

The Gift of the Magi Key Facts

Writer: O. Henry | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

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Written Date: 1905*

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- **Author:** O. Henry (William Sydney Porter)
- **Language:** English
- **Written Date:** 1905
- **First Published:** 1905 (in The New York Sunday World newspaper)
- **Later Included:** 1906 short story collection "The Four Million"
- **Genre:** Short Story / Realistic Fiction
- **Form:** Short Fiction (ironic, emotional, simple narrative)
- **Type of Work:** A sentimental Christmas story about love, sacrifice, and poverty
- **Period:** Early 20th-century American Realist Fiction
- **Narrative Style:** Simple, warm, humorous, and omniscient narration
- **Tone:** Gentle, emotional, ironic, loving, and hopeful
- **Climax:** Della and Jim discover that each has sacrificed their most precious possession to buy a gift for the other.
- **Famous Line:** "Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi."
- **One-Line Summary:** A young, poor couple each sacrifices their greatest treasure to buy a Christmas gift for the other, proving their deep love.
- **Point of View:** Third-person omniscient (all-knowing narrator with warm, humorous comments)
- **Setting**
- **Time Setting:** Early 1900s (Christmastime)
- **Place Setting:** A small furnished apartment in New York City; also includes the streets and shops of the city.

Key Notes - English

The Gift of the Magi: The Magi were the three wise men who brought gifts to baby Jesus on the first Christmas. Their gifts were valuable, but the true value lay in their sacrifice, love, and sincerity. In the story, Della and Jim also sacrifice their most precious possessions to give gifts to each other. Della sells her hair, and Jim sells his gold watch. Although their gifts become useless in a material sense, they become the most valuable gifts in terms of love and sacrifice. In this way, they are just like the Magi, wise, because they understand that the true gift is selfless love and sacrifice. That is why the story is named "The Gift of the Magi." Those who give with love and sacrifice are the truly wise ones, they are the real Magi.

Three Wise Men (The Magi): The Wise Men, or the Magi, were three wise persons who brought gifts to the newborn Jesus Christ on the first Christmas. They brought three valuable gifts:

Melchior - The eldest wise man. He offered gold, which symbolized kingship and honor.

Caspar or Gaspar - He brought frankincense, which symbolized spirituality and worship.

Balthazar - He brought myrrh, a fragrant oil that symbolized death and sacrifice.

According to the Bible, they were astrologers or philosophers from the East. They saw a special star appear in the sky and understood that a special child had been born. They followed that star and reached the place where Jesus was born. Their wisdom and the depth of their gifts show that they wanted to offer not just objects but meaningful, symbolic gifts. In O. Henry's *The Gift of the Magi*, the sacrifices of Della and Jim are compared to these Wise Men. They also give gifts to each other out of pure, selfless love. According to the author, true wisdom and true love belong to those who are willing to sacrifice their most precious possessions for someone else's happiness.