

## Artistic Analysis of “Last Leaf” by O. Henry

**Tojjeva Aziza Mirkhanovna**

The student of Foreign Languages and Literature faculty Bukhara State Pedagogical Institute

### Abstract

The article considers the artistic analysis of a short story “Last leaf” by O. Henry. “Last Leaf” stands as a testament to O. Henry's remarkable ability to infuse profound themes and emotional depth into a concise narrative. As readers traverse the intricacies of the story, they are confronted with a portrayal of life, love, and the enduring resilience of the human spirit, serving as a poignant reminder of the timeless power of storytelling and its capacity to resonate with audiences across generations. The thematic depth, conveyed through artful imagery, resonates deeply with readers, inviting contemplation on the innate human inclination to cherish life despite its hardships.

**Keywords:** leaf, pneumonia, implication, spirit, masterpiece, reader, weakness, fearfully, care, chance, hope, optimism.

O. Henry, whose real name was William Sydney Porter was an American short -story writer. His stories are still popular today. He was born in 1862 in a small provincial town. In his early years he tried many jobs, among which were several literary ones. O. Henry's first story was published in 1899, when the writer was in prison on a false charge of stealing money from a bank. After he came out of prison, O. Henry became a professional writer.

O. Henry describes the life of “the little people”: clerks, shop assistants and farm workers. His stories are mainly humorous and amusing, with the traditional happy end. Through the gaiety and humour of his stories, however, the hard life of the poor can be seen. O. Henry died in 1910.

“Last Leaf” by O. Henry, also known as William Sydney Porter, is a poignant and captivating narrative that delves into the profundities of human existence and the enduring power of love for life. Set against the backdrop of everyday life, O. Henry, known for his portrayal of the “little people” in society, skillfully weaves a tale that resonates with readers due to its rich thematic depth and emotional resonance. By critically analyzing the intricacies of “Last Leaf,” one can gain a deeper appreciation for O. Henry's mastery in conveying profound themes within succinct narratives, reaffirming the enduring relevance of his work in contemporary literary discourse.

The story “Last leaf”, written by the famous American writer William Sidney Porter (O. Henry), is appreciated among readers as it is able to express many times more content than its length. Although the author created larger and more popular works than this, he managed to attract a lot of attention with this story. On the subject of the work, the reader sees the meaning of love for life as the main idea, the meaning of human motives for existence, and finds expression in a hymn to mankind and high human qualities. In the prologue of the work, we witness a picturesque depiction of a place where people settled in an invisible corner of America at the time of writing the work. With the power of the pen, the writer managed to revive the depiction of the process before introducing the characters of the work. In the further development of a series of events, acquaintance with Sue and Joanna, the main characters of the work, and the image given by the author to this process will not fail to warm the reader. “*They met at a table at*

*Delmonico's on Eighth Street, and their views on art, salad dressing and the broader realm of tradition were so compatible that they decided to open a workshop together.*" We see that many works depict the strongest, most intimate character traits of a person. Readers usually believe that it is easy to develop, feel and absorb the above-mentioned qualities of people through more weighty and voluminous stories and novels. But the great skill of some writers shows that a lot of meaning can be attached to this short story that is being studied. O. Henry was the man who did it. The episode that can be assessed, in a manner of speaking, as a state of confusion in relation to the events of the work, represents the penetration of pneumonia in the story into the area of residence of the heroes of the work. It is the visit of the disease, which is described as a "guest," that marks a turning point in the work. Unfortunately, the "guest" also visits the girls' house and ends up staying with Joanna. An innocent girl who dreams of painting a picture of the Bay of Naples becomes more and more desperate to survive. As the doctor said, if a person does not have the will to live, nothing will help him. Through artistic images, the writer here puts forward the idea that a person should be satisfied with life, that the need to live should not disappear altogether. The highest level of imagery is when we compare the life of Joanna, dying of illness, with the ivy that grows against the neighboring wall and which has only a few leaves left from the threats of the fierce wind and snow. It seems that a person suffering while waiting for his life to be cut off will be saved from this. There is one more character in the work, without whom the work would lose most of its power. This character plays a major role in the climax of the work. *"Old Berman was an artist who lived downstairs. He was in his sixties, with a curly beard like Michelangelo's Moses that suited his compact figure."* It is the old artist Berman who is depicted in the work as the "angel of salvation." This man, who had not achieved significant results in the field of painting during his lifetime, thought that one day he would create his own "masterpiece". This man, who has taken it upon himself to protect two girls, Sue and Joanna, is actually referred to as a mischievous and delusional man. But his most sincere and pure human feelings are revealed at the culmination of the work. While Joanna waits for the last leaf to fall, the will of the leaf that never wants to break brings her back to life. The epilogue of the work is a little sad, but touching. The last ivy leaf that brought Joanna back to life was not actually real, but was a "masterpiece" by the artist Berman. Berman, who did this at the cost of his own life, fulfilled his life's goal by saving the life of a young woman.

This captivating tale elegantly exemplifies the human spirit's resilience, underscoring the enduring power of compassion, sacrifice, and unanticipated fulfillment. The narrative underscores the unforeseen realization of dreams and the essence of life. It imparts the vital message that embracing optimism, even amidst arduous trials, is foundational in nurturing hope and fostering a positive societal outlook. Such stories can inspire and remind us of the profundity of the human experience, offering a meaningful reflection on the complexities and beauty of life.

In conclusion, it is necessary for every person to love life, strive for goodness and live with great goals, which determines the main purpose of existence. One day the dreams that were made surely will come true in a way we did not expect, which shows the essence of life. Absorbing optimism, no matter how difficult it may seem, is a prime focus of a person-centered life which is used to instill hope and cultivate a positive outlook within society we live.

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