

STUDY MATERIAL 6

Sub: ENGLISH 'B'

Class: XII

Topic : ASLEEP IN THE VALLEY

Date: 08.06.2020

Textual Words & Meanings :

WORDS	MEANINGS
1. Strands	1. thin pieces of thread , wire, hair .
2. Hollow	2. small valley that lies between the mountains.
3. Mountaintop	3.summit of a mountain.
4. Stretched	4. elongated ,extended.
5. Undergrowth	5.bushes and plants that grow close together under trees in woods or forests.
6. Sun-soaked	6.something that absorbs sunshine.
7. Guile	7.the ability to deceive or trick.
8. Humming	8. buzzing
9. Fern	9.a flowerless plant which has feathery or leafy fronds.
10. Red holes	10.bullet wounds marked by blood.

Short Questions :

- What is Arthur Rimbaud famously known as?
Ans : Arthur Rimbaud is famously known as the boy poet.
- During which period of his life did the poet write his best poetry?
Ans : The poet Arthur Rimbaud wrote his best poetry between the age of sixteen and twenty years.
- On what did the poet wholeheartedly believe in ?
Ans : The poet believed in the universal life force that existed at the heart of all matter.
- 'Rimbaud had a first-hand experience about war'— Justify.
Ans : Rimbaud was a soldier in the Dutch Colonial Army in 1876.Thus,he had a first-hand experience about war.
- When was the above mentioned poem written and under what circumstances?
Ans : Rimbaud wrote the poem ' Asleep in the Valley' in the year 1877 when France was at war with Russia.
- What does the slow stream leave on the bright grass?
Ans : The slow stream leaves long strands of silver on the bright grass.
- Where does the slow stream flow?
Ans : The slow stream flows in a small green valley.
- '.....they fill the hollow full of light'.— What does ' the hollow' describe ?
Ans : 'The hollow' describes the valley that lies between the mountains.
- In what manner does the soldier lie in the valley?
Ans : The young soldier lies open-mouthed with a hand on his breast on a bed of thick undergrowth.

10. What is the soldier's pillow made of?

Ans : The soldier's pillow is made of fern.

11. Why did the soldier look pale?

Ans : The soldier looked pale because he was lying dead in the valley.

12. How is the bed of the dead soldier?

Ans : The bed of the dead soldier is warm ,green and sun-soaked.

13. Where are the feet of the soldier?

Ans : The soldiers feet are among the flowers.

14. What is the smile of the dead soldier compared to?

Ans : The smile of the dead soldier is compared to the innocent smile of an infant.

15. Why does the poet ask Nature to keep the soldier warm?

Ans : The poet asked Nature to keep the soldier warm so that he doesn't catch a cold.

16. Which adjective is used to qualify the insect?

Ans : 'Humming' is an adjective which is used to qualify the insects.

17. How is the soldier's body kept warm?

Ans : The warm sunlight kept the soldier's body warm.

18. "The humming insects don't disturb his rest"— Why?

Ans : The humming insects can't disturb his rest because the soldier is dead.

19. How do the readers come to know that the soldier is dead?

Ans : The readers came to know that the soldier is dead with the final depiction of the soldier's body where two red holes mark the wounds of bullet.

20. What does the phrase 'without guile' signify?

Ans : The phrase ' without guile ' signifies that the young soldier's smile is pure and innocent.

21. What do ' the two red holes ' in the poem ' Asleep in the Valley ' signify ?

Ans : The phrase 'two red holes ' in the poem ' Asleep in the valley ' signifies that the soldier has been shot to death.

22What is the main theme of the poem?

Ans : The main theme of the poem is the futility and brutality of war.

23. What does the concluding line of the poem reveal?

Ans : The concluding line of the poem reveals the harsh reality that the soldier is a casualty of war.

24. What does the epithet, ' very young ', suggest in the poem ?

Ans : The epithet , ' very young ' suggests that the young soldier went to war and his life was sacrificed in the battlefield.

25. How can you say that 'Asleep in the Valley' is an anti-war poem ?

Ans : 'Asleep in the Valley' is an anti-war poem as the ending of the poem evokes our pity at the untimely and unfortunate death of a young soldier.

26. Give an example of an image used by Rimbaud in the poem 'Asleep in the Valley '.

Ans : An image used by Rimbaud in the poem is the sun rays filling up the hollow like a stream or rivulet.

Descriptive & Analytical Questions with Answers :

1."A soldier, very young , lies open-mouthed"— who is the ' soldier ' referred to here ? Narrate in your own words how the soldier lies in the valley .

Ans : Here the soldier is a young man who lies dead in the valley as he is a victim of war.

The young soldier lying asleep in the valley was surrounded by nature. His head rested on a pillow made of fern and he lay on a bed of thick undergrowth. The sunlight kept him warm. There were flowers near his feet. He had a smile on his face and he looked like an infant, pure and innocent. He lay with one hand on his breast.

2. The poem “Asleep in the Valley” shifts from a blissful state to a rude shock. Elucidate.

Ans : The poem ‘Asleep in the Valley’ depicts with remarkable dexterity the tragic fate of a young soldier after suffering bullet injuries. A distinct light and shade image leads to the catastrophic conclusion. The small green valley with a slow flowing stream wonderfully match the long strands of bright grass. The brightness next dims but only to light up the hollow that is the valley between the mountains. A very young soldier is discovered lying open-mouthed, his head resting on the unproductive fern bed—the symbolic representation of an impending doom. He looks ‘pale’, an indication of lifelessness in a scene of contrast. The soldier’s innocent mind without a blemish is indeed deceptive. Nature cannot keep him ‘warm’, he lies in peace, never to wake up again. ‘Sleep’ symbolizes the final sleep of life in celestial peace. The blissful pasture gives way to the tragic disposition : ‘In his side, there are two red holes’.

3. Relate after Rimbaud how the poet drives home the pity of war.

Ans : The poet Rimbaud in his Italian sonnet ‘Asleep in the Valley’ projects the horror and pity of war that Europe experienced in the 1870’s. The tragic reality of war is death and destruction of human life, making no distinction between good and bad. Even young agile soldiers died with their dreams remaining unfulfilled. The young soldier in Rimbaud’s sonnet lies open-mouthed, his head resting on a ferny pillow. He looks pale and deep in sleep, almost oblivious of life and his feet rested among the flowers. Nature seems to bedeck the dead. His innocent and artless mind cannot drive nature to induce life in his lifeless body. With one hand on his breast, the young soldier rests in peace. The two red holes imprinted by deadly bullets make a mockery of life. Rimbaud satirises the war-mongers, the hypocritical statesman and military men. Tragedy is indeed a tryst with destiny.

4. The word ‘sun’ is repeatedly used in the poem — explain the significance of it.

Ans : In the poem ‘Asleep in the Valley’ we find that the word ‘sun’ is used repeatedly. Initially the word is used to describe the valley which is full of light with the sun’s rays. Secondly, the expression ‘sun-soaked bed’ is used. At the latter part of the poem the poet refers to the fact that the soldier sleeps in ‘sunlight’. All these recurrent images serve as a beautiful ‘image-cluster’. These images have some other connotations too. The sun is the source of life. It has the power to nourish life. The soldier is lying dead under the sun, but the sun fails to renew life in his body.

5. The poem ‘Asleep in the Valley’ rests on two contrasting pictures— Discuss the use of two contrasting pictures in the poem.

Ans : The poem ‘Asleep in the Valley’ presents two pictures. The beautiful hollow of the valley is contrasted with the two deep holes in the soldier’s body.

The green valley is decorated by flowers, humming of insects, a slow stream flowing through the valley. The young soldier is asleep amidst such serene circumstances. Such a beautiful picture is contrasted with the shocking picture of the soldier at the end. The poem reveals towards the end that there are two bullet wounds on the side of his body. The peaceful atmosphere is therefore marred by the

horrors of war. The vibrancy of life in nature is juxtaposed to the coldness of death. Death is inevitable in war. Witnessing such contrasting pictures evokes a feeling of helplessness for the victims of war in the reader's mind.

6. What does the poet intend by the word 'asleep' in the poem 'Asleep in the Valley'?

Ans : By the expression 'asleep', the poet tries to show literally the tragedy of the young soldier who cannot wake up to see the picturesque nature around him. Figuratively, he tries to bring out the consciousness/ conscious of mankind which is asleep to the atrocities of war on a young soldier who still retains his childhood innocence and has died even before his life has fully blossomed.

The title is thus suggestive of a sleeping human conscience. Rimbaud does not see any sense in describing beauty as long as respect for humanity remains dormant. The valley represents the ideal place for man's conscience to bloom.

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