



Before You Read...

The Last Leaf

by O. Henry (1862-1910)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

O. Henry is the pen name of William Sidney Porter. His name is synonymous with his short stories, which have been entertaining readers since the turn of the century. O. Henry left school at age 15 and worked at a variety of positions, including as a clerk in a drugstore, a sheep rancher, a bronco buster in Texas, and a bank teller. During the last 10 years of his life, he lived in New York and wrote almost 300 stories. His editors kept him very busy until he died of a stroke at age 47. O. Henry's stories are noted for their ironic endings and their celebration of the common man's life.

ABOUT THE SELECTION

In this heartwarming story set in turn-of-the-century New York, a young woman tries to inspire hope in her dying roommate, and an unlikely hero comes to their rescue. As you read, try to characterize O. Henry's **tone**. Look for his ideas about friendship; and, of course, watch for the classic twist of irony at the end of the story.

Focus

Tell students that they will be reading a classic O. Henry story containing all the elements for which he is famous:

A. O. Henry gives us a sympathetic look at the lives of common people who struggle with poverty and personal problems. He glorifies the common hero, highlighting the daily trials and tribulations of ordinary people who have hopes and dreams.

B. Point out O. Henry's wry sense of humor. His overall tone is somewhat comical despite the poignant emotions and themes that underlie his stories. He pokes fun at his characters, although always in an affectionate manner, and he never loses his respect for them. One example is his mimicry of Behrman's accent.

C. O. Henry is famous for the colloquial tone of his writing. He speaks in a very friendly, informal voice, as though he were telling a story to friends. He frequently steps into his stories instead of remaining in the background, giving his own editorial comments about the situation. Examples in "The Last Leaf" are his remarks about what artists and writers have to do on their way to success, and his comment about the loneliness of people who are preparing to die.

D. Most notably, O. Henry is famous for his ironic endings, which are unexpected and frequently upset readers' expectations.

E. O. Henry's stories are considered period pieces; they convey a vivid sense of the lifestyle and customs of the time in which they are set. Ask students to picture the surroundings as they listen to O. Henry's description of turn-of-the-century Greenwich Village streets and apartments. The American economy at this time was characterized by increasing public resentment of the lavish spending of the rich, who made their money through huge monopolies, a business practice that is now illegal. Students might be interested in knowing that money had great buying power at this time; a steak dinner could be purchased for 50 cents!

The Last Leaf

O. Henry

FOCUS: IRONY

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

So, to quaint old Greenwich Village* the art people soon came prowling, hunting for north windows and eighteenth-century gables and Dutch attics

and low rents. Then they imported some pewter mugs and a chafing dish* or two from Sixth Avenue, and became a "colony."

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

That was in May. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

Washington Square — a park in the neighborhood of Greenwich Village in Lower Manhattan.

Greenwich Village — at that time, a low-rent neighborhood in Lower Manhattan.

chafing dish — a dish set above a heating device to cook food or keep it warm at the table.

table d'hôte — (French) a communal table for all guests at a hotel or restaurant, offering a limited number of choices at a fixed price.

chicory — a plant whose leaves are used in salads.

bishop sleeves — wide sleeves on women's clothing.

colony, touching one here and there with his icy fingers. Over on the east side this *ravager* strode boldly, smiting his victims by scores,* but his feet trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moss-grown “places.”

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

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

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

“She — she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples* some day,” said Sue.

“Paint? — bosh! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking about twice?”

“No, doctor; there is nothing.”

“Well, it is the weakness, then,” said the doctor. “I will do all that science, so

far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her funeral procession I subtract 50 percent from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten.”

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

Johnsy lay, scarcely making a ripple under the bedclothes, with her face toward the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she was asleep.

She arranged her board and began a pen-and-ink drawing to illustrate a magazine story. Young artists must pave their way to Art by drawing pictures for magazine stories that young authors write to pave their way to Literature.

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

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

“Twelve,” she said, and a little later “eleven”; and then “ten,” and “nine”; and

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

scores — a great many; “score” means “twenty.”

duffer — an incompetent or dull-witted person, esp. an old man.

pharmacopoeia — a manual of medicinal drugs and their uses.

Bay of Naples — a picturesque seacoast off the Italian city of Naples, in the Tyrrhenian Sea.

ragtime — a style of jazz music popularized around the turn of the century.



What is ironic about this illustration?

A. Sue is illustrating a story about the American West, yet her drawing is of a sophisticated Easterner, dressed for a horseshow, not a roundup. A native of Maine, she has no idea of how cowboys dress.

In 1902, O. Henry earned \$150 a month.

Visual aids are very helpful in teaching a story like this. You might want to bring in photos of New York at the turn of the century. Show students pictures of the apartment buildings and famous landmarks from that time. Also, seeing the way people dressed at the turn of the century will help students visualize the story.



What is ironic about this illustration?



What has Sue changed in the doctor's comments?

A. Sue has reversed the odds in order to give Johnsy courage.



What has Sue changed in the doctor's comments?

then "eight" and "seven," almost together.

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

"What is it, dear?" asked Sue.

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

"Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie."

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

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

"You needn't get any more wine," said Johnsy, keeping her eyes fixed out the window. "There goes another. No, I don't want any broth. That leaves just four. I

want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then I'll go, too."

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

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

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

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

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

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the ground floor beneath them. He was past sixty and he was a failure in art. Forty years he had *wielded* the brush. He had been always about to paint a masterpiece, but had never yet begun it. For several years he had painted nothing except now and then a *daub* in the line of commerce or advertising. He earned a little by serving as a model to those young artists in the colony who could not pay the price of a professional. He drank gin to excess, and still talked of his coming masterpiece. For the rest he was a fierce little old man, who scoffed terribly at softness in any one, and who regarded himself as especial *mastiff*-in-waiting to protect the two young artists in the studio above.

Sue found Behrman smelling strongly of juniper berries* in his dimly lighted den below. In one corner was a blank canvas on an easel that had been waiting there for twenty-five years to receive the first line of the masterpiece. She told him of Johnsy's fancy,* and how she feared she would, indeed, light and fragile as a leaf herself, float away, when her slight hold upon the world grew weaker.

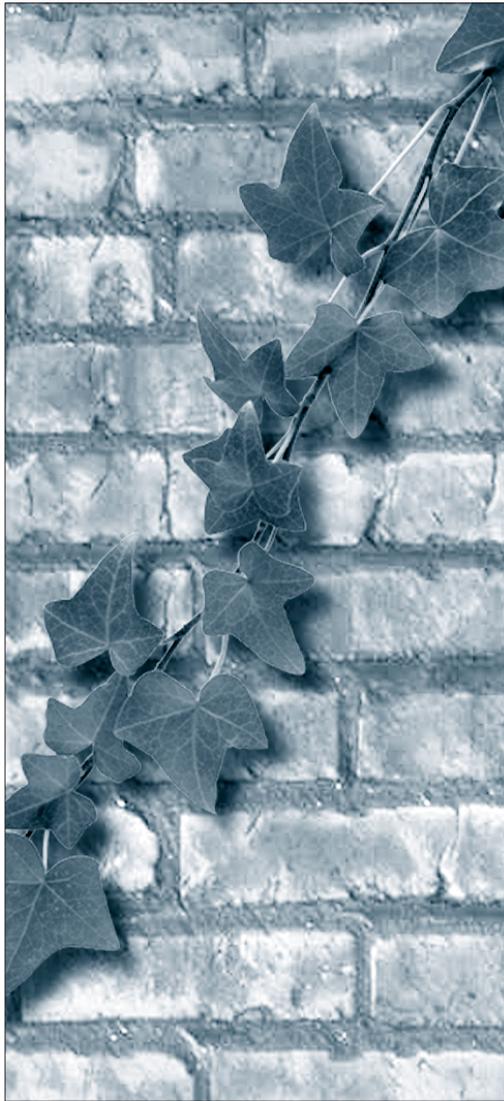
Old Behrman, with his red eyes plainly streaming, shouted his contempt and *derision* for such idiotic imaginings.

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

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

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

Johnsy was sleeping when they went upstairs. Sue pulled the shade down to the window-sill, and motioned Behrman into the other room. In there they peered out the window fearfully at the ivy vine.



Then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. A persistent, cold rain was falling, mingled with snow. Behrman, in his old blue shirt, took his seat as the hermit miner on an upturned kettle for a rock.

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

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

juniper berries — a fragrant, berrylike fruit used to flavor gin.

fancy — imagination; illusion; notion.

flibbertigibbet — a silly, scatterbrained, or overly talkative person.

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

Wearily Sue obeyed.

But, lo! after the beating rain and fierce gusts of wind that had endured through the livelong night, there yet stood out against the brick wall one ivy leaf. It was the last on the vine. Still dark green near its stem, but with its *serrated* edges tinted with the yellow of *dissolution* and decay, it hung bravely from a branch some twenty feet above the ground.

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

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

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

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

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

The ivy leaf was still there.

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

"I've been a bad girl, Sudie," said

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

An hour later she said:

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

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

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

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

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

"I have something to tell you, white mouse," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia today in the hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him on the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were wet through and icy cold. They couldn't imagine where he had been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place, and some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colors mixed on it, and —

look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never fluttered or moved when the wind blew? Ah, darling, it's Behrman's masterpiece — he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell."



? CHECKQUIZ

Part 1:

1. Who lives in Greenwich Village? Why?
2. How did Sue and Johnsy meet?
3. Why does the doctor say that Johnsy has only a one-in-ten chance of recovering?
4. What was Johnsy's grand goal as an artist?
5. What is Johnsy counting? Why?
6. How does Sue respond to Johnsy's despair?
7. What request did Sue make and what was Johnsy's response?
8. Why does Sue ask Behrman to come to the apartment?
9. Why is Behrman considered a failure?
10. What is the weather like on the night the last leaf is supposed to fall?
11. What does Johnsy discover on the morning after the second stormy night? What is her reaction?
12. What happened to Behrman?

Part 2:

In your notebook, write T if the statement is true and F if it is false.

1. The story takes place in a rural setting.
2. The two young women in the story are artists.
3. One of the two women has pneumonia.
4. The doctor predicts certain death for the patient.
5. The sick woman counts leaves falling from a vine outside her window in an effort to distract herself from her illness.
6. Old Behrman who lives in the building comes up to repair a broken pipe.
7. On the night when the last leaf is supposed to fall, it is raining heavily.
8. The last leaf never falls.
9. Johnsy recovers due to the miraculous effects of a new medication.
10. Behrman dies of pneumonia at the end of the story.

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12. He died of pneumonia from exposure to the storm while he was painting "the last leaf" on the wall of the adjoining building.

Part 2

1. F 2. T 3. T 4. F 5. F 6. F 7. T 8. F 9. F 10. T

? CHECKQUIZ

Part 1

1. Artists live in Greenwich Village because the cost of living is lower there.
2. They met while having a meal at a communal table in a restaurant.
3. The doctor says that Johnsy's chances to recover are poor because she has no will to live. She has made up her mind that she will not get well.
4. She wanted to paint the Bay of Naples someday.
5. Johnsy is counting the leaves as they fall from a vine outside her bedroom window. She claims that when the last one falls, she will die.
6. She behaves with false bravado, pretending that there is nothing wrong and that Johnsy is silly for entertaining such ideas.
7. Sue requested that Johnsy close her eyes and not look out of the window, so Sue can complete her work. Johnsy asked Sue to inform her as soon as she finished because she was tired of waiting and wanted to see the last leaf fall. She was tired of holding on to life.
8. Behrman makes his living as a model for other artists, and Sue asks him in because she is illustrating a magazine story about a hermit. Behrman's physical appearance makes him the ideal candidate.
9. He has not completed a painting in several years. He always claims that he will paint a masterpiece one day, but he never even begins it.
10. It is a windy, rainy evening. Remind students that authors use the weather for effect in their stories. Here, gloomy weather reinforces the depressing mood in the story at this point.
11. The last leaf is still on the vine. She decides that she has been "wicked" to want to die and asks for something to eat. She also says she still has hopes of painting the Bay of Naples.



LITERARY CRITIQUE

1. Johnsy wants to “turn loose” her hold on everything and “go sailing down, down, just like one of those poor, tired leaves.” She is weary and wants to die.

2. Behrman, an older man, lives in their building and has befriended them. He models for them on occasion and is protective of them.

3. When she sees that the “last leaf” is still on the wall, she asks for a meal and indicates that she has not given up her dream to paint the Bay of Naples. She is “contentedly knitting a ... scarf”; she wants to be busy again.

4. He spent the night of the storm outside, painting “the last leaf” and became ill.

5. In 1905, pneumonia was very serious because there were no antibiotics; penicillin was not discovered until years later. The doctor knew that unless Johnsy had a strong will to survive, medical treatment could not save her. Another disastrous illness at the time of the story was influenza (the full name for the flu); in a flu epidemic in 1918, 20 million people died.

6. Johnsy insists on monitoring the progress of the falling leaves outside her window. She insists on having the shade lifted to see if the leaf is still there. She is mercilessly pursuing her own death.

7. He never painted anything of note in his life, and yet he uses his talent to save Johnsy’s life. Behrman’s leaf is realistic enough to fool Johnsy; however, it is a masterpiece in what it accomplishes as well as in its artistic worth.

8. The irony is that Behrman succumbed to pneumonia in the process of saving Johnsy from this same fatal illness.

9. Self-fulfilling prophecy means that people can bring about a situation or condition by predicting it

for themselves. Give students an example from everyday life. For instance, when a person goes to a job interview with the attitude that he certainly will not be hired, he may very well behave so that it is less likely that he will be hired — for example, dressing inappropriately, not smiling enough, or not presenting his skills properly. However, if he approaches an interview with confidence, his demeanor will be more impressive to a prospective employer.

Medical and psychological research confirm the idea of a self-fulfilling prophecy, as seen through research on the placebo, a substance with no medicinal value, often given to subjects in medical experiments. Very often, people who think they are receiving medication actually do get better, even though they have taken only a “sugar pill.” This is possible because beliefs do affect a person’s physiological processes. When a person is hopeful and happy, his body produces more endorphins, natural hormones which act as painkillers. People with serious illnesses who undergo therapy that helps them focus on the positive and look for meaning in their lives frequently live longer and sometimes are even cured. Suggested reading includes Norman Cousins’ *Anatomy of an Illness*; it discusses the author’s expe-



LITERARY CRITIQUE

1. In what way does Johnsy compare herself to a leaf?
2. What is Behrman’s connection to the two young women in the story?
3. How do you know that Johnsy is determined to live again?
4. How did Behrman contract pneumonia?
5. This story was first published in 1905. In light of this, what do you know about Johnsy’s medical condition? How does this explain the doctor’s position?
6. Why does the author describe Johnsy as “merciless” on the morning after the rainfall?
7. Why is the last leaf Behrman’s “masterpiece”?
8. What is the great irony in the story?
9. Can a person’s attitude affect his future? Would Johnsy have died if she had realized that the last leaf had fallen?
10. What statement about friendship does the author make?
11. Who do you think is the main character in this story? Why?
12. The author sometimes makes exaggerated use of **personification**. Find two instances of this figure of speech in the story.
13. Another literary concept which O. Henry uses is the **stereotype**. In this story, he builds on the popular concept of the “starving artist.” What do you know about this stereotype? Do you think Sue and Johnsy fit the description?
14. Explain O. Henry’s statement, “The loneliest thing in all the world is a soul when it is making ready to go on its mysterious, far journey.” To what journey does he refer?
15. How does O. Henry feel about his characters?



WRITING WORKSHOP

O. Henry treats the common people in his stories like heroes, appreciating their trials and tribulations. Think of someone in your life who might be considered an “unsung hero” and write a brief essay about this person’s accomplishments. What might be considered a significant achievement or contribution, even though it is not accompanied by public recognition or fanfare? Define a hero in everyday terms.

JOURNAL WORKSHOP

Think about an incident in your life where your expectations influenced the outcome. For example, did you ever try out for a part in a play? Were you confident about your abilities, or did you have a list of reasons why you would not get the part? Do you think your attitude had anything to do with the outcome? Write about your experience, exploring your feelings and expectations along the way. Do you agree with O. Henry's assumptions about the self-fulfilling prophecy?

ADDITIONAL ENRICHMENT

Have students research the cost of living in a neighborhood like Greenwich Village at the turn of the century. How much rent would they have paid for an apartment like the one in which Sue and Johnsy lived? How much would their food and art supplies have cost? Contrast their expenses with a similar budget today.

VOCABULARY WORKSHOP

acute chivalric congenial daub derision dissolution mastiff mite monocle morbid ravage serrated solicitous swagger traverse wield zephyr

Based on your understanding of the italicized words, decide whether each statement below is true or false. In your notebook, write an explanation of your decision, using the definition of the word.

1. One might need a magnifying glass to see a *mite*.
2. A *mastiff* would be used to guard a house.
3. The hurricane *ravaged* the seaside resort.
4. Farmlands may be *ravaged* by a *zephyr*.
5. An *acute* pain would not bother you very much.
6. It is a nurse's job to be *solicitous*.
7. The *dissolution* of a company means that many more jobs will be available.
8. A knife, a saw, and a hammer are all *serrated* items.
9. Two people with *congenial* personalities would have difficulty working together on a project.
10. Montresor, in "The Cask of Amontillado," is filled with *morbid* thoughts.
11. One can hear better with a *monocle*.

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VOCABULARY WORKSHOP

1. T 2. T 3. T 4. F 5. F 6. T 7. F 8. F 9. F 10. T 11. F
(continued on next page)



LITERARY CRITIQUE

rience with a potentially fatal disease, which he combated through mood enhancement and laughter.

10. Friendship can give rise to devotion and even self-sacrifice. Both Sue and Behrman are dedicated to Johnsy and willing to go to great lengths to help her.

11. Some students may say that Johnsy is the main character since the plot revolves around her illness. Others may say that Behrman is the main character because his heroic action saves her. Sue may be considered the heroine because of her selfless devotion to her friend. Ask students what makes a character pivotal.

12. O. Henry writes that the streets in Washington Square "have run crazy." He makes them seem alive. O. Henry personifies pneumonia, describing it as "a cold, unseen stranger" which "stalked about the colony." The illness is "a ravager," and "his feet trod slowly." "Mr. Pneumonia" is said not to be "chivalric"; he is called a "red-fisted, short-breathed old duffer" who would mercilessly kill a woman.

13. "The starving artist," typically a thin person who is poorly clothed and gaunt, is very idealistic and dedicated to his work, and has great trouble earning a living until he finally gains recognition. Most fine artists do not earn regular salaries and may have lean years.

Sue and Johnsy fit the stereotype of poor, struggling artists who rent cheap rooms and are willing to make sacrifices for their art. Johnsy is moodier, with a more typical artistic temperament. Sue is more upbeat, more practical than the stereotype would suggest.

14. O. Henry refers to the final journey — the road to death.

15. O. Henry is very affectionate toward his characters. He is sensitive to their ordeals and is protective of them. O. Henry tells us ordinary people are really not so ordinary and that we should appreciate their problems and efforts.

VOCABULARY WORDS

a-cute (ə kyōōt^α), *adj.* severe, sharp, or intense; of disease, brief and severe.

chi-val-ric (shi va^αlrik, shiv^αəl rik), *adj.* from chivalry, a code of honor held by knights in medieval times which promoted bravery, courtesy, and devotion to the weak. Also, *chivalrous*.

con-gen-ial (kən jēn^αyəl), *adj.* 1. having the same tastes, habits, or temperament. 2. compatible, pleasing in nature or temperament.

daub (dôb), *v.* to smear; apply paint with hasty, crude strokes; *n.* a crude, inartistic painting.

de-ri-sion (di rizh^αən), *n.* ridicule, scorn, or mockery.

dis-so-lu-tion (dis²ə lōō^αshen), *n.* 1. disintegration; decay; termination. 2. the undoing of a bond, partnership, etc.

mas-tiff (mas^αtif), *n.* a large, powerful dog with a short, fawn-colored coat.

mite (mīt), *n.* a very small object, creature, or particle.

mon-o-cle (mon^αəkəl), *n.* an eyeglass for one eye.

mor-bid (mər^αbid), *adj.* suggesting an unhealthy mental state or attitude; overly preoccupied with unwholesome matters.

rav-age (rav^αij), *v.* to devastate; do ruinous damage.

ser-rat-ed (ser^αātīd, sə rā-), *adj.* having notched, sawlike teeth.

so-lic-itous (sə lis^αitəs), *adj.* concerned, attentive, or anxious about another's welfare.

swag-ger (swag^αər), *v.* to walk in a boastful, defiant, or insolent manner; to boast.

trav-erse (trav^αərs, trə vûrs^α), *v.* to travel across, over, or through.

wield (wēld), *v.* to handle, as a weapon; to exercise power or influence.

zeph-yr (zef^αər), *n.* soft warm breeze from the west; any gentle breeze.

12. A person who has just won the Nobel Prize might *swagger* into a room.
13. The chairman of a corporation *wields* a great deal of power.
14. The fireman who saved the child was looked upon by the townspeople with *derision*.
15. A chicken must *traverse* a road to get to the other side.
16. Children are likely to *daub* when using paints.



VOCABULARY WORKSHOP

(continued from previous page)

12. T 13. T 14. F 15. T 16. T