

Teacher: Kashama Sharma**TENDER HEART HIGH SCHOOL, SEC. 33 B, CHD.****CLASS : X****SUBJECT : ENGLISH LITERATURE****POEM - 2 THE GLOVE and the Lions**

By: Leigh Hunt

SETTING OF THE POEM :

The poem 'The Glove and the Lions' is set in a world back in time, a world of Kings, queens, nobles and knights; the world of chivalry, valour and love. In fact, the setting of the poem, transports the reader to the royal court of King Francis, who along with his nobles, courtiers and ladies, is watching the brutal fight between two lions going on in the sandpit. They are seated at a safe distance from where they can watch the battling lions and entertain themselves.

The scene down in the pit may well have been a 'royal sport' but the picture that the poet has conjured up, looks quite similar to the Roman arenas of the ancient times where armed combatants called 'gladiators' used to entertain the audience by indulging in violent confrontations with other gladiators. (In ancient Rome) a man trained to fight with weapons against other men or wild animals in an arena) wild animals and condemned criminals. However, in this poem the fight is between the two lions and the description shows that there is injury and pain and in all likelihood (possibility) bloodshed.

Teacher: Kashama Sharma

CLASS : X

SUBJECT : ENGLISH LITERATURE

The second stanza of the poem described the scene down in the pit so poignantly and vividly that it brings alive the sights and sounds that one would have witnessed and heard - the blows, the thunderous roar, the sand and froth - taking the readers right there amidst King Francis and his nobles.

So, while the poet takes the readers into the by-gone era of Kings and queens and battles, it never loses sight of describing the universal human traits like valour, love, selfishness and vanity.

Explanation in Detail :

STANZA - 1

The poem begins with the speaker describing the royal sport, i.e., a fight between two lions in an arena, being watched by King Francis, along with his courtiers, the Count de Lorge and his lady-love. King Francis is described as a 'hearty' King: a good-hearted King, a kind and just ruler.

Aristocrats, lords, and 'the ladies in their pride (in their best attires)' are all around him. The 'ladies in their pride' can be compared to the 'Pride of lions'. From this comparison, it can be suggested that 'the pride of ladies'

CLASS: X**SUBJECT: ENGLISH LITERATURE**

may be as vicious as the pride of lions fighting. One couple, in particular, who captures the King's special attention is Count de Lorge and his lady-love. Count de Lorge's beloved shows her savagery by dropping glove in the sandpit where the lions were fighting and asking her lover to jump into it to recover her glove.

The King, was looking down at the 'royal creatures' below him as he sits on the top of the stadium-like setup, which is packed with 'valour and love'. The 'beasts' to which the speaker refers are suggestive of both the lions and the nobles who fight amongst themselves to seek the King's favour.

Stanza 2.

Here, the atmosphere of the fight between the lions is described. The lions are engaged in a vicious battle with one another. Their 'blows' are powerful like 'beams', and the wind appears to be moving in step with them.

They are making a huge commotion by rolling on one another. Despite sitting at a safe distance (at an elevated/raised area or a stadium like place) from the arena where animals are battling, the King can still feel the 'bloody froth' that is 'whisking through the air'. He believes that he and those around him are better off 'here than there', i.e.,

CLASS: X

SUBJECT: ENGLISH LITERATURE

- They are better off in the arena than in the sand pit below where the lions are fighting. This shows that the King believes that he is superior to the lions — the King of the jungle.

Stanza 3:

Count de Lorge's beloved finds the King's wit to be exceptionally amusing. She looks at the King and appears to be amazed by the King's royal demeanour and power.

This makes her think of her lover, Count de Lorge. She feels he is 'brave as brave can be' and decides to throw her glove into the Lions' den. She believes that he will jump into the arena and grab it for her. This would prove his love for her and 'great glory' would be hers, as a result. This challenge proves that she was flirtatious by nature and needed attention all the time.

Stanza 4: Count de Lorge's beloved drops her glove in the lions arena and smiles. The Count understands what she wants. He follows and understands her non-verbal instructions. He bows and smiles at her before leaping 'into the lions wild (arena)'. The lions do not touch or harm him as he acts very quickly.

CLASS : X

SUBJECT : ENGLISH LITERATURE

Before anyone can react, he comes back and takes his place once again. So far, everything has gone according to her plan. However Count de Lorge finds this act of hers offensive.

Instead of showing his love for her, he throws the glove at her face, stands up and exits the arena.

King Francis, surprised completely, utters, 'rightly done!' He understands that she has done so to grab everybody's attention and show her false vanity (pride) instead of letting others acknowledge his love for her. In King Francis' opinion, 'love' would not set an absurd task like this for her lover.