**UNIT 5**

**ONE ACT PLAY**

**GRANDMOTHER’S GOLD**

**INTRODUCTION**

Ella Adkins is a modern British Dramatist who has written the collections of one-act plays namely ‘TheCrowning Glory’, ‘Six One- Act Plays for Boys and Girls’ and ‘At Rise of Curtain’. The one-act play ‘Grandmother’s Gold’ is taken from her collection ‘At Rise of Curtain’.

**BACKGROUND TO THE STORY**

‘Grandmother’s Gold is based on the Greek legend of King Midas, King of Phrygia who was granted magical powers by the God Dinoysius to turn whatever the things he touches into gold. It is proved to be a disaster when he couldn’t even touch his food because it is turned into gold. To his dismay when he embraced his beloved daughter embraced him and turned into a golden statue. Ella Adkins uses the legend in a modern context in this play through her characters.

**CHARACTERS**

**Mrs. Bootle,** Grandmother of Betty, on tries out the ring of King Midas as her full name happened to be Elizabeth Marigold Bootle,

**Mrs. Griggs, Daughter of Mrs. Bootle and Mother of Betty**

**Betty Grigg**s, a pretty girl of seventeen, and granddaughter of Mrs. Bootle.

**Alfred Midas**, is quite a good looking young man, aged about twenty-one. He is slim and studious looking, quietly dressed with horn rimmed glasses. He is working as a clerk and known as a descendent of king Midas.

**Mr. Rubenthrope**is adealer who purchases gold and pays excellent prices, even the broken ones. He is a suave, flashily dressed man in the early thirties. He also wears light spats and plenty of jewelry rings, heavy watch-chain, etc and carries a large attached case.

**Sir Gregory Pelham**, an official from the home office, who comes to make an agreement with Mrs. Bootle and Alfred Midas to stop making anymore gold.

**PLOT**

The story happens at the back parlour of Mrs Griggs’ tea shop in Cheesebury Green. As the play opens Betty and Mr. Rubenthrope are having a conversation, and he tries to convince Betty into selling gold as they pay excellent prices even for broken pieces. Betty sell a small piece of her chain for five and six but her mother feels that she is swindled. The same time Mrs. Bootle enters and he was asked to leave.

Mrs. Griggs was there when Alfred Midas comes to meet Betty. He carries two books, for Betty and Grandmother which they asked him to bring. Mrs.Griggs does not look pleased to have Alfred, buthe was saved from her curt behavior when Betty soon joins them. Alfred enquire Betty why her mother does not look happy to see him, and he was shocked to know that it is because of his disclosure of him being the descendent of King Midas.

Mrs. Bootle reenters when Betty asks him if he has any document or any piece of jewelry to prove his identity. Alfred shows a ring which has been in his family for generation, but it will not be enough to prove his identity. The same time he tells her about the legend behind the ring. As by the legend, if a girl named marigold wears that ring on the right middle finger, she can turn things into gold, since it was the name of Kind Midas’s daughter.

Mrs.Bootle seems to be interested in the story and she enquires further about the legend and reveals that she full name happens to be Elizabeth Marigold Bootle. The three get excited and decides to try on the ring. Mrs. Bootle wears the ring and Alfred informs her to utter the spell “Presta Karistica Poo”. She tries it on the Vase and it turns into gold. Excited, soon she turns the table as well as the sideboard too.

Without knowing any of this Rubenthrope comes back enquiring about the brooch Betty mentioned earlier. Mrs. Bootle tells him that she has changed her mind and she wants to sell some family gold that has been with her for a long time. Once the bargaining and documenting over, Mrs. Bootle goes out with Alfred saying that she wants to do some shopping.

In the scene two its made clear through the conversation of Rubenthrope that Mrs. Bootle has made many more gold and supplied it to all over her nations. Because of her unlimited gold supply, her city is suffered from famine, which is caused due to inflation, strike and riots. An official was sent to make an agreement with Mrs. Bootle to stop making any more gold.

Mrs.Bootle and Alfred agrees and sign the agreement, as they were informed of a very liberal settlement which Alfred addresses would help them to live like lords also they will be mentioned in the birthday honours. Mr. Gregory informs Mrs.Bootle that since she doen’t like to be called Lady, she will be called as Duchess of Cheesebury Green for the sacrifice she is willing to make.

In the end, for everyone’s surprise Mrs. Bootle reveals that she cannot make anymore gold, even if she had not sign in the agreement because the ring has slipped from her hand when she was washing.

**Themes**

Too much of anything is good for nothing

**Conclusion**

 Ella Adkins has given a modern touch to the legend and met out the expectations of the modern readers.

**THE DEAR DEPARTED**

**AUTHOR INTRODUCTION**:

The writer of this play, William Stanley Houghton was a famous English dramatist. He was a prominent member of a group of playwrights known as the Manchester School of Dramatics. His plays are set locally in Northern England, but represent universal aspects of human nature.

**INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY:**

In the play The Dear Departed, Stanley Houghton satirises the degradation of moral values in the British middle-class.

In trying to grab the things belonging to grandfather, the children completely disregard modesty, decency and filial obligation. The materialistic attitudes of Mrs Slater and Mrs Jordan come in for bitter criticism. This story is about a middle-class family in a provincial town. Grandfather Abel Merryweather is presumed to be dead and his daughters Amelia Slater and Elizabeth Jordan try to grab his belongings.

SUMMARY:

The curtain opens to reveal that Abel Merryweather, father of Mrs Amelia Slater and Mrs Elizabeth Jordan has apparently passed away. Abel Merryweather has been staying with Mrs Slater for the past three years. Mrs Slater has informed her sister about his demise. We learn that the two sisters are estranged. However, she is expected shortly due to the father’s demise. We also learn that Abel Merryweather is a drunkard, who spends a fair amount of time at the nearby pub, Ring- o’-Bells, run by a widow, Mrs John Shorrocks. That day, too, he had returned drunk from the pub and fallen into bed in a daze. A while later when Amelia took some dinner up for him, she found he had ‘gone’.

The Slaters, Amelia, her husband Henry and daughter Victoria, are making arrangements for the arrival of the Jordans. They dress partly in mourning as they do not have mourning clothes and will acquire them soon. Before the Jordans arrive, Mrs Slater takes hold of her father’s new slippers, his new bureau and clock.

Mrs Jordan arrives with her husband, Ben. Both are dressed in new mourning clothes. Ironically, while both the families make a show of grief, the two sisters are more interested in their inheritance. Elizabeth wants to make a list of her father’s belongings. She wants his gold watch and she claims her father had promised it to her son, Jimmy. They then begin quarrelling over their father’s belongings. They are worried about the payment of their father’s insurance premium. When Victoria tells them Abel Merry weather had not paid the premium, the two ladies, Amelia and Elizabeth, express their anger at their father’s irresponsibility.

And then Abel Merry weather, who had had a little too much to drink and was in a drunken stupor, comes round. The family is surprised to see him. He, in turn, is surprised to see them in mourning. They try to hide the fact by saying that Ben has lost his elder brother. But the truth soon comes out and Abel is upset by his daughters’ shameful behaviour. He announces he is going to make a new will leaving all that he has to the person he is staying with at the time of his death. Each sister tries to convince him to live with her. A quarrel ensues where the two reveal secrets about each other. Their earlier fights have been over keeping the old man as neither had wanted him with her.

Disgusted with their behaviour, Abel announces that he is getting married to Mrs John Shorrocks, the owner of the Ring- o’-Bells and moving in with her as she wouldn’t find looking after him a burden. So saying, he leaves the house. The daughters who had their eyes on the inheritance are taught a lesson in filial duty.

## Introduction

The story of Dear Departed depicts the sad reality of the modern nuclear families that are strained with selfish interests and individual desires. Reflecting the society at large, the tale takes place at the house of the Slaters.

Mrs. Slater is one of two daughters of Mr. Abel Merryweather who lives with her. The other daughter Elizabeth and her husband Ben stay separately.

## Merryweather Lying Motionless

The two sisters are not on talking terms with each other as they often quarrel on things when in the same place. Mrs. Slater’s husband, Henry and daughter Victoria stay in the house with her father but rarely care about his health and happiness.

One day Mrs. Slater finds her father sprawled motionless on his bed. She assumes the worst and declares him dead. She asks Victoria to change into sober clothes as a form of respect as they in mourning of her father’s demise.

## Greed & Quarrel

Henry also joins them and the three start rearranging Abel’s things for their own benefit. Henry sends a message to the Jordans and they were on their way to the house. Aware of the time that was at hand, Henry is encouraged by his wife to take her father’s slippers.

Then, the two move her father’s bureau in their own room in place of their old and creaky chest. Henry was not too happy about such disregard for the things of the recently departed and Victoria expresses her discontent vocally but to no avail.

Soon the Jordans arrive and the sisters give each other a cold and customary kiss. The four of them waste no time in talking about the funeral and in particularly the bestowal of their father’s things. The departed’s insurance is discussed as well as the contents of his [obituary](https://englishsummary.com/obituary-ak-ramanujan/).

They decide to start dividing his things and Mrs. Slater asks Victoria to go to her grandfather’s room. Irritated by her mother’s greed and frostiness she trudges to the room reluctantly.

## Mr. Merryweather Alive

However, she returns with an expression of white horror on her face. She informs them that the dead had reawakened and was preparing to come down to talk with all of them.

Mr. Merryweather is surprised to see his estranged daughter in the house as they have not come to meet him for several years. The fact that all the people are dressed in clothes worn for mourning baffles him.

## Excuses to Hide Greed

Mrs. Slater tries to quell any suspicion by saying that Ben has had a family bereavement and they were honoring the dead with their attire.

Suddenly, her father notices Henry wearing his footwear. Victoria quickly seizes them and offers them to him. His father asks about his bureau and Mrs. Slater is mortified to come up with a sound excuse for moving it.

Elizabeth, taking the opportunity to have a dig at her sister, accuses her and Henry of stealing. This ticks the Slaters and both the couples resort to finger-pointing and name-calling. [The truth](https://englishsummary.com/travel-francis-bacon/) is finally exposed and their father is devastated by their lack of compassion and care for him.

He gathers courage and decides to make wholesale changes coming next Monday. First, he teases his daughters by saying that he will offer his will to the daughter in whose house he will die. The sisters quite expectedly begin to quarrel over it as well.

## Merryweather’s Decision

Calming everyone, he proclaims that he is giving all his belongings to Mrs. Shorrocks (works at a Church) who loves him and truly worry for him.

They will marry each other and spend the rest of their days taking care of one another. In the end and with a cheek in his tone, he asks his daughters and their greedy husbands to attend the wedding and bless the bride and groom.