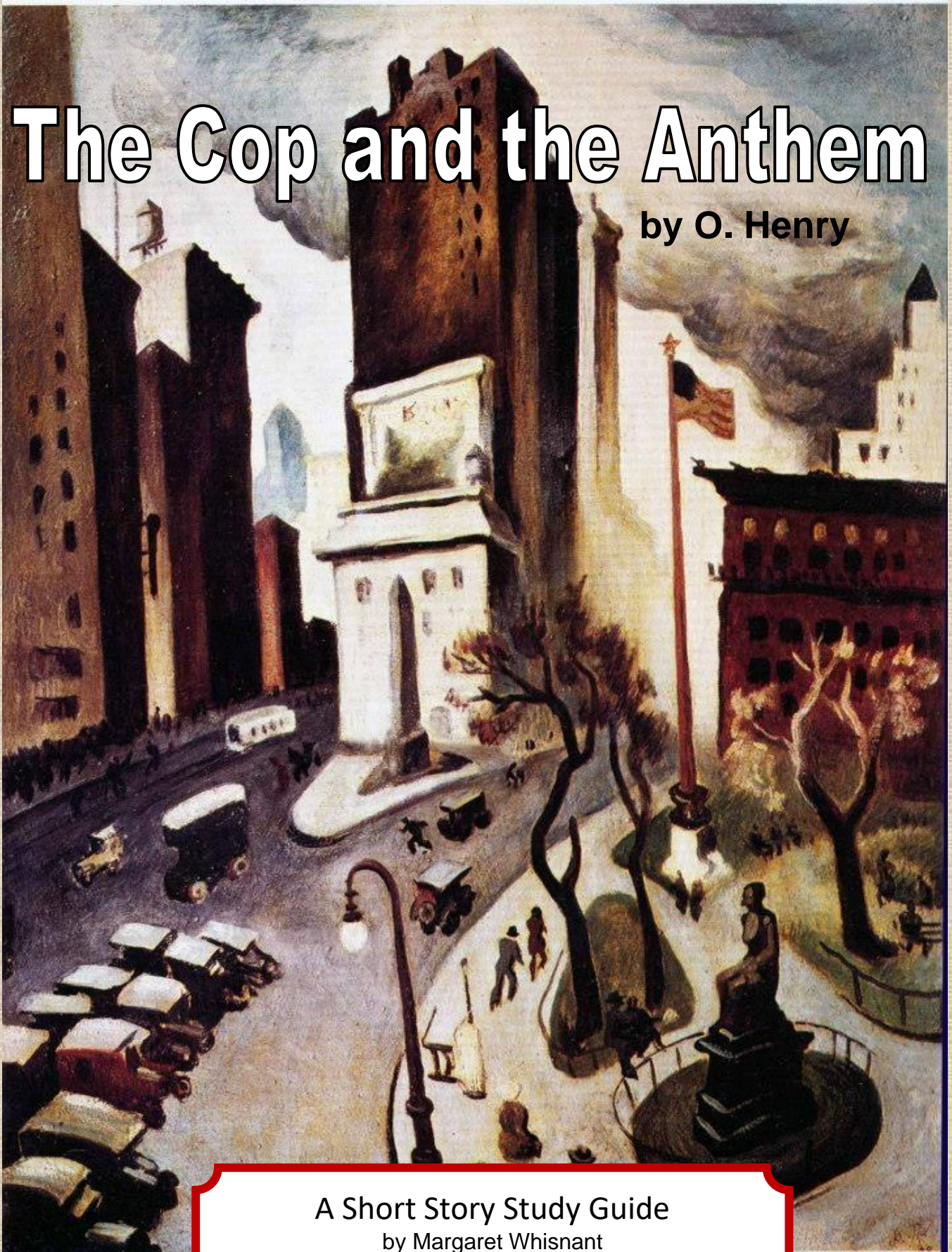


# The Cop and the Anthem

by O. Henry



A Short Story Study Guide  
by Margaret Whisnant

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# ***The Cop and the Anthem***

by O. Henry

## **Short Story Study Guide**

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Cover Image

*Oil painting of Madison Square Park in New York City in the early 1920's  
painted by Thomas Hart Benton*

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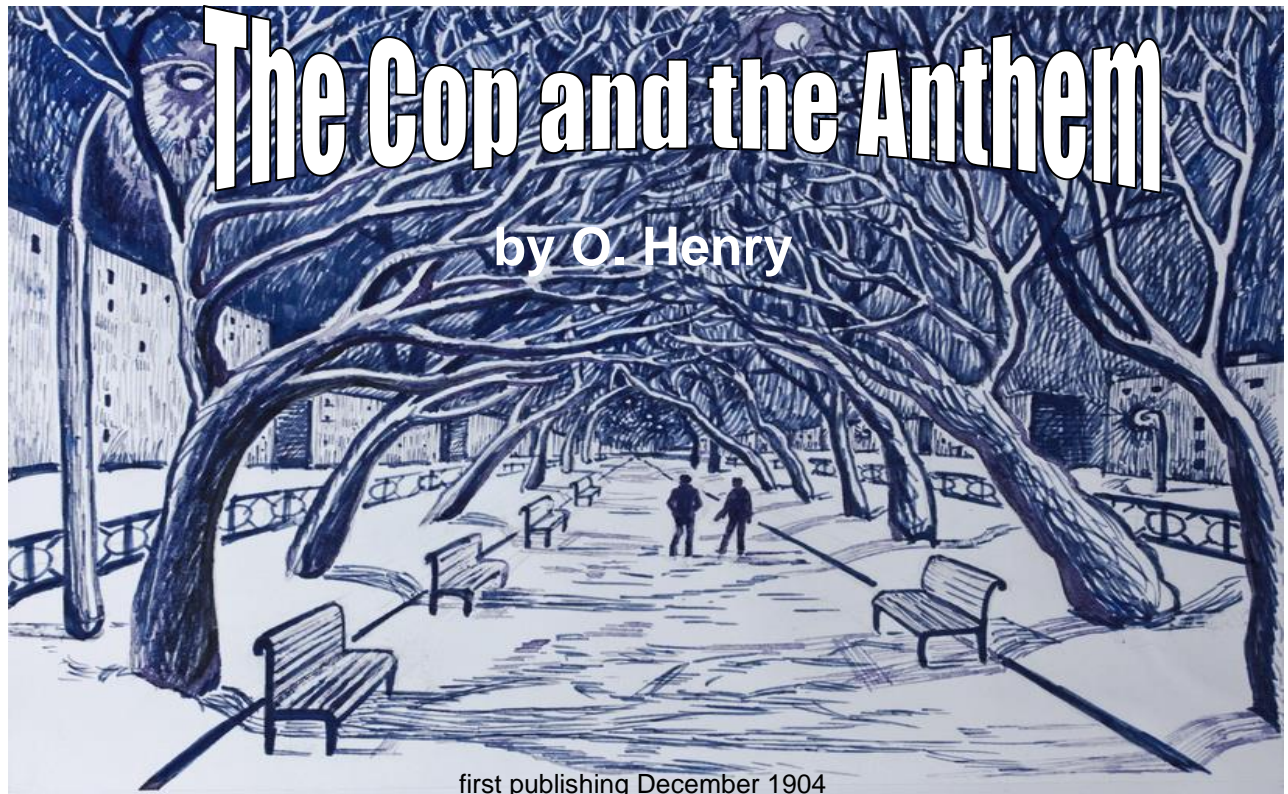
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first publishing December 1904

On his bench in Madison Square Soapy moved uneasily. When wild geese honk high of nights, and when women without sealskin coats grow kind to their husbands, and when Soapy moves uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at hand.

A dead leaf fell in Soapy's lap. That was Jack Frost's card. Jack is kind to the regular denizens of Madison Square, and gives fair warning of his annual call. At the corners of four streets he hands his pasteboard to the North Wind, footman of the mansion of All Outdoors, so that the inhabitants thereof may make ready.

Soapy's mind became cognizant of the fact that the time had come for him to resolve himself into a singular Committee of Ways and Means to provide against the coming rigor. And therefore he moved uneasily on his bench.

The hibernatorial ambitions of Soapy were not of the highest. In them there were no considerations of Mediterranean cruises, of soporific Southern skies drifting in the Vesuvian Bay. Three months on the Island was what his soul craved. Three months of assured board and bed and congenial company, safe from Boreas and bluecoats, seemed to Soapy the essence of things desirable.

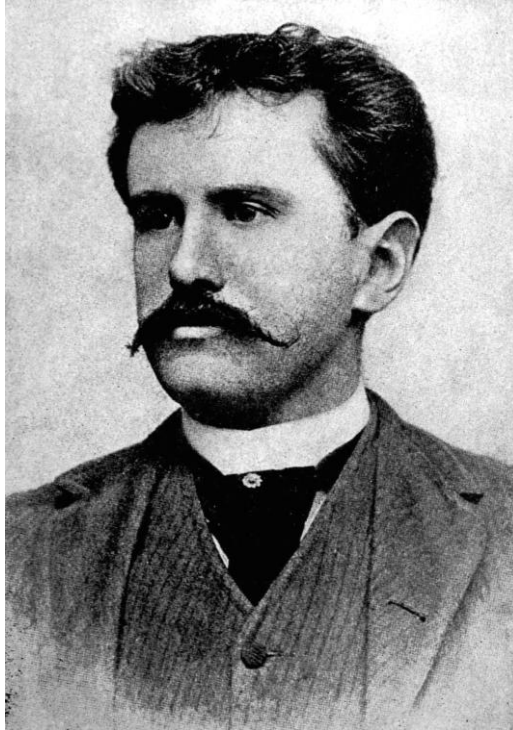
For years the hospitable Blackwell's had been his winter quarters. Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had bought their tickets to Palm Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy had made his humble arrangements for his annual hegira to the Island. And now the time was come. On the previous night

# O. Henry

## Biographical Sketch of William Sydney Porter

September 11, 1862-June 5, 1910

by Margaret Whisnant



*O. Henry early 30s c. 1890*  
Public Domain Image



*O. Henry 1909*  
Public Domain Image

O. Henry never wrote a full-length book. He gained fame writing short stories with unpredictable plots, dry humor, and surprising endings. He wrote about poor people, ordinary people, flawed people—all caught up in unusual situations.

His true life story, a contrast of success and hard luck, is a captivating tale in itself. O. Henry was in many ways a reflection of some of his most colorful characters.

William Sydney Porter was born in 1862, the son of a doctor, in Greensboro, North Carolina. By the age of 19 he was a licensed pharmacist. He also earned money as a portrait sketch artist. In 1882 he moved to Texas, hoping that the dryer climate would help cure the persistent cough he had developed. When he felt better, he left his job on a sheep ranch and moved to Austin to work as a draftsman and journalist. It was around this time that he started writing for magazines.

# O. Henry

## A Biographical Sketch of William Sydney Porter

September 11, 1862-June 5, 1910  
by Margaret Whisnant

### Study Questions

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. O. Henry's stories are noted for their
- (A) unsavory characters and unusual situations.
  - (B) unpredictable plots and surprise endings.
  - (C) portrayal of social injustice.
  - (D) use of simple language and vocabulary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Which of the following quotes *best summarizes* the central idea of the full text?
- (A) *He gained fame writing short stories with unpredictable plots, dry humor, and surprising endings.*
  - (B) *His true-life story, a contrast of success and hard luck, is a captivating tale in itself.*
  - (C) *The debate continues to this day, with the poor bookkeeping theory in the lead.*
  - (D) *However, it seemed that no amount of success and happiness could chase away the dark days.*
3. Explain the connection between the following events:
- a. O. Henry's talent as a musician and his marriage.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- b. O. Henry's degree in pharmacy and his time in prison.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Which textual clue could explain why O. Henry created *The Rolling Stone* when he was making a good living at another job.
- (A) *. . . Altho encouraged her husband to pursue his writing as well.*
  - (B) *Their daughter Margaret was born two years later.*
  - (C) *Luckily it had already caught the attention of the editor at The Houston Post.*
  - (D) *. . . he got word that Altho was dying of tuberculosis.*

## Words and Definitions

### from Story Pages 1 and 2

(18 words)

**denizens** people who visit a place on a regular basis; inhabitants

**cognizant** aware of; having knowledge of

**rigor** harshness; hardship; severity of weather;

**soporific** relaxing; something that causes or induces sleep, such as a drug or a soothing sight or sound.

**Boreas** The ancient Greek name for the god of the north wind.

**congenial** suitable for one's purpose; agreeable; pleasing

**essence** the most important part of a thing, idea, or situation

**hegira** a flight or journey to a more desirable place (from an Islamic word that describes Mohammad's flight from Mecca to Medina to escape persecution)

**loomed** came into view in large, indistinct form

**scorned** hated; felt contempt for

**benign** gentle and kind; favorable; beneficial

**Philanthropy** the act of generously donating money, time, goods, property, etc. for the benefit of the poor or less fortunate.

**eleemosynary** provided by a charity; charitable

**compensation** payback for something received; payment

**encumbered** weighed down; made difficult; hampered; burdened;

**inquisition** an official investigation, especially one that disregards personal rights; harsh questioning;

**insolvency** having no money to pay one's debt; broke; bankrupt

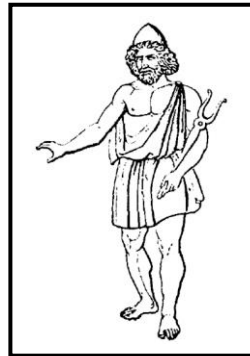
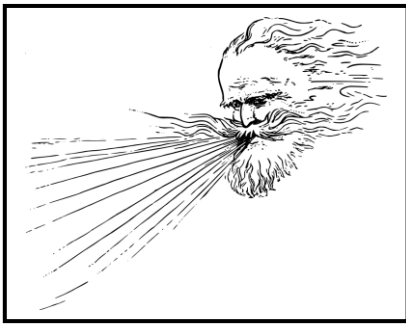
**magistrate** judge of a police court; justice of the peace

## Dictionary Digs

(words from *Story Pages 1 and 2*)

Grab a dictionary and use it to answer the following questions about some of the words O. Henry uses on pages 1 and 2 of *The Cop and the Anthem*. Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank to the left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Which words *best* describe a **congenial** conversation?  
 (A) loud and argumentative, (B) pleasant and agreeable, (C) short and hurried,  
 (D) unexpected and unpleasant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. If a mother said to her children, "Do your chores! I am not running an **eleemosynary** resort," what did she mean? She is not running  
 (A) a bank, (B) a vacation spot, (C) a charity, (D) a cluttered house.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Which of the following is a drawing of the Greek god **Boreas**?
- (A) (B) (C) (D)



- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. A person experiencing **insolvency** is (A) suddenly rich, (B) unable to borrow money because of bad credit, (C) too young to draw from a trust fund, (D) broke.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The phrase **denizens of the deep** refers to (A) animals that live deep in the forest, (B) plants that thrive in caves and other dark places, (C) insects that spent most of their lives underground, (D) plants and animals that live in the ocean.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Which word can be substituted for **benign** in the following sentence without changing its meaning?  
*Carly's usual **benign** disposition was suddenly overtaken by rage.*  
 (A) gentle, (B) unpredictable, (C) agitated, (D) useful
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The *best example* of something that could be described as **soporific** is  
 (A) the sound of heavy traffic on a city street.  
 (B) the squeals and laughter on a children's playground.  
 (C) distant thunder.  
 (D) the sounds of gentle waves rolling to shore.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. An **inquisition** is a type of harsh questioning that  
 (A) is permissible only under oath.  
 (B) is used mainly by police officers.  
 (C) tends to disregard personal rights.  
 (D) allows the questioners to lie in order to get at the truth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. An antonym of **encumbered** is  
 (A) handicapped, (B) supported, (C) overcharged, (D) acknowledged



# Phrase Busters

(Student Resource)

## Note to Students:

O. Henry wrote and published *The Cop and the Anthem* more than 100 years ago in December of 1904. Since then a continuous onslaught of inventions and technology has been changing the way we live. Almost without notice, vocabulary and speech patterns have also been undergoing alterations to keep up with the knowledge explosion. We have dropped words we no longer need, like *surrey*, and added new words for new things, like *astronaut*.

Naturally, O. Henry used the language of his era. He also filled his work with complicated vocabulary that was not part of day-to-day speech, even in the early 1900s. As a result, modern students often find his awesome stories difficult to read.

Not this time! You have Phrase Busters!

As you read, refer to this list of phrases from *The Cop and the Anthem*. Replace O. Henry's words (in *italics*) with the translation, and you won't miss a single ah-ha! moment in the story. The items are separated by page number and presented in story order. Words in **bold print** are from your vocabulary list.

Happy reading to all!

## Phrase Busters for Story Page 1

*. . . when women without sealskin coats grow kind to their husbands*—when women without warm winter coats start buttering up their husbands so he will buy them one.

**denizens** of Madison Square—the people who come to Madison Square became **cognizant** of the fact—knew; understood

*resolve himself into a singular Committee of Ways and Means*—figure things out without help from anyone else; come up with a plan by himself

*The hibernatorial ambitions of Soapy*—Soapy's winter survival plans

*In them there were no considerations of Mediterranean cruises. . .*—He wasn't planning to escape the winter by going on a Mediterranean cruise.

**soporific** Southern skies drifting in the Vesuvian Bay—relaxing Southern skies drifting over the bay of Naples, Italy

*Three months on the Island*—Three months in the prison on Blackwell's Island safe from **Boreas** and bluecoats—safe from the cold winter winds and policemen

*the essence of things desired*—the very thing he needed

*his annual hegira to the Island*—his yearly winter escape to Blackwell's Island