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# Indian Streams Research Journal



## INTRODUCING O.HENRY AS A SHORT STORY WRITER



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### ABSTRACT

The Great American Journalist and Short Story Writer William Sidney Porter , better known as O.Henry . O Henry is his pen name . His real name was William Sidney Porter , but he became more famous under his pen name of O.Henry in American Literature.

**KEYWORDS** :American Literature ,Great American Journalist,draftsman,journalist . .

### INTRODUCTION :

William Sidney Porter was born in Greensboro, Guilford County, North Carolina on 11th September 1862. William Sidney Porter as he himself expressed it “ was born and raised in North

Carolina”. He had sought freedom and self expression through his writings rather than fame. In fact , he shunned publicity with timidity of a child.

O. Henry visited many cities such as Texas, New Orleans, Hoston , Honduras and New York. In Austin he took number of jobs over the next several years, including pharmacist, draftsman, journalist and clerk.



William Sidney Porter works based on Texas and New York city life. He spent a lot of time in both city. When he was working as a Bank Teller in the First National Bank of Austin. Shortly thereafter, he was arrested for embezzlement in connection with the previous employment in Austin

After few months William Sidney Porter was found guilty of embezzlement, he sentenced five years jail. While he was in jail, he began to write short stories to earn money to support his daughter Margaret . His first story signed “O. Henry” appeared in McClure’s magazine in 1899 under the title “Whistling Dick’s Christmas Stocking”, a major figure in the history of the American Short Story had entered upon his profession.

O.Henry's stories became more popular among readers in the U.S. South West and in Central America. William Sidney Porter Published at least fourteen short stories on the name of James L. Bliss, in prison. After six months William Sidney Porter released from the prison on his good behaviour and innocent, his term of sentences was also reduced from five years to three years. In 1901 he released from the prison and changed his name to "O.Henry" to hide his past identity. This name he got from a Jail Warden called 'Orrin Henry'.

O.Henry learned the art of storytelling from his reading of Harte, Kipling and Maupassant but his humorous, energetic style also show the influence of Mark Twain and Ambrose Bierce.

In 1902, O.Henry went to New York city. Where he wrote about three hundred and seventy short stories and ten collections of Short Stories. His First collection is "Cabbages and Kings" and second collection of short stories is "The Four Million" his well known stories are "The Gift of the Magi", "The Furnished Room", "The Trimmed Lamp", "The Last Leaf", "A Muncipal Report", "The Voice of the city" and "The Pendulum".

From which stories he became more popular. In New York's magazine so many writers said that O.Henry, variously styled "The American Kipling", "The American de Maupassant", "The American Gogol", "The Bret Harte of the city", "The Homer of the Tander Lion", "The discover and Interpreter of the romance of New York", "The greatest living master of the short story".

O. Henry challenged the reader to a game of guessing with surprise endings. His short stories had planned plots, vivacity, Comedy, coincidence and were full of wit and humour.

O.Henry wrote about different classes of the people he knew and lived with. In his stories we can observe the characteristics of the city policeman, waitress. The shop and factory girl, the poor and the lowly people. The homeless lodger of the city park. The rich and fashionable and the politician.

Mr. Hackett said about O.Henry's characters "O.Henry writes with a glitter that is characteristics half of the New York sun, half of the smart set".

In his stories we have observed O.Henry gave more importance for a mixture of irony, wit, humour and sympathy especially for "humanity".

Let us have a look at the some of O.Henry's stories. "After Twenty years" is an important story. In this story O.Henry tells us about two childhood friends. Their names are Jimmy & Bob. When they become young they decide to depart from each other to search for their luck or duty. Bob goes to the west to search for his fortune and Jimmy remains in New York. Bob is a greedy and materialistic. He wants to make a lot of money. But he does not care how he gets the money as long as it. Jimmy is well – character person. He wants a good job that is socially useful. He wants a home and family. He came from Irish Catholic who takes his wife and childrens to church every Sunday. Both of them take different paths until they finally meet again after twenty years. Bob considered himself as intelligent and wealthy person. He suggested that he went to the west and struggled hard to earn wealth. He thought that only money is important not friendship but finally he lost everything. After few days he charged against his crime in Chicago. He spent a long time in state prison crime really does not pay him.

"The last leaf" is a masterpiece of O.Henry the story has left an everlasting impression on the minds of readers. This story tells about budding artists living together in a room at Greenwich village. In this story we can find three characters. The main characters is Johnsy she was suffering from Pneumonia she has lost hopes of livings and she was advised by the doctor. She keeps counting the leaves of an Ivy Vine Falls, which is seen through her window. She feels the moment last leap of the vine falls, she would also die that very moment. When there is only one leaf left, her roommate Sue is in great grief, thinking that her friend would die as soon as the last leaf falls. So she informed to an

old man, Behrman, was a Painter who lived on the ground floor. He miraculously saves the life of Johnsy by painting the leaf of the Ivy vine sitting right through the night braving cold winds. He saved the Johnsy's life by his efforts. But he dies of Pneumonia. He sacrifices his life to save the life of Johnsy. Hence we can conclude that art here is for life's sake.

The whole story revolves around "The last Leaf" the painting of the last Leaf saves the life of Johnsy.

Another Short Story of O.Henry "The Gift of the Magi".

It is one of the most popular story in O. Henry's stories. It became more popular in New York City. This story tells about a young married couple which appeared in the New York Sunday Magazine world in 1904 and was later published in O.Henry's collection. The Four million in 1906.

This story tells about New Couple's life, love, sacrifice and in this story we can observe two characters one is Jim and other one is Della. The couple has not lot of money to make enjoy in their life But they have full of love and sacrifice Jim and Della lives in modest apartment. Between them, they have only two things that they consider their treasures Jim's gold pocket watch that belongs to his father and grandfather and Della has long hair that falls almost to her knees.

In Christmas Eve Della wants to buy a chain for Jim pocket watch but they are all out of her price range. So she comes back to home, Della pulls down her beautiful hair and stands in front of mirror, admiring it and thinking after a sudden inspiration, she rushes out again and she decided to cut her hair to sell. She receives \$20.00 for selling her hair, it enough to buy the platinum chain. When Jim returns home he presents a pocket to her in that pocket Della finds a pair of costly decorative hair combs, that she'd long admired, but are now completely useless since she is cutoff her hair. Hiding her tears, she jumps up and she presents her gift for Jim. In that moment Della became surprise to his hand because he has no watch, who sold his watch to buy her combs. In this story we can find unexpected things so O.Henry called it surprise endings story.

The narrator concludes that Jim and Della are wiser than the Magi because their Gifts are Gifts of love. The narrator shows their love and self-sacrifice are truly wise because they know the value of self giving love.

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