

On Killing a Tree

Introduction

This poem has been written by Gieve Patel who is an Indian poet. This poem tells us that a tree is quite strong and it is impossible to kill it easily.

Summary

The poet says that you cannot kill a tree with a simple jab of knife. A tree is very strong. It takes many years to grow. Earth and nature nourish a tree. The poet further says that the tree will also not be harmed by hacking and chopping. If you strike its bark, it will heal up and makes the tree healthy again. Even if the tree is cut down from the bark, then also its small branches will emerge and the tree will grow again. To kill a tree requires a lot of efforts. Until you pull the tree out of the Earth completely, it cannot be killed. A tree has to be uprooted only then it can be killed. Even after being uprooted it is alive for a few days. Then, the scorching sun dries it and then it ultimately dies.

Message

The poet wants to convey the message that strong beings do not give in easily to the adversities of life. He also suggests that a half-done job is as bad as not done at all.



Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow:

1. It takes much time to kill a tree,

Not a simple jab of the knife
Will do it. It has grown
Slowly consuming the Earth,
Rising out of it, feeding
Upon its crust, absorbing
Years of sunlight, air, water,
And out of its leprous hide
Sprouting leaves.

- (a) According to the extract, it takes longer to destroy a

- (b) The tree takes in sunlight, water and air

- (c) The tree has grown rooted in the soil

- (i) quickly (ii) weakly
(iii) gradually (iv) with trunk

- (d) A synonym of the word 'absorbing' is

Answers

- (a) tree
(b) to grow
(c) (iii) gradually
(d) soaking

2. So hack and chop

But this alone wont do it.
Not so much pain will do it.
The bleeding bark will heal
And from close to the ground
Will rise curled green twigs,
Miniature boughs
Which if unchecked will expand again
To former size.

- (a) 'It' here refers to

- (b) The pain is given to which bleeds just like a human being.

- (c) alone is not sufficient to destroy the tree.

- (i) Cutting the bark
(ii) Cutting and chopping the bark
(iii) Destroying the bark
(iv) Striking with heavy blows

- (d) 'boughs' in the extract means the same as

Answers

- (a) destroying the tree
(b) the bark
(c) (ii) Cutting and chopping the bark
(d) branches

3. No,

The root is to be pulled out—
Out of the anchoring Earth;
It is to be roped, tied,
And pulled out—snapped out
Or pulled out entirely,
Out from the earth-cave,
And the strength of the tree exposed
The source, white and wet,
The most sensitive, hidden
For years inside the Earth.

- (a) The poet says that in order to kill the tree, it has to be

- (b) State whether the given statement is True or False.

The poet says that it is not difficult to kill a tree.

- (c) The roots are in colour and are wet.

- (i) brown (ii) black
(iii) green (iv) white

- (d) An antonym of the word 'entirely' is

Answers

- (a) uprooted
(b) False
(c) (iv) white
(d) partially

4. Then the matter

Of scorching and choking
In Sun and air,
Browning, hardening,
Twisting, withering,
And then it is done.

- (a) 'It is done' in the extract means

- (b) The tree dries up with the action of Sun and

- (c) The phrase 'scorching and choking' refers to the:

- (i) scorching heat of the Sun
(ii) drying in the heat of the Sun
(iii) drying up of the tree after being uprooted
(iv) thriving of tree

- (d) State whether the given statement is True or False.

On uprooting the tree, it becomes red.

Answers

- (a) the tree dies
(b) air
(c) (iii) drying up of the tree after being uprooted
(d) False



Short Answer Type Questions

Q 1. What do you think a simple jab of the knife will do to a tree? Explain briefly.

Ans. A simple jab of the knife can only scrape the bark of the tree. The bark of the tree will secrete a liquid for some time and then automatically heal itself.

Q 2. Why does the poet use the expression 'to kill' rather than 'to cut' a tree?

Ans. Cutting a tree usually does not kill a tree. When the roots of the tree are uprooted from the Earth, it kills the tree. The poet wants to convey the message that it is difficult to kill a tree. So, the poet uses the term 'to kill' and not 'to cut' a tree.

Q 3. Why do you think the poet describes in detail the killing of a tree? Explain briefly.

Ans. The poet describes the killing of tree in detail in order to produce moral feelings in the reader so that he will not kill trees. He says that killing causes pain to the tree. So, the readers will try to avoid killing the tree.

Q 4. Briefly justify the title of the poem, 'On Killing a Tree'.

Ans. 'On Killing a Tree' creates an awareness in the minds of people that trees are as much living creatures as animals. It deals primarily with man's misconceptions with regard to nature.

Q 5. What is the meaning of 'bleeding bark'? What makes it bleed?

Ans. When the knife's sudden rough blow hurts the bark, it gives out some liquid. This is called the 'bleeding bark'. The sudden rough blow of the knife makes the bark bleed.

Q 6. What is the meaning of 'anchoring Earth' and 'Earth cave'?

Ans. 'Anchoring Earth' means the Earth supports the tree. The Earth acts as an anchor. It holds the tree fast and firm.

'Earth cave' means the deep cavity of the Earth where a tree finds support.

Q 7. What does the poet mean by 'the strength of the tree exposed'?

Ans. 'The strength of the tree exposed' means that the tree derives strength through its roots. When a tree is uprooted, the strength of the tree is made visible.

Q 8. What processes does a tree undergo before it dies?

Ans. A tree undergoes the following processes before it dies:

(i) It dries up in the Sun and air.

(ii) It turns brown and hard.

(iii) It twists and withers.



Long Answer Type Questions

Q 1. What similarities can we draw between trees and some great people of yesteryears?

Ans. Trees go on live on for years. There are some trees in the Amazon forest which are said to be more than five hundred years old. We may take some lesson from them to spread our roots deep inside the Earth. There had been some great people of yesteryears who still live in our memories. They had spread their roots inside our consciousness and as a result refuse to die. Also the poet conveys the fact that trees are strong. Also the people who are great are also strong.

Q 2. The poem gives out a strong message through an irony that trees mustn't be cut or 'killed'. How has it been done?

Ans. 'On Killing a Tree' is a beautiful poem about the environment. It indirectly gives out a strong idea that trees are our lifeline. So, they mustn't be 'killed'. It is done through an irony. The poet instructs how a tree is 'killed'. But he means its opposite. It implies that a person shall be a murderer if he 'kills' it this way. The poet says that a knife will do no harm to a tree. Even if it is hacked or chopped, its bark will heal. Very soon the twigs will grow at its bottom. These will expand to their former size. If the tree is to be 'killed', it must be uprooted completely. Then, it will wither and dry out. On stating this the poet taunts the people cutting the trees. He wants to give out a message that trees are something pious and are like humans. They are very precious for our lives. So, they must not be cut. Thus, the poet conveys the message that trees should not be killed.