

LITERATURE COMPONENT

POEM

Introduction

A poem is a creative literary piece written in verses (short lines) and rhyming words. It expresses the poet's emotions, experiences, thoughts or feelings. It usually contains a hidden message or messages that the poet wants to convey.

A poem has a literal and figurative meaning. The literal meaning is the original or obvious meaning of the words in the poem. The figurative meaning is the symbolic or underlying meaning of the poem.

Elements of a Poem

1. Synopsis

This is a short description or a summary of the main events or ideas in a poem.

2. Theme

The theme refers to the main or central idea of the poem. It is the message the poet wants to convey to its reader.

3. Moral Values/Messages

Moral values are the lessons that you can learn from the poem.

4. Setting

Setting refers to the place and time the poem is written. It

can be the physical setting or social setting. Physical setting refers to the places or scenes in the poem. Social setting refers to the customs, social and religious beliefs of the society at that time.

5. Point of View

Point of view is the perspective from which the poem is told. It refers to the person who is speaking in the poem. It may mean the persona (speaker of the poem) or someone else. Point of view can be conveyed in the first person where the words 'I' and 'We' are used. The speaker is a character in the poem. The poem can also be written in the third person where the words 'He', 'She', 'It' or 'They' are used.

6. Tone and Mood

Tone is the poet's attitude towards the material and/or readers. It may be positive, negative or hopeful. Mood is the general feelings or emotions created in the poem. It can be playful, formal, intimate, angry, serious, ironic, outraged, baffled, tender, serene or depressed. Tone and mood tie in with the message and theme of the poem.

7. Language and Style

This is the poet's manner of expression. It refers to how a poet uses language to express ideas. It consists of the following poetic devices:

Personification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">It is the treatment of abstractions or inanimate objects as humans.It gives inanimate objects human qualities, powers, or feelings. Examples: <i>nature wept; The wind whispered many truths to me.</i>
Simile	<ul style="list-style-type: none">It is a comparison that uses words 'like', 'as', etc to show similarities in two different things or ideas. Examples: <i>He ran as fast as lightning; She is as quiet as a mouse.</i>
Metaphor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">It is an indirect comparison of two unlike things.It describes one thing as being another. Examples: <i>He is such a tiger; The eye of heaven</i>
Symbol	<ul style="list-style-type: none">It refers to an object or a thing that represents something else because of the idea associated with it. Examples: A rose is always used to symbolise love and beauty; A burning candle can symbolise a short span of life.
Repetition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Words and phrases are repeated to give emphasis on a particular thing
Rhyme Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Words which have the same end sounds and placed at the end of lines or at certain fixed points in a poem
Imagery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pictures created in the reader's mind through words and figurative expressions such as similes, metaphors, symbols and personification
Alliteration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words placed close together
Assonance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Repetition of same vowel sounds in words placed close together

POEM 1: *The Day the Bulldozers Came* by David Orme

Meaning of the Poem

Stanza 1

The persona tells about a day when the bulldozers arrive at the forested area. The animals are going about their lives. The rooks are building their nests high on the tops of the oak trees. Green flies are buzzing about near a pond. A toad is motionless with a blank look as if waiting for the bulldozers.

Stanza 2

When the bulldozers arrive, the squirrels run away quickly in every direction. Some run up tree trunks while others try to escape by jumping from one branch to another. The persona describes the branches as "hardly there". This indicates that the trees are very far apart as many have been cut down before the land can be cleared by the bulldozers.

Stanza 3

The persona describes how the fox reacts as the bulldozers come. The fox's slumber is disturbed when the ground begins

to tremble under the weight of the large heavy bulldozers. However, the fox is not worried. He mocks/laughs at the thought that the bulldozers can harm him. The fox feels that he is "quite safe" in his underground burrow, which is deep below the Earth's surface. He is certain of his safety when he says "No one can get me here". However, his sense of security is only temporary. The blade of the bulldozer can perch into the soil and reach him. We know that even the cunning fox is not safe deep in his underground burrow, when the persona says "Then the bulldozers came".

Themes

1. Conservation is important

The poem reminds us that we need to conserve flora, fauna and the natural resources in the environment in order to reverse the negative consequences of man's deed. Without conservation, pollution, extinction of plant and animal life and global warming will damage the environment. Without conservation, life on Earth for future generations will be bleak.

2. Nature is fragile

The poem shows us how fragile and helpless flora and fauna are against man and their machines. Habitats and ecosystems can be easily destroyed at a switch of a machine.

3. Respect for all living things

We should respect all living things. Every living thing plays an important part in the ecosystem.

4. Social responsibility

Man has a duty to act in a responsible way. Our actions must not cause harm or destroy nature and everything in it. Instead, man's action should benefit society and the environment.

Moral Values

1. We should take steps to conserve and preserve the environment.
2. We should plan for and develop infrastructure in a responsible way.
3. We should always maintain a balance between development and the ecosystem.

Setting

1. Place

The poem is set in any forested area destined to be destroyed or cleared in the name of progress and development.

2. Time

The poem refers to modern times when development projects are ongoing.

Persona

The persona is concerned about the environment. He is observant as he notices how the animals react as the bulldozers come on the day the forest has to be cleared. In stanza 3, the reader is given an insight of the fox's feelings and thoughts. The persona allows the reader to put himself/herself in the fox's shoes in order to understand how it feels against man's intrusion into its habitat.

Tone and Mood

The persona creates a fearful mood in stanzas 1 and 2 as he describes the distress the animals in the forested area experience as they are driven from their homes. In stanza 3, the happy and confident tone the persona creates through the fox actually sets a sad mood. The reader knows that the fox is enjoying a false sense of security. The fox believes that he is safe, in his underground burrow deep in the Earth. However, he is not. The bulldozers are coming and can actually reach him.

Language and Style

1. Personification

Personification is a figure of speech. It gives an animal, a thing or an idea, human characteristics. These non-human subjects are portrayed in a way where they act like humans.

In stanza 3, the persona gives the fox a voice to express his feelings by allowing him to speak his thoughts.

2. Irony

Irony is a figure of speech. It refers to a situation that may have a different outcome than what is expected (the appearance of something is very different from reality). In stanza 3, the fox laughs and states that he feels "quite safe" in his burrow as "No one can get me here" but the reader knows the reality of the situation. The fox is in fact, in danger. He just doesn't know it yet.

3. Repetition

Repeating the same words or phrases in a poem helps make an idea clearer. The persona repeats the phrase "the day the bulldozers came" in the beginning of stanzas 1 and 2. Part of the phrase "the bulldozers came" is used in the last line in stanza 3. The persona wants to emphasise the danger and destruction that is approaching and that the animals are in harm's way (stanzas 1 and 2). Finally, in stanza 3, "the bulldozers came". This emphasises the fact that destruction is upon the animals and that there is no escape.

4. Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia refers to words that copy the sound those words make. When you say the word, it mimics its sound. In line 4 of stanza 1, the persona uses the word "sizzled". This word refers to the hissing sound that the green flies make when they fly about in large numbers by the pond.

POEM 2: *Poisoned Talk* by Raymond Wilson

Meaning of the Poem

Stanza 1

The persona begins each stanza with a question. From the question, the reader can deduce that the robin is dead. The persona wants to know who killed the bird. The worm confesses to the murder by admitting that he has caused the robin "great harm". The robin is found dead on the branch of a dry and shrivelled tree. The worm admits that he has been poisoned too, from living in contaminated soil ("acid soil"). The tree is described as "withered", which tells the reader that the tree is dying as a result of growing in "acid soil". The polluted soil causes a chain reaction – not only harming the worm and the tree growing in it, but also the robin which eats the worm.

Stanza 2

The persona wants to know who murdered the heron and the fish owns up to the crime. The fish is already contaminated because his flesh has been "tainted". The fish is poisoned probably from eating polluted aquatic plants and animals. The fish also admits that he has killed all the birds living in the lake.

Stanza 3

The persona wants to know who is responsible for polluting the lake. "Industry" arrogantly admits that mercury-containing toxic waste has polluted the lake. The word "Industry" is written with a capital 'I' to give it human-like characteristics. "Industry" represents individuals and/or organisations that carry out dishonest practices which cause harm to the environment. When the lake is polluted, fish, plants and seaweed in it also get contaminated. "Industry" states that their action is to give man whatever they want. In this case, it is man's greed for money, material possessions and success that "Industry" attends to.

Stanza 4

The persona wants to know the cause for the death of the flowers. The wind moans and confesses that it has killed the flowers. The persona uses the word "moaned". This hints that the wind answers in a low voice as it is feeling guilty for causing much damage. The wind is free to move from place to place as if in search of a prey when the persona says "prowl unconfined". The wind blows carrying acid rain. Everywhere the wind goes; it takes the acid rain with it. The acid rain falls on land, flora and fauna and pollutes it.