NO MEN ARE FOREIGN -SUMMARY

The poet, James Kirkup, talks about the concept of global brotherhood and equality. He tells us that no men are strange and no counties are foreign. The poem begins by asking us to constantly remind ourselves that no human being is strange or different. Beneath the superficial surface of our bodies, all human beings have hearts, minds and souls. The lines also drive home the point about the futility of war. All those who have divisive mind-sets, or are caught up in war, need to remember that behind such superficial “uniforms” are living and breathing human beings just like you and me.

Each and every land like each and every human being is nourished by sun, air and water. People may have adapted to different conditions and situations, but we are all one in the spirit. We are all able to sustain our lives during peacetime and would starve to death if wars disrupt on earth.

The poet here again reminds us of the humanity in each human being. We all wake up each new day with hope and then take rest. It is only love that can really keep humanity going. With love and looking at each human being with kindness, we can truly create a paradise- like situation on earth.

The poet then reminds us that by trying to hate and even exploit others and their lands, we will be betraying and condemning ourselves. Such kind of exploitation will only lead to superficial short-term success and no deep or spiritual kind of redemption.

In the last lines of this compelling poem, the poet again reminds us that taking “arms against each other,” that is war, is in fact futile. The very human earth is ruined through war, hatred and exploitation of any kind. The earth can become ravaged and polluted through war and exploitation with the constant firing, destruction and piling up of dust and debris. The air that we breathe also becomes polluted as a result. The poet ends with the refrain “no men are foreign, and no countries strange.” We need to constantly remember that we are all one in the spirit and encourage mutual respect for sustainable world in the future.

Literary Devices

1. **Rhyme Scheme -** The entire poem is written in free verse. There is no rhyme scheme in the poem.

The literary devices used are as follows –

1. **Alliteration:** The repetition of a consonant sound in two or more closely placed words is called alliteration. The instances of alliteration in the poem are -

* **Stanza 1**- Body, breathes ‘b’ sound is repeated
* **Stanza 2**– war’s, winter ‘w’ sound is repeated

1. **Metaphor**

* **Stanza 1 -** Uniform refers to the military of different countries
* **Stanza 2 –** wars time is compared to the winter season

1. Repetition: It is used in the entire poem.

* ‘Remember’ word is repeated 5 times in this poem.
* ‘Remember, no men are strange, no countries foreign’ is repeated in stanza 1 and stanza 5

1. **Enjambment -** running lines of poetry from one line to the next without using any kind of punctuation to indicate a stop. Instances of enjambment in the poem are as follows-

* Stanza 1 – line 2, 3 and 4
* Stanza 2 – line 3 and 3
* Stanza 3 – line 1, 2, and 3
* Stanza 4 – line 1 and 2
* Stanza 5 – Line 2 and 3

No men are foreign (Q&A)

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?

Answer

(i) The poet is probably speaking about the uniforms that the soldiers wear at the time of war. The word “uniform” here could also mean the traditional dresses of a country.

(ii) The poet suggests that all people on earth are the same as they breathe, buried, wake, sleep, hate, love and labour. The importance of the sun and air and water is equal for everyone. Everyone needs peace and suffers from starvation during wars.

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

Answer

Words which suggest the five ways in which we all are like are: Each of us has a similar body  
All of us breathe  
All of us walk

All of us lie  
We live and die on the same earth

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

Answer

There are five common features in stanza 2. These features are the sun, the air, the water, peaceful harvest, hands and the 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?

Answer

Whenever there is war, leaders tell people to hate the other country. They tell us to do so because of their personal gains. But we should not act as a puppet in their hands and do as they say. We should understand that war is futile and analyse the situation before jumping to conclusions. The poet says that if we fight against them, we kill and condemn ourselves.

**Extra Questions for practice**  
Q What are peaceful harvests? What do the peaceful harvests symbolise?  
  
Q What does the poet mean when he says “by war’s long winter starv’d”?.

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

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