

TO A STUDENT

Kamala Wijeratne

The poem is set in the backdrop of violence in Srilanka between the Singhalese and the Tamils. The teacher addresses her students who are both Tamils and Singhalese and motivates them to find solutions rather than worry about the situation.

She expresses concern for her students by stating that she understands why they fail to maintain eye contact with the teacher. She also knows that their ears are stopped against her voice because the echoes of gunshots have blocked all unwanted sounds. The grenades have caused damage to their eardrums. They are unable to concentrate in class as they are worried about their brother, friend and lover.

The teacher expresses her concern and says that she is also exposed to the violence of the place with human flesh suspended from bushes and trees, the pieces of splintered bones scattered everywhere and the pools of blood seen on the roads. She hears the echoes of the blast of landmines. Here the teacher expresses her concern for human kind.

The teacher suggests the students to have a positive outlook towards life by not concentrating on unkind sound and violence. She requests them to leave behind all brand names and work towards finding a solution to the problem. She reminds them about how herbs were made into a cooling poultice to heal wounds and asks students to find solutions to the problem of mass lunacy of people.

The teacher asks the students not to focus on the ruins of cities like Illions and Carthages that were destroyed in war and leave it to the interest of antique dealers. finally she assures the students that a fresh methodology has to be planned out to stop war and incidences like Hiroshima.

SURVIVORS

Siegfried Sassoon

The poem gives a picture of physically and mentally scarred soldiers after war. He calls the soldiers who return from the battle field as survivors. The tone of the poem is sarcastic while he expresses his anger towards the nonchalant attitude of the politicians and the civilians towards the sufferings of the soldiers.

The non-combatants are of the opinion that the soldiers are waiting to recover soon and return to the battle field and perform their duty. In reality the soldiers face numerous problems. They are presently in a state of shock that resulted to their stammering and disconnected talk. They look old and scared because of the horrifying experience of war and violence. They are slowly recovering from their injuries and learning to walk. But, the people and the politicians feel that these soldiers are proud of glorious war failing to understand that war has shattered their pride. The nights of the soldiers are haunted and they surrender in fear to the ghosts of their friends. The memory of their friends and their horrifying scenes of battle field disturbs their mind and they are unable to sleep. Their dreams too are filled with the scenes of murder of friends and enemies.

These soldiers go to the battlefield with confidence but return shattered both physically and mentally. It is this state of the soldiers and the attitude of the non-combatants that the poet tries to capture in this poem.

THE PRIZE POEM

P.G WODEHOUSE

This is a story of a London Primary school during the 20th century. It is a humorous story that speaks of the effect of forcing students to participate in competitions.

A misanthropic man writes a will, with an intention of troubling the children. He writes that the school authorities of St. Austin's college should conduct a poetry competition every year for the 6th standard students of the school, stressing on the fact that every student must participate. He sets aside a portion of his money as prize amount and dies. The school authorities follow this tradition of conducting poetry competition for the 6th form students for twenty five years and finally after that this legacy is broken.

Smith a student of the 6th standard visits his friend Reynolds in the infirmary who is his senior. He tells him about the poetry contest and his unwillingness to participate in it, as his interest was in cricket and not poetry. Reynolds who is interested in writing offers to write the poem for him but, on the condition that if he won a prize, he must tell the truth. Smith agrees and leaves, while Reynolds sits near the window to write. He writes and rewrites four line of a poem on different sheets of paper when the nurse suddenly enters the room allowing a gush of wind, that carries away two sheets of paper out of the window.

That afternoon Montgomery passes by the infirmary and finds a piece of paper on the ground. He spends two hours and adds two more lines to it and presents it for the competition. Another student Evans who is assigned to fetch a poem for Morrison also finds the second piece of paper on the ground gives it to Morrison of the sixth standard in exchange for apples. The same is submitted by Morrison for the competition. Smith is forced to submit only the four lines that Reynolds had written for him. All three students submit the same four lines for the poetry contest.

The Principal receives a letter from his friend Mr. Wells, who was the judge for the competition. He mentions about the three comedians who had presented the same poem with an intention of pulling his leg. The Principal summons all the three to the office and enquires them. He understands that all three boys were not interested

in writing poetry and since they were forced to participate, they adopted various means to submit the poem. He also understands the gravity of the issue and convinces the authorities to change the rules of the contest. The next day the notice on the bulletin board stated that only students with a flair for writing should participate and it was not compulsory for all students. This is how the legacy changes after twenty seven years.