

Poem: 4 A Thing of Beauty

GIST OF THE LESSON

- The Poet, John Keats says that beautiful things will never become 'nothing' as they will continue to hold us in their spell and sooth our soul.
- Every beautiful thing is like a band that ties us to this earth as it makes us want to live and enjoy these things of beauty.
 - And these things of beauty, according to the poet, are the things that give hope to human beings and make them want to live, in spite of all the sorrow, ill-health and unpleasant experiences that we face on earth.
 - Some of the beautiful things on this earth that have such an effect on us are the sun, the moon, trees, streams, flowers, forests, beautiful monuments that we have erected for the dead, all the lovely tales that we have heard or read.
 - Finally he compares all these beautiful things to the immortal drink (of perennality) or nectar given to us by gods or gifts of God. Thus he states his firm belief in the Divine.

Solved Questions

_"yes , in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon ,
Trees old, and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep: and such are daffodils"

- a. What does 'in spite of all' refer to?

The expression refers to all the pessimistic and negative thoughts that obstruct our way to happiness. In spite of the sense of hopelessness and gloom that overshadow and darken our way, we are able to find our happiness in the beautiful objects on nature.

b. What, according to the poet, drives away the sadness from our life?

Beauty, in shape or form, helps in driving away the sadness and despair from the dark recesses of our spirit.

c. What does the reference 'simple sheep' symbolize?

Lambs and sheep are envisioned as the embodiments of innocent and serene beauty. Jesus Christ, as an apostle of peace, was a shepherd and was seen surrounded by his flock of sheep, his followers. The poet has made specific reference to the sheep as symbols of 'divine beauty'.

*"... We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read;
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink."*

a). Who are the 'mighty dead'?

The 'mighty dead' refers to those great men and warriors who glorified death by embracing it most gracefully and bravely.

b). Why does the poet make this reference?

The poet refers to 'mighty dead' because beauty can be seen not only in birth and growth, but also in a magnificent death.

c). What 'lovely tales have we heard or read'?

A glorified and magnificent death gets recorded in the leaves of history, leaving an indelible imprint on it. It remains an everlasting source of motivation to all those who read or hear about such great men who achieved glory in death.

d). What is referred to as 'endless fountain of immortal drink'?

Beauty in all respects, whether in growth or in decay, is a perennial source of motivation. It is an endless fountain from where we can drink the immortal elixir of life.

e). Explain "Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink."

Beauty is the greatest gift of God to man which has been showered upon us from the heavens above. This beauty is eternal and everlasting, in whose glory men on earth bask and derive their perennial source of joy and happiness.

Short Answer Questions:

(a) What according to Keats are the things that cause suffering and pain?

The poet says that a scarcity of good-natured people or in other words the wicked people outnumber the good people. And the source of all our sorrows is either ill-health or another human being.

(b) What makes human beings love life in spite of all the suffering?

Answer: The poet says that the beautiful things on earth lift the pall off our spirits and make life worth living. Each beautiful thing is like a link that forms a chain or wreath that binds us to this earth.

(c) Why does the poet say 'mighty dead'?

Answer: Monuments are erected in memory of people who were mighty or great when they lived. Physically mighty as in mighty warriors or mentally mighty as in great poets, writers or philosophers. Their tombs provide inspiration for the living through their beauty just as their works continue to do.

Questions for practice:

1. *"A thing of beauty is a joy forever
Its loveliness increases, it will never
Pass into nothingness; but will keep
a bower quiet for us, and a sleep
full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth."*

- a. What is the special virtue of a beautiful thing?
- b. How does it bless us?
- c. Explain the expression "A bower quiet for us".
- d. What do we do everyday?

2. *"the mid forest brake,
rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms;
and such too is the grandeur of the dooms
who have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read;
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink."*

- a. What do you mean by 'brake'? Where does it grow? What makes it all the more beautiful?
- b. What do you mean by 'the grandeur of the dooms'?
- c. "All lovely tales that we have heard or read" Explain
- d. What is the source of the beauty of nature? What is its effect on us?

3. *“Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
from our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
trees old, and young, sprouting a shady boon
for simple sheep; and such are daffodils
with green world they live in; and clear rills
that for themselves a cooling covert make
‘against the hot season; the mid forest brake
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms”*

- a. What type of beauty and its effect are mentioned here ?
- b. What sprouts a shady boon for sheep and how?
- c. How do ‘daffodils’ and rills enrich the environment?
- d. What makes the mid-forest brake rich?

Short answer Questions

1. How do we wreath a flowery band?
2. Why do human beings suffer or what depresses the human soul?
3. What does Keats mean by the ‘grandeur of doom’?
4. How do we bind ourselves to the earth every morning?
5. Why and how is ‘grandeur’ associated with the mighty dead?
6. What is the source of the ‘endless fountain’ and what is its effect?
7. What is the message of the poem/what philosophy of life is highlighted in the poem?