

Chief Seattle's Speech
4. WORD - NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS

compassion	: sympathy
eternal	: permanent
prairies	: wide areas of grassland
reproach	: criticise
disfigure	: spoil
restrain	: check
hostilities	: strong and angry opposition
forsaken	: abandoned
prosperity	: progress / affluence
teeming	: present in large numbers
firmament	: the sky
sacred	: holy
comprehend	: understand
solemn	: serious
verdant	: fresh and green
sequestered	: quiet and far away
dense	: thick
grim	: serious
mourn over	: grieve over
swelter	: feel uncomfortable
maidens	: unmarried girls
sombre	: serious
perished	: destroyed
deserted	: lonely
throng	: go somewhere in large numbers

Highlights of Speech/or Summary

Chief Seattle delivered his speech at Washington in 1854 saying that whatever Seattle said, the Great Chief at Washington could rely upon with as much certainty as he could upon the return of the sun or the seasons.

He sends greetings of friendship and goodwill and thanks the White chief for their friendship in return. His people were many. They were like the grass that covered vast prairies. Seattle had few people. The White Chief had sent word that he wished to buy their land but was willing to allow them enough to live comfortably. This indeed appeared just, even generous.

There was a time Seattle's people covered the land but that time long since passed away with the greatness of tribes that were now but a mournful memory. Youth is impulsive and young men often grow angry at some real or imaginary wrong, and are often cruel and relentless, and their old men and old women are unable to restrain them. Thus it was when the white man began to push the native's forefathers ever westward. But he hoped that the hostilities between them may never return as there would be everything to lose and nothing to gain.

Seattle then referred to George Washington as —'our great and good father,' who promised the natives that if they do as he desires he would protect them. But native God is not the coloniser's God! The coloniser's god was partial and could not renew the native's prosperity and awaken in them dreams of returning greatness. They are two distinct races with separate origins and separate destinies. There is little in

common between them.

The ashes of their ancestors were sacred to the natives and their resting place is hallowed ground.

The native's dead never forget this beautiful world that gave them being. The Red Man has ever fled the approach of the White Man. However, he agrees that the white man's proposition seems fair and the natives would accept it and retire to the reservation offered to them. Then they would live apart in peace. Grim fate seems to be on the Red Man's trail., He compared the native's plight to that of the wounded doe that hears the approaching footsteps of the hunter.

He agreed to accept the white man's proposition on the condition that they would not be denied the privilege of visiting at any time the tombs of their ancestors, friends, and children.

He appealed to the white man to be just and deal kind to his people.

or violence.

The Old man at the Bridge *Highlights of Speech/or Summary*

The narrator, who says that his mission is to cross the bridge and find out how far the enemy has advanced, does so and finds the old man who was sitting by the bridge when he crossed toward the enemy still sitting there when he crosses back. He begins **conversing** with the old man and elicits the information that his hometown is San Carlos; he was the last person to leave the town, as he was anxious on behalf of some animals he had charge of.

The narrator, while nervously awaiting the advent of the Fascist army and the ensuing battle between the armies, asks the old man about the animals. The old man says he had charge of two goats, a cat, and four pairs of pigeons. He says a major told him to evacuate the town and the animals because of artillery fire. He says he has no family.

The old man expresses **concern about the fate of his animals**. He says that the cat would be all right because cats can look after themselves, but he was not sure about what would happen to the other animals.

The narrator, more concerned for the old man's safety than that of the animals, inquires what the old man's **politics** are, and the old man replies that he has none. He told the soldier that he was an old man of 76, had walked 12 kilometers and was too tired to go any further. The narrator tells him to walk up the road and catch a ride on a truck to Barcelona.

The old man **thanks him**, but continues to express concern over the fate of the animals he left behind. The narrator reassures him, saying that the animals would be fine. He says that the doves would fly away, but the old man

continues to worry about the goats. The narrator advised him not to think about the animals, and that he should get up and walk to the trucks.

The old man tried to get up and walk, but was too tired and sank back down. In the end, the narrator who was reluctant to listen to the old man's story in the beginning, felt pity for him. He thought that the old man's only luck was that the cats could look after themselves and that the day was overcast so the Fascists were unable to launch their planes.

benefits.

The Heart of the Tree

4. SUMMARY

Utilities of a Tree

The poem 'The Heart of the Tree' deals with the utilities and values of the trees. It comments on the relevance and importance of trees in the modern times. The poem opens with a question, which is repeated thrice : 'What does he plant who plants a tree ?' The poet himself provides the answer in metaphors. A tree is a friend of the sun and the sky. In other words, it ensures healthy environment. It ensures cool, free breezes. The place where it stands is akin to heaven. As it shelters birds, one can hear their sweet songs in twilights. So one who plants a tree creates a congenial atmosphere all around in which there is peace, comfort, beauty, music and harmony.

Benefits of a Tree

Then the poet goes on to enumerate several other benefits of planting a tree. A tree ensures cool shade for us in summer. It causes tender rains. It gives seeds and buds to bloom into flowers. A tree is a symbol of a forest's heritage. It can serve us as a living legacy for the next generation. It is the symbol of joy for our still-born children. Thus, trees link our present and future.

Trees Ensure Growth

Then the poet says that he who plants a tree does a civic good. All his neighbours feel blessed and benefitted. It is he who ensures the growth of his country. In other words, a country's growth and progress depends on the wealth of trees. He who plants a tree yearns for the welfare of his country. In fact, by planting a tree he plants a nation.

5. STANZA-WISE EXPLANATION

Stanza 1

The poet underlines the value of planting a tree. When a man plants a tree he plants many things. A tree is a friend of congenial atmosphere. It reduces air temperature and even purifies air by trapping dust, pollen and smoke. It ensures free gentle breezes. Thus, it is aptly described as 'a friend of sun and sky'. It turns a place around it into heaven. The place where there are green trees is nothing short of heaven. He who plants a tree also ensures shelter for the birds whose sweet croonings in silent and happy twilights delight us. By planting a tree he ensures peace, harmony and comfort for himself and others.

Stanza 2

The poet once again repeats the question : 'What does he plant who plants a tree ?' The answer provided is simple. By planting a tree we ensure cool shade for us in summer and tender rains in all seasons, which are essential for our very existence. A tree gives us seeds which

sprout, and buds which bloom in times to come. The poet describes a tree as 'the forest's heritage' and 'the harvest of a coming age'. It can serve us as a living legacy for the next generation. It provides many benefits in the times to come. It is, in fact, a link between us and our children.

Stanza 3

There are many other benefits of planting a tree. Good values like love and loyalty are planted when one plants and nurtures a tree. Planting a tree also does civic good. The tree benefits all the neighbours around. The poet emphasises the fact that a country's growth and development depends upon its wealth of trees. One who plants a tree is conscious of this fact :

*Who in the hollow of His hand
Holds all the growth of all our land--*

6. GLOSSARY

Stanza 1

breezes free	: gentle winds that move with full freedom
shaft	: a long narrow part of something (sunlight, for example)
towering	: rising
anigh	: near, close to
croon	: gentle sweet song, a lullaby of a mother
hushed	: silent
twilight	: the period of time at the end of the day after the sun has just gone down
treble	: high tone

Stanza 2

tender	: gentle, pleasant
days to be	: times to come, future
fade and flush	: fade out and then brighten up

ne.	heritage	: history or tradition that lasts for years
ge'		
us	harvest	: reward
It	unborn eyes	: unborn children
It		

Stanza 3

a	sap	: liquid in a plant that carries food to all parts
ed	civic good	: welfare of the people living in the same town or city
a		
ne	hollow	: empty space
ct	from sea to sea	: all the world
nt		
ts	stirs	: arouses a feeling

6. GLOSSARY

The Coldwithern

Stanza 1

trapped

: caught in a difficult situation of no escape

happenstance

: chance, (here) an event which seems to be pre-arranged, and not accidental

possessed	: had
stick of wood	: small log of wood
Stanza 2	
held...back	: did not give up, kept
black	: non-white
Stanza 3	
not of his church	: person of different religion
bring himself to give	: force himself to give (something)
Stanza 4	
tattered clothes	: rags
gave his coat a hitch	: tightened his coat, symbolic of his meanness
idle rich	: the rich who do not work hard but thrive on the labour of the poor
Stanza 5	
had in store	: accumulated
lazy	: one who shirks work
shiftless	: without ambition to succeed in life, lazy
Stanza 6	
bespoke	: showed
spite	: hatred
Stanza 7	
forlorn	: lonely
nought	: nothing
Stanza 8	
cold without	: the cold out of doors
cold within	: lack of human feelings like generosity, selfless-

4. SUMMARY

A didactic poem The cold within

The poem 'The Cold Within' is a didactic poem. Though simple and straightforward in style, it conveys a profound meaning. It conveys a noble message in the form of a parable. The message is suggestive.

Trapping of six human beings

The setting can be anywhere. Just by chance six human beings get trapped in bitter cold. They are all sitting near the dying fire, their only hope of survival. Each one of them has a stick of wood. If any one of them gives up the stick, it will keep the fire burning and all of them will survive. But sadly and strangely, each has a reason to hold his or her stick back.

Each human being holds back his stick

The first of the group is the woman who does not want to give her stick as it will save the black man's life, whose face she has seen in the light of the fire. The second man holds back his stick as one of them he has noticed, does not belong to his religion. The third is a very poor man in tattered clothes. He holds back his stick thinking that it should not be used to warm the rich man among them. The fourth, a rich man, holds back his stick. He wants to keep his wealth away from the undeserving lazy poor persons. The fifth, the black man, is full of hatred for the white people. He wants to hurt the white somehow by holding back his stick. The last man of the group has his own reason to hold his stick

back. As no one else is ready to renounce his stick, so he too will not. He thinks he will only give to those who give first.

All perish

So all of them perish not because of the coldness from the outdoors but because of the coldness in their hearts.

5. STANZA-WISE EXPLANATION

Stanza 1

The poem opens on a dramatic note. It attracts our attention at once by peculiar use of diction. The poet says that 'six humans' get trapped by chance in a very bitter cold. He uses 'human' and 'not people' so as to refer to all human beings. The line—

Six humans trapped by happenstance

—is to be read carefully. Though the six persons were together in a situation which seems to have been arranged, even though it was accidental. That is why, the poet has used the word 'happenstance', an event that is arranged. The six persons were thus in a situation from which there was no escape. They were sitting near the fire which was fast dying. Each of them had a stick of wood. This is how it is told in the story. We later realize that the stick in each hand is the symbol of sin.

Stanza 2

The fire which was dying needed to be fed with logs of wood. The first of the group was the woman who was not ready to renounce her stick of wood to keep the fire burning because she had noticed that one of them was a black. She did not want to save the black. Thus, she acted out of her racial prejudice.

Stanza 3

The next one found in the group was a person not belonging to his religion. He could not persuade himself to give up his stick of wood to help a person of another religion. He suffered from intolerance.

Stanza 4

The third man was very poor. He was in tattered clothes. He was full of bitterness and envy for the rich. 'He gave his coat a hitch', which is suggestive of his tightness. He thought it would be unjust to give what little he had to help others who had more than he. So he held his stick back.

Stanza 5

The rich man continued to sit back, and think of the money he had, and how he could save it from the lazy poor. He did not want to give anything to the undeserving poor. Thus, he showed his greed and stinginess.

Stanza 6

The black man's face showed how much revengeful he was. As the fire was dying, he thought he had the chance to hurt the white people by keeping his stick with him. He clearly suffered from the vice of spite.

Stanza 7

The last man in the group lacked generosity. As no one else had given his stick, he would also keep his stick with him. In fact, he did nothing except for gain.

Stanza 8

As the fire extinguished, all the persons died. They died not because of the cold outside but because of the cold within. They died because they were too selfish to help others. Each of them had a log still in his or her hand, suggesting that no one had renounced sinning, being unkind, for one reason or the other.