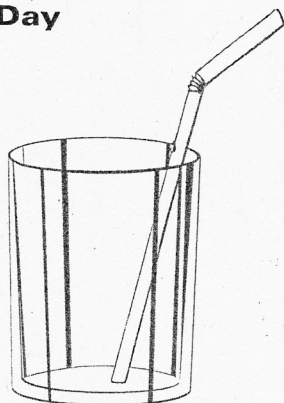


T 1 Joyce Cary: A Hot Day



Mother, father, a small boy, aged four, are walking along the road. The little boy has to trot to keep up. At last he cries out, "Oh Mummy, I'm so thirsty."

5 The mother, plump, red, sweating freely, answers patiently, "But, darling, you just had a drink." The father is a thin, sad little man. He protests mildly, "Well, Nelly – he really didn't
10 take much for tea."

"Are we going to catch that bus or aren't we?"

"We got ten minutes."

"Oh, all right – you always give way to

15 Tom – that's why he acts up like this with you."

They go into a roadside café and Tom is given a lemonade with a straw. He gazes at the straw. "What a funny
20 straw – it's pink."

"Yes, it's a pink straw – now drink up, my dear."

"But, Daddy – is it a real straw?"

"Yes, Tommy. Well, no, not exactly. It's
25 made of something – paper."

Tom gazes at this surprising straw and laughs, "What, paper?"

"Yes, Tommy, paper. With something on it – wax or something. Now drink
30 up, old man."

Tom gazes at the straw and pinches it to see how strong it is.

"It's quite strong, Daddy, isn't it?"

"Yes. Go on, Tommy. We haven't time
35 to waste."

Tom pinches the straw again and blows down it to see if it still works. This makes bubbles in his glass and he calls on his father to admire. He
40 can be sure of his father's admiration. The mother mops her face and says in a resigned voice, "There, I told you it was all nonsense about him being thirsty."

45 "But I *am* thirsty," Tom says.

"Then why aren't you drinking?"

Tom blows more bubbles. The bus passes; it will go to the next village, turn round and come back on the up-
50 per road. They have fifteen minutes to walk to the next stopping place.

The mother exclaims, "Oh, so you're going to play with it," and takes the glass away. Tom, subdued and guilty,
55 says, "May I keep the straw?"

The father takes the straw and gives it to him. They set out along the road. Tom carries the straw carefully and observes it from end to end. This

60 causes him to fall behind. And then he is seized with a strange discomfort which causes him to forget the straw. It crumples in his hand. He drops it. It is a mile to the bus stop and the par-
65 ents call to him.

"Come on, Tommy dear."

"Don't drag, Tom."

Tom now identifies his new discomfort and says, "I'm so thirsty."

70 And indeed he has a fearful, an overwhelming thirst. His throat is burning.

"Come on, do."

"I'm so thirsty, Mum."

The mother finally loses her temper
75 and jerks his arm.

"That's enough of you today – do you want me to smack you?"

Tom breaks into tears and wails, "But I *am* thirsty – I'm too thirsty."

80 He sits down in the road. He's in despair. What can he do if people won't believe him. He'd rather die than move another step.

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517 words

ANNOTATIONS

to act up – to behave badly

to crumple – to crush something

despair – a feeling that you have lost hope

to gaze at – to look at something for a long time

to give way to – to agree to do what someone else wants

to pinch – to press something tightly between your finger and thumb

to seize – to take hold of something suddenly

to smack – to hit someone with your open hand

subdued – unusually quiet

to wail – to cry out in a complaining way

Assignments

1. Comprehension

A Describe the situation presented in the text.

2. Analysis

A Analyse the behaviour of the characters and how the author creates a vivid image of the situation.

3. Evaluation

Choose one of the following assignments:

A **Comment:**

Comment on the question "In what way does the title of the short story reflect its content?" Take into account other factors that might lead to the situation outlined in the text.

B **Re-creation of text:**

Again, it is a hot day and the family wants to catch a bus. Write a text with dialogues in which the parents focus their attention on their son's questions.

Tools

- monolingual dictionary
- bilingual dictionary

Time

90 min.