GEG S5 01(M/P)

Exam Code : ENP 5A

Short Story

SEMESTER V

ENGLISH

BLOCK 1

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May, 2019

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Printed and published by Registrar on behalf of the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University.

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The University acknowledges with thanks the financial support provided by the **Distance Education Bureau, UGC** for preparation of this study material.

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

The Course titled “Short Story” will introduce the learners to several representative short stories across different periods and various places. Fables are also included in this course along with a discussion on the literary genre of short story which will enable the learners to comprehend the massive scope of the genre.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

The first unit introduces the learner to the literary form of short story tracing its history, development, the myths and legends associated with it, and discusses the characteristics and the leading practitioners of the form. The second unit deals with three selected fables of Aesop- the famous Greek storyteller, namely, “The Fox and the Cow”, “The Wind and the Sun” and “Hercules and the Waggoner” and lay importance in the moral values imparted through the fables which are written in simple and lucid language. The third unit consists of a short story by Leo Tolstoy, namely “Three Questions” which reflects his didactic style and moral vision. The fourth unit deals with O. Henry’s “The Last Leaf” which interestingly portrays the close bond between two artist friends, Sue and Johnsy and reveals the role of the old artist Mr. Behrman and a miracle he creates with his final masterpiece which affects the life of both the girls. The fifth unit deals with Anton Chekhov’s “The Bet” which revolves around a challenge decided between a lawyer and a banker,on one fine evening in the midst of a social gathering and reveals an alternate point of view on who among the two could prove be the real winner. The sixth unit deals with a short story written by Guy de Maupassant which symbolically uses the ‘necklace’ to portray the duality of appearance verses reality. The seventh unit unit takes up Katharine Mansfield’s “A Cup of Tea” in which a young socialite, Rosemary Fell’s womanly jealously takes over her initial good intentions to help a poor girl. The eighth unit deals with D.H. Lawrence’s “Odour of Chrysanthemums” which describes at length about the family life of the toiling miners, their life in the Brinsley colliery and the everyday ‘risks’ in the struggle for survival.

While going through these units, you will be able to comprehend the genre of the short story and also appreciate the various cultural contexts in each of the prescribed short stories. The life and works of each of these writers have been discussed to provide a better idea about their contribution to the genre. While going through a unit, you may also notice some text boxes, which have been included to help you know some of the difficult terms and concepts. You will also read about some relevant ideas and concepts in “LET US KNOW” along with the text. We have kept “CHECK YOUR PROGRESS” questions in each unit that have been designed to self check your progress of study. It is important to note that the Self Learning Material (SLM) is not an end in itself and the learners are strongly advised to consult the references and other resources recommended for reading.

UNIT 1: SHORT STORY AS A LITERARY GENRE

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Origin and Development

1.4 Short Story as a Literary Form

1.5 Characteristics of Short Story

1.6 Some Famous Short Story Writers

1.7 Let us Sum up

1.8 Further Reading

1.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.10 Model Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- analyse short story as a genre
- point out the general characteristics of this genre
- trace the origin and development of short story as a genre
- assess the impact of this genre in literature

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Everyone loves a good story. You must have listened to your grandmother's stories on cold wintry nights and felt happy or sad on hearing it. A story sometimes takes you to a world other than the one that you are living in and you are left fascinated by it. A short story is perhaps easier to read and less time-consuming than a novel which takes a long time to finish reading. But, perhaps a short story also is harder to write than a novel as it has to create its effect in a limited number of words. Like miniature paintings, they are tightly bound and every detail counts. In this unit, you will acquire an understanding of what goes on to make a good short story. This unit deals with short story as a literary genre. The term 'genre' implies types or classes of literature. A short story is a brief fictional prose narrative that

is shorter than a novel and that usually deals with only a few characters. In a short story the action, and dialogue of its characters are organised into the artful pattern of a plot. The short story is usually concerned with a single effect conveyed in only one or a few significant episodes. The form encourages economy of setting, concise narrative, and the omission of a complex plot. Character is disclosed in action and dramatic encounter but is seldom fully developed. Despite its relatively limited scope, though, a short story is often judged by its ability to provide a "complete" or satisfying treatment of its characters and subject.

Therefore, this unit introduces you to the short story as a literary form and also elaborates on the different characteristics which a good short story needs to have. You will also be introduced to some famous short story writers of the literary world and some of the very famous and beautiful short stories which they have written. Some of these stories have remained imprinted on the minds of the readers for their sheer brilliance of expression and sensitive human touch.

1.3 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

Let us now look back on the beginnings of the short story. Some argue that the forefathers of the short story are the myths and legends of yesterday, but although the short story as a literary form existed in the remote past in some crude form, its popularity and prominence is of recent origin. You have probably heard of the Parables of Jesus Christ. These **parables** were narrated by Jesus Christ to his disciples to teach them moral lessons. The simple and candid way in which these stories are told stirs the heart of the listeners as well as the readers. The fable, which is a short narrative in prose or verse and which points to a moral is also in a sense a short story. You must have heard about Aesop's fables like 'The Lion and the Mouse', 'The Hare and the Tortoise', 'The Old Man and the Bundle of Sticks', etc. These are all specimens of early short stories. Classical Indian literature too has a **plethora** of **fables** which can be deemed short stories too. The characters are mostly animals through which certain moral values are personified. For example, we have 'The Tiger and the Fox', The Elephant



***Parable*:** story with a moral.

***Plethora*:** excessive number or amount.

***Fable*:** traditional short stories teaching a moral lesson, often showing animals as human characters.

and the Fox', 'The Old Tiger and the Traveller', etc. We have the Buddhist *Jataka* tales, the *Panchantantra* and the *Boddhisatva* tales. The narratives about the brothers Cain and Abel, the Prodigal son, Ruth, Jezebel, and Judith in the Bible are all short stories. The famous *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer are also short stories even though they are written in verse form.

You will be surprised to know that a number of the most famous short stories in the world have been written in the last one hundred fifty years or so. Thus, we see that it is only in the modern times that the short story has been able to garner huge significance and recognition. Though the short story existed earlier, it was practised extensively during the nineteenth century. The literary beginnings of the short story can be traced back to *Sketch Book* by Washington Irving who was the first to acknowledge the individuality of this literary form. Edgar Allan Poe was the first great master of the modern short story. In his short stories, we encounter various fictional genres, such as, science fiction, detective fiction, etc. Although it had its literary beginning in America, the influence in other parts of the world was immense. Guy de Maupassant, the eminent French short story writer was greatly influenced by Poe. In Russia Tolstoy, Gorky, Chekhov, etc. made great contribution to the development of short story. O' Henry was one of the most popular story writers of America. However, it was only during the twentieth century that the short story became popular in England. Rudyard Kipling pioneered this genre and imparted originality to it. Some of his stories include "The Soldiers", "The Plain Tales from the Hill", etc. Kipling never imitated the French or the Russians and wrote from his personal experiences and observation. You must have heard about the detective stories of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by A.C. Doyle. Thus, we see some of the short stories which have become part of common lore are the detective stories of Arthur Conan Doyle, the mystery with a touch of the Gothic stories of Edgar Allan Poe, the moving stories of human relationships of O. Henry, the pleasant stories of Guy de Maupassant and the veritable treasure of our very own Rabindranath Tagore's short stories.

1.4 SHORT STORY AS A LITERARY FORM

Let us first see what ***H. G. Wells*** has to say about a short story: "A short story is or should be a simple thing; aims at producing one single vivid effect; it has to seize the attention at the outset, and never relaxing, gathers it together more and more until the climax is reached. The limits of the human capacity to attend closely, therefore, set a limit to it; it must explode and finish before interruption occurs or, fatigue sets in." It must be noted that a short story has to make an impression upon the mind of the reader within a short period of time, say an hour or two. In fact, someone once said that a short story is something which can be "read in an hour and remembered for a lifetime." The aim of all good literature, as you might know, is to delight its readers and expand their understanding of men and manners. The short story is not different in this aspect. Today, it is a very popular form of study and its popularity owes itself to various causes. In this age of rush and restlessness, a lot of factors draw a reader to the sweet pleasure of reading a short story. A long novel like ***Gone With the Wind***, ***War and Peace*** or ***The Grapes of Wrath*** cannot provide immediate pleasure to the modern reader and so hardly suits his time and temper (this is the age of instant coffee, instant messaging, instant food after all!). Here, a short story amply serves the purpose of the modern man in providing pleasure. The famous novelist, Isabel Allende says: "Novels are, for me, adding up details... Short stories are more difficult- they have to be perfect, complete in themselves."



H. G. Wells: British novelist, author of novels such as *The Time Machine, The War of the Worlds*, etc.

Gone With the Wind: novel by Margaret Mitchell.

War and Peace: novel by Leo Tolstoy.

The Grapes of Wrath: novel by John Steinbeck

However, this is not to say that a short story is a rival or a substitute for a novel. Each has its own place and importance in the history of literary genres. It would also be gravely wrong to brand a short story as a brief novel. The short story also cannot compete with the novel in the sense that it cannot exhibit life in all its variety and complexity for it requires a broader canvas. As a matter of fact, the short story is very difficult to classify as it is one of the most elusive forms, and it is also very difficult to define it within a particular limit. Reading a short story can be a more profound and moving experience than reading a novel because of the sheer intensity of a short

story. If you ask "How long should a short story be?" it will be impossible to construct it within a said limit. There are 'long' short stories and 'very short' short stories. Somerset Maugham commented in his preface to his *Complete Short Stories* that "the shortest item runs to about 1600 words and the longest to about 20,000 words." In fact most short stories fall somewhere between these two extremes.



LET US KNOW

You will be interested to know that the short story has many 'relatives' in different parts of the world. The French have a variation of the short story called *conte* and *nouvelle*, the Spanish call it *novela*, the Italians, *novella*, the Germans, *Nouvelle* and *Kurzgeschichte* and the Russians term it *skaz*.

It was *Wandering Willie's Tale* (1824) by Sir Walter Scott which made the first approach to the modern type prose tale. In America it was Nathaniel Hawthorne who first attempted at writing short story. However, it is Edgar Allan Poe who perfected this form by formulating theory and practice of the short story. Poe has rightly recognised the importance of "*invention, creation, imagination and originality*". Let us look at some of the definitions of short story to get a clear view of this literary form:

According to ***Sir Hugh Walpole***, "A short story should be a story: a record of things happening, full of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development, leading through suspense to a climax and a satisfying *denouement*."

According to ***Somerset Maugham***, "A short story should be a finished product of art with a beginning, middle and an end."

According to ***Berg Esenwein***, "A short story is a brief, imaginative narrative, unfolding a single predominating incident and a single chief character; it contains a plot, the details of which are so compressed, and the whole treatment so organised, as to produce a single impression."

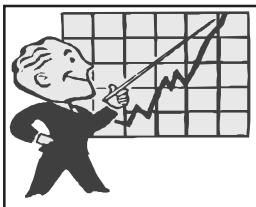


***Sir Hugh Walpole*:** a New Zealand-born English novelist. His skill at scene-setting, his vivid plots, his high profile as a lecturer and his driving ambition brought him a large readership in the United Kingdom and North America.

***Somerset Maugham*:** British playwright, novelist and short story writer. He was among the most popular writers of his era and reputedly the highest paid author during the 1930s.

***Berg Esenwein*:** Joseph Berg Esenwein (1867-1946) was an American editor, lecturer and writer. He was noted for contributions to the Library of the World's Best Literature.

Source: <<www. wikipedia. org>>



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: 'The Lion and the Mouse' is a parable. True/ False

Q 2: Can we say that the short story is a short novel?

Q 3: Most short stories are neither too short nor too long. True/ False

1.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF SHORT STORY

Let us now discuss the important characteristics which a good short story needs to have. We have already learnt that a short story is not easy to define precisely. Poe has described the short story as a prose narrative, "requiring from half an hour to one or two hours for its perusal." William Henry Hudson says that a short story is something which "can be easily read at a single sitting." As has already been mentioned, the short story is a better choice than a novel as it can afford reading pleasure within a short period of time. The short story is characterised by brevity. It should be brief, that is, one should be able to read it at one sitting. Therefore, it is necessary to develop the ideas that can be effectively developed within the prescribed limits. It should be written in a precise manner, clear in outline and yet complete in itself. Unnecessary details should be omitted. A good short story writer does not strive to explain everything. Incidents and necessary details must be selected deliberately. But this is not to say that brevity is the only characteristic of a short story.

A short story is basically a narrative which deals with certain incidents and which involves certain characters around which the story revolves. It should create a single impression and effect upon the reader's mind. Generally, a short story deals with incidents covering a short period of time. But in stories like Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle", Maupassant's *La Parure*, even "The Bet" by Anton Chekhov (which we will deal with later), the narrative covers a long period of time. However, the concentration of interest and the singleness of impression must be maintained in order to classify the short story as a really good one.

In keeping with the oral story telling tradition, a short story tells a story. So, story telling forms an important aspect of a short story. A story

should have a plot which is constituted of events and actions and which achieve certain artistic and emotional effects. And if the plot is stirring, then the story without doubt will be beautiful. A good plot is also commonly said to have unity of action. This means that the parts of the story must be so well connected that any restructuring will upset the story as a whole.

But let us not forget that a good plot in a short story depends upon the characters who act out the incidents. Plot and character are interdependent concepts. Henry James, the novelist, once commented: "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?" However, a short story cannot have a huge cast of characters as in a novel and also the characters' traits cannot de delineated in a detailed manner. But you must understand that the greatest short story writers have beautifully portrayed characters that are truly remarkable and unforgettable. Some characters like Rahamat in Rabindranath Tagore's "Kabuliwallah", Old Behrman in O. Henry's "The Last Leaf", the giant in Oscar Wilde's "The Selfish Giant" are to be cherished forever.

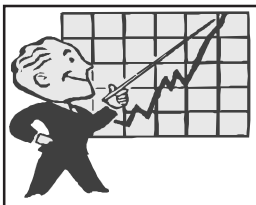
The language of the short story should be a 'model of economy'. The words should contribute towards effectiveness of the story. Thus, apt words and telling phrases are employed.

The plot, characters and the atmosphere must work in tandem for a short story to be effective. The short story also must have a beginning, middle and an end, i.e. it should have a proper structural design. The world's best known short stories adhere to this dictum and delight us with their descriptions of men and manners.



LET US KNOW

We have learnt that a short story needs to have a good plot. But do you know that the plot and the story are distinguishable from each other? A story is only a summary of the chronology of the events. When we tell a story, we say first something happens, then something else and so on. But it is only when we specify how one event is related to the other, and how all the events are ordered and organised so as to achieve their particular effects, that the synopsis begins to be adequate to the plot.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: How is character important in a short story?

Q 5: How does Hudson define a short story?

Q 6: What is the difference between plot and story?

1.6 SOME FAMOUS SHORT STORY WRITERS

Till now, we have discussed what a short story is and what the characteristics of a good short story are. Let us now, have a look at the some of the most famous short story writers of the world who have enthralled readers with their brilliant depiction of the various facets of life.

Edgar Allan Poe is generally regarded as the father of the modern short story, although there has been much debate about this. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that Poe's contribution to the genre is awesome. He especially excelled in the detective story genre which had elements of the ***Gothic***. Some of his famous stories include "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", "The Purloined Letter", "The Mystery of Marie Roget", "The Pit and the Pendulum", "The Black Cat", "The Gold Bug", "The Masque of the Red Death" etc. Besides Poe, the other famous American short story writers include Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Herman Melville, Jack London, Henry James and O. Henry. O. Henry is a master of the surprise ending and his stories are characterised by a 'twist in the tale'. Alexander Pushkin was among the most prolific of the Russian realistic short story writers. Gogol is another Russian short story writer whose stories about everyday occurrences of life and common people moved the readers. You will be interested to know that Gogol has even featured in Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* as the central character is named Gogol Ganguly. "The Overcoat" is one of Gogol's seminal stories. Leo Tolstoy, besides being a novelist, is also noted for his short stories. Anton Chekhov (whom we will discuss in a later unit) had a profound influence on the short story. Guy de Maupassant is the most outstanding of French short story writers.



***Gothic*:** connected with the Goths (a Germanic people who fought against the Roman Empire). Gothic elements are very gloomy and horrifying.

He and Chekhov are generally regarded as the masters of the genre. Honore de Balzac, Alphonse Daudet, and Gustave Flaubert are other notable

French short story writers. Among the English short story writers, mention may be made of Thomas Hardy and his *Wessex Tales*, Arthur Conan Doyle and his *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, H. G. Wells and his science fiction stories; D. H. Lawrence wrote some great stories dealing with human relationships. Saki wrote witty, ironic and elegant stories of enduring interest. The Czech writer Franz Kafka wrote weird short stories which also display his skill in handling his pet themes of the plight of individuals in the modern society. The Spanish American authors Luis Borges and Gabriel Garcia Marquez and the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier also published short stories which are highly regarded.

There are Indian short story writers too who have proved themselves as successful practitioners in the genre. Among them are Rabindranath Tagore, Prem Chand, Ismat Chugtai, Ruskin Bond, Shashi Deshpande, Amrita Pritam and Khushwant Singh. Our very own Assamese short story writers like the extremely brilliant Lakshminath Bezbarua, Bhabendranath Saikia, Shilabhadra, Lakshminandan Bora, Saurav Chaliha also demand consideration.

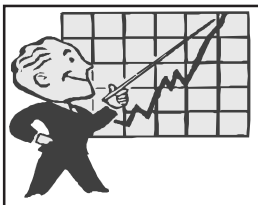
We have therefore seen that the short story has evolved as specific form of literary art like any other form of art, having its own characteristics and its own laws. The genre has been instrumental in providing its readers pleasure and wisdom and all that a good art must offer.



LET US KNOW

Khushwant Singh thinks that there is something special about the Indian short story. In his own words: “It (the Indian short story) sticks to the traditional rules of the craft. It is in fact short and not a novella or an abridged novel. It revolves round one or at the most two or three characters and does not have a long dramatis personae as in novels. It is limited in time and space and does not span decades or spread out in different locales. It also has a well- formulated central theme and does not touch upon several topics or clashes of personalities. It has a distinct beginning, a build- up and usually a

dramatic end, frequently an unexpected one which sums up the story. Western short stories tend to be prolix leaving the reader to guess what it is all about. That is why many critics believe that the West has lost the art of writing short stories. In India, on the other hand, the short story is as vibrant as ever."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Henry's short stories are characterised by a.....

Q 8: Why is Arthur Conan Doyle famous?

Q 9: Name a few Assamese short story writers.

Q 10: Write the names of two English short story writers.

Q 11: D. H. Lawrence is regarded as the father of the modern short story. T/F



ACTIVITY 1.1

1. Read some stories written by Bezbaruah and Dr. Bhabendranath Saikia and compare them in their treatment of Assamese life.
2. Read a short story written by your favourite Assamese/ English short story writer and comment on its unity of action and singleness of impression.



1.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt that the short story is one of the most popular forms of literature today. You have seen, how the short story differs from the novel and also learnt about the beginnings of the genre to the present day. The characteristics of the short story as well as some of its most famous practitioners have also been discussed to enhance your knowledge about this popular literary type. Thus, it is clear that as a literary form, it has become very popular in the present time.

Nowadays stories are published on a wide variety of themes most of which have dramatic climax along with a surprise ending.



1.8 FURTHER READING

1) Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Singapore: Thomson Asia Pvt. Ltd.

2) Barrett, Charles R. (1898). *Short Story Writing: A Practical Treatise on the Art of the Short Story.* New York: The Baker and Taylor Co. (www.gutenburg.org)

3) Cuddon, J. A. (1999). *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin.

4) Canby, Harry S. (1902). The Short Story. Yale Studies in English. (e-book)

Websites:



www.wikipedia.org

www.archive.org

1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: False.

Ans to Q No 2: No, a short story can not be called a novel because it cannot exhibit life in all its variety and complexity like the novel . . . thus it would be gravely wrong to brand a short story as a brief novel.

Ans to Q No 3: True.

Ans to Q No 4: The characters' traits cannot de delineated in a detailed manner . . .short story writers have beautifully portrayed characters that are truly remarkable and unforgettable . . . character . . . the determination of incident.

Ans to Q No 5: William Henry Hudson says that a short story is something which "can be easily read at a single sitting."

Ans to Q No 6: A story is only a summary of the chronology of the event ... But it is only when we specify how one event is related to the other, and how all the events are ordered and organised so as to achieve their particular effects, that the synopsis begins to be adequate to the plot.

Ans to Q No 7: 'twist in the tale'.

Ans to Q No 8: *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.*

Ans to Q No 9: Lakshminath Bezbarua, Bhabendranath Saikia, Shilabhadra, Lakshminandan Bora and Saurav Chaliha.

Ans to Q No 10: Conan Doyle, Katherine Mansfield, D.H. Lawrence, etc.

Ans to Q No 11: False.



1.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Define short story. Discuss its techniques.

Q 2: How did the short story originate? Briefly trace its origins from antiquity to the present day.

Q 3: What are the important characteristics of short story?

Q 4: Name a few short story writers of the world including the regional ones and some famous works written by them.

Q 5: Discuss short story as a literary form.

Q 6: Trace the development of short story as a genre.

Q 7: The short story can be "read in an hour and remembered for a lifetime". Comment on this statement.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 2 : AESOP'S FABLES

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Introducing Aesop's Fables

- 2.3.1 The Fox and the Crow
- 2.3.2 The Wind and the Sun
- 2.3.3 Hercules and the Waggoner

2.4 Major Theme

2.5 Style and Language

2.6 Let us Sum up

2.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.8 Further Reading

2.9 Model Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- gain an idea of 'fable' as well as define it
- differentiate between a fable and a parable
- discuss a few of Aesop's fables like "The Fox and the Crow", "The Wind and the Sun" and "Hercules and the Waggoner"
- explain the themes of the above three Aesop's fables
- discuss the language and style of these fables

2.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit aims to introduce you to the literary genre, namely, fable by dealing with three selected fables by Aesop. As discussed in Unit 1, the fables serve as specimens of early short stories. Before we start discussing the three selected fables, we must understand what a fable is as a genre. This is how M.H Abrams defines Fable in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms*:



***Epigram*:** an epigram is a rhetorical device that is a memorable, brief, interesting and surprising satirical statement. It has originated from a Greek word, 'epigramma', meaning inscription or to inscribe.

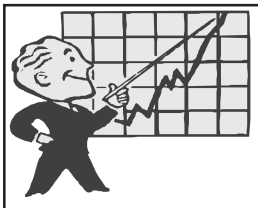
A Fable (also called an apologue) is a short narrative, in prose or verse that exemplifies an abstract moral thesis or principle of human behaviour; usually, at its conclusion, either the narrator or one of the characters states the moral in the form of an ***epigram****. The most common is the beast fable, in which animals talk and act like the human types they represent and it is a very ancient form that existed in Egypt, India and Greece.*

Thus, it may be understood that a Fable is a literary genre that is a short fictional narrative either in prose or in verse and illustrates or leads to an interpretation of a moral lesson (a "moral"), which may or may not be added at the end explicitly stated by the narrator or the characters of the story. A fable may contain animals, supernatural creatures, mythical heroes, inanimate objects like forces of nature that are given human qualities of speech and thought.

A similar genre to the Fable is a *Parable* which is a similar short narrative but which is about only humans and excludes animals, mythical creatures and forces of nature. It tries to draw a parallel between the characters in the story with humankind in general to stress upon a moral lesson as in a fable.

Fables have been considered one of the most enduring forms of folk literature and can be found the world over. Most fables have been passed down the ages through oral storytelling and thus one fable may have many regional variations. The same stories are sometimes found in different countries and cultures.

Fables have a long history all over the world and can be found in Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia. In Asia, India has a rich history of fables which include *The Panchatantra* and *The Jataka Tales* which include enduring and famous stories like the *Hitopadesha* and *Vikram and Baital.* Also from Asia is the very famous collection of fables *The Arabian Nights.*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is a Fable?

Q 2: What is a Parable? How does it differ from a Fable?

Q 3: How have Fables passed on from one generation to the other?

Q 4: Give examples of fables you are familiar with.

2.3 INTRODUCING AESOP'S FABLES

Aesop was supposed to have been a slave in ancient Greece and a famous storyteller. Aesop's Fables also known as the *Aesopica* are a collection of fables that have been attributed to him although it has never been proven if he had actually composed these stories. These stories are the most famous and endearing fables for children in the entire world and have travelled down centuries through different cultures. They continue to be read and admired by children even today. Although attributed to Aesop, these stories are more like cultural fables and the stories have regional and cultural variants. Let us now take a look and read three of his fables prescribed in the course.

2.3.1 The Fox and the Crow

Text

A Fox once saw a Crow fly off with a piece of cheese in its beak and settle on a branch of a tree. 'That's for me, as I am a Fox,' said Master Reynard, and he walked up to the foot of the tree. 'Good-day, Mistress Crow,' he cried. 'How well you are looking to-day: how glossy your feathers; how bright your eye. I feel sure your voice must surpass that of other birds, just as your figure does; let me hear but one song from you that I may greet you as the Queen of Birds.' The Crow lifted up her head and began to caw her best, but the moment she opened her mouth the piece of cheese fell to the ground, only to be snapped up by Master Fox. 'That will do,' said he. 'That was all I wanted. In exchange for your cheese I will give you a piece of advice for the future .'Do not trust flatterers.'

This fable by Aesop is an example of the beast fable where the story includes animals as characters that have human qualities

of speech. The story plays out through the two characters of the fox that is given a name, Master Reynard and a crow that is addressed as Mistress Crow by the wily fox. A quick glance on the section above that sought to define a fable with its prevalent characteristics will reveal to the student how the story falls within that definition. It is a short narrative in prose with animal characters and one which the moral of the story is stated by one of the characters of the narrative itself. The story begins when the cunning fox sees a crow with a piece of cheese. He believes that it is he who should have that cheese as he feels he is superior to the crow since he is a fox. In order to get the piece of cheese from the crow, the fox decides to flatter the crow with many praises about the crow's beauty and grace. He begins by wishing the crow a good day and then goes on to compliment the crow's beautiful black shiny feathers and says how beautiful the crow looks. Then he says to the crow that its voice must be more beautiful than any other bird and wishes to hear the crow sing one song and then he would be convinced that the crow really is the queen of all birds. Flattered by the fox's praises, the crow starts to caw as loudly as it can and in the process drops the piece of cheese from its beak. The fox has his way and collects the cheese and then goes on to advise the crow to not trust flatterers in the future which is thus the moral of the story.

2.3.2 The Wind and the Sun

Text

The Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger. Suddenly they saw a traveller coming down the road, and the Sun said: 'I see a way to decide our dispute. Whichever of us can cause that traveller to take off his cloak shall be regarded as the stronger. You begin.' So the Sun retired behind a cloud, and the Wind began to blow as hard as it could upon the traveller. But the harder he blew the more closely did the traveller wrap his cloak

round him, till at last the Wind had to give up in despair.
Then the Sun came out and shone in all his glory upon
the traveller, who soon found it too hot to walk with his
cloak on.
Kindness effects more than severity.

This story is another endearing fable by Aesop that seeks to teach the moral that one must be kind to people to affect changes in them rather than wishing to do so by severity. This fable anthropomorphises (a word use to describe the bestowing of human characteristics on inanimate objects, animals or forces of nature) the sun and the wind and gives them human qualities of speech and debate. The story revolves around an argument between the two main characters-the sun and the wind regarding who is stronger than the other. The introduction of a third human character allows them the opportunity to test their strengths and find out who is actually stronger than the other. They decide that whoever can make the man remove his cloak will win this battle of strength. They both agree and the sun asks the wind to try his strength first. The wind does so by blowing with all its might to try and make the cloak fly off from the man's shoulders. However, the more the wind blew, the more tightly did the man cover himself with his cloak. The wind gave up, disheartened. It was then the sun's turn and he came out from behind a cloud and shone in all his glory. The man found it too hot to be wearing his cloak and thus took it off. The sun thus won the contest not by showing his strength and might but by being his own kind self. The moral of the story here is not spoken by a character in the story but is included in the end of the narrative by the narrator himself.

2.3.3 Hercules and the Waggoner

Text

A Waggoner was once driving a heavy load along a
very muddy way. At last he came to a part of the road

where the wheels sank half-way into the mire, and the more the horses pulled, the deeper sank the wheels. So the Waggoner threw down his whip, and knelt down and prayed to Hercules the Strong. 'O Hercules, help me in this my hour of distress,' quoth he. But Hercules appeared to him, and said:

'Tut, man, don't sprawl there. Get up and put your shoulder to the wheel.'

The gods help them that help themselves.

This fable includes the mythical character of Hercules and a simple man driving a wagon to tell a story with a moral. A man was riding a wagon with a heavy load and got stuck in the mud. The more the horses tried to pull out of the mud, the more the wheels sank in. The man got worried and started praying to Hercules who his famous for his legendary strength. Hercules heard the man's prayers and appeared but asked the man to put his shoulder to the wheels to help it come out of the mud instead of praying to him. The moral as stated by the narrator is that gods help only those who help themselves. Thus the fable seeks to teach that we must not be disheartened when life gives us a tough time but we must overcome those obstacles with our strength of mind and will. One must not blindly pray to a higher force for help without trying to alter the situation by hard work.



LET US KNOW

Hercules: Hercules is the Roman name for the Greek divine hero Heracles known for his strength and famous for his many adventures of power and strength.

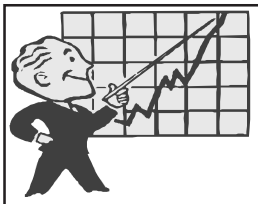
2.4 MAJOR THEME

The themes of the fables differ from story to story and the morality stressed through each story is the major theme in each fable and the purpose

of the fables is solely to underline the moral point of the story. Thus the theme of the *Fox and the Crow* story is to illustrate the moral that one must never trust flatterers while the themes of the next two fables are the same as the morals that the stories wish to portray.

2.5 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

The style and language of the fables are simple and straightforward as they are meant for children and are thus easily accessible to one and all. The style of the fables have similarities with old storytelling traditions as that is how most of the fables have been transmitted down the generations. The student can see how the stories can be read like they were being narrated by a storyteller rather than a writer writing down a story solely as written literature for children. Although the focus is the morals, the style of the fables disguises the moral in a catchy fun narrative that helps to put across the moral better otherwise the fables would have become mere preachy sermons.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Who was Aesop? Where was he from?

Q 6: What are Aesop's Fables known as?

Q 7: What is the style of these Fables?

Q 8: What is the major theme of the fables?

Q 9: Write a note on the style and language of the fables.



2.6 LET US SUM UP

In the unit, the leaders can see how fables have been used the world over down the ages to inculcate certain morals and values in children by presenting a narrative in a fun way with animals and birds to teach children certain do's and don'ts in life. The value of the first story is to teach that someone who flatters you exaggeratedly would definitely have an ulterior motive and thus one must be wary of people like that.

The second fable employs natural elements such as the sun and the wind as characters instead of the first one which used animals. Besides this, there is really not much change in the style and language of the fable. It seeks to teach a child how kindness is a virtue to be cherished and promoted by all instead of harshness and that it is kindness that affects people more than harshness or severity.

The third fable provides us an example of the fable that includes a human being and a mythical figure that of Hercules, the Greek hero of great strength and stature. Like in the other fables, the narrative begins and ends with the main characters. This fable wishes to impart the value of strong will and the ability to not give up in times of trouble and to help oneself to overcome any obstacle.

While the theme in a fable is simple and straightforward, the learners and advised to look beyond it and analyse how the story is shaped, what is the kind of language employed and what is the overall style of the fable that it appeals to so many, young and old alike.

One can notice the simplicity of style where the narrative does not digress but starts exactly with the characters involved just at the moment of the unfolding of the story. The language is catchy and simple and thus is enjoyed immensely by children the world over and down many generations.



2.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: A Fable is a literary genre that has a short fictional narrative either in prose or in verse that illustrates or leads to an interpretation of a moral lesson (a "moral"), which may or may not at the end be added explicitly stated by the narrator or the characters of the story.

Ans to Q No 2: A *Parable* is a short narrative. But unlike a fable which may contain animals, supernatural creatures, mythical heroes, inanimate objects like forces of nature that are given human qualities of speech and thought, a parable is about only humans and excludes animals, mythical creatures and forces of nature. It tries to draw a parallel

between the characters in the story with humankind in general to stress upon a moral lesson as in a fable.

Ans to Q No 3: Most fables have been passed down the ages through oral storytelling.

Ans to Q No 4: India has a rich history of fables which include *The Panchatantra* and *The Jataka Tales* which include enduring and famous stories like the *Hitopadesha* and *Vikram and Baital.* The famous collection of fables from Asia titled *The Arabian Nights* is worth mentioning.

Ans to Q No 5: Aesop was supposed to have been a slave in ancient Greece and a famous storyteller.

Ans to Q No 6: Aesop's Fables also known as the *Aesopica* are a collection of fables that have been attributed to him although it has never been proven that he actually composed these stories.

Ans to Q No 7: These stories are the most famous and endearing fables for children in the entire world and have travelled down centuries through different cultures. Although attributed to Aesop, these stories are more like cultural fables and the stories have regional and cultural variants.

Ans to Q No 8: Morality.

Ans to Q No 9: The style and language of the fables are simple and straightforward as they are meant for children and are thus easily accessible to one and all. The style of the fables have similarities with old storytelling traditions.



2.8 FURTHER READING

1) Anthony, Mayvis.(2006). *The Legendary Life and Fables of Aesop*. Toronto: Mayant Press.

2) Stephen H. Daniel. (1982). Political and Philosophical Uses of Fables in Eighteenth-century England.*The Eighteenth Century*, 23(*2*).

3) Temple, Olivia; Temple, Robert (trans).(1998). *Aesop, The Complete Fables*. New York: Penguin Classics.

2.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Describe briefly the conversation between the Fox and the Crow.

Q 2: What are the qualities that the characters of the crow and fox illustrate?

Q 3: What does the *Fox and the Crow* story attempt to teach us?

Q 4: What is the argument between the Sun and the Wind? Who wins the battle and why?

Q 5: Who was Hercules? Why does the Waggoner pray to him?

Q 6: What does Hercules tell the Waggoner?

Q 7: Explain the theme of the Hercules fable.

Q 8: Comment on the language and style of each of the three fables by Aesop prescribed in your course.

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UNIT 3: LEO TOLSTOY: “THREE QUESTIONS”

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Leo Tolstoy: His Life and Works

3.4 Explanation of the Short Story

3.5 Major Themes

3.6 Style and Language

3.7 Let us Sum up

3.8 Further Reading

3.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.10 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the life and works of the great Russian writer Leo Tolstoy
- explain the gist of the short story “Three Questions”
- describe the important themes reflected in the story
- highlight the techniques used by the writer

3.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to read a short story titled “Three Questions” by the Russian author Leo Tolstoy, who was a highly acclaimed novelist, short story writer and essayist. We shall start with a discussion on the life and works of Tolstoy before delving into the text of the short story. Here, we shall also discuss the themes pervading the short story and analyse its various facets. Further, the style and the techniques that went in while composing the story shall be discussed. It might be important to note that Tolstoy was known for ‘realistic’ fiction.

Significantly, Leo Tolstoy was regarded by many including M.K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. as an influential advocate of ‘nonviolent resistance’. The present unit shall familiarise you with the moral aspect

that pervades Tolstoy's writings. The short story that we are going to read is written in the form of a parable. Let us reflect on what a parable is before we step further into the text of the story. In the previous unit, we have been familiarised with 'fable' as well as its difference from 'parable'. However, the definition of 'parable' given below shall further help you in acknowledging the features of a parable. As put forward by M. H. Abrams in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms,* a "parable is a very short narrative about human beings presented so as to stress the tacit analogy, or parallel, with a general thesis or lesson that the narrator is trying to bring home to his audience" (p. 7). Thus, while reading the short story, we have to keep in mind that Tolstoy's aim is to provide an understanding regarding universal human phenomena and bring out the philosophical essence of life.

3.3 LEO TOLSTOY: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

In this section, we shall get an idea of the life led by Tolstoy whose full name was Leo Nikolaevitch Tolstoy, and his important contribution as a writer. In 1928 the Russian writer and philosopher, Leo Tolstoy was born near Moscow at Yasnaya Polyana, his family estate in Tula province. He came from an aristocratic family and his parents were Count Nikolai Ilitch Tolstoy and Princess Marya Nikolaevna Volkonskaya. He had three brothers and one sister. However, their fate turned out to an unexpected course when they lost their parents. Indeed, at two years of age Tolstoy lost his mother and pertaining to this loss, Tolstoy was brought up by father's distant cousin Tatyana Ergolskaya for a few years. When he lost his father at the age of nine, Alexandra Osten-Saken became the legal guardian. However, upon Alexandra's death, the children were taken care of by their father's sister who lived in Kazan, Russia. Tolstoy received his early education at home before he enrolled in the university in 1843 to pursue Oriental Languages and Law. However, he left the university midway in 1847 and returned to Yasnaya Polynaya as he sorted out that he would become a farmer and help the poor. Following his elder brother,Tolstoy then joined the Russian army in 1851. His marriage to Sofia Andreevna Bers was notably an unhappy one although they had thirteen children. Indeed, their marriage deteriorated as Tolstoy's ideologies became distinctively radical.

Regarded as one of the greatest writers of all times, Leo Tolstoy is well known for many of his works including *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina* (1878), *The Resurrection* (1899), *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (1886), *Hadji Murad* (1898), etc. Besides these, his autobiographical trilogy namely *Childhood* (1852), *Boyhood* (1852) and *Youth* (1856) are rich sources of information regarding Tolstoy's beliefs. His autobiographical novels reflect his realisation of the differences between the rich and the poor class. The experiences he had during the Crimean War was recorded in the book *Sevastopol Sketches* (1855). In fact, it was during his service in the army where he gained varied understandings which he later depicted realistically in his works. He has been widely recognised as one who propounded realism in his works. His plays include *The Power of Darkness* (1886), *The Light Shines in the Darkness* (1890), *The Fruits of Enlightenment* (1891) and *The Living Corpse* (1900). The non-fictional works of Tolstoy are *A Confession* (1882), *What Is To Be Done*? (1886), *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1894), *What Is Art*? (1897), etc. among others. Apart from "Three Questions" Tolstoy wrote many short stories. Some of them are "The Raid", "The Snowstorm", "God Sees the Truth, But Waits", "Where Love Is, God Is", "Promoting a Devil", "Repentance", "The Devil" and so on.

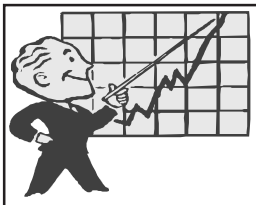
It must be noted that Tolstoy's political views were greatly influenced by Victor Hugo, Schopenhauer as well as the French anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.The ethical writings of Schopenhauer upheld his beliefs in the Christian doctrines of moral principles. Indeed, the story under discussion is a reflection of his insistence upon morality. At 82 years of age, Tolstoy died in the year 1910 suffering from pneumonia. Before his death, he abandoned his highborn lifestyle and secretly left his family. The undisclosed escape from his family was due to his family's objection and unacceptance of his increasing radical opinions.



LET US KNOW

Realism is a technique by which writers can represent life as it appears. In literature it emerged in opposition to the Romantic tradition. As noted in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, "realistic fiction is written to give the effect that it represents life and the social

world as it seems to the common reader, evoking the sense that its characters might in fact exist, and that such things might well happen."(260) A basic characteristic of realist fiction is to represent "complex characters with mixed motives who are rooted in a social class, operate in a developed social structure, interact with many other characters, and undergo plausible, everyday modes of experience." (192)



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Define parable.

Q 2: Mention the names of any four short stories written by Leo Tolstoy.

Q 3: Give a brief description of Tolstoy's personal life.

3.4 EXPLANATION OF THE SHORT STORY

In this short story, Leo Tolstoy narrates the story of a curious king who wanted to know three things to become successful every time he undertook a task. Being in a responsible position, the king wanted his questions to be answered. In fact, this contemplation triggered him to announce 'a great reward' to anyone who could answer his three questions, which were, 'what was the right time for every action?', 'who were the most necessary people?' and finally, 'what was the most important thing to do?'

With reference to all the three questions, many learned men came up with different answers. As their answers varied, the reward was given to none. The king knew of a wise hermit who lived in the forest and decided to consult him regarding his questions. However, the hermit was a simple man and was available only for common men. Thus, the king dressed himself in simple clothes and left behind his horse and bodyguard to meet the hermit. When the king approached the hermit, he was engrossed in digging the ground in front of his hut. The hermit greeted the king and went on digging. The king could see the difficulty with which the hermit,who was frail, dug the ground. The king then informed the hermit about the intention of his visit. The hermit listened to the questions that the king asked but rather than answering immediately, he kept quite and continued to dig the ground. Seeing the frail hermit, the king proposed to dig the ground so that

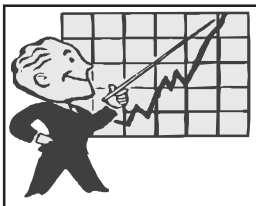
the hermit could take rest. The king continued to dig the ground, stopping at an interval to repeat his questions. Instead of an answer, the hermit suggested that the king should take some rest. The king was, however, reluctant to allow the hermit dig the ground and so he himself continued to dig until it began to turn dark. The king finally stopped digging to ask the hermit either to answer his three questions or let him return home.

It was at that point that a bearded man came running towards them. The man was bleeding from a wound he has had in his stomach. As soon as he came near the king, the man fell down 'moaning feebly' and fainted. The king along with the hermit first unfastened the clothes the man was wearing. Thereafter, the king washed and bandaged the wound with his handkerchief and a towel that the hermit had given. As the man was badly wounded, the king had to wash and bandage the wound several times. By the time, the man revived his consciousness it was already very dark and cold outside. So the two of them 'carried the wounded man into the hut and laid him on the bed'. While the man was quietly sleeping, the king too fell asleep by his side after a tiring day. Next morning as the king woke up the bearded man sought his forgiveness. It came as a surprise to the king because he has neither met the man nor did he know about him. However, the bearded man revealed that his brother was executed and his property was seized by the king which led him revenge upon the king. He apologised because while he wanted to kill the king, the king saved his life. He knew that the king had visited the hermit and planned to kill him on his way back. However, the delay of the king compelled him to come out of his 'ambush' just to get attacked by the king's bodyguard. Out of gratitude, the man offered to become his faithful slave. The king was moved by such an outlook and befriended the man; he also promised him that his property will be restored. The king further told the man that he would send his own physician and servants to look after him.In this way their enmity transformed into friendship.

After the man was gone, the king turned around looking for the hermit hoping to get the answers to his three questions. The hermit was sowing seeds in the beds that he and the king had dug the day before. As the king confronted the hermit, he begged him one last time for the answers. To his utter surprise, he was being told that the questions had already been answered. The hermit explained to the king that:

"If you had not pitied my weakness yesterday, and had not dug these beds for me, but had gone your way, that man would have attacked you, and you would have repented of not having stayed with me. So the most important time was when you were digging the beds; and I was the most important man; and to do me good was your most important business. Afterwards, when that man ran to us, the most important time was when you were attending to him, for if you had not bound up his wounds he would have died without having made peace with you. So he was the most important man, and what you did for him was your most important business."

What the hermit pointed out was that the 'present' time was the most important time because it was the only time he had power. The most important man is the one he was with at that time and the most important thing was to do good.The story ended with the hermit reflecting on the purpose of life; for the wise hermit the most important thing to do was to do good and that must be the sole purpose of life.In the following section, we shall look into the major themes of the story.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What were the three questions asked by the king?

Q 5: What did the bearded man tell the king?

3.5 MAJOR THEMES

Ethical theme pervades the story. Tolstoy throws light on the path to a successful life by maintaining moral standards and emphasising on good deeds. What Tolstoy highlighted through the story is the abandonment of self interest for the good of others because fulfilment in life can only be attained by serving others. The king acts as the mouthpiece for several other people who also searches for the purpose of life. Often we do not see what lessons life offers and try to search for meaning in other things, but only in vain. From the story it is evident that one must look into his or her self for most of the difficulties faced. This is because our very surrounding, the people we live with and our own actions pave the way for our happiness.

It is only by doing something good for the greater welfare of others that peace and happiness can be attained. Here, the king also found the answers to his questions by getting engaged in doing good, first to the hermit and secondly to the wounded man. By being humble and helping them,the king found out that the most important person is the one he was dealing with. This realisation was of prime importance to him as a ruler because he had greater responsibilities to protect his kingdom and his people.

The story also focuses on wisdom. The story, in fact, began with the king who was in search for knowledge- regarding the right time, necessary people and the right thing to be done in order to accomplish whatever task he laid his hands on. The hermit, who was a wise, polite and humble man was approached by the king who told him that the answers he was looking for exists within him. In order to make the king realise these, the hermit carries on his work without being bothered. Interestingly, the episode of the wounded man opened the king's eyes. He realised that the right time, the right person and the right thing to do, all depends upon the present time in which he was living. The regret for the past or worrying for future time, in any case, must not be considered too much as only the present time enables a person to exert his or her power. The present time is the time when a person is fully aware of his or her actions, thoughts and beliefs.

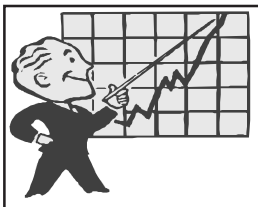
A forgiving attitude helps a man shed false judgments towards others. This is very well reflected in the story. Although the wounded man counted the king as his enemy, he was overwhelmed by the king's actions and behaviour towards him. No matter what he had lost, the man forgave the king. The king became his ally only by doing the right thing at the right time. If the king had not saved his life, there were two things that could have happened- either the king would have been killed by the man or the king would not have made peace with his enemy so easily.

As already mentioned, the story is written in the form of a parable. Tolstoy's moralistic views get uphold in the story thereby touching upon human values and principles one must follow in order to attain success and happiness in life. Through the hermit, Tolstoy gives a moral lesson

encouraging his readers to live the moments in their present life. Although the hermit is referred to as "frail and weak", he emerges as the wisest man who is able to eradicate the king's inquisitiveness regarding the 'three questions'. Rather than giving direct answers to the king's queries, the hermit chose to answer it in a different way. He led the king realise the importance of the 'present time' by giving him ample scope to experience, develop ideas and finally answer his own questions himself through the actions he performed.

3.6 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

In the story "Three Questions" Tolstoy's simple use of language is reflected. He uses the third person narration. It must be noted that Tolstoy uses simple language to address grave issues that are philosophical in nature. Short sentences mark his writings with the intent to explain complicated nature of human beings and therefore, he gives emphasis to detail observation. The story moves in a linear motion and chronologically the readers are acquainted about the problem, that is, the questions that arouses in the king's mind. Then the writer carefully builds up the climax in which the wounded man arrives and is attended by the king and the hermit. This is followed of the revelation by the wounded man who apologises and enables the story end with a positive aspect. In what we see as a chronological structure, lies the power of Tolstoy because as the story unwinds, it becomes possible for Tolstoy, like the hermit in case of the story, to present before his readers certain issues which have deeper meanings and are of universal nature. What is the striking point in Tolstoy's writings is the scope given to the characters to grow on their own and most importantly the way he plays with the reader's imagination without imposing his philosophies directly. To conclude, the greatness of Tolstoy's craftsmanship is evident when he serves as the model of a great number of writers. As admitted by the Nobel laureate J. M. Coetzee, "the ability to do something that sounds easy but is in fact very difficult, namely to write about a moment" is what Tolstoy is apt at as evident in this short story as well. (www.theguardian.com)



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Identify the themes evident in the story "Three Questions".

Q 7: Mention some important features of Tolstoy's writing.



3.7 LET US SUM UP

After reading the unit, you have been familiarised with one of the greatest Russian writers Leo Tolstoy. You have been acquainted with his major works like *War and Peace, Anna Karenina,* etc. and some of his plays, non- fictional pieces as well as his other short stories. You must have noted that his moralistic inclination towards religion (Christianity) contributed in writing stories like the "Three Questions". You are now familiarised with the themes of the short story and well acquainted with its plot and structure. Besides, we have discussed the style and language of Tolstoy, particularly with reference to this story.



3.8 FURTHER READING

1) Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* 7th edition. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

2) Knowlson, T. Sharper. (1904). *Leo Tolstoy: A Biographical and Critical Study*. London: Frederick Warne & Co. E-book.

Websites:

https://www.notablebiographies.com/St-Tr/Tolstoy-Leo.html

https://www.theguardian.com/global/2010/jan/06/leo-tolstoy-greatest-writer

3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: A "parable is a very short narrative about human beings presented so as to stress the tacit analogy, or parallel, with a general thesis or lesson that the narrator is trying to bring home to his audience".

Ans to Q No 2: "Where Love Is, God Is", "Promoting a Devil", "Repentance", "The Devil".

Ans to Q No 3: Refer to Section 3.3

Ans to Q No 4: The three questions were: 'what was the right time for every action?', 'who were the most necessary people?' and 'what was the most important thing to do?'

Ans to Q No 5: The bearded man revealed to the king that his brother was executed and his property was seized by the king which led him revenge upon the king. He apologised because while he wanted to kill the king, the king saved his life. He knew that the king had visited the hermit and planned to kill him on his way back. However, the delay of the king compelled him to come out of his 'ambush' just to get attacked by the king's bodyguard.

Ans to Q No 6: Refer to Section 3.5

Ans to Q No 7: Realism, simple language, etc. What is the striking point in Tolstoy's writings is the scope given to the characters to grow on their own and most importantly the way he plays with the reader's imagination without imposing his thoughts and ideologies.



3.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Give a brief idea of the life and works of Leo Tolstoy.

Q 2: Reflect on your reading of the short story "Three Questions" and attempt to analyse Leo Tolstoy as a writer.

Q 3: How does Tolstoy bring out the philosophical layers in his short story "Three Questions"? Can the essay be called didactic?

Q 4: Highlight the main points of the essay and discuss them in details.

Q 5: Write a critical note on the style and language of Tolstoy as evident in the story "Three Questions".

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UNIT 4: O. HENRY: "THE LAST LEAF"

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 O. Henry: His Life and Works

4.4 Explanation of the Short Story

4.5 Major Themes

4.6 Style and Language

4.7 Let us Sum up

4.8 Further Reading

4.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.10 Model Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the life and works of O. Henry
- discuss the story "The Last Leaf"
- explain the themes, technique, style and language of O. Henry
- appreciate the story in its totality

4.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the story "The Last Leaf" by the celebrated American short-story writer, O. Henry. This story was included in his collection *The Trimmed Lamp* (1907) which explores the lives of ordinary people in the city of New York. His stories generally expresses the occurance and effect of coincidences on characters through humour, the grim or irony, and often bears a surprise twist at the endings, a device that came to be identified with his name.

This unit proposes to offer you a glimpse of his life and works and a detailed analysis of the prescribed story to make you aware of the ideas, ***nuance*** and meanings underlying it. You will also find an elaborate discussion on the technique, style and language O. Henry employed in his stories.



***Nuance*:** subtle difference in meaning, colours, feeling etc.

4.3 O. HENRY: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

O. Henry was the ***pseudonym*** of American short story writer William Sydney Porter. His life was much like the literature he wrote: a short story ***punctuated*** by unforeseen twists. O. Henry is one of those few authors who is known entirely for his short stories and in 1918, the O. Henry Memorial Award was established to be given annually to the best magazine stories, through which the winners and leading contenders would be published in an annual volume.

William Sydney Porter was born in the midst of American Civil War on September 11, 1862, in Greenshoro, North Carolina. His middle name at birth was Sidney; he changed it to Sydney in 1898. His parents were Dr. Algernon Sidney Porter, a physician and Mary Jane Virginia Swaim Porter. When William was three, his mother died from tuberculosis. He was mostly raised in his grandmother's boarding house by his aunt Evelina Maria Porter, a school teacher who encouraged Porter's love of books. As a child, Porter always spent his time reading, everything from classics to ***dime*** novels; his favourite works were Lane's translation of *One Thousand and One Night*, and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. At the age of fifteen he left school and became an apprentice in his uncle's drug store and four years later at the age of nineteen he was a licensed pharmacist.



***Pseudonym*:** pen name.
***Punctuated*:** interrupted from time to time.
***Dime*:** an American coin worth ten cents, so it is used to mean cheap..
***Ranch*:** large farm for breeding cattle, sheep, horse etc.

In March 1882, Porter went to Texas with their family friend, Dr. James K. Hall, hoping that a change of air would help alleviate a persistent cough he had developed. He spent two years on the sheep ***ranch*** of Richard Hall, in La Salle County and helped out at a ranch land. While on the ranch, he learnt bits of Spanish and German from the mix of immigrant ranch hands. He also spent time reading classic literature. His health did improve and he travelled with Richard to Austin in 1884. Here, William took a number of jobs over the next several years, first as a pharmacist, then as a draftsman, bank clerk and journalist.

He led an active social life in Austin, which included membership in singing and drama group. Porter was a good singer and musician who played both the guitar and the mandolin. He became a member of the "Hill

City Quartet", a group of young men who sang at gatherings and ***serenaded*** young women of the town. William met and began courting Athol Estes, then seventeen years old from a wealthy family. On July 1, 1887 William eloped with Athol to the home of Rev. R.K. Smoot, where they were married.

It was at this time when Porter's friend Richard Hall became Texas Land Commissioner and offered Porter the job of a draftsman at the Texas General Land Office (GLO) at a salary of $ 100 a month which was enough to support his family, but he continued his contributions to magazine and newspapers. It was in the GLO building itself, that he began developing characters and plots for such stories as "Georgia's Ruling" and "Buried Treasure". His job at GLO was a political appointment by Richard Hall. Richard ran for Governor in the election of 1890 but lost. Porter resigned in early 1891 when the new Governor was sworn. The same year, Porter began working at the First National Bank at Austin as a teller and book-keeper. The bank was operated informally and Porter was careless in keeping his books. In 1894 cash was found to have been missing from the bank and Porter was accused by the bank of embezzlement and he lost his job; but was not ***indicted***.



Serenade**:** sing or play music for woman one loves outside her window.
Indict**:** (pronounced in dait): accuse; to charge formally with a crime.
Post: lay down, as a stake or payment; deposit (bail money).

He then started working full time in his humorous weekly *The Rolling Stone* which he had started in 1894 while working at the bank. The weekly featured satire on life, people and politics and included Porter's short stories and sketches. Although, it had reached the top circulation 1500, it failed eventually in April, 1895, perhaps because of Porter's poking fun at powerful people. Porter also might have ceased publication as the paper never provided adequate income. By then, his writing had caught the attention of the editor of the *Houston Post.*

Porter and his family moved to Houston in 1895, where he started writing for the ***Post***. Porter gathered ideas for his column by loitering in hotel lobbies and observing and talking to people there. This was a technique he used throughout his writing career.

Unfortunately for him, while he was in Houston, the First National Bank of Austin was audited by Federal auditory and they found the embezzlement shortage which led to his dismissal. A federal indictment followed and he was arrested on charges of embezzlement.

Porter's father-in-law posted bail to keep Porter out of jail, but the day before, Porter was due to stand trial on July 7, 1896, he fled, first to New Orleans and later to Honduras. While holed up in Trujillo hotel for several months, he wrote Cabbages and Kings, in which he coined the term "banana republic" to describe the country, subsequently used to describe any small, unstable tropical nation of Latin America. Porter had sent Athol and Margaret back to Austin to live with her parents. Unfortunately, she became too ill to meet Porter in Honduras as Porter had planned. When he learnt that his wife was dying, Porter returned to Austin in February, 1897 and surrendered to the court. Yet again, Porter's father-in-law had posted bail so that Porter could stay with Athol and Margaret.



Penitentiary **:**
a reformatory prison.

Athol Estes Porter died on July 25, 1897, from tuberculosis, then known as consumption. Porter, having little to say in defence, was found guilty of embezzlement and sentenced to five years jail and imprisoned on March 25, 1898 at the Ohio ***Penitentiary*** in Columbus, Ohio. While in prison, Porter as a licensed pharmacist, worked in the prison hospital. He had fourteen stories published under various pseudonyms which first appeared in the story, "Whistling Dick's Christian Stocking" in the December issue of *McClure's Magazine* in 1899. A friend of his in New Orleans would forward his stories to publishers, so they had no idea that the writer was imprisoned. Porter was released on July 24, 1901, for good behaviour after serving three years. Porter reunited with his daughter Margaret, when she was eleven, in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, where Athol's parents had moved after Porter's conviction. Margaret was never told that her father had been in prison. She was told that he had been away on business.

In 1987 Porter married Sarah Lindsay Coleman, his childhood friend born in Greensboro. The marriage was not happy, and they separated a year later. His last years were shadowed by alcoholism, ill-health and financial problems. He died on June 5, 1910, due to Cirrhosis of liver. After funeral services in New York City, he was buried in the Riverside Cemetery in Asheville, North Carolina.

Porter's **incarceration** in Ohio State Penitentiary proved a blessing in disguise for it helped him to become a professional writer. His prison-stay allowed time to both write and publish together. His first story written in

prison, "Whistling Dick's Christian Stocking" was also his first work under his pseudonym O. Henry, although he continued to use other pseudonyms such as Olivier Henry and S.H. Porters. The origin of his famous pen-name is uncertain, various biographers have suggested that it was taken from the listing of the French Chemist Etienne-Ossian Henry in United States Dispensatory. Whatever be its origin, Fred Abrams observed in his *Studies in Short Fiction*, that "Porter's desire to adopt a pseudonym was undoubtedly motivated by his desire to conceal the stigma of being a convict. His own vague explanations of the pseudonym in later years was a patent evasion of the truth." Making most of his time in prison, porter contributed to various magazines stories based on his experience in the American South and West and in Central America and he worked through a period of literary apprenticeship in which his style was transformed from journalism to genuine literature.

After a brief period of working for Pittsburgh Dispatch in April of 1902, he arrived in New York city, responding to the metropolis with love and awe, spending hours talking with various types of people of the city-the struggling shopgirls, the unsuccessful artists, the ***hobos***, and the impoverished – and ***transmitting*** them into fiction that he sold at rapid rate to magazines and newspapers. In December 1903, Porter agreed to furnish a story each week to *New York World,* an arrangement continued until 1906. While in New York he wrote 381 stories.

Despite the ***frenetic*** pace, in 1904, Porter found time to publish his first book and only novel, *Cabbages and Kings*. Actually the novel was composed of a previously published short story, "Money Maze", which comprised the plot and was broken into separate sections. To these sections Porter added other earlier stories –mostly set in Honduras, which he called 'Anchuria' – simply changing the names of the characters. Porter fittingly described *Cabbages and Kings* as "a few of his South American stories strung on a thread." Although, the novel was generally well received by critics and was praised as a realistic description of Honduras, it did not sell well.



Incarceration **:** imprisonment.
Hobo**:**(U.S.) tram; vagrant.
transmit**:** change into another form.
Frenetic**:** mad; wild; frantic.

Porter followed *Cabbages and Kings* with a much more successful, straight forward collection of short-stories set in New York City and titled it *The Four Million*. The title of this 1906 collection had a satirical reference to the famous statement of New York Society leader of that time McAllister, that there were only four hundred people in New York worth knowing – highest class of society. In naming his collection *The Four Million*, Porter implied that every individual among the four million who populated the city had a story worth telling; regardless of social position. This collection included two of his best stories, "The Gift of the Magi" and "The Furnished Room".



***Encapsulated*:** express something briefly; summarize.

***Range*:** (US) large open area for hunting or grazing.

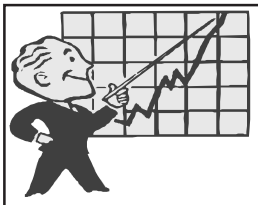
Porter's democratic approach caught the attention of the public, and critical acclaim followed as well, an unsigned review in January, 1907. *Atlantic Monthly* ***encapsulated*** the fine points of *The Four Million*: Porter "knows his world well, but he sees it with eyes for its beauty as well as its absurdity. There is imagination as well of our colloquial tongue he posses in the background, to be used when needed, a real style".

In 1907 Porter published one more volume of New York stories, *The Trimmed Lamp*, and another collection of western stories, *Heart of the West*. The former included "The Last Leaf". The latter presented accurate and fascinating tales of the Texas range. Of these tales, "The Last of the Troubadours", J. Frank Dobie named as "the best ***range*** story in American fiction."

Then in rapid succession came *The Voice of the City* (1908), containing more tales of New York and *The Gentle Grafter,* recounting stories he heard in the penitentiary. Continuing the hectic pace he published *The Road to Destiny* (1909), *Options* (1909), *Strictly Business* (1910) and *The Whirligigs* (1910). The last one included "The Ransom of Red Chief", O. Henry's funniest story about two kidnappers who made off with the young son of a prominent man. They found that the child was a real nuisance – the famous movie *Home Alone* (and its series) owes a debt to this story. At the end the kidnappers agree to pay the boys' father to take him back.

During his life time, O. Henry published ten collections and over 600 short stories. After his death three more volumes of collections, had appeared, *Sixes and Sevens* (1910), *Rolling Stone* (1912), and *Waifs and*

Strays (1917). Later seven fugitive stories and poems, *O. Henryana* (1920), *Letters to Lithopolis* (1922) and *Henry Encore* (1939) were published.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Why and when did O. Henry move to Texas? What did he do there at first?

Q 2: What was the name of the humorous weekly that O. Henry started? Why did it fail?

Q 3: Name the first story of William Sydney Porter that was published under his pseudonym 'O. Henry'.

Q 4: What is the origin of the pseudonym O. Henry?

Q 5: Name collection in which the story "The Last Leaf " was included?

4.4 EXPLANATION OF THE SHORT STORY

The short story "The Last Leaf" portrays two young women named Sue and Johnsy. They meet by chance in a café. They become friends and discover that they have common taste in chicory salad, bishop sleeves and in painting. So they set up a joint studio at the top of a squatty, three-story brick house in old Greenwich village.

Then comes winter and Johnsy falls ill with pneumonia. She lies on her bed looking through the small Dutch window panes at the blank side of the next brick house. The doctor finds that his patient has made up her mind that she is not going to get well, and tells Sue privately that Johnsy has one-in-ten chance of survival and "that chance is for her want to live." She loses all interest in life. She does not eat and drink; she loses her passion for painting, she only looks vacantly at the open window and counting backward the remaining leaves of the ivy vine that is visible through her window, for she associates her last hours with the fall of the leaves. She has an uncanny feeling that her life will end with the fall of the last leaf of the ivy creeper. She wants to see the last one fall before it gets dark.

Long illness and weariness of life had bred in her this morbid feeling. Sue tells this strange fancy of Johnsy to the old painter Behrman who lives downstairs. As a painter he is a failure. But he has the ambition to paint a

masterpiece. Behrman loves the two young painters and protects them as a guardian. He dismisses this fancy as idiotic. He then comes upstairs with Sue to pose as a model for her painting of the hermit miner.

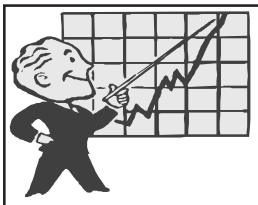
Next morning, Sue and Johnsy are surprised to see that the last leaf is intact on the stem against the brick wall inspite the beating of rain and the fierce gusts of wind throughout the night. The last leaf survives the rain and storm. And also, Johnsy's wish to live survives. Throughout, the next day and the night, the leaf clings to its stem against the wall. Johnsy now considers herself a bad girl having thought of death. The last leaf does not seem to fall and so she feels she will not die. She desires food and drink and assures herself that one day she will paint her masterpiece – the Bay of Naples. Also she is declared out of danger by the doctor after two days.

But therein is the characteristic twist and the mystery is clear. On the dreadful night old Behrman had painted the last yellow-green leaf which appeared attached on the stem against the wall. That is why it neither moved nor fluttered when the wind blew. The painted leaf had given the illusion of a living leaf and Johnsy has got back her urge to survive her illness. Johnsy was out of danger but it is Behrman who dies of pneumonia. With the survival of Johnsy the permanancy of art is established. The painting of the leaf was indeed the masterpiece of Behrman. Thus, it was not the leaf but rather his life which Behrman painted on the brick wall.



LET US KNOW

Personification: It is a figure of speech in which an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings. O. Henry has used it to describe the onslaught of pneumonia in the Greenwich village and the ravages it has caused.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Who are the main characters in the story, "The Last Leaf"?

Q 7: What is the setting of time and place in "The Last Leaf"?

Q 8: What is the period of time that the story, "The Last Leaf" covers?

Q 9: Identify some examples of personification in "The Last Leaf".

"The Last Leaf", like many of O. Henry's stories, is set in New York City in his own time, at the turn of the last century. From his description, we find only a drab rendering of the city that he apparently loved so much. Sentences such as, "There was only a bare, dreary yard to be seen, and the blank side of the brick house twenty feet away" and "A persistent, cold rain was falling, mingled with show" give the reader an unwelcoming picture of the surroundings in which his two main characters were living. It was also a sign of the times. O. Henry's writing was drawn from personal experiences, places and people he had met. In his description of the Greenwich village, he could very well have been talking about the atmosphere he had once been a part of. While we now think of New York City as bustling centre of financial world and the hub of American fashion and art, it was only beginning to come into full bloom at that time O. Henry lived in. People were often very rich or very poor and his fascination with the latter (i.e., the poor) was apparent in nearly all his stories. A popular saying of the day was that there were only "four hundred people" in New York worth knowing. Since there were four million New Yorkers at that time, this was an obvious class distinction O. Henry himself used it as a title for one of his short story collections naming his book *Four Million*.

"The Last Leaf" explores the lives of struggling artists and the masterpiece that proves a source of life. Sue, Johnsy and old Behrman were all artists, however we know that they were struggling artists. The characters are not detailed in terms of their personalities, nor did they offer much to the story in terms of actions or dialogue. In typical O. Henry fashion, the story seems to be almost unimportant at first, a simple means to an end. But by the end there is much irony which adds to the surprise ending that Henry was so famous for. However, O. Henry purposely left out details about many of his characters. In simple analysis it can well be surmised that O. Henry's interest was only in the turning of the plot, not the depth of the characters; but again if we consider that O. Henry did not give Sue,

Johnsy or Behrman much details in description because it actually was part of their personalities, then we can view them in an entirely different light. Sue and Johnsy were both interested in "art, chicory salad and bishop sleeves", and we just do not know much beyond that until Johnsy gets sick. The reader then finds out that Johnsy had decided that she would not get well and had reconciled herself with the fact that she was going to die when the last leaf would fall off the ivy vine outside. Johnsy's character was obviously void of passion or want to live that at the first illness itself she wanted to give into the thoughts of dying. Johnsy's hopelessness and willingness to accept the worst without a fight was a major statement about the emotional state of the character. Behrman, the old man who would become the saviour, seemed to have the same lack of interest with his art. He is described as … "a failure in art….He had been always about to paint a masterpiece, but had never yet begun it." If he were motivated or inspired to be an artist, he would have found something to paint in all of his years instead of waiting for one inspiration that would create his masterpiece. It was only because of Johnsy's illness and his compassion for her that he was finally inspired to paint anything, and it claimed his life when he did. After what we have been told of Johnsy, the point might have been completely lost on her, and she might have not even appreciate Behrman's attempt to save her since she had already decided to live any way. In Behrman's attempt to save someone else, he managed to save himself. Although he died, he did become what he had always claimed to be, an artist. His final masterpiece, which saved Johnsy's uninspired life, was nothing more than a simple leaf painted on a drab brick wall. "The Last Leaf" is not a trite story as some critics have remarked, about three artists living in New York at the turn of the last century. It is rather a story about living. Johnsy was young when she came down with pneumonia, but her spirit was already dead. Her willingness to die leads the reader to wonder why she would be so hopeless at such a young age. O. Henry did not answer this question but gave us a glimpse of how her life might turn out if she continued to live so uninspired by life by creating his character of Behrman. Her artsy neighbour was an old man who had spent his life failing at one thing because he really

never tried. Johnsy did not try to live just as Behrman never tried to paint. The tragic irony occurred when Johnsy decided to live because she realised "It is a sin to want to die." Behrman had already painted the leaf and perhaps his destiny was set. As their lives were similar, so was their sudden realisation. Johnsy understood it was time to live and Behrman understood it was time to do something important with his life even at the cost of death. O. Henry's beautifully written story is not lacking in depth or detail, it only appears that way to those who lack the passion to delve into the story any further.

4.5 MAJOR THEMES

O. Henry's works are like a mirror of American lives of his own time. He had a great understanding of the trials of the lower class, and he frequently pictured the lives of ordinary people of his time with warm and sympathetic colours. These characters were often the overlooked: the struggling shops girl, the unsuccessful artist, and the impoverished. O. Henry's poor and disposed were noble characters with innate capacity for dignity and sacrifice. Two strata of society interested O. Henry most: "those who were under a strain of some sort, and those who were under a delusion". The first stirred his sympathy, the latter entertainment. In "The Making of a New Yorker", the character Raggles is a tramp, which O. Henry termed 'only elliptical way of saying he was a philosopher, an artist, a traveler, a naturalist, and a discoverer.'

Just as he saw the integrity of the poor, O. Henry unquestioningly did not accept the worth of the wealthy but examined the ways in which they gained their riches. His villains were more likely to be hypocrites who robbed the banks from inside, and let someone else suffer the consequences than honest-working crooks. His humanitarianism was especially evident in his portrayal in tales like "An Unfinished Christian Story" and "The Trimmed Lamp" of the single girls who worked in shops and factories, and he studied the details of their lives with sociological exactness. O. Henry even examined the exploitation of the American Indians in tales such as "Supply and Demand" and "He Also Serves."

Many critics have appreciated O. Henry's use of social themes. Some of these are rather sentimental, but like Dickens, O. Henry is known for playing lightly but effectively on a sentimental theme. His representative motifs include reformation and rehabilitation, contrasting crime and authority, the disparity between wealth and poverty, often explored through the use of mistaken identity; and disguise and pretence. One critic defined four other motifs, beyond the sociological ones, of the stories set in New York City: the reversal of fortune, discovery and initiation through adventure, the city as a spiritual plaything for the imagination, and the basic yearning of all human life. Another critic mentioned several types of plots; love stories in which divided hearts or simply divided persons are brought together by chance; hoax stories; prince and pauper stories, in which wealth and poverty meet; disguise stories; and complemental stories such as "The Gift of the Magi."

The popularity of O. Henry's works has remained despite critical neglect. His democratic themes, his worthy poor, and his outlaws with hearts of gold have an appeal for the common reader that goes beyond social distinctions. O. Henry's work contains a sense of the "oneness at the heart of things", the timeless appeal of which transcends his dated language. Through his consistent use of paradox and the reversal of the readers expectations, O. Henry opened the minds of his readers to new possibilities. O. Henry's artistic charms will ever last and be viewed as a "perpetual encyclopedia of American life."

4.6 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

Most of O. Henry's stories were set in his own time, the early years of the 20th century. Critical analysis of his stories often focused on his strong sense of place and the way in which he both portrayed the realistic details and evoked the atmosphere of his chosen settings. Many of the sights of New York City and the local ***hangouts*** that O. Henry frequented had reappeared in a fictional guise in his stories, adding to their realism: 'Sherkey's Saloon' on 'Fourteenth Street' was central to the action of "Past One at Rooney" and "The Guilty Party", 'Gramercy Park' was the site of



***Hangout*:** place where one lives or one visits often.

"The Trimmed Lamp" and 'Delmonico's' on the Eight Street was the café where Sue and Johnsy met in "The Last Leaf". His scenes of Central America and of the American South and West were crafted with the same careful detail. Critics have ***extolled*** the accuracy of O. Henry's Western tales, claiming that his description of the ranch houses and their furnishings were exact down to the water jars and that he captured and reproduced the customs relating to hospitality, smoking, holidays, entertainment and law-enforcement. In his detailed description of the locales of his tales, O. Henry reflected the contemporary emphasis on realism.

Much as the settings of O. Henry, life were transformed in his fiction, so too were the people he had known recreated as his most famous characters. In fact, the characters regarded by the readers as most unlikely were often based on real people. The ex-cowboy bank examiner and his informal procedures in "Friends in San Rosario" had innumerable real-life counterparts, perhaps, of course, in O. Henry's own life. Both the 'Cisco Kid', an O. Henry creation who became an American folk legend, and another character, King James, had their prototypes in such genuine ***desperadoes*** as John Wesley Hardin and King Fisher. Criticism has also focused on O. Henry's immense vocabulary and his acute sensivity to word usage. According to one critic "not even (American realistic novelist) Henry James could choose words more ***fastidiously*** or use them more accurately." O. Henry's careful use of words was especially evident in his descriptive passages which were "cunningly fitted into the structure of his narrative so that they are made to appear not simply ***gratuitous*** lingual ornaments but integral parts of the tale."

If O. Henry's word play revealed his joy in using language, his use of surprise ending reflected his delight in the technique of storytelling. The surprise ending became a hallmark of the O. Henry style, and the question for the reader was not if there would be a surprise ending, but just what the surprise would be and how the author would ***contrive*** to bring it about. O. Henry was skilled at using ***incongruity*** – "the ***juxtaposition*** of unexpected, inharmonious elements built into the structure of the story" – to create a conclusion that was the ***antithesis*** of the reader expectation or



Extol**:** praise highly.
Desperadoes**:** desperate fellow.
Fastidious**:** selecting carefully; choosing only the good and appropriate.
Gratuitous**:** done or given for nothing; unnecessarily, without good reason.
Contrive**:** plan; bring about.
Incongruity**:** state of being not in harmony, with the surrounding features.
Juxtaposition**:** placing side by side or very close together (especially for contrast)
Antithesis**:** when two opposites are used in the same sentence.

of the conventional expectations of society. In stories like "The Gift of the Magi", the reader would believe that the expected reversal had already occurred and that the climax had been reached, only to be shocked by a double reversal. O. Henry's finest climaxes involved genuine paradoxes, and capturing the genuine paradoxical and irrational nature of life. O. Henry was actually more realistic than many writers of his generation.



4.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit you have learnt that William Sydney Porter who wrote short-stories under the pen name of O. Henry was a great American short story writer who romanticised the commonplace – in particular the life of ordinary people of New York City. His contribution to the American short story made him a famous story-teller, rendering his name synonymous with surprise endings. You have also got an idea about his wonderful technique and style of writing short stories. Alongwith this, you have been acquainted with what a short story is and what makes "The Last Leaf" an interesting and a memorable short story.



4.8 FURTHER READING

1) Brooks, Van Wyck. (1952).*The Confident Years. 1855-1915*. New York: Dutton.
2) Current-Garcia, Eugene.(1965).*O. Henry.* New York: Twayne.
3) Current Garcia Eugene. (1993).*O. Henry: A Study of Short Fiction*. New York:Twayne.
4) Long, E. Hudson. (1949).*O. Henry: The Man and His Works*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
5) O. Connor, Richard. (1970).*O. Henry: The Legendary Life of William S. Porter*. New York: Doubleday.
6) Patee, Fred Lewis. (1975).*The Development of American Short Story.* Biblo & Tanner.

7) Smith, C. Alphonso.(1921).*O. Henry Biography Doubleday*.New York.

8) Williams, W. Wash. (1936).*The Quiet Lodger of Irving Place.* New York: Dutton.

4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No. 1: In 1882…with Dr. James K. Hall… two years spent as a ranch hand.

Ans to Q No. 2: *The Rolling Stone*…due to Porter's poking fun at powerful people

Ans to Q No. 3: "Whistling Dick's Christian Stocking".

Ans to Q No. 4: To conceal the stigma of being a convict.

Ans to Q No. 5:*The Trimmed Lamp.*

Ans to Q No. 6: Sue, Johnsy and Behrman.

Ans to Q No. 7: November, Greenwich Village.

Ans to Q No. 8: November.

Ans to Q No.9: Onslaught of pneumonia, etc.



4.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss the theme of the story, "The Last Leaf" by O. Henry.

Q 2: Analyse the character of Mr. Behrman. Is there a contradiction in his character? If so, what is it?

Q 3: Do you think Mr. Behrman would have painted the leaf on the wall had he known he would catch pneumonia and die?

Q 4: Attempt a note on the setting of time and place of "The Last Leaf".

Q 5: Narrate the circumstances that led Mr. Behrman to paint the masterpiece of his life.

Or

"Some day I will paint a masterpiece" – who said this? Did he succeed in painting his masterpiece? If so, how?

Q 6: Who were Sue and Johnsy? Write a note on their relationship as presented in the story "The Last Leaf".

Q 7: What led Johnsy to think that she would die as the last leaf of the ivy vine would fall? How did she overcome this morbid feeling at last?

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UNIT 5: ANTON CHEKHOV: "THE BET"

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Anton Chekhov: His Life and Works

5.4 Explanation of the Short Story

5.5 Major Themes

5.6 Major Characters

5.7 Style and Language

5.8 Let us Sum up

5.9 Further Reading

5.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.11 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the life and works of Anton Chekhov
- discuss the short story, "The Bet"
- describe the characters in the story
- comprehend the themes, technique and language employed by the writer
- value the story in its totality

5.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the life and writings of the Russian short story writer and playwright, Anton Chekhov who is considered to be one of the greatest short story writers of the world. He was also a physician who practised his trade almost throughout his literary career. In his works, therefore, we find the detached attitude of a doctor and also the sensitivity of an artist. His stories and plays ***underscore*** the dramas that go on continuously inside human beings and the tragic- comic aspects of everyday life. The pangs of loneliness and disappointment plaguing men in the



***Underscore*:** emphasise, highlight.

contemporary Russian life are delicately brought to life in his stories. Chekhov remains a widely translated author and a great influence on subsequent world literature.



***Espouses*:** takes up.
***Transience*:** temporariness.

The present story, "The Bet", is about a banker and a young lawyer who lay a bet with each other based on capital punishment and life imprisonment and whether the former is better than the latter. The story essentially deals with man's progressive understanding of the useful precepts of life. Chekhov, with gentle irony, ***espouses*** the ***transience*** of material happiness and the permanence of spiritual bliss, a belief present within most religious traditions.

In this unit, you will get a peek into the life and works of Anton Chekhov, along with an analysis of the story "The Bet" and an emphasis on its basic theme. You will be acquainted with the characters in the story and also get an idea about the technique and language used by Chekhov.

5.3 ANTON CHEKHOV: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Chekhov's full name was Anton Pavlovich Chekhov. He was born in Taganrog in southern Russia in 1860. He was the son of agrocery store owner and his grandfather was a serf, i.e. a person who used to live and work on land which belonged to a landlord. Chekhov had a gloomy childhood. He had to constantly bear the tyranny of his father who was a very abusive person. His mother was a wonderful story teller who used to ***regale*** her children with stories and it is from her that Chekhov developed his gift of story telling. In fact, Chekhov used to say: "Our talents we got from our father, but our soul from our mother." He used to work at his father's store where a ***motley*** group of people always assembled. You will be surprised to know that he gathered stories by listening to them and which he in turn narrated to his friends. So, you see his talent as a story teller was evident even in his childhood.



***Regale*:** amuse or entertain with talk.
***Realism*:** in art and literature, 'realism' means the representation of things in a manner that is true to life.
***Motley*:** made up of variety of different people or things.

Chekhov attended a school for Greek boys in Taganrog, but the family was compelled to flee to Moscow, the capital of Russia as his father became bankrupt. But, Chekhov remained for some time in his native place. He spent his time reading up authors like Miguel de Cervantes, Turgenev,

Schopenhauer and others, and supported himself through private tutoring and writing for newspapers. In 1879, Chekhov enrolled himself in the Moscow University Medical School and graduated as a doctor in 1884. He considered this as his principal profession and had a high regard for doctors and their work. A man with a keen social awareness, Chekhov engaged himself in famine and epidemic relief, was a volunteer census taker and even ran a free medical clinic. Thus, you can see his essential nobility of character in his involvement in humanitarian causes. Chekhov once quipped: "Medicine is my lawful wife, and literature is my mistress." Now, is it not an interesting observation?

Chekhov was held in high esteem as a playwright and short story writer by readers and critics alike. The success of his first book of stories which appeared in 1886 gave him a boost as a writer and he became a full time writer. He had an exceptional talent of composing stories from the most ***mundane*** incidents of life and that too with a rare insight into men and manners. Chekhov was, however, afflicted with tuberculosis which affected his health. His trip to Ukraine stirred him up to the beauty of the Steppe region and revived him into writing more stories. His craft of writing is conspicuous by the way in which he has succeeded in concentrating the Russian life of his day into scattered glimpses and fragmented utterances of his characters.



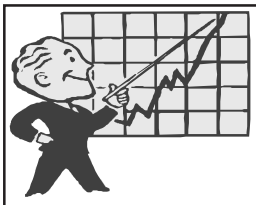
***Mundane*:** ordinary; lacking in interest or excitement.

Chekhov was a friend of the celebrated Russian writers like Leo Tolstoy and Maxim Gorky who were regular guests in his house. He married Olga Knipper, a Moscow Art Theatre actress, in 1901, and by 1904, he was terminally ill. For a change of climate, he went with his wife to Badenweiler in the Black Forest in Germany, but he died soon after. He was buried next to his father in the Novodeviche Cemetery in Moscow. You will be interested to know however that although Chekhov was a celebrated author in Russia at the time of his death, it was only after the First World War when his works were translated into English, that he became known internationally.



LET US KNOW

The death of his brother Nikolai from tuberculosis affected Chekhov deeply. In order to find a purpose in his life, Chekhov involved himself in prison reforms like his brother Mikhail. In 1890, Chekhov travelled to the penal colony on Sakhalin Island, to the north of Japan. He conducted a detailed census of the convicts and settlers in the island. He was greatly moved by the appalling conditions that prevailed there and it is probable that his health worsened. Chekhov's experience in Sakhalin led him to write his informative work, *The Island: A Journey to Sakhalin*.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is the full name of Chekhov?

Q 2: Where do we find Chekhov's essential nobility of character?

As has already been mentioned, Chekhov was adept in drawing sensitive portraits of the typical Russian life. And the characters too are very much like the people whom he had come across in his life. Chekhov was, as mentioned earlier, a prolific writer of novels, plays and stories. His career as a dramatist produced four plays and a number of short stories. Let us have a look at some of his famous writings (not necessarily in the order of publication). Chekhov wrote his first novel in 1882 named *Nenunzhaya Pobeda* (this is a Russian title) and the setting was Hungary. His second novel was *The Shooting Party*, the characters and the background of which were used by the detective writer Agatha Christie in her mystery novel, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. Besides "The Bet", some of Chekhov's other famous short stories include "Ward No. 6" (on the abuse of psychiatry), "The Black Monk", "Neighbours", "The Murder", "Ariadne", "The Man in a Shell, Gooseberries", "About Love, Lady with the Dog", "In the Ravine", "The Betrothed", "The Steppe", "The Huntsman and Others". Chekhov was awarded the Pushkin Prize for his short story collection *At Dusk*. We have already discussed his travel book, *The Island: A Journey to*

Sakhalin which recounts his experiences in the remote prison island, Sakhalin.

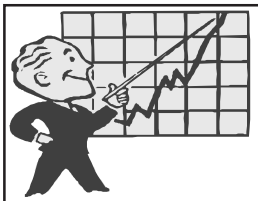
The four plays which made Chekhov famous and which showed his literary excellence are: *The Seagull, Uncle Vanya, TheThree Sisters,* and *The Cherry Orchard. The Seagull* was a failure in the beginning but it achieved stupendous success when it was revived by Constantin Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre. Chekhov's power of analysis can be keenly felt in the play. *Uncle Vanya* portrays the melancholy story of Sonia and her brother- in- law Ivan, who see their hopes and dreams passing in drudgery for others. *The Three Sisters* have much in common with the ***Bronte sisters*** who recognise the futility of their lives and cling to one another for consolation. *The Cherry Orchard* is Chekhov's last play wherein he shows us the old order giving way for the new, and the practical, modern spirit invading the vague, aimless existence so dear to the owners of the cherry orchard. Together with the country life, Chekhov also focuses on Russian life and character in general. Humour and tragedy are ***juxtaposed*** in his plays to leave behind an impression on the minds of the spectators. His dramatic movement is subdued; the characters endure their fate in silence and in the process, sometimes discover things about themselves and their monotonous lives.



***Bronte sisters*:** the three Bronte sisters, Charlotte, Anne and Emily, who were novelists of the Victorian period.

***Juxtapose*:** to place things close together so as to show a contrast.

Many great writers are of the opinion that, in spite of his success as a playwright, it is Chekhov's short stories which represent his greater achievement. Nevertheless, his writings won him admiration and respect which continue to thrive to this day.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Name the four plays of Chekhov.

Q 4: For which short story collection did Chekhov receive the Pushkin Prize?

5.4 EXPLANATION OF THE SHORT STORY

"The Bet" is the story of a bet laid between two persons- a banker and a lawyer and deals with the humaneness of capital punishment

and life imprisonment. The story begins on a "dark, autumn night" with the old banker reminiscing about a party he had thrown one autumn evening fifteen years ago. The party was full of intelligent people who engaged in interesting conversation. One topic of discussion was capital punishment and its justifiability. Most of the people gathered in the party were disapproving of capital punishment and opined that it should be replaced by life imprisonment. But the banker disagreed saying that the death penalty is more moral and more humane than life imprisonment because the former kills a person instantly whereas the latter kills him slowly. But one of the guests countered this saying that both types of punishment are equally immoral as their purpose is to snuff out a life. The State cannot play the role of God as only He has the right to give and take life.

A young banker of twenty five years, who was among the guests, however opined that although both types of penalty were immoral, he would choose life imprisonment as it gives a person a chance to live anyhow. He considered it better than dying at once. Carried away in the midst of the spirited debate which arose among the people present, the banker laid a bet with the lawyer saying that he would pay him two million roubles (the currency of Russia is rouble) if he could stay in solitary confinement for five years. The lawyer agreed, saying that he would stay for fifteen rather than five years. Thus, the bet was carried out as the banker then could spare the two millions. He was, however, of the firm opinion that the lawyer will never win the bet.

Now the banker was recollecting all that happened fifteen years ago, realising the futility of the whole issue. He now considered it as "nonsensical and meaningless". It was, as he says, "the caprice of a pampered man" on the one hand, and "simple greed for money" on the other. He remembered how it was decided that the lawyer would stay in an isolated cottage in the banker's garden without any contact with the human world. His only contact with the outside world would be through a small window from which would be passed on food, books, music, wine, etc. to him. The agreement for fifteen years of isolation was strictly drawn and any attempt on the part of the lawyer to violate it would free the banker from paying the money.

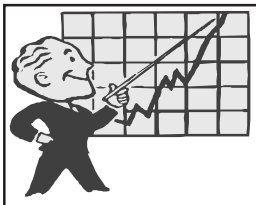
The first year of the lawyer's confinement saw him suffering from "loneliness and depression". Strains from his piano wafted from the lodge. He refused wine and tobacco and asked for "light" books. In his second year of confinement, the piano was silent and classics were asked for. In the fifth year, he asked for wine and played the piano once again. Observers commented that he lazed around the whole year and cried at times. The second half of the sixth year was spent in studying languages, philosophy and history and the prisoner even wrote a letter to the banker in six languages correctly. After the tenth year, the lawyer read the Gospel and spent quite a lot of time over it. The last two years of seclusion saw him asking for a motley collection of books to be read.

Now the banker muses on the fact that the next day at 12 o' clock, the prisoner will walk out to freedom, and he himself will be ruined if he pays him two million as his finances have dwindled. He despaired the fact that the lawyer was only forty years and could well start life anew, while he himself would turn into a pauper. In desperation, the banker, therefore, made up his mind to kill the lawyer in order to save himself from bankruptcy.

With this intent in mind, he crept to the lodge and silently went in. He found the prisoner asleep on the table, but he looked almost unearthly with a skeletal appearance. There was a piece of paper on the table with something written on it. The banker thought that the lawyer no doubt must be dreaming of becoming rich and it would be an easy matter to stifle this emaciated man and no one would find any sign of a violent death. But first he decided to read what was written on the sheet of paper.

The banker was surprised to read that the lawyer had developed a great contempt for freedom and all the good things of life. Through the books he read, he has soared to flights of fancy, and become wiser than other men. But realisation had dawned upon him that all his wisdom was "fleeting, illusionary, and deceptive" and life was only transitory. He has a disdain for the people who had exchanged "heaven for earth". Therefore, he has decided to renounce the two millions and walk out from his confinement five hours before the stipulated time and so break the contract. Thus, the lawyer had spurned material happiness for spiritual bliss and enlightenment.

The banker, on reading the letter, was moved to tears and felt great contempt of himself for his behaviour and petty thoughts. He kissed the sleeping man and came out of the lodge. Next morning the watchman came running to tell him that the prisoner was seen climbing out of the window into the garden and then disappearing. The banker in order to avoid unnecessary gossip quietly put the letter in which the prize money was relinquished in his fireproof safe. Thus, the banker won the bet in the literal sense, but it is the lawyer who was the true winner as he had acquired a holistic understanding of life.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What is the basis of the bet laid between the banker and the lawyer?

Q 6: How much money is at stake in the bet?

Q 7: What happened in the first year of the prisoner's confinement?

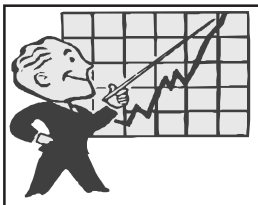
5.5 MAJOR THEMES

You may have analysed by now the pertinent theme in "The Bet", that sometimes the lure of money and the sheen of material things blind us to what is really important in life. You may have heard the saying, "*All that glitters is not gold*." Similarly, sometimes we are led by our greed to possess things which have the sparkle of gold, but which are actually worthless. In the story, the lawyer was goaded by the desire to acquire wealth, but after being kept in seclusion without access to physical goods for fifteen years, he became aware of the irrelevance of these things in the broad spectrum. The story thus deals with the progressive understanding of a man about life. But this happens only when by particular circumstances he was separated from the so called 'real life' of man and was kept confined in a room for fifteen years.

The idea of renouncing material happiness is central to many religions. You certainly know about Gautama Buddha, who was a prince, but he relinquished kingly comforts to assume the life of an ascetic and thereby gain spiritual enlightenment. The Greek philosophers, Socrates and

Plato, also encouraged people to give up worldly possessions in order to acquire true knowledge. Jesus Christ on the other hand, is the epitome of sacrifice for the good of the people. We must however understand that here human beings in general cannot forego all worldly happiness, but life will be worthwhile if we can devote some time to appreciate the world as God has made it instead of always hankering after money and comforts.

Chekhov has, in a very subtle way made us realise this very important aspect of life through the thought processes of his characters and this is his most distinctive quality as a writer.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Do you think the material things are finally as important to the lawyer as to the banker?

Q 9: Why did the banker think of murdering the lawyer?

5.6 MAJOR CHARACTERS

If you read the story carefully, you will find that there are two main characters in it- the banker and the lawyer- and the story revolves around them. But you must understand one very important aspect regarding characterisation. When we speak of character, what do you generally think? Any person will assume 'character' to mean the moral character of a person. This however does not hold ground as regards a piece of fiction. Here, character means the ***dramatis personae***, the persons who are actually involved in the drama and who are instrumental in carrying the story forwards. Let us now look at the main characters in the present story and how their thoughts drive their actions.

The story, as you have already read, depicts a situation in which a banker and a lawyer agreed on a bet based on the relative merit of capital punishment and life imprisonment. The banker put two million roubles and the lawyer staked fifteen years of his life for this "wild, senseless bet". You can see that the banker was gloating in his power and his money at that time and had little hesitation in losing two million roubles. In fact, he was almost "delighted" with the bet. "The banker, spoilt and frivolous, with millions

beyond his reckoning, was delighted at the bet." But now, when the fifteen years are about to end, and there is every possibility of the lawyer winning the bet, the banker is in a quandary. "Desperate gambling on the Stock Exchange, wild speculation, and the excitability which he could not get over even in advancing years, had by degrees led to the decline of his fortune", and the banker is in no position to lose two million now. He has become a slave to the overpowering greed of money and this has led to a decline of his essential humanity. The banker now will not deign to commit even murder to save himself from financial ruin. "The one means of being saved from bankruptcy and disgrace is the death of that man." You can see the moral deterioration which the banker has gone through over the fifteen years.

The lawyer, on the other hand, was a frivolous young man of twenty five at the time of waging the bet. He was supportive of life imprisonment, because according to him, "to live anyhow is better than not at all." Also, as the banker feels, it was "on his part simple greed for money." The lawyer spends his time in confinement reading a wide range of books, playing the piano, talking to himself and crying by turns. During the period of fifteen years spent in a zealous acquisition of knowledge, he has come to realise that money and material possessions are of no value whatsoever. These are transitory things whose significance does not hold water in the long run. He has come to appreciate the spiritual bliss which no amount of material assets can offer. Therefore, he decided to renounce the two million to show his contempt for a world immersed in materialism. "To prove to you in action how I despise all that you live by, I renounce the two millions of which I once dreamed of as paradise and which I now despise." He little realises that in escaping from his confinement, he has unwittingly saved his own life. So, you can see that the lawyer, in contrast to the banker, has gained in moral and spiritual wisdom over the course of fifteen years. No doubt, he lost the bet, but what he has achieved in lieu of two million roubles cannot be tagged with a price.

The banker, on reading the letter written by the lawyer, regretted his intention to kill the latter and felt a great condemnation for himself and his despicable thoughts. His two million roubles are safe, but he has little to

celebrate for his win. You can see how Chekhov very precisely portrays the characters of the banker and the lawyer and lays bare their innermost thoughts. He shows both sympathy and realism towards his characters, who are very real and true- to- life. And this is what makes him one of the greatest writers of the world literature.



LET US KNOW

Raymond Carver, a short story writer in relation to Chekhov had said: "Chekhov's stories are as wonderful (and necessary) now as when they first appeared. It is not only the immense number of stories he wrote- for few, if any, writers have ever done more- it is the awesome frequency with which he produced masterpieces, stories that shrive us as well as delight and move us, that lay bare our emotions in ways only true art can accomplish."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: Who understands life better- the banker or the lawyer?



ACTIVITY 5.1

1. "The Lottery Ticket" by Chekhov also involves a lot of money. Read it if you find the story and then compare it with "The Bet."
2. Write the substance of the lawyer's letter to the banker in your own words.

5.7 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

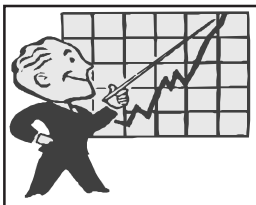
"The Bet" is a short story where the author speaks in the third person. But the thoughts of the main characters are in the first person. It must be noted that Chekhov had at first written stories for monetary gain, but later on as his artistic faculties matured and his ambition grew, he started experimenting with various techniques which influenced the evolution of the modern short story. His originality consists in an early use of the stream

of consciousness technique which James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson and others adopted in their writings. Though the basic narrative technique is to use the authorial voice through third person narrative, there are some moments in the story where workings of the banker's mind are revealed through the technique of stream of consciousness.

In the story, you can sense the mental turmoil in the banker when he questions himself on the object of the bet. "What was the object of the bet? What is the good of that man's losing fifteen years of life and my throwing away two millions?" He realises the futility of the "nonsensical" bet. And it is again with revulsion that we perceive the perverted thoughts of the banker when he decides to murder the lawyer. In fact, he even went to the extent of putting the blame on the watchmen for his own deed. "'If I had the pluck to carry out my intention', thought the old man, 'suspicion would fall first upon the watchman.'"

Chekhov very beautifully reveals the atmosphere of the mind of the lawyer through the letter that he writes to the banker in which he gave up the two million roubles. The long letter charts his mental condition when he decides to renounce everything by which ordinary people live. Chekhov, in fact, poses a question to his readers in the sense that we are made to think for ourselves about the transience of material happiness. He is of the opinion that the role of an artist is to ask questions, and not to answer them. His use of language is direct and he gives no breathing space to the reader. You can feel yourself carried forward by the sheer virtuosity of his literary genius.

We may recall what Dmitry Grigorovich, a celebrated Russian writer of his day, once wrote to Chekhov. He wrote that Chekhov had real talent- a talent which placed him in the front rank among writers in the new generation. He also advised Chekhov to write less and concentrate more on literary quality, an advice which really inspired the young Chekhov. And you can today see how he has evolved into one of the greatest writers of the world. "The Bet" is one of the most memorable short stories in world literature, both for his technical excellence and richness of content. A fundamental truth of human life- triumph of spiritual values over materialistic fulfilment- has been conveyed through a starkly simple story and a use of vocabulary that makes it an easy reading.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 11: Write a short note on the techniques used by Anton Chekov in "The Bet".

Q 12: According to the young lawyer, between the death penalty and imprisonment for life, he would choose the former. True/ False.



5.8 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have gain an idea about the life and works of Anton Chekhov, the great Russian writer. He was a writer with a keen social conscience and his works are noted for their realistic portrayal of men and manners. In this unit, you have read his short story, "The Bet", which is based on a bet laid between two persons- a banker and a lawyer, and the consequences which follow from it. The story uphold the message that material things do not matter in the long run, and how only spiritualism can lead to eternal bliss. The characters of the two protagonists are beautifully drawn and their emotional and mental upheavals are well delineated. The main theme of the story is that of renouncing material happiness. It is beautifully expressed through his narrative. Chekhov had a great influence on the generation of writers following him and he is indeed a rare genius who delights and instructs at the same time.



5.9 FURTHER READING

1) Abrams, M. H. *(2005). A Glossary of Literary Terms. 8th Edition*. New Delhi: Thomson Wadsworth.

2) Mohanty, Jatin. (Ed.) (1995).*Ten Short Stories*. Hyderabad: Universities Press.

3) Ousby, Ian. (1992).*Companion to Literature in English*. London: Cambridge University Press.

5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Anton Pavlovich Chehov.

Ans to Q No2: Involvement in humanitarian causes.

Ans to Q No3: *The Seagull, Uncle Vanya, The Three Sisters, The Cherry Orchard.*

Ans to Q No 4: *At Dusk*.

Ans to Q No 5: Whether death sentence or life imprisonment is immoral.

Ans to Q No 6: Two millions.

Ans to Q No 7: The first year of the lawyer's confinement saw him suffering from "loneliness and depression". Strains from his piano wafted from the lodge. He refused wine and tobacco and asked for "light" books.

Ans to Q No 8: Attempt yourself.

Ans to Q No 9: Fear of bankruptcy, jealousy of the young lawyer and disgrace on losing bet.

Ans to Q No 10: The Lawyer . . . (give reason)

Ans to Q No 11: Refer to Section 5.7

Ans to Q No. 12: False.



5.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Write a short note on the important works of Anton Chekov.

Q 2: What is the central idea of the story "The Bet"?

Q 3: Describe, in your own words, the prisoner's activities during his confinement in the lodge.

Q 4: What does the lawyer write in his letter to the banker? Comment on Chekhov's use of language to describe the mental conditions of the two protagonists?

Q 5: Who, according to you, is the real winner of the bet?

Q 6: "……I despise wisdom and the blessings of this world. It is all worthless, fleeting, illusionary, and deceptive, like a mirage." Who says this and when? Comment on the significance of this statement.

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UNIT 6: GUY DE MAUPASSANT: "THE NECKLACE"

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Guy de Maupassant: His Life and Works

6.4 Explanation of the Short Story

6.5 Major Themes

6.6 Style and Language

6.7 Let us Sum up

6.8 Further Reading

6.9 Answers to Check your Progress

6.10 Model Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- provide an idea of one of the greatest French short story writers, namely Guy de Maupassant
- list all the major works of Maupassant
- discuss the short story "The Necklace"
- explain the central themes of the short story
- describe the style of the essay and the language used

6.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the sixth unit of the course and it shall acquaint you with one of the famous short stories of the great writer Guy de Maupassant titled "The Necklace". In this unit, we shall discuss the story in a detailed way by putting emphasis on certain important aspects like themes, style and characters. It must be noted that Maupassant wrote in the naturalistic mode highlighting the realities of the lives and destinies of human beings, often focusing on the darker side. The naturalists "try to present their subjects with scientific objectivity and with elaborate documentation . . . they tend to

choose characters who exhibit strong animal drives such as greed and sexual desire, and who are helpless victims both of glandular secretions within and of sociological pressures without. The end of the naturalistic novel is usually "tragic," but not, as in classical and Elizabethan tragedy, because of a heroic but losing struggle of the individual mind and will against gods, enemies, and circumstances. Instead the protagonist of the naturalistic plot, a pawn to multiple compulsions, usually disintegrates, or is wiped out." (Abrams, 262) As a practitioner of naturalistic school of thought, this story of Maupassant also has a tragic ending. Before we move into reading the story, let us briefly discuss some of the important aspects of the writer and his works.

6.3 GUY DE MAUPASSANT: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Widely regarded as the master of the short story form, Henry René Albert Guy de Maupassant was a renowned French writer of the nineteenth century born in August 5, 1850.His father Gustave de Maupassant and his mother Laure Le Poittevin both had aristocratic lineage. He also had one younger brother Hervé. However, owing to the separation of his parents when he was eleven years old, Guy de Maupassant as well as his brother who was six years younger than him,lived wit their mother. This is why his mother had a tremendous influence on him. At the age of thirteen, Maupassant was sent for education at a small seminary at Yvetot for a brief period of time and then moved to a private school in Rouen, Leroy-Petit.In 1870, after his graduation the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) broke out and he became a volunteer. In fact, his first hand experiences in the war provided him with much insight into the realities of life and people which was reflected in many of his works. One of the most well known figures who helped Maupassant in his literary endeavours at his initial stage was Gustave Flaubert. Through him, Maupassant got acquainted with the French novelist Émile Zola and the Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev whose philosophy on naturalism influenced his writings to a great extent.

Being the son of an influential father, he was easily transferred from the Ministry of Marine to the Ministry of Public Instruction. He started his

literary career by serving as the contributing editor of many leading newspapers like *Le Figaro, Gil Blas, Le Gaulois and l'Écho de Paris*.

In 1880 his first short fiction titled, *Boule de Suif* was published which he had set against the backdrop of the Franco-Prussian war. Few of his short stories include "Deux Amis", "Mother Savage", "Mademoiselle Fifi", "A Coward", "A Cremation", "Abandoned", "The Accent", "A Family Affair", "Two Little Soldiers", "The Umbrella", etc. among many others. The first volume of his short story was titled *La MaisonTellier*. He also wrote novels namely, *Une Vie, Pierre et Jean, Notre Cœur,etc.*

Through his stories, Maupassant recreated the lives of the ordinary people effortlessly and established himself as one of the greatest short story writers of all times.

6.4 EXPLANATION OF THE SHORT STORY

"The Necklace" is one of the most famous short stories by Guy de Maupassant which was first published in the newspaper *Le Gaulois* in 1884 before appearing in his collection of short stories titled *Tales of Day and Night* in 1885.It deals with a woman named Mathilde. She is married to a clerk who works at the Ministry of Public Instruction. However, even though she is pretty her poverty and the life she led could not make her feel content which shadowed her charm and beauty. Her dissatisfaction with the ordinary life she was living as well as the suffocation of the worn out furniture and the house points towards Mathilde's sadness. The 'little Breton peasant' who did her housework constantly reminds her of her own stature and fills her with despair. She constantly yearns for things which she can not have the privilege to enjoy: "the silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestry", bronze lamps, footmen, *salons* decorated with ancient silk fabrics, exquisitely fine furniture, perfumed chambers, 'shining silverware', exotic dishes, jewelleries and dresses. The thought of her lifestyle tormented her so much that she did not like to visit her rich school friend as was obvious that she might return heart broken. One evening, her husband returned home with an envelope containing an invitation card from the Minister of Public Instruction, Georges Ramponneau and his wife at their palace.

Monsieur Loisel expected that Mathilde will be happy on finding out that they have been invited. But things did not turn the way he expected. Instead of being pleased, Madame Loisel threw the card in disdain complaining with utter grief that she did not have dress to attend the ball. Monsieur Loisel inquired how much it could cost them to buy a suitable dress for her. Mathilde hesitatingly replied four hundred francs- the exact amount that he was saving to buy a gun to shoot larks at Nanterre with his friends. He, however, agreed to buy her a 'pretty dress'. Even then, a kind of anxiety engulfed Madame Loisel as the day of the ball was drawing near. On being asked, she told her husband that she would rather not go to the ball because she did not have jewellery. Even though he tried to convince her that flowers could be worn, she was not eager to go without a jewel. She told him that all the rich women in the ball will look down upon her. However, she cheered up when her husband reminded her that she can borrow jewels from her friend Madame Forestier. She then visited her friend Madame Forestier the next day who laid before her many options from which she could select. Mathilde tried on several ornaments before finalising the diamond necklace which she borrowed with utmost happiness.Mathilde was able to grip everyone's attention at the ball; she could see men of high rank who endeavoured to get acquainted with her. She was too happy with the way she emerged as the most beautiful and gracious woman at the ball. She danced to her heart's content celebrating her success and beauty which are so dear to a woman while her husband slept since midnight in 'little deserted anteroom' along with three other gentlemen. The Loisels left at 4 a.m. in the morning. Monsieur Loisel put wraps on her shoulders that are very ordinary and contrary to what Madame Loisel was wearing. Hence, she swiftly rushed out in order to avoid being seen with the wraps by the other women who were donning costly furs. Even though her husband suggested she should wait for a while till he brings the cab, she rushed hurriedly. They did not find a cab immediately and had to wait until they find one which dropped them at their home in the Rue des Martyrs. What happened next was the most significant twist in the story. As she removed her wraps and looked into her reflection in the mirror once last time to 'see herself in glory', she found out

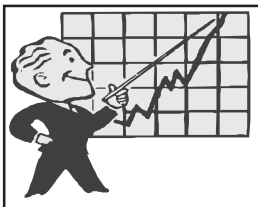
that the necklace was lost. She told her husband and they searched everywhere- the folds of her dress, cloaks, but the necklace was nowhere found. They thought that it might have fallen on the way.Monsieur Loisel searched for the necklace and came home empty handed. He also tried other means like visiting the police, newspaper offices and even the cab offices but to his utter dismay, the necklace could not be found.

He suggested Mathilde to write to her friend stating that the clasp of the necklace had broken and it will take some time to get it mended. But by the end of the week, all their hope was gone. Loisel decided that the ornament have to be replaced. They took the necklace to many jewellers searching for one that exactly looked like the original. At last they found one in a shop located at the Palais Royal. It was worth forty thousand francs which they bought in for thirty six thousand francs. It must be noted that all his savings worth eighteen thousand francs inherited from his father was invested to buy the necklace. Loisel had to borrow the rest of the money. Finally, Mathilde returned the necklace to Madame Forestier who icily told that she returned the necklace late. However, Madame Loisel feared that what if Madame Forestier discovers that it was replaced. But she takes the case from Mathilde without checking the box containing the necklace.

Facing her reality, knowing that the debt had to be repaid, Madame Loisel and her husband dismissed their servant and shifted to a garret. In the absence of their housemaid Mathilde had to wash dishes, linens, and do all other household chores. She had to live the life of a commoner while her husband tried to make money by working very hard and over time. It took them ten long years to repay the debt with interest. By then, Madame Loisel looked old and became a commoner "with frowsy hair, skirts askew, and red hands". However, she sometimes reflected on that night when she was beautiful and the centre of attraction at the ball. With utter pain, she recounts what if the necklace was not lost; life would have been better: "How little a thing is needed for us to be lost or to be saved!"

One Sunday she came across Madame Forestier who looked beautiful and young. Mathilde, on the other hand, looked so old that her friend did not recognise her immediately. However, as soon as her friend

identified her, Mathilde decided to tell her about the necklace since she was already freed of debt.The irony that befell Mathilde at the end was that the necklace was not original and at most it could have been five hundred francs.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Name two novels by Guy de Maupassant.

Q 2: In which newspaper did the short story "The Necklace" first appeared?

Q 3: Why did Mathilde borrow the necklace from her friend?

Q 4: What was the revelation regarding the necklace at the end of the story?

6.5 MAJOR THEMES

Guy de Maupassant handles the issue of reality versus appearance very aptly. Although Madame Loisel was beautiful, she was deceived by her own idea regarding herself. She was highly dissatisfied with her life and thought that she was pretty enough to deserve more. Interestingly, Madame Loisel understands the truth of poverty only after the crisis followed by the loss of the diamond necklace. Before that, she always considered herself to be poor and deprived of the many luxuries of life. In order to repay their debt, the Loisels had to compromise with their living condition. They dismissed their servant and worked hard- Mathilde did all the household chores herself while her husband had to work over time in order to earn extra bucks. As the title goes "The Necklace", it is after all the necklace which represents this theme well. Although the necklace contributed to her overall appearance in the ball at the Minster's party, it is that necklace the price of which led to her shabby and old look later. Therefore, what is reflected through the story is Madame Loisel's inability to envision the reality. Instead she was deceived by the appearance of charm and wealth without realising the real factors behind it.

There seems to be class division in the story. Madame Loisel frequently throws light on this aspect. Initially as the story began, we see the Loisels leading a substantially good and humble life. They were portrayed

neither as rich nor as poor, akin to a lower middle class family. However, the class difference crops up the moment Madame Loisel compares her lifestyle with that of the riches. She dreams of having a luxurious life that is beyond her reach. Indeed, the invitation to the ball itself was not a commonplace thing for her. Unlike Mathilde, Monsieur Loisel was not affected by class difference because he understood their reality. So, for him getting an opportunity to the ball itself was a big achievement.But for Mathilde, who always wanted to lead and enjoy such kind of life, the appearance was all that mattered. She was obsessed by her presence at the ball and wanted to look the most beautiful woman out there. Indeed, she was very 'pretty and charming'.But her inability to perceive her own reality and as a result flown away by appearance reduced her beauty as a person. It affected her so much that she envied her school friend Madame Jeanne Forestier who belonged to upper middle class. In fact, at the end of the story, Mathilde blames her for all that had happened- the replacement of the necklace followed by the burden of debt only to find out that it was not original. As a consequence, Mathilde and her husband suffered ten years and it took her that long to get acquainted to poverty in real sense of the term.

The contrasting figures of Mathilde and her husband lead us to another important aspect highlighted in the story. The conflict between their ideologies contributes towards our understanding of the themes discussed above in a better way. In contrast to her husband who is depicted as kind and sensible, Madame Loisel is defined by what she did not have. She is in fact, shown to be avaricious and a dissatisfied individual. She did not think too much before asking money from her husband to buy an expensive dress. On the other hand, her husband is shown to compromise and get her the dress with the money he had been saving for himself. On the whole, it can be said that the short story beautifully portrays through Madame Loisel the themes discussed above and beautifully leads the reader to the ironical twist just to throw light on how appearance can be so deceptive and damaging at times.

As evident, there are three main characters in the story - Mathilde Loisel, Monsieur Loisel and Madame Forestier. Each one of them has

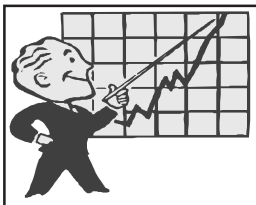
different characteristic traits. In case of the protagonist, Mathilde, we have seen that her urge for becoming rich is too high. She cannot accept that she is not very wealthy and this leads to her continuous inner conflict. Though physically charming and pretty, yet as a wife, she shows less affection towards the feelings of her husband who was overjoyed to have received an invitation from his senior. Instead, she acts selfishly when it came to buying her the dress with the money her husband had been saving for himself. Her jealousy, her selfish nature and her inability to perceive her own reality stands on the way to her happiness. Contrary to Mathilde was her husband, Monsieur Loisel. He is aware of his reality and therefore not unhappy as his wife. Little pleasures excite him just as the invitation to the Ball. His caring attitude as well as his compromising nature gets well reflected when he buys his wife an expensive dress or later when he does hard work to repay the debt. He is portrayed as a good-natured man who gives effort to make his wife happy. Madame Forestier is shown as a generous lady who belongs to a higher social stratum than Mathilde. She helps Mathilde by lending her the necklace and is kind towards her. She feels pity for her friend Mathilde to have discovered the pain undertaken by the latter to return her the necklace.

6.6 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

In the story, one comes across certain literary devices like irony and symbolism extensively pervading its plot. Guy de Maupassant uses an omniscient third person narrator to uphold the entire episode of the necklace. Interestingly, the narrator never judges the characters, rather presents them before the readers as they are. Mostly the story is concerned about the necklace and Madame Loisel, reflecting on her humble family lineage and her marriage, briefly summing up the social class to which she belonged. Herein lies the greatness of Guy de Maupassant who successfully drew attention of his readers by his commentary on social life with a well knit plot and keen sense of observation.

What is striking about the story is the ending which uses the device of irony. While Mathilde and her husband passes ten years in poverty only to repay the debt they had taken to buy a diamond necklace, it was revealed

that the necklace which they borrowed was not original. The twist in the story added to its wholeness thereby highlighting upon the ironical situation prevalent in the society it depicted. Some of the notable aspects of Maupassant's style are his simplicity, use of short paragraphs, emphasis on realism and a twist in the ending. Through the character of Mathilde, he portrayed how social differences or materialistic inclination can pave the way to self destruction. What is emphasised through the story, therefore, is the pointlessness of blindly following what is considered powerful by the society– material wealth as a means of happiness– in case of this story.Significantly, his use of wit goes into the creation of his short stories. He combines both good and bad characters in his stories through which he highlights universal themes like class distinction and reality versus appearance.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What are the themes evident in the story?

Q 6: Write a note on the style and technique of Guy de Maupassant.



6.7 LET US SUM UP

After we have finished reading the unit, we became familiar with one of the greatest short story writers of the nineteenth century, namely Guy de Maupassant. Apart from gaining ideas about his personal life, you have also been acquainted with his major works. Here, we have dealt at great details with one of his famous and frequently anthologised short stories "The Necklace" which deals with the turn in fortune of the Loisels because of the 'necklace' they borrowed. It is an interesting story dealing with certain themes like duality of real versus appearance, division in class, etc. With the help of literary devices like symbolism and irony, Maupassant excellently brings out the essence of the subject matter in the story.To get a better idea regarding his style of writing and the issues of his interest, you are suggested to go through his other short stories too. It will enable you to appreciate the writer and his works in a good way.



6.8 FURTHER READING

1) Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* 7th edition. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

2) Maupassant, Guy de. (2002 11th edition). *Complete Maupassant Original Short Stories.* Project Gutenberg. E book.

Websites:

https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org

6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: *Une Vie, Pierre et Jean*.

Ans to Q No 2: *Le Gaulois* in 1884.

Ans to Q No 3: Refer to Section 6.4

Ans to Q No 4: The irony that befell Mathilde at the end was that the necklace was not original and at most it could have been five hundred francs.

Ans to Q No 5: Class division, appearance versus reality, etc.

Ans to Q No 6: Refer to Section 6.6



6.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Critically analyse the short story "The Necklace".

Q 2: Give a brief description of the major characters of the story "The Necklace".

Q 3: Describe the theme of appearance versus reality in the "The Necklace".

Q 4: Comment on the language and style of Guy de Maupassant with particular reference to the story "The Necklace".

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UNIT 7: KATHERINE MANSFIELD: “A CUP OF TEA”

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 Katherine Mansfield: Her Life and Works

7.4 Explanation of the Short Story

7.5 Major Themes

7.6 Major Characters

7.7 Style and Language

7.8 Let us Sum up

7.9 Further Reading

7.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

7.11 Model Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the short story, “A Cup of Tea”
- describe the characters in the story
- explain the themes, technique and language used by the writer
- value the story in its totality.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will read the short story, *A Cup of Tea*, by Mansfield, who, despite being a New Zealander, is now accepted in the domain of English writers. She found her forte in the short story which is often seen as the occasional by- product of the novel. We have, however, already discussed in the previous unit that the short story is not a brief novel. It is to Mansfield’s absolute credit that she infused into the short story the breath of poetry. Along with other great novelists who have also been short story writers, like Henry James, James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield also developed new methods of exploring the atmosphere of the mind of the characters and interpreted human emotions

into words. She is influenced by Chekhov and there is always a subtle irony in her stories.

A Cup of Tea is a beautiful story by Mansfield where there is a gentle irony in the end. The central character, Rosemary Fell has two sides to her character. At first, we see how Rosemary is motivated by the good intention to help a poor, distressed girl. Later on however, we see how once her jealousy is aroused, all her good intentions come to nothing and she can be as mean and petty as anybody else. Mansfield has very beautifully delineated the psychology of Rosemary Fell.

This unit will acquaint you with the story and the character of Rosemary Fell. You will also get an idea of the themes worked on, and the technique and language used by Mansfield.

7.3 KATHERINE MANSFIELD: HER LIFE AND WORKS

Katherine Mansfield is one of the most important figures in the evolution of the short story. She won recognition as an original and experimental writer, and her stories were the first in English to show the influence of the Russian writer Anton Chekov. Mansfield is generally regarded as one of the finest writers of her generation. Let us now discuss the life of this admirable writer and also the numerous works written by her.

It will be interesting to know that Katherine Mansfield was only a pseudonym, i.e. it was only a pen name. Her real name was Katherine Mansfield Beauchamp. She was born in Wellington, New Zealand in 1888 and was educated at Queen's College, London in 1903. Much against her will, she returned to Wellington in 1906 where she passed the next two years. She was quite a rebel and protested against the narrow- mindedness of a remote provincial existence. In fact, Mansfield led a short but very varied and unconventional life. In 1908, she returned to London with the intention of pursuing a literary career. For her own vested interests, she entered into an unhappy marriage with George Bowden, but the marriage was dissolved soon afterwards. Bowden was, however, instrumental in Mansfield's relationship with the periodical *The New Age* as it was he who suggested her to send some of her writings to the editor. In 1911, Mansfield met John

Middleton Murry whom she married in 1918. Murry had a profound influence on her life and she blossomed under him. She began writing for a quarterly, *Rhythm*, edited by Murry, about her New Zealand childhood.

Mansfield is perhaps the first New Zealand writer to be accepted in the realm of English writing. She is also credited with giving the English short story not only a new content but also a new form. Critics are unanimous in praising her rare insight into the atmosphere of the mind and her penetrating intellect. She has the ability to translate human feelings and thoughts into words. This is balanced by a delicate sense of form which is a perfect quality for the genre of the short story. The stories of Mansfield are some moments, some instances and some gleams of life to which she has added a touch of eternity. Mansfield was central to European modernism, and she was associated with the Bloomsbury circle and with writers such as D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf with whom she had a troubled relationship.

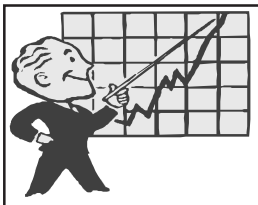
Mansfield was always of delicate health and while living in Cornwall in 1915, she discovered that she was suffering from tuberculosis, an incurable disease during that time. The death of some of her friends in World War I and her illness had a deep impact on her mind and her health deteriorated. Even then, she planned and produced almost 88 stories which established her supremacy on the short story genre. She spent her last days in the South of France hoping to regain her health, but died suddenly on January 9, 1923 at Fontainebleau at the age of 34. Her death evoked comparisons to the untimely and sudden death of the Romantics poets, Keats and Shelley. Keats died of tuberculosis and Shelley by drowning.



LET US KNOW

"The Bloomsbury Group" is the name given to a group of friends who met at a common place to share their views on the importance of the arts. This group of writers, artists and intellectuals began meeting at the Bloomsbury house of the Stephen sisters, Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf. The group included such great

people as Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, E. M. Forster, Thoby Stephen, Roger Fry and others. Their philosophy, in the statement of G. E. Moore, was that "one's prime objects in life were love, the creation and enjoyment of aesthetic experience and the pursuit of knowledge." The Bloomsbury circle was a very influential group and they reacted against the narrow constraints of the Victorian society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Katherine Mansfield was influenced by which Russian writer?

Q 2: Who was the editor of *Rhythm*?

Q 3: What are the qualities of Mansfield as a short story writer?

Q 4: Name some members of the Bloomsbury Group.

Mansfield's reputation as a short story writer rests mainly on five volumes of stories. They are, *In a German Pension* (1911), *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920), *The Garden Partyand Other Stories* (1922), *The Dove's Nest and Other Stories* (1923) and *Something Childish* (1924).

In a German Pension recounts her experiences in Germany. Mansfield, after separating from her first husband, gave birth to a stillborn son from another man in Bavaria, and this experience formed the background of the aforementioned collection. But this collection could not show her maturity as a writer. Her talent as a short story writer blossomed in the volume *Bliss and Other Stories*. Family relationships and people were her subjects in which she tried to explore the various ***nuances*** of life. *The Garden Party and Other Stories* was the last work to be published during her lifetime. This volume contains some of her best known works like 'The Garden Party' and 'Her First Ball' where Mansfield displayed her command over style and language. In the collection, *The Dove's Nest and Other Stories*, she explores the atmosphere of the mind of the characters.



***Nuance*:** subtle difference in meaning.

***Fidelity*:** (origin from Latin 'fidelis' meaning 'faithful') means continuing faithfulness to a person, cause or belief.

Mansfield's stories attempt to describe the true human experience and glorify honesty and ***fidelity*** without any pretensions. She is particularly skillful in portraying children, men and women, and women alone. She often

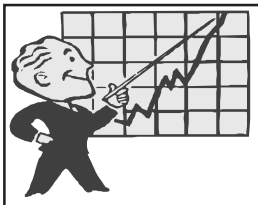
makes use of the interior monologue to depict the psychology of the characters.

The works which were published after Mansfield's death are *Poems* (1923), *Something Childish and Other Stories* (1924) and *A Fairy Story* (1932). *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (1945) was an omnibus volume. Her husband Murry edited *The Letters of Katherine Mansfield* (1928) and *Katherine Mansfield's Letters to John Middleton Murry: 1913- 1922* (1951).



LET US KNOW

An interior monologue presents to the reader the exact course and rhythm of the consciousness of the characters. The author has no part to play in the mental process. The term is often used interchangeably with 'stream of consciousness' which is again all about probing the minds of the characters in a literary work.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: *Something Childish and Other Stories* was published before Mansfield's death.True/False.

Q 6: "Her First Ball" belongs to which collection of stories?

Q 7: How did Mansfield attempt to describe the true human experience through her stories?

7.4 EXPLANATION OF THE SHORT STORY

A Cup of Tea is the story of Rosemary Fell and her relationship with two people, Miss Smith and Philip, her husband. We are told that Rosemary Fell is a "young, brilliant, extremely modern, exquisitely well-dressed" woman who belonged to the affluent section of the society and was married for two years. She is a ***socialite*** who threw extravagant parties and was also well read in the latest books. If she wanted to buy flowers, she will buy it in Regent Street and her clothes came from Paris. So, from this we can make out that Rosemary Fell had all the material comforts of life. Not only this,



***Socialite*:** a person who mixes in fashionable society.

Rosemary Fell was also well loved by her husband, Philip, who was a generous person as far as pleasing her whims were concerned. Rosemary, however, knew ***little*** about the real world which exists outside her cocoon of luxury.

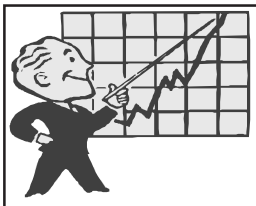


Little: the difference between 'little' and 'a little'- 'little' means 'almost none'; 'a little' means 'some'
Dostoevsky**:** a Russian novelist, best known for his novels, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Brothers Karamazov.*
Alacrity**:** great eagerness.

One winter afternoon, Rosemary was shopping in an antique shop in Curzon Street where she made up her mind to buy an "exquisite little enamel box" for an outrageously high price of twenty eight guineas. Just as she came out of the shop into the cold rainy afternoon, she encountered a "little battered creature with enormous eyes", almost her age, begging her for a "cup of tea". This chance meeting seemed to Rosemary almost something out of a ***Dostoevsky*** novel. It seemed like an adventure to Rosemary and she began to wonder what would happen if she took the unknown girl home and do things which a fairy godmother would do. She is filled with good intentions and, therefore insisted that the girl accompany her home. The girl was much surprised, but Rosemary convinced her to come along with her as "hungry people are easily led". Rosemary was very gracious towards the girl in her home and gave her with food and drinks which the latter took with ***alacrity*** and gratitude. The rich meal had an immediate effect on the young girl and her eyes showed her contentment. Just as Rosemary was making small talk with the girl, her husband Philip came into the room.

Rosemary gets to know that the girl's name is Miss Smith and she introduces her to Philip. He then asks Rosemary to accompany him to the library in order to discuss something private. Philip then asks her what he intends to do with the girl and Rosemary enthusiastically reveals her noble intentions to him. But Philip says that this cannot be done because she is "astonishingly pretty" and that he is "bowled over" by her beauty. Rosemary was greatly surprised to hear this from her husband. Her good nature instantly evaporated to be replaced by womanly jealousy. She could not bear the fact that her husband is praising a stranger. After a few moments of thinking, she dismisses Miss Smith gifting her three pounds out of the five that she had initially intended to give her. Rosemary then dresses herself up prettily, doing her hair, darkening her eyes and putting on her pearls in order to

prove herself equally pretty. She succeeds in getting from Philip the assurance that she is really pretty. She even gets his permission to buy the enamel box for twenty eight guineas. Philip, as usual, is very indulgent and grants her the permission. Thus, Rosemary's jealousy and possessiveness cause an end of her relationship with Miss Smith. All her good intentions of being helpful to the poor girl are reduced to naught. Womanly jealousy got the better of her warm human qualities of showing charity and compassion to the girl.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Rosemary Fell will buy flowers in .....

Q 9: In which street was Rosemary shopping when she met Miss Smith?

Q 10: How many pounds did Rosemary gift Miss Smith?

Q 11: How much did the enamel box cost which Rosemary wanted to buy?

7.5 MAJOR THEMES

"A Cup of Tea" is basically a story of human relationships. As I have already mentioned earlier, Mansfield excels in portraying the characters of men, women and children. In the present story, her vision of life is expressed through her theme i.e. man and woman as husband and wife, in a way quite characteristic of her. She describes the truth of human experience honestly without any attempt at hiding anything.

What we find in the story is that Rosemary and her husband Philip are living in complete harmony as husband and wife. Rosemary though is hardly aware of the harsh realities of life because she is living a life of luxury. She no doubt has a sensitive and kindly side to her. However, the entrance of a third person, the 'other woman' Miss Smith, betrays her inherent nature and she shows that she can be a mean person indeed. This is not to say that Rosemary is a wholly bad person. Perhaps this is the way all women will behave if their marital relationship is threatened, or their husbands seem to be attracted towards other women. This is a purely womanly instinct

which is inexplicable. So, the basic theme of the story is womanly jealousy, which, when aroused in a woman, negates her good qualities and she becomes petty. Rosemary's action illustrates this well.

The basic conflict in "A Cup of Tea" is as removed from us as the society in which it is set. Another theme you may discover in the story is the artificiality of the behaviour of fashionable people like Rosemary Fell. Her concern for the poor girl, Miss Smith, is not born out of her genuinely compassionate character. Her decision to bring the girl home and take care of her is the result of a sudden urge to indulge in an adventure. But the decision to dump the girl is also equally sudden. It has got to do with her womanly jealousy. These themes have been revealed in the story with great clarity.

7.6 MAJOR CHARACTERS

If you read the story carefully, you will notice that the main character in the story is Rosemary Fell. It is she who carries the story forward and it is her psychology which is laid bare for us to see. Katherine Mansfield is best known for her ability to explore the minds of her characters, how they react to situations and also how their thoughts affect their actions. She can beautifully translate human feelings and thoughts into words. And she does all this without the slightest pretension. Human relationships are her particular field of interest and she skillfully portrays the different facets of men, women and children. Her stories are interesting for the exquisite depiction of the relationship between men and women as lovers or as husband and wife as can be seen in the marital relationship between Philip and Rosemary.

Rosemary Fell:

Mansfield introduces Rosemary Fell as "not exactly beautiful". Yet she was rich and led an untroubled, luxurious life with an adoring husband. We cannot decipher the character of Rosemary unless we make allowances for the social hierarchy in which she is rooted. She belongs to the upper strata of society and is well- informed about the latest happenings. Her readings of the great writers have made her an imaginative person with a touch of sensitivity. But regretfully, she has little idea about the realties

of the world around her. She was ignorant of the hard life led by the not- so-fortunate people who have to struggle to have food on their tables.

As you have read in the story, Rosemary is forced to encounter the 'other' world- the world of poverty which was in sharp contrast to her 'ideal' world when she met a ragged creature one chilly winter afternoon pleading her for a "cup of tea". This meeting with a stranger with "reddened hands" and "enormous eyes" prompts her to be a fairy godmother of the kind she has read in her fictive books. It is ironical that her knowledge of the real world is based on the books she has read and the plays she had seen. She finds it "extraordinary" that the girl has no money at all. Rich as she is, she cannot think one could be so poor as to not have any money at all. Her mind is therefore filled with good intentions to help this destitute girl and relieve her from her distress. What I would like to stress here is that the point here is not Rosemary's desire to solve the girl's problem, but her total inability to understand the problem itself.

Very enthusiastically, she takes the girl home and she is thrilled to be of help to her. She also imagines telling her friends later on how she had bestowed her benevolence upon the girl. But all her fervour soon evaporates when her husband Philip comments on the prettiness of Miss Smith and how he was "bowled over" by her beauty. Philip's remarks arouse her jealousy and she dismisses the girl without much ado gifting her only three pounds. This perverse rejection of the girl lies at the heart of the story. Thus, her womanly possessiveness and insecurity got the better of her good intentions and superficial refinements. Her "Am I pretty?" is only a reflection of her insecurity as Philip's wife.

Philip:

Philip is Rosemary's husband. He has only a small part in the story, but he is nonetheless vital in the sense that he helps to reveal the faults in her character. He hurts her female ego by praising the beauty of Miss Smith and admitting that he was overpowered by her beauty. This leads Rosemary to behave in a manner that exposes her womanly jealousy. Rosemary wanted to model herself as a woman of amiable, compassionate nature as one may find in a Dostoevsky novel. She wanted to project herself as a

morally upright person. But is Philip who unwittingly reveals her true nature. She becomes jealous about the girl who is much more beautiful than her. Philip however is totally unaware about the effect his comments has on Rosemary. He accepts her explanation that Miss Smith has insisted on going and so she could not keep her against her will. He loves Rosemary and falls for her charms when she carefully dresses up to present herself as a beautiful and charming ***coquette***.



***Coquette*:** a woman who flirts.

Miss Smith:

Miss Smith is a relatively minor character in the story. She is the girl whom Rosemary treats with affection one moment and dismisses abruptly in another moment. Miss Smith is just a means for Rosemary to display her artificial generosity. As you read the story you may recall the moment when Miss Smith first speaks to Rosemary, asking her for a 'cup of tea'. She is absolutely without money which seems 'extraordinary' to Rosemary. A sudden decision to indulge in an adventure makes Rosemary take the girl to her home. Unaccustomed to such kind of charity, Miss Smith would not believe Rosemary and thought that she was being taken to the police station. At Rosemary's house, she was more surprised to see Rosemary taking every care to make her comfortable. Too startled at first, she now begins to shed her shyness and tales the slight meal offered by Rosemary. But Miss Smith was dismissed by Rosemary when she found that her husband Philip was being 'bowled over' by the girl's beauty.

You can now understand that the whole story revolves around Rosemary and it is the workings of her mind which Mansfield wants us to see. It is the writer's understanding of the female psyche, her concern for human feeling in a concrete situation that arrests our attention. This genuine concern gives her a delicate and personal insight into the problems of personal relationships. We are left delighted by the way in which we become intimate with the way men and women conduct themselves in real- life situations and work out their problems of living.



LET US KNOW

"The Garden Party" is one of Mansfield's most famous stories. The story revolves around the events of a day in the rich colonial family of the Sheridans in New Zealand. The central character, like in "A Cup of Tea", is a woman, Laura, and it is through her consciousness that all the happenings are observed. The story undertakes to unravel the co- existence of rationality and irrationality in life.



ACTIVITY 7.1

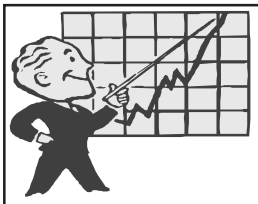
1. "Bliss" is a story by Mansfield which again deals with husband and wife relationship. Read the story if you find it in the library.

7.7 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

"A Cup of Tea" has an authorial narrative voice, i.e. we hear the author speak in the third person. This is called third- person narrative and it is the most common narrative technique in fiction. Mansfield has used the various techniques most creatively and originally. As mentioned earlier, she uses the stream of consciousness method of narration as a means to probe the inner realities of her characters. In the present story however, she has not used this method. But her dexterity in using language places the reader directly within the consciousness of her characters. Do you not feel Rosemary's sense of insecurity when Philip praises Miss Smith in eloquent words? Her use of language with its controlled tone very aptly infuses the emotional pulse in her story. Every character, whether it is Rosemary, Philip, Miss Smith, or even the shopman speaks in a language individual to them. We hear their own voice and get an unmistakable impression about their identity. When Mansfield narrates Rosemary's thoughts after Philip praised Miss Smith, "Pretty. Absolutely lovely.Bowled over. Her heart beat like a heavy bell. Pretty. Lovely.", even our hearts beat like a heavy bell. When Miss Smith says, "I'm very sorry madam, but I'm

going to faint. I shall go off, madam, if I don't have something.", we can feel her desperation for a cup of tea. We can also sense the shopman's flattery when he tries to sell the enamel box to Rosemary: "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…….". We feel Rosemary's rapture when she dreams of helping the poor girl: "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." Her use of language is lyrical and it seems to flow on seamlessly without any hiccups. Mansfield makes Rosemary think and speak to herself and we can almost follow her plans which are going to occur.

Mansfield continually experiments in her stories and so there is no 'typical' Katherine Mansfield short story. She has no fixed concept of the short story. They are just glimpses of the life which we are so used to, but fail to appreciate or analyse. Her main objective is not to impose anything of her own on the reader but to explore the personality. She makes no judgment and allows the readers to judge the characters in their own terms. And therein lies her greatness as a writer.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 12: What made Rosemary Fell appear before her husband as pretty as she could?

Q 13: Why does Mr. Philip disapprove of Rosemary's decision to keep Miss Smith with them?

Q 14: Who is Miss Smith? Under what circumstances was she brought by Rosemary to her own home? Why did she send her back?

Q 15: Write short note on Mansfield as a short story writer.



ACTIVITY 7.2

2. Imagine yourself in Rosemary's position. Do you think she did the right thing by not keeping Miss Smith with them?



7.8 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have acquired an idea of Katherine Mansfield as an astute writer of short fiction. You have learnt that it is a story about human relationships particularly between husband and wife and how they react to certain situations in life. You have come across the character of Rosemary Fell as a complex human character with conflicting emotions. Though belonging to the well- to- do and the fashionable class, she is compassionate to the plight of the poor, and therefore takes the poor girl to her house. She treats her as humanely as possible but she is also a woman vulnerable to the emotions of jealousy. So she abandons the girl when her own marital happiness was thought to be in danger. We have also discussed the important themes of the story and how they come out most prominently through Mansfield's description of Rosemary in a language that is simple and lucid.



7.9 FURTHER READING

1) Abrams, M. H. (2005).*A Glossary of Literary Terms.8th Edition*. New Delhi: Thomson Wadsworth.

2) Cuddon, J. A. (1999). *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin.

3) Drabble, Margaret. Ed (2008) *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. 6th Edition. New Delhi: OUP.

4) Hudson, William Henry. (1995) *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*. New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers.

5) Ousby, Ian. (1992) *Companion to Literature in English*. London: Cambridge University Press.

7.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Anton Chekov.

Ans to Q No 2: John Middleton Murry.

Ans to Q No 3: She is credited with giving short story a new form . . . her rare insight into the atmosphere of the mind . . . ability to translate human feelings and thoughts into words.

Ans to Q No 4: Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, Clive Bell, etc.

Ans to Q No 5: True.

Ans to Q No 6: *The Garden Party and Other Stories.*

Ans to Q No 7: Mansfield's stories attempt to describe the true human experience and glorify honesty and fidelity without any pretensions. She is particularly skillful in portraying children, men and women, and women alone. She often makes use of the interior monologue to depict the psychology of the characters.

Ans to Q No 8: Regent Street.

Ans to Q No 9: Curzon Street.

Ans to Q No 10: Three pounds.

Ans to Q No 11: Twenty eight guineas.

Ans to Q No 12: She could not bear the fact that her husband is praising a stranger, so she dismisses Miss Smith. Rosemary then dresses herself up prettily, doing her hair, darkening her eyes and putting on her pearls in order to prove herself equally pretty. She succeeds in getting from Philip the assurance that she is really pretty.

Ans to Q No 13: Philip disapproves because Miss Smith is "astonishingly pretty" and that he is "bowled over" by her beauty.

Ans to Q No 14: Miss Smith was a "little battered creature with enormous eyes", almost her age, begging her for a "cup of tea". She is the girl whom Rosemary treats with affection one moment and dismisses abruptly in another moment.

It seemed like an adventure to Rosemary and she began to wonder what would happen if she took the unknown girl home and do things which a fairy godmother would do. She is filled with good intentions and, therefore insisted that the girl accompany her home.

She could not bear the fact that her husband is praising a stranger. Hence, she dismisses Miss Smith gifting her three pounds out of the five that she had initially intended to give her.

Ans to Q No 15: Critics are unanimous in praising her rare insight into the atmosphere of the mind and her penetrating intellect. She has the ability to translate human feelings and thoughts into words . . . a delicate sense of form which is a perfect quality for the genre of the short story . . . The stories of Mansfield are some moments, some instances and some gleams of life to which she has added a touch of eternity. . . she was central to European modernism, and she was associated with the Bloomsbury circle.



7.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: What is the unique quality of Katherine Mansfield as a short story writer? Name some of her famous collections.

Q 2: Briefly discuss Mansfield's life and works.

Q 3: Reproduce the story "A Cup of Tea" in your own words.

Q 4: Why did Rosemary Fell consider the fact of helping Miss Smith an "adventure"?

Q 5: Why did Rosemary try to approve as attractive as possible before her husband?

Q 6: Elaborate on the main theme of the story.

Q 7: "Philip," she whispered, and she pressed his head against her bosom, "am I pretty?" Comment on this statement.

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UNIT 8: D.H. LAWRENCE: "ODOUR OF CHRYSANTHEMUMS"

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 D.H. Lawrence: His Life and Works

8.4 Explanation of the Short Story

8.5 Major Themes

8.6 Style and Language

8.7 Let us Sum up

8.8 Further Reading

8.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.10 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the life and works of D.H. Lawrence
- explain the story "Odour of Chrysanthemums"
- explain the important themes of the story
- describe the style, techniques and language used by the author.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to "Odour of Chrysanthemums" one of the best stories of D.H. Lawrence. Best known for his novels, Lawrence was also an accomplished poet, short story writer, essayist, critic and travel writer. The controversial themes for which he is remembered (namely the celebration of sensuality in an over intellectualised world) and his relationship with censor sometimes overshadow the work of a master craftsman and a thinker. In this unit, you will get a glimpse of the life and works of D.H. Lawrence and an in-depth analysis of his story 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' and an elaborate discussion on the styles, techniques and language employed in the story.

8.3 D. H. LAWRENCE: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

David Herbert Lawrence is one of the most versatile and influential figures in the 20th century literary canon. His works represent an extended reflection upon the dehumanising effects of modernity and industrialisation. In his works Lawrence confronts issues relating to emotional health and vitality, spontaneity, and instinct.Lawrence was born on September 11, 1885, in the small coal-mining village of Eastwond, Nottinghamshire. Lawrence's father, Arthur, was a miner, and the mining boom of 1870's had taken the family around Nottinghamshire. By the time, Lawrence who was the family's fourth child, was born, the family had settled in Eastwood for good. Lawrence's mother, Lydia Beardsall,an intellectually ambitious woman was disillusioned with her husband's dead-end job and irresponsible drinking habits and therefore encouraged her children to advance beyond their restrictive environment.

Lawrence, a sickly, bookish child, won a scholarship to Nottingham High School in 1898. But he left school in 1901 and became a clerk at a surgical appliance factory (the experience is recreated in his largely autobiographical novel, *Sons and Lovers*). In the years 1902 to 1906, Lawrence served a pupil teacher at the British School, Eastwood. He joined University College, Nottingham in the ***fall*** of 1906 and received his teacher's certificate in 1908. During these early years, he was working on his first poems, some short stories, and a draft of a novel *Laetitia*, that was eventually to become *The White Peacock*.



Fall: autumn.

In the autumn of 1908, the newly qualified Lawrence left his childhood home for London to become a teacher in Davidson Road School, Croydon. Lawrence continued writing poetry and prose and he soon came to the notice of Ford Madox Ford, then known as Ford Hermamn Hueffer and editor of the influential *The English Review*. Hueffer published his story "Odour of Chrysanthemum" in that magazine and introduced Lawrence to Heinemann, a famous publisher of London. His career as a professional author now began in earnest, although he taught for another year. Shortly after his first novel, *The White Peacock* was published in 1910, his mother

died. She had been ill with cancer. Lawrence had an extremely close relationship with his mother and his grief following her death became a major turning point in his life, as is reflected in the death of the character of Mrs. Morel which forms a major turning point in his autobiographical novel *Sons and Lovers*, a work that draws upon much of the writer's provincial upbringing. In March 1912, Lawrence met Frieda Weekly with whom he was to share the rest of his life. She was six years older than her new lover, married to Lawrence's former modern languages professor from University College, Nottingham. They eloped to Germany. From Germany they walked Southwards across the Alps to Italy, a journey that was recorded in the first of his travel books, *Twilight in Italy*. During his stay in Italy, Lawrence completed the final version of *Sons and Lovers* that, when published in 1913 was acknowledged to represent a vivid portrait of realities of working class provincial life.



***Destitution*:** poverty.
***Traumatic*:** distressing; unpleasant.
***Wanderlust*:** strong desire to travel.

The couple returned to England shortly before the outbreak of the World War I and were married on July 13, 1914. Weekley's German parentage and Lawrence's open contempt for militarism meant that they were viewed with suspicion in wartime England and lived in near ***destitution***. Nevertheless, Lawrence was actively prolific in the period, publishing *The Rainbow* (1915) and working on *Women in Love*.

After the ***traumatic*** experience of the war years, Lawrence began what he termed as his "savage pilgrimage" a time of voluntary exile. He escaped from England at the earliest practical opportunity, to return only twice for brief visits and spent with his wife the remainder of his life travelling. His ***wanderlust*** took him to Australia, Italy, Ceylon (Now called Sri Lanka), the United States, Mexico and South of France. He continued writing novels, poems, and even books on psycho analysis, though only *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* a heavily censored book approached the fame and reputation of *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. His fragile constitution gave out on him, and he died of tuberculosis on March 2, 1030, in Vence, France. Lawrence is one of the few writers whose reputation is staked equally on novels, short stories and poetry, and through his initially censored work now seems tame, he opened up the door to sensuality for countless writers after him.

Lawrence is perhaps best known for his novels *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow, Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover;* within these novels Lawrence explores the possibilities for life and living within an industrial setting. In particular, Lawrence is concerned with the nature of relationship that can be had within such settings. Though, often classed as a realist, Lawrence's characters can be better understood with reference to his philosophy. His depiction of sexual activity, though shocking at the time, has its roots in his highly personal way of thinking and being. It is worthy to note that Lawrence was very interested in human behaviour of touch and that his interest in physical intimacy has its roots in a desire to restore our emphasis on the body, and re-balance it with what he perceived to be western civilisation's slow process of over-emphasis on the mind. In his later years, he developed short novel form in *St. Mawr, The Vision and The Gypsy* and *The Escaped Cook.*

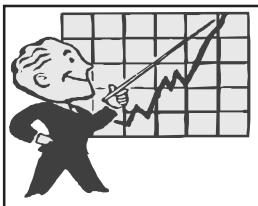
Lawrence's best known short-stories included "The Captain's Doll", "The Fox", "The Lady bird", "Odour of Chrysanthemums", "The Rocking Horse Winner" and "The Women Who Rode Away". His most praised collection is *The Prussion Officer and Other Stories*, published in 1914. His collection *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories*, published in 1928, develops his themes of leadership that he explored in novels such as *Kangaroo*, *The Plumed Serpent*, and *Fanie and Annie*.

Although, best known for his novels, Lawrence wrote almost 800 poems, most of them relatively short. His first poems were written in 1904 and two of his poems, "Dreams Old" and "Dreams Nascent", were among the earliest published works in *The English Review*. His early works clearly place him in the school of Georgian poets. But the First World War dramatically changed his work and he began to write free verse influenced by Walt Whitman. His best known poems are probably, those dealing with nature such as those in *Birds Beasts and Flowers and Tortorises*.

Although Lawrence's works after the Georgian period are clearly in the modernist tradition, they were often very different than many other modernist writers, such as Ezra Pound. Modernist works were often austere in which every word was carefully worked on and hard fought for. Lawrence

felt all poems had to be personal sentimentally and that spontaneity was vital for any work.

Lawrence's criticism of other authors often provides great insight into his own thinking and writing. Of particular note are his *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays* and *Study in Classic American Literature*. In the latter, Lawrence's response to Whitman, Mcville and Edgar Allan Poe shed peculiar light on the nature of Lawrence's craft.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: In which magazine was the story "Odour of Chrysanthemums" first published and when? Who was the editor of that magazine at the time?

Q 2: Name the first published novel by D.H. Lawrence.

8.4 EXPLANATION OF THE SHORT STORY

"Odour of Chrysanthemums" regarded as one of D.H. Lawrence's most accomplished stories, was written in 1909 and published in Ford Madox Ford's *English Review* in June, 1911. A different version, which transformed and expanded the concluding section in which Elizabeth Bates reflects on her married life in the presence of the body of her husband, was published in 1914 in *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories.* The story's controlled analysis of the harsh industrial setting and of Elizabeth Bates' psychological transformation has been widely admired. H.E. Bates has even argued that Lawrence's greatest achievement is his short fiction.

The story's evolution in three major versions has been examined by a number of critics. The final version's unsentimental and highly judgmental condemnation of Elizabeth Bates for the failure of her marriage has been related to Lawrence's liberation from the influence of his beloved mother upon her death in 1910. The story is frequently compared to *Sons and Lovers*, a largely autobiographical novel, in which Lawrence explores his parents' conflicted relationship. As in "Odour of Chrysanthemums" a jolly, hardworking and drink-obsessed miner in *Sons and Lovers* is ***disparaged***



Disparaged: talked slightingly of; depreciated; undervalued.

by his wife who longs for a more genteel life. The harsh, bleak mining villages of Nottinghamshire, which Lawrence knew so well, are powerfully evoked in "Odour of Chysanthemums" and contrasted with the unfettered beauty of the natural world.

Here, the final version of the story that appeared in *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories* has been taken for the unit.

The story begins with a description of the sights and sounds of a bleak mining village at the end of the coal miner's afternoon shift. A locomotive engine comes chugging along the tracks, pulling seven loaded wagons behind it. It pulls into the colliery's loading area, as various miners make their way home. Nearby, is a low cottage with a tiled roof and garden, a sparse apple orchard, and a brook beyond. Elizabeth Bates emerges from the chicken coop, watching the miners walk along the rail road. She turns and calls her son, John, who emerges from the raspberry patch. She tells him that it is time to come in. The locomotive her father is driving appears in the distance. As John makes his way to the house, she chides him for tearing off the petals of the chrysanthemums and scattering them on the path. She picks a few of the flowers and, after holding them against her cheek, sticks a sprig in her apron.

The train comes to a stop near the gate, and Elizabeth brings her father tea and bread and butter. He tells Elizabeth that it is time he remarried. He also informs her that her husband, Walter, had gone on another drinking binge and was heard bragging in the local pub about how much he was going to spend. Done with his tea, the old man drives off. Elizabeth enters the kitchen where the table is set and awaiting Walter's return so that the family can have their tea. With no sign of Walter, Elizabeth continues preparing the meal. Her daughter, Annie, enters the room, and Elizabeth mildly scolds her for being late. She asks Annie if she has seen Walter; she has not. Elizabeth fears that Walter is again at the pub, and at Annie's urging, they start to eat. Annie is transfigured by the slowly dying fire. Eating little Elizabeth grows increasingly angry.

Elizabeth goes to get coal and drops a few pieces on the fire, which snuff out almost all the light in the room. John repeatedly complains about the darkness and Elizabeth lights the overhead lamp, revealing for the first time that she is pregnant. Annie exclaims at the sight of the chrysanthemums in Elizabeth's apron. She removes them and puts the flowers to her lips, enthralled by their scent. Looking at the clock, Elizabeth realises that Walter will not get home until he is again carried in, intoxicated, by his friends. She vows not to clean him after his day of work and to leave him lying on the floor.

The children play quietly, afraid of angering Elizabeth, who sews in her rocking chair. After a while she sends them to bed, although Annie protests, as Walter has not come home yet. Elizabeth tells that when he does appear he will be all but unconscious from drinking. Putting the children to bed, she angrily and fearfully resumes her sewing. At eight o'clock, she leaves the house. She makes her way to a row of dwellings and enters a passage between two of the houses, asking Mrs.Rigley whether her husband is at home. Mrs.Rigley answers that he has had his dinner and then gone briefly to the pub and that she will go to find him. Mrs.Rigley soon returns with her husband ***in tow***. He tells Elizabeth that he last saw Walter at the coal pit, finishing a job. Elizabeth suggests that Walter is simply at another pub, and Mr.Rigley offers to go and find out. He walks her home as Mrs.Rigley runs immediately to her neighbour's house to spread the fresh gossip.



***In tow*:** following behind.

After Elizabeth has waited another forty-five minutes, her mother-in-law enters the cottage, crying hysterically. In fear Elizabeth asks in a forthright manner if he is dead, but all her mother-in-law tells her is that he has been in a serious accident. As the mother-in-law laments and defends her own son's gradual slide into debauchery, a minor arrives to inform that Walter has been dead for hours, smothered after a cave-in. Elizabeth's mother-in-law breaks into tears, and Elizabeth quickly silences her, afraid that her wailing will wake up the children. She moves into the parlour to clear a space on the floor where the body can be laid. She spreads clothes on the floor to protect the carpet, takes out a clean shirt to air it, and then waits in the pantry.

Shortly after, the pit manager and another man arrive with the body on a stretcher. As they bring Walter into parlour and lay him on the floor, one of the men accidentally tips over a vase of chrysanthemums. Elizabeth quickly cleans up the water and the broken glass. Annie, who has woken up, calls from upstairs, and Elizabeth rushes up to put her to bed. The men try to silence Walter's mother, who is still sobbing loudly. With Annie, in bed and the men gone, Elizabeth and her mother-in-law prepare to undress, clean, and lay out the body. Elizabeth embraces the body, trying to make a connection to her husband's still warm corpse. She and Walter's mother wash the body. Elizabeth presses her check against the body but is repulsed by the dead flesh. She laments the distance in their marriage and the intimacy that they lacked as a couple. Walter's mother rouses Elizabeth from her grief. Unable to weep, Elizabeth goes to fetch a shirt. With difficulty, she dresses Walter and covers the body with a sheet and locking the parlour door, she tidies the kitchen, afraid and ashamed of the harsh immediate realisations she has come to as a result of Walter's death. She knew her immediate master was "Life" and the struggles of reality that she was left with. But, Walter was ultimate master from death, to whom she had to look up to, by virtue of having been his wife.

8.5 MAJOR THEMES

"Odour of Chrysanthemums", a story based on the hardships of colliery life, is rightly considered to be among Lawrence's finest tales, one of the most carefully wrought of the early stories. It exemplifies his art at its most dramatic, his vision at its most sympathetic. A moving statement about the human condition is made within the context of the world, Lawrence knew as a child and young man. The collier's son was able to observe his own milieu with the eyes of an outsider; the domestic tragedy is rendered with what seems a great detachment.

The story is bound together by the pervasive imagery of the flowers in its title. Lawrence's careful use of chrysanthemum flower throughout the story has several significant meanings. Beginning with the flower's first appearance, they are described in a less than positive manner. Mrs.

Elizabeth Bates steps out of her house and walks past "disheveled" pink chrysanthemums. They are said to hang on the bushes like cloths; She also tells her son not to drop the flower's petals on the ground because it looks "nasty". When Annie tries to smell the chrysanthemums in her mothers apron band, she is pushed away. Her mother tells her that they don't smell beautiful to her because "it was chrysanthemums when I married him, and chrysanthemums when you were born," and chrysanthemums the first time they ever brought her husband home drunk, he'd got brown Chrysanthemums in his buttonhole". And it was indeed chrysanthemums again the evening when he's brought in from the mine, dead and laid out in the parlour. One of the men bringing in her husband's body accidentally knocks over the vase of chrysanthemums she had put there earlier in the evening – the one's that reminded her so bitterly of the lost dreams of her life. The chrysanthemums which opened her married life had symbolically closed it. The chrysanthemums, which bloom a little while in the full and then die, are symbolic in this stay of the fragility of our inner lives. Elizabeth Bates suddenly discovers that inside herself, she is a person with unique thoughts and passions and fears, her husband was just as much of an individual as she, but one whom she never really sought to know beneath the surface. Their marriage had been long dead before her husband lost his life that night in the mine. In the end, even the vase of flowers is clumsily knocked on the floor, leaving nothing tangible behind, just an odour. The chrysanthemums symbolise a spot of beauty unrecognised by myopic Elizabeth, just as she never appreciated what she could have had with Walter, until it was too late.

The opening paragraph of the story is a brilliant, closely written descriptive set piece, carefully designed to establish the tone and mood of the story, to put the reader immediately into the imaginative world. It juxtaposes the hard, inhuman-machine-world of the mine against the beautiful, vulnerable, natural world. The description introduces the gap between people and nature which will widen at the end of the story to reveal an absolute division between men and women and life and death. In the story's first sentence, the mine's locomotive engine startles a colt and traps

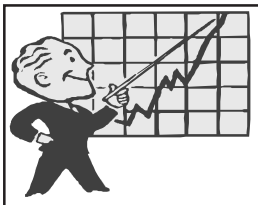
a woman walking on the track and its smoke coats the grass. The mine's pit-bank is powerfully described as having "flames like red sores licking its ashy sides" as if the slag heap is a wounded animal. In this setting where the oak is shedding its withered leaves "noiselessly "and the whiners walk past the houses "like shadows", the wheels are "spinning fast-up against the sky" and the engines come "whistling in the wide bay of railway lines beside the colliery, where rows of trucks stood in harbor", leaving an impression that human and animal life is "overpowered by the mechanical force of the industry."

The most important aspect of the story is the impact of Walter's death. Elizabeth was expecting a drunken husband, and when a dead one came home instead, she was forced to think about their marriage. Confronting his corpse was representative of her confronting the truth that her marriage was less than ideal. Walter's death gives the reader a hint of what Elizabeth was about to realise that he was suffocated in life and, ironically, died in suffocation.

Elizabeth's confrontation of the truth leads her to realise something very important about her marriage. She realises that there hadn't been anything between herself and her husband except for "carnal knowledge of each other." She even feels that the relationship was not real – she muses to herself, "I have been fighting a husband who did not exist." Because their relationship was based on the pleasures of the body of two strangers, she felt that her unborn child was "like an ice in her womb".

The strong reaction of Walter's mother had to his accident gives light to Lawrence's own mother. Walter's mother is overbearing she talks at length about his boyhood days and how she learned to "make allowances" for him, she worries about Elizabeth's pregnancy, and she rushes to answer the door when the miners come to the door. While some level of concern can be seen as expected behaviour, she crosses "the line" when Walter's body is being taken care of by Elizabeth. She becomes very jealous when Elizabeth begins, and pushes herself in Elizabeth's way. Lawrence's mother has been described as being "pushy". The great detachment of the narrative voice is all the more miraculous in the light of the fact that Walter's mother

is the stereotypical awareness mother. Despite its objectivity, the story is as Lawrence himself put it, "full of (his) childhood's atmosphere".*(D.H. Lawrence: Collected Letters. P. 159)* This is a revealing description of a story that ends with a collier's wife grieving over the dead body of her husband. Walter and Elizabeth Bates are instantly recognisable as versions of Walter and Gertrude Morel (in *Sons and Lovers)* and the emotional link with Lawrence's own mother is self-evident. "Odour of Chrysanthemums" along "The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd", finds the most of his parents' marriage more directly than any other of his works other then *Sons and Lovers*.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What references to the effects of environmentally unfriendly industrial practices do you find in the story?

Q 4: What is the name of the Colliery where Walter Bates worked?

Q 5: What is the name of the mining village where the Bates family lived?

8.6 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

Impressionistic and symbolic, dense with figurative language, D.H. Lawrence's "Odour of Chrysanthemums" relies heavily on imagery, such as the 'Chrysanthemums', and the frequent altercation of darkness and light, for effect. It concerns one night, in the life of Elizabeth Bates, mother of two children, pregnant with her third. Her life is hard because she has been disappointed in her marriage; her husband, Walter, although a handsome and strapping man, drinks away most of the wages he receives from his job in the coal mines, she is too caught up in her own bitterness against him to be able to receive much joy from life.

On this fateful night, Elizabeth has absentmindedly tucked a chrysanthemum into the waistband of her apron, and there are more, fresh-cut ones decorating the parlour, but they do not symbolise happiness for

her. As she notes, "It was chrysanthemums when I married him, and chrysanthemums when (my daughter was) born, and, chrysanthemums the first time they ever brought him home drunk, he's got brown chrysanthemums in his buttonhole."

And it's chrysanthemums again the evening when Walter is brought in from the mine, dead, and laid out in the parlour. One of the men bringing in her husband's body accidentally knocks over the vase of the chrysanthemums she had put there earlier in the evening – the ones that reminded her so bitterly of the lost dreams of her life. The chrysanthemums which opened her married life have how closed it.

The chrysanthemums, which bloom a little while in the autumn and then die, are symbolic in this story of the fragility of our inner lives.

"Odour of Chrysanthemums" takes place almost entirely under the cover of darkness and natural light appears only at the beginning when Elizabeth's father rolls through town. Once he leaves Elizabeth retreats to her home, lit only by candles and a wearing fire. She scolds Annie for coming home after dark, although Arnie claims it's "hardly a bit dark". John complains of the lack of light in the cottage as the children eat their dinner, and Elizabeth can barely see their faces. Darkness obscures various dangers, when Elizabeth ventures out into the darkness to find Walter, rats scuffle around her; she senses eavesdropping housewives who are prone to gossip; and as Mr.Rigley escorts Elizabeth home, he warns her of the ruts in the earth that she cannot see in the blackness of night.

Darkness has a life-giving element as well as a dangerous and a threatening one. When Elizabeth prepares to receive Walter's body in the parlour, the only paltry candle she brings does little to dispel the gloom. She can barely see Walter in a literal sense, but now for the first time she gets a glimpse of him as person. In life, she knew almost nothing about Walter, and even their closest physical encounters took place in the dark. Now, with darkness surrounding her and with Walter in the permanent darkness of death, startling truths come to light for Elizabeth. In this sense, darkness serves as kind of renewal. Morning will come for Elizabeth, but her life would be very different.

Throughout the story, Lawrence's dark, ominous imagery forms threatening backdrop to the characters' struggle. For example, when describing the Bates' house, Lawrence writes, "A large bony vine clutched at the house, as if to claw down the tiled roof." We first see young John near raspberry plants that are "like whips". Lawrence twice compares humans to shadows miners who walk past the house are "like shadows" and Elizabeth returns to the house "like a shadow" after she puts the dustpan outside. We get the sense that these people are somehow disappearing, even as they go about their daily lives. Fire, in particular, appears repeatedly in the story, almost always as a threatening force. At the beginning of the story, Lawrence describes the flames rising from coal pit as "red roses licking its ashy sides", as though the flames themselves are alive. Inside the house, when Annie cries out in pleasure at seeing the flowers in Elizabeth's apron, she is startled, fearing that "the house was afire". Mrs.Rigley, whom Elizabeth approaches for help in finding Walter, asks Elizabeth to make sure the children don't "set themselves afire". Fire brings warmth and light into the Bates' home, but the characters are always conscious of the threat that accompanies it.

The animal and natural imagery that Lawrence uses suggests that the characters are part of a larger, more unpredictable natural cycle of life and death. John is like a frog when he crawls out from underneath the sofa, and Elizabeth says angrily that when Walter comes home drunk he'll be "like a log". One of the miners who brings Walter home compares the cave- with a "mousetrap", which suggests that Walter himself was a mouse as he worked in the dark, narrow mines. Walter's mother's tears are like "drops from wet leaves", so impersonal that Lawrence says she was "not weeping". The unborn child feels "like ice" in Elizabeth's womb, an inhuman image that emphasises how separate Elizabeth feels from both the child and its father. Finally, life and death themselves take on human qualities at the end of the story, when Elizabeth says they are her "immediate mother" and "ultimate master", respectively. These are forces beyond her – or anyone else's – control, and she realises that she will always be subservient to this natural cycle.

The language of "Odour of Chrysanthemums" is highly poetic and is characterised by profusion of descriptive adjectives and adverbs. The opening paragraph of the story is a brilliant, closely written descriptive set piece, carefully designed to capture atmosphere of the mining district of England at the turn of the last century when life was harsh and sometimes unnecessarily cruel. The onomatopoeic words are effectively used to create the scene of the heavy, oppressive atmosphere that pervaded the district and surrounded its inhabitants. "The small locomotive engine came "clanking and stumbling" down from Selston and "the trucks thumped heavily past." The woman, who stepped back from the train as it thundered by "stood insignificantly trapped, between the jolting black wagons and the hedge." This is symbolic of the way of life for the women of the village, trapped in their mundane lives of drudgery and grime. The fields take on the mantle of personification when they are described as "dreary and forsaken". The pit-bank is powerfully presented as a wounded animal in the sentence: "The pit-bank loomed up beyond the pond, flames like red sores licking its ashy sides suggesting harmful impact of industrialisation where miners "passed like shadows diverging home." The scene being set by Lawrence is one of futility and inevitability. The emotions suggested are of hopelessness and resignation. Elizabeth Bates is portrayed as a sad and bitter woman. The rhetorical repetition of "bitterly" confirms this description. She even laughed 'bitterly. The house she lives in is covered in ivy. "A large bony vine clutched at the house, as if to claw down the tiled roof" The personification of the vine as it "clutched at the house" and the symbolism suggested in it is as if the house was being smothered and suffocated by the strangling action of a giant monster.

Towards, the end of the story when Elizabeth looks at the corpse of her husband, she realises that for years, she has not really seen Walter. He was her husband but chronically distant from her, and she feels "ashamed" because she had allowed him to be himself. Instead, of feeling anger and resentment she recognises that her own expectations and refusals helped to tear them apart. The pity she feels for Walter, sharply contrasts with her earlier harsh view of him, serving as an ***epiphany*** – she suddenly recognises



Epiphany: it is an experience of sudden and striking realisation.

as a human being, rather than simply a difficult burden. 'Elizabeth realises she has been culpable in her own unhappiness. At the end of the story she submits to both life and death as her "masters", humbled by her own mistaken attitude and, we may assume, about to carry on with a new perspective.

In the story, Lawrence uses 'local dialect' to add authenticity and vitality to the story's setting and to support the idea of isolation among characters. Lawrence grew up among mining families in Nottinghamshire, and his father was a ninth, so Lawrence was familiar with the intonations, elisions (omissions), and distinctive verbal patterns used in the community. The local details make the characters come alive. When Elizabeth goes to Mrs.Rigley to find out whether her husband had seen Walter that evening, Mrs.Rigley asks "Asha'e come whom yit?" The men who eventually bring Walter's body home tell Elizabeth, "E Wor smothered!" when describing Walter's fate. Surrounding these interludes of coarse dialect is Lawrence's elegant, carefully calibrated prose, which helps emphasise the separateness of this particular community from the rest of the world. Perhaps, most significant is the dialect used by the locals which stands in sharp contrast to Elizabeth's more proper or standard speech patterns and emphasises her isolation from the rest of the community. We get the sense that Elizabeth is truly an outsider, perhaps hailing from a distant community or even a higher social station. Her father speaks in Standard English as well, although he is a bit rough than Elizabeth, confirming that Elizabeth's family comes from somewhere else. She clearly resents having come to this place, and though Lawrence never tells us exactly what she gave up or what other options had been open to her, we know that she has been disillusioned by what life offered her. The absence of dialect in Elizabeth's speech emphasises that she is isolated, not only from the husband but also from the community in which she lives.

With numerous examples of a foreshadowing incident or disaster "Odour of Chrysanthemums", provides a sense of an inevitable tragedy. Lawrence gives us clues to Walter's fate from the beginning of the story, when Elizabeth bitterly says to the children that he "can lie on the floor"

when he comes home and that he'll be "like a log". After Elizabeth puts the children to bed, she attempts to distract herself with her sewing, her anger at the situation becoming "tinged with fear". Later, when she seeks the help of Mr.Rigley, he escorts her down the dark alleyway in front of his house, warning her to be careful of the deep ruts in the earth, afraid that someone could slip in the uneven surface of the ground. This idea of accidental physical harm is echoed in Walter's death, caused by a fatal cave in at his mine.

Developments beyond the scope of the story are foreshadowed as well, particularly in Lawrence's description of the children. Annie in divided in her affections, respectful of her mother's ire yet loyal in her love for her father. How her affections will eventually be is suggested in Annie's hair, which by the fire changes is changing from blond, the colour of Walter's hair, to brunette, the colour of Elizabeth's. These details subtle suggest the fact that Annie would be forced transfer her affections exclusively to Elizabeth when Walter dies.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Why does Lawrence use local dialect in the story?



8.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have come to know that D.H. Lawrence was one of the most versatile and influential writers of the 20th century. His works express his belief in the emotional and sexual impulse which is creative as well as true to human nature. You have learnt about his life and works and you have been acquainted also with one of his best short stories "Odour of Chrysanthemums" along with the techniques he employed in writing this beautiful story. His impressionistic and symbolic style and language will help you to appreciate his narration skills as a story-teller. You should be now able to discuss the symbolic substance of the story and

write comprehensively about its techniques and style and assess it worth in its totality.



8.8 FURTHER READING

1) Abrams, M.H. et al ed. (2000).*D.H. Lawrence*, New York: W.W. Norton& Co. Inc.
2) Aldrit Keith. (1971).*The Visual Imagination of D.H. Lawrence*. London: Edward Arnold.
3) Draper R.P. (1970). *D.H. Lawrence: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
4) Fernhough, Anne. (1993). *D.H. Lawrence, Aesthetics and Ideology*, Oxford: O.U.P.
5) Ford Madox Ford.(1937).*D.H. Lawrence in Portraits from Life.*Boston:HonghtonMiffin Co.
6) Hough, Graham .*The Darkshun : A Study of D.H. Lawrence*. London: Duckworth.
7) Kinkead-Weekes, Mark. (1996).*D.H. Lawrence :Trumph to Exile*. Cambridge University Press.
8) Pinion, F.B. (1979). A D.H. *Lawrence Companion.* New York : Harper & Raw Publishers.

8.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: *The English Review*, Autumn, 1908. Ford Madox Ford was the editor.

Ans to Q No 2: *The White Peacock.*

Ans to Q No 3: Colliery life…the mines…the working conditions.

Ans to Q No 4: Brinsley Colliery.

Ans to Q No 5: Selston.

Ans to Q No 6: Lawrence uses 'local dialect' to add authenticity and vitality to the story's setting and to support the idea of isolation among characters. The local details make the characters come alive.



8.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Write a note on the theme of the story "Odour of Chrysanthemums".

Q 2: How does D.H. Lawrence develop the imagery of Chrysanthemums throughout the story "Odour of Chrysanthemums"?

Q 3: Give a character sketch of Elizabeth Bates.

Q 4: How does Lawrence portray Walter's mother? How deeply was she affected by her son's accidental death?

Q 5: Describe the scene of the house after the body of Walter Bates is brought in.

Q 6: How does the death and absence of Walter demonstrate Lawrence's ability in creating presence through absence?

Q 7: How does the use of local dialect add to the authenticity and vitality of the story's setting?

Q 8: Prepare a brief note on the style and technique of the story "Odour of Chrysanthemums".

*** ***** ***

Name of the Paper: Course Code:

Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA)
Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University
City Office, Housefed Complex, Guwahati- 06

Learner's Feedback on Course

Dear Learner,

Regarding the course as mentioned above, we would like to know your opinions and comments so as to improve the quality of self learning materials in future. Please respond to the following statements by ticking the number you feel most reflect your opinion. After completion of the additional comments, please detach the page and send/mail the same to us at the address given below.

The Director, Centre for Internal Quality Assurance, KKHandiqui State Open University
Housefed Complex, Dispur, Guwahati- 781006
(E-mail id: ciqa@kkhsou.in)

1. Approximately how many hours did you spend for studying the units in the course? | | | |
2. Please give your opinions (by √ mark) to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Sl. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I.	The SLMs of the course fulfil the learning objectives set out in the beginning of each unit					
II.	The units of the SLM could satisfy my academic needs and expectations					
III.	The Unit writers have excellent knowledge about the course contents					
IV.	Language and contents of the units were presented at a level which I could readily understand					
V.	Ample opportunity for participation in the activities provided in the units					
VI.	Used enough Illustrations (Diagrams, tables etc.) for conceptual clarity					
VII.	Quality of content is engaging, relevant, and up-to-date					
VIII.	The self check questions are very helpful					
IX.	The Possible/model questions and the answers to check my progress have benefited me a lot					

Additional Comments: *(Please feel free to provide your open comments)*

1. Which aspects of the SLM, according to you, worked well?

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2. What sort of changes/improvements do you feel KKHSOU could implement to improve the overall quality of the SLM?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

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