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S. No 4 B.A.Part-3 English (Hons) Topic Sailing to Byzantium:

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Sailing to Byzantium: Critical appreciation

"Sailing to Byzantium" is a famous poem by W.B. Yeats. This poem suggests that art could be the source of eternal pleasure. In this poem there is a description of two kinds of worlds — on the one hand there is the world of sensual pleasure and on the other hand there is the city of artistic work Byzantium. Byzantium was the capital of Constantiople. It was famous for artistic work .But now this city of Byzantium does not exist in the reality. It is in the imagination of the poet only.

The poet has grown old. He finds that Ireland is not a fit place for an old man; that is a country for the young; because all men and women are engrossed in sensual pleasure. The poet as an old man is incapable of sexual activity. So he wants to take refuse in the city of Byzantium, the city famous for its artistic work.

The poet reacts against the behavior of young people, as they are unmindful of great work of art. The poet calls them the people of a dying generation. The poet believes what the young people refuse, must be wanted by the old. He thinks that the appreciation of a great work of art is the source of pleasure for the old .So the poet requests the holy sage three times .First, he requests the sage to teach his soul to sing. Secondly, he wants the sage to descend upon him and become the singing master of his soul. Thirdly, he wants to learn the

tricks of producing great work of art. But what can be achieved by tricks can't be unique. All the works produced by the same tricks will be similar.

The poet wants to get rid of his physical self. He wants to become a part of eternity. He wants to become a golden bird and to sing the song of past, present and future sitting on a golden branch .The poet considers the great work of art as the source of immortality.

Thus the poem suggests the common theme of W B Yeats poetry that art has its root in experience .Art could be the source of eternal pleasure and immortality. It also suggests the theme of contrast between the youth and Age.