

Introduction

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This support pack contains the following materials:

- a pre-reading vocabulary activity
- the story that you can listen to in the podcast
- a comprehension activity based on the story.

Before reading the story

Exercise 1

In the box are 25 words from the story. Below are the definitions of these words. Can you match the words to their definitions?

banqueter	cock	confection	esteem	fling/flung
garnish	hinterland	hum	ignominious	imperishable
influence	loathe	melody	once in a way	potentate
rapture	reproach	revelation	roebuck	scald
scrutiny	supplant	tureen	unanimous	vanity

1. act of criticizing someone, especially for not being successful or not doing what is expected.
2. male deer.
3. to move a part of your body upwards or in a particular direction.
4. a tune, often forming part of a larger piece of music.
5. to sing without opening your mouth.
6. person at a large formal meal for many people.
7. the land behind the coast or beyond the banks of a river, or an area of a country that is far away from cities.
8. the careful and detailed examination of something in order to obtain information about it.
9. to decorate food with a small amount of different food.
10. a ruler who has a lot of power, especially one whose power is not limited, for example by the existence of a parliament.
11. the power to have an effect on people or things, or a person or thing that is able to do this.
12. sometimes but not often.
13. lasting forever, or never weakening with age.
14. a decorated cake or unusual dish.
15. agreed by everyone.
16. a feeling of extreme pleasure and excitement.
17. a piece of information that is discovered although it was intended to be kept secret.
18. making you feel embarrassed or ashamed.
19. to throw or move something suddenly and with a lot of force.
20. to hate someone or something.
21. to take the place of someone or something.
22. respect and admiration for someone.
23. a large bowl, usually with a lid, from which soup or vegetables are served.
24. when someone thinks they are very attractive and is too interested in their own appearance.
25. to burn something or someone with very hot liquid or steam.

Read the story

The Chaplet

by Saki

A strange stillness hung over the restaurant; it was one of those rare moments when the orchestra was not discoursing the strains of the Ice-cream Sailor waltz.

"Did I ever tell you," asked Clovis of his friend, "the tragedy of music at mealtimes?"

"It was a gala evening at the Grand Sybaris Hotel, and a special dinner was being served in the Amethyst dining-hall. The Amethyst dining-hall had almost a European reputation, especially with that section of Europe which is historically identified with the Jordan Valley. Its cooking was beyond reproach, and its orchestra was sufficiently highly salaried to be above criticism. Thither came in shoals the intensely musical and the almost intensely musical, who are very many, and in still greater numbers the merely musical, who know how Tschaikowsky's name is pronounced and can recognize several of Chopin's nocturnes if you give them due warning; these eat in the nervous, detached manner of roebuck feeding in the open, and keep anxious ears cocked towards the orchestra for the first hint of a recognizable melody.

" 'Ah, yes, Pagliacci,' they murmur, as the opening strains follow hot upon the soup, and if no contradiction is forthcoming from any better-informed quarter they break forth into subdued humming by way of supplementing the efforts of the musicians. Sometimes the melody starts on level terms with the soup, in which case the banqueters contrive somehow to hum between the spoonfuls; the facial expression of enthusiasts who are punctuating potage St. Germain with Pagliacci is not beautiful, but it should be seen by those who are bent on observing all sides of life. One cannot discount the unpleasant things of this world merely by looking the other way.

"In addition to the aforementioned types the restaurant was patronized by a fair sprinkling of the absolutely non-musical; their presence in the dining-hall could only be explained on the supposition that they had come there to dine.

"The earlier stages of the dinner had worn off. The wine lists had been consulted, by some with

the blank embarrassment of a school-boy suddenly called on to locate a Minor Prophet in the tangled hinterland of the Old Testament, by others with the severe scrutiny which suggests that they have visited most of the higher-priced wines in their own homes and probed their family weaknesses. The diners who chose their wine in the latter fashion always gave their orders in a penetrating voice, with a plentiful garnishing of stage directions. By insisting on having your bottle pointing to the north when the cork is being drawn, and calling the waiter Max, you may induce an impression on your guests which hours of laboured boasting might be powerless to achieve. For this purpose, however, the guests must be chosen as carefully as the wine.

"Standing aside from the revellers in the shadow of a massive pillar was an interested spectator who was assuredly of the feast, and yet not in it. Monsieur Aristide Saucourt was the chef of the Grand Sybaris Hotel, and if he had an equal in his profession he had never acknowledged the fact. In his own domain he was a potentate, hedged around with the cold brutality that Genius expects rather than excuses in her children; he never forgave, and those who served him were careful that there should be little to forgive. In the outer world, the world which devoured his creations, he was an influence; how profound or how shallow an influence he never attempted to guess. It is the penalty and the safeguard of genius that it computes itself by troy weight in a world that measures by vulgar hundredweights.

Once in a way the great man would be seized with a desire to watch the effect of his master-efforts, just as the guiding brain of Krupp's might wish at a supreme moment to intrude into the firing line of an artillery duel. And such an occasion was the present. For the first time in the history of the Grand Sybaris Hotel, he was presenting to its guests the dish which he had brought to that pitch of perfection which almost amounts to scandal. Canetons a la mode d'Ambleve. In thin gilt lettering on the creamy white of the menu how little those words conveyed to the bulk of the imperfectly educated diners. And yet how much specialized effort had been lavished, how much carefully treasured lore

had been ungarnered, before those six words could be written. In the Department of Deux-Sevres ducklings had lived peculiar and beautiful lives and died in the odour of satiety to furnish the main theme of the dish; champignons, which even a purist for Saxon English would have hesitated to address as mushrooms, had contributed their languorous atrophied bodies to the garnishing, and a sauce devised in the twilight reign of the Fifteenth Louis had been summoned back from the imperishable past to take its part in the wonderful confection. Thus far had human effort laboured to achieve the desired result; the rest had been left to human genius - the genius of Aristide Saucourt.

"And now the moment had arrived for the serving of the great dish, the dish which world-weary Grand Dukes and market-obsessed money magnates counted among their happiest memories. And at the same moment something else happened. The leader of the highly salaried orchestra placed his violin caressingly against his chin, lowered his eyelids, and floated into a sea of melody.

" 'Hark!' said most of the diners, 'he is playing 'The Chaplet.' "

"They knew it was 'The Chaplet' because they had heard it played at luncheon and afternoon tea, and at supper the night before, and had not had time to forget.

" 'Yes, he is playing "The Chaplet," ' they reassured one another. The general voice was unanimous on the subject. The orchestra had already played it eleven times that day, four times by desire and seven times from force of habit, but the familiar strains were greeted with the rapture due to a revelation. A murmur of much humming rose from half the tables in the room, and some of the more overwrought listeners laid down knife and fork in order to be able to burst in with loud clappings at the earliest permissible moment.

"And the Canetons a la mode d'Ambleve? In stupefied, sickened wonder Aristide watched

them grow cold in total neglect, or suffer the almost worse indignity of perfunctory pecking and listless munching while the banqueters lavished their approval and applause on the music-makers. Calves' liver and bacon, with parsley sauce, could hardly have figured more ignominiously in the evening's entertainment. And while the master of culinary art leaned back against the sheltering pillar, choking with a horrible brain-searing rage that could find no outlet for its agony, the orchestra leader was bowing his acknowledgments of the hand-clappings that rose in a storm around him. Turning to his colleagues he nodded the signal for an encore. But before the violin had been lifted anew into position there came from the shadow of the pillar an explosive negative.

" 'Noh! Noh! You do not play thot again!'

"The musician turned in furious astonishment. Had he taken warning from the look in the other man's eyes he might have acted differently. But the admiring plaudits were ringing in his ears, and he snarled out sharply, 'That is for me to decide.'

" 'Noh! You play thot never again,' shouted the chef, and the next moment he had flung himself violently upon the loathed being who had supplanted him in the world's esteem. A large metal tureen, filled to the brim with steaming soup, had just been placed on a side table in readiness for a late party of diners; before the waiting staff or the guests had time to realize what was happening, Aristide had dragged his struggling victim up to the table and plunged his head deep down into the almost boiling contents of the tureen. At the further end of the room the diners were still spasmodically applauding in view of an encore.

"Whether the leader of the orchestra died from drowning by soup, or from the shock to his professional vanity, or was scalded to death, the doctors were never wholly able to agree. Monsieur Aristide Saucourt, who now lives in complete retirement, always inclined to the drowning theory."

After reading**Exercise 2**

Decide if each of the following statements about the story is True or False.

1. The author classifies the guests depending on how much they know about music.
2. Most of the guests present were more interested in the food than the music.
3. The author suggests that it is easy to fool people about how much you know about wine.
4. Monsieur Saucourt was good at his job and he knew it.
5. Monsieur Saucourt often watched people eating the food he had prepared.
6. The orchestra began to play at the same time that Monsieur Saucourt's dish was served.
7. The diners forgot about their food and concentrated only on the music.
8. This made Monsieur Saucourt very angry.
9. The orchestra leader noticed that Monsieur Saucourt was very angry.
10. Monsieur Saucourt attacked the orchestra leader.
11. The orchestra leader definitely died from drowning in the soup.

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Answers

Exercise 1: 1. *reproach*; 2. *roebuck*; 3. *cock*; 4. *melody*; 5. *hum*; 6. *banqueter*; 7. *hinterland*; 8. *scrutiny*; 9. *garnish*; 10. *potentate*; 11. *influence*; 12. *once in a way*; 13. *imperishable*; 14. *confection*; 15. *unanimous*; 16. *rapture*; 17. *revelation*; 18. *ignominious*; 19. *fling/flung*; 20. *loathe*; 21. *supplant*; 22. *esteem*; 23. *tureen*; 24. *vanity*; 25. *scald*

Exercise 2: 1. *True (T)*; 2. *False (F)*; 3. *T*; 4. *T*; 5. *F*; 6. *T*; 7. *T*; 8. *T*; 9. *F*; 10. *T*; 11. *F*