

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

Learning Outcomes

- To appreciate the life of a tree
- To introduce children to a world they normally would not take notice of
- To predict and use graphic imagery to understand the poem

Summary: The poet describes how a strong tree which has lived for many years is cut down by two wood-cutters within a couple of hours. The poem illustrates the fragility of life, as a strong tree which lived for 100 years is now cut down in a few hours. The tree is personified and the cruelty to the tree is displayed.

Pre-reading

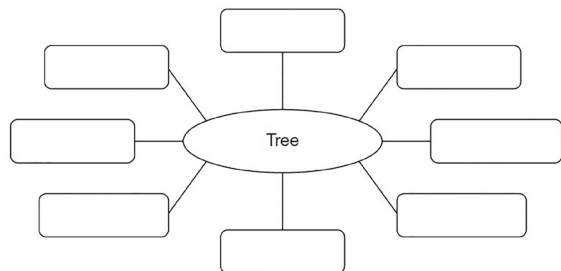
Ask student:

What do you think this poem is about? Elicit answers (Free Response)

Ask students:

What do we generally associate with a poem about nature? What do you think of when you hear the word 'tree'? What are the features, characteristics, sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, feelings, values, advantages, disadvantages of a tree? (Elicit answers, write them all on the board, then tell students to

draw this concept map in their books; choose 8 things they associate with the most in a tree and write them on their individual maps. Each individual's answers (maps) will vary)



READING

Students summarise, comprehend and analyse the poem

Put students in groups and tell them to pick out words from the poem associated with

- Qualities of the tree (list the quality and write the word associated with it)
- The feelings of the tree as it is personified
- The different steps taken to cut down the tree
- Words denoting life in the tree

List the words on the board as the groups call out their answers.

Ask students:

- How are the woodcutters portrayed?
 - What parts of our life, relationships, etc, can we compare to the tree, especially the part where it lives for 100 years but is destroyed in 2 hours.
 - What is the rhyme scheme in the poem?
- Ask the groups to summarise the poem.

- What are the main ideas?
- What are the crucial details necessary for supporting the ideas?

- What information is irrelevant or unnecessary?

Tell them to use key words or phrases to identify the main points from the poem.

Post-reading

Group work

1. What is the moral behind the poem?

2. Ask groups to write a short story or a poem about the interesting life the tree led.

Tell them to use their imagination and be descriptive about the sights, sounds and smells the tree experienced. Also include some friend the tree made in its life.

STUDENTS' BOOK ANSWER KEY

Throwing a Tree

Comprehension

- A.**
1. The word 'executioners' (executioners carry out death sentences) and the words 'bears the death-mark on its side'.
 2. The tree that was felled looked like a tall, proud giant, and a living mast. It was 200 years old, so it was a big, strong tree. That is also why it took the two men almost two hours to fell it—it could not be done easily.
 3. The two men swung their axes and chopped away at the tree trunk just above the ground. Chips flew about and a broad deep gash was marked in the bark all the way round. Then one of them hooked a rope upward. Next, they used the saw to deepen the cut, till the top of the tree trembled. The shivers grew greater with each cut. The men took out the saw and pulled the rope; but the tree did not fall at first. So, they sawed again, stepped back and pulled once more. Finally, the tree swayed heavily, the men rushed aside, and the tree crashed down.
 4. We know that the tree protested its fate before giving in because it did not fall easily. Even when the men used the saw to cut through the bark of the tree, for quite some time, the tree shook, but did not fall down even when they pulled at the rope they had hooked on to the tree. So they had to saw deeper into the trunk. It took almost two hours to fall, and it shook the neighbouring trees when it finally fell, as if protesting its death to the last.
- B.**
1.
 - a. *Sample answer:* The two men who had been ordered to cut down the tree walked over to the tree, across the hills, almost like a predatory animal hunting for a prey.
 - b. The words 'executioners' and 'stalk' convey a feeling of danger in this ordinary scene, as executioners usually refer to people who carry out death sentences, and the word stalk is also often used to refer to predators or hunters.
 2.
 - a. The shivers are seen in the great tree while it is being cut down.
 - b. They grow greater as the two men cut the bark of the tree deeper and deeper with fresh blows.
 - c. *Suggested answer (accept any logical answer):* Yes, pain or fright.
 3. This line means that finally, after the two men had been striking the bark of the tree with their axe, using the saw to make the cut deeper and pulling at the tree too,

the tree, after trying to remain standing for a long time, could not take the blows anymore—could not keep standing any longer.

4. a. The tree that was being cut down has been referred to as 'it' and the other trees standing nearby have been referred to as 'its neighbours'.
- b. The tree shakes its neighbours when it finally crashes down.
- c. *Suggested answer (accept any logical answer):* It could indicate grief or shock or even fear.

C. 1. *Free response*

2. *Suggested answer (accept any logical answer):* Yes, this poem does make us think about the cutting down of trees. Although it is a common event, the poem reminds us that it is sad and painful for a great old tree to be cut down and makes us wonder whether we actually do need to cut down so many trees or whether we can save some of them. The last line particularly reminds us that what takes people only a few hours to destroy is built up over several years—sometimes hundreds of years—and therefore we should be more thoughtful about the preciousness of trees.

Appreciating the Poem

1. The different stanzas of the poem describe different parts of the event. The first stanza describes the two men approaching the tree. The second stanza describes how they begin their task of cutting down the tree. In the third stanza, they continue and persist with their work. The fourth stanza tells us how the tree is finally cut down.
 2. a. The poem makes the two men's job sound like any other job which needs hard work by describing how they approach the tree without having any particular thought or feeling about it, how they begin and continue the work. The poem describes the steps of the task rather than what the men are thinking or feeling, as if this is something they do often and don't have any particular sentiment about. They focus on what they have to do, and so does the poem.
 - b. The poem, however, is not just about the men's hard work. It is actually and mainly about the event of cutting down the tree. It is about the tree and what is lost when the men finish their task.
 - c. The last line compares the men's work with the tree's work. It reminds us that just as the men have been patient and hardworking for two hours, the tree has been patient and hardworking too—for 200 years. So while we may have sympathy or admiration for the men for doing their work carefully, we should also spare a thought for the tree instead of taking it for granted.
3. a. 'proud', 'tall giant', 'shivers', 'quivers', 'living mast', 'sways', 'crashes', 'shakes', 'two hundred years' steady growth'
 - b. Yes, these words can describe any big old tree.
 - c. *Suggested answer (accept any logical answer):* Yes, the poem asks us to pay more attention to trees as well as to questions like which trees are cut down, how old and big and beautiful they are, whether they really need to be cut down or whether they can be saved.

Vocabulary

Free response

QUESTION BANK

Throwing a Tree (Poem)

A. Answer in brief.

What is the work of the executioner? What is being executed in the poem?

Ans: An executioner is a person appointed by the judiciary to carry out the death sentence on prisoners. In the poem, the executioners referred to are the people who have come with axe and saw to cut down an old tree.

B. Answer in detail.

How do the executioners carry out their duty? Was it an easy job?

Ans: The executioners come near their victim, the tree, with axe and shining saw and get ready to carry out their job. They remove their jackets and swing their axe to chop the tree. The leaves of the tree fall and chips of wood fly around. They make deep gashes on the tree yet the tree, which has taken years to grow, is so strong that it does not come down easily. They then tie a rope to the top of the tree to pull it down. They had to keep sawing and pulling the tree to bring it down. It turned out to be a very difficult job for them, as the tree has grown strong and sturdy, absorbing years of sunlight, air and water.

C. Choose the correct answer.

*'The saw then begins, till the top of the tall giant shivers;
The shivers are seen to grow greater with each cut than before.'
Why does the tree shiver?*

- The tree shivers as it knows that it was being cut down.
- The tree shivers because of the impact of the saw on its trunk.
- The tree shivers as it was winter and it could not bear the cold axe on its trunk.

Ans: b

D. Read the lines and answer the questions.

*It shakes all its neighbours throughout,
And two hundred years' steady growth has been ended in less than two hours.*

- When does the tree shake the neighbours?
- How long has the tree been there?
- What feeling does the poet evoke through the last line?

Ans: a. When the huge tree falls, the whole neighbourhood shook because of the impact the earth receives on its fall.
b. The tree has grown for 200 years steadily.
c. On reading the last lines one feels sad for losing such an old sturdy tree that has been nurtured for 200 years and that it took just two hours to destroy it.

E. Answer in detail.

What parts of our life's relationships can we compare to the tree, especially the part where it lives for several years but is destroyed in seconds. What do we learn from this?

Free response