

HAND OUT

LESSON – 4 THE COP AND THE ANTHEM

MODULE – 1

The lesson ‘The Cop and the Anthem’ explains about a very poor person named Soapy, who stays in Madison Square, and now winter is near, Soapy has no place to stay except a seat in the Madison Square, now he cannot stay there as winter is near so he has to find another place to live i.e. Blackwell’s Island (jail) so that he can pass his winter time there.

PART OF THE LESSON

Before you read

Have you ever found yourself in a situation in which what happened was the opposite of what you expected? If so, you are familiar with the ‘irony’ of the situation, which is often embarrassing. The story that you are going to read has a number of such situations.

Soapy is a homeless, jobless man.

Winter is fast approaching and Soapy must have a place to stay.

Soapy comes to a decision, at last.

SOAPY moved restlessly on his seat in Madison Square. There are certain signs to show that winter is coming. Birds begin to fly south. People want new warm coats. And Soapy moves restlessly on his seat in the park. When you see these signs, you know that winter is near.

A dead leaf fell at Soapy’s feet. That was a special sign for him that winter was coming. It was time for all who lived in Madison Square to prepare.

Soapy’s mind now realised that fact. The time had come. He had to find some way to take care of himself during the cold weather. And, therefore, he moved restlessly on his seat.

Soapy's hopes for the winter were not very high. He was not thinking of sailing away on a ship. He was not thinking of southern skies, or of the Bay of Naples. Three months in the prison on Blackwell's Island was what he wanted. Three months of food every day and a bed every night, three months safe from the cold north wind and safe from cops. This is what Soapy wanted most in the world.

For years, Blackwell's Island had been his winter home. Richer New Yorkers made their plans to go to Florida or to the shore of the Mediterranean Sea each winter. Soapy made his small plans for going to the Island. And now, the time had come. Three big newspapers, some under his coat and



some over his legs, had not kept him warm during the night in the park. So Soapy was thinking of the Island. There were places in the city where he could go and ask for food and a bed. These would be given to him. He could move from one building to another, and he would be taken care of through the winter. But he liked Blackwell's Island better.

Soapy's spirit was proud. If he went to any of these places, there were certain things he had to do. In one way or another, he would have to pay for what they gave him. They would not ask him for money. But they would make him wash his whole body. They would make him answer questions. They would want to know everything about his life. No. Prison was better than that. The prison had rules that he would have to follow. But in prison, a gentleman's own life was still his own life. Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once began to move towards his desire.

southern skies: warmer places

Blackwell's Island: name of a prison (If Soapy went to prison, the government would look after his food and stay.)

cop: policeman (American English)

EXPLANATION

The story begins with the description of approaching winter which may be hard for Soapy to survive. Winter is the cruelest season for the homeless person like Soapy. The signs of the coming of the winter as described by the story teller fascinate the readers and make Soapy too much worried. The solid signs of approaching winter are: When the wild geese are heard at night and women grow kind to their husbands and when Soapy was cold and restless on his bench in the park.

The narrative of the story begins thus: Soapy moved restlessly on his seat in Madison Square. There are certain signs to show that winter is coming. Birds begin to fly south. Women who want nice new warm coats become very kind to their husbands. And Soapy moves restlessly on his seat in the park. When you see these signs, you may know that winter is near.

The very thought of winter alerts Soapy. He thinks that since he has no enough clothes to protect himself in winter, he has to find a safer place to survive. For years together “hospitable Blackwell's had been his winter quarters” as the jail would be the nice and comfortable place for him to pass the winter there. He could get free boarding and lodging and warm clothes. He doesn't carve for any magnificent trip nor does he have any other plans in his mind. He decides to get himself arrested by committing a very mean crime what he did for years together.