

Traveling Through the Dark

- in this poem the speaker must decide what to do with a dead pregnant deer on the side of a cliff.
- he reflects on the risk it might cause other drivers.

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7. Travelling Through the Dark (A Poem)

-William Stafford

Summary and Central Idea:

In the poem 'travelling through the dark' Stafford presents a great tension between two systems of life. One is the responsibilities and efficiencies of life whereas the other is human emotion and its outcome. In global context, he shows the destructive nature of people which results into the miserable condition of natural beauty. This poem is also remarkable to depict the indifference of men for others' pain. The poet, driving at night, finds a dead pregnant deer on the edge of the Wilson River road. He thinks to roll the dead body into the gorges as road was very narrow. Poet stops his car and goes near to the deer to observe it minutely. He finds the deer stiffened already and almost cold. He drags the body to the side and gets belly large. By touching its side, poet finds fawn still living and waiting way to come out. Poet realizes that fawn would never born from dead mother. He shows pity for them. Parking light of the car was flashing ahead and low continuous sound of engine was going on. Standing in warm red fume, poet feels that the wilderness was listening to him. After long thinking he pushes doe into the river. In this poem poet exposes the changing nature of human mind. Final pushing of the doe into the river fulfils both mental and physical action. This poem attacks over the so called nature lover, who is sole responsible for its destruction. Ironically poet satirizes over the careless driver and the people, who shows pity only towards fawn not to the doe. It also seems life is full of pain and suffering but it should go on.

Important Questions:

1. Explain the title "Travelling Through The Dark" ?
2. What is the central idea of poem?
3. Where is the poem physical action is replaced by the mental state?
4. How does the poet make rational decision?
5. What is the meaning of the last two lines of the poem?
6. Why does the poet push the doe into the edge of the Wilson River Road?

Short Answer Questions

1. 2075 Partial E Q. No. 12e

How does the poet do justice to the two realities of life? [3]

In the poem, 'Traveling through the Dark', William Stafford talks about two realities, two actions of human life: sentiments and responsibility. With an anecdote of a traveler caught with the sense of emotion and obligation by seeing dead deer, the poet wants to educate us about the harmony of both the realities of life. The narrative starts with the traveler stopping, moving back and dragging the dead doe towards him. This shows physical action, which seems to be replaced by a more tender kind of action when the traveler touches the side of the doe and finds her pregnant. By predicting about the situation of the fawn inside, the traveler turns to be sentimental and says fawn 'waiting alive and never to be born'. The speaker envisions 'the life in death and death in life situation. As a result, he hesitates on the mountain road. He is in a state of indecision, though, later on, combines both the realities- one that of efficiency and another responsibility.

2. 2074 Partial E Q. No. 2C

At what point does the physical action cease to replace by another kind? [3]

Please refer to [2075 Partial E Q. No. 12e](#)

3. 2073 Supp Q. No. 2c

Why is the reference to the alive but never-to-be born fawn moving? [3]

William Stafford's "Travelling through the Dark" evokes an emotion when the narrator touches the warm side of the dead doe. He expresses his sentiments by saying "her fawn lay there waiting alive, still never to be born." The subject of killing a pregnant woman by a driver is treated sentimentally in the poem. One of the creatures has been killed and heartlessly left on the road. It is unburied and unwept. In such a situation, the speaker gives a reference of the fawn "alive still, never to be born". This expresses one system of our life. This condition, once raised by the speaker, makes the readers sentimental. The fawn is in the condition of life-in-death and death-in-life. The narrator, thus, this line, displays his sentiments towards the law which portrays one reality of our living. When the traveler feels the doe's underside warm, he says it contains a fawn waiting to be born. In death, traveler discovers a life. His mind is pregnant with sentiments, emotions, pity and frustrations.

4. Partial A Q. No. 2

How do the last two lines complete both the types of action, in the poem "Travelling Through The Dark?" [3]

In last two lines, we see both types of actions, that responsibility and that of emotion, being completed. The traveller's hesitation is being reconciled with his decision to push the doe into the edge of Wilson River Road. In the final couplet, the traveller thinks hard for "us all," not just for the group, but for every being in creation, for all who suffer and face death - a natural prayer brought on by the moment. The pause was his "only swerving" he says, nothing more could be done. Finally, he pushes the deer into the river, a shock even though the poem has prepared us for it. The reader has known from the beginning that this is what the traveller will do to save more lives, but this knowledge cannot eliminate a feeling of helplessness, nor a sense of waste. In short, the traveller found himself in a confusing state to choose the appropriate step in this situation. However, accepting the ground reality and thinking seriously for other natural lovers, the poet Changed his idea suddenly and pushed the deer into the river making the road free for other. Choosing the easy course of action, the poet placed himself in the row of self-responsible for ecological imbalance.

2069 Q. No. 12a

Why do you think the reference to the alive but never to-be-born fawn sentimental?

Please refer to **2073 Supp Q. No. 2c**

2063 Q. No. 12 e

Do you agree with what the narrator did? Why? [3]

I would agree with what the narrator did. The traveler gets blocked by the dead doe while traveling on the Wilson River Road. He drags the doe and touches her side by climbing down from his car. He hesitates beside the mountain road, when he finds the doe pregnant. This moment of silence then changes in action. By parking his car, the narrator pushes the doe into the edge of Wilson River Road. Thus, the traveler does a full justice by merging his emotions with his responsibility. As a human being, I also can't be away from the warm part i.e., the emotions of my life. Neither could I forget my responsibility. The narrator didn't remain

indifferent to the doe. Though he could do nothing to restore the life to the doe and the fawn, he at least stopped. Hence, I would repeat the traveler through the poem if I experienced such event. I also agree with the narrator because he displayed sadness and responsibility that accompanies each traveler on longer journey of life and towards the inevitability of death.

12. 2060 Q. No. 10b

Show how the action develops stanza by stanza in the poem, "Traveling through the Dark". [3]

William Stafford's "Travelling through the Dark" is something like a story. Since the traveller tells a story of his experience in the poem, it has a proper narrative plot. The road, the darkness and dead deer create an exposition in this tiny story. The setting progresses with the traveller's movement on the road in the darkness. The action of this story like poem develops with a chronology stanza by stanza. The first stanza creates an exposition for this poem. Stafford's traveler finds a dead deer on the highway and obliges with a moral of pushing the deer into the canyon. The second stanza narrates traveler's action. The traveler climbs down of the car, goes back of it where he drags the recently killed doe and measures the body and finds it cold and hard. In third stanza, this action almost pauses, when he finds doe's side warm, he hesitates. He remains quite indecisive in the mountain road. In the stanza fourth, the traveller is seen at the leisure. He sarcastically presents a sharp division between the world of machine and nature. The traveler then comes to reconciliation in the stanza fifth. The inaction of third stanza once again gets a pace. The traveller makes a wise decision by pushing the doe into the Wilson River Road in the final stanza. Thus, this narrative completes a course of action in which the traveller makes a rational decision of his life by expressing his sentiments to the doe and fulfilling his responsibility by clearing the way.

9. 2057 Q. No. 2c

What is the central idea of the poem 'Traveling through the Dark'? [3]

Please refer to **2075 Set B Q. No. 3b 1st Part of Long Answer**

Long Answer Questions

10. 2075 Set B Q. No. 3b

Explain the central theme of the poem "Travelling Through the Dark". Also write your impression of the poem. [10]

The poem deals with difficulty of finding the right path. American poet Stafford sets an example in which the traveler is caught between his emotion and responsibility. So the poem presents two realities in tension. The two systems, one that of emotion and other that of efficiency, are seen merged in the poem. Perhaps the poet moralizes that a wise decision is the one in which these two truths get intersected. The poem beautifully teaches us to rise a step up from the situation of enactment. In the poem, the traveller on the one hand comes to the state of emotion. He remains apathetic to the fawn waiting alive never to be born and on the other he has his efficiency and responsibility of pushing doe into the Wilson River Road. In other words, the traveller encounters with the dead deer by which he stops. He doesn't become indifferent to the doe and her fawn rather expresses his feeling by touching the doe's side; "her fawn lay there, waiting, alive still never to be born". The poem teaches us to tackle the complex situation of our lives when the poet portrays a speaker who pushes the doe in the river and redeems from his indecisive state of living. He does full justice to both sides of the conflict. On the other hand, the poem is about the human and nature conflict. The almost overpowering human technology is an impending danger to the whole ecosphere. The machine in the stanza four represents the technocratic world that has been putting the animals and their habitat at risk. The poet throws irony on the human rationality.

My Impression of the poem

I find the poem really moving. The anecdote of the fawn 'still -alive never to be born' indeed touched my feelings. The way the narrator observes the details in the dark is appreciating. In addition to this, the fourth stanza of the poem gives us an idea of environmental collision in between human machines and environment. The traveller takes a rational decision and redeems from his dilemma at the end. I appreciate this in the poem. The poet has deliberately included the stanza of two lines. He powerfully conveys that both rationality and emotions are essential for our meaningful living. The poem, therefore, educates us that human beings have to live with these two systems of life making a perfect balance between them.

11. 2068 Q. No. 13 a

Write an essay on "Travelling in the Dark Through the Dense Forest." [10]

Travelling is a form of learning. Travelling in the dark through the dense forest provides the opportunity of learning the new realities of life. This sort of experience indeed teaches the travellers some new and strange things. Unlike the regular travelling, travelling in the dark through the dense forest is really difficult and dangerous as the wild animals, a drive in the darkness and criminals come as an obstruction in the journey. Wild animals in the dense forest are common. Some wild animals like tiger and lions look for their prey while other goes to their habitats. But the travellers and their vehicles at night terrify them which ultimately creates problem for both the travellers and the animals. Many of the animals collide with the vehicles and die. Similarly, the drivers in the dark forest, being obstructed by the animals, meet many accidents. The loud horns and lights in the wilderness during night disturb the animal kingdom. Thus, it is really difficult and dangerous to travel in the dark through dense forest. Second problem is the darkness itself while travelling in the dark through dense forest. Travelling or driving in the dark is not natural. Human beings need a good amount of rest which they get through adequate sound sleep. But when they travel in the dark through the deep forest, they might not hold a good grip in the speed and maintain a balance. Even the travellers without vehicles undergo the problem of food, drinks and shelter. The proper management of light reserved food however can ease their journey. there are some machine related problem travellers have to spend the whole night in forest. This again spurs the difficulties. The chances of robbery, kidnap, loot and crime make travelling in the dark and deep forest difficult. Forest and darkness indeed are the setting and time appropriate for the criminals. They wait for the good chance to rub the travelers. If denies, they do not fall behind to kill the travelers. So, driving or travelling alone in the darkness and in the forest is riskiest job. A traveler has to be watchful at any time. Despite such difficulties, people have been travelling in the dark through the dense forest. People love this too. Perhaps, it is because there is adventure and excitement and travelling teaches us to be adventurous. And it is a travel in the dark which empowers one's courage and confidence. But these are simply the ideal part of the logic. Therefore, one needs to be alert, and well prepared while travelling in the dark through the dense forest.