



The Last Leaf

In a little district west of Washington Square the streets have run crazy and broken themselves into small strips called "places." These "places" make strange angles and curves. One Street crosses itself a time or two. An artist once discovered a valuable possibility in this street. Suppose a collector with a bill for paints, paper and canvas should, in traversing this route, suddenly meet himself coming back, without a cent having been paid on account!

So, to quaint old Greenwich Village the art people soon came prowling, hunting for north windows and eighteenth-century gables and Dutch attics and low rents. Then they imported some pewter mugs and a chafing dish or two from Sixth Avenue, and became a "colony."

At the top of a squat, three-story brick Sue and Johnsy had their studio. "Johnsy" was familiar for Joanna. One was from Maine; the other from California. They had met at the table d'hôte of an Eighth Street "Delmonico's," and found their tastes in art, chicory salad and bishop sleeves so congenial that the joint studio resulted.

That was in May. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy fingers. Over on the east side this ravager strode boldly, smiting his victims by scores, but his feet trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moss-grown "places."

Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman with blood thinned by California zephyrs was hardly fair game for the red-faced, short-breathed old

duffer. But Johnsby he smote; and she lay, scarcely moving, on her painted iron bedstead, looking through the small Dutch window-panes at the blank side of the next brick house.

One morning the busy doctor invited Sue into the hallway with a shaggy, gray eyebrow.

"She has one chance in - let us say, ten," he said, as he shook down the mercury in his clinical thermometer. "And that chance is for her to want to live. This way people have of lining-up on the side of the undertaker makes the entire pharmacopoeia look silly. Your little lady has made up her mind that she's not going to get well. Has she anything on her mind?"

"She - she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples some day," said Sue.

"Paint? - bosh! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking twice - a man for instance?"

"A man?" said Sue, with a jew's-harp twang in her voice. "Is a man worth - but, no, doctor; there is nothing of the kind."

"Well, it is the weakness, then," said the doctor. "I will do all that science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her funeral procession I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten."

After the doctor had gone Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsby's room with her drawing board, whistling ragtime.

Johnsby lay, scarcely making a ripple under the bedclothes, with her face toward the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she was asleep.

She arranged her board and began a pen-and-ink drawing to illustrate a magazine story. Young artists must pave their way to Art by drawing pictures for magazine stories that young authors write to pave their way to Literature.

As Sue was sketching a pair of elegant horseshow riding trousers and a monocle of the figure of the hero, an Idaho cowboy, she heard a low sound, several times repeated. She went quickly to the bedside.

Johnsby's eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window and counting - counting backward.

"Twelve," she said, and little later "eleven"; and then "ten," and "nine"; and then "eight" and "seven", almost together.

Sue looked solicitously out of the window. What was there to count? There was only a bare, dreary yard to be seen, and the blank side of the brick house twenty feet away. An old, old ivy vine, gnarled and decayed at the roots, climbed half way up the brick wall. The cold breath of autumn had stricken its leaves from the vine until its skeleton branches clung, almost bare, to the crumbling bricks.

"What is it, dear?" asked Sue.

"Six," said Johnsby, in almost a whisper. "They're falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. It made my head ache to count them. But now it's easy. There goes another one. There are only five left now."



"Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie."

"Leaves. On the ivy vine. When the last one falls I must go, too. I've known that for three days. Didn't the doctor tell you?"

"Oh, I never heard of such nonsense," complained Sue, with magnificent scorn. "What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well? And you used to love that vine so, you naughty girl. Don't be a goosey. Why, the doctor told me this morning that your chances for getting well real soon were - let's see exactly what he said - he said the chances were ten to one! Why, that's almost as good a chance as we have in New York when we ride on the street cars or walk past a new building. Try to take some broth now, and let Sudie go back to her drawing, so she can sell the editor man with it, and buy port wine for her sick child, and pork chops for her greedy self."

"You needn't get any more wine," said Johns, keeping her eyes fixed out the window. "There goes another. No, I don't want any broth. That leaves just four. I want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then I'll go, too."

"Johns, dear," said Sue, bending over her, "will you promise me to keep your eyes closed, and not look out the window until I am done working? I must hand those drawings in by tomorrow. I need the light, or I would draw the shade down."

"Couldn't you draw in the other room?" asked Johns, coldly.

"I'd rather be here by you," said Sue. "Beside, I don't want you to keep looking at those silly ivy leaves."

"Tell me as soon as you have finished," said Johns, closing her eyes, and lying white and still as fallen statue, "because I want to see the last one fall. I'm tired of waiting. I'm tired of thinking. I want to turn loose my hold on everything, and go sailing down, down, just like one of those poor, tired leaves."

"Try to sleep," said Sue. "I must call Behrman up to be my model for the old hermit miner. I'll not be gone a minute. Don't try to move 'til I come back."

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the ground floor beneath them. He was past sixty and had a Michael Angelo's Moses beard curling down from the head of a satyr along with the body of an imp. Behrman was a failure in art. Forty years he had wielded the brush without getting near enough to touch the hem of his Mistress's robe. He had been always about to paint a masterpiece, but had never yet begun it. For several years he had painted nothing except now and then a daub in the line of commerce or advertising. He earned a little by serving as a model to those young artists in the colony who could not pay the price of a professional. He drank gin to excess, and still talked of his coming masterpiece. For the rest he was a fierce little old man, who scoffed terribly at softness in any one, and who regarded himself as especial mastiff-in-waiting to protect the two young artists in the studio above.

Sue found Behrman smelling strongly of juniper berries in his dimly lighted den below. In one corner was a blank canvas on an easel that had been waiting there for twenty-five years to receive the first line of the masterpiece. She told him of Johns's fancy, and how she feared she would, indeed, light and fragile as a leaf herself, float away, when her slight hold upon the world grew weaker.

Old Behrman, with his red eyes plainly streaming, shouted his contempt and derision for such
foolish imaginings.

"Vass!" he cried. "Is dere people in de world mit der foolishness to die because leafs dey drop off
from a confounded vine? I haf not heard of such a thing. No, I will not bose as a model for your fool
hermit-dunderhead. Vy do you allow dot silly business to come in der brain of her? Ach, dot poor leetle
Miss Yohnsy."

"She is very ill and weak," said Sue, "and the fever has left her mind morbid and full of strange
fancies. Very well, Mr. Behrman, if you do not care to pose for me, you needn't. But I think you are a
horrid old - old flibbertigibbet."

"You are just like a woman!" yelled Behrman. "Who said I will not bose? Go on. I come mit you.
for half an hour I haf been trying to say dot I am ready to bose. Gottl dis is not any blace in which one
so goot as Miss Yohnsy shall lie sick. Some day I vill baint a masterpiece, and ve shall all go away. Gottl
yes."

Johnsy was sleeping when they went upstairs. Sue pulled the shade down to the window-sill, and
motioned Behrman into the other room. In there they peered out the window fearfully at the ivy vine.
Then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. A persistent, cold rain was falling,
mingled with snow. Behrman, in his old blue shirt, took his seat as the hermit miner on an upturned
kettle for a rock.

When Sue awoke from an hour's sleep the next morning she found Johnsy with dull, wide-open
eyes staring at the drawn green shade.

"Pull it up; I want to see," she ordered, in a whisper.

Wearily Sue obeyed.

But, lo! after the beating rain and fierce gusts of wind that had endured through the livelong night,
there yet stood out against the brick wall one ivy leaf. It was the last one on the vine. Still dark green near
its stem, with its serrated edges tinted with the yellow of dissolution and decay, it hung bravely from the
branch some twenty feet above the ground.

"It is the last one," said Johnsy. "I thought it would surely fall during the night. I heard the wind. It
will fall today, and I shall die at the same time."

"Dear, dear!" said Sue, leaning her worn face down to the pillow, "think of me, if you won't think
of yourself. What would I do?"

But Johnsy did not answer. The lonesomest thing in all the world is a soul when it is making ready
to go on its mysterious, far journey. The fancy seemed to possess her more strongly as one by one the
ties that bound her to friendship and to earth were loosed.

The day wore away, and even through the twilight they could see the lone ivy leaf clinging to its
stem against the wall. And then, with the coming of the night the north wind was again loosed, while
the rain still beat against the windows and pattered down from the low Dutch eaves.

When it was light enough Johnsy, the merciless, commanded that the shade be raised.

The ivy leaf was still there.

Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was stirring her chicken broth over the gas stove.

"I've been a bad girl, Sudie," said Johns. "Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me how wicked I was. It is a sin to want to die. You may bring me a little broth now, and some milk with a little port in it, and - no; bring me a hand-mirror first, and then pack some pillows about me, and I will sit up and watch you cook."

And hour later she said:

"Sudie, some day I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

The doctor came in the afternoon, and Sue had an excuse to go into the hallway as he left.

"Even chances," said the doctor, taking Sue's thin, shaking hand in his. "With good nursing you'll win." And now I must see another case I have downstairs. Behrman, his name is - some kind of an artist, I believe. Pneumonia, too. He is an old, weak man, and the attack is acute. There is no hope for him; but he goes to the hospital today to be made more comfortable."

The next day the doctor said to Sue: "She's out of danger. You won. Nutrition and care now - that's all."

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johns lay, contentedly knitting a very blue and very useless woollen shoulder scarf, and put one arm around her, pillows and all.

"I have something to tell you, white mouse," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia today in the hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were wet through and icy cold. They couldn't imagine where he had been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place, and some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colors mixed on it, and - look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never fluttered or moved when the wind blew? Ah, darling, it's Behrman's masterpiece - he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell."

VOCABULARY

Attic	: room or space immediately under the roof of the house
Broth	: thin meat or fish soup
Chafing dish	: a vessel for cooking by burning coal
Chicory salad	: chicory is a plant cultivated for its edible leaves, used for salads
Chivalric	: heroic
Confounded	: damned
Congenial	: suited or agreeable
Contempt	: the feeling or attitude of regarding someone or something as inferior

	: or worthless
Daub	: smear with paint, spread paint, etc. crudely
Derision	: an object of mockery
Dissolution	: dismissal, breaking up or abolition of something
Dreadful	: terrible
Easel	: a stand for painting
Fierce	: eager, intense
Flibbertigibbet	: an irresponsible, silly or gossipy person
Fluttered	: wave or flap quickly
Gables	: triangular part of the wall at the end of a ridged roof
Goosey	: having or revealing stupidity
Hermit miner	: a person living in seclusion in search of something like a miner digging/searching for minerals
Imp	: little devil
Janitor	: caretaker
Mastiff-in-waiting	: ancient breed of large strong dogs on guard
Mite	: small object or child
Monocle	: single eyeglass
Morbid	: depressed and melancholy
Pattered	: sound of quick light taps
Pave	: cover with durable surface
Pewter	: articles made of an alloy of metals
Pharmacopoeia	: stock of drugs
Prowling	: sneak or creep in search of
Quaint	: antique, charming, fanciful, attractively odd
Ragtime	: a style of jazz piano music
Ravager	: plunderer
Ripple	: gently lively sound
Satyr	: a lustful person
Scoffed	: ridiculed or teased
Serrated	: with saw like edges
Shaggy	: hairy
Smiting	: defeating
Smote	: defeated

Solicitously	: eagerly, anxiously
Stalked	: move threateningly through
Swaggered	: behave arrogantly
Traversing	: travel or lie across
Wielded	: to manage, to handle
Zephyrs	: the west wind, soft breeze

EXERCISE

Short Questions and Answers

Q.1 *What brought Sue and Johnsy together and where did they live?*

Ans. Sue and Johnsy had common interest. They both liked to paint and also had a taste for chicory salad and bishop sleeves. The similarity in their profession and character brought them together. They did not have much money to spare so they rented a studio apartment in an old village of Greenwich and lived together in it.

Q.2 *What did the doctor told Sue about Johnsy's condition?*

Ans. The doctor told Sue that Johnsy had only one chance out of ten for survival. He said that the one chance she had would also be fruitful if she had the desire to live but he felt that Johnsy had given up the hope to live. He even asked Sue if Johnsy was worried about something and suspected if it was a man who was on her mind. But Sue said that there was nothing of that kind. The doctor then said that it could be her weakness due to which she was depressed. He also said that she would revive only if she re-kindles her desire to live.

Q.3 *What did Sue noticed when she was painting in Johnsy's room after the doctor left?*

Ans. Sue noticed that Johnsy was blankly looking outside the window of her room and doing backward counting when she was painting in her room. Sue also looked outside to find out the reason for Johnsy's counting but could not see anything but a blank brick wall of a house and an ivy vine which had decayed at the roots hanging on to the brick wall. The autumn season had affected the vine and there were barely any leaves remaining on the skeleton of the vine. Johnsy was looking at this vine when she was counting.

Q.4 *What reason did Johnsy gave for the backward counting she was doing?*

Ans. Johnsy was lying in her bed sick with pneumonia. She told Sue that she had been noticing the ivy vine which she could see through her window since past few days. The vine had been decaying and the leaves were falling fast. Of the hundred leaves it had three days back only five were left. She was waiting for the last leaf to fall and she felt her life would also end with the fall of the last leaf. Thus, Johnsy had lost all hope for living.

Q.5 What lie did Sue told Johns and why?

Ans. Sue wanted to raise Johns's hope for living thus she told her that the doctor had said that her chances for getting well were ten to one which was just the opposite of what the doctor said. She wanted Johns to be more hopeful and leave counting the leaves and develop the wish to live as her chances of living could only be better if she herself was hopeful.

Q.6 Who was Behrman?

Ans. Behrman was a painter, an old man, more than sixty years old. He lived on the floor below Sue's and Johns's apartment. He had been painting for the past forty years but was not very successful in art. His wish was to paint a masterpiece but it still hadn't been fulfilled. He just painted for commercial purpose and also served as a model for young artists who were unable to hire a professional model. He was a daring old man and used to drink a lot. He had a sense of protection towards the two young artists who lived above his apartment, Sue and Johns.

Q.7 Describe the weather on the night the last leaf fell.

Ans. The night the last leaf fell was very stormy, the rain was falling heavily and strong wind was blowing. The weather was rough and cold; it had a devastating effect and created an atmosphere of fear and horror.

Q.8 What did Sue told Behrman about Johns?

Ans. Sue told Behrman that Johns had lost all hope for living and a silly thought had crept into her mind that her life would float away like the fragile leaf that was remaining on the ivy vine. She felt that her life would end with the fall of the last leaf left on the ivy vine. Behrman found the thought very ridiculous and could not understand how a human being could link his life to a withered ivy vine leaf.

Q.9 What did Johns noticed the morning after the heavy rainfall? What impact did it have on her?

Ans. Johns saw that the last leaf was still on the ivy vine. It had strongly endured the heavy rain and strong winds. This made Johns realize that she had been wrong in losing the desire to live. There was still hope for living as the last leaf was still there clinging for life to the ivy vine. Thus, she asked Sue to give her something to eat and a mirror to improve her appearance. She also expressed her desire to sit up and watch Sue cooking. Thus there was a drastic change in Johns's attitude. Her pessimism converted into optimism with the desire for living which improved her health.

Q.10 What was Behrman's masterpiece and why?

Ans. Sue told Johns to notice the last leaf on the ivy vine carefully. It did not flutter and move with the wind like other leaves. Then she revealed the truth that the leaf had been painted by Behrman on that fearful stormy night with heavy rains lashing. Behrman had risked his life to paint the last leaf which had fallen from the vine to save Johns's life. As a result he

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had caught pneumonia and died. He had sacrificed his life to paint his masterpiece, the last leaf, which was so realistic that it had saved Johns's life by raising her hope for living.

Q.11 Why personification of pneumonia is done by the writer?

Ans. The personification is a technique used by the writers to lay stress on or highlight something. Here the disease, pneumonia played an important role in the story and that's why it has been personified.

Q.12 Why doctor thought that there was a man in Johns's life?

Ans. Johns was very depressed and weak by the disease and her willingness to live was lost. So, doctor thought that there might be a man in her life who has caused trouble to her and because of whom she was depressed.

Q.13 Why Johns related her life to falling leaves of ivy vine?

Ans. Johns was very ill and her physical and mental state was very weak. Due to this she lost all hope of surviving and found herself alike to that leaf of ivy vine which was just clinching on to life.

That's why she thought that her life will end too when the last leaf falls.

Q.14 Why Sue wanted to be with Johns rather than going to another room for drawing?

Ans. Sue wanted to be with Johns because she was disturbed by the pathetic thoughts Johns was having. Also, she wanted to be with her so that she can arouse some hope for life in her and also distract her from counting the falling leaves of the vine.

Q.15 How did Behrman reacted to Johns's thoughts?

Ans. Behrman got very angry on such thoughts and considered them pure nonsense. He was disturbed by the fact that how can Johns link her life to a vine leaf.

Q.16 What was the impact of the last leaf on Johns which didn't fell?

Ans. Johns's pessimism was converted to optimism by the last leaf and its courage to survive even the most fierce winds. Johns found herself very wicked as she thought of dying. Her will to live again arose and after that she recovered very quickly.

Q.17 Why Sue called Behrman's painting a masterpiece?

Ans. Sue called Behrman's painting a masterpiece because it saved Johns's life. Art is not what it looks like but what it does to us. The painting which saves a life, which saves a soul from drowning is surely a masterpiece.

Q.18 Do you think the feeling of depression Johns has is common among teenagers?

Ans. Teenagers are full of energy. Because of hormonal changes going in the body they do experience mood swings. A slight pep talk can work wonders for their motivation. Similarly, a little bit of set back can create a blue mood for them. It is the way in which adults view teenagers which make them believe that teenagers are prone to depression. Proper guidance

and a caring upbringing can result in less depressed teenagers which will help them realize their potential.

- Q.19 Behrman had a dream. What is it? Does it come true?**

Ans. Behrman always dreamt of creating a masterpiece. A masterpiece is a creation which withstands the test of time and people appreciate it for years to come. Behrman dream comes true because the painting of leaf he made helped save Johnsby's life.

- Q.20 What is Behrman's masterpiece? What makes Sue say so?**

Ans. The painting of leaf which Behrman made after the last leaf fell was really a masterpiece. Sue has every reason to say so because it was this painting which inspired Johnsby to live. Quality or execution of painting can be debatable but inspirational value of the painting can be vouched for because of the desired end result.

- Q.21 How is Johnsby characterized in the story?**

Ans. Johnsby is a character developed through the indirect methods of revealing her thoughts and her speech and her interactions with others. When old Mr. Behrman climbs from outside and paints the leaf upon the window, Johnsby feels that if that leaf can hold on through storms, she, too, can get hold of the pneumonia. The power of Johnsby's mind and her will to survive saves her, just as the doctor has told Sue.

□ Long Questions and Answers

- Q.1. What is Johnsby's fancy and setting of the story?**

Ans. In the story Johnsby and Sue are both artists that are living as roommates in Greenwich Village, New York. Johnsby becomes sick with pneumonia because of the winter months. She lies in bed and begins to will herself to die as her health worsens. Johnsby has been watching an ivy vine which is losing leaves everyday. She believes that when the last leaf falls off the ivy vine she will also die.

So, Johnsby's fancy was watching the leaves falling from the vine as she waits to die. She refuses to eat or do anything to help improve her health because she is fixated on dying when the last leaf falls.

Old Behrman, a painter who resides downstairs and is 60 years old, finds out about Johnsby's thoughts. Late one night he sneaks out and paints a leaf to match the last one on the wall so it looks like it is still attached. Success has always slipped away from him. He has always wanted to paint a masterpiece.

Johnsby watches the leaf cling to the vine. She is unaware that it is painted. She gets better because she sees that the leaf is still there. She recovers but Mr. Behrman dies. He has painted his masterpiece that gave Johnsby her life.

- Q.2 What was the turning point of the story?**

Ans. The turning point of a literary narrative is synonymous with the climax or point of highest emotional intensity.

It is ironical that the turning point of this story coincides with the turning of the final leaf to yellow and dying. For, when old Behrman joins Sue upstairs in hers and Johns' flat and they apprehensively stare out of the window by Johns' bed and then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. This line is the turning point because it is at this point that both Sue and Behrman have the emotional realization that Johns will give up her spirit if she sees that all the leaves have died on the outside vine. It is also at this moment that Behrman realizes that he must do something to save Johns. The little old man then decides to paint the leave onto the window in order to rescue Johns from certain death. This was his "masterpiece" as it was his gift of love for the young woman, a sacrificial gift as he dies, ironically, from pneumonia himself after having painted in the cold rain.

Q.3 What is the exposition, complication, climax and falling action of the story?

Ans. In the exposition (or beginning of the story that gives some background information and sets things up), writer describes the section of town called Greenwich village and describes the various artists and free-thinkers that inhabit it. Among those are Sue and Johns, female roommates that share a lot together and are aspiring artists.

There are several points of complication or rising action. The first is that writer mentions that pneumonia has struck the village. The second is that Johns gets it and the third is that the doctor has not much hope for her. Lastly, Johns declares that as soon as the last leaf falls off the ivy outside her window, she will too "go away."

This leads to the climax, where Johns waits for the last leaf to fall down whereas Sue and Behrman think what can be done to save Johns. But the last leaf stays there and Johns gets better.

The falling action is when Sue tells Johns that the leaf wasn't real, that Behrman painted it and subsequently died from pneumonia himself.

Q.4 Analyze friendship between Sue and Johns.

Ans. In O' Henry's poignant story in which two young aspiring artists become "congenial" enough to find a studio apartment together in Greenwich village, Maine-born Sue worries about her Californian friend, Johns. For, Johns has caught pneumonia in the cold November of New York. Having called a doctor to their studio, Sue learns from him that Johns has only a slim chance of living because she has lost her will to live. He tells Sue that she must get Johns interested in something that will inspire her to get well.

Now, Sue is a true friend who dearly loves Johns. She tries to motivate Johns by humming and being cheerful as she sits by her friend drawing. But, when she realizes that Johns has been counting the leaves that have fallen from an ivy vine and that she believes that she will die too with the fall of the last leaf, Sue becomes very sad. Sue acts scornful of "such nonsense"; speaking positively, she tells Johns that her thoughts about death are "naughty." Sue also lies in order to convince Johns, that doctor has said that her chances of getting well are "ten to one."

Sue pretends that the situation with Johnsby is not of the magnitude that it is; in her love and hope, she acts as though Johnsby will soon be well. However, she is truly worried. Worried Sue goes to Mr. Behrman, informing him of the gravity of Johnsby's condition, hoping there is something he can do.

So greatly concerned is Sue about her friend that she tries her best in every sense to arouse some hope in Johnsby. Sue's determination to do what she can for her friend saves Johnsby's life. There is no doubt that Sue loves Johnsby as she has thought about what the doctor has told her and done everything she can to save Johnsby, even convincing Behrman enough that he paints the last leaf onto the glass of the window outside.

Q.5

Ans.

In literature climax is the point in a plot that creates the greatest intensity, suspense or interest. The climax is usually the point at which the conflict in the story is resolved. So, the reader must not make a subjective judgment in determining climax but, rather look closely at the sequence of events and find the particular event that is the turning point with regard to the conflict.

The conflict of the story involves Sue's loving attempts to keep her friend Johnsby from perishing from pneumonia. And, in her efforts to prevent Johnsby from dying when the last leaf of the vine outside the window dies, Sue tells Behrman about the situation. Sue and Behrman both look at the vine outside the window and realizes that the last leaf will not survive another day and Johnsby too will not survive after watching the fall of the last leaf. But to everyone's amazement the last leaf survives the storm and this brings a change in Johnsby's mind set and urges her to live. This is the climax of the story.

But after this conflict is resolved the falling action brings the reader to the surprising conclusion of Mr. Behrman's sacrifice-his masterpiece-to save Johnsby's life.

Q.6

What is the theme of the story?

Ans.

The message that comes most powerfully through the story is that we should not judge people by their outward appearances or social persona. In the story, the most gruff character portrayed was of Behrman. And yet it was Behrman that takes the very soft, heart touching and compassionate step of painting the leaf, which in essence, saved Johnsby's life. In a way, he sacrifices his own life to save hers. So we should not judge people by what image they promote or portray but instead by their actions and deeds because it is, in the end, actions that truly make an impact.

Also, the story talks about hope and win of optimism over pessimism. Johnsby who was so much surrounded by pessimism and willingness to die survived only because of the optimism of Sue and Behrman. They were both willing that Johnsby should survive and tried their best to arouse that ray of hope in her and finally succeeded in their attempt.

Q.7

Explain the uniqueness of the story.

Ans.

Behrman needed to paint a masterpiece. He had lived his life waiting for the right moment. When Johnsby needed a will to live, Behrman gave his life for Johnsby. This story is unique in

that Behrman was willing to lay down his life for a friend and for his masterpiece. There is no greater love than that.

On the other hand, Johns had given up on life until she realized that she had been thinking only of herself. Behrman gave everything he had for her. That is unique love. Behrman paid the ultimate sacrifice. He stood in the icy cold all night in order to give Johns hope to hang on to life. While painting the last leaf, he developed pneumonia. He died because of his love for her.

This type of human attachment and love is rare to be seen. That's what makes this story unique. It is composed of such love and care that many people do not possess. In the end, Behrman gets his masterpiece while trying to give Johns a will to live. The price Behrman paid was his life.

Q.8 Give a character sketch of Mr. Behrman.

Ans. Behrman is a seemingly defeated character. He makes very little money as an artist. He is always about to do something but never quite gets it done. He is simply a pathetic artist who has never been able to become successful at painting. He also drinks a lot. But, he does care about Sue and Johns. He poses from time to time for Sue and Johns. He feels he is to protect them. He has come to think of himself as Sue's and Johns's protector.

When Sue tells her about Johns's condition and thoughts he gets worried and considers her sentiments as pure nonsense. But as he is having affection for Sue and Johns he goes out in the cold and spends the night outside painting the last leaf, his masterpiece. Due to such a novel act, Johns survives and he himself catches pneumonia and dies.

The writer at first creates Behrman's character as of an imp. But later shows his deep love and affection for the two girls. This makes us conclude that he might be rough and gruff from outside but from inside he was having a kind heart.

Q.9 What is foreshadowed in the story?

Ans. When we are introduced to the character of Behrman, writer writes that he regarded himself as a mastiff-in-waiting to protect the two young artists in the studio above, which means that he felt like he was a protector to Sue and Johns. This description of him being a protector foreshadows his later role in saving Johns's life. He expresses chagrin at Johns's fanciful and foolish fascination with the last ivy leaf and grumpily agrees to go up with Sue, to pose for her.

Also, when the writer says that the next morning, the last ivy leaf stays clinging to the vine all day and through the night, even though previously, they had been dropping rapidly. This hints at the fact that the leaf is "different."

Also, when Johns starts to recover, doctor tells Sue that Behrman is very ill and that he is an old, weak man and the attack is acute and that there is no hope for him. His death is briefly foreshadowed here. Later it is revealed that Behrman catches pneumonia while painting the last leaf for Johns.

All of these tiny little clues foreshadows the final sacrifice that the kindhearted Behrman made to help save Johns's life.

