

O. Henry's  
The Gift of the  
Magi

*and other stories*

Student Learning Materials

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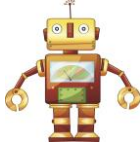


# THE ROMANCE OF A BUSY BROKER

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY 1: VOCABULARY BUILDING

In the story “The Romance of a Busy Broker,” Harvey Maxwell and Miss Leslie work in the same office. Harvey Maxwell is a broker and Miss Leslie is his secretary. This vocabulary activity will help you learn some of the keywords in the story.

### Directions:

1. The left column contains **Words** about life in a busy office. Each word comes with a picture to help you understand what the word means.
2. Match the words in the left column with their **Definitions** in the right column.
3. For each definition, fill in the blank with the number of the word it refers to. An example is given below.

	<b>Words</b>		<b>Definitions</b>
1.	Broker 	<u>6</u>	The feeling of being in love with someone
2.	Secretary 	_____	Someone who works on a ship as part of the crew
3.	Sailor 	_____	A person who helps other people to reach agreements, make deals, or buy and sell property (such as stocks or houses)
4.	Machine 	_____	A person whose job is to handle records, write letters, arrange appointments, etc. for another person in an office
5.	Storm 	_____	An occurrence of bad weather in which there is a lot of rain, or snow, and often strong winds
6.	Romance 	_____	A piece of equipment with moving parts that works when it is given power (electricity, gas)

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY 2: SUNSHINE OUTLINE

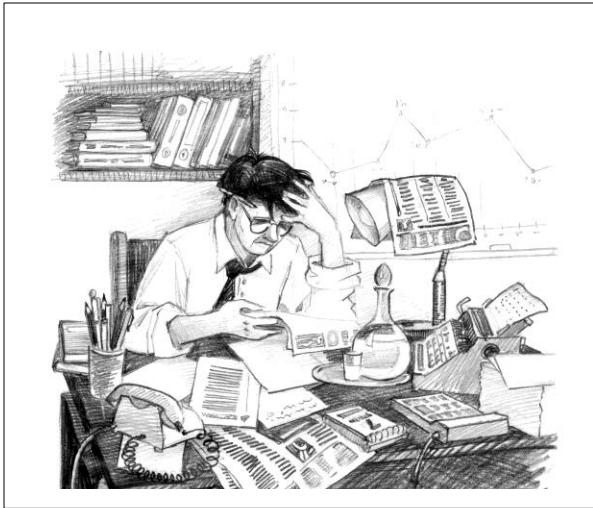
The story “The Romance of a Busy Broker” takes place in the office of Harvey Maxwell, a busy broker, and Miss Leslie, his secretary. In this activity, you will analyze a picture representing the workplace in the story.

### **Directions:**

1. Before you read the story, look at the picture below.
2. Read the phrases below that describe **Who**, **What**, **When**, **Where**, and **How**.
3. Put the letters for the **phrases** below in the correct places. An example is given.
4. Write a short sentence predicting what the story will be about.

### **Phrases**

- A. On a busy morning
- B. The rush of business
- C. Working like a machine
- D. Harvey Maxwell (New York broker) and Miss Leslie (the secretary)
- E. An office of a busy broker in New York



**Who?**

**What?**

**When?**

**Where?**

**How?**

**What do you think this story will be about?**

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## WHILE-READING ACTIVITY 1: SENSORY IMAGES

O. Henry uses many words and phrases to convey sensory images. The following activity will help you understand what the characters are seeing, hearing, smelling, and touching in the story.

### **Directions:**

1. As you read **pages 54-57**, focus on the description of what the characters in the story are seeing, hearing, smelling, or touching.
2. Read the phrases below that describe the sensory images of the characters.
3. Write the letter of each phrase in the corresponding column in the chart below. An example has been provided.

- ~~A. He allowed his face to show interest and surprise. (p. 54)~~  
B. "Good morning, Pitcher," said Maxwell. (p. 54)  
C. She seemed to shine softly. (p. 55)  
D. "Nothing," answered the secretary.... (p. 55)  
E. There was golden hair... high on a head. (p. 56)  
F. His hands full of letters and paper from the machine. (p. 56)  
G. Through the window came a soft sweet smell of flowers. (p. 57)  
H. This smell of flowers belonged to Miss Leslie. (p. 57)  
I. Her arms went around the broker's neck. (p. 57)  
J. "I know now," she said, softly. (p. 57)

See	Hear	Smell	Touch
A			

## WHILE-READING ACTIVITY 2: BUSY LIFE IN AN OFFICE

In the story Harvey Maxwell is described as a very busy businessman in New York City. O. Henry uses many details to describe Maxwell's office routine. This activity will help you identify some details of the office hours.

### Directions:

1. Stop reading at the end of **page 55**. Fill in the column **Details of Busy Office Life** in the table below. Select at least three phrases or sentences that O. Henry uses to describe the busy situation in Maxwell's office. An example from page 55 is completed.
2. Continue reading.
3. Repeat the first two steps for pages 56 and 57.

Page Numbers	Details of Busy Office Life
<b>Pages 54-55</b>	1. <i>He rushed to his table as if he were going to jump over it.</i> 2. 3.
<b>Page 56</b>	1. 2. 3.
<b>Page 57</b>	1. 2. 3.

## POST-READING ACTIVITY 1: COMPARISONS

In the story “The Romance of a Busy Broker,” O. Henry compares Harvey Maxwell, the busy broker, to a machine. This writing technique makes the image of a busy broker vivid to readers. There are some other examples of comparisons in this story. This activity will help you identify some of them.

### Directions:

1. After reading the story, underline those sentences that compare people to other items.
2. Read the comparisons in the first column **Comparisons**. Then find sentences with each comparison in the story. Write each sentence in the column **Examples from the Story**.
3. Each comparison in this story is used to stress certain features of a person or a situation. Fill in the column **Character Description** using the descriptive words from the box below. You may also use your own words to describe the characters. An example has been provided.

### Possible descriptive words and their definitions

**impersonal:** ~~showing no interest in individual people or their feelings~~

**alert:** able to think clearly and to notice things

**attentive:** very concerned about the needs of others

**determined:** having a strong feeling that you are going to do something and that you will not allow anything to stop you

**efficient:** capable of producing desired results without wasting materials, time, or energy

**energetic:** having or showing a lot of energy; involving a lot of effort

**fashionable:** dressing and acting in a way that is currently popular

**furious:** very angry

**restless:** feeling nervous or bored; tending to move around a lot; not relaxed or calm

Comparisons	Examples from the Story	Character Description
Maxwell → machine (p. 55)	<i>The machine sitting at the table was no longer a man.</i>	<i>impersonal</i>
Other men in the office → sailors (p. 56)		
Maxwell → dancer (p. 56)		
Applicant for the secretary position → silver chain (p. 56)		
Maxwell → clock (p. 56)		

## POST-READING ACTIVITY 2: TRUE OR FALSE

A secretary plays an important role in an office. In the story “The Romance of a Busy Broker,” Miss Leslie has worked as Maxwell’s secretary, but now she is leaving and Mr. Pitchers has been instructed to hire a new secretary to replace her. This activity will help you understand Miss Leslie’s role in this story.

### Directions:

1. Identify the information about the secretary in the story.
2. In the **True or False** column, write “T” if you think the statement is true in the table below. Write “F” if the statement is false. An example is given.

True or False	Statement
T	Miss Leslie does not wear chains or jewels in the office. (p. 54)
	Miss Leslie looks different when she comes to the office this morning. (p. 55)
	Miss Leslie decides not to work today because a new secretary will be hired to take her place. (p. 55)
	No one shows up for the job interview before 9:30 in the morning. (p. 55)
	Maxwell shows some interest in the first job applicant for the secretary position. (p. 56)
	Maxwell believes that Miss Leslie is not a good secretary. (p. 56)
	Miss Leslie is angry when Maxwell asks her to marry him. (p. 57)
	Miss Leslie is an understanding and caring secretary. (p. 57)