

No Men are Foreign

James Kirkup

NO MEN ARE FOREIGN



Sreedevi Nair
AECS-1, Tarapur

About James Falconer Kirkup

- Born on April 23, 1918 United Kingdom
- An internationally acclaimed poet, novelist, playwright, and translator.
- Wrote about 30 books, which include autobiography, novels, and plays.
- His first book of poetry, 'The Drowned Sailor at the Downs' was published in 1947.
- A skilled writer of haiku and tanka.
- Work includes several dozen poetry collections, six volumes of autobiography and over a hundred monographs of original work and translations.
- Died on May 10, 2009.

No Men are Foreign : Theme

- In No Men Are Foreign, James Kirkup reminds us that the man-made differences are baseless and they have caused endless wars and bloodshed.
- Divisions based on superficial differences are senseless since we all need the same basic resources for our survival.
- We are all descended from a common source and therefore, we must shun all violence and unite to make our lives better.
- Armies of the different countries wage war against their brothers.

Theme continued:

- They do not understand that there is an inherent similarity between all human beings.
- It is only in the times of peace and harmony that civilization progresses and people are content.
- In fact if a war is raging in a country then that country faces the threat of starvation since all sorts of production comes to a halt.

No Men are Foreign Message

- The poet tells us that some people have ceased to believe in the essential unity of man.
- They believe that a man hailing from a different country is to be hated and discriminated against. Such people are the ones who cause wars due to their false beliefs.
- The poet assures his readers that man is just the same everywhere. He experiences the same joys and sorrows and has been descended from the same ancestors. Therefore, he is justified in asking his readers to expel hatred for their fellow humans from their minds and heart.

SUMMARY

- The poem expounds the universal truth of brotherhood and equality without any kind of prejudice.
- No one is foreign or 'strange'.
- Humanity is the same all over the world and raising our arms against anyone means fighting against ourselves.
- Wars and conflicts defile the earth which is ours.
- The poem is obviously a strong plea to establish universal brotherhood as the same heart throbs in all - the heart of man.



Stanza 1

**Remember, no men are strange, no countries
foreign**

Beneath all uniforms, a single body breathes

Like ours: the land our brothers walk upon

Is earth like this, in which we all shall lie.

In this stanza the poet emphasizes the value of universal brotherhood. He tells us why we must not hate our brothers and sisters who live in different countries. He asks us never to forget that people living in other countries are not strange or unfamiliar. They may fight for the army of their country, but beneath the uniform, we are all similar. All human bodies live and breathe in the same fashion. We are all brothers because we walk upon the same earth that we have divided into countries. We all shall meet the same earth in the end where we shall be buried after death.





Stanza 2

They, too, aware of sun and air and
water,
Are fed by peaceful harvests, by war's
long winter starv'd.
Their hands are ours, and in their lines
we read
A labour not different from our own.

The poet gives us further evidence of the unity of man. He says that all the people of the world are nourished and nurtured equally by the elements of nature like sun, air and water. Everyone is united by the sameness of spirit. Like us the people of other countries too enjoy the harvest in peaceful times and dread starvation caused by long drawn wars. They too toil to earn livelihood and their destiny is similar to ours.





Stanza 3

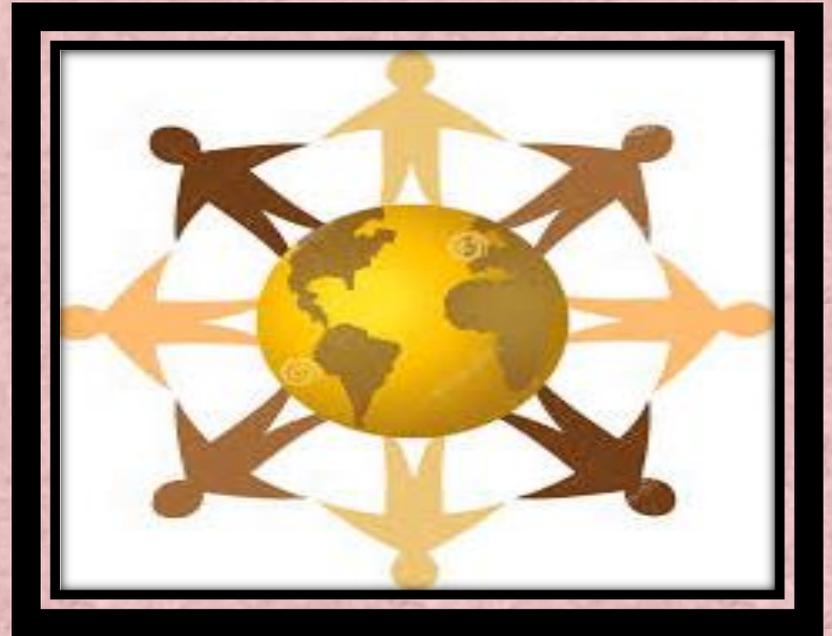
Remember they have eyes like ours that
wake

Or sleep, and strength that can be won

By love. In every land is common life

That all can recognise and understand.

The poet urges us to remember that the so called strange and foreign people sleep and wake like we do. Like us they too can be won over by love and not by force. Their experiences of life are similar to that of ours. Hence we all find something familiar in each other's life and identify with each other.





Stanza 4

Let us remember, whenever we are told

To hate our brothers, it is ourselves

That we shall dispossess, betray, condemn.

Remember, we who take arms against each
other

The fourth stanza says that whenever we are asked by our leaders or our rulers to hate or exploit the people of other countries we must remember that this hatred will have a negative effect on us. It is a form of self-destruction. If we kill people of any other country, we are endangering human beings as a whole and their survival on earth. We would find ourselves cheated as it would deprive us of the bliss of universal brotherhood. We would condemn ourselves to a life of enmity and strangeness.



Stanza 5

It is the human earth that we defile.

**Our hells of fire and dust outrage the
innocence**

Of air that is everywhere our own,

**Remember, no men are foreign, and no
countries strange.**

The poet once again reminds us that war is futile and it spoils the very earth for which we take up arms against each other. The loss is common to all. The deadly weapons emit fire and ashes that spread all over and pollute the environment. This robs the air of its purity and the world becomes a more difficult place to live in. It is therefore imperative not to consider any human being as foreign and any country as strange. Everything is common and everyone is equal on earth. Hence we must build mutual respect and trust.



Poetic Devices in No Men are Foreign:

- **Rhyme scheme:**
- The poet does not follow any identifiable rhyme scheme in this poem.
- It is written in **free verse**.

Poetic Devices

- Metaphor:

- A metaphor is a figure of speech that, directly refers to one thing by mentioning another. It may provide clarity or identify hidden similarities between two ideas.

- **Examples**

- Beneath all uniforms, a single body breathes -
- wars long winter starv'd
- Our hells of fire

Poetic Devices

- **Alliteration:**
- The repetition of usually the initial consonant sounds in two or more closely placed words is called alliteration. (The repetition of words that have the same sound at the beginning.)
- **E.g.**
- Body, breathes
- war's, winter

Poetic Devices

- **Transferred epithet:**
- Transferred epithet is a figure of speech in which an adjective usually used to describe one thing is transferred to another.
- E.g. “peaceful harvests”.

Poetic Devices

- **Repetition:**

- Repetition is the repeating of a word or phrase to add emphasis and stress to an idea.
- The poet repeats the word 'Remember' word 5 times in this poem to emphasize the message the poem has to convey.
- “Remember, no men are strange, no countries foreign”
- “Remember, no men are foreign, and no countries strange”

Make Peace not War



WORD MEANING

- Foreign : belonging to a country that is not our own
- Beneath : under
- Betray : to deceive
- Condemn : criticise
- Arms : weapons
- Defile : damage the purity, spoil
- Outrage : violate the purity of

