

AN EPITAPH

Walter de la Mare

*WALTER DE LA MARE (1873- 1956) was born in the village of Charlton in Kent, England. He lost his father at the age of four and had to move with his family to London. He is known for his sensitive concerns with the world of children and the world of the supernatural. His **Songs for Children** and **Peacock Pie** depict world of dreams. But even in these songs there is a note of 'melancholy'. The poet makes us aware of the inhuman condition of modern life. He shows his genius by evincing fresh interest in old themes. Queen Elizabeth II honoured him with the Order of Merit in 1953.*



A. Work in small groups and discuss these questions:

1. Kings and rulers build 'memorials' in the memory of their near and dear ones. How do common men remember their friends and relatives who have died?
2. You might have come across some lines of verse written on a grave or on a memorial? What is this called? What is its importance?

AN EPITAPH

Here lies a most beautiful lady,
Light of step and heart was she;
I think she was the most beautiful lady
That ever was in the West Country.
But beauty **vanishes**; beauty passes, 5
However, **rare** – rare it be; And when I **crumble**, who will remember
This lady of the West Country?

B.1. 1. Read the following sentences and write 'T' for true and 'F' for false statements:

- a) The poet expresses his sad feeling for a lady.
- b) The lady belonged to the North Country.
- c) The poet considers her the most beautiful lady.
- d) 'Beauty' remains for ever if we take proper care for it.
- e) There are other persons who also know the lady.
- f) The poet feels that after his death nobody will remember her.

B.1. 2. Answer the following questions briefly:

- 1) Where does the lady lie?
- 2) How does she look to the poet?
- 3) Was she a kind and considerate lady ?
- 4) What does the poet think about 'beauty'?
- 5) What does the poet mean when he says 'And when I crumble'.

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

epitaph(n): inscription on a tomb in memory of the dead

light of step and heart : had the habit of moving here and there and had no commitment

vanishes (v): disappears

rare(adj): not common

crumble(v): fall down in pieces, here, die

C. 1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. 'Ambiguity' is a poetic device which is used to suggest more than one meaning and attitude. Comment on the 'ambiguity' in the use of the word 'light' in the second line of the poem?
2. What, according to the poet, are the two qualities of 'beauty'? Discuss with your own comments.
3. What will happen when the poet dies?
4. Write a note on the philosophical meaning of the poem.
5. What makes you feel that the poem is 'ironical' in meaning?

'Irony' is a poetic device that suggests two layers of meaning: the surface meaning and the implied one.

C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in **groups** or **pairs**:

1. Great people do not die; they live in our memory by virtue of their deeds.
2. Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder.

C. 3. COMPOSITION

Write a paragraph in about 100 words on the following:

- a. A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.
- b. All that glitters is not gold.

D. WORD STUDY**D.1. Dictionary Use**

Ex. 1. Correct the spelling of the following words:

beautiful vanises crumbul rimembar ladie

D.2. Word-formation

Read the following line carefully:

*I think she was the most **beautiful** lady*

Mark that '**beautiful**' is derived from '**beauty**' by adding suffix '**-ful**' to it.

Write 10 words that end in '-ful'.

D.3. Word-meaning

Ex 1. Fill in the blanks with the antonyms of the following words given in the box:

beautiful light ever vanish rare remember

- i. The stars suddenly from behind the clouds.
- ii. As the room was I could not see anything.
- iii. They created an scene when they fought together.
- iv. A crow is a bird in India.
- v. We can never the valuable sacrifice of the leaders of the freedom struggle movement.

E. GRAMMAR

Ex. 1. Read the following lines from the poem carefully:

- i. *Here lies a **most beautiful** lady,*
- ii. *I think she was **the most beautiful** lady*

The use of 'a most' is uncommon. The use of 'a' before 'most' suggests general observation. 'The most' is commonly used, and here 'the' suggests 'particular' reference.

Fill in the blanks with 'a', 'an' or 'the' to complete the sentences:

- i. Most of students today want to work in U.S.A
- ii. There is red rose on plant, rose has become quite attractive.
- iii. There are very few students in university, who want to pursue research work.
- iv. apple day keeps doctor away.
- v. I have met M. L..A. today.

F. ACTIVITIES

Ex.1. Request your teacher of social sciences to deliver a lecture on different aspects of the Taj Mahal, namely, historical, location, architectural and human.

Ex.2. Do a project work on 'Taj Mahal: a dream in marble'. Paste a picture of the Taj Mahal on it.

Ex.3. Prepare a list of some well-known monuments and memorials built in India, mentioning the names of those who built them, the dates/ periods when they were built and the persons in whose memory they were built.

