**Mr. Know-All**

–

**Literary analysis**

***THE STORY***

Mr. Know- All is a story with a moral lesson. The subject is simple. A rich Britishmerchant of Oriental origin, called Mr. Kelada, meets a group of Westerners on a shipsailing across the Pacific Ocean. His cabin-mate, a British citizen who is the

**namelessnarrator**

of the story, dislikes Mr. Kelada even before he sees him. However, at theend of the story Mr. Kelada, the Levantine jeweller, proves to be a real gentlemanwhen he sacrifices his own pride and reputation to save an American lady’s marriage.As a result, he earns the respect of the narrator.

***THE SETTING***

**Time**

– a short time after World War I. It is mentioned for two reasons. First, it justifies the accidental meeting in the same cabin of the narrator and Mr. Kelada. The passenger traffic on the ocean-liners was heavy, so the narrator had to agree to share acabin with a person he disliked. Second, it may give us a possible reason for thenarrator’s unjustified antagonism towards Mr. Kelada. Usually, during periods of war,feelings of prejudice and dislike for foreigners grow stronger.

**Place**

– it takes place on a ship in

**INTERNATIONAL WATERS**

– a neutral place.The journey for the USA to Japan takes 14 days.The ship becomes the symbol of the world with people who are prejudiced and evenracists.

***THE PLOT***

The story consists of two plots: the

**main plot**

and the

**sub-plot**

.1.The

**main plot**

deals with the conflicting relationship betweenthe narrator and Mr. Kelada.2.The

**sub-plot**

deals with the relationship between Mr. Keladaand Mr. Ramsay. They discuss real pearls (nature-made) and cultured pearls (man-made), then they bet whether Mrs. Ramsay's necklace ismade of real pearls or an imitation.The two plots are

**connected**

. The sub-plot serves to bring the complications of themain plot to its climax and solution. That is, after the narrator discovers that Mr.Kelada is in fact a gentleman (despite his vulgar manners) he changes his opinionabout him.

***THE CHARACTERS***

The characters may be divided into different groups:

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The

**major**

characters:

*Mr. Kelada and the narrator*

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The

**minor**

characters:

*Mr. And Mrs. Ramsay, and the doctor.*

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The

**prejudiced**

:

*the narrator and Mr. Ramsay.*

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The

**non-prejudiced**

:

*Mr. Kelada, the doctor and Mrs. Ramsay.*

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The

**Oriental**

:

*Mr. Kelada*

The

**Westerners**

:

*Mr. And Mrs. Ramsay and the narrator.*

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The characters are described by their appearance and characteristics,except for the narrator.

***THE NARRATION- point of view***

The story is told in the

**first person**

 – the narrator sees everything and is a part of the plot.In the

**first episode**

, where he meets with Mr. Kelada, the narrator is

**more active,and involved**

. He observes, comments and judges Mr. Kelada as he sees him throughhis own eyes. Since he is influenced by his prejudiced society, his judgments are

**subjective**

.In the

**second episode**

, involving the necklace examination, the narrator is

**lessinvolved**

. He is like a cameraman who takes photos and writes down what he hears

**objectively**

. After the chain examination is over, the narrator becomes subjectiveagain.In the

**last episode**

, the narrator discovers Mr. Kelada’s true character. As a result,

**heundergoes a change**

– he realizes that people should not be judged by their looks but by their actions and character. It is the narrator who closes the story.

***CRISIS and TURNING POINT OF THE STORY***

The cultured pearls topic is the crisis of the story. The heated argument between Mr.Ramsay and Mr. Kelada reveals their true characters.

**Mr. Ramsay**

appears to be a prejudiced person who does his best “to have a fling atthe Levantine”.

**Mrs. Ramsay’s**

character is also revealed as being insincere in her relationship withher husband, whom she had been deceiving. When she was alone in New York for ayear, she probably had a lover who gave her the expensive pearls. Nevertheless, shehas the decency to secretly return to Mr. Kelada his “lost” money.

**Mr. Kelada**

, who has been considered a pushy, inconsiderate and vulgar person, turnsout to be a real gentleman who saves Mrs. Ramsay's marriage.

**The narrator**

also undergoes a change. When he realizes that Mr. Kelada behavesconsiderately with Mrs. Ramsay, he says “At that moment, I did not entirely dislikeMr. Kelada.” Suddenly, he becomes aware that

**GENERALIZATION**

is not the rightway to judge people. This is the moral lesson of the story.

***REAL PEARLS and CULTURE PEARLS***

At first glance, real pearls and cultured pearls look the same. But only a closer inspection can reveal what is real and what is imitation.

**The same goes for people.**

People from the same nationality seem the same. But only when we get to know them,we see that each person is different. For example, the narrator in the story dislikes Mr.Kelada because of his name, luggage, appearance and nationality. However, when hesees the true character of Mr. Kelada, he realizes that prejudice is not the right way to judge people. Therefore, the saying DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER isrelevant here

***THE THEME: CULTURAL and RACIAL PREJUDICE***

The opening paragraph reveals this theme. From the start, the narrator expresses his prejudices against Mr. Kelada for no logical of apparent reason. The narrator dislikesMr. Kelada’s name, his luggage, his appearance, his manners and even his pride in being British.When the narrator says that there are too many labels on Mr. Kelada's luggage it has adouble meaning: for one thing, Mr. Kelada travels a lot so there are labels fromdifferent ports on his suitcases. Second, people put labels on him so they are prejudiced and stereotyped about him.The narraor repeats the expression “I disliked Mr. Kelada” a number of times.In spite of the fact that Mr. Kelada is jovial, hearty and sociable, the writer criticizeshim for being talkative, boring and obnoxious. Strangely, all the Westerners feel thesame, and they give Mr. Kelada the nickname “Mr. Know-All”. What seems good andfriendly to Mr. Kelada seems bad, pushy and vulgar to the Westerners.Ironically, despite the cultural differences between the narrator and Mr. Kelada, theyshare the same attitude towards women. Both refer to Mrs. Ramsay as “a pretty littlething”.

**The author does not name the narrator for a purpose: the racist narrator can beany one of us.**

We all may be guilty of judging people by stereotypes andgeneralizations rather than examining the true character of people and getting to knowthem as individuals.