

Paper Boats – Rabindranath Tagore

1. About the Poet – Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was a renowned Indian poet, writer, philosopher, musician and educationist. He wrote extensively in Bengali and English and is one of the most celebrated figures in Indian literature. He became the first Asian Nobel Laureate when he won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 for *Gitanjali*. His poetry often explores nature, childhood, imagination, spirituality and the relationship between human beings and the world around them.

2. Theme

Childhood innocence

Imagination and dreams

Love for nature

Hope and communication

3. Central Idea

The poem celebrates the innocence, imagination and limitless dreams of childhood, showing how a simple paper boat can become a vessel carrying hopes, flowers and dreams across the world.

4. Figures of Speech

Figure of Speech	Example
Alliteration	“big black letters”
Metaphor	“white bulging sails” – clouds compared to sails
Personification	Clouds are shown racing with the boats
Imagery	Stream, flowers, clouds and stars
Repetition	“on and on”
Symbolism	Paper boats represent dreams and hopes

5. Word Meanings

- **Float** – move on water
- **Stream** – flowing water
- **Strange** – unfamiliar
- **Blooms** – flowers
- **Dawn** – early morning
- **Launch** – put into water
- **Bulging** – swelling outward
- **Midnight** – 12 o'clock at night
- **Fairies** – imaginary magical beings
- **Lading** – load or cargo

6. Summary of the Poem

The poem presents the world through the eyes of an innocent and imaginative child.

Every day, the child makes paper boats and

floats them down a stream. He writes his name and the name of his village on the boats, hoping that someone in a distant land will find them and discover who he is. The child then places shiuli flowers from his garden in the boats. He hopes that the flowers will reach their destination safely during the night. This shows his innocent desire to share something beautiful with an unknown world. As the boats move along the stream, the child looks at the sky. He imagines that the small clouds are sailing boats with white, bulging sails. He wonders which imaginary playmate in the sky is sending the clouds racing alongside his paper boats. At night, the child's imagination becomes even more magical. He dreams that his paper boats continue sailing beneath the [midnight](#) stars. He imagines that the fairies of sleep are travelling in the boats, carrying baskets full of dreams.