

# English Anthology

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## **Preface**

Over the years, writing various articles in and out of class has provided numerous exciting opportunities for me to explore the world of English literature and language. These opportunities have not only helped me become a better writer but also made me fall in love with writing and storytelling once again. This anthology consists of 12 carefully crafted feature articles each reviewing the stories, poems, plays, movies, and television shows I have consumed in the past years or various themes or characters from them.

Writing each of these articles has been instrumental in broadening my knowledge and understanding of deciphering the intricacies of the various literary pieces. It has also facilitated my connection with them on a personal and humanising level, allowing me to delve deeper into the layers of meaning and significance within each work. Through this collection, I aim to share my passion for literature and storytelling while providing insightful analyses that invite readers to engage with these texts in new and meaningful ways.

To everyone reading this anthology, I hope you have as much fun as I had writing each feature article in here!

## A Renaissance Anomaly

| Knights should know better than trying to save her  
| Because shero here is a damsel in a shining armour

When we first meet Portia, we can see that she is anything but a naive princess in a fairyland. She is in fact seen to be tinged with the same melancholy that dominates Antonio. Coming one after another, we cannot miss this echo in the mood of the two characters.

*"In sooth, I know not why I am so sad;  
It wearied me.."*

*(Antonio, I.i.1-2)*

*"By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary  
of this great world"*

*(Portia, I.ii.1)*

Though Portia is sad, unlike Antonio, she can name the cause for her distress. She defines her melancholy in terms of her attitude towards the law and her relationship to it. She says that she is sad because she is bound by the will of her father and, according to the decrees, is denied her freedom of choice in marriage.

However, she reconciles with her father's will when she gets to know that all her unwanted suitors have departed instead of facing the test. Although Portia highly disagreed with her father's will and was tempted to break it, she remains faithful to him. This highlights her nature as a well-refined and cultured Renaissance heroine and, as Elizabethans would say, a dutiful daughter.

Portia, just like all Renaissance heroines, is endowed with her own share of delightful qualities like dignity, sweetness and tenderness. However, she is individualised and distinguished from other Shakespearean heroines by qualities peculiar to herself such as her high mental power, intellectual superiority, enthusiastic temperament and buoyant spirit.

These qualities are innate but she also has other external distinguishing qualities which are the result of the circumstances in which she is placed. She is a heiress of a princely name and countless wealth who has breathed an atmosphere redolent of perfume, opulence, and blandishment from infancy.

Accordingly, she has a commanding grace, a high-bred, airy elegance and a spirit of magnificence in all that she says and does. She is full of penetrative wisdom, genuine compassion and lively wit. Her affections are all mixed up with faith, hope, and joy and her wit has not a particle of malevolence or causticity.

Portia prevails and presents herself as an independent and powerful woman with a unique perspective. From the very beginning of the play, she is seen to be purposeful and definite about her feelings on subjects that deal with the opposite sex. She is also seen challenging the accepted roles of women and the ideas put forward in Elizabethan guide books about the role of ideal wives.

Though Portia is initially portrayed as a “damsel in distress” locked up by her father, a patriarchal figure, she takes matters into her own hands when she steps forward to woo Bassanio. According to the chivalric romances, the knight always woos the lady, not vice versa. But in Portia’s case, we see a reversal of this role when she gives long speeches in the beginning of Act 3 Scene 2 regarding her affection for Bassanio while Bassanio speaks little.

Later, Portia seems to fit into a wife’s Renaissance ideal as she officially hands over all her power and greets her marriage with a surrender of herself and her property to her husband who, like her father, will have full legal control over her (III.ii.169–174). But shortly thereafter, it becomes clear that Portia will never be happy as a wife who is subservient.

An interesting conversation is presented between Portia and Bassanio when they receive the letter from Venice about Antonio’s misfortune and the upcoming trial (III.ii.308-313). Portia is seen exerting her dominance on Bassanio as she makes decisions for both of them and informs Bassanio of what his course of action will be. This makes her sound far more like a typical Renaissance husband giving permission and an allowance to his wife than a fiancée talking to her future husband.

Portia is not only seen as a heiress who is capable of controlling her own destiny and rescue herself from sufferings but also as a damsel, who can make swift decisions and come to the rescue of the knights, or the heroes, when they are in distress.

When Bassanio leaves for Venice to aid Antonio, Portia evokes the conventional ideal of a Renaissance lady but later goes against society’s gender roles to support Antonio in the disguise of a man. The sudden plan which she forms, her disguise and her deportment as the young and learned doctor is a simple and natural result of Portia’s character.

The quickness with which she perceives the legal advantage, the spirit of adventure with which she engages in the masquerading and the firmness and intelligence with which she executes her generous purpose are all in perfect keeping.

All the finest parts of her character are brought to bear in the trial scene. There she shines forth all her divine self. Her intellectual competency, her elevated sense of religion, her high honourable principles, her best feelings as a woman, are all displayed.

As a strong woman in a male-centred and patriarchal society, Portia needed a man's apparel to present her views in court. However, it wasn't the dress, her beauty or her "father-given" property that secured her win in the trial; rather it was her intellectual prowess and eloquence that made it possible for her to write her own narrative of her existence as well as that of the men around them.

Portia brings fresh air from Belmont into the sea-level miasma of Venice when she rewrites the societal rules. By exhibiting masculine energy, according to Elizabethan standards, and reversing gender roles, she shocks the audience - especially the Elizabethan men.

By breaking all the barriers and transgressing the socially defined role as "Damsel in Distress", Portia translocates herself as the "Damsels in Shining Armor" who is capable of becoming the "saviour" of herself, men and mankind.

In simple words I would explain Portia as a very unique, complex character who is partly a typical Renaissance heroine and partly a radical feminist and has immense intellectual and human potential.

"When England was ruled for half a century by Queens but women had almost no legal power." -  
Suzanne W. Hull

## **Frivolous Yet Precious**

| This provocation is the hinge on which the play swings

| For it gives us humour in the name of rings

Having been a part of all the three love stories in the play, rings form an integral part of Merchant of Venice. From when Portia and Nerissa gifted their husbands with rings to when Jessica thieved and sold Leah's turquoise ring while eloping with Lorenzo, rings hold great importance and embody several meanings in the tales of love in this Shakespearean romantic comedy.

A ring, in itself, is a frivolous object yet it serves as a precious symbolic and aesthetic addition. During Shakespeare's time and in this play, the engagement and wedding rings indicated commitment. The ring Portia and Nerissa gave to Bassanio and Gratiano stand for the men's commitment to their wives just as the rings that Bassanio and Gratiano would give to Portia and Nerissa would stand for the wives' commitment.

Traditionally, and to this day, rings mainly showcase love and affection. However, in the context of this play, this tradition is not completely divorced from the symbolism of wealth or power. This is so because during the Elizabethan era, wedding rings were mostly confined to the richer parts of society, who could afford such a token.

The fact that Portia and Nerissa gave rings to Bassanio and Gratiano along with the aspects of love also serves as an indication of their wealth and power. The rings also symbolise a promise, vow or bond. Bonds and promises are a central theme in the play, and so is breaking them too. This makes the rings and bonds interlinked and vital to the play. This connection between the rings and the bonds is expressed through the ring scene.

The ring plot is introduced towards the end of the "Choices of Caskets" when Portia and Nerissa give their husbands, Bassanio and Gratiano, rings to seal their love in marriage. While doing so they make their husbands take a vow to never part with the rings, which foreshadows an event where the rings may be lost or given up.

In a speech which begins with an affective paradox and epitomises the Elizabethan sex/gender system, where women were explicitly commodified and were made pawns in the political and social manoeuvres of their families, Portia declares her love to Bassanio and gives him the ring.

Her declaration of love at first seems to exemplify her acquiescence to woman's place in such a system but later, with the gift of her ring, she accepts submission to Bassanio and the typical Elizabethan marriage which was characterised by women's subjection and their loss of legal rights.

This pledge comes as a huge relief to Bassanio as he owes Antonio a great debt and is pretty much penniless without Portia's wealth. In his answer to the pledge of Portia's, Bassanio implicitly recognizes the economic disparity between the two and metaphorically makes her the master.

The ring which seems to represent Portia's submission to Bassanio thus becomes the means through which she regains control of herself, her wealth and power. By giving him the ring she puts herself in a position of power because she's giving her soon-to-be husband more than he can possibly give her in return.

This ring plot is then continued with Portia and Nerissa saving Antonio from Shylock's cruelty, while being disguised as men, in the court of the Duke. They not only save Antonio from Shylock's bond but also turn the tables on Shylock.

Bassanio, Gratiano, and Antonio are eternally grateful for their services and offer them anything they want. Portia and Nerissa, still disguised, ask for Bassanio's and Gratiano's rings, which the men refuse to part with. However, after much urging from Antonio, they give up their rings to the disguised Portia and Nerissa without knowing it was their wives.

Later, Portia and Nerissa confront their husbands on the matter of the rings in a series of humorous dialogue outbursts. Eventually they reveal their devious and successful plan.

This part of the story is based on paradoxes: Bassanio, in giving it to the young "doctor", is betraying Portia at her own request. In the final scene Portia gives the ring to Antonio, who returns it to Bassanio, thus participating in a symbolic exchange that cements the marriage relationship from which he is excluded. As Portia's ring comes back to Portia, then back to Bassanio, the line of obligation becomes at last a circle, the symbol of perfection and wholeness.

The ring in this part exemplifies the paradox of marriage: it binds two people exclusively to each other, yet it does so within a social network in which they have inevitable ties with other people, ties on which the marriage itself depends on.

The ring episode serves as the major source of humour that classifies this Shakespearean piece as a romantic comedy though it has underlying tones of tragedy. To the audience of Elizabethan age, a wedding ring was a very important thing and they could never imagine parting with it thus making the ring episode quite gripping for them.

The episode acts as an important element that provides for the connection between the various storylines in the play. The Casket culminates with the gift of the ring by Portia to Bassanio. Portia's role in rescuing Antonio allows her to request the ring from Bassanio, thus the ring plot is connected to the bond story and "Pound of Flesh" plot. This connection between the trial scene and the ring plot makes the trial scene more engrossing.

By giving the ring to Bassanio through Antonio and making Antonio an advocate for their marriage, Portia overrides the two men's friendship bond and makes that the most important bond. This links the wedding theme with the friendship theme.

Furthermore, all the readings of the play have often been constructed around a sharp opposition between the two locations, Venice and Belmont, and between the values of Portia and the values of Shylock. Shakespeare, however, has improvised the play by creating constant echoes back and forth between the play's apparently disparate worlds and one of those echoes are the rings.

Portia gives a ring to Bassanio, who gives it away. Meanwhile, Leah has given a ring to Shylock, and Jessica steals it. Shylock's proverb, "Fast bind, fast find" (II.v.56), could be a comment on the way the women use the rings to bind the men to them. Thus the whole story of the play is connected with the plot of rings in some way or the other.

Alice N. Benston, renowned professor of theatre studies, offers an amusing interpretation of this ring scene. She believes that if we treat the so-called "ring-trick" as a trial, in which Portia has as important a task as "Balthazar" had in Venice, we will see that the last act, far from being a mere "thematic appendix".

She describes that we will see that the episode achieves a synthesis of troublesome antinomies, deepens our understanding of Shylock and his "bond", and incorporates Antonio in the final vision. She explains that the key to understanding the thematic and structural organisation of "The Merchant of Venice" is to see the play as a series of three trials ie. as a tripartite consisting of Bassanio's casket scene, Shylock's trial and the ring episode where all three trials are equal partners in the drama.



She further adds that the play not only has a tripartite structure, but is informed throughout by a pattern of triad. There are three trials, three caskets, three couples, and of great importance, three rings.

In conclusion, the ring episode can be explained as a highly intriguing matriarchal challenge that revolves around rings and was contrived to test the love and commitment of the husbands. The ring scene in fact turns out to be a cardinal component that contributes a lot to the smooth development of the play and the humorous twists in it.

In simpler words, it can be said that the rings serve as one of the hinges on which the play turns.

## A Tale From An Overlooked Genre

| From being a patriot to a traitor, the old story is quite ironic

| And that's why the monologue is said to be dramatic

Until the late 19th century, a lot of detailed attention has been given to epics, short-stories, dramas, novels, lyrics, and other literary forms, but comparatively very few references have been made to the dramatic monologue.

A beginning towards the understanding of this neglected form was made by Stopford A. Brooke, who dedicated one chapter to a discussion of Tennyson's use of the dramatic monologue in his book "Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life". Brooke was of the opinion that dramatic monologues "belong directly to the tragedy and to the comedy of life".

However with S.S. Curry's book on dramatic monologues and other literary lauerates including R.H. Fletcher, Claud Howard, W.L. Phelps, Bliss Perry, etc. exploring the genre, the uniqueness of the genre were brought to light.

This evolution of the dramatic monologue, according to Curry, can be traced in the "conflict between poet and stage, between writer and stage artist". The form did not evolve in direct opposition to the play, but rather as a "new and parallel aspect of dramatic art".

A dramatic monologue is the speech of a single character with dramatic significance. They compress into themselves a single vivid scene a narrative sense of the speaker's history and psychological insight into their character.

During this speech, the speaker unveils the situation, setting, the audience and the most interesting part is the revelation about his own personality. The dramatic monologue offers a psychological experience, through entering into the mind of a character and seeing everything only via their perspective.

In dramatic monologues, only one character speaks while there are other characters present on the scene. This quality differentiates dramatic monologues from soliloquies and apostrophes; because in the former, a character relates their thoughts and feelings to themselves and to the audience without

addressing any of the other characters, while the latter involves the speaker or writer addressing an imaginary person, inanimate object, or idea.

A perfect dramatic monologue is that literary form which has the definite characteristics of speaker, audience, occasion, revelation of character, interplay between speaker and audience, dramatic action, and action which takes place in the present.

Robert Browning's *The Patriot* is a typical example of a dramatic monologue as it conforms to most of the aforementioned characteristics.

The first element of this dramatic monologue, the speaker, is the Patriot. Only he speaks out throughout the story and this makes the speech a true monologue.

The second constitutional part, occasion, can be best understood by considering the purpose of the poem. Browning's plan was to present the fickleness of public opinion. To do this, he has used the character of a patriot who had been at the crest of popular applause, but who has fallen into the trough of public condemnation within a gap of a year. While suffering the greatest torment from unfair punishments, he recalls the incident one year ago, when he was worshipped as a hero. Consequently, this occasion is chosen by Browning as the most suitable one for presenting the public fickleness.

The third element, the audience, is shown minor importance in this particular monologue and is not mentioned explicitly. However, it is to be noted from the content and occasion of the poem that it appears that the audience includes the officers accompanying the patriot to the execution and later even the public standing close to him on his way to the gallows. Although they are only in the background and the patriot does not speak to them directly, they form parts of the monologue as the audience.

In the poem, the fourth element, character revelation, is done by the speaker through the story he tells. All of his energies were devoted to the service of his people and he had left no stone unturned to ensure the people's welfare. Although mistreated by his country, he stood true to his ideals and resolutions. He experienced a downright aversion for him but he is not feeling any fear from that downswing. Thus, the monologue clearly reveals aspects of the speaker's character as a patriot indirectly through his own words.

The speaker's psychological experience is also reflected in the monologue as it captures his mood of disillusionment, frustration and regret about the too-high-to-achieve ambitions he had, just like Icarus. The emotionally dejected leader's optimistic hope that the final judgement of God will redeem and

reward him further captures the speaker's character and psychological state. Through this unravelling of the working of his mind, it is noticeable that he is in fact "a soul in action".

The fifth and sixth elements, interplay between speaker and audience and dramatic action, are seen throughout the monologue's story. The speaker takes the readers through his experience in the past year as a political figure. He openly tells about the terrible ordeal, a change in the political and social order.

The readers become aware of the sudden and catastrophic rise and fall of the hero which has taken place within the lapse of one year. The leader who was considered a hero yesterday is now branded as a traitor. Not only the rise but also the fall is unforeseen and quick. The speaker even goes on to summarise the entire history of the story with the antithetical verse "Thus I entered, and thus I go". This rapid rise and tragic downfall of the patriot due to popular fickleness highlights the interplay between the speaker and the audience.

Further, the dramatic action in the monologue is contributed by the ironic storyline consisting of the rise and downfall of the patriot, the extreme receptions thrown by the people to the patriot and the distinct optimism shown by the patriot towards the end. The sudden beginning of the poem which puts the reader in suspense and compels them to read more also adds on to the dramatic action.

And, finally, the action in present tense unfolds as the poem develops and the patriot is walking towards the Shambles' Gate. The rain, stones being thrown and the terrible situation of the patriot all account for this. The patriot's soul is also considered to be in action towards the end due to the presence of the vivid note of optimism.

These 7 characters of the composition shapes "The Patriot: An Old Story" into one of Browning's lauded dramatic monologues that is in the form of a conversational poem set dramatically in such a situation that the speech reveals a hidden tale.

S.S. Curry said, "The reader must approach such a poem as a work of art. Sympathetic and contemplative attention must be given to it as an entirety. Then point after point, idea after idea, will become clear and vivid, and at last the whole will be intensely realised".

I couldn't agree more with him. As I see it, the dramatic irony, political satire, exact and realistic expression and optimistic end along with Browning's distinct writing style forges "The Patriot: An Old Story" into a powerful dramatic monologue and a remarkable piece of poetic art.

## **The Buckeye Bullet His-Story**

| The buckeye bullet has his own story

| And believe me, it has so much more than just glory

Like most great heroes, Jesse Owens had his own creation myth - which unlike the other myths is true. According to his reckoning, he was mostly moulded by the tragic events and desperate circumstances of his childhood. Born on September 12, 1913, in Oakville, Alabama, James Cleveland Owens was the last child of Henry Cleveland Owens and Mary Emma Fitzgerald-Owens.

“J.C.”, as he was called, had nine elder siblings - three sisters and six brothers. He was the grandson of a slave and the son of a sharecropper. For sharecroppers like Henry Owens, every day was filled with struggle. For the Owenses, everything but food, shelter, and the simplest clothes was a luxury that simply could not be afforded - even medical care. As an adult, Owens usually described his hardscrabble youth in Oakville as mostly miserable - an endless cycle of poverty, hunger, and humiliation.

In 1921, when J.C. was nine years old, his family moved to Cleveland, Ohio, for better work opportunities, as part of the Great Migration, when 1.5 million African Americans left the segregated South. Life in Cleveland did not prove to be as successful as the Owens family had hoped, but the move did enable young Owens to enter public school.

It was at his new school that a teacher accidentally wrote down his name as “Jesse” instead of “J. C” due to a misunderstanding caused by J.C.’s strong Southern accent. However, the name stuck, and he went on to be known as Jesse Owens for the rest of his life.

At Cleveland, Owens took different menial jobs in his spare time. He delivered groceries, loaded freight cars and worked in a shoe repair shop while his father and older brother worked at a steel mill. In his spare time between work and school, Owens was on the track team in junior high school. From a skinny boy he developed into a strong runner and excelled at track and field events .

Throughout his life, Owens attributed the success of his athletic career to the encouragement of Charles Riley, his junior high school track coach at Fairmount Junior High School. Riley allowed him to practise before school and manage work timings simultaneously which helped Owens become a promising athlete.

He set Junior High School records by clearing 6 feet in the high jump, and leaping 22 feet 11 3/4 inches in the running broad jump, now known as the long jump. During his high school days, he won all of the major track events, including the Ohio state championship for three consecutive years. Owens was such a complete athlete that a coach once said he seemed to float over the ground when he ran.

At the National Interscholastic meet in Chicago, during his senior year, he set a new high school world record by running the 100 yard dash in 9.4 seconds to tie the accepted world record, and he created a new high school world record in the 220 yard dash by running the distance in 20.7 seconds. A week earlier he had set a new world record in the long jump by jumping 24 feet 11 3/4 inches.

This was when Jesse first came to national attention. His sensational high school athletic career resulted in him being recruited by dozens of colleges. Owens chose The Ohio State University, even though OSU could not offer a track scholarship at that time.

He worked a number of jobs to support himself and his young wife, Ruth. He worked as a night elevator operator, a waiter, he pumped gas, worked in the library stacks, and served a stint as a page in the Ohio Statehouse, all of this in between practice and record setting on the field in intercollegiate competition.

Affectionately known as the "Buckeye Bullet", Owens won a record eight individual NCAA championships, four each in 1935 and 1936, under the coaching of Larry Snyder. Though Owens enjoyed athletic success, he had to live off campus with other African-American athletes. While travelling with his team, he was restricted to ordering carry-out or eating at "blacks-only" restaurants and had to stay at "blacks-only" hotels.

Jesse Owens proved to be one of the greatest athletes in the history of Ohio State. Owens's greatest of great achievements came in a span of 45 minutes on May 25, 1935, during the Big Ten meet at Ferry Field in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He set three world records and tied a fourth, all while suffering from a sore back from a fall down a flight of stairs.

He equaled the world record for the 100 yard dash (9.4 seconds) and set world records in the long jump (26 feet 8 1/4 inches, a world record that would last 25 years), the 220-yard sprint (20.3 seconds), and the 220-yard low hurdles (22.6 seconds). In that span of 45 minutes, Jesse had accomplished what many experts still feel is the greatest athletic feat in history.

After this stunning achievement, Jesse Owens arrived in Berlin to compete in the 1936 Summer Olympics. Adolf Hitler was using the games to show the world a resurgent Nazi Germany. He and other government officials had high hopes that German athletes would dominate the games with victories. Meanwhile, Nazi propaganda promoted concepts of “Aryan superiority” and depicted the ethnic Africans as inferior.

Jesse, however, had different plans. He became the first American track & field athlete to win four gold medals in a single Olympic Game under a sea of swastikas at a Games sullied by propaganda, bigotry, hatred and racism. He won the 100m sprint, the long jump and the 200m sprint. After these victories, he was added to the 4 x 100 m relay team in which he won his fourth gold.

It was here at Berlin, amidst the Battle of Colors(as the Nazis called the 1936 Olympics), against the backdrop of the strangest of circumstances and at the wake of the most anticipated athletic clash, that a friendship was born. It was between an African-American and a “Nazi”. This outré friendship was brought to light when Jesse Owens credited his victory in the long jump to Luz Long, the competitor he had ultimately defeated.

Carl Ludwig "Luz" Long was a 6 ½ feet tall German Olympic long jumper who was then holding the European record for long jump. He had studied law and was continuing his interest in sports. He was eager to compete for the first time against Jesse Owens in the Berlin Olympics. The long jump was Long's first event against Owens and Long met his expectations by setting an Olympic record during the preliminary round.

In contrast, Owens fouled on his first two jumps. Knowing that he needed to reach at least 7.15 metres on his third jump in order to advance to the finals in the afternoon, Owens sat on the field, dejected. It was then that Long approached Owens and encouraged him to draw a line a few inches in the back of the board and aim at making his take-off from there.

Since Owens routinely made distances far greater than the minimum of 7.15 metres required to qualify, Long surmised that Owens would be able to qualify safely. On his third qualifying jump, Owens was calm and jumped with at least 10 centimetres to spare, easily advancing to the finals.

Though a real scandal for the Nazi regime, the gesture of the German athlete Carl Ludwig was a noble one. Jesse and Luz went on to become friends and , according to Jesse, had a great time that night

talking about a dozen things. After Jesse's win, Luz was the first to congratulate him. They posed together for photos and walked arm-in-arm to the dressing room.

Owens said, "It took a lot of courage for him to befriend me in front of Hitler... Hitler must have gone mad when he saw us hugging... You can melt down all the medals and cups I have, and they couldn't be a plating on the twenty-four karat friendship that I felt for Luz Long at that moment."

In the decades following the 1936 Olympics, the story of the two athletes was built largely on Owens' memories of the dramatic event because Long became a soldier in the German army and served in World War II. According to Owens, Long and Owens corresponded even after 1936.

Supposedly, in his last letter, Long wrote to Owens and asked him to contact his son Karl after the war and tell him about his father and "what times were like when we were not separated by war. I am saying - tell him how things can be between men on this earth". After the war, Owens even travelled to Germany to meet Karl Long.

Though Owens returned home from the 1936 Olympics with four gold medals and international fame, he had difficulty finding work. He once again took on menial jobs as a gas station attendant, playground director, and manager of a dry cleaning firm. He also raced against motorcycles and horses for cash. He opened his own public-relations firm and gave a lot of speeches across the United States at various locations.

Working as a playground director was his first step into a lifetime of working with underprivileged youth, which gave him his greatest satisfaction. After relocating to Chicago, he devoted much of his life to underprivileged youth, sharing himself and the little material wealth he had. He was equally the champion on the playground of the poorest neighbourhoods as he was on the oval of the Olympic games.

In 1976, Jesse Owens received national recognition for his achievements when he was awarded with the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honour in the United States, by President Gerald Ford. In February, 1979, he returned to the White House, where President Jimmy Carter presented him with the Living Legend Award.

A smoker, Owens died from lung cancer in Tucson, Arizona, on March 31, 1980, with his wife and other family members at his bedside. In spite of his achievements and struggles, he nurtured the story of his friendship with Luz Long until his death.



The stirring story of the black American four-times Olympic Champion Jesse Owens and Germany's Luz Long in a Swastika-soaked Berlin stadium offers powerful messages for humanity from the realm of sport. Even in 2021, the story of Owens and Long and what they and their friendship stood for remains a lesson to be learned, learned anew and reinforced.

Speaking about Jesse Owens' life, President Carter said it best when he stated "Perhaps no athlete better symbolised the human struggle against tyranny, poverty and racial bigotry. His personal triumphs as a world-class athlete and record holder were the prelude to a career devoted to helping others. His work with young athletes, as an unofficial ambassador overseas, and a spokesman for freedom are a rich legacy to his fellow Americans."

## **An Ambitious Bunny, a Witty Red Fox and a World Where Anyone Can Be Anything**

**Movie Title:** Zootopia

**Cast:** Ginnifer Goodwin, Jason Bateman, Idris Elba, Jenny Slate and Nate Torrence

**Directors:** Byron Howard and Rich Moore

**Genre:** Computer-animated buddy cop action comedy

**Language:** English

**Duration:** 108 minutes

**Rating:** 4.8/5

Zootopia is a 2016 American computer-animated buddy-cop action comedy film directed by Byron Howard and Rich Moore, and produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios. It features the voices of Ginnifer Goodwin, Jason Bateman, Idris Elba, Jenny Slate and Nate Torrence as those of the story's main characters.

Set in the namesake city of Zootopia, in a world populated by anthropomorphic mammals, the beautifully designed film tells us the story of an unlikely partnership between a rabbit police officer and a red fox con artist as they uncover a criminal conspiracy.

Judy Hopps, a rabbit from a rural town called Bunny Burrow, fulfils her childhood dream of becoming a police officer in the urban metropolis of Zootopia—a city where mammals of all shapes, sizes, and dietary preferences, from the biggest of elephants to the smallest of shrews, not only live in harmony but also are encouraged to be whatever they want; where "anyone can be anything."

However, to the relief of her carrot farmer parents, Judy, despite being the academy valedictorian, gets assigned to metre maid duty by the Zootopia Police Department's (ZPD) Chief Bogo. On her first day on the job, Judy quickly discovers how difficult it is to enforce the law at Zootopia after being hustled by Nick Wilde and Finnick, a con artist fox duo.

Determined to prove her worth, Judy jumps at the opportunity to solve the mysterious case of the 14 missing predators in under 48 hours, even if that means partnering with Nick Wilde, who makes her job even tougher. Judy, along with Nick, pieces together all the clues as to where the predators are and who is behind it all to reveal a Zootopia-wide scandal.

Clever and heartwarming, this animated adventure is equal parts a buddy-cop comedy, a fish-out-of-water tale, and a whodunit mystery. From slapstick comedy (like the chase scene through the rodent district) to clever wordplay (like the puns on animal names), Zootopia is filled with numerous memorable scenes to make both kids and grown-ups laugh. Judy and Nick's repartee is reminiscent of classic screwball comedies, and the plot twists are a throwback to noir films, in which the culprit is never who you think.

The movie's attention to detail is one of the things that sets Zootopia apart. The world of the movie is incredibly-crafted, with various districts of the city tailored to different types of animals. These districts include the rainforest district, sahara square, savanna central, little rodentia, tundra town, and the city centre downtown.

The movie brings all of the movie's big-eyed animal characters to life brilliantly. From the lovable sloth at the DMV to the tough-talking sheep assistant mayor, each animal has a distinct personality and physicality that is conveyed through their movements, expressions and perfect voice casting.

Goodwin is fantastic as the constantly energetic, and optimistic Judy, who goes on to prove that even a cute bunny can take down bad guys. Meanwhile, Bateman has the ideal cynical voice to portray the hilariously jaded Nick, a fast-talking charmer with a knack for knowing everything he can about Zootopia's movers and shakers. Elba's robust baritone is perfectly paired with the brusque water buffalo police chief.

Each of these characters add to the richness of the world and helps to make it feel like a real place. The little nods to animal behaviour, such as the way prey animals like Judy have to wear reflective vests when out at night, further immerse viewers in the movie's universe.

Although set in a world of animals, Zootopia gives out a strong message by touching on complex social issues and themes that are very human, such as prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. By using animals to represent different groups, the movie is able to explore these themes in a way that is both accessible and engaging for viewers of all ages.

The film encourages young viewers to understand the importance of empathy and acceptance, and inspires them to think critically about the world around them. Additionally, the movie shows the power of using one's voice to stand up for what is right, even if it means going against the status quo.

With top-notch 3D animation and crisp, vibrant visuals from start to finish, and a simple but evocative storyline, Zootopia is a highly original, and thoroughly engaging movie. The cinematography further enhances the overall look and feel of the film with fluid camera work, thoughtful compositions, and ideal lighting.

The catchy theme song of the movie, "Try Everything," sung by Shakira, is also spot on in capturing the spirit of the movie: be who you want to be, not who others expect you to be. Overall, Zootopia is an ingenious blend of sophisticated storytelling, jubilant humour, and thought-provoking themes and is an absolute delight for viewers of all ages.

I, personally, had a blast watching the movie and believe that Zootopia is arguably one of the finest Disney movies of this decade. It is not just an entertaining film, but also a valuable tool for sparking important conversations about humanity and fostering positive values in young audiences. Thus, I strongly recommend the movie to all the readers of this review.

# Unveiling Prospero: A Closer Look on the Magic, Morality, and Mortality of the Tempestuous Magus

## 1. Introduction

Prospero is a multi-faceted character and all of his facades make Prospero one of the most fascinating characters in the play. It can be noted that a lot of the details we know about the other characters (specifically Sycorax and Antonio) come from Prospero, and therefore it is important to determine his character in order to know if his presentation of these characters is correct. So, let's paint a clearer picture of Prospero's character:

## 2. A Possibly Delinquent Duke

Prospero is the rightful ruler of Milan but he kept himself aloof from worldly affairs, leading a life of scholarly meditation, in retirement but he neglected the responsibility of his ducal position in blame worthy manner:

*“And Prospero, the prime duke, being so reputed  
In dignity, and for the liberal arts  
Without a parallel; those being all my study,  
The Government I cast upon my brother,  
And to my state grew strange, being transported  
And rapt in secret studies.”*

Prospero put too much trust in his brother Antonio, whose character he failed to judge correctly:

*“I thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated  
To closeness and the bettering of my mind  
With that which, but by being so retired  
O'er prized all popular rate, in my false brother  
Awaked an evil nature; and my trust,  
Like a good parent, did beget of him.”*

His usurping brother, Antonio, had put him (with his three-year-old daughter, Miranda) to sea on a "rotten carcass" of a boat to die, twelve years before the play begins. Prospero and Miranda had survived and found exile on a small island. He has learned sorcery from books, and uses it while on the island to protect Miranda and control the other characters.

One could say that he was delinquent in his duties and instead focused on studying magic. One could then argue that Prospero shares some responsibility for his brother's betrayal. This is due to the fact that his neglect gave his brother the opportunity to betray him. The argument can be further reinforced by stating that Prospero actually asked his brother to assist him with running the city/state.

### **3. An Enchanting Magician**

Prospero is portrayed as a powerful sorcerer in the play who is capable of wielding the white magic of nature, not the black magic of evil men. Prospero is seen using his magical powers to control the other characters and orchestrate his revenge against those who wronged him.

Before the play has begun, Prospero has freed the magical spirit Ariel from entrapment within "a cloven pine". Ariel is beholden to Prospero after being freed from imprisonment inside the pine tree. Prospero then takes Ariel as a slave. Prospero's sorcery is sufficiently powerful to control not only the mischievous Ariel but also other spirits, including the monstrous Caliban (the son of Sycorax, a malevolent witch). He forces Caliban into submission by punishing him with magic if he does not obey.

Alongside this, Prospero is able to alter weather, conjure storms, create illusions, manipulate the natural world and even raise the dead: "Graves at my command have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth, by my so potent Art." His magic is not simply a tool, but an extension of his personality and a representation of his power and control.

Prospero's use of magic is not without consequences. However, he recognizes that his magical abilities have made him somewhat isolated from other humans, and he struggles with the desire for revenge against his brother Antonio, who wronged him in the past. Prospero also recognizes the limitations of his magic and acknowledges that he is not truly in control of the world around him.

*"My high charms work,  
And these, mine enemies, are all knit up  
In their distractions. They now are in my power."*

Despite these potential dangers and limitations of his magic, Prospero ultimately uses it for good. He orchestrates events on the island in order to bring about a sense of justice and redemption for himself and the other characters. He also uses his magic to help the characters learn important lessons about forgiveness and reconciliation.

However, at the end of the play, Prospero intends to drown his books and renounce magic. In the view of the audience, this may have been required to make the ending unambiguously happy, as magic was associated with diabolical works during the Shakespearean era..

#### **4. A Merciful Forgiver**

In the play, Prospero uses his magical powers to control the other characters and orchestrate his revenge against those who wronged him. However, as the play progresses, he learns to forgive and ultimately decides to give up his magic and return to his former life.

In light of what his enemies did to him, it can be said that Prospero exercised mercy in forgiving them. Prospero's merciful nature is not a one-off act; this is shown throughout the play. It is first seen in Act 1 when the members of the crew are saved in spite of the tempest that destroyed the ship.

Mercy is displayed by Prospero in the end instead of destroying his enemies in the flick of a finger (using magic). This shows his innate goodness and his belief that "the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance".

#### **5. Sympathetic Yet Flawed**

Prospero embodies both the best and the worst of humanity. On the one hand, Prospero is a sympathetic character who has been wronged by his own brother. He has endured many hardships, including exile. However, he is not embittered by them. His love for his daughter Miranda consoled him in his darkest hours and enabled him to endure the hardships. Prospero loves his daughter Miranda very much, he uses the terms of great endearment for Miranda. He calls her "beloved darling", "dear heart", "a rich gift", and "a third of his own life".

Prospero's sympathetic nature and tender feelings are also shown by his treatment of Ariel. Except for one occasion when he strongly rebuked Ariel, Prospero always used words of praise, affection and encouragement towards Ariel, like — "my Ariel, chick", "my brave spirit", "delicate Ariel". He is even seen saying that he will miss Ariel after Ariel's liberation — "Why, that's my dainty Ariel. I shall miss thee."

On the other hand, Prospero is also a flawed character who is capable of great manipulation and deceit. Throughout the play, he struggles with his desire for revenge against those who have wronged him, particularly his brother Antonio. At times, he is consumed by his anger and seems almost cruel in his treatment of the other characters.

He uses his magic to function as a god on the island and controls the other characters, including the spirit Ariel and the monster Caliban, and he is not above using their loyalty to him to further his own goals. He also treats his beloved Miranda at times like a pawn, using her to further his own schemes.

However, in the due course of the play, Prospero undergoes a transformation from beginning as a vengeful sorcerer, to learning to forgive to ultimately deciding to give up his magic and return to his former life; a transformation symbolised by his breaking of his staff and giving up his book of magic.

### **6. A Dutiful Father or a Manipulator?**

It could be argued that Prospero put his plans into motion so that Miranda would have an opportunity to have a life off the island. For example, did he carefully orchestrate the meeting between Miranda and Ferdinand with the hope that they might fall in love so that he could regain his place in Milan, or did he do it for the good of his daughter?

At the same time, we see that Prospero's motives seem unclear at times in the play. Does he want revenge or does he want reconciliation? We know that Prospero loves Miranda because of his efforts to protect her throughout the play. However, is she just a pawn in his well-woven plans? This question can be asked because we see Prospero planning to return to Milan as a result of Miranda's marriage to Ferdinand.

### **7. A Shakespeare Metaphor**

In many ways, Prospero can be seen as a representation of Shakespeare himself.

Prospero's magic can be seen as a metaphor for the power of art and storytelling. Shakespeare was a master storyteller, and his plays are still performed and enjoyed even today because of the enduring power of his words. Like Prospero, Shakespeare recognized the potential of storytelling in shaping and influencing the world around us.

Shakespeare was a master of his craft, capable of great power and influence, similar to Prospero. And Shakespeare may have struggled with the temptation to use his talents to manipulate and control others too. Ultimately, however, both Shakespeare and Prospero come to realise the importance of letting go of this temptation.



## **8. Conclusion**

In conclusion, Prospero is a complex character in "The Tempest" who symbolises the power of art and storytelling. His story and magical abilities continue to captivate and intrigue audiences to this day.

Through his use of magic, he highlights the potential and limitations of power, and his struggles with anger and temptation make him a flawed but relatable character. Through his transformation and eventual forgiveness, he ultimately learns important lessons and helps the other characters do the same.

Prospero's significance within "The Tempest" lies in his ability to control events and bring about justice, while also teaching the importance of forgiveness and redemption. However, as Shakespeare wrote through Prospero's own words, "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep," Prospero's ability to control events is an illusion and everything will fade away as soon as Prospero lets go of his magic books to attain freedom.

# **The Fishermen's Code: Steering Through the Character of Salvatore and His Lessons on Goodness**

## **1. Introduction**

Salvatore is the protagonist of the story named right after him. He is a young man from a family of Italian fishermen living on Capri, who possesses the rarest of virtues: simple goodness. Let's take a deeper dive into his character:

## **2. A Responsible Teenager and Brother**

As a fifteen-year-old boy, Salvatore was a brown-complexioned boy, endowed with a sturdy built, graceful manner and nonchalant eyes: He was "a boy of fifteen with a pleasant face, a laughing mouth" and "carefree eyes", and "his brown body was as thin as a rail".

He had possessed an effortless ease in the art of swimming. He is depicted as a frolicsome boy belonging to a fishing community: "He would throw himself into the deep water with a cry of delight."

He grows up in the lap of nature along with others in the neighbourhood; a fine democratic upbringing. He has a free-born spirit and jovial temper. Close-knit community feeling is well conspicuous in his character.

He is full of affection for his two brothers and takes care of them as a caring nursemaid: "He shouted to them to come inshore when they ventured out too far." He also dresses them up when it's time to go uphill for lunch. It is a matter of astonishment how a boy of his age could have a protective and motherly feeling for his younger brothers.

## **3. Life as a Grown-Up**

As a grown-up, Salvatore is depicted as a man with sun-weathered skin, a stocky build, and enormous hands that became coarse and hard from constant toil. Salvatore, when married, was a "tall, broad and big husky fellow."

As an adult, Salvatore first served at the royal navy. After being sent home due to his illness (rheumatism), he worked full day in the vineyard and spent the night catching the profitable cuttlefish with his brothers. He is indeed a skilled and experienced fisherman, who takes pride in his work. He is knowledgeable about the sea and its creatures, and knows how to read the weather and the tides.

A man of few words, he values honesty, hard work, and integrity above all else. He is a simple and humble man, who finds joy in the small things, such as spending time with his family, sharing a meal with his friends, and enjoying the natural beauty of his surroundings.

Salvatore faces many challenges and obstacles in his life, such as poverty, rheumatism, getting rejected by his fiancée and the unpredictable nature of his profession. However, he is able to overcome these challenges through his hard work, resilience, and determination; and he is content and grateful for what he has.

#### **4. An Emotional Son**

Salvatore was very emotional for his family. He had never been alone and when he left to become a sailor in the navy, “he wept like a child.” Being away from his home, he was dreadfully homesick. He was not comfortable with strangers on the ship and when onshore he did not like spending time in friendless crowded cities. Moreover when he was left heartbroken by the girl he loved, he wept on his mother’s bosom.

#### **5. A Genuine Lover**

As a lover, Salvatore’s passion knew no bounds. Salvatore was madly in love with a girl from his island. They were engaged and had to wait for marriage until he completed his military service.

He bursts into tears as he starts his life as a sailor in the navy of King Victor Emmanuel. He becomes ill while staying with strangers in cities crowded with people without any charm of friendship. As too much homesickness tells upon his health, he gets impatient to come home to his fiancée. When he was away from her, he used to write her long, passionate letters. He would tell her how much he missed her and how much he longed to go back.

Even when Salvatore hears that he will be crippled for life, he rejoices at it because he would get to go home to the fiancée he loved. He never once thought that she would reject him because of the disease. He just thought she would be happy that he was back. His love for her was so genuine that he never said a harsh word to her even after being rejected.

#### **6. A Dutiful Husband and Father**

Salvatore, after being rejected by the girl he loved, married Assunta. He is a loving and devoted husband and father. He cares deeply for his wife and children, and works tirelessly to provide for them.

He is kind, patient, and understanding with his family, and takes pleasure in their happiness. He is respectful of his wife's wishes and opinions, and does not make decisions without consulting her first: "she never ceased to be touched by his gentle sweetness."

As a father of two young children, Salvatore loved them and spent time with them. It seemed he took part equally in nurturing their children. When he used to give them a bath, he used to hold them tenderly and delicately as "they were like flowers." He used to laugh with them and they all enjoyed it: "His laugh was like the laughter of an angel. His eyes then were as candid as his child."

### **7. A Man of Inherent Goodness**

Salvatore was a man of inherent goodness and the author presents the story to depict this real quality of Salvatore's. This tender, innocent side of him is not revealed at a single moment of his life but throughout his life:

- When he bathed his younger brothers and was a nursemaid to them.
- When he wrote long letters to his fiancée about how he missed her with 'child-like handwriting'.
- When he never said a harsh word to the fiancée who rejected him.
- When he treats Assunta well, and doesn't let his past affect their relationship.
- When he continued to work hard to support his family despite his rheumatism.
- When he bathed his two sons, one a three-year-old, the other less than two, holding him delicately as if they were flowers.
- When he laughs with his children with the laughter of an angel and eyes as candid as his child.
- When he is described by Maugham to have had kindly eyes, an ingenuous smile, and a good word for everyone all through his life even when he was in pain due to his rheumatism: "When pain racked his limbs, he would lie about the beach, smoking cigarettes, with a pleasant word for everyone."

He is twice referred to as an innocent dog in this story:

- When he bore his mysterious ailment with the uncomprehending patience of a dog.
- When he realised that his fiancée had broken off with him because of permanent rheumatism then his eyes had a look of a dog that had been beaten.

By likening him to a creature who is considered the most faithful animal, Maugham makes us empathise rather than feel just plain morose for Salvatore. He was loyal to his people and the fiancée he loved; never did he say a harsh word against her for what she did to him. In fact, he saw it from her perspective and understood her decision. This also shows his angelic nature and inherent goodness.

## **8. Conclusion**

Salvatore is a humble, hardworking, and principled man, who values his family, friends, and the natural beauty of his surroundings. He is a character who embodies the simple joys of life, and whose integrity and love for his family is beyond comparison. Despite the challenges he faces, Salvatore is able to overcome them through his resilience and determination, and remains true to his values and beliefs throughout his life. He possesses goodness, simple goodness, and when all is said and done, that's what we should all possess!

# **Unpacking the Beautiful Complexity of Assunta: A Reflection on Love, Life, and Labels**

## **1. Introduction**

Assunta is a little talked-about character from the story of Salvatore written by William Somerset Maugham. Assunta is introduced to the readers in the middle of the story around the same time when Salvatore is trying to cope up with his romantic disillusionment. Very little is mentioned about her in the story but she has more than that to her. So, let's explore her character:

## **2. The Name 'Assunta'**

Like Salvatore, which means "saviour," the name Assunta has religious connotations. Assunta comes from a Latin root that means "assumption," which refers to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven. Assunta herself, while a generous, devoted wife, is not without her own human faults. For example, she continues to hold a grudge against the girl who broke Salvatore's heart even though he has forgiven her.

While the name Assunta comes from the religious use of the word "assumption," it also alludes to the assumptions made throughout the story, including Salvatore's uninformed assumption that she is "ugly."

## **3. An Independent, Practical Woman**

Assunta was around twenty-four or twenty-five years old when she was introduced to the readers. She had been engaged but her fiancé died an unfortunate death during his military service in Africa. Assunta is a practical woman and knows her needs and desires accurately. She has fallen in love with Salvatore on seeing him at the feste. She proposes to marry Salvatore and even offers to buy him a boat of his own and to take a vineyard for them using some of the money she had saved up.

The order of courtship is reversed in this story, for it is Assunta who proposes to Salvatore's mother first and not the other way around. The fact that an early twentieth-century woman from a small Italian island could propose marriage shows how unique, independent and progressive Assunta was. Also, her offer to give some of her savings to Salvatore shows that Assunta was also financially independent.

#### **4. Ugly as a Devil: Prejudice or Reality?**

Salvatore first calls Assunta 'ugly as a devil' which brings to our mind the stereotypical image men have about independent-single women. It was his mother who cleared up that prejudice in Salvatore's mind about Assunta, after which he was ready to attend High Mass to have a look at her. Salvatore, after looking at her, then agrees to marry her.

Notice that he calls her 'ugly' first then goes to see her 'properly' later. It indicates that most probably Salvatore had never seen Assunta before and was just calling her ugly because he had heard about her and this was the prejudice one had towards independent-single women.

Otherwise, Salvatore may have decided to have one 'careful' look at her to assure himself that he would be happy to settle down with Assunta. Thus, technically, meaning that she was not a good-looking woman and that Salvatore had seen her, but now wanted to look at her beyond mere appearances for he too was rejected for his physical disability.

#### **5. A Devoted Wife**

Though Assunta was a 'grim-visaged female' and looked old for her age, she had a generous heart, and a certain wisdom. She genuinely loved Salvatore and was admiring, respectful and devoted to her husband. She has recognized the intrinsic goodness in her husband.

Assunta has not seen his physical inability to be a hindrance and has always supported her husband through thick and thin. She loathes the girl whom Salvatore had loved because of her inconsiderate nature. She could not tolerate the girl who had failed to see his nobility and 'gentle sweetness'.

Her love for Salvatore which is not influenced by any material pleasure or physical strength helps them live happily together in their tiny, white-washed house in the middle of their vineyard. She even goes on to have two kids with Salvatore who will most definitely grow up to become simple, uncomplicated individuals just like their parents.

#### **6. Complementing Salvatore's Character**

Although they are both simple, and uncomplicated individuals, Assunta is an interesting character who complements Salvatore's character. She has a good heart like Salvatore and is level-headed. However, she is blunt and outspoken in her views, unlike Salvatore.

Unlike the emotionally intelligent Salvatore, Assunta is a more practical and pragmatic person. Together, they create a balanced partnership. They both value hard work and take pride in their respective roles, creating a sense of mutual respect and appreciation for each other's contributions.

### **7. Shattering Stereotypes**

Assunta (along with Salvatore) is seen constantly shattering gender stereotypes in the story. From changing the marriage proposal narrative to offering to pay to buy a boat and vineyard for Salvatore, she is quite the modern day woman.

She never imposed gender roles that are generally imposed on men, on Salvatore. She loved Salvatore for who he was and not whether he would be able to work as a man or not. Her willingness to love and support Salvatore despite his illness challenges the stereotype that men must be strong and capable at all times.

She adored Salvatore for being tender and caring despite being a man: "She never ceased to be touched by his gentle sweetness", and this shows that she believes that true strength and masculinity are not solely based on physical abilities. She is also seen sharing parenting responsibilities with Salvatore. However, this credit not only belongs to her but to Salvatore also!

### **8. A Ray of Hope**

Assunta offered Salvatore the love, respect and care he deserved. She brought back the meaning of life when 'he was terribly unhappy' after his illness and his beloved's rejection. It is she who restores his hope and faith in life, and brings back normalcy in his life. In turn, that helped him stay kind and soft-spoken to others throughout his life even after the two harsh blows he had received.

### **9. Conclusion**

Although Assunta's character is a minor one in the story of Salvatore, she is a very significant part of Salvatore's life. She challenges gender stereotypes of 20th-century Italy by being an independent and practical woman with a generous heart, wisdom, and genuine love towards Salvatore. All of this makes her the quintessential ray of sunshine Salvatore needed and a loving and caring wife who complements Salvatore's character perfectly.

Assunta, thus, embodies the triumph of a good heart over appearance and is an excellent example of how we should love and respect people for who they are, not for what they look like or what they can do. She also is a brilliant role model for independence.



# The Big Bang Theory Dissection

**Television Series Title:** The Big Bang Theory

**Cast:** Jim Parsons, Johnny Galecki, Kaley Cuoco, Simon Helberg, Kunal Nayyar, Melissa Rauch, Mayim Bialik, and Kevin Sussman

**Creators:** Chuck Lorre and Bill Prady

**Director:** Mark Cendrowski

**Genre:** Sitcom (Situational Comedy)

**Language:** English

**No. of seasons:** 12

**No. of episodes:** 279

**Rating:** 4.8/5

"The Big Bang Theory" (TBBT) is a sitcom that follows a group of scientists working at Caltech (California Institute of Technology) and their friends as they navigate life, love and science in Pasadena, California. Created by Chuck Lorre and Bill Prady, and produced by Chuck Lorre Productions and Warner Bros., the show premiered in 2007 and ran for 12 seasons on CBS until its finale in 2019.

The show, which was filmed in front of a live audience, celebrates geek culture and was a massive critical and commercial success, winning multiple Emmy awards and becoming one of the most popular sitcoms of all time. It also spawned a spinoff series, "Young Sheldon," which focuses on the childhood of one of the main characters, Sheldon Cooper.

## Dramatis Personae

One of the show's most significant strengths is the unique persona of the characters. The main cast consists of six characters: Sheldon Cooper, Leonard Hofstadter, Howard Wolowitz, Rajesh Koothrappali, Penny, Bernadette Rostenkowski and Amy Farrah Fowler.

### 1. Dr. Sheldon Lee Cooper

Sheldon, played by Jim Parsons, is the show's most eccentric (or as the university likes to call him: "quirky") character. He's a theoretical physicist researching quantum mechanics and string theory. Originally from Galveston, Texas, Sheldon was a child prodigy with an eidetic memory. He began college when he was 11 years old and earned a Ph.D. at 16.

Despite having an IQ of 187, Sheldon's social skills are lacking and he has peculiar habits and rigid routines. For example, he has a specific spot on the couch, a fixed bathroom schedule, set times and menus for meals, scheduled date nights and what not. He makes anyone who is sad drink a cup of tea irrespective of whether they want it or not. Sheldon has germophobia, haemophobia, ornithophobia and cynophobia, and he also shows multiple symptoms associated with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (OCPD).

An avid fan of paperwork and a person who is obsessed with rules and regulations, he has a complex agreement to sign for everything. From roommate agreements with Leonard and Penny to relationship agreements with Amy, he governs all his relationships and interactions with others using paperwork.

He loves science and sci-fi comics and movies so much that his wardrobe also reflects it. He is also a well-known railfan and a fancier of model trains. He is very fond of flags and runs a show on them he introduces as "Dr. Sheldon Cooper presents Dr. Sheldon Cooper's Fun with Flags".

He even declares an official flag for their apartment: a gold lion rampant on a field of azure. A life-size version of it is kept in the apartment, and a magnet version of the flag is kept on the refrigerator. There is also a lapel pin with the same emblem. He considered their apartment as a country-like entity and this came to light when he once declared his room as a sovereign nation that exports talking and waged a trade war on Leonard and Penny;

His social awkwardness creates tension in the group, and he often clashes with his friends over trivial matters. In spite of these quirks, he is loved by his friends and he also begins a relationship with Amy Farrah Fowler who he eventually marries.

## **2. Dr. Leonard Leaky Hofstader**

Leonard, played by Johnny Galecki, is an experimental physicist with an IQ of 173. Originally from New Jersey, Leonard is a graduate from Princeton University who received his Ph.D. when he was 24 years old. He is Sheldon's roommate and best friend and just like Sheldon, loves video games, comic books, and games like Dungeons & Dragons.

Leonard's character is more grounded and serves as a good foil to Sheldon's eccentricities. He is more easygoing but struggles with assertiveness and often takes on the role of a mediator in the group. He accommodates Sheldon's quirks and tries to maintain a sense of normalcy in their living situation, despite the inconvenience it may cause to him. He is even called a 'satisficer' by Sheldon in an episode of the series.

Over time, Leonard becomes more confident and assertive, and he starts to stand up to Sheldon whenever necessary. Leonard has a strained relationship with his mother, Beverly, who ironically is good friends with Sheldon. Leonard is smitten with his new neighbour, Penny, when they first meet, and they eventually marry.

### **3. Howard Joel Wolowitz**

Howard, played by Simon Helberg, is an Jewish aerospace engineer with a master's degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) who goes on to become a NASA astronaut-cum-payload specialist on the International Space Station. He is often portrayed as the show's least mature character but his over-the-top antics, such as his cheesy pick-up lines, and love for magic and anything space-related, make him a fan favourite.

Native to Pasadena, Howard lived with his overbearing mother, Debbie, for several seasons before eventually moving in with his wife Bernadette Rostenkowski. One of the most important parts of his characterization is his father leaving his family when he was only eleven years old.

Howard sports a bowl/mod haircut and tends to wear loud 1960s-era outfits consisting of iconic skinny jeans, and turtlenecks paired with shirts. He is also fond of wearing and collecting decorator belt buckles. He is a polyglot who can speak 9 languages other than English. Despite his tendency to act impulsively, Howard is a loyal friend who is always willing to help his friends when they need it.

### **4. Dr. Rajesh Ramayan Koothrappali**

Raj, played by Kunal Nayyar, is a somewhat-spoiled astrophysicist with roots in New Delhi, India, where he was born into a big, wealthy family. Raj is Howard's best friend and they have what Raj calls a "bromance". Initially, Raj had selective mutism, rendering him unable to talk to or be around women unless under the influence of alcohol, until the end of the season 6.

Raj despises Indian food, and his knowledge about Indian culture and Hinduism is often rebuked by Sheldon. Raj has very "feminine" tastes and often takes on a stereotypical female role in his friendship with Howard as well as in the group of four men. He owns a Yorkshire Terrier dog, given to him by Howard and Bernadette, who he named Cinnamon and is very close to.

Raj can play the guitar and formed a folk band called "Footprints on the Moon" with Howard (and later Bert, a geologist from the show). They write songs about various fictional characters, such as

"Thor and Doctor Jones", which tells the story of an imaginary encounter between Thor and Indiana Jones.

In the 11th season, Raj started working at the planetarium where he continued his love for space. He had a true passion for showmanship and the stars, and his work Griffith Planetarium reflected it. His passion for showmanship can also be seen in the continuous efforts he puts in conducting over-the-top parties and dinners.

## **5. Penny**

Penny, played by Kaley Cuoco, is the beautiful and free-spirited neighbour of Leonard and Sheldon who disrupts the lives of the four nerdy friends. She is an aspiring actress who moves to LA from Omaha, Nebraska. She initially waits tables at the Cheesecake Factory, but after giving up hope of becoming a successful actress, Penny becomes a pharmaceutical sales representative.

Having dropped out of community college before moving to Pasadena, Penny is the least educated of the group, but she has great social skills and is more street-smart and grounded than the show's other characters. She is messy and disorganised, loves alcohol, is knowledgeable about popular culture, and has full confidence in pseudoscientific concepts such as horoscopes, psychics, and voodoo.

This provides a good balance to the show's geeky aspects however, with time, she too assimilates nerd culture. Penny becomes friends with Bernadette and Amy, who are introduced later on in the show, and they often hang out in each other's apartments. Meanwhile, Penny and Leonard form a relationship and eventually marry.

## **6. Dr. Bernadette Maryann Rostenkowski**

Bernadette, played by Melissa Rauch, is initially introduced as a young female co-worker of Penny's at The Cheesecake Factory using her wages to pay her way through graduate school, where she is studying microbiology.

Bernadette is a smart, ruthless, competitive young woman. Although generally a sweet and good-natured person, she has a short fuse and can be vindictive and lash out when provoked. She is regarded as being intimidating despite her short stature and squeaky voice, largely because of this sharp tongue of hers. Ironically, it is revealed later on in the series that she started treating people like that only because this was the only way to be taken seriously when one's the smallest person in the room.

After being introduced to Howard by Penny, they date and later get engaged and married. While initially not getting along with Howard's mother, she eventually becomes like her, domineering and passive aggressive, and even adopting her signature yell.

Upon finishing grad school, she takes up a high-paying job at a pharmaceutical company enabling her to earn much more money than Howard. A recurring joke in the series references Bernadette and her lab team handling dangerous or infectious specimens, leading to accidental byproducts.

### **7. Dr. Amy Farrah Fowler**

Amy, played by Mayim Bialik, is a neurobiologist who shares many of Sheldon's quirks. Native to Glendale, California, Amy was initially discovered by Raj and Howard as Sheldon's perfect mate through an online dating site.

While she and Sheldon initially shared social cluelessness, after befriending Penny and Bernadette, she is introduced to drinking and other normal activities such as dancing, shopping, hanging out with friends, gossiping and trash-talking. This not only improves her social skills but also makes her more interested in social and romantic interactions

Her relationship with Sheldon slowly progresses to the point at which Sheldon considers her his girlfriend, and eventually, they get married. Amy believes she and Penny are best friends, a sentiment that Penny doesn't initially share but ends up realising during Sheldon and Amy's wedding.

Although she has a Ph.D. in neuroscience and her research focuses on areas like addiction in primates, Amy goes on to win the Nobel Prize in Physics alongside her husband, Sheldon Cooper for their work on super-asymmetric string theory. She even gets called the "Neurobiologist that Revolutionized Physics".

### **8. Other Characters**

Apart from these main characters, there are other supporting ones who often appear regularly in the series. Some of the main ones are Leslie Winkle (recurring in season 1, starring in season 2, and guest in seasons 3, 9), and Stuart Bloom (recurring in seasons 2–5, 7, and starring in seasons 6, 8–12).

Stuart, portrayed by Kevin Sussman, is a mild-mannered, under-confident owner of the Comic Center in Pasadena, a comic book store which the main characters frequently visit. He is a competent portraiture artist and a graduate of the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design who is characterised by his low self-esteem and loneliness.

Stuart's medical situation is depicted as disastrous, so much so that he can be seen under various medical treatments. He is said to have depression and possible malnutrition, among other problems and he often runs into financial problems. He is not part of the main gang but is invited to replace Howard while he is in space.

Later on, he becomes almost an inseparable part of their lives when he begins living in Howard and Bernadette's house, first to attend to Howard's mother and then as a nanny to their kids. In the last season, Stuart's life seems to be turning around. His comic store becomes successful and he gets a steady, long-term relationship.

Meanwhile, Leslie (played by Sara Gilbert) is an experimental physicist who shares her lab with Leonard. In appearance, she is essentially Leonard's female counterpart, equipped with black-framed glasses and sweat jackets. She suffers from lazy eye. She is one of Sheldon's archenemies due to their conflicting scientific ideas and takes every opportunity to insult Sheldon for mistreating her.

Other recurring characters of the show include Wil Wheaton as himself, Joshua Malina as Caltech President Siebert, Regina King as Caltech HR Representative Janine Davis, Brian Posehn as Caltech geologist Bertram Kibbler, John Ross Bowie as Caltech physicist colleague Barry Kripke, Carol Ann Susi(voice) as Howard's mom Debbie Wolowitz, Christine Baranski as Leonard's mom Beverly Hofstadter, Laurie Metcalf as Sheldon's mom Mary Cooper, Aarti Mann as Raj's sister Priya Koothrappali, Alice Amter as Raj's mom Mrs. Koothrappali, Brian George as Raj's dad V. M. Koothrappali, Keith Carradine as Penny's dad Wyatt, Lauren Lapkus as Denise and Bob Newhart as Arthur Jeffries or Professor Proton.

Various Hollywood celebrities and famous scientists and engineers have also made appearances on the show as themselves including Buzz Aldrin, Bill Gates, Stan Lee, Elon Musk, Steve Wozniak, Stephen Hawking, Mark Hamill, Ellen DeGeneres, William Shatner, Kip Thorne and Neil deGrasse Tyson amongst others.

All of these quirky and unique characters and the dynamics between them make the series a fun watch.

## **The TBBT Universe**

The Big Bang Theory is primarily set in Pasadena, California, which is a suburb of Los Angeles. Most of the action takes place at 4A and 4B, 2311, Los Robles Avenue ie. at Leonard and Sheldon's

apartment and at Penny's apartment. The scientists' apartment is shown to be located across the hall from Penny's apartment, to showcase the contrast between the scientific and geeky lifestyles of Leonard and Sheldon and Penny's more "normal" lifestyle.

The apartments itself are characterised by its cluttered interior, which reflects the characters' personalities and lifestyles. Sheldon and Leonard's apartment features large whiteboards used for scientific equations and theories, as well as various posters and memorabilia related to geek culture. Meanwhile, Penny's apartment is colourful and messy. The scenes that don't take place in these two apartments take place in Howard and Bernadette's house, Raj's house or Amy's house.

The characters are also often shown at their workplaces: Leonard, Sheldon, Raj and Howard and later on, Amy's offices/labs at the Caltech; Penny and Bernadette's workplace at the Cheesecake Factory initially, and later on, at ZanGen Pharmaceuticals; and the Griffith Observatory after Raj starts working there as a speaker.

The characters, as a part of their daily life, are often seen at The Comic Center of Pasadena, the comic book store owned by Stuart. It serves as a hub for the characters' geek culture interests, with Stuart often providing them with advice on comics and other collectibles. The characters are also seen at the local bookstore, trainstore, deli, bars and restaurants, dry cleaner, paintball field, etc.

In addition to these regular settings, the show also features various locations outside of Pasadena, including Comic-Con in San Diego, Resorts in Las Vegas, Princeton University in New Jersey, Sheldon's house in Texas, Feynman's grave in Altadena, and Stockholm Concert Hall in Sweden, amongst others.

The show's setting is a key part of its appeal, as it provides a backdrop for the characters' social interactions, various misadventures and comedic mishaps. These settings also provide a sense of place and grounding for the characters' adventures and relationships in the real world.

## **Outlining the Narrative**

Throughout the 12 seasons, the show covered a range of storylines and subplots, from romantic relationships to scientific discoveries.

The show begins with Sheldon and Leonard, who are roommates and work at the California Institute of Technology. They are both brilliant physicists but have trouble with social interactions. They are

joined by their friends Howard, an engineer, and Raj, an astrophysicist, who are also socially awkward but passionate about science.

Leonard, Sheldon, Howard and Raj are all sheltered nerds who have, thanks to Sheldon's love for schedules, divided their week into visits to the comic book store, gaming nights and television viewing parties and have trouble deviating from their incredibly regimented schedules. Their lives are turned upside down when Penny, a beautiful and outgoing aspiring actress, moves in across the hall.

Despite their differences, Penny and the guys form an unlikely friendship and this brings a new perspective and set of experiences to the lives of the four nerds. The early seasons focused heavily on the relationship between Leonard and Penny, which provided much of the show's early humour. Later seasons saw the introduction of Bernadette and Amy, who both became significant characters in their own right.

Over the course of the series, the characters face a range of challenges, from romantic struggles to work-related obstacles. The groups help each other navigate their personal and professional lives: from supporting Penny to expand Penny Blossoms, her hair-clip home business, to retrieving Sheldon's stolen World of Warcraft Battle Ostrich, Glenn; from working on top-secret military projects to helping Raj deal with his selective mutism.

As the group grows and evolves, romantic relationships start to form between the characters. Leonard's life is shaken by an on-again, off-again relationship with Penny, and their eventual marriage is a major milestone for the group. Leonard is seen dealing with his insecurities and lack of confidence, and Penny navigates through her career and financial struggles.

Howard's relationship with Bernadette also develops over the course of the show, and they eventually get married. Howard goes on to become a NASA astronaut and Bernadette secures a well-paid job at a pharmaceutical company after completing her doctorate. Howard is reeled in and reformed by Bernadette and they have children together. They then learn to balance their professional and personal lives as new parents.

Sheldon and Amy develop a quirky romance, and this adds another layer of complexity to the group's dynamics. Amy is remarkably similar to Sheldon, and probably is the only person in the world of the show who can fully understand his worldview. After avoiding romantic relationships her entire life, just like Sheldon, to better dedicate herself to her work, she has now turned her relentless planning



energy on the concept of marriage — a five-year plan to pull Sheldon out of his own head so that they can marry.

Sheldon is seen struggling with changes to his daily routine, such as moving in with Amy and adjusting to married life with her. Although the changes are gradual and hard-won, they come thanks to the efforts of Amy.

Raj is clinically terrified of the opposite sex and struggles with the selective mutism that comes with the phobia. He also struggles with his dating life. He is seen overcoming financial difficulties when his parents cut him off. After these life-shaping experiences, he soon chooses to host shows at the Griffith Planetarium in addition to his day-job at the university in order to embrace the showman in him, taking a turn for a better life.

The show also delves into the character's interests and passions outside of work, including their love of comic books, video games, and science fiction. The group participates in a variety of hobbies together, including playing Dungeons and Dragons, attending comic book conventions, and playing paintball. These shared interests bring the group together and provide a sense of community and belonging.

Additionally, the show depicts the dynamics of the relationships between the characters and their families, including the atheistic Sheldon's very Christian mother, Leonard's mother who keeps experimenting on him and his feelings, Howard's ever-present mother and absent father, Raj's rich, Indian parents and Amy's over-controlling and -paranoid mother.

By the end of the show, Howard and Bernadette get somewhat used to their changed work-life arrangements; Sheldon and Amy together discover "Super-Asymmetry", thus making the scientific discovery of the decade and winning the Nobel Prize for it; Leonard and Penny, both successful and well-settled, are expecting a baby; and Raj becomes a confident and independent adult and goes on to take a world-famous actress as his plus-one to the Nobel Prize distribution ceremony.

The show closes off with Sheldon delivering the most shocking moment of the entire series by realising that there's more to the world than himself after every character in the series finally explodes at Sheldon for being domineering and incredibly stubborn.

He does so by thanking his friends for their incredible patience from the Nobel Prize Ceremony stage. After tossing a characteristically wordy and self-oriented speech, he says:

“I have a very long and somewhat self-centred speech here, but I’d like to set it aside. Because this honour doesn’t just belong to me; I wouldn’t be up here if it weren’t for some very important people in my life. Beginning with my mother, father, meemaw, brother, and sister; and my other family, who I’m so happy to have here with us.

I was under a misapprehension that my accomplishments were mine alone. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have been encouraged, sustained, inspired, and tolerated, not only by my wife, but by the greatest group of friends anyone ever had. I’d like to ask them to stand.

Dr. Rajesh Koothrappali. Dr. Bernadette Rostenkowski-Wolowitz. Astronaut Howard Wolowitz. And my two dearest friends in the world, Penny Hofstadter and Dr. Leonard Hofstadter. I was there the moment Leonard and Penny met. He said to me that their babies would be smart and beautiful. And now that they’re expecting, I have no doubt that that will be the case.

Howard, Bernadette, Raj, Penny, Leonard, I apologise if I haven’t been the friend that you deserve. But I want you to know, in my way, I love you all.”

and thus, closes the curtains with one of the most wholesome moments the group had had in the 12 years.

## **Evolution of the Characters**

Through the timeline of the series, the characters from *The Big Bang Theory* undergo significant growth and development. Their personal and professional journeys are marked by a series of ups and downs, which shape their individual trajectories and ultimately culminate in satisfying resolutions.

Sheldon, in particular, undergoes a major transformation over the course of the show. At the start of the series, Sheldon is characterised by his social awkwardness, rigidity, and lack of empathy. However, as the show progresses, he becomes more self-aware and develops a greater understanding of other people's feelings. This growth is most apparent in his relationship with Amy, which starts as a purely intellectual partnership but eventually becomes a deep emotional connection. Sheldon's eventual decision to propose to Amy and start a family with her marks a major turning point in his personal growth and development. By the end of the series, Sheldon realises that there's more to the world than himself.

Leonard also undergoes significant growth over the course of the show. Initially, Leonard is characterised by his insecurity and deference to Sheldon's demands. However, as the series progresses,

Leonard becomes more confident in himself and his abilities. He stands up to Sheldon more often, asserts his own needs, and eventually becomes a successful scientist in his own right. He also forgives his mother's actions that hurt him and accepts her for who she is, thus untying himself from one another emotional knot.

Howard's journey is marked by his marriage to Bernadette, the death of his mom and the birth of his children, all of which forces him to confront his own fears and insecurities. He evolves from a creepy pervert into a balanced family man. Raj, meanwhile, grapples with his social anxiety, and struggles to form meaningful romantic relationships. However, by the end of the series, Raj is able to overcome most of these obstacles. He goes from being a spoiled brat who is dependent on his parents for daily expenses to an independent adult who learns to manage his life with his own finances.

Penny, initially characterised as a struggling actress and an outsider to the group, eventually becomes a close friend to all of the characters. Her romantic relationship with Leonard is a major plot point throughout the show, but Penny's own personal and professional growth is just as significant. By the end of the series, she embraces her intelligence, becomes more confident in her abilities and starts to make a lot of meaningful contributions to her friends' lives with her insights. She becomes more mature and responsible and has found success as a pharmaceutical sales representative

Bernadette evolves from waiting tables to finish grad school, to a successful microbiologist with a high-level pharmaceutical job that earns her a cartload of money. She initially hates kids, but after having two kids of her own, she becomes a warm mother and even contemplates becoming a stay-at-home mom to take care of them.

Meanwhile, Amy grows from a coldly rational, socially-awkward academic, who displays little emotion to a much more social one who is more assertive, confident, and independent after shedding her strident, aloof personality; so much so that she starts to catalyse a similar change in Sheldon.

Overall, the growth and development of the characters in "The Big Bang Theory" is a major part of what makes the show so satisfying to watch. Each character, even Stuart from the comic book store, has their own unique arc, filled with successes and setbacks, which ultimately culminates in a sense of personal fulfilment and growth. Whether it's Sheldon's journey towards emotional maturity or Penny's rise to success, each character's journey is memorable and rewarding.

## **Thematics of the Narrative**

"The Big Bang Theory" is largely based on daily life and the challenges that come with it. Along the course of its storyline, it subtly and sometimes delves into major real-life themes including:

### **1. Pop Culture**

The show is filled with references to pop culture, including movies, TV shows, comic books, and video games. There are frequent references to well-known comic book characters like Superman, Batman, and Spider-Man. The characters often discuss popular science fiction franchises like "Star Wars," "Star Trek," and "Doctor Who," and frequently make references to fantasy novels like "The Lord of the Rings" and "Game of Thrones."

In addition to this, popular movies and TV shows from a variety of genres including "The Terminator," "Indiana Jones," "Die Hard," "The Simpsons," and "The X-Files" are also frequented throughout the series. Many episodes also showcase popular video game franchises like "World of Warcraft," "Halo," and "Super Mario Bros". All these references often serve as a way for the characters to bond and connect with each other as well as make them feel relatable.

### **2. Geek Culture**

From Star Trek to Dungeons and Dragons, the show isn't afraid to celebrate its nerdiness. The show celebrates and explores nerd culture, portraying its characters as proud and unapologetic nerds who are passionate about their interests and hobbies. The four scientists often discuss the latest advancements in science and engineering, and popular science fiction franchises and comic books.

They are comic book collectors, they attend comic book conventions, they indulge in cosplay as their favourite characters and play other tabletop role-playing games. They are seen speaking to each other in Klingon, a fictional language from Star Trek. In one episode, Sheldon even creates a Klingon boggle game by replacing the letters with Klingon characters.

Klingon boggle, however, is just one of the many modified games the characters are seen playing. Others include Mystic Warlords of Ka'a, Counterfactuals, 3-Person Chess with newly invented chess pieces like the Serpent and Old Woman and power-ups, Trestling, Secret Agent Laser Obstacle Chess, and Rock, Paper, Lizard, Spock. These games are a reflection of the characters' geeky interests and quirky personalities.

By showcasing the characters' passions for such niche areas, the show offers a refreshing change from other shows that look down on geek culture and has become a beloved classic that resonates with everyone.

### **3. Science and Technology**

The show revolves around the characters' interests and achievements in the fields of science and technology. They are often seen discussing complex scientific concepts and theories and often reference famous physicists like Albert Einstein, Richard Feynman, and Stephen Hawking.

Many episodes revolve around Sheldon's research in theoretical physics through which the show explores particle physics concepts such as quantum mechanics, string theory and supersymmetry. The show also explores multiple engineering concepts such as robotics, computer programming and aerospace engineering via Howard's projects.

Meanwhile, accounts on Leonard's work and Raj's work showcases various concepts in experimental physics and astrophysics. The show also explores biological concepts through references about Bernadette's work in pharmaceuticals, and Amy's work on genetics and evolution.

The show also often features cameos from real-life scientists and science communicators. This incorporation of complex scientific concepts in an accessible and entertaining manner adds an intellectual and educational dimension to its storyline, while also reflecting the characters' interests and passions.

### **4. Friendship**

The friendships between the 7 main characters are a central theme of the show. The friends share a deep bond and spend much of their time together, often engaging in geeky pursuits like playing video games or debating scientific concepts.

While the characters often bicker and argue, they ultimately care for each other deeply and are willing to go to great lengths to help one another. There is always an emphasis on the importance of accepting friends for who they are, flaws and all. Sheldon's friends often have to navigate his quirks and idiosyncrasies, but ultimately accept him for who he is.

In addition to the core group's bond, the show explores different types of friendships beyond it. For example, Raj, one of the male characters, forms a close bond with his dog, and the show portrays this relationship as a type of friendship. The characters' involvement in social groups like the Comic Book

Store and the Renaissance Fair portrays a different kind of friendship, one that builds a sense of community and connection with others.

Overall, the show portrays friendship as a source of support, humour, and companionship in an otherwise lonely world with the characters often seen celebrating the joys and challenges of friendship in it.

## **5. Romantic Relationships**

While not the primary focus of the show, romantic relationships play a significant role in the lives of the characters. The show showcases a variety of romantic dynamics through Leonard and Penny, Bernadette and Howard, Amy and Sheldon, and Raj and his girlfriends. As the characters navigate their love lives, they learn important lessons about communication, compromise, and the importance of finding someone who accepts them for who they are.

## **6. Gender**

Being a recurring theme, the show has been both praised and criticised for its portrayal of gender. Many viewers applauded its representation of female characters as intelligent and capable women pursuing careers in male-dominated fields successfully.

However, some critics have argued that the show still reinforces some stereotypes of women as primarily focused on relationships and motherhood. When it comes to the male characters in the show, they are subject to some gender stereotypes as well. But, at the same time, the show also explores the characters' vulnerabilities and challenges these stereotypes.

Thus, it is to be noted that there is conflict in the portrayal of gender in the show. While it has made some strides in representing female characters as more than just stereotypes, it has also perpetuated harmful gender stereotypes.

## **7. Family**

Family plays a significant role in the lives of all the show's characters and several relationships with their families are explored throughout the series. The most prominent example of this is Howard, who has an all-over-his-life relationship with his overbearing and critical mother, and a strained relationship with his father who abandoned him as a kid.

In contrast, Sheldon has a slightly distant relationship with his family due to his high intelligence and social awkwardness. His relationship with his mother, Mary Cooper, is fine but fraught with tension due to her religious beliefs and his own atheism while that with his grandmother, Meemaw, is much warmer and more affectionate, with her being one of the few people who truly understand him.

Meanwhile, Leonard struggles with his mother, Beverly, a cold and distant psychiatrist who only uses him as a test subject for her research and books. Despite this, he is shown to care about his mother and to be affected by her criticism and apathy.

Raj also has a complex relationship with his family, particularly his parents. His parents are extremely traditional and conservative, which often clashes with Raj's more liberal and westernised values. His sister, Priya, also appears on the show.

In addition to all these, Amy's relationship with her mother, who is shown to be critical and over-controlling is also constantly described and later shown too. In several episodes, Amy describes Mrs. Fowler to have forbidden her from doing a lot of things normal kids do, such as taking part in the school play.

Overall, family relationships are an important theme in "The Big Bang Theory," and the show explores the ways in which these relationships can be both supportive and challenging for the characters. The show also highlights the importance of chosen families and the ways in which close friendships can serve as a substitute for traditional familial relationships.

## **8. Music**

Music plays a prominent role in "The Big Bang Theory," and the show's soundtrack features a wide range of musical genres, from classic rock to contemporary pop. The show's iconic opening theme is a classic rock instrumental called "The History of Everything" by the Canadian band Barenaked Ladies. The upbeat song on the namesake Big Bang Theory and the events post the Big Bang (or history of the universe) sets the tone for the show's quirky, lighthearted humour.

The characters in the show often make references to music in their conversations. For example, Penny quoted Toy Story's song; Amy and Howard bond over their love of the music of Neil Diamond. There are several musical performances throughout the series by Howard and Raj before and after the formation of their folk band "Footprints on the Moon", by Leonard who is a cellist and by Amy, who is a talented harpist.

Even the eccentric Sheldon is associated with music in the show. "Soft Kitty" is a lullaby that Sheldon's mother used to sing to him when he was sick and throughout the series, the song becomes a recurring element. The characters often sing it to each other when they're feeling under the weather.

In one episode, he plays the bongos because noted physicist Richard Feynman did too; in another, he discovers that he has a talent for throat singing, a traditional form of singing that involves creating multiple tones simultaneously. Sheldon also realises how Amy has changed his life for the better by a song that persists in his ears. After listening to the earworm again and again, a mention of the Beach Boys finally helps him recognize that the tune is "Darlin'," and the reason it's stuck in his head is because the lyrics remind him of Amy.

Several real-life musicians have also made cameo appearances on the show, including Billy Bob Thornton and Joe Manganiello. Overall, music plays an important role in creating the show's unique atmosphere, and its use of music helps to add to the overall charm and appeal of the show.

## **9. Other Serious Themes**

Apart from the above themes, the show also touches on more serious ones, including death, illness, and addiction. These themes are often explored through the personal experiences of the main characters, and they provide a more nuanced and complex view of the show's world.

For example, in the later seasons, Howard's mother passes away, and the characters are forced to confront the reality of death and the grief that follows. Similarly, in one episode, Sheldon is diagnosed with a medical condition that requires surgery, and the characters rally around him to provide support and comfort.

The show also explores issues related to addiction, such as when Penny struggles with her addiction to video games or Raj's eating issue when he is upset about Lucy. These storylines provide a more realistic and grounded view of the characters' lives, and they add depth and complexity to their relationships and struggles.

The show's willingness to explore these more serious themes and issues and highlight the struggles and challenges faced by real people, even in the midst of humour and lightheartedness is one of the most-loved features of the show.

All the above described themes of "The Big Bang Theory", are what creates its complex and rich tapestry of character interactions and storylines that resonates with a wide range of audiences.



## **Cinematic Language in TBBT**

The Big Bang Theory was filmed in front of a live studio audience, with each episode taking about four hours to film. The show's cinematography and technical aspects were largely focused on capturing the comedic performances of the actors, with a focus on facial expressions and reactions.

One notable aspect of the show's cinematography is its use of close-ups and reaction shots. These shots allow the audience to see the subtle nuances of the characters' performances, and often provide comedic punchlines to jokes or awkward moments.

The show also makes use of various camera angles and techniques to create visual interest and comedic effect. For example, the "dizzy cam" technique is often used to simulate the disorientation experienced by characters during moments of stress or anxiety. The show also employs a lot of two-shot and three-shot compositions, which help to establish the relationships between the characters and their dynamics.

In terms of set design, the show's main setting, the apartment, is a key component of its visual identity. The apartment, as explained earlier, is filled with pop culture memorabilia, including comic book posters, action figures, and other geeky decorations, which help to establish the show's themes of geek culture and nostalgia.

Overall, the show's cinematography and technical aspects are largely and very well focused on supporting the comedic performances of the actors and creating a good visual identity that reflects the show's themes and humour.

## **Personal Say**

The unique cast of characters, memorable guest stars, and the countless laughs and heartfelt moments make "The Big Bang Theory" a hilariously heartwarming sitcom. The show's exploration of the characters' interpersonal relationships, both romantic and platonic, along with humour, witty writing, and clever pop culture references, has made the storyline more engaging.

As a science enthusiast with many quirks myself, I highly resonate with the show's portrayal of the characters as lovable, quirky, \]7[nerds who are unapologetically passionate about science and technology. I relate with many of their childhood experiences as students who loved school, science and learning and misadventures as adults.

The show's added potential to introduce many viewers to concepts and ideas in science and technology, inspiring them to learn more about these fields, further amplifies my interest in it.

Except for some jokes and characterizations that I find problematic, racist and/or sexist, I absolutely adore the show. I believe it is one of the perfect, lighthearted and entertaining ways to unwind with science after a long day.

It is a must-watch for everyone because we are all quirkily unique (or should I say uniquely quirky) and the show has something to offer to every quirky individual.

# **Miranda: An Odyssey of Love, Power, and Forgiveness**

## **1. Introduction**

'The Tempest,' one of William Shakespeare's final plays, presents a compelling array of characters, each with their unique traits and complexities. Among these characters, Miranda, daughter of Prospero, the exiled duke of Milan, stands out as one of the central figures. This critical analysis will delve into the character of Miranda, exploring her relationships, growth, her significance in the play and in the Shakespearean universe and the underlying themes that her character embodies.

## **2. The Name "Miranda"**

The name "Miranda" holds particular significance in the context of Shakespeare's play. Derived from the Latin word "mirandus," meaning "admirable" or "wonderful," the name encapsulates the essence of her character. Shakespeare's choice of this name highlights Miranda's exceptional qualities and positions her as an extraordinary figure amidst the other characters in "The Tempest." The name also connects Miranda to the idea of miracles and the supernatural, which is fitting given her father's magical abilities and the mystical world around her.

## **3. A Celestial Beauty**

Miranda's physical appearance reflects her pure and innocent nature. Described as a "wonder" by Prospero, her father, Miranda's beauty is often likened to a celestial being. Shakespeare portrays her as a radiant and ethereal figure, signifying her divine innocence and connection to nature. Her appearance is a stark contrast to the other characters in the play, emphasising her untainted and unworldly persona.

## **4. The Duality of Innocence and Experience**

Miranda's character embodies the duality of innocence and experience, a recurring theme in Shakespeare's works. At the beginning of the play, Miranda is portrayed as a pure individual who had grown up in isolation on a remote island, untouched by the corrupted world. Various characters, including Prospero and Ferdinand, project their ideals of purity and virtue onto Miranda, often seeing her as a paragon of goodness.

This perception, however well-intentioned, limits her agency and autonomy. As she encounters the shipwrecked characters, she gains insight into the complexities of human nature, including betrayal,

ambition, and deceit. These experiences, combined with her interactions with Ferdinand, foster her emotional maturity and independence.

Miranda's journey from being perceived as a fragile and naive young woman to a strong and independent individual challenges many stereotypes. As she asserts her desires and makes her own choices, she breaks free from the confines of others' expectations, revealing her complexity beyond the initial impression of innocence. Shakespeare uses Miranda's character to underscore the dangers of reducing women to simplistic ideals, reminding the audience that true empowerment lies in embracing the complexities of human nature.

### **5. Dynamic with Prospero**

Miranda's relationship with Prospero is central to her character arc. Both as a loving father and a powerful sorcerer, Prospero's guidance shapes Miranda's worldview. Their relationship is complex, with Prospero's protectiveness sometimes stifling her growth leaving her ill-prepared for the realities of life. Miranda's unconditional love and admiration for her father are evident throughout the play, but she begins to question his intentions as she becomes exposed to other human beings. Prospero's controlling nature and the revelation of his past deeds force Miranda to confront her father's darker side, leading to moments of rebellion.

Her dynamic with Prospero opens up an avenue for exploring parent-child relationships in "The Tempest". Their relationship shows the complexities of parental love, where the intentions of protection and guidance can sometimes hinder a child's growth and self-discovery, thus, showcasing the importance of open communication and mutual understanding.

### **6. The Awakening of Love**

Miranda's connection with Ferdinand adds depth to her character and reveals her capacity for love. Ferdinand's arrival on the island marks a turning point for Miranda, as it provides her with the opportunity to explore emotions and desires beyond the sheltered world she knows. Their love represents a connection between the civilised world and the untamed nature of the island. Furthermore, their love story serves as a contrast to the darker aspects of human nature represented by the other characters, such as Antonio and Sebastian's treachery or Caliban's vengeful nature, and symbolises the power of love to transform and unite

## **7. A Moral Compass and a Beacon of Light**

Compassion and forgiveness are important aspects of Miranda's character. When she discovers Prospero's role in their exile and the machinations behind the tempest, she does not hold onto anger or resentment. Instead, she finds it in her heart to empathise with his desire for reconciliation and redemption.

Despite Caliban's past attempt to violate her, she extends kindness to him. Miranda's willingness to forgive, even in the face of harm, reflects her ability to see beyond appearances and to empathise with those who are marginalised or different from her. Her treatment of Ariel as a fellow sentient being and her recognition of his efforts showcase her ability to see beyond social hierarchies and recognize the intrinsic worth of every individual, even those in service to her father.

Her empathy for the shipwrecked souls and her genuine concern for their well-being also shows her potential for goodness in humanity, making her a moral compass on the island. She symbolises hope for the future and serves as a beacon of light in the midst of darkness, embodying the idea that even in the face of adversity, goodness and compassion can prevail. Her presence in the play reinforces the message that love and empathy have the power to transform individuals and society, offering a path towards reconciliation and renewal.

## **8. Nature and Miranda**

Miranda's affinity with nature is another notable trait that shapes her character. Having grown up on the island, away from the artificiality of society, she has developed a deep connection with the natural world. This connection is not only reflected in her compassionate treatment of Caliban but also in her language and imagery.

Throughout the play, Miranda frequently draws on the elements of nature to express her emotions and thoughts. Her language is filled with metaphors related to the sea, stars, and other natural elements, further reinforcing her association with the untamed beauty of the island. This connection to nature also aligns with the play's themes of the natural world versus the civilised world, highlighting the dichotomy that exists between the two.

## **9. A Unique Shakespearean Character**

Shakespearean women characters often possess multifaceted qualities and serve various purposes in his plays. While some are strong and independent, like Lady Macbeth and Rosalind in "As You Like It," others embody fragility and emotional vulnerability, like Ophelia in "Hamlet." Miranda's character is unique in that she embodies both strength and vulnerability.

Shakespearean women often find themselves in challenging situations and have to navigate the complex societal expectations of their time. Although she may seem passive at times, her character challenges traditional gender roles, when she exercises a strong sense of agency and defies her father's authority. She is not merely a passive object of desire but an active participant in her own love story.

By presenting Miranda as an equal partner in her relationship with Ferdinand and an active agent in shaping her own destiny, Shakespeare challenges the patriarchal norms of his society. This depiction of a woman taking control of her life and making her own choices is empowering and inspiring, offering a progressive and enlightened perspective on women's roles and capabilities.

## **10. Miranda's Significance in The Tempest**

Miranda's character serves multiple essential functions in "The Tempest." Firstly, she humanises Prospero, providing a glimpse into his emotional side and offering insight into his motivations and actions. Her presence is a reminder of the family ties that have been broken by exile and betrayal, making her a vital link to Prospero's past and the desire for redemption. Secondly, Miranda serves as a vehicle for examining the theme of innocence and the corrupting influence of power. Through her eyes, the audience witnesses the impact of power struggles on individuals and society.

## **11. The Legacy of Miranda**

Miranda's character has left a lasting impact on literature and the portrayal of women in theatre. She continues to resonate with contemporary audiences, remaining relevant in the modern world. As one of Shakespeare's most multidimensional female characters, she challenges the tropes of the passive, one-dimensional stereotypes often assigned to women during the Elizabethan era. Her independence, empathy, and strength of character have inspired subsequent generations of writers and playwrights to create more complex and empowered female characters.

Moreover, her journey from isolation to love represents the universal longing for connection and belonging. In an increasingly interconnected yet divided world, Miranda's quest for love and her ability to bridge the gaps between cultures and backgrounds resonate with individuals seeking unity and harmony. Additionally, Miranda's strength, intelligence, and assertiveness to challenge societal expectations and encourage women to embrace their voices and desires, make her a beloved and enduring figure in the realm of literature.

## **12. Conclusion**

In conclusion, Miranda's character in "The Tempest" is a captivating portrayal of innocence, compassion, and empowerment. She serves as a vital anchor in a world filled with deception and intrigue. Her innocence, compassion, and love provide a counterbalance to the darker aspects of human nature that unfold on the island.

Through her, Shakespeare offers a nuanced and compelling depiction of a young woman navigating a complex world, making her a memorable character in the Shakespearean canon who has left an indelible mark on the landscape of literature and inspiring generations to come.

# **Dover Beach: Navigating the Ebb and Flow of Life**

## **1. Introduction**

"Dover Beach" is a profound and introspective poem written by the English poet Matthew Arnold in 1867. Considered one of the most famous poems of the 19th century, it was Arnold's most famous and widely anthologized work. This critical analysis will try to make sense of the rich imagery, emotional intensity, and thought-provoking themes that add up to make "Dover Beach" such a powerful and enduring work of poetry.

## **2. Structure and Tone**

"Dover Beach" is a lyric poem composed of four irregularly-stanzaic sections, each with a different number of lines and varying rhyme schemes. This structure reflects the disarray and unpredictability of the human condition. It mirrors the fragmented thoughts and emotions of the speaker as he contemplates the state of the world.

The poem starts with a calm, descriptive tone as the speaker looks at and describes the serene Dover Beach. This tranquil description in the beginning contrasts with the deep emotional turmoil that follows. As the poem progresses, the tone becomes more introspective and melancholic, reflecting the speaker's growing despair and disillusionment with the world around him.

## **3. Imagery and Symbolism**

The beginning of the poem is characterised by a vivid visual image of the tranquil Dover Beach. This serene scene serves as a metaphor for the fleeting nature of human happiness and stability. The sea, central to the poem's imagery, symbolises the vastness and mystery of human existence, the unknown and uncontrollable forces that shape human life.

The constant, rhythmic sound of the waves crashing on the shore symbolises the eternal cycle of human suffering in the unending flow of time, and by likening human experiences to the fleeting tides of the sea, the poem contemplates their transient nature and impermanence. The reference to the notes of sadness ancient classical playwright Sophocles must have heard when he stood on the shores of the Aegean Sea further emphasises this idea.



The later presented image of the "Sea of Faith" that has "withdrawn" evokes the retreat of religious certainty and the rise of doubt and scepticism in the face of scientific discoveries and changing societal values. This metaphor reflects the broader intellectual and spiritual crisis of the Victorian era, as traditional religious beliefs were increasingly challenged by rationalism and scientific progress.

#### **4. Language and Rhythm**

Arnold's use of language is rich and evocative, contributing to the poem's emotional depth. Meanwhile, the use of poetic devices, such as alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia, contributes to the poem's musicality. The repetitive sounds of the waves, through onomatopoeic words like "roar," "grating," and "tremulous cadence," create a hypnotic effect, immersing the reader in the ebb and flow of the sea. The poem's sombre mood is further accentuated by the use of powerful metaphors and vivid imagery. The juxtaposition of the calm seas and the speaker's inner turmoil creates a powerful contrast, underscoring the complex emotions at play.

#### **5. Intertextuality and Literary Allusions**

The poem incorporates intertextuality, referencing works of art and literature from different time periods. The reference to Sophocles' play "Philoctetes" is just one example. By drawing upon ancient Greek tragedy, the poem connects the universal themes of human suffering and tragedy to the contemporary Victorian era. The use of literary allusions adds layers of depth and cultural richness to the poem.

#### **6. Universal Themes**

"Dover Beach" delves into timeless and universal themes that transcend its historical context. The poem raises questions about the nature of existence, the human quest for meaning, the tension between faith and reason, the transient nature of happiness, the search for stability and comfort in an ever-changing world and the power of love to provide comfort and solace. Here are some of the themes discussed by the poet:

##### **a. Conflict between Faith and Science**

"Dover Beach" reflects the intellectual and spiritual crisis of the Victorian era, as scientific discoveries and advancements in rationalism challenged traditional religious beliefs. The "Sea of Faith" that "was once, too, at the full" indicates a time when religious faith was strong and all-encompassing, but it has now receded like the tide in the face of scientific progress.

The speaker expresses a sense of loss and nostalgia for the time when faith provided solace and purpose, but now he faces an uncertain world where "ignorant armies clash by night" suggesting a sense of confusion and chaos resulting from the collision between opposing belief systems. The poem invites readers to reflect on the human struggle to find meaning and stability in a world where traditional certainties have eroded.

### **b. Isolation and Loss of Connection**

Throughout the poem, the speaker expresses a profound sense of isolation and disconnection from the world. The image of the "darkling plain" creates a stark and desolate landscape, devoid of any guiding light or purpose. This feeling of existential loneliness is further emphasised by the metaphor of a "land of dreams," which suggests a sense of detachment from reality and a longing for an idealised past. The phrase "nor joy nor love nor light" evokes a world devoid of meaningful connections, where human emotions and experiences seem devoid of significance. This sense of alienation and detachment contributes to the poem's melancholic and existential tone.

### **c. Love and Solace**

Amidst the prevailing sense of disillusionment, the speaker turns to his companion and seeks comfort in their love and intimacy. The famous lines "Ah, love, let us be true / To one another!" suggest that in a world devoid of absolute truths and constants, the only solace lies in the emotional connection with another human being. Love, in this context, acts as a counterbalance to the existential anxieties depicted throughout the poem. It becomes an anchor amidst the uncertainties of life, providing a sense of stability and meaning in an otherwise chaotic world.

### **d. Nature and Human Emotions**

Throughout the poem, the natural world is used as a mirror for the speaker's inner emotional state. From the calm sea in the beginning to more turbulent one, the changes reflect the speaker's thoughts and feelings. This mirroring of nature and human emotions highlights the interconnection between the external world and the internal struggles of humans.

### **e. Human Suffering and Tragedy**

Through the reference to Sophocles' play "Philoctetes," which portrays the suffering of a Greek hero abandoned on a desolate island, the poem underscores the universality of human suffering

throughout history, suggesting that the experience of pain and tragedy is an inherent aspect of the human condition.

These themes continue to resonate with readers across time and culture, as they are fundamental aspects of the human experience.

## **7. Historical and Geographical Context**

The poem is titled "Dover Beach," refers to Dover, a coastal town in England. The choice of this setting is not incidental; Dover served as a crucial port for travellers to and from Europe during the Victorian era. This geographical context adds to the poem's themes of change and transition, symbolising the crossing from one realm to another, whether physical, intellectual, or spiritual.

## **8. Literary Interpretations**

"Dover Beach" is characterised by its ambiguity, leaving room for literary interpretations over the years. Some critics see it as a lament for the decline of religious faith and a warning against the dangers of scientific materialism. Others view it as a reflection on the transient nature of human happiness and the ephemerality of human existence. The poem can also be interpreted as an elegy for the loss of innocence and a commentary on the erosion of traditional values in an ever-changing world. It is Arnold's usage of natural imagery to describe human emotions and societal changes that adds such layers of complexity to the poem's interpretation. These layers allow readers to project their own experiences and beliefs onto the poem, making it more relatable and open to diverse perspectives.

## **9. Philosophical Rendition**

"Dover Beach" can be seen as a meditation on the broader themes of existentialism and nihilism. The poem contemplates the human struggle to find purpose and meaning in an indifferent universe. The speaker's disillusionment with the world's changing and uncertain nature reflects the loss of a stable foundation for moral and existential truths.

## **10. The Role of Poetry**

"Dover Beach" can be seen as a meta-poetic work, exploring the function and purpose of poetry itself. The poem embodies the Romantic notion of the poet as a sensitive individual grappling with the complexities of existence and seeking to communicate profound emotions and insights through their craft. The act of writing poetry becomes a way to confront the turmoil within and bridge the gap between the self and the world, underlining the power of literature to express and connect human

experiences. Such acts of sharing these emotions through art serves as a form of catharsis and connection with others.

## **11. Conclusion**

“Dover Beach” invites in-depth analysis from various angles due to its historical context, use of ambiguity and literary allusions, exploration of faith and existential anxieties, and the significance of the poet’s role. Arnold’s masterful use of imagery, symbolism, and language crafts a poignant meditation on the human condition, offering readers an opportunity to grapple with their own beliefs, doubts, and connections with others.

By capturing the transience of human experiences and the existential anxieties, the poem speaks to the human condition across generations. The messages of hope that it offers amidst despair offers comfort and reassurance to readers grappling with their own existential questions. Ultimately, the poem reminds us of the importance of human connection and the power of love to provide comfort and hope in an ever-changing world through timeless themes and poetic brilliance.

# **Mrs. Louise Mallard: The Heart of the Matter**

## **1. Introduction**

Mrs. Louise Mallard is the protagonist of Kate Chopin's short story "The Story of an Hour," published in 1894. She is a complex character who experiences a range of emotions within the short span of the story. She has been subject to much analysis and interpretation due to the story's brevity and the complexity of her emotions. This character analysis will explore Mrs. Mallard's emotional journey along with her thematic and symbolic significance.

## **2. Physical Appearance**

In "The Story of an Hour," Kate Chopin doesn't provide an extensive physical description of Mrs. Mallard's appearance. Mrs. Mallard is described as having a "fair, calm face" and "piercing eyes." She appears to be of average height and delicate in nature. The mention of her "fair" face might imply that she appears gentle and unassuming, while her "piercing eyes" suggest that there is more depth and intensity to her character beneath the surface.

## **3. Heart Trouble**

The symbolism of the heart is central to the story. Mrs. Mallard is said to have "heart trouble," which is significant on both literal and metaphorical levels. Mrs. Mallard's "heart trouble" is a physical ailment that plays a crucial role in the story, especially her death. When Mrs. Mallard learns about her husband's death, her heart beats fast and the "coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body". But as soon as Brently walked in, her 'heart trouble' reappeared.

Her heart trouble serves as a symbolic representation of her emotional and psychological state. It represents the core of Mrs. Mallard's emotions and desires, as well as the burdens and constraints she carries due to her marriage and societal expectations. Her heart condition can be seen as a metaphor for the burden of her repressed desires and the emotional strain caused by her constrained life.

## **4. Irony of Mrs. Mallard's Name**

The name "Louise Mallard" itself holds some irony. "Louise" is derived from the word "Louis," meaning "famous warrior." This name hints at the hidden strength and resilience within Mrs. Mallard, which she finally exhibits in her brief taste of freedom. On the other hand, the surname "Mallard" is a type of duck, which may imply that she is merely a domesticated bird confined to her marital pond.

## 5. Personality Traits

Mrs. Louise Mallard, the protagonist of "The Story of an Hour," exhibits several distinct personality traits throughout the story. Here are some key traits that define her character:

### a. Reserved and Introverted

Mrs. Mallard appears as a reserved and private individual. She keeps her emotions to herself and retreats to her room to be alone with her thoughts when she receives the news of her husband's death, indicating a preference for solitude.

### b. Sensitive

Mrs. Mallard is depicted as a sensitive and introspective woman. Her reaction to her husband's reported death reveals her deeply emotional nature, and she experiences a whirlwind of conflicting feelings in a short span of time.

### c. Vulnerable

Mrs. Mallard's vulnerability is evident in her emotional response to her husband's death and her brief taste of freedom. Her heart condition also adds to her physical vulnerability.

### d. Resilient

Despite her vulnerability, Mrs. Mallard displays a certain level of resilience as she processes her emotions and experiences moments of empowerment. However, her resilience is ultimately short-lived due to the tragic turn of events.

### e. Empathetic

Mrs. Mallard reacts with genuine sadness when she hears of her husband's death, showing her capacity for empathising with the suffering of others. She knew that when she would see "the kind, tender hands folded in death" she would weep again.

These personality traits work together to create the character of Mrs. Mallard..

## 6. Ambivalence and Complexity

Mrs. Mallard's character is layered with ambivalence and complexity. Her initial reaction to her husband's death seems to conform to societal norms, displaying the expected sorrow and grief. However, as the story progresses, her emotions take a surprising turn, revealing a deeper inner conflict.

This shift challenges the stereotype of the mourning widow, presenting a more nuanced portrayal of a woman grappling with conflicting feelings about her husband, her marriage, and her newfound freedom.

## **7. Repression and Desire**

Mrs. Mallard's character epitomises the theme of repression and suppressed desire. Her marriage represents the traditional gender roles and societal expectations of her time, wherein women were expected to prioritise family and submit to the authority of their husbands. Chopin portrays Mrs. Mallard as a woman who longs for independence and self-fulfilment but is suppressed by the patriarchal norms of her society. This represents the desires of all the 19th century women who had to stifle to conform to their expected roles as wives and mothers. Through Mrs. Mallard, Chopin highlights the psychological toll of such repression and the need for women to assert their individuality.

## **8. Psychological Exploration**

"The Story of an Hour" is often analysed for its psychological depth. Chopin, through Mrs. Mallard's changing emotions, suggests that the loss of freedom in a stifling marriage can be as significant a cause for sorrow as the loss of a loved one. Mrs. Mallard's emotional journey is a prime example of how repressed emotions can manifest in unexpected ways. Her elation at the prospect of freedom raises questions about the nature of happiness and the complexities of human psychology. The story provides insights into the human mind and the intricacies of human emotions, which can be suppressed and reshaped by societal norms and expectations.

## **9. Identity and Self-Discovery**

Mrs. Mallard's brief moment of elation upon learning of her husband's death allows her to glimpse a life outside the confines of marriage. Her introspection and reflection upon her emotions suggest a desire to understand herself better, outside the confines of her marriage. This experience indicates a potential for self-discovery and hints at an aspect of her identity that has been suppressed. It raises questions about how societal expectations can erode one's sense of self and the importance of personal autonomy in finding fulfilment.

## **10. The Paradox of Marriage**

The story delves into the paradoxical nature of marriage during that era. On one hand, marriage was seen as a source of security and stability, while on the other hand, it could be a restrictive and

oppressive institution, particularly for women. Through Mrs. Mallard, Chopin emphasises this stifling effect marriage had on women during that era. Mrs. Mallard's internal conflict embodies this paradox, as she mourns the loss of her husband while simultaneously experiencing a sense of relief at the prospect of freedom from the marital constraints. This is representative of the struggles of many married women who longed for independence but were unable to attain it due to societal expectations.

### **11. Whispers of Feminism**

The story is often analysed from a feminist perspective, as it highlights the limited role of women in the late 19th century. Mrs. Mallard's character becomes a representative of the broader struggles of women during that time, who were confined to domestic roles and denied autonomy. Mrs. Mallard's desire for freedom and her internal struggle for self-assertion can be interpreted as a call for women's liberation and autonomy.

The line "Free ! Body and soul free!" shows the change that happened in the perception of life in Mrs. Mallard's mind. When she realised that "there would be no powerful will bending hers", she stretched her hands to welcome the new life of freedom as she said that she will have no one to live for but herself. Therefore, she emerged from her room "like a goddess of victory" with "a feverish triumph in her eyes". She had won back her individuality and freedom.

Her brief taste of freedom signifies the longing for independence that many women felt but were unable to achieve due to societal norms. The joy and self-realisation that came with this taste of freedom underscores the importance of women's individuality and independence, making it a powerful statement against the oppressive constraints of patriarchal society.

### **12. Joy that Kills**

When the doctors examine her, they all concur that she had died as a result of the "joy that kills." It was not normal for a widow to rejoice over her husband's departure. It was expected that his resurrection would make her happy; happy to the point of getting a heart attack. Mrs. Mallard is used to reveal the role of a widow in the society who was expected to grieve after the death of her husband.

### **13. Remembering Mrs. Mallard**

While Kate Chopin's work was published in the late 19th century, Mrs. Mallard's character and her journey have left a lasting impact on literature, feminism, and discussions surrounding women's rights



and individuality. Her legacy extends beyond the confines of the short story itself and lives on in the contemporary discussions on gender roles, marriage, and personal autonomy. Her character continues to resonate with readers even today due to the universal themes of freedom, individuality, and societal expectations that she represents.

#### **14. Conclusion**

Despite being written over a century ago, Mrs. Louise Mallard's story still remains a thought-provoking piece of literature. Chopin's ingenious storytelling and subtle use of symbols make her a powerful representation of the quest for autonomy and self-discovery. Most beautifully written, Mrs. Mallard's character serves as a strong symbol of women's struggles for independence and self-discovery, making her a memorable and influential figure in the world of literature and beyond who continues to resonate with readers and critics alike.

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