

Lesson Name : 43

Lesson Title : On the Seashore and Playthings

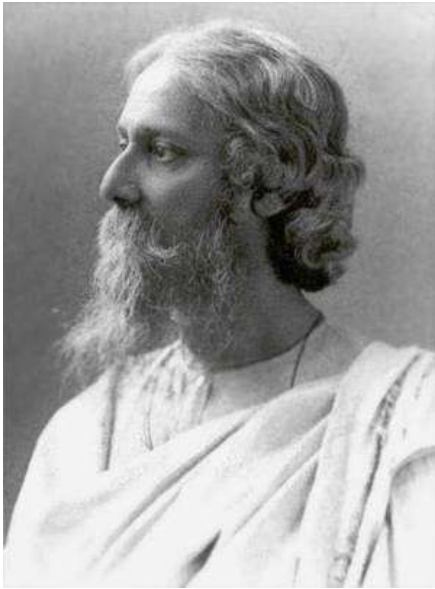
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Read "[On the Seashore](#)" and "[Playthings](#)," by Rabindranath Tagore.



Comparing and Contrasting Poems

In this lesson, you read two poems by the same author, Rabindranath Tagore. These two poems were selected because of their similar subject matter and themes. In both of these poems, the carefree world of childhood is contrasted with the knowledge of the weight of the adult world.

While it may seem easy to identify the similar main ideas these poems share, when you compare and contrast two texts, you should always try to go deeper than the surface level. To do this, you can look for similarities and differences not just in ideas, but also in how the ideas are presented.

Take a few minutes to fill in the table that follows. This table has questions that will prompt you to think critically about how Tagore develops his ideas in these two poems.

Question	"On the Seashore"	"Playthings"
Who is the speaker of the poem? Is the speaker limited (knows only one perspective) or omniscient (knows everything about everyone)?		

How is childhood presented in the poem?		
How is adulthood presented in the poem?		
What images are used to convey childhood?		
What images are used to convey adulthood?		
Does the poem use figurative language? If so, how? To what effect?		
Does the poem have any symbols? If so, what are they? How are they used?		
Do you have any other observations not noted above? If so, note them here.		

Were you able to answer all of the questions? Take a look at the answers that follow and compare them to yours.

Question	"On the Seashore"	"Playthings"
Who is the speaker of the poem? Is the speaker limited (knows only one perspective) or omniscient (knows everything about everyone)?	There is an omniscient speaker. You don't learn anything about the speaker in the poem.	The speaker is the adult in the poem. They have a limited, first-person (I) perspective.
How is childhood presented in the poem?	Innocent (children are unaware of the dangers or mysteries of the sea) Fun and fancy-free (children are laughing and playing on the beach)	Simplistic (the child plays with a stick) Happy (the child is enjoying a game)
How is adulthood presented in the poem?	Dangerous and stressful (the poem mentions storms and death) Desirous of material wealth (treasure hunters)	Stressful (the adult worries about money and work) Unsatisfying (the adult cannot obtain the things they want)
What images are used to convey childhood?	Boisterous water, infinite sky, house of sand, smiling, laughing	Broken stick, mud pies
What images are used to convey adulthood?	Death-dealing waves, tempest roaming the sky, shipwrecks	Lumps of gold and silver, frail canoe

Does the poem use figurative language? If so, how? To what effect?	The ocean is personified throughout the poem. It is described as doing human things including laughing, smiling, being boisterous, singing, etc. This makes the ocean seem childlike and friendly, which helps build the association between it and children.	An analogy is used in which working to obtain material things is compared to "a frail canoe" crossing "the sea of desire." This helps develop the idea that the pursuits of adulthood are weak and often unsatisfying or unattainable.
Does the poem have any symbols? If so, what are they? How are they used?	The "endless worlds of children" could symbolize the idea that all children are connected, no matter the time or place. The ocean could symbolize both childhood and adulthood, depending on how it is depicted. When it is light and happy, it is a child; when it is malicious and difficult, it is an adult.	
Do you have any other observations not noted above? If so, note them here.	Structured with long sentences that are not broken into separate lines. Written almost like prose.	Structured with long sentences that are not broken into separate lines. Written almost like prose. One instance of dialogue.

Now that you have side-by-side notes for both poems, take a few minutes to read through them and make a list of similarities and differences. Try to go beyond statements like "Both use figurative language" or "Both depict childhood as an innocent and happy time." Instead, think about why the poems are similar or different. For example, you could say, "Both poems use figurative language to create correlations between childhood and adulthood."

Similarities	Differences

Were you able to pinpoint both similarities and differences? Here are some you may have noticed.

Similarities	Differences

<p>Childhood is presented similarly in both poems – as a carefree, happy time. Similarly, adulthood is more stressful; there is more awareness and more pursuit of material possessions.</p> <p>Both poems use images to convey childhood and adulthood.</p> <p>Both poems use figurative language to create correlations between childhood and adulthood.</p>	<p>"On the Seashore" uses an omniscient speaker to create a sense of universality; this poem is about all children and adults. "Playthings" uses a limited, first-person speaker who interacts one-on-one with the child in the poem. This makes the poem narrower and more personal.</p> <p>"On the Seashore" uses images of the seashore and ocean to convey both childhood and adulthood. It also is richer in imagery. "Playthings" uses less focused imagery and does not develop it as richly.</p> <p>"On the Seashore" uses personification to create a connection between the seashore and children. "Playthings" uses an analogy to develop the sense of the pointlessness of adulthood.</p> <p>"On the Seashore" uses symbolism to further emphasize the universality of the poem. "Playthings" does not have any symbols.</p>
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From this point, you could use your notes to develop a more in-depth analysis of the poems and Tagore's style of writing.

When you compare and contrast poems in the future, use techniques like these to help develop your analysis.

Vocabulary

Understanding vocabulary is a great way to better comprehend what you are reading. Review these vocabulary words as they are used in "On the Seashore" and "Playthings."

1. **infinite** – adj. – limitless or endless
2. **boisterous** – adj. – wild or stormy
3. **withered** – adj. – dry and shriveled
4. **surges** – verb – makes a sudden powerful forward or upward movement
5. **tempest** – noun – a violent, windy storm
6. **obtain** – verb – get or acquire (something)
7. **frail** – adj. – easily damaged or broken; fragile