

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

*The Best of O' Henry* is a collection of short stories from the vast corpus of work that O. Henry has left behind. This work was published by Enotes.com into Adobe Acrobat Document. The Best of O' Henry has 66 pages with 13 short stories inside it. They are *The Furnished Room, The Last Leaf, The Gift of The Magi, The Cop and The Anthem, The Green Door, After Twenty Year, A Retrieved Reformation, The Third Ingredient, The Princess and The Puma, Buried Treasure, An Unfinished Story, Babes in the Jungle, and The Call of The Tame*. These selected stories do not only give the reader a chance to read some of the best known of his works but also bear ample evidence of the wide range of his writings. Humorous and energetic, O. Henry's stories are marked by coincidence and surprise endings. They offer an insight into human nature and the ways it is affected by love, hate, wealth, poverty, gentility, disguise, and crime. O. Henry's depiction of his characters and their unique situation continue to weave their magic over readers almost a hundred years after the author created them. This is a must-read for all short story lovers as well as for those who want to take a dip into the world of classics.

*The Best of O' Henry* is written by O' Henry. William Sydney Porter (O' Henry) was born on September 11, 1862, in Greensboro, North Carolina. His middle name at birth was Sidney; he changed the spelling in 1898. His parents were Dr. Algernon Sidney Porter (1825–1888), a physician, and Mary Jane Virginia Swain Porter (1833–1865). They were married April 20, 1858. He used such pen names as Oliver Henry, S. H. Peters, James L. Bliss, T. B. Dowd, and Howard Clark to conceal his identity. But upon release from prison, William Sydney Porter chose to emerge as O. Henry. O' Henry write some short stories. The intervening tales continued to deal with the West or Southwest as well as Central or South America. His first book, *Cabbages and Kings* (1904), was a collection of stories that revealed a first-hand acquaintance with coastal Latin America. During his most prolific period (1904–5), he published a total of 115 short stories. All but 21 appeared in the columns of the *New York World*, and all but 16 dealt in some manner with New York City. With the publication of his second book, *The Four Million* (1906), he was hailed as the discoverer of romance in the streets of New York. Like most of his stories, the tales in this collection deal with the commonplace and arrive at a surprise ending through sheer coincidence. Each succeeding year until 1911 was marked by the publication of two collections of his stories. *Heart of the West* (1907) presented a fascinating collection of 19 stories about the West and the Texas

range. *The Trimmed Lamp* (1907) established his right to be called the knight of the shop girl. Following these came *The Voice of the City* and *The Gentle Grafter* (1908), *Roads of Destiny* and *Options* (1909), and *Strictly Business* and *Whirligigs* (1910). *Strictly Business* contains "A Municipal Report," the last story published before his death. *Whirligigs*, published posthumously, contains "*The Ransom of Red Chief*," perhaps his funniest story. Later posthumous volumes included *Sixes and Sevens* (1911), *Rolling Stones* (1912), *Waifs and Strays* (1917), *O. Henryana* (1920), and *O. Henry Encore* (1936). *Sixes and Sevens* contains his last complete work, "Let Me Feel Your Pulse," which is the most autobiographical. In the *O. Henry Encore*, a collection of his *Houston Post sketches*, are to be found his two favorite motifs: the situation of the impostor or wearer of a disguise, and the idea of fate as the one unavoidable reality of life.

As a tribute to Porter's contributions to American literature, the Society of Arts and Letters, in 1918, founded the O. Henry Memorial Award to be awarded annually to the author of the best American short story.

O' Henry's short stories is interesting short story. There are four aspects why the writer is interested in studying these short stories. The first is his brilliant use of language. These stories were written in the first half of the twentieth century, and O. Henry's use of language easily surpasses that of most contemporary writers. Not only

does he have an extensive vocabulary, but his writing abounds with similes and metaphors that breathe sparkling life and depth into his stories, marred only by the occasional "Lordy". *Ulysses and the Dogman* is a fine example of his skills with a language, metaphorically portraying dog owners as victims of Circe, in a hopeless enchantment to their leashed pets. Also exemplary is *Madame Bo-Peep of the Ranches* where a ranch manager has a heart fenced by barbwire just like the ranch on which he lives, and yet the twist at the ending suggests that perhaps we were completely mistaken. *An Unfinished Story* employs profound metaphors of angelic hosts to tell the tragic story of poor Dulcie's struggle for survival.

The second aspect is his unique insight into the social conditions of his time. O. Henry has a great understanding of the trials of the lower class, and he frequently pictures the lives of ordinary people of early twentieth century America with warm and sympathetic colours. His characters are frequently the overlooked: the struggling shop girl, the unsuccessful artist, the impoverished. Admittedly, some of his images can be hard to comprehend for modern readers, and the distance that time has placed between us and O. Henry's beloved New York means that some of his verbal pictures will be harder to understand and identify with. But his genuine sympathy for the oppressed cannot be missed. *The Gift of the Magi* is the signature O.

Henry story, probably his most famous tale which recounts a poor young couple who both give up a prized possession in order to purchase a gift for one another but ironically a gift intended to complement the other's prized possession that they have just given up. Another story which display his ability to picture the social conditions of his time but always with the trademark twist is *The Cop and the Anthem* humorously recounts the unsuccessful attempts of a man to get into jail for the winter - it remains vivid in my mind as a memorable favorite. *The Furnished Room* is a tragic and shocking story of suicide, depicting the depths of despair and desperation of the impoverished.

The third is his warm humors. O. Henry has an uncanny ability to portray the mundane and the ordinary in the most elevated language. Frequently he pits two characters together in a remarkable way so that one outshines and complements the other. And on other occasions he crafts the most ingenious and humorous schemes for outwitting others. One of his most popular stories is *The Handbook of Hymen*, recounting the tale of two men in a winter cabin, one armed with the hilarious Herkimer's handbook of Indispensable Information. And then there is O. Henry's fictional character Jeff Peters, a man who comes with the most ingenious money-making schemes, two shining examples displayed in *Jeff Peters as a Personal Magnet* and *The Exact Science of Matrimony*. *Let Me Feel Your Pulse* pokes fun at

doctors, while in *Next to Reading Matter* an overly eloquent character wins the heart of a senora with streams of articulate talk about the mundane.

The last is his ironic twist. One of the distinctive characteristics of O. Henry's short stories is the ironic twist at the end, which never fails to surprise and entertain, sometimes reversing the entire story line in a concluding one-liner. O. Henry's suspense and trademark ironic twist ensures that readers who have a good literary taste in short stories will not be disappointed. Like the Jeff Peters stories, *The Love-philtre of Ikey Schoenstein* also feature a brilliant scheme but a scheme of romance and the way it backfires is unforgettable. Other delightful examples of ordinary stories with a glorious ironic twist include *Witches' Loaves* and *While the Auto Waits*. The twist that comes at the end of *The Hypotheses of Failure* is so perplexing, that you'll have to re-read the entire story after reading the ending but completely delighted at the way in which O. Henry has misled you. But perhaps one of O. Henry's best uses of the ironic twist comes in *The Last Leaf*, a warm and tragic tale describing how a dying artist proves as resilient as the last leaf on the wall outside, and through the self-less sacrifice of another.

Based on the previous reasons the writer will observe *The Best of O' Henry* short stories using Sociological theory. So the writer

constructs the title **RELIGIOUS THEMES IN O' HENRY'S SHORT STORIES: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.**

## **B. Literature Review**

Actually, short story by O' Henry belongs to the best short story. But, the writer only found two papers analyzing the short story. The first paper about *The Cop and the Anthem* short story by Dragon Heart (2011), entitled "*O' Henry's Black Humor of the Cop and the Anthem*". It analyzed the black humor in *the Cop and the Anthem* short story to find the form of black humor in O' Henry's short story. Dragon Heart also analyzed personification and simile which are found in this short story. The second writer is conducted by Ardhendu De, entitled "*Analysis of O' Henry's short story The Gift of the Magi*". This study describes some figures of speech such; Symbolism, Imagery and Allegory. He also explained some themes which are found in this short story, such as: theme of love, theme of marriage, theme of Wealth, theme of sacrifice, and theme of women and femininity.

The differences between the writer and the previous writers are the theme and perspective. The writer analyzes the religious theme in O' Henry's short story by using Sociological Perspective.

## **C. Problem Statement**

The problem of the study is how religious theme is reflected in O' Henry's short stories.

#### **D. Limitation of the Study**

The writer focuses this research in analyzing religious theme in O' Henry's short stories based on Sociological Perspective.

#### **E. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are mentioned as follow:

1. To analyze the structural element of the memoir by finding character and characterization, setting, point of view, plot, style and theme.
2. To describe religious theme in O' Henry's Short stories memoir on Sociological Perspective.

#### **F. The Benefits of the Study**

The benefits of the study are:

##### **1. Theoretical Benefit**

The study is hoped to give a new contribution and information to the larger body of knowledge, particularly the literary studies on O' Henry's short stories.

##### **2. Practical Benefit**

The study is hoped to enrich knowledge and experience of the writer about religious themes in O' Henry's short stories using a sociological perspective.

#### **G. Research Method**

##### **1. Type of the Study**

In this research, the researcher will use the qualitative research in the form of literary work. Statistic is not necessary in



examining and exploring the facts in qualitative research. Therefore it will not require any calculation and enumeration.

## **2. Object of the Study**

The object of the study is O' Henry's short stories. It is analyzed by using Sociological Perspective.

## **3. Type of the Data and the Data Source**

### **a. Type of the Data**

Type of the data in this research paper is text, which consists of word, phrases and sentences.

### **b. The Data Source**

In doing this study, the researcher uses two sources of data; they are primary data which will be taken from short story *The Best of O' Henry* by O' Henry. It comprises such things as words, phrases, sentences events, and narration. The secondary data are taken from any information related to the short stories. The writer also gathers information of O' Henry's background and her works from many books

## **4. Technique of the Data Collecting**

In conducting the study, the writer uses the techniques of documentation in collecting the data.

1. Reading the novel repeatedly.
2. Taking notes of important part from primary and secondary data available.

3. Selecting the data by rejecting the irrelevant information which does not support the topic of the study.

## **5. Technique of the Data Analysis**

In analyzing data, the writer employs descriptive qualitative analysis of content. The steps of technique of the data analysis arrange as follows:

1. Analyze the structural elements of the work.
2. Try to decide the sociological analysis of the literary work.
3. Make discussion of the finding.
4. Make conclusion and discussion.

## **1. Research Paper Organization**

The research paper organization of the “Religious Theme in O’ Henry’s short story: A Sociological Perspective” is as follows: Chapter I is Introduction; it consists of the Background of the Study, Literary Review, Problem Statement, Limitation of the Study, Objectives of the Study, Benefits of the Study, Research Method, and Research Paper Organization. Chapter II is Underlying Theory; it consists of Sociology of literature, The Perspective of Sociology of Literature, Structural Element of Short Story and Theoretical Application. Chapter III is social historical background of American society in the early twentieth century that covers the social aspect, political aspect, economic aspect, science and technology aspect, cultural aspect, and

religious aspect, Chapter IV is Structural Analysis of O' Henry's short stories; (1) Structural Element of the short story which consists of Characters and Characterizations, Setting, Plot, Point of View, Style and Theme. (2) Discussion. Chapter V is Sociological Analysis and Discussion: (1) Sociological Analysis which consists of social aspect, political aspect, economic aspect, science and technology aspect, cultural aspect, and religious aspect. Chapter VI is Conclusion and Suggestion.