

The Ballad Of Father Gilligan

William Butler Yeats

I. Read the lines from the poem 'The Ballad Of Father Gilligan' and answer the questions.

The old priest Peter Gilligan
Was weary night and day;
For half his flock were in their beds,
Or under green sods lay.

1. Pick out the line which says that the priest was very tired?
2. Why was Father Gilligan weary?
3. What does 'green sod' imply?
4. What does the word 'flock' in the context refer to?
5. What is the rhyme scheme followed in these lines?
6. Identify the visual images used in these lines.

1. Answers

1. The line 'The old priest Peter Gilligan was weary day and night' says that the priest was tired.
2. Father Gilligan was performing his priestly duties day and night because half of his parishioners were either sick or dead
3. It implies to the grave or the burial place covered over by green grass.
4. The word 'flock' refers to the people in the parish.
5. a b c b
6. Green sods, moth hour

II. Read the lines from the poem The Ballad Of Father Gilligan and answer the questions.

Once, while he nodded on a chair,
At the moth-hour of eve,
Another poor man sent for him,
And he began to grieve.

'I have no rest, nor joy, nor peace,
For people die and die';
And after cried he, 'God forgive!
My body spake, not I!'

1. What does 'moth hour' indicate?
2. What was the complaint of the priest?
3. Why did the father seek forgiveness from God?

Answers

1. It indicates the time when moths come in swarms. It can either be evening or morning.
2. He complained that he had no rest, no joy and no peace.
3. Father Gilligan complained to God that he had no rest, no peace and no joy. He felt guilty for his errant words.

III. Read the lines from the poem The Ballad Of Father Gilligan and answer the questions.

'Mavrone, mavrone! the man has died
While I slept on the chair';
He roused his horse out of its sleep,
And rode with little care.

He rode now as he never rode,
By rocky lane and fen;
The sick man's wife opened the door:
'Father! you come again!'

'And is the poor man dead?' he cried.
'He died an hour ago.'
The old priest Peter Gilligan
In grief swayed to and fro.

1. What did father Gilligan do after he woke up from his sleep?
2. Why did Peter Gilligan ride as he never rode?
3. Where did the father ride through?
4. Why did the priest ride his horse with 'little care'?
5. What feeling did the sick man's wife have when she saw the priest at her door?
6. Identify the poetic device employed in the line 'the old priest Peter Gilligan'.
7. Why did the father feel sad?
8. What had happened while the father slept in the chair?

Answers

1. He roused his horse and carelessly rode to the poor man's house.
2. He realized that he hadn't done his priestly duties to the sick man. So he wanted to reach the sick man's house as early as he could.
3. He rode through rocky lane and fen.
4. The priest was in a hurry to reach the sick man's house after he woke up from his sleep.
5. The sick man's wife was surprised to see the priest again at her door.
6. Alliteration.
7. The priest felt sad because he understood that he failed to give the last prayers to the sick man.
8. The sick man died.

IV. Read the lines from the poem *The Ballad Of Father Gilligan* and answer the questions.

'When you were gone, he turned and died
As merry as a bird.'
The old priest Peter Gilligan
He knelt him at that word.

'He Who hath made the night of stars
For souls who tire and bleed,
Sent one of His great angels down
To help me in my need.

'He Who is wrapped in purple robes,
With planets in His care,
Had pity on the least of things
Asleep upon a chair.'

1. Pick out an instance of simile from the given lines.
2. Comment on the line 'He Who is wrapped in purple robes with planets in His care'.
3. Which lines give us the idea that God had made the night for the troubled humanity?
4. What did He do for Father Gilligan?

Answers

1. He turned and died as merry as a bird.
2. He who is wrapped in purple robes refers to God who takes care of the entire universe.

3. 'He Who hath made the night of stars
For souls who tire and bleed
4. God sent one of His great angels to do Father Gilligan's priestly duties.

V. Appreciation of the poem 'The Ballad of Father Gilligan'

The Ballad of Father Gilligan is a touching narrative poem by W.B Yeats. The poem is composed in the form of a Ballad. The poem is about a priest, father Gilligan who rendered selfless service to the poor and the needy in his Parish. The ballad also tells us about the mercy of God to his devotees . The poem is rich in imagery and follows a strict rhyme scheme abcb.

The old priest Father Gilligan was in charge of a parish. There was an epidemic in his area. Almost half of his parishioners were either sick or dead. The priest was tired of doing his priestly duties. One day after the day's busy schedule while he was sitting in his chair, a poor man sent for him. The priest started complaining that he had no rest or joy. Suddenly he realized his mistake and asked for God's forgiveness. He knelt and begged to God for forgiveness, and in the prayer he fell asleep leaning over his chair. He woke up only in the following morning at the time of sparrow chirp. Then he realized that he failed to do his priestly duties. So within no time he roused his horse and went to the sick man's house. The sick man's wife informed him that the man died as merry as a bird immediately after the priest left him.. On hearing this father Gilligan understood that God had sent one of his angels to help him to do his duty. Father praised God for showing his benevolence and kindness towards him. He expressed his gratitude to the merciful God.

Thus the poem beautifully narrates the story of God's timely intervention in the life of a poor priest.

The poem is rich in imagery. 'The green sods', 'rocky lane', 'moth hour' etc are some of the visual images. 'The sparrow chirp' and 'the wind that shook the leaves', are examples of auditory image in the poem. 'The stars began to peep' is an instance of personification. The poetic device simile can be seen in the line 'The man died as merry as a bird '.The use of alliteration also adds beauty to the poem.