

**B.A.IV Semester**

**Optional English**

## **Section B: Selected Short Stories**

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### **“A Hanging” by George Orwell**

*A Hanging* is a short story about the execution of a prisoner by hanging. The author, George Orwell was inspired by as an imperial police in Burma to write this novel. Orwell uses a variety of literary elements and devices to convey his disapproval of capital punishment. He creates a gloomy atmosphere, in the first person point of view, and builds up irony about the jailer's attitude toward the prisoner's death, to depict that everyone is involved into the hanging process, thereby revealing how capital punishment is unjustifiable.

The dark atmosphere of a jail and the narrator's point of view show that capital punishment is not only the prisoner's burden, but everyone's burden. The story is written in the first person point of view, since “I” am the main character of the essay. Also, the narrator himself writes, “We were waiting outside the condemned cells” and “The superintendent of the jail, who was standing apart from the rest of us”, thereby giving readers information that the narrator is a imperial police. Thus, *A Hanging* is a story of an imperial police watching as prisoners are executed around him. It is assumed that an imperial police will agree with the use of capital punishment, since he is not the one being punished. However, the atmosphere of the story is dark and murky at all times. The narrator describes, “A sodden morning of the rains”, “a sickly light, like yellow tinfoil”, “condemned cells, a row of sheds fronted with double bars, like small animal

cages”, “desolately thin in the wet air”. These phrases all create the gloomy atmosphere of the jail. The dark mood proves that the narrator is concerned and nervous about the hanging to come, since the atmosphere is described by the imperial police himself. If the narrator was unaffected by the execution, then the tone of the story would not have been so gloomy. By creating a dim atmosphere from the narrator’s point of view, Orwell verifies that people cannot simply neglect the capital punishment. All people feel anxiety about it, as we know it is a cruel and inhumane form of punishment.

The author also builds up irony about the warder’s emotions before and after the hanging, introducing countless other characters beyond the prisoner and the narrator, who is disturbed about the idea of capital punishment. When a rope is fixed to the prisoner’s neck, he starts to cry out, “Ram! Ram! Ram! Ram!” His voice is not urgent or fearful, but steady and rhythmical, as if the prisoner has accepted the fate he faces; he is ready to be hanged. But then, the narrator states: “Everyone had changed color ... the same thought was in all our minds: oh, kill him quickly, get it over, stop that abominable noise!” This quote describes the jailers’ state of mind; anxious, aghast, and fearful. The general perception is that the prisoner about to die is afraid, and it won’t affect the warders at all. However, Orwell shows the opposite. The prisoner, who should be scared of his encroaching death, calmly receives his fate, while the jailers, who should calmly punish the prisoner, are losing their temper. It is jailers, who are tormented by the hanging. The jailers didn’t have personal relationship or acquaintances with the prisoners, but they are simply troubled of “destroying a healthy, conscious man”. This is more clearly shown by the warders’ attitudes after the hanging. The narrator states, “It seemed quite a homely, jolly scene, after the hanging. An enormous relief had come upon us now that the job was done ... I found that I was laughing quite loudly. Everyone was laughing. Even the superintendent grinned in a tolerant way.” When a person dies, mourning his death is a typical reaction. However, jailers’ demeanor has become awkwardly cheerful and relieved. This is because a relief for escaping the terrible scene of execution was bigger than a despair of a person’s death. To the warders capital punishment is not just about a person dying, but it is torture and agony to watch the murder of a normal life.

These contrasting views between people's general concept and the actual attitude of jailers show how horribly capital punishment influences all people in the jail.

By creating a depressed tone in the first person point of view and the irony of warders' feelings toward the hanging, Orwell portrays the misery and pain that is delivered to every person who experiences, or merely watches capital punishment. The gloomy atmosphere tells us that the narrator, who is just a bystander of a hanging, also senses gloominess around the jail yard. The irony of warders' attitudes toward a prisoner's death shows that everybody involved in capital punishment endures a burden. As it negatively influences many people other than the prisoner, Orwell defines capital punishment as unjustifiable and vicious punishment.

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## **The Adventure of the Empty House.**

- **A.C.Doyle**

"The Adventure of the Empty House" is published in 1903. It is the first Sherlock Holmes short story of the 13 collected in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Public pressure forced Conan Doyle to bring Holmes back to life, and explain his apparently miraculous survival of a deadly struggle with Professor Moriarty. Doyle ranked "The Adventure of the Empty House" sixth in his list of his twelve favorite Holmes stories.

This story takes place three years after the supposed death of Sherlock Holmes at Reichenbach Falls. The Honorable Ronald Adair, son of the Earl of Maynooth, a high colonial official in Australia, is found murdered. The authorities, not to mention the man's family, are perplexed by the case: it seems that Adair had not an enemy in the world. He was in his sitting room, with a window open, working on accounts of some kind, as indicated by the papers and money found by police. Adair liked playing whist and regularly did so at several clubs, but never for significant sums of money. It does, however, come out that he won as much as £420 in partnership with Colonel Sebastian Moran.

Ronald's door was locked from the inside. The only other way out was the window, and there was a 20-foot (about 6m) drop below it onto a flower bed, which now shows no sign of being disturbed, yet he was killed with a soft-point bullet to the back of his head. No one heard a shot, and the police cannot know where it was fired from.

Dr. Watson, having retained an interest in crime from his adventures with Holmes, visits the crime scene and sees a plainclothes detective there with police, and also runs into an elderly deformed book collector, knocking several of his books to the ground. The encounter ends with the man snarling in anger and going away, but that is not the last that Watson sees of him, for a short time later, the man comes to Watson's study to apologize for his earlier behavior. Once he manages to distract Watson's attention for a few seconds

(making Watson turn to his bookshelf to see if there is enough room to fit some books), he shows himself to be Sherlock Holmes, much to Watson's great astonishment. Watson faints, and Holmes helps him up. Watson is overjoyed that Holmes is alive and tells him to explain how he is alive. With the help of baritsu, Holmes won against Professor Moriarty, flinging him down the waterfall and then climbing up the cliff beside the path to make it appear as though he, too, had perished. This was a plan that Holmes had just conceived to defend against Moriarty's confederates. However, at least one of them knew that he was still alive and tried to kill him by throwing rocks at him: luckily, Holmes managed to escape and ran for his life.

He then explains that he spent the next three years travelling to various parts of the world. Holmes says that initially, he travelled to Florence. From there, Holmes travelled to Tibet and wandered for two years, even attaining entry to Lhasa. Afterward, Holmes travelled incognito as a Norwegian explorer named Sigerson. Then, he went to Persia and Mecca and then to a brief stopover in Khartoum to meet with the Khalifa. Finally, before returning, Holmes spent time doing chemical research on coal tar derivatives in Montpellier with his brother Mycroft, until finally, Holmes was brought back to England by news of the Adair murder.

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## **“The Conjuror’s Revenge”**

- **Stephen Leacock**

### **Introduction:**

‘The Conjuror's Revenge’ by Stephen Leacock is a humorous short story. A Conjuror deals smartly with a troublesome person known as the Quick Man for spoiling his magic show.

### **The Conjuror:**

The Conjuror is a skilled magician who performs magic tricks for an audience. He was so talented that he could produce even a fish bowl from a piece of empty cloth. He could do difficult tricks like extracting eggs from a hat. During a show, he meets the Quick Man who unnecessarily spoils the show. Initially, the conjurer ignores him and continues with the show. Towards the end, the conjurer decides to take his revenge on the Quick Man.

### **Quick Man:**

A ‘Quick Man’ is referred to a person who is crazy and fast in grasping, quick-witted but cunning. Among the audience, there was one such man who whispered at the end of every trick that it was all fraud. This upset the conjurer and spoiled the magical effect for the audience. He can be called as the villain in the story.

### **The Conjuror’s Show:**

The conjurer performed several tricks for the audience. From the beginning of the show, the Quick Man keeps spoiling the show for the conjurer. He kept saying the audience that the trick was done with the help of items hidden up the conjurer’s sleeve. When the conjurer produced a fish bowl from a piece of empty cloth, the Quick Man said that this must have been up his sleeve. The next trick was the famous Hindostanee rings. He joined two separate rings into one with a blow. The Quick Man whispered that he had another lot up his sleeve. The conjurer worried a lot but he continued his tricks.

The conjurer got a hat from the audience and extracted seventeen eggs in thirty five seconds. The audience thought it was wonderful but the Quick Man told he had a hen up his sleeve. The egg trick was ruined. The conjurer got the same response for all his tricks. According to the Quick Man, the conjurer must have had rings, eggs, cards, bread, a live

guinea pig and a rocking chair hidden up his sleeve. These constant comments by the Quick Man made the audience feel that the tricks were nothing special. This upset the conjurer. However, he went on performing one trick after the other till he could take it no more. He decided to take revenge.

### **The Famous Japanese Trick:**

The conjurer announced that he would be showing the famous Japanese trick. Appearing to perform a trick using items borrowed from Quick Man, he took the Quick Man's watch and broke it to pieces. The Quick Man told the audience that the watch had been slipped into the conjurer's sleeve. The conjurer then took the Quick Man's handkerchief and punched holes in it. The Quick Man thought that this was a trick which he did not understand. The conjurer then took the Quick Man's hat and trampled on it. He then proceeded to burn the Quick Man's collar and smashed his spectacles. The Quick Man, all the while thought that this was just a trick. However, later the Quick Man and the entire audience realized that what the conjurer did with the Quick Man's things were not tricks.

### **The Conjurer's Revenge:**

The conjurer's revenge was complete after he destroyed the belongings of the Quick Man. The conjurer had succeeded in fooling the Quick Man with his permission. Thus the conjurer took his revenge. The humorous part of the story is the seriousness with which he asked for the various items of the Quick Man. The conjurer kept up the suspense till the end of the show by not letting either Quick Man or the audience realize that the "trick" that he was performing at the end of the show was not a trick but the real destruction of the possessions of the Quick Man. At no point of time did the Quick Man realized that the Conjurer was taking his revenge.

### **Conclusion:**

The moral of the story is that, when we cannot appreciate a person, we should learn to keep it to ourselves. If we unnecessarily irritate or cause any harm to another person, we will have to face the consequences.

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## **The Fishing-boat Picture**

**- Alan Sillitoe**

The Fishing-boat Picture is a short story written by Alan Sillitoe where Harry, the protagonist, tells his experiences with his wife, Kathy, and his reflections about life. Harry starts his story stating two things about himself: first, he has been a postman for twenty-eight years, fact that in his own opinion has no importance at all, although it is tightly linked with the second fact; he got married twenty-eight years ago when he got a permanent job, and that is really important. He gets married just because he has promised it to Kathy, but after all, his life does not change so much, “the bare fact of my getting married meant only that I change one house and one mother for another house and a different mother” (80).

The couple relationship is, since the beginning, troubled and unhappy. Most of Kathy’s friends and family use to say that their marriage would not last long, and Harry agrees. He resigns himself to everything: the marriage, the job, the opinion of others, as he cannot change any of them. Kathy is always dismayed by her husband apathy, he is more interesting in books than in a conversation, so she feels alone and resented. Harry uses the books and the routine to create barriers to escape from the real life. As a result, Kathy cheats on him as a way to punish him for his absence.

One Evening after the tea, they have their worst argue. Kathy calls his attention, but Harry is too much involved in his reading to answer appropriately. Enraged, Kathy gets the book and throw it into the fire. Harry, then, “clocked her one” (82). He is not worried about why she did that or interesting in how she feels, he just concerns about the book. He is anesthetized emotionally, the feelings are there, but he is incapable to put them in practice.

Sometimes later this row, she runs off with a housepainter and leaves to Harry just a small note in front of the clock without any stain of tears. Again, Harry’s apathy prevents him to feel betrayed or unhappy. In fact, he states that “It was all done very nicely” (83) as if he does not care about that, but the note she leaves he still keeps in his wallet.

During ten years, Harry lives alone and his routine, as expected, does not change, although, at the beginning, the time crawls and something inside him changes. He reflects that they had their good moments and notices that the house is different without her. After all, he gets use to the lonely life of basic needs.

Nevertheless, on a Friday evening, a payday as well as in the proposal day, another link between the marriage and his job, Kathy comes to visit him. She has changed in appearance and behavior: her look is older, fatter, wearing old clothes and heavy make-up; her way of being, however, suffers more radical changes, she is unhappy in a deep way and she is no longer sure of herself.

Harry is surprised to see Kathy, but he continues apathetic about her. Their talk is uneasy and she is nervous, avoiding to looking around and at him, because everything in the house is just the same and can bring her some unwilling memories. But eventually, she sees wedding present, the fishing-boat pictures, “The last of the fleet” (88) as Harry calls it. Kathy makes some remarks about it, and Harry gives it to her, at last, wrapped in paper and tied “with the best post-office string” (91).

The way Kathy talks about the picture shows its importance, so important that it is the title of the story. It symbolizes their union, not the marriage, because it is more than that. The picture is the feelings they did not show to each other, the life they did not live and all the happiness they avoided. Harry ties the picture with the best post-office string, that fact connected their love with his job again. Someway, he is breaking up with that feeling and throwing it away when he gives the picture to her, wrapped as if it is dead and ready to be buried. He always let Kathy do whatever she wanted, the true is that her actions construct the story; Harry is just conducted by them. She passed through so much, but Harry continues as always, even his vice habits, like the pipe, do not change.

Some days later, Harry finds the Fishing-boat picture in a pawnshop. He is unable to understand how it got there. He remembers the wedding day and symbolically, he does not know how his marriage got at this stage. “The last of the fleet” docks in a place of hopeless because they did not know how to control it. Worried about his round and routine, because he is working, he buys the picture back without knowing exactly why, and waits for Kathy next visit to see her reaction. Kathy, nonetheless, does not mention the picture, aside to make a compliment when she is leaving the house.

From this time on, she visits him every Tuesday afternoon, even in a cold or dangerous day during the war. Each time she asks him to lend her some shillings to buy a pint of beer, as he supposes. They talk about nothing important, avoiding close contacts. Time passes and they start to enjoy themselves. Harry actually affirms that it is the best time they had together. Occasionally, Kathy looks at the Fishing-boat Picture and makes a remark about it, sometimes a

complement, sometimes saying that Harry “should never apart with it” (96). One day, she asks it directly, and he sees no reason to reject the request, so he gives it to her again.

Harry is not surprised when he finds the picture in the pawnshop once more. This time, nonetheless, he does not buy it back and it results in Kathy’s death. She is run over by a lorry and dies on the way to the hospital. The Fishing-boat picture is with her, “broken up and smeared with blood” (98). She has an accident “at six o’clock in the evening”(97), the same time she came back after ten years of separation and the same time of her uneventful visits to ex-husband.

Harry describes the events using insensitive and strong words. He says “She'd been knocked all to bits, and (...) bled to death” (97) but it does not mean that he does not care, he is simply unable to express it in a different way. He is a practical man who dealt with mechanical actions all his life. Maybe, if he had been more emotional their relationship would have worked, as Kathy suggested once.

After the funeral, when he wishes he would cry, but he cannot, he sees a man that he had not notice before. He is crying a lot and people later told him that Kathy and this man were living together the last six years. It can be a crazy thing, but this man he sees is a different Harry, one capable of crying and show his feelings. Harry sees himself through a reflective surface because he says the stranger “moved only when the fed-up sexton touched his shoulder – and then mine – to say it was all over” (98). Harry sees the sexton touch the other Harry’s shoulder through the reflection and just then he feels the touch on his own shoulder. He was stagnated for so long that he does not recognize the man he became.

Harry burns the Fishing-boat Picture and starts to reflect about his life and realizes that he is dead because he has not really lived. He deadly loves Kathy and they lose their lifetime since they do nothing about it. Harry pays for a oblivious life and for the first time during the story he talks about the present, he comes to the conclusion that he just lived to help Kathy, but it does not cure his maudlin sickness, because he only realizes that when it is too late.

In literature, the fire is a symbol of transformation and when Kathy burns Harry’s book, it symbolizes her transformation. At the same time, when Harry burns the Fishing-boat Picture it symbolizes his. Harry changed from a numb life into a sad awareness where there is no way back. Both transformations happened at the separation moment: first when she left him; second when she died. Also, the periods of time they spend together are equal, this way the story makes a circle: six year of marriage; ten years of separation; another six years together; and then her death close the circle.

Graciously, Sillitoe reproduces in *The Fishing-boat Picture* the features of his historical context. The “Age of Austerity” is portrayed in Kathy’s old clothes and her needing of money. On the other hand, Harry reflects the economic recovering as he says he has a wireless and a comfortable house. In fact, Harry is a prodigious depicted of the man of his period. He has an agreeable life and all the material goods that money can buy are available to him, but he has no purpose in life. The couple, likewise, represents the modern family. They have no child and their relatives are distant, they have contact with them just in especial occasions. Besides that, Kathy’s decision to leave the house and make her own way is characteristic of the contemporary independent woman.

Even though, at the first sight, the story seems simple, it has a lot of significance in its details. Sillitoe wrote a beautiful story about two persons that do not know how to deal with their feelings. In *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, Sillitoe creates a character, in some way, similar to Harry. Smith, the runner, does not know what to do with his life and, like Harry, he just discover his identity in the end of the story. Both live a period of nonsense existence, then, after a series of reflections, they find their goal in life.

This way, read this kind of story can give a person an opportunity to analyze his or her own life and try to find solutions for those small daily problems that have the power to put someone down on his or her knees. The actual rush life can transform people into meaningless insensitive mechanical monsters and the only way to avoid it is doing the same Harry and Smith did: stop to think a little bit about the purpose of the life.

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# **A Cup Of Tea**

Katherine Mansfield

## **1. Characters**

2. **Rosemary Fell**, the most character, is a very wealthy woman and not simply well healthy. The author brings out now by writing that Rosemary went searching to Paris from London. She bought countless flowers from one amongst the foremost modern streets in London. At the look too she would throw her weight around by telling them her likes and dislikes. She was a clannish quite an individual. She had the antique look, from that she shopped, to herself and therefore continuously most well-liked to travel there. and also the merchandiser too unbroken initiatory her by that she was anxious.
3. **Miss Smith**, the poor girl picked up and fed by Rosemary
4. **Jeanne**, a housemaid
5. **Philip**, Rosemary's husband

## **A Materialistic Woman**

The story narrates the life of a rich and materialistic woman named Rosemary who tries to be charitable and compassionate to others who are less unfortunate. However, her generosity is not genuine as has more to do with the novels of such selfless acts that she reads and wants to enact in real life. She is married to a loving husband Phillip but is still insecure about her beauty as the story exposes.

## **A Poor Girl**

One day, while shopping for antiques, Rosemary comes across a beautiful box. She enquires about the price which is too exorbitant. She asks the shopkeeper to save it for her and leaves the shop with unfulfilled desires.

While getting to her car she is startled by a girl. This girl is wearing tattered clothes and asks her for money for tea. Rosemary finds this an opportunity to feel good about herself by being charitable. She almost bullies the young girl into coming with her to the house.

Once they arrive, Rosemary pampers the poor girl and tries to make her comfortable. However, she forgets about how starved she is and the girl complains about the same.

Rosemary hurriedly asks the domestic help to bring some tea and food which the girl engulfs instantaneously. Rosemary tries to inquire more about the girl as she is planning to help her in a more substantial manner.

### **Phillip Enters**

However, they are interrupted by her husband Phillip who is shocked to the visitor in his house. He drags Rosemary to a private corner and expresses her surprise and disapproval. Rosemary is unmoved and resists her husband's criticism.

Seeming his wife's determination, Phillip tries the oldest trick in diplomacy i.e. jealousy. He praises the girl on her winsome looks and this stirs Rosemary the wrong way. Suddenly, her compassion is struck by a bolt of jealousy.

She moves swiftly into her study room and grabs some money. She offers the young girl that money and asks her to leave the premises. Once she sees the girl off, Rosemary returns to her husband and informs him the same. She asks him if she could buy the antique box she saw earlier and he obliges.

### **“Am I pretty?”**

However, she was not being entirely honest in her questions and keeps the truth buried in her heart. In fact, what she truly wanted, she could not let out save in whispered words. She wanted her husband to praise her the way he praises the girl, about her beauty and attractiveness.

### **Themes:**

#### **Class consciousness:**

Class consciousness is a term used in social sciences and political theory, particularly Marxism, to refer to the beliefs that a person holds regarding their social class or economic rank in society, the structure of their class, and their class interests.

**Feminism:**

Feminism is a collection of movements and ideologies that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve equal political, economic, cultural, personal, and social rights for women. This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment. A **feminist** advocates or supports the rights and equality of women.

**Materialism:**

Materialism is a form of philosophical monism which holds that matter is the fundamental substance in nature, and that all phenomena, including mental phenomena and consciousness, are the result of material interactions.

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# **The Verger**

- **Somerset Maugham**

## **Introduction**

Somerset Maugham is a famous English writer. He has written many novels and short stories. This short story is about a verger, who is an illiterate. This story shows how an illiterate man can earn more money and wealth, because of his smart thinking.

## **Introduction of the Verger**

Albert Edward is a verger of a small church. A verger is someone who takes care of the church. Albert has been working in the church for a long time. He takes care of the church very well. He takes great care of his uniform. The story opens with the end of christening ceremony in the church. The verger waits for the vicar to move, but the vicar is staying there.

## **The Past and the Present Vicar**

The vicar of the church has taken his position in the recent past. He is new to the church and to the position. The verger is not comfortable with the new vicar. He considers the old vicar as someone better than the new one. The old vicar had never complained him and had always been good to him. Though the new vicar is good in controlling the child who has come to christening, the verger is not comfortable with him and his manners.

## **Happenings between the Vicar and the Verger**

The vicar calls the verger to his office. Two wardens of the church also come to the vicar's office. The vicar says that he and the church management are not comfortable with the performance of the verger. They consider him an illiterate, who cannot read and write. The two wardens support the vicar. The verger is helpless.

## **Verger's Illiteracy**

The verger accepts the fact that he is an illiterate. He had joined the church when he was twelve and had not attempted to educate himself since then. The previous vicar did not mind about his education. The verger is also able to execute his job in the best

way possible, even without proper education. He assures the new vicar that he can continue to do his job well.

### **Verger Coming out of the Church**

The vicar and the wardens do not accept his plea. They almost threaten the verger. Out of compulsion and repulsion, the verger moves out of the church. He resigns his job as a verger. He is confused about the future. He does not know how to earn his living thereafter. In utter confusion, he takes an unusual road to his house. He is hopeless.

### **Verger a Wealthy Man**

After sometime, he finds that he has taken the wrong route. He is frustrated and he wants to ease himself. He approaches a few shops and asks for a cigarette. No shop sells him a cigarette. It is then he strikes with an idea of opening cigar shops. He opens a shop where there are no shops. His business throngs well. He sells more cigars and he becomes wealthy. Later he approaches a few other places where they do not sell cigars and he puts up a new shop there. He becomes a prospective business man. He becomes very wealthy. He hoards more money in the bank.

### **Conclusion**

The verger deposits all his money in the bank. One day the bank's manager invites him for a meeting. He informs the verger that he has save more than 10 thousand pounds in the bank. This is a huge money. The manger asks him to sign a few documents and the verger says that he is uneducated. This surprises the manager and others. They question him what he would have done if had not started this business. The verger says that he would have remained a verger till the end of his life.

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