



MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY

**DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE AND
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**M.A (English Literature)
First Year
American Literature I**

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Self-Made Men

-Frederick Douglass

"**Self-Made Men**" is a lecture, first delivered in 1859, by Frederick Douglass, which gives his own definition of the self-made man and explains what he thinks are the means to become such a man.

Douglass stresses the low origins of the self-made man, who has not inherited his social position by birth or other favourable circumstances, but who achieves everything without any outside assistance:

Self-made men ... are the men who owe little or nothing to birth, relationship, friendly surroundings; to wealth inherited or to early approved means of education; who are what they are, without the aid of any of the favoring conditions by which other men usually rise in the world and achieve great results.

In addition, Douglass does not believe in what he calls the "good luck theory" , which attributes success to chance and friendly circumstances. He believes that "opportunity is important but exertion is indispensable" . It is not luck that makes a man a self-made man, but considerable physical and mental effort. Douglass underlines the importance of hard work as a necessary means to achieve success. He remarks that "there is nothing good, great or desirable ..., that does not come by some kind of labor" . Douglass is convinced that success can be explained by only one word, namely "work!"

He further argues that there is a natural hierarchy of men. An ambitious man will naturally, through hard work, climb the social ladder, whereas the unmotivated man will not improve his position: "the man who will get up will be helped up; and the man who will not get up will be

allowed to stay down" . Applying this theory to the situation of the African-Americans, Douglass remarks: "Give the negro fair play and let him alone. If he lives, well. If he dies, equally well. If he cannot stand up, let him fall down."

Yet Douglass admits that industry is not the only explanation of the phenomenon of the self-made man. In his opinion, necessity is what urges a man to achieve more. Moreover, favourable circumstances are counterproductive to one's resolution to get ahead. Ease and luxury rather lead to helplessness and inactivity and an inactive man can never become a self-made man. "As a general rule, where circumstances do most for men there man will do least for himself; and where man does least, he himself is least. His doing makes or unmakes him." However, though acknowledging that there are other factors for success such as "order, the first law of heaven" , Douglass insists that hard work is the most important of them all, without which all others would fail:

My theory of self-made men is, then, simply this; that they are men of work. Whether or not such men have acquired material, moral or intellectual excellence, honest labor faithfully, steadily and persistently pursued, is the best, if not the only, explanation of their success.

Differences between Douglass and Franklin

The concept of the self-made man is deeply rooted in the American Dream. Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, is sometimes said to have created the concept of the self-made man. In his *Autobiography*, he describes his way from a poor, unknown son of a candle-maker to a very successful business man and highly acknowledged member of the American society. Franklin creates the archetype of someone coming from low origins, who, against all odds, breaks out of his inherited social position, climbs up the social ladder and

creates a new identity for himself. Key factors in this rise from rags to riches are hard work and a solid moral foundation. Franklin also stresses the significance of education for self-improvement.

Despite all these similarities between Douglass' and Franklin's concept of the self-made man, the two men differ in their emphasis on relationships to other men. Before Douglass even gives his definition of the self-made man, he remarks, "Properly speaking, there are in the world no such men as self-made men."

It must in truth be said though it may not accord well with self-conscious individuality and self-conceit, that no possible native force of character, and no depth or wealth of originality, can lift a man into absolute independence of his fellow-men, and no generation of men can be independent of the preceding generation.

Whereas Franklin does not put a strong emphasis on relationships, for Douglass, they are a matter of the utmost importance. Douglass understands himself as part of a larger entity and highlights what he calls the "brotherhood and inter-dependence of mankind" . Comparing the relationship between an individual and the masses to that between a wave and the ocean, Douglass explains that, though we differ like the waves, we all depend on each other and the power and greatness of each individual derives exactly from this interdependence. Since all men complement each other in their abilities and strengths, Douglass further argues that "the balance of power is kept comparatively even, and a self-acting brotherhood and interdependence is maintained."

Like Franklin, Douglass stresses moral principles. According to him, "the principles of honor, integrity and affection" are the essential prerequisite for enduring success:

All human experience proves over and over again, that any success which comes through meanness, trickery, fraud and dishonour, is but emptiness and will only be a torment to its possessor.

American Civilization

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

A certain degree of progress from the rudest state in which man is found, — a dweller in caves, or on trees, like an ape, a cannibal, an eater of pounded snails, worms, and offal, — a certain degree of progress from this extreme is called Civilization. It is a vague, complex name, of many degrees. Nobody has attempted a definition. Mr. Guizot, writing a book on the subject, does not. It implies the evolution of a highly organized man, brought to supreme delicacy of sentiment, as in practical power, religion, liberty, sense of honor, and taste. In the hesitation to define what it is, we usually suggest it by negations. A nation that has no clothing, no alphabet, no iron, no marriage, no arts of peace, no abstract thought, we call barbarous. And after many arts are invented or imported, as among the Turks and Moorish nations, it is often a little complaisant to call them civilized.

Each nation grows after its own genius, and has a civilization of its own. The Chinese and Japanese, though each complete in his way, is different from the man of Madrid or the man of New York. The term imports a mysterious progress. In the brutes is none; and in mankind, the savage tribes do not advance. The Indians of this country have not learned the white man's work; and in Africa, the Negro of today is the Negro of Herodotus. But in other races the growth is not arrested; but the like progress that is made by a boy, "when he cuts his eye-teeth," as we say, —

childish illusions passing daily away, and he seeing things really and comprehensively, — is made by tribes. It is learning the secret of cumulative power, of advancing on one's self. It implies a facility of association, power to compare, the ceasing from fixed ideas. The Indian is gloomy and distressed, when urged to depart from his habits and traditions. He is overpowered by the gaze of the white, and his eye sinks. The occasion of one of these starts of growth is always some novelty that astounds the mind, and provokes it to dare to change. Thus there is a Manco Capac at the beginning of each improvement, some superior foreigner importing new and wonderful arts, and teaching them. Of course, he must not know too much, but must have the sympathy, language, and gods of those he would inform. But chiefly the sea-shore has been the point of departure to knowledge, as to commerce. The most advanced nations are always those who navigate the most. The power which the sea requires in the sailor makes a man of him very fast, and the change of shores and population clears his head of much nonsense of his wigwam.

Where shall we begin or end the list of those feats of liberty and wit, each of which feats made an epoch of history? Thus, the effect of a framed or stone house is immense on the tranquillity, power, and refinement of the builder. A man in a cave, or in a camp, a nomad, will die with no more estate than the wolf or the horse leaves. But so simple a labor as a house being achieved, his chief enemies are kept at bay. He is safe from the teeth of wild animals, from frost, sun stroke, and weather; and fine faculties begin to yield their fine harvest. Invention and art are born, manners and social beauty and delight. 'T is wonderful how soon a piano gets into a log-hut on the frontier. You would think they found it under a pine-stump. With it comes a Latin grammar, and one of those towhead boys has written a hymn on Sunday. Now let colleges, now

let senates take heed! for here is one, who, opening these fine tastes on the basis of the pioneer's iron constitution, will gather all their laurels in his strong hands.

When the Indian trail gets widened, graded, and bridged to a good road, — there is a benefactor, there is a missionary, a pacificator, a wealth-bringer, a maker of markets, a vent for industry. The building three or four hundred miles of road in the Scotch Highlands in 1726 to 1749 effectually tamed the ferocious clans, and established public order. Another step in civility is the change from war, hunting, and pasturage, to agriculture. Our Scandinavian forefathers have left us a significant legend to convey their sense of the importance of this step. “There was once a giantess who had a daughter, and the child saw a husbandman ploughing in the field. Then she ran and picked him up with her finger and thumb, and put him and his plough and his oxen into her apron, and carried them to her mother, and said, ‘Mother, what sort of a beetle is this that I found wriggling in the sand?’ But the mother said, ‘Put it away, my child; we must begone out of this land, for these people will dwell in it.’” Another success is the post-office, with its educating energy, augmented by cheapness, and guarded by a certain religious sentiment in mankind, so that the power of a wafer or a drop of wax or gluten to guard a letter, as it flies over sea, over land, and comes to its address as if a battalion of artillery brought it, I look upon as a fine metre of civilization.

The division of labor, the multiplication of the arts of peace, which is nothing but a large allowance to each man to choose his work according to his faculty, to live by his better hand, fills the State with useful and happy laborers, — and they, creating demand by the very temptation of their productions, are rapidly and surely rewarded by good sale: and what a police

and ten commandments their work thus becomes! So true is Dr. Johnson's remark, that "men are seldom more innocently employed than when they are making money."

The skilful combinations of civil government, though they usually follow natural leadings, as the lines of race, language, religion, and territory, yet require wisdom and conduct in the rulers, and in their result delight the imagination. "We see insurmountable multitudes obeying, in opposition to their strongest passions, the restraints of a power which they scarcely perceive, and the crimes of a single individual marked and punished at the distance of half the earth."

Right position of woman in the State is another index. Poverty and industry with a healthy mind read very easily the laws of humanity, and love them: place the sexes in right relations of mutual respect, and a severe morality gives that essential charm to woman which educates all that is delicate, poetic, and self-sacrificing, breeds courtesy and learning, conversation and wit, in her rough mate; so that I have thought it a sufficient definition of civilization to say, it is the influence of good women.

Another measure of culture is the diffusion of knowledge, overrunning all the old barriers of caste, and, by the cheap press, bringing the university to every poor man's door in the newsboy's basket. Scraps of science, of thought, of poetry are in the coarsest sheet, so that in every house we hesitate to tear a newspaper until we have looked it through.

The ship, in its latest complete equipment, is an abridgement and compend of a nation's arts: the ship steered by compass and chart, longitude reckoned by lunar observation, and, when the

heavens are hid, by chronometer; driven by steam; and in wildest sea-mountains, at vast distances from home, The pulses of her iron heart Go beating through the storm.

No use can lessen the wonder of this control, by so weak a creature, of forces so prodigious. I remember I watched, in crossing the sea, the beautiful skill whereby the engine in its constant working was made to produce two hundred gallons of fresh water out of salt water, every hour, — thereby supplying all the ship's want.

The skill that pervades complex details; the man that maintains himself; the chimney taught to burn its own smoke; the farm made to produce all that is consumed on it; the very prison compelled to maintain itself and yield a revenue, and, better than that, made a reform school, and a manufactory of honest men out of rogues, as the steamer made fresh water out of salt: all these are examples of that tendency to combine antagonisms, and utilize evil, which is the index of high civilization.

Henry David Thoreau, "Slavery in Massachusetts" (1854)

I wish my countrymen to consider, that whatever the human law may be, neither an individual nor a nation can ever commit the least act of injustice against the obscurest individual without having to pay the penalty for it. A government which deliberately enacts injustice, and persists in it, will at length even become the laughing-stock of the world.

Much has been said about American slavery, but I think that we do not even yet realize what slavery is. If I were seriously to propose to Congress to make mankind into sausages, I have no doubt that most of the members would smile at my proposition, and if any believed me to be in

earnest, they would think that I proposed something much worse than Congress had ever done. But if any of them will tell me that to make a man into a sausage would be much worse—would be any worse—than to make him into a slave—than it was to enact the Fugitive Slave Law, I will accuse him of foolishness, of intellectual incapacity, of making a distinction without a difference. The one is just as sensible a proposition as the other. ("Slavery in Massachusetts")

Basic set up:

In this essay, Henry David Thoreau lays out why he's against the Fugitive Slave Act that had been passed in 1850. The law allowed for the capture of slaves found in the north, who would then be returned to their masters in the south.

Thematic Analysis

Thoreau didn't like slavery very much. Who in their right minds would? And he especially didn't like this horrible, evil law that had been passed by Congress in 1850, which mandated that captured slaves who had escaped to the north be returned to their masters.

Thoreau's anti-slavery views and his criticism of both slavery and the Fugitive Slave Act in the excerpt above reflect the American Romantics' preoccupation with democracy and freedom. Thoreau, like a number of his buddies, believed that we should all be free, regardless of our skin color. Good on you, Thoreau.

Stylistic Analysis

Thoreau makes a pretty heavy political point in this essay, but he makes it in a funny way. He's saying that forcing someone into slavery is as ridiculous as turning someone into a sausage. Yeah, it's funny. But Thoreau's broader point is that slavery is not only unjust, it's absurd. It's as absurd

as turning people into Hot Links. We should aspire to give people freedom, instead of turning them into slaves (or sausages, for that matter).

My Lost Youth

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

'My Lost Youth' by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is a recapitulation of the days of the poet's youth and contains a vivid description of the poet's native place Portland, Maine.

The poetic persona of the poem starts with a description of the old town where once he lived. The streets of the town, tossing of the sea waves, and the woods surrounding the town, are what he sees in his imagination. He becomes a boy again and captures those memories. The poet can recall how his boyish imagination made everything gleaming during his youth. More, there are a lot of other memories that appear in this poem. Lastly, the poet talks about how his town looks like when he visits it nowadays. The freshness of the town and the gleaming leaves of the Deering wood still captivates his heart. But, the old song somehow rings through his mind. The days of youth pass away like the wind. What remains, is a half-hearted recapitulation of the memories.

Meaning

The title of the poem, 'My Lost Youth', refers to Longfellow's youth. Longfellow was once a boy, brimming with the vigor of youthfulness. But, in the present moment, while he thinks about his boyish days, he can see only vacant memories. It was he who made those places described in the poem colorful. When he thinks of those days, he can see the places. But, the boy is absent in those memories. Hence, through the title, the poet says that his youthful memories are still there but the boy has passed away. Apart from that, from the title, it also becomes clear that the poet is

referring to the phase of youth. As he has grown old, his youth has lost its way in the alleyways of time.

Structure

The poem consists of a total of ten stanzas. Each stanza contains nine lines in it. The rhyme scheme of the poem is regular yet interesting. The rhyme scheme of the poem is ABAABCDDE and goes on like this. The internal rhyming of the lines maintains the overall flow of the text. However, the metrical pattern of the poem doesn't follow a set pattern. There are both the iambic meter and anapestic meter in the poem. A few variations are there in the poem. In some lines, the poet uses trochaic feet. Whereas, some feet of the poem are spondees. As an example, "long thoughts" is a spondee. Whatsoever, the whole poem is written from a first-person point-of-view. That's why it's an example of a lyric poem.

Literary Devices

There are several literary devices in the poem, 'My Lost Youth' that make the remembrances of the poet's past more appealing to the readers. Likewise, the poem begins with a personification. In the first stanza, the poet personifies his old town. The poet uses anaphora throughout the poem. This device connects the sense of the lines in which it's used. Thereafter, each stanza of the poem has a refrain at the end of it. These quoted lines contain an allusion to an old folk song of Lapland. Moreover, the quotation contains a tautology and alliteration as well. Apart from that, there is a metaphor in the second stanza in the "Hesperides of all my boyish dreams." There are several other metaphors in this poem.

The poet also uses onomatopoeia here. It can be found in the words such as “murmurs” and “whispers”. Thereafter, there is a simile in the lines, “Come back with a Sabbath sound, as of doves/ In quiet neighborhoods.” Moreover, the poet also uses metonymy and synecdoche in this poem.

Themes

In this poem, ‘My Lost Youth’ there are some important themes such as youth, adulthood vs youth, memories, time, love, pain, and longing. The most important theme of the poem is youth. Here, the poet talks about his youthful days when he was young both physically and mentally. Everything then seemed to be joyous and mysterious to the poet. But, now when he visualizes those memories he can only feel the current, not the warmth of youthfulness. Thereafter, the theme of childhood memories is there. The poet uses the stream-of-consciousness technique for presenting the chain of thoughts regarding his youth. Moreover, the themes of love, pain, and longing are there throughout the poem. Apart from that, nature forms the basis of his imagery. Hence, the theme of natural beauty is also there in this poem by Longfellow.

Historical Context

The poem ‘My Last Youth’ contains several references to the poet’s native town, Portland, Maine. During one of his visits to Portland in 1846, Longfellow relates how he took a long walk around Munjoy’s hill and down to the old Fort Lawrence. Longfellow says, I lay down in one of the embrasures and listened to the lashing, lulling sound of the just at my feet. It was a beautiful afternoon, and the harbor was full of white sails, coming, and departing. Meditated a poem on the Old Fort. During that time, he didn’t write any poem regarding this theme. However, in 1855, when in Cambridge, he notes in his diary, March 29: A day of pain; cowering over the fire. At

night, as I lie in bed, a poem comes into my mind, – a memory of Portland, – my native town, the city by the sea.

Song of the Open Road

-Walt Whitman

'*Song of the Open Road*' by Walt Whitman appeared in what many scholars deem one of the most influential poetry texts of all time, *Leaves of Grass*, which was first published on July 4, 1855. A journalist and teacher by trade, Walt Whitman is known as a poet and essayist, and many modern poets credit his poetry with inspiring and influencing their own works.

Whitman was born on Long Island and grew up in the New York area. He had very little formal schooling, but he considered himself to be a lifelong learner. He took jobs at print shops; additionally, he taught school and worked on several newspapers. Whitman died at the age of 72 after suffering a debilitating stroke. His poems and essays are read in classrooms throughout the United States and the world.

'*Song of the Open Road*' by Walt Whitman describes a trip the speaker takes in order to learn about himself and enjoy the journey to an unnamed destination.

The speaker of the poem is describing a trip on which he is embarking. He describes himself as being "healthy and free," and he realizes he is the only person who is in complete control of his life; he chooses his own destiny. Because of this realization, he does not have to wish or hope or pray for good fortune. He attests that he, himself, is his own good fortune, and that is all he needs. There is nothing that he is lacking. He will reach his destination on his own, and the earth will provide him with anything extra that is necessary. This is not to say that the road he is taking

is not paved with imperfections and burdens. Rather than worry, however, the speaker has decided to take those burdens with him and deal with them as they arise.

Themes

Whitman engages with important themes of freedom, the self, and nature in '*Song of the Open Road*'. His speaker, who is very likely Whitman himself, describes a journey he's embarking on. It is open that is "open". There is a whole line of freedom right in front of him that he's going to tap into. The journey he undertakes is also going to tell him about himself. He believes that he'll come to fully depend on himself for everything. This will allow him to achieve a new perspective on his own abilities and a new knowledge of what he values.

Structure and Form

'*Song of the Open Road*' is separated into four separate stanzas. With the exception of the first stanza, which contains only three lines, the other stanzas contain four lines of verse. The poem utilizes free verse; the lines are unrhymed and of varying lengths. *Song of the Open Road* is told from the first-person point of view, and the speaker, perhaps Whitman, knows himself very well. Whitman is often referred to today as the "father of free verse poetry". His use of this style of writing paved the way for generations of poets after him.

Literary Devices

Whitman makes use of several literary devices in '*Song of the Open Road*'. These include but are not limited to enjambment, alliteration, and caesura. The first, enjambment, is a common and useful poetic technique that allows the poet to control how fast a reader moves through the lines

of verse. One good example is the transition between lines one and two of the second stanza. Alliteration is another common device, but one that works to create a feeling of rhyme and rhythm. This is quite important in free verse poetry. Take for example the words “no,” “need,” and “nothing” in line two of stanza two as well as “complaints” and “criticisms” in line three of that same stanza. Caesura is another formal technique that involves splitting a line with punctuation. Take for example line four of the second stanza. It reads: “Strong and content, I travel the open road”.

Hope is the thing with feathers

- Emily Dickinson

A Short Biography of Emily Dickinson

"Hope" is the thing with feathers (314)' is one of the best known of Emily Dickinson's poems. An extended metaphor, it likens the concept of hope to a feathered bird that is permanently perched in the soul of every human. There it sings, never stopping in its quest to inspire.

Emily Dickinson wrote this poem in 1862, a prolific year for her poetry, one of nearly 1,800 poems she penned during her lifetime. Only seven of these were published while she was still alive. Her sister, Lavinia, collected and helped publish all of her poems after Emily's death in 1886.

The Belle of Amherst, so called, remains an enigma. Her poetry was highly original but was dismissed or simply misunderstood when she sent her work out for appraisal or publication. It was only after she had passed away and her poems circulated more widely that critics began to appreciate her genius.

Her poems, together with those of Walt Whitman, were pioneering works that pointed the way to a new and refreshing era of poetry in the English speaking world.

Dickinson seems to have been a recluse for most of her adult life, living at the family home, only rarely venturing out. Quiet and timid, she never married or actively sought a permanent relationship, despite correspondence with several older men she viewed as her protectors.

Her poetry, however, reflects a lively, imaginative and dynamic inner world; she was able to capture universal moments in a simple sentence, create metaphors that have stood the test of time.

"Hope" is the thing with feathers stands out as a reminder to all—no matter the circumstances, each and every one of us has this entity within that is always there to help us out, by singing.

Summary of "Hope" is the thing with feathers

Full of figurative language, this poem is an extended metaphor, transforming hope into a bird (the poet loved birds) that is ever present in the human soul. It sings, especially when times get tough. Hope springs eternal, might be a reasonable summing up.

With typical disregard for convention, Emily Dickinson's odd-looking syntax has clauses interrupted by dashes, and only one comma throughout. This can be confusing for the reader because of the need to pause and place extra emphasis on certain phrases.

The rhythm of the poem varies in places too, which may not be apparent on first sighting. Readily set to music, the words are a reminder of the poet's yearning for fulfilment in both creativity and love. And they beautifully encapsulate what hope is for us all—something that inspires and can make us fly.

Emily Dickinson did not give titles to her poems, so the first line is always given as the title. Her poems are also given numbers. In 1998, R.W. Franklin published a definitive version of her poems, closely following the poet's form and layout, and this poem is number 314.

First Stanza

The first word is given special emphasis with speech marks (inverted commas, quotation marks) as if the poet wants to define that elusive word "Hope", and she does so with metaphor. Hope has feathers and it can, like a bird, perch in the human soul. Feathers are soft and gentle to the touch but they are also strong in flight, even on tiny birds. And feathers are made up of complex individual fibres; unity is strength.

The imagery here grows stronger as the reader progresses. Not only is Hope feathery, it can sing. It sits on a perch and sings the whole time. But the song is special for there are no words, no diction for anyone to understand rationally. It's as if Hope is pure song, pure feeling, a deep

seated longing that can take flight at any time. The song is endless. Note the double dash emphasis on—at all—and the stanza break which brings extra attention to these two little words.

Second Stanza

The first line is unusual in the use of the double dash—there are two distinct pauses which the reader has to be careful with. Hope is always singing as we know from the first stanza but it sings the sweetest when the going gets rough, when the Gale starts to blow. So, when life is hard and things are thrown at us, the pressure relentless, there is Hope, singing through the chaos and mayhem.

- Note the first mention of the bird in line 7. It would take a hellish storm to embarrass or disconcert this bird (*sore—angry* and *abash—embarrass*) which protects many people from adverse situations. Hope is difficult to disturb, even when life seems hard.

Third Stanza

The personal pronoun I appears for the first time, indicating a personal connection to this subject perhaps? Emily Dickinson thought of herself as a little bird (a wren) so the link is direct. The speaker has heard the bird during the hardest, coldest times, when emotions are churning and life surreal. But even when things are extreme Hope is still there and never asks for anything. Hope gives us much but never asks for a crumb in return. It is all inspirational, yet slightly mysterious. Hope wells up in the heart and soul yet who knows where it comes from?. Philosophy, religion, psychology and even metaphor are not sufficient—there is an abstract nature to Hope. It can give

us strength to carry on in the most adverse of conditions. Its voice can be heard, despite the noise at the height of the storm.

Rhyme

The rhyme scheme is **abcb**, the second and fourth lines rhyme full except for the half rhyme in the first stanza, *soul/all*.

- 2nd stanza—note the additional full rhyme of lines 1 and 3 (*heard/bird*) which helps tighten the mid section of the poem and places emphasis on the bird's ability to sing sweeter.

Syntax

Emily Dickinson used a lot of dashes in her poetry and this poem has a total of 15, which creates unusual syntax—the way the clauses fit together with punctuation, meter (metre in UK) and enjambment.

- It's as if, for every breath she took whilst creating and reading through her lines, she wrote a dash, instead of, say, a comma. In addition, certain phrases are enclosed in a separate double dash, which places particular emphasis on meaning. Note: - *at all* - in the first stanza, and -*in the Gale* - in the second, plus - *never* - in the final stanza.

What Is the Meter in "'Hope" is the thing with feathers (314)'?

As with many of Emily Dickinson's poems, this one follows a basic *iambic trimeter* rhythm, with an extra syllable in the first and third lines of each stanza. But there are lines that do not conform to the iambic beat.

*Hope is / the **thing** / with **feathers***—so we have an opening trochee followed by two iambs and extra beat or feminine ending. Emphasis when reading falls on the opening word.

*That **per** / **ches in** / the **soul***—Iambic trimeter continues in the second line.

*I've **heard** / it **in** / the **chill** / est **land***—the 9th line could be scanned as iambic tetrameter.

*Yet - **nev** / er - in / **Extre** / **mity***, note spondee, pyrrhic and two iambs in line 11.

Acquainted with the Night

-Robert Frost

"Acquainted with the Night" is a poem written by the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Robert Frost and first published in 1927. One of Frost's most celebrated poems, "Acquainted with the Night" is an exploration of isolation, sorrow, and despair—emotions that feel as inescapable as the night itself. These emotions, Frost suggests, are not unique to the speaker of his poem, but rather a universal part of the human experience. Though a sonnet, the poem is not a traditional Italian or English sonnet. "Acquainted with the Night" Summary

The speaker declares their familiarity with the night. It was raining when the speaker began a walk across the city, and it was still raining at the end of the walk. During the walk, the speaker progressed beyond even the outermost light of the city.

The speaker looked into the most desolate city street. The speaker also passed by a watchman patrolling the city. The speaker, however, looked down to avoid eye contact with the watchman, not wanting to talk about the reasons behind the speaker's nighttime walk.

During the walk, the speaker stopped moving upon hearing a distant, broken-off cry. The sound of this other human's voice traveled across houses from a different street.

However, the voice did not call the speaker to come back or bid the speaker farewell. Even more distant and higher up, the moon shines like a bright clock in the sky.

This metaphorical clock declares that the time is not wrong or right. The speaker again says that they are familiar with the night.

“Acquainted with the Night” Themes

Isolation, Sorrow, and Despair

In “Acquainted with the Night,” the speaker describes a solitary nighttime outing in the city. During this aimless wandering, the speaker grapples with a sense of despair and sorrow. Indeed, the speaker’s emotions are so powerful that they prevent the speaker from talking to or connecting with others, keeping the speaker in a state of isolation. The poem thus implies a link between these states: despair leads to isolation, and vice versa, creating a self-perpetuating cycle. The poem further explores how isolation, sorrow, and despair can feel inescapable—like walking through an endless night.

The physical details of the city at night reflect the speaker's mood. The speaker is "one acquainted with the night." The night is generally associated with darkness, which, in turn, is associated with suffering and despair. Thus, the speaker's familiarity with the "night" is also symbolic of the speaker's familiarity with these particular emotions. Furthermore, given the sense of isolation that pervades the poem, "acquainted" is used ironically to imply that the only thing the speaker is connected to is disconnection itself. Additionally, the speaker begins and ends this walk in "rain." Rain is often associated with sorrow, with raindrops often representing human tears. Therefore, the physical rain that surrounds the speaker is a reflection of the speaker's sorrow.

As the speaker continues walking, the darkness and sorrow of the surroundings intensify. The speaker walks beyond even the "furthest city light," thus sinking further into physical darkness. In a similar vein, the speaker characterizes the "city lane" they look into as the "saddest." The use of superlatives—"furthest" and "saddest"—reflects the heightening of the speaker's emotions. Indeed, the speaker's despair and sorrow seem never-ending; although the speaker continues to progress on the walk, the speaker doesn't actually go anywhere on a figurative and emotional level. This sense of despair and sorrow is inescapable, like the night itself.

What's more, the speaker's feelings of suffering and despair prevent the speaker from finding solace in any companionship and preserve a state of isolation. The speaker has deliberately walked beyond "the furthest city light" and is thus on the outskirts of the city. The speaker is thus unlikely to encounter another human being to keep company with. However, even when the speaker encounters a "watchman" patrolling the city, the speaker refuses to make eye contact or speak to him. Then, the speaker hears another human voice from "far away." The distance and darkness make it impossible for the speaker to locate the owner of the voice. Moreover, the voice

does not “call [the speaker] back or say good-bye”; neither the speaker nor the other voice can make a connection with one another. Thus, though the speaker is teased with opportunities for human connection, the speaker’s inability to make that connection happen only reinforces the speaker’s isolation.

Consequently, the speaker’s walk does not provide the solace or resolution the speaker searches for. Rather, the speaker remains in the same state as the beginning. The speaker looks up at the sky for some sort of answer. However, the moon, which the speaker views as a “luminary clock,” tells them that “the time [is] neither wrong nor right.” Thus, even the moon cannot provide the speaker with any comfort or definitive answer. The speaker repeats the assertion that they are “one acquainted with the night,” making it clear that the speaker’s isolation, sorrow, and despair have not lessened or even changed.

Furthermore, the word “one” suggests that the speaker is “one” of many who are similarly familiar with these particular emotions. And indeed, the speaker’s self-perpetuating cycle of isolation and despair exists beyond a particular reason or explanation; the reader never finds out why the speaker is so sad. As the speaker’s suffering is not unique, the poem suggests that isolation, sorrow, and despair are an inherent part of the human experience.

Personification

In "Acquainted with the Night," the surrounding environment is personified in various ways to reflect the speaker's desire for human connection. In lines 1 and 14, the speaker declares that they are "acquainted with the night." The word "acquainted" is often used to refer to a connection between one individual and another, as people might be "acquainted" with their neighbors, coworkers, or friends. Here, the speaker is "acquainted" with the night, which makes the night

itself seem to be a person. However, the night does not represent real human connection, but rather the speaker's connection to despair, sorrow, and isolation. The personification indicates that the speaker is connected to something—but that something turns out to be, put simply, nothing. The city the speaker walks through is also personified. In line 4, the speaker looks into "the saddest city lane." This particular city street is thus personified as having emotions of sorrow, which reflect the speaker's own inner sorrow. Nature, too, is personified in a manner that reflects the speaker's feelings. In lines 12 and 13, the moon, which is described through the metaphor of a "luminary clock," "proclaim[s] the time [is] neither wrong nor right." Although the moon, through personification, becomes a figure that communicates with the speaker, the connection between the moon and the speaker is not a comforting one. The moon's message provides the speaker with no certainty or direction. Overall, the personification throughout the poem suggests that the speaker desires human connection so strongly that this desire influences the way the speaker views the world—the speaker is seeking a person, so everything looks like a person. However, no matter how the surroundings are personified, this personification ultimately provides no real connection or comfort for the speaker, highlighting just how isolated the speaker really is.

Rain

Rain is often associated with sorrow and mourning, and raindrops falling are frequently used as symbols to represent teardrops. In "Acquainted with the Night," the rain is a physical representation of the speaker's never-ending sorrow.

The speaker begins and ends their walk "in rain." The rain is constant throughout the night; the speaker is unable to escape the rain no matter how far or how long the speaker walks. Therefore,

symbolically, the speaker begins and ends their journey in sorrow and despair. These feelings are inescapable for the speaker. Indeed, the speaker cannot progress beyond them no matter what actions they take and no matter how far they walk through the night.

Symbol Clock

Because they track time through human systems and are relatively technologically-advanced objects, clocks are often associated with civilization and human society. In "Acquainted with the Night," the clock represents the speaker's sense of alienation from other people and society. The clock also represents the inability of human civilization to provide comfort, certainty, or direction to the speaker.

In line 11, the clock, a metaphor for the moon, is described as being located "at an unearthly height." The speaker, who is very much at an earthly height, is not able to access or connect to the clock. So in a symbolic sense, the speaker cannot connect with human society or other humans. Moreover, the clock declares "the time [is] neither wrong nor right." Therefore, the clock, and thus human society, can offer no assurance or direction for the speaker; it doesn't seem to tell the speaker anything useful at all. Consequently, the symbol of the clock emphasizes the speaker's isolation and the inability of human connection to comfort or soothe the speaker's feelings.

The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter

-Ezra Pound

'The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter' is a loose translation of another poem by the Chinese poet Li Bai. It was first published in Pound's *Cathay*, a 1915 collection of his works. Upon publication several of the poems in this collection were controversial. Their form, style, and use of language were all-new, something that Pound strived for throughout his career.

'The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter' is generally considered to be the most popular poem of the collection and one of the best of his career. It explores themes of love, loss, and separation.

Summary

'The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter' by Ezra Pound describes the relationship between a sixteen-year-old girl and her merchant husband.

The young wife is the speaker of the text, and she begins by informing the reader that she was married when she was only fourteen. This is not something that she comments on, aside from simply accepting that it happened. At the time she was very reserved and nervous around her husband. She didn't laugh or look him in the eye.

As she aged she came to love him. This love only grew, and at the time the letter was written her husband was on a trip from which she hopes he will soon return. She suggests that he tell her through another letter when he's almost there and she'll come to meet him.

Structure

'The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter' by Ezra Pound is a five stanza poem that is separated into uneven sets of lines. The first stanza contains six lines, the second: four, the third: four, and the fifth has the most at eleven lines. As was the case with all of Pound's poetry, as a leader of the

Modernist movement, particular of the Imagism, there is no rhyme scheme or metrical pattern.

This is a technique known as free verse.

As an imagist, Pound respected the economical use of language and disregarded any need for enhanced poetic diction or overcomplicating syntax.

Poetic Techniques

Despite being written in free verse, Pound makes use of several poetic techniques in ‘The River-Merchant’s Wife: A Letter’. These include but are not limited to, anaphora, caesura, and cliffhanger. The latter, cliffhanger, is clearly evident in the final lines of the poem. There is no resolution to the central conflict of the story. The young woman’s husband does not return home by the end of the final stanza and a reader is left wondering what her future holds.

Pound also makes use of anaphora, or the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of multiple lines, usually in succession. This technique is often used to create emphasis. A list of phrases, items, or actions may be created through its implementation. This can be seen through the use of “You” at the beginning of multiple lines of ‘The River-Merchant’s Wife: A Letter’. This makes sense considering the importance that the intended listener, the young woman’s husband, plays in the poem. She is telling their story and addressing every line to him.

Caesura occurs when a line is split in half, sometimes with punctuation, sometimes not. The use of punctuation in these moments creates a very intentional pause in the text. A reader should consider how the pause influences the rhythm of one’s reading and how it might come before an important turn or transition in the text. There is a good, impactful example in the seventh line of the fifth stanza. It reads: “They hurt me. I grow older”. It falls in the section that includes the

young woman's depictions of the gardens around their home and how everything is changing. Time is passing and she's still alone.

The Tell-Tale Heart

-Edgar Allan Poe

"The Tell-Tale Heart" is a short story by American writer Edgar Allan Poe, first published in 1843. It is related by an unnamed narrator who endeavors to convince the reader of the narrator's sanity while simultaneously describing a murder the narrator committed. The victim was an old man with a filmy pale blue "vulture-eye", as the narrator calls it. The narrator emphasizes the careful calculation of the murder, attempting the perfect crime, complete with dismembering the body in the bathtub and hiding it under the floorboards. Ultimately, the narrator's actions result in hearing a thumping sound, which the narrator interprets as the dead man's beating heart.

The story was first published in James Russell Lowell's *The Pioneer* in January 1843. "The Tell-Tale Heart" is often considered a classic of the Gothic fiction genre and is one of Poe's best known short stories.

The specific motivation for murder (aside from the narrator's hatred of the old man's eye), the relationship between narrator and old man, the gender of the narrator, and other details are left unclear. The narrator denies having any feelings of hatred or resentment for the man who had, as stated, "never wronged" the narrator. The narrator also denies having killed for greed.

Critics have speculated that the old man could be a father figure, the narrator's landlord, or that the narrator works for the old man as a servant, and that perhaps his "vulture-eye" represents a

veiled secret or power. The ambiguity and lack of details about the two main characters stand in contrast to the specific plot details leading up to the murder.

"The Tell-Tale Heart" is a first-person narrative told by an unnamed narrator. Despite insisting that they are sane, the narrator suffers from a disease (nervousness) which causes "over-acuteness of the senses".

The old man, with whom the narrator lives, has a clouded, pale, blue "vulture-like" eye, which distresses and manipulates the narrator so much that the narrator plots to murder the old man, despite also insisting that the narrator loves the old man and has never felt wronged by him. The narrator is insistent that this careful precision in committing the murder proves that they cannot possibly be insane. For seven nights, the narrator opens the door of the old man's room to shine a sliver of light onto the "evil eye." However, the old man's vulture-eye is always closed, making it impossible to "do the work," thus making the narrator go further into distress.

On the eighth night, the old man awakens after the narrator's hand slips and makes a noise, interrupting the narrator's nightly ritual. The narrator does not draw back and after some time, decides to open the lantern. A single thin ray of light shines out and lands precisely on the "evil eye," revealing that it is wide open. The narrator hears the old man's heart beating, which only gets louder and louder. This increases the narrator's anxiety to the point where the narrator decides to strike. He jumps into the room and the old man shrieks once before he is killed. The narrator then dismembers the body and conceals the pieces under the floorboards, ensuring the concealment of all signs of the crime. Even so, the old man's scream during the night causes a neighbor to report to the police, who the narrator invites in to look around. The narrator claims

that the scream heard was the narrator's own in a nightmare and that the old man is absent in the country. Confident that they will not find any evidence of the murder, the narrator brings chairs for them and they sit in the old man's room. The chairs are placed on the very spot where the body is concealed; the police suspect nothing, and the narrator has a pleasant and easy manner.

The narrator begins to feel uncomfortable and notices a ringing in the narrator's ears. As the ringing grows louder, the narrator concludes that it is the heartbeat of the old man coming from under the floorboards. The sound increases steadily to the narrator, though the officers do not seem to hear it. Terrified by the violent beating of the heart and convinced that the officers are aware of not only the heartbeat but also the narrator's guilt, the narrator breaks down and confesses. The narrator tells them to tear up the floorboards to reveal the remains of the old man's body.

Analysis

"The Tell-Tale Heart" uses an unreliable narrator. The exactness with which the narrator recounts murdering the old man, as if the stealthy way in which they executed the crime were evidence of their sanity, reveals their monomania and paranoia. The focus of the story is the perverse scheme to commit the perfect crime. One author, Paige Bynum, asserts that Poe wrote the narrator in a way that "allows the reader to identify with the narrator".

The narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" is generally assumed to be a male. However, some critics have suggested a woman may be narrating; no pronouns are used to clarify one way or the other. The story starts in medias res, opening with a conversation already in progress between the narrator and another person who is not identified in any way. It has been speculated that the narrator is confessing to a prison warden, a judge, a reporter, a doctor, or (anachronistically) a

psychiatrist. In any case, the narrator tells the story in great detail. What follows is a study of terror but, more specifically, the memory of terror as the narrator is retelling events from the past. The first word of the story, "True!", is an admission of their guilt, as well as an assurance of reliability. This introduction also serves to gain the reader's attention. Every word contributes to the purpose of moving the story forward, exemplifying Poe's theories about the writing of short stories.

The story is driven not by the narrator's insistence upon their "innocence," but by their insistence on their sanity. This, however, is self-destructive, because in attempting to prove their sanity, they fully admit that they are guilty of murder. Their denial of insanity is based on their systematic actions and their precision, as they provide a rational explanation for irrational behavior. This rationality, however, is undermined by their lack of motive ("Object there was none. Passion there was none."). Despite this, they say, the idea of murder "haunted me day and night." It is difficult to fully understand the narrator's true emotions about the blue-eyed man because of this contradiction. It is said that "At the same time he disclosed a deep psychological confusion", referring to the narrator and the comment that "Object there was none. Passion there was none" and that the idea of murder "haunted me day and night."

The story's final scene shows the result of the narrator's feelings of guilt. Like many characters in Gothic fiction, they allow their nerves to dictate their nature. Despite their best efforts at defending their actions, their "over-acuteness of the senses"; which helps them hear the heart beating beneath the floorboards, is evidence that they are truly mad. The guilt in the narrator can be seen when the narrator confessed to the police that the body of the old man was under the floorboards. Even though the old man was dead, the body and heart of the dead man still seemed

to haunt the narrator and convict them of the act. "Since such processes of reasoning tend to convict the speaker of madness, it does not seem out of keeping that he is driven to confession", according to scholar Arthur Robinson. Poe's contemporaries may well have been reminded of the controversy over the insanity defense in the 1840s. The confession can be due to a concept called "Illusion of transparency". According to the "Encyclopedia of Social Psychology", "Poe's character falsely believes that some police officers can sense his guilt and anxiety over a crime he has committed, a fear that ultimately gets the best of him and causes him to give himself up unnecessarily".

The narrator claims to have a disease that causes hypersensitivity. A similar motif is used for Roderick Usher in "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) and in "The Colloquy of Monos and Una" (1841). It is unclear, however, if the narrator actually has very acute senses, or if it is merely imagined. If this condition is believed to be true, what is heard at the end of the story may not be the old man's heart, but deathwatch beetles. The narrator first admits to hearing deathwatch beetles in the wall after startling the old man from his sleep. According to superstition, deathwatch beetles are a sign of impending death. One variety of deathwatch beetle raps its head against surfaces, presumably as part of a mating ritual, while others emit ticking sounds. Henry David Thoreau observed in an 1838 article that deathwatch beetles make sounds similar to a heartbeat. The discrepancy with this theory is that the deathwatch beetles make a "uniformly faint" ticking sound that would have kept at a consistent pace but as the narrator drew closer to the old man the sound got more rapid and louder which would not have been a result of the beetles. The beating could even be the sound of the narrator's own heart. Alternatively, if the

beating is a product of the narrator's imagination, it is that uncontrolled imagination that leads to their own destruction.

It is also possible that the narrator has paranoid schizophrenia. Paranoid schizophrenics very often experience auditory hallucinations. These auditory hallucinations are more often voices, but can also be sounds. The hallucinations do not need to derive from a specific source other than one's head, which is another indication that the narrator is suffering from such a psychological disorder.

The relationship between the old man and the narrator is ambiguous. Their names, occupations, and places of residence are not given, contrasting with the strict attention to detail in the plot. The narrator may be a servant of the old man's or, as is more often assumed, his child. In that case, the "vulture-eye" of the old man as a father figure may symbolize parental surveillance or the paternal principles of right and wrong. The murder of the eye, then, is removal of conscience. The eye may also represent secrecy: only when the eye is found open on the final night, penetrating the veil of secrecy, is the murder carried out.

Richard Wilbur suggested that the tale is an allegorical representation of Poe's poem "To Science", which depicts a struggle between imagination and science. In "The Tell-Tale Heart", the old man may thus represent the scientific and rational mind, while the narrator may stand for the imaginative

To Build a Fire

-by Jack London

Day had broken cold and grey, exceedingly cold and grey, when the man turned aside from the main Yukon trail and climbed the high earth-bank, where a dim and little-travelled trail led eastward through the fat spruce timberland. It was a steep bank, and he paused for breath at the top, excusing the act to himself by looking at his watch. It was nine o'clock. There was no sun nor hint of sun, though there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day, and yet there seemed an intangible pall over the face of things, a subtle gloom that made the day dark, and that was due to the absence of sun. This fact did not worry the man. He was used to the lack of sun. It had been days since he had seen the sun, and he knew that a few more days must pass before that cheerful orb, due south, would just peep above the sky-line and dip immediately from view.

The man flung a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. It was all pure white, rolling in gentle undulations where the ice-jams of the freeze-up had formed. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark hair-line that curved and twisted from around the spruce-covered island to the south, and that curved and twisted away into the north, where it disappeared behind another spruce-covered island. This dark hair-line was the trail--the main trail--that led south five hundred miles to the Chilcoot Pass, Dyea, and salt water; and that led north seventy miles to Dawson, and still on to the north a thousand miles to Nulato, and finally to St. Michael on Bering Sea, a thousand miles and half a thousand more.

But all this--the mysterious, far-reaching hairline trail, the absence of sun from the sky, the tremendous cold, and the strangeness and weirdness of it all--made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a new-comer in the land, a chechaquo, and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick

and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty odd degrees of frost. Such fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man's frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold; and from there on it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bite of frost that hurt and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, ear-flaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.

As he turned to go on, he spat speculatively. There was a sharp, explosive crackle that startled him. He spat again. And again, in the air, before it could fall to the snow, the spittle crackled. He knew that at fifty below spittle crackled on the snow, but this spittle had crackled in the air. Undoubtedly it was colder than fifty below--how much colder he did not know. But the temperature did not matter. He was bound for the old claim on the left fork of Henderson Creek, where the boys were already. They had come over across the divide from the Indian Creek country, while he had come the roundabout way to take a look at the possibilities of getting out logs in the spring from the islands in the Yukon. He would be in to camp by six o'clock; a bit after dark, it was true, but the boys would be there, a fire would be going, and a hot supper would be ready. As for lunch, he pressed his hand against the protruding bundle under his jacket. It was also under his shirt, wrapped up in a handkerchief and lying against the naked skin. It was the only way to keep the biscuits from freezing. He smiled agreeably to himself as he thought of those biscuits, each cut open and sopped in bacon grease, and each enclosing a generous slice of fried bacon.

He plunged in among the big spruce trees. The trail was faint. A foot of snow had fallen since the last sled had passed over, and he was glad he was without a sled, travelling light. In fact, he carried nothing but the lunch wrapped in the handkerchief. He was surprised, however, at the cold. It certainly was cold, he concluded, as he rubbed his numbed nose and cheek-bones with his mittened hand. He was a warm-whiskered man, but the hair on his face did not protect the high cheek-bones and the eager nose that thrust itself aggressively into the frosty air.

At the man's heels trotted a dog, a big native husky, the proper wolf-dog, grey-coated and without any visible or temperamental difference from its brother, the wild wolf. The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for travelling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment. In reality, it was not merely colder than fifty below zero; it was colder than sixty below, than seventy below. It was seventy-five below zero. Since the freezing-point is thirty-two above zero, it meant that one hundred and seven degrees of frost obtained. The dog did not know anything about thermometers. Possibly in its brain there was no sharp consciousness of a condition of very cold such as was in the man's brain. But the brute had its instinct. It experienced a vague but menacing apprehension that subdued it and made it slink along at the man's heels, and that made it question eagerly every unwonted movement of the man as if expecting him to go into camp or to seek shelter somewhere and build a fire. The dog had learned fire, and it wanted fire, or else to burrow under the snow and cuddle its warmth away from the air.

The frozen moisture of its breathing had settled on its fur in a fine powder of frost, and especially were its jowls, muzzle, and eyelashes whitened by its crystallized breath. The man's red beard and moustache were likewise frosted, but more solidly, the deposit taking the form of ice and increasing with every warm, moist breath he exhaled. Also, the man was chewing tobacco, and the muzzle of ice held his lips so rigidly that he was unable to clear his chin when he expelled the juice. The result was that a crystal beard of the colour and solidity of amber was increasing its length on his chin. If he fell down it would shatter itself, like glass, into brittle fragments. But he did not mind the appendage. It was the penalty all tobacco-chewers paid in that country, and he had been out before in two cold snaps. They had not been so cold as this, he knew, but by the spirit thermometer at Sixty Mile he knew they had been registered at fifty below and at fifty-five.

He held on through the level stretch of woods for several miles, crossed a wide flat of nigger-heads, and dropped down a bank to the frozen bed of a small stream. This was Henderson Creek, and he knew he was ten miles from the forks. He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He was making four miles an hour, and he calculated that he would arrive at the forks at half-past twelve. He decided to celebrate that event by eating his lunch there.

The dog dropped in again at his heels, with a tail drooping discouragement, as the man swung along the creek-bed. The furrow of the old sled-trail was plainly visible, but a dozen inches of snow covered the marks of the last runners. In a month no man had come up or down that silent creek. The man held steadily on. He was not much given to thinking, and just then particularly he had nothing to think about save that he would eat lunch at the forks and that at six o'clock he

would be in camp with the boys. There was nobody to talk to and, had there been, speech would have been impossible because of the ice-muzzle on his mouth. So he continued monotonously to chew tobacco and to increase the length of his amber beard.

Once in a while the thought reiterated itself that it was very cold and that he had never experienced such cold. As he walked along he rubbed his cheek-bones and nose with the back of his mittened hand. He did this automatically, now and again changing hands. But rub as he would, the instant he stopped his cheek-bones went numb, and the following instant the end of his nose went numb. He was sure to frost his cheeks; he knew that, and experienced a pang of regret that he had not devised a nose-strap of the sort Bud wore in cold snaps. Such a strap passed across the cheeks, as well, and saved them. But it didn't matter much, after all. What were frosted cheeks? A bit painful, that was all; they were never serious.

Empty as the man's mind was of thoughts, he was keenly observant, and he noticed the changes in the creek, the curves and bends and timber-jams, and always he sharply noted where he placed his feet. Once, coming around a bend, he shied abruptly, like a startled horse, curved away from the place where he had been walking, and retreated several paces back along the trail. The creek he knew was frozen clear to the bottom--no creek could contain water in that arctic winter--but he knew also that there were springs that bubbled out from the hillsides and ran along under the snow and on top the ice of the creek. He knew that the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he knew likewise their danger. They were traps. They hid pools of water under the snow that might be three inches deep, or three feet. Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick

covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow. Sometimes there were alternate layers of water and ice-skin, so that when one broke through he kept on breaking through for a while, sometimes wetting himself to the waist.

That was why he had shied in such panic. He had felt the give under his feet and heard the crackle of a snow-hidden ice-skin. And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger. At the very least it meant delay, for he would be forced to stop and build a fire, and under its protection to bare his feet while he dried his socks and moccasins. He stood and studied the creek-bed and its banks, and decided that the flow of water came from the right. He reflected awhile, rubbing his nose and cheeks, then skirted to the left, stepping gingerly and testing the footing for each step. Once clear of the danger, he took a fresh chew of tobacco and swung along at his four-mile gait.

In the course of the next two hours he came upon several similar traps. Usually the snow above the hidden pools had a sunken, candied appearance that advertised the danger. Once again, however, he had a close call; and once, suspecting danger, he compelled the dog to go on in front. The dog did not want to go. It hung back until the man shoved it forward, and then it went quickly across the white, unbroken surface. Suddenly it broke through, floundered to one side, and got away to firmer footing. It had wet its forefeet and legs, and almost immediately the water that clung to it turned to ice. It made quick efforts to lick the ice off its legs, then dropped down in the snow and began to bite out the ice that had formed between the toes. This was a matter of instinct. To permit the ice to remain would mean sore feet. It did not know this. It merely obeyed the mysterious prompting that arose from the deep crypts of its being. But the man knew, having achieved a judgment on the subject, and he removed the mitten from his right hand and helped

tear out the ice- particles. He did not expose his fingers more than a minute, and was astonished at the swift numbness that smote them. It certainly was cold. He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest.

At twelve o'clock the day was at its brightest. Yet the sun was too far south on its winter journey to clear the horizon. The bulge of the earth intervened between it and Henderson Creek, where the man walked under a clear sky at noon and cast no shadow. At half-past twelve, to the minute, he arrived at the forks of the creek. He was pleased at the speed he had made. If he kept it up, he would certainly be with the boys by six. He unbuttoned his jacket and shirt and drew forth his lunch. The action consumed no more than a quarter of a minute, yet in that brief moment the numbness laid hold of the exposed fingers. He did not put the mitten on, but, instead, struck the fingers a dozen sharp smashes against his leg. Then he sat down on a snow-covered log to eat. The sting that followed upon the striking of his fingers against his leg ceased so quickly that he was startled, he had had no chance to take a bite of biscuit. He struck the fingers repeatedly and returned them to the mitten, baring the other hand for the purpose of eating. He tried to take a mouthful, but the ice-muzzle prevented. He had forgotten to build a fire and thaw out. He chuckled at his foolishness, and as he chuckled he noted the numbness creeping into the exposed fingers. Also, he noted that the stinging which had first come to his toes when he sat down was already passing away. He wondered whether the toes were warm or numbed. He moved them inside the moccasins and decided that they were numbed.

He pulled the mitten on hurriedly and stood up. He was a bit frightened. He stamped up and down until the stinging returned into the feet. It certainly was cold, was his thought. That man from Sulphur Creek had spoken the truth when telling how cold it sometimes got in the country. And he had laughed at him at the time! That showed one must not be too sure of things. There was no mistake about it, it was cold. He strode up and down, stamping his feet and threshing his arms, until reassured by the returning warmth. Then he got out matches and proceeded to make a fire. From the undergrowth, where high water of the previous spring had lodged a supply of seasoned twigs, he got his firewood. Working carefully from a small beginning, he soon had a roaring fire, over which he thawed the ice from his face and in the protection of which he ate his biscuits. For the moment the cold of space was outwitted. The dog took satisfaction in the fire, stretching out close enough for warmth and far enough away to escape being singed.

When the man had finished, he filled his pipe and took his comfortable time over a smoke. Then he pulled on his mittens, settled the ear-flaps of his cap firmly about his ears, and took the creek trail up the left fork. The dog was disappointed and yearned back toward the fire. This man did not know cold. Possibly all the generations of his ancestry had been ignorant of cold, of real cold, of cold one hundred and seven degrees below freezing-point. But the dog knew; all its ancestry knew, and it had inherited the knowledge. And it knew that it was not good to walk abroad in such fearful cold. It was the time to lie snug in a hole in the snow and wait for a curtain of cloud to be drawn across the face of outer space whence this cold came. On the other hand, there was keen intimacy between the dog and the man. The one was the toil-slave of the other, and the only caresses it had ever received were the caresses of the whip-lash and of harsh and menacing throat-sounds that threatened the whip-lash. So the dog made no effort to communicate

its apprehension to the man. It was not concerned in the welfare of the man; it was for its own sake that it yearned back toward the fire. But the man whistled, and spoke to it with the sound of whip-lashes, and the dog swung in at the man's heels and followed after.

The man took a chew of tobacco and proceeded to start a new amber beard. Also, his moist breath quickly powdered with white his moustache, eyebrows, and lashes. There did not seem to be so many springs on the left fork of the Henderson, and for half an hour the man saw no signs of any. And then it happened. At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through. It was not deep. He wetted himself half-way to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust.

He was angry, and cursed his luck aloud. He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o'clock, and this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his foot-gear. This was imperative at that low temperature--he knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank, which he climbed. On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small spruce trees, was a high-water deposit of dry firewood--sticks and twigs principally, but also larger portions of seasoned branches and fine, dry, last-year's grasses. He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow. This served for a foundation and prevented the young flame from drowning itself in the snow it otherwise would melt. The flame he got by touching a match to a small shred of birch-bark that he took from his pocket. This burned even more readily than paper. Placing it on the foundation, he fed the young flame with wisps of dry grass and with the tiniest dry twigs.

He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger. Gradually, as the flame grew stronger, he increased the size of the twigs with which he fed it. He squatted in the snow, pulling the twigs out from their entanglement in the brush and feeding directly to the flame. He knew

there must be no failure. When it is seventy- five below zero, a man must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire--that is, if his feet are wet. If his feet are dry, and he fails, he can run along the trail for half a mile and restore his circulation. But the circulation of wet and freezing feet cannot be restored by running when it is seventy-five below. No matter how fast he runs, the wet feet will freeze the harder.

All this the man knew. The old-timer on Sulphur Creek had told him about it the previous fall, and now he was appreciating the advice. Already all sensation had gone out of his feet. To build the fire he had been forced to remove his mittens, and the fingers had quickly gone numb. His pace of four miles an hour had kept his heart pumping blood to the surface of his body and to all the extremities. But the instant he stopped, the action of the pump eased down. The cold of space smote the unprotected tip of the planet, and he, being on that unprotected tip, received the full force of the blow. The blood of his body recoiled before it. The blood was alive, like the dog, and like the dog it wanted to hide away and cover itself up from the fearful cold. So long as he walked four miles an hour, he pumped that blood, willy-nilly, to the surface; but now it ebbed away and sank down into the recesses of his body. The extremities were the first to feel its absence. His wet feet froze the faster, and his exposed fingers numbed the faster, though they had not yet begun to freeze. Nose and cheeks were already freezing, while the skin of all his body chilled as it lost its blood.

But he was safe. Toes and nose and cheeks would be only touched by the frost, for the fire was beginning to burn with strength. He was feeding it with twigs the size of his finger. In another minute he would be able to feed it with branches the size of his wrist, and then he could remove his wet foot-gear, and, while it dried, he could keep his naked feet warm by the fire, rubbing them at first, of course, with snow. The fire was a success. He was safe. He remembered the

advice of the old-timer on Sulphur Creek, and smiled. The old-timer had been very serious in laying down the law that no man must travel alone in the Klondike after fifty below. Well, here he was; he had had the accident; he was alone; and he had saved himself. Those old-timers were rather womanish, some of them, he thought. All a man had to do was to keep his head, and he was all right. Any man who was a man could travel alone. But it was surprising, the rapidity with which his cheeks and nose were freezing. And he had not thought his fingers could go lifeless in so short a time. Lifeless they were, for he could scarcely make them move together to grip a twig, and they seemed remote from his body and from him. When he touched a twig, he had to look and see whether or not he had hold of it. The wires were pretty well down between him and his finger-ends.

All of which counted for little. There was the fire, snapping and crackling and promising life with every dancing flame. He started to untie his moccasins. They were coated with ice; the thick German socks were like sheaths of iron half-way to the knees; and the mocassin strings were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted as by some conflagration. For a moment he tugged with his numbed fingers, then, realizing the folly of it, he drew his sheath-knife.

But before he could cut the strings, it happened. It was his own fault or, rather, his mistake. He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree. He should have built it in the open. But it had been easier to pull the twigs from the brush and drop them directly on the fire. Now the tree under which he had done this carried a weight of snow on its boughs. No wind had blown for weeks, and each bough was fully freighted. Each time he had pulled a twig he had communicated

a slight agitation to the tree--an imperceptible agitation, so far as he was concerned, but an agitation sufficient to bring about the disaster. High up in the tree one bough capsized its load of snow. This fell on the boughs beneath, capsizing them. This process continued, spreading out and involving the whole tree. It grew like an avalanche, and it descended without warning upon the man and the fire, and the fire was blotted out! Where it had burned was a mantle of fresh and disordered snow.

The man was shocked. It was as though he had just heard his own sentence of death. For a moment he sat and stared at the spot where the fire had been. Then he grew very calm. Perhaps the old-timer on Sulphur Creek was right. If he had only had a trail-mate he would have been in no danger now. The trail-mate could have built the fire. Well, it was up to him to build the fire over again, and this second time there must be no failure. Even if he succeeded, he would most likely lose some toes. His feet must be badly frozen by now, and there would be some time before the second fire was ready.

Such were his thoughts, but he did not sit and think them. He was busy all the time they were passing through his mind, he made a new foundation for a fire, this time in the open; where no treacherous tree could blot it out. Next, he gathered dry grasses and tiny twigs from the high-water flotsam. He could not bring his fingers together to pull them out, but he was able to gather them by the handful. In this way he got many rotten twigs and bits of green moss that were

undesirable, but it was the best he could do. He worked methodically, even collecting an armful of the larger branches to be used later when the fire gathered strength. And all the while the dog sat and watched him, a certain yearning wistfulness in its eyes, for it looked upon him as the fire-provider, and the fire was slow in coming.

When all was ready, the man reached in his pocket for a second piece of birch-bark. He knew the bark was there, and, though he could not feel it with his fingers, he could hear its crisp rustling as he fumbled for it. Try as he would, he could not clutch hold of it. And all the time, in his consciousness, was the knowledge that each instant his feet were freezing. This thought tended to put him in a panic, but he fought against it and kept calm. He pulled on his mittens with his teeth, and threshed his arms back and forth, beating his hands with all his might against his sides. He did this sitting down, and he stood up to do it; and all the while the dog sat in the snow, its wolf-brush of a tail curled around warmly over its forefeet, its sharp wolf-ears pricked forward intently as it watched the man. And the man as he beat and threshed with his arms and hands, felt a great surge of envy as he regarded the creature that was warm and secure in its natural covering.

After a time he was aware of the first far-away signals of sensation in his beaten fingers. The faint tingling grew stronger till it evolved into a stinging ache that was excruciating, but which the man hailed with satisfaction. He stripped the mitten from his right hand and fetched forth the birch-bark. The exposed fingers were quickly going numb again. Next he brought out his bunch of sulphur matches. But the tremendous cold had already driven the life out of his fingers. In his

effort to separate one match from the others, the whole bunch fell in the snow. He tried to pick it out of the snow, but failed. The dead fingers could neither touch nor clutch. He was very careful. He drove the thought of his freezing feet; and nose, and cheeks, out of his mind, devoting his whole soul to the matches. He watched, using the sense of vision in place of that of touch, and when he saw his fingers on each side the bunch, he closed them--that is, he willed to close them, for the wires were drawn, and the fingers did not obey. He pulled the mitten on the right hand, and beat it fiercely against his knee. Then, with both mittened hands, he scooped the bunch of matches, along with much snow, into his lap. Yet he was no better off.

After some manipulation he managed to get the bunch between the heels of his mittened hands. In this fashion he carried it to his mouth. The ice crackled and snapped when by a violent effort he opened his mouth. He drew the lower jaw in, curled the upper lip out of the way, and scraped the bunch with his upper teeth in order to separate a match. He succeeded in getting one, which he dropped on his lap. He was no better off. He could not pick it up. Then he devised a way. He picked it up in his teeth and scratched it on his leg. Twenty times he scratched before he succeeded in lighting it. As it flamed he held it with his teeth to the birch-bark. But the burning brimstone went up his nostrils and into his lungs, causing him to cough spasmodically. The match fell into the snow and went out.

The old-timer on Sulphur Creek was right, he thought in the moment of controlled despair that ensued: after fifty below, a man should travel with a partner. He beat his hands, but failed in exciting any sensation. Suddenly he bared both hands, removing the mittens with his teeth. He

caught the whole bunch between the heels of his hands. His arm-muscles not being frozen enabled him to press the hand-heels tightly against the matches. Then he scratched the bunch along his leg. It flared into flame, seventy sulphur matches at once! There was no wind to blow them out. He kept his head to one side to escape the strangling fumes, and held the blazing bunch to the birch-bark. As he so held it, he became aware of sensation in his hand. His flesh was burning. He could smell it. Deep down below the surface he could feel it. The sensation developed into pain that grew acute. And still he endured it, holding the flame of the matches clumsily to the bark that would not light readily because his own burning hands were in the way, absorbing most of the flame.

At last, when he could endure no more, he jerked his hands apart. The blazing matches fell sizzling into the snow, but the birch-bark was alight. He began laying dry grasses and the tiniest twigs on the flame. He could not pick and choose, for he had to lift the fuel between the heels of his hands. Small pieces of rotten wood and green moss clung to the twigs, and he bit them off as well as he could with his teeth. He cherished the flame carefully and awkwardly. It meant life, and it must not perish. The withdrawal of blood from the surface of his body now made him begin to shiver, and he grew more awkward. A large piece of green moss fell squarely on the little fire. He tried to poke it out with his fingers, but his shivering frame made him poke too far, and he disrupted the nucleus of the little fire, the burning grasses and tiny twigs separating and scattering. He tried to poke them together again, but in spite of the tenseness of the effort, his shivering got away with him, and the twigs were hopelessly scattered. Each twig gushed a puff of smoke and went out. The fire-provider had failed. As he looked apathetically about him, his eyes chanced on the dog, sitting across the ruins of the fire from him, in the snow, making

restless, hunching movements, slightly lifting one forefoot and then the other, shifting its weight back and forth on them with wistful eagerness.

The sight of the dog put a wild idea into his head. He remembered the tale of the man, caught in a blizzard, who killed a steer and crawled inside the carcass, and so was saved. He would kill the dog and bury his hands in the warm body until the numbness went out of them. Then he could build another fire. He spoke to the dog, calling it to him; but in his voice was a strange note of fear that frightened the animal, who had never known the man to speak in such way before. Something was the matter, and its suspicious nature sensed danger,--it knew not what danger but somewhere, somehow, in its brain arose an apprehension of the man. It flattened its ears down at the sound of the man's voice, and its restless, hunching movements and the liftings and shiftings of its forefeet became more pronounced but it would not come to the man. He got on his hands and knees and crawled toward the dog. This unusual posture again excited suspicion, and the animal sidled mincingly away.

The man sat up in the snow for a moment and struggled for calmness. Then he pulled on his mittens, by means of his teeth, and got upon his feet. He glanced down at first in order to assure himself that he was really standing up, for the absence of sensation in his feet left him unrelated to the earth. His erect position in itself started to drive the webs of suspicion from the dog's mind; and when he spoke peremptorily, with the sound of whip-lashes in his voice, the dog

rendered its customary allegiance and came to him. As it came within reaching distance, the man lost his control. His arms flashed out to the dog, and he experienced genuine surprise when he discovered that his hands could not clutch, that there was neither bend nor feeling in the fingers. He had forgotten for the moment that they were frozen and that they were freezing more and more. All this happened quickly, and before the animal could get away, he encircled its body with his arms. He sat down in the snow, and in this fashion held the dog, while it snarled and whined and struggled.

But it was all he could do, hold its body encircled in his arms and sit there. He realized that he could not kill the dog. There was no way to do it. With his helpless hands he could neither draw nor hold his sheath-knife nor throttle the animal. He released it, and it plunged wildly away, with tail between its legs, and still snarling. It halted forty feet away and surveyed him curiously, with ears sharply pricked forward. The man looked down at his hands in order to locate them, and found them hanging on the ends of his arms. It struck him as curious that one should have to use his eyes in order to find out where his hands were. He began thrashing his arms back and forth, beating the mittened hands against his sides. He did this for five minutes, violently, and his heart pumped enough blood up to the surface to put a stop to his shivering. But no sensation was aroused in the hands. He had an impression that they hung like weights on the ends of his arms, but when he tried to run the impression down, he could not find it.

A certain fear of death, dull and oppressive, came to him. This fear quickly became poignant as he realized that it was no longer a mere matter of freezing his fingers and toes, or of losing his

hands and feet, but that it was a matter of life and death with the chances against him. This threw him into a panic, and he turned and ran up the creek-bed along the old, dim trail. The dog joined in behind and kept up with him. He ran blindly, without intention, in fear such as he had never known in his life. Slowly, as he ploughed and floundered through the snow, he began to see things again--the banks of the creek, the old timber-jams, the leafless aspens, and the sky. The running made him feel better. He did not shiver. Maybe, if he ran on, his feet would thaw out; and, anyway, if he ran far enough, he would reach camp and the boys. Without doubt he would lose some fingers and toes and some of his face; but the boys would take care of him, and save the rest of him when he got there. And at the same time there was another thought in his mind that said he would never get to the camp and the boys; that it was too many miles away, that the freezing had too great a start on him, and that he would soon be stiff and dead. This thought he kept in the background and refused to consider. Sometimes it pushed itself forward and demanded to be heard, but he thrust it back and strove to think of other things.

It struck him as curious that he could run at all on feet so frozen that he could not feel them when they struck the earth and took the weight of his body. He seemed to himself to skim along above the surface and to have no connection with the earth. Somewhere he had once seen a winged Mercury, and he wondered if Mercury felt as he felt when skimming over the earth.

His theory of running until he reached camp and the boys had one flaw in it: he lacked the endurance. Several times he stumbled, and finally he tottered, crumpled up, and fell. When he tried to rise, he failed. He must sit and rest, he decided, and next time he would merely walk and

keep on going. As he sat and regained his breath, he noted that he was feeling quite warm and comfortable. He was not shivering, and it even seemed that a warm glow had come to his chest and trunk. And yet, when he touched his nose or cheeks, there was no sensation. Running would not thaw them out. Nor would it thaw out his hands and feet. Then the thought came to him that the frozen portions of his body must be extending. He tried to keep this thought down, to forget it, to think of something else; he was aware of the panicky feeling that it caused, and he was afraid of the panic. But the thought asserted itself, and persisted, until it produced a vision of his body totally frozen. This was too much, and he made another wild run along the trail. Once he slowed down to a walk, but the thought of the freezing extending itself made him run again.

And all the time the dog ran with him, at his heels. When he fell down a second time, it curled its tail over its forefeet and sat in front of him facing him curiously eager and intent. The warmth and security of the animal angered him, and he cursed it till it flattened down its ears appeasingly. This time the shivering came more quickly upon the man. He was losing in his battle with the frost. It was creeping into his body from all sides. The thought of it drove him on, but he ran no more than a hundred feet, when he staggered and pitched headlong. It was his last panic. When he had recovered his breath and control, he sat up and entertained in his mind the conception of meeting death with dignity. However, the conception did not come to him in such terms. His idea of it was that he had been making a fool of himself, running around like a chicken with its head cut off--such was the simile that occurred to him. Well, he was bound to freeze anyway, and he might as well take it decently. With this new-found peace of mind came the first glimmerings of drowsiness. A good idea, he thought, to sleep off to death. It was like

taking an anaesthetic. Freezing was not so bad as people thought. There were lots worse ways to die.

He pictured the boys finding his body next day. Suddenly he found himself with them, coming along the trail and looking for himself. And, still with them, he came around a turn in the trail and found himself lying in the snow. He did not belong with himself any more, for even then he was out of himself, standing with the boys and looking at himself in the snow. It certainly was cold, was his thought. When he got back to the States he could tell the folks what real cold was. He drifted on from this to a vision of the old-timer on Sulphur Creek. He could see him quite clearly, warm and comfortable, and smoking a pipe.

"You were right, old hoss; you were right," the man mumbled to the old-timer of Sulphur Creek.

Then the man drowsed off into what seemed to him the most comfortable and satisfying sleep he had ever known. The dog sat facing him and waiting. The brief day drew to a close in a long, slow twilight. There were no signs of a fire to be made, and, besides, never in the dog's experience had it known a man to sit like that in the snow and make no fire. As the twilight drew on, its eager yearning for the fire mastered it, and with a great lifting and shifting of forefeet, it whined softly, then flattened its ears down in anticipation of being chidden by the man. But the man remained silent. Later, the dog whined loudly. And still later it crept close to the man and caught the scent of death. This made the animal bristle and back away. A little longer it delayed, howling under the stars that leaped and danced and shone brightly in the cold sky. Then it turned

and trotted up the trail in the direction of the camp it knew, where were the other food-providers and fire-providers.

The Monkey's Paw

- W. W. Jacobs

'The Monkey's Paw' by W. W. Jacobs (1863-1943) is a miniature classic of the horror genre. In just ten pages, Jacobs provides suspense, a building sense of menace, and real drama, as well as bringing in such themes as family tragedy and the problems with imperialism. Mainly, though, it's a classic tale of three wishes, which has been parodied and retold many times.

One cold winter's night, an elderly man, Mr White, is at home with his wife and his son, the latter of whom is playing chess with him. A sergeant-major named Morris shows up, and tells the White family of his experiences serving in the British Army in India. He then shows them a talisman he has on him: a mummified monkey's paw, which an Indian fakir or holy man placed a spell upon, allowing three separate men each to ask three wishes of the monkey's paw.

Morris tells White that the first man who had three wishes of the paw asked for death as his third and final wish; that is how Morris came to own the paw. He doesn't reveal what three wishes he himself asked from the paw, but he is clearly of the impression that only a fool would seek to ask three wishes of it. He then advises White not to take the paw from him, and Morris even throws the monkey's paw on the fire to try to prevent his friend from taking it. However, White retrieves the paw from the flames. After Morris has gone, and spurred on by his son, White wishes upon the paw, asking for two hundred pounds.

The next morning, Herbert, the son, goes off to work, and both Mr and Mrs White discuss the wish the husband made the night before. Later that day, a smartly dressed man turns up at the house, bearing bad news. Their son had died in an accident at work earlier that day, after being caught in the machinery. The man, who represents the firm for which Herbert worked, reveals that the company would like to offer a sum to Mr and Mrs White by way of compensation. The sum is two hundred pounds. At this news, Mr White promptly faints.

The third part of the story opens a few weeks later. The Whites have buried their son, and are grieving. One night, Mrs White, who has clearly taken her son's terrible death very badly, wakes her husband in the middle of the night and asks, in desperation, for him to fetch the monkey's paw and to use it to make one last wish: for their son to be alive again.

The husband is reluctant to carry out such a request, but eventually agrees. He wishes on the monkey's paw for their son to be restored to life, and they both stay up that night, waiting and hoping. Then there comes a knock at the door, and Mrs White, identifying the figure at the door as Herbert, pleads with her husband to let him in.

But as the thing at the door is frantically grappling with the door to gain entry, Mr White – terrified of the mangled reanimated 'thing' that he fears is trying to get inside the house – grabs the monkey's paw and quickly makes his third and final wish. The noise at the door stops, and he opens the front door to find the road outside deserted. His wife utters a wail of despair. And that, in summary, is the end of the story.

What is Man?

- Mark Twain

The Short story written by Mark Twain called “What is Man?” is a dialogue between the old man and the young man. The old man believes that “no man ever originates anything,” a man will take an action for himself, and a man do not have such thing as free will (Twain 7). The old man’s beliefs are very similar to Baron D’ Holbach’s philosophy of determinism. On the other hand, the young man’s beliefs are the opposite of both the old man and D’Holbach’s beliefs. The young man tries to deny the old man’s beliefs by questioning. However, the more agreeable beliefs are the beliefs of the old man and D’Holbach. In the first chapter, the old man believes that a human being is like a machine, which cannot originates anything. He uses a metal machine and a...*show more content...*

First, the old man states that humans do not originate anything, which is true. Humans are always influenced by external factors. For example, when writers write essays, musicians compose music, and artists drew arts, their products are always influenced by their environment, their surrounding people, and their many other factors. If those people were born in different environment then they did, they probably produced something different. Secondly, it is true that people always think about themselves first. Even if a person chooses to give up his life for someone else, the decision is made for himself; because, he would feel like “if I do not help this person, I will probably regret about it for my entire life.” By loosing his life and helping a person, he is free from the life long regret. Lastly, there is no such thing as free will. Humans live in the earth where there is a something called gravity. Humans are forced to stay on the ground and cannot fly without any kind of flying machine. The existence of the gravity already explains that humans do not have free will. Also, humans will always die. They cannot choose to live forever, the limit of life also proves humans do not have free will. In fact, the old man says the almost an exact same thing, but with a different example. The man who gives a quarter to the woman decides to give a quarter, but he

does not make his decision, it is made for him by forces, which he could not control (Twain 90). Humans have uncontrollable forces such as gravity and death. Overall, the old man explains his thoughts very well and answers to the young man's arguments completely. At the end, the young man does not talk back at the old man. Toward the end of the conversation, it seems like the young man decides to agree with the old man.

The Hairy Ape

- O'Neill

O'Neill uses "voices" in *The Hairy Ape* to emphasize specific class structures and groups within the play. Yank aurally and physically stands out against these "voices," dramatically revealing his displacement and detachment from society at large. Yank does not "join in" with the other firemen laughing and joking in Scene One. On 5th Avenue Yank certainly does not "fit in" with the noise of the street goers, talking about church and monkey fur. And, lastly, Yank confronts voices, perhaps most strikingly, in Scene six as he sits in jail. The voices of Yank's inmates a nameless and faceless group that scorn and laugh at him. In each situation Yank encounters a force that opposes him, which he cannot "join."

How do symbols function within the *Hairy Ape*? Why do you think O'Neill chose to use such heavy symbolism in the text? How do they work thematically? Give specific examples of three symbols in the text, why you think O'Neill chose them and how they comment on theme.

Symbols within *The Hairy Ape* are an expressionistic means to communicate and indicate abstract ideas with concrete "things." For instance, Mildred's white dress symbolically represents the artificiality and detachment of the aristocracy. Her dress makes a literal black and white contrast between herself and the coal-dusted men. Another symbol, the Transatlantic Liner,

reveals the world as a big boat—complete with a "first class" on the top deck and workers below in the bowels of the ship. Steel is yet another symbol in the play, simultaneously representing great strength, industrialization and the repression of the working class. These symbols are vital because they strengthen and heighten Yank's struggle and visually signify class structure and the effects of industry on the worker.

Why does O'Neill choose to place Yank in the position of Rodin's "The Thinker"? How does this comment on the life of the industrial worker and Yank's capability for thought?

Rodin's statue "The Thinker" is perhaps society's most distinguishable symbol of thought. By taking the "attitude" of the statue in the play Yank reveals his attempt to "ape" or copy thought. In reality he does not know how to do it otherwise. While he physically embodies the cultural symbol of a "thinker" he cannot think himself. Every time O'Neill's stage direction calls for the actor to take the position of "The Thinker" Yank has met an obstacle that cannot be tackled by any other means but thought—when Yank cannot process the realities before him. After Yank is thrown out of the I.W.W. he immediately gets into "The Thinker" pose. He is desperate to make sense of his situation and to understand why the union would throw him out. Because Yank cannot process the problems before him, he is sent reeling backward on the evolutionary path—unable to function in modern society.

The real ape in Scene Eight is the only other character that takes "The Thinker" position. The ape is not included in the class or social structures of the human world. Like Yank, he sits in a cage
Rodin's "The Thinker"

Yank's impression of Rodin's statue, "The Thinker" is symbolic of Yank's need to think. While he physically embodies the cultural symbol of a "thinker" he cannot think himself. Every time O'Neill's stage direction calls for the actor to take the position of "The Thinker" Yank has come

up against an obstacle that cannot be tackled by any other means but thought—when Yank cannot process the realities before him. After Yank is thrown out of the I.W.W he immediately gets into "The Thinker" pose. He is desperate to make sense of his situation and understand why the union would throw him out

The real ape in Scene Eight is the only other character that takes "The Thinker" position. The ape sharing this habitual body position reflects on Yank's own animalistic state—his mode of thought is no more advanced than the ape's.

Apes

Apes are everywhere in *The Hairy Ape*: Yank is called an ape, Yank thinks he is an ape, Mildred thinks she sees an ape, Yank tells people he is an ape, Senator Queen writes that the Wobblies will degenerate American civilization "back to the ape" and, most importantly, there is a real live ape in Scene 8. The ape symbolizes man in a primitive state before technology, complex language structures, complex thought or money was necessary. The ape represents man that is not only behind in an evolutionary sense, but is free of class, technology and other elements of modern society. The ape is only concerned with survival.

Thus Yank, constantly compared with apes, does share some characteristics with his early primate relatives. Yank, like the ape, struggles with thought, doesn't understand the class system, has at best basic language skills and is most concerned with his survival on Earth. In addition, male apes are known to be very territorial, obstinate, bull headed and aggressive—all descriptors that could be used to describe Yank.

Steel

Steel is both a symbol of power and oppression in *The Hairy Ape*. While Yank exclaims in Scene One that he is steel, "the muscles and the punch behind it," he is all the while penned in a virtual cage of steel created by the ship around him. Steel creates other cages in the play—Yank's jail cell and the cell of the Ape. Steel is also oppressive because it creates jobs like Yank's, it is symbolic of the technology that force Yank and the Firemen into slave-like jobs.

and perhaps wonders how he can join the rest of society and like his human counterpart, imitates what humans define as thought. The Ape, by sharing this habitual body position reflects on Yank's own animalistic state—his mode of thought is no more advanced than the ape's.

Human Regression by Industrialization

The resounding theme of *The Hairy Ape* is the effect of industrialization and technological progress on the worker. Industrialization has reduced the human worker into a machine. The men are programmed to do one task, are turned on and off by whistles, and are not required to think independently. Today, the job of the coal stoker is actually done by a machine. Workers are thus forced into jobs that require nothing but grunt work and physical labor, which has, in turn, caused a general deterioration of the worker into a Neanderthal or Ape-like state. This is made clear by O'Neill's stage direction, which indicates that the Firemen actually look like Neanderthals and one of the oldest workers, Paddy, as "extremely monkey-like." The longer the Firemen work, the further back they fall on the human evolutionary path—thus Paddy, one of the oldest, is especially "monkey-like." As a whole, the play is a close investigation of this regressive pattern through the character Yank—the play marks his regression from a Neanderthal on the ship to an actual ape at the zoo.

The Frustration of Class

Mildred and Yank are representative of the highest and lowest societal classes—as Long would term it, the bourgeois and the proletariat. However, while Mildred and Yank's lifestyles are extremely different, they share similar complaints about class. Mildred describes herself as the "waste product" of her father's steel company. She has reaped the financial benefits of the company, but has felt none of the vigor or passion that created it. Mildred yearns to find passion—to touch "life" beyond her cushioned, bourgeois world. Yank, on the other hand, has felt too much of the "life" Mildred describes. Yank desires to topple the class structure by reinscribing the importance and necessity of the working class. Yank defines importance as "who belongs."

Class limits and determines both Mildred and Yank's financial resources, educational opportunities, outlook on life, and culture. *The Hairy Ape* reveals how deeply and rigidly class is inscribed into American Culture and the cultural and financial boundaries it erects.

The Glass Menagerie

-Tennessee Williams

Tom calls Laura "peculiar," but Amanda bristles at this word. What is "peculiar" about Laura?

When Amanda asks Tom to explain what he means when he calls Laura "peculiar," he refers to the fact that she never goes out and says that "[s]he lives in a world of her own—a world of little glass ornaments." Her inability to talk to strangers is also unusual, as is the violent illness that overtakes her when she is faced with the most minimal of social pressures. One of her legs is shorter than the other, and it is quite possible that this physical deformity contributes to her pathological shyness. Jim suggests another possible explanation for her oddity: he believes that all of her peculiarities stem from an inferiority complex and that they would disappear if she

could only learn to think more highly of herself. Another more complex explanation for Laura's odd behavior is that she lives in a fantasy world of her own creation. Like the glass menagerie, this fantasy world is dangerously delicate. Because direct contact with the real world threatens to shatter Laura's fantasies, much as the touch of any solid object will pop a soap bubble, she is terrified of any interaction with reality. If such is the case, then Laura begins to look a little less peculiar. After all, Amanda and Tom also live to some extent in fantasy worlds—Amanda in the past and Tom in movies and literature. The only difference between Laura and them, perhaps, is that she inhabits her fantasy world much more completely than they inhabit theirs.

A single line from Laura reveals the complexity of the question of exactly how peculiar she is. In Scene Seven, she says to Jim that she has never heard her glass horses argue among themselves. If we are meant to believe that she actually expects the glass figures to talk, then this quote demonstrates that she is deeply and unhealthily engrossed in her fantasies. Yet the stage directions indicate that she should say this line "lightly." It seems that she is just making a joke, which would indicate that she can, on the right occasion, distance herself enough from her fantasy world to find humor and absurdity in it.

Why is the fire escape important in the play?

On the most concrete level, the fire escape is an emblem of the Wingfields' poverty. In Amanda's youth, she would have stepped onto a veranda or a porch for fresh air. But she and her children now live in a tenement in an urban center, and outdoor space is hard to come by. Yet in Scene Five, in one of the play's few cautiously optimistic moments, the Wingfields still manage to find romance and hope on the fire escape, when Tom and Amanda wish on the moon. The fire

escape also represents exactly what the name implies: the promise of escape from the overheated atmosphere of the apartment. Williams describes life in these tenements as the constant burning of the “slow and implacable fires of human desperation.” Tom, for one, is suffocated by the heat of these fires and occasionally steps onto the fire-escape landing to have a smoke. “I’m starting to boil inside,” he tells Jim in Scene Six. The photo of Mr. Wingfield operates with the fire escape to remind Tom and the audience that leaving is possible, and at the end of the play, Tom does indeed walk down the fire escape steps, never to return. Yet this possibility does not exist for everyone. In Scene Five, Laura slips and falls on the fire escape while on her way to a nearby store. For her, escape is impossible, and the fire escape, which takes the people she loves away from her, represents only the possibility of injury and destruction.

Which aspects of *The Glass Menagerie* are realistic? Which aspects are the most nonrealistic? What function do the nonrealistic elements serve?

In the Production Notes to *The Glass Menagerie*, Williams writes disparagingly of the “straight realistic play with its genuine Frigidaire and authentic ice cubes.” Generally, Williams found realism to be a flat, outdated, and insufficient way of approaching emotional experience. As a consequence, *The Glass Menagerie* is fundamentally a nonrealistic play. Distortion, illusion, dream, symbol, and myth are the tools by means of which the action onstage is endowed with beauty and meaning. A screen displays words and images relevant to the action; music intrudes with melodramatic timing; the lights rise or dim according to the mood onstage, not the time of day; symbols like the glass menagerie are hammered home in the dialogue without any attempt at subtlety. The play’s style may best be described as expressionistic—underlying meaning is emphasized at the expense of realism. The play’s lack of stylistic realism is further explained by the fact that the story is told from Tom’s memory. As Tom puts it, the fact that what we are

seeing is a memory play means that “it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic. In memory everything seems to happen to music.”

Though the style of the play is overwhelmingly nonrealistic, its content is a different matter. Williams also claimed that inventive stylistic devices like those he favored must never lead a play to “escape its responsibility of dealing with reality.” Emotions like Tom’s boredom, Amanda’s nostalgia, and Laura’s terror are conveyed with all the vividness of reality. So are the sorrowful hostility between Tom and Amanda and the quiet love between Tom and Laura. Similarly, the bleak lower-middle-class life of the Wingfield family is portrayed with a great deal of fidelity to historical and social realities. In fact, it often seems as if the main effect of the play’s nonrealistic style is to increase the sense of reality surrounding its content. The play, as Tom says, is committed to giving its audience “truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.”

Themes

Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

The Difficulty of Accepting Reality

Among the most prominent and urgent themes of *The Glass Menagerie* is the difficulty the characters have in accepting and relating to reality. Each member of the Wingfield family is unable to overcome this difficulty, and each, as a result, withdraws into a private world of illusion where he or she finds the comfort and meaning that the real world does not seem to offer. Of the three Wingfields, reality has by far the weakest grasp on Laura. The private world in which she lives is populated by glass animals—objects that, like Laura’s inner life, are incredibly fanciful and dangerously delicate. Unlike his sister, Tom is capable of functioning in

the real world, as we see in his holding down a job and talking to strangers. But, in the end, he has no more motivation than Laura does to pursue professional success, romantic relationships, or even ordinary friendships, and he prefers to retreat into the fantasies provided by literature and movies and the stupor provided by drunkenness. Amanda's relationship to reality is the most complicated in the play. Unlike her children, she is partial to real-world values and longs for social and financial success. Yet her attachment to these values is exactly what prevents her from perceiving a number of truths about her life. She cannot accept that she is or should be anything other than the pampered belle she was brought up to be, that Laura is peculiar, that Tom is not a budding businessman, and that she herself might be in some ways responsible for the sorrows and flaws of her children. Amanda's retreat into illusion is in many ways more pathetic than her children's, because it is not a willful imaginative construction but a wistful distortion of reality.

Although the Wingfields are distinguished and bound together by the weak relationships they maintain with reality, the illusions to which they succumb are not merely familial quirks. The outside world is just as susceptible to illusion as the Wingfields. The young people at the Paradise Dance Hall waltz under the short-lived illusion created by a glass ball—another version of Laura's glass animals. Tom opines to Jim that the other viewers at the movies he attends are substituting on-screen adventure for real-life adventure, finding fulfillment in illusion rather than real life. Even Jim, who represents the "world of reality," is banking his future on public speaking and the television and radio industries—all of which are means for the creation of illusions and the persuasion of others that these illusions are true. The *Glass Menagerie* identifies the conquest of reality by illusion as a huge and growing aspect of the human condition in its time.

The Impossibility of True Escape

At the beginning of Scene Four, Tom regales Laura with an account of a magic show in which the magician managed to escape from a nailed-up coffin. Clearly, Tom views his life with his family and at the warehouse as a kind of coffin—cramped, suffocating, and morbid—in which he is unfairly confined. The promise of escape, represented by Tom’s missing father, the Merchant Marine Service, and the fire escape outside the apartment, haunts Tom from the beginning of the play, and in the end, he does choose to free himself from the confinement of his life.

The play takes an ambiguous attitude toward the moral implications and even the effectiveness of Tom’s escape. As an able-bodied young man, he is locked into his life not by exterior factors but by emotional ones—by his loyalty to and possibly even love for Laura and Amanda. Escape for Tom means the suppression and denial of these emotions in himself, and it means doing great harm to his mother and sister. The magician is able to emerge from his coffin without upsetting a single nail, but the human nails that bind Tom to his home will certainly be upset by his departure. One cannot say for certain that leaving home even means true escape for Tom. As far as he might wander from home, something still “pursue[s]” him. Like a jailbreak, Tom’s escape leads him not to freedom but to the life of a fugitive.

The Unrelenting Power of Memory

According to Tom, *The Glass Menagerie* is a memory play—both its style and its content are shaped and inspired by memory. As Tom himself states clearly, the play’s lack of realism, its high drama, its overblown and too-perfect symbolism, and even its frequent use of music are all

due to its origins in memory. Most fictional works are products of the imagination that must convince their audience that they are something else by being realistic. A play drawn from memory, however, is a product of real experience and hence does not need to drape itself in the conventions of realism in order to seem real. The creator can cloak his or her true story in unlimited layers of melodrama and unlikely metaphor while still remaining confident of its substance and reality. Tom—and Tennessee Williams—take full advantage of this privilege.

The story that the play tells is told because of the inflexible grip it has on the narrator's memory. Thus, the fact that the play exists at all is a testament to the power that memory can exert on people's lives and consciousness. Indeed, Williams writes in the Production Notes that "nostalgia . . . is the first condition of the play." The narrator, Tom, is not the only character haunted by his memories. Amanda too lives in constant pursuit of her bygone youth, and old records from her childhood are almost as important to Laura as her glass animals. For these characters, memory is a crippling force that prevents them from finding happiness in the present or the offerings of the future. But it is also the vital force for Tom, prompting him to the act of creation that culminates in the achievement of the play.

Characters

- **Amanda Wingfield**

Laura and Tom's mother. A proud, vivacious woman, Amanda clings fervently to memories of a vanished, genteel past. She is simultaneously admirable, charming, pitiable, and laughable.

Read an in-depth analysis of Amanda Wingfield .

- **Laura Wingfield**

Amanda's daughter and Tom's older sister. Laura has a bad leg, on which she has to wear a brace, and walks with a limp. Twenty-three years old and painfully shy, she has largely withdrawn from the outside world and devotes herself to old records and her collection of glass figurines.

Read an in-depth analysis of Laura Wingfield .

- **Tom Wingfield**

Amanda's son and Laura's younger brother. An aspiring poet, Tom works at a shoe warehouse to support the family. He is frustrated by the numbing routine of his job and escapes from it through movies, literature, and alcohol.

Little Women

- Louisa May Alcott

Alcott prefaces *Little Women* with an excerpt from John Bunyan's seventeenth-century work *The Pilgrim's Progress*, an allegorical novel about leading a Christian life. Alcott's story begins with the four March girls—Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy—sitting in their living room, lamenting their poverty. The girls decide that they will each buy themselves a present in order to brighten their Christmas. Soon, however, they change their minds and decide that instead of buying presents for themselves, they will buy presents for their mother, Marmee. Marmee comes home with a letter from Mr. March, the girls' father, who is serving as a Union chaplain in the Civil War. The letter inspires the girls to bear their burdens more cheerfully and not to complain about their poverty.

On Christmas morning, the girls wake up to find books, probably copies of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, under their pillows. Later that day, Marmee encourages them to give away their

breakfast to a poor family, the Hummels. Their elderly neighbor, Mr. Laurence, whom the girls have never met, rewards their charitable activities by sending over a feast. Soon, Meg and Jo are invited to attend a New Year's Party at the home of Meg's wealthy friend, Sally Gardiner. At the party, Jo retreats to an alcove, and there meets Laurie, the boy who lives with Mr. Laurence. While dancing, Meg sprains her ankle. Laurie escorts the sisters home. The Marches regret having to return to their daily routine after the holiday festivities.

Jo visits Laurie when he is sick, and meets his grandfather, Mr. Laurence. She inadvertently insults a painting of Mr. Laurence in front of the man himself. Luckily, Laurie's grandfather admires Jo's spunk, and they become friends. Soon, Mr. Laurence meets all the sisters, and Beth becomes his special favorite. Mr. Laurence gives her his deceased granddaughter's piano. The girls have various adventures. Amy is caught trading limes at school, and the teacher hits her as punishment. As a result, Mrs. March withdraws her daughter from school. Jo refuses to let Amy go with her to the theater. In retaliation, Amy burns Jo's manuscript, and Jo, in her anger, nearly lets Amy drown while ice-s-kating. Pretty Meg attends her friend Annie Moffat's party and, after allowing the other girls to dress her up in high style, learns that appearances are not everything. While at the party, she hears that people think she intends to marry Laurie for his money. That year, the Marches form the Pickwick Club, in which they write a family newspaper. In the spring, Jo smuggles Laurie into one of the club meetings, and he becomes a member, presenting his new circle with a postbox. At the beginning of June, the Marches decide to neglect their housework. At the end of a lazy week, Marmee takes a day off too. The girls spoil a dinner, but everyone ends up laughing over it. One day, Laurie has English friends over, and the Marches go on a picnic with them. Later, Jo gets a story published for the first time.

One dark day, the family receives a telegram saying that Mr. March is sick in the hospital in Washington, D.C. Marmee goes to tend to him, and Jo sells her hair to help finance the trip. Chaos ensues in Marmee's wake, for the girls neglect their chores again. Only Beth goes to visit the Hummels, and after one of her visits, she contracts scarlet fever from the Hummel baby. Beth teeters on the brink of death until Marmee returns. Meanwhile, Amy spends time at Aunt March's house in order to escape the disease. Beth recovers, though not completely, and Mr. Brooke, Laurie's tutor, falls in love with Meg, much to Jo's dismay. Mr. Brooke and Meg are engaged by the end of Part One.

Three years pass before Part Two begins. Mr. March is home from the war, and Laurie is nearly done with school. Soon, Meg marries and moves into a new home with Mr. Brooke. One day, Amy decides to have a lunch for her art school classmates, but poor weather ruins the festivities. Jo gets a novel published, but she must cut it down in order to please her publishers. Meanwhile, Meg struggles with the duties of keeping house, and she soon gives birth to twins, Demi and Daisy. Amy gets to go to Paris instead of Jo, who counted on the trip, because their Aunt Carroll prefers Amy's ladylike behavior in a companion. Jo begins to think that Beth loves Laurie. In order to escape Laurie's affections for her, Jo moves to New York so as to give Beth a chance to win his affections. There Jo meets Professor Bhaer, a poor German language instructor. Professor Bhaer discourages Jo from writing sensationalist stories, and she takes his advice and finds a simpler writing style. When Jo returns home, Laurie proposes to her, but she turns him down. Beth soon dies.

Amy and Laurie reunite in France, and they fall in love. They marry and return home. Jo begins to hope that Professor Bhaer will come for her. He does, and they marry a year later. Amy and

Laurie have a daughter named Beth, who is sickly. Jo inherits Plumfield, Aunt March's house, and decides to turn it into a boarding school for boys. The novel ends with the family happily gathered together, each sister thankful for her blessings and for each other.

Women's Struggle Between Familial Duty and Personal Growth

While on the surface a simple story about the four March girls' journeys from childhood to adulthood, *Little Women* centers on the conflict between two emphases in a young woman's life—that which she places on herself, and that which she places on her family. In the novel, an emphasis on domestic duties and family detracts from various women's abilities to attend to their own personal growth. For Jo and, in some cases, Amy, the problem of being both a professional artist and a dutiful woman creates conflict and pushes the boundaries set by nineteenth-century American society.

At the time when Alcott composed the novel, women's status in society was slowly increasing. As with any change in social norms, however, progress toward gender equality was made slowly. Through the four different sisters, Alcott explores four possible ways to deal with being a woman bound by the constraints of nineteenth-century social expectations: marry young and create a new family, as Meg does; be subservient and dutiful to one's parents and immediate family, as Beth is; focus on one's art, pleasure, and person, as Amy does at first; or struggle to live both a dutiful family life and a meaningful professional life, as Jo does. While Meg and Beth conform to society's expectations of the role that women should play, Amy and Jo initially attempt to break free from these constraints and nurture their individuality. Eventually, however, both Amy and Jo marry and settle into a more customary life. While Alcott does not suggest that one model of womanhood is more desirable than the other, she does recognize that one is more realistic than the other.

The Danger of Gender Stereotyping

Little Women questions the validity of gender stereotypes, both male and female. Jo, at times, does not want to be a conventional female. In her desires and her actions, she frustrates typical gender expectations. She wants to earn a living, for example—a duty conventionally reserved for men. Also, she wears a dress with a burn mark to a party, evidence that she does not possess tremendous social grace, a quality that nineteenth-century American society cultivated in women. Similarly, there are times when Laurie does not want to be a conventional man. He wants to pursue music, at that time a culturally feminine pursuit, instead of business, a culturally masculine pursuit. Even his nickname, Laurie, which he uses in favor of his much more masculine given name, Theodore, suggests his feminine side. Alcott bestows the highest esteem upon Jo and Laurie, who, in their refusal to embody gender stereotypes, willingly expose themselves to particular obstacles.

The Necessity of Work

Over the course of Little Women, the March sisters try to find happiness through daily activities, their dreams, and each other; but when they do not engage in any productive work, they end up guilty and remorseful. When they indulge in selfishness by dressing up in finery, hoarding limes, neglecting chores, or getting revenge, the girls end up unhappy. The only way they find meaningful happiness is when they are working, either for a living or for the benefit of their families. The novel demonstrates the importance of the Puritan work ethic, which dictates that it is holy to do work. This work ethic, in line with the transcendentalist teachings with which Alcott grew up, thrived in New England, where many Puritans lived and where the novel takes place. Alcott ultimately recommends work not as a means to a material end, but rather as a means to the expression of inner goodness and creativity through productivity.

The Importance of Being Genuine

Little Women takes great pains to teach a lesson about the importance of being genuine. To make this point, Alcott contrasts the Marches with more well-to-do young women like Amy Moffat and Sally Gardiner. Transcendentalists emphasized the importance of paying more attention to the inner spiritual self than to temporary, earthly conditions like wealth and impressive appearances, and Alcott incorporates this philosophy into Little Women. For instance, Meg and Amy constantly struggle with vanity, and eventually overcome it. Amy turns down Fred Vaughn's offer of marriage, even though he is rich, because she does not love him. The March sisters all learn to be happy with their respective lots in life and not to yearn for meaningless riches. The Marches' snug New England home is presented as more desirable than mansions in Paris. This theme is particularly American, especially distinctive of New England. Unlike their counterparts in Europe, many middle-class Americans at the time did not mind having come from humble origins and did not crave titles or other superficial trappings of wealth. These Americans wanted only what they deserved and believed that what they deserved depended on how hard they worked.

Music

In Little Women, music has an interesting relationship to a character's degree of conformity. For the March girls, the more musically inclined a sister is, the more traditionally feminine and adherent to feminine duty she is. Marmee sings to the girls all the time, and she embodies the ideal dutiful and domestic mother. Beth, similarly, is both very musical and very passive. In contrast, Amy has a bad voice and Jo has the worst voice of all; both girls are independent and impatient with the limitations placed on women. Interestingly, Laurie also likes music and wants

to be a professional musician, but this interest makes him ill-adapted to the role expected of him as a man.

Teaching

Many of the characters in *Little Women* are teachers, reinforcing the idea that the novel is didactic and that we are supposed to learn from the novel's lessons. Mr. March, for example, is a minister, and he instructs his congregation. Marmee, a good transcendentalist mother, reinforces the teaching of her husband. Mr. Brooke and Professor Bhaer, two men whom March girls marry, are teachers by profession. In the end, Jo inherits Plumfield, Aunt March's house, and she and Bhaer turn it into a school for boys. The frequent interaction that the novel's characters have with teaching—both giving and learning lessons—reflects the structured society in which they live.

The Grapes of Wrath

-John Steinbeck

Summary

In Depression-era Oklahoma, Tom Joad hitchhikes home after being paroled from the state penitentiary. Along the road, he encounters Jim Casy, a preacher Tom remembers from childhood. Casy explains that he is no longer a preacher, having lost his calling. He still believes in the Holy Spirit, but not necessarily the spirituality mandated by organized religion. For Casy, the Holy Spirit is love. Not just the love of God or Jesus, but the love of all humans. He maintains that all people are holy, everyone being part of the whole soul of humankind. Tom invites Casy to join him on his walk home. When they arrive at what was once the Joad farm, Tom and Casy find it abandoned. Muley Graves, a Joad neighbor, approaches and tells Tom that

his family has been tracted off their land by the bank. They have moved in with his Uncle John and are preparing to leave for California to find work. Tom and Casy spend the night near the deserted farm and head to Uncle John's early the next morning.

The family is preparing for their journey to California when Tom and Casy arrive. Casy asks whether he can journey west with the Joads. The Joads agree to take him along. Once their belongings have been sold, everyone except Granpa is anxious to get started. They pack the truck, but Granpa has decided he wants to stay on the land, and they must drug Granpa in order to get him in the truck. They are on the highway by dawn. The family stops that first evening next to a migrant couple whose car has broken down. The Wilsons are gracious, offering their tent to Granpa who has a stroke and dies. Tom and Al fix the Wilson's car, and the two families decide to travel together.

In New Mexico, the Wilson's touring car breaks down again, and the families are forced to stop. Granma has become increasingly ill since Granpa's death, and Tom suggests the others take the truck and continue on. Ma refuses to go, insisting that the family stay together. She picks up the jack handle to support her point, and the rest of the family gives in. As they reach the desert bordering California, Sairy Wilson becomes so ill that she is unable to continue. The Joads leave the Wilsons and continue across the California desert on their own. Granma's health continues to deteriorate, and as the truck starts its nighttime trek across the desert, Ma knows that Granma will not survive. Knowing that they cannot afford to stop, Ma lies in the back of the truck with Granma. Midway across the desert, Granma dies. By dawn, the Joads have climbed out of the desert and stop the truck to gaze down upon the beautiful Bakersfield valley. Ma tells them that Granma has passed. She must be buried a pauper because the family does not have enough

money to bury her. The Joads stop at the first camp they come to, a dirty Hooverville of tents and makeshift shelters. The men are talking to Floyd Knowles, a young man in the camp, when a businessman accompanied by a cop offers them work. When Floyd asks for a wage offer in writing, he is accused of being a "red," and the cop attempts to arrest him. Tom trips the cop, and Casy kicks him. When the cop regains consciousness, Casy gives himself up to the law in order to divert attention away from Tom. The Joads immediately leave to avoid any further trouble.

The Joads travel south to a government-run camp in Weedpatch. Here, the community governs itself, electing committees to deal with clean-up, discipline, and entertainment. The Joads are comfortable but, after a month, are still unable to find any work and realize they must move on.

They are offered work picking peaches in Tulare. The camp gate is surrounded by a large group of men shouting and waving. The Joads, escorted through the gate by state police, begin work immediately. They are paid five cents a box, not sufficient to feed the family a day's meal. After the first day of picking, Tom wanders outside the ranch. He meets up with Jim Casy, who is leading a strike against the peach orchard owners who want to pay two-and-a-half cents a box. Tom learns his family is being paid five cents because they are working as strikebreakers. As the men talk, authorities sneak up, looking for Casy, the presumed leader of the strike. Unprovoked, one of the men strikes Casy on the head, killing him. Without thinking, Tom begins beating Casy's killer. The other men intervene, and Tom's nose is broken. He escapes, hiding in the peach orchard until he can reach his house.

Marked by his scarred face and broken nose, Tom becomes a fugitive, hidden by his family. The Joads flee the peach ranch at the first daylight. They find work picking cotton and share an empty boxcar with another family, the Wainwrights. Tom hides in a nearby cave where his mother leaves him food. The family is comfortable for a time, earning enough to eat meat daily.

One day, however, young Ruthie gets in a fight with another child. She threatens to call her big brother who is hiding because he has killed two men. Ma rushes to tell Tom he must leave for his own safety. Tom agrees and leaves with plans to carry on the social work that Jim Casy has begun.

Al gets engaged to sixteen-year-old Agnes Wainwright. As the cotton picking slows, the rains come. It rains steadily, and the water levels begin to rise. The night that Rose of Sharon goes into labor, the river threatens to flood the boxcar. Pa, Uncle John, Al and the rest of the men try to build an embankment to contain the river, but are unsuccessful. Rose of Sharon's baby is stillborn.

After a few days, the rain subsides. Leaving Al and the Wainwrights, the remaining Joads abandon the boxcar for higher ground. They find shelter in an old barn already occupied by a boy and his starving father. The child tells the Joads that his father has not eaten in six days and is unable to keep down solid food. Rose of Sharon offers him the breast milk no longer needed for her own child. The others leave the barn as she cradles the dying man to her breast.

Character List

Tom Joad The novel's main character and second Joad son. As the novel opens, he is returning to his family after his parole from the McAlester State Penitentiary. Among the novel's characters, Tom shows the most growth in his realization of the concept of human unity and love.

Jim Casy A former preacher. Concerned with his controversial beliefs about what is sinful and what is holy, he has renounced his calling. Traveling to California with the Joads, he plans to

listen to the people and help them. Casy is the spokesman for the author's main theories, including the multi-faceted themes of love and strength in unity.

Ma Joad Wife and mother. Ma is the backbone of the Joad family: strong-minded and resolute. Her main concern is that the family unit not be broken. She is the physical embodiment of Steinbeck's theory of love.

Pa Joad Patriarch of the Joad clan. Pa is a sharecropper whose land has just been foreclosed on by the bank. Somewhat lost and weakened, he leads his family to California in search of work.

Rose of Sharon Eldest Joad daughter. Rose of Sharon is pregnant and married to 19-year-old Connie Rivers. Self-absorbed by her pregnancy, she has many plans and dreams for their life in California. At the novel's close, she represents life-giving force.

Granma and Granpa The couple who first began farming on the land that Pa has lost.

Noah Joad The oldest Joad son. Noah is slow-moving and emotionally distant, perhaps the result of an unintentional injury caused by Pa during Noah's birth.

Essays

Use of Literary Devices in the Intercalary Chapters of *The Grapes of Wrath*

The unconventional structure of *The Grapes of Wrath*, in which the narrative chapters are interspersed with intercalary chapters of general comment or information, has frustrated and annoyed readers right up to the present day. Many complain that the chapters are interruptions in the story proper, or that they split the novel into two distinct sections only loosely related. The discerning reader, however, will agree with Steinbeck's claim that the structure of the novel was

indeed carefully worked out. Employing a variety of literary styles and techniques, Steinbeck is able to cross-reference details, interweave symbols, and provide outside commentary on narrative events in such a way that the two types of chapters blend together, unifying and enhancing the social and humanist themes of the novel. According to Steinbeck scholar, Peter Lisca, the author uses three specific literary devices to minimize disruption and bring together the two components of the novel: juxtaposition, dramatization, and a variety of prose styles.

One technique used to unify the separate parts of the novel is juxtaposition. Details are consistently and repeatedly inter-related between narrative and intercalary chapters. Most often an intercalary chapter will present a generalized situation that will either become more fully realized or brought to a conclusion by the events in the succeeding narrative chapter. For example, Chapter 7 provides the monologue of a used car salesman and is followed in Chapter 8 by an account of the Joads preparing to leave, having just purchased a used Hudson Super-Six. Similarly, Chapter 29, which describes the relentless rains that flood the California valley, is framed by the first drops of rain falling at the end of Chapter 28 and the floods that threaten the Joads' boxcar in Chapter 30. The repetition of key elements, often symbolic or thematic in nature, also works to integrate the two types of chapters. The land turtle, whose symbolic struggle across the highway is meticulously described in Chapter 3, is picked up by Tom Joad in Chapter 4 and released in Chapter 6, only to continue its journey in the direction soon to be followed by the Joad family. In the same way, the family rescued by the benevolent stranger at the end of Chapter 9 foreshadows the "rescuing" of the Wilsons by the Joads in the next chapter.

A second technique, perhaps most widely used in the intercalary chapters, is that of dramatization: The use of a collage of vignettes, monologues, and dialogues designed to show the social and historical processes behind the events that were occurring in the story of the Joads.

In Chapter 9, for example, we hear the frustrations of the farmers forced to sell their belongings through an economic system they don't understand, strengthened with the repeated comment, "Can't haul 'em back." Similar to medieval mystery plays that brought biblical stories to life for the understanding of the common people, Steinbeck uses generalized characters and dialogue to illustrate the plight of the dispossessed tenants. Not wishing to merely tell about social or historical facts that composed the backdrop of his plot, Steinbeck allows his readers to find out for themselves the effect of the drought on the sharecroppers, or the gradual deterioration of the houses abandoned by farmers forced to migrate westward.

The dramatically differentiated prose styles used in the intercalary chapters allows Steinbeck to soften the chapters' somewhat moralizing tone and avoid the accusation that they could be grouped together as their own separate section of the novel. The newsreel style of a contemporary of Steinbeck's, author John Dos Passos, is seen in the used car salesman chapter, while the depiction of the boy and his Cherokee girl dancing in Chapter 23 is almost cinematic. The earthy, folk language employed by the Joads, Wainwrights, Wilsons, and other characters in the primary narrative is echoed in the comments of the generalized characters in the intercalary chapters. In keeping with the purpose of these chapters as general expansions of specific events, however, quotation marks indicating precise speakers are quite obviously absent. These conversational collages strengthen the function of these intercalary chapters to provide an overview of the social situation affecting the Joads.

The most striking and pervasive style used in these intercalary chapters is language and rhythms reminiscent of the syntactical structures of the King James Bible. With its force and authority, this biblical voice, present in both the opening description of the drought and the closing

description of the floods, becomes the moral center of the novel. The spiritual beauty and strength of this language is most clearly seen in the apocalyptic warning delivered in Chapter 25, "There is a crime here which goes beyond denunciation. There is a sorrow here that weeping cannot symbolize. There is a failure here that topples all our success. The fertile earth, the straight tree rows, the sturdy trunks and the ripe fruit. And children dying of pellagra must die because a profit cannot be taken from an orange."

Separately, these intercalary chapters have moments of brilliance and beauty. However, it is the way in which they are intricately, and inextricably, woven into the fabric of the primary narrative that they most confirm the genius of Steinbeck's highly personal and global vision of humanity.

Al Joad Sixteen-year-old Joad son. Al willingly admits that only cars and girls interest him. He is responsible for the maintenance of the family's truck during the journey to California. Ruthie Joad The youngest Joad daughter. Ruthie is 12 years old and caught between childishness and adolescence. Winfield Joad The youngest Joad family member. Winfield is 10 years old. Muley Graves A Joad neighbor in Oklahoma. Muley has also been tractored off his land. He chooses to stay behind when his family leaves for California, an illustration of the effect of loss on those who have been driven from their land.

Ivy and Sarah (Sairy) Wilson Traveling companions of the Joads. A couple from Kansas, the Wilsons meet the Joads when their touring car breaks down. After Al and Tom fix their car, they travel with the family to the California border. The cooperation between the Wilsons and the Joads exemplifies the strength that is found in persons helping others.

Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright The Wainwrights share a boxcar with the Joads at the end of the novel. Like the Wilsons, their union with the Joads underscores the novel's theme of human unity.

Agnes Wainwright The Wainwright's 16-year-old daughter. She is engaged to Al Joad at the end of the novel.

Ezra Huston Chairman of the central committee in the government camp at Weedpatch. Willie Eaton Texan in charge of the entertainment committee at the government camp. He and his committee members thwart a staged riot attempt by the Farmers Association.