

Short

ULYSSES - Lord Alfred Tennyson

Q.1 What is the Source of the poem 'Ulysses'?

→ The source of the poem Ulysses can be traced in the 26th canto of Dante's "Inferno". Tennyson of Dante in his poem Ulysses, the spirit and the sentiment of Dante in his poem Ulysses.

② What is the central idea of the poem 'Ulysses'?

→ The central idea of the poem Ulysses is that knowledge is infinite and endless. Though in one short span of human life it is rather impossible to pursue complete knowledge, still man should try to attain as much knowledge and experience through various activities without sitting idle. And old age is not meant for retirement, but for some useful and honourable achievements.

③ What is Tennyson's attitude to life as implied in the poem 'Ulysses'?

→ Tennyson, in the poem Ulysses, expresses the view that life is meant for adventurous work. To him a life of indolence is no more than that. So a life of rest from all toils is not desirable. To him life is a long adventurous journey from the known to the unknown. Every moment of life should be spent in search of new experiences.

④ Who is Ulysses? What idea does he represent in the poem Ulysses?

→ Ulysses is the Roman name of the legendary Greek hero Odysseus. He is the hero of Homer's great epic Odyssey. He was the king of Ithaca, a rocky island in the Ionian Sea of Greece. He was the most eloquent and sagacious of the Greek heroes who took part in the Trojan War. Ulysses represents the spirit of adventure and the eternal quest for knowledge.

⑤ "I am become a name" — Explain.

→ By the word "I am become a name"

Ulysses means to say that he has become famous for his extensive travels over land and sea.

⑥ "Yet all experience is an arch where thro' gleams the untravelled world whose margin fades forever and forever when I move" —

Write the significance of the lines.

→ In the quoted lines experience is compared to an arch. As we can have a distant view through an arch, for Ulysses every experience serves as an arch through which he sees the land and sea yet to be explored. A comparison with a ship-journey across the sea is implied here. As the ship moves towards the horizon, the horizon keeps shifting further and further; similarly every experience begets another experience. Thus his desire for knowledge enhances and allures him.

⑦ "To rust unburnished, not to shine in use" — Who said this and where? What is the significance of the line?

→ Ulysses, the legendary Roman hero, says this in Tennyson's poem Ulysses.

Ulysses had a passion for seeing the unseen and knowing the unknown. To him life of rest and repose is detestable. After his long voyage he returns home. But he is fed up with the lazy and his surely life of a king. He points out that a sword will lose its shine and sharpen if it is kept in sheath for a long time. Similarly if a man remains idle his mental abilities will decline.

⑧ "He works his work, of mine"

— who are the persons concerned? How are they different from one another?

→ The persons concerned are Ulysses and his son Telemachus.

They are vastly different in their temperaments and their attitudes to life. Ulysses is a restless soul who does not like the calm and peaceful duties of life, but is inclined to move forward in search of new knowledge and experience.

Telemachus, on the other hand, is tame, peace loving soul. He is prudent, blameless young-man who is fit to rule the people of Ithaca. He is affectionate, dutiful and has due regard for the household gods. He is ideally suited for maintaining a royal household and ruling a kingdom.

⑨ Do you consider Ulysses as a dramatic monologue?

⇒ Yes, I consider Ulysses as a typical dramatic monologue, where there is the presence of another speaker other than the poet himself, namely Ulysses. The poem begins in a moment of crisis in the speaker's mind. Here the crisis is that Ulysses is living in Ithaca, but spiritually dying there due to lack of action. There is the presence of the audience here, the mariners and a

⑩ "For always roaming with a hungry heart"

Much have I seen and known" — what is meant by "hungry heart"? What has the speaker seen and known?

⇒ A hungry heart refers to Ulysses's insatiable thirst for adventure and his unending quest for knowledge.

→

Ulysses has roamed about extensively over land and seas. He has seen many towns and known the manners, customs, elements and governments of different countries. He has taken part in the famous Trojan War with his fellow warrior.

⑪ "Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
veined the dim sea" — What is Hyades?

→ Hyades is a group of seven stars whose rising and setting indicated storm and rain. Hence when they appeared in the sky, the sea was agitated by a violent storm.

⑫ "It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles
And see the great Achilles" — What is 'Happy Isles'? Who was Achilles?

→ The 'Happy Isles' are called the fortunate Isles or the Isles of the Blessed. These were pictured in Greek mythology as regions of perpetual peace and dazzling sunshine, situated in the Western Ocean beyond the straits of Gibraltar. The Greeks supposed them as Elysium where the souls of the heroes and pious dead enjoyed eternal rest and happiness.

Achilles was the greatest and most famous of the Greek heroes who took part in the Trojan War. He killed Hector, the leader of the Trojan forces and was himself slain before Troy was taken.

⑬ "I can not rest from travel" — Explain the remark.

→ Ulysses, the symbol of indomitable spirit, represents adventurous and quest for infinite knowledge. The contentment of domestic life makes him perturbed. So he hates a life of ease and slumber. He aspires to accomplish some noble deeds before his last breath. Even after spending long twenty years of battle life and sea-adventures, he is not tired of travelling. He ardently craves for new voyages.