

# Appreciation Notes of Textual Poems (Simplified)

## 1. Lines Written in Early Spring

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

The poem 'Lines Written in Early Spring', which celebrates the relation between man and nature, is written by the most celebrated poet of nature William Wordsworth. The poet rejoices in the sights and sounds of nature and at the same time laments on what man has made of man. He deals with the themes of coexistence in the world of nature and disharmony and cruelties in the human world.

The poet once sits in a grove in a very calm and relaxed mood. He hears lots of various sounds and songs and sees many pleasant sights. He finds peace of mind and becomes much pleased in the songs of birds and music of the woods. At the same time, some painful thoughts come into his mind, and he becomes sad.

He sees the primrose and periwinkle make wreaths in the bower there. He believes that every flower enjoys the air it breathes. The birds around him express their thrill of pleasure by hopping and playing in the grove. He also notices the budding twigs spread out their tender leaves to catch the breezy air. In short, the poet sees thrilling sights, hears pleasant songs in everything he looks at in the grove, and he experiences the utmost pleasure in the world of nature. He believes that there is pleasure everywhere in nature – that is the belief sent by heaven.

But when he thinks of the human world, he becomes sad. What man has done to mankind as well as to nature makes him uneasy and unpleasant. The coexistence in perfect harmony is the holy plan of nature. The poet realizes that humans do all atrocities among themselves and cruelties to nature by destroying the ecosystem. They create discord and disharmony and fight and kill themselves. All these wrong-doings are against the holy plan of nature.

The poem becomes much appealing because of the sublimity of its theme and beauty of lines and the abundant use of various poetic devices. The poet uses **hyperbole** when he says that he heard a thousand blended notes. He addresses Nature as a person and calls it 'her'. He makes the flowers breathe the air, and makes the tender leaves of budding twigs catch the breezy air. All these are perfect examples of **Personification**.

A beautiful instance of the **Alliteration** can be seen in the line 'What **man** has **made** of **man**.' The poem ends with a **Rhetorical Question**: "*Have I not reason to lament / What man has made of man?*"

An example of the **Auditory Image** is there in "*I heard a thousand of blended notes.*"

Some **Visual Images** are: flowers (primrose, periwinkle), birds, grove, bower, budding twigs, etc.

## 2. Blowin' in the Wind

Bob Dylan (b May 24, 1941)

The song 'Blowin' in the Wind' is written by the American singer and song writer Bob Dylan, and it was a protest song. The song was an anthem of the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. In this song, the poet asks nine rhetorical questions. All the answers are known to all and blowing in the wind. People only need open their eyes and ears to catch them.

The poet asks first "how many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man?" That means how much trouble a man should experience in life before he is recognized as a human being. He asks again how many seas a white dove should sail before it finds a peaceful place to sleep. White doves are symbol of peace, but peace is found nowhere in the world. The third question is "how many times the cannon balls must fly before they are banned forever?" Everyone talks about banning of weapons and bringing peace, but war and violence are still going on in many parts of the world. White doves are symbol of peace and cannon balls are signals of wars and violence. The poet asks when the weapons are going to be banned and we achieve the real peace and freedom.

The poet keeps on asking questions. How long can the oppressive rulers, who are as mighty as mountains, exist in front of more powerful seas of people's protest? The mountain is metaphorically compared to the oppressive rulers, and the sea is compared to the power of the oppressed people. How long can the people of a nation be kept under slavery? How long can the rulers and the ruled pretend to be blind and deaf? The sky is the symbol of unlimited freedom. But how many times should a man look up to see the sky and understand the value of freedom? How many ears should a man have to hear the cry of the suffering people? And the poet finally asks how many people should die before we realize that many have already died. The poet demands that the rulers must respect the rights of the people and bring peace and freedom in the world. He exhorts the people to fight for their rights.

These questions are the best example of the literary device **Rhetorical questions**. The poet says that the answers to them are known to all as they are blowing in the wind repeating the lines "*the answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind, the answer is blowin' in the wind*". This kind of repetition of lines creates the poetic device, **Refrain**. There are many examples of **Alliterations** in the poem as in "*How many roads must a man...*". There is an **Auditory Image** in "*...people cry?*" 'White dove', 'cannon balls', 'mountain', 'sea' etc. can be seen as **Visual Images**.

### 3. The Ballad of Father Gilligan William Butler Yeats

The poem 'The Ballad of Father Gilligan' is written by the renowned Irish poet WB Yeats. This poem is a Ballad – a poem normally composed in quatrains with a rhyme scheme of ABCB and which tells a story. This poem is a typical ballad with all its features. It tells the story of an old priest.

The poem deals with the themes of the pity and piety of an old priest, the death and miseries of his parishioners and the limitless love and mercy of God. The priest Father Gilligan is very much tired and upset because half of his parishioners are either dead or in sick-bed due to an epidemic. The Father is in service of them day and night.

One evening while he was sitting on his chair after long hours of tiresome work, he was sent for another sick man. The priest unintentionally whispered in a complaining voice that he had no rest, no joy and no peace. Immediately he realized his mistake and repented. He knelt and begged to God for forgiveness, and in the prayer he fell asleep leaning over his chair. He woke up only in the following morning at the time of sparrows chirp. He realized that he failed in his duties and frantically rode on his horse so fast with little care to the sick man's house. When he reached there, his wife asked the priest why he came again! She also told that the man had died an hour earlier as merry as a bird. From the wife's words, the priest understood that God had sent an angel to do his duties in his absence. He said that the most powerful God who has planets in His care showed mercy upon the least of His creatures. He knelt again and prayed in regret and expressed his gratitude to the merciful God.

'The green sods', 'rocky lane', 'moth hour', the priest riding the horse' are some of the **visual images**. 'The sparrow chirp' and the whispering wind that shook the leaves create an **auditory image**. The phrase 'moth-hour of the eve' indicates 'sunset' time and the 'sparrow chirp' indicates 'sunrise' time. There is an example of personification in the line "*And the stars began to peep*". The man died '*as merry as a bird*' is an example of **simile**. The opening line "*The old priest Peter Gilligan*" repeats four times, which can be taken as an example of **Refrain**. There are many examples of **Alliteration** in the poem such as 'priest Peter, 'die and die', 'Mavrone mavrone the man has died' and in "*I have no rest, nor joy, nor peace*". There are examples of **Anaphora** by which several lines are started with the word 'And'. The lines "*And God covered the world with shade / And whispered to mankind*" make an **Allusion** to the motherly care and concern of God towards His creatures. This ballad is comprised of 12 quatrains (four-line stanzas) having the **rhyme-scheme** of ABCB.

### 4. Poetry – Pablo Neruda

The poem 'Poetry' is written by the very famous Chilean poet **Pablo Neruda**. The poetic ecstasy that the poet experienced when he was embraced by the poetic creativity is celebrated in the poem. And this is the theme of the poem as well. This poem is composed in the **Free Verse** style, which does not have a consistent stanza system, metric pattern and rhyme scheme.

There are three phases or periods of the poet's experience depicted in this poem – before the arrival of the poetry when he wished to become a poet, when poetry arrived and touched him and after he composed his first faint lines. The poet says that the poetry arrived in search of him and touched him. He does not know where it came from when and how. He was a man without a name and fame before the arrival of poetry. When it touched him he became like a dumb and blind person, but he felt something started in his soul. He could not name exactly what it was – it was something like fever (poetic passion) or forgotten wings (nameless emotions or inborn but unknown abilities). Deciphering that poetic passion or fire, he wrote his first lines. The lines seemed faint and substance-free, pure nonsense or pure wisdom of an inexperienced person. Anyhow, when he composed his lines some new world of heavens opened in front of him. He could see different things in the universe from planets to palpitating plantation. Though he was an infinitesimal being and similarity of ignorance, he could enjoy the beauty of the starry sky and feel himself to be a part of the abyss. He could travel with stars and his heart became free from all confinements as free as the wind!

This poem is in the Free Verse style. Poetry 'came in search of me and touched me' is an example of **Personification**. The poet does not know from where the poetry came. He doubts whether it is from the 'winter' or a 'river'. 'Winter' points to a 'frozen state' and 'River' to a 'flowing state' and thus the poet creates the figure of speech **Contrast**. Expressions like '*not voices*', '*nor silence*' '*pure nonsense*', '*pure wisdom*', '*from the others or returning alone*' are also examples of **Contrast**. There are many instances of **Alliteration** such as '*Something Started in my Soul*', '*fever or forgotten*', '*palpitating plantations*', '*fire and flowers* etc.

## 5. Mother to Son – Langston Hughes

The poem ‘**Mother to Son**’ is written by the very well-know American poet and social activist **Langston Hughes**. He was one of the leaders of the **Harlem Renaissance**, a movement which paved the way for the social and intellectual enlightenment of the Negro community. This is a **dramatic monologue** composed in **Free Verse** style. In this monologue poem, the speaker is the mother and the son is a passive listener. The tone of the poem is didactic – that is advising and encouraging the son to face the difficulties of life.

The mother is an Afro-American woman and appears to be very poor and uneducated or illiterate. The mother talks to her son about her miserable life experiences. She compares her life to a crystal stair and says that her life has never been luxurious, comfortable or beautiful as a crystal stair. Her stair of life is full of tacks, splinters and is made up of torn-up boards, which means that her life is difficult, sorrowful and poverty-stricken. Her struggles for existence have never been easy. Her life has always been painful and bare of all comforts. While climbing the life’s stairs, very rarely only she reaches a landing place – gets a comfortable time. Most often she has to turn corners and sometimes she reaches in complete darkness without any light. She means that sometimes she reaches completely in hopeless and helpless situations without having anyone to help. But even in her old age, she has never given up hopes or hard work. She wants her son also to work hard and face challenges in life boldly.

The mother advises her son not to turn back or sit down or fall down on the steps of the life’s stairs. She also encourages him to face the difficulties and to succeed in life looking at her and learning lessons from her life.

The poem is in **Free Verse** so that it has no consistent stanza system, no rhyme-scheme or no metric pattern (consistency in line-length). The life of the mother is compared to a crystal stair and the journey of life is compared to climbing the steps. Thus the figure of speech the **extended metaphor** is very aptly used in the poem. The language of the poem is an **Afro-American dialect**, which depicts the mother’s backwardness, poverty and illiteracy. Examples of **Alliteration** can be seen in the line “*Don’t you set down on the steps*”. Also, there is an example of **Assonance** in the line “*So boy don’t you turn back*” where the vowel sound /o/ is repeated. Examples of **Anaphora** can also be seen in the poem, by which the word ‘**And**’ is repeated consecutively at the beginning of several lines.

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