

Research Paper on Twist Ending of ‘O. Henry’s’ Stories

Pratibha Pawar

Camp Education Sr. College, Nigdi

Abstract: *‘O Henry was the pen name of the American writer William Sydney Porter. A prolific writer, he is well remembered for his short stories characterised by wit, memorable characters, and endings usually involving a twist or surprise. The ‘twist ending’ of his stories have become so famous that such endings in fiction is often referred to as an ‘O. Henry ending’. This research paper examines unique feature of O. Henry’s storytelling-his twist endings impact on readers. Through the analysis of stories like The Gift of the Magi, The Last Leaf, After Twenty Years, The Ransom of Red Chief, this paper highlights how O. Henry uses irony and unexpected conclusions to convey emotional truths.*

Keywords: O. Henry, Twist Endings, American, The Gift of Magi, The Last Leaf, After Twenty Years, Surprise endings.

1. Introduction

‘O. Henry (1862-1910) is well known for his short stories characterised by wit, memorable characters, and endings usually involving a twist or surprise. Twist endings become O. Henry’s unique style. His works combine humour, irony, and meaningful.

Analysis of “The Gift of Magi”

The story revolves around a poor couple, Jim and Della, who want to buy Christmas gifts for each other. Della sells her beautiful long hair to buy a chain for Jim’s watch, while Jim sells his watch to buy combs for Della’s long hair.

Twist Ending of “The Gift of Magi”

The twist endings occurs when both realize that their sacrifice have made their gifts unusable.

Significance of the Twist

It shows true love and sacrifice

Highlights cosmic irony

Strengthen the idea that intent matters more than material value.

Analysis of “The Last Leaf”

In the story The Last Leaf Sue and Johnsy are two young artists living in Greenwich Village. Johnsy falls seriously ill with pneumonia and loses the will to live. She believes that when the last leaf on an ivy vine outside her window falls, she will die too. Sue tries to care for and encourage her, but Johnsy remains hopeless. Their old neighbor, Behrman, a painter, learns about Johnsy’s belief. One stormy night, he secretly paints a realistic leaf on the wall after the real leaves have fallen. The painted leaf never falls, giving Johnsy hope and the strength to recover. However, Behrman catches pneumonia while painting in the harsh weather and dies. His final act is consider his masterpiece, as it saves Johnsy’s life.

The twist ending of the ‘The Last Leaf’ reveals that the last leaf giving Johnsy hope was actually painted by Behrman who sacrificed his life to save her.

Significance of the twist in The Last Leaf

Theme of Sacrifice

Power of hope and illusion

True meaning of Art

Analysis of story After Twenty Years

"After Twenty Years" by O. Henry is a short story about two friends, Jimmy Wells and "Silky" Bob, who meet after 20 years. Jimmy, now a patrolman, recognizes Bob as a wanted criminal from Chicago. True to duty, Jimmy has a plainclothes officer arrest Bob, leaving a note explaining he couldn't arrest his friend himself.

2. Conclusion

O. Henry's stories are renowned for their surprise endings and thematic irony. "The Gift of the Magi" concludes with the couple realizing their sacrifices (selling hair/watch) made their bought gifts useless, yet they are deemed the wisest for their love. "The Last Leaf" ends with an artist sacrificing his life to paint a leaf that saves a sick woman's life. A common conclusion across his stories is that love, sacrifice, and loyalty are more valuable than wealth or appearances, often ending in a bittersweet moment of realization

References

- [1] The Gift of the Magi (1905)
- [2] The Last Leaf (1907)
- [3] O. Henry. After Twenty Years. (1906)
- [4] Originally published in The Four Million