

## Geography Lesson

This is a beautiful poem that shows how perspectives change when we look at things from a distance. At eye level, we look at buildings, streets and landmarks as individual objects. From a certain height, the same structures seem part of a larger design. Through the metaphor of a geography lesson, the poem hints at the meaninglessness of harbouring hatred against others in our hearts, when we human beings are just specks in the broader canvass of our universe.

### Before you read

There are no pre-reading activities given in the textbook, but here are a few suggestions that will motivate the learners to read the poem with interest.

Divide the class into two groups and take one group to the terrace of the school. Let the other group go to the playground. The terrace group looks at their friends on the playground and wave or gesture to them. After 5 minutes, let them swap places - the playground group moves up to the terrace group, and the terrace group come down to the playground. Take them back to classroom and ask them what they had noticed about their friends, first as they saw them in the class room, and then from the terrace and the playground. Make sure their answers include the following ideas:

- *change in size*
- *one sees only the head/hair from high up*
- *a person looks flatter from above*
- *a person's upper body looks smaller than their lower body when seen from below*
- *it is difficult to make out who is taller or shorter, and so on.*

Here is an alternative task. Bring to the class two sets of photographs of a few places: one set with the normal terrestrial (ground level) view, and the other an aerial view of the same place without any labels/names printed (e.g. Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar). Jumble the pictures and ask the learners to sit in pairs and match the pictures with terrestrial views with the aerial ones.)

Now ask the learners to quickly note down a few concepts that they have learnt in their geography class. Elicit from them terms such as *map, scale, globe, directions, seasons* etc. Then take the learners back to the map on page 24 of the lesson **Tsunami**.

Ask them what they understand by 'scale' in a map; you may help them with explanation at this point how distances are 'covered' on paper in a systematic calculated manner by a scale( they already do it in their mathematics class when they learn to draw graphs). Remember to draw their attention to the fact that a map offers an aerial view of a place not the terrestrial view.

### The poem



Here are a few important thematic points that you might want learners to notice as they read the poem.

- In the poem, the poet uses a series of negative terms to describe objects seen at ground level (*haphazard, unplanned, without style, hate, kill*), but a set of positive terms to describe the aerial view (*developed, inevitability, valleys were populated, logic, attracted, clearly delineated*). Ask the learners to (i) identify these two sets of words by themselves, and (ii) say what it suggests about the poet's attitude to things on the ground.
- As we know, in poems, the first word of each new line begins with a capital letter. Sometimes, though, the poet continues the next line without a capital letter at the beginning to signal that his / her thoughts are continuing. This is called a **run-on line** and the poetic device is called **enjambment**.

Notice that in this poem, each sentence runs across four lines. Ask learners to guess why the poet has used this kind of run-on line to express his ideas, through this multiple choice task (the answer is option 3):

1. *because the poet does not know much about the rules of poetry*
  2. *because there is no space on the page to write each sentence in one line*
  3. *because he wants to give us a feeling of seeing several things at a time while flying in an aircraft at a high speed*
  4. *because this is actually a prose lesson on geography, just shaped like a poem*
- An interesting thing in this poem is the set of words used to describe the movement of the jet across the sky: *sprang, reached, rose*. Why has the poet chosen these words, and not more commonly used verbs such as *flew, climbed or travelled*?

Highlight the idea that the words chosen by the poet remind us of the gradual manner in which the jet is moving upwards. Make learners brainstorm with their benchmate and list at least three other words that denote **fast, upward movement**. You can prompt them to say words like *soared, ascended, rocketed, or mounted*. This exercise will help them notice that the poet's view gradually changes as he moves higher up into the sky.

- Another fascinating device that the poet has used here is the beginning and ending of each stanza. As you must have noticed, the last line of the third stanza does not follow the pattern of the other two stanzas. You can have a class discussion on this, so that learners can give their opinions on why the poet has chosen a different ending. Encourage the learners to give diverse viewpoints: this will allow you to find out how far they have understood the theme of the poem.



## Working with the poem

After learners have answered question 2, ask them which line in the poem matches the correct option (No. ii), so that their attention is drawn to the important line *seeing it scaled six inches to the mile*.

Here is a task that you can include in this section to test learners' understanding of the gist of the poem:

*Study the words given inside the box. Circle the expressions that show the good effects of man's development or progress and put a cross for terms that show the result of hatred in men.*

monuments	factories	bomb blast	reaching the moon	dam
hospital	riots	schools	war	

## Speaking

After the poem has been dealt with, you can end with a post reading speaking task. Put the learners in groups of four or five, and ask them to think of some suggestions on the topic "Some ways in which people on earth can live in harmony and peace". Remind them that the poem indirectly suggests that people can live with mutual respect if we realize that our quarrels are very insignificant when compared to the rest of the universe.

## Writing

Once the learners have presented their ideas, you can give them a related writing task:

*Imagine that you have been asked to write a short article in your school magazine on the topic that you've just discussed. Sit with your group mates and prepare for the article by discussing among yourselves the important points. Follow these steps:*

- First decide on how many paragraphs your article will contain, and what point will go into which paragraph. For example, the first paragraph can be your **introduction**, the last one your **conclusion**, and the rest will contain the points that you have noted.
- **Sequence** the points – i.e., put them in the order you want to present them in your article.
- Divide the writing of each paragraph among the group members.
- Put them all together, and **edit** the draft by checking for mistakes in **spelling**, **punctuation**, and overall sense.



- *Make a fair copy and submit it to the editor of your magazine. Remember to write a short covering letter, requesting the editor to publish your article.*

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