

Note: The transactional processes suggested in CISCE curriculum are highlighted in grey.

### Learning Outcomes

- To instil an appreciation for nature, particularly stars
- To experience the exhilarating side of nature
- To get the main idea in each stanza of the poem
- To identify the poetic devices used in the poem

**Summary:** *Stars* by Sara Teasdale is a simple, yet touching, and enchanting poem that describes the beauty of stars in the night sky. The poet celebrates the natural world, specifically the stars in the night sky, and relishes the beauty of eternity. The speaker delves into the power of these stars and the way they have remained unvexed. Through her skilful use of imagery, personification and metaphors, she conveys how the stars seem alive to her, and by the end of the poem the readers are left in a peaceful mood more appreciative of the natural world than they were when they began the poem.

### Pre-reading

*Group discussion:*

1. Have you noticed the night sky? What do you see?
2. Have you wondered what the stars in the sky are?

3. What do you expect from a poem, *Stars*?

After students have discussed in groups encourage them to share some of their thoughts with the class.

### READING

Tell students they are going to read a poem about how the speaker appreciates the stars in the night sky.

Play the audio on the Smart Book. Pause at relevant points to ask these questions.

#### Stanza 1 and 2

Ask students:

*Where is the speaker standing? What is the imagery used here? (The stars are visualised as 'White and topaz' and 'misty red') How does this imagery help the reader? (The reader is able to imagine the scene she describes and it transports the reader to the hillside along with the speaker.)*

#### Stanza 3 and 4

Ask students:

*Why does the speaker say that the numerous stars have "beating / hearts of fire"? (She tries to convey how alive these stars seem to her.) Pick out the lines that say that the stars do not fade away even after several years? (That aeons / Cannot vex or tire ;) Explain the lines "I watch them marching / Stately and still". (The speaker uses contrasting words here, *marching* and *still*, to describe the stars as she sees them. She conveys to the reader that the stars are moving, yet from where she is standing, they appear to be still.)*

## Stanza 5

Ask students:

*What does the speaker compare the stars to? (Royalty) What is the structure of the poem? (It has 5 stanzas which are separated into five sets of four lines which are known as quatrains)*

### Poetic devices

*Rhyme scheme:* Quatrain with abcb, with changing end sounds from stanza to stanza

*Metaphor:* "beating / hearts of fire,"

*Personification:* "beating / hearts of fire,"

*Contrasts:* Marching and still

*Alliteration:* "Spicy and still" in line four of the first stanza and "heaven" and "head" in stanza two.

*Imagery:* "White and topaz / And misty red." / "spicy and still" / "white and topaz"

*Tone:* Direct and appreciative conveyed through simple language

### Post reading

*Class discussion*

1. *Night skies are vanishing.* Why do you think this is happening? (Light pollution in cities)
2. Why are stars more visible in rural areas than in cities?
3. Is star gazing beneficial to an individual? ((Free response Welcome varied suggestions. Suggested answers: Reconnects you with nature, is a perfect stress reliever, can spark your creative mind, can be a family fun activity))

## STUDENTS' BOOK ANSWER KEY

### Stars

#### Comprehension

A. 1. b      2. b      3. a      4. a      5. b

- B. 1. a. The pine trees on the hill.  
b. *Suggested answer:* Because pine trees have a spicy smell.  
c. The stars have also been described as being stately and still.
2. a. The poem mentions aeons to describe the countless number of years that the stars have been up there in the sky without being vexed or tired.  
b. The word 'myriads' also means a great number. It has been used to refer to the number of the stars.  
c. The stars are not vexed or tired by aeons.  
d. The speaker thinks that the stars are not vexed or tired by aeons because whenever she looks at them, the stars look the same—in the same place, with the same colour, unchanged. Time or anything that occurred in the time has not been able to upset or change them.
- C. 1. The scene described in the poem is a common scene—a hill at night with stars above and pine trees nearby. That suggests that the beauty of nature is not rare—it can be found wherever nature is visible, like woods, rivers, mountains, gardens and so on—even a single flower in a pot. *Free response*
2. *Free response*

## Appreciating the Poem

- 'heaven full of stars,' 'myriads'
  - 'White and topaz / And misty red'
  - 'with beating / Hearts of fire'
  - 'aeons'
  - 'Cannot vex or tire'
  - 'marching,' 'still'
  - 'Up the dome of heaven / Like a great hill,' 'stately,' 'so much majesty'
- Y
  - Y
  - Suggested answer:* N
  - Y

*Suggested answer (accept any logical answer):* As the speaker in the poem, we would feel amazed and fascinated, honoured and humbled to see the beauty and majesty of the stars. We would also feel peaceful in that place—a dark hill at night with only the pine trees and the stars above for company.

## Vocabulary

- negative connotation
  - positive connotation
- negative connotation
  - positive connotation
- positive connotation
  - negative connotation
- positive connotation
  - negative connotation
- negative connotation
  - positive connotation

## Going Further

- Hints:*
- Robin Hood used to take from the rich and give to the poor.
  - Cinderella had to return home by midnight from the prince's ball or her magic carriage would turn into a pumpkin.
  - William Shakespeare's play *A Comedy of Errors* is about two pairs of twins and many funny confusions surrounding them.
  - Charles Dickens was a novelist whose works are known for their depiction of poor social conditions in London.

## QUESTION BANK

### Stars

#### A. Answer in brief.

What does the “white and topaz” describe?

**Ans:** The “white and topaz” describes the glittering brilliance of the stars in the sky.

#### B. Answer in detail.

What thoughts pass through the speaker’s mind when she sees the stars in the night sky?

**Ans:** The speaker praises the staggering majesty of nature, and while sitting alone on a hill at night, she is mesmerized by the countless stars in the sky. She is struck not only by the beauty of these celestial bodies, but also by their constancy—the way that their “Hearts of fire” never stop “beating.” The peaceful steadiness of these magnificent stars fills the speaker with gratitude for the simple fact that she could bear “witness” to nature’s grandeur.

#### C. Choose the correct option.

*What does the speaker feel about viewing the stars in the night sky?*

- The speaker feels such a sight is meant only for royalty.
- The speaker feels that it is a privilege to view such a grand and powerful sight.
- The speaker knows that she deserves to see the beauty of nature.

**Ans:** b

#### D. Read the lines and answer the questions.

*Myriads with beating*

*Hearts of fire*

*That aeons*

*Cannot vex or tire;*

- What do myriads mean? What does it refer to here?
- What figure of speech is used in these lines?
- What do the lines mean?

**Ans:** a. Numerous. Myriads refer to the numerous stars in the sky.

b. Personification and metaphor

c. There is nothing, throughout time, that can trouble or “tire” these lights in the sky.

#### D. Answer in detail. (Think and answer)

The poet uses several poetic devices. How do the phrases, “spicy and still”, “alone in the night”, “hearts of fire”, help in understanding the poem?

**Ans:** “Spicy and still” is used to draw the attention of the reader to the suddenness and attractiveness of the darkness on the hill surrounded by pines. “Alone in the night” expresses the speaker’s yearning for escape. When the speaker describes the stars as having “hearts of fire,” she personifies the stars to exemplify their strength and brilliance.