

SHORT STORIES

PORTIONS FOR GRADE 12

1. STORY OF AN HOUR
2. THE SINGING LESSON
3. THE SOUND MACHINE
4. B.WORDSWORTH
5. TO BUILD A FIRE

1. STORY OF AN HOUR

1. How does Mrs. Mallard respond to her husband's death at the beginning of the story?

Ans- her initial reaction is an overwhelming outpouring of emotion, which Chopin herself refers to as a "storm of grief." Louise Mallard is described as crying to a level that leaves her emotionally drained. At this stage she retreats to her room and comes to her epiphany. Her husband's death means that she, for the first time in her life, wields real agency over her destiny and feels absolutely free.

2. What do you find surprising or shocking about the short story "The Story of an Hour"?

Ans- What's particularly surprising is the way that Louise reacts to what she thinks is the death of her husband. We don't get the impression that Louise's husband is a bad man, yet when news arrives we see her cry at first but then enjoy a day dream of absolute freedom and liberation.

3. What is the dramatic irony in "The Story of an Hour"?

Ans- Dramatic irony refers to when the reader or audience knows something that one or more characters do not. In this particular story, we know that Louise Mallard is not in her bedroom, grieving and spoiling her health but blissfully musing about her life of liberation from husband, family and society. But Josephine is unaware of this and comes to call her thinking that she would cause death to herself grieving.

4. How does the story end?

Ans- Kate Chopin's short story "The Story of an Hour" ends with Mrs. Mallard collapsing upon seeing her husband Brently alive after thinking he was killed in a train accident. She was already informed of being a heart patient and the doctors claim that Louise dies "of the joy that kills". On one hand it could have been the uncontained joy of having seen her husband alive or the utter disappointment of the loss of the new world of freedom that she envisioned in her room.

2. THE SINGING LESSON

1 Describe Miss Meadows' mood before and after receiving the telegram. How did it affect her class?

Miss Meadows started the music class in the morning. She was in a sad mood. Because the fiancé of Miss Meadows, Basil had sent a letter to her stating that the marriage between himself and Meadows would be a mistake. Therefore she announced the song "A Lament". It was a sad song. Every note was a sigh, a sob, a groan of great sorrow. The words were "Fast fade the roses of pleasure", "Music's gay measure passes away." Therefore the song brought agony to the girls. They sang the song in a sorrowful mood. Later the HM of the school called Miss Meadows and gave her a telegram from Basil. In the telegram Basil - "Forget the letter, I was in a mad mood" This gave her greatest happiness. So when she returned, to the music class she announced a song of happiness- We come here with flowers.--Baskets of fruit and ribbons to congratulations.

Thus there were two different moods of Miss Meadows.

2. What was the knife that Miss Meadows carried with her?

Ans-Baton was the knife carried by Miss.Meadows. Baton is a thin, light stick used by the conductor of an orchestra. Here the Baton is referred to as the knife, a symbol of her mood.

3. What kind of relationship existed between Miss Meadows and the Science Mistress?

Ans-The relationship between Miss Meadows and the Science Mistress was very unfriendly. When the Science Mistress greeted Miss Meadows, the latter stared in hatred at the Science Mistress. Again when the Science Mistress smiled Miss Meadows gave a grimace (an ugly expression of the face)

4. Why was Miss Meadows upset and dejected?

The fiance of Miss Meadows had sent a letter to her stating that the marriage between himself and Meadows would be a mistake. So Miss Meadows was upset and dejected.

5. How would Miss Meadows usually treat Mary? How did her behaviour towards the girl change that day?

Ans-Usually Mary would hand over to Miss Meadows a beautiful yellow Chrysanthemum. Miss Meadows would take it and tuck it into her belt. But that morning, Miss Meadows did not take it, and simply said "Thank you, Mary" Then she announced, "Turn to page-32"

6. Bring out the substance of Basil's letter to Miss Meadows.

Ans-Basil wrote to Miss Meadows. "I feel more and more strongly that our marriage would be a mistake" Then he wrote "I am not a marrying man"

3.THE SOUND MACHINE

1. Describe the characters in the story.

Ans- The characters are portrayed quite well. Dr. Scott's character is the opposite of the protagonist's. He is a compassionate, cooperative and considerate man. He was the closest man Klausner had as a friend. The other character, Mrs. Saunders, appeared rather distant from Klausner. Then comes our protagonist, Klausner, who's a confused yet intriguing soul from the beginning. The reader just can't guess if Klausner was actually making sense or just imagining everything. For the matter, it's possible that Klausner just had a heightened sense of hearing.

2.What are the themes of the story?

Ans- The main themes are; obsession, harsh treatment towards plants & wildlife, instability, desire & determination to prove one's point, and of course, appearance verses reality. Maybe the author just wanted to show how cruel humans are on the plant lives. The theme of 'appearance versus reality' is explored in two ways: once by tempting the readers to think that there indeed are sound that we cannot hear, and again towards the end, by a subtle suggestion that the sounds which Klausner claimed to be listening may actually be non-existent.

3.What are the theories of Klausner?

1. According to the protagonist, Klausner, there are sounds which are inaudible to the human ear and he wants to develop a machine which can record these inaudible sounds. He spends hours developing it. At first what appeared to be an innocent wish has now turned into an obsession. Klausner wants to hear the sounds made by bats, flies and even plants. According to him, the plants make painful shrieking noises when they are cut.

4.B.WORDSWO

1. How does the story start?

Ans- The story starts in the author's home in Trinidad. Like many underdeveloped colonies of the British Empire, Trinidad was no stranger to beggars. There were as many of them as we see here in India. They came to the author's house at periodic intervals and got fixed amount of alms. There was one odd beggar who had the temerity of asking the house owner to light his cigarette. On one occasion, a very strange visitor came. He said, he wanted to see the bees in the yard. The author, then a young boy, sought his mother's

permission before letting the stranger in. He was short, but tidily dressed in black pant and white shirt. He was B Wordsworth.

2. Describe the conversation that takes place between the boy and B Wordsworth.

Ans- During the course of the conversation, the stranger tells Sonny that he takes interest in poetry, and one day, he wants to be the greatest poet of the world. He also tells the wide-eyed Sonny that his name is B. Wordsworth, with B standing for Black. He says he is the brother of the celebrated English poet, Wordsworth with equal interest in poetry. The small beauties of Nature like the 'morning glory' flower brings the same intense passion in him as it did for Wordsworth, the poet. The flower overwhelms him so much that he begins crying. Sonny appears a bit taken aback. The stranger tell the boy that he sees a poet in him too, and he will also cry when he is moved by something.

3. What was Wordsworth's story about the mystery hidden in the wild bushes?

Ans- Once upon a time, there was a boy and there was a girl, both deeply in love. Both were poets. The girl carried their baby in her womb. Sadly, the girl died, so did the yet-to-be-born poet in her womb. It was so tragic. He was heart-broken. From that day, he never touched anything in the girl's garden. Thus, the grasses had become tall and unwieldy.

4. How did Wordsworth say he earned a living?

Ans- Once Sonny asked the poet how he made his both ends meet. Wordsworth didn't have a straight answer. He said he sang calypsos in calypso season, and made do for the whole year with whatever he earned in these few months. The boy assured him that once his poetry gets published he would become very rich.

5. Describe the boy's last meeting with the poet.

Ans- One day Sonny goes to see the poet in his shack. He is shocked to see the poet lying helplessly on his bed. The zest and the optimism seem to have left him for good. He is looking away through the window towards the

coconut tree. Quite magically, his face becomes wrinkled and pallid in very short time. He seems to be clutching to the last strand of his life helplessly. Wordsworth pulls Sony to his chest and offers to tell a funny story. But, he makes Sony swear that he will never come there again after he hears out the story. Wordsworth discloses that the story about a boy and a girl in love that he had told him earlier was just fiction. So was his ambition to become the world's greatest poet. This leaves the boy dumbfounded.

5 TO BUILD A FIRE

1. What view does the writer have of "the man" in "To Build a Fire"?

Ans- The narrator of "To Build a Fire" describes "the man" at the center of the story as unimaginative, ignorant, and arrogant. The man's failure to recognize the dangers of the environment in which he is traveling and heed the advice of others ultimately leads to his death.

2. In "To Build a Fire," what are some details describing how cold it is outside?

Ans- The ignorant newcomer attempts to travel ten miles across the Yukon wilderness in temperatures dropping to seventy-five degrees below zero. Throughout the newcomer's dangerous, treacherous journey, the narrator conveys the cold environment to the audience by describing the harsh natural elements and depicting how the extremely cold temperature adversely affects the newcomer.

3. Whom does he travel with?

Ans- The newcomer is not alone on his journey, and travels with is intuitive, cautious dog. Although the newcomer does not recognize the danger, the dog is aware of their present crisis.

4. Why do you think the protagonist of "To Build A Fire" is referred to as "the man" as opposed to being given a name?

Ans- Jack London doesn't give his protagonist a name because he wants to address his cautionary tale to human beings in general. The man in question could be just about anyone, and what happens to him could

happen to anyone who doesn't show respect for the environment. There are many people just like him who show breathtaking ignorance and arrogance in their interactions with nature. The man's attitude is all too common, even in this day and age.

5. How does the conclusion of the story contribute to its overall meaning? Consider the fates of both the man and the dog in your answer.

Ans- The man in "To Build a Fire" is a young and inexperienced traveler who dies at the end of the story due to his hubris. He thinks, mistakenly, that he knows better than others what it takes to travel and survive in the Klondike wilderness. He mistakenly goes without a fire, and then in the freezing cold, he is unable to make one. In the end, the man dies, and his dog abandons his corpse to find a new camp with food and fire.