

THE SOLDIER

Rupert Brooke

RUPERT BROOKE (1887- 1915) was born in a well-to-do academic family. His father was a housemaster at Rugby School, where Rupert was educated before going to King's College, Cambridge. W.B. Yeats, the famous poet described him as 'the handsomest young man in England.' He assumed a symbolic role that eventually turned into the myth of a young and beautiful fallen warrior. He died of septicaemia on April 23, 1915, off the island of Lemnos in the Aegean on his way to a battle at Gavipoli. Brooke is remembered as a 'war poet' who inspired patriotism in the early phase of the First World War. His reputation chiefly rests on five war sonnets of which 'The soldier' is undoubtedly the best and the most anthologised.



A. Work in small groups and discuss the following:

1. Why do countries go to war? Are the soldiers happy about it?
2. The role of Indian Army in the development of our country.

THE SOLDIER

If I should die, think only this of me:

That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust **concealed**;
A dust whom England **bore**, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to **roam**,
A body of England's, breathing English air,

Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,

A **pulse** in the **eternal** mind, no less

10

Gives, somewhere back the thoughts by England given;

Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;

And laughter, learnt of friends; and **gentleness**,

In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.



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

- a) The speaker of the poem is a soldier.
- b) He is a French soldier.
- c) The soldier is very sad.
- d) He praises England.
- e) He talks about his friends.
- f) It is a love poem.
- g) The poet is depicting the miseries of war.
- h) The poet expresses his indebtedness to England.
- i) The poem is a sonnet.

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

- 1) Is the speaker afraid of death?
- 2) If at all he dies in the battle, how would he like to be remembered?
- 3) How can 'some corner of a foreign field' be 'for ever England'?
- 4) 'In that rich earth a richer dust concealed.' What does 'dust' stand for?
- 5) What is meant by the phrase 'A pulse in the eternal mind'?

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

foreign (adj): a land or country other than one's own

concealed (v): hidden

vanishes (v): hidden

bore (v): gave birth

roam(v): walk or travel without a definite aim

pulse (n): vibration

eternal (adj): lasting for ever

gentleness (n): mildness, tenderness

C. 1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Do you think that the title of the poem is appropriate? Give reasons.
2. Discuss the main ideas contained in the first eight lines, i. e. , octave.
3. What do you understand by patriotism? Is this a patriotic poem? Discuss.
4. Summarise the poem in your own words.
5. How many times does the poet use 'England' or 'English' in the poem? What does it show?
6. How can you show that you love your country?
7. What is a sonnet? Comment on the language of the prescribed poem. Also, mention its rhyme-scheme.

A 'Sonnet' is a poem of 14 lines usually divided in two parts. The first eight lines are called octave and the last six lines are known as sestet. The octave establishes some issue and the sestet resolves it (petrarcham sonnet). It is a concentrated expression of single thought, feeling or situation. Subjectivity, spontaneity, sincerity, reflection, music and melody are some other important characteristics of a sonnet.

C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

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

1. War does not solve problems.
2. A career in Indian Armed Forces.

C. 3. COMPOSITION

Write a short essay in about 100 words on the following:

- a. Life of a soldier.
- b. War widows

D. WORD STUDY

D.1. Dictionary Use

Ex. 1. Look up a dictionary and write two meanings of each of the following words – the one in which it is used in the lesson and the other which is more common

earth	dust	bore	aware
English	pulse	body	eternal

D.2. Word-formation

Read the following line carefully:

A body of England's, breathing English air,....

Mark the use of 'England' and 'English', in the line given above.

Write adjectives showing nationality, against the names of the countries given below:

Pakistan	America	Japan	Nepal	Australia
Newzealand	West Indies	Korea	China	Iran

D.3. Word-meaning

Ex 1. Write the antonyms of the words given below:

die	foreign	roam	evil	eternal
gentleness	peace	heaven	aware	concealed

E. GRAMMAR

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

i. *If I **should** die, think only of this me*

ii. *There **shall** be.....*

Can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would –these are modals. They have different meanings in different situations. In the first sentence given above, 'should' suggests a condition or probability. Similarly, shall in the second sentence suggests 'future time'.

Fill in the blanks with suitable modals to complete the sentences:

- i. Amod complete his homework in an hour. (ability).
- ii. Students..... remain in discipline during the period. (compulsion)
- iii. you succeed in life. (wish)
- iv. If rain today. (possibility)
- v. What I do in this uncommon situation! (advice)
- vi. You to take proper care of your old parents. (moral duty)
- vii. If Chhabi had participated in the dance competition, she have won the admiration of the audience. (a possibility that did not realise)
- viii. In evening they go out for a walk. (habit)
- ix. you, please, bring a cup of tea for me? (polite request)
- x. Safdar be in Delhi in the first week of January. (future time)

F. ACTIVITIES

Ex.1. Take the help of the NCC officer of your school/college and make a list of officer's ranks in the Indian Army from top to bottom; i.e. General

Ex.2. Name at least two Gallantry Awards of Indian Air Force.