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The story also highlights the hypocrisy of Victorian society, which valued appearances over substance. In this article, we will explore the allegorical elements of "The Model Millionaire" and how they relate to the themes of wealth, love, and kindness. We will analyze the characters, plot, and symbolism used by Oscar Wilde to convey his message. By the end of this article, readers will have a better understanding of the deeper meaning behind "The Model Millionaire" and its relevance to modern society. Background on Oscar Wilde Oscar Wilde was a renowned Irish playwright, novelist, poet, and essayist who lived in the late 19th century. Born in Dublin in 1854, Wilde was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford. He was known for his wit, flamboyant personality, and his contributions to the aesthetic and decadent movements of the time. Wilde's literary career began with the publication of his first collection of poetry in 1881. He went on to write several plays, including the popular works "The Importance of Being Earnest" and "An Ideal Husband." These plays were known for their clever dialogue, satirical humor, and exploration of societal norms and conventions. Despite his success, Wilde's life was marred by scandal and controversy. In 1895, he was convicted of homosexuality, which was illegal at the time, and sentenced to two years of hard labor. This experience had a profound impact on Wilde's life and work, and he died in exile in Paris in 1900 at the age of 46. Today, Wilde's works continue to be celebrated for their wit, humor, and commentary on society. His legacy has influenced countless writers and artists, and his contributions to literature and culture continue to be recognized and appreciated around the world. Overview of "The Model Millionaire" "The Model Millionaire" is a short story by Oscar Wilde that was first published in 1887. The story revolves around the character of Hughie Erskine, a handsome and charming young man who is well-liked by everyone he meets. Despite his charm and good looks, Hughie is not wealthy and lives on a small annual allowance from his aunt. One day, while walking through the city, Hughie is approached by a beggar who asks him for money. Moved by the beggar's plight, Hughie gives him all the money he has in his pocket. Later that evening, Hughie discovers that the beggar was actually a millionaire who was testing his generosity. The story is an allegory that explores the themes of wealth, privilege, and generosity. Through the character of Hughie, Wilde suggests that true wealth is not measured by material possessions but by the kindness and generosity that we show to others. Allegorical Elements in the Story The Model Millionaire by Oscar Wilde is a story that contains several allegorical elements. The story is about a young man named Hughie Erskine who is in love with a woman named Laura Merton. Hughie is a poor man, but he is kind and generous. He is always willing to help others, even if it means sacrificing his own happiness. One of the allegorical elements in the story is the character of Baron Hausberg. Baron Hausberg is a wealthy man who is also a beggar. He represents the idea that wealth and poverty are not always what they seem. The Baron's true identity is only revealed at the end of the story, when he gives Hughie a large sum of money as a reward for his kindness. Another allegorical element in the story is the idea of appearance versus reality. The story shows that things are not always what they seem. Hughie assumes that the Baron is a poor beggar, when in fact he is a wealthy man. Similarly, Laura assumes that Hughie is a wealthy man. The story also contains an allegory about the value of kindness. Hughie's kindness towards the Baron is rewarded with wealth, while Laura's lack of kindness towards Hughie leads to her unhappiness. The story suggests that kindness is a valuable trait that can lead to happiness and success in life. Themes and Moral Lessons "The Model Millionaire" by Oscar Wilde is a thought-provoking allegory that explores a variety of themes and moral lessons. Here are some of the most important ones: Generosity and Compassion: The story emphasizes the importance of being kind and compassionate towards others, regardless of their social status. It shows that true wealth lies not in material possessions, but in one's ability to give to others. The Illusion of Wealth: The story also highlights the fact that wealth and material possessions do not necessarily bring happiness or fulfillment. Hughie Erskine, the protagonist, is a romantic and charming young man who lacks money, yet he is universally well-liked and admired. The Power of Perception: The story suggests that appearances can be deceiving, and that people should not judge others based on their external circumstances. The beggar who turns out to be a millionaire is a prime example of this. The Importance of Gratitude: The story also emphasizes the importance of being grateful for what one has, rather than focusing on what one lacks. Hughie learns this lesson when he realizes that his act of kindness towards the beggar has brought him unexpected rewards. Character Analysis Hughie Erskine is the protagonist of "The Model Millionaire," and he is a charming, kind, and handsome young man. However, he lacks the financial means to support his romantic and charming tendencies. He is not intellectually distinguished and is hopeless at business. Despite his lack of wealth, he is universally well-liked and admired by all who know him. Baron Hausberg is the wealthy and generous millionaire who helps Hughie by paying off his debt. He is an enigmatic and mysterious character, but his actions reveal him to be compassionate and kind-hearted. He is the embodiment of Wilde's message that wealth does not necessarily equate to moral superiority. Alan Trevor is a struggling artist who befriends Hughie. He is a bit of a cynic and is critical of Hughie's romantic notions. However, he ultimately helps Hughie by introducing him to Baron Hausberg. Trevor is a representation of the struggling artist who must rely on the generosity of others to survive. The Role of Irony Irony plays a crucial role in "The Model Millionaire." The story is full of ironic situations that highlight the hypocrisy and superficiality of Victorian society. Firstly, the title itself is ironic, as the model millionaire in the story is not the wealthy and successful character, but the poor and generous Hughie Erskine. This irony is further emphasized by the fact that Hughie is the only character who truly embodies the values of kindness and generosity that are often associated with wealth. Secondly, the character of Alan Trevor, a struggling artist, is also ironic. Despite his lack of financial success, he is portrayed as being more genuine and authentic than the wealthy characters in the story. This highlights the idea that money does not necessarily equate to happiness or moral superiority. Finally, the ending of the story is perhaps the most ironic of all. Hughie's act of kindness towards the beggar ultimately leads to his financial success, which is the opposite of what one would expect in a society that values wealth above all else. Wilde's Commentary on Society In "The Model Millionaire," Oscar Wilde uses the character of Hughie Erskine to critique the superficiality of social classes and the simplistic view of wealth. Wilde contrasts the artificiality of the upper classes with the genuine kindness shown by Hughie, who, though of noble background, is poor. This highlights the idea that true happiness and worth cannot be determined by one's wealth or social status. Furthermore, Wilde satirizes Victorian pretensions by showing how the upper class's obsession with wealth and status can lead to a lack of empathy and compassion for those less fortunate. Literary Devices Used "The Model Millionaire" is a short story that employs various literary devices to convey its message. Oscar Wilde's use of these techniques enhances the story's impact and makes it more enjoyable to read. One of the literary devices used in the story is the allegory. The story's plot and characters are symbolic of larger societal issues, such as the divide between the rich and the poor. The allegory is used to convey a deeper meaning to the reader. Another literary technique used in the story is irony. The story's protagonist, Hughie Erskine, is a handsome and charming man who lacks the financial means to support his lifestyle. In contrast, the beggar he helps turns out to be a millionaire. The irony of the situation highlights the story's theme of the unpredictability of life. Wilde also uses humor in the story to lighten the mood and make it more enjoyable to read. The witty dialogue and humorous situations add a touch of levity to the story, making it more accessible to readers. Comparison to Other Wilde Works Wilde's "The Model Millionaire" is a short story that stands out for its use of allegory and satire. While it shares some similarities with other works by Wilde, such as "The Importance of Being Earnest," it also has some unique aspects that set it apart. One of the main similarities between "The Model Millionaire" and "The Importance of Being Earnest" is the use of satire to highlight the hypocrisy and superficiality of Victorian society. Both works use humor and wit to expose the flaws of the upper class and their obsession with wealth and status. However, "The Model Millionaire" differs from "The Importance of Being Earnest" in its use of allegory. The story uses the character of the beggar-turned-model to symbolize the true value of kindness and generosity, contrasting it with the superficiality of wealth and appearance. This use of allegory is not as prominent in Wilde's other works, making "The Model Millionaire" a unique addition to his literary repertoire. Artist Paintings of Hughie Erskine is kind but poor, struggling to make a living. He donates money to a model posing as a beggar. The beggar turns out to be a wealthy Baron in disguise. Impressed by Hughie's kindness, the Baron gifts him £10,000. Hughie is finally able to marry his love, Laura Merton. Find the character sketches from the short story "The Model Millionaire" from ICSE Class 9, Treasure Chest (A Collection of ICSE Poems and Short Stories) book. Hughie Erskine Hughie Erskine is a charming, good-natured young man whose popularity and attractiveness are contrasted by his lack of financial stability. His compassionate and generous heart ultimately transforms his fortunes, exemplifying that genuine kindness can lead to rewarding outcomes. Baron Hausberg Baron Hausberg is a wealthy and generous individual who disguises himself as a beggar to pose for a painting. His humility and kind-heartedness underscore the theme that true wealth lies in generosity and compassion, making him a "model millionaire." Laura Merton Laura Merton, daughter of a retired colonel, is depicted as loving and loyal, deeply attached to Hughie despite his financial instability. Her character underscores the theme of true love transcending material wealth and societal expectations. Alan Trevor Alan Trevor is a renowned artist known for his eccentric personality and artistic brilliance. His genuine friendship with Hughie highlights his admiration for personal charm and generosity, qualities he values highly, despite Hughie's financial shortcomings. Sequence Event / Occurrence Explanation 1 Introduction of Hughie Erskine Hughie is charming, kind-hearted, but poor. 2 Hughie's Financial Struggles Despite many attempts, Hughie fails to earn money. 3 Hughie's Love for Laura Merton Hughie loves Laura, but her father demands he must be wealthy. 4 Visit to Alan Trevor's Studio Hughie visits Alan Trevor, his artist friend. 5 Encounter with the Beggar Model Hughie feels compassion and gives money to the beggar. 6 Revelation of the Beggar's True Identity Alan reveals the beggar is actually Baron Hausberg, a millionaire. 7 Hughie's Embarrassment Hughie feels foolish about giving money to a wealthy man. 8 Reward for Hughie's Kindness Baron Hausberg sends Hughie a cheque of £10,000 as a wedding gift. 9 Happy Conclusion Hughie marries Laura, and his act of kindness transforms his life. The story opens with the author saying that unless one is rich, he or she should not fall in love or think about it. The poor should be practical. Having a permanent source of income is better than being fascinating. There are a few things which the main character Hughie Erskine never realized. Poor Hughie. Intellectually, we must admit he was not of much importance. He never said a brilliant or even ill-natured thing in his life. Poor Hughie was a good person but not very successful. He was good-looking and was popular with both men and women. He had achieved many things however he was unable to earn for himself. His father had left him a Cavalry sword and a History of the Peninsular War in fifteen volumes. He did not inherit any wealth. Hughie hung the first over his looking-glass, put the second on a shelf between Ruff's Guide and Bailey's magazine, and lived on two hundred a year that an old aunt allowed him. Hughie hung the sword over his looking-glass and kept the books given by his father on a shelf between two magazines. He supported himself with two hundred pounds a year lent to him by an old aunt. He had made several attempts to earn a living. He had attempted to make money in the stock market and had been a tea-merchant as well. However, nothing worked for Hughie. It was the same as ever. Then he tried selling sherry. That too didn't give him money. He ended up doing nothing. He was a delightful young man and everything was perfect, except that he didn't have a profession. Whether for worse or good, he was in love with someone. She was a retired Colonel's daughter. Her name was Laura Merton. Her father had been to India and changed a lot. His digestion and temper was affected after coming back. Laura adored Hughie and he too was passionate about her. They were the handsomest couple in London, and had not a penny-piece between them. The Colonel was very fond of Hughie but would not hear of any engagement. They were a great couple and had no money with them. The Colonel too liked Hughie very much but he was against the two of them getting engaged. He would tell Hughie to come to him after becoming rich and having a net-worth of at least ten thousand pounds. He would then think about the future. When he spoke like that, Hughie would look glum and turn to Laura for consolation. One morning, when Hughie was on the way to Holland Park where the Mertons lived, he decided to drop by at his friend's house. His friend's name was Alan Trevor and he was both a painter and artist. As a person, he was quite strange but when he picked up the brush, he was a real master. His works were highly sought after. He liked Hughie a lot. He had been impressed by his personal charm. Hughie was a high-spirited man and had a generous nature. That attracted the artist. Trevor and he welcomed Hughie to visit his studio permanently as and when he pleased. When Hughie came, Alan Trevor was giving finishing touches to the life sized picture of a man dressed in tattered clothes. The beggar was standing on a raised platform when Hughie saw both of them. He had a pitiable expression. He was an old man with wrinkles. Flung over his shoulders was a thick brown cloak which was not in good condition. His shoes too were worn out. With one hand, he held out a rough stick and the other hand had a battered hat held out for alms. "What an amazing model!" whispered Hughie, as he shook hands with his friend. "An amazing model!" shouted Trevor at the top of his voice. "I should think so!" Hughie commented to his friend that the model was outstanding. He shook his hand. Hughie said that he felt sorry for the poor old man. Hughie said that the beggar indeed looked miserable however for artists it is the expression that is indeed priceless. Trevor agreed and said that one doesn't want a beggar to have a happy face. Hughie seated himself comfortably and asked Trevor how much a model is paid for a single sitting. Alan replied that the model is paid a shilling for an hour. Then, Hughie asked Alan how much he would earn for painting this picture. Alan replied that he would get two thousand guineas. Hughie said that the model should also get a percentage of the profit because they are working equally hard. Alan said that painting was not an easy job. It is not just about sitting or standing in one place and painting. It also involves effort like manual labor. Then Alan asked Hughie to not disturb him. "Smoke a cigarette and keep quiet." After some time, the servant came in and told Trevor that the frame-maker wanted to speak to him. Trevor told Hughie that he must not run away and he would come back very quickly. In the absence of Trevor, the old beggar took the opportunity to rest for a moment on the wooden bench behind him. He looked so forlorn and wretched that Hughie immediately felt sorry and checked his pockets. He found a sovereign and some coppers. Even though Hughie himself was poor, he decided to give the beggar whatever he had. He was a poor old fellow, Hughie told himself and he needs the money more than I do. He gave the sovereign to the beggar. The old man smiled a little and thanked Hughie. Soon, Trevor returned and Hughie took his leave. He blushed a little at what he had done. When he met Laura and told her, she scolded him for his extravagance. He walked back home and went to the Palette Club at around eleven in the night. Trevor was sitting alone in the smoking room, having a drink. "Well Alan, did you get the picture finished all right?" he said, as he lit his cigarette. "Finished and framed, my boy!" answered Trevor; and, by-the-by, you have made a conquest. Hughie asked Alan if he had completed the picture they had been working on. Alan replied that the painting was finished and even framed. He then revealed to Hughie that he had made a conquest - the old model had become quite devoted to Hughie. Alan went on to explain that he had shared all the details of Hughie's personal and professional life with the old beggar. He had even told the old beggar about Hughie's love interest, Laura, her colonel father and the ten thousand pounds. Hughie was dismayed, feeling the old man should not be made privy to such private information. He expressed concern for the beggar's wellbeing, noting the man's tattered rags were almost falling apart. Hughie offered to give the old man some of his own old clothes to help. "My dear boy," said Trevor, smiling, "that old beggar, as you call him, is one of the richest men in Europe. He could buy all London tomorrow without overruling his account. Trevor then said that the old man is not a beggar as Hughie thinks. He is one of the richest men in all of Europe. He is so rich that he can buy the entire London and still have money in his account. Trevor continued that the old man has a house in every capital, he dines in gold plates, and can even stop Russia from going to war if he wants. Oscar Wilde Portrait by Napoleon Sarony The old man whom Hughie had seen in his studio was none other than Baron Hausberg. Hughie was startled. He was shocked that he had given such a large sum of money to a poor old fellow. Trevor burst into laughter. Hughie sulked and thought that he had made a fool of himself. Trevor said that he didn't know that Hughie used to go about distributing alms so recklessly! I can understand your kissing a pretty model, but your giving a sovereign to an ugly one - by Jove, no! Besides, the fact is that I really was not at home today to any one; and when you came in I didn't know whether Hausberg would like his name mentioned. Trevor said that he wasn't sure if Hausberg would like his name mentioned because he was not dressed fully. Hughie thought that Hausberg would think he was a big fool. Trevor said that it was nothing like that. In fact, he was extremely elated after that. Trevor said that Hughie's luck would change now. In a fit of joking, Trevor told Hausberg that he would invest his sovereign and Hughie would receive interest from the money. Hughie called himself an unlucky devil. He was upset and said that the best thing was to go home and sleep and he would tell Alan that he must share all this with anyone or it could get very embarrassing. Trevor said that Hughie was talking nonsense. In fact he told Hughie that his act of philanthropy is indeed a very noble deed. He told Hughie to stay and not run away. He told him to have another cigarette and talk about Laura as much as he wanted. However Hughie didn't cheer up and kept feeling hopeless. Alan Trevor found it very funny and he started laughing. The next morning at breakfast, the servant brought a card which said that someone by the name of Monsieur Gustave Naudin had come on behalf of M. Le. Baron Hausberg. Hughie thought that he had come for an apology and asked the servant to let him in. An old gentleman with gold spectacles and grey hair came into the room, and said, in a slight French accent, "Have I the honor of addressing Monsieur Erskine?" The man said that he came from Baron Hausberg. He continued talking however Hughie suddenly interrupted and offered him his apologies. The old gentleman smiled and said that the Baron had asked him to give him a letter. He handed Hughie a sealed envelope. On top of the envelope, it was written that this was a wedding gift for Hugh Erskine and Laura Merton. Inside was a cheque for ten thousand pounds. When they were married, Alan Trevor was his best man and the Baron made a speech at the wedding breakfast. "Millionaire models," remarked Alan, "are rare enough; but, by Jove, model millionaires are rarer still!" Alan said that although it was rare enough to find millionaire models, what was even rarer were model millionaires. Trevor explains that the "model millionaires" who use their means to help others are the rare exceptions, contrasting the novelty of simply wealthy models with the even greater rarity of those who possess both riches and admirable character. He is referring to the generosity, kindness, and civic-mindedness that Baron Hausberg showed to Hughie. This speaks to the difference between mere wealth and true virtue. Thus, the story ends on a positive note. Hughie is rewarded for his act of generosity and everything becomes alright in his life. Understand the key themes in this renowned Oscar Wilde short story, crucial for your ICSE English Literature syllabus. Theme of Class Differences Oscar Wilde distinctly portrays class differences prevalent in Victorian society through the characters of Hughie Erskine and Baron Hausberg. Hughie represents the financially unstable lower class, whose societal acceptance and life opportunities are significantly limited by their economic condition. Conversely, Baron Hausberg embodies immense wealth and social prestige, showcasing how money influences social interactions and opportunities. Critique of Materialism The story is a critical reflection on the materialistic nature of Victorian society, emphasizing how financial status often overshadowed personal virtues and character. Hughie, despite his kindness and good nature, initially struggles because of his financial shortcomings. However, the twist in the story highlights Wilde's belief that genuine human values such as kindness and generosity hold more lasting importance than mere wealth. Irony and Satire Oscar Wilde skillfully employs irony and satire to enhance the story's narrative. Hughie, who gives charity to a seemingly poor man, ironically ends up receiving charity from the wealthy individual he helped. Wilde satirizes societal values, showcasing how appearances can be deceiving and how true worth is not always visible through external appearances. Importance of Generosity and Kindness Generosity emerges as a critical virtue in the story. Hughie's genuine act of kindness towards the disguised Baron Hausberg ultimately transforms his fate. Wilde underscores the moral lesson that acts of generosity, irrespective of one's own circumstances, can lead to unforeseen rewards and blessings. Character as True Wealth The story places significant emphasis on the idea that true wealth lies in one's character rather than financial prosperity. Hughie's goodness and Baron Hausberg's humility and generosity illustrate this principle vividly, suggesting that societal admiration should be directed toward moral virtues rather than financial success alone. We offer premium education on a personalized level. Online tuition for all grades, tailor-made! Below are a few questions that you can look out for your examinations and class tests. Stand out with perfectly written answers with help of Anetta Class. Give a character sketch of Hughie Erskine Hughie Erskine was a handsome young man who lacked nothing except an income. He was kind and generous and it was his philanthropic nature which handsomely rewarded him one fine day unexpectedly. Give a character sketch of Baron Hausberg Baron Hausberg is a rich old man who poses one day as a model in an artist's studio. He pretends to be poor for the portrait but in fact he is one of the wealthiest persons in Europe. Is the title apt for the short story? Yes, the title is apt. Baron was a millionaire model. Subsequently, he also turned Hughie into a millionaire. Hughie too is an ideal millionaire or model millionaire. Revise and master this essential ICSE chapter with carefully prepared interactive MCQs, RTCs, and comprehensive workbook solutions. Start Your Test Oscar Wilde was an Irish poet and celebrated playwright. Born: 16th October, 1854 Died: 30th November, 1900 Place of Birth: Westland Row, Dublin, Ireland Major Works: The Canterville Ghost, The Picture of Dorian Gray, The Importance of Being Earnest. Best Known For: He is known for his wit, epigrams and plays. Oscar Wilde died after contracting meningitis. He loved flowers and often used them. He studied at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. Once loved by the Victorian society, he lost his reputation and had a hard time in jail where he was kept in solitary confinement. He was convicted and sentenced for indecency. He wrote even while in prison. He wrote a poem called 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' while in prison. Deep Waters, a short story published in 1950, describes how one can overcome fear through determination, and willpower. It is... Deep Waters, a short story published in 1950, describes how one can overcome fear through determination, and willpower. It is...