



16

MY ONLY CRY

You all know that atom bombs were dropped on the two Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. You also know how much destruction, death and sickness this caused. Since that time the world has become a store house of very dangerous weapons. To become more powerful than other countries, and to protect itself from other countries, each country is buying or building more and more destructive weapons. Do the adults not know the dangers of building and collecting huge amounts of arms and ammunition? Do they not know that these weapons can destroy the world in which their children will live tomorrow? Here we present a touching appeal for peace by the children of the world.



OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson you will be able to:

- state the theme of the poem;
- relate to the poet's fears and apprehensions about weapons;
- identify the difference between blank verse and rhyming verse;
- express your protest against an issue, and
- use adverbial antonyms.



16.1 LET US READ THE TEXT

My Only Cry: Close the Arms Factories

Who are you deceiving?
You ask me to speak to children,

deceiving: giving a
false impression,
telling lies



Notes

fellowship:
companionship,
friendship

taming: (here)
controlling the
destructive ideas of
countries and people
and using them for
the welfare of the
mankind

right-wing politics: a
political ideology
that promotes and
supports a rigid and
traditional social
order

left-wing politics:
political ideology
that promotes the
rights of the
underprivileged and
weak sections of
society

essentially:
fundamentally,
basically

veil: a covering, a
curtain

but I shall also address you, the grown-ups.
I am still a child, I don't know how to lie like you.
All the children of the world, oh adults of the world,
Could not rebuild what you destroy.
A better world won't be able to be rebuilt
without you, the adults.

You know that our cries are useless,
in a deaf world.
Now, my friends, let's not talk of friendship,
Peace and fellowship,
these words should be spoken by adults.

Enough promises.
Enough waiting.
Come everyone, ask them to stop making arms,
to stop making wars break out,
to stop telling lies.

Listen, listen carefully: we are sick,
you are sick;
but we are here.

So, in your name, we children,
we ask them:
"Close your arms factories
and think about taming the winds."

Right-wing politics matter little to us,
we are children.

Left-wing politics matter little to us.

Our life is essentially affection
But, through your fault,
a veil of dust lies over it.

– Leila Ibrahim Semaan



16.2 LET US UNDERSTAND THE TEXT

16.2.1 PART 1

Who are you deceiving.....spoken by adults.

Can you hear the cry of helplessness of the child, who speaks for all the children of the world, to grown-ups who have created destructive weapons? The child says that the children will have no future if the adults continue to produce deadly weapons. Arms and ammunition put humanity in serious danger. The poem talks of the fears and worries to which the adults pay no attention or which they simply dismiss with their lies. Can you guess the lies? The lies are usually – “No, we will not use arms against anyone. The world is safe. There is no need to worry.” The child desperately repeats that the grown-ups must stop destroying the world but he finds that they don’t listen to him. The problem is that only the adults can build a better world, but it is the adults who are destroying it. It does not make much difference when the children speak of peace, friendship and fellowship. It is the adults who should understand the importance of peace and friendship in the world.

In this unit the child is pleading to the grown ups. Mark the use of pronouns. The poet refers to people only by pronouns. For clear comprehension, you need to know who the pronoun is referring to in each stanza.

I stanza

You - adults

II stanza

You - children of the world

our - children including the child who is speaking

III stanza

them - adults and arm makers

The child knows the truth and tells the truth, whereas the adults know the truth but hide it with their lies.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.1

1. Why does the child want to speak to grown-ups about the arms factories?
2. Who are the adults deceiving?
3. Why does the child feel helpless?



Notes

4. Who does the child call 'my friends'? Choose the correct option from the ones given below:
 - children
 - adults
 - both
5. Why does the child want the adults to talk of peace and fellowship?
6. Why does the child call it a deaf world?



DO YOU KNOW

- The nations that possess nuclear weapons are referred to as the Nuclear Club.
- These nations are the USA, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China.
- The nations that have conducted nuclear tests are India, Pakistan and North Korea.
- Concerned with the safety of the world, the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was signed on March 5, 1970.
- Currently there are 189 nations which have signed the Non Proliferation Treaty.
- By signing the NPT a nation agrees that it will:
 - not transfer nuclear devices or technology to other nations
 - not use nuclear weapons except in response to a nuclear attack
 - use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes only



LET US DO 16.1

The adults know the dangers of arms yet they ignore them. They use arms - smaller arms to settle small disputes within the family, in the neighbourhood. In villages people often wound or kill each other over issues which can be settled amicably. Get together with other boys and girls of your area/village. Invite the adults to a common place for a discussion.

Take care that during the discussion you do not behave like an advisor or preacher of peace. You may politely steer the discussion in the right direction.



16.2.2 PART 2

Enough promises.....a veil of dust lies over it.

The child is tired of waiting for the adults to keep their promises. He wants adults to stop making promises which they do not want to keep. He calls upon everyone—the children and the adults, to join in the protest against arms factories and arms makers. He asks the arms makers to stop producing weapons and to work to stop wars.

In this unit the poet uses the pronouns *them*, *we*, *you*, *your* and *us* to refer to arms makers, all the children including himself, and the adults. In the fourth stanza while talking to the adults, he uses ‘*them*’ instead of ‘*you*’ to separate the arms makers from other grown-ups who feel like him. In the last stanza the child talks directly to the arms makers and addresses them as ‘*you*’.

In the first unit we see the child pleading but in the second unit we find him talking to the arms makers directly. Is the poet suggesting that when pleading does not help we should take upon ourselves the responsibility of asserting what is right?

The poet says that the children are not interested in any politics or any party because politics divides people, creates hatred and leads to wars and destruction.

You have seen that the poet is using the same pronoun for different people in different lines.

There is a continuous shift in reference points of pronouns. For example:

In the fourth line *You* is for adults.

In the fifth line *You* is used for children.

Why does he do so?

It is to make you feel the presence of other characters in the poem, although it is only the child who speaks throughout when the child uses the pronoun *You*, for other children, adults and arm makers, we feel as if he is turning and talking to each of them.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.2

Pick out the lines that show that the child is desperate for a change.

1. State the three things that the child wants everyone to stop doing.
2. Who are ‘*we*’ and ‘*you*’ in ‘we are sick, you are sick’?
3. What is the essential need of the child?
4. Who does the child hold responsible for depriving him of this essential need?



Notes

16.3 APPRECIATION

When you read this poem, do you miss the usual rhyme and jingle of a poem?

The lines in this poem do not end in similar sounds. The sound at the end of each line is different from the sound at the end of other lines.

This is so because the poem is in blank verse.

Blank verse or a poem written in blank verse consists of unrhymed lines but it has a singular pattern of movement. It has a regular rhythm of its own.



DO YOU KNOW

In the Peace Park of Hiroshima, one of the cities which suffered a nuclear attack in 1945, there stands a statue of a little girl holding a golden crane with the inscription...

“This is our cry. This is our prayer. Peace on Earth.”

The statue was inspired by Sadako Sasaki, who was two years old when Hiroshima was bombed. When Sadako was twelve she got leukaemia, also known as the ‘atom bomb disease’. Sadako’s friends reminded her of a Japanese belief that if she folded ten thousand paper cranes, she might live. Sadako died before she could complete the task. Her friends raised money to build a memorial for all the children who had died due to the atomic attack.



LET US DO 16.1

Form a club. Prepare and perform in your area/village a *Nukkad Natak* about how nuclear weapons are a threat to humanity



16.4 LET US LEARN GRAMMAR

Adverbs

Read the sentences given below:

Listen, listen carefully.

Life is essentially affection.

My Only Cry



Notes

The words ‘carefully’ and ‘essentially’ are adverbs. An adverb is used to describe a verb, an adjective or an adverb.

Adverbs generally end in ‘ly’ but all words ending in ‘ly’ are not adverbs. For example, words like *lonely* and *friendly* end in ‘ly’ but are not adverbs. They are adjectives.

Some adverbs have no particular form. Look at the examples:

well, fast, very, never, always, often, still

Like other words adverbs also have their antonyms. These are called adverbial antonyms. For example the antonym of the adverb ‘carefully’ is ‘carelessly’.

Exercise

1. Fill in the blanks with the adverbial antonyms of the words given in brackets.

- _____ he lost his baggage on the flight. (fortunately)
- Tourists _____ visit the Taj Mahal in Agra. (seldom)
- One should _____ be true to one’s word. (sometimes)
- The soldiers fought _____ for their country. (fearfully)
- The boy who was running _____ won the race. (slowly)

2. Replace the underlined adverbs with their antonyms in the sentences given below without changing the meaning and the tense of the sentences. One sentence is done as an example.

- *If you do not work willingly, you can not succeed.*

If you work unwillingly, you cannot succeed.

- Seema did not accept the job happily.
- The child did not break the window intentionally.
- We should not speak impolitely .
- My friend is not well.
- You should never use bad construction material to build your house.



A. Write a formal letter of appeal to the Prime Minister asking him to ensure that nuclear energy is used for constructive and peaceful purposes in the country.

Hint: When you write an appeal you should keep the following points in mind:

- clearly state the issue



Notes

- mention the reasons for your appeal
- make a polite but firm request

Note: Refer to the lessons *A Tiger Comes to Town – II* or *A Prayer for Healing* for tips on how to write a formal letter.

B. All energies, atomic or nuclear are meant to promote better livings why do we use them for destructive purposes? Discuss with your friends and state the reasons in 30-40 words.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

The world is destroying itself by making more and more dangerous weapons. The adults disregard their responsibility to save the world and keep it secure for future. The frequent appeals of peace-loving people to stop the race for destructive nuclear power have fallen on deaf ears. It is time to stop believing that the possession of destructive weapons makes us safe. Weapons kill. Weapons destroy. Weapons have the potential to destroy everyone including those who make them. Energy should be harnessed for peaceful purposes to promote human welfare.



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

I Answer the following questions:

1. How is the world of children different from the world of adults? State in about 50 words.
2. What do you think the poet means by the given phrases? Choose the correct answers:
 - (a) 'think about taming the winds' means——
 - check the storms which cause damage/war.
 - subdue and control natural calamities.
 - use wind for energy.
 - (b) 'through your fault' means——
 - the fault of all adults
 - the fault of arm makers
 - the fault of right and left wing people
 - (c) 'a veil of dust lies over it' means——
 - our life is under the dust left by gun powder and other explosives.

My Only Cry

- our lives are under the threat of weapons.
- our lives are buried under dust and dirt

- Who can build a better world?
- State in about 50-60 words the theme of the poem. How is it relevant in the modern world today?
- Read the poem once again and answer questions about the following points:
 - is there a rhyme scheme in the poem?
 - do all the stanzas have the same number of lines?
 - are all lines equal in length?
 - do all the stanzas have a similar pattern of long and short lines?

Based on your answers to the above questions, state in a few lines your observations about blank verse.

- Why has the poet chosen a child to voice his concerns?



ANSWERS

16.2.1 PART 1

INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.1

- The child wants to speak to grown-ups because the grown ups are building arms which threaten the world, and only the grown ups can bring about a change in the world.
- The adults think that they are deceiving children but actually they are deceiving themselves.
- The child feels helpless because children alone cannot change the situation. They need the help of adults, but the adults do not realize that they are destroying the world by making arms. Instead they deceive the children and themselves with lies.
- The child calls other children 'my friends'.
- The child wants the adults to speak about and discuss peace and fellowship so that they may understand how important these ideas are for the world.
- The child calls it a deaf world because it doesn't hear his cries.



Notes



Notes

16.2.1 PART 2**INTEXT QUESTION 16.2**

1. The child wants everyone to:
 - stop making arms
 - stop making wars break out
 - stop telling lies
2. *We* means children and *you* is used for adults.
3. A world in which there is peace, love and friendship is the essential need of the child.
4. The child holds the adults responsible for depriving him of his essential needs.

16.4 LET US LEARN GRAMMAR

1. a. Unfortunately
b. often
c. always
d. fearlessly
e. fast
2. a. Seema accepted the job unhappily.
b. The child broke the window unintentionally.
c. We should speak politely.
d. My friend is unwell.
e. You should always use good construction material to build your house.

TERMINAL QUESTIONS

- I 1. Individual responses.

Suggested response: The world of children is a world of love and innocence. Children do not tell lies. They are not involved in political rivalries. They want love and affection. They want peace in the world. In times of peace the world is safe for everyone. In times of peace we can work to make the world better for children. Adults tell lies and make war to acquire power over others. For adults peace and friendship are words which can be used to hide and cover up their destructive activities.

- 2 (a) subdue and control natural calamities
(b) the fault of all adults



(c) our lives are under the threat of weapons

3. The adults can build a better world
4. Individual responses

Suggested response: The poem focuses on the dire consequences of developing destructive weapons. Weapons can eliminate life. Weapons can destroy the world. Weapons lead to war and war is made by adults. Adults should stop making weapons and war. They should make the world a happy, safe and peaceful place for children.

The poem is very relevant in the contemporary context. Today many countries possess nuclear weapons which have huge destructive potential. The poem is a reminder to the world to stop the production of destructive weapons.

5. The poem is in blank verse. The lines do not rhyme at the end. The number of lines in each stanza varies. All the lines are not equal in length. There is no uniform pattern of long and short lines in the various stanzas.

Individual responses.

Suggested response: In blank verse the poet has the freedom to vary the number and the length of lines according to the need of the thought of the poem. There is a rhythm in the poem which makes the movement of the thought easy and effortless.

6. The answer could include the following points:
 - the child is innocent
 - the child can speak the truth
 - the child is the future