



THE INDIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL, KOCHI

GRADE X -ICSE  
SUBJECT- ENGLISH

## **An Angel in Disguise [Lesson taught in class]**

[Dear students, I have not erased the difficult words because I want you to learn using them, however, I have given the meanings of the words/ phrases underlined in blue. Please read this and be prepared to answer questions on this tomorrow]

### **An Angel in Disguise Background**

"An Angel in Disguise" is a short story written in 1851 by American author T.S. Arthur. The background of the story is a poor rural [countryside] village. It's the kind of place where everyone has problems of their own. Everyone tries to be good while they manage their own problems. That's why the death of a drunken beggar woman brings little sympathy from the villagers. [brings no sympathy] The three orphaned children she leaves behind, however, deserve charity because they can't find [earn money for themselves] for themselves. "An Angel in Disguise" makes the readers question their capacity for charity and compassion.

### **The Story-line**

"An Angel in Disguise", a short story, written by the popular 19th-century American author-cum-editor Timothy Shay Arthur in 1851 is literally based on the theme "love can win over anything in the world".

An unnamed poor woman dies from excess [too much] alcohol consumption [drinking]. She had been neglected and rejected in her village due to her addiction but her death brought the villager's sympathy so they arranged a proper funeral for her. The woman had three children. A farmer decided to adopt the eldest son John, who is 12 years old, thinking he can help him in his field work. Mrs. Elli reluctantly adopts Kate, who is a few years too young to work in any factory. Mrs. Ellis also thinks that the girl is too undisciplined.

The youngest child, Maggie, gets left alone because of her health. When she was much younger, she fell from a window and the fall had damaged her spine. Hence, she was permanently bed-ridden. Everyone suggests sending her to the poorhouse but no one makes an effort to do something about it.

After the funeral, everyone leaves without even a glance at Maggie but Joe Thompson lingers [stays back]. Joe works as a wheelwright in the village and makes wooden wheels for wagons and carts. Though he looks to be a rough man, Joe is kind and loves children but he and his wife do not have kids. Maggie sees all the villagers leaving and also notices that Joe is still standing outside her hovel. She calls out for him and pleads him not to leave her alone.

Even though Joe knows that his wife, Jane Thompson, won't be very happy to see Maggie, he carries the kid to his home. As he had guessed, his wife is not happy to see her and asks him when he is going to get rid of her.

In answer, he says that he had read many times in The Bible that those who help children shan't be unrewarded. Joe also requests her to put aside her heart's bitterness and see how cruel life is for Maggie; motherless, homeless and permanently bed-ridden. Though Mrs. Thompson doesn't say anything to her husband, her heart softens a little towards Maggie.

Joe tells his wife that he would make errands the next day to send Maggie to the poorhouse and leaves for work. After dusk, when he comes home he sees from the window that Mrs. Thompson is sitting by Maggie's bed and they are talking or rather Maggie's answering Mrs. Thompson's questions. He feels it's best to not bring up the topic of Maggie himself, so he doesn't say anything further on the subject.

He goes to see Maggie and they talk for a while. While having supper Mrs. Thompson asks her husband what he is going to do with the child, in answer to which Joe tells that she's to go to the poorhouse the nextday. Mrs. Thompson doesn't say anything but Joe knows that years of bitterness has finally started fading away [going away/melting away]. She takes food for Maggie into her small chamber and waits for her to finish it. Maggie's innocence, sweetness, unconditional love and gratitude for them fills the void [emptiness] that had formed in Mrs. Thompson's heart. She tells Joe that she wants to keep Maggie for a couple of days more but that day never comes. They remain together forever, as a family. How the little child melts her stoned heart [emotionless heart] is what the story is all about.