

POETRY



Poetry 7 UNIT

P.1 The Frog And The Nightingale

by Vikram Seth

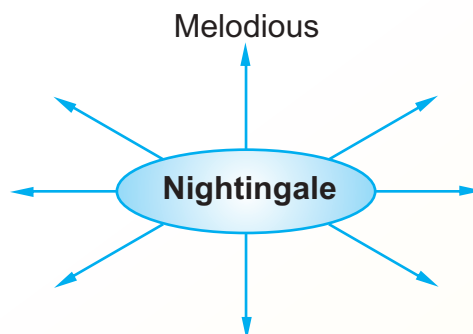
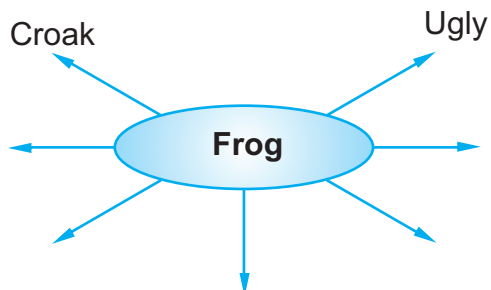
1. Listed below are a few character traits of people. Some are positive qualities, while others are not. Tick mark the ones you feel are desirable qualities in a person.

Characteristic	Tick Mark	Characteristic	Tick Mark	Characteristic	Tick Mark
Insensitive		High - headed		Manipulative	
Humorous		Egoistic		Patronizing	
Naïve		Humble		Submissive	
Opportunistic		Foolish		Arrogant	
Creative		Original		Conniving	
Disapproving		Helpful		Innocent	
Commanding		Calculative		Condescending	
Benevolent		Crafty		Scheming	
Simple		Wise		Rude	
Overbearing		Generous		Boastful	
Sly		Gentle		Proud	
Territorial		Aggressive		Servile	

2. Have you come across people who are not what they seem to be - like someone who is extremely friendly and helpful yet you are not very comfortable with him / her as you feel it is a put-on? Have a class discussion about such people and why you feel as you do.



3. Before you read the poem complete the word - web with the words that we associate with a Frog and a Nightingale.



4. Read Vikram Seth's poem : The Frog and the Nightingale.

Once upon a time a frog
Croaked away in Bingle **Bog**¹
Every night from dusk to dawn
He croaked **awn**² and awn and awn.

- 5 Other creatures **loathed**³ his voice,
But, alas, they had no choice.
And the crass **cacophony**⁴
Blared out from the sumac tree
At whose foot the frog each night
10 **Minstrelled**⁵ on till morning night.

Neither stones nor prayers nor sticks,
Insults or complaints or bricks
Stilled the frog's determination
To display his heart's **elation**⁶.

- 15 But one night a nightingale
In the moonlight cold and pale
Perched upon the sumac tree
Casting forth her melody.
Dumbstruck sat the gaping frog.



- 1 **bog** : an area of land that is very wet and muddy
2 **awn** : *on* misspelt and mispronounced so that it rhymes with *dawn*
3 **loathed** : hated
4 **cacophony** : a very loud and unpleasant noise
5 **minstrelled** : sang
6 **elation** : great pride and joy



- 20 And the whole admiring bog
 Stared towards the sumac, **rapt**⁷,
 And, when she had ended, clapped,
 Ducks had swum and herons waded
 To her as she **serenaded**⁸
- 25 And a solitary **loon**⁹
 Wept, beneath the summer moon.
 Toads and **teals**¹⁰ and tiddlers, captured
 By her voice, cheered on, **enraptured**:¹¹
 "Bravo!" "Too divine!" "**Encore!**"¹²
- 25 So the nightingale once more,
 Quite unused to such applause,
 Sang till dawn without a pause.

- Next night when the Nightingale
 Shook her head and twitched her tail,
 35 Closed an eye and fluffed a wing
 And had cleared her throat to sing
 She was startled by a croak.
 "Sorry - was that you who spoke?"
 She enquired when the frog
 40 Hopped towards her from the bog.
 "Yes," the frog replied. "You see,
 I'm the frog who owns this tree.
 In this bog I've long been known
 For my splendid **baritone**¹³
- 45 And, of course, I wield my pen
 For Bog Trumpet now and then".
 "Did you... did you like my song?"

7 **rapt** : totally interested, so that you cannot think of anything else

8 **serenaded** : sang beautifully

9 **loon** : a large water bird

10 **teal** : a small duck

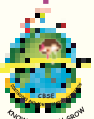
11 **enraptured** : filled with fascination and delight

12 **encore** : 'sing some more'

13 **baritone** : a male singing voice, fairly deep



"Not too bad - but far too long.
 The **technique**¹⁴ was fine of course,
 50 But it lacked a certain force".
 "Oh!" the nightingale confessed.
 Greatly flattered and impressed
 That a critic of such note
 Had discussed her art and throat:
 55 "I don't think the song's divine.
 But - oh, well - at least it's mine".
 "That's not much to boast about".
 Said the heartless frog. "Without
 Proper training such as I
 60 - And few others - can supply.
 You'll remain a mere beginner.
 But with me you'll be a winner".
 "Dearest frog", the nightingale
 Breathed: "This is a fairy tale -
 65 And you're Mozart in disguise
 Come to earth before my eyes".
 "Well I charge a modest fee.
 Oh!... But it won't hurt, you'll see"
 Now the nightingale inspired,
 70 **Flushed**¹⁵ with confidence, and fired
 With both art and adoration,
 Sang - and was a huge sensation.
 Animals for miles around
 Flocked towards the magic sound,
 75 And the frog with great precision
 Counted heads and charged admission.



Though next morning it was raining,
 He began her vocal training.
 "But I can't sing in this weather".

80 "Come my dear - we'll sing together.
 Just put on your scarf and **sash**¹⁶,
 Koo-oh-ah! ko-ash! ko-ash!"
 So the frog and nightingale
 Journeyed up and down the **scale**¹⁷

85 For six hours, till she was shivering
 and her voice was **hoarse**¹⁸ and **quivering**¹⁹.
 Though **subdued**²⁰ and sleep deprived,
 In the night her throat revived,
 And the sumac tree was bowed,

90 With a breathless, titled crowd:
 Owl of Sandwich, Duck of Kent,
 Mallard and Milady Trent,
 Martin Cardinal Mephisto,
 And the Coot of Monte Cristo,

95 Ladies with **tiaras**²¹ glittering
 In the interval sat twittering -
 And the frog observed them glitter
 With a joy both sweet and bitter.

Every day the frog who'd sold her
 100 Songs for silver tried to scold her:
 "You must practice even longer
 Till your voice, like mine grows stronger.
 In the second song last night
 You got nervous in mid-flight.

16 sash : a long piece of cloth that you wear round the waist or over the shoulder, usually as a badge of honour

17 scale : a sequence of musical notes that go up and down, one after the other

18 hoarse : rough and unclear

19 quivering : shaking, trembling

20 subdued : quiet, with little energy

21 tiara : a semicircular metal band decorated with jewels and worn by wealthy women on formal social occasions



105 And, my dear, lay on more **trills**²²:
Audiences enjoy such frills.
You must make your public happier:
Give them something sharper, snappier.
We must aim for better **billings**²³.

110 You still owe me sixty shillings."

Day by day the nightingale
Grew more sorrowful and pale.
Night on night her tired song
Zipped²⁴ and trilled and bounced along,

115 Till the birds and beasts grew tired
At a voice so uninspired
And the ticket office gross
Crashed, and she grew more **morose**²⁵ -
For her ears were now addicted

120 To applause quite unrestricted,
And to sing into the night
All alone gave no delight.

Now the frog puffed up with rage.
"Brainless bird - you're on the stage -

125 Use your wits and follow fashion.
Puff your lungs out with your passion."

Trembling, terrified to fail,
Blind with tears, the nightingale
Heard him out in silence, tried,

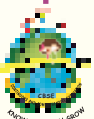
130 Puffed up, burst a vein, and died.
Said the frog: "I tried to teach her,
But she was a stupid creature -
Far too nervous, far too tense.
Far too prone to influence.

22 **trills** : singing two musical notes one after the other, repeatedly and very quickly

23 **billings** : publicity for a concert, show etc.

24 **zipped** : sang quickly

25 **morose** : miserable, bad-tempered



135 Well, poor bird - she should have known
 That your song must be your own.
 That's why I sing with **panache**²⁶:
 "Koo-oh-ah! ko-ash! ko-ash!"
 And the **foghorn**²⁷ of the frog

140 Blared unrivalled through the bog.

5. The following is a summary of the poem but it is jumbled up. Write out the events in their correct order to form a continuous paragraph.

- a) As a result, her voice lost its beauty, and the other creatures stopped coming to hear her sing.
- b) Soon the nightingale became famous, and creatures from miles around came to hear her sing.
- c) All the creatures in the bog cheered and clapped at her beautiful song.
- d) He offered to train the nightingale, so that she could sing even more beautifully.
- e) So the frog could sing unrivalled in the bog once more.
- f) The next night the frog introduced himself.
- g) The frog charged an admission fee, and earned a lot of money from these concerts.
- h) A frog croaked all night in a bog, in an unpleasant voice.
- i) But the frog made the nightingale rehearse continuously in the rain.
- j) One night a nightingale began to sing in a melodious voice.
- k) Finally the nightingale burst a vein and died.

6. Now that you have read the poem, add more personality traits to the word-web of the frog and the nightingale as depicted in the poem. Then complete the table given below. (Some of the words in the box below may help you. You may also use the words given in Q. 1.)

26 panache : a very confident, elegant style

27 foghorn : a very loud, unpleasant noise



Character	Extract	Personality traits
Nightingale	Sorry - was that you who spoke?	Polite, Timorous
Frog	Yes,... you see, I'm the frog who owns this tree In this bog I've long been known For my splendid baritone.	
Nightingale	Did you...did you like my song?	
Frog	Not too bad - but far too long The technique was fine, of course, But it lacked a certain force.	
Frog	Without proper training such as I And a few others can supply You'll remain a mere beginner, But with me you'll be a winner.	
Nightingale	But I can't sing in this weather.	
Nightingale	...This is a fairy tale - And you're Mozart in disguise Come to earth before my eyes.	
Frog	Come, my dear - we'll sing together.	
Frog	We must aim for better billing You still owe me sixty shillings.	
Frog	Brainless bird - you're on the stage Use your wits and follow fashion. Puff your lungs out with your passion.	
Frog	...I tried to teach her, But she was a stupid creature.	

Dismissive

Nervous

Timid

Presumptuous

Superior

Fawning

Shy

Polite

Meek

Possessive

Dominating

Mercenary



7. Divide yourselves into groups of four or five and brainstorm on any one of the given situations in order to create an imaginary dialogue or a comic strip. Keep in mind the characters and situations while doing so. Representatives from each group could then present the dialogues / read them to the class.

Situations

- a. The efforts made by the other creatures of the bog to still the frog's determination 'to display his heart's elation'.
- b. The first time the Nightingale sings.
- c. The nightingale is awestruck when the frog introduces himself.
- d. The practice session when it is raining.
- e. The nightingale is reprimanded by the frog when the box office crashes.

8. On the basis of your understanding of the poem, complete the sentences given below by choosing the appropriate option.

1. The frog's aim was to
 - a. make the nightingale a sensation
 - b. make the nightingale as good a singer as him
 - c. maintain his supremacy in the bog
 - d. make a lot of money
2. The animals reacted to the nightingale's song with
 - a. hatred
 - b. admiration
 - c. indifference
 - d. suggestions for improvement
3. The nightingale accepted the frog's tutelage as she
 - a. was not confident of herself
 - b. wanted to become as good a singer as the frog
 - c. wanted to become a professional singer
 - d. was not a resident of Bingle Bog



9. Read the stanza given below and complete the sentences by choosing the appropriate option.

*Day by day the nightingale
Grew more sorrowful and pale.
Night on night her tired song
Zipped and trilled and bounced along,
Till the birds and beasts grew tired
At a voice so uninspired
And the ticket office gross
Crashed, and she grew more morose -
For her ears were now addicted
To applause quite unrestricted,
And to sing into the night
All alone gave no delight.*

- i. The nightingale was sorrowful and pale because
 1. she had been practicing in the rain
 2. she had been performing all night
 3. she was losing confidence in herself
 4. she was falling ill
- ii. The audience was tired of her song because
 1. they had heard it many times
 2. it had become mechanical
 3. she looked tired
 4. she had added trill to her song
- iii. She no longer enjoyed singing alone as
 1. she wanted to sing only for titled crowd
 2. she was now used to the appreciation she got
 3. the frog was no longer with her
 4. she had become proud of herself

10. Answer the following questions briefly.

- a. How did the creatures of Bingle bog react to the nightingale's singing?
- b. Which are the different ways in which the frog asserts his importance?

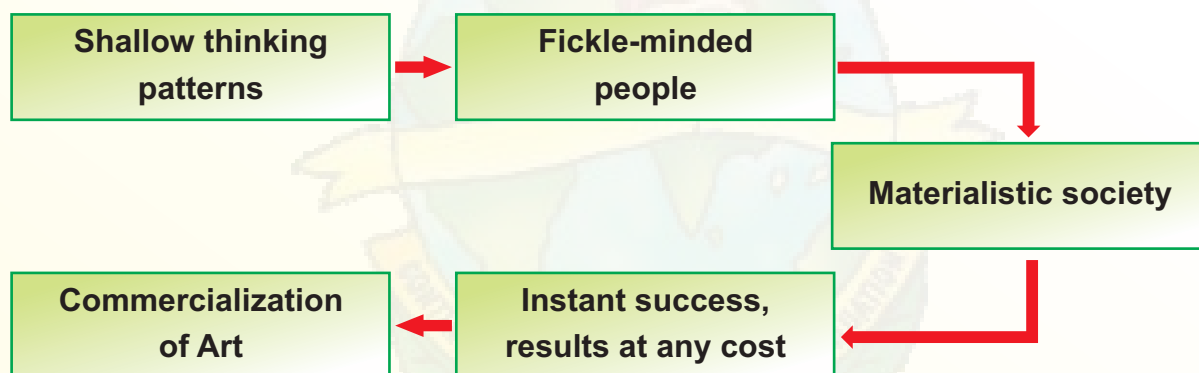


- c. Why is the frog's joy both sweet and bitter?
- d. Why was the frog angry?
- e. How did the frog become the unrivalled king of the bog again?

11. Discuss the following questions and write the answers in your note-books.

- a. Bring out the irony in the frog's statement - 'Your song must be your own'.
- b. Do you think the end is justified?
- c. Do you think the nightingale is 'brainless'? Give reasons for your answer.
- d. In spite of having a melodious voice and being a crowd puller, the nightingale turns out to be a loser and dies. How far is she responsible for her own downfall?
- e. Do you agree with the Frog's inference of the Nightingale's character? Give reasons for your answer.

12. The Frog and the nightingale is a spoof on the present society. Study the Mind Map given below. Divide yourselves into groups, select a box and discuss the statement given. Then present your views to the class.



CLASS DISCUSSION

How a person tries to put down another when that person is succeeding in his or her life.

Our self-image is often based on what others make us believe we are. A poor self-image can do irreparable damage to us. Do you agree with this statement? Elaborate with suitable reasons and examples.

WRITING TASK

- 13. The nightingale has scaled the heights of success. But now the audience is dwindling, the frog is unhappy and reprimands her all the time. She is mentally and physically exhausted and fears failure. As the nightingale, write a diary entry highlighting her fears and analyzing the reasons for her failure.
- 14. Write an obituary for the nightingale. You may begin like this: May the kind soul..... (or you may make use of your own beginning)



LISTENING TASK

15. Listen to a poem on a similar theme by Mary Howitt and compare the Fly to Vikram Seth's Nightingale.

NIGHTINGALE

FLY



Poetry UNIT

P. 2 Mirror

by Sylvia Plath

1. In pairs discuss the following questions:

- (a) When do you generally use a mirror?
- (b) Is a mirror essential for us?
- (c) Given below is a list of possible reasons why a person uses a mirror. Tick the ones you agree with:
 - (i) to check one's appearance
 - (ii) to look beautiful
 - (iii) to make sure one is neat and tidy before going out
 - (iv) to check for a pimple or grey hair
 - (v) to apply make-up
 - (vi) to make a phone call
 - (vii) as a decorative item at home



2. The teacher will now play a recording of the poem. Listen carefully and answer the questions that follow:

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful -

- 5 The eye of a little god, four-cornered.
Most of the time meditate on the opposite wall.
It is pink with speckles. I have looked at it so long
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.



- 10 Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.
- 15 I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman
Rises toward her day after day like a terrible fish.

About the Poet

*Sylvia Plath (October 27, 1932 - February 11, 1963) was an American poet, novelist and short story writer. Born in Massachusetts, she received acclaim as a professional poet and writer. She married fellow poet Ted Hughes in 1956 and they lived together first in the United States and then England, having two children together: Frieda and Nicholas. Following a long struggle with depression and a marital separation, Plath committed suicide in 1963. Plath is credited with advancing the genre of confessional poetry and is best known for her two collections *The Colossus and Other Poems* and *Ariel*. In 1982, she became the first poet to win a Pulitzer Prize posthumously for *The Collected Poems*. She also authored *The Bell Jar*, a semi-autobiographical novel published shortly before her death.*

3. On the basis of your understanding of the poem, answer the following questions by ticking the correct choice

- (a) When the mirror is being described as being 'unmisted by love or dislike' we understand that the mirror is
- not misted
 - not prejudiced
 - has four angles
 - is silver in colour
- (b) The other word for 'contemplation' is.....
- contempt
 - meditation
 - mediation
 - thoughtful



- (c) When the mirror says '*it has no preconceptions*' it means that:
- it reflects back an image objectively
 - it modifies an image as it reflects it
 - it beautifies an image as it reflects it
 - it gives a biased view of a person/object
- (d) The mirror has been called '*a four-cornered god*' because:
- it is square shaped
 - like God it watches you unbiased and fair from all four angles
 - it reflects back all that it sees
 - it never stops reflecting
- (e) The '*speckles*' refer to:
- a pink object
 - the opposite wall which has spots on it
 - a person with pink pimples
 - pink spots in general
- (f) The phrase '*agitation of the hand*' suggests that the person is:
- very ill
 - very upset
 - very angry
 - very happy
- (g) By saying '*Now I am a lake*' the narrator wants to show that
- the poem is not only about external beauty but also the inside of a person
 - the lake can also reflect surfaces
 - the depth of the lake is important
 - the lake does not show as exact an image as a mirror

4. Answer the following questions briefly

- What is the poetic device used when the mirror says '*I swallow*'?
- How does the mirror usually pass its time?
- What disturbs the mirror's contemplation of the opposite wall?



- (d) Why does the mirror appear to be a lake in the second stanza? What aspect of the mirror do you think is being referred to here?
- (e) What is the woman searching for in the depths of the lake?
- (f) How does the narrator convey the fact that the woman looking at her reflection in the lake is deeply distressed?
- (g) What makes the woman start crying?
- (h) What do you think the '*terrible fish*' in the last line symbolizes? What is the poetic device used here?

5. Read the poem silently and answer the following questions:

- (a) List out the adjectives that have been used to describe the mirror. Add a few more adjectives to the list.
- (b) In the second stanza why has the narrator replaced the mirror with a lake? What is he/she trying to focus on?

6. Find the various instances of personification used in this poem.

7. Read the given lines and answer the questions that follow by ticking the correct choice:

A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.

- a. What is the woman bending over?
 - i. the mirror
 - ii. the lake
 - iii. the opposite wall
 - iv. the moon and the candles
- b. Why have the candles and the moon been called '*liars*'?
 - i. because they make people beautiful
 - ii. they hide the blemishes of people with their soft light
 - iii. they hide the blemishes and make people look beautiful in their soft glow
 - iv. they can't talk
- c. Why does she turn to them in spite of calling them '*liars*'?
 - i. the reality is too harsh for her to bear
 - ii. she is desperately looking for someone to comfort her



- iii. she wants to be **told** that she is still beautiful
- iv. she can hide her signs of graying in their light

8. Imagine you are the mirror. Write a speech that you would like to deliver to the humans who come to see their reflection in you. You could begin like this....

Good Morning dear humans.

I feel honoured to have been given the opportunity to express my feelings and share my thoughts with you. As you know, all my life is spent in faithfully reflecting all that comes before my eyes.....

9. Here is another poem on mirror. The narrator calls the mirror a 'fibber'. How is this poem different from the poem by Sylvia Plath? Have a class discussion on the comparison in terms of the theme, the tone and the language used.

MIRROR

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
 Can't you show me tall and slim?
 Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
 Must I look so bloody grim?
 Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
 You're distorting my poor waist!
 Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
 And why the heck am I defaced?
 Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
 Why have I a double chin?
 Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
 And what's the stupid, goofy grin?
 Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
 Pointless asking 'Who's the fairest-?
 More bloody likely, 'Who's the queerest? '
 Now look, I paid a big bucks for thee,
 So why can't you be nice to me?
 Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
 Who's the fairest of them all?
 Me, you say? Ah, that's better -
 Mirror, mirror, bloody fibber!

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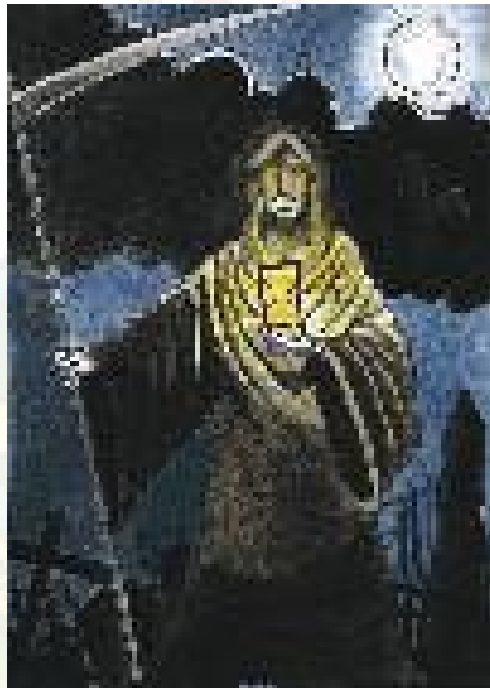


Poetry *9*

UNIT

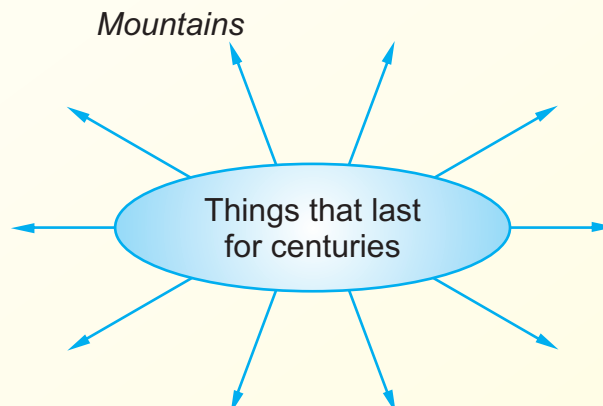
P.3 Not Marble, nor the Gilded Monuments (Sonnet 55) *by William Shakespeare*

1. Look at the following picture carefully.

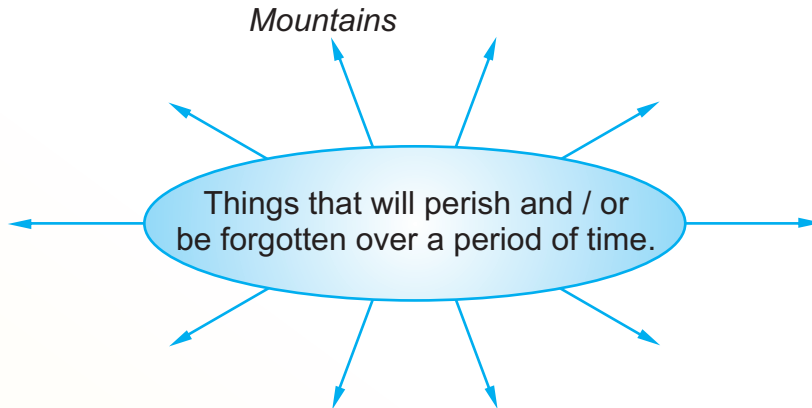


- a) What has Time been portrayed as? Why?
- b) What are the other symbols associated with Time?

2. a) What are the things that last for centuries? List a few things around you that will survive four to five hundred years into the future.



- b) Think of things that will perish and/or be forgotten with the passage of time.



3. The word "sonnet" is derived from the Italian word sonetto, meaning "a little sound" or "a little song." A Sonnet is a poem of 14 lines with a structured rhyme scheme in which a thought about a subject is developed thoroughly.

You will read two sonnets on the powerful effects of Time.

4. Listen to a recording of the sonnet *Not Marble, nor the Gilded Monuments* by William Shakespeare played by your teacher. You could also listen to it on youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0qCa1jBhtM&feature=related>
5. Now read the sonnet.

Not Marble, nor the Gilded Monuments (Sonnet 55)

By William Shakespeare

Not marble, nor the **gilded**¹ monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than **unswept stone**², **besmear'd**³ with **sluttish**⁴ time.

- 5 When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And **broils**⁵ root out the work of masonry,
Nor **Mars**⁶ his sword nor war's **quick**⁷ fire shall burn
The **living record**⁸ of your memory.

-
- 1 **gilded**: covered with gold; gold-plated
2 **unswept stone**: a stone monument left uncared for
3 **besmear'd**: tarnished
4 **sluttish**: of unclean habits and behaviour
5 **broils**: tumult, fighting, disturbances, esp. in war
6 **Mars**: the god of war
7 **quick**: lively, fast moving, searching out
8 **living record**: this written memory of your life which continues after you are dead



'Gainst⁹ death and all oblivious enmity¹⁰

- 10 Shall you **pace forth**¹¹; your praise shall still find room,
Even in the eyes of all **posterity**¹²
That wear this world out to the ending **doom**¹³.

So, till the **judgment**¹⁴ that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

About the Poet

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born in Stratford-upon-Avon. He is considered by many to be the greatest dramatist of all time. He wrote 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems and about three dozen plays. Shakespeare used poetic and dramatic means to create unified aesthetic effects. In verse he perfected the dramatic blank verse.

6. On the basis of your understanding of Shakespeare's sonnet, answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

- (a) The rich and powerful got ornate monuments made in order to _____
- (i) show off their wealth
 - (ii) display their power
 - (iii) show their artistic talent
 - (iv) be remembered till posterity
- (b) The poet addresses his sonnet to _____
- (i) time
 - (ii) war
 - (iii) the person he loves
 - (iv) powerful rulers
- (c) In the line '*The living record of your memory*', living record refers to _____
- (i) the sonnet the poet has written for his friend
 - (ii) an existing statue of his friend
 - (iii) his friend who lives in the poet's memory
 - (iv) the autobiography of the poet's friend

9 **Gainst**: against

10 **oblivious enmity**: enmity which is forgetful of everything and so seeks to destroy everything

11 **pace forth**: stride forwards

12 **posterity**: future generations

13 **doom**: doomsday; the day on which the Last Judgment will occur

14 **judgement**: the day of the last judgement



- (d) The poet's tone in the poem is _____
- (i) despairing
 - (ii) optimistic
 - (iii) loving
 - (iv) admiring
- (e) The poem is set in _____
- (i) the place where the poet meets his friend
 - (ii) a battlefield where Mars is fighting a battle
 - (iii) a city ravaged by war
 - (iv) the poet's study where he is writing

7. Answer the following questions briefly.

- (a) Why do you think the rich and powerful people get monuments and statues erected in their memory?
- (b) Describe how the monuments and statues brave the ravages of time.
- (c) Why does the poet refer to Time as being sluttish ?
- (d) The poet says that neither forces of nature nor wars can destroy his poetry. In fact, even godly powers of Mars will not have a devastating effect on his rhyme. What quality of the poet is revealed through these lines?

8. Shakespeare's sonnet has been divided into three quatrains of 4 lines each followed by a rhyming couplet. Each quatrain is a unit of meaning. Read the poem carefully and complete the following table on the structure of the poem.

	Rhyme scheme	Theme
Quatrain 1		Comparison between poetry and monuments.
Quatrain 2		Ravages of time on monuments contrasted with _____
Quatrain 3		The recorded memory of _____ _____ posterity
Couplet		Poetry immortalises friend

- 9. a) The poet uses alliteration to heighten the musical quality of the sonnet. Working in pairs, underline the examples of alliteration in the poem.**
- b) Identify Shakespeare's use of personification in the poem.**



Poetry 10

UNIT

P.4 Ozymandias

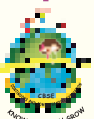
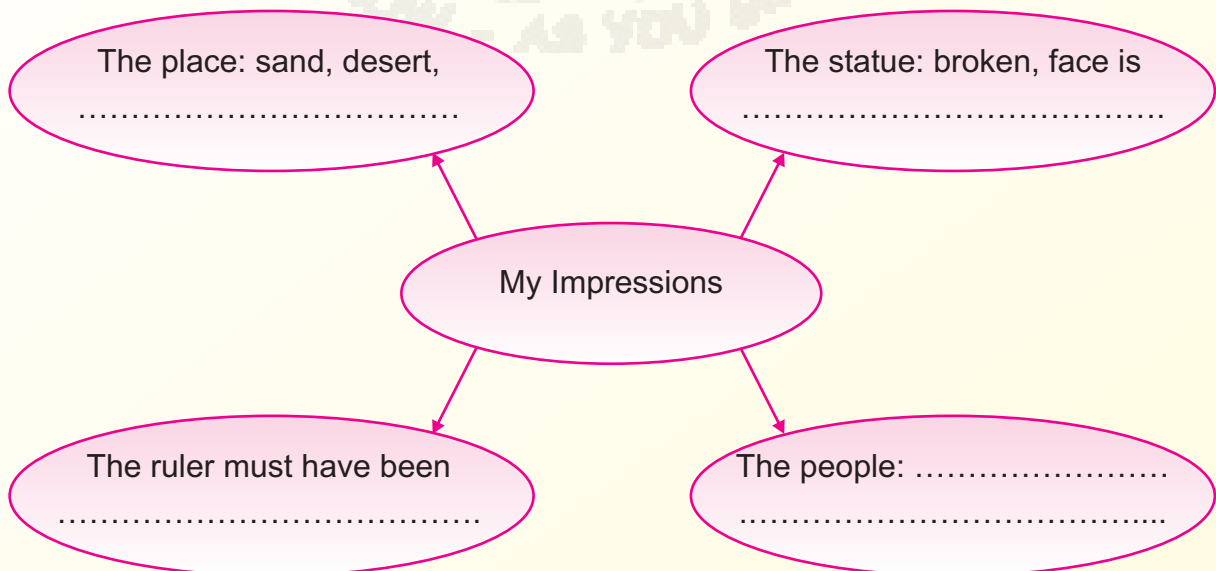
by Percy Bysshe Shelley

1. Look at the picture given below.



While on a sight-seeing tour to an old and mysterious country far away from home, you saw this statue. Discuss with your partner what this picture tells you about the people, the place and the ruler.

Note down your ideas in the web-chart.



2. Write a letter to your friend about the sight you saw and your impression of it.
3. Now read the poem *Ozymandias* by Percy Bysshe Shelley

OZYMANDIAS

- I met a traveller from an antique land
 Who said: Two vast and **trunkless**¹ legs of stone
 Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
 Half sunk, a shattered **visage**² lies, whose frown,
 5 And wrinkled lip, and **sneer**³ of cold command,
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions **read**⁴
 Which yet survive, **stamped**⁵ on these lifeless things,
 The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
 And on the pedestal these words appear:
 10 "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
 Look upon my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
 Nothing **beside**⁶ remains. Round the decay
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.

About the Poet

The son of a Rich Tory Squire, Percy Bysshe Shelley was educated at Eton and then sent to Oxford. Shelley came under the influence of revolutionary ideas of the English philosopher, William Godwin, whose daughter, Mary Godwin he ultimately married. In 1818, Shelley left for Italy; he drowned in the Bay of Spezia in 1822.

4. Answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

- (a) The poem is set in _____
- (i) the wilderness
 - (ii) an ancient land
 - (iii) a palace

-
- 1 **trunkless:** without the upper body (the main part of the body of a human being or an animal, excluding the head, neck, and limbs)
 - 2 **visage:** face
 - 3 **sneer:** facial expression of scorn or hostility in which the upper lip may be raised
 - 4 **read:** interpreted
 - 5 **stamped:** sculpted
 - 6 **beside:** else



- (iv) a desert
- (b) The expression on the face of the statue is one of _____
- (i) admiration
- (ii) anger
- (iii) despair
- (iv) contempt
- (c) This poem throws light on the _____ nature of Ozymandias.
- (i) cruel
- (ii) arrogant
- (iii) boastful
- (iv) aggressive
- (d) The sculptor was able to understand Ozymandias' _____
- (i) words
- (ii) expression
- (iii) feelings
- (iv) ambition
- (e) The tone of the poem is _____
- (i) mocking
- (ii) nostalgic
- (iii) gloomy
- (iv) gloating

5. Answer the following questions briefly.

- (a) *"The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed."* Whose hand and heart has the poet referred to in this line?
- (b) *"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings."* Why does Ozymandias refer to himself as King of Kings? What quality of the king is revealed through this statement.
- (c) *"Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"* Who is Ozymandias referring to when he speaks of ye Mighty? Why should they despair?
- (d) Bring out the irony in the poem.



- (e) *'Nothing beside remains.'* What does the narrator mean when he says these words?
- (f) What is your impression of Ozymandias as a king?
- (g) What message is conveyed through this poem?

6. Identify and rewrite the lines from the poem spoken by the narrator, the traveller and Ozymandias:

The Narrator: _____

The Traveller: _____

Ozymandias: _____

7. Shelley's sonnet follows the traditional structure of the fourteen-line Italian sonnet, featuring an opening octave, or set of eight lines, that presents a conflict or dilemma, followed by a sestet, or set of six lines, that offers some resolution or commentary upon the proposition introduced in the octave. Read the poem carefully and complete the following table on the structure of the poem.

	Rhyme scheme	Theme
Octave		
Sestet		



8. Complete the table listing the poetic devices used by Shelley in Ozymandias.

Poetic Device	Lines from the poem
Alliteration	<i>...and sneer of cold command</i>
Synecdoche (substitution of a part to stand for the whole, or the whole to stand for a part)	<i>the hand that mock'd them</i>

9. Imagine that Ozymandias comes back to life and as he sees the condition of his statue, realisation dawns on him and he pens his thoughts in a diary. As Ozymandias, make this diary entry in about 150 words. You could begin like this: I thought I was the mightiest of all but...
10. 'Ozymandias' and 'Not Marble, nor the Gilded Monuments' are on Time. Compare the two sonnets in terms of the way in which Time is treated by the poets. Write your answer in about 150 words.



P.5 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

1. Look at the picture carefully and answer the questions given below:

1. What can you see in the picture?
Does the man look happy? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Why does he have the bird hanging around his neck?
3. Have you heard of the expression-'having an albatross around your neck'? What do you think it means? Does it mean:
 - a. something that you can always be proud of
 - b. something that you have to do because you have no choice
 - c. something that is with you all the time as a reminder that you have done something wrong?
4. What is an albatross?



The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is one of the best known classical poems written in English, containing some very beautiful and memorable lines. You may find that it needs some work and attention from you to understand it, before you are in a position to appreciate and respond to the beauty of the language that it contains.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is a ballad, i.e. it tells a story. Ballad poetry usually includes archaic words and spellings.



Since it is a long poem, only the first two parts have been included in this Unit. Your teacher will help you read the other five parts after you complete this Unit.

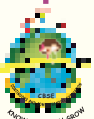
2. **Listen carefully as the teacher reads out the first part of the poem to you or makes you listen to a recording of the poem.**

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Part I

- It is an ancient **Mariner**¹,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and **glittering**² eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?
- 5 The bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of **kin**³;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'
- 9 He holds him with his skinny hand,
"There was a ship," **quoth**⁴ he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard **loon**⁵!'
Eftsoons⁶ his hand dropt he.
- 13 He holds him with his glittering eye-
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.
- 17 The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.
- 21 "The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the **kirk**⁷, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

-
- 1 **Mariner** - sailor
2 **glittering** - shining brightly, with flashing points of light
3 **kin** - members of your family
4 **quoth** - said
5 **loon** - a mad person
6 **Eftsoons** - at once
7 **kirk** - church



- 25 The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.
- 29 Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon-
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud **bassoon**⁸.
- 33 The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry **minstrelsy**⁹.
- 37 The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.
- 41 "And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was **tyrannous**¹⁰ and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.
- 45 With sloping masts and dipping **prow**¹¹,
As who **pursued**¹² with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his **foe**¹³,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.
- 51 And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as **emerald**¹⁴.

8 **bassoon** - a musical instrument

9 **minstrelsy** - singers and musicians

10 **tyrannous** - cruel, severe, harsh

11 **prow** - the front part of a ship

12 **pursued** - chased

13 **foe** - enemy

14 **emerald** - a precious stone, which is clear and bright green



- 55 And through the **drifts**¹⁵ the snowy **clifts**¹⁶
Did send a dismal **sheen**¹⁷:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we **ken**¹⁸ -
The ice was all between.
- 59 The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a **swound**¹⁹!
- 63 At length did cross an Albatross,
Through the fog it came;
As it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.
- 67 It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The **helmsman**²⁰ steered us through!
- 71 And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's **hollo**²¹ !
- 75 In mist or cloud, on mast or **shroud**²²,
It **perched**²³ for **vespers nine**²⁴,
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moonshine."
- 79 'God save thee, ancient Mariner,
From the fiends that **plague**²⁵ thee thus!-
Why look'st thou so?' - "With my **crossbow**²⁶
I shot the Albatross."

15 **drifts** - floating ice

16 **clifts** - steep sides of the ice-bergs

17 **Sheen** - a smooth and gentle brightness on the surface of something

18 **ken** - see

19 **swound** - a fainting fit

20 **helmsman** - the person steering the ship

21 **hollo** - shout, call

22 **shroud** - sail

23 **perched** - sat on the edge of something

24 **vespers nine** - a fixed time every day (the evening church service)

25 **plague** - to bother, trouble

26 **crossbow** - a very powerful bow and arrow, with a trigger



3. The teacher will now assign roles and ask you to read the poem aloud to show how the poem has been written in the first person (the parts in quotation marks spoken by the Mariner) and in the third person (where the narrator comments about the events taking place)
4. Here are some of the archaic words used in the poem; can you match them with the words used in modern English language that mean the same? The first one has been done for you as an example:

stoppeth	why
thy	entered
wherefore	stopped
stopp'st	you
thou	lunatic
may'st	at once
quoth	fainting fit
loon	has
eftsoons	can't you
dropt	stopping
hath	church
spake	enemy
kirk	yes
paced	see
foe	call
aye	trouble
ken	looking
swound	your
hollo	said
plague	dropped
look'st	spoke



5. Using the words given above rewrite **PART I** of the poem in your own words. The first stanza has been done as an example:

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

An old sailor stopped one of the three people passing by, who asked: "Old man, with your long grey beard and glittering eye, why are you stopping me?"

6. Answer the following by choosing the right option from those given below:

- a. The Ancient Mariner stopped one of the three wedding guests because.....
 - i. he wanted to attend the wedding with him
 - ii. he wanted him to sit with him
 - iii. he wanted him to listen to his story
 - iv. he wanted to stop him from going to the wedding
- b. The wedding guest remarked that he was 'next of kin' which means that
 - i. he was a close relation of the bridegroom
 - ii. he was a close relation of the bride
 - iii. he was next in line to get married
 - iv. he had to stand next to the bridegroom during the wedding
- c. 'He cannot choose but hear' means.....
 - i. the mariner was forced to hear the story of the wedding guest
 - ii. the wedding guest was forced to hear the story of the mariner
 - iii. the mariner had the choice of not listening to the story of the wedding guest
 - iv. the wedding guest had the choice of not listening to the story of the mariner
- d. 'The sun came up upon the left, / Out of the sea came he;' This line tells us that the ship.....
 - i. was moving in the northern direction
 - ii. was moving eastwards
 - iii. was moving in the western direction
 - iv. was moving towards the south



- e. The Wedding-Guest beat his breast because.....
- he could hear the sound of the bassoon
 - he was forced to listen to the Mariner's tale when he wanted to attend the wedding
 - the sound of the bassoon meant that the bride had arrived and the wedding ceremony was about to begin and he could not attend it.
 - the sound of the bassoon announced the arrival of the bride and the start of the wedding ceremony
- f. The storm blast has been described as being tyrannous because.....
- it was so fierce that it frightened the sailors
 - it took complete control of the ship
 - the storm was very powerful
 - the sailors were at its mercy
- g. The sailors felt depressed on reaching the land of mist and snow because.....
- there was no sign of any living creature
 - they felt they would die in that cold weather
 - they were surrounded by icebergs and there seemed to be no sign of life
 - everything was grey in colour and they felt very cold
- h. The sailors were happy to see the albatross because.....
- it was the first sign of life and therefore gave them hope that they might survive
 - it split the icebergs around the ship and helped the ship move forward.
 - it was a messenger from God and it lifted the fog and mist.
 - it gave them hope of survival by splitting the icebergs.
- i. The two things that happened after the arrival of the albatross were
- the icebergs split and the albatross became friendly with the sailors
 - the icebergs split and a strong breeze started blowing
 - the ship was pushed out of the land of mist and the ice melted.
 - the albatross started playing with the mariners and ate the food they offered.



- j. 'It perched for vespers nine' means.....
- the ship stopped sailing at nine o'clock every day
 - the albatross would appear at a fixed time everyday.
 - the albatross would sit on the sail or the mast everyday
 - the albatross was a holy creature
- k. 'God save thee, ancient Mariner, /From the fiends that plague thee thus!- Why look'st thou so?' means.....
- the mariner wanted to know why the wedding guest was looking so tormented
 - the wedding guest wanted to know why the mariner was looking so tormented
 - the wedding guest wanted to know whether some creatures were troubling the ancient mariner
 - the ancient mariner wanted to know whether something was troubling the wedding guest

7. Answer the following questions briefly

- How did the ancient mariner stop the wedding guest?
- Was the wedding guest happy to be stopped? Give reasons for your answer.
- Describe the ancient mariner
- How does the mariner describe the movement of the ship as it sails away from the land?
- What kind of weather did the sailors enjoy at the beginning of their journey? How has it been expressed in the poem?
- How did the sailors reach the land of mist and snow?
- How does the mariner express the fact that the ship was completely surrounded by icebergs?
- How do we know that the albatross was not afraid of the humans? Why did the sailors hail it in God's name?
- What was the terrible deed done by the Mariner? Why do you think he did it?

8. There are a number of literary devices used in the poem. Some of them have been listed below. Choose the right ones and write them down in the table as shown in the example. In each of the cases explain what they mean.



simile, metaphor, alliteration, personification. hyperbole, repetition,

1. The Wedding-Guest stood still, And listens like a three years' child:	Simile; the wedding guest was completely under the control of the mariner
2. Below the kirk, below the hill, Below the lighthouse top	
3. The sun came up upon the left, Out of the sea came he	
4. The bride hath paced into the hall, Red as a rose is she	
5. And now the storm-blast came, and he was tyrannous and strong:	
6. With sloping masts and dipping prow, As who pursued with yell and blow Still treads the shadow of his foe	
7. The ice was here, the ice was there, The ice was all around	

9. In groups of four discuss what you think happens next in the poem. Share your views with the rest of the class.
10. The teacher will now read out the second part of the poem or assign parts to you and ask you to read the poem to the class.

Part II

- 83 "The sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.
- 87 And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!
- 91 And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work' **em**²⁷ **woe**²⁸ :

27 **em** - them

28 **woe** - great unhappiness and sorrow



For all **averred**²⁹, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

97 Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious sun **uprist**³⁰:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to **slay**³¹,
That bring the fog and mist.

113 The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

117 Down dropped the breeze, the sails dropped down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

121 All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the moon.

125 Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

129 Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

133 The very **deep**³² did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.



- 137 About, about, in **reel and rout**³³
 The death-fires danced at night;
 The water, like a witch's oils,
 Burnt green, and blue, and white.
- 141 And some in dreams assured were
 Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
 Nine **fathom**³⁴ deep he had followed us
 From the land of mist and snow.
- 145 And every tongue, through utter drought,
 Was withered at the root;
 We could not speak, no more than if
 We had been choked with soot.
- 149 Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
 Had I from old and young!
 Instead of the cross, the Albatross
 About my neck was hung."



11. Answer the following questions briefly

- a. In which direction did the ship start moving? How can you say?
- b. Why does the mariner say that 'no sweet bird did follow'?
- c. How did the other mariners behave towards the Ancient Mariner at first? How many times did they change their mind about the Ancient Mariner? What does this tell us about their character?
- d. How did the sailing conditions change after the ship had moved out of the land of mist and snow? What or who did the mariners blame for this change?
- e. What is indicated by the line 'The bloody sun, at noon,/Right up above the mast did stand,/No bigger than the moon'?
- f. How does the mariner describe the fact that they were completely motionless in the middle of the sea?
- g. What is the irony in the ninth stanza? Explain it in your own words.
- h. What is the narrator trying to convey through the description of the situation in the tenth and eleventh stanza?
- i. What or who did the mariners feel was responsible for their suffering?

33 **reel and rout** - types of dance

34 **fathom** - a measurement of depth



- j. Describe the condition of the mariners as expressed in the thirteenth stanza.
- k. Why did the mariners hang the albatross around the neck of the Ancient Mariner?
12. Like part one, the second part also has a number of literary devices. List them out in the same way as you had done in question number seven and explain them.
13. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?
14. Find examples of the use of interesting sounds from the poem and explain their effect on the reader.

1. The ice 'cracked and growled, and roared and howled'	Coleridge uses onomatopoeic words which use harsh 'ck' sounds to make the ice sound brutal. He also gives the ice animal sounds to give the impression it has come alive and is attacking the ship

15. The poem is full of strange, uncanny or supernatural elements. Discuss how these elements appear in the poem. You should consider:

- the strange weather;
- the albatross as a bird of "good omen"
- the spirit from "the land of mist and snow"
- the strange slimy creatures seen in the sea
- the ocean appearing to rot
- the death fires and sea water being referred to as witch's oil

Now write a paragraph about the supernatural elements in the poem and how they add to the events that take place in the poem.

16. Every ship is supposed to have a *log book*, which is filled in every day by the captain. If he dies, the next senior officer fills it in (usually the First Mate).. Decide on appropriate dates (the mariner's tale was supposed to be thought of as already very old when the poem was published: it should be no later than about 1700 AD; other clues to the date are the light-house and the mariner's crossbow). If you wish you can make the log look old by staining the pages, by your handwriting and spelling. Write a series of entries for the log for the important



events that take place in the ship as recorded in the poem. The first one has been done as an example

1701 AD

Today we left the shore at 3.30 p.m. under glorious sailing conditions. We have 230 men on board. We are sailing with cargo towards Portugal. The journey is expected to take 90 days. We are well stocked with food and water to last us 250 days in case of any emergency. Hopefully we will not face any untoward happenings. God be with us!

You could also do this as an oral activity, recording the entries on audio tape and using voice effects and other sound effects if you can.

17. Performing the poem

This is a very dramatic poem, excellent for reading aloud or even dramatising it. The class could be divided into groups and given the different dramatic moments from the poem to be performed as follows:

- the first storm that they encounter
- the time spent in the land of mist and snow
- the coming of the albatross and the subsequent events till they move out
- the killing of the albatross till they reach the silent seas
- the suffering of the sailors in the hot region till they hang the albatross around the Ancient Mariner's neck

18. The poem has seven parts to it. The class could be divided into five groups and each group be asked to read one part of the remaining poem. Each group would then have to report their findings. The report can be made interesting with illustrations/power point presentations. Help could be taken from the following websites:

www.online-literature.com/coleridge/646/

www.gradesaver.com/the-rime-of-the-ancient-mariner/

text.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Col2Mar.html

www.enotes.com/rime-ancient-mariner-text

19. In your groups discuss the following:

- i. Why did the Ancient Mariner stop the particular wedding guest to listen to his tale?
- ii. Why did he have to tell his tale to someone?
- iii. What is the poet trying to convey through this poem?



Poetry UNIT 12

P.6 Snake

D. H. Lawrence

1. Snakes generate both horror and fascination. Do you agree? Why? Why not?
2. Read what W.W.E. Ross feels when he sees a snake and fill in the table given below:

The Snake Trying

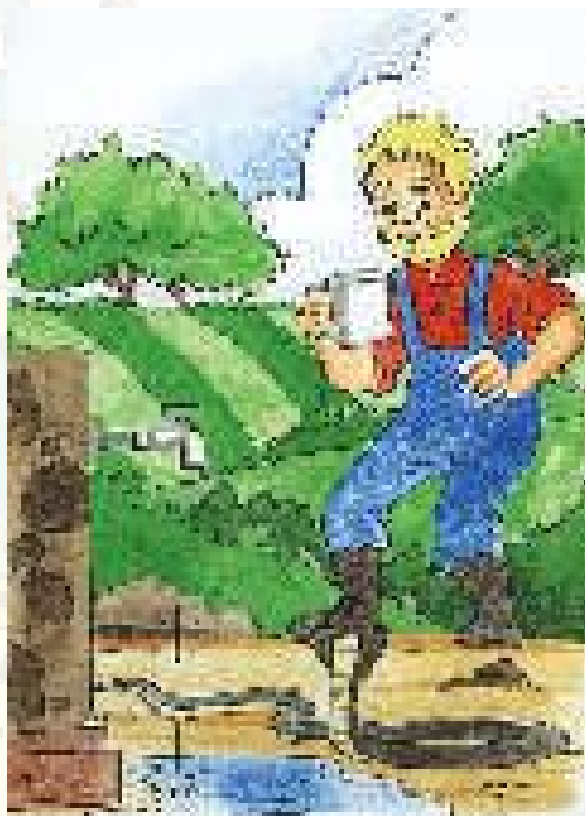
The snake trying
to escape the pursuing stick,
with sudden curvings of thin
long body. How beautiful
and graceful are his shapes!
He glides through the water away
from the stroke. O let him go
over the water
into the reeds to hide
without hurt. Small and green
he is harmless even to children.
Along the sand
he lay until observed
and chased away, and now
he vanishes in the ripples
among the green slim reeds.

What is the snake doing?	Words to describe the snake	Poet's plea



3. Read the poem by D.H. Lawrence about his encounter with a snake.

- A snake came to my water-trough
 On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
 To drink there.
 In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark **carob-tree**¹
- 5 I came down the steps with my **pitcher**²
 And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.
- He reached down from a **fissure**³ in the earth-wall in the gloom
 And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of
 the stone trough
 And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
- 10 And where the water had dripped
 from the tap, in a small clearness,
 He sipped with his straight mouth,
 Softly drank through his straight
 gums, into his slack long body,
 Silently.
- Someone was before me at my water-
 trough,
 And I, like a second comer, waiting.
- 15 He lifted his head from his drinking, as
 cattle do,
 And looked at me vaguely, as drinking
 cattle do,
 And **flickered**⁴ his two-forked tongue
 from his lips, and **mused**⁵ a moment,
 And stooped and drank a little more,
 Being earth-brown, earth-golden
 from the burning **bowels**⁶ of the earth
- 20 On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.
- The voice of my education said to me
 He must be killed,
 For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.



1 **carob-tree** - a red flowered tree originally in the Mediterranean area.
 2 **pitcher** - tall, round container with an open top and large handle
 3 **fissure** - crack
 4 **flickered** - moved
 5 **mused** - think about
 6 **bowels** - bottom of earth



- And voices in me said, If you were a man
 25 You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.
 But must I confess how I liked him,
 How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough
 And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
 Into the burning bowels of this earth?
- 30 Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him? Was it **perversity**⁷, that I longed to talk to
 him? Was it humility, to feel so honoured?
 I felt so honoured.
 And yet those voices:
If you were not afraid, you would kill him!
- And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid, But even so, honoured still more
 35 That he should seek my hospitality
 From out the dark door of the secret earth.
 He drank enough
 And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
 And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,
 40 Seeming to lick his lips,
 And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
 And slowly turned his head,
 And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
 Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
 45 And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.
 And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
 And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered farther,
 A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole,
 Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,
 50 Overcame me now his back was turned.
 I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
 I picked up a clumsy log
 And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.



7 **perversity** - The quality of being unreasonable, illogical

- I think it did not hit him,
 55 But suddenly that part of him that was left behind **convulsed**⁸ in undignified haste.
Writhed⁹ like lightning, and was gone
 Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,
 At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.
 And immediately I regretted it.
- 60 I thought how **paltry**¹⁰, how vulgar, what a mean act!
 I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.
 And I thought of the **albatross**¹¹
 And I wished he would come back, my snake.
- For he seemed to me again like a king,
 65 Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
 Now due to be crowned again.
 And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
 Of life.
 And I have something to **expiate**¹²
 A pettiness.

About the author

D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930), English novelist, storywriter, critic, poet and painter, is one of the greatest figures in 20th-century English literature. The poem Snake was composed in 1923 and forms part of the Reptiles section of D.H. Lawrence's book *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers*. It details a powerful few moments when Lawrence is confronted by a snake at Lawrence's water trough, in Taormina, Sicily. The poem is unrhymed, written in free verse, and is representative of modernist literature.

4. **Given below is the summary of the poem Snake in short paragraphs. However they are jumbled. Work in pairs and put the summary into a logical sequence.**
- After drinking water to satisfaction, the snake raised his head dreamily and flickered his forked tongue and licked his lips. The snake looked around like a God and then slowly proceeded to curve round and move away from the water trough.
 - The poet felt much like the ancient mariner who had killed the albatross for no reason. He wishes that the snake would come back. He thinks of the snake as a king in exile

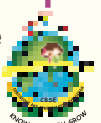
8 **convulsed** - violent movement

9 **Writhed** - to twist and turn

10 **paltry** - worthless

11 **albatross** - an allusion to Coleridge's "Rime of the ancient mariner". He wishes for its return.

12 **expiate** - make amends



who has to be crowned again. He also regrets having missed his opportunity of knowing and understanding one of the lords of life.

- c) As the snake put his head into the hole to retreat into the earth, the poet was filled with a protest against the idea of the snake withdrawing into his hole. The poet put down his pitcher, picked up a log and hurled it at the snake. The snake twisted violently and with great alacrity vanished into the hole in the wall.
- d) A snake visited the poet's water trough on a hot afternoon to quench his thirst. The poet who had also gone to the trough to fill water in a pitcher waited for the snake since he had come at the trough prior to the poet.
- e) The voices of education inside the poet tell him that it was the fear for the snake that made him refrain from killing him. However, the poet feels that though he was quite afraid of the snake, he did actually feel honoured that a snake had come to seek his hospitality from the deep recesses of the earth.
- f) He is guilt-ridden and feels that he has to atone for the meanness of his action of throwing a log at the snake.
- g) The snake rested his throat upon the stone bottom and sipped the water into his slack long body. After drinking water, he raised his head just like cattle do and flashed his forked tongue, thought for a moment and then bent down to drink some more water.
- h) Education and social conventions make the poet think that the golden brown poisonous snake must be killed and that as a brave man he must undertake the task of killing the snake.
- i) The poet instantly felt sorry for his unrefined and contemptible act and cursed the voices of education and civilization that had shaped his thought processes and urged him to kill the snake.
- j) However, the poet instinctively likes the snake, treats him like a guest and feels honoured that it had come to drink at his water trough. The poet questions himself and wonders whether his not daring to kill the snake proved that he was a coward and whether his desire to talk to the snake reflected his perversity.

5. Based on your reading of the poem, answer the following questions by ticking the correct options:

- 1. *'he lifted his head from his drinking as cattle do'* - The poet wants to convey that the snake
 - a) is domesticated
 - b) is innocent
 - c) is as harmless as cattle



- d) drinks water just like cattle
2. *'Sicilian July', 'Etna smoking' and 'burning bowels of the earth'* are images that convey that
- a) there are snakes in volcanic areas
 - b) the poet lived in a hot area
 - c) it was a really hot day when the snake came
 - d) Sicilian snakes are dangerous
3. *'A sort of horror, a sort of protest overcame me'* - The poet is filled with protest because
- a) he doesn't want to let the snake remain alive
 - b) he fears the snake
 - c) he doesn't want the snake to recede into darkness
 - d) he wants to kill it so that it doesn't return
4. In the line *'And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered farther'* the phrase *snake easing* his shoulders means
- a) loosening its shoulders
 - b) slipping in with majestic grace
 - c) moving slowly
 - d) moving fast
5. *'He seemed to me like a king in exile...'* The poet refers to the snake as such to emphasize that the snake
- a) is like a king enduring banishment
 - b) Is like a king due to be crowned
 - c) Is a majestic king who came for a while on earth
 - d) is a majestic creature forced to go into exile by man
6. *'I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act'* - The poet is referring to
- a) the snake going into the dreadful hole
 - b) the accursed modern education
 - c) the act of throwing a log of wood at the snake
 - d) the act of killing the snake



6. Answer the following questions briefly:

- a) Why does the poet decide to stand and wait till the snake has finished drinking? What does this tell you about the poet? (Notice that he uses 'someone' instead of 'something' for the snake.)
- b) In stanza 2 and 3, the poet gives a vivid description of the snake by using suggestive expressions. What picture of the snake do you form on the basis of this description?
- c) How does the poet describe the day and the atmosphere when he saw the snake?
- d) What does the poet want to convey by saying that the snake emerges from the 'burning bowels of the earth'?
- e) Do you think the snake was conscious of the poet's presence? How do you know?
- f) How do we know that the snake's thirst was satiated? Pick out the expressions that convey this.
- g) The poet has a dual attitude towards the snake. Why does he experience conflicting emotions on seeing the snake?
- h) The poet is filled with horror and protest when the snake prepares to retreat and bury itself in the 'horrid black', 'dreadful' hole. In the light of this statement, bring out the irony of his act of throwing a log at the snake.
- i) The poet seems to be full of admiration and respect for the snake. He almost regards him like a majestic God. Pick out at least four expressions from the poem that reflect these emotions.
- j) What is the difference between the snake's movement at the beginning of the poem and later when the poet strikes it with a log of wood? You may use relevant vocabulary from the poem to highlight the difference.
- k) The poet experiences feelings of self-derision, guilt and regret after hitting the snake. Pick out expressions that suggest this. Why does he feel like this?
- l) You have already read Coleridge's poem The Ancient Mariner in which an albatross is killed by the mariner. Why does the poet make an allusion to the albatross?
- m) 'I have something to expiate'-Explain.

7. The encounter with the snake and the dual response of the poet to his presence at the water trough reflect a conflict between civilized social education and natural human instincts. The poet writes a diary entry highlighting how he was torn between the two voices. Write his diary.

- 8. Alliteration** is the repetition of sounds in words, usually the first sound. **Sibilance** is a special form of alliteration using the softer consonants that create hissing sounds, or sibilant sounds. These consonants and digraphs include s, sh, th, ch, z, f, x, and soft c.



Onomatopoeia is a word that imitates the sound it represents for a rhetorical or artistic effect of bringing out the full flavor of words. The sounds literally make the meaning in such words as "buzz," "crash," "whirr," "clang" "hiss," "purr," "squeak," etc. It is also used by poets to convey their subject to the reader. For example, in the last lines of Sir Alfred Tennyson's poem 'Come Down, O Maid', m and n sounds produce an atmosphere of murmuring insects:

*... the moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.*

Notice how D H Lawrence uses both these devices effectively in the following stanza.

*He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of
the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,
Silently.*

To what effect has the poet used these devices? How has it added to your understanding of the subject of the poem? You may record your understanding of snake characteristics under the following headings:

- a) Sound
- b) Movement
- c) Shape

9. The poet has also used both repetition and similes in the poem. For example-- 'must wait, must stand and wait' (repetition) and 'looked at me vaguely as cattle do' (simile). Pick out examples of both and make a list of them in your notebooks. Give reasons why the poet uses these literary devices.
10. A calligram is a poem, phrase, or word in which the handwriting is arranged in a way that creates a visual image. The image created by the words expresses visually what the word, or words, say. In a poem, it manifests visually the theme presented by the text of the poem. Read the poem given below. Try to compose a calligram. You could pick a subject of your choice.



Snake

Snake glides
through grass
over
Pebbles
forked tongue
working
never
speaking
but its
body
whispers
listen.

Keith Bosley

