

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 4: THE COP AND THE ANTHEM



THE COP AND THE ANTHEM

~Summary~

-by William Sydney Porter

"The Cop and the Anthem" is a short story written by **O. Henry**. The story was about a **homeless** man named **Soapy**. Soapy was staying at a park in **Madison Square**. As the winter approached, Soapy thought of finding a **better place to stay**. Soapy desired to get **three months of food** and **stay** on **Blackwell's Island**. So he thought of **different plans to get caught by the policeman**.

Soapy's first plan was to have a **delicious dinner** at a **high-class restaurant** and then say that he had no **money**. With this plan in mind, Soapy came to a **restaurant** where only the **wealthy people** came **every evening**. Unfortunately, the head waiter noticed Soapy's **shattered shoes** and sent him out. As a result, his first attempt failed.

Then Soapy left **Broadway**. Soapy noticed a shop on the corner of **Sixth Avenue**. He thought of executing his second plan. So he took a **cobblestone** and threw it at the **glass door**. People came **rushing**, and a cop was the first one to arrive. He inquired who had done that. Soapy voluntarily came forward and confessed that he had broken the glass. But the policeman refused to arrest because those who commit wrong would not surrender in front of the cops. Finally, his second attempt also got failed.

Later, Soapy saw an **ordinary restaurant** across the street. He thought of executing his third plan. So he entered the restaurant, but no one was bothered about his **broken shoes** and **torn clothes**. He ordered food and ate well. Finally, he told the waiter he had no money to pay the bill. Two of the waiters threw him out of the restaurant. He had failed in his third attempt.

Soapy made his fourth plan by pretending to be a **drunkard**. But, unfortunately, the **cop misunderstood** Soapy as a **college boy**, and hence he left him.

Later, Soapy saw an **umbrella man** buying a **newspaper**. He then thought of executing his fifth plan. Soapy took the umbrella and strolled from there. The umbrella man followed him and said to Soapy that it was his umbrella. But Soapy refused to give the umbrella and told him **to call a cop. However, the man refused to call the cop because the umbrella did not belong to him**. Later Soapy felt sad and **dejected** because all his attempts had failed.

Finally, Soapy thought of returning to the **park**. At that time, he saw an **old church**, and it was his childhood home. Soapy heard a "Sabbath anthem" coming out through the **window**. The anthem had made a remarkable **transformation** in his life. The anthem made him recall his past life. At that moment, Soapy decided to fight against the **challenges of life**. Most noteworthy, Soapy decided to find work from the very next day. Just then, a cop came there, and he asked Soapy

what he was doing there. Soapy then began to argue with him. However, the cop took him in front of the judge the **next morning**. The judge gave him three months of prison on **Blackwell's Island**.

~Conclusion~

At the end, Soapy is sentenced to three months of imprisonment for loitering and misbehaving. But this happens at a time when he had resolved to begin anew. Soapy's life is one that is full of irony. The meanings of confinement and freedom are totally different for a homeless man like Soapy.

The prison does not curtail his freedom but guarantees safety, warmth and food. His story ends on a similar ironical note as when he understands the true meaning of freedom and purposefulness, he is dumped into a prison cell.

NCERT SOLUTIONS**Questions (Page No. 29)**
(Exercise)

Question 1. What are some of the signs of approaching winter referred to in the text?

Answer: Birds begin to fly south. People want new warm coats. Dead leaves fall on the ground. These were some of the signs of approaching winter referred to in the text.

Question 2. Write 'True' or 'False' against each of the following.

- a. Soapy did not want to go to prison. _____
- b. Soapy had been to prison several times. _____
- c. It was not possible for Soapy to survive in the city through the winter. _____
- d. Soapy hated to answer questions of a personal nature. _____

Answer:

- a. False
- b. True
- c. False
- d. True

Question 3. What was Soapy's first plan? Why did it not work?

Answer: Soapy's first plan was to eat at an expensive restaurant and tell that he did not have money to pay for that. They would call the cops and the cops would take him to jail.

The plan did not work because he was stopped at the door of the restaurant by the head waiter. He turned Soapy around and made him leave the place quickly and quietly.

Question 4. "But the cop's mind would not consider Soapy". What did the cop not consider, and why?

Answer: Cop did not consider Soapy as the person who threw the stone at the window glass because no criminal would stand after doing so and talk to the cop.

Question 5. "We have orders to let them shout". What is the policeman referring to?

Answer: The policeman was referring to the orders for not arresting the shouting college students.

Question 6. Write 'True' or 'False' against each of the following.

- a. Soapy stole a man's umbrella. _____
- b. The owner of the umbrella offered to give it to Soapy. _____
- c. The man had stolen the umbrella that was now Soapy's. _____
- d. Soapy threw away the umbrella. _____

Answer:

- a. True
- b. True
- c. True
- d. True

Question 7. "There was a sudden and wonderful change in his soul". What brought about the change in Soapy?

Answer: Soapy stood in front of the house where he had spent his childhood. He was reminded of his mother, the sweet music he used to enjoy in his room and the decent life he used to have back then. He decided that he would work and become somebody in life.

Discuss the following topics in groups.

Question 1. Suppose no cop came at the end. What would Soapy's life be like through the winter?

Answer: Soapy's life would have been very difficult in the winter. He did not have a house and food. He would have had a bad winter. However, if he would be determined to work and lead a decent life once again, he could have achieved it gradually.

Question 2. Retell an episode in the story which is a good example of irony in a situation.

Answer: When Soapy felt that winter was approaching, he decided that he would spend the next three months in jail. For that, he decided that he would have to do some small crime. But even after trying multiple times, he was not caught by the cops.

When he decided to work and lead a decent life, he was arrested by a cop. This is a good example of irony in a situation.