A Letter To God

Introduction

About the writer

The story is written by the Mexican writer Gregorio Lopez Fuentes (1892 to 1966). He is now best remembered as the leading chronicler of the Mexican Revolution, which broke out when he was 15, working in his father's general store. He came in contact with the farmers and laborers and later described their lives with deep insight. His fiction is distinguished by the anonymous nature of the characters archetypes overshadowing individuals.

Setting

This story is about one such archetype- strong faith with far-fetched consequences considering the author's timeline

The story is probably set in the 1920s, shortly after the end of the Mexican Revolution. The most striking detail is the sparse population as Lencho's house is the only one in the valley.

This makes the southern part of Mexico a likely setting with its diverse landscape. In such remote places agriculture is almost the only mode of survival for people.

The story has a third-person omniscient narrator with more focus on Lencho's conflicts and convictions. It allows an equally deep understanding of the simple but illiterate Lencho and the compassionate but complacent self-congratulating postmaster.

Objectives

The story revolves around the idea of having unquestionable faith in God, to understand the importance of faith and to believe that faith can move mountains.

*As a concentrated, concise form of narrative and descriptive prose fiction, the short story has been theorized through the traditional elements of dramatic structure: exposition (the introduction of setting, situation, and main characters), complication (the event that introduces the conflict), rising action, crisis (the decisive moment for the protagonist and his commitment to a course of action), climax (the point of highest interest in terms of the conflict and the point with the most action) and resolution (the point when the conflict is resolved).*

Summary

The story presents the infinite faith of a man to God. Lencho, the main character of the story, even he experienced a great turbulence in his livelihood which made him worry still believes that a help from God will come and that his family will not go hungry despite what happened. The theme of the story, if I am going to base it in biblical sense, “Whatever troubles you encounter always believe in God for He will always carry you and never leave you”. However, the story is a satyr trying to tackle a reality which really exists in the society.

The story is told in third person point of view. The story begins with a brief description of the setting in which we could safely say that it happened in the rural area of Mexico. The setting remotely talking about a house which is singled out in the entire valley, a hill, the river which is seen on heights, the field of corn tilted by the family gives us an idea in the first part of the story that Lencho, being the main character, is a farmer, who supports his family needs through farming. The conflict of the story happens when a hailstorm struck the field and destroyed his farm. “All our work, for nothing!” The entire land was wrecked by the catastrophe. “There is no one who can help us!” This dialogue proves how terrible the aftermath of the calamity was. The type of conflict dominating in the story is Man vs. Nature.

As the story progresses, the family was so distraught. They thought that there was no hope at all, not a single one. “Don’t be so upset, even though this seems like a total loss. Remember no one dies of hunger.” This line gives us a premise that the family has regained back their hope and that hope is a help from God. The next thing that happened, Lencho, being described as an ox of a man started to write a letter addressed to God. And he went to the post office to mail the letter to Him. This action of Lencho suggests his all-out faith to the Heavenly Father. Such a prodigy of faith, he is!

When the postman read the receiver of the letter, he laughed heartily and went to his boss. The postmaster didn’t want to disillusion Lencho’s faith so they answered the letter but they were able to raise an amount of money which is more than a little half of the amount he asked. This is now the denouement of the story when Lencho received the letter which he thought God has sent to him. But he was so disappointed of the amount of money he receives. But still his faith in Him is still intact trying to send another letter telling Him not to send the letter to the post office because those employees are a bunch of crooks.

If we will analyse the story in depth, we could say that it is a satyr of the reality happening in our country. If we take Lencho’s character, someone who is very faithful to the creator but still very malcontent of what he receives. If we take the characters of the postmen they are those people who are willing to help and gave help but still they appear to be the antagonist. And if we take the situation that someone gives what a person who is need but he used another person to give it to the needy one there could be possibility that the aid he sends will not be fully received by the supposed receiver. The situation which I mentioned is very rampant especially here in Philippine setting.

Nevertheless, even if you experienced harshness in life always remember you should not lose hope and do something to overcome that problem by doing the best because remember God will do the rest and He will send instruments that will help you. He will do it in his own best ways!

Word meaning and Analysis

**A Letter to God Lesson Explanation**

*The house - the only one in the entire valley - sat on the crest of a low hill. From this height one could see the river and the field of ripe corn dotted with the flowers that always promised a good harvest. The only thing the earth needed was a downpour or at least a shower. Throughout the morning Lencho - who knew his fields intimately - had done nothing else but see the sky towards the north-east.*

Word meanings

Crest: Top of a hill

Dotted: Full Of

Downpour: Heavy Rain

Intimately: Closely

Lencho, the farmer, lived on the only house that was there on the top of a hill. The hill was low-heighted. From there, a river and a ready-to-harvest corn field were visible. The field belonged to Lencho and he had the utmost confidence that the harvest would reap great profits. The only thing that he awaited was rainfall. In this hope, he spent an entire morning gazing at the sky in the north-east direction from where a drizzle was expected to shower on his field.

*"Now we're really going to get some water, woman. The woman who was preparing supper, replied, "Yes, God willing". The older boys were working in the field, while the smaller ones were playing near the house until the woman called to them all, "Come for dinner. It was during the meal that, just as Lencho had predicted, big drops of rain began to fall. In the north-east huge mountains of clouds could be seen approaching. The air was fresh and sweet. The man went out for no other reason than to have the pleasure of feeling the rain on his body, and when he returned he exclaimed, "These aren't raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins. The big drops are ten cent pieces and the little ones are fives."*

Word meanings

Exclaimed- cry out suddenly in surprise, strong emotion, or pain.

The man, while looking at the sky, confidently tells his wife that they are going to have a rain-shower to which the lady replies by saying, only if everything happens as they hope and expect. Their elder children were working at the field and the younger ones were playing near the house when Lencho's wife calls everyone for dinner. It is during that time, drops of rain begin to fall, hereby proving the farmer's prediction to be true. The wind was pleasant and clouds could be seen approaching from the north-east sky. Lencho goes out of the house to take pleasure in feeling the droplets on his body. He refers to the drizzle as coins, large droplets being equivalent to ten cents and the smaller ones, five cents. He says so because these raindrops would ensure a good crop which would eventually get them a lot of money.

*With a satisfied expression he regarded the field of ripe corn with its flowers, draped in a curtain of rain. But suddenly a strong wind began to blow and along with the rain very large hailstones began to fall. These truly did resemble new silver coins. The boys, exposing themselves to the rain, ran out to collect the frozen pearls.*

Word meanings

Regarded- Consider Or Think Of In A Specified Way

Draped- Adorn, Cover, Or Wrap (Someone Or Something)

Hailstones- A Pellet Of Hail

Resemble- Have A Similar Appearance To Or Qualities In Common With (Someone Or Something); Look Or Seem Like.

Exposing- make (something) visible by uncovering it.; reveal

On seeing everything go as expected, Lencho reflected upon the field and the flowers covered with droplets which seemed as if they were wrapped in a curtain. Unexpectedly, strong wind started blowing, leading to a hailstorm. Satirically, the writer refers to these pellets of frozen rain as "new silver coins. The innocent boys became playful and went out in the rain to play and collect these hailstones which looked like "frozen pearls".

*"It's really getting bad now," exclaimed the man. "I hope it passes quickly. It did not pass quickly. For an hour the hail rained on the house, the garden, the hillside, the cornfield, on the whole valley. The field was white, as if covered with salt.*

The farmer now starts worrying and hopes that the storm gets over quickly, which, to his utmost disappointment, didn't. The hailstones covered the entire valley including the house, garden, hillside, and the cornfield. It made everything look so white that it seemed as if it was covered in salt.

*Not a leaf remained on the trees. The corn was totally destroyed. The flowers were gone from the plants. Lencho's soul was filled with sadness. When the storm had passed, he stood in the middle of the field and said to his sons, "A plague of locusts would have left more than this. The hail has left nothing. This year we will have no corn." That night was a sorrowful one. "All our work, for nothing. There's no one who can help us"."We'll all go hungry this year."*

Word meanings

plague- a destructively numerous inflow or multiplication of a harmful animal, infestation

locusts- Insects which fly in big groups and destroy crops

Lencho became stressed and disappointed as everything went against the plan. The trees had shed their leaves, corns were smashed and the flowers had also fallen from their plants. While standing in the withered fields, he conveyed his dismay and sorrow to his sons by commenting that the effect of the storm proved to be worse than that of crop-destroying insects. All their hard work had gone in vain. He felt helpless as no corn had been left and feared, that they might have to starve this time.

*But in the hearts of all who lived in that solitary house in the middle of the valley, there* *was a single hope: help from God. "Don't be so upset, even though this seems like a total loss. Remember, no one dies of hunger.""That's what they say: no one dies of hunger. "Â*

Word meanings

solitary: Existing alone; lonely.

Even after everything had gone southwards (gone wrong), the family still had hope in their hearts of hearts. They had faith in the almighty even after nothing was left. They gave each other support and recalled a saying which assures that no one ever dies of starvation.

*All through the night, Lencho thought only of his one hope: the help of God, whose eyes, as he had been instructed, see everything, even what is deep in one's conscience. Lencho was an ox of a man, working like an animal in the fields, but still he knew how to write. The following Sunday, at daybreak, he began to write a letter which he himself would carry to town and place in the mail. It was nothing less than a letter to God.*

*Word meanings*

conscience- an inner sense of right and wrong.

ox of a man- hardworking

daybreak- The time in the morning when daylight first appears

Lencho spent his entire night thinking of the only option left and that was to seek the help of God, who, he had been informed, has its eyes and ears everywhere. He thought of writing a letter to God conveying his grievances. Despite spending all these years working at the farm, he still knew how to write. He started writing on the Sunday morning and thought of mailing it himself by going to the town.

*"God, he wrote, "if you don't help me, my family and I will go hungry this year. I need a hundred pesos in order to sow my field again and to live until the crop comes, because the hailstorm...." He wrote 'To God' on the envelope, put the letter inside and, still troubled, went to town. At the post office, he placed a stamp on the letter and dropped it into the mailbox.*

Word meanings

Pesos- the basic monetary unit of Mexico, several other Latin American countries, and the Philippines

In his letter to god, he communicated his poverty-stricken situation and mentioned that he needed 100 pesos to regenerate the crops along with surviving until they are ready to harvest. On the envelope, He wrote, "To God, Then, at the post office, placed stamp on the letter and dropped it in the mailbox.

*One of the employees, who was a postman and also helped at the post office, went to his boss laughing heartily and showed him the letter to God. Never in his career as a postman had he known that address. The postmaster - a fat, amiable fellow - also broke out laughing, but almost immediately he turned serious and, tapping the letter on his desk, commented, "What faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter. Starting up a correspondence with God!"Â*

Word meanings

Amiable- Friendly And Pleasant

Correspondence- Communication by exchanging letters with someone.

A postman, who was also an employee of the post office, noticed Lencho's letter and showed it to the postmaster. They both felt amused, but the postmaster, fat and friendly, immediately developed a sense of seriousness. He was astounded at the amount of faith Lencho has in God and wished he had the same.

*So, in order not to shake the writer's faith in God, the postmaster came up with an idea: answer the letter. But when he opened it, it was evident that to answer it he needed something more than goodwill, ink and paper. But he stuck to his resolution: he asked for money from his employees, he himself gave part of his salary, and several friends of his were obliged to give something'for an act of charity'.*

Word meanings

goodwill- friendly, helpful, or cooperative feelings or attitude

resolution- a firm decision to do or not to do something.

obliged- grateful

With good intentions, the postmaster read the letter and thought of replying to it so as to keep the writer's belief intact. But the writer expected the reply in a different way that could not be fulfilled with pen, paper and morals. The farmer had demanded for 100 pesos. The postmaster along with his colleagues and a few friends, who were more than willing to donate for a good cause, collected a pool of money to help Lencho.

It was impossible for him to gather together the hundred pesos, so he was able to send the farmer only a little more than half. He put the money in an envelope addressed to Lencho and with it a letter containing only a single word as a signature: God

Despite his best efforts, he was only able to collect an amount not more than half of what was required. He then addressed it to Lencho along with a letter which was undersigned by God.

*The following Sunday Lencho came a bit earlier than usual to ask if there was a letter for him. It was the postman himself who handed the letter to him while the postmaster, experiencing the contentment of a man who has performed a good deed, looked on from his office. Lencho showed not the slightest surprise on seeing the money; such was his confidence but he became angry when he counted the money. God could not have made a mistake, nor could he have denied Lencho what he had requested.*

Word meanings

contentment- Satisfaction

Next Sunday, Lencho came looking for the reply a bit earlier than expected. The postman handed him the letter waiting to see him joyful and surprised while the postmaster, feeling satisfied, oversaw it from his office. On the contrary, the farmer got disheartened on seeing that the money was less than what he asked for. His faith is still undeterred and he believed that God cannot make such a mistake.

*Immediately, Lencho went up to the window to ask for paper and ink. On the public writing-table, he started to write, with much wrinkling of his brow, caused by the effort he had to make to express his ideas. When he finished, he went to the window to buy a stamp which he licked and then affixed to the envelope with a blow of his fist. The moment the letter fell into the mailbox the postmaster went to open it. It said: "God: Of the money that I asked for, only seventy pesos reached me. Send me the rest, since I need it very much. But don't send it to me through the mail because the post office employees are a bunch of crooks. Lencho."*

Word Meaning

Crook

On being disappointed, he started looking for ink and paper to write to God again. While writing, his eyebrows got curled out of the concentration with which he was drafting a new request. On completing, he affixed it with a stamp. As soon as he dropped it into the mailbox, the postmaster took it out to read it. Lencho complained that he had only received 70 pesos and he is really in need of the remaining amount. He doubted the integrity and honesty of the post office employees and suggested that the money should not be sent via post because he doubted that the staff at the post office must have stolen the missing amount.

#### ****Conclusion of A letter to God****

We learnt that Faith has the power to give us what we want, to fulfil our needs However, one must realise that humanity still prevails.

Lencho was a spiritual man? I Doubt

#### Lencho is the protagonist of the story ‘A Letter to God’ by G.L. Fuentes. This is the first chapter in the class 10th English First Flight. Academician argues Lencho as spiritual person but Lencho was a spiritual man? I Doubt.

#### Reason

#### One of my professional mentor once said, “Poetry and literary analysis is an intellectual debris.” This is true in many cases. Review is our personal approach and real character is an author’s creativity.

#### I cannot ignore the notion of the characterization that is being portrayed to students through multiple channels. Students, in specific, cannot think at an intellectual level. His approach is imitated from the approach of teacher.

#### It could be a surprise knowing the term spiritual did not appear in the entire text of A Letter to God. How much can we validate the question of spiritual nature of Lencho?

#### About Lencho

#### These aren’t raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins. The big drops are ten cent pieces and the little ones are fives.’’

#### Read these lines from the text, it will signal Lencho’s expectations. He is an ordinary man with a concern for his family. When strong winds started blowing & large hailstorm began to fall, his joy changed into grief. “It is really getting bad now” – showed his fear.

#### When hailstorm destroyed everything and he found nobody to help him through out the year, God was his last refuge. Finally he wrote a letter to God for help.

#### Review of Lencho’s Character

#### “Lencho has been portrayed as a deeply spiritual man” – as stated by brainly.in.

#### “Lencho has been depicted as a true spiritual man.” – as stated by EnglishFi

#### But is it really so?

#### There is no uniform definition of spirituality. This is faith specific. Someone considers soul as a spiritual part of human while another rejects soul as an entity.

#### We cannot read this chapter from spiritual point of view. Concept building about spirituality among students by sharing the story of Lencho’s faith in God can be misleading.

#### When he saw raindrops first time, he saw coins in those water droplets. He did not thank God for timely rainfall. When hailstorm destroyed everything, he looked people for help. When he found nobody, he remembered God. That is why I called God as his last refuse.

#### Why can’t we say that God is his helplessness not faith? In Indian theology, expectations, desires and lust is always considered as obstacles for a spiritual person. Is expectation and desire absent in Lencho? If answer is in negation, than Lencho is not a spiritual person.

#### Postmaster and his employees, after reading the letter, collected money, put money in an envelope (They only collected 70 pesos irrespective of 100 pesos) and sent to Lencho.

#### When Lencho received the envelope, he became angry after counting the money. He wrote another letter and stated, “God: Of the money that I asked for, only seventy pesos reached me. Send me the rest, since I need it very much. But don’t send it to me through the mail because the post office employees are a bunch of crooks. Lencho.”

#### Initially forget about Lencho and read the story from Post-Office staff point of view. They have made the same mistake what potentially our students will do in future after reading this story as a story of faith.

#### Post office staff would found themselves exploited and humiliated. They can be fools but not a bunch of Crookes. Indirectly we are making students fools when we depict Lencho as a spiritual person with the so-called immense trust in God.

#### Spiritual person is full of gratitude towards nature. He has a sense of seeking. He is away from complaints and worries. If I would consider his trust true to God, he must show gratitude for 70 pesos also.

#### Conclusion

#### Being an academician itself, I never promoted or taught Lencho as a spiritual person. G.L. Fuentes is giving warning about pseudo spiritual notions. Lencho is not a spiritual person and I strongly objected his description in various references as spiritual person or a person of faith for God. You can comment if you are not agree with me.