

Answer Key for "The Gift of the Magi" Comprehension Worksheet

- 1. What is the total amount of money Della has saved by the time Christmas is near?**
 - **Answer:** \$1.87
 - **Textual Evidence:** "One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all."
- 2. Why does Della decide to sell her hair?**
 - **Answer:** She wants to buy a gift for Jim, but has very little money.
 - **Textual Evidence:** "Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a gift."
- 3. What is the significance of Jim's gold watch in the story?**
 - **Answer:** It symbolizes Jim's connection to his family's history.
 - **Textual Evidence:** "It had once belonged to his father. And, long ago, it had belonged to his father's father."
- 4. What is the gift Della buys for Jim, and why is it perfect for him?**
 - **Answer:** Della buys a simple gold watch chain for Jim. It is perfect for him because it matches the value and simplicity of his gold watch.
 - **Textual Evidence:** "It was a gold watch chain, very simply made. Its value was in its rich and pure material... It was good enough for The Watch."
- 5. Why is the gold watch chain described as "simple" but "valuable"?**
 - **Answer:** It is made of gold, which makes it valuable even though it looks plain.
 - **Textual Evidence:** "It was a gold watch chain, very simply made. Its value was in its rich and pure material."
- 6. How does Della feel when Jim first sees her with short hair?**
 - **Answer:** Scared
 - **Textual Evidence:** "Della went to him. 'Jim, dear,' she cried, 'don't look at me like that. I had my hair cut off and sold it.'"
- 7. What does Jim buy for Della, and how is it connected to her sacrifice?**
 - **Answer:** Jim buys beautiful combs for Della's hair, which she has sacrificed by selling it.
 - **Textual Evidence:** "For there lay The Combs—the combs that Della had seen in a shop window and loved for a long time."
- 8. What does Jim's reaction reveal about his love for Della?**
 - **Answer:** He is confused, but still deeply loves her.
 - **Textual Evidence:** "Jim stopped inside the door. His eyes looked strangely at Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not understand."
- 9. How does the story convey the theme of sacrifice and love?**
 - **Answer:** The story emphasizes that both Jim and Della sacrificed something precious (Jim's watch, Della's hair) out of love for each other. Their sacrifices reflect the depth of their love and devotion.
 - **Textual Evidence:** "Each sold the most valuable thing he owned in order to buy a gift for the other."
- 10. How does the ending of the story emphasize the idea of "wisdom" in giving?**

- **Answer:** The ending shows that although Jim and Della were not wise in their material choices, their sacrifices were wise in showing true love and selflessness. They are the "wise ones" like the magi because of the selflessness of their gifts.

Textual Evidence: "The magi...were the first to give Christmas gifts. Being wise, their gifts were doubtless wise ones... And here I have told you the story of two children who were not wise... But of all who give and receive gifts, these two were the most wise."

Additional Notes for Instruction:

- **Theme of Sacrifice:** Emphasize how both characters are willing to give up something extremely valuable (Della's hair and Jim's watch) to demonstrate love for the other. This could lead to a deeper discussion of the true meaning of "gift-giving" beyond material items.
- **Character Development:** Discuss the growth of Della and Jim as individuals who value each other's happiness over their own desires. This is a key point in understanding their relationship and the significance of their actions.
- **Irony and Symbolism:** The irony of the story (both characters selling their prized possessions for the other) can be explored further. Ask students to analyze how O. Henry uses irony to deepen the emotional impact of the story.
- **Historical Context:** The story was written in 1905, and it may be helpful to discuss the historical context of living conditions in that time, such as the challenges of working for \$20 a week, and how this would affect the choices of the characters.
- **Moral Lesson:** Consider discussing the concept of wisdom in the story and how O. Henry's commentary on the gifts of the magi compares to Jim and Della's actions. Ask students to reflect on how "wisdom" is portrayed through their selfless acts.