

ENGLISH LITERATURE

CLASS XII

Assignment (June 29,2020)

N. B:Write it in your English literature copy

Do you think there is a hidden meaning in the poem 'Crossing the Bar'? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer: Alfred, Lord Tennyson a great English poet wrote ' Crossing the Bar' in 1889. The poem at first glance appears to be an objective poem, in Which the poet tells about a voyage in Which a ship is going to cross a sand bar. But apart from its literal meaning there is a deep hidden meaning in the poem.

The poem deals With the speaker's concern about his approaching, inevitable death. It also highlights his accepting and calm attitude about the end of his life.

The poet has used the metaphor of a ship sailing into the sea to represent the journey of life and a 'sand bar' The poet has used the metaphor of a ship sailing into the sea to represent the journey of life and a 'sand bar' which is a ridge between harbour and the sea as a spiritual boundary that separates the temporal world and the limitless regions beyond.

The poem opens up with the metaphor " sunset and evening star" which are symbolic of onset of evening when evening star (Venus) rises in the sky. They refer to the last stage of the speaker's life.

A ship is scheduled to sail on a long voyage at sunset when the evening star rises in the sky. After the formal announcement, the "one clear call" the ship would sail out of the harbour, across the sandbar at the entrance of the harbour, into the vast ocean.

The poet wants to say that as the Sun is setting and the day is about to end, his life is also drawing to an end. He can hear the clear call of death which is the signal for the speaker that his death is nearing.

The poet further says " And may there be no moaning of the Bar

When I put out to sea"

The speaker prays that when his ship put out into the sea, there may be " no moaning of the bar ".

Here the sand bar is personified as when the waves crash against the sand bar, they make a gloomy moaning sound. Here the poet suggests that one should accept his imminent death calmly, without fear. There should not be any moaning, sorrow or lament to know the coming of death. Then the speaker wishes for a tide that is " too full for sound and foam" which help his ship to cross the sand bar easily and reach his destination.

Here "tide" represents the experience of dying. The speaker wishes that feelings of death will be so overwhelming that all the other feelings will be numbed. The speaker suggests that when a tide is so full

then it moves in such a way that it appears to be quiet and calm and “asleep”, it can neither produce any sound nor foam.

As the tide came from the deep found sea and now going back to its home from where it came.

Similarly, the act of dying is merely a part of the cycle of birth and death. The “going out” i.e. death, is a “return home” to the “boundless deep” from which all the mortals come. His soul will return back to eternity. Thus the speaker finds comfort in the fact that his journey is not only a departure but homecoming also.

The poet again uses metaphor “twilight” and “evening bell” which literally refers to the end of the day and after that it will be “dark”. But he hopes for a cheerful farewell as his ship is going to start a new journey. Allegorically, “twilight” refers to the last moment of the speaker’s life, when he can hear the “evening bell” which indicates his upcoming death. Here evening bell appears like death knell, which is rung when somebody dies.

After twilight there will be nothing but “darkness” here darkness imply for death.

The speaker further hopes for a cheerful farewell or departure as he is going to start a new journey towards eternity. The speaker is quite hopeful that this flood will bear his ship to the “boundless deep” which is beyond the limits of “Time and Place” When he will “cross the bar” he will be able to see the “Pilot” of his ship. The speaker is cheerful in the hope that the “flood” of hope will take him far beyond the limits of Time and Place i.e. eternity, which is the home to his soul.

Then he will be able to see his “Pilot” face to face. “I hope to see my Pilot face to face When I have crossed the bar”.

Here by capitalising the word Pilot, the speaker refers to God, Who like a skilled mariner will take his ship beyond the limits across the Bar .

These lines clearly indicate that the poet believes in afterlife. He believes that dying is just a stage and afterlife a return By using the word Pilot for God, the poet pointing him as the great power that controls and guides our lives.

Thus “Crossing the Bar” refers to the act of passing beyond the life. The poem is all about accepting and embracing death rather than fearing the dark unknown.