

Ch 6.2 - Animals

- Walt Whitman

Summary

In the poem 'Animals', the poet has described his will to become an animal because he thinks animals are far better than human beings. Human beings are greedy and full of jealousy against each other. But animals are calm and self-contained. The animals are happy with what they have. They never complain about miseries and sorrows. On the other hand human beings complain about their miseries. They give more importance to the rich and strong people, stay restless because of their wrongdoings and run behind the luxurious things of this world. Whereas animals are honest about their relations and don't give importance to a particular class. They live a life which is full of honesty and less of greed and jealousy.

Central Idea of Poem

In the poem 'Animals', the poet Walt Whitman praises animals for being better than human beings and for possessing all such qualities that humans lack or have forgotten. Those qualities are calmness, the lack of greed and the ability to stay happy and contained among others. The poet wants to live among animals and experience a life where no one complains and where they

are free of sins and sorrows. The most important theme of the poem is not to praise how good animals are, but to compare humans with them in order to highlight the flaws of their nature. The poet believes that probably a very long time ago, humans possessed all these qualities mentioned above, but they have now lost them.

Questions and Answers

1. Notice the use of the word 'turn' in the first line, "I think I could turn and live with animals" What is the poet turning from?

A. The poet is turning away from living in the world of human beings. He finds animals more placid and self-contained and therefore, he wants to live with them.

2. Mention three things that humans do and animals don't?

A. The three things that humans do and animals don't are as follows:

- Humans complain and cry about the miseries and sorrows they face.
- Humans lie awake in the night thinking about their wrongdoings.
- Humans also keep telling others about their righteousness and duties towards God.

Questions

1 I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contained I stand and look at them long and long.

- (a) Name the poem and the poet.
- (b) What does the poet say about animals?
- (c) Trace a word from the extract that means 'Serene'
- (d) The poet looks at the animals.

- A (a) The poem 'Animals' has been written by Walt Whitman.
- (b) The poet says that the animals are placid, self-contained, calm and peaceful.
 - (c) placid
 - (d) long and long.

2. (a) The poet wants to live with animals because of their

(b) The two qualities of the animals mentioned in the passage are

(c) Find the word that means 'serene'

(d) Name the poem and the Poet.

- A (a) peaceful nature
- (b) peaceful and satisfied.
 - (c) placid.
 - (d) The poem 'Animals' has been written by Walt Whitman.

3. a) The word 'turn' in the first line implies.
 b) The poet wishes to live with animals because
 c) Word 'placid' used in the second line means.
 d) Who seem to be self contained?

A a) new directions in life.
 b) they are contended.
 c) peaceful.
 d) Animals.

4. a) They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
 They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
 They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God.

a) Name the poem and poet.
 b) Who does the pronoun 'they' stand for.
 c) Who weep for their sins?
 d) Who does not discuss their duty to God?

A a) The poem is 'Animals' and the poet is Walt Whitman.
 b) Animals
 c) Humans
 d) Animals

5. a) Who are 'they' referred to here?
 b) What do they not do at their condition?
 c) How do they feel for their sins?
 d) Their ~~de~~ duty is towards ...

A a) 'They' refers to 'animals'.
 b) They do not sweat and whine at their condition.
 c) They do not lie awake in dark and weep for their sins
 d) God.

6. They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in their possession I wondered where they got those tokens, Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them?
- What does the poet think about the animals brought him tokens of?
 - Who composed these lines?
 - What does the animals evidently show about the tokens?
 - Which word in the passage refers to 'careless'.
- A
- The recognition of his true self.
 - Walt Whitman.
 - The animals evidently show about the tokens of virtues like their kindness, innocent and self-containment.
 - Negligently.

Short Answer Type Questions.

1. In the first line of the poem, 'I think I could turn and live with the animals', What is the poet turning from?

A The poet Walt Whitman says that he can identify himself better with the animals, for their qualities of serenity and calm composure. So he intends turning towards them, away from his human competitors companions.

2. Do humans kneel to other humans who lived thousands of years ago?

A Yes, many communities of humans follow the practice of worshipping saints and sages, who lived thousands of years ago, who led an exemplary life of high moral

values and therefore reflect the image of 'God Almighty' and are worshipped by generations of humans.

3. Mention three things that humans do and animals don't.
- A Through humans differ from animals in innumerable ways, but this poem highlights some negative traits of humans that animals are free from. Humans are forever fretting and complaining about their circumstances and condition, they get distraught with anxiety to gain material possessions and are ridden with guilt of sinful actions which deprive them of a sound sleep.

4. What are the 'tokens' that the poet says he may have dropped long ago and which the animals have kept for him.

- A Humans and animals have similar basic instincts. While civilisation has changed the man, but the basic instincts are preserved in the animals and help the humans to reconnect to their true self, so man seeks comfort in the company of animals.

Long Answers Type Questions

1. Mention three things that Humans do and Animals do not?
- A The poet Walt Whitman in his poem 'Animals' compares animals to human beings and differentiates between them on the basis of their characteristics. According to the poet's perception animals are ranked much higher than humans. Animals do not complain about

their situation and are much happier than humans. Animals live in natural surroundings, they accept nature. Human beings on the other hand do not ~~support~~ accept nature, i.e., they complain about it and try to change it leading an unhappy life.

3. Do humans kneel to other humans who lived thousands of years ago?
Discuss in groups?

A Yes humans kneel to other humans who lived thousands of years ago. They could be some ancestors, saints or the preachers whom they follow religiously. They worship them and follow their preaching.

4. What are the 'tokens' that the poet says he might have dropped long ago, and which the animals have kept for him?
Discuss this in class.

A The word tokens according to the poet is the good qualities in human beings. The poet feels that nowadays good qualities do not exist in human beings. They have lost them for the sake of worldly things which they want to achieve at any cost.