

KRISHNAGAR ACADEMY

SUBJECT- ENGLISH II

CLASS - VIII

22/6/2020

Dear Students,

Here is a poem for you,

The Cold Within by,

James Patrick Kinney.

Read the poem along
with the stanza wise
explanation.

In the next class question
answers will be provided.

Stay Home Stay Safe.

Thank You

James Patrick Kinney

James Patrick Kinney is an American poet who wrote this poem in the 1960s. Although it was first rejected as being too controversial, it gained popularity rapidly after it had been read out at a council meeting of all religions.

The poem describes the tragic death of a group of six who stand around a fire - each holding on grimly to a log of wood. Allowing their selfishness, prejudice, malice and suspicions to dictate their actions, they refuse to share the log to fuel the dying fire and keep each other warm. Eventually, the fire dies out and in the morning all six of them are found frozen to death, each clutching, even in death, a log that could have so easily saved their lives if only they had overcome the petty barriers of class, race and religion that divided them.

The poem is a simple yet powerful reminder that if we selfishly hold on to the world's resources, and the wealth that it has to offer, if we persist in discriminating on grounds of race, religion, caste, gender and ethnicity, we are all lost!

The Cold Within

—James Patrick Kinney

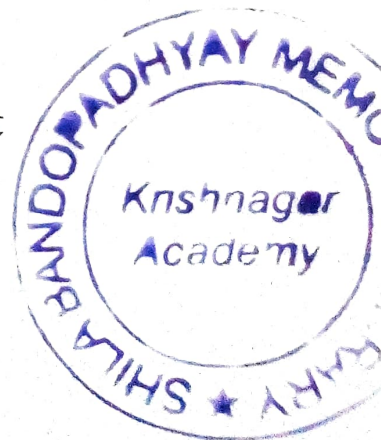
Six humans trapped by happenstance
In bleak and bitter cold.
Each one possessed a stick of wood
Or so the story's told.

Their dying fire in need of logs,
But the first one held hers back,
For, of the faces round the fire,
She noticed one was black.

The next man looking 'cross the way
Saw one not of his church,
And could not bring himself to give
The fire his stick of birch.

The third one sat in tattered clothes.
He gave his coat a hitch.
Why should his log be put to use
To warm the idle rich?

The rich man just sat back and thought
Of the wealth he had in store,
And how to keep what he had earned
From the lazy, shiftless poor.



The black man's face bespoke revenge
As the fire passed from his sight.
For all he saw in his stick of wood
Was a chance to spite the white.

The last man of this forlorn group
Did nought except for gain.
Giving only to those who gave
Was how he played the game.

Their logs held tight in death's still hands
Was proof of human sin.
They did not die from the cold without
They died from the cold within.

THE POEM

Signposts

- Six humans, each possessing a stick of wood, are trapped by chance in biting cold.
- The fire is sinking and is in need of logs to be kept alive.
- Out of a group of six people, a woman on seeing a black man does not give her log.
- The second man on finding that one of them does not belong to his church (religious community), holds back his log.
- The poor man does not put his log to use to prevent the rich man from getting warm.
- The rich man's concern is his wealth and how to keep it safe from the lazy poor man.
- The black man's face is filled with revenge and thus to harm the white does not use his stick of wood.
- The last man is ruled by selfishness and gives only to those who give him in return.
- Their logs held tight in their hands invite death.
- These six people die not of the cold outside but of "the cold within".

The Poem in Detail

Stanza 1

Six humans are trapped together by chance in biting cold. Each one of them has a stick of wood. This forms the setting of the poem and against this background, the story is narrated.

Stanza 2

It is extremely cold and the fire that is keeping them warm is dying. It can be kept alive only if one of them puts his log to use. The first person in the group, a woman is prejudiced when she notices that one of the faces round the fire is black. She therefore, holds her log back.

Stanza 3

Another man looks across the way and finds out that one of them does not belong to the same church (i.e. religious community) as his. This fact stops him from using his stick in the fire.

Stanza 4

The third one is a poor man, who sits in tattered clothes. To protect himself from freezing cold he gives his coat a hitch. He does not use his log to prevent the rich man sitting there from getting warm.

Stanza 5

The rich man, on the other hand, thinks of the wealth he has in store and how to keep it safe from the poor man.

Stanza 6

The black man's face looks revengeful and the only thing visible to him in his stick is a chance to harm the white man.

Stanza 7

The last man of this lonely group does nothing except something for his benefit. What rules him is selfishness. He gives only to those who give him something back in return.

Stanza 8

Their logs being held tight in their hands invite death. It is nothing but a proof of human sin. The poem ends with a note that these six people die not from the freezing cold outside but of the cold within them.