



**Unit
15**

‘A DAYS’ WAIT’ BY HEMINGWAY

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

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15.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Know about the life of Ernest Hemingway.
- Summarize the story after understanding various aspect of the short story “A Day’s Wait”.

15.1 MEET THE AUTHOR

Ernest Hemingway, an American writer was born on 21st July, 1899 in Cicero, which is known as Oak Park now. During World- War-I, he worked as a journalist and where he was injured and he was awarded the ‘Silver Medal’ of Military Valour. In his journey of life he wrote and published seven novels, six collections of short stories; and two works of non- fiction. Ernest Hemingway received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1954. His last major work was in fiction, ‘The Old Man the Sea’ which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1953. Majority of Hemingway’s works were produced between the mid-1920s and the mid-1950s. His three non- fiction autobiographical works were published posthumously. His unique writing style is characterized by economy and understatement and has a significant influence on the development of 20th century fiction writing.

Following are some of the noteworthy works written by him:

Novels/Novella

The Torrents of Spring (1925)

The Sun Also Rises (1926)

A Farewell to Arms (1929)

To Have and Have Not (1937)

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For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940)

Across the River and Into the Trees (1950)

The Old Man and the Sea (1952)

Adventures of a Young Man (1962)

Islands in the Stream (1970)

The Garden of Eden (1986)

Nonfiction

Death in the Afternoon (1932)

Green Hills of Africa (1935)

The Dangerous Summer (1960)

A Moveable Feast (1964)

Short Story Collections

Three Stories and Ten Poems (1923)

In Our Time (1925)

Men Without Women (1927)

The Snows of Kilimanjaro (1932)

Winner Take Nothing (1933)

The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories (1938)

The Essential Hemingway (1947)

The Hemingway Reader (1953)

The Nick Adams Stories (1972)

15.2 'A DAY'S WAIT'- A SHORT STORY

15.2.1 Text- 'A Day's Wait'

He came into the room to shut the windows while we were still in bed and I saw he looked ill. He was shivering, his face was white, and he walked slowly as though it ached to move. 'What's the matter, Schatz?' 'I've got a headache.' 'You better go back to bed.' 'No, I'm all right.' 'You go to bed. I'll see you when I'm dressed.' But when I came downstairs he was dressed, sitting by the fire, looking a very sick and miserable boy of nine years. When I put my hand on his forehead I knew he had a fever. 'You go up to the bed,' I said, 'you're sick.' 'I'm all right,' he said. I took the downstairs, the doctor left three different medicines in different colored capsules with instructions for giving them. One was to bring down the fever, another a purgative, the third to overcome an acid condition. The germs of influenza can only exist in an acid condition, he explained. He seemed to know all about influenza and said there was nothing to worry about if the fever did not go above one hundred and four degrees. This was a light epidemic of flu and there was no danger if you avoided pneumonia. Back in the room I wrote the boy's temperature down and made a note of the time to give the various capsules. 'Do you want me to read to you?' 'All right. If you want to,' said the boy. His face was very white and there were dark areas under his eyes. He lay still in bed

and seemed very detached from what was going on. I read aloud from Howard Pyle book of Pirates, but I could see he was not following what I was reading.

‘How do you feel, Schatz?’ I asked him. ‘Just the same, so far,’ he said. I sat at the foot of the bed and read to myself while I waited for it to be time to give another capsule. It would have been natural for him to go to sleep, but when I looked up he was looking at the foot of the bed, looking very strangely. ‘Why don’t you try to go to sleep? I’ll wake you up for the medicine.’ ‘I’d rather stay awake.’ After a while he said to me, ‘You don’t have to stay here with me, Papa, if it bothers you.’ ‘It doesn’t bother me.’ ‘No, I mean you don’t have to stay if it’s going to bother you.’ I thought perhaps he was a little light-headed and after giving him the prescribed capsule at eleven o’clock I went out for a while. It was a bright, cold day, the ground covered with a sleet that had frozen so that it seemed as if all the bare trees, the bushes, the cut brush, and all the grass and the bare ground had been varnished with ice.

I took the young Irish setter for a little walk up the road and along a frozen creek, but it was difficult to stand or walk on the glassy surface and the red dog slipped and slithered and fell twice, hard, once dropping my gun and having it slide over the ice. We flushed a covey of quail under a high clay bank with overhanging brush and killed two as they went out of sight over the top of the bank. Some of the coveys lit the trees, but most of them scattered into brush piles and it was necessary to jump on the ice-coated mounds of brush several times before they would flush. Coming out while you were poised unsteadily on the icy, springy brush they made difficult shooting and killed two, missed five, and started back pleased to have found a covey close to the house and happy there were so many lefts to find on another day. At the house, they said the boy had refused to let anyone come into the room. ‘You can’t come in,’ he said. ‘You mustn’t get what I have.’ I went up to him and found him in exactly the position I had left him, white-faced, but with the tops of his cheeks flushed by the fever, staring still, as he had stared, at the foot of the bed. I took his temperature. ‘What is it?’

‘Something like a hundred,’ I said. It was one hundred and two and four tenths. ‘It was a hundred and two,’ he said. ‘Who said so?’ ‘The doctor.’ ‘Your temperature is all right,’ I said. It’s nothing to worry about.’ ‘I don’t worry,’ he said, ‘but I can’t keep from thinking.’ ‘Don’t think,’ I said. ‘Just take it easy.’ ‘I’m taking it easy,’ he said and looked straight ahead. He was evidently holding tight onto himself about something. ‘Take this with water.’ ‘Do you think it will do any good?’ ‘Of course, it will.’ I sat down and opened the Pirate book and commenced to read, but I could see he was not following, so I stopped.

‘About what time do you think I’m going to die?’ he asked. ‘What?’ ‘About how long will it be before I die?’ ‘You aren’t going to die. What’s the matter with you?’ Oh, yes, I am. I heard him say a hundred and two.’ ‘People don’t die with a fever of one hundred and two. That’s a silly way to talk.’ ‘I know they do.

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At school in France, the boys told me you can't live with forty-four degrees. I've got a hundred and two.' He had been waiting to die all day, ever since nine o'clock in the morning. 'You poor Schatz,' I said. 'Poor old Schatz. It's like miles and kilometers. You aren't going to die. That's a different thermometer. On that thermometer thirty-seven is normal. On this kind it's ninety-eight.' 'Are you sure?'

'Absolutely,' I said. 'It's like miles and kilometers. You know, like how many kilometers we make when we do seventy in the car?' 'Oh,' he said. But his gaze at the foot of his bed relaxed slowly.

The holdover himself relaxed too, finally, and the next day it was very slack and he cried very easily at little things that were of no importance.

15.2.2 Summary – '*A Day's Wait*'

This short story, '*A Day's Wait*' first appeared in the volume, '*The Snows of Kilimanjaro*'. In this short story Hemingway delineates the tragic outcome of miscommunication which takes place between Schatz, a nine-year-old boy, and his father.

The story opens as the father finds that his son whose name is Schatz has a fever. The father calls a doctor and it is diagnosed that his son has contracted the flu and has a high fever. The doctor says that as long as the fever doesn't go above one hundred and four degrees, Schatz will be fine and he leaves three various types of medication. Out of the three medicines one was to bring down the fever, another a purgative, the third to overcome on acid condition.

Schatz is lying on bed and his father reads a book, '*Howard Pyle Book of Pirates*' but the boy is not paying attention and is staring fixedly at the foot of the bed. His father suggests Schatz to try to get some sleep, but he refuses to do so. He suggests his father that there is no need to stay in his room and his father replies that he will leave this room after giving him medication at 11:00 O' clock. The father provides Schatz his medication and a glass of water, but the boy still seems unusually concerned.

Once again his father starts reading but Shatz is not paying attention. So he stops. Suddenly boy asks, "About What time do you think I'm going to die." The father is stunned and explains him again and again that all will be okay but once again Schatz asks him, "When I will die?". At last, Schatz explains: "at school in France the boys told me you can't live with forty- four degrees. I've got a hundred and two".

The father quickly explains to his son regarding the distinction between Celsius and Fahrenheit thermometers, comparing them to miles and kilometers. Schatz slowly relaxes and by the next day, "he cried very easily at little things that were of no importance".

15.2.3 Theme – '*A Day's Wait*'

Silence and Miscommunication:

Schatz, a sick nine-year-old boy confuses between Celsius and Fahrenheit and imagines that his temperatures are momentarily high and thinks that he will die

very soon. This misunderstanding is left uncorrected for an entire day as the boy fearfully waits to die. Schatz father spends few hours to enjoy himself in the winter sunshine with the family dog, a gun and a covey of quail. Thus, it is a tragedy of miscommunication; the boy would not have endured so many hours of solitary fear. Had he spoken up to his father or had his father done more to inquire into his son’s state of mind.

In this way, Hemingway illustrates how the failure to communicate can result in a knowledge gap, to be filled with painful confusion and misunderstanding.

Of course, the misunderstanding lies at the heart of the story and it is the boy’s fault; both doctor and father fail to explain clearly and openly to the child. If Schatz’s father would have communicated the doctor’s message to the boy that nothing to worry about if the fever does not go above one hundred and four degrees, it would certainly alleviate the boy’s fear. Finally when Schatz asks his father a silly question that ‘when I am going to die?’ In response to this question, his father makes clarification and removes the misunderstanding lying in the mind of the child.

At last, he makes the misunderstanding clear by explaining the difference between Celsius and Fahrenheit. If they had been more willing to discuss both the illness and their feelings from the beginning, there never would have been such a needless misunderstanding.

Masculinity and Heroism:

The book that the father reads to his son in ‘*A Day’s Wait*’ is a notable book about pirates- men who embody toughness, bravery, and absolute autonomy; who chase after danger and meet death proudly and refuse to point out weakness till the last.

The boy of this story is following the example of famous male heroes when he forces himself to be so stoic in the face to supposed death. Boy’s behavior in the entire story reflects the fatalistic heroism.

Ironically, the boy’s father is a typically emotionally reserved male character. The father tells his son that he should go back to bed three times and suggesting that nothing is serious. Nevertheless, the father still exhibits several stereotypically masculine behaviors. He leaves his boy alone at home and he enjoys hunting quail. Once gain hunting is also a typically masculine pursuit.

Maturity and Innocence:

Throughout the story, the father ignores his son’s efforts to exhibit maturity and acts as if the boy is younger than he is, effectively denying that he is growing up. Schatz doesn’t want to be coddled, calming that he is ‘all right’ and does not need to go back to bed like his father to leave him.

Here, Schatz’s perhaps believes that maturity means to hide one’s weakness and to pretend to know everything. After getting the knowledge of medical truth – the difference between Celsius and Fahrenheit the next day Schatz becomes more childlike and he is crying.

15.2.4 Character Analysis of ‘A Day’s Wait’

Schatz:

In this short story, ‘A Day’s Wait’ Schatz is the central character. He is only nine-year old and very innocent child. In the entire story, he conveys the idea of youth and innocence. On the other hand, throughout the story he is in fearful thought of his untimely death as he has misunderstood between Celsius and Fahrenheit. In France, Schatz friends told him that “you cannot live with forty-four degrees” and here he linked the information and spent the full day in a panic.

At last, his father makes it clear and explains the difference between Celsius and Fahrenheit, he returns to his normal life and started crying, “very easily at little things that were of no importance”.

After reading the story one can say that the dynamics of a nine-year old boy’s character serve to support both his age and attributes which he narrates.

Father:

The story is narrated by the character of the father. In the beginning of the short story, the father is reading, ‘Howard Pyle’s Book of Pirates’ for Schatz. However, Schatz is not paying attention, as he is waiting for his untimely death. The father tries to ease Schatz’s mind by answering questions he may have, or by correcting the fault. He treats his son with love, affection and encourages him to rest and to allow his body to recover.

The father, truly loves Schatz and he is concerned about his son. Above all, the father and the doctor both fail to share the difference between temperatures in Celsius and Fahrenheit.

The father explains the difference between the two types of temperatures to Schatz. Thus, the father is evidently dedicated to his son.

Doctor:

The character of the doctor is static by nature and his personality doesn’t deviate the doctor diagnoses Schatz’s temperature at one hundred and two degrees and after examination he gives three different capsules as he has influenza, which is part of a mild epidemic of the flu.

After his medical check-up doctor confidently declares that the boy will be fine as long as his temperature stays below one hundred and four degrees. The doctor explains Schatz’s situation to his father but fails to explain the same to Schatz and that creates misunderstanding. In short, in this short story the doctor provides aid and assistance to Schatz.

15.3 LET US SUM UP

After close reading of this unit, you will

- Identify the theme of the short story.
- Learn to write character sketches of important characters.
- Learn to critically evaluate the short story
- Learn vocabulary

15.4 KEY WORDS

Word Meaning

‘A DAYS’ WAIT’ BY
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Detached	Separate, Disconnected
Epidemic	a widespread occurrence of infectious disease in a community at a particular time
Slack	Loose
Miserable	Unhappy
Flushed	Result of illness
Capsule	A small container with medicine
Commenced	Begin or start
Sleet	Rain containing some ice
Quail	A small, brown bird that is shot for food
Poised	Having a graceful
Bank	Sloping down to river or lake
Prescribed	Advise and authorize the use of medicine or treatment
Varnished	Disguise
Shivering	Frightened
Purgative	Strongly laxative in effect
Influenza	A highly contagious viral infection
Pneumonia	Lung inflammation caused by bacterial viral
Bushes	A plant with many small branches
Brush	An object with short pieces of stiff hair
Thermometer	An instrument for measuring and indicating temperature
Gaze	A steady intent look
Staring	Look fixedly at someone or something
Bother	Take the trouble to do something
Began	Part of begin
Got a headache	Had pain in one’s head
Took the boy’s temperature	Used a thermometer to measure fever
Mad a note	Wrote something down
Take it easy	Relax
We make	We create

15.5 REFERENCES

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CHECK YOURSELF PROGRESS: 1

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN DETAIL.

1. What is the internal conflict in ‘A Day’s wait’?
2. Prepare a detailed note on literary elements present in ‘A Day’s wait’.
3. Draw a character sketch of Schatz.
4. Discuss the title of the short story ‘A Day’s Wait’.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 2

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

1. Why doesn’t Schatz pay attention while father reads to him?
2. Schatz refuses to go to sleep. What does his struggle to stay awake show?
3. What caused Schatz’s fear that his fever would kill him?
4. What were three ways Schatz showed his concern for his family?
5. What is the father’s action at the end and write about his character?
6. What evidence in the story shows that Schatz imagines his illness can hurt his family?
7. How does Schatz imagine that his father is hiding the truth from him?
8. What might Schatz imagine it means who his father leaves?
9. Why might Schatz imagine there is nothing he can do to change his illness?
10. What is the boy waiting for?
11. Why does the boy cry easily the next day?
12. Who are the characters in ‘A Day’s wait’?

13. In what season does the story take place?

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 3

FILL IN THE BLANKS IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES WITH AN APPROPRIATE WORD FROM THOSE GIVEN IN THE FOLLOWING BRACKETS:

(Covey, detached, pirates, epidemic, prescribed, capsule)

1. The little boy was too worried about his temperature to listen to stories of and hidden treasure.
2. Schatz’s doctor the medicine in
3. Schatz lay still in the bed and seemed very from what was going on.
4. The light was of flu and there was no danger if you avoided pneumonia.
5. We flushed a of quail under a high clay bank with an overhanging brush.

Check Your Progress: 4

CHOOSE APPROPRIATE OPTION FROM GIVEN BELOW.

1. The author of the “Book of Pirates” is
 - a. Howard Pyle
 - b. Schatz
 - c. Father
 - d. Ernest Hemingway
2. In the beginning of the story, Schatz complained of
 - a. Headache
 - b. Toothache
 - c. Backache
 - d. Fever
3. How old is Schatz?
 - a. 7
 - b. 8
 - c. 9
 - d. 6
4. The doctor prescribed three different medicines for purpose.
 - a. To bring down a fever
 - b. As a purgative
 - c. To overcome acidity
 - d. All of the above
5. Why did Schatz’s father go out of his house with the Irish setter?
 - a. To go for a stroll on a frozen creek
 - b. To shoot birds
 - c. To breathe fresh air
 - d. To hide his feelings from his son
6. How much did Schatz’s temperature really measure?
 - a. 102
 - b. 103
 - c. 112
 - d. 212

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7. Schatz has misunderstanding regarding.....
 - a. Two thermometer
 - b. Book of pirates
 - c. Miles and kilometers
 - d. Two pirates
8. Schatz's father removes his misunderstanding by showing the difference between
 - a. Two thermometers
 - b. Book of pirates
 - c. Miles and kilometers
 - d. Two pirates
9. What kind of person is Schatz's father?
 - a. Happy go lucky
 - b. Detached
 - c. Concerned
 - d. Cold
10. In the story, "A Day's Wait", Schatz wait for.....
 - a. Death
 - b. Reading "Book of Pirates"
 - c. Going to France to study
 - d. None of the above
11. Who narrates the story, "A Day's Wait"?
 - a. Schatz
 - b. Schatz's Father
 - c. Schatz's Mother
 - d. Ernest Hemingway
12. How does the boy spend his day of illness?
 - a. On the sofa, reading his favorite book
 - b. Sits beside fire
 - c. Cries and weeps
 - d. In bed, anticipating his death
13. Schatz is a boy.
 - a. coward
 - b. brave
 - c. naughty
 - d. loner
14. What important events make up the action of the story?
 - a. Father calling the doctor
 - b. Schatz asking about his temperature
 - c. Schatz asking the questions about the time of his death
 - d. All of the above

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress- 2

Ans.1 Schatz doesn't pay attention while papa reads to him because he is distracted by the thought that he is dying.

Ans.2 Schatz refuses to go to sleep as he wants to get better and doesn't want to die.

Ans.3 Due to lack of understanding of all the facts related to thermometers, Schatz feared that his fever would kill him.

Ans.4 Following were three ways showed Schatz concern for his family.

- He closed the window in his parent’s room.
- He doesn’t want to ‘bother’ papa by making him stay
- He wants to let other people come into his room.

Ans.5 Schatz’s papa wants to give comfort when he realizes his son’s fear.

Ans.6 Schatz closes the window; he makes them stay out of his room; he doesn’t want papa to have to see him die are the evidence in the story that shows that Schatz imagines his illness can hurt his family.

Ans.7 After checking Schatz’s father and the doctor talk to each other but not him; even his father won’t tell him exactly what his temperature is. Additionally, the father leaves the room and look like as he doesn’t want to stay and watch.

Ans.8 Schatz imagines that his father can’t bear to stay and watch his son die, or his father doesn’t care.

Ans.9 Schatz might imagine there is nothing he can do change his illness because the fever is proof that he is sick; he asks his father if the medicine will do any good; he knows people can’t survive with forty-four degrees fever.

Ans.10 The boy is waiting for his death.

Ans.11 The boy cried very easily on the next day because he feels very relaxed and realizes that at little things that were of no importance.

Ans.12 The main character of the story is Schatz, a nine- year old boy. Apart from this, father, doctor, schoolboys from France are the subsidiary characters of A Day’s wait’.

Ans.13 The story set in fall or early winter as it was stated clearly in the story “ice on ground”.

Check Your Progress- 3

The following vocabulary words appear in Hemingway’s story. Write the appropriate words in each sentence.

1. The little boy was too worried about his temperature to listen to stories of and hidden treasure. (**Pirates**)
2. Schatz’s doctor the medicine in (**prescribed, capsule**)
3. Schatz lay still in the bed and seemed very (**detached**) from what was going on.
4. The light was (**epidemic**) of flu and there was no danger if you avoided pneumonia.
5. We flushed a (**covey**) of quail under a high clay bank with an overhanging brush.

Check Your Progress- 4

1. Howard Pyle
2. Headache
3. 9

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4. All of the above
5. To shoot birds
6. 102
7. Two thermometers
8. Miles and kilometers
9. Concerned
10. Death
11. Schatz's Father
12. In bed, anticipating his death
13. brave
14. All of the above