

HAND OUT

LESSON – 4 THE COP AND THE ANTHEM

MODULE – 3

The lesson ‘The Cop and the Anthem’ -Soapy made another attempt for his arrest. This time he began shouting like a drunk man in front of the theatre. The cop thought that he was a college boy and hence left him.

Soapy then saw the umbrella of a man buying a newspaper. He then came to the decision of stealing it. Soapy then took the umbrella and the man kept following him.

Soapy then told him to call the cop who was standing at a corner. The man refused to call the cop because he himself had stolen the umbrella.

Soapy then gave up all hopes of getting arrested. Then he stopped at his old childhood home. Then a sudden change came in his soul.

Soapy tries his luck twice again, but cops remain indifferent as ever.

Soapy is suddenly reminded of his childhood home and mother, and resolves to turn over a new leaf.

Feeling a hand on his arm, Soapy turns around to see the broad face of a cop.

Then he came to another cop standing in front of a big theatre. He thought of something else to try.

He began to shout as if he had too much to drink. His voice was as loud as he could make it. He danced, he cried out.

And the cop turned his back to Soapy, and said to a man standing near him, "It's one of those college boys. He won't hurt anything. We have orders to let them shout."

Soapy was quiet. Was no cop going to touch him? He began to think of the Island as if it were as far away as a star. He pulled his thin coat around him. The wind was very cold.

Then he saw a man in a shop buying a newspaper. The man's umbrella stood beside the door. Soapy stepped inside the shop, took the umbrella, and walked slowly away.

The man followed him quickly. "My umbrella," he said.



"Oh, is it?" said Soapy. "Why don't you call a cop? I took it. Your umbrella! Why don't you call a cop? There's one standing at the corner. The man walked more slowly. Soapy did the same. But he had a feeling that he was going to fail again. The cop looked at the two men.

“I—” said the umbrella man “— that is — you know how these things happen; if that’s your umbrella, I’m very sorry. I found it this morning in a restaurant. If you say it’s yours I hope you’ll—”

“It’s mine!” cried Soapy, with anger in his voice.

The umbrella man hurried away. The cop helped a lady across the street. Soapy walked east. He threw the umbrella as far as he could throw it. He talked to himself about cops and what he thought of them. Because he wished to be arrested, they seemed to believe he was like a king who could do no wrong.

At last, Soapy came to one of the quiet streets on the side of the city. He turned here and began to walk south toward Madison Square. He was going home, although home was only a seat in a park.

But at a very quiet corner, Soapy stopped. Here was his old childhood home. Through one window, he could see a soft light shining. That had been his living room, where he had spent many happy peaceful moments. Sweet music came to Soapy’s ears and seemed to hold him there.

The moon was above, peaceful and bright. There were few people passing. He could hear birds high above him. And the music that came from the room held Soapy there, for he had known it well long ago. In those days, his life contained such things as mothers and flowers and high hopes and friends and clean thoughts and clean clothes.

There was a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He saw with sick fear how he had fallen. He saw his worthless days, his wrong desires, his dead hopes, the lost power of his mind.

And also, in a moment, his heart answered this change in his soul. He would fight to change his life. He would pull himself up, out of the mud. He would make a man of himself again.



There was time. He was young enough. He would find his old purpose in life, and follow it. That sweet music had changed him. Tomorrow he would find work. A man had once offered him a job. He would find that man tomorrow. He would be somebody in the world. He would. Soapy felt a hand on his arm. He looked quickly around into the broad face of a cop.

“What are you doing hanging around here?” asked the cop.

“Nothing,” said Soapy.

“You think I believe that?” said the cop.

Full of his new strength, Soapy began to argue. And it is not wise to argue with a New York cop.

“Come along,” said the cop.

“Three months prison on Blackwell’s

Island,” said the judge to Soapy next morning.

O. HENRY

EXPLANATION

Poor Soapy failed to get himself arrested three times. Therefore he decided to change the mode of offence. The policeman was watching but he did not arrest him. He thought that the man might be her kith. In his second attempt he made terrible noises and danced madly in front of a theatre. The Cop thought that he might be a stupid college student. He would have got zero mark in the examination therefore the police did not arrest him.

Finally Soapy stole an umbrella but that also did not help him getting arrested. The failing attempts create a kind of despair in Soapy. His distress is described thus: He talked to himself about cops and what he thought of them. Because he wished to be arrested, they seemed to believe he was like a king, who could do no wrong.

At last Soapy came to one of the quite streets on the east side of the city. He turned here and began to walk south towards Madison Square. He was going home. Although home was only a seat in a park. The winter was approaching. Soapy did not succeed in being arrested. He was now a broken hearted man. He was going back to his old garden bench. On his way he heard the notes of an Anthem. It reminded him of earlier fruitful life which consists of family and friends. The music worked magic of his soul. He realized the degradation of his present life. Therefore he decided to change his ways and be a good man. Soapy had decided to find out a job and rebuild his life so far he

had been doing nothing to earn his living. He wanted to join a job. But it was not in his destiny to live a life of a respected citizen. Fate played a trick with Soapy. It did not favour Soapy's plan to live a better life than this one by earning his own livelihood.

The irony of fate played a very opposite trick on him. When he was trying to get him arrested, the police always refused to arrest him under one pretension or the other. When he had finally decided to turn his aimless life into a life with some aim, disrespectful life to respectful one, the cop put him back on his old way of life. The end of the story is sudden, surprising and superb. The story ends with irony of fate for Soapy. He was arrested not for a crime but for doing 'nothing.' "Three months on the Island" said the magistrate in the Police Court the next morning.