

UNIT – FOUR

1. **Title:** **FOR A FIVE YEAR OLD BOY - Fleur Adcock**



2. **Value:** Children are god.

Children are innocent as lambs. They are usually compared to God. They never understand the cunningness of the elders.

3. **Summary:** The present poem tells us about the ‘double dealing’ nature of elders, the difference between what we preach and what we really practice. In this poem, a mother is speaking to her child. A child calls his mother and shows her a snail creeping into his room. The mother tells the child that it’s unkind to leave the snail there lest someone should squash it. So the child carries the snail outside and leaves it near a daffodil. Later the mother realizes how cunning the elders are. Usually one’s gentleness is moulded by words and not by action. We trap mice and shoot birds for our enjoyment. But here the mother shows ‘great kindness’ to a snail as if she were kindness personified. The mother feels guilty of her actions.

This poem is a satire against the belief that we can mould our children rather by our words than by imitation of what actually we do. There is a humorous saying, ‘Do what I say and not what I do.’

4. **Life and career of Fleur Adcock:**

Adcock was born in Auckland, but spent the years between 1939 and 1947 in England. Her sister is the novelist Marilyn Duckworth. She studied Classics at the Victoria University of Wellington, graduating with a M.A.. She worked as an assistant lecturer and later an assistant librarian at the University of Otago in Dunedin until 1962. She was married to two famous New Zealand literary personalities. In 1952 she married Alistair Campbell, (divorced 1958). Then in 1962 she married Barry Crump, divorcing in 1963.

In 1963, Adcock returned to England and took up a post as an assistant librarian at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London until 1979. Since then she has been a freelance writer, living in East Finchley, north London. She has held several literary fellowships, including the Northern Arts Literary Fellowship in Newcastle upon Tyne and Durham in 1979-81.

Adcock's poetry is typically concerned with themes of place, human relationships and everyday activities, but frequently with a dark twist given to the mundane events she writes about. Formerly, her early work was influenced by her training as a classicist but her more recent work is looser in structure and more concerned with the world of the unconscious mind.

5. **Suggested Reading:**

A) 'IN LONDON TOWN'

IN LONDON TOWN
by Mary E. Coleridge
It was a bird of Paradise,
Over the roofs he flew.
All the children, in a trice,
Clapped their hands and cried, "How nice!
Look - his wings are blue!"
His body was of ruby red
His eyes were burning gold
All the grown-up people said,
"What a pity the creature is not dead,
For then it could be sold!"
One was braver than the rest,
He took a loaded gun;
Aiming at the emerald crest,
He shot the creature through the breast,
Down it fell in the sun.
It was not heavy, it was not fat,
And folk began to stare.
"We cannot eat it, that is flat!
And such outlandish feathers as that
Why, who could ever wear?"
They flung it into the river brown.
"A pity the creature died!"
With a smile and with a frown,
Thus they did in London town:
But all the children cried.

B. 1. A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a Late Famous General BY JONATHAN SWIFT

His Grace! impossible! what dead!
Of old age too, and in his bed!
And could that mighty warrior fall?
And so inglorious, after all!
Well, since he's gone, no matter how,
The last loud trump must wake him now:
And, trust me, as the noise grows stronger,
He'd wish to sleep a little longer.
And could he be indeed so old
As by the newspapers we're told?
Threescore, I think, is pretty high;
'Twas time in conscience he should die
This world he cumbered long enough;
He burnt his candle to the snuff;
And that's the reason, some folks think,
He left behind so great a stink.
Behold his funeral appears,
Nor widow's sighs, nor orphan's tears,
Wont at such times each heart to pierce,
Attend the progress of his hearse.
But what of that, his friends may say,
He had those honours in his day.
True to his profit and his pride,
He made them weep before he died.
Come hither, all ye empty things,
Ye bubbles raised by breath of kings;
Who float upon the tide of state,
Come hither, and behold your fate.
Let pride be taught by this rebuke,
How very mean a thing's a Duke;
From all his ill-got honours flung,
Turned to that dirt from whence he sprung.

Money

2. When I had money, money, O!
I knew no joy till I went poor;
For many a false man as a friend
Came knocking all day at my door.
Then felt I like a child that holds
A trumpet that he must not blow
Because a man is dead; I dared
Not speak to let this false world know.
Much have I thought of life, and seen
How poor men's hearts are ever light;
And how their wives do hum like bees
About their work from morn till night.
So, when I hear these poor ones laugh,
And see the rich ones coldly frown—
Poor men, think I, need not go up
So much as rich men should come down.
When I had money, money, O!
My many friends proved all untrue;
But now I have no money, O!
My friends are real, though very few.

William Henry Davies
