity' in the very beginning of the story. A child along with his parents is going to visit fair and he is 'brimming over with life and laughter'. He keeps running ahead of his parents being lured to the stalls lined up in the fair full of toys and sweets. The scene brings excitement to the child but he knows it very well that his parents would have elderly arguments and excuses against all his demands in the fair. In fact, it happens exactly the same way; his father gets angry and his mother tries to divert his mind to other things. But the child can't resist himself from being attracted to toys and sweets displayed in the fair. Further, he moves on towards snake charmer and a roundabout swing and he asks for the permission but doesn't get any reply. He looks back and finds his parents nowhere in the fair. All of a sudden, he realizes that he is lost in the fair. In a fraction of a moment, his joys are too lost, he starts craving for his parents, and ultimately it turns into his longing-cry in the fair. A gentleman helps him and consoles him by asking for a joyride, balloons, sweets, garlands which few moments ago were actually the subjects of child's temptation. But this cannot satisfy his yearning for his parents and he keeps sobbing repeatedly uttering one and the same cry "I want my mother, I want my father".

11.4 TEXT: 'THE LOST CHILD' (MULK RAJ ANAND)

It was the festival of spring. From the wintry shades of narrow lanes and alleys emerged a gaily-clad humanity. Some walked, some rode on horses, others sat,

being carried in bamboo and bullock carts. One little boy ran between his father’s legs, brimming over with life and laughter. “Come, child, come,” called his parents, as he lagged behind, fascinated by the toys in the shops that lined the way.

He hurried towards his parents, his feet obedient to their call, his eyes still lingering on the receding toys. As he came to where they had stopped to wait for him, he could not suppress the desire of his heart, even though he well knew the old, cold stare of refusal in their eyes. “I want that toy,” he pleaded. His father looked at him red-eyed, in his familiar tyrant’s way. His mother, melted by the free spirit of the day was tender and, giving him her finger to hold, said, “Look, child, what is before you!”

It was a flowering mustard-field, pale like melting gold as it swept across miles and miles of even land. A group of dragonflies were bustling about on their gaudy purple wings, intercepting the flight of a lone black bee or butterfly in search of sweetness from the flowers.

The child followed them in the air with his gaze, till one of them would still its wings and rest, and he would try to catch it. But it would go fluttering, flapping, up into the air, when he had almost caught it in his hands. Then his mother gave a cautionary call: “Come, child, come, come on to the footpath.”

He ran towards his parents gaily and walked abreast of them for a while, being, however, soon left behind, attracted by the little insects and worms along the footpath that were teeming out from their hiding places to enjoy the sunshine.

“Come, child, come!” his parents called from the shade of a grove where they had seated themselves on the edge of a well. He ran towards them. A shower of young flowers fell upon the child as he entered the grove, and, forgetting his parents, he began to gather the raining petals in his hands. But lo! He heard the cooing of doves and ran towards his parents, shouting, “The dove! The dove!” The raining petals dropped from his forgotten hands.

“Come, child, come!” they called to the child, who had now gone running in wild capers round the banyan tree, and gathering him up they took the narrow, winding footpath which led to the fair through the mustard fields. As they neared the village, the child could see many other footpaths full of throngs, converging to the whirlpool of the fair, and felt at once repelled and fascinated by the confusion of the world he was entering.

A sweetmeat seller hawked, “gulab-jaman, rasagulla, burfi, jalebi,” at the corner of the entrance and a crowd pressed round his counter at the foot of an architecture of many coloured sweets, decorated with leaves of silver and gold. The child stared open-eyed and his mouth watered for the burfi that was his favourite sweet. “I want that burfi,” he slowly murmured. But he half knew as he begged that his plea would not be heeded because his parents would say he was greedy. So without waiting for an answer he moved on.

A flower-seller hawked, “A garland of gulmohur, a garland of gulmohur !” The child seemed irresistibly drawn. He went towards the basket where the flowers lay heaped and half murmured, “I want that garland.” But he well knew his parents would refuse to buy him those flowers because they would say that they were

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

cheap. So, without waiting for an answer, he moved on.

A man stood holding a pole with yellow, red, green and purple balloons flying from it. The child was simply carried away by the rainbow glory of their silken colours and he was filled with an overwhelming desire to possess them all. But he well knew his parents would never buy him the balloons because they would say he was too old to play with such toys. So he walked on farther.

A snake-charmer stood playing a flute to a snake, which coiled itself in a basket, its head raised in a graceful bend like the neck of a swan, while the music stole into its invisible ears like the gentle rippling of an invisible waterfall. The child went towards the snake-charmer.

But, knowing his parents had forbidden him to hear such coarse music as the snake-charmer played, he proceeded farther. There was a roundabout in full swing. Men, women and children, carried away in a whirling motion, shrieked and cried with dizzy laughter. The child watched them intently and then he made a bold request: "I want to go on the roundabout, please, Father, Mother." There was no reply. He turned to look at his parents. They were not there, ahead of him. He turned to look on either side. They were not there. He looked behind. There was no sign of them.

A full, deep cry rose within his dry throat and with a sudden jerk of his body he ran from where he stood, crying in real fear, "Mother, Father." Tears rolled down from his eyes, hot and fierce; his flushed face was convulsed with fear. Panic-stricken, he ran to one side first, then to the other, hither and thither in all directions, knowing not where to go. "Mother, Father," he wailed. His yellow turban came untied and his clothes became muddy.

Having run to and fro in a rage of running for a while, he stood defeated, his cries suppressed into sobs. At little distances on the green grass, he could see, through his filmy eyes, men and women talking. He tried to look intently among the patches of bright yellow clothes, but there was no sign of his father and mother among these people, who seemed to laugh and talk just for the sake of laughing and talking.

He ran quickly again, this time to a shrine to which people seemed to be crowding. Every little inch of space here was congested with men, but he ran through people's legs, his little sob lingering: "Mother, Father!" Near the entrance to the temple, however, the crowd became very thick: men jostled each other, heavy men, with flashing, murderous eyes and hefty shoulders. The poor child struggled to thrust a way between their feet but, knocked to and fro by their brutal movements, he might have been trampled underfoot, had he not shrieked at the highest pitch of his voice, "Father, Mother!"

A man in the surging crowd heard his cry and, stooping with great difficulty, lifted him up in his arms. "How did you get here, child? Whose baby are you?" the man asked as he steered clear of the mass. The child wept more bitterly than ever now and only cried, "I want my mother, I want my father!"

The man tried to soothe him by taking him to the roundabout. "Will you have a ride on the horse?" he gently asked as he approached the ring. The child's throat tore

into a thousand shrill sobs and he only shouted: "I want my mother, I want my father!"

The man headed towards the place where the snake-charmer still played on the flute to the swaying cobra. "Listen to that nice music, child!" he pleaded. But the child shut his ears with his fingers and shouted his double-pitched strain: "I want my mother, I want my father!" The man took him near the balloons, thinking the bright colours of the balloons would distract the child's attention and quieten him. "Would you like a rainbow-coloured balloon?" he persuasively asked. The child turned his eyes from the flying balloons and just sobbed, "I want my mother, I want my father!"

The man, still trying to make the child happy, bore him to the gate where the flower-seller sat. "Look! Can you smell those nice flowers, child! Would you like a garland to put round your neck?" The child turned his nose away from the basket and reiterated his sob: "I want my mother, I want my father!"

Thinking to humour his disconsolate charge by a gift of sweets, the man took him to the counter of the sweet shop. "What sweets would you like, child?" he asked. The child turned his face from the sweet shop and only sobbed, "I want my mother, I want my father!"

11.5 INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Theme:

The story deals with the theme of love and affection that children share with their parents. Being immature at a very young age, children get fascinated by lots of things around them and unknowingly they tend to possess them but many a times parents cannot get them all those things because either they cannot afford it or it is not good for the child or else it may not be required. But children do not understand this and they may get angry with parents. The theme of love and affection of a child has been portrayed in this story by creating a situation in the plot of the story when the child is lost in fair and then he does not find any pleasure in any worldly things that used to allure him. The absence of his parents in the overcrowded fair makes him weep for the loss of his parents. The only thing matters for the child in this situation is his parents.

Significance of the Title:

'The Lost Child' is a very apt title for the story. In the temptations of worldly matters, we forget the value of bonding in relationship. World is full of playful items having price tags on them and they attract our mind but the real treasure of life is hidden in human bonding and that can be realized when this treasure is lost. Here in the story, a child is lost in fair and he is craving for his parents only. Toys and sweets no more attract him once he is separated from his parents in the crowd of the fair. The child is lost in the crowd, in the midst of all worldly enticements and finally he comes out of all allure and realizes the value of his relation with his parents. He feels lonely in the crowd because he is not with his parents; no joyful item attracts his attention because he is not with his parents. His love and affection for his parents turn into a longing sob.

'THE LOST CHILD'
BY MULK
RAJANAND

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

Moral of the story:

We think that we can buy everything with money but happiness cannot be bought by money. We get tempted towards materialistic life and gradually we mislay our relations far behind in our life. In this story, the child feels that his father is very strict and does not fulfil his wishes but actually that is an inseparable part of life that not our every wish can be fulfilled and we need to accept it. Sooner we realize this, happier we would be. Here, at the end of the story the child inconsolably cries for his parents as he is lost in fair and that is how he realizes the value of his parents. Now no matter how attractive the garlands, toys and sweets are, but the only thing, which matters for the child, is the unconditional affection for his parents.

Characters:

The Lost Child: The 'lost child' is the central character in the story. He stands for innocence and purity. His childish gestures grab the readers' attention. He is full of life and laughter and easily gets attracted towards natural beauty of fields and butterflies. He gets tempted to toys and sweets in fun-fair but he is sure that his parents would deny buying any of them so he does not even utter a word of demand. He gets very much attracted to snake charmer and roundabout swing and due to his childlike reaction to the scene in the fair he is lost in the crowd isolated from his parents. Ultimately, nothing consoles his heart, not even garlands, sweets, swing, balloons or toys which he was earlier very much fascinated for.

Parents: The parents of the child take care of their son with utmost love and affection. Their denial for buying things from fair stands for their concern to instil a kind of discipline in their child. The father seems to be strict but his frequent calls to the child proves that he is concerned about the child. The mother's efforts to divert her child's attention towards other things indicate her affectionate love for her child.

A gentleman: There comes a gentleman in the story who helps the child and takes care of him when the child is lost. He understands the feelings of the lost child and to console him he offers the things like garland, balloon, sweet etc. This clearly depicts his compassionate nature. This gentleman in the story stands for humanity.

Conclusion:

'The Lost Child' is all about a curious child whose fancy gets captivated by worldly wonders. His innocence gets fascinated by the beauty of nature. He is delighted to see the joyful fluttering of butterflies and relishing colours of the flowers. He enjoys every possibility of the present time and after facing the bitter reality of being lost in overcrowded fair, he craves for his parents. He does not get content with the offerings of toys, balloons, joyride and garlands by the strange person who is willing to help the lost child and his cry in search of his parents marks his unconditional love and affection for his parents. This is how the story ends in a moral tone that worldly beauty that captures the mind does not fulfil the inner thirst for the human bonding.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 1

FIND OUT THE CORRECT ANSWER FROM THE GIVEN OPTIONS.

‘THE LOST CHILD’

BY MULK

RAJANAND

1. What festival were the people going to celebrate?
(A) The festival of Holi. (B) The festival of Spring.
(C) The festival of Dussehra. (D) The festival of Dipawali.
2. How were the people dressed for the festival?
(A) Shabbily. (B) Daily.
(C) Carelessly. (D) Scantly.
3. How were the people going to the festival?
(A) Going on foot.
(B) Riding on horses.
(C) Carried in bamboo and bullock carts.
(D) All the above
4. Who was the little boy going with?
(A) With his father. (B) With his mother.
(C) With his father and mother. (D) None of the above.
5. How was the little boy feeling while going to the fair?
(A) Nervous. (B) Frightened.
(C) Sad and unhappy. (D) Full of life and laughter.
6. What did the parents say when the child lagged behind?
(A) ‘Come, child, come.’ (B) ‘Come, or you’ll be lost.’
(C) ‘Come, have these toys.’ (D) ‘Come, we’re getting late.’
7. What did the child do when his parents said, ‘Come, child, come’?
(A) He refused to move. (B) He hurried towards them.
(C) He looked at them angrily. (D) He began to cry.
8. What did the father do when the child said, “I want that toy.”?
(A) He at once bought the toy for the child.
(B) He said, “Look, child, what is before you.
(C) He looked at the child red-eyed.
(D) He began to beat the child.
9. What did the mother do when the child said, “I want that toy.”?
(A) She asked the father to buy that toy for the child.
(B) She looked at the child red-eyed.
(C) She said they had no money for the toy.
(D) She said, “Look, child, what is there before you !”
10. How did the flowering mustard-field look?
(A) White like silver. (B) Red like a rose.
(C) Pale like melting gold. (D) Lovely like a rainbow.

11.6 LET US SUM UP

'The Lost Child' is a story written by Mulk Raj Anand which portrays psyche of a child who is yet not coloured with worries of past and future and the child is full of 'life and laughter' but there comes a sudden twist and his pleasures of the fair turn into pains of a huge loss. He realizes that he is lost in the human crowd in the fair. A kind-hearted stranger appears in the story as a saviour to the child and he tries every possible way to console his lamenting heart but the child continues his sob for his lost parents with utmost affection and worries. The world full of materialistic luxuries cannot satisfy his intimate longing for his parents. His 'wants' change the direction from alluring luxuries to affectionate love.

11.7 KEY WORDS

Short story: a short prose fiction usually depicting a single incident (unlike most novels). A newer form than the novel, the modern short story dates from the early nineteenth century.

Plot: A plot is a series of events and character actions that relate to the central conflict.

Theme: A term used in different ways: for the main idea (but not necessarily the subject) of a work of literature; an idea which a work explores; or an argument that a work advances. Therefore, a theme can be identified in a complete sentence, a noun phrase, or a single word.

Setting: The location of a story. It may be important in developing character, motivation and meaning.

Character: A character is a person, or sometimes even an animal, who takes part in the action of a short story or other literary work.

Climax: The high point of tension in a plot, when the outcome is decided.

Alley: narrow way

Gaily: happily

Clad: dressed

Brimming: to be so full of

Lingering: lasting for a long time

Receding: left behind as he walked ahead

Suppress: put an end to

Cold: without any feelings, emotions

Pale: dull, colourless

Gaudy: extremely bright and showy

Grove: a small wood or group of trees

Capers: a playful skipping movement

Throngs: huge crowds

Converging: gathering

Heeded: paid attention to

Overwhelming: a very strong emotion
Forbidden: not allowed
Coarse: unpleasant
Hither and thither: here and there
Intently: carefully
Congested: full of
Hefty: large and heavy
Thrust: push
Knocked: hit
Brutal: harsh, rough
Trampled: crushed
Surging: powerful
Swaying: swinging
Soothe: relax, comfort
Pleaded: requested
Double - pitched strain: usage of a lot of force
Bore: carried
Reiterated: repeated
Disconsolate: very unhappy and unable to be comforted
Charge: a person or thing entrusted to the care of someone
Receding: to move backward
Bustling: moving here and there
Dizzy: unable to balance
Linger: hanging around
Tyrant: cruel ruler
Bustling: full of activity
Fluttering: moving
Caper: short jump
Throng: crowd
Whirlpool: centre
Repelled: driven away
Convulsed: fearful
Shriek: cry
Shrine: holy place
Jostle: to push
Hefty: heavy
Trample: crush
Surge: to move quickly

11.8 REFERENCES

<http://www.brunswick.S12.me.us/hdwyer/short-story-literary-terms-definitions/>
<https://ardhendude.blogspot.com/2015/11/analysis-of-mulk-raj-anands-story-lost.html>

<https://edumantra.net/ncert-extra-questions/the-lost-child-ncert-book-solution/>

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mulk-Raj-Anand>

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:2

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What are the things the child sees on his way to the fair? Why does he lag behind?
2. In the fair the child wants many things. What are they? Why does he move on without waiting for an answer?
3. Why does the lost child lose interest in the things that he had wanted earlier?
4. What did the man do to make the child happy?
5. Write a note on the theme of the story 'The Lost Child'.
6. Describe the condition of the child after he had lost his parents at the fair.

11.9 FURTHER READING SUGGESTED

Books:

- World's Greatest Short Stories (Various Authors, Grapevine Publishers)
- Mulk Raj Anand Father of Indian English Fiction (B. Agrawal, Atlantic Publication)
- Greatest Short Stories (Mul Raj Anand, Jaico Publication)

E-resources:

- <https://englishsummary.com/lost-child-mulk-raj-anand/>
- https://archive.org/stream/TheLostChild-English-MulkRajAnand/lostchild_djvu.txt
- <https://ardhendude.blogspot.com/2015/11/analysis-of-mulk-raj-anands-story-lost.html>

Video Links:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usX1YgJwd-4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaIUoMBmSNw>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8d26sZvByE>

Answers

Check Your Progress 1

1. B 2. B 3. D 4. C 5. D 6. A 7. B 8. C 9. D 10. C

Check Your Progress 2

‘THE LOST CHILD’
BY MULK
RAJANAND

Ans. 1. On his way to the fair, the child sees the following things-

- He saw toys that were displayed in the shops lined up on the way.
- He saw the vast mustard field which seemed like melting gold.
- There were brightly coloured dragonflies, butterflies and black bees which flapped their wings and sat on the flowers to suck nectar from them.
- He also saw little insects and worms along the footpath that were crawling out of the holes in the footpath to get sunshine.
- The child saw a dove bird in the grove.
- Also, he saw hordes of people walking towards the fair.
- The child often lagged behind because he would watch the different happenings around him. He would get attracted to these things and would stop in his way. Then, his parents
- would walk ahead and he would be left behind.

Ans. 2. In the fair, the boy wanted the following things-

- He wanted to buy a burfi from the sweetmeat seller.
- He wanted a garland of flowers from the flower seller.
- Next, he saw a balloon seller and wanted a balloon.
- When he saw the snake - charmer he was attracted to the music of the flute and wanted to listen to it.
- He wanted to take a ride on the roundabout swing.

The child moved ahead from all the stalls without waiting for a reply because he knew that his parents would not heed to his demands. He knew their replies in each case would be as follows -

- For the burfi, they would say that he was a greedy child.
- The garland of flowers would not be bought because it was considered cheap.
- They would not buy him a balloon because he was grown up to play with it.
- The child’s parents had warned him from listening to such unpleasant music as was played by the snake – charmers

Ans. 3. The lost child loses interest in the things that he wanted earlier because now he is sad as he has lost his parents. Before getting anything of his choice like sweets, flowers, balloons, joy rides and music, he wants to reunite with his mother and father.

Ans. 4. The man saw the child crying. He lifted him up in his arms and tried to soothe him. He took the child to the snake-charmer. Then he offered to buy balloons for him. He offered to buy him flowers. Then he took him to the sweets shop. But the child did not want to buy anything. He wanted only to be united with his parents.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

Ans. 5. The story 'The Lost Child' is based on child psychology. A child is curious by nature. He is attracted by beautiful things. He wishes to possess everything which looks attractive. However, he takes interest in these things only when he is in the company of his parents. But when he is lost, these things lose their charm for him. In this story, a child goes to a fair with his parents. He is attracted towards different things. He wishes to buy balloons, sweets and garlands of gulmohur. He wishes to enjoy a ride in the roundabout. But suddenly he finds that his parents are missing. Now he starts weeping. A kind man tries to console him. He offers to buy him a number of things. But the child goes on weeping. He wants only his parents.

Ans. 6. The child went to the fair along with his parents. He was very happy. He was attracted by the colourful and beautiful things. He saw balloons, flower garlands, toys and sweets. He saw a juggler showing tricks. He also saw a roundabout. But he was sad because his parents rejected all his demands. They did not purchase anything for him. He could not enjoy the juggler's tricks. Then he wanted to have a ride on the roundabout. He turned to ask his parents. But he found them missing. He was separated from them. Now a sudden change came in the child. He started crying for his parents. A kind man tried to console him. But the child lost interest in everything. He wanted to join his parents again. He cried, "I want my mother. I want my father!"



'THE POSTMASTER' BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

: UNIT STRUCTURE:

12.0 Objectives

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Rabindranath Tagore

12.3 Text

12.4 Summary

12.5 Theme

12.5.1 Loneliness and the search for meaning

12.5.2 Companionship

12.6 Characterisation

12.6.1 Character sketch of the postmaster

12.6.2 Character sketch of Ratan

12.7 Let Us Sum Up

12.8 Key words

12.9 Suggested Reading

Answers

12.0 OBJECTIVES

- To critically evaluate the short story
- To discuss theme and characterisation of the short story

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Rabindranath Tagore's *The Postmaster* is a poignant story of love of a simple naive girl named Ratan for a city-bred postmaster. The man from bustling Calcutta is posted as a postmaster in a remote village. To avert terrific loneliness, he showers love and affection on his maidservant, Ratan. He craves for some human company and necessary emotional warmth. The postmaster's kindness awakens in Ratan affection for him. But the place cannot hold the city man for long. He decides to resign and go back to his native place. The decision leaves the girl dumbfounded. She had a false hope that the postmaster would return.

12.2 RABINDRANATH TAGORE

One of the greatest Indian litterateurs of the 20th century, Rabindranath Tagore was a versatile personality and a prolific writer. Most of his works were originally written in Bengali and later translated into other languages. Tagore is the first and so far the only Indian to receive the Nobel prize for literature for his collection of poems *Gitanjali*.

Tagore's penetrating insight into the working of human mind, particularly in thoughts and feelings of the helpless and the neglected is quite apparent in his short stories. His stories are usually told in a simple and direct manner.

12.3 TEXT: 'THE POSTMASTER'

The postmaster first took up his duties in the village of Ulapur. Though the village was a small one, there was an indigo factory nearby, and the proprietor, an Englishman, had managed to get a post office established.

Our postmaster belonged to Calcutta. He felt like a fish out of water in this remote village. His office and living-room were in a dark thatched shed, not far from a green, slimy pond, surrounded on all sides by a dense growth.

The men employed in the indigo factory had no leisure; moreover, they were hardly desirable companions for decent folk. Nor is a Calcutta boy an adept in the art of associating with others. Among strangers, he appears either proud or ill at ease. At any rate, the postmaster had but little company; nor had he much to do.

At times, he tried his hand at writing a verse or two. That the movement of the leaves and the clouds of the sky were enough to fill life with joy—such were the sentiments to which he sought to give expression. But God knows that the poor fellow would have felt it as the gift of a new life, if some genie of the *Arabian Nights* had in one night swept away the trees, leaves and all, and replaced them with a macadamized road, hiding the clouds from view with rows of tall houses.

The postmaster's salary was small. He had to cook his own meals, which he used to share with Ratan, an orphan girl of the village, who did odd jobs for him.

When in the evening the smoke began to curl up from the village cowsheds, and the cicadas chirped in every bush; when the mendicants of the Baül sect sang their shrill songs in their daily meeting-place, when any poet, who had attempted to watch the movement of the leaves in the dense bamboo thickets, would have felt a ghostly shiver run down his back, the postmaster would light his little lamp, and call out "Ratan."

Ratan would sit outside waiting for this call, and, instead of coming in at once, would reply, "Did you call me, sir?"

"What are you doing?" the postmaster would ask.

"I must be going to light the kitchen fire," would be the answer.

And the postmaster would say: "Oh, let the kitchen fire be for awhile; light me my pipe first."

At last Ratan would enter, with puffed-out cheeks, vigorously blowing into a flame a live coal to light the tobacco. This would give the postmaster an opportunity of conversing. "Well, Ratan," perhaps he would begin, "do you remember anything of your mother?" That was a fertile subject. Ratan partly remembered, and partly didn't. Her father had been fonder of her than her mother; him she recollected more vividly. He used to come home in the evening after his work, and one or two

evenings stood out more clearly than others, like pictures in her memory. Ratan would sit on the floor near the postmaster's feet, as memories crowded in upon her. She called to mind a little brother that she had—and how on some bygone cloudy day she had played at fishing with him on the edge of the pond, with a twig for a make-believe fishing-rod. Such little incidents would drive out greater events from her mind. Thus, as they talked, it would often get very late, and the postmaster would feel too lazy to do any cooking at all. Ratan would then hastily light the fire, and toast some unleavened bread, which, with the cold remnants of the morning meal, was enough for their supper.

On some evenings, seated at his desk in the corner of the big empty shed, the postmaster too would call up memories of his own home, of his mother and his sister, of those for whom in his exile his heart was sad,—memories which were always haunting him, but which he could not talk about with the men of the factory, though he found himself naturally recalling them aloud in the presence of the simple little girl. And so it came about that the girl would allude to his people as mother, brother, and sister, as if she had known them all her life. In fact, she had a complete picture of each one of them painted in her little heart.

One noon, during a break in the rains, there was a cool soft breeze blowing; the smell of the damp grass and leaves in the hot sun felt like the warm breathing of the tired earth on one's body. A persistent bird went on all the afternoon repeating the burden of its one complaint in Nature's audience chamber.

The postmaster had nothing to do. The shimmer of the freshly washed leaves, and the banked-up remnants of the retreating rain-clouds were sights to see; and the postmaster was watching them and thinking to himself: "Oh, if only some kindred soul were near—just one loving human being whom I could hold near my heart!" This was exactly, he went on to think, what that bird was trying to say, and it was the same feeling which the murmuring leaves were striving to express. But no one knows, or would believe, that such an idea might also take possession of an ill-paid village postmaster in the deep, silent mid-day interval of his work.

The postmaster sighed, and called out "Ratan." Ratan was then sprawling beneath the guava-tree, busily engaged in eating unripe guavas. At the voice of her master, she ran up breathlessly, saying: "Were you calling me, Dada?" "I was thinking," said the postmaster, "of teaching you to read." And then for the rest of the afternoon he taught her the alphabet.

Thus, in a very short time, Ratan had got as far as the double consonants.

It seemed as though the showers of the season would never end. Canals, ditches, and hollows were all overflowing with water. Day and night the patter of rain was heard, and the croaking of frogs. The village roads became impassable, and marketing had to be done in punts.

One heavily clouded morning, the postmaster's little pupil had been long waiting outside the door for her call, but, not hearing it as usual, she took up her dog-

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

eared book, and slowly entered the room. She found her master stretched out on his bed, and, thinking that he was resting, she was about to retire on tip-toe, when she suddenly heard her name—"Ratan!" She turned at once and asked: "Were you sleeping, Dada?" The postmaster in a plaintive voice said: "I am not well. Feel my head; is it very hot?"

In the loneliness of his exile, and in the gloom of the rains, his ailing body needed a little tender nursing. He longed to remember the touch on the forehead of soft hands with tinkling bracelets, to imagine the presence of loving womanhood, the nearness of mother and sister. And the exile was not disappointed. Ratan ceased to be a little girl. She at once stepped into the post of mother, called in the village doctor, gave the patient his pills at the proper intervals, sat up all night by his pillow, cooked his gruel for him, and every now and then asked: "Are you feeling a little better, Dada?"

It was some time before the postmaster, with weakened body, was able to leave his sick-bed. "No more of this," said he with decision. "I must get a transfer." He at once wrote off to Calcutta an application for a transfer, on the ground of the unhealthiness of the place.

Relieved from her duties as nurse, Ratan again took up her old place outside the door. But she no longer heard the same old call. She would sometimes peep inside furtively to find the postmaster sitting on his chair, or stretched on his bed, and staring absent-mindedly into the air. While Ratan was awaiting her call, the postmaster was awaiting a reply to his application. The girl read her old lessons over and over again,—her great fear was lest, when the call came, she might be found wanting in the double consonants. At last, after a week, the call did come one evening. With an overflowing heart Ratan rushed into the room with her—"Were you calling me, Dada?"

The postmaster said: "I am going away to-morrow, Ratan."

"Where are you going, Dada?"

"I am going home."

"When will you come back?"

"I am not coming back."

Ratan asked no other question. The postmaster, of his own accord, went on to tell her that his application for a transfer had been rejected, so he had resigned his post and was going home.

For a long time neither of them spoke another word. The lamp went on dimly burning, and from a leak in one corner of the thatch water dripped steadily into an earthen vessel on the floor beneath it.

After a while Ratan rose, and went off to the kitchen to prepare the meal; but she was not so quick about it as on other days. Many new things to think of had entered her little brain. When the postmaster had finished his supper, the girl suddenly asked him: "Dada, will you take me to your home?"

The postmaster laughed. "What an idea!" said he; but he did not think it necessary to explain to the girl wherein lay the absurdity.

That whole night, in her waking and in her dreams, the postmaster's laughing reply haunted her—"What an idea!"

'THE POSTMASTER' BY
RABINDRANATH
TAGORE

On getting up in the morning, the postmaster found his bath ready. He had stuck to his Calcutta habit of bathing in water drawn and kept in pitchers, instead of taking a plunge in the river as was the custom of the village. For some reason or other, the girl could not ask him about the time of his departure, so she had fetched the water from the river long before sunrise, that it should be ready as early as he might want it. After the bath came a call for Ratan. She entered noiselessly, and looked silently into her master's face for orders. The master said: "You need not be anxious about my going away, Ratan; I shall tell my successor to look after you." These words were kindly meant, no doubt: but inscrutable are the ways of a woman's heart!

Ratan had borne many a scolding from her master without complaint, but these kind words she could not bear. She burst out weeping, and said: "No, no, you need not tell anybody anything at all about me; I don't want to stay on here."

The postmaster was dumbfounded. He had never seen Ratan like this before.

The new incumbent duly arrived, and the postmaster, having given over charge, prepared to depart. Just before starting he called Ratan and said: "Here is something for you; I hope it will keep you for some little time." He brought out from his pocket the whole of his month's salary, retaining only a trifle for his travelling expenses. Then Ratan fell at his feet and cried: "Oh, Dada, I pray you, don't give me anything, don't in any way trouble about me," and then she ran away out of sight.

The postmaster heaved a sigh, took up his carpet bag, put his umbrella over his shoulder, and, accompanied by a man carrying his many-coloured tin trunk, he slowly made for the boat.

When he got in and the boat was under way, and the rain-swollen river, like a stream of tears welling up from the earth, swirled and sobbed at her bows, then he felt a pain at heart; the grief-stricken face of a village girl seemed to represent for him the great unspoken pervading grief of Mother Earth herself. At one time, he had an impulse to go back, and bring away along with him that lonesome waif, forsaken of the world. But the wind had just filled the sails, the boat had got well into the middle of the turbulent current, and already the village was left behind, and its outlying burning-ground came in sight.

So the traveller, borne on the breast of the swift-flowing river, consoled himself with philosophical reflections on the numberless meetings and partings going on in the world—on death, the great parting, from which none returns.

But Ratan had no philosophy. She was wandering about the post office in a flood of tears. It may be that she had still a lurking hope in some corner of her heart that her Dada would return, and that is why she could not tear herself away. Alas for our foolish human nature! Its fond mistakes are persistent. The dictates of reason take a long time to assert their own sway. The surest proofs meanwhile are disbelieved. False hope is clung to with all one's might and main, till a day comes when it has sucked the heart dry and it forcibly breaks through its bonds and departs.

After that comes the misery of awakening, and then once again the longing to get back into the maze of the same mistakes.

12.4 SUMMARY

'The Postmaster' is a very heart-rending story of the relationship between a simple rustic girl and a city-bred man. The man from Calcutta is posted as a postmaster in a remote village of Ulapur. The postmaster felt like a fish out of water in this remote village. Here, he did not have much work to do. To pass the time, he also tried his hand at writing verse.

Due to his meager salary, he had to cook his own meals and used to share with Ratan. Ratan is an orphan girl of the village and helps him to do his daily chores. She cooks food, cleans for the postmaster, fetches his water for him and stokes his hookah. She is vital to his survival in the village.

Without much to do, the postmaster feels forlorn and bored. To overcome his sheer loneliness in the village, the postmaster gradually starts to chitchat with Ratan. This makes Ratan feel comfortable with him. She slowly opens up and develops affection for him. He listens to the stories of her childhood, her parents and family members. On an impulse he begins teaching Ratan to read and write. She is also equally curious to learn. Soon she lives for his call. Ratan, in all her simplicity grows immensely attached to her 'Dada'. On the contrary, for the postmaster she is just a medium of passing time.

In the suffocating atmosphere of village, the postmaster gets sick. In his illness, Ratan takes care of him and nurses him like a mother. As soon as he recovered from his ailment, he writes off to Calcutta office, an application for transfer, on the ground of his poor health at Ulapur. This gives Ratan a tremendous shock, when she learns that her master, her elder brother and above all her only living guardian on earth was leaving the village. The affectionate bond that grows up between them was suddenly severed. Ratan has become so emotionally dependent on the postmaster that she could not find meaning of her existence at Ulapur in his absence. In her desperate need to continue the bond with the postmaster, Ratan asks him to take her with him. He laughs out her desire by saying: "What an idea!" Ratan's plea in fact, strikes him so absurd that he does not even bother to explain his refusal. The postmaster fails to realize even for a moment, the depth of her feelings.

Out of pity, he offers her a substantial portion of his month's salary. But Ratan denies to take anything at all. She falls at his feet, begs him not to give her anything and runs away to hide her tears. The offer of money burns the very core of her being. It appears to her as a crude insult and hence bursting into tears she runs away refusing all the material helps from him. This shakes the postmaster from within but only for a while. The postmaster is also suffering from a sense of guilt. When his boat starts moving, he has a thought of going back to Ratan and takes her with him. But this momentary feeling is soon relieved with the thought that there are many separations and deaths on this earth. As he is carried away from the village on the monsoon-swollen river, leaving Ratan for his replacement, the postmaster consoles himself with philosophical reflections. He ponders on num-

berless meetings and partings in the world, and on death- the great parting, from which there is no return. “But Ratan”, Tagore reminds us, “had no philosophy”.

Ratan stays back with her dumb agony and acute despair. She is unable to understand the harshness of life and is still hopeful that her ‘Dadababu’ would come back to give her shelter. Tagore portrays the vanity of Ratan’s affection and the miserable situation she entangles herself in.

‘THE POSTMASTER’ BY
RABINDRANATH
TAGORE

12.5 THEME

i) Loneliness and the search for meaning

Loneliness and the search for meaning in the world are the main themes of Rabindranath Tagore’s ‘*The Postmaster*’. The story begins and ends with this. The postmaster spends his evening with Ratan speaking about his family: “memories which were always haunting him”. He also falls sick from his family’s separation and loneliness. The story also ends with this. Ratan is separated from him. She stands dumbfounded and earnestly longs that her ‘Dadababu’ would come back.

ii) Companionship

Companionship and dependency can be seen through how the relationship between the postmaster and Ratan grows through the course of this story. The relationship between the postmaster and Ratan is an emotionally imbalanced one. The postmaster’s needs are met in his relationship with Ratan. He finds a companion even though he is isolated from others. He finds in Ratan a person who helps him pass the time in Ulapur. When he is with Ratan, the postmaster is able to relive the joys of his family and his past life in Calcutta. At the same time, the postmaster benefits from Ratan’s loyalty towards him. Ratan had developed an affectionate bond with him.

The relationship between the postmaster and Ratan grows through the course of the story. It emerges from the need for a companion in both the characters. The postmaster comes to a remote village from the city. He does not have enough work to keep himself busy. Ratan provides companionship to the postmaster and grows dependent on him. When the postmaster falls sick, Ratan takes care of him until he recovers. She is heartbroken when he leaves without her and she longs for him to come back.

When the postmaster tells Ratan he is leaving, she is taken aback. She asks to accompany him. But the dismissiveness in his response reflects how her needs were a distant second to his in their relationship. Tagore illustrates a relationship where two desperate people who met in one particular moment needed one another at that point of time. Here, the postmaster’s needs were met, while Ratan’s emotional needs remained unfulfilled.

The Postmaster’s love and compassion for the young girl and her musing by herself late into the night suggests loneliness. The Postmaster understands implicitly what it may be like to be that lonely, to live that loner’s life. Ratan, who has no life, no home, and no job, lacks the Postmaster’s perspective on life.

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

Once in a while the postmaster tries his hand at writing a verse or two. His salary is small and an orphan girl named Ratan from the village helps him by managing his domestic works. He speaks to her about his mother and sister in the evenings, and would keep enquiring about her family. He would speak with sadness of all those “memories which were always haunting him”.

Tagore ends the story by saying that human beings often fall into hope without seeing reason, and long before they realize, disappointment becomes too hard to handle. Ratan the little orphan girl is interested in nothing beyond her own needs and family. Most unsettling, perhaps, and tragic in its sterility, is Ratan’s love for the Postmaster. Ratan complains to the Postmaster that there could be nothing upon which the patron could base his decision because she has no marks in his mind. This comment reveals Ratan’s ignorance about human nature, and a certain naïveté that comes from inexperience. Ratan, it would seem, has lived a very unsheltered life. She needs a shelter and Tagore infuses the situation with tragedy by having the Postmaster helpless in this situation.

The ending of Tagore’s short story brings forth the theme of inevitability and universality of pain and suffering in the world. The ending, in particular the last two paragraphs, takes an almost global perspective to the conditions of both Ratan and the postmaster. Tagore suggests that in their separation, pain is evident and it is experienced by both the characters though they belong to two different worlds.

12.6 CHARACTERISATION

12.6.1 Character sketch of the Postmaster

The postmaster is a city-bred man from Calcutta. He is posted in a remote village named Ulapur. He is an intellectual and a profound thinker. He often thinks about life and philosophizes about various subjects. He feels lonely and displaced in the village. He wants to share his deepest thoughts and sentiments with someone close but cannot, unfortunately, find it in himself to communicate with the locals for he does not deem them decent or intelligent enough. Through the dialogue, Tagore reveals the Postmaster as a man searching desperately for something to cling to in his life, for some meaning. He tries to pacify his longing emotions by writing poetry. Due to his meager salary, he has to cook his own meals and he shares his food with Ratan.

Ratan is an orphan girl of the village and helps him to do his daily chores. Without much to do, the postmaster feels forlorn and bored. To overcome his sheer loneliness in the village, the postmaster gradually starts to chitchat with Ratan. He also teaches Ratan to read and write. Ratan, in all her simplicity grows immensely attached to her ‘Dada’. On the contrary, for the postmaster she is just a medium of passing time.

In the suffocating atmosphere of the village, the postmaster gets sick. In his illness, Ratan takes care of him and nurses him like a mother. As soon as he recovered from his ailment, he writes off to Calcutta office, an application for a transfer, on the ground of his poor health at Ulapur. This gives Ratan a tremendous shock. When Ratan asks whether she can accompany him, her request strikes him so absurd that he does not even bother to explain his refusal. The postmaster fails to

realize even for a moment, the depth of her feelings. This shows that he is not emotionally attached to Ratan as she is to him.

The postmaster at last for a moment experiences a sense of guilt. When his boat is moving, he has an impulse to go back to Ratan and take her with him. But this momentary feeling is soon relieved with the thought that there are many separations and deaths on this earth. In this light, the postmaster is revealed to be emotionally ambivalent about one of the most important decisions of his life.

12.6.2 Character sketch of Ratan

Tagore peeps into the human heart and excavates the human emotions through the portrayal of Ratan. She is a little orphan girl of a village called Ulapur. She is duty bound, caring and sensitive. She helps the postmaster to do his daily chores. She cooks food, does cleaning, fetches water and stokes his hookah. She is vital to his survival in the village.

She slowly opens up and develops an affection for him. He listens to the stories of her childhood, her parents and family members. On an impulse, he begins teaching Ratan to read and write. She is also equally curious to learn. Soon she lives for his call. Ratan, in all her simplicity grows immensely attached to her 'Dada'. When the postmaster falls sick, Ratan takes care of him and nurses him like a mother. When she learns that her master is leaving the village, she is dumbfounded. Ratan has become so emotionally dependent on the postmaster that she could not find meaning of her existence at Ulapur in his absence. In her desperate need to continue the bond with the postmaster, Ratan asks him to take her with him. But her proposal is laughed out by him.

Tagore has vividly described how dutiful the poor orphan is. Even after hearing the shocking news that the postmaster would never come back to her, she does not forget to bake fresh loaves for her master's dinner and slowly goes to the kitchen. Even when she learns that her proposal to her master to take her with him has appeared absurd to him, she meticulously arranges for water for his early morning shower by picking it up from the river late at night. She does all these chores with a completely broken heart.

Being naïve and impressionable, Ratan is not able to accept the separation with her master- cum- guardian- 'Dadababu' easily. She still is not mature enough to understand the harshness of life and is still hopeful that her Dadababu would come back to give her shelter.

But Ratan's simplicity and blind faith does not help her in any way. This does nothing but cruelly tearing her heart into pieces. She finally sinks in a deep sea of misery and excruciating agony.

It is universality that human hearts are powerlessly fond of hope, even when it is a false one. Tagore writes: "Alas, for our foolish human nature! Its fond mistakes are persistent. . . . and then once again the longing to get back into the maze of the same mistakes".

12.7 LET US SUM UP

Rabindranath Tagore's *The Postmaster* revolves round two characters named

'THE POSTMASTER' BY
RABINDRANATH
TAGORE

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

Ratan and the postmaster and the relationship they form during the course of the story. While a simple rustic girl, Ratan seems emotionally attached to her 'Dadababu' and develops an affectional tie with him, the postmaster seems unaffected by her sentiments. Tagore depicts the futility of Ratan's love and the pathetic situation she finds herself in with great intensity.

12.8 KEY WORDS

Fish out of water-	in an unusual or unfamiliar situation
Sentiments-	feelings
Genie-	spirit with supernatural powers
Macadamized road-	(here) well- made city roads
Cicada-	a kind of insect
Mendicants-	beggars
Ghostly shiver-	a shiver caused as if by the presence of a ghost
Unleavened-	unfermented
Exile-	outcast
Allude-	refer
A persistent bird-	a bird that endlessly repeats the same tone
Shimmer-	twinkle
Remnants-	bits and pieces
Kindred soul-	family member, relative
Sprawling-	lying or sitting with arms and legs spread out
Punts-	flat bottom boats
Dada-	(in Bengali) elder brother
Plaintive-	sad, mournful
Furtively-	secretly
Haunted-	disturbed, troubled
Dumbfounded-	struck dumb with surprise
Incumbent-	the holder of an office
Waif-	homeless child
Longing-	desire, yearning

12.9 SUGGESTED READING

You would be benefitted by reading the following short stories:

Kabuliwallah by Rabindranath Tagore

Subha by Rabindranath Tagore

Atithi by Rabindranath Tagore

Maanbhanjan by Rabindranath Tagore

The Letter by Dhumketu

The only American From Our Village by Arun Joshi

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 1**ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.**

- (1) What memories did Ratan have about her past?
- (2) "When postmaster had nothing to do he decided to teach Ratan." Explain in brief.
- (3) Why did the postmaster stop teaching Ratan?
- (4) "Ratan ceased to be a little girl. She at once, stepped into the post of mother"- Discuss in brief.
- (5) What was Ratan's immediate reaction on hearing the postmaster's decision? Why do you think she reacted in this way?
- (6) What provisions did the postmaster make for Ratan when he was leaving?
- (7) Why did Ratan wander near the post office?

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 2**WRITE SHORT NOTES.**

- (1) Draw character sketches of the postmaster and Ratan and discuss the relationship between them.
- (2) Trace the growth of Ratan's love for the postmaster and its eventual failure.
- (3) "Tagore explores in the story man's psychological need for some form of love"- Discuss.
- (4) Justify the title of the story.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:3**CHOOSE THE CORRECT ANSWER FROM THE OPTIONS GIVEN BELOW.**

- 1) Rabindranath Tagore authored _____
 - a) The Post Master
 - b) A Cup of Tea
 - c) A Lottery Ticket
 - d) The Letter
- 2) Where are you going Dada? (Who is Dada in this story?)
 - a) Ratan's brother
 - b) The Post Master
 - c) None of these
- 3) "Ratan ceased to be a little girl." (What does the statement mean?)
 - a) Ratan acted like a little girl
 - b) Ratan has shown her maturity and responsibility
 - c) Ratan has turned eighteen
 - d) None of the above
- 4) The Postmaster belongs to which city?
 - a) Chennai
 - b) Ahmedabad
 - c) Calcutta
 - d) London
- 5) The man from Calcutta is posted as a postmaster in a remote village of _____.

‘THE POSTMASTER’ BY
RABINDRANATH
TAGORE

Block

3

UNIT 13

'My Beloved Charioteer' by Shashi Deshpande

UNIT 14

'Idgah' by Premchand

UNIT 15

A Days 'Wait' by Heming way

UNIT 16

'The Magic Shop' by H. G. Wells

UNIT 17

'A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings' by Gabriel García Márquez

Editor

Prof. (Dr.) Ami Upadhyay

Vice Chancellor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

Programme Advisory Committee

Prof. (Dr.) Ami Upadhyay

Vice Chancellor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

Prof. (Dr.) Kamal Mehta

Saurashtra University, Rajkot

Prof. (Dr.) Darshna Trivedi

Gujarat University, Ahmedabad

Prof. (Dr.) Hetal Patel

HNGU, Patan

Dr. Rajendra Mandalia

Head, Sardar Patel University, V.V.Nagar

Reviewers

Prof. (Dr.) B. S. Nimavat

Retired professor of English

VD Kanakia Arts and MR Sanghavi commerce college Savarkundla

Dr. Ketan Gediya

Smt. S. R. Mehta Arts College, Navgujarat Campus, Ahmedabad

Content Writers

Dr. Kishan Joshi

Dr. Jinali Patel

Dr. Nikita Gadani

Programme Coordinator

Dr. Binny Vaghela

Assistant Professor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

Publisher

Dr. Bhavin Trivedi

Registrar (I/c), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad

ISBN : 978-93-91468-61-3

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph or any other means without permission in writing from Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad.



ROLE OF SELF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL IN DISTANCE LEARNING

The need to plan effective instruction is imperative for a successful distance teaching repertoire. This is due to the fact that the instructional designer, the tutor, the author (s) and the student are often separated by distance and may never meet in person. This is an increasingly common scenario in distance education instruction. As much as possible, teaching by distance should stimulate the student's intellectual involvement and contain all the necessary learning instructional activities that are capable of guiding the student through the course objectives. Therefore, the course / self-instructional material are completely equipped with everything that the syllabus prescribes.

To ensure effective instruction, a number of instructional design ideas are used and these help students to acquire knowledge, intellectual skills, motor skills and necessary attitudinal changes. In this respect, students' assessment and course evaluation are incorporated in the text.

The nature of instructional activities used in distance education self- instructional materials depends on the domain of learning that they reinforce in the text, that is, the cognitive, psychomotor and affective. These are further interpreted in the acquisition of knowledge, intellectual skills and motor skills. Students may be encouraged to gain, apply and communicate (orally or in writing) the knowledge acquired. Intellectual- skills objectives may be met by designing instructions that make use of students' prior knowledge and experiences in the discourse as the foundation on which newly acquired knowledge is built.

The provision of exercises in the form of assignments, projects and tutorial feedback is necessary. Instructional activities that teach motor skills need to be graphically demonstrated and the correct practices provided during tutorials. Instructional activities for inculcating change in attitude and behavior should create interest and demonstrate need and benefits gained by adopting the required change. Information on the adoption and procedures for practice of new attitudes may then be introduced.

Teaching and learning at a distance eliminates interactive communication cues, such as pauses, intonation and gestures, associated with the face-to-face method of teaching. This is particularly so with the exclusive use of print media. Instructional activities built into the instructional repertoire provide this missing interaction between the student and the teacher. Therefore, the use of instructional activities to affect better distance teaching is not optional, but mandatory.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

Our team of successful writers and authors has tried to reduce this.

Divide and to bring this Self Instructional Material as the best teaching and communication tool. Instructional activities are varied in order to assess the different facets of the domains of learning.

Distance education teaching repertoire involves extensive use of self- instructional materials, be they print or otherwise. These materials are designed to achieve certain pre-determined learning outcomes, namely goals and objectives that are contained in an instructional plan. Since the teaching process is affected over a distance, there is need to ensure that students actively participate in their learning by performing specific tasks that help them to understand the relevant concepts. Therefore, a set of exercises is built into the teaching repertoire in order to link what students and tutors do in the framework of the course outline. These could be in the form of students' assignments, a research project or a science practical exercise. Examples of instructional activities in distance education are too numerous to list. Instructional activities, when used in this context, help to motivate students, guide and measure students' performance (continuous assessment)



PREFACE

We have put in lots of hard work to make this book as user-friendly as possible, but we have not sacrificed quality. Experts were involved in preparing the materials. However, concepts are explained in easy language for you. We have included many tables and examples for easy understanding.

We sincerely hope this book will help you in every way you expect. All the best for your studies from our team!



**‘MY BELOVED CHARIOTEER’
– SHASHI DESHPANDE**

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

13.0 Objectives

13.1 Introduction

13.2 About the story- *My Beloved Charioteer*

13.3 Shashi Deshpande- Life and Works

13.4 Text of the story

13.5 Summary of the story

13.6 Themes

13.7 Characters

13.8 Let Us Sum Up

13.9 Key Words

13.10 Books Suggested

Answers

13.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you shall learn

- to understand regarding short story- *My Beloved Charioteer*
- to get understating about Plot,
- to get knowledge of theme of the story
- to understand and analyze the story

13.1 INTRODUCTION

A short story is a piece of fiction, naturally can be read in one sitting. It is one of the oldest forms of literature and has existed in the form of mythic tales, folk tales, fairy tales, fables and anecdotes in various ancient communities across the globe. It has evolved from oral traditions of storytelling, and is one of the oldest modes of recitation. Short stories make use of plot, and other components as used in a novel, but typically to a lesser degree and length. A definition of a short story is that one should be able to read it in one sitting, a point most notably made in Edgar Allan Poe’s essay *The Philosophy of Composition*, while Somerset Maugham thought that the short story ‘must have a definite design, which includes a point of departure, a climax and a point of test; in other words, it must have a plot’. In a short story, the reader as a listener or the audience is equally important as writer, speaker or the storyteller. The aim of the writer, was to find the listener’s interest, so that the tale could be successfully completed in order to disseminate the message of the story. Story telling has been an integral part of Indian culture. The collection of mythological legends, folktales, recitation of episodes from epics, which forms an important cultural practice, and other traditional

forms such a kathasagaritsagar, Gaundya's Brihatkatha, the Buddhist's Jataka tales, form a composite whole.

13.2 ABOUT THE STORY- *MY BELOVED CHARIOTEER*

The story is about relationship of grandmother, mother and a granddaughter in various stages of life. It is a story of a mother daughter relationship as well as a women's role as a wife. Mother and daughter relationship is like sisters or sparring partners. They care for each other. *My Beloved Charioteer* depicts the life of mother's nature and behavior not as generosity but as a normal human being with full of emotions as well as frustrations. *My Beloved Charioteer* by Shashi Deshpande is based on the three generations, three women i.e. grandmother, mother and daughter and three different mindsets living together. Grandmother, being the oldest in the house takes care of each and everyone.

13.3 SHASHI DESHPANDE: LIFE AND WORKS

Shashi Deshpande born in 1938, Dharwad, India. She is the second daughter of the renowned dramatist and Sanskrit scholar, Shiranga. At the age of fifteen, she went to Mumbai where she did graduation in Economics. She then moved to Bangalore, where she persuaded a degree in Law. Her writing career only began in 1970. Deshpande began her writing with short stories which later developed into writing novels. Her first collection of short stories is *The Legacy*, published in 1972. She is regarded as one of the most accomplished contemporary Indian women writers in English. Her Eight novels, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *If I Die Today*, (1982) *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadows* (1986), *That Long Silence* (1987), *The Binding Vine* (1993), *A Matter of Time* (1996) and *Small Remedies* (2000). Shashi Deshpande has written four volumes of short stories, *The Legacy* (1978), *The Miracle* (1986), *It was Dark* (1986), and *It was the Nightingale* (1986), and collections of books for children include *A Summer Adventure*, *The Hidden Treasure* and *The Only Witness*.

Whether she writes short stories or novels, Shashi Deshpande writes mainly about everyday of India and a society in which we breathe and a culture to which we belong. Her major concerns emerge from our own environment, our immediate world. She does not simplify India but presents 'India' as it is to her readers. Shashi Deshpande is known for creating and capturing women characters that are contemporary. Deshpande's women protagonists are victims of the prevalent gross gender discrimination, first as daughters and later as wives. They are conscious of the great social inequality and injustice towards them, and struggle against the oppressive and unequal nature of the social norms and rules that limit their capability and existence as a wife. Fettered to their roles in the family, they question the subordinate status ordained to them by society. Her works have drawn great critical attention and acclaim for her sensitive and realistic representation of the Indian middle-class women. Her sincere concern for women and their oppressive is reflected strongly in all her novels and stories.

Shashi Deshpande is an award-winning Indian novelist. In her story '*My Beloved Charioteer*' she tries to demonstrate the harmonies of grandmother, daughter and granddaughter at multitudinous stages of life.

13.4 TEXT OF THE STORY

‘MY BELOVED CHARI-
OTEER’

– SHASHI DESHPANDE

I SMILE AS I hear them at last, the sounds I am waiting for. A rush of footsteps, the slam of the bathroom door and then, bare feet running towards me.

‘You shouldn’t bang doors that way,’ I say reproachfully. ‘You might wake Mummy.’ She sits opposite me, cross-legged, on the low wooden stool, hair tousled, cheeks flushed. ‘Oh, she won’t wake up for hours yet,’ she says cheerfully. ‘Have you had your tea, Aiji?’

This is part of our daily routine. I can never confess to her that I have had a cup an hour earlier. This is her joy, that I wait for her.

‘No, I’ve been waiting for you. Have you brushed your teeth?’

She makes a face. ‘I’ll do it later,’ she says, trying to be brusque and casual. ‘You’ll do no such thing. Go and brush them at once.’ ‘Only today Aiji. From tomorrow, I promise I’ll brush them first,’ she pleads.

‘Nothing doing,’ I try hard to be firm but I can’t fool her. She knows I am on her side. She lowers her voice to a conspiratorial whisper, ‘Mummy won’t know, she’s sleeping.’

Now, of course, she leaves me no choice. I have to insist. She goes reluctantly and is back so fast, I have to ask, ‘Did you really brush? Properly? Show me.’

‘Look.’ I have to smile at the grinning, impish face.

‘Now, tea for me.’ ‘No, tea for me, milk for you.’

Ultimately, as always, we compromise and her tea is a pale brown. I switch off the Primus and without the hissing sound, our voices seem loud and clear. We look at each other guiltily, thinking of the sleeper and try to speak in lower tones. Happiness can mean different things to different people. For me, it is this—the beginning of a new day with this child. We talk of many things; but too soon it is time for her to go to school. Bathed and fresh, she sets off.

When she is gone, silence settles on the house. A silence that will not lift till she returns. I had got used to this silence in the last seven years. It had never seemed terrible to me. It was a friendly silence, filled with the ghosts of so many voices in my life. They came back to keep me company when I was alone—my younger brother, my aunt who loved me when I was a child, my two infant sons who never grew up, and even the child Aarti who seems to have no connection with this thin, bitter woman who now shares the silence with me. Since she came, the friendly ghosts have all gone.

It is late when she wakes. I have had my bath, finished my puja and am halfway through cooking lunch when I hear her stirring. I take down the dal from the fire and put on the tea. By the time tea is ready, she comes into the kitchen. Wordlessly she takes a cup from me, drinks the tea in hungry gulps as if she has been thirsting for hours, then thrusts the cup back at me. I pour out some more. I too say nothing. Earlier I used to ask, ‘Slept well?’

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

And one day, she had put the cup down with a trembling hand and said, 'Slept well? No, I never do that. I haven't slept well since Madhav died. I'll never sleep well again all my life. I have to take something every night so that I can close my eyes for a few hours. Now never ask me again if I slept well.'

Nine months I carried this daughter of mine in my body. I had felt every beat of her heart, every movement of her limbs within me. But—and my doctor had told me this then—my pains and shocks could never penetrate to her, she was insulated against them. Even now, she is protected from my pains, even now; I have no protection against her pains. I suffer with her but, like all my other emotions, it is a futile suffering. For I cannot help her. I can only fumble and blunder and make things worse.

'Why didn't you let me know earlier?' she had asked me angrily when she had come home after her father's death.

'Why didn't you send for me earlier?'

'Don't tell Aarti yet,' he had said. 'I don't want to frighten her, not now, especially.'

Habits of obedience die harder than any others. I had not dared to inform Aarti. And the next day he had another attack and died instantly. Three months later Priti had been born. She never saw her grandfather.

'Who is that, Aaji?' she had asked me once, pointing to his photograph.

'Your grandfather, Priti.' 'My grandfather?'

She had pondered over it. And then asked, 'And what was he of yours?'

What was he of mine? The innocent question had released a flood of feelings within me. 'My husband,' I had said bluntly at last. As I settle down to cooking lunch, I wonder whether today Aarti will like what I'm cooking, whether she will enjoy her food and eat well. I know she will not, but the hope is always in me. Just as I hope that one day she will talk and laugh again. But the day she had laughed, her laughter—loud laughter that shattered the tenuous peace of the house—had frightened me.

'What is it?' I had asked nervously, wondering whether to smile, laugh, to respond in some way to her.

She had looked at me in surprise, as if she hadn't expected to find me there with her, she had hesitated just a moment, then said, 'I always used to think I was very different from you. And look at us now, both of us alike. A pair of widows.'

She didn't mean to be cruel to me, I know that. Nor was I hurt by her words. What pained me was her calling herself a widow. My mother had been widowed when I was a girl and I can only remember her as one, her head shaven, wearing coarse red saris and shorn of all ornaments. While Aarti, after neglecting herself for days, suddenly dresses up, makes up her face and does up her hair. But it is her face that has the arid look of a desert; no smile, no happiness ever blooms there. Life has been cruel to her. It was her father whom she had loved and he died, while I live. It was her husband she had loved even more than the child, and

he died, while Priti is left to her.

‘MY BELOVED CHARI-
OTEER’

Children are more sensitive than we think. They understand so much we think they don’t. Otherwise why would Priti have said to me one day, ‘Aiji, can I sleep in your room at night?’ – SHASHI DESHPANDE

I am old and grey and have lost most of what I have loved in life except these two persons; but at her words, my heart had leapt with happiness. Yet, I had restrained my joy and asked her, ‘Why, Priti?’

‘I’d like to. You can tell me stories at night. And there are so many things I suddenly remember at night and want to tell you. And . . .’

‘But Mummy is with you.’

The child’s face had fallen. ‘But, Aiji, if I try to talk to her, she says, “Go to sleep, Priti, don’t bother me.” And she never sleeps at all, she just reads and smokes. And I don’t like that smell.’

The child has a high and clear voice and I had hushed her in sudden fear that she might be overheard. But it’s true, she smokes incessantly now. At first, she had tried to hide it from me; but not for long. When I was a child, it had been considered wrong even for a man to smoke in my father’s house. But today, I would of my own accord let my daughter smoke if I thought it brought her happiness. It doesn’t. She puffs out smoke as if she is emitting bitterness. There is an infinity of bitterness in her. And I cannot help her. I can only try to look after her body. Such a small thing, but even in that I fail. She is thin and brittle. Most of the time, she never dresses up, just goes around in an old gown, her hair confined by a rubber band. Priti, looking at an old photograph, had wistfully said once, ‘My Mummy was so pretty, wasn’t she, Aiji?’

The child’s pride in her mother had roused in me a rage against Aarti. She seems to me like a child, sulking because she does not have what she wants, wilfully ignoring the things she has. Has anyone promised us happiness for a lifetime, I want to ask her.

‘Why don’t you go out?’ I had asked her once.

‘Where?’

I had mumbled something she had not heard. She had gone on, ‘There is nowhere I want to go. Everywhere I see couples. I can’t bear to see them. I could murder them when I see them talking and laughing.’

This kind of talk amazes me. I cannot understand her. My niece had once told me of something she had read in an American magazine. Of young children who stab and throttle and rape and gouge out eyes, often for no reason at all. And I had wondered—what kind of parents can they be who give birth to such monsters? Now I know better. The accident of birth can be cruelly deceiving. We fool ourselves that our children are our own, that we know them. But often, they are as alien to us as baby cuckoos born in a crow’s nest. And yet we cannot escape the burden of parentage. If my daughter is so empty that she can hate people who are happy, the fault is, to some extent, mine.

These bitter thoughts do not often occupy me. I have my work. The quiet routine

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

of my day is like balm to my soul. Daily chores are not monotonous but soothing. Now that the child is with me, the day is full of meaning. I wait, eager as a child myself, for her to return from school. When she has a holiday, I don't know who is happier, she or I; if it is an unexpected holiday, we are equally full of glee. But when she my daughter and her mother, comes to us, we feel guilty and hide our happiness.

'Do you remember your Papa?' Aarti had asked her one day with a sudden harshness.

'Papa?' There had been a moment's hesitation. Then she had replied, 'Yes, I remember.'

'No, you don't. Don't lie to me.'

The child had stared at her with a frightened face, feeling she had done something wrong, though she didn't know what it was. When Aarti had left us, she had burst into sobs, clinging to me. And I had been full of pity, more for Aarti who could turn happiness into a wrong. But I can say nothing to her. She has never shared anything with me and now she hides her sorrow like a dog its bone. She guards it jealously and will not let me approach. And. I have kept my distance, too. It was only in my imagination that I cuddled her as a child, only in my imagination that I shared her happiness and confidences when she was a girl. And now I assuage her grief in the same way. 'Look,' I tell myself I will say to her, pouring some water into my cupped palms. 'Look,' I will say as the water seeps through, leaving nothing. 'You cannot hold on. You will have to let go.'

But I know I am fooling myself. I have no courage to speak. I am only a foolish, middle-aged woman who has never known how to win anyone's love. Priti's affection—that is a gift from heaven, the ray of sunshine God sends even to the darkest corners.

For Aarti, it was always her father. Even now, she spends the whole afternoon prowling in what was his room. It is seven years since he died, but the room is unchanged. I have kept everything as it was. I dust and sweep it meticulously myself; but strangely, in spite of this, it has a neglected look, like Priti has at times. Priti is well fed and well dressed, she has her tonics and vitamins and all the other things they give children these days. And yet, a neglected child peeps out of her eyes sometimes, filling me with sadness.

Now I can hear Aarti moving in his room. Even after his death, he can give her something I can't. The thought hurts. Hurts? It's like having salt rubbed into a raw wound. Suddenly it is unbearable and I go and open the door of his room. She is sitting on his chair, her feet on the table, smoking and staring at nothing. Her feet are the feet of a young woman, but I see with a sense of shock that her face is that of an old woman. She hears me and turns round, startled, the movement knocking down his photograph which stands on the table. It lies on the floor, face down and when she picks it up we see that the glass has cracked. Long splinters of glass lie on the floor. The photograph seems somehow naked and pathetic. She looks up at me, something showing through the deliberate blank-

ness.

‘I’m sorry, Mother, I’m sorry.’

I stare down at the photograph and say nothing.

‘I’m sorry,’ she repeats. ‘Don’t look like that.’ She passes her hand over the photograph, uncaring of the bits of glass. ‘I’ll get it fixed tomorrow, I promise I’ll do it.’

‘No, don’t!’ My words are so harsh and abrupt that she looks at me in surprise. ‘I don’t care if it’s broken. I don’t want to see it here. I never want to see it again.’

She seems stunned, frightened. ‘What’s wrong with you? What’s happened to you?’

‘Nothing. I’m all right. But I don’t want it. Let it go.’

‘What are you saying?’

‘Let it go, let it go,’ I repeat. We are speaking in sibilant, strangled whispers, as if he is here, as if he can hear us. Can he hear us? Can he hear me?

‘I don’t understand you. Let what go? He is my father.’ She is still crouching on the floor, holding the photograph in her two hands.

‘Yes, your father, but what was he to me? The day he died, I let him go. Like this.’ Now I make the gesture I had imagined—cupping my palms together and then separating them. She stares at my hands in fascination. ‘And there was nothing left. Nothing.’

‘But I—I’m his daughter. And yours. Am I nothing? Am I?’ She is panting, her eyes hot and angry. ‘What are you then?’ I ask her. ‘You are just smoke and a bit of ash, like those cigarettes you smoke. Like my married life.’

Pain lays its talons on her face, her eyes are anguished. But I force myself to go on. What have I to lose? Only the child’s love. And I know this cannot destroy that. On the contrary, I have a feeling that she is with me now, giving me strength for the battle, urging me on. My beloved charioteer.

‘He was your father, but what was he of mine? I lived with him for twenty-five years. I know he didn’t like unstrung beans and hated grit in his rice, I know he liked his tea boiling hot and his bathwater lukewarm. And he hated tears. And so, when your baby brothers died, I wept alone and in secret. I combed my hair before he woke up because he didn’t like to see women with untidy, loosened hair. And I went into the backyard even then because it made him furious to find stray hairs anywhere. And once a year he bought me two saris, always colours I hated; he never asked me what I liked and I never told him. And at night . . .’

She is still crouching, her hair falling about her face. She whimpers like a hurt puppy. ‘Don’t,’ she says, ‘don’t tell me, don’t.’ With each negative, she bangs the photograph she still holds in her hands and the glass splinters again and again. Now he is totally exposed to us, but there is no pity in me. It is not the dead who need our compassion, it is the living; not the dead who crave

‘MY BELOVED CHARI-
OTEER’

– SHASHI DESHPANDE

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

loyalty, but the living.

‘I don’t want to hear,’ she says.

How innocent she is in spite of her age, her education, her marriage and her child, if knowledge can hurt her. It reminds me of the day she had grown up and I had tried to explain. And she had cried out in the same way, ‘Don’t tell me, don’t!’ This is another kind of growing up, when you see your parents as people. ‘At night,’ I go on relentlessly, ‘I scarcely dared to breathe, I was so terrified of disturbing him. And once, when I asked whether I could sleep in another room—I don’t know how I had the courage—he said nothing. But the next day, his mother, your grandmother, told me bluntly about a wife’s duties. I must always be available, she said. So I slept there, afraid to get up for a glass of water, scared even to cough. When he wanted me, he said, “Come here.” And I went. And when he finished, if I didn’t get out of his bed fast enough, he said, “You can go.” And I got out.’

I know these things should not be said to her, his daughter and mine. But I am like a river in the monsoon, nothing can control me now.

‘And one day, when you were here, you and Madhav, I heard you both talking and laughing in your room. And I stood outside and wondered—what could you be talking about? I felt like I did when I looked at a book as a child before I learned to read. Until then, I had hoped that one day he would say he was pleased with me. That day I knew it would never happen. I would always be outside the room, I would never know what went on inside. And that day I envied you, my own daughter. You hear me, Aarti? I envied you. And when he died I felt like Priti does when school is over and the bell rings. You understand, Aarti? You understand what I’m saying?’

Why am I also crying? We look at each other and she is looking at me as if she has never seen me before. Then, with a sudden movement, she springs up and glares at me. I have made her look at me. But what, my heart shrivels at the thought, if she does not like what she sees? And then, moving backwards from me, her eyes still on my face, she goes out of the room. In a moment I hear her running feet. My legs can no longer support me. I collapse in a chair. As I sit there, my mind a blank, I hear the cry, ‘Ajji, I’m home, where are you?’

I sit up and look about me. ‘Ajji,’ the voice is peremptory. For a moment I can’t speak. Then I call back, loudly, ‘Here, Priti, I’m here.’

My cry rings through the house like hers had done.

13.5 SUMMARY OF THE STORY

‘*My Beloved Charioteer*’ by ShashiDeshpande is based on the three generations, three women i.e. grandmother, mother and daughter. The three different mindsets living together at home of grandmother. Grandmother takes care of each and everyone in the house. The story starts in a cozy early morning, when we can see a grandmother and the close bond that she shares with her granddaughter, Priti. It appears in the first few lines narrates by grandmother that, “I SMILE AS I hear them at last, the sounds I am waiting for. A rush of footsteps, the slam of the bathroom door and then, bare feet running

towards me”. This shows the strong bonding between grandmother and daughter. The story examines the relationship between widow mother and her daughter. Mother named Arti, the daughter of grandmother a depressed woman. She loved two persons the most in her life is that her father and her husband and they both are dead. She is now the most irritated person in the house and she spends her most of the time in looking at the walls of her room. She doesn’t talk to anyone neither to her daughter Priti and nor to her mother. She even scolds Priti for no reason.

‘MY BELOVED CHARI-
OTEER’

– SHASHI DESHPANDE

She is so much entangled with the past and ignored her present. The daughter named Priti, the youngest and the most energetic character in the story. Her father and grandfather both are not present in her life. Her mother doesn’t talk to her. Her caretaker and her best friend in the house is only her grandmother (Aiji). After Priti left for the school, silence settles in the house. The relation between the Arti and Priti is not too good in the story. Arti is depressed, sad, unhappy, and in pain. She doesn’t do any work, which a mother should do for her daughter and for her aged mother. She doesn’t talk to Priti; however she scolds Priti many times to show her anger, outrage and displeasure. Because of her daughter’s nature, grandmother Aiji have to take care of Priti, she acts like her mother. She wakes up her, she dresses her for school, and makes breakfast for her. It is shocking to see that at this age, Aiji does all the work and she even doesn’t complain. The relationship of Arti and Priti is not good whereas the relationship between Aiji and Priti is good. In the story it seems that Aiji insisted Arti to go out of house at park or any other places, but didn’t receive good response from Arti, on the contrary she got amazed after receiving Arti’s response, who mentioned that, “There is nowhere I want to go. Everywhere I see couples. I can’t bear to see them. I could murder them when I see them talking and laughing” this indicates mental condition of Arti.

She keeps on thinking regarding Arti’s happiness, which is clearly visible in the story as she says that, “I wonder whether today Aarti will like what I’m cooking, whether she will enjoy her food and eat well. I know she will not, but the hope is always in me. Just as I hope that one day she will talk and laugh again.” Ironically, Aiji’s husband’s room offers her the opportunity to find her voice, rebel against her daughter and break the silence that threatens to destroy her home and her granddaughter. The photo frame that was broken accidentally by Arti gave a chance to Aiji, and helped her to talk to her and to explain her that what gone is gone. Aiji is also holding the pain of her husband’s death but on the other hand, she is managing and not escaping from her problems and fears. Priti has a daughter and she needs to take care of her. Aiji also says that she does not want to ever see the photograph again as it is no point of seeing things, which gives pain and discomfort. Arti needs to be happy. Hence, through this story Shashi Deshpande elegantly brings out the mother/daughter relationship on different stages and aspects of life.

13.6 THEMES OF THE STORY

Hope- happiness of life:

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

In the story, the old widow is living her lonely life peacefully. But she is unable to make her widow daughter to live happily in the same situation. Arti, a widow daughter of Aiji, is lost in her own grief in such an extent that she neglects the needs of her daughter, Priti. Priti is a ray of hope in her meaningless life. Aiji can't see grief-stricken Arti. She tries her best to bring her back to the happiness. She hopes that Arti will talk and laugh again one day. The mother wants to share the suffering and sorrow of her daughter. Aiji is hurt by calling Arti as a widow. It hurts Aiji that Arti can find her comfort from her dead father and not from her living mother. The incident of breaking the glass on her late father's photograph comes like an opportunity to mother. Arti has loved her father more than her mother. But now mother introduces Arti to her father's latent traits of character. The mother tells Arti that she was always dominated by her husband. At the end mother is happy because she makes her daughter to look at her and to understand her life. She does not bother whether there will be change in attitude of Arti towards her, but she is satisfied that the locked door of the interaction is opened. Arti came to know that her mother is "a victim of gender based oppression and patriarchal socialization." At last, the mother is successful to bring back her daughter to this living world again. Mother feels that daughter is with her now and giving her strength for the battle of life.

Patriarchy:

Presence of patriarchy and dominance is visible in the story. Aiji, the protagonist of the story was always dominated by her husband. Aiji had been manipulated by her husband according to his desires. She had lived with him for twenty-five years and had learnt to know his likes and dislikes, yet he had never troubled himself to know her likes and dislikes. Even when her husband was ill, he did not allow Aiji to share this information to Arti. He said that, "Don't tell Aarti yet," he had said. 'I don't want to frighten her, not now, especially.' And being obedient wife, she had to follow her husband's instruction. She thus feels liberated, free and happy after his death.

Be in Present:

Third theme of the story is to let go in life and accept the present and to be in present. Arti is much unhappy with her present life as she is unable to forget the death of her husband and her father. Due to this, she neglects her present and her responsibilities towards her daughter. Her mother tries to make her understand that 'what gone is gone', and 'let go', the things which has gone, never come back in life again. She has to live with this fact and to remain happy. She has to accept the situation. Rather spending time only at looking wall, she has to come out from this situation.

13.7 CHARACTERS

Aiji:

Aiji is the oldest protagonist of the story, mother of Arti and grandmother of Priti. Aiji is the only character in the story who understands present situation and face it with all the strength and happiness. She was very obedient wife and a good mother. During her entire married life, she did not chance to present her opinion and wish

in front of her husband. Thus, it shows that she was very obedient wife. After her husband's death, she was alone in the house. She tried her best to make Arti happy. Aiji feels happy in the presence of Priti. She says in the story that, "Happiness can mean different things to different people. For me, it is this—the beginning of a new day with this child" indicates her definition of happiness.

‘MY BELOVED CHARIOTEER’
— SHASHI DESHPANDE

Arti:

Arti is daughter of Aiji and mother of Priti. She is the unhappy person in the story. She lost most beloved persons of her life, her husband and her father. After Madhav's death, she could not cope up with depression. She remains unhappy all the time and rarely talks to anyone. She does not take care of daughter Priti. When her mother asks anything she does not give proper reply. One's mother asked regarding whether she slept well or not and she replied that, "I never do that. I haven't slept well since Madhav died. I'll never sleep well again all my life. I have to take something every night so that I can close my eyes for a few hours. Now never ask me again if I slept well." shows her mental condition. She spent her entire day in smoking and looking at the wall.

Priti:

Priti is the daughter of Arti and granddaughter of Aiji. She is the only source of happiness to Aiji and happiest person in the family. As a child, she is not aware about any hardships of life and thus remains happy all the day. She shares strong bond of love and friendship with Aiji. She is the only beloved charioteer in the story.

13.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt

- About the story *My Beloved Charioteer*
- Summary of the story, and
- Various themes and characters of the story

13.9 KEY WORDS

Brusque- abrupt or offhand in speech or manner

Conspiratorial- relating to or suggestive of a secret plan made by a group of people to do something unlawful or harmful

Primus- a brand of portable cooking stove that burns vaporized oil

Trembling- quivering, typically as a result of anxiety, excitement, or frailty.

Suffer- experience or be subjected to Obedience- compliance with an order, request, or law or submission to another's authority

Amaze- surprise (someone) greatly; fill with astonishment

Approach- speak to (someone) for the first time about a proposal or request.

Assuage - make (an unpleasant feeling) less intense.

Charioteer - a chariot driver

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 1

CHOOSE THE CORRECT OPTION FROM GIVEN BELOW.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

- 1) Madhav was the husband of
A) Priti B) Ajji
C) Arti
- 2) Priti is the granddaughter of
A) Riti B) Ajji
C) Arti
- 3) *My Beloved Charioteer* is written by.
A) Shashi Deshpande B) Anita Desai
C) Premchand
- 4) *If I Die Today* is written in
A) 1982 B) 1983
C) 1984
- 5) *A Summer Adventure* is written by.
A) Shashi Deshpande B) Anita Desai
C) Premchand

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:2

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION IN BRIEF

1. Why is Arti not happy in her life?
2. Why is Ajji unhappy with Arti's behaviour?
3. Who is the Charioteer in the story?
4. Why is Priti much comfortable with Ajji?
5. What was Ajji's husband behavior towards Ajji?

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:3

WRITE SHORT NOTES.

- 1) Various themes in the story- *My Beloved Charioteer*
- 2) Discuss characters of the story- *My Beloved Charioteer*

13.10 BOOKS SUGGESTED

Poe, Edgar Allan (1984). Edgar Allan Poe: Essays and Reviews. Library of America.

The Art of the Short Story by Dana Gioia

On Writing Short Stories by Tom Bailey

My Beloved Charioteer by Shashi Deshpande

ANSWERS

1-A, 2-B, 3-A, 4-A, 5-A



'IDGAH' BY PREMCHAND

'IDGAH' BY
PREMCHAND

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

- 14.0 Objectives**
- 14.1 Introduction**
- 14.2 Premchand- Life and Works**
- 14.3 Text of the story 'Idgah'**
- 14.4 Summary of the story**
- 14.5 Plot of the story**
- 14.6 Tone of the story**
- 14.7 Critical analysis of the story**
- 14.8 Let Us Sum Up**
- 14.9 Key words**
- 14.10 Books Suggested**

Answers

14.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you shall

- Understand the plot of the story 'Idgah' by Premchand
- Understand tone of the story 'Idgah'

After completing the unit, you should be able to,

- Summarize the story 'Idgah'
- Analyze characters of the story 'Idgah'

14.1 INTRODUCTION

'Idgah' is a well-known short story of Premchand, set in a village backdrop. It is a story about the attachment that is built between a four-year-old protagonist Hamid and his grandmother Ameena. The story narrates Ameena's concern for Hamid when he goes out for Idgah all by himself. The story cleverly exhibits the struggle of Hamid with his own little self to overcome his desires for sweets, games, and toys in order to buy a pair of tongs for his grandmother.

14.2 PREMCHAND- LIFE AND WORKS

Dhanpat Rai Shrivastava, known by his pen name Munshi Premchand was an Indian writer famous for his modern Hindustani literature. He is one of the most celebrated writers of the Indian subcontinent, and is regarded as one of the foremost Hindi writers of the early twentieth century. His novels include *Godaan*, *Karmabhoomi*, *Gaban*, *Mansarovar*, and many more. He published his first collection of five short stories in 1907 in a book called *Soz-e Watan*.

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

He began writing under the pen name Nawab Rai, but subsequently switched to “Premchand”, Munshi being an honorary prefix. A novel writer, story writer and dramatist, he has been referred as the “*Upanyas Samrat*” by writers. His works include more than a dozen novels, around 300 short stories, several essays and translations of a number of foreign literary works into Hindi.

His works describe the problems of the poor and the urban middle-class. His works depict a rationalistic outlook, which views religious values as something that allows the powerful hypocrites to exploit the weak. He used literature for the purpose of arousing public awareness about national and social issues and often wrote about topics related to corruption, child widowhood, prostitution, feudal system, poverty, colonialism and on the Indian freedom movement.

He is regarded as one of the finest writers for his exemplary creation in Hindi and Urdu literature. His stories look into his pure brilliance as he tracks the growth of his characters, their ambitions and priorities in life. His works throw a light into the psyche of the rural Indian society and its members.

14.3 TEXT OF THE STORY ‘IDGAH’

A full thirty days after Ramadan comes Eid. How wonderful and beautiful is the morning of Eid! The trees look greener; the field more festive, the sky has a lovely pink glow. Look at the sun! It comes up brighter and more dazzling than before to wish the world a very happy Eid. The village is agog with excitement. Everyone is up early to go to the Eidgah mosque. One finds a button missing from his shirt and is hurrying to his neighbour’s house for thread and needle. Another finds that the leather of his shoes has become hard and is running to the oil-press for oil to grease it. They are dumping fodder before their oxen because by the time they get back from the Eidgah it may be late afternoon. It is a good three miles from the village. There will also be hundreds of people to greet and chat with; they would certainly not be finished before midday.

The boys are more excited than the others. Some of them kept only one fast—and that only till noon. Some didn’t even do that. But no one can deny them the joy of going to the Eidgah. Fasting is for the grown-ups and the aged. For the boys it is only the day of Eid. They have been talking about it all the time. At long last the day has come. And now they are impatient with people for not hurrying up. They have no concern with things that have to be done. They are not bothered whether or not there is enough milk and sugar for the vermicelli pudding. All they want is to eat the pudding. They have no idea why Abbajan is out of breath running to the house of Chaudhri Karim Ali. They don’t know that if the Chaudhri were to change his mind he could turn the festive day of Eid into a day of mourning. Their pockets bulge with coins like the stomach of the pot-bellied Kubera, the Hindu God of Wealth. They are forever taking the treasure out of their pockets, counting and re-counting it before putting it back. Mahmood counts “One, two, ten, twelve”—he has twelve pice. Mohsin has “One, two, three, eight, nine, fifteen” pice.

Out of this countless hoard they will buy countless things: toys, sweets, paper-pipes, rubber balls—and much else.

The happiest of the boys is Hamid. He is only four; poorly dressed, thin and famished-looking. His father died last year of cholera. Then his mother wasted away and, without anyone finding out what had ailed her she also died. Now Hamid sleeps in Granny Ameena's lap and is as happy as a lark. She tells him that his father has gone to earn money and will return with sack loads of silver. And that his mother has gone to Allah to get lovely gifts for him. This makes Hamid very happy. It is great to live on hope; for a child there is nothing like hope. A child's imagination can turn a mustard seed into a mountain. Hamid has no shoes on his feet; the cap on his head is soiled and tattered; its gold thread has turned black. Nevertheless Hamid is happy. He knows that when his father comes back with sacks full of silver and his mother with gifts from Allah he will be able to fulfil all his heart's desires. Then he will have more than Mahmood, Mohsin, Noorey and Sammi.

In her hovel the unfortunate Ameena sheds bitter tears. It is Eid and she does not have even a handful of grain. Only if her Abid were there, it would have been a different kind of Eid!

Hamid goes to his grandmother and says, "Granny, don't you fret over me! I will be the first to get back. Don't worry!"

Ameena is sad. Other boys are going out with their fathers. She is the only 'father' Hamid has. How can she let him go to the fair all by himself? What if he gets lost in the crowd? No, she must not lose her precious little soul! How can he walk three miles? He doesn't even have a pair of shoes. He will get blisters on his feet. If she went along with him she could pick him up now and then. But then who would be there to cook the vermicelli? If only she had the money she could have bought the ingredients on the way back and quickly made the pudding. In the village it would take her many hours to get everything. The only way out was to ask someone for them.

The villagers leave in one party. With the boys is Hamid. They run on ahead of the elders and wait for them under a tree. Why do the oldies drag their feet? And Hamid is like one with wings on his feet. How could anyone think he would get tired?

They reach the suburbs of the town. On both sides of the road are mansions of the rich enclosed all around by thick, high walls. In the gardens mango and leechie trees are laden with fruit. A boy hurls a stone at a mango tree. The gardener rushes out screaming abuses at them. By then the boys are furlongs out of his reach and roaring with laughter. What a silly ass they make of the gardener!

Then come big buildings: the law courts, the college and the club. How many boys would there be in this big college? No sir, they are not all boys! Some are grown-up men. They sport enormous moustaches. What are such grown-up men going on studying for? How long will they go on doing so? What will they do with all their knowledge? There are only two or three

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

grown-up boys in Hamid's school. Absolute duds they are too! They get a thrashing every day because they do not work at all. These college fellows must be the same type— why else should they be there! And the Masonic Lodge. They perform magic there. It is rumoured that they make human skulls move about and do other kinds of weird things. No wonder they don't let in outsiders! And the white folk play games in the evenings. Grown-up men, men with moustaches and beards playing games! And not only they, but even their Memsahibs! That's the honest truth! You give my Granny that something they call a racket; she wouldn't know how to hold it. And if she tried to wave it about she would collapse.

Mahmood says, "My mother's hands would shake; I swear by Allah they would!"

Mohsin says, "Mine can grind maunds of grain. Her hand would never shake holding a miserable racket. She draws hundreds of pitchers full of water from the well every day. My buffalo drinks up five pitchers. If a Memsahib had to draw one pitcher, she would go blue in the face."

Mahmood interrupts, "But your mother couldn't run and leap about, could she?"

"That's right," replies Mohsin, "she couldn't leap or jump. But one day our cow got loose and began grazing in the Chaudhri's fields. My mother ran so fast after it that I couldn't catch up with her. Honest to God, I could not!"

So we proceed to the stores of the sweet-meat vendors. All so gaily decorated! Who can eat all these delicacies? Just look! Every store has them piled up in mountain heaps.

They say that after 11 nightfall, Jinns come and buy up everything. "My Abba says that at midnight there is a Jinn at every stall. He has all that remains weighed and pays in real rupees, just the sort of rupees we have," says Mohsin.

Hamid is not convinced. "Where would the Jinns come by rupees?"

"Jinns are never short of money," replies Mohsin. "They can get into any treasury they want. Mister, don't you know no iron bars can stop them? They have all the diamonds and rubies they want. If they are pleased with anyone they will give him baskets full of diamonds. They are here one moment and five minutes later they can be in Calcutta."

Hamid asks again, "Are these Jinns very big?"

"Each one is as big as the sky," asserts Mohsin. "He has his feet on the ground, his head touches the sky. But if he so wanted, he could get into a tiny brass pot.

"How do people make Jinns happy?" asks Hamid. "If anyone taught me the secret, I would make at least one Jinn happy with me."

"I do not know," replies Mohsin, "but the Chaudhri Sahib has a lot of Jinns under his control. If anything is stolen, he can trace it and even tell you the name of the thief. Jinns tell him everything that is going on in the world."

Hamid understands how Chaudhri Sahib has come by his wealth and why people hold him in so much respect. It begins to get crowded. Parties heading for the Eidgah are coming into town from different sides— each one dressed better than the other. Some on tongas and ekkas, some in motorcars.

All wearing perfume; all bursting with excitement.

Our small party of village rustics is not bothered about the poor show they make. They are a calm, contented lot.

For village children everything in the town is strange. Whatever catches their eye; they stand and gape at it with wonder. Cars hoot frantically to get them out of the way, but they couldn't care less. Hamid is nearly run over by a car.

At long last the Eidgah comes in view. Above it are massive tamarind trees casting their shade on the cemented floor on which carpets have been spread. And there are row upon row of worshippers as far as the eye can see, spilling well beyond the mosque courtyard. Newcomers line themselves behind the others. Here neither wealth nor status matters because in the eyes of Islam all men are equal. Our villagers wash their hands and feet and make their own line behind the others. What a beautiful, heart-moving sight it is! What perfect coordination of movements! A hundred thousand heads bow together in prayer! And then all together they stand erect; bow down and sit on their knees! Many times they repeat these movements— exactly as if a hundred thousand electric bulbs were switched on and off at the same time again and again. What a wonderful spectacle it is!

The prayer is over. Men embrace each other. They descend on the sweet and toy-vendors' stores like an army moving to an assault. In this matter the grown-up rustic is no less eager than the boys. Look, here is a swing! Pay a pice and enjoy riding up to the heavens and then plummeting down to the earth. And here is the roundabout strung with wooden elephants, horses and camels! Pay one pice and have twenty-five rounds of fun. Mahmood and Mohsin and Noorey and other boys mount the horses and camels.

Hamid watches them from a distance. All he has are three pice. He couldn't afford to part with a third of his treasure for a few miserable rounds.

They've finished with the roundabouts; now it is time for the toys. There is a row of stalls on one side with all kinds of toys; soldiers and milkmaids, kings and ministers, water-carriers and washerwomen and holy men.

Splendid display! How lifelike! All they need are tongues to speak. Mahmood buys a policeman in khaki with a red turban on his head and a gun on his shoulder. Looks as if he is marching in a parade. Mohsin likes the water-carrier with his back bent under the weight of the water-bag. He holds the handle of the bag in one hand and looks pleased with himself. Perhaps, he is singing. It seems as if the water is about to pour out of the bag. Noorey has fallen for the lawyer. What an expression of learning he has on his face !

A black gown over a long, white coat with a gold watch chain going into a pocket, a fat volume of some law book in his hand. Appears as if he has just finished arguing a case in a court of law.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

These toys cost two pice each. All Hamid has are three pice; how can he afford to buy such expensive toys? If they dropped out of his hand, they would be smashed to bits. If a drop of water fell on them, the paint would run. What would he do with toys like these? They'd be of no use to him.

Mohsin says, "My water-carrier will sprinkle water every day, morning and evening."

Mahmood says, "My policeman will guard my house. If a thief comes near, he will shoot him with his gun.

Noorey says, "My lawyer will fight my cases."

Sammi says, "My washer-woman will wash my clothes every day." Hamid pooh-poohs their toys—they're made of clay— one fall and they'll break in pieces. But his eyes look at them hungrily and he wishes he could hold them in his hands for just a moment or two. His hands stretch without his wanting to stretch them. But young boys are not givers, particularly when it is something new. Poor Hamid doesn't get to touch the toys.

After the toys it is sweets. Someone buys sesame seed candy, others gulab-jammuns or halva. They smack their lips with relish. Only Hamid is left out. The luckless boy has at least three pice; why doesn't he also buy something to eat? He looks with hungry eyes at the others.

Mohsin says, "Hamid, take this sesame candy, it smells good."

Hamid suspects it is a cruel joke; he knows Mohsin doesn't have so big a heart. But knowing this Hamid goes to Mohsin. Mohsin takes a piece out of his leaf-wrap and holds it towards Hamid. Hamid stretches out his hand.

Mohsin puts the candy in his own mouth. Mahmood, Noorey and Sammi clap their hands with glee and have a jolly good laugh. Hamid is crestfallen.

Mohsin says, "This time I will let you have it. I swear by Allah! I will give it to you. Come and take it."

Hamid replies, "You keep your sweets. Don't I have the money?"

"All you have are three pice," says Sammi. "What can you buy for three pice?"

Mahmood says, "Mohsin is a rascal. Hamid you come to me and I will give you gulcib-jammun."

Hamid replies, "What is there to rave about sweets? Books are full of bad things about eating sweets."

"In your heart you must be saying, 'If I could get it I would eat it,'" says Mohsin. "Why don't you take the money out of your pocket?"

"I know what this clever fellow is up to," says Mahmood. "When we've spent all our money, he will buy sweets and tease us.

After the sweet- vendors there are a few hardware stores and shops of real and artificial jewellery. There is nothing there to attract the boys' attention.

So they go ahead— all of them except Hamid who stops to see a pile of tongs. It occurs to him that his granny does not have a pair of tongs. Each

time she bakes chapattis, the iron plate burns her hands. If he were to buy her a pair of tongs she would be very pleased. She would never burn her fingers; it would be a useful thing to have in the house. What use are toys? They are a waste of money. You can have some fun with them but only for a very short time. Then you forget all about them.

Hamid's friends have gone ahead. They are at a stall drinking sherbet. How selfish they are! They bought so many sweets but did not give him one. And then they want him to play with them; they want him to do odd jobs for them. Now if any of them asked him to do something, he would tell them,

“Go suck your lollipop, it will bum your mouth; it will give you a rash of pimples and boils; your tongue will always crave for sweets; you will have to steal money to buy them and get a thrashing in the bargain. It's all written in books. Nothing will happen to my tongs. No sooner my granny sees my pair of tongs she will run up to take it from me and say, 'My child has brought me a pair of tongs,' and shower me with a thousand blessings. She will show it off to the neighbours' womenfolk. Soon the whole village will be saying, 'Hamid has brought his granny a pair of tongs, how nice he is!' No one will bless the other boys for the toys they have got for themselves. Blessings of elders are heard in the court of Allah and are immediately acted on. Because I have no money Mohsin and Mahmood adopt such airs towards me. I will teach them a lesson. Let them play with their toys and eat all the sweets they can. I will not play with toys. I will not stand any nonsense from anyone. And one day my father will return. And also my mother. Then I will ask these chaps, 'Do you want any toys? How many?' I will give each one a basket full of toys and teach them how to treat friends. I am not the sort who buys a pice worth of lollipops to tease others by sucking them myself. I know they will laugh and say Hamid has brought a pair of tongs. They can go to the Devil!”

Hamid asks the shopkeeper, “How much for this pair of tongs?”

The shopkeeper looks at him and seeing no older person with him replies,

“It's not for you.”

“Is it for sale or not?”

“Why should it not be for sale? Why else should I have bothered to bring it here?”

“Why then don't you tell me how much it is!”

“It will cost you six pice.”

Hamid's heart sinks. “Let me have the correct price.”

“All right, it will be five pice, bottom price. Take it or leave it.” Hamid steels his heart and says, “Will you give it to me for three?” And proceeds to walk away lest the shopkeeper screams at him. But the shopkeeper does not scream. On the contrary, he calls Hamid back and gives him the pair of tongs. Hamid carries it on his shoulder as if it were a gun and struts up proudly to show it to his friends. Let us hear what they have to say.

Mohsin laughs and says, “Are you crazy? What will you do with the tongs?”

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

Hamid flings the tongs on the ground and replies, "Try and throw your water-carrier on the ground. Every bone in his body will break."

Mahmood says, "Are these tongs some kind of toy?"

"Why not?" retorts Hamid. "Place them across your shoulders and it is a gun; wield them in your hands and it is like the tongs carried by singing mendicants—they can make the same clanging as a pair of cymbals. One smack and they will reduce all your toys to dust. And much as your toys may try they could not bend a hair on the head of my tongs. My tongs are like a brave tiger."

Sammi who had bought a small tambourine asks, "Will you exchange them for my tambourine? It is worth eight pice."

Hamid pretends not to look at the tambourine. "My tongs if they wanted to could tear out the bowels of your tambourine. All it has is a leather skin and all it can say is dhub, dhub. A drop of water could silence it forever. My brave pair of tongs can weather water and storms, without budging an inch."

The pair of tongs wins over everyone to its side. But now no one has any money left and the fairground has been left far behind. It is well past 9 a.m. and the sun is getting hotter every minute. Everyone is in a hurry to get home. Even if they talked their fathers into it, they could not get the tongs.

This Hamid is a bit of a rascal. He saved up his money for the tongs.

The boys divide into two factions. Mohsin, Mahmood, Sammi and Noorey on the one side, and Hamid by himself on the other. They are engaged in hot argument. Sammi has defected to the other side. But Mohsin, Mahmood and Noorey, though they are a year or two older than Hamid, are reluctant to take him on in debate. Right is on Hamid's side. Also it's moral force on the one side, clay on the other. Hamid has iron now calling itself steel, unconquerable and lethal. If a tiger was to spring on them the water-carrier would be out of his wits; Mister Constable would drop his clay gun and take to his heels; the lawyer would hide his face in his gown, lie down on the ground and wail as if his mother's mother had died. But the tongs, the pair of tongs, Champion of India would leap and grab the tiger by its neck and gouge out its eyes.

Mohsin puts all he has in his plea, "But they cannot go and fetch water, can they?"

Hamid raises the tongs and replies, "One angry word of command from my tongs and your water-carrier will hasten to fetch the water and sprinkle it at any doorstep he is ordered to."

Mohsin has no answer. Mahmood comes to his rescue. "If we are caught, we are caught. We will have to do the rounds of the law courts in chains.

Then we will be at the lawyer's feet asking for help."

Hamid has no answer to this powerful argument. He asks, "Who will come to arrest us?"

Noorey puffs out his chest and replies, "This policeman with the gun."

Hamid makes a face and says with scorn, "This wretch come to arrest the Champion of India! Okay, let's have it out over a bout of wrestling, Far from catching

them, he will be scared to look at my tongs in the face.”

Mohsin thinks of another ploy. “Your tongs’ face will burn in the fire every day.” He is sure that this will leave Hamid speechless. That is not so. Pat comes Hamid with the retort, “Mister, it is only the brave who can jump into a fire. Your miserable lawyers, policemen, and water-carriers will run like frightened women into their homes. Only this Champion of India can perform this feat of leaping into the fire.”

Mahmood has one more try, “The lawyer will have chairs to sit and tables for his things. Your tongs will only have the kitchen floor to lie on.”

Hamid cannot think of an appropriate retort so he says whatever comes into his mind, “The tongs won’t stay in the kitchen. When your lawyer sits on his chair my tongs will knock him down on the ground.”

It does not make sense but our three heroes are utterly squashed—almost as if a champion kite had been brought down from the heavens to the earth by a cheap, miserable paper imitation. Thus Hamid wins the field. His tongs are the Champion of India. Neither Mohsin nor Mahmood, neither Noorey nor Sammi—nor anyone else can dispute the fact.

The respect that a victor commands from the vanquished is paid to Hamid. The others have spent between twelve to sixteen pice each and bought nothing worthwhile. Hamid’s three-pice worth has carried the day. And no one can deny that toys are unreliable things: they break, while Hamid’s tongs will remain as they are for years.

The boys begin to make terms of peace. Mohsin says, “Give me your tongs for a while, you can have my water-carrier for the same time.”

Both Mahmood and Noorey similarly offer their toys. Hamid has no hesitation in agreeing to these terms. The tongs pass from one hand to another; and the toys are in turn handed to Hamid. How lovely they are!

Hamid tries to wipe the tears of his defeated adversaries. “I was simply pulling your leg, honestly I was. How can these tongs made of iron compare with your toys?” It seems that one or the other will call Hamid’s bluff. But Mohsin’s party are not solaced. The tongs have won the day and no amount of water can wash away their stamp of authority. Mohsin says, “No one will bless us for these toys.”

Mahmood adds, “You talk of blessings! We may get a thrashing instead. My Amma is bound to say, ‘Are these earthen toys all that you could find at the fair?’”

Hamid has to concede that no mother will be as pleased with the toys as his granny will be when she sees the tongs. All he had was three pice and he has no reason to regret the way he has spent them. And now his tongs are the Champion of India and king of toys.

By eleven the village was again agog with excitement. All those who had gone to the fair were back at home. Mohsin’s little sister ran up wrenched the water-carrier out of his hands and began to dance with joy. Mister Water-carrier slipped out of her hand fell on the ground and went to paradise. The brother and

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

sister began to fight; and both had lots to cry about. Their mother lost her temper because of the racket they were making and gave each two resounding slaps.

Noorey's lawyer met an end befitting his grand status. A lawyer could not sit on the ground. He had to keep his dignity in mind. Two nails were driven into the wall, a plank put on them and a carpet of paper spread on the plank. The honourable counsel was seated like a king on his throne. Noorey began to wave a fan over him. He knew that in the law courts there were khus curtains and electric fans. So the least he could do was to provide a hand fan, otherwise the hot legal arguments might affect his lawyer's brains. Noorey was waving his fan made of bamboo leaf. We do not know whether it was the breeze or the fan or something else that brought the honourable counsel down from his high pedestal to the depths of hell and reduced his gown to mingle with the dust of which it was made. There was much beating of breasts and the lawyer's bier was dumped on a dung heap.

Mahmood's policeman remained. He was immediately put on duty to guard the village. But this police constable was no ordinary mortal who could walk on his own two feet. He had to be provided a palanquin. This was a basket lined with tatters of discarded clothes of red colour for the policeman to recline in comfort. Mahmood picked up the basket and started on his rounds. His two younger brothers followed him lisping,

"Shopkeepers, keep awake!" But night has to be dark; Mahmood stumbled, the basket slipped out of his hand. Mr. Constable with his gun crashed on the ground. He was short of one leg.

Mahmood being a bit of a doctor knew of an ointment, which could quickly rejoin broken limbs. All it needed was the milk of a banyan sapling.

The milk was brought and the broken leg reassembled. But no sooner was the constable put on his feet the leg gave way. One leg was of no use because now he could neither walk nor sit. Mahmood became a surgeon and cut the other leg to the size of the broken one so the chap could at least sit in comfort.

The constable was made into a holy man; he could sit in one place and guard the village. And sometimes he was like the image of the deity. The plume on his turban was scraped off and you could make as many changes in his appearance as you liked. And sometimes he was used for nothing better than weighing things.

Now let's hear what happened to our friend Hamid. As soon as she heard his voice, Granny Ameena ran out of the house, picked him up and kissed him. Suddenly she noticed the tongs in his hand. "Where did you find these tongs?"

"I bought them."

"How much did you pay for them?"

"Three pice.

Granny Ameena beat her breast. "You are a stupid child! It is almost noon and you haven't had anything to eat or drink. And what do you buy— tongs! Couldn't you find anything better in the fair than this pair of iron tongs?"

Hamid replied in injured tones, "You bum your fingers on the iron plate.

That is why I bought them.”

The old woman's temper suddenly changed to love— not the kind of calculated love, which wastes away in spoken words. This love was mute, solid and seeped with tenderness. What a selfless child! What concern for others! What a big heart! How he must have suffered seeing other boys buying toys and gobbling sweets! How was he able to suppress his own feelings! Even at the fair he thought of his old grandmother. Granny Ameena's heart was too full for words.

And the strangest thing happened— stranger than the part played by the tongs was the role of Hamid the child playing Hamid the old man. And old Granny Ameena became Ameena the little girl. She broke down. She spread her apron and beseeched Allah's blessings for her grandchild. Big tears fell from her eyes. How Hamid to understand what was going on inside her!

13.4 SUMMARY OF THE STORY

'*Idgah*' is a short story of a four-year-old orphan named Hamid who lives with his grandmother Amina. Hamid, the protagonist of the story, has recently lost his parents; however, his grandmother tells him that his father has left to earn money for him, and his mother has gone to Allah to fetch lovely gifts for him. This fills Hamid with hope and happiness and despite Amina's worries regarding their poverty and her grandson's well-being, Hamid is a happy and positive child.

The story begins on an Eid morning, as Hamid wants to go out for the Idgah with his friends from the village. He has only three paise as *Idi* for the festival. His friends spend their pocket money on rides, candies and beautiful clay toys, and tease Hamid when he dismisses this as a waste of money for momentary pleasure. He denies to spend money on this. While his friends are enjoying themselves, he overcomes his temptation and goes to a hardware shop to buy a pair of tongs, remembering how his grandmother burns her fingers while cooking rotis.

As they return to the village Hamid's friends tease him for his purchase, praising the qualities of their toys over his tongs. Hamid replies with several clever arguments and before long his friends become more enamored with the tongs than their own playthings, even offering to trade their items for his, which Hamid refuses. The story ends on a touching note when Hamid gifts the tongs to his grandmother. At first, she scolds him for purchasing this, rather than buying something to eat or drink at the fair, until Hamid reminds her of how she burns her fingers daily. She bursts into tears at this and blesses him for his kindness.

13.5 PLOT OF THE STORY

Hamid, the protagonist of the story is a 5 years old, less privileged child. He is facing the harsh realities of life. He has lost his parents in his early childhood. His life is passing with utter poverty, but even in this situation he is full of hope. The only retreat in this dry situation is the warmth of Ameena, his grandmother, picking the pieces of hope. Hamid is a happy child and is full of love, compassion and hope. He trusts his Dadi's words that his father would return home with lots of money from abroad and his mother would bring many gifts and sweets and toys for him from the house of God. Hamid is full of hope and is waiting eagerly for his parents to come back with lot of good fortune for them.

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

Once on the occasion of Eid festival, Hamid goes to Idgah along with his friends to enjoy the traditional village fair and to buy something. He didn't wear good clothes and shoes as compared to his other friends and got three paise from his grandmother, which was also less. He tries not to get tempted with, material aspects of the fair. He does his best to keep pace from his friends who brings more coins to enjoy in fair

He is a mute spectator throughout the story. Apart from miserable situation of his life, he controls his desire to eat sweets, to buy clay toys and rides. Other kids of his age, not only buying them but also showing it off to him. They are teasing him and playing pranks by saying taste of sweets and taking it away from him as soon as he extends his hand towards it. They are playing typical mischief as children do in their age. They are not aware about the Hamid's situation and misfortune. Being confident boy, he has no impact of all these stuff. Passing through the fair, he crosses many shops selling iron wares. His eyes fall on chimta- a pair of iron tong. In a friction, imagine his loving dadi's situation working on chulha while cooking, he thought to purchase it.

He has asked the price of it and when the shopkeeper responded, it was of five paise, being disappointed he offers three paise all that he has and quickly moves ahead. Witnessing the little boy's disheartened face the man agrees, for three paise. His friends started teasing him for purchasing it. He replies with all his intelligent remarks and makes them understood why his chimta is better than any other, that they have purchased.

His reasoning has now reached the pinnacle and slowly but surely the young audience surrenders to the power of his obvious logic. He was imagining, after purchasing the Chimta that, his Dadi would be so happy and she will share the happiness to all, thus I will receive bountiful blessings and love from everyone.

After returning home, when shows Ameena, what he bought from the fair, at first she is shocked and annoyed by his stupidity that instead of eating anything or buying any toy at the fair, he has purchased a chimta. But when Hamid openly tells her why he had bought this precious gift that would save her fingers from getting burnt when she cooks, Ameena is simply overwhelmed with emotions and breaks down in tears.

The scene and sequence in the story is handled with great maturity by the author. The emotions and values that generally take back in fast city life, but in the story, importance of the emotions and intimates is well portrayed. The little boy's maturity, compassion, emotional intelligence, empathy teaches us the most important wisdom of life. The story teaches us, no matter what the situation is in our life, we need to learn to face it with enthusiasm and smile.

13.6 TONE OF THE STORY

"Idgah" is set in the countryside of rural India. The story is characterized by distinctive Premchand's style where the narration comes straight from the heart of the protagonist, a five-year-old Muslim boy. The tone of the story is rural, rooted deep into the flavor of Indian villages and peasant life. At times, Story depicts a satirical and teasing tone which is mostly used to foreground the conversations

between friends. Use of vernaculars are deeply connected to the socio-cultural setting in which they are used.

At the morphological level, author has dexterously used words in order to maintain the rural tone in his story. On several occasions, he has used distinctive words which reflect that the characters emerge from a rural depth.

13.7 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE STORY

Idgah is a very powerful story written by Munshi Premchand, a well-known Indian Writer. It casts a strong impact on the minds of its readers. This story is a must read piece of literature by the readers of all ages.

Hamid, the hero of the story is a small boy of 5 years. He has lost his parents in his early childhood. He lives with his grandmother Ameena in small village. Literally hand to mouth, the duo are passing their days in utter poverty. Old Amina tries to fulfill their daily needs doing some needle work for others. Still Hamid is a happy child and is full of love, compassion.

Once on the occasion of Eid Hamid goes along with other children of the village to offer Namaz and then enjoy the tour of the traditional village fair. "The boys are more excited than the others. Some of them kept only one fast— and that only till noon. Some didn't even do that. But no one can deny them the joy of going to the Eidgah", for them to keep fast is not important but to enjoy the festival is much important as they love toys, rides and sweets. However the story also depicts the poverty of Hamid as he doesn't have new clothes and shoes like other children. Unlike his friends who have enough pocket money to spend on toys, sweets and rides when they count, Mahmood counts "One, two, ten, twelve"— he has twelve paise. Mohsin has "One, two, three, eight, nine, fifteen" paise. Out of this countless hoard they will buy countless things: toys, sweets, paper-pipes, rubber balls— and much else, while Hamid has only three paise as idi in all to spend which his Dadi could hardly spare. Still he is very happy and full of excitement.

The element of hope is well presented in the story. As Hamid keeps on hoping and thinking that, "...when his father comes back with sacks full of silver and his mother with gifts from Allah he will be able to fulfill all his heart's desires. Then he will have more than Mahmood, Mohsin, Noorey and Sammi.", this shows that, by keeping hope, he starts to enjoy the present situation with smiling face. Though he didn't have shoes to wear, but his smile is an ornament for him amongst his friends.

Control over temptation is quite visible in the story. Little Hamid is also very much tempted with the exclusive beauty of the toys but his wisdom prevents him to spend his small amount on these perishable items. Apart from buying toys and sweets, he bought chimta for his dadi. When his friends laugh on him, he replied so aptly to them by saying that, "'Place them across your shoulders and it is a gun; wield them in your hands and it is like the tongs carried by singing mendicants— they can make the same clanging as a pair of cymbals. One smack and they will reduce all your toys to dust. And much as your toys may try they could not bend a hair on the head of my tongs. My tongs are like a brave tiger". In this section of the story the dialogues of the children are very interesting and it is also funny that how all the children start acknowledging the supremacy of Hamid's chimta and

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

are tempted to exchange their purchase with it .It is a perfect example that MunshiPremchand had a keen insight into child psychology. All the children who were then trying to humiliate and ridicule Hamid now are keen to be friends with him and are satisfied enough if they get the chance to touch his unbeatable and invincible chimta even for once. The most poor and subdued boy of the entire group returns home from the fair most triumphant and victorious like a hero.

The story is an unparalleled saga of a small child with extraordinary wisdom and maturity better than any adult.He sacrificed all his share of enjoyment when the need of his Grandma stands before him to be weighed.

The story has touching end when Hamid gifts the chimta to his Dadi. At first instanceDadi is very much shocked, irritated and annoyed at the stupidity of the boy that instead of eating anything or buying any toy or enjoying any kind of ride all he could find to purchase was this chimta. Initially Hamid gets scared to see the reaction of his Dadi, but when he tells her that he has bought this chimta for her because daily she burns her fingers in making chapaties, Amina is stunned at the sensitivity of the child and is full of regret and repentance at her own outburst. She bursts into tears and blesses him for his kindness. Here the small boy of 4-5 years plays the part of a protecting and comforting adult and the good old Dadi is crying inconsolably like a small child.

Characters:

Hamid: five-year-old boy, who has very positive approach towards life. He believes in his dadi's words. He is not ashamed of his poverty, but tries to convert his situation in happiness. At a very small age, he understands the life from different perspectives. He has good command on his temptation and by controlling it; he purchases Chimta for his dadi. He behaves in a much matured way as compare to his peer group. His strong bonding to his dadi is quite visible in the story as he cares much for her.

Ameena: Ameena is grandmother of Hamid, and only guardian of him. She lost her son in colera and her daughter in law also. She works hard for bread and butter and butter and tries to keep Hamid happy. She gives idi to Hamid so that he can enjoy with friends on the festival of Idgah, but when he bought chimta for her, she burst into tears. She loves Hamid more than anyone and always thinks for him.

Mohsin: Mohsin is a friend of Hamid. He talks about Jinns in the story as he possesses much knowledge about Jinns. Mohsin likes the water-carrier with his back bent under the weight of the water- bag in the fair. He holds the handle of the bag in one hand and looks pleased with it. He says that water-carrier will sprinkle water every day.

Mohmood: Mahmood is also friend of Hamid. He buys a policeman in khaki with a red turban on his head and a gun on his shoulder. He says that, policeman will guard his house. If a thief comes near, he will shoot him with his gun. He is happy with his toy and also argues with Hamid to exchange it with his Chimta.

Noorey: Noorey is friend of Hamid. Noorey has fallen for the lawyer in the

fair and wants to buy it. Nooreysaysthat the lawyer will fight the cases.

Sammi: Sammibuys washer-woman in the fair.

'IDGAH' BY
PREMCHAND

14.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt

- Plot of the story
- Unique features of Premchand's writing through *Idgah*
- Tone of the story

14.9 KEY WORDS

Dazzling- extremely bright, especially so as to blind the eyes temporarily.

Agog- very eager or curious to hear or see something.

Treasure - a quantity of precious metals, gems, or other valuable objects.

Ail- trouble or afflict (someone) in mind or body.

Lark - a small ground-dwelling songbird with elongated hind claws and a song that is delivered on the wing, typically crested and with brown streaky plumage.

Tattered - old and torn; in poor condition.

Blisters - a small bubble on the skin filled with serum and caused by friction, burning, or other damage.

Vermicelli - is a traditional type of pasta round in section similar to spaghetti.

Thrashing - an act of physically beating someone; a beating.

Grind - reduce (something) to small particles or powder by crushing it

Pitchers - a large jug.

Grazing - grassland suitable for pasturage.

Delicacies - fineness or intricacy of texture or structure.

Bursting - break open or apart suddenly and violently, especially as a result of an impact or internal pressure.

Hoot - a low, wavering musical sound which is the typical call of many kinds of owl.

Spilling - cause or allow (liquid) to flow over the edge of its container, especially unintentionally.

String- material consisting of threads of cotton, hemp, or other material twisted together to form a thin length.

14.10 BOOKS SUGGESTED

1. Premchand, Munshi. *Idgah*. Prabhat Prakashan.
2. William Boyd, *A Short History of the Short Story*
3. https://archive.org/stream/Idgah-English-Premchand/idgah_djvu.txt

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:1

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

1. In which disease, did Hamid lose his father?
2. Describe the character of Ameena.
3. Why did Hamid buy chimta?

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

4. Why did Hamid's friends tease him when he buys chimta?
5. What did Mohsin buy in the fair?

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:2

STATE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE.

1. Ameena is Hamid's mother.
2. Hamid goes to Idgah with Ameena
3. Hamid buys toys for his grandmother.
4. Hamid buys chimta for his grandmother.
5. Sammi buys chimta.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:3

WRITE SHORT NOTES.

1. Character sketch of Hamid
2. Summary of the story *Idgah*
3. Tone of the story *Idgah*

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:4

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN YOUR OWN WORDS.

1. Discuss theme of the story.
2. Explain the plot of the story.

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress:2

1- False, 2- False, 3- False, 4- True, 5-False



**Unit
15**

‘A DAYS’ WAIT’ BY HEMINGWAY

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

15.0 Objectives

15.1 Meet the Author

15.2 ‘A Day’s Wait’- A Short Story

15.2.1 Text- ‘A Day’s Wait’

15.2.2 Summary - ‘A Day’s Wait’

15.2.3 Theme - ‘A Day’s Wait’

15.2.4 Character Analysis of ‘A Day’s Wait’

15.3 Let Us Sum Up

15.4 Key Words

15.5 References

Answers

15.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Know about the life of Ernest Hemingway.
- Summarize the story after understanding various aspect of the short story “A Day’s Wait”.

15.1 MEET THE AUTHOR

Ernest Hemingway, an American writer was born on 21st July, 1899 in Cicero, which is known as Oak Park now. During World- War-I, he worked as a journalist and where he was injured and he was awarded the ‘Silver Medal’ of Military Valour. In his journey of life he wrote and published seven novels, six collections of short stories; and two works of non- fiction. Ernest Hemingway received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1954. His last major work was in fiction, ‘The Old Man the Sea’ which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1953. Majority of Hemingway’s works were produced between the mid-1920s and the mid-1950s. His three non- fiction autobiographical works were published posthumously. His unique writing style is characterized by economy and understatement and has a significant influence on the development of 20th century fiction writing.

Following are some of the noteworthy works written by him:

Novels/Novella

The Torrents of Spring (1925)

The Sun Also Rises (1926)

A Farewell to Arms (1929)

To Have and Have Not (1937)

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940)

Across the River and Into the Trees (1950)

The Old Man and the Sea (1952)

Adventures of a Young Man (1962)

Islands in the Stream (1970)

The Garden of Eden (1986)

Nonfiction

Death in the Afternoon (1932)

Green Hills of Africa (1935)

The Dangerous Summer (1960)

A Moveable Feast (1964)

Short Story Collections

Three Stories and Ten Poems (1923)

In Our Time (1925)

Men Without Women (1927)

The Snows of Kilimanjaro (1932)

Winner Take Nothing (1933)

The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories (1938)

The Essential Hemingway (1947)

The Hemingway Reader (1953)

The Nick Adams Stories (1972)

15.2 'A DAY'S WAIT'- A SHORT STORY

15.2.1 Text- 'A Day's Wait'

He came into the room to shut the windows while we were still in bed and I saw he looked ill. He was shivering, his face was white, and he walked slowly as though it ached to move. 'What's the matter, Schatz?' 'I've got a headache.' 'You better go back to bed.' 'No, I'm all right.' 'You go to bed. I'll see you when I'm dressed.' But when I came downstairs he was dressed, sitting by the fire, looking a very sick and miserable boy of nine years. When I put my hand on his forehead I knew he had a fever. 'You go up to the bed,' I said, 'you're sick.' 'I'm all right,' he said. I took the downstairs, the doctor left three different medicines in different colored capsules with instructions for giving them. One was to bring down the fever, another a purgative, the third to overcome an acid condition. The germs of influenza can only exist in an acid condition, he explained. He seemed to know all about influenza and said there was nothing to worry about if the fever did not go above one hundred and four degrees. This was a light epidemic of flu and there was no danger if you avoided pneumonia. Back in the room I wrote the boy's temperature down and made a note of the time to give the various capsules. 'Do you want me to read to you?' 'All right. If you want to,' said the boy. His face was very white and there were dark areas under his eyes. He lay still in bed

and seemed very detached from what was going on. I read aloud from Howard Pyle book of Pirates, but I could see he was not following what I was reading.

‘How do you feel, Schatz?’ I asked him. ‘Just the same, so far,’ he said. I sat at the foot of the bed and read to myself while I waited for it to be time to give another capsule. It would have been natural for him to go to sleep, but when I looked up he was looking at the foot of the bed, looking very strangely. ‘Why don’t you try to go to sleep? I’ll wake you up for the medicine.’ ‘I’d rather stay awake.’ After a while he said to me, ‘You don’t have to stay here with me, Papa, if it bothers you.’ ‘It doesn’t bother me.’ ‘No, I mean you don’t have to stay if it’s going to bother you.’ I thought perhaps he was a little light-headed and after giving him the prescribed capsule at eleven o’clock I went out for a while. It was a bright, cold day, the ground covered with a sleet that had frozen so that it seemed as if all the bare trees, the bushes, the cut brush, and all the grass and the bare ground had been varnished with ice.

I took the young Irish setter for a little walk up the road and along a frozen creek, but it was difficult to stand or walk on the glassy surface and the red dog slipped and slithered and fell twice, hard, once dropping my gun and having it slide over the ice. We flushed a covey of quail under a high clay bank with overhanging brush and killed two as they went out of sight over the top of the bank. Some of the coveys lit the trees, but most of them scattered into brush piles and it was necessary to jump on the ice-coated mounds of brush several times before they would flush. Coming out while you were poised unsteadily on the icy, springy brush they made difficult shooting and killed two, missed five, and started back pleased to have found a covey close to the house and happy there were so many lefts to find on another day. At the house, they said the boy had refused to let anyone come into the room. ‘You can’t come in,’ he said. ‘You mustn’t get what I have.’ I went up to him and found him in exactly the position I had left him, white-faced, but with the tops of his cheeks flushed by the fever, staring still, as he had stared, at the foot of the bed. I took his temperature. ‘What is it?’

‘Something like a hundred,’ I said. It was one hundred and two and four tenths. ‘It was a hundred and two,’ he said. ‘Who said so?’ ‘The doctor.’ ‘Your temperature is all right,’ I said. It’s nothing to worry about.’ ‘I don’t worry,’ he said, ‘but I can’t keep from thinking.’ ‘Don’t think,’ I said. ‘Just take it easy.’ ‘I’m taking it easy,’ he said and looked straight ahead. He was evidently holding tight onto himself about something. ‘Take this with water.’ ‘Do you think it will do any good?’ ‘Of course, it will.’ I sat down and opened the Pirate book and commenced to read, but I could see he was not following, so I stopped.

‘About what time do you think I’m going to die?’ he asked. ‘What?’ ‘About how long will it be before I die?’ ‘You aren’t going to die. What’s the matter with you?’ Oh, yes, I am. I heard him say a hundred and two.’ ‘People don’t die with a fever of one hundred and two. That’s a silly way to talk.’ ‘I know they do.

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

At school in France, the boys told me you can't live with forty-four degrees. I've got a hundred and two.' He had been waiting to die all day, ever since nine o'clock in the morning. 'You poor Schatz,' I said. 'Poor old Schatz. It's like miles and kilometers. You aren't going to die. That's a different thermometer. On that thermometer thirty-seven is normal. On this kind it's ninety-eight.' 'Are you sure?'

'Absolutely,' I said. 'It's like miles and kilometers. You know, like how many kilometers we make when we do seventy in the car?' 'Oh,' he said. But his gaze at the foot of his bed relaxed slowly.

The holdover himself relaxed too, finally, and the next day it was very slack and he cried very easily at little things that were of no importance.

15.2.2 Summary – '*A Day's Wait*'

This short story, '*A Day's Wait*' first appeared in the volume, '*The Snows of Kilimanjaro*'. In this short story Hemingway delineates the tragic outcome of miscommunication which takes place between Schatz, a nine-year-old boy, and his father.

The story opens as the father finds that his son whose name is Schatz has a fever. The father calls a doctor and it is diagnosed that his son has contracted the flu and has a high fever. The doctor says that as long as the fever doesn't go above one hundred and four degrees, Schatz will be fine and he leaves three various types of medication. Out of the three medicines one was to bring down the fever, another a purgative, the third to overcome on acid condition.

Schatz is lying on bed and his father reads a book, '*Howard Pyle Book of Pirates*' but the boy is not paying attention and is staring fixedly at the foot of the bed. His father suggests Schatz to try to get some sleep, but he refuses to do so. He suggests his father that there is no need to stay in his room and his father replies that he will leave this room after giving him medication at 11:00 O' clock. The father provides Schatz his medication and a glass of water, but the boy still seems unusually concerned.

Once again his father starts reading but Shatz is not paying attention. So he stops. Suddenly boy asks, "About What time do you think I'm going to die." The father is stunned and explains him again and again that all will be okay but once again Schatz asks him, "When I will die?". At last, Schatz explains: "at school in France the boys told me you can't live with forty- four degrees. I've got a hundred and two".

The father quickly explains to his son regarding the distinction between Celsius and Fahrenheit thermometers, comparing them to miles and kilometers. Schatz slowly relaxes and by the next day, "he cried very easily at little things that were of no importance".

15.2.3 Theme – '*A Day's Wait*'

Silence and Miscommunication:

Schatz, a sick nine-year-old boy confuses between Celsius and Fahrenheit and imagines that his temperatures are momentarily high and thinks that he will die

very soon. This misunderstanding is left uncorrected for an entire day as the boy fearfully waits to die. Schatz father spends few hours to enjoy himself in the winter sunshine with the family dog, a gun and a covey of quail. Thus, it is a tragedy of miscommunication; the boy would not have endured so many hours of solitary fear. Had he spoken up to his father or had his father done more to inquire into his son’s state of mind.

In this way, Hemingway illustrates how the failure to communicate can result in a knowledge gap, to be filled with painful confusion and misunderstanding.

Of course, the misunderstanding lies at the heart of the story and it is the boy’s fault; both doctor and father fail to explain clearly and openly to the child. If Schatz’s father would have communicated the doctor’s message to the boy that nothing to worry about if the fever does not go above one hundred and four degrees, it would certainly alleviate the boy’s fear. Finally when Schatz asks his father a silly question that ‘when I am going to die?’ In response to this question, his father makes clarification and removes the misunderstanding lying in the mind of the child.

At last, he makes the misunderstanding clear by explaining the difference between Celsius and Fahrenheit. If they had been more willing to discuss both the illness and their feelings from the beginning, there never would have been such a needless misunderstanding.

Masculinity and Heroism:

The book that the father reads to his son in ‘*A Day’s Wait*’ is a notable book about pirates- men who embody toughness, bravery, and absolute autonomy; who chase after danger and meet death proudly and refuse to point out weakness till the last.

The boy of this story is following the example of famous male heroes when he forces himself to be so stoic in the face to supposed death. Boy’s behavior in the entire story reflects the fatalistic heroism.

Ironically, the boy’s father is a typically emotionally reserved male character. The father tells his son that he should go back to bed three times and suggesting that nothing is serious. Nevertheless, the father still exhibits several stereotypically masculine behaviors. He leaves his boy alone at home and he enjoys hunting quail. Once gain hunting is also a typically masculine pursuit.

Maturity and Innocence:

Throughout the story, the father ignores his son’s efforts to exhibit maturity and acts as if the boy is younger than he is, effectively denying that he is growing up. Schatz doesn’t want to be coddled, calming that he is ‘all right’ and does not need to go back to bed like his father to leave him.

Here, Schatz’s perhaps believes that maturity means to hide one’s weakness and to pretend to know everything. After getting the knowledge of medical truth – the difference between Celsius and Fahrenheit the next day Schatz becomes more childlike and he is crying.

15.2.4 Character Analysis of ‘A Day’s Wait’

Schatz:

In this short story, ‘A Day’s Wait’ Schatz is the central character. He is only nine-year old and very innocent child. In the entire story, he conveys the idea of youth and innocence. On the other hand, throughout the story he is in fearful thought of his untimely death as he has misunderstood between Celsius and Fahrenheit. In France, Schatz friends told him that “you cannot live with forty-four degrees” and here he linked the information and spent the full day in a panic.

At last, his father makes it clear and explains the difference between Celsius and Fahrenheit, he returns to his normal life and started crying, “very easily at little things that were of no importance”.

After reading the story one can say that the dynamics of a nine-year old boy’s character serve to support both his age and attributes which he narrates.

Father:

The story is narrated by the character of the father. In the beginning of the short story, the father is reading, ‘Howard Pyle’s Book of Pirates’ for Schatz. However, Schatz is not paying attention, as he is waiting for his untimely death. The father tries to ease Schatz’s mind by answering questions he may have, or by correcting the fault. He treats his son with love, affection and encourages him to rest and to allow his body to recover.

The father, truly loves Schatz and he is concerned about his son. Above all, the father and the doctor both fail to share the difference between temperatures in Celsius and Fahrenheit.

The father explains the difference between the two types of temperatures to Schatz. Thus, the father is evidently dedicated to his son.

Doctor:

The character of the doctor is static by nature and his personality doesn’t deviate the doctor diagnoses Schatz’s temperature at one hundred and two degrees and after examination he gives three different capsules as he has influenza, which is part of a mild epidemic of the flu.

After his medical check-up doctor confidently declares that the boy will be fine as long as his temperature stays below one hundred and four degrees. The doctor explains Schatz’s situation to his father but fails to explain the same to Schatz and that creates misunderstanding. In short, in this short story the doctor provides aid and assistance to Schatz.

15.3 LET US SUM UP

After close reading of this unit, you will

- Identify the theme of the short story.
- Learn to write character sketches of important characters.
- Learn to critically evaluate the short story
- Learn vocabulary

15.4 KEY WORDS

Word Meaning

‘A DAYS’ WAIT’ BY
HEMINGWAY

Detached	Separate, Disconnected
Epidemic	a widespread occurrence of infectious disease in a community at a particular time
Slack	Loose
Miserable	Unhappy
Flushed	Result of illness
Capsule	A small container with medicine
Commenced	Begin or start
Sleet	Rain containing some ice
Quail	A small, brown bird that is shot for food
Poised	Having a graceful
Bank	Sloping down to river or lake
Prescribed	Advise and authorize the use of medicine or treatment
Varnished	Disguise
Shivering	Frightened
Purgative	Strongly laxative in effect
Influenza	A highly contagious viral infection
Pneumonia	Lung inflammation caused by bacterial viral
Bushes	A plant with many small branches
Brush	An object with short pieces of stiff hair
Thermometer	An instrument for measuring and indicating temperature
Gaze	A steady intent look
Staring	Look fixedly at someone or something
Bother	Take the trouble to do something
Began	Part of begin
Got a headache	Had pain in one’s head
Took the boy’s temperature	Used a thermometer to measure fever
Mad a note	Wrote something down
Take it easy	Relax
We make	We create

15.5 REFERENCES

“A Day’s Wait Summary.” Enotes.com, Enotes.com, www.enotes.com/topics/a-days-wait.

“A Day’s Wait.” *Studienett.no: Målrettet Hjelp Til VGS*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

July 2019.

“A Day’s Wait.” *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 08 Apr. 2019. Web. 15 July 2019.

“Character Analysis.” *A Day’s Wait*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 July 2019.

Hemingway, Ernest, and Anderson. “Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway ‘A Day’s Wait’ Summary and Analysis.” GradeSaver, www.gradesaver.com/complete-short-stories-of-ernest-hemingway/study-guide/summary-a-days-wait.

LitCharts. “A Day’s Wait Study Guide.” LitCharts, www.litcharts.com/lit/a-days-wait

Tamer, Farah. “A Day’s Wait.” *Prezi.com*. N.p., 25 Dec. 2013. Web. 15 July 2019.

The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway - “A Day’s Wait” Summary & Analysis.” BookRags. BookRags. 15 July 2019 <<http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-ernest-hemingway/chapanal044.html>>

CHECK YOURSELF PROGRESS: 1

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN DETAIL.

1. What is the internal conflict in ‘A Day’s wait’?
2. Prepare a detailed note on literary elements present in ‘A Day’s wait’.
3. Draw a character sketch of Schatz.
4. Discuss the title of the short story ‘A Day’s Wait’.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 2

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

1. Why doesn’t Schatz pay attention while father reads to him?
2. Schatz refuses to go to sleep. What does his struggle to stay awake show?
3. What caused Schatz’s fear that his fever would kill him?
4. What were three ways Schatz showed his concern for his family?
5. What is the father’s action at the end and write about his character?
6. What evidence in the story shows that Schatz imagines his illness can hurt his family?
7. How does Schatz imagine that his father is hiding the truth from him?
8. What might Schatz imagine it means who his father leaves?
9. Why might Schatz imagine there is nothing he can do to change his illness?
10. What is the boy waiting for?
11. Why does the boy cry easily the next day?
12. Who are the characters in ‘A Day’s wait’?

13. In what season does the story take place?

‘A DAYS’ WAIT’ BY
HEMINGWAY

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 3

FILL IN THE BLANKS IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES WITH AN APPROPRIATE WORD FROM THOSE GIVEN IN THE FOLLOWING BRACKETS:

(Covey, detached, pirates, epidemic, prescribed, capsule)

1. The little boy was too worried about his temperature to listen to stories of and hidden treasure.
2. Schatz’s doctor the medicine in
3. Schatz lay still in the bed and seemed very from what was going on.
4. The light was of flu and there was no danger if you avoided pneumonia.
5. We flushed a of quail under a high clay bank with an overhanging brush.

Check Your Progress: 4

CHOOSE APPROPRIATE OPTION FROM GIVEN BELOW.

1. The author of the “Book of Pirates” is
 - a. Howard Pyle
 - b. Schatz
 - c. Father
 - d. Ernest Hemingway
2. In the beginning of the story, Schatz complained of
 - a. Headache
 - b. Toothache
 - c. Backache
 - d. Fever
3. How old is Schatz?
 - a. 7
 - b. 8
 - c. 9
 - d. 6
4. The doctor prescribed three different medicines for purpose.
 - a. To bring down a fever
 - b. As a purgative
 - c. To overcome acidity
 - d. All of the above
5. Why did Schatz’s father go out of his house with the Irish setter?
 - a. To go for a stroll on a frozen creek
 - b. To shoot birds
 - c. To breathe fresh air
 - d. To hide his feelings from his son
6. How much did Schatz’s temperature really measure?
 - a. 102
 - b. 103
 - c. 112
 - d. 212

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

7. Schatz has misunderstanding regarding.....
 - a. Two thermometer
 - b. Book of pirates
 - c. Miles and kilometers
 - d. Two pirates
8. Schatz's father removes his misunderstanding by showing the difference between
 - a. Two thermometers
 - b. Book of pirates
 - c. Miles and kilometers
 - d. Two pirates
9. What kind of person is Schatz's father?
 - a. Happy go lucky
 - b. Detached
 - c. Concerned
 - d. Cold
10. In the story, "A Day's Wait", Schatz wait for.....
 - a. Death
 - b. Reading "Book of Pirates"
 - c. Going to France to study
 - d. None of the above
11. Who narrates the story, "A Day's Wait"?
 - a. Schatz
 - b. Schatz's Father
 - c. Schatz's Mother
 - d. Ernest Hemingway
12. How does the boy spend his day of illness?
 - a. On the sofa, reading his favorite book
 - b. Sits beside fire
 - c. Cries and weeps
 - d. In bed, anticipating his death
13. Schatz is a boy.
 - a. coward
 - b. brave
 - c. naughty
 - d. loner
14. What important events make up the action of the story?
 - a. Father calling the doctor
 - b. Schatz asking about his temperature
 - c. Schatz asking the questions about the time of his death
 - d. All of the above

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress- 2

Ans.1 Schatz doesn't pay attention while papa reads to him because he is distracted by the thought that he is dying.

Ans.2 Schatz refuses to go to sleep as he wants to get better and doesn't want to die.

Ans.3 Due to lack of understanding of all the facts related to thermometers, Schatz feared that his fever would kill him.

Ans.4 Following were three ways showed Schatz concern for his family.

- He closed the window in his parent’s room.
- He doesn’t want to ‘bother’ papa by making him stay
- He wants to let other people come into his room.

Ans.5 Schatz’s papa wants to give comfort when he realizes his son’s fear.

Ans.6 Schatz closes the window; he makes them stay out of his room; he doesn’t want papa to have to see him die are the evidence in the story that shows that Schatz imagines his illness can hurt his family.

Ans.7 After checking Schatz’s father and the doctor talk to each other but not him; even his father won’t tell him exactly what his temperature is. Additionally, the father leaves the room and look like as he doesn’t want to stay and watch.

Ans.8 Schatz imagines that his father can’t bear to stay and watch his son die, or his father doesn’t care.

Ans.9 Schatz might imagine there is nothing he can do change his illness because the fever is proof that he is sick; he asks his father if the medicine will do any good; he knows people can’t survive with forty-four degrees fever.

Ans.10 The boy is waiting for his death.

Ans.11 The boy cried very easily on the next day because he feels very relaxed and realizes that at little things that were of no importance.

Ans.12 The main character of the story is Schatz, a nine- year old boy. Apart from this, father, doctor, schoolboys from France are the subsidiary characters of A Day’s wait’.

Ans.13 The story set in fall or early winter as it was stated clearly in the story “ice on ground”.

Check Your Progress- 3

The following vocabulary words appear in Hemingway’s story. Write the appropriate words in each sentence.

1. The little boy was too worried about his temperature to listen to stories of and hidden treasure. (**Pirates**)
2. Schatz’s doctor the medicine in (**prescribed, capsule**)
3. Schatz lay still in the bed and seemed very (**detached**) from what was going on.
4. The light was (**epidemic**) of flu and there was no danger if you avoided pneumonia.
5. We flushed a (**covey**) of quail under a high clay bank with an overhanging brush.

Check Your Progress- 4

1. Howard Pyle
2. Headache
3. 9

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

4. All of the above
5. To shoot birds
6. 102
7. Two thermometers
8. Miles and kilometers
9. Concerned
10. Death
11. Schatz's Father
12. In bed, anticipating his death
13. brave
14. All of the above



'THE MAGIC SHOP BY H. G. WELLS

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

16.0 Objectives

16.1 Introduction

16.2 H.G.Wells: Life and works

16.3 Text of the story

16.4 Summary of the story

16.5 Plot of the story

16.6 Theme of the story

16.7 Key Words

16.8 Let Us Sum Up

16.9 Books suggested

Answers

16.0 OBJECTIVES

In this story, you shall,

- Know about the story and its different literary aspects
- Learn the story *The Magic Shop* by H.G.Wells
- Summary, plot and theme of the story

On completing the unit, you should be able to

- Know the short story and its writer
- Analyze the short story, plot and characterization

16.1 INTRODUCTION

'*The Magic Shop*' is the story of a boy named Gip and his mystical experience in a certain magic shop. It is one of the charming tales of H .G. Wells. *The Magic Shop* is not just a Magic Shop- the shopkeeper insists that this is genuine magic shop. The story is an entreating adventure as Gip, like any young boy of his age, experiences the pure enjoyment of true magic, while skeptical father grapples with having to draw the line between slight of hand and genuine magic.

16.2 H.G.WELLS LIFE AND WORKS

Herbert George Wells, (born September 21, 1866, Bromley, Kent, England died August 13, 1946, London,) was an English novelist, journalist, sociologist, and historian and best known for such science fiction novels as *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds* and such comic novels as *Tono-Bungay* and *The History of Mr. Polly*.

He was debatably one of the most prolific writers in the history of literature, and wrote works in nearly every genre, including short stories and nonfiction. He was

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

an outspoken socialist, and most of his works contain some notable political or social commentary.

Wells is one of those writers who can really exercise a language in his writing. He uses his vocabulary as a palette with which he paints a scene. Sometimes he describes things in a literal detail and other times he hints at details in the descriptions, letting your mind fill in the rest.

His first published book was a Textbook of Biology (1893). With his first novel, *The Time Machine* (1895), which was immediately successful, he began a series of science fiction novels that revealed him as a writer of marked originality and an immense prolificacy of ideas: *The Wonderful Visit* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The War of the Worlds* (1898), *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), and *The Food of the Gods* (1904). He also wrote many short stories, which were collected in *The Stolen Bacillus* (1895), *The Plattner Story* (1897), and *Tales of Space and Time* (1899). For a time he acquired a reputation as a prophet of the future, and indeed, in *The War in the Air* (1908), he predicted certain developments in the military use of aircraft. But his imagination flourished at its best not in the manner of the comparatively mechanical anticipations of Jules Verne but in the astronomical fantasies of *The First Men in the Moon* and *The War of the Worlds*, from the latter of which the image of the Martian has passed into popular mythology.

During his lifetime, however, he was most prominent as a forward-looking, even prophetic social critic who devoted his literary talents to the development of a progressive vision on a global scale. A futurist, he wrote a number of utopian works and foresaw the advent of aircraft, tanks, space travel, nuclear weapons, satellite television and something resembling the World Wide Web. His science fiction imagined time travel, alien invasion, invisibility, and biological engineering.

Brian Aldiss referred to Wells as the “Shakespeare of science fiction”. Wells rendered his works convincing by instilling commonplace detail alongside a single extraordinary assumption – dubbed “Wells’s law” – leading Joseph Conrad to hail him in 1898 as “O Realist of the Fantastic!”. His most notable science fiction works include *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The War of the Worlds* (1898) and the military science fiction *The War in the Air* (1907). He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature four times.

16.3 TEXT OF THE STORY

I had seen the Magic Shop from afar several times; I had passed it once or twice, a shop window of alluring little objects, magic balls, magic hens, wonderful cones, ventriloquist dolls, the material of the basket trick, packs of cards that LOOKED all right, and all that sort of thing, but never had I thought of going in until one day, almost without warning, Gip hauled me by my finger right up to the window, and so conducted himself that there was nothing for it but to take him in. I had not thought the place was there, to tell the truth—a modest-sized frontage in Regent Street, between the picture shop and the place where the chicks run about just out of patent incubators, but there it was sure enough. I had fancied it was down

nearer the Circus, or round the corner in Oxford Street, or even in Holborn; always over the way and a little inaccessible it had been, with something of the mirage in its position; but here it was now quite indisputably, and the fat end of Gip’s pointing finger made a noise upon the glass.

“If I was rich,” said Gip, dabbing a finger at the Disappearing Egg, “I’d buy myself that. And that”—which was The Crying Baby, Very Human—“and that,” which was a mystery, and called, so a neat card asserted, “Buy One and Astonish Your Friends.”

“Anything,” said Gip, “will disappear under one of those cones. I have read about it in a book.

“And there, daddy, is the Vanishing Halfpenny—, only they’ve put it this way up so’s we can’t see how it’s done.”

Gip, dear boy, inherits his mother’s breeding, and he did not propose to enter the shop or worry in any way; only, you know, quite unconsciously, he lugged my finger doorward, and he made his interest clear.

“That,” he said, and pointed to the Magic Bottle.

“If you had that?” I said; at which promising inquiry he looked up with a sudden radiance.

“I could show it to Jessie,” he said, thoughtful as ever of others.

“It’s less than a hundred days to your birthday, Gibbles,” I said, and laid my hand on the door-handle.

Gip made no answer, but his grip tightened on my finger, and so we came into the shop.

It was no common shop this; it was a magic shop, and all the prancing precedence Gip would have taken in the matter of mere toys was wanting. He left the burthen of the conversation to me.

It was a little; narrow shop, not very well lit, and the doorbell pinged again with a plaintive note as we closed it behind us. For a moment or so we were alone and could glance about us. There was a tiger in papier-mache on the glass case that covered the low counter—a grave, kind-eyed tiger that waggled his head in a methodical manner; there were several crystal spheres, a china hand holding magic cards, a stock of magic fish-bowls in various sizes, and an immodest magic hat that shamelessly displayed its springs. On the floor were magic mirrors; one to draw you out long and thin, one to swell your head and vanish your legs, and one to make you short and fat like a draught; and while we were laughing at these the shopman, as I suppose, came in.

At any rate, there he was behind the counter—a curious, sallow, dark man, with one ear larger than the other was and a chin like the toe-cap of a boot.

“What can we have the pleasure?” he said, spreading his long, magic fingers on the glass case; and so with a start we were aware of him.

“I want,” I said, “to buy my little boy a few simple tricks.”

“Legerdemain?” he asked. “Mechanical? Domestic?”

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

“Anything amusing?” said I.

“Um!” said the shopman, and scratched his head for a moment as if thinking. Then, quite distinctly, he drew from his head a glass ball. “Something in this way?” he said, and held it out.

The action was unexpected. I had seen the trick done at entertainments endless times before—it’s part of the common stock of conjurers—but I had not expected it here.

“That’s good,” I said, with a laugh.

“Isn’t it?” said the shopman.

Gip stretched out his disengaged hand to take this object and found merely a blank palm.

“It’s in your pocket,” said the shopman, and there it was!

“How much will that be?” I asked.

“We make no charge for glass balls,” said the shopman politely. “We get them,”—he picked one out of his elbow as he spoke—“free.” He produced another from the back of his neck, and laid it beside its predecessor on the counter. Gip regarded his glass ball sagely, then directed a look of inquiry at the two on the counter, and finally brought his round-eyed scrutiny to the shopman, who smiled.

“You may have those too,” said the shopman, “and, if you DON’T mind, one from my mouth. SO!”

Gip counselled me mutely for a moment, and then in a profound silence put away the four balls, resumed my reassuring finger, and nerved himself for the next event.

“We get all our smaller tricks in that way,” the shopman remarked.

I laughed in the manner of one who subscribes to a jest. “Instead of going to the wholesale shop,” I said. “Of course, it’s cheaper.”

“In a way,” the shopman said. “Though we pay in the end. But not so heavily—as people suppose... Our larger tricks, and our daily provisions and all the other things we want, we get out of that hat... And you know, sir, if you’ll excuse my saying it, there ISN’T a wholesale shop, not for Genuine Magic goods, sir. I don’t know if you noticed our inscription—the Genuine Magic shop.” He drew a business-card from his cheek and handed it to me. “Genuine,” he said, with his finger on the word, and added, “There is absolutely no deception, sir.”

He seemed to be carrying out the joke pretty thoroughly, I thought.

He turned to Gip with a smile of remarkable affability. “You, you know, are the Right Sort of Boy.”

I was surprised at his knowing that, because, in the interests of discipline, we keep it rather a secret even at home; but Gip received it in unflinching silence, keeping a steadfast eye on him.

“It’s only the Right Sort of Boy gets through that doorway.”

And, as if by way of illustration, there came a rattling at the door, and a squeaking little voice could be faintly heard. “Nyar! I WARN ‘a go in there, dadda, I WARN ‘a go in there. Ny-a-a-ah!” and then the accents of a down-trodden parent, urging consolations and propitiations. “It’s locked, Edward,” he said.

“But it isn’t,” said I.

“It is, sir,” said the shopman, “always—for that sort of child,” and as he spoke we had a glimpse of the other youngster, a little, white face, pallid from sweet-eating and over-sapid food, and distorted by evil passions, a ruthless little egotist, pawing at the enchanted pane. “It’s no good, sir,” said the shopman, as I moved, with my natural helpfulness, doorward, and presently the spoilt child was carried off howling.

“How do you manage that?” I said, breathing a little more freely.

“Magic!” said the shopman, with a careless wave of the hand, and behold! sparks of coloured fire flew out of his fingers and vanished into the shadows of the shop.

“You were saying,” he said, addressing himself to Gip, “before you came in, that you would like one of our ‘Buy One and Astonish your Friends’ boxes?”

Gip, after a gallant effort, said “Yes.”

“It’s in your pocket.”

And leaning over the counter—he really had an extraordinarily long body—this amazing person produced the article in the customary conjurer’s manner. “Paper,” he said, and took a sheet out of the empty hat with the springs; “string,” and behold his mouth was a string-box, from which he drew an unending thread, which when he had tied his parcel he bit off—and, it seemed to me, swallowed the ball of string. And then he lit a candle at the nose of one of the ventriloquist’s dummies, stuck one of his fingers (which had become sealing-wax red) into the flame, and so sealed the parcel. “Then there was the Disappearing Egg,” he remarked, and produced one from within my coat-breast and packed it, and also The Crying Baby, Very Human. I handed each parcel to Gip as it was ready, and he clasped them to his chest.

He said very little, but his eyes were eloquent; the clutch of his arms was eloquent. He was the playground of unspeakable emotions. These, you know, were REAL Magics. Then, with a start, I discovered something moving about in my hat—something soft and jumpy. I whipped it off, and a ruffled pigeon—no doubt a confederate—dropped out and ran on the counter, and went, I fancy, into a cardboard box behind the papier-mache tiger.

“Tut, tut!” said the shopman, dexterously relieving me of my headdress; “careless bird, and—as I live—nesting!”

He shook my hat, and shook out into his extended hand two or three eggs, a large marble, a watch, about half-a-dozen of the inevitable glass balls, and then crumpled, crinkled paper, more and more and more, talking all the time of the way in which people neglect to brush their hats INSIDE as well as out, politely, of course, but with a certain personal application. “All sorts of things accumulate, sir... Not YOU, of course, in particular... Nearly every customer... Astonishing what they

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

carry about with them. . . .” The crumpled paper rose and billowed on the counter more and more and more, until he was nearly hidden from us, until he was altogether hidden, and still his voice went on and on. “We none of us know what the fair semblance of a human being may conceal, sir. Are we all then no better than brushed exteriors, whited sepulchres—”

His voice stopped—exactly like when you hit a neighbour’s gramophone with a well-aimed brick, the same instant silence, and the rustle of the paper stopped, and everything was still. . . .

“Have you done with my hat?” I said, after an interval.

There was no answer.

I stared at Gip, and Gip stared at me, and there were our distortions in the magic mirrors, looking very rum, and grave, and quiet. . . .

“I think we’ll go now,” I said. “Will you tell me how much all this comes to?

“I say,” I said, on a rather louder note, “I want the bill; and my hat, please.”

It might have been a sniff from behind the paper pile. . . .

“Let’s look behind the counter, Gip,” I said. “He’s making fun of us.”

I led Gip round the head-wagging tiger, and what do you think there was behind the counter? No one at all! Only my hat on the floor, and a common conjurer’s lop-eared white rabbit lost in meditation, and looking as stupid and crumpled as only a conjurer’s rabbit can do. I resumed my hat, and the rabbit lolloped a lollop or so out of my way.

“Dadda!” said Gip, in a guilty whisper.

“What is it, Gip?” said I.

“I DO like this shop, dadda.”

“So should I,” I said to myself, “if the counter wouldn’t suddenly extend itself to shut one off from the door.” But I didn’t call Gip’s attention to that. “Pussy!” he said, with a hand out to the rabbit as it came lolloping past us; “Pussy, do Gip a magic!” and his eyes followed it as it squeezed through a door I had certainly not remarked a moment before. Then this door opened wider, and the man with one ear larger than the other appeared again. He was smiling still, but his eye met mine with something between amusement and defiance. “You’d like to see our show-room, sir,” he said, with an innocent suavity. Gip tugged my finger forward. I glanced at the counter and met the shopman’s eye again. I was beginning to think the magic just a little too genuine. “We haven’t VERY much time,” I said. But somehow we were inside the show-room before I could finish that.

“All goods of the same quality,” said the shopman, rubbing his flexible hands together, “and that is the Best. Nothing in the place that isn’t genuine Magic, and warranted thoroughly rum. Excuse me, sir!”

I felt him pull at something that clung to my coat-sleeve, and then I saw he held a little, wriggling red demon by the tail—the little creature bit and fought and tried to get at his hand—and in a moment he tossed it carelessly behind a counter. No doubt the thing was only an image of twisted indiarubber, but for the moment—! And his gesture was exactly that of a man who handles some petty biting bit of

vermin. I glanced at Gip, but Gip was looking at a magic rocking-horse. I was glad he hadn't seen the thing. "I say," I said, in an undertone, and indicating Gip and the red demon with my eyes, "you haven't many things like THAT about, have you?"

"None of ours! Probably brought it with you," said the shopman—also in an undertone, and with a more dazzling smile than ever. "Astonishing what people WILL carry about with them unawares!" And then to Gip, "Do you see anything you fancy here?"

There were many things that Gip fancied there.

He turned to this astonishing tradesman with mingled confidence and respect. "Is that a Magic Sword?" he said.

"A Magic Toy Sword. It neither bends, breaks, nor cuts the fingers. It renders the bearer invincible in battle against anyone under eighteen. Half-a-crown to seven and sixpence, according to size. These panoplies on cards are for juvenile knights-errant and very useful—shield of safety, sandals of swift-ness, helmet of invisibility."

"Oh, daddy!" gasped Gip.

I tried to find out what they cost, but the shopman did not heed me. He had got Gip now; he had got him away from my finger; he had embarked upon the exposition of all his confounded stock, and nothing was going to stop him. Presently I saw with a qualm of distrust and something very like jealousy that Gip had hold of this person's finger as usually he has hold of mine. No doubt the fellow was interesting, I thought, and had an interestingly faked a lot of stuff, really GOOD faked stuff, still—

I wandered after them, saying very little, but keeping an eye on this prestidigital fellow. After all, Gip was enjoying it. And no doubt when the time came to go we should be able to go quite easily.

It was a long, rambling place, that show-room, a gallery broken up by stands and stalls and pillars, with archways leading off to other departments, in which the queerest-looking assistants loafed and stared at one, and with perplexing mirrors and curtains. So perplexing, indeed, were these that I was presently unable to make out the door by which we had come.

The shopman showed Gip magic trains that ran without steam or clockwork, just as you set the signals, and then some very, very valuable boxes of soldiers that all came alive directly you took off the lid and said—. I myself haven't a very quick ear and it was a tongue-twisting sound, but Gip—he has his mother's ear—got it in no time. "Bravo!" said the shopman, putting the men back into the box unceremoniously and handing it to Gip. "Now," said the shopman, and in a moment Gip had made them all alive again.

"You'll take that box?" asked the shopman.

"We'll take that box," said I, "unless you charge its full value. In which case it would need a Trust Magnate—"

"Dear heart! NO!" and the shopman swept the little men back again, shut the

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

lid, waved the box in the air, and there it was, in brown paper, tied up and—
WITH GIP'S FULL NAME AND ADDRESS ON THE PAPER!

The shopman laughed at my amazement.

"This is the genuine magic," he said. "The real thing."

"It's a little too genuine for my taste," I said again.

After that he fell to showing Gip tricks, odd tricks, and still odder the way they were done. He explained them, he turned them inside out, and there was the dear little chap nodding his busy bit of a head in the sagest manner.

I did not attend as well as I might. "Hey, presto!" said the Magic Shopman, and then would come the clear, small "Hey, presto!" of the boy. But I was distracted by other things. It was being borne in upon me just how tremendously rum this place was; it was, so to speak, inundated by a sense of rumness. There was something a little rum about the fixtures even, about the ceiling, about the floor, about the casually distributed chairs. I had a queer feeling that whenever I wasn't looking at them straight they went askew, and moved about, and played a noiseless puss-in-the-corner behind my back. And the cornice had a serpentine design with masks—masks altogether too expressive for proper plaster.

Then abruptly my attention was caught by one of the odd-looking assistants. He was some way off and evidently unaware of my presence—I saw a sort of three-quarter length of him over a pile of toys and through an arch—and, you know, he was leaning against a pillar in an idle sort of way doing the most horrid things with his features! The particular horrid thing he did was with his nose. He did it just as though he was idle and wanted to amuse himself. First of all it was a short, blobby nose, and then suddenly he shot it out like a telescope, and then out it flew and became thinner and thinner until it was like a long, red, flexible whip. Like a thing in a nightmare it was! He flourished it about and flung it forth as a fly-fisher flings his line.

My instant thought was that Gip mustn't see him. I turned about, and there was Gip quite preoccupied with the shopman, and thinking no evil. They were whispering together and looking at me. Gip was standing on a little stool, and the shopman was holding a sort of big drum in his hand.

"Hide and seek, dadda!" cried Gip. "You're He!"

And before I could do anything to prevent it, the shopman had clapped the big drum over him. I saw what was up directly. "Take that off," I cried, "this instant! You'll frighten the boy. Take it off!"

The shopman with the unequal ears did so without a word, and held the big cylinder towards me to show its emptiness. And the little stool was vacant! In that instant my boy had utterly disappeared?...

You know, perhaps, that sinister something that comes like a hand out of the unseen and grips your heart about. You know it takes your common self away and leaves you tense and deliberate, neither slow nor hasty, neither angry nor afraid. So it was with me.

I came up to this grinning shopman and kicked his stool aside.

“Stop this folly!” I said. “Where is my boy?”

“You see,” he said, still displaying the drum’s interior, “there is no deception—”

I put out my hand to grip him, and he eluded me by a dexterous movement. I snatched again, and he turned from me and pushed open a door to escape. “Stop!” I said, and he laughed, receding. I leapt after him—into utter darkness.

THUD!

“Lor’ bless my ‘eart! I didn’t see you coming, sir!”

I was in Regent Street, and I had collided with a decent-looking working man; and a yard away, perhaps, and looking a little perplexed with himself, was Gip. There was some sort of apology, and then Gip had turned and come to me with a bright little smile, as though for a moment he had missed me.

And he was carrying four parcels in his arm!

He secured immediate possession of my finger.

For the second I was rather at a loss. I stared round to see the door of the magic shop, and, behold, it was not there! There was no door, no shop, nothing, only the common pilaster between the shop where they sell pictures and the window with the chicks!...

I did the only thing possible in that mental tumult; I walked straight to the kerbstone and held up my umbrella for a cab.

“‘Ansoms,” said Gip, in a note of culminating exultation.

I helped him in, recalled my address with an effort, and got in also. Something unusual proclaimed itself in my tail-coat pocket, and I felt and discovered a glass ball. With a petulant expression I flung it into the street.

Gip said nothing.

For a space neither of us spoke.

“Dada!” said Gip, at last, “that WAS a proper shop!”

I came round with that to the problem of just how the whole thing had seemed to him. He looked completely undamaged—so far, good; he was neither scared nor unhinged, he was simply tremendously satisfied with the afternoon’s entertainment, and there in his arms were the four parcels.

Confound it! what could be in them?

“Um!” I said. “Little boys can’t go to shops like that every day.”

He received this with his usual stoicism, and for a moment I was sorry I was his father and not his mother, and so couldn’t suddenly there, corampublico, in our hansom, kiss him. After all, I thought, the thing wasn’t so very bad.

But it was only when we opened the parcels that I really began to be reassured. Three of them contained boxes of soldiers, quite ordinary lead soldiers, but of so good a quality as to make Gip altogether forget that originally these parcels had been Magic Tricks of the only genuine sort, and the fourth contained a kitten, a little living white kitten, in excellent health and appetite and temper.

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

I saw this unpacking with a sort of provisional relief. I hung about in the nursery for quite an unconscionable time....

That happened six months ago. And now I am beginning to believe it is all right. The kitten had only the magic natural to all kittens, and the soldiers seem as steady a company as any colonel could desire. And Gip—?

The intelligent parent will understand that I have to go cautiously with Gip.

But I went so far as this one day. I said, "How would you like your soldiers to come alive, Gip, and march about by themselves?"

"Mine do," said Gip. "I just have to say a word I know before I open the lid."

"Then they march about alone?"

"Oh, QUITE, dada. I shouldn't like them if they didn't do that."

I displayed no unbecoming surprise, and since then I have taken occasion to drop in upon him once or twice, unannounced, when the soldiers were about, but so far I have never discovered them performing in anything like a magical manner.

It's so difficult to tell.

There's also a question of finance. I have an incurable habit of paying bills. I have been up and down Regent Street several times, looking for that shop. I am inclined to think, indeed, that in that matter honour is satisfied, and that, since Gip's name and address are known to them, I may very well leave it to these people, whoever they may be, to send in their bill in their own time.

16.4 SUMMARY OF THE STORY

'The Magic Shop' is the story of a boy named Gip and his mystical experience in a certain magic shop, as told by his father. This magic shop in the story seems to be a little different than all the others and the little boy seems to be a little different than all the others as well in the story.

The story starts with the demand of a little boy who got fascinated by seeing magic shop and grabbed his father in the shop to buy something. The father also gets surprised by seeing the shop, as he is not aware about the shop in the area. They both enter in the shop. The little boy is so excited by watching all the magical items and instruments. Suddenly, from behind the counter, appears a strange looking man, a man with one ear bigger than the other and a weird looking boot. The father-son duo was astonished on seeing the shopkeeper, who then went on to show Gip a lot of magic tricks. The shopkeeper made a comment that Gip was the right sort of person to enter the shop, at the exact same moment when another young boy outside the door wanted to enter, but the door was locked.

They saw a lot of beautiful craft-works like the magic balls, the magic hens, a papier-mache tiger, and so on in the shop. Gip was delighted upon being in the magic shop and explained his father how he had read all about the Magic Cone which made anything under it disappear.

The shop owner of the story is also bit different with one ear larger than the

other, entertains the boy and the father with magic tricks, pulling baubles out of thin air. The shopkeeper reminds the father, constantly, that this is not just any ordinary magic shop, this is “The Genuine Magic Shop”, making sure to emphasize the “Genuine” in the title. The shop keeper entertain little boy with many magic tricks in the shop.

‘THE MAGIC SHOP’ BY
H. G. WELLS

The magic tricks and illusions increase complexity until the father is no longer comfortable with what he is seeing, given the shopkeeper’s frequent reminders, but the boy is engrossed with excitement.

The shopkeeper and Gip complemented each other and enjoyed each other’s company. Gip stood up in a stool and the shopkeeper was beside him, with a big drum in his hand. Gip screamed to his father, ‘Hide and seek, dadda!’ and the shopkeeper put a drum over Gip’s head. The father was furious at his and ordered the shopkeeper to remove the drum at once. When the shopkeeper removed the drum, Gip was missing. He was nowhere to be seen in the shop.

The father had enough and tried to grip the shopkeeper with his hand, but he escaped. Chasing him led the father into a place of utter darkness.

Suddenly, the father found himself bump into a decent-looking man, and with him, was young Gip with four parcels in his arm. The shopkeeper also gifted Gip with a lot of items, including numerous toy soldiers in a box, which had Gip’s full name and address written upon it. The father was puzzled upon this. The father was astonished and looked around, but then, there was NO magic shop anywhere to be found.

16.5 PLOT OF THE STORY

This is a charming tale from H.G. Wells about a young boy named Gip who visits a magic shop for his birthday with his father. But this is not just any magic shop – the shopkeeper insists that this is a genuine magic shop. The story is an entertaining adventure as Gip, like any young boy of his age, experiences the pure enjoyment of true magic while his skeptical father grapples with having to draw the line between sleight of hand and genuine magic.

The story is narrated by an unnamed man who states that he “had seen the Magic Shop from afar several times” but had never gone in until his son Gip pulled him toward it and they had to enter. Its location was never clear: “nearer the Circus, or round the corner in Oxford Street, or even in Holburn.” The boy, Gip, is well-behaved, having inherited “his mother’s breeding, and he did not propose to enter the shop or worry in any way.” Enter it they do, however, and they meet the shopman, “a curious, sallow, dark man, with one ear larger than the other” and with “long, magic fingers.” The establishment is called the “Genuine Magic Shop” and the shopman remarks that Gip is the “Right Sort of Boy,” in contrast to another, badly-behaved boy to whom the shop’s door is locked.

The very presence of the story “The Magic Shop” by Herbert George Wells draws the attention of the reader to the fabulous magic shop, which has all

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

paraphernalia of a genuine magic shop. Minor miracles of wish-fulfillment are worked for the customers of real 'magic shop'. The children are really attracted to this shop. Gip is readily fascinated by this shop and through his innocent gestures shows his insistence on going into that shop. His birthday is near so he wants to buy a birthday gift from this shop.

There was a tiger in papier-mache on the glass case that covered the low counter—a grave, kind-eyed tiger that waggled his head in a methodical manner; there were several crystal spheres, a China hand holding magic cards, a stock of magic fish-bowls in various sizes, and an immodest magic hat that shamelessly displayed its springs.

When they enter into a shop they see quite fascinating stuff there. They also meet the weird shop man who in a quite strange way enters into the scene. His exit from the scene is no less mysterious. This Chatterbox keeps them engaged and makes them realize the importance of his 'genuine magic shop'

The two characters have two different standpoints about the shop. The little child Gip has no doubts about the genuineness of the shop and he is awed by the magical atmosphere and is enjoying being part of the scene. "Dada!" said Gip, at last, "that WAS a proper shop!". Though the father, in the end, gets scared and wants to come out of the shop as soon as possible the boy felt no such desire. The boy enjoyed all the fun there. He liked crystal balls and the rabbit trick. He also liked the beautiful showroom with all its colorful and fascinating stuff.

The story is very British in tone (distortions in magic mirrors are described as "looking very rum"). Young Gip is entranced and his father is amused by the tricks done by the shopman, who eventually takes the place of the father as Gip begins to hold his finger the way he had previously held his father's. In essence, "The Magic Shop" is a story of the seduction of a child by a dark force that slowly pulls him away from the safe haven of his father. The father begins to notice the "rumness" of the shop and thinks of its contents that he has "a queer feeling that whenever I wasn't looking at them straight they went askew." Gip disappears, leading his father to leap after the shopman and suddenly find himself in Regent Street, having collided with another pedestrian. Gip is at his side and carries four parcels under his arm, but the magic shop is nowhere to be seen. Gip opens his parcels and finds a living white kitten.

Six months later, the father "is beginning to believe it is all right." He asks Gip about the toy soldiers he got from the magic shop and is surprised to hear Gip say that they come alive and "March about by themselves" with but a word from Gip. The father tries to witness this for himself but never succeeds; he tries to find the magic shop to pay for the items but can never find it. He concludes that "these people, whoever they may be, will send in their bill in their own time.

The Magic Shop is a subtle tale that leaves the reader wondering if it is about real magic or if it is an allegory about a child's first steps toward independence, steps that may feel frightening and strange. The story may be read online here.

16.6 THEME OF THE STORY

Illusion and magic are the two central themes of the story. In the story, the lines

between the two are blurred until the end. The best thing about story is the delicate shift from delightful illusion to evil magic. One minute it's all illusionist tricks, balls popping up from unlikely places and toys that move of their own accord. Then slowly, the illusions shift to violent, supernatural malevolence. The child sees magic and wonderment, while the father sees dark things by thinking 'Is this place good or bad? Is the shopkeeper good or bad?'

'THE MAGIC SHOP' BY
H. G. WELLS

Character:

Father: He is the narrator of the story and father of Gip. He is kind as he fulfills the wish of his kid to buy magical instruments. He also insists for bill whenever he purchases anything from the market. He takes care of Gip, and when Gip disappeared from the shop, he become tensed and scared.

Gip: A little boy in the story who likes magic tricks and gets fascinated with it whenever he sees anything related to magic.

Shopkeeper: The shopkeeper is the owner of the magic shop. He constantly insists that his shop is not routine magic shop or wholesale magic shop but it is a "Genuine" magic shop. He has one big ear and long nose and looks weird with it. He entertains Gip with his magic tricks and also gifted him magic balls.

16.7 Key Words

Astonish : greatly surprised or impressed; amazed.

Lugged : carry or drag a heavy or bulky object with great effort.

Radiance : light or heat as emitted or reflected by something.

Glance : take a brief or hurried look.

Conjurer : a performer of conjuring tricks.

Squeaking : make a high-pitched sound or cry.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

1. Why did Gip go to the Magic Shop with his father?
2. What did the shopkeeper give to Gip as a gift?
3. Why was Gip's father confused regarding the address of the shop?
4. What trick did the shopkeeper perform at the end of the story?
5. What gifts were received by Gip at the end of the story?

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

STATE WHETHER THE STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE.

1. Father and Gip went to the cheap magic shop.
2. Gip did not like the magical instruments in the shop.
3. Gip's father did not ask for bill.

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

4. The shopkeeper has two long ears .
5. Gip didn't receive any gift.

16.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt

- About *The Magic Shop* and its writer
- His writing style and various features of his writing

16.9 BOOKS SUGGESTED

The Art of the Short Story by Dana Gioia and R. S. Gwynn

Writing Short Stories: A Writers' and Artists' Companion by Courttia Newland
and Tania Hershman

The Making of a Story: A Norton Guide to Creative Writing by Alice LaPlante

The Magic Shop by H.G. Wells

ANSWERS

- 1-False,
- 2-False,
- 3-False,
- 4-False,
- 5-False



**‘A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS’
BY GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ**

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

17.0 Objectives

17.1 About the Author

17.2 Story: A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings

17.3 List of characters in the Story A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings

17.4 About A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings

17.5 Summary of the story

17.6 Critical analysis of the story

17.6.1 Human Reception of the Supernatural

17.6.2 The Blurry Distinction between Natural and Supernatural

17.6.3 What is Human?

17.6.4 Uncertainty in the Narrator

17.6.5 Humans Must Interpret Events

17.6.6 Magic Realism

17.7 Let Us Sum Up

17.8 Key Words

17.9 Books Suggested

Answers

17.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to:

- Study the biographical sketch of the author and his significant literary works
- Critically examine the short story *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*
- Understand the unique literary style ‘Magic Realism’

17.1 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gabriel García Márquez, (born March 6, 1927, Aracataca, Colombia—died April 17, 2014, Mexico City, Mexico), was a Colombian novelist, short story writer, screenwriter and journalist and one of the greatest authors of the 20th century. Márquez has been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in the year 1982 for his masterpiece *One Hundred Years of Solitude* after Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda and Miguel Angel Asturias. He belonged to the greatest period of Latin American Literature i.e. 1960s popularly known as “boom” that soon got recognition internationally. Writers as part of “boom” reacted at the popular traditional realism related to the Latin American literature.

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

Márquez, in most of his writings dealt with some of the universal themes, social realism and narrative technique known as 'Magic Realism'. Some of his seminal works are;

- *The Autumn of the Patriarch*
- *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*
- *The Fragrance of Guava*
- *The General in His Labyrinth*
- *In Evil Hour*
- *Leaf Storm*
- *Love in the Time of Cholera*
- *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*
- *No One Writes to the Colonel*
- *Of Love and Other Demons*
- *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

17.2 STORY: 'A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS'

On the third day of rain they had killed so many crabs inside the house that Pelayo had to cross his drenched courtyard and throw them into the sea, because the newborn child had a temperature all night and they thought it was due to the stench. The world had been sad since Tuesday. Sea and sky were a single ash-gray thing and the sands of the beach, which on March nights glimmered like powdered light, had become a stew of mud and rotten shellfish. The light was so weak at noon that when Pelayo was coming back to the house after throwing away the crabs, it was hard for him to see what it was that was moving and groaning in the rear of the courtyard. He had to go very close to see that it was an old man, a very old man, lying face down in the mud, who, in spite of his tremendous efforts, couldn't get up, impeded by his enormous wings.

Frightened by that nightmare, Pelayo ran to get Elisenda, his wife, who was putting compresses on the sick child, and he took her to the rear of the courtyard. They both looked at the fallen body with a mute stupor. He was dressed like a ragpicker. There were only a few faded hairs left on his bald skull and very few teeth in his mouth, and his pitiful condition of a drenched great-grandfather took away and sense of grandeur he might have had. His huge buzzard wings, dirty and half-plucked were forever entangled in the mud. They looked at him so long and so closely that Pelayo and Elisenda very soon overcame their surprise and in the end found him familiar. Then they dared speak to him, and he answered in an incomprehensible dialect with a strong sailor's voice. That was how they skipped over the inconvenience of the wings and quite intelligently concluded that he was a lonely castaway from some foreign ship wrecked by the storm. And yet, they called in a neighbour woman who knew everything about life and death to see him, and all she needed was one look to show them their mistake.

"He's an angel," she told them. "He must have been coming for the child, but the poor fellow is so old that the rain knocked him down."

On the following day everyone knew that a flesh-and-blood angel was held captive in Pelayo's house. Against the judgment of the wise neighbour woman, for whom angels in those times were the fugitive survivors of a spiritual conspiracy, they did not have the heart to club him to death. Pelayo watched over him all afternoon from the kitchen, armed with his bailiff's club, and before going to bed he dragged him out of the mud and locked him up with the hens in the wire chicken coop. In the middle of the night, when the rain stopped, Pelayo and Elisenda were still killing crabs. A short time afterward the child woke up without a fever and with a desire to eat. Then they felt magnanimous and decided to put the angel on a raft with fresh water and provisions for three days and leave him to his fate on the high seas. But when they went out into the courtyard with the first light of dawn, they found the whole neighbourhood in front of the chicken coop having fun with the angel, without the slightest reverence, tossing him things to eat through the openings in the wire as if weren't a supernatural creature but a circus animal.

Father Gonzaga arrived before seven o'clock, alarmed at the strange news. By that time onlookers less frivolous than those at dawn had already arrived and they were making all kinds of conjectures concerning the captive's future. The simplest among them thought that he should be named mayor of the world. Others of sterner mind felt that he should be promoted to the rank of five-star general in order to win all wars. Some visionaries hoped that he could be put to stud in order to implant the earth a race of winged wise men who could take charge of the universe. But Father Gonzaga, before becoming a priest, had been a robust woodcutter. Standing by the wire, he reviewed his catechism in an instant and asked them to open the door so that he could take a close look at that pitiful man who looked more like a huge decrepit hen among the fascinated chickens. He was lying in the corner drying his open wings in the sunlight among the fruit peels and breakfast leftovers that the early risers had thrown him. Alien to the impertinences of the world, he only lifted his antiquarian eyes and murmured something in his dialect when Father Gonzaga went into the chicken coop and said good morning to him in Latin. The parish priest had his first suspicion of an imposter when he saw that he did not understand the language of God or know how to greet His ministers. Then he noticed that seen close up he was much too human: he had an unbearable smell of the outdoors, the back side of his wings was strewn with parasites and his main feathers had been mistreated by terrestrial winds, and nothing about him measured up to the proud dignity of angels. Then he came out of the chicken coop and in a brief sermon warned the curious against the risks of being ingenuous. He reminded them that the devil had the bad habit of making use of carnival tricks in order to confuse the unwary. He argued that if wings were not the essential element in determining the difference between a hawk and an airplane, they were even less so in the recognition of angels. Nevertheless, he promised to write a letter to his bishop so that the latter would write his primate so that the latter would write to the Supreme Pontiff in order to get the final verdict from the highest courts.

His prudence fell on sterile hearts. The news of the captive angel spread with such rapidity that after a few hours the courtyard had the bustle of a marketplace and they had to call in troops with fixed bayonets to disperse the mob that was about

'A VERY OLD MAN
WITH ENORMOUS
WINGS'

BY GABRIEL GARCÍA
MÁRQUEZ

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

to knock the house down. Elisenda, her spine all twisted from sweeping up so much marketplace trash, then got the idea of fencing in the yard and charging five cents admission to see the angel.

The curious came from far away. A traveling carnival arrived with a flying acrobat who buzzed over the crowd several times, but no one paid any attention to him because his wings were not those of an angel but, rather, those of a sidereal bat. The most unfortunate invalids on earth came in search of health: a poor woman who since childhood has been counting her heartbeats and had run out of numbers; a Portuguese man who couldn't sleep because the noise of the stars disturbed him; a sleepwalker who got up at night to undo the things he had done while awake; and many others with less serious ailments. In the midst of that shipwreck disorder that made the earth tremble, Pelayo and Elisenda were happy with fatigue, for in less than a week they had crammed their rooms with money and the line of pilgrims waiting their turn to enter still reached beyond the horizon.

The angel was the only one who took no part in his own act. He spent his time trying to get comfortable in his borrowed nest, befuddled by the hellish heat of the oil lamps and sacramental candles that had been placed along the wire. At first they tried to make him eat some mothballs, which, according to the wisdom of the wise neighbour woman, were the food prescribed for angels. But he turned them down, just as he turned down the papal lunches that the pentinents brought him, and they never found out whether it was because he was an angel or because he was an old man that in the end ate nothing but eggplant mush. His only supernatural virtue seemed to be patience. Especially during the first days, when the hens pecked at him, searching for the stellar parasites that proliferated in his wings, and the cripples pulled out feathers to touch their defective parts with, and even the most merciful threw stones at him, trying to get him to rise so they could see him standing. The only time they succeeded in arousing him was when they burned his side with an iron for branding steers, for he had been motionless for so many hours that they thought he was dead. He awoke with a start, ranting in his hermetic language and with tears in his eyes, and he flapped his wings a couple of times, which brought on a whirlwind of chicken dung and lunar dust and a gale of panic that did not seem to be of this world. Although many thought that his reaction had not been one of rage but of pain, from then on they were careful not to annoy him, because the majority understood that his passivity was not that of a hero taking his ease but that of a cataclysm in repose.

Father Gonzaga held back the crowd's frivolity with formulas of maidservant inspiration while awaiting the arrival of a final judgment on the nature of the captive. But the mail from Rome showed no sense of urgency. They spent their time finding out in the prisoner had a navel, if his dialect had any connection with Aramaic, how many times he could fit on the head of a pin, or whether he wasn't just a Norwegian with wings. Those meager letters might have come and gone until the end of time if a providential event had not put an end to the priest's tribulations.

It so happened that during those days, among so many other carnival attractions, there arrived in the town the traveling show of the woman who had been changed into a spider for having disobeyed her parents. The admission to see her was not

only less than the admission to see the angel, but people were permitted to ask her all manner of questions about her absurd state and to examine her up and down so that no one would ever doubt the truth of her horror. She was a frightful tarantula the size of a ram and with the head of a sad maiden. What was most heartrending, however, was not her outlandish shape but the sincere affliction with which she recounted the details of her misfortune. While still practically a child she had sneaked out of her parents' house to go to a dance, and while she was coming back through the woods after having danced all night without permission, a fearful thunderclap rent the sky in two and through the crack came the lightning bolt of brimstone that changed her into a spider. Her only nourishment came from the meatballs that charitable souls chose to toss into her mouth. A spectacle like that, full of so much human truth and with such a fearful lesson, was bound to defeat without even trying that of a haughty angel who scarcely deigned to look at mortals. Besides, the few miracles attributed to the angel showed a certain mental disorder, like the blind man who didn't recover his sight but grew three new teeth, or the paralytic who didn't get to walk but almost won the lottery, and the leper whose sores sprouted sunflowers. Those consolation miracles, which were more like mocking fun, had already ruined the angel's reputation when the woman who had been changed into a spider finally crushed him completely. That was how Father Gonzaga was cured forever of his insomnia and Pelayo's courtyard went back to being as empty as during the time it had rained for three days and crabs walked through the bedrooms.

The owners of the house had no reason to lament. With the money they saved they built a two-story mansion with balconies and gardens and high netting so that crabs wouldn't get in during the winter, and with iron bars on the windows so that angels wouldn't get in. Pelayo also set up a rabbit warren close to town and gave up his job as a bailiff for good, and Elisenda bought some satin pumps with high heels and many dresses of iridescent silk, the kind worn on Sunday by the most desirable women in those times. The chicken coop was the only thing that didn't receive any attention. If they washed it down with creolin and burned tears of myrrh inside it every so often, it was not in homage to the angel but to drive away the dungheap stench that still hung everywhere like a ghost and was turning the new house into an old one. At first, when the child learned to walk, they were careful that he not get too close to the chicken coop. But then they began to lose their fears and got used to the smell, and before they child got his second teeth he'd gone inside the chicken coop to play, where the wires were falling apart. The angel was no less standoffish with him than with the other mortals, but he tolerated the most ingenious infamies with the patience of a dog who had no illusions. They both came down with the chicken pox at the same time. The doctor who took care of the child couldn't resist the temptation to listen to the angel's heart, and he found so much whistling in the heart and so many sounds in his kidneys that it seemed impossible for him to be alive. What surprised him most, however, was the logic of his wings. They seemed so natural on that completely human organism that he couldn't understand why other men didn't have them too

When the child began school it had been some time since the sun and rain had caused the collapse of the chicken coop. The angel went dragging himself about

'A VERY OLD MAN
WITH ENORMOUS
WINGS'

BY GABRIEL GARCÍA
MÁRQUEZ

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

here and there like a stray dying man. They would drive him out of the bedroom with a broom and a moment later find him in the kitchen. He seemed to be in so many places at the same time that they grew to think that he'd be duplicated, that he was reproducing himself all through the house, and the exasperated and unhinged Elisenda shouted that it was awful living in that hell full of angels. He could scarcely eat and his antiquarian eyes had also become so foggy that he went about bumping into posts. All he had left were the bare cannulae of his last feathers. Pelayo threw a blanket over him and extended him the charity of letting him sleep in the shed, and only then did they notice that he had a temperature at night, and was delirious with the tongue twisters of an old Norwegian. That was one of the few times they became alarmed, for they thought he was going to die and not even the wise neighbour woman had been able to tell them what to do with dead angels.

And yet he not only survived his worst winter, but seemed improved with the first sunny days. He remained motionless for several days in the farthest corner of the courtyard, where no one would see him, and at the beginning of December some large, stiff feathers began to grow on his wings, the feathers of a scarecrow, which looked more like another misfortune of decrepitude. But he must have known the reason for those changes, for he was quite careful that no one should notice them, that no one should hear the sea chanteys that he sometimes sang under the stars. One morning Elisenda was cutting some bunches of onions for lunch when a wind that seemed to come from the high seas blew into the kitchen. Then she went to the window and caught the angel in his first attempts at flight. They were so clumsy that his fingernails opened a furrow in the vegetable patch and he was on the point of knocking the shed down with the ungainly flapping that slipped on the light and couldn't get a grip on the air. But he did manage to gain altitude. Elisenda let out a sigh of relief, for herself and for him, when she watched him pass over the last houses, holding himself up in some way with the risky flapping of a senile vulture. She kept watching him even when she was through cutting the onions and she kept on watching until it was no longer possible for her to see him, because then he was no longer an annoyance in her life but an imaginary dot on the horizon of the sea.

17.3 LIST OF CHARACTERS IN THE STORY *A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS*

- **The Old Man :** The old man in the story appears at Pelayo and Elisenda's house in extremely poor condition. He speaks a foreign language which is not intelligible to anyone. He has filthy wings and therefore many people think that he is a fallen angel and some believe that he is a Norwegian. By the end of the story he becomes normal and flies away back to his place.
- **Pelayo :** Pelayo is the husband of Elisenda and a host of the old man. He is an ordinary villager living a simple life. He is a self-centered man who uses the old man to make money and never feels sympathy for him.
- **Elisenda :** Elisenda is the wife of Pelayo and a host of the old man. She convinces her husband to charge villagers to see the angel. Though she makes a lot of money from exhibiting the old man she later devel-

ops dislike for him. She is a practical woman and feels relieved at old man's departure.

- **Father Gonzaga :** He is a priest and an authority figure for the town people. He is the one who visits the couple's house to check the identity of the old man and later declares him imposter.
- **The Neighbour Woman :** She is a woman in the story without a proper noun. She counsels the couple over the old man and says that he has come to take their sick child's soul.

'A VERY OLD MAN
WITH ENORMOUS
WINGS'

BY GABRIEL GARCÍA
MÁRQUEZ

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 1

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

1. Write a brief note on the author of the story.
2. Discuss some of the important character in the story.

17.4 ABOUT *A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS*

Gabriel Garcia Marquez wrote the story *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* in the year 1968. The story got the subtitle 'A Tale for Children'. *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* was written in the mid of Marquez's two major novels, *A Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Autumn of the Patriarch*. This story perfectly establishes Marquez as a short story writer using Magic Realist style in his writings. This style simply puts two different elements i.e. ordinary and extra-ordinary together and makes it very obvious to accept, understand and relate for the readers. A unique fact about this technique is that it makes the world complex and problematic void of any moral lesson or maxims to convey.

Moreover, any writing with this style can be interpreted at many levels and this story is not an exception. *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* can similarly be interpreted on many levels. First, we get to know about a town which is dealing with an angel who has lost his way and has come to the town. Initially, it seems like a children's story but later the human being's treatment to that old man raises many important questions of human existence and co-existence of others in this universe.

According to many critics, this story is a veiled allegory dealing with author's experience with fame. Marquez has become a canonical writer with his work *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and this story was about the relationship between an extraordinarily creative artist and his readers or public, who have found him alien with his work typically written with 'Magic Realism' style.

A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings is Marquez's one of the most widely read works with certain elements including uncertain time, setting and open-ended conclusions. However, witty, sad and haunting qualities of the story offer a great treat to all the readers and inspires them to re-read it many times.

17.5 SUMMARY OF THE STORY

In the beginning of the story, with the arrival of the rainstorm, legions of crabs enters into Pelayo and Elisendra's house. Pelayo and his wife both are trying

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

to drive them out of their house and killing them in numbers. At that point, Pelayo finds a very old man with wings in their courtyard who is huge in size and unable to get hold of self. He is completely soaked in mud and weathered. He calls his wife who is busy with attending her child who is suffering from fever. Both try to talk to that old man but he is speaking a dialect they cannot understand. Pelayo and Elisendra feel that he must be a shipwrecked sailor and immediately approaches a neighbour woman who “knows everything about life and death”. That lady declares him an angel who has come to get the soul of their sick child. Pelayo and Elisendra decide to lock him with chicken coop. Next day the rain stops and the child starts feeling normal and therefore both are very happy. Finally, Pelayo and Elisendra decide to shift that old man on a raft with sufficient food supply for three days. At the chicken coop, the old man is visited by many neighbours, troubling him and making fun of him as if he were a subject of fun or carnival attraction.

Father Gonzaga has his own Catholic point of view for that old man and tries to communicate him in Latin, the language of Gods and Angels. Looking at his appearance and inability to speak or understand Latin, he decides to not to call him an angel but an imposter and nothing more.

The news of the arrival of the angel spreads across the country and people starts to visit to see the captivated angel. Realizing the chance of making money, Elisendra thought of charging five cents sees the angel and makes a lot of money. Within a week only they literally crams their rooms with money but the old man is quite indifferent to the events happening in his surroundings. He is treated humanely as people pelts him with rocks just to listen some words from his mouth to ensure that he is an angel and chickens pecks him, though he shows his ‘Supernatural Patience’.

A carnival attraction with the story of a Spider-Girl arrives at the town. It is the story of the girl who has turned into a spider by disobeying her parents over opting to Dance. She becomes a centre of attraction for all the town’s people. After her arrival and as her story is full of life lessons it attracts more people and makes the old man less popular. The reputation of the old man declines with the popularity of the spider girl.

Over the period of the time, Pelayo and Elisenda’s child learn to walk and starts playing with the angel. By now everyone is accustomed to the angel’s presence and his smell. A doctor diagnoses the old man and declares that he is still weak but was very much impressed by his wings and feels that humans do need to have them too.

Later, the chicken coop collapses, but Pelayo and Elisenda ignore this and let the angel to roam free about their house. Slowly Elisenda starts developing irritation for the old man’s presence. The angel grows more ill and eats barely anything. All of a sudden from the verge of death, the angel recovers and starts having new feathers. On a one fine morning as Elisenda is busy cooking in the kitchen, the angel first tests his wings and suddenly flies off to the sky. Finally, Elisenda feels relieved from his departure.

17.6 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE STORY

While analyzing the story critically, a few points appear that can help to understand the story in more comprehensive and realistic manner. The following are the points to be discussed as part of critical analysis.

17.6.1 Human Reception of the Supernatural

The present story deals with two major supernatural events including the arrival of the old man with wings and the girl who gets metamorphosed into a spider girl. The people of the village treat the old man in an odd manner. For them the old man is merely a frail human with frail wings. They all have an endless debate on him being an angel or a human with defect as he was lacking in his dignity as an angel. Even father Gonzaga denies the arrival of the angel and consoles the family on checking on his real identity. The old man is treated badly, manipulated, exploited, and cooped up in a chicken cage. Here, the question that arises is who is lacking dignity, the old man or the people.

On the other hand, the spider-girl entertains people and impresses all of them with her story of disobeying parents and hence with God's wrath has turned in to a spider. With her this story people do not doubt her and accepts her without debate.

17.6.2 The Blurry Distinction between Natural and Supernatural

The story is an exemplary example of Magic Realism and therefore we can see how Marquez has blended the supernatural with vivid natural descriptions. In addition to this, for Pelayo there is no difference between the arrival of Crabs and Angel, of course not in its full glory, in house. Both Pelayo and Elisenda have become very insensitive to the progress they do in their life after the arrival of that old angel. They treat him badly and place in a chicken cage. The crowd also ill-treats him as if he were a circus animal and not a supernatural creature. In this way, the author promotes the readers to come-up with various interpretations.

17.6.3 What is Human?

In the story *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, this very question is directly or indirectly reverberated and posed to the readers. In the beginning of the story the old man is described with a blend of animal, human characteristics but void of angel's one as he did not have the dignity of an angels. Further he is also described as a rag-picker, and later the couple decided that he must be a sailor. Though all these characteristics of an old man, the human themselves loses their human qualities and treats him inhumanly. The old man is kept with chickens, displayed to the visitors and given mush to eat. Even after the old man's decent behaviour, people don't respond humanely.

However, because of the story of the Spider-girl, which was far easy for all the people to believe as it dealt with human-truth, i.e. morality is found appealing, attractive and interesting. The people don't questions her mysterious and complex story that was a real mess one in comparison to the old man's story. At this point, the author tries to prove the point that the humans are very gullible and fearful. For them, whatever is beyond culture or tradition is fearsome and hard to accept. And

'A VERY OLD MAN
WITH ENORMOUS
WINGS'
BY GABRIEL GARCÍA
MÁRQUEZ

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

with this point, author comes up with this debatable question, ‘What is human?’ that everyone must ponder over.

17.6.4 Uncertainty in the Narrator

Throughout the story, readers may find the narrator full of uncertainty, ambiguity and doubts. In the beginning, the narration is third-person omniscient and gradually offers opinions at a few points. The narrator also supports a few characters and condemns the problem ones.

17.6.5 Humans Must Interpret Events

The story emphasizes on the importance and need to interpret life events. The arrival of the old man, though strange event, needed to be interpreted by Pelayo, Elisenda, or Father Gonzaga differently and sensibly. All the people in the story try to interpret the event by relating to their customs and regular lives and ignore the importance of the old man. Here the author depicts the limits of human experiences and not the think beyond the perception they have developed by the means of their senses and culture. However, they fail to accept that there can also be something beyond their world and relate themselves with something universal or call it enigmatic events or inevitability to accept the existence of others in this universe except humans, again something we always belong to, celestial creatures depicted in Holy Scriptures. We do believe in supernatural through the means of religion but when that comes to us in person, we either fear or doubt their very existence.

17.6.6 Magic Realism

The term Magic Realism is a technique used in this story ‘*A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*’. In this technique, we find the inseparable blend of realistic elements with magical events. The ordinary events are beautifully alongside with fantastic events that ultimately convince the readers to accept both and value them equally. According to Bernard McGuirk and Richard Cardwell, “Magical realism expands the categorizes of the real so as to encompass myth, magic and other extraordinary phenomena in Nature or experience which European realism excluded”.

Marquez has played a very important role in developing this technique and used it in a way that has become a seminal part of his most of his works. This term was used to describe the works of Jorge Louis Borges and later Marquez used this style in his major novels and short stories. This style was effortlessly used by Gunter Grass and John Fowles. Magic Realism blurs the differences between serious and trivial or horrible ludicrous. Though this style has been criticized by many of the critics, Marquez’s works with Magic Realism style have become quite popular and got position among the canons.

17.7 LET US SUM UP

‘A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings’ is though unusual but extremely gripping and interesting tale written by using *Magic Realistic* style. The story has become a testimony to Marquez for the human world void of humanity and other issues like lack of sympathy and full of ignorance to others’ co-existence.

17.8 KEY WORDS

Stench- a very unpleasant smell

Stupor- numbness, insensibility

Rag picker- a person who collects and sells rags

Fugitive- a person who has escaped from captivity or is in hiding

Magnanimous- generous or forgiving, especially towards a rival or less powerful person

Reverence- deep respect for someone or something

Frivolous- not having any serious purpose or value

Prudence- the quality of being prudent; cautiousness

Sterile- lacking in imagination, creativity, or excitement; uninspiring or unproductive

Decrepitude- the state of being decrepit

17.9 BOOKS SUGGESTED

Márquez, G. G. (1979). *Leaf Storm* (Vol. 699). Harper Collins.

Marquez, G. G. (1972). *A very old man with enormous wings: A tale for children. Leaf storm and other stories.*

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 2

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

1. Write a brief on the role of supernatural element in the story.
2. Discuss the portrayal of the spider-girl and the angel in the story.
3. Comment on the literary style 'Magic Realism' with reference to the story.
4. Write a critical note on the story with special reference to Humanity.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 3

STATE WHETHER THE STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE.

1. The angel yells at all the visitors in a language they cannot understand.
2. Pelayo and Elisenda were first very annoyed and frightened by the old man but later became comfortable and treated him like his family member.
3. The angel landed to couple's house because he was exiled from the heaven.
4. People shifted their interest from the angel to spider man.
5. An angle lands in an ordinary town full of ordinary people make the story Magical in nature.

Answers

1. False
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. True

'A VERY OLD MAN
WITH ENORMOUS
WINGS'
BY GABRIEL GARCÍA
MÁRQUEZ

યુનિવર્સિટી ગીત

સ્વાધ્યાય: પરમં તપ:

સ્વાધ્યાય: પરમં તપ:

સ્વાધ્યાય: પરમં તપ:

શિક્ષણ, સંસ્કૃતિ, સદ્ભાવ, દિવ્યબોધનું ધામ
ડૉ. બાબાસાહેબ આંબેડકર ઓપન યુનિવર્સિટી નામ;
સૌને સૌની પાંખ મળે, ને સૌને સૌનું આભ,
દશે દિશામાં સ્મિત વહે હો દશે દિશે શુભ-લાભ.

અભણ રહી અજ્ઞાનના શાને, અંધકારને પીવો ?
કહે બુદ્ધ આંબેડકર કહે, તું થા તારો દીવો;
શારદીય અજવાળા પહોંચ્યાં ગુર્જર ગામે ગામ
ધ્રુવ તારકની જેમ ઝળહળે એકલવ્યની શાન.

સરસ્વતીના મયૂર તમારે ફળિયે આવી ગહેકે
અંધકારને હડસેલીને ઉજાસના ફૂલ મહેકે;
બંધન નહીં કો સ્થાન સમયના જવું ન ઘરથી દૂર
ઘર આવી મા હરે શારદા દૈન્ય તિમિરના પૂર.

સંસ્કારોની સુગંધ મહેકે, મન મંદિરને ધામે
સુખની ટપાલ પહોંચે સૌને પોતાને સરનામે;
સમાજ કેરે દરિયે હાંકી શિક્ષણ કેરું વહાણ,
આવો કરીયે આપણ સૌ
ભવ્ય રાષ્ટ્ર નિર્માણ...
દિવ્ય રાષ્ટ્ર નિર્માણ...
ભવ્ય રાષ્ટ્ર નિર્માણ