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Sahebraoji Buttepatil Mahavidyalaya

TYBA COMPULSORY ENGLISH NOTES

Poem

Neutral Tones

SUMMARY

Neutral Tones is poem by Thomas Hardy, one of the most famous novelists and poets of the Victorian era

The poem opens with the speaker recounting a memory of he and someone, later revealed to be his beloved, standing near a pond on a cold winter day. The atmosphere was bleak and sombre; even the sun failed to exude any warmth and joy, as if God had reprimanded it for committing some folly. Its fire, usually burning bright, seemed to have died making him appear absolutely white, devoid of all its passionate, flaming hues. Even the trees surrounding them echoed the barrenness and gloom that impregnated the whole surroundings. The parched ground, most likely due to the harsh weather, was strewn with a few fallen leaves, probably from the ash tree. The leaves too, like the rest of the surroundings, were sans all colour, appearing gray and withered.

After describing the setting in the first stanza, the speaker then begins to talk about his beloved who was with him that day. He says that she looked at him with dispassionate eyes, almost as if she was looking at some dull and tiresome mystery of the past. Maybe she no longer found him interesting or maybe she was not able to figure out his feelings regarding her- whatever it may be, she seems to have given up on their love, tired of figuring out where things were headed between them. Both of them exchanged some words but the conversation, just like their relationship, no longer held much significance. It reeked of morbidity and failure, serving as an indication of not much being left in their love. Probably the conversation was more of an argument as to who among the two of them was to be blamed for their lost love. Or maybe they talked about who was more hurt by their relationship falling apart. It could also be that the more they talked, the more they realised that the love they shared at some point, has ceased to exist, growing fainter with every word they spoke.

The speaker further comments that through all this, a small smile played on her mouth which seemed to cause the poet excruciating pain, filling his heart with bitter resentment. This smile that hovered on her face was not one that filled his heart with joy. Rather, it was dispassionate, resonating with her feelings for him. The beloved's smile was like that of a man who does not have much life left in him; having only enough which would allow him to die. Similarly, most of the love between them had evaporated, leaving behind only as much as was necessary for them to bring their relationship to its death. Such was the bitterness that was reflected in her smile on

the day which marked the end of their love. To the speaker, the smile appeared as sinister as a menacing bird who is just about to take flight. The smile seemed to foretell the dejection and despair that awaited the speaker as he lost his beloved.

Since that day, having experienced fully the pain and sufferings brought upon by a heartbreak, the speaker developed a cynical attitude towards love and relationships. The memory of the day when he lost the one whom he loved the most is firmly etched in his mind, having completely altered his perception of the world. It made him realise the deceptive nature of love and the agony it is capable of afflicting upon one's heart. The image of the lady's face, the "white" sun, the ash tree with its decaying leaves and the pond as it appeared on that cold morning serves as a reminder to him of the immense agony and inner turmoil caused to him by this experience. The memory of that day is tinged with both bitterness and regret, filling the speaker's heart with melancholy and anguish as and when it resurfaces.

Strange Meeting

SUMMARY

The speaker escapes from battle and proceeds down a long tunnel through ancient granite formations. Along his way he hears the groan of sleepers, either dead or too full of thoughts to get up. As he looks at them one leaps up; the soldier has recognized him and moves his hands as if to bless him. Because of the soldier's "dead smile" the speaker knows that he is in Hell.

On the face of the "vision" the speaker sees a thousand fears, but the blood, guns, or moans of above did not reach into their subterranean retreat. The speaker tells the soldier that there is no reason to mourn, and he replies that there is – it is the "undone years" and "hopelessness". The soldier says his hope is the same as the speaker's; he also tells him he once went hunting for beauty in the world, but that beauty made a mockery of time. He knows the truth of what he did, which is "the pity of war, the pity war distilled", but now he can never share it.

The soldier/vision continues, saying men will go on with what is left to them, or they will die as well. They will not break their ranks even though "nations trek from progress". He used to have courage and wisdom. He would wash the blood from the wheels of chariots. He wanted to pour his spirit out, but not in war.

Finally, he says to the speaker that "I am the enemy you killed, my friend," and that he knew him in the dark. It was yesterday that the speaker "jabbed and killed" him, and now it is time to sleep.

Have you got a Brook in your little heart

SUMMARY

“Have you got a Brook in your little heart” was written by one of the greatest American poets of the 19th century, Emily Dickinson. This poem is all about the little brook of life. It flows slowly and steadily, suddenly evaporating at the moment of death. The rivulet exists in everyone’s heart that gives out softer emotions. At times, it overflows with powerful emotions. There comes a time when it goes dry due to harsh circumstances. By presenting this picture of a brook, Dickinson beautifully describes the nature of human life, precisely incorporating subjective feelings with a universal theme.

“Have you got a Brook in your little heart” begins with a description of the brook that mildly babbles by. Bashful flowers blow near it and blushing birds come down to drink its water. No one knows its location so it flows undisturbed. Yet, a little draught of life is daily drunk by the speaker without anyone’s attention.

In the last two stanzas, Dickinson describes the impact of the spring and autumn on the rivulet. During spring, it overflows as the snow starts melting. While, in August, the meadows near it become dry, so does the river. So, the speaker warns listeners to take notice of it lest it would go dry.