

## Telephone Conversation-Wole Soyinka

Wole Soyinka is a famous Nigerian writer. He is the first African to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986.

The poem **Telephone Conversation** was published in 1963 as part of the collection **Modern Poetry from Africa**. It recounts a conversation between a West African man and a British landlady who is offering a room for rent. The speaker is aware of racial discrimination and reveals his identity to the woman. Soon after the speaker reveals his racial identity, the landlady changes her attitude towards him. When he tells her he is black, she asks him how dark he is, using phrases like "light" or "very dark."

The speaker tries to explain his skin colour by comparing it to different shades of chocolate, but the woman doesn't understand. She asks him to clarify, and he tells her his skin colour is West African Sepia. The conversation becomes more and more ridiculous as the speaker tries to persuade the woman to see him in person. She eventually disconnects the phone.

The poem explores the themes of racial identity, discrimination, and the foolish mindset of judging someone's worth solely based on their skin colour. The poem uses sarcasm and irony to highlight the absurdity of racial discrimination. The speaker emphasizes how ridiculous the landlady's questions are and challenges her biases.

The tone of the poem is marked by sarcasm, irony, frustration, and anger. The conversational style makes the poem relatable and engaging. Soyinka effectively uses imagery and metaphor, such as references to "chocolate," "peroxide blonde," and "raven black," for the poem's impact.

**Telephone Conversation** is a strong message about racism and the importance of seeing people for more than just their skin colour. Soyinka uses this poem to encourage readers to recognize their own prejudices and appreciate the diversity of humanity.

## Ulysses-Tennyson

Alfred, Lord Tennyson's poem **Ulysses**, written in 1833 and published in 1842, is a dramatic monologue. It is based on the legendary Greek warrior Ulysses. Ulysses is the king of Ithaca, a barren, rocky island. He has returned to his kingdom after fighting in the Trojan War.

Ulysses expresses his dissatisfaction with the everyday responsibilities of ruling his kingdom. He feels that being idle and inactive do not suit him. He recalls his past exploits—both the joys and hardships he experienced during his travels and battles. He yearns to travel far and wide to gain experience and knowledge. He declares, "I cannot rest from travel. I will drink life to the lees,".

Ulysses believes that life should be lived to the fullest, experiencing everything, rather than wasting away in old age. According to Ulysses, experience is an arch through which one can glimpse the vast unexplored world. He has travelled and fought alone and with companions, on sea and on land.

Despite his fame and achievements, Ulysses remains unsatisfied, feeling a constant hunger for new knowledge and experiences. He then introduces his son Telemachus, whom he plans to leave in charge of Ithaca. He praises Telemachus for his abilities and responsibilities, stating his confidence that his son will continue to rule wisely after him.

Ulysses urges his men to follow him. They have toiled and achieved together. Old age also brings honour and labour. They must accomplish something before death closes all opportunities. He is confident of facing the challenges ahead. They may reach "The Happy

Isles” and meet Achilles. Though they are no longer strong, they possess heroic hearts and the will “to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”

The poem celebrates Ulysses' unyielding spirit and quest for knowledge. Ulysses resonates as a timeless ode to the indomitable human spirit's drive to seek meaning and transcendence through continuous striving and adventure.

### **The Gift of the Magi-O. Henry**

O. Henry, is a well-known American short story writer. He is famous for his stories with unexpected endings. The Gift of the Magi is a story of love and sacrifice.

Jim and Della, a young couple, live happily in a small flat despite facing financial difficulties. Their love for each other remains unwavering. Della wishes to gift Jim a special Christmas present, but her meagre savings of \$1.87 is insufficient.

Della's long, luscious hair is her most prized possession. She decides to sacrifice it to buy a chain for Jim's cherished gold watch. Without Jim's knowledge, Della sells her hair to buy the chain. Meanwhile, Jim is struggling to find the perfect gift for her and wants to buy a set of beautiful combs for her hair.

Jim sells his watch to buy the combs, while Della sells her hair to buy the chain. On Christmas Eve, they exchange their gifts, only to realize that their sacrifices have rendered the presents useless. The irony of their situation strikes them, and they feel a deep sense of sorrow.

However, they soon realize that their sacrifices were not in vain. Their love for each other is the greatest gift they could have ever given. The story highlights the true spirit of giving and the value of sacrifice in relationships.

The Gift of the Magi is a tale of love, sacrifice, and the true meaning of gift-giving. O. Henry's masterful storytelling captivates readers, reminding us that the greatest gifts are those that come from the heart.s

### **Leisure-W. H. Davies**

William Henry Davies is a Welsh writer. His themes revolve around the struggles and hardships of life, the beauty of nature, and his adventures as a homeless person. The poem Leisure was first published in his 1911 collection Songs of Joy and Others.

Leisure is a beautiful poem about the busy nature of modern life. Davies advises us to slow down, relax, and enjoy the world around us. He asserts that if we don't make time to appreciate life, it becomes meaningless. Davies is worried that people are too busy and anxious, causing them to miss out on the beauty of life. He says that life is not just about rushing around but about taking time to enjoy the simple things.

The poem begins with a question: "What is this life if, full of care, / We have no time to stand and stare?" The poet says that people are so busy that they don't even take time to appreciate the beauty of nature. He compares the busy lives of humans with the leisurely lives of sheep and cows. He explains how animals like sheep and cows have the luxury of taking their time to enjoy nature, while we humans are too caught up in our busy lives to do the same.

The poet points out the beautiful things people miss in their busy routine lives. They miss the sunlight shining on the stream, making it look like a starry night sky. They also miss small things, such as squirrels collecting nuts for winter.

Davies personifies beauty as a dancing woman. He laments the lack of time to turn and watch Beauty's glance or wait for a smile to fully blossom. He reminds readers that true happiness comes from taking the time to enjoy life, not from being busy all the time. He tells

us that a life without leisure is a life without joy and that we should make time to appreciate the world around us.

The poem **Leisure** encourages us to slow down, appreciate nature, and enjoy the simple pleasures of life. It is a reminder to take a break from our busy lives and enjoy the beauty that is all around us.

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