

What is Paraphrasing ?

The word 'Paraphrase' is made of two Greek words—**Para**, which means 'alongside of' or 'parallel to', and **Phrasis**, which means 'wording' or 'stating'. Therefore 'Paraphrasing' means expressing the full meaning of a given poem or a prose passage in simple language parallel to the language of the given extract.

According to J. C. Nesfield, "Paraphrasing is rendering of a given extract from one form of wording to another."

Wren and Martin similarly hold that "Paraphrase is restatement of the sense of the passage in other words. It is the reproduction in one's own natural idiom or style of the full sense of a passage written in another idiom or style."

It would be clear from the above noted definitions that in paraphrasing there should be no change in the idea or thought-content of the given extract. The change should be only in the language, diction and style.

Difference between Paraphrase and Precis

Paraphrase and Precis are two different exercises. In Precis one is required to give the central thought and main points systematically arranged in about one-third of the given passage. In paraphrase there is no condition of length nor is one required to rearrange the thoughts of the original extract. One is required only to restate the thoughts in simple language line by line or sentence by sentence in the same order. The paraphrase is, therefore, almost of the same length as the original passage. Sometimes the paraphrase is even longer because the difficult or obscure words, references or allusions occurring in the original extract have to be briefly explained and stated in the paraphrase. But it should be kept in mind that there should be no change in the idea or thought-content in the paraphrase. Also, you are not allowed to express your own opinion or your

agreement or disagreement with the thought of the given passage.

In a way, therefore, paraphrase is a kind of translation, but it is not a translation from one language to another, but from one style and diction to another style and diction in the same language.

Some Hints for Paraphrasing

No definite rules can be framed for paraphrasing, but some practical suggestions can, of course, be given. The following are these suggestions :

- (1) Read the given poem or prose extract slowly and carefully at least two times and try to understand its central idea.
- (2) Thus, keeping the central idea in mind, read the given poem once or twice again and try to grasp the meaning line by line. Also, try to guess the meanings of difficult words and phrases in the light of the central idea and the context.
- (3) Thereafter, underline the archaic or difficult words and expressions, as well as the similes, metaphors and other Figures of Speech, if any. Also underline the literary or mythological references and allusions. All these have to be stated in easy and simple language in the paraphrase.
- (4) The construction of sentences in poetry is different from that in prose. Therefore all poetical constructions and inversions should be changed into simple normal prose-order. For example, see the following line written in verse :
 "A man severe he was, and stern to view;
 I knew him well." (Goldsmith)
 Its prose-order would be :
 "I knew him well that he was a severe man, with a stern expression."
- (5) As has been said above, the difficult and archaic words and phrases should be changed into simple ones. This does not,

however, mean that every difficult word must necessarily be changed. The intention of paraphrasing is to simplify and clarify the meaning and not essentially to change the words.

- (6) The given poem or passage should be paraphrased line to line or sentence to sentence. Therefore the paraphrase is almost of the same length as the original. Sometimes the paraphrase may even be a little longer than the given extract, because difficult words or references have to be briefly explained in it.
- (7) Paraphrase can be done either in the direct or indirect form of speech according to the given extract.
- (8) In a poem articles, prepositions, conjunctions, etc. are often left out. They should be suitably added in the paraphrase. The Rhetorical, Exclamatory or Interrogative sentences occurring in the poem should be converted into simple sentences.
- (9) Neither take away nor add any idea or opinion of your own in the paraphrase.

Examples

(1)

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Foot-prints on the sands of time.
Foot-prints that perhaps another
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

(H.W. Longfellow)

Paraphrase

The lives of all great men remind us that we can also make our lives noble and sublime. Before leaving this world on death, we can also leave some deep impressions of our noble deeds on the shore of time which may encourage and inspire an unfortunate fellow traveller who may have failed in the journey of life and felt forsaken and deserted by all in his despair and loneliness.

(2)

Life ! I know not what thou art.
But know that, thou and I must part.
And when, or how, or where we met
I own to me's a secret yet.

Life ! we've been long together
Through pleasant and through cloudy
weather.

'Tis hard to part when friends are dear

Perhaps it will cost a sigh, a tear;

Then steal away, give little warning,

Choose thine own time :

Say not good night ;

but in some brighter clime,

Bid me good morning. (Barbault)

Paraphrase

I do not know what life is, but one thing that I know for certain is that one day we shall have to part company with each other. I must admit that it is still a mystery to me as to when and in what way and at what place, I came to have life. I am fully conscious of the fact that life and I have been good companions for a long time and remained constant through all favourable and unfavourable situations. It is very painful to part company with life, specially when there are many dear friends around. Parting from life would certainly draw a sigh of grief from the heart and a tear from the eye. Life would certainly part at its own time. Let life part quietly without a warning, but I only earnestly wish that life should not say a permanent good night to me, but it should rather greet me with a good morning in heaven where the departed souls meet.

(3)

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
"This is my own, my native land ?"

Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd.

As home his foot steps he hath turn'd

From wandering on a foreign strand ?

If such there breathe, go, mark him well;

For him no minstrel raptures swell;

High though his titles, proud his name,

Boundless his wealth as wish can claim :

Despite those titles, power and pelf,

The wretch, concentrated all in self,

Living, shall forfeit fair renown,

And doubly dying, shall go down

To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,

Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.

(Sir Walter Scott)

Paraphrase

There cannot be a man who is spiritually so dead that his heart does not feel a kind of thrill when he puts his foot on the shore of his fatherland after a long stay in foreign lands, and who does not say with pride that this is his own dear country. If such an unpatriotic man exists anywhere, go and note his career carefully. You will find that no poet would sing any song in his praise, however high his position may be, or, however dignified his name. He may also be possessing as much wealth as he could desire. But in spite of all his high titles, powerful position and wealth, the miserable man, all absorbed in himself, will get no fame or recognition in his lifetime. And he will die a double death : his body will return to the dust from where it came and his name and memory will be forgotten for ever in oblivion. None will weep for him, none will honour his memory, and no poet will ever write a song in his praise.

(4)

Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade.
Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel; but, being in,
Bear it, that the opposer may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy :
For the apparel oft proclaims the man.

(Shakespeare)

Paraphrase

Here is an advice of a father to a son : Never speak out your personal thoughts by your tongue, nor act in haste in compliance to a casual thought. Be friendly to all but never too intimate. Whatever friends you have, judge their sincerity, and once you find them sincere and loyal to you, bind them to your heart with chains of steel. But do not waste your money in entertaining every casual or time-serving acquaintance. Avoid entering into a

quarrel as far as possible, but once you enter, fight out with all your force so that your opponent may never dare to offend you again. Listen to everybody but speak to the selected ones only. Listen to the advice of everybody but act according to your own judgment. Always wear decent dress, but within the capacity of your purse; your dress should be decent but not too gaudy, for a man is well judged by his dress.

(5)

Let me not hurt, by selfish deed
Or thoughtless word, the heart of foe or friend;
Nor would I pass, unseeing, worthy need,
Or sin by silence when I should defend.
However meagre be my worldly wealth,
Let me give something that shall aid my kind—
A word of courage, or a thought of health,
Dropp'd as I pass for troubled hearts to find.
Let me to-night look back across the span
'Twixt dawn and dark, and to my conscience say—
Because of some good act to beast or man,
The world is better that I lived today.

Paraphrase

I would not hurt by any selfish action of mine or even by an unkind word the heart of any person, whether friend or foe (enemy). Nor would I pass unconcerned by any person who may be in genuine need of some help from me. I would also not hold my tongue when any needy person deserves my defence. I would certainly give something or the other to a fellow human being in his hour of need, however poor my own resources may be. If nothing else, I would at least speak a word of courage, comfort or good cheer to a man languishing in pain. Every day would I survey my deeds from morning to evening and satisfy my conscience that I did at least one good act to help and comfort a man or a beast. Every day of my life I must do something to make the world happier.

Exercise

Paraphrase the following poems :

(1)

If you are sighing for a lofty work,
If great ambitions dominate your mind,

Just watch yourself and see you do not shirk
 The common little ways of being kind.
 If you are dreaming of a future goal,
 When crowned with glory men shall own
 your power,
 Be careful that you let no struggling soul
 Go by unaided in the present hour.
 If you would help to make the wrong things
 right,
 Begin at home, there lies a lifetime's toil :
 Weed your own garden fair for all men's
 sight,
 Before you plan to till another's soil.

Hints

[Here is a poet's advice to a man who is desirous of doing something good and memorable. One should never overlook or neglect small acts of kindness to the humble and needy. One's own family is the most important starting point towards this goal.

Meanings—**Sighing**—Keenly desirous;
shirk—overlook; **unaided**—without giving help;
weed—clean .

(2)

Children we are all
 Of one great Father, in whatever clime
 Nature or chance hath cast the seeds of life—
 All tongues, all colours : neither after death
 Shall we be sorted into languages
 And tints, white, black and tawny, Greek and
 Goth,
 Northmen, and offspring of hot Africa;
 The All-father, He in whom we live and move,
 He the indifferent judge of all, regards,
 Nations, and hues, and dialects alike;
 According to their works shall they be judged,
 When even-handed justice in the scale
 Their good and evil weighs. (R. Southey)

Hints

[Here is the poet's appeal not to make any difference from man to man on the basis of nationality, colour or creed. There is no such distinction in the eye of God. God judges us all by our good or evil deeds only.

Meanings : **Clime**—Climate; **sorted**—classified; **tawny**—brown; **offspring**—children; **hues**—colours; **dialects**—languages; **even-handed**—perfect, impartial.]

(3)

Out of the night that covers me,
 Black as the pit from pole to pole,
 I thank whatever gods may be
 For my unconquerable soul.
 In the fell clutch of circumstance
 I have not winced nor cried aloud.
 Under the bludgeonings of chance
 My head is bloody, but unbowed.
 Beyond this place of wrath and tears
 Looms but the horror of the shade,
 And yet the menace of the years
 Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.
 It matters not how strait the gate,
 How charged with punishments the scroll,
 I am the master of my fate :
 I am the captain of my soul.

(W. E. Henley)

Hints

[This poem is entitled "Invictus" which means 'unconquered'. Human soul is unconquered. It remains steadfast against all strokes of misfortune and sufferings of life. Even death cannot conquer it.

Meanings:—**Fell clutch**—cruel grip.

bludgeonings of chance—heavy blows of fate and chance; **winced**—trembled; **shade**—death; **menace of the years**—Whatever other threats the coming years may bring; **straight the gate**—narrow gate of death; **scroll**—record of good and evil deeds maintained in heaven.]

(4)

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou
 Shouldst lead me on;
 I loved to choose and see my path, but now
 Lead Thou me on,
 I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
 Pride ruled my will; remember not past years.
 So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
 Will lead me on,
 O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
 The night is gone,
 And with morn those angel faces smile,
 Which I have loved long since, and lost
 awhile. (J. H. Newman)

Hints

[This is an extract from a poem entitled “Lead Kindly Light”. It is a hymn, a prayer to God to light his way and lead him on in the difficult journey of life.]

Meanings—Path—journey of life;

garish day—glamorous time; **moor and fen**—hard and thorny path in the journey of life; **Crag and torrent**—hills and rivers; **angel faces**—The loving faces of those dear ones who died earlier and may be waiting for me in heaven.]

(5)

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out
silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed;
How all our copper had gone for his service !
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been
proud !
We that had loved him so, followed him,
honoured him
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear
accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die !

(Robert Browning)

Hints

[This extract is from a poem entitled “The Lost Leader.” The Lost Leader is the great poet Wordsworth. He is called a lost Leader because he had deserted the democratic party and joined the Royalists on receiving a pension from the King.]

Meanings—Handful of silver—a small pension (in the shape of silver coins); **riband**—medal; **bereft**—deprived of; **doled him**—gave him only silver, not gold; **copper**—hard earned little money; **mild and magnificent eye**—affectionate and dignified care; **pattern**—model.]

(6)

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee :—
A Poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company !
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought

What wealth the show to me had brought;

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

(William Wordsworth)

Hints

[This extract is taken from the poem entitled “Daffodils”. Here is a beautiful description of a vast tract of daffodils dancing in the soft breeze. The daffodils filled the poet’s mind and heart with a great treasure of beauty and joy.]

Meanings : Out-did—surpassed;

glee—cheerfulness; **jocund**—gay;

pensive—melancholy;

inward eye—imagination;

solitude—loneliness.]

(7)

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our
powers.

Little we see in Nature that is ours;

We have given our hearts away, a sordid
boon!

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flo-
wers,

For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not—Great God ! I’d rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less for-
lorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;

Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

(William Wordsworth)

Hints

[This is an extract from the poem entitled “The World is too much with us.” In the pursuit of money and material possessions we have ceased to appreciate the beauty of Nature. In order to come closer to Nature the poet is ready to renounce Christianity and accept Paganism where-in all forms of nature are worshipped as different gods.]

Meanings—**Sordid boon**—a hard bargain; **up-gathered**—hushed up **Pagan**—follower of an old non-Christian religion; **outworn**—archaic, dead; **less forlorn** ; less lonely; **Proteus**—Sea-god; **Triton**—god of woods.]

(8)

But the Taj, the tale still telling,
 Stands in Agra city great,
 White and shining, all excelling
 In its beauty and its state.
 There they lie, the loving hearted
 'Neath its marble side by side,
 Those in life so long-time parted
 Death no longer can divide.
 For though pressed from many quarters
 True love steadfast still abides,
 Is not quenched by many waters,
 Even death's relentless tides.
 All true love is never failing
 Howsoe'er men faithless be,
 But o'er everything prevailing
 Lives to all eternity. (Mary Dobson)

Hints

[This extract is from Mary Dobson's poem entitled "**The Taj Mahal**". The Taj is an immortal symbol of love. The Moghul Emperor Shahjahan and his beloved Queen Mumtaz are sleeping in eternal sleep in this tomb. Life had parted them, but Death has united them for ever.

Meanings—**All excelling**—best of all; **stead-fast**—constant; **abides**—remains; **relentless tides**—Ocean of Eternity.]

(9)

I am monarch of all I survery;
 My right there is none to dispute;
 From the centre all round to the sea,
 I am lord of the fowl and the brute.
 O solitude ! where are the charms
 That sages have seen in thy face ?
 Better dwell in the midst of alarms,
 Than reign in this horrible place.
 I am out of humanity's reach,
 I must finish my journey alone,
 Never hear the sweet music of speech;
 I start at the sound of my own.
 The beasts that roam over the plain,
 My form with indifference see;

They are so unacquainted with man,
 Their tameness is shocking to me.

(W. Cowper)

Hints

[This is an extract from the poem entitled "The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk". Selkirk was left all alone on an uninhabited island. He languished to hear any human voice. He feels awfully frustrated in the dead solitude of the island. He is completely out of humanity's reach.

Meanings : **Monarch**—King; **survey**—see around me; **fowl and the brute**—birds and animals; **alarms**—troubles and problems of life; **dwell**—live; **indifference**—non-recognition]

(10)

Beside the ungathered rice he lay,
 His sickle in his hand;
 His breast was bare, his matted hair
 Was buried in the sand.
 Again, in the mist and shadow of sleep,
 He saw his native land.
 Wide through the landscape of his dreams
 The lordly Niger flowed;
 Beneath the palm-trees, on the plain
 Once more a king he strode;
 And heard the tinkling caravans
 Descend the mountain road.
 He saw once more his dark-eyed queen
 Among her children stand :
 They clasped his neck, they kissed his cheeks,
 They held him by the hand—
 A tear burst from the sleeper's lids;
 And fell into the sands. (H. W. Longfellow)

Hints

[This is an extract from the poem entitled "The Slave's Dream." A Negro Chieftain was taken captive as a slave. He was forced to work as a slave on a farm in America. There he remembered his family and his native land and languished to go back to them. He saw them in a dream and in the joy and excitement of the dream he passed away.

Meanings : **Ungathered**—reaped but not collected and bound; **matted hair**—knotted and twined hair; **Niger**—river; **strode**—rode on the horse; **Caravans**—rows of camels; **held him**—caught him; **clasped**—embraced.