

## **Two Gentlemen of Verona By A. J. Cronin**

A J Cronin was a doctor by profession. He gave up his profession as a doctor and started writing novels and short stories. Some of his novels have been made into films. The title of the short story, "Two Gentlemen of Verona," is that one of the early plays of Shakespeare. The story tells about the sacrifice of the two little boys to bring hope to their sister.

The narrator and his companion were driving through the foothills of the Alps. At the outskirts of Verona, they saw two boys selling wild straw berries. They were brothers. Nicola, the elder was 13 years old while Jacopo was 12. They met these two boys in several places. Their behaviour attracted them. They willingly did all kinds of work. They polished shoes, sold fruits, sold newspapers, conducted the tourists round the town and did all kinds of small jobs.

One night, the narrator saw the two boys resting on a stone pavement with a bundle of unsold Newspapers. When the narrator questioned them why they were there at late night, Nicola told him that they were waiting for the last bus to Padua so that they could sell the Newspaper. The next morning, the narrator saw them at the fountain. He went there to get his shoes polished. He asked them what they did with their earnings as they were not spending money on clothes and they ate simple food. He asked if they saved money to go to the United States. They replied that they had some other plans.

Since the narrator was leaving Verona, he asked the boys if they need any help from him. Jacopo requested the narrator to drop them in the car to the village Polenta that is around 30 kilometres away. But his brother Nicola did not like the fact that his brother is troubling the narrator. The narrator gladly agreed to help the boys. The next day afternoon, he drove them to the village and the boys asked him to stop the car before a big building. The boys requested the narrator to wait for some time and they went into the building.

The narrator learnt from a nurse that it was a hospital where the boys' sister Lucia was a patient. She was undergoing treatment for tuberculosis. The two boys were supporting her in the hospital for more than a year.

The nurse also told that their father, a widower, was a popular singer at La Scala and was killed in the German war. Thus they were made orphans by the war. A bomb destroyed their home. The boys spied on the movement of the German troops and gave information to the resistance forces. When peace was restored, they found that Lucia with Tuberculosis. The hospital charged a fee which her two brothers paid. She also said that Lucia also is a singer and she is progressing in her health and very soon she will be able to sing and earn a living.

While they were driving back to Verona, the narrator did not ask anything to the boys. He did not like the boys to know that he knew about their secret. He was impressed with the boys who worked cheerfully and with the purpose. Their selfless action, dignity and courage moved the narrator. So, they were called the gentlemen of Verona by the narrator.

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# Two Gentlemen of Verona

by  
A.J.Cronin

Unit – I : Lesson 1  
Summary and Analysis

Two Gentlemen of Verona is a heart-warming story of human relationships and family ties. In the story set in Italy against the backdrop of the Second World War, the two gentlemen of Verona, the brothers, Nicola and Jacopo, take care of their sister Lucia who is suffering from tuberculosis. The boys are poor and wear shabby clothes. Their father was a famous singer and a hard worker who had died in the war. The boys willingly take on the responsibility of providing for their ailing sister, in the absence of their father.

While driving through the foothills of the Alps to Verona, the narrator was stopped by two small boys selling wild strawberries. The boys were dressed shabbily in old clothes that were too large for them. The two were dark-skinned and thin, with tangled hair and dark eyes, which had a serious expression. Though their driver tried to dissuade them from buying the strawberries, the narrator and his companion bought the biggest basket the boys had for sale because they were attracted to them. The boys were brothers. Nicola, the elder, was 13 and Jacopo, the younger one, was nearly 12. The next morning, the narrator found the two brother shining shoes outside their hotel. The boys told him that besides picking fruit and shining shoes, the two boys also worked as tour guides.

As the boys showed the narrator and his companion around the town, he noticed the boys were childish and innocent. But even though Jacopo was lively, and Nicola had a charming smile, both the boys appeared to be very serious.

During the week that the narrator and his companion spent in Verona, they often saw the boys who were always ready to do chores for the two men.

One night, they were surprised to see the boys in the windy and deserted square, resting on the stone pavement beneath the lights. It was nearly midnight, and though he looked tired, Nicola sat upright while Jacopo slept with his head resting on his brother's shoulder. They were waiting for the last bus from Padua so that they could sell the newspapers.

The narrator was surprised at how hard the boys worked and when he questioned Nicola about it the next morning, he looked ashamed and tongue-tied. The narrator presumed the boys worked so hard and spent frugally as they were saving up to emigrate to America. Nicola expressed a desire to go to the States but said they had plans in Italy at the moment.

The narrator then offered help before he left for the United States on the following Monday. Nicola declined the offer, but Jacopo readily took him up on it and asked him if they could go to Poleta, 30 kilometres from Verona, in the narrator's car. The narrator readily agreed to drive the boys there himself. He assured Nicola, who appeared to be angry with his brother that it wouldn't be any trouble to do so.

The following afternoon they drove to the tiny village set high upon the hillside. At Poleta, Jacopo directed him to a large red-roofed villa, surrounded by a high stone wall. As soon as the car came to a halt, the two boys jumped out and telling the narrator they would be back in an hour, they entered the villa

After a few minutes the narrator followed the boys inside. When he rang the bell, a nurse opened the door. He asked her about the two boys. She led the narrator through the hospital and stopped near the door of a little cubicle. Through the glass partition, the narrator saw the boys sitting next to a girl of about twenty who sat propped up on pillows listening to their chatter, her eyes soft and tender. He realised at once she was their sister from their resemblance to another.

The nurse told him that the children, who had lost their mother earlier, lost their father in the war. He had been a well-known singer. Shortly afterwards, a bomb had destroyed their home. As a result, the three children were left homeless and destitute. The children who had always known a comfortable and cultured life, suffered from lack of food and cold. For months they lived in a shelter they built with their own hands amidst the rubble. Then for three years the Germans ruled the city. The boys grew to hate the Germans. When the resistance movement began secretly, they were among the first to join. When the war was over, and there was peace at last, they came back to their beloved sister. Lucia, who had earlier been training as a singer had developed tuberculosis of the spine.

The boys did not give up. They brought her to the hospital. Lucia had been in the hospital for twelve months and was making good progress. One day she would walk and sing again. The boys, in the meantime, struggled hard to pay for her treatment.

The narrator went back outside and waited until the boys came out. Then he drove them back to the city. He did not let them realise that he knew their secret though he was very impressed by their devotion. War had not broken their spirit. Their selfless action brought a new nobility to human life and gave promise of a greater hope for human society.

Question 1.

Based on your reading of the story answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

- a. The driver did not approve of the narrator buying fruit from the two boys because
- (i) the boys were untidy and poorly dressed
  - (ii) the strawberries were not fresh
  - (iii) they were asking for a heavy price
  - (iv) the driver did not approve of small boys who worked

Answer:

- (i) the boys were untidy and poorly dressed

- b. The narrator was most impressed by the boys

- (i) desire to earn money
- (ii) willingness to work
- (iii) ability to perform many tasks
- (iv) sense of fun

Answer:

- (ii) willingness to work

- c. Nicola was not pleased when Jacopo asked the narrator to drive them to Poleta as he
- (i) did not want a stranger to become involved with their plans
  - (ii) preferred going to Poleta by train so that he could enjoy the scenery
  - (iii) did not want to ask anyone for favours
  - (iv) did not want to take help from someone he did not know well

Answer:

- (iii) did not want to ask anyone for favours

d. The narrator did not go inside Lucia's room as

- (i) he did not want to intrude into their privacy
- (ii) he thought that the boys would object
- (iii) Lucia would not welcome a stranger
- (iv) the boys would feel he was spying on them

(e) The boys were the first to join the resistance movement against the Germans because

- (i) the Germans had hurt their sister
- (ii) the Germans ruled the city
- (iii) the Germans had ruined their family
- (iv) the Germans had destroyed their home

Answer:

- (iv) the Germans had destroyed their home



Dr. S. Beryl Darling Violet  
Assistant Professor  
PG & Research Department of English  
Government Arts College (Autonomous)  
Coimbatore - 18

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA  
by A.J. CRONIN

# A.J. CRONIN

- **Born : 19 July 1896 in United Kingdom**
- **Died : 6 January 1974 in Switzerland**
- **Doctor by Profession**
- **First Novel *Hatter's Castle* - during his breakdown in health**
- **Gave up Practising Medicine**
- **Took up writing career**
- **Wrote novels and short stories**

# Works

## NOVELS

- *The Citadel*
- *The Keys of the Kingdom*
- *The Spanish Gardener*
- *Dr. Finley's Casebook*
- *The Green Years* and many more

# SHORT STORIES

- **The Innkeeper's Wife**
- **The Valorous Years**
- **Vigil in the night**
- **Kaleidoscope**
- **Two Gentlemen of Verona**

# CHARACTERS & PLACES IN THE STORY

**Jacopo - 12 years**

**Verona**

**Nicola - 13 years**

**Polenta**

**Lucia - their sister**

**Hospital**

**Narrator**

**Narrator's Companion - Luigi**

# BACKGROUND

**In 1943, Hitler invaded Italy for personal and political reasons. He wanted to make it a capital of the renewed German kingdom in northern Italy. But the Northern Italy resisted knowing that the Nazi's plotted to destroy Verona. Because of the resistance of Verona, Germans did not fall into the hands of the enemies. They had a lot of explosives stored in a limestone quarry in the hills to the north of Verona, beyond the village of Avesa. The explosion caused a lot of destruction to the city of Verona. Some of the people were killed during the explosion**

# THEME

- **Love**
- **Responsibility**
- **Happiness**
- **Hope**



Dr. S. Beryl Darling Violet

Assistant Professor

PG & Research Department of English  
Government Arts College (Autonomous)

Coimbatore - 18

# How Much Land Does A Man Need? by Leo Tolstoy



# Leo Tolstoy: Biography

- **Born on September 9, 1828 in Yanaya Polyana, Tula Russia.**
- **Born in a wealthy family, but lost his parents very early- taken care of by the older brother and relatives.**
- **Studies languages and law at Kazan University, but dropped and educated himself.**
- **In 1851 joined the military and served as an artillery Commander in the Crimean War.**

# Tolstoy's Works

- Twenties wrote a Semi-autobiographical series of novels, *Childhood*, *Boyhood* and *Youth* (1852-1856)
- Short Stories: *The Death Of Ivan Ilyich*, (1886), *Family Happiness* (1859), *Hadji Murad* (1912)
- Novels: *War and Peace* (1869), *Anna Karenina* (1877)
- Wrote Plays and Philosophical Essays
- Spiritual Works: *Confession* (1882), *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1894), *Resurrection* (1899)
- Interested in the teachings of Jesus Christ (Sermon on the Mount), Mahatma Gandhi's and Martin Luther King, Jr's Non-violence, Economic Philosophy of Henry George. He was a Socialist.

# Characters

- **Pahom - A Peasant**
- **His Wife and Sons**
- **His Wife's Sister and her husband**
- **Devil**
- **Steward - Manager of a small land owner**
- **His Neighbours**
- **Elders**
- **Tradesman**
- **The Bashkirs, The Interpreter**
- **Pahom's Assistant**

# Vocabulary

**Peasant - farmer**

**Rubles - a Russian Currency**

**Fallow - unproductive land**

**Hillock - a small hill**

**Piqued - to make someone angry**

**Aggrieved - injured**

**Tussle - fight**

**Sheaf - a bundle of wheat**

**Freehold -ownership for indefinite  
period**

**Disparaged -to put down someone**

**Arable - cultivable land**

# Vocabulary

**Haggled - bargained**

**Kumiss - Fermented drink made**

**Mare's milk**

**Colt - Male horse**

**Girdle - belt**

**Fodder- food for the cattle**

**Prostrate - lying face downward**

**Mare - Female horse**

**Bruised - injured**

**Twain - two**

**Steward - manager of a farm**

**Steppes - grass covered plains**

# Plot Summary I

- 2 sisters, the elder married to tradesman, the younger to a peasant, are having tea together and the elder one starts to talk about how her life style has many advantages.
- This makes the younger sister angry and she starts telling her what advantages being a peasant has. She says that she wouldn't give up her lifestyle for that of her sister's because she says the peasant's, "may live roughly, but at least we are free from anxiety."
- Pahom overhears this conversation and believes every word and says, "the only trouble is that he hasn't got enough land. If he had plenty of land, he shouldn't fear the devil. Hearing this the devil decides to get him into his power.



# Plot Summary - II

- Pahom worked on the estate of a landowner who had about 300 acres of land. Recently, she had hired a steward to take care of her land and this man would constantly fine Pahom for his horse or cattle straying into that land.
- One Winter, the landowner decided to sell her land to a nearby innkeeper. He was bargaining to buy the land and all the peasants that worked there didn't want the innkeeper to buy the land because they knew that he would fine them more if their cattle went there for grazing.
- The peasants wanted to buy that as a commune land (common land), so that they can cultivate and graze their cattle. Somehow, there was no unity among them and so they decided to buy individually how much ever they could.

# Plot Summary III

- Pahom heard that his neighbour was buying fifty acres and he is planning to pay half of the amount and the rest he decided to pay after one year.
- Pahom got jealous- He had 100 roubles. He sold a colt, one half of the bees, hired his son as a labourer and got his wages in advance, borrowed from his brother-in-law and arranged for half of the money and told would pay rest of the money within two years. He chose a farm of forty acres and registered in his name.
- He was now a landowner and farmed on his own land.

# Plot Summary IV

- Pahom bought seeds and cultivated the land and got the produce, cut the wood from his trees and fed his cattle with his own pasture. He got a good profit and paid his brother-in-law and also the landlady from whom he bought the land.
- He was happy with his lifestyle until the neighbouring farmers started to use his land as a pasture ground for their cattle and horses. He told them several times not to do that. Since they did not listen to him, he complained to the district court. No action was taken.
- He started fining them, and they got angry. One farmer even cut 5 lemon trees for their bark. He suspected it to be his neighbour Simon.

# Plot Summary V

- He took Simon to the court, but he was let free because there was no evidence. So Pahom fought with the neighbours and also the judges.
- Many people were going away from village. Because of his greed, he thought that if he stays in the same place, he could take every one's land and he can have more land.
- One day a stranger came and stayed with him for a night and told that he is from Volga. Many from Pahom's village have settled there. He also told that whoever went and applied there in the Commune, the elders would give him 25 acres of free land. He also told that the land there was very prosperous. Pahom became greedy and decided to go there.

# Plot Summary VI

- In summer, he went to Volga to find out about that. As the stranger told he would be given 25 acres of commune land for his use. One who has money can buy land at fifty cents an acre and also he would get freehold land as much as he wanted.
- Pahom came back, sold all his land, his cattle, his homestead and in spring he went there with his family.
- When he went there he applied for the commune, got 125 acres of commune land for him and his sons in different areas. He had more land, built buildings, bought cattle and was much richer than before. He had a lot of cultivable and pasture land and could have as many cattle as he liked.

# Plot Summary VII

- He established himself well there. He got good crops. He wanted to sow more wheat., but had not enough land to cultivate. There wheat is sown only on virgin or fallow land. Then they have to leave the land fallow till overgrown with grass. Because of this there was always shortage of land.
- Everyone wanted land, and he could not get land. Rich people cultivated and the poor let the land to the dealers so that they can get money to pay the tax.
- Pahom rented land from a dealer and cultivated, but the land was far away from his village and he had to spend a lot of money to take the wheat there.

# Plot Summary VIII

- He wanted to buy some freehold land. He rented the lands and sowed wheat for three years. He started saving money. He could have been happy with what he had, but was tired of renting the land and was also not available.
- In the third year, he and another farmer rented a land and started preparing the land for sowing. At that time, there was a dispute and they went to the courts and all his work got wasted.
- He longed to have his own land. He found a farmer selling 1300 acres land for 1500 roubles. He decided to pay part of the money and buy it.

# Plot Summary IX

- He got details from the trader. He said that bought 13000 acres for 1000 roubles. All he has to do is to buy some gifts for the Bashkirs. He said he got land for less than two cents one acre.
- He tells that the land is near the river, prairie, virgin soil and only thing he has to do is to become a friend of their chief. He also said that they were very simple people.
- He got the details of the location of that place, asked his wife to take care of the homestead, took his man with him, bought some gifts for them and travelled around 300 miles and reached there after seven days.



# Plot Summary X

- The Bashkirs-rich life-tents-easy life-women worked hard making kumiss and cheese-men-easy life-merry making-drinking-ignorant-did not know Russian-good natured.
- Welcomed Pahom-hospitable-interpreter translated-Pahom gave gifts-in return they asked what he wanted-Pahom expressed desire for land-they were laughing among themselves-Pahom did not understand-Chief arrived-Pahom gave gifts-pleased-spoke Russian-told Pahom to choose the land of his choice-he wanted title deeds in his name-chief agreed-enquired for price-said 1000 roubles a day-Pahom couldn't understand-explained how much distance he could cover a day he'll own.

# Plot Summary XI

- Pahom was excited-chief laughed-gave condition-should reach the starting point before sunset-if not will lose the area he covered- instructed to mark the area-gave him comfortable feather bed to sleep.
- Pahom-unable to sleep-excited-dreamt about new land-what he would do-how rich he would become-about to sleep early morning-dreamt Baskirs' chief laughing-saw the dealer who suggested him the land-then saw peasant from Volga-finally saw devil will hoofs and horns.
- Saw a man lying down on the ground-found the man dead-realized it was himself-horror struck-it was morning-woke up assistant-met Baskirs.

# Plot Summary XII

- Left the money on top of the cap of Bashkirs' cap-started-at noon-tired-stopped-had food-water-did not lose hope-happy to see wet, rich soil-came a long way from the Bashkirs-they were not clear-started removing overcoat-boots-made his round shorter to reach the original spot-sweating- tired-made marks with cut grass using spade inbetween-
- Sun about to set-ran-threw boots-flask-cap-only had spade to support-fear made him breathless-started to lose hope-whether he would reach the original spot-thought would die of tiredness.
- Bashkirs encouraged him to run and reach soon. Sun was almost setting.

# Plot Summary XIII

- **Could see his money on the fur cap-remembered his dream the previous night-losing hope-thinking if he would ever reach or die-with great difficulty being forward ran-as he reached the sun had already set-He cried-all my hard work had become useless-Bashkirs still encouraged-reached the hillock where Bashkirs were there and remembered his dream once again-couldn't run further-touched the cap where the money was-fell down with his face down-Bashkirs' chief said, he has gained much land-blood flowed from mouth.His servant buried him-needed only six feet from head to heels.**

# Themes

- **Greed**
- **Contentment**
- **Jealousy**
- **Materialism**

## **How Much Land Does A Man Need? -By Leo Tolstoy**

Leo Tolstoy in this story depicts the greed of a peasant for more and more land till it leads him to death. Pahom was a Russian peasant. He lived a contented life with his little plot of land. One day, his wife and his sister-in-law were discussing the merits of the life of a tradesman and the drawbacks of a peasant's occupation. Pahom was listening to the conversation and thought within himself that the only trouble with the peasant's was that they had not enough land. He thought that he would not be afraid of the Devil himself if he had enough land. The Devil overheard Pahom's boasting and decided to give him land enough and thus get him into his powers.

The land lady near their village who owned a 300 acres land was planning to sell her estate. The peasants heard that the neighbouring innkeeper was going to buy the estate. They were frightened that he would charge a heavy fine if their cattle grazed in his estate. They planned to buy that as a commune land so that they can continue grazing their cattle there. But, since they were not united, they could not buy. Whoever had money, bought a portion of land. Pahom's neighbor bought 50 acres of land. He got jealous of him and wanted to buy 40 acres of land. He had already got 100 roubles with him. He sold a colt, sold half of his honey bees, hired one of his sons as a labourer and took his wages in advance and borrowed some money from his brother-in-law and bought the land. He was happy to have land of his own. He cultivated and got a good harvest and paid all his debts. He was very happy, but soon had some problem with his neighbour and the district court.

He heard from one peasant that all his villagers were moving to a nearby town named Volga where land is cheap and the soil is rich. He heard that each one will be given 25 acres of commune land freehold land. He knew that he and his sons would get together 125 acres of commune land. So, he sold all his land and all other properties and went there and settled comfortably buying more land. There at the beginning, he got good produce but later found out that he had to let the land fallow for one or two years to grow the next wheat crop. Further, there was a shortage for land. He had been cheated by a farmer also. He was looking for his own land and was about to buy thirteen hundred acres of land for 1500 roubles. At that time he heard about the land of the Bashkirs which is much cheaper than the land he was planning to buy. A farmer said that he bought thirteen thousand acres for just 1000 roubles and he heard that the land costs less than two cents an acre. He was tempted to go there.

Finally, he reached the Bashkirs' place where the cost of the land was for one thousand roubles as much land as he could walk round a day. They also told him that if he failed to return at sunset to his starting point, he would lose all the money he paid.

The whole night he was excited and couldn't sleep. As he was about to sleep in the morning, he dreamt of seeing the devil and also saw a man lying down dead and recognized the man to be him. The sun had risen by now and he had to start. He left his 1000 roubles on the fur cap of the Bashkirs' chief at the foot of the hillock where the Bashkirs were and he started. He tried to make a as large a circle as possible. But he was completely tired by the strain that he fell down and died when he reached the starting point. His servant buried him in a grave of six feet long. The story thus answers the question, "How much does a man need?" Six feet land from head to heels was all that Pahom needed. But his greed was unlimited and that is the reason he died.

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# HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN NEED

English – III

Unit – I

Lesson : 2

Summary & Analysis

## How Much Land Does a Man Need? – Leo Tolstoy

### SUMMARY

**Pakhom**, a poor peasant, and his wife are visited by her **elder sister**. The wife of a merchant, the elder sister brags about her glamorous life in the city and insults her sister's modest country existence. The younger sister defends her lifestyle, claiming self-sufficiency and simplicity is the road to the moral high ground. Pakhom joins in, saying that with enough land he would have nothing to fear—including “the **Devil** himself.” The Devil overhears Pakhom's claim and vows to tempt him with land.

When a local **lady landowner** suddenly decides to part with her property, Pakhom convinces her to sell him thirty acres. At first, Pakhom seems happy with his purchase. It would be perfect, he thinks, if not for the constant trespassing of local peasants. Pakhom repeatedly fines these peasants and takes them to court, causing tensions to escalate to the point that his neighbors threaten to burn down his house.



Pakhom has grown resentful of his “cramped life” when a **traveling peasant** tells him of a village south of the Volga river, where families are allotted twenty-five acres of farmland per person upon settling. Pakhom and his family travel to the commune, where they are welcomed and allotted land totaling three times the amount they left behind. Nevertheless, Pakhom wants more, convinced that freehold land—in contrast to leased—is the way to truly become wealthy.

Just as Pakhom is about to purchase some freehold land from a **bankrupt peasant**, a **passing merchant** distracts him with stories of plentiful land in the far-away region of the **Bashkirs**. Over tea, the merchant says that after gifting the Bashkirs a few presents, he was able to secure thirteen thousand acres for a mere twenty copecks apiece.

Pakhom leaves his family behind and travels to the land of the Bashkirs. Upon his arrival, they prove to be friendly yet strange people and offer Pakhom **kumiss** to drink. Pakhom gives the Bashkirs several gifts, as instructed by the passing merchant, and they eagerly look to repay his kindness. Pakhom requests the opportunity to purchase some of their land. The **Bashkir elder** soon arrives and agrees to sell Pakhom as much land as he can circumnavigate in one day for the price of a thousand roubles, provided Pakhom returns to his starting point by sunset. Pakhom readily agrees.

That night Pakhom experiences a strange dream, in which the Bashkir elder, the passing merchant, and the traveling peasant each transform into the Devil, who then laughs at a dead and nearly-naked figure at his feet. Pakhom realizes that the dead figure is in fact himself. Upon waking, however, he brushes off the dream. He sets his eyes on the land waiting to be claimed, grabs his **spade**, and begins his walk.

Despite the growing heat of the sun, Pakhom easily covers approximately six miles of land, marking his way with the spade and shedding his clothing to keep cool. By midday, Pakhom has grown uncomfortable under the relentless sun, but he pushes on. After having walked ten miles, he realizes must hasten his pace to ensure that he returns by sundown.

Pakhom rushes back and arrives at his starting point just as the setting sun crosses the horizon. He then promptly drops dead from exhaustion. His **workman** uses the spade to dig Pakhom's grave, answering the story's title question. In the end, a man needs only enough land to bury him.

## **Ransom of the Red Chief by O.Henry**

Two friends, Sam and Bill lived far south in Alabama. They had together six hundred dollars. They needed just two thousand dollars to buy some land. They planned to kidnap Mr. Ebenezer Dorset's ten year old son from a small town called Summit. They discovered a well-known cave some distance away and stored enough food there. One evening, after the sunset, they got the boy into a cart and drove off. The boy put up a brave fight and even hit Bill's eyes with a piece of brick. As they reached the cave, the boy started liking those men and the life with them in the cave. He imagined himself to be Red Chief and called Sam Snake-eye. He armed himself with the stick which acted as a rifle for him. Very soon he became uncontrollable.

He threatened to smash Bill with a rock half as big as a coconut, put red-hot boiled potato on Bill's back and then mashed it with his foot. He threatened that he would scalp Bill's head. As he was playing with his sling, a rock of the size of an egg caught behind Bill's left ear and he lost his balance and fell on the fire and burnt himself. He rode on Bill's back as that of riding on a horse for ninety miles and on the way he kicked Bill black and blue. He also said that would tie Sam in a pole and burn him. He did not allow Bill and Sam to sleep a whole night. Because of all these, Bill and Sam were forced to keep a close watch on his activities.

Sam went to a nearby town and learnt that the news about the missing of the boy has spread. He returned to find Bill desperate, even frightened. They both drafted a letter to the boy's father demanding a ransom of fifteen hundred dollars. Originally, they planned to demand from him two thousand dollars, but on Bill's request the amount was reduced to this. The letter directed Mr. Dorset to send a messenger to a particular spot at Poplar Cove with a reply to their demand. It threatened that he would never see his son again if the money was not paid.

At the appointed hour in the night a messenger came with a note. Sam took it and found that the contents were strange. Instead of paying the demanded amount to the kidnappers, Mr. Dorset demanded in return two hundred and fifty dollars for taking back the boy. Bill pleaded that the sum demanded was nothing when compared to their sufferings at the hands of the boy. They took the boy home at night, paid the money to Mr. Dorset and rushed away. Sam really found it difficult to go along with Bill because Bill was running away from the boy very fast filled with fear.

**DR. S. BERYL DARLING VIOLET**  
**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR**  
**P G & RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**  
**GOVERNMENT ARTS COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)**  
**COIMBATORE - 18**





**RANSOM OF THE RED  
CHIEF**

By O. Henry

## LIFE AND CAREER OF O.HENRY

- **Born -Southern America during Civil War**
- **Pen name – William Sydney Porter**
- **Career – in ranch, land office, bank teller**
- **1887- got married-started writing stories**
- **1894 –started a Weekly *The Rolling Stone***
- **Joined *Houston Post* – reporter, columnist, cartoonist**
- **1896 – misappropriated bank funds- convicted-spent over 3 years in prison-wife died**



## CONTINUATION

- **In prison wrote adventure stories**
- **On release-New York-wrote for Newspapers and magazines**
- **Suffered from financial crisis and alcoholism**
- **1907 – married again**
- **1910 –died**
- **Posthumous stories, translations, adaptations for film and television-appealing**





# MAIN CHARACTERS & PLACES

- **Bill Driscoll**
- **Sam**
- **Ebenezer Dorset**
- **Johnny (10 Year old)**
- **Alabama**
- **Summit**
- **Owl Creek**
- **Post Office**
- **Poplar Cove**



## NICK NAMES & MONEY DETAILS

- **Bill – Old Hank – Hunter**
- **Sam – Snake Eye the Spy**
- **Johnny – Red Chief**
- **Bill & Sam’s Possession-\$600**
- **Needed \$2000 (Ransom)**
- **Planned to get \$1500 at Bill’s persuasion**
- **Had to give \$250 to Ebenezer Dorset**



## BOY'S MISCHIEFS

- Threw stone at Bill's eye
- Pretended as Red Chief
- Bill to be scalped
- Sam to be boiled at the stake
- Spoke things irrelevantly
- Terrorized Bill
- Refused to go home
- Kept awake Bill and Sam the whole night



# CONTINUATION

- **Bill threatened to be smashed with a rock**
- **Bill was ridden on like a horse**
- **Bill falling into the fire**
- **Put hot potato on Bill's back**
- **Refused to go back home**
- **Forcibly took him back home**
- **Father wanted \$250 to take him back home**



The background features a teal-to-blue gradient with various circular and semi-circular patterns, some resembling gauges or scales. A prominent scale on the left side has numerical markings from 140 to 260 in increments of 10. The overall aesthetic is technical and modern.

# RANSOM OF THE RED CHIEF

PG & RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH,  
GOVERNMENT ARTS COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS),

COIMBATORE - 18



# Brief Summary

## “The Ransom of the Red Chief”



The Ransom of Red Chief" is an example of the type of story O. Henry, whose real name was William Sydney Porter.

He specialized in humorous stories with surprise endings. In fact, so many of his stories had twist endings that they became associated with his name.

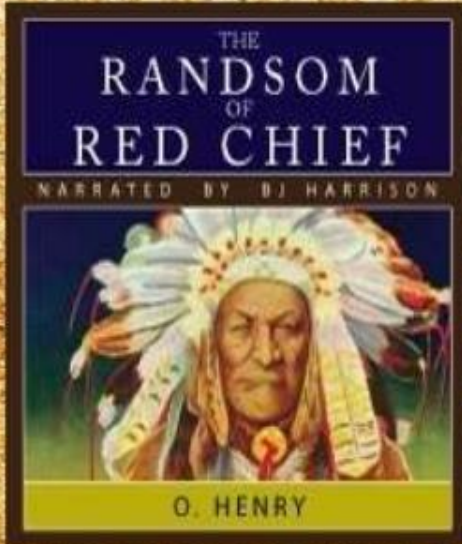
The “good thing” that Sam and Bill have planned is a kidnapping. Early in the story, they select a quiet, sleepy town, a wealthy man with an only son, and a cave where they can keep their victim.

They rent a buggy and approach the small boy with the promise of candy and a buggy ride. At this point, the first reversal occurs. Instead of sweetly climbing into the buggy, Johnny Dorset hits Bill Driscoll with a brick and fights violently when the two men drag him into the buggy.





# Brief Summary



Although Sam and Bill get the boy to their cave hideout, another reversal occurs while Sam is returning the buggy and walking back.

During Sam's absence, the captor and the captive change roles, seemingly only in play but actually in real control of the situation.

When Sam returns to the cave, he finds Bill, badly battered, playing the captured trapper to Johnny's heroic Indian, who calls himself "Red Chief." Appropriating Sam for his game, Johnny announces that Bill is to be scalped and Sam burned at the stake.





# Significance of the Title, Language Used and Style of Writing

The Ransom of Red Chief" is a straightforward title for a straightforward narrative. Red Chief is the name of Johnny's first alter-ego, and indicative of the mess that Sam and Bill are about to get themselves mixed up in.

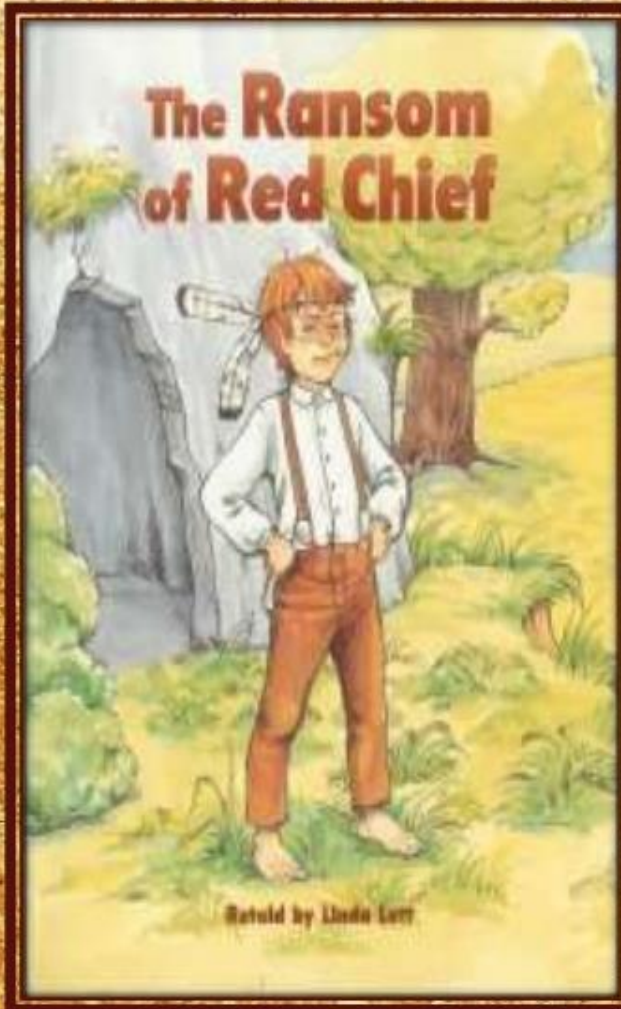
The language used is very funny.

O. Henry gives us a sympathetic narrator like Sam, someone who talks to us like an old friend and seems to have a tone of casual ease with us. The crime is so matter of fact, and the telling of it is familiar and strangely comforting. This comes about both from the writing style itself, such as using the phrase "Bill and me" instead of the more grammatically correct "Bill and I."





# Character I would like to Enact



## Name of Characters in the Story;

- Kidnaper - Bill And Sam
- Kidnapped boy- Johny AKA Red chief
- Boys father-Ebanzer donset.



## Character To Be Enacted

I want to enact the character of the Boy Johny Dorset.





## An Interesting Detail About O' Henry

Porter and his family moved to Houston in 1895, where he started to work as a bank teller and bookkeeper at the First National Bank of Austin.

When the books of accounts were audited, the federal auditors found several discrepancies.

They managed to get a federal indictment against Porter.

Porter was subsequently arrested on charges of embezzlement, charges which he denied, in connection with his employment at the bank.

Porter's father-in-law posted bail to keep Porter out of jail, but the day before Porter was due to stand trial on July 7, 1896, he fled, first to New Orleans and later to Honduras.





## An Interesting Detail About O' Henry

His wife was too sick to join him and six months later, he got word that his wife was dying, so he returned to the United States to be with her and face trial.

Athol Estes Porter died on July 25, 1897 from tuberculosis (then known as consumption).

Porter, having little to say in his own defense, was found guilty of embezzlement in February 1898, and was sentenced to five years jail, at the Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio.



During his 3-yrs of imprisonment, he wrote adventure stories set in Texas and Central America that quickly became popular and were collected in Cabbages and Kings in 1904.



# New Words learnt in the Story

## 1.Flannel-cake:

Meaning: A flat cake of thin batter fried on both sides on the griddle  
Sentence: There was a Town, as flat as a flannel cake , called Summit.

## 2.Cauterize:

Meaning: Burn, sear, or freeze using a hot iron or electric current.  
Sentence: On the way he kicks my hand black and blue from knees down;and i've got to have two or three bites on my thumb and my hand cauterized.

## 3. Ransom:

Meaning: The act of freeing captivity or punishment.  
Sentence: Bill and me figured that ebenezzer would melt down for a ransome of two thousand dollars to a cent.





# New Words learnt in the Story

## 4. Pesky:

Meaning: Causing irritation or annoyance.

Sentence: Every few minutes he would remember his pesky red skin.

## 5. Speckled:

Meaning: A small contrasting part of something.

Sentence: Rats ate up sixteen of the hen's eggs from the farm.

## 6. Yodel:

Meaning: A songlike cry in which the voice fluctuates rapidly.

Sentence: I explored the vicinity of the cave, and risked a yodel or two but there was no response.

## 7. Freckle:

Meaning: A small brownish spot on the skin

Sentence: When i was a girl of six freckles used to appear on me whenever i was exposed to the sun.





Thank you



**Dr. S. Beryl Darling Violet**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**PG & Research Department of English**  
**Government Arts College**  
**Coimbatore – 18**





# **A Hero by R. K Narayan**



# Biography of R.K. Narayan

- Born on 10 October 1906
- Died on 13 May 2001
- Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer  
Narayanaswami
- Eminent Indian writer-short story writer
- Fictional South Indian town- Malgudi

# Characters

- Swami – Hero
- Father – A Lawyer
- Mother – Housewife
- Grandmother
- Thief
- Policemen
- Headmaster
- Friends

# Key Points

- Father read Newspaper- bravery of the boy-responsible for killing the tiger
- Father Wanted Swami to be courageous
- Swami argued with the father
- Father asked Swami to sleep alone in his office room
- Swami sleeps with grandmother-tries to change the topic-tells about cricket club

- Swami promised to sleep from the first of next month
- Father keen on Swami sleeping alone as he was in second form
- Father got angry with his wife for pampering son
- Swami went off to sleep early with grandmother-refused to listen to her story-pretended to sleep-fearing father would make him sleep alone

- Father woke him up-grandmother supported him-father asked him to sleep in the office room- Swami wanted to sleep in the hall
- Swami was angry with the father-father said Swami would be made fun of at school for being a coward
- In the night-Swami was frightened-remembered devils and ghosts story heard from friends-incident of Munisamy's father – Mani seeing devil under Banyan tree frightened him-movement of the trees, insects added to his fear

- Filled with nightmares-dreamt of tiger chasing him-trying to open eyes-trying to put hands on grandma
- touched the bench-something was moving-realized devil pulling him- crawled from bench and bit the devil- a loud sound was heard
- father, cook and the servant came with light-found a thief with the bleeding leg
- Next day Swami was congratulated by the teacher-Headmaster appreciated-the thief was a notorious housebreaker

- Police were grateful to Swami-asked Swami to join police force when he grows-said yes, but did not want to become a police
- Next night, before father could come Swami went and slept near grandmother-father scolded mother for spoiling him
- Swami listened to whatever father was talking, but pretended sleeping.

# Theme

- Reality
- Humour
- Ordinary life at the village



# A Hero

## - R.K. Narayanan

English – III

Unit – I

Lesson : 4

Summary & Analysis

## **Lesson : A Hero**

**By R. K. Narayan**

### **GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:**

- 1. Read the lesson carefully.**
- 2. Refer to the dictionary to comprehend difficult words.**
- 3. Question/Answers to be written neatly in the English Notebook/Practice Copy/ Ruled sheets.**
- 4. Youtube link is provided for the explanation of the lesson.**

**Youtube Link** – [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIYA5qANs\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIYA5qANs_A)

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR- R. K. NARAYAN**

**Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayan** (10 October 1906 – 13 May 2001), was an Indian writer known for his work set in the fictional South Indian town of Malgudi. He was a leading author of early Indian literature in English along with Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. The fictional town of Malgudi was first introduced in *Malgudi Days* through the escapades of Swami and his friends. Narayan highlighted the social

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR- R. K. NARAYAN

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Narayan received many awards and honours including the Padma Vibhushan and the Padma Bhushan, India's second and third highest civilian awards. He was also nominated to the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of India's Parliament.

## INTRODUCTION

**'Hero'** is a very interesting and entertaining story written by R. K. Narayan. The story is about a small, timid boy named Swami who became a hero and pride of his family after an incident that happened on that fateful night. As a young boy, Swami disliked going to school or to work hard. He simply enjoyed playing cricket and listening to stories from his grandmother. He was pampered by her and so preferred to sleep by her side.

## INTRODUCTION

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## EXPLANATION

While going through the newspaper, Swami's father read an article about a courageous boy (almost of Swami's age) who very smartly, misled a tiger and saved himself by climbing a tree for almost half a day until some help arrived. Father believed that courage was everything, strength and age factor was irrelevant to all humans. He challenged Swami to prove that he was a courageous boy. In order to testify that, he asked Swami to sleep alone that night in his office.

The challenge startled Swami who tried his best to resist the move. He employed many tactics like changing



and listening to stories from his grandmother. He was pampered by her and so preferred to sleep by her side. However, the situation turned worse when Swami's father tried to discipline him by asking him to sleep alone. He wished him to become both independent and responsible. The story is all about how Swami accidentally proves on to become a heroic boy who seems to be daring enough to halt a robbery attempt.

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The challenge startled Swami who tried his best to resist the move. He employed many tactics like changing the topic of conversation, requesting his mother and grandmother, going to sleep early etc. but to no avail. Swami's father did not fall into the trap and forced him to sleep in the office. However he allowed him to sleep with the doors and windows open.

While sleeping, Swami was spooked by all the ghostly stories that he had heard from his friends. He remembered all the stories of devils and ghosts he had heard in his life. He trembled all through the night, thinking about being visited by one of them.

Every moment, he expected the devil to carry him away. Falling short of courage, he spread his bed under the bench and soon fell asleep. Later he heard a rustling sound and when he stared into the darkness, he found something(a shadow) moving. Fearing that the devil had come to pick him up, he mustered courage and pulled himself out of the bench and latched onto one of its legs with all his might.

Hearing Swami's shrieks, the family rushed in to find a profusely bleeding burglar lying injured on the ground. The intruder was later handed over to the police and Swami was appreciated for his act of courage and heroism, both by the law and the school. At the end of the lesson, he became happy with the fact that he was allowed to sleep with his grandmother due to his mother's intervention.

**MIND MAP**

In order to make Swami a daring and a courageous boy, Father



## MIND MAP

In order to make Swami a daring and a courageous boy, Father asked him to sleep alone in his office room for one night. He really wished to see him grow up into a brave and an independent boy.

Swami fulfilled his promise of sleeping alone at night in the office room. He was indeed forced by his father to sleep there in order to prove that he was a man.

While sleeping, he remembered all the ghostly and devilish stories that he had heard from his friends and grandmother. He then chose to sleep under the bench so that he could save himself from the clutches of the devils.

At midnight he saw some shadow moving. He resolved to fight back and patiently waited for the devil to come near to the bench. Swami clutched at the ankle of the intruder with all his might until blood started oozing out.

He gave out a helpless cry which brought all the family members to the room only to discover that it was a burglar. Thereby, Swami proved himself to be a brave boy for which he was applauded both by school and law.



## THEME

Through the story 'A Hero', R.K. Narayan has portrayed various kinds of emotions that a child experiences in his life. He undergoes and fights out feelings of fear, insecurity, self-control, powerlessness, bravery and sense of independence, exactly like Swami. While going through the story, the readers can sense the author emphasizing the reality **that bravery and courage do not come by age or experience but by determination**. He has also highlighted that Swami was quite afraid of ghosts and did not have the courage to sleep alone at night; however his father wanted him to become an independent and daring boy who must be confident enough to handle any adverse situations. At last, in order to prove himself, the fear-driven Swami dares to take action of biting the burglar's ankle, fearing that it might be devil. He does not think about the outcome of his action, thereby displaying the inner element of bravery embedded deep within him.

## QUES/ANS

**1. Why did Swami find the idea of sleeping in his father's office 'a frightful proposition'? How did he try to avoid the situation?**



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## **QUES/ANS**

**1. Why did Swami find the idea of sleeping in his father's office 'a frightful proposition'? How did he try to avoid the situation?**

Ans: Swami was used to sleeping beside his grandmother in the passage and the idea of sleeping alone in his father's office was 'a frightful proposition'. He was unable to sleep and kept trembling thinking about it the whole night.

He tried his best to avoid the situation by changing the topic of conversation, expecting to distract his father's mind.

**2. As the night advanced, Swami felt that something dreadful would happen to him. What did he fear would happen to him?**

Ans: As the silence of the dark night deepened, Swami lost all his confidence. His heart beat increased. All the ghostly stories suddenly popped into his mind that he had heard before. He felt lifeless as he feared that he would be carried away by one of the devils that night.

**3. How were Swami's mother and grandmother different from his father?**

Ans: Swami's mother and grandmother were soft, kind and considerate towards Swami. They were aware that he was afraid of dark and could not sleep alone. Hence his mother never stopped him from sleeping with his grandmother. She became even more caring towards him after the burglar's incident. She did not allow his father to risk his life after that.

However, Swami's father did not have the same feeling towards Swami. He had a tougher approach and believed that Swami ought to overcome such fears, hence asked him to sleep alone.

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However, Swami's father did not have the same feeling towards Swami. He had a tougher approach and believed that Swami ought to overcome such fears, hence asked him to sleep alone.

#### **4. How did Swami help in preventing the burglary?**

Ans: As per his father's instructions, Swami slept alone in his office. He took such a daring decision to prove that he was strong and brave-hearted. Later in the night, he heard some rustling sound from behind the bushes. He sweat with fright as he was sure that the devil was there to take him away. He moved to the edge of the bench to see what was the noise all about. He spotted something moving towards him. Instead of waiting passively for the devil to come, he crawled on to the floor and attacked it with all his might. He bit it as hard as he could only to find out a burglar, bleeding profusely from his ankle. The burglar fell down helplessly and was soon apprehended by the people who came out after hearing the commotion.

### **SELF LEARNING**



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## **SELF LEARNING**

**Frame answers of your own to the questions given below. Use the clues to frame them.**

**5. What story did Swami's father read to him?**

**Clues:** cited how a boy fought a tiger fearlessly - encountered while returning home - through the forest.

**6. There was absolute silence in the room. But some noises were heard by Swami. What were they?**

**Clues:** heard various noises - the ticking of the clock, snoring sounds, humming of insects and rustling of leaves - the dark night.

**7. What story did Swami's father read to him?**

**Clues:** a brave village lad - face to face with a tiger - smartly evaded the carnivore - stayed up on the tree

for half day until help arrived.

## RTC

**1. “Leave alone strength, can you prove you have courage? Let me see if you can sleep alone tonight in my office room.”**

**a. Name the lesson and the author.**

Ans: The name of the lesson is ‘A Hero’ and the author is R. K. Narayan.

**b. Who is the speaker of the above line? To whom is he throwing a challenge to?**

Ans: The speaker is Swami’s father. He is throwing the challenge to Swami.

**c. How can the listener prove that he is courageous?**

Ans: He can do so by sleeping alone in his father’s office room that night.

**d. Where did Swami usually sleep?**

Ans: Swami usually slept with his grandmother in the passage as he was afraid to sleep alone.

**2. “Let me sleep in the hall, Father,”**

**a. Name the speaker of the above line.**

Ans: Swami is the speaker of the above line.

**b. Whom was he requesting to allow him to sleep in the hall and why ?**

Ans: He was requesting to his father to allow him to sleep in the hall as he was afraid to sleep alone. He was too petrified of ghosts and thought that the devil would come and take him away if he slept alone.

**c. What excuse did he give to his father to allow him to sleep in the hall?**

Ans: Swami said that the father’s office room was very dusty and full of scorpions. Hence he should be allowed to sleep in the hall.

**d. What was Swami’s father’s profession? How do you come to know about it?**

Ans: Swami’s father was a lawyer by profession. We come to know about this as his office room was full of