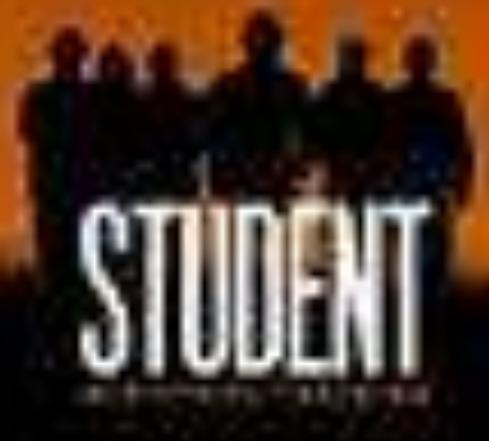


To a Student

-Kamala Wijeratne



Comprehension

I.

1) Who do you think is the narrator of the poem?

Ans. The narrator of the poem is the poet KAMALA WIJETATNE .

2) Pick out the lines which convey that the listener is not heeding to the narrator's words from the poem.

Ans. "I know do your ears are stopped against my voice."

The echoes of gun shots have blocked all extraneous sound , blasts of grenades have cracked the drums.

3) "The echoes of gun shots have blocked all extraneous sound"- what do you think is the meaning of the word 'extraneous' in the context in this poem?

Ans. The word 'extraneous' here conveys that the words of the teacher appear irrelevant , and unrelated when the students keep hearing the gun-shots and blasts of grenades which is the stark reality from which they can not escape. Their minds are filled with fear and apprehension so what the teacher says creates no interest or meaning of them

4) What is the fear lurking in the minds of

- a. the listener
- b. the narrator

Ans. a . The listener fears for brother , friend and lover

b . The narrator fears for men of kindred blood

5) "Let us shake off these brand names". What do "these brand names" , indicate? Are they

- a . The names of political parties ?
- b . The promises of politicians in their party manifestoes?
- c. The names of arms and armaments?
- d . All of the above.

Ans. C . The names of arms and armaments.

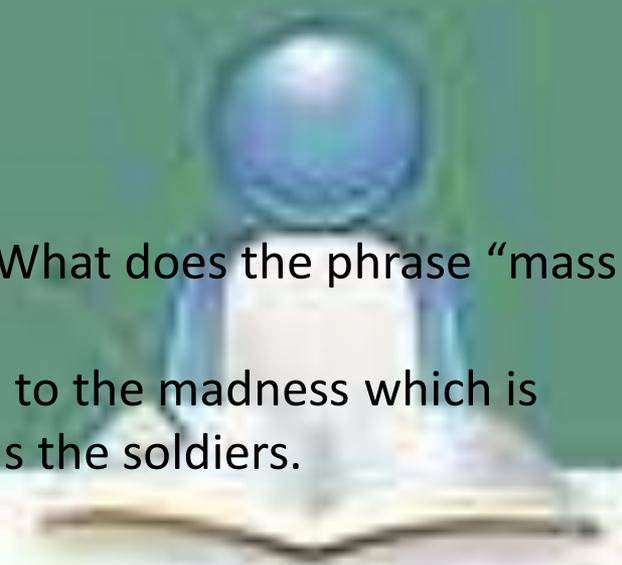
6) Why due you think the speaker is searching for a herb that heals ? What kind of a herb is it? Is it

- a . The herb of a political Messiah?
- b . The herb from the writers and artists?
- c . The herb from a layman?
- d . The herb from the younger generation?

Ans. C . The herb from a layman.

7) Why does the poet use the expression "mass lunacy" ? What does the phrase "mass lunacy" mean?

Ans. Mass lunacy means insanity on a mass scale . It refers to the madness which is seen in the mindless killing of the ethnic minority as well as the soldiers.



8) What future plans does the speaker chalk-out at the end of the poem?

Ans. The speaker urges her students to search for a healing herb to make a poultice to cure mass lunacy. She wants that they leave behind the cities , Ilions and Carthages to the antique dealers , implying that they are old fashion and antiquated but rather concentrate on making fresh methodology to stop other Hiroshimas , to stop further destruction and death.

II.

1) Explain 'Ilions' and 'Carthages' and 'Hiroshimas' in the context of the poem.

Ans. Ilions was the ancient name of the city of Troy while Carthage was an ancient city-state in North Africa near modern Tunis. Three Punic Wars with Rome resulted in complete destruction of Carthage. Hiroshima is a city in southern Japan where on August 6th , 1945 an atom bomb was dropped which almost completely destroyed it. The poet-teacher mentions these three cities to bring home the fact that wars , whether ethnic or otherwise can only result in death and destruction. Ilions and Carthage had faced wars in d distinct past so it is best that they be left to the antique dealers, who might be pleased to refer those antique cities. Hiroshima, is on the other hand still fresh in people's memory for the Carthage the atom bomb brought about. Hence the poet wants to draw a plan with a new methodology to prevent an other such disaster.

2) Why does the student's eyes "leap away" when they meet the teacher's? Give your reasons.

Ans. While the poet-teacher is speaking the student is unable to maintain the eye contact. The eyes 'leap away' when they meet the teacher's eye. This is perhaps due to the fact that they belong to two different racial groups and cultures and given the backdrop of the ongoing conflict the student feels uneasy, uncertain, fearful, or even distrustful

3) What picture of 'life' do you get in the poem ?

Ans. No war can bring about happiness and joy. It only results in death, destruction misery. Life as depicted in the poem is one of fear, distrust and uncertainty and death and destruction. The student, symbolizing the student community or the younger generation sees the bloodbath that is unleashed by the ethnic conflict and his eyes reflect the fear and uncertainty that looms large before them. The student fears for the fate of men of kindred blood. Brand names have only made life miserable for the people at large.