

Often he didn't have a coat in winter. He smoked the cheapest tobacco. He worked hard. They walked on. Mrs Ramsay listened but did not quite understand the meaning, only some words: dissertation •, fellowship •, readership •, lectureship •. She said to herself: 'I won't let the children laugh at him any more, poor little man.'

They had reached the town now and were in the main street. He went on talking, about teaching, and working men, and lectures and he was about to tell her something when they walked out onto the quay •. The whole bay spread before them and Mrs Ramsay could not help exclaiming, 'Oh, how beautiful!' The great plateful of blue water was before her; the Lighthouse, tall and distant in the middle; and on the right, as far as the eye could see, the green sand dunes • with the wild grasses on them.

'That's the view that my husband loves,' she said, stopping.



Mr Tansley was now under the influence of an extraordinary emotion. It had begun in the garden when he had wanted to take her bag, and it had increased in the town when he had wanted to tell her everything about himself. It was very strange.

There had stood in the living room of the little house where she had taken tea. He waited for her, while she went upstairs to see a woman. He had no choice. He waited impatiently. He looked forward to the walk home. He wanted to carry her bag. Then he heard her come out, shut a door and say, 'You must keep the windows open and the doors open. Ask at the house for anything you want.' Then suddenly, when she walked into the room, he realized that she was the most beautiful person he had ever seen.

'With stars in her eyes and the wind in her hair – what nonsense • was he thinking? She was fifty at least. She had eight children. Stepping through fields of flowers with the stars in her eyes and the wind in her hair. He took her bag.

'Goodbye, Elsie,' she said, and they walked up the street. A man digging in a drain • stopped digging and looked at her. And for the first time in his life, Charles Tansley felt very proud. He was walking with a beautiful woman. He was holding her bag.



Glossary

- **dissertation:** long essay
- **drain:** tube that takes away dirty water
- **fellowship:** high level university qualification
- **lectureship:** position of being a lecturer (teacher in a university)
- **nonsense:** silly things
- **quay:** port
- **readership:** position of being a reader (teaching assistant)
- **sand dunes:** small hills of sand near the sea



'You can't go to the Lighthouse, James,' said Mr Tansley.

'Nasty little man,' thought Mrs Ramsay. 'Why does he keep saying that?'

'Perhaps we'll wake up and find the sun shining and the birds singing,' she said kindly, smoothing James's hair. James really wanted to go to the Lighthouse.

She couldn't hear voices any more. They had stopped talking. She listened, and then heard something rhythmical, half said, half chanted, beginning in the garden. Suddenly there was a loud cry:

'Stormed at with shot and shell!'

She turned nervously to see if anyone had heard her husband. Only Lily Briscoe, she was glad to find; and that did not matter. But the sight of the girl standing on the edge of the lawn painting reminded her that she was supposed to keep her head in the same position for Lily's picture. Lily's picture! Mrs Ramsay smiled.

'With her little Chinese eyes and pale face, she'll never marry,' she thought. You could not take her painting very seriously. She was an independent little woman, and Mrs Ramsay liked her because of this. So, remembering her promise, she bent her head.

Mr Ramsay almost knocked Lily's easel over, running towards her with his hands waving, shouting out:

'Bravely we rode and well.'

Glossary

- **easel:** support for holding a painting
- **smoothing:** making soft and flat
- **stormed at:** attacked
- **with shot and shell:** with guns and bombs. Mr Ramsay is reciting lines from Tennyson's poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*

Thankfully, he turned, and rode off, to die gloriously, at Balaclava, Lily supposed. He was frightening and ridiculous at the same time. But as long as he was waving and shouting, she was safe. 'He won't stand and look at my picture,' she thought, relieved. 'I don't want anyone to look at my picture.'

IMAGINE

Imagine the scene. What is happening? Tick (✓) the correct sentence for each pair. Then close your eyes and picture the scene.

- Mrs Ramsay and Lily are in the house.
- Mrs Ramsay and Lily are in the garden.
- Lily is painting Mrs Ramsay's portrait.
- Lily is talking to Mrs Ramsay.
- Mr Ramsay runs across the lawn shouting.
- Mr Ramsay stops and looks at the painting.



But now someone else was walking towards her. She could tell from the footsteps that it was William Bankes. But she did not turn her picture over on the grass. She would have turned it over if it had been anybody else.



- **gloriously:** in a great and brilliant way
- **relieved:** happy because something unpleasant did not happen

They were both staying in the village, and walking in and out, they had talked about the soup, about the children, about one thing and another, which made them friends. Now when he stood beside her, she just stood there. (He was old enough to be her father, a botanist, a widower, smelling of soap, very tidy and clean.)

Staying in the same house with her, he had noticed how organized she was. She got up before breakfast and went to paint. She was poor, and not as attractive as Miss Doyle. However, she was sensible, which made her, in his eyes, superior to Miss Doyle. Now, for instance, when Ramsay came, shouting, and waving his arms, Miss Briscoe understood.

'Someone had blundered'.

Mr Ramsay glared at them. That made them both uncomfortable. Together they had seen a thing they were not meant to see. Quickly, Mr Banks said something about it being cold. He suggested going for a walk. She agreed. But it was difficult to leave her picture.

She loved painting, but when she began to paint, she felt inadequate. She laid her brushes neatly in the box, and said to William Banks, 'Yes, it's cold now.'

It was the middle of September after all, and past six in the evening. They walked down the garden; past the tennis lawn, past the tall grass, to that gap in the thick hedge, guarded by red-hot pokers. Between them, the blue waters of the bay looked bluer than ever.

Glossary

- **blundered:** made a mistake, referring to the mistake of sending the Light Brigade to its death (see page 22)
- **botanist:** scientist who studies plants
- **gap:** empty space
- **glared:** looked angrily
- **inadequate:** not good enough
- **red-hot pokers:** tall red-orange flowers
- **sensible:** wise and practical
- **widower:** man whose wife has died



They came there every evening. They both smiled, standing there. They felt happy. Looking at the sand dunes, William Bankes thought of Ramsay, thought of a road in Westmorland, thought of Ramsay walking along that road ahead of him. He thought their friendship had ended, there, on that road. After that, Ramsay had married. After that, their friendship had changed. But he said he still admired and respected Ramsay.

He turned from the view. They started to walk up the drive to the house. They saw Cam, Ramsay's youngest daughter. She was picking flowers. She was wild and fierce. She would not 'give a flower to the gentleman' as the nursemaid told her to. No! no! no! she would not! She stamped her feet. And Mr Bankes felt old and sad then.

The Ramsays were not rich. And they had eight children! How can anybody feed eight children on philosophy? There was their education to pay for (true, Mrs Ramsay had some money of her own perhaps) and there were the clothes.

VALUES

What is more important in your opinion? Number the boxes.

- Having a happy marriage
- Being successful in your job
- Educating your children
- Having friends



They walked up the drive, and Lily Briscoe said 'yes' and 'no' to his comments. He talked about Ramsay. He felt sorry for him but he also envied him.

Glossary

- **envied him:** wished he was like him
- **fierce:** with strong feelings
- **stamped:** put her feet down heavily on the ground

The children gave Ramsay something - William Bankes acknowledged that. He wished Cam had stuck a flower in his coat or climbed over his shoulders, as she did over her father's. But the children had not destroyed something, his old friends thought. What did Lily Briscoe think? It was surprising that a man of his intelligence depended on people's praise as much as he did.

'Oh,' said Lily, 'think of his work!'

Whenever she 'thought of his work' she always saw a large kitchen table. It was Andrew's fault. 'What are your father's books about?' she had asked him. 'Subject and object and the nature of reality,' Mr Ramsay had said. And when she said she didn't know what that meant, 'Think of a kitchen table when you're not there,' Andrew had said to her. So now when she thought of Mr Ramsay's work, she always saw a kitchen table.

William Bankes liked her for telling him to 'think of his work.' He had thought of it, often. Many times he had said, 'Ramsay is one of those men who do their best work before they're forty.' He had made a definite contribution to philosophy in one little book when he was only twenty-five. What came after that was more or less repetition.

At that moment, Lily Briscoe felt a great respect for Mr Bankes. You are not vain. You are better than Mr Ramsay. You are the best human being that I know. You don't have any children or a wife. You live for science. Praise is an insult to you. You are a kind, generous, heroic man!

- **acknowledged:** accepted
- **contribution to:** something helping the development of
- **depended on:** needed
- **destroyed:** made (something) disappear
- **praise:** approval; admiration
- **vain:** proud; thinking he is the best