



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

Class: Grade 8	Department: ENGLISH	May 2021
Worksheet No: 8	Topic: When you are old- W.B Yeats (Poem)	Note: Notebook

A: Answer these Questions:

1. Who is the poet addressing his poem to? Describe the person.

The poet is addressing his love, Maud Gonne, English heiress and Irish revolutionary. She has soft, deep eyes and some sorrow in her face. She is graceful.

2. How can we say that the person being addressed had many admirers? Did everyone love the person truly?

We can say that the person being addressed has many admirers because of the line 'how many loved your moments of glad grace' but we can tell that not all of them loved her truly because of the line 'and loved your beauty with love false or true'.

3. Explain the phrase, 'your changing face'.

The phrase, 'your changing face' refers to the way in which a face alters with age.

4. Comment on the relevance of the title of the poem. Suggest an alternate title.

The title of the poem, '*When you are old*', is apt and refers to a time in the future when the person addressed can reflect on the days of her youth. Suggestions for an alternate title must sum up the feeling of the poem e.g. 'Love and Loss', 'Eternal Love' etc.

5. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem, *when you are old*?

The rhyme scheme of the poem is ABBA, CDDC, EFFE.

6. Which book is the poet addressing in the poem?

His book of poems

7. What do you mean by 'glad grace'?

Her physical beauty

8. How is the one man different from the many others who loved the lady?

The speaker of the poem addresses the most beautiful lady of his time who does not reciprocate his love. The poet visualizes her old age and thinks that, by then, the lady will be left with none but only with his book of poems that express his true love for her. He now feels that the young lady whom he loves so intensely is surrounded by many young love aspirants who are merely drawn to her physical beauty. He doubts if their intentions of love is true or false. In contrast, he says that he is the one man different from them as he has loved the pilgrim soul in her.

9. “When You Are Old” is a poem of contrasts. What purposes do they serve?

The poet has used wide contrasts in terms of present and future and beauty and time. He takes a conservative stand in his spiritual love in contrast with the many who loved her glad grace. He does not overtly convey his concerns to her while she is engrossed with her role in serious political and social issues.

10. What is the Central Idea of the poem?

The poet has addressed this poem to his beloved, Maud Gonne, who never reciprocated his love. The speaker of the poem dramatizes his unreturned love by giving a future warning to the girl of a present day. He tells her that when she grows old she will get the flashbacks and memories and she will regret the rejected love. The poem is full of a lover’s passion, intense feelings and spirituality. It conveys a message that true love is indestructible and constant.

11. How is the journey from youth to old age described in the poem?

The poet describes the period of youth as prized with physical charms, attractive eyes, pleasant feeling of love etc., while as it describes the old age in terms of grey hairs, drowsiness, sorrow, and desolation. The journey from youth to old age is very heart touching. In our prime youth, we are flocked by many admirers. Life seems to be very sweet and happy. But freaks and vagaries of nature spare none. As we grow old, all pleasures and false admirers begin to fade away. Then we are left alone and bitterness of life dawns on us.

12. What does the phrase full of sleep mean?

The phrase ‘full of sleep’ has a symbolic meaning which means old age. It indicates the natural drowsiness that comes in human beings as one grows old and approaches death. In our ripe age, we always feel meek, feeble, tired and we wish to keep sitting or lying all the time. We are then, indeed, ‘full of sleep’.

13. What is Maud Gonne reminded of in the poem?

Maud Gonne is reminded of her youth, beauty and grace. She is reminded of the false admirers who flocked her for her outer beauty but in old age, they have forsaken her completely. She is also reminded that she will realize the true worth of the poet’s sincere love for her in her old age. She

will then regret for the pure love which has slipped from her hands. She will feel sad for the disappointed poet to whom she has never responded.

14. What does the poem infer about the power of poetry and the written word?

The poem infers that poetry lasts and remains as a constant reminder of what was. The speaker suggests that poetry has the ability to contain a man's life in its lines and, in turn, to ensure that life never dies.

15. The term "glad grace" is an example of what literary device?

The repetition of the 'g' sound suggests that it is an example of alliteration.

16. In what ways is the soul, to the speaker, a "pilgrim"?

The soul of the spoken to is on a pilgrimage through life. It is in a state of constant movement and experience, with its ultimate destination, through death, being heaven.

17. By having love flee to join the "crowd of stars" overhead, what is the speaker suggesting is its role in life?

Love is described as having the role of protector and guidance through life for the pilgrim soul.

B: Answer these questions with reference to the context.

- 1. How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And your loved beauty with love false and true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you.
And loved the sorrows of your changing face....*

a. How can we say that the person being addressed was once beautiful?

We can say that the person being addressed was once beautiful because the poet says that many people (which is in the past tense) her grace and her beauty.

b. Who was the 'one man' the poet is talking about?

The one man the poet is talking about is himself.

c. Explain the phrase, 'the pilgrim soul in you'.

The phrase 'the pilgrim soul in you' refers to the fact that she is an English heiress but has travelled to Ireland to fight for its cause here. Yeats wants to convey to Maud Gonne that he and she are kindred spirits.

- 2. And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead*

And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

a. Why would the person being addressed ‘murmur, a little sadly’?

The person being addressed would ‘murmur, a little sadly’ because her love is no longer with her but is traveling in the mountains.

b. Name the figure of speech used in the above lines. Quote the lines.

The figure of speech used is personification of Love “how Love fled...And hid his face”.

c. How can we say that the love was lost forever?

We can say that the love is lost forever because it has run to the mountaintop to be distant from the loved one.

C: Think and Answer

1. Think of all the images that came to your mind while reading the poem, *When you are old*. Write a note on the imagery used in the poem.

When writing about **imagery** in the poem ensure that you include:

‘**full of sleep**’ which conveys a sense of tiredness.

‘**nodding by the fire**’ represents someone sitting on a rocking chair and thinking

‘**slowly read**’ conveys that the person reading the poem should pause and think /reflect on the lines written in the poem

‘**dream**’ conveys a sense of reverie (memories and images that comes to one mind while thinking about the past)

The word ‘and’ has been used several times, in order to keep the rhythm intact.

2. What is the mood of the poem? What emotion did you have while reading the poem?

The **mood of the first and second stanza** is soothing and calming.

In the **third stanza the mood of the poem changes**. Phrases such as ‘Murmur a little sadly, how love fled’ conveys a sense of regret, ‘and hid his face amid a crowd of stars’ shows how life passed by and therefore is used to express a sense of loss.

D: Write a critical appreciation of the poem, *When you are old*.

The **rhyme scheme** of the poem is in iambic pentameter. (explain with points from above)

The **tone of the poem** changes in the last stanza which is full of regret as opposed to the first two stanzas that are romantic.

Imagery: The eyes are mentioned and here even the eyes (which don't usually age) have lost their luster. (include points from above)

The **theme** is of the passing of youth and love.

E: Identify the objects or ideas that are being personified and explain the human traits or actions that are applied to these objects of ideas

1. The wind whispered through the dark and dismal bungalow.

The **wind** has been personified and is portrayed as whispering in a dark and depressing home.

2. The gardener lovingly watered his plants believing he was making his flowers happy.

Flowers have been personified here and been given the ability to emote happiness.

3. As we walked through the scorching desert, the sun sucked in our energy.

The **sun** has been personified as having the ability to suck energy from people walking in the heat.

4. Time crawled as Ranbir sat, in the gloomy detention room, painfully hearing the clock ticking.

Here **time** is personified as passing very slowly, in fact, crawling.

5. When Mansi walked through the store, each pair of jeans called out to her.

Jeans have been personified as people calling out to Mansi to buy them.