

Writing Substance with Critical Note



Step ... 1

- Read the poem or the prose passage – back to back – several times.
- Try and understand what is being said in the poem / passage.
- Take down notes if needed.

Step ... 2

- Answer these questions:

- 1) What is the poem or the passage all about? What kind of a poem is given? Sonnet? Lyric? Etc. [25 words]
- 2) What does the poet or the writer say in the poem / passage?
- 3) Can you bring out the images used in the poem / passage?
- 4) What rhyme scheme does the poet use in his poem? / Comment on the use of language used by the writer in the prose passage.
- 5) Do you agree with what the writer has said in the prose passage?

Worked Out Sample of a Prose Passage

- The Passage

It is physically impossible for a well-educated, intellectual, or brave man to make money the chief object of his thoughts just as it is for him to make his dinner the principal object of them. All healthy people like their dinners, but their dinner is not the main object of their lives. So all healthy minded people like making money ought to like it and enjoy the sensation of winning it; it is something better than money.

A good soldier, for instance, mainly wishes to do his fighting well. He is glad of his pay — very properly so and justly grumbles when you keep him ten years without it — till, his main mission of life is to win battles, not to be paid for winning them. So of clergymen. The clergyman's object is essentially baptize and preach not to be paid for preaching. So of doctors. They like fees no doubt — ought to like them; yet if they are brave and well-educated the entire object to their lives is not fees. They on the whole, desire to cure the sick; and if they are good doctors and the choice were fairly to them, would rather cure their patient and lose their fee than kill him and get it. And so with all the other brave and rightly trained men: their work is first, their fee second — very important always; but still second.

Substance and Critical Note

- The passage is about one's aim in life. Man and his vocation are organically connected and the life of man revolves round the completion of the work he is asked to do as neatly as possible.
- Money-making is a common attraction in life. But it cannot be the principal aim of well educated, cultured and brave man. A brave soldier prizes honour and victory more than his pay. A good clergyman is more interested in the moral welfare of his people than his returns. A doctor values the care of his patient far more than his fees. Thus with all the well-educated, intellectual persons, their work is first, money next.

Continued ... 2

- The writer puts up an undeniable argument in this passage. He argues that for a committed professional, the work he is asked to do comes ahead of the money he receives for it. To prove it he selects three professions and uses them as touch-stones to prove his contention. Soldiers, clergy and doctors do not however mirror the entire society nor can they form any homogeneous body of opinions. There are far too many professions in the world where the practitioners virtually work for the love of doing the work especially if they are committed and honest. Teachers in India can be seen as one of the primary examples of this category. The politicians, if there be any who can be categorised as the honest politicians also perform for the love of serving people.

Continued ... 3

- We also notice that the writer makes a sweeping statement in the opening line. He assumes that every committed professional makes his work the main object to work for. Money or success are secondary objectives. Only “a job well done” satisfies them and not the result. We have a number of exceptions to prove that this is not always the case. We have seen in the past that workers from various sections including sports going on a strike at crucial moments for commercial reasons. Especially sportsmen; even they are paid satisfactory fees they demand more and refuse to represent their country if their demands are not met. This happened in the field of cricket with countries like South Africa, West Indies and even Australia. We have seen teachers and doctors and other professionals going on strike because they did not like what they were being paid.

Continued ... 4

- All these prove that what Marx said is probably true; that man is motivated by the prospect of material profit. The vision of success and commercial encashment of that success spurs him on in Capitalism. The writer tries to provide an alternative idea of professional satisfaction that is partially and not wholly true.

Unseen Poem

Don't go far off, not even for a day, because --
because -- I don't know how to say it: a day is long
and I will be waiting for you, as in an empty station
when the trains are parked off somewhere else, asleep.

Don't leave me, even for an hour, because
then the little drops of anguish will all run together,
the smoke that roams looking for a home will drift
into me, choking my lost heart.

Oh, may your silhouette never dissolve on the beach;
may your eyelids never flutter into the empty distance.

Don't leave me for a second, my dearest,

because in that moment you'll have gone so far
I'll wander mazily over all the earth, asking,
Will you come back? Will you leave me here, dying?

Substance and critical note

It is said that poets are forlorn beings hungry for love. Their yearning is expressed in rhyme, through a patterned language. Such is the poem we have at hand. It is a love poem and written in the first person.

Here the poet appeals to his mistress to stay with him because otherwise he finds himself as lost, 'choked' and 'dying'. His existence is completely blended with that of his mistress and therefore he cannot even think of separation from her.

Continued ... 2

The poem is a fine example of 'spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions'. Yet alongside such spontaneity there is a conscious design – a clever use of time and space. The poem is divided into four stanzas. In the first stanza the time of separation is for a day; in the second it is for an hour; in the third it is for a second. Thus as in Sonnet 73 of Shakespeare time here takes the shape of an inverted pyramid. Again, the space is also selected for clever experimentation. In the first stanza we have the emptiness of a deserted station; in the second we have the languid movement of smoke over an area; in the third space is referred to as 'distance' and at the end space circumscribes the entire earth. Here the shape is that of a pyramid which tapers at the top and has a larger base at the bottom of the poem.

Word of advice

- Follow this pattern and try some exercises

Exercise ... 1

Yes, call me by my pet-name! let me hear
The name I used to run at, when a child,
From innocent play, and leave the cow-slips piled,
To glance up in some face that proved me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
Fond voices which, being drawn and reconciled
Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
While I call God -- call God! -- So let thy mouth
Be heir to those who are now exanimate.
Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
And catch the early love up in the late.
Yes, call me by that name,--and I, in truth,
With the same heart, will answer and not wait.

- **[Glossary: Bier – coffin; exanimate -- Deprived of life; undefiled – made impure]**

Exercise ... 2 ... Prose

English education and English language have done immense good to India, inspite of their glaring drawbacks. The notions of democracy and self-government are born of English education. Those who fought and died for mother India's freedom were nursed in the cradle of English thought and culture. The West has made contribution to the East. The history of Europe has fired the hearts of our leaders. Our struggle for freedom has been inspired by the struggles for freedom in England, America and France. If our leaders were ignorant of English and if they had not studied this language, how could they have been inspired by these heroic struggles for freedom in other lands? English, therefore, did us great good in the past and if properly studied will do immense good in future. English is spoken throughout the world. For international contact our commerce and trade, for the development of our practical ideas, for the scientific studies, English-is indispensable "English is very rich in literature," our own literature has been made richer by this foreign language. It will really be a fatal day if we altogether forget Shakespeare, Milton, Keats and Shaw.