

Grade 10 & 11 (*New Syllabus*)

Appreciation of English Literary Texts



Prose text

The Lumber Room

Saki's (H.H.Munro's)

About the author

Hector Hugh Munro was born on 18 December 1870 and died on 13 November 1916. He was better known by the pen name, Saki. He was a British writer whose witty and mischievous stories satirized the society and culture. He is considered a master of the short story. Munro's father was an officer in the Burma Police. After the death of his mother when he was two years, he was raised by his aunts who frequently resorted to corporal punishment. He was brought up in a regime of strictness and severity. This left an indelible mark on his character, and is immortalized in a number of short stories, especially The Lumber Room.



The useful vocab.....

Lumber room	-	store room/a room where old furniture is kept
Disgrace	-	the lose of respect of others
Frivolous	-	not having any value or importance
Alleged	-	believed to be true or have
Profoundly	-	greatly
Tactician	-	a person who is clever in applying various methods in achieving something
Unwarranted	-	not justified
Forfeited	-	deprived of
Improvise	-	make something with what one has
Rigorously	-	severely
Debarred	-	banned/prohibited
Unrivalled	-	greater or better than all others
Depravity	-	prevent somebody from getting something
Expedition	-	a tour to explore an area
Scarped	-	injured

The useful vocab.....

Scrambling	-	move quickly or awkwardly
Elation	-	happiness
Characterized	-	studied the qualities of something
Glorious	-	beautiful and splendid
Chuckle	-	laugh
Obstinacy	-	disobedience/stubbornness
Trivial	-	unimportant/small in size
Forbidden	-	prohibited
Concentration	-	mindfulness
Stealth	-	secrete
Evade	-	get away/avoid
Execution	-	carrying out
Germinated	-	grew up
Unauthorized	-	without
Intrusion	-	going into a place without the
permission illumination	-	lighting up

The useful vocab.....

Consign	- put aside
Tapestry	- hard rough cloth with a design on it
Transfixed	- still/ unmoved
Quiver	- strange/unusual
Ridiculously	- very silly or unreasonable
Tight corner	- difficult situation
Aromatic	- having a strong smell
Goblins	- mischievous ugly elf
Vociferation	- expressing opinions forcefully

The Lumber room is a short story purely written in order to signify the unblemished and pure childhood world filled with vibrant imaginations and burning curiosity. The intricacies of the childhood mentality and how it falls apart with selfish and authoritarian adulthood world are starkly juxtaposed in a slice of an everyday life. Nicholas the protagonist in the story seems to be a little boy with bubbling childish vigor and playfulness. The friction between aunt and Nicholas appears to be long lasting feud probably with the widening age gap and the blunt and insensitive temperament of the aunt. It seems that the child always gets on the nerves of the old woman and she is not ready to accept that it is the nature of the childhood. The authoritarian attitude of the aunt gets severe beating at the hands of the little fellow. The pestering nature of the boy makes the aunt reach her wits end with falling into the rain-water tank in the gooseberry garden. It could well be looked at as a piece of the writer's own experience since Saki himself during his childhood had undergone the experiences of this nature.

Other than the collision course these two characters are in, Saki very dexterously highlights the vibrant and free will of the childhood and the pure imaginative power of the childhood psyche. It seems the incident serves the old lady right but it does not make the boy happy. He has been conspiring on his own to enter the restricted domain for long. The simple happiness he derives in gaining entrance to the room and the close scrutiny of the designs on the tapestry with his own interpretations are testimony to prove the fact that the childhood is a stage packed with untapped potentials which could be made use in molding a creative human being.



The salient features of short story writing found in the Lumber room

exposition

The short story; the Lumber room epitomizes some classic features of short fiction writing which could well be found in most of the great short fictions. The story unfolds with an exposition to a routinely work with an exception of the protagonist who is in a bad shape probably because of his mischievous escapades that keep his aunt in a quandary. The first short paragraph towards the end bears enough testimony to conclude that the story is written in a form of teasingly light banter. It seems to be a fictional assertion of humor, criticism and insult rolled into one.



The salient features of short story writing found in the Lumber room

complication

Nicholas the protagonist creates a scene complaining about a frog in his bread and milk. Though the wise adults overlook the seemingly incongruous situation later find that Nicholas is up with some tricks under his sleeves. The infuriated aunt grounds the fellow while the others are taken on an excursion . Aunt strictly prohibits him from entering the gooseberry garden.



The salient features of short story writing found in the Lumber room

climax

The most exciting point in the story which is generally accepted is the incident where aunt falling into the rain water tank and Nicholas' refusal to help her in rescuing. Nicholas simply gets away saying it could probably be the evil one who is persuading him to commit the mistake.



The salient features of short story writing found in the Lumber room

resolution

The story comes to the end with the grim looking aunt with a long face brooding over the humiliation she suffered while Nicholas was getting lost in his own world of enchanting imaginations over what he had seen in the Lumber room.



Some text based questions for you to work on....

1. Why was Nicholas in disgrace?
2. What was the punishment given by aunt?
3. What made Nicholas happy at the departure of the cousins?
4. How did the aunt try to prevent him from entering the gooseberry garden?
5. What compelled Nicholas to enter the Lumber room?



Probable answers to the questions

1. Nicholas had put a frog in his bread and milk.
2. He is grounded and not let be a part of the excursion.
3. It allowed Nicholas to execute his secrete plan in getting into the Lumber room
4. She admonished him not to get into the gooseberry garden.
5. Aunt's overenthusiastic approach in preventing Nicholas entering the gooseberry garden made her a self appointed sentry there.



Further Reading

- www.enotes.com/topics/the-lumber-room
- www.markedbyteachers.com/gcse/english/the-lumber-room.html
- www.markedbyteachers.com/university-degree/.../the-lumber-room.html
- www.cyberessays.com/lists/quotes-to-themes-the-lumber-room-by-saki