

## **"My Tailor" by Stephen Leacock**

'My Tailor' is apparently a humorous essay with a sad end. It is about the life of a professional man who looks like a machine during his work and keeps his real life and personality hidden under the cover of his professional life.

The writer draws the character sketch of his tailor and describes his behaviour and actions in a funny way. But towards the end of the essay he turns this humorous figure into a pathetic character and tries to win our sympathies for him. In fact he seems to be of the view point that the real personality of such men is hidden beyond their professional smiles, actions and dialogues.

Whenever the writer used to go to his tailor to order for new suits, the tailor used to behave in the same way and rehearsed the same dialogues in every visit as these were the part of his dealings. There was always a smile of welcome on his face and a tape around his neck. He talked in a very sympathetic and polite way to his customers and always showed them cloth by putting on his bended knee. While taking the measurement, it was his habit to flatter the writer by saying that the size of his chest had increased by half an inch though the writer knew it very well that there was no increase at all in the size of his chest. Normally people start their conversation with the topic of weather but the tailor used to end the conversation at this topic.

The writer always enjoyed the actions, behaviours and machine like attitude of his tailor. But when he learnt that the tailor was dead, and his family was in trouble, he felt sorry for not knowing about his real personality in his life. For the first time, he took his for a man and realized his worries and problems. The death of the tailor tears his professional cover and shows him as a 'man'. The writer describes this situation in a grave way and wins the sympathies of readers too for the tailor.

### **MORAL OF ESSAY**

The moral of the essay, My Tailor is that we should try to understand our fellow beings and try to share the worries of our fellow beings specially the common professionals around us. We often go to so many people around us to buy or get prepared something for us but we keep

ourselves restricted to the business matters. We take them for mechanical workers and never try to take them as a 'man'.

These men also keep a screen of professional dealings and manners on them and do not show their real personality to us. That is what Leacock has presented in his essay, 'My Tailor'. He tells us about his tailor in a funny way. He describes his ways to talk and deal, habits and actions in a mocking way. But towards the end of the essay he tells us that when he learnt that his tailor was dead, he got a shock. Only then he understood him as a common man and came aware of his worries and hardships. When the tailor was alive, the writer had never tried to know about his real life. But after his death he felt sorry for him and regretted his formal dealings with him. He has not mentioned any particular moral lesson or advice in the essay. He has simply described the character sketch of the tailor and has let us draw the moral ourselves. And the best possible moral in this essay is surely that we should not restrict our dealings with others to the business only.

**Q 1. What were the ways of the tailor?**

Ans. This essay is taken from a collection of humorous pieces called "Further Foolishness". In this essay Leacock mingles humour with pathos and leaves a lasting impression on the reader's mind. Here, he masterfully delineates an unforgettable character. He presents his tailor before us to entertain as well as educate us. Writer's tailor was every special person with some specific ways and habits.

Writer's relation with him was thirty years old and in these thirty years, his style never changed. He remained standing in the back part of his shop with his inches tape round his snack. He used to greet the writer with a warm smile and asked him what he wanted. Then, the tailor himself made the choice of cloth for him as "serge" and then himself chose the colour as dark blue.

His way of displaying the cloth was quite amusing. He lifted one knee and draped the cloth over it, standing upon one leg. The tailor could stand in this posture for an indefinite time. It was very difficult for the writer to resist him. So, he readily agreed with his choice. They had a strange way of obliging each other. The writer always asked him if his dress would be cool and decent. This question pleased the tailor a lot and he told the writer that it would be so.

Then he took measurements of the writer, only round the chest. He tried to flatter him by telling that the writer was growing round the chest. It was like a psychological trick. Then there was the matter of billing. The tailor never talked about the bill rather he turned to other things. This matter was only dealt with by correspondence. The tailor wrote him a letter in such a tone that suggested that he would never have written to him if he were himself not under the pressure of paying for his consignments from Europe. The writer noticed that these consignments generally arrived when he had passed the limit of owing for two suits and had ordered a third one. Then the tailors talked about weather. He always finished his conversation with weather and that only after the order of the suit. He offered the writer to buy some shirts or collaring but the writer never did. They walked to the door in a friendly way. After bidding each other "Good afternoon" they parted.

This was the description of writer's tailor that had some specific details and with the help of these details he has successfully established the salient features of his tailor's personality.

**Q 2. How did the deal with the problem of billing?**

Ans. The writer and his tailor had a strong relation of courtesy. The tailor never talked about the bill. Whenever the writer tried to talk about this matter, he waved it aside and started to discuss something else. This was the matter they never spoke of. They dealt it through correspondence. The tailor wrote him a letter in a fine, decorous and courteous way. His manner of asking for the bill was quite apologetic. He would give reasons for his demand of bill like arrival of heavy consignments from Europe for which he needed money. Writer noticed that these consignments usually arrived when he had to pay for two suits and had ordered a third one. But it might be a coincidence.

It was their unique style of dealing with the matter of bill.

**Q 3. Why did Leacock regard his tailor to be "Immortal"?**

Ans. The writer had been visiting a very nice tailor for last thirty years. They had very courteous and warm relationship. The writer was extremely shocked when one day he heard the news of his tailor's sudden death. He never thought it possible. He had been meeting the tailor for last thirty years and had expected to see him forever. He regarded him as being immortal. This

event carries a criticism on our ways and behaviors in this world. In fact the writer wants to make us realize the importance of “man”. Today people are so busy in their own lives that they cannot see and understand the problems of people living around them. The modern race of collecting more and more money has blinded the human race and people care for nothing except their own lust, selfishness and competition. The modern man regards people around him as machines and never tries to recognize their personal problems and worries.

It was the same case with the writer; he never took his tailor to be a human being. He thought him only to be a machine that provided him a service and that would never break down. Leacock never tried to know about his personal life and worries. His relation with him was only superficial and business like. That's why the news of the tailor's death struck him with wonder. The writer was equally shocked by the existence of his wife and a daughter. The financial problems and the religious interests of the tailor also seemed strange and unreal to him.

The motive of Stephen Leacock is only to make us realize this great reality that humanity will never flourish or be preserved unless the individual man is given importance. The relation ship, the understanding and helpfulness is very important in the society and it is the lack of all these things that has made the modern man lonely and helpless. This situation should be rectified and people should come closer to understand and help each other.

#### **Q 4. What was other side of the tailor's personality?**

Ans. The writer describes his intercourse with his tailor in a very effective and amusing way. He tries to invoke us to think deeply about the human beings and different aspects of their lives.

Every man has a three dimensional life and character but our rushed life does not give us enough time to look beyond life's apparent or obvious facet. The writer too did same in the case of his tailor. He took his tailor as a worker or “hand” but never thought about his inner life. The tailor, besides being a skilled professional, was a religious person. He was interested in music and played the flute. He had a daughter who was also learning music. His business was not going on well. In spite of his smooth and calm ways, his business worry was mounting up with every passing year and now it had finally killed him. It was quite unbelievable for the writer that even the business worries can help to kill a person. He was told that the tailor's wife would have to face grave financial problems. It was quite strange for the writer who never thought about other

aspects of the tailor's life. The smiling face and amusing manners of the tailor were hiding a deeply tragic life and a helpless death behind them. This is the moral of this essay that pleads us to look through the veil or mask of human face and discover the troubled and agonized soul of a man behind it. Today's man needs some companion or helper who can at least listen to his problems sympathetically.

**Q 5. What is the moral of this essay?**

Ans. In this essay, Stephen Leacock presents a finely knit character of his tailor. Through this character and the circumstances of his life, he tries to give us a message. Today the life has become so busy that human beings have taken the shape of isolated Islands that lie scattered in the deep and wide ocean of the world completely oblivious of each other.

Today nobody cares for others. Everyone tries to pursue his own motives and objectives. The sense of friendship, co-operation and sympathy has been finished and human beings take no interest in anybody else's life. Modern man never comes to know that how many people suffer silently and never share their troubles with anyone like Stephen Leacock's tailor.

The thesis of the writer is the need to cultivate love and courtesy in the world so that man can live a humane life. Today we all are running a race with machines and technology. The urge to become rich has killed the soul of humanity and compassion. But we should halt for a moment to take a breath and think who we are and what are we doing. We are human beings but we live an artificial life like machines and this is leading us to the tragedies of the tailor's type. Today a man dies even without expressing his agonies because nobody can spare a moment to talk about his life and its troubles. We should try to improve the situation and live like a man and also consider other people as a "man".

**What is the message of the short story?**

The story has a moral message. In this story the writer draws out the character sketch of tailor. The tailor is a normal human being. He is just like the other men in this world. He runs a shop in order to meet his basic necessities of life. He is professional. In any case, he wants to keep his customers happy. He always welcomes his customers with a smiling face.

He talks about weather. He has a nice style to get his cloth appreciated by the customers.

The writer knows him for the past thirty years. May be, he visits him twice a week. But he is unable to know the real problem faced by the tailor. His relations with the tailor are based on materialism only. He never knows that he has a wife and a daughter. And also that he is a side man of the church. He does not know that his tailor is lover of music and he plays flute very well.

So, when he is told that the tailor has died, he is not ready to believe in this news. He thinks that his tailor is immortal. He is not an object of death. The message of the story is that materialism destroys the relations. This is a materialistic world and we only know others only to the extent of our needs.

**Leacock, in this essay, blends humor with pathos, discuss?**

Basically this is humorous essay but Leacock blends humor with pathos. The essay consists of two parts. First part tells the character of the tailor in a very funny way while in the second part; the author gives some sad details of the character of the Tailor. The first part of the essay makes us smile but the second one makes the reader weep.

Whenever the writer goes to his shop, he welcomes the writer with a smiling face. He has only two kinds of cloth at his shop. The writer has to choose either one of them. Usually he talks about weather. The way of his showing the cloth to the customers is humorous. He never asks the writer for the payment of the bill. This problem is tackled through correspondence.

**Important Points:**

1. It is a humorous essay in which Leacock sketches his tailor

2. He is in contact with his tailor for the past 30 years, he considers him as an immortal object
3. For the past thirty year ,there is not even a slight change in the postures of his tailor
4. He welcomes the writer with his usual smile and starts his discussion with the weather
5. He has always only two kinds of cloth Tweed and Serge in his shop
6. He shows the cloth to the writer on his bended leg standing on the other
7. His measuring tape is always hanging in his neck and he always measures the writer only from his chest
8. He asks his assistant to add half an inch in the measurements, just to flatter the writer
9. One day, tailor is not in his shop, on asking, he is informed that tailor has died
10. The writer is not ready to believe in this news as he thought the tailor an immortal object
11. He further knows that his business was not going well which became the cause of his death
12. The tailor was a religious person, and a good flute player, he had a wife and a daughter