Poetry - 11.

Ode to a Nightingale

UNDERSTANDING THE POEM

Q. 1 How does the nightingale's song plunge the poet into a state of ecstasy?

Answer:

When Keats was sitting under a plum tree in the garden of his house, in Hampstead, he stroked with an idea to compose a poem called "Ode to a Nightingale." He was actually inspired by the song that was sung by Nightingale and he was done with his poem within one day only. The poet began this poem keeping in mind the melodious voice of a nightingale, the mood of the poem was melancholic and initiated a poem by saying that how his "heart aches" as if he was poisoned. Song of Nightingale was making him happy and making him felt in peace as he was comparing with Lethe river water as he was feeling that he was alive and forgot that there is something called death as he was fully indulged in her song and was living that song.

Q. 2 What are the unpleasant aspects of the human condition that the poet wants to escape from?

Answer:

As in a poem, poet had integrated his happiness with nightingale's song and he was fully indulged into it celebrating his happiness, forgetting everything around him. Keats wants to escape from sorrow and critical situations that human go through in his lifespan. The poet wishes to escape from all such unpleasant aspects. He wishes to spend his life like a bird he wants to fly high without any limit on him. He realized the truth of human life and that was a pain. All the gains that humans get have pain with it and he wants to get out of this life. He while reciting his poem and when he was in his deep thoughts he jots down various

obstacles and unpleasant aspects that every human face which are as follows; He tells that bird who never experienced fever, who never sits like a man and start thinking about sadness. He also told about human cycle and end up with death. The poet wants to escape from all such obstacles.

Q. 3What quality of ‘beauty’ and ‘love’ does the poem highlight?

Answer:

In this poem, Keats came across problems in the life of human being when he compared things with a life of that nightingale. Sitting under a tree he was admiring the greenish and fresh feel which was making him happy with a bird’s song, he was enjoying the beauty of nature. He was sad though, thinking one day we all will die. He was wondering while sitting under the tree that bird’s song is immortal and was feeling ecstatic. He was saying that beauty is not that what we see the real beauty is what we feel from inside. The beauty that was a fascinating poet was nature and that beauty makes him feel sad when he was thinking about an end of life and that is death. He will die, but the beauty of bird’s song will always be there. He was trying to explain that in this world nothing is static and time changes, nothing is permanent, neither a love nor a beauty.

Q. 4 How does the poet bring out the immortality of the bird?

Answer:

While poet was thinking about the mortality of human life and wishes to escape from the unpleasant aspect of human life, he adored the nightingale’s song and he finds charming peace in it. He was fascinated with the beauty of her song. He told that nightingale’s song will always be immortal it will never end up like a human age and will never die like a human. He wishes to fly like a bird, keeps on listen to her song and live a life like a bird. He realizes that whatever he was imagining was impossible. He praised beautiful humming voice which will always be

immortal and which has been heard by many people earlier and people will keep on listening but the difference will lie that people will change with time

Q. 5 How is the poet tossed back from ecstasy into despair?

Answer:

When Keats was appreciating the bird's song, the nightingale flies further away from him. The song of the bird was getting far from ears, and suddenly poet tossed back from ecstasy into despair. He realized that what he was dreaming was next to impossible; it's a bitter truth that human life is mortal. He again came into the real world with the same sorrow feeling that we all will die one day.

Q. 6 How does the poem bring out the elusive nature of happiness in human existence?

Answer:

The poem is all about describing and distinguishing between happiness that exist in abstract form and real form which is from inside, the poet talks about the pleasure that he was getting from feeling nature and listening to bird's song and pain when he was thinking about obstacles in human life. The mortality of bird's song had been conversely compared with the immortality of human life which ends up with elusive nature of happiness as thinking about this poet could hardly find he was happy. Poet was praising the real happiness but elusive in nature which he was getting while listening to the song of the nightingale.

TRY THIS OUT

Q. 1 The poet has juxtaposed sets of opposites like numbness pains, waking dream. How does this contribute to the poetic effect? What is this figure of speech called? List other such pairs of poems that you have read.

Answer:

Some other opposites used in poem including numbness pains, waking dream are:

- Death immortal
- Happiness sorrow
- Wake-sleep

These opposites helped poet to plot a difference between those things which play a role in human life and which is a bitter truth that is death and poet had described sorrow feel related to this and compared it with happiness. All these opposites help the author to make an effective distinction between such things.

The figure of speech used is Oxymoron as two opposite words are used.

Q. 2 The poet has evoked the image of wine—why has this image been chosen?

Answer:

The poet has evoked the images of wine because poet used work “drink” as he said that “That I might drink, and leave the world unseen” which signifies that poet was willing to lose himself from the real world and want to feel the world that give him real happiness. This abstract world gave him happiness as he feels free from all the obstacles and fear of death. The poet wants to get drunk and leave the world as it is and want to enjoy the current scenario as he was getting indulged deeper into nightingale’s song which was making him happy.

Q. 3 The senses of sound, sight, and taste are evoked in the poem. Locate instances of these.

Answer:

Instances of sound from the poem are:

1) But being too happy in thine happiness.

That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees, In some melodious plot of beechen green, and shadows numberless, Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

2) Thou was not born for death, immortal Bird! No hungry generations tread thee down; The voice I hear this passing night was heard in ancient days by emperor and clown. An instance of sight from the poem are:

O, for a draught of vintage! That hath been Cool's a long age in the deep-delved earth, Tasting of Flora and the country green, Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!

O, for a beaker full of the warm South, Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene, with beaded bubbles winking at the brim, and purple-stained mouth; An instance of taste from the poem are: With beaded bubbles winking at the brim, and purple-stained mouth; That I might drink, and leave the world unseen, and with thee fade away into the forest dim.

Q. 4 The poet addresses the nightingale and talks to the bird throughout the poem. What is this kind of poem called?

Answer:

In the whole poem, an author was addressing nightingale and was praising her immortal voice and was even talking to her in the whole poem as he was in the stage of abstraction which had taken him to unreality and he was happy with it because he forgot all those unpleasant aspects of human life. So, this poem is based on abstraction.

Q. 5 Make a list of all the adjectives in the poem along with the nouns they describe. List the phrases that impressed you most in the poem.

Answer:

Adjective	Noun
Numbness	John Keats (poet itself)
Happiness	John Keats (poet itself)

Blushful	Nature
Weariness	Human

Phrases that impressed me most in the poem are:

1) Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains One-minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk Impressed me because it shows the reality

2) 'This not through envy of thy happy lot, but being too happy in thine happiness, that thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees, in some melodious plot of beechen green, and shadows numberless, impressed me because it shows happiness

Q. 6 Find out the other odes written by Keats and read them.

Answer:

In 1819, John Keats composed six odes, which are among his most famous. These odes are as follows:

- Ode on a Grecian Urn
- Ode on Indolence
- Ode on Melancholy
- Ode to a Nightingale
- Ode to Psyche
- To autumn

Q. 7 Find out the odes written by Shelley and read them.

Answer:

The ode written by Percy Bysshe Shelley is Ode to the West Wind:

Ode to the West Wind consists of five sections in it. In the first part of three sections, Shelley talks about the power that west wind possesses. In the second part, comprising of two sections, he was putting emphasis on the relationship between wind and narrator. As wind bring changes, and narrator could believe in bringing social change.