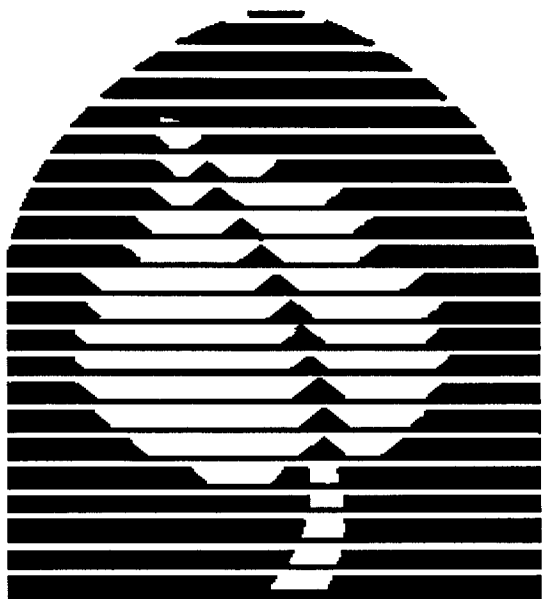


THE LAST LEAF



CFE 3148V

OPEN CAPTIONED
PYRAMID FILM & VIDEO

1993

Grade Levels: 7-13+

21 minutes

1 Instructional Graphic Enclosed

DESCRIPTION

Artists Sue and Johnsy share an apartment during the late 1880s. Johnsy becomes ill with pneumonia and loses her will to live. She is convinced that when the last leaf falls from the vine in the alley, she will die. How Johnsy is saved forms the trademark of this O. Henry story.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

- To motivate reading this and other short stories by O. Henry.
- To dramatize the power of positive and negative thinking.
- To illustrate techniques used to create a dramatic effect on the viewer.
- To depict the elements of a short story.

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Preview the video to determine unfamiliar vocabulary and language concepts.
2. Scatter real or paper leaves around the room and on desks.
3. Introduce O. Henry as an author well-known for his trademark twist endings.
4. Explain pneumonia as a potentially contagious and infectious disease of the lungs. Describe symptoms, treatment, transmission, and prevention of this disease.
5. Explain the setting as a colony of artists in Greenwich Village in New York in the 1880s.

DURING SHOWING

1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
2. Pause and clarify Mr. Behrman's desire to paint a masterpiece.

3. Emphasize that Mr. Behrman painted the last leaf during a storm and, consequently, died from pneumonia. Discuss the irony of this ending.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss reasons for Johnsy's recovery.
 - a. Discuss the power of mind over body.
 - b. Share personal experiences of positive and negative thinking.
2. Discuss Mr. Behrman's desire to paint a masterpiece.
 - a. Describe his masterpiece.
 - b. Discuss the power of the brush.
 - c. Discuss whether he died in vain.
3. Identify elements of this short story, such as setting, character, plot development, theme, conflict, climax, irony, and foreshadowing. (See INSTRUCTIONAL GRAPHICS.)
4. Discuss the cinematographic techniques used to create an impact on the viewer, such as closeups, music, angles, and light and dark.
5. Discuss reasons Johnsy wanted to paint the Bay of Naples.
6. List characteristics of an artistic masterpiece. Judge Mr. Behrman's work according to the characteristic listed.
7. Define *will to live*.
 - a. Discuss how this can be expressed through a deep personal interest or ambition.
 - b. Generate personal lists of reasons to live.
8. What made Johnsy link her own mortality with the leaves on a vine?

Applications and Activities

1. Practice new vocabulary using all appropriate modes of communication.

2. Read the short story and compare it to the video.

3. Dramatize Mr. Behrman as he gathers his supplies, climbs a ladder in the storm, and paints the last leaf.

4. Read and report on a biography of O. Henry. Highlight details of his life that may have influenced his writing.

5. Identify *O. Henry* as William Sydney Porter's pen name.

- a. Discuss reasons for using a pen name.
- b. Identify other authors who used pen names.
- c. Create personal pen names.

6. Read and summarize some of O. Henry's other works.

- a. Describe his writing style.
- b. Identify some common parallels among his works.

7. Write a news article or an obituary for Mr. Behrman.

8. Some works of art become more valuable after the artists' deaths.

- a. Locate pictures of some famous artists and their works.
- b. Display these with biographies.

9. Locate and display articles about how the power of positive thinking and laughter assist in battling illness.

INSTRUCTIONAL GRAPHICS

One instructional graphic is included with this lesson guide. It may be enlarged and used to create transparencies or copies.

- ELEMENTS OF A SHORT STORY

SUMMARY

There is a pneumonia epidemic in Greenwich Village. People are dying. Sue's roommate Johnsy

is also a victim. She lies in bed staring through a small window at the blank wall of the next house. The doctor explains that Johnsy will die unless she has a passion for something. Sue remembers that Johnsy had always wanted to paint the Bay of Naples.

Sue has an editor's deadline the next day. As she works on a drawing in the same room, she hears Johnsy counting backwards. Johnsy explains that she has been watching the leaves fall off a vine and feels certain that she will die with the last leaf. Sue tries to distract her with reminders of her desire to return to painting. Johnsy rejects all attempts to improve her health. Finally, Sue pulls the shade.

Meanwhile, downstairs, an artist is struggling with a blank canvas. He's frustrated. He has been waiting 25 years for an inspiration for a masterpiece. He is annoyed with Sue's frantic request to pose for her as a hermit miner. After Sue's explanation about Johnsy's nearing death, he complies and poses.

The next morning, Johnsy insists that Sue raise the shade so that she may check to see whether the last leaf had fallen during the night. It is still there.

Every morning Johnsy checks on the last leaf. It is still there, hanging on the vine. Johnsy realizes that she has been a bad girl and that she has been wicked for wishing to die. She now takes charge of her health and asks for nourishment. She declares she now wants to paint the Bay of Naples. Her health improves and the doctor is pleased.

The doctor leaves to tend another patient, the painter from below. Two days earlier, the janitor had found him, cold and soaked. He contracts pneumonia and consequently dies. It was concluded that he had been out in the awful storm. Later, in the alley, they find his lantern, a ladder, some scattered brushes, and a pallet with green and yellow colors on it.

Sue bids Johnsy to take a closer look at the last leaf on the wall. They realize that Mr. Behrman had, indeed, accomplished his masterpiece. He had painted a leaf, the night the last leaf fell.

**PLEASE RETURN LESSON GUIDE
WITH VIDEO**



Captioning and Adaptation Branch
Office of Special Education and
Rehabilitative Services
U.S. Department of Education

THE LAST LEAF

by O.HENRY

ELEMENTS OF A SHORT STORY

Directions: Fill in each leaf.

