
UNIT 5: KEY ELEMENTS OF MUSICAL

Structure

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

You are going to be introduced to the novel world of Robert Southey in this unit.

- Robert Southey’s poem “After Blenheim”; and its Historical Background
- It’s Summary, Glossary Critical and Appreciation.
- Robert Southey’s use of poetic Devices.
- Prosody and rhyming scheme contributing to the overall structure of the poem.
- Summing up of our progress, Suggested Reading and Finally
- The Study Questions.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

“After Blenheim,” (1796) also known as “The Battle of Blenheim,” is a poem by Robert Southey who has been conferred the poet laureate of England for his contribution to poetry. The war of Spanish Succession of 1701 -1714 forms the subject matter of the poem. As Charles II did not have a successor, after his death in 1700, Phillip V, King Louis XIV’s grandson, ascended the throne controversially resulting a war between Austria and France; according to the former, the latter has grabbed power with unfair means. The whole of Europe has been dragged into war and the Austrian side, led by England, defeated the France-led side at the Bavarian town of Blenheim in Germany bringing about a turning point in the war. . England’s Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene of Savoy are the two greatest heroes in the battle whom Southey has referred to in the poem.

5.2 ROBERT SOUTHEY: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Robert Southey was a rebel from the very beginning and he had been expelled from Westminster School for his opposition to flogging. He had advocated a radical ideology and along with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, he was pondering over to move to America in favour of a utopian vision. He gave up that idea and considered writing plays and ballads like “Inchcape Rock” and “After Blenheim”. Soon he became a famous writer of verse and an accomplished biographer (*The Life of Nelson*) too. Although Southey as a poet was not a match to his illustrious peers like Wordsworth, his skillful prose writing is beyond doubt as none other than Lord Byron calls it ‘perfect’. His early radical stand was influenced by the writings of Thomas Paine and French Revolution. In 1794, he wrote a ‘dramatic poem’ in three acts about the peasants’ revolution of 1381 entitled *Wat Tyler*. The poem deals with the opposition of peasants against the new tax imposition for meeting expenses of the Crown’s war against France. However, Southey sacrificed his radical stance for name and fame as he became poet laureate of England in 1813.

5.3 THE BACKGROUND TO THE POEM “AFTER BLENHEIM”

Two children seek information about skull from their grandfather in the poem confirming to the ballad form. What follows is the grandfather’s description about the war which brought with it large scale destruction of homes, civilian casualties were rampant, and rotting corpses found all around, pointing to the extent of inhumanity war can come down to. Southey’s main thrust is the common folk who suffer like anything else in a war who disapprove of the cruel and brutal reality that go with it, let alone glorifying it as a heroic act. The grandfather’s repeated recourse to war as “a famous victory” and “a great victory” has no base because he fails to describe as to what exactly is the cause of the war. Breaking out of war has got no meaning for the common people as they do not have even an iota of knowledge about the war or its devastating consequences; they are only concerned with either the victory or the loss.

5.4 TEXT

After Blenheim

*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*

5

*In playing there had found:
He came to ask what he had found
That was so large and smooth and round.*

10

Key Elements of Musical

*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.*

15

*“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.”*

20

*“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.”*

25

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

30

*“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.*

40

*“With fire and sword the country round
Was wasted far and wide,
And many a childing mother then
And newborn baby died:
But things like that, you know, must be
At every famous victory.*

45

*“They say it was a shocking sight
After the field was won,*

50

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*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”—* 55

*“Why ‘twas a very wicked thing!”
Said little Welhelmine;
“Nay—nay, my little girl,” quoth he,
“It was a famous victory.”* 60

*“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.”* 65

5.5 GLOSSARY

1. **Sported:** Played
2. **Green:** Grass field
3. **Rivulet:** Small Stream
4. **Rout:** Defeated, made to flee
5. **Plough share:** the main cutting plate of the plough behind the coulter
6. **Slain:** Killed
7. **Wonder struck:** awestruck, surprised expectant
8. **Quoth:** said
9. **Yon:** (archaic) there, nearby
10. **Dwelling:** house
11. **To fly:** fled
12. **Rest his head:** to take shelter
13. **Childing mother:** Pregnant woman
14. **Something large and round:** Human skull

5.6 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

After Blenheim Stanza-wise Summary

Stanza 1: The first stanza begins with a picturesque description of a summer evening. The poet introduces the main character of the poem; old Kasper had just finished his work for the day and was sitting in the sun before his cottage door, watching his granddaughter Wilhelmine play on the field.

Stanza 2: While playing, Wilhelmine saw her brother Peterkin rolling something “large, smooth and round” which he had found beside the stream. He was curious to know what that thing was and thus turned to his grandfather for information.

Stanza 3: Old Kasper took the “large, and smooth, and round” thing from his grandson’s hands and shook his head with a sigh as he figured that it was some “poor fellow’s skull” who had died in the war. It is ironic that he refers to the battle of Blenheim as a “great victory” at the cost of loss of human lives.

Stanza 4: Kasper goes on to mention that he had found many such skulls while ploughing the land as thousands of soldiers were killed in the victorious war. The dead bodies of these soldiers lie in the fields unnoticed. However, Kasper’s use of the term “great victory” expresses his pride at the sacrifice of the soldiers who played a vital role in the war.

Stanza 5: The children were excited to know more about the war. They were curious to know about the purpose of the war. They had associated a sense of thrill, adventure, and excitement with the idea of war and sacrifice. Little Wilhelmine looked up to her grandfather in anticipation with “wonder-waiting eyes”. In this stanza, the poet attempts to distinguish the kind of curiosity and enthusiasm associated with a child.

Stanza 6: The battle of Blenheim was one of the major battles of the war of Spanish succession in which the English successfully defeated the Franco-Bavarian army. Kasper takes pride in the “great victory” but he is unable to tell his grandchildren the reason behind the war. He did not even try to find the purpose behind it. He just chose to know what others told him regarding the war – that it was a “famous victory”.

Stanza 7: In this stanza, we observe Kasper recollecting the memories of his past. He tells the children that his father used to live at Blenheim. The French soldiers burnt the homes of several innocent people among which was his father’s. This destruction forced the people to leave the village and search for a safer place. Kasper’s father, thus, fled with his wife and young Kasper in search for shelter but he was unable to find a home because of the dreadful war. This rendered their family homeless.

Stanza 8: Stanza eight highlights the horrific aspect of wars. The symbol of “fire” and “sword” embodies the evil spirit of human cruelty and destruction. The image of the death of pregnant mothers and new-born babies heightens the idea of the ruination of human beings caused by none other than men themselves. The idea is to express how thousands of innocent lives are taken in due course of a futile and meaningless war that is sure to bring only damage and destruction. The irony in the poem is made evident by Kasper as he says that these things are meant to happen at every battle where there is a “great victory”.

Stanza 9: The poet, through Kasper, goes on to describe the agony of war. He mentions the “shocking sight” of the battlefield that was full of dead bodies of the soldiers rotting in the sun. Through this image, the poet attempts to bring into consideration the indignity in the way the soldiers lay. They are reduced to a mere status of an inanimate object. There is no

dignity, no glory in war; only misery. Even after such a terrifying aspect of the war, Kasper regards it as a “famous victory” which emphasizes the ignorance of the old man about the purpose and consequence of war.

Stanza 10: Duke of Marlbro was an English General. He was the commander of the British forces in the battle of Blenheim. Prince Eugene and Duke of Marlbro represented Britain in the battle and defeated the French at Blenheim. Kasper sang praises for the men who brought the “famous victory” to the nation. But Wilhelmine, confused at the meaningless praises, exclaims that the war was a “wicked thing”. For the first time in the poem, we see a disapproval of the false glory of war. But, not answering to his granddaughter he does take recourse to repeating same thing again. The war is not a wicked thing for him as it comes with grand success of a “famous victory”.

Stanza 11: In stanza eleven which concludes the poem, Kesper is in full praise for the duke who has won the war for England, their motherland. With the innate nature of a child, young Peterkin asks his grandfather what worth the war has for the successive generations? Unable to satisfy the young mind’s query, all that he says is that it is a famous victory. It points to the poignant irony in the poem as against the grain of loss and devastation; the only thing the old man reiterates is that the war has brought national pride to them.

Analysis

It is an anti-war poem by poet laureate Robert Southey written in the ballad form in 1796. “After Blenheim” better known as “The Battle of Blenheim” where Blenheim is the English equivalent of the German village Blindheim found on the left bank of river Danube in the state of Bavaria in southern Germany.

Southey offers different perspectives on war by actually recounting the aftermath of one of the famous battles of 18th century, the war of Spanish Succession where the coalition of forces led by English Army defeated the French and Bavarian forces at the battle of Blenheim.

Southey maintains a safe distance from taking direct recourse to war, but begins with in the conversational ballad tone where a farmer is talking to his grand children. Gradually the attention of the reader is drawn towards the battle field. Peterkin has found ‘something Targe and round’ knows with the help of his grandfather that it’s a human skull, reminding the tender boy and the reader about the devastating aftermath of war.

Old Kasparov describes the horrible story of the battle and the resultant loss of life. But ironically he never tries to explain what the root cause of the war is or why such a war has broken out? The old man’s vivid description of war where corpses ‘rotting in the sun’ and little Wilhelmine’s firm assertion that war is a ‘wicked thing’, Southey’s spokesperson, the old man Kasparov repeatedly says that the battle is a ‘famous victory’. The reader is repeatedly reminded of the assertion of validating the importance of a war. Of course, later in his career, Southey seems to repudiate the passive acceptance of war as the inevitable happening.

The poem speaks against the inhuman killing as a result of indulging in war. Soldiers are the immediate casualties; innocent civilians are not spared either. The result, out of this gruesome battle, is a misnomer. Many people even do not know what a war actually means. They believe only in a tailor made story to justify the stubborn behaviour of their leaders. The poem attempts to point out the reality involving a war, however, famous like the present one at Blenheim, is only about mindless killing of innocent people resulting in loss of life and property.

It begins with old Kasper finishing a normal day's chore, takes rest out in the sun in front of his cottage, watching his grand children at play. Peterkin, his grandson is playing with a hard round object he found near the stream. He takes it to the old man who explains 'Tis some poor fellow's skull," which he often finds in fields while ploughing . the children insist on their grandfather telling the story behind the skull, particularly, the girl wilhelmine waiting eagerly, "with wonder-waiting eyes,/ Now tell us all about the war/ And what they fought each other for"

Kasper explains the devastating story of the battle where Duke of Malborough routed the French, although he himself has no answer to the reason for fighting a war. He goes on to explain that his father had a cottage near the rivulet "My father lived at Blenheim then", the place his grandson Peterkin traced the skull. The soldiers were on the rioting spree, burning the houses and killing the innocent civilians at will. His parents had to flee to save their lives along with their child. The horrible account of the war records minutely how thousands of innocent people, including pregnant women and children were killed in the war. But Kasper never repents for the loss of life and property regarding the end result as a great victory for England.

Thousands of rotting corpses are found around but kasper justifies these deaths in the name of national pride which seems quite a contemporary rhetoric of war where countries do not hesitate to spend lion's share of their GDP for defense purposes ignoring poverty of the mass. When his granddaughter Wilhelmine points out that war is a wicked thing, he contradicts her saying that it is great victory. Whereas being a child, Peterkin asks a pertinent question what is the use of a war? He did not offer a satisfactory answer, he only believes in others saying that it is a great victory.

It is through a conversation between Kasper and his grandchildren that the poem starts. One of the children informs his grandfather that he has found something 'large and round' on the field, to which his grandfather remarks that it is a skull and there are many more to be found. There are instances that run throughout the poem to support the main ideas of tragic end of war & the vulnerability of human life. The poem "After Blenheim" makes us ponder over the purpose and result of a war and questions its validity.

War always comes paired with catastrophe and destruction. Kasper's gruesome descriptions of the war, which is followed by his casual utterances, form an effect of irony. It is ironic that it was a great war but no one knows why. In the meaningless outbursts of the war heroes, the unawareness of the futility of war and the inability to comprehend the scathing horror of the outcome is detected in the minds of the common people.

The characters are introduced in the poem in the very beginning. We come across an elderly farmer named Kaspar who is sitting in front of his cottage watching his grandchildren Wilhelmine and Peterkin play on the lush green field on a summer evening. When the children enquire about the cause of the war, Kaspar replies that the significance of the war was in the victory that the English routed the French that the later generations would call a great and famous victory. Kaspar also informs them boastfully that there are a number of skulls to be found on the field that belongs to the poor fellows who died while fighting in the war.

The 'great victory' refers to the victory in the battle, which also happens to be an example of patriotism as well as ignorance. However, Kaspar is at a loss to explain the cause of the battle. Kaspar knew that the fields were filled with dead bodies of the soldiers, he knew about the destruction of life and property, the death of the newborn babies. However, according to him such things are all a part of the war and they do not negate the glory of the victory which is why when Wilhelmine says that the battle must be a "wicked thing," Kaspar tells her she is wrong. It was a famous victory, he says.

In the following stanzas, we see the poet depicting the terror of war. After the battle was over, thousands of dead bodies of soldiers lay rotting in the field in indignity. There are sound effects in this stanza and they are generally helped by the assonance of 'shocking' and 'rotting' and the sense of alliteration in the first line. These together give a greater resonance to the horrific image of death. The scene of 'rotting' reduces dead men to carrion.

*"They say it was a shocking sight
After the field was won;
For many thousand bodies here
Lay rotting in the sun;"*

The poet has employed a number of poetic devices in the poem like alliteration, repetition and irony. Throughout the poem Kaspar regards the war as a glorious victory.

The readers come across Kaspar praising the Duke and the Prince for defeating the French army and for bringing glory and pride to the nation, thus, creating more confusion and dilemma in the children's mind. The children are unable to grasp the essence of the so-called glory in a war that their grandfather is singing praises about. It is through the innocence of the children that the disapproval and pointlessness of war is presented.

Kaspar seems to hide all the destruction and agony caused by the war by repeating that it was a great victory. He seems to be afraid of breaking the romantic notions of war that are influenced by the people around him who idealize war without realizing the damage that comes with it. And these romantic ideals of war are what he also wants to put in the minds of the grandchildren. War to him was of a greater good, even though came at the cost of death and destruction.

We again come across the line "*But 'twas a famous victory*". The war was fought over a trivial dispute but it did cost the lives of thousands of soldiers. It was fought near the village of Blenheim, in Bavaria, on the left bank of

the river Danube, on August 13, 1704. The English and Austrians, under the Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene, defeated the French and Bavarians, under Marshall Tallard and Marsin.

The only thing that is undeniable in a war is that destruction of life and property is sure to take place. Victory cannot bring back all the lives, which were lost during the war. That is why the poet questions the effectiveness and the need of war. Thus, the poem ‘After Blenheim’ successfully depicts the poet’s message that war is something which must be avoided as all it brings is more destruction and dissatisfaction in this cruel world.

Critical Appreciation

“After Blenheim” is a brilliant poem in the traditional ballad form by Robert Southey where an old man, sitting in front of his cottage intently watches his grand children playing on the field. The cottage, having an important historical connection of its own, is situated on the bank of a stream where an important historical battle between the English army and the French army has been fought long back. While playing the boy found a skull partially buried under ground and carried it to his grandfather for being curious about revealing its identity at the instant. The old man, in his reply, revealed that it is supposed to be a human skull, a terrible reminder from the battle of Blenheim, fought many years ago. The boy asked his grandfather about the battle in detail; the grandfather said that it was a famous war recording ‘a Great Victory’ for English army which reverberates at the end of almost each stanza.

The poem recounts the terrible aftermath of war fought between two European super powers some ninety four years ago. What is even more interesting is that the choice of the locale of the poem which happens to be small cottage near a stream where actually the battle was fought between two rival parties long back. The story of the poem involving an old man and his grandchildren, (not his son, perhaps killed in the very battle itself), are left to lick the wounds of a great war. The old man sitting outside his cottage, not inside it, has some symbolic connotations that war has reduced many civilians homeless who cannot straighten their back bone after being terribly affected by the war. Interestingly a human skull links the remote past with the present. What past has sown in the form of a war, the immediate present reaps the result of that devastating consciousness. The poem follows a symmetrical structure where bloodshed and horrible accounts of war has been consciously described almost in each stanza. The old man is not in a mood to give in that war is has catastrophic consequences hailing it as a great victory. Even when his grandchildren remind him that war is a wicked thing he is in no mood to rethink about the reality, justifying the war as being the national pride comes with a cost of its own. It might also throw light on another facet of Southey’s personality that the young revolutionary poet is in favour of a war which has been changed later to accept things as they are being represented symbolically by grand children.

While old Kaspar approaches war, rescinding all its catastrophic consequences, casually. However, irony is at work when the poet uses the deliberate ploy of gruesome details of war followed by a casual approach hailing it as great victory. It also points, time and again, that war comes

with a great cost, whatever reasons one must assign for its justification. It has also contemporary relevance of how the questioning of our national pride is invoked while allocating meaty share of the budget to defense establishments, notwithstanding plight of poverty the common people are subjected to, of the respective countries. The imagery of ploughing is used to show that skulls are multiplying; the old Kaspar found more skulls in the plough field which points to symbolic reproduction of the skulls and it certainly is disturbing sight for young children representing the future generation.

Again the introduction of the skull is not a smooth one. At the outset, the poet introduces us to something 'large and smooth and round' which certainly refers to playing object like a toy or ball. When it is revealed that the child has found a skull exposed before the children, unsettling all our hopes and pleasantries in a great way. No more is it about a pleasant English summer evening. The incident of a boy playing with a skull without knowing what is, is shocking. A similar effect is achieved in stanza eight when it is revealed that "A new born baby died' indicating that the death of innocent new born baby is really shocking without assigning a valid reason.

Shocking imagery also found in the soldiers death for unknowingly carrying out orders of their masters, for the survival of kingdoms or for continuation of dominance of one country over the other. Human life has been reduced to meeting deaths routinely without realizing the true worth of their life. The poet is aware of the notoriety of a war; he is repeatedly asserting that the war is a great victory for English side, but for the losing side, the cost with which it is fought is irreparable.

The theme of 'Man's inhumanity to man' is being interwoven into the corpus of the poem effected by a war. Skulls found in plenty in the plough field and the one that Peterkin finds, bear testimony to this cowardly act. The perpetrators of war must also know for sure that while fulfilling their wild ambitions, they also put the entire humanity in a spot of fix for centuries together. Ironically, what the adult world is ignorant about war, children seem to undertake the responsibility of judging the war for its wicked connections.

Children are intent on knowing the repercussions of war: immediately after finding a skull Peterkin asks his grandfather what it is; Wilhelmine is also prompt about knowing the things associated with war. Kaspar explains the devastating happenings at Blemheim but does not know the causes of war. Nor is he interested to know its causes. He reiterates one thing that it is a great victory for Austria and England. Later old Kaspar knows pretty well that women and innocent children also died in the battle of Blemhiem as the cost for the glorious victory. Unlike the modern day politicians who justify war in the name of "collateral damages", Kaspar seems to be complacent.

The symbolic overtone a human skull carries is significant because being the most important functionary of human body it has got no significance before a war which consumes everything like a wild fire. Similarly, the repetitive effect of war as a great victory suggests that the opposite true because the death and devastation that a war brings with it overshadows the tag of victory for a selected few. For an immediate gain one has to pay

prices for centuries together. Southey argues in contrasting terms that war is not at all welcome in the context of development of human civilization.

5.7 POETIC DEVICES

Alliteration: A poetic device which refers to consonant sounds at the beginning of the words is called Alliteration. Southey uses this poetic device to achieve special effect in the poem. Consider this example:

“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 war;
 And what they each other for.”

Irony: It is a poetic device in which the literal meaning is exactly opposite of the intended meaning. Basing on situations, irony does play significant role within the poem to attract the reader’s attention as to what poet actually intends to convey. In the poem, the old man Kaspar’s glorification of war as a great victory comes only at the great cost of loss of life and individual dignity. Victory at war comes at the costly expense of poverty, mass killing and loss of continents and blurring of boundaries. Notions of “famous victory” and “great Victory” have been blatantly overshadowed by phrases like “I couldn’t make out” and “why that I cannot tell”. The truth is that war brings with it a fleeting and false pride which is a nonstarter in comparison to the casualties and destruction it leads to. Irony gives the poet an advantage to deal with such poignantly contrasting situations which no other poetic device can ably represent.

Archaism: It refers to the words which are no longer in use. Its odd and off beat appeal helps the poet to make out for the loss of lighter vein in the poem. High seriousness sacrificed sometimes to balance between the serious and lighter moods within the framework of the poem. Lines like “Nay nay, my little girl, quoth he” uses archaic words like Nay and quoth to achieve the desired effect. The only thing is that the reader needs to know the meaning of such words.

Metonymy: it’s a figure of speech in which a concept or thing is explored by something closely associated with it. In the line “And by him sported on the green” refers to the ground covered with grassland on which the children play. Here the play ground is associated with greenery which is green in colour.

Repetition: the poet also uses repetition to good effect as to point out the ignorance of the old man kaspar about war and its aftermath. The repetition of phrases like “things like that”, “you know”, and must be” point to the increasing degree of uncertainty and ignorance of the after effects of a great war. Similarly, reference to war as a “famous victory” or “great victory” also points to the limitation of the old man in comprehending the negative sides of war. In both the cases the old man is the victim who is supposed to have much more foresight than the children who do not have enough experience to know about the deeper values of life.

5.8 PROSODY AND RHYMING SCHEME

Meter: It refers to the technical aspect of

Each stanza contains six lines. The meter of the stanzas confirms to the following pattern

1. Iambic tetrameter (four iambs for a total of eight syllables).
2. Iambic trimeter (three iambs for a total of six syllables).
3. Iambic tetrameter (four iambs for a total of eight syllables).
4. Iambic trimeter (three iambs for a total of six syllables).
5. Iambic tetrameter (four iambs for a total of eight syllables).
6. Iambic tetrameter (four iambs for a total of eight syllables).

The first stanza demonstrates the metric pattern.

...1.....2.....3.....4

It was...a **sum**...mer **ev**...en **ing**,

...1.....2.....3

Old **Kas**...par's **work**...was **done**,

...1.....2.....3.....4

And **he**...be **fore**...his **cot**...tage **door**

...1.....2.....3

Was **sit**...ting **in** the **sun**,

...1.....2.....3.....4

And **by**...him **sport**...ed **on** the **green**

...1.....2.....3.....4

His **lit**...tle **grand**...child **Wil**...hel **mine**.

Rhyme

The end rhyme in each stanza except the second is abcbdd. The third stanza demonstrates this pattern:

a...Old Kaspar took it from the boy,

b... Who stood expectant **by**;

c...And then the old man shook his head,

b... And, with a natural **sigh**,

d...”’Tis some poor fellow’s skull,” said **he**,

d... “Who fell in the great victory.

In the second stanza, the end rhyme is abcddd.

Alliteration

In several stanzas, Southey uses alliteration to promote rhythm and euphony. Stanza five is an example.

“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**.”

5.9 LET US SUM UP

In this poem we have explored the theme of war to its utmost limit.

- War brings with it devastation and cruelty.
- Human beings are pitied against Mankind; what is more significant in the context of the poem is experienced men of society committing the mistakes repeatedly where as children do see the ugliness of war and the lurking danger behind it.
- Use of poetic devices by the poet contributing to the theme of the poem in the larger context.
- Meter and prosody as technical device contributing the structure of the poem.

5.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. How does the poet reconcile all contrasting moods in the poem? Answer in the light of the poem you have studied.

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2. Why are wars important for us today? What message does Southey’s poem convey to us as students of literature?

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3. What special effects do poetic devices play in a poem? Analyse the poetic devices with reference to the text you studied.

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4. Do you agree that “After Blenheim” is a anti-war poem? What answer do you give in your defense?

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Musicals and Farce

5. Is the poem about “a wicked thing” or a “great victory”? Give your opinion with reference to the poem.

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6. State briefly the moral of the poem in your own words.

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7. How does history help to understand the poem “After Blenheim”? Explain.

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5.10 SUGGESTED READING

Palgrave, Francis T. ed. *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Literature*, selected and arranged with notes by Francis Turner Palgrave. London: Macmillan, 1875.

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