

The Heart of the Tree

—Henry Cuyler Bunner

What does he plant who plants a tree?

He plants a friend of sun and sky;

He plants the flag of breezes free;

The shaft of beauty, towering high;

He plants a home to heaven anigh;

For song and mother-croon of bird

In hushed and happy twilight heard--

The treble of heaven's harmony--

These things he plants who plants a tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree?

He plants cool shade and tender rain,

And seed and bud of days to be,

And years that fade and flush again;

He plants the glory of the plain

He plants the forest's heritage;

The harvest of a coming age;

The joy that unborn eyes shall see--

These things he plants who plants a tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree?

He plants, in sap and leaf and wood,

In love of home and loyalty

And far-cast thought of civic good--

His blessings on the neighborhood
Who in the hollow of His hand
Holds all the growth of all our land--
A nation's growth from sea to sea
Stirs in his heart who plants a tree.

The soft song the mother
Wind gives to be crown

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!

o unpleasant

The Cold Within

—James Patrick Kinney

Six humans trapped by happenstance *By chance*
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.

Signo

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. *hem*

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.

Sarojini Naidu

Sarojini Naidu was called The Nightingale of India by Mahatma Gandhi because of the colour, imagery and lyrical quality of her poetry.

'The Bangle Sellers' is a fine example of her musical verse. The poem is the song of the men who sell glass bangles at village fairs and in temple towns. The different coloured bangles symbolise the different stages in a woman's life as a young maiden, a bride, as a middle aged matron and as an older woman.

Listen carefully to the music of the poem as you read it aloud. Look for the different colours of the glass bangles and see how well they are suited to the stage in the woman's life.

Sarojini Naidu was an important presence in the Freedom Struggle and worked alongside Gandhiji. Her birthday is celebrated as Women's Day to recognise the powerful voices of Women in India's history.

The Bangle Sellers

— Sarojini Naidu

Bangle sellers are we who bear
Our shining loads to the temple fair...
Who will buy these delicate, bright
Rainbow-tinted circles of light?
Lustrous tokens of radiant lives,
For happy daughters and happy wives.

Some are meet for a maiden's wrist,
Silver and blue as the mountain mist,
Some are flushed like the buds that dream
On the tranquil brow of a woodland stream,
Some are aglow with the bloom that cleaves
To the limpid glory of new born leaves.

Some are like fields of sunlit corn,
Meet for a bride on her bridal morn,
Some, like the flame of her marriage fire,
Or, rich with the hue of her heart's desire,
Tinkling, luminous, tender, and clear,
Like her bridal laughter and bridal tear.

Some are purple and gold flecked grey
For she who has journeyed through life midway,
Whose hands have cherished, whose love has blest,

And cradled fair sons on her faithful breast,
And serves her household in fruitful pride,
And worships the gods at her husband's side.

Robert Southey

Robert Southey was an English Romantic poet. He was the first Romantic poet in England. He wrote this poem in 1798 about a battle that took place in Elmhurst, a village in southern Germany in 1704.

It is an anti-war poem that sharply criticises the destruction and death caused by war. The poet uses the simple narrative of a grandfather explaining to his two grand-children his own suffering and the suffering of many others like him who were victims of the battle. The grandfather cannot give any good reason for war and can only repeat that it was a famous victory. Obviously, this was the propaganda that was indoctrinated in the common people.

The poet wants to emphasise through the repetition of the lines that war is senseless, futile and evil. This poem was written in 1798, a year when there was no real winner. There is a perspective given that remains relevant today. Famous quote: "The poet is a man who has seen the world and has not been broken by it."

Robert Southey

Robert Southey was an English Romantic Poet. He was the Poet Laureate (Court Poet) of his time. He wrote this poem in 1796 about a battle that took place in Blenheim, a village in Southern Germany in 1704.

It is an anti-war poem that sharply criticises the destruction and death caused by war. The poet uses the simple narrative of a grandfather explaining to his two grandchildren his own suffering and the suffering of many others like him who were victims of the battle. The grandfather cannot give any good reason for war and can only repeat that "it was a famous victory." Obviously, this was the propaganda that was indoctrinated in the common people.

The poet wants to emphasise through the repetition of the lines that wars are senseless, futile and evil and that, in war, there are no real winners.

This is a powerful poem that echoes Wilfred Owens' famous quote "the pity of war". This poem is a wake-up call to seek peaceful solutions to all conflicts.

After Blenheim

—Robert Southey

It was a summer evening,
Old Kaspar's work was done,
And he before his cottage door
Was sitting in the sun,
And by him sported on the green
His little grandchild Wilhelmine.

She saw her brother Peterkin
Roll something large and round,
Which he beside the rivulet
In playing there had found;
He came to ask what he had found,
That was so large, and smooth, and round.

Old Kaspar took it from the boy,
Who stood expectant by;
And then the old man shook his head,
And, with a natural sigh,
"Tis some poor fellow's skull," said he,
'Who fell in the great victory.

'I find them in the garden,
For there's many here about;
And often when I go to plough,
The ploughshare turns them out!

For many thousand men,' said he,
'Were slain in that great victory.'

'Now tell us what 'twas all about,'
Young Peterkin, he cries;
And little Wilhelmine looks up
With wonder-waiting eyes;
'Now tell us all about the war,
And what they fought each other for.'

'It was the English,' Kaspar cried,
'Who put the French to rout;
But what they fought each other for,
I could not well make out;
But everybody said,' quoth he,
'That 'twas a famous victory.'

'My father lived at Blenheim then,
Yon little stream hard by;
They burnt his dwelling to the ground,
And he was forced to fly;
So with his wife and child he fled,
Nor had he where to rest his head.

'With fire and sword the country round
Was wasted far and wide,
And many a childing mother then,
And new-born baby died;
But things like that, you know, must be
At every famous victory.'

'They say it was a shocking sight
After the field was won;
For many thousand bodies here
Lay rotting in the sun;
But things like that, you know, must be
After a famous victory.

'Great praise the Duke of Marlbro' won,
And our good Prince Eugene.'

'Why, 'twas a very wicked thing!'
Said little Wilhelmine.

'Nay... nay... my little girl,' quoth he,
'It was a famous victory.

'And everybody praised the Duke
Who this great fight did win.'

'But what good came of it at last?'
Quoth little Peterkin.

'Why that I cannot tell,' said he,

'But 'twas a famous victory.'

Roald Dahl

Roald Dahl is one of the most prolific of modern writers in English. He was a British novelist, short story writer, poet, screenwriter, fighter pilot and has a large fan following among young readers.

The poem 'Television' takes a comic look at a serious problem among young children today. The poem warns us about the dangers of excessive television watching. He tells us that the T.V. robs the mind of the power of imagination and creativity. Dahl in his characteristic exaggerated style warns that we will become zombies if we keep staring uninterrupted at the television for long hours.

He advises us to read books, for this will enable us to discover deeper levels of joy, find fulfilment in life and open a whole new and exciting world for us.

The most important thing we've learned,
So far as children are concerned,
Is never, NEVER, NEVER let
Them near your television set —
Or better still, just don't install
The idiotic thing at all.

In almost every house we've been,
We've watched them gaping at the screen.

They loll and slop and lounge about,
And stare until their eyes pop out.

(Last week in someone's place we saw

A dozen eyeballs on the floor.)

They sit and stare and stare and sit

Until they're hypnotised by it,

Until they're absolutely drunk

With all that shocking ghastly junk.

Oh yes, we know it keeps them still,

They don't climb out the window sill,

They never fight or kick or punch,

They leave you free to cook the lunch

And wash the dishes in the sink —

But did you ever stop to think,

To wonder just exactly what

This does to your beloved tot?

IT ROTTS THE SENSE IN THE HEAD!

IT KILLS IMAGINATION DEAD!

IT CLOGS AND CLUTTERS UP THE MIND!
IT MAKES A CHILD SO DULL AND BLIND
HE CAN NO LONGER UNDERSTAND
A FANTASY, A FAIRYLAND!
HIS BRAIN BECOMES AS SOFT AS CHEESE!
HIS POWERS OF THINKING RUST AND FREEZE!
HE CANNOT THINK – HE ONLY SEES!
'All right!' you'll cry, 'All right!' you'll say,
'But if we take the set away,
What shall we do to entertain
Our darling children? Please explain!
We'll answer this by asking you,
'What used the darling ones to do?
'How used they keep themselves contented
Before this monster was invented?
Have you forgotten? Don't you know?
We'll say it very loud and slow:
THEY ... USED ... TO ... READ! They'd READ and READ,
AND READ and READ, and then proceed
To READ some more. Great Scott! Gadzooks!
One half their lives was reading books!
The nursery shelves held books galore!
Books cluttered up the nursery floor!
And in the bedroom, by the bed,
More books were waiting to be read!
Such wondrous, fine, fantastic tales
Of dragons, gypsies, queens, and whales
And treasure isles, and distant shores

Where smugglers rowed with muffled oars,
And pirates wearing purple pants,
And sailing ships and elephants,
And cannibals crouching 'round the pot,
Stirring away at something hot.
(It smells so good, what can it be?
Good gracious, it's Penelope.)
The younger ones had Beatrix Potter
With Mr. Tod, the dirty rotter,
And Squirrel Nutkin, Pigling Bland,
And Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle and-
Just How The Camel Got His Hump,
And How the Monkey Lost His Rump,
And Mr. Toad, and bless my soul,
There's Mr. Rat and Mr. Mole-
Oh, books, what books they used to know,
Those children living long ago!
So please, oh please, we beg, we pray,
Go throw your TV set away,
And in its place you can install
A lovely bookshelf on the wall.
Then fill the shelves with lots of books,
Ignoring all the dirty looks,
The screams and yells, the bites and kicks,
And children hitting you with sticks-
Fear not, because we promise you
That, in about a week or two
Of having nothing else to do,

They'll now begin to feel the need
Of having something to read.
And once they start - oh boy, oh boy!
You watch the slowly growing joy
That fills their hearts. They'll grow so keen
They'll wonder what they'd ever seen
In that ridiculous machine,
That nauseating, foul, unclean,
Repulsive television screen!
And later, each and every kid
Will love you more for what you did.