

padhai | Class X

English

Notes



**Full
Explanations**



**Character
Sketch**



**Word
Meanings**



**Tone, Central
idea, devices....**

First Flight

For Anne Gregory

–WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Detailed Explanation:

The poem “For Anne Gregory” by William Butler Yeats takes the form of a dialogue between a young man and a young woman, Anne Gregory. Their conversation focuses on the question of whether **a person can ever be loved for their inner self** rather than for outward beauty.

In the opening stanza, the young man tells Anne Gregory that no young man will ever love her solely for who she truly is, because her “great **honey-coloured ramparts** at your ear”—a metaphor referring to her striking golden hair—are so **captivating** that people will inevitably be drawn to her appearance. The word “ramparts” likens her hair to the defensive walls of a fort, suggesting that her beauty is so powerful that it dominates perception and prevents others from seeing beyond it. The phrase “**thrown into despair**” is used as a slight hyperbolic expression to indicate how deeply young men are affected by her attractiveness, as if they are helplessly overwhelmed. Thus, the young man argues that admiration for her will largely be based on her physical charm rather than her inner qualities.

In the second stanza, Anne Gregory replies with confidence, asserting that she can **change the colour of her hair** to brown, black, or even carrot-red. She believes that by altering her outward appearance, she can remove the distraction caused by her beauty and encourage people to love her for her real personality. This response introduces a contrast between external appearance and inner identity, implying that while physical beauty can be modified, a person’s true self remains constant.

In the concluding stanza, the young man presents a more philosophical perspective. He states that he once heard an elderly religious man say that **only God has the ability to love a person entirely for their true self**, without being influenced by external features. According to this idea, human love is generally shaped by physical appearance and other superficial aspects, whereas divine love alone is pure and unconditional. This conclusion adds a reflective dimension to the poem, suggesting that such ideal love may lie beyond ordinary human capability.

Thus, the poem examines the connection between **outward beauty** and **genuine affection**, raising the question of whether individuals can ever be valued purely for their inner identity.

Poetic Device Explanations

Metaphor

The expression “great honey-coloured ramparts at your ear” serves as a metaphor for Anne Gregory’s golden hair. The term “ramparts,” which refers to the fortified walls of a castle,

is used to highlight the striking and dominant presence of her hair. This metaphor suggests that her beauty acts almost like a barrier, preventing others from perceiving her true personality.

Imagery

The phrase “honey-coloured” produces vivid visual imagery by evoking the warm, golden shade of Anne Gregory’s hair. This descriptive detail enhances the reader’s understanding of her attractiveness and explains why it draws attention so strongly.

Hyperbole

The line “thrown into despair” is an exaggerated expression that emphasizes the intense effect of Anne Gregory’s beauty on young men. It does not literally indicate despair but conveys how deeply they are captivated.

Symbolism

Anne Gregory’s yellow hair functions as a symbol of physical beauty and outward appearance. In contrast, the idea of loving someone “for yourself alone” represents inner character and true identity. Through this symbolic opposition, the poet explores the difference between superficial attraction and genuine understanding.

Contrast

A significant contrast runs through the poem between external beauty and inner qualities. The young man maintains that people are influenced by appearance, while Anne Gregory believes she can eliminate this influence by altering her hair. This contrast reinforces the central issue of whether true love can exist beyond physical attraction.

Irony

A subtle irony is present in the poem. Anne Gregory assumes that changing her appearance will enable others to love her for her real self, yet the young man implies that human beings may continue to judge based on outward features, suggesting that her effort may not achieve the intended result.

Repetition

The recurring phrase “yourself alone” emphasizes the main concern of the poem—whether it is possible for a person to be loved purely for their inner self, independent of physical beauty.

Central Message / Theme

The poem centres on the distinction between outward appearance and inner personality.

It suggests that in human relationships, attraction and affection are often influenced by physical beauty. External appearance can sometimes overshadow a person’s true character, making it difficult for others to appreciate their inner self.

The poem raises a philosophical question about whether human beings are capable of loving someone entirely for who they are divine level, while human love is generally shaped by superficial factors. In this way, the poem encourages reflection on the value of inner beauty and genuine understanding in relationships.

Poet's Tone / Attitude

The tone of the poem is thoughtful, reflective, and mildly ironic.

At the beginning, the tone is conversational and light, as the young man and Anne Gregory exchange views.

As the poem progresses, it becomes more philosophical, particularly when the idea of divine love is introduced.

There is also a subtle ironic element, as the poem questions whether human love can truly remain unaffected by physical appearance.

Overall, the poet adopts a contemplative tone that invites readers to think deeply about the nature of love and attraction.

Word Meanings

Ramparts – High protective walls of a fort; here used metaphorically for Anne Gregory's thick hair near her ears.

Honey-coloured – Golden or yellowish in shade.

Despair – A feeling of hopelessness; here used in an exaggerated sense for intense attraction.

Hair-dye – A substance used to change the colour of hair.

Carrot – A bright reddish-orange colour.

Declare – To state something clearly or openly.

Text – A passage from a religious or authoritative source used as evidence.

Yesternight – An old-fashioned term meaning the previous night.

Dear – A term used affectionately while addressing someone.

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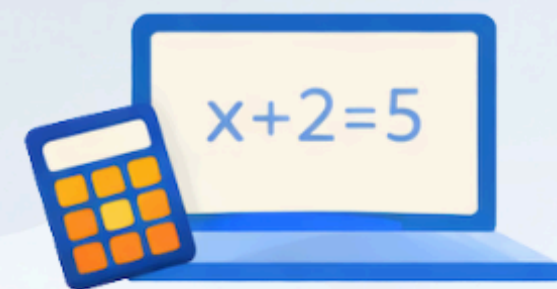
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