



Department of Distance Education
Punjabi University, Patiala

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Medium : English

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Unit : I

Lesson No.

THE POETIC PALETTE

- 1.1 (a) Pippa's Song, Robert Browning
- (b) Apparently with no surprise, Emily Dickinson
- 1.2 (a) Magic of Love; Helen Farries
- (b) The Charge of the Light Brigade; Alfred Lord Tennyson
- 1.3 (a) Where the Mind is Without Fear, Rabindranath Tagore
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- (c) I Sit and Look Out : Walt Whitman
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- (a) Goodbye Poetry for Miss Pushpa T.S.: Nissim Ezekiel
- 1.5 (a) Fool and Flea : Jeet Thayil
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The Poetic Palette

Unit I Nature

- (i) Pippa's Song by Robert Browning
- (ii) Apparently with no Surprise By Emily Dickinson

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1.0 OBJECTIVES :

- To introduce the students to the poets Robert Browning and Emily Dickinson
- To enable the students to understand the main idea of the poem
- To enable the students to comprehend the poems
- To enable the students to understand the meaning of difficult words

1.1 Introduction to the lesson

In this lesson we shall be discussing two poems – Pippa's Song by Robert Browning and Apparently with no Surprise by Emily Dickinson. After discussing poets poems will be summarized. For a detailed understanding of the poem explanation with reference to context is given. The lesson will also help the students to learn the meanings of difficult words. For better comprehension of the poems some short questions with answers will also be given.

1.2 Pippa's Song

1.2.1 Introduction to the poet :

English poet and playwright Robert Browning (1812-1899) was a major poet of the Victorian age. His parents had great influence on his art as well as on his life. He inherited love of nature, of man, from his mother. He was widely recognized as a master of dramatic monologue. Browning was a prolific writer but is most well known for *The Ring and the Book*, the story of a Roman murder trial in 12 books. He also wrote a series of lyrics, including the *Pied Piper of Hamelin* and *Prophyria's Lover*. Pippa's Song has been extracted from Pippa Passes (1841), a poetic drama, considered among Browning's first significant works.

1.2.2 Main idea of the poem

Pippa's Song is a short lyrical poem sung by a character in a verse play Pippa Passes. It is about a silk winder's wanderings in Italy and was first published in the first edition of Bells and Pomegranates series. Its story revolves around a fourteen year old girl Pippa who is working in a silk mill. On her only day off from her workplace, she sings happy songs, inspiring everybody for a positive attitude towards life. Pippa's little song is full of optimum and it says that everything is as it should be in the world of man and nature and that everything is full of promise.

1.2.3 Summary

A young, blameless silk-winding girl Pippa is wandering innocently through the environs of [Asolo](#), in her mind attributing kindness and virtue to the people she passes. She sings as she goes, her song influencing others to act for the good – or, at the least, reminding them of the existence of a moral order. Pippa in the poem, knew that everything wasn't all right with the world. she was an exploited orphan girl who had to work long hours in terrible condition. The poem begins with the description of the charms of spring season. It was seven in the morning. The hillside is covered with dew and when the morning sunrays fell upon fresh dew

drops these shine like beautiful pearls. The activities of the day were already on their swing as the lark, the singing morning bird had already begun its flight in the sky. The snail was toiling hard to mount the hawthorne stone. And God while sitting in his heaven, watching all these activities, keeps everything under control. Perhaps poet wants to end the poem with an optimistic note that despite all the evil, cruelty and injustice in the world, we can still believe that God is there and thus all is right with the world.

1.2.4 Explanation with reference to the context

- (a) The year 's at the spring,
 And day 's at the morn;
 Morning 's at seven;
 The hill-side 's dew-pearl'd;

Context: These simple and lucid lines have been picked up from Pippa's Song written by Robert Browning. this little song has been extracted from a poetic drama Pippa Passes. Pippa, a little girl of fourteen years, worked in a silk mill and was exploited by her employer. But still when she got a day off from her tiresome work she sang a happy song. In these lines she was describing the cheerful physical beauty of spring season.

Explanation :

In the lines under reference, Pippa sings about the beauty of the morning of spring season. On her wanderings she sings that it is the spring time of the year. The day has welcomed the morning and the time is around seven. The dew drops have spread on the hillside and when the morning sunlight falls on the dew drops, these give the impression as if pearls are shining.

- (b) The lark 's on the wing;
 The snail 's on the thorn;
 God 's in His heaven—
 All 's right with the world!

Context: These beautiful lines have been taken from Browning's poem Pippa's song. Pippa, the little innocent girl, sings an optimistic song despite all her problems. No doubt the world is suffering from evil, oppression and cruelty but still the poet shows an unshakable faith in the sublime power of God.

Explanation:

In these lines Pippa sings that the toil of the day has already begun. Not only human beings but birds and animals have also started their labor. The morning bird Skylark has already spread its wings and is on the flight of the sky. The snail is laboring hard to mount on the hawthorne stone. While God is in his abode watching all these activities and toil of his creatures, everything goes well with the world.

Perhaps it means that despite all the wrong and atrocities the world is facing down, we should have faith in the ultimate power of God that while he is there all is right with the world as He gives us strength to bear all the burden of life.

1.2.5 Short answer questions:

1. Who is Pippa?

Ans. Pippa is a young girl, working as a silk winder in a mill. She has been exploited by her employers.

2. What is Pippa's song about?

Ans. Pippa's song is an expression of her joy at the perfection of God's world. She thinks that everything is fine with the world.

3. What is the tone of the poem?

Ans. The tone of the poem is of joy and optimism.

4. What season is it?

Ans. It is the spring season of the year.

5. What time of the day is it? What other descriptions indicate this?

Ans. It is seven O'clock in the morning. The other description is that hill side is covered with pearl like morning dew drops.

6. What does 'The hill-side's dew-pearl'd mean?

Ans. It means that it is morning time and the hill side is covered with dew drops. When the morning sunrays fell on these dew drops they shine like pearls.

7. What does 'All's right with the world' mean? Why does Pippa draw his conclusion?

Ans. It means that despite so much exploitation and wrongs the world is facing, everything is fine with the world as God is sitting in heaven and looking at us. This line leaves an optimistic message.

1.2.6 Glossary

1. Year's at the spring- the spring time of the year

2. morn- morning
3. at seven- seven O'clock
4. dew-pearl'd- the dew drops on the grass on the hillside looks like shining pearls
5. lark's- skylark, singing bird
6. on the wing- in flight in the sky
7. thorn- hawthorne stone

Apparently with no surprise

1.3.1 Introduction to the poet

Emily Dickinson, a major American poet, was born in Amherst, Massachusetts. Throughout her life, she seldom left her house and visitors were few. The people with whom she did come in contact, however, had an enormous impact on her poetry. By the 1860s, Dickinson lived in almost total physical isolation from the outside world, but actively maintained many correspondences and read widely. She spent a great deal of this time with her family. Her father, Edward Dickinson, was actively involved in state and national politics, serving in Congress for one term. Dickinson's poetry reflects her loneliness and the speakers of her poems generally live in a state of want. Her poems are also marked by the intimate recollection of inspirational moments which are decidedly life-giving and suggest the possibility of happiness. Her work was heavily influenced by the Metaphysical poets of seventeenth-century England. She wrote poetry of great power; questioning the nature of immortality and death. Within short, compact phrases she expressed far-reaching ideas; amidst paradox and uncertainty her poetry has an undeniable capacity to move and provoke.

1.3.2 Main idea of the poem

In Emily Dickinson's small poem 'Apparently With No Surprise', the author in a few words tells the reader a story of nature acting out its part. And in the process, it casually turns out to be murderous. A late frost settles on newly bloomed flowers and kills them while the sun passes on unaffected by this event. Dickinson uses this example of nature as a metaphor of life. Just as nature must do what nature does without regard to the outcome, so must God let life go on without interruption or favoritism. The forces of nature were set in motion long ago, and God does not change those things. Similarly, man was given his freedom of choice, long ago, and God also will not change that; man must undergo whatever circumstances his choice brings about. On the surface level this poem seems to be

describing a simple act of nature but underneath it carries deep philosophy of God and nature's working.

1.3.3 Summary

The situation described in this short poem is simple. Frost “beheads” a “happy flower” even as it plays back and forth in a breeze. The flower is not surprised that it has died in this way, even if the Frost’s power was “accidental.” The wordplay on axe, beheading, and accidental is clear. What is a surprise is that the real assassin is “blonde.” It is clearly the sun, which withheld its warmth and allowed the frost to do its dirty job. The sun “proceeds unmoved,” the oxymoron (two words used together, which have or seems to have opposite meaning) emphasizing that the sun simply observes the workings of nature from its high vantage point. It metes out a day, and God, higher still, approves it all as director of the conspiracy.

The frost, the sun and all of nature's objects perform the duties assigned to them, little worried by the fact that in the entire process they become the reason of much destruction. The poet does not, however, blame the nature for its cruelty as everything is accidental and not pre-planned.

1.3.4 Explanation with reference to the context

- (a) Apparently with no surprise,
To any happy flower,
The frost beheads it at its play,
In accidental power.

Context: These lines have been extracted from the poem ‘Apparently with no surprise’ by famous American poet Emily Dickinson. Like her many other poems, Emily seems to be obsessed with death and destruction in this poem also. In this poem Dickinson talks about the cold, cruel and passive attitude of nature. Rather nature has been portrayed as murderous in this short poem which while performing its assigned duties causes havoc to the innocent objects.

Explanation:

In the above lines Emily tells us that a happy and a playful flower is beheaded by the frost. Clearly the flower is not surprised at the turn of the events. The frost of course is more powerful which settles on a flower which is swaying merrily and beheads it. At the same time, the frost while in playful mood , commits

this heinous act of murdering the flower unintentionally. The frost is empowered by nature to kill the flower and not because it has the power to do so.

The poet uses strong words like 'beheads' which presents a negative connotative meaning.

(b) The blond assassin passes on.

The sun proceeds unmoved,
To measure off another day,
For an approving God.

Context:- These lines have been taken from Emily Dickinson's short poem 'Apparently with no Surprise'. The poet talks about the natural process of nature when each object of nature performs its duty without being affected by the damage it causes. An innocent, playful flower has been murdered by the frost but even God seems to have given his consent for this cruel act.

Explanation:

The frost is innocent, naive to the "power" it possesses. The word "blonde" here represents a characterization of the "assassin", not meaning a physical trait of light color. The word blonde is associated with innocence, naiveté, and beauty. The frost is beautiful, as evidenced by a sparkling morning in early spring, but it is also deadly. The sun which withholds its warmth is rather more cruel as it lets the frost settle and kills the flower. It moves ahead unemotionally to complete its task and to come out the next day. The final lines of the poem ring of a sarcastic tone, but God is approving of the events of the poem. The frost and the flower are both of this creation, and they are doing what they were intended to do. In God's eyes, this is good, for God is not a puppet master, pulling the strings of life; instead, He is a father, watching his progeny grow and do as intended.

1.3.5 Short questions with answers

1. What does a 'happy flower' mean?

Ans. It means that the flower is happy without any worry about its impending doom.

2. What does the frost behead?

Ans. The frost beheads the swaying flower.

3. Who is unmoved and by what?

Ans. The Sun is unmoved by the fact that the flower has been murdered by the frost in a cruel manner.

4. Who gets the 'accidental power'?

Ans. The frost gets the power accidentally. It is innocent about the power of murdering the flower.

5. Who is 'blonde Assassin'?

Ans. The frost is the 'blond assassin'. Here blonde is associated not with light color but with innocence and naiveté and beauty.

6. Do you think God is sympathetic to the flower?

Ans. No, God is not sympathetic to the flower.

7. Do the frost and the happy flower symbolize something? Explain briefly.

Ans. The happy flower and frost both are the objects of nature. Happy flower symbolize the innocence while frost represents the cruelty of nature.

8. What does the poet mean by 'an Approving God' ?

Ans. The poet is sarcastic when she says that it is with the approval of God. The God has approved the murder of the flower.

1.3.6 Glossary

1. apparently- clearly/seemingly
2. behead- to cut off somebody's head
3. at its play- while the frost does what it normally does
4. accidental power- a power gained by accident and not by its worth, the frost is powerful as nature made it so
5. blond-a reference to the frost, naiveté and innocence; blond could indicate pale color but here it is frost's innocence which it indicates
6. assassin- murderer
7. passes on- moves on, goes away
8. proceeds- moves on
9. unmoved- unemotional
10. measure off- to rise, to appear

1.4 Let's sum up :

In this lesson we have given a detailed discussion of two poems – Pippa's Song by Robert Browning and Apparently With no Surprise by Emily Dickinson. We hope the lesson will help the students in comprehending the poems thoroughly. The lesson will help the students in the preparation of essay type questions. It will also enable them to explain stanzas with reference to context. We have also given short answer questions and study notes for better understanding the poems.

The Poetic Palette

Unit III: Love

(i) Magic of Love :Helen Farries

Unit IV : War

(ii) The Charge of The Light Brigade: Alfred Lord Tennyson

Structure

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2.2 Magic of Love

2.2.1 Introduction to the poet

2.2.2 Main idea of the poem

2.2.3 Summary

2.2.4 Explanation with reference to the context

2.2.5 Short answer questions

2.2.6 Glossary

2.3 The Charge of The Light Brigade

2.3.1 Introduction to the poet

2.3.2 Main idea of the poem

2.3.3 Summary

2.3.4 Explanation with reference to the context

2.3.5 Short answer questions

2.3.6 Glossary

2.4 Let's Sum up

2.0 OBJECTIVES :

To introduce the students to the poets Helen Farries and Lord Alfred, Tennyson

To enable the students to comprehend the poems

To enable the students to understand the meaning of difficult words

2.1 Introduction to the lesson

In this lesson we shall be discussing two poems – *Magic of Love* by Helen Farries and *Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred Lord Tennyson. After discussing poets poems will be summarized . for a detailed understanding of the poem explanation with reference to context is given. the lesson will also help the students to learn the meanings of difficult words. for better comprehension of the poems some short questions with answers will also be given.

2.2 Magic of Love

2.2.1 Introduction to the poet:

Not much is known about Helen Farries.

2.2.2 Main idea of the poem

Magic of Love comes across as a song like, greeting card style poem and it is written in a detached manner. It speaks of love as a whole, generalized for everyone. There is no personal information in the poem. Instead, it speaks of love, bringing happiness and joy and comfort, of love warming your hands, and of love lighting your way. *Magic of Love* portrays love as something that is perfect, that fixes everything. It is the light that guides you, it warms you, it makes your dreams come true. It is gentle and kind, and perfect.

2.2.3 Summary

The poem *Magic of Love* by Helen Farries is a simple and lucid love song. It is from the genre of greeting card verse. The poet talks about magic love does to those who experience this ecstatic feeling. It is a wonderful feeling which works wonder to change our lives and uplift those who are in love. The poem is in the form of a song and throughout pervades a joyous mood .

Love is like a magic wand which transforms the life of the people who are in love. It a marvelous gift from God Himself which uplifts you. The *MAGIC OF LOVE* is such that it brings comfort, blessings and happiness in our lives. Love like a star keeps our morale high even in the times of difficulties. It is a kind of gift which we can share everyday and the wonderful thing about love is that it comes back as we give it.

Love is a magical thing in our lives. It connects us directly to God and all our prayers are answered immediately. It becomes the guiding light of our life and everything including our troubles are easy to face. Love does not know to be harsh . It is gentle, kind and perfect. In the end of the poem, the poet wishes that may the

divine feeling of love never deserts your heart. May God bless you with this wonderful and magical feeling. With love in your heart and life all the dreams of life come true.

2.2.4 Explanation with reference to the context:

There's a wonderful gift that can give you a lift,
It's a blessing from heaven above !
It can comfort and bless, it can bring happiness-
It's the wonderful Magic of Love !

Context: These lines have been taken from the poem *Magic of Love* by Helen Farries. The poet has simply spoken about the wonderful effects that love has on our lives. In a very simple language and in a greeting card style poet states the benefits of love. Love has a tranquilizing effect in our troubled times and it has the power to raise our sunken spirits.

Explanation:

In these opening lines the poet sings what love can do to our lives. It is definitely a marvelous gift, a blessing which is showered by the heavens. Once we experience this divine feeling it raises our spirit and brings comfort and blesses us with happiness. The *Magic of Love* works wonderfully on our lives'

Like a star in the night, it can keep your faith bright,
Like the sun, it can warm your hearts, too.
It's a gift you can give every day that you live,
And when given it comes back to you !

Context: These lines have been picked from Helen Farries's poem *Magic of love*. This poem in the form of a song eulogises love and the impact it bears on our lives. The poet believes that love is a heavenly gift and it's magic invites blessings from heaven .

Explanation:

In these lines poet propounds the idea that love is like a star. As a star showers brightness during night similarly love guides us and keep our faith alive even in the dark moments of our life. It provides warmth to our hearts like sun. It is an inexhaustible gift which we can give till the last day of our life. The wonderful thing about love is that it comes back to you when it is given.

When love lights the way, there is a joy in the day
All the troubles are lighter to bear,

Love is gentle and kind, and through love you will find

There's an answer to your every prayer !

Context: These lines are extracted from the poem Magic of Love by Helen Farries. The poet in this simple and lucid poem praises love. The magic of love is such that it transforms the lives of the people who experience it. She states love's different aspects. Love as a blessing works wonder on our lives.

Explanation:

The poet feels that love as a beacon of light guides us. With the light of love we have joy in our lives. No matter what troubles and difficulties we are facing but with love as our guiding torch dispels them all. It becomes easy to tolerate all the problems of our life. Love is kind and gentle and with love in heart all our prayers are reciprocated. The poet seems to convey the idea that even God answers the prayers of those who have this heavenly feeling in their hearts.

May it never depart from your two loving hearts,

May you treasure this gift from above-

You will find if you do, all your dreams will come true,

In the wonderful Magic of Love !

Context: These lines have been taken from Helen Farries's poem Magic of Love. In this poem the poet expresses her feelings about love as a God's gift which is gentle and kind and brings comfort in the lives of those who possess it. Love guides even in the dark moments of life.

Explanation:

In the above lines the poet wishes that may love never deserts the loving hearts. It should be valued like a treasure which God himself bestows on the loving hearts. The poet assures the lovers that if love is kept with care, under its wonderful impact and magic all their dreams will definitely come true.

2.2.5 Short answers with questions:

1. What is the wonderful gift and blessing from heaven?

Ans. The wonderful gift and blessing from heaven is Love.

2. What are the different things love can do?

Ans. Love can comfort, bless and bring happiness in our lives. It guides us and provide us warmth.

3. How can love help lighten burdens?

Ans. By giving us joy, love lightens the troubles and burdens.

4. Why does the poet call love a gift?

Ans. The poet calls love a gift as it is given by God and through this gift all our prayers are answered.

5. What blessing does the poet offer at the end of the poem?

Ans. The poet offers the blessing at the end of the poem that may love never depart their loving hearts.

6. What will be the result of the Magic of Love ?

Ans. The result of the Magic of Love will be that all their dreams come true.

2.2.6 Glossory:

give you a lift	:	uplift/make you feel cheerful
lighter to bear	:	easy to tolerate
depart	:	desert/leave
treasure	:	something which is valuable
gifts from above	:	a gift given by the God himself

The Charge of the Light Brigade

2.3.1 Introduction of the Poet:

Alfred Lord Tennyson was born in 1809 in Lincolnshire, the son of a clergyman. He began writing early, publishing a book of poetry with his two brothers titled *Poems by Two Brothers* (1827). Tennyson attended Cambridge for three years, returning home in 1831 after the death of his father. He suffered from another devastating loss in 1833, when his good friend Arthur Henry Hallam, whom he met at Cambridge, died. In 1850, Tennyson was named poet laureate and finally married Emily Sellwood, whom he had courted for 14 years but had not been able to marry due to his strained finances. He was named a peer and served in the House of Lords, beginning in 1883

Tennyson published a number of poems relating to Arthurian legend throughout the course of his life, including "The Lady of Shalott" (1832), "Morte d'Arthur" (1842), *The Princess* (1847), and *Idylls of the King*, which first appeared in 1859 and was published in its complete form in 1888. Although many readers have criticized his Arthur for being too feminine, Tennyson's poem reflected Victorian tensions about female power and uncontrollable male violence. Other notable works include *In Memoriam* (1850), "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1855), *Maud* (1855), and "Crossing the Bar" (1889). Tennyson died in 1892 and was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

2.3.2 Main Idea of the Poem

Tennyson wrote "The Charge of the Light Brigade" in a few minutes on December 2, 1854, after reading an article in the London *Times* about the Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War, which was fought from 1853 to 1856 between Russia on one side and England, France, Turkey, and Sardinia on the other. This poem is about courage, not about the bad luck or stupidity that put the men of the light Brigade into danger. The Charge of the Light Brigade was originally captured in an eyewitness account by a journalist named William Howard Russell who was covering the Crimean War for his audiences back in London. Astonishingly, through a fatal lack of leadership, 600 horsemen brandished with swords bravely rode into a valley flanked on three sides with Russian artillery. It was a slaughter.

2.3.3 Summary:

This poem celebrated an extra-ordinary military disaster during The Crimean War of 1854, between Britain and Russia. A British cavalry Brigade received an order to charge in the wrong direction, and did so- all the way down a long valley surrounded by Russian canons. The poet expresses the beauty of the charge and the nobility of the British soldiers in obeying an order which meant death for most of them.

The rhythm in the first two lines imitated that of galloping horses. A league is equivalent to three miles, and the brave six hundred soldiers charged into the valley of death . They charged to capture the guns and the cannons. The Officer who had given this order did not say which guns he meant. He was killed before he could explain, and so the men rode straight ahead down the valley. Was there any soldier from the Brigade who broke down his courage completely by the sudden danger daunt disheartened thoroughly? No one ever took notice. Their duty was not to reply back, not to reason their way out but their compliance was only to obey their immediate commanding officer and execute the orders completely even if it would kill them.

In front, to the right and to the left, the cannons and the muskets of the enemy volleyed and thundered rapidly with shot and shell. The enemy fired in groups all together. Still the brave six hundred soldiers charged into the jaws of death and into the mouth of hell. When all the six hundred soldiers fired their initial shots from their muskets, they drew out their shiny cavalry swords and swirled them in the air. They charged and massacred the enemy gunners there and

plunged into the enemy frontline group of guns. The whole world was watching as they broke the enemy lines to nothingness and shattered the South Russian cavalry men. The enemy was pushed back but the British Brigade continued to press on.

The cannons and the guns of the enemy in front, to the left and to the right continued endlessly to volley and thunder, stormed with shot and shell. Many of the horses and the riders fell into the enemy's bullet. Yet they fought so well and came through the jaws of death and back from the mouth of hell. The wild fearless charge of the six hundred men made the whole wondered as to when their glory would fade away? Tennyson appealed to all the world to honor the Light Brigade and honor the charge they made. By the end of the day, out of the six hundred only less than two hundred returned back to the camps alive.

2.3.4 Explanation with reference to the context

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
"Charge for the guns!" he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Context: These lines have been picked up from the poem The Charge of The light Brigade by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. A British army unit which was named Light Brigade, comprising of 600 soldiers were ordered to attack the Russians soldiers well equipped with guns at Crimean war in 1856. Though these British soldiers were aware that the order was fatal and it was by mistake, still they fought bravely facing the canons from three sides.

Explanation:

In these lines the word "league" refers to the actual distance the Light Brigade was moved as they got into position, but it also implies that the cavalry was there alone. Although the leader of the Light Brigade could not see the French infantry that was to support his men, he was assured that they were to their left flank. The Light Brigade was now positioned in the valley, which Tennyson refers to as the valley of Death, giving the reader an image of the fate of the troops. In lines 5

and 6, the command to charge is given and the reader can picture the troops springing to action.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Someone had blunder'd:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Context: These lines have been written by Lord Alfred Tennyson in his famous poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade* on the attack on Russian army in the Crimean war. The poem narrates that the soldiers of the unit fought bravely despite knowing their fate. They faced guns and only few out of 600 came back alive.

Explanation:

On the field that day, there was a moment of hesitation there as well, because the leader of the Light Brigade questioned the order delivered to him by the aide-de-camp. Though he was sure the order was a large mistake, he was assured that these orders were given by the general and that he would receive the full support of the French Infantry and the Heavy Brigade. Furthermore, he was reminded that not to obey would be deliberate defiance of authority and likely to result in disciplinary action. In these lines Tennyson captures the futility and hopelessness that must have been felt by the leader that day, but he also causes the reader to question why one should keep silent and obey a directive that is wrong simply because it was issued by someone in a position of authority.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,

Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred.

Context: These lines have been taken from the poem The Charge of the Light Brigade written by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. This poem tries to enact the scene of bravery of the Light Brigade in the mouth of guns and artillery. This small unit of 600 men fought without thinking the consequences which was to result in their death.

Explanation:

In the third stanza, in lines 18 to 22 the reader can "see" and "hear" the cannon on their right, left and in front of them as the brigade commences the charge. In spite of the dangers they faced, the troops boldly continued moving forward into the "jaws of Death" and "the mouth of Hell." They marched forward though the canons were discharging ammunition at them continuously from left, right and in front of them.

Flashed all their sabers bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sab'ring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the saber stroke
Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not,
Not the six hundred.

Context: These lines have been taken from the poem The Charge of the Light Brigade by Tennyson. This poem describes that how the valiant soldiers of this unit fought in the war against Russians and Cossacks. Their enemy was equipped with canons and guns while they had swords but their bravery was unmatched.

Explanation:

The Poet narrates in these lines that they flashed their naked swords in the air and chopping the gunners with their swords. As the Light Brigade begins to attack, Tennyson has not only the eyes of the British, French, Turkish and Russian troops

on these 600 men, but of the whole world as well. While marching forward they jumped into the smoke caused by the guns and broke through the first line of the enemy artillery. The Russians as well as the Cossacks reeled under the attack of the swords. The word "wonder" can mean awe and admiration, but it can also mean doubt and puzzlement. As they realize their predicament, the troops turn and ride back in a hasty and unorganized retreat, but not the 600 that rode in originally. That day, there were 503 men killed within a few minutes.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell.
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

Context: These lines have been taken from the poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade* written by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. This poem tries to enact the scene of bravery of the Light Brigade in the mouth of guns and artillery. This small unit of 600 men fought without thinking the consequences which was to result in their death.

Explanation:

These Lines at the beginning of stanza five are the same as lines 18 to 22 that open stanza three, with the exception that now the cannons are behind them as they make their retreat instead of in front of them as when they began the charge. These lines give the reader a much different picture than lines 23-25 did. Instead of boldly charging toward their enemy they are now making a hasty retreat while the enemy continues shooting men and horses. In these lines 49 we are told not all of them made it back. Only 197 men survived of the 600 men that charged that day.

When can their glory fade ?
O the wild charge they made!

All the world wondere'd
 Honor the charge they made!
 Honor the Light Brigade, Noble six hundred!

Context: These lines have been taken from the poem The Charge of the Light Brigade from the pen of Alfred, lord Tennyson. This poem expresses Tennyson's admiration for the soldiers of the Light Brigade who were small in number but fought with bravery in front of artillery of Russian army.

Explanation:

The poet has asked the question because he fears that these men and this incident may not be remembered or worse yet, that they will be remembered as men that failed. In line 50 he uses "wild" to refer to their charge, which can mean it was a fantastic charge . All the world was surprised to see their courage. The poet appeals to the people to honor these brave men by remembering their bravery always.

2.3.5 Short questions with answers:

1. Why does the poet uses the expression `valley of Death' in the first stanza?
 Ans. The poet uses this expression to express the idea that the soldiers of the Light Brigade were moving towards their death as the Russian army was much better equipped them.
2. What were the weapons that the Light Brigade possessed?
 Ans. The Light Brigade possessed sabers i.e. swords.
3. What were the weapons that the enemies possessed?
 Ans. The enemies possessed guns and canons.
4. Were the rival groups evenly matched? How do you know?
 Ans. No, the rival groups were not evenly matched? The Light Brigade had only swords whereas the enemy had guns.
5. Who does `he' refer to inline 6?
 Ans. In line 6 `he' refers to the commander of the Light Brigade who ordered the brigade to attack the enemy.
6. What does `Sabring the gunners there' mean?
 Ans. It means killing the gunners with their swords.
7. Do the lines `Came thro' the jaws of Death,/Back from the mouth of Hell' refer to those who died or those who survived.

Ans. These lines refer to those who survived and came back from the mouth of canons.

8. Who are the last three lines addressed to?

Ans. The last three lines are addressed to the people of England to remember the sacrifice of the Light Brigade and honor them.

9. What are the last three words in each stanza? What is the effect of the repetition?

Ans. The last three words in each stanza are 'the six hundred'. These words bring out the meager no. of soldiers as compared to Russian army, so it throws light on their bravery and glory.

2.3.6. Glossary

league	- a distance of three miles
onward	- forward
valley of death	- to face death
Light Brigade	- name of the unit of the army
charge	- attack
dismay'd	- sad/disappointed
blunder'd	- committed a mistake
cannon	- guns
volley'd	- bullets/shots fired continuously
thunder'd	- produced a loud noise
storm'd	- fired or attacked
shot and shell	- ammunition/ bullets and cannon balls
boldly	- bravely
flash'd	- shone
sabres bare	- naked swords
sabring	- attacking with swords
charging	- attacking
wonder'd	- surprised
plunged	- jumped into
battery-smoke	- smoke produced by guns
reel'd	- fell dead
stroke	- to hit with swords
shatter'd	- broken into small pieces

sunder'd	- split into pieces
glory	- greatness
fade	- disappear
wild	- very strong

2.4 Let's Sum Up

In this lesson we have given a detailed discussion of two poems – Magic of Love by Helen Farries and The Charge of the Light Brigade by Alfred Lord Tennyson. We hope the lesson will help the students in comprehending the poems thoroughly. The lesson will help the students in the preparation of essay type questions. It will also enable them to explain stanzas with reference to context. We have also given short answer questions and study notes for better understanding the poems.

The Poetic Palette

Unit V

Patriotism:

(i) Where The Mind is Without Fear: Rabindranath Tagore

Unit VI

Thought And Action

(ii)The Soul's Prayer : Sarojini Naidu

Unit VII

Self And Society

(iii)I Sit and Look Out: Walt Whitman

Structure

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3.2 Where the Mind is Without Fear

3.2.1 Introduction to the poet

3.2.2 Main idea of the poem

3.2.3 Summary

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3.5 Let's sum up

3.0 Objectives:

To introduce the students to the poets Helen Farries and Alfred, Lord Tennyson

To enable the students to comprehend the poems

To enable the students to understand the meaning of difficult words

3.1 Introduction to the lesson

In this lesson we shall be discussing three poems –Where the Mind is Without Fear by Rabindranath Tagore, The Soul's Prayer by Sarojini Naidu and I Sit and Look Out by Walt Whitman. After discussing poets poems will be summarized . for a detailed understanding of the poem explanation with reference to context is given. the lesson will also help the students to learn the meanings of difficult words. for better comprehension of the poems some short questions with answers will also be given.

Where the Mind is Without Fear

3.2.1 Introduction to the Poet

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Nobel prize-winning Bengali poet, author, songwriter, philosopher, artist, and educator wrote “Gitanjali” (1912). First published in 1910, Tagore’s collection *Gitanjali* [Song Offerings] of mystical and devotional songs was translated to English in 1912. It would be the first of many volumes that earned him much acclaim in the East and West. It includes an Introduction by fellow Nobel prize-winning poet [William Butler Yeats](#).

A humanitarian and social and religious reformer, Tagore came to dislike the British Raj ruling over his people although he was caught between their culture and that of his own peoples’. As a patriot, he composed the music and lyrics for India’s national anthem “Jana-Gana-Mana” [Thou Art the Ruler of All Minds] and when Bangladesh became independent in 1971 they chose Tagore’s song “Amar Sonar Bangla” [My Golden Bengal] as its national anthem. With his flowing white beard, robes and riveting brown eyes, the famous polymath is fondly remembered and esteemed for his hundreds of poems and songs popularly known as

Rabindrasangeet; his vast collection of paintings and drawings; and the various dramas, novels, essays, operas, short stories, travel diaries, correspondence, and autobiographies that he wrote. Tagore's life and works have made him a cultural icon, studied the world over even into the 21st Century

Tagore modernized Bengali art by spurning rigid classical forms and resisting linguistic strictures. His novels, stories, songs, dance-dramas, and essays spoke to topics political and personal. *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings), *Gora* (Fair-Faced), and *Ghare-Baire* (The Home and the World) are his best-known works, and his verse, short stories, and novels were acclaimed—or panned—for their lyricism, colloquialism, naturalism, and unnatural contemplation. The composer of Sri Lanka's national anthem: *Sri Lanka Matha* was a student of Tagore, and the song is inspired by Tagore's style

3.2.2 main idea of the poem:

Where the Mind is Without Fear was included in the volume called 'Naibedya', the original poem bears the title 'Prarthana' meaning prayer. The poem is a prayer to God. The poem was written by Rabindranath Tagore during the time when India was under the British Rule and people were eagerly waiting to get their freedom from the British Rule. This poem had given a lot of strength to the people who were struggling for India's independence. It is a prayer to the Almighty for a hassle free nation free from any kind of manipulative or corrupted powers.

3.2.3 Summary:

This poem has been taken from his English 'Gitanjali'. Tagore had a very deep religious caste of mind and profound humanism. He was both a patriot and an internationalist. In the poem, 'Where The Mind Is Without Fear', Tagore sketches a moving picture of the nation he would like India to be. Where everyone within the fold of the brotherhood is free to hold up one's head high and one's voice to be heard without having any tension of fear of oppression or forced compulsion. Where the knowledge is not restricted by narrow ideas and loyalties. The British rule had robbed India of its pride and dignity by reducing it to a subject nation.

Where one feels fearless and honored, where knowledge is free, where the whole world is united, where one expresses sincere feelings, where one tries so reach perfection continuously, where new ideas are not disturbed by dead tradition and where the mind is directed to generous thought and action, let my country

awake in such heaven of freedom. In the world our mind should be fearless and we should be respected

Where everyone is free to toil and work hard for anything they desire either for their own or for the good of the nation. Everyone is encouraged to strive tirelessly till they attain full satisfaction in reaching their goals and perfection. Where blind superstitious habits of thought and action have not put out the light of reason. Where people's mind should not dwell in the mistakes of the past nor be possessed by it. On the other hand they should be led by the power of reasoning to be focused on the future by applying scientific thought and action. Tagore's only prayer to the Supreme Ultimate is leading the nation to such an ideal state of heaven. It is only by the universality of outlook and an abiding passion for the realization of great human ideals that India will achieve her true freedom. This way alone she will realize her destiny

3.2.4 Explanation with Reference to the context:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection ;

Context: These lines have been taken from the poem *Where the Mind is without Fear* by "Rabindranath Tagore". The poet prays to God that his country India should be a heaven of freedom. The poem has described how we should live fearlessly and proudly. It has also pointed out the cause of war between nations – the artificial borderline. The poet expresses his desire that his country should be an ideal place for living.

Explanation:

The India of Tagore's dream is a country where her people hold their heads high with their pride in knowledge and strength born of that knowledge. Where all countrymen must come out of their shell and not be people who have lost the vision of humanity by the narrow loyalties of caste creed and religion. Prejudice and superstitious which narrow the mind and divide people would be a thing of the past. Where the words of truth come out from the depths of the heart and are spoken out courageously in the open for the world to hear. People would work for perfections in the clear light of reason leaving aside all superstitious rituals.

Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit ;
Where the mind is led forward by thee
into ever- widening thought and
action.....
Into the heaven of freedom,
my Father, let my country awake.

Context: These lines have been taken from the poem *where the Mind is Without fear* by Rabindranath Tagore. In this poem Tagore wishes that his *country* should enjoy total freedom where there is no fear . In such country there will not be any restrictions of cast, creed or of prejudices.

Explanation:

Where everyone is free to toil and work hard for anything they desire either for their own or for the good of the nation. Everyone is encouraged to strive tirelessly till they attain full satisfaction in reaching their goals and perfection. Where blind superstitious habits of thought and action have not put out the light of reason. Where people's mind should not dwell in the mistakes of the past nor be possessed by it. On the other hand they should be led by the power of reasoning to be focused on the future by applying scientific thought and action. Tagore's only prayer to the Supreme Ultimate is leading the nation to such an ideal state of heaven. It is only by an abiding passion for the realization of great human ideals that India will achieve her true freedom.

3.2.5 Short answer questions

1. What kind of land poet wishes to live into?

Ans. The poet wishes to live into a land where there should not be any fear, where there is free access to knowledge, where there are no barriers of caste or creed among people.

2. What are some of the qualities that the land of freedom should have, according to Tagore?

Ans. The land of freedom should not be divided among narrow domestic walls of religion. Truth and perfection should reign over this land. The land should be fearless.

3. Does the poem apply to all countries or only to the country of the poet?

Ans. The poet wrote this poem for his country i.e. India of pre-Independence times but the poem has a universal message.

4. What does poet mean to say 'narrow domestic walls' ?

Ans. The poet used this expression to convey the idea that his country should not be divided into compartments of caste, creed or religion.

5. Point out the phrases that refer to sectarianism and communalism in the poem.

Ans. The phrases that refer to sectarianism and communalism are 'narrow domestic walls' and 'dreary desert sand of dead habit'.

6. How does Tagore refer to the struggle for perfection and rationality?

Ans. Tagore refers to the struggle for perfection and rationality as 'tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection'.

7. What is the mood of the poet in the poem? Provide evidence in explanation of your answer.

Ans. The poet's mood is patriotic. He expressed this feeling in the lines 'Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake'.

8. Is this the song of a patriot? why?

Ans. Yes, this is the song of patriot. The poet prays for the welfare and upliftment of his country.

3.2.6 Glossary

Where the head is held high	- it refers to the pride in one's freedom
fragments	- pieces
narrow domestic walls	- boundaries of caste and creed
depth of truth	- the ultimate reality
tireless	- constant
Striving	- efforts towards goal
clear stream of reason	- logic without any prejudices and superstition
dreary	- dull and gloomy
dead habit	- outdated habits and practices that have settled into life
ever widening thought and action	- ever increasing and expanding thought and action
Let my country awake	- Poet prays for intellectual and spiritual freedom

3.3 The Soul's Prayer

3.3.1 Introduction to the Poet:

Sarojini Naidu also known by the sobriquet The Nightingale of India, was a child prodigy, Indian independence activist and poet. Naidu was the first Indian woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress and the first woman to become the Governor of Uttar Pradesh state. She was a great patriot, politician, orator and administrator. Sarojini Naidu was born on February 13, 1879 in Hyderabad. Her father, Dr. Aghornath Chattopadhyaya was a scientist, philosopher, and educator. He founded the Nizam College of Hyderabad. Her mother, Varada Sundari Devi was a Bengali poetess. Dr. Aghornath Chattopadhyaya was the first member of the Indian National Congress in Hyderabad. For his socio-political activities, Aghornath was dismissed from his position as Principal.

Besides her role and sacrifices in the Indian Nationalist Movement, Sarojini Naidu is also commended for her contribution in the field of poetry. Her works were so beautiful that many were transformed into songs. Her collections "The golden threshold (1905)", "The bird of time (1912)", and "The broken wing (1912)" attracted huge Indian and English readership.

Sarojini Naidu was the first woman Governor of Uttar Pradesh. Her chairmanship of the Asian Relations Conference in 1947 was highly-appraised. Two years later, on 02 March 1949, Sarojini Naidu died at Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

3.3.2 Main idea of the poem

"The Soul's Prayer" by Sarojini Naidu is a type of lyrical autobiographical poem. Naidu writes poetry to reflect times and the essence of many aspects of her own life. In the poem the person is speaking to God. She is troubled and sad about life. The rituals of the fire (being burned after death) represent purity and peace. The author is a strong believer in Islam and this is reflected in the theme of her poem. She wants God to give her answers to existence. She is aware there are different levels to her soul and she is trying to get a better understanding from God as to her own life and death and why suffering exists.

The poet does not understand why God allows so much pain and suffering. She is answered by the understanding that it will make her pure and that suffering is necessary for a soul's development. God has shared with her that life and death are both part of existence as well as suffering and the miseries of the world.

3.3.3 Summary

In this poem, the poet Sarojini Naidu prays to god and she wants god to speak to her and reveal to her about law of life and death. The poet has an imaginary conversation with god as she pleads with her. She wants to feel each joy and pain in her life, and wants to experience complex knowledge of love, life and death. Not only she craves for bliss in life, but she is ready to keep abreast of every pang of strife and struggle.

She prays not only to be overjoyed with the gifts of life but to have strength to bear with every grief, an intricate knowledge of love and life. She wants to experience all types of situations in life. She does not want to be divorced from any form of strife. For her both gift and grief are welcome blessings that she craves for. She longs for the intricate wisdom of love and life that has hitherto eluded her. She also deeply craves for the mystic knowledge of the grave that has hitherto been unexplored.

She acknowledges God's answer to her prayers, and is assured that He would heed to her prayers. He ascertains that her soul would experience all the passionate raptures and unfeeling despairs. The Almighty deals with her in a stern but down-to-earth manner. He addresses her as "child" mirroring the intimacy and intricacy of the bond that they shared. It also reflects protectiveness and a sense of security.

He assures the poetess that she shall drink of both joy and fame. Love will consume her with fiery passion. Fire is the only basic element with the exquisite quality of cleansing without polluting itself unlike the other imperative elements. The poetess shall be cleansed by pain akin to the flame of purgation. It will purify the dross or impurities from her desire and thereby render it pure. Her chastened spirit will thus aspire for salvation. As her soul will be satiated of these extremes, she will now long for peace. In such a stance, it will seek release from its blind, unconditional prayer. The prayer places infinite faith in God without rationalization, and is therefore termed as 'blind'. It will be 'spent' with time and experience and incessant praying. In such a state it would effortlessly master the secret of His peace. Life is but a prism of His light where the white light (symbolic of purity) enters the realm of the earth and fills our life with different hues and colors. Death is the shadow of his face as destruction is inevitable for creation, meaningful change and procreation.

3.3.4 Explanation with reference to the context

In childhood's pride I said to Thee:
'O Thou, who mad'st me of Thy breath,
Speak, Master, and reveal to me
Thine inmost laws of life and death.

Context: These lines have been taken from 'Nightingale' of India i.e. Sarojini Naidu's Poem The Soul's Prayer. In this poem the poet is putting forward her soul's prayer to God. In the form of imaginary conversation the poet reveals her confusion to God regarding her thoughts on life, death and pain. For her both gift and grief are welcome blessings that she craves for. She longs for the intricate wisdom of love and life that has hitherto eluded her

Explanation:

The poet entreats God that He should reveal her the two most hidden facets of God i.e. life and death. She believes that God has entrusted her with His faith as it is out of His breath that she has got her life. She has asked God to explain her the mystery of life and death with the purity and innocence of childhood.

'Give me to drink each joy and pain
Which Thine eternal hand can mete,
For my insatiate soul would drain
Earth's utmost bitter, utmost sweet.

Context: These lines have been taken from the poem The Soul's Prayer By Sarojini Naidu. The entire poem is in the form of a conversation between the poet and the God. The poet requests God to unfold the mystery of life and death both. The God responds to her prayer accordingly and satisfies her by assuring her that she will drink both from joy and fame.

Explanation:

In these lines the poet wishes God to enable her to experience both joy and pain which His immortal hands can provide her. The thirst of her soul is such that it cannot be satisfied . It is insatiable and therefore can drink most bitter and most sweet experiences of life which exist on earth. The poet wants to convey that she does not want to leave anything inexperienced, be it happiness or pain.

'Spare me no bliss, no pang of strife,
Withhold no gift or grief I crave,
The intricate lore of love and life

And mystic knowledge of the grave.'

Context: These lines have been taken from the poem *The soul's Prayer* written by Bharat Kokila Sarojini Naidu. Naidu's soul is communion with God and in a very mature but in a childlike innocence she beseeches god to enlighten her on life's most basic secrets. The God responds to her prayer and assures her to bestow her all the blessings she ask for.

Explanation:

In these lines in a very mature way the poet asks God to help her to experience all bliss of life. At the same time she should have experienced all the pain and agony of struggle. She understands it thoroughly that without dealing with contrary forces i.e. pain and bliss, love and sorrow she cannot understand life. She wants to soak her soul in the complex forms of love as well as life. She has a sensible approach when she feels that without understanding the enigmatic death she won't be able to achieve her goal.

Lord, Thou didst answer stern and low:
 'Child, I will hearken to thy prayer,
 And thy unconquered soul shall know
 All passionate rapture and despair.

Context: These lines are a part of Sarojini Naidu's poem *The soul's Prayer*. In this poem the poet expresses her soul's desire to be intimate with the most complex intricacies of life. She does not want to remain untouched with any ecstatic feeling of life whether it is joy or pain, life or death. the God also acknowledges her prayer and assures her to give knowledge of life.

Explanation:

In these lines when poet requests God to listen to her prayer and reveal her the complexities of life, God does respond her but in a very strict manner. In a low voice He answers her that after hearing her prayers He Is ready to answer her prayer and then her soul which is invincible will realize all the mysteries of life. She will come to know about all the deep feelings of happiness and despair.

 'Thou shalt drink deep of joy and fame,
 And love shall burn thee like a fire,
 And pain shall cleanse thee like a flame,
 To purge the dross from thy desire.

Context: These lines have been a part of sarojini naidu's poem The Soul's Prayer , in which the poet asks God to let her know the depths of life and death, pain and joy. The God ascertains her that he will realize her all the secrets of life and her soul will be purged from all the impurities afterwards.

Explanation:

In these lines the God calms her anxiety and convinces her that her soul will taste both joy and fame. As fire burns something, in the same way love will burn her. The pain of life will burn her and purge her like the flames. Both love and pain will act like purifiers to clean her soul from all the rubbish from her desires.

‘So shall thy chastened spirit yearn
To seek from its blind prayer release,
And spent and pardoned, sue to learn
The simple secret of My peace.

Context: These lines have been taken from The Soul's Prayer by Sarojini Naidu. In this poem, the poet Sarojini Naidu prays to god and she want a god to speak to her and reveal to her about law of life and death. The poet imaginary conversation with god as she pleads with her. The God promises her that he would exhort her to pinnacle of glory and success.

Explanation:

In this stanza he says that her spirit, through these experiences will be chastened or humbled, and she will wish a release from the prayer she offered-a release from all of these experiences. Her soul tired and exhausted, will want to know how to be peaceful. It will want to know how to leave the fire and flame behind, the burning and cleansing, and simply experience quite, underrated peace.

‘I, bending from my sevenfold height,
Will teach thee of My quickening grace,
Life is a prism of My light,
And Death the shadow of My face.’

Context: These lines are a part of Sarojini Naidu's poem The soul's Prayer. In this poem the poet expresses her soul's desire to be intimate with the most complex intricacies of life. She does not want to remain untouched with any ecstatic feeling of life whether it is joy or pain, life or death. the God also acknowledges her prayer and assures her to give knowledge of life.

Explanation:

In this stanza God replies to Naidu's prayer and assures her that by bending low from His high kingdom He will get her acquainted with His fast paced grace and glory. Life is just like a prism of God's light from which the all the colors of life will pass through. God tells the poet that death is nothing else but another facet of His. death is not separate from Him.

3.3.5 Short questions with answers

1. Who made the poet?

Ans. God, the creator made the poet.

2 Who is poet talking to ?

Ans. The poet is talking to God.

3. What is the poet's request?

Ans. The poet's request is to reveal to her the most intricate and basic laws which govern life and death.

4. What will her Insatiate soul absorb?

Ans. Her insatiate soul would absorb the most bitter as well as the most sweet experiences of life.

5. What response did the poet get?

Ans. The poet got reply in a stern voice but God assured her that all her prayers will be answered .

6. Why will the poet's spirit be chastened?

Ans. God assures her that her spirit will be chastened by both sufferings and joys of her life. Pain and love both will purge her soul like flames.

7. Explain the last two lines of the poem.

Ans. The last two lines reveal that life is nothing but reflection of God's own light and death is the shadow of God's face.

3.3.6 Glossary

child's pride - the innocence and purity of childhood

Thee - you i.e God

mad'st - made

reveal - disclose/unfold

master - creator

Thine - your

inmost laws...death - the most secret incomprehensible rules

	of God by which human life on earth is determined
eternal	- immortal
mete	- give
insatiate	- that which cannot be satisfied
drain	- swallow
pang of strife	- hurt caused by conflict
withhold	- deprive
crave	- desire
intricate	- complex
lore	- a traditional story that has been passed on by generations
mystic knowledge	- knowledge having a spiritual quality
stern	- strict
hearken	- listen to
unconquered	- invincible
rapture	- ecstasy
despair	- gloom
cleanse	- purify
purge	- to get rid of harmful things
dross	- rubbish/unpurified things
chastened	- purified
yearn	- desires
spent and pardoned	- tired and exhausted
sue to learn	- eager to learn
sevenfold height	- heavens where God is supposed to have His abode
quickenings	- fast paced

3.4 I Sit and Look Out

3.4.1 Introduction to the Poet

Poet, journalist, Called the "Bard of Democracy" and considered one of America's most influential poets, Walt Whitman was born May 31, 1819 in West Hills, Long Island, New York. He backed what some considered radical positions on women's property rights, immigration, and labor issues. In the spring of 1855, Whitman, finally finding the style and voice he'd been searching for, self-published a slim collection of 12 unnamed poems titled *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman could only afford to print 795 copies of the book. *Leaves of Grass* marked a radical departure

from established poetic norms. Traditional rhyme and meter were discarded in favor of a voice that came at the reader directly, in the first person.

The work was an attempt at reaching out to the common person with an American [epic](#). He continued expanding and revising it until his death in 1892. After a stroke towards the end of his life, he moved to [Camden, New Jersey](#), where his health further declined. He died at age 72 and his funeral became a public spectacle.

Walt Whitman has been claimed as America's first "poet of democracy", a title meant to reflect his ability to write in a singularly American character. A British friend of Walt Whitman, Mary Smith Whitall Costelloe, wrote: "You cannot really understand America without Walt Whitman, without *Leaves of Grass*... He has expressed that civilization, 'up to date,' as he would say, and no student of the philosophy of history can do without him." [Modernist](#) poet [Ezra Pound](#) called Whitman "America's poet... He is America."

3.4.2 Main idea of the poem

"I sit and look out" by Walt Whitman echoes all miseries and atrocities of life that rose to the surface in the wake of capitalism. 19th century witnessed a sea change in the lives of people as rat race for materialistic possession became more prominent and principles were relegated, concerns and emotions were sidelined from inside of human beings. The poet pen pictures such a sad tale of human life by attempting to pose as onlooker who watches everything but does nothing to alter situations. The poet paints a picture of a dystopian world where there is reign of oppression and cruelty.

3.4.3 Summary

The poet is in a ruminating mood. Like an observer he observes the world around him and finds it a place which is afflicted from oppression, misery and cruelty. Very poignantly, he portrays the grief and injustice which we witness in our daily life. The poet feels helpless and ineffective when he sees sorrow all around. In the wake of capitalism in the 19th century, lives of people went through hell. The poet witness all the problems but states his inability to do anything in improving the condition of people.

The situation outside is shameful and full of oppression. youth is annoyed at himself and sobbing as a regret for certain shameful acts it has committed. The lower strata of life is facing miseries in every sphere. The women are being exploited

from all sides by their children and husbands. Due to neglect they are dying a dejected and a lonely death. The young women are seduced by the deceptive men. The poet feels there is total anarchy and the world has deteriorated. people are affected with jealousy in love.

Whitman is disturbed to watch the sorrowful condition of the world. He is upset to see that the world is marred by the deadly destruction of battles, diseases and tyranny. The sailors are facing starvation and draw lots to save the others from being dying. the poor suffering insult and humiliation at the hands of capitalists. Black people are tortured by their white masters. But poet feels that we are so conditioned that despite watching this horrific condition of the world, we opt to remain silent.

3.4.4 Explanation with reference to the context

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world,
and upon all oppression and shame;
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men,
at anguish with themselves, remorseful after deeds done;

Context : These lines have been taken from the poem I Sit and Look Out by Walt Whitman. In this poem, the poet reflects over his helplessness in not being able to take some action when he sees the oppression, injustice and cruelty prevalent in the society. The world is suffering from miseries but the poet feels there is thoughtlessness and meanness all around.

Explanation:

The poet laments in these lines that after sitting on higher altitude, he could see the sorrow affecting the world. The world is immersed in shame and people are being oppressed by those who have access to wealth. The poet could hear the deep seated sobs of the youth which is annoyed at himself for committing shameful acts and now repenting for those deeds. Among the poor, the poet could see women are being exploited by her children. due to neglect they have been dying in hunger a dejected and a hopeless death.

I see, in low life, the mother misused by her children,
dying neglected, gaunt, desperate;
I see the wife misused by her husband-
I see the treacherous seducer of young women;

Context: These lines have been extracted from the poem I Sit And Look Out by Walt Whitman. In this poem brings forth the negative condition of the world. People are suffering a lot of problems and the world is not at peace at all. Wherever he casts his eyes, he finds exploitation all around. But despite seeing all these problems, the poet and others are unable to do anything.

Explanation:

Among the poor, the poet could see women are being exploited by her children. due to neglect they have been dying in hunger a dejected and a hopeless death. In fact women are exploited everywhere and by everyone. They are not only suffering at the hands of their children but their husbands also misuse them. The young women are seduced by the deceptive men who later leave them in desolate condition. Despite giving their everything to their children, husbands and lovers, women get nothing in turn.

I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love,
attempted to be hid-I see these sights on the earth;
I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny- I see
martyres and prisoners;

Context: These lines have been taken from the poem I Sit and Look Out from the pen of Walt Whitman. In these lines the poet is disappointed to find the world in a deteriorating situation. In the capitalist America in 19th century, the society was beset with oppression and sufferings. The wealthy class was downtrodding the poor and the condition of the women was that of despondency.

Explanation:

The poet feels that the feeling of jealousy marks the lovers when the love is unrewarded and is not reciprocated. They try to hide these bothersome feelings but in vain, as everything is apparent to the world. The poet is further disturbed on seeing that the human beings are beset by the problems they have created themselves. They suffer due to wars and deadly diseases. The tyrants rule over the world. but the poet could see martyrs and prisoners also.

I observe a famine at sea- I observe the sailors casting lots
who shall be kill'd, to preserve the lives of the rest;
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant persons
upon laborers, the poor, and upon negroes, and the like;

Context: These lines have been taken from the poem I Sit and Look Out by Walt Whitman. In this poem, the poet reflects over his helplessness in not being able to take some action when he sees the oppression, injustice and cruelty prevalent in the society. The world is suffering from miseries but the poet feels there is thoughtlessness and meanness all around.

Explanation:

Though the sailors catch fish and provide food to the people. But poet could observe that their fate is locked under famine. They experience shortage of food and then to avoid maximum deaths by starvation they draw lots. Through these lots they decide who will die or thrown away into the sea so that others could be saved. On the other hand, the proud and conceited people shamefully humiliate and hurl insults at the weaker section of society. the poet hints at the slavery also. Be it poor, blacks or labourers all are insulted by the powerful.

All these- All the meanness and agony without end, I sitting,
look out upon,
See, hear, and am silent.

Context: The poet sits helplessly watching the suffering humanity around him. People are suffering at the hands of despots and tyrants. Oppression and humiliation of the poor and deprived has become a common sight. War, disease and famine tarnish the world.

Explanation:

The poet feels that the most shameful thing is that despite all these afflictions from which the people are suffering, nobody dares to speak. These activities go on happening endlessly. The pain does not cease to exist but the poet is so much conditioned to be a passive onlooker that he just sits and looks out but does not raise his voice against this injustice. He prefers to remain silent like others.

3.4.5 Short answer questions

1. What is the mood of the poet?

Ans. The poet is in reflective and pensive mood, pondering over the distress of the world.

2. What is the poet observing?

Ans. The poet is observing exploitation of the weaker section-be it poor , women or the labourers.

3. Why are the sobs of the young men secret?

Ans. These are secret because they do not want to reveal the wrongs which they have committed.

4. What is the cause of the 'famine at sea'?

Ans. Because of the shortage of food there is famine at the sea.

5. What are the 'arrogant persons' doing to others?

Ans. The arrogant persons insult and humiliate the labourers, poor and the negroes.

6. Do you agree that this describes 'meanness and agony' without end? Explain your answer.

Ans. Yes, this poem definitely describes 'meanness and agony' without end. The poet himself is witnessing all this.

7. Why is poet still silent?

Ans. The poet is still silent as like others he too is conditioned to remain quiet even after observing so much exploitation.

3.4.6 Glossary

oppression : governed in an unfair and cruel way

convulsive sobs : Sobs that are involuntary and deep-seated

anguish : anger

remorseful : deeply regretting

low life : poor people

gaunt : haggard and bony

desperate : without any hope

treacherous : deceptive

ranklings : the bothersome feeling caused by an unpleasant action

unrequited :unrewarded/something not responded to

workings....tyranny: breaking out of war, cruelty and deadly diseases for which man himself is responsible

pestilence : deadly disease

famine : shortage of food

casting lots : drawing lottery

slights : insults

degradation : humiliation

cast : hurled

arrogant persons : proud and conceited

agony : pain with anger

3.5 Let's Sum Up

In this lesson we have given a detailed discussion of three poems – Where the Mind is Without Fear by Rabindranath Tagore ,The Soul's Prayer by Sarojini Naidu and I Sit and Look Out by Walt Whitman. We hope the lesson will help the students in comprehending the poems thoroughly. The lesson will help the students in the preparation of essay type questions. It will also enable them to explain stanzas with reference to context. We have also given short answer questions and study notes for better understanding the poems.

The Poetic Palette

Unit VII. Three new poems

1. Goodbye for Miss. Pushpa T.S.

Good bye poetry for Miss. Pushpa T.S., Nissim Ezekiel

4.1 Introduction:

Nissim Ezekiel is a prominent poet, play wright and critic of post-independent India. Impact, he is first a poet and only then a play wright and a critic. Born in 1924 and educated in England, Ezekiel began his career as a teacher of English at Mithhibhai College of Arts, Bombay. He was a visiting professor at the Leeds University in 1964 and lectured and recited his poems in a number of American Colleges and Universities in 1967. He has authored seven books of verse – *A Time to Change* (1952) *Sixty Poems* (1953), *The Third* (1959), *The Unfinished Man* (1960) *The Exact Name* (1965) *Hymns in Darkness* (1979) and *Latter Day Psalms* (1982).

4.2 Main idea of the poem:

“Good bye poetry for Miss Pushpa T.S.” is a satirical and humorous poem about how semi-educated people in India speak English. The poem gives the reader a look at India culture and the common people within it.

4.3 Summary :

Ezekiel has not only tried to describe Indian culture and environment, but also has made good use of “Babu Angrezi” or Indian English. It is a common error in India to use the present continuous in place of the simple present in English. Ezekiel exploits this national trait thought in “Goodbye poetry for Miss Pushpa T.S.” This was written in the form of a farewell speech on the occasion of Miss Pushpa’s departure for a foreign land. The poem comes under Ezekiel’s sixth volume of poems, namely “Hymns in Darkness.” The speaker wishes her a happy voyage, and praises her good qualities. The poem is in the form of a dramatic monologue where Miss Pushpa is depicted as a pleasing personality. In the middle of the poem the

speaker talks about her father and his job seemed as irrelevant and consists of lot of diversions from ideas.

The tone of the poem is humourous. The speaker calls her as sister and shows that he was in a respectable position in the office. We conclude that she was beautiful both internally and externally. As for digression, it is a common Indian way of talking. Perhaps to talk flippantly about certain other things than the main subject is treated as a mark of the additional knowledge on the part of the eloquent speaker. But certainly this is not the way of seasoned Indian thinkers and practised Indian speakers. In the poem the speaker goes astray from his subject, without bothering about it. Later he remembers that Miss. Pushpa is being ignored, and so he returns to his original theme and points out that she is going to a foreign country to improve her prospects.

The poem, like “Very Indian poem in Indian English”, is characteristically Indian in theme, treatment and taste. Ezekiel believed that a poet should belong to his immediate environment. Here he certainly belongs to his Indian Environment.

4.4 Explanation with reference to the context.

Friends,
our dear sister
is departing for foreign
in two three days
and
we are meeting today
To wish her bon voyage,

Context.

These are the opening lines of Nissim Ezekiel’s poem “Goodbye party for Miss Pushpa T.S.”. The poem is a satire on Indian English spoken by majority of Indian Speakers.

Explanation:

The speaker in above lives, says that their dear sister (colleague). Miss Pushpa is leaving for a foreign country. They have organised a farewell party in order to wish her a happy journey.

You are all knowing, Friends
what sweetness is in Miss Pushpa
I don’t mean only external sweetness
But internal sweetness

Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling even for no reason but simply because she is feeling.

Context: These lines occur in, “Goodbye party for Miss Pushpa T.S.” written by Nissim Ezekiel. The poem poses a satire on the semi- educated people in India.

Explanation: In these lines the speaker says that their colleague Miss Pushpa is leaving for a foreign country in two or three days. He says that everyone is familiar with the sweet, chirpy nature of Miss Pushpa who is “smiling and smiling for no reason.”

Miss Pushpa is coming
from very high family
Her father was renowned advocate
in Bulsar or Surat,
I am not remembering now which place.

Context: These lines occur in Nissim Ezekiel’s poem, ‘Goodbye party for Miss Pushpa T.S.’ The way some people speak English in India have seen ridiculed by the poet. Also he stresses on how Pidgin is appropriated by the speaker.

Explanation: The wrong use of present continuous tense in place of simple present tense highlights such people who speak incorrect English. Here the poet means to say that Miss Pushpa belongs to a noble family.. Her father was a famous lawyer in Bulsar or Surat, he does not remember clearly.

Surat? Ah yes,
Once only I stayed in Surat
with family members
of my uncle’s very old friend-
His wife was cooking nicely...
that was long time ago.

Context: These lines have been taken from the poem “Goodbye party for Miss Pushpa T.S” written by Nissim Ezekiel. The poem is considered a mild attack on Indian English speakers who use the present continuous tense in place of the simple present in English.

Explanation: Here, the speaker remembers that the place where Mrs. Pushpa’s father was a famous lawyer was Surat. He points out the irrelevant fact that he had stayed there once with his uncle’s very old friend whose wife was a good cook.

Coming back to Miss Pushpa
she is most popular lady

with men also and ladies also
 whenever I asked her to do anything
 she was saying, just now only
 I will do it; That's showing
 good spirit. I am always
 appreciating the good spirit.

Context: The above lines appear in Nissim Ezekiel's poem. The poem is in the form of a dramatic monologue and the tone is humorous and satirical.

Explanation: After an irrelevant digression, the speaker again comes to the point. He starts praising Miss Pushpa. He says that she is equally popular with ladies and men for she is nice and always ready to work and help others which clearly indicates Miss Pushpa's readiness to do any work. The unnecessary use of 'just' and 'only' exhibit the Indian speaker's ignorance of the usage of English words, creating laughter and fun.

Miss Pushpa is never saying no
 whatever I or anybody is asking
 she is always saying yes,
 and today she is going
 to improve her prospects
 and we are wishing her bon voyage '
 Now I ask other speakers to speak
 \and afterwards Miss Pushpa
 Will do summing up

Context: These lines are a part of Nissim Ezekiel's poem 'Goodbye party for Miss Pushpa T.S.' It is a satire on Indian English spoken by some semi-educational people in India.

Explanation: These concluding lines focus on the speaker who speaks wrong English at times. He says that Miss Pushpa would be leaving for a foreign country to improve her future. He concludes his speech and invites other speakers. He says that Miss Pushpa will give her reactions, as is customary, and will do the 'summing up', when the other speakers have finished. Thus, the poet makes fun of the faulty Indian way of speaking English.

The Poetic Palette

- a) Fool and Flea
- b) Women's Rights

Fool and Flea, Jeet Thayil

Introduction to the poet:

Jeet Thayil (1959) was born in Kerala, India. He was educated in Jesuit schools in Hong Kong, New York and Bombay. He is recipient of grants and awards from the New York foundation for the Arts. His debut Novel, *Narcopolis* was published in 2011. He lives in New Delhi. In 2012, He won the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award for his poetry collection *These Errors are Correct* and was short-listed for the man Booker prize 2012. He became the first Indian author to win the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature, worth \$50,000 for the novel *Narcopolis*.

Summary:

'Fool and Flea' is a short poem that examines the relationship between man and woman in a marital relationship. The poet does not present a positive view of marriage. The opening lines of the poem suggest that a sacred ceremony of marriage is going to be performed. People have gathered there to attend the marriage function between a fool and flea. Normally, marriage is seen between man and a woman i.e a male and female. Metaphorically speaking, flea surfaces as a strong metaphor in this poem. Maybe, she is a lady but her habits are like that of flea. There is no equality of mental pain. The fool is happy to get a partner. He is happy in doing his work. On the other hand, the flea sucks blood. She will in due course of time, gather the earnings of her husband, it is however, hoped that both will learn to be obedient with the passage of time.

The fool will work like a slave and will have no freedom. The flea mainly remains unhappy and has never thought of getting a chance to be happy. Thus they lead their life together, a life no different from animals or insects. They will ultimately die after leading such a life. The fool will die first and the flea, who is a glutton, will die of over-eating. She will eat so much that she will burst.

Explanation with Reference to Context

Dearly beloved
We are gathered here
to join together

this fool and this flea
In holy matrimony

Context: These are the opening lines of the poem, 'Fool and Flea' written by Jeet Thayil. It is a short, light and simple poem in which a fool has been equated with a flea.

Explanation: The occasion has been the wedding of a foolish person and a flea. The idea seems ridiculous that a fool is marrying a flea, people have gathered to attend the ceremony, ironically, the poet calls the marriage as 'holy' or something sacred' .

Fool will sing
Flea will suck
Fool will work,
Flea will pluck.
Both will learn,
The virtue of obedience.

Context: These lines have been taken from Jeet Thayil's poem 'Fool and Flea'. It is a simple, short poem in which a fool has been made equal to a flea.

Explanation: At the wedding, where people have gathered, the fool will sing, naturally, out of joy over his marriage. The flea, as per her habits, will suck, just as a worm sucks blood. The fool will work and the flea will enjoy the benefits of his work. Both, the fool and the flea will be obedient to each other.

Fool will give up his freedom
Flea will give up
whatever chance
she may have had
at happiness.

Context: These lines occur in Jeet Thayil's short, simple poem. 'Fool and Flea'. A fool has been rated equal to a flea.

Explanation: In these lines it is conveyed that after the marriage, the fool will ultimately give up his freedom and acts as an obedient slave of his wife throughout his life. He will keep working while the flea or the wife on the other hand will avail no chance of being happy. Only a foolish person does so. In this manner the traits of the fool and the flea are similar.

Both will die
Fool first.
Flea so full
She will burst.

Context: These are the last lines of 'Fool and Flea' written by Jeet Thayil. In this short, light-hearted poem the poem has been equated with a flea, a wingless parasite or insect.

Explanation: The lines tell that the life of a fool and the flea will be dull and dreary. In the natural cycle of birth and death, they will also die. The fool will die first. The flea will ultimately die of gluttony and over-eating.

Women's Rights

Introduction to the Author: Annie Lousia was born to Robert and Anna Walker on 23 June, 1836 in England. Her father was a civil engineer and was employed with the grand trunk Rail road. Annie Lousik founded a private girls' school with her sisters Frances and Isbella.

Summary: Woman's Rights is an influential poem that communicates the freedom and rights of women. It is about women's rights and what they don't have the right to do. Earlier women could not do anything. They did not have the right to vote, work and do all other stuff that only men could do. They were to stay only at home cleaning all the day and looking after their household activities. Women did not have freedom and they could not do what they do now. It is also suggested in the poem that women should not simply sit and wait for orders from men. They must stand up collectively for themselves and fight for what they want i.e they should be well aware of their rights as human beings.

Reference to Context

You cannot rob us of the rights we cherish,
Nor turn our thoughts away
From the bright picture of 'women's mission'.
Our hearts portray

Context: These are the opening lines of the poem "Women's Rights" written by Annie L. Walker. The poem voices for women's rights equal to those of men.

Explanation: In this stanza, Annie Lousia addresses society at large, and says that society should allow women to pursue this kind of life that they value. Society should also not convince them to think of anything other than what they believe is women's duty to the world. Women must have a brighter vision of their own selves, their role in society and a bright vision for their future. They must not suppress their feelings and interests.