

Page No. 100

Before You Read

Have you ever stopped at a roadside stand? What have you observed there?

Answer:

Robert Frost believes that if we encounter a beautiful thing, even for a small moment, the pleasure remains forever with us. It leaves an everlasting impression which inspires us to lead a life with optimism and hope.

Page No. 102

Think It Out

1. The city folk who drove through the countryside hardly paid any heed to the roadside stand or to the people who ran it. If at all they did, it was to complain. Which lines bring this out? What was their complaint about?

Answer:

“The polished traffic passed with a mind ahead,

Or if ever aside a moment, then out of sorts

At having the landscape marred with the artless paint.

Of signs that with N turned wrong and S turned wrong”

According to the city folk, the stalls have awkward signboards that blemish the landscape blessed with scenic beauty.

2. What was the plea of the folk who had put up the roadside stand?

Answer:

The rural folks pathetically pleaded for customers to stop and buy their goods. City folks passed by on this road, and therefore the rural folks set up the stand on the roadside to grab their attention and sell the goods.

3. The government and other social service agencies appear to help the poor rural people, but actually do them no good. Pick out the words and phrases that the poet uses to show their double standards.

Answer:

The poet criticizes the government for the double standards and the social service agencies, which promise to improve the living standards of the farmers and guide them to the right side of life. But when it comes to delivering the promise, they forget them or fulfil them by keeping in mind their own benefits. The poet calls them “beneficent beasts of prey” and “greedy good-doers” who “swarm over their lives”. The poet says that these people make well-thought-out and calculated shrewd moves, to which farmers are unaware and fall prey to their selfish designs. These clever people rob the peace of mind of these simple and humble farmers. The poet says,

“..... enforcing benefits

That are calculated to soothe them out of their wits,

And by teaching them how to sleep they sleep all day,

Destroy their sleeping at night the ancient way.”

4. What is the ‘childish longing’ that the poet refers to? Why is it ‘vain’?

Answer:

According to Robert Frost, the people running the roadside stand suffer from 'childish longing'. They always expect customers and wait for them. Their windows are always kept open to attract them. When no one turns up, they become sad. They always wait to listen to the squeal of brakes and the sound of a car stop, but all their efforts go in vain.

5. Which lines tell us about the insufferable pain that the poet feels at the thought of the plight of the rural poor?

Answer:

Being filled with empathy, the poet is not able to bear the plight of the innocent and unassuming rural people. The lines which tell us about the insufferable pain are the following:

"Sometimes I feel myself I can hardly bear

The thought of so much childish longing in vain,

The sadness that lurks near the open window there,

That waits all day in almost open prayer"

