


Lesson - 13



Poetry

About the Poet:



Neftali Ricardo Reyes Basoalto (1904-1973), better known by his pen name and, later, legal name **Pablo Neruda**, was a Chilean poet, diplomat and politician. He derived his pen-name from the Czech poet Jan Neruda. He was born on 12 July 1904, in Parral, Chile. He wrote in a variety of styles and his works include poems, historical epics, political manifestos and a prose autobiography. He often wrote in green ink, which was his personal symbol for desire and hope. He won many awards and the notable ones among them are “*International Peace Prize; Lenin Peace Prize (1953); Nobel Prize in Literature (1971)*” Pablo Neruda breathed his last on 23 September 1973, in Santiago, Chile.

Glossary:

Stanza I

1. **Summoned:** called or ordered to be present.
2. **Abruptly:** suddenly and unexpectedly

[The amazing thing in Pablo Neruda’s achieving poetic inspirations is that instead of his search for poetic inspiration, poetry came in search of him, summoned him and touched him. How was he summoned- by voice or silence? Where was he summoned from – any street? When was he summoned- at night? When the poetry touched him whether he was alone or among others, whether he was in a peaceful mood or in a violent emotional disruption, he does not know all these. But, he knows that he was a man without a face – a man without a personal identity or popularity before the arrival of poetry to him.]

Stanza II

3. **Decipher:** succeed in understanding, interpreting, or identifying (something).
4. **Faint:** indistinct, vague or unclear.

5. **Substance:** importance, seriousness, or relationship to real facts
6. **Unfastened:** opened, untied
7. **Palpitate:** beat very fast (heart), (here) move or shake (trees, plants etc as in wind)
8. **Perforated:** having a series of small holes.
9. **Riddled with arrows:** holes created by hitting arrows.

[It's an inexplicable experience for the poet when he was touched by the poetry. He became somewhat blind and dumb. Something started in his mind, fever or forgotten wings – fire of poetic inspiration (a burning passion) or hidden and nameless emotions. Whatever, he was so inspired that he composed his first feeble and faint lines without much confidence, deciphering that fire. What he wrote may be utter nonsense from a beginner who knows nothing, or pure wisdom bestowed by poetic inspiration. Anyhow, when he started composing verses, the heavens opened up in front of him and he could see everything from the planets to plantations, shadows, fire, flowers, and all that make up this universe.]

Stanza III

10. **Infinitesimal:** minute, tiny, extremely small
11. **Drunk:** (drink, drank drunk) (here) intoxicated
12. **Starry void:** (here) vastness of the starry sky
13. **Abys:** a deep or seemingly bottomless chasm or cavity.
14. **Wheel:** (v) fly in a wide circle.
15. **Broke loose:** escaped from control.

[The poet considers himself to be a very minute and insignificant being as compared to the universe. He is almost intoxicated with the wide and starry sky. When the poet started writing poetry, he reached another world that was full of mystery and imagery. He wheeled with starts and his emotions started flying with every word of poetry that he wrote. He himself felt to be part and parcel of everything in this universe from boundless and starry sky to the fathomless abyss. His heart broke loose and started flying with wind, and his feelings had no bounds, and whatever he felt or experienced, he poured out into the verse of poetry.]

Questions and Answers

Read the following lines from the poem “Poetry” and answer the questions that follow.

And it was at that age ... Poetry arrived
 in search of me. I don't know, I don't know where
 it came from, from winter or a river.
 I don't know how or when,
 no they were not voices, they were not
 words, nor silence,
 but from a street I was summoned,
 from the branches of night,
 abruptly from the others,
 among violent fires

or returning alone,
there I was without a face
and it touched me.

Q 1-5:

1. 'Poetry arrived in search of me.' Why does the poet say so?
2. According to the poet, where did poetry come from?
3. The words "Winter" and "river", representing a frozen state and the flow of life respectively, indicate a contrast. Find out a similar expression of contrast from these lines.
4. Pick out an example of personification from the above lines.
5. 'there I was without a face'. What does the poet mean by this line? Or, What was the poet's condition before the poetry arrived?

Read the following lines from the poem "Poetry" and answer the questions that follow.

I did not know what to say, my mouth
had no way
with names,
my eyes were blind,
and something started in my soul,
fever or forgotten wings,
and I made my own way,
deciphering
that fire,
and I wrote the first faint line,
faint, without substance, pure
nonsense
pure wisdom
of someone who knows nothing,
and suddenly I saw
the heavens
unfastened and open,
planets,
palpitating plantations,
shadow perforated,
riddled
with arrows, fire and flowers,
the winding night, the universe.

Q 6-11

6. What happened to the poet when poetry arrived?
7. Poetic intuition is like seeing without eyes. Which line says so?
8. Pick out two examples of alliteration.
9. How did he feel about his first line and why?
10. How did he say when he started writing poetry, his imagination knew no bounds?
11. What do the words 'fire' and 'flower' stand for?

Answers

1. At the time of the poet's earnest desire to become a poet, in a phase of his life when he could not express his ideas, he got abruptly a poetic inspiration and started writing his faint first line. This was like the poetry arrived in search of him.
2. He did not know where the poetry came from, how or when. He did not hear any voices speaking to him. He was summoned away by an invisible force and the poetry touched him.
3. Not voices, nor silence.
4. 'Poetry arrived in search of me' is an example of personification.
5. Before the arrival of poetry, poet was unable to express his ideas and thoughts. He was a person without a self identity.
6. When the poetry arrived he felt something started in his soul. He could make his own way to express his ideas and thoughts by deciphering the fire of poetic passion.
7. 'My eyes were blind', 'and something started in my soul'.
8. 'and something started in my soul'. Planets, palpitating plantations.
9. He felt that his first line was faint and without substance. He was not sure whether it was wisdom or pure nonsense. When he started writing his first line he was not so confident in composing a poem.
10. When he started writing poetry, the heavens opened up before him and he could see everything from the planets to the shadows, fire, arrows and flowers, all that making up the universe.
11. 'Fire' and 'flower' are two things in the universe. 'Fire' stands for the poetic passion and 'flower' for beauty and ecstasy of poetic imagination.

➤ (Activity 1, textbook page 134)

Alliteration:

Alliteration is the repetition of an initial consonant sound in successive words, as in "a *p*eck of *p*ickled *p*eppers"

Note: The repetition of similar consonant **sounds** makes the alliteration, not merely the letters.

E.g. A *c*ute *c*hild. (Here, the letter C is repeated, but the sound is different. So, it is not an example of the Alliteration.)

A *c*lever *k*ing. (Here, the letters are different, but sounds are same and repeated. So, it is an example of the Alliteration.)

Examples of alliterations from the poem Poetry:

*“...my mouth”
“and Something Started in my Soul,
fever or forgotten wings.”
“and I wrote the first faint line,”*

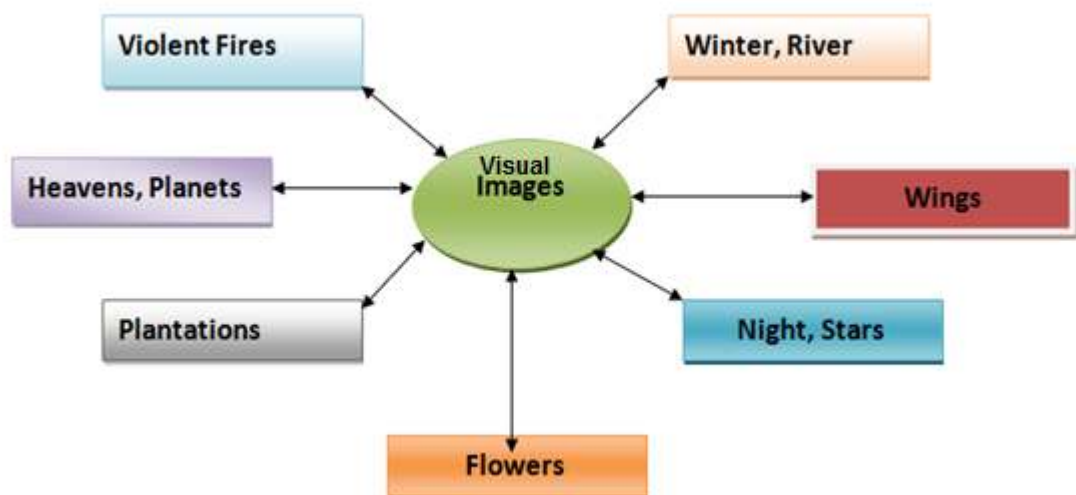
*“planets,
palpitating plantations,
shadow perforated’,
“...fire and flowers,”*

➤ **IMAGERY:**

Imagery is the use of figurative language to create a visual representation of ideas in our mind.

Though it is normally associated with visual images, it is also connected with other physical senses like sense of hearing (**auditory**), sense of smell (**olfactory**), sense of touch (**tactile**), sense of taste (**gustatory**).

- *It was dark and dim in the forest.*
The words “dark” and “dim” are visual images.
 - *The children were screaming and shouting in the fields.*
“Screaming” and “shouting” appeal to our sense of hearing, or auditory sense.
 - *He whiffed the aroma of brewed coffee.*
“Whiff” and “aroma” evoke our sense of smell, or olfactory sense.
 - *The girl ran her hands on a soft satin fabric.*
The idea of “soft” in this example appeals to our sense of touch, or tactile sense.
 - *The fresh and juicy orange is very cold and sweet.*
“Juicy” and “sweet” – when associated with oranges – have an effect on our sense of taste, or gustatory sense.
- (Activity2, textbook page 134) Complete the word web with appropriate images from the poem.



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Prepare an appreciation of the poem “Poetry” focusing on the theme, style, imagery and other literary devices used.

Poetry – an appreciation

In the poem ‘Poetry’ the poet Pablo Neruda talks about poetry that arrived in search of him. He did not know where it came from, or how or when. He did not hear any voices speaking to him. He says he was summoned away by an invisible force, and the poetry touched him. The theme of the poem, in simple words, is the ecstatic experience of the poet embraced by the poetic creativity. He had in his mind ideas which he could not express effectively before he was blessed by that creativity.

[The amazing thing in Pablo Neruda’s achieving poetic inspirations is that instead of his search for poetic inspiration, poetry came in search of him, summoned him and touched him. How was he summoned- by voice or silence? Where was he summoned from – any street? When was he summoned- at night? When the poetry touched him whether he was alone or among others, whether he was in a peaceful mood or in a violent emotional disruption, he does not know all these. But, he knows that he was a man without a face – a man without a personal identity or popularity before the arrival of poetry to him.]

By the arrival of poetry, though he could not utter words and his eyes became blind, he felt something started in his soul, like a fever. He could make his own way to express his ideas and thoughts by deciphering the "fire" of poetry. He wrote his first feeble, faint and substance-free line, and suddenly, the heavens opened up in front of him and he could see everything from the planets to the shadows, fire, flowers and all that making up the universe. By the arrival of poetic inspiration, his imagination became boundless.

[It’s an inexplicable experience for the poet when he was touched by the poetry. He became somewhat blind and dumb. Something started in his mind, fever or forgotten wings – fire of poetic inspiration (a burning passion) or hidden and nameless emotions. Whatever, he was so inspired that he composed his first feeble and faint lines without much confidence, deciphering that fire. What he wrote may be utter nonsense from a beginner who knows nothing, or pure wisdom bestowed by poetic inspiration. Anyhow, when he started composing verses, the heavens opened up in front of him and he could see everything from the planets to plantations, shadows, fire, flowers, and all that make up this universe.]

Although he was an infinitesimal being, by the touch of poetry, he was suddenly elevated to a world of ecstasy, he felt about himself being pure part of the abyss and free to wheel with the stars. He describes the whole experience as his "heart breaking loose on the wind."

[The poet considers himself to be a very minute and insignificant being as compared to the universe. He is almost intoxicated with the wide and starry sky. When the poet started writing poetry, he reached another world that was full of mystery and imagery. He wheeled with starts and his emotions started flying with every word of poetry that he wrote. He himself felt to be part and parcel of everything in this universe from boundless and starry sky to the fathomless abyss.]

His heart broke loose and started flying with wind, and his feelings had no bounds, and whatever he felt or experienced, he poured out into the verse of poetry.]

Free verse is the style of the poem; passion or ecstasy is the tone. ‘The poetry arrived in search of the poet and touched him’-assuming poetry as a person, the poetic device **Personification** is very aptly applied here.

‘Winter’ and ‘river’ represent a ‘frozen’ but ‘flowing’ state and which make a contrast. In the same way, expressions like ‘not voices’, ‘nor silence’; ‘pure nonsense’, ‘pure wisdom’ are example of subtle application of the literary device **Contrast**. The poet has not used the end-rhyme, but instances of **assonance** are there in the line “*I don't know how or when*” which add beauty to the rhythm. Application of Alliteration can be seen in lines, “*and something started in my soul, / *fever or forgotten wings*” and “*planets, / palpitating plantations,*”.*

By the touch of the poetry, a world of ecstasy is opened in the mind of the poet. References to flowers, violent fires, the branches of night, the heavens, wings, planets, plantations, part of abyss etc. create beautiful and perfect **visual images** of the universe in the imaginations of the readers.

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