

St. Andrews Scots Sr. Sec. School
9th Avenue, I.P. Extension, Patparganj, Delhi 110092
Session 2024-2025 Notes

Class: IX

Subject: English

Topic: The Solitary Reaper (Poem)

Q1. Will no one tell me what she sings?

Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow

For old, unhappy, far-off things,

And battles long ago:

a. Why does the poet ask the question in the first line?

Ans :a. The poet asks this question because he is unable to understand the meaning of the song, as the language in which she was singing was not familiar to the poet.

b. What is meant by ‘plaintive numbers’?

Ans :b. ‘Plaintive numbers’ means sad songs.

c. What could have been one of the themes of the song?

Ans: c. One of the themes could have been about battles fought long ago or some sad event of the past.

Q2. Why did the poet compare the song of the solitary reaper with those of the nightingale and the cuckoo – bird? What did he think of the maiden’s song?

Ans: The poet was deeply moved by the sweet melancholic song of the Highland lass. It was so profound that he compared it with the song of the nightingale and the cuckoo – bird. The nightingale sings to welcome weary travellers in the Arabian Desert – the maiden’s singing is compared to the soothing effect of the nightingales singing on the travellers. Similarly the cuckoo – bird’s song announces the onset of spring in the Hebrides island and this singing is so pleasant that it breaks the silence of the gloomy winter – the maiden’s singing has the same effect on the poet. The entire valley was overflowing with this music and the melody lingered on in the poet’s ears long after she had completed singing her song.

Q3. ‘Will no one tell me what she sings?’ Why does the poet ask this question? What, according to the speaker, might be the theme of the girl’s song?

Ans. The English poet is not familiar with the language of the Scottish Highlanders. So he cannot follow the meaning of the Highland girl’s song. That is why he asks this question.

The poet tries to guess what could be the theme of the song. He imagines that the song perhaps tells the tale of some unhappy events of the past or of some battle that had been

fought in the distant past. He also thinks that the song may be about some loss or pain.

Q4. What is the poet's lament in the poem?

Ans. Following are the poet's lament in the poem 'The Solitary Reaper' is that

- **The solitary nature of the reaper:** The image of the girl working alone in the vast landscape evokes a sense of isolation and loneliness.
- **The mystery of the song:** The speaker's inability to understand the meaning of the girl's song creates a feeling of incompleteness and a desire to grasp its deeper significance.
- **The temporary nature of the experience:** The speaker's final statement about carrying the music in his heart "long after it was heard no more" suggests a sense of loss and the fading of a beautiful moment.