

# Unit 5

## Communication Through Poems and Short Stories

### POEMS

#### **“ALL THE WORLD’S A STAGE” BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

##### **About the Poet**

*William Shakespeare* (1564–1616) was an English playwright, poet, and actor. Often called England’s national poet and the “Bard of Avon,” he is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world’s pre-eminent dramatist. He wrote 39 plays, 154 sonnets, and several narrative poems. His works explore universal themes like love, power, jealousy, betrayal, time, and fate.

##### **Background and Context**

This poem is a *monologue* from the play *As You Like It*. The character *Jaques* speaks these lines in Act II, Scene VII. He reflects deeply and philosophically on life, comparing it to a grand play where humans are actors entering and exiting the stage.

##### **Summary with Explanation**

1. “*All the world’s a stage*” – The world is like a theatre, and people are actors who perform their roles.
2. “*And all the men and women merely players*” – Everyone has a role to play in life.
3. “*They have their exits and their entrances*” – People are born (enter) and die (exit).
4. “*And one man in his time plays many parts*” – A person goes through different phases/roles.

##### **The Seven Stages of Life:**

1. *Infant* – Helpless, crying baby in arms.
2. *Schoolboy* – Whining, unwilling to go to school.
3. *Lover* – Emotional, writing poems, sighing deeply.
4. *Soldier* – Brave but quick-tempered, looking for honour.
5. *Justice* – Mature, logical, wise, with a big belly.
6. *Old man (Pantaloone)* – Weak body, glasses, trembling voice.
7. *Second Childhood* – Senility; no teeth, eyes, taste, or memory.

##### **Themes**

- Transience of human life
- Life as a performance
- Inevitability of aging and death
- Irony and futility of social roles

##### **Literary Devices**

- *Metaphor*: Life as a stage
- *Imagery*: Vivid description of each life phase
- *Alliteration*: “shrunk shank,” “whining schoolboy”
- *Symbolism*: Each role symbolizes a stage of human experience

## Philosophical Interpretation

The poem symbolizes the futility of chasing worldly roles and success because every person ultimately ends in the same state – helpless and dependent. It questions identity and permanence, urging the reader to reflect on the *meaning of life*.

## Moral

*“Life is a series of stages. What truly matters is how we play our parts with grace, wisdom, and awareness.”*

## “A PSALM OF LIFE” BY HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

### About the Poet

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882) was one of the most famous American poets. He was a professor at Harvard and is known for optimistic and uplifting poetry. His major works include *The Song of Hiawatha*, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, and *Paul Revere’s Ride*.

### Background

Written in response to a gloomy German poem, *A Psalm of Life* is a call for action, resilience, and purpose. The speaker urges readers to live life bravely and meaningfully.

### Structure

- 9 quatrains (4-line stanzas)
- ABAB rhyme scheme

### Summary

1. “Tell me not, in mournful numbers, / Life is but an empty dream!” – The poet rejects the idea that life is meaningless.
2. “Life is real! Life is earnest! / And the grave is not its goal” – Life is valuable, not just preparation for death.
3. “Art is long, and Time is fleeting” – Our actions outlast us, but time moves fast.
4. “Be not like dumb, driven cattle” – Do not blindly follow others.
5. “Lives of great men all remind us / We can make our lives sublime” – We should be inspired by the deeds of noble people.
6. “Let us, then, be up and doing” – Act now, work with patience and strength.

### Key Themes

- Purpose and action
- Carpe Diem (seize the day)
- Rejection of hopelessness
- Inspiration from role models

### Literary Devices

- Alliteration: “dumb, driven cattle”
- Metaphor: “Life is a battlefield,” “footprints on the sands of time”
- Symbolism: Footprints = legacy

## Moral

*“Don’t waste time in regret or fear. Live bravely, act wisely, and leave a lasting impact.”*

# **SHORT STORIES**

## **“THREE QUESTIONS” BY LEO TOLSTOY**

### **About the Author**

*Leo Tolstoy* was a Russian novelist and philosopher. His works reflect deep moral, spiritual, and existential questions. His best-known novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, are among the greatest literary works.

### **Background**

The story reflects Tolstoy’s lifelong exploration of wisdom, truth, and goodness. It illustrates the philosophy that *truth is found through simple acts of kindness and awareness*.

### **Full Summary**

- A king believes he can achieve success if he knows the answers to 3 questions:
  1. What is the *right time* to begin everything?
  2. Who are the *most necessary people*?
  3. What is the *most important task*?
- He gets different opinions from scholars and wise men but finds no clear answer.
- He visits a *hermit*, a simple but wise man.
- While staying there, he helps dig the hermit’s garden and saves a wounded man.
- The man was once his enemy but now feels grateful.
- The hermit later reveals:
  - The *present moment* is the only important time.
  - The *person you are with* is the most important.
  - The *most important thing* is to do good to others.

### **Characters**

- *The King* – Symbol of leadership and learning
- *The Hermit* – Symbol of spiritual wisdom
- *The Wounded Man* – Represents karma, forgiveness, and transformation

### **Moral Lessons**

- *Live in the present*
- *Value the people around you*
- *Do good deeds as your highest responsibility*

## **“THE NECKLACE” BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT**

### **About the Author**

*Guy de Maupassant* was a master of short stories. His works often contain ironic twists and explore the flaws and struggles of ordinary people.

### **Background**

“The Necklace” is one of Maupassant’s most famous short stories. It captures the tragedy that can result from vanity, pride, and lack of honesty.

### **Detailed Story Summary**

- *Madame Loisel* is a beautiful woman who is dissatisfied with her modest life.
- Her husband gets an invitation to a prestigious party.
- She borrows a *necklace* from her rich friend *Madame Forestier*.
- She enjoys the party but later realizes she has *lost the necklace*.

- Instead of admitting the truth, she and her husband borrow money and buy a *replacement necklace* worth 40,000 francs.
- They spend the next *ten years* living in poverty, doing hard labour to repay the debt.
- After 10 years, she tells Madame Forestier the truth — only to learn that the original necklace was a *fake* made of *paste*.

### Characters

- *Madame Loisel* – Ambitious, prideful, desires luxury
- *Monsieur Loisel* – Loving and supportive husband
- *Madame Forestier* – Wealthy friend who lends the necklace

### Themes

- *Materialism vs. Reality*: Obsession with appearances leads to suffering
- *Irony*: The twist ending reveals the futility of their sacrifice
- *Honesty and Pride*: Lack of honesty caused ten years of unnecessary hardship

### Literary Devices

- *Situational Irony*: The story's ending shocks the reader
- *Symbolism*: The necklace symbolizes false pride and illusion

### Moral

*“Do not pretend to be someone you are not. Be honest and appreciate what you have. Pride and dishonesty can lead to long-term suffering.”*

