

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

by William Butler Yeats

Central Idea of the Poem

The Poem 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' is about the beauty and charm associated with the countryside as compared to the dull, grey and boring life of the city. The poem reveals the poet's desire to escape from the noisy hustle and bustle of the city life and lead a simple life in the natural landscape of Innisfree, a lake island. For the poet, a simple and peaceful life with only a few simple needs is more delightful than the restless life of the city.

Explanation of the Poem

Stanza 1

I will arise and go now and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

Word Meanings

Arise - stand up, Innisfree - an island in a lake, Cabin - a small wooden shelter, Wattles - material consisting of rods interlaced with twigs or branches used for building walls or fences, Bean-rows - rows of bean plants, Hive - honey comb, Bee-loud - a place having the loud sound of bees buzzing, Glade - open space in a forest.

Explanation In the first line, the poet repeats the word 'go' to express his determination of going to Lake Isle of Innisfree. The poet says that he will wake up and go to an island of Innisfree. On the island, he would build a small house from clay and wattles (fences). He would grow nine rows of bean and would also have a hive for honey. The honeybees residing (living in the hive) will fill the place with a buzzing sound. The poet here intends to live alone on the island full of natural beauty.

Stanza 2

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer and noon a purple glow,
And evenings full of the linnets' wings.

Word Meanings

Dropping - falling, Veils - covering, here misty atmosphere in morning, Cricket - an insect, All a glimmer - shining, Linnet - a small bird of brown and grey colour.

Explanation In the first line, the poet repeats the word 'peace' to reveal the real reason for moving away from his current lifestyle.

The poet states that in the countryside, peace can be found at every location. It comes as naturally as the morning sun comes in the sky. It comes slowly just like the morning drops the veil of darkness.

In the morning the poet would hear the crickets singing. At noon, he would see the purple sky and at midnight he would look at the shining sky. In the evening, poet would hear the sound of linnet flapping its wings.

Stanza 3

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear the lake water lapping with low sounds by
the shore;

While I stand on the roadway, or on the
pavements grey,

I hear it in the deep heart's core.

Word Meanings

Lapping - sound of water striking the shore, Low - soft, Pavements grey - dull and drab paths, Deep heart's core - deep in my heart.

Explanation In these lines, the poet takes a resolution to wake up and to go to Innisfree right now. He decides so because, in his mind, he hears for all day and night, the low and soft sound of the water reaching the shore of the island. He hears this sound even when he is standing on a road or a pavement in the city. The poet can hear the sound of the lake which makes a deep effect on his heart.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

- **Alliteration** Repetition of initial consonant sounds in the same line.
 - Lake water lapping with low sounds. (repetition of consonant sounds).
- **Visual Imagery** Use of words that creates a visual representation of ideas, pictures or scenes.
 - Veils of the morning (a morning covered in mist).
 - Midnight a glimmer (a night full of stars).
 - An evening full of linnets song (the evening sky covered with linnets birds who are singing).
 - And noon a purple glow (the deep reddish colour of the sky during noon).
- **Auditory Imagery** Use of words that represent a sound and pleases the sense of hearing
 - Bee-loud glade (a region where only the buzzing sound of bees could be heard).
 - Cricket sings (the sound of cricket singing).
 - Lake water lapping (the sound of water reaching the shore).
 - In all these phrases, the sounds relate to a particular image that is created in the reader's mind.
- **Metaphor** A device which compares two things or qualities which are unlike.
 - Peace comes dropping slow
 - Veils of the morning
 - Bee-loud glade
- **Onomatopoeia** Using a word which suggests the meaning by its sound.
 - I hear lake water lapping
- **Repetition** Repetition of words/phrases in the same line to emphasise something.
 - And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow, Dropping from the veils.... (The words 'peace' and 'dropping' are repeated).
 - I will arise and go now, (phrase repeated in the first and third stanzas to depict the poet's longing).

NCERT FOLDER

(Here, we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

I. Thinking about the Poem (Page 54)

- 1 What kind of place is Innisfree? Think about:
- the three things the poet wants to do when he goes back there (stanza I);
 - what he hears and sees there and its effect on him (stanza II);
 - what he hears in his 'heart's core' even when he is far away from Innisfree (stanza III).

Ans. Innisfree is a calm and peaceful place where nature is beautiful, alive and full of life. It is an uninhabited island.

- The three things the poet wants to do in Innisfree are
 - Build a small cabin of clay and wattles (fences) to live.
 - Plant nine rows of beans.
 - Install a beehive to breed bees.
- At Innisfree, the poet will see the peaceful mornings where peace comes dropping. He will hear the crickets singing in the morning. He will also see the midnight shine and purple glow in the sky. He will also hear the flight of the linnet birds in the evening. All these things makes him peaceful and joyous.
- The poet's longing for the beautiful landscape of Innisfree is so strong that even in the city, he can hear the lapping sound of the water in the lake. The poet's heart aches for going back to Innisfree from away the concrete jungle of the city.

- 2 By now you may have concluded that Innisfree is a simple, natural place, full of beauty and peace. How does the poet contrast it with where he now stands? (Read stanza III.)

Ans. The poet thinks that Innisfree is a simple, natural, calm and quiet place, very close to nature, as he mentions the insects, birds, bees, light of the stars and so on.

In contrast, the place where he now stands is noisy, far from nature and full of hustle and bustle (the place is the pavement of a highway in the city of London).

- 3 Do you think Innisfree is only a place, or a state of mind? Does the poet actually miss the place of his boyhood days?

Ans. Although Innisfree is the poet's boyhood visiting place, it also represents his state of mind.

The poet wishes to escape to Innisfree as it is more peaceful than where he is now i.e. in the city. Innisfree is representative of what the poet considers an ideal place to live in, which is devoid of the restless humdrum (routine) of his life. Yes, the poet actually misses the place of his boyhood days. Even when he is away from Innisfree, he recalls the sound of the lake water washing the shore.

II. Thinking about the Poem (Page 55)

- 1 Look at the words the poet uses to describe what he sees and hears at Innisfree.
- Bee-loud glade
 - Evenings full of the linnet's wings
 - Lake water lapping with low sounds

What pictures do these words create in your mind?

- Ans.**
- These words bring to our minds the image of buzzing bees in an open area which is full of greenery.
 - These words bring up the image of linnets flying across an evening sky.
 - These words evoke not only the image, but also the soft sound of a lake's water washing the shore.

- 2 Look at these words;

... peace comes dropping slow

Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings

What do these words mean to you? What do you think "comes dropping slow...from the veils of the morning"? What does "to where the cricket sings" mean?

Ans. The given lines indicate that peace of mind can be slowly acquired from the natural surroundings. It is peace that comes dropping slow...from the veils of the morning.

The phrase "to where the cricket sings" indicates a peaceful place where one can hear the musical sound of nature in almost anything including the songs of the crickets at the time of dawn.