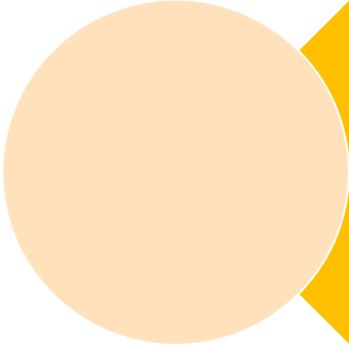


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**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
TAKES YOU TO**

THE BASEMENT ROOM

- GRAHAM GREENE



- **Henry Graham Greene** [OM](#) [CH](#) (2 October 1904 – 3 April 1991), professionally known as **Graham Greene**, was an English novelist regarded by many as one of the leading English novelists of the 20th century
- Combining literary acclaim with widespread popularity, Greene acquired a reputation early in his lifetime as a major writer, both of serious [Catholic novels](#), and of thrillers (or "entertainments" as he termed them). He was shortlisted, in 1966 and 1967, for the [Nobel Prize for Literature](#).
- Through 67 years of writings, which included over 25 novels, he explored the ambivalent moral and political issues of the modern world, often through a Catholic perspective.

- Graham Greene's short story "The Basement Room" appears in his 1954 collection, *Twenty-One Stories*, composed mainly of pieces that had previously appeared in his 1947 collection, *Nineteen Stories*. Greene, an English novelist, is widely considered one of the major literary figures of the twentieth century. His canon of more than two-dozen novels contains works with a serious Catholic perspective and those that fall into the thriller genre, the latter of which he referred to as entertainments. In 1966 and 1967, he was shortlisted for the Nobel Prize for Literature.

SUMMARY

- “The Basement Room” focuses on an innocent child and is filtered through a psycho-analytical perspective. Seven-year-old Master Philip Lanes’s parents have embarked on a holiday trip and he finds himself left alone under the care of the family butler and housekeeper as the family is currently in between nurses.
- Philip looks forward to exploring the huge Belgravia house in which he lives. Philip likes Mr. Baines, the butler, who tells him stories about adventures in Africa. He does not like Mrs. Baines and fears her like a nightmare.
- At first, Philip feels uncomfortable but, thinking about this newfound freedom, realizes that he can do whatever he wants. He feels happy being out from under parental control.
- A new personality begins to emerge from within him. He develops an unquenchable desire to learn what life is all about. This leads him to want a sense of intimacy with the world beyond the one he knows with his family.

- Upon the departure of his parents, Philip looks in the basement room for Mr. Baines. He goes through a “green baize door” which separates masters and servants.
- Philip dislikes Mrs. Baines, even more, when he sees Mr. Baines cower when around her. The young boy starts to see how the adult world he longs to enter has reasons to be feared as well. He also starts to gain an understanding of the meaning of evil. He sees that his unqualified happiness when with Baines is threatened by the existence of people like Mrs. Baines.
- When Philip asks Baines to go for a walk with him, Mrs. Baines steps in to stop it. Rather than remain amid the discord of Mr. and Mrs. Baines, Philip flees the mansion and enters the outside world alone. He took a walk on the street, went window shopping, went to the zoo, and tasted ginger-beer and Dunkee cake. However, when Mr. Baines had an affair with Emmy and asked Philip to keep the secret for them, Philip began his nightmare.

- Meanwhile, Mrs. Baines also tried to coax Philip to tell her Mr. Baines' extramarital relations. Philip involved in this delicate and complex dilemma. In the end of the story, Mrs. Baines was dead in an accident while Philip still wondered who the girl was sixty
- Greene makes use of symbolism, for example, using the green baize door that Philip must pass through as a dividing line between the conscious and the subconscious. The building kit he no longer uses after it takes on a negative connotation because of Mrs. Baines becomes a sign of his inability to continue to create.
- The city outside of the mansion is a realm beyond the self. Good and evil coexist there, for example, Philip's willingness to keep a secret. Back home, however, this becomes more problematic.

- Overall, the story demonstrates how a traumatic event in childhood can keep the person who experienced it from reaching fulfilling human contact later in life. Greene's narrator addresses this loss of innocence theme saying of Philip, "Life fell on him with savagery and you couldn't blame him if he never faced it again in sixty years." Philip is an innocent boy when he learns that sorting through good and evil is not a simple task. At the nub of the story is the need to learn how to deal with the fact that life is not a comfortable straight line, but rather a series of compromises that are not always easy to understand. Betrayal is a major theme.

- This is both physical and psychological journey: a journey from his nursery to the street, a journey from a kid to a man. When Philip understands, it is too late to go back to his naïve age.
- Moreover, he becomes an isolated person, separated from this society, and cannot face his obstacles in life. “He never opened his Meccano set again, never built anything, never created anything, died the old dilettante, sixty years later with nothing to show rather than preserve the memory of Mrs Baines’s malicious voice saying good night, ...”. “He was divided by the fear and the attraction of life”. When he died, only his secretary kept him company.

Thank you