



QUESTION BANK –THE LABURNUM TOP- by Ted Hughes

Class: XI

Sub: ENGLISH

‘The Laburnum Tree’ by Ted Hughes is a poem about the ‘Laburnum’ tree and the ‘Goldfinch’ bird. *The poem is a celebration of life-energy.*

Summary:

It is the autumn season and the tree top is silent, without any movement. It is September and the yellow sunlight of afternoon falls on the motionless tree top. Leaves of the tree are losing their sap and turning yellow in the autumn season. All the seeds are already shed. The tree stands quiet until a goldfinch arrives all of a sudden at the end of one of its branches.

Excited and nervous, it enters the thickness of the tree abruptly but in all alertness. Its movement towards its nest is as smooth as a lizard’s. The bird as soon as it approaches its nest her chicks immediately start a bedlam- the whole tree, sharing in the excitement of the noisy chicks, seems to tremble. It is as if a machine had started, the frenzied fluttering of tiny wings, the cacophony of high-pitched chirrup resembles the sound and fury of an engine under peak conditions. It is so called engine of her family.

She feeds her young with enthusiasm and afterwards briskly moves outward to the end of the branch. She shows her striped face the mark of identity to her young chicks. She emits strange, mysterious, soft whistle-like whispers - perhaps cautioning the chicks that she wouldn’t be around until the next feeding time. And then she takes flight toward the boundless sky.

The Laburnum once again becomes empty, dormant and quiet.

LITERARY DEVICES:

1. Alliteration:

‘September sunlight’

‘tree trembles’

‘whistle-chirrup whisperings’

2. Simile:

Sleek as a lizard

3. Metaphor: ‘The engine of her family’

Extended metaphor: ‘She ‘stokes’ it full’ - fuelling is necessary to keep the engine running.

4. Personification –The whole tree **trembles and thrills**

5. Symbols: ‘Laburnum Tree’ is a symbol of peace and serenity, an integral part of nature.

‘Yellow’ is the symbol of decay and loneliness. ‘Yellow September’ and ‘yellowing leaves’ refer to the autumn and its process of decay. ‘Goldfinch’ is a symbol of activity and liveliness.