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SEMESTER 2

AEC
(ABILITY ENHANCEMENT COURSE)

COMPULSORY ENGLISH

UNIT 2: PROSE

O, HENRY: ‘THE LAST LEAF’

PREPARED BY

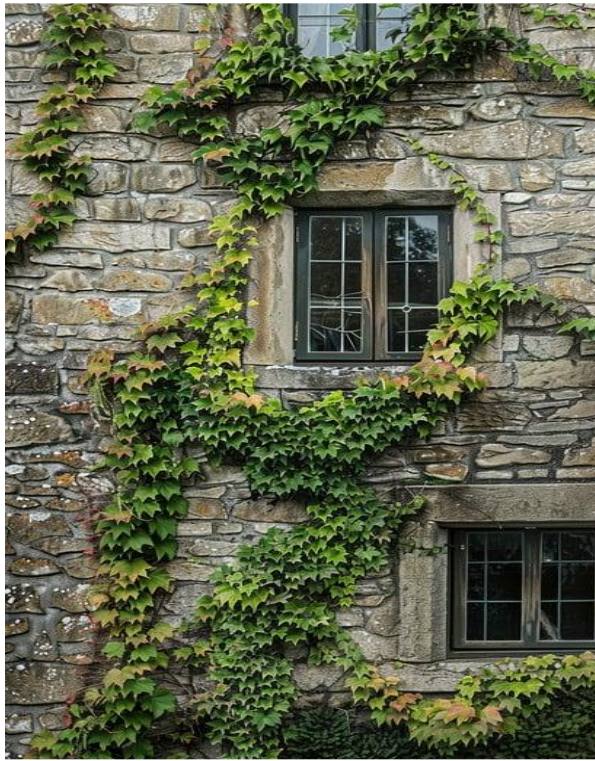
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The Last Leaf

O' Henry

The Last Leaf by O. Henry begins with **Johnsy** (Joanna) and **Sue**, two young artists who live in a small flat in Greenwich Village. Sue came from Maine and Johnsy came from California. They had discovered that they liked the same kind of art, the same kind of food, and the same kind of clothes. So they decided to set up an art studio together in May.



Pneumonia swept through Greenwich Village in November. Johnsy fell ill and gave up all hope of recovery. She felt she would die soon and her condition deteriorated. The doctor told Sue *“She has a chance, if she wants to live. If people don’t want to live, I can’t do much for them”*.

After the doctor left, Sue found Johnsy lying in bed, looking outside her window and counting backwards. There was an ivy plant growing against the opposite wall. The plant was shedding its leaves in winter. Johnsy said she had known for three days that she would die the day the last leaf fell off. Sue asked Johnsy not to look out of the window and get some sleep instead.

Shortly, Sue went to call **Mike Behrman** an old artist (past sixty) who lived downstairs in their building. Sue was painting an old hermit miner for a magazine and wanted Behrman to be her model. Behrman had been a painter for forty years but he had no success. But he always talked of painting a masterpiece someday and had a blank canvas on an easel in his room for twenty-five years. He earned money by modeling for young painters. Sue told Behrman, about Johnsy’s mental state and he was very angry: *“What!” he cried. “Are there such fools? Do people die because leaves drop off a tree? I have not heard of such a thing”*. When Sue and Behrman came upstairs, Johnsy was sleeping. Sue and Behrman looked out of the window and then at each other for a moment without speaking. A cold rain was falling, with snow as well. Behrman sat down on an upturned kettle for a rock and Sue started painting. She worked for almost the whole night.

Next morning, Johnsy was eager to see the ivy plant. It had been raining heavily the previous night and the wild wind had not stopped blowing. Sue fearfully removed the cover from the window. There was one ivy leaf, the last one on the tree, hanging from a branch nearly twenty feet above the ground. It was still dark green near the branch but the edges were turning yellow. The day passed slowly, it rained heavily and the storm blew through the night as well. Miraculously, even the next morning, the last ivy leaf was still there on the plant. Johnsy realized she had been wrong to believe she would die as the last ivy leaf fell. She felt there was a reason why the last leaf survived in the storm; perhaps it was a lesson for her. Johnsy was determined to live once more:

“Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me how bad I was. It is wrong to want to die. I’ll try to eat now. But first bring me a looking-glass, so that I can see myself. And then I’ll sit up and watch you cook.”

An hour later she said, “Sue, some day I hope to paint the Bay of Naples.”



The doctor came that afternoon and said that with proper food care Johnsy would get well. But, his other patient in the building, Mike Behrman, an old weak man was very ill and had no hope of survival. He would be shifted to the hospital later in the day to make his last moments comfortable. Behrman died of pneumonia. He fell ill as he went out at night in a snowstorm and suffered for two days. Then the janitor found him - his shoes and clothes were wet and as cold as ice. He also found a lighted lantern, a ladder, paint brushes and some green and yellow paint in Behrman’s room. Behrman had painted the last ivy leaf on the wall to give Johnsy hope to live. It was Behrman’s masterpiece – the ivy leaf that saved Johnsy’s life but caused his own death.

“Look out the window, dear, at the last leaf on the wall. Didn’t you wonder why it never moved when the wind was blowing? Oh, my dear, it is Behrman’s great masterpiece — he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell.”

Short Questions:

1. Who wrote *The Last Leaf*?
O' Henry
2. What is the full name of O' Henry?
William Sydney Porter
3. Where is the story, *The Last Leaf* set?
Greenwich Village, Washington.
4. Who usually came to live in Greenwich Village?
Art people / Artists
5. Name the two friends in *The Last Leaf*?
Sue and Johnsy (Joanna)
6. Name the cities from where Sue and Johnsy came.
Sue came from Maine and Johnsy came from California.
7. What did Sue and Johnsy start in Greenwich Village?
Sue and Johnsy started an art studio in Greenwich Village.
8. When did Sue and Johnsy start their art studio?
In the month of May
9. What happened in Greenwich Village that November?
Pneumonia spread in Greenwich Village that November.
10. Which of the two girls fell ill in *The Last Leaf*?
Johnsy fell ill with pneumonia.
11. Who cared for Johnsy when she fell ill?
Sue
12. Why was Johnsy not getting well according to the doctor?
The doctor said Johnsy was not getting well as she believed she would not get well.
13. What was troubled Johnsy during her illness?
Johnsy thought she would never go to Italy and paint the Bay of Naples as she would die.

14. What tree grew outside Johnsy's window?
An old ivy vine
15. What did Sue paint while Johnsy was ill?
Sue painted an Idaho cowboy wearing riding trousers and a monocle for a magazine story.
16. What is a monocle?
A single eyeglass
17. What did Johnsy count backwards while she was sick?
Johnsy counted the falling ivy leaves backwards
18. What did Johnsy believe would happen after the last leaf fell?
Johnsy believed that when the last ivy leaf fell, she would die.
19. Who is Old Behrman?
Mike Behrman was a failed artist who wanted to paint a masterpiece someday.
20. Where did Mike Behrman live?
Mike Behrman lived on the ground floor of the building where Sue and Johnsy lived.
21. How did Behrman earn his living?
Behrman served as a model for young artists who could not afford professional models.
22. What was Behrman modeling for Sue?
Behrman was modeling as an old hermit miner for Sue.
23. On what did Behrman pose as a hermit miner?
Behrman posed as a hermit miner on an upturned kettle for a rock.
24. What was Behrman's age?
Behrman was over sixty years old.
25. What was special about Behrman's appearance?
Behrman had a long beard like Michelangelo's sculpture of Moses.
26. How long had Behrman been a painter?
Behrman had been a painter for forty years.
27. How did Behrman treat Sue and Johnsy?
Behrman was very protective of Sue and Johnsy.

28. Why did Behrman keep a blank canvas in his room?

Behrman had a blank canvas in his room for twenty-five years to paint his masterpiece.

29. What did Johnsy realize when she saw the last ivy leaf after the stormy night?

Johnsy realized she had been a 'bad girl' as it was a sin to want to die. Her attitude changed - she decided to live.

30. Why was Behrman taken to the hospital?

Behrman caught acute pneumonia and was taken to the hospital to make him comfortable. He would not live as he was old and weak.

31. What was Johnsy knitting when Sue informed her about Behrman's illness?

Sue was knitting a blue woolen shoulder scarf.

32. What objects were found in Behrman's room by the janitor?

The janitor found a lighted lantern, a ladder, paint brushes and a palette with green and yellow colours in Behrman's room.

33. How did Behrman catch pneumonia?

Behrman caught pneumonia while painting an ivy leaf on the wall outside Johnsy's room at night in a snowstorm. It was the last leaf that never fell.

34. What was Old Behrman's masterpiece?

Behrman's masterpiece was the last ivy leaf on the wall that never fell and gave Johnsy the will to live.