ABSTRACT

James Grover Thurber was a great American author, cartoonist, and humorist. However, he is best known for his contributions both as a cartoonist and as short story writer for the *New Yorker* magazine. Throughout this investigation we have tried to depict his life which was successful in some ways, but at the same time, filled with hardships because of bad health. The first chapter deals with James Thurber's life. During his career, Thurber experimented with many types of writing. The second chapter refers to the historical period in which James Thurber lived. In the third chapter, we analyze his works. James Thurber found a way to make serious statements about human nature and society through his many short stories and books. Even though Thurber's experiences, influences, and feelings are not unique, his writings have found a place in history. Finally, Chapter four analyzes James Thurber's *Fables for Our Time*, a collection of Thurber's humor fables. This study focuses on moral lessons.

Clue Words: James Thurber's biography, humorist and cartoonist, American author, James Thurber's works.

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Contents

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GRAPHIC CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATION CONTENTS

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DEDICATION

To my parents who supported and encouraged me with their patience and love with the progress of this thesis. I would especially like to dedicate this thesis to my husband Juan Pablo and my children Nicole and Francisco, who always gave me their unconditional support to finish my studies.

Thanks to you

Verónica Loayza

DEDICATION

To my loving parents who have guided my days, and motivated me through values helping me to become the person I am today. Thanks for being with me every moment and guiding me with your wise advice and giving me the support that I needed. Also, to my sisters who give me a lot of positive and unconditional love. To you I dedicate this work. Thanks so much.

Jeaneth Solórzano

INTRODUCTION

James Grover Thurber is considered the preeminent American humorist of the twentieth century. The most intriguing characteristics of James Thurber are his style and evocation of humor. Thurber's *My Life and Hard Times* raised the bar of comic literary reminiscence to a height that no other practitioner of the genre has come close to clearing. Humorist James Thurber was very popular and respected in his time. He established the sophisticated humor and style of the prose writers of America. His works have a combination of the normal and the absurd, creating characters and uncommon situations that entertain its readers. In the twentieth century, James Thurber was one of the most prominent comedians and cartoonists. James Thurber was often compared to Mark Twain. He wrote nearly forty books including essays, short stories, fables and tales for children. His fourth book, *My Life and Hard Times* was his admission in American Literature by three generations. Thurber could entertain many people, but he did not feel comfortable with more than a dozen people. He preferred a smaller audience.

His life was affected by the loss of an eye, the failure in his marriage, disappointment in love and his blindness became his irritating with others. James Thurber turned their emotions and experiences in art and these sometimes were painful and readers seemed identified with his work. He, through text and graphics, maintained a connection between himself and the reader. Thurber's legacy are thirty books, most of them are easily available in any library in the U.S.A. or Europe. Thirty-four years after his death, his

originality is incomparable mastery of language, perceptible satire, and fun entertainment.

Thurber's works were translated into many languages and appeared in various forms such as ballet, opera, theater, radio, movies, short films, musical revues, and television. Most of the better drawings flowed directly onto paper from his subconscious. He rarely knew when he began a drawing exactly what would emerge. Thurber's art and prose live on as wonder entertainment of his literary immortality.

CHAPTER 1

JAMES GROVER THURBER'S BIOGRAPHY

Illustration 1 Image of James Grover Thurber

1.1 EARLY YEARS AND EDUCATION

EARLY YEARS

James Grover Thurber was born in Columbus, Ohio on December 8, 1894. His father was Charles L. Thurber, and his mother's name was Mary Agnes. His father was a minor politician. He dreamed of being an actor. Thurber considered his mother as a "born comedienne" and "one of the finest comic talents I think I have ever known." She was a good joker. James Thurber had two brothers, William and Robert. One day William and James were playing, William shot James in his left eye with an arrow causing James to lose his eye. In his childhood he was unable to play any sports because he almost couldn't see. Also, Thurber could never pass biology at the university because he could never see anything through a microscope.

He looked like an older, old fashioned man. He wore wrists dangling from his sleeves, his hair unnaturally brushed. As well, his lack of physical confidence kept him awkward in looks and movement throughout adolescence and early manhood. He began wearing glasses at the age eight because his parents wished to protect him from further eye injury and because, denied the roughhouse life of his brothers, he had become a constant reader, bothered occasionally by movements of light in his good eye.

William and Robert were both athletic and enjoyed a carefree childhood, which the handicapped Thurber must have found discouraging. William had affection for horses. He left the rougher yard play and street games to his brothers. Moreover, he did some activities such as shaking cards into a hat, throwing rocks at bottles, or winning prizes by throwing softballs at the carnival.

Thurber's brothers competed for their mother's attention with constant fights, complaints, and shoving matches. Thurber was the principal disturber of the domestic peace. For years, the Thurber's protected William from any guilt over the eye accident. It happened "during a childhood game." From age ten, William did show a skill for reproductions of photographs and pictures, and even careful and literal representations of real people and objects. William's first sketch, one he kept all his life, was of a little girl telling an old man, "You're going on a long journey." His parents were convinced that James Thurber had a real artistic potential. Thurber became one of the most popular professional draftsmen in the business. William's drawing wasn't creative. He could only watch with envy as his

younger brother went on to glory with a strange form of art William couldn't have understood.

Over the last fifteen years of his life, Thurber worked far away at a play about the *New Yorker.* Thurber had taken the precaution of telling William of his plans to write him into the plot and assured him he would be compensated for it. The play was never finished. Still, Thurber remained more amused by his older brother and treated him with contempt. After William's retirement in 1960, he visited Thurber in New York.

William stayed with the family once in a while during the 1930s when the Thurbers lived on Gay Street. After his father's death in 1939, Robert and his mother moved into the two-bedroom apartment in the Southern Hotel where William had a room of his own for a least six of the fourteen years his mother and brother lived there. Unlike Robert, who had never felt comfortable enough to invite women, William occasionally accompanied ladies, always of polite and decent reputation, and frequently invited them to a restaurant or the theater.

By 1940, when he had a blurred vision, he seemed desperate. Thurber planned to have an eye operation, with no guarantee that his sight would be better. The gods of fortune had permitted him his limited vision longer than medical science could explain, the doctor said, and Thurber knew that this borrowed time was running out. One night at Robert's apartment, a depressed Thurber drank a lot and began to cry. Furious by his bad luck, he threw his glass and then destroyed a wooden desk chair. Robert calmed him and told him to go home.

Thurber dissolved in tears, citing all the unfair obstacles he had had to go through in his life. He had never had the support from his father. He was about to go through more hell with his eye because his parents hadn't had the sense to obtain the proper treatment quickly after the accident. In September 1962, he moved to Clemson, South California in search of warmer weather and a lower cost of living.

Robert was stunned when his older brother William finally got married in 1963 at age seventy and into a Clemson family of some evident local distinction. Thurber had been warning William away from marriage. Robert didn't come to the wedding, but he was invited to live with the newlyweds. Robert visited them for a short time. The temptation, which Robert took pleasure with, was that Greensboro was the hometown of William. But Robert missed Columbus, and two months later he was back there, again living alone in a residential hotel.

William died at age eighty, in November 1973, and was buried in South Carolina at his wife's request. He survived much of his solitary life and seems to have ended it happily. He had to have been as talented as his brother. It was enough, and he, Willism Thurber, understood that, even if nobody else did.

EDUCATION

His first and second grades were spent in the Ohio Avenue School, 1900-1902, but of all his school years, the teachers and classmates who most frequently were in his dreams and memory were those at Sullivant. His fourth-grade teacher at Sullivant was Miss Ballinger. She brought a white rabbit to class and asked the

children to draw it. Thurber impressed her, and the next day she asked him to try again, but Thurber was embarrassed at this attention and being alone with Miss Ballinger so he couldn't do it. His fifth grade was made unforgettable by a teacher, Linnie Wood, who each Friday afternoon made fun of him for entertainment in front of the class.

From the time James was eight, he wore glasses and knew his lessons, and both of those things were considered pretty terrible at Sullivant. He was also a daydreamer. When he was in the fourth or fifth grade, a teacher's report card to his parents read, "I think James is deaf. He never seems to hear anything I say to him." "James was very shy and very quiet," his mother recalled. "He never had to study much, but he always got good grades. He absorbed more in half an hour than the other boys did in a whole evening. He was always very good and never got a bad mark in deportment."

After Thurber had finished sixth grade, his family moved farther east, there he studied at Douglas school a mile from Sullivant. Thurber is remembered there as always knowing the answers when the teacher asked the students, but shy, nervous, and red-faced with embarrassment at having to perform before the class.

Margaret McElvaine, his eighth grade teacher, expressed to his mother her worry over Thurber's personality. Whenever she called on him to recite, his notebook was constantly with him, serving as a kind of defense blanket. However, outside of class he was finding himself socially and acquiring a few friends. Moreover,

his ability to complete the job in a fraction of the time it took his colleagues was what won him respect. Regularly, his humor and spontaneous comedy acts were winning him additional popularity.

Thurber enjoyed English, languages, and history in high school. He even got good grades in math and science, neither of which interested him. After graduating from Douglas School, Thurber found unusual jobs to pay for his nickel novels and theater tickets.

James Grover Thurber graduated from Columbus East High School in June 1913 with the Thurber family in attendance at the ceremonies. On this occasion, he wore a blue suit with a white stiff collar and tie and a handkerchief.

Then he continued working to earn money for the next academic year. He still didn't apply to the university until it was almost too late. His application wasn't approved until September 10, 1913, six days before classes began. His freshman year got off to a bad start. Though he came through his thirty-three credits with good grades, he felt separated and unnoticed on campus. He frequently wore cheap clothes which were very big. His lack of confidence showed up in nervous, awkward movements and incoherent speech. There was evidently something wrong with one of his eyes because it did not always look in the same direction as the other one.

Two university requirements also afflicted Thurber at the beginning. Each afternoon, all male freshmen and sophomores attended military science and

tactics which included learning to march in close-order. Secondly, there was gymnasium, with swimming a requisite for graduating.

Military science and tactics was taught by Captain Converse, a West Pointer with a patch covering an eye he had lost in the Indian wars. Far from being sympathetic to Thurber, he seemed to feel the ungraceful young man was a disgrace to the position of one-eyed persons. Thurber began to skip military classes. He complained to his family. He knew his physical disability would disqualify him from military service, and he resented the reading time that the drilling exercises cost him. William remembers his brother putting a patch over his glass eye at home and performing violently funny and hostile impersonations of Converse.

By the summer of 1915, Thurber was changing, retired, unrecognized, and lonely. He had to leave the university's 1914-1915 academic year. He was broke, unable to find full time summer employment, and that July he accepted his father's offer to take him and William to Cleveland to work.

That fall, Thurber was back on campus, again trying to escape the university's depressing requirements of military and physical conditioning. He again cut military drill eleven times though he completed the first semester's elementary French, English Literature exam, and advanced composition.

He didn't graduate because he couldn't pass botany. Also, he failed to pass military drill and gymnasium and quit in June 1918.

1.2 BEGINNING OF HIS CAREER

Thurber had a job for some years in Ohio as a journalist. In Paris Thurber wrote for *The Chicago Tribune* and other newspapers. He worked hard in the 1920s in the United States and France, where he began as a professional writer. He became famous for his simple, surrealistic drawings and cartoons.

During his career Thurber experimented with many types of writing. He said that his ideas were influenced by the Mid-western atmosphere of Columbus, movies, and comic strips. His poor eyesight was several times the source of surrealistic misunderstandings which found their way into his writings.

Thurber left behind a peculiar and unique comic world that was populated by his curious animals. Thurber’s men dreamed of wild escape and epic adventure and so, in their way, won out in the battle of the sexes. "Humor is emotional chaos remembered in tranquility," he once said. Thurber's theme of war between men and women has been criticized by his feminist readers.

In 1925, James Thurber lived in New York City. There he worked as a reporter for the *New York* Evening Post. He joined the staff of *The New Yorker* in 1927 as an editor and *New Yorker* contributor. Elwyn Brooks White was an American writer. As a long-time contributor to *The New Yorker* magazine, he also wrote many famous books for both adults and children such as the popular Charlotte's Web and Stuart Little. He as one of the most influential modern American essayists.

In collaboration with White, he produced his first book, "*Is Sex Necessary"* (1929). In 1930, he began his career as a cartoonist. His first cartoons began appearing in the *New Yorker* as seals, sea lions, strange tigers, harried men, determined women, and most of all, dogs. Thurber's dogs became something like a national comic institution, and they filled the pages of a whole series of books. His book *The Seal in the Bedroom* appeared in 1932, followed in 1933 by *My Life and Hard Times*. He published *The Middle-aged Man on the Flying Trapeze* in 1935, and by 1937, when he published *Let Your Mind Alone!*, he had become so successful that he left his position at the *New Yorker* and traveled abroad.

The Last Flower appeared in 1939. That year, Thurber collaborated with White on a play, *The Male Animal*. The play was a hit when it opened in 1940. In the 1950s, Thurber published modern fairy tales for children, *The 13 Clocks* (1950) and *The Wonderful* (1957), which both were hugely successful. Thurber's children's tales display a cynical undercurrent and show at times a great deal of bitterness. He received a Litt.D. (Doctor of Letters) in 1950 from Kenyon College, one from Yale in 1953, and an L.H.D. (honorary) from Williams College in 1951.

Thurber was forced to undergo a series of eye operations for cataract and trachoma. His eyesight grew steadily worse until, in 1951, it was so weak that he did his last drawing. He spent the last decade of his life in blindness. He published at least 14 more books including *The Thurber Carnival* (1945), *Thurber Country* (1953), and the extremely popular account of the life of the *New Yorker* editor Harold Ross, *The Years with Ross* (1959). A number of his stories were

made into movies including “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” (1947).White duplicated some of Thurber’s drawings, and then they reproduced a magazine. James contributed both his writings and his drawings to The *New Yorker* until the 1950s.

1. 3 MARRIAGE

First Marriage

His first marriage was in 1922 when James Thurber married Althea Adams. They had a daughter named Rosemary. Althea took up amateur theatrics in Westport that summer in 1929. James cast her in a play. Althea had the leading part. The show had barely begun when James thought that the part was well beyond Althea’s abilities. She not only did the best to make a good role unsuited for her, everything happening onstage was something the New Yorker crowd would have made fun of, including Thurber. She was embarrassed for James, and she did not know how to let him know she understood what he was going through. He said that she was not wonderful. He was being sarcastic, but she realized he meant it.

Then, they had many troubles. Althea was a fine girl but an unhappy wife. James seemed to adore Althea. She had large, classical features that James always described as beautiful. To Jame’s friends she seemed unimaginative and intellectually inferior to James. James was always very supportive of her in the presence of others, but things were not going well between them, and he thought

that he might go to Europe to try to get over his unhappiness. Though Thurber did his best to keep the news of the separation from his family, Thurber told his troubles to his friends. Thurber said his marriage to Althea was over.

In early 1931, Althea discovered she was pregnant. At first it was an embarrassment to Thurber, who had told his women companions that he and Althea were not sleeping together. James Thurber was satisfied about the pregnancy. When his daughter was born, he was very proud to be known as a father. It did wonders for James. It didn't necessarily improve his home life, but he was charmed by the idea of a child of his own. The marriage was very troubled, and on May 25, 1935 they divorced.

Thurber threw a party celebrating the divorce to which all his current women friends were invited. Althea came uninvited to make the point, it was felt, that there were no hard feelings on her part. But she fell out of touch with Thurber's friends after the divorce, and nearly everyone in his inner circle lost track of her. Thurber did not Althea from time to time asked him for money, and in a few years Rosemary was on a visiting schedule with him.

Althea got married with Franny Comstock. He moved Althea and Rosemary to Cambridge. Rosemary didn't see much of her father for several years. Rosemary considered him like her father. Several years later Althea met Allen Gilmore. She divorced Comstock, and the next year she married Gilmore.

In 1948, Allen Gilmore had joined the History Department of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburg, and he moved Althea and Rosemary there. Rosemary remained in the East and attended Skidmore Collage for a year before transferring to the University of Pennsylvania where she earned a degree in English.

In February 1953, in the middle of her senior year at Pennsylvania, Rosemary married Frederick Sauers, a student at the Wharthon School of Finance. Rosemary was twenty one. Sauers was also interested in theater. He and Rosemary had met as actors in a school play. While living in a Chicago suburb, the two became involved in community dramatics including the forming of a touring children's theater troupe. They had three children. For several years, she gave public readings of her father's works. Rosemary developed the feminist point of view.

Second Marriage

After a month of his divorce in June 25 Thurber married Helen Wismer, who was a magazine editor. They spent their honeymoon in a Vineyard. They went to live to New York where Thurber rented an apartment on lower Fifth Avenue. Also, he suffered from alcoholism and depression, but Helen's devoted nursing enabled him to maintain his literary production.

A long series of illnesses that put him under pressure this affected him emotionally. Following a stroke in October, 1961, Thurber developed pneumonia.

Thurber did not always rely on humor, however; his failed first marriage and his declining health served to steadily darken his outlook on life as he grew older.

1. 4 PROFESSIONAL LIFE

The contrast between *Fables for Our Time* and *Further Fables for Our Time* demonstrates how the romantic optimism of James Thurber's early life became pessimistic in his later years. First, the differences between Thurber's treatment of marriage in *Fables* and in *Further Fables* demonstrate the contrast between the two novels. *His Fables for Our Time* is deceptively simple and charming in style, yet clear sighted in its appraisal of human foibles. This is especially true of his viewpoint on marriage. Perhaps due to his failed first attempt at matrimony, his fables represent marriage as a series of power struggles between husbands and wives. However, in these early pieces, this conflict is lightened by touches of irony and idealistic optimism. An excellent example is the fable entitled "The Shrike and the Chipmunk." A female chipmunk leaves her husband and declares that he will never survive on his own. Another fable, "The Crow and the Oriole" demonstrates a similar viewpoint. A male crow leaves his wife in order to court a Baltimore Oriole he has fallen in love with. She rejects him because of the fact that he is a crow.

In contrast, Thurber displays a different outlook in his second collection of fables. The parable "Tea for One" describes the difficulties encountered by a young husband with his bride. Thurber presents another portrayal of a difficult marital relationship in "The Brag dowdy and the Busybody." A nosy female rabbit insists

on “listening to the thumping of her neighbors” and she eventually convinces another female to join her in her nosiness. The two rabbits’ husbands become so fed up with their wives’ harassment that they flee to Tahiti, never to return.

Second, Thurber’s views on politics as presented in these two books determine the contrast between *Fables* and *Further Fables*. Most of the themes are universally practical, but many of them have direct political significance. An excellent example is “The Rabbits Who Caused All the Trouble.” A group of wolves blame a nearby rabbit colony for catastrophes such as a flood and an earthquake. Their logic is hopelessly confused, but they convince the other animals to not interfere when they imprison and then eat the rabbits. “The Very Proper Gander” displays many of the same characteristics as “The Rabbits.”

The pessimism shown by these parables resulted from Thurber’s revulsion towards the ongoing Red Scare of the 1950’s. In one example, Thurber’s “The Peace like Mongoose” details the persecutions facing a mongoose who decides that he does not wish to spend his life killing. Third, the tones of “The Green Isle in the Sea” and its counterpart, “The Human Being and the Dinosaur,” confirm the contrast between the *Fables* and the *Further Fables*. “The Green Isle and the Sea” recounts the day of a luckless man who survives numerous potentially deadly traps only to discover that the trees and fountain that made up a city park, his “green isle,” have all died. As such, the bombers that appear overhead gain an excellent view of the poor fellow. Thurber does not intend to show despair, only to demonstrate that man's life has an unpleasant side.

This changes when Thurber emphasize a different aspect of humanity in “The Human Being and the Dinosaur.” The first human and one of last dinosaurs stand toe to toe. In an arrogant and disapproving speech, the human declares his superiority over the dinosaur, who merely listens mournfully. This fable shows Thurber’s skepticism about the human race. It remains a sad summary of his prospect in his last decade. Thus, the differences between “The Green Isle” and “The Human Being” point out the changes in Thurber’s viewpoint between the writings of *Fables* and *Further Fables*.

Fourth, the prospects presented by “The Unicorn in the Garden” and “The Shore and the Sea” establish the differences between James Thurber’s *Fables for Our Time* and his *Further Fables*. “The Unicorn and the Garden” relates the romantic story of a man’s morning encounter with a placidly feeding unicorn. He informs his wife of its presence, but she scoffs. The later parable “The Shore and the Sea” offers an entirely different viewpoint. In summary, James Thurber’s early works show a positive, hopeful outlook, while his later pieces demonstrate his concern for the state of humanity.

1.5 LAST DAYS

Thurber was intermittently behaving as if he was mentally crazy. Increasingly paranoid, he was beginning to blame his troubles on Helen, calling her stupid, and sometimes accusing her of being insane and an alcoholic. Thurber would sit up most of the night talking to himself. Except to those who knew him well, he seemed rational in public during interviews on the Martha Deane radio program.

Though interruptive and somewhat aggressive on a David Susskind TV show, he made as much sense as the other panelist, who was discussing divorce in America. But he had lost touch with himself. It was a fatal breakdown of communication, one that made him a serious social risk to others and a physical risk to himself.

Thurber was blinder than ever. One eye was quiet gray, and his hair was completely white. Thurber had been falling into bad shape, physically and mentally. By the end of 1959, James Thurber had a massive brain hemorrhage from a blood tumor and ended up with pneumonia. It was suspected that several years earlier he had begun suffering from apoplectic type attacks. His frequent and violent attacks of anger and high excitement may have been related to recurring arteriosclerosis, affecting the supply of blood and nourishment to the brain. He went though periods of agitation and fury with everybody, including his best friends.

He had once described the abrupt end of someone's life in Columbus as that of an electric clock that stops in a thunderstorm. Now he was struck down by his own form of lightning. A blood clot in his lung was detected, and at 4:14 P.M. his death was attributed to respiratory failure. Among Thurber's final, incoherent whispering may have been the words "God bless, goddam," but Helen said that very little of it could be understood. Rosemary said that "He would shout things now and then but they never made sense."

Thurber died after collapsing from a blood clot in the brain. Some sources list it as a brain tumor. By 1952, he had to give it up altogether as his blindness became nearly total. He died on November 2, 1961 and was buried in his hometown of Columbus. He had once written that he wished his ashes to be dispersed on the seas between New York and Bermuda, but Helen found Robert and William angry that she had had him cremated, and didn't dare bury the ashes anywhere but in Columbus, near the remains of his family.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORICAL PERIOD IN WHICH JAMES THURBER LIVED

2.1 1917 The United States entered World War I

After The United States entered World War I in April 1917, Ohio's Governor James M. Cox published an order permitting students to leave school with credit for the term if they were entering military or farm service or another war supportive occupation. The student body, now more than six thousand reduced within days as several hundred males mostly juniors and seniors packed up and left. With the world at war, Thurber's last year at O.S.U.(Ohio State University), 1917-1918, was his most satisfying. It may be because of the war's interruptive effects on campus, he was somehow exonerated from the military and physical education classes.

The United States at the beginning took a policy of isolationism, avoiding conflict while trying to negotiate a peace. This meant an increase of tensions with Berlin and London. On May 7, 1915, a German U-boat sank the British Lusitania, killing 1200 soldiers, including 128 Americans. America became angry, calling Germany's act "barbarism." U-boats continued attacking Allied merchant ships, so the U.S. helped pass the Sussex Pledge, stating that German U-boats would have to warn before attacking. Germany soon broke the pledge and the U.S. became even angrier because it cut off their trade with Western Europe, for fear that the German U-boats would sink American merchant ships as well.

Another reason why the U.S. entered the war was because of an intercepted German telegram, made by Arthur Zimmermann that was on its way to Mexico. The British intercepted his telegram. When translated, this telegram told Mexico to declare war on the U.S., and if so, Germany would reward Mexico with American land. Although this was not much of a concern for neither Mexico nor the U.S., it still made Americans even more aggravated. A final reason why the U.S. entered World War I was because supposedly, it was “the war to end all wars.” This encouraged Americans to join the army, and it also increased American patriotism towards the war. Looking at the war as being the last one ever also supported the idea of world peace.

In January 1917, Germany declared unrestricted submarine warfare against all ships going to Allied ports, including neutral merchant ships. Britain’s secret Royal Navy had broken the German diplomatic code. They intercepted a plan from Berlin to Mexico to join the war as Germany’s ally against the United States, should the U.S. join. The proposal suggested that if the U.S. were to enter the war then Mexico should declare war against the United States and enlist Japan as an ally. This would prevent the United States from joining the Allies and extending troops to Europe, and would give Germany more time for their free submarine warfare program to strangle Britain's vital war supplies. In return, the Germans would promise Mexico support in taking back Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. President Wilson, who had won reelection kept the country out of the war and released the captured telegram as a way of building support for U.S. entry into the war. After submarines sank seven U.S. merchant ships and the

publication of the Zimmerman telegram, which was a coded telegram dispatched by the Foreign Secretary of the German Empire. Arthur Zimmermann, on January 16, 1917, to the German ambassador in Washington, Johann von Bernstorff, at the height of World War I, Wilson called for war on Germany, which the U.S. Congress declared on 6 April 1917.

The United States was never formally a member of the Allies but became a self-styled “Associated Power.” The United States had a small army, but it conscripted four million men, and by summer 1918, it was sending 10,000 fresh soldiers to France every day. In 1917, the U.S. Congress gave U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans when they were conscripted to participate in World War I. Germany had miscalculated, believing it would be many more months before they would arrive and that the arrival could be stopped by U-boats.

The United States Navy sent a battleship group to Scapa Flow to join with the British Grand Fleet, destroyers to Queenstown, Ireland, and submarines to help guard convoys. Several regiments of U.S. Marines were also dispatched to France. German General Erich Ludendorff made plans for the 1918 offensive on the Western Front. The Spring Offensive reached to divide the British and French forces with a series of attacks and advances. The British and French wanted to write with the U.S. to reinforce their troops already on the battle lines and not waste limited shipping by bringing over supplies. General John J. Pershing, American Expeditionary Force (AEF) commander, refused to break up U.S. units to be used as reinforcements for British Empire and French units. As an

exception, he did allow African-American combat regiments to be used in French divisions.

For most of World War I, Allied forces were stalled at trenches. The German leadership hoped to strike a decisive blow before significant U.S. forces arrived. The operation commenced on March 21, 1918 with an attack on British forces near Amiens. German forces achieved an unprecedented advance of 60 kilometers (40 miles).

British and French trenches were penetrated using new Infiltration Tactics, involving small, lightly-equipped infantry forces attacking the enemy from the reas while bypassing enemy front line strong points and isolating them for attack by follow-up troops with heavier weapons. This was, named Hutier tactics, after General Oskar von Hutier. Previously, attacks had been characterized by long artillery bombardments and many assaults. However, in the Spring Offensive of 1918, Ludendorff used artillery only briefly and infiltrated small groups of infantry at weak points. They attacked command and logistics areas and bypassed points of serious resistance. More heavily armed infantry then destroyed these isolated positions. German success relied greatly on the element of surprise.

The front moved to within 120 kilometers of Paris. Many Germans thought victory was near. After heavy fighting, however, the offensive was halted. Lacking tanks or motorized artillery, the Germans were unable to consolidate their gains.

September saw the Germans continuing to fight strong rear guard actions and putting numerous counter attacks on lost positions, with only a few succeeding and then only temporarily. Contested towns, villages, and trenches in the screening positions of the Hindenburg Line continued to fall to the Allies as well as thousands of prisoners.

When Bulgaria signed a separate agreement on September 29, the Allies gained control of Serbia and Greece. Ludendorff, having been under great stress for months, suffered something similar to a breakdown. It was evident that Germany could no longer mount a successful defense. Having suffered over 6 million casualties, Germany moved toward peace.

In November 1918, the Allies had sufficient supplies of material. Continuation of the war would have meant the invasion of Germany. Berlin was almost 900 miles (1,400 km) from the Western Front. The Kaiser's armies retreated from the battlefield in good order, though up to a million of them were suffering from the Spanish Flu. The 1918 flu pandemic (commonly referred to as the Spanish Flu) was an influenza pandemic that spread to nearly every part of the world. It may have been caused by an unusually virulent and deadly influenza, virus strain of subtype H1N1. Historical and epidemiological data are inadequate to identify the geographic origin of the virus. Most of its victims were healthy young adults, in contrast to most influenza outbreaks which predominantly affect juvenile, elderly, or otherwise weakened patients. The flu pandemic has also been implicated in the sudden outbreak of encephalitis lethargic in the 1920s.

A formal state of war between the two sides persisted for another seven months, until the signing of the Treaty of Versailles with Germany on June 28, 1919. Later treaties with Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire were signed. However, the latter treaty with the Ottoman Empire was followed by conflict and a final peace treaty was signed between the Allied Powers and the country that would shortly become the Republic of Turkey, at Lausanne on July 24, 1923.

After the war, the Paris Peace Conference imposed a series of peace treaties on the Central Powers. The Treaty of Versailles officially ended the war. It was one of the peace treaties at the end of World War I. It ended the state of war between Germany and the Allied Powers. It was signed on June 28, 1919.

2.2 THE IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1924

The Immigration Act of 1924 limited the number of immigrants allowed entry into the United States through a national origins quota. The quota provided immigration visas to two percent of the total number of people of each nationality in the United States. The uncertainty generated over national security during World War I made it possible for Congress to pass this Act, and it included several important provisions that paved the way for the 1924 Act. The 1917 Act implemented a literacy test that required immigrants over 16 years old to demonstrate basic reading comprehension in any language. It also increased the tax paid by new immigrants upon arrival and allowed immigration officials to exercise more discretion in making decisions over whom to exclude. In 1907, the Japanese Government had voluntarily limited Japanese immigration to the U.S.

The Philippines was an American colony, so its citizens were American nationals and could travel freely to the United States.

The literacy test alone was not enough to prevent most potential immigrants from entering, so members of Congress sought a new way to restrict immigration in the 1920s. Immigration expert and Republican Senator from Vermont William P. Dillingham introduced a measure to create immigration quotas, which he set at three percent of the total population of the foreign-born of each nationality in the United States as recorded in the 1910 census. This put the total number of visas available each year to new immigrants at 350,000. It did not, however, establish quotas of any kind for residents of the Western Hemisphere. President Wilson opposed the restrictive act, preferring a more liberal immigration policy, so he used the pocket veto to prevent its passage. In early 1921, the newly inaugurated President Warren Harding called Congress back to a special session to pass the law. In 1922, the act was renewed for another two years.

When the Congressional debate over immigration began in 1924, the quota system was so well-established that no one questioned whether to maintain it, but rather discussed how to adjust it. Though there were advocates for raising quotas and allowing more people to enter, the champions of restriction triumphed. They created a plan that lowered the existing quota from three to two percent of the foreign born population. They also pushed back the year on which quota calculations were based from 1910 to 1890.

Another change to the quota altered the basis of the quota calculations. The quota had been based on the number of people born outside of the United States, or the number of immigrants in the United States. The new law traced the origins of the whole of the American population, including natural born citizens. The new quota calculations included large numbers of people of British descent whose families were long resident in the United States. As a result, the percentage of visas available to individuals from the British Isles and Western Europe increased, but newer immigration from other areas like Southern and Eastern Europe was limited.

The 1924 Immigration Act also included a provision excluding from entry any alien who by virtue of race or nationality was ineligible for citizenship. Existing nationality laws dating from 1790 and 1870 excluded people of Asian lineage from naturalizing. As a result, the 1924 Act meant that even Asians not previously prevented from immigrating, the Japanese in particular, would no longer be admitted to the United States. Many in Japan were very offended by the new law. The Japanese government protested, but the law remained, resulting in an increase in existing tensions between the two nations. But it appeared that the U.S. Congress had decided that preserving the racial composition of the country was more important than promoting good ties with the Japanese empire.

The restrictions principles of the Act could have resulted in strained relations with some European countries as well, but these potential problems did not appear for several reasons. The global depression of the 1930s and World War II both

served to limit European emigration. When these crises had passed, emergency provisions for the resettlement of displaced persons in 1948 and 1950 helped the United States avoid conflict over its new immigration laws.

College students, professors, and ministers were exempted from the quotas. Initially immigration from the other Americas was allowed, but measures were quickly developed to deny legal entry to Mexican laborers. The clear aim of this law was to restrict the entry of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, while welcoming relatively large numbers of newcomers from Britain, Ireland, and Northern Europe.

2.3 The Great Depression Begins in the 1920s

Some history books mark the start of the Depression as October 29, 1929. The Federal Reserve began raising interest rates due to financial speculation and inflated stock prices. Industrial production turned down in the spring of 1929, and overall growth turned negative in the summer. The United States and much of the rest of the world faced severe economic problems. Many factories and stores closed, and people were out of work. Many families had little money to buy food. Some were desperate and were even willing to think about a new government system that could deal with the problems. On that day, the value of stocks traded in the New York Stock Exchange dropped dramatically. Banks and investment companies that had put money in stocks lost fortunes. During this time of depression, people were desperate for help and turned to the Federal Reserve

Bank to instate policies to help the situation. Thousands of investors lost large sums of money and many were wiped out, losing everything.

Farm prices were allowed to drop back to their natural price. Farmers continued to produce at high levels and soon excess appeared. As a result, prices for crops and for land fell. Those who had borrowed money could not pay off their loans. Even if they sold their farms, the money they received sometimes was less than what they owed. When banks could not collect the money they borrowed, they could not repay the people who had deposited money in their bank accounts. Many Iowa banks closed, and depositors lost their money. People rushed frantically to turn their bank deposits into cash, but it was too late. The money supply had collapsed, and panic set in for many citizens. Around 167 banks closed in 1920. That number rose to 505 in 1921. For several more years the number of bank failures remained high.

It led to a sharp decrease in world trade as each country tried to protect their own industries and products by raising tariffs on imported goods. Some nations changed their leader and their type of government. In Germany, poor economic conditions led to the rise to power of the dictator Adolf Hitler. The Japanese invaded China, developing industries and mines in Manchuria.

Low crop prices hurt farmers, but there were other factors at work. Farm families had to pay high prices for farm machinery through the 1920s. Many rural areas had built new schools and put gravel on country roads when times were good. Because they were still paying for those improvements, taxes were high. Many

local school boards asked teachers to accept less pay for their work. Sometimes teachers resigned rather than accepting lower wages.

Before the collapse in 1929, wages for city workers were rising, and businesses were doing well. Most farm families still did not have electricity in their homes, and rural schools were clearly falling behind the educational instruction that town schools could offer. The poor were hit the hardest. Many sank into despair and shame after they could not find jobs. The suicide rates increased from 14 to 17 %. Protests that did occur were local, not national: “farm holidays,” neighbors of foreclosed farmers refusing to bid on farms at auction, neighbors moving evicted tenants' furniture back in and local hunger marches.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, after assuming the presidency, promoted a wide variety of federally funded programs aimed at restoring the American economy. It was not until World War II that the US was able to get out of depression and back to a time of prosperity. The war provided some jobs to push the US citizens back into full employment, but unemployment rates stayed up, partly because of the New Deal. This was a program started by President Hoover and carried on by President Roosevelt. After assuming the presidency, he promoted a wide variety of federally funded programs aimed at restoring the American economy.

The New Deal brought in bank-deposit insurance. In the end, it was the war, not the New Deal that restored full employment in the US and brought it out of depression. Although Roosevelt’s New Deal program did not end the Depression, the economy did improve as a result of his program of government intervention. Complete recovery was at least brought about by the arms industry built up

before the United States entered the Second World War. Men found work in war industries and the armed forces.

2.4 World War II

World War II began in the Far East where Japan, having invaded China in 1931, became involved in full-scale hostilities in 1937. In Europe, the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, brought Britain and France into the war two days later. Italy declared war on Britain on June 10, 1940, shortly before the French surrender on June 21. Having defeated France but not Britain, Germany attacked the Soviet Union a year later on June 22, 1941. Then the Japanese attacked United States naval forces in Hawaii on December 7, 1941, and British colonies in Hong Kong and Malaya the following day. The subsequent German and Italian declarations of war on the United States completed the lineup: Germany, Italy, and Japan, the Axis powers of the Anti-Comintern Treaty of 1936, against the Allies: the United States of America, the British Empire and Dominions, and the Soviet Union. Only the Soviet Union and Japan remained at peace with each other until the Soviet declaration of war on August 8, 1945, two days after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

The pattern of the war resembled a tidal flow. Until the end of 1942, the armies and navies of the Axis continually extended their power through Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. Toward the end of 1942 the tide turned. The Allies won decisive victories in each theater: the Americans over the Japanese fleet at Midway and over the Japanese army on the island of Guadalcanal; the British

over the German army in North Africa at Alamein; and the Soviet army over the German army at Stalingrad. From 1943 onward the tide reversed, and the powers of the Axis shrank continually. Italy surrendered to an Anglo-American invasion on September 3, 1943; Germany to the Anglo-American forces on May 7, 1945, and to the Red Army the following day; and Japan to the Americans on September 7, 1945. The war was over.

Events Leading to the War

German preparations for an invasion of the Soviet Union began in 1940, following the French surrender, for three reasons. First, the German leader Adolf Hitler believed that the presence of the Red Army to his rear was the main reason that Britain, isolated since the fall of France, had not come to terms. He expected that a knockout blow in the east would finish the war in the west. Second, if the war in the west continued, Hitler believed that Britain would use its naval superiority to blockade Germany. He planned to ensure Germany's food and oil supplies by means of overland expansion to the east. Third, Hitler had become entangled in the west only because of his aggression against Poland, but Poland was also a means to an end: a gateway to Ukraine and Russia where he sought Germany's "living space." Thus an immediate attack on the Soviet Union promised to overcome all the obstacles barring his way in foreign affairs.

At the same time the Soviet Union was not a passive victim of the war. Soviet preparations for a coming war began in the 1920s. They were stepped up following the war scare of 1927, which strengthened Josef Stalin's determination

to accelerate military and industrial modernization. At this stage, Soviet leaders understood that an immediate war was unlikely. They did not fear Germany which was still a democracy and a relatively friendly power but Poland, Finland, France, or Japan. They feared for the relatively distant future, and this is one reason why Soviet rearmament, although determined, was slow at first. They understood that the first task was to build a Soviet industrial base.

In the early 1930s, Stalin became sharply aware of new real threats from Japan under military rule in the Far East and from Germany under the Nazis in the west. In the years that followed, he gave growing economic priority to the needs of external security. However, for much of the decade Stalin was much more concerned with domestic threats. He believed his external opponents to be working against him by plotting secretly with his internal enemies rather than openly by conventional military and diplomatic means. In 1937 – 1938, he directed a savage purge of the Red Army general staff and officer corps that gravely weakened the armed forces in which he was simultaneously investing billions of rubles. The same purges damaged his own credibility on the world stage. As a result, those countries with which he shared common interests became less likely to see him as a worthy ally, and his external enemies became more likely to attack him. Stalin therefore approached World War II with several deadly enemies, few friends in foreign capitals, and an army that was growing and well equipped but morally broken.

Conflict between the Soviet Union and Japan was different from conflict with Germany. Japan first: From their base in north China in May 1939, the Japanese armed forces began a series of probing border attacks on the Soviet Union that culminated in August with fierce fighting and a decisive victory for the Red Army at Khalkin-Gol (Nomonhan). After that, deterred from encroaching further on Soviet territory, the Japanese shifted their attention to the softer targets represented by British and Dutch colonial possessions in Southeast Asia. In April 1941, the USSR and Japan concluded a treaty of neutrality that lasted until August 1945. It lasted because, while Japan was fighting America and the Soviet Union was fighting Germany, neither wanted war on a second front.

In contrast to Japan, Germany was too near and too powerful for the Soviet Union to be able to deter single-handedly. Stalin's difficulty was that he lacked willing partners. Therefore, when Hitler unexpectedly offered the hand of friendship in the summer of 1939, Stalin accepted it. The result was the notorious nonaggression pact of August 23, 1939 that secretly delineated the Soviet and German spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, giving western Poland to Hitler and eastern Poland and the Baltic to Stalin. Germany was to move first. When Germany did so, Britain and France entered the war.

For nearly two years Stalin stood aloof from the war in the west, exploiting the conditions created by the pact with Hitler. He traded with Germany while still preparing for war. The preparations were costly and extensive. The Red Army continued to rearm and recruit. Stalin annexed Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and the

northern part of Romania, and moved his defensive lines toward the new western frontier with Greater Germany. Attacking Finland, he won a few kilometers of extra territory with which to defend Leningrad at a cost of nearly 400,000 casualties, one-third of them dead or missing. The utility of these preparations appeared doubtful. The communities living in the Soviet Union's new buffer zone were embittered by the imposition of Soviet rule. When war broke out, the territory passed almost immediately into the hands of the invader. Moreover, Stalin believed these preparations to be more effective than his enemy did. He thought he had postponed war several years into the future just as Hitler was accelerating forward plans to end the peace with a surprise attack.

Stalin's true intentions, as had he successfully put off a German attack in 1941, are still debated. Some have read his speeches and the plans of his generals as indicating that he envisaged launching an aggressive war on Germany. Beyond that lay a future in which a defeated Germany and an exhausted Britain would leave it opens to him to dominate the whole continent. Some of Hitler's generals promoted this idea after the war in order to justify themselves. While Stalin's generals sometimes entertained the idea of a preemptive strike, and Soviet military doctrine supported attack as the best means of defense, the Russian archives have demonstrated clearly that Stalin's main concern was to head off Hitler's colonial ambitions on Soviet territory. He had no plans to conquer Europe himself.

It is clear that Hitler caught Stalin and the Red Army by surprise. Stalin's culpability for this has been much debated. His view of Hitler's intentions was strongly held and incorrect, and he did not permit those around him to challenge it. Still, it is worth recalling that democratic leaders could also be taken by surprise. For example, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, though not a brutal dictator, was surprised by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor

Eventually these feelings translated into the USA leading an international movement to isolate Japan economically and thus force them to withdraw from China. Primarily, the USA plan was to cut off credit to the Japanese which would prevent them from being able to purchase petroleum. Japan received petroleum (an absolutely vital economic and military commodity, then as it is now) from three sources: The USA, Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), and Burma (British controlled in the 1940's).

The USA inspired movement included all three sources. Japan could/would not accept a withdrawal from the Chinese war and instead began planning a first strike against the USA navy. Eliminating or reducing the USA naval forces in the Pacific would make the Japanese navy paramount, and thus, Japan would be able to defeat the economic consequences of the USA ultimatum. After eliminating the USA navy, Japan planned to occupy the Dutch East Indies and Burma, thus gaining control of enough oil to run their military and economy. The strike on Pearl Harbor did exactly as hoped by the Japanese. The USA fleet was

crippled. The Dutch lacked forces to repel the Japanese. The British navy (as ordered by Churchill) sent forces to defend their areas but these were totally inadequate for the job and were decimated quickly. Japan occupied all the oil producing areas and settled down to a war of attrition against the USA, which they hoped would wear down the USA politically and enable them to keep their conquests.

Organization, Preparation, and Strategy

Almost immediately after the declaration of war, under the first War Powers Act, the United States began a reorganization and expansion of the army and the navy, including The National Guard already in federal service. Increasing numbers of reservists were called to active duty, not as units but as individuals, to fill gaps in existing units, to staff the training centers, and to serve as officers in new units being formed. Additional divisions were created and put into training, bearing the numbers of World War I divisions in most cases, but with scarcely any relation to them in locality or in personnel of previously existing reserve divisions. New activities were created for psychological warfare and for civil affairs and military government in territories to be liberated or captured. The air force also underwent a great expansion, in personnel, in units, and in planes. Notable was the creation and shipment to England of high-level, precision daylight bombing units, which worked with the British to rain tons of bombs on enemy centers. Later they assisted the invasions and major attacks. Disrupting German factories and rail lines and weakening the entire German economy, the bombing campaign

was extremely important in Hitler's downfall. The armed forces of the United States, in general, expanded their strength and put to use a host of details in tactics and in equipment that had been merely experimental in the preceding years. From new planes to new rifles, from motorization to emergency rations, from field radio telephones to long-range radar, progress was widespread.

In addition to new concepts of operation and new and improved mechanized material, there was an all-out popular war effort, a greater national unity, a greater systematization of production, and, especially, a more intense emphasis on technology, far surpassing the efforts of World War I. The U.S. effort would truly be, as Churchill predicted after the fall of France in 1940, “the new world with all its power and might” stepping forth to “the rescue and liberation of the old.”

In an unprecedented burst of wartime legislative activity, Congress passed the Emergency Price Control Act and established the War Production Board, the National War Labor Board, the Office of War Information, and the Office of Economic Stabilization. Critical items such as food, coffee, sugar, meat, butter, and canned goods were rationed for civilians, as were heating fuels and gasoline. Rent control was established. Two-thirds of the planes of civilian airlines were taken over by the air force. Travel was subject to priorities for war purposes. There was also voluntary censorship of newspapers, under general guidance from Washington.

There was special development and production of escort vessels for the navy and of landing craft small and large for beach invasions. There was a program of

plane construction for the air force on a huge scale and programs for the development of high-octane gasoline and synthetic rubber. Local draft boards had been given great leeway in drawing up their own standards of exemption and deferment from service and at first had favored agriculture over industry. Soon, controls were established according to national needs. By 1945, the United States had engaged more than sixteen million men under arms and improved its economy.

The grand strategy, from the beginning, was to defeat Germany while containing Japan, a strategy maintained and followed by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The strategy was closely coordinated by Roosevelt and Churchill except on one occasion when, in the early summer of 1942, Admiral Ernest J. King (chief of naval operations) and General George C. Marshall (army chief of staff) responded to the news that there would be no attempt to create a beachhead in Europe that year by suggesting a shift of U.S. power to the Pacific. Roosevelt promptly overruled them

Campaign in the Pacific

Almost immediately after the strike at Pearl Harbor, the Japanese invaded the Philippines and overran American garrisons on Guam and Wake Island in late December. They soon captured Manila and then conquered the U.S. forces on the Bataan peninsula by April 1942, along with the last U.S. stronghold on Corregidor on May 6. Japan then feinted into the North Pacific, easily seizing Attu and Kiska in the Aleutian Islands, which it held until March 1943.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur had been pulled out of the Philippines before the fall of Corregidor and sent to Australia to assume responsibility for protecting that continent against Japanese invasion, increasingly imminent since Singapore and Java had been taken. With great skill, MacArthur used American and Australian forces to check Japanese inroads in New Guinea at Port Moresby. He also used land and sea forces to push back the Japanese and take the villages of Buna and Sanananda, although not until January 1943. To block a hostile thrust against MacArthur's communications through New Zealand, marine and infantry divisions landed in the Solomon Islands, where they took Guadalcanal by February 1943 after bitter, touch-and-go land, sea, and air fighting.

Almost concurrently, the navy, with marine and army troops, was attacking selected Japanese bases in the Pacific, moving steadily westward and successfully hitting the Marshall Islands at Eniwetok and Kwajalein, the Gilberts at Makin and Tarawa, and turning north the Marianas at Guam and Saipan in June and July 1944. To assist the army's move on the Philippines, the navy and the marines also struck westward at the Palau Islands in September 1944 and had them in hand within a month. American control of the approaches to the Philippines was now assured. Two years earlier, in the Coral Sea and also in the open spaces near Midway, in May and June 1942, respectively, the U.S. Navy had severely crippled the Japanese fleet. MacArthur's forces returned in October 1944 to the Philippines on the island of Leyte. Their initial success was endangered by a final, major Japanese naval effort near Leyte, which was countered by a U.S. naval thrust that wiped much of the Japanese fleet. U.S.

forces seized Manila and Corregidor in February 1945, thus bringing to a successful conclusion the Bataan-Corregidor Campaign.

American land and sea forces were now in position to drive north directly toward Japan itself. Marines had landed on Iwo Jima on February 19 and invaded Okinawa on April 1, both within good flying distance of the main enemy islands. The Japanese navy and air force were so depleted that in July 1945 the U.S. fleet was steaming off the coast of Japan and bombarding almost with impunity. Between July 10 and August 15, 1945, forces under Adm. William F. Halsey destroyed or damaged 2,084 enemy planes, sank or damaged 148 Japanese combat ships, and sank or damaged 1,598 merchant vessels, in addition to administering heavy blows at industrial targets and war industries.

Until the island hopping brought swift successes in 1944, it had been expected that the United States would need the China mainland as a base for an attack on Japan. The sea and land successes in the central and western Pacific, however, allowed the United States, by the spring of 1945, to prepare for an attack on Japan without using China.

This situation was the result of three major factors: (1) the new naval technique of employing the fleet as a set of floating air bases, as well as for holding the sea lanes open; (2) the augmentation and improvement of U.S. submarine service to a point where they were fatal to Japanese shipping, sinking more than two hundred enemy combat vessels and more than eleven hundred merchant ships, thus seriously disrupting the desperately needed supply of Japanese troops on

the many islands; and (3) MacArthur's leapfrogging tactics, letting many advanced Japanese bases simply die on the vine. Not to be overlooked was MacArthur's personal energy and persuasive skill.

Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Japanese Surrender

Progress in the Pacific theater by this time had been substantial. U.S. ships and planes dominated sea and air close to Japan. Troops were soon to be redeployed from the European theater. Protracted cleanup operations against now-isolated Japanese island garrisons were coming to a close. American planes were bombing Tokyo regularly. A single raid on that city on March 9, 1945 had devastated sixteen square miles, killed eighty thousand persons, and left 1.5 million people homeless, but the Japanese were still unwilling to surrender. Approved by Roosevelt, scientists working under military direction had devised a devastating bomb based on atomic fission. A demand was made on Japan on July 26 for surrender, threatening the consecutive destruction of eleven Japanese cities if it did not. The Japanese rulers scorned the threats. President Harry S. Truman gave his consent for the use of the atomic bomb, which was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, killing 75,000. There were more warnings, but still no surrender. On August 9, Nagasaki was bombed. Two square miles were devastated, and 39,000 people were killed. Five days later, on August 14, the Japanese agreed to surrender. The official instrument of surrender was signed on September 2, 1945, on board the battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

The defeat of the Axis powers did not resolve all of the geopolitical issues arising from World War II. The spirit of amity among the Allied powers collapsed shortly after the war, as the United States and the Soviet Union rapidly assumed a position of mutual hostility and distrust. Germany was divided in half by the Allied victors, with West Germany aligned with the United States and East Germany with the Soviet Union. The United States also established security pacts with Japan and Italy, bringing them within the American defense shield against the Soviets. Ironically, therefore, during the Cold War the United States found itself allied with the former Axis nations and found itself at odds with its former ally, the USSR. Not until 1990, when the Cold War finally came to an end with the collapse of the Soviet Union, was Germany reunited as one nation.

Estimates range from about 50-70 million killed in World War II. Of these, 61 million were on the Allied side and 11 million were on the Axis side. 23 million dead for the Soviet Union and 20 million for China. These figures of course include civilian dead. For Germany the overall total is given as just under 7.4 million.

World War II ended with the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers. Germany surrendered on May 7 to the Western Allies, and May 8 to the Soviet Union, 1945, about a week after Adolf Hitler had committed suicide. Japan was able to hold out for another few months and was preparing for a desperate and bloody defense in the event of an American invasion of the home islands. Atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9

respectively. After that the Imperial government sought the Emperor's personal authority to surrender which he granted. He made a personal radio address announcing the decision on August 15, 1945. The surrender was signed on September 2, 1945 aboard the battleship A.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF SOME OF JAMES THURBER'S POETRY

3.1 CHILDREN'S STORIES

MANY MOONS

Author	James Thurber
Illustrator	Louis Slobodkin
Country	United States
Genre(s)	Children's picture book
Publisher	Harcourt, Brace & Company
Publication date	1943

MANY MOONS

INTRODUCTION

In 1941, Thurber began to write *Many Moons*, his first tale. At the time he was blind in only one eye. The princess in the book is named Lenore. His children's books were not merely word games, nor therapeutic exercises just because they followed his eye operations. They were written with children in mind which is what makes them both wonderful and permanent. *Many Moons* was fashioned from the substance of Thurber's dreams and set him off on another creative road not previously taken. In this fairy tale, the little princess is ill and her father, the king, believes her only chance of survival is to grant her a wish to have the moon, which, she says, is made of gold. None of the king's wise men can come up with a solution. The jester asks the princess how large and far away she thinks the moon is. Smaller than her thumbnail, she replies, which she can measure

whenever the moon gets caught in a tree outside her window. The jester has a small gold ball strung on a chain for her. The king worries that she will see the moon the next night and know she has been tricked. The chamberlain suggests dark glasses. “This made the King very angry, and he shook his head from side to side.” “If she wore dark glasses, she would bump into things!” he said, and then she would be ill again.

The jester than asks the princess the next night why the moon is shining if it is around her neck. “That is easy, silly,” she replies. “When I lose a tooth a new one grows in its place, doesn’t it? I guess it is the same way with everything.”

And so Thurber proved. If the sense of sight was taken away, a myriad of new sensitivities seemed to grow in its place, enabling him to go on listening to the world and interpreting it as he was somehow obliged to do.

MANY MOONS

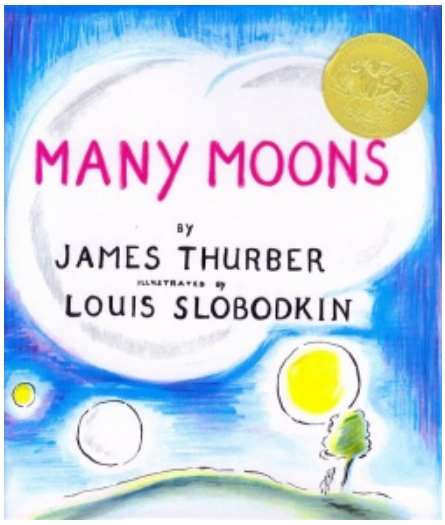


Illustration 2 "Many Moons" by James Thurber; 1943

When Princess Lenore falls ill with a tummy ache from too many tarts, she laments that only the moon itself can cure her ailment. Her father, the King, who always gets his beloved daughter what she wants, promises the moon. Of course, he has no idea how this can even be possible, and it seems that his trusty entourage of crafty assistants only seem to validate this. But perhaps Lenore is not asking for as much as everyone thinks. The only person with the wisdom to actually ask her what she is really asking for is the court jester. While everyone had some idea of what getting the moon consisted of Lenore's idea of it was pretty easy to accommodate. Her father, the king, is enraged when the wizards, the Lord High Chamberlain, and the mathematician court can't get the

moon. In the end, it is the jester who realizes that the princess thinks the moon is only as big as her thumbnail and made of gold, so he goes to the goldsmith, who makes a necklace with a gold sphere on it. The jester gives it to the princess. The King then worries that she will see the moon in the sky that night and realize that the necklace was not the real moon. The jester goes to check on her. The princess thinks that whenever something is taken, it is replaced, like her tooth, a unicorn's horn, and flowers.

CHARACTERS:

Princess Lenore

She was a little girl, the princess was an indolent, fat little glutton because she ate too many raspberry tarts. She was an only child. She was impudent, imperious, and used to making adults run around seeing to her every wish. Princess Lenore is ill from eating too many raspberry tarts. She believes that possessing the moon is the only thing that will cure her.

The king

The King gave her daughter Lenore whatever she wanted. He told his daughter that she could have the moon.

Jester

Although many people tried to bring the moon to the princess, only the court Jester is able to fulfill Princess Lenore's wish for the moon.

The Lord High Chamberlain

The Lord High Chamberlain was a large, fat man who wore thick glasses which made his eyes seems twice as big as they really were. This made the Lord High Chamberlain seem twice as wise as he really was.

The Royal Wizard

The Royal Wizard was a little, thin man with a long face. He wore a high red peaked hat converted with silver stars and a long blue robe covered with golden owls. His face grew very pale when the king told him that he wanted the moon for his little daughter and that he expected the Royal Wizard to get it.

The Royal Mathematician

The Royal Mathematician was a bald-headed, nearsighted man with a cap on his head a pencil behind each ear. He wore a black suit with white numbers on it.

Setting

The story is set in a castle that had almost every color, from black to pink and green. There is also a lot of use of blending in these pictures. In one picture, the castle has different bright colors.

Central theme

The central theme of *Many Moons* concerns the worry of a father to fulfill the desire of his daughter in getting the moon for her.

Style

While many illustrated children's books are written in a style that is quite easy to read, *Many Moons* is a bit more difficult. Writing style is not simple, but it is a pleasure to read and to read out loud. The story also often has a rhythm to it that makes it fun to read. The perfect audience for this book might be third and fourth graders of average reading ability.

Illustration

Many of the pictures are distinguished by a black outline around the objects and characters. There is not much color, and the scenes in the book are surrounded by a white background. The drawings are simple, yet artistic. The illustrator made a lot of his drawings effortless.

THE 13 CLOCKS

Author	James Thurber
Illustrator	Marc Simont
Cover artist	Marc Simont
Country	United States
Language	English
Genre(s)	Fantasy
Publisher	Simon & Schuster
Publication date	January 1, 1950

THE 13 CLOCKS

Introduction

The Thirteen Clocks is a fantasy (mental images or imaginary narratives that distort or entirely depart from reality). Primary fantasies arise spontaneously from the unconscious. It is written in a unique cadenced style in which a mysterious prince must complete a seemingly impossible task to free a maiden from the clutches of an evil duke. It invokes many fairy tale motifs.

The story is noted for Thurber's constant, complex wordplay, and his use of an almost continuous internal meter with occasional hidden rhymes akin to blank verse, but with no line breaks to advertise the structure.

The great *New Yorker* humorist James Thurber wrote a few children's books, the best of which may be *The 13 Clocks*, a 1950 tale of a wicked duke who thinks he has stopped time. By the time he wrote *The 13 Clocks*, Thurber was too blind to

provide his own usual scratchy but vivid illustrations. *The 13 Clocks* is one of the cleverest fairytales that any modern writer has been able to tell. *The 13 Clocks* is a small masterpiece of respectful travesty honoring the whole spectrum of the traditions. *The 13 Clocks* is especially wonderful.

THE 13 CLOCKS

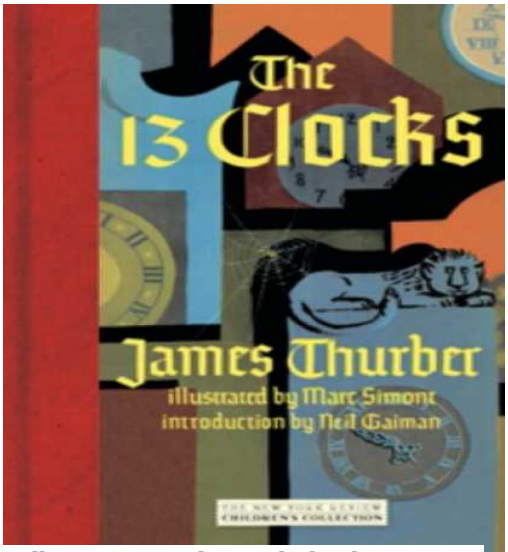


Illustration 3 "The 13 Clocks" by James Thurber; 1950

Plot Summary

The evil Duke of Coffin Castle lives with his niece, the beautiful Saralinda. The castle's thirteen clocks are stopped at "ten minutes to five." After many attempts to get them working again the Duke has decided that he killed Time.

Suitors to the hand of Princess Saralinda are ordered to perform impossible tasks, and in many cases, suitors have been slain by the Duke over trifles or over slight (or even imaginary) insults.

Saralinda is about to turn 21 when a mysterious minstrel named Xingu arrives in the town below the castle. The minstrel hatches a plan to gain access to the castle by singing a silly song about the Duke, as this invariably enrages the Duke (as do names which begin with X). As the minstrel finishes his song, the Golux

materializes and announces his intention to help both the minstrel and the Princess.

Although the Golux admits he forgets things and makes things up, he is “on the side of good,” and he gives the minstrel advice on how to deal with the Duke. He mysteriously vanishes as the Iron Guards arrive to arrest the minstrel.

The next day, the minstrel is brought before the Duke, who, instead of killing him outright, sets the minstrel to perform an impossible task, even though the minstrel points out that “only princes may aspire to Saralinda’s hand.”

Back in the dungeon, the minstrel again encounters the Golux, who has mysteriously appeared claiming to have forgotten to tell the minstrel something important. He tells the minstrel to convince the Duke to make the intended task a search for 1,000 jewels, and it is now revealed that the minstrel is actually Prince Zorn of Zorna. Zorn believes that the only place to find 1,000 jewels is in his father’s “casks and vaults and coffers,” and that the task will take 99 days to complete: “three-and-thirty days to go, and three-and-thirty days to come back here, it always takes my father three-and-thirty days to make decisions.”

Zorn is worried about completing the task, but the Golux reassures him that he has more than one plan. On their way to the Duke’s presence, a guard tells the Prince about the Todal. He makes a sound like rabbits screaming and smells an agent of the Devil sent to punish evildoers for having done less evil than they should.

Accompanied by his spies, Hark and Listen, the Duke reveals the task which the Prince must complete: bring the Duke 1,000 jewels within 99 hours, and return when the clocks are striking five o'clock. As the prince leaves the castle, Saralinda throws a rose to him from her window.

Not far from the castle, the Golux reappears and reveals himself to be the Duke's spy Listen. The Golux comes up with what he believes is a sure-fire plan: there is a woman nearby, Hagga, who was given the magical power to weep jewels instead of tears. The rose which Saralinda tossed to the prince serves as a compass to guide them, and they travel for two days until they reach Hagga's hut. Hagga is alive and well, but unfortunately, she has been made to weep so much in the past by people who wanted jewels that she is no longer able to weep even at the saddest stories.

Although the prince and the Golux try and fail to make Hagga weep, they find an oaken chest filled to the brim with jewels. Hagga tells them that they are "the jewels of laughter," beautiful but of no use to the Prince in his quest as they last but a fortnight, unlike the jewels of tears which last forever. As they watch, the jewels dissolve back into tears. In desperation, the Golux and the Prince try to make Hagga laugh and fail at this also. Inexplicably, Hagga laughs uncontrollably until the hut is ankle-deep in jewels. The Golux and the Prince gather 1,000 jewels, thank Hagga and leave.

At the castle, the Duke, with Hark in attendance, is waiting impatiently counting down the Prince's remaining time. He reveals his intention to marry Princess

Saralinda himself when she has turned twenty one. When Hark objects, the Duke reveals that Saralinda is not really his niece, but a princess whom he had kidnapped when she was a baby. Unfortunately for him, Saralinda's nurse was a witch and cast a spell upon him as he fled with Saralinda.

Under the spell, he cannot marry Saralinda until she is 21 and must keep her safe from his schemes until then. He must allow princes to seek her hand in marriage although he is allowed to set them whatever tasks he pleases so that they may prove themselves, and, most importantly, "she can be saved, and the Duke destroyed, only by a prince whose name begins with X." The Duke feels safe, but Hark gleefully reminds him that Prince Zorn of Zorna had been disguised as a minstrel named Xingu, so Zorn of Zorna is the prince whose name begins with X.

The Duke becomes worried that the Prince and the Golux have secretly gotten into the castle and orders all his guards (each of whom had been guarding a clock) to follow him in a search of the castle. Once the room is deserted, the Golux and Princess Saralinda enter through a secret passage, and the Golux figures out how Saralinda can start the clocks again.

When the Duke and Listen return, Prince Zorn, Saralinda, and the Golux are waiting for them with a pile of jewels on the oak table and the clocks are chiming five. While the Duke is counting the jewels, the Golux and Hark reveal that Saralinda's father is the good King Gwain of Yarrow, who gave Hagga the power to weep jewels. Hark also reveals himself to be a servant of King Gwain who was

forced to work for the Duke and unable to save the princess himself due to being under a witch's spell.

The count completed, the group leaves the castle. The Prince and Princess journey together to Yarrow and then to Zorna, although Hark must remain a fortnight longer to complete the curse laid upon him, and the Golux mysteriously disappears after magically producing two white horses for Zorn and Saralinda.

A fortnight later, the Duke is gloating over his jewels when they turn back into tears. The room is plunged into darkness, and the Todal materializes to fulfill its function. Hark enters the room a little later to find the room completely deserted except for the Duke's sword, a small mysterious black ball stamped with scarlet owls and a puddle of tears on the table.

SETTING

The Thirteen Clocks is set in a gloomy castle on a lonely hill. Though the prince comes from distant Zorna and with the Golux, wanders on a quest to win Saralinda, the center of the story is this gloomy castle. Here lives the "cold, aggressive Duke" with the princess whom he claims is his niece. Here are the thirteen clocks that will not run because the Duke has murdered time within Coffin Castle. The cold and dark castle is the ideal setting for the Duke, with its silent clocks, its sinister spies, and its cavernous, dimly lit rooms.

SOCIAL SENSITIVITY

As in many of his stories, including his fairy tales, Thurber here responds to the many aspects of modern culture that threaten love and imagination. He traces unrestrained desires for power and material wealth to their roots in an impossible desire for immortality. He implies that this book did not begin as a commercial venture and that as it became of commercial value, it gave him and others more trouble.

LITERARY QUALITIES

The Thirteen Clocks is, on one level, an allegory of the struggle of humanity to create and sustain meaning in an indifferent universe. On a more accessible level, the story is an amusing and suspenseful fairy tale. Thurber has worked out both levels artfully. Characteristic of all his fairy tales, this story is replete with wordplay and humor.

On the allegorical level, the Duke seeks immortality by stopping time and collecting jewels. He hopes to crown his possessions with Saralinda, the warmth of human love and the radiance of mortal beauty. He fails to understand that he cannot have both, that he cannot warm his heart and light his soul with another's life. To receive from another, he must give, and he cannot. Only the tears of sorrow last forever. The tears of laughter are transients.

Central theme

The central theme of The Thirteen Clocks concerns the opposition between the forces of light and warmth and the forces of dark and cold.

CHARACTERS

The Duke

Although the Duke loves jewels above all things because their radiance is eternal, he seems to know intuitively that jewels are in reality cold, their radiance borrowed from mortality. The jewels of Hagga's tears of sorrow last forever. The Duke of Coffin Castle is Cold, aggressive, evil, and scheming. The Duke devises impossible tasks to ward off Saralinda's suitors so that he can marry her on her 21st birthday.

SARALINDA

As the Duke is drawn to Saralinda's mortal radiance, her hand is the only warm thing in Coffin Castle shows that at the beginning of the story the Duke has not yet completely surrendered his humanity.

Todal

The Duke hopes to marry Saralinda himself when she turns twenty-one. He stops the thirteen clocks in the castle by slaying time. The Todal is an agent of the Devil sent to punish evildoers for having done less evil than they should.

Golux

The Golux must always appear when people are in peril. He helps Zorn in his quest. Part magician, part logician, and part idiot, the Golux looks like a little old man with wide eyes, a dark beard and indescribable hat who is “on the side of good by accident and happenstance.”

Prince Zorn of Zorna

The Prince Zorn of Zorna comes to town as Xingu, a minstrel, but shows bravery and determination to win the right to marry Saralinda. His mighty deeds have earned him great renown. Zorn is the son of a powerful, wealthy, and indecisive King.

Hagga

Hagga is woman whose tears become jewels. Hagga was given the power by King Gwain of Yarrow.

3.2 CARTOONS

A cartoon is a form of expression or communication which refers to several forms of art including humorous captioned illustrations, satirical political drawings, and animated film. Animated cartoons cater more to younger audiences entertaining children with the adventures of anthropomorphized animals, superheroes, and

child protagonists. From fine art to political commentary and entertainment, cartoons have played an important role in shaping the world as we know it.

In 1930 the New Yorker published its first two Thurber drawings. They were part of a Thurber series called “Our Pet Department,” a caricature on newspaper pet columns. Thurber had a strong inclination for specific human characteristics to animals and birds, and Thurber’s Pet Department makes the most of it.

The price paid to him for his cartoons had been rising from $25 to $40, $50, $75 and, by the end of 1933, $100. The year was a tremendously productive and lucrative one for Thurber in money and fame, besides fifty cartoons and spots in the *New Yorker.*

The cartoons are ingenious. Sometimes you will read a cartoon in a newspaper and it will make you laugh. Go back to it again, and it no longer has the same effect. Thurber’s cartoons, on the other hand, are so utterly inspired, that they will improve upon a second and third look. You will discover subtle nuances you didn’t perceive before. His funniest offerings draw on the theme of marriage, and frequently involve the chasm between a husband and wife trapped in a marriage out of which the love and romance has long since disappeared. You will be left baffled as to where exactly Thurber came across such a natural talent for finding the absurd in everything. A **cartoonist** is an artist who specializes in drawing cartoons which may be humorous or political, most of which has a concrete storyline unlike strips appearing in newspaper.

He drew his cartoons on very large sheets of paper using a thick black crayon, giving them an eerie, wobbly feel that seems to suit their contents. Thurber was

a hugely successful cartoon artist, and contributed heavily to *The New Yorker* James Thurber and *The New Yorker* were made for each other. Soon after he joined the magazine in 1927, he was flooding its pages with casual essays, memoirs, fables, and formless, insistently disarming drawings that bore his unique stamp and frame of mind.

His work was largely unclassifiable and by the end it gave him a place in history as one of the great comic artists and one of the great American humorists. His tremendously original point of view, his literary style, his peculiar kind of vision, and restlessness all went into the magazine and became part of its tradition.

THE LAST FLOWER

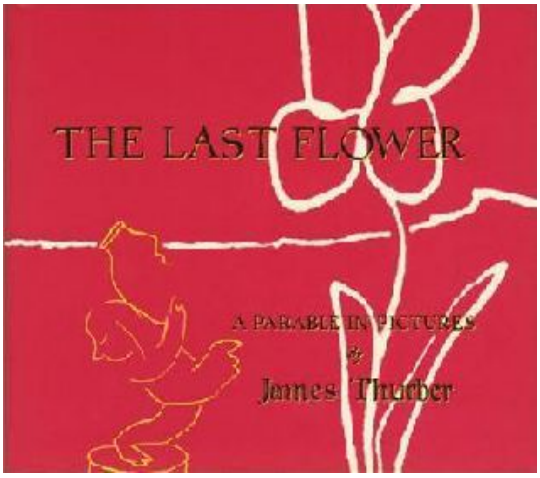
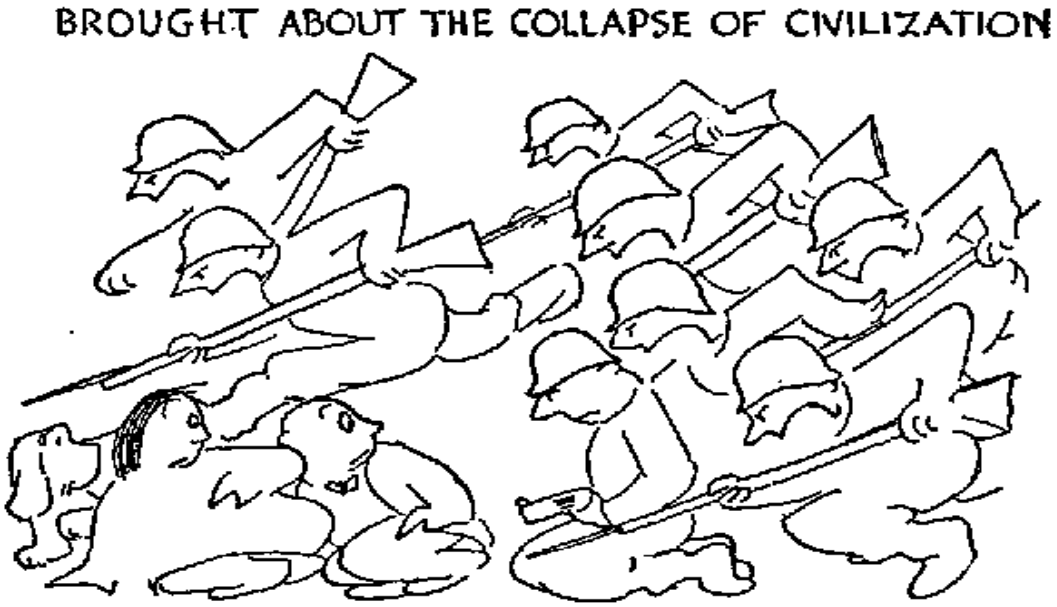


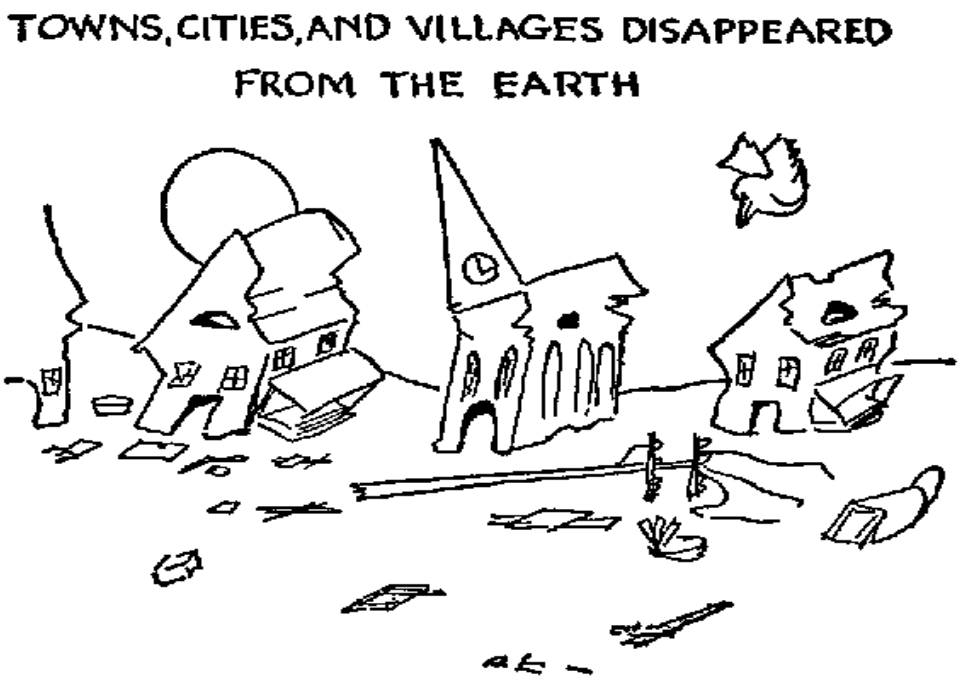
Illustration 4 "The Last Flower" by James Thurber; 1939

THE LAST FLOWER

By James Thurber

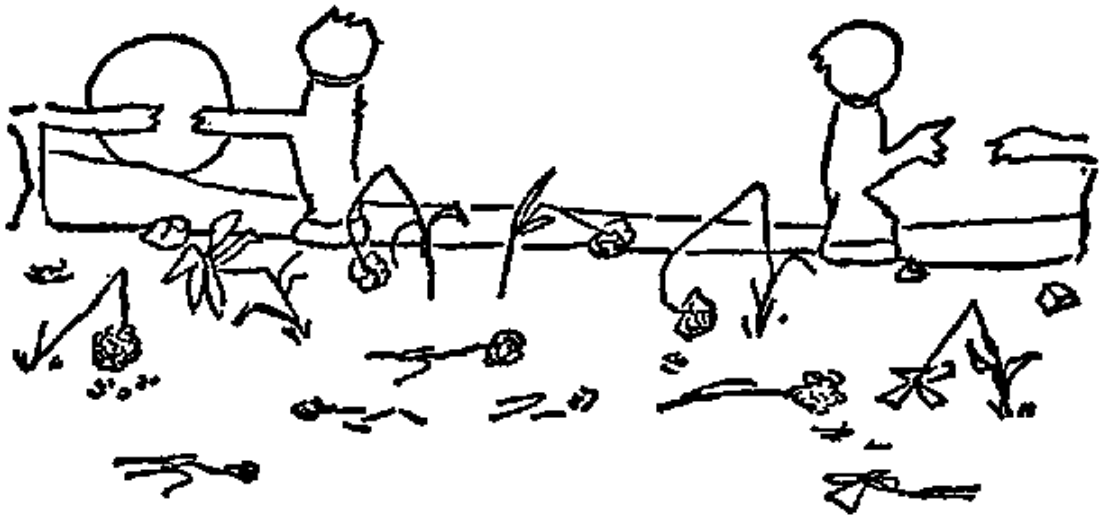


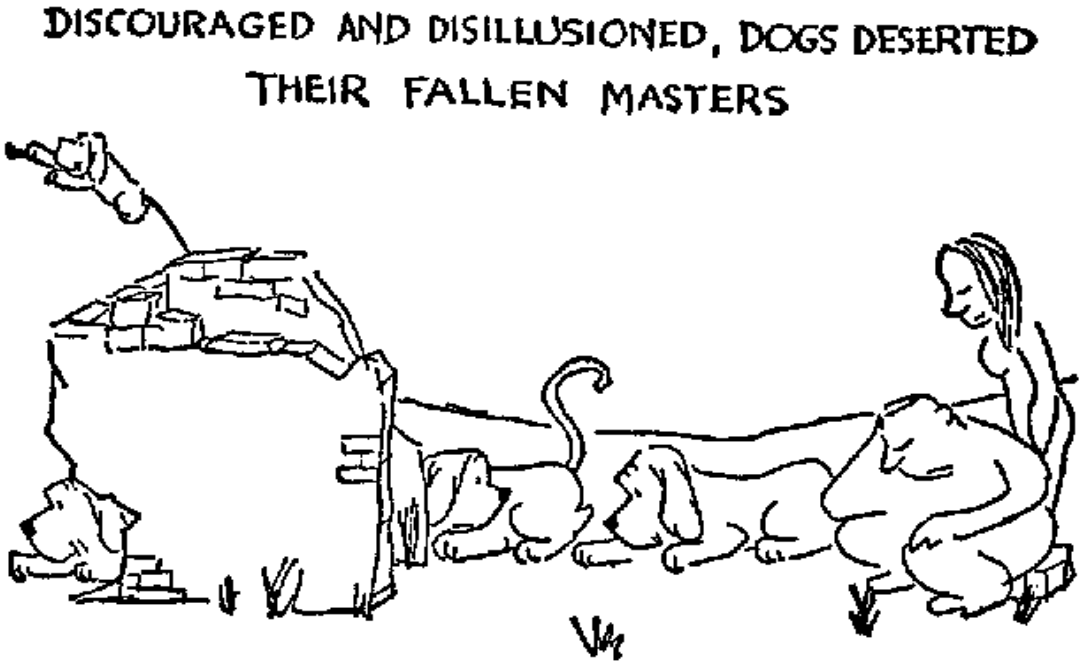
AUTORAS:
Verónica Andrea Loayza Mejía
Jeaneth Catalina Solórzano Ramos

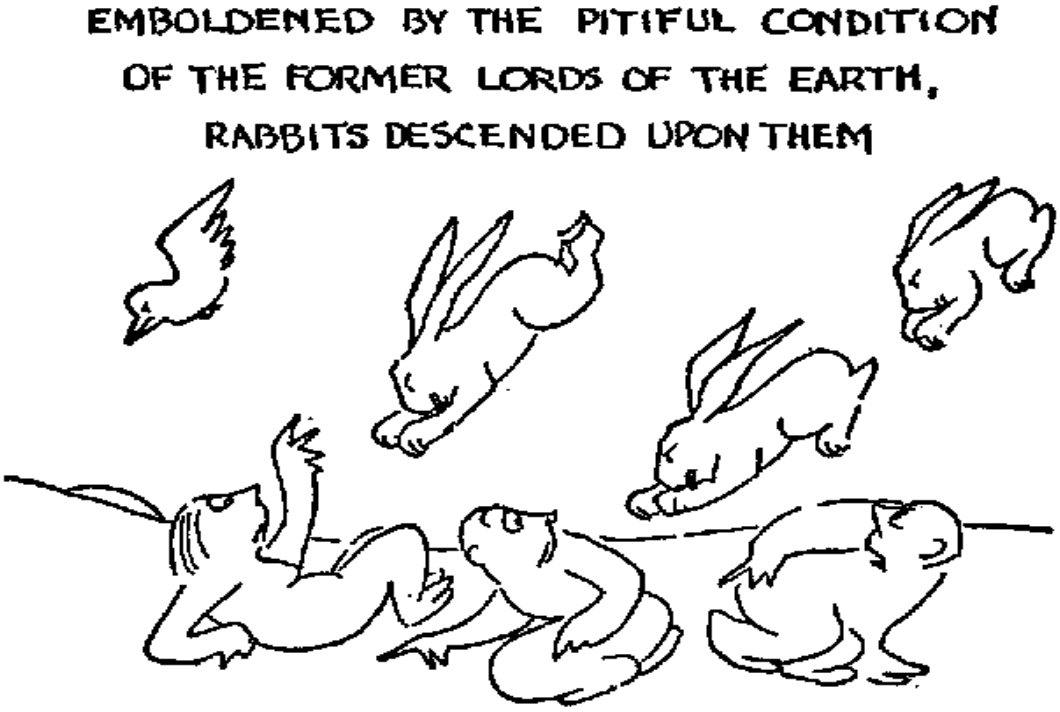

TOWNS, CITIES, AND VILLAGES DISAPPEARED
FROM THE EARTH

AUTORAS:
Verónica Andrea Loayza Mejía
Jeaneth Catalina Solórzano Ramos

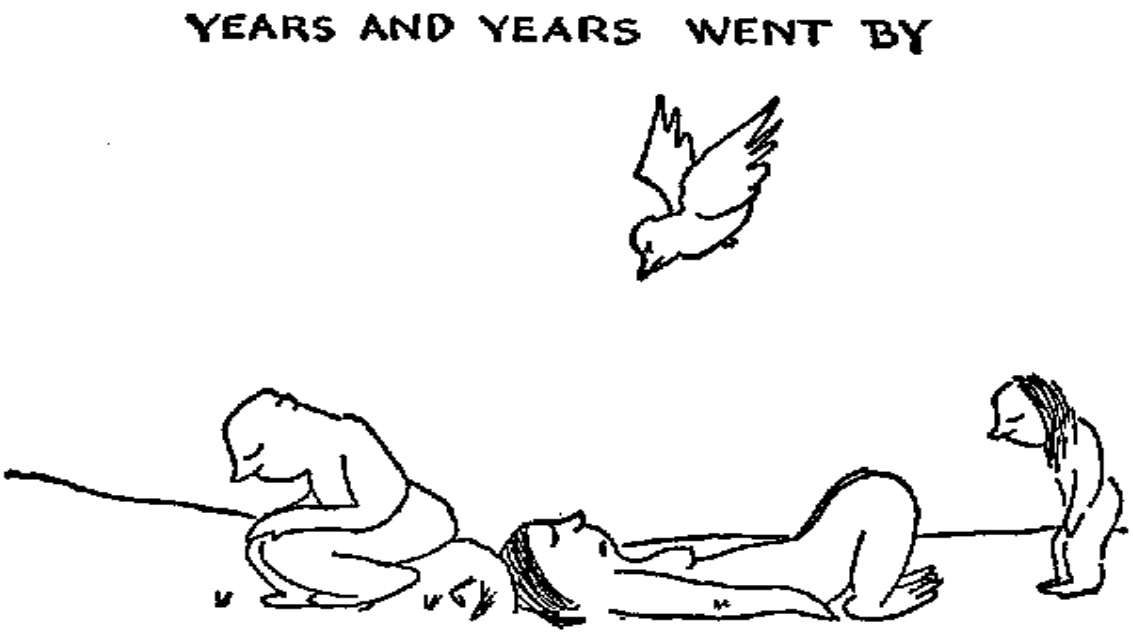
AND ALL THE GARDENS

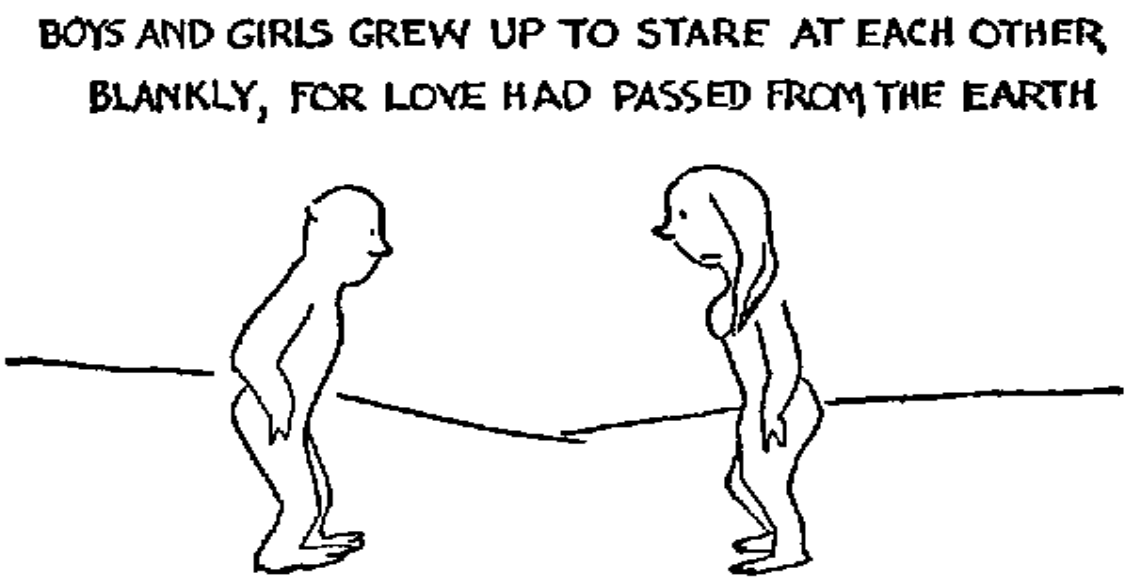



DISCOURAGED AND DISILLUSIONED, DOGS DESERTED
THEIR FALLEN MASTERS

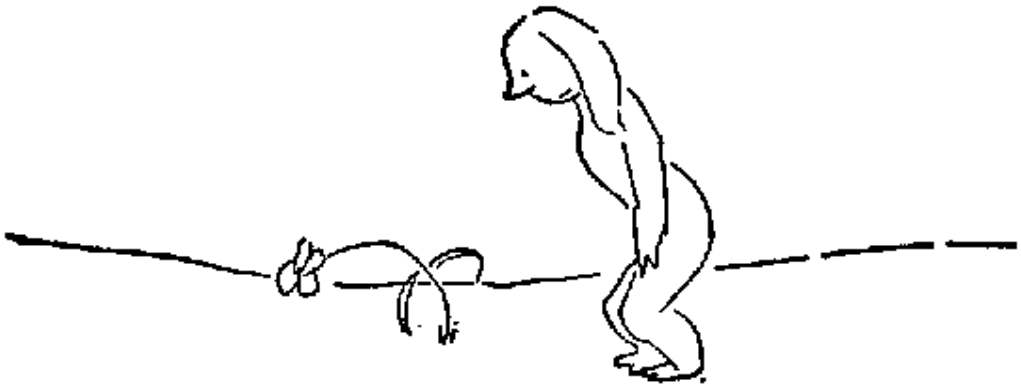

EMBOLDENED BY THE PITIFUL CONDITION
OF THE FORMER LORDS OF THE EARTH,
RABBITS DESCENDED UPON THEM

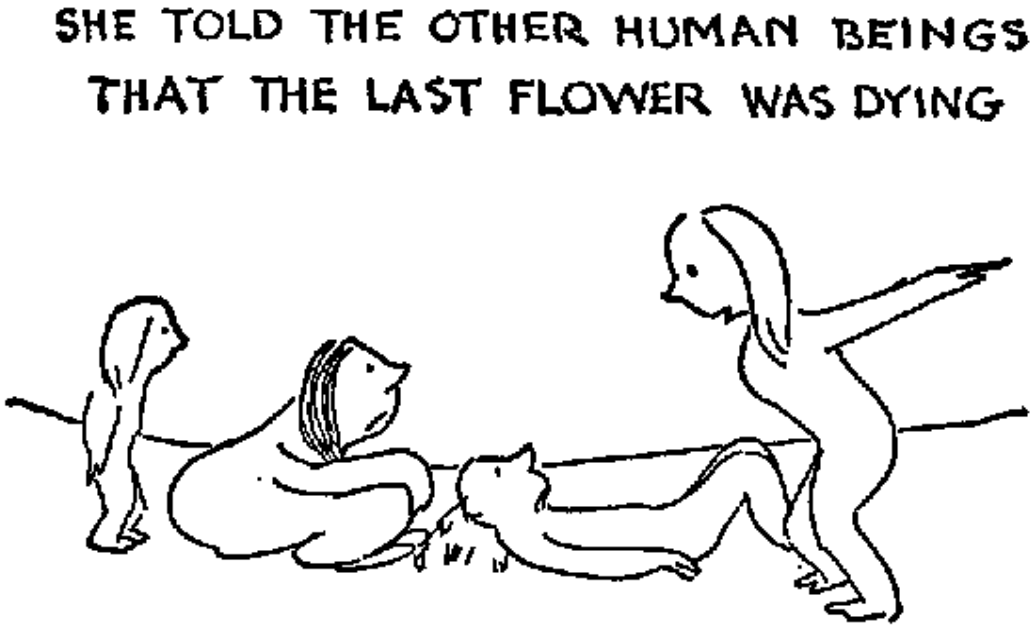

BOOKS, PAINTINGS, AND MUSIC DISAPPEARED
FROM THE EARTH, AND HUMAN BEINGS
JUST SAT AROUND, DOING NOTHING

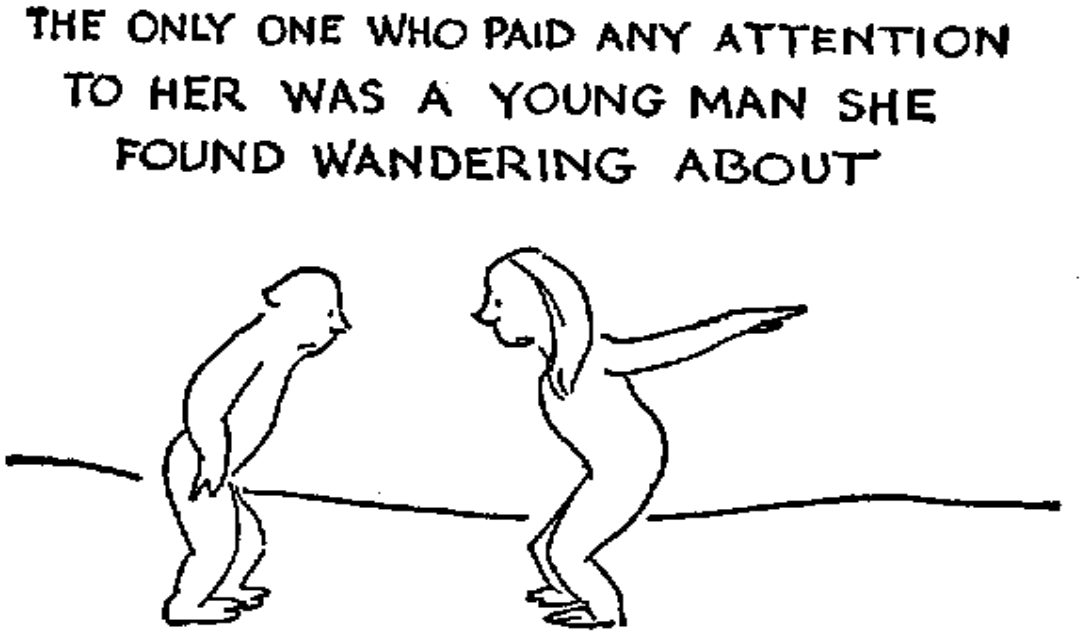

YEARS AND YEARS WENT BY


BOYS AND GIRLS GREW UP TO STARE AT EACH OTHER
BLANKLY, FOR LOVE HAD PASSED FROM THE EARTH

ONE DAY A YOUNG GIRL WHO HAD NEVER SEEN A FLOWER CHANCED TO COME UPON THE LAST ONE IN THE WORLD

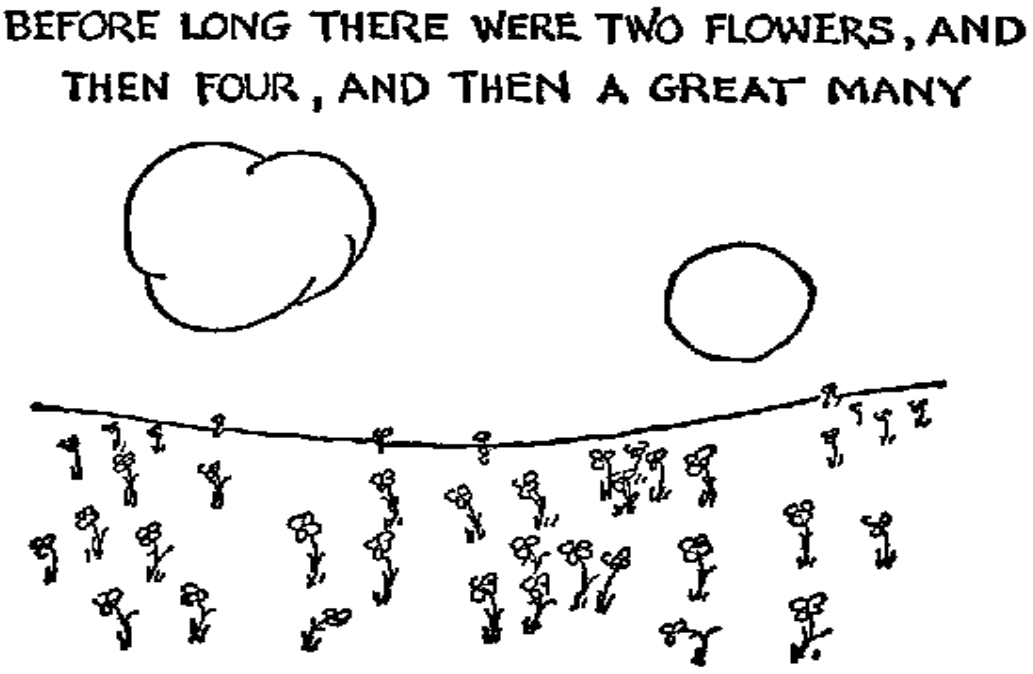



SHE TOLD THE OTHER HUMAN BEINGS
THAT THE LAST FLOWER WAS DYING

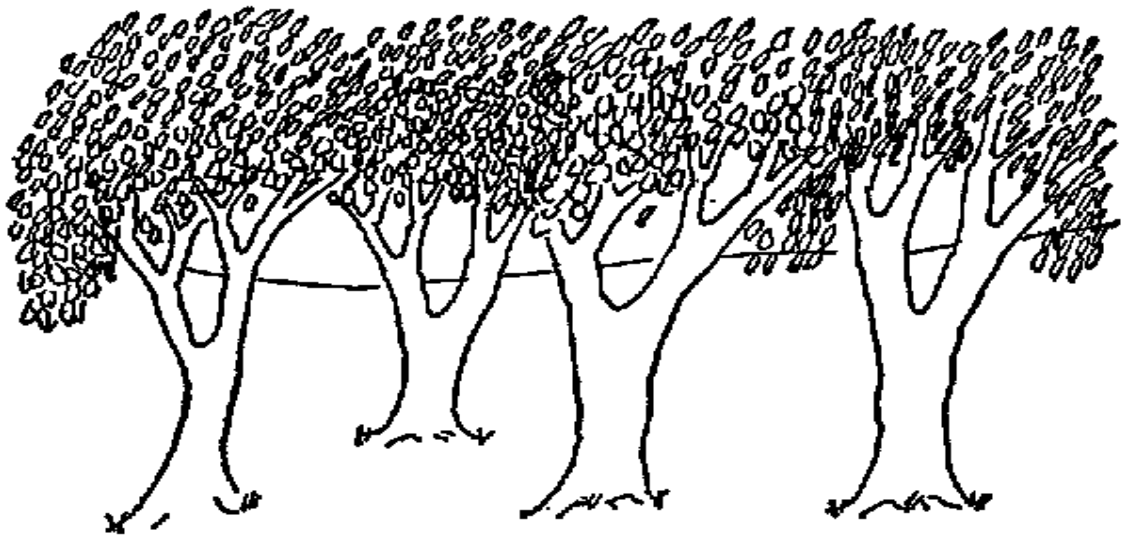

THE ONLY ONE WHO PAID ANY ATTENTION TO HER WAS A YOUNG MAN SHE FOUND WANDERING ABOUT

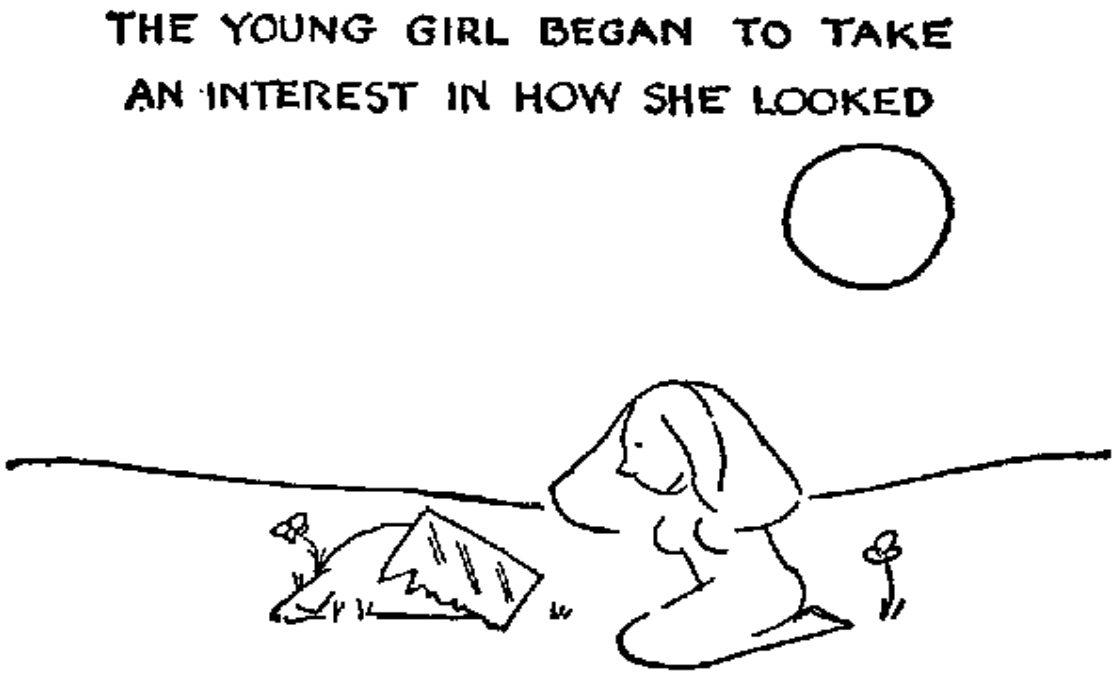
TOGETHER THE YOUNG MAN AND THE GIRL NURTURED THE FLOWER AND IT BEGAN TO LIVE AGAIN

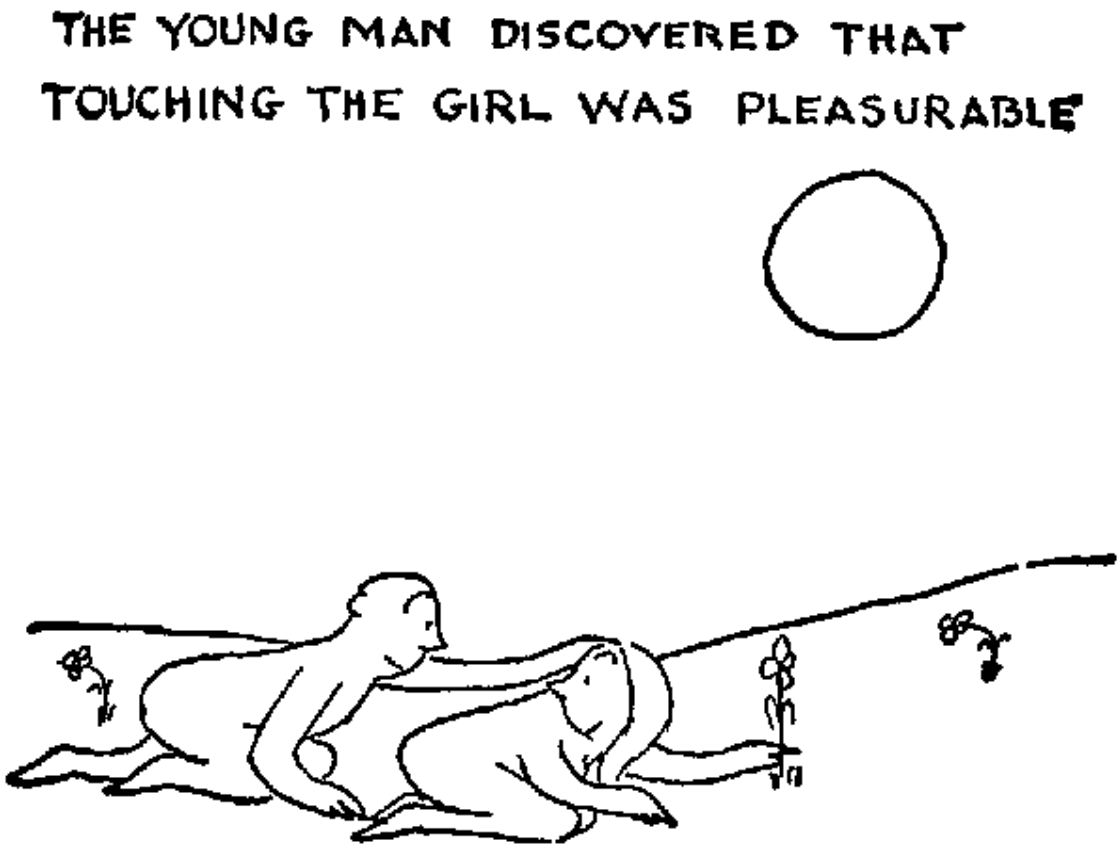
ONE DAY A BEE VISITED THE FLOWER,
AND A HUMMINGBIRD


BEFORE LONG THERE WERE TWO FLOWERS, AND
THEN FOUR, AND THEN A GREAT MANY

GROVES AND FORESTS FLOURISHED AGAIN




THE YOUNG GIRL BEGAN TO TAKE
AN INTEREST IN HOW SHE LOOKED


THE YOUNG MAN DISCOVERED THAT
TOUCHING THE GIRL WAS PLEASURABLE

AUTORAS:
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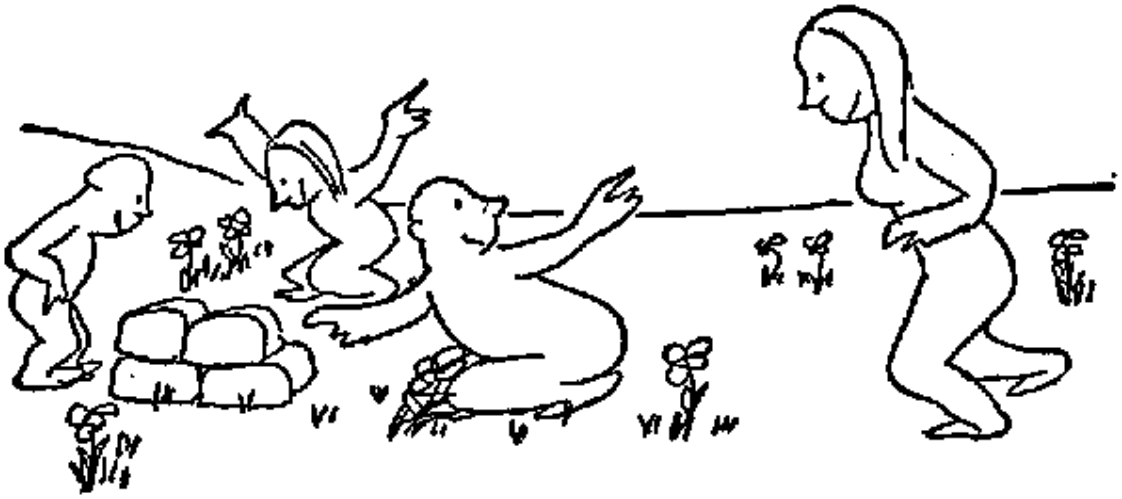
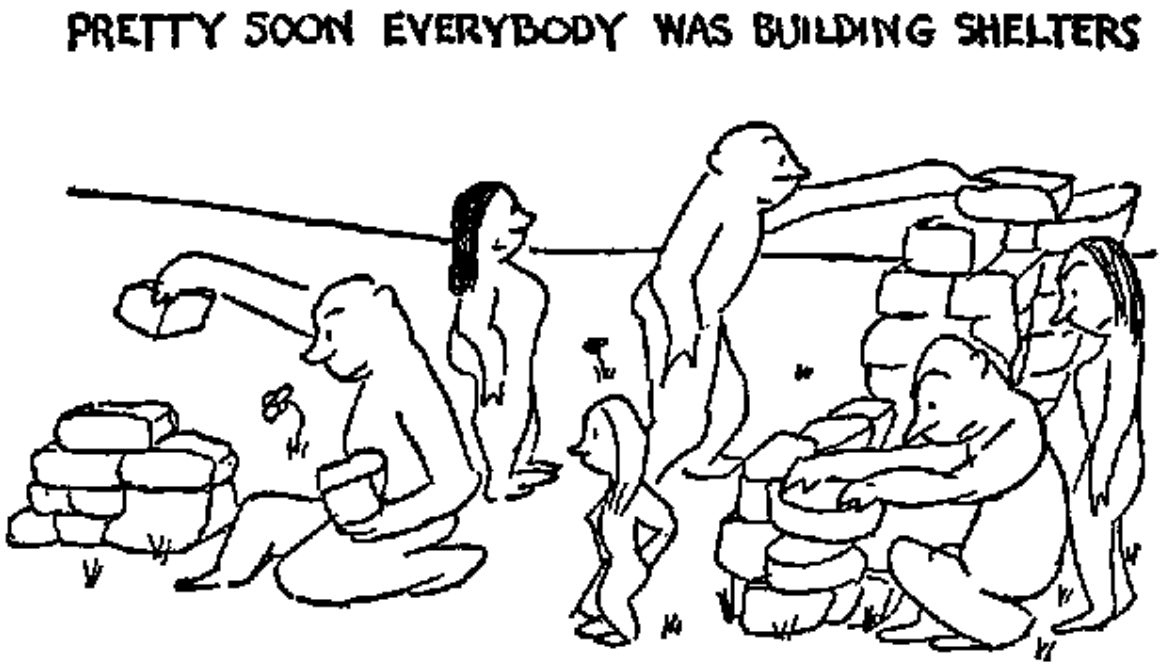
Jeaneth Catalina Solórzano Ramos

THEIR CHILDREN GREW UP STRONG AND HEALTHY
AND LEARNED TO RUN AND LAUGH

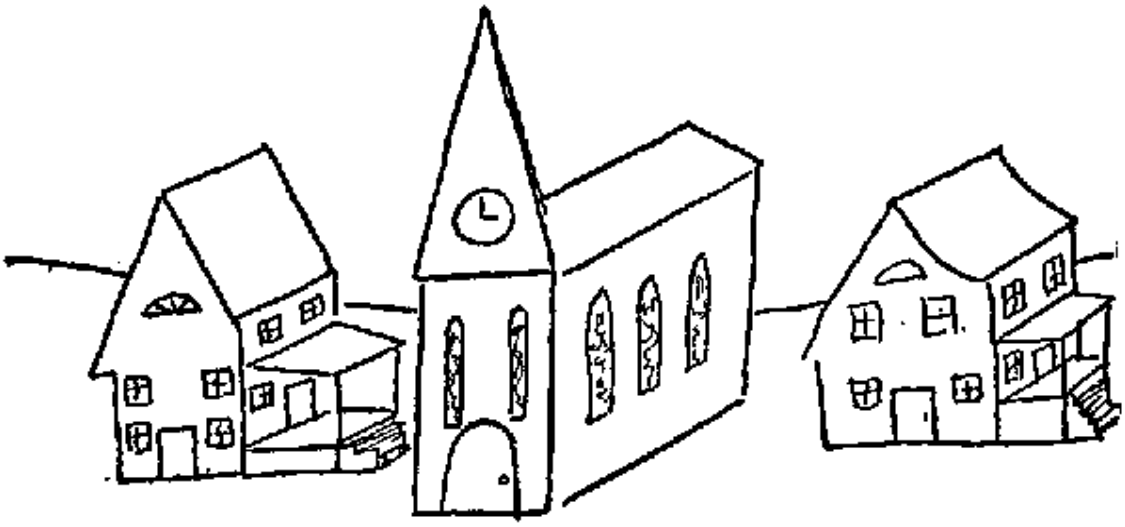
AUTORAS:
Verónica Andrea Loayza Mejía
Jeaneth Catalina Solórzano Ramos

THE YOUNG MAN DISCOVERED, BY PUTTING ONE STONE UPON ANOTHER, HOW TO BUILD A SHELTER

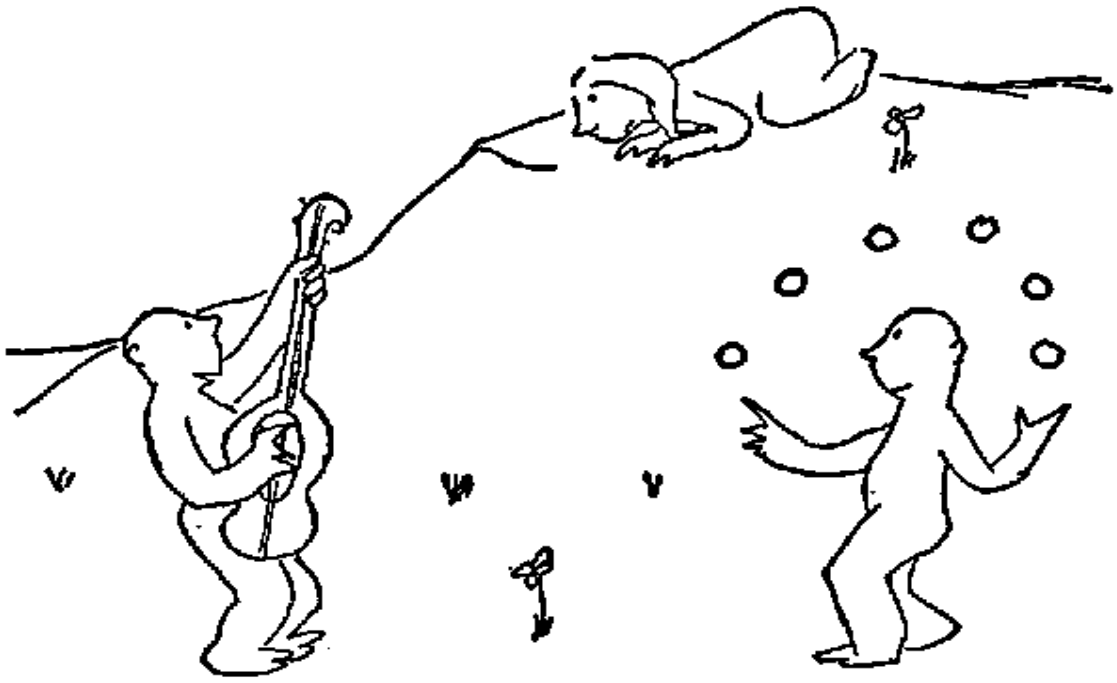



PRETTY SOON EVERYBODY WAS BUILDING SHELTERS

TOWNS, CITIES, AND VILLAGES SPRANG UP



AND TROUBADOURS AND JUGGLERS



AUTORAS:
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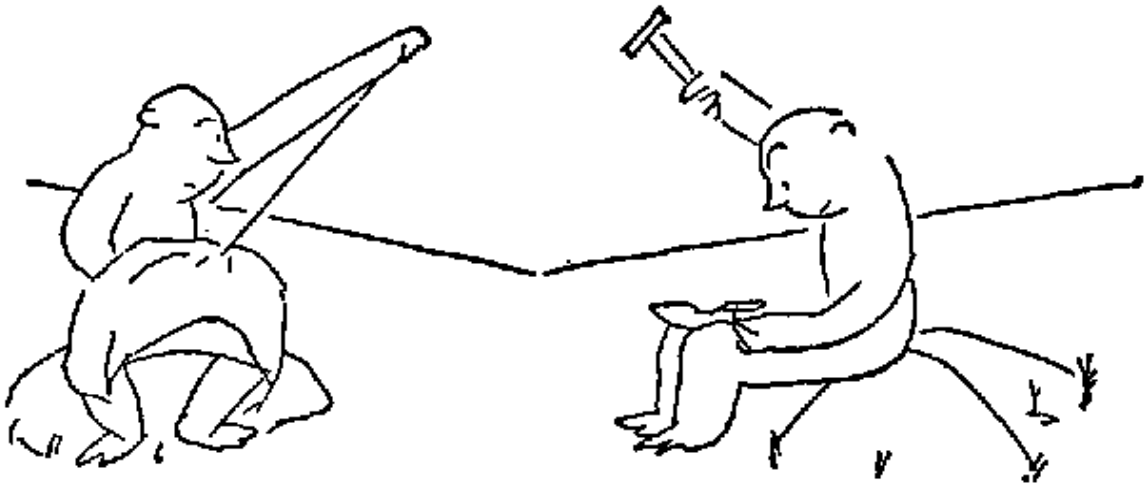
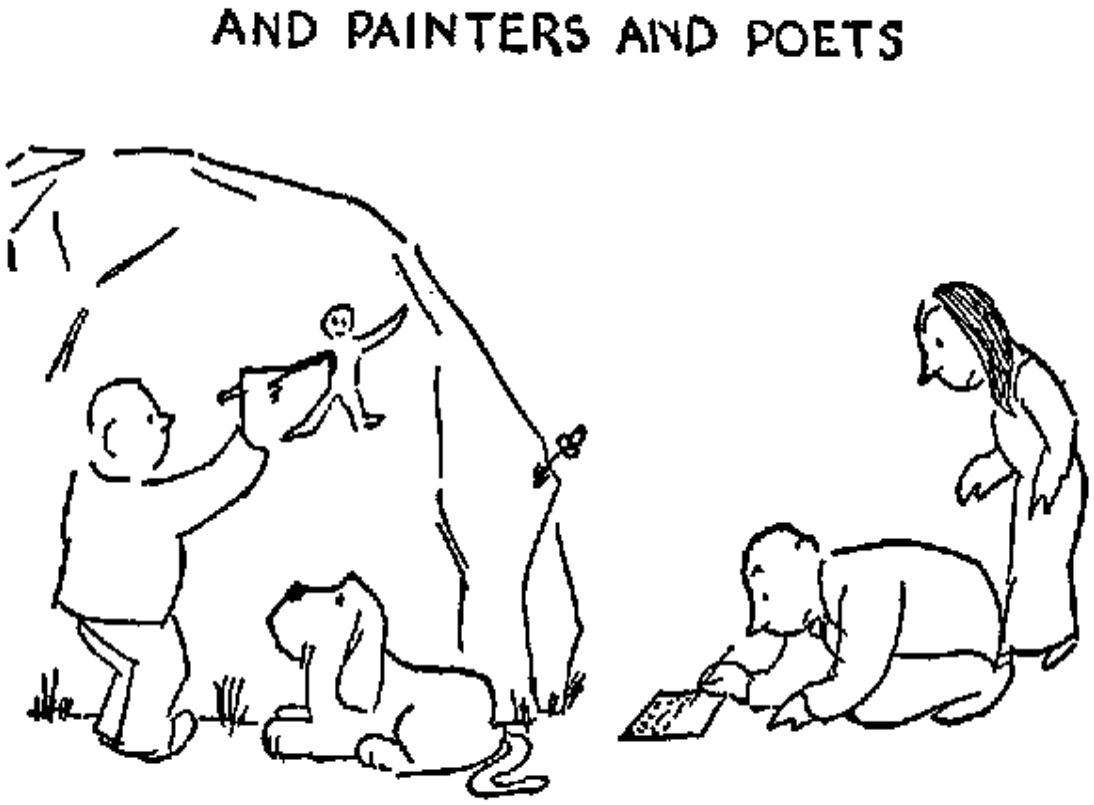
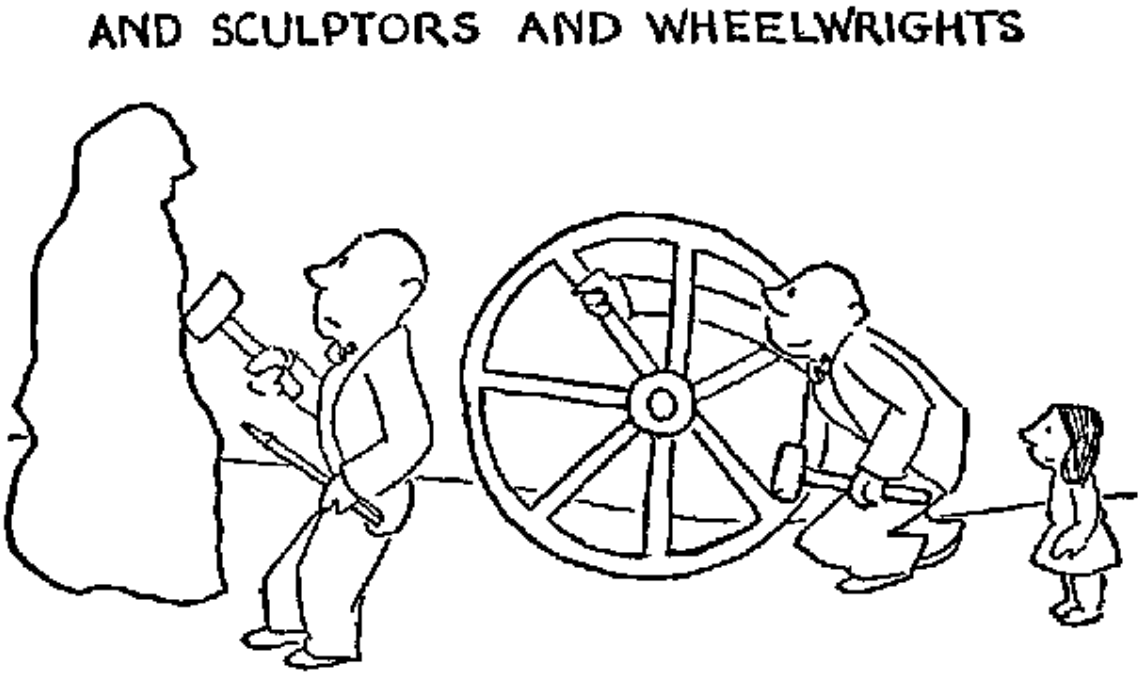
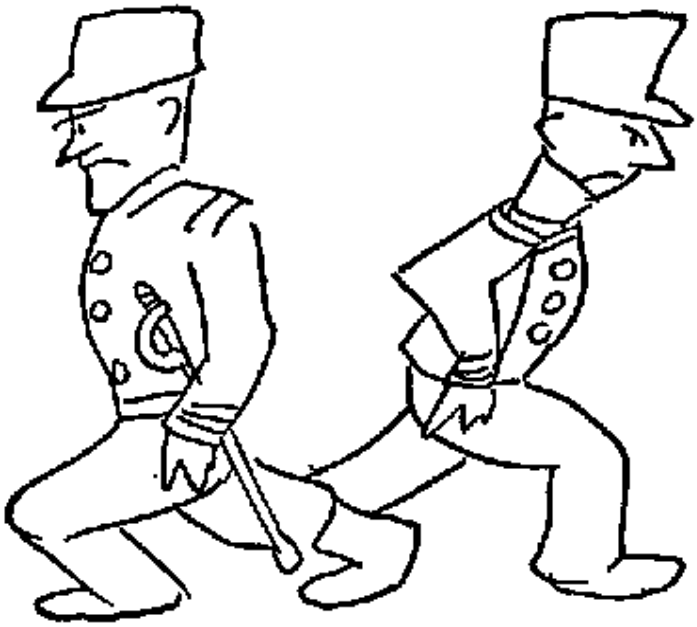
AND TAILORS AND COBBLERS

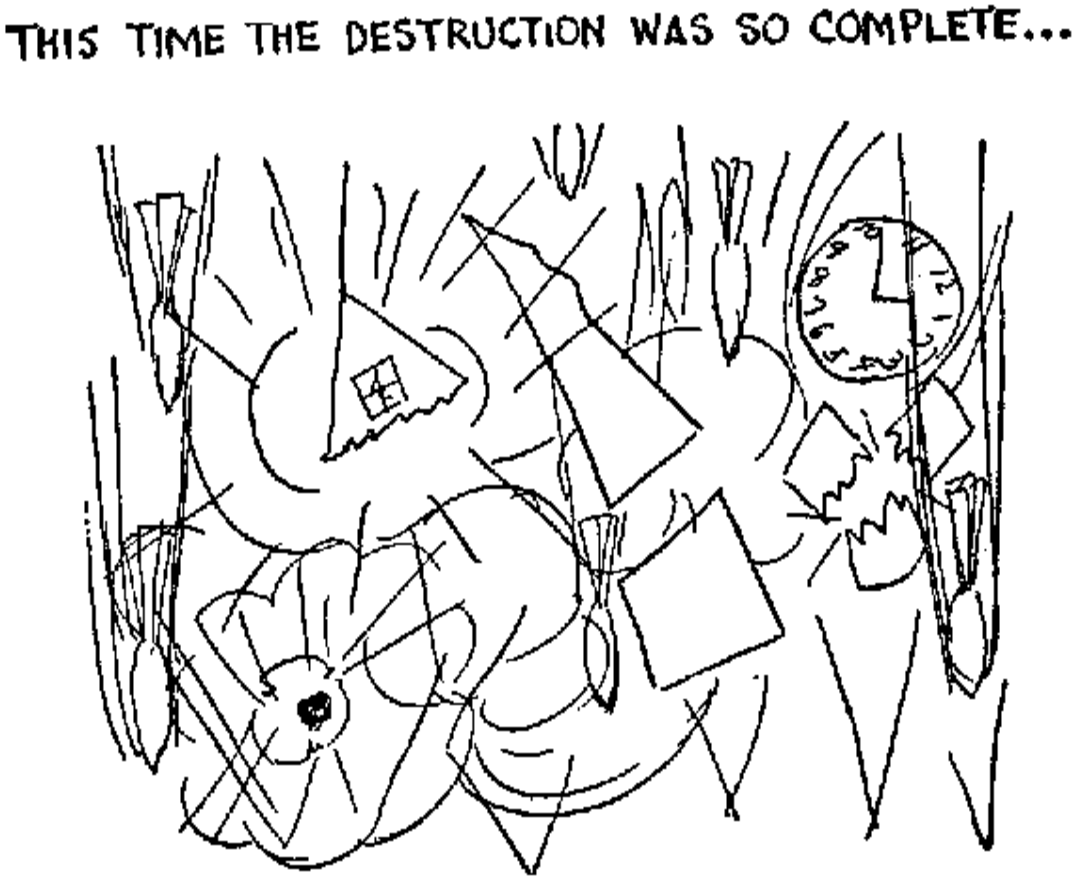



AND PAINTERS AND POETS


AND SCULPTORS AND WHEELWRIGHTS

AND LIEUTENANTS AND CAPTAINS




THIS TIME THE DESTRUCTION WAS SO COMPLETE...

3.3 SHORT STORIES

In his book, *The Thurber Carnival,* James Thurber uses the short stories “The Lady on 142,” “The Secret Life Of Walter Mitty,” “The Catbird Seat,” “The Breaking Up of the Winships,” and “The Curb in the Sky” to focus on the conflicts between men and women. He shows the conflicts between the men who want to be adventurous and the women who hold them back. The conflicts about which Thurber writes typically start out small but expand into major problems. Many of the male characters in James Thurber's writings are feeble and dependent, whereas the women are domineering in their relationships. “Many of Thurber's own stories and drawings show a weak man dependent upon a strong woman; but such a situation appears deplorable rather than to be desired. The men sometimes revolt, but they are handicapped by weakness of both character and body.” The constant demeaning over seemingly trivial situations causes the breakup of relationships in James Thurber's works. Once captured into marriage, many of Thurber's men lead a frustrated existence, being bullied and badgered by nagging wives who consider themselves all-knowing. Some of these men seek escape from the war zone of their married life by imagining a win over being humiliated. When imagination fails, the means to coping sometimes leads to drastic measures such as divorce.

“ The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”

Author	James Thurber
Country	United States
Language	English
Genre(s)	short story
Published in	*The New Yorker*
Publication type	Magazine
Publisher	Harcourt, Brace and Compan
Media type	Print (Periodical, Hardback Paperback)
Publication	1939 (magazine), 1942 (book

THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY (1939)

Introduction

The Secret life of Walter Mitty is a short story by James Thurber. It is based on a man who daydreams and fantasizes about great and heroic acts. The most famous of Thurber’s stories, it was first published in *The New Yorker* on March 18, 1939 and was first collected in his book *My World and Welcome to It* in 1942. It has since

been reprinted in James Thurber: writings and drawings and is one of the most frequently anthologized short stories in American literature. The story is considered one of Thurber's "acknowledged masterpieces."

The name Walter Mitty and the derivative word "Mittyesque" have entered the English language, denoting an ineffectual person who spends more time in heroic daydreams than paying attention to the real world, or more seriously, one who intentionally attempts to mislead or convince others that he is something that he is not.

The secret life of Walter Mitty

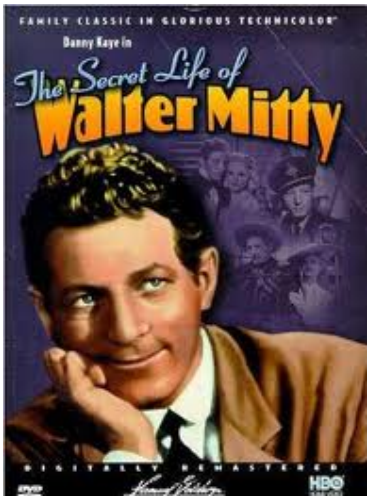


Illustration 5 "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" by James Thurber; 1939

Plot Summary

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty begins when a military officer orders an airplane crew to proceed with a flight through a dangerous storm. The crew members are

scared but are buoyed by their commander's confidence, and they express their faith in him. Suddenly, the setting switches to an ordinary highway where Walter Mitty and his wife are driving into a city to run errands. The scene on the airplane is revealed to be one of Mitty's many fantasies.

Mitty's wife observes that he seems tense, and when he drops her off in front of a hair styling salon, she reminds him to go buy overshoes and advises him to put on his gloves. He drives away toward a parking lot and loses himself in another fantasy. In this daydream he is a brilliant doctor, called upon to perform an operation on a prominent banker. His thoughts are interrupted by the attendant at the parking lot where Mitty is trying to enter through the exit lane. He has trouble backing out to get into the proper lane, and the attendant has to take the wheel. Mitty walks away resentful of the attendant's skill and self-assurance.

Next, Mitty finds a shoe store and buys overshoes. He is trying to remember what else his wife wanted him to buy when he hears a newsboy shouting about a trial which sends Mitty into another daydream. Mitty is on the witness stand in a courtroom. He identifies a gun as his own and reveals that he is a skillful marksman. His testimony causes a disturbance in the courtroom. An attractive young woman falls into his arms; the district attorney strikes her and Mitty punches him. This time Mitty brings himself out of his reverie by remembering what he was supposed to buy. "Puppy biscuit," he says aloud, leading a woman on the street to laugh and tell her friend, "That man said 'Puppy biscuit' to himself."

Mitty then goes to a grocery store for the dog biscuits and makes his way to the hotel lobby where he has arranged to meet his wife. He sits in a chair and picks up a magazine that carries a story about airborne warfare. He begins to daydream again, seeing himself as a heroic bomber pilot about to go on a dangerous mission. He is brave and lighthearted as he prepares to risk his life.

He returns to the real world when his wife claps him on the shoulder. She is full of questions, and he explains to her that he was thinking. “Does it ever occur to you that I am sometimes thinking?” he says. She replies that she plans to take his temperature when they get home. They leave the hotel and walk toward the parking lot. She darts into a drugstore for one last purchase, and Mitty remains on the street as it begins to rain. He lights a cigarette and imagines himself smoking it in front of a firing squad. He tosses the cigarette away and faces the guns courageously “Walter Mitty the Undefeated, inscrutable to the last.”

CHARACTERS

Mrs. Mitty

Mrs. Mitty is Walter’s dominating wife. While Mrs. Mitty may appear overly controlling and condescending, Walter is incompetent and refuses to shoulder adult responsibility. Mrs. Mitty is Walter’s link to reality. She prevents accidents and helps Walter avoid losing his grasp of everyday life.

Walter Mitty

Walter Mitty is a daydreamer who imagines himself the hero of his fantasies as a navy pilot commander, doctor, sharpshooter, bomber pilot, and noble victim of a firing squad. Mitty is married to a woman who treats him more like a child than a husband. This is due to his immature tendency to escape into fantasies rather than live in the real world. He is constantly being upbraided by policemen, parking lot attendants, and his wife for his erratic, distracted behavior. Thurber's characterization of this neurotic man whose wife dominates him, who cannot fix his own car, and who lives in dreams has become an archetypal figure of the ineffectual, weak, bumbling male in American culture.

THEMES

The story depicts a man whose extremely mundane life is constantly interrupted by the character's escapist fantasies. Whereas the fantasy Mitty is not scared of anything, the real one protests feebly, if at all, at demands that he behave cautiously. Similarly, the admiration bestowed on Mitty in the fantasies contrasts with much less pleasant interactions with real people.

SOURCES

Thurber got the idea for Walter Mitty from a book by a leading British crime-fiction writer, Anthony Berkeley Cox. Like many of his male characters, such as the husband in *The Unicorn in the Garden* and the physically unimposing men Thurber often paired with larger women in his cartoons, Mitty is dominated and put upon by

his wife. Like the man who saw the unicorn, he escapes via fantasies. A similar dynamic is found in the Thurber story “The Curb in the Sky,” in which a man starts recounting his own dreams as anecdotes as an attempt to stop his wife from constantly correcting him on the details.

STYLE

In *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, Thurber tells the story of Walter Mitty, a man who lives in a dream world to escape from the routines and humiliations he suffers in everyday life. The action takes place over the course of a single day, during which Walter Mitty and his wife go on their weekly shopping trip. Walter slips into his daydreams, only to be awakened when he has made an error in judgment, such as speeding or driving on the wrong side of the road.

Thurber has carefully constructed the story’s narrative to connect Mitty’s “secret life” with his external life. Each of the dreams begins with some detail from Walter’s everyday life. Significantly, the story opens and closes in the middle of dream sequences, as if to emphasize their priority over reality for Walter. None of the mini-narratives have decisive conclusions. Each of the dream sequences, like the entire story, is an abbreviated short story with no clear beginning or end.

POINT OF VIEW

Linked to his use of narration, Thurber uses an unusual point of view in “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty.” The story is told in the third-person, but the reader has access to Mitty’s thoughts. The dream sequences complicate this third-person limited point

of view. During these sections of the story, readers are inside of Walter's fantasy. Walter's thoughts are projected into narrative action. Thurber shifts from one level of awareness to another without confusing the reader.

WORDPLAY

Thurber has been praised for his use of extravagant wordplay and literary allusions. Noted primarily for his light sketches and humorous line drawings, Thurber did not receive a great deal of serious critical appraisal during his career. However, later critics have commented on his bitter political and social commentary and the latent, darker themes in his work. Through his use of humor and wit, Thurber was able to explore the conflicts and neurotic tensions of modern life. Humorous distortions of medical terms, technological advancements, and items of warfare make Mitty's portrayal accurate, lifelike, and believable.

CONCLUSION

James Thurber is one of the great American humorists of this century. He "is still read and cherished by many readers more than thirty years after his death." James Thurber's biography includes stories of his failed marriage and alcohol abuse. These real life situations are certain to have influenced many of the story lines about real life conflicts between men and women. Most of Thurber's male characters are very far removed from the macho image usually portrayed of the male species. On the other hand, the women are very aggressive and also large and muscular built as seen in Thurber's cartoons. Good humor appears in much of

Thurber's sexual conflict. Thurber's couples are very irritable temperamental and often drink excessively. They are examples of the "high strung, sensitive couples who make up such a large percentage of present day families." Because Thurber's works are so parallel to the present day to day conflicts among men and women, his literary works continue to be popular.

THE CATBIRD SEAT

INTRODUCTION

First published in the November 14, 1942 issue of the *New Yorker*, *The Catbird Seat* also appeared in Thurber's 1945 collection, *The Thurber Carnival*. Since that time, the story has been published in dozens of anthologies for high school and college students, and Thurber has been called America's most important twentieth-century humorist.

The story chronicles a battle of wills between the fussy Erwin Martin, head of a filing department, and Ulgine Barrows, the firm's efficiency expert who threatens to bring change into Martin's well ordered existence. With comic irony, Martin uses his reputation as a meek and pleasant man against the flashy Mrs. Barrows.

THE CATBIRD SEAT

Plot summary

The Catbird Seat is a story of a man who is so disturbed by a change in his life that he plans to commit murder. The main Character Mr. Martin files papers for an accounting firm. As you can tell from his job, Mr. Martin is a very dull man. During the 22 years that he has worked with F&S accounting, he has fallen into a steady routine. Two years ago his employer Mr. Fitweiler hired a young woman, Ms. Ulgine Barrows, as a Special Advisor. Ms. Barrows disrupts Martin's daily routine and causes him to enter a state of panic and paranoia. Mr. Martin then plans to go over to Ms. Barrows home and murder her. Unfortunately his plan had a few fatal flaws.

As Mr. Martin arrives at her house he is visibly shaken and obviously nervous. He greets Ms. Barrows with a stammered excuse for his arrival. Ms. Barrows is obviously surprised but greets Martin warmly nonetheless. As Ms. Barrows goes to fetch some drinks Martin looks around for a murder weapon. He finds a few things in the room like a letter opener, but none of them will do the job. Ms. Barrows returns and Martin has to quickly change his plans. He makes up a story and tells Ms. Barrows that he is going to kill their employer. Ms. Barrows asks him to leave her house and Martin leaves with a smirk on his face. The next day at work Martin is called into his employer's office. His employer tells him that Ms. Barrows had reported his plans this morning. Their employer believes that Ms. Barrows has gone crazy due to being overworked and lets Martin go back to work and fires Ms.

Barrows. In the end, Martin got rid of Ms. Barrows although it was in a different way than he planned.

CHARACTERS

Ulgine Barrows

Ulgine Barrows is the “newly appointed special adviser to the president of the firm” of F&S; Mrs. Barrows has been hired to “bring out the best” in the company. In eighteen months on the job she has fired three loyal employees, driven another to resign, and made changes in nearly every department. Now she plans to reorganize Mr. Martin’s area, the filing department.

Mr. Martin

Mr. Martin despises her large and commanding presence, her loud “quacking voice and braying laugh,” and her habit of repeating the colorful phrases of her favorite baseball announcer, Red Barber. When she reports Mr. Martin’s shocking threats, Fitweiler does not believe her. Instead, he summons a psychiatrist. In a rage she screams accusations at Martin, confirming Fitweiler’s belief that she has gone mad.

Mr. Fitweiler

Mr. Fitweiler is the aging president of the firm of F&S. Almost two years before the story begins, he met Ulgine Barrows at a party, where she “worked upon him a monstrous magic.” Shortly afterwards, he hired her and began to follow her suggestions for reorganizing the company. Fitweiler is formal and autocratic. After

twenty-two years of working together he still calls Mr. Martin by his last name, and Martin calls him “sir”.

Joey Hart

One of Mr. Martin’s assistants in the filing department, Joey Hart, explains to Martin that Mrs. Barrows’ colorful expressions are taken from the baseball announcer Red Barber.

Erwin Martin

Mr. Martin is the protagonist of the story. He is described as a small, neat, quiet man. He has never taken a drink of alcohol or smoked a cigarette, and he has no family or friends. For twenty-two years he has worked for the firm of F&S, eventually rising to the position of head of the filing department. He takes great pleasure in keeping the files as orderly as the rest of his life.

When the loud and aggressive Mrs. Barrows joins the firm and threatens to make changes in his filing system, he goes to her apartment planning to kill her. Suddenly he realizes that he could have her removed from the firm by discrediting her instead. Because Martin is such a “drab, ordinary little man,” not even Mrs. Barrows believes that he has planned her demise.

Miss Paird

One of Mr. Martin's two assistants in the filing department, Miss Paird is "always able to find things out." She spreads the story of how Fitweiler and Barrows met and tries to eavesdrop when Barrows storms into Fitweiler's office.

THEMES

Men and Women

One of the more important themes of *The Catbird Seat* is the struggle for men and women to understand each other and live together. In Thurber's work, the battle is always between a weak, nervous man and a strong, domineering woman. Many of Thurber's stories and drawings explore the struggles between men and women in marriage. In Thurber's world, men and women can never understand each other.

In this story, many of the traditional male and female characteristics are reversed. It is Mrs. Barrows who drinks alcohol, smokes cigarettes, and follows baseball. Mr. Martin drinks milk, has never smoked, and does not know who Red Barber is. Mrs. Barrows is loud, with a commanding presence. Mr. Martin "maintains always an outward appearance of polite tolerance." So if conventional behaviors are considered, Mrs. Barrows is the more "masculine" of the two, and Mr. Martin the more "feminine" Martin himself finds her masculinity offensive.

Thurber's work is a joyfully vengeful and tireless attack on womanhood. Thurber's stories are the very acme in our literature of controlled wish fulfillment and

triumphant, sustained opposition to everything that Woman, especially the aggressive American woman, stands for.

STYLE

Irony

The term “irony” refers to a difference between appearance and reality, between what might be expected and what actually happens. Often, as in Thurber’s work, irony comes out of a grim sense of humor and to make a serious point.

It is ironic that Martin’s well-established reputation as a timid, quiet man makes it possible for his outrageous plan to succeed. To his boss and coworkers, the thought of Martin drinking, smoking seems ridiculous.

The central irony of the story is found in the title. It would appear to be Mrs. Barrows who sits “in the catbird seat” She has the ear of the president, she has mysterious feminine charms, and she has a strange language that Martin cannot understand. Yet as the story plays out, her strength is what brings her down.

In the end, Martin is able to use the title phrase as a weapon against the woman who taught it to him. She recognizes Martin’s plan, but she cannot stop it. Mr. Fitweiler knows that Martin would never use such a phrase. Ironically, in the end it is Martin, not Mrs. Barrows, who sits in the catbird seat.

Critical Overview

Thurber published hundreds of short stories and essays during his career, and while he was one of the few writers to be widely admired both by the critics and by the general public, there is little serious criticism of his work.

The Catbird Seat was one of four stories Thurber published in 1942, and it was included in the volume *Best American Short Stories of 1943*. Thurber liked the story, and chose it for the 1945 retrospective collection of his best work, *The Thurber Carnival*.

The *Thurber Carnival* was widely reviewed. Critic and Editor William Rose Benét, writing in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, praised the book's humor and handling of psychology, and called it "one of the absolutely essential books of our time."

CHAPTER 4

BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THURBER'S WRITINGS

4.1 THURBER LITERARY CAREER

Thurber's use of humor to point out human shortcomings took several forms. His cartoons often represented people struggling with the frustrations and tribulations of everyday life, especially in the face of modern technology that often made things more, rather than less, troublesome. Thurber believed that humans often unnecessarily complicated their lives through an excess of "abstract reasoning" instead of being practical. Thus, he always used to draw animals in a sympathetic light, commending their dependency on instinctive wisdom instead of the confused reasoning of humans. Males were especially targeted for ridicule by Thurber. His cartoons often included without character husbands being humiliated by their domineering and opinionated wives. In "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," (1939) Thurber's most famous *New Yorker* story, he created a title character who escaped his real, daily world by becoming a hero in his daydreams, a gentle symbol of humanity's loss of direction and purpose in modern times. Thurber's work also found its way to the stage, as in *The Male Animal* (1940) and A *Thurber Carnival* (1960).

Upset with alcoholism and blindness, Thurber's last years were not happy ones for him or his friends, and his personal problems were reflected in his creative output in a piece for the *New York Times*. Still, Thurber is considered one of the

century's most prominent humorous writers, with works that took many forms over the duration of his career, including novels, short stories, articles, and sketches almost all of them containing an effort of melancholia that is distinctly modern in style. A quotation from one of his many fables maybe best describes Thurber's attitude. Thurber was not a hater of mankind; he was a modernist who saw the limitations of man in an optimistic age.

He was skillful in drawing out the humor of human relationships and deficiencies. He also relied on nostalgic experiences for material, as in *My Life and Hard Times* (1933), which brought him national attention and featured his signature fusion of humorous fictional and factual events, a device that generated a new literary genre. "The Dog Who Bit People" and "The Night the Bed Fell" are his best known short stories from that collection.

Maybe his most famous piece was his short story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," published in the *New Yorker* and in his collection "My World and Welcome to It" (1942). It won unprecedented popularity among *New Yorker* readers, and featured again the "little man," who escapes his common life and the confines of marriage and society to perform fantastical, heroic acts through imagination.

In the early 1940s, Thurber was surrounded by multiple personal difficulties, including complications with his eyes and vision, his mother's cancer, and his father in law's death. While he continued to write, his fights shone through, as his pieces turned quite dark at times and often lacked his effortless humor. By 1945,

however, Thurber's emotional fights seemed to be behind him with the publication of *The Thurber Carnival*, which was a critical and popular smash.

In his later years, Thurber maintained with near blindness while writing a number of children's tales. Thurber wrote over seventy five fables, most of which were collected in *Fables for Our Time & Famous Poems Illustrated* (1940) and *Further Fables for Our Time* (1956). Thurber's fables were satirical in nature, and the morals served as punch lines rather than advice to the reader. His stories also included several fairy tales, such as "The White Deer" (1945) and "The Wonderful O" (1957). With his poor eyesight, Thurber could rely heavily on his excellent memory and often crafted story details in his head.

Near the end of his life, in 1960, Thurber finally was able to fulfill his long standing desire to be a professional by playing himself in 88 performances of the magazine. A "Thurber Carnival," based on a selection of Thurber's stories and cartoon captions. Thurber won a special Tony Award for the adapted script of the "Thurber Carnival."

4.2 THURBER WORKS ON FABLES

As a satirist, Thurber's desire to communicate with brevity and clarity made the fable form irresistible to him, and some critics feel that the fable would be dead as a literary style had Thurber not revitalized it. Thurber's fables are unique in that unlike the traditional fable, which focuses on only one event, the Thurber fable is often built entirely around a play-word. Like the traditional fable form they contain

animal characters, which not only think and speak, but also have human feelings and, in some cases, conditions such as a guilt complexes or educational difficulties. Among his best known fables are “The Birds and the Foxes,” “The Very Proper Gander,” “The Rabbits Who Caused All the Trouble,” “The Unicorn in the Garden.” and “The Little Girl and the Wolf.” Accordingly, each tale ends with a moral which is usually ironic. Thurber's fables were published in *The New Yorker,* and are collected in two volumes, *Fables for Our Time and Famous Poems Illustrated* (1940) and *Further Fables for Our Time* (1956). Thurber also wrote several children’s pieces including “The White Deer” (1945), a story about a princess who inhabits the body of a white deer.

4.3 THURBER’S FABLES

Fable

A fable is a succinct story in prose or verse that employs the literary device anthropomorphism, that is, giving animals, plants, inanimate objects, or forces of nature human attributes while expressing a simple moral or lesson. Examples abound in fables of talking animals that are fantastic, wise, or foolish creatures mimicking human faults and foibles. A fable’s moral lesson sometimes must be inferred, but at other times it is expressed at the end of the story with a pithy saying or maxim. Often a fable will have a “twist” or a surprise ending as well.

Fables, fairy tales, and parables all have in common the fact that they were handed down as an oral form of storytelling, sometimes recorded in writing much

later than their time of actual creation. In such cases, we might find traces of the historical record of traditions, beliefs, and rites from past eras. While fairy tales have fantastical elements, fables generally do not. Unlike fables, parables do not employ anthropomorphism, but rather characterize humans as they are.

A fable, while usually written as a child's story, conveys a simple lesson that can be appreciated by readers of all ages. Fables, both enjoyable and fun to read, can be an important part of a child's moral education especially when shared between parents and children.

Fables can be described as a didactic mode of literature. That is, whether a fable is handed down from generation to generation as Oral Literature or constructed by a literary tale teller, its purpose is to teach a Lesson or Value, or to give sage advice .

Thurber wrote over seventy five fables, most of which were collected in *Fables for Our Time & Famous Poems Illustrated* (1940) and *Further Fables for Our Time* (1956). These usually conformed to the fable type to the extent that they were short, featured anthropomorphic animals as main characters, and ended with a moral as a tagline. An exception to this format was his most famous fable, "The Unicorn in the Garden," which featured an all-human cast except for the unicorn, which didn't speak. Thurber's fables were satirical in nature, and the morals served as punchlines rather than advice to the reader. His stories also included several book length fairy tales, such as *The White Deer* (1945), *The 13 Clocks* (1950) and The *Wonderful O* (1957).

Fables for Our Time and Famous Poems Illustrated

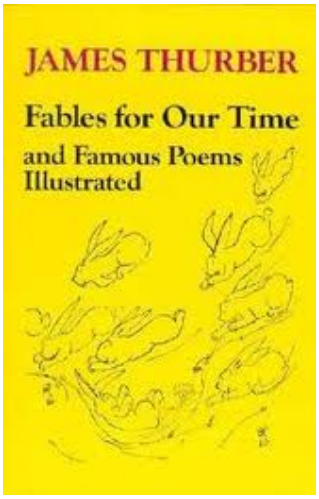


Illustration 6 "Fables for Our Time and Famous Poems illustrated" by James Thurber; 1940

Fables for Our Time and Famous Poems Illustrated is a 1940 book by James Thurber. Thurber updates some old fables and creates some new ones of his own too. Notably there is *The Bear Who Could Take it or Leave It Alone* about a bear who lapses in into alcoholism before sobering up and going too far that way. Also, Little Red Riding Hood took out an automatic and shot the wolf between the eyes. All of the fables have one line morals. The moral of "Little Red Riding Hood" is "Young girls are not so easy to fool these days." Another fable concerns a non-materialist chipmunk who likes to arrange nuts in pretty patterns rather than just piling up as many as he can. He is constantly nagged by his chipmunk wife for this. All fables have been already issued before by *The New Yorker.*

Fable	issue date of New Yorker
The Mouse Who Went to the Country	Jan 21, 1939
The Little Girl and the Wolf	Jan 21, 1939
The Two Turkeys	Jan 21, 1939
The Tiger Who Understood People	Jan 21, 1939
The Fairly Intelligent Fly	Feb 04, 1939
The Lion Who Wanted to Zoom	Feb 04, 1939
The Very Proper Gander	Feb 04, 1939
The Moth and the Star	Feb 18, 1939
The Shrike and the Chipmunks	Feb 18, 1939
The Seal Who Became Famous	Feb 17, 1940
The Hunter and the Elephant	Feb 18, 1939
The Scotty Who Knew Too Much	Feb 18, 1939
The Bear Who Let lt Alone	Apr 29, 1939
The Owl Who Was God	Apr 29, 1939
The Sheep in Wolf's Clothing	Apr 29, 1939
The Stork Who Married a Dumb Wife	Jul 29, 1939
The Green Isle in the Sea	Feb 17, 1940
The Crow and the Oriole	Jul 29, 1939
The Elephant Who Challenged the World	Jul 29, 1939

The Birds and the Foxes	Oct 21, 1939
The Courtship of Arthur and Al	Aug 26, 1939
The Hen Who Wouldn’t Fly	Aug 26, 1939
The Glass in the Field	Aug 26, 1939
The Tortoise and the Hare	Oct 21, 1939
The Patient Bloodhound	Feb 17, 1940
The Unicorn in the Garden	Oct 21, 1939
The Rabbits Who Caused All the Trouble	Aug 26, 1939
The Hen and the Heavens	Feb 04, 1939

The Unicorn in the Garden

Illustration 7 "The Unicorn in the Garden" by James Thurber; 1939

Once upon a sunny morning a man who sat in a breakfast nook looked up from his scrambled eggs to see a white unicorn with a golden horn quietly cropping the roses in the garden. The man went up to the bedroom where his wife was still asleep and woke her. "There's a unicorn in the garden," he said. "Eating roses." She opened one unfriendly eye and looked at him.

"The unicorn is a mythical beast," she said, and turned her back on him. The man walked slowly downstairs and out into the garden. The unicorn was still there; now he was browsing among the tulips. "Here, unicorn," said the man, and he pulled up a lily and gave it to him. The unicorn ate it gravely. With a high heart,

because there was a unicorn in his garden, the man went upstairs and roused his wife again. “The unicorn,” he said, “ate a lily.” His wife sat up in bed and looked at him coldly. “You are a booby,” she said, “and I am going to have you put in the booby-hatch.”

The man, who had never liked the words “booby” and “booby-hatch,” and who liked them even less on a shining morning when there was a unicorn in the garden, thought for a moment. “We’ll see about that,” he said. He walked over to the door. “He has a golden horn in the middle of his forehead,” he told her. Then he went back to the garden to watch the unicorn; but the unicorn had gone away. The man sat down among the roses and went to sleep.

As soon as the husband had gone out of the house, the wife got up and dressed as fast as she could. She was very excited and there was a gloat in her eye. She telephoned the police and she telephoned a psychiatrist; she told them to hurry to her house and bring a strait-jacket. When the police and the psychiatrist arrived they sat down in chairs and looked at her, with great interest.

“My husband,” she said, “saw a unicorn this morning.” The police looked at the psychiatrist and the psychiatrist looked at the police. “He told me it ate a Lilly,” she said. The psychiatrist looked at the police and the police looked at the psychiatrist. “He told me it had a golden horn in the middle of its forehead,” she said. At a solemn signal from the psychiatrist, the police leaped from their chairs and seized the wife. They had a hard time subduing her, for she put up a terrific

struggle, but they finally subdued her. Just as they got her into the strait-jacket, the husband came back into the house.

“Did you tell your wife you saw a unicorn?” asked the police. “Of course not,” said the husband. “The unicorn is a mythical beast.” “That’s all I wanted to know,” said the psychiatrist. “Take her away. I’m sorry, sir, but your wife is as crazy as a jaybird.”

So they took her away, cursing and screaming, and shut her up in an institution. The husband lived happily ever after.

Moral: Don’t count your boobies until they are hatched.

MORAL LESSON

The fable “The Unicorn in the Garden” written in 1939 by James Thurber (1894 – 1961) is about a woman who thinks her husband is crazy, but later on she is the one who is thought to be mad. The man wakes his wife up because he saw a unicorn in their garden. After telling him that he is a "booby," the woman calls the police and the psychiatrist. When the police arrive, they ask the man whether the story about the unicorn is true. He answers that the unicorn is a mythical beast. So the police and psychiatrist think that his wife is the one who is crazy and take her away.

What is different about this fable is that it is not about animals as fables usually are. A fable is a traditional short story that teaches a moral lesson. The main characters in this fable are a man and a woman. Even though it is made obvious

who is crazy, I think it is the man because mad people are often intelligent and not responsible for their actions. At the beginning, the man behaves weirdly, but in the end, he denies the story his wife told the police. The moral of the fable is: “Don’t count your boobies until they are hatched.” This means that the things you do which are bad for someone else, in the end often turn out to be bad for yourself. I think there could be a better moral for this story, for example, “You’ve got to watch that you don’t fall into your own trap.” This moral expresses more clearly what the author actually wants to say. The moral is about the truth. Do not count your bobies until they are hatched. It means, stay where you are, you are sitting pretty, and there is not safety in numbers or anything else. These morals are aimed to teach the reader to live carefully. The second topic is to teach the reader to do or use proper things such as using the wings God gave you, or nothing can save you.

THE LITTLE GIRL AND THE WOLF

By James Thurber

Illustration 8 "The Little Girl and the Wolf" by James Thurber; 1939

One afternoon a big wolf waited in a dark forest for a little girl to come along carrying a basket of food to her grandmother. Finally, a little girl did come along and she was carrying a basket of food. "Are you carrying that basket to your grandmother?" asked the wolf. The little girl said yes, she was. So the wolf asked her where her grandmother lived and the little girl told him and he disappeared into the wood.

When the little girl opened the door of her grandmother's house she saw that there was somebody in bed with a nightcap and nightgown on. She had approached no nearer than twenty five feet from the bed when she saw that it was not her grandmother but the wolf, for even in a nightcap a wolf does not look any more like your grandmother than the Metro Goldwyn lion looks like Calvin

Coolidge. So the little girl took an automatic out of her basket and shot the wolf dead.

(Moral: It is not so easy to fool little girls nowadays as it used to be.)

MORAL LESSON

The short story “The Little Girl and the Wolf” by James Thurber is an altered and shortened version of the original story “Little Red Riding Hood.” On her way to her grandmother’s house a little girl, carrying some food, comes past a wolf who has been waiting for someone young to cross his way. The wolf asks the way to her grandmother’s house, and the girl tells him. When she enters the house, she is surprised by the wolf lying in the grandmother’s bed, wearing her nightgown. Finally, she takes a pistol and shoots the wolf dead. The moral of the story is: “It is not so easy to fool little girls nowadays as it used to be.”

This piece of work is a fable, since one of the characters is an animal that is able to speak and think as humans do. Another hint to this is the significantly short text and the moral at the very end which expresses the message. The text seems quite neutral and meaningless at first glance, but reading between the lines brings up the presented problem.
The first aspect to look at is the two characters. They represent for certain groups in society. The wolf is someone cunning. He totally exploits the naivety of the little girl by asking where the grandmother’s house is. His questions are very direct. He can only get away with this because he knows the girl will not notice his

intention. One can easily tell that the wolf represents someone in society, a party or a single person, who knows about the weakness of others and tries to fool them with deceitful actions.

The little girl, on the other hand, firstly seems to be the naive one because she talks to the wolf who is a stranger to her and even tells him what she is doing with her basket and where she is going. This proves the young age of the girl since older people wouldn't behave like her.

In the second paragraph, though, she immediately notices that something is wrong with the person in her grandma's bed. The fact that she carries a gun in her basket is consistent with my original assumption that the she is very young. Maybe Thurber let an automatic appear in this story to put emphasis on the fact that the girl is able to defend herself. She seems to have changed from a little girl to a confident person. I think she represents people in society who don't let others fool and cheat them. At the beginning of the story, she might not have noticed the wolf's aim, and so the wolf was sure his plan would work. But the girl is clever enough to recognise him in the end and take revenge or rather just defend herself. This can also be transferred to humans in general. There are some people who fall into the trap of others, and there are some who do not because they know how to combat it. According to James Thurber, there are more "little girls" today who know the tricks of deceitful people and are able to protect themselves from them. He basically says that society has become more suspicious and that it's not that easy any more to fool somebody. Even though

the fable is very short, one can actually interpret quite a lot. Thurber is a good writer, and he gets through to the reader. His easy language makes it appealing to read, and it is interesting to think about the different possible meanings of his words.

THE RABBITS WHO CAUSED ALL THE TROUBLE

Within the memory of the youngest child there was a family of rabbits who lived near a pack of wolves. The wolves announced that they did not like the way the rabbits were living. (The wolves were crazy about the way they themselves were living, because it was the only way to live.) One night several wolves were killed in an earthquake and this was blamed on the rabbits, for it is well known that rabbits's pound on the ground with their hind legs and cause earthquakes. On another night one of the wolves was killed by a bolt of lightning and this was also blamed on the rabbits, for it is well known that lettuce-eaters cause lightning. The wolves threatened to civilize the rabbits if they didn't behave, and the rabbits decided to run away to a desert island. But, the other animals who lived at a great distance, shamed them, saying, "You must stay where you are and be brave. This is no world for escapists. If the wolves attack you, we will come to your aid, in all probability." So the rabbits continued to live near the wolves and one day there was a terrible flood which drowned a great many wolves. This was blamed on the rabbits, for it is well known that carrot-nibblers with long ears cause floods. The wolves descended on the rabbits, for their own good, and imprisoned them in a dark cave, for their own protection.

When nothing was heard about the rabbits for some weeks, the other animals demanded to know what had happened to them. The wolves replied that the rabbits had been eaten and since they had been eaten the affair was a purely internal matter. But the other animals warned that they might possibly unite against the wolves unless some reason was given for the destruction of the rabbits. So the wolves gave them one. “They were trying to escape,” said the wolves, “and, as you know, this is no world for escapists.” (Moral: Run; don’t walk, to the nearest desert island).

MORAL LESSON

The fable “The rabbits that caused all the trouble” by James Thurber is about rabbits and wolves who live side by side. In the fable there are some problems. The wolves have prejudices against the rabbits, and so the rabbits are often blamed by the wolves if there is any disaster. The rabbits decide to escape to a desert island, but they do not do it because the other animals promise to help. The other animals do not help, though, and so the rabbits are locked in a dark cave by the wolves. The moral tells that you should run, not walk, to the nearest desert island. But what does this fable really express, and why was it written.

In “The rabbits that caused all the trouble,” the author perhaps lets the rabbits play the role of the Jews in Nazi Germany or of the Red Indians in 19th century America. Here the wolves are the majority, and the rabbits are the minority. The wolves are like the Nazis or even the “Whites,” and the rabbits are like the Jews or the Red Indians. Minorities are often attacked by majorities, and there will

always be an argument or a fight about something. It can become very complicated for minorities if they stay.

This story is a typical scapegoat story. The wolves look for scapegoats and find them in the characters of the rabbits. It is a very absurd story for us because we know that rabbits do not cause earthquakes, floods, or anything like that. Never! The author presents the characters of the animals in a rather unusual way. Wolves have fear and show respect for the rabbits.

All together the story is very exaggerated. It is a little bit ironic because of the characters, and there are repetitions. Those repetitions give relief to the story. Finally, the other animals are defeated with their own arms because of the sentence: “This is no world for escapists…”

And the moral means:

Do not let yourself be influenced by the other people. Form your own opinion. Stick to your first decision.

Fables are a good possibility to criticize a person in an indirect way. The person is not exposed and can think about that story. The other readers think about the story, too, and they can decide if they can identify with the main characters or not. Perhaps they will change something in their lives. Additionally, the author cannot get into trouble because of his special way of criticism.

MORAL LESSONS IN JAMES THURBER'S WRITINGS

Thurber is an excellent writer, and he used a lot of techniques to flavor his work. Besides, a fable's form contains parody, satire, irony, symbolism, moral lessons, metaphors, similes, and language use such as idioms, adverb and vocabulary. *The Fables for our Time* is the first collection of short stories of James Thurber. Although it gained the name "Fables," it is not a fable at all. The author used only the fable form.

The beginning of the stories begin with "once upon the time," " one afternoon," "not very long ago," "several summers ago," "a short time ago," etc. These phrases usually appear in fables. So when we read these short stories, we feel like they are some kind of fable. When we think it is a fable, we also feel relaxed because it is not a true story. Thurber used this opportunity to write and satire the real social situation in fable form. With this form he could present to us the real problem that the Americans faced in the 1930's. From these 28 short stories we have learned about American society at that time. He enjoyed satire on politics, society, and married life. Thurber used many animal characters such as the mouse, wolf, turkey, tiger, fly, lion, gander, moth, shrike, chipmunk, seal, elephant, bear, owl, sheep, crow, oriole, bird, fox, hen, tortoise, hare, bloodhound, unicorn, and rabbit. Through these animal characters, Thurber freely wrote about the society from his point of view. One more thing that Thurber adapted from the fable is the use of moral lessons. He ended his story with a moral. His moral is quite like the story's theme. It is also very useful to study these morals. They can reflect what the writer saw in American society very well.

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These morals imply the main theme of each story. Several times, after we read them, we smiled with Thurber's satire. *Fables for Our Time* is a collection of short stories because this work contains elements that you can find in short stories: one protagonist, one conflict, and one reading.

Thurber is also considered a satirist. This is no doubt why his work contains satire and irony which are very close in meaning. Satire means a way of criticizing a person, an idea, or an institution in which you use humor to show their faults or weaknesses. Irony means the use of words that say the opposite of what you really mean, often as a joke.

4.4 CRITICISM OF THURBER FABLES

Critical Reception

Commentators vary in their views on Thurber. Louis Hasley called him "beyond question the foremost humorist of the twentieth century." Many critics see a progression of dark pessimism during the final twenty years of Thurber's life, from the good-natured irony of the 1940 *Fables for Our Time* to the bitter political and social commentary of the 1956 *Further Fables for Our Times.* Overall, however, Thurber's wit and eccentric humour are celebrated and honoured and his writing continues to be read with appreciation. And yet, behind this humour, there is a seriousness of which T. S. Eliot, who cited Thurber as an eminent humorist, said: "Unlike so much of humour, it is not merely a criticism of manners that is, of the superficial aspects of society at a given moment but something more profound.

His writings and also his illustrations are capable of surviving the immediate environment and time out of which they spring. To some extent, they will be a document of the age they belong to.”

Awards and Honours

1944 – Ohioana Book Award second place, Martha Kinney Cooper Ohioana Library Association, for "*The Great Quillow."*

1944 – Caldecott Honour Book, for "*Many Moons."*

1946 – Ohioana Book Award, Martha Kinney Cooper Ohioana Library Association, for "*The White Deer"*

1949 – Laughing Lions of Columbia University Award

1953 – Sesquicentennial Career Medal, Martha Kinney Cooper Ohioana Library Association

1956 – T Square Award, American Cartoonists Society

1957 – Library and Justice Award, American Library Association, for "*Further Fables for Our Time."*

UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

4.5 BRIEF LOCAL SURVEY ON JAMES GROVER THURBER

UNIVERSITY OF CUENCA

We are students at the English Language and Literature School at the University of Cuenca. We are conducting research on the American writer JAMES GROVER THURBER and we would like you to help us carry out this investigation by answering the following questions:

1. - Have you ever heard of this American writer?

Yes____ No____

2. - If yes. How and/or When?

_____

_____

3. - What do you know about him?

_____

4. - Have you ever read anything by him?

Yes____ No_____

5. - If yes. What?

_____

6. - Do you think he was a good writer?

Yes ____ No____

7. - If yes. Why?

_____

THANK YOU

AUTORAS:
Verónica Andrea Loayza Mejía
Jeaneth Catalina Solórzano Ramos

ANALYSIS OF THE INFORMATION

1. - Have you ever heard of this American writer?

Yes: 4 No: 6

2. - If yes. How and/or When?

- When I was in high school.
- My grandmother likes his books.
- Many years ago in the Philosophy School at the University of Cuenca.
- I don't remember.

3. - What do you know about him?

- I do not know anything.
- No applicable.
- Not much really.
- He is a good writer.

4. - Have you ever read anything by him?

Yes: 1 No: 9

5. - If yes. What?

- The Little Girl and the Wolf.

6. - Do you think he was a good writer?

Yes: 2

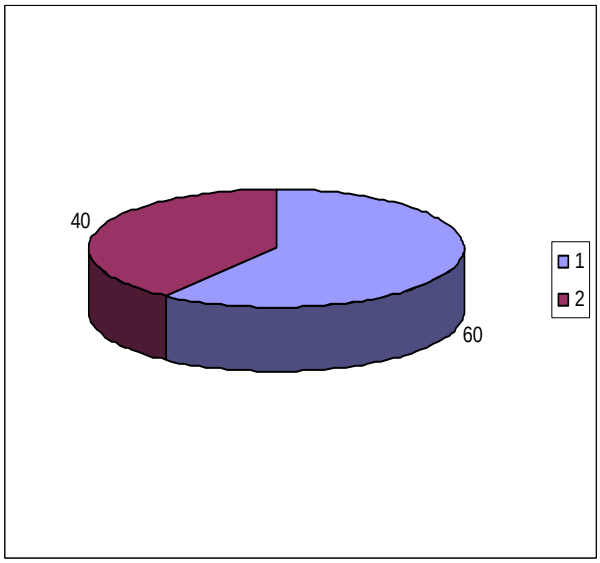
7. - If yes. Why?

- I have read good comments about him.
- The way he guided the reader was great.

ANALYSIS OF THE TABULATION

AMERICANS:

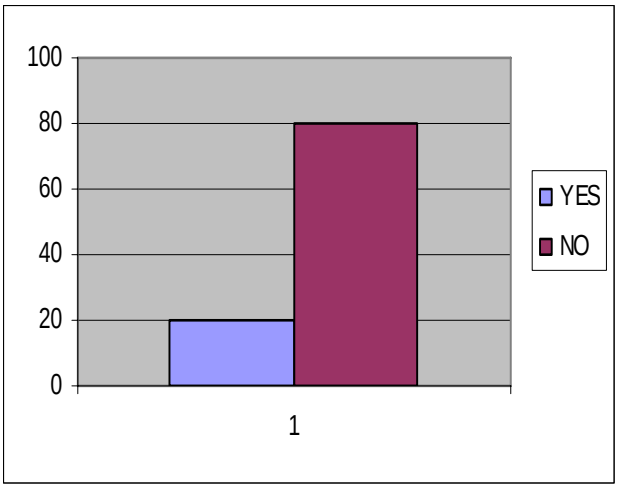
40% of the interviewed people have heard about this American writer and 60% have not.



Graphic 1 40% have heard about James Thurber and 60% have not

ECUADORIANS:

20% of Ecuadorians have heard about James Grover Thurber and 80% have not heard about him.



Graphic 2 20% of Ecuadorians have heard about James Thurber and 80% have not

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The following conclusions can be reached:

1. He is not a well known writer outside of the U.S.A.

2. Very few people have read anything about and/or by him.

3. The ones who know about him agreed that he was a very good writer.

4. Very few Ecuadorians have heard of him, but most Americans knew something about him.

5. Maybe he was famous during his lifetime, but nowadays he is not well known.

CONCLUSIONS

James Grover Thurber's greatest achievement was to have been recognized as a great comedian, writer, and illustrator. He was a famous writer and artist and one of the most popular comedians of his time, demonstrating in the stories and cartoons comic frustrations of eccentric and ordinary people. The elaboration of this work has been of great importance for us because it is valid and reliable information on the author's biography. He was able to demonstrate his charisma in the time he lived. In his life, he went from being a student struggling with blindness to becoming one of America's all the time favorite authors. He possessed great ability, skill and talent in both writing and drawing, and deserves recognition for always giving his best in his works.

The great result of work performed, reflected by his ability, skill, and talent, permitted the improvement in the various activities carried out, thus being deserving of recognition in the various places where he worked, always offering high superiority in his humorous works and how to become a great comedian. His characters became leading icons of the time he lived in.

His comic stories and drawings won him a permanent place in American poetry. This work has helped us to understand better this outstanding writer, and maybe it could help us to follow his example of a fighter, who, despite the disabilities that he had in life, succeeded as a professional writer. He became a successful human

being, fundamentally optimistic to succeed and achieved a deserved place in American history through his literary contributions. The analyses of the development of his progress and level of intelligence made us realize that he was a successful man, who faced many proofs. Throughout his life he faced many personal challenging situations but never fell. He always gave his best.

James Thurber is a survivor. In his prose and his cartoons. He withstands the venomous tongue and emasculating stare of the Thurber Woman. Thurber and other writers of the late 1920s were part of the shift toward the vernacular in American humor. The style of writing may be casual, but it's not easy. Even the punctuation is perfect. It is impossible to read Thurber without falling into the inflections and pauses that he intended. Thurber's attitudes toward women are prominent in any serious study of him as a writer.

By the time of his death, Thurber's work was featured in numerous collections and in more than 20 languages. He was awarded countless awards, as well as honorary degrees from several institutions, including Kenyon College (1950), Williams College (1951), and Yale University (1953). Thurber was also given a *Certificate of Award* from the Ohio State University Class of 1916 for "Meritorious Service to Humanity and Our Alma Mater" (1961). The Thurber House is a literary center located in Columbus, dedicated to celebrating Thurber's life and work, and supporting other writers and artists in the same tradition. The *Thurber Prize for American Humor* is awarded each year. It is the most prestigious award given to writers of the genre. Thurber set the standard for sophisticated humor and prose style for a generation of American readers and writers. His stories, essays, and

drawings combine the mundane and the absurd to create characters and situations at once strange and familiar that continue to fascinate and amuse his audience.

As a final remark about this great American writer, as far as we can state James Grover Thurber is practically unknown in Ecuador. However, we know he was a well known character in the United States of America as a writer, and as an essayist, and as a cartoonist.

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