

BRAIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

English Assignment

Class: XI

December 2024

“The Tale of Melon City”

Theme

Vikram Seth’s poem “The Tale of Melon City” is a satirical narrative that highlights the absurdity of bureaucracy, the flaws of absolute monarchy, and the consequences of adhering rigidly to traditions and laws without applying reason. The tale also underscores the passive nature of citizens in accepting arbitrary rule, as long as their routine remains undisturbed. It questions the idea of leadership and governance, suggesting that power often lacks accountability or meaningful impact.

Poetic devices

1. Rhyme: The poem uses a regular rhyming scheme (AABB) to create a musical and rhythmic quality, which is typical of a ballad.
2. Alliteration: This device is used frequently, where consecutive words start with the same consonant sound, e.g., “Mighty men” and “Mischief made.”
3. Irony: The story is filled with irony, especially the outcome where a melon ends up being crowned king. The absurdity of this situation contrasts sharply with the expected behavior of a ruler.
4. Repetition: Repeated phrases like “the king said, ‘Let a new king be made!’” emphasize the cyclical nature of the events and the senselessness of the decisions being made.
5. Personification: The city and objects like the melon are treated as characters with human traits. For example, the melon is crowned as king, personifying the idea of leadership and power.
6. Humor: The absurdity and wit of the poem are a key part of its charm, using humor to satirize authority, justice, and bureaucracy.
7. Metaphor: The melon symbolizes absurdity and the randomness of political decisions, representing the nonsensical nature of some societal systems.

Answer the following questions.

1. How does Vikram Seth use satire to critique governance and the justice system in “The Tale of Melon City”?
2. What is the significance of the king’s decision to sacrifice himself for the “justice of the land”?
3. How does the citizens’ acceptance of a “melon” as their ruler reflect on societal priorities and complacency?

4. In what ways does the poem critique the reliance on tradition and symbolism in leadership and governance?
5. How does "The Tale of Melon City" explore the relationship between individual responsibility and collective decision-making?