

S. THOMAS' COLLEGE GURUTALAWA



FIRST TERM-2020

Study Pack- English Literature
For
Grade 10

The Lumber Room

-Part one-

The children were to be driven, as a special treat, to the sands at Jagborough. Nicholas was not to be of the party; he was in disgrace. Only that morning he had refused to eat his wholesome bread-and-milk on the seemingly frivolous ground that there was a frog in it. Older and wiser and better people had told him that there could not possibly be a frog in his bread-and-milk and that he was not to talk nonsense; he continued, nevertheless, to talk what seemed the veriest nonsense, and described with much detail the coloration and markings of the alleged frog. The dramatic part of the incident was that there really was a frog in Nicholas' basin of bread-and-milk; he had put it there himself, so he felt entitled to know something about it. The sin of taking a frog from the garden and putting it into a bowl of wholesome bread-and-milk was enlarged on at great length, but the fact that stood out clearest in the whole affair, as it presented itself to the mind of Nicholas, was that the older, wiser, and better people had been proved to be profoundly in error in matters about which they had expressed the utmost assurance.

"You said there couldn't possibly be a frog in my bread-and-milk; there was a frog in my bread-and-milk," he repeated, with the insistence of a skilled tactician who does not intend to shift from favourable ground.

So his boy-cousin and girl-cousin and his quite uninteresting younger brother were to be taken to Jagborough sands that afternoon and he was to stay at home. His cousins' aunt, who insisted, by an unwarranted stretch of imagination, in styling herself his aunt also, had hastily invented the Jagborough expedition in order to impress on Nicholas the delights that he had justly forfeited by his disgraceful conduct at the breakfast-table. It was her habit, whenever one of the children fell from grace, to improvise something of a festival nature from which the offender would be rigorously debarred; if all the children sinned collectively they were suddenly informed of a circus in a neighbouring town, a circus of unrivalled merit and uncounted elephants, to which, but for their depravity, they would have been taken that very day.

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A few decent tears were looked for on the part of Nicholas when the moment for the departure of the expedition arrived. As a matter of fact, however, all the crying was done by his girl-cousin, who scraped her knee rather painfully against the step of the carriage as she was scrambling in. "How she did howl," said Nicholas cheerfully, as the party drove off without any of the elation of high spirits that should have characterized it.

"She'll soon get over that," said the soi-disant aunt; "it will be a glorious afternoon for racing about over those beautiful sands. How they will enjoy themselves!"

"Bobby won't enjoy himself much, and he won't race much either," said Nicholas with a grim chuckle; "his boots are hurting him. They're too tight."

"Why didn't he tell me they were hurting?" asked the aunt with some asperity.

"He told you twice, but you weren't listening. You often don't listen when we tell you important things."

"You are not to go into the gooseberry garden," said the aunt, changing the subject.

"Why not?" demanded Nicholas.

"Because you are in disgrace," said the aunt loftily.

Nicholas did not admit the flawlessness of the reasoning; he felt perfectly capable of being in disgrace and in a gooseberry garden at the same moment. His face took on an expression of considerable obstinacy. It was clear to his aunt that he was determined to get into the gooseberry garden, "only," as she remarked to herself, "because I have told him he is not to."

Now the gooseberry garden had two doors by which it might be entered, and once a small person like Nicholas could slip in there he could effectually disappear from view amid the masking growth of artichokes, raspberry canes, and fruit bushes. The aunt had many other things to do that afternoon, but she spent an hour or two in trivial gardening operations among flower beds and shrubberies, whence she could watch the two doors that led to the forbidden paradise. She was a woman of few ideas, with immense powers of concentration.

Glossary of Part One

lumber room	: a room in which useless or broken furniture etc. is kept
treat	: something that gives great pleasure or delight especially when unexpected to be in
disgrace has	: the loss of other people's respect and approval because of the bad way somebody behaved
wholesome	: healthy
seemingly	: apparently
frivolous	: silly or amusing, especially when such behaviour is not suitable
nonsense	: ideas, statements or beliefs that you think are ridiculous or not true
variest	: extreme
alleged	: to state something as a fact but without giving proof
dramatic	: sudden, very great and often surprising
basin	: a bowl
sin	: an offence against God or religious law
profoundly	: felt deeply or very strongly
insistence	: an act of demanding or saying something firmly and refusing to accept any opposition or excuse
tactician	: a person is skillful in planning
favourable	: good for something and making it likely to be successful or have an advantage
unwarranted	: unwelcome, and done without good reason
styling	: to give (a title) to describe oneself in a specified manner
hastily invented	: create or imagine quickly
expedition	: journey made for a special purpose

impress	: to affect deeply or strongly in mind
forfeit	: to have (something) taken away from a person as a punishment
improvise	: to do or make something owing to an unexpected situation or sudden need
offender	: one who hurts the feelings of others or causes displeasure
rigorously	: carefully, thoroughly and exactly
debar	: officially prevent from doing (something)
unrivalled	: extremely good
depravity	: the state of being morally bad
look for	: try to find
scrape against:	to rub roughly against a surface and get hurt or injured
scramble	: to climb over a rough or steep surface
howl	: to cry loudly in pain sorrow or anger
cheerfully	: in good spirits
elation	: a state of being filled with pride and joy
soi-disant	: so-called, pretended or would be(aunt)
glorious	: very beautiful and impressive
chuckle	: a laugh quietly
asperity somebody	: the fact of being rough or severe, especially in the way you speak to or treat somebody
loftily	: showing a belief that you are worth than other people
flawlessness	: perfection
obstinacy	: refusing to change your opinions, way of behaving etc. when other people try to persuade you to
considerable	: substantial
determined	: firm/unwavering
artichokes part	: a round vegetable with a lot of leaves. The bottom part of the leaves and the inner part of the artichoke can be eaten when cooked
trivial	: unimportant/ small / minor
forbidden	: prohibited / not allowed
paradise	: heaven/ utopia
immense	: huge / massive / vast
concentration	: focus / attentiveness



artichoke

Analysis of Part One

Using the glossary will enable you to understand the first part of the story more clearly. It can be noticed that the story tells about a little orphan Nicholas who is an intelligent child. The death of Saki's mother (the author of the story) and his father's absence abroad, he was brought up during his childhood, with his elder brother and sister, by a grandmother and two aunts in England. These three children were entrusted to this dictatorial and dull-witted Aunt Augusta. Many critics say that the character of the aunt in *The Lumber Room* is Aunt Augusta in his childhood. Now see that the Aunt who is in charge of the children in the story "The Lumber Room" is also a strict lady; naturally the last person who should have been in charge of children. Now let's look at the text.

We are presented from the first lines of the text the reason for Nicholas' punishment: he had put a frog in his basin of bread-and-milk. For this reason he was "in disgrace" (a phrase that makes one think of the divine punishment, of the fall of the first men Adam and Eve) At first thought, Nicholas seemed quite a stupid little boy who does nasty things such as putting a frog into his breakfast of bread and milk. It is not clear as to why he did that at first, maybe it was fun for him. Later he refused to eat the wholesome bread and milk because of the frog.

The adults, who are portrayed as "the older, wiser, and better people" point blank, denied that there couldn't be any frog in his breakfast, and they refused, even to check for it. When Nicholas tried to describe the colour and shape of the frog, it was thought as wild imagination of a child, but Nicholas knew that he was right because he had put the frog there himself. Furthermore, the term "sin" is actually introduced, as "of taking a frog from the garden and putting it into a bowl of wholesome bread and milk."

Can you understand the inner world of Nicholas' mind, or his personal assessment of the things around him, of the others' behaviour, especially the one of adults? He judge adults on the basis of his child-like frankness and on a set of logical rules. To the boy, this confirmed that "the older, wiser and better people had proved to be profoundly in error in matters about which they had expressed the utmost assurance"

What do you think is the error done by the so-called "older, wiser, and better people"? surely it was not trusting Nicholas' word about the existence of a frog in his bowl. Contrary to the adults' opinion, there really was one, because Nicholas himself had put it there on purpose.

Did you notice the vein of irony felt by means of the repetition of the pattern "older and wiser and better"? **Older** and **wiser** and **better** are three adjectives in the comparative degree, by the conjunction "and". This on the one hand contributes to an indirect and ironic characterization of adults which says that adults can be completely wrong about something and on the other highlights Nicholas'

After these first line, the other characters enter the stage, his boy-cousin, girl-cousin, and "his quite uninteresting younger brother." Afterwards we are presented the portrait of a key figure in the story that is none other than of the soi-disant" (so-called, pretended to be) aunt. She acts as a Goddess-like judge, deciding the children's punishment, their state of being in disgrace and improvising walks to the sands of Jagborough. Did you notice that the aunt was not given a proper name? Then how was she introduced? She was introduced as "**aunt-by assertion**", "**Soi-disant**", "**the Evil One**". Don't you see that this condition creates a similarity to the creature with many names, namely the Devil (Beelzebub, Satan). Her idea of punishing was to send other children on an expedition while the child in "disgrace" should stay at home. Sometimes she would tell the children about a wonderful circus in a neighbouring town, but her inability to describe what was wonder in that circus escapes her mind.

That day, she was eager to send all the children to a beach, except Nicholas. That trip did not appeal to Nicholas, although some decent tears were expected on his cheeks at the moment of departure. He dreamed of realizing his plan of getting into the mysterious lumber-room, which had long germinated in his mind. Nicholas did not want to cry but his girl-cousin was already crying, because she had scraped her knee against the carriage step. How did Nicholas react to this? By uttering 'how did she howl!' in a cheerful manner since he knew for sure that his cousins would not enjoy themselves at the sands of Jagborough.

However, on the other side of the problem, his aunt says the contrary; "How they will enjoy themselves." She always tells something like this to make the punishment look greater. On the other hand, the state of affairs is quite funny, later in no more than three lines we are informed quite contradictorily. Just like a determined lawyer (a tactician), Nicholas presents his counterargument to his aunt's previous statement: "Bobby's too tight boots will not allow him to race on the shore. This information is accompanied by a corresponding facial expression, that of a 'grim chuckle', which emphasizes the higher position of thought and reason from which Nicholas is addressing his aunt. That day the aunt looked over a skinned knee of her daughter and very uncomfortable shoes of her son to make the punishment given to Nicholas greater. When his aunt told that Bobby did not mention about it, Nicholas answers in an honest firm way: "He told you twice, but you weren't listening. You often don't listen when we tell you important things." What does that tell about adults? Don't they do this in general even now? They are so preoccupied with other worldly responsibilities and do not devote time to find what children have got to say.

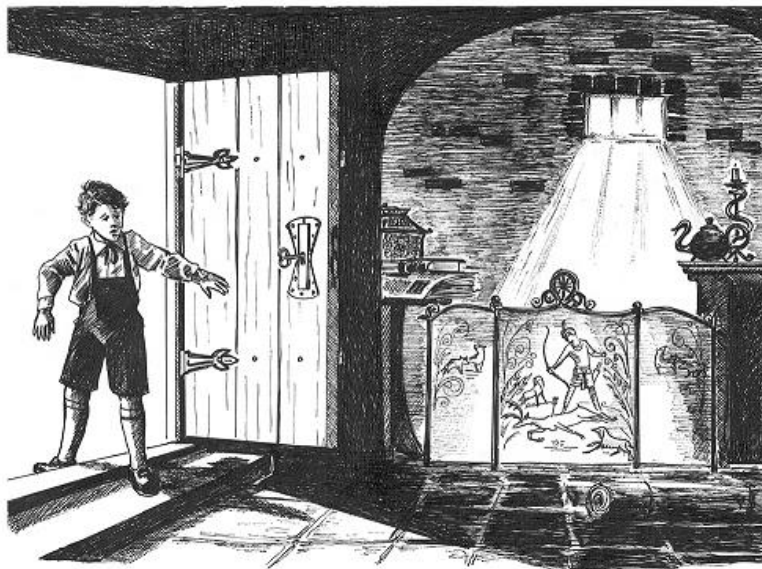
How did the aunt react to this? This particular authoritarian aunt distracts everybody's attention from her general guilt or moreover the sin, of not actually taking into consideration the others' real needs, by shifting the attention to the punishment. In fact she imposes another punishment for her nephew: You are not to go into the gooseberry garden.....because you are in disgrace." How did Nicholas respond to that? We again see Nicholas expressing himself by means his face: "His face took an expression of considerable obstinacy (stubbornness/determination)." From that strange expression what did he show his aunt? He wanted to show his aunt that he is determined to go to the gooseberry garden somehow or other whereas his main intention was to go into the lumber room.

What significant features do you see in Nicholas' Character? Isn't it obvious that Nicholas has a keen sense of deduction (judgment/inference)? He can predict and deduce the aunt's reactions to various things. Now you will realize that his attempt to put a frog in the bread and milk was to drive his cousins away in order to carry out his plan. Moreover, his attempts to get into the garden were a tactic to keep the aunt away engaged in gardening. This would then give him a fine opportunity and ample time to explore the Lumber Room. Isn't he smart? Don't you feel that these actions help him to gain the reader's affection? Now you might have understood that Nicholas gives the impression that he is impertinent(rude/ cheeky) and mischievous(naughty/ill-behaved) to get a chance to isolate in the house in which he lives. Who do you think the winner of the power struggle between Aunt and Nicholas is? It is crystal clear that the moral winner in this affair shall turn out to be Nicholas eventually. As the story develops we see that Nicholas is much smarter than his aunt. He uses his punishment to his advantage by deciding to go into the lumber-room. Nicholas gets prepared to every aspect of his plan so that he would not get caught.

-Part-Two-

Nicholas made one or two sorties into the front garden, wriggling his way with obvious stealth of purpose towards one or other of the doors, but never able for a moment to evade the aunt's watchful eye. As a matter of fact, he had no intention of trying to get into the gooseberry garden, but it was extremely convenient for him that his aunt should believe that he had; it was a belief that would keep her on self-imposed sentry-duty for the greater part of the afternoon. Having thoroughly confirmed and fortified her suspicions, Nicholas slipped back into the house and rapidly put into execution a plan of action that had long germinated in his brain. By standing on a chair in the library one could reach a shelf on which reposed a fat, important-looking key. The key was as important as it looked; it was the instrument which kept the mysteries of the lumber-room secure from unauthorized intrusion, which opened a way only for aunts and such-like privileged persons. Nicholas had not had much experience of the art of fitting keys into keyholes and turning locks, but for some days past he had practised with the key of the schoolroom door; he did not believe in trusting too much to luck and accident. The key turned stiffly in the lock, but it turned. The door opened, and Nicholas was in an unknown land, compared with which the gooseberry garden was a stale delight, a mere material pleasure.

Often and often Nicholas had pictured to himself what the lumber-room might be like, that region that was so carefully sealed from youthful eyes and concerning which no questions were ever answered. It came up to his expectations. In the first place it was large and dimly lit, one high window opening onto the forbidden garden being its only source of illumination. In the second place it was a storehouse of unimagined treasures. The aunt-by-assertion was one of those people who think that things spoil by use and consign them to dust and damp by way of preserving them. Such parts of the house as Nicholas knew best were rather bare and cheerless, but here there were wonderful things for the eye to feast on. First and foremost there was a piece of framed tapestry that was evidently meant to be a fire-screen. To Nicholas it was a living, breathing story; he sat down on a roll of Indian hangings, glowing in wonderful colours beneath a layer of dust, and took in all the details of the tapestry picture. A man, dressed in the hunting costume of some remote period, had just transfixed a stag with an arrow; it could not have been a difficult shot because the stag was only one or two paces away from him; in the thickly growing vegetation that the picture suggested it would not have been difficult to creep up to a feeding stag, and the two spotted dogs that were springing forward to join in the chase had evidently been trained to keep to heel till the arrow was discharged. That part of the picture was simple, if interesting, but did the huntsman see, what Nicholas saw, that four galloping wolves were coming in his direction through the wood? There might be more than four of them hidden behind the trees, and in any case would the man and his dogs be able to cope with the four wolves if they made an attack? The man had only two arrows left in his quiver, and he might miss with one or both of them; all one knew about his skill in shooting was that he could hit a large stag at a ridiculously short range. Nicholas sat for many golden minutes revolving the possibilities of the scene; he was inclined to think that there were more than four wolves and that the man and his dogs were in a tight corner.



But there were other objects of delight and interest claiming his instant attention; there were quaint twisted candlesticks in the shape of snakes, and a teapot fashioned like a china duck, out of whose open beak the tea was supposed to come. How dull and shapeless the nursery teapot seemed in comparison! And there was a carved sandalwood box packed tight with aromatic cotton-wool, and between the layers of cotton-wool were little brass figures, hump-necked bulls, and peacocks and goblins, delightful to see and to handle. Less promising in appearance was a large square book with plain black covers; Nicholas peeped into it, and, behold, it was full of coloured pictures of birds. And such birds! In the garden, and in the lanes when he went for a walk, Nicholas came accross a few birds, of which the largest were an occasional magpie or wood-pigeons here were herons and bustards, kites, toucans, tiger-bitterns, brush turkeys, ibises, golden pheasants, a whole portrait gallery of undreamed-of creatures. And as he was admiring the colouring of the mandarin duck and assigning a life-history to it, the voice of his aunt in shrill vociferation of his name came from the gooseberry garden without. She had grown suspicious at his long disappearance, and had leapt to the conclusion that he had climbed over the wall behind the sheltering screen of the lilac bushes: she was now engaged in energetic and rather hopeless search for him among the artichokes and raspberry canes.

Glossary of Part Two

whence	: from where
sorties	: short attacks
wriggle	: to twist from side to side with short quick movements when moving along
stealth	: the fact of doing something in a quiet or secret way
evade	: to avoid using deception
intention	: goal, aim, purpose
extremely	: exceptionally, exceedingly, extremely
convenient	: suited to one's need pr situation
self-imposed	: voluntary/doing something willingly
sentry duty	: duty of a guard or soldier
confirmed	: established/ definite
fortified	: made stronger, effective
suspicious	: doubts, uncertainties
execution	: performance or completion of an order or plan
germinate	: to start or cause (a seed) to start growing. To start an idea growing in the mind.
repose:	to lie or be placed
mysteries	: vagueness, secrecies
unauthorized	: without formal permission
intrusion	: the act of entering (a place) without permission
privileged	: having a special advantage limited to a particular person or group
stiffly	: not friendly

stale : no longer fresh

steal from : to take or get quickly, without permission

concerning : with regard to, in connection with

expectations : eager anticipation, a belief that something will happen because it is likely

forbidden : not allowed, not permitted

illumination : light

aunt-by-assertion : aunt by force, here, the aunt forcefully declared herself as Nicholas' aunt

consign : to put in to the control/care of somebody/something

bare : not hidden

feast
pleasure : in this short story it means: to look at somebody or something and get great

tapestry : a picture with a frame and stand that is used to cover the fireplace when it is not in use **or** cloth with pictures or designs woven in it, used to hang on walls as a decoration or as a covering for furniture

A fire screen tapestry kept in front of a fireplace.



evidently : clearly, obviously

hangings : curtain and any other materials hanging over the walls, windows, doors etc.

remote period: sometime in the past

transfix : to force a hole through with a sharp pointed weapon

stag : an adult male deer

paces : steps :eg: one pace=one step / two paces=two steps

keep to heel : stay close to

discharged : send away, release, let go

galloping : a stage of running when all four feet are off the ground together

to cope with : to deal successfully with a difficult situation

quiver : a case for carrying arrows

ridiculously : extremely

inclined to : to hold an opinion, but not very strongly.

revolving : going round

a tight corner: a difficult situation

quaint : attractively unusual or old fashioned

twisted candlesticks: candle holder

comparison : a consideration or of the similarities or the dissimilarities between two things

carved: engraved, impressed, stamped



aromatic : perfumed, fragrant, sweet-smelling

hump-necked : a large lump or round part on the neck of bulls

goblin : a small, often ugly, fairy that is usually not kind or is evil and plays tricks on People

appearance : look, form

behold : to see, look at

occasional : random, infrequent, intermittent

assign : to allot, give something as share or duty

shrill : high and sounding sharp to the ear, piercing

vociferation : shouting loudly, especially as a complaint

disappearance : vanishing, withdrawal

leapt to the conclusion : came to the conclusion hurriedly

energetic : enthusiastic, vigorous, active

Analysis of Part Two

In the "Lumber Room" the gooseberry garden was like a paradise for the children and that was the only place they wanted to be except for Nicholas. However, in the story it stands as the Forbidden Paradise. Now we know the reason as to why Nicholas didn't like being there. In other words his true intention was **not** to creep into the "Forbidden Paradise", but to carry out his plan of getting into the mysterious lumber-room, which had long evolved in his mind.

What made the reader understand that he had been nourishing the plan for a long time or this was one of his long term plans to get into the lumber-room and discover its secrets? Can't you remember that he even had practiced in unlocking door in the school room? For Nicholas it is an "unknown land" compared with which the gooseberry garden seemed a "stale delight". This fictional setting had been previously pictured by Nicholas in his mind, even though it had been "sealed from youthful eyes."

There were only Nicholas, the aunt and the kitchen maid left in the household. When the aunt forbade Nicholas to go into the gooseberry garden, she knew for sure that Nicholas would try to sneak into it through one of the two doors, just because she had forbidden it. So she decided to engage in gardening from a place where she could see both the doors. That was the main reason why she spent a lot of time in the garden herself, pretending to have some serious work there. Nicholas who was really cunning, wanted to establish that thought in Aunt's mind. So, he kept walking towards the doors just to see if she thought that he was attempting to do something. He did this a few times and his suspicions were confirmed, but in fact we know that he had no intention to do so—he just enjoyed annoying his aunt. After preparing the grounds he wanted to execute his master plan of going into "The Lumber Room". He then went inside, where he got on a chair and took a big key from one of the top shelves. He knew what it would open. We pretty well know that he wasn't stupid. He is now competent enough to open doors with keys, as he had tried it before on some of the other doors which means he is now fully prepared. Doesn't that suggest that he was a smart and careful boy? He is so curious to know what was hiding behind the door, but he knew that none of the other children had ever been in there, and that he would be the first to do so.



'By standing on a chair in the library one could reach a shelf on which reposed a fat Important-looking key'

We readers know that it was the moment that his true intention would be realized: to discover the treasure of the lumber-room. He took the key from the library and unlocked it. Now can you understand the "Lumber Room", which is the main setting, announced right from the beginning in the title can be entered only by means of a **"fat, important-looking key"**. However, the lumber-room which is of greatest importance contains both pleasant and unpleasant things: dust, dust and damp, and objects that could delight children. We can assume that this is just like Heaven, especially for a child, like Nicholas. Don't you feel that at this moment Nicholas is standing like Saint Peter, The saint who holds the keys to Paradise? Therefore, the lumber-room is a privileged place for the flawless individuals and "it came up to his expectations."

Next, we are closely presented with the interior of the lumber-room: a large dimly lit place, with only "one window that opened on to the forbidden garden". "It was a storehouse of unimaginable treasures." All in all, there are seven treasures, a roll of Indian hangings, "quaint twisted candlesticks in the shape of snakes", a teapot fashioned like a china duck, a carved sandalwood box, little brass figures (humped necked bulls, peacocks and goblins), and a square book full of coloured pictures of exotic birds. All these may be interpreted against the background of a child's fantasy, imagination and curiosity. Don't you feel that the above objects refer to fairy tales, adventure, exotic places and danger, so exciting for a child's mind?

All of these things claimed his attention. He observed everything in the lumber-room – in short nothing escaped his attention. Few minutes or even hours were spent by discovering the lumber-room's treasure. There was a piece of framed tapestry with a hunting scene on it. That tapestry attracted Nicholas' attention and he sat for many minutes revolving the possibilities of the scene because it was "a living breathing story" which shows a huntsman who had transfixed a stag with an arrow. The shot could not have been difficult since the animal was only "one or two paces" away from him. The "spotted dogs" are taught to keep to heel. There is a lurking danger somewhere outside the huntsman's view: four wolves, or there could be more. Being left with only two arrows he found himself in a difficult situation since he could have missed with one arrow or even both of them. One can assume that he wasn't a skillful hunter and his odds of surviving were little the story of adventures and danger fascinated Nicholas' imagination. What could happen to the hunter, the stag and being a prey for a pack of wolves at the same time? Nicholas tried to guess what could have been possibly done to save the hunter. How could he escape the fate of falling prey to a pack of blood thirsty wolves? An how would the wolves act in this kind of a circumstance? Don't they tell the reader that Nicholas was very sensitive and that he had a strong feeling for beauty?

Not only the tapestry, but there were other objects as mentioned before, in the lumber-room "of delight and interest claiming instant attention" twisted candlesticks in the shape of snakes, a teapot fashioned like a china duck, a large square book with a plain black cover full of coloured pictures of birds. Don't you understand that one thing that may seem ugly may appeal to another?

Meanwhile, the aunt was looking for Nicholas and screamed out his name and Nicholas' daydreaming was interrupted y the "voice of his aunt in shrill vociferation": "it's no use to try hiding; I can see you all the time." The screams soon changed into shrieks; and that make Nicholas leave his cozy nook and go to the gooseberry garden.

-Part Three-

"Nicholas, Nicholas!" she screamed, "you are to come out of this at once. It's no use trying to hide there; I can see you all the time."

It was probably the first time for twenty years that any one had smiled in that lumber-room.

Presently the angry repetitions of Nicholas' name gave way to a shriek, and a cry for somebody to come quickly. Nicholas shut the book, restored it carefully to its place in a corner, and shook some dust from a neighbouring pile of newspapers over it. Then he crept from the room, locked the door, and replaced the key exactly where he had found it. His aunt was still calling his name when he sauntered into the front garden.

"Who's calling?" he asked.

"Me," came the answer from the other side of the wall; "didn't you hear me? I've been looking for you in the gooseberry garden, and I've slipped into the rain-water tank. Luckily there's no water in it, but the sides are slippery and I can't get out. Fetch the little ladder from under the cherry tree--"

"I was told I wasn't to go into the gooseberry garden," said Nicholas promptly.

"I told you not to, and now I tell you that you may," came the voice from the rain-water tank, rather impatiently.

"Your voice doesn't sound like aunt's," objected Nicholas; "you may be the Evil One tempting me to be disobedient. Aunt often tells me that the Evil One tempts me and that I always yield. This time I'm not going to yield."

"Don't talk nonsense," said the prisoner in the tank; "go and fetch the ladder."

"Will there be strawberry jam for tea?" asked Nicholas innocently.

"Certainly there will be," said the aunt, privately resolving that Nicholas should have none of it.

"Now I know that you are the Evil One and not aunt," shouted Nicholas gleefully; "when we asked aunt for strawberry jam yesterday she said there wasn't any. I know there are four jars of it in the store cupboard, because I looked, and of course you know it's there, but she doesn't, because she said there wasn't any. Oh, Devil, you have sold yourself!"

There was an unusual sense of luxury in being able to talk to an aunt as though one was talking to the Evil One, but Nicholas knew, with childish discernment that such luxuries were not to be over-indulged in. He walked noisily away, and it was a kitchen maid, in search of parsley, who eventually rescued the aunt from the rain-water tank. Tea that evening was partaken of in a fearsome silence. The tide had been at its highest when the children had arrived at Jagborough Cove, so there had been no sands to play on--a circumstance that the aunt had overlooked in the haste of organizing her punitive expedition. The tightness of Bobby's boots had had a disastrous effect on his temper the whole of the afternoon, and altogether the children could not have been said to have enjoyed themselves. The aunt maintained the frozen muteness of one who has suffered undignified and unmerited detention in a rain-water tank for thirty-five minutes. As for Nicholas, he, too, was silent, in the absorption of one who has much to think about; it was just possible, he considered, that the huntsman would escape with his hounds while the wolves feasted on the stricken stag.

Glossary of Part Three

screamed	: shouted, yelled, cried
probably	: almost certainly, in all probability, possibly, maybe
repetitions	: recurrences
shriek	: a loud sharp shrill cry/ scream yell
restored	: reinstated/ reestablished/to bring back to existence
absorption	: preoccupation/concentration/fascination
feasted	: ate /partook / gobbled
stricken	: hit or wounded by a weapon

it can be noticed that Nicholas is **the only child named** in the story, that itself shows that he is the protagonist or the central character of the story. Now you may understand that the whole story is based on the Child's world and the Adults' world. It can also be noticed the power play between Nicholas and the aunt, who was also unnamed and designated by the definite article.

What did you gather about these characters? Didn't you notice that even though Nicholas is an average child and he stands for the child's fabulous world of imagination in general? His rival (the antagonist), the aunt stands for the Adults' limited unimaginative world. The reader is drawn to the character of Nicholas because he reminds one of what the reader was like as a child and so one feels close to him. He is very clever in constantly twisting his aunt's words and making her seem like the bad one. The aunt seems like a boring person who was stuck in her own ways. She doesn't have time for Nicholas' games and she doesn't have any sympathy or compassion towards children. For instance, when Nicholas' girl-cousin hurts herself, she does not attend to it, but just says, "she'll soon get over that.." Hope you remember how Nicholas spent "golden minutes" imagining all kinds of endings to the story displayed on the tapestry, and he found himself in a realm of old things, of undiscovered fairy tales and excitement. His happy moments were disrupted by his aunt's scream, who had fallen into the rain-water tank while looking for him and now was asking for help.

Nicholas hears his aunt's voice from the gooseberry garden below the lumber room window. She has become concerned that she hasn't seen him for some time and thinks he must have climbed over the wall to hide somewhere in the garden. She calls out: 'It's no use trying to hide there. I can see you all the time.' We as readers do understand that this is not true because we understood that from the beginning Nicholas had no intention of getting into the gooseberry garden. Didn't you notice that her desperation and dishonesty add to Nicholas' delight? We are told that this 'was probably the first time for twenty years that anyone had smiled in that lumber room'. The shift of perspective is significant – this is almost an unexpected moment for Nicholas. Notice that it is Munro communicating directly with the reader, sharing his delight. Yet, the story does not end there. More revenge is to come. the aunt shrieks and then calls out for help. Nicholas takes his time as he carefully replaces the objects he has moved, returns the colourful book to the corner he had taken it from, covers whatever the evidence on the book by shaking some dust from a pile of newspapers nearby, locks the door and restores the key on to the shelf in the library. It is only then that he goes towards the garden. The aunt calls out telling him that, whilst looking for him she fell into the rainwater tank. There is no water in it, but she cannot get out. She tells him to fetch a ladder and to bring it to her. But Nicholas reminds her that told him not to enter the gooseberry garden. Of course, she now gives him permission, but he claims not to recognize her voice, to suspect that she is the Evil One his aunt has so often warned him about. To test whether she is his aunt or not, he asks her if there will be strawberry jam for tea. Hoping to bribe him jam, she says that there will be. "Now I know that you are the Evil One and not aunt," shouted Nicholas gleefully; "when I asked aunt for strawberry jam yesterday she said there wasn't any."

Nicholas has not only used her own belief system against her, he has also caught her out in one of the lies she habitually tells in order to punish him. He walks away, leaving her helpless in the tank.

This is the climax of the story. Hasn't the punishment turned upon her, because she lied about jam? Not only that, the intended "treat" too revealed itself to be a real disaster since children had no fun on account of the lack of proper conditions to play or there wasn't any sand on the beach due to the high tide. In addition to that we got to know that when the children returned from the beach, her son's uncomfortable shoes had caused him to show temper and most probably her daughter was also in pain due to her skinned knee. We know that these things were overlooked by the Aunt because her objective was not to arrange a beach trip for her children, but to punish Nicholas for the 'disgrace'. What do you think the author is trying to do at this point of the story? Don't you think that he uses irony to poke fun and criticize the Aunt. Don't you understand that the trip to Jagborough which is meant to punish Nicholas became a treat for him whereas it became a torture to those who went there? what do all these things reveal? Don't these things reveal the irony that the ideal world of an adult is dull and boring to that of a child? What does that hint about the reality. The author hints that the adulthood causes one to lose all sense of fun and imagination because they become preoccupied with minor trivialities, like the Aunt who is obsessed about punishing and fault-finding on the children. Did you notice how the Aunt acts as a Goddess-like judge, deciding the children's punishment, their state of being in disgrace and improvising (creating/making up) excursions to the places such as sands of Jagborough.

The aunt, who has been rescued from the rainwater tank by a maid, can hardly mention what happened to her without changing her face. All these things contributed for them to have the evening tea in anger and silence. "The aunt maintained the frozen muteness of one who had suffered undignified and unmerited detention in the rainwater tank for thirty-five minutes. As for Nicholas he too was silent, absorption of one who has much to think about;" Note the behaviour of aunt and Nicholas. Doesn't it show an opposition between "silence" and "muteness"? "Silence" is attributed to Nicholas who is sunk into his deepest thoughts about the huntsman's story he saw in the lumber-room. "muteness" is attributed to the aunt who had been reduced to muteness after spending 35 minutes in the rainwater tank and her defeat in front of Nicholas' judgment.

Now you may understand that the story is a remarkable insight into human character. While this works brilliantly as a story about a child outwitting a vindictive adult, it also reveals Aunt's virtues and vices.

In the story the Aunt is represented as a self-righteous and moralistic person. She uses a hypocritical tone and exaggerates a child's trick comparing it to a grave sin. The bookish words "coloration alleged, was in disgrace" show the degree of seriousness that is laid on a simple mistake of a child. And the use of an unnecessarily long expression "older wiser and better people" and the repetition of the word "wholesome" heightens the ironic effect. So in an ironic way the author demonstrates the conditions in which the boy was being brought up. She thinks of herself as a wiser person and does not like to be in the wrong. Being cold and the lacking of love drives her to be more concerned with punishing children than loving them. She keeps food that appeals to the children away from them. She bars them from the beautiful places in the house like the garden and the lumber-room. She sticks to a handful of principles like law, order, and punishment thus revealing her static character, in opposition to Nicholas' dynamic (active/vibrant) character. We can say that she is monolingual; she masters only one language, that of a strict disciplinarian that is concentrated on smallness and that deprives children from small pleasure. What does this suggest about the aunt? Doesn't it reveal her character? Of course it sheds light on the aunt's behaviour which is a reflection of her inner self.

She is unable to understand and communicate with children. She is not even aware that her son's feet were hurting. She dictates their lives for them insisting on when and where they should go for entertainment. So it is clear that the problem of unsympathetic method of bringing up children is highlighted. You may also understand that, the author's sympathy lies with the children and his attitude towards grown-ups is a little bit cynical. It's quite obvious that when describing the hard-heartedness and indifference of an adult's world he is not annoyed but rather amused.

When you read towards the end you may notice that the story reveals the author's social comment about the differences between the world of the child and of an adult. It becomes clear that the boy's character greatly differed from the atmosphere that was in the family. The boy's world was so bright, so warm, and so kind in comparison to the aunt's world. I am sure, while reading this extract you may also have wanted to defend Nicholas from his aunt and her stern ways of bringing up children.

Further on, the author discloses what the aunt's method was exactly. We learnt that the aunt excluded Nicholas from the Jagborough expedition in order to punish him for his "offence" The author tells us that it was her habit to improvise something of a festive nature in order to impress the child who was at fault and make him feel that his ill conduct made him lose all the enjoyment and to make the child regret over it. But if all the children "sinned collectively", they suddenly learned about a very interesting event to which they would have been taken that very day if not for their disgraceful conduct. In this case that day Nicholas' cousins go the chance to go to Jagborough sands while the punished Nicholas had to stay at home with his aunt.

Now read the story once again paying attention to the vocabulary. What did you notice? Did you come across the vocabulary of military service such as expedition, offender, rigorously debarred; the juridical term forfeit: repetition of the modal verb 'to be' to reinforce the main problem.

"That is why she imposed herself a **sentry-duty** and decided to spend all the time in trivial gardening **operations** among flowerbeds and shrubberies, whence she could **keep a watchful eye** on the two doors that led to the forbidden paradise". Here we again come across vocabulary of military service "operations, sentry duty, and periphrasis (the use of an indirect way of speaking or writing) and phrases such as "a woman of a few ideas" and the metaphor forbidden paradise". Don't they help to depict the aunt as an army commander and reinforce an ironic effect? Even though this type of vocabulary makes an ironic effect, they also help us to understand that her methods are really severe and can do a lot of harm to children. We also can see that the aunt being so sure in her own rightness and taking Nicholas' mischief far too seriously which actually do not amuse the readers at all.

Children in Munro's stories are imaginative. Nicholas imagines the who story behind the tapestry while the aunt comes out with boring stories and ideas like a circus or going to the beach. She tries to convince Nicholas the fun of the trip to the beach, but lack the imagination to make it convincing enough for the children. she describes the beach outing as beautiful and glorious, but is unable to elaborate on the beauty as she lacks the essential imagination to do so.

Remember, any short story becomes interesting with the proper plot, setting, theme and characters and it must be accompanied with an attractive title, effective language, clear point of view and an excellent ending. Most of the famous short stories are capable of satisfying the readers because they are aptly composed of the aforementioned elements.

What do you think of the title of this short story? Or what would you say if you were questioned whether the title is an important element of this short story? You may agree with me that it encourages readers to read the story because this short story also deals with the personality or an incident. The title is leading us to this central issue in the story. So now we know that it is the most important and inseparable part of a short story. The title "The Lumber Room" is important to highlight the development of the main character's psyche (inner self). The author penetrates (enters) into the subtlest windings of a child's heart. The lumber-room on the whole bears several functions: it reinforces the prevailing mood in the child's life, it shapes the character's identity and in the end it also reinforces the theme of the story. Further, "The Lumber Room" reveals Nicholas, the protagonist, who has been created as a perfect creative child and mischievous at the same time and as one of those children who would do whatever he pleases. Further, he has no problems disobeying adults. You may have noticed that though he is just a child, he appreciates things in a mature way. Moreover, the Lumber Room is symbolic of fun and imagination of the child's world which is definitely lacking in the adult world. it also emphasizes the destruction of life that adulthood and pride can bring. The aunt's world is full of warped (distorted/perverted) priorities. She puts punishments and withholding of enjoyment as more important than getting to know and molding the lives of the children. She keeps all the beautiful and creative things of the house locked away in a lumber room so as not to spoil them, but in doing so, the purpose of the objects which is to make the house beautiful, is lost, leaving the house dull and colourless. Though the aunt is furious at tea, Nicholas is thinks about the tapestry in the lumber room, believing that it was just possible that 'the huntsman would escape with the hounds while the wolves feasted on the stricken stag'. Saki throws us back into the world of the imagination, the violence of nature, and the figure of the resourceful hunter tricking the wolves by using the stag as bait. It can be understood that the charm of the story lies in its interesting plot and exciting situation. At the same time it conveys the qualities of deep thought, keen observation and sharpness of character.

From the third person narration with the elements of description and dialogues we understand that the action of the text takes place in the aunt's house and takes one day from the character's life.

To sum up, we must comment on the author's style which is remarkable and how the story reveals his great knowledge of man's inner world and how he ridicules many social vices, such as snobbishness, pretense and self-interest. It is also a marvelous satire on the prevailing morality of the Edwardian period.

The End