

Class 9 English/ Literature

THE SOLITARY REAPER

Summary

'The Solitary Reaper' is William Wordsworth's Rendition of the delight a simple peasant girl derives from Nature and how the entire atmosphere reverberates with That happiness.

The poet sees a highland girl reaping the harvest and Singing. The poet compares her song with the song of a Nightingale, soothing his sorrows, easing his weariness, Just the same way as the nightingale welcomes the weary

Travellers in the shady oasis of the Arabian sands. The Maiden's song is also compared to the song of the cuckoo Bird which is the harbinger of summer and ushers in Happiness. The song of the maiden is as thrilling and Persuasive as the song of the cuckoo bird which is Effective enough to break the silence of the seas. The poet cannot understand the dialect of the song, he is unable to comprehend its meaning, but is able to gauge from its sad tone that it probably relates to some unhappy memory, some battles fought long ago. The poet also feels that the song may be about the commonplace things like joys or sorrows.

The poet feels that the girl's song would have no end and would continue forever. The poet saw the girl singing as she bent over her sickle. The song of the maiden was so mesmerising and spellbinding that it held the poet motionless and still. When the poet started mounting the hill, the song could not be heard but it left an indelible mark on the poet's heart. For the poet, it would always remain a fresh evocative memory. The poem also shows how the appeal of music is universal.

TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS (SOLVED)

1. On the basis of your understanding of the poem, answer the following questions by ticking the correct choice.

(a) *The central idea of the poem 'The Solitary Reaper' is _____.*

- (i) Well sung songs give us happiness
- (ii) Melodious sounds appeal to all
- (iii) Beautiful experiences give us lifelong pleasure
- (iv) Reapers can sing like birds

Ans: (a) (iii) beautiful experiences give us lifelong pleasure

(b) *In the poem 'The Solitary Reaper' to whom does the poet say 'Stop here or gently pass?'*

- (i) To the people cutting corn
- (ii) To himself
- (iii) To the people who make noise
- (iv) To all the passers-by

Ans: (b) (IV) to all the passers-by

(c) *'The Solitary Reaper' is a narrative poem set to music. This form of verse is called a _____.*

- (i) lyric
- (ii) soliloquy
- (iii) monologue
- (iv) sonnet

Ans: (c) (i) lyric

(d) *The poet's lament in the poem 'The Solitary Reaper' is that _____.*

- (i) He cannot understand the song
- (ii) He did not know the lass
- (iii) She stopped singing at once
- (iv) He had to move away

Ans: (d) (IV) he had to move away

(e) *The setting of the poem is _____.*

- (i) Arabia
- (ii) Hebrides
- (iii) Scotland
- (iv) England

Ans: (e) (iii) Scotland

2. Why do you think Wordsworth has chosen the song of the nightingale and the cuckoo, for comparison with the solitary reaper's song?

Ans: The nightingale and the cuckoo are known as song-birds. Many poets have written about their melodious notes and there is a reference to nightingale even in the Bible. So the poet has chosen their songs for comparison with the Solitary Reaper's song.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Read the following extracts and choose the correct option :

*1. Alone she cuts and binds the grain, And sings a melancholy strain ; O listen!
for the vale profound Is overflowing with the sound.*

(a) Identify 'she' from the above stanza.

- (i) A traveller
- (ii) The poet
- (iii) Solitary reaper
- (iv) None of the above

(b) How does the poet know that the song is melancholy when he cannot understand the words?

- (i) From the girl's expression
- (ii) From the words of the song
- (iii) From the tune
- (iv) From her dress

(c) What effect does the girl's song have over the surroundings?

- (i) Has no effect
- (ii) All people desert the valley
- (iii) The valley echoes with the song
- (iv) The valley is indifferent

Ans : (a) (iii) (b) (iii) (c) (iii)

*2. A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.*

(a) What is cuckoo bird famous for?

- (i) Cheerfulness
- (ii) Thrill
- (iii) Driving away tiredness
- (iv) Welcoming the spring

(b) How does the Solitary Reaper's song score over the song of the cuckoo?

- (i) It is more far-reaching
- (ii) It echoes more
- (iii) It is more musical and fresh
- (iv) It does not have any effect

(c) Hebrides means:

- (i) A group of trees
- (ii) Far off valleys
- (iii) Sea
- (iv) A group of islands off near Scotland

Ans: (a) (IV) (b) (i) (c) (IV)

*3. Will no one tell me what she sings? Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far off things,
And battles long ago.*

(a) *Explain the use of 'perhaps' in the second line.*

- (i) The poet is not sure
- (ii) He is double-minded
- (iii) He is indifferent
- (iv) None of these

(b) *'Flow', – what quality of the solitary reaper song is expressed here?*

- (i) Its fluidity
- (ii) Its evocativeness
- (iii) Its spontaneity
- (iv) Its music

(c) *What is the poet's guess?*

- (i) The theme is of spring
- (ii) Of happiness and forgotten things
- (iii) Of battles and sad events in the past
- (iv) Of stories

Ans : (a) (i) (b) (iii) (c) (iii)

4. *Or is it some more humble lay, Familiar matter of today?
Some natural sorrow, loss or pain, That has been, may be again.*

(a) 'It' in the first line refers to

- (i) The valley
- (ii) The song
- (iii) The solitary reaper
- (iv) Her dress

(b) Explain 'humble lay'.

- (i) A song about ordinary events
- (ii) A song about extraordinary things
- (iii) A song about modest things
- (iv) A song about rich people

(c) What does the poet wish to convey by saying 'that has been and may be again'?

- (i) A natural loss, and pain
- (ii) A natural event
- (iii) Natural sorrow which can occur again
- (iv) Both (i) and (iii)

Ans : (a) (ii) (b) (i) (c) (iii)

5. *Whatever the theme, the maiden sang*

As if her song could have no ending; I saw her singing at her work And o'er the sickle bending

(a) *What other activities is the maiden doing besides singing?*

- (i) She is ploughing
- (ii) binding the corn
- (iii) cutting grass
- (iv) none of the above

(b) *What makes the maiden's song extraordinary?*

- (i) Its musicality
- (ii) Its eternal nature
- (iii) Its theme
- (iv) Her voice

(c) *What effect does the song have over the poet?*

- (i) Mesmerising
- (ii) Impressive
- (iii) Invigorating
- (iv) No effect

Ans : (a) (ii) (b) (ii) (c) (i)

6. *I listened, motionless and still And, as I mounted up the hill, The music in my heart I bore, Long after it was heard no more.*

(a) *Where does the poet go?*

- (i) Down the valleys
- (ii) Doesn't go anywhere
- (iii) Climbed up the mountain
- (iv) Nowhere

(b) *How did the song affect the poet?*

- (i) It impressed him
- (ii) Served as an inspiration
- (iii) Left a permanent mark on his heart
- (iv) Had no effect

(c) *What does the poet want to convey by “long after it was heard no more”?*

- (i) Music is entertaining
- (ii) Music is eternal and can give pleasure even when you do not hear it
- (iii) Sad music is always remembered
- (iv) The universal and permanent impression of music.

Ans : (a) (iii) (b) (iii) (c) (iv)

7. *Alone she cuts and binds the grain, And sings a melancholy strain ; O listen!
for the vale profound Is overflowing with the sound.*

(a) *‘Melancholy strain’ in the second line refers to :*

- (i) Sad song
- (ii) Thrilling song
- (iii) Happy song
- (iv) Sweet song

(b) *Identify the figure of speech in the above lines:*

- (i) Personification
- (ii) Metaphor
- (iii) Imagery
- (iv) Alliteration

(c) *The last two lines mean:*

- (i) Her voice is resounding in the valley
- (ii) She is singing at a high pitch
- (iii) Her voice is reaching outside the valley

(iv) She is asking everyone to listen to her

Ans. (a) (i) (b) (iii) (c) (i)

8. *No nightingale did ever chant more welcome notes to weary bands Of Travellers in some shady haunt Among Arabian Sands A voice so thrilling never was heard In spring – time from the cuckoo – bird Breaking the silence of the seas Among the farthest Hebrides*

(a) *According to the poet, nightingales sing:*

- (i) To welcome the travellers
- (ii) To please themselves
- (iii) To welcome the tired travellers
- (iv) To get relief from their own pains

(b) *The nightingales sing:*

- (i) In spring season in desert of Arabia
- (ii) In autumn season in deserts
- (iii) In spring season in deserts of Thar
- (iv) In spring season in deserts of Egypt

(c) *The effect of the voice of the cuckoo bird is :*

- (i) That it refreshes the tired travellers
- (ii) That it is spread everywhere
- (iii) That it seems to welcome travellers
- (iv) Breaks the seas' silence

Ans. (a) (iii) (b) (i) (c) (IV)

NON-MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Read the following extracts and answer the questions given below :

1. *Will none tell me what she sings? Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow For old, unhappy, far off things, And battles long ago.*

(a) Explain the use of ‘perhaps’ in the second line.

Ans. ‘Perhaps’ is used to show that poet is not sure about the theme of solitary reaper’s song.

(b) ‘Flow’, – what quality of the solitary reaper song is expressed here?

Ans. The word ‘flow’ expresses the spontaneity of solitary reaper’s song.

(c) What is the poet’s guess?

Ans. He guesses that she might be singing about some unhappy things of the past or the battles fought long ago.

*2. Or is it some more humble lay, Familiar matter of today? Some natural sorrow, loss or pain,
That has been, may be again.*

(a) ‘It’ in the first line refers to :

Ans. ‘It’ in the first line refers to solitary reaper’s song.

(b) Explain ‘humble lay’.

Ans. It means that solitary reaper’s song may be about Some ordinary people.

(c) What does the poet wish to convey by saying ‘that has been and may be again’ ?

Ans. He wishes to convey that the song may be about some natural sorrow which can occur again.

*3. Whatever the theme, the maiden sang As if her song could have no ending; I
saw her singing at her work And o’er the sickle bending*

(a) What other activities is the maiden doing besides singing ?

Ans. Besides singing, the maiden is cutting and binding the grain.

(b) What makes the maiden’s song extraordinary?

Ans. Maiden’s voice makes her song extraordinary.

(c) What effect does the song have over the poet ?

Ans. The song left an indelible mark on the poet's heart.

4. *I listened, motionless and still and, as I mounted up the hill, The music in my heart I bore, Long after it was heard no more.*

(a) Where does the poet go?

Ans. The poet is climbing up the mountain.

(b) How did the song affect the poet?

Ans. The song left a permanent mark on the poet's heart.

(c) What does the poet want to convey by "long After it was heard no more"?

Ans. The poet wants to say that the music is eternal and can give pleasure even when you do not hear it.

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