

That Time of Year...

Comprehension I.

Question 1

a) In which of the four seasons does the poet place himself in the first stanza?

1. Spring
2. Summer
3. Autumn
4. Winter

Answer:

Autumn

b) Which words from the stanza justify your answer?

Answer:

"When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang."

Question 2

The four seasons symbolise the different stages of human life—childhood, youth, old age, and death. At which stage does the poet see himself?

Answer:

Autumn, represents old age.

Question 3

a) What does the phrase "bare ruined choirs" refer to?

Answer:

The branches that once provided a resting place for birds to sit and sing.

b) What does this imagery signify?

Answer:

It suggests that the trees, once lively with leaves and birdsong, are now stripped bare, reflecting ageing and loss.

Question 4

In the first stanza, the poet uses the image of late autumn to convey his nearing end. What imagery does he introduce in the second stanza?

Answer:

"Twilight of such day."

Question 5

Like the seasons, a day also symbolizes different life stages:

1. Morning – Childhood
2. Noon – Youth
3. Evening – Old age
4. Night – Death

At what point in the day does the poet imagine himself in the second stanza?

Answer:

Evening.

Question 6

What does the phrase "Death's second self" refer to?

Answer:

Sleep.

Question 7

What metaphors does the poet use to indicate the approach of death?

Answer:

"Twilight" and "black night."

Question 8

In the second stanza, twilight is used to illustrate that the poet is nearing the night of his life. What new image does he introduce in the following stanza?

Answer:

"Death-bed."

Question 9

Like life and seasons, fire also has four stages:

1. Fuel
2. Flame
3. Ember
4. Ash

At which stage does the poet see himself?

Answer:

Ember.

Question 10

a) What remains in the ashes of its youth?

Answer:

The lingering glow of the fire symbolises the poet's last flickers of passion and enthusiasm for life.

b) What does "death-bed" imply here?

Answer:

It signifies the final phase of life, where only a small spark of vitality remains before it fades completely.

Question 11

In the couplet, "this" refers to:

The three quatrains preceding it.

The concluding two lines.

Both.

Answer:

Both.

Question 12

When does love grow stronger?

Answer:

Love deepens when the time to part approaches, making it more intense and valuable.

Question 13

The poet uses different comparisons to express the stage of life he is in:

a) Relating life to seasons, he aligns himself with which season?

Answer:

Autumn.

b) Comparing life to the course of a day, he associates himself with which time of day?

Answer:

Twilight.

c) In the analogy of fire, he compares himself to which stage?

Answer:

Ember.

Comprehension II.

Question 1

Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

a) What does "bare ruined choirs" symbolize?

1. A decaying church
2. Trees without birds
3. Both

Answer:

Trees without birds.

b) Why has the "sound" disappeared?

Answer:

With the arrival of autumn, cold winds have set in, causing birds to migrate to warmer places, leaving the branches silent.

c) What is the significance of the word "late"?

Answer:

"Late" means "recently," indicating that the birds were present not long ago but have now departed.

d) Why are the tree branches bare?

Answer:

The autumn season has caused the leaves to wither and fall, leaving the trees barren.

Question 2

This thou perceives, which makes thy love more strong, To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

a) Who is referred to as "thou" in these lines?

Answer:

"Thou" refers to a friend or a beloved, whom the poet urges to cherish their bond, knowing they will soon be separated.

b) What strengthens love according to the poet?

Answer:

The realization that time is fleeting and their togetherness will not last forever makes love more intense and meaningful.

c) Explain the meaning of the final line.

Answer:

The poet acknowledges that his time is short—he is in the "autumn" of his life, at "twilight," with only the "embers" of his past vitality remaining. This awareness makes him appreciate love more deeply, knowing that parting is inevitable.

Comprehension III.

Question 1

How does the couplet serve as a fitting conclusion to the three quatrains?

Answer:

1. The first stanza compares life to autumn, symbolizing the poet's old age, with winter (death) fast approaching.
2. The second stanza likens life to twilight, emphasizing that the day is ending, just as the poet's time is running out.

3. The third stanza draws a parallel between life and fire, with the poet now reduced to embers, signifying the fading remnants of his youthful energy.
4. These stanzas establish a gradual decline, leading to the poet's realization that time is limited.
5. The couplet offers a resolution—since life is fleeting, love becomes even more valuable.

Paragraph:

The first two stanzas present a vivid image of the poet as seen through the eyes of the young man—his fading vitality symbolized by withering leaves, barren branches, and the dimming light of day. The third stanza shifts the focus from physical decline to the poet's waning passions, highlighting how the energy that once sustained his relationships is now fading. These twelve lines carry a sombre and inevitable tone, evoking a sense of resignation. However, the final couplet changes this perspective, urging one to cherish love and life while they still last.

Question 2

Explain the double imagery in 'Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.' What does the poet want his friend to observe?

Answer:

1. The phrase can refer to trees stripped of their leaves due to autumn, causing the birds to leave, just as old age strips away vitality.
2. It can also symbolize the poet's diminishing creative ability—his once-flourishing poetic voice now fading with age.
3. The poet wants his friend to recognize that autumn inevitably leads to winter, just as twilight inevitably turns into night, reinforcing the passage of time.

Paragraph:

The poet is not merely preparing his young friend for his physical death but also the symbolic loss of youth and passion. He fears that the young man sees only the outward signs of ageing, much like the poet himself. The first stanza employs the metaphor of a winter day to highlight the starkness of old age. The image of a ruined church, once filled with music but now silent, reflects both the loss of physical vitality and the fading of artistic expression. The absence of birdsong mirrors the poet's fear that his voice, too, is fading into silence.

Activities: Pair Work**Question 1**

When reflecting on the poem, certain vivid images come to mind, such as nearly bare trees with a few withering yellow leaves still clinging to the branches. What other images do you visualize? List them and share them with your group.

Answer:

- The second stanza paints a picture of the fading day, where the sun has already set, and darkness is slowly taking over.
- The dimming twilight sky, symbolizing the gradual approach of night.
- The image of glowing embers in the third stanza, represents the final remnants of a once-blazing fire, now reduced to faint sparks.
- The stark imagery of an abandoned church, its choir silent, much like the poet's fading voice and vitality.

Question 2

Carefully examine the rhyming words in the poem. Do you notice a pattern? Identify the rhyme scheme.

Answer:

The poem follows a structured rhyme scheme: **abab cdcd efef gg**.

Summary of the Poem "That Time of Year"



The poet urges his friend or beloved to cherish their time together, emphasizing that his life is nearing its end. He wishes to deepen their bond, knowing that the time they have left is limited.

Using the metaphor of autumn, the poet compares himself to trees with yellowing leaves trembling in the cold wind, with some leaves already fallen—symbolizing the fading vitality of his life. The absence of "music" represents the silence and stillness that come with aging.

He then shifts to the metaphor of twilight, portraying himself as the fading light of the evening, soon to be overtaken by night—symbolizing the inevitable approach of death, which he equates to "sleep."

In the final metaphor, the poet describes himself as a dying fire, with only faint embers left resting on the ashes of his youth. He

acknowledges that this small remaining glow will soon extinguish.

It is this awareness of his limited time that makes the poet's love for his friend or beloved even stronger. He hopes that they, too, will love him more deeply before they must part forever.

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