

Moments (Lesson - 7): - The Last Leaf (IX)

HANDOUT

Explanation of the Lesson

Sue and Johnsy, the story's protagonists, young artists, having discovered that they have similar tastes in art, food, and fashion, shared a small art studio apartment in an old building in Greenwich Village since May. By November, a pneumonia pandemic has hit New York (cold region). Johnsy, being used to California's warmer weather, falls ill with pneumonia.

Johnsy's health worsened slowly as she was also experiencing depression. Sue, her friend, got worried to see her lying restless on the bed, gazing out of the window. Even though the doctor visited everyday, there was no improvement in her condition. One day the doctor asked Sue if anything was bothering Johnsy because she was not responding to medicines. It seemed as if she had given up hope to get well. Sue tried her best to make her feel happy and start taking interest in her surroundings. But Johnsy was sad. She kept her gaze on the window only and started counting backwards. Sue heard her do this and anxiously looked out of the window. Sue saw an old ivy creeper climbing the wall opposite their window. The creeper was shedding its leaves in the strong wind outside. Johnsy was counting the leaves left on the creeper.

Johnsy had made up her mind that with the fall of the last leaf on the ivy creeper, she will die. But Sue could not see any point in her belief as it was autumn and trees shed their leaves during this season. Sue tried hard to make her understand that there was no connection between her illness and the leaves. But Johnsy was sure that she will sleep forever once the ivy sheds its last leaf.

She somehow manages to make her go to sleep and rushes to call Behrman, who lived on the ground floor of the same building and was a painter too. She poured out her worries to Behrman. He also thinks that it is so foolish of Johnsy to think like that.

They both then go to Johnsy's room and find her sleeping. The weather was getting bad. It was raining heavily and chilly wind was blowing. They went to the other room and saw that only the last leaf was left on the creeper. Behrman didn't say anything and went to his room.

Next morning when Johnsy woke up, she asked Sue to draw back the curtains so that she could see outside. Sue surprisingly tells Johnsy that there was still one leaf left, all green and healthy. Johnsy could not believe as the wind was very strong the last night. Every now and then, Johnsy checked if the leaf was still there.

The same night, again there was a storm but the leaf was still there. Now, Johnsy was hopeful that she would get well soon. When she recovered completely, Sue disclosed that the last leaf that had helped her get better, was not the original one but a masterpiece, which looked more than real, was drawn by Behrman.

Behrman had drawn that leaf on the wall the same night without bothering about the rain or cold. He died after two days of pneumonia.

Themes in the Lesson

We can find the following themes in the lesson-

Friendship, Sacrifice, Hope, Negative thoughts (pessimism), Superstition, Importance of Optimism etc.

Sacrifice: -The important 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.

Friendship: - There is very a good **friendship** between Sue and Johnsy. They share room. Sue takes care of Johnsy who was suffering from pneumonia and pessimism and says that she would die. Friendship saves Johnsy's life.

Pessimism and Optimism - Johnsy is a **pessimist** who wants to die when the last leaf of ivy creeper falls while Sue is optimist who infuses Johnsy's mind with positive thought. Thus, optimism infused in Johnsy's mind saves her.

We should become an **optimist** person like Sue, Behrman and the doctor in the lesson.

The key theme is HOPE -

- Sue, Behrman and doctor infused **hope** in the mind of Johnsy to get well from pneumonia.
- Johnsy **hopes** to live on being helped and supported.
- Behrman, throughout his life, **hopes** to succeed in making his masterpiece and he indeed succeeded in the end.

Enrich Your Vocabulary from Your Text

Artist – A person who produces art, especially paintings or drawing

Storey – Floor

Pneumonia – A lung infection causing illness

Whisper – Murmur, speak very softly using one's breath

Autumn – A season when leaves fall

Masterpiece – best work

Feeble – weak

Reluctantly – unwillingly

Depressed – very sad

Gloomy – sad

Hug – to embrace

Shiver – to tremble

Wonder – surprise

Janitor – A person who looks after a building or watchman

Quaint - unusual or old-fashioned

Prowl - move around restlessly and stealthily, especially in search of or as if in search of prey

Greenwich Village - a district of New York City, traditionally associated with writers, artists, and musicians

chafing dish - a metal pan with an outer pan of hot water, used for keeping food warm

Smite - strike with a firm blow; defeat or conquer

Curative - a medicine or remedy

Solicitous - characterized by or showing interest or concern

Scorn - the feeling or belief that someone or something is worthless or despicable; contempt

Serrated - having or denoting a jagged edge; saw-like

Mastiff - a dog of a large, strong breed with drooping ears and pendulous lips

Fancy - a thing that one supposes or imagines,
