

Grade VIII - English

Lesson 8. On the Grasshopper and Cricket

Poetry

Soul of the Poem

'On the Grasshopper and Cricket' is a fourteen line poem or a sonnet in which the poet expresses his view that the nature is always inspiring a poet to compose poetry through its various aspects. For Keats, seasons may change, but nature would never cease to inspire the poets and sing its songs.

During the extreme heat of the hot summer, when the birds stop singing, the earth continues to sing. The birds hide under the shade of the trees and fall silent. A voice runs from hedge, to hedge, taking the lead in the extreme weather and sings delightfully. That is the voice of the grasshopper. He sings endlessly, but when tired it rests under some pleasant weed.

During extreme winter, too, the birds stop singing. There is a death like silence in which the nature seems to have got enveloped. Frost spreads its blanket over all elements of the nature. Despite that, a shrill sound comes from under the stones, it's the cricket who is singing. Cricket's song restores the warmth that had got lost. People hear the song and to many it seems as if the grasshopper was singing from the grassy hills.

Stanzawise Explanation of The Poem

Stanza 1

The poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
and hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead,
That is the grasshopper's - he takes the lead In
Summer luxury - he has never done With his
delights, for when tired out with fun He rests at
ease beneath some pleasant weed.

Reference :

The above lines have been taken from John Keat's poem 'On the Grasshopper and Cricket'.

Context :

The poet in these lines showcases before the readers the constant music of the nature, which he calls 'the poetry of earth.'

Explanation :

The Stanza opens with the line, 'The poetry of earth is never dead', which becomes the central image or the metaphor that would be invoked in the entire poem. During the extreme warm weather of the summer, when the birds stop singing because of the hot and harsh sun and hide the shade of the cooling trees, what gives us comfort and pleasure is the poetry or music of nature.

The poetry of nature is represented by the songs of the grasshopper. The nature is filled with elements that moderate the temperature to make the conditions liveable for the living creatures. Therefore, even during extreme heat, there are to be found in nature elements like the 'cooling tree' and 'pleasant weed.'

The grasshopper sings tirelessly and provides ease to all those who had become restless under the workings of the 'hot sun'.

Stanza 2

The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a long winter evening when the forest
Has wrought a silence, from the stone there shrills
The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost;
The grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

Reference :

Same as above

Context :

The poet depicts in these lines how the earth endlessly creates sweet music, irrespective of the change of seasons or the movement of the day into night.

Explanation :

In contrast to the extreme warm climate of stanza 1, stanza 2 opens with extreme cold climate indicative of winters. The elements of winter, such as frost, are at their best, casting a blanket of utterly miserable silence on all the surroundings.

Even in such a climate, it becomes the domain of the cricket to spread ever increasing warmth through its song. The 'warmth' of the cricket's song balances out the extreme cold during the winter months. To many, the cricket's song has the same soothing effect that the grasshopper's song did during the summers.

They are recovered from their drowsy sleep to listen to the endless music of the nature, "The poetry of the earth is ceasing never."

NCERT Folder

Working with the Poem

1. Discuss with your partner the following definition of a poem. A poem is made of words arranged in a beautiful order. These words, when read aloud with feelings, have a music and meaning of their own.

It is true that poetry is made of words arranged in a beautiful order. The words create music and produce a certain rhythm because of various poetic elements such as rhythm, rhyme and meter, fused harmoniously into one another.

2. 'The poetry of earth' is not made of words. What is it made of, as suggested in the poem?

The poetry of the earth is made of various sounds.

3. Find in the poem lines that match the following.

(i) The grasshopper's happiness never comes to an end.

"He has never done with his delights".

(ii) The cricket's song has a warmth that never decreases.

"The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever."

4. Which word in stanza 2 is opposite in meaning to 'the frost'?

'Warmth'.

5. The poetry of earth continues round the year through a cycle of two seasons.

Mention each with its representative voice.

The two seasons that seem to create a continuous natural cycle are summer and winter. The grasshopper's song is a representative voice of the summer and the cricket's song is a representative voice of the winter.

Chapter Practice

Very Short Answer Type Questions

1. What happens to birds during summer?

The birds become faint and quiet under the hot sun.

2. Where do the birds go to avoid the heat of the sun?

The birds hide themselves under the shade of the trees in order to protect themselves from the heat of the sun.

3. What happens during winter?

The frost casts complete silence over all aspects of nature during winter.

4. Which words or phrases suggest a sense of relief from the heat of summer in stanza 1?

'Cooling trees' and 'pleasant weeds' offer a sense of relief from the heat of summer in stanza 1.

5. Who are half lost in drowsiness and why?

During winter, people get half lost in drowsiness because of the weather that spreads a chilling numbness.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Discuss the common features between the grasshopper and the cricket?

Both the grasshopper and the cricket are the representative voices of nature's music or poetry. Both offer a soothing effect to the extremities of climate.

The grasshopper's song balances the extreme heat during the summer by providing music that is comforting and pleasing. The cricket does the same during winter.

2. Why does the poet believe that the poetry of earth is never dead?

The poet believes that poetry of nature is never ending or never ceasing because it continues to offer balm over its inhabitants round the year, irrespective of change in seasons, change in day and night and so on. There are so many soothing sounds in nature that provide relief to people from the harsh climate.

Extract Based Questions

Extract 1

Directions (Q. Nos. 1-6) Read the extract given below and the answer the following questions

The poetry of earth is never dead:

When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
and hide in cooling trees, a voice will run

From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead,

1. Whose voice would run from hedge to hedge?

- (a) The grasshopper
- (b) The cricket
- (c) The poet
- (d) The nature

Ans. (a) The grasshopper

2. Name the poet.

- (a) William Blake
- (b) John Keats
- (c) P B Shelley
- (d) Edward Lear

Ans. John Keats

3. The word cooling means.....

Ans. (a) comforting

4. Why do the birds become faint?

The birds become faint because of the heat of the hot sun.

5. What does the poet mean by 'the poetry of earth'?

By the phrase, 'the poetry of earth', the poet means the sounds of the birds, the sounds that are abundantly found in nature.

6. The grasshopper's song is representative of which season?

The grasshopper's song among some grassy hills

Extract 2

Directions (Q. Nos. 1-6) Read the extract given below and the answer the following questions

On a long winter evening when the forest
Has wrought a silence, from the stone there shrills
The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost;
The grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

1. Whose voice is heard from the stones?

- (a) The grasshopper (b) The cricket
(c) The poet (d) The nature

Ans. (b) The cricket

2. Which element of nature has been personified in these lines?

- (a) Winter (b) Frost (c) Silence (d) wrought

Ans. (b) Frost

3. Who does the cricket's song resemble to people lost in drowsiness?

The grasshopper

4. What happens during winter?

During winter, hardly anyone steps out and there is silence everywhere.

5. Who is lost in drowsiness?

The people are lost in drowsiness, owing to the extreme cold during winter.

6. Why does the cricket's song spread warmth?

The cricket's song pours a soothing balm, when everything around is encompassed with death like silence.

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