



Class VIII

ENGLISH

Name of the lesson: *When You Are Old (Poem)*

Dear students

- This e-lesson will help you understand the poem, '*When You Are Old*'.
- Please note that the text of the poem is included in this e-lesson. PDF of the textbook pages have also been attached with this e-lesson.
- Please **attempt the assignment questions in your English notebook** and copy the questions also.

TEXT

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

W B Yeats

INTRODUCTION

William Butler Yeats, a famous Irish poet wrote the poem, 'When You Are Old'. It was first published in 1893 and is one of the famous love poems. It comprises the poet's eternal love for his beloved. The poet is in favour of a kind of love which is not based on **physical appearance** or **outward beauty**. It fades away with time. Rather, he **values the inner beauty** of the **soul**.

Please click on the link given below to listen to the audio recording of the poem.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ttISOHESJE>

STANZA-WISE EXPLANATION OF THE POEM

Stanza 1-

In the first stanza, the poet addresses his beloved and tells her to think of the time in future when she will grow old and grey. When she will sit by the fireside and remember her days of youth and beauty. She will no longer possess those looks and beauty. She will only have the memories of it.

Stanza 2-

The poet tells the girl that she had many admirers of her beauty in her past. Those admirers were not loyal or sincere and loved only her outer appearance and looks. They did not have any true feelings for her. In the last two lines, of the stanza, the poet expresses his feelings for the girl. He says that there is one person who loves the pious and pure soul in her, who loves her, not for her physical beauty but for her inner self.

Stanza 3-

In the last stanza, the poet refers to his beloved who, sitting beside the

fireside will remember how the one who loved her truly, is no more with her. He fled away from her and is now among the stars.

MAJOR THEMES IN THE POEM

Love, false admiration and regret are the major themes of this poem.

It showcases the picture of the old age when the girl sits and reflects on the past memories. She contrasts the shallow form of love and superficial admiration with the true love that she never valued or appreciated.

TONE/ MOOD OF THE POEM

The first two stanzas can be seen as romantic and positive. The loss of the speaker's love in the third stanza changes the tone. It seems as if, the beloved is full of regret.

POETIC DEVICES

Some of the poetic devices used in this poem are:

- **Imagery:** Imagery is used to make readers perceive things with their five senses. It creates a visual representation in the minds of the readers. The poet has used imagery in the poem such as,

“And nodding by the fire, take down this book”

“And bending down beside the glowing bars”

“And paced upon the mountains overhead”

- **Symbolism:** Symbolism is using symbols to signify ideas and qualities, giving them symbolic meaning different from literal meaning.

“grey and weak and full of sleep” symbolizes an elderly woman. “fire” is the symbol of fiery love she once rejected. “mountain overhead” and “crowd of stars” are the symbol of things that exist but she can't reach

them.

- **Alliteration:** Alliteration is the occurrence of the same sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. For example, the sound of 'h' in "And hid his face amid a crowd of stars".
- **Personification:** Personification is to give human characteristics to inanimate objects. For example, "how Love fled", as if, the love is human and it can move.

RHYME SCHEME OF THE POEM: abba

When you are old and grey and full of sleep, a
And nodding by the fire, take down this book, b
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look b
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep; a

ASSIGNMENT

(To be attempted in English notebook)

1. What is the mood of the poem? What emotions do you have while reading the poem?
2. Reference to context-

*"And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars."*

- a) Identify one example of poetic device from the above lines.
- b) Who is "his" in the above lines?

c) Why would the person being addressed “murmur, a little sadly”?

3. Justify the title, ‘When You Are Old’.

4. Explain the phrase, “your changing face”.

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