



The Museum of Obsolescence*

(*from obsolete – no longer useful)

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Pre read discussion:

01

What objects do you think that we use now will become obsolete in the future?

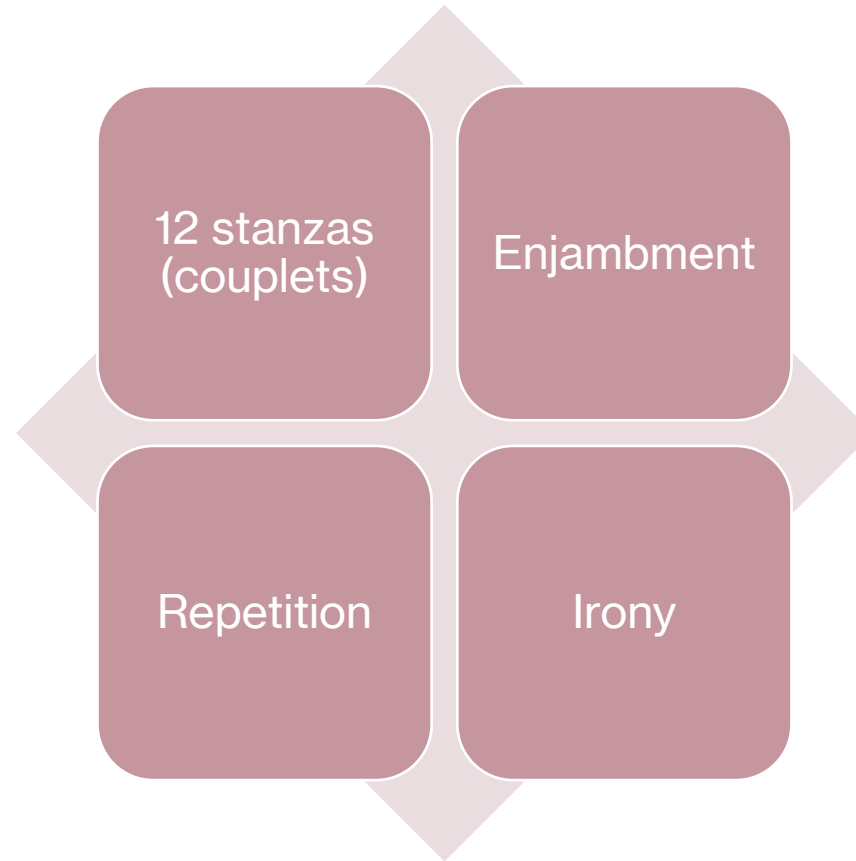
02

What ideologies/ways of living do you think will become obsolete in the future?

03

Can you think of something from the past that your parents/grandparents have been nostalgic about?

Form / Things of note



Overview

The poem is an image of a dystopian future, where the speaker visits a museum containing all the things we value today on earth but are now obsolete on this new planet; material goods, money, religion, and states of being such as love.

Concepts such as 'love' and 'illness', are foreign and the old ways of our civilisation are mocked and ridiculed. An old man is even on display, to be replaced by a video once he dies.

The final irony is that as the speaker leaves the museum, after looking in a mirror (which almost accuses), there are still vendors outside selling t-shirts, a nod to the fact that our inane, harmful consumerism continues.

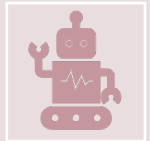
Themes Explored



Excessive consumption, consumerism and wastefulness.



Climate change and our own willful ignorance.



AI and robotics – the future of humankind?



The essence of humanity; love and our mortality.

Key Images Explained

- **‘So much we once coveted. So much / that would have saved us’**

The opening **image** has biblical undertones, ‘coveted’ is associated with sinning, and the **tone** is one of frustration at our ineptitude to do good with all that we had, this is emphasised with the **repetition** of ‘so much’.

- **‘Returning / to uselessness with the mute acquiescence / of shed skin’**

the **metaphor** here of humanity as a snake quietly casting off the accoutrements of capitalism is impactful; the **sibilance** adds a sinister sound.

Key Images Explained

- ‘Our faulty eyes, our telltale heat, hearts / Ticking through our shirts.’

This image evokes the idea that the speaker is some form of evolved or altered human, there is the hint of the robotic, the harsh alliterative ‘t’ and the onomatopoeia of ‘ticking’ adds to the tension.

- the list of items on display: ‘green money, oil in drums...books recounting wars’

All of the images evoke our failures as a species, our greed, environmental degradation at our hands, our violence.

Key Images Explained

- **‘a living man sits on display. Ask / and he’ll describe the old beliefs’**

This ***image*** unsettles, a human in a cage, the old beliefs signify forgotten or archaic values, there is a sense much has been lost.

- **‘Special installations come and go. “Love” / Was up for a season, followed by “Illness”, / concepts difficult to grasp.’**

The saddest line of the poem, what makes us human, our ability to love and illness and mortality, seem to have been lost.

Key Images Explained

- **‘an image of an old planet taken from space. / Outside, vendors hawk t-shirts, three for eight’**

The ironic juxtaposition of the image a dead planet with the capitalist practices that helped kill it extremely impactful.

Tone



Frustration



Sadness



Curiosity



Loss



Irony

Student Task: Personal Response

- Write a personal response to the poem; discuss, themes, key images and sound techniques (and what they evoke), and tone.

