

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 4: CHILDHOOD



CHILDHOOD

~Summary~

-by Markus Natten

Stanza- 1

When did my childhood go?
Was it the day I ceased to be eleven,
Was it the time I realised that Hell and Heaven,
Could not be found in Geography,
And therefore could not be,
Was that the day!

Explanation: The poet wonders when he lost his childhood. He reflects that perhaps it was the day when he crossed the age of eleven. Maybe it was the stage when he realised that the concepts of Hell and Heaven, about which he had been taught since his childhood, did not exist in reality. Geography textbooks did not give the location of any such places. The poet realises that he might have lost his childhood when he gained his rational outlook due to getting educated.

Stanza- 2

When did my childhood go?
Was it the time I realised that adults were not all they seemed to be,
They talked of love and preached of love,
But did not act so lovingly,
Was that the day!

Explanation: In this stanza, the poet reflects that maybe the loss of childhood occurred when he was able to see through the hypocrisy of adults. These people followed double standards, actually following and preaching different standards of behaviour. They told the poet to be loving and caring; however they themselves were argumentative, violent and discourteous. Their behaviour was a far cry from the love they sermonised about and advocated so reverently to the child. Perhaps, says the poet, recognising broken trust was a major step towards adulthood.

Stanza- 3

When did my childhood go?
Was it when I found my mind was really mine,
To use whichever way I choose,
Producing thoughts that were not those of other people,
But my own, and mine alone
Was that the day!

Explanation: The poet asks the same question again and again but with different options. He is trying to guess when he actually lost his childhood. Perhaps, it was the day when he realised that his mind could think independently, forming his own opinions and being able to take his own decisions. He gained a sense of individuality, which set him free from the preconceived opinions of others. His own individual opinions and experiences shape his thoughts now and he realised that this might have been the time when he lost his childhood innocence completely.

Stanza- 4

Where did my childhood go?
It went to some forgotten place,
That's hidden in an infant's face,
That's all I know.

Explanation: In this stanza the poet changes his question. The poet now wonders where his childhood has gone. He reflects that may be his childhood has gone to an unremembered place. The poet also says that childhood can be found in the innocent face of a child who does not have any pretensions and rationality and who trusts others unconditionally. In other words, a small child is full of innocence and there one can find one's own childhood.

NCERT SOLUTIONS
Questions (Page No. 59)
(Think it out)

Question 1. Identify the stanza that talks of each of the following.

individuality rationalism hypocrisy

Answer:

Individuality – Third stanza

Rationalism – First stanza

Hypocrisy – Second stanza

Question 2. What according to the poem is involved in the process of growing up?

Answer: According to the poem, the poet was attempting to direct the process of maturation from childhood to adolescence. The poet believes that by losing his childhood, he will gain some characteristics that will perfectly define his adolescence. These characteristics include: comprehending rationalism and discrimination, comprehending adult hypocrisy, comprehending the power of individualism and self-confidence.

Question 3. What is the poet's feeling towards childhood?

Answer: Childhood, according to the poet, is a stage from which the next stage, adolescence, begins. Childhood was the stage when people tended to believe things earlier; a child easily believes what adults say. The poet was eager to enter his adolescent stage because a poet is eager to understand rationalism, discrimination, hypocrisy, individualism, and self-confidence, and the poet has no regrets about losing his childhood.

Question 4. Which do you think are the most poetic lines? Why?

Answer: The poem's final stanza appears to be the most poetic: "It went to some forgotten place That's hidden in an infant's face; that's all I know." These lines beautifully capture the process of growth and the passing of a particular stage of life. These lines imply, metaphorically, that an infant's innocent face conceals a great deal behind its smiles. He finds solace in the fact that the virtues of childhood are not forever lost, but maybe hidden somewhere in the child's consciousness.