

Nino Tevdoradze

ANALYTICAL READING

(როდერო)

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The Cop and the Anthem

O. Henry

On his bench in Madison Square Soapy moved uneasily. When wild geese **honk** high of nights, and when women without sealskin coats grow kind to their husbands, and when Soapy moves uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at hand.

A dead leaf fell in Soapy's lap. That was Jack Frost's¹ card. Jack is kind to the regular **denizens** of Madison Square, and gives fair warning of his annual call. At the corners of four streets he hands his pasteboard² to the North Wind, footman³ of the mansion of All Outdoors, so that the inhabitants thereof may make ready.

Soapy's mind became **cognisant** of the fact that the time had come for him to resolve himself into a singular Committee of Ways and Means to provide against the coming **rigour**. And therefore he moved uneasily on his bench.

The hibernatorial⁴ ambitions of Soapy were not of the highest. In them there were no considerations of Mediterranean cruises, of soporific⁵ Southern skies drifting in the Vesuvian Bay. Three months on the Island was what his soul

¹ a symbol of cold weather

² sign

³ servant

⁴ annual sleeping period of animals like bears

⁵ sleep-inducing

craved. Three months of assured board and bed and congenial company, safe from Boreas⁶ and bluecoats⁷, seemed to Soapy the essence of things desirable.

For years the hospitable Blackwell's had been his winter quarters. Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had bought their tickets to Palm Beach⁸ and the Riviera⁹ each winter, so Soapy had made his humble arrangements for his annual hegira¹⁰ to the Island. And now the time was come. On the previous night three Sabbath newspapers, distributed beneath his coat, about his ankles and over his lap, had failed to repulse the cold as he slept on his bench near the spurting fountain in the ancient square. So the Island loomed big and timely in Soapy's mind. He scorned the provisions made in the name of charity for the city's dependents. In Soapy's opinion the Law was more benign than Philanthropy.¹¹ There was an endless round of institutions, municipal and eleemosynary,¹² on which he might set out and receive lodging and food accordant with the simple life. But to one of Soapy's proud spirit the gifts of charity are encumbered. If not in coin you must pay in humiliation of spirit for every benefit received at the hands of philanthropy. As Caesar had his Brutus, every bed of charity must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of a private and personal inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a guest of the law, which though conducted by rules, does not meddle unduly with a gentleman's private affairs.

Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once set about accomplishing his desire. There were many easy ways of doing this. The pleasantest was to dine luxuriously at some expensive restaurant; and then, after declaring insolvency, be handed over quietly and without uproar to a policeman. An accommodating magistrate¹³ would do the rest.

Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the square and across the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow together. Up Broadway he turned, and halted at a glittering cafe, where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm.¹⁴

⁶ north wind

⁷ police (sl.)

⁸ a fashionable resort in Florida

⁹ Any coastal area popular with tourists. French Riviera – Mediterranean coastline of the south eastern corner of France, which was one of the first modern resort areas.

¹⁰ flight

¹¹ Philanthropy derives from Ancient Greek, meaning "to love people". Philanthropy is the act of donating money, goods, services, time and/or effort to support a socially beneficial cause, with a defined objective and with no financial or material reward to the donor. In a more general sense, philanthropy may encompass any altruistic activity intended to promote good or improve human quality of life.

¹² charity

¹³ judge

¹⁴ Protoplasm is the living contents of a cell that are surrounded by a plasma membrane.

Soapy had confidence in himself from the lowest button of his vest upward. He was shaven, and his coat was decent and his neat black, ready-tied four-in-hand¹⁵ had been presented to him by a lady missionary on Thanksgiving Day.¹⁶ If he could reach a table in the restaurant unsuspected success would be his. The portion of him that would show above the table would raise no doubt in the waiter's mind. A roasted mallard duck, thought Soapy, would be about the thing – with a bottle of Chablis, and then Camembert, a demitasse¹⁷ and a cigar. One dollar for the cigar would be enough. The total would not be so high as to call forth any supreme manifestation of revenge from the cafe management; and yet the meat would leave him filled and happy for the journey to his winter refuge.

But as Soapy set foot inside the restaurant door the head waiter's eye fell upon his frayed trousers and decadent shoes. Strong and ready hands turned him about and conveyed him in silence and haste to the sidewalk and averted the ignoble fate of the menaced mallard.

Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route to the coveted island was not to be an epicurean¹⁸ one. Some other way of entering limbo must be thought.

At a corner of Sixth Avenue electric lights and cunningly displayed wares behind plate-glass made a shop window conspicuous. Soapy took a cobblestone and dashed it through the glass. People came running around the corner, a policeman in the lead. Soapy stood still, with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of brass buttons.

"Where's the man that done that?" inquired the officer excitedly.

"Don't you figure out that I might have had something to do with it?" said Soapy, not without sarcasm, but friendly, as one greets good fortune.

The policeman's mind refused to accept Soapy even as a clue. Men who smash windows do not remain to parley¹⁹ with the law's minions.²⁰ They take to their heels. The policeman saw a man half way down the block running to catch a car. With drawn club he joined in the pursuit. Soapy, with disgust in his heart, loafed along, twice unsuccessful.

¹⁵ tie

¹⁶ Thanksgiving Day is a harvest festival. Traditionally, it is a time to give thanks for the harvest and express gratitude in general. It is a holiday celebrated in Canada and the United States. While perhaps religious in origin, Thanksgiving is now primarily identified as a secular holiday.

¹⁷ Fr. A small cup to serve coffee

¹⁸ food-related

¹⁹ talk

²⁰ officials

On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great pretensions. It catered to large appetites and modest purses. Its crockery²¹ and atmosphere were thick; its soup and napery thin. Into this place Soapy took his accusive shoes and telltale trousers without challenge. At a table he sat and consumed beefsteak, flapjacks, doughnuts and pie. And then to the waiter he betrayed the fact that the minutest²² coin and himself were strangers.

"Now, get busy and call a cop," said Soapy. "And don't keep a gentleman waiting."

"No cop for youse," said the waiter, with a voice like butter cakes and an eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail. "Hey, Con!"

Next, upon his left ear on the callous pavement two waiters pitched Soapy. He arose, joint by joint, as a carpenter's rule opens, and beat the dust from his clothes. Arrest seemed but a rosy dream. The Island seemed very far away. A policeman who stood before a drug store two doors away laughed and walked down the street.

Five blocks Soapy travelled before his courage permitted him to woo capture again. This time the opportunity presented what he fatuously termed to himself a "cinch."²³ A young woman of a modest and pleasing guise was standing before a show window gazing with sprightly interest at its display of shaving mugs and inkstands, and two yards from the window a large policeman of severe demeanour leaned against a water plug.

It was Soapy's design to assume the role of the despicable and execrated²⁴ "masher."²⁵ The refined and elegant appearance of his victim and the contiguity of the conscientious cop encouraged him to believe that he would soon feel the pleasant official clutch upon his arm that would insure his winter quarters on the right little, tight little isle.

Soapy straightened the lady missionary's readymade tie, dragged his shrinking cuffs into the open, set his hat at a killing cant²⁶ and sidled toward the young woman. He made eyes at her, was taken with sudden coughs and "hems," smiled, smirked and went brazenly through the impudent and contemptible litany of the "masher." With half an eye Soapy saw that the policeman was watching him

²¹ dishes

²² tiny, very little

²³ sl. easy task

²⁴ hateful

²⁵ lady-killer

²⁶ angle

fixedly. The young woman moved away a few steps, and again bestowed her absorbed attention upon the shaving mugs. Soapy followed, boldly stepping to her side, raised his hat and said:

"Ah there, Bedelia! Don't you want to come and play in my yard?"

The policeman was still looking. The persecuted young woman had but to beckon a finger and Soapy would be practically en route²⁷ for his insular²⁸ haven. Already he imagined he could feel the cozy warmth of the station-house. The young woman faced him and, stretching out a hand, caught Soapy's coat sleeve.

"Sure, Mike," she said joyfully, "if you'll blow me to a pail of suds.²⁹ I'd have spoke to you sooner, but the cop was watching."

With the young woman playing the clinging ivy to his oak³⁰ Soapy walked past the policeman overcome with gloom. He seemed doomed to liberty.

At the next corner he shook off his companion and ran. He halted in the district where by night are found the lightest streets, hearts, vows and librettos.³¹ Women in furs and men in greatcoats moved gaily in the wintry air. A sudden fear seized Soapy that some dreadful enchantment had rendered him immune to arrest. The thought brought a little of panic upon it, and when he came upon another policeman lounging grandly in front of a transplendent theatre he caught at the immediate straw of "disorderly conduct."

On the sidewalk Soapy began to yell drunken gibberish at the top of his harsh voice. He danced, howled, raved and otherwise disturbed the welkin.³²

The policeman twirled his club, turned his back to Soapy and remarked to a citizen.

"'Tis one of them Yale lads celebratin' the goose egg they give to the Hartford College. Noisy; but no harm. We've instructions to lave them be."

Disconsolate, Soapy ceased his unavailing racket. Would never a policeman lay hands on him? In his fancy the Island seemed an unattainable Arcadia. He buttoned his thin coat against the chilling wind.

²⁷ Fr. Along the way, on the road

²⁸ protective

²⁹ sl. buy me a beer

³⁰ sl. Holding him close

³¹ songs

³² Arch. sky, heavens

In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar at a swinging light. His silk umbrella he had set by the door on entering. Soapy stepped inside, secured the umbrella and sauntered off with it slowly. The man at the cigar light followed hastily.

"My umbrella," he said, sternly.

"Oh, is it?" sneered Soapy, adding insult to petit³³ larceny. "Well, why don't you call a policeman? I took it. Your umbrella! Why don't you call a cop? There stands one on the corner."

The umbrella owner slowed his steps. Soapy did likewise, with a presentiment that luck would again run against him. The policeman looked at the two curiously.

"Of course," said the umbrella man – "that is – well, you know how these mistakes occur – I – if it's your umbrella I hope you'll excuse me – I picked it up this morning in a restaurant--If you recognise it as yours, why – I hope you'll –"

"Of course it's mine," said Soapy, viciously.

The ex-umbrella man retreated. The policeman hurried to assist a tall blonde in an opera cloak across the street in front of a street car that was approaching two blocks away.

Soapy walked eastward through a street damaged by improvements. He hurled the umbrella wrathfully into an excavation. He muttered against the men who wear helmets and carry clubs. Because he wanted to fall into their clutches, they seemed to regard him as a king who could do no wrong.

At length Soapy reached one of the avenues to the east where the glitter and turmoil was but faint. He set his face down this toward Madison Square, for the homing instinct³⁴ survives even when the home is a park bench.

But on an unusually quiet corner Soapy came to a standstill. Here was an old church, quaint and rambling and gabled. Through one violet-stained window a soft light glowed, where, no doubt, the organist loitered over the keys, making sure of his mastery of the coming Sabbath anthem. For there drifted out to Soapy's ears sweet music that caught and held him transfixed against the convolutions³⁵ of the iron fence.

³³ Fr. little

³⁴ instinct to return home

³⁵ complicated design

The moon was above, lustrous and serene; vehicles and pedestrians were few; sparrows twittered sleepily in the eaves – for a little while the scene might have been a country churchyard. And the anthem that the organist played cemented Soapy to the iron fence, for he had known it well in the days when his life contained such things as mothers and roses and ambitions and friends and immaculate thoughts and collars.

The conjunction of Soapy's receptive state of mind and the influences about the old church wrought³⁶ a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He viewed with swift horror the pit into which he had tumbled, the degraded days, unworthy desires, dead hopes, wrecked faculties and base³⁷ motives that made up his existence.

And also in a moment his heart responded thrillingly to this novel mood. An instantaneous and strong impulse moved him to battle with his desperate fate. He would pull himself out of the mire; he would make a man of himself again; he would conquer the evil that had taken possession of him. There was time; he was comparatively young yet; he would resurrect his old eager ambitions and pursue them without faltering. Those solemn but sweet organ notes had set up a revolution in him. To-morrow he would go into the roaring downtown district and find work. A fur importer had once offered him a place as driver. He would find him to-morrow and ask for the position. He would be somebody in the world. He would –

Soapy felt a hand laid on his arm. He looked quickly around into the broad face of a policeman.

"What are you doin' here?" asked the officer.

"Nothin'," said Soapy.

"Then come along," said the policeman.

"Three months on the Island," said the Magistrate in the Police Court the next morning.

³⁶ produced

³⁷ unworthy

Strategy for Understanding, Analysis, and Interpretation

1. Read O’Henry’s story both as a work of literature and as a piece of historical context about which it was written.
2. Draw Inferences insightfully of what you have read.
3. Get engaged with the text and apply various strategies:

Consider the biographical, historical and cultural context.

Identify the problem the author is trying to resolve.

Identify the author’s attitude.

Identify the relationship between the main point and the supporting points.

Draw deep implications insightfully from the text.

Focus on literary and language means.

About the author

O. Henry was an American short-story writer, a master of surprise endings, who wrote about the life of ordinary people in New York City. His books are enjoyed by millions of people all over the world.

William Sydney Porter (O. Henry) was born in Greensboro, North Carolina. His father, Algernon Sidney Porter, was a physician. When William was three, his mother died, and he was raised by his paternal grandmother and aunt. He first found his success as a writer in prison (he was convicted of embezzling money, although there has been much debate over his actual guilt). While in prison O. Henry started to write short stories to earn money to support his daughter. After doing three years of the five years sentence, Porter emerged from the prison, changed his name to O. Henry and went to New York where he published hundreds of stories (600 short stories during his lifetime).

O. Henry's last years were shadowed by alcoholism. He suffered from poor health, and financial problems. He died of cirrhosis of the liver in New York.

Cultural and Historical Context

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, New York city became a world center for industry, commerce, and communication. The first New York subway company began operating in 1904, and the railroads operating out of Grand Central Terminal and Pennsylvania Station thrived.

Crime rates also increased as the city grew in size. Newspapers made household names of sensational criminal. At the turn of the century was noticeable New York City's ever accelerating changes, rising crime, and poverty rates.

The Cop and The Anthem is another story written about the life of ordinary people in New York City at the turn of the twentieth century.



Does the story say something about life in a big city?

Do you think that life was different in New York at that time?

Do you think that attitudes of people towards each other were different in New York at that time?

Are there any people in your country who spend a night outdoors because they are homeless and have no money?

About the Cop and the Anthem

In the story, a tramp named Soapy tries to get arrested (he does various evil things in order to enter the prison) so that he can spend the winter in jail. However, all of these attempts are quickly exposed as failures. When Soapy was greatly moved by the anthem from the church and determined to start a new life, a policeman captured him. He was tried 3 months captivity.

Genre Identification

THE SHORT STORY

The term “short story” usually refers to the modern short story. Therefore, it is a newer form of literature than other genres, like drama, poetry, or novels. This genre packs a lot into a short format. It can be defined as a relatively brief prose narrative, usually characterized by uniformity of action (having as plot a single action) and theme. It usually tells events with a definite beginning, middle and end. It is frequent that short stories may have very little plot and never move to a completed action.

A short story is usually centered on a single incident and usually contains one event focusing on a single aspect of life. Some stories mainly focus on action, some – on theme. The number of characters in a short story is usually limited, though they are rather vivid, distinct and developed. The story may belong to a particular type: psychological, historical, adventure, detective, science fiction, social, documentary or be the mixture of a number of the types.

In short, a short story reveals the following characteristics: It is short; it has unity; it is concise – nothing is wasted there.

Build Your Vocabulary

Try to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words from context. But even if surrounding words or phrases clarify the meaning, refer to dictionaries.

honk; denizen; cognisant; rigour; crave; congenial; humble; repulse; spurt; loom; benign; accordant; encumber; toll; inquisition; meddle; unduly; accomplish; luxurious; insolvency; halt; glittering; mallard; frayed; decadent; convey; haste; avert; ignoble; menace; coveted; limbo; cunning; conspicuous; cobblestone; pursuit; cater; napery; accuse; telltale; flapjack; callous; woo; fatuously; guise; sprightly; demeanour; despicable; contiguity; conscientious; clutch; sidle; smirk; brazenly; impudent; contemptible; litany; bestow; absorbed; persecute; beckon a finger; haven; doom; enchantment; render; lounge; transplendent; gibberish; twirl; disconsolate; unavailing; racket; unattainable; chilling; saunter; sternly; sneer; larceny; presentiment; wrathfully; turmoil; standstill; rambling; gabled; glow;

loiter; lustrous; serene; pedestrian; twitter; eaves; immaculate; conjunction; receptive; instantaneous; mire; faltering; solemn.

Comprehension Check

1. Where does Soapy want to go and why? Soapy originally plans to spend Christmas on “the Island.” What does “the Island” refer to?
2. What plans does he make?
3. How does O’Henry portray Soapy? Does he give the description of his appearance? Why does he describe his clothes?
4. How does O’Henry portray the policemen in the story?
5. What is Soapy’s particular wish throughout the story? Did he succeed in his endeavour?
6. Why does Soapy develop a series of tactics to encourage the police to arrest him?

Your Response to Literature

How would you behave if you had to spend a cold winter’s night in the street? Have you ever been hopeless in life? How did you get over your hopelessness – by yourself, by someone’s help, by some event?

7. What tactics does Soapy employ to be arrested? In the order in which they occur, list the six schemes that Soapy develops to get himself arrested, and in each case tell why the scheme didn't work.
8. What happens when he hears the church anthem?

Your Response to Literature

Have you ever decided to start a new life? How did you succeed? Will Soapy change? Do you believe that a man can be “born anew?”

9. What, actually, happens at the end of the story?

Retelling of a Literary Work

While retelling the story restate it in your own words, with changes or emphases that reveal your response to it.

Try to retell the story as if you were Soapy. Try to impart what he feels and how he feels. If you were impressed by some particular event in the story, try to emphasize it in your retelling.

Reading between Lines

”He scorned the provisions made in the name of charity for the city’s dependents. In Soapy’s opinion the Law was more benign than Philanthropy. There was an endless round of institutions, municipal and eleemosynary, on which he might set out and receive lodging and food accordant with the simple life. But to one of Soapy’s proud spirit the gifts of charity are encumbered. If not in coin you must pay in humiliation of spirit for every benefit received at the hands of philanthropy. As Caesar had his Brutus, every bed of charity must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of a private and personal inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a guest of the law, which though conducted by rules, does not meddle unduly with a gentleman’s private affairs.”

Why is charity so humiliating to Soapy? Can you feel the narrator’s ironical attitude when he speaks about philanthropy?

“In his fancy the Island seemed an unattainable Arcadia.”

Why does the author compare the island to Arcadia? Does the word “Arcadia” suggest the author’s ironical attitude?

Literary and Language Focus

1. Determine the author’s style, identifying particular word choices, figurative language, and different language devices.

2. Define and identify irony in the story and explain the author's purpose for using it.
3. Explain the use of the literary elements of a story: theme, plot, setting, character, point of view.

Style

Generally, O'Henry's writing style is described as flowery, because he describes events in a colorful, imaginative style to impress and amuse his readers. He possesses one of the largest vocabularies among his contemporary writers. Sometimes he employs inflated circumlocution. His irony is individual and quite different from other American writers.

O'Henry uses a number of "learned words" deliberately to form a sharp contrast to Soapy's devastating condition. This kind of inflated circumlocution is not consistent with the character's deplorable state.

*"Soapy's mind became **cognisant** of the **fact** that the time had come for him to **resolve himself into a singular Committee of Ways and Means** to provide against the coming rigour. And therefore he moved uneasily on his bench.*

*The **hibernatorial ambitions** of Soapy were not of the highest. In them there were **no considerations** of Mediterranean cruises, of **soporific** Southern skies drifting in the Vesuvian Bay. Three months on the Island was what his **soul craved**."*

[Find other examples of this kind](#)

What layer words are mainly used in the story? Illustrate your answer with examples.

Slang

Slang was originally a term for the old French phrase "sale langue," which translated into English means "dirty language." It is regarded as unconventional language. It is colloquial, sometimes vulgar, and always innovative — nothing

registers change in cultural thought faster than slang. The circle of slang users is much narrower than users of colloquialisms. It is mainly used by the young who try to demonstrate their spiritual independence and defiance, or low-class people who lack in education.

Slang is usually informal and spoken rather than formal and written, slang is not the same as dialect, nor is it equal to swearing, although it may take on a vulgar edge, and it almost always evokes negative attitudes. Characterized by its ability to startle, slang falls below the "neutral register" of daily speech. It is considered to be the language of a particular group. The "New English Dictionary" defines slang as follows: the special vocabulary used by any set of persons of a low or disreputable character; language of a low and vulgar type; language of a highly colloquial type.

O'Henry uses a lot of slang in his story: bluecoats (police); they took their heels (run away); if you'll blow me to a pail of suds (buy me a beer); the clinging ivy to his oak (holding him close).

[What is the function of slang in the story?](#)

Language Devices

Does the author resort to stylistically colored vocabulary? Which language devices does he employ?

Graphon

Graphon is an intentional violation of the graphical shape of a word, creating the atmosphere of live communication. It serves the purpose of individualizing the character's speech and provides the information about his/her social and educational background, emotional, or even sarcastic attitude.

Are there any graphons in the text? If so, what is their function in the story?

Aposiopesis

Aposiopesis (break - in - the narrative) is a sudden break in the narration, which has the function to reveal agitated state of the speaker.

Read the story carefully and identify the cases of aposiopesis. Decide why the author refers to this language device.

Polysyndeton

Polysyndeton is an identical repetition of conjunctions: used to emphasize the idea or described actions.

Identify the case of polysyndeton in the text.

Stylistic Parallelism

When successive clauses or sentences are similarly structured, we deal with stylistic parallelism. Stylistic Parallelism is often achieved with other stylistic principles, such as **antithesis** (the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas), **anaphora** (repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of every clause), etc.

Can you identify the cases of stylistic parallelism achieved with other stylistic principles in the text?

Can you identify the cases of antithesis or anaphora?

Identify Language Devices

Read carefully the sentences below and decide:

What kind of semantic relations do the words have with other adjacent words in the context? What is this language device called? What effect does it create?

”Up Broadway he turned, and halted at a glittering cafe, where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm.”

“His life contained such things as mothers and roses and ambitions and friends and immaculate thoughts and collars.”

“He halted in the district where by night are found the lightest streets, hearts, vows and librettos.”

Consider the following extract from the text. What language device can we meet there? Can this device help the reader to concentrate on the message?

“When wild geese honk high of nights, and when women without sealskin coats grow kind to their husbands, and when Soapy moves uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at hand.”

“He would pull himself out of the mire; he would make a man of himself again; he would conquer the evil that had taken possession of him.”

Does the sentence below help to create contrast between the two phenomena or objects? What language device is it?

“Its crockery and atmosphere were thick; its soup and napery thin.”

Irony

Modern theories of rhetoric distinguish between different types of irony.

Verbal irony

When a speaker says one thing but means another, or when a literal meaning is contrary to its intended effect, we deal with verbal irony. Verbal irony is the use of words to convey something other than, and especially the opposite of the literal meaning of the words, to emphasize, or make light of a circumstance or subject.

Situational irony

Situational irony occurs when a reader or character expects one thing to happen, but something entirely different happens. A key attribute of situational irony,

most commonly referred to as a, “surprise ending,” is diversion from the expected outcome to the actual outcome of a plot. Writers use situational irony to make their stories interesting or humorous, and sometimes to force their readers to reexamine their own thoughts and values. Situational irony is closely connected with so-called “Irony of fate” (cosmic irony).

“Irony of fate” (cosmic irony)

The expression “irony of fate” stems from the notion that the gods (or the Fates) are amusing themselves by toying with the minds of mortals with deliberate ironic intent. Closely connected with situational irony, it arises from sharp contrasts between reality and human ideals, or between human intentions and actual results.

Read the story carefully and identify which type(s) of irony might apply to "The Cop and the Anthem." Write down your answers and explain using proof from the text.

Theme

What exactly is a theme of a story, and how can we recognize it? Is it the central idea of the story? Can a literary work have multiple themes? What is the theme of this essay? Is the theme woven all the way through the story, and the character actions, etc., or it exists as a separate entity?

Answer the above questions basing on the theoretical foundations presented below:

A **theme** is an idea or message conveyed by a written text. Themes often explore timeless and universal ideas. One can single out the theme of: love, war, family relations, etc. Most themes are implied rather than explicitly stated. The theme is different from the superficial outlay of the text; it is normally the meaning of the text on a more abstract level. The author’s point of view and attitude is revealed in the way he develops the theme of the story.

Do you think that the theme of the story “The Cop and the Anthem” is still relevant today?

Identify the purpose of the writer and examine the ideas that he includes in support of that purpose.

The **actions or events** in the story are used to suggest theme.

In O’Henry’s short stories we can find not only engaging action but also strong themes.

Arrangement of events and actions within a story is plot.

The theme can be understood from **the plot** – the plan of a literary composition comprising a series of incidents (events) which are gradually unfolded and each of the incidents comes out of the preceding one and increases in intensity until the highest point is reached. In other words, the plot is a series of interlinked events in which the characters of the story participate. The short story has one main plot or series of events. There is no room for sub-plots (other story lines).

The plot develops in the following stage:

Exposition: “Opening” of the story – general atmosphere and mood existing at the beginning of the story. When a reader is “exposed” to the story, he (she) identifies the setting, gets acquainted with the main. Exposition also introduces the conflict of the story (at least initial conflict). Thus, exposition serves opening of the story, contains the setting and introduces the characters.

Rising Action: The series of events and conflicts “rise” and progress intensively. The events and conflicts of the story gradually complicate and move towards the climax. Rising action usually suggests introducing “knots.”

Climax: (Greek word, meaning “staircase” or “ladder”) the turning point, the most intense moment. Climax usually involves a “discovery” and suggests the crucial event. Event may be either an action or a mental decision of the main character. “Mental decision” means that main character usually changes his (her) understanding.

Falling Action: all of the action which follows the climax .The events occurring from the time of the climax to the end of the story. The main character may encounter more conflicts in this part of the story, but the end is inevitable.

Resolution or Denouement: (Denouement is a French word that literally means ‘unraveling the knot’ since the complications (knots) are undone or untied) the conclusion, the tying together of all of the threads. The central conflict is ended. Resolution closes the story. It is usually the final part of plot, which occurs at the end of the story.

Analyze the story according to plot elements.

What can be the climax or turning point in the story “the Cop and the Anthem”?

Setting

Setting serves a variety of purposes in the text. One of the main purposes of it is creating credibility of the plot. Setting involves time and place – tells us where and when the story takes place. It provides the background – a place for the characters to live. The setting may place the character in a recognizable realistic environment. Also setting may include geographical names and allusions to historical events.

The short story usually covers a short time span, a few hours or one day. To determine where a story is set, if it is not stated, you can use hints such as details of landscape, local customs, dialect (speech patterns of a certain region). It is unusual to have several settings in a short story because of its limited length. A good setting helps to make the story real and believable. Setting can include: locale, season, present, past, future, time of day, weather.

Can you find clues to determine what time the story “the Cop and the Anthem” is set in? These clues can include details such as style of clothing, or the way a character speaks, etc.

1. Where does the action take place in “the Cop and the anthem”? How is it described? What is the function of the setting?
2. Does the setting in the story support the theme? If so, how?

Plot Twist

The term “**plot twist**” means a change (“twist”) in the direction or expected outcome of the plot of fictional work. This unexpected conclusion or climax often contains irony. It is a common practice in narration used to keep the interest of an audience, usually surprising them with a revelation. Some “twists” are foreshadowed and can thus be predicted by many readers, whereas others are a complete shock.

O. Henry stories are famous for their surprise endings, to the point that such an ending is often referred to as an "O. Henry ending." A twist of plot, which turns on an ironic or coincidental circumstance, is typical of O. Henry's stories.

Was the outcome of the plot of the story absolutely unexpected?

Did you anticipate what might happen at the end of the story?

CHARACTER

The number of characters in a short story is usually limited. There may be only one **main character** (protagonist). We usually meet this character at a crucial point in his life. Because short stories are *short*, there is no time to fully develop the character, so we may only come to know one or a few of his/her qualities. And because short stories are short, nothing is wasted in them – no character or detail of plot is there without a reason. Even **minor characters** are there for definite reasons. Perhaps the writer uses them to highlight the main character's personality, to introduce complications to the plot, or to explain events the narrator could not see.

1. Is the main character suggested through a description of setting?

2. Is the character suggested through actions?

3. How is the protagonist suggested by a description of physical appearance?

4. Are there any minor characters in the story? What function do they have?

Character Types

O. Henry presents two main character types: the homeless and the policemen. Find and examine the passages describing them.

How does the writer portray Soapy and different policemen?

Critical Thinking

When Soapy deserved being caught by the police for what he had done, he escaped from the arrest unexpectedly. Yet, when he did nothing and had just had good resolutions, he was suddenly under arrest. What does the author want to communicate to his readers through this ironic point?

What feelings were stirred up in Soapy when he heard the anthem? Do you think he was religious?

Mammon and The archer

O. Henry

Old Anthony Rockwall, retired manufacturer and proprietor of Rockwall's ureka soap, looked out the library window of his Fifth Avenue mansion and grinned. His neighbour to the right – the aristocratic clubman, G. Van Schuylight Suffolk-Jones – came out to his waiting motor-car, wrinkling a contumelious

nostril, as usual, at the Italian renaissance sculpture of the soap palace's front elevation.

"Stuck-up old statuette of nothing doing!" commented the ex-Soap King. "The Eden Musee'll get that old frozen Nesselrode yet if he don't watch out. I'll have this house painted red, white, and blue next summer and see if that'll make his Dutch nose turn up any higher."

And then Anthony Rockwall, who never cared for bells, went to the door of his library and shouted "Mike!" in the same voice that had once chipped off pieces of the welkin on the Kansas prairies.

"Tell my son," said Anthony to the answering menial³⁸, "to come in here before he leaves the house."

When young Rockwall entered the library the old man laid aside his newspaper, looked at him with a kindly grimness on his big, smooth, ruddy countenance, rumpled his mop of white hair with one hand and rattled the keys in his pocket with the other.

"Richard," said Anthony Rockwall, "what do you pay for the soap that you use?"

Richard, only six months home from college, was startled a little. He had not yet taken the measure of this sire of his, who was as full of unexpectednesses as a girl at her first party.

"Six dollars a dozen, I think, dad."

"And your clothes?"

"I suppose about sixty dollars, as a rule."

"You're a gentleman," said Anthony, decidedly. "I've heard of these young bloods spending \$24 a dozen for soap, and going over the hundred mark for clothes. You've got as much money to waste as any of 'em, and yet you stick to what's decent and moderate. Now I use the old Eureka--not only for sentiment, but it's the purest soap made. Whenever you pay more than 10 cents a cake for soap you buy bad perfumes and labels. But 50 cents is doing very well for a young

³⁸ Servant, footman

man in your generation, position and condition. As I said, you're a gentleman. They say it takes three generations to make one. They're off. Money'll do it as [slick](#) as soap grease. It's made you one. By hokey! it's almost made one of me. I'm nearly as impolite and disagreeable and ill-mannered as these two old Knickerbocker gents on each side of me that can't sleep of nights because I bought in between 'em."

"There are some things that money can't accomplish," remarked young Rockwall, rather gloomily.

"Now, don't say that," said old Anthony, shocked. "I bet my money on money every time. I've been through the encyclopaedia down to Y looking for something you can't buy with it; and I expect to have to take up the appendix next week. I'm for money against the field. Tell me something money won't buy."

"For one thing," answered Richard, [rankling](#) a little, "it won't buy one into the exclusive circles of society."

"Oho! won't it?" thundered the champion of the root of evil. "You tell me where your exclusive circles would be if the first Astor³⁹ hadn't had the money to pay for his steerage passage over?"

Richard sighed.

"And that's what I was coming to," said the old man, less [boisterously](#). "That's why I asked you to come in. There's something going wrong with you, boy. I've been noticing it for two weeks. Out with it. I guess I could lay my hands on eleven millions within twenty-four hours, besides the real estate. If it's your liver, there's the Rambler⁴⁰ down in the bay, coaled, and ready to steam down to the Bahamas⁴¹ in two days."

"Not a bad guess, dad; you haven't missed it far."

"Ah," said Anthony, keenly; "what's her name?"

³⁹ Astor refers to a rich American fur merchant, John Jacob Astor (1763 – 1848).

⁴⁰ Rambler is the name of Anthony Rockwall's yacht.

⁴¹ **The Bahamas** is an independent, English-speaking country consisting 29 islands. It is located in the Atlantic Ocean southeast of the United States, north-east of Cuba and north to east of the Caribbean Sea. The islands are famous for their favorable climate and fashionable resorts.

Richard began to walk up and down the library floor. There was enough comradeship and sympathy in this crude old father of his to draw his confidence.

"Why don't you ask her?" demanded old Anthony. "She'll jump at you⁴². You've got the money and the looks, and you're a decent boy. Your hands are clean. You've got no Eureka soap on 'em. You've been to college, but she'll overlook that."

"I haven't had a chance," said Richard.

"Make one," said Anthony. "Take her for a walk in the park, or a straw ride, or walk home with her from church Chance! Pshaw!"

"You don't know the social mill, dad. She's part of the stream that turns it. Every hour and minute of her time is arranged for days in advance. I must have that girl, dad, or this town is a blackjack swamp forevermore. And I can't write it--I can't do that."

"Tut!" said the old man. "Do you mean to tell me that with all the money I've got you can't get an hour or two of a girl's time for yourself?"

"I've put it off too late. She's going to sail for Europe at noon day after to-morrow for a two years' stay. I'm to see her alone to-morrow evening for a few minutes. She's at Larchmont now at her aunt's. I can't go there. But I'm allowed to meet her with a cab at the Grand Central Station to-morrow evening at the 8.30 train. We drive down Broadway⁴³ to Wallack's at a gallop, where her mother and a box party⁴⁴ will be waiting for us in the lobby. Do you think she would listen to a declaration from me during that six or eight minutes under those circumstances? No. And what chance would I have in the theatre or afterward? None. No, dad, this is one tangle that your money can't unravel. We can't buy one minute of time with cash; if we could, rich people would live longer. There's no hope of getting a talk with Miss Lantry before she sails."

"All right, Richard, my boy," said old Anthony, cheerfully. "You may run along down to your club now. I'm glad it ain't your liver. But don't forget to burn a few

⁴² She is sure to accept your proposal.

⁴³ A street in Manhattan that passes through Times Square; famous for its theaters

⁴⁴ Box party means a number of people who will occupy the same box at the theatre

punk sticks in the joss house⁴⁵ to the great god Mazuma⁴⁶ from time to time. You say money won't buy time? Well, of course, you can't order eternity wrapped up and delivered at your residence for a price, but I've seen Father Time get pretty bad stone bruises on his heels when he walked through the gold diggings."

That night came Aunt Ellen, gentle, sentimental, wrinkled, sighing, oppressed by wealth, in to Brother Anthony at his evening paper, and began discourse on the subject of lovers' woes.

"He told me all about it," said brother Anthony, yawning. "I told him my bank account was at his service. And then he began to knock money. Said money couldn't help. Said the rules of society couldn't be backed⁴⁷ for a yard by a team of ten-millionaires."

"Oh, Anthony," sighed Aunt Ellen, "I wish you would not think so much of money. Wealth is nothing where a true affection is concerned. Love is all - powerful. If he only had spoken earlier! She could not have refused our Richard. But now I fear it is too late. He will have no opportunity to address her. All your gold cannot bring happiness to your son."

At eight o'clock the next evening Aunt Ellen took a quaint old gold ring from a moth-eaten case and gave it to Richard.

"Wear it to-night, nephew," she begged. "Your mother gave it to me. Good luck in love she said it brought. She asked me to give it to you when you had found the one you loved."

Young Rockwall took the ring reverently and tried it on his smallest finger. It slipped as far as the second joint and stopped. He took it off and stuffed it into his vest pocket, after the manner of man. And then he 'phoned for his cab.

At the station he captured Miss Lantry out of the gadding mob at eight thirty-two.

"We mustn't keep mamma and the others waiting," said she.

⁴⁵ Joss house (a corrupted version of the Portuguese word for "God") is a place for worshipping a variety of indigenous Chinese deities, saints and supernatural beings from Buddhism, Confucianism, etc.

⁴⁶ "Mazuma" is Yiddish (a non-territorial High German language of Jewish origin. Unlike other Germanic languages, Yiddish is written with the Hebrew alphabet as opposed to a Latin alphabet) slang for money.

⁴⁷ Here "back" means to "change"

"To Wallack's Theatre as fast as you can drive!" said Richard loyally.

They whirled up Forty-second to Broadway, and then down the white-starred lane that leads from the soft meadows of sunset to the rocky hills of morning.

At Thirty-fourth Street young Richard quickly thrust up the trap and ordered the cabman to stop.

"I've dropped a ring," he apologized, as he climbed out. "It was my mother's, and I'd hate to lose it. I won't detain you a minute – I saw where it fell."

In less than a minute he was back in the cab with the ring.

But within that minute a crosstown car had stopped directly in front of the cab. The cabman tried to pass to the left, but a heavy express wagon cut him off. He tried the right, and had to back away from a furniture van that had no business to be there. He tried to back out, but dropped his reins and swore dutifully. He was blockaded in a tangled mess of vehicles and horses.

One of those street blockades had occurred that sometimes tie up commerce and movement quite suddenly in the big city.

"Why don't you drive on?" said Miss Lantry, impatiently. "We'll be late."

Richard stood up in the cab and looked around. He saw a congested flood of wagons, trucks, cabs, vans and street cars filling the vast space where Broadway, Sixth Avenue and Thirly-fourth street cross one another as a twenty-six inch maiden fills her twenty-two inch girdle. And still from all the cross streets they were hurrying and rattling toward the converging point at full speed, and hurling themselves into the struggling mass, locking wheels and adding their drivers' imprecations to the clamour. The entire traffic of Manhattan⁴⁸ seemed to have jammed itself around them. The oldest New Yorker among the thousands of spectators that lined the sidewalks had not witnessed a street blockade of the proportions of this one.

⁴⁸ **Manhattan** is one of the five boroughs of New York City, located primarily on **Manhattan Island** at the mouth of the Hudson River.

"I'm very sorry," said Richard, as he resumed his seat, "but it looks as if we are stuck. They won't get this [jumble](#) loosened up in an hour. It was my fault. If I hadn't dropped the ring we – "Let me see the ring," said Miss Lantry. "Now that it can't be helped, I don't care. I think theatres are stupid, anyway."

At 11 o'clock that night somebody tapped lightly on Anthony Rockwall's door.

"Come in," shouted Anthony, who was in a red dressing-gown, reading a book of piratical adventures.

Somebody was Aunt Ellen, looking like a grey-haired angel that had been left on earth by mistake.

"They're engaged, Anthony," she said, softly. "She has promised to marry our Richard. On their way to the theatre there was a street blockade, and it was two hours before their cab could get out of it.

"And oh, Brother Anthony, don't ever boast of the power of money again. A little emblem of true love – a little ring that symbolized unending and [unmercenary](#) affection – was the cause of our Richard finding his happiness. He dropped it in the street, and got out to recover it. And before they could continue the blockade occurred. He spoke to his love and won her there while the cab was hemmed in. Money is dross compared with true love, Anthony."

"All right," said old Anthony. "I'm glad the boy has got what he wanted. I told him I wouldn't spare any expense in the matter if – "

"But, brother Anthony, what good could your money have done?"

"Sister," said Anthony Rockwall. "I've got my pirate in a devil of a scrape. His ship has just been scuttled, and he's too good a judge of the value of money to let drown. I wish you would let me go on with this chapter."

The story should end here. I wish it would as heartily as you who read it wish it did. But we must go to the bottom of the well for truth.

The next day a person with red hands and a blue polka-dot necktie, who called himself Kelly, called at Anthony Rockwall's house, and was at once received in the library.

"Well," said Anthony, reaching for his check-book, "it was a good bilin' of soap. Let's see--you had \$5,000 in cash."

"I paid out \$300 more of my own," said Kelly. "I had to go a little above the estimate. I got the express wagons and cabs mostly for \$5; but the trucks and two-horse teams mostly raised me to \$10. The motormen wanted \$10, and some of the loaded teams \$20. The cops struck me hardest--\$50 I paid two, and the rest \$20 and \$25. But didn't it work beautiful, Mr. Rockwall? I'm glad William A. Brady wasn't onto that little outdoor vehicle mob scene. I wouldn't want William to break his heart with jealousy. And never a rehearsal, either! The boys was on time to the fraction of a second. It was two hours before a snake could get below Greeley's statue."⁴⁹

"Thirteen hundred – there you are, Kelly," said Anthony, tearing off a check. "Your thousand, and the \$300 you were out. You don't despise money, do you, Kelly?"

"Me?" said Kelly. "I can lick the man that invented poverty."

Anthony called Kelly when he was at the door.

"You didn't notice," said he, "anywhere in the tie-up, a kind of a fat boy without any clothes on shooting arrows around with a bow, did you?"

"Why, no," said Kelly, mystified. "I didn't. If he was like you say, maybe the cops pinched him before I got there."

"I thought the little rascal wouldn't be on hand," chuckled Anthony.
"Good-by, Kelly."

Strategy for Understanding, Analysis, and Interpretation

⁴⁹ Greeley's statue is a monument to Horace Greeley (an American politician 1811 – 1872)

Get engaged with the text and apply various strategies:

Identify the cultural and historical context.

Identify the problem the author is trying to resolve.

Identify the author's attitude.

Identify deeper implications insightfully from the text.

Focus on literary and language means.

About Mammon and the Archer

“Mammon and the Archer,” which is considered to be one of O. Henry’s best stories, depicts a rich entrepreneur, Anthony Rockwall, who does not belong to the aristocratic layer but whose son is trying to marry one of the aristocratic daughters. Anthony believes that money can buy everything and tries to prove his point by using his money to stage an elaborate event that helps his son win his bride.

Build Your Vocabulary

Grin; contumelious; grimness; ruddy; countenance; rumped; slick; rankle; boisterously; gad; whirl; girdle; converge; imprecations; clamour; jumble; unmercenary; pinch; chuckle.

Comprehension Check

1. Why does one of Anthony Rockwall's neighbours turn his nose up at a renaissance sculpture in front of Anthony's home? How does Anthony respond to this?
2. Why is Richard so unhappy and desperate? How does his father encourage him?
3. What does Anthony Rockwall think about money?
4. Anthony tells his son, "Richard, I'm for money against the field. Tell me something money won't buy." Does Richard believe that money can buy love?
5. How does the author characterize Aunt Ellen?
6. Why does Aunt Ellen give Richard his mother's ring the next evening? What does the ring symbolize?
7. Does Anthony Rockwall believe that money can buy him the time he needs to propose to Miss Lantry?

Your Response to Literature

Can money buy love? Is your thinking as materialistic as Anthony Rockwall's? Do you think that "money makes the world go round"? Rockwall's entire outlook on life is defined by money, what about yours?

8. Why does Aunt Ellen criticize Anthony?
9. What was the cause of the fortuitous traffic jam?
10. Does either Anthony Rockwall or Aunt Ellen truly know under what circumstances were Richard and Miss Lantry engaged? Can the reader make a guess?

Reading between Lines

Explain the meaning of the statements below, discuss and interpret them:

1. *"I bet my money on money every time. I've been through the encyclopedia down to Y looking for something you can't buy with it; and I expect to have to take up the appendix next time. I'm for money against the field."*
2. *"In the same voice that had once chipped off pieces of the welkin on the Kansas prairies."*

"Welkin" means heavens, the vault of the sky. Thus, Anthony's voice must be so loud that he has broken pieces off heaven. As for the "Kansas prairies," according

to critics, Anthony most likely grew up in Kansas. That he has been able to leave the prairie and make his own fortune, and that he now lives among the aristocrats of New York, are further indications of his personal strength.

3. *"In a red dressing gown, reading a book of piratical adventures."*

Pirates are notorious for their crimes such as murder and theft. Is it accidental that Anthony is reading a book of piratical adventures?

According to critics, red, a color often associated with the devil, makes Anthony appear devil-like, especially when he is reading a story about pirates. Do you think that the color can really be symbolic?

4. *"I've got my pirate in a devil of a scrape. His ship has just been scuttled, and he's too good a judge of the value of money to let drown."*

What do the words devil and evil refer to?

5. *"The Eden Musee'll get that old frozen Nesselrode itself yet he don't watch out."*

"*Musée* is the French word for "museum," and Eden is the garden in the Bible where Adam and Eve, the first created man and woman, dwelled until they were expelled for their sins.

According to some critics O'Henry chose the word "Eden" to increase the religious quality of the story.

Can you detect any hidden meaning behind it?

6. *"Thundered the champion of the root of evil."*

Is it the reference about Anthony's loud voice?

Why is he called "the champion of the root of evil"? What language device is it?

7. *"You didn't notice anywhere in the tie-up, a kind of a fat boy without any clothes on shooting arrows around with a bow, did you?"*

Who is "a fat boy without any clothes on shooting arrows around with a bow"?

Retelling of a Literary Work

Retell the story from different perspectives: As if you were Anthony Rockwall, Aunt Ellen, Richard, Miss Lantry, and Kelly. Are there any changes in the plot by this shift in perspective?

Cultural and Historical Context

What culture does the story come from? Does it influence the text?

What historical period does the story come from? How does this historical period influence the text?

Early Twentieth-Century Rules of Courtship

The dating rules in the early twentieth century were extremely different from the dating rituals of today. This was especially true among the aristocracy, which observed strict, formal dating rules. Since Anthony was not born into the aristocracy, he is not familiar with these rules, as Richard explains to him: "You don't know the social mill, dad. She's part of the stream that turns it. Every hour and minute of her time is arranged for days in advance." Miss Lantry is part of the social elite, so her time is managed very carefully. Men interested in dating a lady, could not just go over to her house to see her. They had to receive permission beforehand.

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

1. Does the author allow the reader to make an accurate assessment as to whether money or love triumphs in the end?
2. O'Henry gives the readers the values of his two main characters: Anthony Rockwall – whose entire outlook on life is defined by money, and Aunt Ellen – who has a strong belief that love will triumph in the end. In Anthony's mind, money (Mammon) has triumphed over love (Cupid). Ellen does not know that Anthony paid for the traffic jam and she believes that love — as symbolized by the ring — has prevailed. Does the author reveal his opinion about the matter? Does the author answer to the question where the truth lies?

3. Does the reader know what actually takes place in the carriage?
4. Is the ending clear to the reader? If not, indicate the causes of ambiguity.
5. Is it possible that both the ring (love) and Anthony's traffic jam (money) play a part in Richard's successful engagement?
6. Why does the author give such a tricky ending?

Language and Literature

1. Explain the use of the literary elements of a story: theme, plot, setting, character, point of view.
2. Define and identify metaphor and explain the author's purpose for using them.
3. Identify symbols within the text and evaluate an author's use of symbolism to convey ideas.
4. Determine the author's style, identifying particular word choices and figurative language.

Theme

Try to identify the central idea of the story.

What is the main theme of the story?

Thematic vocabulary

Find the vocabulary in the text, which refer to mammon (money) and archer (love).

Money versus Love

Money and love are rival themes and their relationship is quite complex. How can we recognize the theme in this story? Is the theme in the story connected with the author's message? Is the author's outlook clear to the reader?

Plot Twist

Was the outcome of the plot of the story absolutely unexpected?
Did you anticipate what might happen at the end of the story?

Setting

1. Is there any information in the story that would help you guess the time, even if it were not stated precisely?
2. Some writers give vague indications of the setting. Is O'Henry among them?
3. Where does the action take place? How is it described? What is the function of the setting?
4. Does setting in the story support the theme? If so, how?

The Title

Metaphor

In the title O'Henry makes use of metaphor.

Two major senses of the term “metaphor” can be outlined: The first sense identifies metaphor as a type of language: “A figure of speech in which a name or descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable; an instance of this [is] a metaphorical expression.” The second sense identifies metaphor as a form of conceptual representation: “A thing considered as representative of some other (usually abstract) thing: A symbol.”⁵⁰

The Mammon (the god of riches of Ancient Syrians) is a symbol of wealth, which has an evil power. The Archer stands for Cupid, the Roman love-god, usually shown in pictures and statues as a chubby naked boy with bow and arrow. Cupid is used as a symbol of love. "Mammon" is the word used to signify wealth in the New Testament of the Bible. The word is used in Savior's famous sermon on the mount, in which he says that man cannot serve both God and mammon. In addition, in medieval times, scholars defined seven deadly sins, each of which was represented by a corresponding archdemon. For avarice, or greed, the archdemon was named Mammon. By using a word with such religious associations, O'Henry elevates the stage for the ideological battle between Mammon and the Archer—money and love.

What effect does the title create?

Character

O'Henry's short stories have a strong emphasis on characterization.

What is his method of presenting characters? How does he portray the characters through their actions, speech, etc.?

Character Types

⁵⁰ The Oxford English Dictionary, 1996.

O' Henry was sometimes criticized by keeping his characters one dimensional. In Mammon and The Archer O. Henry presents two main character types: Anthony Rockwall, whose entire outlook on life is defined by money, and Aunt Ellen who has a strong belief that love will triumph in the end. Find and examine the passages describing them.

Are there any minor characters in the story? What function do they have?

Style

Surprise Ending

O. Henry's trademark style in his short stories is a surprise ending. The reader is led to believe one thing at first but was then shown that the opposite was true, when a story ends differently from what the reader had expected.

Is it true of "Mammon and the Archer"? At first, the reader is led to believe, like Ellen, that it was the ring that led to the successful engagement. What happens at the end of the story? Why does it have a surprise ending?

Surprise Ending and Irony

Surprise ending can be considered ironic since there is difference between *what is* and *what is expected*. "Mammon And The Archer" is typical of O'Henry's brief tales that end with an ironic twist.

Discuss the ironic twist in the story.

This elaborate style of speech is also used when describing some of the characters.

What language devices does he employ when describing Anthony Rockwall and Aunt Ellen? Illustrate your answers with examples.

O'Henry possesses one of the largest vocabularies among his contemporary writers. Sometimes he employs inflated circumlocution.

Does the author resort to stylistically colored vocabulary? Find the examples.

Language Devices

An **allusion** is a figure of speech that makes a reference to, or representation of, a place, event, literary work, myth, or work of art, either directly or by implication. It is usually an implicit reference, perhaps to another work of literature or art, to a person or an event. Allusion is closely related with a linguistic presupposition.

A presupposition is background knowledge relating to an utterance that must be mutually known by the speaker and addressee.

According to literary critics, the title of the story is a mocking allusion to the gods – mammon (the God of riches of ancient Syrians, the symbol of wealth, especially the wealth which has evil power) and archer (Cupid, the Roman love-god).

Anthony called Kelly when he was at the door.

"You didn't notice," said he, "anywhere in the tie-up, a kind of a fat boy without any clothes on shooting arrows around with a bow, did you?"

"Why, no," said Kelly, mystified. "I didn't. If he was like you say, maybe the cops pinched him before I got there."

*"I thought the little rascal wouldn't be on hand," chuckled Anthony.
"Good-by, Kelly."*

What do you think, Anthony really meant “a fat boy” or he was alluding to Cupid?

Why could not Kelly understand the hint?

Stylistic inversion

Stylistic inversion is a reversed word-order. In spite of fixed word-order which is characteristic to the English language, inversion should not be regarded as a violation of the norms of Standard English. This stylistic device aims at attaching logical stress or additional emotional coloring to the surface meaning of the utterance.

“That night came Aunt Ellen, gentle, sentimental, wrinkled, sighing, oppressed by wealth, in to Brother Anthony at his evening paper, and began discourse on the subject of lovers' woes. Good luck in love she said it brought.”

Why does the author use the front position of the object (“good luck in love she said it brought”)?

Identify Language Devices

“Aunt Ellen, looking like a grey-haired angel that had been left on earth by mistake.”

What stylistic device is “like a grey-haired angel”?

Slang and Americanisms

Comment on slang and Americanisms in the text.

Are there any ungrammatical expressions in the text?

Individual style

Individual style makes the writer's works easily recognizable.

After reading O'Henry's two short stories, can you recognize his style if you happen to read his other short stories? What makes his style so singular?

Writing Skills Focus

Plot summary

Write a plot summary of the story in short essay form (not more than four or five paragraphs). You can use the following plan:

1. Tell briefly what the story is about and where it takes place.
2. In chronological order include the most important events in the story.
3. Tell what happens at the end of the story.

A Cup of Tea

Katherine Mansfield

Rosemary Fell was not exactly beautiful. No, you couldn't have called her beautiful. Pretty? Well, if you took her to pieces... But why be so cruel as to take anyone to pieces? She was young, brilliant, extremely modem, exquisitely well dressed, amazingly well read in the newest of the new books, and her parties were

the most delicious mixture of the really important people and... artists - quaint creatures, discoveries of hers, some of them too terrifying for words, but others quite presentable and amusing.

Rosemary had been married two years. She had a duck of a boy. No, not Peter - Michael. And her husband absolutely adored her. They were rich, really rich, not just comfortably well off, which is odious and stuffy and sounds like one's grandparents. But if Rosemary wanted to shop she would go to Paris as you and I would go to Bond Street. If she wanted to buy flowers, the car pulled up at that perfect shop in Regent Street, and Rosemary inside the shop just gazed in her dazzled, rather exotic way, and said: "I want those and those and those. Give me four bunches of those. And that jar of roses. Yes, I'll have all the roses in the jar. No, no lilac. I hate lilac. It's got no shape." The attendant bowed and put the lilac out of sight, as though this was only too true; lilac was dreadfully shapeless. "Give me those stumpy little tulips. Those red and white ones." And she was followed to the car by a thin shop-girl staggering under an immense white paper armful that looked like a baby in long clothes....

One winter afternoon she had been buying something in a little antique shop in Curzon Street. It was a shop she liked. For one thing, one usually had it to oneself. And then the man who kept it was ridiculously fond of serving her. He beamed whenever she came in. He clasped his hands; he was so gratified he could scarcely speak. Flattery, of course. All the same, there was something...

"You see, madam," he would explain in his low respectful tones, "I love my things. I would rather not part with them than sell them to someone who does not appreciate them, who has not that fine feeling which is so rare..." And, breathing deeply, he unrolled a tiny square of blue velvet and pressed it on the glass counter with his pale finger-tips.

To-day it was a little box. He had been keeping it for her. He had shown it to nobody as yet. An exquisite little enamel box with a glaze so fine it looked as though it had been baked in cream. On the lid a minute⁵¹ creature stood under a flowery tree, and a more minute creature still had her arms round his neck. Her hat, really no bigger than a geranium petal, hung from a branch; it had green ribbons. And there was a pink cloud like a watchful cherub floating above their heads. Rosemary took her hands out of her long gloves. She always took off her gloves to examine such things. Yes, she liked it very much. She loved it; it was a great duck. She must have it. And, turning the creamy box, opening and shutting

⁵¹ Very small

it, she couldn't help noticing how charming her hands were against the blue velvet. The shopman, in some dim cavern of his mind, may have dared to think so too. For he took a pencil, leant over the counter, and his pale, bloodless fingers crept timidly towards those rosy, flashing ones, as he murmured gently: "If I may venture to point out to madam, the flowers on the little lady's bodice."

"Charming!" Rosemary admired the flowers. But what was the price? For a moment the shopman did not seem to hear. Then a murmur reached her.

"Twenty-eight guineas, madam."

"Twenty-eight guineas." Rosemary gave no sign. She laid the little box down; she buttoned her gloves again. Twenty-eight guineas. Even if one is rich... She looked vague. She stared at a plump tea-kettle like a plump hen above the shopman's head, and her voice was dreamy as she answered: "Well, keep it for me - will you? I'll..."

But the shopman had already bowed as though keeping it for her was all any human being could ask. He would be willing, of course, to keep it for her for ever.

The discreet door shut with a click. She was outside on the step, gazing at the winter afternoon. Rain was falling, and with the rain it seemed the dark came too, spinning down like ashes. There was a cold bitter taste in the air, and the new-lighted lamps looked sad. Sad were the lights in the houses opposite. Dimly they burned as if regretting something. And people hurried by, hidden under their hateful umbrellas. Rosemary felt a strange pang. She pressed her muff against her breast; she wished she had the little box, too, to cling to. Of course the car was there. She'd only to cross the pavement. But still she waited. There are moments, horrible moments in life, when one emerges from shelter and looks out, and it's awful. One oughtn't to give way to them. One ought to go home and have an extra-special tea. But at the very instant of thinking that, a young girl, thin, dark, shadowy - where had she come from? - was standing at Rosemary's elbow and a voice like a sigh, almost like a sob, breathed: "Madam, may I speak to you a moment?"

"Speak to me?" Rosemary turned. She saw a little battered creature with enormous eyes, someone quite young, no older than herself, who clutched at her coat-collar with reddened hands, and shivered as though she had just come out of the water.

"M-madam, stammered the voice. Would you let me have the price of a cup of

tea?"

"A cup of tea?" There was something simple, sincere in that voice; it wasn't in the least the voice of a beggar. "Then have you no money at all?" asked Rosemary.

"None, madam," came the answer.

"How extraordinary!" Rosemary peered through the dusk and the girl gazed back at her. How more than extraordinary! And suddenly it seemed to Rosemary such an adventure. It was like something out of a novel by Dostoevsky, this meeting in the dusk. Supposing she took the girl home? Supposing she did do one of those things she was always reading about or seeing on the stage, what would happen? It would be thrilling. And she heard herself saying afterwards to the amazement of her friends: "I simply took her home with me," as she stepped forward and said to that dim person beside her: "Come home to tea with me."

The girl drew back startled. She even stopped shivering for a moment. Rosemary put out a hand and touched her arm. "I mean it," she said, smiling. And she felt how simple and kind her smile was. "Why won't you? Do. Come home with me now in my car and have tea."

"You - you don't mean it, madam," said the girl, and there was pain in her voice.

"But I do," cried Rosemary. "I want you to. To please me. Come along."

The girl put her fingers to her lips and her eyes devoured Rosemary. "You're - you're not taking me to the police station?" she stammered.

"The police station!" Rosemary laughed out. "Why should I be so cruel? No, I only want to make you warm and to hear - anything you care to tell me."

Hungry people are easily led. The footman held the door of the car open, and a moment later they were skimming through the dusk.

"There!" said Rosemary. She had a feeling of triumph as she slipped her hand through the velvet strap. She could have said, "Now I've got you," as she gazed at the little captive she had netted. But of course she meant it kindly. Oh, more than kindly. She was going to prove to this girl that - wonderful things did happen in life, that - fairy godmothers were real, that - rich people had hearts, and that women were sisters. She turned impulsively, saying'. "Don't be frightened. After

all, why shouldn't you come back with me? We're both women. If I'm the more fortunate, you ought to expect..."

But happily at that moment, for she didn't know how the sentence was going to end, the car stopped. The bell was rung, the door opened, and with a charming, protecting, almost embracing movement, Rosemary drew the other into the hall. Warmth, softness, light, a sweet scent, all those things so familiar to her she never even thought about them, she watched that other receive. It was fascinating. She was like the rich little girl in her nursery with all the cupboards to open, all the boxes to unpack.

"Come, come upstairs," said Rosemary, longing to begin to be generous. "Come up to my room." And, besides, she wanted to spare this poor little thing from being stared at by the servants; she decided as they mounted the stairs she would not even ring to Jeanne, but take off her things by herself. The great things were to be natural!

And "There!" cried Rosemary again, as they reached her beautiful big bedroom with the curtains drawn, the fire leaping on her wonderful lacquer furniture, her gold cushions and the primrose and blue rugs.

The girl stood just inside the door; she seemed dazed. But Rosemary didn't mind that.

"Come and sit down," she cried, dragging her big chair up to the fire, "in this comfy chair. Come and get warm. You look so dreadfully cold."

"I daren't, madam," said the girl, and she edged backwards.

"Oh, please," - Rosemary ran forward - "you mustn't be frightened, you mustn't, really. Sit down, when I've taken off my things we shall go into the next room and have tea and be cozy. Why are you afraid?" And gently she half pushed the thin figure into its deep [cradle](#).

But there was no answer. The girl stayed just as she had been put, with her hands by her sides and her mouth slightly open. To be quite sincere, she looked rather stupid. But Rosemary wouldn't acknowledge it. She leant over her, saying:

"Won't you take off your hat? Your pretty hair is all wet. And one is so much more comfortable without a hat, isn't one?"

There was a whisper that sounded like "Very good, madam," and the crushed hat was taken off.

"And let me help you off with your coat, too," said Rosemary.

The girl stood up. But she held on to the chair with one hand and let Rosemary pull. It was quite an effort. The other scarcely helped her at all. She seemed to **stagger** like a child, and the thought came and went through Rosemary's mind, that if people wanted helping they must respond a little, just a little, otherwise it became very difficult indeed. And what was she to do with the coat now? She left it on the floor, and the hat too. She was just going to take a cigarette off the mantelpiece when the girl said quickly, but so lightly and strangely: "I'm very sorry, madam, but I'm going to faint. I shall go off, madam, if I don't have something."

"Good heavens, how thoughtless I am!" Rosemary rushed to the bell.

"Tea! Tea at once! And some brandy immediately!"

The maid was gone again, but the girl almost cried out: "No, I don't want no brandy. * I never drink brandy. It's a cup of tea I want, madam." And she burst into tears.

It was a terrible and fascinating moment. Rosemary knelt beside her chair.

"Don't cry, poor little thing," she said. "Don't cry." And she gave the other her lace handkerchief. She really was touched beyond words. She put her arm round those thin, bird-like shoulders.

Now at last the other forgot to be shy, forgot everything except that they were both women, and gasped out: "I can't go on no longer like this. I can't bear it. I can't bear it. I shall do away with myself. I can't bear no more."

"You shan't have to. I'll look after you. Don't cry any more. Don't you see what a good thing it was that you met me? We'll have tea and you'll tell me everything. And I shall arrange something. I promise. Do stop crying. It's so exhausting. Please!"

The other did stop just in time for Rosemary to get up before the tea came. She

had the table placed between them. She plied⁵² the poor little creature with everything, all the sandwiches, all the bread and butter, and every time her cup was empty she filled it with tea, cream and sugar. People always said sugar was so nourishing. As for herself she didn't eat; she smoked and looked away tactfully so that the other should not be shy.

And really the effect of that slight meal was marvelous. When the tea-table was carried away a new being, a light, frail creature with tangled hair, dark lips, deep, lighted eyes, lay back in the big chair in a kind of sweet languor, looking at the blaze. Rosemary lit a fresh cigarette; it was time to begin.

"And when did you have your last meal?" she asked softly.

But at that moment the door-handle turned.

"Rosemary, may I come in?" It was Philip.

"Of course."

He came in. "Oh, I'm so sorry," he said, and stopped and stared.

"It's quite all right," said Rosemary, smiling. "This is my friend, Miss – "

"Smith, madam," said the languid figure, who was strangely still and unafraid.

"Smith," said Rosemary. "We are going to have a little talk."

"Oh yes," said Philip. "Quite," and his eye caught sight of the coat and hat on the floor. He came over to the fire and turned his back to it. "It's a beastly afternoon," he said curiously, still looking at that listless figure, looking at its hands and boots, and then at Rosemary again.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Rosemary enthusiastically. "Vile."

Philip smiled his charming smile. "As a matter of fact," said he, "I wanted you to come into the library for a moment. Would you? Will Miss Smith excuse us?"

The big eyes were raised to him, but Rosemary answered for her: "Of course she will." And they went out of the room together.

⁵² Supplied with in a pressing manner

"I say," said Philip, when they were alone. "Explain. Who is she? What does it all mean?"

Rosemary, laughing, leaned against the door and said: "I picked her up in Curzon Street. Really. She's a real pick-up. She asked me for the price of a cup of tea, and I brought her home with me. "

"But what on earth are you going to do with her?" cried Philip.

"Be nice to her," said Rosemary quickly. "Be frightfully nice to her. Look after her. I don't know how. We haven't talked yet. But show her - treat her - make her feel -"

"My darling girl," said Philip, "you're quite mad, you know. It simply can't be done."

"I knew you'd say that," retorted Rosemary. Why not? I want to. Isn't that a reason? And besides, one's always reading about these things. I decided -"

"But," said Philip slowly, and he cut the end of a cigar, "she's so astonishingly pretty."

"Pretty?" Rosemary was so surprised that she blushed. "Do you think so? I - I hadn't thought about it."

"Good Lord!" Philip struck a match. "She's absolutely lovely. Look again, my child. I was bowled over when I came into your room just now. However, I think you're making a ghastly mistake. Sorry, darling, if I'm crude and all that. But let me know if Miss Smith is going to dine with us in time for me to look up *The Milliner's Gazette*."

"You absurd creature!" said Rosemary, and she went out of the library, but not back to her bedroom. She went to her writing-room and sat down at her desk. Pretty! Absolutely lovely! Bowled over! Her heart beat like a heavy bell. Pretty! Lovely! She drew her check-book towards her. But no, checks would be no use, of course. She opened a drawer and took out five pound notes, looked at them, put two back, and holding the three squeezed in her hand, she went back to her bedroom.

Half an hour later Philip was still in the library, when Rosemary came in.

"I only wanted to tell you," said she, and she leaned against the door again and looked at him with her dazzled exotic gaze, "Miss Smith won't dine with us to-night."

Philip put down the paper. "Oh, what's happened? Previous engagement?"

Rosemary came over and sat down on his knee. "She insisted on going," said she, "so I gave the poor little thing a present of money. I couldn't keep her against her will, could I?" she added softly.

Rosemary had just done her hair, darkened her eyes a little and put on her pearls. She put up her hands and touched Philip's cheeks.

"Do you like me?" said she, and her tone, sweet, husky, troubled him.

"I like you awfully," he said, and he held her tighter. "Kiss me."

There was a pause.

Then Rosemary said dreamily: "I saw a fascinating little box to-day. It cost twenty-eight guineas. May I have it?"

Philip jumped her on his knee. "You may, little wasteful one," said he.

But that was not really what Rosemary wanted to say.

"Philip," she whispered, and she pressed his head against her bosom, "am I pretty?"

Strategy for Understanding, Analysis, and Interpretation

1. Consider the historical and cultural context.
2. Draw Inferences on what you have read.
3. Get engaged with the text and apply various strategies:

Identify the narrator's voice

Identify deeper implications insightfully from the text.

Focus on literary and language means.

About the Author

Katherine Mansfield played an important role in the genre of the short story. She is recognized as innovative and psychologically acute, one of the pioneers of the avant-garde in the creation of short story. Her influence on other writers throughout the twentieth century was immeasurable. She is regarded as one of the most talented writers of the modern short story in English. Her language is clear, sharp, and precise. She "is a central figure in the development of the modern short story," noted *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. "An early practitioner of stream-of-consciousness narration, she applied this technique to create stories based on the illumination of character rather than the contrivances of plot." Virginia Woolf admitted that Katherine was the only writer whose writing she was jealous of. A number of writers, among them Aldous Huxley, borrowed not only her words, but also her character for their novels.

Katherine Mansfield was born in New Zealand. She came to England at the age of nineteen and all within seven months of her arrival, she had several love affairs. Her unconventional lifestyle embarrassed her family and resulted in her mother cutting Katherine from her will. Subsequently she lived on her own and had numerous love affairs. She became a much more complex person "sexually reckless and socially excitable." She is characterized as courageous, contradictory, self-willed, single-minded and argumentative in both her life and her work.

Cultural and Historical Context

The beginning of the twentieth century was a time of great change due to technological advances, scientific theories and capitalism. The 1920s saw enormous political and social disturbance throughout Europe: the period between the two world wars, the new Soviet Union, fascism. The First World War compounded this disturbance. Society was left fragmented and disillusioned and the Modernists felt that the traditional mode of representing the world in literature, specifically realism, was outdated and no longer appropriate. Irwing Howe in his famous book “The Idea of Modern” remarks: “Modern writers find that they begin to work at a moment when the culture is marked by a prevalent style of perception and feeling; and their modernity consists in a revolt against the official order.”⁵³ At the beginning of the 20th century, writers broke with all traditions and conventions in the writing. Between 1910 and 1939 modernism was the most important artistic movement. It is defined as ‘a breaking away from established rules, traditions and conventions, fresh ways of looking at man’s position and function in the universe and many (in some cases remarkable) experiments in form and style.’

*One should distinguish modern from contemporary. The contemporary refers to time, while the modern refers to style.

About a Cup of Tea

Rosemary Fell, a rich woman, goes shopping and walks into Miss Smith, a poor girl who asks for money for a cup of tea. Rosemary decides to help the poor girl as she feels inspired by the stories by Dostoevsky that she has been reading. She drives her to her house. There the girl starts sobbing; the tea and food is brought in, she eats while Rosemary smokes. Then Philip comes in and has a talk with Rosemary in the library. He says he disapproves and he finds Miss Smith pretty; jealous, Rosemary gives three pound notes to the girl and sees her off.

⁵³ Howe I. “the Idea of modern,”

Build Your Vocabulary

What do the following words mean?

Exquisitely; quaint; presentable; odious; dazzle; ridiculous; beam; clasp; glaze; cherub; bodice; discreet; emerge; shadowy; battered; cradle; stagger; languor; blaze; languid; listless; squeeze; husky; wasteful.

Retelling of a Literary Work

Retell the story from the perspective of the main character – Rosemary.

Reading between Lines

"And let me help you off with your coat, too," said Rosemary. The girl stood up. But she held on to the chair with one hand and let Rosemary pull. It was quite an effort. The other scarcely helped her at all. She seemed to stagger like a child, and the thought came and went through Rosemary's mind, that if people wanted helping they must respond a little, just a little, otherwise it became very difficult indeed. And what was she to do with the coat now? She left it on the floor, and the hat too."

What do you learn about Rosemary from the above episode?

Literary and Language Focus

1. Explain the use of the literary elements of a story: theme, character, point of view.

2. Determine the author's style, identifying particular word choices and figurative language.

1. What is the message of the author?
2. How does the author open the story?
3. In your opinion, where does the climax come in the story?

Point of View

Point of view is the perspective from which a story is told. For example, if a story is told by the character within the story, then it is told from the first-person point of view. The point of view can sometimes indirectly establish the author's intentions. Point of view pertains to who tells the story and how it is told.

Modernist writers experimented with point of view. **The third-person subjective** – both its limited and omniscient variants became the most popular narrative perspectives during the twentieth century.

The Third Person Subjective

In the third-person subjective the narrator only describes events perceived and information known by a character at its narrowest and most subjective scope. The story reads as though the viewpoint character were narrating it; it is very similar to the first person, in that it allows in-depth revelation of the character's personality, but it uses third-person grammar.

Third Person Omniscient

Third-person omniscient tells the thoughts, feelings, etc. of more than one character. An omniscient narrator has omniscient knowledge (who “knows everything”) of time, people, places and events.

The narrator cannot tell the reader things that the main character does not know, or depict scenes at which the main character is not present – but the text is written in the third person. It gives the reader access to the character's thoughts and feelings. This means that readers are privy to only character's perspective and all events are filtered through a character.

Third Person Limited

It is a type of third-person subjective narration in which the perspective is that of just one character; in that mode, the reader is "limited" to the thoughts of the focal character, as in the first-person mode.

Mansfield usually employs a casually assumed third–person limited point of view. This means that the knowledge of the storyteller is limited to the internal state of one character.

From what point of view is the story “A Cup of Tea” written?

Style

Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories are mostly written under the modernist literature movement. She employs a style that is distinctly modern in its use of impressionistic detail and stream-of consciousness narrative method. These stylistic features also characterize the works of Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, and other innovative writers of the 1920s and 1930s. According to critics, with her contemporaries, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield forms part of the literary avant-garde whose innovations in the second and third decades of the twentieth century signaled the emergence of modernism. Katherine Mansfield revolutionized the 20th Century English short story. In her deceptively simple stories, she pioneered many new literary techniques and exerted an important influence on the evolution of the short story in English. This involves certain characteristics such as the individual perspective, which is, not

being objective but subjective, showing the breakdown of social norms and cultural conventions.

In her writing Mansfield breaks away from the conventions of nineteenth-century fiction by reducing plot to a minimum. Her focus is on the inner world rather than on external action, and much of the narration is located within the minds of her characters. Mansfield's place in Western literature has been assured by her technical achievements, but she owes her lasting popularity with her readers to the elegance and wit of her writing.

Literary Impressionism

The term "literary Impressionism" is used to describe a work of literature characterized by the selection of a few details to convey the sense impressions left by an incident or scene. This style of writing occurs when characters, scenes, or actions are portrayed from a subjective point of view of reality. Impressionistic literature can basically be defined as when an author centers his story/attention on the character's mental life such as the character's impressions, feelings, sensations and emotions, rather than trying to interpret them. Authors such as Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad (*Heart of Darkness* and *The Lagoon*), and K. Mansfield are among the foremost creators of the type.

According to critics the style of the story may not necessarily be precisely termed stream-of-consciousness, it nonetheless possesses an impressionist that belies its narrative simplicity. It is the subtle method by which Katherine Mansfield is capable of making the simple plot into deep psychological portrait of a character.

Irony

The narrator's ironical effect is based on the contrast between what is been said and what is actually meant.

How is irony felt in the story?

The narration in the story "A cup of Tea" is studded with questions, interjections, and exclamations, which emphasize Rosemary's perspective.

Imperatives and Exclamations

We can meet many imperative sentences in the story. For example:

"Come along;" "Come, come upstairs;" "Come and sit down;" "Don't cry;" "Do stop crying;" "Be nice to her;" "Explain;" "Look again, my child."

Find in the text which characters use imperatives against other characters?
Is there any hidden implication why the author makes her characters use imperatives?

There are also many exclamations: "Charming!" "How extraordinary!" "How thoughtless I am!" "Pretty!" "Lovely!" "There!"

What feelings are expressed through the character's (or characters') exclamations?

Interjections and Exclamatory Words

Interjections are words we use when we express our feelings strongly and are conventional symbols of human emotions. Interjection is a word with strong emotive meaning. They can express different emotions: sadness, despair, joy, regret, fright, reproach, disgust, disapproval, astonishment, sarcasm, admiration, etc. One and the same interjection is apt to express different emotions: for example, the interjection "oh", by itself may express various feelings such as regret, despair, disappointment, sorrow, surprise and many others. Interjections such as: Heavens! Good gracious! God knows! Bless me! are exclamatory words generally used as interjections. Some adjectives and adverbs can also take on the function of interjections - such as terrible! awfully! great! wonderful! splendid! These adjectives acquire strong emotional coloring and are equal in force to interjections.

Double negatives

There are some double negatives in the story: "No, I don't want no brandy"; "I can't go on no longer like this"; "I can't bear no more".

Which character uses them?

From the point of view of traditional grammar double negatives combine to form an affirmative. Otherwise it would be considered a case of dialectical or sub-standard English.

Dialect Words

Dialects are usually regional forms. It is “a variety of a language which prevails in a district, with local peculiarities of vocabulary, pronunciation and phrase” [H.W. Fowler, 19]. The term is applied most often to regional speech patterns, but a dialect may also be defined by other factors, such as social class. Sometimes in stories authors use dialects to make a character stand out.

A dialect that is associated with a particular social class can be termed a sociolect. Among functional styles, dialect words are usually found in prose and their use is rather confined.

Does Mansfield employ sociolect?

Character

Among those writers who adopt these strategies there was K. Mansfield who was interested in characters rather than plot. She focused on meaningful moments of consciousness of her characters and analyzed their inner personalities.

Authors use many different types of characters to tell their stories. Different types of characters fulfill different roles in the narrative process. Characters can be classified in different ways:

1. In terms of their roles:

Protagonist - The protagonist is the central person in a story, and is often referred to as the story's main character.

Antagonist - The antagonist is the character who opposes the protagonist. In other words, the antagonist is an obstacle that the protagonist must overcome.

2. In terms of their complexity:

Round - A rounded character is anyone who has a **complex personality**; he or she is often portrayed as a conflicted and contradictory person.

Flat - A flat character is the opposite of a round character. This literary personality is notable for **one kind of personality trait or characteristic**.

Character types that readers recognize easily (e.g. wicked stepmother), are called **stereotypes**, or **stock characters**.

Stereotypical character has little or no individuality. It is based on fixed, generalized ideas about people or groups of people.

Does Mansfield use a stereotype as a background or as a contrast to the main character? Which character (if any) seems to be a stereotype in the story?

Direct Characterization

A writer uses direct characterization when he or she describes a character's traits explicitly. In other words direct presentation (or characterization refers to what the narrator says or thinks about a character.

Indirect Characterization

Indirect presentation (or characterization) refers to what the character says or does. The reader then infers what the character is all about.

How does Mansfield present Rosemary – directly or indirectly? Illustrate your answer with the passages from the text.

Literary characters may embody more than one of these character types at the same time. A dynamic character may also be the antagonist, and a protagonist can also be, say, a flat and stock character (i.e. the one-dimensional hero).

How does the author describe Rosemary? What does Mansfield's description tell about Rosemary?

How can the reader get the information about Rosamary from the exposition of the story?

What details does she give about her personality, clothes, social condition?

Do you know the parable of "good Samaritan"? In what way does Rosemary try to behave like a "Good Samaritan"? Did she succeed?

Your response to Literature

Have you ever acted as a "Good Samaritan"? Have you succeeded? Is it so easy to be a "Good Samaritan"?

How does the author describe Miss Smith?

Find in the story all the different ways that Mansfield characterizes Miss Smith.

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

1. Can you guess Rosemary's true motives in inviting the girl home?
2. Why does the author mention Dostoevsky?
3. Rosemary says that she hates lilac. She seems to love roses. "Give me four bunches of those. And that jar of roses. Yes, I'll have all the roses in the jar. No, no lilac. I hate lilac. It's got no shape." Does the author want to say something by this, at first sight, inconsequential detail?
4. "And suddenly it seemed to Rosemary such an adventure" says the author. Did Rosemary mix adventure with compassion?
5. Is the story a social commentary?

Cat in the Rain

Ernest Hemingway

There were only two Americans stopping at the hotel. They did not know any of the people they passed on the stairs on their way to and from their room. Their room was on the second floor facing the sea. It also faced the public garden and the war monument. There were big palms and green benches in the public garden. In the good weather there was always an artist with his easel. Artists liked the way the palms grew and the bright colors of the hotels facing the gardens and the sea. Italians came from a long way off to look up at the war monument. It was made of bronze and glistened in the rain. It was raining. The rain dripped from the palm trees. Water stood in pools on the gravel paths. The sea broke in a long line in the rain and slipped back down the beach to come up and break again in a long line in the rain. The motor cars were gone from the square by the war monument. Across the square in the doorway of the cafe a waiter stood looking out of the empty square.

The American wife stood at the window looking out. Outside right under their window a cat was crouched under one of the dripping green tables. The cat was trying to make herself so compact that she would not be dripped on.

"I'm going down and get that kitty," the American wife said.

"I'll do it," her husband offered from the bed.

"No, I'll get it. The poor kitty out trying to keep dry under a table."

The husband went on reading, lying propped up with the two pillows at the foot of the bed.

"Don't get wet," he said.

The wife went downstairs and the hotel owner stood up and bowed to her as she passed the office. His desk was at the far end of the office. He was an old man and very tall.

"Il piove,"⁵⁴ the wife said. She liked the hotel-keeper.

⁵⁴ Ital. It's raining

"Si, si, Signora, brutto tempo."⁵⁵ It is very bad weather."

He stood behind his desk in the far end of the **dim** room. The wife liked him. She liked the deadly serious way he received any complaints. She liked the way he wanted to serve her. She liked the way he felt about being a hotel-keeper. She liked his old, heavy face and big hands.

Liking him she opened the door and looked out. It was raining harder. A man in a rubber cape was crossing the empty square to the cafe. The cat would be around to the right. Perhaps she could go along under the eaves. As she stood in the doorway an umbrella opened behind her. It was the maid who looked after their room.

"You must not get wet," she smiled, speaking Italian. Of course, the hotel-keeper had sent her.

With the maid holding the umbrella over her, she walked along the gravel path until she was under their window. The table was there, washed bright green in the rain, but the cat was gone. She was suddenly disappointed. The maid looked up at her.

"Ha perduto qualche cosa, Signora?"⁵⁶

"There was a cat," said the American girl.

"A cat?"

"Si, il gatto."⁵⁷

"A cat?" the maid laughed. "A cat in the rain?"

"Yes," she said, "under the table." Then, "Oh, I wanted it so much. I wanted a kitty."

When she talked English the maid's face tightened.

"Come, Signira," she said. "We must get back inside. You will be wet."

⁵⁵ Ital. Yes, yes. It is bad weather.

⁵⁶ Ital. Have you lost anything?

⁵⁷ Ital. Yes, a cat.

"I suppose so", said the American girl.

They went back along the gravel path and passed in the door. The maid stayed outside to close the umbrella. As the American girl passed the office, the padrone bowed from his desk. Something felt very small and tight inside the girl. The padrone made her feel very small and at the same time really important. She had a momentary feeling of being of supreme importance. She went on up the stairs. She opened the door of the room. George was on the bed, reading.

"Did you get the cat?" he asked, putting the book down.

"It was gone."

"Wonder where it went to," he said, resting his eyes from reading.

She sat down on the bed.

"I wanted it so much," she said. "I don't know why I wanted it so much. I wanted that poor kitty. It isn't any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain."

George was reading again.

She went over and sat in front of the mirror of the dressing table looking at herself with the hand glass. She studied her profile, first one side and then the other. Then she studied the back of her head and her neck.

"Don't you think it would be a good idea if I let my hair grow out?" she asked, looking at her profile again.

George looked up and saw the back of her neck, clipped close like a boy's.

"I like it the way it is."

"I get so tired of it," she said. "I get so tired of looking like a boy."

George shifted his position in the bed. He hadn't looked away from her since she started to speak.

"You look pretty darn nice," he said.

She laid the mirror down on the dresser and went over to the window and

looked out. It was getting dark.

"I want to pull my hair back tight and smooth and make a big knot at the back that I can feel," she said. "I want to have a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I stroke her."

"Yeah?" George said from the bed.

"And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want some new clothes."

"Oh, shut up and get something to read," George said. He was reading again.

His wife was looking out of the window. It was quite dark now and still raining in the palm trees.

"Anyway, I want a cat," she said, "I want a cat. I want a cat now. If I can't have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat."

George was not listening. He was reading his book. His wife looked out of the window where the light had come on in the square.

Someone knocked at the door.

"Avanti,"⁵⁸ George said. He looked up from his book.

In the doorway stood the maid. She held a big tortoise-shell cat pressed tight against her and swung down against her body.

"Excuse me," she said, "the padrone asked me to bring this for the Signora."

⁵⁸ Ital. Come in

Strategy for Understanding, Analysis, and Interpretation

1. Consider the historical and cultural context.
2. Generate inferences insightfully from the text.
3. Get engaged with the text and apply various strategies:

Identify the problem the author is trying to resolve.

Identify the concepts the author uses or develops.

Identify the relationship between the main point and the supporting points.

Identify deeper implications insightfully from the text.

Focus on literary and language means.

About the Author

The biography of a legendary and timeless American writer Ernest Hemingway was full of adventures: hunting trips, bullfighting, fishing, and war. He was involved in I and II World wars, made four trips to Spain in the midst of civil war, together with his fourth wife he traveled widely, including one trip to Africa, where they were injured in two plane crashes. The sensations he experienced in his lifetime are depicted in many of his literary works.

The early part of Hemingway's career was devoted to journalism. He was employed as a reporter for a leading newspaper in Kansas City and in Paris – as a foreign correspondent.

While staying in Paris (Hemingway and his first wife Hadley Richardson lived in Paris from 1921 – 1926), he became acquainted with outstanding writers and public figures Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Scott Fitzgerald, etc., who encouraged him to publish his first important collection of stories "In Our Time." The following year he published his famous novel "The Sun Also Rises," which deals

with the postwar “lost generation.” His other famous works "A Farewell To Arms", "Death In The Afternoon", "Winner Take Nothing", "Green Hills Of Africa" following in the years from 1926 to 1933 already established his literary fame. In 1940 was published "For Whom the Bell Tolls," a serious and politically motivated novel. “The Old Man and the Sea” was written in Cuba in 1951 and published in 1952.

On July 2, 1961 his depressive thoughts led him to a suicide and Ernest Hemingway took his life with a shotgun.

Many people all over the world still hold the opinion that there has been no American writer like Ernest Hemingway.

About Cat in the Rain

The surface level of the story is quite plain and simple. The story is about an American couple that spends their holidays in an Italian hotel. The American woman’s husband George is reading all the time. The wife sees a cat in the rain and wants to get it. At the end of the story there is a knock on the door and the maid stands there holding a cat for the American woman in her hands. Behind this deceptively simple story, the reader can draw deeper implications and inferences from the text.

Culture Point

Lost Generation

This term is believed to be coined by Gertrude Stein, a well-known public figure. “You are all a lost generation”, she said, speaking to Hemingway. It was in regular use after the First World War in reference to the young generation disillusioned, morally and spiritually waste. The mood of disenchantment and cynicism of the lost generation was presented in many literary works.

Build Your Vocabulary

Easel; glisten; gravel; crouch; drip; prop up; dim.

Retelling of a Literary Work

Retell the story from different perspectives: of the main and minor characters.

Check Your Comprehension

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

1. What does the word “only” in the opening paragraph emphasize in the story?
2. In your opinion, why are two Americans stopping at the hotel?
3. Do “the public garden,” “war monument,” and “empty square” symbolize anything?
4. Why does the author call the main character “the American wife”? Why is not she given a name?
5. Comment upon the title. Explain why the story is called “Cat in the Rain.” Is the story about a cat?
6. Hemingway makes emphasis on the weather in the opening paragraph. Does it have any symbolic meaning? What does rain symbolize in the story? Can you remember literary works, or films, where rain stands for something else?
7. Why does the hotel keeper make the American wife “feel very small and at the same time really important”?
8. Why does the American wife like the hotel keeper?

9. Why does the American wife want to change her hair-style?
10. Does the maid's question to the American wife: "Ha perduto qualche cosa, Signora?" ("Have you lost something, Madam?") have symbolic implication?
11. Why does the author make his character – George – speak so little? Why is he always reading? Is he intellectual?
12. Can you detect what the American wife experiences? What can you call this state – is she disillusioned? Does she feel emotional and spiritual estrangement from her husband? Is there unbridgeable distance between them?
13. What does the cat symbolize in the story?

Language and Literature

1. Explain the use of the literary elements of a story: theme, plot, setting, character, point of view.
2. Identify symbols within the text and evaluate an author's use of symbolism to convey ideas.
3. Determine the author's style, identifying particular word choices and figurative language.

Theme

What, do you think, is the underlying theme of the story?

Setting

How is the setting established in the story? Does it support the theme of the story?

Characters

Do minor characters have some importance in the story?

Authors use a variety of techniques to develop their main characters (protagonists)

Descriptions

Dialogues

Actions

Reactions

Find in the story all the different ways that Hemingway characterizes the protagonist.

Underline descriptions

Underline dialogues and underlying thoughts

Direct and Indirect Characterization

The act of creating and describing a character is called **characterization**. There are two kinds of characterization. Sometimes, information about a character is stated directly. The author explicitly tells us what the character is like. In other instances, the narrator, other characters, or a character's own words and actions may reveal information about that character indirectly. This means that they show us who the character is, rather telling us. Indirect characterization is tricky; while it can develop characters more richly, it can mislead because the reader must interpret it. Readers must use other clues in the story to interpret indirect characterization.

Authors often develop their characters through indirect characterization.

How does Hemingway develop his characters?

Style

“All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened, and after you are finished reading one you will feel that all that happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you: the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was. If you can get so that you can give that to people, then you are a writer.”⁵⁹

Hemingway believed that “a writer’s style should be direct and personal, his imagery rich and earthy, and his words simple and vigorous. His style is famous for the **iceberg principle** – on the surface remarkably and deceptively simple and somewhat plain as just the surface portion of the iceberg; and below the surface as deep as the lower part of the iceberg. He usually presents his narrative with simple sentences and dialogues, leaving a vast space for the readers to draw deep implications.

His stories (as short stories in general) usually focus on only one defining moment in the life of one character, one event in time, one setting. Every word, every event, every action is important. Nothing is wasted. Small details, which, at first glance, may seem trivial and inconsequential, all serve a purpose.

⁵⁹ Hemingway - By-Line; "Old Newsman Writes: A Letter from Cuba," pg. 184

The Rocking Horse Winner

DH Lawrence

There was a woman who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet she had no luck. She married for love, and the love turned to dust. She had bonny⁶⁰ children, yet she felt they had been thrust upon her, and she could not love them. They looked at her coldly, as if they were finding fault with her. And hurriedly she felt she must cover up some fault in herself. Yet what it was that she must cover up she never knew. Nevertheless, when her children were present, she always felt the centre of her heart go hard. This troubled her, and in her manner she was all the more gentle and anxious for her children, as if she loved them very much. Only she herself knew that at the centre of her heart was a hard little place that could not feel love, no, not for anybody. Everybody else said of her: "She is such a good mother. She adores her children." Only she herself, and her children themselves, knew it was not so. They read it in each other's eyes.

There were a boy and two little girls. They lived in a pleasant house, with a garden, and they had discreet servants, and felt themselves superior to anyone in the neighborhood.

Although they lived in style, they felt always an anxiety in the house. There was never enough money. The mother had a small income, and the father had a small income, but not nearly enough for the social position which they had to keep up. The father went into town to some office. But though he had good prospects, these prospects never materialized. There was always the grinding sense of the shortage of money, though the style was always kept up.

At last the mother said: "I will see if I can't make something." But she did not know where to begin. She racked her brains, and tried this thing and the other, but could not find anything successful. The failure made deep lines come into her face. Her children were growing up, they would have to go to school. There must be more money, there must be more money. The father, who was always very handsome and expensive in his tastes, seemed as if he never would be able to do

⁶⁰ (Scott and Northern English dialect) beautiful

anything worth doing. And the mother, who had a great belief in herself, did not succeed any better, and her tastes were just as expensive.

And so the house came to be **haunted** by the unspoken phrase: There must be more money! There must be more money! The children could hear it all the time though nobody said it aloud. They heard it at Christmas, when the expensive and splendid toys filled the nursery. Behind the shining modern rocking-horse, behind the smart doll's house, a voice would start whispering: "There must be more money! There must be more money!" And the children would stop playing, to listen for a moment. They would look into each other's eyes, to see if they had all heard. And each one saw in the eyes of the other two that they too had heard. "There must be more money! There must be more money!"

It came whispering from the springs of the still-swaying rocking-horse, and even the horse, bending his wooden, **champing** head, heard it. The big doll, sitting so pink and smirking in her new pram, could hear it quite plainly, and seemed to be smirking all the more self-consciously because of it. The foolish puppy, too, that took the place of the teddy-bear, he was looking so extraordinarily foolish for no other reason but that he heard the secret whisper all over the house: "There must be more money!"

Yet nobody ever said it aloud. The whisper was everywhere, and therefore no one spoke it. Just as no one ever says: "We are breathing!" in spite of the fact that breath is coming and going all the time.

"Mother," said the boy Paul one day, "why don't we keep a car of our own? Why do we always use uncle's, or else a taxi?"

"Because we're the poor members of the family," said the mother.

"But why are we, mother?"

"Well - I suppose," she said slowly and bitterly, "it's because your father has no luck."

The boy was silent for some time.

"Is luck money, mother?" he asked, rather timidly.

"No, Paul. Not quite. It's what causes you to have money."

"Oh!" said Paul vaguely. "I thought when Uncle Oscar said filthy lucker, it meant money."

"Filthy lucre does mean money," said the mother. "But it's lucre, not luck."

"Oh!" said the boy. "Then what is luck, mother?"

"It's what causes you to have money. If you're lucky you have money. That's why it's better to be born lucky than rich. If you're rich, you may lose your money. But if you're lucky, you will always get more money."

"Oh! Will you? And is father not lucky?"

"Very unlucky, I should say," she said bitterly.

The boy watched her with unsure eyes.

"Why?" he asked.

"I don't know. Nobody ever knows why one person is lucky and another unlucky."

"Don't they? Nobody at all? Does nobody know?"

"Perhaps God. But He never tells."

"He ought to, then. And aren't you lucky either, mother?"

"I can't be, it I married an unlucky husband."

"But by yourself, aren't you?"

"I used to think I was, before I married. Now I think I am very unlucky indeed."

"Why?"

"Well – never mind! Perhaps I'm not really," she said.

The child looked at her to see if she meant it. But he saw, by the lines of her mouth, that she was only trying to hide something from him.

"Well, anyhow," he said stoutly, "I'm a lucky person."

"Why?" said his mother, with a sudden laugh.

He stared at her. He didn't even know why he had said it.

"God told me," he asserted, brazening it out.

"I hope He did, dear!", she said, again with a laugh, but rather bitter.

"He did, mother!"

"Excellent!" said the mother, using one of her husband's exclamations.

The boy saw she did not believe him; or rather, that she paid no attention to his assertion. This angered him somewhere, and made him want to compel her attention.

He went off by himself, vaguely, in a childish way, seeking for the clue to 'luck'. Absorbed, taking no heed of other people, he went about with a sort of stealth, seeking inwardly for luck. He wanted luck, he wanted it, he wanted it. When the two girls were playing dolls in the nursery, he would sit on his big rocking-horse, charging madly into space, with a frenzy that made the little girls peer at him uneasily. Wildly the horse careered, the waving dark hair of the boy tossed, his eyes had a strange glare in them. The little girls dared not speak to him.

When he had ridden to the end of his mad little journey, he climbed down and stood in front of his rocking-horse, staring fixedly into its lowered face. Its red mouth was slightly open, its big eye was wide and glassy-bright.

"Now!" he would silently command the snorting steed. "Now take me to where there is luck! Now take me!"

And he would slash the horse on the neck with the little whip he had asked Uncle Oscar for. He knew the horse could take him to where there was luck, if only he forced it. So he would mount again and start on his furious ride, hoping at last to get there.

"You'll break your horse, Paul!" said the nurse.

He's always riding like that! I wish he'd leave off!" said his elder sister Joan.

But he only glared down on them in silence. Nurse gave him up. She could make nothing of him. Anyhow, he was growing beyond her.

One day his mother and his Uncle Oscar came in when he was on one of his furious rides. He did not speak to them.

"Hallo, you young jockey! Riding a winner?" said his uncle.

"Aren't you growing too big for a rocking-horse? You're not a very little boy any longer, you know," said his mother.

But Paul only gave a blue glare from his big, rather close-set eyes. He would speak to nobody when he was in full tilt. His mother watched him with an anxious expression on her face.

At last he suddenly stopped forcing his horse into the mechanical gallop and slid down.

"Well, I got there!" he announced fiercely, his blue eyes still flaring, and his sturdy long legs straddling apart.

"Where did you get to?" asked his mother.

"Where I wanted to go," he flared back at her.

"That's right, son!" said Uncle Oscar. "Don't you stop till you get there. What's the horse's name?"

"He doesn't have a name," said the boy.

"Gets on without all right?" asked the uncle.

"Well, he has different names. He was called Sansovino last week."

"Sansovino, eh? Won the Ascot. How did you know this name?"

"He always talks about horse-races with Bassett," said Joan.

The uncle was delighted to find that his small nephew was posted with all the racing news. Bassett, the young gardener, who had been wounded in the left foot in the war and had got his present job through Oscar Cresswell, whose batman⁶¹ he had been, was a perfect blade of the 'turf'. He lived in the racing events, and the small boy lived with him.

Oscar Cresswell got it all from Bassett.

"Master Paul comes and asks me, so I can't do more than tell him, sir," said Bassett, his face terribly serious, as if he were speaking of religious matters.

"And does he ever put anything on a horse he fancies?"

"Well - I don't want to give him away - he's a young sport, a fine sport, sir. Would you mind asking him himself? He sort of takes a pleasure in it, and perhaps he'd feel I was giving him away, sir, if you don't mind.

Bassett was serious as a church.

The uncle went back to his nephew and took him off for a ride in the car.

"Say, Paul, old man, do you ever put anything on a horse?" the uncle asked.

The boy watched the handsome man closely.

"Why, do you think I oughtn't to?" he parried.

"Not a bit of it! I thought perhaps you might give me a tip for the Lincoln."

The car sped on⁶² into the country, going down to Uncle Oscar's place in Hampshire.

"Honor bright?" said the nephew.

"Honor bright, son!" said the uncle.

⁶¹ British military officer's orderly

⁶² Past participle of speed. (move fast)

"Well, then, Daffodil."

"Daffodil! I doubt it, sonny. What about Mirza?"

"I only know the winner," said the boy. "That's Daffodil."

"Daffodil, eh?"

There was a pause. Daffodil was an obscure horse comparatively.

"Uncle!"

"Yes, son?"

"You won't let it go any further, will you? I promised Bassett."

"Bassett be damned, old man! What's he got to do with it?"

"We're partners. We've been partners from the first. Uncle, he lent me my first five shillings, which I lost. I promised him, honor bright, it was only between me and him; only you gave me that ten-shilling note I started winning with, so I thought you were lucky. You won't let it go any further, will you?"

The boy gazed at his uncle from those big, hot, blue eyes, set rather close together. The uncle stirred and laughed uneasily.

"Right you are, son! I'll keep your tip private. How much are you putting on him?"

"All except twenty pounds," said the boy. "I keep that in reserve."

The uncle thought it a good joke.

"You keep twenty pounds in reserve, do you, you young romancer? What are you betting, then?"

"I'm betting three hundred," said the boy gravely. "But it's between you and me, Uncle Oscar! Honour bright?"

"It's between you and me all right, you young Nat Gould," he said, laughing. "But where's your three hundred?"

"Bassett keeps it for me. We're partners."

"You are, are you! And what is Bassett putting on Daffodil?"

"He won't go quite as high as I do, I expect. Perhaps he'll go a hundred and fifty."

"What, pennies?" laughed the uncle.

"Pounds," said the child, with a surprised look at his uncle. "Bassett keeps a bigger reserve than I do."

Between wonder and amusement Uncle Oscar was silent. He pursued the matter no further, but he determined to take his nephew with him to the Lincoln races.

"Now, son," he said, "I'm putting twenty on Mirza, and I'll put five on for you on any horse you fancy. What's your pick?"

"Daffodil, uncle."

"No, not the fiver⁶³ on Daffodil!"

"I should if it was my own fiver," said the child.

"Good! Good! Right you are! A fiver for me and a fiver for you on Daffodil." The child had never been to a race-meeting before, and his eyes were blue fire. He pursed his mouth tight and watched. A Frenchman just in front had put his money on Lancelot. Wild with excitement, he flayed his arms up and down, yelling "Lancelot!, Lancelot!" in his French accent.

Daffodil came in first, Lancelot second, Mirza third. The child, flushed and with eyes blazing, was curiously [serene](#). His uncle brought him four five-pound notes, four to one.

"What am I to do with these?" he cried, waving them before the boys eyes.

⁶³ (In Britain) a five-pound note

"I suppose we'll talk to Bassett," said the boy. "I expect I have fifteen hundred now; and twenty in reserve; and this twenty."

His uncle studied him for some moments.

"Look here, son!" he said. "You're not serious about Bassett and that fifteen hundred, are you?"

"Yes, I am. But it's between you and me, uncle. Honor bright?"

"Honor bright all right, son! But I must talk to Bassett."

"If you'd like to be a partner, uncle, with Bassett and me, we could all be partners. Only, you'd have to promise, honor bright, uncle, not to let it go beyond us three. Bassett and I are lucky, and you must be lucky, because it was your ten shillings I started winning with ..."

Uncle Oscar took both Bassett and Paul into Richmond Park for an afternoon, and there they talked.

"It's like this, you see, sir," Bassett said. "Master Paul would get me talking about racing events, spinning yarns, you know, sir. And he was always keen on knowing if I'd made or if I'd lost. It's about a year since, now, that I put five shillings on Blush of Dawn for him: and we lost. Then the luck turned, with that ten shillings he had from you: that we put on Singhalese. And since that time, it's been pretty steady, all things considering. What do you say, Master Paul?"

"We're all right when we're sure," said Paul. "It's when we're not quite sure that we go down."

"Oh, but we're careful then," said Bassett.

"But when are you sure?" smiled Uncle Oscar.

"It's Master Paul, sir," said Bassett in a secret, religious voice. "It's as if he had it from heaven. Like Daffodil, now, for the Lincoln. That was as sure as eggs."

"Did you put anything on Daffodil?" asked Oscar Cresswell.

"Yes, sir, I made my bit."

"And my nephew?"

Bassett was obstinately silent, looking at Paul.

"I made twelve hundred, didn't I, Bassett? I told uncle I was putting three hundred on Daffodil."

"That's right," said Bassett, nodding.

"But where's the money?" asked the uncle.

"I keep it safe locked up, sir. Master Paul he can have it any minute he likes to ask for it."

"What, fifteen hundred pounds?"

"And twenty! And forty, that is, with the twenty he made on the course."

"It's amazing!" said the uncle.

"If Master Paul offers you to be partners, sir, I would, if I were you: if you'll excuse me," said Bassett.

Oscar Cresswell thought about it.

"I'll see the money," he said.

They drove home again, and, sure enough, Bassett came round to the garden-house with fifteen hundred pounds in notes. The twenty pounds reserve was left with Joe Glee, in the Turf Commission deposit.

"You see, it's all right, uncle, when I'm sure! Then we go strong, for all we're worth, don't we, Bassett?"

"We do that, Master Paul."

"And when are you sure?" said the uncle, laughing.

"Oh, well, sometimes I'm absolutely sure, like about Daffodil," said the boy; "and sometimes I have an idea; and sometimes I haven't even an idea, have I, Bassett? Then we're careful, because we mostly go down."

"You do, do you! And when you're sure, like about Daffodil, what makes you sure, sonny?"

"Oh, well, I don't know," said the boy uneasily. "I'm sure, you know, uncle; that's all."

"It's as if he had it from heaven, sir," Bassett reiterated.

"I should say so!" said the uncle.

But he became a partner. And when the Leger was coming on Paul was 'sure' about Lively Spark, which was a quite inconsiderable horse. The boy insisted on putting a thousand on the horse, Bassett went for five hundred, and Oscar Cresswell two hundred. Lively Spark came in first, and the betting had been ten to one against him. Paul had made ten thousand.

"You see," he said. "I was absolutely sure of him."

Even Oscar Cresswell had cleared two thousand.

"Look here, son," he said, "this sort of thing makes me nervous."

"It needn't, uncle! Perhaps I shan't be sure again for a long time."

"But what are you going to do with your money?" asked the uncle.

"Of course," said the boy, "I started it for mother. She said she had no luck, because father is unlucky, so I thought if I was lucky, it might stop whispering."

"What might stop whispering?"

"Our house. I hate our house for whispering."

"What does it whisper?"

"Why - why" - the boy fidgeted - "why, I don't know. But it's always short of money, you know, uncle."

"I know it, son, I know it."

"You know people send mother writs, don't you, uncle?"

"I'm afraid I do," said the uncle.

"And then the house whispers, like people laughing at you behind your back. It's awful, that is! I thought if I was lucky -"

"You might stop it," added the uncle.

The boy watched him with big blue eyes, that had an uncanny cold fire in them, and he said never a word.

"Well, then!" said the uncle. "What are we doing?"

"I shouldn't like mother to know I was lucky," said the boy.

"Why not, son?"

"She'd stop me."

"I don't think she would."

"Oh!" – and the boy writhed in an odd way – "I don't want her to know, uncle."

"All right, son! We'll manage it without her knowing."

They managed it very easily. Paul, at the other's suggestion, handed over five thousand pounds to his uncle, who deposited it with the family lawyer, who was then to inform Paul's mother that a relative had put five thousand pounds into his hands, which sum was to be paid out a thousand pounds at a time, on the mother's birthday, for the next five years.

"So she'll have a birthday present of a thousand pounds for five successive years," said Uncle Oscar. "I hope it won't make it all the harder for her later."

Paul's mother had her birthday in November. The house had been 'whispering' worse than ever lately, and, even in spite of his luck, Paul could not bear up

against it. He was very anxious to see the effect of the birthday letter, telling his mother about the thousand pounds.

When there were no visitors, Paul now took his meals with his parents, as he was beyond the nursery control. His mother went into town nearly every day. She had discovered that she had an odd knack of sketching furs and dress materials, so she worked secretly in the studio of a friend who was the chief 'artist' for the leading drapers. She drew the figures of ladies in furs and ladies in silk and sequins for the newspaper advertisements. This young woman artist earned several thousand pounds a year, but Paul's mother only made several hundreds, and she was again dissatisfied. She so wanted to be first in something, and she did not succeed, even in making sketches for drapery advertisements.

She was down to breakfast on the morning of her birthday. Paul watched her face as she read her letters. He knew the lawyer's letter. As his mother read it, her face hardened and became more expressionless. Then a cold, determined look came on her mouth. She hid the letter under the pile of others, and said not a word about it.

"Didn't you have anything nice in the post for your birthday, mother?" said Paul.

"Quite moderately nice," she said, her voice cold and hard and absent.

She went away to town without saying more.

But in the afternoon Uncle Oscar appeared. He said Paul's mother had had a long interview with the lawyer, asking if the whole five thousand could not be advanced at once, as she was in debt.

"What do you think, uncle?" said the boy.

"I leave it to you, son."

"Oh, let her have it, then! We can get some more with the other," said the boy.

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, laddie!" said Uncle Oscar.

"But I'm sure to know for the Grand National; or the Lincolnshire; or else the Derby. I'm sure to know for one of them," said Paul.

So Uncle Oscar signed the agreement, and Paul's mother touched the whole five thousand. Then something very curious happened. The voices in the house suddenly went mad, like a chorus of frogs on a spring evening. There were certain new furnishings, and Paul had a tutor. He was really going to Eton, his father's school, in the following autumn. There were flowers in the winter, and a blossoming of the luxury Paul's mother had been used to. And yet the voices in the house, behind the sprays of mimosa and almond-blossom, and from under the piles of iridescent cushions, simply trilled and screamed in a sort of ecstasy: "There must be more money! Oh-h-h; there must be more money. Oh, now, now-w! Now-w-w - there must be more money! - more than ever! More than ever!"

It frightened Paul terribly. He studied away at his Latin and Greek with his tutor. But his intense hours were spent with Bassett. The Grand National had gone by: he had not 'known', and had lost a hundred pounds. Summer was at hand. He was in agony for the Lincoln. But even for the Lincoln he didn't 'know', and he lost fifty pounds. He became wild-eyed and strange, as if something were going to explode in him.

"Let it alone, son! Don't you bother about it!" urged Uncle Oscar. But it was as if the boy couldn't really hear what his uncle was saying.

"I've got to know for the Derby! I've got to know for the Derby!" the child reiterated, his big blue eyes blazing with a sort of madness.

His mother noticed how overwrought he was.

"You'd better go to the seaside. Wouldn't you like to go now to the seaside, instead of waiting? I think you'd better," she said, looking down at him anxiously, her heart curiously heavy because of him.

But the child lifted his uncanny blue eyes.

"I couldn't possibly go before the Derby, mother!" he said. "I couldn't possibly!"

"Why not?" she said, her voice becoming heavy when she was opposed. "Why not? You can still go from the seaside to see the Derby with your Uncle Oscar, if that that's what you wish. No need for you to wait here. Besides, I think you care too much about these races. It's a bad sign. My family has been a gambling family, and you won't know till you grow up how much damage it has done. But it has

done damage. I shall have to send Bassett away, and ask Uncle Oscar not to talk racing to you, unless you promise to be reasonable about it: go away to the seaside and forget it. You're all nerves!"

"I'll do what you like, mother, so long as you don't send me away till after the Derby," the boy said.

"Send you away from where? Just from this house?"

"Yes," he said, gazing at her.

"Why, you curious child, what makes you care about this house so much, suddenly? I never knew you loved it."

He gazed at her without speaking. He had a secret within a secret, something he had not divulged, even to Bassett or to his Uncle Oscar.

But his mother, after standing undecided and a little bit sullen for some moments, said: "Very well, then! Don't go to the seaside till after the Derby, if you don't wish it. But promise me you won't think so much about horse-racing and events as you call them!"

"Oh no," said the boy casually. "I won't think much about them, mother. You needn't worry. I wouldn't worry, mother, if I were you."

"If you were me and I were you," said his mother, "I wonder what we should do!"

"But you know you needn't worry, mother, don't you?" the boy repeated.

"I should be awfully glad to know it," she said wearily.

"Oh, well, you can, you know. I mean, you ought to know you needn't worry," he insisted.

"Ought I? Then I'll see about it," she said.

Paul's secret of secrets was his wooden horse, that which had no name. Since he was emancipated from a nurse and a nursery-governess, he had had his rocking-horse removed to his own bedroom at the top of the house.

"Surely you're too big for a rocking-horse!" his mother had remonstrated.

"Well, you see, mother, till I can have a real horse, I like to have some sort of animal about," had been his quaint answer.

"Do you feel he keeps you company?" she laughed.

"Oh yes! He's very good, he always keeps me company, when I'm there," said Paul.

So the horse, rather shabby, stood in an arrested prance in the boy's bedroom.

The Derby was drawing near, and the boy grew more and more tense. He hardly heard what was spoken to him, he was very frail, and his eyes were really uncanny. His mother had sudden strange seizures of uneasiness about him. Sometimes, for half an hour, she would feel a sudden anxiety about him that was almost anguish. She wanted to rush to him at once, and know he was safe.

Two nights before the Derby, she was at a big party in town, when one of her rushes of anxiety about her boy, her first-born, gripped her heart till she could hardly speak. She fought with the feeling, might and main, for she believed in common sense. But it was too strong. She had to leave the dance and go downstairs to telephone to the country. The children's nursery-governess was terribly surprised and startled at being rung up in the night.

"Are the children all right, Miss Wilmot?"

"Oh yes, they are quite all right."

"Master Paul? Is he all right?"

"He went to bed as right as a trivet. Shall I run up and look at him?"

"No," said Paul's mother reluctantly. "No! Don't trouble. It's all right. Don't sit up. We shall be home fairly soon." She did not want her son's privacy intruded upon.

"Very good," said the governess.

It was about one o'clock when Paul's mother and father drove up to their house. All was still. Paul's mother went to her room and slipped off her white fur cloak. She had told her maid not to wait up for her. She heard her husband downstairs, mixing a whisky and soda.

And then, because of the strange anxiety at her heart, she stole upstairs to her son's room. Noiselessly she went along the upper corridor. Was there a faint noise? What was it?

She stood, with arrested muscles, outside his door, listening. There was a strange, heavy, and yet not loud noise. Her heart stood still. It was a soundless noise, yet rushing and powerful. Something huge, in violent, hushed motion. What was it? What in God's name was it? She ought to know. She felt that she knew the noise. She knew what it was.

Yet she could not place it. She couldn't say what it was. And on and on it went, like a madness.

Softly, frozen with anxiety and fear, she turned the door-handle.

The room was dark. Yet in the space near the window, she heard and saw something plunging to and fro. She gazed in fear and amazement.

Then suddenly she switched on the light, and saw her son, in his green pyjamas, madly surging on the rocking-horse. The blaze of light suddenly lit him up, as he urged the wooden horse, and lit her up, as she stood, blonde, in her dress of pale green and crystal, in the doorway.

"Paul!" she cried. "Whatever are you doing?"

"It's Malabar!" he screamed in a powerful, strange voice. "It's Malabar!"

His eyes blazed at her for one strange and senseless second, as he ceased urging his wooden horse. Then he fell with a crash to the ground, and she, all her tormented motherhood flooding upon her, rushed to gather him up.

But he was unconscious, and unconscious he remained, with some brain-fever. He talked and tossed, and his mother sat stonily by his side.

"Malabar! It's Malabar! Bassett, Bassett, I know! It's Malabar!"

So the child cried, trying to get up and urge the rocking-horse that gave him his inspiration.

"What does he mean by Malabar?" asked the heart-frozen mother.

"I don't know," said the father stonily.

"What does he mean by Malabar?" she asked her brother Oscar.

"It's one of the horses running for the Derby," was the answer.

And, in spite of himself, Oscar Cresswell spoke to Bassett, and himself put a thousand on Malabar: at fourteen to one.

The third day of the illness was critical: they were waiting for a change. The boy, with his rather long, curly hair, was tossing ceaselessly on the pillow. He neither slept nor regained consciousness, and his eyes were like blue stones. His mother sat, feeling her heart had gone, turned actually into a stone.

In the evening Oscar Cresswell did not come, but Bassett sent a message, saying could he come up for one moment, just one moment? Paul's mother was very angry at the [intrusion](#), but [on second thoughts](#) she agreed. The boy was the same. Perhaps Bassett might bring him to consciousness.

The gardener, a shortish fellow with a little brown moustache and sharp little brown eyes, tiptoed into the room, touched his imaginary cap to Paul's mother, and stole to the bedside, staring with glittering, smallish eyes at the tossing, dying child.

"Master Paul!" he whispered. "Master Paul! Malabar came in first all right, a clean win. I did as you told me. You've made over seventy thousand pounds, you have; you've got over eighty thousand. Malabar came in all right, Master Paul."

"Malabar! Malabar! Did I say Malabar, mother? Did I say Malabar? Do you think I'm lucky, mother? I knew Malabar, didn't I? Over eighty thousand pounds! I call that lucky, don't you, mother? Over eighty thousand pounds! I knew, didn't I know I knew? Malabar came in all right. If I ride my horse till I'm sure, then I tell you, Bassett, you can go as high as you like. Did you go for all you were worth, Bassett?"

"I went a thousand on it, Master Paul."

"I never told you, mother, that if I can ride my horse, and get there, then I'm absolutely sure - oh, absolutely! Mother, did I ever tell you? I am lucky!"

"No, you never did," said his mother.

But the boy died in the night.

And even as he lay dead, his mother heard her brother's voice saying to her, "My God, Hester, you're eighty-odd thousand to the good, and a poor devil of a son to the bad. But, poor devil, poor devil, he's best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking-horse to find a winner."

Strategy for Understanding, Analysis, and Interpretation

1. Consider the historical and cultural context.
2. Draw Inferences on what you have read.
3. Get engaged with the text and apply various strategies:

Identify deeper implications insightfully from the text.

Focus on literary and language means.

Identify the narrator's voice.

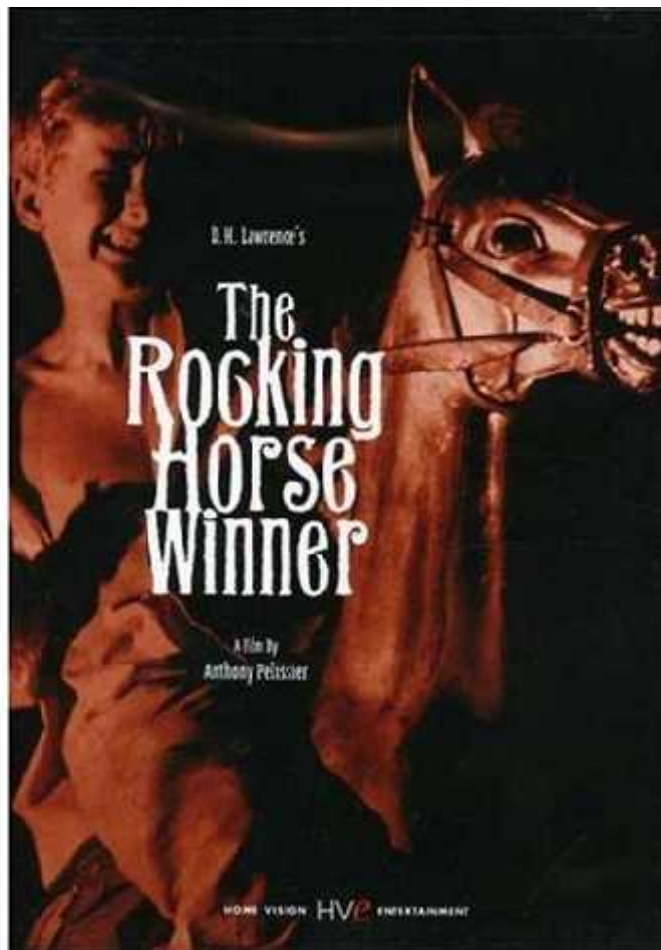
Identify the theme.

About The author

D. H. Lawrence – a representative of modernism in the English literature was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. He was the son of a little-educated coal miner and a mother of middle-class origins. The parents' quarrel and estrangement became the subject of perhaps his most famous novel, *Sons and Lovers* (1913). This novel is regarded as a disguised autobiography. Critics immediately tried to interpret it as an illustration of Sigmund Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex. Lawrence was trained to be a teacher at Nottingham University College and he spent several years as a teacher. In 1914 Lawrence married Frieda von Richthofen Weekley. They traveled to many parts of the world- Italy, Australia, Ceylon, Mexico, and the United States. In 1921 Lawrence published one of his greatest novels – *Women in Love*. While living in Italy, ill from tuberculosis, he completed his last full-length novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The book was banned in England since Lawrence revealed offending boldness for society in treating the sexual side of his characters' relationships.

Lawrence died at the Villa Robermond in Vence, France due to complications from tuberculosis. He is mainly categorized as a novelist – but he is equally influential as a poet and a writer of novellas and short stories.

About The Rocking-Horse Winner



The story was first published in 1926. It describes a young middle-class Englishwoman whose main concern is that "there must be more money!" Her son, Paul, who is devoted to his mother, tries to find a way to get money. He discovers that if he rides his rocking-horse fast enough, he will know the name of the winning horse in the next race. The rocking-horse magically gives Paul advance knowledge of the winners of important races. He begins to make money, but the desire for more money only grows more and more intense. He finally rides his rocking-horse so furiously in order to discover the winner of the Derby that he falls ill and dies. Brian Finney has noted that the reversal of expectation, the breaking of literary conventions, and the movement towards verbal play and self-conscious artifice makes this story a forerunner of Borges and Beckett, and one of the finest achievements of postmodernist prose. The Rocking-Horse Winner became so famous that in 1950 Anthony Pelissier even made an adapted interpretation of the story in his film.

Cultural and Historical Context

The beginning of the twentieth century was a time of great change. The First World War (1914 – 1918) killed more than 8 million people. In 1917, in the midst of war, revolution broke out in Russia, resulting in the overthrow of the czar and the establishment of the world's first communist state, the Soviet Union. Between the wars the disillusioned youth of postwar Europe were known as a “lost generation.” People started to mask their spiritual emptiness by the pursuit of pleasure – fast cars, posh houses, wild jazz...

Comprehension Check

1. “Although they lived in style, they felt always an anxiety in the house. There was never enough money.” What does the author mean by “in style”? Why did they always feel anxiety in the house? Why was the family always short of money?
2. How does Paul's mother understand luck?

Your response to Literature

What is your idea of being lucky or happy? Do you think that you will maintain your position in life if you enter “the right University,” if you live at “the right addresses,” if you go to “the right restaurants,” or if you have “the right friends”?

3. How does mother explain to Paul what luck is?
4. Why is Paul so anxious to change his family's luck? What does he do for that?
5. What secret birthday present does Paul give his mother? Does it make her happy?
6. “I hate our house for whispering,” says Paul. What was the house whispering? How was the whisper heard?

Language and Literature

If a metaphor involves likeness between inanimate and animate objects, we deal with **personification**. If a house whispers, we are dealing with the personification of the house.

In what way does it help the reader to identify the theme of the story?

7. The author compares the secret whisper “there must be more money” to breathing? Why?

Critical thinking

An unspoken phrase "There must be more money! There must be more money!" “whispered” throughout the house.

Does this whispering have an impact on Paul?

Your Response to Literature

Does the today’s world whisper have the same impact on us?

Do you know any people in real life, or characters in literature, driven to such extremes because of lack of money?

8. How does the story end?

Build Your Vocabulary

Cover up; haunted; champ; lucre; assert, brazen it out; compel; heed; frenzy; peer; career; snorting; steed; slash; close-set eyes; fiercely; flare; sturdy; straddle; parry; obscure; serene; obstinately; reiterate; inconsiderable; writs; uncanny; successive; knack; sequins; drapery; almond-blossom; iridescent; trilled; scream; overwrought; remonstrate; seizures; anguish; intrusion; on second thoughts.

Retelling of a Literary Work

Retell the story from the perspective of omniscient author.

Language and Literature

1. Determine the author's style, identifying particular word choices and figurative language.
2. Explain the use of the literary elements of a story: theme, plot, setting, character, point of view.
3. Identify symbols within the text and evaluate an author's use of symbolism to convey ideas.

Style

The author uses the traditional oral storytelling technique, as if he were telling a fairy tale. Instead of "once upon a time," which is a usual way of starting a fairy tale, Lawrence opens the narration with "There was a woman who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet she had no luck." According to Simon Baker the story moved away from traditional narrative realism and the settings of rural and urban England to the realm of the mythical, supernatural fairy story. "The Rocking-Horse Winner" combines elements of the supernatural and the fable.

Why does Lawrence use fairy tale storytelling technique? Why does he combine the supernatural elements of a fable in the story? Does the story end as a fairy tale?

Fairy tales

Fairy tales, also known as wonder tales or *märchen* (from the German), are a sub-genre of folktales involving magical, fantastic or *wonderful* episodes, characters, events, or symbols. Like all folktales they are narratives that are not believed to be true (fictional stories), often in timeless settings (once upon a time), with one-dimensional characters (completely good or bad), etc. The main characters are

usually humans who often follow a typical pattern (as in a heroic quest) that is resolved partly by magic. The fact that these wonder tales still appeal to us attests to their richness and effectiveness as symbolic (artistic) communication.

The genre of fairy tales has several characteristics:

Special beginning – Once upon a time, there was a ...

Good character

Evil character

Magic happens

Problem and solution

Tragic Irony

Paul picks the winning horse in the Epsom Derby but loses his life. The fortune he had amassed, eighty thousand pounds (the equivalent of millions of dollars today), thus became his misfortune.

What do think, can it serve as an example of tragic irony?

In tragic irony, the words and actions of the characters belie the real situation, which the spectators fully realize. It is the revealing to an audience of a tragic event or consequence that remains unknown to the character concerned. Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* provides a classic example of tragic irony at its fullest. It is a special category of dramatic irony.

Dramatic Irony

Dramatic irony is a disparity of expression and awareness: when words and actions possess a significance that the listener or audience understands, but the speaker or character does not; when the audience or the reader is aware of something that a character does not know. For example, when Romeo believes Juliet is dead, but the audience knows that she has only been given a potion to sleep.

Theme

The theme of a fable is its moral. The theme of a parable is its teaching.

Is the theme in this story intended to teach or preach? Is it presented directly, or do we extract it from the characters, action, etc.?

Is the theme in the story lack of money? Is it social snobbery?

Theory of the Oedipus complex

The **Oedipus complex** is named after the Greek mythical character Oedipus, who (albeit unknowingly) kills his father and marries his mother. According to Freud, the Oedipus complex is a universal phenomenon, responsible for much unconscious guilt. In psychoanalytic theory, it is a group of largely unconscious (dynamically repressed) ideas and feelings which centre around the desire to possess the parent of the opposite sex and eliminate the parent of the same sex. According to classical theory, the complex appears during the so-called 'oedipal phase' i.e. between the ages of three and five, though oedipal manifestations may be detected earlier.

W. D. Snodgrass offered a Freudian interpretation of the story. He argued that Paul's desire "to be lucky" represents an oedipal desire to replace his father in his mother's life.

Plot

1. What do you learn in the exposition or introduction of the story?
2. What events are included in the rising action of the story?
3. What is the climax of the story?

Theme and Symbols

A symbol in a literary work may often enhance that work's theme by suggesting multiple meanings, references, or associations.

What does the rocking horse symbolize in the story? Does Paul's attachment to his rocking horse symbolize anything?

Characters

1. Paul seems to possess the power that the ordinary people do not have. How does the author describe him? What is his glance like? What language devices does the author use when he speaks about Paul's eyes?
2. What does Paul's mother mean when she calls her husband unlucky? Does this reveal something about her as a person?
3. Can you characterize Bassett (the gardener)?

The narrator tells the reader that he was a "shortish" fellow with a little brown moustache and sharp little brown eyes, tiptoed into the room, touched his imaginary cap to Paul's mother, and stole to the bedside, staring with glittering, smallish eyes at the tossing, dying child."

Does this description tell you something about his personality?

Point Of View

Third-person narrative mode

Third-person narration provides the greatest flexibility to the author and thus is the most commonly used narrative mode. In every **third-person narrative mode**, the focal character or characters are referred to as "he", "she", "it", or "they", but never as "I" or "we" (first-person), or "you" (second-person).

The third-person modes are usually categorized as "subjective" narration and "objective" narration.

The **third-person objective** mode gives an objective point of view. It tells a story without describing any character's thoughts, opinions, or feelings. It cannot tell the reader what thoughts are going through the minds of the characters.

The **third-person subjective** is between "omniscient" and "limited."

D. H. Lawrence wrote the story in omniscient third-person point of view, enabling him to reveal the thoughts of the characters.

Third-person, omniscient

The **third-person omniscient** perspective has been the most commonly used; it is seen in countless classic novels. This is a tale told from the point of view of a storyteller who plays no part in the story but knows all the facts, including the characters' thoughts. One advantage of omniscience is that this mode enhances the sense of objective reliability (i.e. truthfulness) of the plot. The third-person omniscient narrator is the most reliable narrator, or in any case, the narrator least capable of being unreliable – although the omniscient narrator can have its own personality, offering judgments and opinions on the behavior of the characters.

Find illustrative examples of the above narrative types in literature. Analyze the narrative types in *The Rocking Horse Winner*.

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

1. Do you know what snobbery means? Do you know any snobs around you? Are they like Paul's mother?
2. "The Rocking-Horse Winner" has scholars divided over interpretations—whether it is a social commentary on money and relationships in a society, a psychoanalytic exploration of sexuality and the Oedipus complex, or a simple fable of a boy searching for identity and love. What do you think it is?
3. In the first paragraph of the story, the narrator says Hester does not love her children. Nevertheless, outwardly she pretends to love them, and people say, "She is a good mother. She adores her children."

How can you interpret it?

Your Response to Literature

Do you know families that outwardly look happy, but in fact they lack love and understanding? Is deception common in our society?

Do you know people who suffer from lack of love? How do they mask their inner emptiness: by excessive talking, socializing, flirting, pretending to be a happy, etc.? Are you among those people? (If you feel embarrassed you need not answer in class, but try to be frank with yourself.)

4. Does Bassett really love Paul or does he simply regard him as a "money machine"?

Your Response to Literature

Have you ever had a relationship with someone who loved you and understood you? What is most important for true friendship?

Do you make friends with people who are socially acceptable? (If you feel embarrassed to speak in class openly, you are not obliged. Give examples from literature and try to be frank with yourself.)

5. Are the house voices real? Or does Paul hear them because he is mentally disturbed?

6. Much of the communication in the story comes through the eyes. Find examples from the text to prove this point.

The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection

Virginia Woolf

People should not leave looking-glasses hanging in their rooms any more than they should leave open cheque books or letters confessing some **hideous** crime. One could not help looking, that summer afternoon, in the long glass that hung outside in the hall. Chance had so arranged it. From the depths of the sofa in the drawing-room one could see reflected in the Italian glass not only the marble-topped table opposite, but a stretch of the garden beyond. One could see a long grass path leading between banks of tall flowers until, slicing off an angle, the gold rim cut it off.

The house was empty, and one felt, since one was the only person in the drawing-room, like one of those naturalists who, covered with grass and leaves, lie watching the shyest animals – **badgers, otters, kingfishers** - moving about freely, themselves unseen. The room that afternoon was full of such shy creatures, lights and shadows, curtains blowing, petals falling - things that never happen, so it seems, if someone is looking. The quiet old country room with its rugs and stone chimney pieces, its sunken book-cases and red and gold lacquer cabinets, was full of such **nocturnal** creatures. They came **pirouetting** across the floor, stepping delicately with high-lifted feet and spread tails and pecking allusive beaks as if they had been cranes or flocks of elegant flamingoes whose pink was faded, or peacocks whose trains were veined with silver. And there were obscure flushes and darkenings too, as if a **cuttlefish** had suddenly **suffused** the air with purple; and the room had its passions and rages and envies and sorrows coming over it and **touting** it, like a human being. Nothing stayed the same for two seconds together.

But, outside, the looking-glass reflected the hall table, the sun-flowers, the garden path so accurately and so fixedly that they seemed held there in their reality unescapably. It was a strange contrast – all changing here, all stillness there. One could not help looking from one to the other. Meanwhile, since all the doors and windows were open in the heat, there was a **perpetual** sighing and ceasing sound, the voice of the **transient** and the **perishing**, it seemed, coming and going like human breath, while in the looking-glass things had ceased to breathe and lay still in the trance of immortality.

Half an hour ago the mistress of the house, Isabella Tyson, had gone down the grass path in her thin summer dress, carrying a basket, and had vanished, sliced off by the gilt rim of the looking-glass. She had gone **presumably** into the lower

garden to pick flowers; or as it seemed more natural to suppose, to pick something light and fantastic and [leafy](#) and [trailing](#), traveller's joy, or one of those elegant sprays of convolvulus⁶⁴ that twine round ugly walls and burst here and there into white and violet blossoms. She suggested the fantastic and the tremulous convolvulus rather than the upright aster,⁶⁵ the starched zinnia,⁶⁶ or her own burning roses alight like lamps on the straight posts of their rose trees. The comparison showed how very little, after all these years, one knew about her; for it is impossible that any woman of flesh and blood of fifty-five or sixty should be really a [wreath](#) or a [tendrill](#). Such comparisons are worse than idle and superficial-- they are cruel even, for they come like the convolvulus itself trembling between one's eyes and the truth. There must be truth; there must be a wall. Yet it was strange that after knowing her all these years one could not say what the truth about Isabella was; one still made up phrases like this about convolvulus and traveller's joy. As for facts, it was a fact that she was a [spinster](#); that she was rich; that she had bought this house and collected with her own hands - often in the most obscure corners of the world and at great risk from poisonous stings and Oriental diseases - the rugs, the chairs, the cabinets which now lived their nocturnal life before one's eyes. Sometimes it seemed as if they knew more about her than we, who sat on them, wrote at them, and trod on them so carefully, were allowed to know. In each of these cabinets were many little drawers, and each almost certainly held letters, tied with bows of ribbon, sprinkled with sticks of lavender or rose leaves. For it was another fact -- if facts were what one wanted -- that Isabella had known many people, had had many friends; and thus if one had the [audacity](#) to open a drawer and read her letters, one would find the traces of many agitations, of appointments to meet, of [upbraidings](#) for not having met, long letters of intimacy and affection, violent letters of jealousy and reproach, terrible final words of parting - for all those interviews and [assignments](#) had led to nothing - that is, she had never married, and yet, judging from the mask-like indifference of her face, she had gone through twenty times more of passion and experience than those whose loves are trumpeted forth for all the world to hear. Under the stress of thinking about Isabella, her room became more shadowy and symbolic; the corners seemed darker, the legs of chairs and tables more [spindly](#) and hieroglyphic.

Suddenly these reflections were ended violently and yet without a sound. A large black form loomed into the looking-glass; blotted out everything, [strewed](#) the table with a packet of marble tablets veined with pink and grey, and was gone.

⁶⁴ twining herbaceous convolvulaceous (having trumpet-shaped flowers and typically a climbing, twining habit) plant.

⁶⁵ any plant of the genus *Aster*, having white, blue, purple, or pink daisy-like flowers.

⁶⁶ plant of tropical and subtropical America, having solitary heads of brightly coloured flowers.

But the picture was entirely altered. For the moment it was unrecognisable and irrational and entirely out of focus. One could not relate these tablets to any human purpose. And then by degrees some logical process set to work on them and began ordering and arranging them and bringing them into the fold of common experience. One realised at last that they were merely letters. The man had brought the post.

There they lay on the marble-topped table, all dripping with light and colour at first and crude and unabsorbed. And then it was strange to see how they were drawn in and arranged and composed and made part of the picture and granted that stillness and immortality which the looking-glass conferred. They lay there invested with a new reality and significance and with a greater heaviness, too, as if it would have needed a [chisel](#) to [dislodge](#) them from the table. And, whether it was fancy or not, they seemed to have become not merely a handful of casual letters but to be [tablets](#) graven with eternal truth – if one could read them, one would know everything there was to be known about Isabella, yes, and about life, too. The pages inside those marble-looking envelopes must be cut deep and scored thick with meaning. Isabella would come in, and take them, one by one, very slowly, and open them, and read them carefully word by word, and then with a profound sigh of comprehension, as if she had seen to the bottom of everything, she would tear the envelopes to little bits and tie the letters together and lock the cabinet drawer in her determination to conceal what she did not wish to be known.

The thought served as a challenge. Isabella did not wish to be known - but she should no longer escape. It was absurd, it was monstrous. If she concealed so much and knew so much one must prize her open with the first tool that came to hand - the imagination. One must fix one's mind upon her at that very moment. One must fasten her down there. One must refuse to be put off any longer with sayings and doings such as the moment brought forth - with dinners and visits and polite conversations. One must put oneself in her shoes. If one took the phrase literally, it was easy to see the shoes in which she stood, down in the lower garden, at this moment. They were very narrow and long and fashionable – they were made of the softest and most flexible leather. Like everything she wore, they were exquisite. And she would be standing under the high hedge in the lower part of the garden, raising the scissors that were tied to her waist to cut some dead flower, some overgrown branch. The sun would beat down on her face, into her eyes; but no, at the critical moment a veil of cloud covered the sun, making the expression of her eyes doubtful - was it mocking or tender, brilliant or dull? One could only see the indeterminate outline of her rather faded, fine face looking at the sky. She was thinking, perhaps, that she must order a new net for the strawberries; that she

must send flowers to Johnson's widow; that it was time she drove over to see the Hipplesleys in their new house. Those were the things she talked about at dinner certainly. But one was tired of the things that she talked about at dinner. It was her profounder state of being that one wanted to catch and turn to words, the state that is to the mind what breathing is to the body, what one calls happiness or unhappiness. At the mention of those words it became obvious, surely, that she must be happy. She was rich; she was distinguished; she had many friends; she travel led – she bought rugs in Turkey and blue pots in Persia. Avenues of pleasure radiated this way and that from where she stood with her scissors raised to cut the trembling branches while the lacy clouds veiled her face.

Here with a quick movement of her scissors she snipped the spray of traveller's joy and it fell to the ground. As it fell, surely some light came in too, surely one could penetrate a little farther into her being. Her mind then was filled with tenderness and regret.... To cut an overgrown branch saddened her because it had once lived, and life was dear to her. Yes, and at the same time the fall of the branch would suggest to her how she must die herself and all the futility and evanescence of things. And then again quickly catching this thought up, with her instant good sense, she thought life had treated her well; even if fall she must, it was to lie on the earth and moulder sweetly into the roots of violets. So she stood thinking. Without making any thought precise – for she was one of those reticent people whose minds hold their thoughts enmeshed in clouds of silence – she was filled with thoughts. Her mind was like her room, in which lights advanced and retreated, came pirouetting and stepping delicately, spread their tails, pecked their way; and then her whole being was suffused, like the room again, with a cloud of some profound knowledge, some unspoken regret, and then she was full of locked drawers, stuffed with letters, like her cabinets. To talk of 'prizing her open' as if she were an oyster, to use any but the finest and subtlest and most pliable tools upon her was impious and absurd. One must imagine - here was she in the looking-glass. It made one start.

She was so far off at first that one could not see her clearly. She came lingering and pausing, here straightening a rose, there lifting a pink to smell it, but she never stopped; and all the time she became larger and larger in the looking-glass, more and more completely the person into whose mind one had been trying to penetrate. One verified her by degrees – fitted the qualities one had discovered into this visible body. There were her grey-green dress, and her long shoes, her basket, and something sparkling at her throat. She came so gradually that she did not seem to derange the pattern in the glass, but only to bring in some new element which gently moved and altered the other objects as if asking them, courteously, to make room for her. And the letters and the table and the grass

walk and the sunflowers which had been waiting in the looking-glass separated and opened out so that she might be received among them. At last there she was, in the hall. She stopped dead. She stood by the table. She stood perfectly still. At once the looking-glass began to pour over her a light that seemed to fix her; that seemed like some acid to bite off the unessential and superficial and to leave only the truth. It was an enthralling spectacle. Everything dropped from her -- clouds, dress, basket, diamond – all that one had called the creeper and convolvulus. Here was the hard wall beneath. Here was the woman herself. She stood naked in that pitiless light. And there was nothing. Isabella was perfectly empty. She had no thoughts. She had no friends. She cared for nobody. As for her letters, they were all bills. Look, as she stood there, old and angular, veined and lined, with her high nose and her wrinkled neck, she did not even trouble to open them.

People should not leave looking-glasses hanging in their rooms.

Strategy for Understanding, Analysis, and Interpretation

1. Generate inferences insightfully from the text.
2. Get engaged with the text and apply various strategies:

Consider the biographical, historical and cultural context: Situate V. Woolf's story within its appropriate cultural and historical context.

Identify the narrator in the story.

Identify the “stream” of thoughts in a character's mind.

Identify how the author succeeds in showing the character's portrait.

Focus on literary and language means.

About the Author

The English novelist, critic, and essayist Virginia Woolf was one of England's most distinguished writers of the middle part of the twentieth century.

She was the daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen, a famous scholar and philosopher. James Russell Lowell, the American poet, was her godfather. Virginia and her sister were educated at home in their father's library. She was quite young when she fell deep into the world of literature.

Virginia married Leonard Woolf, a brilliant young writer and critic from Cambridge, England, whose interests in literature were well suited to hers. They founded the Hogarth Press by setting and handprinting on an old press *Two Stories* by "L. and V. Woolf." The volume was a success, and over the years they published many important books, including *Prelude* by Katherine Mansfield (1888–1923), then an unknown writer; *Poems* by T. S. Eliot (1888–1965); and *Kew Gardens* by Virginia Woolf. The policy of the Hogarth Press was to publish the best and most original work that came to its attention, and the Woolfs as publishers favored young and unknown writers. Virginia Woolf's home in Tavistock Square, Bloomsbury, became a literary and art center, attracting such diverse intellectuals: artists, critics, and writers who became known as the Bloomsbury group.

Woolf was a significant figure in London literary society. Her most famous works include the novels *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *Orlando*.

On 28 March 1941, Woolf committed suicide. She put on her overcoat, filled its pockets with stones, then walked into the river near her home and drowned herself.

Cultural and Historical Context

“In or about December, 1910, human nature changed,” declared Virginia Woolf. Through this interesting hyperbole she meant that there is a “frightening discontinuity between the traditional past and the shaken present; that the line of history has been bent, perhaps broken. Modernist literature goes on the tacit assumption that human nature has indeed changed . . . Stephen Spender remarks ,

that the circumstances under which we live, forever being transformed by nature, have been so radically altered that people feel human nature to have changed and thereby behave as though it has . . . The consequences are extreme: a break-up of the traditional unity and continuity of Western culture, so that the decorums of its past no longer count for very much in determining its present, and a loosening of those ties that, in one or another way, has bound it to the institutions of society over the centuries . . . The writer takes upon himself the enormous ambition not to remake the world (by now seen as hopelessly recalcitrant and alien) but to reinvent the terms of reality.”⁶⁷

Modernist writers were in search of new ways to relate the human experience, “changed human character” in an uncertain, vague, and hopeless time in history. That time was demoralized world and “lost generation” as Gertrude Stein would later put it. Changing times and “changed human nature” demanded different modes of expression. For V. Woolf new mode of expression was stream-of-consciousness to convey what lies below the surface of a character's psyche.

Check Your Comprehension

1. What can you say about Isabella’s life? Is the author satisfied with depicting only the established facts about Isabella’s life?
2. How does the story end? What conclusions can you draw about Isabella at the end of the story?

Build Your Vocabulary

Hideous; badger; otter; kingfisher; nocturnal; pirouette; cuttlefish; suffuse; tout; perpetual; transient; perish; presumably; leafy; trailing; wreath; tendril; spinster; audacity; upbraidings; assignation; spindly; strew; chisel; dislodge; tablet; profound; lacy; veil; snip; futility; evanescence; moulder; reticent; enmesh; pliable; impious; linger; penetrate; verify; derange; courteously.

⁶⁷ Howe I., *The Idea of Modern*, Fawcett Publications, 1967.

Language and Literature

1. Explain the use of the literary elements of a story: plot, character, point of view.
2. Identify symbols within the text and evaluate an author's use of symbolism to convey ideas.
3. Determine the author's style, identifying particular word choices and figurative language.

Plot

In traditional stories Plot and character depend on each other. No plot or story can develop without characters and characters are frequently, though not always, developed through plots.

Can the same be said about V. Woolf's story? Is the story "event-dominated" and "tight-plotted"? Is Woolf more interested in character than in plot? Is V. Woolf's narrative a chain of events that develop in traditional plots? Can traditional story-telling techniques succeed in portraying "inner awareness" of the character?

Since stream of consciousness literature focuses on psychic processes (mental and spiritual) of a character, it cannot employ plot in the ordinary sense. "If, then, the stream of consciousness writer cannot draw on the conventional use of plot to provide a necessary unity, he must devise other methods," comments R.

Humphrey. He gives the following classification of those patterns that replace conventional use of plot in stream of consciousness works:

1. The unities (time, place, character, and action)
2. Leitmotifs (A **leitmotif**, also **leitmotiv**; lit. "Leading motif") is a recurring musical theme, associated with a particular person, place, or idea. By extension, the word has also been used to mean any sort of recurring theme, whether in music,

literature, or the life of a fictional character or a real person). In literature it is defined as a recurring image, symbol, word, or phrase.

3. Previously established literary patterns (burlesques)

4. Symbolic structures

5. Formal scenic arrangements

6. Natural cyclical schemes (musical structures, cycles of history, etc.).⁶⁸

Stream of Consciousness Technique

“Stream of consciousness” is properly a term for psychology and, therefore, initially it had only a psychological meaning. The term was coined by W. James and was applied to designate the stream (flow) of individual’s inner mental processes. In literary studies, this term, according to R. Humphrey, becomes “doubly metaphorical”: “consciousness” on the one hand indicates the entire area of psychic structure and on the other hand subconscious (prespeech) levels of psychic activity.⁶⁹ Stream of consciousness fiction “embraces” whole area of psychic processes – conscious and unconscious, the latter being chaotic, irrational and illogical. As for the term “stream,” in modernist fiction it means not only incessant flow, but also implies “checks and interferences” which enable the flow to pass freely from one level of psyche to another. The chief technique in controlling the movement of “stream” has been an application of the principles of psychological “free association.”⁷⁰

Free association Method

“Free associations” in psychology represents the method, which enables the psychiatrist to decipher the patient’s speech even the latter being of “absurd” kind.

Lying on a couch (a position imposing a certain state of relaxation), the patient speaks freely of anything that may cross his/her mind, without searching for some specific subject or topic. The flow (stream) of his/her thoughts is free, and followed with no voluntary intervention. The important thing is that the critical mind does

⁶⁸ Humphrey R., *Stream of Consciousness in the modern Novel*, University of California Press, 1968, p.86.

⁶⁹Ibid p. 42

⁷⁰Ibid

not intervene to censor spontaneous thoughts. Later analysis of thoughts produced by means of the above-mentioned method reveals certain repetitive topics indicative of psychic complexes of emotional charge. These complexes are unconscious. They are autonomously activated by chance verbal associations, and influence conscious psychic life in a frequently dramatic manner. The task of psychoanalysis is to bring such complexes to the surface of conscious mind, and integrate them into the patient's life.⁷¹

Example of free associations

Lying on a couch, in dim light and in a peaceful room, the patient produces the following free associations:

I am thinking of the fluffy clouds I seem to see with my very eyes. They are white and pearly. The sky is full of clouds but a few azure patches can still be seen here and there...

Clouds keep changing their shapes. They are fluid because they are condensed water particles...

I am thinking I may have an obsession about this water. The doctor has told me I am dehydrated; there's not enough water in my body. He suggested I should drink 2-3 liters of water every day. Mineral water or tea.⁷²

Character's Discourse in Stream of Consciousness Literature

In the main, a narrative text of a literary work can be subdivided into **narrator's (author's) discourse** and **character's discourse**. In a stream of consciousness novel, the author either entirely disappears from narration – “there are no commentaries, no stage directions from the author,” or “presents unspoken material as if it were directly from the consciousness of a character.”⁷³ The aim

⁷¹ www.freudfile.org/psychoanalysis/free_associations

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Humphrey R., *Stream of Consciousness in the modern Novel*, University of California Press, 1968, pp. 27-29.

of stream of consciousness writers is to depict imagined inner lives of their fictional characters. Stream of consciousness novel is concerned with depicting psychological state of a character, more precisely his/her mental and spiritual experience, which provides “access” to a character’s thoughts as if the reader were getting “live report” from character’s mind. However, character’s discourse is usually of various types in stream of consciousness fiction.

“Technical experimentation has figured actively in the stream-of-consciousness novel. The satisfactory depiction of consciousness has required either the invention of new fictional techniques or a refocusing of the old ones. It is for this reason, doubtless, that the stream-of-consciousness technique is discussed in critical literature. This has unavoidably led to confusion, since the techniques for presenting stream of consciousness are greatly different from one novel to the next.”⁷⁴ Narrated “silent,” “unuttered” character’s speech is most often composed of a variety of speech types including **narrated stream of consciousness, quoted stream of consciousness, psycho narration, free indirect style, interior monologue, soliloquy, inner voice, internal speech, etc.**

Stream of Consciousness and Psychological Novels

“Stream of consciousness literature reveals essential difference from those psychological novels concerned with psychological aspects of characters. For example, the novels written by Henry James reveal psychological processes ‘in which a single point of view is maintained so that the entire novel is presented through the intelligence of a character. But, these, since they do not deal at all with prespeech levels of consciousness, are not ... defined as stream of consciousness novels ... there is a contrast and it is determined by the difference in psychological focusing. In short, the stream of consciousness novelists were, like the naturalists, trying to depict life accurately; but unlike the naturalists, the life they were concerned with was the individual’s psychic life.”⁷⁵ Thus, stream of consciousness fiction is concerned, as Humphrey states, with “psychic existence and functioning (internal man) [Ibid], depicting inner states of a character – his (her) consciousness. “Stream of consciousness writing aims to provide a textual equivalent to the stream of a fictional character’s consciousness. It creates the impression that the reader is eavesdropping on the flow of conscious experience in the character’s mind, gaining intimate access to their private “thoughts.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid. p.23

⁷⁵ Ibid. p4.

⁷⁶ Mephram J., "Stream of consciousness," the Literary Encyclopedia, 2003.

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

1. Comment upon title and subtitle of the story. Can the looking-glass be regarded as a symbol?
2. Does the new story-telling technique make it possible for the reader to grasp the character's psychic state? Does it help the reader to understand Isabella's inner world, hidden depths of her soul?
3. The author describes interior and exterior of the house? Why?

Your Response to Literature

Have you ever used “a looking glass” to examine your self? Have you succeeded in creating a vivid portrait of your own self? What is easier to examine another person in the “looking-glass” or your own self from outside and in?

The Standard of Living

Dorothy Parker

Annabel and Midge came out of the tea room with the arrogant slow gait of the leisured, for their Saturday afternoon stretched ahead of them. They had lunched, as was their wont, on sugar, starches, oils, and butterfats. Usually they ate sandwiches of spongy new white bread greased with butter and mayonnaise; they ate thick wedges of cake lying wet beneath ice cream and whipped cream and melted chocolate gritty with nuts. As alternates, they ate patties, sweating beads of inferior oil, containing bits of bland meat bogged in pale, stiffening sauce; they ate pastries, limber under rigid icing, filled with an indeterminate yellow sweet stuff, not still solid, not yet liquid, like salve that has been left in the sun. They chose no other sort of food, nor did they consider it. And their skin was like the petals of wood anemones, and their bellies were as flat and their flanks as lean as those of young Indian braves.

Annabel and Midge had been best friends almost from the day that Midge had found a job as stenographer with the firm that employed Annabel. By now, Annabel, two years longer in the stenographic department, had worked up to the wages of eighteen dollars and fifty cents a week; Midge was still at sixteen dollars. Each girl lived at home with her family and paid half her salary to its support.

The girls sat side by side at their desks, they lunched together every noon, together they set out for home at the end of the day's work. Many of their evenings and most of their Sundays were passed in each other's company. Often they were joined by two young men, but there was no steadiness to any such quartet; the two young men would give place, unlamented, to two other young men, and lament would have been inappropriate, really, since the newcomers were scarcely distinguishable from their predecessors. Invariably the girls spent the fine idle hours of their hot-weather Saturday afternoons together. Constant use had not worn ragged the fabric of their friendship.

They looked alike, though the resemblance did not lie in their features. It was in the shape of their bodies, their movements, their style, and their adornments. Annabel and Midge did, and completely, all that young office workers are besought not to do. They painted their lips and their nails, they darkened their

lashes and lightened their hair, and scent seemed to shimmer from them. They wore thin, bright dresses, tight over their breasts and high on their legs, and tilted slippers, fancifully strapped. They looked conspicuous and cheap and charming.

Now, as they walked across to Fifth Avenue with their skirts swirled by the hot wind, they received audible admiration. Young men grouped lethargically about newsstands awarded them murmurs, exclamations, even—the ultimate tribute—whistles. Annabel and Midge passed without the condescension of hurrying their pace; they held their heads higher and set their feet with exquisite precision, as if they stepped over the necks of peasants.

Always the girls went to walk on Fifth Avenue on their free afternoons, for it was the ideal ground for their favorite game. The game could be played anywhere, and indeed, was, but the great shop windows stimulated the two players to their best form.

Annabel had invented the game; or rather she had evolved it from an old one. Basically, it was no more than the ancient sport of what-would-you-do-if-you-had-a-million-dollars? But Annabel had drawn a new set of rules for it, had narrowed it, pointed it, made it stricter. Like all games, it was the more absorbing for being more difficult.

Annabel's version went like this: You must suppose that somebody dies and leaves you a million dollars, cool. But there is a condition to the bequest. It is stated in the will that you must spend every nickel of the money on yourself.

There lay the hazard of the game. If, when playing it, you forgot and listed among your expenditures the rental of a new apartment for your family, for example, you lost your turn to the other player. It was astonishing how many—and some of them among the experts, too—would forfeit all their innings by such slips.

It was essential, of course, that it be played in passionate seriousness. Each purchase must be carefully considered and, if necessary, supported by argument. There was no zest to playing it wildly. Once Annabel had introduced the game to Sylvia, another girl who worked in the office. She explained the rules to Sylvia and then offered her the gambit. “What would be the first thing you'd do?” Sylvia had not shown the decency of even a second of hesitation. “Well,” she said, “the first thing I'd do, I'd go out and hire somebody to shoot Mrs. Gary Cooper, and then...” So it is to be seen that she was no fun.

But Annabel and Midge were surely born to be comrades, for Midge played the game like a master from the moment she learned it. It was she who added the touches that made the whole thing cozier. According to Midge's innovations, the eccentric who died and left you the money was not anybody you loved, or, for the matter of that, anybody you even knew. It was somebody who had seen you somewhere and had thought, "That girl ought to have lots of nice things. I'm going to leave her a million dollars when I die." And the death was to be neither untimely nor painful. Your benefactor, full of years and comfortably ready to depart, was to slip softly away during sleep and go right to heaven. These embroideries permitted Annabel and Midge to play their game in the luxury of peaceful consciences.

Midge played with a seriousness that was not only proper but extreme. The single strain on the girls' friendship had followed an announcement once made by Annabel that the first thing she would buy with her million dollars would be a silver-fox coat. It was as if she had struck Midge across the mouth. When Midge recovered her breath, she cried that she couldn't imagine how Annabel could do such a thing—silver-fox coats were so common! Annabel defended her taste with the retort that they were not common, either. Midge then said that they were so. She added that everybody had a silver-fox coat. She went on, with perhaps a slight toss of head, to declare that she herself wouldn't be caught dead in silver fox.

For the next few days, though the girls saw each other as constantly, their conversation was careful and infrequent, and they did not once play their game. Then one morning, as soon as Annabel entered the office, she came to Midge and said she had changed her mind. She would not buy a silver-fox coat with any part of her million dollars. Immediately on receiving the legacy, she would select a coat of mink.

Midge smiled and her eyes shone. "I think," she said, "you're doing absolutely the right thing."

Now, as they walked along Fifth Avenue, they played the game anew. It was one of those days with which September is repeatedly cursed; hot and glaring, with slivers of dust in the wind. People drooped and shambled, but the girls carried themselves tall and walked a straight line, as befitted young heiresses on their afternoon promenade. There was no longer need for them to start the game at its formal opening. Annabel went direct to the heart of it.

“All right,” she said. “So you've got this million dollars. So what would be the first thing you'd do?”

“Well, the first thing I'd do,” Midge said, “I'd get a mink coat.” But she said it mechanically, as if she were giving the memorized answer to an expected question.

“Yes,” Annabel said. “I think you ought to. The terribly dark kind of mink.” But she, too, spoke as if by rote. It was too hot; fur, no matter how dark and sleek and supple, was horrid to the thoughts.

They stepped along in silence for a while. Then Midge's eye was caught by a shop window. Cool, lovely gleamings were there set off by chaste and elegant darkness.

“No,” Midge said, “I take it back. I wouldn't get a mink coat the first thing. Know what I'd do? I'd get a string of pearls. Real pearls.”

Annabel's eyes turned to follow Midge's.

“Yes,” she said, slowly. “I think that's a kind of a good idea. And it would make sense, too. Because you can wear pearls with anything.”

Together they went over to the shop window and stood pressed against it. It contained but one object – a double row of great, even pearls clasped by a deep emerald around a little pink velvet throat.

“What do you suppose they cost?” Annabel said.

“Gee, I don't know,” Midge said. “Plenty, I guess.”

“Like a thousand dollars?” Annabel said.

“Oh, I guess like more,” Midge said. “On account of the emerald.”

“Well, like ten thousand dollars?” Annabel said.

“Gee, I wouldn't even know,” Midge said.

The devil nudged Annabel in the ribs. “Dare you to go in and price them,” she said.

“Like fun!” Midge said.

“Dare you,” Annabel said.

“Why, a store like this wouldn't even be open this afternoon,” Midge said.

“Yes, it is so, too,” Annabel said. “People just came out. And there's a doorman on. Dare you.”

“Well,” Midge said. “But you've got to come too.”

They tendered thanks, icily, to the doorman for ushering them into the shop. It was cool and quiet, a broad, gracious room with paneled walls and soft carpet. But the girls wore expressions of bitter disdain, as if they stood in a sty.

A slim, immaculate clerk came to them and bowed. His neat face showed no astonishment at their appearance.

“Good afternoon,” he said. He implied that he would never forget it if they would grant him the favor of accepting his soft-spoken greeting.

“Good afternoon,” Annabel and Midge said together, and in like freezing accents.

“Is there something—?” the clerk said.

“Oh, we're just looking,” Annabel said. It was as if she flung the words down from a dais.

The clerk bowed.

“My friend and myself merely happened to be passing,” Midge said, and stopped, seeming to listen to the phrase. “My friend here and myself,” she went on, “merely happened to be wondering how much are those pearls you've got in your window.”

“Ah, yes,” the clerk said. “The double rope. That is two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, Madam.”

“I see,” Midge said.

The clerk bowed. “An exceptionally beautiful necklace,” he said. “Would you care to look at it?” “

“No, thank you,” Annabel said.

“My friend and myself merely happened to be passing,” Midge said.

They turned to go; to go, from their manner, where the tumbrel⁷⁷ awaited them. The clerk sprang ahead and opened the door. He bowed as they swept by him. The girls went on along the Avenue and disdain was still on their faces.

“Honestly!” Annabel said. “Can you imagine a thing like that?”

“Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars!” Midge said. “That's a quarter of a million dollars right there!”

“He's got his nerve!” Annabel said.

They walked on. Slowly the disdain went, slowly and completely as if drained from them, and with it went the regal carriage and tread. Their shoulders dropped and they dragged their feet; they bumped against each other, without notice or apology, and caromed⁷⁸ away again. They were silent and their eyes were cloudy.

Suddenly Midge straightened her back, flung her head high, and spoke, clear and strong.

“Listen, Annabel,” she said. “Look. Suppose there was this terribly rich person, see? You don't know this person, but this person has seen you somewhere and wants to do something for you. Well, it's a terribly old person, see? And so this person dies, just like going to sleep, and leaves you ten million dollars. Now, what would be the first thing you'd do?”

⁷⁷ Raised platform

⁷⁸ collided

Strategy for Understanding, Analysis, and Interpretation

1. Draw Inferences on what you have read.
2. Get engaged with the text and apply various strategies:

Identify the problem the author is trying to resolve.

Identify the author's attitude.

Identify deeper implications insightfully from the text.

Focus on literary and language means.

About The Author

Dorothy Parker is known as a legendary literary figure and the wittiest woman in America. At the age of 24, she became a staff writer for *Vanity Fair* as a drama critic. While her husband, Edwin Parker, was stationed overseas, she met with other writers for drinking and socializing at the Algonquin Hotel in New York City, a group which came to be known as the Algonquin Round Table. During this time she worked as a freelance writer, drank heavily, and made several suicide attempts. In 1933 she moved to California and wrote screenplays with her second husband, Alan Campbell.

Style

Parker's literary style is viewed differently by critics. They argue that at times it carries the formal elements of nineteenth-century tradition, at other times it struggles to break free from them.

Hardly anyone will argue the idea that Parker's stories are filled with satire. Parker regarded herself as a social satirist. She is known for her sharp tongue and malicious wit.

How is this reflected in the style of the story “The Standard of Living”?

About The Standard of Living

The story was written in 1941. Two young working American girls, Midge and Annabel, invent a game – “what-would-you-do-if-you-had-a-million dollars” in order to escape the ordinariness of everyday (standard) life. Literary critics consider “The Standard of Living,” as a story about the beliefs, dreams, and value systems of today's materialistic society through a satire of the lives of two “standard” American girls.

American Dream

The term was first used by James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America*. He states: "The American Dream is "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement." In spite of this, the term “American dream” is not easily defined, for many it implies success, affluence, financial security, fame, “living well,” etc. It is usually based on a materialistic system of values.

What kind of attitude does the story suggest towards American Dream?

Build Your Vocabulary

Arrogant; gait; wont; starches; butterfats; spongy; wedges of cake; grit; patty; inferior; bland; bog; pastry; limber; indeterminate ; salve ; flank; steady ; quartet; unlamented, lament ; inappropriate; scarcely; distinguish; predecessors; invariably; besought; shimmer; fancifully; strap; conspicuous ; audible; lethargically; tribute; condescension; precision; bequest; zest; decency; benefactor; embroideries; strain; infrequent; mink; droop; shamble; befit; rote; sleek; supple; chaste; on account of; emerald; nudge; usher; disdain; sty; immaculate.

Check Your Comprehension

1. What kind of food did the girls eat and what does this say about Annabel and Midge?
2. How do the girls dress, act, walk, and talk? Illustrate your answer with specific examples from the story.
3. The girls looked “conspicuous and cheap and charming”. How did they “succeed” in looking so?

Your Response to Literature

Is this kind of “adornment” still typical (standard) today? How do you want to look like? What is your idea of being “cool”?

4. How did Annabel and Midge spend their free time?
5. What game did the girls invent?
6. What rules did the game have?
7. How serious were the girls when playing the game?
8. What shift did the game take one afternoon?
9. Describe their experience in the shop and the way they were received? How does the author achieve expressiveness?
10. How did the price of the necklace affect the girls’ mood? Follow the change in their behavior.
11. What solution did Midge find? Did they change their “standard of living”?
12. Do you observe any irony in the discrepancy between the way the girls see themselves and the way the author portrays them? Find passages in the story to support your answer.

Critical Thinking and interpretation

What does the writer want to tell the readers – it was just a game or a way of living?

Your Response to Literature

Is dreaming your way of life? Do you really expect that your dreams will come true?

How do you try to escape the ordinariness of your everyday life?

Do you dream about improving your standard of living?

Do you “measure” your happiness and success by standard of living?

Reading between Lines

In addition to using satire and irony, Parker is known for her sharp tongue and malicious wit. Can you detect them below?

1. *“They looked alike, though the resemblance did not lie in their features. It was in the shape of their bodies, their movements, their style, and their adornments.”*

What does the author imply when she speaks about the resemblance of the two girls? Is their appearance also “standard”? Is the shape of their body standard? Is their movement standard? Is their style standard? Are their adornments standard? Are their values standard?

Your response to Literature

Do you, like Dorothy Parker, feel that people are losing their individuality and becoming more and more standard? Have you noticed that their values, style, adornments, even movements, way of talking, are standard?

2. *“They painted their lips and their nails, they darkened their lashes and lightened their hair, and scent seemed to shimmer from them. They wore thin,*

bright dresses, tight over their breasts and high on their legs, and tilted slippers, fancifully strapped. They looked conspicuous and cheap and charming. Now, as they walked across to Fifth Avenue with their skirts swirled by the hot wind, they received audible admiration... Annabel and Midge passed without the condescension of hurrying their pace; they held their heads higher and set their feet with exquisite precision, as if they stepped over the necks of peasants."

Do you observe any irony or even sarcasm in the discrepancy between the way the girls see themselves and the way the author portrays them?

3. *"Young men grouped lethargically about newsstands awarded them murmurs, exclamations, even—the ultimate tribute—whistles Young men grouped lethargically about newsstands awarded them murmurs, exclamations, even—the ultimate tribute—whistles."*

Can young men really become lethargic because of the girls painted lips? Can whistling be ultimate tribute to pay someone?

4. *"Annabel and Midge passed without the condescension of hurrying their pace; they held their heads higher and set their feet with exquisite precision, as if they stepped over the necks of peasants."*

What made them so proud? How does the author present their "pride"?

5. "The single strain on the girls' friendship had followed an announcement once made by Annabel that the first thing she would buy with her million dollars would be a silver-fox coat. It was as if she had struck Midge across the mouth. When Midge recovered her breath, she cried that she couldn't imagine how Annabel could do such a thing—silver-fox coats were so common! Annabel defended her taste with the retort that they were not common, either. Midge then said that they were so. She added that everybody had a silver-fox coat. She went on, with perhaps a slight toss of head, to declare that she herself wouldn't be caught dead in silver fox."

The girls do not wish to look common. Why does it sound ridiculous?

Language and Literature

1. Explain the use of the literary elements of a story: theme, plot, setting, character, point of view.
2. Identify symbols within the text and evaluate an author's use of symbolism to convey ideas.
3. Determine the author's style, identifying particular word choices and figurative language.

Plot

Speak about the plot structure of the story.

Theme and Message

The central concept expressed in the process of developing the theme is the message of the story. The message is generally expressed implicitly. Implication may be conveyed by different techniques.

What is Parker's message? What techniques does she use to convey the idea? How is the message connected with all the elements of the story?

Identify the purpose of the writer and examine the ideas that she includes in support of that purpose.

What is the theme of the story? Is it connected with the title?

Character

Does the author describe the girls' appearance?

What means of characterization are used by the author?

Why does the author use so many similes in the opening paragraph?

Irony and Sarcasm

There is a little confusion over what is ironic and what is sarcastic. Sarcasm is frequently misused as a synonym for irony. It is possible to be ironic without being sarcastic, and to be sarcastic without being ironic.

Irony refers to the literal meaning and the intended meaning of the words uttered being different, while sarcasm refers to the mocking intent of the utterance. Sarcasm is usually caustic and bitter. It is used to describe situations, persons, or things in a derogatory way in order to be funny. Writers use sarcasm to criticize everything.

The most vivid difference between irony and sarcasm, probably, is **ridicule**. Ridicule is an important aspect of sarcasm, but not verbal irony in general.

Can you feel irony and sarcasm in the story? Does Parker refer to ridicule? Illustrate your answers with examples from the story.

In the first paragraph the author tells the readers that “Annabel and Midge came out of the tea room with the arrogant slow gait.” In the fifth paragraph we read “they held their heads higher and set their feet with exquisite precision, as if they stepped over the necks of peasants.”

What made them walk arrogantly? Does it create ironic effect?

Satire

The satirist is regarded as a “self-appointed guardian of standards, ideals and truth; of moral as well as aesthetic values, he is the man (women satirists are very rare) who takes it upon himself to correct, censure and ridicule the follies and vices of society and thus to bring contempt and derision upon aberrations from a desirable and civilized norm. Thus satire is a kind of “protest, a sublimation and refinement of anger and indignation”, says the dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory.

Can Dorothy Parker be considered as a woman satirist?

Shooting an Elephant

George Orwell



In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people — the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way anti-European feeling was very bitter. No one **had the guts** to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was **baited** whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and **jeer at** Europeans.

All this was **perplexing** and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an **evil** thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically — and secretly, of course — I was all for the

Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos — all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not even know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it. All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in saecula saeculorum, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

One day something happened which in a roundabout way was enlightening. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism — the real motives for which despotic governments act. Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out. I took my rifle, an old .44 Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful *in terrorem*. Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant's doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone 'must'. It had been chained up, as tame elephants always are when their attack of 'must' is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and escaped. Its mahout, the only person who could manage it when it was in that state, had set out in pursuit, but had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours' journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly reappeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody's bamboo hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violences upon it.

The Burmese sub-inspector and some Indian constables were waiting for me in the quarter where the elephant had been seen. It was a very poor quarter, a labyrinth of squalid bamboo huts, thatched with palmleaf, winding all over a steep hillside. I remember that it was a cloudy, stuffy morning at the beginning of the rains. We began questioning the people as to where the elephant had gone and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes. Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that he had gone in another, some professed not even to have heard of any elephant. I had almost made up my mind that the whole story was a pack of lies, when we heard yells a little distance away. There was a loud, scandalized cry of 'Go away, child! Go away this instant!' and an old woman with a switch in her hand came round the corner of a hut, violently shooing away a crowd of naked children. Some more women followed, clicking their tongues and exclaiming; evidently there was something that the children ought not to have seen. I rounded the hut and saw a man's dead body sprawling in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dravidian coolie, almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him with its trunk, put its foot on his back and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.) The friction of the great beast's foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit. As soon as I saw the dead man I sent an orderly to a friend's house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle. I had already sent back the pony, not wanting it to go mad with fright and throw me if it smelt the elephant.

The orderly came back in a few minutes with a rifle and five cartridges, and meanwhile some Burmans had arrived and told us that the elephant was in the paddy fields⁷⁹ below, only a few hundred yards away. As I started forward practically the whole population of the quarter flocked out of the houses and followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant. They had not shown much interest in the elephant when he was merely ravaging their homes, but it was different now that he was going to be shot. It was a bit of fun to them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides they wanted the meat. It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of

⁷⁹ Rice fields

shooting the elephant — I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary — and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you. I marched down the hill, looking and feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder and an ever-growing army of people jostling at my heels. At the bottom, when you got away from the huts, there was a metalled road and beyond that a miry waste of paddy fields a thousand yards across, not yet ploughed but soggy from the first rains and dotted with coarse grass. The elephant was standing eight yards from the road, his left side towards us. He took not the slightest notice of the crowd's approach. He was tearing up bunches of grass, beating them against his knees to clean them and stuffing them into his mouth.

I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant — it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery — and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. I thought then and I think now that his attack of 'must' was already passing off; in which case he would merely wander harmlessly about until the mahout came back and caught him. Moreover, I did not in the least want to shoot him. I decided that I would watch him for a little while to make sure that he did not turn savage again, and then go home.

But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the garish clothes — faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd — seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the 'natives', and so in every crisis he has got to do what the 'natives' expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to

fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing — no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a *large* animal.) Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing: he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behavior. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the mahout⁸⁰ came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of 'natives'; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do. There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim.

The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-

⁸⁰ Elephant keeper and driver

hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one would shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear-hole. I ought, therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole, actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick — one never does when a shot goes home — but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time — it might have been five seconds, I dare say — he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open — I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die. Burmans were bringing dash and baskets even before I left, and I was told they had stripped his body almost to the bones by the afternoon.

Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie,⁸¹ because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie. And afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.

Strategy for Understanding, Analysis, and Interpretation

1. Draw Inferences on what you have read.
2. Get engaged with the text and apply various strategies:

Situate Orwell's story within its appropriate cultural and historical context.

Identify the problem the author is trying to resolve.

Identify the concepts the author uses or develops.

Identify the author's attitude.

Identify deeper implications insightfully from the text.

⁸¹ A hired laborer

Focus on literary and language means.

About the Author

Eric A. Blair, better known by his pen name, George Orwell was born in Colonial India to parents in the Indian Civil Service. He studied at Eton College. However, he was unable to win a scholarship to continue his studies at the university level. With few opportunities available, he decided to follow his parents' path into service for the British Empire, joining the Indian Imperial Police in 1922. His first novel, *Burmese Days* (1934) describes his bitter and vulnerable years (1922 – 1927) as an imperial policeman. After five years of service, he became strongly disillusioned with his job and quit the imperial civil service in disgust. "Shooting an Elephant," one of his most famous essays, is based on his experiences from this period. George Orwell is today best known for his last two novels, the anti-totalitarian works *Animal Farm* - a satirical fable attacking both Fascism and Communism and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* - a famous futuristic novel, in which a dictator controls all thought and language.

Cultural and Historical Context

The country that is today Burma (Myanmar) was, during the time of Orwell's experiences in the colony, a province of India, itself a British colony. Prior to British intervention in the nineteenth century Burma was a sovereign kingdom. Britain conquered Burma over a period of sixty-two years (1823—1886), during which three Anglo-Burmese Wars took place, and incorporated it into its Indian Empire. After three wars between British forces and the Burmese, beginning with the First Anglo-Burmese War in 1824-26, followed by the Second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852, the country fell under British control after its defeat in the Third Anglo-Burmese War in 1885. Burma was administered as a province of India until 1937 when it became a separate, self-governing colony; independence was attained as a result of the Aung San–Attlee agreement which guaranteed Burmese independence. Aung San was assassinated after the agreement was formalized, but before it took effect and Burma attained its independence on January 4, 1948. The

essay "Shooting an Elephant" is set in a town in southern Burma during the colonial period.

About Shooting an Elephant

The story describes a colonial officer's obligation to shoot a rogue elephant. The narrator does not want to shoot the elephant, but feels compelled to by a crowd of indigenous residents, before whom he does not wish to appear indecisive or cowardly. Orwell gives the readers not just facts but close-up personal experience. According to critics, George Orwell pioneered personal kind of reporting (many television news reports today are on-the-scene broadcasts, showing people in the middle of an event), using nonfiction.

Build Your Vocabulary

Try to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words from context. But even if surrounding words or phrases clarify the meaning, refer to dictionaries.

have the guts; bait; jeer at; perplexing; evil; oppressor; huddle; stinking; cowed; long-term; convict; intolerable; utter; impose; evil-spirited; bayonet; ravage; bazaar; devour; inflict; thatch; profess; sprawl; score; trench; friction; unnerve; jostle; plough; soggy; coarse grass; take not the slightest notice; stuff something into somebody's mouth; halt; savage; garish; irresistible; hollow; posing; dummy; squeamish; trample; shove the cartridges; stricken; shrunken; sag; flabby; slobber; senility; remnant; hind legs; collapse; beneath; trumpet; rattle; gasp; sufficient; grasp.

Genre Identification

An interesting aspect of commentary on “Shooting an Elephant” is whether it is a **short story** or an autobiographical **essay**. Many critics consider that it is an essay. Orwell himself classified “Shooting an Elephant” as an essay, including it in a collection of his essays as late as 1949.

The definition of an essay is often overlapping with a short story. **Essay** is a short piece of writing usually written from an author's personal point of view. Essays can be literary criticism, political manifestos, learned arguments, observations of daily life, recollections, and reflections of the author.

It is very difficult to define the genre into which essays fall.

Aldous Huxley, a leading essayist, gives guidance on the subject:

Like the novel, the essay is a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything, usually on a certain topic. By tradition, almost by definition, the essay is a short piece, and it is therefore impossible to give all things full play within the limits of a single essay... Essays belong to a literary species whose extreme variability can be studied most effectively within a three-poled frame of reference. There is the pole of the personal and the autobiographical; there is the pole of the objective, the factual, the concrete-particular; and there is the pole of the abstract-universal. Most essayists are at home and at their best in the neighborhood of only one of the essay's three poles, or at the most only in the neighborhood of two of them. There are the predominantly personal essayists, who write fragments of reflective autobiography and who look at the world through the keyhole of anecdote and description. There are the predominantly objective essayists who do not speak directly of themselves, but turn their attention outward to some literary or scientific or political theme. ... And how splendid, how truly oracular are the utterances of the great generalizers! ... The most richly satisfying essays are those which make the best not of one, not of two, but of all the three worlds in which it is possible for the essay to exist.⁸²

Is “Shooting an Elephant” a story or an essay? What characteristic features of an essay does it reveal?

⁸² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essay>

Check Your Comprehension

Critical Thinking and interpretation

1. *"I was hated by large numbers of people," says the narrator, and "anti-European feeling was very bitter."* Why was George Orwell hated in Burma? How was this hatred expressed?
2. Did the narrator understand the hatred? How did he react to their hatred?

Your Response to Literature

How would you react if you were hated?

According to psychologists hatred is a violent feeling that impels the subject to wish another person ill and to take pleasure in bad things that happen to that person.

Freud asserted that "Hate, as a relation to objects, is older than love", for this feeling originates in the ego's self-preservation instincts. It can be inferred from this that "hatred is a kind of self-preservation, to the extent of destroying the other, while loving is a way . . . of making the other exist," as Paul-Laurent Assoun expressed it.

Hatred is an emotion that aims to destroy. Thus it seems to be radically opposite to love.

Father Seraphim Rose wrote:

Do not be depressed that there are people rising up against you... If everyone loved you, then I would say there is some trouble there because you are probably catering too much to people... Christ was also hated, and was crucified. Why should we expect everyone to suddenly love us, if we are following in the steps of Christ? And fear not hatred from others, but hatred within yourself.

Do you react painfully when you are hated? Do you fear hatred within yourself?

3. What is Orwell's attitude towards Burmese people?
4. How does he feel as a police officer?
5. Try to explain the narrator's conflicting attitude in the paragraph:

“It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behavior. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of ‘natives’; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do.”

6. How does Orwell feel about being laughed at as he struggles to make his decision to shoot the elephant?

Your Response to Literature

How do you react when you are laughed at?

7. Why does Orwell finally shoot the elephant? How does Orwell excuse or rationalize his actions?

8. What induced Orwell to decide on shooting the elephant at last?

Your Response to Literature

Have you ever acted against your better judgment because you feared what other people might think of you? Describe how you acted to avoid looking like a fool.

How would you behave if you were in Orwell's place: kill the elephant or spare its life?

Retelling of a Literary Work

Try to retell the story in the third person. If you found a story's conflict dull in spots, your retelling might make it more suspenseful; if you especially enjoyed one particular event, you might emphasize it in your retelling.

Literary and Language Focus

1. Explain the use of the literary elements of a story: theme, plot, setting, character, point of view.
2. Define and identify metaphor and irony and explain the author's purpose for using them.
3. Identify symbols within the text and evaluate an author's use of symbolism to convey ideas.
4. Determine the author's style, identifying particular word choices and figurative language.

Theme

What exactly is a theme of a story, and how can we recognize it? Is it the central idea of the story? Can a literary work have multiple themes? What is the theme of this essay? Is the theme woven all the way through the story, and the character actions, etc., or it exists as a separate entity?

The theme of "Shooting an Elephant" is regarded Orwell's attack on imperialism and its evils, based on his personal experience back when he was working at Burma under the command of the British government.

What is Orwell's message? What techniques does he use to convey the idea?

Identify the purpose of the writer and examine the ideas that he includes in support of that purpose.

Action

When does **the action** of “Shooting an Elephant” begin – when the narrator tells us about his experience in Burma or when he receives a telephone report of an elephant “ravaging the bazaar?” How does the author begin “Shooting an Elephant” – with a meditative prelude to the action or directly reporting the action in the middle of an event?

Analyze the essay according to plot elements.

What can be the climax or turning point in the story?

Setting

Does setting in the essay support the theme? If so, how?

Character as symbol

In some cases, certain characters are understood to represent a given quality or abstraction. Rather than simply being people, these characters stand for something larger.

How would you describe the main characters in "Shooting an Elephant"?

What does the elephant symbolize? What does the British officer symbolize?
What might the elephant's slow death symbolize?

The message of an author can be expressed implicitly, i.e. indirectly. Implication may be conveyed by symbol. Sometimes symbols can be straightforward, for example dove symbolizes peace, rose – purity; lion – strength and courage. Winter represents aging, decay, and death; spring is often used to represent energy, birth, and hope; summer is symbolic of childhood, fun, and laughter; autumn stands for maturity, wisdom, and fulfillment. But more often it is not easy to say exactly what they symbolize.

Discuss the symbolic meaning of the elephant and the executioner.

Point of View

From what point of view is the story written?

The point of view can sometimes indirectly establish the author's intentions. Orwell employs a casually assumed first-person point of view; what readers know of the event described in the story, they know primarily from the narrator's direct and apparently candid divulgence. Critics say that couching the tale in the first person enables Orwell to engage in the rhythm of meditation and action without it seeming forced; because the narrator is reminiscing about the event, which occurred some time in the past, his interweaving of essayistic reflections with the main action strikes the reader as quite natural.

First Person Narration

First person narrative is a narrative or mode of storytelling in which the narrator appears as the 'I' recollecting his or her own part in the events related, either as a witness of the action or as an important participant in it. This allows the reader or audience to see the point of view (including opinions, thoughts, and feelings) of the narrator. The first-person narrative increases the credibility of the story and

the story becomes more confiding. The narrator's statements are backed by his (her) presence in the described events.

Narrator and Author

Literary critics distinguish between the "I" of a first-person narrative, called the **narrator**, and the **author** of the text.

1. What is the difference between the author and the narrator?
2. Are the point of view of the narrator and the point of view of the author the same?
3. How does the author represent the narrator?
4. Do author and narrator necessarily share common opinions, beliefs, or characteristics?
5. How does the use of the first person perspective in the story create a sense of sympathy or understanding for Orwell's position? What would be different if it were written from other perspective?
6. How does the story change by having the narrator not only present, but active, in the action of the story?

Writing Skills Focus

Re-write a section of "Shooting an Elephant" from a different perspective – such as in the third person.

Comment – what is gained by this shift in perspective? What is lost?

Style

Distinguish between emotive and neutral language in the story.

Is the word choice in the story formal or informal? Illustrate your answer with examples.

Why does the author use terminology? Why does the author use the eastern terms bazaar (eastern marketplace), betel (leaf of plant chewed in Burma, latin words saecula saeculorum (a liturgical term meaning "for ever and ever"), words related to the Hindu culture such as Raj (government or rule), mahout (elephant keeper and driver), coolie (a hired laborer)?

Foreign words in the English vocabulary fulfill a terminological function. Therefore, they retain their foreign appearance; they should not be regarded as barbarisms. Foreign words denote certain concepts which reflect an objective reality not familiar to English-speaking communities. There are no names for them in English and they have to be explained. Foreign words are widely used in various styles of language with various aims. One of these functions is to supply local color. In order to depict local conditions of life, specific facts and events, customs and habits, special care is taken to introduce into passage such language elements as will reflect the environment.

Metaphor

*But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd... They were watching me as they would watch **a conjurer about to perform a trick**. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd—**seemingly the leading actor of the piece**; but in reality I was only **an absurd puppet** pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of **hollow, posing dummy**, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to*

impress the "natives," and so in every crisis he has got to do what the "natives" expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it...

In this passage Orwell uses a series of metaphors: "*an absurd puppet,*" "*he wears a mask,*" "*a conjurer about to perform a trick,*" "*seemingly the lead actor,*" "*an absurd puppet,*" "*a posing dummy,*" "*He wears a mask*" and "*his face grows to fit it...*"

What is a metaphor?

A metaphor is a rhetorical trope that describes a first subject as *being* or *equal to* a second object in some way. This device is known for usage in literature, where with few words, emotions and associations from one context are associated with objects and entities in a different context. In a simpler definition, it is comparing two things without using the words "like" or "as." The second sense identifies metaphor as a form of conceptual representation: A thing considered as representative of some other (usually abstract) thing: A symbol.

When an image or metaphor has been used so much that it loses its freshness, it's essentially dead. Many of them die because we use them so frequently. Such metaphors are called *trite metaphors*.

Metaphors which are absolutely unexpected, are quite unpredictable, are called *genuine metaphors*.

Comparison between two things that continues throughout series of sentences in a paragraph or lines is called an *extended metaphor*.

Trite metaphors are sometimes injected with new vigor, their primary meaning is re-established alongside the new derivative meaning. This is done by supplying the central image created by the metaphor with additional words bearing some reference to the main words. Such metaphors are called *sustained or prolonged metaphors*.

What is the function of metaphors in Orwell's essays?

What types of metaphors does he use?

Why was Orwell "seemingly lead actor," or an "absurd puppet?" What is the 'part' he is playing?

In the following paragraph Orwell states: "The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats."

Why does Orwell speak about theatre? Do the above metaphors have a theatrical basis?

Irony

Where is irony employed in the essay?

And what is Orwell's true intent?

What is ironic about Orwell's hesitation whether or not to kill the elephant?

Tone

The author's attitude towards the subject matter is called tone. Style, word choice, events, and characters may provide a clue to the tone of a literary work. Through tone a careful reader can determine whether a writer views the subject with approval, disapproval, sympathy, irony, sarcasm, humor, etc.

Critical analysis

1. Orwell states *"As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him."* Later he says *"...I did not want to shoot the elephant."* Orwell repeatedly states in the text that he does not want to shoot the elephant. By the time that he has found the elephant, the animal has become calm and has ceased to be an immediate danger. Despite feeling that he ought not take this course of action, and feeling that he wished not to take this course, he also feels compelled to shoot the animal. Discuss the reasons why Orwell felt he had to kill the elephant.

2. Orwell makes it clear in this essay that he was not a particularly talented rifleman. In the excerpt above he explains that by attempting to shoot the elephant he was putting himself into grave danger. But it is not a fear for his "own skin" which compels him to go through with this course of action. Instead, it was a fear outside of "the ordinary sense." What did Orwell fear?

3. What creates an impact on the reader: plot, setting, point of view, characterization, symbolism, irony, or all of them together?

4. Do you know any people in real life, or characters in literature, behaving against their will to avoid looking like a fool? Are you influenced by others opinion?

All Summer in a Day

Ray Bradbury

"Ready?"

"Ready."

"Now?"

"Soon."

"Do the scientists really know? Will it happen today, will it?"

"Look, look; see for yourself!"

The children pressed to each other like so many roses, so many weeds, intermixed, peering out for a look at the hidden sun.

It rained.

It had been raining for seven years; thousands upon thousands of days compounded and filled from one end to the other with rain, with the drum and gush of water, with the sweet crystal fall of showers and the concussion of storms

so heavy they were tidal waves come over the islands. A thousand forests had been crushed under the rain and grown up a thousand times to be crushed again. And this was the way life was forever on the planet Venus and this was the schoolroom of the children of the rocket men and women who had come to a raining world to set up civilization and live out their lives.

“It’s stopping. It’s stopping!”

“Yes, yes!”

Margot stood apart from them, from these children who could never remember a time when there wasn’t rain and rain and rain. They were all nine years old, and if there had been a day, seven years ago, when the sun came out for an hour and showed its face to the stunned world, they could not recall. Sometimes, at night, she heard them stir, in remembrance and she knew they were dreaming and remembering gold or a yellow crayon or a coin large enough to buy the world with. She knew they thought they remembered a warmness, like a blushing in the face, in the body, in the arms and legs and trembling hands. But then they always awoke to the **tatting** drum, the endless shaking down of clear bead necklaces upon the roof, the walk, the gardens, the forests, and their dreams were gone.

All day yesterday they had read in class about the sun. About how like a lemon it was, and how hot. And they had written small stories or essays or poems about it:

I think the sun is a flower,

That blooms for just one hour.

That was Margot’s poem, read in a quiet voice in the still classroom while the rain was falling outside.

“Aw, you didn’t write that!” protested one of the boys.

“I did,” said Margot. “I *did*.”

“William!” said the teacher.

But that was yesterday. Now the rain was **slackening**, and the children were crushed in the great thick windows.

“Where’s teacher?”

“She’ll be back.”

“She’d better hurry, we’ll miss it!”

They turned on themselves, like a feverish wheel, all fumbling spokes.

Margot, stood alone. She was a very frail girl who looked as if she had been lost in the rain for years and the rain had washed out the blue from her eyes and the red from her mouth and the yellow from her hair. She was an old photograph dusted from an album, whitened away, and if she spoke at all her voice would be a ghost. Now she stood, separate, staring at the rain and the loud wet world beyond the huge glass.

“What’re *you* looking at?” said William.

Margot said nothing.

“Speak when you’re spoken to.” He gave her a shove. But she did not move; rather she let herself be moved only by him and nothing else.

They edged away from her. They would not look at her. She felt them go away. And this was because she would play no games with them in the echoing tunnels of the underground city. If they tagged her and ran, she stood blinking after them and did not follow. When the class sang songs about happiness and life and games her lips barely moved. Only when they sang about the sun and the summer did her lips move as she watched the drenched windows.

And then, of course, the biggest crime of all was that she had come here only five years ago from Earth, and she remembered the sun and the way the sun was and the sky was when she was four in Ohio. And they, they had been on Venus all their lives, and they had been only two years old when last the sun came out and had long since forgotten the color and heat of the way it really was. But Margot remembered.

“It’s like a penny,” she said once, eyes closed.

“No, it’s not!” the children cried.

“It’s like a fire,” she said, “in the stove.”

“You’re lying, you don’t remember!” cried the children.

But she remembered and stood quietly apart from all of them and watched the patterning windows. And once, a month ago, she had refused to shower in the school shower rooms, had clutched her hands to her ears and over her head, screaming the water mustn't touch her head. So after that, dimly, dimly, she sensed it, she was different and they knew her difference and kept away.

There was talk that her father and mother were taking her back to Earth next year; it seemed vital to her that they do so, though it would mean the loss of thousands of dollars to her family. And so, the children hated her for all these reasons of big and little consequence. They hated her pale snow face, her waiting silence, her thinness, and her possible future.

"Get away!" The boy gave her another push. "What're you waiting for?"

Then for the first time, she turned and looked at him. And what she was waiting for was in her eyes.

"Well, don't wait around here!" cried the boy savagely. "You won't see nothing!"

"Oh, but," Margot whispered, her eyes helpless. "But this is the day, the scientists predict, they say, they *know*, the sun . . ."

"All a joke!" said the boy, and seized her roughly. "Hey, everyone, let's put her in a closet before teacher comes!"

"No," said Margot, falling back.

They surged about her, caught her up and bore her, protesting, and then pleading, and then crying, back into a tunnel, a room, a closet, where they slammed and locked the door. They stood looking at the door and saw it tremble from her beating and throwing herself against it. They heard her muffled cries. Then, smiling, they turned and went out and back down the tunnel, just as the teacher arrived.

"Ready, children?" She glanced at her watch.

"Yes!" said everyone.

"Are we all here?"

"Yes!"

The rain slackened still more.

They crowded to the huge door.

The rain stopped.

It was as if, in the midst of a film concerning an avalanche, a tornado, a hurricane, a volcanic eruption, something had, first, gone wrong with the sound apparatus, thus muffling and finally cutting off all noise, all of the blasts and repercussions and thunders, and then, second, ripped the film from the projector and inserted in its place a peaceful tropical slide which did not move or tremor. The world ground to a standstill. The silence was so immense and unbelievable that you felt your ears had been stuffed or you had lost your hearing altogether. The children put their hands to their ears. They stood apart. The door slid back and the smell of the silent, waiting world came into them.

The sun came out.

It was the color of flaming bronze and it was very large. And the sky around it was a blazing blue tile color. And the jungle burned with sunlight as the children, released from their spell, rushed out, yelling, into the springtime.

“Now, don’t go too far,” called the teacher after them. “You’ve only two hours, you know. You wouldn’t want to get caught out!”

But they were running and turning their faces up to the sky and feeling the sun on their cheeks like a warm iron; they were taking off their jackets and letting the sun burn their arms.

“Oh, it’s better than the sun lamps, isn’t it?”

“Much, much better!”

They stopped running and stood in the great jungle that covered Venus, that grew and never stopped growing tumultuously, even as you watched it. It was a nest of octopi, clustering up great arms of fleshlike weed, wavering, flowering in this brief spring. It was the color of stones and white cheeses and ink, and it was the color of the moon.

The children lay out, laughing, on the jungle mattress, and heard it sigh and squeak under them, resilient and alive. They ran among the trees, they slipped and fell, they pushed each other, they played hide-and-seek and tag, but most of all they squinted at the sun until tears ran down their faces, they put their hands up to that yellowness and that amazing blueness and they breathed of the fresh, fresh air and listened and listened to the silence which suspended them in a

blessed sea of no sound and no motion. They looked at everything and savored everything. Then, wildly, like animals escaped from their caves, they ran and ran in shouting circles. They ran for an hour and did not stop running.

And then –

In the midst of their running one of the girls wailed.

Everyone stopped.

The girl, standing in the open, held out her hand.

“Oh, look, look,” she said, trembling.

They came slowly to look at her opened palm.

In the center of it, cupped and huge, was a single raindrop.

She began to cry, looking at it.

They glanced quietly at the sky.

“Oh. Oh.”

A few cold drops fell on their noses and their cheeks and their mouths. The sun faded behind a stir of mist. A wind blew cool around them. They turned and started to walk back toward the underground house, their hands at their sides, their smiles vanishing away.

A boom of thunder startled them and like leaves before a new hurricane, they tumbled upon each other and ran. Lightning struck ten miles away, five miles away, a mile, a half mile. The sky darkened into midnight in a flash.

They stood in the doorway of the underground for a moment until it was raining hard. Then they closed the door and heard the gigantic sound of the rain falling in tons and avalanches, everywhere and forever.

“Will it be seven more years?”

“Yes. Seven.”

Then one of them gave a little cry.

“Margot!”

“What?”

“She’s still in the closet where we locked her.”

“Margot.”

They stood as if someone had driven them, like so many stakes, into floor. They looked at each other and then looked away. They glanced out at the world that was raining now and raining and raining steadily. They could not meet each other’s glances. Their faces were solemn and pale. They looked at their hands and feet, their faces down.

“Margot.”

One of the girls said, “Well . . .?”

No one moved.

“Go on,” whispered the girl.

They walked slowly down the hall in the sound of the cold rain. They turned through the doorway to the room in the sound of the storm and thunder, lightning on their faces, blue and terrible. They walked over to the closet door slowly and stood by it.

Behind the closet door was only silence.

They unlocked the door, even more slowly, and let Margot out.

Strategy for Understanding, Analysis, and Interpretation

Get engaged with the text and apply various strategies:

Consider the historical and cultural context.

Identify the problem the author is trying to resolve.

Identify the concepts the author uses or develops.

Identify the author's attitude.

Identify deeper implications insightfully from the text.

Focus on literary and language means.

About The Author

Ray Bradbury is an American novelist, short story writer, essayist, playwright, screenwriter and poet. Although his formal education ended in high school, he became a "student of life," selling newspapers on Los Angeles street corners from 1938 to 1942, spending his nights in the public library and his days at the typewriter.

His reputation as a writer was established with the publication of *The Martian Chronicles* in 1950, which describes the first attempts of Earth people to conquer and colonize Mars, and the unintended consequences. Next came *The Illustrated Man* and then, in 1953, *Fahrenheit 451*, which many consider to be Bradbury's masterpiece. In all, Bradbury has published more than thirty books, close to 600 short stories, and numerous poems, essays, and plays. Married since 1947, Mr. Bradbury and his wife Maggie lived in Los Angeles with their numerous cats. Together, they raised four daughters and had eight grandchildren.

On the occasion of his 80th birthday in August 2000, Bradbury said, "The great fun in my life has been getting up every morning and rushing to the typewriter because some new idea has hit me. The feeling I have every day is very much the same as it was when I was twelve. In any event, here I am, eighty years old, feeling no different, full of a great sense of joy, and glad for the long life that has been allowed me. I have good plans for the next ten or twenty years, and I hope you'll come along."

Fall in love with one idea after another – and immerse yourself in these loves. Follow your heart wherever it leads. Don't ever let anyone talk you out of your dreams.

Ray Bradbury has lived his whole life by these principles.

"Have you fallen in love with something? If not, it's time to search. Go to the library. Take the books off the shelf and fall in love! Find something so wonderful you never want to quit. I don't want you to be at peace, I want you to be excited!" Libraries, says Bradbury, have immediacy, a sensory experience that can't be matched using a home computer to surf the Internet.

About All Summer in a Day

In the story “All Summer in a Day” Bradbury combines both imaginary and realistic elements. It is a science fiction short story which deals with a group of nine year old schoolchildren living on the planet Venus that was colonized by "rocket men and women who had come to a raining world to set up civilization and live out their lives," at an unspecified time in the future. It is constantly raining on the planet, therefore seeing the sun is a very rare event, which occurs only every seven years for just one hour.

Build Your Vocabulary

Weeds; compound; gush; concussion; slacken; feverish; spokes; frail; give a shove; edge; tag; blink; drenched; pattern; consequence; savagely; surge; plead; muffle; avalanche; volcanic eruption; blasts; repercussion; rip; tumultuously; octopi; cluster; waver; flowering; resilient; squint; wail; vanish.

Genre Identification

Science fiction is a broad genre of fiction that often involves speculations based on current or future science or technology. It encompasses creative works

incorporating imaginative elements not found in contemporary reality; this includes fantasy, horror, and related genres.

Science fiction differs from fantasy in that, within the context of the story, its imaginary elements are largely possible within scientifically established or scientifically postulated laws of nature (though *some* elements in a story might still be pure imaginative speculation). Exploring the consequences of such differences is the traditional purpose of science fiction, making it a "literature of ideas". Science fiction is largely based on writing entertainingly and rationally about alternate possibilities in settings that are contrary to known reality.

These may include:

- A setting in the future, in alternative time lines
- A setting in outer space, on other worlds, or involving aliens
- Stories that involve technology or scientific principles that contradict known laws of nature
- time travel, or new technology

The literary genre of **science fiction** is diverse and its origin is an open question. Some offer works like the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* as the primal texts of science fiction. Others argue that science fiction began in the late Middle Ages, or that science fiction became possible only with the Scientific Revolution, notably discoveries by Galileo and Newton in astronomy, physics and mathematics. Some place the origin with the gothic novel, particularly Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Science fiction developed and boomed in the 20th century, as the deep penetration of science and inventions into society created an interest in literature that explored technology's influence on people and society. Today, science fiction has significant influence on world culture and thought.

Critics have always argued over whether or not to call Bradbury's work "science fiction." He is often described as a science fiction writer, though Bradbury does not box himself into a particular narrative categorization. Indeed, irrespective of the fact that some of Bradbury's best known works are in the science fiction genre, the bulk of his work probably does not fit easily into the science fiction category.

"First of all, I don't write science fiction. I've only done one science fiction book and that's Fahrenheit 451, based on reality. Science fiction is a depiction of the real. Fantasy is a depiction of the unreal," says the writer.

Identify which aspects of the story set it apart as science fiction.

Identify which literary aspects and facets of the story make it science fiction and which could be part of a regular short story.

Comprehension Check

1. Why are all the children excited? What are they waiting for?
2. When did the sun last shine?
3. What is the weather like on Venus? How long has it been that way?
4. In what way is Margot's experience of the sun different from the experience of all the other children on Venus?
5. What relationship do Margot and her classmates have?
6. What do the children do to Margot just before the rain stops?
7. What do the children do during the two hours that they are outdoors?
8. Can you guess what happens to Margot at the end of the story?
9. What point is made about Margot when the story says that the rain had washed the blue from her eyes and the red from her mouth and the yellow from her hair?
10. How do the children feel when they realize what they did to Margot?

Language and Literature

1. Explain the use of the literary elements of a story: theme, plot, setting, character, point of view.
2. Identify symbols within the text and evaluate an author's use of symbolism to convey ideas.

3. Determine the author's style, identifying particular word choices and figurative language.

Open-Ended Plots

Plots that are not brought to a final or preliminary conclusion are called **open-ended** plots or just open plots.

Some short stories end at the climax, leaving us wondering about the concluding details. A short story which ends with the climax is said to have an *open-ended plot*.

Can you remember some other literary works with open-ended plots? What is the climax of "All Summer in a Day"?

Setting in Science fiction

Setting plays a far more important role in science fiction and a qualitatively different one than it does in mainstream fiction. It is less a backdrop for action and characterization and more a key element that is intimately related to plot, character, and the story as a whole. In fact, one might argue that story elements such as plot and character are far less relevant to the success of a science fiction story than its setting.

Focus on how the setting relates to the conflict in "All summer in a Day." Describe the type of conflict.

Narrator

1. Who is the narrator in the story "All Summer in a Day"?
2. What is the point of view of the narrator?
3. What effect does this particular type of narrator have on the story and/or the reader's understanding of it?

Character

Find in the story all the different ways that Bradbury characterizes the protagonist.

Underline descriptions

Underline dialogues and thoughts

Underline how other children react to Margot

Find places in the story where Bradbury uses direct characterization

Style

Foreshadowing is hinting at events to occur later. It is a look towards the future, a remark or hint that prepares the reader for what is to follow.

What is foreshadowed in the story?

The text, "All Summer in a Day," has many examples of poetic devices such as alliteration and simile ("how like a lemon it was, and how hot,"); repetition ("these children could never remember a time when there wasn't rain and rain and rain,"); metaphor ("I think the sun is a flower,"); personification ("The children lay out, laughing, on the jungle mattress, and heard it sigh?"); hyperbole ("...heard the gigantic sound of the rain falling in tons and avalanches,"); etc.

Describe the figurative language used in the story and how this language helps to contribute to the meaning, setting, theme, plot and characters of the story.

Interpret figurative language to understand the author's message.

Check Your Knowledge of tropes and figures

Tropes

Metaphor and Simile

If metaphors equate two ideas despite their differences, similes allow the two ideas to remain distinct in spite of their similarities. A metaphor is actually a condensed simile, for it omits "as" or "like."

Based on the above definitions, decide whether each quote is an example of a simile or a metaphor.

1. *"The children pressed to each other like so many roses, like so many weeds intermixed."*

Does this quote encompass only one stylistic device?

2. *"They always awoke to the tating drum, the endless snaking of clear bead necklaces upon the roof."*

3. *"They turned on themselves, like a feverish wheel, all fumbling spokes."*

4. "She was an old photograph dusted from an album, whitened away and if she spoke at all her voice would be a ghost."

5. *"The great jungle that covered Venus, that grew and never stopped growing, tumultuously, even as you watched it. It was a nest of octopi, clustering up great arms of fleshlike weed, wavering, flowering in this brief spring."*

6. *"They were running and turning their faces up to the sky and feeling the sun on their cheeks like a warm iron."*

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a lexical stylistic device with the function of intensification. It is a deliberate overstatement or exaggeration, the aim of which is to intensify one of the features of the object in question to such a degree as to sometimes show its utter absurdity.

Hyperbole is a device which sharpens the reader's ability to make a logical assessment of the utterance through *deliberate exaggeration*.

It is important that both communicants should clearly perceive that the exaggeration serves not to denote actual quality or quantity but signals the emotional background of the utterance. The most important function of hyperbole is the emotional expressiveness. If this reciprocal understanding is absent, hyperbole turns into a mere lie.

Hyperboles often create the pathetic and comic effect. Literature has an urgent necessity of the artistic exaggeration of reflection of the world.

Are there any hyperboles in the story?

Figures (Syntactic Stylistic Devices)

Repetition is just the simple repetition of a word, within a sentence or a poetical line, with no particular placement of the words. This is such a common literary device that it is almost never even noted as a figure of speech.

Epizeuxis or **palilogia** is the repetition of a single word, with no other words in between. This is from the Greek words, "Fastening Together"

"Words, words, words." (Hamlet)

Conduplicatio is the repetition of a word in various places throughout a paragraph.

"And the world said, disarm, disclose, or face serious consequences ... and therefore, we worked with the world, we worked to make sure that Saddam Hussein heard the message of the world." (George W. Bush)

Anadiplosis is the repetition of the last word of a preceding clause. The word is used at the end of a sentence and then used again at the beginning of the next sentence.

"The longer life the more offence, the more offence the greater pain, the greater pain the less defense."

Anaphora as we have already mentioned above, is the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of every clause.

"We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender." (Winston Churchill)

Epistrophe is the repetition of a word or phrase at the end of every clause.

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny compared to what lies within us."

It is a kind of "antonym" for anaphora.

Mesodiplosis is the repetition of a word or phrase at the middle of every clause.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed..."
(Second Epistle to the Corinthians)

Asyndeton is a deliberate avoidance of conjunctions in constructions in which they would be normally used.

Polysyndeton - is an identical repetition of conjunctions: used to emphasize simultaneousness of described actions, to disclose the authors' subjective attitude towards the characters, to create the rhythmical effect.

Find syntactic stylistic devices in "All Summer in a Day" and explain how they help to contribute to the meaning, setting, theme, plot and characters of the story.

Critical Thinking and Interpretation

1. Having read the story, what do you think the title, "All Summer in a Day," means?
2. What causes the conflict between Margot and the other children?
3. Did the children envy Margot?

Your Response to Literature

Have you ever been envious of one of your friend's? How did these feelings make you act towards that person?

Describe the problem and the type of conflict in the story.

Your Response to Literature

What causes the conflicts between people? When you hear the word conflict, what comes to mind? Aggression? Fighting?

3. Can you explain the hatred towards Margot?

Your Response to Literature

Have you ever hated anyone? If so, did you try to overcome the hatred? How did you manage it? Did it take you long to "recover" from hatred? Have you been hated by anyone? Is it possible to make friends with a person you hated?

What do you think, why people react so painfully when they are not loved by others?

5. What happened to Margot at the end of the story. Why does the author not make it clear?

STUDIES IN THE PARK

Anita Desai

– Turn it off, turn it off, turn it off ! First he listens to the news in Hindi. Directly after, in English. Broom- brroom –brroom – the voice of doom roars. Next, in Tamil. Then in Punjabi. In Gujarati. What next, my god, what next ? Turn it off before I smash it onto his head, fling it out of the window, do nothing of the sort of course, nothing of the sort.

– And my mother. She cuts and fries, cuts and fries. All day I hear her chopping and slicing and the pan of oil hissing. What all does she finds to fry and feed us on, for God's sake? Eggplants, potatoes, spinach, shoe soles, newspapers, finally she'll slice me and feed me to my brothers and sisters. Ah, now she's turned on the tap. It's roaring, and pouring, pouring and roaring into a bucket without a bottom.

– The bell rings. Voices clash, clatter and break. The tin-and-bottle man ? The neighbors ? The police ? The Help – the – Blind man ? Thieves and burglars ? All of them, all of them, ten or twenty or a hundred of them, marching up the stairs, hammering at the door, breaking in and climbing over me – ten, or a hundred of them.

– Then, worst of all, the milk arrives. In the tallest glass in the house. “Suno, drink your milk. Good for you, Suno. You need it. Now, before the exams. Must have it, Suno. Drink.” The voice wheedles its way into my ear like a worm. I

shudder. The table tips over. The milk runs. The tumbler clangs on the floor. “Sunu, how will you do your exams ?

– That is precisely what I ask myself. All very well to give me a room – Uncle’s been pushed off on a pilgrimage to Hardwar to clear a room for me – and to bring me milk and say, Study, Sunu, study for your exam.” What about the uproar around me? These people don’t know the meaning of the word Quiet. When my mother fills buckets, sloshes the kitchen floor, fries and sizzles things in the pan, she thinks she is being Quiet. The children have never even heard the word, it amazes and puzzles them. On their way back from school they fling their satchels in at my door, then tear in to snatch them back before I tear them to bits. Bawl when I pull their ears, screech when mother whacks them. Stuff themselves with her fries and then smear the grease on my books.

So I raced out of my room, with my fingers in my ears, to scream till the roof, with my fingers in my ears, to scream till the roof fell down about their ears. But the radio suddenly went off, the door to my parents’ room suddenly opened and my father appeared, bathed and shaven, stuffed and set up with the news of the world in six different languages – his white *dhota*⁸³ blazing, his white crackling, his patent leather pumps glittering. He stopped in the doorway and I stopped on the balls of my feet and wavered. My fingers came out my ears, my hair came down over my eyes. Then he looked away from me, took his watch out of his pocket and inquired, “Is the food ready ?” in a voice that came out of his nose like the whistle of a punctual train. He skated off towards his meal, I turned and slouched back to my room. On his way to work, he looked in to say, “Remember, Sunu, I expect good results from you. Study hard, Sunu.” Just behind him, I saw all the rest of them standing, peering in, silently. All of them stared at me, at the exam I was to take. At the degree I was to get. Or not get. Horrifying thought. Oh study, study, study, they all breathed at me while my father’s footsteps went down the stairs, crushing each underfoot in turn. I felt their eyes on me, goggling, and their breath on me, hot with earnestness. I looked back at them, into their open mouths and staring eyes.

“Study,” I said, and found I croaked. “I know I ought to study. And how do you expect me to study – in this madhouse ? You run wild, *wild*. I’m getting out,” I screamed and leaping up and grabbing my books, “I’m going to study outside. Even the street is quieter,” I screeched and threw myself past them and down the stairs that my father had just cowed and subjugated so that they still lay quivering,

⁸³ Clothes worn by Hindu men in India

and paid no attention to the howl that broke out behind me of “Suno, Suno, listen. Your milk – your studies – exams, Suno!”

At first I tried the tea shop at the corner. In my reading I had often come across men who wrote at café tables – letters, verse, whole novels – over a cup of tea. There was no crowd in the mornings, none of my friends would be there. But the proprietor would not leave me alone. Bored, picking his nose, he wandered down from behind the counter to my table by the weighing machine and tried to pass the time of day by complaining about his piles, the new waiter and the high prices. “And sugar,” he whined. “How can I give you anything to put in your tea with sugar at four rupees a kilo? There’s rationed sugar, I know, at two rupees⁸⁴, but that’s enough to feed even an ant. And the way you all sugar your tea – *hai, hai*,” he sighed, worse than my mother. I didn’t answer. I frowned at my book and looked stubborn. But when I got rid of him, the waiter arrived. “Have a biscuit?” he murmured, flicking at my table and chair with his filthy duster. “A bun? Fritters? Make you some hot fritters? I sarled at him but he only smiled, determined to be friendly. Just a boy, really, in pink shirt with purple circles stamped all over it – he thought he looked so smart. He was growing sideburns, he kept fingering them. “I’m a student, too,” he said, “sixth class, fail. My mother wanted me to go back and try again, but I didn’t like the teacher – he beat me. So I came here to look for a job. Lala-*ji* had just thrown out a boy called Hari for selling lottery tickets to the clients so he took me on. I can make out a bill ...” He would have babbled on if Lala-*ji* had not come and showed him into the kitchen with an oath. So it went on. I didn’t read more than half a chapter that whole morning. I didn’t want to go home either. I walked along the street, staring at my shoes, with my shoulders slumped in the way that makes my father scream, “What’s the matter? Haven’t you bones? A spine?” I kicked some rubble along the pavement, down the drain, then stopped at the iron gates of King Edward’s Park.

“Exam troubles?” asked a *gram*⁸⁵ vendor who sat outside it, in a friendly voice. Not insinuating, but low pleasant. “The park’s full of boys like you,” he continued in that sympathetic voice. “I see them walk up and down, up and down, with their books, like mad poets. Then I’m glad I was never sent to school,” and he began to whistle, not impertinently but so cheerfully that I stopped and stared at him. He had a crippled arm that hung out of his shirt sleeve like a leg of mutton dangling on a hook. His face was scared as though he had been dragged out of some terrible accident. But he was shuffling hot *gram* into paper cones with his one hand and whistling, like a bird, whistling the tune of, “We are the *bul-buls*⁸⁶ of our land, our

⁸⁴ Monetary unit in India

⁸⁵ Beans grown for food in India (often served roasted)

⁸⁶ A song bird

land is Paradise.” Nodding at the [greenery](#) beyond the gates, he said, “The park’s a good place to study in,” and, taking his hint, I went in.

I wonder how it is I never thought of the park before. It isn’t far from our house and I sometimes went there as a boy, if I managed to run away from school, to lie on a bench, eat peanuts, shy stones at the [chipmunks](#) that came for the shells, and drink from the fountain. But then it was not as exciting as playing marbles in the street or [stoning](#) rats with my school friends in the vacant lot behind the cinema. It had straight paths, beds of [flapping](#) red flowers – cannas, I think – rows of palm trees like limp flags, a dry fountain and some green benches. Old men sat on them with their legs far apart, heads [drooping over](#) the tops of sticks, mumbling through their [dentures](#) or crackling with that mad, ripping laughter that makes children think of old men as wizards and [bogey-men](#). Bag-like women in gray and fawn *saris*⁸⁷ or black *borkhas*⁸⁸ screamed, just as gray and fawn and black birds do, at children falling into the fountain or racing on rickety legs after the chipmunks and pigeons. A madman or two, [prancing](#) around in paper caps and bits of rags, munching banana peels and scratching like monkeys. Corners behind hibiscus bushes stinking of piss. Iron rails with rows of beggars contentedly [dozing](#), scratching, gambling, with their sackcloth backs to the rails. A city park.

What I hadn’t noticed, or thought of, were all the students who escaped from their city flats and families like mine to come and study here. Now, walking down a path with my history book tucked under my arm, I felt like a gatecrasher at a party or a visitor to a public library trying to control a sneeze. They all seemed to belong here, to be at home here. Dressed in loose pajamas, they strolled up and down under the palms, books open in their hands, heads lowered into them. Or they sat in twos and threes on the grass, reading aloud in turns. Or lay full length under the trees, books spread out across their faces – sleeping, or else imbibing information through the subconscious. Opening out my book, I too strolled up and down, reading to myself in a low murmur.

In the beginning, when I first started studying in the park, I couldn’t concentrate on my studies. I’d keep looking up at the boy strolling in front of me, reciting poetry in a kind of thundering whisper, waving his arms about and running his bony fingers through his hair till it stood up like a thorn bush. Or at the chipmunks that fought and played and chased each other all over the park, now and then joining forces against the sparrows over a nest or a paper cone of *gram*. Or at the madman going through the rubble at the bottom of the dry fountain and

⁸⁷ Sari is a long piece of cotton wrapped around Hindu woman’s body (one end falling to the feet and the other end thrown over the head or shoulder

⁸⁸Borkha is a garment

coming up with a rubber shoe, a banana peel or a piece of glittering tin that he appreciated so much that he put it in his mouth till blood ran in strings from his mouth.

It took me time to accustom to the ways of the park. I went there daily, for the whole day, and soon I got to know it as well as my own room at home and found I could study there, or sleep, or daydream, as I chose. Then I fell into its routine, its rhythm, and my time move in accordance with its time. We were like a house – owner and his house, or a turtle and its shell, or a river and its bank – so close. I resented everyone one else who came to the park – I thought they couldn't possibly share my feeling for it. Except perhaps, the students.

The park was like a hotel, or a hospital belonging to the city but with its own order and routine, enclosed by iron rails, laid out according to prescription in rows of palms, benches and path. If I went there very early in the morning, I'd come upon a yoga class. It consisted of a young body builders rippling their muscles like snake as well as old crack – pots determined to keep up with the youngest and fittest, all sitting cross-legged on the grass and displaying *hus –muck*⁸⁹ to the sun just rising over the palms: The laughing Face pose it was called, but they looked like gargoyles with their mouths torn open and their thick, discolored tongues sticking out. If I were the sun, I'd feel so disgusted by such a reception I'd just turn around and go back. And that was the simplest of their poses – after that they'd go into contortions that would embarrass an ape. Once their leader, a black and hirsute⁹⁰ man like an aborigine, saw me watching and called me to join them. I shook my head and ducked behind an oleander.... I despise all that body-beautiful worship anyway. What's the body compared to the soul, the mind?

I'd stroll under the palms, breathing in the cool of the early morning, feeling it drive out, or wash clean, the stifling dark of the night, and try to avoid bumping into all the other early morning visitors to the park – mostly aged men sent by their wives to fetch the milk from the government dairy booth just outside the gates. Their bottles clinking in green cloth bags and newspapers rolled up and tucked under their arms, they strutted along like stiff puppets and mostly they would be discussing philosophy. “Ah but in Vedanta⁹¹ it is a different matter,” one would say, his eyes gleaming fanatically, and another would announce, “The sage Shanakaracharya showed the way,” and some would refer to the Upanishads or the Bhagavad Puranas⁹², but in such argumentative, hacking tones that you could see

⁸⁹ Hindi – a cheerful and laughing face

⁹⁰ hairy

⁹¹ Sacred writings of the ancient Hindus

⁹² Shanakaracharya, Upanishads, Bhagavad Puranas – ancient commentaries from Hindu myths

they were quite capable of coming to blows over some theological argument. Certainly it was the mind above the body for these old coots but I found nothing to admire in them either. I particularly resented it when one of them disengaged himself from the discussion long enough to notice me and throw me a gentle look of commiseration. As if he'd been through exams, too, long long ago, and knew all about them. So what?

Worst of all were the athletes, wrestlers, Mr. Indias and others who lay on their backs and were massaged with oil till every muscle shone and glittered. The men who massaged them huffed and puffed and cursed as they climbed up and down the supine bodies, pounding and pummeling the men who lay there wearing nothing but little greasy clouts,⁹³ groaning and panting in a way I found obscene and disgusting. They never looked up at me or at anyone. They leave in a meaty, sweating world of their own – massages, oils, the body, a match to be fought and won – I kicked up dust in their direction but never went too close.

The afternoon would be quiet, almost empty. I would sit under a tree and read, stroll and study doze too. Then, in the evening, as the sky softened from its blank white glare and took on shades of pink and orange and the palm trees rustled a little in an invisible breeze, the crowds would begin to pour out of Darya Ganj, Mori Gate, Chandni Chowk and the Jama Masjid bazaars and slums. Large families would come to sit about on the grass, eating peanuts and listening to a transistor radio placed in the center of the circle. Mothers would sit together in flocks like screeching birds while children jumped into the dry fountains, broke flowers and terrorized each other. There would be a few young men moaning at the corners, waiting for a girl to roll her hips and dart his fish eyes in their direction, and then start the exciting adventure of pursuit. The children's cries would grow more piercing with the dark; frightened, shrill and exalted with mystery and farewell. I would wander back to the flat.

The exams drew nearer. Not three, not two, but only one month to go. I had to stop day dreaming and set myself tasks for every day and remind myself constantly to complete them. It grew so hot I had to give up strolling on the paths and staked out a private place for myself under a tree. I noticed the tension tightening the eyes and mouths of other students – they applied themselves more diligently to their books, talked less slept less. Everyone looked a little demented from lack of sleep. Our books seemed attached to our hands as though by roots, they were a part of us, they lived because we fed them. They were parasites and, like parasites, were sucking us dry. We mumbled to ourselves, not always consciously.

⁹³ A piece of clothes

Chipmunks jumped over our feet, mocking us. The *gram* seller down at the gate whistled softly “I’m glad I never went to school, I am a *bul-bul*, I live in Paradise...”

My brains began to jam up. I could feel it happening, slowly. As if the oil were all used up. As if everything was getting locked together, rusted. The white cells, the gray matter, the springs and nuts and bolts. I yelled at my mother – I think it was my mother – “What do you think I am? What do you want of me? And crushed a glass of milk between my hands. It was sticky. She had put sugar in my milk. As if I were a baby. I wanted to cry. They wouldn’t let me sleep, they wanted to see my light on all night, they made sure I never stopped studying. Then they brought me milk and sugar and made clicking sounds with their tongues. I raced out to the park. I think I sobbed as I paced up and down, in the corner that stank of piss. My head ached worse than ever. I slept all day under the tree and had to work all night.

My father laid his hand on my shoulder. I knew I was not to fling it off. So I sat still, slouching, ready to spring aside if he lifted it only slightly. “You must get a first,⁹⁴ Suno,” he said through his nose, “must get a first, or else you won’t get a job. Must get a job, Suno,” he sighed and wiped his nose and went off, his patent leather pumps squealing like mice. I flung myself back in my chair and howled. Get a first, get a first, get a first – like a railway engine, it went charging over me, grinding me down, and left me dead and mangled on the tracks.

Everything hung still and yellow in the park. I lay sluggishly on a heap of waste paper under my tree and read without seeing, slept without sleeping. Sometimes I went to the water tap that leaked and drank the leak. It tasted of brass. I spat out a mouthful. It nearly went over the feet of the student waiting for his turn at that dripping tap. I stepped aside for him. He swilled the water around his mouth and spat, too, carefully missing my feet. Wiping his mouth, he asked, “B.A.?”

“No, Inter.”⁹⁵

“Hu,” he burped. “Wait till you do your B.A. Then you’ll get to know.” His face was like a gray bone. It was not unkind, it simply had no expression. “Another two weeks,” he sighed and slouched off to his own lair.

⁹⁴ The highest grade

⁹⁵ College degree taken before B.A.

I touched my face, I thought it would be all bone, like his. I was surprised to find a bit of skin still covering it. I felt as if we were all dying in the park, that when we entered the examination hall it would be to be declared officially dead. That's what the degree was about. What else was it all about? Why were we creeping around here, hiding from the city, from teachers and parents pretending to study and prepare? Prepare for what? We hadn't been told. Inter, they said, or B.A. or M.A. These were like official stamps – they would declare us dead. Ready for a dead world. A world in which ghosts went about, squeaking or whining, rattling or rustling. Slowly, slowly we were killing ourselves in order to join them. The ball-point pen in my pocket was the only thing that still lived, that still worked. I didn't work myself any more – I mean physically, my body no longer functioned. I was constipated, I was dying. I was lying under a yellow tree, feeling the dust sift through the leaves to cover me. It was filling my eyes, my throat. I could barely walk. I never strolled. Only on the way out of the park, late in the evening, I crept down the path under the palms, past the benches.

Then I saw the scene that stopped it all, stopped me just before I died.

Hidden behind an oleander was a bench. A woman lay on it, stretched out. She was a Muslim, wrapped in a black *borkha*. I hesitated when I saw this straight, still figure in black on the bench. Just then she lifted a pale, thin hand and lifted her veil. I saw her face. It lay bared, in the black folds of her *borkha*, like a flower, wax-white and composed, like a Persian lily or a tobacco flower at night. She was young. Very young, very pale, beautiful with a beauty I had never come across even in a dream. It caught me and held me tight till I couldn't breathe and couldn't move. She was so white, so still, I saw she was very ill – with [anemia](#), perhaps, or [TB](#). Too pale, too white - I could see she was dying. Her head – so still and white it might have been carved if it weren't for this softness, this softness of a flower at night – lay in the lap of a very old man. Very much older than her. With spectacles and a long gray beard like a goat's, or a scholar's. He was looking down at her and caressing her face – so tenderly, so tenderly I had never seen a hand move so gently and tenderly. Beside them, on the ground two little girls, rather dirty, drawing lines in the gravel. They stared at me but the man and the woman did not notice me. They never looked at anyone else, only at each other, with an expression that halted me. It was tender, loving yes, but in an inhuman way, so intense. Divine, I felt, or insane. I stood, half hidden by the bush, holding my book, and wondered at them. She was ill, I could see, dying. Perhaps she had only a short time to live. Why didn't he take her to the Victoria Zenana Hospital, so close to the park? Who was this man – her husband, her father, a lover? I couldn't make out although I watched them without moving, without breathing. I

felt not as if I were gazing at a painting or a sculpture, some work of art. Or seeing a vision. They were still and I stood still and the children stared. Then she lifted her arms above her head and laughed. Very quietly.

I broke away and hurried down the path, in order to leave them alone, in privacy. They weren't a work of art, or a vision, but real, human and alive as no one else in my life had been real and alive. I had only the glimpse of them. But I felt I could never open my books and study or take degrees after that. They belonged to the dead, and now I had seen what being alive meant. The vision burnt the surfaces of my eyes so that they watered as I groped my way up the stairs to the flat. I could hardly find my way to the bed.

It was not just the examination but everything else had suddenly withered and died, gone lifeless and purposeless when compared with this vision. My studies, my family, my life – they all belonged to the dead and only what I had seen in the park had any meaning.

Since I did not know how to span the distance between that beautiful ideal and to my stupid, dull existence, I simply lay still and shut my eyes. I kept them shut so as not to see all the puzzled, pleading, indignant faces of my family around me, but I could not shut out their voices.

“Sunno, Sunno,“ I heard them croon and coax and mourn.

“Sunno, drink milk.”

“Sunno, take the exam.”

And when they tired of being so patient with me and I still would not get up, they began to crackle and spit and storm.

“Get up, Sunno.”

“Study, Sunno.”

“At once, Sunno.”

Only my mother became resigned and gentle. She must have seen something quite out of the ordinary on my face to make her so. I felt her hand on my forehead and heard her say, “Leave him alone. Let him sleep tonight. He is tired out, that it was it is – he has driven himself too much and he must sleep.”

Then I heard all of them leave the room. Her hand stayed on my forehead, wet and smelling of onions, and after a bit my tears began to flow from under my lids.

“Poor Sunno, sleep,” she murmured.

I went back to the park of course. But now I was changed. I had stopped being a student – I was a “professional.” My life was dictated by the rules and routine of the park. I still had my books open on the palms of my hands as I strolled but now

my eyes strayed without guilt, darting at the young girls walking in pairs, their arms linked, giggling and bumping into each other. Sometimes I stopped to rest on a bench and conversed with one of the old men, told him who my father was and what examination I was preparing for, and allowing him to tell me about his youth, his politics, his philosophy, his youth and again his youth. Or I joked with the other students, sitting on the grass and throwing peanut shells at the chipmunks, and shocking them, I could see, with my irreverence and cynicism about the school, the exam, the system. Once I even nodded at the yoga teacher and exchanged a few words with him. He suggested I join his class and I nodded vaguely and said I would think it over. It might help. My father says I need help. I just laugh but I know that he knows I will never appear for the examination, I will never come up to that hurdle or cross it – life has taken a different path for me, in the form of a search, not a race as it is for him, for them.

Yes, it is a search, a kind of perpetual search for me and now that I have accepted it and don't struggle, I find it satisfies me entirely, and I wander about the park as freely as a prince in his palace garden. I look over the benches, I glance behind the bushes, and wonder if I shall ever get another glimpse of that strange vision that set me free. I never have but I keep hoping, wishing.

Strategy for Understanding, Analytical Reading, and Interpretation

1. Consider the biographical, historical and cultural context.
2. Generate inferences insightfully from the text.
3. Get engaged with the text and apply various strategies:

Identify the problem the author is trying to resolve.

Identify deeper implications insightfully from the text.

Focus on literary and language means.

About the Author

Anita Desai is considered as one of India's leading English-language fiction writers. She is the writer who introduced the psychological novel in the tradition of Virginia Woolf to India.

She was born in 1935 in Delhi to a German mother and a Bengali father. She married Ashvin Desai when she was very young and raised several children (two sons and two daughters) before becoming known for her writing. Her first book, "Cry, the Peacock" was published in England in 1963, and her better known novels include "In Custody" (1984), "Baumgartner's Bombay" (1989), and "Journey to Ithaca" (1995).

She grew up speaking German at home and Bengali, Urdu, Hindi and English at school and in the city streets. But Desai only writes in English. Her short story "Studies in the Park" was first published in 1978, in her collection "Games at Twilight."

About Studies in the Park

"Studies in the Park" is Anita Desai's short story about the choice of a young Indian man, named Suno, whose family is continually pressuring him to study for an exam which will determine his future educational track. The pressure continues to build on Suno, who cannot concentrate in this environment surrounded by people who make constant noise: the sound of the news in different languages from his father's room; constant clash and clanging of pots and utensils, as his mother prepares meals; the noise of bells, whistles and sirens; the delivery of milk. Suno decides to study in the park and goes there every day. He realizes that students are dying a slow death. Their arrival at the examination hall will be the final proclamation of death and he chooses not to take the exam after all.

Cultural and Historical Context

In 1876, Queen Victoria of England took on the additional title of Empress of India. During the 19th century India was viewed as Britain's valuable colony, "jewel in the crown," the most precious possession in the Empire, and the key to the rest of Asia. British ships controlled the sea route to India, and the countries on the route were carefully watched. Great Britain wanted to control South Africa and Suez Canal (In Egypt) to keep the route to India safe in order to protect trade, which was very important for Britain's industrial development. India was a colony of the British Empire for almost a century, from 1858 to 1947. In 1947 India won its independence.

English is spoken by more than fifteen million people in India. However, the official language is Hindi. All students are required to be bilingual. Many are trilingual, speaking English, Hindi, and their mother tongue (India has 1600 languages and dialects).

Comprehension Check

1. Why is Suno unable to concentrate on his studies?
2. What "vision" does Suno see in the park?
3. Why is he so affected by the couple he sees in the park?
4. What does Suno mean, when he calls himself a "professional"?
5. How does the author describe Suno's state of hopelessness?

Your Response to Literature

Suno feels as if his books are parasites sucking him dry. He feels as if his brain is jammed. Have you ever felt the same? Have you ever been exasperated and hopeless? Have you ever felt that all your life pursuits are vain? Have you ever felt this way about your studies, work or life in general?

Build Your Vocabulary

Fling; wheedle; tumbler; clang; slosh; sizzle; satchel; bawl; screech; whack; smear; grease; waver; slouch; goggle; earnestness; subjugate; fritters; snarl; slump; spine rubble; vendor; insinuating; cripple; dangle; greenery; chipmunks; stone; flapping; droop over; denture; bogey-men; prance; doze; gargoyles; contortions; oleander dairy booth; strut; hacking; supine; pummel; shrill; exalted; stake out; parasite; squealing; howl; grinding; mangle; sluggishly; burp; anemia; TB; grope; croon; coax; mourn; crackle; stray; dart; irreverence; hurdle; perpetual.

Language and Literature

1. Explain the use of the literary elements of a story: theme, plot, setting, character, point of view.
2. Identify symbols within the text and evaluate an author's use of symbolism to convey ideas.
3. Determine the author's style, identifying particular word choices and figurative language.

Style

Anita Desai as a writer is mostly concerned with innermost feelings, sensations, impressions of her characters. In order to depict the depths of human psychic processes and bring to light the interior world of her characters, she makes extensive use [stream of consciousness technique](#) in her literary works.

Point of View

The story is told from the point of view of Suno, whose narrative contains the interior monologue, characteristic of Desai's stream of consciousness style of writing.

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is a combination of speech sounds which aims at imitating sounds. It is the use of words that sound like their meaning.

Find examples of onomatopoeia in the story and decide why the author employs this phonetic stylistic device.

Simile

One of the most effective devices in a literary work is the use of **comparison**. Simile is a stylistic device that compares two unlike things.⁹⁶ In fact, they compare very different phenomena or objects which belong entirely to different class of things. A simile is expressed by the words like or as. Similes have recognizable structure: they are expressed by the words "as" or "like." As for their function, they usually intensify some feature of the concept.

Anita Desai employs a lot of similes in "Studies in the Park." What is the effect they make in the story? Do these similes reveal something about the character's state of mind?

Character

In terms of the degree characters can change into:

Dynamic - A dynamic character is a person who **changes over time**, usually as a result of resolving a central conflict or facing a major crisis. Most dynamic characters tend to be central rather than peripheral characters, because resolving the conflict is the major role of central characters.

Static - A static character is someone who **does not change over time**; his or her personality does not transform or evolve.

⁹⁶ One should be careful not to confuse ordinary comparison (e.g. my sister is as clever as your teacher)

Is Suno static or dynamic character?

Is he resolving a conflict? Does the conflict center around the plot?

Conflict

A conflict is a struggle between opposing forces. There are two main kinds of conflict in stories: **external** and **internal**.

External Conflict

A struggle between a character and an outside force is an external conflict. The outside force may be:

1. Another character (man against man).
2. Nature (man against nature).
3. Society (a person against the society)

Internal Conflict

A struggle that takes place in a character's mind is called internal conflict (man against himself).

What is the central conflict of the story? What kind of conflict does the character have in the story?

Action

There are two different kinds of action.

External action : What the characters do in the “real,” physical world.

Internal action : What takes place in a character's mind, i.e. his thoughts, feelings, memories, associations etc.

Is the action taking place in the “real”, physical world or in a character's mind, i.e. his thoughts, feelings, memories, associations, etc.?

Vocabulary

The cop and the anthem

O'Henry

honk n. – a call, a representation of the sound made by a goose

denizen n. – an inhabitant; resident

cognisant adj. – aware; having knowledge

rigour n. – hard times; a severe or cruel circumstance

humble adj. – unpretentious; lowly

crave v. – to have a very strong desire

congenial adj. – friendly, pleasant, agreeable;

repulse v. – force or drive back; repel

spurt v. – to gush in a sudden stream

loom v. – to appear as a large shape that is not clear, especially in a frightening or threatening way

benign n. – beneficial

accordant adj. – in conformity or harmony

encumber v. – burden

toll n. – price

inquisition n. – questioning (deeply and searchingly)

meddle v. – to become involved in something that does not concern you

unduly adv. – unfairly; more than you think is reasonable or necessary

accomplish v. – to manage to do, achieve

luxurious adj. – very comfortable

insolvency n. – bankruptcy

halt v. – stop

glittering adj. – reflecting light in bright flashes

mallard n. – a duck

frayed adj. – worn; decadent; old

decadent adj. – showing low standard

convey v. – to take from one place to another

haste n. – speed
avert v. – prevent; turn away
ignoble adj. – dishonorable
menace n. – threat
coveted adj. – desired
limbo n. – a place of confinement
cunning adj. – shrewd, clever
conspicuous adj. – attractive
cobblestone n. – a rounded stone used for paving
pursuit n. – the act of following
cater v. – to provide food, services
napery n. – table linen
accuse- to charge a person with some fault, crime
telltale adj – showing that something has happened (telltale n. – a person who tells stories about others)
flapjack n. – a chewy biscuit made with rolled oats
callous adj. – hard
woo v. – seek (the affection, favour, love)
fatuously adv. – foolishly
guise n. – appearance
sprightly adv. – lively
demeanour n. – look
despicable adj. – contemptible, mean
contiguity n. – continuousness
conscientious adj. – diligent, dedicated
clutch n. – a firm grasp
sidle v. – move in a furtive or stealthy manner
smirk v. – smile expressing scorn
brazenly adv. – boldly
impudent adj. – impertinent
contemptible adj. – hateful, despicable
litany n. – speech
bestow v. – give; confer; present
absorbed adv. – very interested in something
persecute v. – oppress, maltreat
beckon a finger – summon with a finger
haven n. – shelter, sanctuary
doom v. – to fail, suffer
enchantment n. – the state of being under a magic spell
render v. – leave

lounge v. – walk in a relaxed manner
transplendent adj. – decorated
gibberish n. – nonsensical talk
twirl v. – move around rapidly
disconsolate adj. – sad, inconsolable
unavailing adj. – useless
racket n. – noisy disturbance
unattainable adj. – not achievable
chilling adj. – frightening
saunter v. – walk in a casual manner
sternly adv. – firmly, strictly
sneer v. – assume facial expression of scorn and disrespect
larceny n. – theft
presentiment n. – premonition, a sense of something about to happen
wrathfully adv. – angrily, furiously
turmoil n. – confusion
standstill n. – a complete cessation of movement, stop
rambling adj. – spreading in various directions with no particular pattern
gable n. – an upper part of a building, between the two sloping sides of the roof
shaped like a triangle
glow v. – to emit a steady even light without flame
loiter v. – linger, stand or act idly
lustrous adj. – soft and shining
serene adj. – peaceful, tranquil
pedestrian n. – walker
twitter v. – chirp (sound produced by birds)
eaves n. – edge of the roof
immaculate adj. – completely clean
conjunction n. – meeting; joining together
receptive adj. – able to apprehend
instantaneous adj. – immediate
mire n. – confusion
faltering adj. – hesitating
solemn adj. – serious, pompous

Mammon and the Archer

O”Henry

grin v. – smile broadly (revealing the teeth)

contumelious adj. – offensive
grimness n. – stern, severe, cruel
ruddy adj. – reddish colour
countenance n. – face
rumpled adv. – crumpled, ruffled
slick adj. – very attractive; smooth and glossy
rankle n. – irritation
boisterously adv. – noisily
gad v. – visit different places and having fun
whirl v. – turn, spin, revolve
girdle – a woman's elastic corset
converge v. – move towards a place from different directions and meet to form a large crowd
imprecations n. – the act of imprecating (curse)
clamour n. – a loud persistent outcry (from a large number of people)
jumble n. – mingle
unmercenary adj. – disinterested
pinch v. – (informal) steal
chuckle v. – laugh softly

A Cup of Tea

Katherine Mansfield

exquisitely adv. – unusually delicately; beautifully; admirably
quaint adj. – unusual
presentable adj. – fit to be presented to other people
odious adj. – offensive
dazzle v. – blind suddenly by excessive light
ridiculous adj. – laughable, preposterous
beam v – radiate (rays of light)
clasp v. – hold in a firm grasp
glaze n. – smooth, glossy coating
cherub n. – an angel in the form of a child with wings
bodice n. – the upper part of a woman's dress, from the shoulder to the waist
discreet adj. – careful, tactful, sensible, proper
emerge v. – come out, come into view
shadowy adj. – dark, shady
battered adj. – not in good condition

cradle n. – a baby's bed

stagger v. – walk unsteadily

languor n. – physical or mental laziness or weariness; a feeling of dreaminess and relaxation; oppressive silence or stillness

blaze n. – strong fire or flame

languid adj. – without energy or spirit

listless adj. – lacking vigour, enthusiasm, or energy

squeeze v. – compress

husky adj. – slightly hoarse or rasping

wasteful adj. – extravagant

Cat in the Rain

Ernest Hemingway

easel n. – a frame used for supporting or displaying an artist's canvas

glisten v. – to gleam by reflecting light

gravel n. – small stones, often used to make the surface of paths and roads

crouch v. – to bend low with the limbs pulled up close together

drip v. – to fall in drops

prop up phr.v. – to support an object by leaning it against something, or putting something under it (a stick, a pillow)

dim adj. – not clearly seen, indistinct

The Rocking Horse Winner

DH Lawrence

cover up phr. v. – to cover something completely so that it cannot be seen

haunted adv. – believed to be visited by ghosts

champ v. – munch food

lucre n. – money, wealth

assert v. – insist upon

brazen it out – phr.v behave as if you are not ashamed or embarrassed about something even though you should be

compel v. – force somebody to do something

heed n. – close or careful attention

frenzy n. – violent mental derangement

peer v. – look closely or carefully, especially when you cannot see it clearly

career v. – rush in an uncontrolled way

snort v. – exhale forcibly through the nostrils
steed n. – a horse, especially one that is spirited or swift
slash v. – lash with a whip
close-set eyes – eyes very close together
fiercely adv. – savagely, violently
flare v. – burn with a bright flame
sturdy adj. – strong, vigorous, strongly built
straddle v. – sit, walk, or stand with the legs apart
parry v. – ward off, evade
obscure adj. – unclear
serene adj. – calm, peaceful, tranquil
obstinately adv. – stubbornly, in a determined way
reiterate v. – say repeatedly
inconsiderable adj. – relatively small
writ n. – a legal document from a court of law telling somebody to do or not to do something
uncanny adj. – supernatural; mysterious; hard to explain
successive adj. – following another without interruption
knack n. – skill
sequins n. – any of various gold coins
drapery n. – fabrics and cloth
almond-blossom – flower of almond
iridescent adj. – showing many bright colours that seem to change in different lights
trill v. – repeated short high sound made by somebody's voice or by bird
scream v. – speak or laugh wildly
overwrought adj. – agitated, nervous
remonstrate v. – protest, object to
seizures n. – the state of being seized; a sudden manifestation or recurrence of a disease, such as an epileptic convulsion
anguish n. – extreme pain or misery
intrusion n. – the act of intruding, unwelcome visit
on second thoughts idm. – used to say that you have changed your opinion

The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection

Virginia Woolf

hideous adj. – extremely ugly; repulsive

badger n. – an animal with black and white lines on its head living in the holes in the ground

otter n. – a small animal that lives in the river and has a thick brown fur

kingfisher n. – a bird with a long beak, that catches fish in the river

nocturnal adj. – relating to the night; active at night (of animals)

pirouette n. – a body spin on the toes; pirouette v. – to perform a pirouette

cuttlefish n. – a sea creature with ten arms and a wide flat shell inside its body, that produces a black substance like ink when it is attacked

suffuse v. – fill

tout v. – persuade; solicit in a brazen way

perpetual adj. – eternal, permanent

transient adj. – temporary, for a short time only

perish v. – to be destroyed or die

presumably adv. – probably something that you think is true

leafy adj. – covered with or having leaves

trailing adj. – (of a plant) having a long stem which spreads over the ground or hangs loosely

wreath n. – a band of flowers or foliage intertwined into a ring

tendrils n. – a curling stem that grows from a climbing plant; a curling piece of something such as hair

spinster n. – an unmarried woman regarded as being beyond the age of marriage

audacity n. – impudence, presumption

upbraidings n. – stern words of disapproval

assignation n. – a secret or forbidden arrangement to meet, especially one between lovers

spindly adj. – tall, slender, and frail

strew v. – spread or scatter

chisel n. – a hand tool for working wood, consisting of a flat steel blade with a cutting edge; a tool without a handle for working on stone or metal

dislodge – to remove from or leave a lodging place, hiding place, or previously fixed position

tablet n. – a slab of stone, wood, etc.

profound adj. – deep

lacy adj. – made of or resembling lace

veil n. – a piece of more or less transparent material, usually attached to a hat or headdress, used to conceal or protect a woman's face and head

snip v. – to cut or clip with a small quick stroke or a succession of small quick strokes, especially with scissors

futility n. – lack of effectiveness or success

evanescence – passing out of sight; fading away; vanishing; ephemeral or transitory
moulder v. – to decay slowly and steadily
reticent adj. – silent; reserved; not very communicative
enmesh v. – to involve somebody in a bad situation; entangle
pliable adj. – easy to influence or control
impious adj. – ungodly, showing a lack of respect for God and religion (impiety n.)
linger v. – to go in a slow or leisurely manner; saunter; to remain just alive for some time prior to death
penetrate v. – pierce, enter
verify v. – confirm
derange v. – disarrange
courteously adv. – politely

The Standard of Living

Dorothy Parker

arrogant adj. – overbearingly proud
gait n. – manner of walking or running
wont adj. (postpositive) – accustomed (of doing something)
starches n. – any food containing a large amount of starch, such as rice and potatoes
butterfats n. – the fatty substance of milk from which butter is made
spongy adj. – like a sponge
wedges of cake – big pieces of cake
grit n. – very small pieces of stone or sand
patty n. – a small fattened cake
inferior adj. – not of good quality
bland adj. – not having a strong or interesting taste
bog v. – to make something sink into something wet
pastry n. – baked foods, such as tarts, etc.
limber adj. – flexible
indeterminate adj. – uncertain, not definite
salve n. – ointment
flank n. – the side between the ribs and the hip
steady adj. – firmly fixed
quartet n. – group of four
unlamented adj. – not missed, regretted or grieved over
lament n. – sorrow, regret

inappropriate adj. – not fitting; unsuitable or untimely
scarcely adj. – hardly at all
distinguish v. – to recognize the difference between two people or things
predecessor – n. a person who precedes another
invariably adv. – always; without exception
besought (the past tense of beseech) – ask; beg
shimmer v. – shine with tremulous or glistening light
tilt v. – to work or forge with a tilt hammer
fancifully adv. – curiously; not based on fact
strap n – a strip of leather or other material that is used to fasten something
conspicuous adj. – attracting attention
audible adj. – loud enough to be heard
lethargically adv. – without energy, sluggishly
tribute n. – a gift or statement made in acknowledgement, gratitude or admiration
condescension n. – the act of behaving in a patronizing way
precision n. – accuracy; being precise
bequest n. – the act of bequeathing (dispose by will; hand on as to the following generations)
zest n. – keen excitement; piquancy
decency n. – proper and suitable behavior
benefactor n. – a person who supports or helps a person, an institution, etc. especially by money
embroideries n. – elaboration or exaggeration
strain n. – great demand on the emotions; a feeling of tension
infrequent n. – rarely happening
mink n. – the highly valued fur of minks (musteline mammals having slightly webbed feet)
droop v. – hang down; sag
shamble v. – walk in an unsteady way
befit v. – to be appropriate to or suitable for
rote n. – a habitual or mechanical routine or procedure
sleek adj. – polished; smooth and shiny
supple adj. – bending easily without damage
chaste adj. – virginal; pure; modest
on account of prep. – because of; by reason of
emerald n. – a green transparent highly valued stone
nudge v. – to push or poke
usher v. – to conduct or escort in a courteous way
disdain n. – contempt
sty n. – pigsty, a place where pigs live

immaculate adj. – completely clean

Shooting an Elephant

George Orwell

have the guts (informal) – to have the courage and determination

bait v. – persecute or tease

jeer (at) v. – to treat with mockery, ridicule, contempt

perplexing adj. – puzzling; confusing

evil adj. – morally bad or wrong

oppressor n. – a person a group of people that treats somebody in a cruel and unfair way

wretched adj. – in poor or pitiful circumstances

huddle v. – crowd or nestle closely together

stinking adj. – having a foul smell

cowed adj. – frightened

long-term adj – that will last over a long period of time

convict n.– a person serving a prison sentence

intolerable adj – more than can be tolerated, endured

utter v. – to give audible expression, to say something

impose v. – to make somebody accept your ideas

bayonet n. – a long, sharp knife that is fastened onto the end of the rifle and used as a weapon

ravage v. – to cause extensive damage to

bazaar n. – (in some eastern countries) a street or an area where there are many small shops

devour v. – to swallow or eat up slowly or voraciously or greedily

inflict v. – impose something unwelcome

thatch n. – a roofing material that consists of straw, reed, etc.

profess v. – to affirm, pronounce; acknowledge

sprawl v. – sit or lie with one's limbs spread out

score n. – a cut in a surface

trench n. – deep ditch or furrow

friction n. – the action of one object moving against another

unnerve v. – to make somebody feel nervous, frightened; to cause to lose courage, strength, confidence

jostle v. – to force (one’s way) by pushing; to push or bump
 plough v. – to dig or turn the land with a plough (plough n. a piece of farming equipment with curved blades, pulled by a tractor or by animals)
 soggy adj. – soaked with liquid
 coarse grass – rough, not fine grass
 take not the slightest notice – without paying any attention
 stuff something into somebody’s mouth – pack or fill completely somebody’s mouth
 halt v. – to stop
 savage adj. – wild, untamed
 garish adj. – colourful in a crude and vulgar manner
 irresistible adj. – not able to resist or refuse, overpowering
 hollow adj. – empty, without real value
 posing adj. – not sincere, only intended to impress other people
 dummy n. – a model person used especially for showing clothes in a shop window; a stupid person
 squeamish adj. – easily sickened or nauseated, as by the sight of blood
 trample v. – walk roughly on
 shove the cartridges – to push cartridges in a rough way
 stricken adj. – laid low as by disease or illness; deeply affected as by grief
 shrunken adj. (past participle of shrink) – reduced in size
 sag – sink as under weight or pressure
 flabby adj. – lacking firmness; weak
 slobber v. – to dribble (saliva) from the mouth
 senility n. – physical or mental decay because of old age
 remnant n. – a part of something that is left after the other parts have been used
 hind legs – back or rear legs
 collapse v. – fall down or cave in suddenly
 beneath prep. – below
 trumpet v. – a loud sound made by animals (esp. by elephants)
 rattle v. – to send short sharp sounds
 gasp n. – a quick deep breath (usually caused by a strong emotion)
 sufficient adj. – enough
 grasp v. – to understand, comprehend

All Summer in a Day

Ray Bradbury

weeds n. – a plant that grows wild, depriving space and food from cultivated plants

wheedle v. – to persuade (by saying nice things that you do not mean)

tumbler n. – a glass with a flat bottom

clang v. – to make a loud ringing sound

slosh v. – (of liquid) to move around making a lot of noise

sizzle v. – to make the sound of food frying in hot oil or melted butter

satchel n. – a leather bag that you hang over your shoulder or wear on your back
(used by children for carrying books to school)

bawl v. – to shout or cry loudly, especially in an unpleasant or angry way

screech v. – to make a loud high unpleasant voice

whack v. – (inf.) to hit somebody very hard

smear v. – to spread an oily or soft substance over a surface in a rough way

grease n. – thick, oily substance; animal fat

waver v. – to move in an unsteady way

slouch v. – to stand, sit or move in a lazy way

goggle v. – (old-fashioned, inf.) to look at somebody with your eyes wide open
(especially because you are surprised or shocked)

earnestness n. – the state of being very earnest (= very serious and sincere)

subjugate v. – to gain control over; to conquer

fritters n. – a piece of fruit, vegetable or meat covered with batter (a mixture of
eggs, milk and flour) and fried

snarl v. – to show the teeth and make a deep angry voice in the throat

slump v. – to sit or fall down heavily

spine n. – backbone

rubble n. – broken stones or bricks from a building or wall that has been destroyed

vendor n. – a person who sells things (street vendors)

insinuate v. – to suggest indirectly that something unpleasant is true; to speak to
gain favor in an indirect way

crippled adj. – damaged

dangle v. – to hang or swing freely

greenery n. – attractive green leaves and plants

chipmunk n. – a small animal (of a squirrel family)

stone v. – throw stones;

flapping adj. – moving quickly up and down

droop over v. – hang down; sink

denture n. – false teeth

bogey-men n. – an imaginary evil spirit that is used to frighten children

prance v. – to move quickly with exaggerated steps so that people will look at you

doze v. – to sleep lightly for a short time

gargoyle n. – a grotesque face or creature

contortion n. – a movement which twists the body out of its natural shape

oleander n. – a bush or tree with purple, white or pink flowers and long pointed thick leaves

dairy n. – a place on a farm where milk is kept and where butter and cheese are made; a company that sells milk or milk products

booth n. – a small enclosed place

strut v. – to walk proudly with your head up and chest out to show that you are important

hacking adj. – (of a cough) dry and spasmodic that is repeated often

supine adj. – lazy or morally weak; inactive

pummel v. – to keep hitting somebody hard (especially with your fists)

shrill adj. – very high and loud, in an unpleasant way

exalted adj. – full of great joy and happiness; of high rank, position or great importance

stake out phr.v. – to clearly mark the limits of something that you claim is yours

parasite n. – a person who habitually lives on others without making any returns

squeal v. – to make a long high sound (e.g. pigs were squealing)

howl v. – to make a long loud cry (especially in pain, despair, protest)

grind v. – to break or crush something into very small pieces between two hard surfaces or using a special machine

mangle v. – to crush or twist something so that it is badly damaged

sluggishly adv. – more slowly than normal and in a way that seems lazy

burp v. – to let out air from the stomach through the mouth, making a noise

anemia n. – insufficiency of red blood cells

TB n. – short for tuberculosis

grope v. – to try and find something that you cannot see, by feeling with your hands

croon v. – to sing something very quietly and gently

coax v. – wheedle

mourn v. – to grieve over

crackle v. – to make short sharp sounds like something that is burning in a fire

stray v. – to wander haphazardly

dart v. – to look at somebody suddenly and quickly

irreverence n. – not showing respect to somebody

hurdle n. – barriers over which runners leap in certain events

perpetual adj. – eternal, permanent

