

Chapter- 7

The Last Leaf

STUDY NOTES:

- This highly inspirational tale deals with the unselfish sacrifice of a man who uses his talent to save the life of another.
- Two artists, Johanna (Johnsy) and Sue live in an apartment in an artists' community.
- There is an outbreak of a malicious disease which spreads its deadly influence and mows down many of its members.
- Johnsy is infected and soon gives up hope of survival.
- She pins her destiny to the survival of one last leaf on a vine which she perceives through her window, whilst lying in bed.
- The doctor informs Sue that Johnsy's chance of survival is dependent on her hope and desire to survive.
- Sue informs Mr Behrman, an old fellow artist, a neighbour, about this and he is annoyed that Johnsy has such little hope.
- He is aware of her life fading away with the dropping of the last leaf.
- The next morning, after a vicious storm, Johnsy sees the last leaf still clinging to the tree.
- She decides that she wants to continue living.
- With hope returning, Johnsy slowly regains health and her life is saved.
- Sue informs her some time later that Mr Behrman had died of pneumonia and the Janitors had found a burning lamp, a ladder and a palette containing a mixture of colours, similar to that of a leaf, next to his body that was completely drenched.
- He had contracted pneumonia and expired due to his frail condition.
- It was clear that Mr Behrman had painted his long-promised masterpiece-the Leaf which saved Johnsy's life, sacrificing his, in the process.