

OUR CASUARINA TREE

- TORU DUTT

1. Fill in the blanks choosing the words from the box given and complete the summary of the poem.

The casuarina tree is tall and strong, with a creeper winding around it like a (1) python. The tree stands like a (2) giant with a colourful scarf of flowers. Birds surround the garden and the sweet song of the birds is heard. The poet is delighted to see the casuarina tree through her (3) casement. She sees a grey monkey sitting like a (4) statue on top of the tree, the cows grazing and the water lilies (5) springing in the pond. The poet feels that the tree is dear to her not for its (6) impressive appearance but for the (7) nostalgic memories of her happy childhood that it brings to her. She strongly believes that (8) nature communicates with human beings. The poet could communicate with the tree even when she was in a far-off land as she could hear the tree (9) lamenting her absence. The poet consecrates the tree's memory to her loved ones, who are not alive. She immortalizes the tree through her poem like the poet Wordsworth who (11) sanctified the yew tree of Borrowdale in verse. She expresses her wish that the tree should be remembered out of love and not just because it cannot be (12) forgotten.

[python, statue, nature, casement, nostalgic, lamenting, impressive, forgotten, giant, consecrates, springing, sanctified]

2. Based on your understanding of the poem, answer the following questions in one or two sentences each.

a) What is the creeper compared to?

The creeper is compared to a **python**.

b) How does the creeper appear on the tree?

The creeper is **winding the trunk of the Casuarina Tree** round and round. It embraces the tree very **tightly**.

c) Describe the garden during the night.

During the night the garden is filled with an endless song. It is sung from the dark side of the garden.

d) How does the poet spend her winter?

The poet spends her winter **watching the baboon that sits like a statue** on top of the tree, its offsprings run and play in the lower branches, the **cows grazing** and the **water lilies springing** in the pond.

e) Name the bird that sings in the poet's garden.

Kokila is a type of bird **similar to the cuckoo** that sings in the poet's garden.

f) Why is the casuarina tree dear to poet's heart?

The Casuarina tree is dear to poet's heart not only for its impressive appearance **but also for** the nostalgic memories of her happy childhood **that it brings to her**.

g) Does nature communicate with human beings?

Yes, nature communicates with human beings.

h) What has Wordsworth sanctified in his poem?

Wordsworth has sanctified **the yew tree of Borrowdale valley** in his poem.

i) To whom does Toru Dutt want to consecrate the tree's memory?

Toru Dutt wants to consecrate the tree's memory **to her beloved ones who are not alive**.

j) The casuarina tree will be remembered for ever. Why?

The casuarina tree will be remembered for ever. Because the poet expresses her wish that **the tree should be remembered out of love** and not just because it cannot be forgotten.

3. Read the lines given below and answer the questions that follow.

a) A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound

No other tree could live.

i. Which tree is referred to in the above lines?

The Casuarina tree is referred to in the above lines.

ii. How does the tree survive the tight hold of the creeper?

The tree survives the tight hold of the creeper **because the tree is very strong.**

iii. Why does Toru Dutt use the expression ‘a creeper climbs’?

The creeper is winding the tree upwards round and round. So Toru Dutt uses the expression ‘a creeper climbs’.

b) The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung

In crimson clusters all the bough among!

i. Who is the giant here?

The Casuarina tree is the giant here.

ii. Why is the scarf colourful?

Here the scarf refers to the winding creeper’s flowers. They are colourful.

c) “Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,

And Time the shadow”, and though weak the verse

That would thy beauty fain, oh, fain rehearse,

May Love defend thee from oblivion’s curse.

i. What does the poet mean by the expression ‘May love defend thee from oblivion’s curse?’

Here ‘oblivion’s curse’ means the ‘curse of forgetfulness’. **The tree should be remembered out of love** and not just because it cannot be forgotten.

ii. What does the expression ‘fain’ convey?

The expression ‘fain’ conveys **the eagerness of the poet** of the poem.

iii. What does the poet convey through the expression ‘Fear, trembling hope’?

The poet conveys (her) **humans’ state of mind** through the expression ‘Fear, trembling hope’.

ADDITIONAL

i) Like a huge Python, winding round and round.

The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars,

Up to its very summit near the stars,

A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound

a) What is compared to python?

A creeper is compared to python.

b) Where is the tree’s summit?

The tree’s summit is near the stars.

c) Who embraces who?

The creeper embraces the Casuarina Tree.

d) Mention the figure of speech mentioned in this line.

Figure of speech: Simile.

e) What is the rhyme scheme of the above lines?

Rhyme scheme: a b b a

f) Pick out the rhyming words mentioned in the above lines.

Rhyming words: round - bound; scars - stars

ii) No other tree could live. But gallantly

The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung

In crimson clusters all the boughs among

Whereon all day are gathered bird and bee;

a) How does the tree stand?

The tree stands like the Giant.

b) Where are flowers hanging?

Flowers are hanging from the creeper among the boughs of the trees.

c) What does the scarf refer to?

The scarf refers to the winding creeper's colourful flowers.

d) What are gathered on the tree?

Bird and bee are gathered on the tree.

e) What is the rhyme scheme of the above lines?

Rhyme scheme: a b b a

f) Pick out the rhyming words mentioned in the above lines.

Rhyming words: gallantly - bee; hung - among

iii) And oft at nights the garden overflows.

With one sweet song that seems to have no close,

Sung darkling from our tree, while men repose.

a) What does the garden overflow with?

The garden overflows with a sweet song.

b) What time is referred to here?

Night time is referred to here.

c) Who heard the song?

The poet heard the song.

d) What is the rhyme scheme of the above lines?

Rhyme scheme: a a a

e) Pick out the rhyming words mentioned in the above lines.

Rhyming words: overflows - close - repose

d) How does the poet see the casurina tree?

The poet sees the casurina tree through her casement.

v) A grey baboon sits statue-like alone

Watching the sunrise; while on lower boughs.

a) What is compared to the baboon?

A statue is compared to the baboon.

b) What does baboon mean?

Baboon is a kind of monkey lived in Asia and Africa.

c) What is the baboon watching?

The baboon is watching the sunrise.

vi) His puny offspring leap about and play;

And far and near kokilas hail the day.

a) What does "offspring" refer to here?

'Offspring' refers to young one of the baboon.

b) What does the offspring do?

The offspring leaps and plays among the boughs of the casuarina tree.

c) What are kokilas?

Kokilas are the birds like cuckoos.

d) What does 'puny' mean?

Puny means 'sturdy or weak'.

e) What does the poet watch on the tree?

The poet watches a baboon, birds, a bee, and an offspring of the baboon.

vii) By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,

The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.

a) What does 'hoar' mean?

Hoar means cluster (or) group of trees.

b) What is compared to the water-lilies' springing?

'Enmassed Snow' is compared to the water-lilies' springing.

viii) *Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:*

Beneath it we have played; though years may roll

a) What does the tree bring to the poet?

The tree brings nostalgic memories of the poet's happy childhood.

b) What does the poet recollect himself?

The poet recollects her childhood days.

c) Where did they play?

They played under the boughs of the Casuarina Tree.

ix) *What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear*

Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach.

a) What does the poet hear?

The poet hears the (dirge) murmuring sad songs.

b) What does the poet compares the murmur to?

The poet compares the murmur to the sound of sea waves breaking
on the (shingle) rocky beach.

x) I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.

Therefore O foam would consecrate a lay

a) What does "thee" refer to?

'Thee' refers to the Casuarina Tree.

b) Where does the poet see the tree?

The poet sees the tree in her own beloved native land.

c) What does "clime" mean?

It means climate.

xi) *With deathless trees-like those in Borrowdale,*

Under whose awful branches lingered pale.

a) Which deathless tree is compared to here?

The Yew Tree in Borrowdale is compared to the Casuarina Tree.

b) What is meant by Borrowdale?

Borrowdale is a valley in England.

c) Whose poem is referred to here ?

Wordsworth's poem is referred to here.

4. Explain the following lines with reference to the context.

a) *Dear is the Casuarina to my soul;*

Reference:

The above line is taken from the poem 'OUR CASUARINA TREE' written by Toru Dutt.

Context :

The poet expresses her love towards the Casuarina Tree in this line.

Explanation:

The poet says that the Casuarina Tree is very dear to the poet's heart not only for its impressive appearance but also for the nostalgic memories of her happy childhood that it brings to her. She loves the tree because it is this tree under which she and her siblings played with joy during their childhood. The tree is thus a bond between her past and present and so it is dear to her heart and soul.

Comment :

Real love towards anything cannot be washed away by time..

b) *It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,...*

Reference :

The above line is taken from the poem 'OUR CASUARINA TREE', written by Toru Dutt.

Context :

The poet uses this line to convey her strong belief that nature communicates with human beings.

Explanation:

The poet strongly believes that nature communicates with human beings. Whenever the tree's image comes to her mind, hot tears blind her eyes as she is agonised with the absence of her beloved siblings. The poet then hears a dirge-like murmur which is like the sea waves lashing on a rocky beach. She says that it sounds like a strange speech and believes it is the lamentation of the Casuarina tree .

Meanings

Lament - passionate expression of grief/sorrow

Eerie - strange and frightening(ghostly)

Comment :

The poet personifies the tree and believes that it laments over her absence.

c) *Unto thy honor, Tree, beloved of those
Who now in blessed sleep for aye repose,*

Reference :

The given lines are taken from the poem "OUR CASUARINA TREE", written by Toru Dutt.

Context:

The poet says these lines when she glorifies the tree.

Explanation:

The poet says that she is pleased to dedicate the poem to the honour of the Casuarina tree. She sanctifies the tree. She consecrates the tree's memory to her loved ones. But they are not alive. She praises the tree that it is so loveable to both living and dead.

Meanings:

Blessed Sleep – death

Repose - a state of rest

Comment :

The poet's love over the tree is reflected in these lines .

5. Identify the figure of speech used in each of the extracts .

a) "LIKE a huge Python, winding round and round - Zoomorphism/Simile

The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars",

b) "*A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound*

No other tree could live. But gallantly

The giant wears the scarf, and flowers

are hung....." –Personification/Metaphor

c) "*A gray baboon sits statue-like alone*" - Simile

d) "*The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.*" - Simile

e) "*What is that dirge - like murmur that I hear*"-Personification

Like the sea breaking on a shingle -beach?-Simile/ Rhetorical Question

a) **Zoomorphism - Explanation**

Describing the vine in animal terms (as a python). This is used to illustrate movement, making the tree seem more actively alive and also implying movement. This is a subtle indication of the process of life.

Additional Poetic Devices:

- a) Up to its very summit near the stars- **Hyperbole**
- b) In crimson clusters all the boughs among – **Imagery**
- c) It is the tree's lament , an eerie speech – **Personification**
- d)Unknown, yet well-known to the eye

of faith – **Personification/Oxymoron**

e)And the waves gently kissed the classic shore – **Personification**

f)When earth lay tranced in a dreamless swoon – **Personification**

g)Dearer than life to me, alas, were they! – **Simile**

h)Time the shadow.... – **Metaphor**

i)Ah, I have heard that wail far away – **Personification**

j)With deathless trees – like those in Borrowdale - **Simile**

k) With deathless trees – like those in Borrowdale – **Allusion refers to**

Wordsworth's ,“Yew Trees of Borrowdale”.

l)In memory , till the hot tears blind mine eyes – **Hyperbole/ Personification**
