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Understanding The Poem**1. The title, 'Refugee Blues' encapsulates the theme of the poem. Comment.****Answer:**

The African-American form of ballads called Blues arose by the end of the 19th century. They are basically sad and melancholic and are known as “the sad black slave’s songs”. In this poem, the poet explains the sufferings endured by the Jews during the holocaust – their persecution and the rise of Nazism and Fuhrer. This poem mainly narrates the story of a Jewish couple who emigrated to the United States of America after escaping from Nazi Germany. These refugees sing the Blues explaining the pain and agony that they undergo during the tough situation.

2. What is the poetic technique used by the poet to convey the plaintive theme of the poem?**Answer:**

The poem 'Refugee Blues' is a Blue Ballad which explains his character. In Britain and Ireland, Ballads were famous till the 18th century, whereas the African-American form of ballads called Blues arose by the end of the 19th century. The poet, who was a British who migrated to the USA uses two basic techniques to carry out the beauty, which sings about the sufferings and sorrows of the Jewish Refugees. In this poem, the metre he used is similar to the ones he used in 'Calypso', which was written in 1930. The Ballads were famous forms of verse which were narrative in the middle age, while the Blues is an African-American music category which contains a strong pattern based on the use of a rhyme scheme which is simple and has repetitions. In every stanza, the first two lines rhyme with each other, called a tercet, while the third line provides a repetitive pattern using the phrase “my dear”, which is repeated in every third line providing consistency to the entire poem. It is very interesting to see that the first word in every stanza is a verb. This poem is a first-person narrative in informal and colloquial language.

3. What do the references to the birds and animals made in the poem suggest?**Answer:**

This poem is a melancholic depiction of the terror hovering over a Jew couple who escape to America and the misery they endure as no one sympathises with them. The fear of losing their home and death constantly haunted them. They were unwelcome even in America, as they were accused of taking away their bread. The poet compares the free animals and birds to the lives of the Jews. The freedom enjoyed by the cat, dog or fish is not given to the Jew couple. They remember the Fuhrer tried to exterminate the entire race of the Jews through the concentration camps where they were pushed alive into the gas chambers. Here, it is noticed that even the animals have freedom and are respected in America, while the Jews living in Germany do not have the right to live under the regime of the Nazis. The narrator is sad that even a fish which was 10 feet away from the narrator can swim happily while the narrator is grieving at the misery of himself and his wife.

4. How does the poet juxtapose the human condition with the behaviour of the political class?**Answer:**

The poem is written in an environment where Germany came up with the Nazi ideology which sought to eliminate the entire community of the Jews. Hitler's diktat that “they must die” created terror waves in Europe which paralysed the Jews into a state of horror. The poet declares that they are in his mind. In a meeting with the public in the USA, where they were refugees, the speaker also spoke about the anti-Jews. The Americans were apprehensive that allowing the Jews to stay in the USA would take away their food and jobs. Jews across Europe and America were seen with hatred, and people wanted them to die. During this situation, the couple was left penniless in the hands of fate. They were bewildered and scared and did not

possess anything to get back to their nation. They lost their identity and were threatened constantly with death. A contrast is made between the two poles into which the entire world was divided. One consisted of people like them, who were the Jews, while the other was the ones who was hunting and wanting to kill them. One was the sufferer, while the other was the ones who inflicted pain.

5. How is the essence of the poem captured in the lines ‘two tickets to Happiness’?

Answer:

The narrator and his wife were homeless and penniless to get back to their nation. They mourn losing their home and identity. Desperate to get happiness, they were willing to compensate for it. The image presented is lamentable and piteous. Even if they cannot have happiness in real life, the narrator and his wife imagine going to the land which contains happiness by purchasing two tickets. The narrator searches for places to board the train, but all the coaches are full. Death was present all around, and they could not afford happiness as Hitler had called out to entire Europe that “they must die”. In the end, on a land which was stretched with the whiteness of snow, it was annoying to notice the army of the Nazis hunting for the Jew couple to kill them.

