

LESSON – 3

JOURNEY TO THE END OF THE EARTH

About the author

Tishani Doshi is an Indian poet, journalist and dancer based in Chennai. In 2006 she won the Forward Prize for her debut poetry book *Countries of the Body*. Her poetry book *A God at the Door* has been shortlisted for the 2021 Forward Prize under best poetry collection category.



INTRODUCTION

In 'Journey to the End of the Earth' Tishani Doshi describes the journey to the coldest, driest and windiest continent in the world: Antarctica. The world's geological history is trapped in Antarctica. Geoff Green's 'Students on Ice' programme aims at taking high school students to the ends of the world. Doshi thinks that Antarctica is the place to go and understand the earth's present, past and future.

THEME OF THE LESSON

In 'Journey to the End of the Earth' aims at the exploration of the landmass covered by ice-cap of Antarctica will surely reveal vital information about the birth and evaluation of the earth. And the sub-theme is the need of saving the planet Earth from total **annihilation (destruction)** and the role the school students can play in this gigantic task.

MESSAGE OF THE LESSON

The author gives us the message that rarely visited regions of the earth (North and South Poles) are a store house of information and we can learn a lot about the earth's past, present and future if we dig deep into them. It also warns man against too much interference with nature and excessive encroachment on and dominance over Nature which is injurious to the future of mankind and that 'the threat of global warming is very real'.

TITLE OF THE LESSON

The title of the story 'Journey to the End of the Earth' is an account of author's personal experience to the journey to Antarctica with a group of high school students on board 'Akademik Shokalskiy'. We know the earth is round and if at all, ends are to be found they are either at the bottom (the South pole) or the top of the earth (the North pole) the word 'End' used in the title is very forceful and meaningful, because the scientists continually warn us against the catastrophic effects of the excessive "depletion of ozone layer". So, judicious use of natural resources is a must if we want to escape 'End' of the earth. Thus, the title is most appropriate and true to its meaning.

Answer the following questions in 30 to 40 words.

1. What is 'Students on Ice'?

Ans. 'Students on Ice' is an educational expedition to Antarctica. It takes high school students to show them the terrifying impacts of human activities in Antarctica so that, the students will realise that the end of the earth is quite near and therefore something should be done to save the planet.

2. Why did Geoff Green decide to take high school students to Antarctica?

Ans. Geoff Green didn't find any good in taking curious celebrities to Antarctica until he thought of taking high school students. He believed that the high school students are the real future policy makers of the earth and the young enthusiasm in them would easily understand the seriousness of the threat that poses the earth by visiting Antarctica and they would act their bit to save the planet from further deterioration.

3. Why is Students on Ice programme a success?

Ans. When one stands in the midst of the calving ice-sheets, retreating glaciers and melting icebergs, one realises that the threats to the earth are real. It is different and way more pragmatic from talking about Antarctica from the comfort zones of our warm countries and therefore being in Antarctica is a shocking realisation.

4. Why are the youngsters called the future policy makers of the earth?

Ans. The youngsters according to Geoff Green are the future policy-makers because it is them who will bring substantial changes as they grow up. More than that, the more educated youth of today is the hope for the earth as many students are more informed and more aware of the weakening strength of the planet.

5. How do geological phenomena help us to know about the history of humankind?

Ans. Geological phenomena certainly help us to know about the history of humankind. A giant southern supercontinent- Gondwana did exist 650 million years ago. The climate was much warmer. It had a huge variety of flora and fauna. Gondwana thrived for 500 million years. Finally, it broke in to separate countries as they exist today. It was the stage when dinosaurs were wiped out and the age of mammals started.

6. What are the indications for the future of humankind?

Ans. Rapid human population growth and limited resources exert pressure on land. Burning of fossil fuels has only helped in increasing the average global temperature. Melting of ice-caps, depletion of the ozone layer and global warming are the real and immediate dangers for mankind. They will affect the lives of all the marine animals and the birds of the region.

Answer the following questions in 100 to 120 words.

1. How is the study of Antarctica useful to us?

Ans. The world's geological history is trapped in Antarctica. Therefore, the study of Antarctica shows that India and Antarctica were part of a supercontinent named Gondwana. This supercontinent existed 650 million years ago. The climate of Gondwana was much warmer. It fostered a huge variety of flora and fauna. Then about 150 million years ago, dinosaurs were wiped out. The age of mammals started. Gondwana was forced to separate into countries. The globe was shaped much as we know it today. A cold circumpolar current was created. It made Antarctica frigid.

2. What lessons can be learnt from an expedition to Antarctica?

Ans. While in Antarctica, one can witness the ice-sheets breaking, water level rising, seals taking sun bath on the ice floes. One can also walk on the thin layers of ice and feel the life under ones feet. One can see icebergs as big as a small country. And earlier these ice sheets were many times bigger than their present size. One can see a green patch of phytoplankton – a microscopic grass that feeds the entire marine life. Lastly, if one can get a chance to dig a bit, one can be lucky to see the fossils of half a million years old animals, plants and birds that got killed in the previous ice-age. This way one can learn the lesson of the slow impending death of the planet earth and therefore take some constructive actions to save it from its doom.