

Chapter 6: The Wild Swans at Coole

NCERT · Class 12 · English · Kaleidoscope · Poetry

Questions

Question 1

How do the 'trees in their autumn beauty', 'dry woodland paths', 'October twilight', and 'still sky' connect to the poet's own life?

Solution

Answer. The 'trees in their autumn beauty', 'dry woodland paths', 'October twilight', and 'still sky' all indicate the poet's loneliness and old age. Autumn is the season when trees shed their leaves. The woodland remains dry and barren, and there would be no new life evolving until it rains. Though twilight is the most beautiful part of the day, it lasts for a brief period and traverses into the long darkness of night. The stillness of the sky is when there is no movement in the body, comparing it to the coldness of death. So, the poet's imagination is closely associated with the poet's old age and the setting in sadness and loneliness.

Question 2

What do 'the light tread' and 'the sore heart' refer to?

Solution

Answer. The 'light tread' refers to how the poet would walk freely some nineteen autumns ago. Then, he was a free man with no worries and would go around for days wherever he wished to, the same way the Swans did. But now, he has a 'sore heart', which indicates a slight pain in the heart. At the same time, when looking at the Swans moving around freely and carefree reminds him of the responsibilities he has been tied to, and he has a lot to worry about. He feels he can no longer walk around like a free soul. Neither do his physical or mental conditions allow him to do so.

Question 3

What is the contrast between the liveliness of the Swans and human life?

Solution

Answer. The contrast between the liveliness of the Swans and human life is that the poet feels he has grown so old that he is no longer young and active like the Swans. He feels Swans can move around with full of energy as they were some nineteen autumns back. The Swans still could go around carefree with no worries, but he feels it's no more the same with him. Thus, the poet relates himself to the Swans and discerns how time has gradually decayed his youthful and robust body while the Swans are still the same, full of life.

Question 4

What contributes to the beauty and mystery of the Swans' lives?

Solution

Answer. The beauty and mystery of the Swans' lives are that as years pass by, their youthfulness remains the same. The poet has grown old, but the Swans have not aged. They carry the same energy and are full of life, even after years have passed; this makes the poet sad. There seems no change in how the Swans carefreely move around or share love with each other and are connected in brotherhood. The poet gets disturbed as his body refuses to feel energetic again as it once used to be. The mystery is that humans cannot understand the depth of love and family relationships, but the poet believes these Swans know the real meaning of life. Hence, the poet feels life is mysterious.

Language Study.

Notice the rhyme scheme in the poem. Do you notice a consistent pattern? We use a new letter for every new sound at the end of the lines. The rhyme scheme for the first stanza is given alongside the lines. Do it for the rest of the poem.

Yes, we have a consistent pattern. The rhyme scheme in each stanza is ABCBDD.
