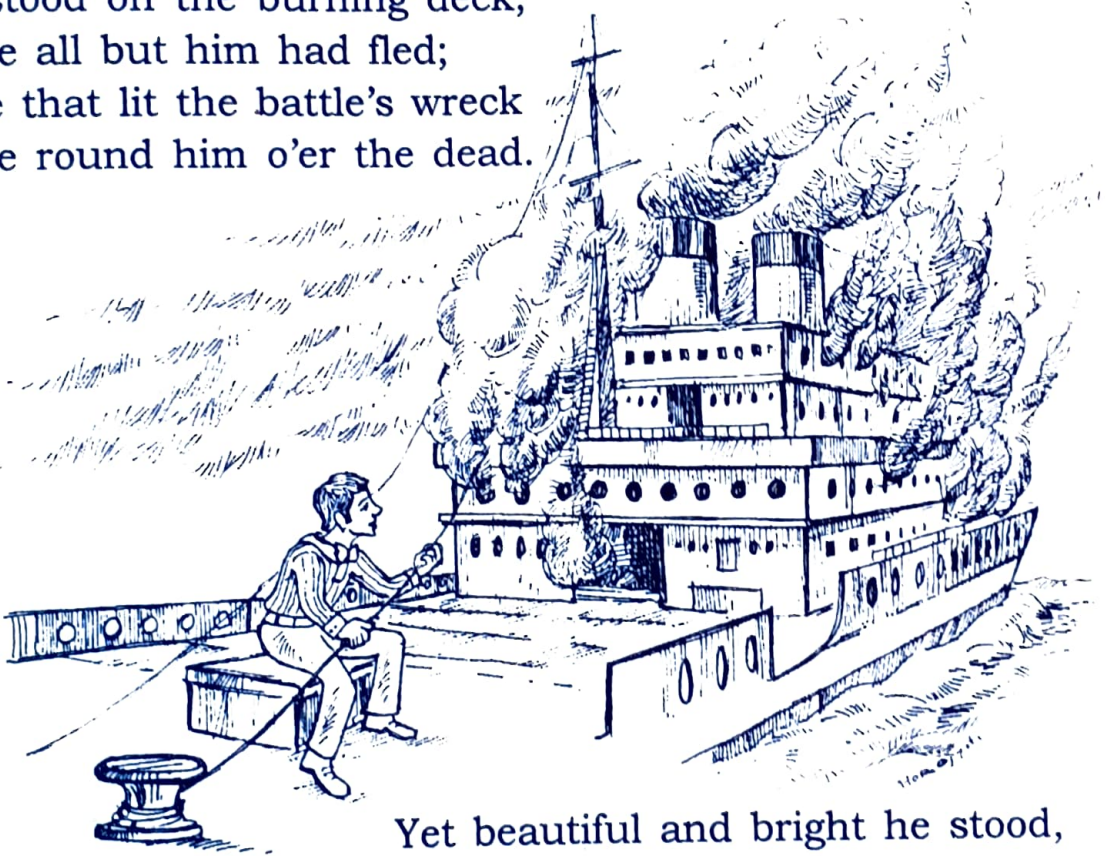


Lesson 5

Casabianca

[**Felicia Hemans** was born in 1793 at Liverpool. She started writing poetry since childhood and her first collection 'Poems' contained the poems written between ages of 8 and 13. She wrote poetry about nature, childhood, travels and heroic stories. From 1816 to 1834, she published twenty four volumes of poetry and became a very popular poet. She died in 1835.]

The boy stood on the burning deck,  
Where all but him had fled;  
The flame that lit the battle's wreck  
Shone round him o'er the dead.



Yet beautiful and bright he stood,  
As born to rule the storm;  
A creature of heroic blood,  
A proud, though childlike form.

The flames rolled on — he would not go  
Without his father's word;  
That father, faint in death below,  
His voice no longer heard.

He called aloud : "Say, father, say  
If yet my task is done !"  
He knew not that the chieftain lay  
Unconscious of his son.

"Speak, father !" once again he cried,  
"If I may yet be gone !"  
—And but the booming shots replied,  
And fast the flames rolled on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath,  
And in his waving hair ;  
And looked from that lone post of death,  
In still, yet brave despair.

And shouted but once more aloud,  
"My father ! must I stay ?"  
While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,  
The wreathing fires made way.

They wrapt the ship in splendour wild,  
They caught the flag on high,  
And streamed above the gallant child,  
Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound—  
The boy — oh ! where was he ?  
—Ask of the winds that far around  
With fragments strewed the sea !—



With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,  
That well had borne their part ;  
But the noblest thing which perish'd there  
Was that young faithful heart.

**The poem :** In this poem the poet tells the story of a young boy who accompanied his father on a warship. His father who was the captain of the ship asked the boy to stand on the deck of the ship. Suddenly the ship was attacked by the enemy and it caught fire. But Casabianca did not move from his place following his father's words. His father became unconscious in the fire and could not hear his shouts and cries. At last Casabianca was burnt to death by the fire.

The poet has used a lot of personification in the poem such as 'the booming shots replied'. In a poem when the poet treats a non-living thing as a living thing, it is called personification. Here the poet also uses 'simile' when he compares 'the wreathing fires' with 'banners'. Simile is a comparison between two things using the words such as 'like', 'as' etc.

### Wordnote

deck	:	a floor of a ship
whence	:	from which place
flame	:	glowing fire
wreck	:	a ship destroyed at sea
faint	:	not clearly seen, heard or smelt
task	:	a piece of work to be done
chieftain	:	captain
booming	:	making a loud sound
lone	:	alone, solitary
despair	:	complete absence of hope

o'er	:	over
shroud	:	a set of ropes supporting the mast of a sailing ship or boat
wreathing	:	arranging flowers in a ring
wrapt	:	covered, enclosed
splendour	:	impressive appearance
streamed	:	ran or moved in a continuous flow
gallant	:	brave, heroic
fragment	:	a small part
strewed	:	scattered untidily
mast	:	a tall, upright post on a ship
helm	:	a wheel for steering a ship
pennon	:	pennant; a long, narrow pointed flag flown on a ship
perish'd	:	destroyed, ruined

### EXERCISE

1. What were the main themes of Felicia Hemans' poetry? 1
2. Where was Casabianca standing? 1
3. Why could his father not hear his voice? 1
4. What did the people in the ship do when it caught fire? What did Casabianca do then? 1+1=2
5. How does the poet describe Casabianca standing in the fire? 2
6. Why does the poet call the young heart the 'noblest thing'? 2
7. Describe the scene of the burning ship. 3
8. Explain with reference to the context. 4  

"Upon his brow he felt their breath,  
 And in his waving hair ;  
 And looked from that lone post of death,  
 In still, yet brave despair."
9. Give rhyming words for the following. 1/2 x 8 = 4  
 deck, form, done, cried, breath, aloud, fair, sky

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