

Dust of Snow

Introduction

This poem has been written by Robert Frost. It describes a moment that is simple but has a larger significance.

Summary

'Dust of Snow' is a short poem describing a simple moment which has a larger significance. A crow sitting on a hemlock tree shakes off the dust of snow on the poet. This simple action changes the depressive mood of the poet. Lost in the sorrow, he has wasted a part of his day repenting but now with the change of mood, he wants to utilise the rest of the day in some useful activity.

Message

This poem conveys the message that even a simple incident can be capable of pulling out a man from depression and change his outlook about how he sees this world.

Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow:

1. The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree
Has given my heart
A change of mood

(a) Fill the blank with one word.

The poet's changed.

(b) To whom does the word 'me' refer?

(c) What did the crow do?

- (i) Ate the leaves
- (ii) Picked the worms
- (iii) Shook down the dust of snow
- (iv) Cawed loudly

(d) What do the 'crow' and 'hemlock' symbolise?

Answers

- (a) mood
 - (b) The word 'me' refers to the poet.
 - (c) (iii) Shook down the dust of snow
 - (d) The 'crow' and 'hemlock' are not considered auspicious. The poet has used them as a symbol of sorrow. A crow is a ugly bird with a harsh voice and a hemlock tree is a poisonous tree. They are negative symbols.
2. Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

(a) What has changed the poet's mood?

(b) Comment on the last two lines.

(c) What has been saved?

- (i) The remaining part of the day
- (ii) The dust of snow

(iii) The crow

(iv) The hemlock tree

(d) What is the rhyme scheme of the given extract?

Answers

- (a) The falling of the dust of snow on him has changed the poet's mood.
- (b) The poet was in a depressive mood. Lost in sorrow, he wasted a part of his day repenting. But now, the falling of the dust of snow on him has changed his mood and he wants to utilise the rest of the day in a positive and cheerful manner.
- (c) (i) The remaining part of the day
- (d) abab

Short Answer Type Questions

Q 1. What does the poet want to convey through the poem 'Dust of Snow'?

Ans. In the poem 'Dust of Snow', the poet wants to convey that sometimes certain moments or actions which are simple have larger significance. They can change the mood or life of a person. The way a crow shakes down the dust of snow on the poet, inspires and gives him the idea to shake off his depressive thoughts, become cheerful, and do something useful.

Q 2. What side of nature do 'crow' and 'hemlock' represent?

Ans. Crow is a black, harsh voiced bird and hemlock is a poisonous tree. Both represent dark, depressive, sorrowful and bitter side of nature. However, these two are instrumental in pulling out the poet from his depressive mood.

Q 3. Why does the poet of 'Dust of Snow' use such poetically uncommon bird and tree?

Ans. The poet seems to be in a depressive and sorrowful mood. In such a mood, one cannot think of sweet and beautiful side of nature. The harsh, bitter and poisonous images come to his mind. So, the poet uses an uncommon, harsh, ugly crow and a poisonous tree like hemlock. He also wants to convey that even negative things have some positive aspects. These have helped him to come out of his depression.

Q 4. What happened when the dust of snow fell on the poet?

Ans. The poet was unhappy and depressed. When the dust of snow fell on him, his mental state changed. He came out of his depression and decided not to waste his day. Now, he wanted to do something useful.

Q 5. What is a 'dust of snow'? What does the poet say has changed his mood? How has the poet's mood changed?

OR

In the poem, 'Dust of Snow', how does the poet's mood get changed? (CBSE 2018)

Ans. A 'dust of snow' means snow flakes. The falling of the snow flakes on poet has changed his mood. The poet was initially in a state of depression. But, when snow flakes fall on him, this simple act lifts him out of depression and his mood changes for the better. It changed it towards the beauty of nature or in a different way.

Q 6. What are the birds that are usually named in poems? Do you think a crow is often mentioned in poems? What images come to your mind when you think of a crow?

Ans. Sparrow, parrots, peacocks, doves, etc. are some of the birds that are usually named in poems. No, I do not think that a crow is often mentioned in poems. An image of a black and ugly bird with harsh voice comes to our mind when we think of a crow.

Q 7. What is a 'hemlock tree'? Why doesn't the poet write about a more 'beautiful' tree such as a maple, or an oak, or a pine?

Ans. A hemlock tree is a poisonous tree. Its poison was used to kill Socrates. Hence, it is a symbol of death. I think that the poet does not write about a beautiful tree like maple, oak or pine because he wants to convey that even the most negative of symbols can have a positive effect.

Q 8. What do the 'crow' and 'hemlock' represent—joy or sorrow? What does the dust of snow that the crow shakes off a hemlock tree stand for?

Ans. Crow and hemlock represent sorrow. The dust of snow that shakes off the hemlock tree stands for joy and happiness and hope.



Long Answer Type Questions ↘

Q 1. How many symbols do you find in the poem 'Dust of Snow'? What is the purpose to use those symbols?

Ans. In this poem, the poet has introduced three symbols—the hemlock tree, the crow and the dust of snow. Hemlock is the name of the poison that was used to kill Socrates. Hence, the hemlock tree is a symbol of death. Walking by the hemlock tree could, in fact, have seemed like an ill omen to the poet. Again, the crow is an ambiguous symbol and could stand for many things. Generally, the crow is considered to be the ugliest among all birds. Hence, it could be another sight to degrade the poet's mood once again. The dust of snow is the symbol of natural joy and energy.

The shower of snow created by the crow improves the poet's mood. Perhaps, the poet is saying that even something that one usually associates with negativity can have a positive impact. Hence, Frost's use of symbols is very profound and meaningful.

Q 2. Have there been times when you felt depressed or hopeless? Have you experienced a similar moment that changed your mood that day?

Ans. Yes, many times when I felt sad and hopeless, a small thing happened and changed my mood. One of the incidents is as follows:

It was the month of December. The weather was foggy and chilly. I was all alone at home. My parents had gone to attend a marriage. I was feeling depressed and lonely. The telephone rang. My elder sister was on the line. She told me that they would be coming to Dehradun to spend the winter holidays with us. I was thrilled. My mood became cheerful and I started planning on how to make the coming winter holidays most enjoyable and unforgettable. A simple telephone call changed my mood. ●