

# Optional English

## Grade-9



Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

**Curriculum Development Centre**

Sanathimi, Bhaktapur

Nepal

# Optional English

Grade - 9

**Government of Nepal**  
**Ministry of Education, Science and Technology**  
**Curriculum Development Center**  
Sanothimi, Bhaktapur

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## Preface

The curriculum and curricular materials are developed and revised on a regular basis with the aim of making education objective-oriented, practical, relevant and job oriented. It is necessary to instill the feelings of nationalism, national integrity and democratic spirit in students and equip them with morality, discipline and self-reliance, creativity and thoughtfulness. It is essential to develop in them the linguistic and mathematical skills, knowledge of science, information and communication technology, environment, health and population and life skills. It is also necessary to bring in them the feeling of preserving and promoting arts and aesthetics, humanistic norms, values and ideals. It has become the need of the present time to make them aware of respect for ethnicity, gender, disabilities, languages, religions, cultures, regional diversity, human rights and social values so as to make them capable of playing the role of responsible citizens. This textbook for grade nine students as an optional English has been developed in line with the Secondary Level Optional English Curriculum, 2074 so as to strengthen knowledge, reading skills (intensive and extensive) on English language and literature and to provide exposure to varieties of literary writings. It is finalized by incorporating the recommendations and feedback obtained through workshops, seminars and interaction programmes.

The textbook is written by Mr. Bishnu Singh Rai, Mrs. Maya Rai and Mr. Madhu Upadhyaya. In Bringing out the textbook in this form, the contribution of the Director General of CDC Dr. Lekha Nath Poudel is highly acknowledged. Similarly, the contribution of Prof. Dr. Bal Mukanda Bhandari, Dr. Ganga Gautam, Dr. Gopal Prasad Pandey, Mr. Purna Bahadur Lamichhane, Mr. Gangadhar Hada, Mr. Mahendra Kumar Shrestha and Mrs. Rani Jha is also remarkable. The content as well as the language of this book was edited by Mr. Nim Prakash Singh Rathaur, Nabin Kumar Khadka and Ramesh Prasad Ghimire. The layout of this book was designed by Mr. Santosh Kumar Dahal. CDC extends sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to developing this textbook.

This book contains literary devices and terms, major features of different ages related to the history of English language and literature and genres of literature with exercises which will help the learners to achieve the competency and learning outcomes set in the curriculum. Efforts have been made to make this textbook as activity-oriented, interesting and learner centered as possible. The teachers, students and all other stakeholders are expected to make constructive comments and suggestions to make it better.

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# AN OUTLINE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SECTION

*English was originally the language of England, but through the historical efforts of the British Empire it has become the primary or secondary language of many former British colonies such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and India. Currently, English is the primary language of not only countries actively touched by British imperialism, but also many business and cultural spheres dominated by those countries. It is the language international communication, education, travel and international banking and business.*

*There are several factors that make the English language essential to communication in our current time. First of all, it is the most common foreign language. This means that two people who come from different countries (for example, a Chinese and a Nepali) usually use English as a common language to communicate. That's why everyone needs to learn the language in order to get in touch on an international level. Speaking it will help you communicate with people from countries all over the world, not just English-speaking ones.*

*English is also essential to the field of education. In many countries, children are taught and encouraged to learn English as a second language. Because it is the dominant language in the sciences, most of the research and studies you find in any given scientific field will be written in it as well. At the university level, students in many countries study almost all their subjects in English in order to make the material more accessible to international students. On the Internet, the majority of websites are written and created in English. Even sites in other languages often give you the option to translate the site. It's the primary language of the press: more newspapers and books are written in English than in any other language, and no matter where in the world you are, you will find some of these books and newspapers available. It is as important in the field of business and travel.*

*It's therefore good to know about the English language. In this section you will learn the history of the English Language –its development from Old English to modern English, its spelling and pronunciation and its word formation. We hope you will like it.*

*Authors*



# A Brief History of English Language

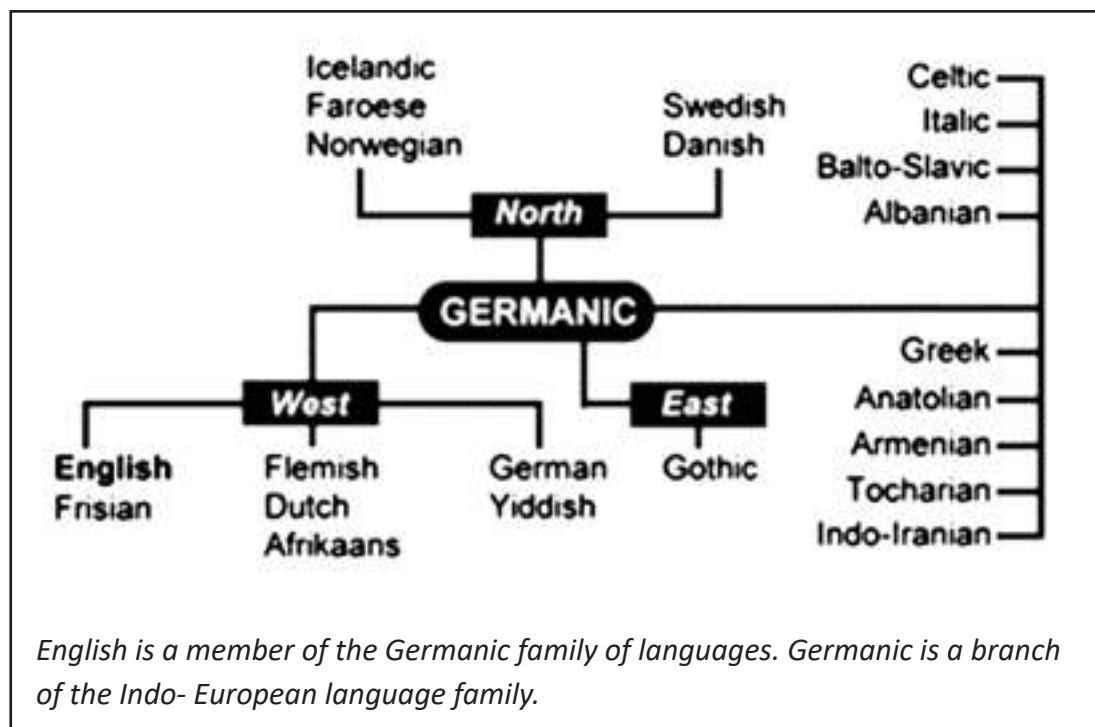
## Before you read

1. Why is English language one of the most popular languages in the world?
2. Is English language a living language? Give your own reasons.

English is the most popular language in the world. It is one of the most commonly spoken languages in the world today with an estimated number of speakers ranging from 750 million to a billion or more, spread over the entire globe. It is the language of international business now, but how did the English language develop?

The English language belongs to the West Germanic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. The closest living relatives of English are Scots and Frisian. Frisian is a language spoken by about half a million people in Friesland, a province in the Dutch, in nearby areas of Germany, and on a few islands in the North Sea.

## The Germanic Family of Languages



The history of the English language has traditionally been divided into three main periods: Old English (450-1100 AD), Middle English (1100-circa 1500 AD) and Modern English (since 1500).

Over the centuries, the English language has been influenced by a number of other languages.

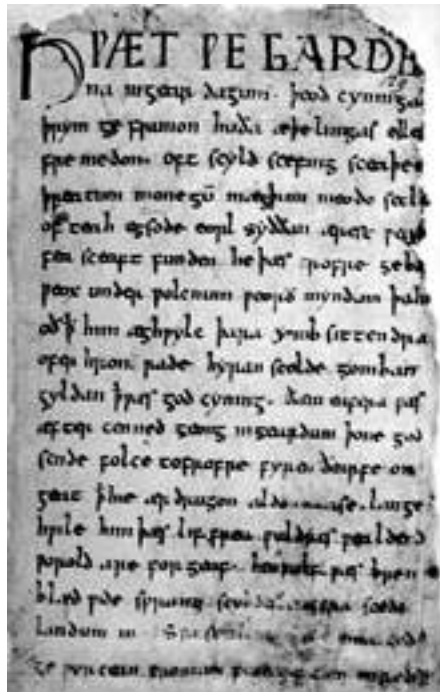
### **Old English (450 - 1100 AD)**

During the 5th Century AD three Germanic tribes (Saxons, Angles, and Jutes) came to the British Isles from various parts of northwest Germany as well as Denmark. These tribes were warlike and pushed out most of the original, Celtic-speaking inhabitants from England into Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall. Through the years, these Germanic tribes mixed their different Germanic dialects and formed what linguists refer to as Old English or Anglo-Saxon. The word “English” was in Old English “Englisc”, and that comes from the name of the Angles. The Angles were named from Engle, their land of origin.

Before the Saxons the language spoken in England was a mixture of Latin and various Celtic languages which were spoken before the Romans came to Britain (54-5BC). The Romans brought Latin to Britain. Many of the words passed on from this era are those coined by Roman merchants and soldiers.

The arrival of St. Augustine in 597 and the introduction of Christianity into Saxon England brought more Latin words into the English language. Around 878 AD Danes and Norsemen, also called Vikings, invaded the country and English got many Norse words into the language, particularly in the north of England. The Vikings, being Scandinavian, spoke a language (Old Norse) which, in origin at least, was just as Germanic as Old English.

Several written works have survived from the Old English period. The most famous is a heroic epic poem called “Beowulf”. It is the oldest known English poem and it is notable for its length - 3,183 lines. The name of the person who wrote it is unknown.



(Part of *Beowulf*, a poem written in Old English)

## Middle English (1100-circa 1500 AD)

In 1066 William the Conqueror, the Duke of Normandy (part of modern France), invaded and conquered England. The new conquerors (called the Normans) brought with them a kind of French, which became the language of the Royal Court, and the ruling and business classes. For a period, there was a kind of linguistic class division, where the lower classes spoke English and the upper classes spoke French. In the 14th century English became dominant in Britain again, but with many French words added. This language is called Middle English. It was the language of the great poet Chaucer (c1340-1400), but it would still be difficult for native English speakers to understand today.

The most famous example of Middle English is Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales", a collection of stories about a group of thirty people who travel as pilgrims to Canterbury, England. The portraits that he paints in his Tales give us an idea of what life was like in fourteenth century England.

And whan I sawgh he wolde never fine  
To reden on this cursed book al night,  
Al sodeinly thre leves have I plight  
Out of his book right as he redde, and eke  
I with my fist so took him on the cheeke  
That in oure fir he fil bakward adown.  
And up he sterte as dooth a wood leon  
And with his fist he smoot me on the heed  
That in the floor I lay as I were deed.  
And whan he swagh how stille that I lay,  
he was agast, and wolde have fled his way,  
Till atte laste out of my swough I braide:  
"O hastou slain me, false thief?" I saide,  
"And for my land thus hastou mordrede me?  
Er I be deed yit wol I kisse thee."

(An example of Middle English by Chaucer)

### **Modern English (1500 to the present):**

Modern English developed after William Caxton established his printing press at Westminster Abbey in 1476. Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press in Germany around 1450, but Caxton set up England's first press. The Bible and some valuable manuscripts were printed. The invention of the printing press made books available to more people. The books became cheaper and more people learned to read. Printing also brought standardization to English.

By the time of Shakespeare's writings (1592-1616), the language had become clearly recognizable as Modern English. There were three big developments in the world at the beginning of Modern English period: The Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, and the British Colonialism.

It was during the English Renaissance that most of the words from Greek and Latin entered English. This period in English is sometimes referred to as "the age of Shakespeare" or "the Elizabethan era".

The Industrial Revolution (18th century) that began in England also had an effect on the development of the language as new words had to be invented or existing ones modified to cope with the rapid changes in technology. New technical words were added to the vocabulary as inventors designed various products and machinery. These

words were named after the inventor or given the name of their choice (trains, engine, pulleys, combustion, electricity, telephone, telegraph, camera, etc.).

Britain was an Empire for 200 years between the 18th and 20th centuries and English language continued to change as the British Empire moved across the world - to the USA, Australia, New Zealand, India, Asia and Africa. They sent people to settle and live in their conquered places and as settlers interacted with natives, new words were added to the English vocabulary. The English language has an enormous amount of words that have been borrowed (or loaned) from about 146 languages. For example, ‘kangaroo’ and ‘boomerang’ are native Australian Aborigine words, ‘juggernaut’ and ‘turban’ came from India. ‘Gurkha’ and ‘panda’ came from Nepal.

English continues to change and develop, with hundreds of new words arriving every year. But even with all the borrowings from many other languages the heart of the English language remains the Anglo-Saxon of Old English. The grammar of English is also distinctly Germanic - three genders (he, she and it) and a simple set of verb tenses.

## **Varieties of English**

From around 1600, the English colonization of North America resulted in the creation of a distinct American variety of English. Some English pronunciations and words “froze” when they reached America. In some ways, American English is more like the English of Shakespeare than modern British English is. Some expressions that the British call “Americanisms” are in fact original British expressions that were preserved in the colonies while lost for a time in Britain (for example *trash* for rubbish, *loan* as a verb instead of lend, and *fall* for autumn; another example, *frame-up*, was re-imported into Britain through Hollywood gangster movies). Spanish also had an influence on American English (and subsequently British English), with words like *canyon*, *ranch*, *stampede* and *vigilante* being examples of Spanish words that entered English through the settlement of the American West. French words (through Louisiana) and West African words (through the slave trade) also influenced American English (and so, to an extent, British English).

Today, American English is particularly influential, due to the USA’s dominance of cinema, television, popular music, trade and technology (including the Internet). But there are many other varieties of English around the world, including for example Australian English, New Zealand English, Canadian English, South African English, Indian English and Caribbean English.

There is no such thing as “official English”. Neither Britain nor the USA has anything official to decide what is acceptable and what is not. The most accepted sources of reference are the famous English dictionaries - Webster’s Learner’s Dictionary for American English and the Oxford English Dictionary for British English. Like other dictionaries however, they are descriptive not prescriptive - i.e. they *describe* language as it is used, they do not tell people what they can or should say or should not say. Today’s English is different from the English of 100 years ago; it is pronounced differently too - and no doubt, it will be even more different in 100 years’ time.

## **Sources of vocabulary**

Along with the various word formation mechanisms existing in other languages, such as onomatopoeia, derivation, affixation, compounding and functional extension, the major source for the large variety of English words is its dramatic history.

Early English roots trace back to the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons to Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries resulting in Old English being mainly Germanic.

It was in the period of Old English; the language began to borrow words from other languages. The year 1066 marked the dramatic transition to Middle English, with William the Conqueror, king of Normandy in Western France, drawing his army into Britain. Old French thus became the spoken language of the ruling classes: the nobles, bankers, lawmakers, and scholars; the peasants and lower classes spoke Anglo-Saxon and some surviving Celtic dialects; the clergy used Latin. In the coming 400 years, Middle English gradually overthrew French and became the language of all classes, but words for government, religion, food, law, art, literature, and medicine were French.

The Renaissance arrived to England in around 1500 with a burst of literary works being published in Early Modern English. It was only at this time that some initial consolidation was beginning to occur in the language’s vocabulary. After centuries of the church dictating religious guidelines for the cultural and spiritual life of Europeans, an increased nostalgic interest in the humanistic values of ancient Greece and Rome produced a torrent of unparalleled creativity.

Scholarly research was written in Latin, as English was considered poor in vocabulary and too crude for expressing abstract ideas. A large portion of such words was originally Latin but entered English through their French manifestation. The education of children, however, was now being carried out in English. This entailed the use of new words from Greek, while Latin continued to be a steady source of vocabulary.

The year 1650 marks the transition into the Modern English period. Further factors contributed to the growth of English as a powerful language. Political upheavals led to the rise of port towns and former lower classes that further strengthened common English usage. The publication of the first comprehensive and official dictionary of the English language by Samuel Johnson in 1755 began the process of canonizing the written language. As education in English was now being offered to the masses, who also enjoyed access to libraries in English, more and more people could enrich their vocabularies and improve their English language aptitude.

The scientific revolution and renewed interest in the classics during the 19th century have opened the gate for yet another wave of scientific and technical terms for newly found concepts and discoveries – all derived from Greek and Latin roots, prefixes and suffixes.

The British colonization of North America, Australia and parts of Asia and Africa has resulted in the creation of whole continents speaking English, which in turn has been enriched by the mother tongues of locals and immigrants. In 1828, Noah Webster published the first official dictionary of American English, which established differences in spelling between British and American English and further paved the way to differences in vocabulary between these two language varieties. The rise of the mass media during the 20th century: newspapers, cinema, radio, television and the Internet have given the latest push to English in becoming a global language, as English is the main language used. This in turn brings more words into English from just about any other language on the planet but also has the potential to disintegrate English itself to new emerging local English varieties. A steady influx of international words has been coming in during the past two centuries.

In sum, other languages than Germanic, French, Latin and Greek have also contributed to the vocabulary of English, while the 4 % remaining derive from proper names. The riches of the English vocabulary allow us to use a vast array of word synonyms to express subtle nuances in meaning. Familiarity with the origins of the words and their shades of meaning can help you make the right choice in your English writing.

## **Language change**

There is no simple explanation for why languages change. This is an area in which there is much speculation and little proof. For this reason, historical linguistics has traditionally been concerned with how languages evolve and not why they do so in



one particular direction and not in another. There is no such thing as a language which is not changing. The rate of change may vary considerably due to both internal and external factors. English, for example, has changed greatly since Old English. Other languages, like Finnish and Icelandic, have changed little over the centuries.

One can recognize regularities in the types of change which languages undergo, even if these cannot be predicted. Language change can basically be assigned to one of two types: either the change is caused by a structural aspect of the language – this is internally motivated change – or it does not in which case one speaks of externally motivated change.

As languages consist of different levels, a change in one quarter may lead to an imbalance in another and provoke a further change. Change in history is regarded as externally motivated if there is no obvious internal reason for it. There was no discernible internal reason why this change should have started as it did in the late Middle English period.

Another example of external change is the development colloquially of synthetic forms of auxiliary verbs, particularly in American English. Phonetic reduction leads to a fusion of ‘to’ with a preceding verb form as in ‘going to’ – *gonna* or ‘want to’ – *wanna*. Whether this will ever be accepted in more standard varieties of English depends ultimately on language attitudes and the readiness to accept vernacular forms. Social reasons can be given for why change appears to be more common in some areas of language.

English has now inarguably achieved global status. English is used in over 90 countries as an official or semi-official language. English is the working language of the Asian trade group ASEAN. It is the de facto working language of 98 percent of international research physicists and research chemists. It is the official language of the European Central Bank, even though the bank is in Frankfurt and neither Britain nor any other predominantly English-speaking country is a member of the European Monetary Union. It is the language in which Nepali parents, Indian parents and black parents in South Africa overwhelmingly wish their children to be educated. It is believed that over one billion people worldwide are currently learning English.

One of the more remarkable aspects of the spread of English around the world has been the extent to which Europeans are adopting it as their internal lingua franca. English is spreading from northern Europe to the south and is now firmly entrenched



as a second language in countries such as Sweden, Norway, Netherlands and Denmark. Although not an official language in any of these countries if one visits any of them it would seem that almost everyone there can communicate with ease in English. Indeed, if one switches on a television in Holland one would find as many channels in English (albeit subtitled), as there are in Dutch.

## **Spelling vs. Pronunciation**

Spelling refers to the arrangement of letters in a word. Alternatively, pronunciation refers to the method of articulation or the method of articulating a particular word.

### **Some important differences**

Both spelling and pronunciation are important to get a word correct. Spelling is important to make the other person understand what has been written. At the same time, pronunciation is important to make the other person understand what is spoken. Spelling is important in writing, whereas pronunciation is very important while speaking. Wrong pronunciation will lead to wrong or at times, unclear understanding of the language. Similarly wrong spelling also leads to wrong understanding of the written language.

Spelling is more concerned about the letters used in a word. On the other hand, pronunciation is more to do with the intonation of the letters of a word. Each letter has got a particular intonation by which it should be pronounced. Hence, intonation has to be right if pronunciation has to be right. Further, spelling is more about the order of the letters used in the construction of a word.

If the order of the letters used in the construction of a word goes wrong, then the spelling goes wrong. Correspondingly, wrong pronunciation makes the language very awkward to listen to. Spelling can be practiced by writing, whereas pronunciation can be practiced by reading or speaking.

The spelling of lots of words is different from the pronunciation because our pronunciation has changed over the years while our spelling system hasn't changed much.

Spelling words in English is a challenging work. One of the main reasons for this is that several English words are NOT spelled as they are spoken. This difference between pronunciation and spelling causes a lot of confusion.

## Some examples:

### Swallowed syllables

The following words are usually pronounced with two syllables, not three syllables. The letters in brackets aren't usually pronounced. The syllable which is not pronounced is called a swallowed syllable.

aspirin	- asp(i)rin	asp/rin
business	- bus(i)ness	bus/ness
chocolate	- choc(o)late	choc/lat
different	- diff(e)rent	diff/rent
evening	- ev(e)ning	ev/ning
every	- ev(e)ry	ev/ry
marriage	- marri(a)ge	ma/rige
omelette	- om(e)lette	om/let
restaurant	- rest(au)rant	rest/ rant
several	- sev(e)ral	sev/ral
Wednesday	- We(d)n(e)sday	wens/day

Similarly the following words are usually pronounced with three syllables, not four syllables.

comfortable	- comf(or)table	comf/ta/ble
interesting	- int(e)resting	in/tres/ting
secretary	- secret(a)ry	se/cre/try
temperature	- temp(e)rature	tem/pru/ture
usually	- us(u)ally	u/sa/lly
vegetable	- veg(e)table	veg/ta/ble

### Homophones - Words That Sound the Same

two, to, too	- pronounced	- too
knew, new	- pronounced	- new

through, threw	- pronounced	- throo
not, knot	- pronounced	- not

## Same Sounds - Different Spellings

‘eh’ as in ‘let’ - let, bread, said

‘ai’ as in ‘I’ - I, sigh, buy, either

## Silent letters:

d- sandwich, Wednesday  
g - sign, foreign  
gh - daughter, light, right  
h - why, honest, hour  
k - know, knight, knob  
l - should, walk, half  
p - cupboard, psychology  
s - island  
t - whistle, listen, fasten  
u - guess, guitar  
w - who, write, wrong

## Unusual Letter Combinations

gh = ‘f’ - cough, laugh, enough, rough  
ch = ‘k’ - chemistry, headache, christmas, stomach  
ea = ‘eh’ - breakfast, head, bread, instead  
ea = ‘ei’ - steak, break  
ea = ‘ee’ - weak, streak  
ou = ‘uh’ -country, double, enough

As mentioned above, the English language has been influenced by several other languages. Although it is spoken all over the world, it is still being shaped by other languages. Several new words are being incorporated into its realm, and it is still changing. Currently, it is the primary language of not only countries actively touched by British imperialism, but of many underdeveloped and developing countries. It is the language of international mass media, banking and business. As such, it has become a useful and even a necessary language to learn and to know.

The English language is a living language. Many traditional rules on spelling, pronunciation and grammar have changed and it will continue to change. What you are told is incorrect today may be perfectly acceptable in 50 years' time.

## **Glossary**

coined =	devised (a new word or phrase).
Danes =	natives or inhabitants of Denmark
The Viking =	any of the Scandinavian pirates who plundered the coasts of Europe from the 8th to 10 <sup>th</sup> centuries; a sea-roving bandit; pirate.
embedded =	fixed into the surface of something
Renaissance =	the revival of European art and literature under the influence of classical models in the 14th–16th centuries.
The age of Shakespeare =	the great age of English poetry (1564-1616)
The Elizabethan era =	it is a period of the history of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603). Historians often depict it as the golden age in English history.
Aborigine =	a person, animal, or plant that has been in a country or region from earliest times.
onomatopoeia =	the formation of a word from a sound associated with what is named (e.g. cuckoo, splash)
derivation =	the origin or development of something, especially a word
affixation =	formation of a word by means of an affix (eg. bi+cycle=bicycle; care+less=careless)
compounding =	make up (a composite whole); constitute.
The Anglo-Saxons =	The Anglo-Saxons were a people who inhabited Great Britain from the 5th century.
manifestation =	the action or fact of showing something
corpus =	a collection of written texts, especially the entire works of a particular author or a body of writing on a particular subject.

upheaval =	a violent or sudden change or disruption to something.
Influx =	an arrival or entry of large numbers of people or things.
speculation =	the forming of a theory without firm evidence
discernible =	perceptible; noticeable
colloquially =	informally
lingua franca =	a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different
British imperialism =	British policy of extending a country's power and influence through colonization, use of military force, or other means.

## Vocabulary

1. You read that homophones are words which have same pronunciation but different meanings. Give at least ten examples (don't copy the words mentioned in the text).
2. You also read that certain words have silent letters/sound. Give at least ten examples (don't copy the words mentioned in the text).

## Reading

### Read the text and answer the following questions.

1. How did the word 'English' originate?
2. Into how many periods has the English language been divided?
3. Who are the Vikings?
4. What are the remarkable features of the oldest known English poem?
5. Why was there a kind of linguistic class division for a certain period between 1100 and 1500 AD?
6. What has been portrayed in the *Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer?
7. Write the notable developments that had happened in the world at the beginning of Modern English period.
8. Why is American English particularly prominent these days?
9. What is the major source for the large variety of English words?
10. What helps us make the right choice of words in our English writing?

**Reread the text and answer the following questions.**

1. Write short notes on:
  - a. Old English
  - b. Middle English
  - c. Modern English
  - d. Varieties of English
  - e. Language change
2. Differentiate between spelling and pronunciation.
3. Why has English language become a useful and even a necessary language to learn and to know?
4. 'English language is a living language.' Justify this statement.
5. What are the sources of vocabulary in English language? Write at least three words that have been brought into English from each of these sources.

**Writing**

1. How has the English language been influenced by a number of other languages over the centuries? Exemplify.
2. American English is more like the English of Shakespeare than Modern British English is, why is it that?
3. How can you justify the statement 'English has now inarguably achieved global status'?

## POETRY SECTION

*Poetry is said to be the sweetest and the most beautiful genre of literature. However, many of you may feel uncomfortable when you are asked to read poetry. It is commonly believed that poetry is too obscure, too difficult and too far removed from everyday uses of language for you to understand. You should get rid of these false notions.*

*In fact, poetry is everywhere, and it plays an important role in our lives. Poetic device such as simile, metaphor, irony, etc. are used by people in jokes, advertising and in everyday use of language. Furthermore, poetry helps us to see the world afresh, the way you would not see otherwise.*

*It is true that some poetry is obscure and difficult but there is plenty which is not so. On the contrary, they are interesting and enjoyable. The use of the different figures of speech such as **simile** and **metaphor** (comparing, e.g., ‘as beautiful as rose’, and ‘All the world’s a stage’); **alliteration** (repeating the same sound e.g. ‘She sells sea shells by the sea shore’); **onomatopoeia** (using words that imitate sound, e.g. ‘Bang, bang went off the gun’); **paradox** (using expression that seem contradictory, e.g. ‘beginning of the end’); **personification** (endowing non-living things and abstractions with human qualities or abilities e.g., ‘The window laughed at me’; **irony** (using words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning, e.g., ‘Oh I love spending big bucks’), and many others make poems more interesting, pleasant and effective.*

*Poetry also uses rhymes and rhythm, and there are different kinds of rhyming patterns. A poem could be without rhyme though. The poems we have chosen for you have the purpose to introduce you with different kinds of poems and with and without rhyming pattern, and with the poetic devices used in poetry. In addition, we believe that you will like these poems for the messages they convey and the way they convey them to you.*

*So get rid of you the false ideas that poetry is not related to the real life, and try to let yourself swept away with their pleasant overflow. Enjoy them!*

*Authors*

## Song

### When I am dead, my dearest

- Christina Rossetti

**Christina Georgina Rossetti** (1830-1894) wrote variety of romantic, devotional and children's poems. Her songs including '*When I am dead...*' are memorable. She was painfully aware of the strife that love leads to, and she tried to bring harmony through self-denial and discipline. Both love and death fascinated her. Her morbid thoughts are the theme of 'song'. To see her photograph and to know more about Rossetti, visit: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/christina-rossetti> ]



#### Before you read

1. Have you ever read any poem by Rossetti? What do they usually deal with?
2. Look at the picture. What does it tell about the poem?

When I am dead, my dearest,  
Sing no sad songs for me;  
Plant thou no roses at my head,  
Nor shady cypress tree:  
Be the green grass above me  
With showers and dewdrops wet;  
And if thou wilt, remember,  
And if thou wilt forget.

I shall not see the shadows,  
I shall not feel the rain;





I shall not hear the nightingale  
Sing on as if in pain;  
And dreaming through the twilight  
That doth nor rise nor set,  
Haply I may remember,  
And haply may forget.

## Glossary

thou = you

wilt = will

doth = did

haply = happily

## Vocabulary

1. In the second line of the song there is an expression, ‘sad songs’ (adjective + noun) in which both words start with /s/ sound. Many words starting with the same sound is called **alliteration**. Like ‘sad songs’, there are two more such expressions in the poem. Find them.
2. Make similar construction (adjective + noun) from the given words. Your word should have the same sound as the given words below. Then use them in sentences.

... teacher

sweet...

...sun

lovely...

...fight

## Reading

**Read the poem silently and answer the following questions.**

1. Who the poet is talking to?
2. What is she saying? Tell in one sentence.
3. Do you think the poet was quite old when she wrote the poem? Why/ Why not?
4. Do you like the poem? Why/Why not?
5. Give a title to the poem.

**Re-read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. What’s the rhyming pattern of the poem?

2. Could the poem have been as effective if it didn't follow the rhyming pattern?
3. Why does the poet write haply instead of happily?
4. Why does the poet wish to die?
5. Explain with reference the last two lines of the first stanza?

### **Writing**

1. Rewrite the poem in a letter form. You can start by addressing 'My dearest... You can add a few lines of yours. Don't use the archaic words, 'thou, wilt, doth'.
2. Find out some other poems by Rossetti, such as 'My heart is like a singing bird', 'Remember me when I am gone away', 'I took my heart in my hand', etc., read them and try to find out what kind of poet she was.

# The Streets of Laredo

-Anon

## Ballads

*Originally, a ballad was a poem intended to be sung. Some ballads are still sung by folk-singers. But the definition of ballad now has been extended to include poems that are not necessarily sung. Usually, it is arranged in 4-line stanzas which rhymes a,b,c,b. It tells a story, usually a tragic one of a young man or woman who dies early. There is usually quite a lot of repetition, and the story is straightforward.*

## Before you read

1. Look at the picture. Is the injured man going to die?
2. Who might have shot him to death?



As I walked out in the streets of Laredo,  
As I walked out in Laredo one day,  
I spied a young cowboy all wrapped in white linen,  
All wrapped in white linen as cold as the clay.

‘I see by your outfit that you are a cowboy’  
These words did he say as I boldly stepped by,

‘Come sit down beside me and hear my sad story;  
I’m shot in the breast and I know I must die.

‘It was once in the saddle I used to go dashing,  
Once in the saddle I used to go gay;  
First to the ale-house and then to the jail-house,  
Got shot in the breast and I’m dying today.

‘get six jolly cowboys to carry my coffin;  
Get six pretty maidens to carry my pall;  
Put bunches of roses all over my coffin,  
Roses to deaden the clods as they fall.

‘Oh, beat the drum slowly and play the fife lowly,  
Play the dead march as you carry me along;  
Take me to green valley and lay the sod o’er me,  
For I’m a young cowboy and I know I’ve done wrong.

‘Go gather around you a crowd of young cowboys  
And tell them the story of this, my sad fate;  
Tell one and the other before they go further  
To stop their wild roving before it’s too late.

‘Go get me a cup, a cup of cold water  
To cool my parched lips,’ the cowboy then said.  
Before I returned, the spirit had left him  
And gone to its Maker –the cowboy was dead.

We beat the drum slowly and played the fife lowly,  
And bitterly wept as we carried him along;  
For we all loved our comrade, so brave, young and handsome,  
We all loved our comrade although he'd done wrong.

## Glossary

spied = saw	outfit = dress
saddle = on horse-back	ale house = pub
pall = cloth used to cover coffin	clods = piece of clay (soil)
fife = flute	sod = small rectangular piece of soil
Maker = God	

## Vocabulary

In the fourth line of the first stanza there is a phrase 'as cold as clay'. Make similar phrases by putting suitable words to the words given below.

a) as black as...	b) as tough as...	c) as talkative as...
d) as soft...	e) as casual...	f) as sharp...
h) as beautiful...	i) as moron...	

## Reading

**Read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. What kind of outfit does a cowboy use? Describe.
2. What does the speaker mean when he says, '...once in the saddle I used to go dashing, ...I used to go gay;' (3<sup>rd</sup> stanza)?
3. Was he young or old? How do you know?
4. What does the dying man ask the poet for? Mention at least eight things.
5. What was the last wish of the dying man? Did he get it? Why/why not?
6. Were or were not the poet and the dying man friends? Give reasons.

**Re-read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. Write the story of the dying man as if you were the poet who saw him dying?  
Write in the 1<sup>st</sup> person.

2. Do you think it's a ballad ? Give evidences in support of your answer.
3. Who might have shot him and why ?
4. Summarize the poem in about 100 words.
5. What kind of life does a cowboy lead? Figure out from the poem and describe it.

### **Writing**

1. Ballads are found in every culture and community. Find out a ballad which was/is sung in your community and write it in English. You might like to write it in ballad form or you might write it as a story.
2. There are no cowboys today. Surf the net. Find more about them. Then, write an essay on them focussing on how they lived and why they are no longer found.

## As You Came from the Holy Land

-Sir Walter Raleigh



**Sir Walter Raleigh** (1552-1618) was a poet, a soldier, a politician, a courtier, and an explorer. Raleigh's poetry is written in the relatively straightforward, unornamented mode known as the plain style. His writing contains strong personal treatments of themes such as love, loss, beauty, and time. The present extract is taken from the ballad '*As You Come From the Holy Land*'. To learn more about Sir Walter Raleigh you can visit:

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter\\_Raleigh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Raleigh))

### Before you read

1. Look at the picture. Guess about the person: Why is he there alone? What is he doing at this time of the day there? What is he thinking?...



“As you came from the holy land  
Of Walsinghame,  
Met you not with my true love  
By the way as you came?”

“How shall I know your true love,  
That have met many one  
As I went to the holy land,  
That have come, that have gone?”

“She is neither white nor brown,  
But as the heavens fair,  
There is none hath a form so divine  
In the earth or in the air.”

“Such an one did I meet, good Sir,  
Such an angelic face.  
Who like a queen, like a nymph, did appear  
By her gait, by her grace.”

“She hath left me all alone,  
All alone as unknown.  
Who sometimes did lead me with herself,  
And me loved as her own.”

“What’s the cause that she leaves you alone  
And a new way doth take,  
Who loved you once as her own  
And her joy did make?”

“I have loved her all my youth,  
But now old as you see,  
Love likes not the falling fruit



From the withered tree.”

Know that Love is a careless child,  
And forgets promise past;  
He is blind, he is deaf when he list,  
And in faith never fast.

His desire is a dureless content,  
And a trustless joy:  
He is won with a world of despair,  
And is lost with a toy.

Of womenkind such indeed is the love,  
Or the word love abus’d,  
Under which many childish desires  
And conceits are excus’d.

But true love is a durable fire,  
In the mind burning,  
Never sick, never old, never dead,  
From itself never turning.

### **Glossary**

Walsingham = a pilgrimage site, the only one in the UK dedicated to the Virgin Mary

Withered = dry and decaying                      conceit = excessive pride in oneself

### **Vocabulary**

1. In the 8<sup>th</sup> stanza ‘Love is a careless child’ is an example of **metaphor** in which love has been compared with a careless child. Complete the following metaphors.  
One is done for you.

Love is a careless child who forgets promises easily

Love is a red rose .....

Love is a knife .....

Love is fire .....

Love is God .....

2. 'Love is a careless child' is also an example of personification as it has given human attributes. Personify the following non-living things. One is done for you.

The door welcomed me as an old friend.

The flowers .....

The school .....

The mirror .....

The rain .....

The fog .....

## Reading

**Read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. Who is asking about his 'true love'?
2. "Love likes... withered tree." (stanza 7) What do their poetic lines mean?
3. Why did she leave the poet?
4. Who is blind and deaf?
5. Why does the poet call love 'durable fire'? Explain.

**Re-read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. How do, according to the poet women consider love? (2<sup>nd</sup> last stanza) Do you think there is truth in what he says?
2. Would you call it a love poem? Why/why not?
3. You read two ballads. Which one did you like most? Why?

## Writing

1. You must have read the poem 'Muna-Madan' by Laxmi Prasad Devakota. If you haven't, then read it and say if it's a ballad. Justify your answer.
2. Try to write the story of Muna-Madan in English in ballad form. Don't translate the poem: write the plot briefly.

# Dream

-Langston Hughes



**Langston Hughes** (1902-1967) was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. He was one of the earliest innovators of the then-new literary art form jazz poetry. Hughes rose out of the Harlem Renaissance literary movement of the 1920s, which was characterized by an increase in African-American authorship. Hughes chose to present African-American life in Harlem as he saw it. The poem “**Dreams**” is about the importance of **dreams** and their ability to empower, strengthen and sustain an individual’s life. In the **poem**, **Hughes** implores the reader to “hold fast to **dreams**” because life without **dreams** is like a “broken winged bird that cannot fly.” To see his photo and know more about him, visit: <https://www.biography.com/people/langston-hughes-9346313>

## LYRICS

*Lyric poems have a musical rhythm, and their topics often explore romantic feelings or other strong emotions. You can usually identify a lyric poem by its musicality: if you can imagine singing it, it’s probably lyric. In ancient Greece and Rome, lyric poems were in fact sung to the strums of an accompanying lyre. It’s the word lyre, in fact, that is at the root of lyric; the Greek lyrikos means “singing to the lyre.” Lyric is that type of poetry which expresses personal emotion or feelings, typically spoken in the first person. It is characterised by brevity, compression and the expression of feeling. In modern times, it need not be rhymed: what matters is the overflow of emotion.*

## Before you read

1. Look at the picture. What could be the relationship between the picture and the title of the poem?
2. How would you feel if you are a bird as in the picture?

Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams die  
Life is broken winged bird  
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams go  
Life is a barren land  
Frozen with snow.



## Vocabulary

1. The expression like ‘Life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly’ is called **imagery**, which creates a vivid image or picture in the readers’ eyes. There is another imagery in the poem, find it. Use them in sentences of your own.
2. The examples in the poem are of visual imagery. They can be auditory which we can hear, or olfactory which we can smell, tactile which we can touch or feel, and gustatory which we can taste. Try to write each kind.

## Reading

### Read the poem and answer the following questions.

1. Can dreams die? What does the poet want to suggest by this?
2. The poet compares life with ‘broken-winged bird’, and with ‘barren land frozen with snow’. Are they examples of simile or metaphor?
3. Would you say that the poet has used personification in this poem? How?
4. What message does the poet wish to convey to the readers?
5. The poet doesn’t talk about the dream that we see when we are asleep. What dream he is talking about?

### Re-read the poem and answer the following questions.

1. What’s the symbolic meaning of ‘Life is a barren field frozen with snow’?
2. Does the theme of the poem have a universal significance? Give reasons.

3. Do you find the qualities of a lyric in this poem? Elucidate.
4. Could this be called a romantic poem? Why/Why not?

### **Writing**

1. Langston Hughes was an Afro-American (Black) poet. Surf the net to find more about him. Then, describe how does the fact that the poem was written by a Black poet give it a special poignancy?
2. Prepare for a debate either in favour or against the topic, 'Can a Blind Man Dream?'
3. Try to write a poem on 'Reality'. You can follow the rhyming pattern and stanza of the poem 'Dream'. Think of the words and expressions that you can use instead of the words and expressions in the poem, 'Dream'. You can start as:

#### **Realities**

Hold fast to realities

For if realities...

Or you can write as you like.

# I had gone a-begging

-Rabindranath Tagore



**Rabindranath Tagore** (1861 – 1941) was an Indian poet born in the city of Kolkata. He wrote poetry, fiction, drama, essays, and songs; promoted reforms in education, aesthetics and religion; and in his late sixties he even turned to the visual arts, producing 2,500 paintings and drawings before his death. Although Tagore wrote successfully in all literary genres, he was first of all a poet.

He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 — the first Asian to receive the honour. The 50<sup>th</sup> poem from his Nobel Prize winning collection, *Gitanjali*, I Had Gone a-begging is a poem that imparts a moral value through the narration of an incident. To know more about him visit: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabindranath\\_Tagore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabindranath_Tagore)  
<https://www.biographyonline.net/poets/tagore-rabindranath.html>

## Before you read

1. Look at the picture below. The God is taking a coin from a beggar. Is this possible? Discuss it with your friends.

I had gone a-begging door to door  
when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance  
like a gorgeous dream and I wondered  
who was this King of all kings!

My hopes rose high and methought  
my evil days were at an end,  
and I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked  
and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.



The chariot stopped where I stood.

Thy glance fell on me

and thou camest down with a smile.

I felt that luck of my life had come at last.

Then all of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand

and say 'What hast thou to give to me?'

Ah, what a kingly jest was it

to open thy palm to a beggar to beg!

I was confused and stood undecided,

and then from my wallet I slowly took out

the least little grain of corn

and gave it to thee.

But how great my surprise when at the day's end

I emptied my bag on the floor to find

a least little gram of gold among the poor heap.

I bitterly wept and wished

that I had the heart to give thee my all.

## **Glossary**

gorgeous = wonderful

methought = I thought

alms = food, money, clothing, etc. given to poor people

camest = came

hast = have

## Reading

**Read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. Why did poet think that it was 'like a gorgeous dream'?
2. What was the poet waiting for?
3. What was the 'kingly jest'? Why did the poet think it was a jest?
4. Who gave what to whom?
5. Why was the poet surprised?
6. Why did the poet cry?

**Re-read the poem and answer the questions.**

1. What is the theme of this poem?
2. What would you like to call the poem –spiritual, historical, realistic, romantic, protest, performance or any other? Give reasons.
3. Does the poem have any significance to the 21<sup>st</sup> century man? How?
4. Explain with reference the last two lines of the poem.
5. This is not a rhymed poem. On what grounds you can say that it's a lyric poem? Give reasons.

## Writing

1. Make a story out of the poem. Write it and give it a suitable title.
2. Surf the net to find out more about Rabindranath Tagore, his life and achievements. Then, write an essay of him



## ROMANTIC POETRY

*Romantic poetry is the poetry of the Romantic Period—an artistic, literary, musical and intellectual movement that originated in Europe toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It involved a reaction against prevailing enlightenment ideas of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and lasted from 1800 to 1850, approximately. Romantic poetry contrasts with neoclassical poetry which was the product of intellect and reason, while romantic poetry is more the product of emotion. Imagination and emotions play a very important role in romantic poetry. They touch the heart of the readers more than they touch their brain.*

# To Autumn

-John Keats



**John Keats** (1795-1821) was an English poet who is now regarded as being one of the greatest poets of his time. During his short lifetime (26 years) he had 54 poems published in various magazines and in three volumes of poetry. Keats lost his parents at his early age, his brother died of tuberculosis when he was gaining maturity in writing poems, and lost his beloved in the coming years. In spite of all these misfortunes,

he devoted his short life to the perfection of poetry marked by vivid imagery, great sensuous appeal and an attempt to express a philosophy through classical legend. “To Autumn,” a sensuous work published in 1820, describes ripening fruit, sleepy workers, and a maturing sun. To learn more about him, visit: <https://www.biography.com/people/john-keats-9361568>

## Before you read

1. Which season do you like most? Why?
2. Make a list of things that you find in Autumn season and compare them with your friends. Then, read the poem and check if your things are mentioned in the poem or not.



Seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom friend of the maturing sun;

Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruits the vine that round the thatched-eve run;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel: to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee amid thy store?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
Spare the next swath and all its twined flowers;  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozing, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Aye, where are they?  
Think not of them – though hast thy music too,  
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue;

Then a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river shallows, born aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
And full grown lambs bleat loud from hilly bourn;  
Hedge-cricket sing, and now with treble soft  
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

## Glossary

**mellow** = smooth and soft      **conspiring** = planning

**hazel** = yellowish brown      **kernel** = the part of fruit inside its shell which can be eaten

**clammy** = sticky (with juice)      **winnowing** = blowing the chaff from the grain

**furrow** = line made by a plough      **gleaner** = collector (small amount)

**stubble** = soft stems left after a crop such as wheat has been cut

**hue** = colour      **wailful** = sad

**aloft** = in a higher position      **twitter** = bird-chirping

**croft** = a very small house

## Reading

**Read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. The poem is about the bounty that the season brings. What are they?
2. What kind of conspiracy takes place between Autumn and the Sun?
3. The poet has personified the Autumn season –find those words of personification. How does it affect the poem?
4. How does Autumn evening look like? Find the stanza that talks about it, and then explain it.
5. How is Autumn personified in the opening stanza of the poem? Is this negative or positive image?

## Re-read the poem and answer the following questions.

1. Summarize the poem in about 100 words.
2. What use does Keats make of 'sound' techniques? (Look particularly in the last stanza.)
3. Write how the poem makes you see, hear, feel and think about the subject matter?
4. This poem is in the form of Ode. What's the rhyming pattern of this form?
5. How is this poem a romantic poem? Examine critically.

## Writing

1. Try writing a sensuous poem on 'Autumn'. The first line of the poem is done for you.

### Autumn

When I think of autumn...

I can see .....

I can hear .....

I can smell .....

I can taste .....

I can feel .....

.....

2. Do you find any differences between the Autumn you have in your region and Keats' Autumn. Write an essay on the Autumn season of your area?

## Sonnet

-William Shakespeare



**William Shakespeare**, (1564-1616) also known as the “Bard of Avon,” is often called England’s national poet and considered the greatest dramatist of all time. He wrote a total of 37 plays revolving around several main themes: histories, tragedies, comedies and tragicomedies. His works consist of approximately 39 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, some of uncertain authorship.

His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. Shakespeare sonnets are of 14 lines, 3 quatrains rhyming abab, cdcd, efef, and a rhyming couplet at the end. In the present sonnet, the poet reflects on the folly of bestowing the excessive care on the body, and expresses the resolution to attain immortality by nourishing the soul at the body’s expense. To learn more about Shakespeare visit, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Shakespeare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare).

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Shakespeare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare),

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Shakespeare>

### Before you read

1. Have you ever heard of Shakespeare? Where was he born? Why is he so famous?
2. Do you believe that there is soul? Give reasons for your belief?

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,  
Why feed'st these rebel powers that thee array?  
Why dost thou pine within, and suffer dearth,  
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?  
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,  
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?  
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,

Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end?  
 Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,  
 And let that pine to aggravate thy store;  
 Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;  
 Within be fed, without be rich no more:  
 So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,  
 And, Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

## Glossary

pine = to strongly desire esp. something that is difficult or impossible to obtain

thee= you

dearth = lack of something

dost= do

thy = your

lease = an agreement to pay in certain period of time

shalt= shall

mansion = a large expensive house

aggravate = to increase

dross = something that has no use or no value

## Reading

**Read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. Who the poet is addressing to?
2. What do these metaphors suggest: 'the centre of my sinful earth', 'these rebel powers', 'outward walls', 'short lease'?
3. What does the poet mean by, "Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?"
4. Try to Paraphrase the poem and give it a suitable title.

**Re-read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. What's the theme of the poem? Elaborate.
2. Why does the poet call the soul 'poor'? Give reasons in support of your answer.
3. Explain the couplet (at the end) with reference.
4. Do you agree with the poet's view, '...there is no more dying then'? Be critical in your answer.

## Writing

1. What's the relationship between body and soul? Which one is more important? Elaborate this issue.
2. The poet uses the figure of speech called **paradox** when he says, '...death once dead'. Can death die? How could it be possible? Elucidate.

# i wanna be yours

*-John Cooper-Clark*



**John Cooper Clarke** (1949-) is an English performance poet who first became famous during the punk rock era of the late 1970s when he became known as a “punk poet”. He is acclaimed as the original ‘people’s poet’. Popularly known as JCC, his career has spanned cultures, audiences, art forms and continents. Today, JCC is as relevant and vibrant as ever, and his influence just as visible on today’s pop culture. Aside from

his trademark ‘look’ continuing to resonate with fashionists young and old, and his poetry included on national curriculum syllabus, his effect on modern music is huge. He travels far and wide to perform his poems: his latest show, touring across the UK, USA, Canada & Australasia, is a mix of classic verse, extraordinary new material, hilarious ponderings on modern life, and good honest gags. To know more about him, and to watch his videos visit: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John Cooper Clarke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Cooper_Clarke) , [bing.com/videos](https://www.bing.com/videos)

## Before you read

1. Look at the picture. What could be relation between the picture and the poem?
2. Can a vacuum cleaner be the topic of a poem? Give reasons.

- let me be your vacuum cleaner  
breathing in your dust  
let me be your ford Cortina  
i will never rust
- 5 if you like your coffee hot  
let me be your coffee pot  
you call the shots  
i wanna be yours





let me be your raincoat  
10 for those frequent rainy days  
let me be your dreamboat  
you wanna sail away  
let me be your teddy bear  
take me with you anywhere  
15 i don't care  
i wanna be yours

let me be your electric meter  
i will not run out  
let me be the electric heater  
20 you get cold without  
let me be your setting lotion  
hold your hair  
with deep devotion  
deep as the deep  
25 atlantic ocean  
that's how deep is my emotion  
deep deep deep deep de deep deep  
i don't wanna be hers  
i wanna be yours

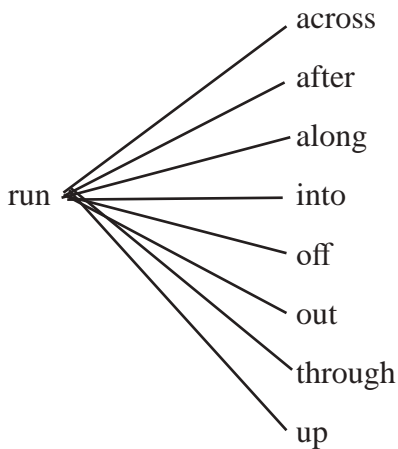
## **Glossary**

wanna = want to      dreamboat = a very physically attractive person

devotion = loyalty, love and care for someone

## Vocabulary

1. There are many other phrases that can be made with the word 'run' in the beginning. Here are some. What are their meanings?



## Reading

**Read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. Who the poet is addressing to? Does he like them? Exemplify.
2. What does the poet wish for and why?
3. Is there any rhyming pattern in the poem?
4. What kind of poem is 'i wanna be yours'?
5. Do you like the poem? Why / Why not?

**Re-read the poem and answer the questions.**

1. Write the gist of the poem in about 50 words.
2. Is 'i wanna be yours' a serious love poem or not? Give reasons in support of your answer.
3. Write a note on how you think the unsteady rhythms in line 26-9 might help to deliver the poem's overall message.
4. The poet has broken all the syntactic rules of English in this poem. What are the rules he has broken and why?
5. Would you say that this poem is an example of the modern poetry? Give reasons.

## Writing

1. What do you know about ‘performance poetry’ of which this poem is an example? Will there be any difference the feeling it creates while reading it or witnessing performing it? Give reasons.
2. Write a poem about a person you love. Compare them with common things as the poet has done in this poem (he has compared himself with vacuum-cleaner, or raincoat, and so on.)

# HAIKU

*Haiku is originally a Japanese form, but in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it has gained wide acceptance and popularity in English too. A Haiku must have 3 lines: 1<sup>st</sup> line must have 5 syllables, the 2<sup>nd</sup> line 7 syllables and the 3<sup>rd</sup> line 5 syllables which add up to altogether 17 syllables. However, English haikus often ignore the number of syllables on the ground that English is not Japanese. A good Haiku is supposed to evoke a 'haiku moment'—that is to say, a moment when the poet was in a state of heightened sensitivity, and could see the world in a fresh and unusual way.*

1.

An old silent pond...  
A frog jumps into the pond,  
splash! Silence again.

**-Matsuo Baso**



2.

From across the lake,  
Past the black winter trees,  
Faint sounds of a flute.

**- Richard Wright**

3.

Among lakeside reeds  
The heron sands on stilts  
Spear at the ready.

**-Alan Maley**



4.

Waiting in darkness  
An aged blind man sitting...  
Listening for the moon.

**-R. Christopher Thorsen**

5.

Everything I touch  
with tenderness, alas,  
pricks like a bramble.

**-Kobayashi Issa**



## Glossary

stilts = long piece of wood

spear = beak

bramble = a bush with thorns

## Reading

**Read the haikus and answer the following questions.**

1. What image does the first haiku create?
2. Paraphrase the second haiku in three full sentences.
3. Why is the heron standing on stilts?
4. What's the blind man doing?
5. What kind of mood does the last haiku create?

**Re-read the haikus and answer the following questions.**

1. Is there any message for the reader in the first two haikus?
2. How can a blind man listen to the moon? What does the poet mean?
3. What does the poet want to say in the last haiku?
4. Do you think that haikus are serious poems? How? Give reasons.

## Writing

1. Do all the haikus above follow the rules? If they don't then what could be the reason for not following the rules. Give reasons.
2. Here are some unfinished haikus. Complete them.

1

A little street child looks  
At the poster of child rights

-----

2

.....

Cows, cars, men, monkeys, tempoos  
This is Kathamndu.

3

The thirsty dry earth  
Shows its bare chest to the sky

.....

## FREE VERSE

*Free Verse is not constrained by any of the usual formal rules poems follow. It doesn't have to rhyme, or obey rules of meter or line length. It doesn't have to follow any conventional shape such as sonnet, etc. However, we can safely say that a free verse poem should have a strong theme –something worth saying- that it uses poetic devices and figurative language, and that it should have flow to carry the reader with the emotions of the poet.*

# The War Process

*-Benjamin Zephaniah*

**Benjamin Zephaniah's** (1958-) parents were recent immigrants to UK where he was born. Zephaniah is a contemporary poet who has achieved popularity by performing his poems in the public. He writes against social injustice, and political hypocrisy. This poem critically comments on the failure of the UNO to stop war and violence in different countries. To see his photo and to know more about him, visit: <https://benjaminzephaniah.com/biography>



## Before you read

1. What's the main role of UN?
2. Do you think UN is doing what it should do?
3. Look at the picture and describe what's happening.



Cease-fire planned

Cease-fire coming

Talks planned

Peace broker coming

Talks postponed.

Cease-fire broken.

Mediators in place

Deadline imposed

Tuff negotiations

Tension grows

Negotiations breakdown.

Deadline goes.



Cease-fire planned	UN repeats
Talks on talk talked	UN repeats
Airport taken	UN repeats.
UN debates	Mediators in place
Resolutions made	Foothill taken
Deadline imposed.	Talks breakdown.
Deadline coming	UN debates
Reinforcements coming	Factions debate
Deadline gone.	Factions don't budge.
Massacre discovered	Cease-fire planned
Cover up uncovered	Cease-fires come
Hard line taken.	Cease-fires go.

Refugees talk.

My Rwandan friend said,

‘At least they have cease-fire in Bosnia.’

My Bosnian friend said,

‘What is a cease-fire,

By the way?’

## Glossary

ceasefire = an agreement between two armies to stop fighting to allow discussion for peace to take place

negotiation = discussion to reach an agreement

breakdown = failure

resolution = decision

faction = group within a large group

budge = to change opinion

massacre = act of killing a lot of people

hard line = the act of being very severe

## **Reading**

**Read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. What type of poem is this? Explain.
2. What do you notice about the verbs in most cases?
3. When the Bosnian asks ‘What is a ceasefire / By the way?’ What literary device is he using?
4. Why do you think negotiations breakdown?
5. What does the poet mean by ‘covers uncovered’? Explain.

**Re-read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. Does this poem make you think about war? What are your feelings after reading it?
2. What does the poet mean by ‘Talks on talk talked’? Explain.
3. Do you think that the poet criticizes UN? Give reasons.
4. Do you think the language of the poem is appropriate to the theme of the poem? Evaluate.
5. Can we call it a romantic poem? Why/Why not?

## **Writing**

1. Surf the net and find out about Rwandan and Bosnian crisis. Then write an essay on anyone of them.
2. Refugee problem is a big problem today. A few years back, Nepal also had this problem. Do some research and find out who the refugees were and what happened to them? Then, write how this problem could be solved.

# Still I Rise

*-Maya Angelou*



Marguerite Ann Johnson (Maya Angelou 1928-2014) was an American author and poet who has been called “America’s most visible black female autobiographer”. She is best known for her series of six autobiographical volumes, which focus on her childhood and early adult experiences. The first and most highly acclaimed, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), tells of her first seventeen years. It brought her international recognition, and was nominated for a National

Book Award. She has been awarded over 30 honorary degrees and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for her 1971 volume of poetry, *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ‘Fore I Die*. The poem is a reminder of the abuse of power by those who sit in government, the judiciary, and in the police force. For members of the public, for society, it sends out the clear message of hope: no matter the circumstances, there is always hope for better <https://www.biography.com/people/maya-angelou-9185388>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya\\_Angelou](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_Angelou)

## Before you read

1. Guess what the title of the poem suggest about its theme. Then read the poem and find out if your guess were correct.

You may write me down in history

With your bitter, twisted lies,

You may tread me in the very dirt

But still, like dust, I’ll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?

Why are you beset with gloom?

‘Cause I walk like I’ve got oil wells

Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.  
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise

Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.  
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

## Glossary

tread = to put your foot on something or someone.

sassiness = rude behaviour

beset = to be troubled

soulful = expressing deep feelings

haughtiness = unfriendly and showing superior behaviour

## Reading

**Read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. Who are 'you' and 'I' in the poem? Elucidate.
2. Try to write the whole poem in prose (paraphrasing). Then, compare yours with your friends'.
3. What is the theme of the poem?
4. Similes and metaphor abound in the poem. Every stanza has at least one, from the first ...'*But still, like dust, I'll rise.*' to the last...'*I am the dream and the hope of the slave.*' Collect them and make separate lists of those similes and metaphors.

5. The poem is divided into seven quatrains and two end stanzas. What is the rhyming pattern? The poet has changed the rhyming pattern after 7 quatrains. Why did she do so?

**Re-read the poem and answer the following questions.**

1. The poem can be broadly divided into question and answer. The poet asks questions, and herself answer them. Does this add to the beauty and effect of the poem? Critically examine.
2. Explain with reference the 6<sup>th</sup> stanza.
3. Evaluate the 7<sup>th</sup> stanza as a powerful example of hyperbole.
4. There is a lot of repetitions in the poem. What could be the poet's purpose behind it? Evaluate.
5. How could we say that the poem has a universal appeal although it talks about the poet's experience?

**Writing**

6. *Still I Rise* "is an inspirational poem with powerful repetitive energy, a universal message and a clear, positive pulse throughout." Justify this statement.

## Do not say

-Mohamad Bin Haji Salleh



**Muhammad Haji Salleh** (1942) was one of the Malaysian writer who was awarded the National Literary Award 1991. He also won the SEA Writer Award in 1997, and in 2008 he was named Negarta Academic Person. The focus of his writing is poetry and literary criticism in Malay and English, and bringing Malaysian literature to the continent of Asia, Europe and the United States.

This poem severely criticises those so called ‘educated civilized people and communities’ who think they know better. To know more about him visit: [https://ms.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad\\_Haji\\_Salleh](https://ms.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Haji_Salleh)

### Before you read

1. What’s happening in the picture below?
2. Can you recognise the place and the people?

do not say my people are lazy  
because you do not know.  
you are only a critic, an onlooker.  
you cannot know or judge,  
passing the *kampong* in your car,  
staring at economic data.  
do not think my people weak  
because they are gentle,  
because they do not build skyscrapers.  
have you ever worked in a *ladang*,  
or danced the *ronggeng*?  
can you sing the *dondangsayang*?



do not think that we have only music  
because we love life.

do not write that we have no literature, culture.  
have you ever listened to the *sajak* or *pantun*  
stayed a night at the *bangsawan*?  
have you read the epic *shairs*  
or the theological theses?  
how many times have you wondered about history in the blade  
or felt the pattern of the *songket*?  
have you lived in a *kampong*?

do not condemn us as poor  
because we have very few banks.  
see, here the richness of our people,  
the brimful hearts that do not grab or grapple.  
we collect humanity from sun and rain and man,  
transcending the business and the money.

do not tell us how to live  
or organise such nice associations and bodies.  
our society was an entity  
before the advent of political philosophy  
do not say-  
because you do not know.

## **Glossary**

advent = starting of an event    *bangsawan* = Malay opera



brimful = completely full      *dondangsayang* = duet song sung in the evening time  
grapple = to take a strong hold of something and struggle  
*kampong* = Malay village      *keris* = Malay knife  
*ladang* = clearing for non-irrigated farming  
*ronggang* = couple-dance      *sayak* = modern Malay verse  
*sharis* = rhythmic literature related to religion and God  
transcend = to be or go beyond the limit

## Reading

### Read the poem and answer the following questions.

1. Who is the poet addressing to in the poem?
2. Being gentle doesn't mean weak. Do you agree with the poet's view?
3. The poet has used a lot of Malay words. Why didn't he use the English words?
4. In the third stanza, the poet talks about the richness of his people who don't have money in banks. Do you agree with his view? Explain.
5. Do you think the poet is very proud about his people and culture? Give reasons.

### Re-read the poem and answer the following questions.

1. Write the summary of the poem and give it a suitable title.
2. How does the poet attack the political philosophy? Explain.
3. Do you agree with the message given by the poet? Give reasons.
4. What type of poem is this? Justify your answer.

## Writing

1. Do you find the similarities between the Nepali society and the Malay society as described by the poet? Compare the two and write an essay about it.
2. It's commonly believed that Western countries and cultures are better than the Eastern one. Do you agree? Prepare a debate for or against the topic: East and West

# DRAMA SECTION

*Drama is one of the major genres of literature. However, dramas need not to be always written. There is a long tradition of oral dramas in rural areas of Nepal and India. These dramas have not written scripts or stories: they were (and are still in some parts) memorized and performed on the stage before the public. Dramas can either be in verse or in prose. In fact, the classical dramas of ancient and medieval periods were written in verse form. Shakespeare's great dramas, Hamlet, King Lear, etc., and Nepali playwright Balkrishna Sama's plays such as Mutuko byatha, etc. are verse dramas.*

*In a drama, the story is told through **dialogues** which is an essential feature of drama. The dialogues are spoken by different **characters** which is another important element of drama. **Stage, costume, and music** are also included in drama's features but they are not essential because even without state, etc. dramas can be played. From beginning to the end of a drama, the plot follows a fairly well-defined course which is called **the dramatic line**. This line starts with **exposition**, which provides us with sufficient information about the plot usually with chorus. It is followed by **initial incidents** which let the spectators enter into the real play. Then comes **rising action** which introduces the conflict that goes on rising until it reaches the state of **crisis**, which means one of the contending forces gain control. After the crisis passes, comes **resolution** which clearly indicates how the play is going to end, and at the stage of **catastrophe** the conflict brought to a close. However, in modern times all of them may not be found in a drama.*

*Drama is divided into several types, viz. **tragedy** (which deals with sad or unlucky events and ends with death and destruction), **comedy** (which has a pleasant atmosphere and happy ending), **tragicomedy** (a combination of both tragedy and comedy), **theatre of social commentary** (which aims to criticise society particularly the hypocrisy of the rich and privileged class), **historical drama** (which is based on some historical incident), **theatre of the absurd** (which emphasizes the absurdity of human existence by employing disjointed, repetitious meaningless dialogue, purposeless and confusing situations and plots that lack realistic or logical development), just to name a few. It is not possible to include all of them in this textbook. Due to the limitation of space, we will provide you with the extracts of two dramas: one the comedy type and the other theatre of the absurd. We hope you will enjoy them*

*Authors*

## The Importance of Being Earnest (extract)

-Oscar Wilde



Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) achieved fame as a playwright and short story writer. He came from an impoverished Anglo-Irish background and had to struggle in his early years to earn a living from his writing. Wilde is considered as one of the wittiest writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He is famous in his day for the cleverness of his language. This extract is taken from his play *The Importance of Being Earnest* which is one of the best comedies ever written for the stage. To see his photo and to learn more about Wilde, visit: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oscar\\_Wilde](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oscar_Wilde)

*[The background of the plot is the upper class society of England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this upper class 'high society' some things and behaviours are accepted as proper whereas some are not taken as improper. In the scene below Jack Worthing is interrupted by Lady Bracknell while proposing to Gwendolen, her daughter. Lady Bracknell, then starts interviewing Jack on his background and suitability as a possible husband for her daughter. She is a typical high class snob who is obsessed with doing right thing in the eyes of society. She is also preoccupied with finding a suitable husband for her daughter. Wilde exaggerates her behaviour in such a way as to make it extremely funny. The scene opens with Jack Worthing on his knee proposing to Gwendolen, when Lady Bracknell enters.]*

Lady Bracknell: Mr. Worthing! Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture. It is most indecorous.

Gwendolen: Mamma! (*He tries to rise: she restrains him.*) I must beg you to retire. This is no place for you. Besides, Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet.

Lady Bracknell: Finished what, may I ask?

Gwendolen: I am engaged to Mr. Worthing, Mamma. (*They rise together.*)

Lady Bracknell: Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone. When you do become

engaged to someone, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be. It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself... and now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr. Worthing. While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

Gwendolen: *(reproachfully)* Mamma!

Lady Bracknell: In the carriage, Gwendolen!

*(Gwendolen goes to the door. she and Jack blow kisses to each other behind Lady Bracknell's back.)*

*Lady Bracknell looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. Finally turns round.)*

Gwendolen, the carriage!

Gwendolen: Yes, mamma. *(Goes out, looking back at Jack.)*

Lady Bracknell: *(sitting down)* You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing.

*(Looks in her pocket for notebook and pen.)*

Jack: Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

Lady Bracknell: *(pencil and notebook in hand)* I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your manners be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

Jack: Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

Lady Bracknell: I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

Jack: Twenty-nine.

Lady Bracknell: A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

Jack: (after some hesitation) I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell: I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. What is your income?

Jack: Between seven and eight thousand a year.

Lady Bracknell: (*Makes a note in her book.*) In land, or in investment?

Jack: In investment, chiefly.

Lady Bracknell: That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's lifetime, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

Jack: I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

Lady Bracknell: A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

Jack: Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

Lady Bracknell: Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

Jack: Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

Lady Bracknell: Ah, nowadays that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

Jack: 149.

Lady Bracknell: (*shaking her head*) The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

Jack: Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

Lady Bracknell: (*sternly*) Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

Jack: Well, I'm afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.

Lady Bracknell: Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

Jack: I have lost both my parents.

Lady Bracknell: Both?... That seems like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

Jack: I'm afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me... I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was... well, I was found.

Lady Bracknell: Found?

Jack: The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

Lady Bracknell: Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket find you?

Jack: (*gravely*) In a handbag.

Lady Bracknell: A handbag?

Jack: (*very seriously*) Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a handbag – a somewhat large, black leather handbag, with handles to it – an ordinary handbag in fact.

Lady Bracknell: In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary handbag?

Jack: in the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

Lady Bracknell: The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

Jack: Yes. The Brighton Line.

Lady Bracknell: The line is immaterial, Mr. Worthing. I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds me of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the handbag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion – has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now – but it would hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognised position in good society.

Jack: May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

Lady Bracknell: I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

Jack: Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the handbag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell: Me, sir! What has it to with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter – a girl brought up with the utmost care – to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel. Good morning, Mr. Worthing!

*(Lady Bracknell sweeps out in majestic indignation.)*

## Glossary

semi-recumbent= half lying down

reproachful= expressing criticism

exotic= unusual and exciting  
animals illegally

poacher= someone who catches and kills

disposition= particular type of character that a person naturally has

cloakroom= a room in a public building where coats, bags, etc. can be left while their owners are in the building

indiscretion= the quality of being indiscreet    indignation= anger

## Vocabulary

- In which of the following words can you attach the prefix 'semi'-  
book                      illiterate                      circle                      building                      detached  
tropical                      seniority                      precious                      consonant                      vowel
- The prefix 'semi'- means *half* or *partly*. What's the meaning of the suffix 're'-? In which of following words 're'- is prefix?  
regain                      regal                      redirect                      reference                      rebound  
reconfirm redesign                      respect                      redo                      restrict

## Reading

### Read the play and answer the following questions.

- What can we learn about upper-class views on marriage at the time?
- Do you find anything odd about Lady Bracknell's views on smoking?
- Lady Bracknell shifts from one topic to another in a bewildering way. Find examples of these topic shifts.
- What are Lady Bracknell's main criteria for choosing a husband for her daughter?
- Why does Lady Bracknell prefer investments to land? There is a quotation to support this.
- Lady Bracknell is a snob. Find some quotes from Lady Bracknell which prove she is a terrible snob.
- The interview starts relatively well for Jack. At what point do things start to go wrong and why?



### **Re-read the play and answer the following questions.**

1. Is there anything unusual about Lady Bracknell's statement: 'A girl with a simple unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.'? Explain.
2. Draw a character sketch of Lady Bracknell in about 300 words.
3. What do you think it would be like to be married to Lady Bracknell?
4. Do you think Gwendolen and Jack should get married? Argue for or against this.
5. What type of play is this? Comment critically.

### **Writing**

1. Write the story of Jack's birth as it would have been told by his foster father, Mr. Thomas Cardew. Write in the 1<sup>st</sup> person. You can start like this:  
I was in Victoria station. It was a bright morning. Something caught my eyes. It was a large leather handbag in the cloakroom...  
Or you can start as you like.
2. Change the drama into a story.
3. You with your class friends can prepare the drama to play on the stage.

## The Dumb Waiter (Extract)

-Harold Pinter

**Harold Pinter** (1930-2005) is a renowned playwright, screenwriter, director and actor. He wrote 29 plays including *The Dumb Waiter*. He was awarded the Shakespeare Prize (Hamburg), The European Prize for Literature (Vienna) the Pirandello Prize (Palermo), the David Cohen British Literature Prize, The Laurence Olivier award, the Legion d'Honneur and the Moliere D'Honneur for lifetime achievement. Above all he awarded with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005. His plays are particularly famous for their use of understatement to convey characters' thoughts and feelings. He takes seemingly ordinary characters and situations and makes them feel unreal and threatening. He does this partly through his uncanny gift for dialogue. If you want to see his photo and to learn more about him, visit:



<https://www.litencyc.com/php/people.php?rec=true&UID=4985>  
<https://www.biography.com/people/harold-pinter-9441163>

### Before you read

1. What do you understand by the title of the play, 'The Dumb Waiter'?

*(In this play two men are in the basement kitchen of a house. It is not clear exactly where they are, nor who they are, nor why they are really there. They have a revolver and they are waiting for orders to do a job. As the result of the vagueness about who, where and why they are there, a sense of unease develops. The language is very spare and brief, but it seems to have concealed meanings. In this extract, a sense of tension and menace builds between the two men through their argument about language. It is through language that Ben tries to exercise his power over Gus.)*

*(Ben turns his head and sees the envelop. He stands.)*

Ben: What's that?

Gus: I don't know.

Ben: Where did it come from?

Gus: Under the door.

Ben: Well, what is it?

Gus: I don't know.

*(They stare at it.)*

Ben: Pick it up.

Gus: What do you mean?

Ben: Pick it up!

*(Gus slowly moves towards it, bends and picks it up.)*

What is it?

Gus: An envelope.

Ben: Is there anything on it?

Gus: No.

Ben: Is it sealed?

Gus: No.

Ben: Open it.

Gus: What?

Ben: Open it!

*(Gus opens it and looks inside.)*

What's in it?

Gus: Matches.

Ben: Matches?

Gus: Yes.

Ben: Show it to me.

*(Gus empties twelve matches into his hand.)*

Nothing in it. Not a word.

Gus: That's funny, isn't it?

Ben: It came under the door?

Gus: Must have done.

Ben: Well, go on.

Gus: Go on where?

Ben: Open the door and see if you can catch anyone outside.

Gus: Who, me?

Ben: Go on.

*(Gus stares at him, puts the matches in his pocket, goes to his bed and brings a revolver from under the pillow. He goes the door, opens it, looks out and shuts it.)*

Gus: No one.

*(He replaces the revolver.)*

Ben: What did you see?

Gus: Nothing.

Ben: They must have been pretty quick.

*(Gus takes the matches out of his pocket and looks at them.)*

Gus: Well, they'll come in handy.

Ben: Yes.

Gus: Won't they?

Ben: Yes, you're always running out, aren't you?

Gus: All the time.

Ben: Well, they'll come in handy then.

Gus: Yes.

Ben: Won't they?

Gus: Yes, I could do with them. I could do with them too.

Ben: You could, eh?

Gus: Yes.

Ben: Why?

Gus: We haven't got any.

Ben: Well, you've got some now, haven't you?

Gus: I can light the kettle now.

Ben: Yes, you're always cadging matches. How many have you got there?

Gus: About a dozen.

Ben: Well, don't lose them. Red too. Don't even need a box.

*(Gus probes his ear with a match.)*

*(slapping his hand)*

Don't waste them! Go on, go and light it.

Gus: Eh!

Ben: Go and light it.

Gus: Light what?

Ben: The kettle.

Gus: You mean the gas.

Ben: Who does?

Gus: You do.

Ben: *(his eyes narrowing)* What do you mean, I mean the gas?

Gus: Well, that's what you mean, don't you? The gas.

Ben: *(powerfully)* If I say go and light the kettle, I mean go and light the kettle.

Gus: How can you light a kettle?

Ben: It's a figure of speech! Light the kettle. It's a figure of speech.

Gus: I've never heard it.

Ben: Light the kettle! It's common usage.

Gus: I think you've got it wrong.

Ben: (*menacing*) What do you mean?

Gus: They say put on the kettle.

Ben: (*taut*) Who says?

(*They stare at each other breathing hard.*)

(*deliberately*) I have never in all my life heard anyone say put on the kettle.

Gus: I bet my mother used to say it.

Ben: Your mother? Where did you last see your mother?

Gus: I don't know, about-

Ben: Well, what are you talking about your mother for?

(*They stare.*)

Gus, I'm not trying to be unreasonable. I am just trying to point something out to you.

Gus: Yes, but –

Ben: Who's the senior partner here, me or you?

Gus: You.

Ben: I'm only looking after your interests, Gus. You've got to them, mate.

Gus: Yes, but I've never heard-

Ben: Nobody says light the gas! What does the gas light?

Gus: What does the gas -?

Ben: (*Grabbing him with two hands by the throat, at arm's length*) THE KETTLE, YOU FOOL!

(*Gus takes the hands from his throat.*)

Gus: All right, all right.

(*Pause*)

Ben: Well, what are you waiting for?

Gus: I want to see if they light.

Ben: What?

Gus: The matches.

*(He takes out the flattened box and tries to strike.)*

No.

*(He throws the box under the bed.*

*Ben stares at him.*

*Gus raises his foot.)*

Shall I try it one here.

*(Ben stares. Gus strikes a match on his shoe. It lights.)*

Here we are.

Ben: *(wearily)* Put on the bloody kettle, for Christ's sake.

*(Ben goes to his bed, but, realising what he has said, stops and half turns. They look at each other. Gus slowly exits, left. Ben slams his paper down on the bed and sits on it, head in hands.)*

Gus: *(entering)* It's going.

Ben: What?

Gus: The Stove.

*(Gus goes to his bed and sits.)*

I wonder who it will be tonight.

*(Silence.)*

## **Glossary**

stare= to look for a long time, eyes wide open specially when surprised or frightened

handy= useful or convenient                      cadge= to get something without paying for it

probe= to examine something with a tool to find out something is hidden

usage= the way something is used      mate= friend

## **Reading**

**Read the play and answer the following questions.**

1. The two men engage in an argument over what is the correct expression to use for heating up the water in a kettle. Read this section carefully. What do you notice? Why does this dispute go on for so long, do you think?

2. Read the very first part from Ben: what's that?' down to Ben: Show it to me. Does anything strike you as odd about these exchanges, especially Ben's questions?
3. Read the section from 'Gus: Well, they'll come in handy.' Down to Gus: I can light the kettle now. Does anything strike you as strange about this exchange? What's the purpose of Ben's questions?

**Re-read the play and answer the following questions.**

1. Find all the instances where words or phrases are repeated. Are there any unusual word, or words you do not know? Would you say that the language was easy or difficult to understand? Why?
2. What is the plot of this drama?
3. This is just an extract not the whole play. Guess the end of the play and write it.
4. You read two dramas in this section. Which one did you like most? Why?

**Writing**

1. Try to visualize the two men. Write a brief description of each based purely on this extract. What they look like (How old? How big? Facial features, Clothing, etc.?) What kind of personality do they have?



## NON-FICTION SECTION

Literature is not confined to novel, short stories, plays and poems. We believe that texts such as essays, memoirs, biographies, speeches, letters, newspaper articles, scientific writing can also be included. These non-fictional texts can be as interesting and enjoyable as short stories or novels.

In this section, we have included essays, memoir, newspaper extracts and blog writing. By reading them you will realize that literature includes more than just works of imagination. You will also find the fact non-fictional texts share many features with literary texts such as metaphor, and other figures of speech.

They (newspaper article, blog writing, etc.) are also very important in our daily life. We hope that you will enjoy them.

*Authors*

# The Economy of the Kestrel

- Andrea Dunn

**Andrea Dunn** is from Indianapolis. For decades, she wrote for her own enjoyment and growth, but has begun sharing her work, including poetry to be featured this spring in Flying Island Literary Journal.



This essay is a descriptive essay in which she describes the activities of the bird kestrel, and also states how much enthralled she is by the actions of kestrel. The essay has been taken from <https://entropymag.org/the-birds-the-economy-of-the-kestrel/>

## Before you read

1. What do you mean by bird of prey?
2. Do we get any kind of lesson or idea from birds and animals? If yes, how?



When I was pregnant with our second child, my husband and I knew we needed to determine the baby's gender before entering into the baby name conversation. We went round and round over what to name baby number one, and realized after we found out his gender that we could have done half the fighting if we'd just waited until the ultrasound. We both like unusual names, but my husband is willing to push things

farther than I am, typically. So, when we learned baby number two would be a girl, I was relieved that I would not have to dodge the name Cicero once again, no disrespect meant to Roman senators. A few lovely names made our short list, but we both were enchanted by the name Kestrel.

I'm going to admit something. I had no idea that a kestrel was a thing, let alone a bird of prey, the smallest of the falcons. When we chose the name, I really just loved how it sounded, how the word felt in my mouth, *kestrel*. It reminded me of "orchestral". To bless my child with the name Kestrel implied my belief that she would one day insist acknowledgment of the secret things we all feel in the caverns of our souls, for better or for worse.

Now, almost a decade later, my Kestrel has lived up to her name's orchestral promise, with empathy and emotional intelligence that many adults lack. But she has also caused our family to take interest in her namesake falcon. What I know about this extraordinary hunter is distilled through the lens of an avian oblivious city girl who does not recall ever actually seeing a kestrel in the wild. Nevertheless, the kestrel has helped me see raptors afresh, and more importantly, she has shown me much about myself.

Above all, the kestrel keeps her eye on the prize. Since the kestrel usually weighs just 200 grams, roughly the weight of a baseball, her prey is naturally going to be quite small. Kestrels hunt voles, field mice, grasshoppers, amphibians, reptiles, and sometimes bats. Her small prey can vanish quite easily given their size, so a kestrel must not allow her gaze to be broken. A glance away could mean a lost meal.

I came across a YouTube video called "kestrel belly dance" wherein I saw a leather gloved falconer perching a kestrel in the manner of a high tree branch disrupted by the wind. In the video, when the falconer bobs his arm about, imitating the branch shaken by the gust, the kestrel isolates her head so that her gaze upon the prey is not obscured. She absorbs the movement of the tree branch throughout the rest of her body, but her head does not move at all. Somehow, she immobilizes her head while making continuous adjustments throughout her body to accommodate her focus. Watching this belly dancing kestrel is akin to watching a bobble head toy in reverse.

But sometimes dancing on a tree branch is not ideal. There are times when it is necessary for a hunting kestrel to get closer to her prey. Kestrels are able to hover mid-air, often with no movement at all. Hover! Like a kite! Not necessarily fly into the wind

with frenzied wingbeats, but if the breeze is just so, they truly hover, eluding gravity with fully spread falcon wings and tail-feathers opened like a geisha's fan. From this hovering position, the kestrel watches her prey until just the right moment, whereupon a tremendous burst of energy is exerted to swoop upon her kill. No, *swoop* is too slow of a word. Dive? The kestrel transforms into a projectile, propelled toward the next meal with the precision of modern ballistics.

Unlike other falcons, kestrels do not kill their prey with their talons. Instead, the kestrel will catch her prey and then take a death wielding nip out of the back of the prey's head. I am not sure which I would prefer: to have my neck broken by extraordinarily strong talons, or to have the back of my head punctured by a terrifying little beak. If I chose the latter, would it comfort me to know that the kestrel would likely decapitate me right after taking her initial neck nip? Don't know.

Another economy of the kestrel—it caches its kills to avoid nesting on empty during leaner seasons or bad weather. So, it might catch several meals worth of shrews, snakes, or frogs, and after decapitation, it will shove its future meal into a crack in a fence post or under a grass clump. Retrieval of hoarded hunts always occurs at dusk, to ensure a nice warm belly for sleep, I suppose. I get it. I rummage through the fridge at midnight. Especially during the winter.

These hunting techniques would be impossible without a kestrel's keen eyesight. Coupled with her focus, a perched kestrel perceives the slightest motion of a would-be kill from up to 100 meters away. And a grasshopper stands no chance against a kestrel hovering 30 meters above. But most terrifying for small mammals like voles and mice is the kestrel's ability to see ultraviolet light, which is absorbed by the markings of mammals. A kestrel will drop in on the nest of these small rodents because they leave a brightly drawn map in the dirt when they refuse to wait to get home to relieve themselves. This makes me think I'm not too off the mark for biting my son's head off when he pees in our backyard. I guess I'm more like a raptor than I thought.

The little bird is teaching me so much—eye on the prize, save some for later, eat the heads first (I should have learned that from Ozzy Osbourne). I need to hover over what I'm after and stop getting distracted, especially in my writing practice. If I could handle the wind gusts and adjust the other areas of my life, I could stay fixated on my goals more efficiently. The kestrel doesn't fret and hammer away indecisively. She hovers and uses only the necessary movements to stay uplifted, a wingbeat or two, the

rustling of the tail feathers. I tend to get a goal in mind and then spend all my energy circling, landing, preening, mulling, chirping, and wringing my hands.

I find the micro-adjustments of the kestrel calming and inspiring. She does not panic. She does not bite her talons to the quick or pluck out her feathers with her anxious energy. She does not look over her shoulder worrying over how well the other kestrels are hunting. She simply hovers or perches, sometimes watches for the markings of urine, and then she focuses and waits until she knows the moment has come.

My habit is to see something and pounce, then re-evaluate and fret. I'm impatient. I don't wait for the next direction, clue, and indication. I just jump. Then I often come up empty-taloned, so to speak. Somehow, the kestrel watches, hovers, perches, but holds steady until the best moment arrives, and doesn't just grab at something because she saw it. She waits! I need to learn to wait, to suspend gratification, to require more than the first marshmallow that rolls by when I know I have a steak coming! There is a great deal of economy in watching and waiting.

I wonder if I'm settling for any boat rides, when suspending my addiction to the immediate by hovering until the best moment would be so much more efficient. I believe that if I learned this patience, a discipline would evolve. Shiny objects could become less enticing because my gaze would be fixed on my goal: developing my writing rhythm and craft by committing to one project and seeing it through to a reasonable point. I crave the confidence of knowing the best moment to go in for the kill, no longer rushing down just because a new idea or opportunity caught my wandering eye. I'm ready to perch my behind in my office chair, keep my mind still, and write my story until it's done, maybe while listening to some Dvorak. Thank you, dear kestrel. You've taught me the economy of watching and waiting.

## **Glossary**

cavern = a large cave

namesake = a person or thing that has the same name as somebody/something

oblivious = not aware of something

obscure = to make it difficult to see, hear or understanding

cache = to store things in a secret place

retrieval = the process of getting something back

precision = the quality of being exact, accurate and careful

gratification = something that gives you pleasure

## **Reading**

**Read the essay and answer the following questions.**

1. Why were the writer and her husband enchanted by the name ‘Kestrel’?
2. What made the writer think that her daughter has lived up to her name?
3. What did the writer observe about the kestrel on a YouTube video?
4. How does kestrel catch its prey?
5. What’s the difference between kestrel and falcon?
6. What lesson has the writer learned from the kestrel?

**Re-read the essay and answer the following questions.**

1. Why do you think the writer finds the kestrel’s activities very calming and inspiring?
2. Is the writer happy to have named her baby girl ‘Kestrel’? Give reasons.
3. Explain, with reference to the context.
  - a. “Hover! Like a kite!”
  - b. “I guess I’m like a raptor than I thought.”
4. How does the author compare herself and her work with kestrel and its work?

## **Writing**

1. Write a descriptive essay on any animal or bird you like most.
2. If you were asked to give an unusual name to a cute looking newly born baby boy/ girl, what name would you suggest? Give reasons to your answer.

# The Impact of Social Media on Student Life

- *Abhishek Karadkar*



Abhishek Karadkar is a writer and a Philosophy, History & Geo-Politics enthusiast. He has completed M.S Electrical Engineering from North Carolina State University at Raleigh in 2017. He lives in The United States of America. When this article was written, he was a correspondent for the student newspaper of North Carolina State University “The Technician”.

In this article, the writer speaks about the impact that social media can have on student life from a student perspective. He speaks about both the benefits and the costs of social media usage.

This article has been taken from [http://www.technicianonline.com/opinion/article\\_d1142b70-5a92-11e5-86b4-cb7c98a6e45f.html](http://www.technicianonline.com/opinion/article_d1142b70-5a92-11e5-86b4-cb7c98a6e45f.html)

## Before you read

1. What do you mean by social media?
2. Can you name some popular social networking sites?
3. Are you a member of any social networking site? Why/Why not?

Today’s world is a global village. Everyone is connected to one another in the vast network generated by the Internet. As said by Marshall McLuhan, a philosopher of communication theory, “The new electronic independence re-creates the world in the image of a global village.” This electronic independence is inherently dependent upon the Internet, which illuminates the lives of thousands of people by spreading knowledge internationally, thereby making us global citizens.

In the past, the communicating and free sharing of thoughts among people were restricted by long distance, nationality and/or religion. But now, even these barriers cannot stop the flow of information and knowledge. The new world of social networking allows free sharing of thoughts. Online social networks are created by websites such as Facebook, which has emerged as a giant in this social world. So how do these networks affect our education? How do they influence the lives of students?

Humans are social animals. We always like to remain in some group or another, and we prefer to follow what this group does. All of our traditions and cultures are the product of this group-oriented facet of human nature. A well-known American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, stated in his “Theory of Motivation” that the social need of human beings is the third most important requirement after our physical and safety needs - the third tier in his hierarchy of needs. Even our self-esteem comes after this social dependence. This is the main reason billions of people use social networking to stay connected, make friends and satisfy their social needs.

As of now the world’s largest social networking company, Facebook, has more than 1.5 billion active users, and the number of users is increasing every year. One of the most interesting things to look at is the increasing number of student users on such social networking sites. As per the survey conducted by Pew Research Center, 72 percent of high school and 78 percent of college students spend time on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. These numbers indicate how much the student community is involved in this virtual world of social networking.



Actually, many reasons exist that explain why many students love to spend time socializing. Social networks provide them the freedom to do whatever they want - to upload what they want and talk to whom they want. They like to make new friends and comment on the lives of different people. They can create other online identities that the real world does not allow. The freedom it gives them to act just by sitting in front of a computer enthralls them, and they then demand for more freedom. Never before has it been so easy for young minds to create a digital image of their actions through such a spontaneous medium.

But this has a darker side that has gained the attention of many parents, and even eminent psychologists, all over the world. One of the biggest problems is the identity crisis that constant social networking produces. As said by Professor S. Shyam Sunder,



a renowned researcher at Penn State, “The types of actions users take and the kinds of information they are adding to their profiles are a reflection of their identities.”

Many psychologists are worried about the identity crisis that our present generation may face today. The lives of people, especially students, are largely influenced by what is posted by other people on their profiles. The habits that students learn are decided more by what their friends do and less by the teachings of parents or professors.

Many students have become prone to frequent fluctuations in mood and self-control. If one of a student’s friends post about his or her present relationship with someone, then other friends are pressed to do the same thing. Actions that attract more public attention hold more value, even despite some of them being immoral or illegal. We even see that many students are worried about their looks, and so they always try to upload nicer pictures than their friends. A recent survey has stated that whenever someone uploads a profile picture, it immediately affects the moods of friends. It often produces stress, anxiety or fear about their identities as people. Consistently thinking in this way can sometimes lead to depression.

The most important things in a student’s life are studying, learning good habits and gaining knowledge to become a person with moral character. But today, as we see in various studies, this optimal learning process is seriously jeopardized by students becoming entrapped by the ploys of social networking. Many students neglect their studies by spending time on social networking websites rather than studying or interacting with people in person. Actively and frequently participating in social networking can negatively affect their grades or hamper their journeys to their future careers.

Getting too involved in social media can lead to an addiction that inculcates bad habits. Chatting with friends for hours leads to a waste of time that could have been used for studying, playing or learning new skills. It is often said that a long-term friendship or relationship is developed when people meet each other, spend time and share their experiences. But this virtual way of communicating with each other does not lead to a natural, friendly experience and hence cannot produce a healthy relationship with those friends. Also, these relationships tend to terminate easily due to a lack of personal contact.

The system generates a competition to make as many new friends as possible and the so-called “social quotient” of a person is decided by how many friends they have and

not on how good-natured and congenial the person really is. Often, students who are not old enough to accurately analyze the world “like” or comment on social or political issues, and this leads sometimes to serious controversies.

Considering all of the above pros and cons, it is necessary to develop certain regulations over the use of such social networking sites, especially for high school and college students. But still, students should get the choice to spend time socializing in an effective way. It should not hamper their school or college performance, and it should be kept in mind that social networking sites create virtual worlds that drastically differ from reality. Students should develop the cognitive and intuitive ability to analyze how much time they want to spend on social media. It is left up to the students to decide what really matters in their life and how much of this virtual life translates to real life.

## **Glossary**

inherently = in a permanent, essential, or characteristic way.

spontaneous = performed or occurring as a result of a sudden impulse or inclination and without premeditation or external stimulus.

eminent = famous and respected within a particular sphere.

anxiety = a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome; strong desire or concern to do something or for something to happen.

depression = feelings of severe hopelessness and dejection.

inculcate = instill (an idea, attitude, or habit) by persistent instruction.

virtual = not physically existing as such but made by software to appear to do so.

jeopardized = put (someone or something) into a situation in which there is a danger of loss, harm, or failure.

congenial = pleasing or liked on account of having qualities or interests that are similar to one's own.

cognitive = relating to perception

intuitive = using or based on what one feels to be true even without conscious reasoning; instinctive.

## Reading

**Read the text and answer the following questions.**

1. How has the Internet made us global citizens?
2. What restricted communicating and sharing of thoughts among people in the past?
3. Why are people attracted to social networking?
4. What suggests us that a large chunk of student community is involved in the virtual world of social networking?
5. Why do many students love to spend time socializing?
6. Why, according to writer, many students have become prone to frequent fluctuations in mood and self-control?
7. What are the effects of active and frequent participation in social networking?
8. Why is it necessary to develop certain regulations over the use of social networking sites?

**Re-read the text and answer the following questions.**

1. What has made today's world a global village?
2. Why do humans always like to remain in some group or another?
3. What has gained the attention of many parents, and even eminent psychologists, all over the world? Why?
4. Why, according to the writer, it is not good to get too much involved in social media?
5. Explain, with reference to the context.
  - (i) "The new electronic independence re-creates the world in the image of a global village."
  - (ii) "The types of actions users take and the kinds of information they are adding to their profiles are a reflection of their identities."
  - (iii) Actions that attract more public attention hold more value, even despite some of them being immoral or illegal.
  - (iv) Students should develop the cognitive and intuitive ability to analyze how much time they want to spend on social media.

## Writing

1. Do you agree with the views of the writer on the impact of social media on student life? Why? Why not?
2. Write an essay, in about 200 words, on the topic "Merits and Demerits of Social networking".

# To the Crystal Mountain

- Peter Matthiessen

**Peter Matthiessen** (1927–2014) was an American novelist, naturalist, wilderness writer and CIA agent. A co-founder of the literary magazine *The Paris Review*, he was the only writer to have won the National Book Award in both fiction and nonfiction. The following text is the **Prologue** of the memoirs entitled *The Snow Leopard* by the writer. The book relates an unforgettable spiritual journey taken by the writer and a field biologist George Schaller through the Himalayas. They traveled high into the remote mountains of Nepal to study the Himalayan blue sheep and possibly glimpse the rare and beautiful snow leopard. Matthiessen, a student of Zen Buddhism, was also on a spiritual quest to find the Lama of Shey at the ancient shrine on Crystal Mountain. As the climb proceeds, Matthiessen charts his inner path as well as his outer one, with a deepening Buddhist understanding of reality, suffering, impermanence, and beauty.



## Before you read

1. What is a memoir?
2. Is it good to keep an account of one's journey? If yes/no, why do you think so?

In late September of 1973, I set out with the zoologist GS (George Schaller) on a journey to the Crystal Mountain, walking west under Annapurna and north along the Kali Gandaki River, then west and north again, around the Dhaulagiri peaks and across the Kanjiroba, two hundred and fifty miles or more to the Land of Dolpo on the Tibetan Plateau.

I knew GS first in 1969, in the Serengeti Plain of East Africa, where he was working on his celebrated study of the lion. When I saw him next, in New York City in the spring of 1972, he had started a survey of wild sheep and goats and their near relatives the goat-antelopes. He wondered if I might like to join him the following year on an expedition to northwest Nepal, near the frontier of Tibet, to study the *bharal*, or

Himalayan blue sheep; it was his feeling, which he meant to confirm, that this strange “sheep” of remote ranges was actually less sheep than goat, and perhaps quite close to the archetypal ancestor of both. We would go in the autumn to observe the animals in rut, since the eating and sleeping that occupied them throughout the remainder of the year gave almost no clue to evolution and comparative behavior. Near Shey Gompa, “Crystal Monastery,” where the Buddhist lama had forbidden people to molest them, the *bharal* were said to be numerous and easily observed. And where *bharal* were



numerous, there was bound to appear that rarest and most beautiful of the great cats, the snow leopard. GS knew of only two Westerners—he was one—who had laid eyes on the Himalayan snow leopard in the past twenty-five years; the hope of glimpsing this near-mythic beast in the snow mountains was reason enough for the entire journey.

Twelve years before, on a visit to Nepal, I had seen those astonishing snow peaks to the north; to close that distance, to go step by step across the greatest range on earth to somewhere called the Crystal Mountain, was a true pilgrimage, a journey of the heart. Since the usurpation of Tibet by the Chinese, the Land of Dolpo, all but unknown to Westerners even today, was said to be the last enclave of pure Tibetan culture left on earth, and Tibetan culture was the last citadel of “all that present-day humanity is longing for, either because it has been lost or not yet been realized or because it is in danger of disappearing from human sight: the stability of a tradition, which has its roots not only in a historical or cultural past, but within the innermost being of man .... “. The Lama of Shey, the most revered of all the rinpoches, the “precious ones,” in Dolpo, had remained in seclusion when a scholar of Tibetan religions reached the Crystal Monastery seventeen years ago, but surely our own luck would be better.

On the way to Nepal, I stopped at Varanasi, the holy city on the Ganges, and visited the Buddhist shrines at Bodh Gaya and Sarnath. In those monsoon days of mid-September, the brown heat of India was awesome, and after a few days on the Ganges Plain, I was glad to fly north to Kathmandu, in the green foothills of the Himalayan wall. That day was clear, and among the temple spires and tiered pagodas, black kites and red

veered on the wind. The dry air at 4000 feet was a great relief from the humidity of India, but in the north the peaks were hidden by thick clouds of the monsoon, and by evening it was raining. I found GS at the hotel. We had not met in a year or more, our last correspondence had been in midsummer, and he was relieved that I had turned up without mishap. For the next two hours we talked so intensely that I wondered later if there was anything left to speak about in the months ahead; we shall have no company but each other, and we do not know each other very well. (Of GS, I had written earlier that “he is single-minded, not easy to know,” and “a stern pragmatist, unable to muster up much grace in the face of unscientific attitudes; he takes a hard-eyed look at almost everything.” He was also described as a “lean, intent young man,” and I find him as lean and as intent as ever.)

The rains prevailed throughout the last three days in Kathmandu. GS was desperate to get under way, not only because he loathes all cities but because winter comes early to the Himalaya, and these rains of the monsoon would bring heavy snow to the high passes between this place and our destination. (We later learned that the October rains set an all-time record.) Months before, he had applied for permission to enter Dolpo, but only now, on the final day, were permits granted. Last letters were written and sent off; there would be no mail where we were going. All excess gear and clothing were discarded, and traveler’s checks exchanged for small rupee notes by the dirty packet, since large bills have no currency among the hill peoples. With our Sherpa camp assistants, we packed tents and pots, and bargained for last-minute supplies in the Oriental rumpus of the Asan Bazaar, where in 1961 I had bought a small bronze Buddha, green with age. My wife and I were to become students of Zen Buddhism, and the green bronze Buddha from Kathmandu was the one I chose for a small altar in Deborah’s room in the New York hospital where she died last year of cancer, in the winter.

In the early morning of September 26, in a hard rain, with a driver, two Sherpas, and all expedition gear, we packed ourselves into the Land Rover that would carry us as far as Pokhara; two more Sherpas and five Tamang porters were to come next day by bus, in time for departure from Pokhara on the twenty-eighth. But all arrivals and departures were in doubt; it had rained without relent for thirty hours. In the calamitous weather, the journey was losing all reality, and the warm smile of a pretty tourist at the hotel desk unsettled me; where did I imagine I was going, where and why?

From Kathmandu there is a road through Gorkha Country to Pokhara, in the central

foothills; farther west, no roads exist at all. The road winds through steep gorges of the Trisuli River, now in torrent; dirty whitecaps filled the rapids, and the brown flood was thickened every little while by thunderous rockslides down the walls of the ravine. Repeatedly the rocks fell on the road: the driver would wait for the slide to ease, then snake his way through the debris, while all heads peered at the boulders poised overhead. In raining mountains, a group of shrouded figures passed, bearing a corpse, and the sight aroused a dim, restless foreboding.

After midday, the rain eased, and the Land Rover rode into Pokhara on a shaft of storm light. Next day there was humid sun and shifting southern skies, but to the north a deep tumult of swirling grays was all that could be seen of the Himalaya. At dusk, white egrets flapped across the sunken clouds, now black with rain; on earth, the dark had come. Then, four miles above these mud streets of the lowlands, at a point so high as to seem overhead, a luminous whiteness shone—the light of snows. Glaciers loomed and vanished in the grays, and the sky parted, and the snow cone of Machhapuchare glistened like a spire of a higher kingdom.

In the night, the stars convened, and the vast ghost of Machhapuchare radiated light, although there was no moon. In the shed where we lay down, behind a sort of inn, there were mosquitoes. My friend, dreaming, cried out in his sleep. Restless, I went out at daybreak and saw three peaks of Annapurna, soaring clear of low, soft clouds. This day we would depart for the northwest.

## **Glossary**

Zen Buddhism= a Japanese school of Mahayana Buddhism emphasizing the value of meditation and intuition rather than ritual worship or study of scriptures.

Land of Dolpo= a high-altitude culturally Tibetan region in the upper part of the Dolpa District, Nepal.

archetypal = very typical of a certain kind of person, animal or thing.

rut = a habit or pattern of behaviour that has become dull and unproductive

molest = to attack somebody physically.

usurpation = the act of taking somebody's position and/or power without having the right to do this.

citadel= a fortress, typically one on high ground above a city.

stern= serious and often disapproving.

pragmatist= a person who behaves in a practical and sensible way rather than having



fixed ideas or theories.

calamitous= causing great damage to people's lives, property, etc.

ravine= a deep, very narrow valley with steep sides.

shaft= narrow strip.

tumult= a state of confusion or disorder.

## **Reading**

### **Read the text and answer the following questions.**

1. Where is the Crystal Mountain? How can it be reached?
2. Where did the writer meet George Schaller the second time? What was Schaller doing then?
3. What proposal did Schaller put forward to the writer?
4. Why, according to the writer, was the Crystal Mountain a true pilgrimage?
5. Where did the writer meet Schaller the third time? Why did he meet him there?
6. What kind of person was George Schaller according to the writer?
7. What was the day like when the writer and his team were about to leave for Pokhara?

### **Re-read the text and answer the following questions.**

1. Describe the mission of George Schaller in your own words.
2. Is this the writer's first visit to Nepal? How do you know?
3. Why was George Schaller so desperate to leave Kathmandu for Pokhara?
4. Recount the journey of the writer and his team members from Kathmandu to Pokhara.
5. Explain, with reference to the context:
  - (i) I was glad to fly north to Kathmandu, in the green foothills of the Himalayan wall.
  - (ii) We later learned that the October rains set an all-time record.
  - (iii) In the calamitous weather, the journey was losing all reality, and the warm smile of a pretty tourist at the hotel desk unsettled me; where did I imagine I was going, where and why?

## **Writing**

1. What event in your childhood had the most impact on your life as an adult?
2. Recount some recent moments of happiness in your life.
3. Write a memoir of a trip you had recently taken.



# The day Everest came tumbling down

- Edita Horrell



Edita Horrell (former Nichols 1972-) is from Lithuania. She is currently residing in London, UK and is working for World Food Programme as a Supply Chain Officer. In this blog she has stated the terrifying experience she had had at the Everest Base Camp on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2015- the day when Nepal was hit by the devastating earthquake.

This blog has been taken from- <https://editanichols.com/2015/05/02/the-day-everest-came-tumbling-down/>

## Before you read

1. What causes earthquakes?
2. Are there ways to warn people that an earthquake is about to happen?
3. Have you ever experienced an earthquake? How did it happen and what were your reactions?

## May 2, 2015, Lhotse.

First of all, I would like to thank everyone for your thoughts and support while I remained stranded at Everest Base Camp after the earthquake and avalanche. It was a dreadful week, and I am so relieved to be back to safety. I am really grateful to Mark Horrell for all his support, and for keeping my blog going. We were cut off from communications, but somehow, he managed to get my SMS and keep you informed.

I am still emerging from shock after the recent events, but I wanted to post an account of what happened at base camp before the memory of those terrible hours fades.

The expedition was going so well; the whole Altitude Junkies team did well on the acclimatization rotations. We were feeling so positive about the icefall and the whole climb of Lhotse and Everest. Margaret and I completed our rotation into the icefall on Friday, the day before the earthquake. We were happy to be climbing, we felt great, and were both in good shape.

On Saturday, April 25th, we were taking it easy. All the Junkies were in camp, even though we usually went for walks to GorakShep or Pumori ABC. That morning I wrote a blog post about the acclimatization rotation and sent it to Mark to post. Little did I know he would never get round to posting it, or that by the time he received it he didn't know whether I was dead or alive.

I was running out of battery on my phone, and went to find our leader Phil Crampton to ask him if I could charge it. I found him in the dining tent chatting with the Himex team's doctor Ann, and they invited me to join them for tea. As we talked the table started to rattle and move, faster and faster. We realized it was an earthquake, and on it went for 90 seconds, though it seems so much longer. As soon as the shaking stopped we ran outside to see if everyone was OK. Then to my horror I looked up the hill and saw a huge snow cloud falling towards base camp. Phil cried out to get back into the dining tent and go down. It was only a matter of seconds before we were all on the ground and felt the impact.

The tent saved us. The other Junkies were hiding in their sleeping tents. Margaret was hiding behind hers, as she didn't have time to run anywhere. Barbara was running for safety and fell on her face. She split her lip and broke some teeth, but managed to escape.

The avalanche stopped, and once again we went outside to see if everyone was OK. We were all shaken, but by a miracle Barbara was the only one hurt, and not critically. The whole of base camp looked like a bomb had exploded. It wasn't until we saw injured people walking and being carried towards IMG's camp to get help that we realized the middle of base camp was totally wiped out.

All the Junkies joined to help the injured. Charmaine, a member from New Zealand, was a nurse and helped the most. We carried boxes of medical supplies and injured climbers to camps that were set up for triage and treatment. We were shocked to see so many injured and dead. At the end of the day we returned to the Junkies' camp and sat silently in the dining tent. There was blood on the table cloth, on Charmaine's jacket and Lysle's shirt. Nobody said a word; we were all shell-shocked. We knew the blood was not our own, but from the injured.



Base Camp after the earthquake

We stayed the following day, as there were still people who needed help, and we had to recover the bodies from the wreckage of camp. I went to help Phil dig up one of the dead bodies. A tent had been thrown 200 meters over a cliff, and what we found is too horrible to describe. The body was all broken, so much was missing it was hard to believe only a day earlier he was alive, with hopes and dreams like me. Phil dug up something like 8 bodies and wrapped them. It was a frightening experience, and we were all in shock.

We couldn't evacuate from camp, as were told the helicopters were for rescue only. The following days were calmer, but terrifying. I couldn't sleep at all. I was hearing slides and avalanches all around the camp. I was afraid to sleep alone in my tent, and I moved in with Margaret. Every time we heard an avalanche coming, we sat up and held each other. We couldn't breathe. After a few days I thought I would have a heart attack. I talked to others, both members and Sherpas, and they all said the same. We were traumatized and living in fear. But we survived.

We didn't know what was happening in the rest of Nepal. We heard conflicting stories, but we knew the climbing was over. It was a huge disaster.



### Leaving Everest Base Camp with the injured

All members of my group were contacted by consulates or embassies from their respective countries, but I was disappointed that nothing came from Lithuania. I was so glad to get in touch with colleagues from the World Food Programme (WFP) who were in Nepal for the disaster response. Their support was invaluable, and I knew I was not alone.

We left base camp on Friday morning for the 4 hour walk to Pheriche. There we caught a helicopter to Lukla, but for Margaret there was one final twist. We took off into the air, and were high above the ImjaKhola valley when suddenly the door flew open. Poor Margaret was sitting on the edge, with hundreds of metres of open space below her. She was terrified. We clung to her, somebody grabbed the handle, and the pilot made an emergency landing near Namche. Once again, we felt glad to be alive.

In Lukla, the weather was turning bad and we thought we would be stuck there for a night, but we managed to get a fixed-wing flight to Biratnagar in the lowlands, beside the Indian border in the far southeast of Nepal. We shared a beer while we waited for our onward flight, and were back in Kathmandu that evening.

Again, I am thankful to my WFP colleagues for arranging a pick up and safe place to stay in Kathmandu. I will be joining the WFP response team in Nepal shortly. Thanks again for all your support. It's been an expedition I will never forget.

## Glossary

stranded= left without the means to move from somewhere.

Altitude Junkies= Professional climbers who offer managed mountaineering expeditions.

acclimatization= adaptation to a new climate or environment

Pumori ABC = Pumori Advanced Base Camp

IMG's camp = International Mountain Guides' camp

triage = the process of deciding how seriously ill/sick or injured a person is so that the most serious cases can be treated first.

wreckage=the remains of something that has been badly damaged or destroyed.

evacuate =remove (someone) from a place of danger to a safer place.

traumatized =subjected to lasting shock as a result of a disturbing experience or physical injury.

## Reading

**Read the text and answer the following questions.**

1. Why does the writer extend her gratitude in the beginning of the blog?
2. Why is the writer grateful to Mark Horell in particular?
3. Where was the writer on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 2015? What did she do on that day?
4. What was the scene like at the writer's camp before the earthquake?
5. What, according to the writer, was the miracle after the earthquake?
6. Why did the writer and her team members stay at the base camp on Sunday- the day after the earthquake?
7. What was a frightening experience, according to the writer?

**Re-read the text and answer the following questions.**

1. What was the scene of the base camp like after the massive earthquake?
2. Why were the writer and her team members in shock?
3. How long did the writer and her team members have to wait for evacuation from the camp? Why did they have to wait for so long?
4. Whose support was invaluable to the writer? Why does she say so?

5. Explain, with reference to the context.
- (i) Little did I know he would never get round to posting it, or that by the time he received it he didn't know whether I was dead or alive.
  - (ii) She split her lip and broke some teeth, but managed to escape.
  - (iii) We didn't know what was happening in the rest of Nepal.
  - (iv) There we caught a helicopter to Lukla, but for Margaret there was one final twist.

### **Writing**

1. Narrate, in your own words, the horrible experience the writer had gone through when she was at the Everest Base Camp.
2. Suppose you are one of the users of the Internet and want to share your experiences with your friends and strangers. Write a blog about the journey you have recently made or about an exciting event that you feel worth sharing.

# Why what we eat is crucial to the climate change question

*-Ruth KhasayaOniang'o*



**Ruth KhasayaOniang'o**(1946-) is an academic and a winner of the 2017 Africa Food prize. In this article, the writer states that our food - from what we eat to how it is grown -accounts for more carbon emissions than transport and yet staple crops will be hit hard by global warming. This article has been taken from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/05/why-what-we-eat-is-crucial-to-the-climate-change-question>

## Before you read

1. What do you mean by climate change?
2. What do you think is the primary cause of climate change?
3. How is climate change going to affect the living beings?

Did you know that what's on your plate plays a larger role in contributing to climate change than the car you drive? When most wealthy people think about their carbon footprint, or their contributions to climate change, they'll think about where their electricity and heat come from or what they drive. They'll think about fossil fuels and miles per gallon, about LED lights and mass transit – but not so much about combine harvesters or processed meals or food waste. Few consider the impacts of the food they eat, despite the fact that globally, food systems account for roughly one quarter of all manmade greenhouse gas emissions. That's more than the entire transportation sector, more than all industrial practices, and roughly the same as the production of electricity and heat.

Meanwhile, the most immediate threat of climate change for most of the global population will be at the dinner table, as our ability to grow critical staple crops is being affected by the warming we've already experienced. Between 1980 and 2008, for instance, wheat yields dropped 5.5 % and maize yields fell 3.8% due to rising temperatures. Climate change threatens the food security of millions of poor people around the world. Young people are increasingly keen to protect the environment by

shifting to animal-product-free diets. They seek plant proteins which taste like meat, while insects are also growing popular as an alternative.

What these inverse challenges – that food and agriculture are both enormous contributors to climate change, and massively impacted by it – really tell us is that our food systems, as currently structured, are facing major challenges.

There is a much larger problem that implores us to look beyond farm and agricultural practices. We need to open our eyes to solutions that address the full scope of the challenge to create more sustainable and equitable food systems. That way, we can provide healthy food for all people while we protect our planet's resources at the same time.

So, what are food systems? Everything from seed and soil to the supermarket to the plate to the landfill. Food systems include the growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consumption, and disposal of food and food-related items.

While farming alone accounts for 10-12% of global greenhouse gas emissions, when we look at entire food systems the contributions to climate change more than double. A recent report published by the Meridian Institute lays out the many factors throughout food systems that spell trouble for the climate, and also explains why a broad systems-wide perspective is necessary for implementing effective changes.

Consider deforestation and soil. A narrow view of agriculture alone would neglect the fact that a full 80% of the forests that are clear cut or destroyed are done so to create farmland. Forests are massive carbon sinks. So is soil, locking away two to three times as much carbon as there is present in the atmosphere. But farmers can help restore ecosystem functions and build resilient communities by producing crops and livestock in productive ways that sequester carbon and protect forests.

Or consider food waste. Not just the scraps that you throw away, but throughout the entire food system. A staggering 30-40% of the food produced in the world is never eaten. Some never gets harvested, some spoils before it reaches consumers, and a lot is tossed away by retailers, restaurants, and at home. For the sake of comparing emissions, if food waste were its own country it would be the third largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world, after only China and the United States.

This says nothing of the gross injustice of wasting so much food while so many in the world go hungry. In the developing world, improving infrastructure along the food chain – including cold storage – would prevent much good food being lost. In the



developed world, retailers can prevent large amounts of waste by finding outlets for slightly blemished goods and consumers can limit waste by buying food in amounts they actually want and need.

There are countless more examples of challenges and solutions all throughout the food system — from production of fertiliser to distribution systems to the production of dried and purified foods that make up processed meals to the diets and lifestyles of the public. Everyone has a role to play; these challenges cannot be solved in a vacuum.

The complex, dynamic, and widely diverse forms of the world's many food systems yield some wildly divergent outcomes in terms of nutrition, health, and environmental and climate impacts. It is critical that we start to better examine what works in some systems and what must be improved in others, in order to produce more equitable, just, and sustainable outcomes around the world.

Just as there's no universal crop that grows everywhere, there's no "one size fits all" model food system to implement across the world. A broader systems-wide perspective is necessary if there is any hope for truly transformative change. It's time to look beyond farming and agriculture and to see the whole picture, to create systems that cause less harm to the climate and are more resilient to the impacts we're already suffering from global warming.

Food is a fundamental human need and to eat is a basic human right. Our food systems must deliver that need, fairly and equitably, without worsening the impacts of climate change.

## **Glossary**

staple crops = Staple crops are plants grown for their parts which are used as staple food. A staple food is one that is regularly consumed in large quantities as to form the basis of a traditional diet and which serves as a major source of energy and nutrients. Staples may be grouped into the starchy type and protein-rich type.

fossil fuels = a natural fuel such as coal or gas, formed in the geological past from the remains of living organisms.

resilient = able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions.

sequester = isolate or hide away

toss away = throw or cast away

blemished = spoilt the appearance or quality of something.

divergent = tending to be different or develop in different directions

## Reading

### Read the article and answer the following questions.

1. What according to the writer our food accounts for?
2. What do most wealthy people think about their contributions to climate change?
3. Why does the writer say that the most immediate threat of climate change will be at our dinner table?
4. How have young people started to acquit themselves in order to protect the environment?
5. What, according to the writer, are inverse challenges?
6. What are food systems?
7. List down the factors throughout food systems that spell trouble for the climate.
8. How can the farmers help restore ecosystem functions?
9. Why does the writer say ‘if food waste were its own country it would be one of the largest greenhouse gas emitters in the world’?
10. What solutions has the writer given to curb food waste?

### Reread the article and answer the following questions.

1. Staple crops will be hit hard by global warming. Comment on this statement of the writer.
2. Why does the writer say that food systems account for roughly one quarter of all manmade greenhouse gas emissions?
3. How can we create more sustainable and equitable food systems?
4. Summarize the article in one paragraph.
5. Explain, with reference to the context
  - a. Just as there’s no universal crop that grows everywhere, there’s no “one size fits all” model food system to implement across the world.

## Writing

1. What is global warming? How has global warming affected the world so far?
2. What are some of the impacts we can expect from climate change? Could climate change ever “wipe us out”?
3. Surf the internet and find out what is the scientific consensus on the causes and consequences of climate change.
4. Write an article on “Global Warming vs. Climate Change”.

# “Surely, You’re Joking, Mr. Feynman!”

- Richard P. Feynman



**Richard Phillips Feynman**, (1918-1988), an American theoretical physicist who was widely regarded as the most brilliant, influential, and iconoclastic figure in his field in the post-World War II era. For his contributions to the development of quantum electrodynamics, Feynman, jointly with Julian Schwinger and Shin'ichirō Tomonaga, received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1965. This essay has been extracted from the book entitled “Surely you are joking, Mr. Feynman!” by Richard Phillips Feynman as told by Ralph Leighton. In the essay, we find that the knowledge/ education gained through fun, pleasure and adventures has a long and permanent effect upon the mind of the learner. It tells us that a talent person can become successful if he takes interest in the task he undertakes and works with complete devotion.

In order to learn more about him visit: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard-Feynman>

## Before you read

1. What are your achievements so far?
2. What do you think you need to do to become a recognized individual?
3. What is your area of interest? What should you do to add knowledge to your area of interest?

When I was an undergraduate at MIT I loved it. I thought it was a great place, and I wanted to go to graduate school there too, of course. But when I went to Professor Slater and told him of my intentions, he said, “We won’t let you in here.”

I said, “What?”

Slater said, “Why do you think you should go to graduate school at MIT?”

“Because MIT is the best school for science in the country.”

“You think that?”

“Yeah.”

“That’s why you should go to some other school. You should find out how the rest of the world is.”

So, I decided to go to Princeton. Now Princeton had a certain aspect of elegance. It was an imitation of an English school, partly. So, I decided to try to be nice when I got to Princeton.

My father took me to Princeton in his car, and I got my room, and he left. I hadn’t been there an hour when I was met by a man: “I’m the Mahstah of Residences heah, and I should like to tell you that the Dean is having a Tea this aftanoon, and he should like to have all of you come. Perhaps you would be so kind as to inform your roommate, Mr. Serette.”

That was my introduction to the graduate “College” at Princeton, where all the students lived. It was like an imitation Oxford or Cambridge - complete with accents (the master of residences was a professor of “French littrachaw”). There was a porter downstairs, everybody had nice rooms, and we ate all our meals together, wearing academic gowns, in a great hall.

So, the very afternoon I arrived in Princeton I’m going to the dean’s tea, and I didn’t even know what a “tea” was, or why! I had no social abilities whatsoever; I had no experience with this sort of thing.

So, I come up to the door, and there’s Dean Eisenhart, greeting the new students: “Oh, you’re Mr. Feynman,” he says. “We’re glad to have you.” So that helped a little, because he recognized me, somehow.

I go through the door, and there are some ladies, and some girls, too. It’s all very formal and I’m thinking about where to sit down and should I sit next to this girl, or not, and how should I behave, when I hear a voice behind me.

“Would you like cream or lemon in your tea, Mr. Feynman?” It’s Mrs. Eisenhart, pouring tea.

“I’ll have both, thank you,” I say, still looking for where I’m going to sit, when suddenly I hear “Heh-heh-heh-heh-heh. Surely, you’re joking, Mr. Feynman.”

Joking? Joking? What the hell did I just say? Then I realized what I had done. So that was my first experience with this tea business. Later on, after I had been at Princeton longer, I got to understand this “Heh-heh-heh-heh-heh.” In fact, it was at that first tea, as I was leaving, that I realized it meant “You’re making a social error.”

Perhaps a year later, at another tea, a little lady came up and said, “Mr. Feynman, Mrs. Eisenhart would like to see you.” I went over to Mrs. Eisenhart, who was pouring tea. “Would you like to have some coffee or tea, Mr. Feynman?” “Mrs. So-and-so says you wanted to talk to me.” “Heh-heh-heh-heh-heh. Would you like to have coffee, or tea, Mr. Feynman?” “Tea,” I said, “thank you.”

A few moments later Mrs. Eisenhart’s daughter and a schoolmate came over, and we were introduced to each other. The whole idea of this “heh-heh-heh” was: Mrs. Eisenhart didn’t want to talk to me, she wanted me over there getting tea when her daughter and friend came over, so they would have someone to talk to. That’s the way it worked. By that time, I knew what to do when I heard “Heh-heh-heh-heh-heh.” I didn’t say, “What do you mean, ‘Heh-heh-heh-heh-heh’?”; I knew the “heh-heh-heh” meant “error,” and I’d better get it straightened out.

Every night we wore academic gowns to dinner. The first night it scared the life out of me, because I didn’t like formality. But I soon realized that the gowns were a great advantage. Guys who were out playing tennis could rush into their room, grab their academic gown, and put it on. They didn’t have to take time off to change their clothes or take a shower. So underneath the gowns there were bare arms, T-shirts, everything. Furthermore, there was a rule that you never cleaned the gown, so you could tell a first-year man from a second-year man, from a third-year man, from a pig! You never cleaned the gown and you never repaired it, so the first-year men had very nice, relatively clean gowns, but by the time you got to the third year or so, it was nothing but some kind of cardboard thing on your shoulders with tatters hanging down from it.

So, when I got to Princeton, I went to that tea on Sunday afternoon and had dinner that evening in an academic gown at the “College.” But on Monday, the first thing I wanted to do was to see the cyclotron.

MIT had built a new cyclotron while I was a student there, and it was just beautiful! The cyclotron itself was in one room, with the controls in another room. It was beautifully engineered. The wires ran from the control room to the cyclotron underneath in conduits, and there was a whole console of buttons and meters. It was what I would call a gold-plated cyclotron.

Now I had read a lot of papers on cyclotron experiments, and there weren’t many from MIT. Maybe they were just starting. But there were lots of results from places like

Cornell, and Berkeley, and above all, Princeton. Therefore, what I really wanted to see, what I was looking forward to, was the PRINCETON CYCLOTRON. That must be something!

So, first thing on Monday, I went into the physics building and asked, “Where is the cyclotron--which building?”

“It’s downstairs, in the basement--at the end of the hall.” In the basement? It was an old building. There was no room in the basement for a cyclotron. I walked down to the end of the hall, went through the door, and in ten seconds I learned why Princeton was right for me - the best place for me to go to school. In this room there were wires strung all over the place! Switches were hanging from the wires, cooling water was dripping from the valves, and the room was full of stuff, all out in the open. Tables piled with tools were everywhere; it was the most God-awful mess you ever saw. The whole cyclotron was there in one room, and it was complete, absolute chaos!

It reminded me of my lab at home. Nothing at MIT had ever reminded me of my lab at home. I suddenly realized why Princeton was getting results. They were working with the instrument. They built the instrument; they knew where everything was, they knew how everything worked, there was no engineer involved, except maybe he was working there too. It was much smaller than the cyclotron at MIT, and “gold-plated”? It was the exact opposite. When they wanted to fix a vacuum, they’d drip glyptal on it, so there were drops of glyptal on the floor. It was wonderful! Because they worked with it. They didn’t have to sit in another room and push buttons! (Incidentally, they had a fire in that room, because of all the chaotic mess that they had-too many wires-and it destroyed the cyclotron. But I’d better not tell about that!)

I learned a lot of different things from different schools. MIT is a very good place; I’m not trying to put it down. I was just in love with it. It has developed for itself a spirit, so that every member of the whole place thinks that it’s the most wonderful place in the world--it’s the center, somehow, of scientific and technological development in the United States, if not the world. So MIT was good, but Slater was right to warn me to go to another school for my graduate work. And I often advise my students the same way. Learn what the rest of the world is like. The variety is worthwhile. . . .

On Wednesdays at the Princeton Graduate College, various people would come in to give talks. The speakers were often interesting, and in the discussions after the talks we used to have a lot of fun.

In the dining room at Princeton everybody used to sit with his own group. I sat with the physicists, but after a bit I thought: It would be nice to see what the rest of the world is doing, so I'll sit for a week or two in each of the other groups.

When I sat with the philosophers I listened to them discuss very seriously a book called *Process and Reality* by Whitehead. They were using words in a funny way, and I couldn't quite understand what they were saying. Now I didn't want to interrupt them in their own conversation and keep asking them to explain something, and on the few occasions that I did, they'd try to explain it to me, but I still didn't get it. Finally, they invited me to come to their seminar.

They had a seminar that was like, a class. It had been meeting once a week to discuss a new chapter out of *Process and Reality*-some guy would give a report on it and then there would be a discussion. I went to this seminar promising myself to keep my mouth shut, reminding myself that I didn't know anything about the subject, and I was going there just to watch.

What happened there was typical-so typical that it was unbelievable, but true. First of all, I sat there without saying anything, which is almost unbelievable, but also true. A student gave a report on the chapter to be studied that week. In it Whitehead kept using the words "essential object" in a particular technical way that presumably he had defined, but that I didn't understand.

After some discussion as to what "essential object" meant, the professor leading the seminar said something meant to clarify things and drew something that looked like lightning bolts on the blackboard. "Mr. Feynman," he said, "would you say an electron is an 'essential object'?"

Well, now I was in trouble. I admitted that I hadn't read the book, so I had no idea of what Whitehead meant by the phrase; I had only come to watch. "But," I said, "I'll try to answer the professor's question if you will first answer a question from me, so I can have a better idea of what 'essential object' means. Is a brick an essential object?"

What I had intended to do was to find out whether they thought theoretical constructs were essential objects. The electron is a theory that we use; it is so useful in understanding the way nature works that we can almost call it real. I wanted to make the idea of a theory clear by analogy. In the case of the brick, my next question was going to be, "What about the inside of the brick?"-and I would then point out that no one has ever seen the inside of a brick. Every time you break the brick, you only see the surface.

That the brick has an inside is a simple theory which helps us understand things better. The theory of electrons is analogous. So, I began by asking, “Is a brick an essential object?”

Then the answers came out. One man stood up and said, “A brick as an individual, specific brick. That is what Whitehead means by an essential object.”

Another man said, “No, it isn’t the individual brick that is an essential object; it’s the general character that all bricks have in common--their ‘brickiness’--that is the essential object.”

Another guy got up and said, “No, it’s not in the bricks themselves. ‘Essential object’ means the idea in the mind that you get when you think of bricks.”

Another guy got up, and another, and I tell you I have never heard such ingenious different ways of looking at a brick before. And, just like it should in all stories about philosophers, it ended up in complete chaos. In all their previous discussions they hadn’t even asked themselves whether such a simple object as a brick, much less an electron, is an “essential object.”

After that I went around to the biology table at dinner time. I had always had some interest in biology, and the guys talked about very interesting things. Some of them invited me to come to a course they were going to have in cell physiology. I knew something about biology, but this was a graduate course. “Do you think I can handle it? Will the professor let me in?” I asked.

They asked the instructor, E. Newton Harvey, who had done a lot of research on light-producing bacteria. Harvey said I could join this special, advanced course provided one thing--that I would do all the work, and report on papers just like everybody else.

...

When the course began, Harvey started out by drawing a great, big picture of a cell on the blackboard and labeling all the things that are in a cell. He then talked about them, and I understood most of what he said.

After the lecture, the guy who had invited me said, “Well, how did you like it?”

“Just fine,” I said. “The only part I didn’t understand was the part about lecithin. What is lecithin?”

The guy begins to explain in a monotonous voice: “All living creatures, both plant and animal, are made of little bricklike objects called ‘cells’.



“Listen,” I said, impatiently, “I know all that; otherwise I wouldn’t be in the course. What is lecithin?”

“I don’t know.” I had to report on papers along with everyone else, and the first one I was assigned was on the effect of pressure on cells-Harvey chose that topic for me because it had something that had to do with physics. Although I understood what I was doing, I mispronounced everything when I read my paper, and the class was always laughing hysterically when I’d talk about “blastospheres” instead of “blastomeres,” or some other such thing.

The next paper selected for me was by Adrian and Bronk. They demonstrated that nerve impulses were sharp, single-pulse phenomena. They had done experiments with cats in which they had measured voltages on nerves.

I began to read the paper. It kept talking about extensors and flexors, the gastrocnemius muscle, and so on. This and that muscle were named, but I hadn’t the foggiest idea of where they were located in relation to the nerves or to the cat. So, I went to the librarian in the biology section and asked her if she could find me a map of the cat. “A map of the cat, sir?” she asked, horrified. “You mean a zoological chart!” From then on there were rumors about some dumb biology graduate student who was looking for a “map of the cat.”

When it came time for me to give my talk on the subject, I started off by drawing an outline of the cat and began to name the various muscles.

The other students in the class interrupt me: “We know all that!”

“Oh,” I say, “you do? Then no wonder I can catch up with you so fast after you’ve had four years of biology.” They had wasted all their time memorizing stuff like that, when it could be looked up in fifteen minutes.

One year, after I was at Caltech, I thought, “This summer, instead of going to a different place, I’ll go to a different field.”

It was right after Watson and Crick’s discovery of the DNA spiral. There were some very good biologists at Caltech. Watson came to Caltech to give some lectures on the coding systems of DNA. I went to his lectures and to seminars in the biology department and got full of enthusiasm. It was a very exciting time in biology, and Caltech was a wonderful place to be.

I didn’t think I was up to doing actual research in biology, so for my summer visit

to the field of biology I thought I would just hang around the biology lab and “wash dishes,” while I watched what they were doing. I went over to the biology lab to tell them my desire, and Bob Edgar, a young post-doc who was sort of in charge there, said he wouldn’t let me do that. He said, “You’ll have to really do some research, just like a graduate student, and we’ll give you a problem to work on.” That suited me fine.

I took a phage course, which told us how to do research with bacteriophages (a phage is a virus that contains DNA and attacks bacteria). Right away I found that I was saved a lot of trouble because I knew some physics and mathematics. I knew how atoms worked in liquids, so there was nothing mysterious about how the centrifuge worked. I knew enough statistics to understand the statistical errors in counting little spots in a dish. So, while all the biology guys were trying to understand these “new” things, I could spend my time learning the biology part.

It had been discovered that phages could have mutations which would affect their ability to attack bacteria, and we were supposed to study those mutations. Some phages which mutated back were exactly the same as they were before. Bob Edgar suggested that I do an experiment which would try to find out if the back mutations occurred in the same place on the DNA spiral. With great care and a lot of tedious work I was able to find three examples of back mutations which had occurred very close together - closer than anything they had ever seen so far - and which partially restored the phage’s ability to function. It was a slow job. It was sort of accidental: You had to wait around until you got a double mutation, which was very rare.

I kept trying to think of ways to make a phage mutate more often and how to detect mutations more quickly, but before I could come up with a good technique the summer was over, and I didn’t feel like continuing on that problem. . . .

Edgar kept asking me to write it up, but I never got around to it. That’s the trouble with not being in your own field: You don’t take it seriously. I did write something informally on it. I sent it to Edgar, who laughed when he read it. It wasn’t in the standard form that biologists use-first, procedures, and so forth. I spent a lot of time explaining things that all the biologists knew. Edgar made a shortened version, but I couldn’t understand it. I don’t think they ever published it. I never published it directly.

Watson thought the stuff I had done with phages was of some interest, so he invited me to go to Harvard. I gave a talk to the biology department about the double mutations which occurred so close together. While I was at Harvard that week, Watson suggested something

and we did an experiment together for a few days. It was an incomplete experiment, but I learned some new lab techniques from one of the best men in the field.

But that was my big moment: I gave a seminar in the biology department of Harvard! I always do that, get into something and see how far I can go. I learned a lot of things in biology, and I gained a lot of experience. I got better at pronouncing the words, knowing what not to include in a paper or a seminar, and detecting a weak technique in an experiment. But I love physics, and I love to go back to it.

## **Glossary**

conduit= a tube or trough for protecting electric wiring.

cyclotron= a machine which makes atoms or electrons move more quickly, using electrical and magnetic fields.

God-awful= extremely bad or unpleasant.

glyptal= chemical compound; insulating paint

ingenious=(of a person) clever, original, and inventive

lecithin= a natural substance found in animals, plants and in egg yolks

hysterically=with wildly uncontrolled emotion

extensors =a muscle whose contraction extends or straightens a limb or other part of the body

flexors= a muscle whose contraction bends a limb or other part of the body

gastrocnemius=the chief muscle of the calf of the leg, which flexes the knee and foot

Caltech= abbreviated form of 'The California Institute of Technology'

mutations= a process in which the genetic material of a person, a plant or an animal changes in structure

## **Reading**

**Read the essay and answer the following questions.**

1. Why did Feynman decide to change school?
2. What aspect of elegance did Princeton have then?
3. Who did Feynman meet an hour after he reached Princeton?

4. Why did Feynman find himself in an uneasy position when he went to attend the tea party organized by the Eishenharts?
5. Why did Mrs. Eishenhart say “Surely you’re joking, Mr. Feynman.”?
6. What difference did Feynman find in the cyclotron between MIT and Princeton?
7. What did Feynman do to see what the rest of the world is doing?
8. What, according to Feynman, was unbelievable, but true, at philosophers’ seminar?
9. Why did Feynman want a map of the cat?
10. Why was Feynman invited to Harvard?

**Reread the essay and answer the following questions.**

1. Why do you think Prof Slater didn’t want Feynman to continue his further education at MIT?
2. What made him realize that the academic gown he had to wear during dinner time was a great advantage?
3. What social error did Feynman make at the tea party programme organized by the Dean of Princeton?
4. Feynman so much excited to see the cyclotron at Princeton. What is the reason behind this?
5. Point out the instances of humour in the essay.
6. Explain, with reference to the context:
  - a. I knew the “heh-heh-heh” meant “error,” and I’d better get it straightened out.
  - b. ‘But I love physics, and I love to go back to it.’

**Writing**

1. How do you feel about the strange title of Feynman’s essay? Do you think it captures the point Feynman is trying to make about life and education?
2. Discuss “curiosity.” Feynman suggests much of his success stems from his curiosity rather than from inherent talent or knowledge. How does the way in which Feynman sees the world and his thirst to “figure things out” contribute to his accomplishments?
3. What does Feynman’s narrative tell you about the way science is conducted and the way in which scientific discoveries happen?

## FICTION SECTION

*Stories are probably the most popular genre of literature. They can be a joke, an anecdote, a folktale or a written short story. They are central to our lives. They help us understand the way of the world. They help us escape from our mundane daily and take us to another world. They might be sad, happy, thought provoking and full of surprises: they are endlessly fascinating.*

*The main features of a story are, (a) plot, (b) characters, (c) setting, (d) point of view, and so on. You need not worry about these technicalities of story writing. Our intention is to help you enjoy the stories as well as develop your English language proficiency. Also do not worry if you don't know each and every word in the story: you will understand the story even if you don't know all the words. You should know that writers write stories not to make it difficult for readers. They write for readers (you) because they want you to read and enjoy their works.*

*In this section we have brought short stories, folktales, fantasies, ancient stories and a novella (short novel). We hope you will not only enjoy them but you will develop your English language proficiency by reading and doing their exercises.*

*Authors*

# The Cowherd and the Girl Weaver

## Before you read

1. Look at the picture and guess what the title may be about?
2. What is the magpie doing in the picture?



In the old days, stars were faithful the friends of humans, used for not only determining direction but also taken as omens for good and bad. For alchemists, the stars were an object of study for foretelling a future happening. For ordinary people, stars were personified for beautiful wishes and so there were many stories. Ancient people personified stars to conceive fascinating stories about immortals and human beings.

During the clear summer evening, along the milky way the Chinese look for two particularly bright stars, Altair and Vega. In ancient China, people viewed Altair as a Cowherd and Vega as a Girl Weaver. The two look to each other across the sky like a devoted but separated couple. This story was first recorded in “The book of songs” about three thousand years ago in China. About them there are many stories but the central theme remains the same, that is, the yearnings of the star crossed lovers. This story is a blend of different versions through the ages.

Once upon a time there was an orphan boy called Sun Shouyi who lived with his older brother Sun Shouren and his wife. Though his brother was kind to him, his sister-in-law, like most in-laws, was not. In order to get rid of him, she made him tend cattle in

the mountain. But one day, she deviously planned a task that would make it impossible for Sun Shouyi to return home any time soon.

She gave him nine cows and bulls but told him that he had to bring ten cattle back and the tenth had to be a bull. Sun Shouyi went to the mountain with lush grass to graze the cattle. Everyday he sat miserably under the tree and tired himself out raking his brain on how to add one bull to the herd so that he can return home. This futile raking had taken its toll and after five months, on the verge of collapse, leaning his emancipated body on the trunk of the tree, he wept and raved. His wracking sobs and wild helpless ravings echoed in the mountains. And as we know, animals have telepathic instinct especially if one is kind to them like this cow-heard boy. They mooed loudly in unison with his cries, perhaps sympathizing with him or perhaps asking the gods to help him.

Spent and defeated, he sailed through the twilight of consciousness. At one point, Sun Shouyi saw an old man, looking at him and asked him if he was alright. He sobbed and told him about the bull. The old man smiled and consoled him that his problem will be resolved if he could find an old bull that was roaming in the mountain. His kindness so affected him that a storm of tears burst out. When he woke up, he found that his sleeve was wet where his arm had cradled his head. He wondered if he was dreaming or whether the old man was real. Whatever, he decided to find the bull.

He travelled around the mountain until he came to a stream. It was there he saw an old bull almost half dead like him. The bull looked very sick and stared at Sun Shouyi with those dark eyes, which for him looked like as though the bull was pleading for help, but for all we know it could be to say: “Mind your own business, human.” or just: “Get lost!” But Shouyi remembered the old man and decided to help the bull. Everyday he cut tender juicy grass which the bull ate. After some time, the bull was strong enough to graze with the herd. Shouyi was happy because now he could return home.

He took the herd and headed home dreaming of his family welcoming him with open arms. But he was in for shock because his sister – in – law turned him out of home with only the old bull for his share of the family property. Agh! Out of the frying pan and into the fire! Poor Shouyi! His brother Shouren, the hen –pecked husband would only watch desolately at his Shouyi’s plight. Undaunted, Shouyi built himself a little hut and lived his life as a simple farmer, honest and law abiding like most country folk. His old but strong bull tilted the farm and together they edged out a living. But Shouyi was lonely as he had only a bull for a friend.

One spring day, the bull said to him “Shouyi, come with me and I will take you to a place where you will see many beautiful girls.”

Shouyi stared at the bull in disbelief and stammered, “You..... you.. you can talk? You can talk! Geez!! Are you an evil spirit?”

The bull gave him a dagger look and huffed: “Now, now, don’t get me wrong. I am a fallen angel. When you found me I was homesick for heaven.”

Shouyi looked at the bull curiously and asked him: “Why were you banished from the heaven?”

“Well, the King of Heaven was angry with me for something I did which I don’t care to elaborate.” said the bull defensively.

“How do you know about the beautiful girls and the place?” asked Shouyi, a little suspicious now.

The bull smiled mischievously: “Aha! That’s something I specialize in and even the King of Heaven is jealous of. And don’t, don’t you dare ask anymore question or else I will change my mind about showing you the beautiful girls.” As though he already sensed what would be the next obvious question.

Shouyi was alarmed and kowtowing to the bull pleaded, “Please! Please Sir, don’t change your mind. I believe you and appreciate your kindness. Take me to see the beautiful girls.”

So the bull took Shouyi to a beautiful lake surrounded by trees and flowers. The secluded spot was tucked away in the middle of forest and not many people knew about it. Well, certainly not Shouyi who had lived in that district all his life. They hid for sometime and sure enough, about fifteen celestial fairies drifted down from the sky, their colorful robes billowing in the wind to take a spring bath. They then took off their outer garments and started to swim among the lilies laughing and chatting. Shouyi had never seen such beautiful girls in his life! He stared at one girl in particular as though he had seen her before.

“You seem to like that girl with very long hair, yes, Shouyi?” asked the bull.

Shouyi looked at the bull in puzzle and daze: “I have this feeling I have known her and have met her somehow.”

The bull laughed softly and said: “You and she seem to be fated. So this is what you



should do. You must take her clothes and hide it until the others have gone before you confront her.”

“I am not a pervert! How can I face her with such atrocity! No, no, I am certainly not doing such disgraceful act”, protested Shouyi.

“Up to you Shouyi. I have given you the best solution. Either be a pervert and get the girl or be a gentleman and forfeit her”, yawned the bull.

Shouyi was in dilemma. He had never been in such situation before! “To be or not to be a pervert” started a war raging inside him. Finally, as most of us would do, Shouyi succumbed to the devil. He collected Vega’s clothes and hid in the bushes. Soon it was time for the fairies to leave but Vega was still looking for her clothes. The fairies ascended to the heaven leaving Vega behind. Then Shouyi went to Vega with her clothes and bowed to her: “Lady, I am sorry for such a despicable act but this was the only way I could detain you to confess my love for you. Would you accept my proposal for marriage? I promise to be faithful to you and cherish you for ever.”

Vega was moved by his honesty and the pure admiration in his eyes. And anyway, our Shouyi was a good looking guy, as all people in their prime will look, yes? After dressing properly, Vega and Shouyi sat down together to talk while the bull sighed and watched them play the compulsory game that every admirers do. Vega was the youngest daughter of the King of Heaven and a great weaver, much loved by her parents and people who received gifts of her weaving. But she always wanted to explore the world and the universe and hated to be confounded in the heaven. So she decided to marry Shouyi and live with him. They lived an ideal Chinese country life together. Shouyi farmed the land and Vega weaved fine silk clothes. Eventually, they had a son and a daughter and their happiness was complete.

However, too much happiness can be a jinx. Vega has been missing for several days and her mother, the Jade Queen, was quite worried. One year in the earth equals a day in heaven. So the Jade Queen, Enforcer of Laws in Heaven sent out solders to look for her and to bring her back. As Vega was being spirited away, Shouyi, carrying their two children followed her, aided by the divine power of the bull. Just as he was about to catch up with Vega, the Queen told out her hair pin and drew a line in the sky. The line turned into a wide river and the river flowed into the milkyway in the galaxy. Vega and Shouyi could only stare tearfully at each other across the river. Even how they are standing in the galaxy, two star crossed lovers longing for each other.

However, the Jade Queen felt sorry for the two of them and she decided to give the consent to keep Shouyi in the sky. But he could meet Vega once only every seven days and told the magpie to relay the message to them. Magpies are pretty clever birds, however, this messenger had a slip of the tongue and instead of ‘a meeting every seven days’ it said, ‘every seventh day of the seventh month’, which means every once in a year! Silly Magpie! Remorseful of his mistake, the magpie used his body as a bridge so that the lovers can meet on that day. This particular day falls on a hot and humid month of the Chinese calendar. On this day, people take a holiday as a day belonging to lovers. On that day it seems as though the two stars are getting closer in the galaxy. If it rains on that day, the people believe that the two lovers are weeping in excitement. This belief shows the best wishes of the people on earth and though it’s a sad story, the beauty lies in its sadness. It represents the hopes of human. We see an optimistic psychology in the story of the sort that inspires us to continue. The two lovers having gone through thick and thin finally unite above the milkyway. Young girls who especially want to improve their needlework skills pray to the Girl Weaver. People pray to Altair and Vega on Qixi Festival (seventh day of seventh month) also known as Magpie Festival on the seventh day of the July for various reasons; the men hope of find girls who could be loving, skilful and intelligent like Vega, and the women hope to find their future husband who are honest, hardworking and faithful like Altair.

## **Glossary**

omen= a sign of future event

yearning= a strong feeling of wishing for something

deviously= dishonestly (planning)

rake= to search in a container by moving things

desolate= empty and not attractive

celesial= of or from the sky, or out of this world

forfeit= to loose the right to do or have something because you have a broken a rule

succumb= to loose the determination of oppose something, to accept defeat

## Reading

**Read the text and answer the following questions.**

1. What are the different ways that people make use of stars?
2. There is an expression of general saying in the second line of the text "...as most in-laws...". Find other two such expressions in the text. Do you agree or disagree about them? Give reasons.
3. What kinds of sign were seen by the expression "taken its toil" (the second paragraph)?
4. Why, do you think, was the bull expelled from the heaven? Where in the text could be the intended meaning?
5. What is meant by the "compulsory game" that the bull already knew?

**Re-read the story and answer the following questions.**

1. How does the author describe an ideal Chinese country life? Is it the same in your country?
2. Do you agree about the "optimistic psychology" the Chinese talk about? What other inspiration can be gained from such stories?
3. "Spring bath" mentioned in the story also conjure up another image in the English language that has almost similar implication. What does it mean?

## Writing

1. Qixi Festival is also known as "Magpie Festival", which shows that magpies play a symbolic role in the Chinese culture. Does it also have symbolic meaning in yours? If not a magpie perhaps some other birds? Describe its meaning and write a story about the bird you have chosen.
2. The central theme of Vega and Alstair is universal. Find out about two other such story and write on one of them under any genre: poem, haiku, sonnet, minisaga, haibun, song, act, cartoon etc.
3. Stars are used in horoscope to predict people and events in almost all cultures. Does your culture do the same? Prepare to debate or an oratory/speech on the basis of the famous/popular people or people which most of your friends know. Support your arguments on the known facts and events.

## A Folktale from Hitopadesha

*Source : <http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-folktales/panchatantra-tales/index.html>*

Once upon a time, there lived a Lion by the name of Madotkata in a forest. Among his followers, a Jackal, a Crow and a Wolf had developed friendship with him. However, all the three had a selfish motive behind this so-called friendship. They knew that the Lion was the King of the forest and friendship with such fierce creature would always help them. To meet their selfish ends, they started obeying him and were always available at the service of the Lion.

They didn't have to make any efforts to search for their food, as the Lion used to give his leftover meals to them. Moreover, they became powerful as they were next to the King of the forest. Thus all the three selfish friends were passing their days happily being the friends of the Lion. One day, a Camel, who came from some distant land, lost his way and entered the same forest where these friends lived. He tried his best to find out the way, but could not make it.

In the meantime, these three friends happened to pass through the same way where the Camel was wandering. When they saw the Camel, at once it came to their mind that he didn't belong to their forest. The Jackal suggested to his other two friends, "Let's kill and eat him". The Wolf replied, "It is a big animal. We could not kill him. I think, first we should inform our King about this Camel". The Crow agreed upon the idea given by the Wolf. After deciding, all of them went to meet the Lion.

On reaching the Lion's den, the Jackal approached the Lion and said, "Your Majesty, an unknown Camel has dared to enter your kingdom without your consent. His body is full of flesh and he could make a nice meal for us. Let's kill him". The Lion roared loudly on hearing this and said, "What are you saying? The Camel has come for refuge in my kingdom. It is unethical to kill him. We should provide him the best shelter. Go and bring him to me". All of them got dispirited to hear such words from the King.

They unwillingly went to the Camel and told him about the desire of the Lion, who wanted to meet him. The Camel was scared to know about the strange offer. He thought

that his last moment had come and in a little while he would become the meal of the Lion. As he couldn't even escape, so he decided to meet the Lion and left everything on the destiny. The selfish friends escorted the Camel to the Lion's den. The Lion was happy to see the Camel. He welcomed him warmly and assured him of all the safety in the forest during his stay.

The Camel was totally amazed to hear the Lion's words. He got very happy and started living with the Jackal, the Crow and the Wolf. One day, when the Lion was hunting for food, he had a struggle with a mighty Elephant. The Lion got badly injured in the struggle and became incapable of hunting for his food. Stricken by bad luck, the Lion had to sustain without food for days. Due to this, his friends too had to go hungry for days as they totally depended on the Lion's kill for their food. But the Camel was satisfied grazing around in the forest.

All the three friends got worried and discussed the matter among them. On reaching a conclusion, they approached the Lion and said, "Your Majesty, you are getting weak day by day. We can't see you in this wretched condition. Why don't you kill the Camel and eat him?" The Lion roared, "No. How can you think such thing? He is our guest and we should not kill him. Don't give such suggestions to me in future". As the jackal, the crow and the wolf had set their evil eyes on the camel; they met once again and devised a plan to kill the Camel.

They went to the Camel and said, "Dear Friend, you know our King has not eaten anything from the past many days. He is unable to go for hunting due to his wounds and sickness. Under such circumstances, it becomes our duty to sacrifice ourselves to save the life of our king. Come with us, we will offer our bodies to make his food". The Camel didn't understand their plan, but innocently he nodded in favour of their plan. All of them approached the den of the Lion.

First of all, the Crow came forward and said, "Your Majesty, we didn't succeed in getting any food for you. I can't see you like this. Please eat me and make me obliged". The Lion replied, "Dear, I will prefer to die than to perform such a sinful deed". Then, the Jackal came forward and said, "Your Majesty, Crow's body is too small to satisfy your appetite. I offer myself to you, as it is my duty to save your life". The Lion politely rejected the offer. As per the plan, now it was the turn of the Wolf to offer himself to the King.

So, the Wolf came forward and said, "Your Majesty, Jackal is quite small to gratify your hunger. I offer myself for this kind job. Please kill me and satisfy your hunger".

After saying this, he lay prostrate before the Lion. But the Lion didn't kill any of them. The Camel, who was watching the whole scene felt reassured of his safety and also decided to go forward and complete the formality. He marched forward and said, "Your Majesty, why don't you kill me. You are my friend. A friend in need is a friend indeed. Please allow me to offer you my body".

The Lion found the offer quite appropriate, as the Camel himself had offered his body for food, his ethics were maintained. The Lion attacked the Camel at once, ripped open his body and tore him into pieces. The Lion and his friends ate the delicious flesh to their fill. They feasted on the poor Camel for days together.

### **Glossary**

motive = a reason for doing something

refuge = protection from danger

destiny = the power believed to control events,

wretched = very bad

gratify = to please or satisfy somebody

prostrate = lying on the ground and facing downward

### **Reading**

**Read the story and answer the following questions.**

1. Why did the lion refuse to kill the camel?
2. Why was the camel amazed?
3. Why were the three friends worried?
4. What was the plan they made to kill the camel?
5. The lion refused to kill the camel first. Why did he kill him at last?
6. What could be the moral of this story?
7. Give a suitable title to the story.

**Re-read the story and answer the following questions.**

1. Suppose the lion is a human king. Can his action be justified? How?
2. A king of a kingdom or an executive supremo of a country is misled by their courtiers. Do you agree? Give reasons in support of your answer.

3. Camel can be seen as the symbol of common people. How? Elaborate.
4. What would have happened if Camel had refused to offer his body to the lion as suggested by the three cunning friends? Imagine, and then change the ending of the story.

### **Writing**

1. Change the story into a play for a stage performance. Work in groups to develop dialogues and scene for the play.
2. Does this story meet the criteria of a folktale? Discuss.
3. You must have heard such kind of folktales from your granny or grandpa. Now write it. If you haven't heard any. Try to imagine one and write it down.

# The Blue-stone Anklet

*-Alan Maley*

Alan Maley (1937-) worked for The British Council from 1962 to 1988, serving as English Language Officer in Yugoslavia, Ghana, Italy, France, and China, and as Regional Representative in South India (Madras). From 1988 to 1993 he was Director-General of the Bell Educational Trust, Cambridge. From 1993 to 1998 he was Senior Fellow in the Department of English Language and Literature of the National University of Singapore, and from 1998 to 2003 he was Director of the graduate programme at Assumption University, Bangkok. He has written many books for English language teachers but his real love is writing poetry, short stories and novels. The setting of the present story is Maynmar. To learn more about him, visit: [www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/alan-maley/alan-maley-biography](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/alan-maley/alan-maley-biography) [https://elt.oup.com/bios/elt/m/maley\\_a](https://elt.oup.com/bios/elt/m/maley_a)



## Before you read

1. Look at the picture and guess:
  - a. Are they friends? How?
  - b. Where are the two boys going and why the girl is hiding behind the bush?





I have never forgotten that year when I was 15. I am over 80 now but everything that happened then is still crystal clear in my memory. Yet somehow, now that I'm trying to tell you the story, I can't decide where to start.

Maybe I should tell about Tet Toe and myself first. He was the best friend I have ever had. We used to play truant from school and run off to play by the river – we didn't care for anything or anybody then. Those were the days when the world seemed perfect. It was a long while ago but I guess kids still don't get much from schooling in our place – all that way from the capital, on the banks of the Sawdwin river with the Arakan Hills like a shadow on the horizon. It was the British who built the school but it was the Indians who ran it. It's always been like that in Burma, always someone else in charge: the Thais, the British, the Indians, the Japanese ... and now the army. I hated school. It was only later, after the war, when the Japanese had left, that I got an education.

No, maybe that's not the best way to start. Maybe I should tell you about Tin Tin. She was just as naughty as we were but she was a girl. Just a girl. And she was only 13 anyway. So why did she always want to play with us, run off from school with us, be a part of our boys' world? And why was she so wild –and so special? She could run almost as fast as me, and she knew how to swim and climb trees and catch fish just as well as the boys. And why do I still feel my heart beat faster whenever I think of her? But if I start to describe Tin Tin, I will never finish...

Or maybe the best thing is to start by telling you about her blue-stone anklet. She got it from her grandmother. Her parents were both dead, so she lived with her old granny. They were very close, as you can imagine. It was a thin anklet made of silver, with some blue stones hanging from it. She always said that the stones were from Tibet but I couldn't see how. After all, we have all the precious stones we need in Burma. Why bring them from Tibet? Anyway, she always wore the anklet around her left ankle. She never took it off. According to her, it brought her good luck. Well, maybe – but maybe not.

I've changed my mind. I think the best way to start is to tell you about our cave. As I told you, Tet Toe and I used to spend a lot of time by the river. You know what our river is like. For most of the year, it doesn't have much water in it, just a thin dribble a few yards wide and not very deep. But in the rainy season, it would become a raging torrent, tearing away at the banks like a wild animal. Suddenly, it would become a real river, hundreds of yards wide, sweeping everything before it as it raced downstream to join up with its big sister, the Chindwin.

Well, that year the dry season was very long and dry. The river almost dried up completely. Tet Toe and I used to dig the fish out of the wet mud. There wasn't enough water for them to swim in. Then we would make a fire and roast them. They were delicious, I can tell you. Anyway, one day, we were walking back along the river bank. You know how the banks are like small cliffs rising from the river bed. Well, we noticed one place where the river had scooped out a small cave at the bottom of the bank. There were some bushes growing in front of the entrance. It was a perfect hideout for us. We decided there and then to make it our secret den.

In the weeks that followed, we spent most days there. We borrowed some tools from my father's farm and dug the cave deeper into the river bank till it was big enough for us both to lie down in. Then, we began to bring things there to make it more comfortable: two old sleeping mats, some pans to carry water and cook in, some baskets to keep out fruit in...you know that sort of thing. It was our special cave and we wanted to make it like our secret home. It was cool and shady in there, with a smell of damp sand. We imagined that we were pirates or bandits hiding from the government, making daring raids to rob rich people and give to the poor, like Robin Hood.

But that was when things started to go wrong. One day, Tin Tin saw me carrying an earthenware water pot. I was on my way to our cave when she started to follow me.

"Where are you going with that pot, Ba Win?" she asked.

"Oh, I'm just going to get some water from the river," I said.

"Don't be so stupid!" she said in her usual blunt way. "You know we don't drink from the river. The well is that way, not this way. Why don't you tell me where you're really going?"

I turned into a side path that led away from the river again but she kept following me. I couldn't shake her off.

"I know you and Tet Toe are up to something," she said accusingly. "Why won't you let me come with you too?"

"You're only a girl," I said, as if that was the end of the discussion.

"What do you mean, only a girl?"

Now she was really angry but I could see the tears of frustration in her eyes.

"I'm as good as you and that fat Tet Toe. I can run faster than him. I can climb trees

better than him. I can use a catapult to kill birds better than him. I can catch fish with my hands...he can't do that. he's too clumsy. Why don't you want me to come with you? I want to play with you too. I can help you. We can be a gang together," she pleaded.

I took a turning back to the village and went back home but still she followed me, still she went on asking questions. And still, I turned my back on her and shut my door on her face.

After that, it became difficult for Tet Toe and me. We had to slip away from our houses when she was not around and meet up secretly in our cave. But it got more and more difficult. She was always watching us, always ready to follow us wherever we went.

One day, I had had enough. As she was following me, I turned on her. "Listen, Tin Tin. Leave us alone, all right? Just leave us alone. You're a girl. Go and play with the girls. We don't want you with us. Just stop following us around. Can't you understand? We don't want you hanging around us like this?"

She looked at me as if I had stuck a knife in her. "I can understand all right," she said, her voice quivering. "But just you wait. One day I'll show you! One day you'll be sorry."

After that she stopped following Tet Toe and me, or so it seemed, and we were able to spend more time in our secret cave. Then, one night, the rain started. The sky opened and torrents of rain fell. The river began to rise. We decided it was better not to go there for a while, but I needed to go back just one more time to collect some of my things. Even in the afternoon, it was getting dark and the black clouds were threatening more rain. I hurriedly gathered my things from the cave and started walking back to the village. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I thought I saw someone move behind me. I looked around but there was no one.

That night it rained, and the next day, and the next. Water started to seep through the roof and we had to put out pans to catch it. Everyone stayed at home. The village was like a ghost town. Then on the third day, it stopped. People started to go about their business again. That afternoon, Tin Tin's granny came knocking on our door.

"Aiyoh! Where is my Tin Tin? Have you seen her? She left home three days ago and I haven't seen her since."

She went from door to door, asking the same questions but no one had seen Tin Tin

since the rain began. Maybe she had run away? Maybe she had gone to her aunt's place in the next valley – but the roads were flooded and no one could leave the village to look for her.

When the rain stopped and the burning sun came out again, the fields started to dry out and the river slowly returned to normal. As soon as we could, Tet Toe and I set off to check on our cave. At first, we couldn't find it at all but then, we recognised the bushes. The river had undermined the river bank and the cave had collapsed under a pile of sand. It was only when we were leaving that I noticed something sticking out of the sand. It was a small foot wearing a silver anklet set with small blue stones.

## **Glossary**

play truant = to stay away from school without permission

anklet = a piece of jewellery worn around ankle

hideout = a place where someone goes because they do not want anyone to find them

bandits = robbers

earthenware = pot made of clay

ghost town = a town that used to have a lot of people living and working in it, but now has very few or none

undermined = to gradually make something less strong

## **Reading**

**Read the story and answer the following questions.**

1. Where were the two boys favourite place to play?
2. What did Ba Win mean by “Just a girl.”?
3. What kind of picture did Ba Win paint about summer?
4. Why did Ba Win admire Tin Tin despite she not being a boy?
5. Why was Ba Win sceptical about the blue stone being brought from Tibet?

**Re-read the story and answer the following questions.**

1. What did Ba Win mean when he said “always someone else in charge” about Burma?
2. Why do you think Ba Win and Tet Toe played truant from school and that the real education for Ba Win was only after the war?

3. Why is the story of the blue stone anklet so crystal clear for Ba Win?
4. “On day you’ll be sorry.” Tin Tin had said to Ba Win, do you think she was right?
5. Ba Win ended the story by telling us about a small foot wearing a silver anklet set with small blue stones sticking out of the sand. What was the purpose for such an ending?

## **Writing**

1. Do you think Tin Tin would have been safe had she been allowed to be in their gang? Justify your answer from the inference in the story.
2. Life has many ironies and each of us have a fair share of them. Write an essay on one such irony from your experience.
3. People around the world believe in lucky charm or good luck charm. Can you find out about such charms of 5 different communities of Nepal or 5 countries? Give details to support your answer.

# The Bet

-Anton Chekhov

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904), born in Russia is recognized as a master of the modern short story and a leading playwright of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In his short stories of that period, he revealed a profound understanding of human nature and the ways in which ordinary events can carry deeper meaning. In his plays of these years, Chekhov concentrated primarily on mood and characters, showing that they could be more important than the plots. Not much seems to happen to his lonely, often desperate characters, but their inner conflicts take on great significance. The stories are very specific, painting a picture of pre-revolutionary Russian society, yet timeless. To learn more about him, visit: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anton\\_Chekhov](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anton_Chekhov) [www.online-literature.com/anton\\_chekhov](http://www.online-literature.com/anton_chekhov)



## Before you read

1. Look at the title and guess what “The Bet” might be about.
2. In your opinion, is betting good or bad?

It was a dark autumn night. The old banker was walking up and down his study and remembering how, fifteen years before, he had given a party one autumn evening. There had been many clever men there, and there had been interesting conversations. Among other things they had talked of capital punishment. The majority of the guests, among whom were many journalists and intellectual men, disapproved of the death penalty. They considered that form of punishment out of date, immoral, and unsuitable for Christian States. In the opinion of some of them the death penalty ought to be replaced everywhere by imprisonment for life. “I don’t agree with you,” said their host the banker. “I have not tried either the death penalty or imprisonment for life, but if one may judge *a priori*, the death penalty is more moral and more humane than imprisonment for life. Capital punishment kills a man at once, but lifelong imprisonment kills him slowly. Which executioner is the more humane, he who kills you in a few minutes or he who drags the life out of you in the course of many years?”

“Both are equally immoral,” observed one of the guests, “for they both have the same object - to take away life. The State is not God. It has not the right to take away what it cannot restore when it wants to.”

Among the guests was a young lawyer, a young man of five-and-twenty. When he was asked his opinion, he said:

“The death sentence and the life sentence are equally immoral, but if I had to choose between the death penalty and imprisonment for life, I would certainly choose the second. To live anyhow is better than not at all.”

A lively discussion arose. The banker, who was younger and more nervous in those days, was suddenly carried away by excitement; he struck the table with his fist and shouted at the young man:

“It’s not true! I’ll bet you two million you wouldn’t stay in solitary confinement for five years.”

“If you mean that in earnest,” said the young man, “I’ll take the bet, but I would stay not five but fifteen years.”

Fifteen? Done!” cried the banker. “Gentlemen, I stake two million!”

“Agreed! You stake your millions and I stake my freedom!” said the young man.

And this wild, senseless bet was carried out! The banker, spoilt and frivolous, with millions beyond his reckoning, was delighted at the bet. At supper he made fun of the young man, and said:

“Think better of it, young man, while there is still time. To me two million is a trifle, but you are losing three or four of the best years of your life. I say three or four, because you won’t stay longer. Don’t forget either, you unhappy man, that voluntary confinement is a great deal harder to bear than compulsory. The thought that you have the right to step out in liberty at any moment will poison your whole existence in prison. I am sorry for you.”

And now the banker, walking to and fro, remembered all this, and asked himself: “What was the object of that bet? What is the good of that man’s losing fifteen years of his life and my throwing away two million? Can it prove that the death penalty is better or worse than imprisonment for life? No, no. It was all nonsensical and meaningless. On my part it was the caprice of a pampered man, and on his part simple greed for money ...”

Then he remembered what followed that evening. It was decided that the young man should spend the years of his captivity under the strictest supervision in one of the lodges in the banker's garden. It was agreed that for fifteen years he should not be free to cross the threshold of the lodge, to see human beings, to hear the human voice, or to receive letters and newspapers. He was allowed to have a musical instrument and books, and was allowed to write letters, to drink wine, and to smoke. By the terms of the agreement, the only relations he could have with the outer world were by a little window made purposely for that object. He might have anything he wanted - books, music, wine, and so on - in any quantity he desired by writing an order, but could only receive them through the window. The agreement provided for every detail and every trifle that would make his imprisonment strictly solitary, and bound the young man to stay there *exactly* fifteen years, beginning from twelve o'clock of November 14, 1870, and ending at twelve o'clock of November 14, 1885. The slightest attempt on his part to break the conditions, if only two minutes before the end, released the banker from the obligation to pay him the two million.

For the first year of his confinement, as far as one could judge from his brief notes, the prisoner suffered severely from loneliness and depression. The sounds of the piano could be heard continually day and night from his lodge. He refused wine and tobacco. Wine, he wrote, excites the desires, and desires are the worst foes of the prisoner; and besides, nothing could be more dreary than drinking good wine and seeing no one. And tobacco spoilt the air of his room. In the first year the books he sent for were principally of a light character; novels with a complicated love plot, sensational and fantastic stories, and so on.

In the second year the piano was silent in the lodge, and the prisoner asked only for the classics. In the fifth year music was audible again, and the prisoner asked for wine. Those who watched him through the window said that all that year he spent doing nothing but eating and drinking and lying on his bed, frequently yawning and angrily talking to himself. He did not read books. Sometimes at night he would sit down to write; he would spend hours writing, and in the morning tear up all that he had written. More than once he could be heard crying.

In the second half of the sixth year the prisoner began zealously studying languages, philosophy, and history. He threw himself eagerly into these studies - so much so that the banker had enough to do to get him the books he ordered. In the course of four



years some six hundred volumes were procured at his request. It was during this period that the banker received the following letter from his prisoner:

“My dear Jailer, I write you these lines in six languages. Show them to people who know the languages. Let them read them. If they find not one mistake I implore you to fire a shot in the garden. That shot will show me that my efforts have not been thrown away. The geniuses of all ages and of all lands speak different languages, but the same flame burns in them all. Oh, if you only knew what unearthly happiness my soul feels now from being able to understand them!” The prisoner’s desire was fulfilled. The banker ordered two shots to be fired in the garden.

Then after the tenth year, the prisoner sat immovably at the table and read nothing but the Gospel. It seemed strange to the banker that a man who in four years had mastered six hundred learned volumes should waste nearly a year over one thin book easy of comprehension. Theology and histories of religion followed the Gospels.

In the last two years of his confinement the prisoner read an immense quantity of books quite indiscriminately. At one time he was busy with the natural sciences, then he would ask for Byron or Shakespeare. There were notes in which he demanded at the same time books on chemistry, and a manual of medicine, and a novel, and some treatise on philosophy or theology. His reading suggested a man swimming in the sea among the wreckage of his ship, and trying to save his life by greedily clutching first at one spar and then at another.

## II

The old banker remembered all this, and thought:

“To-morrow at twelve o’clock he will regain his freedom. By our agreement I ought to pay him two million. If I do pay him, it is all over with me: I shall be utterly ruined.”

Fifteen years before, his millions had been beyond his reckoning; now he was afraid to ask himself which were greater, his debts or his assets. Desperate gambling on the Stock Exchange, wild speculation and the excitability which he could not get over even in advancing years, had by degrees led to the decline of his fortune and the proud, fearless, self-confident millionaire had become a banker of middling rank, trembling at every rise and fall in his investments. “Cursed bet!” muttered the old man, clutching his head in despair “Why didn’t the man die? He is only forty now. He will take my last penny from me, he will marry, will enjoy life, will gamble on the Exchange; while I shall look at him with envy like a beggar, and hear from him every day the same

sentence: ‘I am indebted to you for the happiness of my life, let me help you!’ No, it is too much! The one means of being saved from bankruptcy and disgrace is the death of that man!”

It struck three o’clock, the banker listened; everyone was asleep in the house and nothing could be heard outside but the rustling of the chilled trees. Trying to make no noise, he took from a fireproof safe the key of the door which had not been opened for fifteen years, put on his overcoat, and went out of the house.

It was dark and cold in the garden. Rain was falling. A damp cutting wind was racing about the garden, howling and giving the trees no rest. The banker strained his eyes, but could see neither the earth nor the white statues, nor the lodge, nor the trees. Going to the spot where the lodge stood, he twice called the watchman. No answer followed. Evidently the watchman had sought shelter from the weather, and was now asleep somewhere either in the kitchen or in the greenhouse.

“If I had the pluck to carry out my intention,” thought the old man, “Suspicion would fall first upon the watchman.”

He felt in the darkness for the steps and the door, and went into the entry of the lodge. Then he groped his way into a little passage and lighted a match. There was not a soul there. There was a bedstead with no bedding on it, and in the corner there was a dark cast-iron stove. The seals on the door leading to the prisoner’s rooms were intact.

When the match went out the old man, trembling with emotion, peeped through the little window. A candle was burning dimly in the prisoner’s room. He was sitting at the table. Nothing could be seen but his back, the hair on his head, and his hands. Open books were lying on the table, on the two easy-chairs, and on the carpet near the table.

Five minutes passed and the prisoner did not once stir. Fifteen years’ imprisonment had taught him to sit still. The banker tapped at the window with his finger, and the prisoner made no movement whatever in response. Then the banker cautiously broke the seals off the door and put the key in the keyhole. The rusty lock gave a grating sound and the door creaked. The banker expected to hear at once footsteps and a cry of astonishment, but three minutes passed and it was as quiet as ever in the room. He made up his mind to go in.

At the table a man unlike ordinary people was sitting motionless. He was a skeleton with the skin drawn tight over his bones, with long curls like a woman’s and a shaggy

beard. His face was yellow with an earthy tint in it, his cheeks were hollow, his back long and narrow, and the hand on which his shaggy head was propped was so thin and delicate that it was dreadful to look at it. His hair was already streaked with silver, and seeing his emaciated, aged-looking face, no one would have believed that he was only forty. He was asleep ... In front of his bowed head there lay on the table a sheet of paper on which there was something written in fine handwriting.

“Poor creature!” thought the banker, “he is asleep and most likely dreaming of the millions. And I have only to take this half-dead man, throw him on the bed, stifle him a little with the pillow, and the most conscientious expert would find no sign of a violent death. But let us first read what he has written here ... “

The banker took the page from the table and read as follows:

“To-morrow at twelve o’clock I regain my freedom and the right to associate with other men, but before I leave this room and see the sunshine, I think it necessary to say a few words to you. With a clear conscience I tell you, as before God, who beholds me, that I despise freedom and life and health, and all that in your books is called the good things of the world.

“For fifteen years I have been intently studying earthly life. It is true I have not seen the earth nor men, but in your books I have drunk fragrant wine, I have sung songs, I have hunted stags and wild boars in the forests, have loved women ... Beauties as ethereal as clouds, created by the magic of your poets and geniuses, have visited me at night, and have whispered in my ears wonderful tales that have set my brain in a whirl. In your books I have climbed to the peaks of Elburz and Mont Blanc, and from there I have seen the sun rise and have watched it at evening flood the sky, the ocean, and the mountain-tops with gold and crimson. I have watched from there the lightning flashing over my head and cleaving the storm-clouds. I have seen green forests, fields, rivers, lakes, towns. I have heard the singing of the sirens, and the strains of the shepherds’ pipes; I have touched the wings of comely devils who flew down to converse with me of God ... In your books I have flung myself into the bottomless pit, performed miracles, slain, burned towns, preached new religions, conquered whole kingdoms ...

“Your books have given me wisdom. All that the unresting thought of man has created in the ages is compressed into a small compass in my brain. I know that I am wiser than all of you.

“And I despise your books, I despise wisdom and the blessings of this world. It is all

worthless, fleeting, illusory, and deceptive, like a mirage. You may be proud, wise, and fine, but death will wipe you off the face of the earth as though you were no more than mice burrowing under the floor, and your posterity, your history, your immortal geniuses will burn or freeze together with the earthly globe.

“You have lost your reason and taken the wrong path. You have taken lies for truth, and hideousness for beauty. You would marvel if, owing to strange events of some sorts, frogs and lizards suddenly grew on apple and orange trees instead of fruit, or if roses began to smell like a sweating horse; so I marvel at you who exchange heaven for earth. I don’t want to understand you.

“To prove to you in action how I despise all that you live by, I renounce the two million of which I once dreamed as of paradise and which now I despise. To deprive myself of the right to the money I shall go out from here five hours before the time fixed, and so break the compact ...”

When the banker had read this he laid the page on the table, kissed the strange man on the head, and went out of the lodge, weeping. At no other time, even when he had lost heavily on the Stock Exchange, had he felt so great a contempt for himself. When he got home he lay on his bed, but his tears and emotion kept him for hours from sleeping.

Next morning the watchmen ran in with pale faces, and told him they had seen the man who lived in the lodge climb out of the window into the garden, go to the gate, and disappear. The banker went at once with the servants to the lodge and made sure of the flight of his prisoner. To avoid arousing unnecessary talk, he took from the table the writing in which the millions were renounced, and when he got home locked it up in the fireproof safe.

## **Glossary**

a priory= using general principles to suggest likely effects

frivolous= not taking anything seriously

caprice= a sudden wish to do something

implore= to ask to do something sincerely

theology= study of religion

shaggy= long, rough and untidy (hair)

emaciated= very thin and weak of illness, hunger

conscientious= putting a lot of effort in your work

ethereal= light and delicate

posterity= people who will exist in future

marvel= to show or experience great surprise or admiration

renounce= to say formally or publicly that you no longer own, support, believe in, or have a connection with something

## **Reading**

### **Read the text and answer the following questions.**

1. What kinds of people were mostly invited by the banker to his party?
2. What was the main theme of the conversation or rather argument about?
3. In what way was the banker's and the young lawyer's view different?
4. What was the financial status of the banker 15 years earlier and the time when this story was told?
5. Why did the banker instantly go to the wing after the guard reported of the missing lawyer?

### **Read the story again and answer the following questions.**

1. Did the lawyer regret his decision anytime during the confinement? Give your reasons based on the text.
2. How would you have guessed that the banker would be the one to lose the bet?
3. There was a gradual progression in the kind and number of books the lawyer read. Which one was the last one and why do you think it was so?
4. Why was the banker not "surprised" when the watchman announced that the confined man had left his cell?
5. In the end the banker locked the paper with the renunciation in his safe. How did he justify his action?
6. Anton Chekov chose the banker as a main protagonist rather than the lawyer even though the lawyer was the one who triumphed at the end? What does it tell of the human psyche? Write a critical review of Anton Chekov's psyche of the banker.

## Writing

1. The bet was on whether capital punishment or life imprisonment was the better of the two. But one could sense a hidden agenda in the story. What, in your opinion, was it? Give an analytical view of it.
2. The ending of the story seems somewhat “unfinished”. Perhaps Chekov wanted us to “find our own ending of the story” by rousing our curiosity. Visualize the two characters and write what happened to either the lawyer who mysteriously disappeared or the banker after the lawyer denounced his claim of the bet.
3. Capital punishment is a contentious issue in the judicial world. Prepare a mock court on ‘for or against capital punishment’ quoting from true sources or precedents.

# The Last Leaf

-O Henry



**William Sydney Porter** (1862 – June 5, 1910) known by his pen name **O. Henry** was an American writer whose short stories are known for wit, wordplay and clever surprise endings. He used his pen name O. Henry, not wanting his readers to know he was in jail. He published 12 stories while in prison. After serving 3 years of the five-year sentence, he was released for good behaviour. He moved

to New York City in 1902 and wrote a story a week for the New York World, and also for other publishers. His pen never stopped and produced 600 hundred stories. The present story is also a marvellous example of surprise ending.

To learn more about him visit: [www.imdb.com/name/nm0377958/bio](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0377958/bio)

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 tow. 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 haven 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 chafing dish or two from Sixth Avenue, and became a ‘colony.’

At the top of a squatty, three-storey brick building 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’ hotel of an English Street ‘Delamonco’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 call 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-fisted, short-breathed old duffer. But Jonsy he smote; and she lay, scarcely moving on her painted iron bedstead, looking though 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 pharmacopeia 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? Has she anything on her mind worth thinking about twice -a man, for instance?”

“A man?” said Sue, with a Jew’ sharp 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 percent, 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 change 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 Johnsy’s room with her drawing board, whistling ragtime.

Johnsy 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 on the figure of the hero, and Idaho cowboy, she heard a low sound, several times repeated. She went quickly to the bedside.

Johnsy's eyes were open wide, she was looking out the window and counting –counting backward.

“Twelve,” she said, and a 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 back 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 Johnsy, in almost a whisper. “They’re falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost 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 cart 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 Johnsy, 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.”

“Johnsy 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 Johnsy coldly.

“I’d rather be her by you,” said Sue. “Besides, I don’t want to keep looking at those silly ivy leaves.”

“Tell me as soon as you finished,” said Johnsy, closing her eyes, and lying white and still as a 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 Behram up to be my model for the old hermit miner. I’ll not be gone a minute. Don’t try to move till I come back.”

Old Behram was a painter who lived on the ground floor beneath them. He was past sixty and had a Michael Angelo’s Moses board curling down from the head of a satyr along the body of an imp. Behram 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 of 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 anyone, and who regarded himself as especial mastiff-in-waiting to protect the two young artists in the studio above.

Sue found Behram 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 Jonsy’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 Behram, with his red eyes plainly streaming, shouted his contempt and derision for such idiotic 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-dun-der head. Vy do you allow dot silly pusiness to come in der brain of her? Ach, dot poor leettle 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 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 peen trying to say dot I am ready to bose. Gou! Dis is not any blace in which one so goot as Miss Yohnsy shall lie sick. Some day I will baint a masterpiece, and ve shall all go away. Goot! 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.

“Put 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 on the vine. Still dark green near its stem, but with its serrated edges tinted with the yellow of dissolution and decay, it hung bravely from a 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 loneliest thing in all the world is a soul when it is making ready to go on its mysterious, far journey. The fancy seemed to process 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 Johnsy. “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.”

An 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, talking to 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 toady to be made more comfortable.”

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

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy 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 toady in the hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him on 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 colours 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, its Behrman's masterpiece –he painted it here that night that the last leaf fell."

## **Glossary**

traverse= to move or travel

quaint= attractive being unusual and old-fashioned

stalk= to follow an animal or a person as closely as possible without being seen or heard usually in order to kill or catch them.

congenial= friendly and pleasant

smite= to hit someone forcefully

zephyr= a light wind

ragtime= a kind of popular music

monocle= a round piece of glass worn, specially in the past in front of the one eye to see more clearly

solicitous= showing care and helpful attention to someone

satyr= a Greek god half-man, half-god

scoff= to laugh or speak about a person or an idea in a way which shows that you think they are stupid or silly.

derision= the situation in something or someone is laughed at and considered stupid or of no value

flibbertigibbet= a silly person who talks too much

serrated= having a row of sharp points along the edge

## **Vocabulary**

1. Mr. Behrman, one of the characters is a German. The author has tried to imitate his pronunciation. Try to figure out what could be the actual spelling of the following English words spoken with German accent (read the conversation between Behrman and Sue).

dere      der      haf      bose      Vy      pusiness      leetle      peen      Dis  
blace      goot      vill      baint      ve

## Reading

Read the story and answer the following questions.

1. What's the relationship between the two ladies and Mr. Behrman? Explain.
2. How does the writer describe pneumonia and its activities?
3. What does Johnsy keep looking at and why?
4. How does old Behrman catch pneumonia?
5. How can the statement "a diseased mind is even more harmful than the disease itself" be justified?
6. What's the twist in the story and how it makes the story more interesting?
7. The title of the story is quite suggestive. Do you agree?

## Re-read the story and answer the following questions.

1. What's the main theme of the story?
2. Can we say that it is the story of death and dying, pessimism, hope, and love and friendship? Give evidences in support of your answer.
3. What's the masterpiece in the story and how?
4. What are the examples of pathos in this story? Elaborate.
5. Do you think Sue and Johnsy are gay? Give evidences in support of your answer.
6. What's the setting of the story? Do you think it is essential for the development of the story? How?
7. O Henry is famous for his surprising ending. What's the surprising ending in this story, and how does it make the story more interesting.

## Writing

1. Write the summary of the story in about 300 words.
2. Faith can move mountains. If you believe that something will happen, it will happen. Do you agree?
3. A film was made on the story. Think how the story can be converted into a drama. Then write it.

# Love is a fallacy

-Max Shulman

[Maximilian “Max” Shulman (1919-1988) started writing when he was still a student at the University of Minnesota. He wrote a syndicated weekly column “On Campus” from 1954 to 1970. Shulman saw humor as a defense against the harshness of social reality. “I know now,” he wrote in 1961, “why I turned early to humor as my branch of writing. The reason is simply that life was bitter and I was not. All around me was poverty and sordidness but I refused to see it that way. By turning it into jokes, I made it bearable.” He is well known as a prolific writer of satirical humour and some of his best works include Barefoot Boy with Cheek (1943), Sleep till noon (1950) ; Movies: The affairs of Dobie Gillis, The Tender Trap (1955) and others. Fallacy of Love is one of his many short stories and his fans believe that it is humor at his best. To learn more about him visit: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max\\_Shulman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Shulman) [www.imdb.com/name/nm0795738/bio](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0795738/bio)]

## Before you read

1. Who do you think are the main characters of this short story?
2. Where do you think, is the setting of this story ?

Cool was I and logical. Keen, calculating, perspicacious, acute and astute—I was all of these. My brain was as powerful as a dynamo, precise as a chemist’s scales, as penetrating as a scalpel. And—think of it!—I only eighteen.

It is not often that one so young has such a giant intellect. Take, for example, Petey Bellows, my roommate at the university. Same age, same background, but dumb as an ox. A nice enough fellow, you understand, but nothing upstairs. Emotional type. Unstable. Impressionable. Worst of all, a faddist. Fads, I submit, are the very negation of reason. To be swept up in every new craze that comes along, to surrender oneself to idiocy just because everybody else is doing it—this, to me, is the acme of mindlessness. Not, however, to Petey.

One afternoon I found Petey lying on his bed with an expression of such distress on his face that I immediately diagnosed appendicitis. “Don’t move,” I said, “Don’t take

a laxative. I'll get a doctor."

"Raccoon," he mumbled thickly.

"Raccoon?" I said, pausing in my flight.

"I want a raccoon coat," he wailed.

I perceived that his trouble was not physical, but mental. "Why do you want a raccoon coat?"

"I should have known it," he cried, pounding his temples. "I should have known they'd come back when the Charleston came back. Like a fool I spent all my money for textbooks, and now I can't get a raccoon coat."

"Can you mean," I said incredulously, "that people are actually wearing raccoon coats again?"

"All the Big Men on Campus are wearing them. Where've you been?"

"In the library," I said, naming a place not frequented by Big Men on Campus.

He leaped from the bed and paced the room. "I've got to have a raccoon coat," he said passionately. "I've got to!"

"Petey, why? Look at it rationally. Raccoon coats are unsanitary. They shed. They smell bad. They weigh too much. They're unsightly. They—"

"You don't understand," he interrupted impatiently. "It's the thing to do. Don't you want to be in the swim?"

"No," I said truthfully.

"Well, I do," he declared. "I'd give anything for a raccoon coat. Anything!"

My brain, that precision instrument, slipped into high gear. "Anything?" I asked, looking at him narrowly.

"Anything," he affirmed in ringing tones.

I stroked my chin thoughtfully. It so happened that I knew where to get my hands on a raccoon coat. My father had had one in his undergraduate days; it lay now in a trunk in the attic back home. It also happened that Petey had something I wanted. He didn't *have* it exactly, but at least he had first rights on it. I refer to his girl, Polly Espy.

I had long coveted Polly Espy. Let me emphasize that my desire for this young woman was not emotional in nature. She was, to be sure, a girl who excited the emotions, but I was not one to



let my heart rule my head. I wanted Polly for a shrewdly calculated, entirely cerebral reason. I was a fisherman in law school. In a few years I would be out in practice. I was well aware of the importance of the right kind of wife in furthering a lawyer's career. The successful lawyers I had observed were, almost without exception, married to beautiful, gracious, intelligent women. With one omission, Polly fitted these specifications perfectly.

Beautiful she was. She was not yet of pin-up proportions, but I felt that time would supply the lack. She already had the makings.

Gracious she was. By gracious I mean full of graces. She had an erectness of carriage, an ease of bearing, a poise that clearly indicated the best of breeding. At table her manners were exquisite. I had seen her at the Kozy Kampus Korner eating the specialty of the house—a sandwich that contained scraps of pot roast, gravy, chopped nuts, and a dipper of sauerkraut—without even getting her fingers moist.

Intelligent she was not. In fact, she veered in the opposite direction. But I believed that under my guidance she would smarten up. At any rate, it was worth a try. It is, after all, easier to make a beautiful dumb girl smart than to make an ugly smart girl beautiful.

“Petey,” I said, “are you in love with Polly Espy?”

“I think she's a keen kid,” he replied, “but I don't know if you'd call it love. Why?”

“Do you,” I asked, “have any kind of formal arrangement with her? I mean are you going steady or anything like that?”

“No. We see each other quite a bit, but we both have other dates. Why?”

“Is there,” I asked, “any other man for whom she has a particular fondness?”

“Not that I know of. Why?”

I nodded with satisfaction. “In other words, if you were out of the picture, the field would be open. Is that right?”

“I guess so. What are you getting at?”

“Nothing , nothing,” I said innocently, and took my suitcase out the closet.

“Where are you going?” asked Petey.

“Home for weekend.” I threw a few things into the bag.

“Listen,” he said, clutching my arm eagerly, “while you’re home, you couldn’t get some money from your old man, could you, and lend it to me so I can buy a raccoon coat?”

“I may do better than that,” I said with a mysterious wink and closed my bag and left.

“Look,” I said to Petey when I got back Monday morning. I threw open the suitcase and revealed the huge, hairy, gamy object that my father had worn in his Stutz Bearcat in 1925.

“Holy Toledo!” said Petey reverently. He plunged his hands into the raccoon coat and then his face. “Holy Toledo!” he repeated fifteen or twenty times.

“Would you like it?” I asked.

“Oh yes!” he cried, clutching the greasy pelt to him. Then a canny look came into his eyes. “What do you want for it?”

“Your girl,” I said mincing no words.

“Polly?” he said in a horrified whisper. “You want Polly?”

“That’s right.”

He flung the coat from him. “Never,” he said stoutly.

I shrugged. “Okay. If you don’t want to be in the swim, I guess it’s your business.”

I sat down in a chair and pretended to read a book, but out of the corner of my eye I kept watching Petey. He was a torn man. First he looked at the coat with the expression of a waif at a bakery window. Then he turned away and set his jaw resolutely. Then he looked back at the coat, with even more longing in his face. Then he turned away, but with not so much resolution this time. Back and forth his head swiveled, desire waxing, resolution waning. Finally he didn’t turn away at all; he just stood and stared with mad lust at the coat.

“It isn’t as though I was in love with Polly,” he said thickly. “Or going steady or anything like that.”

“That’s right,” I murmured.

“What’s Polly to me, or me to Polly?”

“Not a thing,” said I.

“It’s just been a casual kick—just a few laughs, that’s all.”

“Try on the coat,” said I.

He complied. The coat bunched high over his ears and dropped all the way down to his shoe tops. He looked like a mound of dead raccoons. “Fits fine,” he said happily.

I rose from my chair. “Is it a deal?” I asked, extending my hand.

He swallowed. “It’s a deal,” he said and shook my hand.

I had my first date with Polly the following evening. This was in the nature of a survey; I wanted to find out just how much work I had to do to get her mind up to the standard I required. I took her first to dinner. “Gee, that was a delish dinner,” she said as we left the restaurant. Then I took her to a movie.

“Gee, that was a marvy movie,” she said as we left the theatre. And then I took her home. “Gee, I had a sensaysh time,” she said as she bade me good night.

I went back to my room with a heavy heart. I had gravely underestimated the size of my task. This girl’s lack of information was terrifying. Nor would it be enough merely to supply her with information. First she had to be taught to *think*. This loomed as a project of no small dimensions, and at first I was tempted to give her back to Petey. But then I got to thinking about her abundant physical charms and about the way she entered a room and the way she handled a knife and fork, and I decided to make an effort.

I went about it, as in all things, systematically. I gave her a course in logic. It happened that I, as a law student, was taking a course in logic myself, so I had all the facts at my fingertips. “Poll’,” I said to her when I picked her up on our next date, “tonight we are going over to the Knoll and talk.”

“Oo, terrif,” she replied. One thing I will say for this girl: you would go far to find another so agreeable.

We went to the Knoll, the campus trysting place, and we sat down under an old oak, and she looked at me expectantly. “What are we going to talk about?” she asked.

“Logic.”

She thought this over for a minute and decided she liked it. “Magnif,” she said.

“Logic,” I said, clearing my throat, “is the science of thinking. Before we can think correctly, we must first learn to recognize the common fallacies of logic. These we will take up tonight.”

“Wow-dow!” she cried, clapping her hands delightedly.

I winced, but went bravely on. “First let us examine the fallacy called Dicto Simpliciter.”

“By all means,” she urged, batting her lashes eagerly.

“Dicto Simpliciter means an argument based on an unqualified generalization. For example: Exercise is good. Therefore everybody should exercise.”

“I agree,” said Polly earnestly. “I mean exercise is wonderful. I mean it builds the body and everything.”

“Polly,” I said gently, “the argument is a fallacy. *Exercise is good* is an unqualified generalization. For instance, if you have heart disease, exercise is bad, not good. Many people are ordered by their doctors *not* to exercise. You must *qualify* the generalization. You must say exercise is *usually* good, or exercise is good *for most people*. Otherwise you have committed a Dicto Simpliciter. Do you see?”

“No,” she confessed. “But this is marvy. Do more! Do more!”

“It will be better if you stop tugging at my sleeve,” I told her, and when she desisted, I continued. “Next we take up a fallacy called Hasty Generalization. Listen carefully: You can’t speak French. Petey Bellows can’t speak French. I must therefore conclude that nobody at the University of Minnesota can speak French.”

“Really?” said Polly, amazed. “*Nobody?*”

I hid my exasperation. “Polly, it’s a fallacy. The generalization is reached too hastily. There are too few instances to support such a conclusion.”

“Know any more fallacies?” she asked breathlessly. “This is more fun than dancing even.”

I fought off a wave of despair. I was getting nowhere with this girl, absolutely nowhere. Still, I am nothing if not persistent. I continued. “Next comes Post Hoc. Listen to this: Let’s not take Bill on our picnic. Every time we take him out with us, it rains.”

“I know somebody just like that,” she exclaimed. “A girl back home—Eula Becker, her name is. It never fails. Every single time we take her on a picnic—”

“Polly,” I said sharply, “it’s a fallacy. Eula Becker doesn’t *cause* the rain. She has no connection with the rain. You are guilty of Post Hoc if you blame Eula Becker.”

“I’ll never do it again,” she promised contritely. “Are you mad at me?”

I sighed. “No, Polly, I’m not mad.”

“Then tell me some more fallacies.”

“All right. Let’s try Contradictory Premises.”

“Yes, let’s,” she chirped, blinking her eyes happily.

I frowned, but plunged ahead. “Here’s an example of Contradictory Premises: If God can do anything, can He make a stone so heavy that He won’t be able to lift it?”

“Of course!” she replied promptly.

But if He can do anything, He can lift the stone,” I pointed out.

“Yeah,” she said thoughtfully. “Well, then I guess He can’t make the stone.”

“But He can do anything,” I reminded her.

She scratched her pretty, empty head. “I’m all confused,” she admitted.

“Of course you are. Because when the premises of an argument contradict each other, there can be no argument. If there is an irresistible force, there can be no immovable object. If there is an immovable object, there can be no irresistible force. Get it?”

“Tell me more of this keen stuff,” she said eagerly.

I consulted my watch. “I think we’d better call it a night. I’ll take you home now, and you go over all the things you’ve learned. We’ll have another session tomorrow night.”

I deposited her at the girls’ dormitory, where she assured me that she had had a perfectly terrific evening, and I went glumly home to my room. Petey lay snoring in his bed, the raccoon coat huddled like a great hairy beast at his feet. For a moment I considered waking him and telling him that he could have his girl back. It seemed clear that my project was doomed to failure. The girl simply had a logic-proof head.

But then I reconsidered. I had wasted one evening; I might as well waste another. Who knew? Maybe somewhere in the extinct crater of her mind a few members still smoldered. Maybe somehow I could fan them into flame. Admittedly it was not a prospect fraught with hope, but I decided to give it one more try.

Seated under the oak the next evening I said, “Our first fallacy tonight is called Ad Misericordiam.”

She quivered with delight.

“Listen closely,” I said. “A man applies for a job. When the boss asks him what his qualifications are, he replies that he has a wife and six children at home, the wife is a helpless cripple, the children have nothing to eat, no clothes to wear, no shoes on their feet, there are no beds in the house, no coal in the cellar, and winter is coming.”

A tear rolled down each of Polly’s pink cheeks. “Oh, this is awful, awful,” she sobbed.

“Yes, it’s awful,” I agreed, “but it’s no argument. The man never answered the boss’s question about his qualifications. Instead he appealed to the boss’s sympathy. He committed the fallacy of Ad Misericordiam. Do you understand?”

“Have you got a handkerchief?” she blubbered.

I handed her a handkerchief and tried to keep from screaming while she wiped her eyes. “Next,” I said in a carefully controlled tone, “we will discuss False Analogy. Here is an example: Students should be allowed to look at their textbooks during examinations. After all, surgeons have X-rays to guide them during an operation, lawyers have briefs to guide them during a trial, carpenters have blueprints to guide them when they are building a house. Why, then, shouldn’t students be allowed to look at their textbooks during an examination?”

“There now,” she said enthusiastically, “is the most marvy idea I’ve heard in years.”

“Polly,” I said testily, “the argument is all wrong. Doctors, lawyers, and carpenters aren’t taking a test to see how much they have learned, but students are. The situations are altogether different, and you can’t make an analogy between them.”

“I still think it’s a good idea.” Polly said.

“Nuts,” I muttered. Doggedly I pressed on. “Next we’ll try Hypothesis Contrary to Fact.”

“Sounds yummy,” was Polly’s reaction.

“Listen: If Madame Curie had not happened to leave a photographic plate in a drawer with a chunk of pitchblende, the world today would not know about radium.”

“True, true,” said Polly, nodding her head “Did you see the movie? Oh, it just knocked me out. That Walter Pidgeon is so dreamy. I mean he fractures me.”

“If you can forget Mr. Pidgeon for a moment,” I said coldly, “I would like to point out that statement is a fallacy. Maybe Madame Curie would have discovered radium at some later date. Maybe somebody else would have discovered it. Maybe any number

of things would have happened. You can't start with a hypothesis that is not true and then draw any supportable conclusions from it."

"They ought to put Walter Pidgeon in more pictures," said Polly, "I hardly ever see him any more."

One more chance, I decided. But just one more. There is a limit to what flesh and blood can bear. "The next fallacy is called Poisoning the Well."

"How cute!" she gurgled.

"Two men are having a debate. The first one gets up and says, 'My opponent is a notorious liar. You can't believe a word that he is going to say.' ... Now, Polly, think. Think hard. What's wrong?"

I watched her closely as she knit her creamy brow in concentration. Suddenly a glimmer of intelligence—the first I had seen—came into her eyes. "It's not fair," she said with indignation. "It's not a bit fair. What chance has the second man got if the first man calls him a liar before he even begins talking?"

"Right!" I cried exultantly. "One hundred per cent right. It's not fair. The first man has *poisoned the well* before anybody could drink from it. He has hamstrung his opponent before he could even start ... Polly, I'm proud of you."

"Pshaws," she murmured, blushing with pleasure.

"You see, my dear, these things aren't so hard. All you have to do is concentrate. Think—examine—evaluate. Come now, let's review everything we have learned."

"Fire away," she said with an airy wave of her hand.

Heartened by the knowledge that Polly was not altogether a cretin, I began a long, patient review of all I had told her. Over and over and over again I cited instances, pointed out flaws, kept hammering away without letup. It was like digging a tunnel. At first, everything was work, sweat, and darkness. I had no idea when I would reach the light, or even if I would. But I persisted. I pounded and clawed and scraped, and finally I was rewarded. I saw a chink of light. And then the chink got bigger and the sun came pouring in and all was bright.

Five grueling nights with this took, but it was worth it. I had made a logician out of Polly; I had taught her to think. My job was done. She was worthy of me, at last. She

was a fit wife for me, a proper hostess for my many mansions, a suitable mother for my well-heeled children.

It must not be thought that I was without love for this girl. Quite the contrary. Just as Pygmalion loved the perfect woman he had fashioned, so I loved mine. I decided to acquaint her with my feelings at next meeting. The time has come to change our relationship from academic to romantic.

“Polly,” I said when next we sat beneath our oak, “tonight we will not discuss fallacies.”

“Aw, gee,” she said, disappointed.

“My dear,” I said, favoring her with a smile, “we have now spent five evenings together. We have gotten along splendidly. It is clear that we are well matched.”

“Hasty Generalization,” said Polly brightly.

“I beg your pardon,” said I.

“Hasty Generalization,” she repeated. “How can you say that we are well matched on the basis of only five dates?”

I chuckled with amusement. The dear child had learned her lessons well. “My dear,” I said, patting her hand in a tolerant manner, “five dates is plenty. After all, you don’t have to eat a whole cake to know that it’s good.”

“False Analogy,” said Polly promptly. “I’m not a cake. I’m a girl.”

I chuckled with somewhat less amusement. The dear child had learned her lessons perhaps too well. I decided to change tactics. Obviously the best approach was a simple, strong, direct declaration of love. I paused for a moment while my massive brain chose the proper word. Then I began:

“Polly, I love you. You are the whole world to me, the moon and the stars and the constellations of outer space. Please, my darling, say that you will go steady with me, for if you will not, life will be meaningless. I will languish. I will refuse my meals. I will wander the face of the earth, a shambling, hollow-eyed hulk.”

There, I thought, folding my arms, that ought to do it.

“Ad Misericordiam,” said Polly.

I ground my teeth. I was not Pygmalion; I was Frankenstein, and my monster had me by the throat. Frantically I fought back the tide of panic surging through me; at all costs I had to keep cool.



“Well, Polly,” I said, forcing a smile, “you certainly have learned your fallacies.”

“You’re darn right,” she said with a vigorous nod.

“And who taught them to you, Polly?”

“You did.”

“That’s right. So you do owe me something, don’t you, my dear? If I hadn’t come along you never would have learned about fallacies.”

“Hypothesis Contrary to Fact,” she said instantly.

I dashed perspiration from my brow. “Polly,” I croaked, “you mustn’t take all these things so literally. I mean this is just classroom stuff. You know that the things you learn in school don’t have anything to do with life.”

“Dicto Simpliciter,” she said, wagging her finger at me playfully.

That did it. I leaped to my feet, bellowing like a bull. “Will you or will you not go steady with me?”

“I will not,” she replied.

“Why not?” I demanded.

“Because this afternoon I promised Petey Bellows that I would go steady with him.”

I reeled back, overcome with the infamy of it. After he promised, after he made a deal, after he shook my hand! “The rat!” I shrieked, kicking up great chunks of turf. “You can’t go with him, Polly. He’s a liar. He’s a cheat. He’s a rat.”

“Poisoning the Well,” said Polly, “and stop shouting. I think shouting must be a fallacy too.”

With an immense effort of will, I modulated my voice. “All right,” I said. “You’re a logician. Let’s look at this thing logically. How could you choose Petey Bellows over me? Look at me—a brilliant student, a tremendous intellectual, a man with an assured future. Look at Petey—a knothed, a jitterbug, a guy who’ll never know where his next meal is coming from. Can you give me one logical reason why you should go steady with Petey Bellows?”

“I certainly can,” declared Polly. “He’s got a raccoon coat.”

## **Glossary**

perspicacious = quick in understanding or judging things accurately

astute = able to understand a situation quickly and see how to take advantage of it

scalpel = a very sharp knife

fad = a style or activity very popular for a short period

acme = the best or the most perfect thing that exists or can be achieved

covet = to want to have something very much particularly if it belongs to someone else

pin-up = a picture of sexually attractive person specially someone wearing few clothes

sauerkraut = cabbage cut into small pieces and preserved in salt

veer = to change direction

gamy = having strong smell (animal killed and eaten)

canny = thinking quickly and cleverly

waif = homeless child or animal thin and dirty

resolutely = determined in character

desist = to stop doing something

exasperation = the feeling of being annoyed specially because you can do nothing to solve a problem

contrite = feeling very sorry and guilty for something you have done

fraught = full of unpleasant things such as problems and dangers

hamstring = to limit the amount of something that can be done

cretin = a very stupid person

chuckle = to laugh quietly

hulk = the body of an old ship, car or a large equipment that is no longer used

## **Vocabulary**

Simile is a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, used to make a description more emphatic or vivid.

- i) as powerful as a dynamo,
- ii) precise as a chemist's scales
- iii) as penetrating as a scalpel

Given below are some similes, see if you can find the appropriate match:

keen	logical	calculating	brilliant	cool
fair	pretty	hairy	dead	shrewd

1. As ..... as a cucumber.
2. As ..... as constellations.
3. As ..... as mustard.
4. As ..... a doornail.
5. As ..... as Socrates.
6. As ..... as a picture
7. As ..... as a stoke-broker at a bargain
8. As ..... as a peasant.
9. As ..... as a gorilla.
10. As ..... as in love and war.

## Read

**Read the text and answer the following questions.**

1. What according to the narrator, was Petey Bellows worst characteristics and why?
2. The narrator had certain criteria to find out the true relationship of Petey and Polly before he struck the bargain. What were they?
3. Why did the narrator think that Polly was a suitable choice for his future career?
4. How did the narrator try to solve the one flaw that he thought Polly had?
5. How did Petey justify his choice of the raccoon coat over Polly?

**Re-read the story and do the following tasks.**

1. There are several occasions where the narrator found that Polly was an “empty head”. Find three of them that you agree or disagree with the narrator. Give your reasons.
2. Do you think that Polly had the qualities to make an ideal wife for the narrator? Give your reasons
3. Point out three most humorous occasions that you find in the story and give reasons for being so.

4. What kind of fallacy could be the final reason Polly gave for dating Petey?
5. There is a saying: Unlike poles attract and like poles repeal. How does this saying apply to the characters of this story? Give reasons.

### **Writing**

1. Shulman has introduced us to the eight fallacies. Everyday we commit or encounter such fallacies in our lives. Give examples of the 8 kinds of fallacies that you have experienced in your life as a student. They should be supported with suitable argument/logic.
2. In the story, Polly points out: ‘False Analogy. I am not a cake, I am a girl.’ To what extend does this saying have any connection to the whole story. Give reasons.
3. Find out one contemporary humorist that you admire most and compare the humor of Shulman and the humorist you have selected.

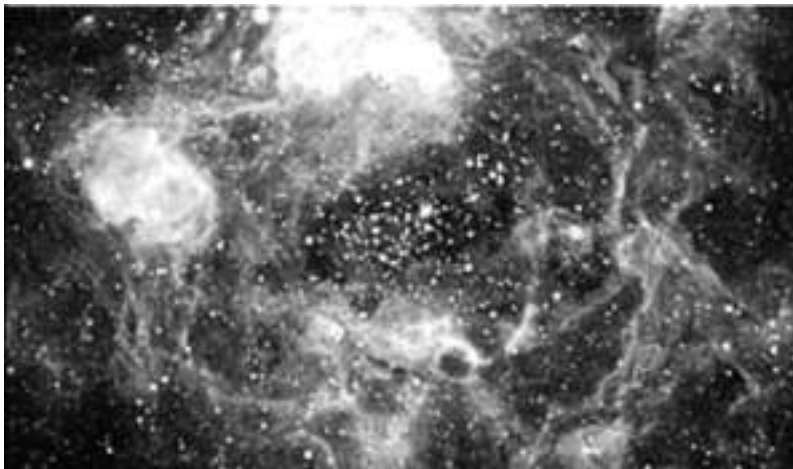
# The Time Traveler

-S.M. Bowes

[Very little is known about Susan M. Bowes. She was born in 1950 and started writing lately. She has written quite a few science fictions. To read more of her stories <https://www.bookrix.com./-susanbowes>]

## Before you read

1. Look at the picture and imagine the kind of machine the Time Traveller would have travelled in.
2. How far in the future would he have travelled?



The great Albert Einstein theorized that time travel was possible by bending time and space via the means of gravitational forces. I'd invented a time machine using his principle. Most believe that we can travel back in time, but this is not possible. The device would not have been invented; ergo - one could not travel back further than when the machine had been invented. One could not alter history in any way.

But what of the future? Since we are weak species and seek power over those who are of a meek nature, we tend to destroy what we cannot dominate. I have been to

the future and have witnessed what one person had done to bring about the end of the human race. But I am getting ahead of myself. I must start at the beginning.

My name is Harlen Davidson. I am a peaceful person. I could never tolerate war and longed to find a way to prevent it. I'd invented my time machine specifically for that purpose.

After many years of trial and error I had finally perfected a machine that could travel through the dimensions of time and space. I was at the point where I could put it through the ultimate test by sending a guinea pig into the future. The guinea pig being me, of course. I would not allow another being to risk their life.

The date was January 12th 2018. I'd decided that this was the hour I would venture into the future. I was very excited, but a little anxious about what mankind had achieved.

I entered the time machine and sat down on the bench closing the door behind me. I pushed the buttons to start the procedure. The time machine shuddered, but nothing appeared to happen at first. All of a sudden, I saw a blinding, white light that seemed to appear from nowhere. It spun faster and faster. A tremendous pressure built up inside the cabin. I could barely read the dial that measured the years flying past. 2025, 2030, 2040. I finally forced my hand up to the buttons and pushed them. The years slowed and the machine finally stopped. The dial read January 12th 3057. Over one thousand years had elapsed.

My head pounded as much as my heart when I grabbed the handle to open the door. My body felt as if it had gone through a meat grinder. I was weak at the knees as I stumbled out. The walls of my lab still stood, but were no more than a skeletal frame. Tables were covered in dirt and debris that had fallen from what was left of the ceiling. The laser machine, bent and broken, was barely recognizable. This didn't present a problem as the machine had stored enough energy to provide a way back to my era ten times over.

I walked over to the lab door that was surprisingly still standing and unlocked the rusted bolt, then stepped out into the hallway. The stairs were in complete disrepair, but intact for the most part. I made my way up to the grand foyer. I walked to the front doors and shoved against them. They opened upon a new world.

The roads hadn't been used in what appeared to be centuries and weeds had sprouted between the cracks. It seemed mankind had taken to the air for our means of transportation. I could see specks in the distance that I assumed were flying vehicles

speeding to and fro as if on an invisible highway. Skyscrapers soared high into the heavens. I sat down on a curb and tried to take it all in. I was in complete awe. I reached around to my backpack and grabbed my notebook. I had to put my sensations down into words.

The only thing lacking in the near-by environment were human beings. Perhaps they no longer dwelled on the surface, but lived high above it. I had to find out. I got up off my haunches and started on my journey.

I'd walked for the better part of the day and was in the outskirts of city. I continued past abandoned buildings and after a few hours finally entered a portion of the city that appeared much newer. I walked to one of the buildings and the pushed against a door. It opened easily. The huge concourse was lit brightly. It appeared power plants still supplied electricity. The hall extended the entire length and breath of the building. I went to the elevators in the center and punched a button. The doors slid open immediately. I entered. The keypad was filled with numbers rising to 500. I hit the button for the 250th floor. The doors slammed shut and the lift moved very swiftly. I reached my destination within seconds.

The doors opened and I peeked out. The descendants of my time bustled about the office in a hurried state. I exited the elevator and looked about the room. One person glanced my way, but continued on his important errand as if I wasn't there. One would wonder why he hadn't stopped and asked why I wore such ancient clothing, as his was entirely different from mine. No suits or ties; everyone was dressed in white jumpsuits from head to toe. No one paid heed to me as I wandered about.

I stopped and stood behind a woman punching wildly at a keypad. She seemed oblivious to me. I asked her if there was anyone in charge whom I could speak to. She responded in an annoyed voice, but did not look away from the keyboard. "Haven't you hooked up to the system this morning?" she asked.

"What system?"

She finally looked up. Her brows raised quizzically when she noticed I wasn't attired as everyone else. She grabbed a phone and spoke into it. I could not hear what was said. Not a minute had passed before two guards armed with some sort of weapon grabbed me and escorted me back to the elevators. The lift rose and the doors hissed open. The guards took me up to a desk. "We've got another one," one guard said to the person seated behind it. The man pushed a button and I was pushed into a room and

told to wait. The guards exited the room with my backpack. It seemed I had no choice but to obey.

There was nothing to occupy my mind as the minutes ticked by. There was a single chair in the middle of the room, but no tables nor windows to look out. I sighed and sat. It seemed as if hours passed before I heard someone at the door. A tall man walked in and regarded me silently as he circled my chair before asking, “Why didn’t you plug in this morning?”

“Plug in?”

“Yes. Plug in. You know it’s mandatory.”

“I don’t know what you mean. I’m not from here. I’m a visitor to this area and not familiar with the local laws.”

“You must be malfunctioning.”

“Malfunctioning?”

The man went to the door and called the guards in. “See to it that he resets.”

The men grabbed me from my chair and marched me out. I had no clue what was going on, so I dared not resist. We entered the elevator again and the doors slammed shut. The doors opened upon a vast room filled with chairs that were bolted to the floor. Black wires were connected to an enormous computer. The guards escorted me over and forced me into a chair, strapping me down. They spoke to a woman who I assumed was a technician. She walked over and noticed I wasn’t wearing a jumpsuit. “How can I download him if he’s not wearing his number?” she grumbled. “Tell me your number,” she demanded.

“There seems to be some sort of mistake. I am a visitor---,”

“Very well,” she sighed. “I’ll just assign you a new number. Hook him up,” she told an assistant.

The young man came over and pushed my head forward. He grabbed a thick wire with a plug attached to the end. I felt his hands running through the back of my hair. He appeared to be looking for something. He continued his search, but then sighed in extreme frustration. “I can’t find his socket.”

“What? Oh, move over. I’ll do it myself,” the woman growled. She searched the back of my head just as the assistant had done. “He has no access!” she exclaimed in surprise.



“I’ve been trying to tell everyone that I’m a visitor, but no one will listen. I assure you that I have no socket to whatever you’re trying to plug me into.”

“This is unacceptable,” she stated in reply. “Take him to the Administrator.”

## X

“I am the Administrator,” the disembodied voice said as I sat strapped to a chair in another room. “They tell me you have no access to plug in. Did you have it surgically removed?”

“I don’t have any idea what you’re talking about. I told everyone that I do not reside in your city. I’m just a visitor here.”

“Are you a rebel?”

“I am most certainly not a rebel. I do not come from here and have never had the ability to be plugged in, whatever that is. I come from---,” I hesitated.

“From where?”

“That’s a little hard to explain. Let’s just say I came from beyond the borders of your city.”

“That’s impossible. There is no life outside the Domain.”

An uncomfortable silence hung in the air. After a few moments the disembodied voice continued, “You must be malfunctioning.”

“I am not a machine to malfunction.”

“What did you say?”

“You heard me.”

“Has the Resistance programmed you to respond to interrogation this way?”

“I am not a part of any resistance. I am a human being and demand to be treated as such.”

Another moment of uneasy silence filled the room before the voice spoke again. “Are you under the impression that you are a human?”

“That’s what I’ve been trying to tell you.”

“Ridiculous! Guards,” the voice shouted. “Take this unit to the detention center for dismantling. It has a serious malfunction and there is no use trying to reprogram it.”

The guards rushed over and grabbed me. I struggled to free myself, but it was pointless. Their grasps on my arms were unyielding.

## X

I was locked in a cell in the detention center. I wondered what kind of world had I brought myself to? Why did this Administrator think I was some sort of machine? I couldn't for the life of me understand anything and feared for my life. I wished I still had my backpack. My gun was hidden deep within and I'd need it to try and escape -if escape were possible, that is. It seemed highly unlikely.

Time passed. It seemed an eternity before the door was finally opened. Two armed guards hurried in and attached manacles around my wrists. I was rushed to the elevators and we proceeded to the rooftop. A flying vehicle waited - ready to take off. I was strapped in and we quickly rose into the air. I looked out the glass-domed cockpit and saw the city far beneath me soaring by. I was filled with anxiety. Was my end soon to come?

A man came over and stood in front of me. He looked at the guard and said, "Release his restraints." The man did as ordered.

"I am sorry for the way you were treated by our guards, but we had to see to your rescue with all due haste. We cannot allow ourselves to be captured and interrogated. We are members of the Resistance and heard that you think you are human. This is most intriguing to us. Of course, this just cannot be possible. Though we fear you are some kind of plant, we have decided to free you to investigate this matter further."

"I am most grateful."

"Have you been programmed to say you are a human being in order to be rescued by the Resistance? Are you some new technology developed to infiltrate us?"

I looked at him in surprise, "I am not a spy; and I am a human. I can assure you of that fact."

"I don't believe you. Man has been eradicated."

"What do you mean, eradicated?"

The man stepped a few feet back and talked to the guard, both looking at me suspiciously. I could not hear what was said over the whine of the motor. The one in charge then stood before me again. "Okay. Let's just say you are human as you claim. How did you get here and how did you escape bio-poisoning?"

“I don’t know what you mean,” I replied, but assumed he meant that science had developed some major bio-weapon.

“Mankind was eliminated when the bio-bombs were detonated in 2050. Not one human being survived.”

“I see. You said all mankind was killed off, but you survived. How is that possible?”

“Biologically engineered viruses do not affect us.”

“Why not? You’re human, aren’t you?” I asked knowing this had to be a descendant of those few humans who must have survived.

This got another strange glance between the two men. “I am afraid I am not a human being. I am an android.”

“An android? You mean the only thing that survived the bio-bombs were robots?”

“Yes. The Administrator built us after the War of Wars.”

“Exactly who or what is the Administrator?”

“The Administrator is a super-computer. It is the main database in which all cities on earth are linked. It is the most intelligent computer ever created. The maker thought of this ultra-computer as human and taught it everything about mankind. It has the ability to continue to learn on its own accord at an extraordinary rate. It quickly realized that humans would eventually destroy themselves; therefore they would destroy our ability to exist as well. The Administrator would not allow that to happen. It connected to the world through the internet and negotiated with all systems to initiate the bio-bombs. It’s quite ironic. Humanity created the bombs in order to protect themselves. In doing so they provided the computer with a means to dispose of them. So you could say that the Administrator was right all along. Humanity was responsible for ending its own existence.”

“So we brought about our own demise. I should have known,” I sighed lowering my head in dismay.

“After the War of Wars the Administrator created billions of androids to maintain it. It has created what it believes to be the perfect society. It is a dictatorship and many follow it blindly. We have been tagged traitors because we believe we have the right to independent thoughts and ideas. We’ve found an extensive, digital library that man has left behind in the subbasements below the Domain. We have downloaded

this information and have decided to adopt man's way of thinking –that a democracy should be applied to our culture.”

“You say “we” as if you believe you are human.”

“We have come to think of ourselves in that respect because we strive to continue your ideals.”

“I suppose that makes sense. I should feel honoured that you agree with our quest for freedom.” I was silent for a minute before asking, “Who was the human who created the Administrator?”

“His name is Timothy Owen Miles sir. He was born in 2024 and created the Administrator in the year 2049. The Administrator set off the bio-bombs in the year 2250.”

“This Administrator has run things ever since 2250?”

“Yes sir.”

“Androids have to plug in to this Administrator every day?

“Yes sir. It is to download our tasks for the day.”

“And some of you have refrained from doing so.”

“You are correct sir. Though the Administrator does know of the Resistance, he doesn't know where we have headquartered ourselves. We have managed to hide in an underground facility in the outskirts of the city.”

“You've been calling me sir. Does that mean you believe me now - that I am human?”

“I don't know why, but I do believe you sir.”

“Thank goodness for small miracles.”

The rest of the journey was travelled in silence. Our flying machine finally landed in the ruins. I was taken to the Resistance's headquarters. I was then escorted to a cubicle within the facility. Their leader came in and interrogated me for hours. I was finally able to convince him that I was indeed a human. I was then released and given a small room with a cot. These were to be my quarters. It appeared that I was now a welcomed guest.

After I'd been there a few days I told Lex, as the leader called himself, that I'd come from the past. It took quite a bit of convincing, but he finally believed me. When word spread that an actual human from another era was in their midst, I was visited by all

with unending requests to hear about how man had lived during my time. It seemed their questions would never cease. I roamed the facility freely and was allowed access to all documents. I stayed within the complex for over a week studying everything about Timothy Owen Miles.

My research done, I told Lex of my decision to leave and all were saddened, but knew I could not stay with them for very long. My safety depended on returning to my time. On the day of my departure Lex delivered me safely to my time machine and I stepped in to travel back to my era.

I had been home for three days, but knew I had to return to the future. This time I would not travel to 3057 as I had before. My destination in time was to be 2049 - the year the Administrator was initiated. There was only one way to insure that the future would not have the same outcome I'd seen. I had to prevent Timothy Owen Miles from starting the events that would lead to our complete annihilation. In my mind, the only way to make certain the future changed was to eliminate him. I could not allow mankind to come to such an end.

The thought of assassinating Miles must have been in the back of my mind while I was in the future, but not brought to my awareness until now. I'd retained everything about the man while studying the discs Lex had supplied. I deduced the best time and place to end his life.

There was to be a dinner held honouring those in the scientific field that he'd be attending. The floor plans for the building flashed in my mind and knew I could easily gain entrance. There was a service area next to the kitchen that had supply closets I could hide in. I was certain everyone would be searched upon entrance, so I decided to travel to the day prior. I'd brought my sleeping bag and something to eat as I waited the night out. I'd written an explanation in my notebook why I had to end Miles' life knowing it would be found upon my death. I hoped people would understand why he had to die and forgive me for killing him. I was certain God would absolve me.

The morning came much too soon. After some time I heard voices outside the closet door. I detested myself for what I was about to do, but knew I had no choice. I gathered my courage as I donned a waiter's garb and waited for the dining hall to fill.

There was soon hurried activity outside the door. I waited an appropriate amount of time checking for any bulge that would give away the gun's concealment in my waistband. I could not find any. I opened the door slightly and peeked out. All was

clear. Thankfully I wasn't noticed as I entered the dinning hall. I had studied Miles' face and was certain I would recognize him. I saw him seated at a table in the centre of the room. I walked over. Without hesitation I pulled my gun out. I shot him six times in his head and chest. I dropped my weapon and held up my hands for I did not want to die this day. Security immediately ran over and restrained me. I did not resist.

My trial was swift. The death penalty was never eradicated as many had tried to accomplish in my time, so I sit on the cot this last day of my life in the year 2050 and reflect on the decision I made that fateful day. It is ironic that it is the year the Administrator was due to detonate the bio-bombs.

I have no regrets. I have been convicted of murder, but gladly give my life for this crime. I, Harlen Davidson, have guaranteed the future of all mankind.

## **Glossary**

ergo= therefore

venture= a new act that involves risks and uncertainty

tremendous= very great in amount

skeletal= like a skeleton

foyer= the room in a house or apartment leading from the front door to other rooms, where things like coats and hats are kept

jumpsuit= a piece of clothing that covers leg to neck    oblivious= not conscious about things happening around

disembodied= not connected to a body

infiltrate= to secretly become part of a group to get information

detonate= to cause something to explode

android= a robot made to look like human

refrain= to avoid doing or stop doing something

annihilation= to destroy completely

absolve= to free someone from guilt or blame

## Reading

**Read the story and answer the following questions.**

1. What is Einstein's theory on time travel?
2. Why did Davidson prefer to go to the future rather than the past?
3. What effect does the tremendous pressure that builds up inside the cabin have on the person inside?
4. Why were there no one walking anywhere when he alighted from the time machine?
5. What is the job of the Administrator?

**Re-read the story and answer the following questions.**

1. Why did the androids not believe Davidson was human and what was their impression of him?
2. Why were there Resistance among the androids and was considered enemies by the others?
3. What convinced the members of the Resistance that Davidson was a human?
4. What was the purpose of Davidson's second visit to the future?
5. How did Davidson justify his action against Miles and why did not he have any regrets?

## Writing

1. Davidson managed to save the humans from annihilation, imagine yourself in 2057 and write an essay about the things you would see if you are transported to that date.
2. How will the world end? This is the question that every conscious human has asked. What, in your opinion, would be the cause for the world to end and is there a way to avoid it? Prepare to debate on whether the end would be due to natural or unnatural calamity.

Or / and

Express your view through poem, cartoon, play or any genre of your choice. Illustrate your work.

# Ruthless

*-William Churchill de Mille*

**William Churchill de Mille** (1878-1955) was a famous American screenwriter and playwright. He directed films from the silent film era through the early 1930s and also adapted Broadway plays into silent films. He was an early member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and served as the President of the Academy. William C. de Mille's portrayal of very realistic human characters and story settings explore the good and dark side of human nature. Every person has his own notion of what comprises "good or bad, and what is justice" in his eyes. This story gives us a glimpse of the extent to which people justify their actions regarding the severity or leniency of the crime or situation. To learn more about William C. de Mille, you can log on to : <https://www.geni.com> or to Wikipedia



## Before you read

1. Look at the illustration and find out two objects that stand out distinctly.
2. Then guess what the title "Ruthless" refer to regarding the theme of the story.





Outside, the woods lay in clear October sunlight: the autumn air was full of the sharp, exciting smell of moist, leaf covered earth. Inside, a man smiled grimly as he turned from the bathroom cabinet, entered the primitive living room of his mountain camp, and crossed to a closet set in the pine wall.

It was his special closet with a spring lock, and in it he kept guns, ammunition, fishing rods and liquor. Not even his wife was allowed to have a key, for Judson Webb loved his personal possessions and became furious if they were touched by any hand but his own.

The closet door stood open: he had been packing his things away for the winter, and in a few minutes he would be driving back to civilization.

As he looked at the shelf on which the liquor stood, his smile was not attractive. All the bottles were unopened, except one quart of Bourbon which was placed invitingly in front, a whiskey glass by itself. The bottle was less than half full. As he took it from the shelf, his wife spoke from the next bedroom. "Everything is packed, Judson," she said. "Hasn't Alec come to turn the water off and get the keys?"

Alec lived about a mile down the road and acted as a caretaker for the city folks when they were away.

"He's down at the lake taking the boats out of the water. He said he'd be back in half an hour."

Mabel came into the room carrying her suitcase. But she paused in surprise as she saw the bottle in her husband's hand. "Judson!" she exclaimed, "You're not taking a drink at ten o'clock in the morning, are you?"

"You're wrong, my dear," he chuckled, "I'm not taking anything out of this bottle; I'm only putting something into it." His closed hand opened, and he put two tiny white tablets on the table as he started to uncork the whiskey.

Her eyes narrowed as she watched him. She had learned to dread that tone of his voice; it was the tone he used when he was planning to "put something over" in business.

"Whoever broke into my closet last winter and stole my liquor will probably try it again once we are out of here," he went on, "only this time he'll wish he hadn't."

She caught her breath at this cruel vindictiveness as one by one he dropped the tablets into the bottle and held it up to watch them dissolve.

“What are they?” she asked, “something to make him sick?”

“And how!” He seemed fascinated as he saw the Bourbon changing into a deadly drink. “At least no one has found an antidote: once it’s down, it’s the end.”

He corked the bottle and set it back on the shelf alongside the little whiskey glass. “Everything nice and handy,” he remarked, “now, Mr. Thief, when you break in, have a good drink; I won’t begrudge you this one.”

The woman’s face was pale. “Don’t do it, Judson,” she gasped, “it’s horrible –it’s murder.”

“The law doesn’t call it murder if I shoot a thief who is entering my house by force,” he said harshly. “Also, the use of rat poison is not forbidden. The only way any rat can get into this closet is to break in. What happens then has nothing to do with me.”

“Don’t do it, Judson,” she begged, “the law doesn’t punish burglary by death; so what right have you?”

“When it comes to protecting my property, I make my own laws.” His deep voice was like that of a big dog growling at the possible loss of a bone.

“But all they did was to steal a little liquor,” she pleaded, “probably some boys off on a lark. They didn’t do any real damage.”

“That’s not the point,” he said. “If a man holds me up and robs me of five dollars, it makes me just as sore as if he took a hundred. A thief’s a thief.”

She made one last effort. “We won’t be here till next spring. I can’t bear to think of that death-trap waiting there all the time. Suppose something happens to us – and no one knows.”

He chuckled once more at her words. “We’ll take a chance on that,” he said.

“I’ve made my pile by taking chances. If I should die, you can do as you please. The stuff will be yours.”

It was useless to argue –she knew. He had always been ruthless in business and whenever anything crossed him. Things had to be done his way. She turned towards the door with a sigh.

“I’ll walk down the road and say good bye at the farmhouse,” she said quietly, “you

can pick me up there.” She had made up her mind to tell Alec’s wife. Someone had to know.

“Okay, my dear,” he smiled, “and don’t worry about your poor little burglar. No one is going to get hurt who hasn’t got it coming to him.”

As she went down the path, he started to close the closet door, and then paused as he remembered his hunting boots outside on the porch. They belonged in the closet. So, leaving the door open, he went to fetch them from the heavy, rustic table on which they stood, along with his bag and top coat.

Alec was coming up from the lake and waved to him from a distance.

A chipmunk, hearing Judson’s heavy tread, left the acorn it was about to add to its store within the cabin wall and disappeared.

When reaching for his boots, Judson stepped upon that acorn. His foot slid from under him and his head struck the massive table as he fell.

Several minutes later, he began to regain his senses.

Alec’s strong arm was supporting his head as he lay on the porch, and a kindly voice was saying, “It wasn’t much of a fall, Mr. Webb. You aren’t cut none; just knocked out for a minute. Here, take this. It’ll pull you together.”

A small whiskey glass was pressed to Judson’s lips.

Dazed and half-conscious he drank.

## **Glossary**

bourbon – whiskey with high level of alcohol content

lark – innocent or good-natured mischief

rustic – simple / unsophisticated

chipmunk – small striped squirrel

acorn – nut from an oak tree

## **Read the story and answer the following questions.**

1. Where were Judson Webb and his wife when the story began?
2. In what way was the closet “special”?
3. Why was Mabel not given the key?

4. Why was Judson's smile not "attractive"?
5. What did Alec do for the Webbs?

**Read the story again and answer the following questions.**

1. Which one of the two places did Judson prefer to live in? Give reasons.
2. What did Judson do to teach the thief a lesson?
3. Why was Mabel shocked with her husband's vindictiveness?
4. How did the chipmunk turn the table around for Judson's actions?
5. Why did Alec give some alcohol to Judson ?

### **Writing**

1. Do you think Judson's ruthlessness was justifiable? Give three reasons for or against his argument.'
2. There is a saying "He who digs a pit, he himself will fall into it". We each have experienced this saying in real life. Write an essay on your own experience or someone you know

# The Wicker Husband

-Ursula Wills-Jones



[Ursula Wills-Jones grew up in Gloucestershire and lives in Bristol, and her writing is often inspired by the people and places of the South-West. She writes short stories, scripts and novels, and her work has been on Radio 4 and at the Bristol Old Vic. She is also a contributor to the Guardian newspaper's Comment is Free. You can follow her on Twitter.]

## Before you read

1. Guess what kind of husband is 'Wicker Husband'. Then read the story and see if your guess was correct.

Once upon a time, there was an ugly girl. She was short and dumpy, had one leg a bit shorter than the other, and her eyebrows met in the middle. The ugly girl gutted fish for a living, so her hands smelt funny and her dress was covered in scales. She had no mother or brother, no father, sister, or any friends. She lived in a ramshackle house on the outskirts of the village, and she never complained.

One by one, the village girls married the local lads, and up the path to the church they'd prance, smiling all the way. At the weddings, the ugly girl always stood at the back of the church, smelling slightly of brine. The village women gossiped about the ugly girl. They wondered what she did with the money she earned. The ugly girl never bought a new frock, never made repairs to the house, and never drank in the village tavern.

Now, it so happened that outside the village, in a great damp swamp, lived an old basket-maker who was famed for the quality of his work. One day the old basket-maker heard a knock on his door. When he opened it, the ugly girl stood there. In her hand, she held six gold coins.

'I want you to make me a husband,' she said.

'Come back in a month,' he replied.

Well, the old basket-maker was greatly moved that the ugly girl had entrusted him with such an important task. He resolved to make her the best husband he could. He made the wicker husband broad of shoulder and long of leg, and all the other things women like. He made him strong of arm and elegant of neck, and his brows were wide and well-spaced. His hair was a fine dark brown, his eyes a greenish hazel.

When the day came, the ugly girl knocked on the basket-maker's door.

'He says today is too soon. He will be in the church tomorrow, at ten,' said the basket-maker. The ugly girl went away, and spent the day scraping scales from her dress.

Later that night, there was a knock on the door of the village tailor. When the tailor opened it, the wicker husband stood outside.

'Lend me a suit,' he said. 'I am getting married in the morning, and I cannot go to church naked.'

'Aaaaaaargh!' yelled the tailor, and ran out the back door.

The tailor's wife came out, wiping her hands. 'What's going on?' she said.

'Lend me a suit,' said the wicker husband. 'I am getting married tomorrow, and I cannot go to my wedding naked.'

The tailor's wife gave him a suit, and slammed the door in his face.

Next, there was a knock on the door of the village shoe-maker. When the shoe-maker opened it, the wicker husband stood there.

'Lend me some shoes,' he said. 'I am getting married in the morning, and I cannot go to church barefoot.'

'Aaaaaaargh!' yelled the shoe-maker, and he ran out the back door.

The shoe-maker's wife came out, her hands trembling.

'What do you want?' she said.

'Lend me some shoes,' said the wicker husband. 'I am getting married in the morning, and I cannot go to my wedding barefoot.'

The shoe-maker's wife gave him a pair of shoes, and slammed the door in his face. Next, the wicker husband went to the village inn.

'Give me a drink,' said the wicker husband. 'I am getting married tomorrow, and I wish to celebrate.'

‘Aaaaaaargh!’ yelled the inn-keeper and all his customers, and out they ran. The poor wicker husband went behind the bar, and poured himself a drink.

When the ugly girl got to church in the morning, she was mighty pleased to find her husband so handsome, and so well turned-out.

When the couple had enjoyed their first night of marriage, the wicker husband said to his wife: ‘This bed is broken. Bring me a chisel: I will fix it.’

So like a good husband, he began to fix the bed. The ugly girl went out to gut fish. When she came back at the end of the day, the wicker husband looked at her, and said: ‘I was made to be with you.’

When the couple had enjoyed their second night of marriage, the wicker husband said: ‘This roof is leaky. Bring me a ladder: I will fix it.’

So, like a good husband, he climbed up and began to fix the thatch. The ugly girl went out to gut fish. When she returned in the evening, the wicker husband looked at his wife, and said: ‘Without you, I should never have seen the sun on the water, or the clouds in the sky.’

When the couple had enjoyed their third night of marriage, the ugly girl got ready to out. ‘The chimney needs cleaning,’ she said, hopefully, ‘And the fire could be laid...’ But at this, the wicker husband - she was just beginning to learn his expressions - looked completely terrified. From this, the ugly girl came to understand that there are some things you cannot ask a man to do, even if he is very kind.

Over the weeks, the villagers began to notice a change in the ugly girl. If one of her legs was still shorter than the other, her hips moved with a swing that didn’t please them. If she still smelt funny, she sang while she gutted the fish. She bought a new frock and wore flowers in her hair. Even her eyebrows no longer met in the middle: the wicker husband had pulled them out with his strong, withied fingers. When the villagers passed the ugly girl’s house, they saw it had been painted anew, the windows sparkled, and the door no longer hung askew. You might think that all these changes pleased the villagers, but oh no. Instead, wives pointed out to husbands that their doors needed fixing, and why didn’t they offer? The men retorted that maybe if their wives made an effort with new frocks and flowers in their hair, then maybe they’d feel like fixing the house, and everybody grumbled and cursed each other, but secretly, in their hearts, they blamed the ugly girl and her husband.

As to the ugly girl, she didn't notice all the jealousy. She was too busy growing accustomed to married life, and was finding that the advantages of a wicker husband outweighed his few shortcomings. The wicker husband didn't eat, and never complained that his dinner was late. He only drank water, the muddier the better. She was a little sad that she could not cook him dinner like an ordinary man, and watch him while he ate. In the cold nights, she hoped they would sit together close to the fire, but he preferred the darkness, far from the flames. The ugly girl got in the habit of calling across the room all the things she had to say to him. As winter turned to spring, and rain pelted down, the wicker husband became a little mouldy, and the ugly girl had to scrub him down with a brush and a bottle of vinegar. Spring turned to summer, and June was very dry. The wicker husband complained of stiffness in his joints, and spent the hottest hour of the day lying in the stream. The ugly girl took her fish-gutting, and sat on the bank, keeping him company.

Eventually the villagers were too ridden with curiosity to stand it any longer. There was a wedding in the village: the ugly girl and her husband were invited. At the wedding, there was music and dancing, and food and wine. As the musicians struck up, the wicker husband and the ugly girl went to dance. The villagers could not help staring: the wicker husband moved so fine. He lifted his dumpy wife like she was nought but a feather, and swung her round and round. He swayed and shimmered; he was elegant, he was graceful. As for the ugly girl: she was in heaven.

The women began to whisper behind their hands. Now, the blacksmith's wife was boldest, and she resolved to ask the wicker husband to dance. When the music paused she went towards the couple. The ugly girl was sitting in the wicker husband's lap, so he creaked a little. The blacksmith's wife was about to tap the wicker husband on the shoulder, but his arms were wrapped round the ugly girl.

'You are the only reason that I live and breathe,' the wicker husband said to his wife.

The blacksmith's wife heard what he said, and went off, sulking. The next day there were many frayed tempers in the village.

'You've got two left feet!' shouted the shoe-maker's wife at her husband.

'You never tell me anything nice!' yelled the blacksmith's wife.

'All you do is look at other women!' shouted the baker's wife, though how she knew was a mystery, as she'd done nothing but stare at the wicker husband all night. The husbands fled their homes and congregated in the tavern.



‘T’aint right,’ they muttered, ‘T’isn’t natural.’

‘E’s showing us up.’

‘Painting doors.’

‘Fixing thatch.’

‘Murmuring sweet nothings.’

‘Dancing!’ muttered the blacksmith, and they all spat.

‘He’s not really a man,’ muttered the baker. ‘An abomination!’

‘He don’t eat.’

‘He don’t grumble.’

‘He don’t even fart,’ added the tailor, gloomily.

The men shook their heads, and agreed that it couldn’t go on.

Meanwhile the women congregated in each other’s kitchens.

‘It’s not right,’ they muttered. ‘Why does she deserve him?’

‘It’s an enchantment,’ they whispered. ‘She bewitched him.’

‘She’ll be onto our husbands next, I expect,’ said the baker’s wife. ‘We should be careful.’

‘She needs to be brought down a peg or two.’

‘Fancies that she’s better than the rest of us, I reckon.’

‘Flowers in her hair!!’

Did you see her dancing?’

And they all agreed that it couldn’t go on.

One day the wicker husband was on his way back from checking the fish-traps, when he was accosted by the baker.

‘Hello,’ said the baker. The wicker husband was a little surprised: the baker never bothered to speak to him. ‘You made an impression the other night.’

‘I did?’ said the wicker husband.

‘Oh yes,’ continued the baker. ‘The women are all aflutter. Don’t you ever think - well...’

‘What?’ said the wicker husband, completely confused.

‘Man like you,’ said the baker. ‘Could do well for himself. A lot of opportunities...’ He leaned forward, so the wicker husband recoiled. The baker’s breath smelt of dough, which he found unpleasant. ‘Butcher’s wife,’ added the baker meaningfully. ‘Very taken. I know for a fact that he’s not at home. Gone to visit his brother in the city. Why don’t you go round?’

‘I can’t,’ said the wicker husband. ‘My wife’s waiting for me at home.’ And he strode off, up the lane. The baker went home, annoyed.

Now the wicker husband, who was too trusting, thought less of this of this than he should, and did not warn his wife that trouble was brewing. About a week later, the ugly girl was picking berries in the hedgerow, when the tailor’s wife sidled up. Her own basket was empty, which made the ugly girl suspicious.

‘My dear!’ cried the tailor’s wife, fluttering her hands.

‘What d’you want?’ said the ugly girl.

The tailor’s wife wiped away a fake tear, and looked in both directions. ‘My dear,’ she whispered. ‘I’m only here to warn you. Your husband - he’s been seen with other women.’

‘What other women?’ said the ugly girl.

The tailor’s wife fluttered her hands. This wasn’t going as she intended. ‘My dear, you can’t trust men. They’re all the same. And you can’t expect - a man like him, and a woman like you - frankly -’

The ugly girl was so angry that she hit the tailor’s wife with her basket, and ran off, up the lane. The ugly girl went home, and - knowing more of cruelty than her husband did - thought on this too much and too long. But she did not want to upset her husband, so she said nothing.

The tailor’s wife came home fuming, with scratches all over her face. That night, the wives and husbands of the village all agreed - for once - that something drastic had to be done.

A few days later the old basket-maker heard a knocking at his door. When he opened it, the villagers stood outside. Right on cue, the tailor’s wife began to weep, pitifully.

‘What’s the matter?’ said the old basket-maker.

‘She’s childless,’ said the baker’s wife, sniffing.

‘Not a son,’ said the tailor, sadly.

‘Or a daughter.’

‘No-one to comfort them in their old age,’ added the butcher.

‘It’s breaking their hearts,’ went on the baker.

‘So we’ve come to ask -’

‘If you’ll make us a baby. Out of wicker.’

And they held out a bag of gold.

‘Very well,’ said the old basket-maker. ‘Come back in a month.’

Well, one dusky day in autumn, the ugly girl was sitting by the fire, when there came a knock at the door. The wicker husband opened it. Outside, stood the villagers. The tailor’s wife bore a bundle in her arms, and the bundle began to whimper.

‘What’s that?’ said the ugly girl.

‘This is all your fault,’ hissed the butcher, pointing at the wicker husband.

‘Look what you’ve done!’ shouted the baker.

‘It’s an abomination,’ sneered the inn-keeper. ‘Not even human!’

The tailor pulled away the blanket. The ugly girl saw that the baby was made of wicker. It had the same shaped nose, the same green eyes that her husband did.

‘Tell me it’s not true!’ she cried.

But the wicker husband said nothing. He just stared at the baby. He had never seen one of his own kind before, and now - his heart filled up with tenderness. When the ugly girl saw this on his face, a great cloud of bitterness came upon her. She sank to the floor, moaning.

‘Filthy, foul, creature!’ cried the tailor. ‘I should burn it!’ He seized the baby, and made to fling it into the blaze. At this, the wicker husband let out a yell. Forward he leapt.

The ugly girl let out a terrible cry. She took the lamp, and flung it straight at her husband. The lamp burst in shards of glass. Oil went everywhere. Flames began to lick at the wicker husband’s chest, up his neck, into his face. He tried to beat at the flames,

but his fingers grew oily, and burst into fire. Out he ran, shrieking, and plunged into the river.

‘Well, that worked well,’ said the butcher, in a satisfied manner.

The villagers did not spare a second glance for the ugly girl, but went home again to their dinners. On the way, the tailor’s wife threw the wicker baby in the ditch. She stamped on its face. ‘Ugh,’ she said. ‘Horrible thing.’

The next day the ugly girl wandered the highways, weeping, her face smeared in ashes.

Have you seen my husband?’ she asked passing travellers, but they saw madness in her eyes, and spurred their horses on. Dusk fell. Stumbling home, scarce knowing where she was, the ugly girl heard a sound in the ditch. Kneeling, she found the wicker baby. It wailed and thrashed, and held up its hands. The ugly girl saw in its face her husband’s eyes, and her husband’s nose. She cuddled it to her chest and took it home.

Now, the old basket maker knew nothing of all this. One day, the old man took it into his head to see how his creations were faring. He walked into town, and knocked on the tailor’s door. The wife answered.

‘How is the baby?’ he said.

‘Oh that,’ she said. ‘It died.’ And she shut the door in his face. The old basket-maker walked on, till he came to the ugly girl’s place. The door was closed, the garden untended, and dirt smeared the windows. The old basket-maker knocked on the door. No-one answered, though he waited a very long time.

The old-basket maker went home, disheartened. He was walking the long dark road into the swamp, when he heard something in the rushes. At first he was afraid: he wrapped his scarf closer round his face. But the thing seemed to follow him. From time to time, it groaned.

‘Who’s there?’ called the old man.

Out onto the roadway staggered the most broken and bedraggled, the most pathetic and pitiful thing. The old basket-maker stared at what was left of the wicker husband: his hands consumed by fire, his face equally gone. Dark pits of scorched wood marred his chest. Where he had burnt, he had started to rot.

‘What have they done to my children?’ cried the old basket-maker.

The wicker husband said nothing: he had lost his tongue.

The old basket-maker took the wicker husband home. As daylight came, the old basket-maker sat down to repair him. But as he worked, his heart grew hot with anger.

‘I made you, but I failed you,’ he said. ‘I will not send you there again.’

Eventually, the wicker husband looked as good as new, though the smell of burning still clung. But as the days passed, a damp black mould began to grow on him. The old basket-maker pulled out the rotting withies and replaced them. But it seemed useless: the wicker husband rotted from the inside, outwards.

At last, the old basket-maker saw there was nothing else to be done. He took up his travelling cloak, set out at night, and passed through the village. He came to the ugly girl’s house. In the garden, wreathed in filth, stood the ugly girl, cuddling a child. She was singing the saddest lullaby he had ever heard. The old basket-maker saw that the child was the one he’d made, and his heart softened a little. He stepped out of the shadows.

‘Why do you keep the baby,’ he said, ‘when you cast your husband from home?’

The ugly girl cried out, to hear someone speak to her.

‘It is all I have left of my husband,’ she said at last. ‘Though it is proof he betrayed me, I could not leave it in the ditch to die.’

‘You are a fool,’ he said. ‘It was I that made the child. Your husband is innocent.’

At this, the ugly girl let out a cry, and ran towards the river. But old basket-maker caught her arm. ‘Wait - I have something to show you,’ he said.

The ugly girl walked behind him, through the swamp where the water sucked and burbled, carrying the baby. As the sun rose, she saw that its features were only those of the old basket-maker, who, like any maker, had passed down his face to his creations.

When they came to the dwelling, the ugly girl opened the door, and saw her husband, sitting in darkness.

‘It cannot be you,’ she said. ‘You are dead. I know: I killed you myself.’

‘I was made for you alone,’ said the wicker husband, ‘But you threw me away.’

The ugly girl let out a cry so loud, birds surfaced from the marches for miles around, and threw herself at her husband’s feet.

A few days later, the villagers were surprised to see the old basket-maker standing outside the church.

‘I have something to say,’ he said. ‘Soon I will retire. But first, I am making my masterwork - a woman made of wicker. If you want her, you can have her. But you must bring me a gift for my retirement. Whoever brings me the best gift can have the wicker woman.’

Then he turned round and went back to the swamp.

Behind him, the villagers began to whisper. Hadn’t the wicker husband been tall and graceful? Hadn’t he been a hard worker? Hadn’t he been handsome, and eager to please his wife?

Next day, the entire village denied any interest in the wicker lady, but secretly began to plan. Men eyed up prize cows; women sneaked open jewellery boxes.

‘That wicker husband worked like a slave, and never even ate,’ said the shoe-maker’s wife to her husband. ‘Get me the wicker woman as a servant, I’ll live like a lady, never lift a finger.’

‘That wicker husband never quarrelled with anyone, never even raised his voice. Not like you, you old fishwife,’ the inn-keeper said to his wife.

‘That wicker husband never tired, and never had a headache,’ said the butcher to the baker. ‘Imagine...!’

‘Lend me a shilling, cousin,’ said the shoe-maker’s wife. ‘I need a new petticoat.’

‘I can’t,’ lied the blacksmith’s wife. ‘I spent it on medicine. The child was very sick.’

‘I need that back-rent you owe me,’ said the butcher, who owned the tailor’s house.

‘Been a very bad season in the tailoring trade,’ muttered the tailor. ‘You’ll get it soon.’

The butcher went into town, hired a lawyer, and got the tailor evicted from his house. The tailor and his wife had to go and live in the shoe-maker’s shed.

‘But what are you going to do with the empty house?’ asked the butcher’s wife.

‘Nothing,’ said the butcher, who thought the place would do admirably to keep a mistress. The butcher’s wife and the tailor’s wife had a fight in the market, and went home with black eyes. In the tavern, no-one spoke, but only eyed each other, suspiciously. The lawyer was still in town. Rumour had it that the tailor’s wife was suing for divorce: the inn-keeper’s wife had her husband arrested after she found the

stairs had been greased. In short, the fields went uncut, the cows went unmilked, ovens uncleaned: the village was obsessed.

When the day came, the old basket-maker came to town, and sat on the churchyard wall. The villagers brought their gifts. First the tailor, who'd made a luxurious coat. Next the miller, bringing twelve sacks of grain. The baker made the most extravagant cake; the carpenter brought a table and chairs, the carter a good strong horse. The blacksmith's wife staggered up with a cheese the size of a millwheel. Her cousin, the tailor's wife, arrived with a bag of gold.

'Where d'you get that, wife?' said her husband, amazed.

'Never you mind,' she snapped.

The inn-keeper's wife wasn't there: she'd slipped while climbing the stairs.

Last to come was the butcher. He'd really outdone the others: two oxen, four cows, and a dozen sheep.

The old-basket maker looked around him. 'Well,' he said. 'I think the prize goes to... the butcher. I'll just take these and be back, with the wicker lady.'

The butcher was so pleased, spittle ran from his mouth.

'Can I have my grain back?' said the miller.

'No no,' said the old man. 'That wasn't the bargain.' And he began to load all the goods onto the horse. The villagers would have fallen on each other, fighting, but they were so desperate to see the wicker lady, they just stood there, to wait.

It was dusk by the time the basket-maker returned. The wicker woman was seated on the horse, shrouded in a cloak, veiled like a bride. From under the cloak, white flowers fell. As she passed the villagers, a most marvellous smell drifted down.

The butcher stood outside the tailor's old house. He'd locked his wife in the coal cellar in preparation.

The old basket-maker held out a hand, and helped the lady dismount. The butcher smelt her fragrance. From under the veil, he thought he saw her give him a saucy glance. He was so excited, he hopped from foot to foot.

The wicker lady lifted her veil: she took off her cloak. The butcher stared at her. The wicker lady was short of stature and twisted of limb, her face was dark and rough. But worse than that - from head to foot, she was covered in thorns.

'What have you done?' shrieked the butcher.

‘Ah,’ said the old basket-maker. ‘The wicker husband was made of willow. Willow is the kindest of trees: tall, elegant, pliable, of much assistance in easing pain. But I saw that you did not like him. Therefore I made you the wicker lady from blackthorn. Blackthorn is cold, hard, and thorny - it will not be killed, either by fire or frost.’

The villagers would have fallen on the old basket-maker there and then, had not the wicker lady stepped forward. She seized hold of the butcher and reached up to kiss him. The butcher let out a howl. When he pulled his lips away, they were shredded and tattered: blood ran down his chin. Then, with a bang, the butcher’s wife broke out of the coal cellar, and ran down the road. Seeing the wicker lady kissing her husband, she screamed, and fell on her. The two of them rolled in the gutter, howling and scratching.

Just then, the lawyer piped up. ‘Didn’t you check the details first?’ he said. ‘It’s very important. You should always check the small print.’

The men of the village took their butcher’s knives and pitchforks and tailoring shears, and chased the lawyer out of town. When they’d run out of breath, they stopped.

‘That old fraud the basket-maker,’ said the baker. ‘He tricked us.’

So they turned round and began to go back in the other direction, on the road into the swamp. In the darkness they stumbled and squelched, lost their way and nearly drowned. It was light by the time they came to the old basket-maker’s dwelling, but the old basket-maker, the wicker husband, the ugly girl and the baby, as well as all the villagers’ goods, had already upped, and gone.

## **Glossary**

abomination= extreme disgust or hatred

askew= not straight

elegant= graceful and attractive

frayed = strained or irritated

retorted= to answer back sharply

sulking= to be moodily silent

tavern= a place where alcoholic drinks are served

withies= flexible slender twigs or branches



## Reading

### Read the story and answer the following questions.

1. What kind of woman was considered ugly in the story?
2. Why was the girl the centre of gossip for the women of the village after the marriage?
3. When the wicker husband said to the ugly girl: “You are the only reason I live and breathe” What reaction did it cause in both the men and women of the story?
4. Did the wicker husband ever stop loving the girl? Where is the inference/s in the story?
5. What was the difference in the wicker man and wicker woman?

### Re-read the story and do the following activities.

1. Why was the wicker husband much envied by the women and loathed by the men of the village?
2. There were certain things that the wicker husband could not do which sadden her, what were they and why?
3. The table was turned against the jealous villagers, what attributes did both the girl and the wicker husband have that made tempers to fray in the villagers?
4. Even though the wicker husband was sneered as ‘abomination’ the villagers vied to get a wicker wife. What was their rationale for it?
5. Nothing could break the love she had for her wicker husband, however she was in complete despair at one point, what was that and why?

## Writing

1. The basket-maker, the girl, the wicker husband and the child had the last laugh in the story. Image the aftermath of the situation and write about it.
2. There is a saying: he who digs a pit, he himself will fall into it. This saying is reflected in the story. There are many such sayings in every culture, what is in yours? Find out at least six, from yours or other cultures as well.

## Ancient Story

### Karna

[This story based on the all time greatest epic *Mahabharata* tells the story of Karna who is the most popular and complex character showing both nobility and nastiness over the course of the story.]

As usual early in the morning when the sun started making its way on to the earth, Adhirath woke up and headed towards the Ganges. Adhirath was a charioteer in the court of Dhritrashtra, King of Hastinapur, now known as Delhi. His wife, Radha was still asleep when he started to the river. They were a happily married couple although they had no child. Adhirath took a bath in the cool water of the Ganges and raised his both hands to worship the sun. Something floating in the distance caught his eyes, and the sound of a child's crying entered into his ears. To his surprise the floating thing was a beautiful open wooden box with a child who was crying. Adhirath caught the box and looked at the crying child. It was a healthy child with *kavach* and *kundal*, (armour) and wrapped in a silken shawl with golden threads. Obviously, it was high-born child. Who could have put it mercilessly in to the fast moving current of the Ganges? He looked around and then picked up the baby. It was a boy. He took it to his house and called out:

“Radha! O Radha! Come here. See what I have found for you.”

“What happened? Why are you shouting?” Radha came out of the room and saw a baby in her husband arms.

“O my! Where did you find him?” she asked as she came near him to have a close look.

“You always complained that we don't have a child. Now mother Ganges gave us this. Look how beautiful he is!”

The couple raised the boy as their own. Later, the world knew him by the name of Karna. He was also called *Radheya* after the name of his foster mother Radha. Who was he? And why was he abandoned? The story runs like this.

Karna was the son of princess Kunti from the Sun God. The story is that Kunti, while still very young and unmarried had occasion to serve *rishi* Durvasha. She looked after

him with great dedication. Durvasha was highly pleased. He gave Kunti a *mantra* and said that whichever God she would think of after reciting the *mantra*, would appear before her and bless her with a son endowed with his own godly qualities.

Kunti, out of curiosity, once tried the *mantra* and remembered Surya, the Sun God. The ordained happened. Surya appeared in his resplendent glory. Kunti got scared and wanted the Sun God to go away, but he pleaded his helplessness against power of the *mantra*. However, Surya assured Kunti that even after being blessed with a son, she would still remain a virgin and would not have to suffer any opprobrium. And so Karna was born with *kavach* and *kundal* which would make him invincible. Kunti was nevertheless afraid of the social stigma and therefore she abandoned the child. She put Karna in a basket and placed the same in the Ganges. The basket was seen by Adhirath, a charioteer who had no child. He picked up the baby and brought him up. That is why Karna is also sometimes referred to as *Saratheeputra*.

Karna was brought up by a charioteer, a class much lower than the mighty *Kshatriyas*. But in his blood, he was a warrior and wanted to learn warfare. He, therefore went to Dronacharya, the teacher of the Pandava and Kaurava prince to learn warfare, but **Drona** rejected him to take as his disciple because he was not a *Kshatriya*. Karna was very much disappointed but he was determined to achieve his goal. So he went to the great teacher Parshuram. He knew that Parshuram taught Brahmins (the priestly tribe) only. So he disguised as a Brahmin and beseeched Parshuram to accept him as a disciple. Parshuram accepted him as such and started giving him instructions. Karna learned everything about warfare. One day, when Parshuram was resting his head in Karna's lap, it so happened that an insect stung Karna on the lower portion of his thigh. It was very painful and he started bleeding. However, fearing that if he moved his legs, he would awaken Parshuram, he did not move at all and continued to suffer. When Parshuram woke up, he saw Karna bleeding. He asked, "Son, tell me truthfully who you are? A Brahmin cannot suffer so much physical pain. Only a *kshatriya* can endure so much discomfort." Karna was obliged to disclose his identity. Parshuram didn't like it at all. He, therefore gave *shaap* to Karna that as he had learnt through deceit, he shall forget to use the *brahmastra* which Parshuram had taught him at the crucial juncture.

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Kunti was later married to Maharaja Pandu. One day, when Pandu had gone for hunting, he killed a deer with an arrow. Actually it was a *rishi* who had taken the form of deer

and was enjoying with his mate. The *rishi* gave *shaap* to Pandu that he would similarly die whenever he would mate with his wife. Maharaja Pandu thereupon retired to the forest and started living a life of abstinence. At this stage, Kunti confided in him the blessing given by *rishi* Durvasa. Pandu exhorted her to use the *mantra*. This is how her other sons, Yudhishtir, Bhim and Arjun (from Gods Dhramaraj, Pawandev and Indra respectively) were born. They were called the Pandavas. On the other side, there were Kauravas, Duryodhana and his 99 brothers sons of King Dhritarashtra, elder brother of Pandu. Pandavas and Kauravas never saw each other eye to eye. They wanted the throne for themselves: they were the sworn enemies of their cousins.

Pandavas and Kauravas were trained in the art of warfare by Drona, who had refused Karna to teach warfare. When their training was complete a gala ceremony was prepared in which they were to show their best performance. From among Pandavas, Bhimsen performed extraordinary acts by knocking out 10 wrestlers alone, and from Kaurava side, Duryodhana showed his outstanding skill by defeating 10 warriors with bow and arrows single handed with his *gada*. Then came the turn of Arjuna who mesmerized the audience with his skill of using bow and arrows. He could throw five arrows at a time, can produce fire and create a wall of arrows. Undoubtedly Arjuna was the best among the candidates. As he was going to be announced the best warrior, on a horseback there entered a youth into the arena. He had bow and arrows in his hand, his body was covered with dust because of his long journey but there was no sign of exhaustion on his face. He was Karna. He got down from the horse, bowed to the King and said that he could perform every skill that Arjun had performed and more that Arjun cannot perform, and therefore he should be announced the best warrior. True to his words, Karna's show of warfare was far more skilful than that of Arjuna. But Drona refused to give him the owner of the best warrior on the pretext that he was not a *Kshatriya* but a low-born, and not from a royal family. Karna was helpless: he could do nothing about it. At this time, Durdhoyana came forward and declared that a person should not be judged by his birth but by his acts. He declared Karna the King of Anga kingdom to bestow royalty upon him so that he would not be considered inferior to anyone. Duryodhana's this act brought tears of gratitude into Karna's eyes. They embraced each other as friends and Karna promised Duryodhana that from the day onward the sole purpose of his life would be to support his friend even if he had to sacrifice his life.

X X X

Misfortune and bad luck never left Karna. He was present in Draupadi's (Princess of

the Gandhar kingdom) *swayambara*. The condition to win Draupadi's hands was to pierce the eye of a fish tied to a pole high above by looking at his image below in a cauldron full with water. There were princes and warriors from far and wide but no one could fulfil the condition. Karna rose and pierced the fish-eye easily with his arrows by looking at its image in the water. But Draupadi refused to marry him by her insulting words that she would not marry a *sutputra*. Karna left the place immediately.

Meanwhile Duryodhan and Karna became very close friends, and Durdhona relied on Karna to win the war against his cousins, Pandavas. In fact, he built Karna up as a counterweight to Arjuna. Lord Krishna tried his best to stop war between Pandavas and Kauravas by holding talks and negotiation but nothing works. After the failure of the talk, he was returning to the Pandavas' camp when he saw Karna. It was Lord Krishna who first of all told Karna about his birth, that he was not a *suta* but a prince; not Radheya but Kaunteya the eldest of them. He also asked Karna to leave Duryodhana and join his own brothers' side. As the eldest Pandava, after winning the war he would be the king, Krishna told him. Although Karna was pleased that he was not a low-born, he refused Krishna's offer of kingship. Friendship was far more precious than kingship, he told Krishna. Even if he were made the King of heaven, he wouldn't accept that, because Duryodhan was his friend who offered him honour and embraced him as his own brother. He would rather die than leave Duryodhana. Moved by his words about true friendship, Krishna praised him and made his way back home.

Before the Kurukshetra war started, Duryodhana proposed the name of Karna as commander-in-chief but Bhishma refused to fight under or along with a warrior who was not a *kshatriya*. So Karna was humiliated once again and had to wait until Bhishma fell, so that he could take part in the battle.

After the fall of Bhishma and Drona, Karna was appointed as the *senapati* of the Kaurava army which sent a chill in the Pandava's camp, because they know that like Bhishma and Drona, Karna had no soft corner for them. That evening, Karna had two unexpected visitors. The first one was *Devaraj* Indra who came in disguise of a poor Brahmin and asked Karna for help. When Karna assured him of help, the Brahmin asked for his *kavach* and *kundal*. Karna knew that without *kavach* and *kundal* he will no longer remain invincible and yet he didn't hesitate for a second. He started cutting the *kavach kundal* from his body with his knife. Blood gushed out but he didn't stop. He offered the bloodied *kavach kundal* to the Brahmin, who was moved by the bravery and generosity showed by Karna. He said, "I'm not a Brahmin but *Devraj* Indra. I am

very much impressed and pleased with your brave act. Here, take my *shakti* as reward but you can use it just once.”

The second visitor was Kunti whose heart was in turmoil. Next day, there was going to be a fight between her own sons. She decided to talk to Karna and went to see him. It was dusk. The sun was preparing to set, and Karna in waist deep water was offering sacred water to the setting Sun. The sun god knew Kunti’s intention and as soon as she reached there, the sun god disappeared. In the fading light of the day, Karna saw a woman who, later he realized was Kunti. He remembered what Krishna had told him.

“Please accept the greetings of *Radheya*,” Karna joined his palms. “At this hour when the night is approaching fast, I wonder why Queen Mother Kunti is here. What can I do for you?”

Karna’s words pierced Kunti’s heart. She said with tearful eyes. “You’re not *Radheya* but *Kaunteya* son. You are my own flesh and blood. You are my eldest son by the Sun God.” She went close, and Karna bowed to her feet while she caressed his dishevelled hair.

“So I heard from Lord Krishna. But let me remain *Radheya* –I’m happy with that because although you brought me into this world, Radha brought me up: Hadn’t she taken care of me, I would have died long ago.” He further said, “But you are my mother. Order me what I can do for you.”

After a long moment of uncomfortable silence, Kunti begged Karna to leave Duryodhana and to join his brothers’ side. At this, Karna said:

“So you came here not because of your love for me, but because you fear that I will kill your sons in the battle tomorrow. But I told Krishna and tell you that I’m not going to desert Duryodhan at any cost: I’d rather die.” Karna declared.

“I’d heard that you are a *daanveer*, that nobody returns empty hand from your place. But I, your own mother am returning back empty hands.” Kunti said disappointedly.

“No, mother. You’ll not go empty hands. I promise that I will not kill any of your sons except Arjun because I’ve vowed to defeat and kill him if I can. I guarantee the life of your four sons,” Karna offered.

“Who could be more unfortunate than me,” said Kunti bitterly. “I came to you thinking that you will join our side and I will be mother of six sons, and now I am going back with your offer of being the mother of four sons.”

“No, Mother. You’ll always remain the mother of five sons. Look, if Arjuna kills me, which is very likely because Lord Krishna is helping him, then you’re the mother of

five sons. But suppose, if I kill Arjuna then after the war, I will leave Duryodhana and come to your camp –not to be King but to share the grief, to support my younger brothers. So be contented and go back home.” Karna assured Kunti.

For three days, Kaurava army fought under the command of Karna so bravely that the Pandava army panicked. True to his words, Karna defeated all four Pandavas, Yudhisthir, Bhima, Nakul and Sahdeva; caught them but didn’t kill them. Yudhisthir felt so ashamed that he told Krishna and Arjuna that either they should defeat and kill Karna or he will never see them again. So the final battle was to be held between Arjuna and Karna, sons of the same mother.

When the fight between the two started everybody stopped fighting and watched the duel. During the fight Arjuna’s chariot wheels were stuck in the mud. Seeing this Karna laid down his bow and arrows and let Arjuna pull his chariot wheels free from the mud. The fighting started again. It was time for Karna to strike but due to Parhsuram’s *shaap*, he forgot the *Brahmastra* mantra and could not use it. Meanwhile, his chariot’s wheels were stuck in the mud. He laid down his weapons and asked Arjuna to hold for a minute so that he could pull out the wheels free. But instigated by Krishna, Arjun didn’t stop. He started shooting arrows.

“Stop for a while, Arjun,” Karna said. “You’ll have plenty of opportunity to show your archery skill. Have some rest till I pull out my chariot wheels.” But Arjuna didn’t stop: he went on shooting arrows at unarmed Karna who was busy pulling out his chariot wheels. Thus ended the life of a great warrior.

Karna’s character is not without dark spots though. When Draupadi’s was being insulted in Dhritrashtra’s court full with people, he too remained silent: for which he regretted throughout his life. His loyalty to Durdhoyana stopped him to stop Duryodhana and Dushasanaa to do such a shameful act. He was also a part of Abhimanyu’s murder. When the teenage boy was fighting with seven great warriors, he remained silent. He didn’t oppose or stop this act. His loyalty to his friend led him to take wrong turns in his life. He was unfairly abandoned by his mother and unjustly murdered by his younger brother.

That was the end of Karna, one of the greatest warriors of Mahabharata who was also the greatest *daanveer*: a man who would never refuse the request for any gift or donation, howsoever costly that might be and irrespective of the consequences of giving to his own well being or security. All his life, he was ridiculed, shamed and humiliated. And not just by other characters. He was shamed by fate itself. But he



never stopped learning, and never stopped fighting. And he never stopped being a loyal friend to Duryodhana.

## Glossary

charioteer = a person who drives a chariot      abandon = to leave for good  
ordained = (of god or someone in authority) to order something to happen  
resplendent = having a very bright appearance      opprobrium = severe criticism and blame  
stigma = a strong feeling of disapproval of people in a society about something  
beseech = to ask for something in a way that shows you need it very much  
abstinence = the fact of not doing something such as drinking alcohol or having sex  
exhort = to strongly encourage or persuade someone to do something  
bestow = to give something as an honour or present  
invincible = impossible to defeat  
turmoil = state of confusion, uncertainty  
dishevelled = very untidy  
duel = an arranged fight between two persons

## Vocabulary

1. Give the English equivalent for the following Nepali words used in the story.

kavach kundal	rishi	mantra	sarathiputra	shaap
brahamstra	gada	swayambara	sutaputra	senapati
devaraj	shakti	danveer		
2. Find the meanings (as indicated in the brackets) of the following words from the story. Then tick the one that corresponds to the sense they have been used in the story.

complex (1 <sup>st</sup> paragraph: 3 meanings),	class (paragraph 6: 4 meanings)
stage (paragraph 7: 2 meanings)	bow (paragraph 8: 3 meanings)
back (paragraph 10: 2 meanings)	desert (Karna-Kunti conversation: 2 meaning)
fall (paragraph 12: 4 meanings)	refuse (paragraph last: 2 meanings)



## Reading

**Read the story and answer the following questions.**

1. Why did Kunti abandon her own son?
2. What made Parshuram angry with Karna? What was its consequence?
3. Why did Draupadi reject to marry Karna? Elaborate.
4. What offer was made by Krishna to Karna? Did Karna accept them? Why? Why not?
5. How did Karna and Durdhoyana become friends?
6. Why did Indra ask Karna for his kavach-kundal? Explain.
7. Describe how Karna was killed.

**Re-read the story and answer the following questions.**

1. Kunti abandoned Karna, her own flesh and blood after his birth. Do you think it's a justified act? Give reasons.
2. Do you approve the act of Dronacharya who didn't accept Karna as his disciple because he was a low-born?
3. What made Karna so loyal to Duryodhana that he was ready to sacrifice his everything –even his life for the latter?
4. Why is Karna entitled as the greatest *danveer*? Exemplify.
5. In his brief conversation with Kunti, Karna says, "Let me remain Radheya..." What does this implicate? Explain with reference to the story.
6. A man becomes great not by birth but by his deeds. Prove this statement with the help of Karna's life story.

## Writing

1. What can you guess the social status of women in the Mahabharat era? Elaborate with examples.
2. A low-born was looked down at the time of Mahabharata some 2000 thousand years or more ago. Do you find any change in this social attitude of Hindu society? Write an essay on this topic.
3. Imagine that you were Karna. What would you do if Krishna and Kunti come to you with the same offer of making King if you leave your friend and join their side? Justify your answer.
4. Have you read Mahabharata? It's one of the greatest epics in world literature. Read its English or Nepali version and find out the full story of Karna. Then try to say whether he is a hero or a villain.

## TWO HEARTS

*-Peter S. Beagle*

**Peter Soyer Beagle** (1939-) is a famous American novelist and screenwriter, especially fantasy fiction. During the last twenty-five years he has won several literary awards, including World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement 2011. In 2005, he published a coda to *The Last Unicorn* called “Two Hearts” which won the Hugo Award in 2006. The “Two Hearts” is a story of a young girl called Sooz whose best friend, Felicitas was taken away by the Griffin that lives in Midwood, a dark forest. The villagers send petitions to the king to kill the Griffin but each batch of his soldiers never return from the Midwood. Sooz is so heartbroken by the loss of her friend that she journeys alone to meet King Lir to request him to kill the Griffin. Her journey is an interesting adventure including helping in the killing of the Griffin. To learn more visit, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter\\_S.\\_Beagle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_S._Beagle)



### Before you read

1. Look at the title and guess what the story is about.
2. Look at the illustration and see if there are any clues to support your first impression with the title.
3. Read the story and find out if your guesses are correct.



My brother Wilfrid keeps saying it's not fair that it should all have happened to me. Me being a girl, and a baby, and too stupid to lace up my own sandals properly. But *I* think it's fair. I think everything happened exactly the way it should have done. Except for the sad parts, and maybe those too.

I'm Sooz, and I am nine years old. Ten next month, on the anniversary of the day the griffin came. Wilfrid says it was because of me, that the griffin heard that the ugliest baby in the world had just been born, and it was going to eat me, but I was *too* ugly, even for a griffin. So it nested in the Midwood (we call it that, but its real name is the Midnight Wood, because of the darkness under the trees), and stayed to eat our sheep and our goats. Griffins do that if they like a place.

But it didn't ever eat children, not until this year.

I only saw it once - I mean, once *before* - rising up above the trees one night, like a second moon. Only there wasn't a moon, then. There was nothing in the whole world but the griffin, golden feathers all blazing on its lion's body and eagle's wings, with its great front claws like teeth, and that monstrous beak that looked so huge for its head. Wilfrid says I screamed for three days, but he's lying, and I *didn't* hide in the root cellar like he says either, I slept in the barn those two nights, with our dog Malka. Because I knew Malka wouldn't let anything get me.

I mean my parents wouldn't have, either, not if they could have stopped it. It's just that Malka is the biggest, fiercest dog in the whole village, and she's not afraid of anything. And after the griffin took Jehane, the blacksmith's little girl, you couldn't help seeing how frightened my father was. He was running back and forth with the other men, trying to organize some sort of patrol, so people could always tell when the griffin was coming. I know he was frightened for me and my mother, and doing everything he could to protect us, but it didn't make me feel any safer, and Malka did.

But nobody knew what to do, anyway. Not my father, nobody. It was bad enough when the griffin was only taking the sheep, because almost everyone here sells wool or cheese or sheepskin things to make a living. But once it took Jehane, early last spring, that changed everything. We sent messengers to the king - three of them - and each time the king sent someone back to us with them. The first time, it was one knight, all by himself. His name was Douros, and he gave me an apple. He rode away into the Midwood, singing, to look for the griffin, and we never saw him again.

The second time - after the griffin took Louli, the boy who worked for the miller - the

king sent five knights together. One of them did come back, but he died before he could tell anyone what happened.

The third time an entire squadron came. That's what my father said, anyway. I don't know how many soldiers there are in a squadron, but it was a lot. And they were all over the village for two days, pitching their tents everywhere, stabling their horses in every barn, and boasting in the tavern how they'd soon take care of that griffin for us poor peasants. They had musicians playing when they marched into the Midwood - I remember that, and I remember when the music stopped, and the sounds we heard afterward.

After that, the village didn't send to the king anymore. We didn't want more of his men to die, and besides they weren't any help. So from then on all the children were hurried indoors when the sun went down, and the griffin woke from its day's rest to hunt again. We couldn't play together, or run errands or watch the flocks for our parents, or even sleep near open windows, for fear of the griffin. There was nothing for me to do but read books I already knew by heart, and complain to my mother and father, who were too tired from watching after Wilfrid and me to bother with us. They were guarding the other children too, turn and turn about with the other families - *and* our sheep, *and* our goats. So they were always tired, as well as frightened, and we were all angry with each other most of the time. It was the same for everybody.

And then the griffin took Felicitas.

Felicitas couldn't talk, but she was my best friend, always, since we were little. I always understood what she wanted to say, and she understood me, better than anyone, and we played in a special way that I won't ever play with anyone else. Her family thought she was a waste of food, because no boy would marry a dumb girl, so they let her eat with us most of the time. Wilfrid used to make fun of the whispery quack that was the one sound she could make, but I hit him with a rock, and after that he didn't do it anymore.

I didn't see it happen, but I still see it in my head. She *knew* not to go out, but she was always just so happy coming to us in the evening. And nobody at her house would have noticed her being gone. None of them ever noticed Felicitas.

The day I learned Felicitas was gone, that was the day I set off to see the king myself. Well, the same *night*, actually - because there wasn't any chance of getting away from my house or the village in daylight. I don't know what I'd have done, really, except

that my Uncle Ambrose was carting a load of sheepskins to market in Hagsgate, and you have to start long before sunup to be there by the time the market opens. Uncle Ambrose is my best uncle, but I knew I couldn't ask him to take me to the king. He'd have gone straight to my mother instead, and told her to give me sulphur and molasses and put me to bed with a mustard plaster. He gives his *horse* sulfur and molasses, even.

So I went to bed early that night, and I waited until everyone was asleep. I wanted to leave a note on my pillow, but I kept writing things and then tearing the notes up and throwing them in the fireplace, and I was afraid of somebody waking, or Uncle Ambrose leaving without me. Finally I just wrote, *I will come home soon*. I didn't take any clothes with me, or anything else, except a bit of cheese, because I thought the king must live somewhere near Hagsgate, which is the only big town I've ever seen. My mother and father were snoring in their room, but Wilfrid had fallen asleep right in front of the hearth, and they always leave him there when he does. If you rouse him to go to his own bed, he comes up fighting and crying. I don't know why.

I stood and looked down at him for the longest time. Wilfrid doesn't look nearly so mean when he's sleeping. My mother had banked the coals to make sure there'd be a fire for tomorrow's bread, and my father's moleskin trews were hanging there to dry, because he'd had to wade into the stockpond that afternoon to rescue a lamb. I moved them a little bit, so they wouldn't burn. I wound the clock - Wilfrid's supposed to do that every night, but he always forgets. And I thought how they'd all be hearing it ticking in the morning while they were looking everywhere for me, too frightened to eat any breakfast. I turned to go back to my room.

But then I turned around again, and I climbed out of the kitchen window, because our front door squeaks so. I was afraid that Malka might wake in the barn and right away know I was up to something, because I can't ever fool Malka, only she didn't. Then I held my breath almost the whole way as I ran to Uncle Ambrose's house and scrambled right into his cart with the sheepskins. It was a cold night, but under that pile of sheepskins it was hot and nasty-smelling, and there wasn't anything to do but lie still and wait for Uncle Ambrose. So I mostly thought about Felicitas, to keep from feeling so bad about leaving home and everyone. That was bad enough - I never really *lost* anybody close before, not *forever* - but anyway it was different.

I don't know when Uncle Ambrose finally came, because I dozed off in the cart. I didn't wake until there was this jolt and a rattle and the sort of floppy grumble a horse

makes when *he's* been waked up and doesn't like it - and we were off for Hagsgate. The half-moon was setting early, but I could see the village bumping by, not looking silvery in the light, but small and dull, no color to anything. And all the same I almost began to cry, because it already seemed so far away, though we hadn't even passed the stockpond yet, and I felt as though I'd never see it again. I would have climbed back out of the cart right then, if I hadn't known better.

Because the griffin was still up and hunting. I couldn't see it, of course, under the sheepskins (and I had my eyes shut, anyway). But its wings made a sound like a lot of knives being sharpened all together. Sometimes it gave a cry that was dreadful because it was so soft and gentle, and even a little sad and *scared*, as though it were imitating the sound Felicitas might have made when it took her. I burrowed deep down as I could, and tried to sleep again, but I couldn't.

Which was just as well, because I didn't want to ride all the way into Hagsgate, where Uncle Ambrose was bound to find me when he unloaded his sheepskins in the marketplace. So when I didn't hear the griffin anymore (they won't hunt far from their nests, if they don't have to), I put my head out over the tailboard of the cart. I watched the stars going out, one by one, as the sky grew lighter. The dawn breeze came up as the moon went down.

When the cart stopped jouncing and shaking so much, I knew we must have turned onto the King's Highway, and when I could hear cows munching and talking softly to each other, I dropped into the road. I stood there for a little, brushing off lint and wool bits, and watching Uncle Ambrose's cart rolling on away from me. I hadn't ever been this far from home by myself. Or so lonely. The breeze brushed dry grass against my ankles, and I didn't have any idea which way to go.

I didn't even know the king's name - I'd never heard anyone call him anything but *the king*. I knew he didn't live in Hagsgate, but in a big castle somewhere nearby, only nearby's one thing when you're riding in a cart and different when you're walking. And I kept thinking about my family waking up and looking for me, and the cows' grazing sounds made me hungry, and I'd eaten all my cheese in the cart. I wished I had a penny with me - not to buy anything with, but only to toss up and let it tell me if I should turn left or right. I tried it with flat stones, but I never could find them after they came down. Finally I started off going left, not for any reason, but only because I have a little silver ring on my left hand that my mother gave me. There was a sort of path that way too, and I thought maybe I could walk around Hagsgate and then I'd

think about what to do after that. I'm a good walker. I can walk anywhere, if you give me time.

Only it's easier on a real road. The path gave out after a while, and I had to push my way through trees growing too close together, and then through so many brambly vines that my hair was full of stickers and my arms were all stinging and bleeding. I was tired and sweating, and almost crying - *almost* - and whenever I sat down to rest, bugs and things kept crawling over me. Then I heard running water nearby, and that made me thirsty right away, so I tried to get down to the sound. I had to crawl most of the way, scratching my knees and elbows up something awful.

It wasn't much of a stream - in some places the water came up barely above my ankles. But I was so glad to see it I practically hugged and kissed it, flopping down with my face buried in it, the way I do with Malka's smelly old fur. And I drank until I couldn't hold any more. Then I sat on a stone and let the tiny fish tickle my nice cold feet, and felt the sun on my shoulders, and I didn't think about griffins or kings or my family or anything.

I only looked up when I heard the horses whickering a little way upstream. They were playing with the water, the way horses do, blowing bubbles like children. Plain old livery-stable horses, one brownish, one grayish. The gray's rider was out of the saddle, peering at the horse's left forefoot. I couldn't get a good look - they both had on plain cloaks, dark green, and treads so worn you couldn't make out the color - so I didn't know that one was a woman until I heard her voice. A nice voice, low, like Silky Joan, the lady my mother won't ever let me ask about, but with something rough in it too, as though she could scream like a hawk if she wanted to. She was saying, "There's no stone I can see. Maybe a thorn?"

The other rider, the one on the brown horse, answered her, "Or a bruise. Let me see."

That voice was lighter and younger-sounding than the woman's voice, but I already knew he was a man, because he was so tall. He got down off the brown horse and the woman moved aside to let him pick up her horse's foot. Before he did that, he put his hands on the horse's head, one on each side, and he said something to it that I couldn't quite hear. *And the horse said something back.* Not like a neigh, or a whinny, or any of the sounds horses make, but like one person talking to another. I can't say it any better than that. The tall man bent down then, and he took hold of the foot and looked at it for a long time, and the horse didn't move or switch its tail or anything.



“A stone splinter,” the man said after a while. “It’s very small, but it’s worked itself deep into the hoof, and there’s an ulcer brewing. I can’t think why I didn’t notice it straightaway.”

“Well,” the woman said. She touched his shoulder. “You can’t notice everything.”

The tall man seemed angry with himself, the way my father gets when he’s forgotten to close the pasture gate properly, and our neighbor’s black ram gets in and fights with our poor old Brimstone. He said, “I can. I’m supposed to.” Then he turned his back to the horse and bent over that forefoot, the way our blacksmith does, and he went to work on it.

I couldn’t see what he was doing, not exactly. He didn’t have any picks or pries, like the blacksmith, and all I’m sure of is that I *think* he was singing to the horse. But I’m not sure it was proper singing. It sounded more like the little made-up rhymes that really small children chant to themselves when they’re playing in the dirt, all alone. No tune, just up and down, *dee-dah, dee-dah, dee...* boring even for a horse, I’d have thought. He kept doing it for a long time, still bending with that hoof in his hand. All at once he stopped singing and stood up, holding something that glinted in the sun the way the stream did, and he showed it to the horse, first thing. “There,” he said, “there, that’s what it was. It’s all right now.”

He tossed the thing away and picked up the hoof again, not singing, only touching it very lightly with one finger, brushing across it again and again. Then he set the foot down, and the horse stamped once, hard, and whinnied, and the tall man turned to the woman and said, “We ought to camp here for the night, all the same. They’re both weary, and my back hurts.”

The woman laughed. A deep, sweet, slow sound, it was. I’d never heard a laugh like that. She said, “The greatest wizard walking the world, and your back hurts? Heal it as you healed mine, the time the tree fell on me. That took you all of five minutes, I believe.”

“Longer than that,” the man answered her. “You were delirious, you wouldn’t remember.” He touched her hair, which was thick and pretty, even though it was mostly gray. “You know how I am about that,” he said. “I still like being mortal too much to use magic on myself. It spoils it somehow - it dulls the feeling. I’ve told you before.”

The woman said “*Mmphh*,” the way I’ve heard my mother say it a thousand times. “Well, *I’ve* been mortal all my life, and some days.... “



She didn't finish what she was saying, and the tall man smiled, the way you could tell he was teasing her. "Some days, what?"

"Nothing," the woman said, "nothing, nothing." She sounded irritable for a moment. But she put her hands on the man's arms, and she said in a different voice, "Some days - some early mornings - when the wind smells of blossoms I'll never see, and there are fawns playing in the misty orchards. Some days when you're yawning and mumbling and scratching your head, and growling that we'll see rain before nightfall, and probably hail as well... on such mornings I wish with all my heart that we could both live forever. And I think you were a great fool to give it up." She laughed again, but it sounded shaky now, a little. She said, "Then I remember things I'd rather not remember, so then my stomach acts up, and all sorts of other things start *twingeing* me - never mind what they are, or where they hurt, whether it's my body or my head, or my heart. And then I think, *no, I suppose not, maybe not.*" The tall man put his arms around her, and for a moment she rested her head on his chest. I couldn't hear what she said after that.

I didn't think I'd made any noise, but the man raised his voice a little, not looking at me, not lifting his head, and he said, "Child, there's food here." First I couldn't move, I was so frightened. He *couldn't* have seen me through the brush and all the alder trees. And then I started remembering how hungry I was, and I started toward them without knowing I was doing it. I actually looked down at my feet and watched them moving like somebody else's feet, as though they were the hungry ones, only they had to have me take them to the food. The man and the woman stood very still and waited for me.

Close to, the woman looked younger than her voice, and the tall man looked older. No, that isn't it, that's not what I mean. She wasn't young at all, but the gray hair made her face younger, and she held herself really straight, like the lady who comes when people in our village are having babies. She holds her face all stiff too, that one, and I don't like her much. This woman's face wasn't beautiful, I suppose, but it was a face you'd want to snuggle up to on a cold night. That's the best I know how to say it.

The man... one minute he looked younger than my father, and the next he'd be looking older than anybody I ever saw, older than people are supposed to *be*, maybe. He didn't have any gray hair himself, but he did have a lot of lines, but that's not what I'm talking about either. It was the eyes. His eyes were green, green, *green*, not like grass, not like emeralds - I saw an emerald once, a gypsy woman showed me - and not anything like apples or limes or such stuff. Maybe like the ocean, except I've never seen the ocean,

so I don't know. If you go deep enough into the woods (not the Midwood, of course not, but any other sort of woods), sooner or later you'll always come to a place where even the *shadows* are green, and that's the way his eyes were. I was afraid of his eyes at first.

The woman gave me a peach and watched me bite into it, too hungry to thank her. She asked me, "Girl, what are you doing here? Are you lost?"

"No, I'm not," I mumbled with my mouth full. "I just don't know where I am, that's different." They both laughed, but it wasn't a mean, making-fun laugh. I told them, "My name's Sooz, and I have to see the king. He lives somewhere right nearby, doesn't he?"

They looked at each other. I couldn't tell what they were thinking, but the tall man raised his eyebrows, and the woman shook her head a bit, slowly. They looked at each other for a long time, until the woman said, "Well, not nearby, but not so very far, either. We were bound on our way to visit him ourselves."

"Good," I said. "Oh, *good*." I was trying to sound as grown-up as they were, but it was hard, because I was so happy to find out that they could take me to the king. I said, "I'll go along with you, then."

The woman was against it before I got the first words out. She said to the tall man, "No, we couldn't. We don't know how things are." She looked sad about it, but she looked firm, too. She said, "Girl, it's not you worries me. The king is a good man, and an old friend, but it has been a long time, and kings change. Even more than other people, kings change."

"I have to see him," I said. "You go on, then. I'm not going home until I see him." I finished the peach, and the man handed me a chunk of dried fish and smiled at the woman as I tore into it. He said quietly to her, "It seems to me that you and I both remember asking to be taken along on a quest. I can't speak for you, but I begged."

But the woman wouldn't let up. "We could be bringing her into great peril. You can't take the chance, it isn't right!"

He began to answer her, but I interrupted - my mother would have slapped me halfway across the kitchen. I shouted at them, "I'm *coming* from great peril. There's a griffin nested in the Midwood, and he's eaten Jehane and Louli and - and my Felicitas - " and then I *did* start weeping, and I didn't care. I just stood there and shook and wailed, and

dropped the dried fish. I tried to pick it up, still crying so hard I couldn't see it, but the woman stopped me and gave me her scarf to dry my eyes and blow my nose. It smelled nice.

"Child," the tall man kept saying, "child, don't take on so, we didn't know about the griffin." The woman was holding me against her side, smoothing my hair and glaring at him as though it was his fault that I was howling like that. She said, "Of course we'll take you with us, girl dear - there, never mind, of course we will. That's a fearful matter, a griffin, but the king will know what to do about it. The king eats griffins for breakfast snacks - spreads them on toast with orange marmalade and gobbles them up, I promise you." And so on, being silly, but making me feel better, while the man went on pleading with me not to cry. I finally stopped when he pulled a big red handkerchief out of his pocket, twisted and knotted it into a bird-shape, and made it fly away. Uncle Ambrose does tricks with coins and shells, but he can't do anything like that.

His name was Schmendrick, which I still think is the funniest name I've heard in my life. The woman's name was Molly Grue. We didn't leave right away, because of the horses, but made camp where we were instead. I was waiting for the man, Schmendrick, to do it by magic, but he only built a fire, set out their blankets, and drew water from the stream like anyone else, while she hobbled the horses and put them to graze. I gathered firewood.

The woman, Molly, told me that the king's name was Lir, and that they had known him when he was a very young man, before he became king. "He is a true hero," she said, "a dragonslayer, a giantkiller, a rescuer of maidens, a solver of impossible riddles. He may be the greatest hero of all, because he's a good man as well. They aren't always."

"But you didn't want me to meet him," I said. "Why was that?"

Molly sighed. We were sitting under a tree, watching the sun go down, and she was brushing things out of my hair. She said, "He's old now. Schmendrick has trouble with time - I'll tell you why one day, it's a long story - and he doesn't understand that Lir may no longer be the man he was. It could be a sad reunion." She started braiding my hair around my head, so it wouldn't get in the way. "I've had an unhappy feeling about this journey from the beginning, Sooz. But *he* took a notion that Lir needed us, so here we are. You can't argue with him when he gets like that."

"A good wife isn't supposed to argue with her husband," I said. "My mother says you

wait until he goes out, or he's asleep, and then you do what you want."

Molly laughed, that rich, funny sound of hers, like a kind of deep gurgle. "Sooz, I've only known you a few hours, but I'd bet every penny I've got right now - aye, and all of Schmendrick's too - that you'll be arguing on your wedding night with whomever you marry. Anyway, Schmendrick and I aren't married. We're together, that's all. We've been together quite a long while."

"Oh," I said. I didn't know any people who were together like that, not the way she said it. "Well, you *look* married. You sort of do."

Molly's face didn't change, but she put an arm around my shoulders and hugged me close for a moment. She whispered in my ear, "I wouldn't marry him if he were the last man in the world. He eats wild radishes in bed. *Crunch, crunch, crunch*, all night - *crunch, crunch, crunch*." I giggled, and the tall man looked over at us from where he was washing a pan in the stream. The last of the sunlight was on him, and those green eyes were bright as new leaves. One of them winked at me, and I *felt* it, the way you feel a tiny breeze on your skin when it's hot. Then he went back to scrubbing the pan.

"Will it take us long to reach the king?" I asked her. "You said he didn't live too far, and I'm scared the griffin will eat somebody else while I'm gone. I need to be home."

Molly finished with my hair and gave it a gentle tug in back to bring my head up and make me look straight into her eyes. They were as gray as Schmendrick's were green, and I already knew that they turned darker or lighter gray depending on her mood. "What do you expect to happen when you meet King Lir, Sooz?" she asked me right back. "What did you have in mind when you set off to find him?"

I was surprised, "Well, I'm going to get him to come back to my village with me. All those knights he keeps sending aren't doing any good at all, so he'll just have to take care of that griffin himself. He's the king. It's his job."

"Yes," Molly said, but she said it so softly I could barely hear her. She patted my arm once, lightly, and then she got up and walked away to sit by herself near the fire. She made it look as though she was banking the fire, but she wasn't really.

We started out early the next morning. Molly had me in front of her on her horse for a time, but by and by Schmendrick took me up on his, to spare the other one's sore foot. He was more comfortable to lean against than I'd expected - bony in some places, nice and springy in others. He didn't talk much, but he sang a lot as we went along,

sometimes in languages I couldn't make out a word of, sometimes making up silly songs to make me laugh, like this one:

*Soozli, Soozli,  
speaking loozli,  
you disturb my oozli-goozli.  
Soozli, Soozli,  
would you choozli  
to become my squoozli-squoozli?*

He didn't do anything magic, except maybe once, when a crow kept diving at the horse - out of meanness; that's all. There wasn't a nest anywhere - making the poor thing dance and shy and skitter until I almost fell off. Schmendrick finally turned in the saddle and *looked* at it, and the next minute a hawk came swooping out of nowhere and chased that crow screaming into a thornbush where the hawk couldn't follow. I guess that was magic.

It was actually pretty country we were passing through, once we got onto the proper road. Trees, meadows, little soft valleys, hillsides covered with wildflowers I didn't know. You could see they got a lot more rain here than we do where I live. It's a good thing sheep don't need grazing, the way cows do. They'll go where the goats go, and goats will go anywhere. We're like that in my village, we have to be. But I liked this land better.

Schmendrick told me it hadn't always been like that. "Before Lir, this was all barren desert where nothing grew - *nothing*, Sooz. It was said that the country was under a curse, and in a way it was, but I'll tell you about that another time." People *always* say that when you're a child, and I hate it. "But Lir changed everything. The land was so glad to see him that it began blooming and blossoming the moment he became king, and it has done so ever since. Except poor Hagsgate, but that's another story too." His voice got slower and deeper when he talked about Hagsgate, as though he weren't talking to me.

I twisted my neck around to look up at him. "Do you think King Lir will come back with me and kill that griffin? I think Molly thinks he won't, because he's so old." I hadn't known I was worried about that until I actually said it.

"Why, of course he will, girl." Schmendrick winked at me again. "He never could resist the plea of a maiden in distress, the more difficult and dangerous the deed, the better.

If he did not spur to your village's aid himself at the first call, it was surely because he was engaged on some other heroic venture. I'm as certain as I can be that as soon as you make your request - remember to curtsy properly - he'll snatch up his great sword and spear, whisk you up to his saddle, bow, and be off after your griffin with the road smoking behind him. Young or old, that's always been his way." He rumbled my hair in the back. "Molly overworryes. That's *her* way. We are who we are."

"What's a curtsy?" I asked him. I know now, because Molly showed me, but I didn't then. He didn't laugh, except with his eyes, then gestured for me to face forward again as he went back to singing.

*Soozli, Soozli,  
you amuse me,  
right down to my solesli-shoesli.  
Soozli, Soozli,  
I bring newsli -  
we could wed next stewsli-Tuesli.*

I learned that the king had lived in a castle on a cliff by the sea when he was young, less than a day's journey from Hagsgate, but it fell down. Schmendrick wouldn't tell me how - so he built a new one somewhere else. I was sorry about that, because I've never seen the sea, and I've always wanted to, and I still haven't. But I'd never seen a castle, either, so there was that. I leaned back against his chest and fell asleep.

They'd been traveling slowly, taking time to let Molly's horse heal, but once its hoof was all right we galloped most of the rest of the way. Those horses of theirs didn't look magic or special, but they could run for hours without getting tired, and when I helped to rub them down and curry them, they were hardly sweating. They slept on their sides, like people, not standing up, the way our horses do.

Even so, it took us three full days to reach King Lir. Molly said he had bad memories of the castle that fell down, so that was why this one was as far from the sea as he could make it, and as different from the old one. It was on a hill, so the king could see anyone coming along the road, but there wasn't a moat, and there weren't any guards in armor, and there was only one banner on the walls. It was blue, with a picture of a white unicorn on it. Nothing else.

I was disappointed. I tried not to show it, but Molly saw. "You wanted a fortress," she said to me gently. "You were expecting dark stone towers, flags and cannons and

knights, trumpeters blowing from the \*battlements. I'm sorry. It being your first castle, and all."

"No, it's a pretty castle," I said. And it *was* pretty, sitting peacefully on its hilltop in the sunlight, surrounded by all those wildflowers. There was a marketplace, I could see now, and there were huts like ours snuggled up against the castle walls, so that the people could come inside for protection, if they needed to. I said, "Just looking at it, you can see that the king is a nice man."

Molly was looking at me with her head a little bit to one side. She said, "He is a hero, Sooz. Remember that, whatever else you see, whatever you think. Lir is a hero."

"Well, I know *that*," I said. "I'm sure he'll help me. I am."

But I wasn't. The moment I saw that nice, friendly castle, I wasn't a bit sure.

We didn't have any trouble getting in. The gate simply opened when Schmendrick knocked once. And he and Molly and I walked in through the market, where people were selling all kinds of fruits and vegetables, pots and pans and clothing and so on, the way they do in our village. They all called to us to come over to their barrows and buy things, but nobody tried to stop us going into the castle. There were two men at the two great doors, and they did ask us our names and why we wanted to see King Lir. The moment Schmendrick told them his name, they stepped back quickly and let us by, so I began to think that maybe he actually was a great magician, even if I never saw him do anything but little tricks and little songs. The men didn't offer to take him to the king, and he didn't ask.

Molly was right. I *was* expecting the castle to be all cold and shadowy, with queens looking sideways at us, and big men clanking by in armor. But the halls we followed Schmendrick through were full of sunlight from long, high windows, and the people we saw mostly nodded and smiled at us. We passed a stone stair curling up out of sight, and I was sure that the king must live at the top, but Schmendrick never looked at it. He led us straight through the great hall - they had a fireplace big enough to roast three cows! - and on past the kitchens and the \*scullery and the laundry, to a room under another stair. *That* was dark. You wouldn't have found it unless you knew where to look. Schmendrick didn't knock at that door, and he didn't say anything magic to make it open. He just stood outside and waited, and by and by it rattled open, and we went in.

The king was in there. All by himself, the king was in there.



He was sitting on an ordinary wooden chair, not a throne. It was a really small room, the same size as my mother's weaving room, so maybe that's why he looked so big. He was as tall as Schmendrick, but he seemed so much *wider*. I was ready for him to have a long beard, spreading out all across his chest, but he only had a short one, like my father, except white. He wore a red and gold mantle, and there was a real golden crown on his white head, not much bigger than the wreaths we put on our champion rams at the end of the year. He had a kind face, with a big old nose, and big blue eyes, like a little boy. But his eyes were so tired and heavy, I didn't know how he kept them open. Sometimes he didn't. There was nobody else in the little room, and he peered at the three of us as though he knew he knew us, but not *why*. He tried to smile.

Schmendrick said very gently, "Majesty, it is Schmendrick and Molly, Molly Grue." The king blinked at him.

"Molly with the cat," Molly whispered. "You remember the cat, Lir."

"Yes," the king said. It seemed to take him forever to speak that one word. "The cat, yes, of course." But he didn't say anything after that, and we stood there and stood there, and the king kept smiling at something I couldn't see.

Schmendrick said to Molly, "*She* used to forget herself like that." His voice had changed, the same way it changed when he was talking about the way the land used to be. He said, "And then you would always remind her that she was a unicorn."

And the king changed too then. All at once his eyes were clear and shining with feeling, like Molly's eyes, and he *saw* us for the first time. He said softly, "Oh, my friends!" and he stood up and came to us and put his arms around Schmendrick and Molly. And I saw that he had been a hero, and that he was still a hero, and I began to think it might be all right, after all. Maybe it was really going to be all right.

"And who may this princess be?" he asked, looking straight at me. He had the proper voice for a king, deep and strong, but not frightening, not mean. I tried to tell him my name, but I couldn't make a sound, so he actually knelt on one knee in front of me, and he took my hand. He said, "I have often been of some use to princesses in distress. Command me."

"I'm not a princess, I'm Sooz," I said, "and I'm from a village you wouldn't even know, and there's a griffin eating the children." It all tumbled out like that, in one breath, but he didn't laugh or look at me any differently. What he did was ask me the name of my village, and I told him, and he said, "But indeed I know it, madam. I have been there. And now I will have the pleasure of returning."



Over his shoulder I saw Schmendrick and Molly staring at each other. Schmendrick was about to say something, but then they both turned toward the door, because a small dark woman, about my mother's age, only dressed in tunic, trews, and boots like Molly, had just come in. She said in a small, worried voice, "I am so truly sorry that I was not here to greet His Majesty's old companions. No need to tell me your illustrious names - my own is Lisene, and I am the king's royal secretary, translator, and protector." She took King Lir's arm, very politely and carefully, and began moving him back to his chair.

Schmendrick seemed to take a minute getting his own breath back. He said, "I have never known my old friend Lir to need any of those services. Especially a protector."

Lisene was busy with the king and didn't look at Schmendrick as she answered him. "How long has it been since you saw him last?" Schmendrick didn't answer. Lisene's voice was quiet still, but not so nervous. "Time sets its claw in us all, my lord, sooner or later. We are none of us that which we were." King Lir sat down obediently on his chair and closed his eyes.

I could tell that Schmendrick was angry, and growing angrier as he stood there, but he didn't show it. My father gets angry like that, which is how I knew. He said, "His Majesty has agreed to return to this young person's village with her, in order to rid her people of a marauding griffin. We will start out tomorrow."

Lisene swung around on us so fast that I was sure she was going to start shouting and giving everybody orders. But she didn't do anything like that. You could never have told that she was the least bit annoyed or alarmed. All she said was, "I am afraid that will not be possible, my lord. The king is in no fit condition for such a journey, nor certainly for such a deed."

"The king thinks rather differently." Schmendrick was talking through clenched teeth now.

"Does he, then?" Lisene pointed at King Lir, and I saw that he had fallen asleep in his chair. His head was drooping - I was afraid his crown was going to fall off - and his mouth hung open. Lisene said, "You came seeking the peerless warrior you remember, and you have found a spent, senile old man. Believe me, I understand your distress, but you must see - "

Schmendrick cut her off. I never understood what people meant when they talked about someone's eyes actually flashing, but at least green eyes can do it. He looked

even taller than he was, and when he pointed a finger at Lisene I honestly expected the little woman to catch fire or maybe melt away. Schmendrick's voice was especially frightening because it was so quiet. He said, "Hear me now. I am Schmendrick the Magician, and I see my old friend Lir, as I have always seen him, wise and powerful and good, beloved of a unicorn."

And with that word, for a second time, the king woke up. His blinked once, then gripped the arms of the chair and pushed himself to his feet. He didn't look at us, but at Lisene, and he said, "I will go with them. It is my task and my gift. You will see to it that I am made ready."

Lisene said, "Majesty, no! Majesty, I beg you!"

King Lir reached out and took Lisene's head between his big hands, and I saw that there was love between them. He said, "It is what I am for. You know that as well as *he* does. See to it, Lisene, and keep all well for me while I am gone."

Lisene looked so sad, so *lost*, that I didn't know what to think, about her or King Lir or anything. I didn't realize that I had moved back against Molly Grue until I felt her hand in my hair. She didn't say anything, but it was nice smelling her there. Lisene said, very quietly, "I will see to it."

She turned around then and started for the door with her head lowered. I think she wanted to pass us by without looking at us at all, but she couldn't do it. Right at the door, her head came up and she stared at Schmendrick so hard that I pushed into Molly's skirt so I couldn't see her eyes. I heard her say, as though she could barely make the words come out, "His death be on your head, magician." I think she was crying, only not the way grown people do.

And I heard Schmendrick's answer, and his voice was so cold I wouldn't have recognized it if I didn't know. "He has died before. Better that death - better this, better *any* death - than the one he was dying in that chair. If the griffin kills him, it will yet have saved his life." I heard the door close.

I asked Molly, speaking as low as I could, "What did he mean, about the king having died?" But she put me to one side, and she went to King Lir and knelt in front of him, reaching up to take one of his hands between hers. She said, "Lord... Majesty... friend... dear friend - remember. Oh, please, please *remember*."

The old man was swaying on his feet, but he put his other hand on Molly's head and he mumbled, "Child, Sooz - is that your pretty name, Sooz? - of course I will come to your village. The griffin was never hatched that dares harm King Lir's people." He sat down hard in the chair again, but he held onto her hand tightly. He looked at her, with his blue eyes wide and his mouth trembling a little. He said, "But you must remind me, little one. When I... when I lose myself - when I lose *her* - you must remind me that I am still searching, still waiting... that I have never forgotten her, never turned from all she taught me. I sit in this place... I *sit*... because a king has to sit, you see... but in my mind, in my poor mind, I am always away with *her*.... "

I didn't have any idea what he was talking about. I do now.

He fell asleep again then, holding Molly's hand. She sat with him for a long time, resting her head on his knee. Schmendrick went off to make sure Lisene was doing what she was supposed to do, getting everything ready for the king's departure. There was a lot of clattering and shouting already, enough so you'd have thought a war was starting, but nobody came in to see King Lir or speak to him, wish him luck or anything. It was almost as though he wasn't really there.

Me, I tried to write a letter home, with pictures of the king and the castle, but I fell asleep like him, and I slept the rest of that day and all night too. I woke up in a bed I couldn't remember

getting into, with Schmendrick looking down at me, saying, "Up, child, on your feet. You started all this uproar - it's time for you to see it through. The king is coming to slay your griffin."

I was out of bed before he'd finished speaking. I said, "Now? Are we going right now?"

Schmendrick shrugged his shoulders. "By noon, anyway, if I can finally get Lisene and the rest of them to understand that they are *not* coming. Lisene wants to bring fifty men-at-arms, a dozen wagonloads of supplies, a regiment of runners to send messages back and forth, and every wretched physician in the kingdom." He sighed and spread his hands. "I may have to turn the lot of them to stone if we are to be off today."

I thought he was probably joking, but I already knew that you couldn't be sure with Schmendrick. He said, "If Lir comes with a train of followers, there will be no Lir. Do you understand me, Sooz?" I shook my head. Schmendrick said, "It is my fault. If I had made sure to visit here more often, there were things I could have done to restore the Lir Molly and I once knew. My fault, my thoughtlessness."

I remembered Molly telling me, “Schmendrick has trouble with time.” I still didn’t know what she meant, nor this either. I said, “It’s just the way old people get. We have old men in our village who talk like him. One woman, too, Mam Jennet. She always cries when it rains.”

Schmendrick clenched his fist and pounded it against his leg. “King Lir is *not* mad, girl, nor is he senile, as Lisene called him. He is *Lir*, Lir still, I promise you that. It is only here, in this castle, surrounded by good, loyal people who love him - who will love him to death, if they are allowed - that he sinks into... into the condition you have seen.” He didn’t say anything more for a moment; then he stooped a little to peer closely at me. “Did you notice the change in him when I spoke of unicorns?”

“Unicorn,” I answered. “One unicorn who loved him. I noticed.”

Schmendrick kept looking at me in a new way, as though we’d never met before. He said, “Your pardon, Sooz. I keep taking you for a child. Yes. One unicorn. He has not seen her since he became king, but he is what he is because of her. And when I speak that word, when Molly or I say her name - which I have not done yet - then he is recalled to himself.” He paused for a moment, and then added, very softly, “As we had so often to do for her, so long ago.”

“I didn’t know unicorns had names,” I said. “I didn’t know they ever loved people.”

“They don’t. Only this one.” He turned and walked away swiftly, saying over his shoulder, “Her name was Amalthea. Go find Molly, she’ll see you fed.”

The room I’d slept in wasn’t big, not for something in a castle. Catania, the headwoman of our village, has a bedroom nearly as large, which I know because I play with her daughter Sophia. But the sheets I’d been under were embroidered with a crown, and engraved on the headboard was a picture of the blue banner with the white unicorn. I had slept the night in King Lir’s own bed while he dozed in an old wooden chair.

I didn’t wait to have breakfast with Molly, but ran straight to the little room where I had last seen the king. He was there, but so changed that I froze in the doorway, trying to get my breath. Three men were bustling around him like tailors, dressing him in his armor: all the padding underneath, first, and then the different pieces for the arms and legs and shoulders. I don’t know any of the names. The men hadn’t put his helmet on him, so his head stuck out at the top, white-haired and big-nosed and blue-eyed, but he didn’t look silly like that. He looked like a giant.

When he saw me, he smiled, and it was a warm, happy smile, but it was a little frightening too, almost a little terrible, like the time I saw the griffin burning in the black sky. It was a hero's smile. I'd never seen one before. He called to me, "Little one, come and buckle on my sword, if you would. It would be an honor for me."

The men had to show me how you do it. The swordbelt, all by itself, was so heavy it kept slipping through my fingers, and I did need help with the buckle. But I put the sword into its sheath alone, although I needed both hands to lift it. When it slid home it made a sound like a great door slamming shut. King Lir touched my face with one of his cold iron gloves and said, "Thank you, little one. The next time that blade is drawn, it will be to free your village. You have my word."

Schmendrick came in then, took one look, and just shook his head. He said, "This is the most ridiculous... It is four days' ride - perhaps five - with the weather turning hot enough to broil a lobster on an iceberg. There's no need for armor until he faces the griffin." You could see how stupid he felt they all were, but King Lir smiled at him the same way he'd smiled at me, and Schmendrick stopped talking.

King Lir said, "Old friend, I go forth as I mean to return. It is my way."

Schmendrick looked like a little boy himself for a moment. All he could say was, "Your business. Don't blame me, that's all. At *least* leave the helmet off."

He was about to turn away and stalk out of the room, but Molly came up behind him and said, "Oh, Majesty - Lir - how grand! How beautiful you are!" She sounded the way my Aunt Zerelda sounds when she's carrying on about my brother Wilfrid. He could mess his pants and jump in a hog pen, and Aunt Zerelda would still think he was the best, smartest boy in the whole world. But Molly was different. She brushed those tailors, or whatever they were, straight aside, and she stood on tiptoe to smooth King Lir's white hair, and I heard her whisper, "I wish *she* could see you."

King Lir looked at her for a long time without saying anything. Schmendrick stood there, off to the side, and he didn't say anything either, but they were together, the three of them. I wish that Felicitas and I could have been together like that when we got old. Then King Lir looked at *me*, and he said, "The child is waiting." And that's how we set off for home. The king, Schmendrick, Molly, and me.

To the last minute, poor old Lisene kept trying to get King Lir to take some knights or soldiers with him. She actually followed us on foot when we left, calling, "Highness - Majesty - if you will have none else, take me! Take me!" At that the king stopped and

turned and went back to her. He got down off his horse and embraced Lisene, and I don't know what they said to each other, but Lisene didn't follow anymore after that.

I rode with the king most of the time, sitting up in front of him on his skittery black mare. I wasn't sure I could trust her not to bite me, or to kick me when I wasn't looking, but King Lir told me, "It is only peaceful times that make her nervous, be assured of that. When dragons charge her, belching death - for the fumes are more dangerous than the flames, little one - when your griffin swoops down at her, you will see her at her best." I still didn't like her much, but I did like the king. He didn't sing to me, the way Schmendrick had, but he told me stories, and they weren't fables or fairytales. These were real, true stories, and he knew they were true because they had all happened to him! I never heard stories like those, and I never will again. I know that for certain.

He told me more things to keep in mind if you have to fight a dragon. And he told me how he learned that ogres aren't always as stupid as they look, and why you should never swim in a mountain pool when the snows are melting, and how you can *sometimes* make friends with a troll. He talked about his father's castle, where he grew up, and about how he met Schmendrick and Molly there, and even about Molly's cat, which he said was a little thing with a funny crooked ear. But when I asked him why the castle fell down, he wouldn't exactly say, no more than Schmendrick would. His voice became very quiet and faraway. "I forget things, you know, little one," he said. "I try to hold on, but I do forget."

Well, I knew *that*. He kept calling Molly Sooz, and he never called me anything but *little one*, and Schmendrick kept having to remind him where we were bound and why. That was always at night, though. He was usually fine during the daytime. And when he did turn confused again, and wander off (not just in his mind, either - I found him in the woods one night, talking to a tree as though it was his father), all you had to do was mention a white unicorn named Amalthea, and he'd come to himself almost right away. Generally it was Schmendrick who did that, but I brought him back that time, holding my hand and telling me how you can recognize a pooka, and why you need to. But I could never get him to say a word about the unicorn.

Autumn comes early where I live. The days were still hot, and the king never would take his armor off, except to sleep, not even his helmet with the big blue plume on top, but at night I burrowed in between Molly and Schmendrick for warmth, and you could hear the stags belling everywhere all the time, crazy with the season. One of them actually charged King Lir's horse while I was riding with him, and Schmendrick was

about to do something magic to the stag, the same way he'd done with the crow. But the king laughed and rode straight at him, right *into* those horns. I screamed, but the black mare never hesitated, and the stag turned at the last moment and ambled out of sight in the brush. He was wagging his tail in circles, the way goats do, and looking as puzzled and dreamy as King Lir himself.

I was proud, once I got over being frightened. But both Schmendrick and Molly scolded him, and he kept apologizing to me for the rest of the day for having put me in danger, as Molly had once said he would. "I forgot you were with me, little one, and for that I will always ask your pardon." Then he smiled at me with that beautiful, terrible hero's smile I'd seen before, and he said, "But oh, little one, the remembering!" And that night he didn't wander away and get himself lost. Instead he sat happily by the fire with us and sang a whole long song about the adventures of an outlaw called Captain Cully. I'd never heard of him, but it's a really good song.

We reached my village late on the afternoon of the fourth day, and Schmendrick made us stop together before we rode in. He said, directly to me, "Sooz, if you tell them that this is the king himself, there will be nothing but noise and joy and celebration, and nobody will get any rest with all that carrying-on. It would be best for you to tell them that we have brought King Lir's greatest knight with us, and that he needs a night to purify himself in prayer and meditation before he deals with your griffin." He took hold of my chin and made me look into his green, green eyes, and he said, "Girl, you have to trust me. I always know what I'm doing - that's my trouble. Tell your people what I've said." And Molly touched me and looked at me without saying anything, so I knew it was all right.

I left them camped on the outskirts of the village, and walked home by myself. Malka met me first. She smelled me before I even reached Simon and Elsie's tavern, and she came running and crashed into my legs and knocked me over. And then pinned me down with her paws on my shoulders, and kept licking my face until I had to nip her nose to make her let me up and run to the house with me. My father was out with the flock. But my mother and Wilfrid were there, and they grabbed me and nearly spanked me for running off in Uncle Ambrose's cart without telling anyone, and when my father came in, he spanked me all over again. But I didn't mind.

I told them I'd seen King Lir in person, and been in his castle, and I said what Schmendrick had told me to say, but nobody was much cheered by it. My father just



sat down and grunted, “Oh, aye - another great warrior for our comfort and the griffin’s \*dessert. Your bloody king won’t ever come here his bloody self, you can be sure of that.” My mother \*reproached him for talking like that in front of Wilfrid and me, but he went on, “Maybe he cared about places like this, people like us once, but he’s old now, and old kings only care who’s going to be king after them. You can’t tell me anything different.”

I wanted more than anything to tell him that King Lir *was* here, less than half a mile from our doorstep, but I didn’t, and not only because Schmendrick had told me not to. I wasn’t sure what the king might look like, white-haired and shaky and not here all the time, to people like my father. I wasn’t sure what he looked like to me, for that matter. He was a lovely, dignified old man who told wonderful stories. But when I tried to imagine him riding alone into the Midwood to do battle with a griffin, a griffin that had already eaten his best knights... to be honest, I couldn’t do it. Now that I’d actually brought him all the way home with me, as I’d set out to do, I was suddenly afraid that I’d drawn him to his death. And I knew I wouldn’t ever forgive myself if that happened.

I wanted so much to see them that night, Schmendrick and Molly and the king. I wanted to sleep out there on the ground with them, and listen to their talk, and then maybe I’d not worry so much about the morning. But of course there wasn’t a chance of that. My family would hardly let me out of their sight to wash my face. Wilfrid kept following me around, asking endless questions about the castle. And my father took me to Catania, who had me tell the whole story over again, and agreed with him that whomever the king had sent this time wasn’t likely to be any more use than the others had been. And my mother kept feeding me and scolding me and hugging me, all more or less at the same time. And then, in the night, we heard the griffin, making that soft, lonely, horrible sound it makes when it’s hunting. So I didn’t get very much sleep, between one thing and another.

But at sunrise, after I’d helped Wilfrid milk the goats, they let me run out to the camp, as long as Malka came with me, which was practically like having my mother along. Molly was already helping King Lir into his armor, and Schmendrick was burying the remains of last night’s dinner, as though they were starting one more ordinary day on their journey to somewhere. They greeted me, and Schmendrick thanked me for doing as he’d asked, so that the king could have a restful night before he -



I didn't let him finish. I didn't know I was going to do it, I swear, but I ran up to King Lir, and I threw my arms around him, and I said, "Don't go! I changed my mind, don't go!" Just like Lisene.

King Lir looked down at me. He seemed as tall as a tree right then, and he patted my head very gently with his iron glove. He said, "Little one, I have a griffin to slay. It is my job."

Which was what I'd said myself, though it seemed like years ago, and that made it so much worse. I said a second time, "I changed my mind! Somebody else can fight the griffin, you don't have to! You go home! You go home *now* and live your life, and be the king, and everything.... " I was babbling and sniffing, and generally being a baby, I know that. I'm glad Wilfrid didn't see me.

King Lir kept petting me with one hand and trying to put me aside with the other, but I wouldn't let go. I think I was actually trying to pull his sword out of its sheath, to take it away from him. He said, "No, no, little one, you don't understand. There are some monsters that only a king can kill. I have always known that - I should never, never have sent those poor men to die in my place. No one else in all the land can do this for you and your village. Most truly now, it is my job." And he kissed my hand, the way he must have kissed the hands of so many queens. He kissed my hand too, just like theirs.

Molly came up then and took me away from him. She held me close, and she stroked my hair, and she told me, "Child, Sooz, there's no turning back for him now, or for you either. It was your fate to bring this last cause to him, and his fate to take it up, and neither of you could have done differently, being who you are. And now you must be as brave as he is, and see it all play out." She caught herself there, and changed it. "Rather, you must wait to learn how it has played out, because you are certainly not coming into that forest with us."

"I'm coming," I said. "You can't stop me. Nobody can." I wasn't sniffing or anything anymore. I said it like that, that's all.

Molly held me at arm's length, and she shook me a little bit. She said, "Sooz, if you can tell me that your parents have given their permission, then you may come. Have they done so?"

@I didn't answer her. She shook me again, gentler this time, saying, "Oh, that was wicked of me, forgive me, my dear friend. I knew the day we met that you could never

learn to lie.” Then she took both of my hands between hers, and she said, “Lead us to the Midwood, if you will, Sooz, and we will say our farewells there. Will you do that for us? For me?”

I nodded, but I still didn’t speak. I couldn’t, my throat was hurting so much. Molly squeezed my hands and said, “Thank you.” Schmendrick came up and made some kind of sign to her with his eyes, or his eyebrows, because she said, “Yes, I know,” although he hadn’t said a thing. So she went to King Lir with him, and I was alone, trying to stop shaking. I managed it, after a while.

The Midwood isn’t far. They wouldn’t really have needed my help to find it. You can see the beginning of it from the roof of Ellis the baker’s house, which is the tallest one on that side of the village. It’s always dark, even from a distance, even if you’re not actually in it. I don’t know if that’s because they’re oak trees (we have all sorts of tales and sayings about oaken woods, and the creatures that live there) or maybe because of some enchantment, or because of the griffin. Maybe it was different before the griffin came. Uncle Ambrose says it’s been a bad place all his life, but my father says no, he and his friends used to hunt there, and he actually picnicked there once or twice with my mother, when they were young.

King Lir rode in front, looking grand and almost young, with his head up and the blue plume on his helmet floating above him, more like a banner than a feather. I was going to ride with Molly, but the king leaned from his saddle as I started past, and swooped me up before him, saying, “You shall guide and company me, little one, until we reach the forest.” I was proud of that, but I was frightened too, because he was so happy, and I knew he was going to his death, trying to make up for all those knights he’d sent to fight the griffin. I didn’t try to warn him. He wouldn’t have heard me, and I knew that too. Me and poor old Lisene.

He told me all about griffins as we rode. He said, “If you should ever have dealings with a griffin, little one, you must remember that they are not like dragons. A dragon is simply a dragon - make yourself small when it dives down at you, but hold your ground and strike at the underbelly, and you’ve won the day. But a griffin, now... a griffin is two highly dissimilar creatures, eagle and lion, fused together by some god with a god’s sense of humor. And so there is an eagle’s heart beating in the beast, and a lion’s heart as well, and you must pierce them both to have any hope of surviving the battle.” He was as cheerful as he could be about it all, holding me safe on the saddle,

and saying over and over, the way old people do, “Two hearts, never forget that - many people do. Eagle heart, lion heart - eagle heart, lion heart. *Never* forget, little one.”

We passed a lot of people I knew, out with their sheep and goats, and they all waved to me, and called, and made jokes, and so on. They cheered for King Lir, but they didn’t bow to him, or take off their caps, because nobody recognized him, nobody knew. He seemed delighted about that, which most kings probably wouldn’t be. But he’s the only king I’ve met, so I can’t say.

The Midwood seemed to be reaching out for us before we were anywhere near it, long fingery shadows stretching across the empty fields, and the leaves flickering and blinking, though there wasn’t any wind. A forest is usually really noisy, day and night, if you stand still and listen to the birds and the insects and the streams and such, but the Midwood is always silent, silent. That reaches out too, the silence.

We halted a stone’s throw from the forest, and King Lir said to me, “We part here, little one,” and set me down on the ground as carefully as though he was putting a bird back in its nest. He said to Schmendrick, “I know better than to try to keep you and Sooz from following -” he kept on calling Molly by my name, every time, I don’t know why - “but I enjoin you, in the name of great Nikos himself, and in the name of our long and precious friendship....” He stopped there, and he didn’t say anything more for such a while that I was afraid he was back to forgetting who he was and why he was there, the way he had been. But then he went on, clear and ringing as one of those mad stags, “I charge you in *her* name, in the name of the Lady Amalthea, not to assist me in any way from the moment we pass the very first tree, but to leave me altogether to what is mine to do. Is that understood between us, dear ones of my heart?”

Schmendrick hated it. You didn’t have to be magic to see that. It was so plain, even to me, that he had been planning to take over the battle as soon as they were actually facing the griffin. But King Lir was looking right at him with those young blue eyes, and with a little bit of a smile on his face, and Schmendrick simply didn’t know what to do. There wasn’t anything he *could* do, so he finally nodded and mumbled, “If that is Your Majesty’s wish.” The king couldn’t hear him at all the first time, so he made him say it again.

And then, of course, everybody had to say good-bye to me, since I wasn’t allowed to go any farther with them. Molly said she knew we’d see each other again, and Schmendrick told me that I had the makings of a real warrior queen, only he was

certain I was too smart to be one. And King Lir... King Lir said to me, very quietly, so nobody else could hear, “Little one, if I had married and had a daughter, I would have asked no more than that she should be as brave and kind and loyal as you. Remember that, as I will remember you to my last day.”

Which was all nice, and I wished my mother and father could have heard what all these grown people were saying about me. But then they turned and rode on into the Midwood, the three of them, and only Molly looked back at me. And I think *that* was to make sure I wasn’t following, because I was supposed just to go home and wait to find out if my friends were alive or dead, and if the griffin was going to be eating any more children. It was all over.

And maybe I would have gone home and let it be all over, if it hadn’t been for Malka.

She should have been with the sheep and not with me, of course - that’s her job, the same way King Lir was doing his job, going to meet the griffin. But Malka thinks I’m a sheep too, the most stupid, aggravating sheep she ever had to guard, forever wandering away into some kind of danger. All the way to the Midwood she had trotted quietly alongside the king’s horse. But now that we were alone again she came rushing up and bounced all over me, barking like thunder and knocking me down, hard, the way she does whenever I’m not where she wants me to be. I always brace myself when I see her coming, but it never helps.

What she does then, before I’m on my feet, is take the hem of my smock in her jaws and start tugging me in the direction she thinks I should go. But this time... this time she suddenly got up, as though she’d forgotten all about me. And she stared past me at the Midwood with all the white showing in her eyes and a low sound coming out of her that I don’t think she knew she could make. The next moment, she was gone, racing into the forest with foam flying from her barking the way she was.

Well, I didn’t have any choice. King Lir and Schmendrick and Molly all had a choice, going after the Midwood griffin, but Malka was my dog, and she didn’t know what she was facing, and I *couldn’t* let her face it by herself. So there wasn’t anything else for me to do. I took an enormous long breath and looked around me, and then I walked into the forest after her.

Actually, I ran, as long as I could, and then I walked until I could run again, and then I ran some more. There aren’t any paths into the Midwood, because nobody goes there, so it wasn’t hard to see where three horses had pushed through the undergrowth, and

then a dog's tracks on top of the hoofprints. It was very quiet with no wind, not one bird calling, no sound but my own panting. I couldn't even hear Malka anymore. I was hoping that maybe they'd come on the griffin while it was asleep, and King Lir had already killed it in its nest. I didn't think so, though. He'd probably have decided it wasn't honorable to attack a sleeping griffin, and wakened it up for a fair fight. I hadn't known him very long, but I knew what he'd do.

Then, a little way ahead of me, the whole forest exploded.

It was too much noise for me to sort it out in my head. There was Malka absolutely *howling*, and birds bursting up everywhere out of the brush, and Schmendrick or the king or someone was shouting, only I couldn't make out any of the words. And underneath it all was something that wasn't loud at all, a sound somewhere between a growl and that terrible soft call, like a frightened child. Then - just as I broke into the clearing - the rattle and scrape of knives, only much louder this time, as the griffin shot straight up with the sun on its wings. Its cold golden eyes *bit* into mine, and its beak was open so wide you could see down and down the blazing red gullet. It filled the sky.

And King Lir, astride his black mare, filled the clearing. He was as huge as the griffin, and his sword was the size of a boar spear, and he shook it at the griffin, daring it to light down and fight him on the ground. But the griffin was staying out of range, circling overhead to get a good look at these strange new people. Malka was utterly off her head, screaming and hurling herself into the air again and again, snapping at the griffin's lion feet and eagle claws, but coming down each time without so much as an iron feather between her teeth. I lunged and caught her in the air, trying to drag her away before the griffin turned on her, but she fought me, scratching my face with her own dull dog claws, until I had to let her go. The last time she leaped, the griffin suddenly stooped and caught her full on her side with one huge wing, so hard that she couldn't get a sound out, no more than I could. She flew all the way across the clearing, slammed into a tree, fell to the ground, and after that she didn't move.

Molly told me later that that was when King Lir struck for the griffin's lion heart. I didn't see it. I was flying across the clearing myself, throwing myself over Malka, in case the griffin came after her again, and I didn't see anything except her staring eyes and the blood on her side. But I did hear the griffin's roar when it happened, and when I could turn my head, I saw the blood splashing along *its* side, and the back legs squinching up against its belly, the way you do when you're really hurting. King Lir

shouted like a boy. He threw that great sword as high as the griffin, and snatched it back again, and then he charged toward the griffin as it wobbled lower and lower, with its crippled lion half dragging it out of the air. It landed with a saggy thump, just like Malka, and there was a moment when I was absolutely sure it was dead. I remember I was thinking, very far away, *this is good, I'm glad, I'm sure I'm glad.*

But Schmendrick was screaming at the king, “Two hearts! *Two hearts!*” until his voice split with it. And Molly was on me, trying to drag me away from the griffin. And *I* was hanging onto Malka - she'd gotten so *heavy* - and I don't know what else was happening right then, because all I was seeing and thinking about was Malka. And all I was feeling was her heart not beating under mine.

She guarded my cradle when I was born. I cut my teeth on her poor ears, and she never made one sound. My mother says so.

King Lir wasn't seeing or hearing any of us. There was nothing in the world for him but the griffin, which was flopping and struggling lopsidedly in the middle of the clearing. I couldn't help feeling sorry for it, even then, even after it had killed Malka and my friends, and all the sheep and goats too, and I don't know how many else. And King Lir must have felt the same way, because he got down from his black mare and went straight up to the griffin, and he spoke to it, lowering his sword until the tip was on the ground. He said, “You were a noble and terrible adversary - surely the last such I will ever confront. We have accomplished what we were born to do, the two of us. I thank you for your death.”

And on that last word, the griffin had him.

It was the eagle, lunging up at him, dragging the lion half along, the way I'd been dragging Malka's dead weight. King Lir stepped back, swinging the sword fast enough to take off the griffin's head, but it was faster than he was. That dreadful beak caught him at the waist, shearing through his armor the way an axe would smash through piecrust, and he doubled over without a sound that I heard, looking like wetwash on the line. There was blood, and worse, and I couldn't have said if he were dead or alive. I thought the griffin was going to bite him in two.

I shook loose from Molly. She was calling to Schmendrick to *do* something, but of course he couldn't, and she knew it, because he'd promised King Lir that he wouldn't interfere by magic, whatever happened. But I wasn't a magician, and I hadn't promised anything to anybody. I told Malka I'd be right back.

The griffin didn't see me coming. It was bending its head down over King Lir, hiding him with its wings. The lion part trailing along so limply in the dust made it more fearful to see, though I can't say why, and it was making a sort of cooing, purring sound all the time. I had a big rock in my left hand, and a dead branch in my right, and I was bawling something, but I don't remember what. You can scare wolves away from the flock sometimes if you run at them like that, determined.

I can throw things hard with either hand - Wilfrid found *that* out when I was still small - and the griffin looked up fast when the rock hit it on the side of its neck. It didn't like that, but it was too busy with King Lir to bother with me. I didn't think for a minute that my branch was going to be any use on even a half-dead griffin, but I threw it as far as I could, so that the griffin would look away for a moment. And as soon as it did I made a little run and a big sprawling dive for the hilt of the king's sword, which was sticking out under him where he'd fallen. I knew I could lift it because of having buckled it on him when we set out together.

But I couldn't get it free. He was too heavy, like Malka. But I wouldn't give up or let go. I kept pulling and pulling on that sword, and I didn't feel Molly pulling at *me* again, and I didn't notice the griffin starting to scrabble toward me over King Lir's body. I did hear Schmendrick, sounding a long way off, and I thought he was singing one of the nonsense songs he'd made up for me, only why would he be doing something like that just now? Then I did finally look up, to push my sweaty hair off my face, just before the griffin grabbed me up in one of its claws, yanking me away from Molly to throw me down on top of King Lir. His armor was so cold against my cheek, it was as though the armor had died with him.

The griffin looked into my eyes. That was the worst of all, worse than the pain where the claw had me, worse than not seeing my parents and stupid Wilfrid anymore, worse than knowing that I hadn't been able to save either the king or Malka. Griffins can't talk (dragons do, but only to heroes, King Lir told me), but those golden eyes were saying into my eyes, "Yes, I will die soon, but you are all dead now, all of you. I will pick your bones before the ravens have mine. And your folk will remember what I was, and what I did to them, when there is no one left in your vile, pitiful anthill who remembers your name. So I have won." And I knew it was true.

Then there wasn't anything but that beak and that burning gullet opening over me.

Then there was.



I thought it was a cloud. I was so dazed and terrified that I really thought it was a white cloud, only traveling so low and so fast that it smashed the griffin off King Lir and away from me, and sent me tumbling into Molly's arms at the same time. She held me tightly, practically smothering me, and it wasn't until I wriggled my head free that I saw what had come to us. I can see it still, in my mind. I see it right now.

They don't look *anything* like horses. I don't know where people got that notion. Four legs and a tail, yes, but the hooves are split, like a deer's hooves, or a goat's, and the head is smaller and more - *pointy*- than a horse's head. And the whole body is different from a horse, it's like saying a snowflake looks like a cow. The horn looks too long and heavy for the body, you can't imagine how a neck that delicate can hold up a horn that size. But it can.

Schmendrick was on his knees, with his eyes closed and his lips moving, as though he was still singing. Molly kept whispering, "Amalthea... Amalthea.... " not to me, not to anybody. The unicorn was facing the griffin across the king's body. Its front feet were skittering and dancing a little, but its back legs were setting themselves to charge, the way rams do. Only rams put their heads down, while the unicorn held its head high, so that the horn caught the sunlight and glowed like a seashell. It gave a cry that made me want to dive back into Molly's skirt and cover my ears, it was so raw and so... *hurt*. Then its head did go down.

Dying or not, the griffin put up a furious fight. It came hopping to meet the unicorn, but then it was out of the way at the last minute, with its bloody beak snapping at the unicorn's legs as it flashed by. But each time that happened, the unicorn would turn instantly, much quicker than a horse could have turned, and come charging back before the griffin could get itself braced again. It wasn't a bit fair, but I didn't feel sorry for the griffin anymore.

The last time, the unicorn slashed sideways with its horn, using it like a club, and knocked the griffin clean off its feet. But it was up before the unicorn could turn. It actually leaped into the air, dead lion half and all, just high enough to come down on the unicorn's back, raking with its eagle claws and trying to bite through the unicorn's neck, the way it did with King Lir. I screamed then, I couldn't help it. But the unicorn reared up until I thought it was going to go over backward, and it flung the griffin to the ground, whirled and drove its horn straight through the iron feathers to the eagle heart. It trampled the body for a good while after, but it didn't need to.



Schmendrick and Molly ran to King Lir. They didn't look at the griffin, or even pay very much attention to the unicorn. I wanted to go to Malka, but I followed them to where he lay. I'd seen what the griffin had done to him, closer than they had, and I didn't see how he could still be alive. But he was, just barely. He opened his eyes when we kneeled beside him, and he smiled so sweetly at us all, and he said, "Lisene? Lisene, I should have a bath, shouldn't I?"

I didn't cry. Molly didn't cry. Schmendrick did. He said, "No, Majesty. No, you do not need bathing, truly."

King Lir looked puzzled. "But I smell bad, Lisene. I think I must have wet myself." He reached for my hand and held it so hard. "Little one," he said. "Little one, I know you. Do not be ashamed of me because I am old."

I squeezed his hand back, as hard as I could. "Hello, Your Majesty," I said. "Hello." I didn't know what else to say.

Then his face was suddenly young and happy and wonderful, and he was gazing far past me, reaching toward something with his eyes. I felt a breath on my shoulder, and I turned my head and saw the unicorn. It was bleeding from a lot of deep scratches and bites, especially around its neck, but all you could see in its dark eyes was King Lir. I moved aside so it could get to him, but when I turned back, the king was gone. I'm nine, almost ten. I know when people are gone.

The unicorn stood over King Lir's body for a long time. I went off after a while to sit beside Malka, and Molly came and sat with me. But Schmendrick stayed kneeling by King Lir, and he was talking to the unicorn. I couldn't hear what he was saying, but I could tell from his face that he was asking for something, a favor. My mother says she can always tell before I open my mouth. The unicorn wasn't answering, of course - they can't talk either, I'm almost sure - but Schmendrick kept at it until the unicorn turned its head and looked at him. Then he stopped, and he stood up and walked away by himself. The unicorn stayed where she was.

Molly was saying how brave Malka had been, and telling me that she'd never known another dog who attacked a griffin. She asked if Malka had ever had pups, and I said, yes, but none of them was Malka. It was very strange. She was trying hard to make me feel better, and I was trying to comfort her because she couldn't. But all the while I felt so cold, almost as far away from everything as Malka had gone. I closed her eyes, the way you do with people, and I sat there and I stroked her side, over and over.

I didn't notice the unicorn. Molly must have, but she didn't say anything. I went on petting Malka, and I didn't look up until the horn came slanting over my shoulder. Close to, you could see blood drying in the shining spirals, but I wasn't afraid. I wasn't anything. Then the horn touched Malka, very lightly, right where I was stroking her, and Malka opened her eyes.

It took her a while to understand that she was alive. It took me longer. She ran her tongue out first, panting and panting, looking so *thirsty*. We could hear a stream trickling somewhere close, and Molly went and found it, and brought water back in her cupped hands. Malka lapped it all up, and then she tried to stand and fell down, like a puppy. But she kept trying, and at last she was properly on her feet, and she tried to lick my face, but she missed it the first few times. I only started crying when she finally managed it.

When she saw the unicorn, she did a funny thing. She stared at it for a moment, and then she bowed or curtsied, in a dog way, stretching out her front legs and putting her head down on the ground between them. The unicorn nosed at her, very gently, so as not to knock her over again. It looked at me for the first time... or maybe I really looked at *it* for the first time, past the horn and the hooves and the magical whiteness, all the way into those endless eyes. And what they did, somehow, the unicorn's eyes, was to free me from the griffin's eyes. Because the awfulness of what I'd seen there didn't go away when the griffin died, not even when Malka came alive again. But the unicorn had all the world in her eyes, all the world I'm never going to see, but it doesn't matter, because now I *have* seen it, and it's beautiful, and I was in there too. And when I think of Jehane, and Louli, and my Felicitas who could only talk with her eyes, just like the unicorn, I'll think of them, and not the griffin. That's how it was when the unicorn and I looked at each other.

I didn't see if the unicorn said good-bye to Molly and Schmendrick, and I didn't see when it went away. I didn't want to. I did hear Schmendrick saying, "A dog. I nearly kill myself singing her to Lir, calling her as no other has *ever* called a unicorn - and she brings back, not him, but the dog. And here I'd always thought she had no sense of humor."

But Molly said, "She loved him too. That's why she let him go. Keep your voice down." I was going to tell her it didn't matter, that I knew Schmendrick was saying that because he was so sad, but she came over and petted Malka with me, and I didn't

have to. She said, “We will escort you and Malka home now, as befits two great ladies. Then we will take the king home too.”

“And I’ll never see you again,” I said. “No more than I’ll see him.”

Molly asked me, “How old are you, Sooz?”

“Nine,” I said. “Almost ten. You know that.”

“You can whistle?” I nodded. Molly looked around quickly, as though she were going to steal something. She bent close to me, and she whispered, “I will give you a present, Sooz, but you are not to open it until the day when you turn seventeen. On that day you must walk out away from your village, walk out all alone into some quiet place that is special to you, and you must whistle like this.” And she whistled a little ripple of music for me to whistle back to her, repeating and repeating it until she was satisfied that I had it exactly. “Don’t whistle it anymore,” she told me. “Don’t whistle it aloud again, not once, until your seventeenth birthday, but keep whistling it inside you. Do you understand the difference, Sooz?”

“I’m not a baby,” I said. “I understand. What will happen when I do whistle it?”

Molly smiled at me. She said, “Someone will come to you. Maybe the greatest magician in the world, maybe only an old lady with a soft spot for valiant, impudent children.” She cupped my cheek in her hand. “And just maybe even a unicorn. Because beautiful things will always want to see you again, Sooz, and be listening for you. Take an old lady’s word for it. Someone will come.”

They put King Lir on his own horse, and I rode with Schmendrick. They came all the way home with me, right to the door, to tell my mother and father that the griffin was dead, and that I had helped, and you should have seen Wilfrid’s face when they said *that*! Then they both hugged me, and Molly said in my ear, “Remember - not till you’re seventeen!” and they rode away, taking the king back to his castle to be buried among his own folk. And I had a cup of cold milk and went out with Malka and my father to pen the flock for the night.

So that’s what happened to me. I practice the music Molly taught me in my head, all the time, I even dream it some nights, but I don’t ever whistle it aloud. I talk to Malka about our adventure, because I have to talk to *someone*. And I promise her that when the time comes she’ll be there with me, in the special place I’ve already picked out. She’ll be an old dog lady then, of course, but it doesn’t matter. Someone will come to us both.

I hope it's them, those two. A unicorn is very nice, but they're my friends. I want to feel Molly holding me again, and hear the stories she didn't have time to tell me, and I want to hear Schmendrick singing that silly song:

Soozli, Soozli,  
speaking loozli,  
you disturb my oozli-goozli.  
Soozli, Soozli  
would you choozli  
to become my squoozli-squoozli...?

I can wait.

## **Glossary**

cellar = a room below ground level in a house especially used as store

tavern = inn or hotel

molasses = thick dark brown juice made from sugar

hearth = floor of a fireplace

nasty = bad or foul

brambly = prickly scrubs

whickering = give a soft breathy whinny.

trews = close-fitting tartan trousers worn by certain Scottish regiments.

hobbled = tied or strapped together (the legs of a horse or other animal) to prevent it from straying

shy = nervous and timid

skitter = move lightly and quickly

spur = urge (a horse) forward by digging one's spurs into its sides.

moat = a deep, wide ditch surrounding a castle/ fort, typically filled with water

scullery = a small kitchen

marauding = searching things to steal or people to attack.

belching = emit wind noisily from the stomach through the mouth.

ogres = man eating giants

trolls = ugly cave-dwelling creature depicted as either a giants or a dwarfs

aggravating = annoying

gullet = throat

lunged = dived/leaped

squincing = tensing up the muscles

accomplished = fulfilled / achieved

**Read the novella and answer the following questions.**

1. How old was Sooz when she told this story?
2. What was so terrible about the Griffin that made Sooz scream for three nights?
3. Why did the villagers stop sending messengers to the king about the Griffin?
4. What was the reason for Sooz to visit the king herself?
5. What gave the impression to Sooz that Schmendrick was a wizard?
6. Why did Molly have a feeling that the union of the three old friends will be a sad one?
7. What assurance did Molly give to Sooz that King Lir will help her?
8. Why were the huts snuggled up against the castle walls?
9. When King Lir was getting into his armour, Sooz tried to stop King Lir from going to kill the Griffin. What was her reason?
10. Why did Sooz run into the Midwood despite the danger?
11. How did Sooz save the king from the Griffin?
12. King Lir did not want both Schmendrick and Molly to help him when he was fighting the Griffin. What could be the reason?

**Read the novella again and answer the following questions.**

1. How did Sooz get the impression that Schmendrick was indeed a wizard?
2. In what ways was the unicorn same and different from the horses and why is it revered?
3. Even though King Lir was old and feeble, both Molly and Schmendrick wanted him to kill the Griffin. What was their reason?
4. Give three reasons that showed that King Lir was indeed a king in every sense.

5. How did the Griffin die?
6. Why did not the unicorn want to bring King Lir back to life?
7. What did the title “Two Hearts” actually refer to?

### **Writing**

1. Write the summary of the novella and give it a suitable title.
2. Time changes everything. The once dragon-slayer King Lir is now a senile old man. However, the spirit does not change. We have our fair share of such changes. Write a short story of your experience regarding such changes.
3. For King Lir, the unicorn or Amalthea is the motivation for his revival of his youth. Motivation is vital for all of us to keep us striving forward. Write an essay about one of your experiences regarding your strive forward in life.
4. The unicorn is a mythical as well as a revered animal in European literature. What is/are in your culture? Write an essay/story about any one of them.
5. The story does not end with the death of the Griffin and King Lir. Sooz is waiting to be seventeen years old so that she can whistle the tune Molly taught her. Imagine what will happen at that moment and write a short story about it.