

Lec 1

Language: Through language we can transmit really complicated thoughts to one another. These thoughts and ideas can be transmitted across vast reaches of space and time. We are able to transmit knowledge across minds.

Through language, one can put a bizarre new idea in the listener's mind. So, for instance, if one were to say, 'Imagine a jellyfish waltzing in a library while thinking about quantum mechanics!'

Now if everything has gone relatively well in your life so far, you probably have not had that thought before. But now that you have listened about it, you might have been tempted to think it through language.

Now, of course, there is not just one language in the world, there are about 7000 languages spoken in the world.

And all the languages differ from one another in all kinds of ways. Some languages have different sounds, different vocabularies, and they also have different structure.

And this begs the question: 'Does the language we speak shape the way we think?' This is an ancient/historical question that has been around for a long, long time now. People have been speculating about this forever.

Charlemagne, Holy Roman Emperor, said, 'To have a second language is to have a second soul'. Now this bespeaks of a strong statement that language crafts/shapes reality.

However, you also have Shakespeare whose character Juliet (from *Romeo and Juliet*) says, 'What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet'. And this may suggest that maybe language does not craft reality.

But if we look closely, languages of course are living things, things that we can hone and change to suit our needs. And therefore, it gives you the opportunity to ask, 'Why do I think the way I do?'

'How could I think differently?' And also, 'what thoughts do I wish to create'.

Language is one of our most nuanced and powerful tools. The relationship between language and society is basically reciprocal since there are certain ways in which language works in society and similarly society governs in a sense the use of language.

The way to look at literature is to look at it as an instrument that sensitises us to different things. We all know that if five different people are asked to describe one scene, they will all describe it differently.

Some may describe the light, others may focus on what people's feet were doing, others may look at the material, shape of the room or the setting. A great writer picks

up on those things that matter.

It is almost like their radar is attuned to the most significant moments. What literature is about is a record of people with very sophisticated radars who are picking up on the really sophisticated stuff.

The interesting thing is that for us that radar is not something that we should simply passively accept while we read the book. It is something that we should learn from. The intelligence giving power of great literature is that we are sensitized by the books we read.

And the more books we read, and the deeper their lessons sink into us, the more pairs of glasses we have and those glasses will enable us to see things that we would otherwise have missed.

'What is Literature for?' – Allain de Botton

Allain de Botton begins with a very fundamental question regarding the utility of literature in today's world. One of the corollaries to this is also 'Why should we spend our time reading novels or poems when out there, big things are going on'?

Botton then moves on to enumerate the various advantages, benefits, and virtues of reading literature such as:

1 It saves time: At the very outset, it appears as if reading literature is a huge waste of time.

But if you come to think of it, it gives us access to a staggering range of emotions, ideas, thoughts, opinions, feelings, perspectives, and events that otherwise would take us years, decades or even a lifetime to try to experience directly.

Botton calls it 'a reality simulator', a machine that puts you through infinitely more situations and circumstances than you could ever directly witness.

It safely allows us from the comfort zone of our reading room to see what it is like to get divorced or kill someone and feel remorseful or to quit your job and take off to the desert or make a terrible mistake while leading your country.

In other words, what we are basically hinting at is the fact that literature permits us to speed up time in order to see the arc or trajectory of a life from childhood to old age. It also introduces us to various settings or *mise en scènes* such as palaces, countless bedrooms so that one is constantly tempted to compare or assess one's life in relation to that of others.

Similarly, reading literature can open an entirely unexplored world of fascinating characters: it could be Roman general, an 11th century French princess, a Russian upper-class mother embarking on an affair.

It takes you across continents and centuries thereby curing us of provincialism and almost at no cost, it turns us into citizens of the world.

2 It makes you nicer: It basically allows us to look at a particular situation from

someone else's point of view. It pushes us to consider the consequences of our actions on others in a way that we otherwise would not.

It also provides us with vivid and arresting examples of kindly, generous, and sympathetic people. More often than not, literature stands in opposition to the dominant value system, the one that usually rewards money and power.

Writers are thus on the other side, as it were, and they make us sympathetic to ideas and feelings that are of deep importance but that cannot afford airtime in a commercialised, status-conscious and cynical world.

3 It is a cure for loneliness: Many of us are more socially maladjusted than we actually care to admit. We often face difficulties when trying to say what is really on our minds. But in books, we find descriptions of who we genuinely are and what events are actually like.

That is, there is an unfiltered/uncensored/honest description which is qualitatively different from what ordinary conversations allow for. In the best books, it appears as though the writer knows us better than we know ourselves.

Because of their extraordinary capacity to communicate with words, writers find a way to describe the fragile, bizarre, and unique experiences of our inner lives.

It could be anything ranging from the light on a summer morning to the anxiety that we felt at the gathering, the sensations of a first date, the envy or admiration (as the case maybe) when a friend told us of their new business.

The sense of nostalgia or desire that we felt looking at the profile of another passenger we never dare to speak to.

Writers open our hearts and minds and provide us maps to our own selves so that we can travel in them more reliably and less with a feeling of paranoia and persecution.

As the famous 19th century American essayist Emerson rightly observes, 'In the works of great writers, we find our own neglected thoughts'. Literature, in that sense, is a corrective or solution to the superficiality and compromises of friendship.

Books are our true friends, always available, never too demanding, and giving us unadorned accounts of what things are really like

4 It prepares you for failure:

Throughout our lives, one of our most haunting fears is that of failing or being what is otherwise fashionably labelled as a 'loser'. At an ordinary, everyday level, the media takes us into stories of failure.

And even though a lot of literature too is also concerned with failure, that is, in one way or another, a great many novels, plays, and poems are about people who have 'messed up', people who committed a crime with no premeditated intent, who let down their partner or who died after running up some debts on shopping sprees.

If the media got to them, they would undoubtedly make an example out of them and

crucify them. But the fascinating thing about books is that they do not judge as harshly or as one-dimensionally as the media.

They evoke pity for the hero and fear for ourselves based on a new sense of how near we all are to destroying our own lives.

The question that arises here could be summarised thus: That if literature can really do all of the above, then should we not be treating it a bit differently to the way we do now?

We often look at it as a distraction or an entertainment (something for the beach perhaps). But its utility value exceeds far beyond that since for all intents and purposes, it is really a kind of therapy in the broad sense.

We could train ourselves to treat it as doctors treat their medicines, something we prescribe in response to a range of ailments and classify according to the problems it might best be suited to addressing.

But above all, it deserves its prestige because of the fact that it's a tool to help us live and die with a little more wisdom, goodness, and sanity.

Sir Ken Robinson begins by drawing our attention to the extraordinary capacity/evidence for human creativity and the sheer, staggering range and variety of it.

In addition, he also acknowledges the acute sense of uncertainty that we all have regarding our future despite our expertise and proficiency in various disciplines.

There is a kind of contradiction or paradox that one often finds or notices in the way in which people who have an interest in education are often looked down upon on the one hand, but on the other hand the one who are disrespectful of these people, they are quite proud and vain about their own academic accomplishments and educational qualifications.

And these educational qualifications go deep with people like religion or money.

Our vested interest in education, according to Robinson, is partly because it is one of the weapons or means through which one is supposed to make sense of the ungraspable or impossible to comprehend future.

In the face of an unknowable future, a future that one simply cannot predict, the one thing that we have in hand is education and therefore we try and prepare kids for it through teaching and pedagogy.

And yet, all is not lost or dull or bleak because of the fact that children exhibit an extraordinary capacity for imagination, creativity, and alternative ways of perceiving the world.

Ken's contention is that when we are kids, we never have a scenario in which just one child is extraordinary or exceptional. Rather, all of us have remarkable skills and talents but most of these are squandered or wasted in a fairly mercilessly by the education system.

In other words, literacy and creativity are never given the same importance in schools even though that is how it should be.

Robinson recounts the story of a little girl who was in a drawing lesson. This girl was six years old, sitting at the back, drawing and the one thing that the teacher constantly complained about was that this little girl barely paid any attention in the class.

The only thing that interested her was the drawing class. This aroused the curiosity of the teacher and she goes over to her and says, 'What are you drawing?' to which the girl replies, 'I am drawing a picture of God'.

The teacher's response to this was, 'But nobody knows what God looks like' to which the girl once again replies, 'They will in a minute'. The point of the story is that whenever kids find an opportunity or a chance, they will grab it, they will never miss it.

There is an inherent tendency in kids to be creative, experimental, and fearless before they are exposed to the grinding and uninspired processes of education

systems. As Ken rightly points out, 'If they don't know, they'll have a go'.

This indicates a certain ability to fill the gaps whenever an opportunity presents itself. In other words, they are not afraid of being wrong. A word of caution here is that being wrong is not the same as being creative.

But obviously, if we do not have a venturesome or daring spirit, a certain kind of readiness or preparedness to be wrong, if you like, then chances are that creativity and innovation will be the first casualty.

The tragedy is that through the schooling system or the education system, by the time these wonderful, fantastic, imaginative kids get to be adults, most of them have already lost that ability or capacity.

So, people who as kids were adventurous, unafraid, and enterprising, they over a period of time end up feeling fearful of being wrong. This a paradigm shift in terms of attitude and mindset.

Ken also says that this stigmatisation of mistakes goes right up to the corporate houses and companies that hire these people. In fact, our entire national education systems are programmed in such a way that mistakes are seen as possibly the worst thing that you could ever make.

The fallout of this is that we are educating people out of our creative capacities. Robinson says that all across the world we have the same hierarchy of subjects.

So, at the top of the food chain, is mathematics and languages, followed by humanities and the last position is invariably reserved for the arts. The buck does not stop there because even within the arts there is an internal hierarchy.

So, schools a greater premium on art and music as opposed to theatre and dance. One of things that really baffles us is that why should dance be not given the same importance as let's say mathematics?

In Robinson's opinion, public education is predicated (in terms of output, standards, and who really succeeds by it) on the idea of academic ability or competence.

The speaker also makes a brutally honest remark about university professors that they more often than not live inside their heads or in other words are deeply caught, entangled, trapped in their own worlds.

It is also curious that before the 19th century, there were no public education systems. They were all created to meet the demands of industrialism. So, the way in which a particular skill, ability, or talent is ranked is really contingent upon two factors.

The first one is the subjects that have the maximum utility are often ranked the highest. So, one gradually gets discouraged from doing things that one is quite great at or is quite interested in, precisely because it does not guarantee you a job.

This applies to music or art perhaps. And this advice may be coming from a good place but we also can see how utterly mistaken it is in today's world.

The second factor pertains to the question of academic ability which makes sure that we have a very limited and singular definition of intelligence. The whole system of schools is always geared toward university entrance.

What is irreparably unfortunate is that many brilliant, exceptional, and imaginative minds think that they are probably not intelligent because the things that they excelled at in schools is either devalued in universities or is actually stigmatised.

The way in which technology has affected how we look at work is also directly related to demography and population explosion. So even as we have more and more people graduating, what we also realise is suddenly degrees are not worth much.

There is an irreversible process of academic inflation which means that we have to reconsider our understanding of intelligence which is diverse and multi-faceted.

We think about the world in different terms based on the way in which we experience it – visuals, sounds, movements, abstract terms etc. A related point to this is about the dynamism of intelligence.

This basically means that it is a product of an interactive and pluralistic way of seeing, understanding, and interpreting the world around us. Finally, identifying, embracing, appreciating, and nurturing the uniqueness of intelligence is the way forward.

Robinson cites the example of Gillian Lynne, a renowned ballet dancer, a choreographer famous for 'Cats' and 'Phantom of the Opera'. In her school (and this is in the 1930s), the authorities complained that she had a learning disorder.

In today's world, we better know it as ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). Thanks to her doctor who advised her mother on sending her to a dance school, she was able to accomplish so much in her life while also enjoying what she actually felt like doing naturally.

Her success also by the way made her a multimillionaire so the utility value is also taken care of as we can see. Imagine if she would have just been given medication and told to just calm down.

The only hope for our future is to develop a sense of appreciation for the richness and diversity of human capacity and potential. Robinson suggests a fundamental rethinking of the principles based on which we are educating our children.

So, it really boils down to having a holistic system of education so that the children of today's world are better equipped to face the uncertainties and the challenges of the future with a more definite sense of meaning, purpose, and direction.

Reading Model

Read with a Purpose Read “The Open Window” to discover how a family story affects a nervous visitor.

The Open Window

by **Saki**

Literary Focus

Characterization The author, Saki, directly characterizes the young lady when he writes that she is “a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen.” *Self-possessed* means “composed” or “in control of one’s feelings or actions.” Once you know this information, you can look for ways that her actions support this characterization.

Literary Focus

Characterization Through his sister’s words, we learn that Framton has a nervous personality and tends to isolate himself and mope around.

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 endeavored 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 toward 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,¹ you know, some four years ago, and she gave me letters of introduction to some of the people here.”

1. **rectory:** house in which the minister of a parish lives.

**Analyzing Visuals**

Viewing and Interpreting After reading the story, describe how this girl reminds you of Vera.

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 window² that opened onto a lawn.

2. **French window:** pair of doors that have glass panes from top to bottom and open in the middle.

Reading Focus

Making Inferences You can infer from his "tone of distinct regret" that Framton isn't thrilled about having to meet new people.

Reading Model

Reading Focus

Making Connections The character of the aunt may remind you of other characters from television, movies, or books. Many stories have a character who wants something so badly that he or she has lost touch with reality.

Literary Focus

Characterization Notice Vera's and Framton's reactions to the creepy story of the missing family members. Vera shudders, and Framton is uncomfortable.

"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 favorite snipe-shooting³ 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 onto 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

3. **snipe-shooting:** A snipe is a kind of bird that lives in swampy areas.

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 labored 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 toward the niece with a look intended to convey sympathetic comprehension. The child was staring out through the open window with 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 toward 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."

Reading Focus

Making Judgments Using the information Saki gives us, we can make the judgment that Framton is a bit of a bore, going on and on about his health.

Reading Focus

Making Judgments Now that we know more about the situation, it is time to adjust our judgment about Mrs. Sappleton.

Reading Model

Literary Focus

Motivation The author tells us in the last sentence why Vera has been making up stories. *Romance*, here, doesn't refer to a love affair. Instead, it refers to a story that has adventurous, mysterious, or heroic characters and plot.

"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 Ganges⁴ by a pack of pariah dogs⁵ 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.

4. **Ganges** (GAN jeez): river in northern India and Bangladesh.

5. **pariah** (puh RY uh) **dogs**: wild dogs.

Read with a Purpose How does Framton Nuttel react to what happens after Vera tells her story? Do you feel sorry for him? Why or why not?

MEET THE WRITER

Saki

(1870–1916)

Mischief and Mayhem

Saki is the pen name of Hector Hugh Munro. He was born in Burma (now called Myanmar) in Southeast Asia, where his father, a Scottish military officer, was posted. Later, in England, Saki's mother died, and he and his siblings were raised by their grandmother and two aunts.

Although living with his strict and often-bickering aunts was an unpleasant experience, it helped Saki develop the mischievous sense of humor that later made his writing famous.

Saki is well-known for his funny yet often creepy stories. It has been said that when we read his stories, "our laughter is only a note or two short of a scream of fear."

Think About the Writer What elements of Saki's humor do you see in "The Open Window"?



SKILLS IN ACTION

Wrap Up

SKILLS FOCUS Literary Skills Analyze character.
Reading Skills Make inferences about characters; make connections to characters; make judgments about characters. Vocabulary Skills Use academic vocabulary appropriately.

Into Action: Character Flowchart

Practice analyzing a character by completing a flowchart like the one below for either Framton Nuttel or for Vera. Then, write a character description that is two or three sentences long.

Character Details from Text:

My Inference:

My Connection:

My Judgment:

Talk About ...

1. Discuss Vera's character with a partner. Is she cruel, or basically harmless? Support your opinion with details from the text. Try to use each Academic Vocabulary word listed at the right at least once in your discussion.

Write About ...

2. What can you tell about Vera and Framton from the way they interact?
3. In what way is Vera's story a critical factor of Saki's tale?
4. Think about Framton's response when the hunters return home. How might his response to this incident have kept Vera from getting into trouble?

Writing Focus

Think as a Reader/Writer

In Collection 2, you will read several stories with interesting characters. The Writing Focus activities on the Preparing to Read pages will help you focus on the ways an author can reveal a character's personality. On the Applying Your Skills pages, you will have an opportunity to try an author's techniques out for yourself.

Academic Vocabulary for Collection 2

Talking and Writing About Stories

Academic Vocabulary is the language you use to write and talk about literature. Use the following words to discuss the characters in this collection. These words are underlined throughout the collection.

incident (IHN suh duhnt) *n.*: event or occurrence. *What did the character's behavior during the scary incident reveal about her?*

factor (FAK tuhr) *n.*: something that has an influence on something else. *Factors to consider when analyzing a character are his or her appearance, actions, and relationships.*

interact (ihN tuhr AKT) *v.*: behave toward one another. *Characters reveal their personalities when they interact.*

response (rih SPAHNS) *n.*: reply or reaction. *To learn more about a character, observe his or her response to a stressful event.*

Your Turn



Copy these Academic Vocabulary words into your *Reader/Writer Notebook*, and try to use them as you answer questions about the stories in the collection.

What is Poetry? It is a literary work in which the expression of feelings and ideas is given intensity by the use of distinctive style and rhythm; poems collectively or as a genre of literature.

So, the obvious question that lies before us is ‘What makes a poem...a poem?’
Poetry generally has certain recognisable characteristics.

One – poems emphasise language’s musical qualities. This can be achieved through rhyme and rhythm.

Two – poems use condensed language.

Three – poems often feature intense feelings.

Poetry, like art itself, has a way of challenging simple definitions. What should also be kept in mind is that a poem does not need to be lyrical. Poetry has a shape that we usually recognise. Its line breaks help readers navigate the rhythms of a poem.

But even if the line breaks are not there, we could still have a prose poem. These poems use vivid images and wordplay but are formatted like paragraphs. When we look at poetry less as a form and more as a concept, we can see the poetic all around us.

These could be found in all kinds of places from spiritual hymns to social media. Poetry has evolved over time and perhaps now more than ever, the line between poetry, prose, song and visual art has blurred.

However, what remains constant is the fact that the word poetry actually began in verb form, coming from the ancient Greek *poiesis*, which means to create.

Poets, like craftsman, still work with the raw materials of the world to come up with new understandings and comment on what it is to be human in a way only humans can. Researchers in Dartmouth tested this idea by asking robots to write poetry.

A panel of judges sorted through stacks of submissions to see if they could distinguish those made by man and machine. Predictably enough, even though scientists have successfully used artificial intelligence in manufacturing, medicine, and even journalism, poetry is a different story.

The robots were caught red-handed 100% of the time.

As human beings we are all creatures of habit. Our schedules, routines, and time tables are largely characterised by repetition and certain set patterns. But we do not just live our lives with these and obviously rely on emotions, feelings and imagination to relate to the world around us.

In language, rhythm and repetition are often used as the building blocks of poetry.
There is the rhythm of language. With so many uses, repetition is one of the poet’s most malleable and reliable tools.

It can lift or lull the listener, amplify or diminish the line, unify or diversify ideas. Even rhythm itself is a form of repetition. Yet for all its varied uses, too much repetition can backfire. Imagine writing the same sentence on the blackboard 20 times, again and again, and again and again.

Or imagine a young child clamouring for her mother's attention, 'Mom, mom, mommy, mom, mom'. Not exactly what we might call poetry. So, what is poetic repetition and why does it work?

Possibly most familiar is rhyme, the repetition of like sounds in word endings. Repetition in a sense creates an expectation. We begin to listen for the repetition of those similar sounds. When we hear them, the found pattern is somewhat pleasurable.

We hear the echo in the oral chatter. Yet, rhyme need not surface solely at a line's end. You could have alliteration or front rhyme. Great examples include tongue twisters.

Betty bought some butter but the butter was bitter so Betty bought some better butter to make the bitter butter better. Here the pleasure in pattern is apparent as we trip over the front rhyme.

But tongue twisters also perhaps highlight the need for variation in poetic repetition. While challenging to say, they are seen by some as lesser imitations of poetry because they hammer so heavily on the same sounds closer to that blackboard style of repetition.

Ultimately, this is the poet's balancing act, learning when to repeat, when to riff (a short repeated phrase), when to satisfy expectations and when to thwart them, and in that balance it may be enough to remember that we all live in a world of wide variation and carry with us our own rhythm and beat, our own repetition wherever we go.

Introduction to Poetry

Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

Ruskin Bond

The Eyes Are Not Here

Ruskin Bond was born in India in 1934 and is an acclaimed short story writer, poet, and novelist. In 1992, he received the Sahitya Akademi award for English writing in India. The following story—"The Eyes Are Not Here"—first appeared in Contemporary Indian Short Stories in English, edited by Shiv K. Kumar (1991).

Before You Read

What interesting travel experiences have you had that taught you something about yourself?

- 1 I had the compartment to myself up to Rohana, and then a girl got in. The couple who saw her off were probably her parents; they seemed very anxious about her comfort, and the woman gave the girl detailed instructions as to where to keep her things, when not to lean out of the windows, and how to avoid speaking to strangers. They said their good-byes; the train pulled out of the station.
- 2 As I was totally blind at the time, my eyes sensitive only to light and darkness, I was unable to tell what the girl looked like; but I knew she wore slippers from the way they slapped against her heels. It would take me some time to discover something about her looks, and perhaps I never would. But I liked the sound of her voice, and even the sound of her slippers.
- 3 "Are you going all the way to Dehra?" I asked.
- 4 I must have been sitting in a dark corner, because my voice startled her. She gave a little exclamation and said, "I didn't know anyone else was here."
- 5 Well, it often happens that people with good eyesight fail to see what is right in front of them. They have too much to take in, I suppose. Whereas people who cannot see (or see very little) have to take in only the essentials, whatever registers most tellingly on their remaining senses.
- 6 "I didn't see you either," I said. "But I heard you come in."
- 7 I wondered if I would be able to prevent her from discovering that I was blind. I thought "Provided I keep to my seat, it shouldn't be too difficult."
- 8 The girl said, "I'm getting down at Saharanpur. My aunt is meeting me there."

- 9 "Then I had better not be too familiar," I said. "Aunts are usually formidable creatures."
- 10 "Where are you going?" she asked.
- 11 "To Dehra, and then to Mussoorie."
- 12 "Oh, how lucky you are, I wish I were going to Mussoorie. I love the hills. Especially in October."
- 13 "Yes, this is the best time," I said, calling on my memories. "The hills are covered with wild dahlias, the sun is delicious, and at night you can sit in front of a logfire and drink a little brandy. Most of the tourists have gone, and the roads are quiet and almost deserted. Yes, October is the best time."
- 14 She was silent, and I wondered if my words had touched her, or whether she thought me a romantic fool. Then I made a mistake.
- 15 "What is it like?" I asked.
- 16 She seemed to find nothing strange in the question. Had she noticed already that I could not see? But her next question removed my doubts.
- 17 "Why don't you look out of window?" she asked.
- 18 I moved easily along the berth and felt for the window ledge. The window was open, and I faced it, making a pretence of studying the landscape. I heard the panting of the engine, the rumble of the wheels, and, in my mind's eye, I could see the telegraph-posts flashing by.
- 19 "Have you noticed," I ventured, "that the trees seem to be moving while we seem to be standing still?"
- 20 "That always happens," she said. "Do you see any animals?"
- 21 "No," I answered quite confidently. I knew that there were hardly any animals left in the forests near Dehra.
- 22 I turned from the window and faced the girl, and for a while we sat in silence.
- 23 "You have an interesting face," I remarked. I was becoming quite daring, but it was a safe remark. Few girls can resist flattery.
- 24 She laughed pleasantly, a clear, ringing laugh.
- 25 "It's nice to be told I have an interesting face. I'm tired of people telling me I have a pretty face."
- 26 Oh, so you do have a pretty face, thought I, and aloud I said: "Well, an interesting face can also be pretty."
- 27 "You are a very gallant young man," she said. "But why are you so serious?"
- 28 I thought then, that I would try to laugh for her; but the thought of laughter only made me feel troubled and lonely.
- 29 "We'll soon be at your station," I said.
- 30 "Thank goodness it's a short journey. I can't bear to sit in a train for more than two or three hours."
- 31 Yet I was prepared to sit there for almost any length of time, just to listen to her talking. Her voice had the sparkle of a mountain stream. As soon as she left the train, she would forget our brief

encounter; but it would stay with me for the rest of the journey, and for some time after.

31 The engine's whistle shrieked, the carriage wheels changed their sound and rhythm.

32 The girl got up and began to collect her things. I wondered if she wore her hair in a bun, or if it was plaited, or if it hung loose over her shoulders, or if it was cut very short.

33 The train drew slowly into the station. Outside, there was the shouting of porters and vendors and a high-pitched female voice near the carriage door which must have belonged to the girl's aunt.

34 "Good-bye," said the girl.

35 She was standing very close to me, so close that the perfume from her hair was tantalizing. I wanted to raise my hand and touch her hair; but she moved away, and only the perfume still lingered where she had stood.

'You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will linger there still...'

36 There was some confusion in the doorway. A man, getting into the compartment, stammered an apology. Then the door banged shut, and the world was shut out again. I returned to my berth. The guard blew his whistle and we moved off. Once again, I had a game to play and a new fellow-traveller.

37 The train gathered speed, the wheels took up their song, the carriage groaned and shook. I found the window and sat in front of it, staring into the daylight that was darkness for me.

38 So many things were happening outside the window. It could be a fascinating game, guessing what went on out there.

39 The man who had entered the compartment broke into my reverie.

40 "You must be disappointed," he said, "I'm sorry I'm not as attractive a travelling companion as the one who just left."

41 "She was an interesting girl," I said. "Can you tell me—did she keep her hair long or short?"

42 "I don't remember," he said, sounding puzzled. "It was her eyes I noticed, not her hair. She had beautiful eyes—but they were of no use to her, she was completely blind. Didn't you notice?"

Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S. by Nissim Ezekiel

About the Author

Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004) is a very well-known post-independent poet. His poems depict Indian life from various perspectives. For his contribution to Indian poetry, he has been awarded with the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983.

In addition to 'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.', Nissim Ezekiel is also famous for poems like 'The Night of the Scorpion' and 'Enterprise'.

The Poem

Friends,
Our dear sister
Is departing for foreign
In two three days,
And
We are meeting today
To wish her bon voyage.

You are all knowing, friends,
What sweetness is in Miss Pushpa.

I don't mean only external sweetness
But internal sweetness.
Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling
Even for no reason but simply because
She is feeling.

Miss Pushpa is coming
From very high family.
Her father was renowned advocate
In Bulsar or Surat,
I am not remembering now which place.

Surat, ah, yes,
Once only I stayed in Surat
With family members
Of my uncle's very old friend –
His wife was cooking nicely...
That was long time ago.

Coming back to Miss Pushpa
She is most popular lady
With men also and ladies also.

Whenever I asked her to do anything,
She was saying, 'Just now only
I will do it.' That is showing

Good spirit. I am always
Appreciating the good spirit.

Pushpa miss is never saying no.
Whatever I or anybody is asking
She is always saying yes,
And today she is going
To improve her prospects
And we are wishing her bon voyage.

Now I ask other speakers to speak
And afterwards Miss Pushpa
Will do summing up.

Summary of the Poem

Written by Nissim Ezekiel, 'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.' is actually a farewell speech by one of the colleagues of Ms Pushpa in the office. Like any other farewell party, here also, the speaker wishes her a happy voyage and appreciates her for her nature and dedication to work.

However, the speech becomes a mirror to the mistakes committed by Indians who do not have adequate language yet are fond of using it.

The speaker starts the farewell speech with the best wishes for Ms Pushpa's visit to a foreign country. The speaker refers to Ms Pushpa as a 'dear sister' and mentions that Ms Pushpa is leaving India for better prospects in some foreign land.

It is to her honour that the farewell party has been organised.

Indian expression used in the poem	More appropriate expression
Goodbye party for Ms Pushpa TS	Farewell party to Ms Pushpa TS
Our dear sister	Our dear colleague
Is departing for foreign	Is leaving for a foreign land/country
In two three days	In a couple of days
We are meeting today	We have met today/we have gathered here
You are all knowing, friends	Friends, you know it very well that
What sweetness is in Ms Pushpa. I don't mean only external sweetness but internal sweetness.	Ms Pushpa is a charming lady. She is not only pretty but is also someone who possesses a very friendly and helpful nature.
Ms Pushpa is smiling and smiling even for no reason but simply because she is feeling	She has an ever-smiling face and is full of positive attitude (Here is an unintentional pun. The speaker probably wishes to appreciate the cheerful nature of Ms Pushpa but he conveys that Ms Pushpa keeps on smiling even without reason)
Ms Pushpa is coming from very high family	Ms Pushpa belongs to/comes from a very reputed family.

<p>Her father was renowned advocate in Bulsar or Surat. I am not remembering now which place.</p>	<p>Ms Pushpa's father was a renowned advocate.</p> <p>(In Gujarati and Hindi, use of article is not required. However, in English every countable noun and an adjective in English language requires it. Under the influence of mother tongue, the speaker has forgotten to use an article before the adjective 'renowned').</p> <p>(Moreover, the speaker, here, is supposed to collect all the necessary information that he wishes to include about the person in the speech beforehand. Due to the lack of adequate information or faulty information, he is likely to hurt the person being referred to. Moreover, it shows lack of preparation on the part of the speaker).</p>
<p>Surat? Ah, yes, once only I stayed in Surat with family members of my uncle's very old friend – his wife was cooking nicely...that was long time ago.</p>	<p>This is a digression in the speech. A good speaker should avoid this. There is no point in referring to your experience until and unless they are naturally connected to and/or enhance the effect of the speech you are delivering.</p>
<p>She is most popular lady with men also and ladies also</p>	<p>She is very popular among all the staff members (Superlative degree is used while referring to her popularity but 'the' is missing before 'most popular').</p> <p>In addition to this, the line is an unintentional pun.</p> <p>Ms Pushpa's popularity with men and ladies gives a different meaning than what is actually intended by the speaker.</p>
<p>Whenever I asked to do anything, she was saying, 'Just now only I will do it'.</p>	<p>She was always very prompt in her work. Whenever she was assigned any work, she readily accepted it and completed it in time.</p>
<p>That is showing good spirit</p>	<p>This shows her good spirit.</p>
<p>I am always appreciating the good spirit.</p>	<p>I have always appreciated her zeal for work.</p>
<p>Pushpa Miss is never saying no.</p>	<p>She never says no to any office work.</p>
<p>Whatever I or anybody is asking she is always saying yes, and today she is going to improve her prospect and we are wishing her bon voyage.</p>	<p>She is always ready to do work whether it is assigned by me or anyone else from the office. We heartily wish her bon voyage when she is leaving this country for better prospects.</p>
<p>Now I ask other speakers to speak and afterwards Miss Pushpa will do summing up.</p>	<p>I, now, invite other colleagues to share their feelings on this occasion. Thereafter, Ms</p>

	Pushpa will respond and express her feelings.
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Theme of the poem ‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.’

The poem is in the form of a farewell speech delivered by a colleague of Ms Pushpa. However, the focus of the poem is not the loss of a good friend or colleague. Actually, the poem makes gentle fun of those Indians who do not know English but are very fond of using it.

The poem highlights the errors caused by the wrong translations from Indian languages into English. The errors include grammatical mistakes, arrangement of words, unintentional puns and idioms.

It also satirises the skill of delivering a speech because of the irrelevant information added. The major things satirised here are:

Incorrect Use of Present Continuous Tense

Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling

Even for no reason but simply because

She is feeling.

In Indian languages like Hindi and Gujarati, it is very common to repeat a word to emphasise it, however, it is not the case with English. Here, the speaker’s English is influenced by the mother tongue so ‘smiling’ is used twice.

In the last line, she is ‘feeling’, the worst use of present continuous tense is shown. Verbs denoting feelings do not take the present continuous tense. The speaker should have used simple present tense as the sentence refers to the nature of Ms Pushpa and not something, which is true of the present moment only.

Ungrammatical English used by the People of India

Whatever I or anybody is asking

As per the rules, whenever, there are more than one subjects, the sequence would be third person, second person and first person. However, here the speaker first refers to ‘I’ and then the third person ‘anybody’.

This shows the tendency to translate things from mother tongue to English.

She is the most popular lady with men also and ladies also

Superlative degree is used while referring to her popularity but ‘the’ is missing before ‘most popular’.

I am always appreciating the good spirit.

Here, the speaker refers to the good nature of Ms Pushpa. Nevertheless, the speaker should have either used present perfect tense (I have always appreciated her zeal for work) or simple present tense (I always appreciate the good spirit).

Unintentional pun

She is most popular lady with men also and ladies also

Here the speaker intends to appreciate Ms Pushpa but unknowingly, his words may convey something else too.

Digression in the speech

Surat? Ah, yes, once I stayed in Surat with family members of my uncle's very old friend – his wife was cooking nicely...

That was long time ago.

This is a digression in the speech. A good speaker should avoid this. There is no point in referring to one's experience until and unless they are naturally connected to and/or enhance the effect of the speech being delivered.

Thus, the poem becomes a satire on Indian English as well as the way of delivering a speech.

Title of the Poem

The title of the poem 'Goodbye Party for Ms Pushpa T.S.' by Nissim Ezekiel is very significant. The title suggests two things:

The party is for someone who is leaving the organisation. Also, since it is a farewell party there will be speech too.

The poem apparently is about a farewell party thrown by the colleagues of Ms Pushpa as she is leaving for some other country. The farewell speech by one of the colleagues is the main content of the poem.

However, the poem gently makes fun of all the speakers who are very fond of using English but cannot speak it correctly. This is evident from the title itself, which says 'Goodbye Party'. However, a better word expression could be 'Farewell Party'.

Throughout the poem, the poet satirises Indian English in terms of incorrect use of grammar, unintentional pun, arrangement of words etc.

There is also a reference to the farewell speech delivered by people on such an occasion. The speech has digressions and sometimes the speaker starts referring to his experiences also. This throws light on the tendency of the speaker to refer to oneself unnecessarily.

Thus, the title of the poem is very appropriate and meaningful as the poem talks about the farewell party organised for Miss Pushpa and the speech delivered by her colleague.

The Breakaway

As far as Justin knew, there was only one way out of his neighborhood: basketball. So he ran with the ball like the hounds were chasing him. He could drop any of the older guys at the court in a blaze of crossovers, fadeaways, and finger rolls, and the younger guys didn't stand a chance. Justin saw his way out and he ran for it. But the world has a funny way of changing right when you think you've got things figured out, and that's just what happened to Justin.

One day when Justin was shooting around at the local court, some guys from another block ran up and asked to play. The big one in the middle said that he had heard that Justin was the best and he wanted to see if it was true. Justin said, "Nah, Man, I'm just shooting around with my cousin, I ain't trying to get all sweaty right now." But the big guy was insistent, and Justin's cousin was bugging, "C'mon, Justin, drop this guy." So Justin figured that he'd just do what everyone wanted and play.

Justin was running all over the big guy and making his shots while he did it. But just as the outcome of the game seemed certain, the big guy shoved Justin as he went for a lay up. Justin went flying in just such a way that he managed to tear up his right knee. The doctor said Justin might never play again, and if he did play, he wouldn't play the same. Justin was devastated.

The first six weeks, Justin just laid in bed with his leg in a long cast feeling like a broomstick. He watched three reruns of *The Simpsons* every day and ate potato chips until the bag was empty, and then he'd dig the salt and grease out of the corner with his index finger. Justin blew up like a balloon as watched his once bright future fadeway. Right when he reached the bottom of the pit of despair, Justin's sister, Kiki came home from the university

She came in the house like a whirl of sunshine, bringing exciting tales of a far away land called college. Justin was amazed and intrigued by the dorm room dramas and campus craziness that Kiki told, but he could hardly believe any of it. It was as if she were telling him about some fantasy land high above the clouds. Justin gazed off dreamily as she spoke.

"Justin!" She interrupted his day dream. "Let me see your progress report." Justin was ashamed. His grades had really slumped since his injury. "Oh no, this won't do, J," she said. "We're going to have to get these up." Well, Justin was a pretty stubborn guy, but his older sister had a way of getting him to do things that nobody else could. So, while she was home on break, they studied together, and they talked, and they worked, and Justin felt better than he ever had before.

After spending those weeks with his sister, Justin realized that he didn't want to feel bad for himself any more, and he didn't want to quit. Basketball used to be his thing, and he was good at it, but now there was only school, so he had to get good at that. Justin passed through all his classes like a half-court trap. By the time he got to senior year in high school, his GPA was hovering in the slam-dunk position. The last thing that Justin had to do to get into the college of his choice was score well on the ACT. Well wouldn't you know it? Using the study skills Justin had acquired from his sister, Justin scored a 24 on the ACT. That's not the highest score a person can get, but it was high enough for Justin. Now he had his academic game together.

Though the recruiters never came to Justin's door, every university that he applied to accepted him; and when the fall came, Justin had his choice in colleges. Though he'd miss his family, Justin decided to enroll in the sunniest university in Hawaii, and nobody could say that Justin made a bad choice.

“The Breakaway” - Reading Skill Sheet

1. Author’s Purpose: **entertain**
Why did the author write this?

inform

persuade

2. Genre: _____
Ex: Nonfiction, fiction, or folklore

Subgenre: _____
Ex: Autobiography, science fiction, fable, informational writing, etc.

3. Narrator’s Point of View: _____
1st-person, 2nd-person, 3rd-person objective, 3rd-person limited, or 3rd-person omniscient

4 & 5. Summarize the text:
Five key events from beginning, middle, & end.

6. Exposition

A.

Setting: _____
When and where does the story take place?

B. Conflict: _____
Describe the conflict in the story.

7. **Rising Action:** List some events that occur before the climax.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

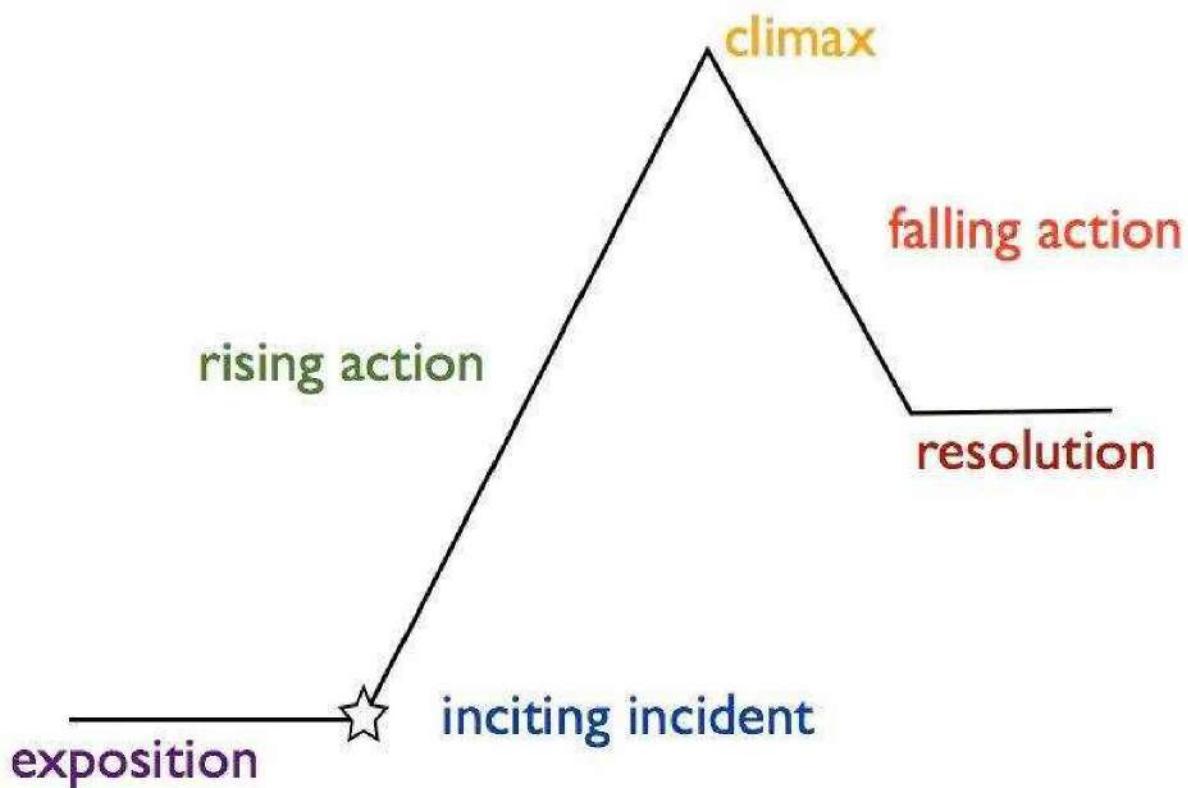
Climax:
The turning point

Falling Action: List some events that occur after the climax.

1. _____
2. _____

Resolution:
When the conflict is solved

freytag's pyramid



"Happy Endings" - Margaret Atwood

John and Mary meet.
What happens next?
If you want a happy ending, try A.

A.

John and Mary fall in love and get married. They both have worthwhile and remunerative jobs which they find stimulating and challenging. They buy a charming house. Real estate values go up. Eventually, when they can afford live-in help, they have two children, to whom they are devoted. The children turn out well. John and Mary have a stimulating and challenging sex life and worthwhile friends. They go on fun vacations together. They retire. They both have hobbies which they find stimulating and challenging. Eventually they die. This is the end of the story.

B.

Mary falls in love with John but John doesn't fall in love with Mary. He merely uses her body for selfish pleasure and ego gratification of a tepid kind. He comes to her apartment twice a week and she cooks him dinner, you'll notice that he doesn't even consider her worth the price of a dinner out, and after he's eaten dinner he sleeps with her, thereafter she does the dishes so he won't think she's untidy, having all those dirty dishes lying around, and puts on fresh lipstick so she'll look good when he wakes up, but when he wakes up he doesn't even notice, he puts on his socks and his shorts and his pants and his shirt and his tie and his shoes, the reverse order from the one in which he took them off. Mary she acts as if she's dying for it every time, not because she likes sex exactly, she doesn't, but she wants John to think she does because if they do it often enough surely he'll get used to her, he'll come to depend on her and they will get married, but John goes out the door with hardly so much as a good-night and three days later he turns up at six o'clock and they do the whole thing over again.

Mary gets run-down. Crying is bad for your face, everyone knows that and so does Mary but she can't stop. People at work notice. Her friends tell her John is a rat, a pig, a dog, he isn't good enough for her, but she can't believe it. Inside John, she thinks, is another John, who is much nicer. This other John will emerge like a butterfly from a cocoon, a Jack from a box, a pit from a prune, if the first John is only squeezed enough.

One evening John complains about the food. He has never complained about her food before. Mary is hurt.

Her friends tell her they've seen him in a restaurant with another woman, whose name is Madge. It's not even Madge that finally gets to Mary: it's the restaurant. John has never taken Mary to a restaurant. Mary collects all the sleeping pills and aspirins she can find, and takes them and a half a bottle of sherry. You can see what kind of a woman she is by the fact that it's not even whiskey. She leaves a note for

John. She hopes he'll discover her and get her to the hospital in time and repent and then they can get married, but this fails to happen and she dies.

John marries Madge and everything continues as in A.

C.

John, who is an older man, falls in love with Mary, and Mary, who is only twenty-two, feels sorry for him because he's worried about his hair falling out. She sleeps with him even though she's not in love with him. She met him at work. She's in love with someone called James, who is twenty-two also and not yet ready to settle down.

John on the contrary settled down long ago: this is what is bothering him. John has a steady, respectable job and is getting ahead in his field, but Mary isn't impressed by him, she's impressed by James, who has a motorcycle and a fabulous record collection. But James is often away on his motorcycle, being free. Freedom isn't the same for girls, so in the meantime Mary spends Thursday evenings with John. Thursdays are the only days John can get away.

John is married to a woman called Madge and they have two children, a charming house which they bought just before the real estate values went up, and hobbies which they find stimulating and challenging, when they have the time. John tells Mary how important she is to him, but of course he can't leave his wife because a commitment is a commitment. He goes on about this more than is necessary and Mary finds it boring, but older men can keep it up longer so on the whole she has a fairly good time.

One day James breezes in on his motorcycle with some top-grade California hybrid and James and Mary get higher than you'd believe possible and they climb into bed. Everything becomes very underwater, but along comes John, who has a key to Mary's apartment. He finds them stoned and entwined. He's hardly in any position to be jealous, considering Madge, but nevertheless he's overcome with despair. Finally he's middle-aged, in two years he'll be as bald as an egg and he can't stand it. He purchases a handgun, saying he needs it for target practice-- this is the thin part of the plot, but it can be dealt with later--and shoots the two of them and himself.

Madge, after a suitable period of mourning, marries an understanding man called Fred and everything continues as in A, but under different names.

D.

Fred and Madge have no problems. They get along exceptionally well and are good at working out any little difficulties that may arise. But their charming house is by the seashore and one day a giant tidal wave approaches. Real estate values go down. The rest of the story is about what caused the tidal wave and how they escape from it. They do, though thousands drown, but Fred and Madge are virtuous and grateful, and continue as in A.

E. Yes, but Fred has a bad heart. The rest of the story is about how kind and understanding they both are until Fred dies. Then Madge devotes herself to charity work until the end of A. If you like, it can be "Madge," "cancer," "guilty and confused," and "bird watching."

F.

If you think this is all too bourgeois, make John a revolutionary and Mary a counterespionage agent and see how far that gets you. Remember, this is Canada. You'll still end up with A, though in between you may get a lustful brawling saga of passionate involvement, a chronicle of our times, sort of.

You'll have to face it, the endings are the same however you slice it. Don't be deluded by any other endings, they're all fake, either deliberately fake, with malicious intent to deceive, or just motivated by excessive optimism if not by downright sentimentality.

The only authentic ending is the one provided here: *John and Mary die. John and Mary die. John and Mary die.*

So much for endings. Beginnings are always more fun. True connoisseurs, however, are known to favor the stretch in between, since it's the hardest to do anything with.

That's about all that can be said for plots, which anyway are just one thing after another, a what and a what and a what.

Now try *How* and *Why*.

Vocabulary:

Remunerative—profitable

Stimulating—encouraging, exciting

Gratification—pleasure or satisfaction

Entwined—bound together

Virtuous—possessing high morals and ethical principles

Bourgeois—middle class

Counterespionage—counter spy

Malicious—intentionally harmful

Sentimentality—expressing excessive tender emotions and feeling

Connoisseurs—experts

Reading Questions. Discuss the following with your group. One of you will write it down and submit along with the Writing Activity on Google classroom.

1. Give examples of cause and effect from the story.
2. Give examples of conflict from the story with each type of conflict labeled.
3. What is the overall theme of the story?
4. How does the dialogue and the character interaction contribute to the characterization, message, and overall plot of the story?
5. Describe the setting. How does the setting contribute to the action, theme, and tone of the story?
6. Are the main characters round or flat? Are they static or dynamic? Give examples to support your argument.
7. Give two important quotations from the story, explain their meaning, and describe why you think they are significant.
8. Does technology factor into the story? If so, how? Why or why does it not?
9. How does this story fit into its subject category?

Group Activity for Submission :

Choose any one of the following and submit by Sunday night.

A. Writing Prompt

You should write a paragraph response to the following prompt (in complete sentences): Which characters have the ability to exercise free will in each of these scenarios? Who seems to be powerless to stop what is happening? What would feminists say about the fate of these characters?

OR

B. Scene Re-Write

Directions: Choose a brief scene from the story to re-write in your own words. This will be the same plot from the scene you read, but will be in modern language. Write in play format. Write at least 5 lines per character, as well as stage directions where needed. Do NOT copy lines directly from the story.

OR

C. Short StoryTabloid Newspaper

Directions: As a group, you will create a tabloid type article using a scene from the story. You will decide on your scene, and then re-write the scene using modern language and making it look like a tabloid article. Every group member should have at least one role—if you do not have enough members, some might have to double up—every role must be filled. You will list the names of the members next to their assigned roles, then describe in sentence format the scene you pick from the story. After deciding who will do what, and describing your scene on this sheet, you will write your article. Descriptions of the roles are the following: writer—writes the article; reporter—interviews one (or more) characters from the scene for a quote for the article; editor—edits the article, checking for grammar and punctuation errors; illustrator—draws a picture (or several) for the article; typist—types the final, edited article on the computer; presenter—presents the article to the class.

So what's this all about?

Polar ice caps are melting, hurricanes swirl in the seas, wars are heating up around the world, and the job market is in a deep freeze.

Whoa.

It's getting pretty ugly out there.

That's why one chilly spring night I started a tiny website called 1000 Awesome Things. For a boring guy with a nine-to-five job, it became a getaway from my everyday.

I never imagined that writing about finding money in your old coat pocket, the smell of gasoline, or watching *The Price Is Right* when you're at home sick would amount to anything.

Honestly, when I started the site I got excited when my mom forwarded it to my dad and the traffic doubled. Then I got excited when friends sent it to friends and strangers started sending me suggestions: "When cashiers open up new checkout lanes at the grocery store," "The smell of rain on a hot sidewalk," "Waking up and realizing it's Saturday."

It seems like maybe these tiny little moments make an awesome difference in many of our rushed, jam-packed lives. Maybe we all love snow days, peeling an orange in one shot, and Popping Bubble Wrap.

• 1 •

Maybe we're basically all the same.

Over the past year the website grew into a warm place where people around the world came to curl up under a blanket and think about the small joys we often overlook. With so much sad news and bad news pouring down upon us, it's fun to stop for a minute and share a universal high five with the rest of humanity.

What started on a whim has changed me for the better too. Now when I get the thank-you wave while merging, hear the crack of ice cubes in my drink, or move clothes from the washer to the dryer without dropping anything, I just smile and enjoy the moment.

So . . . that's the story so far. That's how we got from there to here. And now it's time to come on in. The fire's crackling and there's a seat on the couch here. Cuddle up and let's all get into it.

Let's all get onto it.

And let's all get a little bit

AWSOME!

The other side of the pillow

Have you ever found yourself lying in bed **wide awake** in the middle of the night?

You know how it is: **Clock's clicking** past 1:30 a.m. and you lie there with your eyes bugged open, chewing your upper lip, tapping the sheets with your fingers, completely frustrated. Your pupils have long adjusted to the dark, so your eyes are darting around the room over and over, trying to identify dark shapes or watching the moonlight shadow-dance around the walls. Maybe your thoughts won't settle down, you just can't get comfortable, **you ate spicy food** before bed, you have a presentation the next morning, or maybe it's just the frustration itself keeping you in a terrible, never-ending cycle of sleeplessness.

So you **play dead** and try to remain motionless as long as possible. You change positions back and forth, side to side, left to right. You get up and go to the bathroom or start reading a book. Maybe you try to remake the bed, since by now you've probably managed to twist your sheets and blankets into a completely unusable, tightly wound knotpile barely covering your legs.

On nights like this, when you just can't sleep, one of the greatest things invented is simply **Turning Over the Pillow**.

Yes, flipping over your pillow and checking out the other side cranks **Bed Comfort** up a few notches and is a simple and easy way to help you relax and get comfy.

The other side of the pillow, folks. Because it's flat when you're sagging, **fresh when you're stale**, and cold when you're hot, baby.

AWESOME!

When cashiers open up new check out lanes at the grocery store

Though I hate to admit it, I am a slow, indecisive mess in the grocery store checkout lane.

Since I am an **extremely cheap person**, I watch the prices scroll up on screen like a hawk, often saying things like “Oh, I thought that was on sale,” or “Actually, I don’t really want that anymore,” forcing the cashier to call in price checks to the unresponsive produce department or find a temporary home for the pack of **melting Fudgsicles** I’ve decided to leave off my list last minute.

And because I’m watching the screen so closely, I start bagging my groceries late, fumble with my wallet, and awkwardly leave my shopping cart blocking the lane like a metal **crisscrossed castle knight** enforcing a firm “Thou shall not pass” law in its trademark silence.

Yes, I clog up the line and annoy everybody behind me. I’m one of **Four People You Don’t Want to Stand Behind** in the grocery line, together with:

- **Fidgety Grandma** , who on cue dumps a pile of warm nickels on the counter to pay and then slowly counts them out by sliding them across the counter with her index finger
- **Flyer Guy** , who hands the cashier a dog-eared flyer from home, forcing her to manually tear out all the coupons while everybody waits
- **No-Math Jack** , who sneaks in piles of extra items into the Express Lane and acts like it’s no big deal

Those tense, winding checkout lanes can be a pretty rough go sometimes. It’s not easy out there. You have to watch the anxiety levels, take deep breaths, keep that blood pressure in check.

That’s why there are few things better than a **sprightly new cashier** hopping onto the scene, grabbing the “Next lane please” sign from the end of the belt, flicking on the light-bulb above her station, and offering a loud, beaming “Next customer, please!” to the scowling, stressed-out masses.

When that cashier bulb goes on, a **bright warm glow** showers down on everybody waiting. People like me feel less guilty about holding up the line and folks at the end win the big front-of-the-line jackpot. Yes, it’s **one giant mood swing**, one massive swelling of goodwill, complete with buzzing chatter, a few laughs, and even the occasional crinkly plastic sound of a tightly wound frown turning upside down.

AWESOME!

Intergenerational dancing

Have you ever felt too old or too young on the dance floor?

Maybe you and your husband signed up for a Saturday morning **ballroom dancing class** and noticed everyone else arriving on a shuttle bus from the old folks' home. Or maybe you surprised your wife with a romantic date night on your tenth wedding anniversary and accidentally stumbled into a local college hotspot full of **white baseball caps**, bead necklaces, and Jell-O shooters. Or maybe you just found out the hard way that All-Ages usually means All-Underagers.

I mean, if you've ever found yourself saying "Man, I feel old here," or "**Does anyone else smell Ben-Gay?**" then you know what I'm talking about. It's not that people of different age groups don't socialize, it's just that they don't often groove to the same beats is all.

I think that's why wedding dance floors are a real sight.

They're a breeding ground for that amazing intergenerational dancing that's just so rare and beautiful to see.

You've got grandmas slow-dancing with their **five-year-old grandchildren** to "What a Wonderful World," old men crowd-surfing over a pack of sweaty teenagers, snaking conga lines of all shapes and sizes, and circles forming around anyone who happens to be doing something interesting— whether that's a father-and-daughter team waltzing in circles or a slightly inebriated bridesmaid shaking her booty with a ninety-year-old great-grandpa in a wheelchair.

Yes, intergenerational dancing is a rare and wonderful thing. It's a magical moment where boundaries are broken and the thumping **power of music** sort of sweeps us all together into a tiny little place where everything's just cast aside in favor of living for the moment.

AWESOME!

Seeing a cop on the side of the road and realizing
you're going the speed limit anyway

Stress level goes up.

Stress level goes down.

AWESOME!

Illegal naps

You know what's even better than lying on a hammock in the backyard on a sunny Saturday afternoon? Better than catching a few winks after classes before a long night out at the bars? Better than falling asleep on the couch with the baseball game on the radio? You know what's even better than all that?

I'll tell you what: **illegal naps**, my friend. Sneaking them in when you ain't supposed to.

Napping any time you know you shouldn't be napping has a bit of an edgy, dangerous feel to it, like sneaking into a movie, sharing a free-refill soda at a family restaurant, or coming through customs without declaring the new sweater you're wearing.

I'm talking about driving away from work at lunchtime, parking in a nearby parking lot, tilting back your driver's seat, and sneaking in a little siesta before an afternoon full of meetings. I'm talking about waking up groggily at 11 a.m. after a long night, chomping on handfuls of cold popcorn while surfing the Internet for an hour, then going back to the bedroom to crash all afternoon, building toward that exotic and sinful **Day o' Naps**. Yes, I'm talking about the naps you pull off in the bathroom stall at work, the ones at the back of the bus just before your stop, and the naps you take in the middle of a big bout of procrastination before a deadline, when you convince yourself that a quick snooze will give you more energy to finish that big paper due in a few hours.

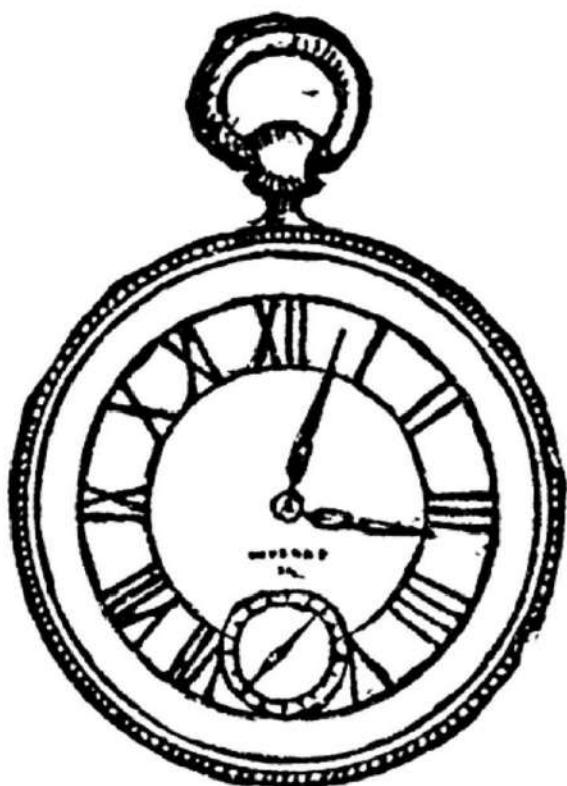
So come on! If you're with me, then you agree **life's just too short not to sleep when you feel like it**. So lower those blinds, unplug that alarm clock, and nap strong, nap long, and nap proud, my friends.

AWESOME!

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

By

O. Henry



One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty

dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling—something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pierglass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mne. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation—as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value—the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends—a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do—oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit of saying a little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two—and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again—you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!'

Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice—what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you—sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year—what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an

ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs—the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims—just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones,

The Gift of the Magi by O. Henry

possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

THE END



The Gift of the Magi



NE DOLLAR AND EIGHTY-SEVEN CENTS.

That was all. She had put it aside, one cent and then another and then another, in her careful buying of meat and other food. Della counted it three times. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be **Christmas**.

There was nothing to do but fall on the bed and cry. So Della did it.

While the lady of the home is slowly growing quieter, we can look at the home. **Furnished** rooms at a cost of \$8 a week. There is little more to say about it.

In the hall below was a letter-box too small to hold a letter. There was an electric bell, but it could not make a sound. Also there was a name beside the door: "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

When the name was placed there, Mr. James Dillingham Young was being paid \$30 a week. Now, when he was being paid only \$20 a week, the name seemed too long and important. It should perhaps have been "Mr. James D. Young." But when Mr. James Dillingham Young entered the furnished rooms, his name became very short indeed. Mrs. James Dillingham Young put her arms warmly about him and called him "Jim." You have already met her. She is Della.

Della finished her crying and cleaned the marks of it from her face. She stood by the window and looked out with no interest. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a gift. She had put aside as much as she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week is not much. Everything had cost more than she had expected. It always happened like that.

Only \$ 1.87 to buy a gift for Jim. Her Jim. She had had many happy hours planning something nice for him. Something nearly good enough. Something almost worth the honor of belonging to Jim.

There was a looking-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen the kind of looking-glass that is placed in \$8 furnished rooms. It was very narrow. A person could see only a little of himself at a time. However, if he was very thin and moved very quickly, he might be able to get a good view of himself. Della, being quite thin, had mastered this art.

Suddenly she turned from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brightly, but her face had lost its color. Quickly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its complete length.

The James Dillingham Youngs were very proud of two things which they owned. One thing was Jim's gold watch. It had once belonged to his father. And, long ago, it had belonged to his father's father. The other thing was Della's hair.

If a queen had lived in the rooms near theirs, Della would have washed and dried her hair where the queen could see it. Della knew her hair was more beautiful than any queen's jewels and gifts.

If a king had lived in the same house, with all his riches, Jim would have looked at his watch every time they met. Jim knew that no king

had anything so valuable.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, shining like a falling stream of brown water. It reached below her knee. It almost made itself into a dress for her.

And then she put it up on her head again, nervously and quickly. Once she stopped for a moment and stood still while a tear or two ran down her face.

She put on her old brown coat. She put on her old brown hat. With the bright light still in her eyes, she moved quickly out the door and down to the street.

Where she stopped, the sign said: "Mrs. Sofronie. Hair Articles of all Kinds."

Up to the second floor Della ran, and stopped to get her breath.

Mrs. Sofronie, large, too white, cold-eyed, looked at her.

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Mrs. Sofronie. "Take your hat off and let me look at it."

Down fell the brown waterfall.

"Twenty dollars," said Mrs. Sofronie, lifting the hair to feel its weight.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours seemed to fly. She was going from one shop to another, to find a gift for Jim.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the shops, and she had looked in every shop in the city.

It was a gold watch chain, very simply made. Its value was in its rich and pure material. Because it was so plain and simple, you knew that it was very valuable. All good things are like this.

It was good enough for The Watch.

As soon as she saw it, she knew that Jim must have it. It was like him. Quietness and value—Jim and the chain both had quietness and value. She paid twenty-one dollars for it. And she hurried home with the chain and eighty-seven cents.

With that chain on his watch, Jim could look at his watch and learn the time anywhere he might be. Though the watch was so fine, it had never had a fine chain. He sometimes took it out and looked at it only when no one could see him do it.

When Della arrived home, her mind quieted a little. She began to think more reasonably. She started to try to cover the sad marks of what she had done. Love and large-hearted giving, when added together, can leave deep marks. It is never easy to cover these marks, dear friends—never easy.

Within forty minutes her head looked a little better. With her short hair, she looked wonderfully like a schoolboy. She stood at the looking-glass for a long time.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he looks at me a second time, he'll say I look like a girl who sings and dances for money. But what could I do—oh! What could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At seven, Jim's dinner was ready for him.

Jim was never late. Della held the watch chain in her hand and sat near the door where he always entered. Then she heard his step in the hall and her face lost color for a moment. She often said little prayers quietly, about simple everyday things. And now she said: "Please God, make him think I'm still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in. He looked very thin and he was not smiling. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two—and with a family to take care of! He needed a new coat and he had nothing to cover his cold hands.

Jim stopped inside the door. He was as quiet as a hunting dog when it is near a bird. His eyes looked strangely at Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not understand. It filled her with fear. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor anything she had been ready for. He simply looked at her with that strange expression on his face.

Della went to him.

"Jim, dear," she cried, "don't look at me like that. I had my hair cut off and sold it. I couldn't live through Christmas without giving you a

gift. My hair will grow again. You won't care, will you? My hair grows very fast. It's Christmas, Jim. Let's be happy. You don't know what a nice—what a beautiful nice gift I got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim slowly. He seemed to labor to understand what had happened. He seemed not to feel sure he knew.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me now? I'm me, Jim. I'm the same without my hair."

Jim looked around the room.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said.

"You don't have to look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you—sold and gone, too. It's the night before Christmas, boy. Be good to me, because I sold it for you. Maybe the hairs of my head could be counted," she said, "but no one could ever count my love for you. Shall we eat dinner, Jim?"

Jim put his arms around his Della. For ten seconds let us look in another direction. Eight dollars a week or a million dollars a year—how different are they? Someone may give you an answer, but it will be wrong. The **magi** brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. My meaning will be explained soon.

From inside the coat, Jim took something tied in paper. He threw it upon the table.

"I want you to understand me, Dell," he said. "Nothing like a haircut could make me love you any less. But if you'll open that, you may know what I felt when I came in."

White fingers pulled off the paper. And then a cry of joy; and then a change to tears.

For there lay The **Combs**—the combs that Della had seen in a shop window and loved for a long time. Beautiful combs, with jewels, perfect for her beautiful hair. She had known they cost too much for her to buy them. She had looked at them without the least hope of owning them. And now they were hers, but her hair was gone.

But she held them to her heart, and at last was able to look up and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then she jumped up and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful gift. She held it out to him in her open hand. The gold seemed to shine softly as if with her own warm and loving spirit.

"Isn't it perfect, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at your watch a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how they look together."

Jim sat down and smiled.

"Della," said he, "let's put our Christmas gifts away and keep them a while. They're too nice to use now. I sold the watch to get the money to buy the combs. And now I think we should have our dinner."

The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the newborn Christ-child. They were the first to give Christmas gifts. Being wise, their gifts were doubtless wise ones. And here I have told you the story of two children who were not wise. Each sold the most valuable thing he owned in order to buy a gift for the other. But let me speak a last word to the wise of these days: Of all who give gifts, these two were the most wise. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are the most wise. Everywhere they are the wise ones. They are the magi.

SONNET 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

- **William Shakespeare (1609)**

SONNET 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

- William Shakespeare (1609)

Sonnet 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O nol it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

-William Shakespeare (1609)

To ----

By Percy Bysshe Shelley (1824)

For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,—
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

Valentine

by Carol Ann Duffy (1993)

Not a red rose or a satin heart.

I give you an onion.
It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.
It promises light
like the careful undressing of love.

Here.
It will blind you with tears
like a lover.
It will make your reflection
a wobbling photo of grief.

I am trying to be truthful.

Not a cute card or a kissogram.

I give you an onion.
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
possessive and faithful
as we are,
for as long as we are.

Take it.
Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding-ring,
if you like.

Lethal.
Its scent will cling to your fingers,
cling to your knife.

Landscape with the Fall of Icarus
William Carlos Williams - 1883-1963



According to Brueghel
when Icarus fell
it was spring

a farmer was ploughing
his field
the whole pageantry

of the year was
awake tingling
near

the edge of the sea
concerned
with itself

sweating in the sun
that melted
the wings' wax

unsignificantly
off the coast
there was

a splash quite unnoticed
this was
Icarus drowning

The Lottery By Shirley Jackson

The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green. The people of the village began to gather in the square, between the post office and the bank, around ten o'clock; in some towns there were so many people that the lottery took two days and had to be started on June 26th, but in this village, where there were only about three hundred people, the whole lottery took only about two hours, so it could begin at ten o'clock in the morning and still be through in time to allow the villagers to get home for noon dinner.

The children assembled first, of course. School was recently over for the summer, and the feeling of liberty sat uneasily on most of them; they tended to gather together quietly for a while before they broke into boisterous play, and their talk was still of the classroom and the teacher, of books and reprimands. Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example, selecting the smoothest and roundest stones; Bobby and Harry Jones and Dickie Delacroix—the villagers pronounced this name “Dellacroy”—eventually made a great pile of stones in one corner of the square and guarded it against the raids of the other boys. The girls stood aside, talking among themselves, looking over their shoulders at the boys, and the very small children rolled in the dust or clung to the hands of their older brothers or sisters.

Soon the men began to gather, surveying their own children, speaking of planting and rain, tractors and taxes. They stood together, away from the pile of stones in the corner, and their jokes were quiet and they smiled rather than laughed. The women, wearing faded house

dresses and sweaters, came shortly after their menfolk. They greeted one another and exchanged bits of gossip as they went to join their husbands. Soon the women, standing by their husbands, began to call to their children, and the children came reluctantly, having to be called four or five times. Bobby Martin ducked under his mother's grasping hand and ran, laughing, back to the pile of stones. His father spoke up sharply, and Bobby came quickly and took his place between his father and his oldest brother.

The lottery was conducted—as were the square dances, the teen-age club, the Halloween program—by Mr. Summers, who had time and energy to devote to civic activities. He was a round-faced, jovial man and he ran the coal business, and people were sorry for him, because he had no children and his wife was a scold. When he arrived in the square, carrying the black wooden box, there was a murmur of conversation among the villagers, and he waved and called, "Little late today, folks." The postmaster, Mr. Graves, followed him, carrying a three-legged stool, and the stool was put in the center of the square and Mr. Summers set the black box down on it. The villagers kept their distance, leaving a space between themselves and the stool, and when Mr. Summers said, "Some of you fellows want to give me a hand?," there was a hesitation before two men, Mr. Martin and his oldest son, Baxter, came forward to hold the box steady on the stool while Mr. Summers stirred up the papers inside it.

The original paraphernalia for the lottery had been lost long ago, and the black box now resting on the stool had been put into use even before Old Man Warner, the oldest man in town, was born. Mr. Summers spoke frequently to the villagers about making a new box, but no one liked to upset even as much tradition as was represented by the black box. There was a story that the present box had been made with some pieces of the box that had preceded it, the one that had been constructed when the first people settled down to make a village here. Every year, after the lottery, Mr. Summers began talking again about a new box, but every year the subject was allowed to fade off without anything's being done. The black box grew shabbier each year; by now it was no longer completely black but splintered badly

along one side to show the original wood color, and in some places faded or stained.

Mr. Martin and his oldest son, Baxter, held the black box securely on the stool until Mr. Summers had stirred the papers thoroughly with his hand. Because so much of the ritual had been forgotten or discarded, Mr. Summers had been successful in having slips of paper substituted for the chips of wood that had been used for generations. Chips of wood, Mr. Summers had argued, had been all very well when the village was tiny, but now that the population was more than three hundred and likely to keep on growing, it was necessary to use something that would fit more easily into the black box. The night before the lottery, Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves made up the slips of paper and put them into the box, and it was then taken to the safe of Mr. Summers' coal company and locked up until Mr. Summers was ready to take it to the square next morning. The rest of the year, the box was put away, sometimes one place, sometimes another; it had spent one year in Mr. Graves' barn and another year underfoot in the post office, and sometimes it was set on a shelf in the Martin grocery and left there.

There was a great deal of fussing to be done before Mr. Summers declared the lottery open. There were the lists to make up—of heads of families, heads of households in each family, members of each household in each family. There was the proper swearing-in of Mr. Summers by the postmaster, as the official of the lottery; at one time, some people remembered, there had been a recital of some sort, performed by the official of the lottery, a perfunctory, tuneless chant that had been rattled off duly each year; some people believed that the official of the lottery used to stand just so when he said or sang it, others believed that he was supposed to walk among the people, but years and years ago this part of the ritual had been allowed to lapse. There had been, also, a ritual salute, which the official of the lottery had had to use in addressing each person who came up to draw from the box, but this also had changed with time, until now it was felt necessary only for the official to speak to each person approaching. Mr. Summers was very good at all this; in his clean white shirt and blue jeans, with one hand resting carelessly on the black box, he

seemed very proper and important as he talked interminably to Mr. Graves and the Martins.

Just as Mr. Summers finally left off talking and turned to the assembled villagers, Mrs. Hutchinson came hurriedly along the path to the square, her sweater thrown over her shoulders, and slid into place in the back of the crowd. "Clean forgot what day it was," she said to Mrs. Delacroix, who stood next to her, and they both laughed softly. "Thought my old man was out back stacking wood," Mrs. Hutchinson went on, "and then I looked out the window and the kids was gone, and then I remembered it was the twenty-seventh and came a-running." She dried her hands on her apron, and Mrs. Delacroix said, "You're in time, though. They're still talking away up there."

Mrs. Hutchinson craned her neck to see through the crowd and found her husband and children standing near the front. She tapped Mrs. Delacroix on the arm as a farewell and began to make her way through the crowd. The people separated good-humoredly to let her through; two or three people said, in voices just loud enough to be heard across the crowd, "Here comes your Mrs., Hutchinson," and "Bill, she made it after all." Mrs. Hutchinson reached her husband, and Mr. Summers, who had been waiting, said cheerfully, "Thought we were going to have to get on without you, Tessie." Mrs. Hutchinson said, grinning, "Wouldn't have me leave m'dishes in the sink, now, would you, Joe?," and soft laughter ran through the crowd as the people stirred back into position after Mrs. Hutchinson's arrival.

"Well, now," Mr. Summers said soberly, "guess we better get started, get this over with, so's we can go back to work. Anybody ain't here?"

"Dunbar," several people said. "Dunbar, Dunbar."

Mr. Summers consulted his list. "Clyde Dunbar," he said. "That's right. He's broke his leg, hasn't he? Who's drawing for him?"

"Me, I guess," a woman said, and Mr. Summers turned to look at her. "Wife draws for her husband," Mr. Summers said. "Don't you have a grown boy to do it for you, Janey?" Although Mr. Summers and

everyone else in the village knew the answer perfectly well, it was the business of the official of the lottery to ask such questions formally. Mr. Summers waited with an expression of polite interest while Mrs. Dunbar answered.

"Horace's not but sixteen yet," Mrs. Dunbar said regretfully. "Guess I gotta fill in for the old man this year."

"Right," Mr. Summers said. He made a note on the list he was holding. Then he asked, "Watson boy drawing this year?"

A tall boy in the crowd raised his hand. "Here," he said. "I'm drawing for m'mother and me." He blinked his eyes nervously and ducked his head as several voices in the crowd said things like "Good fellow, Jack," and "Glad to see your mother's got a man to do it."

"Well," Mr. Summers said, "guess that's everyone. Old Man Warner make it?"

"Here," a voice said, and Mr. Summers nodded.

Asudden hush fell on the crowd as Mr. Summers cleared his throat and looked at the list. "All ready?" he called. "Now, I'll read the names—heads of families first—and the men come up and take a paper out of the box. Keep the paper folded in your hand without looking at it until everyone has had a turn. Everything clear?"

The people had done it so many times that they only half listened to the directions; most of them were quiet, wetting their lips, not looking around. Then Mr. Summers raised one hand high and said, "Adams." A man disengaged himself from the crowd and came forward. "Hi, Steve," Mr. Summers said, and Mr. Adams said, "Hi, Joe." They grinned at one another humorlessly and nervously. Then Mr. Adams reached into the black box and took out a folded paper. He held it firmly by one corner as he turned and went hastily back to his place in the crowd, where he stood a little apart from his family, not looking down at his hand.

"Allen," Mr. Summers said. "Anderson. . . . Bentham."

"Seems like there's no time at all between lotteries any more," Mrs. Delacroix said to Mrs. Graves in the back row. "Seems like we got through with the last one only last week."

"Time sure goes fast," Mrs. Graves said.

"Clark. . . . Delacroix."

"There goes my old man," Mrs. Delacroix said. She held her breath while her husband went forward.

"Dunbar," Mr. Summers said, and Mrs. Dunbar went steadily to the box while one of the women said, "Go on, Janey," and another said, "There she goes."

"We're next," Mrs. Graves said. She watched while Mr. Graves came around from the side of the box, greeted Mr. Summers gravely, and selected a slip of paper from the box. By now, all through the crowd there were men holding the small folded papers in their large hands, turning them over and over nervously. Mrs. Dunbar and her two sons stood together, Mrs. Dunbar holding the slip of paper.

"Harburt. . . . Hutchinson."

"Get up there, Bill," Mrs. Hutchinson said, and the people near her laughed.

"Jones."

"They do say," Mr. Adams said to Old Man Warner, who stood next to him, "that over in the north village they're talking of giving up the lottery."

Old Man Warner snorted. "Pack of crazy fools," he said. "Listening to the young folks, nothing's good enough for *them*. Next thing you know, they'll be wanting to go back to living in caves, nobody work any more, live *that* way for a while. Used to be a saying about 'Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon.' First thing you know, we'd all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns. There's *always* been a

lottery," he added petulantly. "Bad enough to see young Joe Summers up there joking with everybody."

"Some places have already quit lotteries," Mrs. Adams said.

"Nothing but trouble in *that*," Old Man Warner said stoutly. "Pack of young fools."

"Martin." And Bobby Martin watched his father go forward.

"Overdyke. . . . Percy."

"I wish they'd hurry," Mrs. Dunbar said to her older son. "I wish they'd hurry."

"They're almost through," her son said.

"You get ready to run tell Dad," Mrs. Dunbar said.

Mr. Summers called his own name and then stepped forward precisely and selected a slip from the box. Then he called, "Warner."

"Seventy-seventh year I been in the lottery," Old Man Warner said as he went through the crowd. "Seventy-seventh time."

"Watson." The tall boy came awkwardly through the crowd. Someone said, "Don't be nervous, Jack," and Mr. Summers said, "Take your time, son."

"Zanini."

After that, there was a long pause, a breathless pause, until Mr. Summers, holding his slip of paper in the air, said, "All right, fellows." For a minute, no one moved, and then all the slips of paper were opened. Suddenly, all the women began to speak at once, saying, "Who is it?," "Who's got it?," "Is it the Dunbars?," "Is it the Watsons?" Then the voices began to say, "It's Hutchinson. It's Bill," "Bill Hutchinson's got it."

"Go tell your father," Mrs. Dunbar said to her older son.

People began to look around to see the Hutchinsons. Bill Hutchinson was standing quiet, staring down at the paper in his hand. Suddenly, Tessie Hutchinson shouted to Mr. Summers, “You didn’t give him time enough to take any paper he wanted. I saw you. It wasn’t fair!”

“Be a good sport, Tessie,” Mrs. Delacroix called, and Mrs. Graves said, “All of us took the same chance.”

“Shut up, Tessie,” Bill Hutchinson said.

“Well, everyone,” Mr. Summers said, “that was done pretty fast, and now we’ve got to be hurrying a little more to get done in time.” He consulted his next list. “Bill,” he said, “you draw for the Hutchinson family. You got any other households in the Hutchinsons?”

“There’s Don and Eva,” Mrs. Hutchinson yelled. “Make *them* take their chance!”

“Daughters draw with their husbands’ families, Tessie,” Mr. Summers said gently. “You know that as well as anyone else.”

“It wasn’t *fair*,” Tessie said.

“I guess not, Joe,” Bill Hutchinson said regretfully. “My daughter draws with her husband’s family, that’s only fair. And I’ve got no other family except the kids.”

“Then, as far as drawing for families is concerned, it’s you,” Mr. Summers said in explanation, “and as far as drawing for households is concerned, that’s you, too. Right?”

“Right,” Bill Hutchinson said.

“How many kids, Bill?” Mr. Summers asked formally.

“Three,” Bill Hutchinson said. “There’s Bill, Jr., and Nancy, and little Dave. And Tessie and me.”

“All right, then,” Mr. Summers said. “Harry, you got their tickets back?”

Mr. Graves nodded and held up the slips of paper. "Put them in the box, then," Mr. Summers directed. "Take Bill's and put it in."

"I think we ought to start over," Mrs. Hutchinson said, as quietly as she could. "I tell you it wasn't *fair*. You didn't give him time enough to choose. Every body saw that."

Mr. Graves had selected the five slips and put them in the box, and he dropped all the papers but those onto the ground, where the breeze caught them and lifted them off.

"Listen, everybody," Mrs. Hutchinson was saying to the people around her.

"Ready, Bill?" Mr. Summers asked, and Bill Hutchinson, with one quick glance around at his wife and children, nodded.

"Remember," Mr. Summers said, "take the slips and keep them folded until each person has taken one. Harry, you help little Dave." Mr. Graves took the hand of the little boy, who came willingly with him up to the box. "Take a paper out of the box, Davy," Mr. Summers said. Davy put his hand into the box and laughed. "Take just *one* paper," Mr. Summers said. "Harry, you hold it for him." Mr. Graves took the child's hand and removed the folded paper from the tight fist and held it while little Dave stood next to him and looked up at him wonderingly.

"Nancy next," Mr. Summers said. Nancy was twelve, and her school friends breathed heavily as she went forward, switching her skirt, and took a slip daintily from the box. "Bill, Jr.," Mr. Summers said, and Billy, his face red and his feet overlarge, nearly knocked the box over as he got a paper out. "Tessie," Mr. Summers said. She hesitated for a minute, looking around defiantly, and then set her lips and went up to the box. She snatched a paper out and held it behind her.

"Bill," Mr. Summers said, and Bill Hutchinson reached into the box and felt around, bringing his hand out at last with the slip of paper in it.

The crowd was quiet. A girl whispered, “I hope it’s not Nancy,” and the sound of the whisper reached the edges of the crowd.

“It’s not the way it used to be,” Old Man Warner said clearly. “People ain’t the way they used to be.”

“All right,” Mr. Summers said. “Open the papers. Harry, you open little Dave’s.”

Mr. Graves opened the slip of paper and there was a general sigh through the crowd as he held it up and everyone could see that it was blank. Nancy and Bill, Jr., opened theirs at the same time, and both beamed and laughed, turning around to the crowd and holding their slips of paper above their heads.

“Tessie,” Mr. Summers said. There was a pause, and then Mr. Summers looked at Bill Hutchinson, and Bill unfolded his paper and showed it. It was blank.

“It’s Tessie,” Mr. Summers said, and his voice was hushed. “Show us her paper, Bill.”

Bill Hutchinson went over to his wife and forced the slip of paper out of her hand. It had a black spot on it, the black spot Mr. Summers had made the night before with the heavy pencil in the coal-company office. Bill Hutchinson held it up, and there was a stir in the crowd.

“All right, folks,” Mr. Summers said. “Let’s finish quickly.”

Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use stones. The pile of stones the boys had made earlier was ready; there were stones on the ground with the blowing scraps of paper that had come out of the box. Mrs. Delacroix selected a stone so large she had to pick it up with both hands and turned to Mrs. Dunbar. “Come on,” she said. “Hurry up.”

Mrs. Dunbar had small stones in both hands, and she said, gasping for breath. “I can’t run at all. You’ll have to go ahead and I’ll catch up with you.”

The children had stones already, and someone gave little Davy Hutchinson a few pebbles.

Tessie Hutchinson was in the center of a cleared space by now, and she held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her. "It isn't fair," she said. A stone hit her on the side of the head.

Old Man Warner was saying, "Come on, come on, everyone." Steve Adams was in the front of the crowd of villagers, with Mrs. Graves beside him.

"It isn't fair, it isn't right," Mrs. Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her. ♦