

Fog

Introduction

This poem has been written by Carl Sandburg. In this poem, the poet compares the fog with a kitten.

Summary

The poet says that when the kitten comes around us, it comes so slowly that we hardly notice it. In the same way, the fog also comes slowly, in a manner that we cannot predict it. After the arrival of snow, its onset is silent and it slowly engulfs the harbour and the city. It then finally moves on just like a kitten who does not like to stay at one place for a long time.

Message

The poet tries to bring forth the beauty of a city engulfed with fog. The poet wants to say that nature does not change according to the desire of the people.



Extract Based Questions ↘

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

1. The fog comes
on little cat feet.
It sits looking
over harbour and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on. (CBSE SQP 2023-24)
- (a) In what way does the language used in this poem challenge traditional ideas of what poetry should be?
- (b) What is the significance of the use of the word "little" to describe the fog in the poem and how does this word choice contribute to the overall mood and tone of the poem?
- (c) Complete the sentence with the appropriate option.
The lines from the poem tell us that the city is
- (i) hilly
(ii) coastal
(iii) industrial
(iv) underdeveloped
- (d) Identify the type of imagery used in the lines of the poem.

Answers

- (a) Unlike traditional poetry that often relies on complex rhyme schemes and metaphors, this poem uses simple, everyday language to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind to create a powerful and evocative mood.
- (b) The word 'little' used to describe the fog in the poem suggests the subtle and quiet nature of the fog. The word 'little' also evokes a sense of innocence and vulnerability, as if the fog is a harmless creature moving through the city. This contributes to the overall mood and tone of the poem, which is calm and peaceful with a touch of mystery.
- (c) (ii) coastal
- (d) Visual/animal imagery is used.

Short Answer Type Questions ↘

- Q 1. What metaphor has the poet used in the poem? Do you think it is appropriate? (CBSE 2018)
- Ans. The poet has used the metaphor of 'cat' or 'kitten' for 'fog'. Yes, it is appropriate. Both have similar features. Both arrive and depart silently without making any sound.
- Q 2. The poet describes the fog as a living being. Explain.
- Ans. The poet describes the fog like a cat, who is a living being. For the poet, the fog is the cat itself. It moves silently like a cat. Its arrival and departure cannot be predicted, just like the arrival and departure of fog.
- Q 3. How is the fog like a cat? Explain.
- Ans. In the poem, the fog is shown like a cat. The fog comes silently as a cat. Also, like a cat it does not rest at a place for long. So, the fog is like a cat.
- Q 4. Does the poet actually say that the fog is like a cat? Find three things that tell us that the fog is like a cat.
- Ans. The poet does not say it, but he means it through a metaphor. The following three sentences make this clear:
- (i) The fog comes on little cat feet.
(ii) It sits on haunches.
(iii) It then moves on.

Long Answer Type Question ↘

- Q 1. What is the theme of the poem 'Fog' by Carl Sandburg?
- Ans. Sandburg's brevity and natural language make the poem seem like it is only about fog engulfing a harbour city and then moving out. It is more likely that the theme that Sandburg is trying to convey to his readers is nature's uncaring attitude towards mankind. It is obvious from the poem that the fog and people exist within the same space, but it's also clear that the fog (nature) has a sort of aloof attitude at the intrusion of mankind in its space. A cat is a perfect animal to further illustrate that since cats tend to be fiercely independent and quite aloof towards just about everything. Thematically, Sandburg is showing his readers that people are a part of nature, but nature isn't about to bend to the will and desires of people.