

9th Standard English

The Seven Ages Summary

'The Seven Ages' is an extract taken from Shakespeare's famous play 'As You Like It'. The poet compares this world to a stage of a theatre and all its men and women to actors and actresses. They take birth, play seven different roles and die. These seven stages of man's life are that of an infant, school-boy, lover, soldier, justice, old 'pantaloon' and 'second childishness'. After playing these seven roles and living through these stages of life, man departs from this world. It ends the strange and eventful history of his life.

World Compared to a Stage

Shakespeare compares this world to a stage in a theatre. All men and women are only players. The stage has both exits and entrances. Similarly, men and women take birth and enter the world. They live their lives and go out of it when they die. Every man plays seven roles and lives through seven stages of life.

Infant and School-boy

The birth of an infant begins the first stage of man's life. The infant cries and vomits in the arms of his nurse. Then he grows into a school-going boy. He is unwilling to go to the school and moves towards it at a snail's speed.

Lover and Soldier

In the third stage man plays the role of a lover. He sighs like a furnace and

keeps on writing woeful ballads praising the beauty of the eyes of his beloved. The fourth stage is that of a soldier. He keeps a beard like that of a leopard. He always runs after honour and fame. He is ready even to enter a cannon's mouth just for momentary fame and reputation.

Justice and Old 'Pantaloon'

In the fifth stage man plays the role of a justice. He is fond of eating chickens and develops a fat round belly. He is full of wise sayings and modern instances. He is a man of wisdom and knowledge. In the sixth stage man becomes weak and thin in body. He wears slippers, spectacles and clothes that he bought when he was young. These pants and stockings have become loose for his shrunk and thin legs.

Last Stage

The seventh stage is 'second childishness'. In this stage man becomes very old and starts behaving like a child. He is left with no teeth and becomes weak in eyesight. Actually, he loses taste and becomes a victim of forgetfulness. Then after living through the seventh stage of life, man departs from the world.