

Watching and Waiting

Old –

ASSESSMENT: “Watching and Waiting” Short Story Analysis Presentation



- Read the short story, “Watching and Waiting” by Morley Callaghan, and prepare to analyze its content thoroughly in a brief presentation.
- Choose ONE aspect of the story to focus on and analyze that particular element in detail. Please select from the following list of short story elements/literary techniques for this assessment:

Setting (if it is significant) **Character** **Theme** Irony TONE

Narrative Perspective (including voice and tone) *Literary Devices* (except irony)

Steps for Completion:

- **Read** the short story **carefully** (highlight important aspects of the short story as you read)
- After you have completed your initial reading of the short story, choose ONE aspect of the short story that you wish to analyze **independently** (this will be the basis of your

individual assessment presentation).

- In the time provided, please make **in-depth notes** that thoroughly examine your chosen literary element as it is developed in “Watching and Waiting”. Direct quotations and specific references from the short story **must be** included in your analysis in order to support your ideas and observations.
- Students must then consider what information they think is the **most significant** from their analysis, and present their literary examination to the class. Please be prepared for teacher feedback!
- **Presentations must be 2-3 minutes in length.**

https://prezi.com/8_sjszg8ria/copy-of-watching-and-waiting/

Watching and Waiting

by Morley Callaghan

Whenever Thomas Hilliard, the lawyer, watched his young wife dancing with men of her own age, he was very sad, for she seemed to glow with a laughter and elation that didn't touch her life with him at all. He was jealous, he knew; but his jealousy at that time made him feel humble. It gave him the fumbling tenderness of a young boy. But as time passed and he saw that his humility only added to her feeling of security, he grew sullen and furtive and began to spy on her.

At times he realized that he was making her life wretched, and in his great shame he struggled hard against the distrust of her that was breaking the peace of his soul. In his longing to be alone with her, so that he would be free to offer her whatever goodness there was in him, he insisted that they move out to the country and renovate the old farmhouse on the lake where he had been born. There they lived like two scared prisoners in the house that was screened from the lane by three old oak trees. He went into the city only three days a week and his business was soon ruined by such neglect.

One evening Thomas Hilliard was putting his bag in the car, getting ready to return to the city. He was in a hurry, for the sky was darkening; the wind had broken the surface of the lake into choppy little waves with whitecaps, and soon it would rain. A gust of wind slammed an open window. Above the noise of the water on the beach, he heard his wife's voice calling, rising eagerly as it went farther away from the house.

She was calling, 'Just a minute, Joe,' and she was running down to the gate by the lane, with the wind blowing her short fair hair back from her head as she ran.

At the gate a young man was getting out of a car, waving his hand to her like an old friend, and calling: 'Did you want to speak to me, Mrs Hilliard?'

'I wanted to ask you to do something for me,' she said.

The young man, laughing, lifted a large green bass from a pail in the back of his car, and he said: 'I caught it not more than half an hour ago. Will you take it, Mrs Hilliard?'

'Isn't it a beauty!' she said, holding it out at arm's length on the stick he had thrust through the jaws. 'You shouldn't be giving such a beauty away.' And she laughed, a free careless laugh that was carried up to the house on the wind.

For a while there was nothing Thomas Hilliard could hear but the murmur of his wife's voice mixed with the murmur of the young man's voice; but the way the laughter had poured out of her, and the look of pleasure on the young man's face, made him tense with resentment. He began to feel sure he had been actually thinking of that one man for months without ever naming him, that he had even been wondering about him while he was packing his bag and thinking of the drive into the city. Why was the young man so friendly that first time he had stopped them, on the main street of the town, when they were doing their weekend shopping, to explain that his name was Joe Whaley and he was their neighbour? That was something he had been wondering about for a long time. And every afternoon when Joe Whaley was off shore in his motorboat, he used to stand up and wave to them, the length of his lean young body outlined against the sky. It was as though all these things had been laid aside in Thomas Hilliard's head, to be given a sudden meaning now in the eager laughter of his wife, in her voice calling, and the pleasure on the young man's face.

He became so excited that he started to run down to the gate; and as he ran, his face was full of yearning and despair. They watched him coming, looking at each other doubtfully. When his wife saw how old and broken he looked, she suddenly dropped the fish in the dust of the road.

Day 1

'Hey, there! Wait a minute,' he was calling to the young man, who had turned away awkwardly.

'Did you want to speak to me, Mr Hilliard?' Joe Whaley said.

'Is there something you want?' Hilliard asked.

'I just stopped a moment to give you people the fish.'

'I'd like to know, that's all,' Hilliard said, and he smiled foolishly.

The young man, who was astonished, mumbled some kind of an apology and got into his car. He drove up the lane with the engine racing, and the strong wind from the lake whirling the dust in a cloud across the fields.

Speaking quietly, as if nothing had happened to surprise her, Mrs Hilliard began, 'Did you think there was something the matter, Tom?' But then her voice broke, and she cried out: 'Why did you come running down here like that?'

'I heard the way you laughed,' he said.

'What was the matter with the way I laughed?'

'Don't you see how it would strike me? I haven't heard you laugh like that for such a long time.'

'I was only asking him if he'd be passing by the station tonight. I was going to ask him if he'd bring my mother here, if she was on the right train.'

'I don't believe that. You're making up a story,' he shouted.

It was the first time he had openly accused her of deceit; and when she tried to smile at him, her eyes were full of terror. It was as though she knew she was helpless at last, and she said slowly: 'I don't know why you keep staring at me. You're frightening me. I can't bear the way you watch me. It's been going on for such a long time. I've got to speak to someone—can't you see? It's dreadfully lonely here.'

She was staring out over the choppy wind-swept water: she turned and looked up with a child's wonder at the great oak trees that shut the house off from the road. 'I can't stand it any longer,' she said, her voice soft and broken. 'I've been a good wife. I had such an admiration for you when we started. There was nothing I wouldn't have trusted you with. And now—I don't know what's happened to us.' This was the first time she had ever tried to tell him of her hidden desolation; but all he could see was that her smile as she pleaded with him was pathetically false.

'You're lying. You're scared of what might happen,' he shouted.

'I've known how you've been watching me, and I've kept asking myself what the both of us have been waiting for,' she said. As the wind, driving through the leaves of the trees, rattled a window on the side of the house, and the last of the light faded from the lake, she cried out: 'What are we waiting for, day after day?'

'I'm not waiting any more,' he shouted. 'I'm going. You don't need to worry about me watching you any more. I'll not come back this time.' He felt crazy as he started to run over to the car.

Running after him, she cried out: 'I've kept hoping something would happen to make it different, something that would save us. I've prayed for it at night, just wanting you to be like you were three years ago.'

But he had started the car, and it came at her so suddenly that she had to jump out of the way. When the car lurched up the lane, he heard her cry out, but the words were blown away on the wind. He looked back, and saw her standing stiff by the gate, with both hands up to her head.

He drove up to the highway, swinging the car around so wildly at the turn by the grocery-store that the proprietor shouted at him. He began to like the way the car dipped at high speed down the deep valleys, and rose and fell with him always rigid and unthinking. When he reached the top of the highest hill in the country, the first of the rain whipped across his face, slashing and cutting at him in the way they slap the face of a fighter who has been beaten and is coming out of a stupor. His arms were trembling so he stopped the car; and there he sat for a long time, looking out over the hills in the night rain, at the low country whose roll and rise could be followed by the line of lights curving around

the lake through the desolation of the wooded valleys and the rain-swept fields of this country of his boyhood, a gleaming line of light leading back to the farm and his wife.

There was a flash of lightning, and the fields and pasture-land gleamed for a moment in the dark. Then he seemed to hear her voice crying out above the wind: 'I've been waiting for so long!' And he muttered: 'How lost and frightened she'll be alone there on a night like this.' He knew then that he could go no farther. With his heart, full of yearning for the tenderness he knew she had offered to him, he kept repeating: 'I can't leave her. I can't ever leave her. I'll go back and ask her to forgive me.'

So he sighed and was ashamed; and he drove back slowly along the way he had come, making up in his head fine little speeches that would make his wife laugh and forgive him.

But when he had turned off the highway and was going down the lane that led to the house, he suddenly thought it could do no harm if he stopped the car before it was heard, and went up to the house quietly to make sure no one else was there.

Such a notion made him feel terribly ashamed. As the car rocked in the ruts and puddles of the dirt road, and the headlights gleamed on the wet leaves from over-hanging branches, he was filled with a profound sadness, as if he knew instinctively that no matter how he struggled, he would not be able to stop himself from sneaking up to the house like a spy. Stopping the car, he sat staring at the shuttered windows through which the light hardly filtered, mumbling: 'I've got a heart like a snake's nest. I've come back to ask her to forgive me.' Yet as he watched the strips of light on the shutters, he found himself thinking it could do no harm to make sure she was alone, that this would be the last time he would ever spy on her.

As he got out of the car, he stood a while in the road, getting soaking wet, assuring himself he had no will to be evil. And then as he started to drag his feet through the puddles, he knew he was helpless against his hunger to justify his lack of faith in her.

Swinging open the gate and crossing the grass underneath the oak tree, he stopped softly on the veranda and turned the door-knob slowly. When he found that the door was locked, his heart began to beat unevenly, and he went to pound the door with his fist. Then he grew very cunning. Jumping down to the grass, he went cautiously around to the side of the house, pressed his head against the shutters and listened. The rain streamed down his face and ran into his open mouth.

He heard the sound of his wife's voice, and though he could not make out the words, he knew she was talking earnestly to someone. Her voice seemed to be breaking; she seemed to be sobbing, pleading that she be comforted. His heart began to beat so loud he was sure they would be able to hear it. He grabbed at the shutter and tried to pry it open with his hand, but his fingers grew numb, and the back of his hand began to bleed. Stepping back from the house, he looked around wildly for some heavy stick or piece of iron. He remembered where there was an old horseshoe imbedded in the mud by the gate, and running there, he got down on his knees and scraped with his fingers, and he grinned in delight when he tugged the old horseshoe out of the mud.

But when he had inserted the iron prongs of the shoe between the shutters, and had started to use his weight, he realized that his wife was no longer talking. She was coming over to the window. He heard her gasp and utter a little cry. He heard her running from the room.

Full of despair, as though he were being cheated of the discovery he had been patiently seeking for years, he stepped back from the house, trembling with eagerness. The light in the room where he had loosened the shutter was suddenly turned out. He turned and ran back up the lane to the car, and got his flashlight.

This time he went round to the other side of the house, listening for the smallest sounds which might tell him where they were hiding, but it was hard to hear anything above the noise of the wind in the trees and the roll of the waves on the shore. At the kitchen window at the back of the house he pulled at the shutter. He heard them running out of the room.

Day 1

The longing to look upon the face of the one who was with his wife became so great that he could hardly think of his wife at all. 'They probably went upstairs to the bedroom. That's where they'll be. I think I heard them going up the stairs.' He went over to the garage and brought out the ladder they had used to paint the house, and put it up against the bedroom window and started to climb on the slippery rungs with the flashlight clutched in his hand, eager for the joy that would be his if he could see without being seen.

The voices he heard as he lay against the ladder were broken with fright; he began to feel all the terror that grew in them as they ran from room to room and whispered and listened and hid in the darkness and longed to cry out.

But they must have heard some noise he made at the window, for before he was ready to use the flashlight, they ran from the room; they hurried downstairs in a way that showed they no longer cared what noise they made, they fled as though they intended to keep on going out of the front door and up the lane.

If he had taken the time to climb down the ladder, they might have succeeded; but instead of doing that, he wrapped his arms and legs around the wet rails and slid to the ground; he got over to the oak tree, and was hidden, his flashlight pointed at the door, before they came out.

As they came running from the house, he kept hidden and flashed the light on them, catching his wife in the strong beam of light, and making her stop dead and scream. She was carrying the rifle he used for hunting in the fall.

With a crazy joy he stepped out and swung the light on the other one; it was his wife's mother, stooped in horror. They were both held in the glare of the light, blinking and cringing in terror, while he tried to remember that the mother was to come to the house. And then his wife shrieked and pointed the gun into the darkness at the end of the beam of light, and fired; and he called out helplessly: 'Marion—'

But it was hurting him on his breast. The light dropped from his hand as he sank to the ground and began to cough.

Then his wife snatched up the light and let it shine on his face: 'Oh, Tom, Tom! Look what I've done,' she moaned.

The mother was still on her knees, stiff with fright.

His hand held against his breast was wet with warm blood; and as his head sank back on the grass he called out jerkily to the mother: 'Go on—hurry! Get someone—for Marion. I'm dying. I want to tell them how it happened.'

The mother, shrieking, hobbled over to the lane, and her cries for help were carried away on the wind.

With his weeping wife huddled over him, he lay dying in the rain. But when he groped with his hand and touched her head, his soul was suddenly overwhelmed by an agony of remorse for his lack of faith in her: in these few moments he longed to be able to show her all the comforting tenderness she had missed in the last three years. 'Forgive me,' he whispered. 'It was my fault—if only you could forgive me.' He wanted to soothe the fright out of her before the others came running up from the lane.

Morley Callaghan (1903–1990) was an award-winning Canadian short story writer, novelist, playwright, and journalist.