

«Rain» by W. Somerset Maugham

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The Quote

«If the tree is rotten it shall be cut down and cast into the flames» (Mr. Davidson)

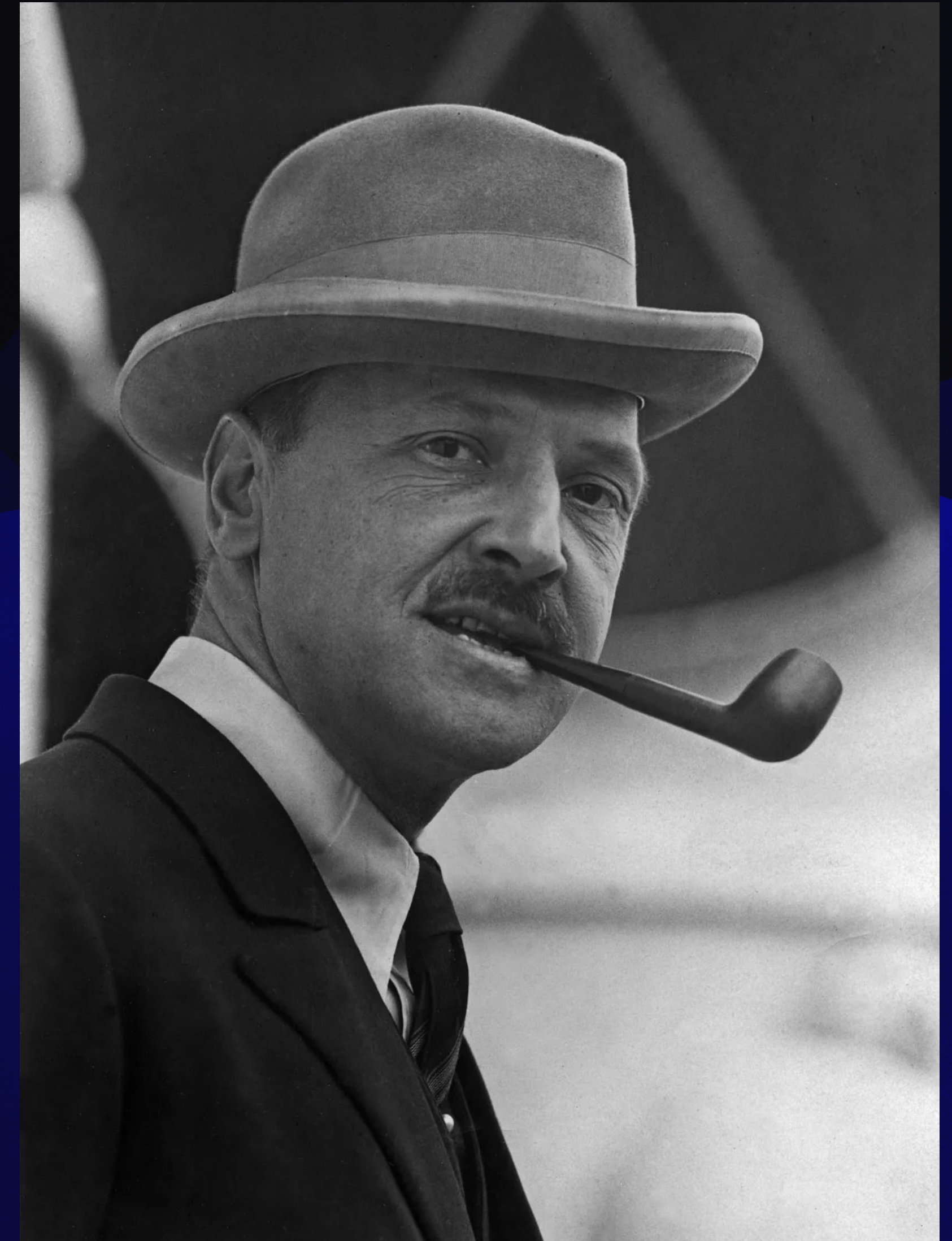
Author's Biography

William Somerset Maugham was an English writer, known for his plays, novels and short stories. He was born in Paris, where he spent his first ten years, graduated from school in England and went to a German university. He became a medical student in London and qualified as a physician in 1897. However, he never practised medicine, and became a full-time writer.

While studying, Somerset Maugham wrote his first novel, *Liza of Lambeth* about the life in London slums. It was highly rewarded and assessed by the audience and this leap determined his future career. He wrote 32 plays, abandoned this genre and concentrated on novels and short stories

Engaging facts:

- He became an orphan at the age of 10
- He was teased at school and developed stammer
- His works were harshly criticized due to his reliance on cliches
- He worked for the British Secret Service during WWI



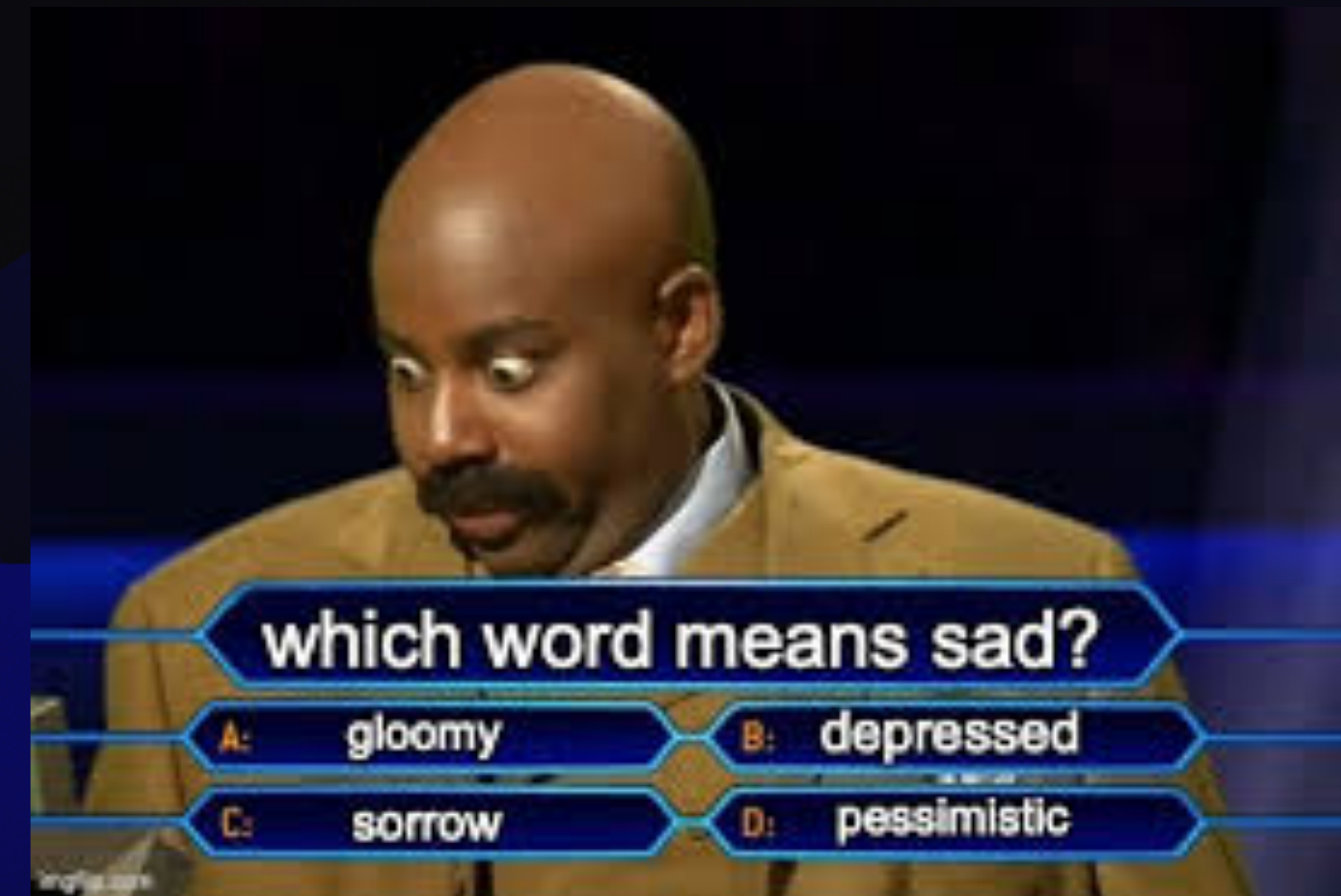
Background to the Story

- The plot of the story is based on the real incident that experienced Maugham on his own and his loyal companion Gerald Hatton during their tour of the Pacific
- Pago Pago is a real city and the capital of American Samoa. Rainmaker Mountain is located near it trapping rain clouds and making precipitations very frequent here.
- Mogham got stuck in this city owing to quarantine inspection and took lodging there. Many characters from the story are book version of the passengers from Maugham's steamer



Compelling Vocabulary

- An argumentative mind - often arguing or wanting to argue
- A big bug - very common in the 19th century slang term, meaning an important person, an aristocrat
- To put on frills - to act in a pretentious or snobbish way
- With bated breath - in an excited or anxious way
- To be not averse to smith - to quite like it or quite want to do it
- To take smth/smb in hand - to take control or responsibility over them in order to improve them



Setting and Plot in Brief

- The story happened in Pago Pago, the capital of American Samoa that is located on the tropical island. Its inhabitants are indigenous people with their own odd customs. Unceasing rain makes the atmosphere more lugubrious and enigmatic
- Two couples the Machails and the Davidsons who were Christian missionaries got acquainted during their voyage. They delayed in the city due to the measles outbreak on the steamer. They had to rent longing. Mr. Davidson struggled to convert the Samoans with their own customs and Belief. Their attires and culture, the lack of sense of sin made him mad. He decided to fine everyone who commits a sin using his political power.
- His neighbor, Miss Thomson drew the attention of Mr. Davidson by her wickedness and allegedly profane profession. He implemented his oppressive measures to make her change and were going to sent her to San Francisco where she would be sentenced. She finally surrendered and started to pray. However, on the brink of her departure something unfathomable happened...



Characters

- Mr. Davidson - very devoted missionary, who is willing to impose Christianity at all costs. He enjoys his upscale position and power that he uses to pursue his own goals. He reveals his true identity under circumstances
- Mrs. Davidson adores Mr. Davidson's deeds and always supports him. She shares her husband's point of view and turns a blind eye to his brutal behavior
- Dr Macphsail - timid man that always sees silver lining. He treats locals for their diseases. His indecisive character doesn't allow him to confront Mr. Davidson, though he isn't approve of his actions
- Miss Thomson - a young girl who wears ostentatious outfit and has to have intercourse with sailors for money. She endures a lot of adversities and humiliations. Finally, after concealing her inner traits, she saves her outgoing character.



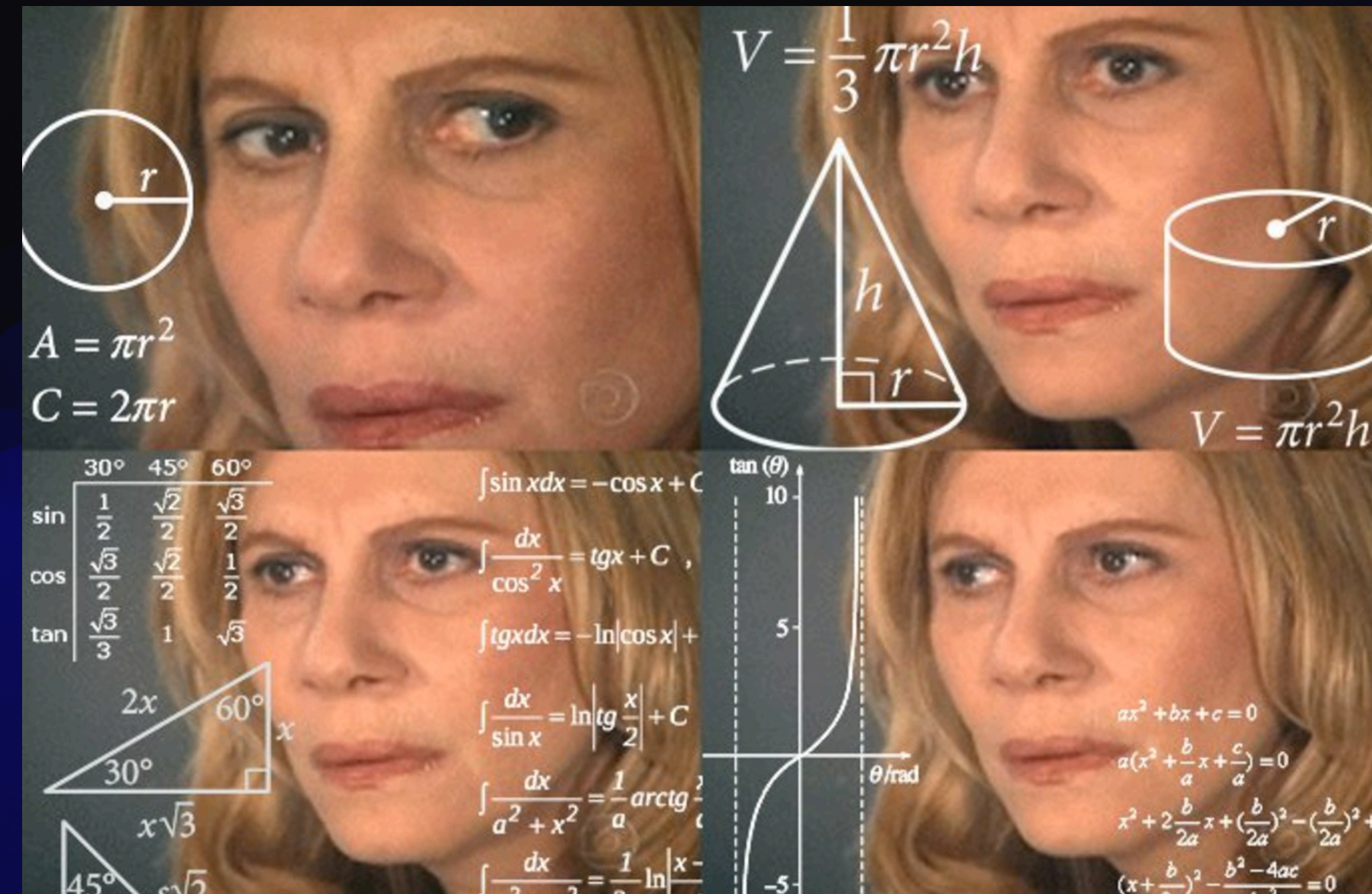
Episodes and lines

- Fred Ohlson story
- «You see, they were so naturally depraved that they couldn't be brought to see their wickedness. We had to make sins out of what they thought were natural actions» (Davidson)
- «It's terrible the way the men who are in authority seek to evade their responsibility. They speak as though evil that was out of sight ceased to be evil. The very existence of that woman is a scandal and it does not help matters to shift it to another of the islands. In the end I had to speak straight from the shoulder» (Davidson)
- She gathered herself together. No one could describe the scorn of her expression or the contemptuous hatred she put into her answer. 'You men! You filthy, dirty pigs! You're all the same, all of you. Pigs! Pigs!' Dr Macphail gasped. He understood.



Questions and Speculations

- Is it possible to impose a religion on people using power?
- Can people leave without a religion?
- What makes people commit a sin?
- Can people judge others and determine their life?
- Did Miss Thomson endure ordeal or betray Mr. Davidson?



Message and Writer's Vision

- People cannot change their character and nature
- One's true identity always reveals
- All people are sinful
- The more one shows off his faith, the less they actually have it
- Power lures into trap
- No one can intervene in others' life and be a judge for them

Adaptations

- «Rain» was adapted as a play by John Colton and Clemence Randolph and ran for 608 performances
- A silent film «Sadie Thompson» (1928)
- A film starring Joan Crawford «Rain»
- A two act three scene play starring June Havoc on Broadway «Sadie Thompson»
- A film starring Rita Hayworth «Miss Sadie Thompson» (1953)
- «Rain», an opera by Richard Owen (1997)

