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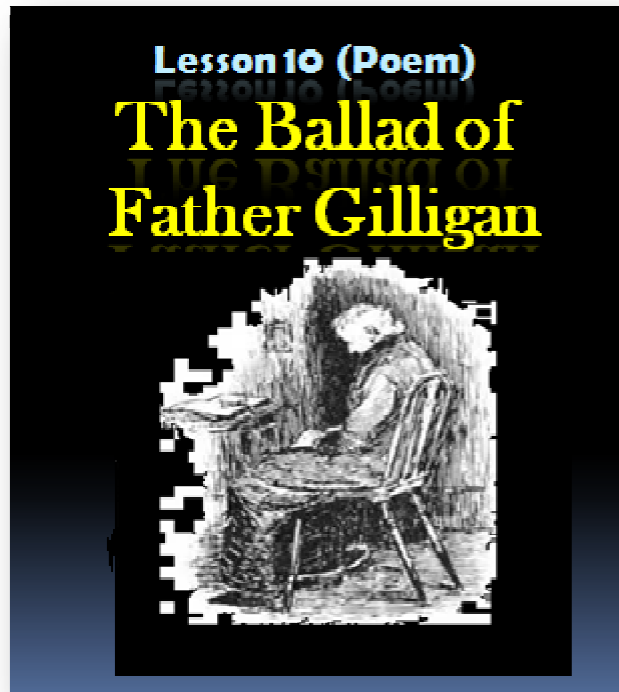
SSLC ENGLISH

Intensive Coaching
Sessions

Unit – 3

Lore of Values

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About the Poet:



William Butler Yeats was an Irish poet and one of the foremost figures of 20th century literature. He was born in Sandymount, Ireland on 13 June, 1865 and educated there and in London. He was not only famous as a poet but also as a dramatist in the English language and he helped to found the *Abbey Theatre*, also known as the *National Theatre of Ireland*. His notable works include 'Leda and the Swan', 'The Second Coming', 'Long-Legged Fly' 'The Tower', 'The Winding Stair and Other Poems' etc. In 1923 he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. He passed away on 28 Jan 1939, aged 73, in Cannes, France.

Glossary:

1. **Weary:** tired
2. **Flock:** (here) the people in the parish
3. **Sod:** grassy surface of the ground, turf
4. **Nodded:** moved head up and down
5. **Moth-hour of the eve:** sunset with the presence of moths, dusk
6. **Grieve:** feel or show grief, lament, express sorrow
7. **Spake:** (here) spoke
8. **Knelt:** (pt of kneel)
9. **Leaning:** bending
10. **Peep:** look secretly like through a narrow opening
11. **Grew:** (pt of Grow)
12. **Shook:** (pt of Shake) moved, vibrated

13. **Time of sparrow-chirp:** day break, dawn
14. **Chirp:** sharp sound produced by small birds like sparrow, twitter
15. **Mavrone:** an expression of sorrow, alas! (origin form Irish 'mobhron'; mo = my, bhron = grief)
16. **Roused:** awakened
17. **Rode:** (pt of ride)
18. **Lane:** a narrow road, a country path
19. **Fen:** wetland, marsh
20. **Swayed:** moved to and fro or side to side.
21. **Merry:** happy
22. **Hath made:** has made
23. **Wrapped:** covered, (here) wore
24. **Robe:** a long, loose outer garment reaching to the ankles.
25. **Least of things:** silliest creature.

Short Questions and Answers

Read the following lines from the poem “The Ballad of Father Gilligan” and answer the questions that follow.

Q1-5: (from SCERT Question Pool)

The old priest Peter Gilligan
Was weary night and day
For half his flock were in their beds
Or under green sods lay.

Once, while he nodded in a chair
At the moth-hour of the eve
Another poor man sent for him,
And he began to grieve.

1. Why was the old priest so tired?
2. 'For half his flock were in their beds' - What is the significance of this line?
3. What does moth hour of the eve indicate?
4. Pick out an instance of alliteration from these lines.
5. Identify a visual image from the above lines.

Read the following lines from the poem “The Ballad of Father Gilligan” and answer the questions that follow.

Q6-10:

'I have no rest, nor joy, nor peace,
For people die and die';
And after cried he, 'God forgive!
My body spake, not I!'

He knelt, and leaning on the chair
He prayed and fell asleep;

And the moth-hour went from the fields,
And stars began to peep.

They slowly into millions grew,
And leaves shook in the wind;
And God covered the world with shade,
And whispered to mankind.

6. Why does the priest have no rest, joy or peace?
7. Why did the priest repent to God and cry, "God forgive!"
8. "My body spake not I". What does this line mean?
9. Why did the priest fall asleep in prayer?
10. How was the night described in these lines?

Read the following lines from the poem "The Ballad of Father Gilligan" and answer the questions that follow.

Q11-15:

Upon the time of sparrow-chirp
When the moths came once more.
The old priest Peter Gilligan
Stood upright on the floor.

'Mavrone, mavrone! the man has died
While I slept on the chair';
He roused his horse out of its sleep,
And rode with little care.

He rode now as he never rode,
By rocky lane and fen;
The sick man's wife opened the door:
'Father! you come again!'

11. What time reference do you get from these lines?
12. Pick out the line that shows us the setting of the poem is a country side.
13. Identify an instance of auditory image from these lines.
14. 'Father! You come again!' Why did the sick man's wife ask so in surprise?
15. Pick out two instances of alliteration from these lines.

Read the following lines from the poem "The Ballad of Father Gilligan" and answer the questions that follow.

Q16-20:

'And is the poor man dead?' he cried.
'He died an hour ago.'
The old priest Peter Gilligan
In grief swayed to and fro.

'When you were gone, he turned and died
As merry as a bird.'
The old priest Peter Gilligan
He knelt him at that word.

'He Who hath made the night of stars
For souls who tire and bleed,
Sent one of His great angels down
To help me in my need.

'He Who is wrapped in purple robes,
With planets in His care,
Had pity on the least of things
Asleep upon a chair.'

16. Why was the priest so upset on the death of the sick man?
17. Identify the figure of speech used in the line "As merry as a bird".
18. How did God help Father Gilligan?
19. Identify the visual images that you can see in the last stanza.
20. In the last stanza, the poet talks about God Who had planets in His care and He had pity on the least of things. What significant message does the poet convey through these lines?

Answers

1. Father Gilligan had been performing his priestly obligations day and night. His parishioners were dying or half of them were dead. He had to conduct their funeral services and last prayers.
2. More than half the people of his parish were dying.
3. Moth hour of eve indicates evening time.
4. **Was weary, half his.**
5. Green sods, moth hour.
6. An epidemic had spread in his parish and people were dying. He was very busy with the funeral services and last prayers.
7. In utter desperation these words came out of the priest. Soon he realized that it was a sin to complain against God's will.
8. Father Gilligan's tired body spoke out the words that he had 'no rest, nor joy, nor peace'. His conscience did not indent to complain.
9. The priest was physically tired and mentally very much distressed. So he fell asleep in the middle of his prayer.
10. The moth hour – the dusk – gave way to night. Darkness began to spread and millions of stars appeared. In the night wind leaves shook and God covered the world in darkness and calmness.
11. 'The time of sparrow-chirp' refers to dawn.
12. The line 'By rocky lane and fen' shows that the setting of the poem is a country side.
13. Sparrow-chirp.
14. At the time of her husband's death she had seen the presence of a priest. She thought it was Father Gilligan.
15. 'Mavrone, Mavrone, the man' and 'He roused his horse'.
16. Father Gilligan was so upset because he could not attend the last man's final moments as he fell asleep in his chair.
17. 'Simile' is the figure of speech used in 'As merry as a bird'.

18. God sent an angel in place of Father Gilligan to attend the sick man's last moments and do the services.
19. The images of the Mighty but Merciful God in purple robes and a piteous and pious priest are seen in the last stanza.
20. Though God the Almighty has great things like planets in His cares, He never ignores least things. God loves and cares everything and everyone alike.

- **Prepare a critical appreciation of the poem “The Ballad of Father Gilligan” focusing on the theme, imagery and other poetical devices used in the poem.**

The Ballad of Father Gilligan – a note of Appreciation

W B Yeats, an Irish poet and one of the noted figures of the 20th century literature, depicts in this poem the poverty and extreme religiosity of the Irish rural life of his time.

This poem tells the story of an old priest Father Gilligan. Half of his people in the parish were either in sick-bed or already dead due to an epidemic. Day and night Father Gilligan was in service of them and he was very tired and weak. He could not attend one sick-man's last moments, as he fell asleep sitting on his chair. Realizing that he failed to do his duty, next day morning in great grief Father Gilligan rode on his horse to the man's house. Where, his wife told the priest that her husband had already died and she asked him why he came again. From her question Father understood that in his absence God had sent an angel to perform his duties. He knelt and cried in repentance and thanked God for His mercy. The Almighty God having planets in His control showed mercy upon the least of his creatures like the priest. A powerful but merciful God and a pious and dutiful priest are seen here.

This poem is a perfect example of the class of poems or songs called **Ballad**. It is written in multiple stanzas of four lines (quatrain) each, keeping a regular rhyme-scheme of **ABCB**. It tells the story of an old priest and deals with the themes of his piety, the death and destiny of his parishioners and above all, the boundless Mercy of God. The setting of the poem is a country-side dwelled by poor people. The mentioning of the father's riding a horse “*by rocky lane and fen*” and phrases like “**green sod**” show us more of the settings of the poem.

The poem is rich with various imageries. **Visual Images:** We see the dusk and the dawn with the presence of moths, we see the night sky twinkling with millions of stars and we watch the whole world gets covered in darkness. We can also visualize the image of Father riding his horse by the rocky and grassy country-sides. **Auditory Images:** we hear leaves shaking in the wind and sparrows chirping and also, the cry of repentance from the priest calling “Mavrone”, mavrone!”

The two lines, “*For half his flock were in their beds, / Or under green sods lay*” are **metaphoric** with sick and death respectively, denoting that half of the villagers are either in sick-beds or in graves due to some devastating epidemic. The lines ‘*And God covered the world with shade, / And whispered to mankind?*’ make another metaphor by comparing God to a Mother. A caring mother covers her baby in a blanket and sings a lullaby to make it sleep. The compassionate God covers His suffering people in a blanket of night and with whispering of wind send them to soothing sleep. The lines ‘*... he turned and died / As merry as a bird*’ is an example of the literary device **Simile**. The repetition of the line, “*The old priest, Peter Gilligan*”, is an example of **Refrain** in the poem.

Textual Activities

Let's Revisit

➤ Activity 1, Textbook page 104

Answer the questions by choosing the most appropriate answer from the options give.

i. b) suffering from an epidemic ii. b) weary. iii. b) an expression of sorrow iv. a) done his duty v. d) people in the parish. vi. c) God. vii. a) graves covered over by green grass. viii. c) evening.

➤ Activity 2, Textbook page 104

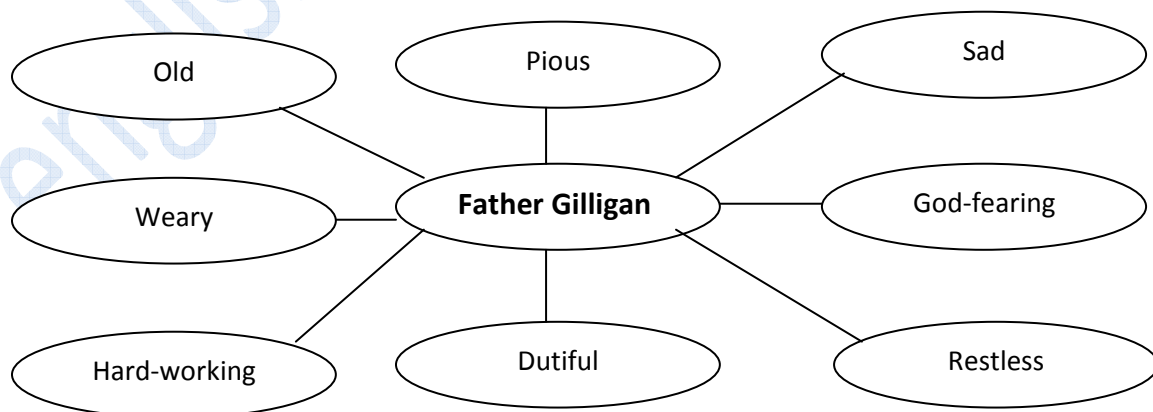
The poem is in the form of a ballad. A ballad is a poem or song narrating a story in short stanzas. Ballads are usually musical and dramatic. What are the features that make this poem a typical ballad?

The poem, 'The Ballad of Father Gilligan' is a typical ballad with all its features. It tells a story- the story of an old and weary priest, the miseries of his parishioners. The poem is comprised of 12 quatrains (four-line stanzas) composed in a simple language maintaining the rhyme scheme of ABCB. The poem deals with the themes of the pity and piety of an old priest, the death and devastation of his parishioners and the limitless love and mercy of God. Half of the people in the parish are either dead or in sickbed. The old priest has restless life engaging in their last-moment or funeral services. Though not intentionally, the Father's weary body grunts complaints about his restless life. He falls asleep while in prayer and fails to attend a dying man's last rites. Soon he realizes that God has sent an angel in his place to attend the dying man and the man has died as merrily as a bird. His feelings of guilt and failure and the sense of God's boundless mercy make him break in tears and fall in repentance.

➤ Activity 3, Textbook page 105

How does Yeats describe the character of Father Gilligan in the poem?

Complete the following word web.



➤ **Activity 4, Textbook page 105**

Read the poem again and pick out an instance of Simile used in the poem.

Simile is a figure of speech by which a comparison is made using ‘like’ or ‘as’. In the lines ‘*When you were gone, he turned and died, / As merry as a bird*’, the poet says that the man was as merry as a bird when he died.

➤ **Activity 5, Textbook page 105**

Yeats uses a number of images in the poem to provide a sensory experience to the readers. Pick out instances of visual and auditory images from the poem.

<i>Visual Images</i>	<i>Auditory Images</i>
Green sods	Chirping of sparrows
Priest’s nodding in chair	Whispering of wind
Moth-hour	Shaking of leaves
Priest’s riding the horse	Expression of sorrow by crying ‘Mavrone, mavrone

➤ **Activity 6, Textbook 105**

Other Rhyming Words: [die – I] [asleep – peep] [wind-mankind] [more-floor] [chair-care] [fen-again] [ago-fro] [bird-word] [bleed-need] [care-chair]

The rhyme scheme of the poem is ABCB, i.e. the second line rhymes with the fourth line in each stanza.

➤ **Activity 7, Textbook page 106**

- A syllable is a unit of speech sound comprising a vowel sound with or without surrounding consonant sounds. E.g. *I am a boy*. Here each word has only a single vowel sound and such words are called ‘mono syllabic’ words. The word ‘*water*’ (wa-ter) contains two syllables and such words are known as disyllabic words. The word ‘*syllabic*’ (sy-lla-bic) contains three syllables and such words are called tri-syllabic words. Words having more than three syllables are generally called ‘poly syllabic’ words.
- Unlike ‘free verse’ poems, the formal poems have a metric pattern – a specific line length determined by the number and accentuation (stressed and unstressed articulation) of syllables.
- The poetic term ‘Foot’ is the basic unit of measurement of a poetic line. A ‘foot’ usually contains at least two syllables. The most important and widely used metric pattern in English poems is ‘iambic penta meter’ which contains five feet, each foot having two syllables of an unstressed followed by a stressed syllable.

➤ **Let’s measure the following lines of the poem, ‘The Ballad of Father Gilligan’.**

(I **have**) (no **rest**), (nor **joy**), (nor **peace**), - Four feet of unstressed-stressed pattern, known as Iambic Tetra-meter

(For **peo**)-(ple **die**) (and **die**), - Three feet of unstressed-stressed pattern, known as Iambic Tri-meter.

(And **af**) (ter **cried**) (he, **God**) (for-**give**!) - Four feet of unstressed-stressed pattern, known as

Iambic Tetra-meter.

(My **bo**) (dy **spake**,) (not **I!**)

Iambic Tri-meter.

-Three feet of unstressed-stressed pattern, known as

<i>Unstressed/stressed</i>	<i>Unstressed/stressed</i>	<i>Unstressed/stressed</i>	<i>Unstressed/stressed</i>	<i>Metric Pattern</i>
He knelt ,	and lea	ning on	the chair	Iambic Tetra-meter
He prayed	and fell	asleep		Iambic Tri-meter
And the	moth- hour	went from	the fields ,	Iambic Tetra-meter
And stars	began	to peep		Iambic Tri-meter

If the lines are recited in accordance with this unstressed and stressed syllable pattern, it will create a falling and rising tone making a rhythm of ‘da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM.

➤ **Activity 8, Textbook page 108**

A Script for choreographing the poem

Scene 1: The Chamber of Father Gilligan.

In the sunset time, there is the presence of moths. In the dim light Father Gilligan is seen sitting wearily on a chair nodding his head. He is very tired and exhausted from restless work day and night. He is very sad and sorrowful as half of his parishioners are either dead or in the sickbed. This time a voice is heard from outside calling the priest. A woman is yelling out, ‘*Father...father please come fast, my husband is about to die!*’

Hearing this, he unknowingly grumbles, ‘*I have no rest, nor joy, nor peace; my people are dying one by one!*’ Immediately he realizes his mistake and cries in repentance to God, ‘*Oh God! Forgive me. My weary body spoke the complaint, not my conscience*’. Then he leans to the chair and sinks in prayer. He forgets his duty for a while and thus falls asleep.

Next morning-the chirping of birds is heard and presence of moths is seen. Father Gilligan wakes up with a shock in utter despair and anguish. His sorrowful cry is heard.. ‘*mavrone...mavrone..the man has died while I slept in the chair!*’. He rouses his horse and rides recklessly to the dying man’s house.

Scene 2: The house of the dying man

Father Gilligan is seen in a remorseful mood, waiting anxiously in front of the house. A woman, the wife of the dying man, appears at the door. She asks in astonishment, ‘*Father, why have you come again?*’ In a cry he asks her, ‘*Is he dead?*’ She says, ‘*Yes, he died an hour ago. After you left he died as merrily as a bird!*’ Father realizes that God has sent an angel in place of him to attend the dying man’s last moments. He becomes more devoted and knelt in prayer. He cries, ‘*Oh God, how merciful You are! You have planets in Your care, still you’ve shown pity up on me, the least of your creatures!*’ The scene ends with bell sounds from the church.
