

Lesson- 16

The Snare

I hear a sudden cry of pain!
There is a rabbit in a snare;
Now I hear the cry again,
But I cannot tell from where.

But I cannot tell from where
He is calling out for aid.
Crying on the frightened air,
Making everything afraid

Making everything afraid,
Wrinkling up his little face,
As he cries again for aid;
And I cannot find the place!

And I cannot find the place
Where his paw is in the snare;
Little one! Oh, little one!
I am searching everywhere.

- James Stephens

About the Poem:

James Stephens grew up in the slums of Dublin and worked as a stenographer during the early years of his age. Later he served for some years as an Assistant Curator in Dublin. He had deep interest in Gaelic art, legends, literature and culture.

The poem depicts a rabbit in a snare crying out of pain. The poet can recognize the voice of the rabbit with his paw into the snare. The poet depicts the situation with effective imaging and sympathetic attitude. The last line of every stanza is repeated at the beginning of the next one. The first three stanzas are written in iambic tetrameter with a stress at the end but this does not happen in the last stanza.

GLOSSARY:

snare (n) - noose, symbol of captivity, confinement, detention, loss of freedom

ACTIVITY 1: COMPREHENSION:

A Say whether the following statements are True or False. Write 'T' for true and 'F' for false:

1. The poet is happy throughout the poem.
2. The poet can recognize the sound of the rabbit
3. The poet can locate the rabbit and help him.
4. The poem is written in present tense only.

B. Answer the following questions in about 10-20 words each:

1. Lines and words are repeated time and again, what is the purpose of the poet?
2. What purpose does the interjection 'But' serve in the poem?
3. Find the words or phrases depicting the condition of the rabbit.
4. Find the rhyme scheme of the first stanza.

C. Answer the following questions in about 20-30 words each:

1. Explain the phrase 'frightened air'.
2. Why is the poet searching for the rabbit?
3. Who is afraid and why?
4. What provides unity to the poem?

D. Answer the following questions in about 60-80 words each:

1. What is the theme of the poem?
2. What attitude does the poet have towards the rabbit's plight?
3. How is the attitude of the poet towards the rabbit reflected?
4. Describe the universal appeal of the poem.

ACTIVITY 2: VOCABULARY:

A. Write four rhyming words for each word given below. The first one is done for you.

- (a) sight -flight- might- knight-cite
(b) seat.....
(c) debate.....
(d) sit.....
(e) find.....

B. Acquaint yourself with the following literary terms:

Persona:

A persona is a social role or a character played by an actor. It is a narrative voice that speaks in the first person. It is not autobiographical as the speaker assumes the role and has a universal appeal. Here Stephens, the poet, assumes the role of an animal lover but he is not an individual and exhorts us like any other animal lover.

Symbol:

A symbol is something that represents something else by association, resemblance or connection, especially a material object used to represent something invisible for example - the flower is a symbol of beauty. Here, in this poem the poet has used 'snare' and 'cry' as symbols of loss of freedom, imprisonment and strong voice, sound for help respectively.

Rhyme:

Rhyme is a repeating pattern of similar sound mostly in the final syllables of lines in poems or songs. Tail rhyme/end rhyme helps to mark off the ends of lines and clarifies the material structure of the poem for the listener. It is pleasant to hear and facilitates to memorize. Stephens has used end-rhyme a-b-a-b in all the four stanzas of equal length.

ACTIVITY 3: SPEECH ACTIVITY

Should animal/insect dissections be banned in lab experiments at school/college level? Argue in favour of or against it.

ACTIVITY 4: COMPOSITION

1. During kite flying season, birds get injured badly. Write a report for your local newspaper about the plight of birds.
2. Write a letter to the Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Govt. of India, New Delhi about the plight of caged birds and animals for human entertainment.
3. Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper about the importance of freedom and liberty for birds and animals keeping in view the problem of their extinction.