

Poetry - 8.

For Elkana

UNDERSTANDING THE POEM

Q. 1 Comment on the subtlety with which the poet captures the general pattern of communication within a family.

Answer:

Nissim Ezekiel has tried to picturize the daily common conversational styles in the poem. He speaks of how an Indian family's evening usually looks like. To make it more realistic, he adds a few incidences that are extremely common. There is the description of a family which consists of three people. The wife is talking about something that the husband listens to but doesn't pay attention. This is done because he thinks that the things his wife is talking about are irrelevant. So he just admits that the wife is always right to avoid any further problems. The kid too is seen to be the most influential person in the family since his demands are not neglected by the other two of the family.

Q. 2 Poetic effect is achieved in the poem through understatement and asides. Discuss this with examples.

Answer:

The poetic effect is definitely achieved through understatement and asides. The poet's focus is not on the family alone. His prime focus is on the things that are happening in nature around them and the things that are present there. To prove so we may take up the mention of the broken window panes made by the poet. This makes us realize that even though the window panes may not seem to be important, they are significant for the poem and its subject.

The other aspect of subtlety is that the husband claims that 'the man she loves who happens to be me'. This means that though he is ignoring the



things that she's uttering, he is also sure that she loves him. And this makes him gladly accept the fact that her lady is always correct.

Q. 3 How is the idyllic juxtaposed with the pedestrian in the poem?

Answer:

Nissim is one of the first poets to abandon romance and talks about daily life issues. Or rather say talk about romance in a much subtle way. He in the poem the idyllic situation of a daily-life incident is taken into consideration by the poet. This makes Nissim discuss the things that one can relate with and abandon the grandeur that most writers brought along with romance. The scene shows the pedestrian feeling when the characters talk about random things like the broken window panes or the wife rants about things that the husband should do. In this way, the idyllic juxtaposed with the pedestrian in the poem.

Q. 4 Explain the undertones in the statement: 'Wife and husband in unusual rapport State one unspoken thought':

Answer:

This situation explains the entire feeling of understanding the unspoken. Although both of them believe that it is absolutely necessary for any person to be disciplined, it is also the fact that they as parents do care for the child. This becomes clear because even after being amidst an argument, the entire thought of the child becoming undisciplined makes them halt the entire argument and both go into a kind of silence. But even after being silent, they both read each other's minds very well. They do so out of love and affection.

Q. 5 Comment on the capitalization of all the words in the line: 'Children Must Be Disciplined'.

Answer:

The line is capitalized because the importance of the line increases immensely. This line is the ultimate expression that runs in the heads of



both the parents when they stop their argument and completely immerse in the thoughts of their child and hence understand the fact that their child is making an untimely demand. And they both fall into an almost ugly middle position because they love their son too much to deny him of anything. At the same time, they are also worried about him getting in disciplined.

Q. 6 What makes the urgency of the child's demand seem logical?

Answer:

On being said that dinner will be served in some time, the boy refuses to wait. He also gives the logic of not being hungry after five minutes. This makes the father believe that the boy is at least learning and trying to give logic. So the mother starts laughing and is ready to serve food.

TRY THIS OUT

Q. 1 Paraphrase the poem and notice the change in effect. Comment on the deft touch with which the poet transforms ordinary events into evocative poetry.

Answer:

The poem talks about the tiny incidents that take place in a family. There are these small insignificant arguments that keep happening but that doesn't mean that love and bonding decreases. This proves that the family keeps bonded. These tiny aspects of family life have been chosen by Nissim as a subject.

There is definitely a change in pattern. The change in pattern is that the fluidity of the poem and the ultimate pasteurization is missing vividly. What Nissim Ezekiel could do in a few sentences needs an elaborate explanation to be put into prose based lines.

The poet effectively transforms everyday events into life-sized poetry and makes it seem absolutely effortless.

