

Paper for Semester-III Students (Open Elective)

Short Story

O Henry -The Gift of Magi

O. Henry

William Sydney Porter, pseudonym O. Henry (1862-1910) Bettman / Contributor Porter's life was rife with sorrow, but outwardly, at least, he was seen as a good-natured raconteur with a sharp wit, especially after a few belts. On the ranch, he'd begun jotting down stories, mainly with a Wild West theme, but not doing anything with them. In Austin, with Athol's encouragement, he upped his literary output and began submitting stories to the Detroit Free Press and Truth, a New York-based magazine featuring the likes of Stephen Crane. Along the way, he took a job as a teller at First National Bank and 1894, borrowed \$250 from the bank (with a note signed by a couple of drinking buddies), bought a printing press and started self-publishing a weekly magazine. The Rolling Stone. Featuring stories, cartoons, and humor pieces, it found a local audience with print runs of more than 1,000. For a hot second, times were good.

"The little cottage [Potter] rented and lived in with his wife and children is now a museum. It's in the middle of downtown Austin's skyscrapers and looks even more modest and sweet than it did before the city grew," says Laura Furman, a fiction writer who served as the series editor for the O. Henry Prize stories from 2002-19. "The house doesn't have many authentic O. Henry possessions but there's enough in it to give you a sense of what his brief-lived family life might have been like. It's widely believed that he was his happiest in that house. The happiness of family life didn't last long for him." The Rolling Stone never made much money or made it beyond Austin, so Porter shut it down in 1895, later telling the New York Times that it had all the hallmarks of getting "mossy."

He decamped to Houston to write columns for the Daily Post, but was called back to court in Austin. The First National Bank, which had been freewheeling and informal in its lending practices, accused him of embezzling \$5,000. Instead of facing the charges, Porter fled the country, eventually landing in Honduras, which had no extradition treaty with the United States. (It's where he coined the term "banana republic," in his story "The Admiral," which appeared in his first book, Cabbages and Kings.) It was a short stay.

After seven months, Porter returned to Texas to care for Athol who was suffering from tuberculosis. She died in July 1897. (In 1916, C. Alphonso Smith, a childhood friend of O. Henry's, wrote that Della was modeled on Athol.) This time, he stayed in the Lone Star state and faced the music. In February 1898, William Sydney Porter was found guilty of embezzling \$854.08 and sentenced to five years in federal prison at the Ohio Penitentiary. Various biographers, including Smith, have long held the evidence of serious criminal intent was flimsy and that while Porter kept haphazard records, bank mismanagement was more to blame, and he was actually punished for going on the lam. Porter who was never good with money and routinely walked the line of being dead broke, always maintained his innocence. From the North Carolina History Project: "When confronted with his crime, William would write his mother-in-law and claim, 'I am absolutely innocent of wrongdoing in that bank matter...I care not so much for the opinion of the general public, but I would have a few of my friends still believe there is good in me.'"

The Ohio Penitentiary was a harsh life for prisoners, but William received partial treatment due to his skills as a pharmacist. Allowed a higher status than the normal prisoner, William was given more free time, and it was during these long night hours that William adopted the pseudonym O. Henry and penned some of his best short stories." The official reason behind "O. Henry" as a pen name has never been fully established. An Inkwell of Pen Names links it to a cat from his childhood named "Henry the Proud," a verse from a cowboy song called "Root, Hog, or Die.," while the writer Guy Davenport, who wrote introductions to multiple collections believes it was a twist on "Ohio Penitentiary" while also keeping his true identity safe in prison—the stories.

O Henry wrote during time were sent to the wife of an incarcerated banker in New Orleans to be sent out to editors—but the author himself claimed it was simply easy to write and say. The pseudonym may be a mystery, but his success was not. The first story published as O. Henry was "Whistling Dick's Christmas Stocking." Appearing in McClure's magazine in December 1899, it tells the tale of a "professional tramp," a fateful gift from a passing sorry, and a good night's sleep on Christmas Eve. Released after three years for good behavior,

O. Henry moved to Pittsburgh where Margaret, now 12, lived with her grandparents. She was never told of his being incarcerated; only that dad was away on business. (Tragically, Margaret too would die at 37 from tuberculosis, three days after getting married from her deathbed.) O. Henry didn't stay long. He headed to the heart of the publishing world, New York City, the crowded relentless cosmopolitan polyglot he fell in love with and nicknamed "Baghdad-on-the-Subway." The street life of New York would be a major inspiration for O. Henry as he penned

some 380-some-odd stories while living in the Gramercy Park area. The nightlife, however, would exact a bigger toll as O. Henry drank himself to an early grave at the countless number of joints just like Healy's. On June 5, 1910, at the age of 47,

O. Henry died from cirrhosis of the liver and other health complications. (Many years later, his second wife from a short marriage, Sarah Lindsey Coleman, would emphatically proclaim he died from diabetes, not the bottle.) Nestled away on 18th St. near Gramercy Park, just a couple blocks from the bustling Union Square holiday markets, Pete's Tavern welcomes tipplers with an awning reading "The Tavern O. Henry Made Famous." The writer lived across the street at 55 Irving Place in a first floor apartment featuring three large windows where he could look out at his second home across the street, which was then named Healy's Cafe. (First opened in 1864, the bar would be renamed Pete's in 1922 after Peter Belles purchased the establishment, which today claims itself as the longest continuous tavern in New York City. During Prohibition, the flower shop in front led to the booze in the back, likely protected from police raids by its nearby proximity to Tammany Hall.)

The hard-drinking Henry became a regular at Healy's and was said to consider it an extension of his office at the New York World, who hired him for \$100 a week for a single story. Healy's even made it into O. Henry's story 'The Lost Blend,' but in disguise as "Kenealy's," perhaps to keep his favorite watering hole to himself. According to biographer David Stuart, in late autumn 1905, a new World editor decided Henry's salary far exceeded his output and ordered him fired. Unbeknownst to Henry, the World still wanted him to write up until his contract expired in December. So it came as a shock to Henry when, shortly before the World's big Christmas special edition came out on December 10, an office boy knocked on his apartment door looking for a contribution.

The lackey wasn't leaving without a story so O. Henry sat down and banged out "Gift of the Magi" in "two feverish hours" according to the faded plaque outside his apartment building. It fit Henry's pattern of writing overnight, on deadline, and delivering at the last minute, but usually with pristine copy that didn't require much editorial heavy lifting. On the whole, "Gift of the Magi" encapsulates the best of what O. Henry stories accomplish, a brief lived-in human experience. One that is often, for good, bad, or in-between, given over to an unwanted fate, only to be rescued through a combination of sentimentality and his patented surprise ending. "O. Henry had a strong sense of form; if you read a story of his blind, you'd be able to identify it as an O. Henry story by the movement of the action, leading up to his famous trick—the twist at the end," says Furman.

“The twist is really a wringing out of the plot elements and revealing something that was there all along but the reader hadn’t noticed. He was less interested in style than in getting a reaction from his reader. That performative aspect of his stories and his relationship to the reader as audience has appeal to writers now.” Despite the plaque on 55 Irving Place, the question of where O. Henry scribbled down his masterwork remains an open one. Folklore handed down from generations of the tavern’s owners claims it was authored inside Pete’s—a sacred booth includes multiple pictures and a handwritten letter O. Henry wrote as William Sydney Porter deferring on a dinner invitation—but at least one dissenter claims it was authored in Henry’s apartment.

Written in 1936, *The Quiet Lodger of Irving Place* is a series of reminiscences about O. Henry’s time in New York City by his friend and colleague William Wash Williams. In it, Williams says “Gift of the Magi” was written in the room O. Henry rented. No official documentation exists either way, but what truly matters is the story has become synonymous with Pete’s Tavern, the New York City holiday season, and the wonderfully brightly festooned intersection of the two. “Some of the decorations we have are over 50 years old, so I’d say the Christmas season has always been important to us here at Pete’s,” says general manager and tavern historian Gary Egan, who started working there as a waiter and bartender in 1987. “Every year, five of us put up all the lights and decorations. We close early and go from midnight to eight in the morning for three weeks straight.

And at home, I make gallons and gallons of eggnog and bring it in. It’s brutal.” Egan means the holiday stretch, of course, not the egg nog, which is delicious. Made with brandy, a glass runs \$13, which could’ve probably bought a quality timepiece and a full-length wig in O. Henry’s day, but late on a Tuesday afternoon, with a wintry mix flurrying about the setting sun, before the boisterous crowds shuffled in, it wasn’t hard to be transported to Christmases past and to toast the spirit of Della and Jim in the reflected glow of a sea of red lights. “O. Henry’s such an American character and it’s too bad an ‘O. Henry’ story has become somewhat of a cliché,” says Amanda Vaill, a writer and former book publisher who edited a 1994 collection of his works.

“His other works deserve a bigger audience, but I also still vividly remember reading *Magi* at age 10 in a holiday anthology and thinking, ‘Oh, my gosh. Oh, no. No! NO!’ I was struck by the cruelty of the universe and the kindness of the characters within it.” Furman has a similar recollection, saying, “I have fond memories of reading ‘Gift of the Magi’ as a child and thinking hard about the misfortune of the two main characters. It bothered me that they both failed in their

presents. That's how I saw it then. Later, I had an appreciation of the story's cleverness and how tightly constructed it was—and I understood that it really didn't matter if the presents weren't the right ones since, in O. Henry's view, their sacrifice was a sign of their love.

I was more focused as a child on the presents than love.” One reason the “Gift of the Magi” has had a longer time in the spotlight than any of the estimated 600 other stories O. Henry wrote over his lifetime--which were extremely popular, by 1920, a decade after his death, some five-million copies of his books had been sold in the United States—is that its seasonal message and framework has been paid homage for years. The first one, *The Sacrifice*, was a silent film directed by D.W. Griffith in 1909.

Later versions include O. Henry's *Full House*, a 1952 quintet of his stories tied together by on-screen narrator John Steinbeck in his lone acting credit, a 1999 animated riff featuring the famous Disney mice and a harmonica in Mickey's *Once Upon A Christmas*, and a tender 2014 Greek short film set during the country's recent financial crisis. It's also been a staple television plot, be it in a 1955 “Honeymooners” episode in which Ralph Kramden pawns his beloved bowling ball, a 1988 “Saturday Night Live” parody lampooning a future president impersonated by Phil Hartman and a gold-plated jewel-encrusted golf club door, and the one that introduced many a young Gen-Xer, myself included, to the O. Henry classic.

In the 1978 special “Christmas Eve on Sesame Street”, Bert and Ernie follow the formula with a rubber duckie-for a cigar box/paper clip collection-for a soapdish trade. (In the end, Mr. Hooper shows up in the fuzzy roommate's bedroom, returns their original items, and tells his Muppet pals they gave him the best gift of all.) \$1.87 might not buy a cup of holiday cheer anymore, but it remains holiday central at Pete's Tavern, thanks to O. Henry's deadline masterpiece, be it written with a stiff drink in a booth or not. The holidays are Egan's craziest time, yet, given a chance to reflect on the Della, Jim, and the dewy-eyed scribe who made his tavern famous, the insanity of the season slips away, for a moment anyway. “Gift of the Magi’ is heartwarming, a beautiful story with a hint of sadness,” he says. “It's Christmas.”

O. Henry's 'The Gift of the Magi'

Summary

Farley Granger and Jeanne Crain star in 'The Gift of the Magi', one of five stories by O Henry grouped together under the title of 'O Henry's Full House.' Hulton Archive / Stringer The story begins just before Christmas with a small sum of money: \$1.87 to be exact, 60 cents of which was in pennies. For the writer O. Henry, the pittance was enough to launch his most famous work, a fable about poverty, love, and generosity, and also likely covered the drinks he plied himself with as he crafted the tale at Healy's, the neighborhood bar. In "The Gift of the Magi," first published in 1905, two down-on-their-luck lovebirds Della and Jim make sacrifices well beyond the cost of a boozy beverage to share their Christmas spirit with each other. The beloved tale tells of Della cutting off her gorgeous past-her-knees hair described in the story as, "rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters" for \$20 to buy her man the perfect gift: a platinum fob watch chain, "simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation."

Later on that fateful Christmas Eve, Jim offers his present in kind, combs for Della's beautiful locks, purchased after he sold his watch. The timeless, ironic twist, emblematic of O. Henry's oeuvre, reminds readers of the oft-repeated "true meaning of Christmas." The sentiment is tiresome and trite, but the story's soul endures. First published by the New York World in 1905, and then to a wider audience in the 1906 collection *Four Million* (named for the NYC population, it was the number of stories O. Henry, whose real name was William Sydney Porter, believed existed in his adopted city), the 2,163-word masterpiece has become a holiday standard, a slim mix of pain and joy sitting on a fireplace mantel with other redemptive Yuletide perennials like *A Christmas Carol*, *It's A Wonderful Life*, and "Fairytale of New York." The mixture of sadness and sentimentality in "Gift of the Magi" befits a man whose life was marked by repeated human tragedies.

Porter was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, in September 1862, the same month as the Civil War battles at Antietam and Harpers Ferry. His father was a prominent doctor and inventor whose life unraveled after his wife died of tuberculosis when William was only 3. His father retreated into a private world of tinkering with machinery—a perpetual-motion machine, a steam-driven horseless carriage, a device for picking cotton—and drinking away his troubles. The diseases of alcoholism and tuberculosis would haunt Porter throughout his life. At 20, in hopes of relieving his own perpetual cough, the "family curse," Porter left North Carolina for the dry air of Texas and lived with a sheep herder who had Greensboro ties.

William worked the ranch on the Nueces River near San Antonio for two years, apparently becoming a proficient broncobuster while also learning Spanish and memorizing the dictionary. Two years later, he went to Austin where he took various jobs including cigar store clerk, pharmacist, bookkeeper and draftsman for the state's General Land Office. He also played the guitar and sang baritone for the Hill City Quartette and met and fell in love with 17-year-old Athol Estes, who he wooed by helping with her homework. They eloped and were married two years later on July 5, 1887. Athol gave birth to a son in 1888, who died hours after birth; the following year, the couple had a daughter, Margaret.

Themes in The Gift of The Magi

Value

"Gift of the Magi" revolves around a young couple, Della and Jim, who lack a lot in the way of material possessions and external amusements. The beginning of the story focuses on their poverty—the shabby couch, the lack of mirror, the eight-dollar flat, the broken doorbell. Despite this, the narrator adds that Jim always arrives home to be “greatly hugged. Which is all very good?” Their poverty doesn’t seem to affect their cozy home.

Love

Della’s main concern is that the money she’s saved by pinching pennies isn’t enough to buy Jim a worthy Christmas present. For her, the main obstacle that poverty poses to her happiness is its limitation of her expression of love.

Sacrifice

At the beginning of the story, Della and Jim have only two prized possessions—Della’s hair and Jim’s watch. In order to overcome their poverty and to give a good Christmas present to the other, each sacrifices the item that they value the most. The sacrifices turn out to have been made rather uselessly, since the gifts they buy can’t be used. One could argue that they ended the story in the same place they...

Beauty

“Gift of the Magi” constantly contrasts the idea of inner beauty and value with outside appearances. The story begins, for example, with a description of bleak surroundings (“a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray background,” “shabby couch”) while hinting at a warm home life that brightens the exterior (Jim arrives home “to be greatly hugged”).

Themes, symbols, and motifs are valuable aspects of any literary work, and they add richness to stories. Part of the Common Core ELA standards is to introduce and explain these complex concepts. However, abstract ideas are often difficult for students to analyze without assistance. Using a storyboard, students can visually demonstrate their understanding of these concepts, and master analysis of literary elements. For best practices, see our supplementary article with

specific lesson plan steps on setting up your classroom and activities to teach themes, symbols, and motifs. In the classroom, students can track the themes in "The Gift of the Magi". They will analyze the appearance of any themes and illustrate examples from the story.

Generosity

"The Gift of the Magi" is a Christmas story, and it functions as a parable about both the nature of love and the true meaning of generosity. Della's earnest desire to buy a meaningful Christmas gift for Jim drives the plot of the story, and Jim's reciprocity of that sentiment is shown when he presents Della with the tortoise-shell combs. Both Jim and Della give selflessly, without expectation of reciprocity. Their sole motivation is to make the other person happy. This, combined with the personal meaning imbued in each of the gifts, conveys the story's moral that true generosity is both selfless and thoughtful. Della scours every store in town for two hours before finding the perfect gift for Jim. She notes the similarities between the simple yet valuable watch chain and her understated but loving husband. The watch chain is not merely a shiny trinket; instead, it represents Della's regard for Jim, and the inherent value she sees in him.

Similarly, the combs are not merely an extravagant bauble meant to impress Della; instead, they represent Jim's commitment to Della and to their relationship. He willingly sells his most valuable possession, handed down from his father, in order to buy Della the combs, suggesting that for Jim, Della and their future family are the most important things in his life. The combs and watch chain can also be read as promises for the future: though the couple currently lives in difficult financial circumstances, both the combs and the watch chain are symbols of Della and Jim's optimism that their circumstances will change. Ultimately, the spirit of giving has less to do with the material gifts themselves and more to do with the sentiment behind them. Della and Jim's generosity towards each other is embodied by their choices of gifts, which speak to the depths of their appreciation and love for each other. The narrator ends the story by stating that so long as people love truly and give generously, then they will have given wisely.

Wealth

Henry foregrounds the drab, worn-down circumstances in which Della and Jim live in order to create a distinction between material wealth and immaterial wealth. Between their second-hand furniture, cheap apartment, and inability to afford new clothes, Jim and Della are undoubtedly impoverished. Jim's decreased pay and the economic circumstances of early-twentieth-century New York mean that times are tough, and Della has had to bargain for every last penny that she has saved up for Jim's gift. These depictions of the couple's poverty only serve to emphasize the value of the two possessions that they do take pride in: Della's hair and Jim's watch. The narrator suggests that Della's hair is beautiful enough to devalue all of the wealth of the Queen of Sheba and that Jim's watch is fine enough to be envied by King Solomon.

For a young couple living in such economically strained circumstances, it is unlikely that their possessions truly rival those of biblical royalty. However, the items are considered valuable for more than just their material worth. Della's hair represents her beauty and femininity, and for it to have reached such a length, she must have been growing it out for years. Jim's watch is an heirloom that was passed down from his father. The sentimentality and personal value of these possessions is greater than any monetary value that could be ascribed to them. It is fitting, then, that both Jim and Della decide to sacrifice their prized belongings not in order to change their material circumstances but rather to buy a sentimentally motivated gift for their partner. Though the combs and the watch chain are given monetary value, it is the sentiment behind each gift that makes them truly meaningful. Della and Jim may remain materially impoverished, but their exchange of functionally useless Christmas gifts only serves to emphasize the wealth of love that exists between them.

What is the main conflict in "The Gift of the Magi"?

The main conflict in "The Gift of the Magi" concerns Della not having enough money to purchase Jim a valuable Christmas gift, which she believes he deserves. Jim's problem should not be included as part of the main conflict in "The Gift of the Magi." Della is the protagonist and the viewpoint character. It is her story from beginning to end. Her conflict arises out of her motivation. She wants to buy her husband a nice Christmas present because she loves him so much. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Jim's conflict is never mentioned in the story. Jim is not even present until towards the end when he gets home from work. Everything that happens in the story up to the climax happens to Della. She doesn't have enough money--and yet she still keeps wanting to buy Jim a nice present. She even knows what she would like to get: a watch fob to attach to Jim's beautiful pocket watch.

In attempting to solve her conflict, Della hits on the idea of selling her beautiful hair. Impulsively she goes to Madame Sofronie and sells it for twenty dollars, just enough to buy the platinum watch fob. (Note that nothing is said about any conflict Jim might be experiencing. He may not have had any conflict at all but just decided to sell his watch to raise some Christmas money.) One problem leads to another. Now that Della has sold her hair she sees that she looks very strange. She is afraid that Jim will be repelled by her appearance and will cease to love her. This is the way with primary conflicts in stories: one conflict leads to another one which is even more serious. Della's desire to buy Jim a nice gift was a small problem, but her fear of losing him forever is a much greater problem, and she has no means of solving this one because she has parted with the only thing of value that she owned. She had a habit for saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty." She did have one recourse.

She could pray to God for help. And the conflict is resolved, apparently, as a result of her prayer. It turns out that Jim not only still loves her in spite of her changed appearance, but he loves her so much that he has parted with his most treasured material possession in order to buy her a Christmas present. Prayer can work miracles. The message is especially appropriate in a Christmas story. The main conflict of the short story "The Gift of the Magi" is only superficial. Let me try to tease out the deeper meaning. On the surface, there is a conflict. The conflict is that both Jim and Della, the protagonists, are poor.

Moreover, it is Christmas and they want to get something for each other to show their deep love. The story starts with these words: One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. However, as the story progresses we learn they each possess something of great value. Della has beautiful hair and Jim has a gold pocket watch. So, both Jim and Della have a plan. Della will cut her hair and sell it to buy Jim a chain for his pocket watch. And Jim will sell his watch to buy combs for Della's beautiful hair. At the end of the story, there is a surprise. Both Jim and Della have gifts that they cannot use. Combs for little hair and a chain without a watch do not work.

But in the end, they are seen as wise, because they gave what they loved to another person. They outdid one another in love and generosity. What really showed was their hearts. From this perspective, is there really a dilemma? Probably not. It is only apparent. In the end, I am sure that they were glad to give, for in giving they received much more than they could ever imagine. The main conflict in *The Gift of the Magi* is poverty. Because of their poverty, Jim and Delia have to make great personal sacrifices to buy the other a Christmas present. "In *"The Gift of the Magi,"* O. Henry uses a folksy narrator to tell the story of Jim and Delia Young, a poor young couple who buy each other special Christmas gifts, which ironically cancel each other out because Delia sells her hair to buy Jim a chain for his watch, which he in turn has sold to buy her a fine set of combs for her hair. Despite the fact that these gifts are now useless, Jim and Delia have given each other the greatest gift of all, which the narrator compares to the gifts given to the Christ child by the wise men, or magi: selfless love. There are basically two types of conflicts in the story:

Internal conflict exists, as Della and Jim struggle with the decision to sacrifice the things that mean the most to them personally in order to provide the one they love with a proper gift that appropriately symbolizes their love. External conflict exists in the form of Man versus Society as Jim and Della struggle against a financially centered society in which they lack the ability or means to provide their loved one with a proper gift that appropriately symbolizes their love. Another conflict in the story and probably the most obvious is that the couple would like to be able to give the other something spectacular for Christmas that neither can afford because they are poor. The conflict is how each can express their love for the other through the material thing they present on Christmas Day and they find that resolved in the act of sacrifice that each was willing to commit through the useless gifts they presented made useless by each sacrifice made by Jim and Della. One major conflict is the couple's struggle to survive in the midst of poverty. O'Henry describes their apartment in great detail in order to show just how poor the couple is in material wealth. Both Jim and Delia have an internal struggle as well.

Delia's long, beautiful hair is her most prized possession, and she must convince herself that she's doing the right thing in having it cut. For Jim, his watch is a family heirloom that has been handed down to him. It isn't something he can go out and buy later if he should get the money. It's a difficult conflict for him as well to sell the watch. In O. Henry's classic short story "The Gift of the Magi," Della is the protagonist, and her primary conflict is that she does not have enough money to purchase Jim a worthy Christmas present. Jim and Della Dillingham Young are depicted as a poor, loving couple, who sincerely desire to get each other a valuable Christmas present. O. Henry primarily focuses on Della's conflict in the story as she makes the difficult decision to sacrifice her prized hair in order to purchase Jim an expensive platinum fob for his gold watch. After saving one dollar and eighty-seven cents, Della visits Madame Sofronie's salon to sell her hair.

Della recognizes that her hair is the only valuable thing that she owns and willingly sells it for twenty dollars. Once Della sells her beautiful hair, she searches every store for the perfect gift and ends up purchasing a platinum fob chain for her husband. Although Della's main conflict seems to be resolved, her solution leads to another conflict, which concerns her fear that Jim will leave her because she looks like an unattractive schoolboy. Della reveals her anxiety that Jim will leave her by saying a quick prayer and attempting to style what remains of her hair. Fortunately, Jim's love for Della is not based on superficial material items or her outward appearance. Jim remains a faithful, loving husband and appreciates Della's sacrifice because it proves her love. Ironically, both Jim and Della's gifts are useless, but their love for each other is sincere and remains intact.