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Class 11 English (Hornbill) Notes

FATHER TO SON



Key Notes and Important Questions with Answers

Poem -5

Father to Son

- By Elizabeth Jennings

'Father to Son' describes the troubled relationship between a father and his son. The poem talks about generation-gap between the father and the son and voices the father's pain and helplessness in failing to understand his child. The father wants the same kind of bond with his son as he had when the son was a little child. But now, silence is what surrounds their relationship and there is a complete lack of communication between them. Though they have lived in the same house for years, they behave as strangers. The father sees his son as the 'the prodigal son' who would soon return to his father's house which was once his very own. The father is unable to understand why in his grief he becomes angry with his son. As there is still love between both of them, they try to find out a way to resolve their differences but that seems futile. Elizabeth Jennings says that fathers and sons all over the world should learn to live on the same globe and same land. The poem talks about the universal problem - lack of communication and understanding.

Very Short Answer Questions

Read the extracts given below and answer the questions that follow:

1. I do not understand this child
Though we have lived together now
In the same house for years. I know
Nothing of him, so try to build
Up a relationship from how
He was when small
- Questions:
 - a. Name the poem and the poet
 - b. Explain 'I know nothing of him'.
 - c. How does the father 'try to build a relationship'?
2. Yet have I killed
The seed I spent or sown it where
The land is his and none of mine?
We speak like strangers, there's no sign

Of understanding in the air—

- a. Who does I stand for?
 - b. What do the words 'seed' and 'land' stand for?
 - c. Why do they speak like strangers?
3. Silence surrounds us.
- I would have Him prodigal, returning to
His father's house, the home he knew,
Rather than see him make and move
His world. I would forgive him too,
Shaping from sorrow a new love.
- a. Explain 'silence surrounds us'.
 - b. What is meant by, 'I would have him prodigal'?
 - c. How would the father shape a new love from sorrow?

Short Answer Questions

Answer the following questions in not more than 30-40 words.

1. What kind of relationship exists between father and his son?
2. What does father mean when he says 'We speak like strangers'?
3. Why does the father say 'Silence surrounds us'?
4. Explain 'This child is built to my design, yet what he loves I cannot share'.
5. Why does the father think that he has killed the seed that he spent?
6. How is the father's helplessness brought out in the poem?
7. Give reasons for the failure of the father-son relationship.
8. The father wishes to rebuild a cordial relationship with the son. Why doesn't he succeed in doing so? (Hint- Does not walk his talk)
9. Who do you think is responsible for the deterioration in the relationship - the father or the son? Give reasons for your answer.
10. The poem is a commentary on generation gap. Do you agree with the statement? Support your answer.
11. How does the father feel about his separation from the son?
12. Bring out the pathos in the last stanza of the poem.