



1. What was the reason for Johnsy's deteriorating health?

Ans: Johnsy suffered an attack of pneumonia in the cold winter month of November. Her illness made her so weak that she went into depression. She would lie still on her bed and keep gazing out of the window. The autumn added to her gloom when she saw the trees shedding leaves. She began to associate her death with the falling leaves and this negative thought deteriorated her health. When she gave up all hope on life, she refused to eat anything and medicines lost their effect. According to the doctor, her recovery depended on her willingness to live. In the absence of determination to get well soon even the medicines failed to affect positively.

2. How did Behrman save Johnsy's life?

Ans: Behrman saved Johnsy's life by sacrificing himself at the altar of art. "The Last Leaf" is about his extreme sacrifice that infuses life in a young depressed woman. Johnsy's illness was serious but could be cured if she had the will to live. Her falling health was more due to her state of depression than pneumonia. The sixty-year-old painter Behrman took upon himself the difficult responsibility of saving Johnsy. He made a single-handed effort to brave the icy winds and rain to reach the window by climbing a ladder and finally paint a fresh and green leaf that looked natural and real. The readiness with which he gave up his life shows that art unparalleled commitment to talent. He painted the leaf with such passion that it revived the sinking breath of Johnsy. He thus saved Johnsy's life by sacrificing his own.

3. The Last Leaf' is a story of supreme sacrifice by a wretched drunken artist.

Comment

OR

Who was Behrman? What was his masterpiece and why did he paint it?

Ans. Sue and Johnsy were two young girl-artists. They lived together in the artists' colony. Once Johnsy caught pneumonia. She developed a fancy that she would die when the last leaf on the ivy creeper fell. The doctor said that she should take interest in life and wish to live only then she could be saved. Behrman was an old painter. He lived on the ground floor beneath them. He was a failure in art. For forty years he had been trying to paint a masterpiece, but he had not yet started. He came to know of Johnsy's fancy. The night the last leaf fell, he painted a leaf on the wall; He worked all night in the air and snow and painted the leaf. The next morning, Johnsy saw the leaf on the wall: Her will to live returned. Her life was saved. But Behrman caught pneumonia and died. Thus, he sacrificed his life and saved Johnsy's life. The last leaf painted on the wall was his masterpiece.

4. In "The Last Leaf" why did Sue cry bitterly when the doctor had gone? Later she walked into Johnsy's room whistling a cheerful tune. Why?

OR

What was Johnsy's real ailment? What were the chances of her recovery?

Ans. Sue and Johnsy were two young girls. They were painters. They lived like sisters. One day, Johnsy had an attack of pneumonia. Her condition worsened. She didn't have the will to live. One day, the doctor told Sue that Johnsy's disease was psychological also. She did not want to live. In such a condition, no medicine could work. If she did not get back the will to live, her

chances of recovery were only one out of ten. When Sue heard this, she felt very sad. She cried bitterly as soon as the doctor had gone. But the next moment she entered Johnsy's room, whistling. Sue did so because she wanted to cheer up Johnsy.

5. What did Johnsy believe about the falling leaves? Did Sue believe the same thing?

Ans. Sue and Johnsy were two young artist girls. They had a joint studio. They loved each other like sisters. One day, Johnsy caught pneumonia. There was an ivy creeper on the back wall of the next house. Johnsy could see it through her window. The leaves of this creeper were falling fast in the cold winds. Johnsy developed a fancy that she would also die when the last leaf of the creeper fell. She lost the will to live. Sue came to know of Johnsy's fancy. She tried her best to cheer up Johnsy. She told her that there was no link between the falling of leaves and her death. She nursed Johnsy with love and care. She told Behrman about Johnsy's fancy. Behrman was a painter. He painted a leaf on the wall when the last leaf fell. This saved Johnsy's life. Thus, Sue played an important role in saving Johnsy's life.

6. Behrman's masterpiece helped Johnsy to survive. Explain how the last leaf influenced Johnsy?

Ans. The story reveals Behrman's sacrifice. He was a poor old artist. He had a dream to paint a masterpiece. Once Johnsy fell ill and established a bond of her life with the ivy leaves. One day, Sue found her whispering this. Sue looked after Johnsy and she informed Behrman about her condition. It was a stormy night and there was a single leaf on the creeper. Behrman thought that the leaf would fall that stormy night. So he decided to paint the leaf on the wall. He painted the leaf so beautifully that it looked natural. But he got pneumonia that night and died two days after his painting. Hence, this story becomes the story of supreme sacrifice.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Johnsy was suffering from_____.

- (A) pneumonia (B) malaria
(C) a headache (D) stomach pain

Ans. (A) pneumonia

2. According to the doctor, about what had Johnsy made up her mind?

- (A) she will recover soon (B) she will recover late
(C) she is not going to get well (D) all of the above

Ans. (C) she is not going to get well

3. What will happen when the last leaf will fall?

- (A) Johnsy will die (B) Sue will die
(C) Behrman will die (D) all of the above

Ans. (A) Johnsy will die

4. What was Sue doing in Johnsy's room??

- (A) reading a book (B) stitching a shirt
(C) singing a song (D) making a painting

Ans. (D) making a painting

5. Who was Behrman?

- (A) a painter (B) a musician
(C) a doctor (D) a teacher

Ans. (A) a painter

6. Who painted the leaf on the wall?

(A) Sue

(B) Johnsy

(C) Behrman

(D) all of the above

Ans. (C) Behrman

7. What can make a man recover soon?

(A) the will to die

(B) will to live

(C) eating healthy food

(D) all of the above

Ans. (B) will to live

8. What was Behrman's masterpiece?

(A) painting a picture of sue

(B) painting a picture of Johnsy

(C) painting a picture of a leaf

(D) all of the above

Ans. (C) painting a picture of a leaf

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS: -

1. How did Sue react to the doctor's advice?

Clearly, the doctor's grim warning about the Johnsy's slim chances of survival unsettled Sue. She was in a quandary thinking about the way she could make Johnsy give up her lost desire to recover. But, being a pragmatic and tenacious person, she was determined to pull her dear friend out of the abyss of despair. She held back her anguish and began to think positive.

2. What was bothering Johnsy as she lay in her sick bed?

Pneumonia had ravaged Johnsy's body and mind. The acute suffering robbed her of all desire to patiently wait out the crisis. She convinced herself that the time to depart had indeed come. She became obsessed with an old vine creeper that was shedding leaves one by one due to seasonal reasons. Quite illogically, she linked the dwindling number of vine leaves to her remaining life span. She concluded that the fall of the last leaf would herald the arrival of her death. Thus, she waited, quite foolishly, for the last leaf to fall.

Some Important Points to remember-

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.

He never painted anything of note in his life, 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.

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

Self-fulfilling prophecy means that people can bring about a situation or condition by predicting it for themselves. Because Johnsy has decided she will die when the last leaf falls, she has a tenuous hold on life. The sight of the "last leaf," clinging to the vine, encourages her to hold onto

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

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.

Theme / Central Idea of the Lesson. Analysis of THE LAST LEAF

The story is based on the theme that life is precious and faith and hope should never be lost. We come across many hindrances in life and they should be overcome by fighting back in high spirits. Depression can lead to disaster even when the situation is not bad. Another theme that runs through the story is that devoted friendship can be succour during times of crisis. A minor theme of the story is the importance of art in human lives. The old painter knowingly sacrifices his life in his urge to create a masterpiece. Very often, we find people having a negative attitude toward life. They lose interest in life and these causes suffering to people surrounding them. They are even ready to lose their life as life has lost all meaning for them. The story tells the need to have a positive attitude towards life so that we can make it as fruitful as possible. Sacrificing our life for the sake of others is also a theme in this story. Painter Behrman sacrifices his life for Johnsy.

Justify the title of THE LAST LEAF

The title “The Last Leaf” raises the curiosity of the reader regarding a happening or an event towards some kind of ‘end’. The word ‘last’ reflects the main idea of the story which is the last breath of Johnsy. The last leaf becomes the last hope of survival and keeps the reader hooked until the end. Throughout, the last ivy leaf remains the central point. In the early part of the story it remains associated with Johnsy’s ailment and depression while later on, it conveys the message of courage, hope and optimism. The last leaf saves Johnsy’s life and fulfils Behrman’s lifelong dream to paint a masterpiece. However, it also turns out to be his last masterpiece, too. Hence the title is very apt. The leaves of the ivy creeper are falling fast. Johnsy, the sick girl, feels that she would die as soon as the last leaf would fall from the ivy creeper. One night, only one leaf remains on the ivy. It would fall the same night. The old artist, Behrman, decides to go out in the rain and paint an artificial leaf as soon as the last leaf fall. So, since Johnsy makes her life depends upon the last leaf, the title is appropriate. The last leaf on the ivy helps one person to survive but results in the death of another person.

Message

The chief message that this story gives is the spirit of sacrifice we need to have in our life. The old artist, Behrman sacrificed his life so that Johnsy could live. In this process, he also achieved his ambition of painting a masterpiece. The other message is that we should have a positive attitude in life. Johnsy was under depression and she felt her life was linked to the leaves on the ivy creeper. This prevented her from getting better from her illness. She was also causing harm to her friend, Sue. Had she adopted a positive attitude, Behrman would not have died. Our thinking and attitude affect the lives of other people too.

Character Sketches

Behrman: Behrman is a 60-years-old painter. He lived on the ground floor of the house where Sue and Johnsy lived. He had a lifelong dream to paint a masterpiece. Sue told him about the condition of Johnsy. Johnsy felt that she would die, once the last leaf fell from the ivy creeper. Behrman thought of a plan to save Johnsy. He went out in the rainy and stormy night and painted a picture of a leaf on the ivy. Johnsy saw the leaf the next morning and got back her will to live. But Behrman died of pneumonia because he had been out all night in the cold. Thus Behrman made the supreme sacrifice of giving up his life for the sake of another person. He was a great soul. In this process, he achieved his ambition of painting a masterpiece.

Johnsy: Johnsy was a young artist who lived with her friend Sue. She fell ill very seriously and had pneumonia. She had the fancy idea that she would die once the last leaf on the ivy creeper, outside her window, would fall down. The leaves were falling down very fast as the weather was stormy. Only one leaf remained. She felt that the last leaf will fall in the night and she would die. But Behrman went out in the cold night and painted a leaf on the wall. Johnsy saw this leaf the next morning and got back her will to live. But her foolish attitudes lead to the death of Behrman. She was a weak-hearted woman.

Sue: Sue was a young artist who lived with Johnsy. She tried her best to feel Johnsy better and help in to get over her illness. But Johnsy would not listen to her. She was adamant. Sue sought the help of Behrman to solve the issue. Behrman solved the problem by painting a leaf on the wall. So we find that Sue is a true friend of Johnsy.

1. What was Behrman's dream? Did it come true?

Behrman's lifelong dream was to create a masterpiece in painting that could look perfect. It comes true when he paints an ivy leaf which looks a replica of a real leaf and saves a young life and fulfils Behrman's ambition too. Unfortunately, it costs him his life.

2. How is 'the last leaf' the artists' masterpiece? what makes you say so?

"The Last Leaf" is definitely the artist's masterpiece because it seems real and natural. The painting also rekindles hope and willpower in a person who had lost the desire to live.

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow

She talked about clothes and fashions, but Johnsy did not respond. Johnsy continued to lie still on her bed. She brought her drawing-board into Johnsy's room and started painting.

(a) Why did Sue talk about clothes and fashion?

Ans: Sue talked about clothes and fashion because she was trying to cheer up Johnsy who was depressed due to her illness.

(b) Why did Johnsy continue to lie still on her bed?

Ans: Johnsy was suffering from pneumonia and was weak and depressed. So she continued to lie still in her bed.

(c) Why did Sue bring her drawing-board into Johnsy's room?

Ans: Sue brought her drawing-board into Johnsy's room to give her company and help her not to feel lonely.

(d) Which value of Sue's character is revealed through these lines?

Ans: These lines reveal Sue's value as a true friend. She makes special efforts to divert her friend's

mind away from negative thoughts.

(II)

He was a sixty-year-old painter. His lifelong dream was to paint a masterpiece but that had remained a dream. Sue poured out her worries to Behrman.

(a) Who is being talked about here? The person being talked about here is Mr Behrman,

Ans: Sue and Johnsy's neighbour, who lived on the ground floor of the same building where the two girls lived.

(b) What was his lifelong dream? Why had it remained unfulfilled so far?

Ans: His lifelong dream was to paint a masterpiece. It had remained unfulfilled so far because he had not found any opportunity or inspiration to paint the masterpiece.

(c) Why did Sue pour out her worries to Behrman?

Ans: Sue poured out her worries to Behrman because she was alarmed at her friend, Johnsy's deteriorating condition and wanted guidance and support from the elderly well-wisher.

(d) Why do you think Behrman listened to Sue?

Ans: Mr Behrman, the old painter, listened to Sue because he was a compassionate person and a good neighbour.

(III)

Sue hugged Johnsy. Then she gave her lots of hot soup and a mirror. Johnsy combed her hair and smiled brightly.

(a) When did Sue hug Johnsy? Why?

Ans: Sue hugged Johnsy because she was happy to get a positive response from her for the first time after her illness. This raised hope about Johnsy's recovery.

b. Why did Sue give her soup?

Ans: Sue gave her soup to replenish her energy since a depressed Johnsy had not been eating properly since her illness.

(c) Why did Sue give her a mirror too?

Ans: Sue gave Johnsy a mirror too so that Johnsy could comb her hair and make her appearance brighter and better.

(d) What made Johnsy smile brightly?

Ans: The kindled hope of her recovery and survival made Johnsy smile brightly.