N.V. Alekhina, N.V. Gribacheva

ENGLISH STORIES FOR EXTENSIVE READING

Workshop (Seminars)

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АНГЛИЙСКИЕ РАССКАЗЫ ДЛЯ ЭКСТЕНСИВНОГО ЧТЕНИЯ

Практикум

Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation
Federal State Budget Educational
Institution of Higher Education
«South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University»

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Chelyabinsk
2024

Министерство просвещения Российской Федерации
Федеральное государственное бюджетное образовательное
учреждение высшего образования
«Южно-Уральский государственный
гуманитарно-педагогический университет»

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УДК 42-88(021)
ББК 81.432.1-923.3
А 49

Алехина, Н.В. Английские рассказы для экстенсивного чтения: практикум / Н.В. Алехина, Н.В. Грибачева; Министерство просвещения РФ, Южно-Уральский государственный гуманитарно-педагогический университет. – Челябинск: Изд-во ЮУрГГПУ, 2024. – 132 с. – ISBN 978-5-907869-22-6. – Текст: непосредственный.

В практикуме представлены рассказы английских авторов для чтения на английском языке. Каждый рассказ сопровождается заданиями разнообразного характера, направленными на более глубокое понимание смысла и на стилистический анализ текстов.

Практикум предназначен для студентов педагогических университетов по направления подготовки 44.03.05 – Педагогическое образование (с двумя профилями подготовки); может быть использовано на групповых занятиях по дисциплинам «Домашнее чтение», «Чтение произведений английских авторов», «Практика устной и письменной речи», «Практический курс английского языка», «Иностранный язык (английский), «Стилистика изучаемого языка», а также для самостоятельной работы.

ISBN 978-5-907869-22-6.

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INTRODUCTION

The workshop contains nine stories by American, English and Northern Irish writers (O. Henry, R.D. Bradbury, J.D. Salinger, R. Dahl, R. Seiffeld, K. Vonnegut, L. Caldwell) and tasks.

The workshop is intended for use by undergraduate senior students who specialize in English at pedagogical universities. It is aimed at perfecting students' skills of retelling stories, analyzing lexical and stylistic content of a text and expressing their own opinions on the main idea of a belles-lettres text.

The tasks suggested by the authors are aimed at checking students' comprehension, at reinforcing students' lexical skills and at developing students' ability to speak off the cuff and to express their own points of view and their attitude to the problems reflected in the stories. Furthermore, there are tasks which are focused on stylistic peculiarities of the stories.

The workshop is designed for use in the following classes: "Extensive Reading", "English-speaking Authors' Works", "Speaking and Writing Practice", "English Practical Course", "Foreign Language (English)", "Stylistics of the English Language", and for self-study.

ВВЕДЕНИЕ

Данный практикум содержит рассказы американских, английских и североирландских писателей: О'Генри, Р. Брэдбери, Д. Сэлинджера, Р. Даля, Р. Зейфферт, К. Воннегута, Л. Колдуэлл, а также задания к ним.

Практикум предназначен для студентов-бакалавров старших курсов педагогических вузов, изучающих английский язык и направлено на совершенствование умений грамотно пересказывать, анализировать на английском языке прочитанный текст, свободно выражать свое мнение о содержании текста и анализировать его лексико-стилистическую наполненность.

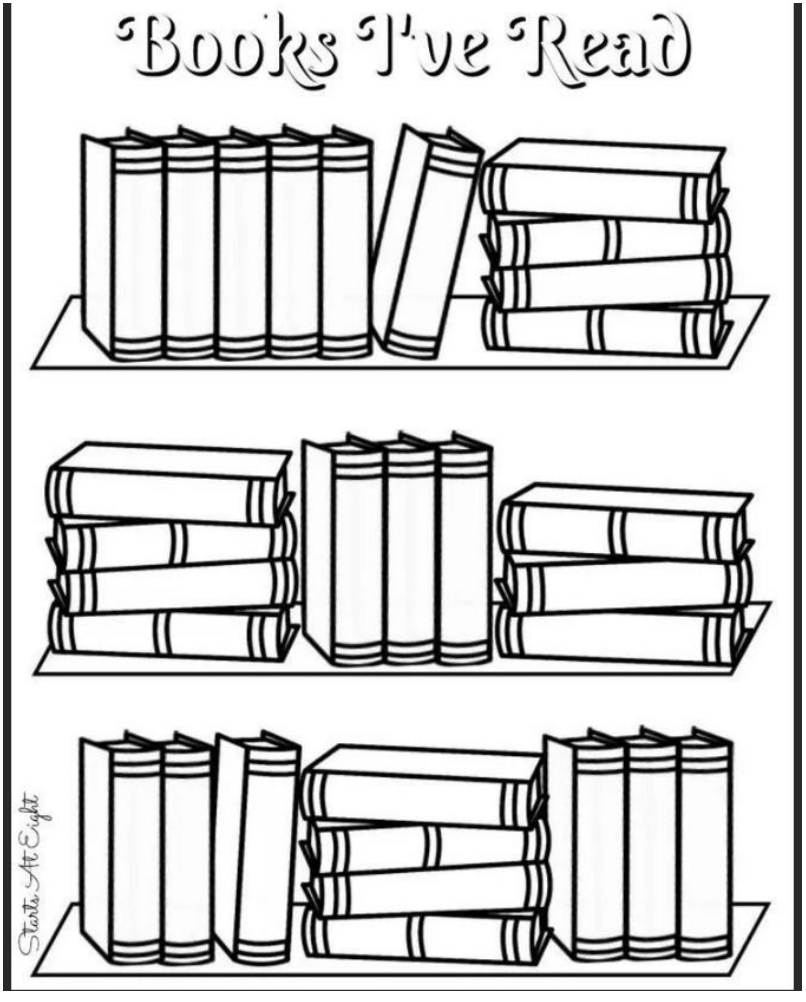
Задания к рассказам позволяют проверить знание содержание текстов, закрепить навыки употребления лексических единиц, сформировать умение выражать свое мнение и отношение к проблемам, нашедшим отражение в представленных рассказах, отработать навык видения стилистических особенностей текстов.

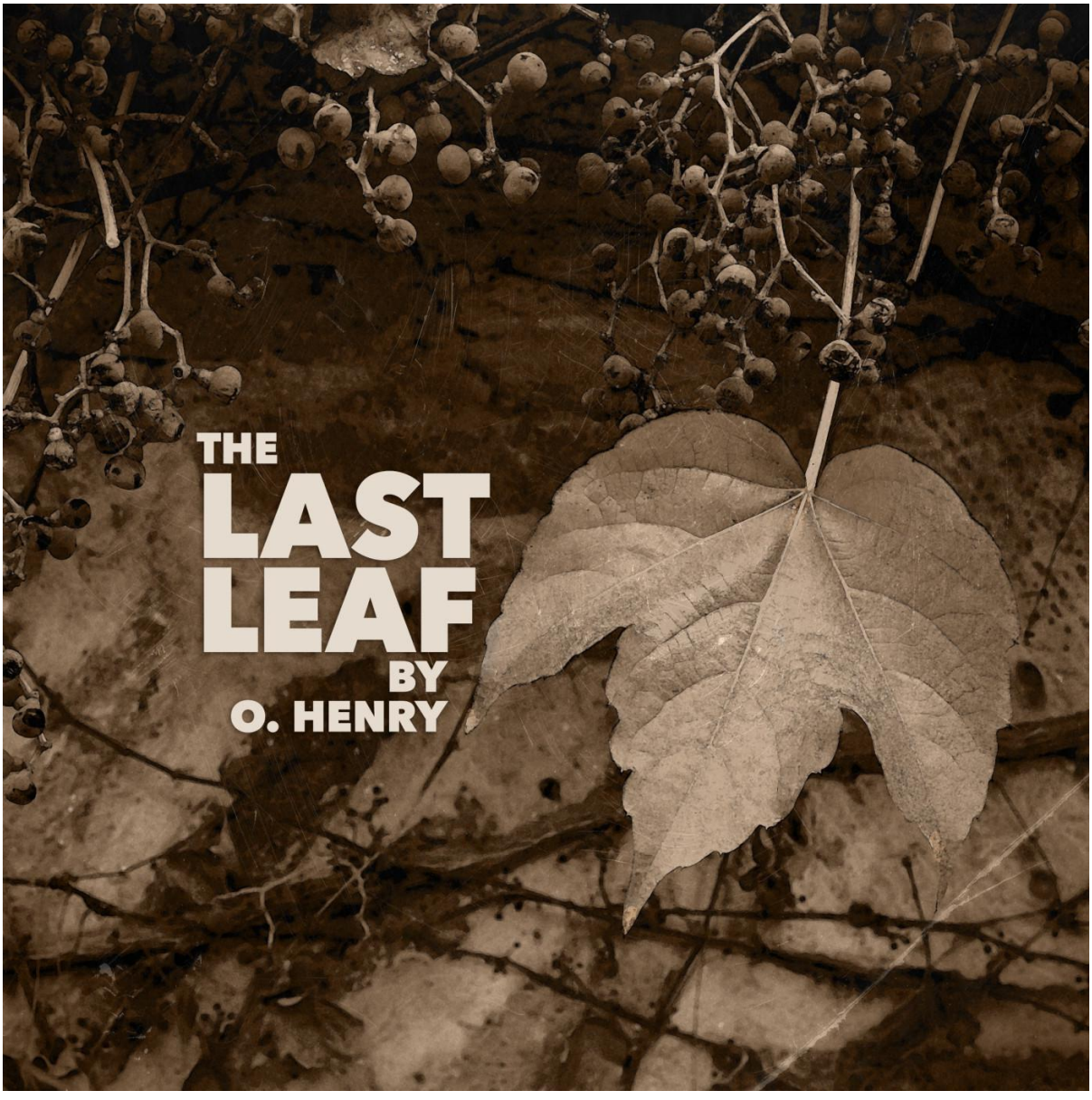
Практикум может быть использован на групповых занятиях по дисциплинам «Домашнее чтение», «Чтение произведений английских авторов», «Практика устной и письменной речи», «Практический курс английского языка», «Иностранный язык (английский)», «Стилистика изучаемого языка», а также для самостоятельной работы.

Book Tracker

1. Write down the names of the books you have read so far this year on the book covers in the picture.

2. Work in pairs and tell your partner about the books you have read (plot, your favourite characters, and the characters you didn't like). *Which of them would you recommend your partner to read?*




THE
LAST
LEAF
BY
O. HENRY

Read the story *The Last Leaf* by O. Henry and do the tasks. Pay attention to the words **in bold.**

1. What is the **main idea** of the story?

2. Describe the **main characters** of the story (Sue, Johnsy, Behrman and the doctor). In your opinion, who does the author sympathize with? Who do you sympathize with?

3. Is there a **real friendship** between Sue and Johnsy? Give examples from the text.

4. What does the last leaf **symbolize**? E.g. death, hope, endurance etc. Explain your ideas.

5. What is O. Henry's attitude to **art**? Did Behrman paint his **masterpiece**?

6*. Find stylistic devices and expressive means (metaphors, epithets, irony, pun etc.) used by the author.

e.g. *the streets have run crazy* → personification etc.

7. Explain allusions and realia used by the author (e.g. *table d'hote* etc)

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* extra task for stylistic analysis

O. Henry
The Last Leaf

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

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

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

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

Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a **chivalric** old gentleman. A **mite of a little woman** with **blood thinned by California zephyrs** was hardly fair game for the **red-fisted**, **short-breathed** old **duffer**. But Johnsy he **smote**; and she lay, scarcely moving, on her painted iron bedstead, looking through the small **Dutch window-panes** at the blank side of the next brick house.

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

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

"She – she wanted to paint the **Bay of Naples** some day," said Sue. "Paint? – bosh! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking about twice – a man, for instance?"

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

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

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

Johnsy lay, **scarcely** making a **ripple** under the bedclothes, with her face toward the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she was asleep. She arranged her board and began a pen-and-ink drawing to illustrate a magazine story. Young artists must **pave** their way to Art by drawing pictures for magazine stories that young authors write to pave their way to Literature.

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

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

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

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

"What is it, dear?" asked Sue.

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

"Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sue found Behrman smelling strongly of **juniper berries** in his dimly lighted **den** below. In one corner was a blank canvas on an easel that had been waiting there for twenty-five years to receive the first line of the **masterpiece**. She told him

of Johnsy's fancy, and how she feared she would, indeed, light and **fragile** as a leaf herself, **float away** when her slight hold upon the world grew weaker.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wearily Sue obeyed.

But, lo! after the beating rain and fierce **gusts** of wind that had **endured** through the **livelong** night, there yet stood out against the brick wall one ivy leaf. It was the last

on the vine. Still dark green near its **stem**, but with its serrated edges **tinted** with the yellow of dissolution and decay, it hung **bravely** from a branch some twenty feet above the ground.

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

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

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

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

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

The ivy leaf was still there.

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

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

An hour later she said:

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF

by O. Henry

Read the story *The Ransom of Red Chief* by O. Henry and do the tasks. Pay attention to the words **in bold.**

1. What is the **main idea** of the story?

2. Find examples of **irony** in the story and define the technique used by the author.

E.g. "*during a moment of temporary mental apparition*" → contrast between the manner and the matter etc.

3. Find examples of **allusions** and **realia** in the text. Explain them (look them up on the internet if necessary).

E.g. ***Buffalo Bill Wild West Show*** *was an outdoor circus-like show run in the beginning of the nineteenth century. It combined elements of historical scenes with rodeo-style events and sharpshooting etc.*

4. Was the ending of the story **unexpected** for you? Why (not)?

5. Who does the author **side with** in the story (the boy or the criminals)? Prove your point.

6. Fill in the chart with **specific vocabulary** that the author uses:

– to speak about Indians;

– to speak about criminal/illegal business;

– literary/bookish words.

Why does the author use these words? What for?

"Indian" vocabulary	"Criminal" vocabulary	Literary vocabulary
Red Chief to be scalped etc.	ransom (n) a fraudulent town-lot scheme etc.	mental apparition undeleterious (adj) etc.

O. Henry
The Ransom of Red Chief

It looked like a good thing: but wait till I tell you. We were down South, in Alabama – Bill Driscoll and myself – when this kidnapping idea struck us. It was, as Bill afterward expressed it, "during a moment of **temporary mental apparition**"; but we didn't find that out till later.

There was a town down there, as flat as a flannel-cake, and called Summit, of course. It contained inhabitants of as **undeleterious** and **self-satisfied** a class of peasantry as ever clustered around a Maypole. Bill and me had a joint capital of about six hundred dollars, and we needed just two thousand dollars more to pull off a **fraudulent town-lot scheme** in Western Illinois with. We talked it over on the front steps of the hotel. **Philoprogenitiveness**, says we, is strong in semi-rural communities; therefore and for other reasons, a kidnapping project ought to do better there than in the radius of newspapers that send reporters out **in plain clothes** to stir up talk about such things. We knew that Summit couldn't get after us with anything stronger than constables and maybe some **lackadaisical bloodhounds** and **a diatribe or two** in the Weekly Farmers' Budget. So, it looked good.

We selected for our victim the only child of **a prominent citizen** named Ebenezer Dorset. The father was respectable and tight, a mortgage fancier and a **stern, upright collection-plate passer** and forecloser. The kid was a boy of ten, with **bas-relief freckles**, and **hair the colour of the cover of the magazine you buy at the newsstand when you want to catch a train**. Bill and me figured that Ebenezer would **melt down** for a ransom of two thousand dollars to a cent. But wait till I tell you.

About two miles from Summit was a little mountain, covered with a dense cedar brake. On the rear elevation of this mountain was a cave. There we stored provisions.

One evening after sundown, we drove in a buggy past old Dorset's house. The kid was in the street, throwing rocks at a kitten on the opposite fence.

"Hey, little boy!" says Bill, "would you like to have a bag of candy and a nice ride?"

The boy catches Bill neatly in the eye with a piece of brick.

"That will cost the old man an extra five hundred dollars," says Bill, climbing over the wheel.

That boy **put up a fight like a welter-weight cinnamon bear**; but, at last, we got him down in the bottom of the buggy and drove away. We took him up to the cave and I hitched the horse in the cedar brake. After dark I drove the buggy to the little village, three miles away, where we had hired it, and walked back to the mountain.

Bill was pasting court-plaster over the scratches and bruises on his features. There was a fire burning behind the big rock at the entrance of the cave, and the boy was watching a pot of boiling coffee, with two buzzard tail-feathers stuck in his red hair. He points a stick at me when I come up, and says:

"Ha! **cursed paleface**, do you dare to enter the camp of Red Chief, **the terror of the plains**?"

"He's all right now," says Bill, rolling up his trousers and examining some bruises on his shins. "We're playing Indian. We're making **Buffalo Bill's show** look like magic-lantern views of Palestine in the town hall. I'm Old Hank, the Trapper, Red Chief's captive, and I'm to be scalped at daybreak. **By Geronimo!** that kid can kick hard."

Yes, sir, that boy seemed to be having the time of his life. The fun of camping out in a cave had made him forget that he was a captive himself. He immediately **christened** me Snake-eye, the Spy, and announced that, when his braves returned from the warpath, I was to be broiled at the stake at the rising of the sun.

Then we had supper; and he filled his mouth full of bacon and bread and gravy, and began to talk. He made a during-dinner speech something like this:

"I like this fine. I never camped out before; but I had a pet 'possum once, and I was nine last birthday. I hate to go to school. Rats ate up sixteen of Jimmy Talbot's aunt's speckled hen's eggs. Are there any real Indians in these woods? I want some more gravy. Does the trees moving make the wind blow? We had five puppies. What makes your nose so red, Hank? My father has lots of money. Are the stars hot? I whipped Ed Walker twice, Saturday. I don't like girls. You dassent catch toads unless with a string. Do oxen make any noise? Why are oranges round? Have you got beds to sleep on in this cave? Amos Murray has got six toes. A parrot can talk, but a monkey or a fish can't. How many does it take to make twelve?"

Every few minutes he would remember that he was **a pesky redskin**, and pick up his stick rifle and tiptoe to the mouth of the cave to **rubber** for the scouts of the **hated paleface**. Now and then he would let out a **war-whoop** that made Old Hank the Trapper shiver. That boy had Bill terrorized from the start.

"Red Chief," says I to the kid, "would you like to go home?"

"Aw, what for?" says he. "I don't have any fun at home. I hate to go to school. I like to camp out. You won't take me back home again, Snake-eye, will you?"

"Not right away," says I. "We'll stay here in the cave a while."

"All right!" says he. "That'll be fine. I never had such fun in all my life."

We went to bed about eleven o'clock. We spread down some wide blankets and quilts and put Red Chief between us. We weren't afraid he'd run away. He kept us awake for three hours, jumping up and reaching for his rifle and **screeching**: "**Hist! pard**," in mine and Bill's ears, as the fancied crackle of a twig or the rustle of a leaf revealed to his young imagination the stealthy approach of the outlaw band. At last, I fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamed that I had been kidnapped and chained to a tree by a **ferocious** pirate with red hair.

Just at daybreak, I was awakened by a series of awful screams from Bill. They weren't **yells, or howls, or shouts, or whoops, or yawps**, such as you'd expect from

a manly set of vocal organs – they were simply **indecent**, terrifying, humiliating screams, such as women emit when they see ghosts or caterpillars. It's an awful thing to hear a strong, **desperate**, fat man scream incontinently in a cave at daybreak.

I jumped up to see what the matter was. Red Chief was sitting on Bill's chest, with one hand twined in Bill's hair. In the other he had the sharp case-knife we used for slicing bacon; and he was **industriously** and realistically trying to take Bill's scalp, according to the **sentence** that had been pronounced upon him the evening before.

I got the knife away from the kid and made him lie down again. But, from that moment, Bill's spirit was broken. He laid down on his side of the bed, but he never closed an eye again in sleep as long as that boy was with us. I **dozed off** for a while, but along toward sun-up I remembered that Red Chief had said I was to be burned at the stake at the rising of the sun. I wasn't nervous or afraid; but I sat up and lit my pipe and leaned against a rock.

"What you getting up so soon for, Sam?" asked Bill.

"Me?" says I. "Oh, I got a kind of a pain in my shoulder. I thought sitting up would rest it."

"You're a liar!" says Bill. "You're afraid. You was to be burned at sunrise, and you was afraid he'd do it. And he would, too, if he could find a match. Ain't it awful, Sam? Do you think anybody will pay out money to get **a little imp** like that back home?"

"Sure," said I. "A **rowdy** kid like that is just the kind that parents **dote on**. Now, you and the Chief get up and cook breakfast, while I go up on the top of this mountain and **reconnoitre**."

I went up on the peak of the little mountain and ran my eye over the **contiguous vicinity**. Over toward Summit I expected to see **the sturdy yeomanry** of the village **armed with scythes and pitchforks** beating the countryside for the **dastardly kidnappers**. But what I saw was a peaceful landscape dotted with one man ploughing with a dun

mule. Nobody was dragging the creek; no couriers dashed hither and yon, bringing tidings of no news to the distracted parents. There was a **sylvan attitude of somnolent sleepiness** pervading that section of the external outward surface of Alabama that lay exposed to my view.

"Perhaps," says I to myself, "it has not yet been discovered that the wolves **have borne away the tender lambkin from the fold**. Heaven help the wolves!" says I, and I went down the mountain to breakfast.

When I got to the cave I found Bill backed up against the side of it, breathing hard, and the boy threatening to smash him with a rock half as big as a cocoanut.

"He put a **red-hot** boiled potato down my back," explained Bill, "and then mashed it with his foot; and I **boxed his ears.** Have you got a gun about you, Sam?"

I took the rock away from the boy and kind of **patched up the argument**.

"I'll fix you," says the kid to Bill. "No man ever yet struck the Red Chief but what he got paid for it. You better beware!"

After breakfast the kid takes a piece of leather with strings wrapped around it out of his pocket and goes outside the cave **unwinding** it.

"What's he up to now?" says Bill, anxiously. "You don't think he'll run away, do you, Sam?"

"No fear of it," says I. "He don't seem to be much of **a home body**. But we've got to fix up some plan about the ransom. There don't seem to be much excitement around Summit on account of his disappearance; but maybe they haven't realized yet that he's gone. His **folks** may think he's spending the night with Aunt Jane or one of the neighbours. Anyhow, he'll be missed to-day. To-night we must get a message to his father demanding the two thousand dollars for his return."

Just then we heard a kind of war-whoop, such as **David might have emitted when he knocked out the champion Goliath**. It was a **sling** that Red Chief had pulled

out of his pocket, and he was whirling it around his head. I dodged, and heard a **heavy thud** and a kind of a sigh from Bill, like a horse gives out when you take his saddle off. A niggerhead rock the size of an egg had caught Bill just behind his left ear. He **loosened himself all over** and fell in the fire across the frying pan of hot water for washing the dishes. I dragged him out and poured cold water on his head for half an hour.

By and by, Bill sits up and feels behind his ear and says: "Sam, do you know who my favourite Biblical character is?"

"Take it easy," says I. "You'll come to your senses presently."

"King Herod," says he. "You won't go away and leave me here alone, will you, Sam?"

I went out and caught that boy and shook him **until his freckles rattled**.

"If you don't behave," says I, "I'll take you straight home. Now, are you going to be good, or not?"

"I was only funning," says he sullenly. "I didn't mean to hurt Old Hank. But what did he hit me for? I'll behave, Snake-eye, if you won't send me home, and if you'll let me play the Black Scout to-day."

"I don't know the game," says I. "That's for you and Mr. Bill to decide. He's your playmate for the day. I'm going away for a while, on business. Now, you come in and make friends with him and say you are sorry for hurting him, or home you go, at once."

I made him and Bill shake hands, and then I took Bill aside and told him I was going to Poplar Cove, a little village three miles from the cave, and find out what I could about how the kidnapping had been regarded in Summit. Also, I thought it best to send a **peremptory** letter to old man Dorset that day, demanding the ransom and dictating how it should be paid.

"You know, Sam," says Bill, "I've stood by you without batting an eye in earthquakes, fire and flood – in poker games, dynamite outrages, police raids, train

robberies and cyclones. I never lost my nerve yet till we kidnapped that **two-legged skyrocket of a kid**. He's **got me going**. You won't leave me long with him, will you, Sam?"

"I'll be back some time this afternoon," says I. "You must keep the boy amused and quiet till I return. And now we'll write the letter to old Dorset."

Bill and I got paper and pencil and worked on the letter while Red Chief, with a blanket wrapped around him, strutted up and down, guarding the mouth of the cave. Bill begged me tearfully to make the ransom fifteen hundred dollars instead of two thousand.

"I ain't attempting," says he, "to **decry** the **celebrated moral aspect of parental affection**, but we're dealing with humans, and it ain't human for anybody to give up two thousand dollars for that **forty-pound chunk of freckled wildcat**. I'm willing to take a chance at fifteen hundred dollars. You can **charge the difference up to me**."

So, to relieve Bill, I acceded, and we collaborated a letter that ran this way:

Ebenezer Dorset, Esq.:

We have your boy concealed in a place far from Summit. It is useless for you or the most skilful detectives to attempt to find him. Absolutely, the only terms on which you can have him restored to you are these: We demand fifteen hundred dollars ***in large bills*** *for his return; the money to be left at midnight to-night at the same spot and in the same box as your reply-as hereinafter described. If you agree to these terms, send your answer in writing by a solitary messenger to-night at half-past eight o'clock. After crossing Owl Creek, on the road to Poplar Cove, there are three large trees about a hundred yards apart, close to the fence of the wheat field on the right-hand side. At the bottom of the fence-post, opposite the third tree, will be found a small pasteboard box. The messenger will place the answer in this box and return immediately to Summit. If you attempt any* ***treachery*** *or fail to comply with our demand as stated, you will*

never see your boy again. If you pay the money as demanded, he will be returned to you safe and well within three hours. These terms are final, and if you do not accede to them no further communication will be attempted.

*TWO **DESPERATE** MEN.*

I addressed this letter to Dorset, and put it in my pocket. "I'm the Black Scout," says Red Chief, "and I have to ride to the stockade to warn the settlers that the Indians are coming. I'm tired of playing Indian myself. I want to be the Black Scout."

"All right," says I. "It sounds harmless to me. I guess Mr. Bill will help you **foil the pesky savages**."

"What am I to do?" asks Bill, looking at the kid suspiciously.

"You are the **hoss**," says Black Scout. "Get down on your hands and knees. How can I ride to the stockade without a **hoss**?"

"You'd better keep him interested," said I, "till we get the scheme going. **Loosen up**."

As I was about to start, the kid comes up to me and says: "Aw, Snake-eye, you said I could play the Black Scout while you was gone."

"Play it, of course," says I. "Mr. Bill will play with you. What kind of a game is it?"

Bill gets down on his all fours, and **a look comes in his eye like a rabbit's when you catch it in a trap**. "How far is it to the stockade, kid?" he asks, in a husky manner of voice.

"Ninety miles," says the Black Scout. "And you have to hump yourself to get there on time. **Whoa, now**!"

The Black Scout jumps on Bill's back and digs his heels in his side. "For Heaven's sake," says Bill, "hurry back, Sam, as soon as you can. I wish we hadn't made the ransom more than a thousand. Say, you quit kicking me or I'll get up and **warm you good**."

I walked over to Poplar Cove and sat around the post office and store, talking with the **chawbacons** that came in to trade. One **whiskerando** says that he hears

Summit is all upset on account of Elder Ebenezer Dorset's boy having been lost or stolen. That was all I wanted to know. I bought some smoking tobacco, referred casually to the price of black-eyed peas, posted my letter **surreptitiously** and came away. The postmaster said the mail-carrier would come by in an hour to take the mail on to Summit.

When I got back to the cave Bill and the boy were not to be found. I explored the vicinity of the cave, and risked a yodel or two, but there was no response. So I lighted my pipe and sat down on a mossy bank to **await developments**. In about half an hour I heard the bushes rustle, and Bill wabbled out into the little glade in front of the cave. Behind him was the kid, stepping softly like a scout, with a broad grin on his face. Bill stopped, took off his hat and wiped his face with a red handkerchief.

The kid stopped about eight feet behind him.

"Sam," says Bill, "I suppose you'll think I'm a renegade, but I couldn't help it. I'm a grown person with **masculine proclivities** and habits of self-defense, but there is a time when all systems of egotism and predominance fail. The boy is gone. I have sent him home. All is off. There was **martyrs** in old times," goes on Bill, "that suffered death rather than give up the particular graft they enjoyed. None of 'em ever was subjugated to such **supernatural tortures** as I have been. I tried to be faithful to our **articles of depredation**; but there came a limit."

"What's the trouble, Bill?" I asks him. "I was rode," says Bill, "the ninety miles to the stockade, not barring an inch. Then, when the settlers was rescued, I was given oats. Sand ain't a **palatable substitute**. And then, for an hour I had to try to explain to him why there was nothin' in holes, how a road can run both ways and what makes the grass green. I tell you, Sam, a human can only stand so much. I takes him by the neck of his clothes and drags him down the mountain. On the way he kicks my legs **black-and-blue** from the knees down; and I've got to have two or three bites on my thumb and hand **cauterized"**.

"But he's gone" – continues Bill – "gone home. I showed him the road to Summit and kicked him about eight feet nearer there at one kick. I'm sorry we lose the ransom; but it was either that or Bill Driscoll to the **madhouse**."

Bill is puffing and blowing, but there is a look of **ineffable peace** and growing content on his **rose-pink features**. "Bill," says I, "there isn't any heart disease in your family, is there?"

"No," says Bill, "nothing chronic except malaria and accidents. Why?"

"Then you might turn around," says I, "and have a look behind you."

Bill turns and sees the boy, and **loses his complexion** and sits down **plump** on the ground and begins to **pluck** aimlessly at grass and little sticks. For an hour I was afraid for his mind. And then I told him that my scheme was to put the whole job through immediately and that we would get the ransom and **be off** with it by midnight if old Dorset fell in with our proposition.

So Bill braced up enough to give the kid a weak sort of a smile and a promise to play the Russian in a Japanese war with him is soon as he felt a little better.

I had a scheme for collecting that ransom without danger of being caught by counterplots that ought to commend itself to professional kidnappers. The tree under which the answer was to be left – and the money later on – was close to the road fence with big, bare fields on all sides.

If a gang of constables should be watching for any one to come for the note they could see him a long way off crossing the fields or in the road. But no, **sirree**! At half-past eight I was up in that tree as well hidden as a tree toad, waiting for the messenger to arrive. Exactly on time, a **half-grown** boy rides up the road on a bicycle, locates the pasteboard box at the foot of the fence-post, slips a folded piece of paper into it and pedals away again back toward Summit. I waited an hour and then concluded **the thing was square**.

I slid down the tree, got the note, slipped along the fence till I struck the woods, and was back at the cave in another half an hour. I opened the note, got near the lantern and read it to Bill. It was written with a pen in a crabbed hand, and the sum and substance of it was this:

Two Desperate Men.

Gentlemen: I received your letter to-day by post, in regard to the ransom you ask for the return of my son. I think you are a little ***high in your demands****, and I hereby make you a* ***counter-proposition****, which I am* ***inclined*** *to believe you will accept.*

You bring Johnny home and pay me two hundred and fifty dollars in cash, and I agree to ***take him off your hands****.*

You had better come at night, for the neighbours believe he is lost, and I couldn't be responsible for what they would do to anybody they saw bringing him back.

Very respectfully,
EBENEZER DORSET.

"Great pirates of Penzance!" says I; "of all the **impudent –** "

But I glanced at Bill, and hesitated. He had the most **appealing look** in his eyes I ever saw on the face of a dumb or a talking brute.

"Sam," says he, "what's two hundred and fifty dollars, after all? We've got the money. One more night of this kid will send me to a bed in **Bedlam**. Besides being **a thorough gentleman**, I think Mr. Dorset is a **spendthrift** for making us such a liberal offer. You ain't going to let the chance go, are you?"

"Tell you the truth, Bill," says I, "this **little he ewe lamb** has somewhat **got on my nerves** too. We'll take him home, pay the ransom and **make our get-away**."

We took him home that night. We got him to go by telling him that his father had bought a silver-mounted rifle and a pair of moccasins for him, and we were going to hunt bears the next day. It was just twelve o'clock when we knocked at Ebenezer's front door.

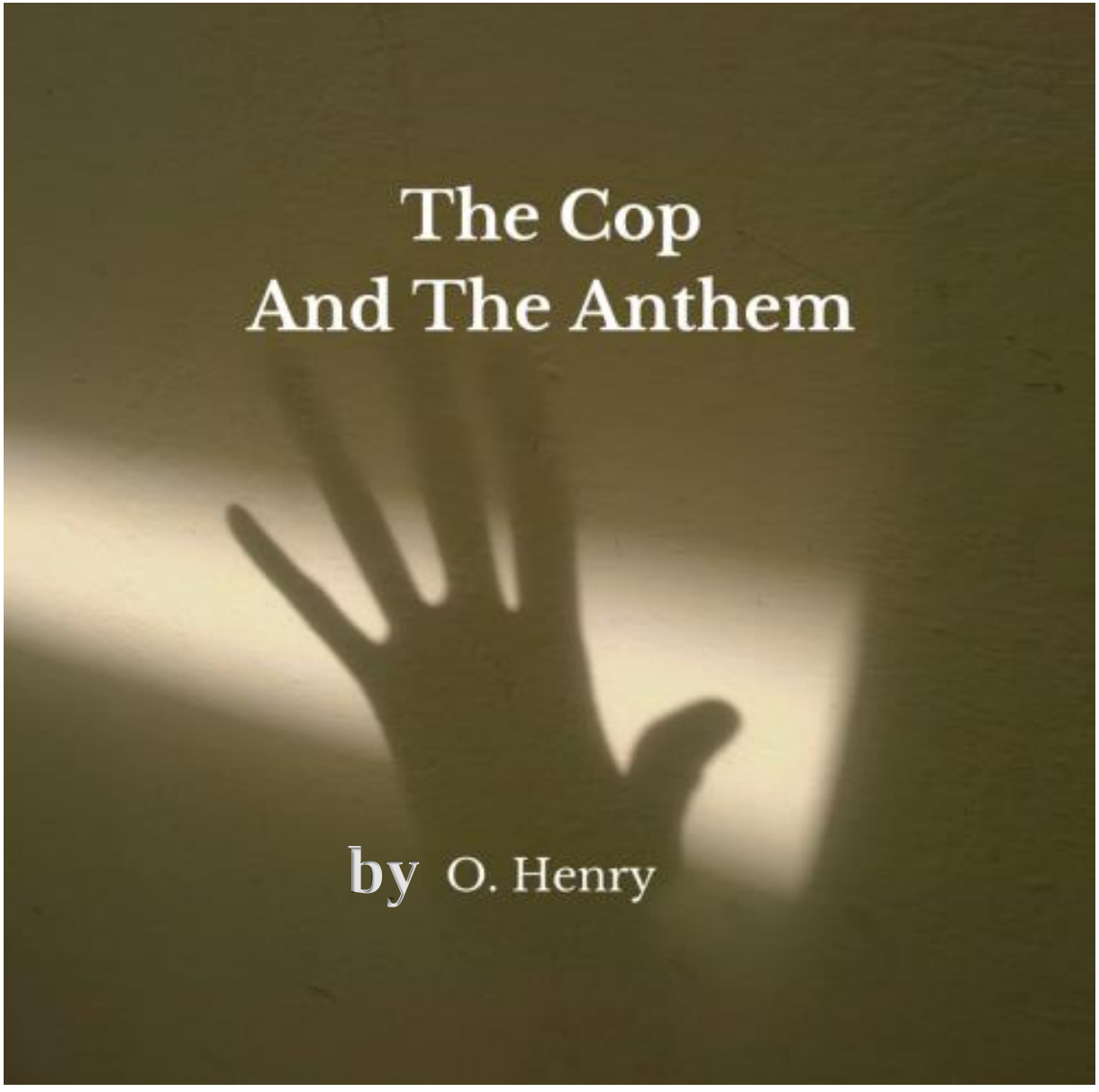
Just at the moment when I should have been abstracting the fifteen hundred dollars from the box under the tree, according to the original proposition, Bill was counting out two hundred and fifty dollars into Dorset's hand. When the kid found out we were going to leave him at home he started up **a howl like a calliope** and fastened himself **as tight as a leech** to Bill's leg. His father **peeled him away** gradually, **like a porous plaster**.

"How long can you hold him?" asks Bill.

"I'm not as strong as I used to be," says old Dorset, "but I think I can promise you ten minutes."

"Enough," says Bill. "In ten minutes I shall cross the Central, Southern and Middle Western States, and **be legging it trippingly** for the Canadian border."

And, as dark as it was, and as fat as Bill was, and as good a runner as I am, he was a good mile and a half out of Summit before I could catch up with him.


The Cop
And The Anthem
by O. Henry

Read the story *The Cop and the Anthem* by O. Henry and do the tasks. Pay attention to the words **in bold.**

1. What is the **main idea** of the story?
2. Describe Soapy (his appearance and personality). What does he do for a living?
3. The author uses different names for *police and policemen*. Find them in the text. E.g. *a policeman, a cop, brass buttons…etc.*
4. What is the main **irony** of the story?
5. Find examples of **allusions** and **realia** in the text. Explain them (look them up on the internet if necessary).

E.g. ***As Caesar had his Brutus****… is an allusion to the assassination of Julius Caesar by Brutus's conspirators in 44 BC etc.*

6. Was the ending of the story **unexpected** for you? Why (not)?
7. In your opinion does Soapy have a chance to become a **good law-abiding citizen**? Why (not)? Prove your point.
8. The author uses a lot of **periphrasis** in the story. Find at least 7 examples of periphrasis and fill in the chart below.

Why do you think O. Henry uses this device a lot in the story?

Examples of periphrasis	What we think the author wants to say
… at a glittering cafe, where are gathered together nightly ***the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm…***	*… at a glittering cafe, where are gathered together nightly* ***the best wines, silken clothes and people…***
*…****decadent*** *shoes…*	*…****beaten-down dirty*** *shoes…*

9. O. Henry uses a lot of **religious allusions and metaphors** (*entering* ***limbo****, his annual* ***hegira*** *to the Island…*). Find more examples in the story. What does the author want to say by that in your opinion?

O. Henry
The Cop and the Anthem

On his bench in Madison Square Soapy **moved uneasily**. When wild geese **honk high** of nights, and when women without **sealskin coats** grow kind to their husbands, and when Soapy moves uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at hand.

A dead leaf fell in Soapy's lap. That was **Jack Frost's card**. Jack is kind to the regular denizens of Madison Square, and gives **fair warning** of his annual call. At the corners of four streets he hands his pasteboard to the North Wind, footman of the mansion of All Outdoors, so that the inhabitants thereof may make ready.

Soapy's mind became cognisant of the fact that the time had come for him to resolve himself into a singular Committee of Ways and Means to provide against the coming rigour. And therefore he moved uneasily on his bench.

The **hibernatorial ambitions** of Soapy were not of the highest. In them there were no considerations of Mediterranean cruises, of soporific Southern skies drifting in the Vesuvian Bay. Three months on the Island was what his soul **craved**. Three months of assured board and bed and congenial company, safe from **Boreas** and **bluecoats**, seemed to Soapy the essence of things **desirable**.

For years the hospitable Blackwell's had been his winter quarters. Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had bought their tickets to Palm Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy had made his **humble** arrangements for his annual **hegira** to the Island. And now the time was come. On the previous night three Sabbath newspapers, distributed beneath his coat, about his ankles and over his lap, had failed to repulse the cold as he slept on his bench near the spurting fountain in the ancient square. So the Island loomed big and timely in Soapy's mind. He scorned

the provisions made in the name of charity for the city's dependents. In Soapy's opinion the Law was more **benign** than Philanthropy. There was an endless round of institutions, municipal and eleemosynary, on which he might set out and receive lodging and food accordant with the simple life. But to one of Soapy's proud spirit the gifts of charity are encumbered. If not in coin you must pay in **humiliation of spirit** for every benefit received at the hands of philanthropy. As **Caesar had his Brutus**, every bed of charity must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of a private and personal inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a guest of the law, which though conducted by rules, does not **meddle** unduly with a gentleman's **private affairs**.

Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once set about accomplishing his desire. There were many easy ways of doing this. The pleasantest was to **dine luxuriously** at some expensive restaurant; and then, after declaring insolvency, be handed over quietly and without uproar to a policeman. An accommodating magistrate would do the rest.

Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the square and across the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow together. Up Broadway he turned, and halted at a glittering cafe, where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm.

Soapy had confidence in himself from the lowest button of his vest upward. He was shaven, and his coat was **decent** and his neat black, ready-tied four-in-hand had been presented to him by a lady missionary on Thanksgiving Day. If he could reach a table in the restaurant unsuspected success would be his. The portion of him that would show above the table would raise no doubt in the waiter's mind. A roasted mallard duck, thought Soapy, would be about the thing – with a bottle of Chablis, and then Camembert, a demi-tasse and a cigar. One dollar for the cigar would be enough. The total would not be so high as to call forth any supreme manifestation of revenge from the cafe management; and yet the meat would leave him filled and happy for the journey to his winter **refuge**.

But as Soapy set foot inside the restaurant door the head waiter's eye fell upon his **frayed** trousers and **decadent** shoes. Strong and ready hands turned him about and conveyed him in silence and haste to the sidewalk and averted the ignoble fate of the menaced mallard.

Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route to the coveted island was not to be an **epicurean** one. Some other way of **entering limbo** must be thought of.

At a corner of Sixth Avenue electric lights and cunningly displayed wares behind plate-glass made a shop window conspicuous. Soapy took a cobblestone and dashed it through the glass. People came running around the corner, a policeman in the lead. Soapy stood still, with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of brass buttons.

"Where's the man that done that?" inquired the officer excitedly.

"Don't you figure out that I might have had something to do with it?" said Soapy, not without sarcasm, but friendly, as one greets good fortune.

The policeman's mind refused to accept Soapy even as a clue. Men who smash windows do not remain to parley with the **law's minions**. They take to their heels. The policeman saw a man half way down the block running to catch a car. With drawn club he joined in the pursuit. Soapy, with disgust in his heart, loafed along, twice unsuccessful.

On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great pretensions. It catered to large appetites and modest purses. Its crockery and atmosphere were thick; its soup and napery thin. Into this place Soapy took his **accusive** shoes and **telltale** trousers without challenge. At a table he sat and consumed beefsteak, flapjacks, doughnuts and pie. And then to the waiter be betrayed the fact that the minutest coin and himself were strangers.

"Now, get busy and call a cop," said Soapy. "And don't keep a gentleman waiting."

"No cop for youse," said the waiter, with a voice like butter cakes and an eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail. "Hey, Con!"

Neatly upon his left ear on the callous pavement two waiters pitched Soapy. He arose, joint by joint, as a carpenter's rule opens, and beat the dust from his clothes. Arrest seemed but a **rosy dream**. The Island seemed very far away. A policeman who stood before a drug store two doors away laughed and walked down the street.

Five blocks Soapy travelled before his courage permitted him to woo capture again. This time the opportunity presented what he fatuously termed to himself a "cinch." A young woman of a modest and pleasing guise was standing before a show window gazing with sprightly interest at its display of shaving mugs and inkstands, and two yards from the window a large policeman of **severe** demeanour leaned against a water plug.

It was Soapy's design to assume the role of the despicable and execrated "masher." The refined and elegant appearance of his victim and the contiguity of the conscientious cop encouraged him to believe that he would soon feel the pleasant official clutch upon his arm that would insure his winter quarters on the right little, tight little isle.

Soapy straightened the lady missionary's readymade tie, dragged his shrinking cuffs into the open, set his hat at a killing cant and sidled toward the young woman. He made eyes at her, was taken with sudden coughs and "hems," smiled, smirked and went brazenly through the impudent and contemptible litany of the "masher." With half an eye Soapy saw that the policeman was watching him fixedly. The young woman moved away a few steps, and again bestowed her absorbed attention upon the shaving mugs. Soapy followed, boldly stepping to her side, raised his hat and said:

"Ah there, Bedelia! Don't you want to come and play in my yard?"

The policeman was still looking. The persecuted young woman had but to beckon a finger and Soapy would be practically en route for his insular haven. Already

he imagined he could feel the cozy warmth of the station-house. The young woman faced him and, stretching out a hand, caught Soapy's coat sleeve.

"Sure, Mike," she said joyfully, "if you'll blow me to a pail of suds. I'd have spoke to you sooner, but the cop was watching."

With the young woman playing **the clinging ivy to his oak** Soapy walked past the policeman overcome with gloom. He seemed **doomed to liberty**.

At the next corner he shook off his companion and ran. He halted in the district where by night are found the lightest streets, hearts, vows and librettos.

Women in furs and men in greatcoats moved gaily in the wintry air. A sudden fear seized Soapy that some dreadful enchantment had rendered him immune to arrest. The thought brought a little of panic upon it, and when he came upon another policeman lounging grandly in front of a transplendent theatre he caught at the immediate straw of "disorderly conduct."

On the sidewalk Soapy began to yell drunken gibberish at the top of his harsh voice. He danced, howled, raved and otherwise disturbed the welkin.

The policeman twirled his club, turned his back to Soapy and remarked to a citizen.

"'Tis one of them **Yale lads** celebratin' the goose egg they give to the Hartford College. Noisy; but no harm. We've instructions to lave them be."

Disconsolate, Soapy ceased his unavailing racket. Would never a policeman lay hands on him? In his fancy the Island seemed an unattainable Arcadia. He buttoned his thin coat against the chilling wind.

In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar at a swinging light. His silk umbrella he had set by the door on entering. Soapy stepped inside, secured the umbrella and sauntered off with it slowly. The man at the cigar light followed hastily.

"My umbrella," he said, sternly.

"Oh, is it?" sneered Soapy, adding insult to petit larceny. "Well, why don't you call a policeman? I took it. Your umbrella! Why don't you call a cop? There stands one on the corner."

The umbrella owner slowed his steps. Soapy did likewise, with a presentiment that luck would again run against him. The policeman looked at the two curiously.

"Of course," said the umbrella man – "that is – well, you know how these mistakes occur – I – if it's your umbrella I hope you'll excuse me – I picked it up this morning in a restaurant – If you recognise it as yours, why – I hope you'll".

"Of course it's mine," said Soapy, viciously.

The ex-umbrella man retreated. The policeman hurried to assist a tall blonde in an opera cloak across the street in front of a street car that was approaching two blocks away.

Soapy walked eastward through a street damaged by improvements. He hurled the umbrella wrathfully into an excavation. He muttered against the men who wear helmets and carry clubs. Because he wanted to fall into their clutches, they seemed to regard him as a king who could do no wrong.

At length Soapy reached one of the avenues to the east where the glitter and turmoil was but faint. He set his face down this toward Madison Square, for the homing instinct survives even when the home is a park bench.

But on an unusually quiet corner Soapy came to a standstill. Here was an old church, **quaint** and rambling and gabled. Through one violet-stained window a soft light glowed, where, no doubt, the organist loitered over the keys, making sure of his mastery of the coming Sabbath anthem. For there drifted out to Soapy's ears sweet music that caught and held him transfixed against the convolutions of the iron fence.

The moon was above, **lustrous and serene**; vehicles and pedestrians were few; sparrows twittered sleepily in the eaves – for a little while the scene might have been

a country churchyard. And the anthem that the organist played **cemented** Soapy to the iron fence, for he had known it well in the days when his life contained such things as mothers and roses and ambitions and friends and immaculate thoughts and collars.

The conjunction of Soapy's receptive state of mind and the influences about the old church wrought a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He viewed with swift horror the pit into which he had tumbled, the degraded days, unworthy desires, dead hopes, wrecked faculties and **base motives** that made up his **existence**.

And also in a moment his heart responded thrillingly to this **novel mood**. An instantaneous and strong impulse moved him to battle with his desperate fate. He would pull himself out of the mire; he would make a man of himself again; he would conquer the evil that had taken possession of him. There was time; he was comparatively young yet; he would resurrect his old eager ambitions and pursue them without faltering. Those solemn but sweet organ notes had set up a revolution in him. To-morrow he would go into the roaring downtown district and find work. A fur importer had once offered him a place as driver. He would find him to-morrow and ask for the position. He would be somebody in the world. He would –

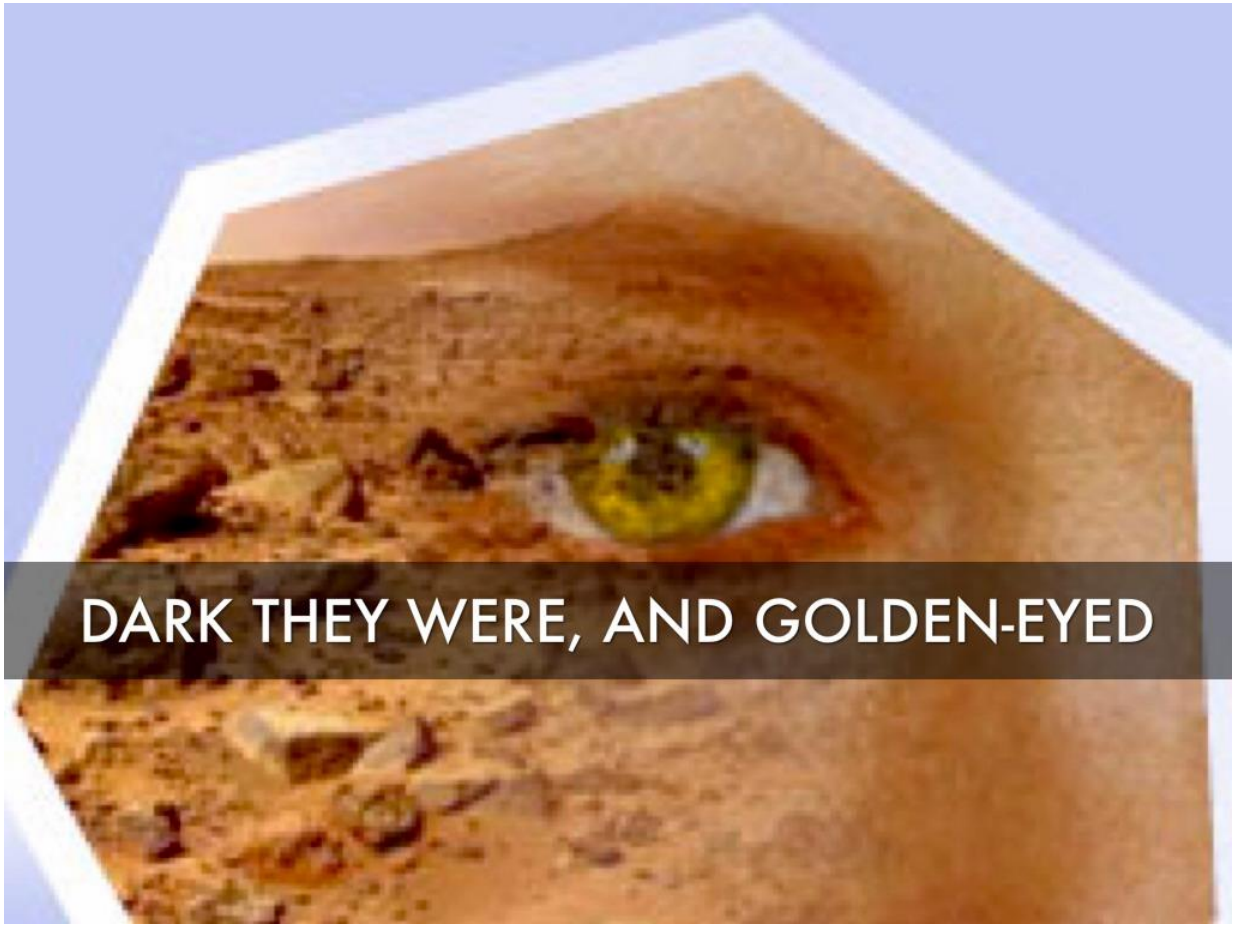
Soapy felt a hand laid on his arm. He looked quickly around into the broad face of a policeman.

"What are you doin' here?" asked the officer.

"Nothin'," said Soapy.

"Then come along," said the policeman.

"Three months on the Island," said the Magistrate in the Police Court the next morning.



by R.D. Bradbury

Read the story *Dark They Were and Golden-Eyed (The Naming of Names)* by R.D. Bradbury and do the tasks. Pay attention to the words **in bold.**

1. How does the author express the **ideas of "unfriendliness" and "vast spaces"** of Mars? Find examples in the story.

2. Find examples of **onomatopoeia** in the story (… *fear* ***dripped****…,* ***splashing*** *as in a creek*…etc.). Why does Bradbury use this device a lot in the story?

3. Why do you think the author describes the weather (especially Martian wind) a lot in the story? How does it reflect people's emotions? Find examples in the text.

4. Does the author use any **speaking names** (e.g. Mr. Bittering, Cora etc.) considering the fact that the second title of the story is *The Naming of Names*?

5. What is the message of the story? In your opinion is it purely science-fictional or are there any parallels in history?

R.D. Bradbury
Dark They Were and Golden-Eyed

The rocket's metal cooled in the **meadow winds**. Its lid gave a **bulging pop**. From its clock interior stepped a man, a woman, and three children. The other passengers **whispered away** across the Martian meadow, leaving the man alone among his family.

The man felt his hair **flutter** and the **tissues** of his body draw tight as if he were standing at the centre of a vacuum. His wife, before him, **trembled**. The children, small seeds, might at any instant be **sown** to all the Martian climes. The children looked up at him. His face was cold. "What's wrong?" asked his wife. "Let's get back on the rocket." "Go back to Earth?" "Yes! Listen!"

The wind blew, whining. At any moment the Martian air might draw his soul from him, **as marrow comes from a white bone**.

He looked at Martian hills that time had worn with **a crushing pressure of years**. He saw the old cities, lost and lying like children's **delicate bones** among the blowing lakes of grass.

"**Chin up**, Harry," said his wife. "It's too late. We've come at least sixty-five million miles or more."

The children with their yellow hair hollered at the **deep dome of Martian sky**. There was no answer but the **racing hiss of wind** through the **stiff grass**.

He picked up the luggage in his cold hands. "Here we go," he said – a man standing on the edge of a sea, ready to **wade in and be drowned**.

They walked into town.

Their name was Bittering. Harry and his wife Cora; Tim, Laura, and David. They built a small white cottage and ate good breakfasts there, but the fear was never gone.

It lay with Mr. Bittering and Mrs. Bittering, a **third unbidden partner** at every midnight talk, at every dawn **awakening**.

"I feel like a salt crystal," he often said, "in a mountain stream, being **washed away**. We don't belong here. We're Earth people. This is Mars. It was meant for **Martians**. For heaven's sake, Cora, let's buy tickets for home!"

But she only shook her head. "One day the atom bomb will fix Earth. Then we'll be safe here." "**Safe and insane**!"

Tick-took, seven o'clock sang the voice clock; time to get up. And they did.

Something made him check everything each morning – warm **hearth**, potted blood-geraniums – precisely as if he expected something to be amiss. The morning paper was toast-warm from the six a.m. Earth rocket. He broke its seal and tilted it at his breakfast plate. He forced himself to be **convivial**.

"Colonial days all over again," he declared. "Why, in another year there'll be a million Earthmen on Mars. Big cities, everything! They said we'd fail. Said the Martians would **resent our invasion**. But did we find any Martians? Not a living soul! Oh, we found their empty cities, but no one in them. Right?"

A river of wind **submerged** the house. When the windows **ceased rattling**, Mr. Bittering swallowed and looked at the children.

"I don't know," said David. "Maybe there're Martians around we don't see. Sometimes nights I think I hear 'em. I hear the wind. The sand **hits** my window. I get scared. And I see those towns way up in the mountains where the Martians lived a long ago. And I think I see things moving around those towns, Papa. And I wonder if those Martians mind us living here. I wonder if they won't do something to us for coming here."

"**Nonsense**!" Mr. Bittering looked out of the windows. "We're clean, decent people." He looked at his children. "All dead cities have some kind of ghosts in them.

Memories, I mean." He stared at the hills. "You see a staircase and you wonder what Martians looked like climbing it. You see Martian paintings and you wonder what the painter was like. You make a little ghost in your mind, a memory. It's quite natural. Imagination." He stopped. "You haven't been **prowling up** in those ruins, have you?"

"No, Papa." David looked at his shoes.

"See that you stay away from them. Pass the jam."

"Just the same," said little David, "I bet something happens."

Something happened that afternoon.

Laura **stumbled through** the settlement, crying. She **dashed blindly** on to the porch.

"Mother, Father – the war, Earth!" she sobbed. "A radio flash just came. Atom bombs hit New York! All the space rockets blown up. No more rockets to Mars, ever!"

"Oh, Harry!" The mother held on to her husband and daughter.

"Are you sure, Laura?" asked the father quietly.

Laura wept. "We're **stranded on** Mars, for ever and ever!"

For a long time there was only the sound of the wind in the late afternoon.

Alone, thought Bittering. Only a thousand of us here. No way back. No way. No way. Sweat poured from his face and his hands and his body; he was **drenched in the hot-ness** of his fear. He wanted **to strike** Laura, cry, "No, you're lying! The rockets will come back!" Instead, he **stroked** Laura's head against him and said, "The rockets will get through, some day."

"In five years maybe. It takes that long to build one. Father, Father, what will we do?"

"Go about our business, of course. Raise crops and children. Wait. Keep things going until the war ends and the rockets come again."

The two boys stepped out on to the porch. "Children," he said, sitting there, looking beyond them, "I've something to tell you." "We know," they said.

Bittering wandered into the garden to stand alone in his fear. As long as the rockets had **spun a silver web** across space, he had been able to accept Mars. For he had always told himself: "Tomorrow, if I want, I can buy a ticket and go back to Earth."

But now: the web gone, the rockets lying in **jigsaw heaps of molten girder** and **unsnaked wire**. Earth people left to the strangeness of Mars, the **cinnamon dusts** and wine airs, to be baked like **gingerbread shapes** in Martian summers, put into **harvested storage** by Martian winters. What would happen to him, the others? This was the moment Mars had waited for. Now it would eat them.

He got down on his knees in the flower bed, a spade in his nervous hands. Work, he thought, work and forget.

He glanced up from the garden to the Martian mountains. He thought of the proud old Martian names that had once been on those peaks. Earthmen, dropping from the sky, had **gazed upon** hills, rivers, Martian seas left nameless in spite of names. Once Martians had built cities, named cities; climbed mountains, named mountains; sailed seas, named seas. Mountains melted, seas drained, cities tumbled. In spite of this, the Earthmen had felt a silent guilt at putting new names to these ancient hills and valleys.

Nevertheless, man lives by symbol and label. The names were given.

Mr. Bittering felt very alone in his garden under the Martian sun, bent here, planting Earth flowers in a **wild soil**.

Think. Keep thinking. Different things. Keep your mind free of Earth, the atom war, the lost rockets.

He **perspired**. He glanced about. No one watching. He removed his tie. **Pretty bold**, he thought. First your coat off, now your tie. He **hung it neatly** on a peach tree he had imported as a sapling from Massachusetts.

He returned to his philosophy of names and mountains. The Earthmen had changed names. Now there were Hormel Valleys, Roosevelt Seas, Ford Hills,

Vanderbilt Plateaus, Rockefeller Rivers, on Mars. It wasn't right. The American settlers had shown wisdom, using old Indian prairie names: Wisconsin, Minnesota, Idaho, Ohio, Utah, Milwaukee, Waukegan, Osseo. The old names, the old meanings.

Staring at the mountains wildly he thought: "Are you up there? All the dead ones, you Martians? Well, here we are, alone, **cut off**! Come down, move us out! We're helpless!"

The wind blew a **shower of peach blossoms**.

He put out his **sun-browned** hand, gave a small cry. He touched the blossoms, picked them up. He turned them, be touched them again and again. Then he shouted for his wife.

"Cora!"

She appeared at a window. He ran to her.

"Cora, these blossoms!"

She handled them.

"Do you see? They're different. They've changed! They're not peach blossoms any more!"

"Look all right to me," she said.

"They're not. They're wrong! I can't tell how. An extra petal, a leaf, something, the colour, the smell!"

The children ran out in time to see their father hurrying about the garden, pulling up radishes, onions, and carrots from their beds.

"Cora, come look!"

They handled the onions, the radishes, the carrots among them.

"Do they look like carrots?"

"Yes... No." She **hesitated.** "I don't know."

"They're changed."

"Perhaps."

"You know they have! Onions but not onions, carrots but not carrots. Taste: the same but different. Smell: not like it used to be." He felt his **heart pounding**, and he was afraid. He **dug his fingers into the earth**. "Cora, what's happening? What is it? We've got to get away from this." He ran across the garden. Each tree felt his touch. "The roses. The roses. They're turning green!"

And they stood looking at the green roses.

And two days later, Tim came running. "Come see the cow. I was milking her and I saw it. Come on!"

They stood in the shed and looked at their one cow.

It was growing a third **horn**.

And the lawn in front of their house very quietly and slowly was colouring itself, like spring violets. Seed from Earth but growing up a soft purple.

"We must get away," said Bittering. "We'll eat this stuff and then we'll change – who knows to what. I can't let it happen. There's only one thing to do. Burn this food!"

"It's not poisoned."

"But it is. **Subtly**, very subtly. A little bit. A very little bit. We mustn't touch it."

He looked **with dismay** at their house. "Even the house. The wind's done something to it. The air's burned it. The fog at night. The boards, all **warped out** of shape. It's not an Earthman's house any more."

"Oh, your imagination!"

He put on his coat and tie. "I'm going into town. We've got to do something now. I'll be back."

"Wait, Harry!" his wife cried.

But he was gone.

In town, on the shadowy step of the grocery store, the men sat with their hands on their knees, conversing with great **leisure and ease**.

Mr. Bittering wanted to fire a pistol in the air.

What are you doing, you fools! he thought. Sitting here! You've heard the news – we're **stranded on this planet**. Well, move! Aren't you frightened? Aren't you afraid? What are you going to do?

"Hello, Harry," said everyone.

"Look," he said to them. "You did hear the news, the other day, didn't you?"

They nodded and laughed. "Sure. Sure, Harry."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Do, Harry, do? What can we do?"

"Build a rocket, that's what!"

"A rocket, Harry? To go back to all that trouble? Oh, Harry!"

"But you must want to go back. Have you noticed the peach blossoms, the onions, the grass?"

"Why, yes, Harry, seems we did," said one of the men.

"Doesn't it scare you?"

"Can't recall that it did much, Harry."

"Idiots!"

"Now, Harry."

Bittering wanted to cry. "You've got to work with me. If we stay here, we'll all change. The air. Don't you smell it? Something in the air. A Martian **virus**, maybe; some seed, or a **pollen**. Listen to me!"

They stared at him.

"Sam," he said to one of them.

"Yes, Harry?"

"Will you help me build a rocket?"

"Harry, I got a whole load of metal and some **blueprints**. You want to work in my metal shop, on a rocket, you're welcome. I'll sell you that metal for five hundred

dollars. You should be able to construct a right pretty rocket if you work alone, in about thirty years."

Everyone laughed.

"Don't laugh."

Sam looked at him with quiet good humour.

"Sam," Bittering said. "Your eyes."

"What about them, Harry?"

"Didn't they used to be grey?"

"Well, now, I don't remember."

"They were, weren't they?"

"Why do you ask, Harry?"

"Because now they're kind of yellow-coloured."

"Is that so, Harry?" Sam said, **casually**.

"And you're taller and thinner."

"You might be right, Harry."

"Sam, you shouldn't have yellow eyes."

"Harry, what colour eyes have you got?" Sam said.

"My eyes? They're blue, of course."

"Here you are, Harry." Sam handed him a pocket mirror. "Take a look at yourself."

Mr. Bittering **hesitated**, and then raised the mirror to his face.

There were little, very **dim flecks** of new gold captured in the blue of his eyes.

"Now look what you've done," said Sam, a moment later. "You've broken my mirror."

Harry Bittering moved into the metal shop and began to build the rocket. Men stood in the open door and talked and joked without raising their voices. Once in a while

they **gave him a hand** on lifting something. But mostly they just idled and watched him with their yellowing eyes.

"It's supper-time, Harry," they said.

His wife appeared with his supper in a wicker basket.

"I won't touch it," he said. "I'll eat only food from our **deepfreeze**. Food that came from Earth. Nothing from our garden."

His wife stood watching him. "You can't build a rocket."

"I worked in a shop once, when I was twenty. I know metal. Once I get it started, the others will help," he said, not looking at her, laying out the blueprints.

"Harry, Harry," she said, helplessly.

"We've got to get away, Cora. We've got to!"

The nights were full of wind that blew down the empty **moonlit** sea-meadows past the little white chess cities lying for their twelve-thousandth year in the **shallows**. In the Earthmen's settlement, the Bittering house shook with a feeling of change.

Lying abed, Mr. Bittering felt his bones shifted, shaped, melted like gold. His wife, lying beside him, was dark from many sunny afternoons. Dark she was, and golden, burnt almost black by the sun, sleeping, and the children metallic in their beds, and the wind roaring **forlorn** and changing through the old peach trees, violet grass, shaking out green rose petals.

The fear would not be stopped. It had his throat and heart. It **dripped** in a wetness of the arm and the **temple** and the trembling palm.

A green star rose in the east.

A strange word **emerged** from Mr. Bittering's lips.

"*Iorrt. Iorrt*." He repeated it.

It was a Martian word. He knew no Martian.

In the middle of the night he arose and **dialed** a call through to Simpson, the archaeologist.

"Simpson, what does the word '*Iorrt*' mean?"

"Why that's the old Martian word for our planet Earth. Why?"

"No special reason."

The telephone **slipped** from his hand.

"Hello, hello, hello, hello," it kept saying while he sat gazing out at the green star. "Bittering? Harry, are you there?"

The days were full of metal sound. He laid the frame of the rocket with the reluctant help of three indifferent men. He grew very tired in an hour or so and had to sit down.

"The **altitude**," laughed a man.

"Are you eating, Harry?" asked another.

"I'm eating," he said, angrily,

"From your deep-freeze?"

"Yes!"

"You're getting thinner, Harry."

"I'm not!"

"And taller."

"Liar!"

His wife took him aside a few days later. "Harry, I've used up all the food in the deep-freeze. There's nothing left. I'll have to make sandwiches using food grown on Mars."

He sat down heavily.

"You must eat," she said. "You're weak."

"Yes," he said.

He took a sandwich, opened it, looked at it, and began to **nibble** at it.

"And take the rest of the day off," she said. "It's hot. The children want to swim in the canals and hike. Please come along."

"I can't waste time. This is a crisis!" "Just for an hour," she urged. "A swim'll do you good." He rose, sweating. "All right, all right. Leave me alone. I'll come."

"Good for you, Harry."

The sun was hot, the day quiet. There was only an **immense staring burn** upon the land. They moved along the canal, the father, the mother, the racing children in their swimsuits. They stopped and ate meat sandwiches. He saw their skin baking brown. And he saw the yellow eyes of his wife and his children, their eyes that were never yellow before. A few tremblings shook him, but were carried off in waves of pleasant heat as he lay in the sun. He was too tired to be afraid.

"Cora, how long have your eyes been yellow?" She was **bewildered**. "Always, I guess." "They didn't change from brown in the last three months?"

She bit her lips. "No. Why do you ask?" "**Nevermind**." They sat there.

"The children's eyes," he said. "They're yellow, too." "Sometimes growing children's eyes change colour." "Maybe we're children, too. At least to Mars. That's a thought." He laughed. "Think I'll swim."

They **leaped** into the canal water, and he let himself sink down and down to the bottom like a golden statue and lie there in green silence. All was water, quiet and deep, all was peace. He felt the steady, slow current drift him easily.

If I lie here long enough, he thought, the water will work and eat away my flesh until the bones show like coral. Just my skeleton left. And then the water can build on that skeleton – green things, deep-water things, red things, yellow things. Change. Change. Slow, deep, silent change. And isn't that what it is up there!

He saw the sky **submerged** above him, the sun made Martian by atmosphere and time and space.

Up there, a big river, he thought, a Martian river, all of us lying deep in it, in our **pebble** houses, in our sunken boulder houses, like **crayfish** hidden, and the water washing away our old bodies and lengthening the bones and –

He let himself **drift up** through the soft light.

Tim sat on the edge of the canal, **regarding** his father seriously.

"*Utha*," he said.

"What?" asked his father.

The boy smiled. "You know. *Utha*'s the Martian word for 'father'."

"Where did you learn it?"

"I don't know. Around. *Utha*!"

"What do you want?"

The boy hesitated. "I – I want to change my name."

"Change it?"

"Yes."

His mother swam over. "What's wrong with Tim for a name?"

Tim **fidgeted**. "The other day you called Tim, Tim, Tim. I didn't even hear. I said to myself, That's not my name. I've a new name I want to use."

Mr. Bittering held to the side of the canal, his body cold and his heart pounding slowly. "What is this new name?" "*Linnl*. Isn't that a good name? Can I use it? Can I, please?"

Mr. Bittering put his hand to his head. He thought of the rocket, himself working alone, himself alone even among his family, so alone.

He heard his wife say, "Why not?" He heard himself say, "Yes, you can use it." "Yaaa!" screamed the boy. "I'm *Linnl, Linnl*!" Racing down the meadowlands, he danced and shouted. Mr. Bittering looked at his wife. "Why did we do that?" "I don't know," she said. "It just seemed like a good idea."

They walked into the hills. They strolled on old mosaic paths, beside still-pumping fountains. The paths were covered with a **thin film of cool water** all summer long. You kept your bare feet cool all the day, splashing as in a creek, **wading**.

They came to a small **deserted** Martian villa with a good view of the valley. It was on top of a hill. Blue-marble halls, large **murals**, a swimming-pool. It was refreshing in this hot summer-time. The Martians hadn't believed in large cities.

"How nice," said Mrs. Bittering, "if you could move up here to this villa for the summer."

"Come on," he said. "We're going back to town. There's work to be done on the rocket."

But as he worked that night, the thought of the cool bluemarble villa entered his mind. As the hours passed, the rocket seemed less important.

In the **flow** of days and weeks, the rocket receded and **dwindled**. The old fever was gone. It frightened him to think he had let it slip this way. But somehow the heat, the air, the working conditions – he heard the men **murmuring** on the porch of his metal shop.

"Everyone's going. You heard?"

"All right. That's right."

Bittering came out. "Going where?" He saw a couple of trucks, loaded with children and furniture, drive down the dusty street.

"Up to the villa," said the man.

"Yeah, Harry. I'm going. So is Sam. Aren't you, Sam?"

"That's right, Harry. What about you?"

"I've got work to do here."

"Work! You can finish that rocket in the autumn, when it's cooler."

He took a breath. "I got the frame all set up."

"In the autumn is better." Their voices were lazy in the heat.

"Got to work," he said.

"Autumn," they reasoned. And they sounded so sensible, so right.

"Autumn would be best," he thought. "Plenty of time, then."

No! cried part of himself, deep down, put away, **locked tight**, **suffocating**. No! No! "In the autumn," he said. "Come on, Harry," they all said.

"Yes," he said, feeling his flesh melt in the hot liquid air. "Yes, the autumn. I'll begin work again then." "I got a villa near the *Tirra* Canal," said someone. "You mean the Roosevelt Canal, don't you?" "*Tirra*. The old Martian name."

"But on the map – "

"Forget the map. It's *Tirra* now. Now I found a place in the *Pillan* mountains – "

"You mean the Rockefeller range," said Bittering.

"I mean the *Pillan* mountains," said Sam.

"Yes," said Bittering, buried in the hot, swarming air. "The *Pillan* mountains."

Everyone worked at loading the truck in the hot, still afternoon of the next day.

Laura, Tim, and David carried packages. Or, as they preferred to be known, *Ttil, Linnl, and Werr* carried packages.

The furniture was abandoned in the little white cottage.

"It looked just fine in Boston," said the mother. "And here in the cottage. But up at the villa? No. We'll get it when we come back in the autumn."

Bittering himself was quiet.

"I've some ideas on furniture for the villa," he said, after a time. "Big, lazy furniture."

"What about your Encyclopedia! You're taking it along, surely?"

Mr. Bittering **glanced away**. "I'll come and get it next week."

They turned to their daughter. "What about your New York dresses?"

The bewildered girl stared. "Why, I don't want them any more."

They shut off the gas, the water, they locked the doors and walked away. Father **peered into** the truck.

"Gosh, we're not taking much," he said. "Considering all we brought to Mars, this is only a **handful**!"

He started the truck.

Looking at the small white cottage for a long moment, he was filled with a desire to rush to it, touch it, say goodbye to it, for he felt as if he were going away on a long journey, leaving something to which he could never quite return, never understand again.

Just then Sam and his family drove by in another truck.

"Hi, Bittering! Here we go!"

The truck swung down the ancient highway out of town. There were sixty others travelling the same direction. The town filled with a silent, heavy dust from their passage. The canal waters lay blue in the sun, and a quiet wind moved in the strange trees.

"Good-bye, town!" said Mr. Bittering.

"Good-bye, good-bye," said the family, waving to it.

They did not look back again.

Summer burned the canals dry. Summer moved like flame upon the meadows. In the empty Earth settlement, the painted houses **flaked and peeled**. Rubber tyres upon which children had swung in back yards hung suspended like stopped clock **pendulums** in the **blazing** air.

At the metal shop, the rocket frame began to **rust**.

In the quiet autumn, Mr. Bittering stood, very dark now, very golden-eyed, upon the slope above his villa, looking at the valley.

"It's time to go back," said Cora.

"Yes, but we're not going," he said, quietly. "There's nothing there any more."

"Your books," she said. "Your fine clothes."

"Your *Illes* and your fine *ior uele rre*," she said.

"The town's empty. No one's going back," he said. "There's no reason to, none at all."

The daughter **wove tapestries** and the sons played songs on ancient flutes and pipes, their laughter echoing in the marble villa.

Mr. Bittering **gazed** at the Earth settlement far away in the low valley. "Such odd, such ridiculous houses the Earth people built."

"They didn't know any better," his wife **mused**. "Such ugly People. I'm glad they've gone."

They both looked at each other, startled by all they had just finished saying. They laughed.

"Where did they go?' he wondered. He glanced at his wife. She was golden and **slender** as his daughter. She looked at him, and he seemed almost as young as their eldest son.

"I don't know," she said.

"We'll go back to town maybe next year, or the year after, or the year after that," he said, calmly. "Now – I'm warm. How about taking a swim?"

They turned their backs to the valley. Arm in arm they walked silently down a path of clear running **spring water**.

Five years later, a rocket fell out of the sky. It lay **steaming** in the valley. Men **leaped out** of it, shouting.

"We won the war on Earth! We're here to rescue you! Hey!"

But the American-built town of cottages, peach trees, and theatres was silent. They found a half-finished rocket frame, rusting in an empty shop.

The rocket men searched the hills. The captain established headquarters in an **abandoned** bar. His lieutenant came back to report.

"The town's empty, but we found native life in the hills, sir. Dark people. Yellow eyes. Martians. Very friendly. We talked a bit, not much. They learn English fast. I'm sure our relations will be most friendly with them, sir."

"Dark, eh?" mused the captain. "How many?"

"Six, eight hundred, I'd say, living in those marble ruins in the hills, sir. Tall, healthy. Beautiful women."

"Did they tell you what became of the men and women who built this Earth **settlement**, Lieutenant?"

"They hadn't **the foggiest notion** of what happened to this town or its people."

"Strange. You think those Martians killed them?"

"They look surprisingly **peaceful**. Chances are a **plague** did this town in, sir."

"Perhaps. I suppose this is one of those mysteries we'll never solve. One of those mysteries you read about."

The captain looked at the room, the dusty windows, the blue mountains rising beyond, the canals moving in the light, and he heard the soft wind in the air. He **shivered**. Then, recovering, he tapped a large fresh map he had **thumb-tacked** to the top of an empty table.

"Lots to be done, Lieutenant." His voice **droned on** and quietly on as the sun sank behind the blue hills. "New settlements. Mining sites, minerals to be looked for. Bacteriological **specimens** taken. The work, all the work. And the old records were lost. We'll have a job of remapping to do, renaming the mountains and rivers and such. Calls for a little imagination."

"What do you think of naming those mountains the Lincoln Mountains, this canal the Washington Canal, those hills – we can name those hills for you, Lieutenant. Diplomacy. And you, for a favour, might name a town for me. **Polishing the apple**. And why not make this the Einstein Valley, and further over... are you listening, Lieutenant?"

The lieutenant snapped his gaze from the blue colour and the quiet mist of the hills far beyond the town.

"What? Oh, yes, sir!"

Down at the Dinghy

by J.D. Salinger

Read THE FIRST PART of the story *Down at the Dinghy* by J.D. Salinger and do the tasks. Pay attention to the words **in bold.**

1. What is Sandra's job? How do you know?
2. What is Sandra worried about? Try to guess.
3. Why can't Sandra and Mrs. Snell drink their tea? What does it symbolize in your opinion? What can Mrs. Snell's hat symbolize?
4. Salinger uses a lot of **graphons** (*shellin', gladda get backa the city*…etc.) in Sandra and Mrs. Snell's speech. Why? How does it portray them?

Read THE SECOND PART of the story *Down at the Dinghy* by J.D. Salinger and do the tasks. Pay attention to the words **in bold.**

5. What is the author's attitude to Boo Boo? What do Sandra and Mrs. Snell think of Boo Boo?
6. Who's a "he" in Boo Boo's speech? *I want to bring **him** a pickle*. Describe this person.
7. How many times has "he" run away? Why?

Read THE THIRD PART of the story *Down at the Dinghy* by J.D. Salinger and do the tasks. Pay attention to the words in bold.

8. Salinger uses a lot of **sea vocabulary** in the third part of the story (*ahoy, admiral, an oar's length* etc.). Find more examples. Why does the author use sea vocabulary here?
9. What techniques does Boo Boo use to make Lionel come off the boat? What worked in the end? Why?
10. What can the following objects **symbolize**: *the dinghy (the boat), underwater goggles, the key chain*?
11. Why did Lionel run away this time? Why did he cry in the end?
12. There are **elements** in the story connected with the *world of children* and the *world of adults*. Find them.
13. In the end of the story Lionel and Boo Boo raced to the house and Lionel won. What can it possibly symbolize?

J.D. Salinger
Down at the Dinghy

The first part of the story

IT was a little after four o'clock on an **Indian Summer** afternoon. Some fifteen or twenty times since noon, Sandra, the maid, had come away from the lake-front window in the kitchen with her mouth set tight. This time as she came away, she **absently untied and re-tied** her apron strings, taking up what little slack her **enormous** waistline allowed.

Then she went back to the enamel table and lowered her **freshly uniformed body** into the seat opposite Mrs. Snell. Mrs. Snell having finished the cleaning and ironing was having her **customary cup of tea** before walking down the road to the bus stop. Mrs. Snell had her hat on. It was the same interesting, black felt headpiece she had worn, not just all summer, but for the past three summers – through **record heat waves**, through change of life, over scores of ironing boards, over the helms of dozens of vacuum cleaners. The Hattie Carnegie label was still inside it, faded but (it might be said) **unbowed**.

"I'm not gonna worry about it," Sandra announced, for the fifth or sixth time, addressing herself as much as Mrs. Snell. "I made up my mind I'm not gonna worry about it. What for?"

"That's right," said Mrs. Snell. "I wouldn't. I really wouldn't. Reach me my bag, dear."

A leather **handbag**, extremely worn, but with a label inside it as impressive as the one inside Mrs. Snell's hat, lay on the **pantry**. Sandra was able to reach it without standing up. She handed it across the table to Mrs. Snell, who opened it and took out a pack of mentholated cigarettes and a folder of Stork Club matches.

Mrs. Snell lit a cigarette, then brought her teacup to her lips, but immediately set it down in its **saucer**. "If this don't hurry up and cool off, I'm gonna miss my bus." She looked over at Sandra, who was staring, **oppressedly**, in the general direction of the copper sauce-pans lined against the wall. "Stop worryin' about it," Mrs. Snell ordered.

"What good's it gonna do to worry about it? Either he tells her or he don't. That's all. What good's worryin' gonna do?"

"I'm not worryin' about it," Sandra **responded**. "The last thing I'm gonna do is worry about it. Only, it drives ya **loony**, the way that kid goes **pussyfootin**' all around the house. Ya can't hear him, ya know. I mean nobody can hear him, ya know. Just the other day I was **shellin'** beans – right at this here table – and I almost stepped on his hand. He was sittin' right under the table."

"Well. I wouldn't worry about it."

"I mean ya gotta **weigh every word** ya say around him," Sandra said. "It drives ya loony."

"I still can't drink this," Mrs. Snell said. "…That's terrible. When ya gotta weigh every word ya say and all."

"It drives ya loony! I mean it. Half the time I'm half loony." Sandra brushed some imaginary **crumbs off her lap**, and **snorted**. "A four-year-old kid!"

"He's kind of a good-lookin' kid," said Mrs. Snell. "Them big brown eyes and all."

Sandra snorted again. "He's gonna have a nose just like the father." She raised her cup and drank from it without any difficulty. "I don't know what they wanna stay up here all October for," she said **malcontentedly**, lowering her cup. "I mean none of 'em even go anywheres near the water now. She don't go in, he don't go in, the kid don't go in. Nobody goes in now. They don't even take that crazy boat out no more. I don't know what they threw good money away on it for."

"I don't know how you can drink yours. I can't even drink mine."

Sandra **stared rancorously** at the opposite wall. "I'll be so gladda get backa the city. I'm not foolin'. I hate this crazy place." She gave Mrs. Snell a **hostile glance**. "It's all right for you, you live here all year round. You got your social life here and all. You don't care."

"I'm gonna drink this if it kills me," Mrs. Snell said, looking at the clock over the **electric stove**.

"What would you do if you were in my shoes?" Sandra asked abruptly. "I mean what would you do? Tella truth."

This was the sort of question Mrs. Snell **slipped into** as if it were an **ermine coat**. She at once let go her teacup. "Well, in the first place," she said, "I wouldn't worry about it. What I'd do, I'd look around for another."

"I'm not worried about it," Sandra interrupted.

"I know that, but what I'd do, I'd just get me."

The second part of the story

The swinging door opened from the dining room and Boo Boo Tannenbaum, **the lady of the house**, came into the kitchen. She was a small, almost hipless girl of twenty-five, with styleless, colorless, **brittle** hair pushed back behind her ears, which were very large. She was dressed in knee-length jeans, a black turtleneck pullover, and socks and loafers. Her **joke of a name aside**, her general unprettiness aside, she was – in terms of permanently memorable, **immoderately perceptive**, small-area faces – a **stunning** and final girl. She went directly to the refrigerator and opened it. As she **peered inside**, with her legs apart and her hands on her knees, she whistled, unmelodically, through her teeth, keeping time with a little **uninhibited, pendulum** action of **her rear end**. Sandra and Mrs. Snell were silent. Mrs. Snell put out her cigarette, **unhurriedly**.

"Sandra…"

"Yes, ma'am?" Sandra looked **alertly** past Mrs. Snell's hat.

"Aren't there any more pickles? I want to bring him a pickle."

"He et 'em," Sandra reported intelligently. "He et 'em before he went to bed last night. There was only two left."

"Oh. Well, I'll get some when I go to the station. I thought maybe I could **lure him out** of that boat." Boo Boo shut the refrigerator door and walked over to look out of the **lakefront window**. "Do we need anything else?" she asked, from the window."

"Just bread."

"I left your check on the hall table, Mrs. Snell. Thank you."

"O.K.," said Mrs. Snell. "I hear Lionel's supposeta be runnin' away." She gave a short laugh.

"Certainly looks that way," Boo Boo said, and slid her hands into her hip pockets.

"At least he don't run very far away," Mrs. Snell said, giving another short laugh.

At the window, Boo Boo changed her position slightly, so that her back wasn't directly to the two women at the table. "No," she said, and pushed back some hair behind her ear. She added, purely informatively: "He's been hitting the road regularly since he was two. But never very hard. I think the farthest he ever got – in the city, at least – was to the Mall in Central Park. Just a couple of blocks from home. The least far – or nearest – he ever got was to the front door of our building. He stuck around to say goodbye to his father."

Both women at the table laughed.

"The Mall's where they all go skatin' in New York," Sandra said very sociably to Mrs. Snell. "The kids and all."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Snell.

"He was only three. It was just last year," Boo Boo said, taking out a pack of cigarettes and a folder of matches from a side pocket in her jeans. She lit a cigarette, while the two women **spiritedly** watched her. "Big excitement. We had the whole police force out looking for him."

"They find him?" said Mrs. Snell.

"Sure they found him!" said Sandra with contempt. "Wuddaya think?"

"They found him at a quarter past eleven of night, in the middle of – my God, February, I think. Not a child in the park. Just **muggers**, I guess, and an **assortment** of **roaming degenerates**. He was sitting on the floor of the bandstand, rolling a marble back and forth along a crack. Half-frozen to death and looking – »

"**Holy Mackerel**!" said Mrs. Snell. "How come he did it? I mean what was he runnin' away about?"

Boo Boo blew a single, faulty smoke-ring at a pane of glass. "Some child in the park that afternoon had come up to him with the **dreamy misinformation**, 'You **stink**, kid.' At least, that's why we think he did it. I don't know, Mrs. Snell. It's all slightly **over my head**."

"How long's he been doin' it?" asked Mrs. Snell. "I mean how long's he been doin' it?"

"Well, at the age of two-and-a-half," Boo Boo said biographically, "he **sought refuge** under a sink in the **basement** of our apartment house. Down in the laundry. Naomi somebody – a close friend of his – told him she had a worm in her thermos bottle. At least, that's all we could get out of him." Boo Boo sighed, and came away from the window with a long ash on her cigarette. She started for the screen door. "I'll have another go at it," she said, by way of goodby to both women.

They laughed.

"Mildred," Sandra, still laughing, addressed Mrs. Snell, "you're gonna miss your bus if ya don't **get a move on**."

Boo Boo closed the screen door behind her.

The third part of the story

She stood on the **slight downgrade** of her front lawn, with the low, glaring, late afternoon sun at her back. About two hundred yards ahead of her, her son Lionel was sitting in the stem seat of his father's **dinghy**. Tied, and stripped of its main and jib sails, the dinghy **floated** at a perfect right angle away from the far end of the **pier**. Fifty feet or so beyond it, a lost or abandoned water ski floated bottom up, but there were no **pleasure boats** to be seen on the lake; just a stern-end view of the county launch on its way over to Leech's Landing. Boo Boo found it **queerly difficult** to keep Lionel in **steady focus**. The sun, though not especially hot, was nonetheless so brilliant that it made any fairly distant image – a boy, a boat – seem almost as **wavering and refractional** as a stick in water. After a couple of minutes, Boo Boo let the image go. She peeled down her cigarette Army style, and then started toward the pier.

It was October, and the pier boards no longer could hit her in the face with reflected heat. She walked along whistling «Kentucky Babe» through her teeth. When she reached the end of the pier, she **squatted**, her knees **audible**, at the right edge, and looked down at Lionel. He was less than **an oar's length** away from her. He didn't look up.

"**Ahoy**," Boo Boo said. "Friend. Pirate. Dirty dog. I'm back."

Still not looking up, Lionel abruptly seemed called upon to demonstrate his sailing ability. He **swung the dead tiller** all the way to the right, then immediately yanked it back in to his side. He kept his eyes exclusively on the deck of the boat.

"It is I," Boo Boo said. "Vice-Admiral Tannenbaum. Nee Glass. Come to inspect the stermaphors."

There was a response.

"You aren't an admiral. You're a lady," Lionel said. His sentences usually had at least one break of **faulty breath control**, so that, often, his emphasized words, instead of rising, sank. Boo Boo not only listened to his voice, she seemed to watch it.

"Who told you that? Who told you I wasn't an admiral?"

Lionel answered, but inaudibly.

"Who?" said Boo Boo.

"Daddy."

Still in a squatting position, Boo Boo put her left hand **through the V of her legs,** touching the pier boards in order to keep her balance. "Your daddy's a nice fella," she said, "but he's probably the biggest landlubber I know. It's perfectly true that when I'm in port I'm a lady – that's true. But my true calling is first, last, and always the bounding."

"You aren't an admiral," Lionel said.

"I beg your pardon?"

"You aren't an admiral. You're a lady all the time."

There was a short silence. Lionel filled it by changing the course of his craft again – his hold on the tiller was a two-armed one. He was wearing khaki-colored shorts and a clean, white T-shirt with a dye picture, across the chest, of Jerome the Ostrich playing the violin. He was quite **tanned**, and his hair, which was almost exactly like his mother's in color and quality, was a little **sun-bleached** on top.

"Many people think I'm not an admiral," Boo Boo said, watching him. "Just because I don't **shoot my mouth off** about it." Keeping her balance, she took a cigarette and matches out of the side pocket of her jeans. "I'm almost never tempted to discuss my rank with people. Especially with little boys who don't even look at me when I talk to them. I'd be **drummed out** of the **bloomin' service**." Without lighting her cigarette, she suddenly got to her feet, stood unreasonably erect, made an oval out of the thumb and index finger of her right hand, drew the oval to her mouth, and **– kazoo style –** sounded something like a bugle call. Lionel instantly looked up. In all probability, he was aware that the call was bogus, but nonetheless he seemed deeply aroused; his mouth fell

open. Boo Boo sounded the call – a peculiar amalgamation of "Taps" and "Reveille" – three times, without any pauses. Then, ceremoniously, she saluted **the opposite shoreline**. When she finally reassumed her squat on the pier edge, she seemed to do so with maximum regret, as if she had just been profoundly moved by one of the virtues of naval tradition closed to the public and small boys. She gazed out at the petty horizon of the lake for a moment, then seemed to remember that she was not absolutely alone.

She glanced – venerably – down at Lionel, whose mouth was still open. "That was a secret bugle call that only admirals are allowed to hear." She lit her cigarette, and blew out the match with a theatrically thin, long stream of smoke. "If anybody knew I let you hear that call –" She shook her head. She again fixed the sextant of her eye on the horizon.

"Do it again."

"Impossible."

"Why?"

Boo Boo **shrugged**. "Too many **low-grade officers** around, for one thing." She changed her position, taking up a **cross-legged, Indian squat**. She pulled up her socks. "I'll tell you what I'll do, though," she said, **matter-of-factly**. "If you'll tell me why you're running away, I'll blow every **secret bugle call** for you I know. All right?"

Lionel immediately looked down at the deck again. "No," he said.

"Why not?"

"Because."

"Because why?"

"Because I don't want to," said Lionel, and jerked the tiller for emphasis.

Boo Boo shielded the right side of her face from the glare of the sun. "You told me you were all through running away," she said. "We talked about it, and you told me you were all through. You promised me."

Lionel gave a reply, but it didn't carry. "What?" said Boo Boo.

"I didn't promise."

"Ah, yes, you did. You most certainly did."

Lionel resumed steering his boat. "If you're an admiral," he said, "where's your fleet?"

"My fleet. I'm glad you asked me that," Boo Boo said, and started to **lower herself into the dinghy**.

"Get off!" Lionel ordered, but without giving over to shrillness, and keeping his eyes down. "Nobody can come in."

"They can't?" Boo Boo's foot was already touching the bow of the boat. She obediently drew it back up to pier level. "Nobody at all?" She got back into her Indian squat. "Why not?"

Lionel's answer was complete, but, again, not loud enough.

"What?" said Boo Boo.

"Because they're not allowed."

Boo Boo, keeping her eyes steadily on the boy, said nothing for a full minute.

"I'm sorry to hear it," she said, finally. "I'd just love to come down in your boat. I'm so **lonesome** for you. I miss you so much. I've been all alone in the house all day without anybody to talk to."

Lionel didn't **swing the tiller**. He examined the grain of wood in its handle. "You can talk to Sandra," he said.

"Sandra's busy," Boo Boo said. "Anyway, I don't want to talk to Sandra, I want to talk to you. I wanna come down in your boat and talk to you."

"You can talk from there."

"What?"

"You can talk from there."

"No, I can't. It's too big a distance. I have to get up close."

Lionel swung the tiller. "Nobody can come in," he said.

"What?"

"Nobody can come in."

"Well, will you tell me from there why you're running away?" Boo Boo asked.

"After you promised me you were all through?"

A pair of underwater goggles lay on the deck of the dinghy, near the stem seat. For answer, Lionel secured the headstrap of the goggles between the big and second toes of his right foot, and, with a deft, brief, leg action, flipped the goggles overboard. They sank at once.

"That's nice. That's **constructive**," said Boo Boo. "Those belong to your Uncle Webb. Oh, he'll be so delighted." She dragged on her cigarette. "They once belonged to your Uncle Seymour."

"I don't care."

"I see that. I see you don't," Boo Boo said. Her cigarette was angled peculiarly between her fingers; it burned dangerously close to one of her knuckle grooves. Suddenly feeling the heat, she let the cigarette drop to the surface of the lake. Then she took out something from one of her side pockets. It was a package, about the size of a deck of cards, wrapped in white paper and tied with green ribbon. "This is a key chain," she said, feeling the boy's eyes look up at her. "Just like Daddy's. But with a lot more keys on it than Daddy's has. This one has ten keys."

Lionel leaned forward in his seat, letting go the tiller. He held out his hands in catching position. "Throw it?" he said. "Please?"

"Let's keep our seats a minute, Sunshine. I have a little thinking to do. I should throw this key chain in the lake."

Lionel stared up at her with his mouth open. He closed his mouth. "It's mine," he said on a **diminishing note of justice**.

Boo Boo, looking down at him, shrugged. "I don't care."

Lionel slowly sat back in his seat, watching his mother, and reached behind him for the tiller. His eyes reflected **pure perception**, as his mother had known they would.

"Here." Boo Boo tossed the package down to him. It landed squarely on his lap.

He looked at it in his lap, picked it off, looked at it in his hand, and **flicked it – sidearm –** into the lake. He then immediately looked up at Boo Boo, his eyes filled not with **defiance** but tears. In another instant, his mouth was **distorted** into a **horizontal figure-8**, and he was crying **mightily**.

Boo Boo got to her feet, **gingerly**, like someone whose foot has gone to sleep in theatre, and lowered herself into the dinghy. In a moment, she was in the stern seat, with the pilot on her lap, and she was rocking him and kissing the back of his neck and giving out certain information: "Sailors don't cry, baby. Sailors never cry. Only when their ships go down. Or when they're shipwrecked, on rafts and all, with nothing to drink except – ".

"Sandra – told Mrs. Smell – that Daddy's a big – sloppy – **kike**."

Just perceptibly, Boo Boo **flinched**, but she lifted the boy off her lap and stood him in front of her and pushed back his hair from his forehead. "She did, huh?" she said.

Lionel worked his head up and down, **emphatically**. He came in closer, still crying, to stand between his mother's legs.

"Well, that isn't too terrible," Boo Boo said, holding him between the two vises of her arms and legs. "That isn't the worst that could happen." She gently bit the **rim of the boy's ear**. "Do you know what a kike is, baby?"

Lionel was either unwilling or unable to speak up at once. At any rate, he waited till the **hiccupping aftermath of his tears** had subsided a little. Then his answer was delivered, muffled but intelligible, into the warmth of Boo Boo's neck. "It's one of those things that go up in the air," he said. "With string you hold."

The better to look at him, Boo Boo pushed her son slightly away from her. Then she put a wild hand inside the seat of his trousers, startling the boy considerably, but almost immediately withdrew it and decorously tucked in his shirt for him. “Tell you what we’ll do,” she said. “We’ll drive to town and get some pickles, and some bread, and we’ll eat the pickles in the car, and then we’ll go to the station and get Daddy, and then we’ll bring Daddy home and make him take us for a ride in the boat. You’ll have to help him carry the sails down. O.K.?”

“O.K.,” said Lionel.

They didn’t walk back to the house; they **raced**. Lionel won.


The
SURGEON
Roald Dahl

Read the first part of the story *The Surgeon* by Roald Dahl and do the tasks. Pay attention to the words and expressions **in bold.**

Part I

1. Describe **the main character** of the story. What does he do for living?
2. What was special about surgeon's new patient. How did he treat him?
3. Characterize Robert Sandy from professional point of view.
4. Why did the doctor accept the gift from the king?
5. Why did Dr. Sandy go to the jeweller? Why was Mr. Golf surprised? Was the diamond of a high quality? How much did it weigh? What was the price of the brilliant? What was its origin?
6. Why was Dr. Sandy nervous cycling home? What did he think about?
7. What did Dr. Sandy tell his wife about the diamond? Was she happy? What plans did she have?
8. How many children did they have? What occupation did their children have?
9. Where were they going to go for the weekend?
10. Where did they decide to hide the diamond? Where would you hide it?
11. What would you do with the diamond if you were in Dr. Sandy and Mrs. Sandy shoes?
12. Choose 5 words or expressions in bold to make your own sentences.
13. Retell the first part of the story from the point of view of Dr. Sandy, Mrs. Sandy, Mr. Gold.
14. Find stylistic devices in the text.
15. Try to predict the end of the story.

Part II

Read the second part of the story *The Surgeon* by Roald Dahl and do the tasks. Pay attention to the words and expressions **in bold.**

1. What did Sandys find in their house after the weekend?
2. What was peculiar about the robbery?
3. What happened in the Operating Theatre number two?
4. Who of the medical staff found out the diamond? What did they decide to do with it? Was it legal?
5. Who did William Haddock and the nurse decide to visit? What were their reasons?
6. Was the jeweller happy to see the diamond again? How did he understand that Dr. Sandy had lost the diamond?
7. Why did Dr. Sandy call the police? Where was the real robber at that moment?
8. Why did Dr. Sandy invite his collegues to have a drink? How does his gesture characterize him?
9. What would you if you were given a royal diamond?
10. What would you do if you lost something expensive?
11. Imagine that you are an editor of a magazine and you want your readers to buy the supplement of your magazine with this story. Write a blurb to make them interested in this story.
12. Retell the second part of the story from the point of view of the Police Inspector, William Haddock, Dr. Sandy's wife, Mr. Gold.
13. Write Dr. Sandy's travelling dairy.

Roald Dahl
The Surgeon
(abridged)

Part I

"YOU have done extraordinarily well," Robert Sandy said, seating himself behind the desk.

"It's altogether **a splendid recovery**. I don't think there's any need for you to come and see me any more."

The patient finished putting on his clothes and said to the surgeon, "May I speak to you, please, for another moment?"

"Of course you may," Robert Sandy said. "Take a seat."

The man sat down opposite the surgeon and leaned forward, placing his hands, palms downward, on the top of the desk.

"I suppose you still refuse to take a fee?" he said.

"I've never taken one yet and I don't propose to change my ways at this time of life," Robert Sandy told him pleasantly.

"I work entirely for the **National Health Service** and they pay me a very **fair salary**."

Robert Sandy <…> had been at The Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford for eighteen years and he was now fifty-two years old, with a wife and three grown-up children. Unlike many of his colleagues, he did not hanker after fame and riches. He was basically a simple man utterly **devoted to** his profession.

It was now seven weeks since his patient, a university undergraduate, had been rushed into Casualty by ambulance after a nasty car accident in the Banbury Road not far from the hospital. He was suffering from **massive abdominal injuries** and he had

lost consciousness. <…> After three and a half hours on the operating table, the patient was still alive and Robert Sandy had done everything he could to save his life. The next day, to the surgeon's considerable surprise, the man was showing signs that he was going to survive. <…>

It was only then, on the morning after the operation, that Robert Sandy began to realize that he had an important person on his hands. Three dignified gentlemen from the Saudi Arabian Embassy <…> came into the hospital and the first thing they wanted was to call in all manner of celebrated surgeons from Harley Street to advise on the case. The patient <…> **murmured** something in Arabic to the Ambassador.

"He says he wants only you to look after him," the Ambassador said to Robert Sandy. "You are very welcome to call in anyone else you choose for consultation."

The Ambassador then told Robert Sandy that his patient was none other than a prince of royal blood. In other words, he was one of the many sons of the present King of Saudi Arabia. A few days later, they wanted him to be moved to a far more luxurious hospital, but the Prince would have none of it.

"I stay here," he said, "with the surgeon who saved my life." Robert Sandy **was touched by the confidence** his patient was putting in him <…>.

And now, in the consulting-room, the Prince was saying, "I do wish you would allow me to pay you for all you have done, Mr. Sandy."

"Please let me pay you, Mr. Sandy," he said. Robert Sandy shook his head.

"I'm sorry," he answered, "but I still have to say no. It's just a personal rule of mine and I won't break it."

"But you saved my life," the Prince said.

"I did no more than any other **competent surgeon** would have done," Robert Sandy said.

The Prince took his hands off the desk and clasped them on his lap.

“All right, Mr. Sandy, even though you **refuse a fee**, there is surely no reason why my father should not give you a small present to show his gratitude.”

Robert Sandy shrugged his shoulders. <…> The Prince took from his jacket pocket a small pouch made of black velve t and he pushed it across the desk.

“My father,” he said, “has asked me to tell you how enormously indebted he is to you for what you have done. He told me that whether you took a fee or not, I was to make sure you accepted this little gift.”

Robert Sandy looked suspiciously at the black pouch.

“My father,” the Prince went on, “said also to tell you that in his eyes my life is without price and that nothing on earth can repay you for having saved it. This is simply a what shall we call it... a present for your next birthday. A small birthday present.”

“He shouldn’t give me anything,” Robert Sandy said.

“Look at it, please,” the Prince said.

The surgeon picked up the pouch and loosened the silk thread at the opening. <…> There was a flash of brilliant light as something icewhite dropped on to the plain wooden desk-t op. <…>. Its many facets glimmered and sparkled in the most wonderful way.

“Good gracious me,” Robert Sandy said. <…> “What is it?”

“It’s a diamond,” the prince said. "Pure white. It’s not especially large, but the colour is good.”

“I really can’t accept a present like this,” Robert Sandy said. “No, it wouldn’t be right. It must be quite valuable.”

The Prince smiled at him. “I must tell you something, Mr. Sandy,” he said. “Nobody refuses a gift from the King. It would be **a terrible insult**.”

Robert Sandy looked back at the Prince. “Oh dear,” he said.

"You are making it **awkward** for me, aren't you?"

"It is not awkward at all," the Prince said. "Just take it."

"You could give it to the hospital."

"We have already **made a donation** to the hospital," the Prince said.

"Please take it, not just for my father, but for me as well."

"You are very kind," Robert Sandy said. "All right, then. <…> "But I feel quite embarrassed." <…> "There's never been a diamond in our family before," he said. "Gosh, it is beautiful, isn't it. You must please **convey** my thanks to His Majesty and tell him I shall always treasure it."

"You don't actually have to hang on to it," the Prince said. "My father would not be in the least **offended** if you were to sell it. Who knows, one day you might need a little pocket-money."

"I don't think I shall sell it," Robert Sandy said. "It is too lovely. Perhaps I shall have it made into a pendant for my wife."

"What a nice idea," the Prince said, getting up from his chair. "And please remember what I told you before. You and your wife are invited to my country at any time. My father would be happy to welcome you both."

"That's very good of him," Robert Sandy said. "I won't forget."

When the Prince had gone, Robert Sandy picked up the diamond again and examined it **with total fascination**. It was **dazzling** in its beauty <…>. He glanced at his watch. It was ten minutes past three. An idea had come to him. He picked up the telephone and asked his secretary if there was anything else urgent for him to do that afternoon. If there wasn't, he told her, then he thought he might leave early. "There's nothing that can't wait until Monday," the secretary said. <…> "Try to get some rest over the weekend. I'll see you on Monday."

In the hospital car park, Robert Sandy unchained his bicycle, mounted and rode out on to the Woodstock Road. <…> He turned into the Woodstock Road and headed

for The High. The only good jeweller in town had his shop in The High, <…> he was called H.F. Gold. <…> He parked his bike against the **curb** outside the shop and went in.

A woman behind the counter asked if she could help him.

"Is Mr. Gold in?" Robert Sandy said.

"Yes, he is."

"I would like to see him. My name is Sandy."

"Just a minute, please."

The woman disappeared through a door at the back, but in thirty seconds she returned and said, "Will you come this way, please." Robert Sandy walked into a large untidy office in which a small, oldish man was seated behind the desk.

"Mr. Gold, my name is Robert Sandy. I wonder if you can help me."

"I'll do my best, Mr. Sandy. Please sit down."

"Well, it's an odd story," Robert Sandy said. "I recently operated on one of the Saudi princes. And now he has given me, or rather his father has given me, a fairly wonderful-looking diamond."

"Good gracious me," Mr. Gold said. <…> "I didn't want to accept it, but I'm afraid it was more or less forced on me."

"And you would like me to look at it?"

"Yes, I would."

"Of course you should," Harry Gold said. "I'll be glad to help you."

Robert Sandy took the black pouch out of his pocket and placed it on the desk. Harry Gold opened the pouch and tipped the diamond into his hand. As the stone fell into his palm, there was a moment when the old man appeare to freeze. His whole body became motionless as he sat there staring at the brilliant shining thing that lay before him. Slowly, he stood up. He walked over to the window and held the stone so that daylight fell upon it. He turned it over with one finger. He didn't say a word.

His expression never changed. He returned to his desk and from a drawer he took out a single sheet of clean white paper. He made a loose fold in the paper and placed the diamond in the fold. Then he returned to the window and stood there for a full minute studying the diamond that lay in the fold of paper.

"I am looking at the colour," he said at last. "That's the first thing to do. One always does that against a fold of white paper and preferably in a northlight."

"Is that a north light?"

"Yes, it is. This stone is a wonderful colour, Mr. Sandy. <…> Harry Gold went back to his desk and took out from another drawer a sort of hooded **magnifying glass**.

"This is a ten-times loupe," he said, holding it up.

"What did you call it?"

"A loupe. It is simply a jeweller's magnifier. With this, I can examine the stone for imperfections."

Robert Sandy watched him and kept quiet.

"So far as I can see," Harry Gold said, "it is completely flawless. It really is a most lovely stone. The quality is superb and the cutting is very fine, though definitely not modern."

"Approximately how many facets would there be on a diamond like that?" Robert Sandy asked.

"Fifty-eight."

"You mean you know exactly?"

"Yes, I know exactly."

"Good Lord. And what roughly would you say it is worth?"

"A diamond like this," Harry Gold said, "a D–colour stone of this size and clarity would command on **enquiry** a **trade price** of between twenty-five and thirty thousand dollars a carat. <…> Up to sixty thousand dollars a carat in the retail market."

“Great Scott!” Robert Sandy cried, jumping up.

“And now,” Harry Gold was saying, "we must find out **precisely** how many carats it weighs."

He crossed over to a shelf on which there stood a small metal apparatus.

“This is simply an electronic scale,” he said. “It weighs fifteen point two seven carats,” he said. "And that, in case it interests you, makes it worth about half a million dollars in the trade and over one million dollars if you bought it in a shop.”

“You are making me nervous,” Robert Sandy said, laughing nervously.

“If I owned it,” Harry Gold said, “it would make me nervous. Sit down again, Mr. Sandy, so you **don’t faint**.”

Robert Sandy sat down. <…>

“This is quite an occasion, Mr. Sandy,” he said. <…>

Harry Gold had put the diamond back on to the f old of white paper on his desk, and he sat there looking at it with the eyes of a man who loved what he saw.

“Are you going to sell it?”

“Oh gosh, I don’t know what I am going to do with it,” Robert Sandy said. “It’s all so sudden and confusing.”

“May I give you some advice.”

“Please do.”

“If you are going to sell it, you should take it to auction.”

“You have been more than kind to me,” Robert Sandy said “When I do decide to sell it, I shall come first of all to you for advice.” <…>

Outside in The High, Robert Sandy mounted his bicycle and headed for home. He was feeling totally light headed. It was as though he had just finished a whole bottle of good wine all by himself. He arrived back at his house in Acacia Road at about half past four and parked his bike in the garage alongside the car. <…>

He found his wife in the kitchen packing some jars of home-made jam into a basket.

"Robert!" she cried, delighted as always to see him.

"You're home early! How nice!"

He kissed her and said,

"I am a bit early, aren't I?"

"You haven't forgotten we're going to the Renshaws for the weekend? We have to leave fairly soon."

"I had forgotten," he said. "Or maybe I hadn't. Perhaps that's why I'm home early." "I thought I'd take Margaret some jam."

"Good," he said. "Very good. You take her some jam." <…>

"Robert," she said, "what's happened? There's something the matter."

"Pour us each a drink," he said.

"I've got a bit of news for you."

"Oh darling, it's not something awful, is it?"

"No," he said. "It's something funny. I think you'll like it." <…>

She got the ice-tray from the fridge and started making his whisky and soda.

<…> He sat down at the kitchen table and watched her as she put the glass of whisky in front of him.

"All right," she said. "Come on. Let's have it."

"Get a drink for yourself first," he said.

"My goodness, what is this?" she said, but she poured some gin into a glass and was reaching for the **ice-tray** when he said, "More than that. Give you self a good stiff one."

"Now I am worried," she said. <…>

"Now then," she said, sitting down beside him at the table. <…>"

Robert began telling his story. He reached into his pocket and took out the little black pouch and put it on the table.

"There it is," he said.

"What do you think?"

She loosened the silk cord and tipped the stone into her hand.

"Oh, my God!" she cried. "It's absolutely stunning!"

"It is, isn't it."

"It's amazing."

"I haven't told you the whole story yet," he said, and while his wife rolled the diamond from the palm of one hand to the other, he went on to tell her about his visit to Harry Gold in The High. When he came to the point where the jeweller began to talk about value, he stopped and said,

"So what do you think he said it was worth?"

"Something pretty big," she said.

"It's bound to be. I mean just look at it!"

"Go on then, make a guess. How much?"

"Ten thousand pounds," she said. "I really don't have any idea."

"Try again."

"You mean, it's more?"

"Yes, it's quite a lot more."

"Twenty thousand pounds!"

"Is it really worth twenty thousand pounds?"

"Yes," he said. "<…> It is worth at least half a million dollars and very probably over a million."

"You're joking!" Her words came out in a kind of gasp. <…> "I'm completely stunned," she said, still gasping.

She stood up and went over to him and gave him a huge hug and a kiss. <…>

"Oh Robert!" she cried, <…> "Do you realize what this means? It means we can get Diana and her husband out of that horrid little flat and buy them a small house!

And we can buy a decent flat for John and give him a better allowance all the way through his medical school! And Ben... Ben wouldn't have to go on a motor-bike to work all through the freezing winters. We could get him something better. And... <…> We can go to Egypt and Turkey ...Wouldn't that be marvellous?" his wife was saying.

"Turkey," he said. "Today is Friday. When do we get back from the Renshaws?"

"Sunday night."

"And what are we going to do with our million-pound rock in the meanwhile? Take it with us in my pocket?"

"No." she said, "that would be silly. You really cannot walk around with a million pounds in your pocket for a whole weekend. It's got to go into a safe-deposit box at the bank. We should do it now."

"It's Friday night, my darling. All the banks are closed till next Monday."

"Well then, we'd better hide it somewhere in the house."

"The house will be empty till we come back," he said. "I don't think that's a very good idea."

"It's better than carrying it around in your pocket or in my handbag."

"I'm not leaving it in the house."

"Come on, darling," she said, "surely we can think of a place where no one could possibly find it." <…>

"I've got it!" she cried, leaping up from her chair. "In here," she cried, picking up the ice-tray and pointing to one of the empty compartments. "We'll just drop it in here and fill it with water and put it back in the fridge. In an hour or two it'll be hidden inside a solid block of ice and even if you looked, you wouldn't be able to see it."

Robert Sandy stared at the ice-tray. "It's fantastic!" he said. "You're a genius! <…>

She opened the door of the **freezer section** of the fridge and slid the tray in.

"Then we must be off. I've packed your case for you. And we'll try not to think about our million pounds any more until we come back."

"Do we talk about it to other people?" he asked her.

"I wouldn't," she said. <…>

Part II

The weekend was pleasant and uneventful, and on Sunday evening Robert and Betty Sandy drove home again, arriving at the, house in Acacia Road at about seven pm. Robert took the two small suitcases from the car and they walked up the path together. He unlocked the front door and held it open for his wife. <…>

"Oh no!" she was crying. "No! No! No!"

Robert dropped the suitcase and rushed in after her. She was standing there pressing her hands to her cheeks and already tears were streaming down her face. The scene in the sitting-room was one of **utter desolation**. The curtains were drawn and they seemed to be the only things that remained intact in the room. Everything else had been **smashed to smithereens**. <…>

"I don't think I can stand this." He didn't say anything. He felt physically sick.

The mess in the kitchen was indescribable. Almost every single container of any sort in the entire room had been emptied on to the floor. <…> The plastic ice-trays had been **yanked out** and each had been literally broken in two and thrown aside.

<…>Robert and Betty Sandy stood on the edge of it all, speechless with horror. At last Robert said,

"I imagine our lovely diamond is somewhere underneath all that."

"I'd like to kill the people who did this."

"So would I," Robert said. "I've got to call the police." He went back in to the sitting-room and picked up the telephone.

The first squad car arrived in a few minutes. <…>

"These are not professional thieves," the police inspector told Robert Sandy after he had taken a look round. "They weren't even **amateur thieves"**

Then Robert told the Inspector about the diamond. He gave him all the details from the beginning to end because he realized that from the police point of view it was likely to be the most important part of the whole business.

"Half a million quid!" cried the Inspector. "We'll find it. That was a clever place to hide it." <…> "Now look, sir," the Inspector said, "the thing for you to do tonight is to take your wife off to a hotel and get some rest. Come back tomorrow, both of you, and we'll start sorting things out."

"I have to operate at the hospital first thing in the morning," Robert said. "But I expect my wife will try to come along."

"Good," the Inspector said. <…>

Shortly after noon, Robert had finished his last operation. He removed his rubber glove s and mask and went next door to the surgeons' small rest-room for a cup of coffee. But before he got his coffee, he picked up the telephone and called his wife. "How are you, darling?" he said.

"Oh Robert, it's so awful," she said. "I just don't know where to begin."

"Have you called the **insurance company**?"

"Yes, they're coming any moment to help me make a list."

"Good," he said. "And have the police found our diamond?"

"I'm afraid not," she said. <…>

"I've just about finished here for the morning. I'm going to **grab** some coffee, then I'll come home to give you a hand."

"Good," she said. "I need you, Robert. I need you badly."

In Number Two **Operating Theatre** not ten yards away, another **senior surgeon** called Brian Goff and his assistant William also nearly finished for the morning. He was

on his last patient, a young man who had a piece of bone lodged somewhere in his small intestine. <…>

Brian Goff held the section of intestine in the palm of his left hand. The sister handed him a scalpel and he made **a small incision**. The sister gave him a pair of forceps and Goff probed down amongst all the slushy matter of the intestine until he found the offending object. He brought it out and dropped it into the small **stainless-steel bowl** the sister was holding. The thing was covered in pale brown gunge.

"That's it," Goff said.

"You can finish this one for me now, can't you, William. I was meant to be at a meeting downstairs fifteen minutes ago."

"You go ahead," William Haddock said. "I'll close him up."

The senior surgeon hurried out of the Theatre and the Registrar proceeded to **sew up**. The whole thing took no more than a few minutes.

"I'm finished," he said to the anaesthetist.

The man nodded and removed the mask from the patient's face.

"Thank you, sister," William Haddock said. "See you tomorrow."

As he moved away, he picked up from the sister's tray the stainless-steel bowl that contained the **gunge-covered** brown object.

"Ten to one it's a chicken bone," he said and he carried it to the sink and began rinsing it under the tap.

"Good God, what's this?" he cried.

"Come and look, sister!"

The sister came over to look.

"It's a piece of costume jewellery," she said.

"Probably part of a necklace. Now how on earth did he come to swallow that?"

"He'd have passed it if it hadn't had such a sharp point," William Haddock said. "I think I'll give it to my girlfriend."

"You can't do that, Mr. Haddock," the sister said. "It belongs to the patient.

She took the stone from William Haddock's gloved hand and carried it into the powerful light that hung over the operating table. <…>

"Come here, Mr. Haddock," the sister said <…> "This is amazing," she went on. "Just look at the way it sparkles and shines. A bit of glass wouldn't do that."

"Maybe it's **rock-crystal**,"William Haddock said, "or topaz, one of those **semi – precious stones**."

"You know what I think," the sister said. "I think it's a diamond."

"Don't be damn silly," William Haddock said. <…>

"It's easy enough to test it," William Haddock said.

The sister held the stone between finger and thumb and pressed the sharp pointed end against the glass and drew it downward. <…>

"Jesus Christ!" William Haddock said. "It is a diamond!"

"If it is, it belongs to the patient," the sister said firmly.

"Maybe it does," William Haddock said, "but he was mighty glad to get rid of it. Hold on a moment. Where are his notes?"

He hurried over to the side table and picked up a folder which said on it JOHN DIGGS. He opened the folder. In it there was an Xray of the patient's intestine accompanied by the r adiologist's report. John Diggs, the report said. Age 17. Address 123 Mayfie ld Road, Oxford. There is clearly a large obstruction of some sort in the upper small intestine. The patient has no recollection of swallowing anything unusual, but says that he ate some fried chicken on Sunday evening. <…>

"How could he swallow a thing like that without knowing it?" William Haddock said.

"It doesn't make sense," the sister said.

"There's no question it's a diamond after the way it cut the glass," William Haddock said. "Do you agree?"

"Absolutely," the sister said.

"How much is it worth?"

"We'd better send it to the lab right away," the sister said.

"To hell with the lab," Haddock said.

"Let's have a bit of fun and do it ourselves."

"How?"

"We'll take it to Golds, the jewellers in The High. They'll know." <…>

"Do you know anyone at Golds?" the sister said. "No, but that doesn't matter."

Twenty minutes later, at a quarter to one, the little Mini pulled up outside the jewellery shop of H. F. Gold. <…> As soon as they came in, the assistant pressed a bell under the counter and Harry Gold emerged through the door at the back.

"Yes," he said to William Haddock and the sister. "Can I help you?"

"Would you mind telling us what this is worth?" William Haddock said, placing the stone on a piece of green cloth that lay on the counter.

Harry Gold stopped dead. He stared at the stone. Then he looked up at the young man and woman who stood before him. He was thinking very fast.

"Well well," he said as casually as he could. "That looks to me like a very fine diamond, a very fine diamond indeed. Would you mind waiting a moment while I weigh it and examine it carefully in my office. Then perhaps I'll be able to give you an **accurate valuation**. Do sit down, both of you."

Harry Gold scuttled back into his office with the diamond in his hand. Immediately, he took it to the electronic scale and weighed it. Fifteen point two seven carats. That was exactly the weight of Mr. Robert Sandy's stone! He had been certain it was the same one the moment he saw it. His instinct was to call the police right away, but he was **a cautious man** who did not like making mistakes. Perhaps the doctor had already sold his diamond. Quickly he picked up the Oxford telephone book. He dialled it. He asked for Mr. Robert Sandy. He got Robert's secretary.

"What's his home number?" Mr. Gold asked her.

"Is this to do with a patient?"

"No!" cried Harry Gold.

"It's to do with a robbery! For heaven's sake, woman, give me that number quickly!"

"Who is speaking, please?"

"Harry Gold! I'm the jeweller in The High! Don't waste time, I beg you!"

She gave him the number. Harry Gold dialled again.

"Mr. Sandy?"

"Speaking."

"This is Harry Gold, Mr. Sandy, the jeweller. Have you by any chance lost your diamond?"

"Yes, I have."

"Two people have just brought it into my shop," Harry Gold whispered excitedly. "A man and a woman. Youngish. They're trying **to get it valued**. They're waiting out there now."

"Are you certain it's my stone?"

"Positive. I weighed it."

"Keep them there, Mr. Gold!" Robert Sandy cried. "Talk to them! Humour them! Do anything! I'm calling the police!"

Robert Sandy called the police station. Within seconds, he was giving the news to the Detective Inspector who was in charge of the case.

"Get there fast and you'll catch them both!" he said. "I'm on my way, too!"

"Come on, darling!" he shouted to his wife. "Jump in the car. I think the you've found our diamond and the thieves are in Harry Gold's shop right now trying to sell it!"

When Robert and Betty Sandy drove up to Harry Gold's shop nine minutes later, two police cars were already parked outside.

"Come on, darling," Robert said. "Let's go in and see what's happening."

There was a good deal of activity inside the shop when Robert and Betty Sandy rushed in. Two policemen and two **plain-clothes detectives**, one of them the Inspector, were surrounding a furious William Haddock and an even more furious theatre sister. Both the young surgeon and the theatre sister were **handcuffed**.

"You found it where?" the Inspector was saying. "**How dare you do this**! Tell us again where you found it."

"In someone's stomach!" William Haddock yelled back at him. "I've told you twice!"

"Don't give me that crap!" the Inspector said.

"Good God, William!" Robert Sandy cried as he came in and saw who it was.

"And Sister Wyman! What on earth are you two doing here?"

"They had the diamond," the Inspector said.

"They were trying to flog it. Do you know these people, Mr. Sandy?"

It didn't take very long for William Haddock to explain to Robert Sandy, and indeed to the Inspector, exactly how and where the diamond had been found.

"Remove their handcuffs, for heaven's sake, Inspector," Robert Sandy said. "They're telling the truth. The man you want, at least one of the men you want, is in the hospital right now, just coming round from his anaesthetic. Is n't that right, William?"

"Correct," William Haddock said. "His name is John Diggs. He'll be in one of the surgical wards."

Harry Gold stepped forward. "Here's your diamond, Mr. Sandy," he said.

"Now listen," the theatre sister said, still angry, "would someone for God's sake tell me how that patient came to swallow a diamond like this without knowing he'd done it?"

"I think I can guess," Robert Sandy said.

"He allowed himself the luxury of putting ice in his drink. Then he got very drunk. Then he swallowed a piece of half-melted ice."

"I still don't get it," the sister said.

"I'll tell you the rest later," Robert Sandy said. "In fact, why don't we all go round the corner and have a drink ourselves.


REACH
Rachel Seiffeld

Read the whole story *Reach* by Rachel Seiffert and do the tasks. Pay attention to the words and expressions **in bold.**

1. Where does the story take place?
2. How can you characterize Alice and Kim (their appearance, behaviour, habits). Did Alice have other children? What were their names? How old were they?
3. Was Kim successful at school? Was she a teacher's pet? Did Alice care about her daughter's study?
4. Kim wasn't an easy child, was she?
5. What was Alice's private life? How did it affect her children?
6. Describe the way Alice took care of her daughter during her illness. What feelings did Kim have? Did Alice call for a doctor?
7. How was Alice treated in hospital? Did Alice visit her? How long was she in hospital?
8. Why was Kim On Report? Was she happy to come back to school? How did her mother change?
9. Why didn't Kim go to school any longer? What was she doing?
10. Comment on the last paragraph. Why did Alice start drying her daughter's hair? Has Alice changed?
11. What is the main idea of the story? Why is the story called "Reach"? Comment on its title.
12. Retell the story from the point of view of Alice, Kim, Kim's teacher, family neighbors, Alice clients.
13. Do the family relationships influence children lives and their future?
14. There are a lot of short sentences in the story. What atmosphere do they create?
15. Find stylistic devices in the story. Explain their usage.
16. Make your own sentences with the words in bold.

Rachel Seiffeld
Reach

Wednesday and Kim's mother goes up to the school for parents' evening.

– She's doing badly, then.

– Well, no, not exactly. She can read and write. Quite well for a seven year old, as it happens.

Her daughter's class teacher pushes Kim's report around on the desk with her **fingertips** and Alice waits for her to pull the words together.

– She's just not an easy child to reach, Mrs. Bell.

Home is the end house of the terrace above the **seafront**. From her bedroom window, Kim can see over the rooftops to the old pier and, beyond it, the last curve of sand before the headland. Seagulls hover on thermals, suspended, and Kim watches them at the window, swaying, waiting. From here she will see her mother when she comes home from the school.

In the door and then chopping, no sitting down between and no hello either. But this is not unusual. Kim's description of her mother in one of her schoolbooks: she always cooks with her coat on.

Kim waits after her mother has passed along the path beneath her windowsill to the back door and the kitchen. Face still pressed to the wall, and so still hidden from the street below, Kim listens a while to the pot and pan noises, then goes downstairs to find Alice. Early evening, getting dark, her mother is working **by the blue light** of the grillflame, chops spitting underneath. Kim stands in the doorway a minute or so, but Alice does not turn. An evening like any other: potato peelings on the counter, mother's back at the sink. Kim wonders briefly if she got the day right, if Alice has been to the parents' evening after all, but decides against mentioning it. Joins her brother in the sitting room instead, watches TV with Joseph until dinner.

If she's staying, Alice will take her coat off and eat with her children. Tonight, she has a cup of tea and makes sure the washing-up is underway before she heads off out to work again. A reminder of bedtimes and **a brisk kiss** each on her way to the door. This too is normal, so Kim breathes a little easier, dries the plates slowly that Joseph washes fast. Watches the familiar sight of her mother's back receding down the garden path. She can close her eyes and see Alice making her way down the hill to the seafront. Keys gripped in her right hand, left holding her collar together against the wind.

Kim's eyes are **sore** tonight, scratchy, her lids heavy. She keeps them closed, keeps her mind's eye on her mother a little longer. Imagines the sea flat behind Alice as she opens the salon door, surface skimmed into ripples by the wind. She knows her mother chose the shop for its view across the beach, along the seafront. Has heard her telling the customers, watched her polish the wide glass window clean of rain and salt. Alice plays no music in her salon, she does not talk much. There is calm when she cuts and sets hair. In the summer with the door open and the sea air. In the winter with the hum of the dryers and the wide window misted against the dark afternoons.

Kim opens her eyes again at the kitchen window, her mother long gone, brother back in front of the television. She dries her hands on the damp tea towel, **flicks the last crumbs of dinner off the kitchen table**. Kim tries **to rest her forehead** on the cool surface, but can't; her neck stiff, resisting, caught somehow by her shoulders. The days before the parents' evening have been edgy, and she can't relax now, not sure what to do with all the worry.

When Alice is asked about her business, she says she makes **a decent living** for her family. Margins are tight with debts like hers, but she has no gaps in her appointment book to speak of, few concerns to raise with her accountant.

When Alice thinks about her daughter, as she does this evening, she sees her pale eyes and paler hair, the solid flesh of her face with its closed, impassive expression. Stubby thumbs sucked white and soft and drawn into tight, damp fists.

Alice has long fingers and strong nails: neat ovals without cuticles. She does them last thing before she leaves the salon, after the work is done. Alone with her thoughts and files. Rubbing the cream in, hand over hand over hand.

She didn't argue with what the teacher said this afternoon. *Not an easy child*. Alice has heard those words before now: from different sources, in different **disguises**, so many times she has come to expect them. Would never say so, but she agrees.

With Joseph it was simple: love arrived with him. Fury when the midwife carried him away from her across the delivery room to be washed and weighed. Kim was early. Only a few weeks after Frank had gone. Gas and air, and Alice kept telling the midwife she wasn't ready for the baby, but she came anyway. No tears and not much pain either. And then it took Alice years to get used to her: her rare smiles, her uncooperative arms and legs.

Alice hears the pigeons shuffling in the eaves above the doorway as she locks up. The soft, quivering noise they make in their throats. The water behind her is calm, just a slight breeze coming in across the sands. Breaking up the surface a little, touching her cheek as she turns the key in the lock and up the street towards home.

Thursday and Kim is ill.

She vomits once at school. A pile of sawdust and a smell in the corridor. Again when she gets home. Joseph heats the dinner Alice has left in the fridge for them, and when Kim throws up a third time, he phones the shop.

– Can you come home now, Mum?

– Run her a bath and put her to bed, love. Please. I'll not be late. Make sure she drinks something.

Joseph does as he is told, and his sister is silent, compliant. When Alice comes home it is dark and Kim is running a fever: dry heat and then sudden sweats which glue her pale hair to her forehead.

Friday morning, Kim can't stand up to walk to the toilet, and so when she needs to throw up again, her mother finds her **crawling out** into the bright hall.

– No school for you, then.

An unwieldy dead weight with limbs, Alice carries her daughter to the bathroom.

Cold black tea. Chalky taste of the aspirin mashed into jam and eaten with a teaspoon. Alice is home for fifteen minutes at lunchtime, keeps her coat on. Stands her daughter naked by the radiator, washes her down with a flannel and hot water in a red plastic bowl. Kneeling next to her **clammy body**, its awkward joints and dimples, soft belly. Kim's eyes are half-closed and she sways as Alice works. Hot cloth on face and neck, round ears, down spine, between toes and fingers. Skin turning cool where the flannel has been.

Kim lies in new pyjamas when Alice leaves for work again. Under new sheets and tucked blankets, curtains drawn against the day. The slats of the bunk above her shift and birds' eyes peep from the mattress. Beaks and wings. Kim calls for her mum, but she's gone now, back down the road. The hairspray smell of Alice left with her, and Kim is alone with the birds again. They fly out from between the slats, grey wings beating the hot air against her cheeks.

Alice always hoped it would come. Read about it in the leaflets she got from the midwives and the library. You will not always bond with your baby immediately, but this is normal and no cause for worry.

Kim arrived and Alice had two to care for. Frank gone and only one of her: didn't seem nearly enough. Joseph was four then and she would pick him up from nursery school early. To feel his hand holding her skirt as they walked home along the seafront, to have his arms fold around her neck when she lifted him up.

Alice tried holding Kim after her evening bottle, after Joseph was asleep and they could have some quiet time together, like it said in the leaflets. But it was hard and sometimes it frightened her: sitting with her baby and still feeling so little.

Red-brown spots gather in the afternoon. On the soles of Kim's feet, behind her ears, inside her eyelids. Joseph sees them when the doctor shines his torch in his sister's dark bedroom. He pulls the girl's eyelids down with his thumbs.

– I'll need to use your telephone. Call an ambulance and your mother.

Joseph tells Kim later that they drove away with the siren on, but Kim remembers silence inside the ambulance. Looking at her mother and then following Alice's gaze to the trees and lamp-posts passing. The strip of world visible through the slit of clear window above the milk-glass in the doors.

Alice Bell's girl had meningitis and nearly died.

The customers in the salon **ask concerned questions**, and Alice gets a call from the health visitor, too. The woman has a good look at the clean hall, the tidy kitchen Alice leads her to. The grass in the garden is long, falls this way and that, but Alice is sure that everything else is in good order. Thinks she recognises the health visitor, too; that she has maybe cut her hair before.

Alice gets more leaflets from her. Is told about the tumbler test: roll a glass against the rash, she says. Alice thanks the woman, but thinks it's not really any good to her, this information. It's happened now, over; Kim will be home again soon.

The house is quiet after the health visitor leaves. Small. Alice sweeps her leaflets off the kitchen table, dumps them in the bin on the front on her way back to the salon.

Kim has scars. A tiny, round wound in the small of her back, where they tapped the **fluid from her spine**. And one on the back of her hand from the drip: skin and vein still slightly raised, puncture-mark already healing, fading with the black-turning-yellow bruise. She has fine, white scratch-lines on the soles of her feet, too, but these are more memory than reality. Pin-tip traces to check for sensation, pricks in the tops of her toes that drew blood-drops, which later become blood-spots on the hospital sheets.

The real scar is at her throat. Tracheotomy. Kim can't say the word, but this is where her fingers go at night in her hospital bed, and when she wakes. To feel the way

the skin is pulled over, small folds overlapping and grown together. Like melted plastic, the **beaker** which fell in on itself when Joseph left it on the stove. At first the hairy ends of the stitches are there too. Six black bristles for Kim's fingertips to brush against under the dressing, to investigate in the bathroom mirror when no one else is there to be looking. One hand on the wheely drip, the other pushing herself up on the sink, closer to the long, clean mirror and the grey-pink pucker of skin in her reflection.

Kim is back at home now, back at school. Weeks have passed already, but Alice still sees the first days in the hospital with her daughter. The pictures come at her from nowhere. When she is doing the books, while she is cutting, shopping, walking, on her way home.

From her bedroom window, Kim watches her mother **in the dusk light**, coming up the road. She walks with her coat unbuttoned and sometimes she stops, head down, hands deep in her pockets. Stays like that for a minute or two on the pavement before walking on.

The nurses held Kim's body curled and still and Alice watched. Daughter's spine turned towards her, small feet pulled up below her bum. Brown iodine swirled on to her skin, and then her toes splayed as the needle went in: five separate soft pads on each foot, reaching.

They had a bed free for Alice in a room down the hall, but she stayed in the chair by her daughter's bed and didn't sleep much. Awake when Kim's temperature rose again and she swallowed her tongue. The doctors drew the curtain round the bed and the fitting girl while they worked. So Alice couldn't see what they were doing any longer but still she didn't move, Stayed put, listening, while they made the hole for the tube in her daughter's neck, and took her temperature down with wet sheets around her legs. No one asked Alice to leave and she sat in the chair, shoes off, coat on, pulled tight around her chest.

Kim has headaches, too.

Joseph watches while his sister ties the belt round her head. One of Granddad's old ones. Big buckle, cracked leather, round her forehead, over her temples. He pulls it tight for her and then she lies down, head under the blankets, nose showing. Brows pulled into a frown by the belt, jaw clenching, neck held taut against the pain.

Kim's drinks have to be warm because her teeth feel everything, and she is clumsy. Legs bruised from falls and corners, clothes stained colourful by spills. Kim has no sense of edges these days; where a glass can be placed safely, where her body can pass without damage. She creates noise and mess and the mumbling speech that the doctor said should improve quickly takes weeks to go away.

The school calls Alice in again. No parents' evening this time: a meeting with Kim's class teacher and headmistress, attendance register open on the desk between them.

– When does Kim leave the house, Mrs. Bell?

– Quarter to nine. With her brother.

– Every morning?

Alice nods, doesn't tell them that she leaves the house at eight twenty to open the salon. Thinks they are doubtless capable of working that one out. She reminds them.

– My daughter has been very ill.

– Yes.

They are writing things down and Alice is remembering, again. That Kim couldn't stop herself looking at her tracheotomy wound. That the peeled ends of the dressing curled up off her neck, giving her away, gathering dust like magnets, tacky traces on her skin turning black. Alice visited her at visiting time, whispered: it'll get infected. She smiled when she said it. Didn't want to tell her daughter off; just to tell her. Let her know that she had noticed. That she understood it, her curiosity.

Kim looked at her. Skin under her eyes flushing. Hands moving up to cover the dressing. Alice didn't know what that meant: whether her daughter was surprised or pleased or angry.

– Kim is what we call **On Report** now, Mrs. Bell.

– She could have died.

–Yes.

They blink at her across the desk. **Sympathetic, insistent**.

– I'm afraid her **attendance record** has to improve.

Kim finds different places to spend her days. Sometimes the coast path over the headland where the wind cuts into her legs. Sometimes the burnt stubble of the fields inland, where she flies her kites made out of plastic bags. Most days it is the beach, though, where she lies down under the old pier. On her back on the cracking shingle, waves at her feet, sea wall behind her. Sodden wood, salt, seaweed and litter.

Above her, she can see the gulls' flapping battles through the gappy planks of the old walkway. Lies still, watching the starlings fly their swooping arcs around the splintered columns and rails. Cloud and wind over the water. Storm of black beak and wing reeling above her head.

Alice shuts the salon early and is home before her children. Joseph acts as though it is normal for his mother to open the door for him; Kim steps into the hallway, clutching her school bag as if it were proof of something, tell-tale damp of the day in her clothes and hair. Joseph slips upstairs to his bedroom, Kim stays silent, eyes on the wallpaper while Alice asks her where she has been, and why. She watches Kim's face for a reaction but cannot read anything from her daughter's expression.

– Whatever. You'll be leaving the house with me from now on.

– No.

Later Alice goes over the scene again. In bed, light out, eyes open. Feels something closing down, tight around her ribs. Remembers the screaming battles they had when Kim was three, four, five. Doesn't want to repeat those years again. Her daughter smelled of sea and air this afternoon, it filled the corridor. Alice didn't know what to do, what to say, so she said nothing. An almost eight year old stranger standing in front of her. Mouth open, breath passing **audibly** over her small, wet teeth.

Kim doesn't know it, but the school keeps close tabs on her. Her teachers know she comes for registration and then dodges out of the gate behind the playing fields. They don't **confront her**; instead they call her mother and then Alice hangs up the phone in the back room of the salon, behind the closed curtain, under the noise of the dryers, and cries.

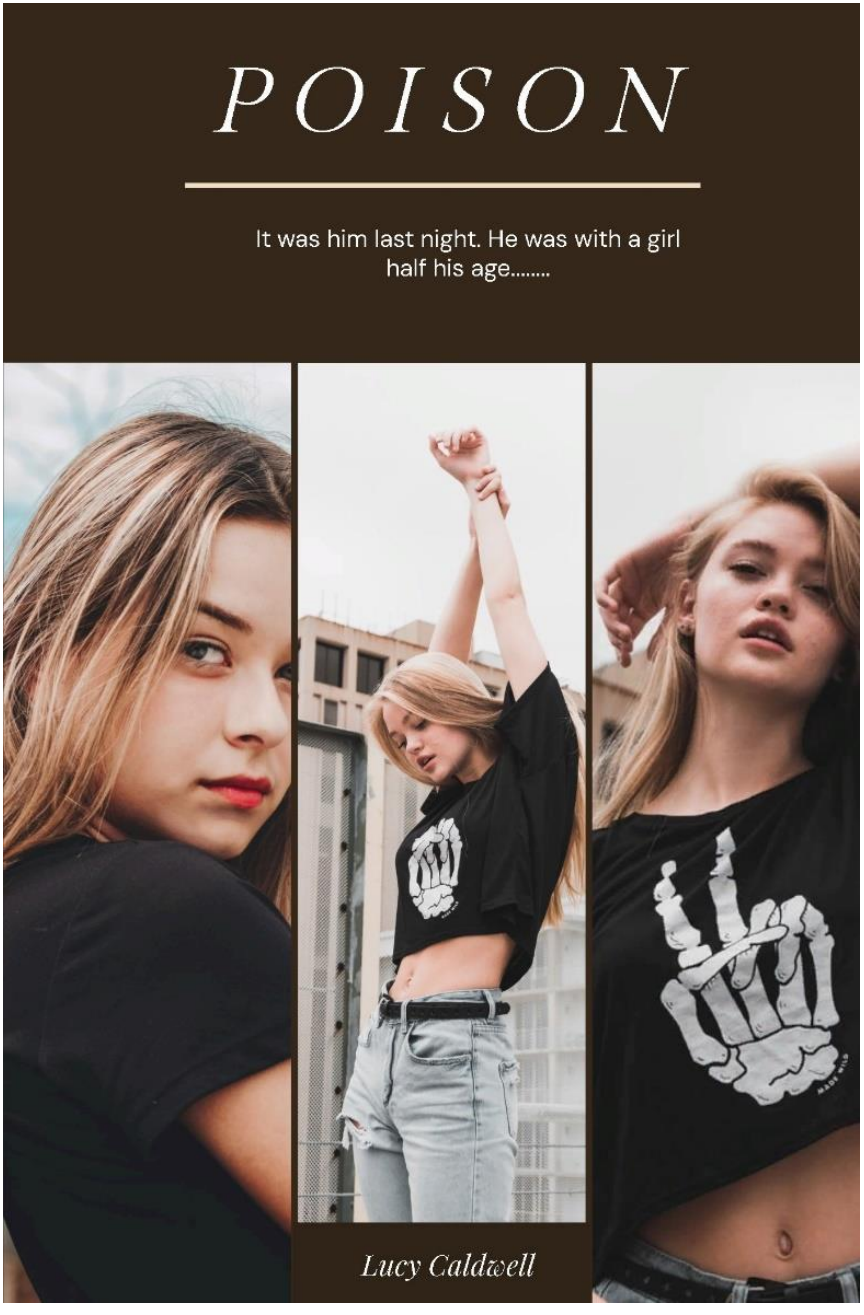
Alice doesn't know it, but some mornings her daughter comes down to the front. The smell leads her there: hot air, warm skin and hair, shampoo. She doesn't go in; instead she watches her mother's face at the salon window. Eyes and cheekbones amongst the reflections. Blank sky, cold sea, ragged palms. Her mother's eyes blinking, face not moving. Lamp-posts with lights strung between, rocking in the breeze.

Another Wednesday, another week or two later, and Kim stands in the salon doorway. Alice has had the phone call already. Knows her daughter hasn't been to school, didn't expect her to **show up** here. **The rain slides down the windowpane** and, through the open shop door, she can hear it singing in the drains.

Alice takes her daughter's coat from her, sits her down in an empty chair. The salon is quiet and Kim spends the next few minutes watching her mother working in the mirror. She sees that Alice doesn't look at her, only out of the window, or down at her fingers, turning grey hair around the pastel shades of the plastic rollers, pink and yellow and green. Her mother's cheeks are flushed, lips drawn in, and the skin around her eyes pulled taut.

When Alice steps over to her, Kim looks away. Sees the old lady's eyes on them, under the dryer. Alice knows she is watching them, too. Has felt her customers observing her ever since Kim was ill, has grown **accustomed to the scrutiny**. She stands behind her daughter now. A second or two passes, and she finds herself still there. Not shouting, not angry. Just looking at the slope of her daughter's shoulders, the nape of her neck, her sodden hair.

Alice gets a clean towel from the shelves at the back and then plugs in a dryer, sets to work. At first Kim watches the rain, the gulls fighting on the rail outside, but soon she closes her eyes. Feels the pressure of her mother's fingers, how strong her hands are, how warm the air is, the low noise of the dryer.


POISON
It was him last night. He was with a girl half his age.....
Lucy Caldwell

Read the whole story *Poison* by Lucy Caldwell and do the tasks. Pay attention to the words and expressions **in bold.**

1. Where is the narrator? Who does she see? Who does she recognize?
2. Who was Mr. Knox? What did he look like? What was special about Mr. Knox? What did he teach? What was special about his car? Comment on his appearance and behavior.
3. Describe the girls. Why were they interested in Mr. Knox?
4. Who was Davina? What was special about her? What did girls know about her?
5. Why did girls walk to Mr. Knox' house? What did they expect to find there?
6. What did Davina look like? Was she surprised to see the girls?
7. Who of the girls came into Mr. Knox' house? What did they see? What did the narrator do? What was friend's reaction? What did the narrator take with her? What for?
8. What was the girl doing with the things she had taken from Mr. Knox' bathroom? What was Mr. Knox' reaction to that? Did he realize the narrator was one of the girls who had come to his wife?
9. Why did the girls stop communicating?
10. Who became crazier about Mr. Knox? What did she do?
11. How did the narrator manage to sit into Mr. Knox' car? What was teacher's reaction?
12. What did the narrator tell about the trip with Mr. Knox?
13. Who told girls' parents about the trip with Mr. Knox? What did they insist on? What happened to Mr. Knox after it? What happened to Davina?
14. What does the narrator want to pay? Why?
15. Comment on the last sentence.

16. What is the main idea of the story? Was it worth reading? What can it teach?

17. Comment on the title of the story. What does it mean?

18. Find stylistic devices in the story.

19. Make your own sentences with six of the words and expressions in bold.

20. Write a review about this short story.

Lucy Caldwell
Poison

I saw him last night. He was with a girl half his age, more than half, a third of his age. It was in the bar of the Merchant Hotel and they were together on the crushed-raspberry velvet banquette. Her arm was flung around his shoulder, and he had an arm around her, too, an easy hand on her waist. She was laughing, her face turned right up to his. They kept clinking glasses: practically every time they **took a sip** of their cocktails they clinked glasses. I was alone, in a high seat at the bar, waiting for my friends – friends I hadn't seen in years, but who even years ago were always late. I'd ordered a glass of white wine while I waited. It was him. There was no doubt about it.

I hadn't seen him in years. I scrambled to work out the numbers in my head. Sixteen – seventeen – almost eighteen. All those years later and there he was, **entwined with** a girl a fraction of his age. He must be nearly sixty now.

I **bent** my head **over** the cocktail list as he walked towards me, letting my hair fall partly over my face, but I couldn't take my eyes off him. He didn't look once at me. I watched him walk along the candy-striped carpet and out towards the toilets, and then I turned to look at his companion. She had her head bowed over her phone and she was jiggling one leg and rapidly texting. She suddenly looked very young indeed. I'd put her in her mid-twenties but it was less than that. I felt a strange tightness in my chest. She had too much make-up on: huge swipes of blusher, exaggerated cat-eyes. She glanced around the bar, then she took out her phone again, **flicked and tapped at it**. I watched the relief on her face when he appeared again, how she wriggled into him and kissed him on the cheek. As they studied the menu together, **giggling,** their heads bent confidentially together, I suddenly realised she wasn't his lover.

She was his daughter.

She was Melissa. Seventeen years. She'd be eighteen now. Perhaps they were out tonight celebrating her eighteenth birthday.

***

I don't remember whose idea it was to go to Mr. Knox's house.

There were four of us: Donna, Tanya, Lisa and me. We were fourteen, and bored. It was a Baker Day, which meant no school, and we had nothing else to do. It was April, and chilly; rain coming in gusty, intermittent bursts. The Easter holidays had only just ended, and none of us had any pocket money left. We'd met in Cairnburn park just after nine, but at that time on a wet Monday morning it was deserted. And then the conversation, almost inevitably, turned to Mr. Knox.

We all **fancied** Mr. Knox. No-one even bothered to deny it. The whole school fancied him. He was the French and Spanish teacher, and he was part French himself, or so the rumours went. He was part-something, anyway, he had to be: he was so different from the other teachers. He had dark hair that he wore long and floppy over one eye, and **permanent morning – after stubble**, and he smoked Camel cigarettes. He drove an Alfa Romeo, bright red. On Own Clothes Day at the end of term he'd wear tapered jeans and **polonecks** and Chelsea boots and, even in winter, mirrored aviator sunglasses, like an off-duty film star.

But that wasn't all. A large part of his charge came from the fact that he'd had an affair with a former pupil, Davina Calvert. It had been eight years ago, and they were married now: he'd left his wife for her, and it was a real scandal, he'd almost lost his job over it, except in the end they couldn't dismiss him because he'd done nothing strictly, legally wrong. It had happened before we joined the school, but we knew all the details: everyone did.

Davina Calvert, Davina Knox. She was as near and as far from our lives as it was possible to get.

Davina, the story went, was her year's star pupil. She got the top mark in Spanish **A-level** in the whole of Northern Ireland, and came third in French. Davina

Calvert, Davina Knox. Nothing happened between them while she was still at school – or nothing anyone could pin on him, at least – but when she left she went on a gap year, teaching English in Granada, and he went out to visit her. It went around the school like wildfire that he'd been in Granada, visiting Davina Calvert, and sure enough, when she was back for Christmas at least two people saw them in his Alfa Romeo, parked up a side street, kissing, and by the end of the school year he and his wife were separated, getting divorced. The following year he didn't even pretend to hide it from his classes: when they talked about what they'd done at the weekend he'd **grin** and say, in French or Spanish, that he'd been visiting a special friend in Edinburgh. Everyone knew it was Davina.

And back in the KFC on the Upper Newtownards Road, on that rainy Monday Baker Day in April, we knew where Mr. Knox and Davina lived. It was out towards the Ice Bowl, near the golf club, in Dundonald. It was a forty-, forty-five minute walk. We had nothing else to do. We linked arms and set off.

It was an anti-climax when we got there. We'd walked down the King's Road, passing such posh houses on the way; somehow, with the sports car and the sunglasses and the designer suits, we'd expected his house to be special, too. But most of the houses on his street were just like ours: bungalows, or **small red-brick semis**, with hedges and lawns and rhododendron bushes. We walked up one side, and down the other. There was nothing to tell us where he lived: no sign of him.

All four of us were in his French class, and me and Lisa had him for Spanish, too: he'd recognise us. We should go: we knew we should go. The long walk back in the rain stretched ahead of us.

Then we saw Davina.

It was Lisa who recognised her, at the wheel of a metallic-blue Peugeot. The car swept past us and round the curve of the road, but Lisa swore it had been her at the wheel.

"Well come on," Donna said.

"Donna!" Tanya said.

"What, are you scared?" Donna said. We were all a little scared of Donna.

"Come on," Lisa said.

Tanya looked as if she was about to cry.

"We're just going to look," I said. "We're just going to walk past and look at the house. There's no law against that." Then I added, "For fuck's sake, Tanya."

I didn't mind Tanya, if it was just the two of us, but it didn't do to be too friendly with her in front of the others.

"Yeah, Tanya, for fuck's sake," Lisa said.

Tanya sat back down on the wall.

"I'm not going anywhere," she said. "We'll be in such big trouble."

"Fine," Donna said. "Fuck off home, what are you waiting for." She turned and linked Lisa's arm, and they started walking down the street.

"Come on, Tan," I said.

"I have a bad feeling," she said.

We found the house where the Peugeot was parked: right at the bottom of the street. We **clustered** on the opposite side of the road, half-hidden behind a white van, giggling at it: and then we realised that Davina was still in the car.

"What's she at?" Donna said. "Stupid bitch."

We stood and watched a while longer, but nothing happened. You could see the dark blur of her head and the back of her shoulders, just sitting there.

"Well fuck this for a game of soldiers," Donna said. "I'm not standing here all day."

She turned and walked a few steps down the road and waited for the rest of us to follow.

"Yeah," Tanya said. "I'm going too. I said I'd be home for lunch."

Neither Lisa nor I moved.

"What do you think she's doing?" Lisa said.

"Listening to the radio?" I said. "Mum does that, sometimes, if it's the Archers. She doesn't want to leave the car until it's over."

"I suppose," Lisa said, looking disappointed.

"Come on," Tanya said. "We've seen where he lives, now let's just go."

Donna was standing with her hands on her hips, annoyed that we were ignoring her.

"Seriously," she shouted. "I'm away on."

They were expecting me and Lisa to follow, but we didn't.

"Hah," I said, vaguely. Lisa's mum and mine had gone to school together and the two of us had been friends since we were babies: there were photographs of us in the bath together, covered in bubbles. We'd been inseparable through primary school, and into secondary. It made me **weird** and **awkward** around Lisa when it was just the two of us. I'd always imagined we'd do everything together, like we always had done. I could feel Lisa still looking at me.

We must have been standing there for ten minutes by now. A minute longer and we might have turned to go. But all of a sudden the door of the Peugeot swung open and Davina got out: there she was, Davina Calvert, Davina Knox.

Except that the Davina in our heads had been glamorous, **like the movie sirens** on Mr. Knox's classroom walls, but this Davina had **messy hair** in a ponytail and **bruises under her eyes**, and she was wearing baggy jeans and a raincoat. And she was crying: her face was puffy and she was crying, openly, tears just running down her face.

I felt Lisa take my hand and squeeze it.

"Oh my God," she breathed.

We watched Davina walk around to the other side of the car and unstrap a toddler from the back seat. She lifted him to his feet and then hauled a baby car-seat out.

The **toddler** was **wailing**: we watched Davina wrestle him up the drive and into the porch, the baby car-seat over the crook of her other arm. She had to put it down while she found her keys, unlocked the door and went inside. The door swung shut behind her.

We stood there for a moment longer. Then:

"Come on," I found myself saying. "Let's knock on her door."

Lisa turned to face me.

"Are you insane?"

"Come on," I said.

"But what will we say?"

"We'll say we're lost – we'll say we're after a glass of water – I don't know. We'll think of something. Come on."

Lisa stared at me. "Oh my God you're mad," she said. But she giggled. And then we were crossing the road and walking up the driveway and there we were standing in Mr. Knox's porch.

I can still picture every moment of what happens next. Davina opens the door (Davina Calvert, Davina Knox) with the baby in one arm and the toddler hanging off one of her legs. We blurt out – it comes to me, inspired – that we live just round the corner and we're going door-to-door to see does anyone need a babysitter. All at once, we're like a team again, me and Leese. I start a sentence, she finishes it. She says something, I **elaborate**. We sound calm, and totally plausible. Davina says,

"Thank you, but the baby's too young to be left."

Lisa says,

"Can we leave our details anyway, for maybe in a few months' time."

We write down, Judith and Carol, and give a made-up number.

"Why aren't you at school today," Davina asks, and I say,

"It's a Baker Day."

I suddenly wonder if all schools have the same Baker Days and a dart of fear goes through me: but Davina just says,

"Oh," and doesn't ask anything more.

We sense she's going to usher us out now and before she can do it, Lisa asks what the baby's called, and Davina says,

"Melissa."

"That's a pretty name," I say, and Davina says,

"Thank you."

So we admire the baby, her screwed-up little face and flexing fingers, and I think of having Mr. Knox's baby growing inside you, and a huge rush of heat goes through me.

When Davina says, as we knew she was going to,

"Girls, as I'm sure you can see, I've really got my hands full here," and Lisa says,

"No-no, of course, we'll have to be going," – and she's getting the giggles now, I can see them rising in her, the way the corners of her lips pucker and tweak – I say,

"Yes, of course, but do you mind if I use your toilet first."

Davina blinks again, her red-raw eyes, as if she can sense a trap but doesn't know quite what it is, and then she says,

"No problem, but the downstairs loo's blocked, wee Reuben has a habit of flushing things down it and they haven't gotten round to calling out the plumber."

I'll have to go upstairs, it's straight up the stairs and first on the left. I can feel Lisa staring at me but I don't meet her eye, I just say,

"Thank you," and make my way upstairs.

The bathroom is full with Mr. Knox. There's his dressing gown hung on the back of the door – his electric razor on the side of the sink – his can of Lynx deodorant on the windowsill. There's his toothbrush in a mug, and there's flecks of his stubble in the sink,

and there's his dirty clothes in the laundry basket: I kneel and open it and recognise one of his shirts, a slippery pale blue one with yellow diamond patterning. I reach over and flush the toilet, so the noise will cover my movements, and then I open the mirrored cabinet above the sink and run my fingers over the bottles on what must be his shelf, the shaving cream, the brown plastic bottle of prescription drugs, a six-pack of Durex condoms, two of them missing. I ease one of the condoms from the strip, and stuff it into my jeans. Then I put the box back, exactly as it was, and close the mirrored cabinet. I stare at myself in the mirror. My face looks flushed. I wonder, again, what age she was when he first noticed her.

I realise that I don't know how long I've been in here. I run the tap, and look around me one last time. And then, without planning to, without knowing I'm going to until I've done it, I find my hand closing around one of the bottles of perfume on the **windowsill**, and rearranging the others so the gap doesn't show. You're not supposed to keep perfume on the windowsill, anyway: even I know that. I slide it into the inside pocket of my jacket and arrange my left arm over it so the bulge doesn't show, then I turn off the tap and go downstairs and Lisa's shooting me desperate glances.

Outside, she can't believe what I've done. None of them can. We catch up with Donna and Tanya still waiting for us on the main road – although it feels like a lifetime has passed, it's only been ten minutes or so since they left us.

"You'll never believe what she did," Lisa says, and there's pride in her voice as she tells them how we knocked on the door and went inside, inside Mr. Knox's house, and talked to Davina, and touched the baby, and how I used his bathroom. I take over the story then. The condom I keep quiet about – that's mine, just for me – but I show them the perfume. It's a dark glass bottle, three quarters full, aubergine, almost black, with a round glass stopper. In delicate gold lettering it says, POISON, Christian Dior.

"I can't believe you nicked her perfume?" Donna says.

Tanya stares at me as if she's going to be sick.

Donna takes the bottle from me and uncaps the lid.

"Spray me then," I say, and they all look at me. "Go on," I say, "spray me." I roll up the sleeve of my jumper to bare my wrist.

"Eww," says Tanya, "that smells like fox. Why would anyone want to smell like that?"

I press my wrists together carefully and raise them to my neck, dab both sides. It's the strongest perfume I've ever smelt.

"What are you going to do with it?" Lisa says.

"We could bring it into school," I say, and all at once **my heart is racing** again.

"We could bring it into school, and spray it in his lesson. We could see what he does."

"You're a psycho," Donna says, and she laughs.

"You can't," Tanya's saying, "I'm not having anything to do with this," but we're all ignoring her now.

"Me and Lisa have Spanish tomorrow," I say, "straight after lunch. We'll do it then. Right, Leese?"

"What do you think he'll do?" Lisa says, wide-eyed.

"Maybe," I say, "he'll keep us behind after class and shag our brains out on his desk." I say it as if I'm joking, and she and Donna laugh, and I laugh too, but I think of the condom hidden in my pocket.

The next day in Spanish we did it, just as we'd planned. Before class started we huddled over my bag and sprayed the Poison, unknotting our ties to mist it in the hollow of our throat. We were feverish with excitement. He didn't know how close to him we'd got.

Mr. Knox came in, sat on the edge of his desk and asked us what we'd been doing over the weekend.

My heart was thumping. I suddenly wished I'd prepared something clever to say, something that would get his attention, or make him smile, but I hadn't and I found myself saying the first thing that came into my head, just to be the one that spoke.

"Voy de compras," I said.

"I'm sure you go shopping all the time, but in this instance it was in the past tense."

"Otra vez, Señorita."

Señorita. I'd never been one of the girls he called Señorita before. I imagined he'd called Davina Señorita. His accent in Spanish was rolling and sexy.

"Fui de compras," I said, locking eyes with him.

"Muy bien, fuiste de compras, y qué compraste?"

"What did I buy?"

"Si – qué compraste?"

"Compré – compré un nuevo perfume."

"Muy bien." He grinned at me. "Fuiste de compras, y compraste un nuevo perfume. Muy bien."

"Do you want to smell it, Mr. Knox?" Lisa blurted.

"Lisa!" I hissed, delighted and appalled.

"Gracias, Lisa, pero no."

"Are you sure? I think you'd like it."

"Gracias, Lisa. Who's next?" He gazed around the room, waiting for someone else to put their hand up. I felt the colour rising to my face. Lisa was stifling a fit of giggles I ignored her and kept my eyes on Mr. Knox.

At the end of class we hung about, taking our time to pack our bags, and wondering if he'd keep us behind, but he didn't. We left the room and fell into each other's arms in fits of giggles.

My last lesson of the day was Maths, where I sat with Tanya – none of our other friends were taking Higher Maths. We walked out of school together. And today, there was the increased attraction of knowing that this was the way Mr. Knox must drive home.

We walked down Wandsworth and crossed the busy junction, then up the Upper Newtownards Road. I was standing facing the traffic. I was waiting for the Alfa Romeo to pass us.

When it did, I turned to follow it and didn't take my eyes from it until it was gone completely from sight. And by the time I turned back, something inside me had shifted.

I spent an hour that night learning extra French vocab and practicing my Spanish tenses, determined to impress him the following day, to make him notice me. The next day I walked home with Tanya again, and the day after that, and pretty soon I was walking home with her every day.

Lisa and Donna were friends again, and Lisa still didn't invite me on their Cairnburn nights, but suddenly I didn't care. Three Saturday evenings in a row I let my mum think I was going to Lisa's, and I walked the whole way to Mr. Knox and Davina's house, and I walked past two, three, four, five times, and saw both cars in their driveway and the lights in their windows and once even caught a glimpse of him in an upstairs room.

It had to happen. I knew it had to happen.

The days you were most likely to see his car, I'd worked out, were Tuesdays and Wednesdays: and one Wednesday.

"There he is," I said, and Tanya followed my gaze and said, "No, wise up, what are you doing?"

"Mr. Knox!" I yelled, and I waved at the car. "Mr. Knox!"

His windows were wound halfway down – he was smoking – and he ducked to look out, then pressed a button to wind them down fully.

"Hello?" he said, "what is it, is everything ok?"

"Mr. Knox," I said, "we need a lift, will you give us a lift?"

"Stop it!" Tanya hissed at me.

"Please, Mr. Knox!" I said. "We're really late and it's important."

The lights were still red but any moment they'd go amber, and green.

"Please, Mr. Knox," I said. "You have to, please, you have to."

I had taken to wearing a dab of Poison every day I had a French or Spanish lesson – even though Lisa told me I was **a weirdo** – and I could still **smell the perfume**, Davina's perfume, on me.

He took a drag of his cigarette and dropped it out of the window.

"Where are you going?"

The lights were amber and as they turned green I was opening the passenger seat and getting in. There I was, in Mr. Knox's Alfa Romeo. It was happening.

"Where do you need to go?" he said again, and I said:

"Anywhere."

He looked at me and raised an eyebrow and snorted with laughter, and I thought he might tell me to get out, but he didn't, he just revved the engine and then accelerated away, and in the **wing mirror** I **caught a glimpse** of Tanya's stricken face, open-mouthed, and I looked at Mr. Knox beside me – Mr. Knox, I was there, now, finally, in Mr. Knox's car, me and Mr. Knox - and I started laughing, too.

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Afterwards, I couldn't resist telling Tanya. I told her how he kissed me, gently at first and his lips were soft, then harder, with his tongue. I told her how he undid my tie, and unbuttoned my shirt, and how his fingers were cool on my skin….

"He didn't," she said, big-eyed and scared, and I promised her,

"Yes, he did."

Once I'd told Tanya, I had to tell Donna, and Lisa, and when Lisa looked at me with slitted eyes and said I was lying I got out the condom and showed them.

I hadn't counted on Tanya blubbering it all to her mother: all of it, including the time we went to his house. We got in such trouble for that, but the trouble he was in was worse.

Even though I cracked as soon as my mum asked me, told her that I'd made it all up, she didn't believe me. Tanya's mother decided Mr. Knox had an unhealthy hold over me, over all of us.

They contacted the headmistress and that was that: Mr. Knox was called before the governors and **forced to resign**, and I was sent to **a counsellor** who tried to make me talk about my parents' divorce. And then, in the autumn, we heard that Davina had left Mr. Knox: had taken her babies and gone back to her mother's. It must have been her worst nightmare come true, the merest suggestion that her husband, the father of her two children, would do it again. She, more than anyone else, would have known there was no such thing as innocence.

I think she was right.

I don't believe it was a one-off.

What happened that day is that he drove me five minutes up the road, then pulled a U-turn at the garage and drove back down the other side and made me get out not far from where he'd picked me up and said,

"Now this was a one-off, you know," and laughed.

If only I hadn't told Tanya.

***

I lifted my glass of wine and **took a sip**, and then another. Mr. Knox and Melissa were still giggling over the cocktail menu, flicking back and forth through the pages.

"Excuse me," I said, turning to the bar and addressing the nearest barman. He didn't hear me; carried on carving twists of orange peel. "Excuse me," I said again, louder. He raised his finger: one moment. But I carried on.

"You see the couple over there? By the window? The man with the black hair, and the blonde girl?"

He frowned and put the orange down; looked at them, then back at me.

"Can I pay for their drinks?" I blurted.

"You'd like to buy them a drink?"

"Yes: whatever they're having. All of it. I want to pay for all of it."

"I'll just get the bar manager for you. One moment, please."

My heart was pounding. It was impulsive and stupid. My friends hadn't even arrived yet: we'd still be sitting here when Mr. Knox asked for his bill in a drink or so's time, and how would I explain it to them, or to him: because the barman would point me out as the one who'd paid for it. Would my name mean anything to him, all these years later? Surely it would. Surely it must.

I **swivelled on my stool** to look at them again. Melissa didn't look very much like him. She didn't look much like Davina either, come to that. They were **mock-arguing** about something now. She leant in **to murmur something in her ear**.

She had to be his daughter. She had to be.

"Ma'am. Excuse me." The bar manager was leaning across the bar, attempting to get my attention. "Excuse me."

"Sorry," I said. "I was miles away."

She had to be his daughter.


2BRO2B
KURT VONNEGUT

Read the whole story *2BR02B* by Kurt Vonnegut and do the tasks. Pay attention to the words and expressions **in bold.**

1. What period of human history is depicted in the story? What is peculiar about it? Where does the story happen?
2. What was the population of the US?
3. How old is K. Wehling Junior? What is he doing at the hospital?
4. Why is K. Wehling upset? What choice does he need to make?
5. Who else is in the room with Mr. K. Wehling?
6. What does the artist depict?
7. Describe Dr. Hitz. What is he famous for? What does he look like?
8. What Buroes does the US have? What is their occupation?
9. What is 2BR02B?
10. Comment on K. Wehling Junior' action? What does he kill people for? What would you do if you were in his shoes?
11. What does the painter want to do? What does he phone for?
12. Would you like to live in this period? Give your reasons.
13. Find stylistic devices in the text. Comment on their use.

Kurt Vonnegut
2BR02B

Everything was perfectly well. There were no prisons, no **slums**, no **insane asylums**, no cripples, no poverty, no wars. All diseases were **conquered**. So was old age. Death, **barring accidents**, was an adventure for volunteers. The population of the United States was stabilized at forty-million souls.

One bright morning in the Chicago Lying-in Hospital, a man named Edward K. Wehling, Jr., waited for his wife to give birth. He was the only man waiting. Not many people were born a day any more.

Wehling was fifty-six, a mere stripling in a population whose average age was one hundred and twenty-nine.

X-rays had revealed that his wife was going **to have triplets**. The children would be his first. Young Wehling **was hunched** in his chair, his head in his hand. The room was being redecorated. It was being redecorated as a memorial to a man who had volunteered to die. The floor was paved with spattered dropcloths.

A sardonic old man, about two hundred years old, sat on a stepladder, painting **a mural** he did not like. The mural depicted a very neat garden. Men and women in white, doctors and nurses, turned the soil, planted seedlings, sprayed bugs, spread fertilizer. Men and women in purple uniforms pulled up weeds, cut down plants that were old and sickly, raked leaves, carried refuse to trash-burners. Never, never, never – not even in medieval Holland nor old Japan had a garden been more formal, been better tended. Every plant had all the loam, light, water, air and nourishment it could use.

A formidable woman strode into the waiting room **on spike heels**. Her shoes, stockings, trench coat, bag and overseas cap were all purple, the purple the painter called "**the color of grapes on Judgment Day**."

The medallion on her purple musette bag was the seal of the Service Division of the Federal Bureau of Termination, an eagle perched on a turnstile. The Federal Bureau of Termination was an institution whose fanciful sobriquets included: "Automat," "Birdland," "Cannery," "Catbox," "De – louser," "Easy – go," "Good – by, Mother," "Happy Hooligan," "Kiss – me – quick," "Lucky Pierre," "Sheepdip," "Waring Blendor," "Weep – no – more" and "Why Worry?"

"2 B R 0 2 B" ("To be or not to be") was the telephone number of the municipal **gas chambers** of the Federal Bureau of Termination. The zero in the telephone number was pronounced "naught."

"Is this where I'm supposed to come?" she said to the painter.

"A lot would depend on what your business was," he said. "You aren't about to have a baby, are you?"

"They told me I was supposed to pose for some picture," she said. "My name's Leora Duncan." She waited.

"And you dunk people," he said.

"What?" she said.

"Skip it," he said.

"That sure is a beautiful picture," she said. "Looks just like heaven or something."

"Or something," said the painter. He took a list of names from his smock pocket. "Duncan, Duncan, Duncan," he said, scanning the list. "Yes – here you are. You're entitled **to be immortalized**. See any faceless body here you'd like me to stick your head on? We've got a few choice ones left." He meant that the faces of many of the figures in the mural were still blank. All blanks were **to be filled with** portraits of important people on either the hospital staff or from the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Termination.

She studied the mural bleakly. "Gee," she said, "they're all the same to me. I don't know anything about art."

The painter pointed to a figure in purple who was sawing a dead branch from an apple tree. "How about her?" he said. "You like her at all?"

"Gosh" – she said, and she **blushed** and **became humble** – "that – that puts me right next to Dr. Hitz."

"That upsets you?" he said.

"Good gravy, no!" she said. "It's …it's just such an honor."

"Ah, You admire him, eh?" he said.

"Who doesn't admire him?" she said. "He was responsible for setting up the very first gas chamber in Chicago, the hospital's Chief Obstetrician."

"Nothing would please me more," said the painter, "than to put you next to him for all time. Sawing off a limb that strikes you as appropriate?"

"That is kind of like what I do," she said. She was **demure** about what she did. What she did was make people comfortable while she killed them.

And, while Leora Duncan was posing for her portrait, into the waiting room **bounded** Dr. Hitz himself. He was seven feet tall, tanned, white-haired, omnipotent Zeus and he boomed with importance, **accomplishments**, and the joy of living.

"Well, Miss Duncan! Miss Duncan!" he said, and he made a joke. "What are you doing here?" he said. "This isn't where the people leave. This is where they come in! Guess what was just born," he said. "Triplets!"

"Triplets!" she said. She was exclaiming over the legal implications of triplets.

The law said that no newborn child could survive unless the parents of the child could find someone who would volunteer to die. Triplets, if they were all to live, called for three volunteers.

"Do the parents have three volunteers?" said Leora Duncan.

"Last I heard," said Dr. Hitz, "they had one, and were trying to scrape another two up."

"I don't think they made it," she said. "What's the name?"

"Wehling," said the waiting father, sitting up, red – eyed and frowzy. "Edward K. Wehling, Jr., is the name of the happy father – to – be."

He raised his right hand, looked at a spot on the wall, gave a hoarsely wretched chuckle. "Present," he said.

"Oh, Mr. Wehling," said Dr. Hitz, "I didn't see you."

"The invisible man," said Wehling.

"They just phoned me that your triplets have been born," said Dr. Hitz. "They're all fine, and so is the mother. I'm on my way in to see them now."

"Hooray," said Wehling emptily.

"You don't sound very happy," said Dr. Hitz.

"What man in my shoes wouldn't be happy?" said Wehling. He gestured with his hands to symbolize **care-free simplicity**. "All I have to do is pick out which one of the triplets is going to live, then deliver my maternal grandfather to the Happy Hooligan, and come back here with a receipt."

Dr. Hitz became rather severe with Wehling, towered over him. "You don't believe in population control, Mr. Wehling?" he said.

"I want those kids," said Wehling quietly. "I want all three of them."

"Of course you do," said Dr. Hitz. "That's only human."

"I don't want my grandfather to die, either," said Wehling.

"Nobody's really happy about taking a close relative to the Catbox," said Dr. Hitz gently, sympathetically.

"I wish people wouldn't call it "the Catbox," and things like that," she said.

"You're absolutely right," said Dr. Hitz. "Forgive me." He corrected himself, gave the municipal gas chambers their official title, a title no one ever used in conversation. "I should have said, "Ethical Suicide Studios," he said.

"This child of yours whichever one you decide to keep, Mr. Wehling," said Dr. Hitz. "He or she is going to live on a happy, roomy, clean, rich planet, thanks to **population**

control. In a garden like that mural there." He shook his head. "Two centuries ago, when I was a young man, it was a hell that nobody thought could last another twenty years. Now centuries of peace and plenty stretch before us as far as the imagination cares to travel."

He smiled luminously.

The smile faded as he saw that Wehling had just drawn a revolver. Wehling shot Dr. Hitz dead.

"There's room for one a great big one," he said. And then he shot Leora Duncan.

"It's only death," he said to her as she fell. "There! Room for two."

And then he shot himself, making room for all three of his children. Nobody came running. Nobody, seemingly, heard the shots. The painter sat on the top of his stepladder, looking down reflectively on the sorry scene.

The painter pondered the mournful puzzle of life demanding to be born and, once born, demanding to be fruitful ... **to multiply** and to live as long as possible to do all that on a very small planet that would have to last forever.

And then the painter decided he had had about enough of life in the Happy Garden of Life, too, and he came slowly down from the ladder. He took Wehling's pistol, really intending to shoot himself. But he didn't have the nerve.

And then he saw the telephone booth in the corner of the room. He went to it, dialed the well – remembered number: "2 B R 0 2 B."

"Federal Bureau of Termination," said the very warm voice of a hostess.

"How soon could I get an appointment?" he asked, speaking very carefully.

"We could probably fit you in late this afternoon, sir," she said. "It might even be earlier, if we get a cancellation."

"All right," said the painter, "fit me in, if you please." And he gave her his name, spelling it out.

"Thank you, sir," said the hostess. "Your city thanks you; your country thanks you; your planet thanks you. But the deepest thanks of all is from future generations."

CONCLUSION

English and American literary heritage kindles readers' interest all over the world. English and American literature raises various issues that excite all the humanity, i.e. relationships, love and hate, childhood and upbringing, society and its influence on a person, being rich and being poor, behavior of the young and its reflection on other people's fate, visions of the future and so on.

No doubt, any literary work reflects a frame of mind typical for the writer and for the country where he/she is from. That is why reading stories in the original lets us fully immerse in the culture under study and become aware of the place of your own culture in the global community.

ЗАКЛЮЧЕНИЕ

Английское и американское литературное наследие вызывают особый интерес у читателей всего мира. В англо-американской литературе поднимаются разнообразные, волнующие все человечество темы: взаимоотношения людей, любовь и ненависть, детство и воспитание, общество и его влияние на личность, богатство и бедность, поступки молодости и их отражение на судьбах других людей, представление будущего и другие.

Литература, несомненно, отражает менталитет той страны, к которой принадлежит писатель, поэтому чтение аутентичных произведений позволяет в большей степени окунуться и понять природу и особенности мировоззрения других культур, а также осознать место собственной культуры в мировом сообществе.

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Учебное издание

Надежда Викторовна Алехина
Наталья Валерьевна Грибачева

Английские рассказы для экстенсивного чтения

Практикум

ISBN 978-5-907869-22-6

Работа рекомендована РИС университета
Протокол № 30 от 2024 г.

Редактор Л.Н. Корнилова
Технический редактор А.Г. Петрова

Издательство ЮУрГГПУ
454080, г. Челябинск, пр. Ленина, 69

Подписано в печать 02.09.2024
Формат 60x84/8. Объем 4,8 уч.-изд. л.
Тираж 100 экз. Заказ

Отпечатано с готового оригинал-макета
в типографии ЮУрГГПУ
454080, г. Челябинск, пр. Ленина, 69