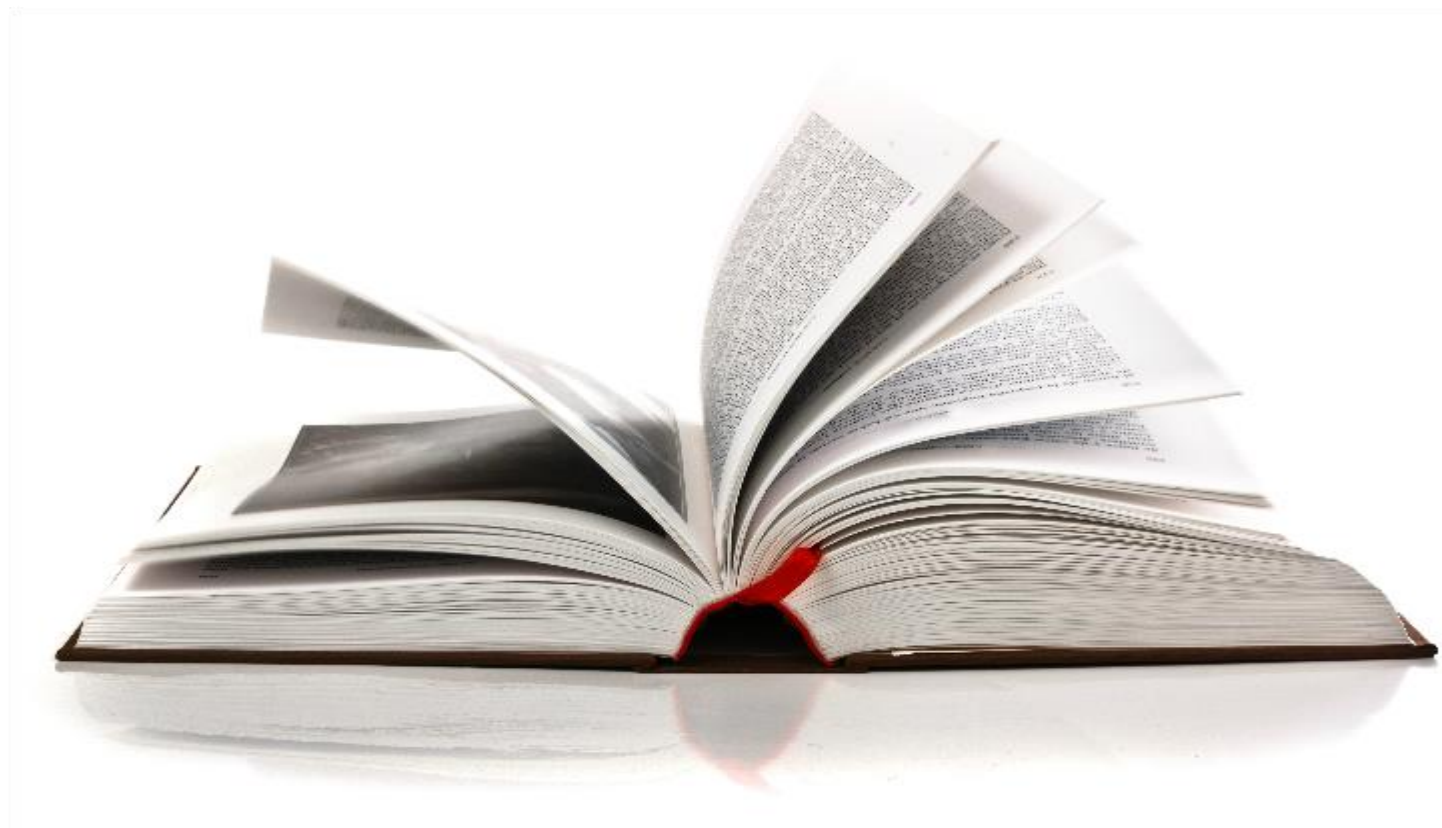


# American Literature



**Учитель: Киричок И.И.**

## *Indian Wisdom*



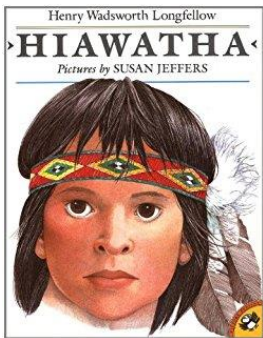
*For generation after generation, the people who inhabited the North American continent were different in many ways, and the same in others. While not alike in tradition, ceremony, language or lifestyle, they did seem to share a common reverence for the earth and all things in nature. For thousands of years Indians maintained an ecological and social balance, but unfortunately for many years their philosophies were not heard because no one was listening.*

***"Treat this earth well:  
it is not a present from your parents,  
it is on loan to your children."***

- ❖ Beauty is before me,  
And beauty is behind me.  
Above and below me hovers the beautiful.  
I am surrounded by it.  
I am immersed in it.  
In my youth I am aware of it,  
And in old age I shall walk quietly  
The beautiful trail.  
(a Navajo prayer)
  
- ❖ Thoughts are like arrows: once released , they strike their mark. Guard them well or one day you may be your own victim.
- ❖ Always assume your guest is tired, cold and hungry, and act accordingly.
- ❖ When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced. Live your life so that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice.
- ❖ Certain things catch your eye, but pursue only those that capture your heart.
- ❖ We will be known forever by the tracks we leave.
- ❖ You can't wake a person who is pretending to be asleep.
- ❖ Listen or your tongue will keep you deaf.
- ❖ Take only memories, leave nothing but footprints.
- ❖ Every animal knows more than you do.
- ❖ No river can return to its source, yet all rivers must have a beginning.
- ❖ It takes a thousand voices to tell a single story.



*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*  
From *"The Song Of Hiawatha"* (1855)



(Introduction)

Should you ask me,  
whence these stories?  
Whence these legends  
and traditions,  
With the odors of the  
forest  
With the dew and damp  
of meadows,

With the curling smoke of wigwams,  
With the rushing of great rivers,  
With their frequent repetitions,  
And their wild reverberations  
As of thunder in the mountains?

I should answer, I should tell you,  
"From the forests and the prairies,  
From the great lakes of the Northland,  
From the land of the Ojibways,  
From the land of the Dacotahs,  
From the mountains, moors, and fen-lands  
Where the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,  
Feeds among the reeds and rushes.  
I repeat them as I heard them  
From the lips of Nawadaha,  
The musician, the sweet singer."

Should you ask where Nawadaha  
Found these songs so wild and wayward,  
Found these legends and traditions,  
I should answer, I should tell you,  
"In the bird's-nests of the forest,  
In the lodges of the beaver,  
In the hoofprint of the bison,  
In the eyry of the eagle!

"All the wild-fowl sang them to him,  
In the moorlands and the fen-lands,  
In the melancholy marshes;  
Chetowaik, the plover, sang them,  
Mahng, the loon, the wild-goose, Wawa,  
The blue heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,  
And the grouse, the Mushkodasa!"

...

"There he sang of Hiawatha,  
Sang the Song of Hiawatha,  
Sang his wondrous birth and being,  
How he prayed and how he fasted,  
How he lived, and toiled, and suffered,  
That the tribes of men might prosper,  
That he might advance his people!"

\* Ye who love the haunts of Nature,  
Love the sunshine of the meadow,  
Love the shadow of the forest,  
Love the wind among the branches,  
And the rain-shower and the snow-storm,  
And the rushing of great rivers  
Through their palisades of pine-trees,  
And the thunder in the mountains,  
Whose innumerable echoes  
Flap like eagles in their eyries;-  
Listen to these wild traditions,  
To this Song of Hiawatha!

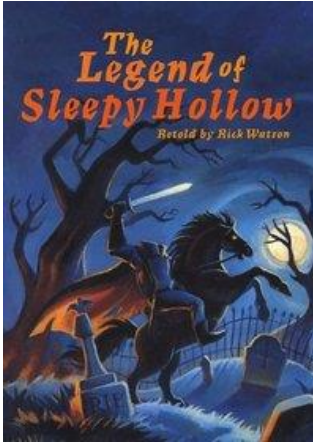
Ye who love a nation's legends,  
Love the ballads of a people,  
That like voices from afar off  
Call to us to pause and listen,  
Speak in tones so plain and childlike,  
Scarcely can the ear distinguish  
Whether they are sung or spoken;-  
Listen to this Indian Legend,  
To this Song of Hiawatha!

Ye whose hearts are fresh and simple,  
Who have faith in God and Nature,  
Who believe that in all ages  
Every human heart is human,  
That in even savage bosoms  
There are longings, yearnings, strivings  
For the good they comprehend not,  
That the feeble hands and helpless,  
Groping blindly in the darkness,  
Touch God's right hand in that darkness  
And are lifted up and strengthened;-  
Listen to this simple story,  
To this Song of Hiawatha!

\*Ye, who sometimes, in your rambles  
Through the green lanes of the country,  
Where the tangled barberry-bushes  
Hang their tufts of crimson berries  
Over stone walls gray with mosses,  
Pause by some neglected graveyard,  
For a while to muse, and ponder  
On a half-effaced inscription,  
Written with little skill of song-craft,  
Homely phrases, but each letter  
Full of hope and yet of heart-break,  
Full of all the tender pathos  
Of the Here and the Hereafter;  
Stay and read this rude inscription,  
Read this Song of Hiawatha!

**Washington Irving**  
**From "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1820)**

*"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is a short story by Washington Irving contained in his collection "The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent". Set in rural New York State, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is widely considered to be one of the very first modern short stories. The following is the description of Sleepy Hollow, a fascinating blend of fact and fiction, whimsicality and charm.*



From the listless repose of the place, and the peculiar character of its inhabitants, who are descendants from the original Dutch settlers, this sequestered glen has long been known by the name of SLEEPY HOLLOW, and its rustic lads are called the Sleepy Hollow Boys throughout all the neighboring country. A drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang over the land, and to pervade the very atmosphere. Some say that the place was bewitched by a High German doctor, during the early days of the settlement; others, that an old Indian chief, the prophet or wizard of his tribe, held his powwows there before the country was discovered by Master Hendrick Hudson. Certain it is, the place still continues under the sway of some witching power, that holds a spell over the minds of the good people, causing them to walk in a continual reverie. They are given to all kinds of marvelous beliefs; are subject to trances and visions, and frequently see strange sights, and hear music and voices in the air. The whole neighborhood abounds with local tales, haunted spots, and twilight superstitions; stars shoot and meteors glare oftener across the valley than in any other part of the country, and the nightmare, with her whole ninefold, seems to make it the favorite scene of her gambols.

The dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region, and seems to be commander-in-chief of all the powers of the air, is the apparition of a figure on horseback, without a head. It is said by some to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper (1), whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during the Revolutionary War, and who is ever and anon seen by the country folk hurrying along in the gloom of night, as if on the wings of the wind. His haunts are not confined to the valley, but extend at times to the adjacent roads, and especially to the vicinity of a church at no great distance. Indeed, certain of the most authentic historians of those parts, who have been careful in collecting and collating the floating facts concerning this spectre, allege that the body of the trooper having been buried in the churchyard, the ghost rides forth to the scene of battle in nightly quest of his head, and that the rushing speed with which he sometimes passes along the Hollow, like a midnight blast, is owing to his being belated, and in a hurry to get back to the churchyard before daybreak.

Such is the general purport of this legendary superstition, which has furnished materials for many a wild story in that region of shadows; and the spectre is known at all the country firesides, by the name of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow.

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*1 Hessian trooper: German soldier (hired by the British during the American War of Independence)*

**POST-READING EXERCISES**

- 1. What kind of place is Sleepy Hollow? Does it strike you as a real or an imaginary place? Or is it a mixture of both? Support your answer with evidence from the text.*
- 2. How does Irving attempt to convince his readers of the authenticity of his story?*
- 3. Why is the horseman headless, and why does he continue to appear at night?*
- 4. In what sense might this story be considered 'American' instead of 'English'?*

## Edgar Allen Poe "The Raven" (1847)

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,  
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore -  
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,  
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door -  
"Tis some visiter", I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door -  
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,  
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.  
Eagerly I wished the morrow;--vainly I had sought to borrow  
From my books surcease of sorrow--sorrow for the lost Lenore--  
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore--  
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain  
Thrilled me--filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;  
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating  
"Tis some visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door--  
Some late visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door;  
This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,  
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;  
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,  
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,  
That I scarce was sure I heard you"--here I opened wide the door--  
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,  
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream before;  
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,  
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"  
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"--  
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,  
Soon again I heard a tapping something louder than before.  
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;  
Let me see, then, what theraut is and this mystery explore--  
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;--  
'Tis the wind and nothing more.

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,  
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore.  
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he,  
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door--  
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door--  
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then the ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,  
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,  
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no  
craven,  
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore--  
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"  
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,  
Though its answer little meaning--little relevancy bore;  
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being  
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door--  
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,  
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only  
That one word, as if its soul in that one word he did outpour  
Nothing farther then he uttered; not a feather then he fluttered--  
Till I scarcely more than muttered: "Other friends have flown before--  
On the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before."  
Then the bird said "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,  
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store,  
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster  
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore--  
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore  
Of 'Never--nevermore.'"

But the Raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,  
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust and door;  
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking  
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore--  
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore  
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing  
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;  
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining  
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,  
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er  
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer  
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.  
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee--by these angels he hath sent  
thee  
Respite--respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore!  
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"  
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!--prophet still, if bird or devil!--  
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,  
Desolate, yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted--  
On this home by Horror haunted--tell me truly, I implore--  
Is there--is there balm in Gilead?--tell me--tell me, I implore!"  
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

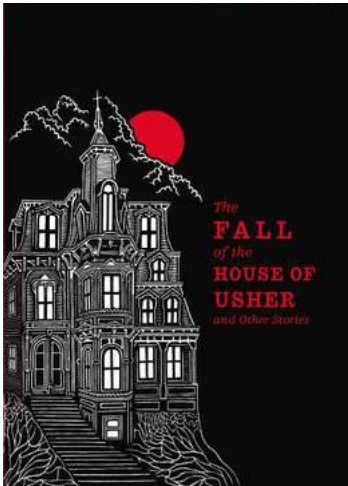
"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!--prophet still, if bird or devil!  
By that Heaven that bends above us--by that God we both adore--  
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,  
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore--  
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."  
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Be that our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting--  
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!  
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul has spoken!  
Leave my loneliness unbroken!--quit the bust above my door!  
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"  
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting  
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming  
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadows on the floor;  
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor  
Shall be lifted--nevermore!

*Edgar Allen Poe*  
From “*The Fall of the House of Usher*” (1839)

*The following is the opening paragraph to one of Edgar Poe’s most well known horror stories. Written in the first person, the story demonstrates Poe’s ability to create an unsettling and almost intangible atmosphere of anguish and terror.*



DURING the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was --but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest (1) natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me --upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain --upon the bleak walls --upon the vacant eye-like windows --upon a few rank sedges --and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees --with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to

no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller (2) upon opium --the bitter lapse (3) into common life--the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart --an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading (4) of the imagination could torture into aught (5) of the sublime. What was it --I paused to think --what was it that so unnerved me (6) in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there are combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down --but with a shudder even more thrilling than before --upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

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1 sternest: severest

2 reveller: somebody who celebrates at a noisy party

3 lapse: return to a previous way of life

4 goading: stimulation, inciting

5 aught: anything

6 unnerved me: took away my courage

### **POST-READING EXERCISES**

1. How does the narrator feel on observing the scene before him?

2. How does the narrator try to rid himself of the “sorrowful impression” of the landscape? Does he succeed in his aim?

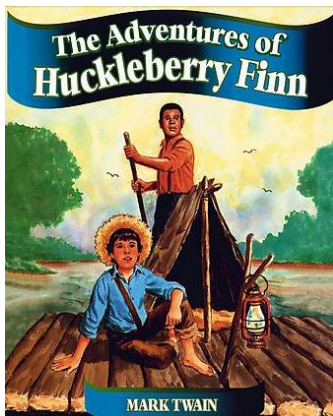
## Mark Twain. From "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" (1885)

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) is commonly accounted as the first great American novel. It was also one of the first novels ever written in the vernacular, or common speech, being told in the first person by the eponymous Huckleberry "Huck" Finn, best friend of Tom Sawyer. The book was published for the first time on February 18, 1885.

Many agree with what Ernest Hemingway wrote in "The Green Hills of Africa": "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called "Huckleberry Finn". ... all American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since."

The book is noted for its innocent young protagonist, its colorful description of people and places along the Mississippi River, and its sober and often scathing look at entrenched attitudes, particularly racism, of the time. The drifting journey of Huck and his friend Jim, a runaway slave, down the Mississippi River on their raft may be one of the most enduring images of escape and freedom in all of American literature.

In the passage below, Huckleberry Finn has helped Jim, a slave, to escape from his master, but is doubtful as to whether it was the right thing to do. Afflicted by guilt for his illegal action, Huck is helping Jim to reach the free states by canoe. In this passage Mark Twain describes part of their journey down the river towards Cairo, their first destination on the way to the free states.



Jim talked out loud all the time while I was talking to myself. He was saying how the first thing he would do when he got to a free State he would go to saving up money and never spend a single cent, and when he got enough he would buy his wife, which was owned on a farm close to where Miss Watson lived; and then they would both work to buy the two children, and if their master wouldn't sell them, they'd get an Ab'litionist (1) to go and steal them.

It most (2) froze me to hear such talk. He wouldn't ever dared to talk such talk in his life before. Just see what a difference it made in him the minute he judged he was about free. It was according to the old saying, "Give a nigger (3) an inch and he'll take an ell (4)." Thinks I, this is what comes of my not thinking. Here was this nigger, which I had as good as helped to run away, coming right out flat-footed and saying he would steal his children -- children that belonged to a man I didn't even know; a man that hadn't ever done me no harm.

I was sorry to hear Jim say that, it was such a lowering of him. My conscience got to stirring me up hotter than ever, until at last I says to it, "Let up on me -- it ain't too late yet -- I'll paddle ashore at the first light and tell." I felt easy and happy and light as a feather right off. All my troubles was gone. I went to looking out sharp for a light, and sort of singing to myself. By and by one showed. Jim sings out: "We's safe, Huck, we's safe! Jump up and crack yo' heels! Dat's de good ole Cairo (5) at las', I jis knows it!"

I says: "I'll take the canoe and go and see, Jim. It mightn't be, you know."

He jumped and got the canoe ready, and put his old coat in the bottom for me to set on, and give me the paddle; and as I shoved off, he says: "Pooty soon I'll be a-shout'n' for joy, en I'll say, it's all on accounts o' Huck; I's a free man, en I couldn't ever ben free ef it hadn' ben for Huck; Huck done it. Jim won't ever forgit you, Huck; you's de bes' fren' Jim's ever had; en you's de only fren' ole Jim's got now." I was paddling off, all in a sweat to tell on him; but when he says this, it seemed to kind of take the tuck (6) all out of me. I went along slow then, and I warn't right down certain whether I was glad I started or

whether I warn't. When I was fifty yards off, Jim says: "Dah you goes, de ole true Huck; de on'y white genlman dat ever kep' his promise to ole Jim."

Well, I just felt sick. But I says, I got to do it -- I can't get out of it.

---

1 *ab'litionist*: abolitionist – someone who fought for the abolition of slavery

2 *most*: most nearly, almost

3 *nigger*: derogatory, African-American

4 *ell*: a unit of length

5 *Cairo*: Cairo, Illinois, at the convergence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers

6 *tuck*: determination

## POST-READING EXERCISES

1. What does Jim want to do when he gets to a free state?
2. What does Huck's reaction to Jim's ideas reveal about his character? Is Huck coherent in his reasoning?
3. What does he decide to do? How does he feel at first upon making this decision? And later? Why do you think he is so undecided?
4. What do you think Twain is trying to say through his depiction of Huck?
5. Twain's use of the Missouri African-American dialects (especially in the speech of Jim) provides the dialogue with an air of authenticity rarely seen in American fiction up to his time.

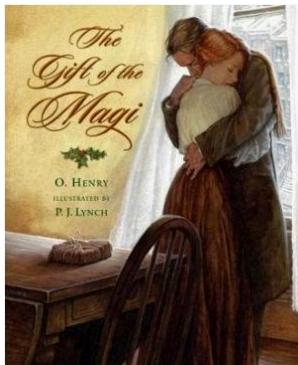
The main deviations from standard English are as follows:

- ✓ **d** instead of **th**: de (the), dis (this), dat's (that's), wid (with)...
- ✓ **f** instead of **th**: sumf'n (something), mouf (mouth)...
- ✓ **ah** instead of **ere, ir, are**: whah (where), dah (there)...
- ✓ **i** instead of **e**: git (get), yit (yet), forgit (forget)...
- ✓ **e** instead of **i**: tell (till), ef (if), sence (since) ...
- ✓ **i** instead of **u**: sich (such), jis' (just) ...
- ✓ **e** instead of **d**: chile (child), ole (old), behine ( behind)...
- ✓ **t** is added: chanst (chance), acrost (across)...
- ✓ omitting a sound or syllable: 'live (alive), 'em (them), y'r, yo' (your), fren' (friend), o' (of), bes' (best), on'y (only), po' (poor), los' (lost), las' (last)...
- ✓ **a** instead of **have**: I couldn't 'a' got drunk...
- ✓ **ain't** corresponds to any negative form of 'be', 'have', and 'do'
- ✓ **I thinks** (I think), **you hears** (you hear), **there was things** (there were things), **she done it herself** (she did it herself) ...
- ✓ **ben** (been), **en** (and), **fer** (for), **gwyne** (going), **lemme** (let me), **pooty** (pretty), **seed** (seen)....

Translate into modern standard English Jim's speech beginning "Pooty soon I'll be a-shout'n' for joy..." up to "de on'y white genlman dat ever kep' his promise to ole Jim".



## O. Henry. "The Gift of the Magi"



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

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

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

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

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

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation--as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value--the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain. When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends--a mammoth task.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

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

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

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

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you--sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

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

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

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

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

For there lay The Combs--the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims--just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

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

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

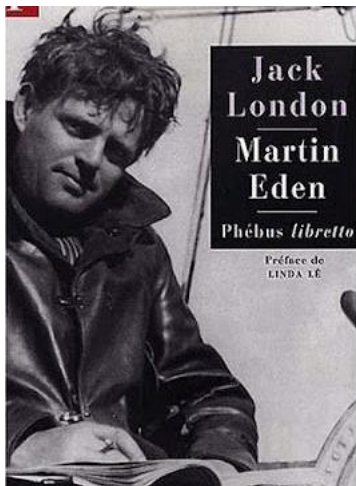
"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

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

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

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

## Jack London. From "Martin Eden" (1909)



*Martin Eden* is a semi-autobiographical novel by Jack London, published in 1909. The title character becomes a writer, hoping to acquire the respectability sought by his society-girl sweetheart. She spurns him, however, when his writing is rejected by several magazines and when he is falsely accused of being a socialist. She tries to win him back after he achieves fame, but Eden realizes her love is false. Financially successful and robbed of connection to his own class, aware that his quest for bourgeois respectability was hollow, Eden travels to the South Seas, where he jumps from the ship and drowns (a detail which undoubtedly contributed to the "biographical myth" that Jack London's own death was a suicide).

...That Ruth had little faith in his power as a writer, did not alter her nor diminish her in Martin's eyes. In the breathing spell of the vacation he had taken, he had spent many hours in self-analysis, and thereby learned much of himself. He had discovered that he loved beauty more than fame, and that what desire he had for fame was largely for Ruth's sake. It was for this reason that his desire for fame was strong. He wanted to be great in the world's eyes; "to make good," as he expressed it, in order that the woman he loved should be proud of him and deem him worthy.

As for himself, he loved beauty passionately, and the joy of serving her was to him sufficient wage. And more than beauty he loved Ruth. He considered love the finest thing in the world. It was love that had worked the revolution in him, changing him from an uncouth sailor to a student and an artist; therefore, to him, the finest and greatest of the three, greater than learning and artistry, was love. Already he had discovered that his brain went beyond Ruth's, just as it went beyond the brains of her brothers, or the brain of her father. In spite of every advantage of university training, and in the face of her bachelorship of arts, his power of intellect overshadowed hers, and his year or so of self-study and equipment gave him a mastery of the affairs of the world and art and life that she could never hope to possess.

...In his own small room Martin lived, slept, studied, wrote, and kept house. Before the one window, looking out on the tiny front porch, was the kitchen table that served as desk, library, and type-writing stand. The bed, against the rear wall, occupied two-thirds of the total space of the room. The table was flanked on one side by a gaudy bureau, manufactured for profit and not for service, the thin veneer of which was shed day by day. This bureau stood in the corner, and in the opposite corner, on the table's other flank, was the kitchen - the oil-stove on a dry-goods box, inside of which

were dishes and cooking utensils, a shelf on the wall for provisions, and a bucket of water on the floor. Martin had to carry his water from the kitchen sink, there being no tap in his room. On days when there was much steam to his cooking, the harvest of veneer from the bureau was unusually generous. Over the bed, hoisted by a tackle to the ceiling, was his bicycle. [...]

A small closet contained his clothes and the books he had accumulated and for which there was no room on the table or under the table. Hand in hand with reading, he had developed the habit of making notes, and so copiously did he make them that there would have been no existence for him in the confined quarters had he not rigged several clothes-lines across the room on which the notes were hung. Even so, he was crowded until navigating the room was a difficult task. He could not open the door without first closing the closet door, and vice versa. [...]

In conjunction with a perfect stomach that could digest anything, he possessed knowledge of the various foods that were at the same time nutritious and cheap. Pea-soup was a common article in his

diet, as well as potatoes and beans, the latter large and brown and cooked in Mexican style. Rice, cooked as American housewives never cook it and can never learn to cook it, appeared on Martin's table at least once a day. Dried fruits were less expensive than fresh, and he had usually a pot of them, cooked and ready at hand, for they took the place of butter on his bread. Occasionally he graced his table with a piece of round-steak, or with a soup-bone. Coffee, without cream or milk, he had twice a day, in the evening substituting tea; but both coffee and tea were excellently cooked.

There was need for him to be economical. [...] Except at such times as he saw Ruth, or dropped in to see his sister Gertude, he lived a recluse, in each day accomplishing at least three days' labor of ordinary men. He slept a scant five hours, and only one with a constitution of iron could have held himself down, as Martin did, day after day, to nineteen consecutive hours of toil. He never lost a moment. On the looking-glass were lists of definitions and pronunciations; when shaving, or dressing, or combing his hair, he conned these lists over. Similar lists were on the wall over the oil-stove, and they were similarly conned while he was engaged in cooking or in washing the dishes. New lists continually displaced the old ones. Every strange or partly familiar word encountered in his reading was immediately jotted down, and later, when a sufficient number had been accumulated, were typed and pinned to the wall or looking-glass. He even carried them in his pockets, and reviewed them at odd moments on the street, or while waiting in butcher shop or grocery to be served.

He went farther in the matter. Reading the works of men who had arrived, he noted every result achieved by them, and worked out the tricks by which they had been achieved - the tricks of narrative, of exposition, of style, the points of view, the contrasts, the epigrams; and of all these he made lists for study. He did not ape. He sought principles. He drew up lists of effective and fetching mannerisms, till out of many such, culled from many writers, he was able to induce the general principle of mannerism, and, thus equipped, to cast about for new and original ones of his own, and to weigh and measure and appraise them properly. In similar manner he collected lists of strong phrases, the phrases of living language, phrases that bit like acid and scorched like flame, or that glowed and were mellow and luscious in the midst of the arid desert of common speech. He sought always for the principle that lay behind and beneath. He wanted to know how the thing was done; after that he could do it for himself. He was not content with the fair face of beauty. He dissected beauty in his crowded little bedroom laboratory, where cooking smells alternated with the outer bedlam of the Silva tribe; and, having dissected and learned the anatomy of beauty, he was nearer being able to create beauty itself.

He was so made that he could work only with understanding. He could not work blindly, in the dark, ignorant of what he was producing and trusting to chance and the star of his genius that the effect produced should be right and fine. He had no patience with chance effects. He wanted to know why and how. His was deliberate creative genius, and, before he began a story or poem, the thing itself was already alive in his brain, with the end in sight and the means of realizing that end in his conscious possession. Otherwise the effort was doomed to failure. On the other hand, he appreciated the chance effects in words and phrases that came lightly and easily into his brain, and that later stood all tests of beauty and power and developed tremendous and incommunicable connotations. Before such he bowed down and marvelled, knowing that they were beyond the deliberate creation of any man. And no matter how much he dissected beauty in search of the principles that underlie beauty and make beauty possible, he was aware, always, of the innermost mystery of beauty to which he did not penetrate and to which no man had ever penetrated. He knew

full well, from his Spencer, that man can never attain ultimate knowledge of anything, and that the mystery of beauty was no less than that of life - nay, more that the fibres of beauty and life were intertwined, and that he himself was but a bit of the same nonunderstandable fabric, twisted of sunshine and star-dust and wonder.

In fact, it was when filled with these thoughts that he wrote his essay entitled "Star-dust," in which he had his fling, not at the principles of criticism, but at the principal critics. It was brilliant, deep, philosophical, and deliciously touched with laughter. Also it was promptly rejected by the magazines as often as it was submitted. But having cleared his mind of it, he went serenely on his way. It was a habit he developed, of incubating and maturing his thought upon a subject, and of then rushing into the type-writer with it. That it did not see print was a matter a small moment with him. The writing of it was the culminating act of a long mental process, the drawing together of scattered threads of thought and the final generalizing upon all the data with which his mind was burdened. To write such an article was the conscious effort by which he freed his mind and made it ready for fresh material and problems. It was in a way akin to that common habit of men and women troubled by real or fancied grievances, who periodically and volubly break their long-suffering silence and "have their say" till the last word is said.

### ***POST-READING EXERCISES***

- 1. What was the most important thing for Martin as an artist? What changes had he undergone?*
- 2. What did Martin do to improve himself? At what cost?*
- 3. What kind of person was Martin in your opinion? Explain.*

## *Theodore Dreiser. From “An American Tragedy” (1925)*

*An American Tragedy* is a famous American novel, by Theodore Dreiser. Written in 1925, the book is the story of a young man Clyde Griffiths, whose troubles with women and the law take him from his religious upbringing in Kansas City to the fictional town of Lyncurgus, New York. Among Clyde's love interests are the materialistic Hortense Briggs, the charming farmer's daughter Roberta Alden and the aristocratic Sondra Finchley.

The book is naturalistic in style, containing subject matter such as religion, capital punishment and abortion. Dreiser based the book on a notorious criminal case, using it as an attempt to shed light on societal evils.

The well-known film “A Place in the Sun” is based on “An American Tragedy”.

### **Plot Summary**

In 1906 Chester Gillette was convicted of killing his ex-girlfriend, Grace Brown, at Big Moose Lake in the Adirondacks in upstate New York. The murder trial drew international attention as Brown's love letters to Gillette were read in court. Theodore Dreiser saved newspaper clippings about the case for some 15 years before writing his novel. Clyde Griffiths was based on Chester Gillette, right down to the same initials.

Clyde's downfall begins when he takes a job as a bell-boy at a local hotel. The boys he meets are much more liberal than he, and they introduce Clyde to the world of alcohol and prostitution. Clyde enjoys his new lifestyle, and does everything in his power to win the affections of the flirtatious Hortense Briggs. But Clyde's life is forever changed when a stolen car he is travelling in with friend's kills a young child. Clyde is forced to flee Kansas City, and after a brief stay in Chicago, he reestablishes himself at the collar factory of his uncle in Lyncurgus, New York.

Although Clyde vows not to give in to women in the way that caused his Kansas City downfall, he quickly succumbs to the charms of Roberta Alden, a poor girl working under him at the factory. While Clyde initially feels fulfilled by Roberta, his ambition forces him to realize that he could never marry her. He dreams of the aristocratic Sondra Finchley, the daughter of a wealthy Lyncurgus man, and a family friend of his uncle's. As developments between him and Sondra begin to look promising, Roberta discovers that she is pregnant.

Trying unsuccessfully to secure an abortion of the child, Clyde procrastinates the decision while his relationship with Sondra continues to mature. As he realizes that he has a wonderful opportunity to marry into such an aristocratic family, Clyde hatches a diabolic scheme to drown Roberta in a manner that seems accidental.

Upon taking Roberta for a canoe ride in one of the Finger Lakes in upstate New York, Clyde loses the nerve to murder her -- however, Roberta accidentally falls out of the boat and drowns, Clyde being too cowardly to save her. The trail of circumstantial evidence points to murder, and the local authorities are only too eager to convict Clyde. Following a sensational trial before an unsympathetic audience, and with no legal support from his wealthy relatives, Clyde is found guilty and sentenced to death. The jailhouse scenes and the correspondence between Clyde and his mother stand out as an exemplar of pathos in modern literature.

### **From Book II, Chapter 24**

The effect of this so casual contact was really disrupting in more senses than one. For now in spite of his comfort in and satisfaction with Roberta, once more and in this positive and to him entrancing way, was posed the whole question of his social possibilities here. And that strangely enough by the one girl of this upper level who had most materialized and magnified for him the meaning of that upper level itself. The beautiful Sondra Finchley! Her lovely face, smart clothes, gay and superior demeanor! If only at the time he had first encountered her he had managed to interest her. Or could now.

The fact that his relations with Roberta were what they were now was not of sufficient import or weight to offset the temperamental or imaginative pull of such a girl as Sondra and all that she represented. Just to think the Wimblinger Finchley Electric Sweeper Company was one of the largest manufacturing concerns here. Its tall walls and stacks made a part of the striking sky line across the Mohawk. And the Finchley residence in Wykeagy Avenue, near that of the Griffiths, was one of the most impressive among that distinguished row of houses which had come with the latest and most discriminating architectural taste here—Italian Renaissance—cream hued marble and Dutchess County sandstone combined. And the Finchleys were among the most discussed of families here.

Ah, to know this perfect girl more intimately! To be looked upon by her with favor,—made, by reason of that favor, a part of that fine world to which she belonged. Was he not a Griffiths—as good looking as Gilbert Griffiths any day? And as attractive if he only had as much money—or a part of it even. To be able to dress in the Gilbert Griffiths' fashion; to ride around in one of the handsome cars he sported! Then, you bet, a girl like this would be delighted to notice him,—

mayhap, who knows, even fall in love with him. Analschar and the tray of glasses. But now, as he gloomily thought, he could only hope, hope, hope.

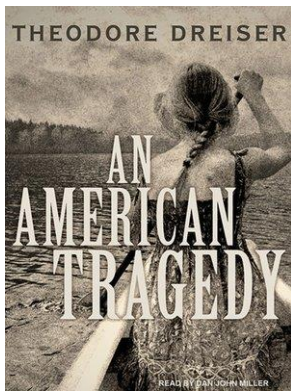
The devil! He would not go around to Roberta's this evening. He would trump up some excuse—tell her in the morning that he had been called upon by his uncle or cousin to do some work. He could not and would not go, feeling as he did just now.

So much for the effect of wealth, beauty, the peculiar social state to which he most aspired, on a temperament t disrupting hat was as fluid and unstable as water.

## POST-READING EXERCISES

1. *Why does Dreiser call the effect of Clyde's meeting with Sondra Finchley disrupting? How did his life change after it?*
2. *What was Clyde's attitude to both girls? Did he feel the same? What did Sondra symbolize for him? What would the marriage with her bring to Clyde? Did he love Roberta? Or Sondra? Or both? Or none?*

## From Chapter 44



...But now once more in Lycurgus and back in his room after just explaining to Roberta, as he had, he once more encountered on his writing desk, the identical paper containing the item concerning the tragedy at Pass Lake. And in spite of himself, his eye once more followed nervously and yet unwaveringly to the last word all the suggestive and provocative details. The uncomplicated and apparently easy way in which the lost couple had first arrived at the boathouse; the commonplace and entirely unsuspecting way in which they had hired a boat and set forth for a row; the manner in which they had disappeared to the north end; and then the upturned boat, the floating oars and hats near the shore. He stood reading in the still strong evening light. Outside the windows were the dark boughs of the fir tree of which he had thought the preceding day and which now suggested all those firs and pines about the shores of Big

Bittern.

But, good God! What was he thinking of anyhow? He, Clyde Griffiths! The nephew of Samuel Griffiths! What was "getting into" him? Murder! That's what it was. This terrible item—this devil's accident or machination that was constantly putting it before him! A most horrible crime, and one for which they electrocuted people if they were caught. Besides, he could not murder anybody—not Roberta, anyhow. Oh, no! Surely not after all that had been between them. And yet—this other world!—Sondra— which he was certain to lose now unless he acted in some way—

His hands shook, his eyelids twitched—then his hair at the roots tingled and over his body ran chill nervous titillations in waves. Murder! Or upsetting a boat at any rate in deep water, which of course might happen anywhere, and by accident, as at Pass Lake. And Roberta could not swim. He knew that. But she might save herself at that—scream—cling to the boat—and then—if there were any to hear—and she told afterwards! An icy perspiration now sprang to his forehead; his lips trembled and suddenly his throat felt parched and dry. To prevent a thing like that he would have to—to—but no—he was not like that. He could not do a thing like that—hit any one—a girl—Roberta—and when drowning or struggling. Oh, no, no—no such thing as that! Impossible.

He took his straw hat and went out, almost before any one heard him THINK, as he would have phrased it to himself, such horrible, terrible thoughts. He could not and would not think them from now on. He was no such person. And yet—and yet—these thoughts. The solution—if he wanted one. The way to stay here—not leave—marry Sondra—be rid of Roberta and all—all—for the price of a little courage or daring. But no!

He walked and walked—away from Lycurgus—out on a road to the southeast which passed through a poor and decidedly unfrequented rural section, and so left him alone to think—or, as he felt, not to be heard in his thinking.

Day was fading into dark. Lamps were beginning to glow in the cottages here and there. Trees in groups in fields or along the road were beginning to blur or smokily blend. And although it was warm—the air lifeless and lethargic—he walked fast, thinking, and perspiring as he did so, as though he were seeking to outwalk and outthink or divert some inner self that preferred to be still and think.

That gloomy, lonely lake up there!  
That island to the south!  
Who would see?  
Who could hear?

That station at Gun Lodge with a bus running to it at this season of the year. (Ah, he remembered that, did he? The deuce!) A terrible thing, to remember a thing like that in connection with such a thought as this! But if he were going to think of such a thing as this at all, he had better think well—he could tell himself that—or stop thinking about it now—once and forever— forever. But Sondra! Roberta! If ever he were caught— electrocuted! And yet the actual misery of his present state. The difficulty! The danger of losing Sondra. And yet, murder—

He wiped his hot and wet face, and paused and gazed at a group of trees across a field which somehow reminded him of the trees of . . . well . . . he didn't like this road. It was getting too dark out here. He had better turn and go back. But that road at the south and leading to Three Mile Bay and Greys Lake—if one chose to go that way—to Sharon and the Cranston Lodge—whither he would be going afterwards if he did go that way. God! Big Bittern—the trees along there after dark would be like that—blurred and gloomy. It would have to be toward evening, of course. No one would think of trying to . . . well . . . in the morning, when there was so much light. Only a fool would do that. But at night, toward dusk, as it was now, or a little later. But, damn it, he would not listen to such thoughts. Yet no one would be likely to see him or Roberta either—would they—there? It would be so easy to go to a place like Big Bittern—for an alleged wedding trip— would it not—over the Fourth, say—or after the fourth or fifth, when there would be fewer people. And to register as some one else—not himself—so that he could never be traced that way. And then, again, it would be so easy to get back to Sharon and the Cranstons' by midnight, or the morning of the next day, maybe, and then, once there he could pretend also that he had come north on that early morning train that arrived about ten o'clock. And then . . .

Confound it—why should his mind keep dwelling on this idea? Was he actually planning to do a thing like this? But he was not! He could not be! He, Clyde Griffiths, could not be serious about a thing like this. That was not possible. He could not be. Of course! It was all too impossible, too wicked, to imagine that he, Clyde Griffiths, could bring himself to execute a deed like that. And yet . . .

And forthwith an uncanny feeling of wretchedness and insufficiency for so dark a crime insisted on thrusting itself forward. He decided to retrace his steps toward Lycurgus, where at least he could be among people.

### **POST-READING EXERCISES**

*Sum up what you have read and speak about Clyde. What kind of character is he? Do you feel sorry for him knowing what happened to him later in the story? What do you think caused his downfall? Who or what was to blame: Clyde himself, fate, the American system of justice, the American society of 1920s? What is an American tragedy?*

## **Robert Frost "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening"**

*1. "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening", one of Robert Frost's most well-known poems, was published in his collection called "New Hampshire" in 1923. This poem illustrates many of the qualities most characteristic of Frost, including the attention to natural detail, the relationship between humans and nature, and the strong theme suggested by individual lines.*

*Whose woods these are I think I know  
His house is in the village **though**;  
He will not see me stopping **HERE**  
To watch his woods fill up with **snow**.*

*He gives his harness bells a **shake**  
To ask if there is some **mistake**.  
The only other sound's the **SWEEP**  
Of easy wind and downy **flake**.*

*My little horse must think it **QUEER**  
To stop without a farmhouse **NEAR**  
Between the woods and frozen **lake**  
The darkest evening of the **YEAR**.*

*The woods are lovely, dark and **DEEP**,  
But I have promises to **KEEP**,  
And miles to go before I **SLEEP**,  
And miles to go before I **SLEEP**.*

**2. Write the rhyming scheme for the whole poem.**

**3. The most important element of poetry is the fact that it is charged with meaning. Normally poems are shorter than other works. This makes each word of a poem extremely significant. Every word has a key role in the deeper meaning of the**

poem. An excellent example of it is Robert Frost's "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening". This poem is layered with different meanings; it requires the reader to contemplate Frost's emotions behind the words.

a) See whether you can extend the meaning of the poem's metaphors and attach implied meanings to such notions as "MILES", "PROMISES", and "SLEEP". If so, how can the beginning stanza be interpreted? Who is "HE" that Frost is talking about?

b) Why does Frost employ one rhyming scheme and repetition in the last stanza. What does he want to point out?

c) Describe the narrator's feelings. What is going on inside of him? Is the event described ordinary for him or out-of-the-way?

4. "**The Road Not Taken**" (1916) is typically simple in terms of its familiar language, yet confronts one of the most pressing problems of modern existence.

Two roads diverged (1) in a yellow **wood**  
And sorry I could not travel **BOTH**  
And be one traveler, long I **stood**  
And looked down one as far as I **could**  
To where it bent in the **UNDERGROWTH** (2);

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

Then took the other, as just as fair  
And having perhaps the better claim (3),  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear (4);  
Though as for that, the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence (5):  
Two roads diverged in a wood and I--  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

**1 diverged:** took different directions

**2 undergrowth:** small trees and bushes growing underneath taller trees in a forest.

**3 claim:** a right or just title to something

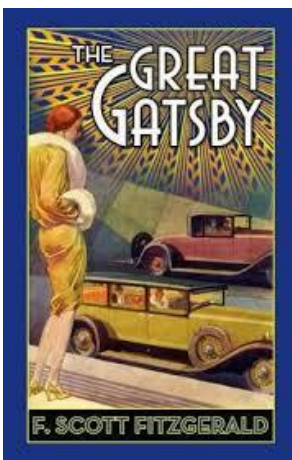
**4 wanted wear:** was unused

**5 hence:** in the future

## 5. POST-READING EXERCISES

1. This poem works on two levels: what do you think they are?
2. Why does the poet regret he cannot be one traveller who can walk down both paths?
3. What, if anything, is the difference between the two roads?
4. Why does the poet doubt he will ever come back to travel down the other road?
5. Explain the meaning of the last line.
6. Do you think Frost's interpretation of the traveller's dilemma is justified? Have you ever been forced to make a decision of this kind before? In retrospect, do you think you made the right decision?

## F. Scott Fitzgerald . "The Great Gatsby" (1925)



*The Great Gatsby* has often been seen as the epitome of American literature of the so-called "Jazz Age".

The novel was not popular when it was first published, selling less than 24,000 copies during Fitzgerald's lifetime. Largely forgotten during the Great Depression and World War II, it was republished in the 1950s and quickly found a wide readership. It is now often cited as one of the greatest English-language novels of the 20th century.

### From Chapter 5

*This is the pivotal chapter of The Great Gatsby, as Gatsby's reunion with Daisy is the hinge on which the novel swings. Gatsby's character throughout their meeting is at its purest and most revealing .*

"I want you and Daisy to come over to my house," he said, "I'd like to show her around."

"You're sure you want me to come?"

"Absolutely, old sport."



Daisy went up-stairs to wash her face—too late I thought with humiliation of my towels—while Gatsby and I waited on the lawn.

“My house looks well, doesn’t it?” he demanded. “See how the whole front of it catches the light.”

I agreed that it was splendid.

“Yes.” His eyes went over it, every arched door and square tower. “It took me just three years to earn the money that bought it.”

“I thought you inherited your money.”

“I did, old sport,” he said automatically, “but I lost most of it in the big panic—the panic of the war.” I think he hardly knew what he was saying, for when I asked him what business he was in he answered, “That’s my affair,” before he realized that it wasn’t the appropriate reply.

“Oh, I’ve been in several things,” he corrected himself. “I was in the drug business and then I was in the oil business. But I’m not in either one now.” He looked at me with more attention. “Do you mean you’ve been thinking over what I proposed the other night?”

Before I could answer, Daisy came out of the house and two rows of brass buttons on her dress gleamed in the sunlight.

“That huge place *there*?” she cried pointing.

“Do you like it?”

“I love it, but I don’t see how you live there all alone.”

“I keep it always full of interesting people, night and day. People who do interesting things. Celebrated people.”

Instead of taking the short cut along the Sound we went down the road and entered by the big postern. With enchanting murmurs Daisy admired this aspect or that of the feudal silhouette against the sky, admired the gardens, the sparkling odor of jonquils and the frothy odor of hawthorn and plum blossoms and the pale gold odor of kiss-me-at-the-gate. It was strange to reach the marble steps and find no stir of bright dresses in and out the door, and hear no sound but bird voices in the trees.

And inside, as we wandered through Marie Antoinette music-rooms and Restoration salons, I felt that there were guests concealed behind every couch and table, under orders to be breathlessly silent until we had passed through. As Gatsby closed the door of “the Merton College Library” I could have sworn I heard the owl-eyed man break into ghostly laughter.

We went up-stairs, through period bedrooms swathed in rose and lavender silk and vivid with new flowers, through dressing-rooms and poolrooms, and bathrooms with sunken baths—intruding into one chamber where a dishevelled man in pajamas was doing liver exercises on the floor. It was Mr. Klipspringer, the “boarder.” I had seen him wandering hungrily about the beach that morning. Finally we came to Gatsby’s own apartment, a bedroom and a bath, and an Adam study, where we sat down and drank a glass of some Chartreuse he took from a cupboard in the wall.

He hadn’t once ceased looking at Daisy, and I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes. Sometimes, too, he stared around at his possessions in a dazed way, as though in her actual and astounding presence none of it was any longer real. Once he nearly toppled down a flight of stairs.

His bedroom was the simplest room of all—except where the dresser was garnished with a toilet set of pure dull gold. Daisy took the brush with delight, and smoothed her hair, whereupon Gatsby sat down and shaded his eyes and began to laugh.

“It’s the funniest thing, old sport,” he said hilariously. “I can’t—When I try to—”

He had passed visibly through two states and was entering upon a third. After his embarrassment and his unreasoning joy he was consumed with wonder at her presence. He had been full of the idea so long, dreamed it right through to the end, waited with his teeth set, so to speak, at an inconceivable pitch of intensity. Now, in the reaction, he was running down like an overwound clock.

Recovering himself in a minute he opened for us two hulking patent cabinets which held his massed suits and dressing-gowns and ties, and his shirts, piled like bricks in stacks a dozen high.

“I’ve got a man in England who buys me clothes. He sends over a selection of things at the beginning of each season, spring and fall.”

He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them, one by one, before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel, which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many-colored disarray. While we admired he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher—shirts with stripes

and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, and monograms of Indian blue. Suddenly, with a strained sound, Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily.

“They’re such beautiful shirts,” she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. “It makes me sad because I’ve never seen such—such beautiful shirts before.”

After the house, we were to see the grounds and the swimming-pool, and the hydroplane and the mid-summer flowers—but outside Gatsby’s window it began to rain again, so we stood in a row looking at the corrugated surface of the Sound.

“If it wasn’t for the mist we could see your home across the bay,” said Gatsby. “You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock.”

Daisy put her arm through his abruptly, but he seemed absorbed in what he had just said. Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one.

### **POST-READING EXERCISES**

1. Why does Gatsby want Daisy to see his house?
2. Comment on Gatsby’s display of his wealth and Daisy’s response. Observe the epithets characterizing her voice. Why do you think Daisy sobs when Gatsby shows her his shirts?
3. In this scene the meaning of the novel’s epigraph becomes clear. Read the epigraph and say how it reflects on Gatsby’s story.

*Then wear the gold hat, if that will move her;  
If you can bounce high, bounce for her too,  
Till she cry "Lover, gold-hatted, high-bouncing lover,  
I must have you!"  
(Thomas Parke D’Invilliers)*

4. What significance did the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock have to Gatsby?
5. Comment on “Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one.”
6. In this chapter, Gatsby’s dream seems to be fulfilled. What indications are there, though, that reality cannot satisfy his dream?
7. What do you learn about Gatsby from this extract?

### **Ernest Hemingway. “Hills Like White Elephants” (1927)**

First published in August of 1927, “Hills Like White Elephants” became an important piece in Hemingway’s second collection of short stories, “Men Without Women”. Hemingway wrote the story soon after the publication of his 1926 novel, “The Sun Also Rises”, while living in Paris. “Men Without Women” was well-received, as were Hemingway’s other early works. He was embraced by the expatriate literary community in Paris and received strong reviews on his work in the United States and abroad. Although he continued to write novels and stories throughout his career, the early short stories are often considered to be among his finest works. “Hills Like White Elephants,” a widely-anthologized and much-discussed story, offers a glimpse at the spare prose and understated dialogue that represents Hemingway’s mastery of style.

The story, told nearly in its entirety through dialogue, is a conversation between a young woman and a man waiting for a train in Spain. Through their tight, brittle conversation, much is revealed about their personalities. At the same time, much about their relationship remains hidden. At the end of the story it is still unclear as to what decision has or has not been made, or what will happen to these two characters waiting for a train on a platform in Spain.

The hills across the valley of the Ebro were long and white. On this side there was no shade and no trees and the station was between two lines of rails in the sun. Close against the side of the station there was the warm shadow of the building and a curtain, made of

strings of bamboo beads, hung across the open door into the bar, to keep out flies. The American and the girl with him sat at a table in the shade, outside the building. It was very hot and the express from

Barcelona would come in forty minutes. It stopped at this junction for two minutes and went to Madrid.

'What should we drink?' the girl asked. She had taken off her hat and put it on the table.

'It's pretty hot,' the man said.

'Let's drink beer.'

'Dos cervezas,' the man said into the curtain.

'Big ones?' a woman asked from the doorway.

'Yes. Two big ones.'

The woman brought two glasses of beer and two felt pads. She put the felt pads and the beer glass on the table and looked at the man and the girl. The girl was looking off at the line of hills. They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry.

'They look like white elephants,' she said.

'I've never seen one,' the man drank his beer.

'No, you wouldn't have.'

'I might have,' the man said. 'Just because you say I wouldn't have doesn't prove anything.'

The girl looked at the bead curtain. 'They've painted something on it,' she said. 'What does it say?'

'Anis del Toro. It's a drink.'

'Could we try it?'

The man called 'Listen' through the curtain. The woman came out from the bar.

'Four reales.' 'We want two Anis del Toro.'

'With water?'

'Do you want it with water?'

'I don't know,' the girl said. 'Is it good with water?'

'It's all right.'

'You want them with water?' asked the woman.

'Yes, with water.'

'It tastes like liquorice,' the girl said and put the glass down.

'That's the way with everything.'

'Yes,' said the girl. 'Everything tastes of liquorice. Especially all the things you've waited so long for, like absinthe.'

'Oh, cut it out.'

'You started it,' the girl said. 'I was being amused. I was having a fine time.'

'Well, let's try and have a fine time.'

'All right. I was trying. I said the mountains looked like white elephants. Wasn't that bright?'

'That was bright.'

'I wanted to try this new drink. That's all we do, isn't it - look at things and try new drinks?'

'I guess so.'

The girl looked across at the hills.

'They're lovely hills,' she said. 'They don't really look like white elephants. I just meant the colouring of their skin through the trees.'

'Should we have another drink?'

'All right.'

The warm wind blew the bead curtain against the table.

'The beer's nice and cool,' the man said.

'It's lovely,' the girl said.

'It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig,' the man said. 'It's not really an operation at all.'

The girl looked at the ground the table legs rested on.

'I know you wouldn't mind it, Jig. It's really not anything. It's just to let the air in.'

The girl did not say anything.

'I'll go with you and I'll stay with you all the time. They just let the air in and then it's all perfectly natural.'

'Then what will we do afterwards?'

'We'll be fine afterwards. Just like we were before.'

'What makes you think so?'

'That's the only thing that bothers us. It's the only thing that's made us unhappy.'

The girl looked at the bead curtain, put her hand out and took hold of two of the strings of beads.

'And you think then we'll be all right and be happy.'

'I know we will. You don't have to be afraid. I've known lots of people that have done it.'

'So have I,' said the girl. 'And afterwards they were all so happy.'

'Well,' the man said, 'if you don't want to you don't have to. I wouldn't have you do it if you didn't want to. But I know it's perfectly simple.'

'And you really want to?'

'I think it's the best thing to do. But I don't want you to do it if you don't really want to.'

'And if I do it you'll be happy and things will be like they were and you'll love me?'

'I love you now. You know I love you.'

'I know. But if I do it, then it will be nice again if I say things are like white elephants, and you'll like it?'

'I'll love it. I love it now but I just can't think about it. You know how I get when I worry.'

'If I do it you won't ever worry?'

'I won't worry about that because it's perfectly simple.'

'Then I'll do it. Because I don't care about me.'

'What do you mean?'

'I don't care about me.'

'Well, I care about you.'

'Oh, yes. But I don't care about me. And I'll do it and then everything will be fine.'

'I don't want you to do it if you feel that way.'

The girl stood up and walked to the end of the station. Across, on the other side, were fields of grain and trees along the banks of the Ebro. Far away, beyond the river, were mountains. The shadow of a cloud moved across the field of grain and she saw the river through the trees.

'And we could have all this,' she said. 'And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible.'

'What did you say?'

'I said we could have everything.'

'No, we can't.'

'We can have the whole world.'

'No, we can't.'

'We can go everywhere.'

'No, we can't. It isn't ours any more.'

'It's ours.'

'No, it isn't. And once they take it away, you never get it back.'

'But they haven't taken it away.'

'We'll wait and see.'

'Come on back in the shade,' he said. 'You mustn't feel that way.'

'I don't feel any way,' the girl said. 'I just know things.'

'I don't want you to do anything that you don't want to do -'

'Nor that isn't good for me,' she said. 'I know. Could we have another beer?'

'All right. But you've got to realize -'

'I realize,' the girl said. 'Can't we maybe stop talking?'

They sat down at the table and the girl looked across at the hills on the dry side of the valley and the man looked at her and at the table.

'You've got to realize,' he said, 'that I don't want you to do it if you don't want to. I'm perfectly willing to go through with it if it means anything to you.'

'Doesn't it mean anything to you? We could get along.'

'Of course it does. But I don't want anybody but you. I don't want anyone else. And I know it's perfectly simple.'

'Yes, you know it's perfectly simple.'

'It's all right for you to say that, but I do know it.'

'Would you do something for me now?'

'I'd do anything for you.'

'Would you please please please please please please stop talking?'

He did not say anything but looked at the bags against the wall of the station. There were labels on them from all the hotels where they had spent nights.

'But I don't want you to,' he said, 'I don't care anything about it.'

'I'll scream,' the girl said.

The woman came out through the curtains with two glasses of beer and put them down on the damp felt pads. 'The train comes in five minutes,' she said.

'What did she say?' asked the girl.

'That the train is coming in five minutes.'

The girl smiled brightly at the woman, to thank her.

'I'd better take the bags over to the other side of the station,' the man said. She smiled at him.

'All right. Then come back and we'll finish the beer.'

He picked up the two heavy bags and carried them around the station to the other tracks. He looked up the tracks but could not see the train. Coming back, he walked through the bar-room, where people waiting for the train were drinking. He drank an Anis at the bar and looked at the people. They were all waiting reasonably for the train. He went out through the bead curtain. She was sitting at the table and smiled at him.

'Do you feel better?' he asked.

'I feel fine,' she said. 'There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine.'

### POST-READING EXERCISES

1. The main topic of the discussion between the man and the girl is never named. What is 'the awfully simple operation'? Why is it not named? What different attitudes are taken towards it by the man and the girl?
2. Much of the conversations seems to be about trivial things (ordering drinks, the weather, and so on). What purposes does this conversation serve? What relevance has the girl's remark about absinthe?
3. How sincere is the man in his insistence that he would not have the girl undergo the operation if she doesn't want to and that 'he is perfectly willing to go through with it' if it means anything to the girl?
4. What is indicated about the past life of the man and the girl? What has happened to the quality of their relationship? Why? How accurate is the man's judgment about their future?
5. What purpose does the setting serve – the hills across the valley, the treeless road tracks and station? What is the point of the girl's comparison of the hills to 'white elephants'? What do they symbolize? Why does the author use the image for his title?

### Ernest Hemingway. "A Day's Wait"

He came into the room to shut the windows while we were still in bed and I saw he looked ill. He was shivering, his face was white, and he walked slowly as though it ached to move.

"What's the matter, Schatz?"

"I've got a headache."

"You better go back to bed."

"No. I'm all right."

"You go to bed. I'll see you when I'm dressed."

But when I came downstairs he was dressed, sitting by the fire, looking a very sick and miserable boy of nine years. When I put my hand on his forehead I knew he had a fever.

"You go up to bed," I said, "you're sick."

"I'm all right," he said.

When the doctor came he took the boy's temperature.

"What is it?" I asked him.

"One hundred and two."

Downstairs, the doctor left three different medicines in different colored capsules with instructions for giving them. One was to bring down the fever, another a purgative, the third to overcome an acid condition. The germs of influenza can only exist in an acid condition, he explained. He seemed to know all about influenza and said there was nothing to worry about if the fever did not go above one hundred and four degrees. This was a light epidemic of flu and there was no danger if you avoided pneumonia.

Back in the room I wrote the boy's temperature down and made a note of the time to give the various capsules.

"Do you want me to read to you?"

"All right. If you want to," said the boy. His face was very white and there were dark areas under his eyes. He lay still in the bed and seemed very detached from what was going on.

I read aloud from Howard Pyle's *Book of Pirates*; but I could see he was not following what I was reading.

"How do you feel, Schatz?" I asked him.

"Just the same, so far," he said.

I sat at the foot of the bed and read to myself while I waited for it to be time to give another capsule. It would have been natural for him to go to sleep, but when I looked up he was looking at the foot of the bed, looking very strangely.

"Why don't you try to go to sleep? I'll wake you up for the medicine."

"I'd rather stay awake."

After a while he said to me, "You don't have to stay in here with me, Papa, if it bothers you."

"It doesn't bother me."

"No, I mean you don't have to stay if it's going to bother you."

I thought perhaps he was a little lightheaded and after giving him the prescribed capsules at eleven o'clock I went out for a while.

It was a bright, cold day, the ground covered with a sleet that had frozen so that it seemed as if all the bare trees, the bushes, the cut brush and all the grass and the bare ground had been varnished with ice. I took the young Irish setter for a little walk up the road and along a frozen creek, but it was difficult to stand or walk on the glassy surface and the red dog slipped and slithered and I fell twice, hard, once dropping my gun and having it slide away over the ice. We flushed a covey of quail under a high clay bank with overhanging brush and I killed two as they went out of sight over the top of the bank. Some of the covey lit in trees, but most of them scattered into brush piles and it was necessary to jump on the ice-coated mounds of brush several times before they would flush. Coming out while you were poised unsteadily on the icy, springy brush they made difficult shooting and I killed two, missed five, and started back pleased to have found a covey close to the house and happy there were so many left to find on another day.

At the house they said the boy had refused to let any one come into the room.

"You can't come in," he said. "You mustn't get what I have."

I went up to him and found him in exactly the position I had left him, white-faced, but with the tops of his cheeks flushed by the fever, staring still, as he had stared, at the foot of the bed.

I took his temperature.

"What is it?"

"Something like a hundred," I said. It was one hundred and two and four tenths.

"It was a hundred and two," he said.

"Who said so?"

"The doctor."

"Your temperature is all right," I said. "It's nothing to worry about."

"I don't worry," he said, "but I can't keep from thinking."

"Don't think," I said. "Just take it easy."

"I'm taking it easy," he said and looked straightahead. He was evidently holding tight onto himself about something.

"Take this with water."

"Do you think it will do any good?"

"Of course it will."

I sat down and opened the *Pirate* book and commenced to read, but I could see he was not following, so I stopped.

"About what time do you think I'm going to die?" he asked.

"What?"

"About how long will it be before I die?"

"You aren't going to die. What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, yes, I am. I heard him say a hundred and two."

"People don't die with a fever of one hundred and two."

"That's a silly way to talk."

"I know they do. At school in France the boys told me you can't live with forty-four degrees. I've got a hundred and two."

He had been waiting to die all day, ever since nine o'clock in the morning.

"You poor Schatz," I said. "Poor old Schatz. It's like miles and kilometres. You aren't going to die. That's a different thermometer. On that thermometer thirty-seven is normal. On this kind it's ninety-eight."

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely," I said. "It's like miles and kilometers. You know, like how many kilometers we make when we do seventy miles in the car?"

"Oh," he said.

But his gaze at the foot of the bed relaxed slowly. The hold over himself relaxed too, finally, and the next day it was very slack and he cried very easily at little things that were of no importance.

#### **POST-READING EXERCISES**

1. What were the changes in the boy that made his father suspect the kid was ill?

2. How did the boy behave after the doctor's visit? What worried him?

3. Did the boy tell his father about his fears? Why not? How does the boy's behaviour characterize him?

4. Why did the author introduce the description of his father's walk?

5. How would you explain the contrasts in the boy's behaviour on the first and the second day of his illness? Why was it that on the following day the boy cried very easily at little things of no importance?

6. What is the relationship between the boy and his father? Why do you think the boy's mother did not figure in the story?

### **Tennessee Williams. From "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1947)**

*This play tells the story of Blanche DuBois, an aristocratic woman who has lost her ancestral home of Belle Reve (beautiful dream) and has just lost her job as a teacher because of her sexual promiscuity. She goes to visit her sister in a working-class neighbourhood of New Orleans called Elysian Fields. To get there she literally takes the streetcar that runs down Desire Street.*

*Blanche's sister, Stella, has turned her back on her aristocratic upbringing, and has married a working man named Stanley Kowalski, who has little patience for Blanche's lies and fantasies.*

*In this scene Blanche is trying to convince her sister, who is pregnant, that she should leave Stanley – the night before Blanche witnessed one of Stanley's drunken and violent poker games.*

(From SCENE 4)

**Blanche:** Stella, I can't live with him! You can, he is your husband. But how could I stay here with him, after last night, with just those curtains (1) between us?

**Stella:** Blanche, you saw him at his worst last night.

**Blanche:** On the contrary, I saw him at his best! What such a man has to offer is animal force and he gave a wonderful exhibition of that! But the only way to live with such a man is to – go to bed with him! And that's your job, not mine!

**Stella:** After you've rested a little, you'll see it's going to work out. You don't have to worry about anything while you're here. I mean – expenses...

**Blanche:** I have a plan (2) for us both, to get us both – out!

**Stella:** You take it for granted that I am in something that I want to get out of.

**Blanche:** I take it for granted that you still have sufficient memory of Belle Reve to find this place and these poker players impossible to live with.

**Stella:** Well, you're taking entirely too much for granted.

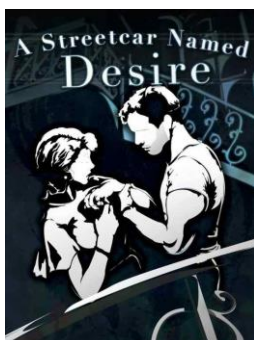
**Blanche:** I can't believe you're in earnest.

**Stella:** No?

**Blanche:** I understand how it happened – a little. You saw him in uniform, an officer, not here but –

**Stella:** I'm not sure it would have made any difference where I saw him.

**Blanche:** Now don't say it was one of those mysterious electric things between people! If you do I'll laugh in your face.



**Stella:** I am not going to say anything more at all about it!

**Blanche:** All right, then, don't!

**Stella:** But there are things that happen between a man and a

woman in the dark – that sort of make everything else seem – unimportant. [Pause]

**Blanche:** What you are talking about is brutal desire – just Desire! – the name of that rattle-trap (3) streetcar that bangs through the Quarter (4), up one old narrow street and down another...

**Stella:** Haven't you ever ridden on that streetcar?

**Blanche:** It brought me here. – Where I'm not wanted and where I'm ashamed to be...

**Stella:** Then don't you think your superior attitude is a bit out of place?

**Blanche:** I am not being or feeling at all superior, Stella. Believe me, I'm not! It's just this. This is how I look at it. A man like that is someone to go out with – once – twice – three times when the devil is in you. But live with? Have a child by?

**Stella:** I have told you I love him.

**Blanche:** Then I tremble for you! I just – tremble for you... [There is a pause]

**Blanche:** May I – speak – plainly?

**Stella:** Yes, do. Go ahead. As plainly as you want to.

[Outside a train approaches. They are silent till the noise subsides. They are both in the bedroom. Under cover of the train's noise Stanley enters from outside. He stands unseen by the women, holding some packages in his arms, and overhears their following conversation. He wears an undershirt and grease-stained seersucker pants.]

**Blanche:** Suppose! You can't have forgotten that much of our bringing up, Stella, that you just suppose that any part of a gentleman's in his nature! Not one particle, no! Oh, if he was just – ordinary! Just plain – but good and wholesome (5), but no... There's something downright – bestial – about him! You're hating me saying this, aren't you?

**Stella:** [coldly] Go on and say it all, Blanche.

**Blanche:** He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one! There's even something – sub-human – something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something – ape-like about him, like one of

those pictures, I've seen in – anthropological studies! Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is – Stanley Kowalski – survivor of the Stone Age! Bearing the raw meat home from the kill in the jungle! And you – you here – waiting for him! Maybe he'll strike you or maybe grunt and kiss you! That is, if kisses have been discovered yet! Night falls and the other apes gather! There in front of the cave, all grunting like him, and swilling (6) and gnawing (7) and hulking (8)! His poker nights! You call it – this party of apes! Somebody growls – some creature snatches at something – the fight is on! God! Maybe we are a long way from being made in God's image, but Stella – my sister – there has been some progress since then! Such things as art – as poetry and music – such kinds of new light have come into the world since then! In some kinds of people some tenderer feelings have had some little beginning! That we have got to make grow! And cling to it, and hold as our flag! In this dark march toward whatever it is we're approaching... Don't – don't hang back with the brutes (9)!

[Another train passes outside. Stanley hesitates, licking his lips. Then suddenly he turns stealthily about and withdraws through front door. The women are still unaware of his presence. When the train has passed he calls through the closed front door.]

**Stanley:** Hey! Hey, Stella!

Stella: [who has listened gravely to Blanche]  
Stanley!

**Blanche:** Stell, I – [But Stella has gone to the front door. Stanley enters casually with his packages.]

**Stanley:** Hiyuh, Stella. Blanche back?

**Stella:** Yes, she's back.

**Stanley:** Hiyuh, Blanche. [He grins at her.]

**Stella:** You must've got under the car.

**Stanley:** Them darn mechanics at Fritz's don't know their ass fr'm (10) – Hey! [Stella has embraced him with both arms, fiercely, and full in the view of Blanche. He laughs and clasps her head to him. Over her head he grins through the curtains at Blanche. As the lights fade away, with a lingering brightness on their embrace, the music of the Blue Piano and trumpet and drums is heard.]

1. *Curtains:* only a curtain divides Blanche's room from the rest of the house.

2. *Plan:* Blanche's plan is to get money from a rich married lover of hers.

3. *Rattle-trap:* rundown, in terrible condition.

4. *Quarter:* the Latin Quarter of New Orleans

5. *Wholesome:* good and morally correct.

6. *Swilling:* drinking quickly large quantities.

7. *Gnawing:* chewing

8. *Hulking:* walking in an awkward manner because he is too big and muscular

9. *Brutes:* animals

10. *Don't...fr'm:* They don't know their ass from a hole in the ground, i.e., they don't know anything at all.

## POST-READING EXERCISES

1. What kind of background do Blanche and Stella have?
2. Why has Blanche come to stay with Stella?
3. How does Stella react to Blanche's criticism of Stanley?
4. What is Blanche talking about when she says that the streetcar goes 'up one narrow street and down another... '?
5. Comment on: "Haven't you ever ridden on that streetcar?" – "It brought me here."
6. Why does Blanche say that Stella should leave Stanley? Do you think these are the real reasons why she can't accept him?
7. How would you describe Blanche's way of speaking?
8. What dramatic effect does Stanley's secretly listening to Blanche's speech have?
9. Why do you think Stanley grins at Blanche?
10. Tennessee Williams drew his own definition of desire: "Desire is rooted in a longing for companionship, a release from the loneliness that haunts every individual." Does his idea of desire help explain the desires of these two sisters from a once-aristocratic family?

## Tennessee Williams. "A Streetcar Named Desire"

(The development of the character of Blanche through the text.)

Read the following short extracts from scenes 1, 9 and 10 and answer these questions in as much detail as you can.

- a. Identify the techniques the playwright has used in these extracts to indicate the development of Blanche's character during the play. You could consider costume, movement, dialogue, and props as observed in several scenes.
- b. From the audience's perspective, comment on how effective each of these techniques is. In doing so you should make close reference to the three given extracts, and provide quotations.  
Set your answer out like this:

Technique	Quotations	Comment on effectiveness
costume	a) Extract from scene 1: "daintily dressed in a white suit"	suggests her purity, frailty, delicacy

SCENE ONE	SCENE NINE	SCENE TEN
<p>BLANCHE comes around the corner, carrying a valise. She looks at a slip of paper, then at the building, then again at the slip and again at the building. Her expression is one of shocked disbelief. Her appearance is incongruous to this setting. She is daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace and earrings of pearl, white gloves and hat, looking as if she were arriving at a summer tea or cocktail party in the garden district. She is about five years older than STELLA. Her delicate beauty must avoid a strong light. There is something about her uncertain manner, as well as her white clothes, that suggests a moth.</p> <p>EUNICE [finally]: What's the matter, honey? Are you lost?</p> <p>BLANCHE [with faintly hysterical humour]: They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at - Elysian Fields!</p> <p>EUNICE: That's where you are now.</p> <p>BLANCHE: At Elysian Fields?</p> <p>EUNICE: This here is Elysian Fields.</p> <p>BLANCHE: They mustn't have - understood - what number I wanted ...</p> <p>EUNICE: What number you lookin' for?</p> <p>[BLANCHE wearily refers to the slip of paper.]</p>	<p>A while later that evening. BLANCHE is seated in a tense hunched position in a bedroom chair that she has recovered with diagonal green and white stripes. She has on her scarlet satin robe. On the table beside the chair is a bottle of liquor and a glass. The rapid, feverish polka tune, the 'Varsouviana', is heard. The music is in her mind; she is drinking to escape it and the sense of disaster closing in on her, and she seems to whisper the words of the song. An electric fan is turning back and forth across her.</p> <p>[MITCH comes around the corner in work clothes: blue denim shirt and pants. He is unshaven. He climbs the steps to the door and rings. BLANCHE is startled.]</p> <p>BLANCHE: Who is it, please?</p> <p>MITCH [hoarsely]: Me. Mitch.</p> <p>[The polka tune stops.]</p> <p>BLANCHE: Mitch! - Just a minute.</p> <p>[She rushes about frantically, hiding the bottle in a closet, crouching at the mirror and dabbing her face with cologne and powder. She is so excited that her breath is audible as she dashes about. At last she rushes to the door in the kitchen and lets him in.]</p>	<p>It is a few hours later that night. BLANCHE has been drinking fairly steadily since MITCH left. She has dragged her wardrobe trunk into the centre of the bedroom. It hangs open with flowery dresses thrown across it. As the drinking and packing went on, a mood of hysterical exhilaration came into her and she has decked herself out in a somewhat soiled and crumpled white satin evening gown and a pair of scuffed silver slippers with brilliants set in their heels.</p> <p>[Now she is placing the rhinestone tiara on her head before the mirror of the dressing-table and murmuring excitedly as if to a group of spectral admirers.]</p> <p>BLANCHE: How about taking a swim, a moonlight swim at the old rock-quarry? If anyone's sober enough to drive a car! Ha-Ha! Best way in the world to stop your head buzzing! Only you've got to be careful to dive where the deep pool is - if you hit a rock you don't come up till tomorrow ...</p> <p>[Trembling she lifts the hand mirror for a closer inspection. She catches her breath and slams the mirror face down with such violence that the glass cracks. She moans a little and attempts to rise.]</p>

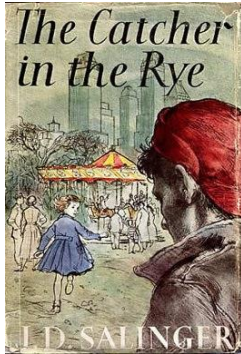
### Jerome David (J.D.) Salinger. From "The Catcher in the Rye" (1951)

Although "The Catcher in the Rye" caused considerable controversy when it was first published in 1951, the book was an instant hit. Within two weeks after its release, it was listed number one on "The New York Times" best-seller list, and it stayed there for thirty weeks. It remained immensely popular for many years, especially among teenagers and young adults. Bit it has long been considered "inappropriate" and "immoral" in more conservative areas of the United States. Because Salinger used slang and profanity in his text and because he discussed adolescent sexuality in a complex and open



way, many readers were offended, and "The Catcher in the Rye" was (and continues to be) banned in some communities. Written in the first person, "The Catcher in the Rye" is the account of three disoriented days in the life of a troubled sixteen-year-old boy, Holden Caulfield, after being kicked out of Pencey Prep. Having already been kicked out of some other schools and not wanting to face his parents, he decides to set off and spend a few days alone in New York City.

In the excerpt below, we find Holden exhausted physically and mentally, when he comes home to see his younger sister Phoebe who is also his close friend.



Then all of a sudden, she said, "Oh, why did you do it?" She meant why did I get the ax (1) again. It made me sort of sad, the way she said it.

"Oh, God, Phoebe, don't ask me. I'm sick of everybody asking me that," I said. "A million reasons why. It was one of the worst schools I ever went to. It was full of phonies. And mean guys. You never saw so many mean guys in your life. For instance, if you were having a bull session (2) in somebody's room, and somebody wanted to come in, nobody'd let them in if they were some dopey, pimply guy. Everybody was always locking their door when somebody wanted to come in. And they had this goddam secret fraternity (3) that I was too yellow not to join. There was this one pimply, boring guy, Robert Ackley, that wanted to get in. He kept trying to join, and they wouldn't let him. Just because he was boring and pimply. I don't even feel like

talking about it. It was a stinking school. Take my word."

Old Phoebe didn't say anything, but she was listening. I could tell by the back of her neck that she was listening. She always listens when you tell her something. And the funny part is she knows, half the time, what the hell you're talking about. She really does.

I kept talking about old Pencey. I sort of felt like it.

"Even the couple of nice teachers on the faculty, they were phonies, too," I said. "There was this one old guy, Mr. Spencer. His wife was always giving you hot chocolate and all that stuff, and they were really pretty nice. But you should've seen him when the headmaster, old Thurmer, came in the history class and sat down in the back of the room. He was always coming in and sitting down in the back of the room for about a half an hour. He was supposed to be incognito or something. After a while, he'd be sitting back there and then he'd start interrupting what old Spencer was saying to crack a lot of corny jokes (4). Old Spencer'd practically kill himself chuckling and smiling and all, like as if Thurmer was a goddam prince or something."

"Don't swear (5) so much."

"It would've made you puke, I swear it would," I said. "Then, on Veterans' Day. They have this day, Veterans' Day, that all the jerks that graduated from Pencey around 1776 come back and walk all over the place, with their wives and children and everybody. You should've seen this one old guy that was about fifty. What he did was, he came in our room and knocked on the door and asked us if we'd mind if he used the bathroom. The bathroom was at the end of the corridor--I don't know why the hell he asked us. You know what he said? He said he wanted to see if his initials were still in one of the can doors. What he did, he carved his goddam stupid sad old initials in one of the can doors about ninety years ago, and he wanted to see if they were still there. So my roommate and I walked him down to the bathroom and all, and we had to stand there while he looked for his initials in all the can doors. He kept talking to us the whole time, telling us how when he was at Pencey they were the happiest days of his life, and giving us a lot of advice for the future and all. Boy, did he depress me! I don't mean he was a bad guy--he wasn't. But you don't have to be a bad guy to depress somebody--you can be a good guy and do it. All you have to do to depress somebody is give them a lot of phony advice while you're looking for your initials in some can door--that's all you have to do. I don't know. Maybe it wouldn't have been so bad if he hadn't been all out of breath. He was all out of breath from just climbing up the stairs, and the whole time he was looking for his initials he kept breathing hard, with his nostrils all funny and sad, while he kept telling Stradlater and I to get all we could out of Pencey. God, Phoebe! I can't explain. I just didn't like anything that was happening at Pencey. I can't explain."

Old Phoebe said something then, but I couldn't hear her. She had the side of her mouth right smack on the pillow, and I couldn't hear her.

"What?" I said. "Take your mouth away. I can't hear you with your mouth that way."

"You don't like anything that's happening."

It made me even more depressed when she said that.

"Yes I do. Yes I do. Sure I do. Don't say that. Why the hell do you say that?"

"Because you don't. You don't like any schools. You don't like a million things. You don't."

"I do! That's where you're wrong--that's exactly where you're wrong! Why the hell do you have to say that?" I

said. Boy, was she depressing me.

"Because you don't," she said. "Name one thing."

"One thing? One thing I like?" I said. "Okay."

The trouble was, I couldn't concentrate too hot. Sometimes it's hard to concentrate.

"One thing I like a lot you mean?" I asked her.

She didn't answer me, though. She was in a cock-eyed position way the hell over the other side of the bed. She was about a thousand miles away. "C'mon answer me," I said. "One thing I like a lot, or one thing I just like?"

"You like a lot."

"All right," I said. But the trouble was, I couldn't concentrate. About all I could think of were those two nuns that went around collecting dough (6) in those beatup old straw baskets. Especially the one with the glasses with those iron rims. And this boy I knew at Elkton Hills. There was this one boy at Elkton Hills, named James Castle, that wouldn't take back something he said about this very conceited boy, Phil Stabile. James Castle called him a very conceited guy, and one of Stabile's lousy friends went and squealed on him to Stabile. So Stabile, with about six other dirty bastards, went down to James Castle's room and went in and locked the goddam door and tried to make him take back what he said, but he wouldn't do it. So they started in on him. I won't even tell you what they did to him--it's too repulsive--but he still wouldn't take it back, old James Castle. And you should've seen him. He was a skinny little weak-looking guy, with wrists about as big as pencils. Finally, what he did, instead of taking back what he said, he jumped out the window. I was in the shower and all, and even I could hear him land outside. But I just thought something fell out the window, a radio or a desk or something, not a boy or anything. Then I heard everybody running through the corridor and down the stairs, so I put on my bathrobe and I ran downstairs too, and there was old James Castle laying right on the stone steps and all. He was dead, and his teeth, and blood, were all over the place, and nobody would even go near him. He had on this turtleneck sweater I'd lent him. All they did with the guys that were in the room with him was expel them. They didn't even go to jail.

That was about all I could think of, though. Those two nuns I saw at breakfast and this boy James Castle I knew at Elkton Hills. The funny part is, I hardly even know James Castle, if you want to know the truth. He was one of these very quiet guys. He was in my math class, but he was way over on the other side of the room, and he hardly ever got up to recite or go to the blackboard or anything. Some guys in school hardly ever get up to recite or go to the blackboard. I think the only time I ever even had a conversation with him was that time he asked me if he could borrow this turtleneck sweater I had. I damn near dropped dead when he asked me, I was so surprised and all. I remember I was brushing my teeth, in the can, when he asked me. He said his cousin was coming in to take him for a drive and all. I didn't even know he knew I had a turtleneck sweater. All I knew about him was that his name was always right ahead of me at roll call. Cabel, R., Cabel, W., Castle, Caulfield--I can still remember it. If you want to know the truth, I almost didn't lend him my sweater. Just because I didn't know him too well.

"What?" I said to old Phoebe. She said something to me, but I didn't hear her.

"You can't even think of one thing."

"Yes, I can. Yes, I can."

"Well, do it, then."

"I like Allie," I said. "And I like doing what I'm doing right now. Sitting here with you, and talking, and thinking about stuff, and--"

"Allie's dead--You always say that! If somebody's dead and everything, and in Heaven, then it isn't really--"

"I know he's dead! Don't you think I know that? I can still like him, though, can't I? Just because somebody's dead, you don't just stop liking them, for God's sake--especially if they were about a thousand times nicer than the people you know that're alive and all."

Old Phoebe didn't say anything. When she can't think of anything to say, she doesn't say a goddam word.

"Anyway, I like it now," I said. "I mean right now. Sitting here with you and just chewing the fat (2) and horsing (7)--"

"That isn't anything really!" "It is so something really! Certainly it is! Why the hell isn't it? People never think anything is anything really. I'm getting goddam sick of it,"

"Stop swearing. All right, name something else. Name something you'd like to be. Like a scientist. Or a lawyer or something."

"I couldn't be a scientist. I'm no good in science."

"Well, a lawyer--like Daddy and all."

"Lawyers are all right, I guess--but it doesn't appeal to me," I said. "I mean they're all right if they go around saving innocent guys' lives all the time, and like that, but you don't do that kind of stuff if you're a lawyer. All you do is make a lot of dough and play golf and play bridge and buy cars and drink Martinis and look like a hot-

shot (8). And besides. Even if you did go around saving guys' lives and all, how would you know if you did it because you really wanted to save guys' lives, or because you did it because what you really wanted to do was be a terrific lawyer, with everybody slapping you on the back and congratulating you in court when the goddam trial was over, the reporters and everybody, the way it is in the dirty movies? How would you know you weren't being a phony? The trouble is, you wouldn't."

I'm not too sure old Phoebe knew what the hell I was talking about. I mean she's only a little child and all. But she was listening, at least. If somebody at least listens, it's not too bad.

"Daddy's going to kill you. He's going to kill you," she said.

1. get the ax: to be expelled (from a school)
2. have a bull session; chew the fat: to chat
3. fraternity: a society of male students (at schools and colleges)
4. corny jokes: unoriginal jokes (анекдоты с бородой)

5. swear: 1. to use words considered obscene or blasphemous 2. to vow
6. dough: (sl) money
7. horse: = horse around – play roughly or boisterously
8. a hot-shot: эд. пижон

## POST-READING EXERCISES

1. Holden narrates the story of "The Catcher in the Rye" while he is recovering from his breakdown. Though Holden never describes his psychological breakdown directly, it becomes clear as the novel progresses that he is growing increasingly unstable. How does Salinger indicate this instability to the reader? What could be the reasons for his growing restless? Support your answer with the reference to the text.

2. Why does Holden think about James Castle when Phoebe asks him to name one thing that he likes a lot? Why does he deny really knowing James? What does it tell us about Holden when he says, "Just because somebody's dead, you don't just stop liking them, for God's sake---especially if they were a thousand times nicer than the people you know that're alive and all"? What kind of effect did Holden's witnessing the deaths of James Castle and his brother Allie have on him?

3. Look carefully at the description of the "catcher in the rye." Analyze the symbols in this image. What does "rye" symbolize? What are the children falling into? Compare this to Burns's poem. What do you think the song has to do with Holden's experiences?

### Comin' Thro' the Rye

O, Jenny's a' weat, poor body,  
Jenny's seldom dry;  
She draigl't a' her petticoattie  
Comin' thro' the rye.

Comin' thro' the rye, poor body,  
Comin' thro' the rye,  
She draigl't a' her petticoatie,  
Comin' thro' the rye !

Gin a body meet a body  
Comin' thro' the rye,  
Gin a body kiss a body,  
Need a body cry?

Gin a body meet a body  
Comin' thro' the glen,  
Gin a body kiss a body,  
Need the warld ken?

-- Robert Burns

a' weat: all wet

comin' thro': coming through

gin ['g' as in give]: if

draigl't a' her petticoattie: dragged (wet by trailing on the ground) all her petticoats

ken: know

Пробираясь до калитки  
Полем вдоль межи,  
Дженни вымокла до нитки  
Вечером во ржи.

Очень холодно девчонке,  
Бьет девчонку дрожь:  
Замочила все юбочки,  
Идя через рожь.

Если кто-то звал кого-то  
Сквозь густую рожь  
И кого-то обнял кто-то,  
Что с него возьмешь,

И какая нам забота,  
Если у межи  
Целовался с кем-то кто-то  
Вечером во ржи !..

Перевод С.Я. Маршак

4. Why does Holden want to be 'the catcher in the rye'? What are the positive and negative aspects of his fantasy?

5. Some critics have characterized this book as a "Peter Pan Syndrome." Explain what you think a "Peter Pan Syndrome" is.

## J. D. Salinger. "The Catcher in the Rye"

The entire story is written in the 'stream of consciousness' technique (a style of writing when the narrator seems to be putting down his thoughts, unedited, as quickly as they come into his head) presenting the main character's thoughts about the world and his role in it. Read the following passage from the "Catcher in the Rye" and answer the questions.

And the band started playing one of those really slow songs, like "Stairway to Heaven" or "Freebird" that probably have really great lyrics or something but the song itself just is awful - just awful. Then this real phony guy, with the hair all

slicked back on the top of his head stood up with the Sax and did a solo. I almost died. I mean, almost completely died right there. It had to be the cheesiest solo I had ever heard. I mean he was swaying back and forth and he closed his eyes like he was really getting into it and all, but it was the fakest thing you ever heard. It was like something out of a bad Howard Johnson's. I swear, he must record Muzak for a living or drive a forklift or something.

Old Jean was getting into it, though. She was humming along and swaying to the song and practically just swaying her own dance out there. I mean I'm a pretty good dancer but I hate slow songs. There's nothing you can do except just sit there and hold her and move her around and wait for the song to end. I would have rather just sat down and ordered another drink and waited for something else but not old Jean. She wanted to dance everything. Up real close to, so I could smell her breath. She didn't smell bad or anything. Don't get me wrong, she just didn't smell quite right. I mean girls should smell a certain way-like baby powder, new clothes and perfume. Something that was girlish, y'know. Jean, I swear, smelled like a fruit salad or Old Spice. I hate Old Spice. I mean I like Jean fine, y'know. She's great, but I just couldn't smell her.

Christ, I must be nuts. All of a sudden I start to imagine myself as the old sailor in the Old Spice commercial. Right out there on the dance floor. I start to think about coming home from the sea and bringing in the duffel and that song. It must have been the goddammed saxophone because that goddam song is running through my head "Dum dum de dum dum, dum di de dum dum da di dum dum" I see myself coming home to this really cute girl and wearing a sailor suit or something. I'm crazy. I mean, I'm really nuts sometimes.

1. Does it seem as if the thoughts are just thrown onto the paper as they occur? What words make you think so?
2. Why doesn't he like the sax player?
3. Does he like Jean? How do you know?
4. Is he crazy? Explain.

*Holden, as a storyteller, possesses a distinct array of idiosyncrasies in his speech that "The Catcher in the Rye" strives to portray. His tone is informal and loose; Holden uses slang and idiomatic expressions quite often which give Holden's voice a casual and indifferent air, perfect for a teenager who tries to appear unconcerned about the world.*

*Holden's speech has got several features. Look through the extracts from the novel and find examples.*

1. The constant use of such words and expressions as:

- a. **and all; and stuff; and crap** (все такое прочее, и всякое такое)
- b. **or something; or anything** (или что-нибудь такое, или что-нибудь в этом роде)
- c. **sort of** (вроде, как бы, тупа)

1. Holden's speech is often very repetitive as he iterates certain words and idioms as fillers.

2. His speech is not always grammatically correct.

3. He often uses slang expressions like **'to shoot the bull'**, **'to give smb. a buzz'**...

4. His speech is very emotional (trying to emphasize the emotional state of his character, Salinger puts certain words and phrases in italics)

6. He often uses such epithets as **phony** (липовый), **lousy** (поганый, вишивый), **terrific** (1. замечательный, 2. отвратительный) and others.

7. The use of the word **old** while characterizing different people (regardless of their age) and even things.

8. A lot of exclamations as:

- a. **Boy!** (Ого! Боже!)
- b. **For Chrissake** = For Christ's sake
- c. **Hell** (в качестве эмфатического усилителя)-
- c. **Goddam** = God damned (эмфатический эпитет)

## **Harper Lee. From "To Kill a Mockingbird"(1960)**

"To Kill a Mockingbird", published in 1960, was an immediate best-seller and won great critical acclaim for Harper Lee, including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1961. A coming-of-age story, it is told from the point of view of Jean Louise "Scout" Finch, the young daughter of Atticus Finch, an educated lawyer in Maycomb, Alabama, a small town in the deep South of the United States. The

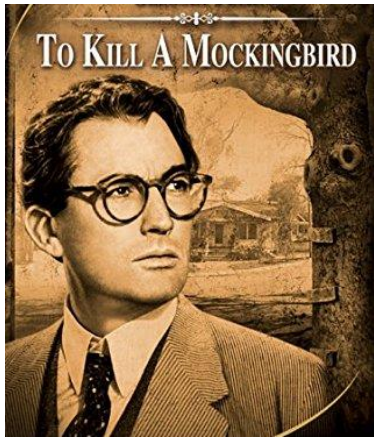
*protagonist and her brother Jem watch as their father defends a black man, Tom Robinson, wrongly accused of raping a white girl in a racist community in the 1930's.*

Atticus was halfway through his speech to the jury. He had evidently pulled some papers from his briefcase that rested beside his chair, because they were on his table. Tom Robinson was toying with them.

"...absence of any corroborative evidence, this man was indicted on a capital charge and is now on trial for his life...."

I punched Jem. "How long's he been at it?"

"He's just gone over the evidence," Jem whispered. [...]



We looked down again. Atticus was speaking easily, with the kind of detachment he used when he dictated a letter. He walked slowly up and down in front of the jury, and the jury seemed to be attentive: their heads were up, and they followed Atticus's route with what seemed to be appreciation. I guess it was because Atticus wasn't a thunderer.

Atticus paused, then he did something he didn't ordinarily do. He unhitched his watch and chain and placed them on the table, saying, With the court's permission- Judge Taylor nodded, and then Atticus did something I never saw him do before or since, in public or in private: he unbuttoned his vest, unbuttoned his collar, loosened his tie, and took off his coat. He never loosened a scrap of his clothing until he undressed at bedtime, and to Jem and me, this was the equivalent of him standing before us stark naked. We exchanged horrified glances. Atticus put his hands in his pockets, and as he returned to the jury, I saw his gold collar button and the tips of his pen and pencil winking in the light.

"Gentlemen," he said. Jem and I again looked at each other: Atticus might have said, "Scout." His voice had lost its aridity, its detachment, and he was

talking to the jury as if they were folks on the post office corner.

"Gentlemen," he was saying, "I shall be brief, but I would like to use my remaining time with you to remind you that this case is not a difficult one, it requires no minute sifting of complicated facts, but it does require you to be sure beyond all reasonable doubt as to the guilt of the defendant. To begin with, this case should never have come to trial. This case is as simple as black and white.

"The state has not produced one iota of medical evidence to the effect that the crime Tom Robinson is charged with ever took place. It has relied instead upon the testimony of two witnesses whose evidence has not only been called into serious question on cross-examination, but has been flatly contradicted by the defendant. The defendant is not guilty, but somebody in this courtroom is.

"I have nothing but pity in my heart for the chief witness for the state, but my pity does not extend so far as to her putting a man's life at stake, which she has done in an effort to get rid of her own guilt.

"I say guilt, gentlemen, because it was guilt that motivated her. She has committed no crime, she has merely broken a rigid and time-honored code of our society, a code so severe that whoever breaks it is hounded from our midst as unfit to live with. She is the victim of cruel poverty and ignorance, but I cannot pity her: she is white. She knew full well the enormity of her offense, but because her desires were stronger than the code she was breaking, she persisted in breaking it. She persisted, and her subsequent reaction is something that all of us have known at one time or another. She did something every child has done- she tried to put the evidence of her offense away from her. But in this case she was no child hiding stolen contraband: she struck out at her victim- of necessity she must put him away from her- he must be removed from her presence, from this world. She must destroy the evidence of her offense.

"What was the evidence of her offense? Tom Robinson, a human being. She must put Tom Robinson away from her. Tom Robinson was her daily reminder of what she did. What did she do? She tempted a Negro.

"She was white, and she tempted a Negro. She did something that in our society is unspeakable: she kissed a black man. Not an old Uncle, but a strong young Negro man. No code mattered to her before she broke it, but it came crashing down on her afterwards.

"Her father saw it, and the defendant has testified as to his remarks. What did her father do? We don't know, but there is circumstantial evidence to indicate that Mayella Ewell was beaten savagely by someone who led almost exclusively with his left. We do know in part what Mr. Ewell did: he did what any God-fearing, persevering, respectable white man would do under the circumstances- he swore out a warrant, no doubt signing it with his left hand, and Tom Robinson now sits before you, having taken the oath with the only good hand he possesses- his right hand.

"And so a quiet, respectable, humble Negro who had the unmitigated temerity to 'feel sorry' for a white woman has had to put his word against two white people's. I need not remind you of their appearance and conduct on the stand- you saw them for yourselves. The witnesses for the state, with the exception of the sheriff of Maycomb County, have presented themselves to you gentlemen, to this court, in the cynical confidence that their testimony would not be doubted, confident that you gentlemen would go along with them on the assumption- the evil assumption- that all Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro men are not to be trusted around our women, an assumption one associates with minds of their caliber.

"Which, gentlemen, we know is in itself a lie as black as Tom Robinson's skin, a lie I do not have to point out to you. You know the truth, and the truth is this: some Negroes lie, some Negroes are immoral, some Negro men are not

to be trusted around women- black or white. But this is a truth that applies to the human race and to no particular race of men. There is not a person in this courtroom who has never told a lie, who has never done an immoral thing, and there is no man living who has never looked upon a woman without desire."

Atticus paused and took out his handkerchief. Then he took off his glasses and wiped them, and we saw another "first": we had never seen him sweat- he was one of those men whose faces never perspired, but now it was shining tan.

"One more thing, gentlemen, before I quit. Thomas Jefferson once said that all men are created equal, a phrase that the Yankees and the distaff side of the Executive branch in Washington are fond of hurling at us. There is a tendency in this year of grace, 1935, for certain people to use this phrase out of context, to satisfy all conditions. The most ridiculous example I can think of is that the people who run public education promote the stupid and idle along with the industrious- because all men are created equal, educators will gravely tell you, the children left behind suffer terrible feelings of inferiority. We know all men are not created equal in the sense some people would have us believe- some people are smarter than others, some people have more opportunity because they're born with it, some men make more money than others, some ladies make better cakes than others- some people are born gifted beyond the normal scope of most men.

"But there is one way in this country in which all men are created equal- there is one human institution that makes a pauper the equal of a Rockefeller, the stupid man the equal of an Einstein, and the ignorant man the equal of any college president. That institution, gentlemen, is a court. It can be the Supreme Court of the United States or the humblest J.P. court in the land, or this honorable court which you serve. Our courts have their faults, as does any human institution, but in this country our courts are the great levelers, and in our courts all men are created equal.

"I'm no idealist to believe firmly in the integrity of our courts and in the jury system- that is no ideal to me, it is a living, working reality. Gentlemen, a court is no better than each man of you sitting before me on this jury. A court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men who make it up. I am confident that you gentlemen will review without passion the evidence you have heard, come to a decision, and restore this defendant to his family. In the name of God, do your duty."

Atticus's voice had dropped, and as he turned away from the jury he said something I did not catch. He said it more to himself than to the court. I punched Jem. "What'd he say?"

"In the name of God, believe him, I think that's what he said." [...]

What happened after that had a dreamlike quality: in a dream I saw the jury return, moving like underwater swimmers, and Judge Taylor's voice came from far away and was tiny. I saw something only a lawyer's child could be expected to see, could be expected to watch for, and it was like watching Atticus walk into the street, raise a rifle to his shoulder and pull the trigger, but watching all the time knowing that the gun was empty.

A jury never looks at a defendant it has convicted, and when this jury came in, not one of them looked at Tom Robinson. The foreman handed a piece of paper to Mr. Tate who handed it to the clerk who handed it to the judge....

I shut my eyes. Judge Taylor was polling the jury: "Guilty... guilty... guilty... guilty..." I peeked at Jem: his hands were white from gripping the balcony rail, and his shoulders jerked as if each guilty was a separate stab between them.

Judge Taylor was saying something. His gavel was in his fist, but he wasn't using it. Dimly, I saw Atticus pushing papers from the table into his briefcase. He snapped it shut, went to the court reporter and said something, nodded to Mr. Gilmer, and then went to Tom Robinson and whispered something to him. Atticus put his hand on Tom's shoulder as he whispered. Atticus took his coat off the back of his chair and pulled it over his shoulder. Then he left the courtroom, but not by his usual exit. He must have wanted to go home the short way, because he walked quickly down the middle aisle toward the south exit. I followed the top of his head as he made his way to the door. He did not look up.

Someone was punching me, but I was reluctant to take my eyes from the people below us, and from the image of Atticus's lonely walk down the aisle.

"Miss Jean Louise?"

I looked around. They were standing. All around us and in the balcony on the opposite wall, the Negroes were getting to their feet. Reverend Sykes's voice was as distant as Judge Taylor's:

"Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passin'."

### **POST-READING EXERCISES**

1. *Where is the scene set?*
2. *What is Tom Robinson charged with?*
3. *Why did Judge Taylor appoint Atticus Finch to defend him?*
4. *What does Atticus Finch say about the case? How does he show that Tom Robinson could not have committed the crime he is accused of?*
5. *According to Atticus, what is Mayella's motive for accusing Tom? What assumption does Atticus fear the jury will make?*
6. *What does Atticus say about people not being created equal?*
7. *Though Atticus tries to stay calm through his speech, there are a lot of indications that he is anxious and worried. Give examples. Make your own interpretation of 'first'.*
8. *Does Atticus believe in the integrity of their courts and in the jury system?*

Ken Kesey. From *"One flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"* (1962)



*"One flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest", first published in 1962, is an allegorical novel set among the patients and workers in a mental institution. It tells the story (narrated by a paranoid half-Indian suffering from hallucinations) of an energetic con man Randle McMurphy who seeks institutionalization as a means of escaping the rigours of a prison work. McMurphy, in order to reduce the sexual and emotional submission of the men at the institution, begins to challenge the dictatorial Nurse Ratched, altering the destiny of those in the ward. The story is made up of series of skirmishes between McMurphy and Big Nurse. McMurphy becomes a hero, changing the life of the inmates, but pays dearly for his individualism. The setting of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" takes place at the end of the 1950s, when many of the nation's younger generation began to challenge conformity. Nurse Ratched personifies the power and control exhibited by large government and*

*businesses. The mental hospital in the novel is presented as a metaphor for the oppressive society of the late 1950s.*

That's that McMurphy. He's far away. He's still trying to pull people out of the fog. Why don't he leave me be? "... remember that vote we had a day or so back—about the TV time? Well, today's Friday and I thought I might just bring it up again, just to see if anybody else has picked up a little guts."

"Mr. McMurphy, the purpose of this meeting is therapy, group therapy, and I'm not certain these petty grievances—"

"Yeah, yeah, the hell with that, we've heard it before. Me and some of the rest of the guys decided—"

"One moment, Mr. McMurphy, let me pose a question to the group: do any of you feel that Mr. McMurphy is perhaps imposing his personal desires on some of you too much? I've been thinking you might be happier if he were moved to a different ward."

Nobody says anything for a minute. Then someone says, "Let him vote, why dontcha? Why ya want to ship him to Disturbed just for bringing up a vote? What's so wrong with changing time?"

"Why, Mr. Scanlon, as I recall, you refused to eat for three days until we allowed you to turn the set on at six instead of six-thirty."

"A man needs to see the world news, don't he? God, they coulda bombed Washington and it'd been a week before we'd of heard."

"Yes? And how do you feel about relinquishing your world news to watch a bunch of men play baseball?"

"We can't have both, huh? No, I suppose not. Well, what the dickens—I don't guess they'll bomb us this week."

"Let's let him have the vote, Miss Ratched."

"Very well. But I think this is ample evidence of how much he is upsetting some of you patients. What is it you are proposing Mr. McMurphy?"

"I'm proposing a revote on watching the TV in the afternoon."

"You're certain one more vote will satisfy you? We have more important things—"

"It'll satisfy me. I just'd kind of like to see which of these birds has any guts and which doesn't."

"It's that kind of talk, Doctor Spivey, that makes me wonder if the patients wouldn't be more content if Mr. McMurphy were moved."

"Let him call the vote, why dontcha?"

"Certainly, Mr. Cheswick. A vote is now before the group. Will a show of hands be adequate, Mr. McMurphy, or are you going to insist on a secret ballot?"

"I want to see the hands. I want to see the hands that don't go up, too."

"Everyone in favor of changing the television time to the afternoon, raise his hand."

The first hand that comes up, I can tell, is McMurphy's, because of the bandage where that control panel cut into him when he tried to lift it. And then off down the slope I see them, other hands coming up out of the fog. It's like . . . that big red hand of McMurphy's is reaching into the fog and dropping down and dragging the men up by their hands, dragging them blinking into the open. First one, then another, then the next. Right on down the line of Acutes, dragging them out of the fog till there they stand, all twenty of them, raising not just for watching TV but against the Big Nurse, against her trying to send McMurphy to Disturbed, against the way she's talked and acted and beat them down for years.

Nobody says anything. I can feel how stunned everybody is, the patients as well as the staff. The nurse can't figure what happened; yesterday, before he tried lifting that panel, there wasn't but four of five men might of

voted. But when she talks she don't let it show in her voice how surprised she is.

"I count only twenty, Mr. McMurphy."

"Twenty? Well, why not? Twenty is all of us there—" His voice hangs as he realizes what she means. "Now hold on just a goddamned minute, lady—"

"I'm afraid the vote is defeated."

"Hold on just one goddamned *minute!*"

"There are forty patients on the ward, Mr. McMurphy. Forty patients, and only twenty voted. You must have a majority to change the ward policy. I'm afraid the vote is closed."

The hands are coming down across the room. The guys know they're whipped, are trying to slip back into the safety of the fog. McMurphy is on his feet.

"Well, I'll be a sonofabitch. You mean to tell me that's how you're gonna pull it? Count the votes of those old birds over there too?"

"Didn't you explain the voting procedure to him, Doctor?"

"I'm afraid—a majority *is* called for, McMurphy. She's right. She's right."

"A majority, Mr. McMurphy; it's in the ward constitution."

"And I suppose the way to change the damned constitution is with a majority vote. Sure. Of all the chicken-shit things I've ever seen, this by God takes the *cake!*"

"I'm sorry, Mr. McMurphy, but you'll find it written in the policy if you'd care for me to—"

"So this's how you work this democratic bullshit—hell's bells!"

"You seem upset, Mr. McMurphy. Doesn't he seem upset, Doctor? I want you to note this."

"Don't give me that noise, lady. When a guy's getting screwed he's got a right to holler. And we've been damn well screwed."

"Perhaps, Doctor, in view of the patient's condition, we should bring this meeting to a close early today—"

"Wait! Wait a minute, let me talk to some of those old guys."

"The vote is closed, Mr. McMurphy."

...

He don't pay any attention to her. He comes on down the line of Chronicles. "C'mon, c'mon, just one vote from you birds, just raise a hand. Show her you can still do it."

"I'm tired," says Pete and wags his head.

"The night is ... the Pacific Ocean." The Colonel is reading off his hand, can't be bothered with voting.

"*One of you guys, for cryin' out loud!* This is where you get the edge, don't you see that? We have to do this—or we're *whipped!* Don't a one of you clucks know what I'm talking about enough to give us a hand? You, Gabriel? George? No? You, Chief, what about you?"

He's standing over me in the mist. Why won't he leave me be?

"Chief, you're our last bet."

The Big Nurse is folding her papers; the other nurses are standing up around her. She finally gets to her feet.

"The meeting is adjourned, then," I hear her say. "And I'd like to see the staff down in the staff room in about an hour. So, if there is nothing el—"

It's too late to stop it now. McMurphy did something to it that first day, put some kind of hex on it with his hand so it won't act like I order it. There's no sense in it, any fool can see; I wouldn't do it on my own. Just by the way the nurse is staring at me with her mouth empty of words I can see I'm in for trouble, but I can't stop it. McMurphy's got hidden wires hooked to it, lifting it slow just to get me out of the fog and into the open where I'm fair game. He's doing it, wires . . .

No. That's not the truth. I lifted it myself.

McMurphy whoops and drags me standing, pounding my back.

"Twenty-one! The Chief's vote makes it twenty-one! And by God if that ain't a majority I'll eat my hat!"

"Yippee," Cheswick yells. The other Acutes are coming across toward me.

"The meeting was closed," she says. Her smile is still there, but the back other neck as she walks out of the day room and into the Nurses' Station, is red and swelling like she'll blow apart any second.

But she don't blow up, not right off, not until about an hour later. Behind the glass her smile is twisted and queer, like we've never seen before. She just sits. I can see her shoulders rise and fall as she breathes.

McMurphy looks up at the clock and he says it's time for the game. He's over by the drinking fountain with some of the other Acutes, down on his knees scouring off the baseboard. I'm sweeping out the broom closet for the tenth time that day. Scanlon and Harding, they got the buffer going up and down the hall, polishing the new wax into shining figure eights. McMurphy says again that he guesses it must be game time and he stands up, leaves the scouring rag where it lies. Nobody else stops work. McMurphy walks past the window where she's glaring out at him and grins at her like he knows he's got her whipped now. When he tips his head back and



winks at her she gives that little sideways jerk of her head.

Everybody keeps on at what he's doing, but they all watch out of the corners of their eyes while he drags his armchair out to in front of the TV set, then switches on the set and sits down. A picture swirls onto the screen of a parrot out on the baseball field singing razor-blade songs. McMurphy gets up and turns up the sound to drown out the music coming down from the speaker in the ceiling, and he drags another chair in front of him and sits down and crosses his feet on the chair and leans back and lights a cigarette. He scratches his belly and yawns.

"Hoo-weee! Man, all I need me now is a can of beer and a red-hot."

We can see the nurse's face get red and her mouth work as she stares at him. She looks around for a second and sees everybody's watching what she's going to do—even the black boys and the little nurses sneaking looks at her, and the residents beginning to drift in for the staff meeting, they're watching. Her mouth clamps shut. She looks back at McMurphy and waits till the razor-blade song is finished; then she gets up and goes to the steel door where the controls are, and she flips a switch and the TV picture swirls back into the gray. Nothing is left on the screen but a little eye of light beading right down on McMurphy sitting there.

That eye don't faze him a bit. To tell the truth, he don't even let on he knows the picture is turned off; he puts his cigarette between his teeth and pushes his cap forward in his red hair till he has to lean back to see out from under the brim.

And sits that way, with his hands crossed behind his head and his feet stuck out in a chair, a smoking cigarette sticking out from under his hatbrim—watching the TV screen.

The nurse stands this as long as she can; then she comes to the door of the Nurses' Station and calls across to him he'd better help the men with the housework. He ignores her.

"I said, Mr. McMurphy, that you are supposed to be working during these hours." Her voice has a tight whine like an electric saw ripping through pine. "Mr. McMurphy, I'm *warning* you!"

Everybody's stopped what he was doing. She looks around her, then takes a step out of the Nurses' Station toward McMurphy.

"You're committed, you realize. You are . . . under the *jurisdiction* of me . . . the staff." She's holding up a fist, all those red-orange fingernails burning into her palm. "Under jurisdiction and *control*—"

Harding shuts off the buffer, and leaves it in the hall, and goes pulls him a chair up alongside McMurphy and sits down and lights him a cigarette too.

"Mr. Harding! You return to your scheduled duties!"

I think how her voice sounds like it hit a nail, and this strikes me so funny I almost laugh.

"Mr. Har-*ding!*"

Then Cheswick goes and gets him a chair, and then Billy Bibbit goes, and then Scanlon and then Fredrickson and Sefelt, and then we all put down our mops and brooms and scouring rags and we all go pull us chairs up.

"You *men*—Stop this. *Stop!*"

And we're all sitting there lined up in front of that blanked out TV set, watching the gray screen just like we could see the baseball game clear as day, and she's ranting and screaming behind us.

If somebody'd of come in and took a look, men watching a blank TV, a fifty-year old woman hollering and squealing at the back of their heads about discipline and order and recriminations, they'd of thought the whole bunch was crazy as loons.

### **POST-READING EXERCISES**

1. *What do you think the fog in Chief Bromden's hallucinations symbolically means? Are all the patients lost in the fog? Explain: "He (McMurphy) is still trying to pull people out of the fog."*
2. *How does Nurse Ratched react when McMurphy brings up the question of changing the TV time? How does she try to intimidate him?*
3. *How many people were in favour of changing the schedule? What did McMurphy do to gain more votes?*
4. *Who do you think 'last' the battle*

