

WARMING UP

1. Stories can be told even in the form of poetry. Such poems are called Narrative poems. Narrative poems do not always follow rhythmic patterns of a fixed rhyme scheme. Such poems are written in a style called 'Free Verse.'
Recall and name some narrative poems you have done / read earlier.
2. Read the poem below and fill in the gaps, choosing appropriate pairs of rhyming words, to make them meaningful.

Little things

Little drops of water,
 Little grains of
 Make the mighty ocean
 And the pleasant

Thus the little minutes,
 Humble though they ,
 Make the mighty ages
 Of

Little deeds of kindness,
 Little words of
 Make this earth an Eden,
 Like the heaven a

(love - above / sand-land / be - eternity)

- What important message does the above poem convey?

The Plate of Gold

One day there fell in great Benares' temple-court
A wondrous plate of gold, whereon these words were writ;
To him who **loveth best**, a gift from Heaven.'

There at

The priests made **proclamation**: 'At the midday hour,
Each day, let those assemble who for virtue **deem**
their right to Heaven's gift the best; and we will hear the
deeds of mercy done, and so **adjudge**.'

The news

ran swift as light, and soon from every **quarter** came
nobles and munshis, hermits, scholars, holy men,
and all **renowned** for gracious or for splendid deeds,
Meanwhile the priests in **solemn** council sat and heard
what each had done to merit best the gift of Heaven.
So for a year the **claimants** came and went.

At last,

after a patient weighing of the worth of all,
the priests **bestowed** the plate of gold on one who seemed,
the largest lover of the race – whose whole estate,
within the year had been **parted** among the poor.
This man, all trembling with his joy, advanced to take
the golden plate when lo ! at his finger's first touch
it changed to basest lead ! All stood **aghast**; but when
the **hapless** claimant dropt it clanging on the floor,
Heaven's **guerdon** was again transformed to shining
gold.

So far another twelve month sat he priests and judged.
Thrice they awarded – thrice did Heaven refuse the gift.
Meanwhile a host of poor, **maimed** beggars in the street
lay all about the temple gate, in hope to move
that love whereby each claimant hoped to win the gift

◆ *Who could claim the plate of gold?*

- **loveth best** : (here)
one who loves God most
- **proclamation** : a public statement
- **deem** : consider, regard
- **adjudge** : consider and declare
- **quarter** : (here)
corner
- **renowned** : well-known
- **solemn** : serious
- **claimants** : those who state the right to get something
- **bestowed** : presented as a gift
- ◆ *To whom did the priests gift the plate of gold?*
- **parted** : distributed
- ◆ *What magical occurrence shocked the people?*
- **aghast** : shocked and horrified
- **hapless** : unfortunate
- **guerdon** : reward
- **maimed** : permanently damaged, crippled

◆ *Why had many beggars collected outside the temple?*

◆ *Why did the pilgrims, to the temple, shower coins to the beggars?*

◆ *What did they fail to do?*

● **shrivelled** : dried up and wrinkled

● **shunned** : avoided and rejected

◆ *What did the poor peasant offer the blind beggar?*

● **wrangled** : argued angrily

and well for them it was (if gold be charity),
For every pilgrim to the temple gate praised God,
that love might thus approve itself before the test,
and so coins rained freely in the outstretched hands;
but none of those who gave, so much as turned to look
into the poor sad eyes of them that begged.



And now

The second year had almost passed, but still the plate of gold, by whomsoever touched was turned to lead. At length there came a simple peasant – not aware of that strange contest for the gift of God—to pay a vow within the temple. As he passed along the line of **shrivelled** beggars, all his soul was moved within him to sweet pity, and the tears welled up and trembled in his eyes.

Now by the temple gate
there lay a poor, sore creature, blind, and **shunned** by all;
but when the peasant came, and saw the sightless face
and trembling, maimed hands he could not pass, but knelt,
and took both palms in his, and softly said: ‘O thou,
my brother! bear thy troubles bravely. God is good.’
Then he arose and walked straightway across the court,
and entered where they **wrangled** of their deeds of love
before the priests.

A while he listened sadly then
 had turned away but something moved the priest who held
 the plate of gold to **beckon** to the peasant. So
 he came, not understanding and obeyed, and stretched
 his hand and took the sacred vessel. Lo ! it shone
 with thrice its former **lustre**, and amazed them all!
 ‘Son’, cried the priest, ‘rejoice, the gift of God is thine.
 Thou lovest best!’ And all made answers, ‘It is well.’
 And, one by one, departed. But the peasant knelt
 and prayed, bowing his head above the golden plate;
 while o’er his soul, like morning, streamed the love of
 God.

– James Henry Leigh Hunt



● **beckon** : call

● **lustre** : shine

◆ *Why had God
 chosen the simple
 peasant as the most
 deserving of the
 plate of gold?*

ENGLISH WORKSHOP

1. Pick out words from the poem to complete the sentences meaningfully.

- (a) Stephen Hawking was a (famous) Astrophysicist.
- (b) The Government made a (announcement) about their new
 taxation policy.
- (c) Everyone stood (horrified) when the terrible accident took place.
- (d) She (bargained) with the hawker to reduce the price.
- (e) Handicapped people should never be (ignored and avoided)

2. Make a list of archaic words from the poem and give their modern equivalents.

3. Rearrange the following in the proper order and insert them into a flow chart as per the poem.

- (a) The plate turned to lead, when it was gifted to false-hearted claimants.
- (b) Many claimants donated their wealth to receive the plate of gold.
- (c) For almost two years, no claimants received the plate of gold.
- (d) A plate of gold fell in a temple from Heaven.
- (e) The peasant offered comfort and courage to a blind miserable beggar, whom all had ignored.
- (f) The priests announced that the one who loved God most of all, would receive the gift from Heaven.
- (g) When the priest gave the plate of gold to that peasant, it shone with thrice its lustre.
- (h) A simple peasant, who had nothing to offer, came to that temple.

4. Which two sayings about God are conveyed through the poem ‘The Plate of Gold’?

- (a) God helps those, who help themselves.
- (b) God loves those, who love their fellow beings.
- (c) God loves those, who give away their wealth, to please Him.
- (d) Service to mankind is service to God.

5. ‘But the peasant bowed and prayed to God’ What could he have prayed for ?

6. Imagine that you are the peasant. Compose a short prayer to God, after having received the plate of gold. Write it using stylish handwriting.

7. Read other poems by Leigh Hunt, especially ‘Abou Ben Adhem’.

Compare the messages in that poem with those in ‘The Plate of Gold’. What do you observe ?

