**THE VILLAGE SCHOOL**

The building of the village school was surrounded by an irregular hedge, which was fully blossomed. The village school is referred to as a ‘Noisy mansion’  The building is noisy as it holds a number of school children in it.

The poet depicts the undisputed and sovereign power of the village school master. He was a strict disciplinarian with a hard and rigid expression on his face. It made every truant anxious. The poet also describes that the dangers of that day to be faced by the students could be predicted from the grim expression on his face.

The children were quite afraid of the village school master. The truants, especially were quite anxious about him. The children could foresee the dangers that were awaiting them that day from the grim expression of the school master. When the school master expressed his sense of humor by a joke, the children laughed to it with ‘Counterfeited glee’. The poet gives a vivid description of an ideal classroom in a village school.

Since education was scarce in villages, the school master was very much respected by the villagers for his abundant knowledge. The school master could measure, write and count, which was of great help for them. He could measure lands, and foretell the terms and tides, which was useful for the peasants for making various payments such as their rents, wages, etc…

**Poem: Invitation**

“Invitation” was composed in Alipore Jail in 1908. Here, Sri Aurobindo gives voice to his own inner feelings by inventing a narrator.

To put the poem in a nutshell, the poet‐narrator invites readers to attain an inner freedom that does not depend on any other beyond the Self, an invitation to embrace solitude, and an invitation to experience free and peaceful existence.

The poem is an invitation to experience the narrator’s experience of freedom and largesse in existence. The atmosphere that the words create is dreamy, almost fairytale like and unfelt, unknown in reality or not wholly comprehendible to our own, busy self‐absorbed mechanical routine of life. The effect of this poem is that one can sense a calling or beckoning and one knows that bright promises are inherent in the call.

In the first stanza of “Invitation” we can sense that the geo‐physical words employed by Sri; the word “moorlands” which is indicative of the uncultivated countryside and the idea of “Wade through the brook and tramp to the snow” The poet wants others to be a party to the ascension and extends an invitation in verse when he says “Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?”

In this poem, Sri Aurobindo goes ahead to move us from the outer landscape to the inner nature and a state of desirable freedom. The poet‐narrator makes his carefree state of existence very clear by contrasting it with city life and its limitedness when he says “Not in the petty circles of cities / Cramped by your doors and your walls I dwell;”

The phrase “petty circle of cities” suggests that city life is binding and circular or rather limited. A note of distinction between the poet and the drabness of city life is made more obvious and emphatic when the poet narrator says “your doors” and “your walls”. He sees himself as distinct and there is a sort of psychoanalytic “otherness” that the poet‐narrator establishes by emphasizing on the word “your”. He describes his natural state of existence when he says “Over me God is blue in the welkin/ Against me the wind and the storm rebel.”

There is an aura of mystery when the poet‐narrator says that he plays with solitude in his own region and that he has befriended misadventure. Perhaps he implies that to those who are trapped in the humdrum of life his situation would translate to a misadventure, but for him there is a largesse and freedom in his situation.

 In the last stanza, the poet‐narrator reveals the prominent attributes of his entity and also enlists the essential pre‐requisites for those who wish to accept his invitation. He calls himself the lord of the tempest and the mountain and says that he is “the Spirit of freedom and pride”. The persona that Sri Aurobindo creates is powerful and embodies the spirit of freedom and pride.

In the end the poet says that the ones who accept the invitation must be “stark” and “a kinsman to danger” indicative of the strength required to accept the invitation and to ascend upwards to share the poet‐narrator’s experience. Sri Aurobindo’s short poems can awaken one to the true love of poetry and this little poem is proof enough to that effect.

**To Daffodils**

 by Robert Herrick

In his poem ‘To Daffodils’, the poet Robert Herrick begins by saying that we grieve to see the beautiful daffodils being wasted away very quickly. The duration of their gloom is so short that it seems even the rising sun still hasn’t reached the noon-time. Thus, in the very beginning he has struck a note of mourning at the fast dying of daffodils. The poet then addresses the daffodils and asks them to stay until the clay ends with the evening prayer. After praying together he says that they will also accompany the daffodils. This is so because like flowers, men too have a very transient life and even the youth is also very short-lived.

**Deep meaning:**

Robert Herrick symbolically equates/compares human life with the life of daffodils. He says that both of them grow very fast to be destroyed later. Just like the short duration of the flowers, men too die away soon. Their life is as short as the rain of the summer season, which comes for a very short time; and the dew-drops in the morning, which vanish away and never return again. Thus, the poet after comparing the flowers to humans later turns to the objects of nature – he has compared the life of daffodils with summer rain, dew drops.

***IF….***

***By Rudyard Kipling***

Life only has meaning when it has been lived meaningfully and our identity as human beings can only be ratified in the real sense of the term if we live virtuously by following a set of high moral codes and conduct. Rudyard Kipling’s *If* is a blueprint for all those qualities and virtues which we must inculcate within us to be able to call ourselves complete human beings and also in order to attain true success in life. In course of the thirty two lines of the poem, Kipling advocates the virtues of composure, patience, integrity, modesty, control, perseverance, tolerance determination, confidence – for a few to cite. This poem is the like a rule book to perfect the art of living and being human.

The poem *If*  speaks to each and every reader on what it means to become a complete man and how he operates through the thick and thins of life. The various values and codes of conduct imparted through the poem form the different sub-themes of the poem, which are as follows:

*Rightful Behavior:* Most of what this poem advocates deals with rightful behavior such as keeping a calm head and maintaining composure during times of crisis instead of indulging in blame games. The poet also adds that we must not deal with lies or brew hatred in our hearts even if the ones around us are doing the same. Upon achieving success or failure the poet advocates the rightful stance of not letting any of these promotions or set-backs influencing us. Instead we must understand the temporary nature of the ups and downs in life and go about our business in a steadfast, unaffected fashion.

*Modesty:* Modesty is one theme which shines out in the poem. The poet asks us to never get too self-righteous even if we have the best set of virtues and abide by strict moral codes: *And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise.* Money often comes in suit with arrogance. The poet urges his readers to practice modesty upon getting successful in life so that he can fit in seamlessly with the kings as well as the common masses.

*Balance:* Maintaining balance and control in all aspects of life is an important theme which the poem forwards. The poet asks us to give our maximum effort to our goals in life but at the same times asks us to not make our ambition and dreams our be all and end all. He asks us to have faith in our belief system but not so much that we become immune to the valuable opinions of others.

*Patience:* There is also the theme of patience in the poem. The poet asks us to patiently wait for our efforts to reach fruition because all good things take time to materialize.

*Self-belief:* Belief in the self is one another sub-theme in the poem. The poet asks us to not lose faith in our beliefs and convictions even if the ones around us begin to lose hope in us.

*Risk Taking:*The poem often showcases life as a gamble in which all our achievements might get washed away. The poet wants us to be willing to take that risk in life as it will bring us closer to our final goals in life.

*Persistence:* The ‘never-give-up’ outlook towards life is one major theme of the poem. The poet asks us to keep striving towards our goals, against all odds, even if it involves putting all of our life’s achievements at stake. Shall we lose all we have while trying to get ahead in life, we must not back down but muster enough will power and determination to start again from scratch.

*Time Management:*The unforgiving nature of Time comes out in the last stanza of the poem. The poet stresses upon the fact that Time when lost never comes back so one must give every second of our waking minutes all we have to make the most of it

**The Darkling Thrush**

‘The Darkling Thrush’ opens with endings: the end of the year, the end of the day even the end of the nineteenth century.

The poem’s speaker leans upon a woodland gate and views the land around him as a symbol of the events of the nineteenth century, the ‘Century’s corpse outleant’. The speaker is made a part of the scene, not just a detached observer, as ‘outleant’ echoes the speaker’s own action at the start of the poem. The century is dying (‘crypt’, ‘death-lament’) because it is at its end, but also because something has died as a result of the events of that century: religious faith.

The fact that the thrush, despite being ‘aged’ and ‘small’, can still sing a song filled with ‘joy illimited’ is contrasted with the speaker’s lack of hope and joy. The word ‘illimited’ is describing a joy that is unaffected by knowledge of such things as the end of the year or the end of the century.

The poem ends on an ambiguous note. The speaker inspired by the ‘blessed Hope’ of the thrush’s song, or does he continue to lack optimism for the future? He is ‘unaware’ of the thrush’s reasons for being cheerful, but he seems to believe that such a cause for hope exists somewhere, and he simply hasn’t discovered (or rediscovered) it yet. This ambivalence is partly what helps to make ‘The Darkling Thrush’ a great piece of poetry to analyse. Unlike the thrush’s carolings, Hardy’s poem does not sound an unconditionally positive note.