

SIMPLIFIED READERS

A2

LEVEL 2

Short Stories By O. Henry



WORKSHEETS

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ABOUT THE STORIES

The stories in this book were written by O. Henry whose real name was William Sydney Porter. O. Henry was a famous American short story writer. He began writing as a hobby while he worked in several different jobs, including the ones in pharmacy, banking and journalism. His professional writing began in 1902 when he moved to New York City. There, he wrote 381 stories for magazines. *The Last Leaf*, *The Christmas Presents*, *Soapy's Choice*, *Twenty Years Later* and *A Walk in Amnesia* are among his most popular stories and were published between 1905 and 1907. O. Henry liked New York City very much, and most of his stories, including

the ones in this book, are set there. They all take place in the writer's time. The characters are mostly ordinary people, like waitresses, artists and policemen. O. Henry's short stories give us a realistic view of everyday life in America a century ago. Most of them have unexpected, surprise endings. They are quite amusing and are told in a humorous way, so they are read all over the world for pleasure and studied in schools. Five of O. Henry's stories, including *The Last Leaf*, *The Christmas Presents* and *Soapy's Choice*, were featured in a famous film in 1953 starring the famous actress Marilyn Monroe.

STORY SUMMARIES***The Last Leaf***

It is set in Greenwich Village when New York was hit by a pneumonia epidemic. In the story, an old artist saves the life of his neighbour, Johnsy, who is a young artist living together with another artist named Sue. Johnsy is dying of pneumonia, and through her window, she can see an old ivy vine on the wall of the next building. As fall is turning into winter, the ivy is shedding its leaves. Johnsy believes that she will die when the last leaf falls. The leaves fall day by day, and Johnsy counts the number of the leaves that stay on the wall each day. She is surprised when the last leaf does not fall. This gives Johnsy the hope that she will not die. And she begins to recover quickly. At the end of the story, we learn that the old artist spent a night in the cold and wet weather painting a leaf on the wall. He has given Johnsy the will to live, but unfortunately, he himself dies of pneumonia.

The Christmas Presents

A young housewife named Della wants to buy a precious Christmas gift for her husband, James (Jim). Because they are very poor, Della sells her beautiful long hair to buy a platinum chain for Jim's antique gold watch. Meanwhile, Jim has sold this watch to buy the expensive combs that Della has always wanted for her hair. On Christmas Eve, when they give each other their gifts, they are both shocked. Della doesn't need the combs because she no longer has long hair. And Jim doesn't have a gold watch anymore. However, they are happy because they love each other.

Soapy's Choice

Soapy is a homeless man in New York City. He needs a place to spend the winter. He wants to get arrested by the police so that he can spend the winter in the prison on Blackwell Island. So, he makes a number of attempts to break the law, but each attempt fails; he does not get

arrested. While he is hopelessly walking back to the park where he sleeps each night, he stops in front of a small church and listens to the music coming from inside. There, he decides to live a normal life and look for a job. At that moment, a policeman arrests him for standing there aimlessly. Then, he is sentenced to prison for three months and is sent to Blackwell Island.

After Twenty Years

This is a story about a New York police officer, Jimmy, and a criminal named Bob. In the past, these two men were very close friends. When Bob left New York to work in the West twenty years ago, they lost contact. But they had promised to meet each other 20 years later at the same place where they had their last dinner together and on the same date and at the same hour. Now, Bob has travelled all the way from Chicago and is waiting outside a store, which was a restaurant years ago. A policeman comes and begins asking him questions to make sure that it is his friend, Jimmy. He realizes that his old friend is a criminal, who the police are looking for and leaves. A few minutes later, another man appears, and Bob thinks he is Jimmy. But the man is an officer and arrests Bob.

A Walk in Amnesia

Elwyn Belford is a successful lawyer who works very hard. His doctor warns him that he might get amnesia if he doesn't take a break. One day, he leaves home for work and does not come back. He wakes up in a coach on a train to New York. He doesn't remember who he is or what his name is. He has 3000 dollars in his pocket. He checks into a hotel and spends wonderful days in New York. Meanwhile, his wife and his best friend, the doctor, think he has amnesia and are looking for him. When they learn that Belford is in New York, they go there and find him at his hotel. Belford tells them that he had an amnesia attack and asks the doctor to cure him. He also tells the doctor that he had great fun.

Discuss before you begin reading:

- 1 What makes a story interesting to read? Have you ever tried writing a story? When?
- 2 What do you know about New York City? / Can you name any of its famous buildings, streets or parks?

A Word Search

Find the 14 hidden words in this puzzle. Then match them with the definitions given below the puzzle.

W	J	V	A	P	A	R	T	M	E	N	T	L
E	Q	F	C	P	B	E	L	L	B	O	Y	A
W	E	D	H	A	R	D	W	A	R	E	T	J
A	L	M	A	S	T	E	R	P	I	E	C	E
F	W	E	F	N	Q	U	I	V	Y	C	I	G
C	Z	A	F	U	C	R	I	M	I	N	A	L
P	N	E	U	M	O	N	I	A	P	U	T	S
L	K	S	T	U	D	I	O	D	I	N	E	R
C	C	O	A	C	H	F	K	I	K	N	F	W
N	X	B	O	F	F	I	C	E	R	T	F	T
Y	S	T	P	H	O	M	E	L	E	S	S	X
U	E	E	K	S	A	A	M	N	E	S	I	A
L	T	C	R	D	I	S	C	O	U	N	T	V

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1 a medical condition that makes people forget things; even their names: _____</p> <p>2 American-English word for 'flat': _____</p> <p>3 a boy or a man who takes the guests to their rooms in a hotel and carries their bags: _____</p> <p>4 one of the parts of a train where passengers sit: _____</p> <p>5 someone who commits a crime; such as a murderer, robber: _____</p> <p>6 a small, simple and inexpensive restaurant; also a person who is eating a meal in a restaurant: _____</p> <p>7 reduction in the price of something; lower price: _____</p> | <p>8 tools, materials and equipment that we use in a house or garden, like hammers and nails: _____</p> <p>9 someone with no place to live in: _____</p> <p>10 a plant that clings to and grows up trees and buildings: _____</p> <p>11 an excellent painting, book, or piece of music; the best work of an artist, writer, musician: _____</p> <p>12 a member of the police force; policeman: _____</p> <p>13 a serious disease that affects the lungs and makes it difficult to breathe: _____</p> <p>14 a room where an artist works; also a small flat with only one room, a small kitchen and a bathroom: _____</p> |
|--|--|

B What do you think the stories in this book are about? Match the descriptions (1-5) with the titles (a-e).

a	b	c	d	e
The Last Leaf	The Christmas Presents	Soapy's Choice	After Twenty Years	A Walk in Amnesia

- 1 ____ a young married couple who has very little money to live on
- 2 ____ a successful rich lawyer who forgets his name and who he is
- 3 ____ two friends who grew up together but went their separate ways later on
- 4 ____ a young woman who is very ill and spends her days in bed, staring at the ivy outside her window
- 5 ____ a homeless man who prefers staying in prison to living in a park when winter comes

A What Happens Next? Put (✓) next to your choice for each story.

THE LAST LEAF

Stop reading at the end of page 9. Which of the following do you expect to happen next?

- 1 ___ Johnsy will die when the last ivy leaf falls.
- 2 ___ The last ivy leaf will fall, but Johnsy will not die. She will begin to recover.
- 3 ___ Behrman will sell one of his paintings. With the money from it, he will put Johnsy in a good hospital.
- 4 ___ Behrman begins making a portrait of Johnsy. This makes her stop counting the leaves.

THE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

Stop reading at the end of page 21, guess what is in the packet and why Della starts to cry.

- 1 ___ There is a leather strap for Jim's pocket watch. Della is disappointed. She was expecting a gift for herself.
- 2 ___ It is a gold chain for Jim's pocket watch. Della is very upset because Jim spent a lot of money on it.
- 3 ___ There is a present for Della. It's a set of hair combs with precious stones on them. But her hair is too short now.
- 4 ___ There is an old photograph of Della. Her hair looks very beautiful in it, and it makes her cry.

SOAPY'S CHOICE

Stop reading at the end of page 30, and decide which of the following happens to Soapy at the end.

- 1 ___ He changes his mind. He decides to get a job and starts looking for one.
- 2 ___ An old kind man gives him a job in his shop. He will be able to eat and sleep in the shop.
- 3 ___ He steals some money from a shop and gets a room in a hotel. But a policeman arrests him.
- 4 ___ He tries other ways to get caught by the police. But he can't succeed and will have to go back to his park.

AFTER TWENTY YEARS

Stop reading at the end of page 39. Which of the following do you think will happen later?

- 1 ___ Jimmy will not come. The man will be very sad. He will think that Jimmy is dead.
- 2 ___ The policeman is Jimmy, in fact. But the man is a criminal whom the police are looking for. And Jimmy will recognize him.
- 3 ___ When Jimmy does not come in the next half hour, the man will leave. And when Jimmy comes, he won't be there. Jimmy will be very disappointed.
- 4 ___ Jimmy had an accident on the way and is in hospital. The man will think that Jimmy was not a true friend.

A WALK in AMNESIA

Stop reading at the end of page 52. What will we find out at the end of the story?

- 1 ___ Belford doesn't really have amnesia; he was lying. He wanted to enjoy himself in New York
- 2 ___ Belford knows the pretty woman. She was his former girlfriend. They will have a romantic relationship.
- 3 ___ Belford stole the 3000 dollars. The fat man in the hotel lobby is a detective. He will arrest Belford.
- 4 ___ Belford has been dreaming. Everything, the train ride, the beautiful woman and his fun days in New York are all a dream.

A For each sentence, put a tick to the box under the correct story title.

The sentences below are taken from ...	<i>The Last Leaf</i>	<i>The Christmas Presents</i>	<i>Soapy's Choice</i>	<i>After Twenty Years</i>	<i>A Walk in Amnesia</i>
"I knew that you would be here. Our old restaurant is not here anymore. But tell me, how is your life in the West?"					
He went near the woman and began to stare at her. He tried to catch her attention with a few coughs.					
"Do you recognize me? Don't say no because I won't believe it."					
The policeman suddenly slowed down. There was a man in the doorway of a closed hardware store.					
"I prefer to get better suddenly. I am tired of all this."					
The doctor's words made her very sad. She went to her own room and cried there quietly.					
"Will you try to cure me, Doctor Volney?"					
He thought about his old days. He was a good and happy man in those days.					
He watched the dead leaves falling from the trees. This was a sign of the coming winter.					
When she stopped crying, she walked to the window and looked out. ... She felt more depressed.					

B Write the character's name (one from any of the stories). Explain why/how (as in the example).

Who?

Why / How?

Example: made someone very happy: Behrman

painted/by painting a leaf on the wall

- 1 did something foolish: _____
- 2 did something wrong: _____
- 3 did something right: _____
- 4 had a very good life: _____
- 5 had a very negative thought: _____
- 6 was loyal to his friend: _____
- 7 was not loyal to his friend: _____
- 8 had a miserable life: _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A Match the words (a-j) with the stories (1-5). (2 words for each title) (5x4=20 pts)

a	appointment	b	church	c	discount
d	pharmacist	e	masterpiece	f	memory
g	umbrella	h	pneumonia	i	scar
j	combs				

- 1 ___ , ___ The Last Leaf
- 2 ___ , ___ The Christmas Presents
- 3 ___ , ___ Soapy's Choice
- 4 ___ , ___ After Twenty Years
- 5 ___ , ___ A Walk in Amnesia

B Match the places (1-6) with the characters (a-d). (6x2=12 pts)

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 ___ Chicago | 2 ___ Madison Square |
| 3 ___ Greenwich Village | 4 ___ Denver |
| 5 ___ Manhattan | 6 ___ California |

a	Belford (<i>A Walk in Amnesia</i>)	c	Johnsy (<i>The Last Leaf</i>)
b	Bob (<i>After Twenty Years</i>)	d	Soapy (<i>Soapy's Choice</i>)

C Mark the sentences as True (T) or False (F). (10x2=20 pts)

The Last Leaf

- ___ 1 Sue and Johnsy have been friends since childhood.
- ___ 2 Behrman was a famous artist.

The Christmas Presents

- ___ 3 Della hasn't saved enough money to buy Jim a good present.
- ___ 4 Jim is very upset at Della for cutting her hair.

Soapy's Choice

- ___ 5 Soapy first had a meal with French wine at an elegant restaurant.
- ___ 6 Soapy is finally arrested for standing in front of a church, doing nothing.

After Twenty Years

- ___ 7 Bob doesn't know that the policeman talking to him is his friend Jimmy.
- ___ 8 Jimmy sends another officer to arrest Bob.

A Walk in Amnesia

- ___ 9 Elwyn Belford is a happily married, famous lawyer.
- ___ 10 When Elwyn Belford disappears, no one believes that he has amnesia.

D Mark the correct answers. (12x3=36 pts)

- 1 **What does Sue want Behrman to do?**
 - a to pose for her drawing of an old man
 - b to paint a leaf on the brick wall
 - c to look after Johnsy when she is working
- 2 **Why does the old artist Behrman die?**
 - a He was too old and didn't take care of himself.
 - b He catches pneumonia while painting a leaf on the brick wall for Johnsy.
 - c He drank too much, which damaged his health.
- 3 **Which is not true about Behrman?**
 - a He had no masterpiece until he painted a leaf.
 - b He drew pictures for a magazine.
 - c He posed for young artists to earn his living.

4 Della's husband, Jim, looks sad when she gives him the platinum chain because - - - .

- a he thinks he does not deserve it
- b he has sold his gold pocket watch
- c he thinks she spent all their money

5 Why does Soapy try to be sent to prison?

- a He feels very lonely; he needs to have friends.
- b The park bench hurts his back when he sleeps on it.
- c He needs a warm place to spend the winter.

6 When Soapy breaks a shop window, the policeman - - - .

- a thinks Soapy is drunk
- b laughs at him
- c thinks someone else did it

7 Which is true about Bob, the man from the West?

- a He never liked his friend, Jimmy Wells.
- b He became very rich in the West.
- c He hasn't changed much in the past 20 years.

8 Jimmy Wells realizes that Bob is a criminal whom the police are looking for when - - - .

- a Bob lights a match for his cigar
- b they stand under a lamp post
- c he sees the scar near his eyebrow

9 Which is true about Elwyn Belford?

- a He doesn't love his wife.
- b He is tired of his routine life.
- c He still loves his ex-girlfriend.

10 Why does Elwyn Belford choose the name Edward Pinkhammer?

- a It was his best friend's name at school.
- b It's a name that catches his attention in an advert in the passenger's newspaper.
- c It was the name of one of his old clients

11 Which story has both a happy and sad ending?

- a *A Walk in Amnesia*
- b *The Last Leaf*
- c *After Twenty Years*

12 In which story does the main character find himself/herself in ridiculous situations?

- a *Soapy's Choice*
- b *After Twenty Years*
- c *The Christmas Presents*

E Match the characters (1-6) with the descriptions (a-f). (6x2=12 pts)

- 1 Johnsy in *The Last Leaf* ___
- 2 Behrman in *The Last Leaf* ___
- 3 Della in *The Christmas Presents* ___
- 4 Soapy in *Soapy's Choice* ___
- 5 Jimmy in *After Twenty Years* ___
- 6 Belford in *A Walk in Amnesia* ___

- a makes a very difficult choice
- b gives up a precious thing for her/his loved one
- c wants to give up his/her freedom for survival
- d has no hope until a miracle happens
- e acts selfishly for his/her freedom
- f sacrifices his/her life for a friend

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