



STUDY MATERIAL 4

Sub: ENGLISH 'B'

Class: XI

Topic: Meeting At Night

Date: 02.07.2020

About the Poet: Robert Browning (7 May 1812 – 12 December 1889) was an English poet and playwright whose mastery of the dramatic monologue made him one of the foremost Victorian poets. His poems are known for their irony, characterization, dark humour, social commentary, historical settings, and challenging vocabulary and syntax. He is widely recognized as a master of dramatic monologue and psychological portraiture. Browning wrote eight plays and fifty-one poems during his lifetime. He established his career first as a poet and then as a playwright. His works won global recognition marked by allusive imagery, symbolic structures, dramatic monologue, a blend of dark humour and irony. Browning successfully used dramatic monologue techniques which enabled the readers to see an event using the character's lenses. Moreover, he explored the beauty of the real-world using artistic techniques in his poems. Some of his famous poems include *My Last Duchess*, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, *Porphyria's Lover*, *Hildebrand to the Dark Tower*, *The Lost Leader*, *Meeting at Night*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, and *The Laboratory*. Besides poetry, he tried his hands on plays. Some of them include *Colombe's Birthday*, *King Victor and King Charles*, *Pippa Passes* and *In a Balcony*. Browning's literary ideas have left deep imprints on English as well as international literature. His distinctive writing approach and unique way of expression made him stand among the best Victorian poets. His thoughtful ideas influenced many great poets and writers including Robert Frost, Ezra Pound, and T.S. Eliot.

Summary of the Poem: The speaker describes a mysterious landscape: a dull sea and an expanse of land that looks black in the darkness. The half-moon looms low in the sky, giving off a yellow light. Small waves appear in little rings, where previously the surface had been calm. The speaker rows into the bay and brings the vessel to a halt in the wet sand. The speaker walks for a mile along the warm beach, and can smell the sea. The speaker continues across three fields until reaching a farm. The speaker knocks gently on a window, at which point someone else (implied to be the speaker's lover) hurriedly strikes a match that bursts into a blue flame. "A voice"—that of the lady-love—talks, overcome with happiness and fear. The voice, though, doesn't seem to be as loud as the lovers' racing hearts, which beat together.

Use of Imagery in the Poem: The poet uses different types of images (for example: visual, hearing, olfactory etc) to represent the landscape. Their application is as follows:

(i) visual imagery— 'grey sea', 'long black land', 'yellow moon', 'fiery ringlets', 'blue spurt of a lighted match' etc.

(ii) hearing imagery— 'tap at the pane', 'sharp scratch', 'hearts beating' etc.

(iii) olfactory imagery— 'slushy sand', 'warm sea-scented beach'.

Textual Words/Phrases & Their Meanings

WORDS / PHRASES	MEANINGS
1. Grey sea	1. The sea water looking grey.
2. Fiery ringlets	2. Bright small rings of frothy crest of sea waves.
3. Cove	3. A small and narrow bay or creek.
4. Prow	4. The pointed front part of a ship/boat.
5. Slushy sand	5. Marshy stretch of land alongside the sea.
6. Pane	6. A glass window.
7. Scratch	7. Sound of friction or rubbing something on a hard surface.

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS :

1. What kind of a poem is "Meeting at Night"?

Ans: "Meeting at Night" is a love poem in the form of a dramatic lyric.

2. 'the grey sea...'—what makes the sea grey?

Ans: The sea looks grey due to darkness of the night.

3. What does the moon look like?

Ans: The moon looks yellow, large and low.

4. Why are the little waves called 'startled'?

Ans: The little waves are called startled because it seems that the sea is sleepy at the late hour but the unexpected appearance of the speaker's boat startled it.

5. What is meant by 'pushing prow'?

Ans: The expression pushing prow means the front part of the boat that is being guided forward to reach the inlet.

6. When does the narrator slow down the speed of his boat?

Ans: The narrator slows down the speed of his boat when it reaches the bay.

7. How did the lover reach his lady-love's farmhouse?

Ans: The lover crossed three fields to reach his lady-love's farmhouse.

8. How did the lady-love respond to the tap of her lover at the pane?

Ans: The lady-love responded to the tap of her lover at the pane by lighting a match-stick.

9. What things did the lover cross to meet his lady-love?

Ans: The lover first crossed a part of the sea, then a mile long sea beach and then three fields to meet his lady-love.

10. What were the feelings of the woman after hearing the 'tap at the pane'?

Ans: After hearing the tap at the window pane the woman became aware of the presence of her lover and she felt both joy and fear.

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS :

1. How does the poet use colours in the poem, "Meeting at Night"?

Ans: In the first three lines of the poem the poet uses three different colours to describe three things. The sea is grey. The land is black. The moon is yellow. The other colours described by the poet is the blue spurt of a lighted match.

2. State in your own words the significance of the title of the poem "Meeting in Night".

Ans: The dark and mysterious atmosphere, the aura of illicit love that characterizes "Meeting at Night" and justifies the title, bears the imprint of the relationship Robert Browning was involved in at the time he wrote and published the poem. In January 1845, he had started a correspondence with Elizabeth Barrett who had achieved great fame and popularity in the previous year due to her collection of poems. Elizabeth Barrett was at that time living in virtual imprisonment, confined to her room both by her infirm health and by her jealous and over strict father, who controlled every single movement of his three daughters and placed strict limits on their social contacts. Browning followed the example of his idol, the English romantic poet P.B. Shelley and abducted his beloved from her home. The two got married and escaped to Italy, where they lived until Elizabeth's death in 1861. "Meeting at Night" and its companion poem "Parting at Morning" were first published in December, 1845 in "Dramatic Romances and Lyrics".

3. "Than the two hearts beating each to each!" — Explain.

Ans: This is the climax of the poem. The triumph of love and lovers is recorded here. But then, the attainment of fulfilment in love is not an easy one. The long tedious journey offers a union of two yearning souls but hazard remains. The caution exercised is suggestive of the lovers' proper reading of the situation.

4. What is personification? Give an example of personification in the poem "Meeting at Night".

Ans: Personification is the practice of representing inanimate objects as humans in art and literature. It is the literary style of imposing human characteristics on inanimate objects. In the poem "Meeting at Night", the speaker observes the startled waves in fiery ringlets. Actually, waves do not sleep or leap. The narrator imagines the waves to rise from sleep and leap in fiery ringlets. This is an example of personification.

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