

# Literature form 5



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

**IN THE MIDST OF HARDSHIP SYNOPSIS (OVERALL)** In this poem, the poet tells of the situation of a farmer and his family. They come back at dawn after being out in the floodwater for a day and night. They are looking for their albino buffalo. They come back wet and hurt but they do not show any despair. They have been born into a life of hardship and have never complained. Now, they are in the kitchen and they joke and talk while preparing to relax with a smoke. **SYNOPSIS (ACCORDING TO STANZA)** Stanza 1 They returned home at dawn and headed for the stove.

Their clothes were soaking wet and tattered. Their bodies were covered with scratches and wounds. Yet, they did not display any signs of being worried. Stanza 2 They were out in the flood the whole day and night. They were surrounded by dead animals and parts of trees that had been destroyed by the flood. They searched desperately for their son's albino buffalo but were unable to find it. Stanza 3 They were born into poverty and difficulty, but they do not complain about their suffer.

Instead, they sit in the kitchen, cracking jokes while smoking cigarettes. **SETTING** The setting of the poem is in the house. **THEMES** Stoicism in life Family love Acceptance of way of life **POINT OF VIEW** Third person point of view. **MORAL VALUES** We should learn to accept problems in life with a positive outlook. We must attempt to face and solve problems. Failure is part of growing up. Do not despair in the face of failure. **LANGUAGE & STYLE** Language is simple and easy to understand. The style is simple with no rhyming scheme. **POETIC DEVICES** Imagery – Gives picture of poet's thoughts e. 'soaky clothes torn' and 'legs full of wounds' Alliteration – e. g. 'but on their brows' Symbols – e. g. 'horrendous flood' and 'bloating carcasses'

Diction – e. g. ‘ stove’ and ‘ brows’ He Had Such Quiet Eyes SYNOPSIS OF THE POEM The poem is about a woman who has been deceived to think that she was loved by a man with ‘ quiet eyes’. She suffers for this and only learns on hindsight not to trust or give in to men who seek women only for pleasure. The poet gives an advice on being able to recognise what is true and what is not, when a person is truly friendly and when he is not.

You may lose in the game of love and give your heart away, but knowing the truth of the situation will mean that you will not suffer any lasting losses.

UNDERSTANDING THE POEM Stanza 1 The woman is taken up with his ‘ quiet eyes’. The eyes mesmerise and beg her to ‘ be nice’ to him and make him extremely happy, that is ‘ render him paradise’. The poet uses a very long imagery of the eyes ‘ breathing desolate sighs’ to enhance the effect of the eyes on the girl. The woman, being enamoured with those eyes, does not notice he is deceiving her.

It would not be difficult to see through the man if the woman had her feet on the ground because the eyes have only the ‘ thinnest ice’, easy to break through to learn the man’s true nature. Stanza 2 Something has happened to the woman and she has learnt the truth about the man. The poet suggests that she has learnt the hard way that is she learns her lesson through bad experience. She has made a mistake of trusting the man because she has refused to listen to the advice not ‘ to compromise’, that is, lower her standards or expectations in order to please a man who seduces women.

Stanza 3

The poet extends her friendly advice to women to understand what is meant by ‘ nice’ what it means when men are ‘ nice’ to you. When he is ‘ nice’,

friendly and pleasant to you, make sure that he is sincere and trustworthy and not because he has ulterior motive, that is he wants something from you in return. The poet further comments that love may be a gamble as suggested in 'dice', you take your chances with someone, you may find true love or you may not. The important issue here is that ultimately you have not lost anything because you have not compromised, you are not deceived.

LINE BY LINE STANZA 1 MEANING BY LINE He had such quiet eyes – His eyes were calm and quiet \* She did not realise – She did not know \* They were two pools of lies- His eyes were like two pools filled with lies \* Layered with thinnest ice – Thinly veiled, like very thin ice \* To her, those quiet eyes – To the woman, those calm and quiet eyes \* Were breathing desolate sighs – Looked very sad and desolate \* Imploring her to be nice – The eyes were begging her to be nice to him \* And to render him to paradise – And to give him happiness and bliss so that he would feel like he was in paradise (heaven) STANZA 2 MEANING BY LINE If only she'd been wise – The woman wished she had been wiser in her past actions \* And had listened to the advice – And she had listened to the sound advice given to her by people who cared about her \* Never to compromise – They had advised her not to give up her moral values or principles \* With pleasure-seeking guys – When she was with men who wanted only pleasure and fun \* She'd be free from the 'hows and whys' – If she had listened to them, she would not be haunted by questions of hows and whys and the difficult situation she was in.

STANZA 3 MEANING BY LINE \* Now here's a bit of advice – Let me give you a bit of advice \* Be sure that nice really means nice – Make sure that the person you think is nice, is truly sincere and trustworthy \* Then you'll never

be losing at dice – Then, you will not lose in a game of chance or a game of love where you can lose your heart to an undeserving man \* Though you may lose your heart once or twice – Even if you should fall in love and lose your heart to love once or twice Elements of the Poem – Literal and Figurative Meaning Stanza 1

**Literal Meaning** When the persona looked into the young man's sincere-looking eyes, she was deceived into thinking that he needed someone to love. She was not aware that betrayal was second nature to him. His eyes even made her feel compelled to be ' nice' to him. **Figurative Meaning** Meeting people and getting involved in a social relationship is part and parcel of life. However, along the way, we may meet two-faced people with ulterior motives. Sometimes, they may come across as so sincere that we innocently accept them as friends or partners. Stanza 2

**Literal Meaning** When the persona was betrayed by the man, she wondered why she had not been wiser. She should have remembered the age-old advice of not believing man blindly. If she had held on to her principles, she would not be asking herself why she had been cheated. **Figurative Meaning** Social relationships can turn sour if one party betrays the other. Hence, one should be careful of the other party's motives. In any case, do not compromise your principles, as someone who is sincere would not force you into giving up your morals. Stanza 3 **Literal Meaning**

The poet advises young ladies to be more careful before getting involved in relationships with men. They must make sure they know their men well. They should learn to differentiate between sincerity and falsehood. They will eventually meet the right man, though they may lose their hearts to a few

times before that. Figurative Meaning It is always good to be cautious before committing to a relationship to avoid serious consequences. You have to make sure you can trust the person you befriend. Do not gamble with your affections, even when you fall in love. Themes (1) Strong Moral Values and Self-Respect

The woman in the poem got herself into a difficult situation and was cheated by a man because she gave in to his pleading and his insincere lies. She displayed weakness in her moral standing and lost her self-respect as a result. We should never lower our self-esteem no matter how much we like a man. If a man has respect for the woman he loves, he too would not ask her to do what is morally wrong. (2) Deception in Appearances The woman is taken in by the man's gentle and quiet eyes. She thinks he is a truthful and trustworthy person. The theme in this poem focuses on deception in appearances.

Do not judge a person's character by his appearance. As can be seen in this poem, a gentle and kind-looking man can actually be a wolf in sheep's clothing. (3) Consequences When we make mistakes in life, we have to live with the consequences. The persona tells us that the woman is haunted with questions of 'hows and whys'. She probably asks herself every day how she could have fallen for his lies; how she could have forgotten the moral values instilled in her by her parents; how she could have ignored all the advice given to her by people who love and care about her.

She would probably also wonder why she had not been wiser in her choice of men; why she did not see through his deception and insincerity. (4) Listen to Advice The poet wants to reach out to all young readers. The woman in the

poem wished she ' had listened to the advice'. She poured out her disappointment, frustration and hurt in this poem and wished she had ' been wise'. The poet cautions young readers that they should not be impulsive in their actions and they should, above all, listen to the advice of their elders so that they would not end up like the woman – full of regrets.

Moral Values & Lessons Learnt (1) Avoid Being Deluded by Looks or Appearance • We sometimes encounter people who have ill intentions towards us. • These are con men who prey on young women. • They look nice and decent but have bad motives. • So we should take precaution against them. • We should not judge a book by its cover. (2) Listen to Beneficial Advice • We are given good advice when others feel that we need it. • We should listen to their advice. • The advice is for our own good. It prevents us from getting hurt or getting into trouble. Setting \* The poem is set in the present – the world around us now. \* It highlights the fact that the people around us are not always sincere. \* They may have ulterior motives towards us. \* Some have the intention to cheat us. \* In the case of the woman in the poem, the man only wanted to have sexual pleasure from her. \* However, she saw him as a man in need of love and consolation. \* The poem puts forward the need to practise caution when we deal with the people around us.