Keeping Quiet

Summary PDF and revision sheet · Class 12 English Core, Flamingo Poem 2 (CBSE and RBSE) · Pablo Neruda **LitGram**

In one line: the poet asks the world to count to twelve and keep still, so that in silence people stop harming nature and each other and come to understand themselves; this is a call for reflection and peace, not for inactivity or death.

Poet: Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), Chile; Nobel Prize 1971. Form: free verse (English translation).

Stanza by stanza

1. **Count to twelve,** all keep still (a full cycle: hours, months).
2. **No language, no movement** for one second; languages divide, silence unites.
3. **An "exotic moment",** "without rush, without engines", all together.
4. **Fishermen** would not harm whales; the **salt-gatherer** would look at his hurt hands.
5. **War makers** (green wars, gas, fire, "victory with no survivors") walk with brothers in the shade.
6. **Not "total inactivity";** "Life is what it is about"; "no truck with death".
7. **The sadness** of never understanding ourselves and threatening ourselves with death.
8. **The Earth** seems dead in winter and "later proves to be alive".
9. **The poet goes;** we keep quiet.

Devices

Device	Example
Paradox	"victory with no survivors"
Contrast / oxymoron	"green wars"
Repetition	"wars with gas, wars with fire"
Symbol	the Earth after winter; counting to twelve
Free verse, enjambment	no rhyme scheme; lines run on

हिंदी में भावार्थ

कवि कहता है कि हम बारह तक गिनें और कुछ पल चुप रहें। उस मौन में मछुआरे व्हेल को नहीं मारेंगे, मज़दूर अपने घायल हाथ देखेगा, और युद्ध करने वाले अपने भाइयों के साथ छाँव में टहलेंगे। कवि निष्क्रियता या मृत्यु नहीं चाहता; वह जीवन चाहता है। जैसे सर्दी में धरती मरी हुई लगती है पर बसंत में फिर जीवित हो उठती है, वैसे ही मौन नए जीवन की तैयारी है।

Word meanings

Word	Meaning	Word	Meaning
exotic	strange and new	inactivity	doing nothing at all
green wars	wars against nature	no truck with	nothing to do with
survivors	people left alive	single-minded	focused on one aim

Common mistakes

- The poet does not want inactivity or death: quote "total inactivity" and "no truck with death".
- "Green wars" are wars against the environment.
- The "sadness" is not grief for the dead; it is never understanding ourselves.
- Free verse: no fixed rhyme scheme.

Memory trick, "12 Fishermen Salt War": Twelve, Fishermen (whales), Salt (hurt hands), War (brothers), then "not death" and "the Earth".

Practice answers

1. **What will counting to twelve achieve?** A calm moment to look within, stop harming nature and each other, and feel brotherhood.
2. **Does the poet want total inactivity?** No; he wants a pause that leads to wiser living, and "no truck with death".
3. **What is the "sadness"?** Never understanding ourselves and threatening ourselves with death.
4. **Which symbol shows life under stillness?** The Earth: dead-looking in winter, alive in spring.
5. **Why no language?** Languages divide; silence is shared by all.