

## **M.G.Vidyamandir's S.P.H.Mahila Mahavidyalaya Malegaon**

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### **FYBA Compulsory English : The Model Millionaire**

Firstly, this short story emphasises the materialistic aspects of life. The protagonist of this story Hughie is a misfit in a mercantile world. He is at a loss in the world of bulls and bears. In spite of his charming appearance, he has failed in every attempts to make money. He cannot understand the ways of the world and ends up miserably whenever he tries to be successful materially. His affair with Laura is at a stake as he has failed to raise a fund of ten thousand pounds demanded by Laura's father who welcomes Hughie as a person but is not ready to accept him as his son-in-law. Hence the second sentence of the story becomes significant: "Romance is the privilege of the rich, not the profession of the unemployed." In the end, had Baron not provided Hughie the money, the latter's marriage with Laura would not have materialised. So, making both ends meet becomes more important than the melody of love. When the stomach burns with hunger, the whole world becomes prosaic and the beautiful full moon looks like a hot flour cake. Every lover and beloved should keep it in mind. Secondly, one must have the kindness of heart as well. Kindness shown to others pays in the end. There is no doubt that had Hughie not offered the sovereign to Baron, the latter would not have shown his generosity to sponsor the money Hughie required. Tender qualities are not to be totally dispensed with even in a thoroughly materialistic world. The above two themes are undoubtedly opposed to each other. Many readers object to the very fact that this story has a fairytale quality. There are many chance factors in this story. Hughie accidentally meets the disguised Baron at Trevor's studio. Then he gets the chance to have an intimate exchange of feelings with the latter. Accidentally there is a sovereign in his pocket. Strangely enough the beggar turns out to be a millionaire. Many critics have identified the story as a modern version of the Jason legend. But we must not discard the story as based only on chance factors because we know that truth is stranger than fiction. Such chance factors are common in our life too. However, one question remains in the end: What ultimately wins- the value system that Laura's father believes or the cordial qualities that Hughie possesses? There is no doubt that without ten thousand pounds the marriage would not have taken place. On the other hand, it is also true that Hughie would not have got the prize from Baron had Hughie not shown his kindness to the beggar, the disguised Baron. Wilde is not an extremist. He believes that one must have a solid financial base to build the successful married life. On the other hand, he maintains that while following the ways of the world, one must not discard his cordial qualities completely. We must maintain a steady balance between the two. Lastly, a rich man must know the proper ways to expend his wealth. Monetary gains do not salve one's soul unless he expends that money to help others. By helping Hughie to marry Laura, Baron exemplifies the ideal way to spend money.

That is why he raises himself to the status of a model millionaire from the status of a millionaire model. The Model Millionaire' begins in Oscar Wilde's usual witty yet thought-provoking way. Wilde has this natural ability to coin intellectually very commendable and humorous phrases which we find in all his other works as well. This story starts with the strong affirmation that it is no use being charming if one is not wealthy. When you look at it on closer perspective, it is in certain cases true. What is the use of a good personality when a person doesn't have the money to enhance one's latent potential? Still Wilde's phrases are open to debate where the truth is concerned, and as Sophocles once said: "The Truth is always the strongest argument." Mind you, Wilde ends this short story on another witticism from his repertoire of wise words which brings us to the question – what is rarer? A Millionaire model or a Model Millionaire? In the story a charmer but penniless young man called Hughie Erskine loves a Colonel's daughter. The daughter's name is Laura and the Colonel has made it clear to Hughie that charm will only not do the trick; Hughie will have to earn or procure 10,000 pounds of his own and then only will he give his consent. Hughie manages to do so at his Painter friend Alan Trevor's residence when he gives a model in beggars garb there all the money in his pocket. The beggar turns out to be one of the richest men in Europe. Irony and novelty are at the heart of this story. Oscar Wilde's characters are always of an eccentric nature and so is Baron Hausberg, the millionaire who modeled for the nonchalant Alan Trevor as a beggar. This story and especially the last meaningful phrase in the short story categorize both the Baron as well as Hughie as 'a model millionaire' because the former donated money to a good cause and the latter because of compassion for a poor fellow soul in rags. Many times, in Wilde's literature we come across this dual natured aspect of frivolous extravagance mingled with good virtues, often Christian like in nature. Hughie's giving away of his 'sovereign and some coppers' from his pocket brings to mind the story of the poor woman at the temple in the Bible who did not part from her plenty but gave all she had. To Oscar Wilde, Hughie deserved the 10,000 pounds because although he was a person who looked good, was charming but had no monetary back up – he was compassionate, merciful and had a soft spot for the downtrodden. These virtues are noticed by the comic Baron who funds the money desired by the Colonel to get Hughie and Laura married. I want to point out to the character of Alan Trevor the painter at whose house the meeting of Hughie and the Baron takes place. It is odd that even in Wilde's seminal work The Picture of Dorian Gray two very important people get acquainted with each other at, yet again, the house of a painter. Alan seems to be a very careful painter but a person who is aloof from all things emotional. The painter in The Picture of Dorian Gray is more emotionally invested in life than Alan Trevor. It is however Alan Trevor who becomes best man for the wedding and who gives the final speech which makes us analyze the phrase 'model millionaire' more closely.

