

Summary

The poem 'No Men Are Foreign' begins and ends with the same line- 'Remember no men are strange, no countries foreign' as the poet wants to emphasize on the fact that all the people living on this Earth are the same and that we have created distinctions by erecting borders and fences, different languages, etc. While we are alive, we walk on the same Earth and upon our death, we will lie in our graves in the same earth. He draws another similarity that we all enjoy good food during peace and starve during war and in winter time. We all have similar hands which we use to do a lot of hard work. All of us have eyes which remain open when we are awake and close when we are asleep. He reminds the reader that whenever we hate someone, we cheat and hate ourselves. Also, when we pick up weapons against someone, we pollute the Earth and make it impure with the huge mounds of dead bodies strewn on it.

Question and Answers

1. (i) "Beneath all uniforms . . ." What uniforms do you think the poet is speaking about?

(ii) How does the poet suggest that all people on earth are the same?

A. (i) The uniforms refer to those worn by soldiers belonging to different countries who indulge in wars and fights.

(ii) The poet says that all the people are the same in the following ways

—

i. we belong to one human race

ii. we walk on the same Earth

iii. Upon death, we will lie in our graves in the same Earth

iv. During peace we all enjoy the bounties of nature

v. During war and in the winter season, we all starve due to shortage of food

vi. We all do a lot of labour with our hands

vii. We have eyes which function in the same way

2. In stanza 1, find five ways in which we all are alike. Pick out the words.

A. The five words which indicate that we are all alike are –

- i. we walk
- ii. we breathe
- iii. we have eyes
- iv. we work with our hands
- v. we enjoy the bounties of nature

3. How many common features can you find in stanza 2? Pick out the words.

A. There are three common features in stanza two. They are as follows –

- i. We enjoy the bounties of nature and eat good food during peace
- ii. We starve during war and in winter season.
- iii. We have similar hands which we use for doing labour

4. “...whenever we are told to hate our brothers ...” When do you think this happens? Why? Who ‘tells’ us? Should we do as we are told at such times? What does the poet say?

A. The leaders of any country tell the masses to hate the people of another country. They say so to fulfil their personal gains and benefits. The poet says that we should not follow them because when we hate our brothers, we hate and belittle ourselves. When we indulge in wars, we pollute and render the mother Earth impure by laying dead bodies on it.

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Question 1.

What does the poet mean when he says “Remember, no men are strange, no countries foreign”?

Answer:

The poet is making an impassioned plea telling readers to give up extreme nationalism and perceived differences between people belonging to different nations. We are brothers because we inhabit the same planet, drink the same water and breathe the same air, but we feel different and behave like enemies at times. The poet wants us to give up our misplaced patriotism and live in universal brotherhood.

Question 2.

How does the poet prove that there are no foreign countries?

Answer:

Everyone shares the same sun, earth and air. They have the same body structure and its functioning elements. So there should be no biased attitude towards anyone.

Question 3.

What is meant by uniforms? What is there beneath all uniforms?

Answer:

The word “uniform” refers to the distinctive clothing worn by members of the same organization or body or by children attending certain schools. In this poem, the poet uses “uniforms” to mean both the uniforms worn by soldiers and the varied traditional dresses belonging to different cultures and civilisations of the world, or the different clothes that symbolise who the wearers are. Beneath all uniforms lies the same human body.

Question 4.

Bring out the irony in the use of the word “uniform”?

Answer:

Uniform implies a dress, costume or identification code that is similar to a group or organisation. Uniforms are necessary especially during war in order to differentiate between and identify soldiers on different sides

who would otherwise appear to be same. But uniforms give rise to differences. Because every nation has a uniform, the world remains divided rather than united.

Question 5.

How are all the people of the world brothers?

Answer:

All human beings are similar in structure as we are all flesh and blood. We walk on the same land as long as we are alive and will be buried in the same earth when we die. We also use the same sun, air and water.

Question 6.

How can we be one people though we belong to different nations?

Answer:

Even if we belong to different nations, we can be one people because we all have the same body and we live and die on the same planet. All of us enjoy the same sun, air and water.

Question 7.

What are peaceful harvests? What do the peaceful harvests symbolise?

Answer:

Peaceful harvests are the bountiful crops grown during times of peace. They are said to be peaceful because they can be nurtured only during times of peace. They symbolise happiness and prosperity.

Question 8.

What does the poet mean when he says “by war’s long winter starv’d”?

Answer:

If a war is raging in a country then that country faces the threat of starvation since all agricultural production comes to a halt. Just as there are no crops in winter, war renders a land barren. That is why there is a shortage of food in winters and in times of war, too, there is deprivation and famine. People starve to death. Thus, starvation is associated with war and with winter.

Question 9.

What do you understand by “Their hands are ours”? What are their lines? How can we conclude that their labour is same as ours?

Answer:

Their hands are ours means that people living in other countries have hands just like ours which toil hard to earn a living. Their lines mean the lines on their face and body which are just like ours. Hence, we can conclude that though they belong to another land, they have worked hard throughout their lives, just like us.

Question 10.

The poet says that men from other countries have the same basic requirements as us. Elaborate.

Answer:

The poet says that men from other countries have the same requirements as his own countrymen by saying that they enjoy the same sunlight, breathe the same air and drink the same water. Not only this, they also work hard to earn a living. They too eat when their harvest is plentiful during times of peace and starve during war.

Question 11.

How can we win over the strength of our opponents?

Answer:

The strength of our opponents can be won over by love, instead of through brute force because everybody responds to love and appreciates the feeling of brotherhood. .

Question 12.

What does the poet mean by “In every land is common life That all can recognise and understand”?

Answer:

People who live in a different country are just like us. They too understand the concept and feeling of universal brotherhood. The implication is that if we extend a loving hand, they will recognise it and willingly join hands with us.

Question 13.

How does the poet bring out in the extract the idea that men are not strangers to one another?

Answer:

The poet specifies that just like us they wake and sleep and respond to love. Even if we look different on the exterior we all can recognise and understand the universal language of love and brotherhood.

Question 14.

“ ... whenever we are told to hate our brothers “ Who ‘tells’ us to hate our brothers? What is the poet’s opinion regarding this?

Answer:

Sometimes some selfish people, who work for their own personal gains, instigate the innocent to harm others. They do it for their own benefit. The common or ordinary man does not understand their tricks and starts hating his fellow human beings. This leads to wars. The poet says that one should not follow their advice because all human beings are the same.

Question 15.

What happens when we hate our brothers?

Answer:

When we hate our brothers, we try to take away what they own, we betray our brothers and we criticise them. But when we hate our brothers, in effect we rob, cheat and condemn our own selves. We do not realise that in perpetuating hatred on our brothers, we are actually harming ourselves.

Question 16.

What happens when we pick up arms against others?

Answer:

The very earth is ruined through war and hatred. When we arm ourselves against each other, we defile the purity of our own earth through bloodshed. The bombs and other weapons of war ravage and pollute the earth. Due to the constant firing, there is destruction and piling up of

dust and debris. The air that we breathe also becomes polluted as a result.

Question 17.

What do you understand by hells of fire and dust?

Answer:

Hells of fire and dust are the effects caused by bombs and other instruments of warfare. They destroy the purity of the air we breathe and depend upon for our survival.

Question 18.

How do we defile the earth?

Answer:

We defile the earth by considering other human beings as our enemies, outsiders and foreigners; by dividing our earth into countries and by developing enmity against another group of people. We wage wars and the weapons of war pollute the air we breathe, by raising dust and smoke and by piling debris on earth.

Question 19.

How does air remind us of our sharing the earth? How is air innocent?

Answer:

Although human beings have divided land, the air we breathe remains undivided. Air doesn't belong to any country or territory, but moves freely across countries and is breathed by all men and women. Air is essentially clean so is it innocent. Human beings wage wars and raise dust and emit smoke, thereby polluting the air.

Question 20.

What does the poet emphasize by beginning and ending the poem with the same line?

Answer:

By beginning and ending the poem with the same line, the poet emphasizes his message of the oneness of spirit of brotherhood.

Although the message in both the lines is same, the opening line uses the adjective 'strange' with regard to men and 'foreign' in regard of countries, while in the end, the adjective 'foreign' is used to describe men and 'strange' is used to describe countries. This means that the two adjectives are one. Countries exist only because men create nations; nature does not divide humanity, it is man who does so. However, all human beings are the same.

Question 21.

What message does the poet want to convey?

Answer:

The poet wants to say that there should be no discrimination or enmity between people on the basis of their appearance religion or region. It is inhuman to hate one because of one's different background. The poet wants that the people should love their fellow human beings as all men are brothers.

Question 22.

State briefly the theme of the poem.

Answer:

The theme of the poem is one of globalisation, universal brotherhood and the renunciation of war. The world is one big family, no one is a stranger: no one is different; we all need and want the same things. Hence, waging wars against our brothers does not make sense.

Long Answer Type

Question 1.

How are all men our brothers?

Answer:

All men are our brothers. No human beings are strange or unfamiliar. Underneath the external trappings of different cultures or civilisations or any colour of any soldier's uniform belonging to any nation, all human beings are the same. All men walk upon the same earth and one day are

laid to rest in their graves under the same earth. Each and every human being is nourished by the same sun, breathes the same air and drinks the same water to survive.

All human beings have eyes that wake or sleep. In every land, there is a common life. Love is paramount everywhere that wins the heart. When we hate others, fight with them, raise arms against them, it is ourselves that we shall dispossess, betray and condemn. Thus, despite different living conditions, all human beings are one in spirit.

Question 2.

In the James Kirkup's poem "No Men Are Foreign" explain the poet's use of the word uniform.

Answer:

The literal meaning of "uniform" is a dress, costume or identification code that is similar to a group or organisation. The poet, here, uses the word "uniform" metaphorically to denote the universal brotherhood of man. On the other hand, uniforms are necessary especially during war in order to identify oneself as belonging to that country so as not to kill or harm its own people.

In the wearing of their country's uniform, they contradict the meaning of the word since they are set apart and identified as different—the enemy. Thus, James Kirkup points out the irony in the word uniform. This contradiction is based on the uniformity of man, as the poet suggests that all men are uniform themselves in the sense that they are "aware of sun and air and water" and they share humanity, and different uniforms identifying the wearers as being different from each other.

Reference to Context

[Read the extracts given below and answer the questions that follow.](#)

Question 1.

*Remember, no men are strange, no countries foreign
Beneath all uniforms, a single body breathes
Like ours: the land our brothers walk upon
Is earth like this, in which we all shall lie.*

(a) Who does the poet address in the poem? Name the poetic device used in line 1.

Answer:

The poet is addressing the readers in the poem. The poetic device used here is Apostrophe.

(b) What does the word “uniform” mean?

Answer:

The word “uniform” refers to the distinctive clothing worn by members of the same organization or body or by children attending certain schools.

(c) What breathes beneath all uniforms?

Answer:

A single body breathes beneath all uniforms. This means beneath superficial differences, there is a similarity.

(d) What is the irony in uniform?

Answer:

Uniform implies a dress, costume or identification code that is similar to a group or organisation. But because every nation has a different uniform, the world remains divided rather than united.

Question 2.

*Remember, no men are strange, no countries foreign
Beneath all uniforms, a single body breathes
Like ours: the land our brothers walk upon
Is earth like this, in which we all shall lie.*

(a) Why does the poet feel 'no men are foreign'?

Answer:

The poet feels that no human beings are strange or different as beneath a different exterior all human beings breathe just like any other person.

(b) Who are referred to as brothers?

Answer:

All human beings are brothers, irrespective of their superficial differences.

(c) What two things are common to all people as referred to in lines three and four of the extract?

Answer:

This is because all walk on the same land and will be buried in the same earth after death.

d) 'In which we shall all lie.' When will this happen?

Answer:

We shall lie under the soil, in our grave, after our death.

Question 3.

*They, too, aware of sun and air and water,
Are fed by peaceful harvests, by war's long winter starv'd.
Their hands are ours, and in their lines we read
A labour not different from our own.*

(a) Whom does 'they' refer to?

Answer:

They refers to those people who hail from countries different from ours.

(b) What is the significance of the word "too"?

Answer:

The word too is significant because it emphasizes that "they" or people

who are said to be our enemies are just like us in their need of sun, air and water.

(c) What does the poet mean by 'peaceful harvests'?

Answer:

Peaceful harvests are the crops grown in abundance during times of peace.

(d) What is the message of the poem?

Answer:

The message of the poem is that no men are strangers in this world because all people on earth are connected through their common humanity. We share a number of similarities even with our supposed enemies.

Question 4.

*They, too, aware of sun and air and water,
Are fed by peaceful harvests, by war's long winter starv'd.
Their hands are ours, and in their lines we read
A labour not different from our own.*

(a) What are the common elements in the universe that are shared by all?

Answer:

All of us share the common elements of sun, air and water.

(b) What happens to people during wartime?

Answer:

Wars lead to deprivation causing famines, starvation and deaths.

(c) Explain "Their hands are ours." What can we see in 'their' hands?

Answer:

Our hands, and the hands of our so-called enemies are similar. Our hands show the same signs of hard work and struggle.

(d) “In their lines we read.” What do we read in their lines?

Answer:

In the lines on their face and body we can read that though they belong to another land, they have worked hard throughout their lives, just like us.

Question 5.

*Remember they have eyes like ours that wake
Or sleep, and strength that can be won
By love. In every land is common life
That all can recognise and understand.*

(a) How does the author show that men from other countries have the same basic requirements as his own countrymen?

Answer:

Men from other countries have the same requirements as his own countrymen by saying that they enjoy the same sunlight, breathe the same air and drink the same water.

(b) In what respect are their eyes compared to ours?

Answer:

Their eyes are compared to us in that they too wake and sleep, just as we do.

(c) Whose strength is referred to in the extract?

Answer:

The poet is referring to the strength of people who are from another country.

(d) Explain how strength can be won by love?

Answer:

Their strength can be won by love because everybody responds to love and appreciates the feeling of brotherhood.

Question 6.

*Remember they have eyes like ours that wake
Or sleep, and strength that can be won
By love. In every land is common life
That all can recognise and understand.*

(a) Name three basic requirements the author feels that men from other countries have which are the same as his own countrymen.

Answer:

The author feels that men from other countries enjoy the same sunlight, breathe the same air and drink the same water. Not only this, they also work hard to earn a living.

(b) What is it that can be recognised and understood?

Answer:

It can be recognised and understood that life is common everywhere.

(c) Explain: In every land is common life That all can recognise and understand.

Answer:

People living in another land are just like us. They too understand the concept and feeling of universal brotherhood.

(d) What is the poet's message in this stanza?

Answer:

Every population of every nation in this world recognizes the similarity in the life of people and that physical strength that can be won by love.

Question 7.

*Let us remember, whenever we are told
To hate our brothers, it is ourselves
That we shall dispossess, betray, condemn.
Remember, we who take arms against each other*

(a) Who are our brothers?

Answer:

People from countries other than ours are our brothers.

(b) Why do we hate our brothers?

Answer:

We are told by some selfish people to hate the others.

(c) The poet implies that one picks up arms for three reasons. What are they?

Answer:

We pick up arms to take away what someone owns, to cheat or betray our brothers, or to condemn them.

(d) What happens when we hate our brothers?

Answer:

When we hate our brothers, in effect we rob, cheat and condemn our own selves.

Question 8.

Let us remember, whenever we are told

To hate our brothers, it is ourselves

That we shall dispossess, betray, condemn.

Remember, we who take arms against each other

(a) Who is the narrator of the poem? To whom is the poem addressed?

Answer:

The poem appears to have an omniscient narrator and is addressed to all of mankind.

(b) Who tells us to hate our brothers?

Answer:

Our leaders tell us to hate our brothers who belong to another country or a different religious, social or political group.

(c) Why do they tell us to hate our brothers?

Answer:

They tell us to hate our brothers for their own personal gains.

(d) Should we believe those who tell us to hate our brothers? Why/why not?

Answer:

We should not become puppets in the hands of those who incite us to hatred. If we fight our brothers, we condemn ourselves too.

Question 9.

It is the human earth that we defile.

Our hells of fire and dust outrage the innocence

Of air that is everywhere our own,

Remember, no men are foreign, and no countries strange.

(a) How do we defile earth?

Answer:

We defile the human earth by dividing our earth into countries and by developing enmity against another group of people.

(b) What you mean by the innocence of the air?

Answer:

Air is essentially clean and pure so is it innocent.

(c) How does air become defiled?

Answer:

We fight wars and carry on other such activities that raise dust and emit smoke. As a result, the air gets defiled.

(d) State briefly the theme of the poem.

Answer:

The theme of the poem is one of universal brotherhood, internationalism and the renunciation of war.

Question 10.

It is the human earth that we defile.

Our hells of fire and dust outrage the innocence

Of air that is everywhere our own,

Remember, no men are foreign, and no countries strange.

(a) What do you understand by 'human earth?'

Answer:

Human earth refers to the earth on which human beings live and that is full of human feelings and human values of love and brotherhood.

(b) Explain: hells of fire and dust?

Answer:

The hells of fire and dust are the fire and dust caused by wars between countries.

(c) How is the innocence of air outraged?

Answer:

Fire and dust caused by wars make the air impure.

(d) How does the poet bring out the idea that men are not strangers to one another?

Answer:

The poet specifies that just like us they wake and sleep and respond to love. Even if we look different on the exterior we all can recognise and understand the universal language of love and brotherhood.