CHAPTER 4
CULTURAL INTERPRETATION OF SHORT STORIES
AN ASTROLOGER’S DAY BY R.K. NARAYAN

Warm Up

Recollect any situation you remember when you heard of people speaking about astrology and astrologers. In how many different ways can you imagine an astrologer?

Try imagining the astrologer. Check with the lesson and see how far your imagination is similar or varied.

-PUNCTUALLY at midday he opened his bag and spread out his professional equipment, which consisted of a dozen cowrie shells, a square piece of cloth with obscure mystic charts on it, a notebook, and a bundle of palmyra writing. His forehead was resplendent with sacred ash and vermilion, and his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam which was really an outcome of a continual searching look for customers, but which his simple clients took to be a prophetic light and felt comforted. The power of his eyes was considerably enhanced by their position-placed as they were between the painted forehead and the dark whiskers which streamed down his cheeks: even a halfwit's eyes would sparkle in such a setting.

To crown the effect he wound a saffron-colored turban around his head. This color scheme never failed. People were attracted to him as bees are attracted to cosmos or dahlia stalks. He sat under the boughs of a spreading tamarind tree which flanked a path running through the Town Hall Park. It was a remarkable place in many ways: a surging crowd was always moving up and down this narrow road
morning till night. A variety of trades and occupations was represented all along its way: medicine sellers, sellers of stolen hardware and junk, magicians and, above all, an auctioneer of cheap cloth, who created enough din all day to attract the whole town. Next to him in vociferousness came a vendor of fried groundnut, who gave his ware a fancy name each day, calling it Bombay Ice-Cream one day, and on the next Delhi Almond, and on the third Raja's Delicacy, and so on and so forth, and people flocked to him. A considerable portion of this crowd dallied before the astrologer too. The astrologer transacted his business by the light of a flare which crackled and smoked up above the groundnut heap nearby. Half the enchantment of the place was due to the fact that it did not have the benefit of municipal lighting. The place was lit up by shop lights. One or two had hissing gaslights, some had naked flares stuck on poles, some were lit up by old cycle lamps and one or two like the astrologer’s, managed without lights of their own. It was a bewildering criss-cross of light rays and moving shadows. This suited the astrologer very well, for the simple reason that he had not in the least intended to be an astrologer when he began life; and he knew no more of what was going to happen to others than he knew what was going to happen to himself next minute. He was much a stranger to the stars as were his innocent customers. Yet he said things which pleased and astonished everyone: that was more a matter of study, practice and shrewd guesswork. All the same, it was as much an honest man's labor as any other, and he deserved the wages he carried home at the end of the day.

He had left his village without any previous thought or plan. If he had continued there he would have carried on the work of his forefathers- namely, tilling the land, living, marrying and ripening in his cornfield and ancestral home. But that
was not to be. He had to leave home without telling anyone, and he could not rest till he left it behind a couple of hundred miles. To a villager it is a great deal, as if an ocean flowed between.

He had a working analysis of mankind's troubles: marriage, money and the tangles of human ties. Long practice had sharpened his perception. Within five minutes he understood what was wrong. He charged three pies per question never opened his mouth till the other had spoken for at least ten minutes, which provided him enough stuff for a dozen answers and advices. When he told the person before him, gazing at his palm, “In many ways you are not getting the fullest results for your efforts,” nine out of ten were disposed to agree with him. Or he questioned: “Is there any woman in your family, maybe even a distant relative, who is not well disposed towards you?” Or he gave an analysis of character: “Most of your troubles are due to your nature. How can you be otherwise with Saturn where he is? You have an impetuous nature and a rough exterior.” This endeared him to their hearts immediately, for even the mildest of us loves to think that he has a forbidding exterior.

The nuts vendor blew out his flare and rose to go. This was a signal for the astrologer to bundle up too, since it left him in darkness except for a little shaft of green light which strayed in from somewhere and touched the ground before him. He picked up his cowrie shells and paraphernalia and was putting them back into his bag when the green shaft of light was blotted out; he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him. He sensed a possible client and said: “You look so careworn. It will do you good to sit down for a while and chat with me.” The other grumbled some reply vaguely. The astrologer pressed his invitation; whereupon the other thrust his palm
under his nose, saying, “You call yourself an astrologer?” The astrologer felt challenged and said, tilting the other’s palm towards the green shaft of light: “Yours is a nature ....” “Oh, stop that,” the other said. “Tell me something worthwhile. . . .”

Our friend felt piqued. “I charge only three pies per question, and what you get ought to be good enough for your money. . . .” At this the other withdrew his arm, took out an anna, and flung it out to him, saying, “I have some questions to ask. If I prove you are bluffing, you must return that anna to me with interest.”

“If you find my answers satisfactory, will you give me five rupees?”

“No.”

“Or will you give me eight annas?”

“All right, provided you give me twice as much if you are wrong,” said the stranger. This pact was accepted after a little further argument. The astrologer sent up a prayer to heaven as the other lit a cheroot. The astrologer caught a glimpse of his face by the match-light. There was a pause as cars hooted on the road, jutka drivers swore at their horses and the babble of the crowd agitated the semi-darkness of the park. The other sat down, sucking his cheroot, puffing out, sat there ruthlessly. The astrologer felt very uncomfortable. “Here, take your anna back. I am not used to such challenges. It is late for me today. . . .” He made preparations to bundle up. The other held his wrist and said, “You can't get out of it now. You dragged me in while I was passing.” The astrologer shivered in his grip; and his voice shook and became faint. “Leave me today. I will speak to you tomorrow.” The other thrust his palm in his face and said, “Challenge is challenge. Go on.” The astrologer proceeded with his throat drying up. “There is a woman . . .”
“Stop,” said the other. “I don't want all that. Shall I succeed in my present search or not? Answer this and go. Otherwise I will not let you go till you disgorge all your coins.” The astrologer muttered a few incantations and replied, “All right. I will speak. But will you give me a rupee if what I say is convincing? Otherwise I will not open my mouth, and you may do what you like.” After a good deal of haggling the other agreed. The astrologer said, “You were left for dead. Am I right?”

“Ah, tell me more.”

“A knife has passed through you once?” said the astrologer.

“Good fellow! “ He bared his chest to show his scar. “What else?”

“And then you were pushed into a well nearby in the field. You were left for dead.”

“I should have been dead if some passer-by had not chanced to peep into the well,” exclaimed the other, overwhelmed by enthusiasm. “When shall I get at him?” he asked, clenching his fist.

“In the next world,” answered the astrologer. “He died four months ago in a far-off town. You will never see any more of him.” The other groaned on hearing it. The astrologer proceeded.

“Guru Nayak…. ”

“You know my name!” the other said, taken aback.

“As I know all other things. Guru Nayak, listen carefully to what I have to say. Your village is two day's journey due north of this town. Take the next train and be gone. I see great danger once again to your life if you go from home.” He took out a pinch of sacred ash and held it to him. “Rub it on your forehead and go home. Never travel southwards again, and you will live to be a hundred.”
“Why should I leave home again?” the other said reflectively. “I was only going away now and then to look for him and to choke out his life if I met him.” He shook his head regretfully. “He has escaped my hands. I hope he died as he deserved.”

“Yes,” said the astrologer. “He was crushed under a lorry.” The other looked gratified to hear it.

The place was deserted by the time the astrologer picked up his articles and put them into his bag. The green shaft was also gone, leaving the place in darkness and silence. The stranger had gone off into the night, after giving the astrologer a handful of coins.

It was nearly midnight when the astrologer reached home. His wife was waiting for him at the door and demanded an explanation. He flung the coins at her and said, “Count them. One man gave all that.”

“Twelve and a half annas,” she said, counting. She was overjoyed. “I can buy some jaggery and coconut tomorrow. The child has been asking for sweets for so many days now. I will prepare some nice stuff for her.”

“The swine has cheated me! He promised me a rupee,” said the astrologer. She looked up at him. “You look worried. What is wrong?”

“Nothing.”

After dinner, sitting on the pyol, he told her, “Do you know a great load is gone from me today? I thought I had blood of a man on my hands all these years. That was the reason why I ran away from home, settled here and married you. He is alive.”

She gasped. “You tried to kill?”
“Yes, in our village, when I was a youngster. We drank, gambled and quarrelled badly one day—why think of it now? Time to sleep,” he said, yawning, and stretched himself on the pyol.

About the author:

R. K. Narayan (born 1906) is one of the best-known novelists among Indian English writers. Narayan wrote his first novel, *Swami and Friends* in 1935. He is the author of fourteen novels, five volumes of short stories and a number of travelogues and collections of non-fiction. He also wrote his memoir *My Days* (1975). Greene has called Narayan “the novelist I most admire in the English language.” Narayan created the imaginary town of Malgudi, where realistic characters in a typically Indian setting lived amid unpredictable events. He is one of the most famous and widely read Indian novelists. His stories are grounded in a compassionate humanism and celebrated the humor and energy of ordinary life. His stories are characterized by simple style and subtle humor.

Background:

“An Astrologer's Day” was first published in the newspaper *The Hindu* and then was made the title story of a collection of short stories which appeared in 1947—the year that India gained its independence.

Objectives:

- To highlight the elements of culture as depicted in the story
• To emphasize the role of culture in understanding the story
• To make the learners sensitive to learn and understand different aspects in culture

**Glossary:**

cowrie: shell of a sea animal, often used as charm
obscure: indistinct or unclear
mystic: having magical properties.
palmyra: palm leaves
resplendent: bright, dazzling and impressive
enhanced: increased
vociferous: loud and confident
dallied: Wasted time just hanging around
shrewd: good at judging people; clever
impetuous: impulsive; one who acts without much thought
endeared: made himself likeable
paraphernalia: assorted objects
piqued: be in a bad mood or feel hurt
jutka: horse-drawn cart
disgorge: empty, pour out in large quantities.
incantations: supposed magical words
haggling: bargaining
gratified: pleased; satisfied
pyol: string cot
Case Study:

Compare and contrast An Astrologer’s Day with A Pot of Tea by Agatha Christie.

Frequently asked questions:

1. Who were the other traders and vendors who did their business around the astrologer?
2. Where did he ply his trade? How did the setting help in attracting his customers?
3. The writer took pains to describe the impressive appearance of the astrologer.
   What are the highlights of that description?
4. What motivated the protagonist of the story to become an astrologer?
5. What was the role of dusk in the story ‘An Astrologer’s Day’?
6. What tactics were used by the astrologer to earn his wages?
7. What does the astrologer tell the stranger about his past? What advice does he give him about his future?
8. R.KNarayan has created, developed and retained the suspense till the end. Justify
10. How did the astrologer convince Guru Nayak about his future?

Self Study Assignment: writing

1. List out the vocabulary that speaks about Indian culture that figured in the story.
2. List out all the descriptions in the lesson that talk about culture in the lesson.
3. How is the astrologer you have seen in your town/village/city is similar or different from the astrologer in the lesson?
4. Describe Indian way of living in about 50 -75 words. Talk about their food habits, beliefs and attitudes.
5. Describe the astrologer’s life. How does he spend his day and evaluate how it is similar to Indian way of life in general.

Speaking:

1. Meet at least 5 members from your family or friends and ask if they have met an astrologer. Ask them to describe the astrologer. They might tell you in the vernacular medium. Translate the same into English to present in the class.

2. Fate has changed the life of the astrologer in the story. Recollect any event told by your family or friends whose life had changed according to the predictions of the astrologer.

Reading Comprehension:

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many ways: a surging crowd was always moving up and down this narrow road morning till night. A variety of trades and occupations was represented all along its way: medicine sellers, sellers of stolen hardware and junk, magicians and, above all, an auctioneer of cheap cloth, who created enough din all day to attract the whole town. Next to him in vociferousness came a vendor of fried groundnut, who gave his ware a fancy name each day, calling it Bombay Ice-Cream one day, and on the next Delhi Almond, and on the third Raja's Delicacy, and so on and so forth, and people flocked to him.

**Answer the following questions**

1. What are the cultural words and phrases used in the paragraph?
2. Is there any special significance in using these words and phrases?
3. With which culture can you associate these words and phrases?
4. Is there any significance for the tamarind tree in the culture portrayed in the story?
5. Could you imagine the location of the story while reading the paragraph? Justify your answer.

**Assignment:**

1. Visit a local market and analyze how close the author is in describing the local market in the story.

**Snippets of Indian Culture:**

Geographical location of a country or a place is also a part of culture. The story is based in the writer’s fictional town called Malgudi in South India. The story deals with many cultural aspects pertaining to South India.
Beliefs:

Astrology can be defined as the study of stars. Astrology is an integral part of Indian culture. Even in twenty first century people generally consult an astrologer to ask what is in future for them. Before planning of any ceremony an astrologer is consulted.

Situation/Locale:

The depiction of the market place in the story is close to reality. Even today, in a predominantly technology influenced world, local markets are still in vogue. Farmers’ Market is a quite old and known phrase in India. A farmers’ market consists of vendors who set up make shift shops like the astrologer in the story to sell vegetables, fruits, meat products and sometimes ready to eat foods and beverages. Farmers’ markets also show a wide range of goods such as toys, balloons, vegetables, grocery, utensils, and clothes. These farmers also depend on Municipal lighting or the hissing gaslights. The farmers or vendors shout with their loud voices to attract the customers.

Food Habits:

Fried groundnuts and chick peas (salted and spicy) are usually taken as snacks in the evening.
Warm Up:

Family is an important unit in society. Do you agree? Substantiate

Good family is a pre-requisite to be a good human being. Express your view.

Where is Johannesburg?

Have you ever met an orphan who is longing to be with his family like anybody else? What emotions and sentiments come into picture?

What is an orphan’s imagination of a family?

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Of the six hundred boys at the reformatory, about one hundred were from ten to fourteen years of age. My Department had from time to time expressed the intention of taking them away, and of establishing a special institution for them, more like an industrial school than a reformatory. This would have been a good thing, for their offences were very trivial, and they would have been better by themselves. Had such a school been established, I should have liked to be Principal of it myself, for it would have been an easier job; small boys turn instinctively towards affection, and one controls them by it, naturally and easily.

Some of them, if I came near them, either on parade or in school or at football, would observe me watchfully, not directly or fully, but obliquely and secretly; sometimes I would surprise them at it, and make some small sign of recognition, which would satisfy them so that they would cease to observe me, and would give their full attention to the event of the moment. But I knew that my authority was thus confirmed and strengthened.

The secret relations with them were a source of continuous pleasure to me. Had they been my own children I would no doubt have given a greater expression to it. But often I would move through the silent and orderly parade, and stand by one of them. He would look straight in front of him with a little frown of concentration that expressed both childish awareness and manly indifference to my nearness. Sometimes I would tweak his ear, and he would give me a brief smile of acknowledgement, or frown with still greater concentration. It was natural, I suppose, to confine these outward expressions to the very smallest, but they were taken as symbolic, and some older boys would observe them and take themselves to be included. It was a relief, when the reformatory was passing through times of turbulence and trouble, and when
there was danger of estrangement between authority and boys, to make those simple and natural gestures, which were reassurances to both me and them that nothing important had changed.

On Sunday afternoons when I was on duty I would take my car to the reformatory and watch the free boys being signed out at the gate. The simple operation was watched by many boys not free, who would tell each other, “In so many weeks I’ll be signed out myself.” Among the watchers were always some of the small boys, and these I would take by turns in the car. We would go out to the Potchefstroom Road with its ceaseless stream of traffic, and to the Baragwanath crossroads, and come back by the Van Wyksrus road to the reformatory. I would talk to them about their families, their parents, their sisters and brothers, and I would pretend to know nothing of Durban, Port Elizabeth, Potchefstroom, and Clocolan, and ask them if these places were bigger than Johannesburg.

One of the small boys was Ha’penny, and he was about twelve years old. He came from Bloemfontein and was the biggest talker of them all. His mother worked in a white person’s house, and he had two brothers and two sisters. His brothers were Richard and Dickie, and his sisters Anna and Mina.

“Richard and Dickie?” I asked.

“Yes, Sir.”

“In English,” I said, “Richard and Dickie are the same name?”

When we returned to the reformatory, I sent for Ha’penny’s papers; there it was plainly set down. Ha’penny was a waif, with no relatives at all. He had been taken from one home to another, but he was naughty and uncontrollable, and eventually had taken to pilfering at the market. I then sent for the Letter Book, and
found that Ha’penny wrote regularly, or rather that others wrote for him till he could write himself, to Mrs Betty Maarman, of 48 Vlak Street, Bloemfontein. But Mrs Maarman had never once replied to him. When questioned, he had said, ‘Perhaps she is sick.’ I sat down and wrote at once to the Social Welfare Officer in Bloemfontein, asking him to investigate.

The next time I had Ha’penny out in the car I questioned him again about his family. And he told me the same as before, his mother, Richard and Dickie, Anna and Mina. But he softened the “D” of Dickie, so that it sounded now like Tickie.

“I thought you said Dickie,” I said.

“I said Tickie,” he said.

He watched me with concealed apprehension, and I came to the conclusion that this waif of Bloemfontein was a clever boy, who had told me a story that was all imagination, and had changed one single letter of it to make it safe from any question. And I thought I understood it all too, that he was ashamed of being without a family and had invented them all, so that no one might discover that he was fatherless and motherless and that no one in the world cared whether he was alive or dead. This gave me a strong feeling for him, and I went out of my way to manifest towards him that fatherly care that the State, though not in those words, had enjoined upon me by giving me this job.

Then the letter came from the Social Welfare Officer in Bloemfontein, saying that Mrs Betty Maarman of 48 Vlak Street was a real person, and that she had four children, Richard and Dickie, Anna and Mina, but that Ha’penny was no child of hers, and she knew him only as a derelict of the streets. She had never answered his letters, because he wrote to her as “Mother,” and she was a decent woman, a faithful member
of the church, and she had no thought of corrupting her family by letting them have anything to do with such a child.

But Ha’penny seemed to me anything but the usual delinquent; his desire to have a family was so strong, and his reformatory record was so blameless, and his anxiety to please and obey so great that I began to feel a great duty towards him. Therefore I asked him about his “mother”.

He could not speak enough of her, or with too high praise. She was loving, honest, and strict. Her home was clean. She had affection for all her children. It was clear that the homeless child, even as he had attached himself to me, would have attached himself to her; he had observed her even as he had observed me, but did not know the secret of how to open her heart, so that she would take him in, and save him from the lonely life that he led.

“Why did you steal when you had such a mother?” I asked.

He could not answer that; not all his brains nor his courage could find an answer to such a question, for he knew that with such a mother he would not have stolen at all.

“The boy’s name is Dickie,” I said, “not Tickie.”

And then he knew the deception was revealed. Another boy might have said, “I told you it was Dickie,” but he was too intelligent for that; he knew that if I had established that the boy’s name was Dickie, I must have established other things too. I was shocked by the immediate and visible effect of my action. His whole brave assurance died within him, and he stood there exposed, not as a liar, but as a homeless child who had surrounded himself with mother, brothers, and sisters, who did not
exist. I had shattered the very foundations of his pride, and his sense of human significance.

He fell sick at once, and the doctor said it was tuberculosis. I wrote at once to Mrs Maarman, telling her the whole story, of how this small boy had observed her, and had decided that she was the person he desired for his mother. But she wrote back saying that she could take no responsibility for him. For one thing, Hapenny was a Mosuto, and she was a coloured woman; for another, she had never had a child in trouble, and how could she take such a boy?

Tuberculosis is a strange thing; sometimes it manifests itself suddenly in the most unlikely host, and swiftly sweeps to the end. Ha’penny withdrew himself from the world, from all Principals and mothers, and the doctor said there was little hope. In desperation I sent money for Mrs Maarman to come.

She was a decent, homely woman, and, seeing that the situation was serious, she, without fuss or embarrassment, adopted Ha’penny for her own. The whole reformatory accepted her as his mother. She sat the whole day with him, and talked to him of Richard and Dickie, Anna and Mina, and how they were all waiting for him to come home. She poured out her affection on him, and had no fear of his sickness, nor did she allow it to prevent her from satisfying his hunger to be owned.

She talked to him of what they would do when he came back, and how he would go to the school and what they would buy for Guy Fawkes night.

He in his turn gave his whole attention to her, and when I visited him he was grateful, but I had passed out of his world. I felt judged in that I had sensed only the existence and not the measure of his desire. I wished I had done something sooner, more wise, more prodigal. We buried him on the reformatory farm, and Mrs Maarman
said to me, “When you put up the cross, put he was my son.” “I’m ashamed,” she said, “that I wouldn’t take him.”

“The sickness,” I said, “the sickness would have come.”

“No,” she said, shaking her head with certainty. “It wouldn’t have come. And if it had come at home, it would have been different.”

So she left for Bloemfontein, after her strange visit to a reformatory. I was left too, with the resolve to be more prodigal in the task that the State, though not in so many words, had enjoined upon me.

About the Author:

Alan Paton (born 1903) is a famous South African writer and anti-apartheid activist. One of his best-known works is *Cry, The Beloved Country*. He was born in Pietermaritzburg, Natal Province. His parents were: James Paton, a civil servant, and Eunice Warder Paton. He worked as a teacher at the Ixopo High School, and later at a Pietermaritzburg High School. In 1935, he became the principal of the Diepkloof Reformatory for delinquent urban African boys near Johannesburg. He died of throat cancer on April 12, 1988 at Lintrose, Botha's Hill in Natal.
Objectives:

- To make the learners understand that every festival has a cultural background;
- To make them believe that geographical location is also an element of culture;
- To make them realize that human suffering and agony are the same in any culture;
- To enhance their sensitivity in understanding that kindness is above any culture.

Glossary:

reformatory: a penal institution for young people.

trivial: a commonplace and of little value: unimportant

obliquely: indirectly; in a way that is not straightforward.

indifference: lack of interest

estrangement: a state of being unfriendly

waif: a homeless child

pilfering: stealing small insignificant things

apprehension: fear and doubt

enjoined: commanded someone to act in a particular way

derelict: deserted or abandoned

delinquent: young offender

derection: act of misleading

Mosuto: Member of the Black South African people

Colored: person of dark skin
Guy Fawkes Night:  Bon fire Night

prodigal:  spending resources lavishly

**Case Study:**

Compare and contrast Ha’penny with A Postmaster by Rabindranath Tagore.

**FAQS:**

1. Why was Ha’penny sent to the reformatory?
2. What made the narrator think that Ha’penny was not telling him the truth about his family?
3. What was the actual reality about his background?
4. How did Ha’penny convince the prison authorities that Mrs Maarman was his mother? Who was she actually?
5. Why did Ha’Penny want her to be his mother?
6. What convincing evidence was there to show that Mrs Maarman was not his mother?
7. Why was Mrs. Maarman reluctant to visit the reformatory?
8. Why did Mrs Maarman regret later that she had not come at the right time to take Ha’penny?
9. What effect Ha’penny’s death has on the narrator?
10. Imagine yourself in Mrs Maarman’s role. How would you have responded to the first request to take him home from the reformatory?

**Self Study Assignment: Writing**

1. List out the words that speak about places situated in Africa.
2. The story speaks about a major social and political issue of its time. What is that? Define the term. Which word in the story gives you the clue?
3. Who is Nelson Mandela and why is he so popular?
4. Think about any great person who fought for the welfare of the nation and write a few words about him.
5. What are the few cultural inputs you gained after reading the lesson?

Speaking:
1. “I have come to realize more and more that the greatest disease and the greatest suffering is to be unwanted, unloved, uncared for, to be shunned by everybody, to be just nobody (to no one).”

Reading Comprehension:

Guy Fawkes Night or Bonfire Night: November 5

Guy Fawkes Night also called as Bonfire Night is celebrated every year on the evening of the 5th of November principally in the United Kingdom. The celebration extended to former British colonies like New Zealand, South Africa, the island of Newfoundland (Canada).

British people celebrate Bonfire Night every year on 5 November in reminiscence of a legendary event in British history, the Gunpowder Plot. On 5 November 1605 a group of Roman Catholics planned to blow up the Houses of Parliament while King James I was inside. The plot was exposed on the evening before, when one of them named Guy Fawkes was caught in the cellars with gun powder. Along with him all other conspirators were put to death. Bonfire Night is sometimes called Guy Fawkes Night.
Initially, Bonfire Night was celebrated as a mark of triumph for Protestants over Catholics, but now the festival is enjoyed by everyone. Some children celebrate by making, a figure of a man made of stuffed newspaper, straw or old clothes and burn on the top of a bonfire on the Bonfire Night. Only adults are permitted legally to buy the fireworks. Private bonfire parties are held in the gardens by some, while many others attend larger public events that are generally organized by local council or charities. Potatoes and chestnuts are put in the bonfire to be cooked as it burns.

**Answer the following questions**

1. Do you recollect any Indian festivals?
2. In what way are they similar or different?
3. How is Bonfire Night significant with the text?
4. How is it important to you in understanding the text?
5. What is the other name for Guy Fawkes Night?

**Assignment:**

1. Compare and contrast the life of a child with protective environment and that of an orphan. Throw light on the behavioral differences between a family child and an orphan.
2. Talk about their beliefs and aspirations.
3. Imagine yourself as a reformatory head in the story. Write a few lines on how you would have acted in the given situations.

**Snippets of South African Culture:**

**Geography:**

South Africa occupies the southern tip of Africa. Generally temperate climate prevails in South Africa. Winter in South Africa occurs between June and August.
Social Interaction:

Titles and surnames are used in addressing the people.

Locale:

Van Wyksrus or Van Wyksrust is a city in South Africa.

Durban is the third largest city in South Africa. It is the third largest city in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Port Elizabeth is considered to be the first city in South Africa which established a democratic local authority. The city has long been a pioneer in transforming the country politically. Xhosa speakers call it “Ibhayi.” Afrikaners call it “Die Baai”, English speakers call it “The Bay’ and it is called “friendly city” by all.

Potchefstroom is also a city in the North West Province of South Africa.

Clocolan is a town situated in the North-East. It is about 34 kilometers from Ficksburg in the North east and 37 kilometers from Ladybrand to the South.

Johannesburg also called as Jozi, Jo’burg or eGoli is the largest city in South Africa by its population. It is the capital of Gauteng, the wealthiest province in South Africa. It is one of the fifty largest metropolitan areas in the world. It is the world’s largest city which is not situated on a river, lake, or coastline.

Bloemfontein, known as “The City of Roses” is an important city in the country. It is the Capital of the Free State Province in South Africa. It is situated in the middle of the Province as well as in South Africa.
Fig. 2. Map of South Africa with Important Cities

![Map of South Africa with Important Cities](https://www.places.co.za)
THE GIFT OF THE MAGI BY O. HENRY

Warm up:

Rcollect the best gift you have ever received. Think about it and speak to the class.

Imagine a situation when you want to give a gift to your beloved person (mother, father, husband, and friend) but you don’t have money. What do you do?

How is Christmas celebrated in your country?

-o0o-

ONE DOLLAR AND eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at $8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name “Mr. James Dillingham Young.” The “Dillingham” had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when
its possessor was being paid $30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to $20, the letters of “Dillingham” looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called “Jim” and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a grey cat walking a grey fence in a grey backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only $1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only $1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling—something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an $8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and
his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: “Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds.” One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the “Sofronie.”

“Will you buy my hair?” asked Della.

“I buy hair,” said Madame. “Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it.”

Down rippled the brown cascade. “Twenty dollars,” said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand.

“Give it to me quick,” said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.
She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation—as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value—the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends—a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

“If Jim doesn't kill me,” she said to herself, “before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do—oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?”

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the
stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit for saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: “Please God, make him think I am still pretty.”

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two—and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

“Jim, darling,” she cried, “don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again—you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say ‘Merry Christmas!’ Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice—what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you.”

“You've cut off your hair?” asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

“Cut it off and sold it,” said Della. “Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?”

Jim looked about the room curiously.

“You say your hair is gone?” he said, with an air almost of idiocy.
“You needn't look for it,” said Della. “It's sold, I tell you—sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered,” she went on with sudden serious sweetness, “but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?”

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year—what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on. Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

“Don't make any mistake, Dell,” he said, “about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first.”

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs—the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims—just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.
But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: “My hair grows so fast, Jim!”

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, “Oh, oh!”

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

“Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it.”

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

“Dell,” said he, “let's put our Christmas presents away and keep ’em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on.”

The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.
About the Author:

William Sydney Porter (1862-1910) popular with his pseudonym O.Henry is an American short story writer. His works are known for ironic plots and unexpected twists at the end. His famous stories, such as “The Gift of the Magi,” “The Furnished Room,” and “The Ransom of Red Chief,” are simple in plot but make effective use of contradictory coincidences to create ironic endings. He produced ten collection of stories like “Cabbages and Kings” (1904); "The Four Million" (1906); "Heart of the West" (1907); "The Trimmed Lamp" (1907); "The Gentle Grafter" (1908); "The Voice of the City" (1908); "Options" (1909); "Roads of Destiny" (1909); "Whirligigs" (1910), and "Strictly Business" (1910) in less than a decade. The collections "Sixes and Sevens" (1911), "Rolling Stones" (1912), and "Waifs and Strays" (1917) were published posthumously. In the year 1919 the Society of Arts and Sciences founded O. Henry Memorial Awards for the best American short stories published each year. O.Henry published over 500 short stories in many widely read periodicals and became one of the most popular writers in America.

Objectives:

- To make the learners understand gift-giving as an important custom in some cultures
- To emphasize the element of sacrifice in the story
- To make them believe that food is an important part of culture
Glossary:

imputation: an accusation, charge
parsimony: thriftiness, frugality
instigates: incites, urges on
predominating: prevalent; having more power
mendicancy: poverty (mendicant lives by asking people for food and money)
vestibule: an entryway
appertaining: relating to; or belonging to
longitudinal: in vertical measurements
depreciate: to devalue, cheapen
fob: a chain connected to a pocket watch
meretricious: showy, flashy, seeming attractive
laboriously: with much effort and time
assertion: a statement, claim
ecstatic: overjoyed, elated
coveted: desired, wanted
ardent: eager, passionate
janitor: A person employed as a caretaker of a building

Case Study:

Compare and contrast The Gift of Magi with Arun Joshi’s Only American in our village.

FAQS:

1. How much does Jim earn per week? How does Della manage to save the $1.87 to buy the gift?
2. What is her new plan by which she would have enough money to buy Jim a grand gift?

3. How much does the hair dresser offer for her tresses? What does she want to buy for Jim?

4. What does Jim buy for Della on Christmas and how does he manage to buy the same?

5. Who are the Magi? What cultural implications do you understand through Magi?

6. Why does the author call Jim and Della “two foolish children?” Why are they later said to have been the wisest of those who exchange gifts?

7. What is your opinion about Jim and Della’s relationship?

Self Study Assignment: Writing

1. Find out the words and situations from the text that highlight American culture.

2. Is giving gifts an important part of your culture? Apart from birthdays and special occasions do you give gifts for any festival in your culture? On what festivals you offer gifts? Explain

Speaking:

1. “Sacrificing your happiness for the happiness of the one you love is by far, the truest type of love.” (Anonymous) Justify with reference to the story.

2. Recollect a situation when you purchased a gift to your near or dear ones. What are the various aspects you looked at before selecting the gift? Is there any situation like you madly loved the one you selected but sacrificed to your dear one? Share your thoughts with your classmates.
Reading Comprehension:

Coney Island “playground of the world,” since 1800s has played different roles in the lives and imagination of the world. It played a significant role especially in the lives of New Yorkers. As a quiet town by the sea side it flourished in the early 1800s. Entrepreneurs flooded to Coney Island to reap their fortunes. The area prospered with the glory of Luna Park, Dreamland and Steeplechase Park but with the Great Depression the Island collapsed as a castle of cards. The entire island transformed into a “Nickel Empire” a cheap amusement park. The amusement parks that prospered struggled for existence and Coney Island became the victim of the worst economic conditions and time.

Coney Island is a small peninsula that hangs from the southern edge of Brooklyn. It is very convenient to reach the place from different parts of the city. The area spreads from West 8th to West 24th Street and from Surf Avenue to the Atlantic Ocean. Besides the amusement parks and rides the area has a three-mile beachfront walk, The New York Aquarium, Key Span Park-which is considered to be the home of the Brooklyn Cyclone’s minor league base ball team. An Asser Levy park and an amphitheatre are also present in the Island.

Answer the following questions

1. Where is Coney Island?
2. What is Coney Island?
3. What are the other two names for Coney Island?
4. Write the names of the different parks situated in the Coney Island.
5. What transformed the Coney Island?
Assignment:

1. Who is Santa Claus? What is his significance in Christmas?

2. Collect information on why and how is Easter celebrated in different countries.

3. What are the important symbols of Easter and what do they signify?

Snippets of American culture:

USA Gifting Culture:

The traditional US holiday season is also considered to be the gifting season. The season begins with Thanksgiving on fourth Thursday of November every year. They thank the Lord for gracing them with abundant harvest. This holiday season with Thanksgiving and moves on to Christmas and ends with New Year Eve. But, now this season of tradition and culture extended to the St.Valentine’s Day as well. Presenting gifts to family, friends and business associates during holiday season is a part of American culture.
NOTES

Queen of Sheba; King Solomon – In the Old Testament, the wealthy Queen of Sheba, who ruled an ancient kingdom in the region of modern-day Ethiopia, visited the equally wealthy King Solomon of Israel in order to test his wisdom. When the King answered her questions, she was so impressed with his wisdom that she showered him with gold and jewels. He, in turn, granted her everything she desired.

“The magi brought valuable gifts...” – The magi (the “Three Wise Men” in the Bible) paid homage to baby Jesus by bringing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. frankincense: a substance that is burnt to give a pleasant smell, especially during religious ceremonies
myrrh: a sticky substance with a sweet smell that comes from trees and is used to make perfume

Fig. 3 & 4. Coney Island Pictures
VENDETTA BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Warm Up:

Never pursue vendetta or punch people on the nose.

Family vendettas are common in every culture.

Discuss what can be the meaning of the word vendetta in the above two sentences.

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The widow of Paolo Saverini lived alone with her son in a poor little house on the outskirts of Bonifacio. The town, built on an out jutting part of the mountain, in places even overhanging the sea, looks across the straits, full of sandbanks, towards the southernmost coast of Sardinia. Beneath it, on the other side and almost surrounding it, is a cleft in the cliff like an immense corridor which serves as a harbor, and along it the little Italian and Sardinian fishing boats come by a circuitous route between precipitous cliffs as far as the first houses, and every two weeks the old, wheezy steamer which makes the trip to Ajaccio.

On the White Mountain the houses, massed together, makes an even whiter spot. They look like the nests of wild birds, clinging to this peak, overlooking this terrible passage, where vessels rarely venture. The wind, which blows uninterruptedly, has swept bare the forbidding coast; it drives through the narrow straits and lays waste both sides. The pale streaks of foam, clinging to the black rocks, whose countless peaks rise up out of the water, look like bits of rag floating and drifting on the surface of the sea.

The house of widow Saverini, clinging to the very edge of the precipice, looks out, through its three windows, over this wild and desolate picture.
She lived there alone, with her son Antonia and their dog "Semillante," a big, thin beast, with a long rough coat, of the sheep-dog breed. The young man took her with him when out hunting.

One night, after some kind of a quarrel, Antoine Saverini was treacherously stabbed by Nicolas Ravolati, who escaped the same evening to Sardinia.

When the old mother received the body of her child, which the neighbors had brought back to her, she did not cry, but she stayed there for a long time motionless, watching him. Then, stretching her wrinkled hand over the body, she promised him a vendetta. She did not wish anybody near her, and she shut herself up beside the body with the dog, which howled continuously, standing at the foot of the bed, her head stretched towards her master and her tail between her legs. She did not move any more than did the mother, who, now leaning over the body with a blank stare, was weeping silently and watching it.

The young man, lying on his back, dressed in his jacket of coarse cloth, torn at the chest, seemed to be asleep. But he had blood all over him; on his shirt, which had been torn off in order to administer the first aid; on his vest, on his trousers, on his face, on his hands. Clots of blood had hardened in his beard and in his hair.

His old mother began to talk to him. At the sound of this voice the dog quieted down.

"Never fear, my boy, my little baby, you shall be avenged. Sleep, sleep; you shall be avenged. Do you hear? It's your mother's promise! And she always keeps her word, your mother does, you know she does."

Slowly she leaned over him, pressing her cold lips to his dead ones.
Then Semillante began to howl again with a long, monotonous, penetrating, horrible howl.

The two of them, the woman and the dog, remained there until morning.

Antoine Saverini was buried the next day and soon his name ceased to be mentioned in Bonifacio.

He had neither brothers nor cousins. No man was there to carry on the vendetta. His mother, the old woman, alone pondered over it.

On the other side of the straits she saw, from morning until night, a little white speck on the coast. It was the little Sardinian village Longosardo, where Corsican criminals take refuge when they are too closely pursued. They compose almost the entire population of this hamlet, opposite their native island, awaiting the time to return, to go back to the "maquis." She knew that Nicolas Ravolati had sought refuge in this village.

All alone, all day long, seated at her window, she was looking over there and thinking of revenge. How could she do anything without help--she, an invalid and so near death? But she had promised, she had sworn on the body. She could not forget, she could not wait. What could she do? She no longer slept at night; she had neither rest nor peace of mind; she thought persistently. The dog, dozing at her feet, would sometimes lift her head and howl. Since her master's death she often howled thus, as though she were calling him, as though her beast's soul, inconsolable too, had also retained a recollection that nothing could wipe out.

One night, as Semillante began to howl, the mother suddenly got hold of an idea, a savage, vindictive, fierce idea. She thought it over until morning. Then, having arisen at daybreak she went to church. She prayed, prostrate on the floor, begging the
Lord to help her, to support her, to give to her poor, broken-down body the strength
which she needed in order to avenge her son.

She returned home. In her yard she had an old barrel, which acted as a cistern.
She turned it over, emptied it, made it fast to the ground with sticks and stones. Then
she chained Semillante to this improvised kennel and went into the house.

She walked ceaselessly now, her eyes always fixed on the distant coast of
Sardinia. He was over there, the murderer.

All day and all night the dog howled. In the morning the old woman brought
her some water in a bowl, but nothing more; no soup, no bread.

Another day went by. Semillante, exhausted, was sleeping. The following day
her eyes were shining, her hair on end and she was pulling wildly at her chain.

All this day the old woman gave her nothing to eat. The beast, furious, was
barking hoarsely. Another night went by.

Then, at daybreak, Mother Saverini asked a neighbor for some straw. She took
the old rags which had formerly been worn by her husband and stuffed them so as to
make them look like a human body.

Having planted a stick in the ground, in front of Semillante's kennel, she tied
to it this dummy, which seemed to be standing up. Then she made a head out of some
old rags.

The dog, surprised, was watching this straw man, and was quiet, although
famished. Then the old woman went to the store and bought a piece of black sausage.
When she got home she started a fire in the yard, near the kennel, and cooked the
sausage. Semillante, frantic, was jumping about, frothing at the mouth, her eyes fixed
on the food, the odor of which went right to her stomach.
Then the mother made of the smoking sausage a necktie for the dummy. She tied it very tight around the neck with string, and when she had finished she untied the dog.

With one leap the beast jumped at the dummy's throat, and with her paws on its shoulders she began to tear at it. She would fall back with a piece of food in her mouth, then would jump again, sinking her fangs into the string, and snatching few pieces of meat she would fall back again and once more spring forward. She was tearing up the face with her teeth and the whole neck was in tatters.

The old woman, motionless and silent, was watching eagerly. Then she chained the beast up again, made her fast for two more days and began this strange performance again.

For three months she accustomed her to this battle, to this meal conquered by a fight. She no longer chained her up, but just pointed to the dummy.

She had taught her to tear him up and to devour him without even leaving any traces in her throat.

Then, as a reward, she would give her a piece of sausage.

As soon as she saw the man, Semillante would begin to tremble. Then she would look up to her mistress, who, lifting her finger, would cry, "Go!" in a shrill tone.

When she thought that the proper time had come, the widow went to confession and, one Sunday morning she partook of communion with an ecstatic fervor. Then, putting on men's clothes and looking like an old tramp, she struck a bargain with a Sardinian fisherman who carried her and her dog to the other side of the straits.
In a bag she had a large piece of sausage. Semillante had had nothing to eat for two days. The old woman kept letting her smell the food and whetting her appetite.

They got to Longosardo. The Corsican woman walked with a limp. She went to a baker's shop and asked for Nicolas Ravolati. He had taken up his old trade, that of carpenter. He was working alone at the back of his store.

The old woman opened the door and called:

"Hallo, Nicolas!"

He turned around. Then releasing her dog, she cried:

"Go, go! Eat him up! eat him up!"

The maddened animal sprang for his throat. The man stretched out his arms, clasped the dog and rolled to the ground. For a few seconds he squirmed, beating the ground with his feet. Then he stopped moving, while Semillante dug her fangs into his throat and tore it to ribbons. Two neighbors, seated before their door, remembered perfectly having seen an old beggar come out with a thin, black dog which was eating something that its master was giving him.

At nightfall the old woman was at home again. She slept well that night.

About the Author:

Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893), is considered to be the greatest French short story writer. He studied Law in Paris, but he volunteered to serve the country
during the Franco-Prussian war. He worked as a civil servant in the ministry of maritime affairs and then he worked in the ministry of education. Maupassant made his entry with *Des Vers* in 1880. In the same year he published “*Boule De Suif.*”, his masterpiece. He is the author of around 300 short stories, six novels, three travel books and one volume of verse. His stories were created around everyday life situations which exposed the hidden shades of people. *Une Vie* (A Woman’s Life) and *Bel-Ami* are considered to be his best books. His novels are marked by his style, humor and comedy.

**Objectives:**

- To make the students follow the given description in the text
- To highlight the role of poverty in taking revenge
- To make the learners understand how Mrs. Sardinia executed her plan
- To make the learners sympathize with negative culture

**Glossary:**

- cleft: A fissure or split, especially one in rock or the ground.
- circuitous: Roundabout, devious
- precipitous: Dangerously high or steep.
- treacherously: Guilty of or involving in betrayal or deception.
- vendetta: A blood feud in which the family of a murdered person seeks vengeance on the murderer or the murderer's family.
- pondered: Think about (something) carefully, esp. before deciding or concluding.
- speck: A tiny spot
- hamlet: A small settlement, generally one smaller than a village.
persistently: repetitive or continuous
savage: aggressive and violent
vindictive: spiteful
prostrate: lying on the ground and facing downwards
barrel: a large round container, usually made of wood or metal
cistern: a container in which water is stored in a building
hoarsely: sounding rough and unpleasant
straw: stems of wheat or other grain plants that have been cut and dried.
famished: very hungry
sausage: a mixture of finely chopped meat, fat, bread, etc. in a long tube of skin, cooked and eaten whole or served cold in thin slice.
frantic: done quickly but in a way that is not very well organized
frothing: a mass of small bubbles, especially on the surface of a liquid, foam
devour: to eat all of something quickly because one is very hungry
ecstatic: delighted
whetting: to increase desire for or interest in something

**Case Study:**

Compare and contrast A Vendetta with A stench of Kerosene by Amrita Pritam.

**FAQS:**

1. Describe the town of Bonifacio in your own words.

2. What kind of a lady is the widow Mrs. Saverini? What information does the author give to help his reader create an image of the widow?

3. How did Saverini plan to avenge her son’s murder?
4. How do you account Mrs. Saverini speaking to the dead body of her murdered son?

5. Did you guess whether Saverini will avenge her son’s death? Do you agree with her viewpoint?

6. According to Saverini what is justice? Justify your point of view.

7. Why does Mrs. Saverini go to Church?

8. Why did Saverini dress like an old beggar?

9. Is the dog rewarded for its work in the story?

10. Did you watch any films in your culture where an animal or an insect takes revenge?

**Self Study Assignment: Writing**

1. From the author’s introduction in which country is the story set? Justify your answer.

2. The story speaks about a major practice of the region? What is it?

3. Pick up a few words or phrases that speak about the culture of the locale from the story.

4. Select the words that speak about food and description of the places and the widow’s house that denote the social status of the widow.

5. What does Corsica and Sardinia signify in the story?

**Speaking:**

1. “Anger concealed often hardens into revenge”. Justify the statement with reference to the story.
Reading Comprehension:

The Corsican is very simple, dignified and proud. He is very courteous and demonstrates hospitality towards strangers. However he is very pitiless towards his own country people if enmity is aroused and blood-feud or vendetta has not eliminated. Almost each and every individual is close to a powerful family. The natives of Corsica aspire to take up an official career which is a dominant factor in their social life. They show very little interest in commerce and agriculture.

Very little significance is given to the manufactures on the island. The manufactures comprise of extraction of Gallic acid from the bark of chest-nut, manufacturing of preserved citron, macaroni, fancy goods and cigars.

Answer the following questions

1. How is the Corsican described in the paragraph?
2. What has not still died out in Corsica?
3. What is the dominant factor in social life in Corsica?
4. Name a few products that are manufactured on the island.
5. In what manner is the vindictiveness aroused in Corsica to take revenge?

Assignment:

1. Read a few articles that speak about family vendettas and analyze both situations and causes that prompted them to take revenge.

Snippets of Sardinian Culture:

Sardinian cuisine reveals the fact that Sardinia is a shepherd country. Food flavors are very simple, powerful and natural. There are very less rich spices or sauces. The food is so tasty that it only requires olive oil and local herbs to enrich its taste and flavor. Roasted suckling pig is a typical Sardinian dish. The restaurants are
worthy of a visit for their genuine taste and flavor of Sardinian food coupled with hospitality.

**Bread:**

Bread is one of the main staple foods of the Sardinian diet. Any meal is incomplete without bread. Apart from the bakeries that produce bread on the island it is also prepared at home.
WORKS CITED

WEB LINKS


“< http://www.pmb.co.za/>.”


“<http://www.nmbt.co.za/port_elizabeth.html>.”


“<http://www.vanalen.org/competitions/ConeyIsland/background.htm>.”


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