Painting is silent poetry, and poetry is painting that speaks.

- Plutarch

A poet is, before anything else, a person who is passionately in love with language.

- W.H. Auden
William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

William Shakespeare is undoubtedly the most quoted author of all times. He lived during the Elizabethan period, the golden age of English literature. Shakespeare has to his credit 37 plays, 154 sonnets and two long narrative poems. This is indeed extraordinary, taking into account the fact that his formal education was only up to the elementary level in a grammar school. The world’s pre-eminent dramatist is remembered most notably for his brilliant themes, unforgettable characters and the extraordinary beauty of his language. His plays are broadly classified into comedies, histories, tragedies and tragi-comedies. Tales from Shakespeare by Charles Lamb and his sister Mary Lamb, published in 1807, brings Shakespearean plays closer to children of all times.

Focus

The poem ‘Since Brass, Nor Stone, Nor Earth, Nor Boundless Sea’ is written in a poetic form called sonnet which originated in Italy.

A sonnet is a fourteen line lyric that follows a strict rhyme and a specific structure. It was introduced in English literature by Wyatt and Surrey in the 16th century. There are two prominent sonnet forms - the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean. The Shakespearean sonnet has the structure of three quatrains (four line stanzas) and a final concluding couplet (two lines).

This sonnet is a moving expression of the poet’s love for his friend, whose identity is still debatable. Critics are of the opinion that the friend mentioned in the sonnet could either be the Earl of Southampton or the Earl of Surrey. Its highly dramatic and intensely personal elements make it one of Shakespeare’s best-remembered sonnets.
Since Brass, Nor Stone,
Nor Earth, Nor Boundless Sea

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o’er-sways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

O, how shall summer’s honey breath hold out
Against the wreckful siege of battering days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?

O fearful meditation! where, alack,
Shall Time’s best jewel from Time’s chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?

O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

1. What does the expression ‘mortality o’er-sways’ mean?
2. Long lasting and short-lived things are contrasted in the first stanza. What are they?
3. What are some of the strong objects mentioned in stanza two that are affected by the passage of Time?
4. Who is described as ‘Time’s best jewel’?
5. Whose swift foot does the speaker wish to hold back?
6. What hope does the speaker express in the final couplet?

**mortality**: death  
**plea**: an excuse  
**siege**: the art of capturing a fortressed place  
**battering**: damaging  
**impregnable**: unconquerable  
**stout**: strong  
**meditation**: thought  
**alack**: an expression showing sorrow or regret  
**chest**: a box used for strong valuables  
**forbid**: prevent
Understanding the poem

1. What is the theme of the sonnet? Does the theme have any universal appeal?

2. The great power of Time is expressed in the first two stanzas. What strategy does the poet employ to express this idea quite convincingly?

3. Comment on the symbolic meaning of summer in the poem.

4. Pick out the expression from the poem which means ‘scary thoughts’.

5. What is the tone of the poem? Do you notice any change in tone as the thought progresses? Explain.

6. In the poem, the poet attributes human qualities to ‘summer’ and ‘time’. This is called personification. Find out similar expressions in the poem.

7. Shakespeare uses a number of visual images in the poem. Identify them.

8. A metaphor is a figure of speech that describes something asserting that it is something else. What is the central metaphor in this poem?

9. ‘Power’ and ‘flower’ are two rhyming words from the poem. List out other rhyming words.

10. The poet employs a particular pattern of rhyme or a ‘rhyme scheme’. What is the rhyme scheme followed in the poem?

Writing about the poem

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the sonnet highlighting its theme, tone, poetic devices and structure.

2. Collect a few sonnets belonging to various periods in English literature.

3. Read the following sonnet by Elizabeth Barrett Browning expressing her love for her husband Robert Browning.
Sonnets from the Portuguese

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men might strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

How does the poet express her love for Robert Browning?

How is it different from Shakespeare's depiction of love for his friend?

Compare the two sonnets using the comparison grid given overleaf:
ICT

- Make a presentation using presentation software hyperlinking the poem with audio/video files of recitation available in the YouTube and with images from Google Images suitable to understand the poem better. You may also hyperlink difficult words that need to be glossed with their meaning from an online dictionary. Present your hyperlinked poem before the class.
Robert Burns (1759-1796)

Robert Burns, the 'ploughman poet', is one of the leading voices of Scotland in English literature. He is best known as the pioneer of the Romantic movement for his lyrical poetry and re-writing of Scottish folksongs. His volume of work particularly in Scottish, the language of Southern Scotland, earned him the status of the National Bard of Scotland. The poetry of Robert Burns is in a way a revolt against the preceding age of literature, the Neo-Classical Age, which laid emphasis more on reason and form. His interests on reviving the culture of his land and the focus on very subjective themes make him an inspiring and passionate poet.

Focus

The poem ‘A Red Red Rose’ is one among the best lyrics of English poetry.

A lyric is a song that expresses a subjective, personal point of view. The word ‘lyric’ stems from a Greek term implying ‘singing to the lyre’. The lyre is a stringed musical instrument of the harp family. Poets across the world have employed the lyric in diverse forms to express their thoughts and emotions. This lyric consists of 16 lines divided into four four-line stanzas. The poem blends eternity of love with the mortality of life. It is an address to the speaker's lover to whom he swears eternal love and allegiance. Intense feeling and technical skill characterises the works of Robert Burns.
A Red Red Rose

1. Who is the speaker of the poem?
   - The speaker is addressing his love.

2. What does the red rose symbolize?
   - The red rose symbolizes the speaker's love, as it is a common symbol of love in literature.

3. What different things does the speaker compare his love to?
   - The speaker compares his love to a red rose, the melody, and a fair girl.

4. How long will the speaker's love last?
   - The speaker's love will last forever, as the sea and rocks will not last as long as the sands of life.

5. What promise does the poet give his love?
   - The poet promises to love his love forever, regardless of what happens in the future.
Poems

Understanding the poem

1. Identify the word that is repeated in all the stanzas of the poem. What does it indicate?

2. What does the phrase 'ten thousand mile' indicate?

3. ‘O my Luve's like a red, red rose.’ Here the poet compares his love to a red rose. Identify other similes used in the poem.

4. How does the poet express that he is an eternal lover?

5. Why is the word 'red' repeated?

6. Comment on the use of the expression 'sands of life'.

7. Pick out instances of alliteration in the poem.

8. 'Thee' is an archaic expression of the word 'you'. Pick out other archaic words and words in the Scottish dialect from the poem.

9. See the phrase ‘Till a’ the seas gang dry’. The poet says that his love will last as long as the seas go dry. He exaggerates his love. This is a figure of speech called Hyperbole. Pick out other instances of hyperbole from the poem.

10. What may have prompted the poet to express his love like this?

Writing about the poem

1. Is this a typical love poem? The poet refers to the things in nature like the sun, the sea, the rocks and the rose. Critically examine the poem to bring out the effect of images in creating a powerful lyric.

2. ‘A Red Red Rose’ is a typical romantic poem. Examine the statement on the basis of your reading of the poem.

ICT

Visit http://www.robertburns.org/works - to know more about Robert Burns and his works.

Listen to the recitation and video on YouTube and prepare a slide presentation showing each stanza of the poem and using pictures to bring out the different visual images used by the poet. You may also use the audio text available on YouTube during your presentation.
William Blake (1757-1827)

William Blake’s works are considered significant in the history of both poetry and the visual arts today. During his life time, he was largely neglected and even dismissed as insane for his idiosyncratic views. His early writings were greatly influenced by the French and the American revolutions. His work Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience is a milestone in the history of English Literature.

The Romantic Movement in English literature was a revolt that tried to liberate art from Classicism. The movement gave priority to imagination, subjectivity, freedom of thought and an idealization of nature. Romanticism officially started with the publication of the Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1798. But poets like Blake had already started breaking away from the ancient ideas. Blake’s use of images, simple diction and spontaneous expression of thoughts and emotions are remarkable.

Focus

‘The Tyger’ is taken from Songs of Experience which is part of the collection titled, Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience. It is a companion poem to ‘The Lamb’, included in Songs of Innocence. The poems stand contrasting each other with one portraying the meekness of the lamb and the other presenting the darker forces of energy in the tiger.

‘The Tyger’ is a fine lyric that expresses the reflections of the author about the fearsome, yet beautiful creation of God - the tiger. The poet marvels at the supreme artistry of the Almighty who created both the lamb and the tiger. Blake builds the poem on the conventional idea that nature, like a work of art, reflects the spirit of its creator.
The Tyger

TYGER, tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

1. Whose hands framed the fearful symmetry of the tyger?
2. How are the tyger's eyes described in the second stanza?
3. Who does the poet refer to when he talks about 'dread hand and dread feet'?
4. What were the tools used to create the tyger's brain?
5. How did the stars react when they saw the creation of God?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Tyger, tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

**immortal**: living for ever

**fearful**: feeling or causing fear

**symmetry**: the exact match in size/shape between two sides of something

**thine**: your

**aspire**: have a hope or ambition

**dare**: to be bold enough to do something

**seize**: take hold of forcibly and suddenly

**sinews**: tough fibrous tissues joining muscle to the bone

**furnace**: an enclosed fireplace for intense heating of something

**anvil**: an iron block on which a smith hammers metal into shape

**deadly**: causing death

**spear**: a weapon with a long shaft and a pointed tip
Understanding the poem

1. Why does the poet say that the tyger is 'burning bright'?

2. The poet refers to a few tools that were used to create the tyger's brain. Who uses these tools usually? What picture does the description bring to your mind? Which poetic device is used here?

3. Look at the words 'spears' and 'tears' in stanza 5. Can these be related to the tyger and the lamb?

4. What does 'The Tyger' represent? Is it a creation of art? Is it God? Or is it just a tiger?

5. Cite two examples of alliteration from the poem.

6. The last stanza and the first stanza are the same except for the substitution of the word 'could' with 'dare'. What do you think about this substitution?

7. List out the rhyming words in the poem. What is the rhyme scheme?

Writing about the poem

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem paying special attention to the theme, tone, figures of speech etc.
2. Read the poem, "The Lamb" by the same author.

The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life and bid thee feed.
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb;
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child.
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.

Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Poems

The Tyger

Fill up the table given below choosing appropriate words and phrases used by the poet to describe the tiger and the lamb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The tiger</th>
<th>The lamb</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>terror</td>
<td>tender</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Now, complete the following table with the expressions used by the poet to describe the tiger and the lamb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creating tiger</th>
<th>Creating lamb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fearful symmetry</td>
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Based on the above activity, write a paragraph comparing the theme, diction and the nature of images used in ‘The Tyger’ and ‘The Lamb’.

ICT

♦ Visit http://www.william-blake.org/slideshow.html - to watch the slide show of Blake’s Paintings. Make use of appropriate paintings and present the poems ‘The Tyger’ and ‘The Lamb’ by hyperlinking them with these images. You may also use the audio text of these poems available on YouTube during your presentation.

♦ Watch the William Blake documentary available on YouTube and learn more about Blake’s life and works.
William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

William Wordsworth co-authored the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 with Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It formally heralded the Romantic age in English literature, which extended till the mid 19th century. Wordsworth’s poems often present instances where nature speaks to him and he responds by speaking for nature. For him, manifestations of the natural world inspire noble, elevated thoughts and passionate emotions.

Wordsworth was the Poet Laureate of Britain from 1843 till his death in 1850. He has written numerous sonnets, and other hugely influential poems including his semi-autobiographical work, ‘The Prelude’.

Focus

This poem is an ode. An *ode* is a long lyric poem, serious in subject and treatment, elevated in style and elaborates in stanzaic structure. The prototype of odes was established by the Greek poet Pindar, whose odes were modelled on the songs by the chorus in Greek drama. This form was introduced into England by Ben Jonson. The Romantic poets employed this form to convey their strong sentiments. An ode can be defined as a formal address to an event, a person or a thing.

Here the poet addresses a cuckoo. The poet hears the cuckoo and wonders if it is something more than a bird. His wonder rises from the recollection of memories of his childhood when the elusive bird opens up the world of imagination to him. The bird is an assorted symbol of beauty, innocence and childhood.
To the Cuckoo

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy two-fold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;

The same whom in my school-boy days
I listened to; that Cry

1. Who is being addressed in the poem?
2. What does the poet wish to call the cuckoo?
3. Why does the poet describe the cuckoo’s song as a ‘twofold shout’?
4. How does the bird’s song affect the poet?
5. How does the poet emphasize his eagerness to receive the bird’s call?
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessèd Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!
Understanding the poem

1. The poem begins by addressing the bird as ‘...blithe New-comer!’ which aptly conveys the bliss experienced by the speaker. What other words or expressions add to this sense of elation?

2. Why does the poet call the cuckoo ‘a wandering voice’?

3. An overstatement is made in stanza 5 - ‘Which made me look a thousand ways.’ A similar statement is there in stanza 4 too. What does this signify?

4. Do you think the choice of the word ‘golden’ in stanza 7 was deliberate? Why?

5. Why do you think the poet has made profuse use of archaisms?

6. Why is the world a fit home for the bird?

7. Does the poem follow a regular structural pattern? What overall effect does this create?

8. A symbol is an object that represents, stands for or suggests an idea or belief. Do you think Wordsworth uses the bird as a symbol? If so, what does it symbolise?

Writing about the poem

1. What elements of romantic poetry do you find in the poem ‘To the Cuckoo’? Prepare a write-up considering the ode as a Romantic lyric.

2. Consider the bird as a link between the poet’s past and present and write a paragraph.

ICT

Compile an anthology of other ‘bird poems’ using internet resources.
Prepare a multimedia presentation on major romantic poets and their works.
The following websites will help you gather information.
http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5670
http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic
Robert Browning (1812-1889)

Robert Browning, one of the foremost poets of the Victorian era, is held in high esteem for his mastery of the poetic form known as the dramatic monologue. He was also a playwright. During his life time, he was largely neglected in the literary circles. In fact, his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning was more popular than him. Browning's writings actually shocked the Victorian readers because of their psychological realism, wild experiments and harsh language. However, it is this raw power of poetry that makes his verses appealing to the readers of all times. Some of the major dramatic monologues of Browning include My Last Duchess, The Bishop Orders His Tomb, Andrea del Sarto etc.

The reign of Queen Victoria (1827 -1903) is known as the Victorian era in British history. It was an age of imperialism, science, technology and prose and it was sandwiched between two great traditions, namely the Romantic and the Modernist movements. Victorian poetry was characterised by the struggle between religion and science, new ideas about nature and romance, sentimentality and the use of sensory images.

Focus

‘My Last Duchess’ was published in 1842 in the collection of poems titled Dramatic Lyrics. As suggested by the title itself, Browning experimented with the lyric form in this poem. The poem is considered to be one of the greatest dramatic monologues in English literature.

The term ‘dramatic monologue’ was first used by the Greeks.

A dramatic monologue, psychological in nature, is a lyric in which a speaker - who is not the poet- addresses a silent listener in a specific situation at a dramatic moment in his life. As the poem progresses, the reader is given an insight into the character of the speaker. ‘My Last Duchess’ was inspired by the Renaissance Duke, Alfonso II of Ferrara, whose young wife, Lucrezia died under suspicious circumstances.
My Last Duchess

That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now. Fra Pandolf’s hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will’t please you sit and look at her? I said
“Fra Pandolf” by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, ’twas not
Her husband’s presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess’ cheek, perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say “Her mantle laps
Over my lady’s wrist too much,” or “Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat”. such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad.

1. Who is the speaker of the poem and who is he/she speaking to?

2. How does the poet give the reader an impression that there is a silent listener?

3. What does the speaker mean by saying, ‘I said “Fra Pandolf” by design’?
Too easily impressed; she liked whate’er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, ’twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blushed, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody’s gift. Who’d stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, “Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark”—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E’en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene’er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will’t please you rise? We’ll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master’s known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter’s self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we’ll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea–horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

7. What is ‘stooping’ according to the speaker?
8. What does the speaker mean by the expression, ‘all smiles stopped together’?
9. What is the significance of the Duke’s drawing attention to Neptune taming the sea–horse?

Fra: title for an Italian monk, or friar
by design: on purpose
countenance: face
durst (old use): dared
mantle: clothing
courtesy: polite behaviour
officious: self important
mule: the offspring of a horse and a donkey
stoop: to bend your body forward
trifling: of very little importance
disgust: to make one feel shocked

forsooth: used to emphasize a statement, especially in order to show surprise
munificence: generosity
ample: enough
warrant: an acceptable reason for doing something
pretence: a claim
avow: to say firmly and often publicly
tame: to make something easy to control
Neptune: the Roman God of Sea
Understanding the poem
1. How do we know that the painting referred to by the speaker is good?
2. Who is ‘Fra Pandolf’?
3. How do we know that the speaker is very possessive of his painting?
4. How do we know that the speaker of the poem is very powerful?
5. What does the Duke tell the listener in the poem about the fate of his former wife?
6. Did the Duchess do anything to displease her husband, the Duke? Justify your answer.
7. Why was the ‘nine-hundred-years old name’ so important to the Duke?
8. The Duke seems to have executed his wife for very trivial reasons. What were those trivial reasons?

Writing about the poem
1. In what way can ‘My Last Duchess’ be called a fine example of a dramatic monologue?
2. Would it have made much of a difference had the poem been called ‘My Late Duchess’?
3. In the poem readers are presented with the point of view of the Duke only. Prepare a narrative, imagining that the Duchess is narrating how her husband mistreated her.

ICT
• Visit the schoolworld.tv website (http://www.schoolsworld.tv/node/3065) and watch the presentation on the poem.
• Design activities like quiz/guessing the missing word/reordering jumbled lines etc. based on the poem using a word processor software or presentation software.
Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

Rabindranath Tagore is a versatile genius renowned as a poet, playwright, artist, composer, novelist and a philosopher. He is a source of inspiration to many writers of modern India. Tagore is regarded as one of the greatest mystic poets as his poetry is mostly concerned with his relationship with God. His poems are simple, spontaneous and have a striking originality. Tagore was a prominent figure in the Bengal Renaissance during the 19th and early 20th century. India's first Nobel Laureate, Tagore won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for his work *Gitanjali*. This prestigious work that took India to the forefront of world literature, is a collection of 157 songs through which Tagore expresses his thoughts on God and humanity. The preface to *Gitanjali* was written by W.B. Yeats, who was a great friend and admirer of Tagore.

Focus

Verse 50 of Tagore's *Gitanjali* is noted for its simplicity and portrayal of emotion. It depicts a strange experience which gives the poet a glimpse of the path that leads to the ultimate realization of God. Tagore has been content to discover the soul and surrender himself to its spontaneity. In *Gitanjali* Tagore writes thus: 'Men going home glance at me and smile and fill me with shame. I sit like a beggar maid, drawing my skirt over my face, and when they ask me, what it is I want, I drop my eyes and answer them not.' The *Gitanjali* abounds in such innocent and simple verses that one mostly fails to find elsewhere in literature. The verse for study, according to critics, can be read as the autobiography of the poet. Its central theme - the realization of God through self-purification and complete submission - has a universal appeal. Verse 50, with its honesty of feeling, radiance of imagery and musical quality, becomes a fine example of lyrical poetry.
"I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path,
when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream
and I wondered who was this King of all kings!
My hopes rose high and me thought my evil days were at an end,
and I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked
and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.
The chariot stopped where I stood.
Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile.
I felt that the luck of my life had come at last.
Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say
'What hast thou to give to me?'
Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg!
I was confused and stood undecided,
and then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee.
But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor
to find a least little gram of gold among the poor heap.
I bitterly wept and wished that
I had had the heart to give thee my all.

6. 'I bitterly wept,' says the speaker. Why did he cry?

7. What surprise awaited the speaker at the end?

8. Who, do you think, are 'the King of kings' and 'the beggar'?

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chariot: an open vehicle pulled by horses
gorgeous: very beautiful and attractive
alms: money, clothes and food that are given to poor people
camest (old use): second-person singular simple past of 'come'
didst (old use): second-person singular past tense of 'do'
bast (old use): second-person singular simple present form of 'have'
jest: joke
wallet: a small flat folding case made of leather or plastic for keeping money
Understanding the poem

1. The beggar and the king are the central characters in the poem. List the words associated with the beggar and the king in the table given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Beggar</th>
<th>The King</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>evil days</td>
<td>smile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. 'The poem is not just a description of an incident that happened in the life of a beggar. It has deeper significance.' Comment.

3. The poem ends with a great revelation for the poet. Discuss.

4. Tagore uses the word 'thy' in the second line of the poem. This is an example of archaisms. Identify other archaic words in the poem. What effect do these words create?

5. Tagore's poetry is celebrated for its pictorial quality. The image of the 'golden chariot' is an example. Identify other visual images used by the poet.

6. In the second line, the poet compares the appearance of the golden chariot to a 'gorgeous dream'. Name the poetic device used here.
Writing about the poem

The characters and events in the poem symbolize certain abstract ideas. A literary work in which each character or event is a symbol representing an idea or a quality is called allegory. Write a paragraph on the allegorical nature of the poem.

ICT

Visit the website http://tagoreweb.in/ and collect other verses from Gitanjali. Prepare a presentation on Tagore including his major works, biographical details and other noteworthy contributions. You may add pictures of the cover pages of his books, Tagore's own paintings and drawings and interesting anecdotes of his life, quotes etc. in your presentation. The following sites will help you collect them:

http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/r/rabindranath_tagore.html
Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949)

Sarojini Naidu was a freedom fighter, politician, orator, administrator and a poet. She is hailed as the ‘Nightingale of India’. She was a close associate of some of India's nationalist leaders and freedom fighters. Her birthday, February 13, is celebrated as National Women's Day. Sarojini Naidu voiced the dreams and aspirations of a nation in its making. She wrote mainly on the rural aspects of Indian culture and women's experiences. Her poems are remarkable for their richness of colour and splendour, lyrical charm and romantic beauty. Her works include The Golden Threshold, The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death & the Spring, The Broken Wing: Songs of Love, besides other equally significant collections.

Focus

The poem 'Bangle Sellers' is a lyric which depicts the social and cultural life of Indian women through a string of images associated with 'bangles'. They are not just a series of beautiful imagery, but a symbolic representation of the various stages in the life of a typical Indian woman. Her maidenhood, state of being a bride and motherhood are poignantly and lyrically portrayed in four stanzas. The resultant feeling is one of fulfilment and contentment. Thus, the multi-hued bangles celebrate the beauty and meaning of womanhood.
Bangle Sellers

Bangle sellers are we who bear
Our shining loads to the temple fair...
Who will buy these delicate, bright
Rainbow-tinted circles of light?
Lustrous tokens of radiant lives,
For happy daughters and happy wives.

Some are meet for a maiden's wrist,
Silver and blue as the mountain mist,
Some are flushed like the buds that dream
On the tranquil brow of a woodland stream,
Some are aglow with the bloom that cleaves
To the limpid glory of new born leaves

Some are like fields of sunlit corn,
Meet for a bride on her bridal morn,
Some, like the flame of her marriage fire,
Or, rich with the hue of her heart's desire,
Tinkling, luminous, tender, and clear,
Like her bridal laughter and bridal tear.

1. Who speaks in the poem?
2. Who are the possible bangle buyers?
3. What are the auspicious occasions for buying bangles?
4. How does the poet describe the bangles suitable for maidens?
5. Pick out words that relate bangles to the feelings of a bride.
Some are purple and gold flecked grey
For she who has journeyed through life midway,
Whose hands have cherished, whose love has blest,
And cradled fair sons on her faithful breast,
And serves her household in fruitful pride,
And worships the gods at her husband's side.

6. Identify the change in the colour of the bangles.

7. List the phrases that reflect the 'proud motherhood' of women.

**fair**: festival
**tinted**: coloured
**lustrous**: having a glow
**radiant**: gleamed with brilliant light
**meet**: suitable
**maiden**: a virgin
**mist**: droplets of water suspended in the atmosphere
**flush**: to turn red
**tranquil**: calm
**bloom**: flower
**cleaves**: stick fast to
**limpid**: unclouded, clear
**hue**: colour
**tinkling**: cause to make a light, clear ringing sound
**luminous**: shining
**tender**: soft
**flecked**: marked with small patches of colour
Understanding the poem

1. How do bangles relate to the lives of their buyers?

2. 'Shining load' is an image used in the poem. Pick out other images used in the poem and comment on their importance.

3. Weddings become befitting occasions to wear bangles. In what ways does the poet associate bangles with a bride?

4. How are the crucial phases in the life of an Indian woman depicted in the poem? How are the words 'dream', 'desire' and 'faithful' related with these phases?

5. How does the poet relate the change in the colour of the bangles to the changes in the life of a maiden?

6. Identify the rhyme scheme employed in the poem. How far does it suit the theme of the poem?

7. Identify instances of alliteration in the poem.

Writing about the poem

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem in terms of theme, message, tone, mood and the poetic devices employed. You may consider the structure of the poem, the arrangement of lines etc.

2. The poem describes the beauty and contentment of womanhood. Do women all over the world lead such colourful lives? Comment.

ICT

Make a presentation on the life history of Sarojini Naidu using presentation software. You may make use of images, video and audio files in the presentation to highlight the various stages of her life covering the political and literary phases.
Alfred Noyes (1880-1958)

Alfred Noyes was an English poet, playwright and novelist who lived in the United States and Canada during much of World War II. He was a noted critic of modernist writers such as James Joyce and T.S. Eliot. Noyes was called a literary conservative as he followed traditional models in the structure and subject of his poetry, refusing to embrace the modernist movement in literature. His verse was influenced by Romantic poets like Tennyson and Wordsworth. ‘The Highway Man’ is arguably the most well-known and popular of his poems.

Focus

‘The Highway Man’ is a ballad. Ballad is a song-like narrative poem which tells a story. A ballad is a plot-driven song, with one or more characters and the events in their lives leading to a dramatic conclusion. At the best, a ballad does not tell the reader what is happening, but rather shows the reader what is taking place, describing each crucial moment in the trail of events.

In ‘The Highway Man’, Noyes displays his skill at writing a narrative poetry reminiscent of his two biggest influences, Wordsworth and Tennyson. ‘The Highway Man’ is a tale of an outlaw and his doomed love for the innkeeper’s daughter. It is a splendid example of a modern ballad, full of romance, adventure, thrill and excitement.
The Highway Man

PART 1

I

THE wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
And the highwayman came riding—
    Riding—riding—
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

II

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,
A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin;
They fitted with never a wrinkle: his boots were up to the thigh!
And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,
    His pistol butts a-twinkle,
    His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

III

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn-yard,
And he tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred;

1. How does the poet describe the night?

2. How is the Highwayman described?

3. Who whistled a tune and who appeared at the window?
He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,

   Bess, the landlord's daughter,

Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

   IV

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked
Where Tim the ostler listened; his face was white and peaked;
His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy hay,
But he loved the landlord's daughter,

   The landlord's red-lipped daughter,

Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say—

   V

‘One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize to-night,
But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light;
Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day,
Then look for me by moonlight,

   Watch for me by moonlight, I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way.’
VI
He rose upright in the stirrups; he scarce could reach her hand,
But she loosened her hair i' the casement! His face burnt like a brand
As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his breast;
And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,
(Oh, sweet, black waves in the moonlight!)
Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped away to the West.

PART 2
I
He did not come in the dawning; he did not come at noon;
And out o' the tawny sunset, before the rise o' the moon,
When the road was a gypsy's ribbon, looping the purple moor,
A red-coat troop came marching-
Marching-marching-
King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-door.

II
They said no word to the landlord, they drank his ale instead,

7. What do the Highwayman and Bess do to express their love?
8. Who came marching up to the old inn-door?
9. What did King George's men do to Bess?
But they gagged his daughter and bound her to the foot
of her narrow bed;
Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at their
side!
There was death at every window;
And hell at one dark window;
For Bess could see, through her casement, the road that
he would ride.

III
They had tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering
jest;
They had bound a musket beside her, with the barrel
beneath her breast!
‘Now, keep good watch!’ and they kissed her.
She heard the dead man say—

Look for me by moonlight;
Watch for me by moonlight;
I’ll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar
the way!

IV
She twisted her hands behind her; but all the knots held
good!
She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with
sweat or blood!

10. What words of
the Highwayman are
echoed in the heart
of Bess?

11. What did Bess
struggle for? What
was her intention?

12. Why did Bess
decide not to strive
more?
They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours crawled by like years.

Till, now, on the stroke of midnight,
Cold, on the stroke of midnight,
The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least was hers!

V

The tip of one finger touched it; she strove no more for the rest!
Up, she stood up to attention, with the barrel beneath her breast,
She would not risk their hearing; she would not strive again;
For the road lay bare in the moonlight;
Blank and bare in the moonlight;
And the blood of her veins in the moonlight throbbed to her love's refrain.

VI

Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot! Had they heard it? The horse- hoofs ringing clear;
Tlot-tlot, tlot-tlot, in the distance? Were they deaf that they did not hear?
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,
The highwayman came riding,
Riding, riding!

13. Who are the ‘they’ referred to in the stanza?

14. What did Bess do to warn the Highwayman?
The red-coats looked to their priming! She stood up, straight and still!

VII

Tlot-tlot, in the frosty silence! Tlot-tlot, in the echoing night!
Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light!
Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last deep breath,
Then her finger moved in the moonlight,
Her musket shattered the moonlight,
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—
with her death.

VIII

He turned; he spurred to the West; he did not know who stood
Bowed, with her head o'er the musket, drenched with her own red blood!
Not till the dawn he heard it, his face grew grey to hear
How Bess, the landlord's daughter,
The landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in the darkness there.

IX

Back, he spurred like a madman, shrieking a curse to the sky,
With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier brandished high!
Blood-red were his spurs i' the golden noon; wine-red was his velvet coat.
When they shot him down on the highway,
    Down like a dog on the highway,
And he lay in his blood on the highway, with the bunch of lace at his throat.

* * * * * *

And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the trees,
When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
A highwayman comes riding-
    Riding-riding-
A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.

Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard;
He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and barred;

17. What was the local lore about the lovers?
He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
  Bess, the landlord's daughter,
  Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

**Words to Know:**

- **torrent**: strong, fast moving
- **gust**: a brief strong rush of wind
- **moor**: a barren, unproductive land
- **galleon**: a large sailing ship
- **bonny**: beautiful
- **cocked hat**: hat bent upward
- **claret**: dark red
- **breeches**: trousers
- **doe**: female deer
- **cobbles**: water-worn rounded stones
- **clatter**: riding with a noisy sound
- **tawny**: golden
- **Gipsy's ribbon**: symbolises dark and dirty
- **muskets**: rifles
- **sniggering**: half suppressed, secretive laughter
- **muzzle**: open end of a gun
- **gag**: a piece of cloth that is put over or in somebody's mouth to stop them speaking
Understanding the poem

1. What mood does Noyes try to set when he uses metaphors like ‘wind was a torrent of darkness’, ‘moon was a ghostly galleon’ and ‘road was a ribbon of moonlight’ in the poem?

2. Refrain is the part of a song/poem repeated in the song/poem. Which are the lines repeated in the poem? What is the significance of the refrain in this ballad?

3. The poet uses words which resemble the sounds they describe. This technique is called onomatopoeia. He also makes use of alliteration (the repetition of consonant sound at the beginning of words that are close together). Pick out examples for both and comment on their effect in the poem.

4. Pick out an instance of simile in the poem and comment on the aptness of the comparison.

Writing about the poem

1. The poet makes use of excellent word-pictures to describe the central characters in the poem. Complete the following web and attempt a character sketch of both.

   ![Character Web](character_web.png)
2. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem as a literary ballad giving emphasis to its poetic form, diction, imagery, theme, unity and musical quality.

3. Discuss how Bess is caught in the crossfire between the Highwayman and the King’s soldiers and how she pays with her life for saving the Highwayman’s life. Attempt a write-up connecting the events with that of the contemporary society where innocent women are molested, assaulted and killed.

**ICT**

The ballad which tells the story of adventure and romance is best suited for filming. Watch the video text of the ballad on YouTube and attempt a review of it. You can attempt an audio recording of the poem and present the poem before the class hyperlinking the audio and video files.
Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Robert Lee Frost is one of the most popular 20th century American poets. In an age of Modernism, Frost upheld traditional poetry by strictly keeping meter, rhyme and formalized stanzas instead of writing in free verse. He used themes from everyday life to analyse complex social and philosophical questions. By portraying rural life in the most realistic manner and by bringing in a wide range of human experiences, Frost initiated a new poetic trail. ‘Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening’, ‘The Road not Taken’, ‘Apple Picking’, ‘Home Burial’, ‘Mending Wall’ and ‘Birches’ are some of his well-known verses. He had received the Pulitzer Prize four times, which was unprecedented in the history of American literature.

Focus

‘Never Again would Birds' Song be the Same’, set in the Garden of Eden is a poem in praise of Eve and her eternal charm. She is in deep communion with nature, especially with the birds in the garden. Her sweet voice adds an 'over sound' to theirs and thereby makes it sweeter. The poem was an attempt by the poet on the modernist expression, yet he framed it as a sonnet. Frost also experimented a change of scene by setting the poem in the Garden of Eden instead of the usual rural background.
Never Again would Birds' Song  
be the Same

He would declare and could himself believe
That the birds there in all the garden round
From having heard the daylong voice of Eve
Had added to their own an oversound,
Her tone of meaning but without the words.
Admittedly an eloquence so soft
Could only have had an influence on birds
When call or laughter carried it aloft.
Be that as may be, she was in their song.
Moreover her voice upon their voices crossed
Had now persisted in the woods so long
That probably it never would be lost.
Never again would birds' song be the same.
And to do that to birds was why she came.

1. What is the adjective used by the poet to describe Eve's voice?
2. Which 'garden' is mentioned in the poem?
3. How did Eve's voice influence the birds?
4. Which line indicates that it was a long lasting influence?
5. Why, according to the poet, did Eve come to Eden?
Understanding the poem

1. ‘Be that as may be, she was in their song.’ What impression do you get from this regarding the quality of Eve's voice?

2. What difference does the poet notice in the bird's song and Eve's speech?

3. Who is the ‘he’ in the opening lines of the poem? Why do you think his name has never come up in the poem?

4. What is the meaning of 'oversound' in the poem?

5. How does the poet establish a close link between birds and Eve?

6. Does Eve represent a single biblical character or womanhood as a whole? Justify.

7. Do you think that women are closer to nature than men? Explain with reference to the poem.

8. Birds are associated with liberty. How does that association work in the context of this poem?

9. Allusion is an artistic device of making an indirect reference to something without mentioning it explicitly. What is the allusion in this poem?

10. Pick out the rhyme scheme of the poem.

Writing about the poem

1. If Adam were at the centre of the poem, how different would the treatment of the poet be? Comment.

2. Eco-feminists across the world believe that 'Women are more akin to nature than to culture.' Prepare a review of the poem in the light of the above statement.

ICT

Robert Frost has many poems to his credit. Search the web for more poems and make an e-portfolio of his works.
Theodore Roethke (1908 - 1963)

Theodore Huebner Roethke is an American poet who makes profuse use of nature images in his poetry. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1954 for his book, *The Waking* and he won the annual National Book Award for Poetry twice, in 1959 for *Words for the Wind* and posthumously in 1965 for *The Far Field*. As Karl Malkoff of *The Sewanee Review* noted, 'He is one of our finest poets, a human poet in a world that threatens to turn man into an object.'

Focus

This is an elegy, a poem reflecting on death or loss.

A traditional elegy is written in elegiac stanzas, often in lines of iambic pentameter that have the rhyme scheme *abab*. An elegy often idealises the deceased. It typically ends with a consolation. In this elegy, Roethke chooses to deviate from some of the traditional elements to mirror the unconventional nature of the theme.

‘Elegy for Jane’, included in *The Waking* is a teacher’s emotional response to the death of a student. The poem deals with the complexity of love outside the compartmentalisations prescribed by society. The reader is faced with the challenge of addressing a love different from the typical ones that society teaches us to value or pursue.
Elegy for Jane  
(My student, thrown by a horse)

I remember the neckcurls, limp and damp as tendrils;  
And her quick look, a sidelong pickerel smile;  
And how, once startled into talk, the light syllables leaped for her,  
And she balanced in the delight of her thought,  
A wren, happy, tail into the wind,  
Her song trembling the twigs and small branches.  
The shade sang with her;  
The leaves, their whispers turned to kissing,  
And the mould sang in the bleached valleys under the rose.  
Oh, when she was sad, she cast herself down into such a pure depth,  
Even a father could not find her,  
Scraping her cheek against straw,  
Stirring the clearest water.  
My sparrow, you are not here,  
Waiting like a fern, making a spiny shadow.  
The sides of wet stones cannot console me,

1. How does the speaker recall the physical qualities of the student?  
2. How does the happiness of the girl permeate to nature?  
3. Why do you think the poet uses the expression 'a father'?  
4. Pick out an instance of animal imagery used in the poem.
Nor the moss, wound with the last light.
If only I could nudge you from this sleep,
My maimed darling, my skittery pigeon.
Over this damp grave I speak the words of my love.
I, with no rights in this matter,
Neither father nor lover.

5. Identify the visual images used to establish the mood of the poem.

6. What wish does the poet express?

7. How does the poet drive home the feeling that he is an outsider?

circumflex: a kind of song bird
pickerel: a kind of freshwater fish with a long flat snout
maimed: injured, with permanent damage to body
spiney: having thorns, difficult to handle
skittery: moving restlessly, quickly
Understanding the poem

1. How does the poet establish the elegiac nature of the poem?

2. Comment on the expressions ‘sidelong pickerel smile’ and ‘bleached valleys under the rose’.

3. The poet refers to the girl as a 'wren', a 'sparrow' and a 'pigeon'. Why do you think he selected these birds? How do they relate to the girl?

4. Does the poet employ rhyming words or a definite rhyme scheme? Poems without a definite pattern are said to be written in 'free verse'. How does the choice of this form complement the theme?

5. In the second line of the first stanza, stressed monosyllabic words are used side by side (e.g. quick look). Find out similar usages in the poem. What effect do they create?

6. In the beginning, ‘the neck curls’ of the girl are compared to wet tendrils. Identify other elements of nature used and their effectiveness in bringing out the personality traits of the girl.

7. In the final stanza, we see the poet standing at the newly dug grave of the girl. How does the setting contribute to the sombre mood of the poem? Comment on the effectiveness of the setting.

8. The poet wonders whether he has the right to acknowledge his intense feelings of grief. Why does he have such a doubt?

Writing about the poem

1. The poem ‘Elegy for Jane’ explores the impact of one human life on another, outside the context of family or romantic love. Prepare a critical review of the poem.

2. If Jane could read this poem, what would she think? How would she feel about it: flattered, confused, embarrassed, or angry? Why?

ICT

Recite the poem with proper stress, tone and intonation. Record the reading and make a presentation of the poem using presentation software. You may use appropriate images in your presentation.
Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

James Mereer Langston Hughes is a famous Afro-American poet, novelist, playwright and social activist who started writing in the context of the Harlem Renaissance (1919-1930) which focussed on literature, music, theatre, art and politics. He, being a black, wrote profusely about the meaning and mettle of black identity. His poems voice the black American writing in English. 'The Negro Speaks of Rivers' is one of his best poems. He has written books for the young: The Dream Keeper and Other Poems (1932), The First Book of Rhythms (1954), Don't You Turn Back and the Like, Montage a Dream Deferred (poetry), Without Laughter, 1930 (novel), The Big Sea, 1940 (autobiography) and Don't You Want to be Free? 1938 (play) are some of his significant works.

Focus

'Oppression', with its revolutionary content, is a typical Langston Hughes poem in free verse. The discrimination and oppression suffered by the Afro-Americans form the core of Hughes' poems. With his usual economy of words and imagery, the poet expresses the inevitability of social change. The poet also prophesies the end of oppression and the redemption of his dreams quite convincingly.
Oppression

Now dreams
Are not available
To the dreamers,
Nor songs
To the singers

In some lands
Dark night
And cold steel
Prevail
But the dream
Will come back
And the song
Break
Its jail.

1. How does the poet bring out the condition of oppression?

2. Why are some lands dark and cold?

3. How does the poet express his faith in dreams and songs?

prevail: to be in force/use/effect to be current
Understanding the poem

1. The word ‘oppression’ does not occur anywhere in the poem. Still an atmosphere of oppression prevails. How?

2. What do cold steel and dark night represent?

3. Is the poet optimistic? Explain.

4. The dream in this poem is not just a day-dream. Do you think that dreams have a motivating influence in our lives? Justify your argument.

5. Have you ever experienced such a situation as described in the poem? Were you able to overcome it? How?

6. What does ‘jail’ stand for?

Writing about the poem

1. Here is another poem on dreams by Langston Hughes. Compare the idea of dream in both poems and bring out their social significance.

Harlem (Dream Deferred)

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

Like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore-

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over-

Like a syrupy sweet?

May be it just sags

Like a heavy load

Or does it explode?

2. Write a poem of your own on the theme 'dream'.

60 ICT

Find out the literature of African-American origin and prepare profiles of any five of these works including their photographs, works, themes handled etc.
Pablo Neruda (1904-1973)

Pablo Neruda is the pen name and later the legal name of the Chilean poet and politician Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto. Neruda has gifted us with love poems, historical epics, surrealist poems and a handful of political poems too. After the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Neruda developed an admiration for Communist ideology. This inkling towards communism made him criticise the Chilean government. In 1948, he was forced into hiding and was exiled for his actions. He returned to Chile in 1952 and continued to live there till his death in 1973. He shared the World Peace Prize with Paul Robeson and Pablo Picasso in 1950. In 1971, he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. The Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez has hailed him as 'the greatest poet of the twentieth century in any language.'

Focus

Neruda wrote his poems in Spanish. This poem is a translated one and was most likely written during his exile. It was published in a collection in 1952 titled 'The Captain's Verses', after his return from exile. Charged with sensuality and passion, Neruda's love poems are the most celebrated pieces of his compositions. This poem is frequently thought to be a love poem dedicated to his wife Matilde Urrutia. But some critics state that this poem is an address to the poet's home country, Chile, rather than a love poem.

The poem comprises of six stanzas of unequal length. The lyric is written in free-form as most of Neruda's other poems are. Love being a persistent subject of interest, 'If You Forget Me' with its themes of passionate love and sacrifice, has captured the attention of many readers across the globe.
I want you to know one thing.

You know how this is:
if I look at the crystal moon, at the red branch of the slow autumn at my window, if I touch near the fire the impalpable ash or the wrinkled body of the log, everything carries me to you, as if everything that exists, aromas, light, metals, were little boats that sail toward those isles of yours that wait for me.
Well, now,
if little by little you stop loving me
I shall stop loving you little by little.
If suddenly
you forget me
do not look for me,
for I shall already have forgotten you.

If you think it long and mad,
the wind of banners
that passes through my life,
and you decide
to leave me at the shore
of the heart where I have roots,
remember
that on that day,
at that hour,
I shall lift my arms
and my roots will set off
to seek another land.

4. Loving somebody is not a momentary affair. It is time-consuming. Which words reflect this idea?

5. Can roots be fixed in one’s heart? If so, whose ‘heart’ is referred to?
But
if each day,
each hour,
you feel that you are destined for me
with implacable sweetness,
if each day a flower
climbs up to your lips to seek me,
ah my love, ah my own,
in me all that fire is repeated,
in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,
my love feeds on your love, beloved,
and as long as you live it will be in your arms
without leaving mine.

6. How do we know
that the love in the
poem is reciprocal?

7. Does the lyric end
in a loving tone or a
bitter one?

**impalpable**: incapable of being perceived by the senses; especially by the sense of touch

**aroma**: perfume; sweet smell

**isles**: islands

**destined**: governed by fate

**implacable**: incapable of being pacified; cannot be appeased

**extinguished**: to put an end to or bring to an end
Understanding the poem

1. The summary of each stanza may be listed as one-liners. Two are done for you. Complete the remaining:

Stanza 1- I want you to know one thing
Stanza 2- Everything reminds me of you
Stanza 3- ............................................
Stanza 4- .............................................
Stanza 5- .............................................
Stanza 6- .............................................

2. Is the poem an address to the speaker's lover? Substantiate your answer.

3. A historical placing of the poem suggests that the poet was stimulated by his personal experience of exile from his home. Justify.

4. The word 'if' is employed by the poet in all the five stanzas except the first one. Does the word have any significance in the poem? Does the poet wish all that he has written to happen?

5. The poet here is reluctant to leave the heart where he has roots. Here 'heart' is a metaphor for home. What other metaphors are employed by the poet?

6. Use of poetic devices like alliteration adds to the musical quality of a verse. Pick out instances of alliteration from the poem.

7. Find out instances of personification used in the poem.

8. In stanza 2, the poet borrows images from sea life to drive home his passionate longing for his lover. Identify the image used and comment on them.

9. There is a sudden shift in the tone of the poet as the poem progresses. Where do you notice this shift? How does the shift affect the progression of thought of the poet?

Writing about the poem

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem taking into account its themes, language, literary devices used, tone and mood.

ICT

Prepare a presentation on Neruda's poems. You may include videos on Neruda's poems, audio texts, his biographical details etc. in your presentation.