

Questions & Answers

The Inchcape Rock: About the Poem

The Inchcape Rock by Robert Southey is a ballad (a song or poem that tells a story, or a slow love song) that tells us about the legends of the Inchcape Rock, a rock in the North Sea about 18 km off the east coast of Angus, Scotland. The story is about the good Abbot of Aberbrothok and the devilish Sir Ralph the Rover. The Abbot achieved the great feat of installing a bell on the dangerous Inchcape rock that had previously caused many shipwrecks. (Ship accidents) His bell rang during the storms and issued an alert for the passing ships. So, the seamen knew where the rock is and could avoid the danger of an accident. They blessed the Abbot for his

good work. But it was the Rover who felt jealous at the fame of the Abbot and planned to cut down the bell from the Inchcape rock. And so, he did. This Ralph the Rover was actually a sea-pirate so, he needed to destroy the bell to accomplish his desire to rob more ships by putting them in danger. But finally, he himself was the victim of the Inchcape rock. One day his ship was left in the midst of storms, lost the direction and crashed against the rock. Thus, the Rover was punished for his sinful work. Here the poet Robert Southey delivers a message through his poem: As you sow, so shall you reap.

EXTRA QUESTIONS

1. What is “Inchcape Rock”?

Ans: The ‘Inchcape Rock’ is a perilous reef off the east coast of Angus Scotland near the mouth of the river Tay. The rock would just protrude for a few inches above the surface of the sea in low tide and be completely covered by the sea at high tide or when the sea was rough. Many ships had been wrecked by this [‘Inchcape rock’](#) when they mistakenly struck it when it was covered by the sea.

2. Describe the legend of the Inchcape Bell.

Ans: According to the legend, a monk placed a bell on the Inchcape shore to send warning to sailors about the impending danger during storms. According to the folktale, whenever, the bell rang, the sailors used to thank the Abbot for saving them from danger. But a pirate named Sir Ralph cut down the bell to earn money and treasures from ships that fatally crashed against the rock. However, one day Sir Ralph’s ship too encountered a storm and

crashed against the rock and he died repenting.

3. Who is Sir Ralph? What are his intentions?

Ans: Sir Ralph was a notorious pirate who spent days looting and plundering other ships for treasures. He wanted to tarnish the reputation of the Abbot of Aberbrothok so he cut down the famous bell tied on the Inchcape Rock. He looted and robbed the ships that crashed against the rock and soon became rich.

4. How had Ralph grown rich and prosperous?

Ans: For a long time, Ralph had been wandering in distant seas. He had been plundering and looting many ships. In this way, he made a great heap of wealth and had grown rich and prosperous.

5. What do you learn from the action of Sir Ralph?

Ans: Sir Ralph's actions give the moral message that what one sows, so does he reap. The pirate committed an evil deed by cutting down the Inchcape Bell which was a life saver for seamen. He did this for his selfish intentions to hoard wealth. But, ultimately, in his death-hour, he needed the Inchcape Bell to save his ship, but it was not there. We learn that evil deeds never go unpunished. The evil-doer becomes the victim of his own wicked designs. He digs a pit for others but himself falls into it.

6. Describe Sir Ralph's feelings towards the Abbot of Aberbrothok.

Ans: Sir Ralph did not like the Abbot's actions of installing a bell on the Inchcape Rock to save sailors. It was getting in his way of looting wealth from ships. Also, he was jealous of the Abbot's reputation.

So, he decided to remove the bell. Now he was satisfied because he thought that the next man who happened to pass through that way would not survive to bless the Abbot.

New Words:

Stir-swirl, whirl, rotate (here movement)

Still (adj)- here, not moving, steady, silent, quiet, calm, stable etc.

Sails- canvas used for mast, strong sheet of fabric attached to a boat.

Keel - base or bottom of ship

Motion -movement

Steady — stable

Shock - blow, jolt, stunned, unpleasant event

Buoy - floater, drifter, floating object anchored in the sea

Swing (Swung) - swayed, waved

Ring (Rung)-sounded, call for attention by sounding a bell

Mariner-sailor, seamen

Abbot- head of Abbey of monks

Abbey- a building where monks or nuns live or used to live

Aberbrothok- largest town in Scotland

Surge's swell-sudden and great rise in the level of the sea

Perilous-dangerous

Blest-old English form of blessed

Joyance - (Poetic) joy, delight, enjoyment

Gay- happy, light hearted and carefree

Wheel's round- whirling over the sea, soaring

Joyance- screaming in joy, delight

Speck - dot, spot, point, mark

Sir Ralph the Rover - a sea pirate

Pirate- a person who attacks and Rob's ships at the sea.

Deck - flooring of a ship, boarding place in a ship, the upper floor of the sea.

The darker speck - here metaphorically used for the Inchcape Bell

Cheering - encouraging, motivating, soothing, delighted

Mirthful - joyful, merry, gleeful, overjoyed, amusing

Wickedness - evil, malice, badness, being immoral

Inchcape float - means the buoy (floater)

Quoth - archaic word for quoted (said/spoke)

Row - oared to, sailed to, rowing by oars in waters

Plague - torture, torment, cause trouble, kill, destroy

Spring- name of one of the seasons

Float-a thing that is buoyant in water

Sunk- past participle form of sink, submerged, go down

Gurgling-bubbling, make a hallow sound

Burst-apart suddenly and violently

Scour'd-(here) travelled freely, energetically for ships to rob

Plunder'd store-big amount of looted/robbed wealth

Steers- directs the course of the ship, guide

Haze-thin mist, fog

Hath-(an archaic word)has

Gale- a very strong wind

Dawn-(here)moon will appear, the first appearance of light in the sky before sunrise

Canst-can, an archaic word for you can

Breakers-(here) heavy sea waves

Methinks- it seems to me (archaic form of 'I think')

Swell- (here) Tide

Drift- move slowly, be carried slowly by a current of air or water

Vessel- large boat, ship

Strikes- hits forcibly

Tore- pulled hard

Despair- frustration, absence of hope

Beneath- under

Dreadful- extremely bad or serious

Devil- the supreme spirit of evil, Satan, demon.

Knell- the sound of a bell solemnly after death or at funeral announcement of death.