

## Hungry Child by R.K. Narayan

In *Hungry Child* by R. K. Narayan we have the theme of escape, loneliness, innocence, trust, dissatisfaction, gender roles, independence and paralysis. Taken from his *Malgudi Days* collection the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator and from the beginning of the story the reader realises that Narayan may be exploring the theme of escape. There is a sense that Raman's purpose at the Expo is to escape from the life he is living. He is yet to get over the fact that Daisy has abandoned him and his work has also been affected due to the weariness his heart feels over Daisy. It is also noticeable that Raman is overly critical of the things he sees at the Expo. This may be a direct result of the dissatisfaction that Raman feels. Triggered again by the loneliness he feels in his life since Daisy left him. It is as though Raman has gone to the Expo to cheer himself up yet at the same time he is unable to forget the position he finds himself in. It is only when Raman claims to be the father of the young boy that things get a little bit brighter for Raman.

What is also interesting about the young boy is how innocent he is. Raman is a complete stranger to the young boy yet the boy gladly follows Raman's lead. Though some critics might suggest that the boy is just happy to be free of the confinement he felt while in the Central Office. It is more likely that the boy would have been prepared to leave the Central Office with any adult such is his innocence. The boy also shows remarkable trust in Raman though perhaps this is because Raman appears to be bribing the boy with food and rides on some of the attractions at the Expo. Either way what is clear to the reader is the fact that Raman is enjoying his role as a father. He has mapped out the boy's education. He knows that he has to make up a story for his neighbours when they see the boy but more importantly there is a spring in Raman's step. A spring that had been missing since Daisy left him. If anything Raman has great plans for the boy's future. He also plans on fixing up his home which symbolically mirrors Raman's life. Just as Raman's home is in a mess so too is his life.

The role of women in the story is also interesting as Raman considers women to be either home-makers (Raman's aunt) or child-bearers (Daisy). Raman does not see women as being independent of men. Something that Daisy is. She is a political activist who does not necessarily fall into the category of willing child-bearer. She believes in her fight for the right for women to have no children. Most likely because she knows that once a woman has a child they are bound to the home. Their lives will be taken over by their children while the male in the family continues to have their independence. Similarly when it comes to the fish-woman at the Expo she is viewed upon as an object just as many men (including Raman) would view women. As no more than being objects.

Likewise with the clerk in the Central Office. When Raman collects the boy the clerk asks where the child's mother is. It is as though the rearing of child is the duty of a mother. They are supposed to be by a child's side. It is possible that Narayan is placing a spotlight on the perceived gender roles that existed at the time the story was written.

The end of the story is also interesting as despite playing the role of father for the day. Things come to an abrupt end for Raman when the young boy sees his family and runs towards them. All the dreams and goals that Raman had toyed with for the day are gone. Something that he is acutely aware of. He is to go back to his home alone and most likely live his life as lonely as he was prior to collecting the boy in the Central Office. Nothing will have changed for Raman except for how he felt for a few hours when he was in charge of the boy. If anything Raman is to continue to live his life in paralysis. Any chance of happiness that he may have had has faded. It is also interesting that the young boy at the end of the story shows no loyalty to Raman. He may have just been a means to an end. Someone to buy him food and take him on some of the attractions at the Expo. Though the boy said very little throughout the story his actions at the end highlight to the reader that he is happy to have found his family. Even if it means that his father through worry scolds him.

## The Case for Defence

The short story takes place in England, around 1940's. You see that by their talk for example. They are very polite and sincere and we know this because the book came out in 1947, so it is most likely that this short story was about the 1940's.

The main characters in the story is Mrs. Salmon, living in 15 Northwood Street, 56 years old. Kind, honest and careful lady. Adams the suspected for the murder, heavy man with bulging, bloodshot eyes. It was three more witnesses than Mrs. Salmon; Henry MacDougall, Mr. Wheeler and an unknown.

The story is not chronological; it starts with Mrs. Salmon's attest to the crime. In the early of the morning, at 2 o'clock Mrs. Salmon heard a noise outside her house. Therefore, she went to the window and saw Adams the suspected on the steps of Mrs. Parker's house. Adams had gloves on and a hammer in his hand. Mrs. Salmon saw Adams drop the hammer into the bushes. She had seen his face when he looked up in the light of a streetlamp. Mrs. Salmon spoke this attest to the court. While Adams's wife said that, he was with her at two in the morning. There was more witnesses but Mrs. Salmon was the ideal witness, with her expression of honesty, care and kindness to tell to the court if the man in the dock was the murder. She looked straight at the big man standing in the dock, and said, "Yes, there is he." Then they bring in Mr. Adams twin brother, exactly same as Mr. Adams. Mrs. Salmon got confused and now she could not say which one of them is the murder. There were no one else that could say which one of them was the murder, so they both got free. One of the brothers was the murder, but no one knew it. When the brothers came out in the crowd, somehow one of the twins got pushed on the road right in front of a bus. He died of course but which one of them died, the murder or the innocent man?

The theme of the story is not to judge people too quickly and without enough evidence. The story tells a very good point; nothing is what it looks like, and maybe; everyone gets what they deserve.

The Case for the Defence is a short story written by Graham Greene. The story takes place in England around the time it was written, in the late 1930's, when a conviction for murder carried a death penalty. We find ourselves in Central Criminal Court in London where the trial of the "Peckham murder" is being held. In this story we meet Mrs. Salmon who testifies against the defendant Mr. Adams. But it turns out he has a twin brother and the witnesses can not be sure of which one of them they saw. Mr. Adams is therefore acquitted, although one of them committed the murder. Outside of the courtroom one of the two brothers is pushed by the crowd and hit by a bus. If it was the murderer or not we do not know. But what we do know, is that their might be a killer that Mrs. Salmon witnessed against on free foot.

The narrator of the story is most likely the prosecutor as he is in the courtroom, and talking to Mrs. Salmon, following her out after the trial and speaking of her as the ideal witness. The narrator does not participate in the plot, but he or she is observing and referring from the events of the story in third person. By having a third person narrator the author achieves an open story where you need to read between the lines, whereas an omniscient narrator to take an example, would know everything about the characters and in a way kill some of the tension in the story.

Even though Mrs. Salmon is not really significant to the theme, she is important to the plot of the story and is the protagonist. Mrs. Salmon is a round character and is described like this by the narrator: "She was the ideal witness, with her slight Scotch accent and her expression of honesty, care and kindness. (...) There was no malice in her." The reason I think the author chose to describe Mrs. Salmon like that, is to point out that she would tell the truth, that she would be a character with credibility. That way the reader can be sure that it really was Mr. Adams that she saw. The characterizing of Mr. Adams has the same purpose. "He was a heavy stout man with bulging bloodshot eyes. (...) Yes an ugly customer, one you wouldn't forget." This description rules out the chance of the witnesses being wrong.

In this short story, Graham Greene has used some narrative techniques to set a mood or point out some things. Like the plot-structure of the story and using certain language. Although there is some tension in the beginning of the story, I would say the tension gradually builds up until the twin brother rises in the back of the courtroom, which is the climax, and then fades out. But the author also ends the story with some tension. The last sentence: "But if you were Mrs. Salmon, could you sleep at night?" points out that there might be a murderer on free foot that she witnessed against in court. Leaving the reader with the possibility of a murderer coming for her. One interesting thing in the

story is the date of the murder, February 14. This is Valentines Day, the day when you show someone you care. This might be a coincidence or maybe the author may have thought that it would be a nice contrast to what happened that day in the story. Graham Green also uses words that are typical in law to create a courtroom atmosphere. This gives the story that particular mood he wishes for the story to have. For example: "Crown counsel" or "The man in the dock". Other than this, he has not done anything distinctive regarding style or language.

During the time of this story, a conviction for murder was punished with a death-sentence. I think that what Graham Greene tries to say through "The Case for the Defence" is that execution should be abolished. This message becomes particularly clear when one of the twin brothers is run over by a bus: The story says that the police kept the roadway clear for traffic, yet a bus suddenly comes driving the exact moment that he is pushed out on the road. "Divine vengeance?", the author says in the text. By writing this I think that Graham Greene is evidently saying that human beings do not have the right to judge other people, only God should have this jurisdiction. And with this I totally agree. How can we as humans, all created equal by God, give ourselves the right to judge others?

## The unknown citizen

The Bureau of Statistics and all other reports show that he will complied with his duties to "the Greater Community." He worked in a factory and paid his union dues. He had no odd views. The Social Psychology investigators found him to be normal, as did the Press: he was popular, "liked a drink," bought the daily paper, and had the "normal" reactions to advertisements. He was fully insured. The Health-card report shows he was in the hospital only once, and left cured.

The Producers Research and High-Grade Living investigators also showed he was normal and "had everything necessary to the Modern Man"—radio, car, etcetera. The Public Opinion researchers found "he held the proper opinions for the time of year," supporting peace in peacetime but serving when there was war. He was married and had the appropriate number of five children, according to the Eugenecist. He never interfered with the public schools.

It is absurd to ask whether he was free or happy, for if anything had been wrong, "we should certainly have heard."

## Analysis

"The Unknown Citizen" (1940) is one of Auden's most famous poems. Often anthologized and read by students in high school and college, it is renowned for its wit and irony in complaining about the stultifying and anonymous qualities of bureaucratic, semi-socialist Western societies. Its structure is that of a satiric elegy, as though the boring, unknown citizen was so utterly unremarkable that the state honored him with a poetic monument about how little trouble he caused for anyone. It resembles the

**“Unknown Soldier” memorials that nations erect to honor the soldiers who fought and died for their countries and whose names have been lost to posterity; Britain’s is located in Westminster Abbey and the United States’ is located in Arlington, Virginia. This one, in an unnamed location, lists the unknown man as simply “JS/07 M 378.”**

**The rhyme scheme changes a few times throughout the poem. Most frequently the reader notices rhyming couplets. These sometimes use the same number of syllables, but they are not heroic couplets—no, they are not in iambic pentameter—they are often 11 or 13 syllables long, or of differing lengths. These patterns increase the dry humor of the poem.**

**Auden’s “Unknown Citizen” is not anonymous like the Unknown Soldier, for the bureaucracy knows a great deal about him. The named agencies give the sense, as early as 1940, that a powerful Big Brother kind of bureaucracy watches over its citizens and collects data on them and keeps it throughout one’s life. This feeling makes the poem eerie and prescient; one often thinks of the dystopian, totalitarian states found in the writings of George Orwell and Aldous Huxley or the data-driven surveillance state of today. In Auden’s context, one might think of the state-focused governments of Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini.**

**The Big Brother perspective begins from the very outset of the poem, with its evocation of a Bureau of Statistics. The man has had every aspect of his life catalogued. He served his community, he held a job, he paid union dues, he did not hold radical views, he reacted normally to advertisements, he had insurance, he possessed the right material goods, he had proper opinions about current events, and he married and had the right amount of children. It does not appear on paper that he did anything wrong or out of place. In fact, “he was a saint” from the state’s perspective, having “served the Greater Community.” The words used to describe him—“normal,” “right,” “sensible,” “proper,” “popular”—indicate that he is considered the ideal citizen. He is praised as “unknown” because there was nothing interesting to know. Consider, in comparison, the completely normalized protagonist Emmet in The Lego Movie.**

**At the end of the poem, the closing couplet asks, “Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd: / Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.” With these last lines comes the deeper meaning of the poem, the irony that despite all of the bureaucratic data gathering, some aspect of the individual might not have been captured. It becomes clear that the citizen is also “unknown” because in this statistical gathering of data, the man’s individuality and identity are lost. This bureaucratic society, focused on its official view of the common good, assesses a person using external, easily-catalogued characteristics rather than respect for one’s uniqueness, one’s**

particular thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears, and goals.

Interestingly, and ironically, the speaker himself is also unknown. The professionals in the poem— “his employers,” “our Social Psychology workers,” “our researchers into Public Opinion,” “our Eugenicist”— are just as anonymous and devoid of personality. While a person might be persuaded that he is free or happy, the evidence of his life shows that he is just one more cog in the faceless, nameless bureaucratic machine.

### The election

Sitakant Mahapatra is an Oriya writer belonging to the post-colonial era. In his writing he tries to go against the trend of romanticizing the past and instead focuses on the reality and the presence of movement. The reality in his works is not what we see or perceive with our eyes but the reality of life. The poem The Election is based on the Postcolonial Disillusionment. The poem is a narrative of an election day in India. A politician is the narrative of the poem who has come to campaign for the votes in a remote area. The poem is a satire on the ‘rule of people’ in India. In the beginning we find that he has criticized the politicians but with at the end of the poem, the criticism moves from the rulers to the commoners and failure of democracy is revealed.

In the first stanza, the narrator i.e. the politician says to the villagers that the jeep of



politicians 'crawl' on the road to reach them. The jeep does not run but crawl signifying the worst condition of roads in remote areas. Rallies of the politician are accompanied with music, applaud, noise, hooting etc which is quite strange as such things rarely happen in the villages particularly under the burning sun.

All this happens for the sake of 'the common will' i.e. democracy which is very important in India (that is why he keeps the term in single commas). The Politician forces the villagers to acknowledge the problems and difficulties he has faced by travelling to their village on criss-cross geometry i.e. irregular and rough roads. If we go deeper into the words we find how politicians, who were supposed to be the servants of the public, ironically become their masters and vice versa. Thus now that the democracy has made them masters, their leaving of comfort zone for the people would be a kind of gratitude on people.

In the second stanza the politician says that the villagers are not affected by the 'dark longings' i.e. their hard work done by him on poster making, symbol campaigning, speeches and the handbills etc because they have their own sorrows and grieves that surpass the issues of the states. However, it is the grieves of the commoners that help him to gain power. The politician emotionally trigger their problems to gain favor and ultimately succeed in gaining votes as well.

In the third stanza, the narrator says that villagers have killed desires in their hearts as they know well that their condition will never be changed. However they have hope in their hearts that their future progeny may be able to live in a better way. This makes them to look on the face of politician which is tired and ashy as he has left his comfort zone for the sake of votes.

In these lines, one can see how the people see their leaders. They consider as if they have some magical powers to do something for them. The people never try to bring the change on their own but instead put their hopes on the politicians. Hence they remain in the same condition for eternity.

In the fourth stanza the narrator expose the real face of democracy in India. According to him, it is not hidden but very common fact that in such remote areas they (the politicians) need not to do something big and extraordinary for the votes, but providing cheap things like plastic, nylon, glasses etc during the campaign period will do. Politicians thus succeed to blot out the sun; they deviate people from the development

and welfare by giving away the cheap goods (only during the campaign). Thus anti-democracy comes into existence.

In the last stanza, the narrator describes the failure of democracy caused, not by the politicians but by the commoners. The people on one hand become selfish in their demands and ask for livelihood to the rulers at any cost. On the other hand they talk about the soulful things like basic rights, social change etc. They cannot decide to which side they should go and ultimately fail in making the right decision.

Thus social issues like inequality, class-divide and poverty is not because of politicians but because of the choice of people. Hence the narrator explain how a task like election which was meant for welfare of people and which could bring about the change in the country becomes miser task of corruption and malpractices.

**The garden party**

**Summary**

**"They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden party if they had ordered it " (38). Warm, windless, without a cloud in the sky, the Sheridan's garden party was expected to be a great success.**

**Still at breakfast, Laura, Meg, Jose Sheridan and their mother sat discussing arrangements for the party. Mrs. Sheridan declared she was not going to make a single decision, an unfortunate announcement as the workmen had just arrived at the front gate to put up the marquee. Meg could not go outside to speak to them because her hair was wet. Jose was not dressed. Laura was nominated and she practically flew out of the house in anticipation. She loved to arrange things and felt she was better at it than everyone else.**

**With a piece of buttered toast in her hand, Laura met the workmen in the garden. Suddenly shy and aware of how young she must look to the burly men she affected her mother's high voice and asked if they would set up the marquee on the tennis court where the band would be playing. She immediately regretted her words when one of the workmen sarcastically asked after the band. Embarrassed, Laura said it was a small band but another of the workmen smiled and his easy and friendly nature put her at ease. She took a bite of her toast.**

**The workmen decided the marquee would look best under the karakas trees and without any invitation from Laura they set out. Only one of the workmen remained behind, a tall man, he bend down and pinched a sprig of lavender from the garden and smelled it. Laura doubted any of the men she knew, the ones she danced with or had over for Sunday dinner, would have stopped what they were doing to enjoy the scent of lavender. She thought she would get on much better with the workmen than she would men of her own social class.**

**Someone from the house yelled to Laura that she had a telephone call. Laura ran up the path onto the veranda and into the house. There she met her father and brother, Laurie, getting ready to go to the office. She gave her brother a quick hug and then answered her call. It was her friend, Kitty Maitland. Only Laura's end of the conversation was heard and she asked Kitty to come to lunch to eat leftovers of whatever Cook had made for the garden party. Mrs. Sheridan yelled down to Laura and told her to tell Kitty to wear the same hat she wore last Sunday. Laura repeated her mother's words and said goodbye to Kitty.**

**Returning the phone to its receiver, Laura sighed loudly and contently and listened to the beautiful silence of the house. Then all at once the house came to life, noise sounded from another room, the piano was being moved, the doorbell rang and Sadie, the maid,**

answered it. The florist had arrived with trays of pink lilies. At first Laura assumed there had been a mistake in the sheer number of flowers that the florist had brought but Mrs. Sheridan assured her the order was correct. She had passed by the florist the other day and ordered extra lilies for the party as a treat for herself.

Meanwhile in the drawing room, Meg, Jose, and Han, their servant, had finally succeeded in moving the piano. Jose asked Hans to fetch her mother and Laura while she positioned herself at the piano. Jose hoped someone would ask her to sing at the party and wanted to practice. She sang a melancholy tune about life being weary and love that changes. When she was finished she declared herself in good voice and no one contradicted her.

Just then Sadie came in and asked Mrs. Sheridan for the little flags she had made for the sandwich trays to identify what they were made of so that Cook could start preparing for the party. After some confusion as to where Mrs. Sheridan had left the flags, Laura brought them to the kitchen and she and Jose marveled over the fifteen different types of sandwiches Cook had prepared.

A deliveryman came into the kitchen while the girls were still there and brought in a tray of delicious cream puffs. While Laura and Jose ate two of the fluffy pastries they overheard the deliveryman telling Sadie and Cook about the terrible death of man who lived down the lane. His horse had reared up while he was out riding and he had fallen, hit his head and died.

Everyone took the news in stride; they knew the man, Mr. Scott, and he and his impoverished wife and children lived very close by. Their home was a bit of an eyesore to the Sheridans. Their lawn littered with cabbages, chickens, and old cans. They lived only a street apart from one another but were from two different worlds.

Although she did not know the Scott family well, if at all, Laura was deeply upset by the news. She told Jose they had to call the party off. Jose told her that she was being stupid and that no one would expect them to cancel the garden party just because Mr. Scott died. Laura tried to appeal to her mother but Mrs. Sheridan was of the same mind as Jose. To distract her daughter, Mrs. Sheridan put a new black velvet hat with a yellow daisy trim on Laura's head but it was no use. Laura stomped off into her own room and shut the door.

She looked at herself in the mirror and she saw that the black velvet hat was gorgeous and she looked beautiful in it; but she was still confused. She wanted to enjoy the party but she social obligation to help the Scotts but how? "You're being very absurd, Laura...people like that don't expect scarifies from us" (47) her mother had said but

Laura pictured the body of Mr. Scott being carried into his home while his wife and children looked on. The idea seemed so unreal, as if she were reading about in the newspaper, that Laura decided to worry about it later. There was nothing that she could do now anyway and the party would soon start.

After lunch the guests started to arrive including her friend Kitty Maitland. Laurie came home soon after and Laura ran to him to tell him about the accident but he complimented her hat and she forgot all about the Scotts for the remainder of the party. Guests came in droves, couples strolled the garden path, the band played, flowers were admired, sandwiches eaten and then it was all over. The Sheridans were left alone again, at last.

In the empty marquee Mr. Sheridan sat with his wife and children, eating another sandwich and telling them about Mr. Scott's accident all over again. Mrs. Sheridan thought it was very tactless of her husband but then she had the brilliant idea of sending a basket of leftover food from the party to the Scotts. She told Laura to make up a large basket and bring it down to the family.

Laura protested at first. She thought it would be rude to bring leftovers to the grieving Scotts but her mother insisted they would be very appreciative for any help at the moment. Mrs. Sheridan wanted to send lilies as well but decided against it at the last moment.

Laura set out down the lane and away from her own home and into the impoverished area of town where the Scotts lived. It was hard to imagine anyone living there at all but men bustled past and children played in doorways, all of them seemed to be staring at her and Laura felt a deep sense of shame for daring to wear her expensive lace dress and new hat amid such poverty.

A crowd had gathered outside of the Scott house and as Laura approached the group parted to let her in. Startled by their behavior and feeling very out of place, Laura hoped to leave the basket on the doorstep and run home but a woman came to the door and ushered her inside.

It was Mrs. Scott's sister. She showed Laura into the kitchen where Mrs. Scott sat crying before the fire, her face red and swollen. She seemed confused as to why Laura was there with the basket in her beautiful lace dress. Laura put the basket down and turned to leave but Mrs. Scott's sister insisted she see the body and before Laura could protest she was in the back bedroom.

Mr. Scott seemed somehow more handsome in death than he had been in life. Laura

was almost envious of the look of contentment on his face, as if garden parties, baskets, and all of life's particularities were behind him. While the band had played and they had all laughed and socialized at the party, this man laid like "a marvel," she thought, just a road away. He seemed so happy and yet the situation was so grave that Laura felt she had to say something. "Forgive my hat" (51) she mumbled and ran out the door.

She met Laurie coming down the lane and took his arm, pressing herself against him. Laurie was surprised to see her crying. Laura said, "Isn't life..." but could not finish her thought. She repeated, "Isn't life..." again; Laurie nodded and answered, "Isn't it, darling?" (51).

### Analysis

"The Garden Party," written by Katherine Mansfield, was published in the literary magazine the *Weekly Westminster Gazette* in February 1922 in an effort to promote the author's larger short story collection *The Garden Party and Other Stories* published by Constable and Co., which prominently featured the titled story. In fact, "The Garden Party" is considered one of Mansfield's best-known works, perhaps because of its autobiographical undertones.

The early twentieth century setting for the story is loosely based upon Mansfield's childhood home in Wellington, New Zealand. The Sheridans, like the Beauchamps (Mansfield's surname) were an upper middle class family with three daughters and a son. Laura Sheridan is a parody of Mansfield as a young adult during her years as an idealistic if not naïve socialite before she left Wellington to go to England for college. The Sheridan siblings are named in mocking tribute to the beloved characters of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* published in 1880. The March sisters are named Meg, Jo (Josephine), Beth, and Amy. Laurie is a good friend of the March family and later marries Amy. The Sheridan siblings are similarly named Meg, Jose, Laura, and Laurie. Note the symmetry in name and demeanor of Laura and her brother, Laurie. Like her literary counterpart, Jo March, Laura Sheridan questions her place in the world and especially within her family.

In "The Garden Party," Mansfield, a modernist, experimented with the use of third person narration from Laura's point of view, allowing the reader simultaneous insight into the protagonist's thoughts while observing her actions. Noted for her frequent use of internal monologue, a literary device that expresses the thoughts of a character, Mansfield allows for an in-depth observation of Laura's perspective as her story unfolds. Mrs. Sheridan and Jose's points of view briefly interrupt Laura's dominant perspective

but are used by Mansfield to emphasize the story's ambiance rather than offer counter-perspectives to Laura's viewpoint. Mansfield's preference for the female perspective was unique for her time period as is the lack of structure in "The Garden Party." The story is told over the course of a few hours with no set beginning or traditional character introductions. Instead Mansfield begins her story in medias res or in the middle, allowing the character's histories to unfold as the story progresses. Specializing in realism, Mansfield, like her contemporaries, preferred to focus the core of her plot on a single moment in time, illustrating how small events, such as a garden parties, can influence a character's perspective with life alternating results. Laura Sheridan's worldview is similarly shaken by the death of her neighbor, Mr. Scott, which causes her to reevaluate her thoughts on class relations in response to her family's stance on the subject.

As a character Laura Sheridan is endearingly naive. Pampered and petted, she is accustomed to the privileges and comforts associated with the upper middle class and yet she is eager to prove how pragmatic she can be. In comparison to her siblings (who make only brief appearances in the text) Laura is a capable organizer and budding socialite who tends to favor the simpler pleasures of life unlike her mother who is noted for her extravagances. Laura is sympathetic toward the emotions of others and is naturally concerned about the world around her, especially concerning the plight of the lower class. Despite her compassion, Laura's ignorance in talking to the workmen illustrates how truly naïve she is about how she and her family are perceived by others. Raised in a life of privilege, Laura's usual concerns about flower arrangements, clothes, and preparing menus seem frivolous but are a necessary part of her life. She is thrilled to be asked to help organize the garden party and is pleased by her family's and by extension her popularity but there is an underling curiosity about Laura that separates her from her more vapid siblings and mother.

The death of Mr. Scott, only a passing acquaintance, shocks Laura into action. She feels it would be incredibly rude of her family to proceed with their garden party so soon after Mr. Scott's death especially because he lived and died so close to the Sheridan's property. No one in her family shares her concerns which causes Laura to begin to view her family in a different light. How could they be so ignorant of the suffering of others? Laura's vivid imagination and musings over how devastated the Scott family must be in the wake of the tragedy only intensifies her desire to help them. She cannot understand her family's lack of empathy. The Scotts were their neighbors but Mrs. Sheridan is firm in her decision to have the garden party despite what has happened. Mrs. Sheridan, in direct opposition to Laura sentiments, is deeply prejudiced against families like the Scotts who live in the poorer section of their community. She does not understand how

they can survive at all and yet makes no effort to help them. Instead she feels only irritated by their presence and thinks their “shabby” homes, located only one street away, reflect poorly on the Sheridan’s decadent property. Mansfield deliberately places the poor of Wellington alongside the Sheridan’s home as a less than subtle reference to class relations in New Zealand post WWI. Mrs. Sheridan’s mindset further illustrates the prejudice toward the lower classes for this time period. Like others of her social class, Mrs. Sheridan feels sympathy toward the Scott’s circumstances but she does not think their misfortune should infringe upon her family’s affairs. Laura, conflicted over her own feelings, decides it is her duty to continue on with the garden party and is soon engrossed in the festivities.

Laura’s quick dismissal of Mr. Scott’s death reveals a lack of conviction and maturity. Although she tries to do well by others, Laura is still young and easily swayed by her family’s influence, especially her brother Laurie who distracts her with compliments. After their guests depart, Mrs. Sheridan agrees to allow Laura to go down to the Scott’s for a visit. She asks Laura to bring a basket of leftovers but decides against sending flowers. Laura is concerned the Scotts will see the leftovers as an insult (and they should) but what is more concerning about Mrs. Sheridan’s behavior is that she does not send the flowers, revealing an inner selfishness and lack of regard or respect for those beneath her rank. Observant Laura begins to see her mother very differently and once she crosses the road and enters the poverty stricken home of the Scotts, she begins a metaphysical transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Laura’s walk to the Scotts, her shame at wearing her best clothes and a new hat amid such depraved conditions is a brutal awakening to her psyche. She wants to flee, to return to her own kind but is made to enter not only the home of the Scotts but to see Mr. Scott’s dead body laid out in the back bedroom. Death, a reoccurring theme in Mansfield’s work, often acts as a catalyst, prompting other characters to reevaluate their own lives. True to form, Laura has an epiphany of sorts while staring at Mr. Scott’s peaceful face. She sees herself as she truly is: frivolous, naïve, and wonton. She feels a deep sense of shame for having come to the Scott house dressed as she is and the only comfort she can provide is leftover food. For a brief moment Laura is envious of Mr. Scott, he has escaped society’s expectations and is answerable to no one. “Forgive my hat” (51), she remarks before leaving, her comment reflective of her thoughts. She runs away from the Scotts, away from the poverty and suffering that she can no longer ignore and meets her brother, Laurie, who had come to look for her. Crying, Laura tries to express herself but can’t. Mansfield ends the text with Laura asking, “Isn’t life...” and Laurie replying “Isn’t it, darling?” (51).



Emphasizing her modernistic roots, Mansfield purposely named these characters to denote similarities in their demeanor, the male and female version of the same person, although she gives preference to the female perspective. Note the symmetry in their responses and yet the divide between them. Laura has returned from the Scotts a different person, her brother has not had such an experience (that we know of), and although they are saying the same thing, neither really knows or understands the thoughts of the other. From a larger perspective the Sheridans and the Scotts and the social classes they represent, can never truly understand the viewpoint of the other if they remain ignorant of each other's lifestyles. Noted for her ambiguous endings, Mansfield intentionally closes "The Garden Party" with a dissatisfying conclusion to allow room for the reader's interpretation of events to come.