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Before You Read

Q. What does the title of the poem suggest to you? What do you think the poem is about?

Ans: Pablo Neruda advises the reader to keep inner calm in his poem "Keeping Quiet." Since language serves as a barrier between individuals, the poet begs everyone not to speak, as indicated by the poem's title. We will find ourselves again during this time of inactivity, and nature won't suffer any more damage. The poem also encourages respect for one another and international brotherhood. The dread of dying prevents us from living life to the fullest because it drives everyone to do as much as they can in a finite amount of time.

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Think It Out

Q. What will counting up to twelve and keeping still help us achieve?

Ans: The poet exhorts the audience to count silently from one to twelve, with each number denoting the hour or sign of the zodiac. We've never experienced anything like it before, so it will be a time of unending joy and peace. He thinks that in the haste to accomplish everything, individuals fail to consider the repercussions of their choices. The pause will assist us in overcoming it and achieving inner tranquility. They will also be able to experience the peace of the discovery and comprehend the significance of the reason they were born as human souls.

Q. Do you think the poet advocates total inactivity and death?

Ans: The poet asks everyone to stop and contain themselves and experience the present moment. By this, he did not mean total inactivity and death but a state of tranquillity. Those who are busy destroying their mental health and nature might stop and work towards their self-discovery which would benefit everyone. Keeping quiet will be an initiator for the rebirth of humanity. There will not be any war or harm to nature or oneself while everyone will remain calm and count till twelve.

Q. What is the 'sadness' that the poet refers to in the poem?

Ans: As humans, we are completely immersed in the desire to achieve more. We end up trapping ourselves in a monotonous schedule that drives us away from ourselves and fails to understand each other. It ruins the universal brotherhood and peace that we all must have amongst ourselves. The wars end up killing many and the consequence of lack of this understanding is borne by everyone. We should try to find peace in the moments we are blessed every day and reclaim the peace and serenity within us.

Q. What symbol from Nature does the poet invoke to say that there can be life under apparent stillness?

Ans: The poet uses seasons to justify that there can be life under apparent stillness. With the change in seasons, nature rebirths itself, and similarly when people remain quiet for a while, they will realize their purpose and undergo a similar rebirth which might change the course of their lives forever.

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Try This Out

Q. Choose a quiet corner and keep still physically and mentally for about five minutes. Do you feel any change in your state of mind?

Ans: We as humans are not very accustomed to being silent and still for a while. We constantly move around and work to finish as many jobs as we can. I found it unpleasant and unusual to be silent and immobile for a moment. At first, it was frightening, and my body and mind pushed me to do the tasks at hand. As I made an effort to concentrate only on my breathing, things started to seem a little quieter and the mental storm eventually subsided. I felt a little more in control of my anxiousness at the peaceful time. I had the impression that now I could work more enthusiastically. It is a moment worth having, especially when you're feeling depressed or overwhelmed.