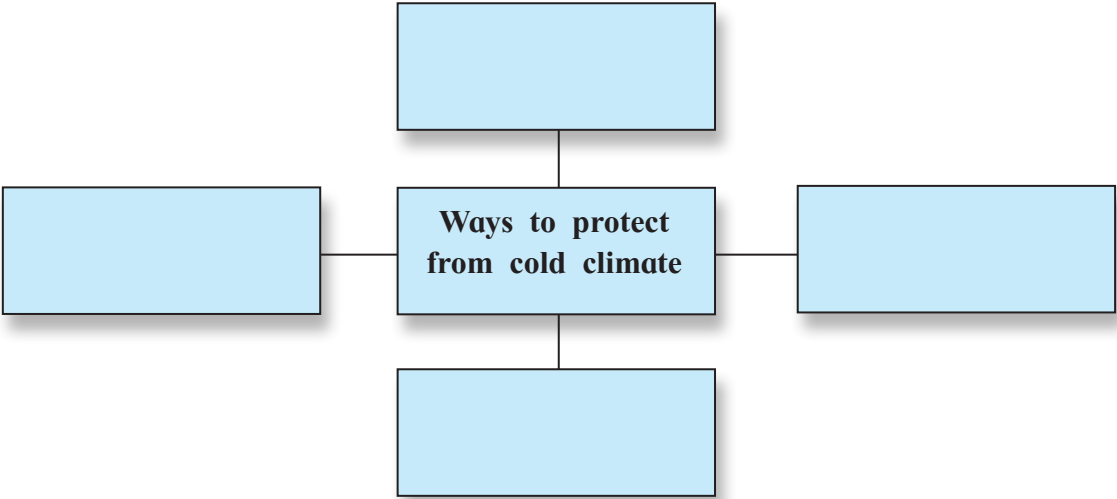




# 1.3 The Cop and the Anthem

## ICE BREAKERS

- Suppose you have gone to a place where the winter season is very severe, discuss with your partner the ways in which you would protect yourself in the cold climate.



- When you see a cop approaching, you feel either ‘relieved’ or ‘scared’. Discuss with your partner the situations when you feel ‘relieved’ or ‘scared’.

Relieved	(a) You are walking alone in a dark street. (b) ..... (c) .....
Scared	(a) You are riding a bike without a valid driving licence. (b) ..... (c) .....

- Discuss some of the motivating things that can change a person’s life. One is given :
- (a) Listening to an inspiring speech
  - (b) .....
  - (c) .....
  - (d) .....



**O'Henry (1862-1910)** William Sydney Porter, an American writer is better known by his pen name O'Henry. He was a voracious reader since childhood. He started a humorous weekly, 'The Rolling Stone' and when the venture failed, he joined the 'Houston Post' as a reporter, columnist and occasional cartoonist.

The story, 'The Cop and the Anthem' is one of O'Henry's well known stories. To describe his style of writing, people have often used the term 'smile with tears' which implies his twisted way of thoughts and endings in almost every story.

In this story the main character, Soapy, is a vagabond and a person with criminal background. He makes different plans to re-enter the prison as he has no shelter to protect himself from the severe winter. The story ends in an unexpected way. O'Henry has depicted Soapy's futile attempts to get arrested in a very humorous vein.

'The Cop and the Anthem' is about freedom and confinement. Initially Soapy feels that there is freedom (from miseries and worries) in confinement (prison). The notes of anthem transform him from within and he resolves to work hard. Soapy faces the irony of fate as the moment he realizes the real freedom lies in a virtuous life, he is taken into confinement.



## The Cop and the Anthem

**strolled** : walked in a leisurely way

### Thanksgiving Day:

The fourth Thursday of November marked by religious observances and traditional meals

### Guess the meaning of the expression in the context :

- winter island
- eye fell upon

**decadent** : (here) old and worn out

Soapy left his bench and **strolled** out of the square and across the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow together. Up Broadway he turned, and stopped at a luxurious cafe.

Soapy had confidence in himself from the lowest button of his vest upward. He was shaven, and his coat was trim and his neat, black bow had been presented to him by a lady missionary on **Thanksgiving Day**. If only he could reach a table in the restaurant unsuspected, success would be his. The portion of him that would show above the table would raise no doubt in the waiter's mind. A roasted mallard duck, thought Soapy, would be about the thing with a bottle of wine and then some cheese, a cup of coffee and a cigar. One dollar for the cigar would be enough. The total would not be so high as to call forth any extreme of revenge from the cafe management; and yet the meat would leave him filled and happy for the journey to his **winter island**.

But as Soapy set foot inside the restaurant door, the head-waiter's **eye fell upon** his tattered trousers and **decadent** shoes. Strong and ready hands turned

him about and conveyed him in silence and haste to the side-walk and averted the **ignoble** fate of the menaced mallard.

Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route to the **coveted** island was not to be an easy one. Some other way of entering the **limbo** must be devised.

At a corner of Sixth Avenue electric lights and cunningly displayed wares behind plateglass made a shop window attractive. Soapy took a stone and dashed it through the glass. People came running round the corner, a policeman in the lead. Soapy stood still with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of brass buttons.

“Where’s the man that done that?” inquired the officer **agitatedly**.

“Don’t you think that I might have had something to do with it?” said Soapy, with a friendly voice, as one greets good fortune.

The policeman refused to accept Soapy even as a clue. Men who smash windows do not remain to chat with the police. They take to their heels. The policeman saw a man half-way down the block running to catch a car. With drawn club he joined in the pursuit. Soapy, with disgust in his heart, drifted along, twice unsuccessful.

On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great pretensions. **It catered to large appetites and modest purses.** Its crockery and atmosphere were thick; its soup and **napery** thin. Into this place Soapy **betook** himself without challenge. At a table he sat and consumed beefsteak, flapjacks, doughnuts and pie. And then he told the waiter the fact that the minutest coin and himself were total strangers.

“Now, get busy and call a cop”, said Soapy. “And don’t keep a gentleman waiting.”

“No cop for you,” said the waiter, with a voice like butter cakes and an eye like the cherry in the Manhattan cocktail. “Hey, Con!”

Neatly upon his left ear on the **callous** pavement two waiters **pitched** Soapy. He arose, joint by joint, as

**ignoble** : dishonourable

**coveted** : greatly desired

**limbo** : border place  
between heaven and hell

*Soapy took a stone because*  
.....

**agitatedly** : in a troubled or  
nervous manner

*Discuss the hidden  
meaning in the expression.*

• It catered to large appetites  
and modest purses.


*Guess the meaning :*

• napery  
• betook

**callous** : (here) very hard

**pitched** : threw





**elusive** : difficult to find, catch or achieve

**rendered** : made

*Discuss the meaning in the context :*

he caught at the immediate straw of 'disorderly conduct'

**twirled** : turned something quickly round and round

**disconsolate** : very unhappy

**Arcadia** : a mountainous district in the Peloponnese of Southern Greece. In poetic fantasy it represents a pastoral paradise.

**sauntered** : walked in a relaxed manner

**sneered**: gave a contemptuous or mocking smile, remark or tone

**larceny** : theft of personal property

**premonition** : a strong feeling that something is about to happen, especially something unpleasant

a carpenter's rule opens, and dusted his clothes. Arrest seemed now but an **elusive** dream. The island seemed very far away. A policeman who stood before a drugstore two doors away laughed and walked down the street.

Soapy was seized with a sudden fear that some dreadful enchantment had **rendered** him immune to arrest. He was in a state of panic, and, when he came upon another policeman lounging grandly in front of a glittering theatre, **he caught at the immediate straw of 'disorderly conduct'.**

On the sidewalk Soapy began to yell drunken gibberish at the top of his harsh voice. He danced, howled, raved and otherwise disturbed the skies.

The policeman merely **twirled** his club, turned his back to Soapy and remarked to a citizen :

"Tis one of them Yale lads celebratin the goose egg they give to the Hartford College. Noisy; but no harm. We've instructions to let them be."

**Disconsolate**, Soapy stopped his unavailing racket. Would never a policeman lay hands on him? In his fancy, the island seemed an unattainable **Arcadia**. He buttoned his thin coat against the chilling wind.

In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar at the swinging light. He had set his silk umbrella by the door on entering. Soapy stepped inside, grabbed the umbrella and **sauntered** off with it slowly. The man at the cigar light followed hastily.

"My umbrella," he said sternly.

"Oh, is it?" **sneered** Soapy, adding insult to petty **larceny**. "Well, why don't you call a policeman? I took it. Your umbrella ! Why don't you call a cop? There stands one on the corner."

The umbrella owner slowed his steps. Soapy did likewise, with a **premonition** that luck would again run against him. The policeman eyed at the two curiously.

"Of course," said the umbrella man "Well, you know how these mistakes occur if it's your umbrella. I hope you'll excuse me – I picked it up this morning in a restaurant if you recognize it as yours, why I hope you'll".

“Of course it’s mine,” said Soapy savagely.

The ex-umbrella man retreated. The policeman hurried to assist a tall **blonde** in an opera cloak across the street in front of a street car that was approaching two blocks away.

Soapy walked eastward through a street damaged by improvements. He hurled the umbrella angrily into an excavation. He muttered against the men who wear helmets and carry clubs. Because he wanted to fall into their clutches, they seemed to regard him as a king who could do nothing wrong.

At length Soapy reached one of the avenues to the east where the glitter and **turmoil** was but faint. He dragged himself toward Madison Square, for the homing instinct survives even when the home is a park bench.

But, on an unusually quiet corner, Soapy came to a standstill. Here was an old church, **quaint** and **rambling** and **gabled**. Through one violet-stained window a soft light glowed, where, no doubt, the organist loitered over the keys, making sure of his mastery of the coming **Sabbath** anthem. For there drifted out to Soapy’s ears sweet music that caught and held him transfixed against the **convolutions** of the iron fence.

The moon was above, full and radiant; vehicles and pedestrians were few; sparrows twittered sleepily in the eaves or a little while the scene might have been a country churchyard. And the anthem that the organist played cemented Soapy to the iron fence, for he had known it well in the days when his life contained such things as mothers and roses and ambitions and friends and **immaculate** thoughts and collars.

The conjunction of Soapy’s receptive state of mind and the influences about the old church brought a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He viewed with rising horror the pit into which he had tumbled, the degraded days, unworthy desires, dead hopes, wrecked faculties and base motives that made up his existence.

And also in a moment his heart responded thrillingly to this strange mood. A strong impulse moved him to

**blonde** : a person with pale yellow hair

*Soapy was angry because*  
.....

**turmoil** : a state of great disturbance

**quaint** : attractively unusual or old fashioned

**rambling** : (here) spreading or winding irregularly in various directions.

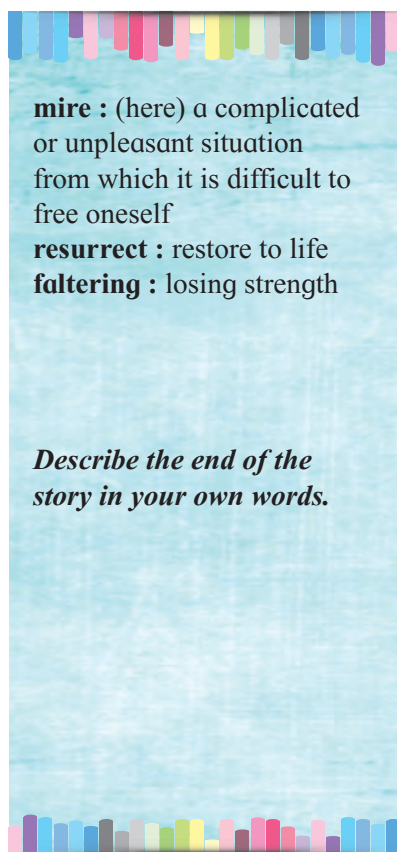
**gabled** : constructed with gables (the triangular upper part of a wall at the end of a ridged roof)

**Sabbath** : a day of religious observance and abstinence from work kept by Jews and Christians

**convolutions** : coils or twists

**immaculate** : perfectly clean and tidy

*Describe the wonderful change in Soapy’s soul.*



**mire** : (here) a complicated or unpleasant situation from which it is difficult to free oneself

**resurrect** : restore to life

**faltering** : losing strength

*Describe the end of the story in your own words.*

battle with his desperate fact. He would pull himself out of the **mire** and would make a man of himself again; he would conquer the evil that had enslaved him. There was time; he was young yet; he would **resurrect** his old eager ambitions and pursue them without **faltering**. Those solemn but sweet organ notes had set up a revolution in him. Tomorrow he would go into the roaring downtown district and find work. A fur importer had once offered him a place as driver. He would be somebody in the world. He would ----

Soapy felt a hand laid – on arm. He looked quickly around into the impassive face of a policeman.

“What are you doin’ here?” asked the officer.

“Nothin’,” said Soapy.

“Then come along,” said the policeman.

“Three months on the island,” said the Magistrate in the Police Court the next morning.

- O’Henry

## BRAINSTORMING

(A1) (i) Discuss with your partner and find out the different ways in which Soapy tried to get arrested. The first one is given.

- (a) Tried to enter a luxurious cafe.
- (b) .....
- (c) .....
- (d) .....

(ii) Describe the atmosphere when Soapy reached near the Church.

- (a) A soft light glowed through the violet-stained window.
- (b) .....
- (c) .....
- (d) .....



- (A2) (i) Read the story and match the incidents given in Column A with the consequences given in Column B.

Column A	Column B
(1) Soapy tried to enter a cafe.	The cop ran after another man.
(2) Soapy broke a glass window.	Suddenly a wonderful change came in his heart.
(3) Two waiters pitched Soapy on the callous pavement.	Dream of turning around in life was shattered.
(4) Soapy heard the anthem being played in the Church.	He stood up slowly beating the dust from his clothes.
(5) Cop arrests Soapy for hanging around.	Strong and ready hands of the head waiter turned him around.

- (ii) Give reasons and complete the following :

- (a) Soapy had confidence in himself because .....
- (b) The head waiter of the luxurious cafe did not allow Soapy to enter because .....
- (c) The cop did not arrest Soapy for breaking the glass window because .....
- (d) The cop did not arrest Soapy for shouting and dancing because .....

- (iii) Pick out the lines from the text which show that :

- (a) Soapy wants to enter the cafe for two reasons.
- (b) Soapy was afraid that he won't be able to enter the prison.
- (c) Soapy was not caught by the cop for throwing stones at the glass.
- (d) Soapy actually did not want the umbrella.
- (e) Listening to the anthem, Soapy remembered his good old days.

- (iv) 'He would make a man of himself again' – The word 'man' in the sentence means .....

- (v) Soapy's earlier life was much different from his present life. Complete the table to show this contrast. One is done for you.

Earlier life	Present life
(a) Contained friends and roses	(a) Unworthy desires
(b)	(b)
(c)	(c)

- (vi) After listening to the sweet and solemn organ notes, Soapy decides to :

- (a) .....
- (b) .....

**(vii) Write an incident in which you did something wrong and repented for it later. Give reasons.**

**(A3) (i) O’Henry has used different words to indicate prison where Soapy wants to reach. Make a list of those words.**

**(ii) Find out the words used for the ‘degraded state of Soapy’.**

**(iii) The specific meaning of word ‘anthem’ in the content of the story is.....**

**(A4) (i) Convert the following sentences into negative without changing their meanings.**

(a) The policeman refused to accept Soapy even as a clue.

(b) Soapy drifted along twice unsuccessful.

(c) Soapy stopped his unavailing racket.

(d) The island seemed very far away.

(e) The island seemed an unattainable Arcadia.

**(ii) Convert the following sentences into affirmative without changing their meanings.**

(a) Men who smash windows do not remain to chat with the police.

(b) Why don’t you call a cop?

(c) On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great pretensions.

(d) Noisy; but no harm.

(e) They seemed to regard him as a King who could do no wrong.

**(A5) (i) ‘Forgiveness is often better than punishment’. Write two paragraphs – one for and another against this notion.**

**(ii) You are the class representative and you have been asked by the Principal to conduct an interview of a cop. Frame 8-10 questions with the help of the following points, give introduction and conclusion.**

- reasons for joining the department
- special trainings
- developing the skill to identify and locate criminals
- dealing with criminals
- achievements and awards

**(A6) (i) Make a list of jobs which would give you an opportunity to help the society or serve the country. Also mention the different ways in which they can be beneficial to the people and also the country.**

**(ii) Go to your school/college library and read some other stories by O’Henry like, ‘The Gift of the Magi’, ‘The Last Leaf’ and ‘After Twenty years’. Write the stories in short in your notebook.**