

The stylistic analysis of the last leaf by o'henry essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The text under stylistic analysis is the short story "The Last Leaf" by O'Henry. William Sydney Porter was born on 11-th of September in 1862 in North Carolina. His mother died when he was three year old. Porter worked at drug store of his uncle. Then he went to Texas and tried many professions. For example rancher, bank teller, journalist, founding a comic weekly magazine The Rolling Stone. Then was employed by the Houston Post to write a humorous daily column. When Porter alleged from bank he was arrested and spent 3 years in federal penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio.

Here Porter started to write short stories under pseudonym O'Henry. In all, Henry wrote 270 stories, and they consist of a rich mixture of semi-realism, sentiment and surprise endings. He is frequently thought of as a "funny" writer. His masterpieces reflect the atmosphere of the early twentieth century, of how life was lived at a time when slavery and the Indian Wars were only a generation or so in the past. O'Henry was interested in social problems and revealed his negative attitude to the bourgeois society. O'Henry's heroes are various: cowboys, writers, artists, milliners, clerks, politicians.

He doesn't show psychological side of character's action, so it reinforces unexpectedness of the end. After his death, O'Henry Memorial Awards were established to be given annually for the best magazine stories. The plot revolves around two artist girls - Sue and Johnsy - who live together in quaint old Greenwich Village. They have "common tastes in art, chicory salad and bishop sleeves". Everything is going well till Johnsy fell ill with pneumonia. She lay all day on her bed awaiting her death, looking out of the

window hopelessly. The doctor put her chances at one-in-ten. Johnsy had her eyes on an old ivy-vine, losing leaves.

Johnsy believe she would die when the last leaf fell. On the ground floor of Sue's studio lived old Behrman, who wanted create a masterpiece. Sue went over to him to poured out her heart about Johnsy. Days passed, the ivy-vine leaves fell one after the other until one very last. Rain, shine or the twilight, nothing could possibly make it part ways with the vine. The young woman waited and she waited still and then her patience wore off. She concluded that God didn't want her to die and realized that asking for death was a sin. One afternoon as the two girls sat knitting, Sue broke the news of old Behrman's death from pneumonia.

He was found " cold and wet and in pain...and beside him was a palette with green and yellow colors mixed on it. No one had wondered why the last leaf never fluttered, never moved.. ". Behrman had finally delivered his masterpiece! He had painted it the night the last leaf fell! I think the last leaf is the symbol of human's life. Under the rain, wind, day and night, this leaf struggles for its life. Description of the weather and nature create dark pessimistic atmosphere. The author's tone is gloomy and dramatic. The conflict of a story is that heroine Johnsy has a dilemma, inside her private world.

She is sick, but doesn't want to do anything for recover; she is just laying in her bed, looking through the window on the ivy tree, counting backward leaves and waiting for the end of life. The narrator personifies the disease as " Mr. Pneumonia". The author expresses dreadful disease by metaphor: " a

cold unseen stranger with his icy fingers". Simile for expression Johnsy's mood "light and fragile as a leaf herself". O' Henry shows us that the tree is a life with personification "skeleton branches" and repetition "The old old ivy vine" To my mind the story explores the psychological aspect of illness and death.

It's often easy enough to become attached to a symbol. We need something to hold onto. It's the "last leaf." In the story the concept of friendship is one of the most important. Friendship between two young artists, in description of Green Village where people of art came and "become a colony", and Bergman's attitude to young girls, which O'Henry expressed by simile "regarded himself as especial mastiff-in-waiting to protect two young artists in the studio above" Personalization of speech typical of O. Henry.

He gives his characters the traits found in their manner of speech. For example Bergman's speech: "ach dot poor little miss Johnsy". In this story the narrator pays attention to Bergman's personality. O'Henry creates ironical image, but in the end of the story, the narrator use many epithets to describe what happened with Bergman "helpless with pain, dreadful night, the night that the last leaf fell". It shows us that the author sympathizes and empathizes to him.

In summary, I think that the story itself is a metaphor of a self-sacrificing love and the meaning of human life. It's remarkable for extensive use of similes, metaphors and epithets, describing nature and atmosphere. The whole story is permitted with metaphorical language which helps the author to create the sentimental atmosphere. This ivy vine is not just a tree for

Johnsy, but it is her life, and her hope for recovery is leaving her with this falling leaves.

We and Sue know that the leaf is not real, that it was painted by Bergman, but for Johnsy it is real and natural. It is a symbol of victory over death and the triumph of life, the great power of art, a sacrifice in the name of loved ones, the aim of human being in this world. It combines the end of one life, the revival of another and eternal life masterpieces. Finally it should be said about unexpectedness of the end. It helps the author to make the story realistic, instructive and sentimental. That's why this story is one of the most favorite for me.