

Tender Heart High School, Chandigarh
Class: X Subject: English Literature
With the Photographer 15.4.24

Storyline

Exposition

1. The narrator visits a photo studio to get his photograph taken.

2. The photographer looks at him unenthusiastically and asks him to wait.

3. After an hour of waiting, the photographer takes the narrator into the studio to click his photograph.

Rising action

4. The photographer observes that the narrator's face is quite wrong.

5. The narrator first feels glad then gets annoyed at the photographer's behaviour.

6. The photographer tries different angles and asks the narrator to do some facial acrobatics.

Climax

7. The photographer clicks his photo in a moment of animation.

Falling action

8. The narrator is shocked to see his photo as the photographer had totally retouched it.

Denouement

9. Describing the photo as a worthless bauble the narrator leaves it and walks out teary eyed.

Story in Detail

One fine day, the narrator went to a photo studio to get his photograph taken. After looking at him rather unenthusiastically the photographer, a drooping but intelligent looking man in a gray suit, asked him to sit and wait. The narrator, while waiting for the photographer, read the magazines kept in the waiting room which included old editions of the *Ladies Companion*, the *Girls Magazine* and the *Infants Journal*. When the photographer did not come back after a long wait, the narrator felt that he had intruded into the private space of the photographer. The photographer returned after an hour, and asked the narrator to come in the inner room. The narrator went in and sat down under a beam of sunlight filtered through a sheet of factory cotton cloth. The photographer rolled his camera but was not satisfied with the narrator's face and said that his face was quite wrong. The narrator replied that he is aware of it.

At first the narrator felt happy that the photographer was empathetic to the issue of his face being full but he got angry when the photographer cut him mid-sentence to find faults with his facial features. He kept on complaining about his head, ears and other features. The narrator exaggerates the acrobatics the photographer expected him to do such as opening his wide mouth a little and closing it immediately. When the photographer continued finding faults with his face and physical appearance.

the narrator told him with emotion and dignity to stop complaining. He told him that it was his face and he had been living with it for forty years. After speaking harshly, the narrator started to rise from his seat; in that instant the photographer pulled the string to take the photograph without the knowledge of the narrator. The narrator asked the photographer to show his picture but the latter asked him to come back on a particular day to collect the developed proof.

The narrator returned to the photo studio on the scheduled day to see the proof of the photograph. When the photographer showed him the proof of the photograph, the narrator was utterly shocked and asked the photographer if the person in the photograph was him (the narrator). The photographer had retouched all his facial features. He had removed his eyebrows and drawn new ones and adjusted his mouth a little. He told the narrator that he had used a process called the Delphide for removing the eyebrows and putting in new ones. He had even removed the hair that was on his face. This enraged the narrator. The photographer had changed his whole appearance to showcase his professional skills. The narrator told him he wanted something that would depict his face as Heaven has given him, humble though the gift may have been. He wanted a photograph that his friends would keep with them and remember him after his death. What he wanted was not done. He asked the photographer to keep that photograph because for him (the narrator) it was a worthless bauble. The narrator left that studio with tears in his eyes.

NOTES

drooping: bending

natural scientist: a scientist who studies objects, phenomena or laws of nature

unwarrantable: unacceptable; incapable of being justified

breaking in: intruding

frantic: desperate

grave: serious

apparently: seemingly

ceased: stopped

twisted: moved as if by forceful rotation

droop: hang downwards

bump: heave

staggering: shaking

animation: excitement

beckoned: called

splendidly: nicely

superfices: surface; *here*, face

withering: disapproving

scorn: a feeling that someone is not worthy of any respect

brutal: extremely cruel or harsh

reconcile: come to terms with

emboss: cause to bulge up

bauble: an inexpensive piece of jewellery which has little artistic value; *here*, a thing of no value

CHARACTERISATION

The Narrator

The narrator of the story was a forty-year old man, who went to a photographer to get his photo clicked.

WITH THE PHOTOGRAPHER

The Need for the Photo: The narrator wanted to get his photo clicked, a photo that would look exactly like him. He did not want any alterations but something that would depict his face as given to him by Heaven. In fact, he wanted to have a picture of himself that would be a true copy of his self and which his friends would value after he was no more with them.

Self Awareness and Acceptance: Although the story does not mention anything about the characteristics of the narrator, but one thing about him that clearly emerges is the fact that he had self-awareness about his face and its shortcomings. He was quite satisfied with his features and his looks. When the photographer told him that his face was quite wrong, he replied that he had always known it. Again when the photographer continuously kept on complaining about one or the other facial features of his, he told him with a voice full of emotion but with dignity that he had lived with that face for forty years and therefore, knew its faults. But he had learnt to love it. And when he was finally handed a copy of his photograph, he was shocked beyond imagination as he asked the photographer whether it was his photo. He was so annoyed at not finding anything near to his original self in the photo. He blasted the photographer, and asked him to keep the photo for himself and his friends and described it as a 'worthless bauble.'

A Calm, Composed Man: The narrator seems to be calm and composed man, who did not lose his temper easily. Firstly, he did not complain when he was kept waiting by the photographer for an hour. He even felt that he had intruded into the private space of the photographer. Second, he did not say anything to the photographer when he took more than expected time to click his photograph. In fact, he ironically said that the photographer might be praying inside the machine. Even when the photographer said that there was something wrong with his face, he agreed to his viewpoint. He continued cooperating with the photographer even when he gave him strange instructions like to open and close his mouth, droop his ears a little more, turn the face just a little upward and expand his lungs. After doing all these facial acrobatics, when the photographer told him that he still did not like his face, the narrator finally lost his cool and blasted the photographer.

Resolute: When he visited the photographer's studio to get a copy of his photo, the narrator appeared to be a man of conviction. He was aware of the shortcomings in his face and had accepted the same. In light of this awareness, he wanted a photograph that resembled his face with all its faults. He was sure what he liked and disliked. When he found his photo having no resemblance to his real self, he told the photographer that it was a worthless bauble and that he (the photographer) could keep it.

The Photographer

The photographer is the antagonist of the story.

Physical Appearance: He is described in the story as a drooping man. It can be interpreted as a man overcome by weariness or lacking in strength and firmness perhaps because of age. It is also the reason for his having dim eyes or weak or indistinct vision. The author of the story says that there is no need to describe him any further because he is like every other photographer.

Natural Scientist: The photographer has been described as a natural scientist, the one who is involved in carrying out experiments and deals with the objects and phenomena of the physical world. As such the photographer observes his human subject to not only click his photo but also to make alterations in the photo using the processes called the 'Delphide' and the 'Sulphide' which allows him to replace the original features of a person like the eyebrows with new ones. Delphide and Sulphide is used to create humour in the story.

Indifferent to Others: The photographer appears to be an indifferent man, lost in his own 'scientific pursuits' and not interested in others or their needs. It is this indifference that makes him look at the narrator without any enthusiasm. Though the narrator is his customer, he makes him wait for him for an hour. Further, he does not listen to what the narrator wants. He continuously keeps on criticising his facial features and even goes to the extent of physically taking his head in his hands and twisting it sideways and then twisting his face as far as it could go. He never thinks of the effect it would have on the narrator.

While taking his photo, he crawls into the camera box and comes out several times. On one occasion, he remains inside the camera box for quite a long period that the narrator satirically says that he thinks that the photographer is praying inside. Without thinking about hurting the sentiments of the narrator, he tells him that his face is quite wrong. He does not stop there but continues to physically twist and turn his head and face to get the perfect angle for clicking his photo. To make matters worse, he gives ridiculous instructions to the narrator like dropping his ears a little more, rolling his eyes under the lids, expanding his lungs, contracting his waist and twisting his hip. He reaches the height of idiosyncrasies when he continues to criticise the narrator's facial features and clicks his photo in just a moment of animation.

Lack of Professional Ethics: The photographer indeed lacks professional ethics as is indicated by his unpleasant and humiliating treatment of the narrator, his customer. The moment the narrator enters his studio, he shows his unprofessionalism by looking at him unenthusiastically and making him wait for an hour before calling him into the studio to click his photo.

He shows his total lack of professional ethics when he makes changes in the narrator's photo to please his eye and his own fixed standards of beauty rather than accepting what is real and what the customer wanted. He retouched his photo to such an extent that narrator is unable to recognise himself in the proof of the photo.

Thus, the photographer appears to be an uncivilised unethical person who lacks the basic fundamentals of his profession and basic manners in dealing with his customers.