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CLASS: IX

P - 1

SUBJECT : ENGLISH LITERATURE

POEM THE NIGHT MAIL

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Historical Background of the poem:

This poem stresses upon the importance of letters for staying connected with the people throughout the world despite the advancement which has taken place nowadays. During the poet's times letters were the only mean of communication among the people. This train known as 'The Night Mail' functions at night. This train basically operated from England to Scotland. This train carries various important things like cheques, money orders i.e., postal orders and it also carries letters for all kinds of people without any discrimination. In early 20th century the British postal system operated through the network of multiple trains which basically transported letters, parcels and many other such important documents. They would depart at night and arrive at their destination in the morning and therefore allowing the postal department to sort out letters and mails and distribute them during the day. As the train moved from England to Scotland at night so this train was very famous over there because of its speed, efficiency and reliability. The night mail also played a vital role in connecting people and spreading business across the

Teacher: Kashama Sharma

CLASS: IX

THE NIGHT MAIL

SUBJECT: ENGLISH LITERATURE P-2

country.

Stanza-1.

The first stanza of the poem depicts the journey of this train which is called 'The Night Mail'. It is shown crossing the border and bringing the cheques, the postal orders (money orders) and letters for all segments of people whether rich or poor without any sort of discrimination. It brings letters for the girl next door as well as for the inmates of the shop at the corner. It then reaches the town Beattock which is steep at times, mountaneous ^{on the other than} having various twists and turns but still the Night Mail passes through it without any delay overcoming the gradient (the degree at which a road goes up and down) turns and twists in a road) and never gets late. It crosses the fields of cotton grass and moorland boulder (a very large rock which is found in this huge uncultivated area full of weeds or other unwanted material).

The train produces white steam over her shoulder as coal needs to be used during that era. This is a beautiful example of visual imagery as one could see the train producing white steam and throwing off ^{a loud snorting sound} noisily (a sound produced by the train like an animal which can be heard - so it is an example of auditory imagery) as it passes through stretched fields of air bent grass.

CLASS: IX

SUBJECT: ENGLISH LITERATURE
THE NIGHT MAILSTANZA-2:

The second stanza portrays the reaction of various creatures who were asleep before its arrival. Birds awake due to the noise produced by the train as it approaches and start staring from the bushes at her (Night Mail is addressed as a feminine train and it is personified) blank faced coaches (expressionless compartments as it is not a passenger train or it does not carry any humans. It simply carries mails, postal orders and letters) without being scared as it is an usual activity of the train and the birds are completely familiar with its course. Even the sheep dogs which are used to guard (save) sheep ^{they try to bark at the train and change its} cannot change the ^{path but they} course of the train. They sleep soundly without being scared spreading their paws across. Even when it passes through the field nobody wakes up except the vibration which is felt or noticed in the people's bedroom ^{as they kept there} which gently moves with its arrival. It is another example of auditory imagery. The train moves further to reach its destination.

Stanza 3:

This stanza is dominated by ^{the rise of} factories, steam tugs (boats powered by steam), glades of cranes (the row of cranes along the Glasgow harbour that look like trees in the woods/forest), fields of apparatus, the furnaces which highlights

Teacher : Kashama Sharma

CLASS : IX

P - 4

SUBJECT : ENGLISH LITERATURE

The advancement which has taken place there. So as the morning time starts the steep climb is over and the Night Mail is heading towards the steam tugs passing through the glades of cranes towards the field of apparatus ^{and} the furnaces which are noticed in the dark plain like the huge pieces of chessmen on a chess board. The entire Scotland waits for the arrival of the train eagerly as it brings letters of different types - love letters, official letters, mournful letters for all the people of Scotland. All people in Scotland desire ^{wait} for these letters as it passes dark narrow glens (valleys) which are beside the sea lochs.

Pronunciation of lochs is 'locks' but it stands for a lake. **Lochs is basically a British word.**

Stanza 4:

Fourth stanza denotes the type of letters which the Night Mail carries. It carries letters of gratitude (thanks), letters from banks (financial letters), letters of happiness from the lovers, receipted bills and invitations as well. Sometimes invitations are sent to inspect ^{new} stock or letters to visit near by relations. It also carries letters containing ^{news of} the vacancy for a job which is known as Situation Wanted or Situation Vacant and an outlet by shy lovers who cannot express their love personally or orally but prefer to

CLASS : IX

P - 5

SUBJECT : ENGLISH LITERATURE

write a love letter to their lover/beloved.

Besides this it carries circumstantial (specific details related to a particular event or live reporting etc.) and financial (related to money) news. Sometimes it carries letters containing holiday snaps which needs to be enlarged or extended and also letters on which faces are scrawled along the margin. The night mail also carries the gossip of all the nations.

It carries varied letters ranging from uncles cousins and aunts, letters from ^{the South of France to} Scotland that means letters for all kinds of people residing at various parts of Scotland. It do contains grief letters which are sent to High - lands and Lowlands, notes which are sent from abroad to Hebrides (an island at the coast of Scotland). These letters are written on the paper of different - 2 colours like pink, violet, white and blue. These letters are chatty (talk - ative) at times whereas on the ^{other} hand they seem catty (spiteful), boring and at times they seem to praise ^{and express one's deep rooted affec-} the indifferent subject - tion) matter which is solely related to a specific subject matter addressed as cold by the poet is also carried by the Night Mail along with the official news and ^{the letters containing} heart felt affection of an individual jotted down in the form of a letter. These letters come in varying lengths and contain entirely different subject matter like some

CLASS: IX

P - 6

SUBJECT: ENGLISH LITERATURE

- letters seem clever, the other seem stupid and at times they are ^{too} short and too long. Some times these letters are typed, the other time they are printed and at the same time they are misspelt also but these letters are catering to the emotions of all the people.

STANZA 5: talks about

- In this stanza the poet, the underlying theme of the poem and the reason behind calling the place working Glasgow. As we know that Night Mail reaches its destination at the day break early in the morning so people of Scotland still seem asleep and are dreaming of scary monsters or having nightmares. They are even planning to have friendly tea at the most happening band venue at Cranston's or Crawford's for having some sort of entertainment and enjoyment. They are enjoying sound sleep in the highly industrial town which is full of activity and where a lot of advancement has taken place. A few asleep soundly in Edinburgh which is known for its beauty and grandeur. Whereas others sleep soundly in Aberdeen - another city which is made up of grey colour stone granite. They will continue their dreams but on waking up they will yearn for letters which are sent by their near and dear ones. They will be opening the doors of their houses excitedly on hearing a tap/knock by the post man because no one can tolerate the pain

CLASS: IX

P-7

SUBJECT: ENGLISH LITERATURE

of neglect by his/her near and dear ones'. So the last stanza of the poem beautifully brings out the theme of the poem which is Human Connections. Man being a social animal wants to be remembered and cannot live away from his near and dear ones'. Man loves to be connected with the people all over the world either officially, socially or personally and this Night Mail helps in connecting people all over the world emotionally, officially, financially and personally. So connections are very important for keeping human beings in touch with one another.

~ last page ~