

# Analysis of the happy man

Experience, Happiness



I'm going to analyze the novel "The Happy Man" by Somerset Maugham, a well-known English novelist, short-story writer, playwright, and essayist. William Somerset Maugham was born in Paris, educated at King's School in Canterbury and studied to be a doctor at St. Thomas Hospital in England. He was one of the best-known writers of his time as he was master of short stories. The story starts with the narrator thinking and telling the reader about his attitude to giving advice to somebody. He thinks it to be quite difficult and even impossible to give the right advice as "we know nothing of the others".

The whole first paragraph of the story is devoted to the narrator's expressing the opinion on life, the manner of bourgeois society and the danger of ordering the lives of others. Then the author goes on telling a story that once happened to the narrator. This novel runs about a desperate man who confided his life to a total stranger. The theme of the novel: a man's search for happiness; the role of advice in the life of people. The main characters of the story are the narrator and Stephens. The main character is the narrator.

There is no information about his appearance in the text. The only thing about his age is the information that he was a young man when he advised well. Nevertheless, we can judge about his character from his thoughts, behavior, and speech. The description of his character is indirect. He is a wise man: he knows that it is impossible to know another person as well as oneself to give him/her advice which would be good for him/her. And he is bold enough for a man who dares to give the life-changing advice to a man he sees for the first time.

The narrator was intelligent, clever and bright. We can judge by his way of narration, speech. He is an educated person, he uses literary vocabulary mostly, for instance, such words as errand, flounder, squeamish, silences. Connotation of words is positive and the way the author uses the literature terms makes the story understandable and close to the readers. He was a doctor but didn't practice. And first of all he was a writer. He was an experienced person, philosopher and good psychologist because he could say for sure who the man was and what life was.

He thought a lot about life and tried to understand the value of life. ' And life is something that you can lead but once...' He is a responsible man. He has a sharp eye for details which reveal Stephens' inner state: he (Stephens) had some difficulty in lighting cigarette without letting go off his hat. He quickly did this and while doing it dropped his umbrella. Stephens' portrayal is subjective and the reader sees everything from the narrator's point of view. Stephens represents and images. The first is Stephens who lives in London.

He sensitive and emotional, the proof is being the usage of metaphors and epithets in his speech. " Each one help of this metaphor the author shows the narrator's outlook on the relations between people and the impossibility of knowing a person well enough to give him advice". The next metaphor: " There are men who flounder at the journey's start is aimed at making speech more colorful and interesting, so that the whole scene readily presents itself to the reader's eye" It is an unhappy man, bored with his life, who doesn't find air one can breathe in London.

Stephens' inner state, his emotions are depicted through the narrator's evaluation of Stephens' sentences. He finds striking and sharp. These

epithets are used by the author to show that Stephens could not really stick his life anymore. He is fed up with the routine of being a medical officer because that was all he had to look forward to the far the rest of life. Even good money of London can't stop him from leaning for uncertainty in Spain. The second image, that is a happy man, and he is presented by Stephens' living in Spain. He satisfied with his life though he is rather shabbily dressed.

The happiness and content with life can be seen through all the narrator's description of Stephens appearance: his eyes twinkled gaily, his face bore an expression of perfect good-humor. This metaphor helps us to get the idea of Stephens' happiness. The exaggeration Stephens uses " I wouldn't exchange the life I have had that of any king in would" shows the highest degree of being happy. Another exaggeration used by the author " you couldn't have imagined a more delightful creature to drink a glass of wine" which is aimed at revealing the author's positive attitude to Stephens.

So, the two images a " happy and unhappy man" are opposed to each other. The stylistic device used in this case, it is the contrast, its function is to bring some phenomena in opposition and find differentiate features. This Stylistic device helps us to state the main idea of the story, which twists around the theme of happiness. Stephens found his happiness in Spain, where is air one can breathe while in London there was no possibility for him to enjoy life. The contrast between Spain and London shows the drawback of London's society in which Stephens wouldn't like to live any longer.

While his wife, who preferred to go back to Camberwell, found her happiness there. Thus the main idea states that every person has his own understanding of happiness. We can divide the novel into three logical parts

<https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-the-happy-man/>

in order to understand it better. It is a narrative text. The key in the first part is rather pessimistic, deeply psychological, and sometimes we can say that it is rather negative. This could be proved if we look at the metaphors the author use: he compares every man to “ a prisoner in a solitary tower”, life to “ a difficult business”. Another metaphor is used when he says that “ some people flounder at the journey’s start”.

So we see that the author tries to make us ready for future accidents, and to show us the difference between the past “ wrapped in the dark cloud of Destiny” and the future. The second part was written in the form of a dialogue between the patient and our hero. We can see the despair of a stranger, because he uses “ short, sharp sentences”, to emphasize it the author told us that they had “ a forcible ring”. The visitor seems to be very tired of life, he is passive, but he wants to change something in it, that is why to show us the antagonistic character of the visitor, the author uses an oxymoron “ bright dark eyes”.

The third part is lyrical, and a bit romantic. In the third part, our main character comes to Seville and tries to find that stranger. He lived in an ordinary Spanish house, his room was littered with papers, books, medical appliances, and lumber but he was really happy. It could be seen from his description: a dissipated, though antirely sympathetic appearance, and of course from his murmuring “ Life is full of compensations”. The stylistic devices, used in the story, make the narration more interesting and attracting readers’ attention. They reveal the object of depiction in a deep manner and make the narration more emotional.

The author uses the contrast on the level of the text. With its help, he conveys the main idea of the text, his attitude to the characters. The syntactical pattern is not very difficult and it doesn't do any difficulty to follow the main idea. Somerset Maugham doesn't use many details. Every used detail is important from the author's view point and carefully selected. So the author used such stylistic devices as metaphor: ' a prisoner in solitary tower', ' dark cloak of Destiny' etc. The narrator shows the readers his attitude towards life, thinks about the value of life. Hyperbole ' I wouldn't exchange the life.

'I've had with that of any king in the world' is used to show that Stephens was very happy and wasn't concerned about material things. So, also in the story there is an inversion and repetition ' Poor I have been and poor I always be'. Parallel syntactical constructions such as: "I was, I never, I've never done...", ' there is sunshine, there is good wine...' underline the importance of what Stephens told. The sentences in the story are rather simple and complete, the paragraphs are balanced. Also, there are rhetorical questions with the help of them the author tries to understand what the value of life is.

There are a lot of antithesis: ' Stephens's salary was pretty good, but his clothes were shabby', in the beginning he was an unhappy man and in the end he was a happy one, Spain - is full of emotions, freedom, romantic, and England is conservative. Allusions: Carmen - a symbol of Spain, of freedom etc. The text is a descriptive one; there are many descriptive signals: a modest apartment, a total stranger, an apologetic laugh, a cursory glance, a little man, a wonderful life, trifling indisposition, a squeamish patient, a dim

recollection, a Spanish woman and others. Descriptive words make the text expressive and vivid.

The author employs many contextual synonyms, which make the language expressive: dangerous, hazardous; unwillingly, forced; confused, embarrassed; a total stranger, a perfect stranger; alter, change; twinkled, shone. The story is devoted to the problem of human's ability to change his life. For some people it is very difficult to live another life and they prefer to be in the same way all their lives. We shouldn't be afraid of new changes, because " life is full of compensations". If a person is afraid to take risks and change his life, he cannot expect to gain anything. So, as they say, he that fears every bush must never go birding.