

# A Letter to God

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## A. Lead – in:

Have you ever written a letter to God ? Did you ever come across someone writing a letter to God ? People believe faith can move mountains. But what should we put our faith in ? This is the question this story delicately poses.

Lencho is a farmer who writes a letter to God asking for a sum of money when his crops fail. Does Lencho's letter reach God ? Does God send him the money ? Think and try to answer these questions. Before you begin to read the story, try to imagine how it would develop and what conclusion it might arrive at.

## B. The Text:

The house - the only one in the entire valley– sat on the **crest** of a low hill. From this height one would see the river and the field of ripe corn **dotted with** the flowers that always promised a good harvest. The only thing the earth needed was a downpour or at least a shower. Throughout the morning Lencho—who knew his fields intimately—had done nothing else but see the sky towards the north-east.

“Now we’re really going to get some water, woman.” The woman who was preparing supper, replied, “Yes, God willing”. The older boys were working in the field, while the smaller ones were playing near the house until the woman called to them all, “Come for dinner”. It was during the meal that, just as Lencho had **predicted**, big drops of rain began to fall. In the north-east huge mountains of clouds could be seen approaching. The air was fresh and sweet. The man went out for no other reason than to have the pleasure of feeling the rain on his body, and when he returned he exclaimed, “These aren’t raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins. The big drops are ten cent pieces and the little ones are fives.”

With a satisfied expression he regarded the field of ripe corn with its flowers, **draped** in a curtain of rain. But suddenly a strong wind began to blow and along with the rain very large hailstones began to fall. These truly did resemble new silver coins. The boys, exposing themselves to the rain, ran out to collect the frozen pearls.

“It’s really getting bad now”, exclaimed the man. “I hope it passes quickly.” It did not pass quickly. For an hour the hail rained on the house, the garden, the hillside, the cornfield, on the whole valley. The field was white, as if covered with salt.

Not a leaf remained on the trees. The corn was totally destroyed. The flowers were gone from the plants. Lencho’s soul was filled with sadness. When the storm had passed, he stood in the middle of the field and said to his sons, “A plague of **locusts** would have left more than this. The hail has left nothing. This year we will have no corn.”

That night was a sorrowful one.

“All our work, for nothing.”

“There’s no one who can help us.”

“We’ll all go hungry this year.”

But in the hearts of all who lived in that **solitary** house in the middle of the valley, there was a single hope: help from God.

“Don’t be so **upset**, even though this seems like a total loss. Remember, no one dies of hunger.”

“That’s what they say : no one dies of hunger.”

All through the night, Lencho thought only of one hope: the help of God, whose eyes, as he had been instructed, see everything, even what is deep in one’s **conscience**. Lencho was an ox of a man, working like an animal in the fields, but still he knew how to write. The following Sunday, at daybreak, he began to write a letter which he himself would carry to town and place in the mail. It was nothing less than a letter to God.

“God,” he wrote, “if you don’t help me, my family and I will go hungry this year. I need a hundred pesos in order to sow my field again and to live until the crop comes, because the hailstorm...”

He wrote ‘To God’ on the envelope, put the letter inside and, still troubled, went to town. At the post office, he placed a stamp on the letter and dropped it into the mailbox.

One of the employees, who was a postman and also helped at the post office, went to his boss laughing heartily and showed him the letter to God. Never in his career as a postman had he known that address. The postmaster— a fat, **amiable** fellow—also broke out laughing, but almost immediately he turned serious and, tapping the letter on his desk, commented, “What faith ! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter. Starting up a **correspondence** with God !”

So, in order not to shake the writer’s faith in God, the postmaster came up with an idea: answer the letter. But when he opened it, it was evident that to answer it he needed something more than goodwill, ink and paper. But he stuck to his **resolution**: he asked for money from his employees, he himself gave part of his salary, and several friends of his were obliged to give something ‘for an act of charity’.

It was impossible for him to gather together the hundred pesos, so he was able to send the farmer only a little more than half. He put the money in an envelope addressed to Lencho and with it a letter **containing** only a single word as a signature : God.

The following Sunday Lencho came a bit earlier than usual to ask if there was a letter for him. It was the postman himself who handed the letter to him while the postmaster, experiencing the **contentment** of a man who has performed a good deed, looked on from his office.

Lencho showed not the slightest surprise on seeing the money; such was his confidence- but he became angry when he counted the money. God could not have made a mistake, nor could he have denied Lencho what he had requested.

Immediately, Lencho went up to the window to ask for paper and ink. On the public writing-table, he started to write, with much wrinkling of his brow, caused by the effort he had to make to express his ideas. When he finished, he went to the window to buy a stamp which he licked and then affixed to the envelope with a blow of his fist. The moment the letter fell into the mailbox the postmaster went to open it. It said: "God: Of the money that I asked for, only seventy pesos reached me. Send me the rest since I need it very much. But don't send it to me through the mail because the post office employees are a bunch of **crooks**. Lencho."

### **C. About the Author:**

**Gregorio Lopez Fuentes** (1895-1966) was a Mexican novelist, poet, and journalist. Fuentes started writing at the age of 15, when the Mexican Revolution began. Many of his books are related to the civil conflict. His stories are exciting and humorous. Many of his works are concerned with the oppression of Americans. He was awarded the National Prize of Arts and Science in 1935.

### **D. Notes & Glossary:**

crest	:	top/the highest part of a hill
dotted with	:	scattered over an area
predict	:	foretell the future
drape	:	cover
locusts	:	insects which fly in big groups and destroy crops.
solitary	:	lonely / single
upset	:	disturbed
conscience	:	an inner sense of right and wrong
peso	:	currency of several Latin American countries

amiable : friendly and pleasant  
correspondence : an act of writing letters  
resolution : a firm decision  
contentment : satisfaction  
crooks : dishonest persons / people

**E. Let's understand the text :**

- 1) Where did Lencho live ?
- 2) What did he hope for ?
- 3) What did he say about the raindrops ?
- 4) How did the rain change ?
- 5) What happened to Lencho's corn fields ?
- 6) Who did Lencho have faith in ?
- 7) Who did he write a letter to ?
- 8) Who read the letter ?
- 9) What did the postmaster do ?
- 10) Was Lencho surprised to find a letter for him with money in it ?
- 11) What was Lencho's reaction after getting the letter ?

**F. Let's read between the lines:**

- (a) (i) Why did Lencho keep on looking at the sky throughout the morning?
- (ii) Why was the field white after the storm ?
- (iii) Why did Lencho say the raindrops were like 'new coins' ?
- (iv) Why did Lencho prefer locusts to the storm ?
- (v) Did Lencho try to find out who had sent the money to him ? Why / Why not ?

- (vi) What would be the reaction of the post office employees when they read the second letter ?

**(b) Read the passage from the text and answer the questions that follow:**

All through the night \_\_\_\_\_ act of charity. (Five paragraphs)

- (i) Who does Lencho have complete faith in ?  
 (ii) 'Lencho was an ox of a man' – what does the line mean ?  
 (iii) What was the postmaster like ?  
 (iv) Why did the postmaster send money to Lencho ?  
 (v) What does the expression 'an act of charity' mean ?

**G. Let's learn some new words :**

(i) Look at the following sentence from the story. But *suddenly a strong wind began to blow and along with the rain very large hailstones began to fall.*

'Hailstones' are small balls of ice that fall like rain. A storm in which hailstones fall is a 'hailstorm'. We know that a storm is bad weather with strong winds, rain, thunder and lightning.

There are different names in different parts of the world for storms, depending on their nature. Try to match the names in the box with their descriptions below, and fill in the blanks. You may take the help of a dictionary.

gale, whirlwind, cyclone  
 hurricane, tornado, typhoon

- 1) A violent tropical storm in which strong winds move in a circle :  
 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ c \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_  
 2) An extremely strong wind : \_\_\_ a \_\_\_ \_\_\_  
 3) A violent tropical storm with very strong winds : \_\_\_ \_\_\_ p \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_  
 4) A violent storm with strong winds, especially in the Western Atlantic Ocean :  
 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ r \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_

- 5) A violent storm whose centre is a cloud in the shape of a funnel : \_\_\_ \_\_\_ n \_\_\_  
\_\_\_ \_\_\_
- 6) A very strong wind that moves very fast in a spinning movement and causes a lot of damage : \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_
- (ii) Mark how the word 'hope' is used in these sentences from the story.
- a) I hope it (the hailstorm) passes quickly.
- b) There was a single hope : help from God.

In sentence 'a', **hope** is used as a verb which means you wish for something to happen.

In sentence 'b' it is a **noun** meaning a chance for something to happen.

Match the sentences in **Column A** with the meanings of 'hope' in **Column B**.

A	B
1) Will you get the subjects you want to study in a college ?  I <b>hope</b> so.	- a feeling that something good will probably happen
2) I hope you don't mind my saying this, but I don't like the way you are arguing.	- thinking that this would happen (It may or may not have happened)
3) This discovery will give new <b>hope</b> to HIV/AIDS sufferers.	- stopped believing that this good thing would happen
4) We are hoping against <b>hope</b> that the judges would not notice our mistakes.	- wanting something to happen (and thinking it quite possible)
5) I called early in the <b>hope</b> of speaking to her before she went to school.	- showing concern that what you say should not offend or disturb the other person : a way of being polite
6) Just when everybody had given up	- wishing for something

**hope**, the fisherman came back  
seven days after the cyclone.

to happen, although this  
is very unlikely.

(iii) Now read the story and make a list of words used as verbs and nouns. Make sentences of your own using them as verbs and nouns in your own words.

#### **H. Let's listen and speak :**

In pairs, play the roles of a father and son. You may substitute the roles with those of a mother and daughter, if required.

Dad : It's quite late. Go to bed.

Son : I've got the final examination tomorrow.

Dad: It's almost 12.30 in the night.

No more argument. Off to bed.

Son: I have a lot to learn yet.

Dad: It's essential to get your concepts clear.

Son: But I need to make sure that I know everything that's required.

Dad: Isn't it necessary to read the books to get the concepts clear ?

Son: ~~All right, father.~~

Read the text and prepare a dialogue like the one given above and play the roles.

#### **I. Let's learn language:**

##### **(i) Relative Clauses:**

Look at the following sentences:

Throughout the morning Lencho – who knew his fields intimately – looked at the sky.

This sentence may also be written as All morning Lencho, who knew his fields intimately, looked at the sky.

The underlined parts of the sentences provide us more information about Lencho and the woman. We call it a Relative Clause. Mark that they begin with a relative pronoun, 'who'. Other common relative pronouns are whom, which, that whose.

The relative clause in the above sentence is called non-defining relative clause because we already know the identity of the person described. We don't need the information in the relative clause to pick the person out of a larger set.

A. **Non-defining Relative Clause** usually has a comma preceding and following it. Some writers use a dash (-) instead (as in the story). If the relative clause comes at the end, we just put a full stop.

Join the pair of sentences given below using a relative pronoun.

(i) My mother is going to host a T.V. show on cooking.

She cooks very well.

(ii) Our institution is highly popular.

It works for public welfare.

(iii) Satish scored a goal in the last minute.

He was fortunate.

(iv) Mother Teresa is revered as a saint.

She served mankind.

(v) I often go to Mumbai.

Mumbai is the commercial capital of India.

(vi) These sports -persons are going to meet the President.

Their performance has been excellent.

Sometimes the relative pronoun in a relative clause remains 'hidden'. For example, look at the first sentence of the story.

- a) The house – the only one in the entire valley – sat on the crest of a low hill.

We can rewrite the sentence as : (without any change in the meaning)

The house – *which was* the only one in the entire valley – sat on the crest of a low hill.

In the original sentence of the text (a) the relative pronoun ‘which’ and the verb ‘was’ are not present (hidden).

**(ii) Using negatives for emphasis:**

We know that sentences with words such as ‘no’, ‘not’, or ‘nothing’ show the absence of something, or contradict something.

For example : (from the text)

- a) This year we will have no corn. (The crops have failed.)  
b) The hail has left nothing. (Absence of a crop)  
c) These aren’t raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins. (Contradicts the common idea of what the drops of water falling from the sky are.)

But sometimes negative words are used to emphasise an idea. Look at these sentences from the story :

- d) Lencho . . . had done **nothing** else but see the sky towards the north-east. (He had done only this.)  
e) The man went out for **no** other reason than to have the pleasure of feeling the rain on his body. (He had only this reason.)  
f) Lencho showed **not** the slightest surprise on seeing the money. (He showed no surprise at all.)

Now look back at example ‘C’. Mark that the contradiction in fact serves to emphasise the value or usefulness of the rain to the farmer.

Find sentences in the story with negative words, which express the following ideas emphatically :

- 1) The trees lost all their leaves.

2) The letter was addressed to God himself.

3) The postman saw this address for the first time in his life.

**J. Let's write :**

Read the newspaper report given below:

Note the information given at different points.

Rath Yatra pulls in lakhs of devotees to Puri	-	Title
The Times of India	-	Source
Puri, 22 <sup>nd</sup> June	-	Place and date

All roads led to Puri on Thursday with lakhs of devotees flocking to the town to participate in the grand Rath Yatra festival. A wave of euphoria swept across the beach town with the reigning deities commencing their nine day 'outing' from Jagannath shrine to Gundicha temple in a boisterous procession.

Topic sentence  
and Introduction

Details of the Yatra

However, the threat of possible terror attack and the death of two pilgrims allegedly in a stampede cast a shadow on the festivities. There were intelligence reports that some subversive groups might create trouble during Rath Yatra.

Information on the terror threat and stampede

"Security was tightened compared to the previous years" the DGP said. "We also appealed to the people to remain alert," the DGP added.

Further details of action taken by the authorities.

(1) Now imagine that you are a reporter of 'The Indian Express'. You have received the news about the recent cyclone that hit Odisha. Using the guidelines given in the box above, complete a similar report for the newspaper.