

## **Honeycomb: Textbook in English for class VII**

### **Fiction 5: Quality**

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**Introduction:** The fiction “Quality” by John Galsworthy is a touching and sad story of Gessler brothers and their exceptional honesty, resolution, humility and commitment towards their art of shoemaking.

The title of the story “Quality” implies in the context of the story that in today’s world there is decline of quality in work due to industrialisation. It took away the bread and butter of artists, artisans, craftsmen and those who loved doing their work.

**Artist:** An artist is a person who is skilled at some activity related to art. Any artisan who loves his art and immersed in it can be respectfully called as an artist. Therefore, we can call a Carpenter, a Sculptor, a Shoemaker, a Pottery maker as an artist. (**Refer slide3: Artists**)

#### **Characters:**

1) **Gessler Brothers:** Mr.Gessler (Younger brother) is the central character (protagonist) in the story. He stand for high degree of passion in his art of shoe making. Both the brothers died due to financial loss in the business.

2) **The Narrator:** The narrator is very loyal customer and fan of Mr Gessler’s shoe making. There is deep bonding between Mr Gessler (Younger brother) and the narrator. The story unfolds to the readers through the narrator’s action in the story.

3) **The Englishman:** The Englishman took over Mr .Gessler’s shop who told the narrator about Mr Gessler’s struggle and his failure due to lack advertisement, ultimately his death due to starvation.

### **Main Themes: (Refer slide 5: Main Themes)**

- Commitment to one's work. Every worker is an artist if he loves his work and immersed in it.
- Competition between small business and big firms.
- The tragedy of Gessler brothers signified that human values are threatened by material gain.

**Language:** Language used in the story is simple though not colloquial. One of the important aspects is the use of native accents in the speech of Mr Gessler. He immigrated from Germany therefore there is pull of his mother tongue on the acquired language, English. When Mr Gessler speaks **p, t, k** sound like **b, d, g** (Refer slide 6: Accent)

**Summary cum analysis:** The story 'Quality' opens with the narrator's deep bonding with the Mr. Gessler (Younger brother). Mr. Gessler was the great and passionate artist. He would make boots on order. The boots would last long. His shop "Gessler Brothers" was like a church.

The setting of the story is in fashionable part of London. Gessler brothers basically were immigrants from Germany. They had set up the shoe-making shop in a small by-street of London for their livelihood. (Refer slide 4: **Key Characters and Setting**)

The first meeting of the narrator was when Mr Gessler made boots from Russian – leather. When the narrator asked Mr. Gessler about the difficulties in his task of making boots, he answered in his German accent, "**It is an art!**" (It is an art) As the story progresses, the narrator familiarizes the readers with the ways of Mr Gessler and this sense of familiarity is important in understanding the story.

Once the narrator has had a small complaint regarding the boots made by Mr. Gessler, Mr Gessler promises to take it back and cancel the charges. This shows the **humility of the artist**. Art requires humility and Mr Gessler's humility helped him improve his craft. Mr.Gessler believed in "work is worship".

Once the narrator absentmindedly enters the man's workplace wearing a pair of boots he bought at some large firm. Mr Gessler quickly tells him those are not his boots. Saying so, he presses his fingers on a part of the boot where comfort was compromised in the pursuit of style.

*"It 'urds you dere," he said. "Dose big virms 'ave no self-respect." .....  
"dey get id by advertisement, nod by work". (Page no.74-75)*

First time Mr Gessler spoke out his mental pain, his struggle to compete against big firms which spread their business with the help of advertisement. They compromised with the quality of their product. Therefore Gessler brothers suffered a lot. This scenes generates pathos in the sensitive readers. Their small business was crippled in front of the mall business which was showy without quality. (**Refer slide 11: Competition**)

But the passionate artist neither gave up nor compromised with the quality of his work. Listening Mr.Gessler's heart, the narrator grew sympathetic and gave a big order of boots. Thereafter the narrator couldn't visit him for two years.

The narrator very often visited his shop for placing orders of boots. Therefore the story is seen through the narrator's point of view. The narrator tells us what is going in in the life of Mr.Gessler...

The next time when the narrator went to Mr Gessler, he received the sad news of his **elder** brother's death. Even then the younger brother continued

to run the shop with Great Spirit. The sympathetic narrator again put a huge order of boots with Mr. Gessler. He prepared excellent boots. Every shoe he made spoke for itself and therefore they didn't require any name-dropping.

As the story progresses still further the narrator went abroad for a year. On arrival he again placed the order of boots to Mr Gessler. The narrator received the boots and happily wrote a cheque and himself posted the cheque.

On his last visit to Mr Gessler to thank him for the splendid boots he made, the narrator shocked to see an English man had taken over the shop. He informed the narrator about the death of Mr. Gessler due to starvation. It is indeed the tragic end of the story. Mr Gessler could not meet both ends, whatever he earned went into leather and rent of the shop. The tragedy is heightened by the fact that **even the Englishman agreed that he (Mr Gessler) made the best boots** in London. This acknowledgement was the tribute to Mr Gessler and his art.

### **Conclusion:**

**Mr Gessler died** possibly because of his merit which has no value in the world of advertisements. (**Refer slide 9: Role of advertisement.**) The advertisements, mad pursuit of profit by the big firms have ruined the quality of the products and killed the artist with "quality" like Mr Gessler.