

THE IMPORTANCE AND ESSENCE OF TRADITIONS IN "TWO THANKSGIVING DAY GENTLEMEN"

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Abstract

This article is about the importance and essence of traditions in the short story "Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen" written by O'Henry. The story also highlights the importance of gratitude and giving thanks, which are essential components of the Thanksgiving tradition. The two gentlemen express gratitude for each other's friendship and for the simple pleasures in life, such as a warm meal and a comfortable place to sleep.

Keywords: Thanksgiving Day, Puritans, traditions, gratitude, friendship, overeating, culture, conventional meal.

Introduction

O'Henry was a famous writer of short stories. That is why he took the name "King of short stories" by other writers. His original name was William Sydney Porter. He placed a crucial part among writers at that time. As he was the owner of brilliant power, knowledge and abilities. Almost all of his stories became popular once they were published. Such as "The Gift of the Magi", "The Last Leaf", "Mammon and the Archer" along with "Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen" which has been attracting large audience since it had been written. This short story is included in the collection named "Trimmed Lamp and Other Stories of the Four Million". The collection that has been considered as culturally significant for its readers, also includes "According to their lights", "The Ferry of Unfulfilment", "Elsie in New York" and other short stories. "Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen" was written in 1907 in New York. As other works, this writing have also took a large place in readers' hearts and it could have an effect on their minds towards appreciating traditions.



Main body

In America there are abundance of traditional holidays which had been celebrating from past years. One of the precious days that we want to discuss is Thanksgiving day which takes the second place after Christmas as to its importance. Shortstory highlights the essence of that day in americans' life. Actually, this holiday is held on the fourth Thursday of November as the sign of being thankful to God when the country pick up all of their harvest. On this day people cook a range of meals, such as turkey as the main one and others. Being considered as enjoyable, highly prized and historical holiday, Thanksgiving day is valued by people even today. In "Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen," traditions play a significant role in conveying the essence of the story. The story revolves around two gentlemen who have a tradition of meeting every Thanksgiving Day. The tradition is so important to them that they plan their entire year around it, and they go to great lengths to ensure that they meet on that day. The tradition represents the bond between the two men, and it is a symbol of their friendship. It also serves as a reminder of the importance of human connection and the need for companionship. The two gentlemen are both lonely, and their tradition is a way for them to combat their loneliness and find solace in each other's company.

This short story covers one of the most vital issues as to the appreciation and deep loyalty on the way to american tradition. This short story is worthy of attention when it comes to the role of culture and customs. Both central and minor characters serve as assistants to explain how to follow traditions and how they are important among americans. Actions that is done by characters amaze us, as they go to extreme lenthns so as to show obedience to a custom which was set by their ancestors. They are ready even to give up themselves to save the tradition and continue it for centuries.

Short story begins with the description of situation when Puritans landed on Atlantic shore and they were the very people who began the tradition. As a conventional meal, turkey was eaten on this day. In the story there is a man named Stuffy Pete was sitting on the bench in one of the Parks in New York called Union Square. For nine years on Thanksgiving day he sits there during afternoon and one Gentleman come here in order to buy dinner for Stuffy Pete. Situation is the same every year. But today Pete was very full because of turkey that he ate.



" But today Pete was not hungry. He had come from a dinner so big that, He had almost no power to move. He's like green eyes looked out from a grey face on which there was still a little food. His breath was short. His body had suddenly become too big for his clothes; It seemed ready to break out them."¹

New York has many people that really appreciate and follow to traditions. For nine years the Old Gentleman has offered dinner to Stuffy Pete on this day. In order not to make the gentleman upset he agreed to be with him although Petty's clothes were about to tear because of overeating. The Old gentleman were happy and they went to one of the restaurants in the street, they sat down round the table offering a delicious meal. They were recognisable faces for the waiters who serves at the restaurant. Because every year the Old gentleman and Stuffy Pete come here on thanksgiving day and have a dinner. Tradition had been followed. After having dinner Stuffy Pete said thank you to the old gentlemen as usual and went to one side of the street and the gentleman went to opposite corner. After some time there unexpected Event happened. Stuffy Pete fall suddenly to the ground and was taken to the hospital. Doctors was wandering that what kind of illness is it that Stuffy Pete faced. In the same hospital the Old Gentleman was also taken. There two doctors came across with each other and one said the cause of Gentleman's sickness which was prompted by starvation from which The gentleman was suffering for 3 days. Whereas overeating led Stuffy Pete to death.

"He is almost dead for need of food, a very proud old man, I think. He told me he has had nothing to eat for three days."²

At the end of story two of the main characters die, but importantly both of them managed to save the tradition, they could follow the custom though it showed the way of death to them.

Tradition is a thing that most of the people in a particular society have the same way of thinking, behaving or acting as their ancestors.

"Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire."³

Gustav Mehlhar, one of the romantic composers who was famous around the world said this statement.

¹ https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/two-thanksgiving-gentlemen.pdf

² https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/two-thanksgiving-gentlemen.pdf

³ <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/tradition>



Understanding the essence, we should follow our customs. Since they reflect our mentality, country, religion together with teaching us how to take lesson from past mistakes, how to live in a community, how to appreciate each other and etc. It takes decades for a tradition to be formed. Henry James said: " *It takes an endless amount of history to make even a little tradition*".⁴

There is A day which is similar to Thanksgiving among Uzbeks too. It is called "Mehrjon bayrami" . All people on this day celebrate to express being thankful for harvest. This holiday is often held in schools and kindergartens when all uzbek people collect their crop in November.

Besides, in other countries like Austria, Germany and Switzerland there are also holidays which are similar to Thanksgiving. Furthermore, Korean people celebrate Chuseok as a major harvest festival between September and November.⁵

To conclude, traditions are one of the most important parts of the community. Even there is also such kind of people that sacrifice themselves to follow customs of their society. Since, there are representatives of history, they are roots of our ancestors. Overall, traditions are an integral part of "Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen" because they represent the themes of friendship, companionship, gratitude, and human connection. The story emphasizes the importance of these values, which are often overlooked in our fast-paced, modern society.

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