



INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT

SENIOR SECTION

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

CLASS IX

NO MEN ARE FOREIGN

-JAMES KIRKUP



DATE:

SUMMARY:

'No Men are Foreign' is a thought provoking poem by James Kirkup. It tells us that there is no difference between different people and the countries they live in. Therefore wars and the bloodshed that takes place in the name of caste, class, creed and country are futile and must be condemned. The uniforms worn by people in different parts of the world may be different, but the bodies beneath them are the same. The earth that one walks upon is the same for all people from different countries. All will one day or the other die and return to earth only. People in every part of the world get the sunshine, air and water in equal measures. They too prosper during peace but have to suffer poverty and hunger during the war like us. They do the same jobs to earn their livelihood as we do. They are built just like us and sleep or wake up in a manner similar to ours. They too can be won over by love- Thus, human life is the same in every part of the world. We must remember that when we hate, betray and condemn others or forcibly take away land and property from them, we actually harm ourselves. Our weapons of war make the earth dirty and spoil its atmosphere. Wars thus cause misery and destruction. In this way, the poem gives us the message of mutual and peaceful co-existence and warns us not to fight or hate others.

THEME

The theme of the poem "No Men are Foreign" is the oneness of mankind underneath the superficial differences of colour, race, nationality and faith. It presupposes that all human beings are brothers and sisters. Those who spread hatred and wage wars are criminals and deserve to be condemned. The poem also deals with the supremacy of love, accord, friendship and amity among all the people in this world.

LITERARY DEVICES

Alliteration

Alliteration is the close repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of successive words (initial alliteration) and within words (internal alliteration).

Examples:

- a single body breathes (' b' sound is repeated at the beginning of each word)
- Or sleep, and strength (' s' sound is repeated)

Metaphor

A figure of speech in which a word or phrase (which is not linked directly) is used to describe an object or action through comparison.

Examples:

- Beneath all uniforms, a single body breathes

‘Uniforms’ here basically stand for militaries that different countries in the world have. These uniforms may be different in colour, design, shape and culture, but people donning them are the same anywhere in the world.

- war’s long winter starv’ d

Here the starvation experienced during unproductive and harsh winters describes the want and hunger faced during war-time. Both these conditions lead to ultimate destruction.

Repetition

Poets often repeat single words or phrases, lines, and sometimes, even whole stanzas at intervals to create a musical effect; to emphasize a point; to draw the readers’ attention or to lend unity to a piece. In “No Men are Foreign” James Kirkup repeats the word ‘Remember’ five times in the poem to emphasize the serious message the poem has to convey.

RHYME SCHEME

The poem doesn’t have any specific rhyme scheme. It is written in free verse.

I. Read the extracts given below and answer the questions that follow.

1. *They, too, aware of sun and air and water,
Are fed by peaceful harvests, by war’s lone winter starv’d.
Their hands are ours, and in their lines, we read
A labour not different from our own.*
 - a) Who do they refer to in this stanza?
 - b) What are they fed by ?
 - c) Name the poet.

2. *Let us remember, whenever we are told
To hate our brothers, it is ourselves
That we shall dispossess, betray, condemn.
Remember, we who lake arms against each other*
 - a) Whom do we hate when we hate other?
 - b) What are we doing to our fellow beings?
 - c) Write the Name of the poem.

3. *It is the human earth that we defile.
Our hells of fire and dust outrage the innocence
Of air that is everywhere our own,
Remember, no men are foreign, and no countries strange.*
 - a) What is outraging this earth?
 - b) What can we call our own?
 - c) What should we remember?

II. Answer the following in 30-40 words.

1.”Beneath all uniforms...” What uniforms do you think the poet is speaking about? (Textual)

Ans:-The poet is speaking about the uniforms that armies of different countries wear. Though these ‘uniforms’ are different in appearance the bodies under them are the same. The poet tries to convey that the differences among the people of different countries are superficial. Essentially, all human beings are the same.

2. Whom does the poet refer to as ‘our brothers’ and why?

Ans:-The poet refers to the people living in other countries as ‘our brothers’. He says so because the superficial dissimilarities of complexion, language, dress, culture and nationality must not, segregate us as human beings. Human wants, needs, hopes, and emotions are the same anywhere in the world.

3. Why does the poet call harvests ‘peaceful’ and war as ‘winter’?

Ans:-Harvests are called ‘peaceful’ because they bring abundance and prosperity and they thrive in peaceful times only. War, on the other hand, is like the severe and harsh ‘winter’ that ruins the crops and starves people.

4. ‘...whenever we are told to hate our brothers....’ When do you think this happens and why? (Textual)

Ans:-Whenever their own importance or existence is in danger, politicians and fundamentalist make us believe that our existence and our interests are in danger and, provoke us to hate our fellow human-beings. This happens when we allow our reason to be swayed by our fears and hatred.

5. How does the poet propose to win over other countries?

Ans:-The poet proposes to win over other countries through the divine force of love. It is a universal fact that this world responds positively to love and kindness. So the poet plans to use it to end all hatred and war and create a peaceful heaven on earth.

III. Answer the following question in 120-150 words.

1. How, according, to the poet, the human earth is ‘defiled’ and the innocence of air ‘outraged’?

Ans:- The weapons of war make the earth dirty and spoil its atmosphere. Explosives cause destructive fires sending ashes all over. This pollutes the land as well as the air and the water. It leads to the spread of hunger and innumerable diseases. Both earth and air lose their purity. Thus, the victor, as well as the vanquished, find the Earth and its environment hostile and unfriendly. The kind mother Nature becomes absolutely helpless and is unable to shower her gifts on human beings. It is tarnished and robbed of its bounties. The innocence of air is signified by its purity. But wars strip the air of this innocence and fill it with smoke and dirt. The air then becomes unsuitable for human survival. Thus ‘human earth’ is ‘defiled’ and ‘innocence of air’ is ‘outraged’ by wars. (144 words)