



ST. LAWRENCE HIGH SCHOOL

A JESUIT CHRISTIAN MINORITY INSTITUTION



STUDY MATERIAL 2

Sub: ENGLISH 'B'

Class: XI

Topic: Upon Westminster Bridge

Date: 23.06.2020

About The Poet: William Wordsworth (7 April 1770 – 23 April 1850) was an important poet of the Romantic Age in England and ranks as one of the greatest lyric poets in the history of English literature. His famous work '*Lyrical Ballads*', which he worked on along with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, helped usher in the Romantic Movement in English Literature. He was an early leader of Romanticism, a literary movement that celebrated nature and concentrated on human emotions, in English poetry. Wordsworth introduced a new style of poetry using language that appealed to ordinary people. His poems often portrayed his love of nature as well as his inner thoughts and feelings. '*The Prelude*', an autobiographical poem of his early years, is considered by many to be his masterpiece. Wordsworth was England's Poet Laureate from 1843 until his death in 1850.

Summary Of The Poem: The first eight lines praise the beauty of London in the early morning light, as the poet stands on Westminster Bridge admiring the surrounding buildings. Wordsworth finds London a glorious sight in the early morning light, because the city has not yet woken up and these industrial processes and governmental activities have not yet begun. London is instead at one with nature. Indeed, the sun shines as beautifully on these structures as it does on the natural world. London seems to lie still, plunged into a calm state that is akin to a pleasant sleep. But once London wakes from its slumber, this gentle calm will be disrupted by man-made activity. The world of trade, of ships and boats coursing along the Thames, will override the river's own natural pace. The ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples that appear to lie in passive submission to the natural world now will be overturned when London wakes.

TEXTUAL WORDS/ PHRASES & MEANINGS :

WORDS/PHRASES	MEANINGS
1. Fair	1. Beautiful.
2. Dull of soul	2. Unaesthetic.
3. Touching	3. Impressive, appealing.
4. Majesty	4. Grandeur, impressive beauty.
5. This city	5. City of London.
6. Garment	6. Dress.
7. Pass by	7. Go past.

8. Bare	8. Unstained.
9. Towers	9. The towers of London.
10. Domes	10. The dome of St. Pauls.
11. Glittering	11. Sparkling.
12. Splendour	12. Magnificent and splendid appearance.
13. The river	13. The Thames.
14. The river glideth	14. The river flows.
15. At his own sweet will	15. Freely and smoothly.
16. Smokeless air	16. Clear and clean air.
17. Steep	17. Bathe, flood.
18. Silent, bare	18. The sense of quiet and peace.
19. His	19. Refers to the river (personification).
20. Dear God!	20. The exclamation shows the feeling of joy and wonder of the poet.

Short Answer Type Questions :

1. Where is the Westminster Bridge situated?

Ans: The Westminster Bridge is situated over river Thames in London.

2. What is described in the poem "Upon Westminster Bridge"?

Ans: The poem gives a fine description of the city of London seen very early in the morning from Westminster Bridge.

3. 'Dull would he be of soul'—Why is the person called dull of soul?

Ans: The man who could pass by, ignoring the beauty of London at sunrise must be dull of soul, according to Wordsworth.

4. 'A sight so touching in its majesty'— Which 'sight' is referred to here ?

Ans: The sight of the city of London in the early morning is referred to here.

5. What has Earth shown to the poet?

Ans: Earth has shown to the poet the excellent beauty of the city of London and her surrounding seen early in the morning from Westminster Bridge.

6. What is the garment the city of London wears?

Ans: The city of London wears the garment of the beauty of the early morning.

7. Why is the city of London silent in the early morning?

Ans: The city of London is silent in the early morning because the daily activities of the city has not yet started.

8. What things does the sun steep' in his first splendour'?

Ans: The first splendour of the rising sun steeps beautifully the valley, rock or hill at a distance.

9. Why does the poet say that 'the river glideth at his own sweet will'?

Ans: The poet says that the river glides at his own sweet will because in that early hour of the morning no boats or ships are sailing to disturb the natural flow of the river.

10. With what is the city of London compared by Wordsworth?

Ans: Wordsworth compares the city of London to a powerful giant.

Descriptive/Analytical Questions & Answers :

1. "All bright and glittering in the smokeless air"— What does the poet refer to by 'all'? Why are they bright and glittering?

Ans: 'All' refers to everything visible from the Westminster Bridge. The poet has mentioned ships, towers, domes, theatres, temples, open fields and the sky.

In the smokeless air, the morning sunshine illuminates everything in the city of London. Thus, everything looks bright and glittering.

2. "The river glideth at his own sweet will"— What is the name of the river mentioned here? Why does the poet use the word 'he' in the above line? What does the poet imply?

Ans: The name of the river mentioned in the poem "Upon Westminster Bridge" is river Thames which flows through the city of London.

The poet William Wordsworth personifies the river Thames and refers to it as 'his'. It is considered to be a person guided by his own 'sweet will'. The river flows freely.

The poet wants to imply that in the early hours of the morning river Thames remains undisturbed by the ships and the sailors. The natural flow of the river remains unhindered. Thus, it flows freely and at its own 'sweet will'.

3. The poet uses words like 'silent', 'bare' and 'calm' in order to describe London. How does this atmosphere give the city a special character?

Ans: The poet uses the above mentioned terms to describe the beauty of the city of London seen from the Westminster Bridge in the early hours of the morning. Bathed in the early morning golden sunlight of the rising sun, the atmosphere of the city is silent and calm as the city is still asleep. The atmosphere is of serene tranquility. The air is smokeless which renders

maximum visibility. The uninhibited view of the city of London from the Westminster Bridge in the early morning creates a wonderful feeling and imparts a special character to the familiar busy city. The city blends with nature harmoniously. Wordsworth very successfully presents a very different and unique side of the city of London which throbs with exuberant life force.

4. What is the 'garment' the poet refers to? Who is wearing it?

Ans: Evidently, the city of London, personified and compared to a huge giant wears a wonderful natural garment— the beauty of the early morning characterized by immense silence/tranquility, and the bright and sparkling sun. There is neither the familiar fog or smoke nor the noise of hectic human activities. In fact, the chimneys do not obscure the bright and glittering light and a rare calm both of mind and surroundings delight the poet.

5. What does 'dull soul' mean? Who would be a person 'dull of soul'?

Ans: 'Dull soul' literally means an absolutely insensible or unfeeling person.

In the poem "Upon Westminster Bridge", 'dull soul' refers to one who does not care for beautiful things and so would simply pass by a splendid sight. Wordsworth wonders if anyone would ever ignore the sight of the city of London in the early hour of the morning when silence prevails in the smokeless atmosphere and the mellow sunlight brightens the surroundings creating a majestic sight.

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