

Chapter 5: A Legend of the Northland

Thinking about the Poem

I.

Question 1:

Which country or countries do you think “the Northland” refers to?

Answer:

It is a country in the north where days are short and nights are long.

Question 2:

What did Saint Peter ask the old lady for? What was the lady’s reaction?

Answer:

Saint Peter asked the old lady for a piece of cake. The lady behaved miserly and kept decreasing the size of the cake. At last she did not give him anything to eat.

Question 3:

How did he punish her?

Answer:

He cursed her and made her a woodpecker.

Question 4:

How does the woodpecker get her food?

Answer:

The woodpecker bores the hard and dry wood to get its food.

Question 5:

Do you think that the old lady would have been so ungenerous if she had known who Saint Peter really was? What would she have done then?

Answer:

No, she would not have done this. On the contrary, she would have given him a large piece of cake to make him happy with the greed to get a handsome return.

Question 6:

Is this a true story? Which part of this poem do you feel is the most important?

Answer:

No, it is an imaginative story. It is a legend. The third stanza of the poem is very important.

Question 7:

What is a legend? Why is this poem called a legend?

Answer:

A legend is a story from ancient times about people and events. The title of the poem tells that it is a legend. The poet himself says that ‘I don’t believe it is true.’

Question 8:

Write the story of ‘A Legend of the Northland’ in about ten sentences.

Answer:

The poem is a story of an old woman. She is asked by Saint Peter for alms who has become weak because of fasting and travelling. But her greed forces her not to give him anything. He becomes angry and makes her a woodpecker who bores hard, dry wood to get food. Her clothes are burnt to ashes and she is left with a cap on her head. She continues boring into hard wood for her little food.

II.

Question 1:

Let's look at words at the end of the second and fourth lines, viz., 'snows' and 'clothes', 'true' and 'you', 'below' and 'know'. We find that 'snows' rhymes with 'clothes', 'true' rhymes with 'you' and 'below' rhymes with 'know'.

Find more such rhyming words.

Answer:

Earth-hearth, done-one, lay-away, another-over, flat-that, faint-saint, form- worm, food-wood, same-flame.

Question 2:

Go to the local library or talk to older persons in your locality and find legends in your own language. Tell the class these legends.

Answer:

Self attempt.