**Reference(s)**:  *Hischak, Thomas S. (2012). American Literature on Stage and Screen*

**Sub-topics** – “The Last Leaf” by O.Henry

**Analysis of facts**

1. “The Last Leaf” concerns Johnsy, a poor young woman who is seriously ill with pneumonia. She believes that when the ivy vine on the wall outside her window loses all its leaves, she will also die. Her neighbour Behrman, an artist, tricks her by painting a leaf on the wall. Johnsy recovers, but (in a twist typical of O. Henry) Behrman, who caught pneumonia while painting the leaf, dies.
2. “The Last Leaf” takes place in Greenwich Village, a bohemian neighbourhood in New York City, sometime in the early 20th century. The story canters on Sue and Johnsy, two young women artists who share a studio at the top of a run-down apartment building.
3. When winter comes, Johnsy becomes grievously ill with a case of pneumonia. The doctor who visits them predicts that Johnsy won’t have much chance of survival if she doesn’t find the will to live, since his medicines have little effect on a patient who has decided that she’s going to die. When the doctor asks if Johnsy is depressed about something in particular, Sue mentions Johnsy’s unfulfilled ambition to paint the Bay of Naples, but the doctor is dismissive and asks if Johnsy is troubled over a man.
4. An increasingly fatalistic Johnsy becomes obsessed with the leaves falling from a vine outside her window. After the last leaf falls, she tells Sue, she will die. Sue works on an illustration for a magazine (which she plans to sell to buy more food for Johnsy) and tries unsuccessfully to convince Johnsy that she has something to live for.
5. Sue goes to visit their downstairs neighbour, Behrman—an old, unsuccessful artist who, after decades of failure, still hopes to paint his “masterpiece.” When he hears about Johnsy’s illness and her obsession with the leaves outside her window, he is initially contemptuous of the idea that leaves could have anything to do with Johnsy’s health.
6. Ultimately, however, Behrman stays out all night in a violent storm to paint a realistic-looking leaf onto the wall outside Sue and Johnsy’s window. Seeing that the “last leaf”—which is in fact Behrman’s painting—has seemingly survived the storm two nights in a row, Johnsy takes hope and begins to recover.
7. However, Behrman catches pneumonia from exposure to the rain and cold, and dies a few days later. When Sue tells Johnsy this, she remarks that Behrman had finally painted his “masterpiece.”
8. “The Last Leaf” takes place in Greenwich Village, a bohemian neighbourhood in New York City, sometime in the early 20th century. The narrator remarks that the labyrinthine, winding streets of the neighbourhood make it an ideal home for artists, since debt collectors find the area difficult to navigate.
9. However, the “starving artist” existence has its costs, such as poor living conditions, shortage of food, and exposure to cold and sickness. It’s also worth noting that Greenwich Village has historically been home to a large portion of New York’s lesbian and gay population—a fact which becomes significant in light of Henry’s implication that the two female protagonists may be romantically involved.