

Subject : English

Class : X

Topic : A Gift for
Christmas





Della finished crying. She went up to the looking-glass and began to powder her cheeks. Then she stood by the window and looked out dully at a grey cat walking on a grey fence in a grey backyard.

Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars week doesn't go far.

Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Oh, the many happy hours she had spent planning for something nice for him! Something fine and rare,

4. A Gift for Christmas

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time. Three times Della counted it. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing that Della could do except to throw herself on the dirty little couch and cry. While Della is crying let us take a look at her home which is a furnished flat at \$8 a week. You see signs of poverty wherever you turn your eyes. What else can you expect when Della's husband, Mr. James Dillingham Young, earns just \$20 a week?

Della finished crying. She went up to the looking-glass and began to powder her cheeks. Then she stood by the window and looked out dully at a grey cat walking on a grey fence in a grey backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Oh, the many happy hours she had spent planning for something nice for him! Something fine and rare, worthy of the honour of being owned by Jim.

Suddenly Della turned away from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its colour all of a sudden. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took great pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Della let fall her beautiful hair and it looked like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knees. Quickly and nervously she combed it and did it up again. For a minute she faltered. Tears appeared in her eyes.

That was only for a moment. She put on her old brown jacket, she put on her old brown hat. With her eyes shining brightly she fluttered out of the door and down the stairs to the street.

She stopped at a shop with the sign 'M'me Sofronio. Hair Goods of All Kinds.' The shop was located on the second floor. Della ran up the stairs.

‘Will you buy my hair?’ asked Della. ‘I buy hair,’ said Madame. ‘Take your hat off and let me have a look at it.’ Down came the brown cascade.

‘Twenty dollars,’ said Madame, lifting the beautiful hair with her experienced hand. ‘Give it to me quickly,’ said Della. Della spent the next two hours in the stores eagerly looking for Jim’s present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores. It was a platinum watch-chain, simple but well made. It was worthy of the watch. As soon as she saw it she decided that it was the right present for Jim. She paid twenty-one dollars for it and hurried home with the 87 cents that remained.

When Della reached home, pleased with the present, she grew nervous as she thought calmly about what she had done. She looked at the reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically. She brought out her curling irons and began to curl her hair carefully. The tiny curls made her look like a schoolboy. 'If Jim doesn't kill me,' she said to herself, 'before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a boy. But what could I do-Oh! What could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?'

At seven o'clock the coffee was made and everything arranged to get dinner ready. Jim was never late. Della sat on the corner of the table near the door with the watch chain in her hand. Then she heard his step on the stairs. She turned white for just a moment. She prayed, 'Please God, make him think I am still pretty.'

worthy of the honour of being
owned by Jim.

Words : Meanings

Expenses : Money spent

Calculated : Counted

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took great pride.

One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's



The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two and he was burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves. Jim's eyes were fixed on Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise. He simply stared at her with a strange expression on his face.

Della got off the table and moved towards him. 'Jim, darling,' she cried, 'don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I had to buy a Christmas present for you. I just had to do it. My hair grows so fast-you don't mind, do you? Say "Merry Christmas! Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice – what a beautiful present I've got for you.'

'You've cut off your hair?' asked Jim, speaking with difficulty. 'Cut it off and sold it,' said Della. 'Don't you like me just as well, without my hair?' Jim looked about the room curiously. 'You say, your hair is gone?' he said with an air almost of disbelief. 'You needn't look for it,' said Della. 'It's sold, I tell you - sold and gone. It's Christmas Eve, Jim. Be good to me, because I did it all for you

'Jim seemed to wake up at last, and to understand. He kissed Della. He suddenly remembered that he had bought something for Della too. He drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table. 'Don't make any mistake, Dell,' he said, 'about me. Whatever happens I shall always love you just the same. Now open the package and you will understand why I behaved as I did.' Della's white fingers quickly opened the package. And then at first a scream of joy followed by a quick feminine change to tears. For there lay The Combs – the set of combs, side and back, that Della had seen in a Broadway window and liked so much. They were beautiful combs, so expensive and they were hers now. But alas, the hair in which she was to wear them was sold and gone! She took them up lovingly, smiled through her tears and said, 'My hair grows so fast, Jim!' And then Della jumped up like a little cat and cried, 'Oh, oh!' Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly on her open palm. 'Isn't it lovely, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at your watch a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it.' Instead of obeying, Jim sat down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

'Dell,' said he, 'let's put our Christmas presents away and keep them awhile. They are too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now please get the dinner ready.'



the other was Della's hair.

Words : Meanings

Pride : Honour

Possessions :

State of owning or
having something



Glossary:

expenses (*noun*) : operating cost The salary he gets barely covers his *expenses*.

rare (*adj*) : uncommon It is *rare* to find sincerity these days.

possession (*noun*) : owning something The gang was caught in *possession* of cocaine.

cascade (*v, noun*) : flowing like a small waterfall Water *casca*ded down the stairs. The *cascade* made a lovely scene.

falter (*verb*) : to become weak His courage never *falter*ed.

flutter (*verb*) : to move quickly The flag *flutter*ed in the breeze.

critically (*adv*) : with disapproval She spoke *critically* of her sister.

feminine (*adj*) : qualities connected with women This dress gives you a typical *feminine* look.

scream (*verb*) : loud cry The boys were *screaming* with excitement.

LANGUAGE EXERCISES

A. Comprehension Questions

(i) Answer the following questions in your own words:

1. Why was Della crying?
2. Describe the poverty of Della's house.
3. What type of present had Della planned for Jim?
4. What were the two prized possessions of Jim?
5. Describe the present Della bought for Jim.
6. How did Della manage to buy the gift?
7. What did Della think when she looked at herself in the mirror?
8. What was Jim's reaction on seeing Della's hair gone?
9. What explanation did Della give to Jim for getting her hair cut?
10. What was in the package that Jim had brought for Della?
11. How had Jim managed to bring the present for Della?





(ii) Answer the following questions in about 50 words each:

1. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. Why?
2. Describe the incident of Della's selling her hair in your own words.
3. Why was Della pleased with her selection of the present for Jim?
4. Why does the storywriter call Jim 'a poor fellow'?
5. What do you think about the expression in Jim's eyes? Was it shock, surprise or anger? Why?
6. Both of them gave each other the gift of rare love. How? Explain.

(iii) Write true or false against the following statements:

1. Jim loved Della more than she loved him.
2. Della could easily buy a present for Jim without selling her hair.
3. Della was proud of being Jim's wife.
4. Both the gifts proved their true love for each other.
5. Jim and Della could do without gifts.

B. Vocabulary Exercises

(i) Look at the sentences:

She went up to the *looking glass*. She brought out her *curling irons*. The words *looking* and *curling* are the *verbs* ending in *ing* and have the force of *noun* as well as *verb*. Such words are called 'gerunds'.

(ii) Supply suitable gerunds in the blanks:

1. I am not interested in a celebrity. (become)
2. I am used to by the phone. (sleep)
3. I feel like the mountains. (climb)
4. Your plants need (prune)
5. He didn't want to risk the boss. (annoy)
6. I am not interested in in luxury. (live)
7. Will it help if we try ... the cake back in the oven? (put)
8. I feel like across the river. (swim)
9. I am not used to irregular hours. (work)
10. I am used to overtime. (do)

ii (a) Combine the nouns with gerunds in the table to form meaningful compound nouns.

Fruit lorry bird farming picking
coal weight fish lifting mining
watching driving

(b) Now combine the gerunds with the nouns to form compound nouns:

waiting	diving	driving	committee	pool	rink
dining	swimming	licence	board	hall	housing
skating	room				

(iii) Fill in the blanks with the suitable word:

1. *Happiness* is to *sorrow* as *strength* is to (muscle/lion/weakness/strong)
2. *Touch* is to *strike* as *whisper* is to (shout/kill/quiet/anger)
3. *Snow* is to *white* as *honey* is to (light/bee/sweet/tree)
4. *Deep* is to *shallow* as *bold* is to (dull/strong/timid/loud)
5. *Bear* is to *cub* as *horse* is to (lamb/fawn/foal/kid)
6. *Herd* is to *deer* as *bunch* is to (people/chickens/cattle/keys)
7. *Horse* is to *neigh* as *lamb* is to (bleat/screech/roar/yell)
8. *Haste* is to *delay* as *honour* is to (king/judge/shame/prize)
9. *Puppy* is to *dog* as *fawn* is to (bear/wolf/duck/deer)
10. *Victory* is to *defeat* as *vague* is to (lose/definite/virtue/fame)

C. Grammar Exercises

(i) (c) Look at the sentences:

She *put on* her old brown hat. Della *got off* the table and moved towards him.

When a preposition or an adverb is placed after a verb, the phrase so formed gives a variety of meanings.

Now fill in the blanks with the phrases given below:

put off look ahead

put out look after

put on look out

put forward look up

1. Will you my dog when I am away.
2. You should and make plans for your future.
3. While swimming in the seafor sharks.
4. He was depressed after his accident, but with time, life began to
5. the light, I want to read.
6. the light, I want to sleep.
7. I shall my visit to Delhi till the weather is fine.
8. The new officers many new suggestions

Q. Why was Della crying?

Ans. Della was crying,
because she had only
one dollar and eighty
seven cents to buy a
present for Jim.

(ii) Correct the following sentences: (errors in the use of prepositions)

1. To save the child he jumped in the well.
2. You have to answer on your misbehaviour.
3. He did not agree with my proposal.
4. We should abide with the decision of the management.
5. He has been accused for theft.
6. You must apologize from the boss on your misbehaviour.
7. The student assured the teacher with his honesty.
8. Della was absorbed with her studies.
9. The nurse is attending near your father.
10. He is addicted from drugs.

Q. Describe the poverty of the house.

Ans. There was a dirty little couch and her flat was furnished for eight dollars a week.

(iii) Rewrite the following in the Indirect Form of Narration:

1. “You have cut off your hair?” asked Jim, speaking with difficulty. “Cut it off and sold it,” said Della. “Don’t you like me just as well, without my hair?”
2. “You needn’t look for it,” said Della. “Be good to me, because I did it all for you.”
3. “Isn’t it lovely, Jim? I hunted all over the town to find it. You will have to look at your watch a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it.” said Della to Jim.

D. Pronunciation Practice

Check up the pronunciation of the following words in the dictionary and say them aloud.

Wool	onion	suite
lamb	oven	adjective
cough	potato	interrogative
ewe	quay	bury
hero	suggestion	exhibition

Don't you think you should learn some phonetic symbols to be able to read the correct pronunciation of words from the dictionary?

(ii) Correct the following sentences: (errors in the use of prepositions)

1. To save the child he jumped in the well.
2. You have to answer on your misbehaviour.
3. He did not agree with my proposal.
4. We should abide with the decision of the management.
5. He has been accused for theft.
6. You must apologize from the boss on your misbehaviour.
7. The student assured the teacher with his honesty.
8. Della was absorbed with her studies.
9. The nurse is attending near your father.
10. He is addicted from drugs.

E. Creative Writing and Extended Reading

1. Continue an imaginary dialogue (started below) between Jim and Della while sitting over the dinner table on the Christmas Eve.

Jim: Della, how could you think of this gift?

Della:

Jim: But, why did you not tell me anything about it?

Della:

Jim: Couldn't we do without gifts this Christmas?

Della: But you too did not disclose your plans. Why?

Jim:

Della: Should we not put them away for the next Christmas?

Jim:

2. Write a short paragraph on:

The Practice of Exchanging Gifts on special occasions.

3. Discuss with your friends, the wisdom (or otherwise) of Jim and Della in matter of the practice of exchanging gifts on the Christmas eve.

Just a little fun:

Here lies my wife.

Here let her lie!

Now she's at rest

And so am I.

Q. What type of present had Della planned for Jim?

Ans. She had planned a fine and rare present, worthy of the honour of being owned by him.

Q. What were the two prized possessions of Jim and Della?

Ans. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and grandfather's and the other was Della's hair.



She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other



like it in any of the stores. It was a platinum watch - chain, simple but well made. It was

Q.1. What explanation did Della give to Jim?

Ans. Della told Jim that she had sold her hair to buy a gift for Jim, but she didn't have money for it. So she had to sell her hair.

Q.2. Describe the present Della bought for Jim?

Ans. Della bought a platinum watch chain for Jim. This chain was simple but well made.

Q.3. How did Della manage to buy the gift?

Ans. Della sold her beautiful long hair for twenty dollars. Thus she was able to buy a gift for Jim.

Q4. Why was Della crying?

Ans. Della was crying because she wanted to buy a gift for Jim but she did not have money for it.

Q.5. What was in the package that Jim had brought for Jim?

Ans. The package contained a beautiful set of combs.

Q.1. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. Why?

Ans. She was a housewife. She had to buy household goods from the market. But many things she needed were costly. The expenses were greater than the income of her husband. Formerly he was getting \$30 a week, but now he was getting only \$20 a week. So she was worried about the expenses on the goods she had to buy.



worthy of the watch. As soon as she saw it she decided that it was the right present for Jim.



She paid twenty - one dollars for it and hurried home with the 87 cents that remained.

Words : Meanings

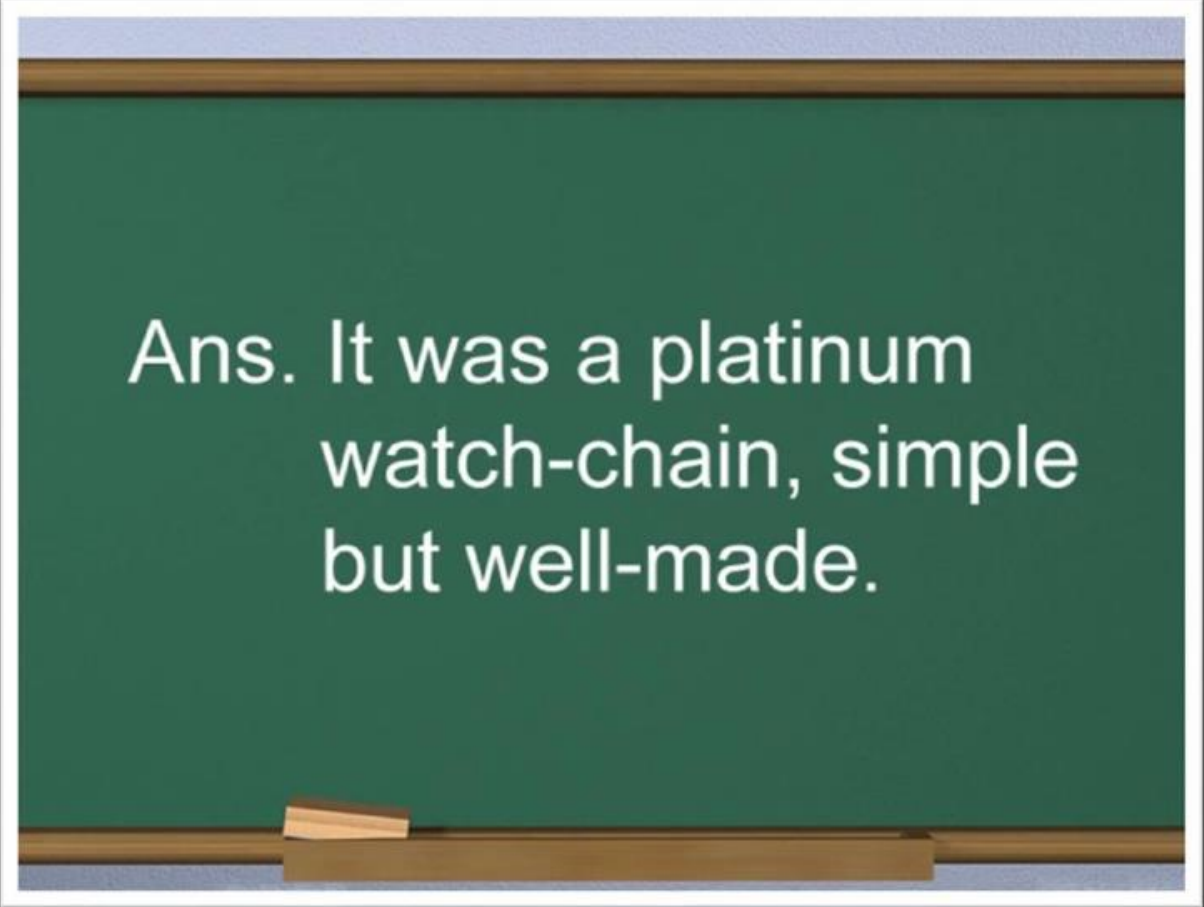
Platinum : A metal

Worthy : Respectable

Why was Della pleased with her selection of the present for Jim?

There was no other like it in any of the stores. It was a platinum watch-chain, simple but well made. It was worthy of the watch. As soon as she saw it she decided that it was the right present for Jim.

Q. Describe the present Della bought for him.



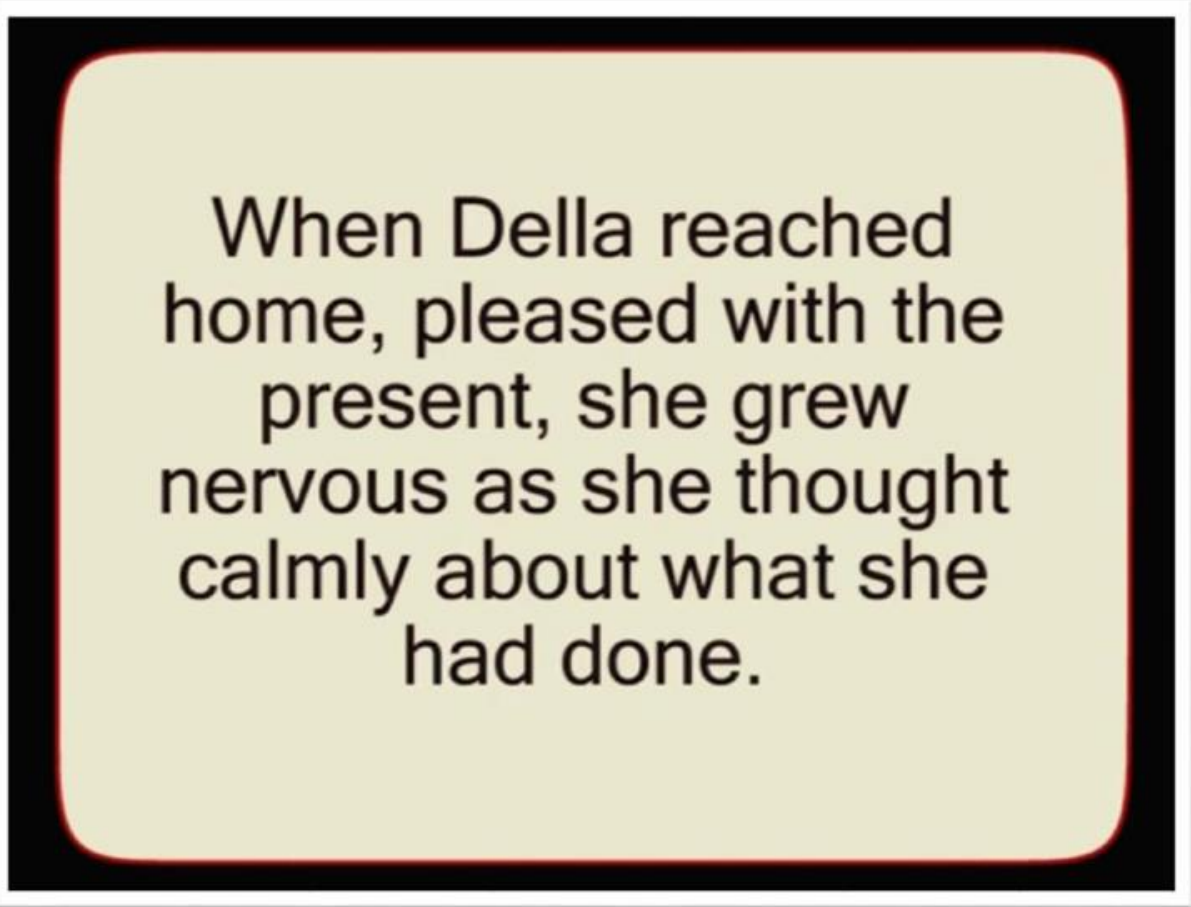
Ans. It was a platinum watch-chain, simple but well-made.



Q. How did Della manage to buy the gift?



Ans. She managed to buy the gift by selling her hair for \$ 20.



When Della reached home, pleased with the present, she grew nervous as she thought calmly about what she had done.



She looked at the reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically. She brought



out her curling irons and began to curl her hair carefully. The tiny curls made



Words : Meanings

Nervous : Confused


Reflection : Image

Curling : To form something into a curl


Critically : Expressing disapproval



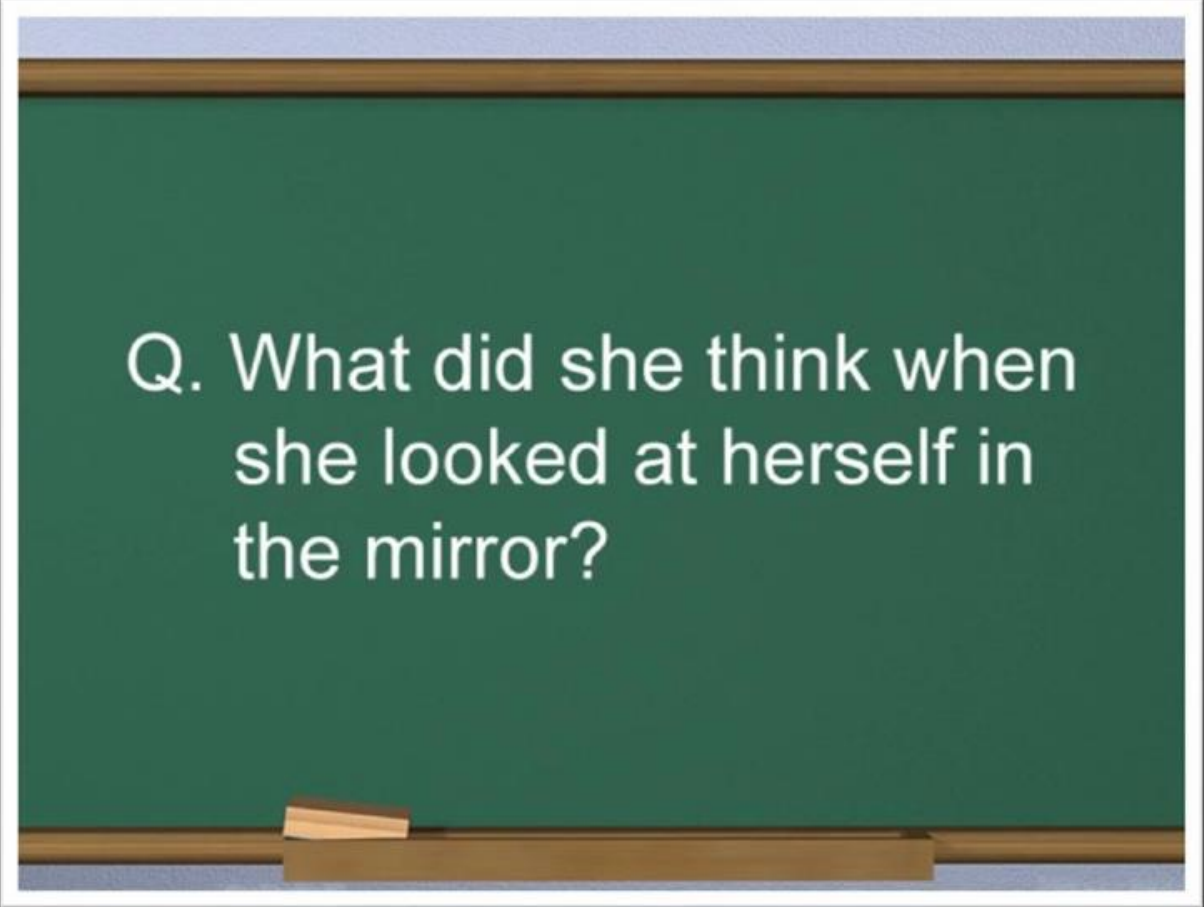


A woman with short blonde hair, wearing a bright pink short-sleeved dress and a necklace with a blue pendant, stands in a dimly lit room with a stone wall background. She is looking slightly to her right.

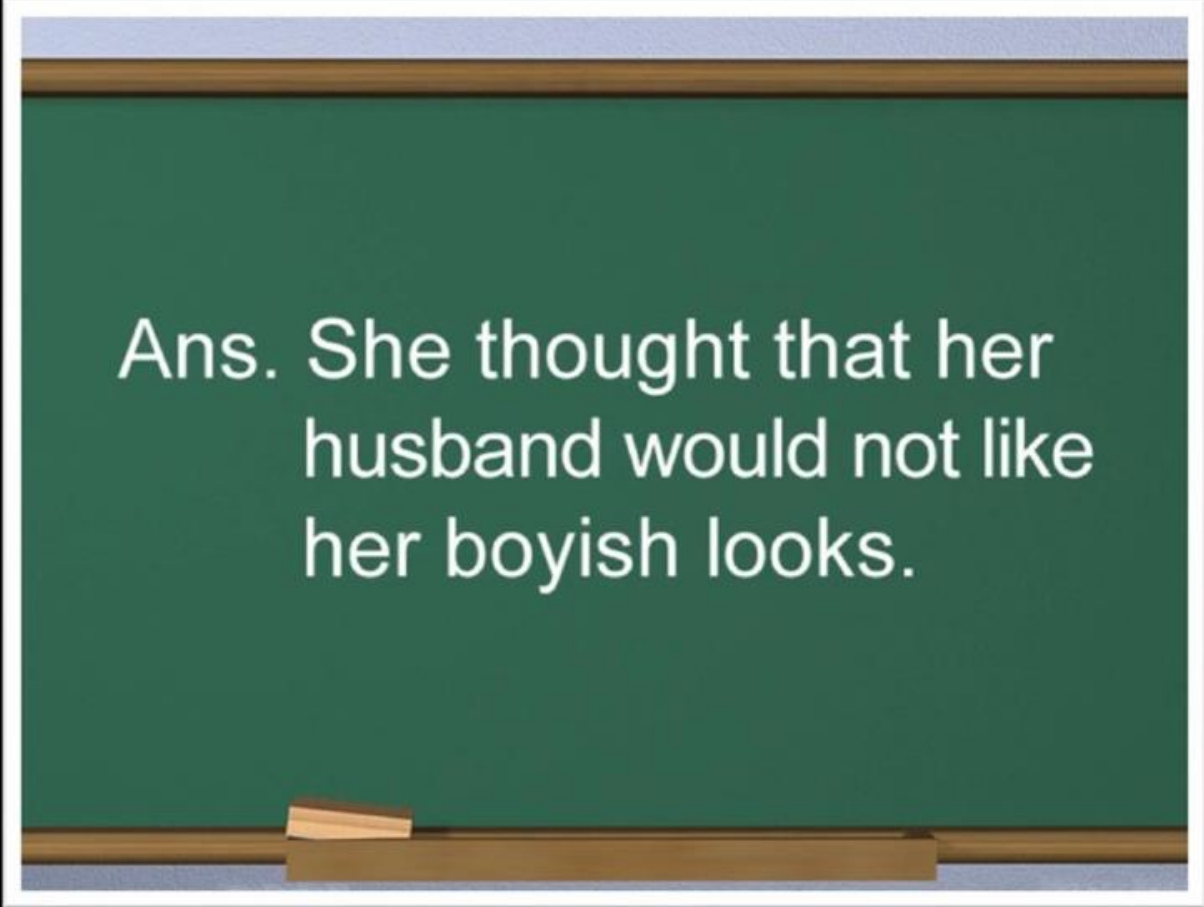
What could I do
with a dollar and
eighty- seven cents?

A man with shoulder-length reddish-brown hair and a light beard, wearing a brown jacket over a light-colored shirt, is shown in a close-up. He is looking towards the woman in the background. The woman is in the same pink dress and necklace as in the first panel.

before he takes a
second look at me,



Q. What did she think when she looked at herself in the mirror?



Ans. She thought that her husband would not like her boyish looks.

At seven o'clock the coffee was made and everything arranged to get dinner ready. Jim was never late. Della sat on the corner of the table near the door with the watch chain in her hand. Then she heard his step on the stairs.

She turned white for just a moment. She prayed, 'Please God, make him think I am still pretty.'

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two and he was burdened with a family!

He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves. Jim's eyes were fixed on Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise.

He simply stared at her with a strange expression on his face.

Words : Meanings

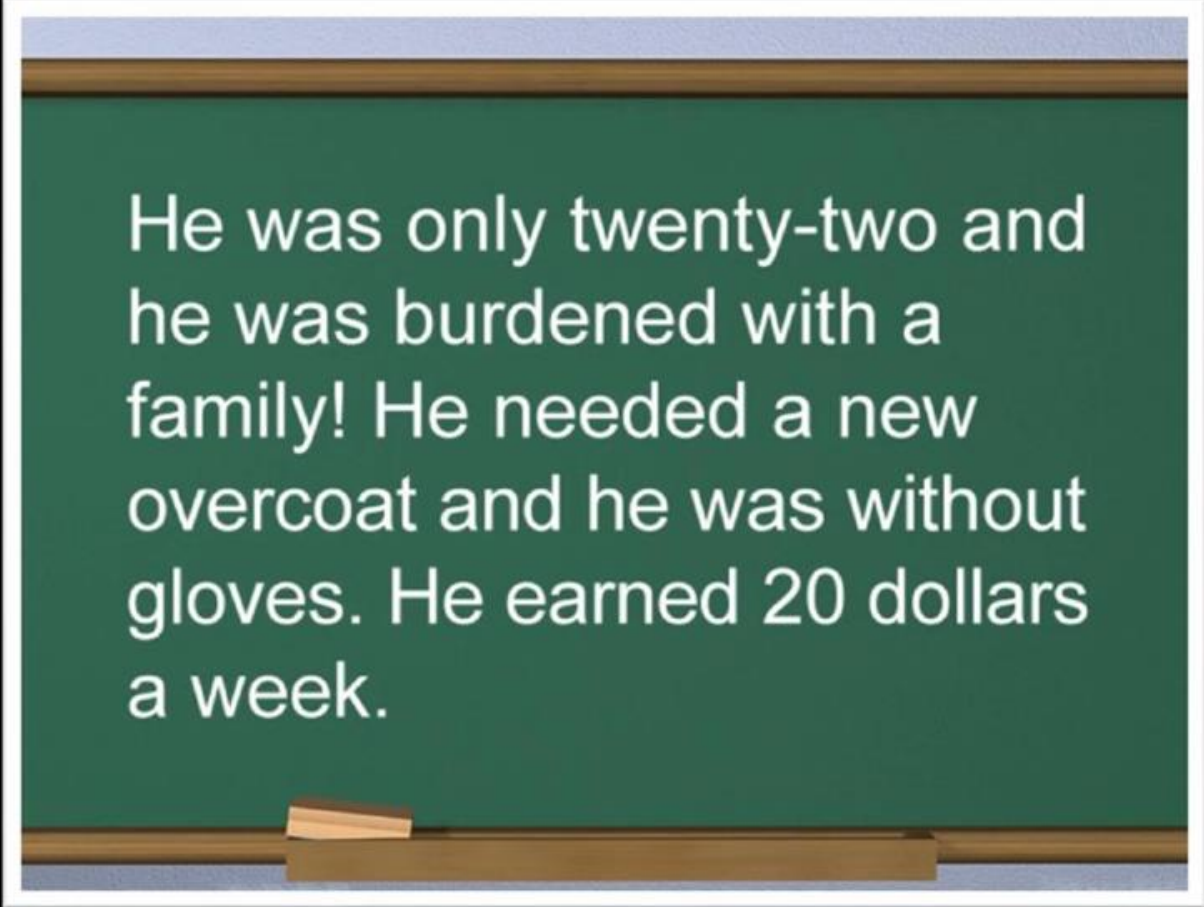
Burdened : Carry the burden of responsibility, work or worry

Expression : Look

Gloves : Covering of the hand




Why does the storywriter call Jim a poor fellow?




He was only twenty-two and he was burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves. He earned 20 dollars a week.







and sold it
because I had to
buy a Christmas
present for you.




I just had
to do it.




My hair grows so fast - you don't mind, do you?




You've cut off your hair?




Cut it off and sold
it. Don't you like
me just as well,
without my hair ?



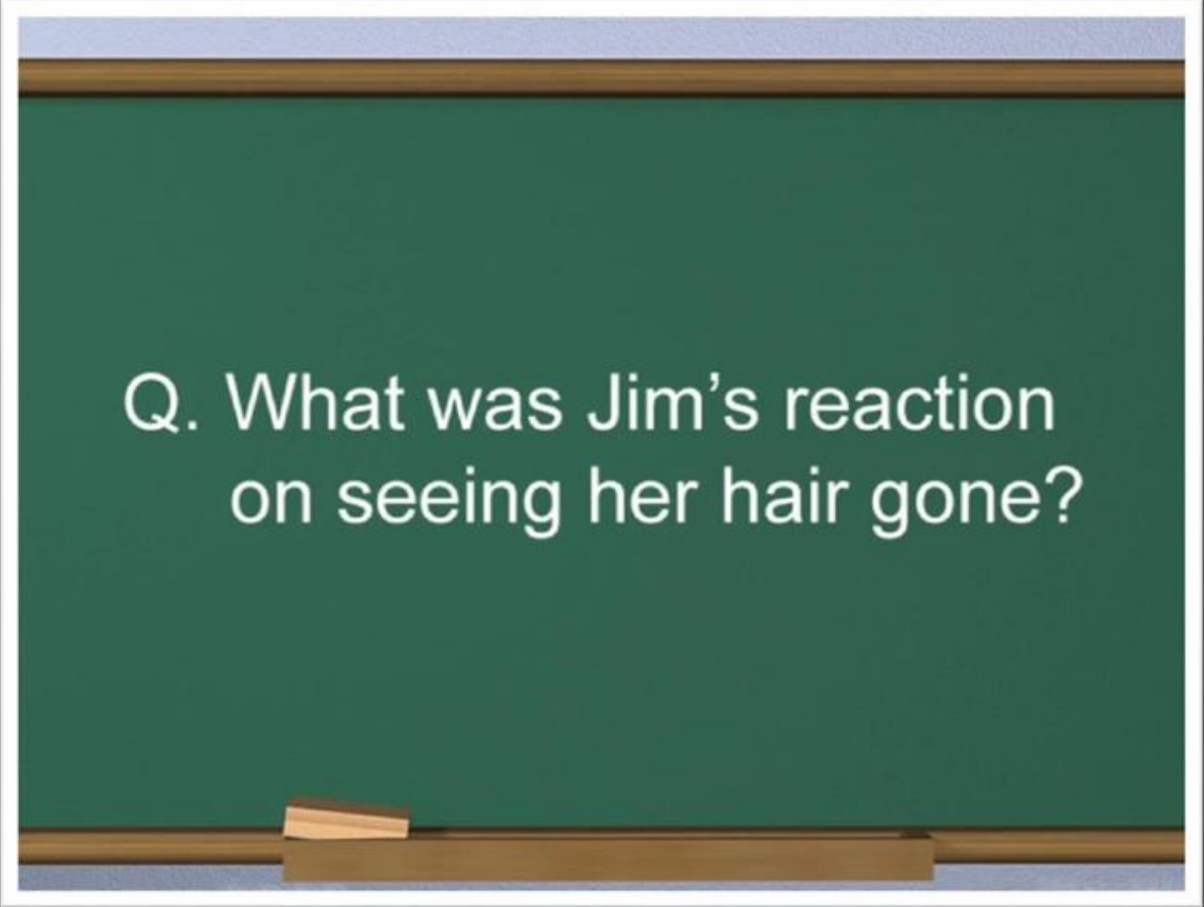
You say, your
hair is gone?



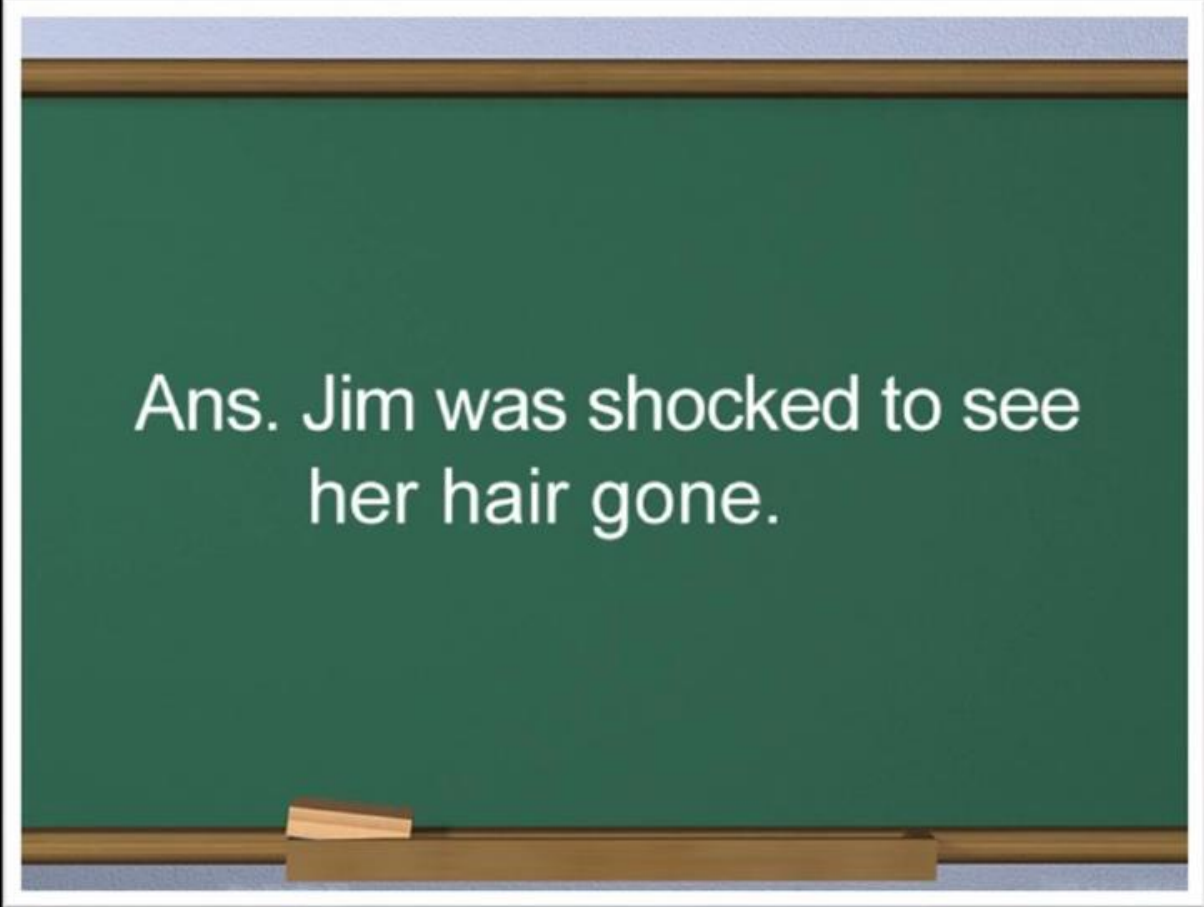
You needn't look for it. It's sold. I tell you sold and gone.



It's Christmas Eve, Jim. Be good to me, because I did it all for you.

A green chalkboard with a wooden ledge and a piece of chalk. The text is written in white on the board.


Q. What was Jim's reaction on seeing her hair gone?

A green chalkboard with a wooden ledge and a piece of chalk. The text is written in white on the board.


Ans. Jim was shocked to see her hair gone.

Q. What explanation did Della give to him?


Ans. She said that she got her hair cut and sold only for him. Moreover her hair grew very fast.

A man with long, wavy red hair and a light brown beard is sitting on a brown couch. He is wearing a brown jacket over a white shirt and a brown tie. He has his hands behind his head and is looking towards the right. The background is a dark, textured wall.


Don't make any
mistake, about
me, Della.

The same man from the first panel is shown in the same pose, sitting on the couch with his hands behind his head, looking to the right.

Whatever
happens I shall
always love you
just the same.



Now open the package



and you will understand why I behaved as I did.



They were beautiful combs, so expensive and they were hers now.



But alas, the hair in which she was to wear them was sold and gone!



She took them up lovingly, smiled through her tears and said.



My hair grows so fast Jim!




Words : Meanings

Combs : A flat piece of metal or plastic with a row of teeth on one side to make hair neat


Expensive : Costly

Q. What was in the package that Jim had brought for Della?


Ans. There was a set of beautiful expensive combs in the pack that Jim had brought for her.

A woman with short blonde hair, wearing a bright pink dress and a blue necklace, is sitting on a stone ledge. She is holding a gold chain necklace in her hands and gesturing with her right hand towards the left. A speech bubble is next to her.

Isn't it lovely, Jim?
I hunted all over
town to find it.

A woman with short blonde hair, wearing a bright pink dress and a blue necklace, is sitting on a stone ledge. She is holding a gold watch chain in her hands. Her right hand is extended towards the left.

You'll have to
look at your watch
a hundred times
a day now.

A man with long red hair, wearing a brown jacket, is sitting on a stone ledge with his arms outstretched. A woman in a pink dress is sitting next to him, holding a watch chain. A speech bubble is directed at her.

Give me your
watch. I want to
see how it looks
on it.





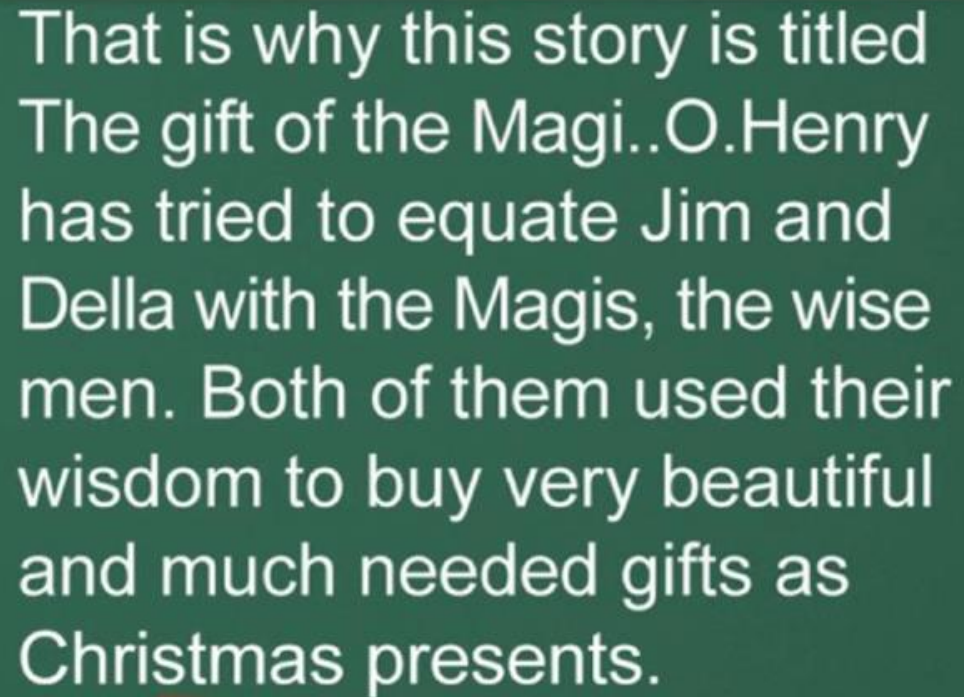
Q. How had Jim managed to bring the present for her?

Ans. Jim had managed to bring the present for her by selling his gold watch.

In fact, the first men who brought gifts for Christ were the Magis. They are also called the wise men.

The Magis brought gifts for the new born Christ in Bethlehem.

According to the Gospel of Mathew the Magi found Jesus by following his star, which thus traditionally became known as the star of Bethlehem. On finding him, they gave him three symbolic gifts.



That is why this story is titled
The gift of the Magi..O.Henry
has tried to equate Jim and
Della with the Magis, the wise
men. Both of them used their
wisdom to buy very beautiful
and much needed gifts as
Christmas presents.

Amrit

Amritsar

B.Sc.(Non-Med), M.A. (English, Political Science, History), M.Com, MBA, B.Ed.
National Awardee ICT 2017

Worked as District Coordinator English, DRP English, MRP English, British Council Master Trainer, CAL Trainer, Psychology Super KRP

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