

To The Cuckoo

Summary...

The poem "To the Cuckoo", by William Wordsworth is a poem that eulogizes Cuckoo and applauds the bird. The poet is lying on the grass, immersing himself in nature, when he hears the song of the Cuckoo. Wordsworth gives the bird the label of being merry and not being victim to the restrictions of industrial life. The bird's cry strikes emotions in him that he had not visited since his childhood. The sweet music of the bird fills the poet's heart with joy. The cry makes Wordsworth recollect his childhood days when he first heard the bird. He receives the bird gladly and welcomes it with many sweet names. He calls it a happy new corner. He wonders if he should label it just a bird or a creature bigger than the realms of comprehension. He looked for the bird in the bushes, trees and in the sky but he could never find the bird. Throughout his life, the Cuckoo is to him a mystery and an invisible creature.

He calls it the darling of the spring and blessed bird which indicates how the entire poem is addressed to the cuckoo. The poet loves the bird and indicates that it lavishes joy and happiness upon him.

Wordsworth ends the poem by indicating that the earth, that both of them share is not strong or concrete in the figurative sense, and it is actually a mystical place. It can hold such immense natural beauty at the same time as holding such distained industrial evil. He considers the world a suitable home for such a beautiful and beloved creation.

The Happy Prince

Themes...

The Happy Prince is an awe-inspiring allegory, characteristic of 19th century English fiction. Love and sacrifice, poverty, hypocrisy and exploitation are some of the prime themes introduced by Oscar Wilde.

(a) **LOVE AND SACRIFICE:** Sacrificing your happiness for the happiness of the one you love is by far the truest type of love. The story symbolizes the same and tells us that sacrifice and selflessness are great human values and should be upheld in every case. The swallow is overawed by the attitude and actions of the statue of the prince. He gives up the intention of going to Egypt and makes up his mind to accomplish the noble task initiated by the prince. The frost of winter kills him but the bird is determined and sacrifices his life. Similarly the happy prince is the symbol of sacrifice and gives away his all for the sake of humanity.

(b) **POVERTY:** The son of tailor who is suffering from fever and the little weeping match girl depicts the poverty of the Victorian age. People don't have their own houses. The beggars are sitting at the gates of the houses of rich people. Rich are making merry while as the downtrodden sections of the society are in a miserable condition. The poverty of the writers of the Victorian Era has been brought out as well.

(c) **HYPOCRISY AND EXPLOITATION:** The Mayor and the town councilors are the worst example of hypocrisy. Disregard towards the poor gives a fair evidence of their deceitful and barbaric nature. They pretend to have artistic taste and only want to please the authorities. The poor on the other hand are working hard but they cannot even meet the basic needs of their lives. This is the worst kind of exploitation.

Shaikh Noor-ud-Din Wali (R.A.)

Q 1. Why did Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali (RA) enter the cave?

Sheikh Noor-ud-din (RA) embraced the hermetic way of life and lived in seclusion for most of the time. It was for the purpose of deep meditation that he entered a cave near Kaimoh and spent twelve years there, doing penance and purifying self.

Q 2. What made people flock to the Shaikh?

Sheikh lived a very simple life. He used to serve common people in several ways. He left a deep effect on the people from his speeches and actions. All these qualities made people flock to him.

Q 3. What does Sheikh-ul-Aalam (RA) mean?

“Sheikh-ul-Aalam” means the spiritual guide of the world, or a saint who has a great reputation all over the world and is a revered one.

Q 4. What kind of life did Sheikh-ul- Aalam (RA) lead?

Sheikh lived an austere life and preached Islam throughout Kashmir. He lived a life of complete abnegation and renunciation, feeding purely on a meagre, vegetarian diet, herbs or a cup of milk.

Q 5. What did Sheikh-ul-Aalam (RA) teach to the people?

Sheikh, a devoted personality taught everyone the perfect way of life. He propagated the eternal message of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). He stressed on the importance of honesty and humility in order to maintain the peace and brotherhood.

The Fun They Had

Q. What are the main features of the mechanical teachers and the schoolrooms that Margie and Tommy have in the story?

In this story everybody has a mechanical teacher. Margie and Tommy belong to the future generation. The author wants to show how schools could be in 200 years and there are not conventional schools as we have now. Classrooms don't exist and there is no human involvement. Everything is taught by the mechanical teacher. It is a machine which is large and ugly with black face. It has a big screen on which all the lessons are displayed. Everything is programmed by the use of codes. The mechanical teacher calculates the marks in no time. Their classroom is next to their bedroom. The mechanical teacher is always there waiting for them at the same time every day except Saturday and Sunday.

Q. Why did Margie hate school? Why did she think the old kind of the school must have been fun?

Margie had school in the form of mechanical teacher at home. It was a computer operated regular teacher. However, she had no liking for it . The mechanical teacher had been giving her test after test in geography and her performance was no below par. She liked the old kind of school where children from neighborhood came laughing and shouting in the school

yard. They sat together in the classroom and learned the same thing and could help each other. The teachers were humans and it was fun.

Q. Do u agree with Margie that schools today are more fun than the school in the story? Give reasons for your answer.

Yes, it can be acknowledged that schools today are more fun. In the present day schools children come together and learn things in a group. They can share ideas and experiences while in Margie's school there is only one student and same teacher always. While having fun with friends, we learn to work in coordination and at the same time explore our potential. The various qualities like respect, obedience, sharing and kindness are all a part of school education today. The excitement of waiting to know the marks scored in exams is greater when one is sitting in a classroom with other students. It does not have the same effect when marks are calculated by the mechanical teacher after the test has been taken. Mechanical teacher on the other hand forces students to learn in a regular way which becomes boring. Students should be given opportunity to learn in a natural environment.

Saint of the Gutters

Q1. What activities made Mother Theresa so exceptional?

Mother Theresa devoted herself to the poor and her love for the poor was profound. She instilled hope and joy where none existed. She relinquished her personal life for the honor and glory of God and never wavered in her efforts to help the poor. This made her an exceptional character.

Q2. Why did Mother Theresa leave St. Mary High School?

Mother Theresa taught for twenty years in St. Mary High school in Calcutta. On Sep. 10, 1946, while riding in a train from Calcutta to Darjeeling, she received a divine call from God "to serve him amongst the poorest of the poor". In 1948, she was finally granted permission to leave her duties, and she began to share her life with the poor, the sick and the hungry of Calcutta

Q3. What did Mother Theresa mean by "to fail would be to break faith"?

Mother Theresa was sure that it was Jesus calling out to her and that his message was unmistakable. She felt that it was an order for her which she couldn't have disobeyed. She wanted to satiate the longings of the Lord. That was the reason she started missionaries of charity in 1948.

Q4. What kind of life did Mother Theresa lead?

Mother Theresa was a spiritual Giant during her life and continued to be an icon for so many people around the world. Her whole life was so joyously poor, simple and prayer filled. She was a symbol of pure love, grace and compassion.

Q5. Why do you think Mother Theresa learnt Bengali?

Mother Theresa learnt Bengali and Hindi to be able to better serve the poor. It was important for her to learn the regional languages if she had to interact with the masses.

Q6. What did Malcolm Muggeridge see on the streets of Calcutta?

It was Malcolm Muggeridge who first brought Mother Theresa to worldwide attention. In 1970, on his visit to India he saw Mother Theresa cleaning the sores of a half dead man in the slums of Calcutta. There was not even a slightest trace of disgust on her face. He couldn't believe that a human being looked so happy while doing such a repelling task. He wanted the world to know about this saintly person and the result was a book and a documentary film on Mother Theresa, titled, "Something Beautiful for God".

BIOGRAPHY....

Mother Theresa was born in Yugoslavia on 27th August, 1910. She prayed every night and went to church every day when she was a child. She was very much influenced by religion and astonished everyone when at the age of twelve she decided that she wanted to become a nun.

Mother Theresa was full of enthusiasm, love, tenderness, kindness and courage. These were the qualities which helped her to eliminate the sufferings of the poor and the misery of the helpless. Although her mission started in India, she succeeded in bringing the people of all societies under one roof i.e. humanity. She stayed in India for the major portion of her life. In 1928, she came to Calcutta with a message of love. At first she began to work as a teacher. She saw the stress of the slum dwellers which touched her heart deeply. For over 45 years, she ministered to the poor, sick, orphaned and dying.

She converted herself to an Indian and in a short span of time became familiar to Indian customs. She established a school for the poor children. Afterwards he founded "Missionaries of Charity". Then she found Nirmal Hriday. Not only in India, but also in abroad there are branches of Nirmal Hriday.

In 1979, she was awarded the Nobel Prize for peace. Government of India conferred Padma shri upon her for selfless service.

She possessed strong leadership skills that made her get to rise to such a great level and win the hearts of people. She has been praised by many individuals , governments and organizations. However she has also face a diverse range of criticism. These include objections by various individuals and groups, including Christopher Hitchens, Aroup Chaterjee, VHP, against the proselytizing focus of her work, including strong stance against abortion. She was also criticized for her beliefs in spiritual goodness of poverty and alleged baptisms of the dying.

Despite all criticism, she was loved by majority. She had devoted her entire life in the service of poor and underprivileged. She passed on 5th Sep. 1997 and the whole world paid tribute to this noble lady of the present century.