

The Brook

Lord Alfred Tennyson

A. Lead – in:

Our country is a land of rivers. Some rivers are big and some are small. Have you ever seen the place of the origin of a river ? Most of the rivers rise in the form of small streams in hills or mountains. These small streams sometimes fall into big rivers. A stream in the course of its journey covers a long distance and passes through plains, valleys and forests.

Read the poem to know what a stream feels as it rushes to join a brimming river.

B. Let's Listen to the Poem :

- Your teacher reads the poem aloud. Listen to him/ her without opening the book. Mark the teacher's voice, tone and expressions. S/He reads the poem again.
- Now open the book and try to follow him/ her. Mark the words, phrases and expressions that appeal to you. Add more words and phrases that occur to you as relevant to the context.
- Read the poem silently. You may refer to the notes and glossary to understand the text.

C. Text:

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
 Upon me, as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
 Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
 To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
 But I go on for ever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots ;
 I slide by hazel covers ;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
 That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
 Among my skimming swallows ;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
 Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
 In brambly wildernesses ;
I linger by my shingly bars ;
 I loiter round my cresses ;

And out again I curve and flow
 To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
 But I go on for ever.

D. About the Poet:

Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809 -1892) was born in Lincolnshire in Great Britain. His poetry is noted for its pictorial quality and musical beauty. He was Poet Laureate for over 40 years.

E. Notes and glossary :

brook	-	a small mountain stream
fern	-	a type of plant with large, delicate leaves having no flowers
haunts	-	places frequently visited
coot	-	water bird with a white spot on the forehead
hern	-	(Heron) another kind of water bird
sally	-	emerge suddenly
bicker	-	(Here) flow down making a lot of noise.
thorp	-	a village
trebles	-	high-pitched sound
eddying	-	spiral movement of water
babble	-	sound made when one talks gaily
fallow	-	land left uncultivated
foreland	-	a projecting land mass.
mallow	-	plant with hairy stems and leaves with pink, white or purple flowers
lusty trout	-	a big freshwater fish
grayling	-	another type of fish
ridges	-	a narrow area of highland along the top of a line of hills
brimming	-	become full of something
chatter	-	to talk quickly

sharps	-	musical raised by one semitone
fret	-	gradually wear away (something) by rubbing or grawing
willow weed-		a bush with flexible branches and long narrow leaves often growing near water.
gravel	-	small stones
hazel	-	a small tree or bush with edible nuts.
forget-me-nots-		a type of flower.
shingly bars	-	covered with small rounded pebbles.
cresses	-	pungent-leaved plant
slide	-	to move smoothly
gloom	-	partial darkness
linger	-	to stay for a time
brambly	-	a thorn-covered shrub.

F. Let's understand the poem:

1. Where does the brook come from ?
2. How does it "sparkle" ?
3. What does the brook pass through during its journey ?
4. Where does it finally meet the river ?
5. What does the poet mean by the statement "with many a curve my banks I fret" ?
6. Why does the poet repeat the word 'chatter' in the poem ?
7. What does the poet want to say by using the words 'steal' and 'slide' ?
8. What does the poet mean by 'the netted Sunbeam' ? How does it dance ?
9. Some lines of the poem given below are not in order. Arrange them in their sequential order to make them meaningful.

- i) In brambly wildernesses;
I loiter round my cresses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I murmur under moon and stars
- ii) To join the brimming river,
And out again I curve and flow
But I go on for ever.
For men may come and men may go

G Let's appreciate the poem:

- (a)
1. What do you mean by the word 'bicker' ?
Why does the poet use this word here ?
 2. What picture do you imagine when you go through the line " I wind about, and in and out" ?
 3. How does the brook chatter ?
 4. Why has the poet used the word "brimming" ?
 5. What kind of a picture does it create in your mind ?
 6. Why does the poet repeat the expression, 'For men may come and men may go, But I go on for ever' ?
- (b) Answer the following questions choosing the correct alternative.
- 1- The poet compares the journey of the brook with _____.
 - a) the worries and anxieties in a man's life
 - b) the talkative nature of human beings
 - c) the death of a man
 - d) the life of a man
 - 2- The lines "And here and there a lusty trout, And here and there a grayling" suggest that _____.
 - i) the brook is full of life
 - ii) the brook enjoys all kinds of scenes

iii) people enjoy the beauty of the brook

iv) fishes are alive because of water

3- The poem is narrated in the first person by the _____ .

i) poet

ii) nature

iii) flower

iv) brook

4- The message of the poem is that the life of a brook is _____ .

i) temporary

ii) short-lived

iii) eternal

iv) momentary

(c) Make a list of seven pairs of rhyming words used by the poet in the poem.

The brook has been personified in this poem. It has also a message for us.

Compose a poem of 6 to 8 lines on something inanimate such as **a hill**, a **desert**,
a paperweight or **a lamp**, **a book** or **a pen**.

(Teacher can make it a group activity)

H. Let's listen and speak :

(i) One student asks a question. Another student reads aloud the relevant stanza.

The exercise should create a context as if the Brook is answering to the questions of many children.

Question- Where do you come from ?

Reply - One student reads aloud the first stanza.

Question - What did you pass on your way ?

Reply- Another student reads aloud second stanza. (The activity continues)

