

# The Lake Isle of Innisfree

by WB Yeats



## Central Idea of the Poem

The poem is about the charm of a rural area. It's all about how the speaker's dreams for the future don't quite reconcile with his present situation and about the clash between dreams and reality.

The poet dreams of escaping the busy and crowded streets of London to a small island in a lake, of which he had fond childhood memories. It is a simple natural place where he will build a cottage, grow beans, have a beehive and live alone, listening to the sounds of the birds singing, the bees buzzing and the lapping of lake water. The poem expresses a set of desires familiar in the modern world; to escape, to achieve peace and solitude, to be at one with nature.

## Explanation of the Poem

### Stanza 1

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

### WORD MEANINGS

arise	stand up
Innisfree	an island in a lake
cabin	a small wooden shelter
clay	mud
wattles	material consisting of rods interlaced with twigs or branches used for building walls or fences
bean-rows	rows of bean plants
bee-loud	place having the loud sound of bees buzzing
glade	open space in a forest

**Explanation** The poem starts with the poet saying that he will wake up and go to the island of Innisfree. He compares his life in the city to sleep. When he wakes up and becomes conscious, he will be transported away from the sedentary (non-active) city life to a life of activity in a rural area. In particular, the poet mentions two activities that he would like to engage in – physical labour (i.e. building a cabin and planting nine rows of beans and beekeeping). He wishes to live alone where buzzing sound of the bees will fill the entire environment.

## Stanza 2

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes  
dropping slow  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the  
cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,  
And evenings full of the linnet's wings.

### WORD MEANINGS

peace	(here its meaning is) dew
dropping slow	dropping slowly
veils	misty atmosphere in morning
cricket	an insect
all a glimmer	shining
purple glow	the light of afternoon
linnet	a small bird of brown and grey colour

**Explanation** In this stanza, the poet says that his life on the island of Innisfree will be peaceful. He especially connects peacefulness with the early morning. Peace will come to him readily as morning comes, and he wakes up to the sound of crickets chirping. He compares the morning to a woman who is veiled. This means that, when the Sun rises, morning drops her veil of darkness and brings peace upon the rural setting of Innisfree. The poet also likes midnight, with the stars shining brightly in the sky. He also likes noon, as well as evening, which is full of the sound of the linnet birds' melodious song.

## Stanza 3

I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear the lake water lapping with low sounds by the  
shore;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

### WORD MEANINGS

lapping	sound of water striking the shore
low	soft
roadway	road in the town
pavements grey	dull and drab paths
deep heart's core	deep in my heart

**Explanation** In this stanza, the poet makes a resolution that he will go to Innisfree just now because Innisfree is never out of his mind. Throughout the day and the night, he can only hear one sound in his mind – that of the water reaching the shore of the island of Innisfree at a calm pace and creating a soft lapping sound. He hears this sound deep within his own heart as he goes about his life in the urban setting of roadways and pavements. This urban setting contains none of the colours that make Innisfree beautiful; instead it appears grey and boring.

### Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

**Alliteration** Repetition of initial consonant sounds in the same line.

- lake water lapping with low sounds. (repetition of consonant sounds)

**Visual Imagery** It pertains to graphics, visual scenes pictures or the sense of sight.

- veils of the morning
- midnight's all a glimmer
- And evening full of the linnet's wings
- and noon a purple glow...

**Auditory Imagery** It pertains to sounds, noises, music or the sense of hearing.

- bee-loud glade
- cricket sings
- lake water lapping
- hear it in the deep heart's core

**Metaphor** A device which compares two things or qualities which are unlike.

- Peace comes dropping slow
- veils of the morning
- bee-loud glade

**Onomatopoeia** Using a word which suggests the meaning by its sound.

- I hear lake water lapping

**Repetition** Repetition of words/phrases in the same line.

- And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow, Dropping from the veils...: (The words 'peace' and 'dropping' are repeated).
- I will arise and go now, (phrase repeated in the first and third stanzas).



# NCERT FOLDER

(Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

## I. *Thinking about the Poem* (Page 54)

1 What kind of place is Innisfree? Think about:

- (i) the three things the poet wants to do when he goes back there (stanza I);
- (ii) what he hears and sees there and its effect on him (stanza II);
- (iii) what he hears in his 'heart's core' even when he is far away from Innisfree (stanza III).

**Ans.** Innisfree is a calm and peaceful place where nature is beautiful, alive and full of life. It is an uninhabited island.

(i) The three things the poet wants to do in Innisfree are:

- (a) build a small cabin of mud and wattles to live in.
- (b) plant nine rows of beans.
- (c) install a beehive to breed bees.

(ii) He hears the sound of bees buzzing and sees the purple glow of the sky at noon. He sees the midnight sky filled with glittering stars and the flight of the linnet birds in the evening. He thus feels peaceful in the lap of nature.

(iii) The poet's heart aches for going back to Innisfree from amidst the concrete jungle of the city. Even in the city, he can hear the lapping sound of the water on the lake.

2 By now you may have concluded that Innisfree is a simple, natural place, full of beauty and peace. How does the poet contrast it with where he now stands? (Read stanza III.)

**Ans.** The poet thinks that Innisfree is a simple, natural, calm and quiet place very close to nature, as he mentions the insects, birds, bees, light of the stars and so on. In contrast, the place where he now stands is noisy, far from nature and full of hustle and bustle (the place is the pavement of a highway in the city of London).

3 Do you think Innisfree is only a place, or a state of mind? Does the poet actually miss the place of his boyhood days?

**Ans.** Although Innisfree is the poet's boyhood haunt (visiting place) it also represents his state of mind.

The poet wishes to escape to Innisfree as it is more peaceful than where he is now—the city. Innisfree is representative of what the poet considers an ideal place to live in, which is devoid of the restless humdrum of his life.

Yes, the poet actually misses the place of his boyhood days. Even when he is away from Innisfree, he recalls the sound of the lake water washing the shore.

## II. *Thinking about the Poem* (Page 55)

1 Look at the words the poet uses to describe what he sees and hears at Innisfree.

- (i) Bee-loud glade
- (ii) Evenings full of the linnet's wings
- (iii) Lake water lapping with low sounds

What pictures do these words create in your mind?

- Ans.**
- (i) These words bring to our minds the image of buzzing bees.
  - (ii) These words bring up the image of linnets flying across an evening sky.
  - (iii) These words evoke not only the image, but also the soft sound of a lake's water washing the shore.

2 Look at these words;

... peace comes dropping slow

Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings

What do these words mean to you? What do you think "comes dropping slow...from the veils of the morning"? What does "to where the cricket sings" mean?

**Ans.** The given lines indicate that peace of mind can be slowly acquired from the natural surroundings. It is peace that "comes dropping slow...from the veils of the morning".

The phrase "to where the cricket sings" indicates a peaceful place where one can hear the vibrant sounds of nature—sounds such as the songs of the crickets at the time of dawn.



# Exam Practice

## Extract Based Questions

[4 Marks each]

Read the following extracts carefully and choose the correct option.

1 I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and  
wattles made:

Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for  
the honeybee,

And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

- (i) Where does the poet want to go?  
(a) Innisfree (b) Iceland  
(c) Riverside (d) Countryside
- (ii) What does the poet wish to build with clay  
and wattles?  
(a) A small lake (b) A small pond  
(c) A small cottage (d) A small library
- (iii) What does the phrase 'Nine bean-rows will I  
have there' mean?  
(a) Nine rows to play  
(b) Nine methods of playing  
(c) Nine beans to sow  
(d) Plantation of nine rows of beans at lake
- (iv) What does Innisfree symbolise?  
(a) Where everything is free  
(b) A place of peace and tranquility  
(c) A place of snow and water  
(d) A place of fruits and vegetables

- Ans. (i) (a) Innisfree  
(ii) (c) A small cottage  
(iii) (d) Plantation of nine rows of beans at lake  
(iv) (b) A place of peace and tranquility

2 I will arise and go now, for always night and  
day  
I hear the lake water lapping with low sounds  
by the shore;

While I stand on the roadway, or on the  
pavements grey,

I hear it in the deep heart's core.

- (i) Which figure of speech has the poet used in  
the above lines?  
(a) Simile  
(b) Alliteration  
(c) Metaphor  
(d) Personification

(ii) Who is 'I' in the above lines?

- (a) The lake (b) Innisfree  
(c) Roadway (d) The poet

(iii) What does the poet hear day and night?

- (a) Lapping of lake water  
(b) Traffic on the roadway  
(c) Chirping of birds  
(d) Roaring of the lions

(iv) Which word in the extract means 'beating  
against something'?

- (a) Shore (b) Core  
(c) Lapping (d) Arise

- Ans. (i) (b) Alliteration  
(ii) (d) The poet  
(iii) (a) Lapping of lake water  
(iv) (c) Lapping

3 And I shall have some peace there, for peace  
comes dropping slow

Dropping from the veils of the morning to  
where the cricket sings;

There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a  
purple glow,

And evenings full of the linnet's wings.

(i) How is the noon of Innisfree?

- (a) Purple glow (b) All a glimmer  
(c) Hot and humid (d) Irritating

(ii) How is the night of Innisfree?

- (a) Purple glow (b) All a glimmer  
(c) Hot and humid (d) Bitterly cold

(iii) Write the rhyming scheme of the given stanza.

- (a) abcd (b) aabb  
(c) abab (d) abcc

(iv) Which word in the extract means 'weak, faint,  
unsteady light'?

- (a) Veils (b) Cricket  
(c) Glow (d) Glimmer

- Ans. (i) (a) Purple glow  
(ii) (b) All a glimmer  
(iii) (c) abab  
(iv) (d) Glimmer



## Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

[2 Marks each]

1 What three things will the poet like to do at Innisfree?

**Ans.** Innisfree is a small island in a lake that provides the poet the opportunity to do what he likes. Three things that he will do there are building a small cabin with clay and wattles, plant nine rows of beans and rear bees in a beehive.

2 How shall the poet live at the isle of Innisfree?

**Ans.** The poet will live at the isle of innisfree peacefully and freely in a cabin made of clay and wattles. The poet would cultivate beans and gather honey from the honeybees there.

3 How is the roadway in the city different from the isle of Innisfree?

**Ans.** The roadway in the city is dull and grey. However, there is nature's beauty all around at Innisfree. The poet hears the soft lapping of lake water, the singing of the cricket and sees the birds flying.

4 Where does the poet want to go and why?

**Ans.** The poet wants to go to Innisfree, a rural island, because it will provide him everything that he desires. Most of all, he will get peace there. He envisions a simple life in a cottage surrounded by a garden instead of the dull pavement of the city.

5 How will the poet have peace at Innisfree?

**Ans.** The poet is a lover of nature. He will enjoy the natural beauty of Innisfree, undisturbed by the hustle and bustle of the city where he is now a days. Thus he will have peace at Innisfree.

6 How would the poet enjoy his time at Innisfree?

**Ans.** In the mornings he will watch the fallen dewdrops through the morning mist and hear the cricket singing. In the evenings, he will see the colourful wings of the flying linnnet birds. At midnight, he will watch the stars glowing in the sky. All these are enjoyable to him.

7 Explain the words, 'lake water lapping with low sounds'?

**Ans.** These words describe the beautiful natural environment at Innisfree, where the lake water strikes the island with a soft sound on its shore. As there is no noise around, one can hear this soft sound also.

8 How does the poet miss the isle of Innisfree?

**Ans.** The poet spent some time of his childhood at Innisfree. He keeps on hearing the sounds of that place and feels that it is calling to him. He wants to escape from the city and go there. So he misses the isle of Innisfree very much as there is no peace or solitude in the busy city of London.

## Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

[8 Marks each]

1 How does the isle of Innisfree contrast with the place where the poet now stands?

**Ans.** The poet contrasts the colourful images of the island with the dull images of the city. The poem is based on these two images. The island is bright even at night with the glow of the stars and music due to the cricket singing, the bees buzzing and the lake water lapping softly on its shore. In contrast, the roadways in the city are noisy. Where the city's roadways and pavements are dull and grey, the isle is having a purple glow at noon. Thus there is a major contrast between the two places. The isle of innisfree is full of peace as it is uninhabited and far away from the city. It is full of natural surroundings.

2 Describe Innisfree as visualised by the poet so graphically.

**Ans.** Innisfree is an island in a lake far away, both physically and metaphorically, from the dull grey city. You can see dewdrops on the ground through the morning mist, while a cricket is singing. At noon the Sun glows with a purple glow, while in the evening the colourful linnnet birds start to fly to their nests. At midnight the sky is alight with the glow of stars. The lake water laps softly on the shore of the island.

The poet would like to live there alone in a cabin built with clay and wattles (material for making walls, fences), rearing bees for honey and planting nine rows of beans.



3 Life in cities is so mechanical that people long/desire to go places which are peaceful and full of natural beauties. How it is a flaw of urbanisation. Elaborate in context of this poem 'The lake Isle of Innisfree'.

Ans. Due to urbanisation a city starts getting crowded with more and more of cemented buildings, less of open spaces and peaceful areas. Due to over population, industrialisation and pollution, life in cities becomes stuffy and noisy, men lead a mechanical life with no pace or solitude.

A place full of natural beauty, away from city will provide a perfect place to the people who long for peaceful surroundings.

The poet feels that only when we associate ourselves with the nature, then we will get a heavenly bliss. Poet's idea of peace is modeled (based) on the usual early morning sights one sees in rustic island life.

The poet who lives in London and leading a mad city life, finally decides to go to Innisfree, never to return. Standing in the street, he dreams of the beautiful and quiet Lake Isle of Innisfree and the secluded and self-sufficient life he would have lived there.

# Self Assessment

## Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and choose the correct option.

1 I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:

(i) Name the poet and poem.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (a) Phoebe Cary—A Legend of the Northland | (b) S Bharati—Wind                      |
| (c) James Kirkup—No Men are Foreign       | (d) WB Yeats—The Lake Isle of Innisfree |

(ii) What material will the poet use in building the cabin?

- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| (a) Cement and water | (b) Glass and machines |
| (c) Clay and wattles | (d) Flowers and wood   |

(iii) Which word in the extract means 'shelter'?

- |               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| (a) Innisfree | (b) Cabin   |
| (c) Clay      | (d) Wattles |

(iv) What does the word 'wattles' in the extract mean?

- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| (a) Poles interwoven with slender branches | (b) Concrete pillars |
| (c) Pebbles                                | (d) Dry leaves       |

2 And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;

(i) What are the veils of the morning that the poet is referring to here?

- |                       |                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| (a) Darkness and cold | (b) Brightness and warmth |
| (c) Heat              | (d) Humidity              |

(ii) What will the poet experience in Innisfree?

- |            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| (a) Warmth | (b) Cold     |
| (c) Peace  | (d) Darkness |

- (iii) Which word in the extract means 'a type of insect'?
- |           |              |
|-----------|--------------|
| (a) Veils | (b) Cricket  |
| (c) Sings | (d) Dropping |
- (iv) Which place is being referred to in the above lines?
- |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) Northern hemisphere | (b) Sea-shore         |
| (c) River side          | (d) Lake of Innisfree |

### Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

- 3 What kind of living environment does the poet desire at Innisfree?
- 4 Why does 'peace come dropping low' at Innisfree?
- 5 What picture does the poet portray of the lake water at Innisfree?
- 6 What quality does it display in the poet when he says 'I hear it in the deep heart's core'?
- 7 How significant is Innisfree for the poet?

### Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

- 8 The poet gives many reasons for going to Innisfree. Give his reasoning for each of them.
- 9 How does the poet visualise the morning, noon, evening and midnight at Innisfree? How are they different from where he now stands?
- 10 How is the 'roadway in London' different from the lake isle of Innisfree?