Class : 11th

Subject : English

Chapter : 9

Chapter Name : Refugee Blues

Q1 The title, ‘Refugee Blues’ encapsulates the theme of the poem. Comment.

Answer. The poem highlights the lost and horrible state of German Jewish people who had to leave their homes and seek refuge in other countries due to the rise of Hitler and Nazism. The strict laws deprived them of their right to live, holocaust, concentration camps. Blues in the title refers to the musical genre that originated at the end of the 19th century and has a sad, melancholic tone, which is the tone of this poem. They sing of their agony and pain.

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Q2 What is the poetic technique used by the poet to convey the plaintive theme of the poem?

Answer. The technique used by the poet is a mix of blues and ballad . Auden had mixed the two together to bring out the main political situation which was prevalent at the time, and which showed the pathetic condition of Jewish refugees who were homeless and lived in constant fear of death. The first two lines of every stanza rhyme and the third line is repetitive represents the style of blues lyrics. The use of refrain is used to bring about the realization of the harsh truth of the narrator's and his lover's plight.

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Q3 What do the references to the birds and animals made in the poem suggest?

Answer. The references to the birds in the woods and fish in the waters suggest that they have the freedom to live on their own without the fear. Even the dogs and cats are kept safe and warm and cars are equally taken care of as they are not jews. The order of mass killing by Hitler made jews fearful of Nazis and greater masses were transferred to a concentration camp.

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Q4 How does the poet juxtapose the human condition with the behaviour of the political class?

Answer. The setting of the poem is in the city of refuges like the narrator and his lover they are thrown out of their house just because they are jews. They are considered misfits for society just because Hitler has ordered that. This attacked across Europe and in the minds of the petrified Jews who are then treated miserably by Europe. They are constantly threatened and their fate is left at the hands of the non-Jews.

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Q5 How is the essence of the poem captured in the lines ‘two tickets to Happiness’?

Answer. The narrator and his lover are homeless now and they have no place to stay. They grieve over their loss of home and their identity. The line shows hope that jews can still run away from killings to a better future. But tickets are overprized and train compartments are full leaving no space. Nazi soldiers are hunting down jews on Hitler's order.

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