

The overcoat



The Overcoat: The narrator of The Overcoat is anonymous and his/her voice in the story is digressing. The narrator's attitude towards Akaky is compassionate and humorous, yet the narrator brings a condescending perspective to the story. His fellow workers persecute Akaky because they are very materialistic. They only respect people who possess material that they are impressed with. Akaky maintains a downtrodden and poor image. The coat he always keeps wearing before obtaining the overcoat becomes worn off to transparency. His fellow workers do not approve of his poverty and therefore, torture him. In reply to their witty statements, Akaky calmly retorts, "Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?" (Gogol, 2006, p. 5). Akaky maintains a very intimate relationship with his work as a civil servant. He keeps immersed in work all the time. He remains so busy in copying all the time, that everything else is non-existent for him in his life. He lives an empty life and cares only for work. He does not even take care of his personal hygiene. Prior to obtaining the overcoat, Akaky maintains an introverted image. He is essentially a person with no hope for materialistic success or socialization. Soon after he obtains the overcoat, his colleagues take notice of that and make compliments on the overcoat. This raises the self esteem of Akaky manifold and changes his social life drastically. The overcoat lends Akaky a new identity that he can proudly carry in the social circle. This improves his relationship with peers and he becomes optimistic about his career and future. Therefore, buying a new overcoat turned out to be an extremely fateful decision for Akaky. Upon having his overcoat lost, Akaky approach a Very Important Person upon the advice of a fellow clerk that works in his department. In the story, The Most Important Person represents the people in power. Accordingly, his attitude is the portrayal of

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the way a common man is treated by those in power in the society. Gogol portrays the Very Important Person as a high-ranking general who is used to belittling the people under him. He does so in an attempt to become more important and prominent. The Very Important Person is quite central in the story because the theme of the story fundamentally revolves around materialism. The Very Important Person does not treat Akaky with respect because he appears to be poor. The most significant comic element of the story is the appearance of ghosts after the death of Akaky. The ghost approaches people and tears away their coats. The ghost even steals the coat of the Very Important Person who later becomes remorseful of the way he had treated Akaky when he had approached him for help. The ghost takes revenge of Akaky from the materialistic world in a very funny way. Though, the death of Akaky is the most tragic of all events in the story. Although no religious elements are directly involved in the story, yet by advising against materialism, the story preaches the teachings of religion. This was a wonderful story. The story holds the message for the audience that it is very wrong to deal an individual according to his looks or financial status. I feel that the author has conveyed a very important message that particularly applies to the materialistic world we live in today. References: Gogol, N. (2006). The Overcoat. Objective Systems Pvt. Ltd.