

UNIT 3.

BEYOND THE HORIZON

SUNRISE ON THE HILLS (H. W. Longfellow)

Activity I:

1. a) Heaven's wide arch - the Horizon
b) Returning march - the Sunrise.

Heaven's wide arch refers to the curve formed by the sky touching the seas, that is the horizon.

Even though this is an imaginary line, it appears very clearly to an onlooker, from one end of the earth to the other, or a gateway to heaven.

The Returning march refers to sunrise. The Sun had set the day before and now he reappears shining and glowing wonderfully. The poet gives an army imagery to this sunrise, by saying that the sun who had gone for a battle yesterday comes with glory, shining victoriously.

Thus the victorious Sun comes marching through the gateway of heaven.

2. Soft gales - A gale is a strong wind. Here the wind is strong but soft because it provides a pleasing and happy experience. So the gales are soft.

3. The clouds were ruling the skies until the sun came up. The Sun who is now victorious glows with power and shines brightly. So the clouds fade away becoming lighter and lighter in the brightness of the Sun.

4. The clouds are compared to ARMIES which have been defeated in battle. The Sun is the victorious in battle.

5. Nature in all beauty is revealed here at sunrise. The hill top is dense with forests. Down, the hill is a valley, with a river flowing through it. The sunrise makes the valley glow. The poet conveys this beauty through each word. However most of the river remains hidden in the shade of the forest. Only the sound of the river is heard at many places. Further up, the white colour of the waterfall is visible. The poet uses the word 'White Cascade'. Suddenly a bird flies up the valley.

6. When the sun rises the valley starts getting bright. A little later the valley glows. The valley then rings with the sound of the village bell. The cry of the screech owl too is heard. The shouts of enjoyment from villagers too are heard. Thin smoke like mist rise up the valley.

7. Nature has always been a source of shelter and comfort to man. The various forms of beauty in nature attract us and surprise us. Our sorrows are lessened and our joys doubled. The sights in nature save our hearts from fainting and our souls from sleep.

8. All the three stanzas vary in length. They are written in rhyme and rhythm. The first stanza has 18 lines, the second 12 lines and the last has only 6 lines. The first stanza is full of scenic beauty. Actually we picture the sunrise as seen by the poet from the hills. It is beautiful. The hills, the valleys, the river, waterfall and woods come clear in the mind of the reader. Even the colour changes due to the glow of the sun are mentioned.

The second stanza is however, full of the sounds occurring at sunrise. The dashing of waters, the whirling of the current, the music of the village bell and the wild horn.

Lastly, the six lines of the third stanza is didactic. It is a message of comfort and peace to mankind. It is a source of solutions to sorrow and pain that the world offers us. The six lines though brief are full of meaning. "Brevity is the soul of wit."

Activity II

1. The musical quality of the poem.

The poem reads like a song. The feelings of the poet are expressed in a smooth flow of words with a musical touch. The alternate lines of the poem rhyme and the entire poem reads like a series of couplets. Actually there are internal rhymes too. Eg: stood, woods, Many lines abound in 'Consonance' too.

Rhyme : arch, march, gales, vales,
light, height

These rhymes are also elaborated and extended from the end rhymes to cover parallel phrases and experiences

Eg: shifting glance - shattered lance
silver beach - silent reach.

2. The symbols used in the poem.

The birds like bittern, screech, owl etc: in the village symbolise the richness of the flora and fauna in the hills and valleys. We look into the beauty of nature. The sun is symbolic of the warmth and love and pleasure provided by nature. The music of the village bell stands for the human life and activity in the valley. The forests, dense and thick prevent free human activity.

This clearly shows how nature hides away the sorrows of man. Nature is romantic it is a solution to the sorrows of man.

3. Figurative Language in the Poem

Figures of speech decorate a poem, they give a clearer picture to the reader too.

This poem is built on a military image. There are two armies which meet - one is the All powerful sun and the other the clouds which are many in number. The clouds are the lost and the Sun is the invading guest. The Sun is the winning, victorious army, and is making a proud march in the sky. Everything else in its way fades away in the sunny glow. The first stanza is full of this picture. Even the pinnacles of the mountains are presented as tips of lances. The clouds that run away from the Sun's bright light are compared to armies who have been defeated and are running away. The poem also contains metonymic suggestions eg: noisy bitterness suggesting awakening wild life as well as metaphoric descriptions eg: veil of cloud.

Activity III Appreciation.

'Sunrise on the Hills' is a descriptive and beautiful lyric which praises and glorifies the 'sunrise' as viewed by the poet. The poet is not a passive viewer of this scenic beauty. He appreciates each minute and takes part in glorifying it. His eyes think deeply and picture the whole event in a figurative way.

The poet watches the 'Sunrise' from the top of a hill. The first rays of the sun come in through the wide arch of heaven. The woods brighten up. The soft winds move gently and refresh him. The hosts of the bright sky - i.e. the clouds are ashamed with the glory of the sun and they fade away like defeated soldiers. The tips of the peaks of the trees appear to the poet as tips of lances or spears in the hands of soldiers. A little later, the sun lights up the whole valley. The valley is awesome. A beautiful river is hidden by the thick forests. But the poet's ears catch the sound of the slow flowing river. The morning glory is then crowned by the beautiful and pleasant sounds of nature. The birds of the valley chirp and sing, and the village bells ring to show the hectic life of the villagers. The 'bittern' and the 'wild horn' fly past the valley, making nature immensely enjoyable.

The poet who gets carried away by the beauty of nature however plans to prescribe a medicine for man's sorrows. The cares and worries of life may depress humans. Nature must be made a comfort in times of trouble.

The poem is full of sights, sounds and movements of nature. The poet paints a verbal picture of the hills and the valley at sunrise. The poem is romantic. We are reminded of Wordsworth.

The poem has three stanzas. The first dealing with the sights on the hills, the second, the sounds on the hills and third giving the message of the poem. The message is a preventive to man who falls into depression. Our heart must not faint and our soul must not sleep. The poem leaves an everlasting impression in our minds. The reader is transported to a beautiful landscape beaming with the glories of nature and natural phenomena.