

Chapter 1

The Model Millionaire*Author: Oscar Wilde***Compiled By: Dr. Monika Malhotra**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Objectives**
3. **Summary of the short story**
4. **Important Questions and Answers**
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Introduction:

The short story "*The Model Millionaire*" was written by Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900), a famous Irish writer. Oscar Wilde had a sarcastic wit, and was a strong critic of snobbery and society. His stories are known for the pleasant surprise twists. '*The Model Millionaire*' first appeared in print in the newspaper '*The World*' in June 1887. It was published again in 1891 as a part of the anthology *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories*.

Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are to:

1. Acquaint the students with the summary of the short story.
2. To discuss the theme, title and characters.
3. To discuss the question and answers.

SUMMARY:

The protagonist of the story *The Model Millionaire* by Oscar Wilde is a handsome young man Hughie Erskine who is unemployed and poor. He has tried his luck in many jobs but fails in all. He is in love with a girl named Laura Merton, daughter of a retired colonel. Though the colonel is fond of Hughie, but he refuses to marry his daughter to him unless he has ten thousand pounds of his own. One morning, Hughie visits his painter friend, Alan Trevor. At

that time Trevor is giving finishing touches to a picture of a ragged beggar. The beggar looks miserable with one hand leaning on a stick and the other hand with his old hat for alms. His face is heavily wrinkled and he looks extremely piteous. Hughie fills with pity for the beggar. Although he can barely afford to do so, Hughie gives the beggar the only pound he has. The beggar smiles and thanks him for his charity.

Later when Hughie meets Trevor in a club at night, he enquires about the picture. Trevor replies that it is finished and framed but the old man has become quite concerned about Hughie, when Trevor told him all about Laura, the colonel and the £10,000. Hughie becomes angry with Trevor for telling the old man about his private affairs. The amused Trevor tells him that the old man he was painting is Baron Hausberg, one of the wealthiest men in Europe who has come to Trevor's studio to have himself painted as a beggar. Now Hughie feels very small at what he has done. He feels ashamed about having given a coin to a millionaire. On hearing this Trevor goes into fits of laughter and tells Hughie not to worry. The following day, an old gentleman comes to Hughie's house with a sealed envelope from Baron Hausberg. The writing on envelope is "A wedding present to Hughie and Laura, from an old beggar". Inside the envelope, Hughie finds the cheque for £10,000.

Hughie and Laura get married. Trevor is the best man on their wedding. The Baron attends the wedding and remarks "Millionaire Models are rare enough, but by Jove, model millionaires are rarer still".

THEME:

Oscar Wilde has beautifully portrayed the themes of generosity, gratitude, love, charity, compassion, and commitment in this short story. Hughie's act of generosity gets repaid. Though he does not have enough money, but he shows sympathy towards the ragged beggar by giving him more than he can really afford. His kindness is repaid in the form of ten thousand pounds as the wedding present.

Q1: Justify the title of the story *The Model Millionaire*.

Ans: The writer has given the title '*The Model Millionaire*' to the story, which is apt and justified. In the story, the rich man Baron Hausberg, out of whim poses as a mendicant. Not only does he prove to be a perfect model, but he also proves a model for millionaires as he knows how to use his money. In the story, Hughie Erskine is a handsome and sweet mannered guy who has inherited nothing from his late father. His only means is an allowance of 200 pounds a year from an old aunt. He tries his hand in various jobs like selling tea and sherry but fails.

He is desperately in love with Laura Merton who is daughter of retired Colonel. Hughie is in a tight corner as Laura's father wants him to have £10,000 before marriage. The two lovers feel helpless. On his visit to the studio of his painter friend, Trevor, he is fascinated to see a ragged beggar with wrinkled face. He takes pity on his wretched looks and gives him the only coin he has in his pocket. Later he is shocked to learn from his painter friend that the

old beggar is really Baron Hausberg. Baron thus proves to be a perfect model. Next morning, a gentleman calls on Hughie saying that he has come from Baron Hausberg. Hughie hastens to apologize for the previous day's incident. He is surprised to see a check of 10000 pounds as his marriage gift. The Baron justifies himself to be a rarer model millionaire as he knows the real value of money and how to use it.

Q2: Discuss the Character Sketch of Hughie Erskine.

Ans:

- ❖ Hughie Erskine is a charming young man with impressive looks. He has curly brown hair, grey eyes and clear features. He is a sincere lover, a generous soul and a true friend.
- ❖ Hughie is desperately in love with Laura Merton, whose father, a retired colonel, wants Hughie to have £10,000 of his own before marrying his daughter. He is helpless and in a tight corner.
- ❖ He is a kind-hearted man who shows his sympathy towards ragged beggar by paying him the only coin he possesses. The wretched beggar gets impressed by his generosity and repays his kindness by presenting him the money which he is in dire need of.
- ❖ Hughie lacks practical wisdom as he has tried various professions and trades but has been unsuccessful in all of them, as he lacks the art of making money. He tries various professions like selling tea, stock exchange, etc. but earns nothing. At present he is unemployed and depends upon £200 per year which he gets as an allowance from his old aunt.
- ❖ Hughie's luck finally takes a turn. The incident of visiting his friend Trevor and his giving a coin to pathetic beggar changes his ill luck in the story. It is a chance that the beggar is one of the richest men of Europe. The money he gives to beggar proves to be an investment which gets repaid with a lot of interest. Finally his generosity changes the whole course and he receives a cheque of ten thousand pounds from the rich millionaire. Thus, he gets married to Laura.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS:

Q1: Sketch the character of Alan Trevor.

Q2: Analyse the elements of suspense in the story 'The Model Millionaire'.

THE JUDGEMENT OF PARIS**Author: Leonard Merrick****Introduction**

Leonard Merrick (1864-1939) was an English novelist, dramatist and short-story writer. His name was Leonard Miller, which he changed to Merrick during his acting days. *The Judgement of Paris* is one of the short stories included in Merrick's volume entitled 'While Paris Laughed'. Merrick is a writer of comedies with tragedy lurking at every corner and is an expert at surprise endings.

Objectives:

The objectives of this chapter are to:

1. Acquaint the students with the summary of the short story.
2. To discuss the title and plot of the story.
3. To discuss the important question answers.

Summary:

The Judgement of Paris is a story about the friendly rivalry between Robichon and Quinquart, the top two comedians of Paris stage. Both the comedians are accomplished in their profession. The robust Robichon stuns the audience the moment he opens his mouth, and on the other hand Quinquart is all skin and bone whose silence makes the spectators roll with laughter. Though friends, they both compete for the hand of Suzanne Brouette, the leading actress of France. Suzanne has kept a condition that she will marry the one whom the city of Paris considers the best actor. As they are equal in comedy, they decide to try their skill as tragedians.

As they are comedians, no Paris theatre is ready to offer them a tragic role. Just then, a stranger approaches them and begs them for help. He is Jacques Roux, a retired public executioner. He offers two hundred and fifty francs to describe the highlights of his career as an executioner and to make a confession of his horror and regret at what he has been doing throughout his career. As Roux is a stranger in Appeville, Robichon thinks this as an opportunity to deliver the lecture on his behalf. Suzanne too is thrilled and excited to hear of Robichon's plan to deliver the address in a packed hall. Robichon starts his lecture with a couple of jokes and then slowly moves to horrible details about his executions. This is his strategy to shock the audience. By contrast, the audience gets spellbound because the veteran actor starts speaking of Roux, and this kind of oration is not expected of from the executioner. After narrating horror after horror, he confesses by saying "I am a murderer".

The audience gets moved by pity, terror and disgust. The whole atmosphere becomes grim and there is pin drop silence on the exit of the artist. The press reporters rush to the telegraph office and wire their papers that Roux is the greatest artist.

Suzanne and Quinquart congratulate Robichon on his success as the best tragic actor. Just then a chit arrives from a Marquis de Thevenin requesting the speaker for a chat. When the actor visits the stranger's place, he is received by a servant who tells him that his master will be back as he has gone to doctor's clinic. Later, an old wobbling man comes in and congratulates Robichon on his success. He offers him a glass of wine and does not drink himself as he says this is doctor's advice.

He asks Roux to remember one Victor Lesneur. Robichon bluffs that Victor died like a hero. Marquis now reveals that Victor was his only son and Roux has killed him. Robichon stammers that he was only an instrument of the law but Roux reminds him that he has admitted that he was a murderer. Then he asks Robichon whether he finds the wine to his taste. Robichon at once guesses that the wine is poisoned. The old man smilingly declares "Roux will die within the hour." Robichon starts feeling the pangs of death.

The old man removes his wig and plaster from his teeth. He is Quinquart. The top tragedy actor Robichon himself gets duped and defeated by his rival. He is adjudged as the best actor by Paris and he gets Suzanne as his reward.

Q1: Discuss the title of the story *The Judgment of Paris* .

Ans: The title is based on the famous painting by Rubens. It describes the scene of the beauty contest between three Greek goddesses Juno, Venus and Minerva. Paris acted as a judge.

The story *The Judgement of Paris* concerns the friendly rivalry between two famous comedians Robichon and Quinquart for the hand of the leading lady of the Paris stage. Here the general public of city of Paris acts as a judge. Suzanne Brouette leaves the decision to the audience of Paris, saying that whomsoever the audience choose as the best actor, she will marry him. As both are equals in comic acting, they have to compete for the lady's hand.

A retired executioner, Roux, pays visit and wants a lecture to be delivered at Appeville on the highlights of career of an executioner. As he himself has abandoned this profession of execution, he believes capital punishment is evil. He wants to spread this message but finds it hard to perform for the audience on stage. Robichon thinks that this will give him a chance to play tragic possibilities in the guise of the executioner. He agrees to impersonate Roux.

Robichon starts delivering the lecture at Appeville stage. He narrates all the horrible details of his career and the audience gets moved by pity, horror and shock. He leaves the audience enthralled by his performance. Suzanne and Quinquart congratulate him on his success.

Later he receives an invitation to chat with some unknown noble. Visiting there, he is received by his servant. A tottering old man comes in and congratulates him on his success. He offers him a glass of wine and asks him to remember one Victor Lesneur. Robichon bluffs

saying that Victor died a hero's death. The old man accuses Robichon of murdering his only son Victor and informs him that the wine is poisoned to kill him to avenge his son's execution by him. Robichon gets terrified.

The old man brings an end to Robichon's scary dream by revealing his identity. He takes off his mask and thus Robichon is outwitted. It is in fact the crafty plot of Quinquart to give the biggest shock to his rival Robichon.

Robichon as an actor duped the audience at Appeville but Quinquart finally duped the actor. The audience of Paris give their judgement by declaring Quinquart the winner of the contest.

Q2: Discuss the plot of the story *The Judgement of Paris*.

Ans: The story has a well constructed plot. There is a lot of suspense and it lasts upto the end. Various threads of the story are interwoven and skilfully mixed to make the story interesting. The story opens with the problem to decide who the better actor is. Both the actors Robichon and Quinquart are considered equals in comic acting. Suddenly destiny provides answer. Retired public executioner Roux offers them a chance as he wants one of the actors to impersonate him on the stage at Appeville.

Robichon decides to take up this challenge to perform on the stage the role of executioner. It is highly dramatic as he leaves the audience spell bound and proves himself to be the greatest actor. It appears that the matter has been settled and Robichon has won Suzanne. Suddenly tables turn and unexpected thing happens when Robichon is invited by some unknown old person to his place for chat. There is suspense on who the old man is and the reader is shocked when it is revealed that the wine offered to Robichon by the stranger is poisoned. Suspense is heightened to zenith and the plot reaches its climax when the mask is removed by the stranger. Everything becomes crystal clear. The old man is Quinquart before the shocked Robichon. The dupe has been duped.

The plot is well knit. There are no loose ends. Our curiosity is aroused and interest is sustained throughout the story. The story has a surprising end and the whole matter is resolved in a dramatic way.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS:-

Q1: How was Robichon outwitted by Quinquart in the end? Who do you think was a better actor of the two?

Q2: Comment on Robichon's performance as an executioner and the public response to his performance.