

NON-DETAILED MATERIAL

1. AN IDEAL FAMILY

-Katherine Mansfield

The short story "An Ideal Family" was written by Katherine Mansfield. She was one of the most prominent short story writers of New Zealand. It is taken from her collection of stories, "The Garden Party and Other Stories." Mansfield is considered a master for her capacity to depict the complexities of human emotions.

An Ideal Family is the story of Mr. Neave who in spite of his obvious financial and social success in life, is now struggling against inevitable old age. Mr. Neave, a successful businessman felt as if he were too old for spring that year. Walking home from work, as he had done countless times before, he suddenly felt very tired and subdued by his surroundings. He thought of his son Harold who was supposed to inherit the business. Harold was too handsome by far with his full lips and eyelashes. But he was least interested in the family business and even the father felt that Harold was unsuitable for the job. He arrived hours late from lunch, sauntering into the office. But everyone, especially the women, forgave him all his faults. When Harold was a boy, he robbed money from his mother's purse and left the purse in the cook's bedroom. It made him untrustworthy in Neave's opinion. In spite of his undisciplined lifestyle he was pampered by his mother as well as his sisters.

Mr. Neave's wife and daughters wanted him to retire from the business and stay at home. They repeatedly remind him of his old age. He was admonished by his daughter for walking home alone and over a long distance, suggesting that he was too old to do so. His wife supported this decision momentarily. Despite providing them with a very comfortable life and extravagant lifestyle, they didn't appear to have any understanding or appreciation for his efforts and hard work. Mr. Neave was reluctant to leave his profession, the only source of his true identity.

Mr. Neave's house was frequently the site of large parties and people often appreciated Neave's family as an ideal family as the members of it seemed to lead a luxurious and happy life. But things in reality were quite different. By trying to be successful in business Mr Neave neglected his family when he was young. When he became old he was feeling that he had been neglected and forgotten by the family. He barely recognized his daughter Lola, a young woman now. He

thought of her still as a little girl and realized he did not know Lola as well as he thought he did. He felt both unwelcome and out of place in their frivolous world of dinners and parties. The family members left to Charles (the servant) to look after Neave. He was easily bullied by them to dress for dinner and was just as easily forgotten by them when he fell asleep in his room. His physical exhaustion outweighed his intentions and he fell asleep twice in a short amount of time. He dreamt of a 'little withered ancient man' which is symbolical. The man in the dream can be to Mr Neave himself. The fact that the man is 'climbing up endless flights of stairs' suggests the continued, unending struggle that Mr Neave faces when it comes to not only retiring but handing his business over to Harold. After waking up from his dream Neave seemed to realise that he didn't really know his family. He saw Charles standing in the light (symbolic of an angel) Mr Neave said, 'I'm coming, I'm coming' at the end of the story. It suggests that it is too late for Mr Neave. If anything Mr. Neave's life could soon be over and he may never get the opportunity to really know his family. Thus, one of the principal themes of this story is age and how we accept it.

2. WAR

-Luigi Pirandello

Luigi Pirandello was a dramatist, novelist, poet and short story writer. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1934. Luigi Pirandello's short story 'War' is a tragic story in which the author uses the grief of the parents of the slain soldiers to subtly highlight the sense of pain and hopelessness that war brings about in the lives of ordinary people.

The story is about a group of people traveling from Rome to Sulmona, Italy. They had to stop for the night to await a connecting passage to the main line. While they were waiting a man boarded the carriage with his wife. She was described as a very large woman and he was very small. The woman was in deep mourning that she was helped by the other passengers to get into the carriage.

Her husband, following her, thanked the people for their assistance and then tried to look after his wife's comfort but she responded to his assistance by pulling up the collar of her coat to her eyes, hiding her face. The husband managed a sad smile and commented that it is a nasty world. He explained the remark by saying that his wife was to be pitied because the war is going to separate her from their

twenty-year-old son to whom both had devoted their entire life. The son is due to go to the front. The husband remarked that this imminent departure has come as a shock because when they gave permission for their son's enlistment, they were assured that he would not go for war till six months. However, they have just been informed that he will depart in three days.

The husband's story did not prompt too much sympathy from the others because the war had similarly touched their lives. One of the passengers told the man that he and his wife should be grateful that their son is leaving now. He said that his own son was sent there the first day of the war. His son had already come back twice wounded and been sent back again to the front. Some other passenger, joining the conversation, added that his two sons and three nephews were already at the front. The thin husband retorted that his child is the only son. If his son dies at the front, his grief would be more profound. The other man refused to agree that this would make any difference.

The other passengers did not express their solidarity or support. One passenger told that war creates an unending sense of loss in the people who must see their loved ones sacrifice their lives for it.

An old fat man heard the sad discussion of the passengers about the sacrifices their children were making. The old man with a great deal of confidence affirmed that everyone should stop crying because only good boys answer the call of their country. The old man gave reference of his own son as evidence. He told his fellow passengers that his son before dying sent him a message that he was dying satisfied at having ended his life in the best way he could have wished. As further proof of this, he showed the passengers that he did not even wear mourning dress. The old man firmly believes that his son died for a proper cause and his son's sacrifice is not a source of sadness rather it is a source of pride.

The fat man argued that any patriotic young person should be permitted to answer the call of his country. After all, he reasoned that someone must go to defend all their freedoms and since they are too old to go, they should allow their sons to fight. He opined " If one dies young and happy, without having the ugly sides of life, the boredom of it, the pettiness, the bitterness of disillusion...what more can we ask for him?"

In the end, the woman's question reinforced the fat man, the finality of his son's death and the reality of his loss; then, in a touching demonstration of his own vulnerability, he was finally able to come to terms with his grief.

His face contracted and it became horribly distorted. Then, he snatched a handkerchief from his pocket and to the amazement of everyone, broke into harrowing, heartbreaking and uncontrollable sob.

3.The Verger

-WilliamSomersetMaugham

William Somerset Maugham (1874-1966) is a well-known English novelist, short-story writer, playwright and essayist. He is famous for his clear and precise style of writing. He does not impose his views on the reader. When criticizing something he sounds rather amused than otherwise. The short story “The Verger” is an example of how a person gets success even though he is an illiterate and thrown out of St. Peter's, Neville, a famous church in England .Albert Edward Foreman, had been a verger for sixteen years. He was so devoted to his profession that he never thrown away from his worn out gowns.

Albert Edward Foreman started his career as a pageboy in the house of merchant prince. He has risen by due degree from the position of a foot man to a single handed butler to widowed peeress. Later, he joined St. Peter's, Neville as a verger. Albert was tall, spare, grave and dignified. He looked, if not like a duke, at least like an actor of the old school who specialized in dukes' parts. He had tact, firmness and self-assurance. His character was impeccable.

A new vicar from east end was appointed in St Peter's.Albert found that the new vicar is different from his predecessors. The church of St .Peter's is famous for christening .There was a christening ceremony at St.Peter's church conducted by the new vicar. After the christening ceremony the new vicar called the verger in to the vestry. There were already two church wardens in the vestry, waiting for these people to come. The new vicar praised the verger's capability and dedication for these sixteen years as verger in the church. But he also pointed out the illiteracy of the verger. Albert was shocked but he defended himself by saying the previous vicars never mind it. Then, the verger elucidated himself that he could manage without education. The vicar didn't like his reply, he told the verger that he would give him three months time to learn how to read and write. Albert was not ready to do so and decided to resign as a verger for the church.

After giving his resignation Albert Edward with his usual politeness had closed the church door behind the vicar and the two churchwardens .He could not sustain the air of unruffled dignity with which he had borne the blow imposed upon him and his lips trembled. He did not know what he had to do next. He did not know what he should do with himself. He did not fancy the notion of going back to domestic service; after being his own master for so many years, for the vicar and churchwardens could say what they liked, it was he that had run St. Peter's, Neville Square, he could scarcely demean himself by accepting a situation

He took a wrong route with heaviness in his sad heart. .Though Albert is a non smoker still felt to have a cigarette and looked reflectively up and down. Even then he searched the entire street he could not find a single shop. It was a long street with all sorts of shops in it, but there was not a single one where you could buy cigarettes.

He considered the matter from every point of view and next day he went along the street and by good luck found a little shop to let that looked as though it would exactly suit him. Twenty-four hours later he had taken it and when a month after that he left St. Peter's, Neville Square, forever, and set up business as a tobacconist and news agent. His wife said it was a dreadful come-down after being vergar of St. Peter's, but he answered that you had to move with the times, the church wasn't what it was, and henceforward he was going to render unto Caesar what was Caesar's.

Albert Edward did well with his dexterity in all his business. He developed well that in a year or so it struck him that he might take a second shop and put a manager in. He looked for another long street that hadn't got a tobacconist in it and when he found it and a shop to let, took it and stocked it. This was a success too. Then it occurred to him that if he could run two he could run half a dozen, so he began walking about London, and whenever he found a long street that had no tobacconist and a shop to let he took it. In the course of ten years, he had acquired no less than ten shops and he was making money hand over fist.

One morning when he was there paying in a bundle of notes and a heavy bag of silver the cashier told him that the manager would like to see him. In course of their conversation the bank manager said that Albert had thirty thousand pounds in his account. The manager also said that his money would be added in various schemes like stocks and shares, for better rates of interest. A troubled look settled on Mr. Foreman's distinguished face and he said he never had anything to do with stocks and shares .The manager with a smile face said that Albert had to sign the transfers.Albert replied that he could not read and write and. The manager stared at

him as though he were a prehistoric monster. The stunned manager asked with wonder that what he would have become if he had been able to read and write. Mr. Foreman replied a little smile on his still aristocratic featured face that he would be verger of St. Peter's, Neville Square.

4.SCARECROW

Satyajit Ray

Satyajit Ray is a Director, Producer, Screenwriter, Composer, and Graphic Designer. He began his career as a commercial artist. Satyajit Ray penned many short stories. These stories were published as collections of twelve stories, which were mostly urbane and very unassuming until the very last line or paragraph, where suddenly a new revelation leaves the reader amazed. The language of the stories is very straightforward and lucid. He wrote many essays and was a critic on films covering various facets on great film makers and movements such as Italian neorealism.

Mriganko Shekhar Mukhopadhyay, the protagonist, was a famous author. In the story, the protagonist is introduced travelling back from a cultural function after being felicitated in a club at Durgapur. Sudheer, his driver, had not paid attention to the filling of petrol in the car. Besides this, the petrol gauge of the car was not functioning. As a result, the car was stopped in a nearby village of Panagarh. Mriganko Babu felt irritated at the thoughtless behavior of Sudheer. Moreover, he had to spend almost two and a half hours sitting alone in his car and in middle of nowhere.

Mriganko Babu got out of his car, looked around and found that the crops were harvested, the empty barren lands stretched for miles on the both sides of road. He found a small hut far away. Obviously, there was no sign of any habitation and on the western side of the road in the middle of the small winter field, the protagonist found a scarecrow. Mriganko Babu tried to spend his time by reading a novel but found that he could not do so. At this juncture, he recollected that Bharat Magazine wanted him to write a story. He decided to continue the plotting of bits and pieces and construct it into a story which he had begun in the morning while journeying. He jotted a few lines; finding it boring, he got out the car, walked a few paces and looked at the scarecrow intently. He felt it strange as he kept on looking at it and unknowingly he was drawn towards it. He observed in the sunset light that the

scarecrow wore red and black printed shirt. In the twilight of fast approaching darkness as it is winter season, his heart missed a beat when he felt the scarecrow was advancing towards him and addressed “Babu”. The call terrified him. The protagonist recognized the scarecrow to be Abhiram, whom he had removed for stealing a golden watch twenty years ago. The local witch doctor affirmed it by casting a spell. Abhiram continued his questioning and said he was awaiting all these years to disclose where the watch was kept. He asked him to look up under his ward robe which lay untouched for the past three years. After giving out the identification of the lost watch he became hazy and left in peace. Mriganko Babu had fallen asleep thinking deeply about the plot of the story. He woke up and found that his driver was back.

Satyajit Ray gives the reader an astounding ending by showing the dream to come true. As said by Abhiram, the watch was found in the wardrobe. The reader is left in the dilemma of what is the reality and what is not. The author also gives us an insight that an educated person should have his own sense of judgment and not believe in superstitions.

5. ‘ A Village Lost to the Nation’

- Krishna Chandra Pujari

‘ A Village Lost to the Nation’ is a poignant text by Krishna Chandra Pujari, a journalist who relives the loss of his home to the Hirakud Dam. More than 400 villages were submerged and many people were displaced. In this text, the author tries to highlight the other side of development and tragedy that sudden and unplanned development can ensue. He describes the feelings of people thus displaced (including himself), who returned to visit their old village now lost to the Nation as it was ruined by the waters.

In 1957, Hirakud Dam built on Mahanandi river was dedicated to the Nation by the then Prime Minister of India Jawahar Lal Nehru. Nearly 400 villages perished in the reservoir and many more are going down. The Nation was excited about the new irrigation project but in these villagers there was a sense of loss. The author’s village Rampella, previously called as Ramya Palli meaning the

‘enchanted hamlet’ was a big , thriving village. The villagers were proud of their lineage.

In 2009, 52 years after the construction of the dam, the author clearly remembers his village. He is reminded of how the once bustling village turned into a ghost village within months. He is reminded of tears-filled women who visited the author’s mother before leaving the village.

Once the author, along with his parents and brother visited his village. His parents had many anecdotes to share about their village. When they visited their ‘dear old village’, they had to take the age-old temple structure as the reference point to locate their own house. The brothers moved around their ‘house’ from one ‘room to another’. They even remembered their playground.

They noticed that their mother was crying by sitting in their supposed to be ‘bed room’. She was calling their ‘emotion-choked father’. They sat together and they reminded themselves of all the memorable days they have had together in their ‘home’.

They talked of how they met for the first time after their marriage, how they got the children into this world, how they had brought them up against all odds and sent them to IIT,Kharagpur. They also talked about how they treated malaria, cholera and chicken-pox with herbs and fervent prayers.

That was the life in the village which was ravaged by the reservoir. As they were leaving, the author looked back one last time. The remnants of the village and his beautiful childhood looked like a silhouette. He felt a strong sense of loss.

Nehru’s ‘temples’ have surely benefitted the Nation and made her prosperous. But they have also perished many villages and washed away many memories of thousands of villagers.

6. Martin Luther King and Africa

-Chinua Achebe

Chinua Achebe is a Nigerian novelist, poet and a prominent name in African literature. He has written this essay on the complex issue of racism and discrimination of Africans. In this essay, he states how Martin Luther King was able to fight racism in America by accepting his African roots.

Achebe says that he didn't have the fortune of meeting King. Yet, his work, his thoughts and his death left an indelible impression that the man belonged to Africa. King embraced the pain and suffering of the African continent.

King had a vision of an America in which the structure of racism must be challenged. In preparation for this work, Dr. King made friends with many African leaders like Albert Luthuli and Kwama Nkrumah. He had gone for progressive leaders in strategic locations.

In 1957, King visited Ghana, the flagship of modern Africa's journey into political freedom. The same year, along with Eleanor Roosevelt and Bishop James Pike sponsored a document signed by 130 leaders to protest against apartheid. In 1962, along with Albert Luthuli, he sponsored an 'Appeal for Action against Apartheid'.

Chinua Achebe says that generally many African-Americans suffer from what James Baldwin calls as the 'African conundrum'. But Dr. King is an exception to this. He made great commitment to the fortunes of America as a preparation for his great work in the US. Achebe also speaks of James Baldwin who is clear-eyed and brilliant. But even he had the 'problem' with Africa. He once lamented that his African ancestors did nothing but sit around waiting for the white slavers to arrive.

Achebe also quotes the British historian Basil Davidson who called the trans-Atlantic slave trade as the greatest and most fateful migration-forced migration- in the history of man. Others call it as the greatest crime against humanity in the history of the world.

Achebe remembers a TV show where a Professor of History declared that it was Africans themselves who captured people in their hinterland and sold them to the whites on the coast. He didn't say what the Whites were doing on the African coast. Achebe mocks them saying that perhaps they were holidaying on the beaches.

Each one would like us to believe that they are not the perpetrators of slavery. Fortunately, truth is rarely completely lost. Even in the very archives of Europe, there are entries that point out to rational aspects.

Achebe mentions about Thomas Jefferson who concluded that Negroes were inferior in all but memory and that in imagination they were 'dull, tasteless and anomalous'. This thought was opposed by another American Imay White. White told Jefferson respectfully that nothing could be more false than comparing the intellect and talent of two descriptions of news: one enslaved, degraded and the other free, independent and with the advantage of appropriating the reason and science which have been the result of the study and labors of the philosophers and sensible men.

Baldwin and Achebe met in 1980 for the first time and the last time at the annual conference of the African Literature Association in Gainesville, Florida. He had come to see the conventional attitudes to his ancestors and their history for what they were. A third party was responsible for our soured relationship.

Martin Luther King didn't suffer Baldwin's kind of anguish about his African connection or else got over it very early. Even before he reached 39, when he was assassinated, he got over it. King was a thinker/activist who grew, meditated on his mission and matured into action. Achebe says that Mahatma Gandhi hadn't even returned to India at the age of 39.

King learned from Gandhi that human beings have a fundamental obligation to respect life in the thick of a just struggle, for if they should forget this obligation and violate the lives of others, they would cheapen their own lives and their own humanity. But these thoughts would have come to King out of the great Bantu dictum: *Umuntungumuntunqabantu*- which means 'a human is human because of other humans. The Igbo culture has a proverb 'Onyejionyen arujionweya' which

means 'he who will hold another down in the mud must stay in the mud to keep him down'.

Then why is Dr. King remembered and why is he worthy of this great honor and celebration? This is because of two things: what he achieved himself and what he stands for in a long line of a people's struggle for freedom and justice.

First, let us look at his personal achievement. He was a man who struggled to conquer in himself both fear and hate, two of humanity's most destructive and limiting emotions. He is our hero and he enables us to become beneficiaries of his heroic journey and able to derive from it the energy and hope to dare the obstacles on our own little side roads.

Second, he is important as a staging post in a long history of black struggle going back to the first revolts, and as a signpost for future battles. It is important to have this historical perspective because it is the correct one and because it saves us from the heresy that there was once a golden age of tyranny when its victims were happy with their oppression.

Chinua Achebe mentions another incident involving J. Lowrie Anderson, a missionary working in Nairobi, another American and a Kenyan soon after the King's assassination. The African said, "We hate you Americans. You killed our Martin Luther King. The second American replied, "Yes, I was ashamed of being an American- until I remembered that Martin Luther King was an American also. Then I was proud."

It is appropriate that we celebrate Martin Luther King, a man who struggled to restore humanity to the oppressed and the oppressor.