

## Comprehension and critical thinking activities for “Luncheon” by W. Somerset Maugham

Saidov Ravshan Tursunovich  
tursunovich1989@mail.ru  
Senior Teacher

Uzbekistan State World Language University

**Annotation.** This article presents innovative comprehension activities tailored for W. Somerset Maugham’s short story *Luncheon*. Highlighting themes such as social class, irony, and manners, the story provides an engaging framework for developing students’ reading and analytical skills. The activities are designed to enhance vocabulary acquisition, improve reading comprehension, and foster inferential thinking, making them ideal for literature and language classrooms. By encouraging critical reading, students are guided to explore the subtleties of Maugham’s writing, including his use of irony and character portrayal. The proposed exercises range from close textual analysis to discussions on thematic relevance, promoting deeper engagement with the text. Additionally, the article emphasizes the importance of contextual understanding, helping students connect the narrative’s social commentary to broader cultural and historical contexts. Overall, this resource serves as a valuable tool for educators aiming to enrich their teaching of literary texts while cultivating advanced comprehension skills in students.

**Keywords:** *Luncheon*, W. Somerset Maugham, Short story, Comprehension activities, Social class, Irony, Literary analysis, Vocabulary building, Reading comprehension

## Задания на понимание и развитие критического мышления для рассказа “Ланч” Сомерсета Моэма

Саидов Равшан Турсунович  
tursunovich1989@mail.ru  
Старший преподаватель

Узбекский государственный университет мировых языков

**Аннотация.** В статье представлены инновационные задания на понимание текста, разработанные для анализа рассказа Сомерсета Моэма «Ланч». Освещая такие темы, как социальные классы, ирония и манеры, рассказ служит увлекательной основой для развития навыков чтения и анализа. Задания направлены на расширение словарного запаса, улучшение понимания текста и развитие умения делать выводы, что делает их идеальными для уроков литературы и языка. Студентам предлагается критически прочитать текст, исследуя тонкости письма Моэма, включая его использование иронии и характеристику персонажей. Предложенные упражнения варьируются от детального анализа текста до обсуждений тематической значимости, что способствует более глубокому вовлечению в содержание. Кроме того, статья подчеркивает важность контекстуального понимания, помогая учащимся связать социальный комментарий рассказа с более широкими культурными и историческими контекстами. В целом, этот ресурс является ценным инструментом для преподавателей, стремящихся обогатить изучение литературных текстов и развить у студентов навыки углубленного понимания.

**Ключевые слова:** «Ланч», Сомерсет Моэм, Рассказ, Задания на понимание текста, Социальные классы, Ирония, Литературный анализ, Расширение словарного запаса, Чтение с пониманием.

## Somerset Moemning “Lanch” hikoyasiga oid tushunish va tanqidiy fikrlashga oid mashqlar

Saidov Ravshan Tursunovich

tursunovich1989@mail.ru

Katta o‘qituvchi

O‘zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universitet

**Annotatsiya.** Ushbu maqolada Somerset Moemning “Lanch” hikoyasi uchun innovatsion tushunish faoliyatlari taqdim etiladi. Hikoya ijtimoiy tabaqa, kinoya va odob-axloq kabi mavzularni yoritib, talabalarni o‘qish va tahliliy ko‘nikmalarini rivojlantirish uchun qiziqarli asos yaratadi. Faoliyatlar so‘z boyligini oshirish, o‘qilgan matnni tushunish va bilvosita fikrlashni rivojlantirishga mo‘ljallangan bo‘lib, ular adabiyot va til darslari uchun ideal hisoblanadi. Talabalarga Moemning kinoya va qahramonlar tasviridan foydalanishini o‘rganish orqali tanqidiy o‘qishni rag‘batlantiradi. Taklif etilgan mashqlar matnni chuqur tahlil qilishdan tortib mavzuviy muhimlikka bag‘ishlangan munozaralargacha bo‘lib, matnga chuqurroq jalb qilishni ta‘minlaydi. Shuningdek, maqola kontekstual tushunishning ahamiyatini ta‘kidlaydi, bu esa talabalarni hikoyadagi ijtimoiy tanqidni kengroq madaniy va tarixiy kontekstlarga bog‘lashga yordam beradi. Umuman olganda, ushbu manba adabiy matnlarni o‘rgatishda o‘qituvchilarga yordam beradigan va talabalarni ilg‘or tushunish ko‘nikmalarini shakllantirishga yo‘naltiradigan qimmatli vosita hisoblanadi.

**Kalit so‘zlar:** Lunch, Somerset Moem, hikoya, tushunish faoliyatlari, ijtimoiy tabaqa, kinoya, adabiy tahlil, so‘z boyligini oshirish, o‘qish tushunchasi

“Luncheon” is a cleverly crafted and entertaining short story by W. Somerset Maugham, which centers on the humorous yet thought-provoking encounter between a young, aspiring writer and a seemingly sophisticated woman who exudes an air of higher social standing. Set in Paris, the story unfolds as the protagonist narrates his experience of being invited to lunch by this woman, whom he had previously met and admired. The lunch takes place at an expensive restaurant, chosen by the woman, despite the narrator's limited financial means.

Through their interactions, the woman’s actions and attitudes gradually reveal deeper themes related to social class, personal values, and the superficial nature of appearances. Her insistence on ordering the most expensive items from the menu, all while professing modesty and a lack of appetite, creates a stark contrast between her outward demeanor and her actual behavior. This irony not only amuses the reader but also sheds light on the disparities in social expectations and the shallow pretenses often maintained to uphold social status.

Maugham employs humor and sharp irony throughout the narrative to underscore the tension between the protagonist’s modest circumstances and the woman’s oblivious extravagance. The story subtly critiques the superficiality and entitlement often associated with privilege, while also exploring the complexities of human interactions shaped by societal norms. Ultimately, “Luncheon” serves as a witty commentary on the disparities in values and expectations that exist within different social strata, leaving readers with both laughter and thoughtful reflection on the nuances of human behavior.

Comprehension activities are carefully structured exercises that aim to improve a learner’s ability to understand, interpret, and analyze written or spoken texts. These activities are designed to develop a range of cognitive and linguistic skills that are essential for effective reading and listening comprehension. Among the key skills targeted are the ability to identify main ideas, discern supporting details, make logical inferences, summarize content concisely, and critically evaluate the information presented in the text.

Such activities play a fundamental role in language and literature education, as they encourage learners to engage actively with the material rather than passively absorbing information. Through tasks like answering comprehension questions, creating summaries, drawing connections between

ideas, and analyzing the author's intent, students gain a deeper understanding of the text and its context. These exercises also help learners build vocabulary, improve their grasp of syntax and grammar, and develop critical thinking skills by examining the text's themes, arguments, and stylistic features.

In literature classrooms, comprehension activities often extend to analyzing literary elements such as tone, mood, symbolism, and narrative techniques. For instance, students may be asked to explore how an author's choice of words shapes the text's meaning or how specific plot developments contribute to the overall message. These tasks not only enhance reading comprehension but also foster an appreciation for literary artistry.

Additionally, comprehension activities can be tailored to suit various proficiency levels and learning styles, making them versatile tools for educators. Whether in the form of individual assignments, group discussions, or interactive tasks, these exercises serve to promote active engagement with texts and ensure that learners develop both the confidence and the skills necessary to interpret complex materials effectively in academic and real-world contexts (Snow, 2002).

**Key Elements of Comprehension Activities:**

*Literal Understanding:* Grasping explicit information and details in the text.

*Inferential Thinking:* Drawing conclusions or making predictions based on implicit information.

*Critical Analysis:* Evaluating the author's purpose, style, and themes.

*Vocabulary Development:* Enhancing the understanding of unfamiliar words through contextual clues.

*Text-to-World Connections:* Relating the text to broader cultural, historical, or social contexts (Harmer, 2007).

Below we we'll present the activities related to comprehension and critical thinking.

**Comprehension Activities**

*Activity 1: Vocabulary Building*

In this activity, students will focus on unfamiliar words and phrases from the story.

Select ten challenging words from Luncheon. Examples might include words like "obsequious," "affected," or "prodigality." Students are asked to define these words using context clues, then verify their definitions using a dictionary. Afterward, students will use each word in their own sentences to show understanding.

Above mentioned activity may encourage students to derive meanings from context helps them develop an essential reading skill that extends beyond the classroom. This strategy mirrors how readers naturally encounter and learn new words in authentic texts. Moreover, it can verify meanings using a dictionary teaches students how to cross-check their understanding and builds their confidence in using reference tools effectively. We can state following results related to the activity.

*Encourages Active Usage*

Asking students to create their own sentences ensures they not only understand the words but also learn to apply them in relevant contexts. This active engagement solidifies retention and practical usage.

*Enhances Engagement with the Text*

By focusing on words directly from Luncheon, students are encouraged to delve deeper into the story, understanding nuances in Maugham's style and vocabulary. This not only aids comprehension but also fosters an appreciation for his writing.

*Supports Vocabulary Retention*

Writing personal sentences allows for deeper cognitive processing of new vocabulary, making it more likely that students will remember and use these words in the future.

*Fosters Critical Thinking*

Selecting challenging words that have nuanced meanings, such as "obsequious" or "prodigality," provides an opportunity to discuss connotation and tone, encouraging students to think critically about language use.

### *Prepares Students for Advanced Texts*

Familiarizing students with sophisticated vocabulary equips them with the tools needed for analyzing more complex literary works, advancing their overall reading competence (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002).

Here are you can read activities related to comprehension and critical thinking.

#### *Activity 2: Character Analysis*

This activity will encourage students to analyze the main characters and their motivations.

Questions:

1. How does the narrator describe the woman at the beginning of the story?
2. How does the woman's behavior reflect her views on social class?
3. What are the narrator's feelings toward her by the end of the story?

Extension: Students can compare the narrator's portrayal of the woman with her actual behavior and motivations.

#### *Activity 3: Themes and Irony*

Luncheon employs irony to critique social conventions. In this activity, students will explore how Maugham uses irony to develop themes of pretension and social disparity.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is ironic about the woman's insistence on eating in a fancy restaurant?
2. How does the ending of the story reveal a deeper level of irony about the narrator's relationship with the woman?

Students should write a short paragraph discussing how irony enhances the theme of social class and expectations.

#### *Activity 4: Summarizing and Sequencing*

In this activity, students will work in pairs or small groups to summarize the key events of the story and put them in order. After reading Luncheon, students will write a brief summary of the story's plot. Students will then sequence key moments (e.g., the lunch meeting, the woman's behavior, the narrator's reaction) to improve understanding of the narrative flow.

#### *Activity 5: Inferential Questions*

These questions encourage students to make inferences based on details in the text.

Questions:

1. Why do you think the narrator felt compelled to pay for the lunch, despite the woman's extravagant order?
2. What do you think Maugham is saying about the nature of relationships based on social class through the interaction between the two characters?

#### *Activity 2: Character Analysis*

Students analyze the characters in Luncheon, focusing on their traits, motivations, and development. For instance, they might explore the narrator's perspective and the woman's manipulative nature. This helps develop critical thinking and understanding of characterization (Abrams, 1999).

#### *Activity 3: Themes and Irony*

Students identify and discuss key themes such as social class, manipulation, and irony in the story. They explore how Maugham uses irony to highlight societal norms and the power dynamics between the narrator and the woman (Booth, 1974).

#### *Activity 4: Summarizing and Sequencing*

Students summarize the plot of Luncheon in their own words and sequence events to reinforce comprehension. This activity aids in understanding narrative structure and identifying key moments (Brown, 2004).

#### *Activity 5: Inferential Questions*

Students answer inferential questions based on implicit details in the text, such as the characters' intentions or the significance of specific events. This enhances their ability to think critically and read between the lines (Day & Park, 2005).

The comprehension activities described above aim to deepen students' understanding of *Luncheon* by W. Somerset Maugham, along with its intricate themes and nuanced storytelling. These activities are strategically designed to guide students in exploring the layers of meaning within the text, fostering a more profound engagement with the narrative and its underlying messages. Through structured tasks, students are encouraged to delve into the complexities of the story, analyzing how the author uses literary devices such as irony, character development, and social commentary to craft a compelling and thought-provoking narrative.

By focusing on the interplay between these elements, students not only enhance their ability to interpret literary texts but also develop critical thinking and analytical skills. The activities can be tailored to suit a variety of learning levels, ensuring that students at different stages of literary competency can engage meaningfully with the material. This approach creates an interactive and reflective learning environment, allowing students to connect with the text on multiple levels while also gaining valuable insights into the craft of storytelling and the socio-cultural implications embedded in literature.

**The list of used literature:**

1. Abrams, M.H. (1999). *A glossary of literary terms*. Harcourt Brace.
2. Beck, I.L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. Guilford Press.
3. Booth, W.C. (1974). *A rhetoric of irony*. University of Chicago Press.
4. Brown, H.D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. Pearson Education.
5. Day, R.R., & Park, J. (2005). Developing reading comprehension questions. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 17(1), 60-73.
6. Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching* (4th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
7. Maugham, W.S. (1951). *Luncheon*.
8. Snow, C. (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward an R&D program in reading comprehension*. RAND Corporation.