

VIRGINIA WOOLF'S SUICIDE

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- 5. CLARISSA VAUGHAN



Virginia Woolf wrote two suicide notes, one to her sister (Vanessa) and the other to her husband (Leonard). This image depicts the end-of-life letter which she wrote to Leonard. It says:

"Dearest,

"I feel certain I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and I can't concentrate. So I am doing what seems the best thing to do. You have given me the greatest possible happiness. You have been in every way all that anyone could be. I don't think two people could have been happier till this terrible disease came. I can't fight any longer. I know that I am spoiling your life, that without me you could work. And you will I know. You see I can't even write this properly. I can't read. What I want to say is I owe all the happiness of my life to you. You have been entirely patient with me and incredibly good. I want to say that - everybody knows it. If anybody could have saved me it would have been you. Everything has gone from me but the certainty of your goodness. I can't go on spoiling your life any longer.

"I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been."

Leonard and Virginia purchased a country house, in 1919, in the village of <u>Rodmell</u>, England. It was named <u>Monk's House</u>, although no monks ever lived there. Virginia wrote <u>Jacob's Room</u> (in memory of her brother Thoby) at Monk's House. A <u>map</u>, annotated by Leonard, depicts its <u>location</u>.

By the time Virginia was fifty-nine years old, bouts of mental illness had damaged her outward beauty and her inner well-being. Having suffered mental breakdowns during <u>World War I</u>, she was once again living in the nightmare of war. She could no longer <u>travel</u> and her home in London was destroyed by Germany's bombs.

In March of 1941, Leonard became increasingly concerned about his wife's mental health. He summoned a friend, <u>Octavia Wilberforce</u>, to examine her. The doctor did not find the situation particularly serious. Later, Wilberforce thought that she had failed her friend by not recognizing the extent of Virginia's illness.

With Hitler's <u>Blitzkrieg</u> hammering her beloved London, and with headaches and "voices" returning to disrupt her writing (this is her <u>desk</u> in her <u>writing lodge</u>) and her life, Virginia wrote two suicide notes. One was for her husband, Leonard. The other, nearly identical, was for her sister, Vanessa.

Following the footpath to the nearby <u>River Ouse</u> (from the Celtic word for "water" and pictured here at <u>Lewes</u>), Virginia walked away from <u>the home</u> which she shared <u>with Leonard</u> at Monk's House. It was the 28th of March, 1941. She put a heavy stone in her coat pocket and let the river's current swallow her. Children found her body three weeks later, on the 18th of April.

Following an inquest into her death, which was ruled a <u>suicide</u>, Virginia's body was cremated. Her ashes were scattered under the elm tree just beyond <u>her garden</u>. Her last novel, <u>Between the Acts</u>, was published posthumously. <u>Leonard lived</u> at <u>Monk's House</u> until his death in 1969.

Virginia's nephew, <u>Quentin Bell</u>, wrote what most Woolf scholars agree is the definitive <u>biography</u> of his <u>famous</u> <u>aunt</u>. Quentin died in 1996.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/VIRGINIA-WOOLF-S-SUICIDE-The-Hours</u>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/VIRGINIA-WOOLF-S-SUICIDE-The-Hours

Media Stream









<u>Desk Used by Virginia Woolf</u> Image online, courtesy the <u>Smith College</u> website. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Desk-Used-by-Virginia-Woolf

Monk's House - Leonard and Virginia Woolf Photo by Oliver Mallinson Lewis; online, via Wikimedia Commons. License: <u>CC BY-SA 2.0</u> View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Monk-s-House-Leonard-and-Virginia-Woolf</u>

Rodmell - Location of Virginia Woolf's Home

Image online, courtesy <u>Washington State University Libraries</u> website. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Rodmell-Location-of-Virginia-Woolf-s-Home

<u>Virginia Woolf - Foreign Office Photo</u> Image online, courtesy the Vintage Everyday website. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Virginia-Woolf-Foreign-Office-Photo

Octavia Wilberforce Image online, courtesy <u>The Virginia Woolf</u> blog. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Octavia-Wilberforce</u>

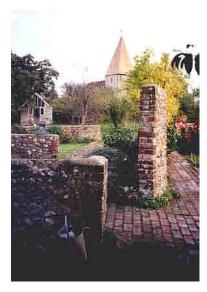




Writing Lodge Used by Virginia Woolf

Image online, courtesy the <u>Smith College</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Writing-Lodge-Used-by-Virginia-Woolf</u>

<u>River Ouse and Virginia Woolf</u> Image online, courtesy the <u>University of Sussex</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/River-Ouse-and-Virginia-Woolf</u>

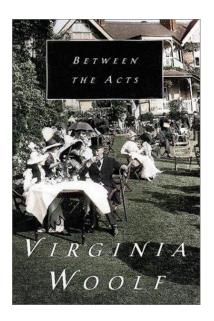


Home of Virginia and Leonard Woolf Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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<u>Leonard Woolf Photo</u> Image online, courtesy the Smith College website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Leonard-Woolf-Photo</u>



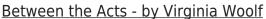
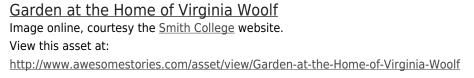


Image online, courtesy <u>amazon.com</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Between-the-Acts-by-Virginia-Woolf</u>







Leonard Woolf - Tending the Garden at Home Image online, courtesy the Smith College website. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Leonard-Woolf-Tending-the-Garden-at-Home



<u>Monk's House - Gate</u> Image online, courtesy the <u>Smith College</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Monk-s-House-Gate</u>

VIRGINIA WOOLF



A Biography

The tumultuous life of the author of Mrs. Dalloway and A Room of One's Own as told by her nephew

Quentin Bell



Virginia Woolf - Quentin Bell

Image online, courtesy <u>amazon.com</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Virginia-Woolf-Quentin-Bell</u>

Virginia Woolf in 1934

Image online, via the <u>National Portrait Gallery, London</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Virginia-Woolf-in-1934</u>