

UNIT THIRTEEN: LIFE AND DEATH

The Great Answer

Fulton Oursler, USA (1893-1952)

The story “The Great Answer” is written by an American writer, Fulton Oursler. The story is about the importance of struggle to overcome from the problems regarding the life. The alternative name of the life is the struggle. So that we have to struggle until the last drop of energy is prevailed inside the body. “*Struggle is the great answer of the riddles of life*” is the central idea of the story.

The story is based on the incident during the *Second World War*. A group of people were lodged who were *Zeus* refugees who wanted to cross the Spanish border. But it was the difficult journey of miles far. There was a young woman having a daughter. It was rumor outside that *Gestapo*, the secret agent of Nazi and the Nazi soldiers were following them. If they found the refugees, they would be burnt alive. So the woman having a daughter was praying with the God for the help. At the mean time a strange man appeared from the underground and introduced himself as a guide who would lead the group of refugees up to the Spanish border. Then they started their journey. On the way an aged man, middle aged men, women and young joined the group. The three aged men carried the child turn wise. But after a distance they couldn't move anymore and started to groan. They requested the leader to leave them there to die but the leader encouraged them to struggle the journey until the last drop of energy is prevailed in the body and they tried to do so. The following morning they were able to cross the Spanish border with the new strength, life and were ready to face a new world of freedom.

Hence, the story is about the importance of the struggle to overpower the riddles of the life.

Four levels of the story The Great Answer:

1. Literal Comprehension

The story “The Great Answer” is written by an American writer, Fulton Oursler. The story is based on the incident during the *Second World War*. A group of people were lodged who were *Zeus* refugees who wanted to cross the Spanish

border. But it was the difficult journey of miles far. There was a young woman having a daughter. It was rumor outside that Gestapo, the secret agent of Nazi and the Nazi soldiers were following them. If they found the refugees, they would be burnt alive. So the woman having a daughter was praying with the God for the help. At the mean time a strange man appeared from the underground and introduced himself as a guide who would lead the group of refugees up to the Spanish border. Then they started their journey. On the way an aged man, middle aged men, women and young joined the group. The three aged men carried the child turn wise. But after a distance they couldn't move anymore and started to groan. They requested the leader to leave them there to die but the leader encouraged them to struggle the journey until the last drop of energy is prevailed in the body and they tried to do so. The following morning they were able to cross the Spanish border with the new strength, life and were ready to face a new world of freedom.

2. Interpretation

The story is about the importance of struggle to overcome from the problems regarding the life. The alternative name of the life is the struggle. So that we have to struggle until the last drop of energy is prevailed inside the body. "Struggle is the great answer of the riddles of life" is the central idea of the story.

3. Critical Thinking

The story is about the importance of struggle to overpower the riddles of the life. In the story, the writer explains that a man came from the underground for their help. But can we believe the presence of a man from the underground? In the story, the aged old man already told that he can't move further anymore. Then how can an aged and helpless man continue the journey due to the encouragement? How can they travel hundreds of miles in one night? Etc.

4. Assimilation

After reading this story, I understand that the struggle is a belt why to overpower the riddles of the life. This story reminds me of an incident that occurred one afternoon during a sunny day. A building was on fire and all of us were walking hard to put of the fire but it was such a sunny day that I couldn't

believe it would rain. It was like a miracle, raining in a sunny day as a help from the God to put off the fire as a blessing for our hand work.



Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Robert Frost USA (1874-1963)

The poem “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” is written by an American poet, Robert Frost. In the poem, the poet is talking about the life’s journey. The life’s journey in which we entrusted with responsibilities and duties, we have to fulfill. “*Nature has various things to fascinate us and is the source of reincarnation but we shouldn’t forget the duties and responsibilities of our life*” is the central idea of the poem.

The persona, in the poem, is stopped by the wood on the snowy evening and things that he knows the owner of the woods. The persona is a horse rider. He is stopped in the jungle without farmhouse near so he thinks his horse must think the strangeness. The horse shakes his harness bell to ask if there is some mistake. The poet feels the sweep of the easy wind and downy flake. The poet finds the wood lovely, dark and deep and wishes to enjoy the nature but he remembers his promises of his life to continue the journey until he reaches to the destination i.e. death and he says ‘and miles to go before I sleep’.

Four levels of the poem Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening:

1. Literal Comprehension

The poem “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” is written by an American poet, Robert Frost. The persona of the poem is the poet himself and is a horse rider. The persona is stopped by woods on a snowy evening. He thinks that he knows the owner of the woods. Though his house is in the village, the persona thinks that his little horse must think strange because they are stopped without farm house near between the woods and frozen lake in the dark evening. The horse shakes his harness bell to ask if there is some mistake. Along with the bell of the horse, the person feels the sweep of the easy wind and downy flake. The persona finds the woods lovely dark and deep and wishes to enjoy the nature but he remembers his promises of reaching to the destination. While starting his journey he says ‘*Miles to go before I sleep*’.

2. Interpretation

The poem is about the importance of fulfilling the duties and responsibilities in the journey of the life. “*Nature has various things to influence us but we should be responsible and dutiful while spending the life*” is central idea of the poem.

3. Critical Thinking

The poem is about the life and journey that is attached with the nature in which we shouldn't forget our duties and responsibilities but some of the ideas in the poem didn't seem convincing. In the poem, the persona says that the horse shakes his bell to ask the cause of stopping in the forest. Does the horse do so? The poet (persona) uses the words lovely, deep and dark to show the fascination of the nature. Doesn't the word 'dark' contradict with the words 'lovely' and 'deep'? Etc.

4. Assimilation

After reading this poem, I really understood the importance of nature that fascinates us and is the source of survival. The poem taught me the moral lesson that we should not forget our duties and responsibilities of our life until we reach to the destination.

A Tale

Bishweshwar Pd. Koirala, Nepal (1914-1982)

The story “A Tale” is written by a Nepalese politician and literary figure, Bishweshwar Pd. Koirala. In the story, the writer is trying to show the importance of family life that ensures happiness, satisfaction and ecstasy. “*Sexual desire is a biological need that can never be repressed*” is the message of the story. “*Family is not the block and hindrance for supreme knowledge and satisfaction*” is central idea of the story.

This is the story of long ago, when human beings were in competition with the God. Whenever there was the conflict between Gods and Devils, the Gods didn't hesitate to take the help of human beings but when the human beings tried to achieve the supreme knowledge and godhood transcending their soul through their deep penance, the Gods used to be worried and destroyed the penance using the nymphs of the heaven. While spending the life in the cities and villages, a man realized that supreme knowledge and godhood are blocked by social obligations, the love of family and friends. Then he went to the dense forest abandoning (learning) the physical world pleasure. He fasted for many days, sat around the fire in the summer season, plunged (dive) into icy cold water in the winter and couldn't even feel the nest of termites that was built supporting his legs. He began to feel thousands of suns inside him and seat of heaven shook. Anyway, the hermit was in deep penance. Due to the penance, he was about to achieve the godhood. At that time the seats of heaven started trembling that made the King of Gods, Indra worried. So, he called the most beautiful nymph and sent her to the hermitage with the responsibility of destroying the penance. Then she came to hermitage, stepped towards the river, and started bathing in the naked spell binding posture. At that moment, the eyes of the hermit opened involuntarily, then they fell in love, got married, returned back to the village, gave birth to two baby boys and started spending simple domestic life helping the villagers but the villagers didn't forgive them. They saw the nymph as an evil seductress who caused the downfall of the saint. But the sage never ceased to experience the ecstasy and bliss, as he was in the meditative trance.

Four Levels of the story A Tale:

1. Literal Comprehension

The story “A Tale” is written by a Nepalese politician and literary figure, Bishweshwar Pd. Koirala. This is the story of long ago, when human beings were in competition with the God. Whenever there was the conflict between Gods and Devils, the Gods didn’t hesitate to take the help of human beings but when the human beings tried to achieve the supreme knowledge and godhood transcending their soul through their deep penance, the Gods used to be worried and destroyed the penance using the nymphs of the heaven. While pending the life in the cities and villages, a man realized that supreme knowledge and godhood are blocked by social obligations, the love of family and friends. Then he went to the dense forest abandoning (learning) the physical world pleasure. He fasted for many days, sat around the fire in the summer season, plunged (dive) into icy cold water in the winter and couldn’t even feel the nest of termites that was built supporting his legs. He began to feel thousands of suns inside him and seat of heaven shook. Anyway, the hermit was in deep penance. Due to the penance, he was about to achieve the godhood. At that time the seats of heaven started trembling that made the King of Gods, Indra worried. So, he called the most beautiful nymph and sent her to the hermitage with the responsibility of destroying the penance. Then she came to hermitage, stepped towards the river, and started bathing in the naked spell binding posture. At that moment, the eyes of the hermit opened involuntarily, then they fell in love, got married, returned back to the village, gave birth to two baby boys and started spending simple domestic life helping the villagers but the villagers didn’t forgive them. They saw the nymph as an evil seductress who caused the downfall of the saint. But the sage never ceased to experience the ecstasy and bliss, as he was in the meditative trance.

2. Interpretation

In the story, the writer is trying to show the importance of family life that ensures happiness, satisfaction and ecstasy. “Sexual desire is a biological need that can never be repressed” is the message of the story. “Family is not the block and hindrance for supreme knowledge and satisfaction” is central idea of the story.

3. Critical Thinking

This story is about the importance of the family life. Sexual desire is a biological need that can never be repressed. But some of the ideas in the story are not convincing. In the story, a man fasted for many days. Can a man fast for many days? Does the God exist? Is it possible for a man to sit in the middle surrounded by fire in the summer season and plunge into the icy cold water in the winter season? How can a nymph marry a man and live in a society? Etc.

4. Assimilation

After reading this story, I really understood the importance of family life. Family life is not a source of frustration. I also understood that the sexual desire is a biological need which can't be repressed.



Ethics

Linda Pastan, USA (1932-)

The poem “Ethics” is written by an American poetess, Linda Pastan. This is an autobiographical nostalgic poem in which Pastan has recalled her childhood memories while she was the student in the school. “The importance of understanding the level of the students while teaching to make the teaching learning process programmatic and fruitful, unnecessary questions should not be asked going beyond the level of students” is the central idea of the poem. In the poem, the poet has given the justice for both life and art. Though life is perishable and the art never dies. In the poem, the poet is talking about the ethics class when she was in the school. Many years ago, the poet’s teacher would ask question “If there were fire in a museum which would you save, a Rembrandt painting (art) or an old woman (life) who hasn’t many years left anymore?” In response, they would choose once the art and the next life, being half-heartedly. Once, feeling clever, Linda replied why not let the woman decide herself? In response, the teacher would report she was trying to escape from the burden of responsibilities. Now Linda is standing in front of the real museum and thinks woman, painting and season are almost one and are beyond saving by children.

Four Levels of the poem Ethics:

1. Literal Comprehension

The poem “Ethics” is written by an American poetess, Linda Pastan. In the poem, the poet is talking about the ethics class when she was in the school. Many years ago, the poet’s teacher would ask question “If there were fire in a museum which would you save, a Rembrandt painting (art) or an old woman (life) who hasn’t many years left anymore?” In response, they would choose once the art and the next life, being half-heartedly. Once, feeling clever, Linda replied why not let the woman decide herself? In response, the teacher would report she was trying to escape from the burden of responsibilities. Now, Linda is standing in front of the real museum and thinks woman, painting and season are almost one and are beyond saving by children.

2. Interpretation

This is an autobiographical nostalgic poem in which Pastan has recalled her childhood memories while she was the student in the school. “The importance of understanding the level of the students while teaching to make the teaching learning process programmatic and fruitful, unnecessary questions should not be asked going beyond the level of students” is the central idea of the poem. In the poem, the poet has given the justice for both life and art. Though life is perishable and the art never dies.

3. Critical Thinking

This poem is about the importance of understanding the level of the students for the practical learning but some ideas in the poem are not convincing. In the poem, it is said that the teacher in the ethics class used to ask the question that was beyond the capacity of the students. Does a good teacher do so? In the poem, the poet says that life, art and season are almost one. Is it possible? How can we compare life with art? Are a piece of art and a human being of equal value? Etc.

4. Assimilation

After reading this poem, I really understood the importance of life and art and both are almost same. I also remembered an incident that was occurred in my life. While I was in Grade 5, our Math teacher used to talk and ask the question regarding politics and force us to answer the questions. Now, as a teacher, I realized that our teacher’s teaching method was beyond the level of us.

Where the Mind Is Without Fear

Rabindranath Tagore, India (1861-1941)

The poem “Where the Mind Is without Fear” is written by an Indian remarkable poet, Rabindranath Tagore. In the poem, the poet has shown his deep patriotic feelings towards his motherland. The poet imagines an ideal state having freedom of knowledge, unity among people, truth, the perfection of the works, the respect for the modern belief, ever widening thoughts and actions that ensures freedom, equality, harmony, co-operation, prosperity, justice, dignity, recognition and helps for the freedom of heaven. The poet finds his country people devastating into the traditional belief so that the poet is praying with the God to awake his country people and give the strength to believe modern progressive thoughts.

Four Levels of the poem Where the Mind Is without Fear:

1. Literal Comprehension

The poem “Where the Mind Is without Fear” is written by an Indian remarkable poet, Rabindranath Tagore. In the poem, the poet wants to make his motherland the freedom of heaven, praying with the God that he wishes to have the mind without fear, the freedom of knowledge, unity among people, truth, and perfection of the work, modern progressive belief, ever widening thoughts and actions in his nation.

2. Interpretation

The poet, in the poem, is showing patriotic feelings towards his motherland, wishing and praying of dignity, recognition, existence, justice, unity, truth, equality and freedom to make his nation prosperous and peaceful.

3. Critical Thinking

The poem is about patriotic feelings towards the motherland to ensure an existential and dignified life but some of the ideas in the poem are not convincing. In the poem, the poet is praying with the God to make his nation like the heaven.

Does the God exist? Is there heaven? The poet says everyone should speak the truth. Is it possible? Etc.

4. Assimilation

After reading this poem, I really understood the importance of motherland which is the symbol of dignity and identity. I'm determined to be respectful towards my motherland for an existential life.



New Year

Parijat, Nepal (1934-1993)

The poem “New Year” is written by a well-known Nepalese female writer, Parijat. In the poem, the poet sings the glory of the natural world and expresses her disgust towards the routine human life. “Life without changes is no progress” is the central idea of the poem. The poet wants to come out from the routine life for the freedom and ecstasy. However, the poet seems disappointed living in the same abode. So, the poet wants to run out away from the real world and try to form an imaginary world which is optimism.

The poet sees the wind that chases March away, sun that clammers up the hills, nightingales flit to and fro, the buds of the bottlebrush that let her presume a new day has arrived. But when she sees the mason wasps return to the old nests gathering the old dreams, she thinks the thinking and perception had not got the new nest though the entire nature afresh. We find the poet is disappointed with her life because her unfulfilled desires and ambitions are not addressed by the New Year.

Hence, the poem is about the changes in the nature with the arrival of the New Year but the consistent misery of human beings that is indulged in the scheduled life.

Four Levels of the poem New Year:

1. Literal Comprehension

The poem “New Year” is written by a well known Nepalese female writer, Parijat. The poet sees the wind that chases March away, sun that clammers up the hills, nightingales flit to and fro, the buds of the bottlebrush that let her presume a new day has arrived. But ‘when she sees the mason wasps return to the old nests gathering the old dreams, she thinks the thinking and perception had not got the new nest though the entire nature afresh. We find the poet is disappointed with her life because her unfulfilled desires and ambitions are not addressed by the New Year.

2. Interpretation

In the poem, the poet sings the glory of the natural world and expresses her disgust towards the routine human life. “Life without changes is no progress” is the central idea of the poem. The poet wants to come out from the routine life for the freedom and ecstasy. However, the poet seems disappointed living in the same abode. So, the poet wants to run out away from the real world and try to form an imaginary world which is optimism.

3. Critical Thinking

The poem is about the changes in the natural surrounding with the arrival of the New Year and her dissatisfaction on same schedule of human beings but some of the ideas in the poem are not convincing. The poet says that her life wasn't changed though natural surrounding was fresh. Doesn't the idea contrast as we are dependent on the nature? She says that the mason wasps returned lazily to the old nests. Does it mean that we have to build the new house every year? Is it possible to forget the dreams of the past with the arrival of New Year? Etc.

4. Assimilation

After reading this poem, I really understood that the New Year brings the changes in the natural surroundings but human beings should try to catch the dream of the past in the same scheduled life. The poem taught me that the New Year brought the changes in the nature though the life of the poet wasn't much wonderful and was covered with physical, mental and psychological turmoil.