

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 3: THE VOICE OF THE RAIN



THE VOICE OF THE RAIN

~Summary~

-by Walt Whitman

Stanza- 1

And who art thou said I to the soft-falling shower,
Which, strange to tell, gave me an answer, as here translated:
I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain,

Explanation: The poem begins with the poet asking for the identity of the soft-falling rain shower. Much to the surprise of the poet, the rain replies to his question which the poet translates for his readers. The rain in its own voice tells the poet that she is the poem of this Earth. The rain is trying to say that, as music or poetry gives pleasure to human beings, the rain gives happiness to mother Earth.

Stanza- 2

Eternal I rise impalpable out of the land and the bottomless sea, Upward, to
heaven, whence, vaguely form'd, altogether changed, and yet the same,

Explanation: The poet says that the rain is an eternal process, but it takes different forms at different times. It rises from the land and the deep sea in the form of intangible water vapour and goes up to the sky. There it takes an indistinct shape in the form of clouds. Although it changes in its form or shape, its core matter remains the same. Since vapour and clouds contain water they can get transformed into the other. The words 'impalpable' and 'eternal' indicate that nature is not fully understood and some part of it always remains beyond our reach.

Stanza- 3

I descend to lave the droughts, atomies, dust-layers of the globe,
And all that in them without me were seeds only, latent, unborn;

Explanation: The raindrops pour down from above to wash away droughts and dust layers enveloping Earth. It satisfies the thirst of the dry Earth and heals everything that is degrading and is lying lifeless. The showers remove the dust particles and make Earth clean and green. The rain also helps in the germination of seeds which were lying dormant due to a dry spell.

Stanza- 4

"And forever, by day and night, I give back life to my own origin, And make pure and beautify it;
(For song, issuing from its birth-place, after fulfilment, wandering Reck'd or unreck'd, duly with love returns.)

Explanation: The rain is involved in a continued process of giving life on Earth by providing water to dormant seeds and making the Earth more beautiful and full of greenery. Rain helps in enhancing the beauty of Earth as, in the absence of water, everything turns dull or lifeless and dust accumulates everywhere. The last two lines are the poet's own words and his reflections upon the answers given by the rain. The poet observes that the life of rain is similar to that of a song. A song or poem is creativity at its best. It has the power to calm, heal, rejuvenate, transform and thrill. In the same way, repeated evaporation and condensation purifies the rain. The entire environment gets drenched in the rain, dust particles settle down and there is greenery everywhere which makes the whole Earth beautiful to look at. The poet therefore draws a parallel between rain and music as both have rhythm and ability to thrill. Both of them rejuvenate and beautify life.

NCERT SOLUTIONS

Questions (Page No. 42)

(Think it out)

I. Question 1. There are two voices in the poem. Who do they belong to? Which lines indicate this?

Answer: The poem contains two voices. The first is of the rain, and the second is of the poet himself.

“And who art thou? Said I to the soft-falling shower,” is the voice of the poet and “I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain” is the voice of rain.

Question 2. What does the phrase “strange to tell” mean?

Answer: The phrase refers to a peculiar phenomenon, as the raindrop responds to the poet’s questions.

Question 3. There is a parallel drawn between rain and music. Which words indicate this? Explain the similarity between the two.

Answer: The voice of the rain says, “I am the Poem of Earth,” implying a link between rain and poetry.

The poet draws parallels between the two by observing the rain’s life cycle. They both originate from a source, rise, and return to their origin after completing their task.

Question 4. How is the cyclic movement of rain brought out in the poem? Compare it with what you have learnt in science.

Answer: As the poem’s lines go, the water rises from the “land and the bottomless sea” to reach the sky. Water rises untouched from the sea in the form of water vapors, forms a cloud, and then descends back on earth to wash away the dryness, returning to its source. This cyclical movement of rain provided a contrast to science in the poem.

Question 5. Why are the last two lines put within brackets?

Answer: The last two lines contain the poet’s comment or general observation, not the voice (something said) of the rain or the poet. As a result, they are enclosed in brackets because they do not constitute a conversation between the rain and the poet.

Question 6. List the pairs of opposites found in the poem.

Answer:

- a. Day, night
- b. Reck'd, unreck'd
- c. Rise, descend

II. Notice the following sentence patterns.

Question 1. And who art thou? said I to the soft-falling shower.

Answer: I enquired the soft-falling rain about its identity.

Question 2. I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain.

Answer: The voice of the rain introduced itself as the Poem of Earth.

Question 3. Eternal I rise

Answer: Upward movement of the rain (towards sky) is eternal.

Question 4. For song... duly with love returns

Answer: The poet says that, similar to the natural cycle of the rain, a song originates from the heart of the poet, travels to reach others and after fulfilling its purpose (whether acknowledged or not), it returns to the poet with all due love.

III. Question 1. Look for some more poems on the rain and see how this one is different from them

Answer: Do it yourself.