

## **Flamigo Poem-2**

### **An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum**

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In this poem the poet focuses on the theme of social injustice and inequalities. He presents the pathetic and miserable picture of the elementary classroom in a slum. These children have pale and lifeless faces and some are even diseased. They are like rootless weeds which are uncared and unwanted with their disorderly hair torn around their faces.

They are depressed and oppressed with the burdens of life and keep their heads down. They have stunted growth. One of the girls is apparently burdened with the miseries of poverty. One of the boys has inherited his father's disease and has stunted growth. Another student is sitting unnoticed and he is yearning to play outdoors. A sweet young boy is sitting at the back of the dim classroom. He is dreaming of a squirrel's game in the trees and probably other interesting things.

The walls are dirty and creamy and on them are hung the donations given to the school in the form of pictures, paintings, Shakespeare's portrait and maps which are meaningless for the children. They exhibit the world of the elite and the privileged while the children in the slum have a future that is sealed and confined to the slum. Their future is dark and limited. The donations on the walls only add to the frustration of the children. They are tempted to attain what would be unattainable for them. The children studying in these schools do not have the means to go and explore the world. For them what they see through their classroom windows, the narrow street and the lead sky is the world.

Shakespeare is wicked for them as he has written only about the rich, beautiful world tempting them to steal.

The map is of no interest to them because it does not reflect the world they live in-cramped and dark lanes. Their lives start in darkness and ends in utter darkness. They are undernourished and their poverty has distorted their vision as they spend their whole time in foggy slums. The poet feels that the map which shows beautiful and exotic places should be replaced with slums as it is not the world they live in.

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Unless the governor inspector and visitor play a vital role in bringing about a change, their lives will remain in dark. The slum children will be able to peep through the window only when the gap between the two worlds is bridged.

They should break the barriers till they come out of the dirty surroundings and their world should be extended into the green fields, golden sands and bright world. They should have the freedom of expression and their outlook be broadened. Thus, the children in the slum can progress only if they are given good education and the freedom to move into a world of opportunities and progress. The poet also states that history is made only by those people who have the power of knowledge. Hence, educating and letting the children into a free world of opportunities would release them from the suffocating, wretched life in a slum.

- In this poem the poet focuses on the theme of social injustice and inequalities.
- He presents the pathetic and miserable picture of the elementary classroom in a slum.
- These children have pale and lifeless faces.
- They are like rootless weeds which are uncared and unwanted with their disorderly hair torn around their faces.
- They are depressed and oppressed with the burdens of life and keep their heads down. They have stunted growth.
- They inherit the diseases of their father.
- Some of them do have dreams. A sweet young boy is sitting at the back of the dim classroom. He is dreaming of a squirrel's game in the trees and probably other interesting things.
- The walls are dirty and creamy and on them are hung the donations given by the rich and also Shakespeare's portrait.
- A civilized dome found in the cities and Tyrolese valleys with beautiful flowers are also put up.
- The map on the wall shows the children, the beautiful world outside; but for these children of the slum it is meaningless.
- The children studying in these schools do not have the means to go and explore the world. For them what they see through their classroom windows, the narrow street and the lead sky is the world.
- Shakespeare is wicked for them as he has written only about the rich, beautiful world tempting them to steal.<sup>62</sup>

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- The map is of no interest to them because it does not reflect the world they live in cramped and dark lanes.
  - Their lives start in darkness and ends in utter darkness.
  - They are undernourished and their poverty has distorted their vision as they spend their whole time in foggy slums.
  - The poet feels that the map which shows beautiful and exotic places should be replaced with slums as it is not the world they live in.
  - Unless the governor inspector and visitor play a vital role in bringing about a change, their lives will remain in dark.
  - The slum children will be able to peep through the window only when the gap between the two worlds is bridged.
  - They should break the barriers till they come out of the dirty surroundings and their world should be extended into the green fields, golden sands and bright world.
  - They should have the freedom of expression and their outlook be broadened.
  - For, only the educated and learned people can create history whose language has strength and power.

### **Similes:**

**Like rootless weeds:** the coarse, untidy and unkempt hair of the slum children is similarised to rootless weeds to bring forth the idea that the children were malnourished.

**Like bottle bits on stones:** the shining mended glasses of the spectacles is contrasted against the dark complexion of the malnourished slum children. The metal framed, broken glasses of the spectacles of the slum children is similarised to the shining bottle bits on stones. The slum children settled on the waste heap is similarised to the splinters and pieces of broken bottle/glass against stones.

Like the broken glasses of the spectacles, the hopes , aspirations , ambitions lives of these slum children are completely shattered.

**Like catacombs:** The slum children are living in dark and dingy rooms which are similarised to catacombs in subterranean cemetery. The windows of these rooms look like the lids of catacombs. The future of the slum children is shut for ever like the dead bodies in the catacombs.

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**Slum as bid as doom:** slum is similarised to hell of death. Living in slum is worse than death, rather it is a living hell.

**Metaphors:**

**Rat's eyes:** suggests the boy's curious, anxious and insecure nature. Like a rat always insecure, on the move, searching for food and safety, this small boy too shares the same condition.

**Father's gnarled disease:** the boy's father is handicapped with a crooked body. The boy has inherited his father's disease and the malnourished body of the paper seeming boy is no better than the crooked, disease-stricken body of his father.

**Squirrel's game:** Like the squirrel enjoys his freedom playing feely everywhere in nature, the boy also wants to play and enjoy his life with his endless curiosity. But he Is forced to be in the dark,dull and dreary classroom of the slum school.

**Tree room:** The hiding place of squirrel with great, comfort , security , curiosity and fun is contrasted with the gloomy and dull class room of the little boy.

**Future painted with fog:** Just as fog blocks, blurs or ruins vision, the slum children's future is vague and blurred with hopelessness, frustrations and lack of empathy and upliftment.

**Lead sky:** The normal bright and blue sky is described as lead sky, suggesting the dark and dull sky just as the base metal lead is . There is no blue and bright sky of life and future for the slum children.

**Spectacles of steel:** The poverty-stricken, skinny and skeletal bodies of the slum children look like wiry framework of steel just like that of a pair of spectacles. The expression also suggest the view of mass of students, visually impaired wearing low-cost and unhealthy spectacles with metal frames. These poor children are deprived of everything due to the callous attitude of the government officials.