



## No Men Are Foreign

### A. Lead- in:

Some people think they are different from others on the basis of their caste, colour, country and religion etc. Do you think people from other countries like China, Russia or Sri Lanka are different from us. What could be other possible reasons? Make a list of them.

All men are similar and the part of the same brotherhood. There is an essential unity of human race despite all differences we can think of. We are the children of the same God; He has made us equal, and the same blood flows in every human body. We feel pain or pleasure; tears and smiles in the same way.

Let's read the following poem to learn more about how people are the same everywhere, and why they belong to one humanity.

### B. The Text:

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.
2. They, too, aware of sun and air and water,  
Are fed by peaceful harvests, by war's long winter starved.  
Their hands are ours, and in their lines we read  
A labour not different from our own.
3. 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.

4. Let us remember, whatever we are told  
To hate our brothers, it is ourselves  
That we shall dispossess, betray, condemn,  
Remember, we who take arms against each other.
5. 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.

**James Kirkup**

**C. About the Poet :**

James Kirkup was born at Robertson Street, South Shields, co-Durham on 23 April 1918. He is a very well-known poet, translator and a travel writer. He won the Atlantic Award for Literature in 1950. He worked as Professor of English at Stockholm and at Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan. He died on 10 May 2009.

The present poem “No Men Are Foreign” is based on the idea that no man is foreign or strange. The theme that Kirkup presents is all men are equal. Though they are separated by boundaries, languages and attires, there is no difference among men of different nations. Thus, we should not hate people from other nations as we all belong to one brotherhood.

**D. Notes and glossary:**

strange	: unfamiliar / unknown
foreign	: located outside one's own country
beneath	: below or in a lower place

a single body breathes like ours	: All people live and breathe in the similar fashion/way as we breathe.
our brothers	: The people who live in countries other than ours.
in which we all shall lie	: We all shall lie buried in the same earth when we die.
war's long winter starved	: It is a war time trouble caused by people which robs away the peace
their hands are ours	: The people outside our country work hard using their hands for their livelihood as we do.
A labour not different from our own	: The hard work done by the people in other countries is not different from ours. All people work hard for their survival.
strength can be won by love	: The strength of other people can be won by love and kindness, not by force or war.
Whenever we are told to hate our brothers	: to hate people of other countries as commanded by power- hungry people
dispossess	: to deprive someone of the possession
betray	: to be false to/not to be loyal or faithful
condemn	: to strongly criticise
defile	: to make dirty / pollute
hells of fire and dust outrage the innocence of air	: the freshness and purity of air the nature has blessed us with is polluted due to war

**E. Let's understand the poem:**

(a) Read the poem above silently and answer the following questions.

1. What is this poem about ?
2. What should we remember ?

3. What do you mean by ‘uniform’ as mentioned by the poet ?
4. Why are the uniforms different ?
5. What is there beneath all uniforms ?
6. Do all the people on the earth breathe the same way ?
7. Who does “our brothers” stand for ?
8. How do they walk ? Do we walk like them?
9. What does the phrase “in which” stand for ? ( fourth line , first stanza)
10. Where are people buried when they die ? Is it common everywhere ?
11. All people in the world are our brothers and sisters. How should we treat them ?
12. Who does “They” refer to in the first line of the second stanza ?
13. What do we get from the sun? Do people in other countries get it ?
14. How is air essential to us ? Is it essential for the people in other countries ?
15. Can we live without water ? What about the people in other countries ?
16. What are the people in other countries aware of ? Do we also realise it in the same way ?
17. Who are benefitted if there are peaceful harvests ? How ?
18. Can there be peaceful harvests if there is a war ? What happens to people when there is a war or after a war ?
19. What does “their hands are ours” mean ?
20. Who do the words “they” and “ours” refer to in the first line of the third stanza ?
21. How can we win other people ?
22. What does common life mean ? (birth, death, joyfulness, etc. Add more.)
23. Who tells us to hate our brothers ?
24. What does “to hate our brothers” mean ? (stanza-4)
25. How do we dispossess our brothers in other part of the world ?

26. What is “human earth” ?
27. How do we defile the human earth ?
28. To whom do we harm by going to war ?
29. What does “our hells of fire” mean ?
30. What do you mean by “Innocence of air ?”

(b) Choose the right option.

1. A single body breathes beneath all \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. souls            B. bodies            C. uniforms            D. heads
2. What are all people aware of ?  
A. water            B. air            C. sun            D. all of the above
3. What are we doing to the human earth according to the poet?  
A. decorating    B. defiling            C. saving            D. recreating
4. How can strength be won?  
A. By war            B. By love and kindness  
C. By betraying            D. By taking arms against each other
5. We should remember that \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. no men are foreign            B. no men are strange  
C. no men are our enemies            D. all of the above

**F. Let's appreciate the poem:**

1. What message does the poet convey in the poem “No Men Are Foreign ?”
2. How do we defile the human earth ? Apart from war, what other things do we do to defile the earth ?
3. The poet uses the word “remember” four times in this poem. What does he want to convey ?

4. The poet repeats the line “Remember, no men are strange, no countries foreign” in the last line with some changes? What are those small changes? Do both the lines mean the same ?
5. How does the poet suggest that all people in the world are equal ?
6. One of the greatest philosophers of the world, Socrates wrote the following sentence. “I am a citizen, not of Athens or Greece, but of the world.” Does this sentence match with the theme of the poem ? How ?

**G. Let's do the activities:**

**1. Let's recite the poem :**

- The teacher divides the class into five groups.
- S/he reads aloud the poem two times with proper word stress and intonation.
- S/he reads the poem aloud line by line and students repeat after him/her.
- Students read the first line and the teacher reads aloud the second line and so on till the whole poem is complete.
- Each group reads a stanza and the rest of the groups repeat after them and so on.
- Finally each group reads a stanza.
- The teacher invites some students to recite the poem individually.

**2. Let's say the following dialogue.**

Imagine that David is a person, who works for a reputed telecasting organisation. He interviews the poet, James Kirkup on his poem “No Men Are Foreign”. See, how the poet interacts with David.

David : Good evening, Sir!

The Poet : Good evening David!

David : Could you share some information on your poem ‘No Men Are Foreign’, Sir ?

The Poet : I’d welcome any questions.

David : “No Men Are Foreign” is a wonderful piece of poetry. What made you pen the poem ?

- The Poet : The sharp distinction between man and man.
- David : How's that, Sir?
- The Poet : You see, all men are born, live and die. This is common to all. They feel pain or pleasure in one and the same way. But, you see, it's the boundary, attires, languages and beliefs which create differences among men on the earth.
- David : Will you add something more, please?
- The Poet : Well, here you're. All men belong to one earth. They enjoy benefits from the sun, air, and water equally well. Every one works hard for bread. I can't just believe how the walls of castes, creed and colour divide humanity.
- David : Thank you, Sir! Your thoughts are really great!
- The Poet : You're welcome.
- David : Good night, Sir!
- The Poet : Good-bye David, see you !

**3. Let's match the stanzas with their themes.**

Draw lines to match column "A" with column "B". "A" contains the stanza numbers and "B" contains the themes. One is done for you.

Stanza Numbers	Themes of the stanzas
1	aware of sun , air and water- hands alike –work hard for livelihood
2	power –hungry leaders – motivate negatively – hate our brothers- go for a war – think brothers to be foreign
3	different kinds of people -different uniforms –walk in the same way on the earth – lie in the earth when die
4	human earth-all countries , races and culture – war causes death and destruction – pollute the air and environment
5	have eyes like ours –wake and sleep alike – be won by love and kindness- not by force

**4. Let's write :**

Write a paragraph for each stanza of the poem. Go through the above matching activity before you begin to write. One paragraph is written to help you.

The poem "No Men Are Foreign" has five stanzas. The first stanza is about how people in different countries wear different uniforms. They walk on the same earth using their legs. We also walk so using our legs. They are buried in the earth when they die. We are also buried in the earth when we die. So we are equal.

