

Thinking about the Poem**1. Which country or countries do you think “the Northland” refers to?**

Answer: “The Northland” could refer to any extremely cold country in the Earth’s north polar region, such as Greenland, the northern regions of Russia, Canada, Norway etc.

2. What did Saint Peter ask the old lady for? What was the lady’s reaction?

Answer: Saint Peter asked the old lady for one of her baked cakes to satisfy his hunger. The lady tried to bake a small cake for the saint.

3. How did he punish her?

Answer: He punished the lady by changing her into a woodpecker that built “as birds do” and gathered scanty food by boring in the “hard, dry wood” all day long.

4. How does the woodpecker get her food?

Answer: The woodpecker gets her food by boring holes into trees.

5. Do you think that the old lady would have been so ungenerous if she had known who Saint Peter really was? What would she have done then?

Answer: No, the old lady would not have been so ungenerous if she had known who Saint Peter really was. Instead, she would have tried to please him with her cakes for the fulfilment of her greedy desires.

6. Is this a true story? Which part of this poem do you feel is the most important?

Answer: No, this not a true story; it is a legend.

I feel that the point in the story where the old lady is changed into a woodpecker is the most important. This is because the punishment meted out to the lady teaches us the value of generosity and charity.

7. What is a legend? Why is this poem called a legend?

Answer: A ‘legend’ is a popular story from the past which is believed by many but one cannot prove whether it is true or not. It usually contains a message or a moral and is narrated to children.

The poet himself says that he doesn’t believe this tale to be true. This poem is called a ‘legend’ because it preaches generosity towards fellow beings.

8. Write the story of ‘A Legend of the Northland’ in about ten sentences.

Answer: Once Saint Peter stopped by an old lady’s cottage because he was feeling hungry and weak after the day’s fasting. The lady was baking cakes on the hearth. Since he was weak with fasting, he asked her for a cake from her store of cakes.

The selfish lady tried to bake small cakes but each time they seemed too big for her to give away. Finally, she baked one that was as thin as a wafer. Unable to part with it too, she put it on a shelf and did not give any cake to the Saint.

Saint Peter was very angry with her behaviour and said she was too selfish to live as a human and have food, shelter and a fire to keep her warm. He punished her by changing her into a woodpecker that would have to build a nest to live in, bore for food in the trunks of trees. Her clothes were burned and she was left with her scarlet cap on her head as she flew out through the chimney.

Even today she still lives in the woods and is seen by all the country school boys.

II. 1. 1. Let's look at the words at the end of the second and fourth lines, viz., 'snows' and 'clothes', 'true' and 'you', 'below' and 'know'. We find that 'snows' rhymes with 'clothes', 'true' rhymes with 'you' and 'below' rhymes with 'know'.

Answer: The rhyming words are:

'Few' and 'through'

'Earth' and 'hearth'

'Done' and 'one'

'Lay' and 'away'

'One' and 'done'

'Flat' and 'that'

Myself and 'shelf'

'Faint' and 'saint'

'Form' and 'warm'

'Food' and 'wood'

'Word' and 'bird'

'Same' and 'flame'

'Wood' and 'food'

2. Go to the local library or talk to older persons in your locality and find legends in your own language. Tell the class these legends.

Answer: Echo was a nymph who talked too much. She was very fond of having the last word. One day she spoke rudely to the great Juno, who said that for this offence Echo should never use her voice again, unless to repeat what she had just heard, but since she was so very fond of last words, she might repeat the last words of others.

This was almost as bad as if Juno had changed her into a parrot. Echo was very much ashamed, and hid herself in the forest.

Narcissus, a young man who had hair as yellow as gold and eyes as blue as the sky, – a very rare thing in Greece, where most people were very dark, – used to hunt in the forest where Echo was hiding. As she was peeping out shyly from some cave or from behind a great tree, Echo often saw Narcissus, and she admired him very much.

One day Narcissus became separated from his friends, and hearing something rustle among the leaves, he called out, "Who's here?"

"Here," answered Echo.

"Here I am. Come!" said Narcissus.

"I am come," said Echo; and, as she spoke, she came out from among the trees.

When Narcissus saw a stranger, instead of one of his friends as he had expected, he looked surprised and walked quickly away.

After this, Echo never came out and allowed herself to be seen again, and in time she faded away till she became only a voice.

This voice was heard for many, many years in forests and among mountains, particularly in caves. In their solitary walks, hunters often heard it. Sometimes it mocked the barking of their dogs; sometimes it repeated their own last words. It always had a weird and mournful sound, and seemed to make lonely places lonelier.

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