

Introduction

It is better to begin with direct question, what is literature? And there we find different types of associations with the word 'literature'. In dictionaries, we find meanings of the word 'literature', but are they really help us to understand the concept of literature in its broader sense? In mundane life, the word 'literature' is used to show different things, e.g. when we purchase a new mobile phone, we get user manual along with it. This user manual is a literature provided with mobile phone. Or a sport kit includes a literature, and in the same way a first aid medicine kit also contains some literature. Do all these examples comprise the concept of literature we are talking about? Of course not. Then what comprises of literature? You have dictionary meanings of the word and I will not state all those meanings here, because you can consult and compare all those meanings on your own. Here, my concern is to familiarize you and make you able to identify the works or passages or lines which belong to the notion of literature. Do the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Paradise Lost, Hamlet, Robinson Crusoe, Ancient Mariner, or One Thousand Dollar comprise of literature? The answer to this question is yes. Now the question is that what qualities make these works literature? Let us list some general qualities of literature:

1. Literature consists of a particular use of language. It exploits all the means of language. Language charged with figures and ornaments form a beautiful literature.
2. Literature gives us pleasure, since it is beautiful and "a thing of beauty is a joy forever". It is a thing of beauty which gives joy to the readers.
3. Literature remains for all the time as literature and becomes everlasting. It is permanent fountain of joy and knowledge.
4. Literature is a source of knowledge; it is past, present and future.
5. Literature does not create in vacuum or space; it has its creator(s).
6. Literature directs and reflects human life and society. History and culture has a major role in literature.
7. Literature expresses an ideology or thought of an individual or nation.
8. Literature is an identity of an individual, a group, a society, a community or a nation.
9. Every literary creation has particular reasons behind its creation.
10. Literature basically is meant for entertainment, pleasure and imparts knowledge, but this order and preference has been changing over the years.
11. Literature can exploit any theme or subject from earth to sky; no limit to the subject.
12. Literature is the most effective means of expression of emotions and feelings of human beings.
13. Literature, from ancient times has been considered one of the significant arts. It has artistic qualities expressing truth and beauty of human life. Following lines are an instance of truth and beauty in the form of an art of poetry:
"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home."
(*Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (1807), William Wordsworth).
14. Every literature is a kind of revelation. As a painter whose work on canvas makes the imprint on our mind, a poet or an author also forms the same effect on the mind of reader.
"My breath is sweet as children's prattle is;
I drunk in all the whole earth's fruitfulness,
To make of it the fragrance of my soul
That shall outlive my death."
(From *The Bard of the Dinibovitza*, First Series).
15. Literature is marked by special kind of tests; e.g. its universal interest and personal style. A literature can be of universal interest like Homer's *Iliad*.

Literature has various types of branches of study from the ancient times. Poetry being the most ancient form practiced since the evolution of literature and later the other forms of literature developed in the course of time. Poetry and drama were the most celebrated forms of literature. From the time of Plato and Aristotle or before them, verse and drama were only forms practiced for moral preaching and entertainment. The above qualities are enough to understand the notion of literature at its primary level. Here are some of the famous statements on literature made by literary scholars:

1. "Literature and Butterflies are the two sweetest passions known to man." (Vladimir Nobokov)
2. "Great literature is simply charged with meaning to the utmost degree." (Ezra Pound)
3. "Literature gives us a picture of life—not the picture that is actually (historically) true, but a picture that has its own kind of truth—a "truth" that includes important elements that science, from its very nature, is forced to leave out. The truth of literature takes the form, not of abstract statement, but of a concrete and dramatic presentation, which may allow us to experience imaginatively the "lived" meanings of a piece of life." (Cleanth Brooks, John T. Purser and Robert Penn Warren)
4. "Writing is not literature unless it gives to the reader a pleasure which arises not only from the things said, but from the way they are said; and that pleasure is only given when the words are carefully or curiously or beautifully put together into sentences." (Stopford Brooke)
5. "Literature is the human activity that takes the fullest and most precise account of variousness, possibility, complexity and unity." (Lionel Trilling)
6. "Literature is the art of saying something that will be read twice. (Cyril Connolly)
7. "Literature is the language well used." (Laurence Learner)

The statements express a comprehensive idea of the literature. With human quest and curiosity, literature has been evolved in different forms which in the later period became separate study genres. The meaning of literature in the ancient time was confined only to one or two forms or kinds, e.g. poetry and drama. Poetry is to be considered the most ancient and fundamental form of literature. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is one of the earliest known literary works. This Babylonian epic poem arises from stories in the Sumerian language. Although the Sumerian stories are older (probably dating to at least 2100 B.C.), it was probably composed around 1900 BC. The epic deals with themes of heroism, friendship, loss, and the quest for eternal life. Different historical periods are reflected in literature. National and tribal sagas, accounts of the origin of the world and of customs, and myths which sometimes carry moral or spiritual messages predominate in the pre-urban eras. The epics of Homer, dating from the early to middle Iron Age, and the great Indian epics of a slightly later period, have more evidence of deliberate literary authorship, surviving like the older myths through oral tradition for long periods before being written down. In the Medieval period any writing in general and with some purpose was accepted as literature. It is at the end of the medieval period, the line of distinction was drawn among various forms and sub-forms of literature. Consider the following works and try to place them in particular form or kind:

1. *The Ramayana* (Valmiki)
2. *The Mahabharata* (Vyasa)
3. *Iliad* (Homer)
4. *Canterbury Tales* (Geoffrey Chaucer)
5. *Absalom and Achitophel* (John Dryden)
6. *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Edmund Burke)
7. *Hamlet* (Shakespeare)
8. *As You Like It* (Shakespeare)
9. *The Duchess of Malfi* (John Webster)
10. *On His Blindness* (John Milton)
11. *Essay on Criticism* (Alexander Pope)
12. *Life of Jonson* (Boswell)
13. *Moll Flanders* (Daniel Defoe)
14. *Animal Farm* (George Orwell)
15. *The Alchemist* (Paulo Coelho)
16. *The Refugees* (Pearl Buck)
17. *The Axe* (R. K. Narayan)
18. *One Thousand Dollars* (O'Henry)
19. *My Experiments with Truth* (Mahatma Gandhi)

20. *My Story* (Kamala Das)

These works are the examples of literature as whole. But we need to distinguish them in different forms or kinds for the sake of study. Let us divide them into proper forms: first three are the great epics or epic poetry which provided the path to later literatures. 4, 5 and 10 are simply poems. Again in poems, we have distinction like sonnet (*On His Blindness*). No. 6 is a literary essay. No. 7, 8 and 9 are the examples of drama. Though 11 is called essay, it is a poem in couplets. 12 is a biography. 13, 14 and 15 are novels; 14 is a fable and political satire novella. 16, 17 and 18 are our interest i.e. short stories. And 19 and 20 are the examples of autobiography one of the most direct forms of literature. All these forms and kinds contribute to the development of literature. Each and every form has its own history of origin and development. Here our main concern is to discuss the two forms of literature i.e. short story and novel. The short story and novel are the most prominent elements of the genre of fiction.

The Short Story

The short story has been recognized as one of the most popular forms of reading and writing in the modern age literature. Generally it is a work of fiction and prose style is used to compose it. A few characters are introduced forming one total effect on the readers. It presents single action and mood. The extensive form of short story is novel. Shorty story shares all the characteristics of a novel limiting each characteristic. A short story is meant for reading in one sitting. It is defined in its length but there are many views on the length expressed by critics. As such, the short story is defined relative to other prose forms in various traditions and styles, with the precise length of each story determined by each author's artistic intent or the requirements of the plot or depiction. Like the novel, the short story tradition has been defined and shaped through the markets available for publication, and thus, the form can be practically traced through the submission guidelines of publishing houses, print and online media that have solicited them. Let us discuss some of the common features of the short story which help us to identify and analyze the short story:

1. Length:

As its name suggests, a short story must keep brevity, or brevity is the soul of the short story. There is an argument regarding the exact length of the short story among scholars. Most of the critics emphasized on two thousand to six thousand words (2000-6000) as an ideal length of a short story. But we find that there are excellent short stories with the length of one thousand words only. Today, the short story does not have any strict limitation of length. It may have more than ten thousand words (10,000). But it has to maintain the economy in the use of language, particularly vocabulary. Each and every word needs to be contributing to the main theme and total effect of the story.

2. Plot Structure:

Plot can be defined as the chain of events or how events happen in a story. There must be logical connections and coherence among the events. Plot structure consists of the beginning i.e. the opening of the story, middle i.e. the progress of the story, and the end i.e. closing of the story. Different types of techniques like revelations, epiphany moments, twists, turns, ironic reversals, etc. are used to develop the structure of the story. The arrangement of events and situations are the significant part of the plot structure.

3. Characters:

The short story has limitation of characters. It cannot afford so many characters and their exposition. Generally, there should have two to six characters (2-6) each contributing to the main idea of the story. It is impossible to show the complete development of the characters in a limited course of the story. A particular age is considered and depicted, e.g. childhood, adulthood, old age, or fix age. Characters are presented as they exist. There may be major or minor character(s) in the story depending on the roles assigned to them. The way of character portrayal i.e. characterization is one of the crucial features of the short story. It causes to the progress of the plot.

4. Dialogues:

Dialogues are significant to reveal the emotions, moods, intentions, attitudes, actions, etc. of the characters in a story. It imparts the reality to characters and plot. It is helpful to expose the specific complications and they decide the coming up next actions and events. It shows the psychological development of characters by disclosing inner mind in the form of thoughts. The authors of short story use dialogues as their mouthpieces to convey their own opinions and thoughts. It receives the response of the readers.

5. Setting and Atmosphere:

Where do events happen in the story—in a village, city, hotel, station, restaurant, forest, desert, the sea, house, office, or any other particular place. Generally the scene is set at a fix place which has to add its effect to tone of the story. It contributes to create an atmosphere suitable for life of characters, e.g. to depict a farmer's life, the scene may set in a village, on a farm or any place which is able to show a farmer's life. Two to four scenes are included in a short story. We do not have more scenic details but the places used are familiar to readers. It is used in vivid manners so that readers can recognize the scene and locale. Here economy is maintained by avoiding extra descriptions. Language is used very skillfully with selective lexis to reveal the scene. It has its effect on character and action.

6. Narrative Technique:

A story can be told in variety of ways. The narrative technique is also called the point of view. One of the following narrative techniques can be used to tell the story:

First Person Point of View: here the character is within the story that tells story to readers and handles the other characters. There may be protagonist or other major or minor character narrates the story. The pronoun prominently used is **I**, and sometimes **we**. It keeps the story at its limit. Readers get trusted because someone within the story is narrating events and sharing experiences to others.

Second Person Point of View: it is rarely used in storytelling. A few short story writers has been used this type of mode of narration—Tom Robbins' *Even Cowgirls Get the Blue* and Robert Coover's *Panel Game*. The pronoun used in this narration is **you**. It is a complex and arduous mode of narration not much popular among short story writers.

Third Person Point of View: it is one of the popular methods of storytelling also called authorial narration because author himself tells the story. The author becomes detached observer of events and situations in the story. The pronouns used by author are **he**, **she**, and **they**. Being outside of the story, the author has got liberty to peep into minds of any character and disclose his/ her thoughts to readers. The narrator does not have limitation of time, space or any perspective on anything in the story. The narrator can focus on characters or factors he/ she wished. So that it is referred to as omniscient narrator. The narrator is free to control anything in the story.

7. Theme:

Theme is the central idea expressed in a story. Characters, dialogues, plot, narrative technique, scene, atmosphere, length, style, the opening, and ending all are interconnected and used to depict the theme or the central idea of the story. The theme of the story is not subject matter but the dominant concept running throughout all these aspects. It can be stated in a few words.

8. The Opening:

How story begins decide the course of the story. It gives readers clue to further events. First two or three paragraphs are important to thrust into the story and from here the rising action begins. In the initial stage there is character introduction and later its development. Flashback technique can also be used to initiate the story. In flashback technique past events are shifted to present and included into the main narration of the story. It gives readers a different experience.

9. The Ending:

Ending is the revelation of all happenings developed through the course of the story. Author can conclude story by using some methods like irony or ironical reversals, coming back to the opening or giving hint to the title, bring about change in the diction i.e. from formal to informal or vice versa, disappearance or death of the protagonist, etc. Twist can be resolved at the end. In most short stories the last sentence or statement is kept brief—not more than five or six words. The fragmented sentences also can be introduced by changing the syntax at the end of the story.

With these characteristics, a short story can be analyzed and interpreted.

The Happy Prince by Oscar Wilde

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It is a ridiculous attachment," twittered the other Swallows; "she has no money, and far too many relations"; and indeed the river was quite full of Reeds. Then, when the autumn came they all flew away. After they had gone he felt lonely, and began to tire of his lady-love. "She has no conversation," he said, "and I am afraid that she is a coquette, for she is always flirting with the wind." And certainly, whenever the wind blew, the Reed made the most graceful curtsies. "I admit that she is domestic," he continued, "but I love travelling, and my wife, consequently, should love travelling also."

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

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

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

Then he saw the statue on the tall column.

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

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

Then another drop fell.

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

But before he had opened his wings, a third drop fell, and he looked up, and saw - Ah! what did he see? The eyes of the Happy Prince were filled with tears, and tears were running down his golden cheeks. His face was so beautiful in the moonlight that the little Swallow was filled with pity.

"Who are you?" he said.

"I am the Happy Prince."

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

"When I was alive and had a human heart," answered the statue, "I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the Palace of Sans-Souci, where sorrow is not allowed to enter. In the daytime I played with my companions in the garden, and in the evening I led the dance in the Great Hall. Round the garden ran a very lofty wall, but I never cared to ask what lay beyond it, everything about me was so beautiful. My

courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness. So I lived, and so I died. And now that I am dead they have set me up here so high that I can see all the ugliness and all the misery of my city, and though my heart is made of lead yet I cannot choose but weep."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When day broke he flew down to the river and had a bath. "What a remarkable phenomenon," said the Professor of Ornithology as he was passing over the bridge. "A swallow in winter!" And he wrote a long letter about it to the local newspaper. Every one quoted it; it was full of so many words that they could not understand.

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

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

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

"I am waited for in Egypt," answered the Swallow. "To-morrow my friends will fly up to the Second Cataract. The river-horse couches there among the bulrushes, and on a great granite throne sits the God Memnon. All night long he watches the stars, and when the morning star shines he utters one cry of joy,

and then he is silent. At noon the yellow lions come down to the water's edge to drink. They have eyes like green beryls, and their roar is louder than the roar of the cataract.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

All the next day he sat on the Prince's shoulder, and told him stories of what he had seen in strange lands. He told him of the red ibises, who stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile, and catch gold-fish in their beaks; of the Sphinx, who is as old as the world itself, and lives in the desert, and knows everything; of the merchants, who walk slowly by the side of their camels, and carry amber beads in their hands; of the King of the Mountains of the Moon, who is as black as ebony, and worships a large crystal; of the great green snake that sleeps in a palm-tree, and has twenty priests to feed it with honey-cakes; and of the pygmies who sail over a big lake on large flat leaves, and are always at war with the butterflies.

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

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

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

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

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

Then the snow came, and after the snow came the frost. The streets looked as if they were made of silver, they were so bright and glistening; long icicles like crystal daggers hung down from the eaves of the houses, everybody went about in furs, and the little boys wore scarlet caps and skated on the ice. The poor little Swallow grew colder and colder, but he would not leave the Prince, he loved him too well. He picked up crumbs outside the baker's door when the baker was not looking and tried to keep himself warm by flapping his wings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The End

The Author: Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (born 16 October, 1854—died 30 November, 1900) was an Irish poet, playwright, novelist, short story writer, essayist, journalist, editor and teacher who

contributed immensely to the literature. He was well versed in English and French. He completed his education in the prestigious institutions—Trinity College, Dublin, Magdalen College and Oxford University. He became teacher for some time and lectured on the New English Renaissance in Art in the United States and Canada. Wilde is remembered for his biting humour, swank dress manners and witty conversation skill. He was considered one of the well-recognized icons of his day i.e. the Victorian Age. He got punishment of two years of imprisonment for defamation of Marquess of Queensberry. In his last years, he went to Paris, France and died there indigent.

His Famous Works:

1. 1890: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (novel)
2. 1891: *Salome* (play)
3. 1895: *Importance of Being Ernest* (his masterpiece play)
4. 1897: *De Profundis* (a long letter written in prison, published 1905)

Comment on the Story:

The Happy Prince (1888) is a fairy tale meant for children. It is a tale of a prince and a swallow. The prince was happy because he could not see the ugliness and misery of the people when he was alive, but after his death, he was situated on a tall column to see the plight of the public. The Happy Prince decides to help the poor and wretched but for that he needed someone other's help because now he was a statue. One day in the evening a Swallow came to the Happy Prince. The prince expressed his emotions to the Swallow by weeping. The Swallow agrees to help the Prince and both tried to remove the miseries of the masses. But the Swallow dies due to the extreme frost and the Happy Prince became bare in this course. The statue of the Prince was thrown away. The Town Councilors decide to erect the new statue of the Happy Prince. At the end, God commands his Angels to bring the most precious things in the city and Angels picked up the leaden heart of the Happy Prince and the dead bird. The story highlights the significance of the charity as a moral principle. The three themes are dominant in the story—the outer beauty is not much important, love and sacrifice is more significant to get real happiness, and there is a great valley between the poor and rich, the common public and rulers. The story is in the form of allegory. Love and sacrifice can lead us to God. The death of the Happy Prince and Swallow is not the end but the beginning of their immortality.

Glossary:

Sapphires: a type of jewel made up of crystals of a color other than red; especially one of a transparent rich blue.

Ruby: a jewel of a precious stone that is red corundum.

Hilt: the handle of the sword.

Weathercock: a person or thing that changes readily or often.

Charity Children: an institution engaged in relief of the poor.

Scarlet Cloak: a bright red loose outer garment.

Pinafores: a sleeveless usually low-necked garment fastened in the back and worn as an apron or dress.

Frowned: contracted eyebrows in displeasure or concentration.

Swallow: a small bird with a short bill, long pointed wings, often a deeply forked tail, and the bird feed on insects caught on the wing.

Reed: a type of tall grass with slender often prominently jointed stems that grow especially in wet areas.

Spring: a cheerful season of the year between winter and summer in Europe.

Moth: a small insect similar to butterfly, flies at night and attracted towards light.

Slender: thin, delicate and attractive.

Low bow: to show agreement and submission.

Ripple: to flow in small waves.

Autumn: a fertile season between summer and winter, the months of September, October and November.

Tire of: to become bored with something or someone, to stop enjoining an activity.

Coquette: a woman, who endeavors without sincere affection to gain the attention and admiration of men, passive to response.

Curtsey: an act of civility, respect or reverence made mainly by women.

Trifling: no significant, negligible.

Put up: to stay, to halt.

Alight: to descend from or as if from the air and come to rest.

Chimney-pot: a secure place where the rain is kept away.

Drench: wet thoroughly (as by soaking or immersing in liquid).

Ugliness: grotesque, hideous, unattractive.

Seamstress: a woman whose occupation is sewing, a lady tailor.

Embroider: to ornament with needlework.

Passion-flowers: tropical woody tendriled climbing vines or erect herbs with usually showy flowers and pulpy often edible berries.

Satin: a lustrous and sleek fabric.

Pedestal: at the feet, base of an upright structure.

Linen: cloth made of flax and noted for its strength, coolness and luster.

Jade: tough compact typically green gemstone (jewel) that take a high polish.

Agility: marked by ready ability to move with quick easy grace.

Mast: a long pole or spar rising from kneel or deck of a ship and supporting the yards, booms, and rigging.

Ghetto: a quarter of a city in which Jews were prominently required to live.

Scale: either pan or tray of balance.

Thimble: a pitted cap or cover worn on the finger to push the needle in sewing.

Slumber: to sleep lightly (doze).

Good action: good job or good work.

Ornithology: a branch of the study dealing with birds, science of birds.

Steeple: a whole church tower (a tall structure usually having a small spire at the top and surmounting a church tower).

Commission: an authorization or command to act in a prescribed manner or to perform prescribed acts.

Cataract: any of several large rushes or sedges growing in wet lands.

Beryl: a mineral consisting of a silicate of beryllium and aluminum of great hardness that occurs in colorless hexagonal prisms.

Garret: a room or unfinished part of a house just under the roof.

Tumbler: a drinking glass without foot or stem and originally with pointed or convex base.

Withered violets: dry herbs with alternate stipulate leaves and showy flowers in spring.

Crisp: curly, wavy, and fragile.

Pomegranate: a several called reddish berry that is about the size an orange.

Grate: a frame or bed of iron bars to hold a stove or furnace fire, fireplace.

Dart: to thrust or move with sudden speed.

To bid: to say, to tell.

Swoop: to move with sweep.

Ibises: any of various chiefly tropical or subtropical wading birds.

Amber beads: a dark orange yellow necklace of pearls.

Ebony: a hard heavy blackish wood.

Frost: a process of freezing, extreme cold.

Icicle: pendant mass of ice formed by the freezing of dripping water.

Eave: the lower border of a roof that overhangs the wall.

Crumb: a small fragment of something baked (bread).

Shabby: miserable, neglected.

Proclamation: an official formal public announcement.

Composition:

A) Write down answers of the following questions.

1. "The Happy Prince" is a fairy tale for children. Discuss.
2. How does the Happy Prince and Swallow become happy?
3. "There is a great gap between the poor and rich," explain. Or discuss the theme of exploitation in the story "The Happy Prince".
4. Why did Swallow decide to stay with Happy Prince?
5. According to you, what is the theme of the Happy Prince? Comment.
6. How does the writer become successful to convey the message of love and sacrifice through the story "The Happy Prince"?
7. Express your own views about the Happy Prince and Swallow.

B) Choose an appropriate option from the following multiple choice questions.

1. High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of ____.

- a. Liberty
 - b. Hippi Prince
 - c. Happy Prince
 - d. Happy Princess
2. When did The Happy Prince publish?
 - a. 1888
 - b. 1988
 - c. 1788
 - d. 1889
 3. The prominent small bird described in The Happy Prince is _____.
 - a. The Sparrow
 - b. The Parrot
 - c. The Duck
 - d. The Swallow
 4. "Shall I love you?" who said to whom?
 - a. Reed said to Swallow
 - b. Swallow said to Reed
 - c. Both said to each-other
 - d. No one said to other
 5. Swallow's friends had gone to Egypt _____ before.
 - a. Four weeks
 - b. Five weeks
 - c. Six weeks
 - d. Seven weeks
 6. The Happy Prince wept, because _____.
 - a. He saw the ugliness and misery of the city.
 - b. He saw the happiness and joy of the city.
 - c. He saw the rich are merry making in the city.
 - d. All the above
 7. "What a remarkable phenomenon," said the Professor of _____.
 - a. Dermatology
 - b. Psychology
 - c. Ornithology
 - d. Anthology
 8. To whom did the Swallow give the eyes of the prince which made up of sapphires?
 - a. A playwright and a match-girl
 - b. A story writer and a match-girl
 - c. A playwright and a match-boy
 - d. A and b
 9. The little Swallow died of _____.
 - a. Extreme cold temperature
 - b. Extreme hot temperature
 - c. Both the above
 - d. None of the above
 10. "for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me," is the _____ of the story The Happy Prince.
 - a. Beginning
 - b. Ending
 - c. Beginning and ending
 - d. None of the above
 11. The writer wanted to give the message of _____ in the story The Happy Prince.
 - a. Love and sacrifice
 - b. Hate and betray
 - c. Give and take
 - d. None of the above
 12. The Happy Prince is a fairy tale, because _____.

- a. It uses fairy elements and personification
- b. It is a story of a happy prince
- c. It has characters like dead prince and a bird
- d. All the above

The Open Window by Saki (H. H. Munro)

"My aunt will be down presently, Mr. Nuttel," said a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen; "in the meantime you must try and put up with me."

Framton Nuttel endeavoured to say the correct something which should duly flatter the niece of the moment without unduly discounting the aunt that was to come. Privately he doubted more than ever whether these formal visits on a succession of total strangers would do much towards helping the nerve cure which he was supposed to be undergoing.

"I know how it will be," his sister had said when he was preparing to migrate to this rural retreat; "you will bury yourself down there and not speak to a living soul, and your nerves will be worse than ever from moping. I shall just give you letters of introduction to all the people I know there. Some of them, as far as I can remember, were quite nice."

Framton wondered whether Mrs. Sappleton, the lady to whom he was presenting one of the letters of introduction came into the nice division.

"Do you know many of the people round here?" asked the niece, when she judged that they had had sufficient silent communion.

"Hardly a soul," said Framton. "My sister was staying here, at the rectory, you know, some four years ago, and she gave me letters of introduction to some of the people here."

He made the last statement in a tone of distinct regret.

"Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?" pursued the self-possessed young lady.

"Only her name and address," admitted the caller. He was wondering whether Mrs. Sappleton was in the married or widowed state. An undefinable something about the room seemed to suggest masculine habitation.

"Her great tragedy happened just three years ago," said the child; "that would be since your sister's time."

"Her tragedy?" asked Framton; somehow in this restful country spot tragedies seemed out of place.

"You may wonder why we keep that window wide open on an October afternoon," said the niece, indicating a large French window that opened on to a lawn.

"It is quite warm for the time of the year," said Framton; "but has that window got anything to do with the tragedy?"

"Out through that window, three years ago to a day, her husband and her two young brothers went off for their day's shooting. They never came back. In crossing the moor to their favourite snipe-shooting ground they were all three engulfed in a treacherous piece of bog. It had been that dreadful wet summer, you know, and places that were safe in other years gave way suddenly without warning. Their bodies were never recovered. That was the dreadful part of it." Here the child's voice lost its self-possessed note and became falteringly human. "Poor aunt always thinks that they will come back someday, they and the little brown spaniel that was lost with them, and walk in at that window just as they used to do. That is why the window is kept open every evening till it is quite dusk. Poor dear aunt, she has often told me how they went out, her husband with his white waterproof coat over his arm, and Ronnie, her youngest brother, singing 'Bertie, why do you bound?' as he always did to tease her, because she said it got on her nerves. Do you know, sometimes on still, quiet evenings like this, I almost get a creepy feeling that they will all walk in through that window -"

She broke off with a little shudder. It was a relief to Framton when the aunt bustled into the room with a whirl of apologies for being late in making her appearance.

"I hope Vera has been amusing you?" she said.

"She has been very interesting," said Framton.

"I hope you don't mind the open window," said Mrs. Sappleton briskly; "my husband and brothers will be home directly from shooting, and they always come in this way. They've been out for snipe in the marshes today, so they'll make a fine mess over my poor carpets. So like you menfolk, isn't it?"

She rattled on cheerfully about the shooting and the scarcity of birds, and the prospects for duck in the winter. To Framton it was all purely horrible. He made a desperate but only partially successful effort to turn the talk on to a less ghastly topic, he was conscious that his hostess was giving him only a fragment of her attention, and her eyes were constantly straying past him to the open window and the lawn beyond. It was certainly an unfortunate coincidence that he should have paid his visit on this tragic anniversary.

"The doctors agree in ordering me complete rest, an absence of mental excitement, and avoidance of anything in the nature of violent physical exercise," announced Framton, who laboured under the tolerably widespread delusion that total strangers and chance acquaintances are hungry for the least detail of one's ailments and infirmities, their cause and cure. "On the matter of diet they are not so much in agreement," he continued.

"No?" said Mrs. Sappleton, in a voice which only replaced a yawn at the last moment. Then she suddenly brightened into alert attention - but not to what Framton was saying.

"Here they are at last!" she cried. "Just in time for tea, and don't they look as if they were muddy up to the eyes!"

Framton shivered slightly and turned towards the niece with a look intended to convey sympathetic comprehension. The child was staring out through the open window with a dazed horror in her eyes. In a chill shock of nameless fear Framton swung round in his seat and looked in the same direction.

In the deepening twilight three figures were walking across the lawn towards the window, they all carried guns under their arms, and one of them was additionally burdened with a white coat hung over his shoulders. A tired brown spaniel kept close at their heels. Noiselessly they neared the house, and then a hoarse young voice chanted out of the dusk: "I said, Bertie, why do you bound?"

Framton grabbed wildly at his stick and hat; the hall door, the gravel drive, and the front gate were dimly noted stages in his headlong retreat. A cyclist coming along the road had to run into the hedge to avoid imminent collision.

"Here we are, my dear," said the bearer of the white mackintosh, coming in through the window, "fairly muddy, but most of it's dry. Who was that who bolted out as we came up?"

"A most extraordinary man, a Mr. Nuttel," said Mrs. Sappleton; "could only talk about his illnesses, and dashed off without a word of goodbye or apology when you arrived. One would think he had seen a ghost."

"I expect it was the spaniel," said the niece calmly; "he told me he had a horror of dogs. He was once hunted into a cemetery somewhere on the banks of the Ganges by a pack of pariah dogs, and had to spend the night in a newly dug grave with the creatures snarling and grinning and foaming just above him. Enough to make anyone lose their nerve."

Romance at short notice was her specialty.

The End

The Author:

Hector Hugo Munro (born 18 December 1870—died 14 November 1916) was a Scottish (British) writer born in Burma (Myanmar). More popular by his pen name "Saki", Munro wrote extensively satirizing the Edwardian (period) society. He was sent to Pencarwick School in Exmouth, Devon and Bedford School for education. He started his career as a journalist in England and wrote for the newspapers like the Westminster Gazette, Daily Express, Bystander, Morning Post and Outlook. He wrote political sketches, short stories, novels, play, and a book based on history. He was a witty and mischievous story writer. He served in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma, the then part of the British Empire. He joined army of 2nd King Edward's Horse as an ordinary trooper not physically fit. During the Battle of Ancre, near Beaumont Hamel, France, he was killed by a German sniper.

His Notable Works:

1. 1899: Dogged (short story)
2. 1900: The Rise of the Russian Empire (his first book—history)
3. 1902: Not-So-Stories (short stories)
4. 1904: Reginald (short stories)
5. 1910: Reginald in Russia (short stories)
6. 1911: The Chronicles of Clovis (short stories)
7. 1912: The Unbearable Bassington (novel)

8. 1913: When William Came (novel)
9. 1914: Beast and Super-Beasts (short stories)
10. 1924: The Watched Pot (a play with collaboration)

Comment on the Story:

The story is a brilliant portrayal of the nervous personality of Mr. Framton Nuttel who came to a village to get cured his nerves. He went to Sappleton family and there met Vera—a fifteen year old self-possessed lady—who took benefit of his nerve cure impediment. Vera tells the tragedy of Sappleton family. She adds the twist in the story by telling that the window is kept open for one day Mr. Sappleton and Ronnie would come back to the home. But Mr. Sappleton (husband of Mrs. Sappleton) and Ronnie (Mrs. Sappleton's brother) went away on a hunting trip and both were drowned in a bog. She tells Framton that according to Mrs. Sappleton, they would return through the window. Framton finds himself in an unfamiliar situation that ultimately has a negative effect on his seemingly nervous personality.

Glossary:

Self-possessed: self control and poise.

Pleasant: joyous, pleasure giving.

Total strangers: complete outsiders.

Retreat: the process of receding from a position or state attained.

Moping: to act in a dazed or stupid manner.

Moor: a broad area of open land, often high but poorly drained, with patches of heath and peat bog.

Engulf: to flow over, enclose.

Bog: wet spongy or waterlogged ground, surrounding a body of open water, a marsh.

Falter: to be unsteady in purpose or action, as from loss of courage or confidence; waver.

Spaniel: a breed of dog.

Dusk: darkness, semidarkness, lightless; gloomy.

Creepy: producing a nervous shivery apprehension.

Broke off: to stop abruptly.

Shudder: to tremble convulsively, shiver.

Bustle: to move briskly and often ostentatiously.

Whirl of apologies: to convey moving speedily formal justifications.

Shooting: to hunt.

Rattle: chatter incessantly and aimlessly.

Desperate: having lost hope, hopeless.

Ghastly: intensely unpleasant, disagreeable.

Muddy: lacking in clarity or brightness.

Daze: to stupefy by a blow, stun.

Stare: to gaze, look fixedly.

Gravel: loose rounded fragments of rock.

Mackintosh: raincoat.

Dash off: to complete or finish hastily, move with sudden speed.

Creatures: lower animals.

Snarl: to growl with a snapping, gnashing, or display of teeth.

Snipe: a type of wading bird.

Rectory: a home occupied by a minister or clergy.

Infirmities: frailties; disabilities.

Imminent: about to occur, impending.

Pariah: member of lowest class, a social outcast.

Composition:

A) Answer the following questions.

1. Comment on the setting of the story.
2. What is problem with Framton Nuttel?
3. Describe in your own words what happen from the time Framton comes into the Sappleton household, with particular attention to why things happen as they do?
4. What is the climax (high point) of the story?
5. In your opinion, is Framton or Vera the more likable character? Why?
6. Summarize the story that Vera tells Framton upon his arrival.

7. Comment on the ending of the story.

B) Choose the correct option.

1. How many characters are there in the story?
 - a. Six characters
 - b. Five characters
 - c. Four characters
 - d. Three characters
2. Vera is the niece of _____.
 - a. Mrs. Sappleton
 - b. Framton
 - c. Ronnie
 - d. None of the above
3. Who went away for hunting?
 - a. Framton
 - b. Vera
 - c. Mr. Sappleton and Ronnie
 - d. Mr. Appleton and Jonny
4. Vera is a self-possessed young lady of _____.
 - a. Sixteen
 - b. Seventeen
 - c. Fifteen
 - d. Fourteen
5. Vera uses Framton's lack of knowledge about his new environment to _____.
 - a. To establish his trust in her
 - b. Get him lost in the bog
 - c. Set her trap
 - d. Make him feel comfortable
6. Vera stares in dazed horror out of window because she _____.
 - a. Needs to strengthen the credibility of her story
 - b. Doesn't need to strengthen the credibility of her story
 - c. Fears for her aunt's safety
 - d. Questions what she is looking
7. How does Vera frighten Framton?
 - a. By telling facts
 - b. By telling fictional story
 - c. By telling a fairy tale
 - d. By telling nothing
8. A broad area of open land, often high but poorly drained, with patches of heath and peat bog is called _____.
 - a. Boor
 - b. Poor
 - c. Moor
 - d. Rectory
9. _____ is the protagonist and _____ is the antagonist in the story.
 - a. Framton, Vera
 - b. Vera, Framton
 - c. Mr. Sappleton, Mrs. Sappleton
 - d. Ronnie, Vera
10. "Bertie, why do you bound?" is the favorite song of _____.
 - a. Mr. Sappleton
 - b. Mrs. Sappleton's brother
 - c. Framton
 - d. Vera

After Twenty Years by O'Henry (W. S. Porter)

The policeman on the beat moved up the avenue impressively. The impressiveness was habitual and not for show, for spectators were few. The time was barely 10 o'clock at night, but chilly gusts of wind with a taste of rain in them had well nigh depopulated the streets.

Trying doors as he went, twirling his club with many intricate and artful movements, turning now and then to cast his watchful eye adown the pacific thoroughfare, the officer, with his stalwart form and slight swagger, made a fine picture of a guardian of the peace. The vicinity was one that kept early hours. Now and then you might see the lights of a cigar store or of an all-night lunch counter; but the majority of the doors belonged to business places that had long since been closed.

When about midway of a certain block the policeman suddenly slowed his walk. In the doorway of a darkened hardware store a man leaned, with an unlighted cigar in his mouth. As the policeman walked up to him the man spoke up quickly.

"It's all right, officer," he said, reassuringly. "I'm just waiting for a friend. It's an appointment made twenty years ago. Sounds a little funny to you, doesn't it? Well, I'll explain if you'd like to make certain it's all straight. About that long ago there used to be a restaurant where this store stands--'Big Joe' Brady's restaurant."

"Until five years ago," said the policeman. "It was torn down then."

The man in the doorway struck a match and lit his cigar. The light showed a pale, square-jawed face with keen eyes, and a little white scar near his right eyebrow. His scarfpin was a large diamond, oddly set.

"Twenty years ago to-night," said the man, "I dined here at 'Big Joe' Brady's with Jimmy Wells, my best chum, and the finest chap in the world. He and I were raised here in New York, just like two brothers, together. I was eighteen and Jimmy was twenty. The next morning I was to start for the West to make my fortune. You couldn't have dragged Jimmy out of New York; he thought it was the only place on earth. Well, we agreed that night that we would meet here again exactly twenty years from that date and time, no matter what our conditions might be or from what distance we might have to come. We figured that in twenty years each of us ought to have our destiny worked out and our fortunes made, whatever they were going to be."

"It sounds pretty interesting," said the policeman. "Rather a long time between meets, though, it seems to me. Haven't you heard from your friend since you left?"

"Well, yes, for a time we corresponded," said the other. "But after a year or two we lost track of each other. You see, the West is a pretty big proposition, and I kept hustling around over it pretty lively. But I know Jimmy will meet me here if he's alive, for he always was the truest, stanchest old chap in the world. He'll never forget. I came a thousand miles to stand in this door to-night, and it's worth it if my old partner turns up."

The waiting man pulled out a handsome watch, the lids of it set with small diamonds.

"Three minutes to ten," he announced. "It was exactly ten o'clock when we parted here at the restaurant door."

"Did pretty well out West, didn't you?" asked the policeman.

"You bet! I hope Jimmy has done half as well. He was a kind of plodder, though, good fellow as he was. I've had to compete with some of the sharpest wits going to get my pile. A man gets in a groove in New York. It takes the West to put a razor-edge on him."

The policeman twirled his club and took a step or two.

"I'll be on my way. Hope your friend comes around all right. Going to call time on him sharp?"

"I should say not!" said the other. "I'll give him half an hour at least. If Jimmy is alive on earth he'll be here by that time. So long, officer."

"Good-night, sir," said the policeman, passing on along his beat, trying doors as he went.

There was now a fine, cold drizzle falling, and the wind had risen from its uncertain puffs into a steady blow. The few foot passengers astir in that quarter hurried dismally and silently along with coat collars turned high and pocketed hands. And in the door of the hardware store the man who had come a thousand miles to fill an appointment, uncertain almost to absurdity, with the friend of his youth, smoked his cigar and waited.

About twenty minutes he waited, and then a tall man in a long overcoat, with collar turned up to his ears, hurried across from the opposite side of the street. He went directly to the waiting man.

"Is that you, Bob?" he asked, doubtfully.

"Is that you, Jimmy Wells?" cried the man in the door.

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed the new arrival, grasping both the other's hands with his own. "It's Bob, sure as fate. I was certain I'd find you here if you were still in existence. Well, well, well! --twenty years is a long time. The old gone, Bob; I wish it had lasted, so we could have had another dinner there. How has the West treated you, old man?"

"Bully; it has given me everything I asked it for. You've changed lots, Jimmy. I never thought you were so tall by two or three inches."

"Oh, I grew a bit after I was twenty."

"Doing well in New York, Jimmy?"

"Moderately. I have a position in one of the city departments. Come on, Bob; we'll go around to a place I know of, and have a good long talk about old times."

The two men started up the street, arm in arm. The man from the West, his egotism enlarged by success, was beginning to outline the history of his career. The other, submerged in his overcoat, listened with interest.

At the corner stood a drug store, brilliant with electric lights. When they came into this glare each of them turned simultaneously to gaze upon the other's face.

The man from the West stopped suddenly and released his arm.

"You're not Jimmy Wells," he snapped. "Twenty years is a long time, but not long enough to change a man's nose from a Roman to a pug."

"It sometimes changes a good man into a bad one, said the tall man. "You've been under arrest for ten minutes, 'Silky' Bob. Chicago thinks you may have dropped over our way and wires us she wants to have a chat with you. Going quietly, are you? That's sensible. Now, before we go on to the station here's a note I was asked to hand you. You may read it here at the window. It's from Patrolman Wells."

The man from the West unfolded the little piece of paper handed him. His hand was steady when he began to read, but it trembled a little by the time he had finished. The note was rather short.

"Bob: I was at the appointed place on time. When you struck the match to light your cigar I saw it was the face of the man wanted in Chicago. Somehow I couldn't do it myself, so I went around and got a plain clothes man to do the job. JIMMY."

The End

The Author:

William Sidney Porter (born 11 September 1862—died 5 June 1910) is much better known by his pen name O'Henry (Oliver Henry). He was born and brought up in North Carolina and completed formal schooling at the School of his Aunt Lina. There he developed a keen interest in reading books. He became a good singer and musician. His most prolific writing career began in 1902 as he moved to New York where he could write more than 350 short stories. His stories are marked by surprise ending, playfulness and witty narration. He was often compared to Guy de Maupassant in this case. Most of his short stories are set in New York City, in his own time and dealt with ordinary people like clerks, policemen, servicemen, workers, waitresses, etc. He was a heavy drinker which caused him to lose health and died of cirrhosis of the liver, complications of diabetes and an enlarged heart.

His Famous Short Stories:

1. 1902: The Duplicity of Hargraves
2. 1903: A Retrieved Reformation
3. 1904: The Cop and the Anthem
4. 1905: The Gift of Magi
5. 1906: After Twenty Years
6. 1907: Conscience in Art
7. 1907: The Last Leaf
8. 1908: The Third Ingredient
9. 1910: Ransom of Red Chief
10. 1911: Makes the Whole World Kin

Comment on the Story:

The story includes only three characters—Bob, Jimmy and a policeman. Bob and Jimmy are fast friends to each other but they depart and decide to meet after twenty years. Both tried their fortunes. One joins the police department and other becomes a criminal. They became opposite poles and the

policeman has to arrest the criminal. Due to their close friendship, there formed the inner conflict between the duty and faithfulness toward a friend. But the policeman is able to resolve the dilemma in his mind by replacing himself by the other policeman to arrest the criminal. O'Henry is famous for surprise ending of the story. In the present story, the short note handed over to Bob by the policeman gives readers a surprising shock. The note reveals that Bob and Jimmy were met as it was decided before twenty years. The story has some positive lessons to young readers that duty is always important than a criminal friend, choose only socially agreeable ways to make fortune, the fortune of a criminal is futile, don't be friend with a criminal, so and so forth. The story is set on a deserted New York Street in the night at 10 o'clock. It is approximately one thousand four hundred words short story fair in length. It can be analyzed on the level of its opening, setting, plot structure, characters and ending.

Glossary:

Beat: a regularly traversed (route/ way) round.

Spectators: onlookers, watchers; observers.

Chilly gust: noticeably cold sudden brief rush of wind.

Depeopled: deserted, unpeopled; without people.

Trying: hard, tough; difficult to open or close.

Twirling: to move in a curved path rapidly.

Intricate: complicate.

Pacific: soothing, mild appearance.

Thoroughfare: main road, the condition necessary for passing through.

Stalwart: strong, courageous; fearless.

Swagger: arrogantly self-confident way of walking.

Lean: to incline, to cast one's weight to one side for support.

Pale: faded, not bright.

Scar: a mark left in the skin by the healing of injured tissue.

Dine: to take dinner.

Chum: close or fast friend.

Chap: fellow friend; also baby or child.

Destiny: fate, fortune.

Hustling: to make one's way by pushing and shoving.

Stanchest: steadfast in loyalty or principle.

Lid: cap, cover.

Plodder: a person who work laboriously and monotonously.

Pile: a great amount of money, fortune.

Groove: a fixed routine, depression.

Drizzle: a fine misty, sprinkle rain.

Puff: to blow in short gusts.

Astir: staying, living.

Dismal(ly): showing or causing gloom or depression.

Bully: a fine chap, beautiful friend.

Egotism: the practice of talking about oneself too much.

Pug: a breed of Asian dog with a smooth, short coat, tightly curled tail, short muzzle, and broad wrinkled face.

Composition:

A) Answer the following questions.

1. "O'Henry is a master story teller", discuss with the opening and closing of the story.
2. Explain the importance of setting in the story.
3. Comment on the characters and characterization in the story.
4. What is your opinion about Jimmy as he causes his friend's arrest?
5. Is Jimmy a coward who betrays a friend? How could Jimmy solve his inner conflict?

B) Choose the correct option from the following multiple choice questions.

1. "After Twenty Years" is written by _____.
 - a. R. K. Narayan
 - b. H. H. Munro
 - c. Rabindranath Tagore

- d. W. S. Porter
2. What is the pen name of William Sidney Porter?
 - a. Saki
 - b. O'Henry
 - c. O'Enry
 - d. None of the above
3. The story "After Twenty Years" opens with the following sentence.
 - a. The man in the doorway struck a match and...
 - b. The waiting man pulled a handsome watch...
 - c. The policeman on the beat moved up the avenue...
 - d. Somehow I couldn't do it myself...
4. How many characters are there in the story?
 - a. Two (Bob and Jimmy)
 - b. Three (Bob, Jimmy and a policeman)
 - c. Four (Bob, Jimmy and two policeman)
 - d. Five (Bob, Jimmy and three policeman)
5. "After Twenty Years" is a story of particularly _____.
 - a. Two friends
 - b. Two enemies
 - c. Two policemen
 - d. Two businessmen
6. Why Jimmy did not arrest Bob himself?
 - a. Because both were close friends
 - b. Because both were hard enemies
 - c. Because Jimmy did not know Bob
 - d. None of the above
7. "It's all right, officer." "I'm just waiting for a friend." Who said?
 - a. Bob
 - b. Jimmy
 - c. Policeman
 - d. None of the above
8. Jimmy's best friend Bob becomes a _____ after twenty years.
 - a. Businessman
 - b. Policeman
 - c. Criminal
 - d. Investigator
9. Jimmy did not arrest Bob himself. This shows _____.
 - a. Inner conflict
 - b. Outer conflict
 - c. Physical conflict
 - d. Cunning nature
10. The story "After Twenty Years" is published in the year _____.
 - a. 1903
 - b. 1904
 - c. 1905
 - d. 1906
11. "The Gift of Magi" is a famous story by _____.
 - a. O'Henry
 - b. Saki
 - c. O'Menry
 - d. None of the above
12. O'Henry's stories are famous for its twist i.e. _____.
 - a. Surprising ending
 - b. Surprising beginning
 - c. Surprising middle
 - d. Surprising characters

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A Ghost by Guy de Maupassant

We were speaking of sequestration, alluding to a recent lawsuit. It was at the close of a friendly evening in a very old mansion in the Rue de Grenelle, and each of the guests had a story to tell, which he assured us was true.

Then the old Marquis de la Tour-Samuel eighty-two years of age, rose and came forward to lean on the mantelpiece. He told the following story in his slightly quavering voice.

"I, also, have witnessed a strange thing — so strange that it has been the nightmare of my life. It happened fifty-six years ago, and yet there is not a month when I do not see it again in my dreams. From that day I have borne a mark, a stamp of fear, — do you understand?

"Yes, for ten minutes I was a prey to terror, in such a way that ever since a constant dread has remained in my soul. Unexpected sounds chill me to the heart; objects which I can ill distinguish in the evening shadows make me long to flee. I am afraid at night.

"No! I would not have owned such a thing before reaching my present age. But now I may tell everything. One may fear imaginary dangers at eighty-two years old. But before actual danger I have never turned back, *mesdames*.

"That affair so upset my mind, filled me with such a deep, mysterious unrest that I never could tell it. I kept it in that inmost part, that corner where we conceal our sad, our shameful secrets, all the weaknesses of our life which cannot be confessed.

"I will tell you that strange happening just as it took place, with no attempt to explain it. Unless I went mad for one short hour it must be explainable, though. Yet I was not mad, and I will prove it to you. Imagine what you will. Here are the simple facts:

"It was in 1827, in July. I was quartered with my regiment in Rouen.

"One day, as I was strolling on the quay, I came across a man I believed I recognized, though I could not place him with certainty. I instinctively went more slowly, ready to pause. The stranger saw my impulse, looked at me, and fell into my arms.

"It was a friend of my younger days, of whom I had been very fond. He seemed to have become half a century older in the five years since I had seen him. His hair was white, and he stooped in his walk, as if he were exhausted. He understood my amazement and told me the story of his life.

"A terrible event had broken him down. He had fallen madly in love with a young girl and married her in a kind of dreamlike ecstasy. After a year of unalloyed bliss and unexhausted passion, she had died suddenly of heart disease, no doubt killed by love itself.

"He had left the country on the very day of her funeral, and had come to live in his hotel at Rouen. He remained there, solitary and desperate, grief slowly mining him, so wretched that he constantly thought of suicide.

"As I thus came across you again,' he said, 'I shall ask a great favor of you. I want you to go to my château and get some papers I urgently need. They are in the writing-desk of my room, of *our* room. I cannot send a servant or a lawyer, as the errand must be kept private. I want absolute silence.

"I shall give you the key of the room, which I locked carefully myself before leaving, and the key to the writing-desk. I shall also give you a note for the gardener, who will let you in.

"Come to breakfast with me to-morrow, and we'll talk the matter over.'

"I promised to render him that slight service. It would mean but a pleasant excursion for me, his home not being more than twenty-five miles from Rouen. I could go there in an hour on horseback.

"At ten o'clock the next day I was with him. We breakfasted alone together, yet he did not utter more than twenty words. He asked me to excuse him. The thought that I was going to visit the room where his happiness lay shattered, upset him, he said. Indeed, he seemed perturbed, worried, as if some mysterious struggle were taking place in his soul.

"At last he explained exactly what I was to do. It was very simple. I was to take two packages of letters and some papers, locked in the first drawer at the right of the desk of which I had the key. He added:

"I need not ask you not to glance at them.'

"I was almost hurt by his words, and told him so, rather sharply. He stammered:

"Forgive me. I suffer so much!"

"And tears came to his eyes.

"I left about one o'clock to accomplish my errand.

"The day was radiant, and I rushed through the meadows, listening to the song of the larks, and the rhythmical beat of my sword on my riding-boots.

"Then I entered the forest, and I set my horse to walking. Branches of the trees softly caressed my face, and now and then I would catch a leaf between my teeth and bite it with avidity, full of the joy of life, such as fills you without reason, with a tumultuous happiness almost indefinable, a kind of magical strength.

"As I neared the house I took out the letter for the gardener, and noted with surprise that it was sealed. I was so amazed and so annoyed that I almost turned back without fulfilling my mission. Then I thought that I should thus display over-sensitiveness and bad taste. My friend might have sealed it unconsciously, worried as he was.

"The manor looked as though it had been deserted the last twenty years. The gate, wide-open and rotten, held, one wondered how. Grass filled the paths; you could not tell the flower-beds from the lawn.

"At the noise I made kicking a shutter, an old man came out from a side-door and was apparently amazed to see me there. I dismounted from my horse and gave him the letter. He read it once or twice, turned it over, looked at me with suspicion, and asked:

"Well, what do you want?"

"I answered sharply:

"You must know it as you have read your master's orders. I want to get in the house."

"He appeared overwhelmed. He said:

"So — you are going in — in his room?"

"I was getting impatient.

"Parbleu! Do you intend to question me, by chance?"

"He stammered:

"No — monsieur — only — it has not been opened since — since the death. If you will wait five minutes, I will go in to see whether — —"

"I interrupted angrily:

"See here, are you joking? You can't go in that room, as I have the key!"

"He no longer knew what to say.

"Then, monsieur, I will show you the way."

"Show me the stairs and leave me alone. I can find it without your help."

"But — still — monsieur — —"

"Then I lost my temper.

"Now be quiet! Else you'll be sorry!"

"I roughly pushed him aside and went into the house.

"I first went through the kitchen, then crossed two small rooms occupied by the man and his wife. From there I stepped into a large hall. I went up the stairs, and I recognized the door my friend had described to me.

"I opened it with ease and went in.

"The room was so dark that at first I could not distinguish anything. I paused, arrested by that moldy and stale odor peculiar to deserted and condemned rooms, of dead rooms. Then gradually my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, and I saw rather clearly a great room in disorder, a bed without sheets having still its mattresses and pillows, one of which bore the deep print of an elbow or a head, as if someone had just been resting on it.

"The chairs seemed all in confusion. I noticed that a door, probably that of a closet, had remained ajar.

"I first went to the window and opened it to get some light, but the hinges of the outside shutters were so rusted that I could not loosen them.

"I even tried to break them with my sword, but did not succeed. As those fruitless attempts irritated me, and as my eyes were by now adjusted to the dim light, I gave up hope of getting more light and went toward the writing-desk.

"I sat down in an arm-chair, folded back the top, and opened the drawer. It was full to the edge. I needed but three packages, which I knew how to distinguish, and I started looking for them.

"I was straining my eyes to decipher the inscriptions, when I thought I heard, or rather felt a rustle behind me. I took no notice, thinking a draft had lifted some curtain. But a minute later, another movement, almost indistinct, sent a disagreeable little shiver over my skin. It was so ridiculous to be moved thus even so slightly, that I would not turn round, being ashamed. I had just discovered the

second package I needed, and was on the point of reaching for the third, when a great and sorrowful sigh, close to my shoulder, made me give a mad leap two yards away. In my spring I had turned round, my hand on the hilt of my sword, and surely had I not felt that, I should have fled like a coward.

"A tall woman, dressed in white, was facing me, standing behind the chair in which I had sat a second before.

"Such a shudder ran through me that I almost fell back! Oh, no one who has not felt them can understand those gruesome and ridiculous terrors! The soul melts; your heart seems to stop; your whole body becomes limp as a sponge, and your innermost parts seem collapsing.

"I do not believe in ghosts; and yet I broke down before the hideous fear of the dead; and I suffered, oh, I suffered more in a few minutes, in the irresistible anguish of supernatural dread, than I have suffered in all the rest of my life!

"If she had not spoken, I might have died. But she did speak; she spoke in a soft and plaintive voice which set my nerves vibrating. I could not say that I regained my self-control. No, I was past knowing what I did; but the kind of pride I have in me, as well as a military pride, helped me to maintain, almost in spite of myself, an honorable countenance. I was making a pose, a pose for myself, and for her, for her, whatever she was, woman, or phantom. I realized this later, for at the time of the apparition, I could think of nothing. I was afraid.

"She said:

"Oh, you can be of great help to me, monsieur!"

"I tried to answer, but I was unable to utter one word. A vague sound came from my throat.

"She continued:

"Will you? You can save me, cure me. I suffer terribly. I always suffer. I suffer, oh, I suffer!"

"And she sat down gently in my chair. She looked at me.

"Will you?"

"I nodded my head, being still paralyzed.

"Then she handed me a woman's comb of tortoise-shell, and murmured:

"Comb my hair! Oh, comb my hair! That will cure me. Look at my head — how I suffer! And my hair — how it hurts!"

"Her loose hair, very long, very black, it seemed to me, hung over the back of the chair, touching the floor.

"Why did I do it? Why did I, shivering, accept that comb, and why did I take between my hands her long hair, which left on my skin a ghastly impression of cold, as if I had handled serpents? I do not know.

"That feeling still clings about my fingers, and I shiver when I recall it.

"I combed her, I handled, I know not how, that hair of ice. I bound and unbound it; I plaited it as one plaits a horse's mane. She sighed, bent her head, seemed happy.

"Suddenly she said, 'Thank you!' tore the comb from my hands, and fled through the door which I had noticed was half opened.

"Left alone, I had for a few seconds the hazy feeling one feels in waking up from a nightmare. Then I recovered myself. I ran to the window and broke the shutters by my furious assault.

"A stream of light poured in. I rushed to the door through which that being had gone. I found it locked and immovable.

"Then a fever of flight seized on me, a panic, the true panic of battle. I quickly grasped the three packages of letters from the open desk; I crossed the room running, I took the steps of the stairway four at a time. I found myself outside, I don't know how, and seeing my horse close by, I mounted in one leap and left at a full gallop.

"I didn't stop till I reached Rouen and drew up in front of my house. Having thrown the reins to my orderly, I flew to my room and locked myself in to think.

"Then for an hour I asked myself whether I had not been the victim of an hallucination. Certainly I must have had one of those nervous shocks, one of those brain disorders such as give rise to miracles, to which the supernatural owes its strength.

"And I had almost concluded that it was a vision, an illusion of my senses, when I came near to the window. My eyes by chance looked down. My tunic was covered with hairs, long woman's hairs which had entangled themselves around the buttons!

"I took them off one by one and threw them out of the window with trembling fingers.

"I then called my orderly. I felt too perturbed, too moved, to go and see my friend on that day. Besides, I needed to think over what I should tell him.

"I had his letters delivered to him. He gave a receipt to the soldier. He inquired after me and was told that I was not well. I had had a sunstroke, or something. He seemed distressed.

"I went to see him the next day, early in the morning, bent on telling him the truth. He had gone out the evening before and had not come back.

"I returned the same day, but he had not been seen. I waited a week. He did not come back. I notified the police. They searched for him everywhere, but no one could find any trace of his passing or of his retreat.

"A careful search was made in the deserted manor. No suspicious clue was discovered.

"There was no sign that a woman had been concealed there.

"The inquest gave no result, and so the search went no further.

"And in fifty-six years I have learned nothing more. I never found out the truth."

The End

The Author:

Henri Rene Albert Guy de Maupassant (born 5 August 1850—died 6 July 1893) was a French author regarded as one of the fathers of Modern Short Story. His mother had a keen interest in classical literature and Shakespeare. She read a vast body of literature which deeply influenced Maupassant. His mother sent him to study Classics at the age of thirteen. He worked as a clerk in Navy Department in Paris for ten years. He took interest in journalism and became a contributing editor of many newspapers and spent his spare time in writing, especially short stories and novels. He used several pseudonyms to write such as Joseph Prunier, Guy de Volmont, and Maufrigneuse. The stories of Maupassant are marked by economy of style, efficiency, wise plot, and effortless ending. He penned near about 300 short stories, six novels, three travel books, and one volume of verse. He died in Paris.

His Notable Works:

1. 1881: La Maison Tellier (short story collection)
2. 1882: Mademoiselle Fifi (short story collection)
3. 1883: Une Vie (novel)
4. 1884: Miss Harriet (short story collection)
5. 1884: Ausoleil (travel writing)

Comment on the Story:

A Ghost is a meta-story (story about or within story). The story deals with a frightening experience told by an old man. It rouses elements of fear and pity in the mind of readers. The title of the story is very suggestive to its content. It is about a ghost of a woman seen by the old man Marquis later concluded that it was a vision, an illusion of his senses and he never found the truth. There are four vivid characters in the story—an old man who tells the story, his friend, a gardener and a woman (ghost) seen in the dark room. Among them the character of old man is developed with his name i.e. Marquis de la Tour-Samuel. The first person point of view has been used to narrate the story with particular pronoun **we**. But later it turns into **I** when Marquis tells the story. The opening of the story is straight, plot is very simple and the ending is effortless. The brevity at the ending is kept with the last five words—"I never found out the truth" which is more appropriate.

Glossary:

Sequestration: a legal writ authorizing a sheriff or commissioner to take into custody the property of a defendant who is in contempt until the orders of a court are complied with; aloneness; insulation.

Alluding: to make indirect reference.

Lawsuit: a case before a court, action; proceeding.

Mansion: a separate, big built, a large structured house; castle.

Mantelpiece: a shelf above a fireplace, the finish around a fireplace.

Quavering: to utter sound in a fearful tone or manner.

Nightmare: a frightening dream; agony; horror.

Prey: to have an injurious, destructive or wasting effect.

Mesdames: plural of madam or of madame or of mrs.

Conceal: to hide, to place out of sight.

Regiment: a military unit consisting usually of number of battalions.

Strolling: to walk in a leisurely or idle manner.

Quay: a structure built parallel to the bank of a waterway for use as a landing place.

Stoop: to stand or walk with a forward inclination of the head, body, or shoulders.

Amazement: admiration, wonder; astonishment.

Ecstasy: a state of being beyond reason and self-control; a state of overwhelming emotion.

Unalloyed bliss: absolute, fine or complete happiness.

Funeral: the last ritual of burial or giving fire after the death of a person.

Solitary: alone, without companion.

Desperate: having lost hope, hopeless.

Wretched: deeply afflicted, dejected or very poor, bad condition.

Chateau: a castle, fortress or mansion (particularly in France).

Errand: an oral message entrusted to a person.

Excursion: usually brief pleasure trip.

Perturb: to cause to be worried or upset; confused.

Stammer: to make involuntary stops and repetitions in speaking.

Radiant: vividly bright and shining.

Lark: any of a family of chiefly ground dwelling song birds that are usually brownish in colour; skylark.

Avidity: keen eagerness.

Caress: to touch or stroke lightly in a loving or endearing manner; kiss.

Tumultuous: loud, excited; full of emotions.

Bad taste: ill-behaviour.

Manor: a landed estate or mansion.

Dismount: to get down from the horse.

Monsieur: mister or mr. (particularly French).

Moldy: being old.

Stale: tasteless or unpalatable from age.

Odor: bad smell.

Closet: an apartment or small room for privacy.

Ajar: slightly open.

Hinge: a joint or a jointed or flexible device on which a door, lid, or other swinging part turns.

Straining: to draw tight, cause to fit firmly.

Decipher: to decode, to interpret the meaning.

Inscription: written, engraved or printed lasting record.

Leap: jump.

Gruesome: inspiring horror or repulsion; dreadful.

Hideous: offensive to the senses; frightful, shocking.

Phantom: something invisible (ghost or apparition).

Apparition: a ghost or a ghostly figure.

Ghastly: terrifying horrible to the senses.

Cling: to hold together or have a strong emotional attachment.

Hazy: obscure, indefinite.

Panic: a sudden overpowering fright.

Gallop: to run fast.

Hallucination: perception of objects with no reality usually arising from disorder of the nervous system; illusion.

Inquest: a judicial or official inquiry or examination especially before a jury.

Composition:

A) Answer the following questions.

1. Write a detailed note on the setting and atmosphere in the story.
2. Narrate the story told by Marquis in your own words.
3. What did Marquis see into the upstairs room? Describe.
4. What was the condition of Marquis when he saw a tall woman, dressed in white with long hair stood behind him?
5. Whether the title of the story is appropriate or not? State your opinion.
6. Will you believe in ghost? Rewrite the story with your own point of view.
7. Comment on the beginning and ending of the story.

B) Choose the correct option from the following questions.

1. Who wrote "A Ghost"?
 - a. William Sidney Porter
 - b. Guy de Maupassant
 - c. Joy de Maupassant
 - d. Guy de Caupassant
2. A Ghost deals with _____.
 - a. A horrible experience
 - b. A happy experience
 - c. A joyful experience
 - d. None of the above
3. The guests were gathered in a very old mansion in the _____.
 - a. Rue de Grenelle
 - b. Hue de Grenelle
 - c. Rue de Crenelle
 - d. Rouen
4. What is the name of the old man mentioned in the story?
 - a. Marquis de la Tour-Samuel
 - b. Guy de Maupassant
 - c. Samuel de la Tour
 - d. De la Marquis Tour
5. Who told the story among the guests gathered?
 - a. An old man
 - b. A young man
 - c. An old woman
 - d. A young woman
6. How many years Marquis de la Tour-Samuel is old?
 - a. Eighty years
 - b. Eighty-two years
 - c. Seventy-two years
 - d. Seventy years
7. The old man Marquis was _____.
 - a. An army man
 - b. A businessman
 - c. A leader
 - d. A trader
8. Marquis was quartered with his regiment in _____ in the year _____.
 - a. Rouen, 1830
 - b. Rio, 1827
 - c. Rouen, 1827
 - d. 1827, Rouen
9. What did Marquis's friend urgently need?
 - a. Some money
 - b. Some papers
 - c. Some privacy
 - d. Nothing
10. How much distance was between Rouen and the chateau that Marquis was going to visit?
 - a. Not more than twenty miles
 - b. Not more than twenty-three miles
 - c. Not more than twenty-four miles
 - d. Not more than twenty-five miles
11. "I was almost hurt by his words, and told him so, rather sharply," who said?
 - a. Marquis
 - b. Marquis's friend
 - c. Gardener
 - d. None of the above

12. What did Marquis see behind him in the dark room?
 - a. A tall woman dressed in white
 - b. A tall man dressed in white
 - c. A tall woman dressed in black
 - d. A tall man dressed in black
13. Maupassant's stories are marked by _____.
 - a. Economy of style, wise plot and simple ending
 - b. No economy in style and unwise plot
 - c. Mysterious opening and ending
 - d. Complicated plot and characters
14. "Oh, you can be of great help to me, monsieur!" is said by _____.
 - a. Woman in dark room
 - b. Marquis
 - c. Marquis's friend
 - d. Gardener
15. "I never found out the truth," is the _____ of the story.
 - a. Opening
 - b. Ending
 - c. Opening as well as ending
 - d. None of the above

Home-Coming by Rabindranath Tagore

Phatik Chakravorti was ringleader among the boys of the village. A new mischief got into his head. There was a heavy log lying on the mud-flat of the river waiting to be shaped into a mast for a boat. He decided that they should all work together to shift the log by main force from its place and roll it away. The owner of the log would be angry and surprised, and they would all enjoy the fun. Every one seconded the proposal, and it was carried unanimously.

But just as the fun was about to begin, Makhan, Phatik's younger brother, sauntered up, and sat down on the log in front of them all without a word. The boys were puzzled for a moment. He was pushed, rather timidly, by one of the boys and told to get up but he remained quite unconcerned. He appeared like a young philosopher meditating on the futility of games. Phatik was furious. "Makhan," he cried, "if you don't get down this minute I'll thrash you!"

Makhan only moved to a more comfortable position.

Now, if Phatik was to keep his regal dignity before the public, it was clear he ought to carry out his threat. But his courage failed him at the crisis. His fertile brain, however, rapidly seized upon a new manoeuvre which would discomfit his brother and afford his followers an added amusement. He gave the word of command to roll the log and Makhan over together. Makhan heard the order, and made it a point of honour to stick on. But he overlooked the fact, like those who attempt earthly fame in other matters, that there was peril in it.

The boys began to heave at the log with all their might, calling out, "One, two, three, go," At the word "go" the log went; and with it went Makhan's philosophy, glory and all.

All the other boys shouted themselves hoarse with delight. But Phatik was a little frightened. He knew what was coming. And, sure enough, Makhan rose from Mother Earth blind as Fate and screaming like the Furies. He rushed at Phatik and scratched his face and beat him and kicked him, and then went crying home. The first act of the drama was over.

Phatik wiped his face, and sat down on the edge of a sunken barge on the river bank, and began to chew a piece of grass. A boat came up to the landing, and a middle-aged man, with grey hair and dark moustache, stepped on shore. He saw the boy sitting there doing nothing, and asked him where the Chakravortis lived. Phatik went on chewing the grass, and said: "Over there," but it was quite impossible to tell where he pointed. The stranger asked him again. He swung his legs to and fro on the side of the barge, and said; "Go and find out," and continued to chew the grass as before.

But now a servant came down from the house, and told Phatik his mother wanted him. Phatik refused to move. But the servant was the master on this occasion. He took Phatik up roughly, and carried him, kicking and struggling in impotent rage.

When Phatik came into the house, his mother saw him. She called out angrily: "So you have been hitting Makhan again?"

Phatik answered indignantly: "No, I haven't; who told you that? "

His mother shouted: "Don't tell lies! You have."

Phatik said suddenly: "I tell you, I haven't. You ask Makhan!" But Makhan thought it best to stick to his previous statement. He said: "Yes, mother. Phatik did hit me."

Phatik's patience was already exhausted. He could not hear this injustice. He rushed at Makban, and hammered him with blows: "Take that" he cried, "and that, and that, for telling lies."

His mother took Makhan's side in a moment, and pulled Phatik away, beating him with her hands. When Phatik pushed her aside, she shouted out: "What I you little villain! would you hit your own mother?"

It was just at this critical juncture that the grey-haired stranger arrived. He asked what was the matter. Phatik looked sheepish and ashamed.

But when his mother stepped back and looked at the stranger, her anger was changed to surprise. For she recognised her brother, and cried: "Why, Dada! Where have you come from? "As she said these words, she bowed to the ground and touched his feet. Her brother had gone away soon after she had married, and he had started business in Bombay. His sister had lost her husband while he was In Bombay. Bishamber had now come back to Calcutta, and had at once made enquiries about his sister. He had then hastened to see her as soon as he found out where she was.

The next few days were full of rejoicing. The brother asked after the education of the two boys. He was told by his sister that Phatik was a perpetual nuisance. He was lazy, disobedient, and wild. But Makhan was as good as gold, as quiet as a lamb, and very fond of reading, Bishamber kindly offered to take Phatik off his sister's hands, and educate him with his own children in Calcutta. The widowed mother readily agreed. When his uncle asked Phatik If he would like to go to Calcutta with him, his joy knew no bounds, and he said; "Oh, yes, uncle! " In a way that made it quite clear that he meant it.

It was an immense relief to the mother to get rid of Phatik. She had a prejudice against the boy, and no love was lost between the two brothers. She was in daily fear that he would either drown Makhansome day in the river, or break his head in a fight, or run him into some danger or other. At the same time she was somewhat distressed to see Phatik's extreme eagerness to get away.

Phatik, as soon as all was settled, kept asking his uncle every minute when they were to start. He was on pins and needles all day long with excitement, and lay awake most of the night. He bequeathed to Makhan, in perpetuity, his fishing-rod, his big kite and his marbles. Indeed, at this time of departure his generosity towards Makhan was unbounded.

When they reached Calcutta, Phatik made the acquaintance of his aunt for the first time. She was by no means pleased with this unnecessary addition to her family. She found her own three boys quite enough to manage without taking any one else. And to bring a village lad of fourteen into their midst was terribly upsetting. Bishamber should really have thought twice before committing such an indiscretion.

In this world of human affairs there is no worse nuisance than a boy at the age of fourteen. He is neither ornamental, nor useful. It is impossible to shower affection on him as on a little boy; and he is always getting in the way. If he talks with a childish lisp he is called a baby, and if he answers in a grown-up way he is called impertinent. In fact any talk at all from him is resented. Then he is at the unattractive, growing age. He grows out of his clothes with indecent haste; his voice grows hoarse and breaks and quavers; his face grows suddenly angular and unsightly. It is easy to excuse the shortcomings of early childhood, but it is hard to tolerate even unavoidable lapses in a boy of fourteen. The lad himself becomes painfully self-conscious. When he talks with elderly people he is either unduly forward, or else so unduly shy that he appears ashamed of his very existence.

Yet it is at this very age when in his heart of hearts a young lad most craves for recognition and love; and he becomes the devoted slave of any one who shows him consideration. But none dare openly love him, for that would be regarded as undue indulgence, and therefore bad for the boy. So, what with scolding and chiding, he becomes very much like a stray dog that has lost his master.

For a boy of fourteen his own home is the only Paradise. To live in a strange house with strange people is little short of torture, while the height of bliss is to receive the kind looks of women, and never to be slighted by them.

It was anguish to Phatik to be the unwelcome guest in his aunt's house, despised by this elderly woman, and slighted, on every occasion. If she ever asked him to do anything for her, he would be so overjoyed that he would overdo it; and then she would tell him not to be so stupid, but to get on with his lessons. The cramped atmosphere of neglect in his aunt's house oppressed Phatik so much that he felt that he could hardly breathe. He wanted to go out into the open country and fill his lungs and breathe freely. But there was no open country to go to. Surrounded on all sides by Calcutta houses and walls, he would dream night after night of his village home, and long to be back there. He remembered the glorious meadow where he used to fly his kite all day long; the broad river-banks where he would wander about the livelong day singing and shouting for joy; the narrow brook where he could go and dive and swim at any time he liked. He thought of his band of boy companions over whom he was despot; and, above all, the memory of that tyrant mother of his, who had such a prejudice against him, occupied him day and night. A kind of physical love like that of animals; a longing to be in the presence of the one who is loved; an inexpressible wistfulness during absence; a silent cry of the inmost heart for the mother, like the lowing of a calf in the twilight; this love, which was almost an animal instinct, agitated the shy, nervous, lean, uncouth and ugly boy. No one could understand it, but it preyed upon his mind continually.

There was no more backward boy in the whole school than Phatik. He gaped and remained silent when the teacher asked him a question, and like an overladen ass patiently suffered all the blows that came down on his back. When other boys were out at play, he stood wistfully by the window and gazed at the roofs of the distant houses. And if by chance he espied children playing on the open terrace of any roof, his heart would ache with longing.

One day he summoned up all his courage, and asked his uncle: "Uncle, when can I go home?"

His uncle answered; "Wait till the holidays come." But the holidays would not come till November, and there was a long time still to wait.

One day Phatik lost his lesson-book. Even with the help of books he had found it very difficult indeed to prepare his lesson. Now it was impossible. Day after day the teacher would cane him unmercifully. His condition became so abjectly miserable that even his cousins were ashamed to own him. They began to jeer and insult him more than the other boys. He went to his aunt at last, and told her that he had lost his book.

His aunt pursed her lips in contempt, and said: "You great clumsy, country lout. How can I afford, with all my family, to buy you new books five times a month?"

That night, on his way back from school, Phatik had a bad headache with a fit of shivering. He felt he was going to have an attack of malarial fever. His one great fear was that he would be a nuisance to his aunt.

The next morning Phatik was nowhere to be seen. All searches in the neighbourhood proved futile. The rain had been pouring in torrents all night, and those who went out in search of the boy got drenched through to the skin. At last Bishamber asked help from the police.

At the end of the day a police van stopped at the door before the house. It was still raining and the streets were all flooded. Two constables brought out Phatik in their arms and placed him before Bishamber. He was wet through from head to foot, muddy all over, his face and eyes flushed red with fever, and his limbs all trembling. Bishamber carried him in his arms, and took him into the inner apartments. When his wife saw him, she exclaimed; "What a heap of trouble this boy has given us. Hadn't you better send him home?"

Phatik heard her words, and sobbed out loud: "Uncle, I was just going home; but they dragged me back again,"

The fever rose very high, and all that night the boy was delirious. Bishamber brought in a doctor. Phatik opened his eyes flushed with fever, and looked up to the ceiling, and said vacantly: "Uncle, have the holidays come yet? May I go home?"

Bishamber wiped the tears from his own eyes, and took Phatik's lean and burning hands in his own, and sat by him through the night. The boy began again to mutter. At last his voice became excited: "Mother," he cried, "don't beat me like that! Mother! I am telling the truth!"

The next day Phatik became conscious for a short time. He turned his eyes about the room, as if expecting some one to come. At last, with an air of disappointment, his head sank back on the pillow. He turned his face to the wall with a deep sigh.

Bishamber knew his thoughts, and, bending down his head, whispered: "Phatik, I have sent for your mother." The day went by. The doctor said in a troubled voice that the boy's condition was very critical.

Phatik began to cry out; "By the mark! --three fathoms. By the mark-- four fathoms. By the mark-." He had heard the sailor on the river- steamer calling out the mark on the plumb-line. Now he was himself plumbing an unfathomable sea.

Later in the day Phatik's mother burst into the room like a whirlwind, and began to toss from side to side and moan and cry in a loud voice.

Bishamber tried to calm her agitation, but she flung herself on the bed, and cried: "Phatik, my darling, my darling."

Phatik stopped his restless movements for a moment. His hands ceased beating up and down. He said: "Eh?"

The mother cried again: "Phatik, my darling, my darling."

Phatik very slowly turned his head and, without seeing anybody, said: "Mother, the holidays have come."

The End

The Author:

Rabindranath Tagore (born 6 May 1861—died 7 August 1941) was the most versatile personality in the modern age Indian art—a poet, dramatist, actor, producer, musician, painter, educationist, reformer, philosopher, practical idealist, teacher, novelist, short story writer, essayist, critic of life and literature, nationalist and internationalist, so and so forth. He left behind a vast body of literature including all types of writing. W. B. Yeats, one of the renowned Irish poet praised Tagore by writing an Introduction to his Gitanjali which won Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. His stories generally reflect the common social life with sharp vivacity. He travelled all over the world including more than thirty countries on five continents. He expressed his ideas on many essential fields of human life. He spoke on divergent matters like culture, gender, poverty, education, freedom, nature, globalization, etc. in different countries.

His Major works:

Originally Tagore wrote in Bengali and it is translated into English by himself and others. He was also the master of English and wrote in English. Literature in both languages got the same popularity and translated into many other languages.

1. 1905: The Wreck (novel)
2. 1910: Gora (novel)
3. 1910: Gitanjali (spiritual songs)
4. 1913: Gardener (play)
5. 1914: Chitra (play)
6. 1914: The Post Office (play)
7. 1914: The King of the Dark Chamber (play)
8. 1916: The Home and the World (novel)
9. 1933: Chandalika (play)

Comment on the Story:

It is a story of a young boy called Phatik who has mischievous nature. His mother sends him to live with his (maternal) uncle. There he did not get fair treatment by uncle's wife and other children. He strongly desired for belongingness and love and missed his home, mother and brother. At the end, his uncle understood his feelings and sent him back to his home. The writer has portrayed the emotional condition of an adolescent boy very skillfully. The simple and straight way is adopted to develop the story by using the third person narrative technique. The psychological interferences in the mind of Phatik is presented which is the centre of the story. Initially, Phatik has been pictured negatively but later we impart sympathy to him. Mischievousness is not the permanent feature of Phatik's nature; it is a state of adolescence. At the end of the story, all is set well with Phatik's return to his own home.

Glossary:

Mischief: a trick to do something bad.

Unanimously: agreeably.

Saunter: to walk in an idle or leisurely manner.

Furious: very angry.

Thrash: to beat soundly with a stick or whip.

Manoeuvre: a trick, a tactical action.

Peril: danger or risk.

Heave: to pull or lift.

Hoarse: rough or harsh in sound.

Furies: supposed to be certain demons that pursued guilty men with loud cries.

Sunken barge: a boat lying at the bottom into the (river or sea) water.

To and fro: from one place to another.

Meditate: to think of, ponder over.

Futility: uselessness, vanity.

Impotent rage: useless or ineffective anger.

Indignantly: angrily.

Perpetual nuisance: continuing annoyance or pain.

On pins and needles: extremely eager, full of enthusiasm.

Sullenly: in a bad temper.

Bequeath: to give or leave by will, transmit.

In perpetuity: forever.

Lad: a boy, youth.

Indiscretion: carelessness.

Lisp: to speak falteringly, childishly.

Impertinent: irrelevant, arch; bold.

Espied: saw.

Regal dignity: position like a king.

Fertile (brain): full of inventions and plans.

Point of honour: feeling of disgrace if given away.

Mother earth: the earth is considered as human being.

Crave: desire.

Stray dog: wandering dog on street.

Cramp: painful, confined.

Uncouth: unfamiliar, awkward; rude.

Longing: a strong desire for belongingness.

Cane: to beat.

Abject: sunk or existing in low state or condition; hopelessness.

Jeer: to mock or ridicule.

Clumsy: awkward, lacking dexterity or tact.

Lout: an awkward brutish person.

Torrent: a violent stream of water.

Delirious: agitated, frantic.

No love was lost: a mild way of saying that they disliked each other.

On pins: exceedingly restless.

Indecent haste: unbecoming eagerness.

Holiday: release.

Composition:

A) Answer the following questions.

1. Sketch the character of Phatik.
2. Does you sympathize phatik? Why?
3. What is the theme of the story? Comment on various themes.
4. Describe Phatik's condition when he went to his uncle's home.
5. Narrate the story in your own words.
6. Comment on the title of the story.
7. What is your opinion about the ending of the story?

B) Choose the correct option from the following questions.

1. Phatik is a character appeared in the story _____.
 - a. Home-Coming
 - b. Home-Going
 - c. Home-Returning
 - d. Home-Leaving
2. Phatik was living with his mother, brother and other boys in the _____.
 - a. Town

- b. City
 - c. Village
 - d. Suburb
3. Who was Makhan in the story?
- a. Phatik's friend
 - b. Phatik's brother
 - c. Phatik's uncle
 - d. Phatik's uncle's son
4. Why Phatik was furious?
- a. Because Makhan sat down on the log
 - b. Because Makhan has beaten him
 - c. Because boys were not playing with him
 - d. None of the above
5. "If you don't get down this minute I'll thrash you!" who said?
- a. Phatik
 - b. Makhan
 - c. Phatik's mother
 - d. Phatik's aunt
6. Who is Bishamber in the story?
- a. Phatik's brother
 - b. Phatik's father
 - c. Phatik's maternal uncle
 - d. Phatik's paternal uncle
7. Where did Bishamber come back to live?
- a. To Bombay
 - b. To Calcutta
 - c. To Phatik's village
 - d. To Bilaspur
8. Where did Phatik's mother send Phatik?
- a. To her brother's home in Calcutta
 - b. To her sister's home in Calcutta
 - c. To her father's home in Calcutta
 - d. To her uncle's home in Calcutta
9. How many years was Phatik old?
- a. Thirteen
 - b. Fourteen
 - c. Fifteen
 - d. Sixteen
10. Phatik was not loved by ____.
- a. His uncle's children
 - b. His aunt
 - c. His schoolmates
 - d. All the above
11. Who did bring Phatik back to the home as he left his uncle's home without telling anybody?
- a. Two constables
 - b. His own uncle
 - c. Two army men
 - d. Two friends of uncle
12. Home-Coming is a story of ____.
- a. An old age experience
 - b. An adolescence experience
 - c. An immature child experience
 - d. None of the above
13. The story Home-Coming deals with ____.
- a. Village life
 - b. City life

- c. The difference between them
 - d. All the above
14. The story ends with ____.
- a. A sad note
 - b. A happy note
 - c. A bad note
 - d. A horrible note
15. The story closes with the following words:
- a. "Mother, the holidays have come"
 - b. "Phatik, my darling, my darling"
 - c. "Phatik, I have sent for your mother"
 - d. "Don't beat me like that! Mother! I am telling the truth!"

To Nun with Love by Shiv K. Kumar

As she took the plastic knife to slit open the heavily scented azure envelop, with a budded vermillion rose embedded in the left-hand corner, curiosity brought a couple of furrows to an otherwise smooth forehead. Then, as her eyes raced through the opening lines, her face crimsoned with an upsurge of intense embarrassment.

Sister Jasmina
Headmistress
Jesus Primary School
Gondapally

I don't know if I should open out my heart to you, especially when I must remain anonymous, unknown and invisible. This may make me doubly sinful in your eyes—like a driver running over a pedestrian and then bolting from the scene of accident. But surely, your divine understanding of human suffering, through Christ, should enable you to empathize with my agony.

I have fallen in love with you, Sister. These words will shock you as blasphemous. They ever suggest incest. But I can't help it. Maybe it's the devil in me. I feel I am already burning in hell—my mortification is ghastly, my sin abysmal, my pain unendurable. But there's nobody else I can turn to for understanding and compassion.

I happened one day before your annual function, when I came with my daughter for the grand rehearsal. You were directing her third grade class as they sang 'Oh, my darling Clementine.' I saw you sitting at the piano, robed in virgin white silk, your net gently arched over the keyboard like a swan's, a little crescent of your ebony hair showing under the veil, and the words being formed by those fragile lips. It was heavenly, like Frank Dicksee's 'Harmony', except that in this scene the admirer stood anonymously four rows away with other parents. My imagination lent you a rubied jhumka for your forehead, diamond bracelets for your wrists, and gold earrings like a large yellow moon. I imagined you on a warm summer night, the very picture of youth, beauty, grace and purity. Married to a guileful shrew, I have wanted someone like you all my life. And now you have risen like the star of my nativity.

I have come to look at you each morning since then, as you direct the school assembly and gently scold the late-comers, while I stand securely ensconced among the other parents. My daughter is always early now. That allows me a little more time for you. Just a glimpse of you each morning is enough for me to go cheerfully through the grind at my office.

The letter stunned Sister Jasmina. Her first reaction was of shame. Then she felt intense anger, and emotion almost unknown to her. She felt as though someone had deserted her. Why had this devilish man chosen her? Daughter of an affluent coal merchant, she had voluntarily renounced the world only three years ago, at the age of twenty-one, to dedicate herself to Christ and humanity. Now the world she'd forsaken seemed to have caught up with her anyway.

Some moisture glistened under her dark long eyelashes. Alone in her office, she went down on her knees to pray for divine help in meeting this challenge from a sly enemy who was trying to ambush her.

It was nervous and tremulous voice that addressed the assembly next morning. And the shortest ever speech.

‘Children, never forgot to pray before you retire at night. Prayer is strength—the only weapon to counter all evil.’

Then she strode to the gate with the apparent intention of chiding those who were late. But she merely let them off with a very mild reprimand. She stood on the pavement, furtively looking around for some clue to her mysterious enemy. But there was no way to identify him. A bunch of parents still lingered near the bus stop, while the traffic rolled on relentlessly—trucks, milk vans, scooters, bicycles and rickshaws.

The pavement vendors on either side of the gate were a little intrigued to see her standing there so long after school began. The grizzled old woman who sold roasted peanuts in cones made out of old newspapers smiled her toothless greeting to her. The young candy vendor in tattered clothes, with a jumbled assortment of chewing gum, chocolate bars and the lemon drops laid out on a strawmat in front of him, nearly stood up for her, as though to pay homage to royalty. Even the blind stationer, in his soiled dhoti, perched precariously on a wooden stool and surrounded by his armoury of compasses, rulers, pencils, sharpeners and erasers, felt a mysterious awe descend upon him.

Another letter came in the mail next morning, in the same scented azure cover. This time it was a brief scribble on a ruled sheet torn off a school notebook. His daughter’s? Her hands trembled as she opened the envelop.

Yes, I too prayed last night, perhaps for the first time, to counteract my own ‘evil’ longing for you, but it was a futile exercise. Then I tried to pray for your forgiveness, because I know I have hurt you. That look of fear on your face this morning, like a hunted deer’s, as you looked all around trying to locate me—you looked all the more beautiful for it. It put a sparkle in your eyes. I was tucked away behind the tobacconist’s, just round the corner. Of course, I will be some place else next time.

But don’t be upset, my dear. I mean no harm to you. I only love you. I’ll try prayer again and I’ll ask for peace for you. May be that will work. Perhaps you too should pray for me so that we may communicate with each other—through Christ.

God bless you!

There had been only two letters, but already she felt as if her life was falling apart. When school was over she sat in her office, wrapped in a silence which was periodically punctured by the muffled sound of distant traffic. Outside, in the school grounds, the gardener had already started watering the lawns and flower beds, and she could hear the hiss of his hose.

As she stood up to look out of the window, her eyes fell on her reflection in the pane. She saw the straggling crescent of her under her veil, her curved neck (‘like a swan’s’), her ample bosom, and the puzzlement in her large eyes.

‘This accursed body! I know I’m on trial.’

That night she felt distracted in her prayer, as though she was caught in some-cross talk on the phone, with the devil cutting in blasphemously. In a revelation, almost epiphanic, she decided to go to the confessional, submit herself to the Lord’s will, and seek some way out of her confusion.

Next Sunday morning she was seen walking across the gravel path of St. Peter’s—a seventeenth century Portuguese cathedral built by the earliest European settlers in this remote town, about eighty miles away from Madras. It was a gigantic Gothic structure in sable granite, its mammoth glass windows lavishly painted with the pictures of stout-bodied Madonnas in various prayerful postures. Its steeples reared up in triumphant certitude.

Quickly, she turned round a gray column and vanished into the confessional. Drawing close to the screen, she felt assured of complete privacy. She then poured her heart out.

‘Why should you feel so upset, my child, at this lunatic’s letter?’ asked a gentle husky voice from behind the screen.

‘Father, I feel frightened—I feel like I’ve been exposed to the evil eye.’

‘Why should you?’ Just throw these letters away and continue to do your duty to Christ.’

‘But I find it difficult to forget...’

‘What?’

‘The things he has said.’

‘What things?’ This time the confessor’s tone was a little astringent.

‘His references to my body and...’ Sister Jasmina’s voice trailed off into a whisper, and she broke into a sob.

‘Don’t cry, my child. Speak on.’ The confessor was somewhat mystified. He now pressed his ear close to the screen. Sounds of agonized breathing slashed the air.

‘The other day, I saw my reflection in the window pane of my office, and my eyes lingered sinfully over every part of my body: I felt...’ There was a brief pause, and then she muttered, ‘Father, isn’t it a sin to become conscious of one’s physical being when the spirit is the only reality?’

The confessor answered with mute silence. It was a confused voice that now stuttered:

‘We shall talk about these matters some other time. This is not the moment. You are too agitated. In the meanwhile I’ll pray for you, my child.’

The confession had been of no help. She must seek to move to another place to get out of this maze. When she asked Mother Superior for a posting elsewhere on grounds of health, her request was immediately granted. She was directed to take over as Headmistress of Virgin Mary Primary School at Zaminabad near Agra.

She was given a most touching send-off by the children, staff and parents. The function began with the presentation of bouquets—jasmines, lilies, roses, woven into all sort of patterns. What attracted everyone’s attention was a large heart-shaped bouquet of vermilion roses, offered by a little girl who almost stumbled on the steps as she walked up to the rostrum.

This was followed by a colourful sequence of entertainment—a playlet on the nativity, a skit on the late-comers, a fancy-dress parade, a pantomime, followed by group singing. When someone requested Sister Jasmina to play on the piano, she flushed and politely declined. She had not been keeping too well, she replied.

Finally, the farewell speeches. Two children spouted out prepared orations, lauding the qualities of her ‘head and heart’, followed by a couple of parents who alluded to her ‘charisma’.

Sister Jasmina, however, seemed to be lost in another world altogether. Her eyes moved restlessly from one end of the room to the other, looking for him. When she rose to respond, she looked so tense that it appeared she might collapse. Her face twitched and she clenched the lectern with both hands. She tried to push a straggling wisp of hair back up under her veil, drew in a deep breath, and plunged into words.

‘All of you have been very generous to me with your affection—children, teachers and parents. I’ll carry your blessings with me wherever I go. However, what one has to guard against is attachment to any place or object. The spirit alone should lead us, not our mortal being. And so, gladly, I have accepted my posting at another place. God bless you all!’

Then she slumped into her chair. A wave of sniffing, sighing and sobbing now swept the audience. Suddenly, an excited group of little girls began to shout in unison: ‘Three cheers for Sister Jasmina!’ and a thunderous clapping of hands rent the air.

A week after she had taken over at Zaminabad, another letter arrived, and the envelop had the same vermilion rose.

‘Oh, dear Jesus!’ She exclaimed in fright.

It was a long letter this time, neatly written on crisp white paper, as if he had worked very hard on it.

Tracking down your address was no problem at all.

What are these clerks and teachers for? But seeking a transfer on ‘grounds of health’ was close to untruth. May be it was noble lie, *magnanimamensogna*. Mild prevarication also seeped into your farewell speech. Surely, it wasn’t the Jesus-Mary Education Fraternity that sent you away from me. It was your own choice. And wasn’t I the primary cause of it all? Otherwise, you wouldn’t have looked so searchingly for me in the audience.

I feel we have been playing games with each other, dodging each other. But something strange seems to have emerged from this business. I am on the brink of a conversation for which I was totally unprepared. Now that you have chosen to ensconce yourself in an outlandish place (or have you gone into retreat?), I have been forced to come to terms with myself. I realize that I love you more than ever before—and, I have become something of a believer. I find this incredible because, although I was born into an orthodox Hindu family, I was alienated from the idea of faith by my scientific education. But I now comprehend for the first time why people believe in God without ever seeing Him. The invisible seems to have a mysterious edge over the known and the near. It is as if God has chosen you—so young, so beautiful, so pure—as the medium to bring me faith.

Only yesterday afternoon, I stumbled on a letter in my wife’s wardrobe from an admirer. There was even a mysterious phone call the same evening! The person hung up as soon as I picked up the receiver. But I don’t hate her for it. Let her go her own way. Maybe her clandestine affair will make her less shrewish.

Now a bit of news for you. Remember the old woman who sold roasted peanuts outside the school? She died this afternoon, collapsed right at the gate. A sudden stroke. Only this morning I had drawn her into a casual conversation about you. She spoke of you so fondly!

Do you know that Sister Juliana, your successor, plans to move all the vendors to beyond the traffic lights? She's a real dragon, shouting at everybody in a raucous voice, so like my wife's, and terrorizing the late-comers.

This will be my last letter to you. Beyond this point, I must let silence and guide me to a stronger faith.

God bless you!

Only yours

...

The End

The Author:

Shiv K. Kumar was an Indian story writer born in 1921 in Lahore (now in Pakistan). He completed his education from Dayanand Anglo Vedic High School, Government College and Forman Christian College, Lahore. He started his career as a lecturer at D. A. V. College, Lahore. During the partition, he came to Delhi but in 1950, he left India for Cambridge where he joined Fitzwilliam College. He completed his PhD research from the University of Cambridge with the thesis entitled "Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel". He studied under the guidance of prestigious professors David Daiches and F. R. Leavis. Then he returned to India and started teaching English Literature, first at the Usmania University, Hyderabad and then the University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad and there he retired. He was visiting faculty at the Universities of Oklahoma, Northern Iowa, Drake, Hofstra, Marshall, Yale, so and so forth. He received Sahitya Academy Award in 1987 and Padma Bhushan in 2001 for his contribution to literature. He handled many forms of literature—poetry, drama, novel, short story, criticism and translation—with master skill. Now, he lives in Hyderabad.

His Notable Works:

1. 1970: Articulate Silences (poetry)
2. 1974: Cobwebs in the Sun (Poetry)
3. 1976: Subterfuges (poetry)
4. 1977: The Last Wedding Anniversary (play)
5. 1979: The Bone's Prayer (novel)
6. 1980: Beyond Love and Other Stories (stories)
7. 1983: Nude Before God (novel)
8. 1986: Trapfalls in the Sky (poetry—Sahitya Academy Award, 1987)
9. 2001: To Nun With Love and Other Stories (stories)

Comment on the Story:

The story is in the epistolary form as it contains letters written to a school teacher by an unknown person. Sister Jasmina, the central character, bothers as she receives the anonymous letters begging for her love. The man who sent these letters has not been revealed to readers in the story. The reaction of Sister Jasmina is significant and she tried to get rid of this complex situation. She got very much annoyed by these unknown letters. She did not disclose the fact to anyone but went to a cathedral for confession and solace. The confession also did not help her to get out from the situation. At last, she decided to get transferred from the school and applied for transfer on health grounds. She granted the transfer order and joined near Agra. But there also she got the same letter by the same anonymous person. Now she felt a great annoyance and helplessness. This time, the letter writer admitted that it would be the last letter to her.

There are two major characters in the story—Sister Jasmina and an unknown person who sent her love letters. Much of the plot has been disclosed in the form of letters. The story is told by a third party or writer i.e. in the third person point of view. Readers get the clear picture of two different minds—opposite to each other. The curiosity is maintained till the end without opening the identity of the person who sent letters but it is assured to readers that it was the last letter to Jasmina. A clue has been left behind to disclose the identity of the man for Jasmina but not for the readers. In the farewell function, a small girl brought a large heart-shaped bouquet of vermilion roses which attracted everyone's attention. And so that girl's father might be behind the whole scene. Yet readers are unable to stress out the letter man.

Glossary:

Azure: the blue colour of the clear sky.

Furrow: a deep wrinkle.

Upsurge: a rapid or sudden rise.

Embarrassment: abashment, confusion.

Bolting: a break away from or oppose one's previous affiliation.

Agony: intense pain of mind or body.

Blasphemous: abusive, irreverence or contempt; to defame.

Incest: sexual intercourse between persons so closely related that they are forbidden by law to marry.

Mortification: a sense of humiliation and shame caused by something that wounds one's pride or self-respect.

Ghastly: terrifying horrible to the senses.

Abysmal: having immense or fathomless extension downward, backward, or inward; immeasurably low or wretched.

Unendurable: unbearable.

Robe: a long flowing outer garment.

Arch: to cover or provide with an arch i.e. angle or bend.

Crescent: marked by an increase.

Ebony: black, dark.

Veil: a length of cloth worn by women as a covering for the head, shoulders or face.

Guileful: cunning, deceitful.

Shrew: an ill-tempered scolding woman.

Ensconce: hide, conceal.

Affluent: rich.

Forsake: to renounce or turn away from entirely, abandon.

Sly: cunning, devious.

Tremulous: fearful.

Reprimand: rebuke, chide.

Grizzled: sprinkled or streaked with gray.

Peanut: oily edible seed (*watana*).

Scribble: to write hastily or carelessly.

Hiss: to make a sharp or sibilant sound.

Hose: to spray, water or wash.

Epiphanic: an illuminating discovery or realization; a revealing scene or moment

Gothic: a style of architecture developed in northern France and spreading through Western Europe from the middle of the 12th century to the early 16th century.

Mammoth: of very great size; enormous.

Lunatic: wildly foolish, crazy; insane.

Astringent: contraction.

Sob: to cry or weep with convulsive catching of the breath.

Rostrum: stage, platform, dais; podium.

Spout: to speak or utter readily, volubly, and at length.

Twitch: to move or pull with a sudden motion.

Clench: to hold fast and tightly.

Lectern: a stand used to support a book or script in a convenient position for a standing reader or speaker.

Wisp: something frail, slight or fleeting.

Slump: to fall or sink suddenly.

Prevarication: deviation from the truth.

Dodging: tricking, playing.

Clandestine: secret, private.

Comprehension:

A) Answer the following questions.

1. Comment on the theme of the story.
2. How did Sister Jasmina react on anonymous letters? Explain.
3. Write a detailed note on the character of Sister Jasmina.

4. Discuss the plot structure (with epistolary form) of the story.
5. What would be your response, if you receive some anonymous letter? State your own view.
6. Rewrite the story in your own words.
7. What is your opinion about the man who sent love letters to Sister Jasmina? Criticize.
8. Justify the title of the story.

B) Choose the correct option from the following questions.

1. _____ is the story composed by Shiv K. Kumar.
 - a. After Twenty Years
 - b. A Ghost
 - c. To Nun With Love
 - d. The Happy Prince
2. Which point of view is used to narrate the story?
 - a. First person
 - b. Second person
 - c. Third person
 - d. All the above
3. What is the name of central character in the story?
 - a. Sister Jasmina
 - b. Sister Juliana
 - c. Peanut vendor
 - d. All the above
4. Sister Jasmina was _____ at Jesus Primary School at _____.
 - a. Teacher, Zaminabad
 - b. Headmistress, Gondapally
 - c. Teacher, Agra
 - d. Headmistress, Agra
5. Jasmine was the daughter of an affluent _____.
 - a. Tar merchant
 - b. Coal merchant
 - c. Cloth merchant
 - d. Shoe merchant
6. The grizzled old woman sold _____ in cones made out of told newspapers.
 - a. Roasted peanuts
 - b. Roasted groundnuts
 - c. Roasted green nuts
 - d. Roasted almonds
7. The letter sender's _____ was learning in Sister Jasmina's school.
 - a. Son
 - b. Daughter
 - c. Brother
 - d. Sister
8. Another letter came in the mail next morning which was written on a ruled sheet torn off a _____.
 - a. School notebook
 - b. Blank sheet
 - c. School book
 - d. School handbook
9. "Next Sunday morning she was seen walking across the gravel path of St. Peter—a seventeenth century _____ cathedral built by the earliest _____ settlers in this remote town."
 - a. French, American
 - b. Portuguese, European
 - c. American, French
 - d. European, Portuguese
10. The cathedral was a gigantic _____ structure in sable granite.
 - a. Gothic
 - b. Indian

- c. Fatic
 - d. Bothic
11. "Its mammoth glass windows lavishly painted with the pictures of stout-bodies _____ in various prayerful postures."
- a. Mary Magdalene
 - b. Mary-An-Evans
 - c. Madonnas
 - d. Maddo-Annas
12. 'Father, I feel frightened—I feel like I've been exposed to the evil eye.' Who said?
- a. Sister Jasmina
 - b. Sister Juliana
 - c. Father
 - d. The person who sent letter
13. Jasmina was transferred as Headmistress of _____ at _____ near Agra.
- a. Jesus Primary School, Gondapally
 - b. Virgin Mary Primary School, Zaminabad
 - c. Zaminabad, Virgin Mary Primary School
 - d. Gondapally, Jesus Primary School
14. Which thing attracted everyone's attention in Jasmina's farewell function?
- a. A large heart-shaped bouquet of vermilion roses
 - b. A skit on the late comers
 - c. A fancy dress parade
 - d. A pantomime and group singing
15. 'All of you have been very generous to me with your affection—children, teachers and parents.' Whose these words are?
- a. The man who sent letters
 - b. New teacher appointed
 - c. Sister Jasmina
 - d. A girl in her speech
16. Who came as a new teacher (Headmistress) in the place of Sister Jasmina?
- a. Sister Mary
 - b. Sister Yasmina
 - c. Sister Juli
 - d. Sister Juliana
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