

The Last Leaf (Short Story)

O. Henry

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- speak confidently and fluently in a wide range of contexts, For example, (conflict resolution, panel discussion, role-play, dialogue, etc.) to fulfil different purposes (exposition, argumentation etc.)
- engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-level topics, texts, and issues
- read with accurate pronunciation, appropriate pitch and voice variation suitable for fictional and nonfictional texts
- ask and answer higher-order questions to guide/assess reading
- evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader.
- use pre-reading and while-reading strategies to analyse and explore different layers of meaning within texts including biases and opinions
- comment on implied meaning, e.g. writer's viewpoint, relationships between characters etc.
- apply skimming and scanning strategies for relevant information and main points in texts to identify the writer's purpose, and intended audience. Infer the theme/main idea of the text, distinguishing between fact and opinion where necessary
- acquire and use appropriate words and phrases for reading, writing, speaking, and listening; independently gather vocabulary when considering a word or phrase important for comprehension or expression.
- evaluate the particular elements of a story or drama (e.g., how the setting shapes the characters or plot)
- Evaluate stages of plot development in a fictional text. (exposition, setting, climax, character development, resolution)
- evaluate different points of view (e.g., first-person, third-person narrative) Examine an author's point of view or purpose in a text
- identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., correct form of verb)
- use past tense correctly in speech and writing
- demonstrate knowledge and application of parts of speech in oral and written communication in varying degrees of complexity
- produce legible work that shows the correct spelling of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization
- use summary skills to write an objective summary of the given text and poems

Pre-Reading

- What does the title signify?
- If we are in a difficult situation, can hope sustain us? Let us read.

Reading

IN A SMALL PART OF THE CITY WEST OF Washington Square, the streets have gone wild. They turn in different directions. They are broken into small pieces called "places." One street goes across itself one or two times. A painter once discovered something possible and valuable about this street. Suppose a painter had some painting materials for which he had not paid. Suppose he had no money. Suppose a man came to get the money. The man might walk down that street and suddenly meet himself coming back, without having received a cent!



This part of the city is called Greenwich Village. And to old Greenwich Village the painters soon came. Here they found rooms they like, with good light and at a low cost.

Sue and Johnsy lived at the top of a building with three floors. One of these young women came from Maine, the other from California. They had met at a restaurant on Eighth Street. There they discovered that they liked the same kind of art, the same kind of food, and the same kind of clothes. So, they decided to live and work together.

That was in the Spring.

Towards winter a cold stranger entered Greenwich Village. No one could see him. He walked around touching one person here and another there with his icy fingers. He was a bad sickness. Doctors called him Pneumonia. On the east side of the city he hurried, touching many people; but in the narrow streets of Greenwich Village, he did not move so quickly.

Mr. Pneumonia was not a nice old gentleman. A nice old gentleman would not hurt a weak little woman from California. But Mr. Pneumonia touched Johnsy with his cold fingers. She lay on her bed almost without moving, and she looked through the window at the wall of the house next to hers.

While-reading

Put students in pairs, then have them read one paragraph at a time silently. When they finish, ask them to take turns paraphrasing the paragraph they've just read.

One morning the busy doctor spoke to Sue alone in the hall, where Johnsy could not hear.

"She has a very small chance," he said. "She has a chance, if she wants to live. If people don't want to live, I can't do much for them. Your little lady has decided that she is not going to get well. Is there something that is troubling her?"

While-reading

Ask the students to locate the specific information such as names, dates, times, and numbers mentioned in the story.

"She always wanted to go to Italy and paint a picture of the Bay of Naples," said Sue.

"Paint! Not paint. Is there anything worth being troubled about? A man?"

"A man?" said Sue. "Is a man worth—No, doctor. There is not a man."

"It is weakness," said the doctor. "I will do all I know how to do. But when a sick person begins to feel that he's going to die, half my work is useless. Talk to her about new winter clothes. If she were interested in the future, her chances would be better."

After the doctor had gone, Sue went into the workroom to cry. Then she walked into Johnsy's room. She carried some of her painting materials, and she was singing.

Johnsy lay there, very thin and very quiet. Her face was turned toward the window. Sue stopped singing, thinking that Johnsy was asleep.

Sue began to work. As she worked, she heard a low sound, again and again. She went quickly to the bedside.

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

"Twelve," she said; and a little later, "Eleven"; and then, "Ten," and, "Nine"; and then, "Eight," and, "Seven," almost together.

Sue looked out the window. What was there to count? There was only the side wall of the next house, a short distance away. The wall had no window. An old, old tree grew against the wall. The cold breath of winter had already touched it. Almost all its leaves had fallen from its dark branches.

"What is it, dear?" asked Sue.

**While-reading**

When does half of the work of a doctor become useless?

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

"Five what, dear? Tell your Sue."

"Leaves. On the tree. 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 a thing," said Sue. "It doesn't have any sense in it. What does an old tree have to do with you? Or with your getting well? And you used to love that tree so much. Don't be a little fool. The doctor told me your chances for getting well. He told me this morning. He said you had very good chances! Try to eat a little now. And then I'll go back to work. And then I can sell my picture, and then I can buy something more for you to eat to make you strong."

"You don't have to buy anything for me," said Johnsy. She still looked out the window. "There goes another. No, I don't want anything to eat. Now there are four. I want to see the last one fall before night. Then I'll go, too."

"Johnsy, dear," said Sue, "will you promise me to close your eyes and keep them closed? Will you promise not to look out the window until I finish working? I must have this picture ready tomorrow. I need the light; I can't cover the window."

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

"I'd rather be here by you," said Sue. "And I don't want you to look at those leaves."

"Tell me as soon as you have finished," said Johnsy. She closed her eyes and lay white and still. "Because I want to see the last leaf fall have done enough waiting. I have done enough thinking. I want to go sailing down, down, like one of those leaves."

"Try to sleep," said Sue. "I must call Behrman to come up here. I want to paint a man in this picture, and I'll make him look like Behrman. I won't be gone a minute. Don't try to move till I come back."

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the first floor of their house. He was past sixty. He had had no success as a painter. For forty years he had painted, without ever painting a good picture. He had always talked of painting a great picture, a masterpiece, but he had never yet started it.

He got a little money by letting others paint pictures of him. He drank too much. He still talked of his great masterpiece. And he believed that it was his special duty to do everything possible to help Sue and Johnsy.

While-reading

For how many years Old Behrman had been a painter?

Sue found him in his dark room, and she knew that he had been drinking. She could smell it. She told him about Johnsy and the leaves on the vine. She said that she was afraid that Johnsy would indeed sail down, down like the leaf. Her hold on the world was growing weaker.

Old Behrman shouted his anger over such an idea.

"What!" he cried. "Are there such fools? Do people die because leaves drop off a tree? I have not heard of such a thing. No, I will not come up and sit while you make a picture of me. Why do you allow her to think such a thing? That poor little Johnsy!"

"She is very sick and weak," said Sue. "The sickness has put these strange ideas into her mind. Mr. Behrman, if you won't come, you won't. But I don't think you're very nice."

"This is like a woman!" shouted Behrman. "Who said I will not come? Go. I come with you. For half an hour I have been trying to say that I will come. God! This is not any place for someone so good as Johnsy to lie sick. Someday I shall paint my masterpiece, and we shall all go away from here. God! Yes."

Johnsy was sleeping when they went up. Sue covered the window and took Behrman into the other room. There they looked out the window fearfully at the tree. Then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. A cold rain was falling, with a little snow in it too.

Behrman sat down, and Sue began to paint.

She worked through most of the night.

In the morning, after an hour's sleep, she went to Johnsy's bedside. Johnsy with wide-open eyes was looking toward the window. "I want to see," she told Sue.

Sue took the cover from the window.

But after the beating rain and the wild wind that had not stopped through the whole night, there still was one leaf to be seen against the wall. It was the last on the tree. It was still dark green near the branch. But at the edges it was turning yellow with age. There it was hanging from a branch nearly 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 Johnsy!" said Sue. "Think of me, if you won't think of yourself. What would I do?"

But Johnsy did not answer. The most lonely thing in the world is a soul when it is preparing to go on its far journey. The ties that held her to friendship and to earth were breaking, one by one.

The day slowly passed. As it grew dark, they could still see the leaf hanging from its

While-reading

Why was Johnsy looking towards the window?

branch against the wall. And then, as the night came, the north wind began again to blow. The rain still beat against the windows. When it was light enough the next morning, Johnsy again commanded that she be allowed to see.

The leaf was still there.

Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was cooking something for her to eat.

"I've been a bad girl, Sue," said Johnsy. "Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me how bad I was. It is wrong to want to die. I'll try to eat now. But first bring me a looking-glass, so that I can see myself. And then I'll sit up and watch you cook."

An hour later she said, "Sue, someday I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

The doctor came in the afternoon. Sue followed him into the hall outside Johnsy's room to talk to him.

"The chances are good," said the doctor. He took Sue's thin, shaking hand in his. "Give her good care, and she'll get well. And now I must see another sick person in this house. His name is Behrman. A painter believes. Pneumonia, too. Mike is an old, weak man, and he is very ill. There is no hope for him. But we take him to the hospital today. We'll make it as easy for him as we can."

The next day the doctor said to Sue: "She's safe. You have done it. Food and care now—that's all."

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay. She put one arm around her.

"I have something to tell you", she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia today in the hospital. He was ill only two days. Someone found him on the morning of the first day, in his room. He was helpless with pain."

"His shoes and his clothes were wet and as cold as ice. Everyone wondered where he had been. The night had been so cold and wild.

"And then they found some things. There was a light that he had taken outside. And there were his materials for painting. There was paint, green paint and yellow paint. And—

"Look out the window, dear, at the last leaf on the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never moved when the wind was blowing? Oh, my dear, it is Behrman's great masterpiece—he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell."

Post-reading

- Why did the leaf not fall from the tree?





Glossary

Given below are the difficult words from the unit. Look at their meanings and give synonyms of each in the given column. The first one is done for you. Also use these words in your own sentences.

words	Meanings	Synonyms
quaint	attractively unusual or old-fashioned	charming
prowl	(of a person or animal) move around restlessly and stealthily, especially in search of or as if in search of prey	
gable	the part of a wall that encloses the end of a pitched roof	
greenwich Village	a district of New York City on the lower west side of Manhattan, traditionally associated with writers, artists, and musicians	
pewter	a gray alloy of tin with copper and antimony (formerly, tin and lead)	
chafing dish	a metal pan with an outer pan of hot water, used for keeping food warm	
table d'hotê	a menu where multi-course meals with only a few choices are offered for a fixed total price	
chicory	an edible Mediterranean plant whose bitter leaves may be blanched and used in salads; also known as endive	
smite	strike with a firm blow; defeat or conquer	
chivalric	displaying courteous behavior, as would be expected of an ideal knight	
zephyrs	a soft gentle breeze	
pneumonia	lung inflammation caused by bacterial or viral infection, in which the air sacs fill with pus and may become solid	
pharmacopoeia	a book, especially an official publication, containing a list of medicinal drugs with their effects and directions for their use; a stock of medicinal drugs	
jew's harp	a small lyre-shaped musical instrument held between the teeth and struck with a finger. It can produce only one note, but harmonics are sounded by the player altering the shape of the mouth cavity	

curative	a medicine or remedy
solicitous	characterized by or showing interest or concern
scorn	the feeling or belief that someone or something is worthless or despicable; contempt
serrated	having or denoting a jagged edge; saw-like
mastiff	a dog of a large, strong breed with drooping ears and pendulous lips
fancy	a thing that one supposes or imagines, typically an unfounded or tentative belief or idea; notion or whim



Reading and Critical Thinking

a. Answer the following:

1. How does Behrman's last painting become a masterpiece and save a life in "The Last Leaf" by O. Henry?
2. Analyze the friendship between Sue and Johnsy in "The Last Leaf" by O. Henry.
3. How would you describe the character of Mr. Behrman in the story "The Last Leaf" by O. Henry?
4. How is "The Last Leaf" by O. Henry a story of hope, friendship and sacrifice?
5. What is the point of view in O. Henry's short story "The Last Leaf," and what are the three coincidences in this story?
6. Does Johnsy's doctor think that she will recover from her illness, and does Johnsy plan on getting better?
7. How is pneumonia described in the story?
8. What is the significance of ivy leaves?
9. Who was struck by pneumonia in the story the last leaf?
10. What is the main idea of the story "The Last Leaf" by O' Henry?
11. Discuss the following elements of the plot of the story: exposition, setting, climax, character development, resolution.

b. Choose the best answer:

- i. There are _____ meteor showers each year
 - a) malaria
 - b) pneumonia
 - c) fever
- ii. Behrman painted the leaf because he wanted to save _____'s life.
 - a) Sue
 - b) Johnsy
 - c) a boy
- iii. Towards winter a cold stranger named _____ entered Greenwich Village,
 - a) Sue
 - b) Behrman
 - c) pneumonia

**Oral Communication**

Have you ever felt depressed and dejected? How did you overcome such feelings? Share your experience with your classmates.

Activity

Recite a poem in line with the theme of Hope keeping in mind the following points:

- a) Read the poem aloud. Remember that reading poems is different from prose. Like fiction, poems mostly do not have many characters. Even if you do not understand the meanings, it gives you pleasure while reading.
- b) Discuss whatever you have understood, and what you think is the message in the text.
- c) Do the students agree that one must never lose heart? Even the adverse circumstances must be overcome with hope and determination.

**Vocabulary and Grammar****Past Tense**

The past tense is a verb tense used for a past activity or a past state of being. For example:

I jumped in the lake.

I was happy.

a. Simple Past

The simple past is a "simple" way to share past events and can reflect something happened from any time in the past. It's also the main way we express that we did

something one time but can also cover things that happened many times. Its form is easy: **Subject + Past Verb**.

I ate a cheese burger for dinner last night.

She ran fast!

b. Past Continuous

The past continuous tense shares events or actions that happened continuously; they were going on for a while or over a period of time in the past. To show this, we use verbs ending in *ing*. Sentences in the past continuous tense follow the form **Subject + Verb to be + ing Verb**:

I was eating a cheese burger.

The dogs were barking loudly.

c. Past Perfect

The past perfect tense describes something that we have done before, but also matters now. We use it to clarify that one event happened before another event in the past. To use the past perfect, we need the auxiliary *had* before the main verb to show that we “*had done*” something. Then, we need to add the main verb, in its past-tense form. As you know, the past form of regular verbs ends in *ed*, but irregular verbs have different forms. So, a sentence in the past perfect follows the form **Subject + Had + Past form of main verb**:

Rayyan had traveled to Europe already, he wanted to go to Asia.

They had lived in that house for 10 years.

He had taken the exam already and felt confident that he had done well.

d. Past Perfect Continuous

The past perfect continuous describes actions that we had been doing or had been going on continuously before a certain time in the past but aren't going on anymore. It's often used to express a situation where something had been happening until something else happened. To use it, we need to use *had* and *been* combined with the continuous form of the verb (ending in *ing*) to show that we “*had been*” doing the action.

Sentences written in the past perfect continuous follow **Subject + had been + ing Verb**:

They had been living in that house since 2006, but they moved.

He had been taking that exam for two hours when the teacher said, “Time's up!”

a) Make two sentences using simple present and past continuous tense.

b) Put the verbs into the correct form (past perfect tense).

i-The children collected the chestnuts that (fall) from the tree.

ii-He (not / be) to Cape Town before 1997.

iii-When she went out to play, she (do / already) her homework.

iv-My brother ate all of the cake that our mum (make). -

c) Make two sentences from past perfect continuous tense:.

d) Use the given phrasal verbs in sentences:

shop around _____

show off _____

sleep over _____

sort out _____

stick to _____

switch off _____



Writing

- Summarize the story in your own words.

Teacher's Point



- Help students to understand the theme of the story.
- Let them discuss their moment of tension, and how did they solve it?