

Poem-2 Keeping Quiet

- Pablo Neruda

VALUE POINTS:

1. The poem ‘Keeping Quiet’ addresses the problem of environmental pollution caused by thoughtless activities of man and the need for quiet introspection.
 2. The poet asks the readers to keep quiet for a count of twelve (which is indicative of time)
 3. He asks them to stop any barrier (Like language, war, exploitation etc) which creates a divide.
 4. This silence will be free from _the disturbing sounds of engines and rush of people due to their materialistic attitude for some time
 5. The importance of silence and self-introspection can transform not only the life of an individual but also the face of the earth.
 6. They will lead a hatred-free and peaceful life, living in harmony, giving a halt to their destructive activities.
 7. It will help people to understand themselves & will create the feeling of mutual love & respect.
 8. By quiet introspection, the poet does not mean total inactivity; instead, he wants full involvement with life.
 9. The effect of the discard & war is the imbalance between man & nature.
 10. Quiet introspection will establish a spiritual & physical union that is most desirable for the survival of the earth & of human beings.
 11. The example of Earth can teach us a lesson as during Autumn all leaves fall and everything seems dead but there is a quiet period of winter when regeneration takes place in seeming stillness and once again life comes back with the arrival of Spring season
- Literary Devices

Following literary devices/figures of speech have been used in the poem Keeping Quiet:

1. Alliteration: It is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words. e.g. —we will count||, —sudden strangeness||, —stop for one second||, —his hurt hands||, —clean clothes||.
2. Anaphora: Two consecutive lines starting with the word ‘Let’s’. let’s not speak in any language, let’s stop for one second
3. Repetition: It is the repetition of phrases in the poem for poetic effect. e.g. —without rush, without engines.
4. Symbolism: The poet uses various symbols in the poem. e.g. —counting to twelve || symbolises time, —Brothers|| symbolise mankind, —green wars|| refer to deforestation, —wars with gas|| refers to pollution, —clean clothes|| symbolise change of perspective, —shade|| symbolises protection etc.
5. Antithesis: It is the juxtaposition of opposing or contrasting ideas. e.g., —count to twelve and we will all keep still||. Here counting and keeping still are contrasting activities and are put together.
6. Personification: it is the attribution of human characteristics to non-human things and animals. e.g., —Earth can teach us.
7. Metaphor: It is used to make a comparison between two things that aren’t alike but do have something in common. e.g. —shade|| refers to protection.
8. Enjambment: It is the continuation of a sentence to the next line/stanza. In the poem, many sentences continue to multiple lines. e.g. i) —Now we will count to twelve and we will all keep still.||, ii) —For once on the face of the Earth let’s not speak in any language let’s stop for one second, and not move our arms so much.||
- iii) Perhaps a huge silence might interrupt this sadness of never understanding ourselves and of threatening ourselves with death. etc.
9. Irony: ‘When everything seems dead, later proves to be alive’

Read the following lines and answer the questions that follow:

- I. “Now we will count to twelve
And we will all keep still.....And not move our arms so much.”
1. Why does the poet want us to keep quiet?
 2. How long does the poet exhort us to be silent?
 3. What is the poet’s opinion of normal people?

Answers:

1. The poet wants us to keep quiet so that we can do a self analysis.
2. The poet wishes that we become still only for a brief time-only time taken to count one to twelve.
3. According to the poet, a temperamental mobility is rampant in normal people. Nothing can force us to sit quietly for some time.

II. “It would be an exotic moment
Without rush, without engines,.....Would look at his hurt hands.”

1. What does the poet mean by ‘an exotic moment’?
2. What kind of feeling would this ‘exotic moment’ evoke?
3. How does the fishermen harm nature?
4. What sublime impacts would keeping quiet have?

Answers:

1. A psychosomatic silence would have a transcendental effect on us.
2. The ‘exotic moment’ will evoke a feeling of solidarity with our brethren.
3. Fishermen harpoon whales. The whale population is gradually getting depleted. It imbalances nature.
4. Keeping quiet would prompt us to introspect. It would be a sublime moment, when we would identify ourselves with nature and our fellowmen. Fishermen, who hunt whales, would regret their folly and abstain from causing ecological imbalance. It would consolidate and unify all men.

I. Exercise: (unsolved)
“What I want should not be

Confused With total inactivity.....

threatening ourselves with death.”

1. According to the poet, what is the difference between ‘silence’ and ‘inactivity’?
2. What graceful experience would we have, if we ceased our instinctive motion?
3. What do we fail to understand, although we live for a long time on this earth?
4. To what does the poet compare lack of self awareness?

II. Short answer type questions: (30-40 words)

1. What do you think the poem is about?
It is about a transcendental experience, which is triggered by ceasing all mundane activities. Such experiences would evoke feelings of solidarity with our fellowmen and apathy for our reckless attitude towards nature. It is an elementary stage in self-realisation.
2. What do we fail to realize when we get marooned in mundane pursuits?
Men are too busy to find time to introspect. We pass away without realizing ourselves. According to the poet, this ignorance of our real worth, is a truck with death.

III. Extra questions (unsolved)

1. List a few rash activities that man indulges in.
2. Does the poet advocate inactivity? If not why?
3. What lesson can the earth teach us?