

UNIT 5 LESSON 2

THIS IS GOING TO HURT JUST A LITTLE BIT by Ogden Nash

Critical Appreciation of the poem

The poem “This is Going to Hurt Just a Little Bit” is a humorous graphic description of the experience of the poet while sitting in a dentist’s chair. It speaks about the dentists’ unfeeling professionalism and the horror of visiting the dentist.

The poet begins with his dislike for being at a dentist. For him, dental torture is unique since it is both physical and mental. While other pains are either physical or mental, dental pain brings both because it is physically painful to endure and even this thought, while visiting the dentist is mentally painful. Dental pain is unbearable in most cases. The poet exaggerates this while saying one can’t be self- possessed as here is no time to think of oneself of past and future and it makes one scratch one’s palm with fingernails so hard that even the life line may get altered. He says that one has to forget all decency and dignity related to sitting.

To bring out the horror of being at the dentist more clearly, he compares his mouth before the dentist with a section of the road under repair. It is quite apt. Like the road under construction, with all the stones, crushers and concrete mixtures, the mouth undergoes a similar stage. He also compares the dentist with a bear (ursa). The dentist mauls and suffocates him like a bear doing its prey. A touch of humour arises while the poet fears to be with a dentist because he examines and pulls the teeth with the help of a tiny mirror. His fear is due to the feeling that mirror’s lateral inversion may cause the doctor to confuse the right for left.

After the treatment, the patient takes a sigh of relief. But the doctor tells him to come back. The vicious circle, repeated visits to him is a paradox as the poet wants his teeth in good condition only to avoid going to the dentist. Here the cyclical process become necessary for his teeth in good condition.

The title of the poem is quite ironical. It says that it is going to hurt ‘just’ a little bit whereas dental torture is unique and the worst and most horrible thing. The poem with its exaggerations, comparisons and paradox, gives a vivid description of sitting on a dental chair and thus a visual imagery of the patient and the dentist is brought out.