

UNIT 2

POEM

A POISON TREE

- William Blake



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William Blake (1757 - 1827) was an English poet, painter and print maker. He is now considered a seminal figure in the history of English poetry. Born in London he was an imaginative poet who wrote boldly against the wrong things using his imagination and art. Some of his famous poems are "The Lamb" and "The Tiger".

SUMMARY

The poet says that he was angry with his friend. When he told him about it, his anger ended. The poet was angry with his enemy. When he did not tell it, his anger grew. As his anger grew he gave more life to it with his fears and tears. He tried to smile but he had some bad thoughts behind his smile. Hence his anger towards his enemy grew day and night. It grew like a tree that bore a bright apple. His enemy saw the shining apple and he knew that the apple belonged to the poet. He came secretly into that garden when it was night. In the morning the poet's anger changed into gladness when he found the enemy outstretched under the poison tree.

THE MAIN CHARACTERS ARE : The Poet and his enemy.

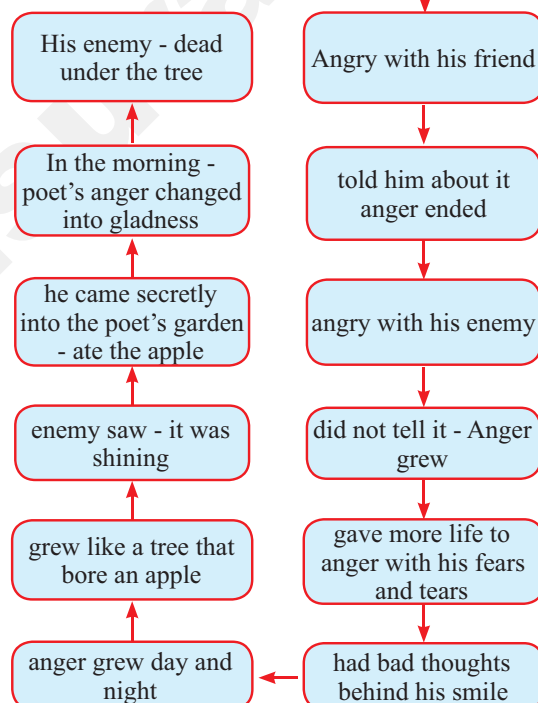
POEM OVERVIEW

No.	Poem Line	Explanation
1.	<i>I was angry with my friend;</i>	The poet says that he was angry with his friend.
2.	<i>I told my wrath, my wrath did end.</i>	When he told him about his anger, it ended.
3.	<i>I was angry with my foe:</i>	He was also angry with his enemy .
4.	<i>I told it not, my wrath did grow.</i>	But he did not tell it to him so his anger grew more on him.

No.	Poem Line	Explanation
5.	<i>And I water 'd it in fears,</i>	He gave more life to it with his fears
6.	<i>Night and morning with my tears:</i>	and his cries every morning and night.
7.	<i>And I sunned it with smiles,</i>	He brightened it with smiles
8.	<i>And with soft deceitful wiles .</i>	and with soft tricky thoughts.
9.	<i>And it grew both day and night,</i>	And the anger grew both day and night.
10.	<i>Till it bore an apple bright .</i>	It grew like a tree that bore a bright apple.
11.	<i>And my foe beheld it shine,</i>	His enemy saw it shine brightly.
12.	<i>And he knew that it was mine.</i>	And knew that the apple belonged to the poet.
13.	<i>And into my garden stole,</i>	He came secretly into his garden,
14.	<i>When the night had veiled the pole;</i>	when the night covered the pole.
15.	<i>In the morning glad I see,</i>	In the morning, the poet's anger changed into gladness.
16.	<i>My foe outstretched beneath the tree.</i>	to see his enemy outstretched beneath the tree.

MIND MAP

Poet William Blake



Glossary



deceitful (<i>adj</i>)	-	cunning, treacherous (தந்திரமான)
foe (<i>n</i>)	-	enemy (எதிரி)
veiled (<i>v</i>)	-	covered (மூடப்பட்ட)
wiles (<i>n</i>)	-	tricks (தந்திரங்கள்)
wrath (<i>n</i>)	-	anger (கோபம்)

A. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.

1. *I was angry with my friend*

I told my wrath 'my wrath did end.

a) **Who does 'I' refer to?**

Ans : 'I' refers to the poet, William Blake.

b) **How did the anger of poet come to an end?**

Ans : The poet told the reason of his anger to his friend. The anger came to an end.

2. *And I watered it in fears*

Night and morning with my tears;

a. **What does 'it' refer to?**

Ans : 'It' refers to anger.

b. **How is 'it' watered?**

Ans : It is watered with fears and tears and tears of the poet.

3. *In the morning glad I see*

My foe outstretched beneath the tree

a. **How did the poet feel in the morning?**

Ans : He felt glad in the morning.

b. **Who is the 'foe' referred to here?**

Ans : The person on whom the poet is angry with.

c. **Why was the 'foe' found lying outstretched beneath the tree?** ⊗

Ans : The 'foe' ate the apple from the poison tree of anger. So he fell below the tree.

4. *And it grew both day and night,*

Till it bore an apple bright

a. **Who does 'it' refer to?**

Ans : It refers to anger, that is personified to the 'poison tree'.

b. **What does 'apple' signify?** ⊗

Ans : Apple indicates anger.

c. **What grew both day and night?** ⊗

Ans : Anger that is personified to the 'poison tree' grew both day and night.

B. Complete the summary by filling in the given spaces with suitable words.

Once the poet was angry with his friend. He expressed his (i) and it ended. They became friendly but when he grew angry with his foe, he (ii) it and allowed his anger to grow. Day and night he watered it with his tears allowing it to grow. He (iii) his foe with false smiles and cunning tricks. The tree kept growing and yielded a bright apple which (iv) his foe to eating it stealthily during the night. The next morning the poet was happy to see his foe lying (v) under the tree.

Ans : (i) anger (ii) suppressed (iii) faced (iv) attracted (v) outstretched

C. Answer the following questions in about 80-100 words.

1. How did the poet's anger with his friend end?

Ans : The poet expressed his anger towards his friend as well as his enemy. But he specified the difference between two types of anger. He told that when he was angry with a friend, he convinced his own heart to forgive his friend. He sorted out the differences with his friend by expressing his anger to him and by discussing his own points of view with him. Even if he was hurt and he knew that his friend had done injustice to him, he would have tried his best to forget the past and end the feeling of vengeance in his heart. In this way, the poet's anger, with his friend, came to an end.

2. Describe how his anger kept growing?

Ans : The poet confessed that when he was angry with his enemy, he did not reveal his anger to his enemy. He feared that if he expressed his anger to him, his enemy would do harm to him. So he suppressed his anger. Day and night he shed tears thinking about the ill or the injustice that had been caused by his enemy to him. Thus, he watered the tree of anger with his tears, allowing the anger to grow. He also aroused his anger with his false smiles and cunning tricks towards his enemy. Since the poet kept his anger within himself and had his own fear and tears, his anger kept growing every day.

3. Describe the effect of the poisonous fruit on the 'enemy'. ⊗

Ans : The poet, William Blake, revealed his anger to his friend and the anger ended. But when the poet concealed his anger from his enemy, the anger grew. It grew like a tree that bore a bright apple. His enemy saw the shining apple. Even though he knew that the apple belonged to the poet, he wanted to have it. So the enemy came secretly into the garden when it was night and ate the apple. In the morning, the poet's anger changed into gladness when he found the enemy outstretched under the poison tree. The apple in the tree of anger symbolizes the poisonous effect.

D. Poem Appreciation : Figures of speech.

Pick out at least two instances of alliteration from the poem.

- Ans :**
1. I was angry with my foe.
 2. Night and morning with my tears.
 3. And I sunned it with smiles.
 4. Till it bore an apple bright.

E. Read the following lines from the poem and answer the questions that follow.

1. *I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.*

i. **Pick out the rhyming words.**

Ans : friend - end; foe - grow

ii. **What is the rhyme scheme of the stanza?**

Ans : aabb

iii. **Identify the figure of speech in the title of the poem.**

Ans : Personification

2. *And I watered it in fears
Night and morning with my tears;*

i. **What figure of speech is used in 'watered it in fears'?**

Ans : Personification.

**POEM COMPREHENSION AND POETIC DEVICES
ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

1. *I was angry with my foe :
I told it not, my wrath did grow.*

(a) **Who was the poet angry with?**

Ans : The poet was angry with his enemy.

(b) **Why did he not reveal it?**

Ans : He did not reveal it, for he wanted his enemy to suffer the consequence of his anger.

(c) **What was the consequence?**

Ans : As he did not reveal it, it started growing bigger.

2. *And I water'd it in fears,*

(a) **Bring out the significance of the line.**

Ans : The poet gave more life to his anger with his fears.

3. *And he knew that it was mine.*

(a) **What does 'he' refer to here?**

Ans : He refers to the poet's enemy.

(b) **What did he know?**

Ans : The enemy wanted to eat the apple and he knew that it belonged to the poet.

4. *And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.*

Pick out the rhyming words. ⊗

Ans : The rhyming words : night - bright

5. *And into my garden stole,
When the night had veiled the pole;*

(a) **Who crept into the garden? Why?**

Ans : The enemy of the poet crept into the garden, to eat the apple.

(b) **When did the foe sneak into the garden?**

Ans : He sneaked into the garden at night.

(c) **How does wrath keep growing like a tree?**

Ans : Wrath keeps growing like a tree, when you have grudges and allow the feelings of hatred to stay inside without dealing with them through communication.

LISTENING



F. Listen to the passage on 'anger management' and match the sentence parts by drawing a line. The recording can be played more than once if needed.

1. Meditation is definitely a great technique _____.	a. who will take care of the reason why you got angry ?
2. There is a person living inside you _____.	b. to know how to handle it is a virtue.
3. Getting angry is natural but _____.	c. do calm your inner self.
4. Anger is something that releases the tension _____.	d. speak to yourself and calm yourself.
5. Close your eyes and _____.	e. who always tells you how to act.

[Ans: 1. (c); 2. (e); 3. (b); 4. (a); 5. (d)]

G. Answer the following in about 80-100 words. Take ideas from the poem and also use your own ideas.

1. **Recall a recent situation when you became angry. What were the consequences of your anger? After listening to the guidelines on anger management, find out how well you could have handled the situation. Write your findings.**

Ans : I got angry when I did not find a place to sit in a bus. I went to the school with anger. When I listened to the methods of anger management, I learnt to apologise and forget the situation. It made me happy.

2. **What might have caused the conflict which led to the poet becoming angry with his enemy? Think of one such situation that you have experienced. Describe how you felt and how the enmity grew and things became worse.**

Ans : One situation of the enmity with a friend might have been his refusal to help when he was in need. I was waiting in a place for the rain to stop. It became very late. I could not find any bus. After sometime I saw my friend coming in his car. When I tried to stop him for a lift he did not stop and drove away. This made me very angry. I did not talk to him for many days. He forgot to bring his pen for the exam. Since I was his friend I just took this as a chance to place him in the same coin and refused to help him. Now both of us became enemies to each other.

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS : ADDITIONAL

1. How did talking to his friend about his anger help the speaker in 'A Poison Tree' by William Blake?

Ans : William Blake's poem 'A Poison Tree' is a figurative expression of the relation of the spiritual world with the natural world. When the speaker of this poem becomes angry with his friend, he communicates his feelings to his friend. As a result, his anger is released and their friendship continues. In contrast to this, he fails to release his feelings with his enemy. This causes his anger to increase so much so that the poison tree grows, as he waters it with his fears and tears and suns it with deceitful tricks. The poison tree becomes the symbolic of the corruption that occurs in the soul, when a person suppresses his feelings. The tree produces an apple, which ends the life of his enemy.

2. What is the meaning of night and morning in the poem?

Ans : The poet describes how he suppressed his anger for his enemy. Overtime his anger increased. In the second stanza, he says he watered it 'Night and morning'. He means that he allowed his anger to grow day and night. It grew into an apple. The enemy crept secretly at night and ate his fruit of wrath which killed him ultimately. The speaker is glad to see his enemy dead. Here, Blake condemns one who cultivates wrath and the effects of it.

3. How is Blake's 'A Poison Tree' a parable?

Ans : A parable is a short symbolic story that teaches a moral lesson. Blake's 'A Poison Tree' is a parable about the dangers of suppressing anger. The poet explains the point he is trying to make in the first stanza. When he became angry with his friend, he told him about why he was angry and he soon felt better. But, when he becomes angry with someone he disliked, he kept it a secret and became more and more angry. His anger became a tree that bears an apple like the Tree of knowledge in the 'Garden of Eden'. The poet tempts his enemy, like the serpent in the Bible, to eat it with his deceitful smile. His enemy is poisoned by his anger and dies. The moral of this parable is that suppressing anger can make things.

H. Discuss and Write.

1. Identify five to six qualities which make an ordinary person, loved and respected by all. Work in groups of five or six. Each group has to take up one quality and discuss the methods for imbibing that quality and identify the challenges that need to be faced.

Ans : Mahatma Gandhi

We must forgive.
We must forget wrong things done by others.
We must apologise.
We must not watch others suffering.
We must be kind and helpful to others.

2. Adolescents are often distracted by feelings like anger, disappointment and general helplessness when they face challenges at school or at home. Suggest way to turn such feelings into positive ones.

Ans : Adolescents are full of energy and highly competitive. They cannot come to an understanding or shake hands with enemies easily. They must learn to forget past mistakes, to forgive people who hurt them, to apologise if they hurt others, to help even an enemy who harmed them, to think to them selfless why they are angry, to control harsh words and actions.

TEXTUAL ACTIVITIES

WARM UP

A. Choose the option that suits your own behavior in the given situations. Compare your answers with a partner's answers.

1. You overhear a friend talking badly about you. How angry does that make you feel? (⊗)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel angry at all. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel moderately angry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel slightly annoyed. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel very angry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel a little angry. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I feel furious. |

2. Your friend persuades you to take help to prepare for the Maths board examination, from a close friend. That person does not turn up at all, as agreed. How angry does that make you feel?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel angry at all. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel moderately angry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel slightly annoyed. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I feel very angry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel a little angry. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel furious. |

3. You have agreed to pick up some friends at the train station. They are coming to stay with you for a few days. You've arranged with your elder brother/sister to drive the car for the day. You are about to leave the house when you realise the car is outside but your brother/sister has gone to work, taking the keys!. How angry does that make you feel?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel angry at all. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel moderately angry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel slightly annoyed. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I feel very angry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel a little angry. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel furious. |

4. During a get together, your friend makes fun of your singing in front of your friends. You thought your singing was fine, but your friend thinks you really need to practise much more. How angry does that make you feel?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel angry at all. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel moderately angry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel slightly annoyed. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I feel very angry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel a little angry. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel furious. |

B. Answer the following questions. Share your views with the class.

- Do you argue often with your classmates?

Ans : Yes, I do. But often I am the first person to apologize or if necessary, make others realise their faults and become my friends once again.

- Do you forgive them or choose to remain enemies forever?

Ans : I forgive my classmates. I do not consider them my enemies at all.

- How long does your anger last?

Ans : My anger lasts for one or two days. I forgive my friends or apologize to them, if it is my mistake. We forget the bad quarrels and become friends again.

