

# Introduction to Literature



# Introduction to Literature

*NANCI LOVE, BAY COLLEGE*



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PART I

# FACULTY RESOURCES



# I. I Need Help



Need more information about this course? Have questions about faculty resources? Can't find what you're looking for? Experiencing technical difficulties?

We're here to help! Take advantage of the following Lumen customer-support resources:

- Check out one of Lumen's Faculty User Guides [here](#).
- Submit a support ticket [here](#) and tell us what you need.
- Talk and screen-share with a live human during Lumen's OER office hours. See available times [here](#).



PART III

# MODULE 2: WHAT IS FICTION?



## 2. Defining Literature

**Literature**, in its broadest sense, is any written work. Etymologically, the term derives from Latin *litaritura/litteratura* “writing formed with letters,” although some definitions include spoken or sung texts. More restrictively, it is writing that possesses literary merit. Literature can be classified according to whether it is fiction or non-fiction and whether it is poetry or prose. It can be further distinguished according to major forms such as the novel, short story or drama, and works are often categorized according to historical periods or their adherence to certain aesthetic features or expectations (genre).

Taken to mean only written works, literature was first produced by some of the world’s earliest civilizations—those of Ancient Egypt and Sumeria—as early as the 4th millennium BC; taken to include spoken or sung texts, it originated even earlier, and some of the first written works may have been based on a pre-existing oral tradition. As urban cultures and societies developed, there was a proliferation in the forms of literature. Developments in print technology allowed for literature to be distributed and experienced on an unprecedented scale, which has culminated in the twenty-first century in electronic literature.

### Definition

Definitions of literature have varied over time. In Western Europe prior to the eighteenth century, literature as a term indicated all

books and writing.<sup>1</sup> A more restricted sense of the term emerged during the Romantic period, in which it began to demarcate “imaginative” literature.<sup>2</sup>

Contemporary debates over what constitutes literature can be seen as returning to the older, more inclusive notion of what constitutes literature. Cultural studies, for instance, takes as its subject of analysis both popular and minority genres, in addition to canonical works.<sup>3</sup>

1. Leitch et al., *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 28
2. Ross, "The Emergence of "Literature": Making and Reading the English Canon in the Eighteenth Century," 406 & Eagleton, *Literary theory: an introduction*, 16
3. Leitch et al., *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 28





of subject consisting of Rythm or Verses".<sup>6</sup> POSSIBLY AS A RESULT OF ARISTOTLE'S INFLUENCE (HIS POETICS), "POETRY" BEFORE THE NINETEENTH CENTURY WAS USUALLY LESS A TECHNICAL DESIGNATION FOR VERSE THAN A NORMATIVE CATEGORY OF FICTIVE OR RHETORICAL ART.<sup>7</sup> AS A FORM IT MAY PRE-DATE LITERACY, WITH THE EARLIEST WORKS BEING COMPOSED WITHIN AND SUSTAINED BY AN ORAL TRADITION;<sup>8</sup> HENCE IT CONSTITUTES THE EARLIEST EXAMPLE OF LITERATURE.

## Prose

Prose is a form of language that possesses ordinary syntax and natural speech rather than rhythmic structure; in which regard, along with its measurement in sentences rather than lines, it differs

6. "POETRY, N.". OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY. OUP. RETRIEVED 13 FEBRUARY 2014. (SUBSCRIPTION REQUIRED)
7. ROSS, "THE EMERGENCE OF "LITERATURE": MAKING AND READING THE ENGLISH CANON IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY", 398
8. FINNEGAN, RUTH H. (1977). ORAL POETRY: ITS NATURE, SIGNIFICANCE, AND SOCIAL CONTEXT. INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS. P. 66. & MAGOUN, JR., FRANCIS P. (1953). "ORAL-FORMULAIC CHARACTER OF ANGLO-SAXON NARRATIVE POETRY".SPECULUM **28** (3): 446-67. DOI:10.2307/2847021

from poetry.<sup>9</sup> On the historical development of prose, Richard Graff notes that "

- **Novel:** a long fictional prose narrative.
- **Novella:** The novella exists between the novel and short story; the publisher Melville House classifies it as "too short to be a novel, too long to be a short story."<sup>10</sup>
- **Short story:** a dilemma in defining the "short story" as a literary form is how to, or whether one should, distinguish it from any short narrative. Apart from its distinct size, various theorists have suggested that the short story has a characteristic subject matter or structure;<sup>11</sup> THESE DISCUSSIONS OFTEN POSITION THE FORM IN SOME RELATION TO THE NOVEL.<sup>12</sup>

9. Preminger, *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 938–9 & Alison Booth; Kelly J. Mays.

"Glossary: P". *LitWeb, the Norton Introduction to Literature Studyspace*. Retrieved 15 February 2014.

10. Antrim, Taylor (2010). "In Praise of Short". *The Daily Beast*. Retrieved 15 February 2014.

11. ROHRBERGER, MARY; DAN E. BURNS (1982). "SHORT FICTION AND THE NUMINOUS REALM: ANOTHER ATTEMPT AT DEFINITION". *MODERN FICTION STUDIES*. XXVIII (6). & MAY, CHARLES (1995). *THE SHORT STORY. THE REALITY OF ARTIFICE*. NEW YORK: TWAIN.

12. MARIE LOUISE PRATT (1994). CHARLES MAY, ED. *THE SHORT STORY: THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT*. ATHENS: OHIO UP.

## Drama

Drama is literature intended for performance.<sup>13</sup>

13. Elam, Kier (1980). *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*.  
London and New York: Methuen.  
p. 98. ISBN 0-416-72060-9.

### 3. Introduction to Fiction

Click below for a video presentation that gives college students a brief introduction to fiction.

<https://youtu.be/BcllvisjIWY>

## 4. Philip K. Dick, "Beyond the Door," 1954

That night at the dinner table he brought it out and set it down beside her plate. Doris stared at it, her hand to her mouth. "My God, what is it?" She looked up at him, bright-eyed.

"Well, open it."

Doris tore the ribbon and paper from the square package with her sharp nails, her bosom rising and falling. Larry stood watching her as she lifted the lid. He lit a cigarette and leaned against the wall.

"A cuckoo clock!" Doris cried. "A real old cuckoo clock like my mother had." She turned the clock over and over. "Just like my mother had, when Pete was still alive." Her eyes sparkled with tears.

"It's made in Germany," Larry said. After a moment he added, "Carl got it for me wholesale. He knows some guy in the clock business. Otherwise I wouldn't have—" He stopped.

Doris made a funny little sound.

"I mean, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to afford it." He scowled. "What's the matter with you? You've got your clock, haven't you? Isn't that what you want?"

Doris sat holding onto the clock, her fingers pressed against the brown wood.

"Well," Larry said, "what's the matter?"

He watched in amazement as she leaped up and ran from the room, still clutching the clock. He shook his head. "Never satisfied. They're all that way. Never get enough."

He sat down at the table and finished his meal.

The cuckoo clock was not very large. It was hand-made, however, and there were countless frets on it, little indentations and ornaments scored in the soft wood. Doris sat on the bed drying her eyes and winding the clock. She set the hands by her wristwatch.

Presently she carefully moved the hands to two minutes of ten. She carried the clock over to the dresser and propped it up.

Then she sat waiting, her hands twisted together in her lap—waiting for the cuckoo to come out, for the hour to strike.

As she sat she thought about Larry and what he had said. And what she had said, too, for that matter—not that she could be blamed for any of it. After all, she couldn't keep listening to him forever without defending herself; you had to blow your own trumpet in the world.

She touched her handkerchief to her eyes suddenly. Why did he have to say that, about getting it wholesale? Why did he have to spoil it all? If he felt that way he needn't have got it in the first place. She clenched her fists. He was so mean, so damn mean.

But she was glad of the little clock sitting there ticking to itself, with its funny grilled edges and the door. Inside the door was the cuckoo, waiting to come out. Was he listening, his head cocked on one side, listening to hear the clock strike so that he would know to come out?

Did he sleep between hours? Well, she would soon see him: she could ask him. And she would show the clock to Bob. He would love it; Bob loved old things, even old stamps and buttons. He liked to go with her to the stores. Of course, it was a little *awkward*, but Larry had been staying at the office so much, and that helped. If only Larry didn't call up sometimes to—

There was a whirr. The clock shuddered and all at once the door opened. The cuckoo came out, sliding swiftly. He paused and looked around solemnly, scrutinizing her, the room, the furniture.

It was the first time he had seen her, she realized, smiling to herself in pleasure. She stood up, coming toward him shyly. "Go on," she said. "I'm waiting."

The cuckoo opened his bill. He whirred and chirped, quickly, rhythmically. Then, after a moment of contemplation, he retired. And the door snapped shut.

She was delighted. She clapped her hands and spun in a little circle. He was marvelous, perfect! And the way he had looked

around, studying her, sizing her up. He liked her; she was certain of it. And she, of course, loved him at once, completely. He was just what she had hoped would come out of the little door.

Doris went to the clock. She bent over the little door, her lips close to the wood. "Do you hear me?" she whispered. "I think you're the most wonderful cuckoo in the world." She paused, embarrassed. "I hope you'll like it here."

Then she went downstairs again, slowly, her head high.

Larry and the cuckoo clock really never got along well from the start. Doris said it was because he didn't wind it right, and it didn't like being only half-wound all the time. Larry turned the job of winding over to her; the cuckoo came out every quarter hour and ran the spring down without remorse, and someone had to be ever after it, winding it up again.

Doris did her best, but she forgot a good deal of the time. Then Larry would throw his newspaper down with an elaborate weary motion and stand up. He would go into the dining-room where the clock was mounted on the wall over the fireplace. He would take the clock down and making sure that he had his thumb over the little door, he would wind it up.

"Why do you put your thumb over the door?" Doris asked once.

"You're supposed to."

She raised an eyebrow. "Are you sure? I wonder if it isn't that you don't want him to come out while you're standing so close."

"Why not?"

"Maybe you're afraid of him."

Larry laughed. He put the clock back on the wall and gingerly removed his thumb. When Doris wasn't looking he examined his thumb.

There was still a trace of the nick cut out of the soft part of it. Who—or what—had pecked at him?

---

One Saturday morning, when Larry was down at the office working



over some important special accounts, Bob Chambers came to the front porch and rang the bell.

Doris was taking a quick shower. She dried herself and slipped into her robe. When she opened the door Bob stepped inside, grinning.

"Hi," he said, looking around.

"It's all right. Larry's at the office."

"Fine." Bob gazed at her slim legs below the hem of the robe. "How nice you look today."

She laughed. "Be careful! Maybe I shouldn't let you in after all."

They looked at one another, half amused half frightened. Presently Bob said, "If you want, I'll—"

"No, for God's sake." She caught hold of his sleeve. "Just get out of the doorway so I can close it. Mrs. Peters across the street, you know."

She closed the door. "And I want to show you something," she said. "You haven't seen it."

He was interested. "An antique? Or what?"

She took his arm, leading him toward the dining-room. "You'll love it, Bobby." She stopped, wide-eyed. "I hope you will. You must; you must love it. It means so much to me—he means so much."

"He?" Bob frowned. "Who is he?"

Doris laughed. "You're jealous! Come on." A moment later they stood before the clock, looking up at it. "He'll come out in a few minutes. Wait until you see him. I know you two will get along just fine."

"What does Larry think of him?"

"They don't like each other. Sometimes when Larry's here he won't come out. Larry gets mad if he doesn't come out on time. He says—"

"Says what?"

Doris looked down. "He always says he's been robbed, even if he did get it wholesale." She brightened. "But I know he won't come out because he doesn't like Larry. When I'm here alone he comes right

out for me, every fifteen minutes, even though he really only has to come out on the hour.”

She gazed up at the clock. “He comes out for me because he wants to. We talk; I tell him things. Of course, I’d like to have him upstairs in my room, but it wouldn’t be right.”

There was the sound of footsteps on the front porch. They looked at each other, horrified.

Larry pushed the front door open, grunting. He set his briefcase down and took off his hat. Then he saw Bob for the first time.

“Chambers. I’ll be damned.” His eyes narrowed. “What are you doing here?” He came into the dining-room. Doris drew her robe about her helplessly, backing away.

“I—” Bob began. “That is, we—” He broke off, glancing at Doris. Suddenly the clock began to whirr. The cuckoo came rushing out, bursting into sound. Larry moved toward him.

“Shut that din off,” he said. He raised his fist toward the clock. The cuckoo snapped into silence and retreated. The door closed. “That’s better.” Larry studied Doris and Bob, standing mutely together.

“I came over to look at the clock,” Bob said. “Doris told me that it’s a rare antique and that—”

“Nuts. I bought it myself.” Larry walked up to him. “Get out of here.” He turned to Doris. “You too. And take that damn clock with you.”

He paused, rubbing his chin. “No. Leave the clock here. It’s mine; I bought it and paid for it.”

In the weeks that followed after Doris left, Larry and the cuckoo clock got along even worse than before. For one thing, the cuckoo stayed inside most of the time, sometimes even at twelve o’clock when he should have been busiest. And if he did come out at all he usually spoke only once or twice, never the correct number of times. And there was a sullen, uncooperative note in his voice, a jarring sound that made Larry uneasy and a little angry.

But he kept the clock wound, because the house was very still and quiet and it got on his nerves not to hear someone running

around, talking and dropping things. And even the whirring of a clock sounded good to him.

But he didn't like the cuckoo at all. And sometimes he spoke to him.

"Listen," he said late one night to the closed little door. "I know you can hear me. I ought to give you back to the Germans—back to the Black Forest." He paced back and forth. "I wonder what they're doing now, the two of them. That young punk with his books and his antiques. A man shouldn't be interested in antiques; that's for women."

He set his jaw. "Isn't that right?"

The clock said nothing. Larry walked up in front of it. "Isn't that right?" he demanded. "Don't you have anything to say?"

He looked at the face of the clock. It was almost eleven, just a few seconds before the hour. "All right. I'll wait until eleven. Then I want to hear what you have to say. You've been pretty quiet the last few weeks since she left."

He grinned wryly. "Maybe you don't like it here since she's gone." He scowled. "Well, I paid for you, and you're coming out whether you like it or not. You hear me?"

Eleven o'clock came. Far off, at the end of town, the great tower clock boomed sleepily to itself. But the little door remained shut. Nothing moved. The minute hand passed on and the cuckoo did not stir. He was someplace inside the clock, beyond the door, silent and remote.

"All right, if that's the way you feel," Larry murmured, his lips twisting. "But it isn't fair. It's your job to come out. We all have to do things we don't like."

He went unhappily into the kitchen and opened the great gleaming refrigerator. As he poured himself a drink he thought about the clock.

There was no doubt about it—the cuckoo should come out, Doris or no Doris. He had always liked her, from the very start. They had got along well, the two of them. Probably he liked Bob too—probably

he had seen enough of Bob to get to know him. They would be quite happy together, Bob and Doris and the cuckoo.

Larry finished his drink. He opened the drawer at the sink and took out the hammer. He carried it carefully into the dining-room. The clock was ticking gently to itself on the wall.

"Look," he said, waving the hammer. "You know what I have here? You know what I'm going to do with it? I'm going to start on you—first." He smiled. "Birds of a feather, that's what you are—the three of you."

The room was silent.

"Are you coming out? Or do I have to come in and get you?"

The clock whirled a little.

"I hear you in there. You've got a lot of talking to do, enough for the last three weeks. As I figure it, you owe me—"

The door opened. The cuckoo came out fast, straight at him. Larry was looking down, his brow wrinkled in thought. He glanced up, and the cuckoo caught him squarely in the eye.

Down he went, hammer and chair and everything, hitting the floor with a tremendous crash. For a moment the cuckoo paused, its small body poised rigidly. Then it went back inside its house. The door snapped tight-shut after it.

The man lay on the floor, stretched out grotesquely, his head bent over to one side. Nothing moved or stirred. The room was completely silent, except, of course, for the ticking of the clock.

---

"I see," Doris said, her face tight. Bob put his arm around her, steadying her.

"Doctor," Bob said, "can I ask you something?"

"Of course," the doctor said.

"Is it very easy to break your neck, falling from so low a chair? It wasn't very far to fall. I wonder if it might not have been an accident. Is there any chance it might have been—"

“Suicide?” the doctor rubbed his jaw. “I never heard of anyone committing suicide that way. It was an accident; I’m positive.”

“I don’t mean suicide,” Bob murmured under his breath, looking up at the clock on the wall. “I meant *something else*.”

But no one heard him.

**Philip Kindred Dick** (December 16, 1928 – March 2, 1982) was an American writer, who published works mainly belonging to the genre of science fiction. Dick explored philosophical, sociological and political themes in novels with plots dominated by monopolistic corporations, authoritarian governments, and altered states of consciousness. His work reflected his personal interest in metaphysics and theology, and often drew upon his life experiences in addressing the nature of reality, identity, drug abuse, paranoia, schizophrenia, and transcendental experiences.



PART IV

# MODULE 3: THE SHORT STORY





# 5. How to Analyze a Short Story

## What Is a Short Story?

A short story is a work of short, narrative prose that is usually centered around one single event. It is limited in scope and has an introduction, body and conclusion. Although a short story has much in common with a novel (See How to Analyze a Novel), it is written with much greater precision. You will often be asked to write a literary analysis. An analysis of a short story requires basic knowledge of literary elements. The following guide and questions may help you:



*Old Fence. A short story has a structure and a message. Can you analyze this picture in much the same way as a short story?*

## Setting

Setting is a description of where and when the story takes place. In a short story there are fewer settings compared to a novel. The time is more limited. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How is the setting created? Consider geography, weather, time

of day, social conditions, etc.

- What role does setting play in the story? Is it an important part of the plot or theme? Or is it just a backdrop against which the action takes place?

Study the time period, which is also part of the setting, and ask yourself the following:

- When was the story written?
- Does it take place in the present, the past, or the future?
- How does the time period affect the language, atmosphere or social circumstances of the short story?

## Characterization

Characterization deals with how the characters in the story are described. In short stories there are usually fewer characters compared to a novel. They usually focus on one central character or protagonist. Ask yourself the following:

- Who is the main character?
- Are the main character and other characters described through dialogue – by the way they speak (dialect or slang for instance)?
- Has the author described the characters by physical appearance, thoughts and feelings, and interaction (the way they act towards others)?
- Are they static/flat characters who do not change?
- Are they dynamic/round characters who DO change?
- What type of characters are they? What qualities stand out? Are they stereotypes?
- Are the characters believable?

## Plot and structure

The plot is the main sequence of events that make up the story. In short stories the plot is usually centered around one experience or significant moment. Consider the following questions:

- What is the most important event?
- How is the plot structured? Is it linear, chronological or does it move around?
- Is the plot believable?

## Narrator and Point of view

The narrator is the person telling the story. Consider this question: Are the narrator and the main character the same?

By point of view we mean from whose eyes the story is being told. Short stories tend to be told through one character's point of view. The following are important questions to consider:

- Who is the narrator or speaker in the story?
- Does the author speak through the main character?
- Is the story written in the first person "I" point of view?
- Is the story written in a detached third person "he/she" point of view?
- Is there an "all-knowing" third person who can reveal what all the characters are thinking and doing at all times and in all places?

## Conflict

Conflict or tension is usually the heart of the short story and is

related to the main character. In a short story there is usually one main struggle.

- How would you describe the main conflict?
- Is it an internal conflict within the character?
- Is it an external conflict caused by the surroundings or environment the main character finds himself/herself in?

## Climax

The climax is the point of greatest tension or intensity in the short story. It can also be the point where events take a major turn as the story races towards its conclusion. Ask yourself:

- Is there a turning point in the story?
- When does the climax take place?

## Theme

The theme is the main idea, lesson, or message in the short story. It may be an abstract idea about the human condition, society, or life. Ask yourself:

- How is the theme expressed?
- Are any elements repeated and therefore suggest a theme?
- Is there more than one theme?

## Style

The author's style has to do with the his or her vocabulary, use

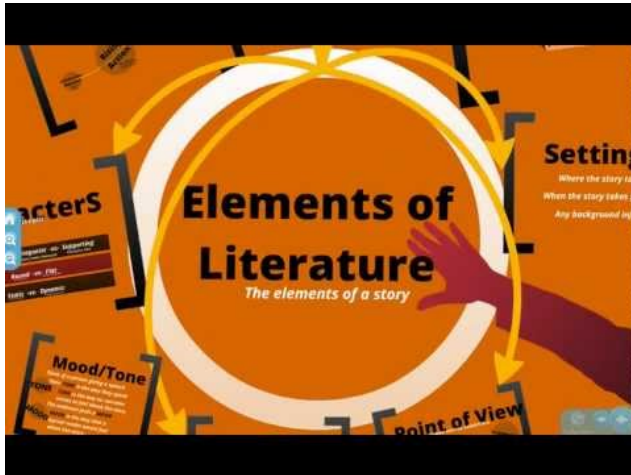
of imagery, tone, or the feeling of the story. It has to do with the author's attitude toward the subject. In some short stories the tone can be ironic, humorous, cold, or dramatic.

- Is the author's language full of figurative language?
- What images are used?
- Does the author use a lot of symbolism? Metaphors (comparisons that do not use "as" or "like") or similes (comparisons that use "as" or "like")?

Your literary analysis of a short story will often be in the form of an essay where you may be asked to give your opinions of the short story at the end. Choose the elements that made the greatest impression on you. Point out which character/characters you liked best or least and always support your arguments.

## 6. Elements of Literature

These are the Elements of Literature, the things that make up every story. This is the first of two videos.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/baycollegeintrolit/?p=27>

These are the elements of literature with Mr. Taylor.

[https://youtu.be/O7c\\_SjKcGbE](https://youtu.be/O7c_SjKcGbE)

## 7. Conflict

If stories were without conflicts or tension, we would be easily bored. The conflict is usually the heart of the story and revolves around the main character. What does Harry struggle with? The main conflict is Harry's attempt to stop Voldemort, the murderer of his parents, from stealing the Philosopher's Stone. So, it is a classical fight between good and evil forces. We also note that the world of the wizards clashes with the world of the Muggles, where the Muggles are represented by the stupid Dursleys. These are outer conflicts threatening Harry. However, there are also conflicts going on inside Harry; like, should he:

- Avenge the murder of his parents?
- Live by the wizard rules and obligations?
- Punish the Dursleys for treating him so badly?
- Boast of his skills and abilities?
- Be loyal to his friends?

Conflicts are important to stories to make them interesting.

There may be outer and inner conflicts.

Conflict: a struggle between opposing forces.

A conflict is a misunderstanding or clash of interests that develops in the story. This often occurs between main characters. It drives the story forward and creates suspense.

If a story had no conflict, it would be very boring. A conflict is basically a situation which has to change.

## Examples

In a story where someone finds a lump of gold, the conflicts will probably revolve around who gets to keep this gold. The conflict here would involve greed.

If a plane crashes in the mountains, the conflict will deal with survival.

But conflicts may also be on a personal level – like in novels where a person struggles with emotional issues or moral dilemmas.



## 8. Mary Shelley, "The Mortal Immortal," 1833

July 16, 1833. — This is a memorable anniversary for me; on it I complete my three hundred and twenty-third year!

The Wandering Jew? — certainly not. More than eighteen centuries have passed over his head. In comparison with him, I am a very young Immortal.

Am I, then, immortal? This is a question which I have asked myself, by day and night, for now three hundred and three years, and yet cannot answer it. I detected a grey hair amidst my brown locks this very day — that surely signifies decay. Yet it may have remained concealed there for three hundred years — for some persons have become entirely white-headed before twenty years of age.

I will tell my story, and my reader shall judge for me. I will tell my story, and so contrive to pass some few hours of a long eternity, become so wearisome to me. For ever! Can it be? to live for ever! I have heard of enchantments, in which the victims were plunged into a deep sleep, to wake, after a hundred years, as fresh as ever: I have heard of the Seven Sleepers — thus to be immortal would not be so burthensome: but, oh! the weight of never-ending time — the tedious passage of the still-succeeding hours! How happy was the fabled Nourjahad! — But to my task.

All the world has heard of Cornelius Agrippa. His memory is as immortal as his arts have made me. All the world has also heard of his scholar, who, unawares, raised the foul fiend during his master's absence, and was destroyed by him. The report, true or false, of this accident, was attended with many inconveniences to the renowned philosopher. All his scholars

at once deserted him — his servants disappeared. He had no one near him to put coals on his ever-burning fires while he slept, or to attend to the changeful colours of his medicines while he studied. Experiment after experiment failed, because one pair of hands was insufficient to complete them: the dark spirits laughed at him for not being able to retain a single mortal in his service.

I was then very young — very poor — and very much in love. I had been for about a year the pupil of Cornelius, though I was absent when this accident took place. On my return, my friends implored me not to return to the alchemist's abode. I trembled as I listened to the dire tale they told; I required no second warning; and when Cornelius came and offered me a purse of gold if I would remain under his roof, I felt as if Satan himself tempted me. My teeth chattered — my hair stood on end; — I ran off as fast as my trembling knees would permit.

My failing steps were directed whither for two years they had every evening been attracted, — a gently bubbling spring of pure living water, beside which lingered a dark-haired girl, whose beaming eyes were fixed on the path I was accustomed each night to tread. I cannot remember the hour when I did not love Bertha; we had been neighbours and playmates from infancy, — her parents, like mine were of humble life, yet respectable, — our attachment had been a source of pleasure to them. In an evil hour, a malignant fever carried off both her father and mother, and Bertha became an orphan. She would have found a home beneath my paternal roof, but, unfortunately, the old lady of the near castle, rich, childless, and solitary, declared her intention to adopt her. Henceforth Bertha was clad in silk — inhabited a marble palace — and was looked on as being highly favoured by fortune. But in her new situation among her new associates, Bertha remained true to the friend of her humbler days; she often visited the cottage of my father, and when forbidden to go thither, she would stray

towards the neighbouring wood, and meet me beside its shady fountain.

She often declared that she owed no duty to her new protectress equal in sanctity to that which bound us. Yet still I was too poor to marry, and she grew weary of being tormented on my account. She had a haughty but an impatient spirit, and grew angry at the obstacle that prevented our union. We met now after an absence, and she had been sorely beset while I was away; she complained bitterly, and almost reproached me for being poor. I replied hastily, —

“I am honest, if I am poor! — were I not, I might soon become rich!”

This exclamation produced a thousand questions. I feared to shock her by owning the truth, but she drew it from me; and then, casting a look of disdain on me, she said, —

“You pretend to love, and you fear to face the Devil for my sake!”

I protested that I had only dreaded to offend her; — while she dwelt on the magnitude of the reward that I should receive. Thus encouraged — shamed by her — led on by love and hope, laughing at my later fears, with quick steps and a light heart, I returned to accept the offers of the alchymist, and was instantly installed in my office.

A year passed away. I became possessed of no insignificant sum of money. Custom had banished my fears. In spite of the most painful vigilance, I had never detected the trace of a cloven foot; nor was the studious silence of our abode ever disturbed by demoniac howls. I still continued my stolen interviews with Bertha, and Hope dawned on me — Hope — but not perfect joy: for Bertha fancied that love and security were enemies, and her pleasure was to divide them in my bosom. Though true of heart, she was something of a coquette in manner; I was jealous as a Turk. She slighted me in a thousand ways, yet would never acknowledge herself to be

in the wrong. She would drive me mad with anger, and then force me to beg her pardon. Sometimes she fancied that I was not sufficiently submissive, and then she had some story of a rival, favoured by her protectress. She was surrounded by silk-clad youths — the rich and gay. What chance had the sad-robed scholar of Cornelius compared with these?

On one occasion, the philosopher made such large demands upon my time, that I was unable to meet her as I was wont. He was engaged in some mighty work, and I was forced to remain, day and night, feeding his furnaces and watching his chemical preparations. Bertha waited for me in vain at the fountain. Her haughty spirit fired at this neglect; and when at last I stole out during a few short minutes allotted to me for slumber, and hoped to be consoled by her, she received me with disdain, dismissed me in scorn, and vowed that any man should possess her hand rather than he who could not be in two places at once for her sake. She would be revenged! And truly she was. In my dingy retreat I heard that she had been hunting, attended by Albert Hoffer. Albert Hoffer was favoured by her protectress, and the three passed in cavalcade before my smoky window. Methought that they mentioned my name; it was followed by a laugh of derision, as her dark eyes glanced contemptuously towards my abode.

Jealousy, with all its venom and all its misery, entered my breast. Now I shed a torrent of tears, to think that I should never call her mine; and, anon, I imprecated a thousand curses on her inconstancy. Yet, still I must stir the fires of the alchymist, still attend on the changes of his unintelligible medicines.

Cornelius had watched for three days and nights, nor closed his eyes. The progress of his alembics was slower than he expected: in spite of his anxiety, sleep weighted upon his eyelids. Again and again he threw off drowsiness with more than human energy; again and again it stole away his senses.

He eyed his crucibles wistfully. "Not ready yet," he murmured; "will another night pass before the work is accomplished? Winzy, you are vigilant — you are faithful — you have slept, my boy — you slept last night. Look at that glass vessel. The liquid it contains is of a soft rose-colour: the moment it begins to change hue, awaken me — till then I may close my eyes. First, it will turn white, and then emit golden flashes; but wait not till then; when the rose-colour fades, rouse me." I scarcely heard the last words, muttered, as they were, in sleep. Even then he did not quite yield to nature. "Winzy, my boy," he again said, "do not touch the vessel — do not put it to your lips; it is a philtre — a philtre to cure love; you would not cease to love your Bertha — beware to drink!"

And he slept. His venerable head sunk on his breast, and I scarce heard his regular breathing. For a few minutes I watched the vessel — the rosy hue of the liquid remained unchanged. Then my thoughts wandered — they visited the fountain, and dwelt on a thousand charming scenes never to be renewed — never! Serpents and adders were in my heart as the word "Never!" half formed itself on my lips. False girl! — false and cruel! Never more would she smile on me as that evening she smiled on Albert. Worthless, detested woman! I would not remain unrevenged — she should see Albert expire at her feet — she should die beneath my vengeance. She had smiled in disdain and triumph — she knew my wretchedness and her power. Yet what power had she? — the power of exciting my hate — my utter scorn — my — oh, all but indifference! Could I attain that — could I regard her with careless eyes, transferring my rejected love to one fairer and more true, that were indeed a victory!

A bright flash darted before my eyes. I had forgotten the medicine of the adept; I gazed on it with wonder: flashes of admirable beauty, more bright than those which the diamond emits when the sun's rays are on it, glanced from the surface

of the liquid; and odour the most fragrant and grateful stole over my sense; the vessel seemed one globe of living radiance, lovely to the eye, and most inviting to the taste. The first thought, instinctively inspired by the grosser sense, was, I will — I must drink. I raised the vessel to my lips. "It will cure me of love — of torture!" Already I had quaffed half of the most delicious liquor ever tasted by the palate of man, when the philosopher stirred. I started — I dropped the glass — the fluid flamed and glanced along the floor, while I felt Cornelius's gripe at my throat, as he shrieked aloud, "Wretch! you have destroyed the labour of my life!"

The philosopher was totally unaware that I had drunk any portion of his drug. His idea was, and I gave a tacit assent to it, that I had raised the vessel from curiosity, and that, frightened at its brightness, and the flashes of intense light it gave forth, I had let it fall. I never undeceived him. The fire of the medicine was quenched — the fragrance died away — he grew calm, as a philosopher should under the heaviest trials, and dismissed me to rest.

I will not attempt to describe the sleep of glory and bliss which bathed my soul in paradise during the remaining hours of that memorable night. Words would be faint and shallow types of my enjoyment, or of the gladness that possessed my bosom when I woke. I trod air — my thoughts were in heaven. Earth appeared heaven, and my inheritance upon it was to be one trance of delight. "This it is to be cured of love," I thought; "I will see Bertha this day, and she will find her lover cold and regardless; too happy to be disdainful, yet how utterly indifferent to her!"

The hours danced away. The philosopher, secure that he had once succeeded, and believing that he might again, began to concoct the same medicine once more. He was shut up with his books and drugs, and I had a holiday. I dressed myself with care; I looked in an old but polished shield which served

me for a mirror; methoughts my good looks had wonderfully improved. I hurried beyond the precincts of the town, joy in my soul, the beauty of heaven and earth around me. I turned my steps toward the castle — I could look on its lofty turrets with lightness of heart, for I was cured of love. My Bertha saw me afar off, as I came up the avenue. I know not what sudden impulse animated her bosom, but at the sight, she sprung with a light fawn-like bound down the marble steps, and was hastening towards me. But I had been perceived by another person. The old high-born hag, who called herself her protectress, and was her tyrant, had seen me also; she hobbled, panting, up the terrace; a page, as ugly as herself, held up her train, and fanned her as she hurried along, and stopped my fair girl with a "How, now, my bold mistress? whither so fast? Back to your cage — hawks are abroad!"

Bertha clasped her hands — her eyes were still bent on my approaching figure. I saw the contest. How I abhorred the old crone who checked the kind impulses of my Bertha's softening heart. Hitherto, respect for her rank had caused me to avoid the lady of the castle; now I disdained such trivial considerations. I was cured of love, and lifted above all human fears; I hastened forwards, and soon reached the terrace. How lovely Bertha looked! her eyes flashing fire, her cheeks glowing with impatience and anger, she was a thousand times more graceful and charming than ever. I no longer loved — oh no! I adored — worshipped — idolized her!

She had that morning been persecuted, with more than usual vehemence, to consent to an immediate marriage with my rival. She was reproached with the encouragement that she had shown him — she was threatened with being turned out of doors with disgrace and shame. Her proud spirit rose in arms at the threat; but when she remembered the scorn that she had heaped upon me, and how, perhaps, she had thus lost one whom she now regarded as her only friend, she

wept with remorse and rage. At that moment I appeared. "Oh, Winzy!" she exclaimed, "take me to your mother's cot; swiftly let me leave the detested luxuries and wretchedness of this noble dwelling — take me to poverty and happiness."

I clasped her in my arms with transport. The old dame was speechless with fury, and broke forth into invective only when we were far on the road to my natal cottage. My mother received the fair fugitive, escaped from a gilt cage to nature and liberty, with tenderness and joy; my father, who loved her, welcomed her heartily; it was a day of rejoicing, which did not need the addition of the celestial potion of the alchymist to steep me in delight.

Soon after this eventful day, I became the husband of Bertha. I ceased to be the scholar of Cornelius, but I continued his friend. I always felt grateful to him for having, unaware, procured me that delicious draught of a divine elixir, which, instead of curing me of love (sad cure! solitary and joyless remedy for evils which seem blessings to the memory), had inspired me with courage and resolution, thus winning for me an inestimable treasure in my Bertha.

I often called to mind that period of trance-like inebriation with wonder. The drink of Cornelius had not fulfilled the task for which he affirmed that it had been prepared, but its effects were more potent and blissful than words can express. They had faded by degrees, yet they lingered long — and painted life in hues of splendour. Bertha often wondered at my lightness of heart and unaccustomed gaiety; for, before, I had been rather serious, or even sad, in my disposition. She loved me the better for my cheerful temper, and our days were winged by joy.

Five years afterwards I was suddenly summoned to the bedside of the dying Cornelius. He had sent for me in haste, conjuring my instant presence. I found him stretched on his pallet, enfeebled even to death; all of life that yet remained



animated his piercing eyes, and they were fixed on a glass vessel, full of roseate liquid.

"Behold," he said, in a broken and inward voice, "the vanity of human wishes! a second time my hopes are about to be crowned, a second time they are destroyed. Look at that liquor — you may remember five years ago I had prepared the same, with the same success; — then, as now, my thirsting lips expected to taste the immortal elixir — you dashed it from me! and at present it is too late."

He spoke with difficulty, and fell back on his pillow. I could not help saying, —

"How, revered master, can a cure for love restore you to life?"

A faint smile gleamed across his face as I listened earnestly to his scarcely intelligible answer.

"A cure for love and for all things — the Elixir of Immortality. Ah! if now I might drink, I should live for ever!"

As he spoke, a golden flash gleamed from the fluid; a well-remembered fragrance stole over the air; he raised himself, all weak as he was — strength seemed miraculously to re-enter his frame — he stretched forth his hand — a loud explosion startled me — a ray of fire shot up from the elixir, and the glass vessel which contained it was shivered to atoms! I turned my eyes towards the philosopher; he had fallen back — his eyes were glassy — his features rigid — he was dead!

But I lived, and was to live for ever! So said the unfortunate alchemist, and for a few days I believed his words. I remembered the glorious intoxication that had followed my stolen draught. I reflected on the change I had felt in my frame — in my soul. The bounding elasticity of the one — the buoyant lightness of the other. I surveyed myself in a mirror, and could perceive no change in my features during the space of the five years which had elapsed. I remembered the radiant hues and grateful scent of that delicious beverage

— worthy the gift it was capable of bestowing — I was, then, **IMMORTAL!**

A few days after I laughed at my credulity. The old proverb, that “a prophet is least regarded in his own country,” was true with respect to me and my defunct master. I loved him as a man — I respected him as a sage — but I derided the notion that he could command the powers of darkness, and laughed at the superstitious fears with which he was regarded by the vulgar. He was a wise philosopher, but had no acquaintance with any spirits but those clad in flesh and blood. His science was simply human; and human science, I soon persuaded myself, could never conquer nature’s laws so far as to imprison the soul for ever within its carnal habitation. Cornelius had brewed a soul-refreshing drink — more inebriating than wine — sweeter and more fragrant than any fruit: it possessed probably strong medicinal powers, imparting gladness to the heart and vigour to the limbs; but its effects would wear out; already they were diminished in my frame. I was a lucky fellow to have quaffed health and joyous spirits, and perhaps a long life, at my master’s hands; but my good fortune ended there: longevity was far different from immortality.

I continued to entertain this belief for many years. Sometimes a thought stole across me — Was the alchemist indeed deceived? But my habitual credence was, that I should meet the fate of all the children of Adam at my appointed time — a little late, but still at a natural age. Yet it was certain that I retained a wonderfully youthful look. I was laughed at for my vanity in consulting the mirror so often, but I consulted it in vain — my brow was untrenched — my cheeks — my eyes — my whole person continued as untarnished as in my twentieth year.

I was troubled. I looked at the faded beauty of Bertha — I seemed more like her son. By degrees our neighbors began to make similar observations, and I found at last that I went

by the name of the Scholar bewitched. Bertha herself grew uneasy. She became jealous and peevish, and at length she began to question me. We had no children; we were all in all to each other; and though, as she grew older, her vivacious spirit became a little allied to ill-temper, and her beauty sadly diminished, I cherished her in my heart as the mistress I idolized, the wife I had sought and won with such perfect love.

At last our situation became intolerable: Bertha was fifty — I twenty years of age. I had, in very shame, in some measure adopted the habits of advanced age; I no longer mingled in the dance among the young and gay, but my heart bounded along with them while I restrained my feet; and a sorry figure I cut among the Nestors of our village. But before the time I mention, things were altered — we were universally shunned; we were — at least, I was — reported to have kept up an iniquitous acquaintance with some of my former master's supposed friends. Poor Bertha was pitied, but deserted. I was regarded with horror and detestation.

What was to be done? we sat by our winter fire — poverty had made itself felt, for none would buy the produce of my farm; and often I had been forced to journey twenty miles to some place where I was not known, to dispose of our property. It is true, we had saved something for an evil day — that day was come.

We sat by our lone fireside — the old-hearted youth and his antiquated wife. Again Bertha insisted on knowing the truth; she recapitulated all she had ever heard said about me, and added her own observations. She conjured me to cast off the spell; she described how much more comely grey hairs were than my chestnut locks; she descanted on the reverence and respect due to age — how preferable to the slight regard paid to mere children: could I imagine that the despicable gifts of youth and good looks outweighed disgrace, hatred and scorn? Nay, in the end I should be burnt as a dealer

in the black art, while she, to whom I had not deigned to communicate any portion of my good fortune, might be stoned as my accomplice. At length she insinuated that I must share my secret with her, and bestow on her like benefits to those I myself enjoyed, or she would denounce me — and then she burst into tears.

Thus beset, methought it was the best way to tell the truth. I reveled it as tenderly as I could, and spoke only of a *very long life*, not of immortality — which representation, indeed, coincided best with my own ideas. When I ended I rose and said,—

“And now, my Bertha, will you denounce the lover of your youth? — You will not, I know. But it is too hard, my poor wife, that you should suffer for my ill-luck and the accursed arts of Cornelius. I will leave you — you have wealth enough, and friends will return in my absence. I will go; young as I seem and strong as I am, I can work and gain my bread among strangers, unsuspected and unknown. I loved you in youth; God is my witness that I would not desert you in age, but that your safety and happiness require it.”

I took my cap and moved toward the door; in a moment Bertha’s arms were round my neck, and her lips were pressed to mine. “No, my husband, my Winzy,” she said, “you shall not go alone — take me with you; we will remove from this place, and, as you say, among strangers we shall be unsuspected and safe. I am not so old as quite to shame you, my Winzy; and I daresay the charm will soon wear off, and, with the blessing of God, you will become more elderly-looking, as is fitting; you shall not leave me.”

I returned the good soul’s embrace heartily. “I will not, my Bertha; but for your sake I had not thought of such a thing. I will be your true, faithful husband while you are spared to me, and do my duty by you to the last.”

The next day we prepared secretly for our emigration. We

were obliged to make great pecuniary sacrifices — it could not be helped. We realized a sum sufficient, at least, to maintain us while Bertha lived; and, without saying adieu to any one, quitted our native country to take refuge in a remote part of western France.

It was a cruel thing to transport poor Bertha from her native village, and the friends of her youth, to a new country, new language, new customs. The strange secret of my destiny rendered this removal immaterial to me; but I compassionated her deeply, and was glad to perceive that she found compensation for her misfortunes in a variety of little ridiculous circumstances. Away from all tell-tale chroniclers, she sought to decrease the apparent disparity of our ages by a thousand feminine arts — rouge, youthful dress, and assumed juvenility of manner. I could not be angry. Did I not myself wear a mask? Why quarrel with hers, because it was less successful? I grieved deeply when I remembered that this was my Bertha, whom I had loved so fondly and won with such transport — the dark-eyed, dark-haired girl, with smiles of enchanting archness and a step like a fawn — this mincing, simpering, jealous old woman. I should have revered her grey locks and withered cheeks; but thus! — It was my work, I knew; but I did not the less deplore this type of human weakness.

Her jealousy never slept. Her chief occupation was to discover that, in spite of outward appearances, I was myself growing old. I verily believe that the poor soul loved me truly in her heart, but never had woman so tormenting a mode of displaying fondness. She would discern wrinkles in my face and decrepitude in my walk, while I bounded along in youthful vigour, the youngest looking of twenty youths. I never dared address another woman. On one occasion, fancying that the belle of the village regarded me with favouring eyes, she brought me a grey wig. Her constant discourse among her

acquaintances was, that though I looked so young, there was ruin at work within my frame; and she affirmed that the worst symptom about me was my apparent health. My youth was a disease, she said, and I ought at all times to prepare, if not for a sudden and awful death, at least to awake some morning white-headed and bowed down with all the marks of advanced years. I let her talk — I often joined in her conjectures. Her warnings chimed in with my never-ceasing speculations concerning my state, and I took an earnest, though painful, interest in listening to all that her quick wit and excited imagination could say on the subject.

Why dwell on these minute circumstances? We lived on for many long years. Bertha became bedrid and paralytic; I nursed her as a mother might a child. She grew peevish, and still harped upon one string — of how long I should survive her. It has ever been a source of consolation to me, that I performed my duty scrupulously towards her. She had been mine in youth, she was mine in age; and at last, when I heaped the sod over her corpse, I wept to feel that I had lost all that really bound me to humanity.

Since then how many have been my cares and woes, how few and empty my enjoyments! I pause here in my history — I will pursue it no further. A sailor without rudder or compass, tossed on a stormy sea — a traveller lost on a widespread heath, without landmark or stone to guide him — such I have been: more lost, more hopeless than either. A nearing ship, a gleam from some far cot, may save them; but I have no beacon except the hope of death.

Death! mysterious, ill-visaged friend of weak humanity! Why alone of all mortals have you cast me from your sheltering fold? Oh, for the peace of the grave! the deep silence of the iron-bound tomb! that thought would cease to work in my brain, and my heart beat no more with emotions varied only by new forms of sadness!

Am I immortal? I return to my first question. In the first place, is it not more probably that the beverage of the alchymist was fraught rather with longevity than eternal life? Such is my hope. And then be it remembered, that I only drank *half* of the potion prepared by him. Was not the whole necessary to complete the charm? To have drained half the Elixir of Immortality is but to be half-immortal — my For-ever is thus truncated and null.

But again, who shall number the years of the half of eternity? I often try to imagine by what rule the infinite may be divided. Sometimes I fancy age advancing upon me. One grey hair I have found. Fool! do I lament? Yes, the fear of age and death often creeps coldly into my heart; and the more I live, the more I dread death, even while I abhor life. Such an enigma is man — born to perish — when he wars, as I do, against the established laws of his nature.

But for this anomaly of feeling surely I might die: the medicine of the alchymist would not be proof against fire — sword — and the strangling waters. I have gazed upon the blue depths of many a placid lake, and the tumultuous rushing of many a mighty river, and have said, peace inhabits those waters; yet I have turned my steps away, to live yet another day. I have asked myself, whether suicide would be a crime in one to whom thus only the portals of the other world could be opened. I have done all, except presenting myself as a soldier or duelist, an objection of destruction to my — no, *not* my fellow mortals, and therefore I have shrunk away. They are not my fellows. The inextinguishable power of life in my frame, and their ephemeral existence, places us wide as the poles asunder. I could not raise a hand against the meanest or the most powerful among them.

Thus have I lived on for many a year — alone, and weary of myself — desirous of death, yet never dying — a mortal immortal. Neither ambition nor avarice can enter my mind,

and the ardent love that gnaws at my heart, never to be returned — never to find an equal on which to expend itself — lives there only to torment me.

This very day I conceived a design by which I may end all — without self-slaughter, without making another man a Cain — an expedition, which mortal frame can never survive, even endued with the youth and strength that inhabits mine. Thus I shall put my immortality to the test, and rest for ever — or return, the wonder and benefactor of the human species.

Before I go, a miserable vanity has caused me to pen these pages. I would not die, and leave no name behind. Three centuries have passed since I quaffed the fatal beverage; another year shall not elapse before, encountering gigantic dangers — warring with the powers of frost in their home — beset by famine, toil, and tempest — I yield this body, too tenacious a cage for a soul which thirsts for freedom, to the destructive elements of air and water; or, if I survive, my name shall be recorded as one of the most famous among the sons of men; and, my task achieved, I shall adopt more resolute means, and, by scattering and annihilating the atoms that compose my frame, set at liberty the life imprisoned within, and so cruelly prevented from soaring from this dim earth to a sphere more congenial to its immortal essence.

**Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley** (née **Godwin**; 30 August 1797 – 1 February 1851) was an English novelist, short story writer, dramatist, essayist, biographer, and travel writer, best known for her Gothic novel *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818). She also edited and promoted the works of her husband, the Romantic poet



and philosopher Percy Bysshe Shelley. Her father was the political philosopher William Godwin, and her mother was the philosopher and feminist Mary Wollstonecraft.



PART V

# MODULE 4: CHARACTERIZATION



## 9. Characters and Characterization

The characters are the persons that are involved in the story. Obviously, Harry Potter is the main character. The main character is often called the protagonist. Since *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is a novel, we meet many other characters as well. Look at the character list on [Sparknotes – Harry Potter](#). Which characters would you rank as the most important? It would be surprising if you did not include Harry's friends Ron and Hermione, his enemies Draco and the scary Voldemort, and not to forget "the good guys," Professor Dumbledore and the giant Hagrid.

How are the characters described? In the novel we are admitted to Harry's thoughts and fears and based on that, we can say something about Harry as well as his relationship with other characters.

Most novels will have a hero, a good guy. There is no doubt that Harry Potter is the hero and protagonist, and he has a lot of good friends. How do we know that they are good? We have to depend on information about looks, behavior and speech.

### Extracts from the Novel

Study the extracts and then answer the questions which follow.

Extracts from the first chapter of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* used in the analysis.

## Extract 1

If the motorcycle was huge, it was nothing to the man sitting astride it. He was almost twice as tall as a normal man and at least five times as wide. He looked simply too big to be allowed, and so wild – long tangles of bushy black hair and beard hid most of his face, he had hands the size of trash can lids, and his feet in their leather boots were like baby dolphins. In his vast, muscular arms he was holding a bundle of blankets.  
(Description of Hagrid)

## Extract 2

“S-s-sorry,” sobbed Hagrid, taking out a large, spotted handkerchief and burying his face in it. “But I c-c-can’t stand it – Lily and James dead – an’ poor little Harry off ter live with Muggles – ” (Hagrid talks about Harry’s dead parents and how he has to stay with the humans, the Muggles)

### Extract 3

“Yes, yes, it’s all very sad, but get a grip on yourself, Hagrid, or we’ll be found,” Professor McGonagall whispered, patting Hagrid gingerly on the arm as Dumbledore stepped over the low garden wall and walked to the front door. He laid Harry gently on the doorstep, took a letter out of his cloak, tucked it inside Harry’s blankets, and then came back to the other two. For a full minute the three of them stood and looked at the little bundle; Hagrid’s shoulders shook, Professor McGonagall blinked furiously, and the twinkling light that usually shone from Dumbledore’s eyes seemed to have gone out. (From the delivery of the orphan Harry at the Dursleys’ doorstep)

### Extract 4

“Look”– he murmured, holding out his arm to stop Malfoy. Something bright white was gleaming on the ground. They inched closer. It was the unicorn, all right, and it was dead. Harry had never seen anything so beautiful and sad. Its long, slender legs were stuck out at

odd angles where it had fallen and its mane was spread pearly white on the dark leaves. Harry had taken one step toward it when a slithering sound made him freeze where he stood. A bush on the edge of the clearing quivered... Then, out of the shadows, a hooded figure came crawling across the ground like some stalking beast. Harry, Malfoy, and Fang stood transfixed. The cloaked figure reached the unicorn, lowered its head over the wound in the animal's side, and began to drink its blood. (from the first time Harry meets Voldemort)

## *Exercises*

### *Study Extracts 1, 2 and 3*

1. How does the author introduce us to Hagrid and Professor Dumbledore? What kind of impression do you get? Do you like them? Why?
2. Describe in your own words Hagrid's looks.
3. How is speech used to describe the characters?

### *Villains/Antagonists*

In most novels we will also meet some “bad guys”. They



are often called villains or antagonists. How do we know that they are evil? Study **Extract 4** above.

1. Describe in your own words Voldemort's looks and behavior.
2. How does the author tell us that Voldemort is an evil character (an antagonist)?

### *Character Development*

Throughout the story Harry changes a lot. He develops from a loner into a sociable, more mature guy, and he also has to admit that he is mistaken. One of the characters that he thinks is “a bad guy” is actually “a good guy”! In most reports you will be asked to write a characterization of one of the main characters and to comment if they have changed, or not.

### *Terminology*

- The characters are the persons we meet in the story.
- A characterization is a description of the characters.
- The protagonist is the main character, often the hero of the story.
- The antagonist is the villain or enemy in the story.



## 10. Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour," 1894

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which someone was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair,

quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under the breath: “free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind

intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

“Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. “Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven’s sake open the door.”

“Go away. I am not making myself ill.” No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister’s importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister’s waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Someone was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine’s piercing cry; at Richards’ quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of the joy that kills.

**Kate Chopin**, born **Katherine O'Flaherty** (February 8, 1850 – August 22, 1904), was a U.S. author of short stories and novels. She is now considered by some<sup>to have</sup> been a forerunner of the feminist authors of the 20th century of Southern or Catholic background, such as Zelda Fitzgerald.

From 1892 to 1895, she wrote short stories for both children and adults that were published in such magazines as *Atlantic Monthly*, *Vogue*, *The Century Magazine*, and *The Youth's Companion*. Her major works were two short story collections, *Bayou Folk* (1894) and *A Night in Acadie* (1897). The characters in her stories are usually inhabitants of Louisiana. Many of her works are set in Natchitoches in north central Louisiana.

## II. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown," 1835

Young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village; but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, "prithee put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afeard of herself sometimes. Pray tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year."

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married?"

"Then God bless you!" said Faith, with the pink ribbons; "and may you find all well when you come back."

"Amen!" cried Goodman Brown. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee."

So they parted; and the young man pursued his way until, being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

"Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too.

Methought as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done tonight. But no, no; 't would kill her to think it. Well, she's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven."

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as could be; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead; so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

"There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman Brown to himself; and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, "What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!"

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and, looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree. He arose at Goodman Brown's approach and walked onward side by side with him.

"You are late, Goodman Brown," said he. "The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston, and that is full fifteen minutes ago."

"Faith kept me back a while," replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features. Still they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger, and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the



governor's dinner table or in King William's court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither. But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

"Come, Goodman Brown," cried his fellow-traveller, "this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary."

"Friend," said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter thou wot'st of."

"Sayest thou so?" replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go; and if I convince thee not thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet."

"Too far! too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept—"

"Such company, thou wouldst say," observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. "Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war. They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake."

"If it be as thou sayest," replied Goodman Brown, "I marvel they never spoke of these matters; or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumor of the sort would have driven them from New England.

We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness.”

“Wickedness or not,” said the traveller with the twisted staff, “I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me; the selectmen of divers towns make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The governor and I, too—But these are state secrets.”

“Can this be so?” cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion. “Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council; they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day.”

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity; but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

“Ha! ha! ha!” shouted he again and again; then composing himself, “Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but, prithee, don’t kill me with laughing.”

“Well, then, to end the matter at once,” said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, “there is my wife, Faith. It would break her dear little heart; and I’d rather break my own.”

“Nay, if that be the case,” answered the other, “e’en go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm.”

As he spoke he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

“A marvel, truly, that Goody Cloyse should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall,” said he. “But with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian

woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going."

"Be it so," said his fellow-traveller. "Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path."

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff's length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words—a prayer, doubtless—as she went. The traveller put forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent's tail.

"The devil!" screamed the pious old lady.

"Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?" observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick.

"Ah, forsooth, and is it your worship indeed?" cried the good dame. "Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But—would your worship believe it?—my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage, and cinquefoil, and wolf's bane."

"Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe," said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

"Ah, your worship knows the recipe," cried the old lady, cackling aloud. "So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it; for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion to-night. But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling."

"That can hardly be," answered her friend. "I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse; but here is my staff, if you will."

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment,

and, looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

“That old woman taught me my catechism,” said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew. The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week’s sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther.

“Friend,” said he, stubbornly, “my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven: is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her?”

“You will think better of this by and by,” said his acquaintance, composedly. “Sit here and rest yourself a while; and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along.”

Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom. The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the

guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man's hiding-place; but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the wayside, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tiptoe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

"Of the two, reverend sir," said the voice like the deacon's, "I had rather miss an ordination dinner than to-night's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of the Indian powwows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much deviltry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion."

"Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!" replied the solemn old tones of the minister. "Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the ground."

The hoofs clattered again; and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to

the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

“With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!” cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices. Once the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accents of towns-people of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never until now from a cloud of night. There was one voice of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favor, which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain; and all the unseen multitude, both saints and sinners, seemed to encourage her onward.

“Faith!” shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, “Faith! Faith!” as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy husband held his breath for a response. There was a scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter, as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and silent sky above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly down through the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon.

“My Faith is gone!” cried he, after one stupefied moment. “There

is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given.”

And, maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest path rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil. The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds—the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians; while sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

“Ha! ha! ha!” roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him.

“Let us hear which will laugh loudest. Think not to frighten me with your devilry. Come witch, come wizard, come Indian powwow, come devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fear you.”

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight. He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune; it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away,

and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful harmony together. Goodman Brown cried out, and his cry was lost to his own ear by its unison with the cry of the desert.

In the interval of silence he stole forward until the light glared full upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire, blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.

“A grave and dark-clad company,” quoth Goodman Brown.

In truth they were such. Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected



even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their pale-faced enemies were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

"But where is Faith?" thought Goodman Brown; and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled.

Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more. Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends. Verse after verse was sung; and still the chorus of the desert swelled between like the deepest tone of a mighty organ; and with the final peal of that dreadful anthem there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts, and every other voice of the unconcerted wilderness were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man in homage to the prince of all. The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke wreaths above the impious assembly. At the same moment the fire on the rock shot redly forth and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure. With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New England churches.

"Bring forth the converts!" cried a voice that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest.

At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could have well-nigh sworn that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms and led him to the

blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female, led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha Carrier, who had received the devil's promise to be queen of hell. A rampant hag was she. And there stood the proselytes beneath the canopy of fire.

"Welcome, my children," said the dark figure, "to the communion of your race. Ye have found thus young your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!"

They turned; and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend worshippers were seen; the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage.

"There," resumed the sable form, "are all whom ye have revered from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly. This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds: how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for widows' weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their fathers' wealth; and how fair damsels—blush not, sweet ones—have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest to an infant's funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places—whether in church, bedchamber, street, field, or forest—where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot. Far more than this. It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power—than my power at its utmost—can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other."

They did so; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

“Lo, there ye stand, my children,” said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race. “Depending upon one another’s hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream. Now are ye undeceived. Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race.”

“Welcome,” repeated the fiend worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the shape of evil dip his hand and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

“Faith! Faith!” cried the husband, “look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one.”

Whether Faith obeyed he knew not. Hardly had he spoken when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind which died heavily away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp; while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.

The next morning young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was taking a walk along the graveyard to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown. He shrank from the venerable saint as if to avoid an anathema. Old Deacon Gookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window. “What God doth the wizard pray to?”

quoth Goodman Brown. Goody Cloyse, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine at her own lattice, catechizing a little girl who had brought her a pint of morning's milk. Goodman Brown snatched away the child as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?

Be it so if you will; but, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit with power and fervid eloquence, and, with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often, waking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbors not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom.

**Nathaniel Hawthorne** (born **Nathaniel Hathorne**; July 4, 1804 – May 19, 1864) was an American novelist, Dark Romantic, and short story writer.

Much of Hawthorne's writing centers on New England, many works featuring moral allegories with a Puritan inspiration. His fiction works are considered part of the Romantic movement and, more specifically, Dark romanticism. His themes often center on the inherent evil and sin of humanity, and his works often have moral messages and deep psychological complexity.



PART VI

# MODULE 5: THE CHARACTER ANALYSIS





## 12. Writing an Introduction to a Literary Analysis Essay

This video discusses the steps to take when writing an introduction to a literary analysis paper.

[https://youtu.be/\\_p9FVfJ6urA](https://youtu.be/_p9FVfJ6urA)

## 13. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," 1892

It is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer.

A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity—but that would be asking too much of fate!

Still I will proudly declare that there is something queer about it.

Else, why should it be let so cheaply? And why have stood so long untenanted?

John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage.

John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures.

John is a physician, and PERHAPS—(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)—PERHAPS that is one reason I do not get well faster.

You see he does not believe I am sick!

And what can one do?

If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing.

So I take phosphates or phosphites—whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to “work” until I am well again.

Personally, I disagree with their ideas.

Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good.

But what is one to do?

I did write for a while in spite of them; but it DOES exhaust me a good deal—having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition.

I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus—but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad.

So I will let it alone and talk about the house.

The most beautiful place! It is quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. It makes me think of English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people.

There is a DELICIOUS garden! I never saw such a garden—large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them.

There were greenhouses, too, but they are all broken now.

There was some legal trouble, I believe, something about the heirs and coheirs; anyhow, the place has been empty for years.

That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid, but I don't care—there is something strange about the house—I can feel it.

I even said so to John one moonlight evening, but he said what I felt was a DRAUGHT, and shut the window.

I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition.

But John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself—before him, at least, and that makes me very tired.

I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it.

He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.

He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction.

I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more.

He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest and all the air I could get. "Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear," said he, "and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all the time." So we took the nursery at the top of the house.

It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls.

The paint and paper look as if a boys' school had used it. It is stripped off—the paper—in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life.

One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin.

It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions.

The color is repellent, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.

It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others.

No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long.

There comes John, and I must put this away,—he hates to have me write a word.

We have been here two weeks, and I haven't felt like writing before, since that first day.

I am sitting by the window now, up in this atrocious nursery, and

there is nothing to hinder my writing as much as I please, save lack of strength.

John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious.

I am glad my case is not serious!

But these nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing.

John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no REASON to suffer, and that satisfies him.

Of course it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way!

I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!

Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able,—to dress and entertain, and order things.

It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby!

And yet I CANNOT be with him, it makes me so nervous.

I suppose John never was nervous in his life. He laughs at me so about this wall-paper!

At first he meant to repaper the room, but afterwards he said that I was letting it get the better of me, and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies.

He said that after the wall-paper was changed it would be the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then that gate at the head of the stairs, and so on.

“You know the place is doing you good,” he said, “and really, dear, I don’t care to renovate the house just for a three months’ rental.”

“Then do let us go downstairs,” I said, “there are such pretty rooms there.”

Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose, and said he would go down to the cellar, if I wished, and have it whitewashed into the bargain.

But he is right enough about the beds and windows and things.

It is an airy and comfortable room as any one need wish, and, of course, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim.

I'm really getting quite fond of the big room, all but that horrid paper.

Out of one window I can see the garden, those mysterious deepshaded arbors, the riotous old-fashioned flowers, and bushes and gnarly trees.

Out of another I get a lovely view of the bay and a little private wharf belonging to the estate. There is a beautiful shaded lane that runs down there from the house. I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try.

I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me.

But I find I get pretty tired when I try.

It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work. When I get really well, John says we will ask Cousin Henry and Julia down for a long visit; but he says he would as soon put fireworks in my pillow-case as to let me have those stimulating people about now.

I wish I could get well faster.

But I must not think about that. This paper looks to me as if it KNEW what a vicious influence it had!

There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down.

I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where two breadths didn't match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other.

I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy store.

I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big, old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend.

I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hop into that chair and be safe.

The furniture in this room is no worse than inharmonious, however, for we had to bring it all from downstairs. I suppose when this was used as a playroom they had to take the nursery things out, and no wonder! I never saw such ravages as the children have made here.

The wall-paper, as I said before, is torn off in spots, and it sticketh closer than a brother—they must have had perseverance as well as hatred.

Then the floor is scratched and gouged and splintered, the plaster itself is dug out here and there, and this great heavy bed which is all we found in the room, looks as if it had been through the wars.

But I don't mind it a bit—only the paper.

There comes John's sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing.

She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick!

But I can write when she is out, and see her a long way off from these windows.

There is one that commands the road, a lovely shaded winding road, and one that just looks off over the country. A lovely country, too, full of great elms and velvet meadows.

This wall-paper has a kind of sub-pattern in a different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then.

But in the places where it isn't faded and where the sun is just so—I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design.

There's sister on the stairs!

Well, the Fourth of July is over! The people are gone and I am tired

out. John thought it might do me good to see a little company, so we just had mother and Nellie and the children down for a week.

Of course I didn't do a thing. Jennie sees to everything now.

But it tired me all the same.

John says if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall.

But I don't want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so!

Besides, it is such an undertaking to go so far.

I don't feel as if it was worth while to turn my hand over for anything, and I'm getting dreadfully fretful and querulous.

I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time.

Of course I don't when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone.

And I am alone a good deal just now. John is kept in town very often by serious cases, and Jennie is good and lets me alone when I want her to.

So I walk a little in the garden or down that lovely lane, sit on the porch under the roses, and lie down up here a good deal.

I'm getting really fond of the room in spite of the wall-paper. Perhaps BECAUSE of the wall-paper.

It dwells in my mind so!

I lie here on this great immovable bed—it is nailed down, I believe—and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we'll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I WILL follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion.

I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of.

It is repeated, of course, by the breadths, but not otherwise.

Looked at in one way each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes—a kind of "debased Romanesque" with



delirium tremens—go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity.

But, on the other hand, they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase.

The whole thing goes horizontally, too, at least it seems so, and I exhaust myself in trying to distinguish the order of its going in that direction.

They have used a horizontal breadth for a frieze, and that adds wonderfully to the confusion.

There is one end of the room where it is almost intact, and there, when the crosslights fade and the low sun shines directly upon it, I can almost fancy radiation after all,—the interminable grotesques seem to form around a common centre and rush off in headlong plunges of equal distraction.

It makes me tired to follow it. I will take a nap I guess.

I don't know why I should write this.

I don't want to.

I don't feel able.

And I know John would think it absurd. But I MUST say what I feel and think in some way—it is such a relief!

But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief.

Half the time now I am awfully lazy, and lie down ever so much.

John says I musn't lose my strength, and has me take cod liver oil and lots of tonics and things, to say nothing of ale and wine and rare meat.

Dear John! He loves me very dearly, and hates to have me sick. I tried to have a real earnest reasonable talk with him the other day, and tell him how I wish he would let me go and make a visit to Cousin Henry and Julia.

But he said I wasn't able to go, nor able to stand it after I got there; and I did not make out a very good case for myself, for I was crying before I had finished.

It is getting to be a great effort for me to think straight. Just this nervous weakness I suppose.

And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sat by me and read to me till it tired my head.

He said I was his darling and his comfort and all he had, and that I must take care of myself for his sake, and keep well.

He says no one but myself can help me out of it, that I must use my will and self-control and not let any silly fancies run away with me.

There's one comfort, the baby is well and happy, and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wall-paper.

If we had not used it, that blessed child would have! What a fortunate escape! Why, I wouldn't have a child of mine, an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds.

I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all, I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see.

Of course I never mention it to them any more—I am too wise,—but I keep watch of it all the same.

There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will.

Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.

It is always the same shape, only very numerous.

And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder—I begin to think—I wish John would take me away from here!

It is so hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so.

But I tried it last night.

It was moonlight. The moon shines in all around just as the sun does.

I hate to see it sometimes, it creeps so slowly, and always comes in by one window or another.

John was asleep and I hated to waken him, so I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wall-paper till I felt creepy.

The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.

I got up softly and went to feel and see if the paper DID move, and when I came back John was awake.

"What is it, little girl?" he said. "Don't go walking about like that—you'll get cold."

I thought it was a good time to talk, so I told him that I really was not gaining here, and that I wished he would take me away.

"Why darling!" said he, "our lease will be up in three weeks, and I can't see how to leave before.

"The repairs are not done at home, and I cannot possibly leave town just now. Of course if you were in any danger, I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you."

"I don't weigh a bit more," said I, "nor as much; and my appetite may be better in the evening when you are here, but it is worse in the morning when you are away!"

"Bless her little heart!" said he with a big hug, "she shall be as sick as she pleases! But now let's improve the shining hours by going to sleep, and talk about it in the morning!"

"And you won't go away?" I asked gloomily.

"Why, how can I, dear? It is only three weeks more and then we will take a nice little trip of a few days while Jennie is getting the house ready. Really dear you are better!"

"Better in body perhaps—" I began, and stopped short, for he sat up straight and looked at me with such a stern, reproachful look that I could not say another word.

"My darling," said he, "I beg of you, for my sake and for our child's sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter your mind! There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so?"

So of course I said no more on that score, and we went to sleep before long. He thought I was asleep first, but I wasn't, and lay there

for hours trying to decide whether that front pattern and the back pattern really did move together or separately.

On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind.

The color is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing.

You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well underway in following, it turns a back-somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream.

The outside pattern is a florid arabesque, reminding one of a fungus. If you can imagine a toadstool in joints, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions—why, that is something like it.

That is, sometimes!

There is one marked peculiarity about this paper, a thing nobody seems to notice but myself, and that is that it changes as the light changes.

When the sun shoots in through the east window—I always watch for that first long, straight ray—it changes so quickly that I never can quite believe it.

That is why I watch it always.

By moonlight—the moon shines in all night when there is a moon—I wouldn't know it was the same paper.

At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candle light, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.

I didn't realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind, that dim sub-pattern, but now I am quite sure it is a woman.

By daylight she is subdued, quiet. I fancy it is the pattern that keeps her so still. It is so puzzling. It keeps me quiet by the hour.

I lie down ever so much now. John says it is good for me, and to sleep all I can.

Indeed he started the habit by making me lie down for an hour after each meal.

It is a very bad habit I am convinced, for you see I don't sleep.  
And that cultivates deceit, for I don't tell them I'm awake—O no!  
The fact is I am getting a little afraid of John.

He seems very queer sometimes, and even Jennie has an inexplicable look.

It strikes me occasionally, just as a scientific hypothesis,—that perhaps it is the paper!

I have watched John when he did not know I was looking, and come into the room suddenly on the most innocent excuses, and I've caught him several times LOOKING AT THE PAPER! And Jennie too. I caught Jennie with her hand on it once.

She didn't know I was in the room, and when I asked her in a quiet, a very quiet voice, with the most restrained manner possible, what she was doing with the paper—she turned around as if she had been caught stealing, and looked quite angry—asked me why I should frighten her so!

Then she said that the paper stained everything it touched, that she had found yellow smooches on all my clothes and John's, and she wished we would be more careful!

Did not that sound innocent? But I know she was studying that pattern, and I am determined that nobody shall find it out but myself!

Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see I have something more to expect, to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better, and am more quiet than I was.

John is so pleased to see me improve! He laughed a little the other day, and said I seemed to be flourishing in spite of my wall-paper.

I turned it off with a laugh. I had no intention of telling him it was BECAUSE of the wall-paper—he would make fun of me. He might even want to take me away.

I don't want to leave now until I have found it out. There is a week more, and I think that will be enough.

I'm feeling ever so much better! I don't sleep much at night, for it is so interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal in the daytime.

In the daytime it is tiresome and perplexing.

There are always new shoots on the fungus, and new shades of yellow all over it. I cannot keep count of them, though I have tried conscientiously.

It is the strangest yellow, that wall-paper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw—not beautiful ones like buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things.

But there is something else about that paper—the smell! I noticed it the moment we came into the room, but with so much air and sun it was not bad. Now we have had a week of fog and rain, and whether the windows are open or not, the smell is here.

It creeps all over the house.

I find it hovering in the dining-room, skulking in the parlor, hiding in the hall, lying in wait for me on the stairs.

It gets into my hair.

Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it—there is that smell!

Such a peculiar odor, too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like.

It is not bad—at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met.

In this damp weather it is awful, I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me.

It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house—to reach the smell.

But now I am used to it. The only thing I can think of that it is like is the COLOR of the paper! A yellow smell.

There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mopboard. A streak that runs round the room. It goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even SMOOCH, as if it had been rubbed over and over.

I wonder how it was done and who did it, and what they did it for. Round and round and round—round and round and round—it makes me dizzy!

I really have discovered something at last.

Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out.

The front pattern DOES move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it!

Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over.

Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard.

And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern—it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads.

They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down, and makes their eyes white!

If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be half so bad.

I think that woman gets out in the daytime!

And I'll tell you why—privately—I've seen her!

I can see her out of every one of my windows!

It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight.

I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes she hides under the blackberry vines.

I don't blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight!

I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once.

And John is so queer now, that I don't want to irritate him. I wish he would take another room! Besides, I don't want anybody to get that woman out at night but myself.

I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows at once.

But, turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of one at one time.

And though I always see her, she MAY be able to creep faster than I can turn!

I have watched her sometimes away off in the open country, creeping as fast as a cloud shadow in a high wind.

If only that top pattern could be gotten off from the under one! I mean to try it, little by little.

I have found out another funny thing, but I shan't tell it this time! It does not do to trust people too much.

There are only two more days to get this paper off, and I believe John is beginning to notice. I don't like the look in his eyes.

And I heard him ask Jennie a lot of professional questions about me. She had a very good report to give.

She said I slept a good deal in the daytime.

John knows I don't sleep very well at night, for all I'm so quiet!

He asked me all sorts of questions, too, and pretended to be very loving and kind.

As if I couldn't see through him!

Still, I don't wonder he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months.

It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jennie are secretly affected by it.

Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. John is to stay in town over night, and won't be out until this evening.

Jennie wanted to sleep with me—the sly thing! but I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for a night all alone.

That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.

I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper.

A strip about as high as my head and half around the room.

And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me, I declared I would finish it to-day!

We go away to-morrow, and they are moving all my furniture down again to leave things as they were before.

Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it out of pure spite at the vicious thing.



She laughed and said she wouldn't mind doing it herself, but I must not get tired.

How she betrayed herself that time!

But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me—not ALIVE!

She tried to get me out of the room—it was too patent! But I said it was so quiet and empty and clean now that I believed I would lie down again and sleep all I could; and not to wake me even for dinner—I would call when I woke.

So now she is gone, and the servants are gone, and the things are gone, and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we found on it.

We shall sleep downstairs to-night, and take the boat home to-morrow.

I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again.

How those children did tear about here!

This bedstead is fairly gnawed!

But I must get to work.

I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path.

I don't want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes.

I want to astonish him.

I've got a rope up here that even Jennie did not find. If that woman does get out, and tries to get away, I can tie her!

But I forgot I could not reach far without anything to stand on!

This bed will NOT move!

I tried to lift and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little piece at one corner—but it hurt my teeth.

Then I peeled off all the paper I could reach standing on the floor. It sticks horribly and the pattern just enjoys it! All those strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths just shriek with derision!

I am getting angry enough to do something desperate. To jump

out of the window would be admirable exercise, but the bars are too strong even to try.

Besides I wouldn't do it. Of course not. I know well enough that a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued.

I don't like to LOOK out of the windows even—there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast.

I wonder if they all come out of that wall-paper as I did?

But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope—you don't get ME out in the road there!

I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard!

It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please!

I don't want to go outside. I won't, even if Jennie asks me to.

For outside you have to creep on the ground, and everything is green instead of yellow.

But here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way.

Why there's John at the door!

It is no use, young man, you can't open it!

How he does call and pound!

Now he's crying for an axe.

It would be a shame to break down that beautiful door!

"John dear!" said I in the gentlest voice, "the key is down by the front steps, under a plantain leaf!"

That silenced him for a few moments.

Then he said—very quietly indeed, "Open the door, my darling!"

"I can't," said I. "The key is down by the front door under a plantain leaf!"

And then I said it again, several times, very gently and slowly, and said it so often that he had to go and see, and he got it of course, and came in. He stopped short by the door.

"What is the matter?" he cried. "For God's sake, what are you doing!"

I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder.

"I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!"

Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!

**Charlotte Perkins Gilman** (July 3, 1860 – August 17, 1935) was a prominent American feminist, sociologist, novelist, writer of short stories, poetry, and nonfiction, and a lecturer for social reform. She was a utopian feminist during a time when her accomplishments were exceptional for women, and she served as a role model for future generations of feminists because of her unorthodox concepts and lifestyle. Her best remembered work today is her semi-autobiographical short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" which she wrote after a severe bout of postpartum psychosis.

## 14. Arthur Conan Doyle, "Scandal in Bohemia," 1891

To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen; but, as a lover, he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer. They were admirable things for the observer—excellent for drawing the veil from men's motives and actions. But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament was to introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results. Grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one of his own high-power lenses, would not be more disturbing than a strong emotion in a nature such as his. And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory.

I had seen little of Holmes lately. My marriage had drifted us away from each other. My own complete happiness, and the home-centred interests which rise up around the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment, were sufficient to absorb all my attention; while Holmes, who loathed every form of society with his whole Bohemian soul, remained in our lodgings in Baker-street, buried among his old books, and alternating from week to week between cocaine and ambition, the drowsiness of the drug, and the fierce energy of his own keen nature. He was still, as ever, deeply attracted by the study of crime, and occupied his immense faculties and extraordinary powers of observation in following out

those clues, and clearing up those mysteries, which had been abandoned as hopeless by the official police. From time to time I heard some vague account of his doings: of his summons to Odessa in the case of the Trepoff murder, of his clearing up of the singular tragedy of the Atkinson brothers at Trincomalee, and finally of the mission which he had accomplished so delicately and successfully for the reigning family of Holland. Beyond these signs of his activity, however, which I merely shared with all the readers of the daily press, I knew little of my former friend and companion.

One night—it was on the 20th of March, 1888—I was returning from a journey to a patient (for I had now returned to civil practice), when my way led me through Baker-street. As I passed the well-remembered door, which must always be associated in my mind with my wooing, and with the dark incidents of the Study in Scarlet, I was seized with a keen desire to see Holmes again, and to know how he was employing his extraordinary powers. His rooms were brilliantly lit, and, even as I looked up, I saw his tall spare figure pass twice in a dark silhouette against the blind. He was pacing the room swiftly, eagerly, with his head sunk upon his chest and his hands clasped behind him. To me, who knew his every mood and habit, his attitude and manner told their own story. He was at work again. He had risen out of his drug-created dreams and was hot upon the scent of some new problem. I rang the bell, and was shown up to the chamber which had formerly been in part my own.

His manner was not effusive. It seldom was; but he was glad, I think, to see me. With hardly a word spoken, but with a kindly eye, he waved me to an armchair, threw across his case of cigars, and indicated a spirit case and a gasogene in the corner. Then he stood before the fire and looked me over in his singular introspective fashion.

“Wedlock suits you,” he remarked. “I think, Watson, that you have put on seven and a half pounds since I saw you.”

“Seven,” I answered.

“Indeed, I should have thought a little more. Just a trifle more, I

fancy, Watson. And in practice again, I observe. You did not tell me that you intended to go into harness."

"Then, how do you know?"

"I see it, I deduce it. How do I know that you have been getting yourself very wet lately, and that you have a most clumsy and careless servant girl?"

"My dear Holmes," said I, "this is too much. You would certainly have been burned, had you lived a few centuries ago. It is true that I had a country walk on Thursday and came home in a dreadful mess; but, as I have changed my clothes, I can't imagine how you deduce it. As to Mary Jane, she is incorrigible, and my wife has given her notice; but there again I fail to see how you work it out."

He chuckled to himself and rubbed his long nervous hands together.

"It is simplicity itself," said he; "my eyes tell me that on the inside of your left shoe, just where the firelight strikes it, the leather is scored by six almost parallel cuts. Obviously they have been caused by someone who has very carelessly scraped round the edges of the sole in order to remove crusted mud from it. Hence, you see, my double deduction that you had been out in vile weather, and that you had a particularly malignant boot-slitting specimen of the London slavey. As to your practice, if a gentleman walks into my rooms smelling of iodoform, with a black mark of nitrate of silver upon his right fore-finger, and a bulge on the side of his top-hat to show where he has secreted his stethoscope, I must be dull indeed, if I do not pronounce him to be an active member of the medical profession."

I could not help laughing at the ease with which he explained his process of deduction. "When I hear you give your reasons," I remarked, "the thing always appears to me to be so ridiculously simple that I could easily do it myself, though at each successive instance of your reasoning I am baffled until you explain your process. And yet I believe that my eyes are as good as yours."

"Quite so," he answered, lighting a cigarette, and throwing himself down into an armchair. "You see, but you do not observe. The

distinction is clear. For example, you have frequently seen the steps which lead up from the hall to this room."

"Frequently."

"How often?"

"Well, some hundreds of times."

"Then how many are there?"

"How many! I don't know."

"Quite so! You have not observed. And yet you have seen. That is just my point. Now, I know that there are seventeen steps, because I have both seen and observed. By the way, since you are interested in these little problems, and since you are good enough to chronicle one or two of my trifling experiences, you may be interested in this." He threw over a sheet of thick, pink-tinted notepaper which had been lying open upon the table. "It came by the last post," said he. "Read it aloud."

The note was undated, and without either signature or address.

"There will call upon you to-night, at a quarter to eight o'clock," it said, "a gentleman who desires to consult you upon a matter of the very deepest moment. Your recent services to one of the royal houses of Europe have shown that you are one who may safely be trusted with matters which are of an importance which can hardly be exaggerated. This account of you we have from all quarters received. Be in your chamber then at that hour, and do not take it amiss if your visitor wear a mask."

"This is indeed a mystery," I remarked. "What do you imagine that it means?"

"I have no data yet. It is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts. But the note itself. What do you deduce from it?"

I carefully examined the writing, and the paper upon which it was written.

"The man who wrote it was presumably well to do," I remarked, endeavouring to imitate my companion's processes. "Such paper

could not be bought under half a crown a packet. It is peculiarly strong and stiff.”

“Peculiar—that is the very word,” said Holmes. “It is not an English paper at all. Hold it up to the light.”

I did so, and saw a large E with a small g, a P, and a large G with a small t woven into the texture of the paper.

“What do you make of that?” asked Holmes.

“The name of the maker, no doubt; or his monogram, rather.”

“Not at all. The G with the small t stands for ‘Gesellschaft,’ which is the German for ‘Company.’ It is a customary contraction like our ‘Co.’ P, of course, stands for ‘Papier.’ Now for the Eg. Let us glance at our *Continental Gazetteer*.” He took down a heavy brown volume from his shelves. “Eglow, Eglonitz—here we are, Egria. It is in a German-speaking country—in [Bohemia](#), not far from Carlsbad. ‘Remarkable as being the scene of the death of [Wallenstein](#), and for its numerous glass factories and paper mills.’ Ha, ha, my boy, what do you make of that?” His eyes sparkled, and he sent up a great blue triumphant cloud from his cigarette.

“The paper was made in Bohemia,” I said.

“Precisely. And the man who wrote the note is a German. Do you note the peculiar construction of the sentence—‘This account of you we have from all quarters received.’ A Frenchman or Russian could not have written that. It is the German who is so uncourteous to his verbs. It only remains, therefore, to discover what is wanted by this German who writes upon Bohemian paper, and prefers wearing a mask to showing his face. And here he comes, if I am not mistaken, to resolve all our doubts.”

As he spoke there was the sharp sound of horses’ hoofs and grating wheels against the curb, followed by a sharp pull at the bell. Holmes whistled.

“A pair, by the sound,” said he. “Yes,” he continued, glancing out of the window. “A nice little brougham and a pair of beauties. A hundred and fifty guineas apiece. There’s money in this case, Watson, if there is nothing else.”

“I think that I had better go, Holmes.”



"Not a bit, Doctor. Stay where you are. I am lost without my [Boswell](#). And this promises to be interesting. It would be a pity to miss it."

"But your client—"

"Never mind him. I may want your help, and so may he. Here he comes. Sit down in that armchair, Doctor, and give us your best attention."

A slow and heavy step, which had been heard upon the stairs and in the passage, paused immediately outside the door. Then there was a loud and authoritative tap.

"Come in!" said Holmes.

A man entered who could hardly have been less than six feet six inches in height, with the chest and limbs of a Hercules. His dress was rich with a richness which would, in England, be looked upon as akin to bad taste. Heavy bands of Astrakhan were slashed across the sleeves and fronts of his double-breasted coat, while the deep blue cloak which was thrown over his shoulders was lined with flame-coloured silk, and secured at the neck with a brooch which consisted of a single flaming beryl. Boots which extended half way up his calves, and which were trimmed at the tops with rich brown fur, completed the impression of barbaric opulence which was suggested by his whole appearance. He carried a broad-brimmed hat in his hand, while he wore across the upper part of his face, extending down past the cheek-bones, a black vizard mask, which he had apparently adjusted that very moment, for his hand was still raised to it as he entered. From the lower part of the face he appeared to be a man of strong character, with a thick, hanging lip, and a long, straight chin suggestive of resolution pushed to the length of obstinacy.

"You had my note?" he asked, with a deep harsh voice and a strongly marked German accent. "I told you that I would call." He looked from one to the other of us, as if uncertain which to address.

"Pray take a seat," said Holmes. "This is my friend and colleague, Dr. Watson, who is occasionally good enough to help me in my cases. Whom have I the honour to address?"

"You may address me as the Count Von Kramm, a Bohemian nobleman. I understand that this gentleman, your friend, is a man of honour and discretion, whom I may trust with a matter of the most extreme importance. If not, I should much prefer to communicate with you alone."

I rose to go, but Holmes caught me by the wrist and pushed me back into my chair. "It is both, or none," said he. "You may say before this gentleman anything which you may say to me."

The Count shrugged his broad shoulders. "Then I must begin," said he, "by binding you both to absolute secrecy for two years, at the end of that time the matter will be of no importance. At present it is not too much to say that it is of such weight it may have an influence upon European history."

"I promise," said Holmes.

"And I."

"You will excuse this mask," continued our strange visitor. "The august person who employs me wishes his agent to be unknown to you, and I may confess at once that the title by which I have just called myself is not exactly my own."

"I was aware of it," said Holmes dryly.

"The circumstances are of great delicacy, and every precaution has to be taken to quench what might grow to be an immense scandal and seriously compromise one of the reigning families of Europe. To speak plainly, the matter implicates the great House of Ormstein, hereditary kings of Bohemia."

"I was also aware of that," murmured Holmes, settling himself down in his armchair and closing his eyes.

Our visitor glanced with some apparent surprise at the languid, lounging figure of the man who had been no doubt depicted to him as the most incisive reasoner, and most energetic agent in Europe. Holmes slowly reopened his eyes, and looked impatiently at his gigantic client.

"If your Majesty would condescend to state your case," he remarked, "I should be better able to advise you."

The man sprang from his chair and paced up and down the room

in uncontrollable agitation. Then, with a gesture of desperation, he tore the mask from his face and hurled it upon the ground. "You are right," he cried, "I am the King. Why should I attempt to conceal it?"

"Why, indeed?" murmured Holmes. "Your Majesty had not spoken before I was aware that I was addressing Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein, and hereditary King of Bohemia."

"But you can understand," said our strange visitor, sitting down once more and passing his hand over his high white forehead, "you can understand that I am not accustomed to doing such business in my own person. Yet the matter was so delicate that I could not confide it to an agent without putting myself in his power. I have come *incognito* from Prague for the purpose of consulting you."

"Then, pray consult," said Holmes, shutting his eyes once more.

"The facts are briefly these: Some five years ago, during a lengthy visit to Warsaw, I made the acquaintance of the well-known adventuress, Irene Adler. The name is no doubt familiar to you."

"Kindly look her up in my index, Doctor," murmured Holmes, without opening his eyes. For many years he had adopted a system of docketing all paragraphs concerning men and things, so that it was difficult to name a subject or a person on which he could not at once furnish information. In this case I found her biography sandwiched in between that of a Hebrew Rabbi and that of a staff-commander who had written a monograph upon the deep sea fishes.

"Let me see?" said Holmes. "Hum! Born in New Jersey in the year 1858. Contralto—hum! La Scala, hum! Prima donna Imperial Opera of Warsaw—yes! Retired from operatic stage—ha! Living in London—quite so! Your Majesty, as I understand, became entangled with this young person, wrote her some compromising letters, and is now desirous of getting those letters back."

"Precisely so. But how—"

"Was there a secret marriage?"

"None."

"No legal papers or certificates?"

"None."

"Then I fail to follow your Majesty. If this young person should produce her letters for blackmailing or other purposes, how is she to prove their authenticity?"

"There is the writing."

"Pooh, pooh! Forgery."

"My private notepaper."

"Stolen."

"My own seal."

"Imitated."

"My photograph."

"Bought."

"We were both in the photograph."

"Oh, dear! That is very bad! Your Majesty has indeed committed an indiscretion."

"I was mad—insane."

"You have compromised yourself seriously."

"I was only Crown Prince then. I was young. I am but thirty now."

"It must be recovered."

"We have tried and failed."

"Your Majesty must pay. It must be bought."

"She will not sell."

"Stolen, then."

"Five attempts have been made. Twice burglars in my pay ransacked her house. Once we diverted her luggage when she travelled. Twice she has been waylaid. There has been no result."

"No sign of it?"

"Absolutely none."

Holmes laughed. "It is quite a pretty little problem," said he.

"But a very serious one to me," returned the King, reproachfully.

"Very, indeed. And what does she propose to do with the photograph?"

"To ruin me."

"But how?"

"I am about to be married."

"So I have heard."

"To Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen, second daughter of the King of Scandinavia. You may know the strict principles of her family. She is herself the very soul of delicacy. A shadow of a doubt as to my conduct would bring the matter to an end."

"And Irene Adler?"

"Threatens to send them the photograph. And she will do it. I know that she will do it. You do not know her, but she has a soul of steel. She has the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men. Rather than I should marry another woman, there are no lengths to which she would not go—none."

"You are sure that she has not sent it yet?"

"I am sure."

"And why?"

"Because she has said that she would send it on the day when the betrothal was publicly proclaimed. That will be next Monday."

"Oh, then we have three days yet," said Holmes, with a yawn. "That is very fortunate, as I have one or two matters of importance to look into just at present. Your Majesty will, of course, stay in London for the present?"

"Certainly. You will find me at the Langham, under the name of the Count Von Kramm."

"Then I shall drop you a line to let you know how we progress."

"Pray do so. I shall be all anxiety."

"Then, as to money?"

"You have *carte blanche*."

"Absolutely?"

"I tell you that I would give one of the provinces of my kingdom to have that photograph."

"And for present expenses?"

The King took a heavy chamois leather bag from under his cloak, and laid it on the table.

"There are three hundred pounds in gold, and seven hundred in notes," he said.

Holmes scribbled a receipt upon a sheet of his note-book, and handed it to him.

"And mademoiselle's address?" he asked.

"Is Briony Lodge, Serpentine-avenue, St. John's Wood."

Holmes took a note of it. "One other question," said he. "Was the photograph a cabinet?"

"It was."

"Then, good night, your Majesty, and I trust that we shall soon have some good news for you. And good night, Watson," he added, as the wheels of the Royal brougham rolled down the street. "If you will be good enough to call to-morrow afternoon at three o'clock, I should like to chat this little matter over with you."

## II.[\[edit\]](#)

At three o'clock precisely I was at Baker-street, but Holmes had not yet returned. The landlady informed me that he had left the house shortly after eight o'clock in the morning. I sat down beside the fire, however, with the intention of awaiting him, however long he might be. I was already deeply interested in his inquiry, for, though it was surrounded by none of the grim and strange features which were associated with the two crimes which I have already recorded, still, the nature of the case and the exalted station of his client gave it a character of its own. Indeed, apart from the nature of the investigation which my friend had on hand, there was something in his masterly grasp of a situation, and his keen, incisive reasoning, which made it a pleasure to me to study his system of work, and to follow the quick, subtle methods by which he disentangled the most inextricable mysteries. So accustomed was I to his invariable success that the very possibility of his failing had ceased to enter into my head.

It was close upon four before the door opened, and a drunken-looking groom, ill-kempt and side-whiskered, with an inflamed face

and disreputable clothes, walked into the room. Accustomed as I was to my friend's amazing powers in the use of disguises, I had to look three times before I was certain that it was indeed he. With a nod he vanished into the bedroom, whence he emerged in five minutes tweed-suited and respectable, as of old. Putting his hands into his pockets, he stretched out his legs in front of the fire, and laughed heartily for some minutes.

"Well, really!" he cried, and then he choked; and laughed again until he was obliged to lie back, limp and helpless, in the chair.

"What is it?"

"It's quite too funny. I am sure you could never guess how I employed my morning, or what I ended by doing."

"I can't imagine. I suppose that you have been watching the habits, and perhaps the house, of Miss Irene Adler."

"Quite so, but the sequel was rather unusual. I will tell you, however. I left the house a little after eight o'clock this morning, in the character of a groom out of work. There is a wonderful sympathy and freemasonry among horsey men. Be one of them, and you will know all that there is to know. I soon found Briony Lodge. It is a *bijou* villa, with a garden at the back, but built out in front right up to the road, two stories. Chubb lock to the door. Large sitting-room on the right side, well furnished, with long windows almost to the floor, and those preposterous English window fasteners which a child could open. Behind there was nothing remarkable, save that the passage window could be reached from the top of the coach-house. I walked round it and examined it closely from every point of view, but without noting anything else of interest.

"I then lounged down the street, and found, as I expected, that there was a mews in a lane which runs down by one wall of the garden. I lent the ostlers a hand in rubbing down their horses, and I received in exchange twopence, a glass of half-and-half, two fills of shag tobacco, and as much information as I could desire about Miss Adler, to say nothing of half a dozen other people in the neighbourhood in whom I was not in the least interested, but whose biographies I was compelled to listen to."

"And what of Irene Adler?" I asked.

"Oh, she has turned all the men's heads down in that part. She is the daintiest thing under a bonnet on this planet. So say the Serpentine-mews, to a man. She lives quietly, sings at concerts, drives out at five every day, and returns at seven sharp for dinner. Seldom goes out at other times, except when she sings. Has only one male visitor, but a good deal of him. He is dark, handsome, and dashing; never calls less than once a day, and often twice. He is a Mr. Godfrey Norton, of the Inner Temple. See the advantages of a cabman as a confidant. They had driven him home a dozen times from Serpentine-mews, and knew all about him. When I had listened to all they had to tell, I began to walk up and down near Briony Lodge once more, and to think over my plan of campaign.

"This Godfrey Norton was evidently an important factor in the matter. He was a lawyer. That sounded ominous. What was the relation between them, and what the object of his repeated visits? Was she his client, his friend, or his mistress? If the former, she had probably transferred the photograph to his keeping. If the latter, it was less likely. On the issue of this question depended whether I should continue my work at Briony Lodge, or turn my attention to the gentleman's chambers in the Temple. It was a delicate point, and it widened the field of my inquiry. I fear that I bore you with these details, but I have to let you see my little difficulties, if you are to understand the situation."

"I am following you closely," I answered.

"I was still balancing the matter in my mind, when a hansom cab drove up to Briony Lodge, and a gentleman sprang out. He was a remarkably handsome man, dark, aquiline, and moustached—evidently the man of whom I had heard. He appeared to be in a great hurry, shouted to the cabman to wait, and brushed past the maid who opened the door with the air of a man who was thoroughly at home.

"He was in the house about half an hour, and I could catch glimpses of him, in the windows of the sitting-room, pacing up and down, talking excitedly and waving his arms. Of her I could



see nothing. Presently he emerged, looking even more flurried than before. As he stepped up to the cab, he pulled a gold watch from his pocket and looked at it earnestly. 'Drive like the devil,' he shouted, 'first to Gross & Hankey's in Regent-street, and then to the Church of St. Monica in the Edgware-road. Half a guinea if you do it in twenty minutes!'

"Away they went, and I was just wondering whether I should not do well to follow them, when up the lane came a neat little landau, the coachman with his coat only half buttoned, and his tie under his ear, while all the tags of his harness were sticking out of the buckles. It hadn't pulled up before she shot out of the hall door and into it. I only caught a glimpse of her at the moment, but she was a lovely woman, with a face that a man might die for.

"'The Church of St. Monica, John,' she cried, 'and half a sovereign if you reach it in twenty minutes.'

"This was quite too good to lose, Watson. I was just balancing whether I should run for it, or whether I should perch behind her landau, when a cab came through the street. The driver looked twice at such a shabby fare; but I jumped in before he could object. 'The Church of St. Monica,' said I, 'and half a sovereign if you reach it in twenty minutes.' It was twenty-five minutes to twelve, and of course it was clear enough what was in the wind.

"My cabby drove fast. I don't think I ever drove faster, but the others were there before us. The cab and the landau with their steaming horses were in front of the door when I arrived. I paid the man, and hurried into the church. There was not a soul there save the two whom I had followed and a surpliced clergyman, who seemed to be expostulating with them. They were all three standing in a knot in front of the altar. I lounged up the side aisle like any other idler who has dropped into a church. Suddenly, to my surprise, the three at the altar faced round to me, and Godfrey Norton came running as hard as he could towards me."

"Thank God!" he cried. "You'll do. Come! Come!"

"What then?" I asked.

"Come man, come, only three minutes, or it won't be legal."

I was half dragged up to the altar, and, before I knew where I was, I found myself mumbling responses which were whispered in my ear, and vouching for things of which I knew nothing, and generally assisting in the secure tying up of Irene Adler, spinster, to Godfrey Norton, bachelor. It was all done in an instant, and there was the gentleman thanking me on the one side and the lady on the other, while the clergyman beamed on me in front. It was the most preposterous position in which I ever found myself in my life, and it was the thought of it that started me laughing just now. It seems that there had been some informality about their license, that the clergyman absolutely refused to marry them without a witness of some sort, and that my lucky appearance saved the bridegroom from having to sally out into the streets in search of a best man. The bride gave me a sovereign, and I mean to wear it on my watch chain in memory of the occasion."

"This is a very unexpected turn of affairs," said I; "and what then?"

"Well, I found my plans very seriously menaced. It looked as if the pair might take an immediate departure, and so necessitate very prompt and energetic measures on my part. At the church door, however, they separated, he driving back to the Temple, and she to her own house. 'I shall drive out in the Park at five as usual,' she said as she left him. I heard no more. They drove away in different directions, and I went off to make my own arrangements."

"Which are?"

"Some cold beef and a glass of beer," he answered, ringing the bell. "I have been too busy to think of food, and I am likely to be busier still this evening. By the way, Doctor, I shall want your co-operation."

"I shall be delighted."

"You don't mind breaking the law?"

"Not in the least."

"Nor running a chance of arrest?"

"Not in a good cause."

"Oh, the cause is excellent!"

"Then I am your man."

"I was sure that I might rely on you."

"But what is it you wish?"

"When Mrs. Turner has brought in the tray I will make it clear to you. Now," he said, as he turned hungrily on the simple fare that our landlady had provided, "I must discuss it while I eat, for I have not much time. It is nearly five now. In two hours we must be on the scene of action. Miss Irene, or Madame, rather, returns from her drive at seven. We must be at Briony Lodge to meet her."

"And what then?"

"You must leave that to me. I have already arranged what is to occur. There is only one point on which I must insist. You must not interfere, come what may. You understand?"

"I am to be neutral?"

"To do nothing whatever. There will probably be some small unpleasantness. Do not join in it. It will end in my being conveyed into the house. Four or five minutes afterwards the sitting-room window will open. You are to station yourself close to that open window."

"Yes."

"You are to watch me, for I will be visible to you."

"Yes."

"And when I raise my hand—so—you will throw into the room what I give you to throw, and will, at the same time, raise the cry of fire. You quite follow me?"

"Entirely."

"It is nothing very formidable," he said, taking a long cigar-shaped roll from his pocket. "It is an ordinary plumber's smoke-rocket, fitted with a cap at either end to make it self-lighting. Your task is confined to that. When you raise your cry of fire, it will be taken up by quite a number of people. You may then walk to the end of the street, and I will rejoin you in ten minutes. I hope that I have made myself clear?"

"I am to remain neutral, to get near the window, to watch you, and, at the signal, to throw in this object, then to raise the cry of fire, and to wait you at the corner of the street."

"Precisely."

"Then you may entirely rely on me."

"That is excellent. I think perhaps it is almost time that I prepare for the new rôle I have to play."

He disappeared into his bedroom, and returned in a few minutes in the character of an amiable and simple-minded Nonconformist clergyman. His broad black hat, his baggy trousers, his white tie, his sympathetic smile, and general look of peering and benevolent curiosity were such as Mr. [John Hare](#) alone could have equalled. It was not merely that Holmes changed his costume. His expression, his manner, his very soul seemed to vary with every fresh part that he assumed. The stage lost a fine actor, even as science lost an acute reasoner, when he became a specialist in crime.

It was a quarter past six when we left Baker-street, and it still wanted ten minutes to the hour when we found ourselves in Serpentine-avenue. It was already dusk, and the lamps were just being lighted as we paced up and down in front of Briony Lodge, waiting for the coming of its occupant. The house was just such as I had pictured it from Sherlock Holmes' succinct description, but the locality appeared to be less private than I expected. On the contrary, for a small street in a quiet neighbourhood, it was remarkably animated. There was a group of shabbily-dressed men smoking and laughing in a corner, a scissors grinder with his wheel, two guardsmen who were flirting with a nurse-girl, and several well-dressed young men who were lounging up and down with cigars in their mouths.

"You see," remarked Holmes, as we paced to and fro in front of the house, "this marriage rather simplifies matters. The photograph becomes a double-edged weapon now. The chances are that she would be as averse to its being seen by Mr. Godfrey Norton, as our client is to its coming to the eyes of his Princess. Now the question is—Where are we to find the photograph?"

"Where, indeed?"

"It is most unlikely that she carries it about with her. It is cabinet size. Too large for easy concealment about a woman's dress. She knows that the King is capable of having her waylaid and searched.

Two attempts of the sort have already been made. We may take it then that she does not carry it about with her."

"Where, then?"

"Her banker or her lawyer. There is that double possibility. But I am inclined to think neither. Women are naturally secretive, and they like to do their own secreting. Why should she hand it over to anyone else? She could trust her own guardianship, but she could not tell what indirect or political influence might be brought to bear upon a business man. Besides, remember that she had resolved to use it within a few days. It must be where she can lay her hands upon it. It must be in her own house."

"But it has twice been burgled."

"Pshaw! They did not know how to look."

"But how will you look?"

"I will not look."

"What then?"

"I will get her to show me."

"But she will refuse."

"She will not be able to. But I hear the rumble of wheels. It is her carriage. Now carry out my orders to the letter."

As he spoke the gleam of the sidelights of a carriage came round the curve of the avenue. It was a smart little landau which rattled up to the door of Briony Lodge. As it pulled up one of the loafing men at the corner dashed forward to open the door in the hope of earning a copper, but was elbowed away by another loafer who had rushed up with the same intention. A fierce quarrel broke out, which was increased by the two guardsmen, who took sides with one of the loungers, and by the scissors grinder, who was equally hot upon the other side. A blow was struck, and in an instant the lady, who had stepped from her carriage, was the centre of a little knot of flushed and struggling men who struck savagely at each other with their fists and sticks. Holmes dashed into the crowd to protect the lady; but, just as he reached her, he gave a cry and dropped to the ground, with the blood running freely down his face. At his fall the guardsmen took to their heels in one direction and the loungers

in the other, while a number of better dressed people, who had watched the scuffle without taking part in it, crowded in to help the lady and to attend to the injured man. Irene Adler, as I will still call her, had hurried up the steps; but she stood at the top with her superb figure outlined against the lights of the hall, looking back into the street.

"Is the poor gentleman much hurt?" she asked.

"He is dead," cried several voices.

"No, no, there's life in him," shouted another. "But he'll be gone before you can get him to hospital."

"He's a brave fellow," said a woman. "They would have had the lady's purse and watch if it hadn't been for him. They were a gang, and a rough one too. Ah, he's breathing now."

"He can't lie in the street. May we bring him in, marm?"

"Surely. Bring him into the sitting-room. There is a comfortable sofa. This way, please!"

Slowly and solemnly he was borne into Briony Lodge, and laid out in the principal room, while I still observed the proceedings from my post by the window. The lamps had been lit, but the blinds had not been drawn, so that I could see Holmes as he lay upon the couch. I do not know whether he was seized with compunction at that moment for the part he was playing, but I know that I never felt more heartily ashamed of myself in my life than when I saw the beautiful creature against whom I was conspiring, or the grace and kindness with which she waited upon the injured man. And yet it would be the blackest treachery to Holmes to draw back now from the part which he had entrusted to me. I hardened my heart, and took the smoke-rocket from under my ulster. After all, I thought, we are not injuring her. We are but preventing her from injuring another.

Holmes had sat up upon the couch, and I saw him motion like a man who is in need of air. A maid rushed across and threw open the window. At the same instant I saw him raise his hand, and at the signal I tossed my rocket into the room with a cry of "Fire." The word was no sooner out of my mouth than the whole crowd

of spectators, well dressed and ill-gentlemen, ostlers, and servant maids—joined in a general shriek of “Fire.” Thick clouds of smoke curled through the room and out at the open window. I caught a glimpse of rushing figures, and a moment later the voice of Holmes from within, assuring them that it was a false alarm. Slipping through the shouting crowd I made my way to the corner of the street, and in ten minutes was rejoiced to find my friend’s arm in mine, and to get away from the scene of uproar. He walked swiftly and in silence for some few minutes, until we had turned down one of the quiet streets which lead towards the Edgware-road.

“You did it very nicely, Doctor,” he remarked. “Nothing could have been better. It is all right.”

“You have the photograph!”

“I know where it is.”

“And how did you find out?”

“She showed me, as I told you that she would.”

“I am still in the dark.”

“I do not wish to make a mystery,” said he laughing. “The matter was perfectly simple. You, of course, saw that everyone in the street was an accomplice. They were all engaged for the evening.”

“I guessed as much.”

“Then, when the row broke out, I had a little moist red paint in the palm of my hand. I rushed forward, fell down, clapped my hand to my face, and became a piteous spectacle. It is an old trick.”

“That also I could fathom.”

“Then they carried me in. She was bound to have me in. What else could she do? And into her sitting-room, which was the very room which I suspected. It lay between that and her bedroom, and I was determined to see which. They laid me on a couch, I motioned for air, they were compelled to open the window, and you had your chance.”

“How did that help you?”

“It was all-important. When a woman thinks that her house is on fire, her instinct is at once to rush to the thing which she values most. It is a perfectly overpowering impulse, and I have more than

once taken advantage of it. In the case of the Darlington Substitution Scandal it was of use to me, and also in the Arnsworth Castle business. A married woman grabs at her baby—an unmarried one reaches for her jewel box. Now it was clear to me that our lady of to-day had nothing in the house more precious to her than what we are in quest of. She would rush to secure it. The alarm of fire was admirably done. The smoke and shouting were enough to shake nerves of steel. She responded beautifully. The photograph is in a recess behind a sliding panel just above the right bell pull. She was there in an instant, and I caught a glimpse of it as she half drew it out. When I cried out that it was a false alarm, she replaced it, glanced at the rocket, rushed from the room, and I have not seen her since. I rose, and, making my excuses, escaped from the house. I hesitated whether to attempt to secure the photograph at once; but the coachman had come in, and, as he was watching me narrowly, it seemed safer to wait. A little over-precipitance may ruin all."

"And now?" I asked.

"Our quest is practically finished. I shall call with the King to-morrow, and with you, if you care to come with us. We will be shown into the sitting-room to wait for the lady, but it is probable that when she comes she may find neither us nor the photograph. It might be a satisfaction to His Majesty to regain it with his own hands."

"And when will you call?"

"At eight in the morning. She will not be up, so that we shall have a clear field. Besides, we must be prompt, for this marriage may mean a complete change in her life and habits. I must wire to the King without delay."

We had reached Baker-street, and had stopped at the door. He was searching his pockets for the key, when someone passing said:—

"Good-night, Mister Sherlock Holmes."

There were several people on the pavement at the time, but the greeting appeared to come from a slim youth in an ulster who had hurried by.



"I've heard that voice before," said Holmes, staring down the dimly lit street. "Now, I wonder who the deuce that could have been."

### III.[\[edit\]](#)

I slept at Baker-street that night, and we were engaged upon our toast and coffee in the morning when the King of Bohemia rushed into the room.

"You have really got it!" he cried, grasping Sherlock Holmes by either shoulder, and looking eagerly into his face.

"Not yet."

"But you have hopes?"

"I have hopes."

"Then, come. I am all impatience to be gone."

"We must have a cab."

"No, my brougham is waiting."

"Then that will simplify matters." We descended, and started off once more for Briony Lodge.

"Irene Adler is married," remarked Holmes.

"Married! When?"

"Yesterday."

"But to whom?"

"To an English lawyer named Norton."

"But she could not love him?"

"I am in hopes that she does."

"And why in hopes?"

"Because it would spare your Majesty all fear of future annoyance. If the lady loves her husband, she does not love your Majesty. If she does not love your Majesty, there is no reason why she should interfere with your Majesty's plan."

"It is true. And yet—! Well! I wish she had been of my own station! What a queen she would have made!" He relapsed into a moody

silence which was not broken, until we drew up in Serpentine-avenue.

The door of Briony Lodge was open, and an elderly woman stood upon the steps. She watched us with a sardonic eye as we stepped from the brougham.

"Mr. Sherlock Holmes, I believe?" said she.

"I am Mr. Holmes," answered my companion, looking at her with a questioning and rather startled gaze.

"Indeed! My mistress told me that you were likely to call. She left this morning with her husband, by the 5.15 train from Charing-cross, for the Continent."

"What!" Sherlock Holmes staggered back, white with chagrin and surprise. "Do you mean that she has left England?"

"Never to return."

"And the papers?" asked the King, hoarsely. "All is lost."

"We shall see." He pushed past the servant, and rushed into the drawing-room, followed by the King and myself. The furniture was scattered about in every direction, with dismantled shelves, and open drawers, as if the lady had hurriedly ransacked them before her flight. Holmes rushed at the bell-pull, tore back a small sliding shutter, and, plunging in his hand, pulled out a photograph and a letter. The photograph was of Irene Adler herself in evening dress, the letter was superscribed to "Sherlock Holmes, Esq. To be left till called for." My friend tore it open, and we all three read it together. It was dated at midnight of the preceding night, and ran in this way:—

"My Dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes,—You really did it very well. You took me in completely. Until after the alarm of fire, I had not a suspicion. But then, when I found how I had betrayed myself, I began to think. I had been warned against you months ago. I had been told that, if the King employed an agent, it would certainly be you. And your address had been given me. Yet, with all this, you made me reveal what you wanted to know. Even after I became suspicious, I found it hard to think evil of such a dear, kind old clergyman. But, you know, I have been trained as an actress myself. Male costume is nothing new to me. I often take advantage of the

freedom which it gives. I sent John, the coachman, to watch you, ran up stairs, got into my walking clothes, as I call them, and came down just as you departed.

“Well, I followed you to your door, and so made sure that I was really an object of interest to the celebrated Mr. Sherlock Holmes. Then I, rather imprudently, wished you good night, and started for the Temple to see my husband.

“We both thought the best resource was flight, when pursued by so formidable an antagonist; so you will find the nest empty when you call to-morrow. As to the photograph, your client may rest in peace. I love and am loved by a better man than he. The King may do what he will without hindrance from one whom he has cruelly wronged. I keep it only to safeguard myself, and to preserve a weapon which will always secure me from any steps which he might take in the future. I leave a photograph which he might care to possess; and I remain, dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes, very truly yours,

“Irene Norton, *née* Adler.”

“What a woman—oh, what a woman!” cried the King of Bohemia, when we had all three read this epistle. “Did I not tell you how quick and resolute she was? Would she not have made an admirable queen? Is it not a pity that she was not on my level?”

“From what I have seen of the lady, she seems, indeed, to be on a very different level to your Majesty,” said Holmes, coldly. “I am sorry that I have not been able to bring your Majesty’s business to a more successful conclusion.”

“On the contrary, my dear sir,” cried the King. “Nothing could be more successful. I know that her word is inviolate. The photograph is now as safe as if it were in the fire.”

“I am glad to hear your Majesty say so.”

“I am immensely indebted to you. Pray tell me in what way I can reward you. This ring—.” He slipped an emerald snake ring from his finger, and held it out upon the palm of his hand.

“Your Majesty has something which I should value even more highly,” said Holmes.

"You have but to name it."

"This photograph!"

The King stared at him in amazement.

"Irene's photograph!" he cried. "Certainly, if you wish it."

"I thank your Majesty. Then there is no more to be done in the matter. I have the honour to wish you a very good morning." He bowed, and, turning away without observing the hand which the King had stretched out to him, he set off in my company for his chambers.

And that was how a great scandal threatened to affect the kingdom of Bohemia, and how the best plans of Mr. Sherlock Holmes were beaten by a woman's wit. He used to make merry over the cleverness of women, but I have not heard him do it of late. And when he speaks of Irene Adler, or when he refers to her photograph, it is always under the honourable title of *the* woman.

**Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle** (22 May 1859 – 7 July 1930) was a Scottish writer and physician, most noted for creating the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes and writing stories about him which are generally considered milestones in the field of crime fiction.

He is also known for writing the fictional adventures of a second character he invented, Professor Challenger, and for popularizing the mystery of the *Mary Celeste*. He was a prolific writer whose other works include fantasy and science fiction stories, plays, romances, poetry, non-fiction and historical novels.

PART VII

# MODULE 6: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND FICTION



# 15. Symbols in Literature

What is a symbol? How are they used in literature? How can you interpret them and how do they relate to theme? Take a minute to learn more here!

<https://youtu.be/SydKhlUmfqQ>

# 16. Symbolism

A short video explaining symbols in literature.

<https://youtu.be/-mjkj36hY-4>

Definition of symbolism with examples of poems using symbolism.

<https://youtu.be/nl2bmY2XnMk>



## 17. Kelly Link, "The Specialist's Hat," 1998

When you're Dead," Samantha says, "you don't have to brush your teeth . . ."

"When you're Dead," Claire says, "you live in a box, and it's always dark, but you're not ever afraid."

Claire and Samantha are identical twins. Their combined age is twenty years, four months, and six days. Claire is better at being Dead than Samantha.

The babysitter yawns, covering up her mouth with a long white hand. "I said to brush your teeth and that it's time for bed," she says. She sits crosslegged on the flowered bedspread between them. She has been teaching them a card game called Pounce, which involves three decks of cards, one for each of them. Samantha's deck is missing the Jack of Spades and the Two of Hearts, and Claire keeps on cheating. The babysitter wins anyway. There are still flecks of dried shaving cream and toilet paper on her arms. It is hard to tell how old she is—at first they thought she must be a grownup, but now she hardly looks older than they. Samantha has forgotten the babysitter's name.

Claire's face is stubborn. "When you're Dead," she says, "you stay up all night long."

"When you're dead," the babysitter snaps, "it's always very cold and damp, and you have to be very, very quiet or else the Specialist will get you."

"This house is haunted," Claire says.

"I know it is," the babysitter says. "I used to live here."

*Something is creeping up the stairs,  
Something is standing outside the door,  
Something is sobbing, sobbing in the dark;  
Something is sighing across the floor.*

Claire and Samantha are spending the summer with their father, in the house called Eight Chimneys. Their mother is dead. She has been dead for exactly 282 days.

Their father is writing a history of Eight Chimneys and of the poet Charles Cheatham Rash, who lived here at the turn of the century, and who ran away to sea when he was thirteen, and returned when he was thirty-eight. He married, fathered a child, wrote three volumes of bad, obscure poetry, and an even worse and more obscure novel, *The One Who is Watching Me Through the Window*, before disappearing again in 1907, this time for good. Samantha and Claire's father says that some of the poetry is actually quite readable and at least the novel isn't very long.

When Samantha asked him why he was writing about Rash, he replied that no one else had and why didn't she and Samantha go play outside. When she pointed out that she was Samantha, he just scowled and said how could he be expected to tell them apart when they both wore blue jeans and flannel shirts, and why couldn't one of them dress all in green and the other in pink?

Claire and Samantha prefer to play inside. Eight Chimneys is as big as a castle, but dustier and darker than Samantha imagines a castle would be. There are more sofas, more china shepherdesses with chipped fingers, fewer suits of armor. No moat.

The house is open to the public, and, during the day, people—families—driving along the Blue Ridge Parkway will stop to tour the grounds and the first story; the third story belongs to Claire and Samantha. Sometimes they play explorers, and sometimes they follow the caretaker as he gives tours to visitors. After a few weeks, they have memorized his lecture, and they mouth it along with him. They help him sell postcards and copies of Rash's poetry to the tourist families who come into the little gift shop.

When the mothers smile at them and say how sweet they are, they stare back and don't say anything at all. The dim light in the house makes the mothers look pale and flickery and tired. They leave Eight Chimneys, mothers and families, looking not quite as real as they did before they paid their admissions, and of course

Claire and Samantha will never see them again, so maybe they aren't real. Better to stay inside the house, they want to tell the families, and if you must leave, then go straight to your cars.

The caretaker says the woods aren't safe.

Their father stays in the library on the second story all morning, typing, and in the afternoon he takes long walks. He takes his pocket recorder along with him and a hip flask of Gentleman Jack, but not Samantha and Claire.

The caretaker of Eight Chimneys is Mr. Coeslak. His left leg is noticeably shorter than his right. He wears one stacked heel. Short black hairs grow out of his ears and his nostrils and there is no hair at all on top of his head, but he's given Samantha and Claire permission to explore the whole of the house. It was Mr. Coeslak who told them that there are copperheads in the woods, and that the house is haunted. He says they are all, ghosts and snakes, a pretty bad tempered lot, and Samantha and Claire should stick to the marked trails, and stay out of the attic.

Mr. Coeslak can tell the twins apart, even if their father can't; Claire's eyes are grey, like a cat's fur, he says, but Samantha's are gray, like the ocean when it has been raining.

Samantha and Claire went walking in the woods on the second day that they were at Eight Chimneys. They saw something. Samantha thought it was a woman, but Claire said it was a snake. The staircase that goes up to the attic has been locked. They peeked through the keyhole, but it was too dark to see anything.

*And so he had a wife, and they say she was real pretty. There was another man who wanted to go with her, and first she wouldn't, because she was afraid of her husband, and then she did. Her husband found out, and they say he killed a snake and got some of this snake's blood and put it in some whiskey and gave it to her. He had learned this from an island man who had been on a ship with him. And in about six months snakes created in her and they got between her meat and the skin. And they say you could just see them running up and down her legs. They say she was*

*just hollow to the top of her body, and it kept on like that till she died. Now my daddy said he saw it.*

—An Oral History of Eight Chimneys

Eight Chimneys is over two hundred years old. It is named for the eight chimneys that are each big enough that Samantha and Claire can both fit in one fireplace. The chimneys are red brick, and on each floor there are eight fireplaces, making a total of twenty-four. Samantha imagines the chimney stacks stretching like stout red tree trunks, all the way up through the slate roof of the house. Beside each fireplace is a heavy black firedog, and a set of wrought iron pokers shaped like snakes. Claire and Samantha pretend to duel with the snake-pokers before the fireplace in their bedroom on the third floor. Wind rises up the back of the chimney. When they stick their faces in, they can feel the air rushing damply upwards, like a river. The flue smells old and sooty and wet, like stones from a river.

Their bedroom was once the nursery. They sleep together in a poster bed which resembles a ship with four masts. It smells of mothballs, and Claire kicks in her sleep. Charles Cheatham Rash slept here when he was a little boy, and also his daughter. She disappeared when her father did. It might have been gambling debts. They may have moved to New Orleans. She was fourteen years old, Mr. Coeslak said. What was her name, Claire asked. What happened to her mother, Samantha wanted to know. Mr. Coeslak closed his eyes in an almost wink. Mrs. Rash had died the year before her husband and daughter disappeared, he said, of a mysterious wasting disease. He can't remember the name of the poor little girl, he said.

Eight Chimneys has exactly one hundred windows, all still with the original wavy panes of handblown glass. With so many windows, Samantha thinks, Eight Chimneys should always be full of light, but instead the trees press close against the house, so that the rooms on the first and second story—even the third-story rooms—are green and dim, as if Samantha and Claire are living deep under the sea. This is the light that makes the tourists into ghosts. In the morning, and again towards evening, a fog settles in around

the house. Sometimes it is grey like Claire's eyes, and sometimes it is gray, like Samantha's eyes.

*I met a woman in the wood,  
Her lips were two red snakes.  
She smiled at me, her eyes were lewd  
And burning like a fire.*

A few nights ago, the wind was sighing in the nursery chimney. Their father had already tucked them in and turned off the light. Claire dared Samantha to stick her head into the fireplace, in the dark, and so she did. The cold wet air licked at her face and it almost sounded like voices talking low, muttering. She couldn't quite make out what they were saying.

Their father has mostly ignored Claire and Samantha since they arrived at Eight Chimneys. He never mentions their mother. One evening they heard him shouting in the library, and when they came downstairs, there was a large sticky stain on the desk, where a glass of whiskey had been knocked over. It was looking at me, he said, through the window. It had orange eyes.

Samantha and Claire refrained from pointing out that the library is on the second story.

At night, their father's breath has been sweet from drinking, and he is spending more and more time in the woods, and less in the library. At dinner, usually hot dogs and baked beans from a can, which they eat off of paper plates in the first floor dining room, beneath the Austrian chandelier (which has exactly 632 leaded crystals shaped like teardrops) their father recites the poetry of Charles Cheatham Rash, which neither Samantha nor Claire cares for.

He has been reading the ship diaries that Rash kept, and he says that he has discovered proof in them that Rash's most famous poem, "The Specialist's Hat," is not a poem at all, and in any case, Rash didn't write it. It is something that the one of the men on the whaler used to say, to conjure up a whale. Rash simply copied it down and stuck an end on it and said it was his.

The man was from Mulatuppu, which is a place neither Samantha

nor Claire has ever heard of. Their father says that the man was supposed to be some sort of magician, but he drowned shortly before Rash came back to Eight Chimneys. Their father says that the other sailors wanted to throw the magician's chest overboard, but Rash persuaded them to let him keep it until he could be put ashore, with the chest, off the coast of North Carolina.

*The specialist's hat makes a noise like an agouti;  
The specialist's hat makes a noise like a collared peccary;  
The specialist's hat makes a noise like a white-lipped  
peccary;  
The specialist's hat makes a noise like a tapir;  
The specialist's hat makes a noise like a rabbit;  
The specialist's hat makes a noise like a squirrel;  
The specialist's hat makes a noise like a curassow;  
The specialist's hat moans like a whale in the water;  
The specialist's hat moans like the wind in my wife's hair;  
The specialist's hat makes a noise like a snake;  
I have hung the hat of the specialist upon my wall.*

The reason that Claire and Samantha have a babysitter is that their father met a woman in the woods. He is going to see her tonight, and they are going to have a picnic supper and look at the stars. This is the time of year when the Perseids can be seen, falling across the sky on clear nights. Their father said that he has been walking with the woman every afternoon. She is a distant relation of Rash and besides, he said, he needs a night off and some grownup conversation.

Mr. Coeslak won't stay in the house after dark, but he agreed to find someone to look after Samantha and Claire. Then their father couldn't find Mr. Coeslak, but the babysitter showed up precisely at seven o'clock. The babysitter, whose name neither twin quite caught, wears a blue cotton dress with short floaty sleeves. Both Samantha and Claire think she is pretty in an old-fashioned sort of way.

They were in the library with their father, looking up Mulatuppu in the red leather atlas, when she arrived. She didn't

knock on the front door, she simply walked in and then up the stairs, as if she knew where to find them.

Their father kissed them goodbye, a hasty smack, told them to be good and he would take them into town on the weekend to see the Disney film. They went to the window to watch as he walked into the woods. Already it was getting dark and there were fireflies, tiny yellow-hot sparks in the air. When their father had entirely disappeared into the trees, they turned around and stared at the babysitter instead. She raised one eyebrow. "Well," she said. "What sort of games do you like to play?"

*Widdershins around the chimneys,*

*Once, twice, again.*

*The spokes click like a clock on the bicycle;*

*They tick down the days of the life of a man.*

First they played Go Fish, and then they played Crazy Eights, and then they made the babysitter into a mummy by putting shaving cream from their father's bathroom on her arms and legs, and wrapping her in toilet paper. She is the best babysitter they have ever had.

At nine-thirty, she tried to put them to bed. Neither Claire nor Samantha wanted to go to bed, so they began to play the Dead game. The Dead game is a let's pretend that they have been playing every day for 274 days now, but never in front of their father or any other adult. When they are Dead, they are allowed to do anything they want to. They can even fly by jumping off the nursery bed, and just waving their arms. Someday this will work, if they practice hard enough.

The Dead game has three rules.

One. Numbers are significant. The twins keep a list of important numbers in a green address book that belonged to their mother. Mr. Coeslak's tour has been a good source of significant amounts and tallies: they are writing a tragical history of numbers.

Two. The twins don't play the Dead game in front of grownups. They have been summing up the babysitter, and have decided that she doesn't count. They tell her the rules.

Three is the best and most important rule. When you are Dead, you don't have to be afraid of anything. Samantha and Claire aren't sure who the Specialist is, but they aren't afraid of him.

To become Dead, they hold their breath while counting to 35, which is as high as their mother got, not counting a few days.

"You never lived here," Claire says. "Mr. Coeslak lives here."

"Not at night," says the babysitter. "This was my bedroom when I was little."

"Really?" Samantha says. Claire says, "Prove it."

The babysitter gives Samantha and Claire a look, as if she is measuring them: how old, how smart, how brave, how tall. Then she nods. The wind is in the flue, and in the dim nursery light they can see the milky strands of fog seeping out of the fireplace. "Go stand in the chimney," she instructs them. "Stick your hand as far up as you can, and there is a little hole on the left side, with a key in it."

Samantha looks at Claire, who says, "Go ahead." Claire is fifteen minutes and some few uncounted seconds older than Samantha, and therefore gets to tell Samantha what to do. Samantha remembers the muttering voices and then reminds herself that she is Dead. She goes over to the fireplace and ducks inside.

When Samantha stands up in the chimney, she can only see the very edge of the room. She can see the fringe of the mothy blue rug, and one bed leg, and beside it, Claire's foot, swinging back and forth like a metronome. Claire's shoelace has come undone and there is a Band-Aid on her ankle. It all looks very pleasant and peaceful from inside the chimney, like a dream, and for a moment she almost wishes she didn't have to be Dead. But it's safer, really.

She sticks her left hand up as far as she can reach, trailing it along the crumbly wall, until she feels an indentation. She thinks about spiders and severed fingers, and rusty razorblades, and then she reaches inside. She keeps her eyes lowered, focused on the corner of the room and Claire's twitchy foot.

Inside the hole, there is a tiny cold key, its teeth facing outward. She pulls it out, and ducks back into the room. "She wasn't lying," she tells Claire.



"Of course I wasn't lying," the babysitter says. "When you're Dead, you're not allowed to tell lies."

"Unless you want to," Claire says.

*Dreary and dreadful beats the sea at the shore. Ghastly  
and dripping is the mist at the door.*

*The clock in the hall is chiming one, two, three, four.*

*The morning comes not, no, never, no more.*

Samantha and Claire have gone to camp for three weeks every summer since they were seven. This year their father didn't ask them if they wanted to go back and, after discussing it, they decided that it was just as well. They didn't want to have to explain to all their friends how they were half-orphans now. They are used to being envied, because they are identical twins. They don't want to be pitiful.

It has not even been a year, but Samantha realizes that she is forgetting what her mother looked like. Not her mother's face so much as the way she smelled, which was something like dry hay and something like Chanel No. 5, and like something else too. She can't remember whether her mother had gray eyes, like her, or grey eyes, like Claire. She doesn't dream about her mother anymore, but she does dream about Prince Charming, a bay whom she once rode in the horse show at her camp. In the dream, Prince Charming did not smell like a horse at all. He smelled like Chanel No. 5. When she is Dead, she can have all the horses she wants, and they all smell like Chanel No. 5.

"Where does the key go to?" Samantha says.

The babysitter holds out her hand. "To the attic. You don't really need it, but taking the stairs is easier than the chimney. At least the first time."

"Aren't you going to make us go to bed?" Claire says.

The babysitter ignores Claire. "My father used to lock me in the attic when I was little, but I didn't mind. There was a bicycle up there and I used to ride it around and around the chimneys until my mother let me out again. Do you know how to ride a bicycle?"

"Of course," Claire says.

"If you ride fast enough, the Specialist can't catch you."

"What's the Specialist?" Samantha says. Bicycles are okay, but horses can go faster.

"The Specialist wears a hat," says the babysitter. "The hat makes noises."

She doesn't say anything else.

*When you're dead, the grass is greener*

*Over your grave. The wind is keener.*

*Your eyes sink in, your flesh decays. You*

*Grow accustomed to slowness; expect delays.*

The attic is somehow bigger and lonelier than Samantha and Claire thought it would be. The babysitter's key opens the locked door at the end of the hallway, revealing a narrow set of stairs. She waves them ahead and upwards.

It isn't as dark in the attic as they had imagined. The oaks that block the light and make the first three stories so dim and green and mysterious during the day, don't reach all the way up. Extravagant moonlight, dusty and pale, streams in the angled dormer windows. It lights the length of the attic, which is wide enough to hold a softball game in, and lined with trunks where Samantha imagines people could sit, could be hiding and watching. The ceiling slopes down, impaled upon the eight thickwaisted chimney stacks. The chimneys seem too alive, somehow, to be contained in this empty, neglected place; they thrust almost angrily through the roof and attic floor. In the moonlight they look like they are breathing. "They're so beautiful," she says.

"Which chimney is the nursery chimney?" Claire says.

The babysitter points to the nearest righthand stack. "That one," she says. "It runs up through the ballroom on the first floor, the library, the nursery."

Hanging from a nail on the nursery chimney is a long black object. It looks lumpy and heavy, as if it were full of things. The babysitter takes it down, twirls it on her finger. There are holes in the black thing and it whistles mournfully as she spins it. "The Specialist's hat," she says.

"That doesn't look like a hat," says Claire. "It doesn't look like anything at all." She goes to look through the boxes and trunks that are stacked against the far wall.

"It's a special hat," the babysitter says. "It's not supposed to look like anything. But it can sound like anything you can imagine. My father made it."

"Our father writes books," Samantha says.

"My father did too." The babysitter hangs the hat back on the nail. It curls blackly against the chimney. Samantha stares at it. It nickers at her. "He was a bad poet, but he was worse at magic."

Last summer, Samantha wished more than anything that she could have a horse. She thought she would have given up anything for one—even being a twin was not as good as having a horse. She still doesn't have a horse, but she doesn't have a mother either, and she can't help wondering if it's her fault. The hat nickers again, or maybe it is the wind in the chimney.

"What happened to him?" Claire asks.

"After he made the hat, the Specialist came and took him away. I hid in the nursery chimney while it was looking for him, and it didn't find me."

"Weren't you scared?"

There is a clattering, shivering, clicking noise. Claire has found the babysitter's bike and is dragging it towards them by the handlebars. The babysitter shrugs. "Rule number three," she says.

Claire snatches the hat off the nail. "I'm the Specialist!" she says, putting the hat on her head. It falls over her eyes, the floppy shapeless brim sewn with little asymmetrical buttons that flash and catch at the moonlight like teeth. Samantha looks again and sees that they are teeth. Without counting, she suddenly knows that there are exactly fifty-two teeth on the hat, and that they are the teeth of agoutis, of curassows, of white-lipped peccaries, and of the wife of Charles Cheatham Rash. The chimneys are moaning, and Claire's voice booms hollowly beneath the hat. "Run away, or I'll catch you. I'll eat you!"

Samantha and the babysitter run away, laughing as Claire mounts

the rusty, noisy bicycle and pedals madly after them. She rings the bicycle bell as she rides, and the Specialist's hat bobs up and down on her head. It spits like a cat. The bell is shrill and thin, and the bike wails and shrieks. It leans first towards the right and then to the left. Claire's knobby knees stick out on either side like makeshift counterweights.

Claire weaves in and out between the chimneys, chasing Samantha and the babysitter. Samantha is slow, turning to look behind. As Claire approaches, she keeps one hand on the handlebars and stretches the other hand out towards Samantha. Just as she is about to grab Samantha, the babysitter turns back and plucks the hat off Claire's head.

"Shit!" the babysitter says, and drops it. There is a drop of blood forming on the fleshy part of the babysitter's hand, black in the moonlight, where the Specialist's hat has bitten her.

Claire dismounts, giggling. Samantha watches as the Specialist's hat rolls away. It picks up speed, veering across the attic floor, and disappears, thumping down the stairs. "Go get it," Claire says. "You can be the Specialist this time."

"No," the babysitter says, sucking at her palm. "It's time for bed."

When they go down the stairs, there is no sign of the Specialist's hat. They brush their teeth, climb into the ship-bed, and pull the covers up to their necks. The babysitter sits between their feet. "When you're Dead," Samantha says, "do you still get tired and have to go to sleep? Do you have dreams?"

"When you're Dead," the babysitter says, "everything's a lot easier. You don't have to do anything that you don't want to. You don't have to have a name, you don't have to remember. You don't even have to breathe."

She shows them exactly what she means.

When she has time to think about it, (and now she has all the time in the world to think) Samantha realizes with a small pang that she is now stuck indefinitely between ten and eleven years old, stuck with Claire and the babysitter. She considers this. The number 10 is pleasing and round, like a beach ball, but all in all, it hasn't been

an easy year. She wonders what 11 would have been like. Sharper, like needles maybe. She has chosen to be Dead, instead. She hopes that she's made the right decision. She wonders if her mother would have decided to be Dead, instead of dead, if she could have.

Last year they were learning fractions in school, when her mother died. Fractions remind Samantha of herds of wild horses, piebalds and pintos and palominos. There are so many of them, and they are, well, fractious and unruly. Just when you think you have one under control, it throws up its head and tosses you off. Claire's favorite number is 4, which she says is a tall, skinny boy. Samantha doesn't care for boys that much. She likes numbers. Take the number 8 for instance, which can be more than one thing at once. Looked at one way, 8 looks like a bent woman with curvy hair. But if you lay it down on its side, it looks like a snake curled with its tail in its mouth. This is sort of like the difference between being Dead, and being dead. Maybe when Samantha is tired of one, she will try the other.

On the lawn, under the oak trees, she hears someone calling her name. Samantha climbs out of bed and goes to the nursery window. She looks out through the wavy glass. It's Mr. Coeslak. "Samantha, Claire!" he calls up to her. "Are you all right? Is your father there?" Samantha can almost see the moonlight shining through him. "They're always locking me in the tool room. Goddamn spooky things," he says. "Are you there, Samantha? Claire? Girls?"

The babysitter comes and stands beside Samantha. The babysitter puts her finger to her lip. Claire's eyes glitter at them from the dark bed. Samantha doesn't say anything, but she waves at Mr. Coeslak. The babysitter waves too. Maybe he can see them waving, because after a little while he stops shouting and goes away. "Be careful," the babysitter says. "He'll be coming soon. It will be coming soon."

She takes Samantha's hand, and leads her back to the bed, where Claire is waiting. They sit and wait. Time passes, but they don't get tired, they don't get any older.

*Who's there?*

*Just air.*

The front door opens on the first floor, and Samantha, Claire, and

the babysitter can hear someone creeping, creeping up the stairs. "Be quiet," the babysitter says. "It's the Specialist."

Samantha and Claire are quiet. The nursery is dark and the wind crackles like a fire in the fireplace.

"Claire, Samantha, Samantha, Claire?" The Specialist's voice is blurry and wet. It sounds like their father's voice, but that's because the hat can imitate any noise, any voice. "Are you still awake?"

"Quick," the babysitter says. "It's time to go up to the attic and hide."

Claire and Samantha slip out from under the covers and dress quickly and silently. They follow her. Without speech, without breathing, she pulls them into the safety of the chimney. It is too dark to see, but they understand the babysitter perfectly when she mouths the word, *Up*. She goes first, so they can see where the finger-holds are, the bricks that jut out for their feet. Then Claire. Samantha watches her sister's foot ascend like smoke, the shoelace still untied.

"Claire? Samantha? Goddammit, you're scaring me. Where are you?" The Specialist is standing just outside the half-open door. "Samantha? I think I've been bitten by something. I think I've been bitten by a goddamn snake." Samantha hesitates for only a second. Then she is climbing up, up, up the nursery chimney.

**Kelly Link** (born 1969) is an American editor and author of short stories. While some of her fiction falls more clearly within genre categories, many of her stories might be described as slipstream or magic realism: a combination of science fiction, fantasy, horror, mystery, and realism. Among other honors, she has won a Hugo award, three Nebula awards, and a World Fantasy Award for her fiction.

Link is a graduate of Columbia University in New York and the MFA program of UNC Greensboro. In 1995, she attended the Clarion East Writing Workshop.

## 18. Jim Shepard, "The Zero Meter Diving Team," 2007

Click on the following link and read "The Zero Meter Diving Team" by Jim Shepard. Pay attention to the relationships between the sons and their father and the sons and each other. "What about the mother?" you may ask? Yes, indeed. Good question, but for another day.

- ["The Zero Meter Diving Team" by Jim Shepard, from BOMB](#)



PART VIII

# MODULE 7: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND POETRY



# 19. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven," 1845

**Read & Listen:**



**Listen or Download:**



Right-click and choose "Save Link As..." or "Save Target As..."

# 20. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Selected Works, 1855

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...

## An April Day

When the warm sun, that brings  
Seed-time and harvest, has returned again,  
'T is sweet to visit the still wood, where springs  
The first flower of the plain.

I love the season well,  
When forest glades are teeming with bright forms,  
Nor dark and many-folded clouds foretell  
The coming-on of storms.

From the earth's loosened mould  
The sapling draws its sustenance, and thrives;  
Though stricken to the heart with winter's cold,  
The drooping tree revives.

The softly-warbled song  
Comes from the pleasant woods, and colored wings  
Glance quick in the bright sun, that moves along  
The forest openings.

When the bright sunset fills  
The silver woods with light, the green slope throws  
Its shadows in the hollows of the hills,  
And wide the upland glows.

And when the eve is born,  
In the blue lake the sky, o'er-reaching far,  
Is hollowed out and the moon dips her horn,  
And twinkles many a star.

Inverted in the tide  
Stand the gray rocks, and trembling shadows throw,

And the fair trees look over, side by side,  
And see themselves below.

Sweet April! many a thought  
Is wedded unto thee, as hearts are wed;  
Nor shall they fail, till, to its autumn brought,  
Life's golden fruit is shed.

## The Arrow and the Song

I shot an arrow into the air,  
It fell to earth, I knew not where;  
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight  
Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,  
It fell to earth, I knew not where;  
For who has sight so keen and strong,  
That it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward, in an oak  
I found the arrow, still unbroke;  
And the song, from beginning to end,  
I found again in the heart of a friend.

## The Arsenal at Springfield

This is the Arsenal. From floor to ceiling,

Like a huge organ, rise the burnished arms;  
But front their silent pipes no anthem pealing  
Startles the villages with strange alarms.

Ah! what a sound will rise, how wild and dreary,  
When the death-angel touches those swift keys  
What loud lament and dismal Miserere  
Will mingle with their awful symphonies

I hear even now the infinite fierce chorus,  
The cries of agony, the endless groan,  
Which, through the ages that have gone before us,  
In long reverberations reach our own.

On helm and harness rings the Saxon hammer,  
Through Cimbric forest roars the Norseman's song,  
And loud, amid the universal clamor,  
O'er distant deserts sounds the Tartar gong.

I hear the Florentine, who from his palace  
Wheels out his battle-bell with dreadful din,  
And Aztec priests upon their teocallis  
Beat the wild war-drums made of serpent's skin;

The tumult of each sacked and burning village;  
The shout that every prayer for mercy drowns;  
The soldiers' revels in the midst of pillage;  
The wail of famine in beleaguered towns;

The bursting shell, the gateway wrenched asunder,  
The rattling musketry, the clashing blade;  
And ever and anon, in tones of thunder,  
The diapason of the cannonade.

Is it, O man, with such discordant noises,

With such accursed instruments as these,  
Thou drownest Nature's sweet and kindly voices,  
And jarrest the celestial harmonies?

Were half the power, that fills the world with terror,  
Were half the wealth, bestowed on camps and courts,  
Given to redeem the human mind from error,  
There were no need of arsenals or forts:

The warrior's name would be a name abhorred!  
And every nation, that should lift again  
Its hand against a brother, on its forehead  
Would wear forevermore the curse of Cain!

Down the dark future, through long generations,  
The echoing sounds grow fainter and then cease;  
And like a bell, with solemn, sweet vibrations,  
I hear once more the voice of Christ say, "Peace!"

Peace! and no longer from its brazen portals  
The blast of War's great organ shakes the skies!  
But beautiful as songs of the immortals,  
The holy melodies of love Thearise.

## Autumn Sonnet

Thou comest, Autumn, heralded by the rain,  
With banners, by great gales incessant fanned,  
Brighter than brightest silks of Samarcand,  
And stately oxen harnessed to thy wain!  
Thou standest, like imperial Charlemagne,



Upon thy bridge of gold; thy royal hand  
Outstretched with benedictions o'er the land,  
Blessing the farms through all thy vast domain!  
Thy shield is the red harvest moon, suspended  
So long beneath the heaven's o'er-hanging eaves;  
Thy steps are by the farmer's prayers attended;  
Like flames upon an altar shine the sheaves;  
And, following thee, in thy ovation splendid,  
Thine almoner, the wind, scatters the golden leaves!

## The Beleaguered City

I have read, in some old, marvellous tale,  
Some legend strange and vague,  
That a midnight host of spectres pale  
Beleaguered the walls of Prague.

Beside the Moldau's rushing stream,  
With the wan moon overhead,  
There stood, as in an awful dream,  
The army of the dead.

White as a sea-fog, landward bound,  
The spectral camp was seen,  
And, with a sorrowful, deep sound,  
The river flowed between.

No other voice nor sound was there,  
No drum, nor sentry's pace;  
The mist-like banners clasped the air,  
As clouds with clouds embrace.

But when the old cathedral bell  
    Proclaimed the morning prayer,  
The white pavilions rose and fell  
    On the alarmed air.

Down the broad valley fast and far  
    The troubled army fled;  
Up rose the glorious morning star,  
    The ghastly host was dead.

I have read, in the marvellous heart of man,  
    That strange and mystic scroll,  
That an army of phantoms vast and wan  
    Beleaguer the human soul.

Encamped beside Life's rushing stream,  
    In Fancy's misty light,  
Gigantic shapes and shadows gleam  
    Portentous through the night.

Upon its midnight battle-ground  
    The spectral camp is seen,  
And, with a sorrowful, deep sound,  
    Flows the River of Life between.

No other voice nor sound is there,  
    In the army of the grave;  
No other challenge breaks the air,  
    But the rushing of Life's wave.

And when the solemn and deep churchbell  
    Entreats the soul to pray,  
The midnight phantoms feel the spell,  
    The shadows sweep away.

Down the broad Vale of Tears afar  
The spectral camp is fled;  
Faith shineth as a morning star,  
Our ghastly fears are dead.

## The Belfry of Bruges, Carillon

In the ancient town of Bruges,  
In the quaint old Flemish city,  
As the evening shades descended,  
Low and loud and sweetly blended,  
Low at times and loud at times,  
And changing like a poet's rhymes,  
Rang the beautiful wild chimes  
From the Belfry in the market  
Of the ancient town of Bruges.

Then, with deep sonorous clangor  
Calmly answering their sweet anger,  
When the wrangling bells had ended,  
Slowly struck the clock eleven,  
And, from out the silent heaven,  
Silence on the town descended.  
Silence, silence everywhere,  
On the earth and in the air,  
Save that footsteps here and there  
Of some burgher home returning,  
By the street lamps faintly burning,  
For a moment woke the echoes  
Of the ancient town of Bruges.

But amid my broken slumbers  
Still I heard those magic numbers,  
As they loud proclaimed the flight  
And stolen marches of the night;  
Till their chimes in sweet collision  
Mingled with each wandering vision,  
Mingled with the fortune-telling  
Gypsy-bands of dreams and fancies,  
Which amid the waste expanses  
Of the silent land of trances  
Have their solitary dwelling;  
All else seemed asleep in Bruges,  
In the quaint old Flemish city.

And I thought how like these chimes  
Are the poet's airy rhymes,  
All his rhymes and roundelays,  
His conceits, and songs, and ditties,  
From the belfry of his brain,  
Scattered downward, though in vain,  
On the roofs and stones of cities!  
For by night the drowsy ear  
Under its curtains cannot hear,  
And by day men go their ways,  
Hearing the music as they pass,  
But deeming it no more, alas!  
Than the hollow sound of brass.

Yet perchance a sleepless wight,  
Lodging at some humble inn  
In the narrow lanes of life,  
When the dusk and hush of night  
Shut out the incessant din  
Of daylight and its toil and strife,

May listen with a calm delight  
To the poet's melodies,  
Till he hears, or dreams he hears,  
Intermingled with the song,  
Thoughts that he has cherished long;  
Hears amid the chime and singing  
The bells of his own village ringing,  
And wakes, and finds his slumberous eyes  
Wet with most delicious tears.

Thus dreamed I, as by night I lay  
In Bruges, at the Fleur-de-Ble,  
Listening with a wild delight  
To the chimes that, through the night  
Bang their changes from the Belfry  
Of that quaint old Flemish city.

## The Bridge

I stood on the bridge at midnight,  
As the clocks were striking the hour,  
And the moon rose o'er the city,  
Behind the dark church-tower.

I saw her bright reflection  
In the waters under me,  
Like a golden goblet falling  
And sinking into the sea.

And far in the hazy distance  
Of that lovely night in June,

The blaze of the flaming furnace  
Gleamed redder than the moon.

Among the long, black rafters  
The wavering shadows lay,  
And the current that came from the ocean  
Seemed to lift and bear them away;

As, sweeping and eddying through them,  
Rose the belated tide,  
And, streaming into the moonlight,  
The seaweed floated wide.

And like those waters rushing  
Among the wooden piers,  
A flood of thoughts came o'er me  
That filled my eyes with tears.

How often, oh, how often,  
In the days that had gone by,  
I had stood on that bridge at midnight  
And gazed on that wave and sky!

How often, oh, how often,  
I had wished that the ebbing tide  
Would bear me away on its bosom  
O'er the ocean wild and wide!

For my heart was hot and restless,  
And my life was full of care,  
And the burden laid upon me  
Seemed greater than I could bear.

But now it has fallen from me,  
It is buried in the sea;

And only the sorrow of others  
Throws its shadow over me.

Yet whenever I cross the river  
On its bridge with wooden piers,  
Like the odor of brine from the ocean  
Comes the thought of other years.

And I think how many thousands  
Of care-encumbered men,  
Each bearing his burden of sorrow,  
Have crossed the bridge since then.

I see the long procession  
Still passing to and fro,  
The young heart hot and restless,  
And the old subdued and slow!

And forever and forever,  
As long as the river flows,  
As long as the heart has passions,  
As long as life has woes;

The moon and its broken reflection  
And its shadows shall appear,  
As the symbol of love in heaven,  
And its wavering image here.

## Burial of the Minnisink

On sunny slope and beechen swell,

The shadowed light of evening fell;  
And, where the maple's leaf was brown,  
With soft and silent lapse came down,  
The glory, that the wood receives,  
At sunset, in its golden leaves.

Far upward in the mellow light  
Rose the blue hills. One cloud of white,  
Around a far uplifted cone,  
In the warm blush of evening shone;  
An image of the silver lakes,  
By which the Indian's soul awakes.

But soon a funeral hymn was heard  
Where the soft breath of evening stirred  
The tall, gray forest; and a band  
Of stern in heart, and strong in hand,  
Came winding down beside the wave,  
To lay the red chief in his grave.

They sang, that by his native bowers  
He stood, in the last moon of flowers,  
And thirty snows had not yet shed  
Their glory on the warrior's head;  
But, as the summer fruit decays,  
So died he in those naked days.

A dark cloak of the roebuck's skin  
Covered the warrior, and within  
Its heavy folds the weapons, made  
For the hard toils of war, were laid;  
The cuirass, woven of plaited reeds,  
And the broad belt of shells and beads.

Before, a dark-haired virgin train



Chanted the death dirge of the slain;  
Behind, the long procession came  
Of hoary men and chiefs of fame,  
With heavy hearts, and eyes of grief,  
Leading the war-horse of their chief.

Stripped of his proud and martial dress,  
Uncurbed, unreined, and riderless,  
With darting eye, and nostril spread,  
And heavy and impatient tread,  
He came; and oft that eye so proud  
Asked for his rider in the crowd.

They buried the dark chief; they freed  
Beside the grave his battle steed;  
And swift an arrow cleaved its way  
To his stern heart! One piercing neigh  
Arose, and, on the dead man's plain,  
The rider grasps his steed again.

## Dante

Tuscan, that wanderest through the realms of gloom,  
With thoughtful pace, and sad, majestic eyes,  
Stern thoughts and awful from thy soul arise,  
Like Farinata from his fiery tomb.  
Thy sacred song is like the trump of doom;  
Yet in thy heart what human sympathies,  
What soft compassion glows, as in the skies  
The tender stars their clouded lamps relume!  
Methinks I see thee stand, with pallid cheeks,

By Fra Hilario in his diocese,  
As up the convent-walls, in golden streaks,  
The ascending sunbeams mark the day's decrease;  
And, as he asks what there the stranger seeks,  
Thy voice along the cloister whispers, "Peace!"

## The Day Is Done

The day is done, and the darkness  
Falls from the wings of Night,  
As a feather is wafted downward  
From an eagle in his flight.

I see the lights of the village  
Gleam through the rain and the mist,  
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me  
That my soul cannot resist:

A feeling of sadness and longing,  
That is not akin to pain,  
And resembles sorrow only  
As the mist resembles the rain.

Come, read to me some poem,  
Some simple and heartfelt lay,  
That shall soothe this restless feeling,  
And banish the thoughts of day.

Not from the grand old masters,  
Not from the bards sublime,  
Whose distant footsteps echo

Through the corridors of Time.

For, like strains of martial music,  
Their mighty thoughts suggest  
Life's endless toil and endeavor;  
And to-night I long for rest.

Read from some humbler poet,  
Whose songs gushed from his heart,  
As showers from the clouds of summer,  
Or tears from the eyelids start;

Who, through long days of labor,  
And nights devoid of ease,  
Still heard in his soul the music  
Of wonderful melodies.

Such songs have power to quiet  
The restless pulse of care,  
And come like the benediction  
That follows after prayer.

Then read from the treasured volume  
The poem of thy choice,  
And lend to the rhyme of the poet  
The beauty of thy voice.

And the night shall be filled with music  
And the cares, that infest the day,  
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.

## Endymion

The rising moon has hid the stars;  
Her level rays, like golden bars,  
Lie on the landscape green,  
With shadows brown between.

And silver white the river gleams,  
As if Diana, in her dreams,  
Had dropt her silver bow  
Upon the meadows low.

On such a tranquil night as this,  
She woke Endymion with a kiss,  
When, sleeping in the grove,  
He dreamed not of her love.

Like Dian's kiss, unasked, unsought,  
Love gives itself, but is not bought;  
Nor voice, nor sound betrays  
Its deep, impassioned gaze.

It comes,--the beautiful, the free,  
The crown of all humanity,--  
In silence and alone  
To seek the elected one.

It lifts the boughs, whose shadows deep  
Are Life's oblivion, the soul's sleep,  
And kisses the closed eyes  
Of him, who slumbering lies.

O weary hearts! O slumbering eyes!  
O drooping souls, whose destinies

Are fraught with fear and pain,  
Ye shall be loved again!

No one is so accursed by fate,  
No one so utterly desolate,  
But some heart, though unknown,  
Responds unto his own.

Responds,--as if with unseen wings,  
An angel touched its quivering strings;  
And whispers, in its song,  
"Where hast thou stayed so long?"

## The Evening Star

Lo! in the painted oriel of the West,  
Whose panes the sunken sun incarnadines,  
Like a fair lady at her casement, shines  
The evening star, the star of love and rest!  
And then anon she doth herself divest  
Of all her radiant garments, and reclines  
Behind the sombre screen of yonder pines,  
With slumber and soft dreams of love oppressed.  
O my beloved, my sweet Hesperus!  
My morning and my evening star of love!  
My best and gentlest lady! even thus,  
As that fair planet in the sky above,  
Dost thou retire unto thy rest at night,  
And from thy darkened window fades the light.

## Excelsior

The shades of night were falling fast,  
As through an Alpine village passed  
A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,  
A banner with the strange device,  
    Excelsior!

His brow was sad; his eye beneath,  
Flashed like a falchion from its sheath,  
And like a silver clarion rung  
The accents of that unknown tongue,  
    Excelsior!

In happy homes he saw the light  
Of household fires gleam warm and bright;  
Above, the spectral glaciers shone,  
And from his lips escaped a groan,  
    Excelsior!

"Try not the Pass!" the old man said:  
"Dark lowers the tempest overhead,  
The roaring torrent is deep and wide!  
And loud that clarion voice replied,  
    Excelsior!

"Oh stay," the maiden said, "and rest  
Thy weary head upon this breast!"  
A tear stood in his bright blue eye,  
But still he answered, with a sigh,  
    Excelsior!

"Beware the pine-tree's withered branch!  
Beware the awful avalanche!"

This was the peasant's last Good-night,  
A voice replied, far up the height,  
    Excelsior!

At break of day, as heavenward  
The pious monks of Saint Bernard  
Uttered the oft-repeated prayer,  
A voice cried through the startled air,  
    Excelsior!

A traveller, by the faithful hound,  
Half-buried in the snow was found,  
Still grasping in his hand of ice  
That banner with the strange device,  
    Excelsior!

There in the twilight cold and gray,  
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,  
And from the sky, serene and far,  
A voice fell, like a falling star,  
    Excelsior!

## Flowers

Spake full well, in language quaint and olden,  
    One who dwelleth by the castled Rhine,  
When he called the flowers, so blue and golden,  
    Stars, that in earth's firmament do shine.

Stars they are, wherein we read our history,  
    As astrologers and seers of eld;

Yet not wrapped about with awful mystery,  
Like the burning stars, which they beheld.

Wondrous truths, and manifold as wondrous,  
God hath written in those stars above;  
But not less in the bright flowerets under us  
Stands the revelation of his love.

Bright and glorious is that revelation,  
Written all over this great world of ours;  
Making evident our own creation,  
In these stars of earth, these golden flowers.

And the Poet, faithful and far-seeing,  
Sees, alike in stars and flowers, a part  
Of the self-same, universal being,  
Which is throbbing in his brain and heart.

Gorgeous flowerets in the sunlight shining,  
Blossoms flaunting in the eye of day,  
Tremulous leaves, with soft and silver lining,  
Buds that open only to decay;

Brilliant hopes, all woven in gorgeous tissues,  
Flaunting gayly in the golden light;  
Large desires, with most uncertain issues,  
Tender wishes, blossoming at night!

These in flowers and men are more than seeming;  
Workings are they of the self-same powers,  
Which the Poet, in no idle dreaming,  
Seeth in himself and in the flowers.

Everywhere about us are they glowing,  
Some like stars, to tell us Spring is born;



Others, their blue eyes with tears o'er-flowing,  
Stand like Ruth amid the golden corn;

Not alone in Spring's armorial bearing,  
And in Summer's green-emblazoned field,  
But in arms of brave old Autumn's wearing,  
In the centre of his brazen shield;

Not alone in meadows and green alleys,  
On the mountain-top, and by the brink  
Of sequestered pools in woodland valleys,  
Where the slaves of nature stoop to drink;

Not alone in her vast dome of glory,  
Not on graves of bird and beast alone,  
But in old cathedrals, high and hoary,  
On the tombs of heroes, carved in stone;

In the cottage of the rudest peasant,  
In ancestral homes, whose crumbling towers,  
Speaking of the Past unto the Present,  
Tell us of the ancient Games of Flowers;

In all places, then, and in all seasons,  
Flowers expand their light and soul-like wings,  
Teaching us, by most persuasive reasons,  
How akin they are to human things.

And with childlike, credulous affection  
We behold their tender buds expand;  
Emblems of our own great resurrection,  
Emblems of the bright and better land.

## Footsteps of Angels

When the hours of Day are numbered,  
And the voices of the Night  
Wake the better soul, that slumbered,  
To a holy, calm delight;

Ere the evening lamps are lighted,  
And, like phantoms grim and tall,  
Shadows from the fitful firelight  
Dance upon the parlor wall;

Then the forms of the departed  
Enter at the open door;  
The beloved, the true-hearted,  
Come to visit me once more;

He, the young and strong, who cherished  
Noble longings for the strife,  
By the roadside fell and perished,  
Weary with the march of life!

They, the holy ones and weakly,  
Who the cross of suffering bore,  
Folded their pale hands so meekly,  
Spake with us on earth no more!

And with them the Being Beauteous,  
Who unto my youth was given,  
More than all things else to love me,  
And is now a saint in heaven.

With a slow and noiseless footstep  
Comes that messenger divine,

Takes the vacant chair beside me,  
Lays her gentle hand in mine.

And she sits and gazes at me  
With those deep and tender eyes,  
Like the stars, so still and saint-like,  
Looking downward from the skies.

Uttered not, yet comprehended,  
Is the spirit's voiceless prayer,  
Soft rebukes, in blessings ended,  
Breathing from her lips of air.

Oh, though oft depressed and lonely,  
All my fears are laid aside,  
If I but remember only  
Such as these have lived and died!

## A Glean of Sunshine

This is the place. Stand still, my steed,  
Let me review the scene,  
And summon from the shadowy Past  
The forms that once have been.

The Past and Present here unite  
Beneath Time's flowing tide,  
Like footprints hidden by a brook,  
But seen on either side.

Here runs the highway to the town;

There the green lane descends,  
Through which I walked to church with thee,  
O gentlest of my friends!

The shadow of the linden-trees  
Lay moving on the grass;  
Between them and the moving boughs,  
A shadow, thou didst pass.

Thy dress was like the lilies,  
And thy heart as pure as they:  
One of God's holy messengers  
Did walk with me that day.

I saw the branches of the trees  
Bend down thy touch to meet,  
The clover-blossoms in the grass  
Rise up to kiss thy feet,

"Sleep, sleep to-day, tormenting cares,  
Of earth and folly born!"  
Solemnly sang the village choir  
On that sweet Sabbath morn.

Through the closed blinds the golden sun  
Poured in a dusty beam,  
Like the celestial ladder seen  
By Jacob in his dream.

And ever and anon, the wind,  
Sweet-scented with the hay,  
Turned o'er the hymn-book's fluttering leaves  
That on the window lay.

Long was the good man's sermon,

Yet it seemed not so to me;  
For he spake of Ruth the beautiful,  
And still I thought of thee.

Long was the prayer he uttered,  
Yet it seemed not so to me;  
For in my heart I prayed with him,  
And still I thought of thee.

But now, alas! the place seems changed;  
Thou art no longer here:  
Part of the sunshine of the scene  
With thee did disappear.

Though thoughts, deep-rooted in my heart,  
Like pine-trees dark and high,  
Subdue the light of noon, and breathe  
A low and ceaseless sigh;

This memory brightens o'er the past,  
As when the sun, concealed  
Behind some cloud that near us hangs  
Shines on a distant field.

## The Goblet of Life

Filled is Life's goblet to the brim;  
And though my eyes with tears are dim,  
I see its sparkling bubbles swim,  
And chant a melancholy hymn  
With solemn voice and slow.

No purple flowers,--no garlands green,  
Conceal the goblet's shade or sheen,  
Nor maddening draughts of Hippocrene,  
Like gleams of sunshine, flash between  
    Thick leaves of mistletoe.

This goblet, wrought with curious art,  
Is filled with waters, that upstart,  
When the deep fountains of the heart,  
By strong convulsions rent apart,  
    Are running all to waste.

And as it mantling passes round,  
With fennel is it wreathed and crowned,  
Whose seed and foliage sun-imbrowned  
Are in its waters steeped and drowned,  
    And give a bitter taste.

Above the lowly plants it towers,  
The fennel, with its yellow flowers,  
And in an earlier age than ours  
Was gifted with the wondrous powers,  
    Lost vision to restore.

It gave new strength, and fearless mood;  
And gladiators, fierce and rude,  
Mingled it in their daily food;  
And he who battled and subdued,  
    A wreath of fennel wore.

Then in Life's goblet freely press,  
The leaves that give it bitterness,  
Nor prize the colored waters less,  
For in thy darkness and distress

New light and strength they give!

And he who has not learned to know  
How false its sparkling bubbles show,  
How bitter are the drops of woe,  
With which its brim may overflow,  
    He has not learned to live.

The prayer of Ajax was for light;  
Through all that dark and desperate fight  
The blackness of that noonday night  
He asked but the return of sight,  
    To see his foeman's face.

Let our unceasing, earnest prayer  
Be, too, for light,--for strength to bear  
Our portion of the weight of care,  
That crushes into dumb despair  
    One half the human race.

O suffering, sad humanity!  
O ye afflicted one; who lie  
Steeped to the lips in misery,  
Longing, and yet afraid to die,  
    Patient, though sorely tried!

I pledge you in this cup of grief,  
Where floats the fennel's bitter leaf!  
The Battle of our Life is brief  
The alarm,--the struggle,--the relief,  
    Then sleep we side by side.

## God's-Acre

I like that ancient Saxon phrase, which calls  
The burial-ground God's-Acre! It is just;  
It consecrates each grave within its walls,  
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.

God's-Acre! Yes, that blessed name imparts  
Comfort to those, who in the grave have sown  
The seed that they had garnered in their hearts,  
Their bread of life, alas! no more their own.

Into its furrows shall we all be cast,  
In the sure faith, that we shall rise again  
At the great harvest, when the archangel's blast  
Shall winnow, like a fan, the chaff and grain.

Then shall the good stand in immortal bloom,  
In the fair gardens of that second birth;  
And each bright blossom mingle its perfume  
With that of flowers, which never bloomed on earth.

With thy rude ploughshare, Death, turn up the sod,  
And spread the furrow for the seed we sow;  
This is the field and Acre of our God,  
This is the place where human harvests grow!

## The Good Part That Shall Not Be Taken Away

She dwells by Great Kenhawa's side,



In valleys green and cool;  
And all her hope and all her pride  
Are in the village school.

Her soul, like the transparent air  
That robes the hills above,  
Though not of earth, encircles there  
All things with arms of love.

And thus she walks among her girls  
With praise and mild rebukes;  
Subduing e'en rude village churls  
By her angelic looks.

She reads to them at eventide  
Of One who came to save;  
To cast the captive's chains aside  
And liberate the slave.

And oft the blessed time foretells  
When all men shall be free;  
And musical, as silver bells,  
Their falling chains shall be.

And following her beloved Lord,  
In decent poverty,  
She makes her life one sweet record  
And deed of charity.

For she was rich, and gave up all  
To break the iron bands  
Of those who waited in her hall,  
And labored in her lands.

Long since beyond the Southern Sea

Their outbound sails have sped,  
While she, in meek humility,  
Now earns her daily bread.

It is their prayers, which never cease,  
That clothe her with such grace;  
Their blessing is the light of peace  
That shines upon her face.

## Hymn to the Night

I heard the trailing garments of the Night  
Sweep through her marble halls!  
I saw her sable skirts all fringed with light  
From the celestial walls!

I felt her presence, by its spell of might,  
Stoop o'er me from above;  
The calm, majestic presence of the Night,  
As of the one I love.

I heard the sounds of sorrow and delight,  
The manifold, soft chimes,  
That fill the haunted chambers of the Night  
Like some old poet's rhymes.

From the cool cisterns of the midnight air  
My spirit drank repose;  
The fountain of perpetual peace flows there,--  
From those deep cisterns flows.

O holy Night! from thee I learn to bear  
What man has borne before!  
Thou layest thy finger on the lips of Care,  
And they complain no more.

Peace! Peace! Orestes-like I breathe this prayer!  
Descend with broad-winged flight,  
The welcome, the thrice-prayed for, the most fair,  
The best-beloved Night!

## Drinking Song

### Inscription for an Antique Pitcher

Come, old friend! sit down and listen!  
From the pitcher, placed between us,  
How the waters laugh and glisten  
In the head of old Silenus!

Old Silenus, bloated, drunken,  
Led by his inebriate Satyrs;  
On his breast his head is sunken,  
Vacantly he leers and chatters.

Fauns with youthful Bacchus follow;  
Ivy crowns that brow supernal  
As the forehead of Apollo,  
And possessing youth eternal.

Round about him, fair Bacchantes,

Bearing cymbals, flutes, and thyrses,  
Wild from Naxian groves, or Zante's  
Vineyards, sing delirious verses.

Thus he won, through all the nations,  
Bloodless victories, and the farmer  
Bore, as trophies and oblations,  
Vines for banners, ploughs for armor.

Judged by no o'erzealous rigor,  
Much this mystic throng expresses:  
Bacchus was the type of vigor,  
And Silenus of excesses.

These are ancient ethnic revels,  
Of a faith long since forsaken;  
Now the Satyrs, changed to devils,  
Frighten mortals wine-o'ertaken.

Now to rivulets from the mountains  
Point the rods of fortune-tellers;  
Youth perpetual dwells in fountains,--  
Not in flasks, and casks, and cellars.

Claudius, though he sang of flagons  
And huge tankards filled with Rhenish,  
From that fiery blood of dragons  
Never would his own replenish.

Even Redi, though he chaunted  
Bacchus in the Tuscan valleys,  
Never drank the wine he vaunted  
In his dithyrambic sallies.

Then with water fill the pitcher

Wreathed about with classic fables;  
Ne'er Falernian threw a richer  
Light upon Lucullus' tables.

Come, old friend, sit down and listen  
As it passes thus between us,  
How its wavelets laugh and glisten  
In the head of old Silenus!

## It Is Not Always May

No hay pajaros en los nidos de antano.  
Spanish Proverb

The sun is bright,--the air is clear,  
The darting swallows soar and sing.  
And from the stately elms I hear  
The bluebird prophesying Spring.

So blue you winding river flows,  
It seems an outlet from the sky,  
Where waiting till the west-wind blows,  
The freighted clouds at anchor lie.

All things are new;--the buds, the leaves,  
That gild the elm-tree's nodding crest,  
And even the nest beneath the eaves;--  
There are no birds in last year's nest!

All things rejoice in youth and love,  
The fulness of their first delight!

And learn from the soft heavens above  
The melting tenderness of night.

Maiden, that read'st this simple rhyme,  
Enjoy thy youth, it will not stay;  
Enjoy the fragrance of thy prime,  
For oh, it is not always May!

Enjoy the Spring of Love and Youth,  
To some good angel leave the rest;  
For Time will teach thee soon the truth,  
There are no birds in last year's nest!

## L'envoi

### The Poet and His Songs

As the birds come in the Spring,  
We know not from where;  
As the stars come at evening  
From depths of the air;

As the rain comes from the cloud,  
And the brook from the ground;  
As suddenly, low or loud,  
Out of silence a sound;

As the grape comes to the vine,  
The fruit to the tree;  
As the wind comes to the pine,

And the tide to the sea;  
  
As come the white sails of ships  
O'er the ocean's verge;  
As comes the smile to the lips,  
The foam to the surge;  
  
So come to the Poet his songs,  
All hitherward blown  
From the misty realm, that belongs  
To the vast unknown.  
  
His, and not his, are the lays  
He sings; and their fame  
Is his, and not his; and the praise  
And the pride of a name.  
  
For voices pursue him by day,  
And haunt him by night,  
And he listens, and needs must obey,  
When the Angel says: "Write!"

## The Light of Stars

The night is come, but not too soon;  
And sinking silently,  
All silently, the little moon  
Drops down behind the sky.  
  
There is no light in earth or heaven  
But the cold light of stars;

And the first watch of night is given  
To the red planet Mars.

Is it the tender star of love?  
The star of love and dreams?  
O no! from that blue tent above,  
A hero's armor gleams.

And earnest thoughts within me rise,  
When I behold afar,  
Suspended in the evening skies,  
The shield of that red star.

O star of strength! I see thee stand  
And smile upon my pain;  
Thou beckonest with thy mailed hand,  
And I am strong again.

Within my breast there is no light  
But the cold light of stars;  
I give the first watch of the night  
To the red planet Mars.

The star of the unconquered will,  
He rises in my breast,  
Serene, and resolute, and still,  
And calm, and self-possessed.

And thou, too, whosoe'er thou art,  
That readest this brief psalm,  
As one by one thy hopes depart,  
Be resolute and calm.

O fear not in a world like this,  
And thou shalt know ere long,



Know how sublime a thing it is  
To suffer and be strong.

## Maidenhood

Maiden! with the meek, brown eyes,  
In whose orbs a shadow lies  
Like the dusk in evening skies!

Thou whose locks outshine the sun,  
Golden tresses, wreathed in one,  
As the braided streamlets run!

Standing, with reluctant feet,  
Where the brook and river meet,  
Womanhood and childhood fleet!

Gazing, with a timid glance,  
On the brooklet's swift advance,  
On the river's broad expanse!

Deep and still, that gliding stream  
Beautiful to thee must seem,  
As the river of a dream.

Then why pause with indecision,  
When bright angels in thy vision  
Beckon thee to fields Elysian?

Seest thou shadows sailing by,  
As the dove, with startled eye,

Sees the falcon's shadow fly?

Hearst thou voices on the shore,  
That our ears perceive no more,  
Deafened by the cataract's roar?

O, thou child of many prayers!  
Life hath quicksands,--Life hath snares  
Care and age come unawares!

Like the swell of some sweet tune,  
Morning rises into noon,  
May glides onward into June.

Childhood is the bough, where slumbered  
Birds and blossoms many-numbered;--  
Age, that bough with snows encumbered.

Gather, then, each flower that grows,  
When the young heart overflows,  
To embalm that tent of snows.

Bear a lily in thy hand;  
Gates of brass cannot withstand  
One touch of that magic wand.

Bear through sorrow, wrong, and ruth,  
In thy heart the dew of youth,  
On thy lips the smile of truth!

O, that dew, like balm, shall steal  
Into wounds that cannot heal,  
Even as sleep our eyes doth seal;

And that smile, like sunshine, dart

Into many a sunless heart,  
For a smile of God thou art.

## Mezzo Cammon

Half of my life is gone, and I have let  
    The years slip from me and have not fulfilled  
    The aspiration of my youth, to build  
    Some tower of song with lofty parapet.  
Not indolence, nor pleasure, nor the fret  
    Of restless passions that would not be stilled,  
    But sorrow, and a care that almost killed,  
    Kept me from what I may accomplish yet;  
Though, half way up the hill, I see the Past  
    Lying beneath me with its sounds and sights,--  
    A city in the twilight dim and vast,  
With smoking roofs, soft bells, and gleaming lights.--  
    And hear above me on the autumnal blast  
    The cataract of Death far thundering from the heights.

## Midnight Mass for the Dying

Yes, the Year is growing old,  
    And his eye is pale and bleared!  
Death, with frosty hand and cold,  
    Plucks the old man by the beard,  
        Sorely, sorely!

The leaves are falling, falling,  
Solemnly and slow;  
Caw! caw! the rooks are calling,  
It is a sound of woe,  
A sound of woe!

Through woods and mountain passes  
The winds, like anthems, roll;  
They are chanting solemn masses,  
Singing, "Pray for this poor soul,  
Pray, pray!"

And the hooded clouds, like friars,  
Tell their beads in drops of rain,  
And patter their doleful prayers;  
But their prayers are all in vain,  
All in vain!

There he stands in the foul weather,  
The foolish, fond Old Year,  
Crowned with wild flowers and with heather,  
Like weak, despised Lear,  
A king, a king!

Then comes the summer-like day,  
Bids the old man rejoice!  
His joy! his last! O, the man gray  
Loveth that ever-soft voice,  
Gentle and low.

To the crimson woods he saith,  
To the voice gentle and low  
Of the soft air, like a daughter's breath,  
"Pray do not mock me so!  
Do not laugh at me!"

And now the sweet day is dead;  
Cold in his arms it lies;  
No stain from its breath is spread  
Over the glassy skies,  
No mist or stain!

Then, too, the Old Year dieth,  
And the forests utter a moan,  
Like the voice of one who crieth  
In the wilderness alone,  
"Vex not his ghost!"

Then comes, with an awful roar,  
Gathering and sounding on,  
The storm-wind from Labrador,  
The wind Euroclydon,  
The storm-wind!

Howl! howl! and from the forest  
Sweep the red leaves away!  
Would, the sins that thou abhorrest,  
O Soul! could thus decay,  
And be swept away!  
For there shall come a mightier blast,  
There shall be a darker day;

And the stars, from heaven down-cast  
Like red leaves be swept away!  
Kyrie, eleyson!  
Christe, eleyson!

## The Norman Baron

Dans les moments de la vie ou la reflexion devient plus calme  
et plus profonde, ou l'interet et l'avarice parlent moins haut  
que la raison, dans les instants de chagrin domestique, de  
maladie, et de peril de mort, les nobles se repentirent de  
posseder des serfs, comme d'une chose peu agreable a Dieu, qui  
avait cree tous les hommes a son image.--THIERRY, Conquete de  
l'Angleterre.

In his chamber, weak and dying,  
Was the Norman baron lying;  
Loud, without, the tempest thundered  
And the castle-turret shook,

In this fight was Death the gainer,  
Spite of vassal and retainer,  
And the lands his sires had plundered,  
Written in the Doomsday Book.

By his bed a monk was seated,  
Who in humble voice repeated  
Many a prayer and pater-noster,  
From the missal on his knee;

And, amid the tempest pealing,  
Sounds of bells came faintly stealing,  
Bells, that from the neighboring kloster  
Rang for the Nativity.

In the hall, the serf and vassal  
Held, that night their Christmas wassail;  
Many a carol, old and saintly,  
Sang the minstrels and the waits;

And so loud these Saxon gleemen  
Sang to slaves the songs of freemen,  
That the storm was heard but faintly,  
    Knocking at the castle-gates.

Till at length the lays they chanted  
Reached the chamber terror-haunted,  
Where the monk, with accents holy,  
    Whispered at the baron's ear.

Tears upon his eyelids glistened,  
As he paused awhile and listened,  
And the dying baron slowly  
    Turned his weary head to hear.

"Wassail for the kingly stranger  
Born and cradled in a manger!  
King, like David, priest, like Aaron,  
    Christ is born to set us free!"

And the lightning showed the sainted  
Figures on the casement painted,  
And exclaimed the shuddering baron,  
    "Miserere, Domine!"

In that hour of deep contrition  
He beheld, with clearer vision,  
Through all outward show and fashion,  
    Justice, the Avenger, rise.

All the pomp of earth had vanished,  
Falsehood and deceit were banished,  
Reason spake more loud than passion,  
    And the truth wore no disguise.

Every vassal of his banner,  
Every serf born to his manor,  
All those wronged and wretched creatures,  
    By his hand were freed again.

And, as on the sacred missal  
He recorded their dismissal,  
Death relaxed his iron features,  
    And the monk replied, "Amen!"

Many centuries have been numbered  
Since in death the baron slumbered  
By the convent's sculptured portal,  
    Mingling with the common dust:

But the good deed, through the ages  
Living in historic pages,  
Brighter grows and gleams immortal,  
    Unconsumed by moth or rust

## Nuremberg

In the valley of the Pegnitz, where across broad meadow-lands  
Rise the blue Franconian mountains, Nuremberg, the ancient, sta

Quaint old town of toil and traffic, quaint old town of art and  
Memories haunt thy pointed gables, like the rooks that round th

Memories of the Middle Ages, when the emperors, rough and bold,  
Had their dwelling in thy castle, time-defying, centuries old;



And thy brave and thrifty burghers boasted, in their uncouth rhyme  
That their great imperial city stretched its hand through every

In the court-yard of the castle, bound with many an iron hand,  
Stands the mighty linden planted by Queen Cunigunde's hand;

On the square the oriel window, where in old heroic days  
Sat the poet Melchior singing Kaiser Maximilian's praise.

Everywhere I see around me rise the wondrous world of Art:  
Fountains wrought with richest sculpture standing in the common

And above cathedral doorways saints and bishops carved in stone  
By a former age commissioned as apostles to our own.

In the church of sainted Sebald sleeps enshrined his holy dust,  
And in bronze the Twelve Apostles guard from age to age their trust

In the church of sainted Lawrence stands a pix of sculpture rare  
Like the foamy sheaf of fountains, rising through the painted air

Here, when Art was still religion, with a simple, reverent heart  
Lived and labored Albrecht Durer, the Evangelist of Art;

Hence in silence and in sorrow, toiling still with busy hand,  
Like an emigrant he wandered, seeking for the Better Land.

Emigravit is the inscription on the tombstone where he lies;  
Dead he is not, but departed,--for the artist never dies.

Fairer seems the ancient city, and the sunshine seems more fair  
That he once has trod its pavement, that he once has breathed its air

Through these streets so broad and stately, these obscure and dim

Walked of yore the Mastersingers, chanting rude poetic strains.

From remote and sunless suburbs came they to the friendly guild  
Building nests in Fame's great temple, as in spouts the swallow

As the weaver plied the shuttle, wove he too the mystic rhyme,  
And the smith his iron measures hammered to the anvil's chime;

Thanking God, whose boundless wisdom makes the flowers of poesy  
In the forge's dust and cinders, in the tissues of the loom.

Here Hans Sachs, the cobbler-poet, laureate of the gentle craft  
Wisest of the Twelve Wise Masters, in huge folios sang and laugh

But his house is now an ale-house, with a nicely sanded floor,  
And a garland in the window, and his face above the door;

Painted by some humble artist, as in Adam Puschman's song,  
As the old man gray and dove-like, with his great beard white a

And at night the swart mechanic comes to drown his cark and care  
Quaffing ale from pewter tankard; in the master's antique chair

Vanished is the ancient splendor, and before my dreamy eye  
Wave these mingled shapes and figures, like a faded tapestry.

Not thy Councils, not thy Kaisers, win for thee the world's reg  
But thy painter, Albrecht Durer, and Hans Sachs thy cobbler-bar

Thus, O Nuremberg, a wanderer from a region far away,  
As he paced thy streets and court-yards, sang in thought his ca

Gathering from the pavement's crevice, as a floweret of the soi  
The nobility of labor,--the long pedigree of toil.

## The Occultation of Orion

I saw, as in a dream sublime,  
The balance in the hand of Time.  
O'er East and West its beam impended;  
And day, with all its hours of light,  
Was slowly sinking out of sight,  
While, opposite, the scale of night  
Silently with the stars ascended.

Like the astrologers of eld,  
In that bright vision I beheld  
Greater and deeper mysteries.  
I saw, with its celestial keys,  
Its chords of air, its frets of fire,  
The Samian's great Aeolian lyre,  
Rising through all its sevenfold bars,  
From earth unto the fixed stars.  
And through the dewy atmosphere,  
Not only could I see, but hear,  
Its wondrous and harmonious strings,  
In sweet vibration, sphere by sphere,  
From Dian's circle light and near,  
Onward to vaster and wider rings.  
Where, chanting through his beard of snows,  
Majestic, mournful, Saturn goes,  
And down the sunless realms of space  
Reverberates the thunder of his bass.

Beneath the sky's triumphal arch  
This music sounded like a march,

And with its chorus seemed to be  
Preluding some great tragedy.  
Sirius was rising in the east;  
And, slow ascending one by one,  
The kindling constellations shone.  
Begirt with many a blazing star,  
Stood the great giant Algebar,  
Orion, hunter of the beast!  
His sword hung gleaming by his side,  
And, on his arm, the lion's hide  
Scattered across the midnight air  
The golden radiance of its hair.

The moon was pallid, but not faint;  
And beautiful as some fair saint,  
Serenely moving on her way  
In hours of trial and dismay.  
As if she heard the voice of God,  
Unharm'd with naked feet she trod  
Upon the hot and burning stars,  
As on the glowing coals and bars,  
That were to prove her strength, and try  
Her holiness and her purity.

Thus moving on, with silent pace,  
And triumph in her sweet, pale face,  
She reached the station of Orion.  
Aghast he stood in strange alarm!  
And suddenly from his outstretched arm  
Down fell the red skin of the lion  
Into the river at his feet.  
His mighty club no longer beat  
The forehead of the bull; but he  
Reeled as of yore beside the sea,  
When, blinded by Oenopion,

He sought the blacksmith at his forge,  
And, climbing up the mountain gorge,  
Fixed his blank eyes upon the sun.

Then, through the silence overhead,  
An angel with a trumpet said,  
"Forevermore, forevermore,  
The reign of violence is o'er!"  
And, like an instrument that flings  
Its music on another's strings,  
The trumpet of the angel cast  
Upon the heavenly lyre its blast,  
And on from sphere to sphere the words  
Re-echoed down the burning chords,--  
"Forevermore, forevermore,  
The reign of violence is o'er!"

## The Old Clock on the Stairs

L'eternite est une pendule, dont le balancier dit et redit sans  
cesse ces deux mots seulement dans le silence des tombeaux:  
"Toujours! jamais! Jamais! toujours!"--JACQUES BRIDAINÉ.

Somewhat back from the village street  
Stands the old-fashioned country-seat.  
Across its antique portico  
Tall poplar-trees their shadows throw;  
And from its station in the hall  
An ancient timepiece says to all,--  
    "Forever--never!  
    Never--forever!"

Half-way up the stairs it stands,  
And points and beckons with its hands  
From its case of massive oak,  
Like a monk, who, under his cloak,  
Crosses himself, and sighs, alas!  
With sorrowful voice to all who pass,--  
    "Forever--never!  
    Never--forever!"

By day its voice is low and light;  
But in the silent dead of night,  
Distinct as a passing footstep's fall,  
It echoes along the vacant hall,  
Along the ceiling, along the floor,  
And seems to say, at each chamber-door,--  
    "Forever--never!  
    Never--forever!"

Through days of sorrow and of mirth,  
Through days of death and days of birth,  
Through every swift vicissitude  
Of changeful time, unchanged it has stood,  
And as if, like God, it all things saw,  
It calmly repeats those words of awe,--  
    "Forever--never!  
    Never--forever!"

In that mansion used to be  
Free-hearted Hospitality;  
His great fires up the chimney roared;  
The stranger feasted at his board;  
But, like the skeleton at the feast,  
That warning timepiece never ceased,--  
    "Forever--never!"

Never--forever!"

There groups of merry children played,  
There youths and maidens dreaming strayed;  
O precious hours! O golden prime,  
And affluence of love and time!  
Even as a Miser counts his gold,  
Those hours the ancient timepiece told,--  
    "Forever--never!  
    Never--forever!"

From that chamber, clothed in white,  
The bride came forth on her wedding night;  
There, in that silent room below,  
The dead lay in his shroud of snow;  
And in the hush that followed the prayer,  
Was heard the old clock on the stair,--  
    "Forever--never!  
    Never--forever!"

All are scattered now and fled,  
Some are married, some are dead;  
And when I ask, with throbs of pain.  
"Ah! when shall they all meet again?"  
As in the days long since gone by,  
The ancient timepiece makes reply,--  
    "Forever--never!  
    Never--forever!"

Never here, forever there,  
Where all parting, pain, and care,  
And death, and time shall disappear,--  
Forever there, but never here!  
The horologe of Eternity  
Sayeth this incessantly,--

"Forever--never!  
Never--forever!"

## A Psalm of Life

### What the Heart of the Young Man Said to the Psalmist

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,  
Life is but an empty dream!  
For the soul is dead that slumbers,  
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal;  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is our destined end or way;  
But to act, that each to-morrow  
Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,  
And our hearts, though stout and brave,  
Still, like muffled drums, are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of Life,



Be not like dumb, driven cattle!  
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!  
Let the dead Past bury its dead!  
Act,--act in the living Present!  
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time;--

Footprints, that perhaps another,  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labor and to wait.

## The Quadroon Girl

The Slaver in the broad lagoon  
Lay moored with idle sail;  
He waited for the rising moon,  
And for the evening gale.

Under the shore his boat was tied,

And all her listless crew  
Watched the gray alligator slide  
Into the still bayou.

Odors of orange-flowers, and spice,  
Reached them from time to time,  
Like airs that breathe from Paradise  
Upon a world of crime.

The Planter, under his roof of thatch,  
Smoked thoughtfully and slow;  
The Slaver's thumb was on the latch,  
He seemed in haste to go.

He said, "My ship at anchor rides  
In yonder broad lagoon;  
I only wait the evening tides,  
And the rising of the moon.

Before them, with her face upraised,  
In timid attitude,  
Like one half curious, half amazed,  
A Quadroon maiden stood.

Her eyes were large, and full of light,  
Her arms and neck were bare;  
No garment she wore save a kirtle bright,  
And her own long, raven hair.

And on her lips there played a smile  
As holy, meek, and faint,  
As lights in some cathedral aisle  
The features of a saint.

"The soil is barren,--the farm is old";

The thoughtful planter said;  
Then looked upon the Slaver's gold,  
And then upon the maid.

His heart within him was at strife  
With such accursed gains:  
For he knew whose passions gave her life,  
Whose blood ran in her veins.

But the voice of nature was too weak;  
He took the glittering gold!  
Then pale as death grew the maiden's cheek,  
Her hands as icy cold.

The Slaver led her from the door,  
He led her by the hand,  
To be his slave and paramour  
In a strange and distant land!

## Rain in Summer

How beautiful is the rain!  
After the dust and heat,  
In the broad and fiery street,  
In the narrow lane,  
How beautiful is the rain!

How it clatters along the roofs,  
Like the tramp of hoofs  
How it gushes and struggles out  
From the throat of the overflowing spout!

Across the window-pane  
It pours and pours;  
And swift and wide,  
With a muddy tide,  
Like a river down the gutter roars  
The rain, the welcome rain!

The sick man from his chamber looks  
At the twisted brooks;  
He can feel the cool  
Breath of each little pool;  
His fevered brain  
Grows calm again,  
And he breathes a blessing on the rain.

From the neighboring school  
Come the boys,  
With more than their wonted noise  
And commotion;  
And down the wet streets  
Sail their mimic fleets,  
Till the treacherous pool  
Ingulfs them in its whirling  
And turbulent ocean.

In the country, on every side,  
Where far and wide,  
Like a leopard's tawny and spotted hide,  
Stretches the plain,  
To the dry grass and the drier grain  
How welcome is the rain!

In the furrowed land  
The toilsome and patient oxen stand;

Lifting the yoke encumbered head,  
With their dilated nostrils spread,  
They silently inhale  
The clover-scented gale,  
And the vapors that arise  
From the well-watered and smoking soil.  
For this rest in the furrow after toil  
Their large and lustrous eyes  
Seem to thank the Lord,  
More than man's spoken word.

Near at hand,  
From under the sheltering trees,  
The farmer sees  
His pastures, and his fields of grain,  
As they bend their tops  
To the numberless beating drops  
Of the incessant rain.  
He counts it as no sin  
That he sees therein  
Only his own thrift and gain.

These, and far more than these,  
The Poet sees!  
He can behold  
Aquarius old  
Walking the fenceless fields of air;  
And from each ample fold  
Of the clouds about him rolled  
Scattering everywhere  
The showery rain,  
As the farmer scatters his grain.

He can behold  
Things manifold

That have not yet been wholly told,--  
Have not been wholly sung nor said.  
For his thought, that never stops,  
Follows the water-drops  
Down to the graves of the dead,  
Down through chasms and gulfs profound,  
To the dreary fountain-head  
Of lakes and rivers under ground;  
And sees them, when the rain is done,  
On the bridge of colors seven  
Climbing up once more to heaven,  
Opposite the setting sun.

Thus the Seer,  
With vision clear,  
Sees forms appear and disappear,  
In the perpetual round of strange,  
Mysterious change  
From birth to death, from death to birth,  
From earth to heaven, from heaven to earth;  
Till glimpses more sublime  
Of things, unseen before,  
Unto his wondering eyes reveal  
The Universe, as an immeasurable wheel  
Turning forevermore  
In the rapid and rushing river of Time.

## The Rainy Day

The day is cold, and dark, and dreary  
It rains, and the wind is never weary;

The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,  
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,  
And the day is dark and dreary.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;  
It rains, and the wind is never weary;  
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering Past,  
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,  
And the days are dark and dreary.

Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;  
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;  
Thy fate is the common fate of all,  
Into each life some rain must fall,  
Some days must be dark and dreary.

## The Reaper and the Flowers

There is a Reaper, whose name is Death,  
And, with his sickle keen,  
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,  
And the flowers that grow between.

"Shall I have naught that is fair?" saith he;  
"Have naught but the bearded grain?  
Though the breath of these flowers is sweet to me,  
I will give them all back again."

He gazed at the flowers with tearful eyes,  
He kissed their drooping leaves;  
It was for the Lord of Paradise

He bound them in his sheaves.

"My Lord has need of these flowerets gay,"

The Reaper said, and smiled;

"Dear tokens of the earth are they,

Where he was once a child.

"They shall all bloom in fields of light,

Transplanted by my care,

And saints, upon their garments white,

These sacred blossoms wear."

And the mother gave, in tears and pain,

The flowers she most did love;

She knew she should find them all again

In the fields of light above.

O, not in cruelty, not in wrath,

The Reaper came that day;

'T was an angel visited the green earth,

And took the flowers away.

## Serenade

Stars of the summer night!

Far in yon azure deeps,

Hide, hide your golden light!

She sleeps!

My lady sleeps!

Sleeps!



Moon of the summer night!

Far down yon western steeps,  
Sink, sink in silver light!

She sleeps!  
My lady sleeps!  
Sleeps!

Wind of the summer night!

Where yonder woodbine creeps,  
Fold, fold thy pinions light!

She sleeps!  
My lady sleeps!  
Sleeps!

Dreams of the summer night!

Tell her, her lover keeps  
Watch! while in slumbers light

She sleeps  
My lady sleeps  
Sleeps!

## The Skeleton in Armor

"Speak! speak I thou fearful guest  
Who, with thy hollow breast  
Still in rude armor drest,  
Comest to daunt me!  
Wrapt not in Eastern balms,  
Bat with thy fleshless palms  
Stretched, as if asking alms,  
Why dost thou haunt me?"

Then, from those cavernous eyes  
Pale flashes seemed to rise,  
As when the Northern skies  
    Gleam in December;  
And, like the water's flow  
Under December's snow,  
Came a dull voice of woe  
    From the heart's chamber.

"I was a Viking old!  
My deeds, though manifold,  
No Skald in song has told,  
    No Saga taught thee!  
Take heed, that in thy verse  
Thou dost the tale rehearse,  
Else dread a dead man's curse;  
    For this I sought thee.

"Far in the Northern Land,  
By the wild Baltic's strand,  
I, with my childish hand,  
    Tamed the gerfalcon;  
And, with my skates fast-bound,  
Skimmed the half-frozen Sound,  
    That the poor whimpering hound  
Trembled to walk on.

"Oft to his frozen lair  
Tracked I the grisly bear,  
While from my path the hare  
    Fled like a shadow;  
Oft through the forest dark  
Followed the were-wolf's bark,  
Until the soaring lark

Sang from the meadow.

"But when I older grew,  
Joining a corsair's crew,  
O'er the dark sea I flew  
    With the marauders.  
Wild was the life we led;  
Many the souls that sped,  
Many the hearts that bled,  
    By our stern orders.

"Many a wassail-bout  
Wore the long Winter out;  
Often our midnight shout  
    Set the cocks crowing,  
As we the Berserk's tale  
Measured in cups of ale,  
Draining the oaken pail,  
    Filled to o'erflowing.

"Once as I told in glee  
Tales of the stormy sea,  
Soft eyes did gaze on me,  
    Burning yet tender;  
And as the white stars shine  
On the dark Norway pine,  
On that dark heart of mine  
    Fell their soft splendor.

"I wooed the blue-eyed maid,  
Yielding, yet half afraid,  
And in the forest's shade  
    Our vows were plighted.  
Under its loosened vest  
Fluttered her little breast

Like birds within their nest  
By the hawk frightened.

"Bright in her father's hall  
Shields gleamed upon the wall,  
Loud sang the minstrels all,  
Chanting his glory;  
When of old Hildebrand  
I asked his daughter's hand,  
Mute did the minstrels stand  
To hear my story.

"While the brown ale he quaffed,  
Loud then the champion laughed,  
And as the wind-gusts waft  
The sea-foam brightly,  
So the loud laugh of scorn,  
Out of those lips unshorn,  
From the deep drinking-horn  
Blew the foam lightly.

"She was a Prince's child,  
I but a Viking wild,  
And though she blushed and smiled,  
I was discarded!  
Should not the dove so white  
Follow the sea-mew's flight,  
Why did they leave that night  
Her nest unguarded?

"Scarce had I put to sea,  
Bearing the maid with me,  
Fairest of all was she  
Among the Norsemen!  
When on the white sea-strand,

Waving his armed hand,  
Saw we old Hildebrand,  
    With twenty horsemen.

"Then launched they to the blast,  
Bent like a reed each mast,  
Yet we were gaining fast,  
    When the wind failed us;  
And with a sudden flaw  
Came round the gusty Skaw,  
So that our foe we saw  
    Laugh as he hailed us.

"And as to catch the gale  
Round veered the flapping sail,  
Death I was the helmsman's hail,  
    Death without quarter!  
Mid-ships with iron keel  
Struck we her ribs of steel  
Down her black hulk did reel  
    Through the black water!

"As with his wings aslant,  
Sails the fierce cormorant,  
Seeking some rocky haunt  
    With his prey laden,  
So toward the open main,  
Beating to sea again,  
Through the wild hurricane,  
    Bore I the maiden.

"Three weeks we westward bore,  
And when the storm was o'er,  
Cloud-like we saw the shore  
    Stretching to leeward;

There for my lady's bower  
Built I the lofty tower,  
Which, to this very hour,  
    Stands looking seaward.

"There lived we many years;  
Time dried the maiden's tears  
She had forgot her fears,  
    She was a mother.  
Death closed her mild blue eyes,  
Under that tower she lies;  
Ne'er shall the sun arise  
    On such another!

"Still grew my bosom then.  
Still as a stagnant fen!  
Hateful to me were men,  
    The sunlight hateful!  
In the vast forest here,  
Clad in my warlike gear,  
Fell I upon my spear,  
    O, death was grateful!

"Thus, seamed with many scars,  
Bursting these prison bars,  
Up to its native stars  
    My soul ascended!  
There from the flowing bowl  
Deep drinks the warrior's soul,  
Skoal! to the Northland! skoal!"  
    Thus the tale ended.

## The Slave in the Dismal Swamp

In dark fens of the Dismal Swamp  
The hunted Negro lay;  
He saw the fire of the midnight camp,  
And heard at times a horse's tramp  
And a bloodhound's distant bay.

Where will-o'-the-wisps and glow-worms shine,  
In bulrush and in brake;  
Where waving mosses shroud the pine,  
And the cedar grows, and the poisonous vine  
Is spotted like the snake;

Where hardly a human foot could pass,  
Or a human heart would dare,  
On the quaking turf of the green morass  
He crouched in the rank and tangled grass,  
Like a wild beast in his lair.

A poor old slave, infirm and lame;  
Great scars deformed his face;  
On his forehead he bore the brand of shame,  
And the rags, that hid his mangled frame,  
Were the livery of disgrace.

All things above were bright and fair,  
All things were glad and free;  
Lithe squirrels darted here and there,  
And wild birds filled the echoing air  
With songs of Liberty!

On him alone was the doom of pain,  
From the morning of his birth;

On him alone the curse of Cain  
Fell, like a flail on the garnered grain,  
And struck him to the earth!

## The Slave Singing at Midnight

Loud he sang the psalm of David!  
He, a Negro and enslaved,  
Sang of Israel's victory,  
Sang of Zion, bright and free.

In that hour, when night is calmest,  
Sang he from the Hebrew Psalmist,  
In a voice so sweet and clear  
That I could not choose but hear,

Songs of triumph, and ascriptions,  
Such as reached the swart Egyptians,  
When upon the Red Sea coast  
Perished Pharaoh and his host.

And the voice of his devotion  
Filled my soul with strange emotion;  
For its tones by turns were glad,  
Sweetly solemn, wildly sad.

Paul and Silas, in their prison,  
Sang of Christ, the Lord arisen,  
And an earthquake's arm of might  
Broke their dungeon-gates at night.



But, alas! what holy angel  
Brings the Slave this glad evangel?  
And what earthquake's arm of might  
Breaks his dungeon-gates at night?

## The Slave's Dream

Beside the ungathered rice he lay,  
His sickle in his hand;  
His breast was bare, his matted hair  
Was buried in the sand.  
Again, in the mist and shadow of sleep,  
He saw his Native Land.

Wide through the landscape of his dreams  
The lordly Niger flowed;  
Beneath the palm-trees on the plain  
Once more a king he strode;  
And heard the tinkling caravans  
Descend the mountain-road.

He saw once more his dark-eyed queen  
Among her children stand;  
They clasped his neck, they kissed his cheeks,  
They held him by the hand!--  
A tear burst from the sleeper's lids  
And fell into the sand.

And then at furious speed he rode  
Along the Niger's bank;  
His bridle-reins were golden chains,

And, with a martial clank,  
At each leap he could feel his scabbard of steel  
Smiting his stallion's flank.

Before him, like a blood-red flag,  
The bright flamingoes flew;  
From morn till night he followed their flight,  
O'er plains where the tamarind grew,  
Till he saw the roofs of Caffre huts,  
And the ocean rose to view.

At night he heard the lion roar,  
And the hyena scream,  
And the river-horse, as he crushed the reeds  
Beside some hidden stream;  
And it passed, like a glorious roll of drums,  
Through the triumph of his dream.

The forests, with their myriad tongues,  
Shouted of liberty;  
And the Blast of the Desert cried aloud,  
With a voice so wild and free,  
That he started in his sleep and smiled  
At their tempestuous glee.

He did not feel the driver's whip,  
Nor the burning heat of day;  
For Death had illumined the Land of Sleep,  
And his lifeless body lay  
A worn-out fetter, that the soul  
Had broken and thrown away!

## The Spirit of Poetry

There is a quiet spirit in these woods,  
That dwells where'er the gentle south-wind blows;  
Where, underneath the white-thorn, in the glade,  
The wild flowers bloom, or, kissing the soft air,  
The leaves above their sunny palms outspread.  
With what a tender and impassioned voice  
It fills the nice and delicate ear of thought,  
When the fast ushering star of morning comes  
O'er-riding the gray hills with golden scarf;  
Or when the cowed and dusky-sandaled Eve,  
In mourning weeds, from out the western gate,  
Departs with silent pace! That spirit moves  
In the green valley, where the silver brook,  
From its full laver, pours the white cascade;  
And, babbling low amid the tangled woods,  
Slips down through moss-grown stones with endless laughter.  
And frequent, on the everlasting hills,  
Its feet go forth, when it doth wrap itself  
In all the dark embroidery of the storm,  
And shouts the stern, strong wind. And here, amid  
The silent majesty of these deep woods,  
Its presence shall uplift thy thoughts from earth,  
As to the sunshine and the pure, bright air  
Their tops the green trees lift. Hence gifted bards  
Have ever loved the calm and quiet shades.  
For them there was an eloquent voice in all  
The sylvan pomp of woods, the golden sun,  
The flowers, the leaves, the river on its way,  
Blue skies, and silver clouds, and gentle winds,  
The swelling upland, where the sidelong sun  
Aslant the wooded slope, at evening, goes,  
Groves, through whose broken roof the sky looks in,

Mountain, and shattered cliff, and sunny vale,  
The distant lake, fountains, and mighty trees,  
In many a lazy syllable, repeating  
Their old poetic legends to the wind.

And this is the sweet spirit, that doth fill  
The world; and, in these wayward days of youth,  
My busy fancy oft embodies it,  
As a bright image of the light and beauty  
That dwell in nature; of the heavenly forms  
We worship in our dreams, and the soft hues  
That stain the wild bird's wing, and flush the clouds  
When the sun sets. Within her tender eye  
The heaven of April, with its changing light,  
And when it wears the blue of May, is hung,  
And on her lip the rich, red rose. Her hair  
Is like the summer tresses of the trees,  
When twilight makes them brown, and on her cheek  
Blushes the richness of an autumn sky,  
With ever-shifting beauty. Then her breath,  
It is so like the gentle air of Spring,  
As, front the morning's dewy flowers, it comes  
Full of their fragrance, that it is a joy  
To have it round us, and her silver voice  
Is the rich music of a summer bird,  
Heard in the still night, with its passionate cadence.

## Sunrise on the Hills

I stood upon the hills, when heaven's wide arch  
Was glorious with the sun's returning march,

And woods were brightened, and soft gales  
Went forth to kiss the sun-clad vales.  
The clouds were far beneath me; bathed in light,  
They gathered mid-way round the wooded height,  
And, in their fading glory, shone  
Like hosts in battle overthrown.  
As many a pinnacle, with shifting glance.  
Through the gray mist thrust up its shattered lance,  
And rocking on the cliff was left  
The dark pine blasted, bare, and cleft.  
The veil of cloud was lifted, and below  
Glowed the rich valley, and the river's flow  
Was darkened by the forest's shade,  
Or glistened in the white cascade;  
Where upward, in the mellow blush of day,  
The noisy bittern wheeled his spiral way.

I heard the distant waters dash,  
I saw the current whirl and flash,  
And richly, by the blue lake's silver beach,  
The woods were bending with a silent reach.  
Then o'er the vale, with gentle swell,  
The music of the village bell  
Came sweetly to the echo-giving hills;  
And the wild horn, whose voice the woodland fills,  
Was ringing to the merry shout,  
That faint and far the glen sent out,  
Where, answering to the sudden shot, thin smoke,  
Through thick-leaved branches, from the dingle broke.

If thou art worn and hard beset  
With sorrows, that thou wouldst forget,  
If thou wouldst read a lesson, that will keep  
Thy heart from fainting and thy soul from sleep,  
Go to the woods and hills! No tears

Dim the sweet look that Nature wears.

## To a Child

Dear child! how radiant on thy mother's knee,  
With merry-making eyes and jocund smiles,  
Thou gazest at the painted tiles,  
Whose figures grace,  
With many a grotesque form and face.  
The ancient chimney of thy nursery!  
The lady with the gay macaw,  
The dancing girl, the grave bashaw  
With bearded lip and chin;  
And, leaning idly o'er his gate,  
Beneath the imperial fan of state,  
The Chinese mandarin.

With what a look of proud command  
Thou shakest in thy little hand  
The coral rattle with its silver bells,  
Making a merry tune!  
Thousands of years in Indian seas  
That coral grew, by slow degrees,  
Until some deadly and wild monsoon  
Dashed it on Coromandel's sand!  
Those silver bells  
Reposed of yore,  
As shapeless ore,  
Far down in the deep-sunken wells  
Of darksome mines,  
In some obscure and sunless place,

Beneath huge Chimborazo's base,  
Or Potosi's o'erhanging pines  
And thus for thee, O little child,  
Through many a danger and escape,  
The tall ships passed the stormy cape;  
For thee in foreign lands remote,  
Beneath a burning, tropic clime,  
The Indian peasant, chasing the wild goat,  
Himself as swift and wild,  
In falling, clutched the frail arbuté,  
The fibres of whose shallow root,  
Uplifted from the soil, betrayed  
The silver veins beneath it laid,  
The buried treasures of the miser, Time.

But, lo! thy door is left ajar!  
Thou hearest footsteps from afar!  
And, at the sound,  
Thou turnest round  
With quick and questioning eyes,  
Like one, who, in a foreign land,  
Beholds on every hand  
Some source of wonder and surprise!  
And, restlessly, impatiently,  
Thou strivest, strugglest, to be free,  
The four walls of thy nursery  
Are now like prison walls to thee.  
No more thy mother's smiles,  
No more the painted tiles,  
Delight thee, nor the playthings on the floor,  
That won thy little, beating heart before;  
Thou strugglest for the open door.

Through these once solitary halls  
Thy pattering footstep falls.

The sound of thy merry voice  
Makes the old walls  
Jubilant, and they rejoice  
With the joy of thy young heart,  
O'er the light of whose gladness  
No shadows of sadness  
From the sombre background of memory start.

Once, ah, once, within these walls,  
One whom memory oft recalls,  
The Father of his Country, dwelt.  
And yonder meadows broad and damp  
The fires of the besieging camp  
Encircled with a burning belt.  
Up and down these echoing stairs,  
Heavy with the weight of cares,  
Sounded his majestic tread;  
Yes, within this very room  
Sat he in those hours of gloom,  
Weary both in heart and head.

But what are these grave thoughts to thee?  
Out, out! into the open air!  
Thy only dream is liberty,  
Thou carest little how or where.  
I see thee eager at thy play,  
Now shouting to the apples on the tree,  
With cheeks as round and red as they;  
And now among the yellow stalks,  
Among the flowering shrubs and plants,  
As restless as the bee.  
Along the garden walks,  
The tracks of thy small carriage-wheels I trace;  
And see at every turn how they efface  
Whole villages of sand-roofed tents,



That rise like golden domes  
Above the cavernous and secret homes  
Of wandering and nomadic tribes of ants.  
Ah, cruel little Tamerlane,  
Who, with thy dreadful reign,  
Dost persecute and overwhelm  
These hapless Troglodytes of thy realm!  
What! tired already! with those suppliant looks,  
And voice more beautiful than a poet's books,  
Or murmuring sound of water as it flows.  
Thou comest back to parley with repose;  
This rustic seat in the old apple-tree,  
With its o'erhanging golden canopy  
Of leaves illuminate with autumnal hues,  
And shining with the argent light of dews,  
Shall for a season be our place of rest.  
Beneath us, like an oriole's pendent nest,  
From which the laughing birds have taken wing,  
By thee abandoned, hangs thy vacant swing.  
Dream-like the waters of the river gleam;  
A sailless vessel drops adown the stream,  
And like it, to a sea as wide and deep,  
Thou driftest gently down the tides of sleep.

O child! O new-born denizen  
Of life's great city! on thy head  
The glory of the morn is shed,  
Like a celestial benison!  
Here at the portal thou dost stand,  
And with thy little hand  
Thou openest the mysterious gate  
Into the future's undiscovered land.  
I see its valves expand,  
As at the touch of Fate!  
Into those realms of love and hate,

Into that darkness blank and drear,  
By some prophetic feeling taught,  
I launch the bold, adventurous thought,  
Freighted with hope and fear;  
As upon subterranean streams,  
In caverns unexplored and dark,  
Men sometimes launch a fragile bark,  
Laden with flickering fire,  
And watch its swift-receding beams,  
Until at length they disappear,  
And in the distant dark expire.

By what astrology of fear or hope  
Dare I to cast thy horoscope!  
Like the new moon thy life appears;  
A little strip of silver light,  
And widening outward into night  
The shadowy disk of future years;  
And yet upon its outer rim,  
A luminous circle, faint and dim,  
And scarcely visible to us here,  
Rounds and completes the perfect sphere;  
A prophecy and intimation,  
A pale and feeble adumbration,  
Of the great world of light, that lies  
Behind all human destinies.

Ah! if thy fate, with anguish fraught,  
Should be to wet the dusty soil  
With the hot tears and sweat of toil,--  
To struggle with imperious thought,  
Until the overburdened brain,  
Wearied with labor, faint with pain,  
Like a jarred pendulum, retain  
Only its motion, not its power,--

Remember, in that perilous hour,  
When most afflicted and oppressed,  
From labor there shall come forth rest.

And if a more auspicious fate  
On thy advancing steps await  
Still let it ever be thy pride  
To linger by the laborer's side;  
With words of sympathy or song  
To cheer the dreary march along  
Of the great army of the poor,  
O'er desert sand, o'er dangerous moor.  
Nor to thyself the task shall be  
Without reward; for thou shalt learn  
The wisdom early to discern  
True beauty in utility;  
As great Pythagoras of yore,  
Standing beside the blacksmith's door,  
And hearing the hammers, as they smote  
The anvils with a different note,  
Stole from the varying tones, that hung  
Vibrant on every iron tongue,  
The secret of the sounding wire.  
And formed the seven-chorded lyre.

Enough! I will not play the Seer;  
I will no longer strive to ope  
The mystic volume, where appear  
The herald Hope, forerunning Fear,  
And Fear, the pursuivant of Hope.  
Thy destiny remains untold;  
For, like Acastes' shaft of old,  
The swift thought kindles as it flies,  
And burns to ashes in the skies.

## To an Old Danish Songbook

Welcome, my old friend,  
Welcome to a foreign fireside,  
While the sullen gales of autumn  
Shake the windows.

The ungrateful world  
Has, it seems, dealt harshly with thee,  
Since, beneath the skies of Denmark,  
First I met thee.

There are marks of age,  
There are thumb-marks on thy margin,  
Made by hands that clasped thee rudely,  
At the alehouse.

Soiled and dull thou art;  
Yellow are thy time-worn pages,  
As the russet, rain-molested  
Leaves of autumn.

Thou art stained with wine  
Scattered from hilarious goblets,  
As the leaves with the libations  
Of Olympus.

Yet dost thou recall  
Days departed, half-forgotten,  
When in dreamy youth I wandered  
By the Baltic,--

When I paused to hear  
The old ballad of King Christian  
Shouted from suburban taverns  
In the twilight.

Thou recallest bards,  
Who in solitary chambers,  
And with hearts by passion wasted,  
Wrote thy pages.

Thou recallest homes  
Where thy songs of love and friendship  
Made the gloomy Northern winter  
Bright as summer.

Once some ancient Scald,  
In his bleak, ancestral Iceland,  
Chanted staves of these old ballads  
To the Vikings.

Once in Elsinore,  
At the court of old King Hamlet  
Yorick and his boon companions  
Sang these ditties.

Once Prince Frederick's Guard  
Sang them in their smoky barracks;--  
Suddenly the English cannon  
Joined the chorus!

Peasants in the field,  
Sailors on the roaring ocean,  
Students, tradesmen, pale mechanics,  
All have sung them.

Thou hast been their friend;  
They, alas! have left thee friendless!  
Yet at least by one warm fireside  
Art thou welcome.

And, as swallows build  
In these wide, old-fashioned chimneys,  
So thy twittering songs shall nestle  
In my bosom,--

Quiet, close, and warm,  
Sheltered from all molestation,  
And recalling by their voices  
Youth and travel.

## To the Driving Cloud

Gloomy and dark art thou, O chief of the mighty Omahas;  
Gloomy and dark as the driving cloud, whose name thou hast taken  
Wrapt in thy scarlet blanket, I see thee stalk through the city  
Narrow and populous streets, as once by the margin of rivers  
Stalked those birds unknown, that have left us only their footprints  
What, in a few short years, will remain of thy race but the footprints

How canst thou walk these streets, who hast trod the green turf  
How canst thou breathe this air, who hast breathed the sweet air  
Ah! 't is in vain that with lordly looks of disdain thou dost cast  
Looks of disdain in return, and question these walls and these  
Claiming the soil for thy hunting-grounds, while down-trodden men  
Starve in the garrets of Europe, and cry from its caverns that

Have been created heirs of the earth, and claim its division!

Back, then, back to thy woods in the regions west of the Wabash  
There as a monarch thou reignest. In autumn the leaves of the  
Pave the floors of thy palace-halls with gold, and in summer  
Pine-trees waft through its chambers the odorous breath of the  
There thou art strong and great, a hero, a tamer of horses!  
There thou chasest the stately stag on the banks of the Elkhorn  
Or by the roar of the Running-Water, or where the Omaha  
Calls thee, and leaps through the wild ravine like a brave of the  
Blackfeet!

Hark! what murmurs arise from the heart of those mountainous deserts  
Is it the cry of the Foxes and Crows, or the mighty Behemoth,  
Who, unharmed, on his tusks once caught the bolts of the thunder  
And now lurks in his lair to destroy the race of the red man?  
Far more fatal to thee and thy race than the Crows and the Foxes  
Far more fatal to thee and thy race than the tread of Behemoth,  
Lo! the big thunder-canoe, that steadily breasts the Missouri's  
Merciless current! and yonder, afar on the prairies, the camp-fire  
Gleam through the night; and the cloud of dust in the gray of the  
Marks not the buffalo's track, nor the Mandan's dexterous horse  
It is a caravan, whitening the desert where dwell the Camanches  
Ha! how the breath of these Saxons and Celts, like the blast of the  
Drifts evermore to the west the scanty smokes of thy wigwams!

## To the River Charles

River! that in silence windest  
Through the meadows, bright and free,  
Till at length thy rest thou findest

In the bosom of the sea!

Four long years of mingled feeling,  
Half in rest, and half in strife,  
I have seen thy waters stealing  
Onward, like the stream of life.

Thou hast taught me, Silent River!  
Many a lesson, deep and long;  
Thou hast been a generous giver;  
I can give thee but a song.

Oft in sadness and in illness,  
I have watched thy current glide,  
Till the beauty of its stillness  
Overflowed me, like a tide.

And in better hours and brighter,  
When I saw thy waters gleam,  
I have felt my heart beat lighter,  
And leap onward with thy stream.

Not for this alone I love thee,  
Nor because thy waves of blue  
From celestial seas above thee  
Take their own celestial hue.

Where yon shadowy woodlands hide thee,  
And thy waters disappear,  
Friends I love have dwelt beside thee,  
And have made thy margin dear.

More than this;--thy name reminds me  
Of three friends, all true and tried;  
And that name, like magic, binds me



Closer, closer to thy side.

Friends my soul with joy remembers!  
How like quivering flames they start,  
When I fan the living embers  
On the hearth-stone of my heart!

'T is for this, thou Silent River!  
That my spirit leans to thee;  
Thou hast been a generous giver,  
Take this idle song from me.

## To William E. Channing

The pages of thy book I read,  
And as I closed each one,  
My heart, responding, ever said,  
"Servant of God! well done!"

Well done! Thy words are great and bold;  
At times they seem to me,  
Like Luther's, in the days of old,  
Half-battles for the free.

Go on, until this land revokes  
The old and chartered Lie,  
The feudal curse, whose whips and yokes  
Insult humanity.

A voice is ever at thy side  
Speaking in tones of might,

Like the prophetic voice, that cried  
To John in Patmos, "Write!"

Write! and tell out this bloody tale;  
Record this dire eclipse,  
This Day of Wrath, this Endless Wail,  
This dread Apocalypse!

## The Village Blacksmith

Under a spreading chestnut-tree  
The village smithy stands;  
The smith, a mighty man is he,  
With large and sinewy hands;  
And the muscles of his brawny arms  
Are strong as iron bands.

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,  
His face is like the tan;  
His brow is wet with honest sweat,  
He earns whate'er he can,  
And looks the whole world in the face,  
For he owes not any man.

Week in, week out, from morn till night,  
You can hear his bellows blow;  
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,  
With measured beat and slow,  
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,  
When the evening sun is low.

And children coming home from school  
Look in at the open door;  
They love to see the flaming forge,  
And bear the bellows roar,  
And catch the burning sparks that fly  
Like chaff from a threshing-floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church,  
And sits among his boys;  
He hears the parson pray and preach,  
He hears his daughter's voice,  
Singing in the village choir,  
And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice,  
Singing in Paradise!  
He needs must think of her once more,  
How in the grave she lies;  
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes  
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling,--rejoicing,--sorrowing,  
Onward through life he goes;  
Each morning sees some task begin,  
Each evening sees it close  
Something attempted, something done,  
Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,  
For the lesson thou hast taught!  
Thus at the flaming forge of life  
Our fortunes must be wrought;  
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped  
Each burning deed and thought.

## Walter Von Der Vogelweid

Vogelweid the Minnesinger,  
When he left this world of ours,  
Laid his body in the cloister,  
Under Wurtzburg's minster towers.

And he gave the monks his treasures,  
Gave them all with this behest:  
They should feed the birds at noontide  
Daily on his place of rest;

Saying, "From these wandering minstrels  
I have learned the art of song;  
Let me now repay the lessons  
They have taught so well and long."

Thus the bard of love departed;  
And, fulfilling his desire,  
On his tomb the birds were feasted  
By the children of the choir.

Day by day, o'er tower and turret,  
In foul weather and in fair,  
Day by day, in vaster numbers,  
Flocked the poets of the air.

On the tree whose heavy branches  
Overshadowed all the place,  
On the pavement, on the tombstone,  
On the poet's sculptured face,

On the cross-bars of each window,  
On the lintel of each door,  
They renewed the War of Wartburg,  
Which the bard had fought before.

There they sang their merry carols,  
Sang their lauds on every side;  
And the name their voices uttered  
Was the name of Vogelweid.

Till at length the portly abbot  
Murmured, "Why this waste of food?  
Be it changed to loaves henceforward  
For our tasting brotherhood."

Then in vain o'er tower and turret,  
From the walls and woodland nests,  
When the minster bells rang noontide,  
Gathered the unwelcome guests.

Then in vain, with cries discordant,  
Clamorous round the Gothic spire,  
Screamed the feathered Minnesingers  
For the children of the choir.

Time has long effaced the inscriptions  
On the cloister's funeral stones,  
And tradition only tells us  
Where repose the poet's bones.

But around the vast cathedral,  
By sweet echoes multiplied,  
Still the birds repeat the legend,  
And the name of Vogelweid.

## The Warning

Beware! The Israelite of old, who tore  
The lion in his path,--when, poor and blind,  
He saw the blessed light of heaven no more,  
Shorn of his noble strength and forced to grind  
In prison, and at last led forth to be  
A pander to Philistine revelry,--

Upon the pillars of the temple laid  
His desperate hands, and in its overthrow  
Destroyed himself, and with him those who made  
A cruel mockery of his sightless woe;  
The poor, blind Slave, the scoff and jest of all,  
Expired, and thousands perished in the fall!

There is a poor, blind Samson in this land,  
Shorn of his strength and bound in bonds of steel,  
Who may, in some grim revel, raise his hand,  
And shake the pillars of this Commonweal,  
Till the vast Temple of our liberties.  
A shapeless mass of wreck and rubbish lies.

## The Witnesses

In Ocean's wide domains,  
Half buried in the sands,  
Lie skeletons in chains,

With shackled feet and hands.

Beyond the fall of dews,  
Deeper than plummet lies,  
Float ships, with all their crews,  
No more to sink nor rise.

There the black Slave-ship swims,  
Freighted with human forms,  
Whose fettered, fleshless limbs  
Are not the sport of storms.

These are the bones of Slaves;  
They gleam from the abyss;  
They cry, from yawning waves,  
"We are the Witnesses!"

Within Earth's wide domains  
Are markets for men's lives;  
Their necks are galled with chains,  
Their wrists are cramped with gyves.

Dead bodies, that the kite  
In deserts makes its prey;  
Murders, that with affright  
Scare school-boys from their play!

All evil thoughts and deeds;  
Anger, and lust, and pride;  
The foulest, rankest weeds,  
That choke Life's groaning tide!

These are the woes of Slaves;  
They glare from the abyss;  
They cry, from unknown graves,

"We are the Witnesses!"

## Woods in Winter

When winter winds are piercing chill,  
And through the hawthorn blows the gale,  
With solemn feet I tread the hill,  
That overbrows the lonely vale.

O'er the bare upland, and away  
Through the long reach of desert woods,  
The embracing sunbeams chastely play,  
And gladden these deep solitudes.

Where, twisted round the barren oak,  
The summer vine in beauty clung,  
And summer winds the stillness broke,  
The crystal icicle is hung.

Where, from their frozen urns, mute springs  
Pour out the river's gradual tide,  
Shrilly the skater's iron rings,  
And voices fill the woodland side.

Alas! how changed from the fair scene,  
When birds sang out their mellow lay,  
And winds were soft, and woods were green,  
And the song ceased not with the day!

But still wild music is abroad,  
Pale, desert woods! within your crowd;



And gathering winds, in hoarse accord,  
Amid the vocal reeds pipe loud.

Chill airs and wintry winds! my ear  
Has grown familiar with your song;  
I hear it in the opening year,  
I listen, and it cheers me long.

## The Wreck of the Hesperus

It was the schooner Hesperus,  
That sailed the wintry sea;  
And the skipper had taken his little daughter,  
To bear him company.

Blue were her eyes as the fairy-flax,  
Her cheeks like the dawn of day,  
And her bosom white as the hawthorn buds,  
That ope in the month of May.

The skipper he stood beside the helm,  
His pipe was in his month,  
And he watched how the veering flaw did blow  
The smoke now West, now South.

Then up and spake an old Sailor,  
Had sailed to the Spanish Main,  
"I pray thee, put into yonder port,  
For I fear a hurricane.

"Last night, the moon had a golden ring,

And to-night no moon we see!"  
The skipper, he blew a whiff from his pipe,  
And a scornful laugh laughed he.

Colder and louder blew the wind,  
A gale from the Northeast.  
The snow fell hissing in the brine,  
And the billows frothed like yeast.

Down came the storm, and smote amain  
The vessel in its strength;  
She shuddered and paused, like a frightened steed,  
Then leaped her cable's length.

"Come hither! come hither! my little daughter,  
And do not tremble so;  
For I can weather the roughest gale  
That ever wind did blow."

He wrapped her warm in his seaman's coat  
Against the stinging blast;  
He cut a rope from a broken spar,  
And bound her to the mast.

"O father! I hear the church-bells ring,  
O say, what may it be?"  
"'Tis a fog-bell on a rock-bound coast!"--  
And he steered for the open sea.

"O father! I hear the sound of guns,  
O say, what may it be?"  
"Some ship in distress, that cannot live  
In such an angry sea!"

"O father! I see a gleaming light  
O say, what may it be?"  
But the father answered never a word,  
A frozen corpse was he.

Lashed to the helm, all stiff and stark,  
With his face turned to the skies,  
The lantern gleamed through the gleaming snow  
On his fixed and glassy eyes.

Then the maiden clasped her hands and prayed  
That saved she might be;  
And she thought of Christ, who stilled the wave,  
On the Lake of Galilee.

And fast through the midnight dark and drear,  
Through the whistling sleet and snow,  
Like a sheeted ghost, the vessel swept  
Tow'rds the reef of Norman's Woe.

And ever the fitful gusts between  
A sound came from the land;  
It was the sound of the trampling surf  
On the rocks and the hard sea-sand.

The breakers were right beneath her bows,  
She drifted a dreary wreck,  
And a whooping billow swept the crew  
Like icicles from her deck.

She struck where the white and fleecy waves  
Looked soft as carded wool,  
But the cruel rocks, they gored her side  
Like the horns of an angry bull.

Her rattling shrouds, all sheathed in ice,  
With the masts went by the board;  
Like a vessel of glass, she stove and sank,  
Ho! ho! the breakers roared!

At daybreak, on the bleak sea-beach,  
A fisherman stood aghast,  
To see the form of a maiden fair,  
Lashed close to a drifting mast.

The salt sea was frozen on her breast,  
The salt tears in her eyes;  
And he saw her hair, like the brown sea-weed,  
On the billows fall and rise.

Such was the wreck of the Hesperus,  
In the midnight and the snow!  
Christ save us all from a death like this,  
On the reef of Norman's Woe!

## 21. Theodore Roethke, "My Papa's Waltz," 1961

Click on the link below to read the poem "My Papa's Waltz" by Theodore Roethke.

- ["My Papa's Waltz" by Theodore Roethke, from Poetry Foundation](#)

**Theodore Huebner Roethke** (May 25, 1908 – August 1, 1963) was an American poet. He published several volumes of award-winning and critically acclaimed poetry. Roethke is regarded as one of the most accomplished and influential poets of his generation.

Roethke's work is characterized by its introspection, rhythm and natural imagery. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1954 for his book *The Waking*, and he won the annual National Book Award for Poetry twice, in 1959 for *Words for the Wind* and posthumously in 1965 for *The Far Field*.

## 22. Reader-response to "My Papa's Waltz"

Click on the link below to read an essay responding to the poem "My Papa's Waltz," using reader-response criticism.

- ["Reaction to Poem: 'My Papa's Waltz,' Theodore Roethke" from Hubpages](#)

## 23. Robert Frost, "The Lockless Door," 1920

It went many years,  
But at last came a knock,  
And I thought of the door  
With no lock to lock.

    I blew out the light,  
I tip-toed the floor,  
And raised both hands  
In prayer to the door.

    But the knock came again  
My window was wide;  
I climbed on the sill  
And descended outside.

    Back over the sill  
I bade a "Come in"  
To whoever the knock  
At the door may have been.

    So at a knock  
I emptied my cage  
To hide in the world  
And alter with age.

**Robert Lee Frost** (March 26, 1874 – January 29, 1963) was an American poet. His work was initially published in England before it was published in America. He is highly regarded for his realistic depictions of rural life and his command of American colloquial speech. His

work frequently employed settings from rural life in New England in the early twentieth century, using them to examine complex social and philosophical themes. One of the most popular and critically respected American poets of the twentieth century, Frost was honored frequently during his lifetime, receiving four Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry. He became one of America's rare "public literary figures, almost an artistic institution." He was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1960 for his poetic works. On July 22, 1961, Frost was named poet laureate of Vermont.



## 24. How to Analyze Poetry

Poetry is a form of expression. The poet uses his/her own personal and private language which leaves poetry open to different interpretations. Although the poet may have had one specific idea or purpose in mind, the reader's response may be completely different. Nevertheless, this does not mean that you may interpret poetry any way you wish. All interpretations must be supported by direct reference to the text. As with any type of literary analysis, you need a basic knowledge of the elements of poetry. The following guide and questions will help you.

- Read the poem in its entirety to get a general impression.
- What is the poem about?
- What is the title of the poem?
- Who is speaker or narrative voice of the poem
- To whom is the speaker speaking?
- What is the purpose of the poem: to describe, amuse, entertain, narrate, inform, express grief, celebrate or commemorate?
- What is the tone of the poem? Sad, happy, melancholy, bitter?



PART IX

# MODULE 8: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND DRAMA



## 25. Reading a Play

Click below to access this article about plays as works of



literature.

- [“Reading a Play” from the OWL at Purdue University’s Writing Lab](#)

# 26. Susan Glaspell, "Trifles," 1916

First performed by the Provincetown Players at the Wharf Theatre, Provincetown, Mass., August 8, 1916.

GEORGE HENDERSON (County Attorney)

HENRY PETERS (Sheriff)

LEWIS HALE, A neighboring farmer

MRS PETERS

MRS HALE

SCENE: *The kitchen is the now abandoned farmhouse of JOHN WRIGHT, a gloomy kitchen, and left without having been put in order—unwashed pans under the sink, a loaf of bread outside the bread-box, a dish-towel on the table—other signs of incompleting work. At the rear the outer door opens and the SHERIFF comes in followed by the COUNTY ATTORNEY and HALE. The SHERIFF and HALE are men in middle life, the COUNTY ATTORNEY is a young man; all are much bundled up and go at once to the stove. They are followed by the two women—the SHERIFF's wife first; she is a slight wiry woman, a thin nervous face. MRS HALE is larger and would ordinarily be called more comfortable looking, but she is disturbed now and looks fearfully about as she enters. The women have come in slowly, and stand close together near the door.*

COUNTY ATTORNEY: *(rubbing his hands)* This feels good. Come up to the fire, ladies.

MRS PETERS: *(after taking a step forward)* I'm not—cold.

SHERIFF: *(unbuttoning his overcoat and stepping away from the stove as if to mark the beginning of official business)* Now, Mr Hale, before we move things about, you explain to Mr Henderson just what you saw when you came here yesterday morning.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: By the way, has anything been moved? Are things just as you left them yesterday?

SHERIFF: (*looking about*) It's just the same. When it dropped below zero last night I thought I'd better send Frank out this morning to make a fire for us—no use getting pneumonia with a big case on, but I told him not to touch anything except the stove—and you know Frank.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Somebody should have been left here yesterday.

SHERIFF: Oh—yesterday. When I had to send Frank to Morris Center for that man who went crazy—I want you to know I had my hands full yesterday. I knew you could get back from Omaha by today and as long as I went over everything here myself—

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Well, Mr Hale, tell just what happened when you came here yesterday morning.

HALE: Harry and I had started to town with a load of potatoes. We came along the road from my place and as I got here I said, I'm going to see if I can't get John Wright to go in with me on a party telephone.' I spoke to Wright about it once before and he put me off, saying folks talked too much anyway, and all he asked was peace and quiet—I guess you know about how much he talked himself; but I thought maybe if I went to the house and talked about it before his wife, though I said to Harry that I didn't know as what his wife wanted made much difference to John—

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Let's talk about that later, Mr Hale. I do want to talk about that, but tell now just what happened when you got to the house.

HALE: I didn't hear or see anything; I knocked at the door, and still it was all quiet inside. I knew they must be up, it was past eight o'clock. So I knocked again, and I thought I heard somebody say, 'Come in.' I wasn't sure, I'm not sure yet, but I opened the door—this door (*indicating the door by which the two women are still standing*) and there in that rocker—(*pointing to it*) sat Mrs Wright.

(*They all look at the rocker.*)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: What—was she doing?

HALE: She was rockin' back and forth. She had her apron in her hand and was kind of—pleating it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: And how did she—look?

HALE: Well, she looked queer.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: How do you mean—queer?

HALE: Well, as if she didn't know what she was going to do next. And kind of done up.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: How did she seem to feel about your coming?

HALE: Why, I don't think she minded—one way or other. She didn't pay much attention. I said, 'How do, Mrs Wright it's cold, ain't it?' And she said, 'Is it?'—and went on kind of pleating at her apron. Well, I was surprised; she didn't ask me to come up to the stove, or to set down, but just sat there, not even looking at me, so I said, 'I want to see John.' And then she—laughed. I guess you would call it a laugh. I thought of Harry and the team outside, so I said a little sharp: 'Can't I see John?' 'No', she says, kind o' dull like. 'Ain't he home?' says I. 'Yes', says she, 'he's home'. 'Then why can't I see him?' I asked her, out of patience. "Cause he's dead", says she. 'Dead?' says I. She just nodded her head, not getting a bit excited, but rockin' back and forth. 'Why—where is he?' says I, not knowing what to say. She just pointed upstairs—like that (*himself pointing to the room above*) I got up, with the idea of going up there. I walked from there to here—then I says, 'Why, what did he die of?' 'He died of a rope round his neck', says she, and just went on pleatin' at her apron. Well, I went out and called Harry. I thought I might—need help. We went upstairs and there he was lyin'—

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I think I'd rather have you go into that upstairs, where you can point it all out. Just go on now with the rest of the story.

HALE: Well, my first thought was to get that rope off. It looked ... (*stops, his face twitches*) ... but Harry, he went up to him, and he said, 'No, he's dead all right, and we'd better not touch anything.' So we went back down stairs. She was still sitting that same way. 'Has anybody been notified?' I asked. 'No', says she unconcerned.



‘Who did this, Mrs Wright?’ said Harry. He said it business-like—and she stopped pleatin’ of her apron. ‘I don’t know’, she says. ‘You don’t know?’ says Harry. ‘No’, says she. ‘Weren’t you sleepin’ in the bed with him?’ says Harry. ‘Yes’, says she, ‘but I was on the inside’. ‘Somebody slipped a rope round his neck and strangled him and you didn’t wake up?’ says Harry. ‘I didn’t wake up’, she said after him. We must ‘a looked as if we didn’t see how that could be, for after a minute she said, ‘I sleep sound’. Harry was going to ask her more questions but I said maybe we ought to let her tell her story first to the coroner, or the sheriff, so Harry went fast as he could to Rivers’ place, where there’s a telephone.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: And what did Mrs Wright do when she knew that you had gone for the coroner?

HALE: She moved from that chair to this one over here (*pointing to a small chair in the corner*) and just sat there with her hands held together and looking down. I got a feeling that I ought to make some conversation, so I said I had come in to see if John wanted to put in a telephone, and at that she started to laugh, and then she stopped and looked at me—scared, (*the COUNTY ATTORNEY, who has had his notebook out, makes a note*) I dunno, maybe it wasn’t scared. I wouldn’t like to say it was. Soon Harry got back, and then Dr Lloyd came, and you, Mr Peters, and so I guess that’s all I know that you don’t.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*looking around*) I guess we’ll go upstairs first—and then out to the barn and around there, (*to the SHERIFF*) You’re convinced that there was nothing important here—nothing that would point to any motive.

SHERIFF: Nothing here but kitchen things.

(*The COUNTY ATTORNEY, after again looking around the kitchen, opens the door of a cupboard closet. He gets up on a chair and looks on a shelf. Pulls his hand away, sticky.*)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Here’s a nice mess.

(*The women draw nearer.*)

MRS PETERS: (*to the other woman*) Oh, her fruit; it did freeze, (*to*

the LAWYER) She worried about that when it turned so cold. She said the fire'd go out and her jars would break.

SHERIFF: Well, can you beat the women! Held for murder and worryin' about her preserves.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I guess before we're through she may have something more serious than preserves to worry about.

HALE: Well, women are used to worrying over trifles.

*(The two women move a little closer together.)*

COUNTY ATTORNEY: *(with the gallantry of a young politician)* And yet, for all their worries, what would we do without the ladies? *(the women do not unbend. He goes to the sink, takes a dipperful of water from the pail and pouring it into a basin, washes his hands. Starts to wipe them on the roller-towel, turns it for a cleaner place)* Dirty towels! *(kicks his foot against the pans under the sink)* Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?

MRS HALE: *(stiffly)* There's a great deal of work to be done on a farm.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: To be sure. And yet *(with a little bow to her)* I know there are some Dickson county farmhouses which do not have such roller towels. *(He gives it a pull to expose its length again.)*

MRS HALE: Those towels get dirty awful quick. Men's hands aren't always as clean as they might be.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Ah, loyal to your sex, I see. But you and Mrs Wright were neighbors. I suppose you were friends, too.

MRS HALE: *(shaking her head)* I've not seen much of her of late years. I've not been in this house—it's more than a year.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: And why was that? You didn't like her?

MRS HALE: I liked her all well enough. Farmers' wives have their hands full, Mr Henderson. And then—

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Yes—?

MRS HALE: *(looking about)* It never seemed a very cheerful place.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: No—it's not cheerful. I shouldn't say she had the homemaking instinct.

MRS HALE: Well, I don't know as Wright had, either.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: You mean that they didn't get on very well?

MRS HALE: No, I don't mean anything. But I don't think a place'd be any cheerfuller for John Wright's being in it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I'd like to talk more of that a little later. I want to get the lay of things upstairs now. *(He goes to the left, where three steps lead to a stair door.)*

SHERIFF: I suppose anything Mrs Peters does'll be all right. She was to take in some clothes for her, you know, and a few little things. We left in such a hurry yesterday.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Yes, but I would like to see what you take, Mrs Peters, and keep an eye out for anything that might be of use to us.

MRS PETERS: Yes, Mr Henderson.

*(The women listen to the men's steps on the stairs, then look about the kitchen.)*

MRS HALE: I'd hate to have men coming into my kitchen, snooping around and criticising.

*(She arranges the pans under sink which the LAWYER had shoved out of place.)*

MRS PETERS: Of course it's no more than their duty.

MRS HALE: Duty's all right, but I guess that deputy sheriff that came out to make the fire might have got a little of this on. *(gives the roller towel a pull)* Wish I'd thought of that sooner. Seems mean to talk about her for not having things slicked up when she had to come away in such a hurry.

MRS PETERS: *(who has gone to a small table in the left rear corner of the room, and lifted one end of a towel that covers a pan)* She had bread set. *(Stands still.)*

MRS HALE: *(eyes fixed on a loaf of bread beside the bread-box, which is on a low shelf at the other side of the room. Moves slowly toward it)* She was going to put this in there, *(picks up loaf, then abruptly drops it. In a manner of returning to familiar things)* It's a shame about her fruit. I wonder if it's all gone. *(gets up on the chair and looks)* I think there's some here that's all right, Mrs Peters. Yes—here; *(holding it toward the window)* this is cherries, too. *(looking again)* I declare I believe that's the only one. *(gets down,*

bottle in her hand. Goes to the sink and wipes it off on the outside) She'll feel awful bad after all her hard work in the hot weather. I remember the afternoon I put up my cherries last summer.

*(She puts the bottle on the big kitchen table, center of the room. With a sigh, is about to sit down in the rocking-chair. Before she is seated realizes what chair it is; with a slow look at it, steps back. The chair which she has touched rocks back and forth.)*

MRS PETERS: Well, I must get those things from the front room closet, *(she goes to the door at the right, but after looking into the other room, steps back)* You coming with me, Mrs Hale? You could help me carry them.

*(They go in the other room; reappear, MRS PETERS carrying a dress and skirt, MRS HALE following with a pair of shoes.)*

MRS PETERS: My, it's cold in there.

*(She puts the clothes on the big table, and hurries to the stove.)*

MRS HALE: *(examining the skirt)* Wright was close. I think maybe that's why she kept so much to herself. She didn't even belong to the Ladies Aid. I suppose she felt she couldn't do her part, and then you don't enjoy things when you feel shabby. She used to wear pretty clothes and be lively, when she was Minnie Foster, one of the town girls singing in the choir. But that—oh, that was thirty years ago. This all you was to take in?

MRS PETERS: She said she wanted an apron. Funny thing to want, for there isn't much to get you dirty in jail, goodness knows. But I suppose just to make her feel more natural. She said they was in the top drawer in this cupboard. Yes, here. And then her little shawl that always hung behind the door. *(opens stair door and looks)* Yes, here it is.

*(Quickly shuts door leading upstairs.)*

MRS HALE: *(abruptly moving toward her)* Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Yes, Mrs Hale?

MRS HALE: Do you think she did it?

MRS PETERS: *(in a frightened voice)* Oh, I don't know.

MRS HALE: Well, I don't think she did. Asking for an apron and her little shawl. Worrying about her fruit.

MRS PETERS: *(starts to speak, glances up, where footsteps are heard in the room above. In a low voice)* Mr Peters says it looks bad for her. Mr Henderson is awful sarcastic in a speech and he'll make fun of her sayin' she didn't wake up.

MRS HALE: Well, I guess John Wright didn't wake when they was slipping that rope under his neck.

MRS PETERS: No, it's strange. It must have been done awful crafty and still. They say it was such a—funny way to kill a man, rigging it all up like that.

MRS HALE: That's just what Mr Hale said. There was a gun in the house. He says that's what he can't understand.

MRS PETERS: Mr Henderson said coming out that what was needed for the case was a motive; something to show anger, or—sudden feeling.

MRS HALE: *(who is standing by the table)* Well, I don't see any signs of anger around here, *(she puts her hand on the dish towel which lies on the table, stands looking down at table, one half of which is clean, the other half messy)* It's wiped to here, *(makes a move as if to finish work, then turns and looks at loaf of bread outside the breadbox. Drops towel. In that voice of coming back to familiar things.)* Wonder how they are finding things upstairs. I hope she had it a little more red-up up there. You know, it seems kind of sneaking. Locking her up in town and then coming out here and trying to get her own house to turn against her!

MRS PETERS: But Mrs Hale, the law is the law.

MRS HALE: I s'pose 'tis, *(unbuttoning her coat)* Better loosen up your things, Mrs Peters. You won't feel them when you go out.

*(MRS PETERS takes off her fur tippet, goes to hang it on hook at back of room, stands looking at the under part of the small corner table.)*

MRS PETERS: She was piecing a quilt. *(She brings the large sewing basket and they look at the bright pieces.)*

MRS HALE: It's log cabin pattern. Pretty, isn't it? I wonder if she was goin' to quilt it or just knot it?

(Footsteps have been heard coming down the stairs. The SHERIFF enters followed by HALE and the COUNTY ATTORNEY.)

SHERIFF: They wonder if she was going to quilt it or just knot it! (The men laugh, the women look abashed.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*rubbing his hands over the stove*) Frank's fire didn't do much up there, did it? Well, let's go out to the barn and get that cleared up. (*The men go outside.*)

MRS HALE: (*resentfully*) I don't know as there's anything so strange, our takin' up our time with little things while we're waiting for them to get the evidence. (*she sits down at the big table smoothing out a block with decision*) I don't see as it's anything to laugh about.

MRS PETERS: (*apologetically*) Of course they've got awful important things on their minds.

(*Pulls up a chair and joins MRS HALE at the table.*)

MRS HALE: (*examining another block*) Mrs Peters, look at this one. Here, this is the one she was working on, and look at the sewing! All the rest of it has been so nice and even. And look at this! It's all over the place! Why, it looks as if she didn't know what she was about!

(*After she has said this they look at each other, then start to glance back at the door. After an instant MRS HALE has pulled at a knot and ripped the sewing.*)

MRS PETERS: Oh, what are you doing, Mrs Hale?

MRS HALE: (*mildly*) Just pulling out a stitch or two that's not sewed very good. (*threading a needle*) Bad sewing always made me fidgety.

MRS PETERS: (*nervously*) I don't think we ought to touch things.

MRS HALE: I'll just finish up this end. (*suddenly stopping and leaning forward*) Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Yes, Mrs Hale?

MRS HALE: What do you suppose she was so nervous about?

MRS PETERS: Oh—I don't know. I don't know as she was nervous. I sometimes sew awful queer when I'm just tired. (MRS HALE starts to say something, looks at MRS PETERS, then goes on sewing) Well I must get these things wrapped up. They may be through sooner

than we think, (*putting apron and other things together*) I wonder where I can find a piece of paper, and string.

MRS HALE: In that cupboard, maybe.

MRS PETERS: (*looking in cupboard*) Why, here's a bird-cage, (*holds it up*) Did she have a bird, Mrs Hale?

MRS HALE: Why, I don't know whether she did or not—I've not been here for so long. There was a man around last year selling canaries cheap, but I don't know as she took one; maybe she did. She used to sing real pretty herself.

MRS PETERS: (*glancing around*) Seems funny to think of a bird here. But she must have had one, or why would she have a cage? I wonder what happened to it.

MRS HALE: I s'pose maybe the cat got it.

MRS PETERS: No, she didn't have a cat. She's got that feeling some people have about cats—being afraid of them. My cat got in her room and she was real upset and asked me to take it out.

MRS HALE: My sister Bessie was like that. Queer, ain't it?

MRS PETERS: (*examining the cage*) Why, look at this door. It's broke. One hinge is pulled apart.

MRS HALE: (*looking too*) Looks as if someone must have been rough with it.

MRS PETERS: Why, yes.

(*She brings the cage forward and puts it on the table.*)

MRS HALE: I wish if they're going to find any evidence they'd be about it. I don't like this place.

MRS PETERS: But I'm awful glad you came with me, Mrs Hale. It would be lonesome for me sitting here alone.

MRS HALE: It would, wouldn't it? (*dropping her sewing*) But I tell you what I do wish, Mrs Peters. I wish I had come over sometimes when *she* was here. I—(*looking around the room*)—wish I had.

MRS PETERS: But of course you were awful busy, Mrs Hale—your house and your children.

MRS HALE: I could've come. I stayed away because it weren't cheerful—and that's why I ought to have come. I—I've never liked this place. Maybe because it's down in a hollow and you don't see the

road. I dunno what it is, but it's a lonesome place and always was. I wish I had come over to see Minnie Foster sometimes. I can see now—(*shakes her head*)

MRS PETERS: Well, you mustn't reproach yourself, Mrs Hale. Somehow we just don't see how it is with other folks until—something comes up.

MRS HALE: Not having children makes less work—but it makes a quiet house, and Wright out to work all day, and no company when he did come in. Did you know John Wright, Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Not to know him; I've seen him in town. They say he was a good man.

MRS HALE: Yes—good; he didn't drink, and kept his word as well as most, I guess, and paid his debts. But he was a hard man, Mrs Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him—(*shivers*) Like a raw wind that gets to the bone, (*pauses, her eye falling on the cage*) I should think she would 'a wanted a bird. But what do you suppose went with it?

MRS PETERS: I don't know, unless it got sick and died.

(*She reaches over and swings the broken door, swings it again, both women watch it.*)

MRS HALE: You weren't raised round here, were you? (MRS PETERS *shakes her head*) You didn't know—her?

MRS PETERS: Not till they brought her yesterday.

MRS HALE: She—come to think of it, she was kind of like a bird herself—real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and—fluttery. How—she—did—change. (*silence; then as if struck by a happy thought and relieved to get back to everyday things*) Tell you what, Mrs Peters, why don't you take the quilt in with you? It might take up her mind.

MRS PETERS: Why, I think that's a real nice idea, Mrs Hale. There couldn't possibly be any objection to it, could there? Now, just what would I take? I wonder if her patches are in here—and her things.

(*They look in the sewing basket.*)

MRS HALE: Here's some red. I expect this has got sewing things in it. (*brings out a fancy box*) What a pretty box. Looks like something somebody would give you. Maybe her scissors are in here. (*Opens box. Suddenly puts her hand to her nose*) Why—(MRS PETERS *bends*



nearer, then turns her face away) There's something wrapped up in this piece of silk.

MRS PETERS: Why, this isn't her scissors.

MRS HALE: (*lifting the silk*) Oh, Mrs Peters—it's—

(MRS PETERS *bends closer.*)

MRS PETERS: It's the bird.

MRS HALE: (*jumping up*) But, Mrs Peters—look at it! It's neck! Look at its neck!

It's all—other side to.

MRS PETERS: Somebody—wrung—its—neck.

(*Their eyes meet. A look of growing comprehension, of horror. Steps are heard outside. MRS HALE slips box under quilt pieces, and sinks into her chair. Enter SHERIFF and COUNTY ATTORNEY. MRS PETERS rises.*)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*as one turning from serious things to little pleasantries*) Well ladies, have you decided whether she was going to quilt it or knot it?

MRS PETERS: We think she was going to—knot it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Well, that's interesting, I'm sure. (*seeing the birdcage*) Has the bird flown?

MRS HALE: (*putting more quilt pieces over the box*) We think the—cat got it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*preoccupied*) Is there a cat?

(MRS HALE *glances in a quick covert way at MRS PETERS.*)

MRS PETERS: Well, not now. They're superstitious, you know. They leave.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*to SHERIFF PETERS, continuing an interrupted conversation*) No sign at all of anyone having come from the outside. Their own rope. Now let's go up again and go over it piece by piece. (*they start upstairs*) It would have to have been someone who knew just the—

(MRS PETERS *sits down. The two women sit there not looking at one another, but as if peering into something and at the same time holding back. When they talk now it is in the manner of feeling their*

way over strange ground, as if afraid of what they are saying, but as if they can not help saying it.)

MRS HALE: She liked the bird. She was going to bury it in that pretty box.

MRS PETERS: (*in a whisper*) When I was a girl—my kitten—there was a boy took a hatchet, and before my eyes—and before I could get there—(*covers her face an instant*) If they hadn't held me back I would have—(*catches herself, looks upstairs where steps are heard, falters weakly*)—hurt him.

MRS HALE: (*with a slow look around her*) I wonder how it would seem never to have had any children around, (*pause*) No, Wright wouldn't like the bird—a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that, too.

MRS PETERS: (*moving uneasily*) We don't know who killed the bird.

MRS HALE: I knew John Wright.

MRS PETERS: It was an awful thing was done in this house that night, Mrs Hale. Killing a man while he slept, slipping a rope around his neck that choked the life out of him.

MRS HALE: His neck. Choked the life out of him.

(*Her hand goes out and rests on the bird-cage.*)

MRS PETERS: (*with rising voice*) We don't know who killed him. We don't know.

MRS HALE: (*her own feeling not interrupted*) If there'd been years and years of nothing, then a bird to sing to you, it would be awful—still, after the bird was still.

MRS PETERS: (*something within her speaking*) I know what stillness is. When we homesteaded in Dakota, and my first baby died—after he was two years old, and me with no other then—

MRS HALE: (*moving*) How soon do you suppose they'll be through, looking for the evidence?

MRS PETERS: I know what stillness is. (*pulling herself back*) The law has got to punish crime, Mrs Hale.

MRS HALE: (*not as if answering that*) I wish you'd seen Minnie Foster when she wore a white dress with blue ribbons and stood up

there in the choir and sang. *(a look around the room)* Oh, I wish I'd come over here once in a while! That was a crime! That was a crime! Who's going to punish that?

MRS PETERS: *(looking upstairs)* We mustn't—take on.

MRS HALE: I might have known she needed help! I know how things can be—for women. I tell you, it's queer, Mrs Peters. We live close together and we live far apart. We all go through the same things—it's all just a different kind of the same thing, *(brushes her eyes, noticing the bottle of fruit, reaches out for it)* If I was you, I wouldn't tell her her fruit was gone. Tell her it *ain't*. Tell her it's all right. Take this in to prove it to her. She—she may never know whether it was broke or not.

MRS PETERS: *(takes the bottle, looks about for something to wrap it in; takes petticoat from the clothes brought from the other room, very nervously begins winding this around the bottle. In a false voice)* My, it's a good thing the men couldn't hear us. Wouldn't they just laugh! Getting all stirred up over a little thing like a—dead canary. As if that could have anything to do with—with—wouldn't they *laugh!*

*(The men are heard coming down stairs.)*

MRS HALE: *(under her breath)* Maybe they would—maybe they wouldn't.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: No, Peters, it's all perfectly clear except a reason for doing it. But you know juries when it comes to women. If there was some definite thing. Something to show—something to make a story about—a thing that would connect up with this strange way of doing it—

*(The women's eyes meet for an instant. Enter HALE from outer door.)*

HALE: Well, I've got the team around. Pretty cold out there.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I'm going to stay here a while by myself, *(to the SHERIFF)* You can send Frank out for me, can't you? I want to go over everything. I'm not satisfied that we can't do better.

SHERIFF: Do you want to see what Mrs Peters is going to take in?

*(The LAWYER goes to the table, picks up the apron, laughs.)*

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Oh, I guess they're not very dangerous

things the ladies have picked out. (*Moves a few things about, disturbing the quilt pieces which cover the box. Steps back*) No, Mrs Peters doesn't need supervising. For that matter, a sheriff's wife is married to the law. Ever think of it that way, Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Not—just that way.

SHERIFF: (*chuckling*) Married to the law. (*moves toward the other room*) I just want you to come in here a minute, George. We ought to take a look at these windows.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*scoffingly*) Oh, windows!

SHERIFF: We'll be right out, Mr Hale.

(*HALE goes outside. The SHERIFF follows the COUNTY ATTORNEY into the other room. Then MRS HALE rises, hands tight together, looking intensely at MRS PETERS, whose eyes make a slow turn, finally meeting MRS HALE's. A moment MRS HALE holds her, then her own eyes point the way to where the box is concealed. Suddenly MRS PETERS throws back quilt pieces and tries to put the box in the bag she is wearing. It is too big. She opens box, starts to take bird out, cannot touch it, goes to pieces, stands there helpless. Sound of a knob turning in the other room. MRS HALE snatches the box and puts it in the pocket of her big coat. Enter COUNTY ATTORNEY and SHERIFF.*)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*facetiously*) Well, Henry, at least we found out that she was not going to quilt it. She was going to—what is it you call it, ladies?

MRS HALE: (*her hand against her pocket*) We call it—knot it, Mr Henderson.

(CURTAIN)

**Susan Keating Glaspell** (July 1, 1876 – July 28, 1948)

was an American Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, novelist, journalist and actress. With her husband George Cram Cook she founded the Provincetown

Players, the first modern American theater company. During the Great Depression she served in the Works Progress Administration as Midwest Bureau Director of the Federal Theater Project.

A prolific writer, Glaspell is known to have composed nine novels, fifteen plays, over fifty short stories and one biography. Often set in her native Midwest, these semi-autobiographical tales frequently address contemporary social issues, such as gender, ethics and dissent, while featuring deep, sympathetic characters who make principled stands.



PART X

MODULE 9: USING OUR  
CLASS WORK TO WRITE  
EFFECTIVE LITERARY  
ESSAYS





# 27. Reader-Response Criticism

## Summary

We have examined many schools of literary criticism. Here you will find an in-depth look at one of them: Reader-Response.

## The Purpose of Reader-Response

Reader-response suggests that the role of the reader is essential to the meaning of a text, for only in the reading experience does the literary work come alive. For example, in [Mary Wollstonecraft](#) *Shelley's Frankenstein* (1818), the monster doesn't exist, so to speak, until the reader reads *Frankenstein* and reanimates it to life, becoming a co-creator of the text.

Thus, the purpose of a reading response is examining, explaining, and defending your personal reaction to a text.

Your critical reading of a text asks you to explore:

- why you like or dislike the text;
- explain whether you agree or disagree with the author;
- identify the text's purpose; and
- critique the text.

There is no right or wrong answer to a reading response.

Nonetheless, it is important that you demonstrate an understanding of the reading and clearly explain and support your reactions. Do not use the standard approach of just writing: "*I liked*

*this text because it is so cool and the ending made me feel happy,” or “I hated it because it was stupid, and had nothing at all to do with my life, and was too negative and boring.”* In writing a response you may assume the reader has already read the text. Thus, do not summarize the contents of the text at length. Instead, take a systematic, analytical approach to the text.

## Write as a Scholar

When writing a reader-response write as an educated adult addressing other adults or fellow scholars. As a beginning scholar, if you write that something has nothing to do with you or does not pass your “Who cares?” test, but many other people think that it is important and great, readers will probably not agree with you that the text is dull or boring. Instead, they may conclude that *you* are dull and boring, that you are too immature or uneducated to understand what important things the author wrote.

## Criticize with Examples

If you did not like a text, that is fine, but criticize it either from:

- *principle*, for example:
  - Is the text racist?
  - Does the text unreasonably puts down things, such as religion, or groups of people, such as women or adolescents, conservatives or democrats, etc?
  - Does the text include factual errors or outright lies? It is too dark and despairing? Is it falsely positive?
- *form*, for example:

- Is the text poorly written?
- Does it contain too much verbal “fat”?
- Is it too emotional or too childish?
- Does it have too many facts and figures?
- Are there typos or other errors in the text?
- Do the ideas wander around without making a point?

In each of these cases, do not simply criticize, but give examples. As a beginning scholar, be cautious of criticizing any text as “confusing” or “crazy,” since readers might simply conclude that you are too ignorant or slow to understand and appreciate it.

## The Structure of a Reader-Response Essay

Choosing a text to study is the first step in writing a reader-response essay. Once you have chosen the text, your challenge is to connect with it and have a “conversation” with the text.

In the beginning paragraph of your reader-response essay, be sure to mention the following:

- title of the work to which you are responding;
- the author; and
- the main thesis of the text.

Then, do your best to answer the questions below. Remember, however, that you are writing an essay, not filling out a short-answer worksheet. You do not need to work through these questions in order, one by one, in your essay. Rather, your paper as a whole should be sure to address these questions in some way.

- *What does the text have to do with you, personally, and with your life (past, present or future)?* It is not acceptable to write that the text has NOTHING to do with you, since just about

everything humans can write has to do in some way with every other human.

- *How much does the text agree or clash with your view of the world, and what you consider right and wrong?* Use several quotes as examples of how it agrees with and supports what you think about the world, about right and wrong, and about what you think it is to be human. Use quotes and examples to discuss how the text disagrees with what you think about the world and about right and wrong.
- *What did you learn, and how much were your views and opinions challenged or changed by this text, if at all? Did the text communicate with you? Why or why not? Give examples of how your views might have changed or been strengthened (or perhaps, of why the text failed to convince you, the way it is). Please do not write “I agree with everything the author wrote,” since everybody disagrees about something, even if it is a tiny point. Use quotes to illustrate your points of challenge, or where you were persuaded, or where it left you cold.*
- *How well does the text address things that you, personally, care about and consider important to the world? How does it address things that are important to your family, your community, your ethnic group, to people of your economic or social class or background, or your faith tradition? If not, who does or did the text serve? Did it pass the “Who cares?” test? Use quotes from the text to illustrate.*
- *What can you praise about the text? What problems did you have with it? Reading and writing “critically” does not mean the same thing as “criticizing,” in everyday language (complaining or griping, fault-finding, nit-picking). Your “critique” can and should be positive and praise the text if possible, as well as pointing out problems, disagreements and shortcomings.*
- *How well did you enjoy the text (or not) as entertainment or as a work of art? Use quotes or examples to illustrate the quality of the text as art or entertainment. Of course, be aware that some texts are not meant to be entertainment or art: a news report*

or textbook, for instance, may be neither entertaining or artistic, but may still be important and successful.

For the conclusion, you might want to discuss:

- your overall reaction to the text;
- whether you would read something else like this in the future;
- whether you would read something else by this author; and
- if would you recommend read this text to someone else and why.

## Key Takeaways

- In reader-response, the reader is essential to the meaning of a text for they bring the text to life.
- The purpose of a reading response is examining, explaining, and defending your personal reaction to a text.
- When writing a reader-response, write as an educated adult addressing other adults or fellow scholars.
- As a beginning scholar, be cautious of criticizing any text as “boring,” “crazy,” or “dull.” If you do criticize, base your criticism on the principles and form of the text itself.
- The challenge of a reader-response is to show how you connected with the text.

## Examples

### Reader-Response Essay Example

#### To Misread or to Rebel: A Woman's Reading of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

At its simplest, reading is "an activity that is guided by the text; this must be processed by the reader who is then, in turn, affected by what he has processed" (Iser 63). The text is the compass and map, the reader is the explorer. However, the explorer cannot disregard those unexpected boulders in the path which he or she encounters along the journey that are not written on the map. Likewise, the woman reader does not come to the text without outside influences. She comes with her experiences as a woman—a professional woman, a divorcée, a single mother. Her reading, then, is influenced by her experiences. So when she reads a piece of literature like "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" by James Thurber, which paints a highly negative picture of Mitty's wife, the woman reader is forced to either misread the story and accept Mrs. Mitty as a domineering, mothering wife, or rebel against that picture and become angry at the society which sees her that way.

Due to pre-existing sociosexual standards, women see characters, family structures, even societal structures from the bottom as an oppressed group rather than from a powerful position on the top, as men do. As Louise Rosenblatt states: a reader's "tendency toward identification [with characters or events] will certainly be guided by our preoccupations at the time we read. Our problems and needs may lead us to focus on those characters and situations through which we may achieve the satisfactions, the balanced vision, or perhaps merely the unequivocal motives unattained in our own lives" (38). A woman reader who feels chained by her role as a housewife is more likely to identify with an individual who is oppressed or feels trapped than the reader's

executive husband is. Likewise, a woman who is unable to have children might respond to a story of a child's death more emotionally than a woman who does not want children. However, if the perspective of a woman does not match that of the male author whose work she is reading, a woman reader who has been shaped by a male-dominated society is forced to misread the text, reacting to the "words on the page in one way rather than another because she operates according to the same set of rules that the author used to generate them" (Tompkins xvii). By accepting the author's perspective and reading the text as he intended, the woman reader is forced to disregard her own, female perspective. This, in turn, leads to a concept called "asymmetrical contingency," described by Iser as that which occurs "when Partner A gives up trying to implement his own behavioral plan and without resistance follows that of Partner B. He adapts himself to and is absorbed by the behavioral strategy of B" (164). Using this argument, it becomes clear that a woman reader (Partner A) when faced with a text written by a man (Partner B) will most likely succumb to the perspective of the writer and she is thus forced to misread the text. Or, she could rebel against the text and raise an angry, feminist voice in protest.

James Thurber, in the eyes of most literary critics, is one of the foremost American humorists of the 20th century, and his short story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" is believed to have "ushered in a major [literary] period ... where the individual can maintain his self ... an appropriate way of assaulting rigid forms" (Elias 432). The rigid form in Thurber's story is Mrs. Mitty, the main character's wife. She is portrayed by Walter Mitty as a horrible, mothering nag. As a way of escaping her constant griping, he imagines fantastic daydreams which carry him away from Mrs. Mitty's voice. Yet she repeatedly interrupts his reveries and Mitty responds to her as though she is "grossly unfamiliar, like a strange woman who had yelled at him in the crowd" (286). Not only is his wife annoying to him, but she is also distant and removed from what he cares about, like a stranger. When she does speak to him, it seems reflective of the way a mother would speak to a child. For example, Mrs. Mitty

asks, “‘Why don’t you wear your gloves? Have you lost your gloves?’ Walter Mitty reached in a pocket and brought out the gloves. He put them on, but after she had turned and gone into the building and he had driven on to a red light, he took them off again” (286). Mrs. Mitty’s care for her husband’s health is seen as nagging to Walter Mitty, and the audience is amused that he responds like a child and does the opposite of what Mrs. Mitty asked of him. Finally, the clearest way in which Mrs. Mitty is portrayed as a burdensome wife is at the end of the piece when Walter, waiting for his wife to exit the store, imagines that he is facing “the firing squad; erect and motionless, proud and disdainful, Walter Mitty the Undefeated, inscrutable to the last” (289). Not only is Mrs. Mitty portrayed as a mothering, bothersome hen, but she is ultimately described as that which will be the death of Walter Mitty.

Mrs. Mitty is a direct literary descendant of the first woman to be stereotyped as a nagging wife, Dame Van Winkle, the creation of the American writer, Washington Irving. Likewise, Walter Mitty is a reflection of his dreaming predecessor, Rip Van Winkle, who falls into a deep sleep for a hundred years and awakes to the relief of finding out that his nagging wife has died. Judith Fetterley explains in her book, *The Resisting Reader*, how such a portrayal of women forces a woman who reads “Rip Van Winkle” and other such stories “to find herself excluded from the experience of the story” so that she “cannot read the story without being assaulted by the negative images of women it presents” (10). The result, it seems, is for a woman reader of a story like “Rip Van Winkle” or “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” to either be excluded from the text, or accept the negative images of women the story puts forth. As Fetterley points out, “The consequence for the female reader is a divided self. She is asked to identify with Rip and against herself, to scorn the amiable sex and act just like it, to laugh at Dame Van Winkle and accept that she represents ‘woman,’ to be at once both repressor and repressed, and ultimately to realize that she is neither” (11). Thus, a woman is forced to misread the text and accept “woman as



villain.” as Fetterley names it, or rebel against both the story and its message.

So how does a woman reader respond to this portrayal of Mrs. Mitty? If she were to follow Iser’s claim, she would defer to the male point of view presented by the author. She would sympathize with Mitty, as Thurber wants us to do, and see domineering women in her own life that resemble Mrs. Mitty. She may see her mother and remember all the times that she nagged her about zipping up her coat against the bitter winter wind. Or the female reader might identify Mrs. Mitty with her controlling mother-in-law and chuckle at Mitty’s attempts to escape her control, just as her husband tries to escape the criticism and control of his own mother. Iser’s ideal female reader would undoubtedly look at her own position as mother and wife and would vow to never become such a domineering person. This reader would probably also agree with a critic who says that “Mitty has a wife who embodies the authority of a society in which the husband cannot function” (Lindner 440). She could see the faults in a relationship that is too controlled by a woman and recognize that a man needs to feel important and dominant in his relationship with his wife. It could be said that the female reader would agree completely with Thurber’s portrayal of the domineering wife. The female reader could simply misread the text.

Or, the female reader could rebel against the text. She could see Mrs. Mitty as a woman who is trying to do her best to keep her husband well and cared for. She could see Walter as a man with a fleeting grip on reality who daydreams that he is a fighter pilot, a brilliant surgeon, a gun expert, or a military hero, when he actually is a poor driver with a slow reaction time to a green traffic light. The female reader could read critics of Thurber who say that by allowing his wife to dominate him, Mitty becomes a “non-hero in a civilization in which women are winning the battle of the sexes” (Hasley 533) and become angry that a woman’s fight for equality is seen merely as a battle between the sexes. She could read Walter’s daydreams as his attempt to dominate his wife, since all of his

fantasies center on him in traditional roles of power. This, for most women, would cause anger at Mitty (and indirectly Thurber) for creating and promoting a society which believes that women need to stay subservient to men. From a male point of view, it becomes a battle of the sexes. In a woman's eyes, her reading is simply a struggle for equality within the text and in the world outside that the text reflects.

It is certain that women misread "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." I did. I found myself initially wishing that Mrs. Mitty would just let Walter daydream in peace. But after reading the story again and paying attention to the portrayal of Mrs. Mitty, I realized that it is imperative that women rebel against the texts that would oppress them. By misreading a text, the woman reader understands it in a way that is conventional and acceptable to the literary world. But in so doing, she is also distancing herself from the text, not fully embracing it or its meaning in her life. By rebelling against the text, the female reader not only has to understand the point of view of the author and the male audience, but she also has to formulate her own opinions and create a sort of dialogue between the text and herself. Rebelling against the text and the stereotypes encourages an active dialogue between the woman and the text which, in turn, guarantees an active and (most likely) angry reader response. I became a resisting reader.

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## 28. Reader-Response Criticism

**Reader-response criticism** is a school of literary theory that focuses on the reader (or “audience”) and their experience of a literary work, in contrast to other schools and theories that focus attention primarily on the author or the content and form of the work.



Although literary theory has long paid some attention to the reader's role in creating the meaning and experience of a literary work, modern reader-response criticism began in the 1960s and '70s, particularly in the US and Germany, in work by Norman Holland, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Robert Jauss, Roland Barthes, and others.

Reader-response theory recognizes the reader as an active agent who imparts “real existence” to the work and completes its meaning through interpretation. Reader-response criticism argues that

literature should be viewed as a performing art in which each reader creates their own, possibly unique, text-related performance. It stands in total opposition to the theories of formalism and the New Criticism,



PART XI

# MODULE 10: LITERARY ANALYSIS





# 29. Henrik Ibsen, "A Doll's House," 1879

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

---

Torvald Helmer.  
Nora, his wife.  
Doctor Rank.  
Mrs Linde.  
Nils Krogstad.  
Helmer's three young children.  
Anne, their nurse.  
A Housemaid.  
A Porter.  
[The action takes place in Helmer's house.]

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## A DOLL'S HOUSE

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### ACT I

[SCENE.—A room furnished comfortably and tastefully, but not extravagantly. At the back, a door to the right leads to the entrance-hall, another to the left leads to Helmer's study. Between the doors stands a piano. In the middle of the left-hand wall is a door, and beyond it a window. Near the window are a round table, arm-chairs and a small sofa. In the right-hand wall, at the farther end, another door; and on the same side, nearer the footlights, a stove, two easy

chairs and a rocking-chair; between the stove and the door, a small table. Engravings on the walls; a cabinet with china and other small objects; a small book-case with well-bound books. The floors are carpeted, and a fire burns in the stove.

It is winter. A bell rings in the hall; shortly afterwards the door is heard to open. Enter NORA, humming a tune and in high spirits. She is in outdoor dress and carries a number of parcels; these she lays on the table to the right. She leaves the outer door open after her, and through it is seen a PORTER who is carrying a Christmas Tree and a basket, which he gives to the MAID who has opened the door.]

Nora. Hide the Christmas Tree carefully, Helen. Be sure the children do not see it until this evening, when it is dressed. [To the PORTER, taking out her purse.] How much?

Porter. Sixpence.

Nora. There is a shilling. No, keep the change. [The PORTER thanks her, and goes out. NORA shuts the door. She is laughing to herself, as she takes off her hat and coat. She takes a packet of macaroons from her pocket and eats one or two; then goes cautiously to her husband's door and listens.] Yes, he is in. [Still humming, she goes to the table on the right.]

Helmer [calls out from his room]. Is that my little lark twittering out there?

Nora [busy opening some of the parcels]. Yes, it is!

Helmer. Is it my little squirrel bustling about?

Nora. Yes!

Helmer. When did my squirrel come home?

Nora. Just now. [Puts the bag of macaroons into her pocket and wipes her mouth.] Come in here, Torvald, and see what I have bought.

Helmer. Don't disturb me. [A little later, he opens the door and looks into the room, pen in hand.] Bought, did you say? All these things? Has my little spendthrift been wasting money again?

Nora. Yes but, Torvald, this year we really can let ourselves go a little. This is the first Christmas that we have not needed to economise.

Helmer. Still, you know, we can't spend money recklessly.

Nora. Yes, Torvald, we may be a wee bit more reckless now, mayn't we? Just a tiny wee bit! You are going to have a big salary and earn lots and lots of money.

Helmer. Yes, after the New Year; but then it will be a whole quarter before the salary is due.

Nora. Pooh! we can borrow until then.

Helmer. Nora! [Goes up to her and takes her playfully by the ear.] The same little featherhead! Suppose, now, that I borrowed fifty pounds today, and you spent it all in the Christmas week, and then on New Year's Eve a slate fell on my head and killed me, and—

Nora [putting her hands over his mouth]. Oh! don't say such horrid things.

Helmer. Still, suppose that happened,—what then?

Nora. If that were to happen, I don't suppose I should care whether I owed money or not.

Helmer. Yes, but what about the people who had lent it?

Nora. They? Who would bother about them? I should not know who they were.

Helmer. That is like a woman! But seriously, Nora, you know what I think about that. No debt, no borrowing. There can be no freedom or beauty about a home life that depends on borrowing and debt. We two have kept bravely on the straight road so far, and we will go on the same way for the short time longer that there need be any struggle.

Nora [moving towards the stove]. As you please, Torvald.

Helmer [following her]. Come, come, my little skylark must not droop her wings. What is this! Is my little squirrel out of temper? [Taking out his purse.] Nora, what do you think I have got here?

Nora [turning round quickly]. Money!

Helmer. There you are. [Gives her some money.] Do you think I don't know what a lot is wanted for housekeeping at Christmas-time?

Nora [counting]. Ten shillings—a pound—two pounds! Thank you, thank you, Torvald; that will keep me going for a long time.

Helmer. Indeed it must.

Nora. Yes, yes, it will. But come here and let me show you what I have bought. And all so cheap! Look, here is a new suit for Ivar, and a sword; and a horse and a trumpet for Bob; and a doll and dolly's bedstead for Emmy,—they are very plain, but anyway she will soon break them in pieces. And here are dress-lengths and handkerchiefs for the maids; old Anne ought really to have something better.

Helmer. And what is in this parcel?

Nora [crying out]. No, no! you mustn't see that until this evening.

Helmer. Very well. But now tell me, you extravagant little person, what would you like for yourself?

Nora. For myself? Oh, I am sure I don't want anything.

Helmer. Yes, but you must. Tell me something reasonable that you would particularly like to have.

Nora. No, I really can't think of anything—unless, Torvald—

Helmer. Well?

Nora [playing with his coat buttons, and without raising her eyes to his]. If you really want to give me something, you might—you might—

Helmer. Well, out with it!

Nora [speaking quickly]. You might give me money, Torvald. Only just as much as you can afford; and then one of these days I will buy something with it.

Helmer. But, Nora—

Nora. Oh, do! dear Torvald; please, please do! Then I will wrap it up in beautiful gilt paper and hang it on the Christmas Tree. Wouldn't that be fun?

Helmer. What are little people called that are always wasting money?

Nora. Spendthrifts—I know. Let us do as you suggest, Torvald, and then I shall have time to think what I am most in want of. That is a very sensible plan, isn't it?

Helmer [smiling]. Indeed it is—that is to say, if you were really to save out of the money I give you, and then really buy something for

yourself. But if you spend it all on the housekeeping and any number of unnecessary things, then I merely have to pay up again.

Nora. Oh but, Torvald—

Helmer. You can't deny it, my dear little Nora. [Puts his arm round her waist.] It's a sweet little spendthrift, but she uses up a deal of money. One would hardly believe how expensive such little persons are!

Nora. It's a shame to say that. I do really save all I can.

Helmer [laughing]. That's very true,—all you can. But you can't save anything!

Nora [smiling quietly and happily]. You haven't any idea how many expenses we skylarks and squirrels have, Torvald.

Helmer. You are an odd little soul. Very like your father. You always find some new way of wheedling money out of me, and, as soon as you have got it, it seems to melt in your hands. You never know where it has gone. Still, one must take you as you are. It is in the blood; for indeed it is true that you can inherit these things, Nora.

Nora. Ah, I wish I had inherited many of papa's qualities.

Helmer. And I would not wish you to be anything but just what you are, my sweet little skylark. But, do you know, it strikes me that you are looking rather—what shall I say—rather uneasy today?

Nora. Do I?

Helmer. You do, really. Look straight at me.

Nora [looks at him]. Well?

Helmer [wagging his finger at her]. Hasn't Miss Sweet Tooth been breaking rules in town today?

Nora. No; what makes you think that?

Helmer. Hasn't she paid a visit to the confectioner's?

Nora. No, I assure you, Torvald—

Helmer. Not been nibbling sweets?

Nora. No, certainly not.

Helmer. Not even taken a bite at a macaroon or two?

Nora. No, Torvald, I assure you really—

Helmer. There, there, of course I was only joking.

Nora [going to the table on the right]. I should not think of going against your wishes.

Helmer. No, I am sure of that; besides, you gave me your word— [Going up to her.] Keep your little Christmas secrets to yourself, my darling. They will all be revealed tonight when the Christmas Tree is lit, no doubt.

Nora. Did you remember to invite Doctor Rank?

Helmer. No. But there is no need; as a matter of course he will come to dinner with us. However, I will ask him when he comes in this morning. I have ordered some good wine. Nora, you can't think how I am looking forward to this evening.

Nora. So am I! And how the children will enjoy themselves, Torvald!

Helmer. It is splendid to feel that one has a perfectly safe appointment, and a big enough income. It's delightful to think of, isn't it?

Nora. It's wonderful!

Helmer. Do you remember last Christmas? For a full three weeks beforehand you shut yourself up every evening until long after midnight, making ornaments for the Christmas Tree, and all the other fine things that were to be a surprise to us. It was the dulllest three weeks I ever spent!

Nora. I didn't find it dull.

Helmer [smiling]. But there was precious little result, Nora.

Nora. Oh, you shouldn't tease me about that again. How could I help the cat's going in and tearing everything to pieces?

Helmer. Of course you couldn't, poor little girl. You had the best of intentions to please us all, and that's the main thing. But it is a good thing that our hard times are over.

Nora. Yes, it is really wonderful.

Helmer. This time I needn't sit here and be dull all alone, and you needn't ruin your dear eyes and your pretty little hands—

Nora [clapping her hands]. No, Torvald, I needn't any longer, need I! It's wonderfully lovely to hear you say so! [Taking his arm.] Now I will tell you how I have been thinking we ought to arrange things,

Torvald. As soon as Christmas is over-[A bell rings in the hall.] There's the bell. [She tidies the room a little.] There's some one at the door. What a nuisance!

Helmer. If it is a caller, remember I am not at home.

Maid [in the doorway]. A lady to see you, ma'am,-a stranger.

Nora. Ask her to come in.

Maid [to HELMER]. The doctor came at the same time, sir.

Helmer. Did he go straight into my room?

Maid. Yes, sir.

[HELMER goes into his room. The MAID ushers in Mrs Linde, who is in travelling dress, and shuts the door.]

Mrs Linde [in a dejected and timid voice]. How do you do, Nora?

Nora [doubtfully]. How do you do-

Mrs Linde. You don't recognise me, I suppose.

Nora. No, I don't know-yes, to be sure, I seem to-[Suddenly.] Yes! Christine! Is it really you?

Mrs Linde. Yes, it is I.

Nora. Christine! To think of my not recognising you! And yet how could I-[In a gentle voice.] How you have altered, Christine!

Mrs Linde. Yes, I have indeed. In nine, ten long years-

Nora. Is it so long since we met? I suppose it is. The last eight years have been a happy time for me, I can tell you. And so now you have come into the town, and have taken this long journey in winter-that was plucky of you.

Mrs Linde. I arrived by steamer this morning.

Nora. To have some fun at Christmas-time, of course. How delightful! We will have such fun together! But take off your things. You are not cold, I hope. [Helps her.] Now we will sit down by the stove, and be cosy. No, take this armchair; I will sit here in the rocking-chair. [Takes her hands.] Now you look like your old self again; it was only the first moment-You are a little paler, Christine, and perhaps a little thinner.

Mrs Linde. And much, much older, Nora.

Nora. Perhaps a little older; very, very little; certainly not much. [Stops suddenly and speaks seriously.] What a thoughtless creature

I am, chattering away like this. My poor, dear Christine, do forgive me.

Mrs Linde. What do you mean, Nora?

Nora [gently]. Poor Christine, you are a widow.

Mrs Linde. Yes; it is three years ago now.

Nora. Yes, I knew; I saw it in the papers. I assure you, Christine, I meant ever so often to write to you at the time, but I always put it off and something always prevented me.

Mrs Linde. I quite understand, dear.

Nora. It was very bad of me, Christine. Poor thing, how you must have suffered. And he left you nothing?

Mrs Linde. No.

Nora. And no children?

Mrs Linde. No.

Nora. Nothing at all, then.

Mrs Linde. Not even any sorrow or grief to live upon.

Nora [looking incredulously at her]. But, Christine, is that possible?

Mrs Linde [smiles sadly and strokes her hair]. It sometimes happens, Nora.

Nora. So you are quite alone. How dreadfully sad that must be. I have three lovely children. You can't see them just now, for they are out with their nurse. But now you must tell me all about it.

Mrs Linde. No, no; I want to hear about you.

Nora. No, you must begin. I mustn't be selfish today; today I must only think of your affairs. But there is one thing I must tell you. Do you know we have just had a great piece of good luck?

Mrs Linde. No, what is it?

Nora. Just fancy, my husband has been made manager of the Bank!

Mrs Linde. Your husband? What good luck!

Nora. Yes, tremendous! A barrister's profession is such an uncertain thing, especially if he won't undertake unsavoury cases; and naturally Torvald has never been willing to do that, and I quite agree with him. You may imagine how pleased we are! He is to take up his work in the Bank at the New Year, and then he will have a



big salary and lots of commissions. For the future we can live quite differently—we can do just as we like. I feel so relieved and so happy, Christine! It will be splendid to have heaps of money and not need to have any anxiety, won't it?

Mrs Linde. Yes, anyhow I think it would be delightful to have what one needs.

Nora. No, not only what one needs, but heaps and heaps of money.

Mrs Linde [smiling]. Nora, Nora, haven't you learned sense yet? In our schooldays you were a great spendthrift.

Nora [laughing]. Yes, that is what Torvald says now. [Wags her finger at her.] But "Nora, Nora" is not so silly as you think. We have not been in a position for me to waste money. We have both had to work.

Mrs Linde. You too?

Nora. Yes; odds and ends, needlework, crotchet-work, embroidery, and that kind of thing. [Dropping her voice.] And other things as well. You know Torvald left his office when we were married? There was no prospect of promotion there, and he had to try and earn more than before. But during the first year he overworked himself dreadfully. You see, he had to make money every way he could, and he worked early and late; but he couldn't stand it, and fell dreadfully ill, and the doctors said it was necessary for him to go south.

Mrs Linde. You spent a whole year in Italy, didn't you?

Nora. Yes. It was no easy matter to get away, I can tell you. It was just after Ivar was born; but naturally we had to go. It was a wonderfully beautiful journey, and it saved Torvald's life. But it cost a tremendous lot of money, Christine.

Mrs Linde. So I should think.

Nora. It cost about two hundred and fifty pounds. That's a lot, isn't it?

Mrs Linde. Yes, and in emergencies like that it is lucky to have the money.

Nora. I ought to tell you that we had it from papa.

Mrs Linde. Oh, I see. It was just about that time that he died, wasn't it?

Nora. Yes; and, just think of it, I couldn't go and nurse him. I was expecting little Ivar's birth every day and I had my poor sick Torvald to look after. My dear, kind father—I never saw him again, Christine. That was the saddest time I have known since our marriage.

Mrs Linde. I know how fond you were of him. And then you went off to Italy?

Nora. Yes; you see we had money then, and the doctors insisted on our going, so we started a month later.

Mrs Linde. And your husband came back quite well?

Nora. As sound as a bell!

Mrs Linde. But—the doctor?

Nora. What doctor?

Mrs Linde. I thought your maid said the gentleman who arrived here just as I did, was the doctor?

Nora. Yes, that was Doctor Rank, but he doesn't come here professionally. He is our greatest friend, and comes in at least once every day. No, Torvald has not had an hour's illness since then, and our children are strong and healthy and so am I. [Jumps up and claps her hands.] Christine! Christine! it's good to be alive and happy!—But how horrid of me; I am talking of nothing but my own affairs. [Sits on a stool near her, and rests her arms on her knees.] You mustn't be angry with me. Tell me, is it really true that you did not love your husband? Why did you marry him?

Mrs Linde. My mother was alive then, and was bedridden and helpless, and I had to provide for my two younger brothers; so I did not think I was justified in refusing his offer.

Nora. No, perhaps you were quite right. He was rich at that time, then?

Mrs Linde. I believe he was quite well off. But his business was a precarious one; and, when he died, it all went to pieces and there was nothing left.

Nora. And then?—

Mrs Linde. Well, I had to turn my hand to anything I could

find—first a small shop, then a small school, and so on. The last three years have seemed like one long working-day, with no rest. Now it is at an end, Nora. My poor mother needs me no more, for she is gone; and the boys do not need me either; they have got situations and can shift for themselves.

Nora. What a relief you must feel if—

Mrs Linde. No, indeed; I only feel my life unspeakably empty. No one to live for anymore. [Gets up restlessly.] That was why I could not stand the life in my little backwater any longer. I hope it may be easier here to find something which will busy me and occupy my thoughts. If only I could have the good luck to get some regular work—office work of some kind—

Nora. But, Christine, that is so frightfully tiring, and you look tired out now. You had far better go away to some watering-place.

Mrs Linde [walking to the window]. I have no father to give me money for a journey, Nora.

Nora [rising]. Oh, don't be angry with me!

Mrs Linde [going up to her]. It is you that must not be angry with me, dear. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one so bitter. No one to work for, and yet obliged to be always on the lookout for chances. One must live, and so one becomes selfish. When you told me of the happy turn your fortunes have taken—you will hardly believe it—I was delighted not so much on your account as on my own.

Nora. How do you mean?—Oh, I understand. You mean that perhaps Torvald could get you something to do.

Mrs Linde. Yes, that was what I was thinking of.

Nora. He must, Christine. Just leave it to me; I will broach the subject very cleverly—I will think of something that will please him very much. It will make me so happy to be of some use to you.

Mrs Linde. How kind you are, Nora, to be so anxious to help me! It is doubly kind in you, for you know so little of the burdens and troubles of life.

Nora. I—? I know so little of them?

Mrs Linde [smiling]. My dear! Small household cares and that sort of thing!—You are a child, Nora.

Nora [tosses her head and crosses the stage]. You ought not to be so superior.

Mrs Linde. No?

Nora. You are just like the others. They all think that I am incapable of anything really serious—

Mrs Linde. Come, come—

Nora.—that I have gone through nothing in this world of cares.

Mrs Linde. But, my dear Nora, you have just told me all your troubles.

Nora. Pooh!—those were trifles. [Lowering her voice.] I have not told you the important thing.

Mrs Linde. The important thing? What do you mean?

Nora. You look down upon me altogether, Christine—but you ought not to. You are proud, aren't you, of having worked so hard and so long for your mother?

Mrs Linde. Indeed, I don't look down on anyone. But it is true that I am both proud and glad to think that I was privileged to make the end of my mother's life almost free from care.

Nora. And you are proud to think of what you have done for your brothers?

Mrs Linde. I think I have the right to be.

Nora. I think so, too. But now, listen to this; I too have something to be proud and glad of.

Mrs Linde. I have no doubt you have. But what do you refer to?

Nora. Speak low. Suppose Torvald were to hear! He mustn't on any account—no one in the world must know, Christine, except you.

Mrs Linde. But what is it?

Nora. Come here. [Pulls her down on the sofa beside her.] Now I will show you that I too have something to be proud and glad of. It was I who saved Torvald's life.

Mrs Linde. "Saved"? How?

Nora. I told you about our trip to Italy. Torvald would never have recovered if he had not gone there—

Mrs Linde. Yes, but your father gave you the necessary funds.

Nora [smiling]. Yes, that is what Torvald and all the others think, but—

Mrs Linde. But—

Nora. Papa didn't give us a shilling. It was I who procured the money.

Mrs Linde. You? All that large sum?

Nora. Two hundred and fifty pounds. What do you think of that?

Mrs Linde. But, Nora, how could you possibly do it? Did you win a prize in the Lottery?

Nora [contemptuously]. In the Lottery? There would have been no credit in that.

Mrs Linde. But where did you get it from, then? Nora [humming and smiling with an air of mystery]. Hm, hm! Aha!

Mrs Linde. Because you couldn't have borrowed it.

Nora. Couldn't I? Why not?

Mrs Linde. No, a wife cannot borrow without her husband's consent.

Nora [tossing her head]. Oh, if it is a wife who has any head for business—a wife who has the wit to be a little bit clever—

Mrs Linde. I don't understand it at all, Nora.

Nora. There is no need you should. I never said I had borrowed the money. I may have got it some other way. [Lies back on the sofa.] Perhaps I got it from some other admirer. When anyone is as attractive as I am—

Mrs Linde. You are a mad creature.

Nora. Now, you know you're full of curiosity, Christine.

Mrs Linde. Listen to me, Nora dear. Haven't you been a little bit imprudent?

Nora [sits up straight]. Is it imprudent to save your husband's life?

Mrs Linde. It seems to me imprudent, without his knowledge, to—

Nora. But it was absolutely necessary that he should not know! My goodness, can't you understand that? It was necessary he should have no idea what a dangerous condition he was in. It was to me that the doctors came and said that his life was in danger, and that

the only thing to save him was to live in the south. Do you suppose I didn't try, first of all, to get what I wanted as if it were for myself? I told him how much I should love to travel abroad like other young wives; I tried tears and entreaties with him; I told him that he ought to remember the condition I was in, and that he ought to be kind and indulgent to me; I even hinted that he might raise a loan. That nearly made him angry, Christine. He said I was thoughtless, and that it was his duty as my husband not to indulge me in my whims and caprices—as I believe he called them. Very well, I thought, you must be saved—and that was how I came to devise a way out of the difficulty—

Mrs Linde. And did your husband never get to know from your father that the money had not come from him?

Nora. No, never. Papa died just at that time. I had meant to let him into the secret and beg him never to reveal it. But he was so ill then—alas, there never was any need to tell him.

Mrs Linde. And since then have you never told your secret to your husband?

Nora. Good Heavens, no! How could you think so? A man who has such strong opinions about these things! And besides, how painful and humiliating it would be for Torvald, with his manly independence, to know that he owed me anything! It would upset our mutual relations altogether; our beautiful happy home would no longer be what it is now.

Mrs Linde. Do you mean never to tell him about it?

Nora [meditatively, and with a half smile]. Yes—someday, perhaps, after many years, when I am no longer as nice-looking as I am now. Don't laugh at me! I mean, of course, when Torvald is no longer as devoted to me as he is now; when my dancing and dressing-up and reciting have palled on him; then it may be a good thing to have something in reserve—[Breaking off.] What nonsense! That time will never come. Now, what do you think of my great secret, Christine? Do you still think I am of no use? I can tell you, too, that this affair has caused me a lot of worry. It has been by no means easy for me to meet my engagements punctually. I may tell you

that there is something that is called, in business, quarterly interest, and another thing called payment in installments, and it is always so dreadfully difficult to manage them. I have had to save a little here and there, where I could, you understand. I have not been able to put aside much from my housekeeping money, for Torvald must have a good table. I couldn't let my children be shabbily dressed; I have felt obliged to use up all he gave me for them, the sweet little darlings!

Mrs Linde. So it has all had to come out of your own necessities of life, poor Nora?

Nora. Of course. Besides, I was the one responsible for it. Whenever Torvald has given me money for new dresses and such things, I have never spent more than half of it; I have always bought the simplest and cheapest things. Thank Heaven, any clothes look well on me, and so Torvald has never noticed it. But it was often very hard on me, Christine—because it is delightful to be really well dressed, isn't it?

Mrs Linde. Quite so.

Nora. Well, then I have found other ways of earning money. Last winter I was lucky enough to get a lot of copying to do; so I locked myself up and sat writing every evening until quite late at night. Many a time I was desperately tired; but all the same it was a tremendous pleasure to sit there working and earning money. It was like being a man.

Mrs Linde. How much have you been able to pay off in that way?

Nora. I can't tell you exactly. You see, it is very difficult to keep an account of a business matter of that kind. I only know that I have paid every penny that I could scrape together. Many a time I was at my wits' end. [Smiles.] Then I used to sit here and imagine that a rich old gentleman had fallen in love with me—

Mrs Linde. What! Who was it?

Nora. Be quiet!—that he had died; and that when his will was opened it contained, written in big letters, the instruction: “The lovely Mrs Nora Helmer is to have all I possess paid over to her at once in cash.”

Mrs Linde. But, my dear Nora—who could the man be?

Nora. Good gracious, can't you understand? There was no old gentleman at all; it was only something that I used to sit here and imagine, when I couldn't think of any way of procuring money. But it's all the same now; the tiresome old person can stay where he is, as far as I am concerned; I don't care about him or his will either, for I am free from care now. [Jumps up.] My goodness, it's delightful to think of, Christine! Free from care! To be able to be free from care, quite free from care; to be able to play and romp with the children; to be able to keep the house beautifully and have everything just as Torvald likes it! And, think of it, soon the spring will come and the big blue sky! Perhaps we shall be able to take a little trip—perhaps I shall see the sea again! Oh, it's a wonderful thing to be alive and be happy. [A bell is heard in the hall.]

Mrs Linde [rising]. There is the bell; perhaps I had better go.

Nora. No, don't go; no one will come in here; it is sure to be for Torvald.

Servant [at the hall door]. Excuse me, ma'am—there is a gentleman to see the master, and as the doctor is with him—

Nora. Who is it?

Krogstad [at the door]. It is I, Mrs Helmer. [Mrs LINDE starts, trembles, and turns to the window.]

Nora [takes a step towards him, and speaks in a strained, low voice]. You? What is it? What do you want to see my husband about?

Krogstad. Bank business—in a way. I have a small post in the Bank, and I hear your husband is to be our chief now—

Nora. Then it is—

Krogstad. Nothing but dry business matters, Mrs Helmer; absolutely nothing else.

Nora. Be so good as to go into the study, then. [She bows indifferently to him and shuts the door into the hall; then comes back and makes up the fire in the stove.]

Mrs Linde. Nora—who was that man?

Nora. A lawyer, of the name of Krogstad.

Mrs Linde. Then it really was he.



Nora. Do you know the man?

Mrs Linde. I used to—many years ago. At one time he was a solicitor's clerk in our town.

Nora. Yes, he was.

Mrs Linde. He is greatly altered.

Nora. He made a very unhappy marriage.

Mrs Linde. He is a widower now, isn't he?

Nora. With several children. There now, it is burning up. [Shuts the door of the stove and moves the rocking-chair aside.]

Mrs Linde. They say he carries on various kinds of business.

Nora. Really! Perhaps he does; I don't know anything about it. But don't let us think of business; it is so tiresome.

Doctor Rank [comes out of HELMER'S study. Before he shuts the door he calls to him]. No, my dear fellow, I won't disturb you; I would rather go in to your wife for a little while. [Shuts the door and sees Mrs LINDE.] I beg your pardon; I am afraid I am disturbing you too.

Nora. No, not at all. [Introducing him]. Doctor Rank, Mrs Linde.

Rank. I have often heard Mrs Linde's name mentioned here. I think I passed you on the stairs when I arrived, Mrs Linde?

Mrs Linde. Yes, I go up very slowly; I can't manage stairs well.

Rank. Ah! some slight internal weakness?

Mrs Linde. No, the fact is I have been overworking myself.

Rank. Nothing more than that? Then I suppose you have come to town to amuse yourself with our entertainments?

Mrs Linde. I have come to look for work.

Rank. Is that a good cure for overwork?

Mrs Linde. One must live, Doctor Rank.

Rank. Yes, the general opinion seems to be that it is necessary.

Nora. Look here, Doctor Rank—you know you want to live.

Rank. Certainly. However wretched I may feel, I want to prolong the agony as long as possible. All my patients are like that. And so are those who are morally diseased; one of them, and a bad case too, is at this very moment with Helmer—

Mrs Linde [sadly]. Ah!

Nora. Whom do you mean?

Rank. A lawyer of the name of Krogstad, a fellow you don't know at all. He suffers from a diseased moral character, Mrs Helmer; but even he began talking of its being highly important that he should live.

Nora. Did he? What did he want to speak to Torvald about?

Rank. I have no idea; I only heard that it was something about the Bank.

Nora. I didn't know this—what's his name—Krogstad had anything to do with the Bank.

Rank. Yes, he has some sort of appointment there. [To Mrs Linde.] I don't know whether you find also in your part of the world that there are certain people who go zealously snuffing about to smell out moral corruption, and, as soon as they have found some, put the person concerned into some lucrative position where they can keep their eye on him. Healthy natures are left out in the cold.

Mrs Linde. Still I think the sick are those who most need taking care of.

Rank [shrugging his shoulders]. Yes, there you are. That is the sentiment that is turning Society into a sick-house.

[NORA, who has been absorbed in her thoughts, breaks out into smothered laughter and claps her hands.]

Rank. Why do you laugh at that? Have you any notion what Society really is?

Nora. What do I care about tiresome Society? I am laughing at something quite different, something extremely amusing. Tell me, Doctor Rank, are all the people who are employed in the Bank dependent on Torvald now?

Rank. Is that what you find so extremely amusing?

Nora [smiling and humming]. That's my affair! [Walking about the room.] It's perfectly glorious to think that we have—that Torvald has so much power over so many people. [Takes the packet from her pocket.] Doctor Rank, what do you say to a macaroon?

Rank. What, macaroons? I thought they were forbidden here.

Nora. Yes, but these are some Christine gave me.

Mrs Linde. What! I?—

Nora. Oh, well, don't be alarmed! You couldn't know that Torvald had forbidden them. I must tell you that he is afraid they will spoil my teeth. But, bah!—once in a way—That's so, isn't it, Doctor Rank? By your leave! [Puts a macaroon into his mouth.] You must have one too, Christine. And I shall have one, just a little one—or at most two. [Walking about.] I am tremendously happy. There is just one thing in the world now that I should dearly love to do.

Rank. Well, what is that?

Nora. It's something I should dearly love to say, if Torvald could hear me.

Rank. Well, why can't you say it?

Nora. No, I daren't; it's so shocking.

Mrs Linde. Shocking?

Rank. Well, I should not advise you to say it. Still, with us you might. What is it you would so much like to say if Torvald could hear you?

Nora. I should just love to say—Well, I'm damned!

Rank. Are you mad?

Mrs Linde. Nora, dear—!

Rank. Say it, here he is!

Nora [hiding the packet]. Hush! Hush! Hush! [HELMER comes out of his room, with his coat over his arm and his hat in his hand.]

Nora. Well, Torvald dear, have you got rid of him?

Helmer. Yes, he has just gone.

Nora. Let me introduce you—this is Christine, who has come to town.

Helmer. Christine—? Excuse me, but I don't know—

Nora. Mrs Linde, dear; Christine Linde.

Helmer. Of course. A school friend of my wife's, I presume?

Mrs Linde. Yes, we have known each other since then.

Nora. And just think, she has taken a long journey in order to see you.

Helmer. What do you mean?

Mrs Linde. No, really, I—

Nora. Christine is tremendously clever at book-keeping, and she

is frightfully anxious to work under some clever man, so as to perfect herself—

Helmer. Very sensible, Mrs Linde.

Nora. And when she heard you had been appointed manager of the Bank—the news was telegraphed, you know—she travelled here as quick as she could. Torvald, I am sure you will be able to do something for Christine, for my sake, won't you?

Helmer. Well, it is not altogether impossible. I presume you are a widow, Mrs Linde?

Mrs Linde. Yes.

Helmer. And have had some experience of book-keeping?

Mrs Linde. Yes, a fair amount.

Helmer. Ah! well, it's very likely I may be able to find something for you—

Nora [clapping her hands]. What did I tell you? What did I tell you?

Helmer. You have just come at a fortunate moment, Mrs Linde.

Mrs Linde. How am I to thank you?

Helmer. There is no need. [Puts on his coat.] But today you must excuse me—

Rank. Wait a minute; I will come with you. [Brings his fur coat from the hall and warms it at the fire.]

Nora. Don't be long away, Torvald dear.

Helmer. About an hour, not more.

Nora. Are you going too, Christine?

Mrs Linde [putting on her cloak]. Yes, I must go and look for a room.

Helmer. Oh, well then, we can walk down the street together.

Nora [helping her]. What a pity it is we are so short of space here; I am afraid it is impossible for us—

Mrs Linde. Please don't think of it! Goodbye, Nora dear, and many thanks.

Nora. Goodbye for the present. Of course you will come back this evening. And you too, Dr. Rank. What do you say? If you are well enough? Oh, you must be! Wrap yourself up well. [They go

to the door all talking together. Children's voices are heard on the staircase.]

Nora. There they are! There they are! [She runs to open the door. The NURSE comes in with the children.] Come in! Come in! [Stoops and kisses them.] Oh, you sweet blessings! Look at them, Christine! Aren't they darlings?

Rank. Don't let us stand here in the draught.

Helmer. Come along, Mrs Linde; the place will only be bearable for a mother now!

[RANK, HELMER, and Mrs Linde go downstairs. The NURSE comes forward with the children; NORA shuts the hall door.]

Nora. How fresh and well you look! Such red cheeks like apples and roses. [The children all talk at once while she speaks to them.] Have you had great fun? That's splendid! What, you pulled both Emmy and Bob along on the sledge? –both at once?–that was good. You are a clever boy, Ivar. Let me take her for a little, Anne. My sweet little baby doll! [Takes the baby from the MAID and dances it up and down.] Yes, yes, mother will dance with Bob too. What! Have you been snowballing? I wish I had been there too! No, no, I will take their things off, Anne; please let me do it, it is such fun. Go in now, you look half frozen. There is some hot coffee for you on the stove.

[The NURSE goes into the room on the left. NORA takes off the children's things and throws them about, while they all talk to her at once.]

Nora. Really! Did a big dog run after you? But it didn't bite you? No, dogs don't bite nice little dolly children. You mustn't look at the parcels, Ivar. What are they? Ah, I daresay you would like to know. No, no—it's something nasty! Come, let us have a game! What shall we play at? Hide and Seek? Yes, we'll play Hide and Seek. Bob shall hide first. Must I hide? Very well, I'll hide first. [She and the children laugh and shout, and romp in and out of the room; at last NORA hides under the table, the children rush in and out for her, but do not see her; they hear her smothered laughter, run to the table, lift up the cloth and find her. Shouts of laughter. She crawls forward and pretends to frighten them. Fresh laughter. Meanwhile there has

been a knock at the hall door, but none of them has noticed it. The door is half opened, and KROGSTAD appears, he waits a little; the game goes on.]

Krogstad. Excuse me, Mrs Helmer.

Nora [with a stifled cry, turns round and gets up on to her knees]. Ah! what do you want?

Krogstad. Excuse me, the outer door was ajar; I suppose someone forgot to shut it.

Nora [rising]. My husband is out, Mr. Krogstad.

Krogstad. I know that.

Nora. What do you want here, then?

Krogstad. A word with you.

Nora. With me?-[To the children, gently.] Go in to nurse. What? No, the strange man won't do mother any harm. When he has gone we will have another game. [She takes the children into the room on the left, and shuts the door after them.] You want to speak to me?

Krogstad. Yes, I do.

Nora. Today? It is not the first of the month yet.

Krogstad. No, it is Christmas Eve, and it will depend on yourself what sort of a Christmas you will spend.

Nora. What do you mean? Today it is absolutely impossible for me-

Krogstad. We won't talk about that until later on. This is something different. I presume you can give me a moment?

Nora. Yes-yes, I can-although-

Krogstad. Good. I was in Olsen's Restaurant and saw your husband going down the street-

Nora. Yes?

Krogstad. With a lady.

Nora. What then?

Krogstad. May I make so bold as to ask if it was a Mrs Linde?

Nora. It was.

Krogstad. Just arrived in town?

Nora. Yes, today.

Krogstad. She is a great friend of yours, isn't she?

Nora. She is. But I don't see—

Krogstad. I knew her too, once upon a time.

Nora. I am aware of that.

Krogstad. Are you? So you know all about it; I thought as much. Then I can ask you, without beating about the bush—is Mrs Linde to have an appointment in the Bank?

Nora. What right have you to question me, Mr. Krogstad?—You, one of my husband's subordinates! But since you ask, you shall know. Yes, Mrs Linde is to have an appointment. And it was I who pleaded her cause, Mr. Krogstad, let me tell you that.

Krogstad. I was right in what I thought, then.

Nora [walking up and down the stage]. Sometimes one has a tiny little bit of influence, I should hope. Because one is a woman, it does not necessarily follow that—. When anyone is in a subordinate position, Mr. Krogstad, they should really be careful to avoid offending anyone who—who—

Krogstad. Who has influence?

Nora. Exactly.

Krogstad [changing his tone]. Mrs Helmer, you will be so good as to use your influence on my behalf.

Nora. What? What do you mean?

Krogstad. You will be so kind as to see that I am allowed to keep my subordinate position in the Bank.

Nora. What do you mean by that? Who proposes to take your post away from you?

Krogstad. Oh, there is no necessity to keep up the pretence of ignorance. I can quite understand that your friend is not very anxious to expose herself to the chance of rubbing shoulders with me; and I quite understand, too, whom I have to thank for being turned off.

Nora. But I assure you—

Krogstad. Very likely; but, to come to the point, the time has come when I should advise you to use your influence to prevent that.

Nora. But, Mr. Krogstad, I have no influence.

Krogstad. Haven't you? I thought you said yourself just now—

Nora. Naturally I did not mean you to put that construction on it. I! What should make you think I have any influence of that kind with my husband?

Krogstad. Oh, I have known your husband from our student days. I don't suppose he is any more unassailable than other husbands.

Nora. If you speak slightly of my husband, I shall turn you out of the house.

Krogstad. You are bold, Mrs Helmer.

Nora. I am not afraid of you any longer. As soon as the New Year comes, I shall in a very short time be free of the whole thing.

Krogstad [controlling himself]. Listen to me, Mrs Helmer. If necessary, I am prepared to fight for my small post in the Bank as if I were fighting for my life.

Nora. So it seems.

Krogstad. It is not only for the sake of the money; indeed, that weighs least with me in the matter. There is another reason—well, I may as well tell you. My position is this. I daresay you know, like everybody else, that once, many years ago, I was guilty of an indiscretion.

Nora. I think I have heard something of the kind.

Krogstad. The matter never came into court; but every way seemed to be closed to me after that. So I took to the business that you know of. I had to do something; and, honestly, I don't think I've been one of the worst. But now I must cut myself free from all that. My sons are growing up; for their sake I must try and win back as much respect as I can in the town. This post in the Bank was like the first step up for me—and now your husband is going to kick me downstairs again into the mud.

Nora. But you must believe me, Mr. Krogstad; it is not in my power to help you at all.

Krogstad. Then it is because you haven't the will; but I have means to compel you.

Nora. You don't mean that you will tell my husband that I owe you money?

Krogstad. Hm!—suppose I were to tell him?



Nora. It would be perfectly infamous of you. [Sobbing.] To think of his learning my secret, which has been my joy and pride, in such an ugly, clumsy way—that he should learn it from you! And it would put me in a horribly disagreeable position—

Krogstad. Only disagreeable?

Nora [impetuously]. Well, do it, then!—and it will be the worse for you. My husband will see for himself what a blackguard you are, and you certainly won't keep your post then.

Krogstad. I asked you if it was only a disagreeable scene at home that you were afraid of?

Nora. If my husband does get to know of it, of course he will at once pay you what is still owing, and we shall have nothing more to do with you.

Krogstad [coming a step nearer]. Listen to me, Mrs Helmer. Either you have a very bad memory or you know very little of business. I shall be obliged to remind you of a few details.

Nora. What do you mean?

Krogstad. When your husband was ill, you came to me to borrow two hundred and fifty pounds.

Nora. I didn't know anyone else to go to.

Krogstad. I promised to get you that amount—

Nora. Yes, and you did so.

Krogstad. I promised to get you that amount, on certain conditions. Your mind was so taken up with your husband's illness, and you were so anxious to get the money for your journey, that you seem to have paid no attention to the conditions of our bargain. Therefore it will not be amiss if I remind you of them. Now, I promised to get the money on the security of a bond which I drew up.

Nora. Yes, and which I signed.

Krogstad. Good. But below your signature there were a few lines constituting your father a surety for the money; those lines your father should have signed.

Nora. Should? He did sign them.

Krogstad. I had left the date blank; that is to say, your father

should himself have inserted the date on which he signed the paper. Do you remember that?

Nora. Yes, I think I remember—

Krogstad. Then I gave you the bond to send by post to your father. Is that not so?

Nora. Yes.

Krogstad. And you naturally did so at once, because five or six days afterwards you brought me the bond with your father's signature. And then I gave you the money.

Nora. Well, haven't I been paying it off regularly?

Krogstad. Fairly so, yes. But—to come back to the matter in hand—that must have been a very trying time for you, Mrs Helmer?

Nora. It was, indeed.

Krogstad. Your father was very ill, wasn't he?

Nora. He was very near his end.

Krogstad. And died soon afterwards?

Nora. Yes.

Krogstad. Tell me, Mrs Helmer, can you by any chance remember what day your father died?—on what day of the month, I mean.

Nora. Papa died on the 29th of September.

Krogstad. That is correct; I have ascertained it for myself. And, as that is so, there is a discrepancy [taking a paper from his pocket] which I cannot account for.

Nora. What discrepancy? I don't know—

Krogstad. The discrepancy consists, Mrs Helmer, in the fact that your father signed this bond three days after his death.

Nora. What do you mean? I don't understand—

Krogstad. Your father died on the 29th of September. But, look here; your father has dated his signature the 2nd of October. It is a discrepancy, isn't it? [NORA is silent.] Can you explain it to me? [NORA is still silent.] It is a remarkable thing, too, that the words "2nd of October," as well as the year, are not written in your father's handwriting but in one that I think I know. Well, of course it can be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature, and someone else may have dated it haphazard before they knew of his

death. There is no harm in that. It all depends on the signature of the name; and that is genuine, I suppose, Mrs Helmer? It was your father himself who signed his name here?

Nora [after a short pause, throws her head up and looks defiantly at him]. No, it was not. It was I that wrote papa's name.

Krogstad. Are you aware that is a dangerous confession?

Nora. In what way? You shall have your money soon.

Krogstad. Let me ask you a question; why did you not send the paper to your father?

Nora. It was impossible; papa was so ill. If I had asked him for his signature, I should have had to tell him what the money was to be used for; and when he was so ill himself I couldn't tell him that my husband's life was in danger—it was impossible.

Krogstad. It would have been better for you if you had given up your trip abroad.

Nora. No, that was impossible. That trip was to save my husband's life; I couldn't give that up.

Krogstad. But did it never occur to you that you were committing a fraud on me?

Nora. I couldn't take that into account; I didn't trouble myself about you at all. I couldn't bear you, because you put so many heartless difficulties in my way, although you knew what a dangerous condition my husband was in.

Krogstad. Mrs Helmer, you evidently do not realise clearly what it is that you have been guilty of. But I can assure you that my one false step, which lost me all my reputation, was nothing more or nothing worse than what you have done.

Nora. You? Do you ask me to believe that you were brave enough to run a risk to save your wife's life?

Krogstad. The law cares nothing about motives.

Nora. Then it must be a very foolish law.

Krogstad. Foolish or not, it is the law by which you will be judged, if I produce this paper in court.

Nora. I don't believe it. Is a daughter not to be allowed to spare her dying father anxiety and care? Is a wife not to be allowed to save

her husband's life? I don't know much about law; but I am certain that there must be laws permitting such things as that. Have you no knowledge of such laws—you who are a lawyer? You must be a very poor lawyer, Mr. Krogstad.

Krogstad. Maybe. But matters of business—such business as you and I have had together—do you think I don't understand that? Very well. Do as you please. But let me tell you this—if I lose my position a second time, you shall lose yours with me. [He bows, and goes out through the hall.]

Nora [appears buried in thought for a short time, then tosses her head]. Nonsense! Trying to frighten me like that!—I am not so silly as he thinks. [Begins to busy herself putting the children's things in order.] And yet—? No, it's impossible! I did it for love's sake.

The Children [in the doorway on the left]. Mother, the stranger man has gone out through the gate.

Nora. Yes, dears, I know. But, don't tell anyone about the stranger man. Do you hear? Not even papa.

Children. No, mother; but will you come and play again?

Nora. No, no,—not now.

Children. But, mother, you promised us.

Nora. Yes, but I can't now. Run away in; I have such a lot to do. Run away in, my sweet little darlings. [She gets them into the room by degrees and shuts the door on them; then sits down on the sofa, takes up a piece of needlework and sews a few stitches, but soon stops.] No! [Throws down the work, gets up, goes to the hall door and calls out.] Helen! bring the Tree in. [Goes to the table on the left, opens a drawer, and stops again.] No, no! it is quite impossible!

Maid [coming in with the Tree]. Where shall I put it, ma'am?

Nora. Here, in the middle of the floor.

Maid. Shall I get you anything else?

Nora. No, thank you. I have all I want. [Exit MAID.]

Nora [begins dressing the tree]. A candle here—and flowers here—The horrible man! It's all nonsense—there's nothing wrong. The tree shall be splendid! I will do everything I can think of to please

you, Torvald!—I will sing for you, dance for you—[HELMER comes in with some papers under his arm.] Oh! are you back already?

Helmer. Yes. Has anyone been here?

Nora. Here? No.

Helmer. That is strange. I saw Krogstad going out of the gate.

Nora. Did you? Oh yes, I forgot, Krogstad was here for a moment.

Helmer. Nora, I can see from your manner that he has been here begging you to say a good word for him.

Nora. Yes.

Helmer. And you were to appear to do it of your own accord; you were to conceal from me the fact of his having been here; didn't he beg that of you too?

Nora. Yes, Torvald, but—

Helmer. Nora, Nora, and you would be a party to that sort of thing? To have any talk with a man like that, and give him any sort of promise? And to tell me a lie into the bargain?

Nora. A lie—?

Helmer. Didn't you tell me no one had been here? [Shakes his finger at her.] My little songbird must never do that again. A songbird must have a clean beak to chirp with—no false notes! [Puts his arm round her waist.] That is so, isn't it? Yes, I am sure it is. [Lets her go.] We will say no more about it. [Sits down by the stove.] How warm and snug it is here! [Turns over his papers.]

Nora [after a short pause, during which she busies herself with the Christmas Tree.] Torvald!

Helmer. Yes.

Nora. I am looking forward tremendously to the fancy-dress ball at the Stenborgs' the day after tomorrow.

Helmer. And I am tremendously curious to see what you are going to surprise me with.

Nora. It was very silly of me to want to do that.

Helmer. What do you mean?

Nora. I can't hit upon anything that will do; everything I think of seems so silly and insignificant.

Helmer. Does my little Nora acknowledge that at last?

Nora [standing behind his chair with her arms on the back of it].  
Are you very busy, Torvald?

Helmer. Well—

Nora. What are all those papers?

Helmer. Bank business.

Nora. Already?

Helmer. I have got authority from the retiring manager to undertake the necessary changes in the staff and in the rearrangement of the work; and I must make use of the Christmas week for that, so as to have everything in order for the new year.

Nora. Then that was why this poor Krogstad—

Helmer. Hm!

Nora [leans against the back of his chair and strokes his hair]. If you hadn't been so busy I should have asked you a tremendously big favour, Torvald.

Helmer. What is that? Tell me.

Nora. There is no one has such good taste as you. And I do so want to look nice at the fancy-dress ball. Torvald, couldn't you take me in hand and decide what I shall go as, and what sort of a dress I shall wear?

Helmer. Aha! so my obstinate little woman is obliged to get someone to come to her rescue?

Nora. Yes, Torvald, I can't get along a bit without your help.

Helmer. Very well, I will think it over, we shall manage to hit upon something.

Nora. That is nice of you. [Goes to the Christmas Tree. A short pause.] How pretty the red flowers look—. But, tell me, was it really something very bad that this Krogstad was guilty of?

Helmer. He forged someone's name. Have you any idea what that means?

Nora. Isn't it possible that he was driven to do it by necessity?

Helmer. Yes; or, as in so many cases, by imprudence. I am not so heartless as to condemn a man altogether because of a single false step of that kind.

Nora. No, you wouldn't, would you, Torvald?

Helmer. Many a man has been able to retrieve his character, if he has openly confessed his fault and taken his punishment.

Nora. Punishment—?

Helmer. But Krogstad did nothing of that sort; he got himself out of it by a cunning trick, and that is why he has gone under altogether.

Nora. But do you think it would—?

Helmer. Just think how a guilty man like that has to lie and play the hypocrite with every one, how he has to wear a mask in the presence of those near and dear to him, even before his own wife and children. And about the children—that is the most terrible part of it all, Nora.

Nora. How?

Helmer. Because such an atmosphere of lies infects and poisons the whole life of a home. Each breath the children take in such a house is full of the germs of evil.

Nora [coming nearer him]. Are you sure of that?

Helmer. My dear, I have often seen it in the course of my life as a lawyer. Almost everyone who has gone to the bad early in life has had a deceitful mother.

Nora. Why do you only say—mother?

Helmer. It seems most commonly to be the mother's influence, though naturally a bad father's would have the same result. Every lawyer is familiar with the fact. This Krogstad, now, has been persistently poisoning his own children with lies and dissimulation; that is why I say he has lost all moral character. [Holds out his hands to her.] That is why my sweet little Nora must promise me not to plead his cause. Give me your hand on it. Come, come, what is this? Give me your hand. There now, that's settled. I assure you it would be quite impossible for me to work with him; I literally feel physically ill when I am in the company of such people.

Nora [takes her hand out of his and goes to the opposite side of the Christmas Tree]. How hot it is in here; and I have such a lot to do.

Helmer [getting up and putting his papers in order]. Yes, and I

must try and read through some of these before dinner; and I must think about your costume, too. And it is just possible I may have something ready in gold paper to hang up on the Tree. [Puts his hand on her head.] My precious little singing-bird! [He goes into his room and shuts the door after him.]

Nora [after a pause, whispers]. No, no—it isn't true. It's impossible; it must be impossible.

[The NURSE opens the door on the left.]

Nurse. The little ones are begging so hard to be allowed to come in to mamma.

Nora. No, no, no! Don't let them come in to me! You stay with them, Anne.

Nurse. Very well, ma'am. [Shuts the door.]

Nora [pale with terror]. Deprave my little children? Poison my home? [A short pause. Then she tosses her head.] It's not true. It can't possibly be true.

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## ACT II

[THE SAME SCENE.—THE Christmas Tree is in the corner by the piano, stripped of its ornaments and with burnt-down candle-ends on its dishevelled branches. NORA'S cloak and hat are lying on the sofa. She is alone in the room, walking about uneasily. She stops by the sofa and takes up her cloak.]

Nora [drops her cloak]. Someone is coming now! [Goes to the door and listens.] No—it is no one. Of course, no one will come today, Christmas Day—nor tomorrow either. But, perhaps—[opens the door and looks out]. No, nothing in the letterbox; it is quite empty. [Comes forward.] What rubbish! of course he can't be in earnest about it. Such a thing couldn't happen; it is impossible—I have three little children.



[Enter the NURSE from the room on the left, carrying a big cardboard box.]

Nurse. At last I have found the box with the fancy dress.

Nora. Thanks; put it on the table.

Nurse [doing so]. But it is very much in want of mending.

Nora. I should like to tear it into a hundred thousand pieces.

Nurse. What an idea! It can easily be put in order—just a little patience.

Nora. Yes, I will go and get Mrs Linde to come and help me with it.

Nurse. What, out again? In this horrible weather? You will catch cold, ma'am, and make yourself ill.

Nora. Well, worse than that might happen. How are the children?

Nurse. The poor little souls are playing with their Christmas presents, but—

Nora. Do they ask much for me?

Nurse. You see, they are so accustomed to have their mamma with them.

Nora. Yes, but, nurse, I shall not be able to be so much with them now as I was before.

Nurse. Oh well, young children easily get accustomed to anything.

Nora. Do you think so? Do you think they would forget their mother if she went away altogether?

Nurse. Good heavens!—went away altogether?

Nora. Nurse, I want you to tell me something I have often wondered about—how could you have the heart to put your own child out among strangers?

Nurse. I was obliged to, if I wanted to be little Nora's nurse.

Nora. Yes, but how could you be willing to do it?

Nurse. What, when I was going to get such a good place by it? A poor girl who has got into trouble should be glad to. Besides, that wicked man didn't do a single thing for me.

Nora. But I suppose your daughter has quite forgotten you.

Nurse. No, indeed she hasn't. She wrote to me when she was confirmed, and when she was married.

Nora [putting her arms round her neck]. Dear old Anne, you were a good mother to me when I was little.

Nurse. Little Nora, poor dear, had no other mother but me.

Nora. And if my little ones had no other mother, I am sure you would—What nonsense I am talking! [Opens the box.] Go in to them. Now I must—. You will see tomorrow how charming I shall look.

Nurse. I am sure there will be no one at the ball so charming as you, ma'am. [Goes into the room on the left.]

Nora [begins to unpack the box, but soon pushes it away from her]. If only I dared go out. If only no one would come. If only I could be sure nothing would happen here in the meantime. Stuff and nonsense! No one will come. Only I mustn't think about it. I will brush my muff. What lovely, lovely gloves! Out of my thoughts, out of my thoughts! One, two, three, four, five, six— [Screams.] Ah! there is someone coming—. [Makes a movement towards the door, but stands irresolute.]

[Enter Mrs Linde from the hall, where she has taken off her cloak and hat.]

Nora. Oh, it's you, Christine. There is no one else out there, is there? How good of you to come!

Mrs Linde. I heard you were up asking for me.

Nora. Yes, I was passing by. As a matter of fact, it is something you could help me with. Let us sit down here on the sofa. Look here. Tomorrow evening there is to be a fancy-dress ball at the Stenborgs', who live above us; and Torvald wants me to go as a Neapolitan fisher-girl, and dance the Tarantella that I learned at Capri.

Mrs Linde. I see; you are going to keep up the character.

Nora. Yes, Torvald wants me to. Look, here is the dress; Torvald had it made for me there, but now it is all so torn, and I haven't any idea—

Mrs Linde. We will easily put that right. It is only some of the trimming come unsewn here and there. Needle and thread? Now then, that's all we want.

Nora. It is nice of you.

Mrs Linde [sewing]. So you are going to be dressed up tomorrow

Nora. I will tell you what—I shall come in for a moment and see you in your fine feathers. But I have completely forgotten to thank you for a delightful evening yesterday.

Nora [gets up, and crosses the stage]. Well, I don't think yesterday was as pleasant as usual. You ought to have come to town a little earlier, Christine. Certainly Torvald does understand how to make a house dainty and attractive.

Mrs Linde. And so do you, it seems to me; you are not your father's daughter for nothing. But tell me, is Doctor Rank always as depressed as he was yesterday?

Nora. No; yesterday it was very noticeable. I must tell you that he suffers from a very dangerous disease. He has consumption of the spine, poor creature. His father was a horrible man who committed all sorts of excesses; and that is why his son was sickly from childhood, do you understand?

Mrs Linde [dropping her sewing]. But, my dearest Nora, how do you know anything about such things?

Nora [walking about]. Pooh! When you have three children, you get visits now and then from—married women, who know something of medical matters, and they talk about one thing and another.

Mrs Linde [goes on sewing. A short silence]. Does Doctor Rank come here everyday?

Nora. Everyday regularly. He is Torvald's most intimate friend, and a great friend of mine too. He is just like one of the family.

Mrs Linde. But tell me this—is he perfectly sincere? I mean, isn't he the kind of man that is very anxious to make himself agreeable?

Nora. Not in the least. What makes you think that?

Mrs Linde. When you introduced him to me yesterday, he declared he had often heard my name mentioned in this house; but afterwards I noticed that your husband hadn't the slightest idea who I was. So how could Doctor Rank—?

Nora. That is quite right, Christine. Torvald is so absurdly fond of me that he wants me absolutely to himself, as he says. At first he used to seem almost jealous if I mentioned any of the dear folk at

home, so naturally I gave up doing so. But I often talk about such things with Doctor Rank, because he likes hearing about them.

Mrs Linde. Listen to me, Nora. You are still very like a child in many things, and I am older than you in many ways and have a little more experience. Let me tell you this—you ought to make an end of it with Doctor Rank.

Nora. What ought I to make an end of?

Mrs Linde. Of two things, I think. Yesterday you talked some nonsense about a rich admirer who was to leave you money—

Nora. An admirer who doesn't exist, unfortunately! But what then?

Mrs Linde. Is Doctor Rank a man of means?

Nora. Yes, he is.

Mrs Linde. And has no one to provide for?

Nora. No, no one; but—

Mrs Linde. And comes here everyday?

Nora. Yes, I told you so.

Mrs Linde. But how can this well-bred man be so tactless?

Nora. I don't understand you at all.

Mrs Linde. Don't prevaricate, Nora. Do you suppose I don't guess who lent you the two hundred and fifty pounds?

Nora. Are you out of your senses? How can you think of such a thing! A friend of ours, who comes here everyday! Do you realise what a horribly painful position that would be?

Mrs Linde. Then it really isn't he?

Nora. No, certainly not. It would never have entered into my head for a moment. Besides, he had no money to lend then; he came into his money afterwards.

Mrs Linde. Well, I think that was lucky for you, my dear Nora.

Nora. No, it would never have come into my head to ask Doctor Rank. Although I am quite sure that if I had asked him—

Mrs Linde. But of course you won't.

Nora. Of course not. I have no reason to think it could possibly be necessary. But I am quite sure that if I told Doctor Rank—

Mrs Linde. Behind your husband's back?

Nora. I must make an end of it with the other one, and that will be behind his back too. I must make an end of it with him.

Mrs Linde. Yes, that is what I told you yesterday, but—

Nora [walking up and down]. A man can put a thing like that straight much easier than a woman—

Mrs Linde. One's husband, yes.

Nora. Nonsense! [Standing still.] When you pay off a debt you get your bond back, don't you?

Mrs Linde. Yes, as a matter of course.

Nora. And can tear it into a hundred thousand pieces, and burn it up—the nasty dirty paper!

Mrs Linde [looks hard at her, lays down her sewing and gets up slowly]. Nora, you are concealing something from me.

Nora. Do I look as if I were?

Mrs Linde. Something has happened to you since yesterday morning. Nora, what is it?

Nora [going nearer to her]. Christine! [Listens.] Hush! there's Torvald come home. Do you mind going in to the children for the present? Torvald can't bear to see dressmaking going on. Let Anne help you.

Mrs Linde [gathering some of the things together]. Certainly—but I am not going away from here until we have had it out with one another. [She goes into the room on the left, as HELMER comes in from the hall.]

Nora [going up to HELMER]. I have wanted you so much, Torvald dear.

Helmer. Was that the dressmaker?

Nora. No, it was Christine; she is helping me to put my dress in order. You will see I shall look quite smart.

Helmer. Wasn't that a happy thought of mine, now?

Nora. Splendid! But don't you think it is nice of me, too, to do as you wish?

Helmer. Nice?—because you do as your husband wishes? Well, well, you little rogue, I am sure you did not mean it in that way. But

I am not going to disturb you; you will want to be trying on your dress, I expect.

Nora. I suppose you are going to work.

Helmer. Yes. [Shows her a bundle of papers.] Look at that. I have just been into the bank. [Turns to go into his room.]

Nora. Torvald.

Helmer. Yes.

Nora. If your little squirrel were to ask you for something very, very prettily—?

Helmer. What then?

Nora. Would you do it?

Helmer. I should like to hear what it is, first.

Nora. Your squirrel would run about and do all her tricks if you would be nice, and do what she wants.

Helmer. Speak plainly.

Nora. Your skylark would chirp about in every room, with her song rising and falling—

Helmer. Well, my skylark does that anyhow.

Nora. I would play the fairy and dance for you in the moonlight, Torvald.

Helmer. Nora—you surely don't mean that request you made to me this morning?

Nora [going near him]. Yes, Torvald, I beg you so earnestly—

Helmer. Have you really the courage to open up that question again?

Nora. Yes, dear, you must do as I ask; you must let Krogstad keep his post in the bank.

Helmer. My dear Nora, it is his post that I have arranged Mrs Linde shall have.

Nora. Yes, you have been awfully kind about that; but you could just as well dismiss some other clerk instead of Krogstad.

Helmer. This is simply incredible obstinacy! Because you chose to give him a thoughtless promise that you would speak for him, I am expected to—

Nora. That isn't the reason, Torvald. It is for your own sake. This

fellow writes in the most scurrilous newspapers; you have told me so yourself. He can do you an unspeakable amount of harm. I am frightened to death of him—

Helmer. Ah, I understand; it is recollections of the past that scare you.

Nora. What do you mean?

Helmer. Naturally you are thinking of your father.

Nora. Yes—yes, of course. Just recall to your mind what these malicious creatures wrote in the papers about papa, and how horribly they slandered him. I believe they would have procured his dismissal if the Department had not sent you over to inquire into it, and if you had not been so kindly disposed and helpful to him.

Helmer. My little Nora, there is an important difference between your father and me. Your father's reputation as a public official was not above suspicion. Mine is, and I hope it will continue to be so, as long as I hold my office.

Nora. You never can tell what mischief these men may contrive. We ought to be so well off, so snug and happy here in our peaceful home, and have no cares—you and I and the children, Torvald! That is why I beg you so earnestly—

Helmer. And it is just by interceding for him that you make it impossible for me to keep him. It is already known at the Bank that I mean to dismiss Krogstad. Is it to get about now that the new manager has changed his mind at his wife's bidding—

Nora. And what if it did?

Helmer. Of course!—if only this obstinate little person can get her way! Do you suppose I am going to make myself ridiculous before my whole staff, to let people think that I am a man to be swayed by all sorts of outside influence? I should very soon feel the consequences of it, I can tell you! And besides, there is one thing that makes it quite impossible for me to have Krogstad in the Bank as long as I am manager.

Nora. Whatever is that?

Helmer. His moral failings I might perhaps have overlooked, if necessary—

Nora. Yes, you could—couldn't you?

Helmer. And I hear he is a good worker, too. But I knew him when we were boys. It was one of those rash friendships that so often prove an incubus in afterlife. I may as well tell you plainly, we were once on very intimate terms with one another. But this tactless fellow lays no restraint on himself when other people are present. On the contrary, he thinks it gives him the right to adopt a familiar tone with me, and every minute it is "I say, Helmer, old fellow!" and that sort of thing. I assure you it is extremely painful for me. He would make my position in the Bank intolerable.

Nora. Torvald, I don't believe you mean that.

Helmer. Don't you? Why not?

Nora. Because it is such a narrow-minded way of looking at things.

Helmer. What are you saying? Narrow-minded? Do you think I am narrow-minded?

Nora. No, just the opposite, dear—and it is exactly for that reason.

Helmer. It's the same thing. You say my point of view is narrow-minded, so I must be so too. Narrow-minded! Very well—I must put an end to this. [Goes to the hall door and calls.] Helen!

Nora. What are you going to do?

Helmer [looking among his papers]. Settle it. [Enter MAID.] Look here; take this letter and go downstairs with it at once. Find a messenger and tell him to deliver it, and be quick. The address is on it, and here is the money.

Maid. Very well, sir. [Exit with the letter.]

Helmer [putting his papers together]. Now then, little Miss Obstinate.

Nora [breathlessly]. Torvald—what was that letter?

Helmer. Krogstad's dismissal.

Nora. Call her back, Torvald! There is still time. Oh Torvald, call her back! Do it for my sake—for your own sake—for the children's sake! Do you hear me, Torvald? Call her back! You don't know what that letter can bring upon us.

Helmer. It's too late.

Nora. Yes, it's too late.



Helmer. My dear Nora, I can forgive the anxiety you are in, although really it is an insult to me. It is, indeed. Isn't it an insult to think that I should be afraid of a starving quill-driver's vengeance? But I forgive you nevertheless, because it is such eloquent witness to your great love for me. [Takes her in his arms.] And that is as it should be, my own darling Nora. Come what will, you may be sure I shall have both courage and strength if they be needed. You will see I am man enough to take everything upon myself.

Nora [in a horror-stricken voice]. What do you mean by that?

Helmer. Everything, I say—

Nora [recovering herself]. You will never have to do that.

Helmer. That's right. Well, we will share it, Nora, as man and wife should. That is how it shall be. [Caressing her.] Are you content now? There! There!—not these frightened dove's eyes! The whole thing is only the wildest fancy!—Now, you must go and play through the Tarantella and practise with your tambourine. I shall go into the inner office and shut the door, and I shall hear nothing; you can make as much noise as you please. [Turns back at the door.] And when Rank comes, tell him where he will find me. [Nods to her, takes his papers and goes into his room, and shuts the door after him.]

Nora [bewildered with anxiety, stands as if rooted to the spot, and whispers]. He was capable of doing it. He will do it. He will do it in spite of everything.—No, not that! Never, never! Anything rather than that! Oh, for some help, some way out of it! [The door-bell rings.] Doctor Rank! Anything rather than that—anything, whatever it is! [She puts her hands over her face, pulls herself together, goes to the door and opens it. RANK is standing without, hanging up his coat. During the following dialogue it begins to grow dark.]

Nora. Good day, Doctor Rank. I knew your ring. But you mustn't go in to Torvald now; I think he is busy with something.

Rank. And you?

Nora [brings him in and shuts the door after him]. Oh, you know very well I always have time for you.

Rank. Thank you. I shall make use of as much of it as I can.

Nora. What do you mean by that? As much of it as you can?

Rank. Well, does that alarm you?

Nora. It was such a strange way of putting it. Is anything likely to happen?

Rank. Nothing but what I have long been prepared for. But I certainly didn't expect it to happen so soon.

Nora [gripping him by the arm]. What have you found out? Doctor Rank, you must tell me.

Rank [sitting down by the stove]. It is all up with me. And it can't be helped.

Nora [with a sigh of relief]. Is it about yourself?

Rank. Who else? It is no use lying to one's self. I am the most wretched of all my patients, Mrs Helmer. Lately I have been taking stock of my internal economy. Bankrupt! Probably within a month I shall lie rotting in the churchyard.

Nora. What an ugly thing to say!

Rank. The thing itself is cursedly ugly, and the worst of it is that I shall have to face so much more that is ugly before that. I shall only make one more examination of myself; when I have done that, I shall know pretty certainly when it will be that the horrors of dissolution will begin. There is something I want to tell you. Helmer's refined nature gives him an unconquerable disgust at everything that is ugly; I won't have him in my sick-room.

Nora. Oh, but, Doctor Rank—

Rank. I won't have him there. Not on any account. I bar my door to him. As soon as I am quite certain that the worst has come, I shall send you my card with a black cross on it, and then you will know that the loathsome end has begun.

Nora. You are quite absurd today. And I wanted you so much to be in a really good humour.

Rank. With death stalking beside me?—To have to pay this penalty for another man's sin? Is there any justice in that? And in every single family, in one way or another, some such inexorable retribution is being exacted—

Nora [putting her hands over her ears]. Rubbish! Do talk of something cheerful.

Rank. Oh, it's a mere laughing matter, the whole thing. My poor innocent spine has to suffer for my father's youthful amusements.

Nora [sitting at the table on the left]. I suppose you mean that he was too partial to asparagus and pate de foie gras, don't you?

Rank. Yes, and to truffles.

Nora. Truffles, yes. And oysters too, I suppose?

Rank. Oysters, of course, that goes without saying.

Nora. And heaps of port and champagne. It is sad that all these nice things should take their revenge on our bones.

Rank. Especially that they should revenge themselves on the unlucky bones of those who have not had the satisfaction of enjoying them.

Nora. Yes, that's the saddest part of it all.

Rank [with a searching look at her]. Hm!–

Nora [after a short pause]. Why did you smile?

Rank. No, it was you that laughed.

Nora. No, it was you that smiled, Doctor Rank!

Rank [rising]. You are a greater rascal than I thought.

Nora. I am in a silly mood today.

Rank. So it seems.

Nora [putting her hands on his shoulders]. Dear, dear Doctor Rank, death mustn't take you away from Torvald and me.

Rank. It is a loss you would easily recover from. Those who are gone are soon forgotten.

Nora [looking at him anxiously]. Do you believe that?

Rank. People form new ties, and then–

Nora. Who will form new ties?

Rank. Both you and Helmer, when I am gone. You yourself are already on the high road to it, I think. What did that Mrs Linde want here last night?

Nora. Oho!–you don't mean to say you are jealous of poor Christine?

Rank. Yes, I am. She will be my successor in this house. When I am done for, this woman will–

Nora. Hush! don't speak so loud. She is in that room.

Rank. Today again. There, you see.

Nora. She has only come to sew my dress for me. Bless my soul, how unreasonable you are! [Sits down on the sofa.] Be nice now, Doctor Rank, and tomorrow you will see how beautifully I shall dance, and you can imagine I am doing it all for you—and for Torvald too, of course. [Takes various things out of the box.] Doctor Rank, come and sit down here, and I will show you something.

Rank [sitting down]. What is it?

Nora. Just look at those!

Rank. Silk stockings.

Nora. Flesh-coloured. Aren't they lovely? It is so dark here now, but tomorrow—. No, no, no! you must only look at the feet. Oh well, you may have leave to look at the legs too.

Rank. Hm!—

Nora. Why are you looking so critical? Don't you think they will fit me?

Rank. I have no means of forming an opinion about that.

Nora [looks at him for a moment]. For shame! [Hits him lightly on the ear with the stockings.] That's to punish you. [Folds them up again.]

Rank. And what other nice things am I to be allowed to see?

Nora. Not a single thing more, for being so naughty. [She looks among the things, humming to herself.]

Rank [after a short silence]. When I am sitting here, talking to you as intimately as this, I cannot imagine for a moment what would have become of me if I had never come into this house.

Nora [smiling]. I believe you do feel thoroughly at home with us.

Rank [in a lower voice, looking straight in front of him]. And to be obliged to leave it all—

Nora. Nonsense, you are not going to leave it.

Rank [as before]. And not be able to leave behind one the slightest token of one's gratitude, scarcely even a fleeting regret—nothing but an empty place which the first comer can fill as well as any other.

Nora. And if I asked you now for a—? No!

Rank. For what?

Nora. For a big proof of your friendship–

Rank. Yes, yes!

Nora. I mean a tremendously big favour–

Rank. Would you really make me so happy for once?

Nora. Ah, but you don't know what it is yet.

Rank. No–but tell me.

Nora. I really can't, Doctor Rank. It is something out of all reason; it means advice, and help, and a favour–

Rank. The bigger a thing it is the better. I can't conceive what it is you mean. Do tell me. Haven't I your confidence?

Nora. More than anyone else. I know you are my truest and best friend, and so I will tell you what it is. Well, Doctor Rank, it is something you must help me to prevent. You know how devotedly, how inexpressibly deeply Torvald loves me; he would never for a moment hesitate to give his life for me.

Rank [leaning towards her]. Nora–do you think he is the only one–?

Nora [with a slight start]. The only one–?

Rank. The only one who would gladly give his life for your sake.

Nora [sadly]. Is that it?

Rank. I was determined you should know it before I went away, and there will never be a better opportunity than this. Now you know it, Nora. And now you know, too, that you can trust me as you would trust no one else.

Nora [rises, deliberately and quietly]. Let me pass.

Rank [makes room for her to pass him, but sits still]. Nora!

Nora [at the hall door]. Helen, bring in the lamp. [Goes over to the stove.] Dear Doctor Rank, that was really horrid of you.

Rank. To have loved you as much as anyone else does? Was that horrid?

Nora. No, but to go and tell me so. There was really no need–

Rank. What do you mean? Did you know–? [MAID enters with lamp, puts it down on the table, and goes out.] Nora–Mrs Helmer–tell me, had you any idea of this?

Nora. Oh, how do I know whether I had or whether I hadn't? I

really can't tell you—To think you could be so clumsy, Doctor Rank! We were getting on so nicely.

Rank. Well, at all events you know now that you can command me, body and soul. So won't you speak out?

Nora [looking at him]. After what happened?

Rank. I beg you to let me know what it is.

Nora. I can't tell you anything now.

Rank. Yes, yes. You mustn't punish me in that way. Let me have permission to do for you whatever a man may do.

Nora. You can do nothing for me now. Besides, I really don't need any help at all. You will find that the whole thing is merely fancy on my part. It really is so—of course it is! [Sits down in the rocking-chair, and looks at him with a smile.] You are a nice sort of man, Doctor Rank!—don't you feel ashamed of yourself, now the lamp has come?

Rank. Not a bit. But perhaps I had better go—for ever?

Nora. No, indeed, you shall not. Of course you must come here just as before. You know very well Torvald can't do without you.

Rank. Yes, but you?

Nora. Oh, I am always tremendously pleased when you come.

Rank. It is just that, that put me on the wrong track. You are a riddle to me. I have often thought that you would almost as soon be in my company as in Helmer's.

Nora. Yes—you see there are some people one loves best, and others whom one would almost always rather have as companions.

Rank. Yes, there is something in that.

Nora. When I was at home, of course I loved papa best. But I always thought it tremendous fun if I could steal down into the maids' room, because they never moralised at all, and talked to each other about such entertaining things.

Rank. I see—it is their place I have taken.

Nora [jumping up and going to him]. Oh, dear, nice Doctor Rank, I never meant that at all. But surely you can understand that being with Torvald is a little like being with papa—[Enter MAID from the hall.]

Maid. If you please, ma'am. [Whispers and hands her a card.]

Nora [glancing at the card]. Oh! [Puts it in her pocket.]

Rank. Is there anything wrong?

Nora. No, no, not in the least. It is only something—it is my new dress—

Rank. What? Your dress is lying there.

Nora. Oh, yes, that one; but this is another. I ordered it. Torvald mustn't know about it—

Rank. Oho! Then that was the great secret.

Nora. Of course. Just go in to him; he is sitting in the inner room. Keep him as long as—

Rank. Make your mind easy; I won't let him escape.

[Goes into HELMER'S room.]

Nora [to the MAID]. And he is standing waiting in the kitchen?

Maid. Yes; he came up the back stairs.

Nora. But didn't you tell him no one was in?

Maid. Yes, but it was no good.

Nora. He won't go away?

Maid. No; he says he won't until he has seen you, ma'am.

Nora. Well, let him come in—but quietly. Helen, you mustn't say anything about it to anyone. It is a surprise for my husband.

Maid. Yes, ma'am, I quite understand. [Exit.]

Nora. This dreadful thing is going to happen! It will happen in spite of me! No, no, no, it can't happen—it shan't happen! [She bolts the door of HELMER'S room. The MAID opens the hall door for KROGSTAD and shuts it after him. He is wearing a fur coat, high boots and a fur cap.]

Nora [advancing towards him]. Speak low—my husband is at home.

Krogstad. No matter about that.

Nora. What do you want of me?

Krogstad. An explanation of something.

Nora. Make haste then. What is it?

Krogstad. You know, I suppose, that I have got my dismissal.

Nora. I couldn't prevent it, Mr. Krogstad. I fought as hard as I could on your side, but it was no good.

Krogstad. Does your husband love you so little, then? He knows what I can expose you to, and yet he ventures—

Nora. How can you suppose that he has any knowledge of the sort?

Krogstad. I didn't suppose so at all. It would not be the least like our dear Torvald Helmer to show so much courage—

Nora. Mr. Krogstad, a little respect for my husband, please.

Krogstad. Certainly—all the respect he deserves. But since you have kept the matter so carefully to yourself, I make bold to suppose that you have a little clearer idea, than you had yesterday, of what it actually is that you have done?

Nora. More than you could ever teach me.

Krogstad. Yes, such a bad lawyer as I am.

Nora. What is it you want of me?

Krogstad. Only to see how you were, Mrs Helmer. I have been thinking about you all day long. A mere cashier, a quill-driver, a—well, a man like me—even he has a little of what is called feeling, you know.

Nora. Show it, then; think of my little children.

Krogstad. Have you and your husband thought of mine? But never mind about that. I only wanted to tell you that you need not take this matter too seriously. In the first place there will be no accusation made on my part.

Nora. No, of course not; I was sure of that.

Krogstad. The whole thing can be arranged amicably; there is no reason why anyone should know anything about it. It will remain a secret between us three.

Nora. My husband must never get to know anything about it.

Krogstad. How will you be able to prevent it? Am I to understand that you can pay the balance that is owing?

Nora. No, not just at present.

Krogstad. Or perhaps that you have some expedient for raising the money soon?

Nora. No expedient that I mean to make use of.

Krogstad. Well, in any case, it would have been of no use to you



now. If you stood there with ever so much money in your hand, I would never part with your bond.

Nora. Tell me what purpose you mean to put it to.

Krogstad. I shall only preserve it—keep it in my possession. No one who is not concerned in the matter shall have the slightest hint of it. So that if the thought of it has driven you to any desperate resolution—

Nora. It has.

Krogstad. If you had it in your mind to run away from your home—  
Nora. I had.

Krogstad. Or even something worse—

Nora. How could you know that?

Krogstad. Give up the idea.

Nora. How did you know I had thought of that?

Krogstad. Most of us think of that at first. I did, too—but I hadn't the courage.

Nora [faintly]. No more had I.

Krogstad [in a tone of relief]. No, that's it, isn't it—you hadn't the courage either?

Nora. No, I haven't—I haven't.

Krogstad. Besides, it would have been a great piece of folly. Once the first storm at home is over—. I have a letter for your husband in my pocket.

Nora. Telling him everything?

Krogstad. In as lenient a manner as I possibly could.

Nora [quickly]. He mustn't get the letter. Tear it up. I will find some means of getting money.

Krogstad. Excuse me, Mrs Helmer, but I think I told you just now—

Nora. I am not speaking of what I owe you. Tell me what sum you are asking my husband for, and I will get the money.

Krogstad. I am not asking your husband for a penny.

Nora. What do you want, then?

Krogstad. I will tell you. I want to rehabilitate myself, Mrs Helmer; I want to get on; and in that your husband must help me. For the last year and a half I have not had a hand in anything dishonourable,

amid all that time I have been struggling in most restricted circumstances. I was content to work my way up step by step. Now I am turned out, and I am not going to be satisfied with merely being taken into favour again. I want to get on, I tell you. I want to get into the Bank again, in a higher position. Your husband must make a place for me—

Nora. That he will never do!

Krogstad. He will; I know him; he dare not protest. And as soon as I am in there again with him, then you will see! Within a year I shall be the manager's right hand. It will be Nils Krogstad and not Torvald Helmer who manages the Bank.

Nora. That's a thing you will never see!

Krogstad. Do you mean that you will—?

Nora. I have courage enough for it now.

Krogstad. Oh, you can't frighten me. A fine, spoilt lady like you—

Nora. You will see, you will see.

Krogstad. Under the ice, perhaps? Down into the cold, coal-black water? And then, in the spring, to float up to the surface, all horrible and unrecognisable, with your hair fallen out—

Nora. You can't frighten me.

Krogstad. Nor you me. People don't do such things, Mrs Helmer. Besides, what use would it be? I should have him completely in my power all the same.

Nora. Afterwards? When I am no longer—

Krogstad. Have you forgotten that it is I who have the keeping of your reputation? [NORA stands speechlessly looking at him.] Well, now, I have warned you. Do not do anything foolish. When Helmer has had my letter, I shall expect a message from him. And be sure you remember that it is your husband himself who has forced me into such ways as this again. I will never forgive him for that. Goodbye, Mrs Helmer. [Exit through the hall.]

Nora [goes to the hall door, opens it slightly and listens.] He is going. He is not putting the letter in the box. Oh no, no! that's impossible! [Opens the door by degrees.] What is that? He is standing outside. He is not going downstairs. Is he hesitating? Can

he-? [A letter drops into the box; then KROGSTAD'S footsteps are heard, until they die away as he goes downstairs. NORA utters a stifled cry, and runs across the room to the table by the sofa. A short pause.]

Nora. In the letter-box. [Steals across to the hall door.] There it lies-Torvald, Torvald, there is no hope for us now!

[Mrs Linde comes in from the room on the left, carrying the dress.]

Mrs Linde. There, I can't see anything more to mend now. Would you like to try it on-?

Nora [in a hoarse whisper]. Christine, come here.

Mrs Linde [throwing the dress down on the sofa]. What is the matter with you? You look so agitated!

Nora. Come here. Do you see that letter? There, look-you can see it through the glass in the letter-box.

Mrs Linde. Yes, I see it.

Nora. That letter is from Krogstad.

Mrs Linde. Nora-it was Krogstad who lent you the money!

Nora. Yes, and now Torvald will know all about it.

Mrs Linde. Believe me, Nora, that's the best thing for both of you.

Nora. You don't know all. I forged a name.

Mrs Linde. Good heavens-!

Nora. I only want to say this to you, Christine-you must be my witness.

Mrs Linde. Your witness? What do you mean? What am I to-?

Nora. If I should go out of my mind-and it might easily happen-

Mrs Linde. Nora!

Nora. Or if anything else should happen to me-anything, for instance, that might prevent my being here-

Mrs Linde. Nora! Nora! you are quite out of your mind.

Nora. And if it should happen that there were some one who wanted to take all the responsibility, all the blame, you understand-

Mrs Linde. Yes, yes-but how can you suppose-?

Nora. Then you must be my witness, that it is not true, Christine. I am not out of my mind at all; I am in my right senses now, and I tell

you no one else has known anything about it; I, and I alone, did the whole thing. Remember that.

Mrs Linde. I will, indeed. But I don't understand all this.

Nora. How should you understand it? A wonderful thing is going to happen!

Mrs Linde. A wonderful thing?

Nora. Yes, a wonderful thing!—But it is so terrible, Christine; it mustn't happen, not for all the world.

Mrs Linde. I will go at once and see Krogstad.

Nora. Don't go to him; he will do you some harm.

Mrs Linde. There was a time when he would gladly do anything for my sake.

Nora. He?

Mrs Linde. Where does he live?

Nora. How should I know—? Yes [feeling in her pocket], here is his card. But the letter, the letter—!

Helmer [calls from his room, knocking at the door]. Nora! Nora [cries out anxiously]. Oh, what's that? What do you want?

Helmer. Don't be so frightened. We are not coming in; you have locked the door. Are you trying on your dress?

Nora. Yes, that's it. I look so nice, Torvald.

Mrs Linde [who has read the card]. I see he lives at the corner here.

Nora. Yes, but it's no use. It is hopeless. The letter is lying there in the box.

Mrs Linde. And your husband keeps the key?

Nora. Yes, always.

Mrs Linde. Krogstad must ask for his letter back unread, he must find some pretence—

Nora. But it is just at this time that Torvald generally—

Mrs Linde. You must delay him. Go in to him in the meantime. I will come back as soon as I can. [She goes out hurriedly through the hall door.]

Nora [goes to HELMER'S door, opens it and peeps in]. Torvald!

Helmer [from the inner room]. Well? May I venture at last to come

into my own room again? Come along, Rank, now you will see—  
[Halting in the doorway.] But what is this?

Nora. What is what, dear?

Helmer. Rank led me to expect a splendid transformation.

Rank [in the doorway]. I understood so, but evidently I was mistaken.

Nora. Yes, nobody is to have the chance of admiring me in my dress until tomorrow.

Helmer. But, my dear Nora, you look so worn out. Have you been practising too much?

Nora. No, I have not practised at all.

Helmer. But you will need to—

Nora. Yes, indeed I shall, Torvald. But I can't get on a bit without you to help me; I have absolutely forgotten the whole thing.

Helmer. Oh, we will soon work it up again.

Nora. Yes, help me, Torvald. Promise that you will! I am so nervous about it—all the people—. You must give yourself up to me entirely this evening. Not the tiniest bit of business—you mustn't even take a pen in your hand. Will you promise, Torvald dear?

Helmer. I promise. This evening I will be wholly and absolutely at your service, you helpless little mortal. Ah, by the way, first of all I will just— [Goes towards the hall door.]

Nora. What are you going to do there?

Helmer. Only see if any letters have come.

Nora. No, no! don't do that, Torvald!

Helmer. Why not?

Nora. Torvald, please don't. There is nothing there.

Helmer. Well, let me look. [Turns to go to the letter-box. NORA, at the piano, plays the first bars of the Tarantella. HELMER stops in the doorway.] Aha!

Nora. I can't dance tomorrow if I don't practise with you.

Helmer [going up to her]. Are you really so afraid of it, dear?

Nora. Yes, so dreadfully afraid of it. Let me practise at once; there is time now, before we go to dinner. Sit down and play for me, Torvald dear; criticise me, and correct me as you play.

Helmer. With great pleasure, if you wish me to. [Sits down at the piano.]

Nora [takes out of the box a tambourine and a long variegated shawl. She hastily drapes the shawl round her. Then she springs to the front of the stage and calls out]. Now play for me! I am going to dance!

[HELMER plays and NORA dances. RANK stands by the piano behind HELMER, and looks on.]

Helmer [as he plays]. Slower, slower!

Nora. I can't do it any other way.

Helmer. Not so violently, Nora!

Nora. This is the way.

Helmer [stops playing]. No, no—that is not a bit right.

Nora [laughing and swinging the tambourine]. Didn't I tell you so?

Rank. Let me play for her.

Helmer [getting up]. Yes, do. I can correct her better then.

[RANK sits down at the piano and plays. NORA dances more and more wildly. HELMER has taken up a position beside the stove, and during her dance gives her frequent instructions. She does not seem to hear him; her hair comes down and falls over her shoulders; she pays no attention to it, but goes on dancing. Enter Mrs Linde.]

Mrs Linde [standing as if spell-bound in the doorway]. Oh!—

Nora [as she dances]. Such fun, Christine!

Helmer. My dear darling Nora, you are dancing as if your life depended on it.

Nora. So it does.

Helmer. Stop, Rank; this is sheer madness. Stop, I tell you! [RANK stops playing, and NORA suddenly stands still. HELMER goes up to her.] I could never have believed it. You have forgotten everything I taught you.

Nora [throwing away the tambourine]. There, you see.

Helmer. You will want a lot of coaching.

Nora. Yes, you see how much I need it. You must coach me up to the last minute. Promise me that, Torvald!

Helmer. You can depend on me.

Nora. You must not think of anything but me, either today or tomorrow; you mustn't open a single letter—not even open the letter-box—

Helmer. Ah, you are still afraid of that fellow—

Nora. Yes, indeed I am.

Helmer. Nora, I can tell from your looks that there is a letter from him lying there.

Nora. I don't know; I think there is; but you must not read anything of that kind now. Nothing horrid must come between us until this is all over.

Rank [whispers to HELMER]. You mustn't contradict her.

Helmer [taking her in his arms]. The child shall have her way. But tomorrow night, after you have danced—

Nora. Then you will be free. [The MAID appears in the doorway to the right.]

Maid. Dinner is served, ma'am.

Nora. We will have champagne, Helen.

Maid. Very good, ma'am. [Exit.]

Helmer. Hullo!—are we going to have a banquet?

Nora. Yes, a champagne banquet until the small hours. [Calls out.] And a few macaroons, Helen—lots, just for once!

Helmer. Come, come, don't be so wild and nervous. Be my own little skylark, as you used.

Nora. Yes, dear, I will. But go in now and you too, Doctor Rank. Christine, you must help me to do up my hair.

Rank [whispers to HELMER as they go out]. I suppose there is nothing—she is not expecting anything?

Helmer. Far from it, my dear fellow; it is simply nothing more than this childish nervousness I was telling you of. [They go into the right-hand room.]

Nora. Well!

Mrs Linde. Gone out of town.

Nora. I could tell from your face.

Mrs Linde. He is coming home tomorrow evening. I wrote a note for him.

Nora. You should have let it alone; you must prevent nothing. After all, it is splendid to be waiting for a wonderful thing to happen.

Mrs Linde. What is it that you are waiting for?

Nora. Oh, you wouldn't understand. Go in to them, I will come in a moment. [Mrs Linde goes into the dining-room. NORA stands still for a little while, as if to compose herself. Then she looks at her watch.] Five o'clock. Seven hours until midnight; and then four-and-twenty hours until the next midnight. Then the Tarantella will be over. Twenty-four and seven? Thirty-one hours to live.

Helmer [from the doorway on the right]. Where's my little skylark?

Nora [going to him with her arms outstretched]. Here she is!

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## ACT III

[THE SAME SCENE.—The table has been placed in the middle of the stage, with chairs around it. A lamp is burning on the table. The door into the hall stands open. Dance music is heard in the room above. Mrs Linde is sitting at the table idly turning over the leaves of a book; she tries to read, but does not seem able to collect her thoughts. Every now and then she listens intently for a sound at the outer door.]

Mrs Linde [looking at her watch]. Not yet—and the time is nearly up. If only he does not—. [Listens again.] Ah, there he is. [Goes into the hall and opens the outer door carefully. Light footsteps are heard on the stairs. She whispers.] Come in. There is no one here.

Krogstad [in the doorway]. I found a note from you at home. What does this mean?

Mrs Linde. It is absolutely necessary that I should have a talk with you.

Krogstad. Really? And is it absolutely necessary that it should be here?

Mrs Linde. It is impossible where I live; there is no private



entrance to my rooms. Come in; we are quite alone. The maid is asleep, and the Helmers are at the dance upstairs.

Krogstad [coming into the room]. Are the Helmers really at a dance tonight?

Mrs Linde. Yes, why not?

Krogstad. Certainly—why not?

Mrs Linde. Now, Nils, let us have a talk.

Krogstad. Can we two have anything to talk about?

Mrs Linde. We have a great deal to talk about.

Krogstad. I shouldn't have thought so.

Mrs Linde. No, you have never properly understood me.

Krogstad. Was there anything else to understand except what was obvious to all the world—a heartless woman jilts a man when a more lucrative chance turns up?

Mrs Linde. Do you believe I am as absolutely heartless as all that? And do you believe that I did it with a light heart?

Krogstad. Didn't you?

Mrs Linde. Nils, did you really think that?

Krogstad. If it were as you say, why did you write to me as you did at the time?

Mrs Linde. I could do nothing else. As I had to break with you, it was my duty also to put an end to all that you felt for me.

Krogstad [wringing his hands]. So that was it. And all this—only for the sake of money!

Mrs Linde. You must not forget that I had a helpless mother and two little brothers. We couldn't wait for you, Nils; your prospects seemed hopeless then.

Krogstad. That may be so, but you had no right to throw me over for anyone else's sake.

Mrs Linde. Indeed I don't know. Many a time did I ask myself if I had the right to do it.

Krogstad [more gently]. When I lost you, it was as if all the solid ground went from under my feet. Look at me now—I am a shipwrecked man clinging to a bit of wreckage.

Mrs Linde. But help may be near.

Krogstad. It was near; but then you came and stood in my way.

Mrs Linde. Unintentionally, Nils. It was only today that I learned it was your place I was going to take in the Bank.

Krogstad. I believe you, if you say so. But now that you know it, are you not going to give it up to me?

Mrs Linde. No, because that would not benefit you in the least.

Krogstad. Oh, benefit, benefit—I would have done it whether or no.

Mrs Linde. I have learned to act prudently. Life, and hard, bitter necessity have taught me that.

Krogstad. And life has taught me not to believe in fine speeches.

Mrs Linde. Then life has taught you something very reasonable. But deeds you must believe in?

Krogstad. What do you mean by that?

Mrs Linde. You said you were like a shipwrecked man clinging to some wreckage.

Krogstad. I had good reason to say so.

Mrs Linde. Well, I am like a shipwrecked woman clinging to some wreckage—no one to mourn for, no one to care for.

Krogstad. It was your own choice.

Mrs Linde. There was no other choice—then.

Krogstad. Well, what now?

Mrs Linde. Nils, how would it be if we two shipwrecked people could join forces?

Krogstad. What are you saying?

Mrs Linde. Two on the same piece of wreckage would stand a better chance than each on their own.

Krogstad. Christine I...

Mrs Linde. What do you suppose brought me to town?

Krogstad. Do you mean that you gave me a thought?

Mrs Linde. I could not endure life without work. All my life, as long as I can remember, I have worked, and it has been my greatest and only pleasure. But now I am quite alone in the world—my life is so dreadfully empty and I feel so forsaken. There is not the least pleasure in working for one's self. Nils, give me someone and something to work for.

Krogstad. I don't trust that. It is nothing but a woman's overstrained sense of generosity that prompts you to make such an offer of yourself.

Mrs Linde. Have you ever noticed anything of the sort in me?

Krogstad. Could you really do it? Tell me—do you know all about my past life?

Mrs Linde. Yes.

Krogstad. And do you know what they think of me here?

Mrs Linde. You seemed to me to imply that with me you might have been quite another man.

Krogstad. I am certain of it.

Mrs Linde. Is it too late now?

Krogstad. Christine, are you saying this deliberately? Yes, I am sure you are. I see it in your face. Have you really the courage, then—?

Mrs Linde. I want to be a mother to someone, and your children need a mother. We two need each other. Nils, I have faith in your real character—I can dare anything together with you.

Krogstad [grasps her hands]. Thanks, thanks, Christine! Now I shall find a way to clear myself in the eyes of the world. Ah, but I forgot—

Mrs Linde [listening]. Hush! The Tarantella! Go, go!

Krogstad. Why? What is it?

Mrs Linde. Do you hear them up there? When that is over, we may expect them back.

Krogstad. Yes, yes—I will go. But it is all no use. Of course you are not aware what steps I have taken in the matter of the Helmers.

Mrs Linde. Yes, I know all about that.

Krogstad. And in spite of that have you the courage to—?

Mrs Linde. I understand very well to what lengths a man like you might be driven by despair.

Krogstad. If I could only undo what I have done!

Mrs Linde. You cannot. Your letter is lying in the letter-box now.

Krogstad. Are you sure of that?

Mrs Linde. Quite sure, but—

Krogstad [with a searching look at her]. Is that what it all means?—that you want to save your friend at any cost? Tell me frankly. Is that it?

Mrs Linde. Nils, a woman who has once sold herself for another's sake, doesn't do it a second time.

Krogstad. I will ask for my letter back.

Mrs Linde. No, no.

Krogstad. Yes, of course I will. I will wait here until Helmer comes; I will tell him he must give me my letter back—that it only concerns my dismissal—that he is not to read it—

Mrs Linde. No, Nils, you must not recall your letter.

Krogstad. But, tell me, wasn't it for that very purpose that you asked me to meet you here?

Mrs Linde. In my first moment of fright, it was. But twenty-four hours have elapsed since then, and in that time I have witnessed incredible things in this house. Helmer must know all about it. This unhappy secret must be disclosed; they must have a complete understanding between them, which is impossible with all this concealment and falsehood going on.

Krogstad. Very well, if you will take the responsibility. But there is one thing I can do in any case, and I shall do it at once.

Mrs Linde [listening]. You must be quick and go! The dance is over; we are not safe a moment longer.

Krogstad. I will wait for you below.

Mrs Linde. Yes, do. You must see me back to my door...

Krogstad. I have never had such an amazing piece of good fortune in my life! [Goes out through the outer door. The door between the room and the hall remains open.]

Mrs Linde [tidying up the room and laying her hat and cloak ready]. What a difference! what a difference! Someone to work for and live for—a home to bring comfort into. That I will do, indeed. I wish they would be quick and come—[Listens.] Ah, there they are now. I must put on my things. [Takes up her hat and cloak. HELMER'S and NORA'S voices are heard outside; a key is turned, and HELMER brings NORA almost by force into the hall. She is in an

Italian costume with a large black shawl around her; he is in evening dress, and a black domino which is flying open.]

Nora [hanging back in the doorway, and struggling with him]. No, no, no!—don't take me in. I want to go upstairs again; I don't want to leave so early.

Helmer. But, my dearest Nora—

Nora. Please, Torvald dear—please, please—only an hour more.

Helmer. Not a single minute, my sweet Nora. You know that was our agreement. Come along into the room; you are catching cold standing there. [He brings her gently into the room, in spite of her resistance.]

Mrs Linde. Good evening.

Nora. Christine!

Helmer. You here, so late, Mrs Linde?

Mrs Linde. Yes, you must excuse me; I was so anxious to see Nora in her dress.

Nora. Have you been sitting here waiting for me?

Mrs Linde. Yes, unfortunately I came too late, you had already gone upstairs; and I thought I couldn't go away again without having seen you.

Helmer [taking off NORA'S shawl]. Yes, take a good look at her. I think she is worth looking at. Isn't she charming, Mrs Linde?

Mrs Linde. Yes, indeed she is.

Helmer. Doesn't she look remarkably pretty? Everyone thought so at the dance. But she is terribly self-willed, this sweet little person. What are we to do with her? You will hardly believe that I had almost to bring her away by force.

Nora. Torvald, you will repent not having let me stay, even if it were only for half an hour.

Helmer. Listen to her, Mrs Linde! She had danced her Tarantella, and it had been a tremendous success, as it deserved—although possibly the performance was a trifle too realistic—a little more so, I mean, than was strictly compatible with the limitations of art. But never mind about that! The chief thing is, she had made a success—she had made a tremendous success. Do you think I

was going to let her remain there after that, and spoil the effect? No, indeed! I took my charming little Capri maiden—my capricious little Capri maiden, I should say—on my arm; took one quick turn round the room; a curtsy on either side, and, as they say in novels, the beautiful apparition disappeared. An exit ought always to be effective, Mrs Linde; but that is what I cannot make Nora understand. Pooh! this room is hot. [Throws his domino on a chair, and opens the door of his room.] Hullo! it's all dark in here. Oh, of course—excuse me—. [He goes in, and lights some candles.]

Nora [in a hurried and breathless whisper]. Well?

Mrs Linde [in a low voice]. I have had a talk with him.

Nora. Yes, and—

Mrs Linde. Nora, you must tell your husband all about it.

Nora [in an expressionless voice]. I knew it.

Mrs Linde. You have nothing to be afraid of as far as Krogstad is concerned; but you must tell him.

Nora. I won't tell him.

Mrs Linde. Then the letter will.

Nora. Thank you, Christine. Now I know what I must do. Hush—!

Helmer [coming in again]. Well, Mrs Linde, have you admired her?

Mrs Linde. Yes, and now I will say goodnight.

Helmer. What, already? Is this yours, this knitting?

Mrs Linde [taking it]. Yes, thank you, I had very nearly forgotten it.

Helmer. So you knit?

Mrs Linde. Of course.

Helmer. Do you know, you ought to embroider.

Mrs Linde. Really? Why?

Helmer. Yes, it's far more becoming. Let me show you. You hold the embroidery thus in your left hand, and use the needle with the right—like this—with a long, easy sweep. Do you see?

Mrs Linde. Yes, perhaps—

Helmer. But in the case of knitting—that can never be anything but ungraceful; look here—the arms close together, the knitting-needles

going up and down—it has a sort of Chinese effect—. That was really excellent champagne they gave us.

Mrs Linde. Well,—goodnight, Nora, and don't be self-willed any more.

Helmer. That's right, Mrs Linde.

Mrs Linde. Goodnight, Mr. Helmer.

Helmer [accompanying her to the door]. Goodnight, goodnight. I hope you will get home all right. I should be very happy to—but you haven't any great distance to go. Goodnight, goodnight. [She goes out; he shuts the door after her, and comes in again.] Ah!—at last we have got rid of her. She is a frightful bore, that woman.

Nora. Aren't you very tired, Torvald?

Helmer. No, not in the least.

Nora. Nor sleepy?

Helmer. Not a bit. On the contrary, I feel extraordinarily lively. And you?—you really look both tired and sleepy.

Nora. Yes, I am very tired. I want to go to sleep at once.

Helmer. There, you see it was quite right of me not to let you stay there any longer.

Nora. Everything you do is quite right, Torvald.

Helmer [kissing her on the forehead]. Now my little skylark is speaking reasonably. Did you notice what good spirits Rank was in this evening?

Nora. Really? Was he? I didn't speak to him at all.

Helmer. And I very little, but I have not for a long time seen him in such good form. [Looks for a while at her and then goes nearer to her.] It is delightful to be at home by ourselves again, to be all alone with you—you fascinating, charming little darling!

Nora. Don't look at me like that, Torvald.

Helmer. Why shouldn't I look at my dearest treasure?—at all the beauty that is mine, all my very own?

Nora [going to the other side of the table]. You mustn't say things like that to me tonight.

Helmer [following her]. You have still got the Tarantella in your blood, I see. And it makes you more captivating than ever.

Listen—the guests are beginning to go now. [In a lower voice.]  
Nora—soon the whole house will be quiet.

Nora. Yes, I hope so.

Helmer. Yes, my own darling Nora. Do you know, when I am out at a party with you like this, why I speak so little to you, keep away from you, and only send a stolen glance in your direction now and then?—do you know why I do that? It is because I make believe to myself that we are secretly in love, and you are my secretly promised bride, and that no one suspects there is anything between us.

Nora. Yes, yes—I know very well your thoughts are with me all the time.

Helmer. And when we are leaving, and I am putting the shawl over your beautiful young shoulders—on your lovely neck—then I imagine that you are my young bride and that we have just come from the wedding, and I am bringing you for the first time into our home—to be alone with you for the first time—quite alone with my shy little darling! All this evening I have longed for nothing but you. When I watched the seductive figures of the Tarantella, my blood was on fire; I could endure it no longer, and that was why I brought you down so early—

Nora. Go away, Torvald! You must let me go. I won't—

Helmer. What's that? You're joking, my little Nora! You won't—you won't? Am I not your husband—? [A knock is heard at the outer door.]

Nora [starting]. Did you hear—?

Helmer [going into the hall]. Who is it?

Rank [outside]. It is I. May I come in for a moment?

Helmer [in a fretful whisper]. Oh, what does he want now?  
[Aloud.] Wait a minute! [Unlocks the door.] Come, that's kind of you not to pass by our door.

Rank. I thought I heard your voice, and felt as if I should like to look in. [With a swift glance round.] Ah, yes!—these dear familiar rooms. You are very happy and cosy in here, you two.

Helmer. It seems to me that you looked after yourself pretty well upstairs too.



Rank. Excellently. Why shouldn't I? Why shouldn't one enjoy everything in this world?—at any rate as much as one can, and as long as one can. The wine was capital—

Helmer. Especially the champagne.

Rank. So you noticed that too? It is almost incredible how much I managed to put away!

Nora. Torvald drank a great deal of champagne tonight too.

Rank. Did he?

Nora. Yes, and he is always in such good spirits afterwards.

Rank. Well, why should one not enjoy a merry evening after a well-spent day?

Helmer. Well spent? I am afraid I can't take credit for that.

Rank [clapping him on the back]. But I can, you know!

Nora. Doctor Rank, you must have been occupied with some scientific investigation today.

Rank. Exactly.

Helmer. Just listen!—little Nora talking about scientific investigations!

Nora. And may I congratulate you on the result?

Rank. Indeed you may.

Nora. Was it favourable, then?

Rank. The best possible, for both doctor and patient—certainty.

Nora [quickly and searchingly]. Certainty?

Rank. Absolute certainty. So wasn't I entitled to make a merry evening of it after that?

Nora. Yes, you certainly were, Doctor Rank.

Helmer. I think so too, so long as you don't have to pay for it in the morning.

Rank. Oh well, one can't have anything in this life without paying for it.

Nora. Doctor Rank—are you fond of fancy-dress balls?

Rank. Yes, if there is a fine lot of pretty costumes.

Nora. Tell me—what shall we two wear at the next?

Helmer. Little featherbrain!—are you thinking of the next already?

Rank. We two? Yes, I can tell you. You shall go as a good fairy—

Helmer. Yes, but what do you suggest as an appropriate costume for that?

Rank. Let your wife go dressed just as she is in everyday life.

Helmer. That was really very prettily turned. But can't you tell us what you will be?

Rank. Yes, my dear friend, I have quite made up my mind about that.

Helmer. Well?

Rank. At the next fancy-dress ball I shall be invisible.

Helmer. That's a good joke!

Rank. There is a big black hat—have you never heard of hats that make you invisible? If you put one on, no one can see you.

Helmer [suppressing a smile]. Yes, you are quite right.

Rank. But I am clean forgetting what I came for. Helmer, give me a cigar—one of the dark Havanas.

Helmer. With the greatest pleasure. [Offers him his case.]

Rank [takes a cigar and cuts off the end]. Thanks.

Nora [striking a match]. Let me give you a light.

Rank. Thank you. [She holds the match for him to light his cigar.]  
And now goodbye!

Helmer. Goodbye, goodbye, dear old man!

Nora. Sleep well, Doctor Rank.

Rank. Thank you for that wish.

Nora. Wish me the same.

Rank. You? Well, if you want me to sleep well! And thanks for the light. [He nods to them both and goes out.]

Helmer [in a subdued voice]. He has drunk more than he ought.

Nora [absently]. Maybe. [HELMER takes a bunch of keys out of his pocket and goes into the hall.] Torvald! what are you going to do there?

Helmer. Emptying the letter-box; it is quite full; there will be no room to put the newspaper in tomorrow morning.

Nora. Are you going to work tonight?

Helmer. You know quite well I'm not. What is this? Someone has been at the lock.

Nora. At the lock-?

Helmer. Yes, someone has. What can it mean? I should never have thought the maid-. Here is a broken hairpin. Nora, it is one of yours.

Nora [quickly]. Then it must have been the children-

Helmer. Then you must get them out of those ways. There, at last I have got it open. [Takes out the contents of the letter-box, and calls to the kitchen.] Helen!-Helen, put out the light over the front door. [Goes back into the room and shuts the door into the hall. He holds out his hand full of letters.] Look at that-look what a heap of them there are. [Turning them over.] What on earth is that?

Nora [at the window]. The letter-No! Torvald, no!

Helmer. Two cards-of Rank's.

Nora. Of Doctor Rank's?

Helmer [looking at them]. Doctor Rank. They were on the top. He must have put them in when he went out.

Nora. Is there anything written on them?

Helmer. There is a black cross over the name. Look there-what an uncomfortable idea! It looks as if he were announcing his own death.

Nora. It is just what he is doing.

Helmer. What? Do you know anything about it? Has he said anything to you?

Nora. Yes. He told me that when the cards came it would be his leave-taking from us. He means to shut himself up and die.

Helmer. My poor old friend! Certainly I knew we should not have him very long with us. But so soon! And so he hides himself away like a wounded animal.

Nora. If it has to happen, it is best it should be without a word-don't you think so, Torvald?

Helmer [walking up and down]. He had so grown into our lives. I can't think of him as having gone out of them. He, with his sufferings and his loneliness, was like a cloudy background to our sunlit happiness. Well, perhaps it is best so. For him, anyway. [Standing still.] And perhaps for us too, Nora. We two are thrown quite upon each other now. [Puts his arms round her.] My darling wife, I don't feel as if I could hold you tight enough. Do you know, Nora, I have

often wished that you might be threatened by some great danger, so that I might risk my life's blood, and everything, for your sake.

Nora [disengages herself, and says firmly and decidedly]. Now you must read your letters, Torvald.

Helmer. No, no; not tonight. I want to be with you, my darling wife.

Nora. With the thought of your friend's death—

Helmer. You are right, it has affected us both. Something ugly has come between us—the thought of the horrors of death. We must try and rid our minds of that. Until then—we will each go to our own room.

Nora [hanging on his neck]. Goodnight, Torvald—Goodnight!

Helmer [kissing her on the forehead]. Goodnight, my little singing-bird. Sleep sound, Nora. Now I will read my letters through. [He takes his letters and goes into his room, shutting the door after him.]

Nora [gropes distractedly about, seizes HELMER'S domino, throws it round her, while she says in quick, hoarse, spasmodic whispers]. Never to see him again. Never! Never! [Puts her shawl over her head.] Never to see my children again either—never again. Never! Never!—Ah! the icy, black water—the unfathomable depths—If only it were over! He has got it now—now he is reading it. Goodbye, Torvald and my children! [She is about to rush out through the hall, when HELMER opens his door hurriedly and stands with an open letter in his hand.]

Helmer. Nora!

Nora. Ah!—

Helmer. What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

Nora. Yes, I know. Let me go! Let me get out!

Helmer [holding her back]. Where are you going?

Nora [trying to get free]. You shan't save me, Torvald!

Helmer [reeling]. True? Is this true, that I read here? Horrible! No, no—it is impossible that it can be true.

Nora. It is true. I have loved you above everything else in the world.

Helmer. Oh, don't let us have any silly excuses.

Nora [taking a step towards him]. Torvald—!

Helmer. Miserable creature—what have you done?

Nora. Let me go. You shall not suffer for my sake. You shall not take it upon yourself.

Helmer. No tragic airs, please. [Locks the hall door.] Here you shall stay and give me an explanation. Do you understand what you have done? Answer me! Do you understand what you have done?

Nora [looks steadily at him and says with a growing look of coldness in her face]. Yes, now I am beginning to understand thoroughly.

Helmer [walking about the room]. What a horrible awakening! All these eight years—she who was my joy and pride—a hypocrite, a liar—worse, worse—a criminal! The unutterable ugliness of it all!—For shame! For shame! [NORA is silent and looks steadily at him. He stops in front of her.] I ought to have suspected that something of the sort would happen. I ought to have foreseen it. All your father's want of principle—be silent!—all your father's want of principle has come out in you. No religion, no morality, no sense of duty—. How I am punished for having winked at what he did! I did it for your sake, and this is how you repay me.

Nora. Yes, that's just it.

Helmer. Now you have destroyed all my happiness. You have ruined all my future. It is horrible to think of! I am in the power of an unscrupulous man; he can do what he likes with me, ask anything he likes of me, give me any orders he pleases—I dare not refuse. And I must sink to such miserable depths because of a thoughtless woman!

Nora. When I am out of the way, you will be free.

Helmer. No fine speeches, please. Your father had always plenty of those ready, too. What good would it be to me if you were out of the way, as you say? Not the slightest. He can make the affair known everywhere; and if he does, I may be falsely suspected of having been a party to your criminal action. Very likely people will think I was behind it all—that it was I who prompted you! And I have to

thank you for all this—you whom I have cherished during the whole of our married life. Do you understand now what it is you have done for me?

Nora [coldly and quietly]. Yes.

Helmer. It is so incredible that I can't take it in. But we must come to some understanding. Take off that shawl. Take it off, I tell you. I must try and appease him some way or another. The matter must be hushed up at any cost. And as for you and me, it must appear as if everything between us were just as before—but naturally only in the eyes of the world. You will still remain in my house, that is a matter of course. But I shall not allow you to bring up the children; I dare not trust them to you. To think that I should be obliged to say so to one whom I have loved so dearly, and whom I still—. No, that is all over. From this moment happiness is not the question; all that concerns us is to save the remains, the fragments, the appearance—

[A ring is heard at the front-door bell.]

Helmer [with a start]. What is that? So late! Can the worst—? Can he—? Hide yourself, Nora. Say you are ill.

[NORA stands motionless. HELMER goes and unlocks the hall door.]

Maid [half-dressed, comes to the door]. A letter for the mistress.

Helmer. Give it to me. [Takes the letter, and shuts the door.] Yes, it is from him. You shall not have it; I will read it myself.

Nora. Yes, read it.

Helmer [standing by the lamp]. I scarcely have the courage to do it. It may mean ruin for both of us. No, I must know. [Tears open the letter, runs his eye over a few lines, looks at a paper enclosed, and gives a shout of joy.] Nora! [She looks at him questioningly.] Nora!—No, I must read it once again—. Yes, it is true! I am saved! Nora, I am saved!

Nora. And I?

Helmer. You too, of course; we are both saved, both you and I. Look, he sends you your bond back. He says he regrets and repents—that a happy change in his life—never mind what he says! We are saved, Nora! No one can do anything to you. Oh, Nora,

Nora!—no, first I must destroy these hateful things. Let me see—. [Takes a look at the bond.] No, no, I won't look at it. The whole thing shall be nothing but a bad dream to me. [Tears up the bond and both letters, throws them all into the stove, and watches them burn.] There—now it doesn't exist any longer. He says that since Christmas Eve you—. These must have been three dreadful days for you, Nora.

Nora. I have fought a hard fight these three days.

Helmer. And suffered agonies, and seen no way out but—. No, we won't call any of the horrors to mind. We will only shout with joy, and keep saying, "It's all over! It's all over!" Listen to me, Nora. You don't seem to realise that it is all over. What is this?—such a cold, set face! My poor little Nora, I quite understand; you don't feel as if you could believe that I have forgiven you. But it is true, Nora, I swear it; I have forgiven you everything. I know that what you did, you did out of love for me.

Nora. That is true.

Helmer. You have loved me as a wife ought to love her husband. Only you had not sufficient knowledge to judge of the means you used. But do you suppose you are any the less dear to me, because you don't understand how to act on your own responsibility? No, no; only lean on me; I will advise you and direct you. I should not be a man if this womanly helplessness did not just give you a double attractiveness in my eyes. You must not think anymore about the hard things I said in my first moment of consternation, when I thought everything was going to overwhelm me. I have forgiven you, Nora; I swear to you I have forgiven you.

Nora. Thank you for your forgiveness. [She goes out through the door to the right.]

Helmer. No, don't go—. [Looks in.] What are you doing in there?

Nora [from within]. Taking off my fancy dress.

Helmer [standing at the open door]. Yes, do. Try and calm yourself, and make your mind easy again, my frightened little singing-bird. Be at rest, and feel secure; I have broad wings to shelter you under. [Walks up and down by the door.] How warm and cosy our home is, Nora. Here is shelter for you; here I will protect

you like a hunted dove that I have saved from a hawk's claws; I will bring peace to your poor beating heart. It will come, little by little, Nora, believe me. Tomorrow morning you will look upon it all quite differently; soon everything will be just as it was before. Very soon you won't need me to assure you that I have forgiven you; you will yourself feel the certainty that I have done so. Can you suppose I should ever think of such a thing as repudiating you, or even reproaching you? You have no idea what a true man's heart is like, Nora. There is something so indescribably sweet and satisfying, to a man, in the knowledge that he has forgiven his wife—forgiven her freely, and with all his heart. It seems as if that had made her, as it were, doubly his own; he has given her a new life, so to speak; and she has in a way become both wife and child to him. So you shall be for me after this, my little scared, helpless darling. Have no anxiety about anything, Nora; only be frank and open with me, and I will serve as will and conscience both to you—. What is this? Not gone to bed? Have you changed your things?

Nora [in everyday dress]. Yes, Torvald, I have changed my things now.

Helmer. But what for?—so late as this.

Nora. I shall not sleep tonight.

Helmer. But, my dear Nora—

Nora [looking at her watch]. It is not so very late. Sit down here, Torvald. You and I have much to say to one another. [She sits down at one side of the table.]

Helmer. Nora—what is this?—this cold, set face?

Nora. Sit down. It will take some time; I have a lot to talk over with you.

Helmer [sits down at the opposite side of the table]. You alarm me, Nora!—and I don't understand you.

Nora. No, that is just it. You don't understand me, and I have never understood you either—before tonight. No, you mustn't interrupt me. You must simply listen to what I say. Torvald, this is a settling of accounts.

Helmer. What do you mean by that?



Nora [after a short silence]. Isn't there one thing that strikes you as strange in our sitting here like this?

Helmer. What is that?

Nora. We have been married now eight years. Does it not occur to you that this is the first time we two, you and I, husband and wife, have had a serious conversation?

Helmer. What do you mean by serious?

Nora. In all these eight years—longer than that—from the very beginning of our acquaintance, we have never exchanged a word on any serious subject.

Helmer. Was it likely that I would be continually and forever telling you about worries that you could not help me to bear?

Nora. I am not speaking about business matters. I say that we have never sat down in earnest together to try and get at the bottom of anything.

Helmer. But, dearest Nora, would it have been any good to you?

Nora. That is just it; you have never understood me. I have been greatly wronged, Torvald—first by papa and then by you.

Helmer. What! By us two—by us two, who have loved you better than anyone else in the world?

Nora [shaking her head]. You have never loved me. You have only thought it pleasant to be in love with me.

Helmer. Nora, what do I hear you saying?

Nora. It is perfectly true, Torvald. When I was at home with papa, he told me his opinion about everything, and so I had the same opinions; and if I differed from him I concealed the fact, because he would not have liked it. He called me his doll-child, and he played with me just as I used to play with my dolls. And when I came to live with you—

Helmer. What sort of an expression is that to use about our marriage?

Nora [undisturbed]. I mean that I was simply transferred from papa's hands into yours. You arranged everything according to your own taste, and so I got the same tastes as your else I pretended to, I am really not quite sure which—I think sometimes the one and

sometimes the other. When I look back on it, it seems to me as if I had been living here like a poor woman—just from hand to mouth. I have existed merely to perform tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault that I have made nothing of my life.

Helmer. How unreasonable and how ungrateful you are, Nora! Have you not been happy here?

Nora. No, I have never been happy. I thought I was, but it has never really been so.

Helmer. Not—not happy!

Nora. No, only merry. And you have always been so kind to me. But our home has been nothing but a playroom. I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I was papa's doll-child; and here the children have been my dolls. I thought it great fun when you played with me, just as they thought it great fun when I played with them. That is what our marriage has been, Torvald.

Helmer. There is some truth in what you say—exaggerated and strained as your view of it is. But for the future it shall be different. Playtime shall be over, and lesson-time shall begin.

Nora. Whose lessons? Mine, or the children's?

Helmer. Both yours and the children's, my darling Nora.

Nora. Alas, Torvald, you are not the man to educate me into being a proper wife for you.

Helmer. And you can say that!

Nora. And I—how am I fitted to bring up the children?

Helmer. Nora!

Nora. Didn't you say so yourself a little while ago—that you dare not trust me to bring them up?

Helmer. In a moment of anger! Why do you pay any heed to that?

Nora. Indeed, you were perfectly right. I am not fit for the task. There is another task I must undertake first. I must try and educate myself—you are not the man to help me in that. I must do that for myself. And that is why I am going to leave you now.

Helmer [springing up]. What do you say?

Nora. I must stand quite alone, if I am to understand myself and

everything about me. It is for that reason that I cannot remain with you any longer.

Helmer. Nora, Nora!

Nora. I am going away from here now, at once. I am sure Christine will take me in for the night—

Helmer. You are out of your mind! I won't allow it! I forbid you!

Nora. It is no use forbidding me anything any longer. I will take with me what belongs to myself. I will take nothing from you, either now or later.

Helmer. What sort of madness is this!

Nora. Tomorrow I shall go home—I mean, to my old home. It will be easiest for me to find something to do there.

Helmer. You blind, foolish woman!

Nora. I must try and get some sense, Torvald.

Helmer. To desert your home, your husband and your children! And you don't consider what people will say!

Nora. I cannot consider that at all. I only know that it is necessary for me.

Helmer. It's shocking. This is how you would neglect your most sacred duties.

Nora. What do you consider my most sacred duties?

Helmer. Do I need to tell you that? Are they not your duties to your husband and your children?

Nora. I have other duties just as sacred.

Helmer. That you have not. What duties could those be?

Nora. Duties to myself.

Helmer. Before all else, you are a wife and a mother.

Nora. I don't believe that any longer. I believe that before all else I am a reasonable human being, just as you are—or, at all events, that I must try and become one. I know quite well, Torvald, that most people would think you right, and that views of that kind are to be found in books; but I can no longer content myself with what most people say, or with what is found in books. I must think over things for myself and get to understand them.

Helmer. Can you not understand your place in your own home?

Have you not a reliable guide in such matters as that?—have you no religion?

Nora. I am afraid, Torvald, I do not exactly know what religion is.

Helmer. What are you saying?

Nora. I know nothing but what the clergyman said, when I went to be confirmed. He told us that religion was this, and that, and the other. When I am away from all this, and am alone, I will look into that matter too. I will see if what the clergyman said is true, or at all events if it is true for me.

Helmer. This is unheard of in a girl of your age! But if religion cannot lead you aright, let me try and awaken your conscience. I suppose you have some moral sense? Or—answer me—am I to think you have none?

Nora. I assure you, Torvald, that is not an easy question to answer. I really don't know. The thing perplexes me altogether. I only know that you and I look at it in quite a different light. I am learning, too, that the law is quite another thing from what I supposed; but I find it impossible to convince myself that the law is right. According to it a woman has no right to spare her old dying father, or to save her husband's life. I can't believe that.

Helmer. You talk like a child. You don't understand the conditions of the world in which you live.

Nora. No, I don't. But now I am going to try. I am going to see if I can make out who is right, the world or I.

Helmer. You are ill, Nora; you are delirious; I almost think you are out of your mind.

Nora. I have never felt my mind so clear and certain as tonight.

Helmer. And is it with a clear and certain mind that you forsake your husband and your children?

Nora. Yes, it is.

Helmer. Then there is only one possible explanation.

Nora. What is that?

Helmer. You do not love me anymore.

Nora. No, that is just it.

Helmer. Nora!—and you can say that?

Nora. It gives me great pain, Torvald, for you have always been so kind to me, but I cannot help it. I do not love you any more.

Helmer [regaining his composure]. Is that a clear and certain conviction too?

Nora. Yes, absolutely clear and certain. That is the reason why I will not stay here any longer.

Helmer. And can you tell me what I have done to forfeit your love?

Nora. Yes, indeed I can. It was tonight, when the wonderful thing did not happen; then I saw you were not the man I had thought you were.

Helmer. Explain yourself better. I don't understand you.

Nora. I have waited so patiently for eight years; for, goodness knows, I knew very well that wonderful things don't happen every day. Then this horrible misfortune came upon me; and then I felt quite certain that the wonderful thing was going to happen at last. When Krogstad's letter was lying out there, never for a moment did I imagine that you would consent to accept this man's conditions. I was so absolutely certain that you would say to him: Publish the thing to the whole world. And when that was done—

Helmer. Yes, what then?—when I had exposed my wife to shame and disgrace?

Nora. When that was done, I was so absolutely certain, you would come forward and take everything upon yourself, and say: I am the guilty one.

Helmer. Nora—!

Nora. You mean that I would never have accepted such a sacrifice on your part? No, of course not. But what would my assurances have been worth against yours? That was the wonderful thing which I hoped for and feared; and it was to prevent that, that I wanted to kill myself.

Helmer. I would gladly work night and day for you, Nora—bear sorrow and want for your sake. But no man would sacrifice his honour for the one he loves.

Nora. It is a thing hundreds of thousands of women have done.

Helmer. Oh, you think and talk like a heedless child.

Nora. Maybe. But you neither think nor talk like the man I could bind myself to. As soon as your fear was over—and it was not fear for what threatened me, but for what might happen to you—when the whole thing was past, as far as you were concerned it was exactly as if nothing at all had happened. Exactly as before, I was your little skylark, your doll, which you would in future treat with doubly gentle care, because it was so brittle and fragile. [Getting up.] Torvald—it was then it dawned upon me that for eight years I had been living here with a strange man, and had borne him three children—. Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself into little bits!

Helmer [sadly]. I see, I see. An abyss has opened between us—there is no denying it. But, Nora, would it not be possible to fill it up?

Nora. As I am now, I am no wife for you.

Helmer. I have it in me to become a different man.

Nora. Perhaps—if your doll is taken away from you.

Helmer. But to part!—to part from you! No, no, Nora, I can't understand that idea.

Nora [going out to the right]. That makes it all the more certain that it must be done. [She comes back with her cloak and hat and a small bag which she puts on a chair by the table.]

Helmer. Nora, not now! Wait until tomorrow.

Nora [putting on her cloak]. I cannot spend the night in a strange man's room.

Helmer. But can't we live here like brother and sister—?

Nora [putting on her hat]. You know very well that would not last long. [Puts the shawl round her.] Goodbye, Torvald. I won't see the little ones. I know they are in better hands than mine. As I am now, I can be of no use to them.

Helmer. But some day, Nora—some day?

Nora. How can I tell? I have no idea what is going to become of me.

Helmer. But you are my wife, whatever becomes of you.

Nora. Listen, Torvald. I have heard that when a wife deserts her husband's house, as I am doing now, he is legally freed from all

obligations towards her. In any case, I set you free from all your obligations. You are not to feel yourself bound in the slightest way, any more than I shall. There must be perfect freedom on both sides. See, here is your ring back. Give me mine.

Helmer. That too?

Nora. That too.

Helmer. Here it is.

Nora. That's right. Now it is all over. I have put the keys here. The maids know all about everything in the house—better than I do. Tomorrow, after I have left her, Christine will come here and pack up my own things that I brought with me from home. I will have them sent after me.

Helmer. All over! All over!—Nora, shall you never think of me again?

Nora. I know I shall often think of you, the children, and this house.

Helmer. May I write to you, Nora?

Nora. No—never. You must not do that.

Helmer. But at least let me send you—

Nora. Nothing—nothing—

Helmer. Let me help you if you are in want.

Nora. No. I can receive nothing from a stranger.

Helmer. Nora—can I never be anything more than a stranger to you?

Nora [taking her bag]. Ah, Torvald, the most wonderful thing of all would have to happen.

Helmer. Tell me what that would be!

Nora. Both you and I would have to be so changed that—. Oh, Torvald, I don't believe any longer in wonderful things happening.

Helmer. But I will believe in it. Tell me! So changed that—?

Nora. That our life together would be a real wedlock. Goodbye.  
[She goes out through the hall.]

Helmer [sinks down on a chair at the door and buries his face in his hands]. Nora! Nora! [Looks round, and rises.] Empty. She is gone. [A hope flashes across his mind.] The most wonderful thing of all—?  
[The sound of a door shutting is heard from below.]

**Henrik Johan Ibsen** (20 March 1828 – 23 May 1906) was a major 19th-century Norwegian playwright, theatre director, and poet. He is often referred to as “the father of realism” and is one of the founders of Modernism in theatre. He is the most frequently performed dramatist in the world after Shakespeare, and *A Doll's House* became the world's most performed play by the early 20th century.



PART XIII

# MODULE 12: POETIC ANALYSIS



## 30. Free Verse

Free verse refers to poetry that does not follow standard or regularized meter (the organization of stressed and unstressed syllables) or rhyme scheme. As opposed to more traditional poetry, which tends to use recurring line lengths, metrical patterns, and rhyme to unify individual lines of verse and tie them to other lines within the same poem, free verse can, at times, seem to be random, having no pattern or organization at all. Yet in the hands of many poets, free verse enables a different kind of organization, as they balance free verse's openness, its ability to provide elements of the poem with a different amount of emphasis, with the use of repeated imagery or syntactic patterns (parallel organization of grammatical elements) to maintain coherence and create a sense of connection among lines. Even as it eschews regular meter and rhyme schemes, free verse does, at times, draw on metrical patterns and occasional rhyme to tie lines together. What distinguishes free verse from other traditional forms of verse is that it only uses these elements occasionally—for a few lines here and there in a longer poem—and does not use them to structure the poem as a whole. A poem in free verse, then, does not lack structure—or, in many cases, some instances of metrical organization or rhyme—it simply does not maintain or use a regular pattern of meter or rhyme to structure the poem as a whole. Instead, free verse relies more on thematic, syntactic, or semantic repetition and development to create coherence.



Walt

Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* is often credited as introducing free verse into English-language poetry. While not quite true (other experiments and uses preceded his), Whitman's poetry helped to establish free verse's potential for exploring a broad range of topics and its ability to embrace an extensive number of ways of organizing verse lines. Later-nineteenth-century poets, such as Matthew Arnold in England, further explored the use of free verse, but it was the French symbolists (Jules Laforgue, Gustave Kahn, and Arthur Rimbaud) who practiced what they called *vers libre* most fully during this period. In the twentieth century, free verse came to dominate much poetic production in English, beginning with the modernists (such as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams) who saw the open form as allowing for the more nimble representation of a modern fragmented and accelerated world.

## 31. Poetry Lesson Presentation

Click below for a powerpoint presentation that gives college students a poetry lesson presentation.

<https://youtu.be/JLKengChb-E>

## 32. Billy Collins: A Poet Speaks Out

**Watch** Billy Collins' audio/visual poem:



*A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/baycollegeintrolit/?p=72>

After watching the video above, click on the link below to listen to a lecture by Billy Collins on his craft and how it relates to the reader:

- [“Poetry Lectures: Billy Collins” from The Poetry Foundation](#)

# 33. Maya Angelou, "On the Pulse of Morning," 1993

Maya Angelou's 1993 inaugural poem and remarks

*12 January 2009*

This document and its [associated audio file](#) (5:48) are distributed with permission of the Clinton Presidential Library.

Mr. President and Mrs. Clinton,  
Mr. Vice-President and Mrs. Gore,  
And Americans Everywhere ...  
    A Rock, A River, A Tree  
Hosts to species long since departed,  
Marked the mastodon.

    The dinosaur, who left dry tokens  
Of their sojourn here  
On our planet floor,  
Any broad alarm of their hastening doom  
Is lost in the gloom of dust and ages.

    But today, the Rock cries out to us, clearly, forcefully,  
Come, you may stand upon my  
Back and face your distant destiny,  
But seek no haven in my shadow.

    I will give you no hiding place down here.  
    You, created only a little lower than  
The angels, have crouched too long in  
The bruising darkness,  
Have lain too long  
Face down in ignorance.

Your mouths spilling words  
Armed for slaughter.

The Rock cries out to us today, you may stand on me,  
But do not hide your face.

Across the wall of the world,  
A River sings a beautiful song,  
It says come rest here by my side.

Each of you a bordered country,  
Delicate and strangely made proud,  
Yet thrusting perpetually under siege.

Your armed struggles for profit  
Have left collars of waste upon  
My shore, currents of debris upon my breast.

Yet, today I call you to my riverside,  
If you will study war no more. Come,

Clad in peace and I will sing the songs  
The Creator gave to me when I and the  
Tree and the rock were one.

Before cynicism was a bloody sear across your  
Brow and when you yet knew you still  
Knew nothing.

The River sang and sings on.

There is a true yearning to respond to  
The singing River and the wise Rock.

So say the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew  
The African, the Native American, the Sioux,  
The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek  
The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheikh,  
The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher,  
The privileged, the homeless, the Teacher.  
They all hear  
The speaking of the Tree.

They hear the the first and last of every Tree  
Speak to humankind today. Come to me, here beside the River.

Plant yourself beside the River.



Each of you, descendant of some passed  
On traveller, has been paid for.

You, who gave me my first name, you  
Pawnee, Apache, Seneca, you  
Cherokee Nation, who rested with me, then  
Forced on bloody feet, left me to the employment of  
Other seekers—desperate for gain,  
Starving for gold.

You, the Turk, the Swede, the German, the Eskimo, the Scot ...  
You the Ashanti, the Yoruba, the Kru, bought  
Sold, stolen, arriving on a nightmare  
Praying for a dream.

Here, root yourselves beside me.

I am that Tree planted by the River,  
Which will not be moved.

I, the Rock, I the River, I the Tree  
I am yours—your Passages have been paid.

Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need  
For this bright morning dawning for you.

History, despite its wrenching pain,  
Cannot be unlived, but if faced  
With courage, need not be lived again.

Lift up your eyes upon  
This day breaking for you.

Give birth again  
To the dream.

Women, children, men,  
Take it into the palms of your hands.

Mold it into the shape of your most  
Private need. Sculpt it into  
The image of your most public self.  
Lift up your hearts  
Each new hour holds new chances  
For new beginnings.

Do not be wedded forever

To fear, yoked eternally  
To brutishness.

The horizon leans forward,  
Offering you space to place new steps of change.  
Here, on the pulse of this fine day  
You may have the courage  
To look up and out and upon me, the  
Rock, the River, the Tree, your country.

No less to Midas than the mendicant.

No less to you now than the mastodon then.

Here on the pulse of this new day  
You may have the grace to look up and out  
And into your sister's eyes, and into  
Your brother's face, your country  
And say simply  
Very simply  
With hope  
Good morning.

Read more: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2009/01/20090112155227berehellek0.2457697.html#ixzz3oNfd7X00>

**Maya Angelou** (born **Marguerite Annie Johnson**; April 4, 1928 – May 28, 2014) was an American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and was credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years. She received dozens of awards and more than 50 honorary degrees. Angelou is best known for her series of seven autobiographies, which focus on her childhood and

early adult experiences. The first, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), tells of her life up to the age of 17 and brought her international recognition and acclaim.

## 34. Billy Collins, "The Lanyard," 2007

This video features three poems from the former US Poet Laureate Billy Collins. Focus on "The Lanyard."



*A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/baycollegeintrolit/?p=74>

As you listen to "The Lanyard," click on the link below to follow along with the text of the poem.

- ["The Lanyard" by Billy Collins, from The Writer's Almanac](#)

**William James “Billy” Collins** (born March 22, 1941) is an American poet, appointed as Poet Laureate of the United States from 2001 to 2003. He is a Distinguished Professor at Lehman College of the City University of New York and is the Senior Distinguished Fellow of the Winter Park Institute, Florida. Collins was recognized as a Literary Lion of the New York Public Library (1992) and selected as the New York State Poet for 2004 through 2006. As of 2015, he is a teacher in the MFA program at Stony Brook Southampton.

# 35. Langston Hughes, "Let America Be America Again," 1935

Let America be America again.

Let it be the dream it used to be.

Let it be the pioneer on the plain

Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—

Let it be that great strong land of love

Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme

That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty

Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,

But opportunity is real, and life is free,

Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,

Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?

And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,

I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.

I am the red man driven from the land,

I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—

And finding only the same old stupid plan

Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,

Tangled in that ancient endless chain

Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!

Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!  
Of work the men! Of take the pay!  
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.  
I am the worker sold to the machine.  
I am the Negro, servant to you all.  
I am the people, humble, hungry, mean—  
Hungry yet today despite the dream.  
Beaten yet today—O, Pioneers!  
I am the man who never got ahead,  
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream  
In the Old World while still a serf of kings,  
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,  
That even yet its mighty daring sings  
In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned  
That's made America the land it has become.  
O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas  
In search of what I meant to be my home—  
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,  
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,  
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came  
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?  
Who said the free? Not me?  
Surely not me? The millions on relief today?  
The millions shot down when we strike?  
The millions who have nothing for our pay?  
For all the dreams we've dreamed  
And all the songs we've sung  
And all the hopes we've held  
And all the flags we've hung,  
The millions who have nothing for our pay—  
Except the dream that's almost dead today.

O, let America be America again—

The land that never has been yet—  
And yet must be—the land where every man is free.  
The land that's mine—the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME—  
Who made America,  
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,  
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,  
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose—  
The steel of freedom does not stain.  
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,  
We must take back our land again,  
America!

O, yes,  
I say it plain,  
America never was America to me,  
And yet I swear this oath—  
America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,  
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,  
We, the people, must redeem  
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.  
The mountains and the endless plain—  
All, all the stretch of these great green states—  
And make America again

**James Mercer Langston Hughes** (February 1, 1902 – May 22, 1967) was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist from Joplin, Missouri.

He was one of the earliest innovators of the then-new



literary art form called jazz poetry. Hughes is best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance in New York City. He famously wrote about the period that “the negro was in vogue,” which was later paraphrased as “when Harlem was in vogue.”

## 36. Christina Rossetti, "Goblin Market," 1862

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PART XIV

# MODULE 13: IRONY, SATIRE, AND COMEDY



# 37. Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest, 1895

## The Importance of Being Earnest A Trivial Comedy for Serious People

### THE PERSONS IN THE PLAY

John Worthing, J.P.  
Algernon Moncrieff  
Rev. Canon Chasuble, D.D.  
Merriman, Butler  
Lane, Manservant  
Lady Bracknell  
Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax  
Cecily Cardew  
Miss Prism, Governess

### THE SCENES OF THE PLAY

ACT I. Algernon Moncrieff's Flat in Half-Moon Street, W.  
ACT II. The Garden at the Manor House, Woolton.  
ACT III. Drawing-Room at the Manor House, Woolton.  
TIME: The Present.

# FIRST ACT

## SCENE

Morning-room in Algernon's flat in Half-Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.

[**Lane** is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, **Algernon** enters.]

**Algernon.** Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

**Lane.** I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

**Algernon.** I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—any one can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

**Lane.** Yes, sir.

**Algernon.** And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

**Lane.** Yes, sir. [Hands them on a salver.]

**Algernon.** [Inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa.] Oh! . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreman and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

**Lane.** Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

**Algernon.** Why is it that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? I ask merely for information.

**Lane.** I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

**Algernon.** Good heavens! Is marriage so demoralising as that?

**Lane.** I believe it is a very pleasant state, sir. I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married

once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young person.

**Algernon.** [Languidly.] I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

**Lane.** No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

**Algernon.** Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

**Lane.** Thank you, sir. [**Lane** goes out.]

**Algernon.** Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility.

[Enter **Lane**.]

**Lane.** Mr. Ernest Worthing.

[Enter **Jack**.]

[**Lane** goes out.]

**Algernon.** How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

**Jack.** Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? Eating as usual, I see, Algy!

**Algernon.** [Stiffly.] I believe it is customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

**Jack.** [Sitting down on the sofa.] In the country.

**Algernon.** What on earth do you do there?

**Jack.** [Pulling off his gloves.] When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

**Algernon.** And who are the people you amuse?

**Jack.** [Airily.] Oh, neighbours, neighbours.

**Algernon.** Got nice neighbours in your part of Shropshire?

**Jack.** Perfectly horrid! Never speak to one of them.

**Algernon.** How immensely you must amuse them! [Goes over and takes sandwich.] By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

**Jack.** Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?

**Algernon.** Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

**Jack.** How perfectly delightful!

**Algernon.** Yes, that is all very well; but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here.

**Jack.** May I ask why?

**Algernon.** My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you.

**Jack.** I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

**Algernon.** I thought you had come up for pleasure? . . . I call that business.

**Jack.** How utterly unromantic you are!

**Algernon.** I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact.

**Jack.** I have no doubt about that, dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted.

**Algernon.** Oh! there is no use speculating on that subject. Divorces are made in Heaven—[**Jack** puts out his hand to take a sandwich. **Algernon** at once interferes.] Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [Takes one and eats it.]

**Jack.** Well, you have been eating them all the time.

**Algernon.** That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [Takes plate from below.] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendolen. Gwendolen is devoted to bread and butter.



**Jack.** [Advancing to table and helping himself.] And very good bread and butter it is too.

**Algernon.** Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be.

**Jack.** Why on earth do you say that?

**Algernon.** Well, in the first place girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don't think it right.

**Jack.** Oh, that is nonsense!

**Algernon.** It isn't. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over the place. In the second place, I don't give my consent.

**Jack.** Your consent!

**Algernon.** My dear fellow, Gwendolen is my first cousin. And before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily. [Rings bell.]

**Jack.** Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily! I don't know any one of the name of Cecily.

[Enter **Lane**.]

**Algernon.** Bring me that cigarette case Mr. Worthing left in the smoking-room the last time he dined here.

**Lane.** Yes, sir. [**Lane** goes out.]

**Jack.** Do you mean to say you have had my cigarette case all this time? I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard about it. I was very nearly offering a large reward.

**Algernon.** Well, I wish you would offer one. I happen to be more than usually hard up.

**Jack.** There is no good offering a large reward now that the thing is found.

[Enter **Lane** with the cigarette case on a salver. **Algernon** takes it at once. **Lane** goes out.]

**Algernon.** I think that is rather mean of you, Ernest, I must say. [Opens case and examines it.] However, it makes no matter, for,

now that I look at the inscription inside, I find that the thing isn't yours after all.

**Jack.** Of course it's mine. [Moving to him.] You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case.

**Algernon.** Oh! it is absurd to have a hard and fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read.

**Jack.** I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back.

**Algernon.** Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from some one of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know any one of that name.

**Jack.** Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

**Algernon.** Your aunt!

**Jack.** Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me, Algy.

**Algernon.** [Retreating to back of sofa.] But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [Reading.] 'From little Cecily with her fondest love.'

**Jack.** [Moving to sofa and kneeling upon it.] My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For Heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case. [Follows **Algernon** round the room.]

**Algernon.** Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? 'From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack.' There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

**Jack.** It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

**Algernon.** You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to every one as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. [Taking it from case.] 'Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany.' I'll keep this as a proof that your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to any one else. [Puts the card in his pocket.]

**Jack.** Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

**Algernon.** Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.

**Jack.** My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

**Algernon.** Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now.

**Jack.** Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?

**Algernon.** I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.

**Jack.** Well, produce my cigarette case first.

**Algernon.** Here it is. [Hands cigarette case.] Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable. [Sits on sofa.]

**Jack.** My dear fellow, there is nothing improbable about my explanation at all. In fact it's perfectly ordinary. Old Mr. Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a little boy, made me in his will guardian to his grand-daughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily, who addresses me as her uncle from motives of respect that you could

not possibly appreciate, lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

**Algernon.** Where is that place in the country, by the way?

**Jack.** That is nothing to you, dear boy. You are not going to be invited . . . I may tell you candidly that the place is not in Shropshire.

**Algernon.** I suspected that, my dear fellow! I have Bunbured all over Shropshire on two separate occasions. Now, go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

**Jack.** My dear Algy, I don't know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes. That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.

**Algernon.** The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

**Jack.** That wouldn't be at all a bad thing.

**Algernon.** Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow. Don't try it. You should leave that to people who haven't been at a University. They do it so well in the daily papers. What you really are is a Bunburyist. I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

**Jack.** What on earth do you mean?

**Algernon.** You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's to-night, for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week.

**Jack.** I haven't asked you to dine with me anywhere to-night.

**Algernon.** I know. You are absurdly careless about sending out invitations. It is very foolish of you. Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.

**Jack.** You had much better dine with your Aunt Augusta.

**Algernon.** I haven't the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relations. In the second place, whenever I do dine there I am always treated as a member of the family, and sent down with either no woman at all, or two. In the third place, I know perfectly well whom she will place me next to, to-night. She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner-table. That is not very pleasant. Indeed, it is not even decent . . . and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase. The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public. Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules.

**Jack.** I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother, indeed I think I'll kill him in any case. Cecily is a little too much interested in him. It is rather a bore. So I am going to get rid of Ernest. And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr. . . . with your invalid friend who has the absurd name.

**Algernon.** Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

**Jack.** That is nonsense. If I marry a charming girl like Gwendolen, and she is the only girl I ever saw in my life that I would marry, I certainly won't want to know Bunbury.

**Algernon.** Then your wife will. You don't seem to realise, that in married life three is company and two is none.

**Jack.** [Sententiously.] That, my dear young friend, is the theory

that the corrupt French Drama has been propounding for the last fifty years.

**Algernon.** Yes; and that the happy English home has proved in half the time.

**Jack.** For heaven's sake, don't try to be cynical. It's perfectly easy to be cynical.

**Algernon.** My dear fellow, it isn't easy to be anything nowadays. There's such a lot of beastly competition about. [The sound of an electric bell is heard.] Ah! that must be Aunt Augusta. Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner. Now, if I get her out of the way for ten minutes, so that you can have an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen, may I dine with you to-night at Willis's?

**Jack.** I suppose so, if you want to.

**Algernon.** Yes, but you must be serious about it. I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them.

[Enter **Lane**.]

**Lane.** Lady Bracknell and Miss Fairfax.

[**Algernon** goes forward to meet them. Enter **Lady Bracknell** and **Gwendolen**.]

**Lady Bracknell.** Good afternoon, dear Algernon, I hope you are behaving very well.

**Algernon.** I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta.

**Lady Bracknell.** That's not quite the same thing. In fact the two things rarely go together. [Sees **Jack** and bows to him with icy coldness.]

**Algernon.** [To **Gwendolen**.] Dear me, you are smart!

**Gwendolen.** I am always smart! Am I not, Mr. Worthing?

**Jack.** You're quite perfect, Miss Fairfax.

**Gwendolen.** Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments, and I intend to develop in many directions. [**Gwendolen** and **Jack** sit down together in the corner.]

**Lady Bracknell.** I'm sorry if we are a little late, Algernon, but I was obliged to call on dear Lady Harbury. I hadn't been there since her poor husband's death. I never saw a woman so altered; she looks

quite twenty years younger. And now I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those nice cucumber sandwiches you promised me.

**Algernon.** Certainly, Aunt Augusta. [Goes over to tea-table.]

**Lady Bracknell.** Won't you come and sit here, Gwendolen?

**Gwendolen.** Thanks, mamma, I'm quite comfortable where I am.

**Algernon.** [Picking up empty plate in horror.] Good heavens! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially.

**Lane.** [Gravely.] There were no cucumbers in the market this morning, sir. I went down twice.

**Algernon.** No cucumbers!

**Lane.** No, sir. Not even for ready money.

**Algernon.** That will do, Lane, thank you.

**Lane.** Thank you, sir. [Goes out.]

**Algernon.** I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers, not even for ready money.

**Lady Bracknell.** It really makes no matter, Algernon. I had some crumpets with Lady Harbury, who seems to me to be living entirely for pleasure now.

**Algernon.** I hear her hair has turned quite gold from grief.

**Lady Bracknell.** It certainly has changed its colour. From what cause I, of course, cannot say. [**Algernon** crosses and hands tea.] Thank you. I've quite a treat for you to-night, Algernon. I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar. She is such a nice woman, and so attentive to her husband. It's delightful to watch them.

**Algernon.** I am afraid, Aunt Augusta, I shall have to give up the pleasure of dining with you to-night after all.

**Lady Bracknell.** [Frowning.] I hope not, Algernon. It would put my table completely out. Your uncle would have to dine upstairs. Fortunately he is accustomed to that.

**Algernon.** It is a great bore, and, I need hardly say, a terrible disappointment to me, but the fact is I have just had a telegram to say that my poor friend Bunbury is very ill again. [Exchanges glances with **Jack**.] They seem to think I should be with him.

**Lady Bracknell.** It is very strange. This Mr. Bunbury seems to suffer from curiously bad health.

**Algernon.** Yes; poor Bunbury is a dreadful invalid.

**Lady Bracknell.** Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailment goes. I should be much obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when every one has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

**Algernon.** I'll speak to Bunbury, Aunt Augusta, if he is still conscious, and I think I can promise you he'll be all right by Saturday. Of course the music is a great difficulty. You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music people don't talk. But I'll run over the programme I've drawn out, if you will kindly come into the next room for a moment.

**Lady Bracknell.** Thank you, Algernon. It is very thoughtful of you. [Rising, and following **Algernon**.] I'm sure the programme will be delightful, after a few expurgations. French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse. But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe is so. Gwendolen, you will accompany me.

**Gwendolen.** Certainly, mamma.

[**Lady Bracknell** and **Algernon** go into the music-room, **Gwendolen** remains behind.]

**Jack.** Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax.

**Gwendolen.** Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr.



Worthing. Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else. And that makes me so nervous.

**Jack.** I do mean something else.

**Gwendolen.** I thought so. In fact, I am never wrong.

**Jack.** And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence . . .

**Gwendolen.** I would certainly advise you to do so. Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into a room that I have often had to speak to her about.

**Jack.** [Nervously.] Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl . . . I have ever met since . . . I met you.

**Gwendolen.** Yes, I am quite well aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. [**Jack** looks at her in amazement.] We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits, I am told; and my ideal has always been to love some one of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

**Jack.** You really love me, Gwendolen?

**Gwendolen.** Passionately!

**Jack.** Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me.

**Gwendolen.** My own Ernest!

**Jack.** But you don't really mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name wasn't Ernest?

**Gwendolen.** But your name is Ernest.

**Jack.** Yes, I know it is. But supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me then?

**Gwendolen.** [Glibly.] Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical

speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them.

**Jack.** Personally, darling, to speak quite candidly, I don't much care about the name of Ernest . . . I don't think the name suits me at all.

**Gwendolen.** It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations.

**Jack.** Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names. I think Jack, for instance, a charming name.

**Gwendolen.** Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude. The only really safe name is Ernest.

**Jack.** Gwendolen, I must get christened at once—I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

**Gwendolen.** Married, Mr. Worthing?

**Jack.** [Astounded.] Well . . . surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

**Gwendolen.** I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

**Jack.** Well . . . may I propose to you now?

**Gwendolen.** I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr. Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly before-hand that I am fully determined to accept you.

**Jack.** Gwendolen!

**Gwendolen.** Yes, Mr. Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

**Jack.** You know what I have got to say to you.

**Gwendolen.** Yes, but you don't say it.

**Jack.** Gwendolen, will you marry me? [Goes on his knees.]

**Gwendolen.** Of course I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

**Jack.** My own one, I have never loved any one in the world but you.

**Gwendolen.** Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girl-friends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite, blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present. [Enter **Lady Bracknell**.]

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

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

**Lady Bracknell.** Finished what, may I ask?

**Gwendolen.** I am engaged to Mr. Worthing, mamma. [They rise together.]

**Lady Bracknell.** Pardon me, you are not engaged to any one. When you do become engaged to some one, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be. It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself. . . . And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr. Worthing. While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

**Gwendolen.** [Reproachfully.] Mamma!

**Lady Bracknell.** In the carriage, Gwendolen! [**Gwendolen** goes to the door. She and **Jack** blow kisses to each other behind **Lady Bracknell's** back. **Lady Bracknell** looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. Finally turns round.] Gwendolen, the carriage!

**Gwendolen.** Yes, mamma. [Goes out, looking back at **Jack**.]

**Lady Bracknell.** [Sitting down.] You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing.

[Looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil.]

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

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

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

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

**Jack.** Twenty-nine.

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

**Jack.** [After some hesitation.] I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

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

**Jack.** Between seven and eight thousand a year.

**Lady Bracknell.** [Makes a note in her book.] In land, or in investments?

**Jack.** In investments, chiefly.

**Lady Bracknell.** That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's lifetime, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a

pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Jack.** 149.

**Lady Bracknell.** [Shaking her head.] The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

**Jack.** Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

**Lady Bracknell.** [Sternly.] Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

**Jack.** Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.

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

**Jack.** I have lost both my parents.

**Lady Bracknell.** To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

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

**Lady Bracknell.** Found!

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

**Lady Bracknell.** Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

**Jack.** [Gravely.] In a hand-bag.

**Lady Bracknell.** A hand-bag?

**Jack.** [Very seriously.] Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag in fact.

**Lady Bracknell.** In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

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

**Lady Bracknell.** The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

**Jack.** Yes. The Brighton line.

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

**Jack.** May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need

hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

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

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

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

[**Lady Bracknell** sweeps out in majestic indignation.]

**Jack.** Good morning! [**Algernon**, from the other room, strikes up the Wedding March. Jack looks perfectly furious, and goes to the door.] For goodness' sake don't play that ghastly tune, Algy. How idiotic you are!

[The music stops and **Algernon** enters cheerily.]

**Algernon.** Didn't it go off all right, old boy? You don't mean to say Gwendolen refused you? I know it is a way she has. She is always refusing people. I think it is most ill-natured of her.

**Jack.** Oh, Gwendolen is as right as a trivet. As far as she is concerned, we are engaged. Her mother is perfectly unbearable. Never met such a Gorgon . . . I don't really know what a Gorgon is like, but I am quite sure that Lady Bracknell is one. In any case, she is a monster, without being a myth, which is rather unfair . . . I beg your pardon, Algy, I suppose I shouldn't talk about your own aunt in that way before you.

**Algernon.** My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused. It is the only thing that makes me put up with them at all. Relations are simply a tedious pack of people, who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die.

**Jack.** Oh, that is nonsense!

**Algernon.** It isn't!

**Jack.** Well, I won't argue about the matter. You always want to argue about things.

**Algernon.** That is exactly what things were originally made for.

**Jack.** Upon my word, if I thought that, I'd shoot myself . . . [A pause.] You don't think there is any chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?

**Algernon.** All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

**Jack.** Is that clever?

**Algernon.** It is perfectly phrased! and quite as true as any observation in civilised life should be.

**Jack.** I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever nowadays. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance. I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

**Algernon.** We have.

**Jack.** I should extremely like to meet them. What do they talk about?

**Algernon.** The fools? Oh! about the clever people, of course.

**Jack.** What fools!

**Algernon.** By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

**Jack.** [In a very patronising manner.] My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

**Algernon.** The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to some one else, if she is plain.

**Jack.** Oh, that is nonsense.

**Algernon.** What about your brother? What about the profligate Ernest?

**Jack.** Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of him.



I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy. Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

**Algernon.** Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It's a sort of thing that runs in families. You had much better say a severe chill.

**Jack.** You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything of that kind?

**Algernon.** Of course it isn't!

**Jack.** Very well, then. My poor brother Ernest to carried off suddenly, in Paris, by a severe chill. That gets rid of him.

**Algernon.** But I thought you said that . . . Miss Cardew was a little too much interested in your poor brother Ernest? Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

**Jack.** Oh, that is all right. Cecily is not a silly romantic girl, I am glad to say. She has got a capital appetite, goes long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons.

**Algernon.** I would rather like to see Cecily.

**Jack.** I will take very good care you never do. She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen.

**Algernon.** Have you told Gwendolen yet that you have an excessively pretty ward who is only just eighteen?

**Jack.** Oh! one doesn't blurt these things out to people. Cecily and Gwendolen are perfectly certain to be extremely great friends. I'll bet you anything you like that half an hour after they have met, they will be calling each other sister.

**Algernon.** Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first. Now, my dear boy, if we want to get a good table at Willis's, we really must go and dress. Do you know it is nearly seven?

**Jack.** [Irritably.] Oh! It always is nearly seven.

**Algernon.** Well, I'm hungry.

**Jack.** I never knew you when you weren't . . .

**Algernon.** What shall we do after dinner? Go to a theatre?

**Jack.** Oh no! I loathe listening.

**Algernon.** Well, let us go to the Club?

**Jack.** Oh, no! I hate talking.

**Algernon.** Well, we might trot round to the Empire at ten?

**Jack.** Oh, no! I can't bear looking at things. It is so silly.

**Algernon.** Well, what shall we do?

**Jack.** Nothing!

**Algernon.** It is awfully hard work doing nothing. However, I don't mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind.

[Enter **Lane**.]

**Lane.** Miss Fairfax.

[Enter **Gwendolen**. **Lane** goes out.]

**Algernon.** Gwendolen, upon my word!

**Gwendolen.** Algy, kindly turn your back. I have something very particular to say to Mr. Worthing.

**Algernon.** Really, Gwendolen, I don't think I can allow this at all.

**Gwendolen.** Algy, you always adopt a strictly immoral attitude towards life. You are not quite old enough to do that. [**Algernon** retires to the fireplace.]

**Jack.** My own darling!

**Gwendolen.** Ernest, we may never be married. From the expression on mamma's face I fear we never shall. Few parents nowadays pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out. Whatever influence I ever had over mamma, I lost at the age of three. But although she may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry some one else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you.

**Jack.** Dear Gwendolen!

**Gwendolen.** The story of your romantic origin, as related to me by mamma, with unpleasing comments, has naturally stirred the deeper fibres of my nature. Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination. The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me. Your town address at the Albany I have. What is your address in the country?

**Jack.** The Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire.

[**Algernon**, who has been carefully listening, smiles to himself,

and writes the address on his shirt-cuff. Then picks up the Railway Guide.]

**Gwendolen.** There is a good postal service, I suppose? It may be necessary to do something desperate. That of course will require serious consideration. I will communicate with you daily.

**Jack.** My own one!

**Gwendolen.** How long do you remain in town?

**Jack.** Till Monday.

**Gwendolen.** Good! Algy, you may turn round now.

**Algernon.** Thanks, I've turned round already.

**Gwendolen.** You may also ring the bell.

**Jack.** You will let me see you to your carriage, my own darling?

**Gwendolen.** Certainly.

**Jack.** [To **Lane**, who now enters.] I will see Miss Fairfax out.

**Lane.** Yes, sir. [**Jack** and **Gwendolen** go off.]

[**Lane** presents several letters on a salver to **Algernon**. It is to be surmised that they are bills, as **Algernon**, after looking at the envelopes, tears them up.]

**Algernon.** A glass of sherry, Lane.

**Lane.** Yes, sir.

**Algernon.** To-morrow, Lane, I'm going Bunburying.

**Lane.** Yes, sir.

**Algernon.** I shall probably not be back till Monday. You can put up my dress clothes, my smoking jacket, and all the Bunbury suits . .

**Lane.** Yes, sir. [Handing sherry.]

**Algernon.** I hope to-morrow will be a fine day, Lane.

**Lane.** It never is, sir.

**Algernon.** Lane, you're a perfect pessimist.

**Lane.** I do my best to give satisfaction, sir.

[Enter **Jack**. **Lane** goes off.]

**Jack.** There's a sensible, intellectual girl! the only girl I ever cared for in my life. [**Algernon** is laughing immoderately.] What on earth are you so amused at?

**Algernon.** Oh, I'm a little anxious about poor Bunbury, that is all.

**Jack.** If you don't take care, your friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape some day.

**Algernon.** I love scrapes. They are the only things that are never serious.

**Jack.** Oh, that's nonsense, Algy. You never talk anything but nonsense.

**Algernon.** Nobody ever does.

[**Jack** looks indignantly at him, and leaves the room. **Algernon** lights a cigarette, reads his shirt-cuff, and smiles.]

ACT DROP

## SECOND ACT

### SCENE

Garden at the Manor House. A flight of grey stone steps leads up to the house. The garden, an old-fashioned one, full of roses. Time of year, July. Basket chairs, and a table covered with books, are set under a large yew-tree.

[**Miss Prism** discovered seated at the table. **Cecily** is at the back watering flowers.]

**Miss Prism.** [Calling.] Cecily, Cecily! Surely such a utilitarian occupation as the watering of flowers is rather Moulton's duty than yours? Especially at a moment when intellectual pleasures await you. Your German grammar is on the table. Pray open it at page fifteen. We will repeat yesterday's lesson.

**Cecily.** [Coming over very slowly.] But I don't like German. It isn't at all a becoming language. I know perfectly well that I look quite plain after my German lesson.

**Miss Prism.** Child, you know how anxious your guardian is that you should improve yourself in every way. He laid particular stress

on your German, as he was leaving for town yesterday. Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving for town.

**Cecily.** Dear Uncle Jack is so very serious! Sometimes he is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well.

**Miss Prism.** [Drawing herself up.] Your guardian enjoys the best of health, and his gravity of demeanour is especially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility.

**Cecily.** I suppose that is why he often looks a little bored when we three are together.

**Miss Prism.** Cecily! I am surprised at you. Mr. Worthing has many troubles in his life. Idle merriment and triviality would be out of place in his conversation. You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man his brother.

**Cecily.** I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man, his brother, to come down here sometimes. We might have a good influence over him, Miss Prism. I am sure you certainly would. You know German, and geology, and things of that kind influence a man very much. [**Cecily** begins to write in her diary.]

**Miss Prism.** [Shaking her head.] I do not think that even I could produce any effect on a character that according to his own brother's admission is irretrievably weak and vacillating. Indeed I am not sure that I would desire to reclaim him. I am not in favour of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice. As a man sows so let him reap. You must put away your diary, Cecily. I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all.

**Cecily.** I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life. If I didn't write them down, I should probably forget all about them.

**Miss Prism.** Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that we all carry about with us.

**Cecily.** Yes, but it usually chronicles the things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened. I believe that

Memory is responsible for nearly all the three-volume novels that Mudie sends us.

**Miss Prism.** Do not speak slightly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days.

**Cecily.** Did you really, Miss Prism? How wonderfully clever you are! I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much.

**Miss Prism.** The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.

**Cecily.** I suppose so. But it seems very unfair. And was your novel ever published?

**Miss Prism.** Alas! no. The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned. [**Cecily** starts.] I use the word in the sense of lost or mislaid. To your work, child, these speculations are profitless.

**Cecily.** [Smiling.] But I see dear Dr. Chasuble coming up through the garden.

**Miss Prism.** [Rising and advancing.] Dr. Chasuble! This is indeed a pleasure.

[Enter **Canon Chasuble**.]

**Chasuble.** And how are we this morning? Miss Prism, you are, I trust, well?

**Cecily.** Miss Prism has just been complaining of a slight headache. I think it would do her so much good to have a short stroll with you in the Park, Dr. Chasuble.

**Miss Prism.** Cecily, I have not mentioned anything about a headache.

**Cecily.** No, dear Miss Prism, I know that, but I felt instinctively that you had a headache. Indeed I was thinking about that, and not about my German lesson, when the Rector came in.

**Chasuble.** I hope, Cecily, you are not inattentive.

**Cecily.** Oh, I am afraid I am.

**Chasuble.** That is strange. Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips. [**Miss Prism** glares.] I spoke metaphorically.—My metaphor was drawn from bees. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, I suppose, has not returned from town yet?

**Miss Prism.** We do not expect him till Monday afternoon.

**Chasuble.** Ah yes, he usually likes to spend his Sunday in London. He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment, as, by all accounts, that unfortunate young man his brother seems to be. But I must not disturb Egeria and her pupil any longer.

**Miss Prism.** Egeria? My name is Lætitia, Doctor.

**Chasuble.** [Bowing.] A classical allusion merely, drawn from the Pagan authors. I shall see you both no doubt at Evensong?

**Miss Prism.** I think, dear Doctor, I will have a stroll with you. I find I have a headache after all, and a walk might do it good.

**Chasuble.** With pleasure, Miss Prism, with pleasure. We might go as far as the schools and back.

**Miss Prism.** That would be delightful. Cecily, you will read your Political Economy in my absence. The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational. Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side.

[Goes down the garden with **Dr. Chasuble**.]

**Cecily.** [Picks up books and throws them back on table.] Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German!

[Enter **Merriman** with a card on a salver.]

**Merriman.** Mr. Ernest Worthing has just driven over from the station. He has brought his luggage with him.

**Cecily.** [Takes the card and reads it.] 'Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany, W.' Uncle Jack's brother! Did you tell him Mr. Worthing was in town?

**Merriman.** Yes, Miss. He seemed very much disappointed. I mentioned that you and Miss Prism were in the garden. He said he was anxious to speak to you privately for a moment.

**Cecily.** Ask Mr. Ernest Worthing to come here. I suppose you had better talk to the housekeeper about a room for him.

**Merriman.** Yes, Miss.

[**Merriman** goes off.]

**Cecily.** I have never met any really wicked person before. I feel rather frightened. I am so afraid he will look just like every one else.

[Enter **Algernon**, very gay and debonnaire.] He does!

**Algernon.** [Raising his hat.] You are my little cousin Cecily, I'm sure.

**Cecily.** You are under some strange mistake. I am not little. In fact, I believe I am more than usually tall for my age. [**Algernon** is rather taken aback.] But I am your cousin Cecily. You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack's brother, my cousin Ernest, my wicked cousin Ernest.

**Algernon.** Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily. You mustn't think that I am wicked.

**Cecily.** If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.

**Algernon.** [Looks at her in amazement.] Oh! Of course I have been rather reckless.

**Cecily.** I am glad to hear it.

**Algernon.** In fact, now you mention the subject, I have been very bad in my own small way.

**Cecily.** I don't think you should be so proud of that, though I am sure it must have been very pleasant.

**Algernon.** It is much pleasanter being here with you.

**Cecily.** I can't understand how you are here at all. Uncle Jack won't be back till Monday afternoon.

**Algernon.** That is a great disappointment. I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious . . . to miss?

**Cecily.** Couldn't you miss it anywhere but in London?

**Algernon.** No: the appointment is in London.

**Cecily.** Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives. I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating.

**Algernon.** About my what?

**Cecily.** Your emigrating. He has gone up to buy your outfit.



**Algernon.** I certainly wouldn't let Jack buy my outfit. He has no taste in neckties at all.

**Cecily.** I don't think you will require neckties. Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.

**Algernon.** Australia! I'd sooner die.

**Cecily.** Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to choose between this world, the next world, and Australia.

**Algernon.** Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world, are not particularly encouraging. This world is good enough for me, cousin Cecily.

**Cecily.** Yes, but are you good enough for it?

**Algernon.** I'm afraid I'm not that. That is why I want you to reform me. You might make that your mission, if you don't mind, cousin Cecily.

**Cecily.** I'm afraid I've no time, this afternoon.

**Algernon.** Well, would you mind my reforming myself this afternoon?

**Cecily.** It is rather Quixotic of you. But I think you should try.

**Algernon.** I will. I feel better already.

**Cecily.** You are looking a little worse.

**Algernon.** That is because I am hungry.

**Cecily.** How thoughtless of me. I should have remembered that when one is going to lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals. Won't you come in?

**Algernon.** Thank you. Might I have a buttonhole first? I never have any appetite unless I have a buttonhole first.

**Cecily.** A Marechal Niel? [Picks up scissors.]

**Algernon.** No, I'd sooner have a pink rose.

**Cecily.** Why? [Cuts a flower.]

**Algernon.** Because you are like a pink rose, Cousin Cecily.

**Cecily.** I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.

**Algernon.** Then Miss Prism is a short-sighted old lady. [Cecily puts the rose in his buttonhole.] You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

**Cecily.** Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare.

**Algernon.** They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.

**Cecily.** Oh, I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man. I shouldn't know what to talk to him about.

[They pass into the house. **Miss Prism** and **Dr. Chasuble** return.]

**Miss Prism.** You are too much alone, dear Dr. Chasuble. You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand—a womanthrope, never!

**Chasuble.** [With a scholar's shudder.] Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase. The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church was distinctly against matrimony.

**Miss Prism.** [Sententiously.] That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day. And you do not seem to realise, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. Men should be more careful; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray.

**Chasuble.** But is a man not equally attractive when married?

**Miss Prism.** No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

**Chasuble.** And often, I've been told, not even to her.

**Miss Prism.** That depends on the intellectual sympathies of the woman. Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted. Young women are green. [**Dr. Chasuble** starts.] I spoke horticulturally. My metaphor was drawn from fruits. But where is Cecily?

**Chasuble.** Perhaps she followed us to the schools.

[Enter **Jack** slowly from the back of the garden. He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crape hatband and black gloves.]

**Miss Prism.** Mr. Worthing!

**Chasuble.** Mr. Worthing?

**Miss Prism.** This is indeed a surprise. We did not look for you till Monday afternoon.

**Jack.** [Shakes **Miss Prism's** hand in a tragic manner.] I have returned sooner than I expected. Dr. Chasuble, I hope you are well?

**Chasuble.** Dear Mr. Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

**Jack.** My brother.

**Miss Prism.** More shameful debts and extravagance?

**Chasuble.** Still leading his life of pleasure?

**Jack.** [Shaking his head.] Dead!

**Chasuble.** Your brother Ernest dead?

**Jack.** Quite dead.

**Miss Prism.** What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it.

**Chasuble.** Mr. Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolence. You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers.

**Jack.** Poor Ernest! He had many faults, but it is a sad, sad blow.

**Chasuble.** Very sad indeed. Were you with him at the end?

**Jack.** No. He died abroad; in Paris, in fact. I had a telegram last night from the manager of the Grand Hotel.

**Chasuble.** Was the cause of death mentioned?

**Jack.** A severe chill, it seems.

**Miss Prism.** As a man sows, so shall he reap.

**Chasuble.** [Raising his hand.] Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity! None of us are perfect. I myself am peculiarly susceptible to draughts. Will the interment take place here?

**Jack.** No. He seems to have expressed a desire to be buried in Paris.

**Chasuble.** In Paris! [Shakes his head.] I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last. You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday. [**Jack** presses his hand convulsively.] My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing. [All sigh.] I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festal days. The last time I delivered it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontent among the Upper

Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew.

**Jack.** Ah! that reminds me, you mentioned christenings I think, Dr. Chasuble? I suppose you know how to christen all right? [**Dr. Chasuble** looks astounded.] I mean, of course, you are continually christening, aren't you?

**Miss Prism.** It is, I regret to say, one of the Rector's most constant duties in this parish. I have often spoken to the poorer classes on the subject. But they don't seem to know what thrift is.

**Chasuble.** But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr. Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

**Jack.** Oh yes.

**Miss Prism.** [Bitterly.] People who live entirely for pleasure usually are.

**Jack.** But it is not for any child, dear Doctor. I am very fond of children. No! the fact is, I would like to be christened myself, this afternoon, if you have nothing better to do.

**Chasuble.** But surely, Mr. Worthing, you have been christened already?

**Jack.** I don't remember anything about it.

**Chasuble.** But have you any grave doubts on the subject?

**Jack.** I certainly intend to have. Of course I don't know if the thing would bother you in any way, or if you think I am a little too old now.

**Chasuble.** Not at all. The sprinkling, and, indeed, the immersion of adults is a perfectly canonical practice.

**Jack.** Immersion!

**Chasuble.** You need have no apprehensions. Sprinkling is all that is necessary, or indeed I think advisable. Our weather is so changeable. At what hour would you wish the ceremony performed?

**Jack.** Oh, I might trot round about five if that would suit you.

**Chasuble.** Perfectly, perfectly! In fact I have two similar ceremonies to perform at that time. A case of twins that occurred

recently in one of the outlying cottages on your own estate. Poor Jenkins the carter, a most hard-working man.

**Jack.** Oh! I don't see much fun in being christened along with other babies. It would be childish. Would half-past five do?

**Chasuble.** Admirably! Admirably! [Takes out watch.] And now, dear Mr. Worthing, I will not intrude any longer into a house of sorrow. I would merely beg you not to be too much bowed down by grief. What seem to us bitter trials are often blessings in disguise.

**Miss Prism.** This seems to me a blessing of an extremely obvious kind.

[Enter **Cecily** from the house.]

**Cecily.** Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to see you back. But what horrid clothes you have got on! Do go and change them.

**Miss Prism.** Cecily!

**Chasuble.** My child! my child! [**Cecily** goes towards **Jack**; he kisses her brow in a melancholy manner.]

**Cecily.** What is the matter, Uncle Jack? Do look happy! You look as if you had toothache, and I have got such a surprise for you. Who do you think is in the dining-room? Your brother!

**Jack.** Who?

**Cecily.** Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.

**Jack.** What nonsense! I haven't got a brother.

**Cecily.** Oh, don't say that. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past he is still your brother. You couldn't be so heartless as to disown him. I'll tell him to come out. And you will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack? [Runs back into the house.]

**Chasuble.** These are very joyful tidings.

**Miss Prism.** After we had all been resigned to his loss, his sudden return seems to me peculiarly distressing.

**Jack.** My brother is in the dining-room? I don't know what it all means. I think it is perfectly absurd.

[Enter **Algernon** and **Cecily** hand in hand. They come slowly up to **Jack**.]

**Jack.** Good heavens! [Motions **Algernon** away.]

**Algernon.** Brother John, I have come down from town to tell you

that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you, and that I intend to lead a better life in the future. [**Jack** glares at him and does not take his hand.]

**Cecily.** Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse your own brother's hand?

**Jack.** Nothing will induce me to take his hand. I think his coming down here disgraceful. He knows perfectly well why.

**Cecily.** Uncle Jack, do be nice. There is some good in every one. Ernest has just been telling me about his poor invalid friend Mr. Bunbury whom he goes to visit so often. And surely there must be much good in one who is kind to an invalid, and leaves the pleasures of London to sit by a bed of pain.

**Jack.** Oh! he has been talking about Bunbury, has he?

**Cecily.** Yes, he has told me all about poor Mr. Bunbury, and his terrible state of health.

**Jack.** Bunbury! Well, I won't have him talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else. It is enough to drive one perfectly frantic.

**Algernon.** Of course I admit that the faults were all on my side. But I must say that I think that Brother John's coldness to me is peculiarly painful. I expected a more enthusiastic welcome, especially considering it is the first time I have come here.

**Cecily.** Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest I will never forgive you.

**Jack.** Never forgive me?

**Cecily.** Never, never, never!

**Jack.** Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it. [Shakes with **Algernon** and glares.]

**Chasuble.** It's pleasant, is it not, to see so perfect a reconciliation? I think we might leave the two brothers together.

**Miss Prism.** Cecily, you will come with us.

**Cecily.** Certainly, Miss Prism. My little task of reconciliation is over.

**Chasuble.** You have done a beautiful action to-day, dear child.

**Miss Prism.** We must not be premature in our judgments.

**Cecily.** I feel very happy. [They all go off except **Jack** and **Algernon**.]

**Jack.** You young scoundrel, Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible. I don't allow any Bunburying here.

[Enter **Merriman**.]

**Merriman.** I have put Mr. Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right?

**Jack.** What?

**Merriman.** Mr. Ernest's luggage, sir. I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.

**Jack.** His luggage?

**Merriman.** Yes, sir. Three portmanteaus, a dressing-case, two hat-boxes, and a large luncheon-basket.

**Algernon.** I am afraid I can't stay more than a week this time.

**Jack.** Merriman, order the dog-cart at once. Mr. Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

**Merriman.** Yes, sir. [Goes back into the house.]

**Algernon.** What a fearful liar you are, Jack. I have not been called back to town at all.

**Jack.** Yes, you have.

**Algernon.** I haven't heard any one call me.

**Jack.** Your duty as a gentleman calls you back.

**Algernon.** My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree.

**Jack.** I can quite understand that.

**Algernon.** Well, Cecily is a darling.

**Jack.** You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

**Algernon.** Well, I don't like your clothes. You look perfectly ridiculous in them. Why on earth don't you go up and change? It is perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest. I call it grotesque.

**Jack.** You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week as a guest or anything else. You have got to leave . . . by the four-five train.

**Algernon.** I certainly won't leave you so long as you are in mourning. It would be most unfriendly. If I were in mourning you would stay with me, I suppose. I should think it very unkind if you didn't.

**Jack.** Well, will you go if I change my clothes?

**Algernon.** Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result.

**Jack.** Well, at any rate, that is better than being always over-dressed as you are.

**Algernon.** If I am occasionally a little over-dressed, I make up for it by being always immensely over-educated.

**Jack.** Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct an outrage, and your presence in my garden utterly absurd. However, you have got to catch the four-five, and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you.

[Goes into the house.]

**Algernon.** I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily, and that is everything.

[Enter **Cecily** at the back of the garden. She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers.] But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury. Ah, there she is.

**Cecily.** Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

**Algernon.** He's gone to order the dog-cart for me.

**Cecily.** Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

**Algernon.** He's going to send me away.

**Cecily.** Then have we got to part?

**Algernon.** I am afraid so. It's a very painful parting.

**Cecily.** It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time. The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity. But even a momentary separation from anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

**Algernon.** Thank you.



[Enter **Merriman**.]

**Merriman**. The dog-cart is at the door, sir. [**Algernon** looks appealingly at **Cecily**.]

**Cecily**. It can wait, Merriman for . . . five minutes.

**Merriman**. Yes, Miss. [Exit **Merriman**.]

**Algernon**. I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection.

**Cecily**. I think your frankness does you great credit, Ernest. If you will allow me, I will copy your remarks into my diary. [Goes over to table and begins writing in diary.]

**Algernon**. Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it. May I?

**Cecily**. Oh no. [Puts her hand over it.] You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy. But pray, Ernest, don't stop. I delight in taking down from dictation. I have reached 'absolute perfection'. You can go on. I am quite ready for more.

**Algernon**. [Somewhat taken aback.] Ahem! Ahem!

**Cecily**. Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough. Besides, I don't know how to spell a cough. [Writes as **Algernon** speaks.]

**Algernon**. [Speaking very rapidly.] Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.

**Cecily**. I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

**Algernon**. Cecily!

[Enter **Merriman**.]

**Merriman**. The dog-cart is waiting, sir.

**Algernon**. Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

**Merriman**. [Looks at **Cecily**, who makes no sign.] Yes, sir.

[**Merriman** retires.]

**Cecily.** Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, at the same hour.

**Algernon.** Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

**Cecily.** You silly boy! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

**Algernon.** For the last three months?

**Cecily.** Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

**Algernon.** But how did we become engaged?

**Cecily.** Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him, after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest.

**Algernon.** Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

**Cecily.** On the 14th of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lover's knot I promised you always to wear.

**Algernon.** Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

**Cecily.** Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters. [Kneels at table, opens box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon.]

**Algernon.** My letters! But, my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

**Cecily.** You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener.

**Algernon.** Oh, do let me read them, Cecily?

**Cecily.** Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [Replaces box.] The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

**Algernon.** But was our engagement ever broken off?

**Cecily.** Of course it was. On the 22nd of last March. You can see the entry if you like. [Shows diary.] 'To-day I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming.'

**Algernon.** But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so charming.

**Cecily.** It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out.

**Algernon.** [Crossing to her, and kneeling.] What a perfect angel you are, Cecily.

**Cecily.** You dear romantic boy. [He kisses her, she puts her fingers through his hair.] I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

**Algernon.** Yes, darling, with a little help from others.

**Cecily.** I am so glad.

**Algernon.** You'll never break off our engagement again, Cecily?

**Cecily.** I don't think I could break it off now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is the question of your name.

**Algernon.** Yes, of course. [Nervously.]

**Cecily.** You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love some one whose name was Ernest. [**Algernon** rises, **Cecily** also.] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

**Algernon.** But, my dear child, do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

**Cecily.** But what name?

**Algernon.** Oh, any name you like—Algernon—for instance . . .

**Cecily.** But I don't like the name of Algernon.

**Algernon.** Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, I really can't see why you should object to the name of Algernon. It is not at all a bad name. In fact, it is rather an aristocratic name. Half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court are called Algernon. But seriously, Cecily . . . [Moving to her] . . . if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

**Cecily.** [Rising.] I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear that I should not be able to give you my undivided attention.

**Algernon.** Ahem! Cecily! [Picking up hat.] Your Rector here is, I suppose, thoroughly experienced in the practice of all the rites and ceremonials of the Church?

**Cecily.** Oh, yes. Dr. Chasuble is a most learned man. He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows.

**Algernon.** I must see him at once on a most important christening—I mean on most important business.

**Cecily.** Oh!

**Algernon.** I shan't be away more than half an hour.

**Cecily.** Considering that we have been engaged since February the 14th, and that I only met you to-day for the first time, I think it is rather hard that you should leave me for so long a period as half an hour. Couldn't you make it twenty minutes?

**Algernon.** I'll be back in no time.

[Kisses her and rushes down the garden.]

**Cecily.** What an impetuous boy he is! I like his hair so much. I must enter his proposal in my diary.

[Enter **Merriman**.]

**Merriman.** A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr. Worthing. On very important business, Miss Fairfax states.

**Cecily.** Isn't Mr. Worthing in his library?

**Merriman.** Mr. Worthing went over in the direction of the Rectory some time ago.

**Cecily.** Pray ask the lady to come out here; Mr. Worthing is sure to be back soon. And you can bring tea.

**Merriman.** Yes, Miss. [Goes out.]

**Cecily.** Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many good elderly women who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his philanthropic work in London. I don't quite like women who are interested in philanthropic work. I think it is so forward of them.

[Enter **Merriman**.]

**Merriman.** Miss Fairfax.

[Enter **Gwendolen**.]

[Exit **Merriman**.]

**Cecily.** [Advancing to meet her.] Pray let me introduce myself to you. My name is Cecily Cardew.

**Gwendolen.** Cecily Cardew? [Moving to her and shaking hands.] What a very sweet name! Something tells me that we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say. My first impressions of people are never wrong.

**Cecily.** How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other such a comparatively short time. Pray sit down.

**Gwendolen.** [Still standing up.] I may call you Cecily, may I not?

**Cecily.** With pleasure!

**Gwendolen.** And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?

**Cecily.** If you wish.

**Gwendolen.** Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

**Cecily.** I hope so. [A pause. They both sit down together.]

**Gwendolen.** Perhaps this might be a favourable opportunity for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

**Cecily.** I don't think so.

**Gwendolen.** Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive. Cecily, mamma, whose views on education

are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

**Cecily.** Oh! not at all, Gwendolen. I am very fond of being looked at.

**Gwendolen.** [After examining **Cecily** carefully through a lorgnette.] You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

**Cecily.** Oh no! I live here.

**Gwendolen.** [Severely.] Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

**Cecily.** Oh no! I have no mother, nor, in fact, any relations.

**Gwendolen.** Indeed?

**Cecily.** My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me.

**Gwendolen.** Your guardian?

**Cecily.** Yes, I am Mr. Worthing's ward.

**Gwendolen.** Oh! It is strange he never mentioned to me that he had a ward. How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly. I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight. [Rising and going to her.] I am very fond of you, Cecily; I have liked you ever since I met you! But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr. Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well, just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very alluring in appearance. In fact, if I may speak candidly—

**Cecily.** Pray do! I think that whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid.

**Gwendolen.** Well, to speak with perfect candour, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age. Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honour. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception. But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others. Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many

most painful examples of what I refer to. If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable.

**Cecily.** I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say Ernest?

**Gwendolen.** Yes.

**Cecily.** Oh, but it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother—his elder brother.

**Gwendolen.** [Sitting down again.] Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

**Cecily.** I am sorry to say they have not been on good terms for a long time.

**Gwendolen.** Ah! that accounts for it. And now that I think of it I have never heard any man mention his brother. The subject seems distasteful to most men. Cecily, you have lifted a load from my mind. I was growing almost anxious. It would have been terrible if any cloud had come across a friendship like ours, would it not? Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

**Cecily.** Quite sure. [A pause.] In fact, I am going to be his.

**Gwendolen.** [Inquiringly.] I beg your pardon?

**Cecily.** [Rather shy and confidently.] Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr. Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

**Gwendolen.** [Quite politely, rising.] My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr. Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post* on Saturday at the latest.

**Cecily.** [Very politely, rising.] I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [Shows diary.]

**Gwendolen.** [Examines diary through her lorgnette carefully.] It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at 5.30. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. [Produces diary of her own.] I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train.

I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid I have the prior claim.

**Cecily.** It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

**Gwendolen.** [Meditatively.] If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with a firm hand.

**Cecily.** [Thoughtfully and sadly.] Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

**Gwendolen.** Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

**Cecily.** Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade I call it a spade.

**Gwendolen.** [Satirically.] I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

[Enter **Merriman**, followed by the footman. He carries a salver, table cloth, and plate stand. **Cecily** is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe.]

**Merriman.** Shall I lay tea here as usual, Miss?

**Cecily.** [Sternly, in a calm voice.] Yes, as usual. [**Merriman** begins to clear table and lay cloth. A long pause. **Cecily** and **Gwendolen** glare at each other.]

**Gwendolen.** Are there many interesting walks in the vicinity, Miss Cardew?

**Cecily.** Oh! yes! a great many. From the top of one of the hills quite close one can see five counties.



**Gwendolen.** Five counties! I don't think I should like that; I hate crowds.

**Cecily.** [Sweetly.] I suppose that is why you live in town? [Gwendolen bites her lip, and beats her foot nervously with her parasol.]

**Gwendolen.** [Looking round.] Quite a well-kept garden this is, Miss Cardew.

**Cecily.** So glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

**Gwendolen.** I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

**Cecily.** Oh, flowers are as common here, Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

**Gwendolen.** Personally I cannot understand how anybody manages to exist in the country, if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

**Cecily.** Ah! This is what the newspapers call agricultural depression, is it not? I believe the aristocracy are suffering very much from it just at present. It is almost an epidemic amongst them, I have been told. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

**Gwendolen.** [With elaborate politeness.] Thank you. [Aside.] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

**Cecily.** [Sweetly.] Sugar?

**Gwendolen.** [Superciliously.] No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more. [Cecily looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup.]

**Cecily.** [Severely.] Cake or bread and butter?

**Gwendolen.** [In a bored manner.] Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays.

**Cecily.** [Cuts a very large slice of cake, and puts it on the tray.] Hand that to Miss Fairfax.

[Merriman does so, and goes out with footman. Gwendolen drinks the tea and makes a grimace. Puts down cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation.]

**Gwendolen.** You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given

me cake. I am known for the gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.

**Cecily.** [Rising.] To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to which I would not go.

**Gwendolen.** From the moment I saw you I distrusted you. I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never deceived in such matters. My first impressions of people are invariably right.

**Cecily.** It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a similar character to make in the neighbourhood.

[Enter **Jack.**]

**Gwendolen.** [Catching sight of him.] Ernest! My own Ernest!

**Jack.** Gwendolen! Darling! [Offers to kiss her.]

**Gwendolen.** [Draws back.] A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady? [Points to **Cecily.**]

**Jack.** [Laughing.] To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

**Gwendolen.** Thank you. You may! [Offers her cheek.]

**Cecily.** [Very sweetly.] I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present round your waist is my guardian, Mr. John Worthing.

**Gwendolen.** I beg your pardon?

**Cecily.** This is Uncle Jack.

**Gwendolen.** [Receding.] Jack! Oh!

[Enter **Algernon.**]

**Cecily.** Here is Ernest.

**Algernon.** [Goes straight over to **Cecily** without noticing any one else.] My own love! [Offers to kiss her.]

**Cecily.** [Drawing back.] A moment, Ernest! May I ask you—are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

**Algernon.** [Looking round.] To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen!

**Cecily.** Yes! to good heavens, Gwendolen, I mean to Gwendolen.

**Algernon.** [Laughing.] Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

**Cecily.** Thank you. [Presenting her cheek to be kissed.] You may. [Algernon kisses her.]

**Gwendolen.** I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Mr. Algernon Moncrieff.

**Cecily.** [Breaking away from Algernon.] Algernon Moncrieff! Oh! [The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waists as if for protection.]

**Cecily.** Are you called Algernon?

**Algernon.** I cannot deny it.

**Cecily.** Oh!

**Gwendolen.** Is your name really John?

**Jack.** [Standing rather proudly.] I could deny it if I liked. I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is John. It has been John for years.

**Cecily.** [To Gwendolen.] A gross deception has been practised on both of us.

**Gwendolen.** My poor wounded Cecily!

**Cecily.** My sweet wronged Gwendolen!

**Gwendolen.** [Slowly and seriously.] You will call me sister, will you not? [They embrace. Jack and Algernon groan and walk up and down.]

**Cecily.** [Rather brightly.] There is just one question I would like to be allowed to ask my guardian.

**Gwendolen.** An admirable idea! Mr. Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present.

**Jack.** [Slowly and hesitatingly.] Gwendolen—Cecily—it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind.

However, I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

**Cecily.** [Surprised.] No brother at all?

**Jack.** [Cheerily.] None!

**Gwendolen.** [Severely.] Had you never a brother of any kind?

**Jack.** [Pleasantly.] Never. Not even of any kind.

**Gwendolen.** I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to any one.

**Cecily.** It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in. Is it?

**Gwendolen.** Let us go into the house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

**Cecily.** No, men are so cowardly, aren't they?

[They retire into the house with scornful looks.]

**Jack.** This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?

**Algernon.** Yes, and a perfectly wonderful Bunbury it is. The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life.

**Jack.** Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here.

**Algernon.** That is absurd. One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

**Jack.** Serious Bunburyist! Good heavens!

**Algernon.** Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't got the remotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolutely trivial nature.

**Jack.** Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing too.

**Algernon.** Your brother is a little off colour, isn't he, dear Jack?

You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was. And not a bad thing either.

**Jack.** As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like that is quite inexcusable. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

**Algernon.** I can see no possible defence at all for your deceiving a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady like Miss Fairfax. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

**Jack.** I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

**Algernon.** Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her.

**Jack.** There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew.

**Algernon.** I don't think there is much likelihood, Jack, of you and Miss Fairfax being united.

**Jack.** Well, that is no business of yours.

**Algernon.** If it was my business, I wouldn't talk about it. [Begins to eat muffins.] It is very vulgar to talk about one's business. Only people like stock-brokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties.

**Jack.** How can you sit there, calmly eating muffins when we are in this horrible trouble, I can't make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

**Algernon.** Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

**Jack.** I say it's perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

**Algernon.** When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as any one who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins. [Rising.]

**Jack.** [Rising.] Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way. [Takes muffins from **Algernon**.]

**Algernon.** [Offering tea-cake.] I wish you would have tea-cake instead. I don't like tea-cake.

**Jack.** Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

**Algernon.** But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

**Jack.** I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

**Algernon.** That may be. But the muffins are the same. [He seizes the muffin-dish from **Jack**.]

**Jack.** Algy, I wish to goodness you would go.

**Algernon.** You can't possibly ask me to go without having some dinner. It's absurd. I never go without my dinner. No one ever does, except vegetarians and people like that. Besides I have just made arrangements with Dr. Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest.

**Jack.** My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better. I made arrangements this morning with Dr. Chasuble to be christened myself at 5.30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest. Gwendolen would wish it. We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like. There is no evidence at all that I have ever been christened by anybody. I should think it extremely probable I never was, and so does Dr. Chasuble. It is entirely different in your case. You have been christened already.

**Algernon.** Yes, but I have not been christened for years.

**Jack.** Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing.

**Algernon.** Quite so. So I know my constitution can stand it. If you are not quite sure about your ever having been christened, I must say I think it rather dangerous your venturing on it now. It might make you very unwell. You can hardly have forgotten that some one very closely connected with you was very nearly carried off this week in Paris by a severe chill.

**Jack.** Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary.

**Algernon.** It usen't to be, I know—but I daresay it is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements in things.

**Jack.** [Picking up the muffin-dish.] Oh, that is nonsense; you are always talking nonsense.

**Algernon.** Jack, you are at the muffins again! I wish you wouldn't. There are only two left. [Takes them.] I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.

**Jack.** But I hate tea-cake.

**Algernon.** Why on earth then do you allow tea-cake to be served up for your guests? What ideas you have of hospitality!

**Jack.** Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go!

**Algernon.** I haven't quite finished my tea yet! and there is still one muffin left. [**Jack** groans, and sinks into a chair. **Algernon** still continues eating.]

ACT DROP

## THIRD ACT

### SCENE

Morning-room at the Manor House.

[**Gwendolen** and **Cecily** are at the window, looking out into the garden.]

**Gwendolen.** The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house, as any one else would have done, seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left.

**Cecily.** They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance.

**Gwendolen.** [After a pause.] They don't seem to notice us at all. Couldn't you cough?

**Cecily.** But I haven't got a cough.

**Gwendolen.** They're looking at us. What effrontery!

**Cecily.** They're approaching. That's very forward of them.

**Gwendolen.** Let us preserve a dignified silence.

**Cecily.** Certainly. It's the only thing to do now. [Enter **Jack** followed by **Algernon**. They whistle some dreadful popular air from a British Opera.]

**Gwendolen.** This dignified silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect.

**Cecily.** A most distasteful one.

**Gwendolen.** But we will not be the first to speak.

**Cecily.** Certainly not.

**Gwendolen.** Mr. Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply.

**Cecily.** Gwendolen, your common sense is invaluable. Mr. Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question. Why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother?

**Algernon.** In order that I might have an opportunity of meeting you.

**Cecily.** [To **Gwendolen**.] That certainly seems a satisfactory explanation, does it not?

**Gwendolen.** Yes, dear, if you can believe him.

**Cecily.** I don't. But that does not affect the wonderful beauty of his answer.

**Gwendolen.** True. In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity is the vital thing. Mr. Worthing, what explanation can you offer to me for pretending to have a brother? Was it in order that you might have an opportunity of coming up to town to see me as often as possible?

**Jack.** Can you doubt it, Miss Fairfax?

**Gwendolen.** I have the gravest doubts upon the subject. But I intend to crush them. This is not the moment for German scepticism. [Moving to **Cecily**.] Their explanations appear to be quite satisfactory, especially Mr. Worthing's. That seems to me to have the stamp of truth upon it.



**Cecily.** I am more than content with what Mr. Moncrieff said. His voice alone inspires one with absolute credulity.

**Gwendolen.** Then you think we should forgive them?

**Cecily.** Yes. I mean no.

**Gwendolen.** True! I had forgotten. There are principles at stake that one cannot surrender. Which of us should tell them? The task is not a pleasant one.

**Cecily.** Could we not both speak at the same time?

**Gwendolen.** An excellent idea! I nearly always speak at the same time as other people. Will you take the time from me?

**Cecily.** Certainly. [**Gwendolen** beats time with uplifted finger.]

**Gwendolen** and **Cecily** [Speaking together.] Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier. That is all!

**Jack** and **Algernon** [Speaking together.] Our Christian names! Is that all? But we are going to be christened this afternoon.

**Gwendolen.** [To **Jack**.] For my sake you are prepared to do this terrible thing?

**Jack.** I am.

**Cecily.** [To **Algernon**.] To please me you are ready to face this fearful ordeal?

**Algernon.** I am!

**Gwendolen.** How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us.

**Jack.** We are. [Clasps hands with **Algernon**.]

**Cecily.** They have moments of physical courage of which we women know absolutely nothing.

**Gwendolen.** [To **Jack**.] Darling!

**Algernon.** [To **Cecily**.] Darling! [They fall into each other's arms.]

[Enter **Merriman**. When he enters he coughs loudly, seeing the situation.]

**Merriman.** Ahem! Ahem! Lady Bracknell!

**Jack.** Good heavens!

[Enter **Lady Bracknell**. The couples separate in alarm. Exit **Merriman**.]

**Lady Bracknell.** Gwendolen! What does this mean?

**Gwendolen.** Merely that I am engaged to be married to Mr. Worthing, mamma.

**Lady Bracknell.** Come here. Sit down. Sit down immediately. Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old. [Turns to **Jack**.] Apprised, sir, of my daughter's sudden flight by her trusty maid, whose confidence I purchased by means of a small coin, I followed her at once by a luggage train. Her unhappy father is, I am glad to say, under the impression that she is attending a more than usually lengthy lecture by the University Extension Scheme on the Influence of a permanent income on Thought. I do not propose to deceive him. Indeed I have never deceived him on any question. I would consider it wrong. But of course, you will clearly understand that all communication between yourself and my daughter must cease immediately from this moment. On this point, as indeed on all points, I am firm.

**Jack.** I am engaged to be married to Gwendolen Lady Bracknell!

**Lady Bracknell.** You are nothing of the kind, sir. And now, as regards Algernon! . . . Algernon!

**Algernon.** Yes, Aunt Augusta.

**Lady Bracknell.** May I ask if it is in this house that your invalid friend Mr. Bunbury resides?

**Algernon.** [Stammering.] Oh! No! Bunbury doesn't live here. Bunbury is somewhere else at present. In fact, Bunbury is dead.

**Lady Bracknell.** Dead! When did Mr. Bunbury die? His death must have been extremely sudden.

**Algernon.** [Airily.] Oh! I killed Bunbury this afternoon. I mean poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

**Lady Bracknell.** What did he die of?

**Algernon.** Bunbury? Oh, he was quite exploded.

**Lady Bracknell.** Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr. Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity.

**Algernon.** My dear Aunt Augusta, I mean he was found out!

The doctors found out that Bunbury could not live, that is what I mean—so Bunbury died.

**Lady Bracknell.** He seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. I am glad, however, that he made up his mind at the last to some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now that we have finally got rid of this Mr. Bunbury, may I ask, Mr. Worthing, who is that young person whose hand my nephew Algernon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?

**Jack.** That lady is Miss Cecily Cardew, my ward. [**Lady Bracknell** bows coldly to **Cecily**.]

**Algernon.** I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

**Lady Bracknell.** I beg your pardon?

**Cecily.** Mr. Moncrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

**Lady Bracknell.** [With a shiver, crossing to the sofa and sitting down.] I do not know whether there is anything peculiarly exciting in the air of this particular part of Hertfordshire, but the number of engagements that go on seems to me considerably above the proper average that statistics have laid down for our guidance. I think some preliminary inquiry on my part would not be out of place. Mr. Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any of the larger railway stations in London? I merely desire information. Until yesterday I had no idea that there were any families or persons whose origin was a Terminus. [**Jack** looks perfectly furious, but restrains himself.]

**Jack.** [In a clear, cold voice.] Miss Cardew is the grand-daughter of the late Mr. Thomas Cardew of 149 Belgrave Square, S.W.; Gervase Park, Dorking, Surrey; and the Sporrán, Fifeshire, N.B.

**Lady Bracknell.** That sounds not unsatisfactory. Three addresses always inspire confidence, even in tradesmen. But what proof have I of their authenticity?

**Jack.** I have carefully preserved the Court Guides of the period. They are open to your inspection, Lady Bracknell.

**Lady Bracknell.** [Grimly.] I have known strange errors in that publication.

**Jack.** Miss Cardew's family solicitors are Messrs. Markby, Markby, and Markby.

**Lady Bracknell.** Markby, Markby, and Markby? A firm of the very highest position in their profession. Indeed I am told that one of the Mr. Markby's is occasionally to be seen at dinner parties. So far I am satisfied.

**Jack.** [Very irritably.] How extremely kind of you, Lady Bracknell! I have also in my possession, you will be pleased to hear, certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping cough, registration, vaccination, confirmation, and the measles; both the German and the English variety.

**Lady Bracknell.** Ah! A life crowded with incident, I see; though perhaps somewhat too exciting for a young girl. I am not myself in favour of premature experiences. [Rises, looks at her watch.] Gwendolen! the time approaches for our departure. We have not a moment to lose. As a matter of form, Mr. Worthing, I had better ask you if Miss Cardew has any little fortune?

**Jack.** Oh! about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds. That is all. Goodbye, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you.

**Lady Bracknell.** [Sitting down again.] A moment, Mr. Worthing. A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! And in the Funds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her. Few girls of the present day have any really solid qualities, any of the qualities that last, and improve with time. We live, I regret to say, in an age of surfaces. [To Cecily.] Come over here, dear. [Cecily goes across.] Pretty child! your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it. But we can soon alter all that. A thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvellous result in a very brief space of time. I remember recommending one to young Lady Lancing, and after three months her own husband did not know her.

**Jack.** And after six months nobody knew her.

**Lady Bracknell.** [Glares at **Jack** for a few moments. Then bends, with a practised smile, to **Cecily**.] Kindly turn round, sweet child. [**Cecily** turns completely round.] No, the side view is what I want. [**Cecily** presents her profile.] Yes, quite as I expected. There are distinct social possibilities in your profile. The two weak points in our age are its want of principle and its want of profile. The chin a little higher, dear. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn. They are worn very high, just at present. Algernon!

**Algernon.** Yes, Aunt Augusta!

**Lady Bracknell.** There are distinct social possibilities in Miss Cardew's profile.

**Algernon.** Cecily is the sweetest, dearest, prettiest girl in the whole world. And I don't care twopence about social possibilities.

**Lady Bracknell.** Never speak disrespectfully of Society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that. [To **Cecily**.] Dear child, of course you know that Algernon has nothing but his debts to depend upon. But I do not approve of mercenary marriages. When I married Lord Bracknell I had no fortune of any kind. But I never dreamed for a moment of allowing that to stand in my way. Well, I suppose I must give my consent.

**Algernon.** Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

**Lady Bracknell.** Cecily, you may kiss me!

**Cecily.** [Kisses her.] Thank you, Lady Bracknell.

**Lady Bracknell.** You may also address me as Aunt Augusta for the future.

**Cecily.** Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

**Lady Bracknell.** The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon.

**Algernon.** Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

**Cecily.** Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

**Lady Bracknell.** To speak frankly, I am not in favour of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which I think is never advisable.

**Jack.** I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady Bracknell, but this engagement is quite out of the question. I am Miss Cardew's

guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent until she comes of age. That consent I absolutely decline to give.

**Lady Bracknell.** Upon what grounds may I ask? Algernon is an extremely, I may almost say an ostentatiously, eligible young man. He has nothing, but he looks everything. What more can one desire?

**Jack.** It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you, Lady Bracknell, about your nephew, but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character. I suspect him of being untruthful. [Algernon and Cecily look at him in indignant amazement.]

**Lady Bracknell.** Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian.

**Jack.** I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter. This afternoon during my temporary absence in London on an important question of romance, he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretence of being my brother. Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my butler, an entire pint bottle of my Perrier-Jouet, Brut, '89; wine I was specially reserving for myself. Continuing his disgraceful deception, he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward. He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin. And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is, that he was perfectly well aware from the first that I have no brother, that I never had a brother, and that I don't intend to have a brother, not even of any kind. I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon.

**Lady Bracknell.** Ahem! Mr. Worthing, after careful consideration I have decided entirely to overlook my nephew's conduct to you.

**Jack.** That is very generous of you, Lady Bracknell. My own decision, however, is unalterable. I decline to give my consent.

**Lady Bracknell.** [To Cecily.] Come here, sweet child. [Cecily goes over.] How old are you, dear?

**Cecily.** Well, I am really only eighteen, but I always admit to twenty when I go to evening parties.

**Lady Bracknell.** You are perfectly right in making some slight

alteration. Indeed, no woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating . . . [In a meditative manner.] Eighteen, but admitting to twenty at evening parties. Well, it will not be very long before you are of age and free from the restraints of tutelage. So I don't think your guardian's consent is, after all, a matter of any importance.

**Jack.** Pray excuse me, Lady Bracknell, for interrupting you again, but it is only fair to tell you that according to the terms of her grandfather's will Miss Cardew does not come legally of age till she is thirty-five.

**Lady Bracknell.** That does not seem to me to be a grave objection. Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years. Lady Dumbleton is an instance in point. To my own knowledge she has been thirty-five ever since she arrived at the age of forty, which was many years ago now. I see no reason why our dear Cecily should not be even still more attractive at the age you mention than she is at present. There will be a large accumulation of property.

**Cecily.** Algy, could you wait for me till I was thirty-five?

**Algernon.** Of course I could, Cecily. You know I could.

**Cecily.** Yes, I felt it instinctively, but I couldn't wait all that time. I hate waiting even five minutes for anybody. It always makes me rather cross. I am not punctual myself, I know, but I do like punctuality in others, and waiting, even to be married, is quite out of the question.

**Algernon.** Then what is to be done, Cecily?

**Cecily.** I don't know, Mr. Moncrieff.

**Lady Bracknell.** My dear Mr. Worthing, as Miss Cardew states positively that she cannot wait till she is thirty-five—a remark which I am bound to say seems to me to show a somewhat impatient nature—I would beg of you to reconsider your decision.

**Jack.** But my dear Lady Bracknell, the matter is entirely in your own hands. The moment you consent to my marriage with

Gwendolen, I will most gladly allow your nephew to form an alliance with my ward.

**Lady Bracknell.** [Rising and drawing herself up.] You must be quite aware that what you propose is out of the question.

**Jack.** Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to.

**Lady Bracknell.** That is not the destiny I propose for Gwendolen. Algernon, of course, can choose for himself. [Pulls out her watch.] Come, dear, [**Gwendolen** rises] we have already missed five, if not six, trains. To miss any more might expose us to comment on the platform.

[Enter **Dr. Chasuble**.]

**Chasuble.** Everything is quite ready for the christenings.

**Lady Bracknell.** The christenings, sir! Is not that somewhat premature?

**Chasuble.** [Looking rather puzzled, and pointing to **Jack** and **Algernon**.] Both these gentlemen have expressed a desire for immediate baptism.

**Lady Bracknell.** At their age? The idea is grotesque and irreligious! Algernon, I forbid you to be baptized. I will not hear of such excesses. Lord Bracknell would be highly displeased if he learned that that was the way in which you wasted your time and money.

**Chasuble.** Am I to understand then that there are to be no christenings at all this afternoon?

**Jack.** I don't think that, as things are now, it would be of much practical value to either of us, Dr. Chasuble.

**Chasuble.** I am grieved to hear such sentiments from you, Mr. Worthing. They savour of the heretical views of the Anabaptists, views that I have completely refuted in four of my unpublished sermons. However, as your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed by the pew-opener that for the last hour and a half Miss Prism has been waiting for me in the vestry.



**Lady Bracknell.** [Starting.] Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

**Chasuble.** Yes, Lady Bracknell. I am on my way to join her.

**Lady Bracknell.** Pray allow me to detain you for a moment. This matter may prove to be one of vital importance to Lord Bracknell and myself. Is this Miss Prism a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education?

**Chasuble.** [Somewhat indignantly.] She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

**Lady Bracknell.** It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

**Chasuble.** [Severely.] I am a celibate, madam.

**Jack.** [Interposing.] Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell, has been for the last three years Miss Cardew's esteemed governess and valued companion.

**Lady Bracknell.** In spite of what I hear of her, I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

**Chasuble.** [Looking off.] She approaches; she is nigh.

[Enter **Miss Prism** hurriedly.]

**Miss Prism.** I was told you expected me in the vestry, dear Canon. I have been waiting for you there for an hour and three-quarters. [Catches sight of **Lady Bracknell**, who has fixed her with a stony glare. **Miss Prism** grows pale and quails. She looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape.]

**Lady Bracknell.** [In a severe, judicial voice.] Prism! [**Miss Prism** bows her head in shame.] Come here, Prism! [**Miss Prism** approaches in a humble manner.] Prism! Where is that baby? [General consternation. The **Canon** starts back in horror. **Algernon** and **Jack** pretend to be anxious to shield **Cecily** and **Gwendolen** from hearing the details of a terrible public scandal.] Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left Lord Bracknell's house, Number 104, Upper Grosvenor Street, in charge of a perambulator that contained a baby of the male sex. You never returned. A few weeks later, through the elaborate investigations of the Metropolitan police, the perambulator was discovered at midnight, standing by itself in a

remote corner of Bayswater. It contained the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality. [**Miss Prism** starts in involuntary indignation.] But the baby was not there! [Every one looks at **Miss Prism**.] Prism! Where is that baby? [A pause.]

**Miss Prism.** Lady Bracknell, I admit with shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is for ever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old, but capacious hand-bag in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I never can forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the basinette, and placed the baby in the hand-bag.

**Jack.** [Who has been listening attentively.] But where did you deposit the hand-bag?

**Miss Prism.** Do not ask me, Mr. Worthing.

**Jack.** Miss Prism, this is a matter of no small importance to me. I insist on knowing where you deposited the hand-bag that contained that infant.

**Miss Prism.** I left it in the cloak-room of one of the larger railway stations in London.

**Jack.** What railway station?

**Miss Prism.** [Quite crushed.] Victoria. The Brighton line. [Sinks into a chair.]

**Jack.** I must retire to my room for a moment. Gwendolen, wait here for me.

**Gwendolen.** If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life. [Exit **Jack** in great excitement.]

**Chasuble.** What do you think this means, Lady Bracknell?

**Lady Bracknell.** I dare not even suspect, Dr. Chasuble. I need hardly tell you that in families of high position strange coincidences are not supposed to occur. They are hardly considered the thing.

[Noises heard overhead as if some one was throwing trunks about. Every one looks up.]

**Cecily.** Uncle Jack seems strangely agitated.

**Chasuble.** Your guardian has a very emotional nature.

**Lady Bracknell.** This noise is extremely unpleasant. It sounds as if he was having an argument. I dislike arguments of any kind. They are always vulgar, and often convincing.

**Chasuble.** [Looking up.] It has stopped now. [The noise is redoubled.]

**Lady Bracknell.** I wish he would arrive at some conclusion.

**Gwendolen.** This suspense is terrible. I hope it will last. [Enter **Jack** with a hand-bag of black leather in his hand.]

**Jack.** [Rushing over to **Miss Prism**.] Is this the hand-bag, Miss Prism? Examine it carefully before you speak. The happiness of more than one life depends on your answer.

**Miss Prism.** [Calmly.] It seems to be mine. Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days. Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage, an incident that occurred at Leamington. And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years.

**Jack.** [In a pathetic voice.] Miss Prism, more is restored to you than this hand-bag. I was the baby you placed in it.

**Miss Prism.** [Amazed.] You?

**Jack.** [Embracing her.] Yes . . . mother!

**Miss Prism.** [Recoiling in indignant astonishment.] Mr. Worthing! I am unmarried!

**Jack.** Unmarried! I do not deny that is a serious blow. But after all, who has the right to cast a stone against one who has suffered? Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men, and another for women? Mother, I forgive you. [Tries to embrace her again.]

**Miss Prism.** [Still more indignant.] Mr. Worthing, there is some error. [Pointing to **Lady Bracknell.**] There is the lady who can tell you who you really are.

**Jack.** [After a pause.] Lady Bracknell, I hate to seem inquisitive, but would you kindly inform me who I am?

**Lady Bracknell.** I am afraid that the news I have to give you will not altogether please you. You are the son of my poor sister, Mrs. Moncrieff, and consequently Algernon's elder brother.

**Jack.** Algy's elder brother! Then I have a brother after all. I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily,—how could you have ever doubted that I had a brother? [Seizes hold of **Algernon.**] Dr. Chasuble, my unfortunate brother. Miss Prism, my unfortunate brother. Gwendolen, my unfortunate brother. Algy, you young scoundrel, you will have to treat me with more respect in the future. You have never behaved to me like a brother in all your life.

**Algernon.** Well, not till to-day, old boy, I admit. I did my best, however, though I was out of practice.

[Shakes hands.]

**Gwendolen.** [To **Jack.**] My own! But what own are you? What is your Christian name, now that you have become some one else?

**Jack.** Good heavens! . . . I had quite forgotten that point. Your decision on the subject of my name is irrevocable, I suppose?

**Gwendolen.** I never change, except in my affections.

**Cecily.** What a noble nature you have, Gwendolen!

**Jack.** Then the question had better be cleared up at once. Aunt Augusta, a moment. At the time when Miss Prism left me in the hand-bag, had I been christened already?

**Lady Bracknell.** Every luxury that money could buy, including christening, had been lavished on you by your fond and doting parents.

**Jack.** Then I was christened! That is settled. Now, what name was I given? Let me know the worst.

**Lady Bracknell.** Being the eldest son you were naturally christened after your father.

**Jack.** [Irritably.] Yes, but what was my father's Christian name?

**Lady Bracknell.** [Meditatively.] I cannot at the present moment recall what the General's Christian name was. But I have no doubt he had one. He was eccentric, I admit. But only in later years. And that was the result of the Indian climate, and marriage, and indigestion, and other things of that kind.

**Jack.** Algy! Can't you recollect what our father's Christian name was?

**Algernon.** My dear boy, we were never even on speaking terms. He died before I was a year old.

**Jack.** His name would appear in the Army Lists of the period, I suppose, Aunt Augusta?

**Lady Bracknell.** The General was essentially a man of peace, except in his domestic life. But I have no doubt his name would appear in any military directory.

**Jack.** The Army Lists of the last forty years are here. These delightful records should have been my constant study. [Rushes to bookcase and tears the books out.] M. Generals . . . Mallam, Maxbohm, Magley, what ghastly names they have—Markby, Migsby, Mobbs, Moncrieff! Lieutenant 1840, Captain, Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, General 1869, Christian names, Ernest John. [Puts book very quietly down and speaks quite calmly.] I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well, it is Ernest after all. I mean it naturally is Ernest.

**Lady Bracknell.** Yes, I remember now that the General was called Ernest, I knew I had some particular reason for disliking the name.

**Gwendolen.** Ernest! My own Ernest! I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

**Jack.** Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?

**Gwendolen.** I can. For I feel that you are sure to change.

**Jack.** My own one!

**Chasuble.** [To Miss Prism.] Lætitia! [Embraces her]

**Miss Prism.** [Enthusiastically.] Frederick! At last!

**Algernon.** Cecily! [Embraces her.] At last!

**Jack.** Gwendolen! [Embraces her.] At last!

**Lady Bracknell.** My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality.

**Jack.** On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realised for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest.

TABLEAU

PART XVI

# MODULE 15: PREPARE FOR FINAL ESSAY





## 38. How to Write With Style

In the anthology *How To Use The Power of the Printed Word*, brilliant author Kurt Vonnegut shares eight tips on how to write with style:

### **Find a Subject You Care About**

Find a subject you care about and which you in your heart feel others should care about. It is this genuine caring, and not your games with language, which will be the most compelling and seductive element in your style.

I am not urging you to write a novel, by the way – although I would not be sorry if you wrote one, provided you genuinely cared about something. A petition to the mayor about a pothole in front of your house or a love letter to the girl next door will do.

### **Do Not Ramble, Though**

I won't ramble on about that.

## Keep It Simple

As for your use of language: Remember that two great masters of language, William Shakespeare and James Joyce, wrote sentences which were almost childlike when their subjects were most profound. ‘To be or not to be?’ asks Shakespeare’s Hamlet. The longest word is three letters long. Joyce, when he was frisky, could put together a sentence as intricate and as glittering as a necklace for Cleopatra, but my favorite sentence in his short story ‘Eveline’ is just this one: ‘She was tired.’ At that point in the story, no other words could break the heart of a reader as those three words do.

Simplicity of language is not only reputable, but perhaps even sacred. The Bible opens with a sentence well within the writing skills of a lively fourteen-year-old: “In the beginning God created the heaven and earth.”

## Have the Guts to Cut

It may be that you, too, are capable of making necklaces for Cleopatra, so to speak. But your eloquence should be the servant of the ideas in your head. Your rule might be this: If a sentence, no matter how

excellent, does not illuminate your subject in some new and useful way, scratch it out.

## Sound like Yourself

The writing style which is most natural for you is bound to echo the speech you heard when a child. English was the novelist Joseph Conrad's third language, and much that seems piquant in his use of English was no doubt colored by his first language, which was Polish. And lucky indeed is the writer who has grown up in Ireland, for the English spoken there is so amusing and musical. I myself grew up in Indianapolis, where common speech sounds like a band saw cutting galvanized tin, and employs a vocabulary as unornamental as a monkey wrench.

In some of the more remote hollows of Appalachia, children still grow up hearing songs and locutions of Elizabethan times. Yes, and many Americans grow up hearing a language other than English, or an English dialect a majority of Americans cannot understand.

All these varieties of speech are beautiful, just as the varieties of butterflies are beautiful. No matter what your first language, you should treasure it all your life. If it happens not to be standard English, and if it shows itself when you write standard English, the result is usually delightful, like a very pretty girl with one eye that is green and one that is blue.

I myself find that I trust my own writing most, and

others seem to trust it most, too, when I sound most like a person from Indianapolis, which is what I am. What alternatives do I have? The one most vehemently recommended by teachers has no doubt been pressed on you, as well: to write like cultivated Englishmen of a century or more ago.

## Say What You Mean to Say

I used to be exasperated by such teachers, but am no more. I understand now that all those antique essays and stories with which I was to compare my own work were not magnificent for their datedness or foreignness, but for saying precisely what their authors meant them to say. My teachers wished me to write accurately, always selecting the most effective words, and relating the words to one another unambiguously, rigidly, like parts of a machine. The teachers did not want to turn me into an Englishman after all. They hoped that I would become understandable – and therefore understood. And there went my dream of doing with words what Pablo Picasso did with paint or what any number of jazz idols did with music. If I broke all the rules of punctuation, had words mean whatever I wanted them to mean, and strung them together higgledy-piggledy, I would simply not be understood. So you, too, had better avoid Picasso-style or jazz-style writing if you have something worth saying and wish to be understood.

Readers want our pages to look very much like pages

they have seen before. Why? This is because they themselves have a tough job to do, and they need all the help they can get from us.

## Pity the Readers

Readers have to identify thousands of little marks on paper, and make sense of them immediately. They have to read, an art so difficult that most people don't really master it even after having studied it all through grade school and high school – twelve long years.

So this discussion must finally acknowledge that our stylistic options as writers are neither numerous nor glamorous, since our readers are bound to be such imperfect artists. Our audience requires us to be sympathetic and patient teachers, ever willing to simplify and clarify, whereas we would rather soar high above the crowd, singing like nightingales.

That is the bad news. The good news is that we Americans are governed under a unique constitution, which allows us to write whatever we please without fear of punishment. So the most meaningful aspect of our styles, which is what we choose to write about, is utterly unlimited.

## For Really Detailed Advice

For a discussion of literary style in a narrower sense, a more technical sense, I commend to your attention *The Elements of Style*, by Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White. E. B. White is, of course, one of the most admirable literary stylists this country has so far produced.

You should realize, too, that no one would care how well or badly Mr. White expressed himself if he did not have perfectly enchanting things to say.

## 39. Creating an Effective Style

### *Learning Objectives*

- Discuss ways to make the style more effective and compelling.
- Discuss how to fix common mistakes in editing.
- Provide two contrasting example essays for review.

Once you've adequately explored your subject and laid out your analysis with an effective structure, you can focus more deliberately on the style. Though content and style are difficult to separate, the focus of our attention tends to shift in later drafts from discovering new ideas to considering more effective ways to convey them. The process, however, is not linear but recursive—because a thorough analysis leads to clarity of expression and clarity of expression will in turn lead to a more thorough analysis. Often when you can find a more precise term, it will give you new insights on the entire section and lead to a more sophisticated approach in general.

### Finding the Most Vivid Terms

For this reason, I recommend that after you've finished writing a draft of your essay go back and underline all the vague and general terms to see if you can replace them with more **precise diction**, words that are clear and specific. Especially look out for the “s” word, and no, I do not mean the one that comes to almost

everyone's lips when they look in the rear view mirror and see flashing police lights. I mean "society." By itself it can mean anything—the entire world, the specific part of the country you live in, the people who make the rules, the counter culture that resists the people who make the rules, to name just a few. If you can specify which "society" you are referring to, you will not only clarify your analysis but also discover new insights concerning the significance of your perspective to a specific group. And also try to avoid all the variations of society that do not provide additional clarity, such as: "in today's society" or "in today's modern complex industrial society."

Consider also looking out for these vague terms and phrases: "The Government." Try to specify if this term refers to state, local, or federal representatives, the people who vote them in, or to those who get paid through tax dollars, such as public school teachers, policeman, and armed service personal. "Since the beginning of time." Try to specify when something actually begins. Personal computers, for instance, have not been around since the beginning of time, as one of my students wrote, but only since the late 1970s. "All people want to have..." No matter how you finish that sentence, you probably won't discover something that all people want to have. Again, specify which group of people and why they want to have it. You should also be on the lookout for words like, "stuff," "things," or "items," if you can replace them with more concrete terms like, "scattered papers," "empty oil cans," or "half finished plates of food."

Give the same care and attention to your choice of verbs. You should especially avoid overusing the passive voice, in which the subject of the sentence does not perform the action as in "Tina was asked to go to the prom by Jake." Usually the active voice sounds more vivid and more compelling, "Jake asked Tina to go to the prom." And it would be even better if you could replace the verb "asked" with one that gives a more specific account of the action: "Jake begged Tina to go to the Prom." But don't feel the need to eliminate the passive voice entirely. Sometimes you may not know who performed the action implied in the sentence, "my car was



scraped” or you don’t want to admit responsibility for your own actions, “mistakes were made.” Just make certain that when you use a form of the verb “to be,” you do so for a reason and not in place of a verb that suggests a more vivid account.

## Avoiding Wordiness

In advising you to find more precise and compelling words, I do not mean that you should search your thesaurus to find the longest and most complicated terms. Nothing makes students sound like they are trying too hard to impress their teachers than when they use words that appear unnecessarily complicated, dated, or pretentious to make the analysis seem more sophisticated. Though students often think that they impress their teachers by using the most complex term, it usually leaves the opposite impression that you are spending too much time with the thesaurus and not enough with the actual substance of the essay.

Along these lines, avoid the other common trick of adding unnecessary words just to lengthen the essay out to the required number of pages. Instead always look for ways to state your point of view more succinctly. Sometimes you can do this by using a term that implies several others. For instance, you do not need to write, “Sue is like those people who always put off doing what they are supposed to do until much later than they should have done it in the first place,” when you can simply say, “Sue procrastinates.”

## Writing Compelling Sentences

Once your essay has a precise, natural diction, you can jazz it up even further by creating **sentence variety**. A series of sentences of the same length and type tends to get hypnotic (in fact, hypnotists

use rhythmical tones and repetitious phrases to put people into trances). Your essay should “flow” in the sense that the ideas connect to each other, but not in the sense that the style seems like listening to the waves of a lake lapping against the shore at steady intervals. A style that commands attention seems more like a river that changes at every bend. To achieve this effect, try to juxtapose sentences of various lengths and types. If you have a long sentence that is full of subordination and coordination, moving through the complexities of a section of your analysis, then try to follow it up with a short one. Like this.

An excellent way to achieve more variety, provide more coherence, and reduce wordiness is to combine some of the sentences. Take the following series: *I wanted some ice cream. There are ice cream shops downtown. I have to drive to get to downtown. I don't have time to drive downtown. I've been putting on weight lately. I decided to eat a carrot. Carrots are healthier than ice cream.* Even if these sentences were full of more intriguing observations, we would have to struggle not to fall into a hypnotic trance while reading them. Consider how much more engaging it is to read: *I wanted some ice cream. But when I realized I had to drive all the way downtown to get some, I decided to settle for a carrot instead, a much healthier choice for me anyway. I've put on weight lately.* The combination of short and long sentences keeps our attention by jolting us out of a monotonous flow; the elimination of excess words keeps us from having to sort through the clutter; and the coordination and subordination provides a sense of coherence to the previously scattered thoughts.

## Editing

Once you have an effective structure and style, make sure to proofread your essay carefully. Try to imagine going out on a date, in which you took the time to work for the extra money to go to a

nice restaurant and spent hours trying on outfits to look your best, but then when the food arrives, you dig into it with your hands, chew with your mouth open, and reach over to eat your partner's food, too. Sounds ridiculous, right? Then why do I often get papers from students who took the time to write engaging analyses but did not bother to eliminate similar distractions in editing etiquette? No matter how intelligently you express your point of view, no one will take your essay seriously if it is riddled with errors in punctuation, sentence structure, and spelling.

To avoid these problems, I recommend that when you finish your essay try **reverse editing**, a method in which you check the essay a sentence at a time backwards. In other words, read the last sentence first and work your way back to the first. This way you will not get so involved in the content that you overlook the problems with grammar, spelling, and punctuation. If you have trouble recognizing these problems, I suggest that you get a hold of a handbook and dictionary instead of relying on your computer to solve all the problems for you. For instance, spell check cannot catch all errors, especially when you use the wrong homonym, or when a typo transforms the word you intend into one that's different, such as when you forget to type the "t" in "the" and it becomes "he."

## Review

To underscore all the advice I have given throughout this book, consider the ways that you might revise and edit the following piece entitled "Those Misleading Manhattan Friends" that I wrote as a parody of bad essay writing. While producing it, I had the joy of ignoring every piece of advice I've given throughout this book. It contains no developed analysis; a five paragraph essay structure; vague, repetitive, archaic, and inappropriate terms; monotonous sentences of the same type and length; errors in punctuation, parallelism, and logic; and oodles of misspellings that spell check

will not catch. Before you attempt to revise it, you might want to first review the advice given throughout this chapter about transforming topic sentences into transitions, choosing appropriate diction, combining sentences for variety, and editing the finished draft by reading it a sentence at a time backwards.

## Those Misleading Manhattan Friends

Television. According to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, television is a system for transmitting images and sound into a receiver. Television influences how we think. As part of the media, it shows us ways to consider the ways we see the world. In the show *Friends* three major contradictions can be found that can be seen by the desecrating viewer. As this paper proceeds each of these contradictions will be made more clearer.

The first of these contradictions has to do with the economics of the major characters within the show *Friends*. Manhattan is an expensive place too live. It is expensive because the rents are very high their. My friend lives in Manhattan. My friend pays a lot for rent in Manhattan. My friend pays over 2,000 dollars a month for a studio apartment in Manhattan. My friend has a good job in Manhattan and still has difficulty making ends meet in such an expensive city as Manhattan. Ross is a teacher. He teaches at the University. Ross lives in a nice apartment. Teachers make very little money. Even University teachers make very little money. Phoebe is a masseuse. She gets paid per job. She lives in a nice

apartment. She makes 50 dollars per job. She is always at the coffee shop with her friends. How many jobs can she do in a week? Rents are just too high overall.

Another contradiction within the show *Friends* is there relationships. Ross and Rachel date each other. Ross and Rachel indubitably break up. This usually happens at the end of each season. They are still friends. I cannot be friends with anyone I break up with. My feckless girlfriend and I dated for six years. Then she changed 360 degrees into a different person. She brook my heart. I do not wish to talk to he anymore. Rachel and Ross have a kid together. There kid is very cute. They were once married to each other. They still get together and go two movies as if they simply have a causal relationship. This is a contradiction to. I think now Joey and Rachel are dating. I am sure that they will brake up to.

Another contradiction within the show *Friends* has to do with the modern, complex, ever-changing, technological, fast paced world that we live in today. Few people stay in one place anymore. People move a lot. Only 1 friend from my high school steal lives in the same area. Ross, Rachel, Joey, Chandler, Phoebe, and Monica never move. Except when they move in and out of each others apartments. They also never make gnu friends. Except when they date other people for about half a season and then get board and come back and end up dating each other again.

In conclusion, *Friends* is full of mini and varied contradictions. It is knot a very realistical show. For one, the characters live in Manhattan and they would not be

able to afford to live their especially Ross and Phoebe. For two they date each other and have kids together and the brake up but they still remain friends. And for three and finally they never move or make new friends in eleven years!!! Yet the show is popular. I suppose there are many reasons why it is popular any weigh.

This essay took less than an hour to write. I started with an outline for each of the five paragraphs and followed it precisely and quickly, throwing in the main ideas without further thought, revision, or editing (okay, I did challenge myself to include several common misspellings that spell check would not catch). Even still the piece is not completely hopeless. The notion that a show like *Friends* can lead audiences to accept false impressions of reality could have proven intriguing to explore, and if this essay were not written by me as a parody but by a student in earnest, I would try to help her to focus the paper around this theme and to further develop her relevant ideas.

When you respond to the writing of your peers, keep in mind that we all have to write drafts and that it is always better to focus on the positive, how the writing could become more effective, rather than the negative, explicating what is wrong with it at the moment. In fact, when running writing workshops, I insist that all the feedback be stated in terms of what we like (so the writer knows what to keep or expand in subsequent drafts) and how it can be improved (so the writer has specific advice as to how to make the essay better). This helps writers to get excited about the potential of their essays rather than depressed about their current shortcomings. Ultimately it's our attitude about our writing that causes us either to give up on it entirely or to continue to try to improve it.

The difference between the previous essay on *Friends* and the following one that I wrote on a strange museum in Los Angeles did

not emerge from the potential interest of the subject matter but from the time and effort that I put into the writing of each. The piece that follows took several days and many drafts as I integrated experience, research, and critical examination to develop my analysis. When writing it, I used the advice I've given you throughout this book, so for the sake of review, I will explain how I created it before providing you with the finished draft.

When I first visited The Museum of Jurassic Technology I was dumbfounded by what awaited me inside the building. Stumbling through the dark building, I discovered a series of dioramas on such odd and diverse subjects as spores that take over the brains of ants, bats whose radars can pierce through lead, artifacts found in American trailer parks, illustrations of archaic beliefs and superstitions, and a convoluted and bizarre theory of how memory functions by a man I'd never heard of named Geoffrey Sonneabend. Later, when I discovered that parts of the collection were made up (including both Sonneabend and his theory of memory) and other parts were simply unremarkable, I felt the need to write about the experience in my journal:

*How could I have been so stupid? "Museum of Jurassic Technology?" There was no technology in the Jurassic period, just a bunch of dinosaurs stomping around. I let the word "museum" lead me to think that the rest of the title made sense. And I should have realized when I entered that the items in the collection have nothing in common with each other, have no remarkable characteristics, are scientifically impossible, or just don't make any sense. I consider myself a critical thinker but maybe I'm just as conditioned as everyone else to accept institutional authority.*

As I reflected further on the significance of my visit, I decided that the museum is not the only place where questionable information gets passed off as objective and factual. In school, teachers often ask students to simply repeat information and seldom encourage them to critically examine it, a trend that has become even more common since standardized testing has dominated so much of the current curriculum. This emphasis on memorizing answers does not encourage us to think past the obvious, leading us to accept provisional theories as though they are universal truths. The museum makes us aware of this by using academic sounding phrases to get us to momentarily accept even the most ridiculous claims.

With this working thesis in mind, I set the stage for writing my essay. I researched the museum and related issues, evaluated each aspect of my visit in light of the Pentad, and brainstormed on the museum's wider significance. I then collated and reviewed all of my observations and notes into a first draft, focusing mostly on developing this thesis. I then wrote a second draft in which I included stronger transitions and more deliberate opening and closing paragraphs. Then I produced a third draft, in which I tried to make the style more accurate and varied. I showed this draft to some of my colleagues who gave me excellent suggestions concerning other sources to consult, which parts I should cut and which I should develop, and how it might be reorganized. After this, I submitted it to the online journal, *Americana*, where, after completing more revisions suggested by their editors, it was originally published. When reading it, think about the process that went into creating it, how it didn't spring out of the blue but developed slowly through careful consideration and deliberate revision.



## The Museum of Jurassic Technology

### From Wonder into Wonder Experience Opens

This article was first published in *Americana* by Randy Fallows. [http://americanpopularculture.com/archive/venues/jurassic\\_technology.htm](http://americanpopularculture.com/archive/venues/jurassic_technology.htm)

The Museum of Jurassic Technology, located in Los Angeles, is a place that is easier to describe by its effect than by its content. According to Lawrence Weschler, who wrote about the museum in his highly acclaimed book *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder*, a visit gives one a feeling of being “a bit out of order, all shards and powder.” This reaction springs from two opposing impulses; the first is to trust that everything in the museum is true (since after all it is a museum) and the other is a gnawing feeling that something doesn't seem quite right. The best reason for trusting the latter impulse is that most of the collection is, to varying degrees, false. To be specific, the museum consists of dioramas revealing different aspects of “life in the Lower Jurassic,” including some that are completely made up (a series on the life and theories of a fictional psychologist), some that are made up but believed true (a series on common superstitions), some that are true but unremarkable (a series on the European mole and the night flying moth), and a few that are both true and remarkable (a series on tiny carvings that fit into the eye of a needle).

Although there are no direct statements on the museum's walls which let the visitors in on the secret, the museum does have copies of Weschler's book available, so the extra confused and curious can discover the attraction's "true" nature. I was one of those who, after my first visit, purchased the book in the hopes that it would guide me out of my own confusion. It did, but it also left me repeating "of course" just as I do when I discover the solution to a riddle that seems simultaneously complicated and simple.

There is something fishy about a museum with an oxymoron in its title. Yet to be perfectly honest, I never even considered this a problem because in my mind the term "museum" eclipsed any notion to question the words that followed. I assumed that there must be a special use of the term "Jurassic" which was unfamiliar to me, a use that allowed it to be appropriately paired with the term "technology." This tendency to ignore one's personal reasoning in favor of a greater authority is only partly a result of the respect we attribute to museums in general; it is even more a result of years of academic conditioning to accept that information offered from an acknowledged authority must be true, significant, reasonable, and, in some way, good for us. Everything in the museum seems designed to make us feel uncomfortable with this trust.

At the entrance, there is a short video that introduces the visitor to the museum's mission, a mission placed within a historical context. On closer inspection, the video contains oblique expressions and historical inaccuracies; however because its style and narration

has a “measured voice of unassailable institutional authority,” as Weschler put it, and because there are truths mixed with the fiction, it seems reasonable enough on first examination:

The Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles, California, is an educational institution dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and the public appreciation of the Lower Jurassic. Like a coat of two colors, the museum serves dual functions. On the one hand, the museum provides the academic community with a specialized repository of relics and artifacts from the Lower Jurassic, with an emphasis on those that demonstrate unusual or curious technological qualities. On the other hand, the museum serves the general public by providing the visitor a hands-on experience of “life in the Jurassic.”

The first thing that struck me was the strange use of the phrase “the Lower Jurassic.” However, the claim that the museum serves the academic community led me to believe that there must be a new use of the phrase with which I was unfamiliar. I figured that if it were simply an error, someone long before would have informed the curator that he was confusing a term that describes an ancient time period for one that depicts a modern area. My inclination to trust was furthered by the second mission, to provide a “hands on experience” for the general public, which assured me that the museum was designed with models of effective learning in mind. The video goes on to describe the museum’s place in the history of other such institutions, including what it claims to be the first natural history museum, Noah’s

Ark. This mixture of truth and legend is preparation for what lies in the main collection.

The first exhibits one encounters after leaving the video room are a series of dioramas which focus on the life and theories of Geoffrey Sonnabend. Don't bother looking him up, or you will end up just as frustrated as Weschler, who, after his first visit, looked for references to Sonnabend in several library databases, publishing houses and historical societies before realizing that he was chasing a phantom. Like Weschler, I too fully believed that Sonnabend was a real person, partly because of the vast amount of details about his life and theories and partly because next to the dioramas of him is one of Marcel Proust tasting the tea soaked madeleine that invokes the memories of his childhood. My fondness for Proust increased my desire to learn about this more obscure theorist who also seemed to be interested in the nature of memory.

After looking through several dioramas that focus on a series of unremarkable events from Sonnabend's life, I finally got to the one that deals with his theory of memory, the gist of which is:

All living things have a Cone of Obliscence by which the being experiences experience. This cone is sometimes also known as the Cone of True Memory (and occasionally the Characteristic Cone). Sonnabend speaks of this cone as if it were an organ like the pancreas or spleen and like these organs its shape and characteristics are unique to the individual and remain relatively consistent over time. This cone (occasionally referred to as a horn) is composed of two elements—the

Atmonic Disc (or base of the cone) which Sonnabend described as “the field of immediate consciousness of an individual” and the hollows (or interior of the cone). A third implied element of the Characteristic Cone is the Spelean Axis, an imaginary line which passes through the cone and the center of the Atmonic Disc.

Neither the explanation nor the equally obscure model that accompany it make any sense; however, both echo the rhetoric of academic discourse so well that I convinced myself that my confusion came from my inability to grasp the theory and not from the theory itself. In giving some of the parts different names, it seemed as if many other theorists had arrived at similar conclusions but quibbled with Sonnabend over terminology, and by using complex sounding terms with both certainty and consistency, I was inspired to trust those who were smart enough to invent and use this jargon. However, despite its impressive look, when summarized and translated into common usage, the whole theory boils down to an obvious point: events that affect us deeply are more likely to be remembered than those that are everyday occurrences.

Perhaps if the theory was written out and I had more time to consider it, I might have arrived at this conclusion. However, the recording speeds past with no accompanying text except for the above model. This results in an effort of silent desperation to make sense of the whole thing, an effort that for me went something like this: *Cone of Obliscence? I don't know this term but it sounds like it's related to "obsolescence," so I assume it has to do with memories we no longer need and discard into a*

*what? Spelean Axis! This is completely unfamiliar, but maybe it only intersects the cone at an angle because most experiences are not kept with us as memories; perhaps that is why he calls this part “the Hollows” since these particular experiences do not have a lot of substance.*

Though the exhibit did nothing to enlighten my understanding of the nature of memory as a concept, it did inspire a few memories from my early undergraduate days when I would sit in lecture halls and listen to a professor pontificate through jargon, graphs, models and theories which I did not understand but which I assumed made sense to those who were smart enough to use them. That I began to recall these classroom experiences was quite appropriate, for, as I discovered later, the whole Sonnabend spiel began in lecture form prior to the museum’s establishment when its eventual founder and curator, David Wilson, was explaining these “theories” to high school and university students in the Los Angeles area. One of these lectures was attended by art critic, Ralph Rugoff, who describes a classroom scene in which:

Everybody there was taking notes furiously, as if this were all on the level and was likely to be on the test—the Falls, the cones, the planes, the whole thing. It was amazing. And at one point I leaned over to Diana [David Wilson’s wife] and whispered, “This is the most incredible piece of performance art I have ever seen.” And she replied, “What makes you think it’s performance? David believes all this stuff.” Lawrence Weschler, *Mr. Wilson’s Cabinet of Wonder* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 41.

Wilson's belief notwithstanding, I know that many would consider it outrageous that he is passing off lies as truth in front of students who don't know any better. I wonder, however, if the content of most lectures today will seem equally outrageous in a few years to come. Consider that a student in the early 1950s could come out of a day at school believing that a person will never walk on the moon, that Columbus was the first to discover America, and that the meaning of a literary text can be ascertained through codes completely contained within the piece itself. Isn't it arrogant to believe that much of what currently gets taught won't seem just as ridiculous in the not too distant future?

Wilson sees his museum as a filter through which layers of explanations become obscured, allowing us to acknowledge the mysterious nature of the subjects they attempt to explain. He states, "Certain aspects of this museum you can peel away very easily, but the reality behind, once you peel away those relatively easy layers, is more amazing still than anything those initial layers purport to be." In short, a large part of the Museum's purpose is to inspire the kind of confusion that leads to a healthy skepticism of institutional truths. For it's only when people question established knowledge that new ways of seeing the world can come into existence, or as Lao Tzu put it in the Tao Te Ching, "from wonder into wonder experience opens."

Creating an essay like this takes time, but it is time well spent. Even if you never write another analytical essay after you finish

school, the resulting mental stimulation will both enable and encourage you to think about your own life more deeply and help you discover ways to make it better. And analysis can also lead us to create a better world in general. Given the problems we face stemming from environmental damage, nuclear proliferation, and economic instability, we will need a massive amount of critical thinking spread throughout the entire world to insure our very survival. Because for many years I have studied just how creative and resourceful people can be, I believe we have the ability to solve these problems and live more fulfilling lives as we do so. This can only happen, however, when more of us take the time to slow down and analyze the world around us, so that we can add our perspectives to the written and spoken conversations that make up our culture, our history, and our lives.

## *Exercises*

Consider the differences between the two essays in this section. List all of the problems with the “Misleading Manhattan Friends” piece and think of why these problems did not manifest in the piece on the “Museum of Jurassic Technology.” Now go back over the piece on *Friends* and consider how you could revise it. Begin with the content. How could the focus be more precise? What parts should be cut and which expanded? How could each aspect of analysis be further developed? Now think about the structure. How might you revise the opening and closing paragraphs? What transitions could be added? Finally, consider the style and editing. Try combining sentences for variety, finding more accurate terms, and fixing the problems in spelling and grammar.



## *Key Takeaways*

- An effective style can be achieved through providing sentence variety, precise (but not needlessly complicated) diction, and a personal voice.
- Careful editing can best be achieved by reading the essay a sentence at a time backwards to see more clearly the errors in grammar and spelling.