Vikram’s English Academy (ICSE)

Assignment (The Last Leaf)

1. How does the writer describe the geographical location of Greenwich Village?

Ans: Greenwich Village is said to be in a little district west of Washington Square. The writer says that there the streets have run crazy and broken themselves into small strips called ‘places’. These ‘places’ make strange angles and curves. One street crosses itself a time or two.

1. What valuable possibility did an artist discover in Greenwich?

Ans: A valuable possibility an artist discovered in Greenwich was that if a bill collector could get lost looking for the artists who owed him money in traverse that route.

3. How was a ‘colony’ formed at this Greenwich Village?

Ans: The art people went there prowling, hunting for north windows and eighteenth century houses and Dutch attics and low rents. Additionally, the artists imported some pewter mugs and one or two chafing dishes from the Sixth Avenue. Thus a colony was formed at Greenwich Village.

4. How did the two friends meet? Where did they stay?

Ans: The two friends; Johnsy, also called Joanna and Sue had met at the Eighth Street ‘Delmonico’s’. The two friends found their tastes in art, food and clothes so congenial that the joint studio resulted.

5. How did the writer personify pneumonia?

Ans: Pneumonia is personified as a cold unseen stranger who stalked about the colony touching one person or the other with his icy fingers. Pneumonia is also personified as a non-chivalric gentleman

6. How was Johnsy laid low by Pneumonia? Why is the doctor described ‘busy’?

Ans: Johnsy was smitten by Pneumonia and she laid scarcely moving on her painted iron bedstead. The doctor has been described as busy as he has been attending many patients afflicted with Pneumonia.

7. What was doctor’s diagnosis about Johnsy?

Ans: The doctor told Sue that Johnsy had one chance in ten. That chance too was if she had the willingness to live. He guessed that Johnsy had made up her mind that she was not going to get well.

8. What did Sue do after the doctor had gone? Why?

Ans: After the doctor had gone, Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered in Johnsy’s room, whistling ragtime. She did so as she wanted to pretend to Johnsy that all was fine. She could not have shared the reality of the doctor’s diagnosis with her.

9. Why did Sue stop whistling? What did she do next?

Ans: Sue stopped whistling thinking Johnsy had already fallen asleep and did not want to disturb her. Sue started to paint a pen-and-ink drawing to illustrate a magazine story.

1. What did Sue hear while sketching? How did Sue look out of the window? Why?

Ans: Sue heard a low sound which was repeated several times. She realised that it was Johnsy counting backward. Sue looked solicitously out of the window as she could not understand what Johnsy had been counting.

11. What did Sue notice out of the window?

Ans: Sue noticed that there was only a bare dreary yard visible and the blank side of the brickhouse which was twenty feet away and an old ivy vine, gnarled and decayed at the roots climbed half way up the brick wall.

12. What according to Johnsy was easier then?

Ans: According to Johnsy, it was easier then to count the leaves on the ivy vine. Three days earlier almost a hundred leaves had been visible. But with only five leaves left, the counting had become easier.

13. What strange fancy possessed Johnsy?

Ans: The strange fancy that possessed Johnsy was that when the last leaf would fall down, she would die. She claimed to have known it for three days and expected that the doctor would have informed Sue.

14. What lie does Sue give Johnsy while talking about doctor’s diagnosis? How does she substantiate it?

Ans: The doctor had said that Johnsy’s chance of recovery was one in ten. Sue lies to Johnsy stating that according to the doctor her chance of recovery was ten to one. She substantiates it by saying that it was as good a chance as one would have in New York while riding on the street cars or walking past a new building.

15. What does Sue offer Johnsy? What does she plan to do after Johnsy had had it?

Ans: Sue offers Johnsy some broth. She wants to continue her drawing so that she can sell it to the editor. The money that she collects would be used to buy food for her sick child that is Johnsy and chops for herself.

16. Does Johnsy have any broth? What does she plan to do before it gets dark?

Ans: No, Johnsy does not have any broth. She plans to keep noticing the ivy wine which had only four leaves left. She wants to see the last leaf fall before it gets dark.

17. Describe the physical appearance of old Behrman. How was Behrman in art? What did he claim?

Ans: Old Behrman was more than sixty years old and had a long curly beard. Sue wanted a model for an old hermit miner. Behrman was a failure in art. He had wielded the brush for forty years without getting near enough to touch the hem of his Mistress’ robe. He claimed that he had always been about to paint a masterpiece but had not yet begun it.

18. In what way did old Behrman earn his livelihood?

Ans: 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.

19. What fear did Sue express to Behrman? What is Behrman’s reaction?

Ans: Sue communicated the strange fancy of Johnsy to Behrman. She expressed her fear that Johnsy would float away when her slight hold upon the world grew weaker. Behrman loses his temper when he hears about the fancy of Johnsy. He asks if there are people in the world who die because of leaves dropping off from a confounded vine. Later in anger he tells Sue that he will not pose for her and blames her for allowing such silly thoughts to come in Johnsy’s mind.

20. What reason does Sue give to Behrman was Johnsy’s condition? What argument takes place between Sue and Behrman?

Ans: Sue tells Behrman that Johnsy is very ill and weak and fever has left her mind morbid and full of strange fancies. She expresses her anger by saying that if he is not willing to pose for her she is fine with it. Behrman melts down and says that she is just behaving like a woman. He says he is very much willing to pose and would come with her.

21. What order did Johnsy give Sue after she woke up?

Ans: Johnsy ordered Sue to pull up the drawn green shade. She wanted to see what had happened to the last leaf.

22. What was surprising to notice for Johnsy when she looked out of the window?

Ans: When Johnsy looked out of the window, she was surprised to see one ivy leaf against the brick wall. She was surprised as after the beating rain and fierce gusts of wind that had endured through livelong night, she had not expected the leaf to be still there.

23. What was the last desperate attempt that Sue made to convince Johnsy to think positively?

Ans: Sue was quite disappointed when Johnsy insisted that she would die the same day when the last leaf falls. In her last desperate attempt she tells Johnsy to think of her if not about herself.

24. What brings about a change in Johnsy’s approach towards life? In what way is the change visible?

Ans: The sight of the last leaf persisting in rough weather and still clinging to the wall brought about a positive change in Johnsy’s approach towards life. The change was visible when she states that it is sin to want to die. She also tells Sue to bring her a little broth and some milk with a little port wine in it. She also asks for hand-mirror and tells Sue to pack some pillows as she wanted to watch her cook. Finally, she expresses her optimism on painting Bay of Naples.

25. What was the doctor’s diagnosis when he inspected Johnsy after she had been inspired by the last leaf? What other information does the doctor share?

Ans: The doctor told Sue that Johnsy had even chances of surviving. He also told her that if she nursed Johnsy properly, she would win. The doctor shares the information about Behrman suffering from pneumonia.

26. What information about Behrman’s death did Sue share with Johnsy?

Ans: Sue told Johnsy that Behrman had died of pneumonia that day in the hospital. He was ill only for two days. The janitor had found him on the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were completely wet and icy cold.

27. What circumstantial evidence led to the understanding that it was Behrman who had painted the leaf upon the wall?

Ans: Behrman had died because of pneumonia and a couple of days earlier was found with wet and icy cold clothes. It had been a dreadful night and he was found near a lantern which was still lighted and a ladder that had been dragged from its place. There were some scattered brushes nearby and a palette with green and yellow colours mixed on it.

28. Can you call the last leaf as a masterpiece? Justify.

Ans: Yes, Behrman’s painting of the last leaf was indeed a masterpiece. It inspired Johnsy to fight her way out of pneumonia and eventually this inspiration saved her life. Also, the painting was so well made, that it looked like a real leaf. So artistically speaking too it was a masterpiece.

29. Did the last leaf fall? Answer with the reference to the title of the story.

Ans: No, the last leaf did not fall. The title of the story refers to the last leaf which was painted upon the wall by Behrman. Though the leaf from the ivy vine fell, this painted leaf very much hung up there.

30. Was Behrman actually a failure in art? Why? Is friendship defined by the quantity of years? Justify with reference to the story ‘The last leaf’.

Ans: No, Behrman was not actually a failure in art. Though he had not succeeded as an artist commercially, his painting of the leaf upon the wall was indeed a masterpiece. It inspired Johnsy, made her optimistic and brought about a fighting spirit in her. This eventually saved her life. No, friendship is not defined by the quantity of years. Johnsy and Sue’s friendship was only a few months old but their bond was very strong indeed. It is quite visible in the way Sue took care of Johnsy while she was down with pneumonia.