

Comprehension Passages

Stanza 1

What does he plant who plants a tree?
a
He plants a friend of sun and sky;
b
He plants the flag of breezes free;
The shaft of beauty, towering high;
He plants a home to heaven anigh;
For song and mother-croon of bird
In hushed and happy twilight heard—
The treble of heaven's harmony—
These things he plants who plants a tree.

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

Question 1.

Explain with reference to context.

Answer:

These lines have been taken from the poem, 'The Heart of a tree' by Henry Cuyler Bunnar. The poet comments on the advantages of planting a tree. The poem opens with a rhetorical question asking the reader what does the planting of a tree signify. The poet emphasises that when a tree is planted the sun and sky share their bounty like a friend with the earth. The tree which rises high helps in originating cool breezes, a home which is close to heaven for the birds to nest in and nurture their young ones. The music created by the humming of birds and breeze is like a heavenly song and the poet reiterates that these are all the things that are created when a tree is planted.

Question 2.

Why does the poet call the tree a friend of sun and sky?

Answer:

The poet says that the tree is a friend of the sun and sky because it shares their benefits like a friend and helps to create cool breeze to lessen the heat of the sun and the glare of the sky.

Question 3.

What is the shaft of beauty, towering high?

Answer:

The small sapling grows into a tall and high arrow like tree which stands stately in beauty.

Question 4.

For whom is the home to heaven anigh?

Answer:

In the tree that rises towards the sky the birds build their nests on the high branches which seem close to heaven.

Question 5.

What is meant by 'the treble of heaven's harmony'?

Answer:

The sound of the breeze rustling the leaves, the crooning of the bird to their young ones and the sound of the creatures in the twilight all mingle together and create music that seems like a combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes which produce a divine effect.

Question 6.

What three things are created when a tree is planted according to the poet?

Answer:

When one plants a tree the things created are a friend ,beauty, and music.

Question 7.

Pick out some figures of speech.

Answer:

The poet personifies a tree by calling it a friend, he uses euphemisms like home to heaven anigh, towering high and treble of heaven's harmony. He uses metaphors like hushed and happy twilight.

Question 8.

Who is described as a 'friend of sun and sky' ?

Answer:

A tree is described as a 'friend of sun and sky'.

Question 9.

Whom does a tree give shelter ? How ?

Answer:

A tree gives shelter to birds by allowing them to build their nests.

Question 10.

Which literary device has been used in the line: 'In hushed and happy twilight heard' ?

Answer:

The literary device used here as alliteration.

Question 11.

Explain: The treble of heaven's harmony.'

Answer:

The high tone 'treble' of the song of the bird is symbolic of heaven's harmony. It provides an atmosphere of calm and peace.

Question 12.

Towards the end of the poem the poet refers to the longing in the heart of the one who plants a tree. What is this longing ?

Answer:

This longing is for the growth of his country

Stanza 2

What does he plant who plants a tree?

He plants cool shade and tender rain,

And seed and bud of days to be,

And years that fade and flush again;

He plants the glory of the plain;

He plants the forest's heritage;

The harvest of a coming age;

The joy that unborn eyes shall see—

These things he plants who plants a tree.

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

Question 1.

Explain with reference to context.

Answer:

These lines have been taken from the poem, 'The Heart of a tree' by Henry Cuyler Bunnar. In this second stanza the poet continues eulogising on the benefits of planting a tree. The poet says that by planting a tree one ensures that there is cool shade and no dry spell as trees make sure it rains. The planting of a tree leads to new life to replace the one which has withered. The tree leads to a legacy that is the forest of the future and it adds beauty to the plains. The tree when planted as a sapling will one day grow into a tall towering tree and become a joy for everyone. The poet talks about the cycle of life that is very evident in the growth of a tree, which germinates in soil, grows and flourishes, then dies, decays and returns to the soil to support new saplings.

Question 2.

What is meant by the phrase 'days to be'?

Answer:

This phrase is a reference to the future, the days which will follow.

Question 3.

Explain the line, "And years that fade and flush again."

Answer:

Here the poet refers to the cycle of life which is never ending. Things bloom and then fade only to be born again to again bloom and fade or wither and die.

Question 4.

What is meant by the 'forest's heritage'?

Answer:

The new sapling planted will grow into a big tree which will be part of a forest and thus the legacy of the forest will continue.

Question 5.

How is it the harvest of a coming age?

Answer:

The future will see the tree in all its glory as a towering tree with a thick trunk which can be put to various uses by the future generations. The poet is here talking about transition from a tender youth to adulthood which is also a reference to the tree growing from a sapling into a tree.

Question 6.

Who is being referred to as the unborn eyes?

Answer:

The poet is referring to the future generations who are still unborn but will be born in the future and will find pleasure in the sight of the tree which would have grown big in height by that time.

Question 7.

List two phrases which refer to the future.

Answer:

The phrases which denote future are- "days to be," and 'a coming age.'

Stanza 3

What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants, in sap and leaf and wood,
In love of home and loyalty
And far-cast thought of civic good—
His blessings on the neighbourhood,
Who in the hollow of His hand
Holds all the growth of all our land—
A nation's growth from sea to sea
Stirs in his heart who plants a tree.

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

Question 1.

Explain with reference to context.

Answer:

These lines have been taken from the poem, 'The Heart of a tree' by Henry Ciiyler Bunnar. In the final stanza the poet refers to It is the sapling as a thing that infuses life into the earth just like a heart. Whenever a heart is planted it will sprout into beaming life, and will create new life. Thus the person who plants a tree sees in it a symbol of growth, of regeneration and this shows his love for his family, for his society and nations. He who plants a tree believes in the growth of mankind, his neighbors, his nation. The man who plants a tree is likened to a man who plants a heart that pumps life. He thinks that planting a tree is like planting a new nation and it will bring peace and harmony to the Earth.

Question 2.

What motivates the man to plant a tree according to the poet?

Answer:

The poet believes that when a man plants a sapling he does so because he sees it as symbolic of growth and future life.

Question 3.

Does the man plant a tree because of his love of society and his nation?

Answer:

Yes, the man believes that if he plants a tree he will be planting a new nation.

Question 4.

How is the man holding the blessing on his neighborhood in his hand?

Answer:

The poet believes that the man who holds the sapling in his hand is actually in fact holding the growth of humanity in his hand because the tree is like a heart and will create new life on earth. The trunk is like a bridge; and the branches are a link to the cosmos. He will bring transformation and aid in the growth and prosperity of life on earth.

Question 5.

What is meant by a nation's growth from sea to sea?

Answer:

The poet believes that the tree is symbolic and will lead to prosperity and peace in the nation. It will be a transition to peace and growth.

Question 6.

What is the reference to in the phrase 'stirs in his heart'?

Answer:

The poet says that the feelings that are awakened in the heart of the man who plants a tree are feelings that hope for growth and transformation.

Project

Question 1.

What message is relevant to the present age in the poem?

Answer:

Though the poem was written many years ago when there was little importance given to ecology and environment yet it is relevant today also because it tells us that trees are an integral and important part of our ecological and economic growth and environmental well-being. In our times forests are being decimated for building houses, roads and bridges. Trees seem to attract none of our concern. But in the poem the poet draws our attention to the advantages of planting trees. He rightly says that one who plants trees, plants many things: beauty, peace, shade, harmony and good values.

He says that one who plants a tree:

Who in the hollow of His hand
Holds all the growth of all our land—
A nation's growth from sea to sea Stirs in his heart who plants a tree.

Question 2.

Give two examples of alliteration from the poem.

Answer:

Examples are:

He plants a friend of sun and sky. (sound of 's')
In hushed and happy twilight heard (sound of 'h')

Question 3.

What does the tree symbolise in the poem?

Answer:

The tree is used as a symbol of all the good in our lives. It symbolises peace and prosperity in our country and in the world. It teaches the values of love and loyalty. It symbolises rich rewards for our future generations and represents a link of our present with the future. It stands as a symbol of growth, prosperity and harmony.

Question 4.

Do you consider the title apt?

Answer:

The title of the poem is very apt and suggestive. The tree is the main focus in the poem and the poet refers to the heart of the tree. What kind of heart is it- it is generous, loving and magnanimous. It shows no discrimination based on colour or creed. It blesses all alike- all who take care of it and even those who neglect it. Whenever a tree is planted it turns the earth into a heaven and the poet rightly says:

The shaft of beauty, towering high:

He plants a home to heaven anigh.

Question 5.

Does the poet use the literary devices in the poem?

Answer:

Yes the poet uses metaphors, alliteration and imagery in the poem. The poet describes the tree metaphorically: 'a friend of sun and sky, ' 'the flag of breezes free. '

He uses alliteration when he says: He plants a friend of sun and sky.
In hushed and happy twilight heard'

Visual Imagery is used in the poem: **The shaft of beauty, towering high:, 'the flag of breezes free.** 'And auditory imagery is also used: **'For song and mother-croon of bird.'**

Question 6.

Why does the poet use repetition in the poem?

Answer:

Repetition is used to show how a person should feel after he/she plants a tree. The first line of the poem, "What does he plant who plants a tree?" is repeated three times, and is followed by, "These things he plants who plants a tree," which is repeated twice, and on the last line it says, "A nation's growth from sea to sea (new line) Stirs in his heart who plants a tree." All put together it tells you that this man thinks that planting a tree is like planting a new nation and it will bring peace and harmony to the Earth!

Extra Questions

Question 1.

How has the poet described a tree earlier in the poem?

Answer:

The poet earlier describes it as a friend of sun and sky.

Question 2.

What social and ecological benefits of planting a tree does the poet refer to?

Answer:

The person who plants a tree not only ensures cool shade and tender rain but he also sows the seeds and buds for lush forests for the future generations to benefit from. He sows the seeds of development of the nation and the world.

Question 3.

In what sense is the tree 'the harvest of a coming age'?

Answer:

The future will see the tree in all its glory as a towering tree with a thick trunk which can be put to various uses by the future generations. The poet is here talking about transition from a tender youth to adulthood which is also a reference to the tree growing from a sapling into a tree.

Question 4.

How does a tree planter do civic good?

Answer:

The planting of a tree makes the atmosphere fresh and pollution free giving peace and comfort not only to the one who plants a tree but to all and sundry. It makes the atmosphere pollution free and more congenial for all our neighbours and other people too.

Question 5.

Who holds 'all the growth of our land'? Which land has the poet in mind?

Answer:

The poet might be referring to America but he is also talking with reference to the entire earth as our land or the land of all mankind.

Question 6.

Do you agree with the poet that a nation's growth depends upon the wealth of trees? Why/why not?

Answer:

The tree is like a heart and will create new life on earth. The trunk is like a bridge; and the

branches are a link to the cosmos. He will bring transformation and aid in the growth and prosperity of life on earth. The tree is used as a symbol of all the good in our lives. It symbolises peace and prosperity in our country and in the world. It teaches the values of love and loyalty. It symbolises rich rewards for our future generations and represents a link of our present with the future. It stands as a symbol of growth, prosperity and harmony. A tree gives us seeds which sprout, and buds which bloom in times to come. It is a forest heritage as one tree leads to a whole forest in the future and a harvest of a coming age or in other words a reward and legacy for the future in the form of wood and a congenial environment. It is a link of the present to the future.

Question 7.

In what way is the poet relevant to our times?

Answer:

The poem is relevant today also because it tells us that trees are an integral and important part of our ecological and economic growth and environmental well-being. In our times forests are being decimated for building houses, roads, and bridges. Trees seem to attract none of our concern. But in the poem the poet draws our attention to the advantages of planting trees. He rightly says that one who plants trees, plants many things: beauty, peace, shade, harmony and good values. He says that one who plants a tree: Who in the hollow of His hand

Holds all the growth of all our land—
A nation's growth from sea to sea
Stirs in his heart who plants a tree.