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Topic: 1

Paragraph (1)

Read the selection below from O. Henry's "Gift of the Magi" to answer questions 01-05:

[Della and Jim are a young husband and wife. They are very poor, and it is Christmas Eve. Della does not have enough money for a Christmas present, so she decides to sell her beautiful hair to buy a fob for Jim's watch, which once belonged to his grandfather and is his most prized possession.]

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...

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 friend—a mammoth task...?

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 of saying a 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. Yell 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, aunt 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, 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...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

For their lay The Combs—the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. ...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!"

...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."

Question: 1

What is the theme in this selection?

- A. True love leads to the sacrifice of one's own most precious possessions.
- B. Christmas is the representation of the love and sacrifice needed by all.
- C. The love between two people eventually leads to difficult circumstances.
- D. Sacrifice without love is meaningless, but may lead to deeper feelings later.

Answer: A

Explanation:

True love leads to the sacrifice of one's own most precious possessions.

The entire story is about how Della and Jim are deeply in love. They both sell something important to themselves to buy a present for the other person.

Question: 2

Which detail below best supports the idea that Jim loves Della?

- A. Jim asks, ""You've cut off your hair?"
- B. Jim had gone to work that day and came home on time.
- C. Jim sat down on the couch and smiled.
- D. Jim says, "I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs."

Answer: D

Explanation:

He says, "I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs."

Jim's most prized possession was his grandfather's watch. He sold it to purchase the combs for his wife. Choice A deals with Jim's shock—his wife no longer has her beautiful hair for which he just bought expensive combs. Choice B is something that Jim did consistently, and Choice C does not provide support to the idea.

Question: 3

Della is concerned about what her husband will do when he sees her hair is gone. What is one important idea that Della learns after her husband comes home?

- A. He considers her sacrifice worthless.
- B. He is shocked that she would sell her hair.
- C. He loves her regardless of her appearance.
- D. He has sold his watch to buy combs for her.

Answer: C

Explanation:

He loves her regardless of her appearance.

Jim obviously loves Della, proving that she had nothing to worry about. "Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della...

"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." Jim hugs her tightly and then says that nothing could change his feelings for her. Choice A is the opposite of what Jim feels, Choice B deals with the shock Jim feels, but does not answer the question about what Della learns from her husband, and Choice D is about what Jim did before he got home. It does not show what Della learned.

Question: 4

What might be one reason O. Henry included the exact dialogue between Della and Jim?

- A. He was trying to show how Della and Jim might have decided to choose a different solution to the money issue.
- B. He wanted to illustrate that they were not well-educated and that they were just average people.
- C. He wanted to show that Della was from a certain area of the city and that Jim was obviously from another town.
- D. He was trying to set up the story for what would come when Della revealed that she had cut off her hair.

Answer: B

Explanation:

He wanted to illustrate that they were not well-educated and that they were just average people. This story is about the love and sacrifice of two average individuals. The dialogue is given to show that Della and Jim were not highly educated or particularly special: they were just in love.

Question: 5

Which of the following choices best illustrates the way O. Henry builds tension in the story?

- A. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's.
- B. The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious.
- C. Jim looked about the room curiously. "You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.
- D. 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.

Answer: C

Explanation:

Jim looked about the room curiously. "You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy. In the beginning of the story, Della has her hair cut off so she can get money for Jim's gift. However, she is worried about how she will appear to her husband and is concerned that he will be very angry (or worse). When Jim keeps asking about Della's hair, it almost seems as if he is angry about it.

Question: 6

What is one effect the setting of the novel had on the story in Victor Hugo's Les Miserable's?

- A. It was set during the time period just before the tempestuous French Revolution, and it created a new world and new rules for the characters to follow.
- B. It was set after the period of the stormy French Revolution, and it added to the feeling of helplessness and lawlessness in the novel.
- C. It was set some time after the terrible French Revolution, and it developed the ongoing theme of helplessness in the face of overwhelming odds.
- D. It was set almost one hundred years before the terrors of the French Revolution, and it helped to explain how the oppression of the underclass led to eventual revolt.

Answer: B

Explanation:

It was set after the period of the stormy French Revolution, and it added to the feeling of helplessness and lawlessness in the novel.

A major theme in Hugo's book is how one can change; it is related to the chaos that appears as the backdrop of the novel. The period of time after the French Revolution was tempestuous. It helped heighten the character development and eventual change of Jean Val jean. The other choices are incorrect because they do not indicate the correct time period or the correct theme development.

Question: 7

Below is the poem "The Donkey" by G. K. Chesterton. Compare it to the painting of Balaam and the Donkey by Rembrandt. What is one key idea expressed in both works?

The Donkey - G. K. Chesterton

When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born.
With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.
The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.
Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.

- A. The donkey is the devil's creation, and its stubbornness is carefully depicted in both works.
- B. The donkey is usually seen as a slow animal, and both works depict the donkey as moving swiftly toward a goal.
- C. The donkey is seen as a disgusting pack animal, and both works indicate that the donkey is indeed a lowly animal.
- D. The donkey is typically seen as lowly, but both works depict the donkey as being a more elevated creature because of its actions.

Answer: D

Explanation:

The donkey is typically seen as lowly, but both works depict the donkey as being a more elevated creature because of its actions.

In Rembrandt's painting, the donkey is laying down with its head raised. It is depicting the story of Balaam. Balaam was riding on his donkey when the animal suddenly refused to go forward. After beating the animal, the donkey spoke and Balaam's eyes were opened: an angel with a sword was waiting to kill Balaam. The donkey had saved Balaam's life. The poem mentions the donkey's elevated status when it carried Jesus into Jerusalem before his execution on the cross. Both works depict the donkey in a more positive light than it is typically given in popular culture. The donkey is typically seen as stupid and stubborn.

Question: 8

In the modern play, West Side Story, two members of rival gangs meet and fall in love. The outcome of their relationship leads to tragedy. What classical work does this most resemble?

- A. Macbeth
- B. The Taming of the Shrew
- C. Romeo and Juliet
- D. A Midsummer Night's Dream

Answer: C

Explanation:

Romeo and Juliet

Romeo and Juliet is the story of two star-crossed lovers, and the West Side Story was modeled on it. The Taming of the Shrew is about the relationship between a man and his wife, Macbeth is about a man seizing power, and A Midsummer Night's Dream is a comedic love story.



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