

①

Dr. Nuzhat Shirin

classmate

Date _____
Page _____

The Scholar Gypsy (Mathew Arnold)
B.A. Part - 1 (Hons) Paper - II
(English Hons)

The Scholar Gypsy (1853) is a poem by Mathew Arnold based on a 17th century. It has often been called one of the best and most popular of Arnold's poems and is also familiar to music-lovers through Ralph Vaughan Williams' choral work, An Oxford Elegy which sets lines from this poem and from its companion-piece

One of the themes of "The Scholar Gypsy" by Mathew Arnold is the ennui and boredom bred by modern life. The narrator of the poem clearly finds every-day modern life lacking in excitement and inspiration. The narrator admires the scholar Gypsy for being able to find release from the life of a scholar in Oxford. Instead the Scholar-Gypsy escapes into nature with a band of "gipsies", represent a group that does not follow modern, industrial patterns but instead still wanders & tries to make a life by reading people's minds.

Another theme is the way in which nature provides a release from modern life. At the beginning of the poem, the narrator is watching shepherds in a pasture. Stalks of flowers shade him from the sun, and the narrator sees the towers of Oxford in the distance. These towers of Oxford represent the ugly, unwanted intrusion of modern life into perfectly pastoral scene. Later, the narrator believes he and

(2)

others see the scholar-gipsy has a free, un fettered life in nature, which represents the freedom of life before the Industrial age.

A related theme is the inspiration that comes from nature. Arnold writes about the scholar-gipsy, "Thou waitest for the spark from heaven!" The narrator believes that the scholar-gipsy is able to receive divine inspiration and is closer to the sources of this inspiration than he himself is. In contrast the narrator says that people in modern life are "light half-believers of our casual needs". The narrator believes that modern people are not believers in anything and have no real convictions. The scholar-gipsy is closer to sources of authentic joy than the narrator and others living modern lives are. While nature brings the scholar-gipsy a life of happiness and creativity, modern people in a more industrial world lead stale, uninspired lives.

The theme of time surfaced in much of Arnold's work usually as a tragic force of loss, something that humans have no control over, and yet time can also bring consolation, reminding us that there are greater forces than the limitations of humanity forces that we can reflect upon in hopes of reaching some greater state.

vs. ~~modern life~~ ~~the~~ ~~idea~~
typically Roman, to suggest that the struggle
for human transcendence are timeless. Myth
allows to relate to pure times, but also to realize
the extent to which humans must always stru-
-ggle against their own natures.

The poem itself is much more specific. The Country
-side is a specific one, well known and loved
by Arnold, the legend of scholar Cipsy had special
meaning for him. While Arnold certainly seeks
something that will supply meaning for life,
what the poem specifically emphasizes is that
the poet seeks a way of life analogous to that
of the scholar. The scholar is free dedicated, not
pulled about by the daily concerns of modern
life - and thus he has a kind.

