

## **CLASS XII | FLAMINGO**

### **POEM: A ROADSIDE STAND**

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#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Robert Lee Frost (1874-1963), born in San Francisco, California, lived a life of contrasts. His father, William Prescott Frost Jr., died of tuberculosis when he was just 11, leaving a paltry eight dollars with the family. His mother died in 1900 of cancer. For most of his life, Frost battled with mental depression. Perhaps, this problem ran in the family. Frost had to take care of his younger sister who, too, battled depression. It is saddening to note that his wife, Elinor Miriam White also suffered bouts of depression. Despite such a scourge that blighted Frost, he rose to be the literary and cultural icon of America, winning prizes and accolades in plenty. He won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for Literature four times, and was made Poet Laureate of Vermont. He also won the American Academy of Art and Letters Gold Medal.

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#### **SUMMARY**

Roadside Stand summary deals with the lives of poor deprived people. Furthermore, the poet contrasts the struggling lives of the countryside people with the insensitive life of the city dwellers. The city dwellers don't even bother to ponder on the harsh condition of the roadside stand people. The city dwellers don't think about the struggles these roadside people have to go through in order to sell their goodies. These poor people have nothing to do except wait for the passing cars to stop and purchase their products. If at all a car stops by, it is to know about directions or to make complain about something. The poet deeply sympathises with these impoverished people and feels compassion for them. This sympathy is evident in the portrayal of the roadside sheds in a poignant manner.

There has been an extension of the shed in front by the occupants of the little old house. Furthermore, this extension is around the edge of the road where the passage of traffic takes place. It seems like the shack-owners want to implore the passers-by to purchase something from the shack. These deprived people have a huge desire for the currency.

Unfortunately, the traffic goes past ignoring the shack. If by chance the traffic does stop, it would come with a feeling of disappointment. They are very disturbed to see the poor unattractive signboards. There is an offer of wild berries shack for sale in a wooden quart (a quarter of a gallon). This place offers a peaceful natural stay for those who can afford it. The poet becomes angry at this attitude of the 'polished traffic' and asks them to move ahead.

The poet shows more concern for the sadness of the shed-owners than he does for the landscape blemish. He believes that these people have a longing to handle some city money. This money can reduce their suffering as one can see in movies. The political party that enjoys power is the one that deprives them of a happy life.

The poet makes mention of the news which points out the relocation of the poor villagers to the vicinity of shops and theatres. There were big promises to ensure good care for them. However, the government authorities became negligent of these promises. Furthermore, the poet is angry at this behavior and calls them “greedy good-doers”. He calls them “beasts of prey” who indulge in the exploitation of the poor villagers.

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## **WORDS/PHRASES AND THEIR CONTEXTUAL MEANINGS**

A dole of bread: money or food given in charity at regular intervals

Marred: spoiled

Greedy good doers: the people who help others for their own benefit

Selfish cars: people who travel by cars and do not purchase anything from farmers

The voice of the country: people as a whole

Come back into the sane: become aware

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## **POETIC DEVICES**

Transferred epithet –1)polished traffic (the traffic is not polished, people are polished)  
2)Selfish cars

Metaphor/ figurative speech-1) the flower of cities from sinking and withering faint;  
2) Swarm over their lives  
3) Teaching them to sleep they sleep all day

Oxymoron and Alliteration - Greedy good doers; beneficent beasts of prey  
Personification:

Alliteration: A roadside stand that too pathetically pled(also alliteration)

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## **QUESTION ANSWER ncert**

1. The city folk who drove through the countryside hardly paid any heed to the roadside stand or to the people who ran it. If at all they did, it was to complain. Which lines bring this out? What was their complain about?

Ans: The lines that reflect the above meaning are as follows:

"The polished traffic passed with a mind ahead,  
Or if ever aside a moment, then out of sorts  
At having the landscape marred with the artless paint  
Of signs that with N turned wrong and S turned wrong"

The people from the city who pass by complain that the roadside stands put up by the people are pathetic and artless which are ruining the beautiful scenery of the landscape.

2. What was the plea of the folk who had put up the roadside stand ?

Ans. The folk that had put up the roadside stand was poor and was living in pathetic condition. The folk had put up the stand in hope of getting some city money from the passersby. So, the plea was for some city money.

3. The government and other social service agencies appear to help the poor rural people, but actually do them no good. Pick out the words and phrases that the poet uses to show their double standards?

Ans : The words and phrases used by the poet to show their double standard are: "greedy good-doers", "beneficent beasts of prey" , "swarm over their lives", "soothe them out of their wits"

4. What is the 'childish longing' that the poet refers to ? Why is it in 'vain' ?

Ans: The "childish longing" the poet is referring to is the poor rural people's hopes and desires to earn some cash from the passersby.

It is in vain because although they wait for the passersby to halt and buy from their roadside stand, their speeding car never stops to make any purchase. They speed off without paying any heed to the stands.

5. Which lines tell us about the insufferable pain that the poet feels at the thought of the plight of the rural people?

Ans: The lines from the poem which tell us the poet's insufferable pain that he feels at the thought of the plight of the rural people are as follows:

"Sometimes I feel myself I can hardly bear  
The thought of so much childish longing in vain,  
The sadness that lurks near the open window there,  
That waits all day in almost open prayer"

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## Short answer type questions

1. Who are referred to as the 'flower of cities' ?

Ans : The pleasures of the cities are referred to as the "flower of cities".

2. What are being sold in that roadside stand ?

Ans: Wild berries and crook-necked golden squash with silver warts and similar other products are being sold in that roadside stand.

3. Why do the people running the roadside stand ask for some city money ?

Ans. The people running the roadside stand are poor and they desire a prosperous life like that of the city dwellers shown in movies. They knew that only through money they can experience the pleasures of life so that is why they ask for some city money.

4. Who has betrayed the rural people and how?

Ans: The rich and the powerful people are the ones that betrayed the rural people. They disguised themselves as their messiah who will protect them from all miseries but instead they loot them and make them dependent on their mercy for all basic things required to sustain life. They did nothing so as to make their lives a little better filled with happiness.

5. Why do the people wait all day long for?

Ans: The rural people wait all day long expecting customers that passes by in speeding cars to halt and come to their open window of their houses to buy products from them. But they really never stop to buy anything.

6. What will be of great relief to the poet?

Ans: The pain and suffering of the poor people melts the poet's heart. He could hardly bear it sometimes so he feels that death will ultimately take away all their sufferings. If they cease to exist, it will bring the poet a great relief.

7. "The little old house was out with a little new shed.." What does the poet mean by the phrase "old house was out with..."?

Ans. The phrase "old house was with ..." is used by the poet to express the yearning of the poor people to earn money by putting up the roadside stand.