

Full Circle by Edith Wharton Part 7

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Level: Advanced

Age: Young adults / Adults

Aims: In this lesson the students will:

1. recall the end of Part 6 and their predictions for this part;
2. listen for gist and attitude;
3. act out a short conversation;
4. listen for key information;
5. predict the end of the instalment;
6. discuss the significance of a key event;
7. study the relationship between punctuation and pronunciation;
8. write a short first-person account of the final scene.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student; Track 1 (first part of Part 7), Track 2 (extract), Track 3 (second part of Part 7), Track 4 (final part of Part 7) and Track 5 (full audio) downloaded from onestopenglish; one copy of the full transcript per student

Summary: The story is about two writers who were once friends. Their lives have taken very different directions since they left university. One has become a successful novelist; the other is poor and out of work. An advertisement in the paper brings the two together in a new relationship, one that brings to light quite a few uncomfortable truths about the two men. In Part 7, Betton is enjoying the letters being sent to him by two of his fans, but, when Vyse is called away because of an illness in his family, Betton receives an unwanted surprise.

Activity 1

Aims: to recall how Part 6 ended; to predict how Part 7 begins; to listen for gist and attitude; to act out a short conversation

1. Ask the students to recall what happened at the end of Part 6. (*Betton started to receive letters from two interesting correspondents.*) Ask them to recall, also, the scene they acted out when Betton tells Vyse that he wants to read the letters himself.

Hand out the worksheet and tell students to look at Activity 1. They should decide which summary they think will best describe the conversation between the two men. Explain that they are guessing here from their knowledge of the story and that they are going to listen to the conversation between the two men to confirm their guesses.

2. Field answers from the class, asking them to justify their choice. Do not offer any feedback at this stage.

3. Ask the students to put the worksheet aside for a moment as they listen to the first instalment of Part 7. Play Track 1.

4. Ask the students to check their answers in pairs, referring back to the worksheet. Then, check answers with the whole class. Encourage discussion and justification of their answers if there is any disagreement.

Key: 2

5. Hand out the first part of the transcript (excluding Track 4) and refer students to the section marked 'Track 1'. Ask them to work in pairs and act out the conversation between the two men. Tell them to read only the words said by the two men and to try to convey the attitude suggested by the narrator.

6. Ask one or two pairs to act the conversation out to the rest of the class and comment on the attitude of the two speakers. Alternatively, if you have recording facilities available (on computers or phones, for

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example), ask each pair to record themselves and, then, listen back to their recorded conversation, discussing how successfully they feel they have conveyed the attitudes of the two speakers.

Activity 2

Aims: to raise awareness of the relationship between punctuation and pronunciation; to practise pausing and chunking, according to punctuation

1. Tell students to turn over their transcripts. Ask them to work in pairs to complete Activity 2 on the worksheet, where they have to add punctuation marks to the short extract. Point out that they should add the punctuation marks in the order shown.
2. Ask the students to listen to the opening sentences again and see if the way the speaker reads the words helps them decide if they have chosen the correct locations for the punctuation marks. Play Track 2.
3. Encourage discussion and play Track 2 again if necessary, pausing the audio to highlight the pauses. Finally, ask the students to look at the transcript and compare their answers.
4. Ask the students to read the extract aloud in time with the narrator, using the same rhythm and pauses. Play Track 2 again.

Activity 3

Aims: to listen for key information; to predict the twist at the end of Part 7

1. Ask the students to look at the questions in Activity 3 on the worksheet and prepare to listen to the next instalment of Part 7. Explain that it will be a longer instalment and that they will need to make notes of their answers.
2. Play Track 3. Ask the students to make notes of their answers on the worksheet.
3. Ask the students to compare their answers and recall as much as they can about both correspondents and the letters Betton exchanged with the young woman.

Key: 1. *because they satisfy his need for intellectual recognition;* 2. *because he feels*

that she is interested in him as a person and possibly attracted to him; 3. *because he wants to meet her in person;* 4. *her first response is to say that it's impossible that they should meet*

4. Write the following questions on the board. Alternatively, you could dictate them and ask students to think about the answers quietly as they write them down. Then, ask the students to discuss the questions in pairs.

- *Why does Vyse have to go away?*
- *Why is Betton relieved that Vyse has to go away?*
- *What happens on the morning that Vyse is due to come back?*

5. Tell them to check their answers by referring to the section marked 'Track 3'.

6. Check answers with the whole class.

Key: 1. *because his father is ill;* 2. *because he doesn't want Vyse to read the response from the young woman;* 3. *Betton gets up late and rushes to open his mail before Vyse arrives. There is a letter from the young woman.*

7. Ask the students to discuss what they think the letter will say.

Activity 4

Aims: to listen for key information; to discuss the significance of the returned letter

1. Ask the students to listen to Track 4.
2. Ask the students to look at Activity 4 on the worksheet and complete the sentences. Then, hand out the transcript for Track 4 and ask them to check their answers. Field answers from the class and ask them to discuss the significance of the returned letter. Remind them of the earlier letter from Hester Macklin and the significance of that letter. Some students may now understand that the letters are being written by Vyse. Don't confirm this yet. All will be revealed in the final part of the story.

Key (suggested answers): 1. *... it makes no reference to his suggestion that they should meet.;* 2. *... she wants to meet him.;*

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3 ... the Dead Letter Office.; ... the letter he wrote to the young woman asking her a second time to meet him.

Creative writing

Aim: to write a short first-person narration of the closing scene

1. Tell the students to think about how Betton feels and what he is thinking as he opens the two letters. Ask them to work in pairs to discuss their ideas.
2. Field answers from the class, encouraging as much detail in their responses as possible. Ask the students to think about Betton's movements and physical reactions, as well as his thoughts.
3. Ask the pairs to write a short first-person text describing the last scene through Betton's eyes.
4. Bring the pairs together in groups of four to compare and discuss their texts. You may want to ask volunteers to read out their text in the role of Betton to the class.

Follow-up activities

1. Ask the students to continue with the summary of the story so far.
2. Ask them to read back through the transcripts for each part and predict what will happen in the final part of the story.
3. Ask the students to write the letter that Betton wrote to the young woman the second time, trying to persuade her to meet him.

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Activity 1

What do you think will happen in the conversation between Betton and Vyse? Choose from the descriptions below.

1. Vyse is surprised that Betton wants to read the letters himself but doesn't ask any questions.
2. Vyse shows no surprise but makes a remark that makes Betton feel uncomfortable.
3. Vyse isn't at all surprised but he asks some awkward questions that Betton finds difficult to answer.
4. Vyse shows surprise and Betton, feeling uncomfortable, feels he has to justify himself.

Activity 2

Add the punctuation marks below to the extract. Add capitals where necessary.

. , , : " , ! " . " . "

vyse showed no surprise when betton announced his intention of dealing personally with the two correspondents who showed so flattering a reluctance to take their leave but betton immediately read a criticism in his lack of comment and put forth on a note of challenge after all one must be decent vyse looked at him with an evanescent smile you'll have to explain that you didn't write the first answers

Activity 3

Listen and answer the questions.

1. Why does Betton enjoy reading the letters from the professor?
2. Why does Betton enjoy reading the letters from the young woman?
3. Why does Betton decide to write to the young woman?
4. What is her response?

Activity 4

Listen to the last instalment of Part 7. Then, complete the sentences below.

1. The young woman's letter is strange because ...
2. Betton interprets her letter to mean that ...
3. The next letter in the pile is from ... It contains ...

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Track 1

Vyse showed no surprise when Betton announced his intention of dealing personally with the two correspondents who showed so flattering a reluctance to **take their leave**. But Betton immediately read a criticism in his lack of comment, and **put forth**, on a note of challenge: "After all, one must be decent!"

Track 2

Vyse looked at him with an **evanescent** smile. "You'll have to explain that you didn't write the first answers."

Betton halted. "Well – I – I more or less dictated them, didn't I?"

"Oh, virtually, they're yours, of course."

"You think I can put it that way?"

"Why not?" The secretary absently drew an **arabesque** on the blotting-pad. "Of course they'll keep it up longer if you write yourself," he suggested.

Betton **blushed**, but faced the issue. "Hang it all, I sha'n't be sorry. They interest me. They're remarkable letters." And Vyse, without observation, returned to his writings.

Track 3

The spring, that year, was delicious to Betton. His college professor continued to address him **tersely** but **cogently** at fixed intervals, and twice a week eight **serried** pages came from Florida. There were other letters, too; he had the solace of feeling that at last "Abundance" was making its way, was reaching the people who, as Vyse said, read slowly because they read intelligently. But welcome as were all these proofs of his restored authority they were but the background of his happiness. His life revolved for the moment about the personality of his two chief correspondents. The professor's letters satisfied his craving for intellectual recognition, and the satisfaction he felt in them proved how completely he had lost faith in himself. He blushed to think that his opinion of his work had been swayed by the shallow judgments of a public whose taste he despised. Was it possible that he had allowed himself to think less well of "Abundance" because it was not to the taste of the average novel-reader? Such false humility was less excusable than the crudest appetite for praise: it was ridiculous to try to do conscientious work if one's self-esteem were at the mercy of popular judgments. All this the professor's letters delicately and indirectly conveyed to Betton, with the result that the author of "Abundance" began to recognize in it the ripest flower of his genius.

But if the professor understood his book, the girl in Florida understood *him*; and Betton was fully alive to the superior qualities of **discernment** which this process implied. For his lovely correspondent his novel was but the starting-point, the **pretext** of her discourse: he himself was her real object, and he had the delicious sense, as their exchange of thoughts proceeded, that she was interested in "Abundance" because of its author, rather than in the author because of his book. Of course she laid stress on the fact that his ideas were the object of her contemplation; but Betton's agreeable person had permitted him some insight into the incorrigible subjectiveness of female judgments, and he was pleasantly aware, from the lady's tone, that she guessed him to be neither old nor ridiculous. And suddenly he wrote to ask if he might see her ...

The answer was long in coming. Betton fumed at the delay, watched, wondered, fretted; then he received the one word: "Impossible."

He wrote back more urgently, and awaited the reply with increasing

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eagerness. A certain shyness had kept him from once more modifying the instructions regarding his mail, and Strett still carried the letters directly to Vyse. The hour when he knew they were passing under the latter's eyes was now becoming intolerable to Betton, and it was a profound relief when the secretary, suddenly advised of his father's illness, asked permission to absent himself for a fortnight.

Vyse departed just after Betton had **despatched** to Florida his second **missive** of **entreaty**, and for ten days he tasted the **furtive** joy of a first **perusal** of his letters. The answer from Florida was not among them; but Betton said to himself "She's thinking it over," and delay, in that light, seemed favourable. So charming, in fact, was this phase of **sentimental** suspense that he felt a start of resentment when a telegram **apprised** him one morning that Vyse would return to his post that day.

Betton had slept later than usual, and, springing out of bed with the telegram in his hand, he learned from the clock that his secretary was due in half an hour. He reflected that the morning's mail must long since be in; and, too impatient to wait for its appearance with his breakfast-tray, he threw on a dressing-gown and went to the library. There lay the letters, half a dozen of them: but his eye flew to one envelope, and as he tore it open a warm wave rocked his heart.

Glossary

take your leave (old-fashioned) to say goodbye

put forth (formal) to state

evanescent (mainly literary) lasting for only a very short time

arabesque a pattern of curved lines

blush to turn red because you are embarrassed

tersely not at length

cogently (formal) in a reasoned and sensible way

serried (literary) written in lines arranged very closely together

discernment the ability to make good judgements about things such as art and literature

pretext a reason that you pretend to have in order to hide your real reason or intention

despatched sent

missive (formal) letter

entreaty (formal) a strong serious request that you make to someone about something that is worrying you

furtive done secretly to avoid being noticed

perusal (formal) the act of reading something

sentimental relating to the emotions

apprised (formal) tell someone about something

purport (formal) the basic meaning of a document

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The letter was dated a few days after its writer must have received his own: it had all the qualities of grace and insight to which his unknown friend had accustomed him, but it contained no allusion, however indirect, to the special **purport** of his appeal. Even a vanity less ingenious than Betton's might have read in the lady's silence one of the most familiar motions of consent; but the smile provoked by this inference faded as he turned to his other letters. For the uppermost bore the superscription "Dead Letter Office", and the document that fell from it was his own last letter from Florida.

Track 4

Transcript and glossary