

2.1 Song of the Open Road

Title:

The title of the poem is very significant as Whitman has used the word 'Song' with a definite purpose that he enjoys to travel on the open road without any tension and worries of past, present and future and face the life without any complaint against his life. The poet wishes to move ahead on the road of life with his own will and goodness. The poem 'Song of the Open Road' also indicates Freedom.

Poet:

Walt Whitman was an American poet, essayist and journalist. He is often called the father of free verse. He was born at Long Island in 1819 and grew up in the New York. He had very little formal schooling, but he considered himself to be a lifelong learner. Whitman died at the age of 72 after suffering stroke in 1892. His poem 'O' Captain, My Captain' and his poetry collection 'Leaves of Grass' are his remarkable literary works.

Introduction:

Song of the Open Road is a poem by Walt Whitman. It is taken from the collection "Leaves of Grass". It is written in free verse and is in form of a monologue by the poet. The poet intends to express his open thoughts over journey of life taken on different roads. The unrhymed and varying length of lines shows the complexities and the ups and downs one faces in his/her life. It also indicates the poet's inner desire to enjoy life to its fullest without bothering about the tensions and worries.

It is an inspirational poem written in the form of narration. This poem is an Ode to one's self

Paraphrase:

The poem begins with poet's journey on foot on the open road. Here the road means the road of life. He expresses that he is very cheerful to take the journey in this healthy and free world. In addition, the poet has a control over the journey as he is free to choose the brown path wherever to travel.

Next, the poet continues the thoughts in earlier lines by saying that he does not ask for good fortune and considers himself the creator of his own fortune. He adds that he will not cry or hesitate to do anything without postponing it and expects nothing. He is no longer satisfied being confined in the four walls. He is strong and happy enough to travel on the open road having unlocked himself from several complaints and arguments in his past life.

In the next lines, the poet tries to free himself from the worldly pleasures and relations. Even though he has a great faith in them and knows that they are doing well and happy with them, no more he likes to engage himself in friends and other people as he thinks that the mother earth is now enough for him to travel.

Special features:

The poem is written in very simple and effective language which is easy to understand. As it is written in a free verse, there is no rhyme scheme and meter. Length of the lines and stanzas are not equal. It has four separate stanzas. The first stanza contains only three lines, the other two stanzas contain four lines. In the last stanza poet uses parentheses to separate himself from the worldly needs. Phrases like 'light-hearted' and 'querulous criticism' are interesting. Imageries such as constellations and brown colour are noteworthy. Figures of speech such as Alliteration, Metaphor, Repetition and Paradox are impressive.

Theme:

Freedom, joy of free life and optimism are the major themes of this poem. Throughout the poem, the poet encourages the readers to be true to themselves and live a free life and enjoy the freedom of life. Although his life is not free from obligations and troubles, he encourages everyone to live their dreams, leaving the obstacles behind.

Moral/Opinion:

It teaches us to be optimistic and happy. We have everything including freedom and opportunities. It encourages us to enjoy the life in healthy and free world. It motivates us to fill our heart with immense pleasure.

New words and their meaning:

1. Afoot-going on foot, walking, in motion
2. brown path-bare land
3. postpone-to stop for few days
4. suffice-enough, adequate, sufficient
5. delicious burdens(here)- bad memories of the past
6. whimper- low voice of cry or agony, unhappiness, sadness
7. querulous-argumentative, complaining
8. constellations- here it means group, collection, gathering of people
9. light hearted-cheerful, care free
10. take to-begin

Figures of Speech:

1)'The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose'

Alliteration- The sound of letter 'l' is repeated.

2)'Henceforth I ask not good – fortune, I myself am good- fortune'

Repetition- Word 'good- fortune' is repeated.

3)'I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever I go'

Repetition- Words 'Carry them' are repeated.

4)'Still here I carry my old delicious burdens'

Paradox- Delicious and burden express opposite meaning.

5)'Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticism'

Tautology- 'Complaint and Querulous' expresses same meanings.

6)'Still here burdens

Metaphor- Old sweet memories are indirectly compared to something delicious.

7)'Henceforth I need no more-

Climax- Words are arranged in their ascending order of importance.

8)Querulous Criticism

Alliteration- Sound of 'k' is repeated.

9)'Strong and content I travel the open road.

Inversion- The words are not in a correct prose order. The correct prose order is-
I travel the open road strong and content.

10)'I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in return.

Repetition- The word 'fill' is repeated.

11)'Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road.

Inversion- The words are not in a correct prose order. The correct prose order is-
I take to the open road afoot and light hearted.

12)'Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticism.

Climax- Ideas are arranged in ascending order.

13)'Song of the road

Personification- Non living object 'Road' is shown singing.

14) I carry my old delicious burdens-

Paradox- Burdens are described as delicious. It is absurd.

A burden cannot be delicious. The poet has used this combination of words to express that he has many sweet memories of the people and places which he would like to remember forever.