

**O. Henry. (William Sydney Porter). From "The Gift of the Magi"**

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young." The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, the letters of "Dillingham" looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

**Define Each Word**

Magi: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

parsimony: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

shabby: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

mendicancy: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

unassuming: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Write the Correct Word from the Vocabulary**

1. The wealthy investor's \_\_\_\_\_ appearance and old car deceived others into thinking he had little money.
2. The new student demonstrated a quiet, shy, and \_\_\_\_\_ attitude, but she quickly demonstrated her true leadership potential as a member of student government.
3. In many Spanish-speaking cultures, The \_\_\_\_\_ bring children gifts during the Christmas season, not Santa Claus.
4. With every dollar that Justin added to his bank account, his extreme \_\_\_\_\_ became more and more ingrained in his nature.
5. Mrs. Malkin was determined to save her son from living in a state of \_\_\_\_\_ for the rest of his life, begging on street corners and sleeping on bus benches.

**Comprehension and Discussion: Answer Each Question in Complete Sentences**

1. What evidence does the reader have that Della and James Dillingham are not doing well financially?

---

---

---

---

2. What can the reader predict from the title, the couple's financial hardships, and the last sentence of the first paragraph, "And the next day would be Christmas"?

---

---

---

---

---