

Responding to the Poem

1. What imagery does the poet use to delineate Summer's day more picturesquely than any painter could?

Answer. The poet uses the imagery of psaltery to outline the summer's day more picturesquely than a painter could. Furthermore, the poet uses various phrases to explain the scenic beauty of the sun hiding between the clouds, the insects humming, the wind playing through the leaves, and the birds chirping. All these instances in the poem highlight the perfect beauty of a summer day. In this unique way, the poet tries to represent the various elements and portrays them more beautifully than any painter.

2. What do you understand by 'Psalteries of Summer'?

Answer. 'Psaltery' is an ancient musical instrument played by plucking strings. The poet uses the simile of 'Psalteries of summer' to describe the natural sounds that the poet hears on a bright sunny day. The natural sounds of the wind playing through the leaves, the chirping of birds, and the rapid beating of wings by bees and gnats make the poet feel happy, and he does not feel tired listening to the music of nature.

3. In which lines are creatures attributed with human qualities? How does this add to the beauty of the Summer's day?

Answer. In the following lines, the creatures are attributed human qualities:

In the first stanza,

'The Trees like Tassels hit – and – swungAccompanying the Sun –'

Here in these lines, the poet says about the 'Tune' formed by mini creatures in the sun and tree branches swinging in the air as the tune hits their ears. The poet refers to creatures like bees and gnats as 'Miniature Creatures' which fill the air with a satisfying tone of music with their humming and beating of wings. The dancing of the tree compared to that of humans dancing to celebrate their happiness. Likewise, small insects and birds dance to the tunes of music heard by trees.

In the fifth stanza,

'A Bird sat carelessly on the fence ...Just winding round a Stone'

Here in these lines, a bird is compared to a village woman sitting by the side of a fence gossiping on a bright sunny day. The bird sits carelessly on the fence and chirps without any worries. The snake is attracted to the bird as he has been charmed by the 'silver gossip'.

4. How would you explain the image of the 'Hindered Flags'?

Answer. The poet uses the 'Hindered Flags' image to portray the beauty of flowers that stand on their stems with petals full of aroma, having not bloomed fully. But, to dance like a tree, they have to bloom fully. So, before they could bloom, they had to slit open the tough green calyx. Hence, the 'Hindered Flags' represents flowers that have not bloomed fully.

5. Why are the pronouns referring to the Sun capitalised?

Answer. The pronouns referring to the Sun are capitalised because the poet represents the Sun as eternal. The Sun is highlighted here, which is an essential aspect of everyone's life. Without sunlight, nothing survives. So, everything which stays on this earth requires the Sun. The Sun sometimes shines wholly, and it is half or sometimes fully hidden behind the clouds to protect him from the mortal gaze.

6. Give examples from the poem to show that great poetry is a result of close observation of natural phenomena.

Answer. A natural phenomenon is one thing that keeps taking place in everyday life. Unfortunately, humans have become busy over their lives and have no time for nature. Here are a few examples from the poem that

illustrate the greatness of trees. Trees are the tallest and most important flag of happiness on a bright summer's day. Trees dance to the wind as 'There seemed to rise a Tune / From Miniature Creatures / Accompanying the Sun-' 'The Sun's Estates of Cloud / Sufficient to Enfold Him' 'Except it was a whim of His / To let the Orchards grow.' These phrases show that Sun is the master. Hence, the poem depicts various summer shades and how playful and happy nature enjoys summer days. All these instances show that the poet has a keen observation of nature which resulted in Poetry.

Language Study

You came across 'dulcimer' in the poem 'Kubla Khan'. Did you note down 'Psaltery' as another musical instrument? They are very similar. Look up the illustrations for the two in an illustrated dictionary. Find out in what ways they are different from one another.

Answer. Yes, 'Psaltery' is also a musical instrument. We came across 'dulcimer' in the poem 'Kubla Khan' as well. They both seem similar to musical instruments. The strings of psaltery are played with the fingers or nails. While in the case of dulcimers, the lines are struck with two small wooden hammers. The different ways in which they are played lead to differences in their shape.

