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POETRY FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

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UNIT – I

1. ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

- *William Shakespeare*

Introduction to the Poem

Shakespeare is the greatest playwright in English Literature. He has written many plays, sonnets and poems. The poem “All the World’s a Stage” is taken from his romantic comedy *As You Like It*. The lines are spoken by one character Jaques by name. Jaques is a character who philosophies on everything he sees. Here Jaques compares the different stages in a man’s life to acts/parts of a play. According to him, a man begins by being a baby in the first act of the play ends as an old man facing death in the last act.

The world is a stage

Shakespeare compares the world to a drama stage where there is an entrance and exit. Similar to the characters in a drama, we, all the men and women born in this world act our part for some time and exit / die. Birth is like a players’ entrance and death his exit. We play many roles, to be exact seven, according to the dramatist. The seven different ages in a human life are different roles.

The First stage

At first man is an infant. The child lisps for words and in doing so it makes many sounds including that of cat’s crying sound. Often the infant vomits (which babies often do). Someone is to attend the baby, either its mother or nurse. It shows its dependency.

Second stage

At this stage, man is a school going boy. He has a bright face in the morning. He carries a schoolbag but moves slowly like a snail, which shows his unwillingness.

Third stage

The next role man plays is that of an unhappy lover. He is always thoughtful of his mistress. He writes ballads to seek her love. He sighs heavily like the bellowing of a furnace.

Fourth stage

In the fourth stage man turns into a responsible soldier. He swears strange oaths. He has a beard that makes his appearance look like a leopard. He is quick to fight and ready to risk his life, even by dying hit by gunfire. He wants to guard his good name at any cost.

Fifth stage

The fifth stage is the role of justice. Here Shakespeare satirizes the lavish life of the magistrate. As he takes a lot of food and no exercise, he has a round stomach which is filled with cock's meat. The justice has wise things to say to everyone.

Sixth stage

Man in the sixth stage or role is physically shrunk and wears loose trousers and slippers. This means that he is not worried much about the clothes he wears. His spectacles stand on his nose and flush hangs loose on cheeks because of age. His voice, once gruff and manly has become shrill like that of a child. When he pronounces words, air escapes because his teeth are missing. In total he is a silly, foolish man.

Seventh stage

This is man's last stage. He becomes weak and old. He behaves like child. He has lost teeth, eyesight, taste and everything in his old age. The eventful history of man comes to an end. It is like a second childhood for him. He makes an exit (dies) like the actor leaving the stage.

Conclusion

Shakespeare, in the poem has given a sad but ironical portrayal of human life. His analysis of man's life in seven stages is full of similies. His description of the life of man from his birth to death is quite appealing.

2. THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

- Robert Frost

Introduction to the Poem

The poem 'The Road Not Taken' is found in Frost's volume of poems Mountain Interval (1916). Frost always uses very simple diction and simple symbols to talk about important issues. In 'The Road Not Taken' the poet is talking about situations we face in life, that of making a choice; taking a decision. Once the choice is made there is little chance of looking back. The poem is marked by ordinary, straightforward language, great emotional restraint, and understatement.

Summary of the Poem

It was autumn season with the fallen yellow leaves. The poet stood where the roads branched. He could not travel through both. He stood for a long time looking down as far as

his eyes could reach at one road. The road after some distance, bent near the bushes. He stood undecided.

The poet now took the other road which also looked equally good. He felt this road much better because it was still grassy and not many walked over it. But the road which he did not choose was well used by people.

In both the roads, on that morning the leaves were still lying not crushed because no one had taken either road after some time. He realized that it was not possible. Once a certain direction is chosen, there is no turning back. One road leads to another and it is difficult to change tracks.

Perhaps sometimes in future he will have a sigh and say how he had to choose one of the two roads. He will say how the path divided into two roads and he chose the one less travelled and that made his life different.

UNIT – II

3. ODE TO THE WEST WIND

– P. B. Shelley

Introduction to the Poem

In the powerful and frequently quoted “Ode to the West Wind,” Percy Bysshe Shelley employs a poetic structure of five cantos with four tercets each (a tercet is three lines of verse). The third line of each tercet allows for change in the direction of the poet’s thought. The end of each canto features a rhyming couplet that allows the passionate urgency of the poet’s words to gain strength as his persona strives to merge his essence with that of the driving West Wind. Shelley’s wild, proud, untamed wind forms his personal emblem, the perfect symbol for and the impetuous agent of radical social change.

Shelley, a poet of the second generation of English Romantics, wrote his ode shortly after the Peterloo Massacre, in which royal soldiers attacked and killed working people at a protest rally in the St. Peter’s Field area of Manchester. The poem also followed shortly after some of Shelley’s own most terrible personal losses. Together with other works written in 1819, such as “Sonnet: England in 1819” and “Song to the Men of England,” “Ode to the West Wind” did much to shore up Shelley’s reputation as radical thinker.

Summary of the Poem

The first of five cantos of the ode summon the West Wind, referring to it as a kind of magician, a transformer in and of the world emanating from autumn itself, an invisible enchanter from whom ghostly dead leaves scurry. The first canto makes grief-spawned

allusions to the deaths of the poet's son William and of others close to him, as well as his knowledge of and sympathy for England's poor: Shelley speaks of autumn leaves as "pestilence-stricken multitudes" that the great wind blows to their "dark wintry bed" (graves). He finds intermixed with those driven leaves, however, the "winged seeds" that, as stanza 3 has it, will soon be awakened from a death-like sleep by the West Wind's "azure sister of the Spring." This wind from the warm south will open the buds whose flowers feed on the sweet springtime air as a flock of sheep feeds on pasture grass.

In the couplet ending canto 1, the poet's persona calls out to praise the wildness of the West Wind and call it "Destroyer and preserver." He sees it as the force that must listen to his cry for the transformation of society, a cry he made more directly in poems such as "Sonnet: England in 1819." In "Ode to the West Wind," Shelley oxymoronically portrays the wind as something that at once "preserves" the world from destruction and destroys the existing order that is waging war against humanity. Canto 2 begins with a continuation of the speaker's sense of awe concerning the wind's might; he hails the wind as the clouds' creator—a "living stream" in the sky that moves the "trees" of heaven and ocean. In stanza 2, the poet delineates a vision of angels that flow with the wind and that, in his simile, are like the "bright hair" streaming "from the head of some fierce Maenad." Inducing in his readers a sense of vertigo, Shelley takes them to the height of the skies and to the distant horizon, where they see "the locks of the approaching storm," a storm that will bring about changes on the earth.

At the end of canto 1, stanza 4, and at the beginning of the ending rhyming couplet, the term "dirge" is Shelley's descriptor of the stormy wind signaling the old year's demise. This melancholy wind will in turn create "the dome of a vast sepulcher" that will have as its ceiling vaulting a host of vapors from whose seeming solidity a rain of darkness and hail will explode as—once again—a pleading voice cries for people to heed what is foretold: "O hear!" With this cry, Shelley the prophet announces the end of an old, dehumanizing order and the beginning of a new order that will offer freedom to the oppressed.

In canto 3, the poet's persona furthers the notion of things changing instantly from sweetness to darkness and cold through the action of his ever-driving West Wind. He asks readers to envision a Mediterranean Sea suddenly being awakened from deep summer sleep "Beneath a pumice isle in Baiae's Bay," a place "All overgrown with azure moss, and flowers/ So sweet, the sense faints picturing them!" Below the sea wrack floating in great ocean depths, the realization occurs that profound change is happening in the world, and the sea's denizens "tremble and despoil themselves" out of panic. Something is indeed afoot in Europe, and it does not simply have to do with a change in weather: The palpable fear

expressed by the powers of the ocean, one is led to believe, is the fear felt by earth's great and mighty, who will out of fear "grow gray" when catastrophic change finally comes.

Beginning with canto 4, the poet shifts into a more personal voice. Shelley praises, contrasts himself with, and longs like a leaf to be wafted by his beloved West Wind. His yearnings for oneness with this spirit of nature have the intensity of heartfelt prayer. The poet would choose to be a dead leaf blown about by the wind, or a flying cloud, or a wave on the sea being pushed to shore rather than stay in his present despairing condition. Hoping to share in the West Wind's power in order to be freed from the bonds of earth, he calls upon the "uncontrollable" to control him, to be for him a strong friend who would lead him just as an older, stronger adult would mentor a child, saying, "if even/ I were as in my boyhood, and could be/ The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven."

The fourth line in the fourth stanza is another prayer to the wind, and this time Shelley asks it to "lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud" because, as he exclaims in one of the most memorable phrases of the poem, "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" The speaker feels weighed down by time and life's circumstances, and he suffers unmercifully. He cries out for the release that his reigning West Wind can provide.

Canto 5 ends "Ode to the West Wind" with the persona's most passionate pleas, then features his commands to the invisible mover and shaker of the world. In the first stanza, he petitions the wind to be its lyre, asking that, if his own leaves are falling as those in Nature, the wind should use them to help create a melancholy tone befitting the autumn season. Then he asks the wind for the ultimate favor—to be one with it: "Be thou, Spirit fierce,/ My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!" He compares his thoughts to those dead leaves the wind blows, asking that those thoughts, like leaves, be whirled through the world to "quicken a new birth."

Finally, when the poet's persona prays for the wind to "Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth/ Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!" he makes clear that he now sees himself as the wind's agent, doing its bidding by prophesying through his written words. The prediction he makes is subtle and—on the surface—even pedestrian, with its commonsensical observation, "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

The question becomes a profound one, however, if winter is equated with an England hobbled by the darkness and cold of greed, tyranny, and scorn for the poor and if spring stands for the happy birth of an England of noble aspiration—as was Shelley's intent.

In "Ode to the West Wind," Shelley defies the remote, impersonal character of the unseen Power behind Nature and strives to establish a personal relationship with it. The poem

manages to reconcile the poet's terrific emotional intensity with the elegant, even stately formal pattern of the regular Horatian ode. Using heroic meter (iambic pentameter) throughout, Shelley made each of the five stanzas into a sonnet with four terza-rima tercets and a closing couplet. The poetical effect is rather unlike that of the usual sonnet. Shelley's interlocking rhymes sweep a reader along like gusts of wind, and the couplet pounds its message home with direct clarity and force.

The first three stanzas, addressed to the wild west wind, praise its irresistible power, marking its effects on all things in nature: clouds in the air, waves on the sea, leaves in the forest, even "the oozy woods which wear the sapless foliage of the ocean." Poets usually address the mild, warm winds of Spring that bring nature to life, but Shelley confronts the cold, wild "breath of Autumn's being," which acts as both destroyer and preserver.

The hidden Power behind Nature is not always friendly to humankind. The morality or immorality of its operations may not be discernible. Thus, the poet stands, appropriately, in awe of it. Each of the first three stanzas ends with a plea for the wind to take heed and hear the poet's prayer.

The fourth stanza turns introspective. The poet wonders whether he might be used as the leaves have been, tossed about and left for dead by the indifferent force. He humbles himself, admitting that his powers have faded since boyhood, when I would ne'er have striven As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need. Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud! I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed! A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

Then in the final stanza the poet casts off the humility with the simile and claims a more intimate, metaphoric, mythic relationship with the wild Spirit. "Make me thy lyre," he demands, first to accompany the Power and turn the wind into sweet music, and then boldly to become it, "Be thou me." The poet has found that "soul out of my soul." He yokes the great hidden Power to his own imagination to scatter among humankind the glowing spark of his verse "to quicken a new birth." Thus, the Shelley poet becomes the prophet of an apocalyptic revolution to redeem humankind from torpid experience.

Then, suddenly, after such thunderous bursts of emotion, the poem ends as quietly as a sigh with perhaps the finest, most wistful and haunting line in all English poetry, a question: "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

4. LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

– *John Keats*

Introduction to the Poem

La Belle Dame Sans Merci seems to be easy to understand at the narrative level. An unidentified passerby asks the knight what is wrong with him (stanzas I-III). The knight answers that he has been in love with a beautiful lady who has abandoned him and left him alone in the meadows (stanzas IV-XII).

The poem creates a sense of mystery because some details are realistic and familiar, others are unearthly and strange. Here Keats imitates the folk ballad, uses simple language, focuses on an event, provides minimal details about the characters, and makes no judgments at the end. He leaves the result to the discretion of the readers. There are several questions raised in the minds of the readers, so it puzzles the readers. The questions like:

- What does the poem mean?
- What is the nature of *La Belle Dame sans Merci*?
- What is the meaning of the knight's experience?
- Why has the knight, one of Keats's dreamers, been ravaged by the visionary or dream experience?
- What is the meaning of the dream?
- Was the knight deluded by his beloved or did he delude himself?

Likewise there are several questions which arise in the minds of the reader and baffles them. John Keats based the title of his literary ballad on the title of a long French poem with a different story. The title of the latter poem, written in 1424 by Alain Chartier (1392-1433), is “*La Belle Dame Sans Mercy*.” (Notice the different spelling of the last word.) As a feminine noun, the French word *merci* means pity or mercy. As a masculine noun, it means thanks. The translation of the title is “The Beautiful Woman without Mercy.” The time indicated in the ballad is late autumn. The place is England during the Age of Chivalry. A lovesick knight tells an unidentified person about a beautiful “faery's child” who met him in a meadow and deceived him by deserting for ever all alone in the meadows. “*La Belle Dame sans Merci*” or “The Beautiful Lady without Pity” is the title of an early fifteenth-century French poem by Alain Chartier which belongs to the tradition of courtly love. Keats appropriates this phrase for a ballad which has been generally read as the story of a seductive and treacherous woman who tempts men away from the real world and then leaves them, their dreams unfulfilled and their lives blighted. For all the beguiling simplicity of the surfaces of this

literary ballad, it is one of the most difficult of Keats's poems to explain, and open to many interpretations. It has been alternately suggested, for example, that it is about the wasting power of sexual love and / or the poet's infatuation with his muse. This particular analysis will examine the *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* as a poem which offers a feminist interpretation of the ballad. A woman conventionally tempts man with her beauty and ultimately causes his destruction. There are many such figures in traditional supernatural ballads concerned with a faery's seduction of a human.

Summary of the Poem

The knight-at-arms in this poem has been enchanted, enthralled, and is immediately suggested by his wandering in a desolate wasteland where the plant life has withered and no birds sing. He himself is in a decline; he is pale and the rose in his cheeks, like the sedge, is withering. In trying to explain his state to his questioner, he makes us highly suspicious of the lady whom he encountered. The narrator of the poem portrays the lady as a negative character.

To start with, he identifies her as a supernatural being, a 'faery's child' with 'wild wild eyes' suggestive perhaps of madness. She speaks a strange language, and in her elfin grotto she lulls him to sleep. There may be a suggestion here that she is potentially treacherous since 'lull' can denote an attempt to calm someone's fears or suspicions by deception. The lady's responsibility for his condition seems to be confirmed in the dream he has of the death of pale kings, princes, and warriors who claim 'La Belle Dame sans Merci / Hath thee in thrall!' 'And this is why I sojourn here' he tells his questioner, apparently referring back to this 'horrid warning' of the dream. He stays because he is in thrall to the merciless beautiful lady. We are, in fact, given very little information about anything. We know nothing about the speaker who interrogates and describes the knight. We know very little about the lady, only what the knight tells us; we are offered no interpretation of his experience; indeed, the knight's story opens up more questions than it answers. We are clueless about the lady's being merciless by keeping the kings, knights and princes in thrall.

The ballad narrates the perspective of the knight only. The other probable version the lady is nowhere presented. The knight is a helpless victim. He loves her so much and always courts her, and creates garlands, bracelets and belts that can be seen not only to decorate but also to bind and enclose her. He claims possession of her 'I set her on my pacing steed'. As soon as they reach her 'elfin grot', we are given the perplexing and unexplained suggestion that she herself is now unhappy. 'she wept, and sigh'd full sore'. In this poem, the beautiful lady has been defined as a cruel, merciless enchantress, but nothing is described in the ballad

about her cruelty and mercilessness. The poet has not given any clues of her cruelty. The knight says that she speaks in 'language strange', then how can he be sure she said "I love thee true". It is contradictory on the part of the knight himself. It is possible that he has translated what she said into what he wanted to hear. This argument can be justified by the knight's expression - 'She looked at me as she did love, / And made sweet moan'. A feminist approach to the ballad might point to these ambiguities, contradictions in the text which offers a counter argument that the lady is a victim.

Keats has adopted patriarchal perspective. It is the knight who tells the story and describes the lady and his experiences. The knight and the kings, princes and warriors who appear in his dream, belong to the masculine world of conflict and action. These kings, princes and warriors have been attracted to the lady who captured them in her "elfin grot"; they have luxuriated in the pleasures she has provided for the time being but later realised they were enthralled. The knight continues to share his story and says that the lady has provided him with sweet foods and lulls him to sleep.

In the perspectives of the lady, the interpretation of the ballad may deviate us for her description by the knight. Here one can take the extremely ambiguous nature of the word 'lulled' into consideration. Indeed it means to calm someone's fears or suspicions by deception.

However, it can also more innocently mean to soothe with soft sounds and motions, as a mother might soothe a child to sleep. We can assume that the pale kings and warriors with 'starved lips' have had a similar experience to the knight. In the lady's world they regress in an almost infantile manner.

Then, recognising the power and stability of the male dominated world, urge to withdraw, the kings, warriors, and princes have placed the blame squarely upon the woman who is defined as the temptress who has the knight in thrall. And the knight seems to authorise this definition: 'And this is why I sojourn here', he tells his questioner. Wandering in this barren landscape, he is neither in the masculine world of conflict and action nor the feminine world of the bower. In succumbing to his desire to withdraw from the duties and responsibilities of the former into the luxurious pleasures of the latter, he has undermined the definitions and assigned roles of male and female. Now nothing is open to him; he is in limbo. A reading such as given above would fit well with Keats's general ambivalence concerning romance and the bower.

UNIT – III

5. ULYSSES

– *Alfred Tennyson*

Introduction to the Poem

Ulysses was first published in 1842. Ulysses was a legendary Greek hero, the story of whose heroic deeds and adventures is sung by Homer in his *Odyssey*. However, Tennyson's Ulysses is closely modeled on Dante's Ulysses as sketched in the 26th Canto of the *Inferno*. The influence of classical poets, Homer and Virgil, is seen in phrasing and many verbal echoes. But despite this indebtedness, Tennyson's treatment is original, and Ulysses remains "the noblest of all Tennyson's classical poems".

Summary of the Poem

King Ulysses has been living in Ithaca for some time. He is tired of his idle life. He is used to a life of travel and adventure, and cannot rest away from travel. So he wants to set sail and visit new countries, and have fresh experiences.

Ulysses has travelled far and wide and has had many adventures. But he feels they are not enough for him. He is thirsty for more knowledge and experience. He considers his present life as dull and useless. He desires to set sail and have fresh adventures. Knowledge is infinite, and human life is short. Ulysses has only a few more years to live, and he would devote them gain more knowledge and experience. He would follow knowledge, like a sinking star.

King Ulysses is determined to leave his kingdom to his son Telemachus. Thereafter he would set sail to acquire more knowledge and experience.

Ulysses encouraged his sailors to set sail with him. They have faced dangers together with a cheerful heart, and together they have grown old. But before they die, they would have fresh adventures and achieve something noble, really worth of them.

Ulysses is determined to sail beyond the western horizon. He will travel and have adventures, till the very last moment.

Then Ulysses turns to his fellow mariners and says that they are men who have faced many adventures in all kinds of circumstances. They are also men who have even fought Gods. Of course, they are now old and are incapable of further similar adventures. There are things which even old people can perform. Then pointing to the harbour he earnestly invites them to join him in his last voyage. Perhaps they may be swallowed by the waves of the sea. It is equally possible that they may reach the Happy Isles where they will be able to meet the

great Achilles whom he knew. Whatever may be the consequences, his aim is to be active and not be discouraged by difficulties.

Ulysses is determined, “to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield” upto the very end of his days. He will travel and have adventures till he dies.

6. MY LAST DUCHESS

– Robert Browning

Introduction to the Poem

The poem is set in the Italian town Ferrara during the Renaissance period. The Duke [who is also the speaker] is supposedly Alfonso the second. Alfonso is the fifth Duke of Ferrara and he lived during the 16th century. The Last Duchess is considered to be Lucrezia de Medici, wife of Alfonso. Robert Browning portrays the character of the Duke with egoistic attitude and a man who likes to dominate the scene rather than getting deluged by the ideas of others. An emissary visits the recently widowed Duke and the dramatic monologue begins.

My Last Duchess Summary - Lines 1-15

Alfonso shows the painting of his deceased Duchess exhibited on the wall. He feels that the image is alive and remarks the painting as a remarkable achievement. He reveals that the artist is Fra Pandolf who spent a day to complete the portrait. His artistry has resulted in the life like image of the Duchess and he asks the emissary to examine the painting.

The Duke acknowledges that whenever strangers look at the painting, they want to ask how the artist was able to achieve such depth in emotion. So, he answers the emissary without a question being asked. Moreover, the Duke is the only one who can unveil the curtain of the painting and answer the questions as no else is allowed to go near the painting.

Alfonso explains that his last Duchess expressed joy not only in the presence of her husband [the Duke], but also when others are present. It is the reason for her cheeks to express joy in the presence of Fra Pandolf.

My Last Duchess Analysis – Lines 1-15

Browning reveals later in the poem that the emissary visits the Duke to talk about marriage proposals. So, the Duke craftily walks him through to create an impression about him. Immediately, Alfonso tries to establish a negative impression on the Duchess so that he could gain from it. He presents himself as a lover of art and admires the work done by Fra Pandolf. But, his real intentions are shown when he expresses his thoughts about the Duchess. The Duke says that his mistress would blush at the presence of any man. One can

also detect that the artist was given only one day to complete the painting indicating that the Duke is afraid about any advancements between his wife and the artist. Despite all the concealing ideas shown by the Duke, it is evident that he was jealous about the nature and character of the Duchess. This leads to the suspicion that her death was not normal and Alfonso had something to do with it.

My Last Duchess Summary - Lines 16-35

Alfonso tries to explain the smile on the face of his wife with the use of imaginary claims. He thinks that Fra Pandolf might have said that the cloak of the Duchess covers the wrists [a way of flirting] or remarking that such beauty can never be reproduced by paints. The Duke says that such words were enough to produce a smile on her face as she believed that they were the words of courteousness. She was the one who would derive gladness from anything quickly. She admired everything and her sight could derive happiness from everywhere.

To the Duchess, according to the Duke, his expensive gift at her breast, setting sun, cherries presented by a fool, riding on her mule, etc. were things of joy and she blushed to enjoy any of them. Alfonso believes that she thanked many men, but in a suspicious way. He could not believe that she thinks other gifts equivalent to the proud family name given by the Duke. However, Alfonso expresses that it is too low to bend to her level and try to mend her ways even if it is possible.

My Last Duchess Analysis – Lines 16-35

The reader of the emissary does not know about the personality of the Duchess. But, Alfonso creates such psychological impact with his words that one would believe that the Duchess was unfaithful. His cynical remarks on how his last Duchess would be blushing in reaction to the words almost make it certain that she has sinful intentions in her mind. However, her childish nature is brought forth by Browning in the lines 26-30. The Duchess is not unfaithful but a woman with simple philosophy – enjoy the life and the surroundings. Her attitude towards gifts and the beauty of Nature shows that her easy going life style, which is not something one would expect from a Duchess. The contrasting behaviours of Alfonso and his wife are shown by Browning through the words of the speaker. This is an indicator of the mastery achieved by Robert Browning in the use of dramatic monologue.

My Last Duchess Summary - Lines 36-56

The Duke goes on to explain that three factors stood in his way for advising the Duchess – he claims his inability to deliver a good speech than can change the predicament of his wife, even if he achieves it would be shameful if the wife gives out an excuse to escape

and lastly Alfonso says that he will not be stooping down for anything. Alfonso admits to the emissary that his wife smiled at him as a mark of love, but he felt that the same smile was produced to anyone who passes her by. After narrating a compelling story about the death of his wife, the Duke shows the emissary the painting by Fra Pandolf where one can find the life like image of her. The Duke resumes to business and asks the emissary to come with him to join the others.

My Last Duchess Analysis – Lines 36-56

To make his point clear, the Duke used the story of Duchess to create a pitiful aura around himself and at the same highlight the name of his family. He does so successfully on several occasions. The brilliant conclusion by Robert Browning clears the fog about the true nature of the Duke. His interest towards the bronze statue Neptune taming a sea horse reflects his interests in life. Dramatic Monologue is similar to soliloquy in a drama, but Robert Browning has taken it to a more intimate level. His emphasis was always on the development of an individual, precisely psychological development. He has written many such poems but My Last Duchess is deservedly the best of his dramatic monologues for it depicts contrasting lives of a merry woman and a stern man. If the reader could understand every word of his works like –My Last Duchess, it could lead to evolution of thoughts, personal growth and new understanding of the world.

UNIT – IV

7. A PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER

– W.B. Yeats

Introduction to the Poem

Modifying Shelley's view of poetry as prophesy, which so sharply contrasts with Marianne Moore's ostensibly skeptical attitude to poetry ("I too dislike it"),¹ William Butler Yeats has written that "Because an emotion does not exist, or does not become perceptible and active among us, till it has found its expression, in color or in form or in sound ... and because no two modulations or arrangements of these evoke the same emotion, poets and painters and musicians ... are continually making and un-making mankind.,² But mankind is also continually making and unmaking the poet. The history of a poem's reception, like the fate of a beloved child, is unpredictable. At one stage of reception the intellectual and emotional repertoire of a poem may appear hopelessly dated; at another it may emerge as well ahead of its time. I shall sketch these two eventualities in respect of Yeats's "A Prayer for My Daughter."

Summary of the Poem

A prayer is an attempt to exert an influence on the world which, to paraphrase Housman, one "has never made." As a poetic move it is partly akin to what in *Les Figures du discours*, the eighteenth-century rhetorician Pierre Fontanier describes as "metalepsis," that is claiming to produce, one may even say generate, that which one is merely describing. Modern literary theory tends to reverse Fontanier's distinction and say that by using images of fertility Delille may be redeeming the dream wasteland since in doing so he is "instructing,"⁴ the reader to conjure it up in a certain way. In terms of J. L. Austin's performative speech-act theory, in an everyday speech situation, such a case of ekphrasis would constitute not a constative speech act but a performative one, an "exercitive," that is an act of "giving a decision in favour of or against a certain course of action, or advocacy of it," a decision "that something is to be so, as distinct from a judgment that it is so." Austin denies the possibility of applying speech act theory to the same utterance if introduced in a poem or a novel since the use of language in such frames is, as he says, "parasitic."⁶ The word "introduced" is, however, a spring of ambiguities: does Austen refer to any sentence in a novel or a poem or a direct speech act "introduced" in this derivative discourse? What if the poem as a whole is viewed as a complex speech act, variously deploying and reining in different illocutionary forces?

The oral speech act is made in an actual deictic situation which determines the extent of its "felicity." A literary work, as an act of communication, belongs to a virtual rather than an actual deictic situation; the author cannot foresee what cultural audiences he might eventually be addressing. Hence, the range of the *perlocutionary* effects of a codified literary text is much greater than that of a direct oral speech act; and the control that the speaker can exercise over its consequences diminishes as the time goes by. In that sense "procreation" is a better metaphor for the origin of a literary speech act than "performance." Indeed, the result of a felicitous performative speech act, one performed by a person in authority and in appropriate circumstances, is definite, limited, and final. When the person authorised to do so proclaims "I name this ship Queen Elizabeth," reality is modified in the precisely intended way. In giving birth, by contrast, contingencies are paramount. To a baby one transmits one's codes but in unpredictable combinations, and the world into which a baby is inserted is one that even the most influential of parents has never made. The instructions encoded in the text come down to us trailing halos of blanks, and these blanks tend to grow with the passage of time.

The resulting semiotic entropy can be partly contained by the study of relevant biographical and inter textual materials that set limits to the liberties we take with texts. Yet these materials are, in their turn, reinserted into the perpetual flow and do not re-emerge from it unchanged.

The contingencies of the ideological reception of "A Prayer for My Daughter" are partly due to the significance of the issues raised in different parts of this rather long poem. Yeats's treatment of one issue may appear archaically culture-bound, his treatment of another may emerge as prophetic. It seems important, therefore, to refrain from extrapolating our response to separate parts of the poem and from turning this partial response into a perlocutionary *dominant* of the poem as a whole. The negative eventuality in the reception-history of "A Prayer for My Daughter" may be illustrated by the harshly critical reaction of a feminist reader like Joyce Carol Oates to Yeats's metaphors for the future that he would wish for his daughter:

May she become a flourishing hidden tree
That all her thoughts may like the linnet be,
And have no business but dispensing round
Their magnanimities of sound,
Not but in merriment begin a chase,
Not but in merriment a quarrel.
o may she live like some green laurel
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

"This celebrated poet would have his daughter an object of nature for others' -which is to say maledilection. She is not even an animal or a bird in his imagination, but a vegetable: immobile, unthinking, placid, 'hidden.' It would seem, however, that Oates is merely using Yeats as a sample spokesman of a run-of-the-mill patriarchal position, practically identical in purport with that of American popular fiction for lady readers. This is basically the position that George Eliot attributed to her Victorian Middlemarchers and defined in the following way: "Women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on." 10 Oates's agenda is to show that despite the immense aesthetic distance between modernist literature and the middle-to-low-brow ladies' reading-matter that she criticises in her article, the persistence of the paleological patriarchal mind-set forms a partial ideological overlap between them. The only place in the poem that is, indeed, a clear expression of an obsolete patriarchal attitude is the culture-bound belatedly Victorian reference to the bridegroom who

is expected to prepare a ready-made form of well-being for the bride: "And may her bridegroom bring her to a house / Where all's accustomed, ceremonious." Already more than half a century before novelists like Dickens and George Eliot created striking portraits of women who offered helping hands to unanchored young men instead of waiting for them to qualify (mainly financially and prior to marriage) for the roles of respectable heads of the family. The two lines just quoted may support Oates's critique of Yeats, but she discredits her case when she attempts to supporting it by her interpretation of lines 65-72:

... all hatred driven hence,

The soul recovers radical innocence
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,
And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will;
She can, though every face should scowl
And every windy quarter howl
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

What for most readers is a poet's dream of his daughter's intellectual and emotional independence is, for Oates, a recommendation of "a kind of autism of the spirit." Here Oates overshoots her goal by betraying her own near-totalitarian tendency to condemn non-joiners. Her metaphor of "autism of the spirit" conflicts with Yeats's simile which presents his daughter's thoughts not as a natural outgrowth of her being (not, for instance, as the foliage of the tree to which he likens her in his vision) but as singing birds (linnets), gently hosted by the boughs that do not bear the autistic fruit of hatred ("If there's no hatred in the mind / Assault and battery of the wind / Can never tear the linnet from the leaf") and shared by the tree with the outside world. Ideas are thus presented as partners in the relationship, and the worst that can be said of Yeats's imagery is that he does not seem to expect his daughter to *generate* original thoughts.

The poem deals not with the desirability or danger of new philosophical insight; the target of its critique is "opinions," that is, the socially formalized and shared attitudes that suppress and damage individuality instead of promoting its growth.

There is, moreover, a difference between the Middlemarchers' dismissively paternalistic attitude to women and an actual father's desire to have his child protected from that "murderous innocence of the sea"-from that "blood-dimmed tide" which, in Yeats's "The Second Coming" drowns, and "In a Prayer for My Daughter" threatens to drown, "the ceremony of innocence." 12 The impulse of paternal protection works irrespective of the

baby's gender; indeed it characterizes both "A Prayer for my Daughter" and "A Prayer for My Son" (1921), written after the birth of Yeats's son. Both the poems contrast sharply with the Romantic wish to have the object of one's care exposed to the seasons; Yeats's agenda is that of the exertion of his psychic energies in a (doomed) attempt to shield.

"A Prayer for My Son" lacks the touches of specific tenderness edited by a girl-baby (they are partly compensated for by the care for the baby's mother); and though it is also free from the imaginary Victorian-style match-making, it is the weaker poem of the two. M. L. Rosenthal has noted that its feelings "seem strained, especially in the comparison of the dangers the poet says the child will confront (such as enemies jealous of his achievements) with those faced by the Holy Family.,,13

A woman and a man
Unless the Holy Writings lie
Hurried through the smooth and rough
W. B. Yeats's "A Prayer for My Daughter"
And through the fertile and waste,
Protecting, till the danger past,
With human love.

However, this allusion to Mary's and Joseph's plight can be read as emphasizing not the grandeur of the baby's future "deed or thought" but as an ultimate expression of the parents' helplessness to forestall their child's martyrdom: the present danger will pass, but not the one thirty three years later. The epithet that qualifies the future "deed or thought" of the child is not, as one might expect, "mighty" (or some such bisyllabic word that would fit into the prosodic slot in the line) but "haughty" ("some most haughty deed or thought")-a word with not only positive but also strongly negative connotations.14 It is almost as if the exertive speech-act of "prayer" in both the poems seeks to protect the child in each poem not only from the enemies of their ideas but also from the sway of the ideas themselves. This is precisely the attitude which, if not original, is, nevertheless, ahead of its contemporary philosophical contexts. "Intellectual hatred is the worst," "opinions are accursed," "not but in merriment begin a quarrel" -all these might just as well be among the rhetorical vignettes of the type of late-twentieth-century intellectual whom Richard Rorty calls "a liberal ironist." In "A Prayer for My Daughter," often regarded as a companion piece to "The Second Coming," 18 the speaker casts for a prescriptive conclusion, and finds it in the place where another twenty-first century philosopher, Bernard Williams will introduce a correction on the

ironic stance. For Yeats the instabilities that result from an ironist's pluralism are to be compensated for by "rooted" -ness in "custom" and "ceremony"; for Williams, they are to be contained by the "ethical confidence" that results from a conscious affiliation with a sustaining cultural or ideological circle.¹⁹ A recognition of the validity of other perspectives need not undermine or even relativize one's own position- one's philosophical foothold has a good chance of stability if it has been planted by a conscious and reciprocated commitment to the people around one. What makes Yeats vulnerable to criticism like that of Joyce Carol Oates is that his motifs of custom and ceremony are intellectually less tenable than Williams's broader concept of ethical confidence. They do not specify, for instance, that the planting of the self in a tradition is to be done by the self, rather than by others.

8. JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

– T. S. Eliot

Introduction to the Poem

The theme of the poem *Journey of the Magi* by Eliot is an episode in the Gospel of St. Matthew. Three wise men are identified as kings. They saw a bright star. It announced the birth of Christ. They started on a journey to see and pay homage to the new-born baby. The birth symbolised to these three wise men the inauguration of a new order and the death of paganism (not belonging to one of the world's main religion). The poem is a dramatic monologue by one of the three wise men. He recollects his experiences in the poem. The poem goes beyond the retelling of an episode in a religious text. The journey could be the journey that all human beings have to make between birth and death.

Summary of the Poem

The Magi are that Three Wise Men who came to visit Jesus Christ when he was born. Here Eliot imagines that one of these men is recollecting in his old age the happenings of that journey, and what they found.

The first stanza is regarding their travel from the East to Bethlehem during the winter season across the desert. In those days travel was on camel back.

The second stanza strangely suggests not the time of the birth of Jesus but his death; the three trees on a low sky; six hands dicing for pieces of silver. But in spite of these omens they found the place where Jesus was born.

The final stanza however is the most striking. Even though these Wise Men had come expecting the birth of a King and priest, they only found an insignificant Carpenter's son, and what was more, they somehow felt that they were witnessing not merely a Birth but also a Death-and it was hard and bitter agony for them, an agony of spirit, for they were no longer contented with their own Gods and way of life. They seemed to be alienated even from their own people.

Through the experience of this old man, Eliot shows how the coming of Jesus meant for every man's 'death' to the old ways of living, and a new birth into a different relationship with God.

UNIT – V

9. THE UNKNOWN CITIZEN

- *W. H. Auden*

Introduction to the Poem

W. H. Auden, was an Anglo-American poet, born in England, later an American citizen, regarded by many critics as one of the greatest writers of the 20th century. His work is noted for its stylistic and technical achievements, its engagement with moral and political issues, and its variety of tone, form and content. The central themes of his poetry are love, politics and citizenship, religion and morals, and the relationship between unique human beings and the anonymous, impersonal world of nature. Auden wrote it in 1939, shortly after moving from England to the United States. The poem was first published in 1939 in *The New Yorker* and first appeared in book form in Auden's collection *Another Time*.

Summary of the Poem

The Unknown Citizen by W.H. Auden is a satiric poem. It describes an average citizen in a government-controlled state. In many big cities, there is a monument to the Unknown Soldier that stands for the thousands of unknown soldiers who die for their country. The title of Auden's poem parodies this. The citizen to whom the monument has been built has been found to be without any fault. He was a saint not because he searched for God but because he served the government perfectly. He did not get dismissed from his job.

He was a member of the Union and paid all his dues to the union. A report on the Union shows that it was a balance union and did not take extreme views on anything. The social psychology workers found that he was popular among his fellow workers and had a

drink with them now and then. He also bought a newspaper everyday. He reached to the advertisements normally.

He had good health and although he went to hospital once, he came out quite cured. The citizen was sensible about buying things on an instalment basis. He had everything a modern man needed at home. Moreover, this ideal citizen was found to be sensible in his view. When there was peace, he supported it. But when there was war, he was ready to fight. He didn't hold his personal views on anything. He had the right number of children and he did not quarrel with the education they got.

The poet now asks the important questions. Was this man free? Was he happy? No government statistics can ever answer these kinds of questions. 'The Unknown Citizen' is a typical Auden's poem in that it shows the poet's profound concern for the modern world and its problems. A keen intelligent observer of the contemporary scene.

Theme of the Poem

Auden was one of the first to realize that the totalitarian socialist state would be no Utopia and that man there would be reduced to the position of a cog in the wheel. A citizen will have no scope to develop his initiative or to assert his individuality. He will be made to conform to the State in all things. It is the picture of such a citizen, in a way similar to Eliot's Hollow Man, which is ironically presented in the poem.

Auden dramatizes his theme by showing the glaring disparity between the complete statistical information about the citizen compiled by the State and the sad inadequacy of the judgments made about him. The poet seems to say, statistics cannot sum up an individual and physical facts are inadequate to evaluate human happiness- for man does not live by bread alone. In the phrase 'The Unknown' the word 'unknown' means ordinary, obscure. So the whole phrase means 'those ordinary, obscure soldiers as citizens of the state who laid down their lives for defending their motherland wanted name and fame, but remained unknown.

Significance of the Title

The title of Auden's poem parodies this. Thus 'The Unknown Citizen' means the ordinary average citizen in the modern industrialized urban society. He has no individuality and identity. He has no desire for self-assertion. He likes to remain unknown. At the end of the poem the poet asks two questions. Was he free? Was he happy? No government statistics

can ever answer these kinds of questions. By asking these questions, the poet is drawing our attention to the question of freedom and happiness.

And ironically, the poet suggests that the modern man is slaver to routine and he is incapable of understanding such concepts freedom and happiness. Therefore, such a question in this context would be 'absurd'. Thus, this poem 'The Unknown Citizen' is a bitter attack on modern society-its indifference towards individuality and identity. The only way for an individual to survive in a regimented society is to conform, obey and live in perpetual mental slavery. Such a creative is this 'unknown citizen' who is utterly devoid of any urge for self-assertion. Such a modern man is a slave to the routine, is incapable of understanding such concepts as freedom and happiness.

In a Nutshell

The poem is the epitaph of a man, identified only by a combination of letters and numbers somewhat like an American Social Security Number who is described entirely in external terms: from the point of view of government organizations such as the fictional "Bureau of Statistics." The speaker of the poem concludes that the man had lived an entirely average, therefore exemplary, life. The poem is a satire of standardization at the expense of individualism. The poem is implicitly the work of a government agency at some point in the future, when modern beaureau cratizing trends have reached the point where citizens are known by arbitrary numbers and letters, not personal names.

By describing the "average citizen" through the eyes of various government organizations, the poem criticizes standardization and the modern state's relationship with its citizens. The last lines of the poem dismiss the questions of whether he was "free" or "happy", implicitly because the statistical methods used by the state to be his life have no means of understanding such questions. The epigraph to "Unknown Citizen" is a parody of the symbolic Tomb of the unknown soldier commemorating unidentified soldiers; tombs of unknown soldiers were first created following the first World War.

10. NIGHT OF THE SCORPION

– Nissim Ezekiel

Introduction to Nissim Ezekiel

Nissim Ezekiel a prolific poet, playwright, critic, broadcaster and social commentator, is considered to be the Father of post independence Indian verse in English. He was born on

24 December 1924 in a Jew family. His father was a Professor of Botany and mother was Principal of her own school. Since schooling, Ezekiel studied the poets such as T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound and continued to study further. The influence of all these poets was apparent in his early works. Nissim Ezekiel worked as an Advertising Copywriter and General Manager of a picture frame company. He was the Art Critic of *The Times of India* from 1964 to 66 and Editor of *The Poetry India* from 1966 to 67. He launched the literary monthly the *Imprint* as the co-founder. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983. In 1988, he received another civil honour, Padma Shri for his contribution to the Indian Writings in English. After a prolonged illness, he passed away on 9 January 2004 in Mumbai. Nissim Ezekiel made a great contribution to the field of Indian English poetry. Some of his major works are:

- ❖ Time To Change (1952)
- ❖ Sixty Poems (1953)
- ❖ Night of the Scorpion (1953)
- ❖ The Third (1959)
- ❖ The Unfinished Man (1960)
- ❖ The Exact Name (1965)
- ❖ Hymns In Darkness (1976)
- ❖ Latter-Day Psalms (1982)
- ❖ Collected Poems 1952-88 (1989)

Introduction to ‘The Night of the Scorpion’

The Night of the Scorpion is a poignant poem by one of India’s foremost modern day poets, Nissim Ezekiel. In this poem, the poet describes the selfless love of a mother who is stung by a scorpion. To portray the motherly affections, he used imagery relating to the senses of sight, smell, touch and hearing. Even though the scorpion parted poison in her toe, yet she is thankful to the God that the scorpion had chosen her and spared her children. Here the poet remains as a helpless spectator and expresses his feeling. He also comments on the Indian culture where superstitions still play a significant role.

The poem "The Night of the Scorpion" can be interpreted in two different ways. First, the poet describes how, on a rainy day, the narrator's mother is bitten by a scorpion and what are the chain reactions to it. Second, the poem depicts the Indian ethos, superstitions and cultural richness through a simple incident and symbolizes the typical Indian motherhood which depicts her sacrifice and affection for her children. The poet narrates the poem by remembering his childhood when his mother was bitten by a scorpion. He says that the

continuous rainfall for ten hours had driven the scorpion into the house where it crawled beneath a sack of rice. When his mother entered the dark room, the scorpion parted the poison into her toe and disappeared.

The news spread through out the village and the peasants gathered in the poet's house in large numbers like 'the swarms of flies' and buzzed God's name about a hundred times, praying to stop the movements of the scorpion. They believed that every movement of the scorpion would be troublesome to the mother, the poison would move in the mother's blood. So the villagers searched their house with the candles and lanterns to paralyze the evil scorpion, but he disappeared in the dark.

As a number of villagers gathered in the house, the shadows they formed on the wall too appeared as a scorpion to the poet. The villagers prayed that the scorpion stops and the sins of mother's previous birth gets washed away that night or her sufferings might decrease the misfortunes of her next birth. They said this way the sums of evil might get balanced in this unreal world. They called the world unreal as everything in this world is temporary and births and deaths keep occurring in a cycle. They even prayed to god that the poison purifies her flesh.

They sat around the mother who was groaning in pain. There was calmness and they thought that she had approached her end. The condition was becoming very critical as many neighbours were entering the house with more candles and lanterns, the insects were also increasing and the rain too continued. The poet's father was a sceptic and rationalist person who tried powders, mixtures and herbs to cure the mother. However, he also tried prayers and blessings as it was a very taxing situation. He poured some paraffin upon the bitten toe and burnt it. The priest, who also came to the spot, was also performing his religious rites to tame the poison. Finally, after twenty hours, the sting was lost. The mother, after getting cured, thanked god that the scorpion had chosen her and spared her children.

Summary of the Poem

Nissim Ezekiel's 'Night of the Scorpion' is the poet's personal account of his memory of his childhood. Once his mother was stung by a scorpion, he was helpless and just became a spectator. He explains that the scorpion had come in because of heavy rainfall and had hidden beneath a sack of rice. Ezekiel uses alliteration to describe the moment of the sting: 'Parting with his poison'. He uses the phrase 'diabolic tail' to depict the evil and compared the scorpion to the devil.

The scorpion disappeared from the spot; after hearing the news of the deadly sting, villagers came to the spot. Ezekiel uses the simile 'like swarms of flies' to describe their

number and behaviour of the people. He states that they 'buzzed the name of God' repeatedly, the onomatopoeia enabling us to 'hear' the constant noise they made. The scorpion is again seen as the devil in line ten: 'the Evil One'. We can imagine the fear of the child observing the scene, as the peasants' lanterns created 'giant scorpion shadows' on the walls of his home. Onomatopoeia is used again as the poet says that these people 'clicked their tongues' whilst searching for the scorpion. They believed that whenever the scorpion moved, its poison 'moved in mother's blood'.

Line eighteen is the first in a fourteen-line section which recounts the words of wisdom voiced by the peasants in the hope that the woman would survive. Five of the lines begin 'May ...' and are clear examples of the religious beliefs the villagers held. They refer to the past and future lives, absolution of sins, the lessening of evil and the hope that the poison will 'purify' the woman's flesh and spirit. Ezekiel describes how they surrounded his mother; he saw 'the peace of understanding' in their facial expressions.

In the lines thirty-two and thirty-three, Ezekiel repeats the word 'More' for four times and describes the arrival of 'More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours, more insects' as the rain continued to fall. In the line thirty-four, he makes the first direct reference to his mother's suffering, telling us that she 'twisted through and through' and was groaning in pain. Then the poet turns to the reaction of his father who was not a religious and superstitious man but a 'sceptic and rationalist'. On this occasion, however, the man resorted to 'every curse and blessing' accompanied by various herbal concoctions, such was his desperation. Ezekiel describes in detail that his father actually set alight to the toe that had been bitten by the scorpion. It must have had a profound effect on the poet as a child; he describes how 'I watched the flame feeding on my mother', personifying the fire. Ezekiel then watched and listened to a 'holy man' carrying out certain rites to 'tame' the poison. The poison lost its sting the following night and after twenty hours of suffering, the mother had a sigh of relief.

The first forty-five lines form one continuous stanza relating the event from start to finish, concludes with a short three-line stanza in which the poet recalls his mother's reaction to her scary and painful experience. She spoke of it only briefly, thanking God and saying how glad she was that the scorpion had chosen to sting her and spared her children. This was the boundless, selfless love of a mother who had great affection and love for her children. Ezekiel never forgot these words through out his life.

In this poem it is interesting to know that the poet narrates this incident as an observer's point of view. He was not involved in the situation as the other adults who were in any action. This allows him to relate the actions and words of the peasants and his father

whilst being detached from them. It is an insight into the behaviour of a small community in rural India where everyone becomes involved in one family or a mother's suffering, and all gather to witness the event and contribute a prayer, give justifications, suggestions, etc. It must have seemed though to the poet as a child as there was a huge gathering of people, and the night must have been everlasting. His comparison of the peasants to 'swarms of flies' suggests that they would rather have left the family in peace and comfort.

Structure of the poem

The structure of the poem is very free, with lines of varying lengths and no rhyme scheme. The second stanza that ends the poem attracts attention for its brevity and emphasizes the words of the mother and their effect on the son.

Imagery

Imagery is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perceptions referred to in a poem. Nissim Ezekiel describes a childhood experience through this poem. The poet conveys through some imageries which can be understood by our senses. The senses consist of seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling and touching. The poet creates an image to stimulate these senses, this is called imagery. It can be defined as the representation of an experience through language. Though visual imagery is most often used in poetry, an image may also represent a sound, a smell, a touch or a feeling or sensation.

Questions and Answers

1. What does the poet mean by 'entrance' and 'exit' in the poem?

There is one entrance to the stage called the world. It is birth. There is one exit. It is death.

2. What is the complaint of the schoolboy?

The schoolboy is unwilling to go to school. Carrying a schoolbag, he moves like a snail.

3. How is the appearance of the magistrate?

The magistrate is fat and his belly is big and round by good eating.

4. Who wrote the poem 'The Road Not Taken'?

The poem 'The Road Not Taken' was written by the American poet Robert Frost.

5. Which road did the poet choose?

The poet chose the road where there were yellow leaves found uncrushed. It was still grassy and not much walked over.

6. What is an ‘Ode’?

The word ‘ode’ itself means a poem that is in the form of an address, to a person, an object or even to a god. It expresses an enthusiastic emotion.

7. How does the West Wind called by the poet?

The poet calls the west wind a wild spirit.

8. What is the meaning of “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”?

The title has been borrowed from a medieval French poem. It means “Beautiful Lady without pity”

9. What is a ballad?

A ballad is a folk song. The traditional folk song was usually not written down but passed on by word of mouth.

10. What did the ghosts of kings say?

They told him that he too had been enslaved by the beautiful lady without pity.

11. Who was Ulysses?

Ulysses, King of Ithaca, was one of the Greek heroes who participated in the Trojan War.

12. Why Ulysses is unhappy in his Kingdom?

Ulysses says it is of no use to be an idle King. He is unhappy, his wife is aged. His subjects lead an uncivilized life.

13. What kind of person is Telemachus?

Telemachus is the good and son of Ulysses. No doubt, he would make a careful, wise ruler. Ulysses lists all his good qualities. Telemachus has the qualities necessary for a good ruler, namely patience and prudence.

14. Who speaks in the dramatic monologue?

Browning’s *‘My Last Duchess’* is spoken by the Duke of Ferrara, the husband of the dead Duchess.

15. Who is the painter of the Duchess’s portrait?

Fra Pandolf is the painter of the Duchess’s portrait.

16. When was the poem “A Prayer for my Daughter” written?

The poem was written in 1919, a few weeks after Yeats’s daughter Anne was born.

17. Who was Maud Gonne?

Maud Gonne was a beautiful woman and friend of Yeats. She was actively involved in Irish politics and in the Irish revolutionary movement.

18. What is the worst hatred according to Yeats?

The worst hatred is that of the mind which comes from being arrogant.

19. Who are the Magi?

The Magi are the Three Wise Men from the East who travelled to Bethlehem where Jesus Christ had been born.

20. What had happened to the camels used by the Magi?

The camel's necks were swollen, and they were sore-footed. They lay down on the melting snow and refused to get up.

21. What is 'The Unknown Citizen'?

The Unknown Citizen is the ordinary citizen in the modern industrialised urban society.

22. How was the health of the unknown citizen?

The citizen's health card showed that he was once in hospital but left it after being cured.

23. What was the poem 'Night of the Scorpion' about?

It is about a woman being stung by a scorpion with all the goings – on that follow.

24. Why did the father put paraffin to the bitten toe?

The father tried to burn out the bitten spot to stop the flow of poison into the blood.

25. Why did the mother thank God?

After the pain had subsided, the mother calmly thanked God that the scorpion had stung only her and spared her children.