

Comprehension Passages

Stanza 1 and 2

Six humans trapped by happenstance,
In black and bitter cold.
Each one possessed a stick of wood,
Or so the story's told.
Their dying fire in need of logs,
The first man held his back.
For on the faces around the fire,
He noticed one was black.

Read the lines given above and answer the questions that follow.

Question 1.

Explain with reference to context

Answer:

These lines are from the poem, 'The Cold Within' written by James Kinney. The poem touches on how each of the people around the fire died because of the "Cold Within," and because of their inability to accept each other. It so happened that due to an accidental or arranged event they were together on that bitterly cold night. However, they were not together willingly. Each had a stick and even if one would give his stick to keep the dying fire going they would have survived. But the first man did not give his stick due to racial prejudice as he noticed that one amongst them was black. It was not the cold weather that killed them but the frigidity of their hearts led to their deaths.

Question 2.

What does happenstance mean?

Answer:

Happenstance means an event that might have been arranged although it is accidental.

Question 3.

Why does the poet use this diction?

Answer:

This use of diction is important because by saying that it is accidental, yet almost seems arranged, it gives the reader a sense that they are supposed to be there.

Question 4.

What is suggested by the use of the word trapped?

Answer:

The word trapped suggests that they do not want to be in the situation, but they cannot escape.

Question 5.

Explain the symbolism used by the poet.

Answer:

The poet uses symbolism to show that it was the coldness of their hearts which extinguished the fire of life. Fire, which symbolized hope and acceptance, might have saved the characters but they refused to shun their prejudices and let it die thus sealing their own doom.

Question 6.

What do the logs denote?

Answer:

The logs symbolize each character and how they “couldn’t bring [themselves] to give the fire” their wood in order to save all of them.

Question 7.

Which sin is hinted at in these lines?

Answer:

The sin of racial discrimination is hinted at. The first man does not give his stick because he does not want to save a black man.

Question 8.

What does the phrase ‘six humans’ signify?

Answer:

By saying “six humans”, it is almost as if he is talking about all humans. If he would have said “people” then we might have different associations with the words.

Stanza 3,4 and 5

The next man looking ‘cross the way
Saw one not of his church
And couldn’t bring himself to give
The fire his stick of birch.

The third one sat in tattered clothes.
He gave his coat a hitch.
Why should his log be put to use
To warm the idle rich?

The rich man just sat back and thought
Of the wealth he had in store
And how to keep what he had earned
From the lazy shiftless poor.

Read the lines given above and answer the questions that follow.

Question 1.

Explain with reference to context

Answer:

These lines are from the poem, ‘The Cold Within’ written by James Kinney. The poem touches on how each of the people around the fire died because of the “Cold Within,” and because of their inability to accept each other. The second man mentioned in these lines is a bigot and does not want to help the man who was not from his religion. The poor man did not want to help the idle rich while the rich man wanted to keep his wealth from the poor. They are consumed by the negativity of intolerance, envy and bitterness.

Question 2.

In stanza 3, why did the man refuse to use his stick of wood?

Answer:

The man refuses to give up his stick because of religious intolerance as he sees a man not belonging to his church.

Question 3.

Why did "the third one" refuse to use his stick of wood?

Answer:

The third one was a poor man in torn clothes and he did not want to give his stick as he envied the rich man his wealth and did not want to save the idle rich.

Question 4.

Why did the rich man refuse to use his stick of wood?

Answer:

The rich man thought of hoarding his wealth and wanted to keep his great amount of money away from the undeserving, lazy poor people.

Question 5.

Which is the symbol word used in these lines?

Answer:

The word used is stick.

Question 6.

To what purpose are the symbol words used repeatedly?

Answer:

The symbol words are used for emphasis.

Stanza 6,7 and 8

The black man's face bespoke revenge
As the fire passed from his sight.
For all he saw in his stick of wood
Was a chance to spite the white.

The last man of this forlorn group
Did nought except for gain.
Giving only to those who gave
Was how he played the game.

Their logs held tight in death's still hands
Was proof of human sin.
They didn't die from the cold without
They died from the cold within.

Read the lines given above and answer the questions that follow.

Question 1.

Explain with reference to context

Answer:

These lines are from the poem, 'The cold within' written by James Kinney. The poet talks about the feeling of revenge in the heart of the black man which prevented him from giving his stick to keep the fire going because he wanted to take revenge from the white man. The last man avoided giving his stick because none of the others had given theirs. The fire died and they too died of the cold, each a prisoner of the hate within, the coldness of their hearts which killed all of them. They all had sticks in their hands which they could have given to keep the fire going but the hate in their hearts prevented them from helping others and so they too died on the alter of their frigidity and discrimination.

Question 2.

Why did the black man refuse to use his stick of wood?

Answer:

The black man saw his stick as a means to take revenge from the white man and so did not give his stick.

Question 3.

What happened to the six humans? Why?

Answer:

The six humans died due to the cold. Their hatred for each other prevented them from giving up their sticks to keep the fire going and so they all died due to the cold. But actually it was the cold in their hearts which killed them.

Question 4.

What does this say about what prejudice can do to people and the importance of working together?

Answer:

Prejudice destroys not only our enemies but also us. The frigidness of people is what ends up killing them. This is important because this indirectly shows how fast arrogance, greed, and sin can "kill" us.

Question 5.

Analyse the title and whether it is appropriate.

Answer:

The Cold Within- is a good and appropriate expression. Cold-heartedness really is what killed the characters. This symbolizes their "coldness" and prejudices against each other. Eventually, this is what killed them.

Question 6.

Discuss personification as used by the poet.

Answer:

The use of personification is very artfully done. One line mentions "Death's still hands," suggesting that Death is a person who now essentially owns these six people.

Question 7.

Who are 'they' referred to here ? Where were they ?

Answer:

'They'-refer to six men in a group. They were all caught in an extreme cold weather, sitting near a dying fire.

Question 8.

What were the logs in their hands ? What was their significance ?

Answer:

The logs in their hands were sticks of woods. These logs of woods needed to fuel the dying fire, or these was no hope for their survival.

Question 9.

What was the obvious cause of their deaths ?

Answer:

The six men held their logs of wood back out of some prejudice. The fire died out, and they died of cold.

Question 10.

What do you mean by the 'cold within'? How is it responsible for their deaths?

Answer:

'The cold within' means the lack of warmth within, born out of selfishness, greed, arrogance, etc. It is because of these negative feelings, 'the cold within', that they do not give up their sticks of wood which could have kept the fire burning and kept them alive.

Question 11.

What message does the poet want to convey ?

Answer:

According to the poet, the prejudice of race, religion or colour is sinful. We must rise above all prejudices to be kind, generous and helpful. We should not allow ourselves to be dictated by the 'cold within' which is self-destructive

Project

Question 1.

How does figurative language assist in conveying the theme and purpose of the poem?

Answer:

Figurative language plays a vital role in developing the poem's theme. "Their dying fire in need of logs" literally means the fire that is keeping them warm, but also stands as a metaphor for their sinful souls. They are committing sins such as racism, envy, arrogance, revenge, and greed. By saying they need to add logs to the fire suggest that they need to help out someone other than themselves, or they will "freeze" to death. Opening up and not being greedy will warm their souls and will save them, unfortunately it has overcome them and is an impossibility.

Question 2.

Explain how diction is important in the poem with the help of an example.

Answer:

The line that Kinney starts his poem with is "six humans trapped by happenstance". His diction in this line is very important to the overall theme of the poem. By saying "six humans", it is almost as if he is talking about all humans. If he would have said "people" then we might have different associations with the words. Another curious use of diction is by saying "trapped in happenstance". Happenstance means an event that might have been arranged although it is accidental. This use of diction is important because by saying that it is accidental, yet almost seems arranged, gives the reader a sense that they are supposed to be there. The fact that he says they are trapped suggests that they do not want to be in the situation, but they cannot escape.

Question 3.

Explain the importance of rhythm in the poem.

Answer:

The rhyme of the poem sets up an easy read. This allows for your eyes to simply guide and take in Kinney's message: the frigidness of people are what end up killing them. The rhythm is important to the theme of the story because it makes reading the poem faster. This is important because this indirectly shows how fast arrogance, greed, and sin can "kill" you.

Question 4.

Can we say that the poet has succeeded in conveying his point? How?

Answer:

James Patrick Kinney effectively portrays his point about hatred killing you by using diction, figurative language, and rhyme. His persuasion in this poem is really helpful in understanding the entirety behind his point. This poem really makes you think about yourself and the lengths to which you would go to either hurt someone else, or save yourself. Helping out someone you hate can be one of the hardest things that you have to face, and when you are put in that situation what would you do? Could you be brave enough to save someone you despise in order to save yourself? James Patrick Kinney has successfully used literary devices and narrative to project his point that prejudices control people's lives and actions.

Question 5.

What is the tone of the poem?

Answer:

His tone seems condemning, scornful. Also, it seems to be warning you somewhat about the results of a cold heart. In the beginning, the poem unwraps as a story or a tale. The author uses negative language – 'idle,' 'lazy,' 'shiftless'. The people in this poem illustrate the coldness within and how destructive it is and how it works.

Question 6.

What is universal about the theme – that is, what can we all learn from the poem?

Answer:

One of the great challenges to our humanity is acknowledging and overcoming our natural tendency to think less of and discriminate against people who are different than us racially, ethnically, religiously or ideologically. Despite persistent rhetoric about prizing diversity, political debates often reflect disdain and contempt for those we disagree with and prejudices of all sorts are more readily stated. James Patrick Kinney in his poem "The Cold Within" reminds us what is at stake.

Question 7.

What point is the author trying to make?

Answer:

This poem had a very clear message conveys the message of the dangers, and even the futility, of discrimination and racism. The poet touches on how each of the people around the fire died because of the "Cold Within," and because of their inability to accept each other. He wants to suggest to all humans to avoid prejudice as it would only bring one down and potentially cause our downfall. Discrimination cannot bring good, only the doom that awaited each of the unnamed characters in "The Cold Within."

Question 8.

How does the poem relate to our study of the Diary of Anne Frank and the events of the Holocaust?

Answer:

The poem conveys how fast arrogance, greed, hatred and sin can "kill". It consumes everyone irrespective of their caste, creed and colour. The Diary of Anne Frank also talks about discrimination and hatred and how it almost annihilated the human race. In the poem 'The Cold Within' it is the cold-heartedness really which killed the characters. This symbolizes their "coldness" and prejudices against each other. Eventually, this is what killed them.

Question 9.

What are the poetic devices (figurative language) in the poem? How do they contribute to the meaning/how do they effect the poem?

Answer:

James Patrick Kinney uses diction, figurative language, and rhyme to project his point that prejudices control people's lives and actions.

The line that Kinney starts his poem with is "six humans trapped by happenstance". His diction in this line is very important to the overall theme of the poem. By saying "six humans", it is almost as if he is talking about all humans. If he would have said "people" then we might have different associations with the words. Another curious use of diction is by saying "trapped in happenstance". Happenstance means an event that might have been arranged although it is accidental. This use of diction is important because by saying that it is accidental, yet almost seems arranged, gives the reader a sense that they are supposed to be there. The fact that he says they are trapped suggests that they do not want to be in the situation, but they cannot escape.

Figurative language plays a vital role in developing the poem's theme. "Their dying fire in need of logs" literally means the fire that is keeping them warm, but also stands as a metaphor for their sinful souls. They are committing sins such as racism, envy, arrogance, revenge, and greed. By saying they need to add logs to the fire suggest that they need to help out someone other than themselves, or they will "freeze" to death. Opening up and not being greedy will warm their souls and will save them, unfortunately it has overcome them and is an impossibility.

The rhyme of the poem sets up an easy read. This allows for your eyes to simply guide and take in Kinney's message: the frigidness of people are what end up killing them. The rhythm is important to the theme of the story because it makes reading the poem faster. This is important because this indirectly shows how fast arrogance, greed, and sin can "kill" you.

James Patrick Kinney effectively portrays his point about hatred killing you by using diction, figurative language, and rhyme. His persuasion in this poem is really helpful in understanding the entirety behind his point. This poem really makes you think about yourself and the lengths to which you would go to either hurt someone else, or save yourself.

Extra Questions

Question 1.

What brought the six humans together? Where were they?

Answer:

The six humans were brought together by chance. However it all seemed pre-arranged although it was accidental. They were trapped together and it was bitterly cold. It could be anywhere.

Question 2.

Is there any significance of the logs of wood in the hands of the six people?

Answer:

Yes each log is a symbol of a particular sin. Each log of wood is suggestive of a sin. If the logs of wood are put into the fire it would mean helping out someone, other than one's own self. But if they are held on as they are, it means holding onto sins even beyond death. Each man's prejudice—greed, envy, arrogance, revenge, spite, intolerance—are represented symbolically by the stick held by each man.

Question 3.

What could these persons have done?

Answer:

Each person could have relinquished his log to keep the fire going and could have saved each other from dying in the cold. Symbolically if they had rid themselves of their sins they could have kept alive the fire of faith and saved themselves from damnation.

Question 4.

The poet refers to a dying fire. Who were sitting beside it and why?

Answer:

The six men were sitting beside the fire to keep warm as they were trapped in a bitterly cold place. The poet refers to a fire which was slowly extinguishing' as none of the six men were willing to keep it going by relinquishing their logs. Hence, the fire which was keeping them alive was dying and they too would die from the cold.

Question 5.

Why did the men keep back their sticks?

Answer:

The men kept back their sticks and did not put them in the fire to keep it going because of the cold in their hearts. They were prey to the sins of racism, greed, intolerance, meanness, arrogance and discrimination.

Question 6.

Why was each man in the group unaware of self- destruction by his action?

Answer:

Each man was so consumed by hatred, racism, self-centredness, and arrogance that they remained unaware of the self -destructiveness of their action.

Question 7.

What killed the six men?

Answer:

The six men did not die because of the cold without. Rather it was the cold within their hearts that killed them. Their feelings of revenge, greed, hatred, selfishness, racism, intolerance and arrogance killed them. The poet emphasises the idea that it is the coldness within men's hearts which leads to their death and doom.