

ONCE UPON A TIME by Gabriel Okara

- 'Once upon a time' suggests things now are different from earlier times.
- The words 'used to laugh with hearts and eyes' suggest 'sincerity and frankness' i.e. wholeheartedness.
- The words 'laugh with their teeth' suggest 'hypocritical nature' of present people.
- 'ice-block-cold eyes' means 'eyes that do not show any emotion.'
- '**Searching behind someone's shadow**' means interacting with someone's unreal and fake sides so that there is no need of interacting with the real person.
- The poet uses the words 'hearts' and 'eyes' to refer to emotions.
The words 'they shake hands without hearts' suggest 'insincerity of people' in their actions.
- '**empty pockets**'
The poet feels that he has been stripped of real happiness. He has lost sincerity and warmth that he had long time ago.
- **strip sb of something** = separate; remove sth from somebody = వేరు చేయు; తొలగించు
- **at home (idiom)** = comfortable and relaxed
feel at home = be comfortable and relaxed (మీ ఇంట్లోనే ఉన్నట్లు భావించండి.)
- **no thrice** = no third time
- **I find doors shut on my face** = people don't welcome us if we visit them very often
- **wear many faces** = behave according to the situation
- **cocktail party** = a formal social occasion, usually in the early evening, when people drink cocktails or other alcoholic drinks
- **conform** = to behave and think in the same way
- **with all their conforming smiles** = with all the people smiling in the same way (artificially)
- **Portrait** = a painting, drawing or photograph of a person, especially of the head and shoulders
- **good-riddance** = a rude way of saying you are glad someone has left
- **glad** = happy
- **unlearn** = to deliberately forget something that you have learned, especially something bad or wrong (నేర్చుకున్న చెడును కావాలని మర్చిపోయే ప్రయత్నం చేయడం)
- **muting things** = things that are changing all the time
- **(The poet has learnt to mute/silence his real feelings.)**

TONE OF THE POEM

- ✓ Philosophical
philosophy = the use of reason in understanding such things as the nature of the real world and existence
- ✓ Satirical/Ironic (criticizing people or ideas in a humorous way)
- ✓ Nostalgic (feeling happy thinking about things that happened in the past)