

“The Egg” 思考题

Summary:

In the short story “The Egg” by Sherwood Anderson, the narrator tells of the struggles of his parents during his childhood. When his father meets his mother at age 35, he is a carefree farmhand, but after they marry, they both become ambitious. They start a chicken farm and attempt to make it work for 10 years, but eventually they are overcome by the difficulties of raising chickens. They then move to a town near a railway station where they open a restaurant. However, the restaurant has few customers, and they have to work very hard, keeping it open day and night. The father comes up with the idea of offering entertainment to the restaurant clientele, but his first effort involving playing tricks with an egg ends in disaster.

About the author:

Sherwood Anderson (舍伍德·安德森) (1876-1941) was an American novelist and short story writer known for his unique literary style and exploration of small-town life and the complexities of human relationships. Born in Camden, Ohio, Anderson worked various jobs before becoming a successful writer. He is best known for his groundbreaking work *Winesburg, Ohio* (《小城畸人》), a collection of interconnected short stories that delve into the lives and struggles of the residents of a small town. Anderson’s writing is characterized by its realistic portrayal of ordinary people and their inner lives, as well as its **use of stream-of-consciousness narrative techniques**. Throughout his career, Anderson’s work often focused on themes of loneliness, alienation, and the search for meaning in life. His writing style and themes have influenced generations of writers and continue to resonate with readers today.

1. What does the egg symbolize?

It symbolizes the parents’ broken dreams and fragile hopes – easily shattered like an eggshell. It also represents the cycle of life and death (new life vs. being consumed) and the uncertainty of fate.

2. What is the **mood** of the story? (小说的**氛围**: 强调读者的情绪体验)

- 1) Tragic – The father’s dreams end in failure and despair. When he breaks down crying, the reader feels deep sadness and pity for him.
- 2) Grotesque (怪诞) – The father’s obsession with deformed chicken monstrosities is strange and even repulsive. These images make the reader feel uncomfortable and uneasy.
- 3) Heavy and hopeless – Nothing the family does works out. The reader feels trapped

in a cycle of failed hope, like there is no way out.

4) Bittersweet (苦乐参半) and painful – Some moments are funny in a sad way. The reader does not know whether to laugh or cry, which makes the story feel achingly human.

5) Sympathetic – Despite the strangeness, the reader cannot help but feel sorry for the parents and their quiet desperation.

3. What is the **tone of the story? (小说的**基调**: 强调作者的态度)**

1) Philosophical – The narrator reflects on life through his storytelling. He asks big questions about success, failure, and the meaning of ordinary lives.

2) Cozy and intimate – The first-person address makes the reader feel personally included, as if the narrator is telling a private story to a close friend.

3) Humorous yet jaded (幽默风趣, 却又略带厌倦感) – The narrator applies high-sounding philosophy to his parents' ordinary, failed lives. This creates a dry, tired kind of humor—he sees the absurdity of their struggles but no longer expects things to change.

4) Calm and restrained – The narrator never gets emotional or dramatic. He tells the story quietly and honestly, without blame or anger.

5) Gentle and compassionate – Behind his calm voice, the narrator shows understanding and pity for his parents. He does not make fun of them; he respects their struggles, even when they fail.

4. What is the **point of view of the story?**

The First-person ("I") – an unnamed narrator looks back on his childhood. This creates intimacy and allows readers to see his inner thoughts and changing perspectives.

5. What kind of person is the Father?

Before marriage, he is a content farmhand, happy with simple life. After marriage, he becomes ambitious and starts a chicken farm and a restaurant, but fails repeatedly, leading to despair. The father represents old-fashioned values and is the emotional center of the story's tragedy.

6. What is the narrator's attitude toward the American Dream and his family?

Toward the American Dream: disillusioned – sees it as a false promise.

Toward his family: feels resentment and a desire to break free from tradition and expectations.

7. What three negative events did the narrator witness as a child?

1) A hen killed by a weasel – showing the vulnerability of chickens.

2) His father forcibly breaking a broody hen's eggs – causing distress to the hen.

3) A hen snatched by a hawk – reinforcing helplessness and fear.

8. What is the theme of the story?

- 1) Disillusionment with the American Dream – hard work does not guarantee success.
- 2) The cycle of life and death – all things grow, decay, and pass; eventually, one must accept this reality.

9. How does **stream-of-consciousness technique work in the story?**

The narration flows freely and non-linearly, mixing memories and reflections. This reveals the narrator's raw inner thoughts and emotions, deepening our understanding of his struggles and identity.