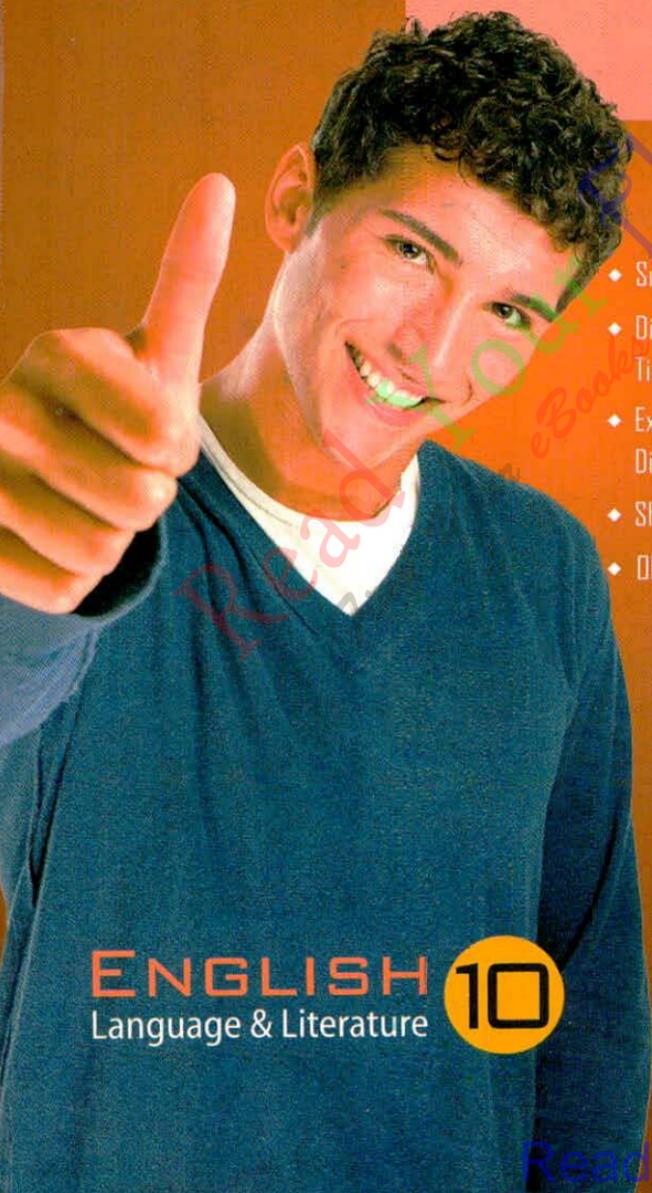


FOR 21ST CENTURY LEARNERS

# LITERATURE COMPANION

**FIRST FLIGHT**

(Textbook)



- ◆ Summaries of Stories, Poems & Plays
- ◆ Discussions on Characters, Themes, Titles, Morals and Messages
- ◆ Extracts to Test Understanding of Different Literary Genres
- ◆ Short & Long Answer Type Questions
- ◆ Objective Type Questions & MCQs

**ENGLISH**  
Language & Literature

**10**

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## FIRST FLIGHT (PROSE)

### 1. *A Letter to God*

(G. L. Fuentes)

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#### ABOUT THE STORY

##### *Introduction*

"A Letter to God" is a story about an innocent man who has unshakeable faith in the generosity of God. But this faith gives rise to an amusing situation where the persons who try to save this man's faith in God are accused by him of being 'a bunch of crooks'.

##### *Summary*

"A Letter to God" is the story of Lencho, a very hardworking and a God-fearing peasant who lives with his family in an isolated house. When the story opens, we find him waiting for a downpour that will assure a very rich harvest. Lencho shares his hope with his wife who agrees with her husband, although not as enthusiastically as him. As the family settles down for dinner, Lencho's prediction about the rainfall comes true. This welcome rain thrills Lencho, and he runs out of the house like a child to get the pleasant feel of raindrops on his body. Little does he expect that the raindrops which promised a shower of prosperity would spell disaster. The constant rain is soon accompanied by very large hailstones which keep hitting the entire valley for more than an hour, eventually destroying the crops to the last grain.

Lencho helplessly watches his devastated fields with his sons by his side. He observes that even a swarm of locusts wouldn't have created

as much havoc. The family sits together lamenting their loss. Yet their unflinching faith in God saves them from absolute frustration and they count upon the Almighty's generosity.

Lencho knows that nothing is hidden from God's eyes, so on the following Sunday, he writes a letter to God asking for a hundred pesos. He asks for this money so that he can sow his field again and tide over the crisis till the next harvest. Addressing the letter to God, Lencho personally takes it to the town for posting it. At the post office he stamps it duly and drops it into the mail box.

This unique letter with an unusual addressee's name causes much amusement in the post office. In the midst of laughter, the postmaster admits that he is touched by the deep faith of the sender. He decides to send an answer to Lencho on God's behalf, so that his faith remains steadfast.

He opens the letter to find that Lencho has requested God to send him money. However, he does not shirk from helping Lencho and contributes a part of his salary to help him. He also raises some more money by seeking donations from his friends and employees. However, even the best of his efforts can't get him a hundred pesos and he has to manage this 'act of charity' with seventy pesos only. He puts the money in an envelope, writes a letter with only one word - 'God', and addresses it to Lencho.

Next Sunday, Lencho returns to the post office to collect God's response to his request. The postmaster hands him the letter and looks on from his office like a contended man who has performed a good deed. Lencho opens the 'letter from God' and confidently takes out the enclosed money. However, he gets angry after counting it and feels that God could not have made a mistake in sending him thirty pesos short. He could also not have denied Lencho's request. Immediately, he asks for paper and ink and writes another letter to

God. He buys a stamp, affixes it on the envelope and puts it in the mailbox. The postmaster opens it to find an ironical response from Lencho. In this letter, Lencho had complained to God that he had received only seventy pesos and God must send the rest at the earliest. But he instructs God not to send the money through the mail because the employees at the post office were an untrustworthy 'bunch of crooks'.

#### TITLE

The title "A Letter to God" is direct and simple as it highlights the letter written to God by Lencho. This letter displays a man's faith in God as well as the kindness of the postmaster. The poor farmer's belief in the generosity of God is reflected through this letter. Even the helpful nature of the postmaster finds an expression after he reads this letter to God. Although Lencho writes two letters to God, it is the first letter that forms the binding element of Lencho's story.

#### THEME

"A Letter to God" is based on the theme that faith in God cannot be shaken. Lencho, the farmer, believes strongly in the generosity of God. This faith gives him the hope to get help from God when he loses his crops to hailstorm. He actually writes to God for help and when he gets the response, he does not doubt God's grace. On the contrary, he suspects the honesty of the employees of the post office.

Another sub-theme is that good and kind souls are God's messengers. They help the believers to keep their faith intact. The postmaster and his colleagues belong to this category. Their act of kindness does not even get acknowledged but they part with their hard earned money to make Lencho believe that God has answered his request.

#### MESSAGE

The story "A Letter to God" conveys the message that faith can move

mountains. Lencho's faith in God gets him financial help even though indirectly and not entirely as desired by him. However, this reinforces a poor and simple man's faith in the power of God. The people, who take upon themselves the responsibility to uphold Lencho's faith, inspire to keep alive the spirit of humanity. It is immaterial whether their kindness is acknowledged or not, the faith in the power of God remains steadfast.

### CHARACTERS

#### *Lencho*

Lencho was a hard working farmer and an innocent person having immense faith in God. He was an 'ox of a man'. He toiled hard and never complained about it. He waited anxiously for the rain which he thought would help in a good harvest of corn. However, when the rain turned into the destructive hail, he still believed that God would help him. Displaying his deep faith in God, he even wrote a letter to Him requesting to send him a hundred pesos as help.

Lencho had a child-like confidence in God which made him believe that God will respond to his letter and fulfill his request. When he received only seventy pesos, he did not even once imagine that someone else could have sent that money. Rather, he doubted the integrity of the people at the post office and wrote another letter to God telling Him not to send the remaining money through mail. He had a firm conviction that neither could God have made the mistake of sending less money nor could He have denied his request.

It was this unquestionable faith in God that gave him immense strength to face difficult situations in life. His child-like simplicity, innocence and honesty make him an inspiring character.

#### *Postmaster*

The postmaster was a kind-hearted and a compassionate man. He

was amazed by the deep faith of Lencho in the kindness of God. He expressed his appreciation for Lencho's belief by sending him money on behalf of God. He took upon himself the responsibility of collecting money for Lencho and generously contributed a part of his salary to this fund. His sincerity can be seen in the way he made every possible effort to save a simple peasant's faith in God. He made sure that Lencho's faith remained intact so that the novel way in which he had started a communication with God does not become a wasted effort.

Like a true believer, he wished to have a similar faith in the goodness of the Almighty.

The postmaster, thus not only becomes a source through whom God sends help to Lencho but also becomes an admirable character who inspires the virtues of fellow-feeling and generosity.

#### EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION

*Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.*

#### (I)

The only thing the earth needed was a downpour or at least a shower. Throughout the morning Lencho – who knew his fields intimately – had done nothing else but see the sky towards the north-east.

(a) **Who was Lencho? Where did he live?**

Lencho was a simple farmer who lived in a village in the valley.

(b) **Why was Lencho looking at the sky?**

Lencho was looking at the sky because he expected a downpour or a shower for his crop.

(c) **Explain: "..... knew his fields intimately."**

This expression means that Lencho was an intelligent farmer. He was adept in farming skills.

**(d) Why did the earth need a downpour or a shower?**

The earth needed a downpour or a shower because that would have assured a good harvest of corn for Lencho.

**(II)**

"These aren't raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins. The big drops are ten cent pieces and the little ones are fives."

**(a) Who speaks these words?**

These words are spoken by a simple farmer Lencho who lived in the valley.

**(b) Why does the speaker call the raindrops as 'new coins'? Or**

**To what does the speaker compare the raindrops? Why?**

Lencho calls the raindrops as 'new coins' because they were round and glittering like new coins.

**(c) When does the speaker utter these words?**

Lencho utters these words after feeling the pleasure of rain on his body.

**(d) What is the state of mind of the speaker at this time? Why?**

Lencho is very happy and satisfied at this time because the rain is expected to bring a good harvest of corn for him.

**(III)**

"A plague of locusts would have left more than this. The hail has left nothing..."

**(a) Who speaks these words and to whom?**

Lencho the poor farmer, speaks these words to his sons.

**(b) When does the speaker utter these words?**

Lencho utters these words when he is standing in the middle of his hail-struck fields with his sons by his side.

**(c) Why does the speaker say this?**

Lencho says this because he is extremely sad and disappointed to

see his entire field of ripe corn with its flowers being ruined by the hailstrom.

**(d) What is the speaker's state of mind at this time?**

Lencho is extremely worried at this time and fears that his family will have to starve that year.

**(IV)**

But in the hearts of all who lived in that solitary house in the middle of the valley, there was a single hope:

**(a) Where was the 'solitary house'?**

The solitary house was on a crest of a low hill in the valley.

**(b) Who all lived in that 'solitary house'?**

Lencho, his wife and their sons lived in the 'solitary house'.

**(c) What was the 'single hope' of the people in the 'solitary house'?**

God was the 'single hope' of the people in Lencho's house.

**(d) Why did the people in the 'solitary house' look for hope?**

Lencho's family looked for hope as they had lost the entire crop of ripe corn to hailstorm and were faced with the threat of hunger.

**(V)**

The following Sunday, at daybreak, he began to write a letter which he himself would carry to town and place in the mail.

**(a) Who is 'he' in this extract?**

'He' in this extract is Lencho, the poor farmer who lost his crops.

**(b) To whom did 'he' write a letter?**

Lencho wrote a letter to God.

**(c) What did 'he' write in the letter?**

In his letter, Lencho pleaded with God to help him by sending a hundred pesos in order to buy seeds and sow his fields again so that his family would not have to remain hungry that year.

- (d) **What does the extract reveal about the person who wrote the letter?**

The extract reveals that Lencho was a simple man who had unflinching faith in the supremacy of God.

(VI)

"What faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter. Starting up a correspondence with God!"

- (a) **Who is "I" in this extract? To whom does he/she speak?**

'I' here refers to the postmaster and he speaks to his colleagues.

- (b) **When are these words spoken?**

These words are spoken when the postmaster and his colleagues begin to laugh after finding a letter in the mail addressed to God.

- (c) **Who is the 'man' who wrote the letter? Why does 'I' admire his faith?**

The man who wrote the letter is Lencho. The postmaster admired his faith because it indicated that the man had complete trust in the power of God.

- (d) **What was the 'correspondence' about?**

The correspondence was Lencho's request to God to send him a hundred pesos to buy seeds to sow his fields again.

(VII)

Lencho showed not the slightest surprise on seeing the money; such was his confidence – but he became angry when he counted the money.

- (a) **Who was Lencho? Why wasn't he surprised to see the money?**

Lencho was a poor farmer who had written a letter to God to send him money as help. He wasn't surprised to see the money because he had firm faith that it was God's response to his request.

- (b) **Who had sent the money to Lencho? Why?**

The postmaster had sent the money to Lencho because he wanted a poor man's faith in God to remain intact.

**(c) Why was Lencho so confident about getting the money?**

Lencho was so confident because he had an unshakeable faith in God's kindness.

**(d) Why did Lencho become angry after counting the money?**

Lencho became angry on receiving thirty pesos short because he doubted that this missing amount had been stolen by the post office employees. He believed strongly that neither could God have made the mistake of sending less money nor could He have denied his request.

**(VIII)**

On the public writing-table, he started to write, with much wrinkling of his brow, caused by the effort he had to make to express his ideas.

**(a) Who is 'he' in the above extract? Where is 'he' at the moment?**

'He' in the above extract is Lencho. At this moment, he is in the postoffice.

**(b) What is 'he' writing and why?**

Lencho is writing another letter to God. He is writing it to ask Him to send the remaining thirty pesos and to warn Him not to send it through the mail.

**(c) Why does 'he' have to make an 'effort' to express his ideas?**

He has to make an effort to express his ideas because he is a simple farmer who works like an animal in the fields and knows only how to write.

**(d) Who reads what 'he' writes? Why?**

The postmaster reads the second letter to God written by Lencho because he expects Lencho to thank God for sending him seventy pesos.

## (IX)

"Of the money that I asked for, only seventy pesos reached me. Send me the rest, since I need it very much. But don't send it to me through the mail because the post office employees are a bunch of crooks."

- (a) **Who is 'I' in the above extract? To whom does the speaker address these lines?**

'I' in the above extract is Lencho. He is addressing God.

- (b) **How much money had 'I' asked for? Why does he receive only seventy pesos?**

Lencho had asked for a hundred pesos. He received only seventy pesos because the money sent to him was collected by the postmaster who found it impossible to arrange the entire amount.

- (c) **What did 'I' need the money for?**

Lencho's entire field of ripe corn had been destroyed by a hailstorm. So, he needed the money to sow his field again and to live until the crop came.

- (d) **Why does 'I' call the post office employees a 'bunch of crooks'?**

Lencho calls the post office employees a 'bunch of crooks' because he believed that they had stolen thirty pesos out of the hundred sent to him by God. According to Lencho, God could neither have made the mistake of sending less money, nor could He have denied his request.

- (e) **What light do these lines throw on the character of 'I'?**

These lines show that Lencho was a simple man who had complete trust in God's generosity.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 30 - 40 words each)

**Q1. Where did Lencho live?**

Lencho lived in a house that was located at the crest of a low hill. From that height, the river and the field of ripe corn dotted with flowers could be seen. His house was the only one in the entire valley.

**Q2. Why did Lencho's fields need 'a downpour or a shower'?**

Or

**Why did Lencho see the sky towards north-east the entire morning?**

The corn in Lencho's field was almost ripe and was dotted with flowers. This was a promise of a good harvest but only if there was some downpour or at least a shower. So, Lencho saw the sky towards north-east the entire morning expecting rain.

**Q3. What were Lencho's family members doing before the rain arrived?**

Or

**In what activities were Lencho's family members engaged before the rain arrived?**

Before the rain arrived, Lencho's wife was preparing supper, his older boys were working in the field, and the smaller boys were playing near the house.

**Q4. Why did Lencho go out of his house when it started raining?**

Or

**Why did Lencho go out and get wet in the rain?**

Lencho went out of his house when it started raining because he had been awaiting rain for a long time. The prospect of a rich harvest left him excited and he wanted to feel the pleasure of rain on his body.

**Q5. What did Lencho compare the raindrops with and why?**

Or

Why did Lencho say the raindrops were like 'new coins'? (Textual)

Or

How did Lencho describe the raindrops?

Or

"These are not raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins. The big drops are ten cent pieces and the little ones are fives."

Why did Lencho say this?

Lencho compared the raindrops with 'new coins'. He compared the big drops to the ten cent pieces and the little ones to the five cent pieces. He felt so because these raindrops were round, shining and precious like coins. Besides, like coins, they were expected to bring him the wealth of a good harvest of corn.

Q6. Why was Lencho satisfied to look at his field?

Lencho was satisfied to look at his field because it had ripe corn with flowers, draped in a curtain of rain. The rain would have benefitted the corn and he would have got a good harvest.

Q7. "It's really getting bad now". What was getting bad, according to Lencho?

The weather was getting bad because the rain was soon accompanied by a strong wind. This wind blew hard and brought in large hailstones that were as big as new silver coins and threatened to ruin Lencho's crop.

Q8. How did the storm damage Lencho's fields?

Or

Describe the scene after the hailstorm.

Or

What happened to Lencho's fields after the heavy storm?

Or

How did the rain change? What happened to Lencho's fields?

Or

(Textual)

**How did the 'new silver coins' bring disaster to Lencho's corn field?**

The storm that began with a light drizzle, soon turned violent. Strong winds began to blow and were accompanied by large hailstones. For an hour, the hailstones, that resembled 'new silver coins', rained on the house, the garden, the hillside, the cornfield and the valley. They covered the field like a sheet of white salt. Not a leaf remained on the tress and the corn in the field was completely destroyed. The flowers too had gone from the plants.

**Q9. What were Lencho's feelings when the hail stopped?** (Textual)

Or

**What did Lencho tell his sons after the storm had passed?**

Or

**"A plague of locusts would have left more than this". When and why did Lencho say these words?**

Or

**Why was Lencho's soul filled with sadness?**

After the storm had passed, Lencho's soul was filled with sadness. He helplessly looked at his completely destroyed cornfield and exclaimed that even the locusts wouldn't have ruined the crops to such an extent. He also said that in the absence of the harvest, the entire family would have to starve that year.

**Q10. How did Lencho's family members try to console him after the crops were damaged?**

Though the family members were also heartbroken after the crops were damaged, still they tried to console Lencho by telling him that no one died of hunger. They comforted him by asking him not to get upset even though it seemed like a total loss.

**Q11. What was Lencho's only hope?** Or

**What hopes did Lencho hang on to?**

Lencho hung on to his only hope – 'the help of God'. He believed that God's eyes have the power to see everything. His eyes could see even what is deep in one's conscience.

**Q12. What was unusual about Lencho as a farmer?**

Like all farmers Lencho was such a hard working man, that the author calls him 'an ox of a man'. But still, unlike other farmers, he was literate and he knew how to read and write.

**Q13. Why did Lencho decide to write a letter to God?**

Or

**Who or what did Lencho have faith in? What did he do? (Textual)**

Or

**What did Lencho do on a Sunday morning following the storm?**

**Why?**

Or

**Why was Lencho and his family in distress? Whom did Lencho ask for help?**

Following the total devastation of his corn field by the hailstorm, Lencho was filled with sorrow. His family was on the brink of starvation. In this critical time, God was his only hope. Having full faith in Him, he decided to write a letter to God on a Sunday morning and ask for a hundred pesos to sow his field again and to live until the crop came.

**Q14. What were the contents of Lencho's first letter to God?**

Or

**Who did Lencho write his first letter to? What did he write in it?**

Lencho wrote his first letter to God. In this letter, he told God that if He will not help him, his entire family would go hungry that year. He then asked Him to send a hundred pesos to sow his field again and live on it till the next harvest.

**Q15. What did Lencho do to make sure that his letter reached God?**

To make sure that his letter reached God, Lencho carried it himself

to town. He addressed the envelope "To God", put the letter inside it, placed a stamp on the letter and dropped it into the mailbox.

**Q16. How did the employees at the post office react on seeing Lencho's letter?**

The postmaster and his employees were shocked to see Lencho's letter addressed to God. They found it very amusing and started to laugh heartily after reading it. However, the postmaster immediately got serious and admired the man's unflinching faith. The idea of starting a correspondence with God fascinated him.

**Q17. How did the postmaster react on seeing Lencho's first letter to God?**

The postmaster was deeply moved to see a letter addressed to God. He marvelled at the sensitivity of the idea to start up a correspondence with God. So, in order not to shake the writer's strong faith in God, he decided to answer it.

**Q18. What idea did the postmaster come up with after reading Lencho's letter?** Or

What did the postmaster resolve to do after reading Lencho's letter? How did he fulfill it? (Textual)

Or

**How did the postmaster help Lencho?**

After reading Lencho's letter, the kind-hearted postmaster understood that to answer it he needed more than goodwill. So, he resolved to keep Lencho's faith intact. To fulfill this resolve he collected money from his friends and contributed a part of his salary as well to be sent to Lencho on God's behalf.

**Q19. Why did the postmaster send only seventy pesos to Lencho?**

Or

**How much money was the postmaster able to collect for Lencho? Why?**

It was impossible for the postmaster to gather together a hundred pesos, the amount requested by Lencho in his letter to God. He could collect only seventy pesos after giving a part of his salary and taking money from his friends 'for an act of charity'. So, he sent only seventy pesos to Lencho.

**Q20. An amount of 70 pesos was raised by the postmaster. What light does this gesture reflect on human beings in general and the post master in particular?**

The postmaster's gesture reflects the goodness of human heart. Human beings are generally charitable at heart and volunteer to help their fellow beings. The incident particularly reflects the postmaster's generosity and graciousness.

**Q21. Why did Lencho visit the post office on consecutive Sundays?**

Lencho visited the post office on the first Sunday to post the letter to God. The next Sunday he went there very confidently to receive God's letter in reply to his own.

**Q22. How did Lencho react on receiving God's letter?**

*Or*

**Was Lencho surprised to find the letter with money in it? (Textual)**

Lencho was not at all surprised to receive the letter and the money in it. He had immense faith in God, and was absolutely certain that God would respond to his request.

**Q23. What made Lencho angry when he opened the letter?**

*Or*

**How did Lencho react when he counted the money?**

*Or*

**What were Lencho's feelings when he opened the letter with money in it?**

Lencho was angry on finding just seventy pesos enclosed in the letter. He felt that God could neither have made a mistake nor

could have denied his request. He suspected that the dishonest post office employees must have stolen the missing amount.

**Q24. Why did Lencho decide to write a second letter to God?**

*Or*

**Why was Lencho angry? And what did he do?**

Lencho was angry to find just seventy pesos enclosed in God's reply. Suspecting the dishonesty of the post office people, he decided to write a second letter to God asking for the rest of the amount.

**Q25. What were the contents of Lencho's second letter to God?**

*Or*

**What did Lencho write in his second letter to God?**

The second letter was a request to God for sending the remaining thirty pesos. The letter also requested God not to send the amount through the mail as the employees there were a bunch of crooks who had stolen his money.

**Q26. What must have the postmaster expected in Lencho's second letter?**

Having done an act of charity, the postmaster was feeling contented. So, he must have expected that Lencho's second letter would contain words of gratitude at having received seventy pesos from God.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

**Q1. Who was Lencho? Why did he write a letter to God?**

Lencho was a simple, God-fearing farmer who was an 'ox of a man'. He worked very hard in his fields and took delight in his work.

He was as committed to his family as he was to his fields. He worked hard to provide for them and rejoiced in fulfilling his responsibilities. His mode of livelihood depended on the mercy of nature which unfortunately once turned unfavourable. A hail storm completely devastated his crops. However, he had unshakeable faith in the generosity of God. So, he wrote a letter to God explaining that the failure of crop would result in the starvation of his family that year. He asked God to help him by sending a hundred pesos in order to sow his field again and to live till the crop was ready. He had a child-like confidence in God that prompted him to turn to Him for help and his unshakeable faith led him to start a correspondence with the Almighty.

**Q2. What prompted the postmaster to respond to Lencho's letter?**

Or

**Why did the postmaster send money to Lencho? Why did he sign the letter as 'God'?** (Textual)

One day, one of the post office employees brought a strange letter to the postmaster. This letter was addressed to God seeking help of a hundred pesos. Initially, amused at the innocence of the writer of this letter, the postmaster was soon touched by the depth of the man's steadfast faith in God. He did not want this faith to be shaken at any cost. So, this kind-hearted man took upon himself the task of assuring Lencho, the writer of the letter, that God existed and helped those who believed in

Him. He then collected seventy pesos by contributing a part of his salary and raising the rest with the help of his friends and post office employees. He enclosed this money with a letter that was to be sent as God's response. So, the postmaster simply wrote a single word 'God' in this letter. He did so because he wanted Lencho to believe that the letter with which the money was enclosed was written by God himself.

**Q3. Did Lencho try to find out who had sent the money to him? Why/Why not?**

No, Lencho did not try to find out who had sent the money to him because he was confident that it had been sent to him by God. Lencho was a simple farmer who had firm faith in the power of God. He believed that God can see everything, even the inner most thoughts of a person. This made his faith in God strong and complete. Besides, God was his only hope and he did not know who else to approach in his trying times. Thus, he did not doubt even once that the seventy pesos could have been sent by anyone else. In addition, perhaps his experience about human help had not been good. This becomes evident from the fact that even his family talks of hope only from God. Quite likely, Lencho had distrust for human beings with regard to money matters. That's why when he writes to God the second time, he tells Him not to send the remaining money through the dishonest post office employees.

**Q4. What do you think was the postmaster's reaction to Lencho's second letter?**

After having mailed seventy pesos to Lencho in the name of God, the postmaster experienced the contentment of a man who had performed a good deed. So, he must have expected the farmer to express his gratitude and appreciation in his second

letter to God. He eagerly opened this letter, the moment Lencho dropped it in the mailbox. However, contrary to his expectations, the postmaster found that Lencho had expressed dissatisfaction at not having received the complete amount. In addition, he had doubted the integrity of the post office employees and had called them 'a bunch of crooks'.

This must have come as a rude shock to the postmaster and might have left him heartbroken and dejected. He might also have felt that his efforts had been a waste. However, since he is projected as a sensible man, later he might have felt relieved that his purpose of having been able to restore Lencho's faith in God had been achieved. The eventual truth was that Lencho had not doubted even once that the help was not sent by God.

- Q5. Who does Lencho think has taken the rest of the money? What is the irony in the situation?** Or *(Textual)*

**Why was Lencho angry when he found that God had sent him only seventy pesos? Why is it ironical?**

Lencho was angry when he found that God had sent him only seventy pesos because he had firm faith in God and believed that God could neither have made a mistake by sending less money nor could He have denied him what he had requested. Ironically, his suspicion about the missing amount fell on the post office employees who had actually taken the trouble to contribute to the seventy pesos that he received. Had the post office employees not taken this step, the poor farmer and his family would have had to face starvation that year. It is again ironical that Lencho referred to these kind-hearted souls as 'a bunch of crooks' in his second letter to God. The irony is further compounded when Lencho instructs God not to send the remaining money through the mail. Therefore, Lencho's firm

faith in God's generosity remains steadfast, but ironically he doubts the goodness of human beings.

**Q6. In response to Lencho's letter, did God actually help him?**

God's ways are mysterious. He does answer our prayers and responds to our pleadings but His omniscient power doesn't appear in person to work miracles for us. He fulfills our wishes through his instruments in such a spontaneous manner that one wonders whether it is a chance happening or a shower of His grace. In Lencho's case, God did answer his request albeit indirectly and partially. The seventy pesos that reached Lencho were an act of charity done by the people who too believed in God's kindness. The motive of these people was not to let Lencho's faith in God be shaken. Their volunteering to take upon themselves the responsibility to help Lencho was in fact their way of answering God's call. They too must have experienced God's generosity and thus they made an effort to keep alive a simple man's faith.

**Q7. There are two kinds of conflicts in the story - between humans and nature and between humans themselves. How are these conflicts illustrated? (Textual)**

The story "A Letter to God" opens with a conflict between humans and nature. This conflict is illustrated when the hailstorm completely destroys Lencho's crops. The hard working farmer, along with his sons, toiled in his fields and expectantly waited for a downpour to seal the prospects of a very good harvest. However, nature, in its vicious mood, came in direct conflict with him at this time. The helpless Lencho witnessed the ruin of his labour caused by the hostile nature.

The second conflict, which is between the humans, is illustrated when Lencho accuses the post office employees as dishonest

and calls them a 'bunch of crooks' in his second letter to God. He fails to see their act of charity and doubts their integrity. This situation shows a conflict between humans which is the outcome of mistrust of one man with another. Nature is more powerful than man, so human beings accept defeat in case of a conflict with a superior power. However, they resent a situation where the conflict is with another human being who is equally strong.

**Q8. The story "A Letter to God" contains three letters. Which one of these does the title refer to?**

The story "A Letter to God" contains three letters. Two are written to God and the third is supposed to have been written by God. The title refers to the first letter that Lencho writes to God as it is this letter that starts up a correspondence with God. This letter depicts the faith of a simple farmer on the only help that he can depend on. It is this first letter that arouses humane sentiments in the postmaster and motivates him to help Lencho. Again, it is the first letter that reveals the fact that humanity is still bound together by its common faith in God. The second letter that Lencho writes to God also brings to light an aspect of human psychology which indicates that people have more faith in the unseen than in what is visible. Still, the title is about the first letter that Lencho writes to God.

**Q9. Discuss the character of the postmaster in light of his act of charity towards Lencho.**

The postmaster is a kind-hearted man who admires the goodness in fellow human beings. He is amazed by the unshakeable faith of Lencho in God. Although this fat and amiable man first laughs on seeing Lencho's letter, but immediately his compassionate nature leads him to appreciate

the unique idea of starting a correspondence with God. He resolves to help Lencho by sending him money on behalf of God. The generosity and commitment of his character gets revealed when he takes upon himself the responsibility of collecting money for Lencho. He voluntarily contributes a part of his salary to this fund. His sincerity can be seen in the way he makes every possible effort to save a simple peasant's faith in God. He is a true believer and so, wishes to have a faith similar to that of Lencho's. The postmaster is thus an admirable character who inspires the virtues of fellow-feeling and generosity.

**Q10. Why did Lencho say the raindrops were like 'new coins'? How did they change the face of Lencho's fields? Or**

**Describe the circumstances under which Lencho's crops were destroyed?**

Lencho had been waiting for the rain since morning. He expected 'a downpour or a shower' in order to have a good harvest. So when it began to rain, Lencho was very happy. He felt that the raindrops resembled 'new coins'. He felt that the bigger drops were like ten cent pieces and the little ones like fives. The raindrops seemed to him to be like round, sparkling and precious coins. He knew that this rain would boost a good harvest and would bring him prosperity just like coins. However, the same new coins soon changed the face of Lencho's fields. After turning into 'new silver coins' and 'frozen pearls', the raindrops fell in the form of hailstones. They rained on the house, the garden, the hillside, the cornfield and on the whole valley. In place of raising the crop better and bringing prosperity, these frozen raindrops made his field white, as if covered with salt. The corn was completely destroyed and the flowers had gone from the plants. Not a leaf remained on the trees, and this filled Lencho's soul with sadness.

## 2. Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom

(Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela)

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### ABOUT THE CHAPTER

#### *Introduction*

The extract "Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" is taken from the autobiography of this great man. It is a touching account of the horrible atrocities and oppression inflicted by the heartless white rulers on the innocent black natives in South Africa. The regime adopted a policy called apartheid that created one of the harshest systems of racial discrimination in the world.

Mandela shares a few of his bitter experiences during his struggle against apartheid along with the overwhelming emotions he experienced when a democratic era was finally ushered in after years of struggle.

#### *Summary:*

The chapter is an extract from Nelson Mandela's autobiography and takes the reader back to May 10, 1994, when Mandela was sworn in as the first black president of democratic South Africa.

This historic day was clear and bright with dignitaries from all over the world coming over gradually to felicitate him. The inauguration ceremony of the installation of South Africa's first democratic, non-racial government was to be held in a sandstone amphitheatre in Pretoria. This building had been the "seat of white supremacy" for decades but on this day it was thronged by people of varied colours and races from different nations.

Mandela was accompanied by his daughter Zenani and his swearing-in was preceded by that of Mr de Klerk as the second deputy president and Mr Thabo Mbeki as the first deputy president. Nelson Mandela

pledged to obey and uphold the constitution of his Republic. He also swore to devote himself "to the well being of his Republic and its people." In his inaugural speech, Mandela equated the centuries old misrule of the whites to an "extraordinary human disaster." He promised to bring up a society of which all humanity would be proud. He expressed a sense of pride over the fact that the blacks, who had been considered as 'outlaws' till then, were host to so many nations of the world. He expressed his gratitude to all the dignitaries for having participated in this common victory for justice, peace, and human dignity. He further added that they had achieved political emancipation and were now taking the pledge to free all their people from the shackles of poverty, suffering, deprivation, gender and other types of discrimination. He closed his address with the wish that freedom reigns and Africa be blessed by God.

An impressive display of South African jets, helicopters and troop carriers added to the spectrum of the inauguration ceremony. Mandela termed it as an exhibition of military loyalty to the newly formed democratic government. When saluted by the military generals, Mandela pointed out the shift in their attitude. These decorated officers, who had just saluted him as the new president and pledged loyalty to his government, would have arrested him not many years ago. The grand ceremony came to a close with the Impala jets leaving a trail of the bright colours that formed the new South African flag.

On that symbolic day, two national anthems were played, the whites sang "*Nkosi Sikelel -iAfrika*" and the blacks "*Die Stem*." Mandela knew that although the two groups had once despised each other's anthem, they would soon memorize both.

Mandela also recalled the historical events that had marked the growth of apartheid in South Africa. The Boer war and the first

decade of the twentieth century had witnessed the spreading of the system of racism and dominance of the blacks by the whites. However, in the last decade of the century, all this had been overturned and the South Africans enjoyed equal rights and freedom irrespective of the colour of their skin.

Mandela also recognised the sacrifices made by thousands of people before him who had suffered hardships because they were patriots. He felt sorry that they could not witness the fruits borne due to the hardships undergone by them. Mandela particularly criticised the policy of apartheid, which had left a deep and lasting wound on his country and its people. He admitted that it would take ages to recover from this but also observed that decades of oppression and brutalities had given birth to courageous patriots like Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Chief Luthuli and many more. He shared that his people were his greater wealth than the minerals and gems found in his country. He further remarked that he had learnt the real meaning of courage and selflessness from such patriots. He had learnt that "courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it."

Another observation that Mandela shared was the belief that hatred is not natural to men. It is acquired. If a man can learn to hate another because of the colour of the skin, he can also be taught to love. Love, according to him "comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite." He recounted the days of oppression that he had undergone during his long imprisonment as a freedom fighter. He shared that even at the most critical time he saw "a glimmer of humanity" in one of the guards. This helped to keep alive his faith that man's goodness is a flame that can never be extinguished.

Sharing another aspect of his experience regarding the obligations every individual has in life, Mandela remarked that every individual has twin obligations - personal obligations to his family and friends

and obligation to his community and country. Every man fulfils both these obligations according to his circumstances and abilities. But tragically in his country, if any black coloured man like him tried to fulfill these obligations he was "punished and isolated." Discharging duties to one's country, its people and community was considered a crime by the authorities and such a person was severed away from his surroundings. This was what had happened to him as well. As a child, he did not understand the meaning of freedom because he enjoyed life freely under the care of his parents. He later realized that this "boyhood freedom" was an illusion and after going to Johannesburg, his attention was drawn to the fact that he as well as his fellow beings were not free. He then began to yearn for the basic and honourable freedom which he required to achieve his potential. He observed that this freedom had been curtailed for all those who were like him.

It was at this stage that he joined the African National Congress which drew him into the struggle for a general freedom for his countrymen. His desire to see his countrymen leading a free and dignified life in place of insubordination changed Mandela from a timid man into a bold one and from a law-abiding attorney into a criminal. He was isolated and rendered homeless.

In the end, Mandela says that he considers both the oppressor and the oppressed to be prisoners. The oppressed is a prisoner because he undergoes physical torture and the oppressor because he is bound by hatred. He very rightly sums up by saying that, "The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity."

#### TITLE

"Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" is a befitting title for this extract. It is an autobiographical account by this great South African leader and deals with the long and arduous journey he undertook to bring liberation to his countrymen. He had to struggle against the

cruel apartheid regime for over eight decades, which was preceded by three centuries of tireless efforts of his patriotic countrymen. The entire extract focuses on the various stages of the 'walk' that led Mandela and his country to 'freedom'. Therefore, the title clearly connects to the contents of the extract that follows.

#### THEME

The chapter explores the idea of struggle, setback, renewed hopes and ultimate triumph of truth. Its theme is summed up in the last sentence of the extract, "The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity." Nelson Mandela shares his experiences to convey the thought that freedom is an individual's birthright. Oppression is condemnable when it is inflicted as well as when it is tolerated. People all over the world are equal and deserve respect, irrespective of their cast, creed or skin-colour. So, those who look down upon their fellow beings or mistreat them, behave against the laws of nature. The natural tendency of human beings is to love and not to hate. This flame of love can never be extinguished. Therefore, the chains of hatred that bind the oppressor and the chains that deprive anyone of his rights, must be broken.

#### MESSAGE

Nelson Mandela, the legendary South African leader and the author of this extract, clearly advocates the supremacy of love. He conveys the message that love comes more naturally to living beings than hatred. Love and compassion are inborn while hatred is acquired. Therefore, the flame of goodness and love in man can never be extinguished. The author also wants human beings to accept the need for compassion even for one's oppressor. He believes that liberation from bondage is essential for both the oppressed and the oppressor since slavery robs them both of their humanity.

Another message that the author wishes to impart is about 'courage'. Courage does not stand for absence of fear, but it actually lies in overcoming fear. So, one must struggle fearlessly for a just cause. Courage helps ordinary people do extraordinary things. It also gives the ability of resilience that helps to fight the adversities of life.

### CHARACTER

#### *Nelson Mandela*

This autobiographical extract tells us that Nelson Mandela was born in a family with adequate means. As a child he was free to do whatever he liked as long as he was obedient and honoured the customs of his tribe. On growing up, he acquired education and realised that the freedom enjoyed by him in his childhood was a myth. He found himself and his countrymen bound by racial oppression and discrimination. His love of freedom made him react very strongly against it.

Mandela was a courageous person and did not fear anything. He had immense will-power to undergo a long and difficult struggle for almost eight decades before he won freedom for his countrymen. He was a humble man with gratitude in his heart for all those who had kept the flame of freedom-struggle alive before he carried on their legacy. He had a kind heart and bore no malice against anyone.

As a dedicated leader of the African National Congress, Mandela worked all his life for peace and humanity. His resilience and selflessness earned him love and respect from the whole world. His views, that even the oppressor requires to be liberated from the chains of hatred that bind him, indicate that he was an apostle of love and harmony. This dynamic leader eventually succeeded in realising his aim to set up a democratic non-racial government in South Africa.

**EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION**

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.

**(I)**

For decades this had been the seat of white supremacy, and now it was the site of a rainbow gathering of different colours and nations for the installation of South Africa's first democratic, non-racial government.

- (a) **What does 'this' refer to in the extract?**

'This' refers to the lovely sandstone amphitheatre formed by the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

- (b) **Why had 'this' been the seat of white supremacy for decades?**

The sandstone amphitheatre had been the seat of white supremacy for decades because it was used by the whites as a place from where they would pass racist policies to suppress the native blacks.

- (c) **Why was 'this' now the site of a rainbow gathering?**

The sandstone amphitheatre was now the site of a rainbow gathering as it was the venue of the installation of a democratic, non-racial government in South Africa.

- (d) **What does the term 'rainbow gathering' stand for?**

'Rainbow gathering' conveys the presence of people from varied nationalities belonging to different classes, creeds and colours.

**(II)**

Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud.

- (a) **Who speaks these words and when?**

Nelson Mandela speaks these words on the occasion of the installation of South Africa's first democratic, non-racial government.

- (b) **According to the speaker, what is the 'extraordinary human disaster'?**

According to Mandela, the 'extraordinary human disaster' is the suffering borne by the blacks of South Africa under their oppressive and racist white rulers.

- (c) **Why did the 'extraordinary human disaster' last too long?**

The sufferings of the blacks of South Africa lasted too long because they had been under the white rule for more than three centuries.

- (d) **What type of society does the speaker expect to be born out of this 'extraordinary human disaster'?**

Mandela expects the birth of a society that would be fair and equal for all regardless of class, colour or creed.

### (III)

We, who were outlaws, not so long ago, have today been given the rare privilege to be host to the nations of the world on our own soil.

- (a) **Whom does 'we' refer to in this extract?**

'We' refers to the native black population of South Africa.

- (b) **Why were 'we' considered 'outlaws'?**

The natives of South Africa were considered 'outlaws' because the ruling white government did not recognize them as citizens.

- (c) **What was the 'rare privilege'?**

The 'rare privilege' was to welcome people from different nationalities on the South African soil. These nationalities had boycotted South Africa so far because of the racist policies of their apartheid government.

- (d) **Why was the 'rare privilege' given?**

The 'rare privilege' was given to show solidarity with the newly elected democratic first non-racial government of South Africa.

## (IV)

I was not unmindful of the fact that not so many years before they would not have saluted but arrested me.

(a) **Who is 'I' in this extract?**

'I' in this extract is Nelson Mandela, the first President of a democratic non-racial South Africa.

(b) **Whom does 'they' refer to?**

'They' refers to the highest generals of the South African defence force and police.

(c) **When does 'I' make this observation?**

Mandela makes this observation when he is saluted by the senior officials from the former white regime.

(d) **Why would 'they' have arrested the speaker not so many years before?**

They would have arrested Mandela not so many years before because the racist law that they safeguarded considered Mandela as an 'outlaw' as he was a black

## (V)

On the day of the inauguration, I was overwhelmed with a sense of history.

(a) **Who speaks these words?**

Nelson Mandela, the first President of the newly formed democratic, non-racial government of South Africa, speaks these words.

(b) **When was the day of the inauguration?**

Tenth May 1994 was the day of the inauguration.

(c) **What was inaugurated on that day?**

The newly formed democratic, non-racial government of South Africa was inaugurated on that day.

**(d) Why was the speaker overwhelmed with a sense of history?**

Mandela was overwhelmed with a sense of history because he recalled the countless sacrifices made by his countrymen for centuries before their present generation could see the light of freedom.

**(VI)**

I would see a glimmer of humanity in one of the guards, perhaps just for a second, but it was enough to assure me and keep me going. Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished.

**(a) Who speaks or writes these words?**

Nelson Mandela writes these words in the excerpt from his autobiography.

**(b) Which guard does he/she refer to?**

Mandela refers to one of the guards in the prison where he had been kept along with his comrades for protesting the racist policy of apartheid.

**(c) What would assure him/her and keep him/her going?**

The brief glimmer of humanity that Mandela would see in one of the guards even in the grimmest times in prison assured him to keep going for the victory of love.

**(d) Why does he/she compare man's goodness to a flame?**

Mandela compares man's goodness to a flame because it can never be blown out. It keeps glowing and keeps spreading light of hope.

**(VII)**

I saw that it was not just my freedom that was curtailed, but the freedom of everyone who looked like I did.

**(a) Who is 'I' in this extract?**

'I' here is Nelson Mandela, the symbol of courage, who fought the racist apartheid regime to win freedom for South Africa.

- (b) When did the speaker see that freedom was curtailed for him and others?**

Mandela saw this when he was a young man in Johannesburg.

- (c) Why was freedom curtailed for everyone who looked like the speaker?**

Mandela was a black South African and the government in his country was racist that oppressed the black coloured people. So, freedom of all those who had black looks like Mandela was also curtailed.

- (d) What did the speaker do after seeing that freedom was curtailed for him and others like him?**

After seeing that freedom was curtailed for him and others like him, Mandela joined the African National Congress to subsequently become part of the freedom struggle of South Africa.

**(VIII)**

A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred;

- (a) Who is the speaker here? When does he/she make this observation?**

Nelson Mandela is the speaker here. He makes this observation when he notices the situations of the oppressor and the oppressed.

- (b) Whom does he refer to as 'prisoner of hatred'?**

Mandela refers to the oppressor as a 'prisoner of hatred'.

- (c) Whose freedom is taken away and why?**

The freedom of the oppressed is taken away because the oppressor has greater power vested in him.

- (d) How can hatred imprison anyone?**

Hatred is like a wall of a prison that does not allow a person inside it to connect to those on the other side. In this way, a man who allows hatred to control him gets cut off from everyone and is left alone like a prisoner.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 30 – 40 words each)

- Q1. What is apartheid? Which country faced apartheid until very recently?**

Apartheid is the oppressive policy that is based on racial discrimination. South Africa faced the evil effects of this inhuman practice till 10 May, 1994.

- Q2. Can you say how 10 May is an 'autumn day' in South Africa?**

Or (Textual)

**What is the significance of tenth May for the people of South Africa?**

Or

**Why did Mandela call May 10 'that lovely autumn day'?**

Mandela called 10 May 'that lovely autumn day' as this day saw the fall of a system of governance based on race and creed. Just as the trees shed their old and worn out leaves in autumn, so were the oppressive policies practised in South Africa shed, making room for a new and fresh democratic non-racial government.

- Q3. Why had the international leaders gathered on South African soil? What did it signify?**

The international leaders had gathered on South African soil to congratulate Nelson Mandela and his team at the victory of their struggle against racism. They were the guests at the installation ceremony of the newly elected democratic, non-racial government. This gathering signified recognition of the rights of the black community in South Africa by the political agencies of the world.

- Q4. Where did the ceremonies of the inauguration of South Africa take place? Can you name any public buildings in India that are made of sandstone?**

(Textual)

The ceremonies of the inauguration of South Africa took place in the lovely sandstone amphitheatre formed by the Union Buildings in Pretoria. It was attended by dignitaries from more than 140 countries around the world.

The Jama Masjid and Humayun's Tomb in Delhi and the Amer Fort in Jaipur are some of the sandstone buildings in India.

- Q5. What two symbols did the sandstone amphitheatre stand for?**

*Or*

**What importance do the Union Buildings in Pretoria hold?**

The sandstone amphitheatre stood as a symbol of white supremacy over the people of black race till the new democratic government came to power on May 10, 1994. After the installation of the first non-racial democratic government, it stood as a symbol of freedom, peace and harmony of human-race.

- Q6. Who accompanied Mandela for the inauguration? Which three people were sworn in?**

*Or*

**Which two political members were sworn in before Mandela on 10 May 1994?**

Mandela was accompanied to the inauguration by his daughter Zenani. The three people who were sworn in were Mr de Klerk as the second deputy president, Thabo Mbeki as the first deputy president, and Nelson Mandela as the President of South Africa.

- Q7. What did Mandela pledge when he was sworn in?**

Mandela pledged to obey and uphold the Constitution and to devote himself to the well-being of the Republic and its people. He also pledged to liberate all his people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination.

- Q8. Why did Mandela say that the entire humanity will be proud at the birth of a new society in South Africa?**

Mandela said so because he viewed this new society as a brave survivor who had withstood the onslaught of a long and extraordinary human disaster. This society was therefore unique and its existence was a matter of pride for the entire world.

**Q9. What does Mandela thank the international leaders for? (Textual)**

Mandela thanks the international leaders for having graced the occasion of the installation of the democratic, non-racial government of South Africa. Their presence on this historic day proved that the international community supported equality and recognised its victory over injustice and discrimination. The countries of these representatives had earlier severed diplomatic relations with the white regime in South Africa to express their disapproval of the policy of apartheid.

**Q10. Why did Mandela call the swearing-in 'a common victory for justice, for peace, for human dignity'?**

Mandela calls the swearing-in 'a common victory for justice, for peace, for human dignity' because most nations of the world who had expressed their disapproval of the policy of apartheid practised by the white rulers of South Africa had now given international recognition to a newly born free nation. The setting up of a democratic, non-racial government thus was a victory for everyone.

**Q11. 'We have, at last, achieved our political emancipation.' Explain the significance of this statement.**

This statement means that the black people of South Africa had eventually won their freedom from oppressive laws like the apartheid. Now, their political rights and opportunities were the same as that of the whites.

**Q12. What ideals does Mandela set out for the future of South Africa?**

*(Textual)*

Mandela foresees that his country will be free of segregation in the name of colour and class. It will be free from hatred, and love will reign supreme. He also pledges to liberate his countrymen from poverty, deprivation and suffering.

**Q13. What did Mandela say about the spectacular array of South African jets?**

Presenting his observations about the performance of military at the inauguration ceremony, Mandela records that it was not only a display of pinpoint precision and military force, but was also a demonstration of the military's loyalty to democracy and to a new government that had been elected freely and fairly.

**Q14. Why does Mandela observe that the generals of the South African defence force and police would have arrested him not so many years ago?**

Mandela makes this observation because these generals abided by the rules of the apartheid regime before the non-racial democratic government came to power. As per the laws of apartheid Mandela was an outlaw who protested their racist and discriminatory rules. So he would have been arrested by the generals.

**Q15. Why were two national anthems sung on the inauguration day? What did it symbolize? (Textual)**

The two national anthems sung on the inauguration day were the 'Nkosi Sikelel -iAfrika' sung by the whites and the 'Die Stem' - the old anthem of the Republic - sung by the blacks. It symbolized the coming together of two groups that had remained segregated along racial lines till then.

**Q16. What overwhelmed Mandela on the day of the inauguration?**

On the day of the inauguration, Mandela was overwhelmed by a sense of history. He recalled the first decade of the twentieth

century, a few years after the bitter Anglo-Boer war and the time before his own birth. Enumerating the sacrifices of the freedom fighters before him, he expressed gratitude.

**Q17. How had the white-skinned peoples of South Africa managed to dominate the blacks?**

The white-skinned peoples of South Africa patched up their differences and erected a harsh and inhumane system of racial domination against the dark-skinned blacks of their own country. They adopted the policy of apartheid and took away even the basic rights of the black people.

**Q18. Explain: "That long and noble line ended and now began again with me."**

This means that the numerous freedom fighters before Nelson Mandela had passed away after having contributed to the struggle for liberation. These were men of extraordinary courage, wisdom and generosity. Mandela had resumed their struggle against poverty, discrimination and suffering.

**Q19. '...they were not able to see what their sacrifices has wrought'. Whose sacrifices was Mandela talking about? Why?**

Mandela was talking about the unimaginable sacrifices made by thousands of his people. He was talking about them because the suffering and courage of these people could never be counted or repaid. The victory of freedom struggle was actually the sum total of all the African patriots before him.

**Q20. What was the impact of the policy of apartheid on the people of South Africa?**

*Or*

**What was the only 'positive', albeit 'unintended effect' that Mandela attributed to apartheid?**

The policy of apartheid had created a deep and lasting wound on South Africa and its people. The hurt was so profound that it

was likely to take years to recover from it. However, the 'unintended effect' was that it gave birth to courageous, wise and generous people like Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Chief Luthuli and other extraordinary personalities.

**Q21. How does Mandela associate oppression with character?**

Mandela believes that deeper the oppression, the greater the height of character. To him, character is strengthened by the challenges and sufferings encountered by a person. Tougher the challenges, the stronger the character.

**Q22. What, according to Mandela, is the true wealth of his nation?**

*Or*

**What or whom does Mandela regard as the country's finest resource?**

According to Nelson Mandela, the true wealth of his nation is its people who are finer and truer than the purest diamonds. He considers the people to be richer than the minerals and gems beneath the nation's soil.

**Q23. How did Mandela learn the meaning of courage?**

Mandela learnt the meaning of courage from his comrades in struggle for freedom. He repeatedly saw men and women risking and giving their lives for an idea. He saw them standing up to attacks and torture, displaying remarkable resilience without breaking.

**Q24. What does courage mean to Mandela?**

*(Textual)*

To Mandela, courage means overcoming fear and not the absence of fear. The brave always conquer fear which gives them the strength to stand firmly against atrocities without breaking down. The courageous people never feel afraid.

**Q25. Why does Mandela believe that people can be taught to love?**

*Or*

**Which does Mandela think is natural - to love or to hate? (Textual)**

Mandela believes that love comes naturally to human heart while hatred is acquired. Therefore, if people can learn to hate, they can also be taught to love. He forms this opinion out of his own experience as a prisoner when he saw a "glimmer of humanity" in the eyes of white prison guards at crucial times.

**Q26. In Mandela's opinion, what are the 'twin obligations' that every man has in life? Why was it not possible for a man in South Africa to fulfill these 'twin obligations'? Or**

**What 'twin obligations' does Mandela mention? (Textual)**

Mandela is of the opinion that every man has twin obligations. The first one is towards his family, his parents, his wife and children, and the second one is towards his people, his community and his country. It was not possible for a man in South Africa to fulfill both these because by doing so he became a threat to the white rulers. They punished and isolated such a man under the oppressive apartheid laws.

**Q27. What kind of life did Mandela have as a child? Or**

**What had freedom meant to Mandela when he was a child?**

As a child, Mandela had a safe and free life. He was free to run in the fields, swim in the clear stream, roast mealies under the stars and ride the bulls. As long as he obeyed his father and abided by the customs of his tribe, he was not restricted.

**Q28. When and why did Mandela begin to feel the hunger for freedom?**

Mandela began to feel the hunger for freedom when he was in Johannesburg as a young man. He felt this hunger because even the basic and honourable freedom desired by him, and others like him, was curtailed by the whites.

**Q29. When and why did Mandela join the African National Congress?**

Mandela joined the African National Congress when he saw all black people in his country bound in the chains of oppression.

He joined the ANC because he was now hungry for the freedom of the entire race and wanted his people to live a life of dignity and self-respect.

**Q30. Why was Mandela labelled a 'criminal'?**

The desire for freedom of his people to live their lives with dignity and self-respect emboldened Mandela. Earlier he was a law abiding attorney but later he defied the oppressive laws of the white rulers and was labelled a 'criminal'.

**Q31. How did the struggle for winning freedom affect Mandela's life?**

The struggle for winning freedom isolated Mandela and he had to leave his family and home to live like a monk. He could fulfill his obligation only towards the nation and had to give up his obligation towards his family.

**Q32. 'Freedom is indivisible'. What did Mandela mean by these words?**

Mandela used this expression to convey that the chains and bondage, that enslaved anyone of his people, were the chains on all of them including him. Freedom had to be brought to every citizen as all had an equal right for an honourable existence.

**Q33. "The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity." Why did Mandela say this? Or**

**What, according to Mandela, is similar about the oppressor and the oppressed? Or**

**Does Mandela think the oppressor is free? Why/Why not?**

*(Textual)*

According to Mandela, the oppressor is as enslaved as the oppressed. They both are robbed of their humanity. The oppressed is robbed by the suppressive power of the oppressor while the oppressor is burdened with the weight of hatred and is enslaved by the barriers of prejudice and narrow-mindedness.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)*

- Q1. What do you understand by the term 'Apartheid'? Of the three countries namely North America, Australia and South Africa, where was this system practised and with what result? Who was responsible for wiping out this system from the country?**

'Apartheid' was a political system based on racial discrimination intended to establish dominance of the whites over the dark-skinned people in their own land. This system granted social and political privileges only to the whites. The blacks were subjected to harsh and inhuman oppressive practices that had ever been faced by any society in the world.

This vicious political system was practised in South Africa by the Botha regime. This policy resulted in the creation of a very deep and lasting wound on the country and its people. The blacks of South Africa were treated as 'outlaws' and any attempt to fight for their rights led to their victimization by the laws of the apartheid.

Nelson Mandela, the African National Congress, and many other freedom fighters like Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu and Chief Luthuli waged a long war against this deeply oppressive policy and eventually succeeded in wiping it out on May 10, 1994.

- Q2. Why did a large number of international leaders attend the inauguration? What did it signify the triumph of? (Textual)**

A large number of international leaders and dignitaries representing more than 140 countries from all over the world attended the inauguration ceremony because it was hosted to install the first democratic, non-racial government in South Africa. These leaders had come to show solidarity with, and pay their respects to the long and arduous freedom struggle of South

Africans. The swearing in of Mandela as the first black president of South Africa was an event of international significance as the fight against the racist policy of apartheid was supported by almost all the nations of the world. They had broken their diplomatic relations with the white rulers of South Africa to strongly express their disapproval. They had gathered in such great numbers on the soil of South Africa after a very long time. Their presence at the time of the establishment of democracy and acknowledgement of the rights of blacks was a victory for the entire international community. It signified the triumph of the faith in equality and the right to liberty.

- Q3. At the beginning of his speech, Mandela mentions "an extraordinary human disaster." What does he mean by this? What is the "glorious .... human achievement" he speaks of at the end? (Textual)**

The "extraordinary disaster" that Mandela talks of in his inaugural presidential speech is the effect of the long drawn apartheid policy practised by the whites in South Africa. This policy had inflicted unthinkable, inhuman and harsh atrocities on the dark-skinned people in their own country. This was against natural justice because God has made everyone equal and rights of one man could not be allowed to be suppressed by another solely on the basis of the difference in the colour of the skin.

The "glorious human achievement", about which Mandela speaks in the end, is the eventual victory of the 'outlaws', who, after making countless sacrifices, finally won the first democratic elections in South Africa to form a government which was non-racial. This achievement was glorious as it had been gained after undergoing hardships for many centuries.

- Q4. What did the military and police generals do? How had their attitude changed and why? (Textual)**

The highest ranking generals of the South African defence forces and the police demonstrated their loyalty to the new government by saluting their first black president, Nelson Mandela. Their attitude underwent a change because as government servants they were the ones who had earlier carried out the duty of arresting all the 'outlaws' who had fought the oppressive policies of the white government. However, the situation changed after the democratic elections which resulted in the victory of the African National Congress. The power now shifted to the team led by Nelson Mandela. But these officers displayed integrity by pledging their loyalty to the newly elected democratic, non-racial government. The change in their attitude showed that they served as the upholders of law and worked within the ambit of their constitutional responsibilities.

**Q5. Why were two national anthems sung on the occasion of the installation ceremony? Or**

**'Although that day neither group knew the lyrics of the anthem they once despised, they would soon know the words by heart.' What do you think Mandela meant by these words?**

The whites and the blacks in South Africa had always been at loggerheads. The whites ruled South Africa with an iron hand denying even the basic rights to the dark-skinned people in their own land. They oppressed the blacks and ripped them of normal life if they tried to raise their discontentment over the white misrule. However, the country belonged to both the whites and the blacks. So, the two groups sang their respective national anthems to pledge their loyalty to the nation. The blacks sang "Die Stem" which was the old anthem of the Republic, while the whites sang "Nkosi Sikelel -iAfrika." Although both the groups had despised the lyrics of each other's anthem but it was now

expected that after living together as equal citizens of the same country they would soon learn these anthems by heart.

- Q6. How does Mandela describe the systems of government in his country (i) in the first decade, and (ii) in the final decade, of the twentieth century? (Textual)**

In the first decade of the twentieth century, before Mandela was born, the whites in South Africa sorted out their differences and became united. They set up the most vicious system of racial domination called the apartheid. In the words of Mandela, this system was "an extraordinary disaster" that formed the basis of one of the harshest, most inhumane societies the world had ever known. The whites discriminated against the blacks and scarred them deeply.

However, in the last decade of the twentieth century, the apartheid system was overturned forever and was replaced by the one that recognized the rights and freedom of all people, regardless of the colour of their skin. This new system was a symbolic victory for justice, peace and human dignity. It led to the installation of the first democratic, non-racial government of South Africa.

- Q7. What does Mandela mean when he says he is "simply the sum of all those African patriots" who had gone before him? (Textual)**

The struggle against the atrocities committed on blacks by the whites in South Africa started much before Mandela was born. The African patriots before him had already started the struggle for equality and liberty. Had they not raised their voice against oppression and racial discrimination, Mandela, perhaps, would never have realised the real significance of being a free man. He carried forward the legacy left by these great African patriots. Thus, the courage exhibited, the sufferings undergone and the

sacrifices made by thousands of his people before him became a symbol of awakening for Mandela. Whatever he did for his country, was the culmination of the total efforts made by all the freedom fighters put together. This made him the sum of all those who had kept the hunger for freedom thriving.

**Q8. "Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished"? Why does Mandela say this? Or**

**During his time in prison, what reassured Mandela that man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished?**

Nelson Mandela had unflinching faith in the goodness of man. He believed that it was like a glowing flame that could perhaps be kept hidden but could never be extinguished. He understood and acknowledged this value of man when he was kept confined as a political prisoner along with his comrades. He observed that even in the grimmest times in prison, when he and his fellow freedom fighters were pushed to their limits, a glimmer of humanity would flicker momentarily in one of the guards. This was enough to assure Mandela that goodness of man could not be extinguished and he continued to fight for his rights. He admired this 'flame' and kept going on to face adversities, overcome suppression and eventually win liberation for his brothers. He knew that love comes more naturally to human heart than hate. Therefore, man's goodness could never be wiped off. Sooner or later it would glow like a flame and spread its brightness in human lives.

**Q9. What "twin obligations" does Mandela mention? What happened to people who tried to perform both these obligations under the white rule in South Africa?**

The 'twin obligations' Mandela talks about are a man's duty towards his blood relations *i.e.* parents, wife, children, brothers

and sisters on the one hand, and his country and his community on the other. Under the white rule in South Africa, so long as a black did not question the rules laid down by the whites and submitted to all their whims, he was not disturbed. But the moment he started working for the uplift of his community, he earned the wrath of the white rule and was penalised. He was ripped off his family and was constrained to lead a "twilight existence" divorced from his near and dear ones. The white government left no scope of rebellion and brutally curtailed all such efforts. They executed their powers to suppress the blacks and kept all the resources concentrated in their own hands. All voices of discontentment were throttled ruthlessly.

**Q10. What did being free mean to Mandela as a boy and as a student?**

**How does he contrast these 'transitory freedoms' with the "basic and honourable freedoms?" Or (Textual)**

**How did Mandela realize that his vision of boyhood freedom was an illusion?**

As a village boy, freedom for Mandela meant running about the fields freely, swimming in the clear stream at will, roasting mealies under the stars and riding the broad backs of slow-moving bulls. As a young man, freedom for him meant staying late at night and reading what he liked. However, later on, he realised that these were mere illusionary "transitory freedoms." 'Basic and honourable freedoms' lied in achieving one's potential and leading a life of dignity and self-respect. It included the right to earn one's keep, the right to marry and have a family, and the right not to be obstructed in a lawful life. The 'transitory freedoms' were restricted to a phase in one's life where one was under the guardianship of elders. In contrast the 'basic and honourable freedoms' were for the individual as well as those

around him. These freedoms were not divisible and had to be won for all the brothers and sisters of the community.

**Q11. How did Mandela's understanding of freedom change with age and experience?** *(Textual)*

Mandela, as a child, had nothing exceptional about him and like other children he too felt content with the freedom he enjoyed in his own village. He was free to do whatever he liked so long as he obeyed his father and abided by the dictates of his tribe. However, his perception of freedom changed with the passage of time. Age and experience made him understand that real freedom stood for the right to live with dignity and self-respect. He realised that he was not free to achieve his potential, or earn his keep, or marry and have a family or free not to be obstructed in the name of law. He also understood that his fellow-beings too were as bound as he was. So, as a grown up man, his understanding of freedom changed leading to a hunger for an honourable life for himself and for his brethren.

**Q12. When and why did Nelson Mandela join the African National Congress (ANC)?**

Mandela belonged to a loving family that provided him with all that was required by a young growing up boy. However, on reaching boyhood, he understood that his freedom was an illusion. Gradually he began to feel a strong hunger for freedom. Initially, he wanted the freedom only for himself. This was a transitory freedom of being able to stay out at night, read what pleased him and go where he wanted. These thoughts remained with him when he was a student. But on reaching Johannesburg, as a young man, he yearned for the basic and honourable freedom to achieve his potential and lead a life where there would not be any obstruction to earn his keep, and marry and

have a family. However, on a closer observation of people around him, Mandela realised that all those who looked like him were not free. The freedom of each one of his brothers and sisters had been curtailed. At this juncture Nelson Mandela joined the African National Congress since the hunger for his own freedom became the greater hunger for the freedom of his people.

**Q13. How did Mandela's "hunger for freedom" change his life? (Textual)**

*Or*

**How did Mandela's personality undergo a transformation after joining the ANC?**

Mandela's hunger for freedom changed his life diametrically. He realized that all his countrymen, who were black like him, were bound by racism. This realisation thrust him into a way of life where he gave up his family and home to live like a monk. He changed from a law-abiding attorney to a 'criminal' who challenged and defied the oppressive laws. He was no longer a frightened young man, but a self-sacrificing bold one. He could not enjoy the little freedom that he had because he knew that his people were not free. He had finally realised that as long as his brothers were in chains, he too was a slave. He also understood that even the oppressor was a slave. He was bound by the chains of hatred and locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. Thus Mandela's hunger for freedom brought a complete change in his life and his way of thinking.

**Q14. Would you agree that the "depths of oppression" create "heights of character"? How does Mandela illustrate this? Can you add your own examples to this argument? (Textual)**

It is certain that the "depths of oppression" bring the best out of an individual and create "heights of character". Mandela illustrates this by talking about the unimaginable atrocities

perpetrated by the whites against the black South Africans. This awakened the spirit of revolt in them and they showed a rare strength of character in fighting against their oppressors. The atrocities inflicted upon the South Africans by the apartheid regime led to an equally strong retaliation by patriots like Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Chief Luthuli, Yusuf Dadoo, Bram Fischer, Robert Sobukwe and later on Nelson Mandela.

On the Indian scene, one can't forget the sacrifices made by the likes of Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Pandit Nehru, Lala Laj Pat Rai, Bhagat Singh, Subhash Chander Bose and Chander Shekhar Azad in India's struggle for freedom.



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### 3. Two Stories About Flying

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#### ABOUT THE STORIES

##### Introduction:

"Two Stories About Flying" includes experiences of a young seagull and a professional pilot under the two titles 'His First Flight' and 'Black Aeroplane' respectively. These are accounts of the thrill and fear that mark the 'first-time' experience of an individual. The young seagull's native flight and the miraculous safe landing of a pilot include the common elements of risk, reluctance, courage and success. The reader's interest is kept intact by the description about the emotional turmoil of the two 'fliers'.

#### I. His First Flight

(Liam O' Flaherty)

##### Summary:

A young seagull sat alone on a ledge. He was trying to muster up courage to fly for the first time. The previous day, his sister and his two brothers had already learnt to fly. However, he was afraid to fly and thus he just looked on quietly. Whenever he came to the brink of the ledge to attempt to flap his wings, the vast stretch of sea below terrified him. He was not confident that his wings would support him, so he rushed back to his hole under the ledge and slept for the night. He could not gather the courage to take the plunge in spite of the fact that he had seen his brothers and sister rush to the brink and fly away smoothly. Even the encouraging words of his parents, their yelling and their scolding, failed to make him fly.

After sometime, the baby seagull's parents felt frustrated and went away. All through the day, he watched his parents teach his brothers and sister the fine art of flying, swimming and diving for fish. He

watched his elder brother catch his first herring (a fish) and swallow it. The parents circled round him cackling proudly.

All through the next morning, the entire family walked on the big plateau on the opposite cliff. They appeared to be jeering at him for his cowardice. As the sun ascended the sky, the young seagull started feeling hungry. He had not eaten anything since the previous evening. He tried to attract his parent's attention by pretending to sleep. Still, they took no notice of him. His brothers and sister were dozing on the plateau with their heads hidden in the necks.

Nobody paid any attention to him, except his mother. She was eating a fish that lay at her feet. He was mad with hunger and wanted to tear that food away from her. He repeatedly sharpened his beak, signalling his mother to give him some food. She, in turn, was in no mood to help him. Still, she picked a piece of fish and flew closer to him. She did not give it to him but withdrew the moment she came close. It was as if she were trying to tempt him. This surprised the baby seagull. Mad with hunger, he dived towards the fish and fell outwards and downwards in the space, giving a loud scream. He was terrified and felt as if his heart would stop beating. He could not hear anything. But this terror-stricken state lasted just for a minute and soon he found his wings spreading out, the wind rushing against the wings, under his breast and stomach. Gradually, his wings started cutting through the wind and he began to soar.

He was fearless now and rose upwards. His parents appreciated and encouraged him by flying by his side. His brothers and sister too flew close to him. This maiden attempt at flying turned out to be a success. He flew fearlessly over the vast sea and enjoyed the scene down below. His brothers, sister and parents sat on the "green flooring" ahead of him and called him. He sat on the green sea and felt his legs sinking downwards and screamed with fright. He felt tired and was unable to

rise because of exhaustion. But when his belly touched the surface, he sank no farther and started floating. All the members of his family applauded him as he had successfully accomplished his first flight.

#### TITLE

##### *Two Stories About Flying*

The title clearly conveys that the text is about two stories, both of which deal with the experience of flying. One story describes the maiden flying experience of a baby seagull, while the other story shares the flying experience of the pilot of a Dakota plane. Both these stories are gripping narratives of flying. Thus, the title is simple and apt.

##### *His First Flight*

"His First Flight", the subtitle of the first narrative, is appropriate as it describes the maiden flight of a seagull. The entire episode deals with the inhibitions and fears of the seagull before the flight and the thrill and joy experienced by him after the flight.

So, the title "His First Flight" justifiably sums up the importance of this first venture in the life of the young seagull.

#### THEME

"His First Flight" is based on the theme that self-belief and confidence can be brought about through motivation. The parents of the seagull had tried in different ways to push him to learn the art of flying. When all efforts failed, the mother achieved success by tactfully helping her child conquer fear and take the plunge. After overcoming a momentary feeling of fear, the young bird finally experienced great joy in completing his maiden flight.

#### MESSAGE

"His First Flight" conveys the message that self-reliance is very important and parents should encourage their children to have a

strong self-belief. They should know that in order to overcome fear the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. The mother seagull persuades the young one to get him to learn flying. This finally makes the baby seagull take the plunge and he flaps his wings to fly away freely and independently.

### EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.

#### (I)

His father and mother had come around calling to him shrilly, upbraiding him, threatening to let him starve on his ledge unless he flew away. But for the life of him, he could not move.

(a) Who is 'he' here?

Here 'he' is the young seagull who was reluctant to fly.

(b) Why are his parents scolding him?

His parents are scolding him because he is not making any efforts to learn flying.

(c) What do they expect him to do?

They expect him to follow their instructions like his brothers and sister and learn to fly.

(d) Why could 'he' not move?

He could not move because he was extremely afraid to fly. He failed to muster up courage to take a plunge from the cliff as he felt that his wings would never support him.

#### (II)

That was twenty-four hours ago. Since then nobody had come near him.

(a) **Who is 'him' in this extract?**

In this extract, 'him' is the young seagull.

(b) **Who all hadn't come near 'him'?**

The young seagull's parents, brothers and sister had not come near him.

(c) **Why hadn't anybody come near 'him'?**

Nobody had come near him because they had not been able to motivate him enough to take the plunge. So, they moved away from him and let him be alone.

(d) **What does 'that' refer to?**

'That' refers to the efforts made by the young seagull's family to coax him to fly.

(III)

And all the morning the whole family had walked about on the big plateau midway down the opposite cliff taunting him with his cowardice.

(a) **Who is 'he' here?**

Here 'he' is the young seagull.

(b) **Who all are the members of his family?**

His parents, his two brothers and a sister are the members of his family.

(c) **What cowardice did they taunt him for?**

They taunted him for being afraid and not mustering up enough courage to take a plunge from the cliff in order to learn the art of flying.

(d) **How did they help him overcome the cowardice?**

They circled around him by motivating and coaxing him to learn flying.

(IV)

He leaned out eagerly, tapping the rock with his feet, trying to get nearer to her as she flew across.

(a) **Who is 'he' in this extract?**

In this extract, 'he' is the young seagull who was afraid to fly.

(b) **Where did 'he' lean out from?**

The young seagull leaned out from the ledge where he had been waiting for his mother to get him food.

(c) **Whom did he try to get nearer to? Why?**

The young seagull tried to get nearer to his mother because she was flying across to him with a piece of fish.

(d) **Who was 'she'? Why did she fly across?**

'She' was the mother seagull and she flew across to tempt her child with the piece of fish and motivate him to take the plunge for flying.

(V)

He was no longer afraid. He just felt a bit dizzy. Then he flapped his wings once and he soared upwards.

(a) **Who is 'he' in this extract?**

In this extract, 'he' is the young seagull who was afraid to fly.

(b) **What was 'he' no longer afraid of?**

The young seagull was no longer afraid of falling down into the vast sea while flying over it.

(c) **Why did 'he' feel dizzy?**

He felt dizzy because of the anxiety that he experienced during his first flight. Besides, he was tired and had not eaten anything in the past twenty-four hours.

(d) **Why did he soar upwards?**

The young seagull soared upwards because he was enjoying his first flight and was happy as his courage had given him the momentum to rise high.

## (VI)

He dropped his legs to stand on the green sea. His legs sank into it. He screamed with fright and attempted to raise again flapping his wings.

(a) **Who is 'he' here?**

Here 'he' is the young seagull.

(b) **What does he mistake the green sea for?**

The young seagull mistakes the green sea for firm land on which he could descend easily.

(c) **Why did he scream with fright?**

The young seagull screamed with fright because his legs sank into the green sea and he felt as if he would drown.

(d) **He attempted to flap his wings. Why?**

The young seagull attempted to flap his wings to avoid getting drowned. He did not know that seagulls have the natural ability to float and swim.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 30 – 40 words each)*

**Q1. Why was the young seagull alone on his ledge? How did he feel there all alone? What did his parents do at this time?**

The young seagull was alone on his ledge because he was afraid to fly and he did not respond to his parents when they motivated and coaxed him to learn the art of flying. He was also hungry and felt lonely and miserable. His parents left him for a while and started to give flight lessons to his brothers and little sister who were obeying their instructions.

**Q2. Why was the young seagull afraid of the sea? Or**

**Why did the young seagull run back to his little hole under the ledge?**

The young seagull's heart sank when he looked at the vast expanse of the sea which was visible from the brink of his ledge. He felt that it was so many miles down that his wings would certainly not support him. So, he ran back to the little hole under the ledge and slept there at night.

**Q3. How did the young seagull's parents try to coax him to fly?**

In order to coax the young seagull to fly, his parents came around calling to him shrilly, upbraiding him, threatening to let him starve on the ledge unless he flew.

**Q4. What did the young seagull watch all day long?**

Or

What did the young seagull's parents teach his brothers and little sister?

Or

**Sitting of the ledge all alone, what did the young seagull see?**

All day long, the seagull watched his parents flying about with his brothers and little sister, perfecting them in the art of flight. They taught them how to skim the waves and how to dive for fish. He also saw his older brother catch his first herring and devour it while his parents circled around him raising a proud cackle.

**Q5. How was the young seagull different from his brothers and little sister?**

The young seagull had longer wings than his brothers and little sister but he did not have the courage like them to take the plunge off the ledge and fly. He took an additional day to follow his parents' instructions unlike his siblings who ran to the brink, flapped their wings and flew away.

**Q6. What was the young seagull's family doing on the plateau?**

The young seagull's family was walking about on the big plateau midway down the opposite cliff throughout the morning. They were trying to taunt him for his cowardice so that he might get

persuaded to take the plunge and fly.

- Q7. Why did the young seagull feel the heat of the ascending sun? What did he do?**

The young seagull felt the heat of the ascending sun because he had not eaten anything since the previous nightfall. He then stepped slowly out to the brink of the ledge, and standing on one leg, closed his eyes one by one pretending to sleep and draw sympathy of his family.

- Q8. How did the young seagull's family respond when he pretended to fall asleep?**

The young seagull's family ignored him when he pretended to fall asleep. Instead, his two brothers and his sister lay on the plateau dozing with their heads sunk into their necks. His father preened his feathers and only his mother looked at him.

- Q9. Why was the young seagull maddened by the sight of food?**

*Or*

**How did the young seagull react when his mother tore at a piece of fish and scraped her beak on the rock?**

The young seagull was maddened when he saw his mother tearing a piece of fish and scraping her beak on the rock. He had not eaten anything during the past twenty-four hours and the sight of food made him mad with hunger.

- Q10. How and why did the young seagull beg his mother to bring him food? How did she respond to him?**

The young seagull cried 'ga, ga, ga' begging his mother to bring him some food as he had not eaten anything since the previous nightfall. However, she refused to feed him and screamed back 'gaw-col-ah' in a harsh-derisive tone. The young seagull still kept calling plaintively till he saw her flying across to him with a piece of fish in her beak.

**Q11. '...after a minute or so he uttered a joyful scream.' Why did the young seagull scream joyfully? How did he express his joy?**

The young seagull screamed joyfully because he saw that his mother had picked up a piece of fish and was flying across to him with it. He expressed his joy by eagerly leaning out, tapping the rock with his feet, and trying to get nearer to her as she flew across.

**Q12. Why did the young seagull's mother halt on reaching close to him with a piece of fish in her beak? How did the young seagull respond when she halted?**

The young seagull's mother halted on reaching close to him with a piece of fish in her beak because she wanted to tempt him with food and encourage him to shed his fear so that he would make an effort to fly. However, the young seagull was surprised when his mother halted. Maddened by hunger, he dived at the fish, falling outwards and downwards into space.

**Q13. What happened to the young seagull when he dived at the fish?**

Or

**What happened as the young seagull fell outwards and downwards into space?**

The young seagull was seized by terror for a minute when he dived at the fish held by his mother in her beak. It was like a monstrous fear gripping him. His heart stood still and he could not hear anything. But the next moment, his wings spread outwards and he felt the wind rushing in under his stomach. Instead of falling headlong, he soared gradually.

**Q14. Did the mother seagull really want to taunt and mock the young seagull?**

No, the mother seagull had no such intention. She was simply trying to motivate her child to shed his fear and make an effort to learn the art of flying.

**Q15. How did the young seagull enjoy his first flight?**

*Or*

**How did the young seagull express his joy during his first flight?**

The young seagull thoroughly enjoyed his first flight. He screamed joyfully when his mother swooped past him in admiration. Slowly he completely forgot that he had not always been able to fly. He enjoyed by diving, soaring, curving and shrieking shrilly.

**Q16. Describe the reaction of the young seagull's family when he started flying.**

The young seagull's family felt happy and excited to see him flying. His mother swooped past him with her wings making a loud noise. His father flew over him screaming. His two brothers and his sister flew around him curveting, banking, soaring and diving.

**Q17. How did the sea appear to the young seagull during his first flight? What was his reaction?**

*Or*

**How did the young seagull feel on flying over the vast green sea?**

On his first flight, the sea appeared interesting to the young seagull. He saw its vast green stretch beneath him, with little ridges moving over it. This amused him and he reacted by turning his beak sideways and cawing.

**Q18. Why did the young seagull feel terrified upon landing on the sea? What did he do to overcome this feeling?**

The young seagull felt terrified upon landing on the sea because his legs sank into the green sea when he dropped them to stand on it. To overcome his fright, he attempted to rise again by flapping his wings. However, he could not fly as he was tired and weak with hunger. As he sank further, his belly touched the sea and he began floating naturally.

**Q19. What do you think motivated the young seagull to make his first flight?**

The young seagull was compelled by hunger to make his first flight. He was tempted by the fish that his mother carried in her beak. She flew across to him but stopped a little, before the fish was within his reach. He could not resist his strong urge to eat and dived at the fish.

**Q20. "He had made his first flight." How was the flight important to the seagull?**

The flight was extremely important for the seagull as it had helped him to find his self-confidence. He had now overcome his fear and had the courage to soar upwards and outwards like his brothers and little sister.

### LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

*(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)*

**Q1. The young seagull was afraid to fly. How did he conquer his fear?**

Or

**How did the young seagull get over his fear of flying?**

Or

**How did the young seagull overcome his fear and make his first flight?**

The young seagull was sitting all alone on a ledge. His parents had been trying to motivate and coax him to learn the art of flying. His two brothers and a sister, who were more daring, had already learnt to fly and swim for food. But this little one failed to gather enough courage to take the plunge. The parents decided to ignore him and kept him hungry for a day. No one came near him for twenty four hours. The mother teased him by bringing

fish close within his reach and then took it away. The little seagull, frustrated out of hunger, dived at the fish in his mother's beak, and fell off the ledge with a loud scream. He was seized by a monstrous terror and his heart stood still. However, he soon discovered his natural potential to fly. Within minutes, he soared and curved like an expert seagull. He had conquered his fear completely, and enjoyed his first flight.

- Q2. Why was the young seagull afraid to fly? Do you think all young birds are afraid to make their first flight or are some birds more timid than others? Do you think a human baby also finds it a challenge to take its first step? (Textual)**

The young seagull was afraid to fly because he lacked self-confidence. He believed that his wings would not support him and he would fall in the vast sea below if he took the plunge. All birds do have some natural fear in their minds while undertaking their first flight. However, nature and temperament amongst all living beings is different. Some are dare-devils and jump at risks with pleasure while others are timid and hesitate to accept challenges. The young seagull's two brothers and sister prove to be more daring and learn to fly earlier than him although their wings were rather short. However, the young seagull took some extra time and more coaxing before learning the art of flight.

Human babies also behave in a similar manner and find it a challenge when they take their first step. Some learn to walk early and easily, while others hesitate and refuse to take baby steps.

- Q3. "The sight of the food maddened him." What does this suggest? What compelled the young seagull to finally fly? (Textual)**

Hunger can make any living being desperate. This is a driving force that increases the feeling of despair to such a height that one is ready to do anything without worrying about the dangers

involved. Babies cannot remain hungry for a long time. Thus, the sight of fish, that the young seagull's mother held in her beak near him, made him almost mad. He had been hungry for the last 24 hours. So, he jumped at it regardless of any thoughts about the consequences. This sudden dash for food plunged him in the open space and he started falling downwards towards the sea. However, he overcame initial fear and his will to survive compelled him to fly. He spread his wings, felt the air filling them, used that air to soar and eventually learnt the art of flying.

- Q4. "They were beckoning to him, calling shrilly." Why did the seagull's father and mother threaten him and cajole him to fly?**

Or

(Textual)

**Comment on the role of parents in preparing their children to face the challenges of the world. Use the character of the mother seagull in explaining the idea.**

Or

**How did the young seagull's family teach him the art of flying?**

Or

**What role did the family of the young seagull play in overcoming his fear of flying?**

Parents of all living creatures love their young ones and try to train and educate their children in the art of survival. In doing so, they have to adopt many ways like showing love, encouragement, cajoling, scolding, patting and threatening. All these methods help the child to learn and eventually become accomplished.

Flying for a seagull is a basic necessity without which he cannot survive. So the parents of the young seagull too adopted various methods like cajoling, upbraiding and threatening in order to make their little one take the plunge and learn the art of flying. They beckoned to him, often calling shrilly, because they wanted

their little one to shed his fear and fly. They were anxious to prepare him to fend for himself. The mother seagull, in particular, tempted her child by holding a piece of fish close enough to him. This ploy proved successful as the young seagull dived at the fish and quickly learnt flying. Once he took the plunge, his father and siblings reached out to him to admire his effort. His father flew over him screaming and his two brothers and little sister flew around him curveting, banking, soaring and diving. They beckoned him after landing on the 'green flooring' and screamed around him when he began to float successfully. They praised him by offering him scraps of dog-fish.

In this way, the young seagull's entire family helped him in overcoming the fear of flying.

**Q5. What motivated the young seagull to learn the art of flying? Was it love of adventure or extreme hunger?**

The young seagull was afraid to fly because the sight of the sea that he could see from the brink of his ledge filled him with terror. Besides, he did not believe in the strength of his wings. Hence, adventure was certainly not his cup of tea. What motivated him to fly was actually extreme hunger. This was his parents' last resort to force him to take the plunge. He had not eaten anything during the past twenty-four hours and was desperately hungry. When his mother tempted him with a piece of fish in her beak, he was maddened by the sight of food. She halted after reaching quite close to him. The strong urge to eat compelled the young seagull to pounce at the fish in his mother's beak. This impulsive action bore fruit and the desperate struggle to survive taught him the art of flying.

Thus, it was hunger, and not the love of adventure, that motivated the young seagull to fly.

**Q6. How does the young seagull transform from a coward bird into a confident flier?**

In the beginning, the young seagull is timid and cowardly to such an extent that all goading and cajoling of his parents fail to make him fly. He is mortally afraid to take the plunge. He convinces himself that his wings would certainly not support him if he flew and he would fall in the vast sea below. However, one day's neglect by the parents and the torture of hunger make him desperate and he pounces at the fish held close within his reach by his mother. While diving at the fish, he falls off the cliff and finds himself in mid-air. Initially, he starts falling downwards but the will to survive impels him to spread his wings and he discovers his natural potential to fly. This wipes away all his fear and he thoroughly enjoys his first flight. In the end, the young seagull is a happy bird who is no longer afraid to fly.

**Q7. After having failed in their efforts to make the young seagull to learn to fly, the parents ignore him. Why do you think they do so?**

Or

**The young seagull's parents threatened to let him starve on his ledge. Why did they do so? Do you think they were right in their approach? Why/Why not?**

The mother and father seagull try their utmost to make their young ones learn the art of flight. All but one of their children picks up this skill with ease. This little one fails to muster up enough courage to spread his wings and soar. After having failed to coax him through encouragement, love, goading and upbraiding, the parents ignore him for a while. They leave him alone on the ledge not because they had started to dislike him, but because they wanted him to feel the intense drive to fly that was forced by the pinch of hunger. Hunger is known to be a great

educator. So the parents use this method to motivate the young seagull. As expected, this effort bears fruit and the young seagull eventually dives off the cliff to discover his inborn talent to fly. So, the parents' approach to let the young seagull starve on the ledge unless he flew away, proves right. He sheds his fear and gradually soars downwards and outwards to fly like other seagulls.

**Q8. "Necessity is the mother of invention." How does this saying stand true in context of the story "His First Flight"?**

The saying, "Necessity is the mother of invention", stands absolutely true in context of the story "His First Flight". The young seagull learnt the art of flying only after it became necessary for him to satisfy his hunger. His parents had tried to motivate and coax him by cajoling, upbraiding and threatening. But, he could not get over his fear of falling down to the sea and ran back to his hole whenever he looked at the sea from the brink of his ledge. As a bird, flying was his natural talent but he was so afraid to take the plunge that he could not discover it. In the end, it was the necessity to get food which made him ignore his fear and dive at the fish that his mother held in her beak. He achieved success in learning the art of flying only when he had to flap his wings after falling off the ledge. Again it was the necessity to save himself from falling into the sea deep below that helped the young seagull to find his potential. Thus, for the young seagull, necessity becomes the mother of an invention. He learns to fly only after overcoming his fear of falling into the great expanse of sea miles beneath his ledge.

## II. The Black Aeroplane

(Frederick Forsyth)

### Summary

It was a clear starry night with a bright moon coming up in the east. The author was flying his old Dakota aeroplane over France and was on his way back home to England. He was thinking about enjoying his holidays with his family. If was just past one o'clock in the morning when he thought of getting in touch with the Paris control room. He saw some lights of a big city and switched on his radio. After giving the details of his location, he sought directions for his destination - England. The Paris Control Room responded immediately and guided him to turn twelve degrees west. He followed the instructions, switched over to his second and last fuel tank, and hoped to reach home in time for breakfast. Everything was moving according to plan and it was an easy flight.

When he reached 150 kilometres away from Paris, he saw a huge, black and ominous cloud ahead of him. It was like a dark mountain. He was unable to rise up and fly over it and did not have sufficient fuel to circle around either South or North of it. He was keen to reach home for a rich English breakfast, so he decided not to go back to Paris. He took the risk and flew his Dakota straight into the cloud.

Once inside, everything changed suddenly and he was unable to see anything. To his utter surprise, the compass of his aeroplane stopped functioning and other instruments too suddenly went dead. His attempts to get in touch with Paris control room also proved futile. The radio was dead too and he was lost in the storm.

Suddenly, he saw a black aeroplane flying next to his Dakota. The pilot of this plane turned to him and signalled to follow. He turned his plane slowly towards North and flew ahead of him. The author followed his guide like an obedient child. Both the planes flew for half

an hour when the author noted that his fuel would last just for five to ten minutes. He was terrified. But, just then he found his guide-pilot going down. This relieved him and all of a sudden he came out of the stormy clouds and saw "two straight lines of light" ahead of him. It was a runway. He turned around to look for his guide but couldn't see him anymore. The black aeroplane had suddenly disappeared.

However, he landed safely and walked away from his old Dakota to the control room. When he asked where he was and who the other pilot was, so that he could thank him, the lady in-charge at the control room looked at him in a strange manner and laughed. She told him that there was no other pilot or aeroplane. All flights had been cancelled owing to the rough weather. His was the only plane that could be spotted on the radar.

The identity of the divine guide who had rescued him always remained a mystery for the author.

#### TITLE

The title "The Black Aeroplane" arouses the curiosity of the reader as aeroplanes aren't really black. In addition, the presence of black colour underlines everything in the story. The element of mystery, that makes this story gripping is enhanced by the colour black. The life-threatening flight of the pilot is amid the black clouds that dampen visibility. The rescuer too arrives mysteriously in a black coloured plane. The strange and inexplicable experience of the pilot is as intriguing as the black colour. Hence, this title is appropriate.

#### THEME

The story is based on the theme that there is a divine power that controls and guides human effort. The pilot of the Dakota could not have asked for an easier flight when he started from Paris. However, the sudden change in the flying conditions brings him close to death.

It is at this time that a guide-plane appears mysteriously and rescues him. This plane disappears as mysteriously as it had appeared. But, it rescues the life of the narrator. So, the courage of the pilot to fly to safety is guided by supernatural elements.

#### MESSAGE

The story conveys the message that courage is guided by faith. The pilot of the Dakota plane was an experienced flier but he panicked when he got engulfed by the black storm. Still, he kept trying to reach to safety with the help of the guiding instruments in his plane. When all the instruments too got jammed, he suddenly found a mysterious black plane that guided him. It was perhaps the pilot's courage that gave him faith and he managed to find his way out of the storm. So faith is very important to guide courage in the proper direction.

The story also gives the message that one must never give up in the face of adverse times. Difficulties should be taken by the horns and hope should not be abandoned.

#### CHARACTER

##### *The Pilot*

The narrator is a pilot by profession and flies the old Dakota DS 088. He is an Englishman who loves his homeland. This is evident from the fact that he takes the risk of entering the storm clouds because he is eager to reach home to his family to enjoy a good big English breakfast with them. He has proper knowledge about weather conditions and enjoys his job. He begins his flight at 1:30 in the morning because he is confident that the weather conditions are favourable. He is cheerful as he starts the flight and admires the sleepy countryside beneath.

The narrator is also a brave man. He takes the risk of flying straight into the storm. Although later it proves to be an error of judgement, he does not ever lose courage. On realizing that he is in danger, he at

once tries to contact the control room. He does not panic when his equipments fail one after the other. He tries to use the last device, radio, to contact the control room.

The narrator's courage is strengthened by his faith. His will to survive brings a mysterious black plane by his side whose pilot guides him to safety. This illusion is so real that the pilot follows his guide like an obedient child till he lands safely.

The pilot is also a humble man who has deep sense of gratitude for his mysterious guide. The first thing he does on landing safely is to inquire about his saviour so that he could thank him. The narrator inspires the readers to always keep faith and never give up in the face of adversity.

#### EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION

*Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.*

(I)

There wasn't a cloud in the sky. I was happy to be alone high up above the sleeping countryside.

(a) Who is 'I' in this extract?

'I' in this extract is the pilot of the Dakota plane.

(b) Why is 'I' describing the weather?

The pilot is describing the weather to convey that flying conditions were absolutely favourable at this time.

(c) Where was "I" and why was he happy?

The pilot was inside his Dakota and was happy because he was flying homewards for a holiday to be with his family in England.

(d) Which 'countryside' does 'I' talk about? Why does he/she call it 'sleeping'?

The countryside is in France over which the pilot was flying his Dakota. He calls it 'sleepy' as it was 1.30 in the morning.

## (II)

I checked the map and the compass, switched over to my second and last fuel tank, and turned the Dakota twelve degrees west towards England.

"I'll be in time for breakfast," I thought. A good big English breakfast! Everything was going well – it was an easy flight.

**(a) Who speaks these words and when?**

The pilot of the old Dakota DS 088, who is also the narrator of the story, shares these thoughts with the readers when he begins his flight at one thirty in the morning.

**(b) Why did the narrator check his map and compass?**

The pilot checked his map and compass to make sure that everything was okay for a safe flight.

**(c) Where was the narrator flying from and where was he headed to?**

The pilot was flying from France and was headed to his home in England.

**(d) Why does the narrator consider his flight as easy?**

The pilot considers his flight as easy because the weather was perfectly fine for a safe flight and everything was going well.

## (III)

"I ought to go back to Paris," I thought, but I wanted to get home. I wanted that breakfast.

"I'll take the risk," I thought, and flew that old Dakota straight into the storm.

**(a) Who is the narrator? Why did he think of going back to Paris?**

The narrator is the pilot of the old Dakota, DS 088. He thought of going back to Paris because he had encountered storm-clouds that he could not escape with the fuel that he was left with.

- (b) **Where was the narrator's home?**

The pilot's home was in England.

- (c) **What was the risk that the narrator decided to take?**

The pilot decided to take the risk of flying straight into the storm-clouds and cut across them.

- (d) **What happened immediately after the narrator headed into the storm?**

As soon as the pilot headed into the storm, his aeroplane jumped and twisted in the air. All his equipments - the compass and the radio - went dead and he was surrounded by pitch darkness.

(IV)

Inside the clouds, everything was suddenly black. It was impossible to see anything outside the aeroplane.

- (a) **Where were the clouds?**

The clouds were 150 kilometres off Paris towards England.

- (b) **Why was it black inside the clouds?**

It was black inside the clouds because they were huge and dark stormy clouds.

- (c) **Who was inside the clouds?**

The pilot of the old Dakota DS 088 was inside the clouds.

- (d) **Why was this person inside the clouds?**

The pilot of the old Dakota was inside the clouds because he had taken the risk and flown into it, in place of flying over it or around the south or north of it.

(V)

I was very glad to see another person. He lifted one hand and waved.

- (a) **Who is 'I' in this extract?**

'I' is the pilot of the old Dakota.

**(b) Why was 'I' glad to see another person?**

The pilot of the old Dakota was glad to see another person because he was lost in the dark stormy clouds where he could neither see anything nor navigate in the absence of radio and compass.

**(c) Who was the other person?**

The other person was the pilot of the black aeroplane that flew close to the old Dakota plane.

**(d) Who did the other person lift one hand and wave to and why?**

The other person lifted one hand and waved to signal the pilot of the old Dakota to follow him because he wanted to help him get out of the storm safe and sound.

(VI)

Suddenly I came out of the clouds and saw two long straight lines of lights in front of me.

**(a) Who is 'I' in this extract?**

'I' is the pilot of the old Dakota, DS 088.

**(b) Which clouds did 'I' come out from?**

The pilot came out from the stormy, dark clouds because of which he had lost his way.

**(c) How had 'I' got into the clouds?**

The pilot had got into the clouds because he opted to take the risk of reaching home instead of returning to Paris.

**(d) What were the two straight lines that 'I' saw? How did he/she react on seeing them?**

The two straight lines that the pilot saw was a runway at the airport where he landed safely after a while. He was relieved to see these lines.

## (VII)

I went and asked a woman in the control centre where I was and who the other pilot was. I wanted to say 'Thank you'.

(a) **Who are 'I' and the 'woman' in the above extract?**

'I' here is the pilot of the old Dakota, DS 088 and the 'woman' is the lady at the control centre of the airport where the pilot had just landed.

(b) **Which other pilot is the speaker talking about?**

The speaker is talking about the mysterious pilot of the black aeroplane who appeared suddenly by his side inside the storm clouds and guided him to safety.

(c) **What did the woman have to say about the other pilot?**

The woman did not have any information about the other pilot because she saw only the Dakota plane on her radar.

(d) **Who did the speaker want to thank? Why?**

The pilot of the old Dakota wanted to thank the mysterious pilot of the black aeroplane because he had saved his life by guiding him through the storm clouds.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 30 - 40 words each)*

**Q1. Describe the weather conditions when the pilot of the old Dakota began his flight.** **Or**

**Describe the skies when the narrator had just begun his flight.**

The weather conditions when the pilot began his flight were favourable. The sky was clear with the stars shining and the moon coming up in the east. There was not a single cloud in the sky.

**Q2. Why was the pilot of the old Dakota happy to be flying?**

*Or*

**What was the narrator's mood as he neared Paris in his Dakota DS 088?**

The pilot was in a happy mood to be flying because he was headed homewards to England to be with his family and enjoy a good, big English breakfast. His flight too was comfortable and he enjoyed being alone in his Dakota going past over the sleeping countryside.

**Q3. When and why did the pilot of the old Dakota call the Paris Control? How did the control room guide him?**

The pilot called the Paris Control Room at one thirty in the morning to inform them about himself and his position. In response, he was guided to turn twelve degrees west to proceed to England.

**Q4. What did the pilot do after he was guided by the Paris Control Room to turn twelve degrees west?**

After being guided by the Paris control room, the pilot checked his map and the compass, switched over to his second and last fuel tank, and turned the Dakota twelve degrees west towards England.

**Q5. Why does the pilot say, "It was an easy flight"? Was it really so?**

The pilot says that it was an easy flight because the sky was clear and everything was going well. However, it did not really turn out to be so. About 150 kilometres off Paris, he encountered huge storm clouds.

**Q6. When did the pilot see the clouds? Why did they worry him?**

*Or*

**What difficulty did the pilot of Dakota encounter 150 kms away from Paris?**

The pilot saw storm clouds when he was 150 kilometres away from Paris. He became worried because the clouds were huge and looked like black mountains. He could neither fly up and over them nor did he have enough fuel to fly around north or south of them.

**Q7. Why did the pilot think of returning to Paris? Why did he decide against it?**

The pilot thought of returning to Paris because the storm clouds ahead of him were huge like black mountains. He knew that he could not fly up and over them and did not have enough fuel to fly around them. However, he decided not to return to Paris, that was just 150 km behind, because he wanted to get home to relish the sumptuous English breakfast.

**Q8. What happened when the pilot flew into the storm?**

*Or*

**How did the narrator's aeroplane behave when it went through the black clouds?** *Or*

**"I'll take the risk." What 'risk' did the narrator decide to take and to what effect?**

When the pilot took the risk and flew straight into the storm, everything suddenly turned black. Visibility became negligible and the old plane jumped and twisted in the air. The compass moved round and round and suddenly turned dead. The other instruments, including the radio also stopped functioning.

**Q9. What did the pilot see when he was lost in the storm? Why was he pleased to see it?** *Or*

**What did the narrator see inside the black clouds? How did it delight him?** *Or*

**What made the pilot of the Dakota happy while he was still stuck in the dark clouds?**

When lost in the storm, the pilot saw another aeroplane in the black clouds quite near him. It had no lights on its wings but he could see the pilot of this dark plane next to him through the storm. He was glad to see another person in this storm as it brought him a ray of hope for survival.

**Q10. What did the other pilot gesture to the pilot in the old Dakota and then turn his aeroplane slowly to the north?**

The other pilot in the black aeroplane turned his face towards the pilot in the old Dakota and gestured by lifting one hand and waving to him. He was signalling the pilot of the old Dakota to follow him. This mysterious pilot then turned his aeroplane slowly to the north so that he could move it in front of the narrator's Dakota to make it easier for him to follow the black plane and land safely.

**Q11. Why did the pilot follow the black aeroplane 'like an obedient child'?**

The pilot, who had lost his way in the storm, followed the black aeroplane like an obedient child because this was his only chance for survival. He was happy to go behind this strange aeroplane since it was guiding him out of the storm to safety.

**Q12. What problem did the narrator encounter after having followed the black aeroplane for half an hour?**

After following the black aeroplane for half an hour, the Dakota was left with only enough fuel in its last tank to fly for five or ten minutes more. This left the narrator frightened.

**Q13. When did the pilot of the Dakota see the runway? What were his feelings on seeing it?**

*Or*

**When did the pilot of Dakota feel that he was safe?**

Minutes before landing, the narrator noticed that he was running out of fuel. But he suddenly came out of the clouds and

saw two straight lines of lights in front of him which was the runway of the airport. He was relieved to be safe and he at once turned to look at the pilot of the other plane to thank him.

**Q14. Why did the pilot of the Dakota turn back after realizing that he was safe? What did he notice?**

The pilot turned back after realizing that he was safe, to thank his benefactor. However, he noticed that the sky was empty. There was nothing there. The black aeroplane was gone and he could not see it anywhere.

**Q15. What did the pilot ask the woman at the control centre and why? How did this woman react?**

Or

**What enquiries did the narrator make from the woman at the control tower? Why?**

The pilot asked the woman at the control centre about his landing location and about the other pilot who had guided him to land safely. He made this inquiry because he wanted to thank him for having saved his life.

The woman, however looked strangely at him because she had not noticed any plane, other than the old Dakota, on the radar. She laughed because she presumed that the narrator was in a state of panic.

**Q16. Comment upon the ending of the story "The Black Aeroplane."**

The ending of the story about the black aeroplane adds to its element of mystery and suspense. The pilot wonders about the identity of his saviour. He speculates who could have been the pilot on the strange black aeroplane, flying in the storm, without lights.

**Q17. Who do you think helped the narrator to reach safely? (Textual)**

I think the narrator was helped by some supernatural force to

land safely. Of course, his own will to survive kept his efforts going but the manner in which he describes his plight after having got lost in the storm, it is likely that some supernatural power rescued him.

### LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

- Q1. "I'll take the risk." What is the risk? Why does the narrator take it and with what result?** (Textual)

While flying to his hometown in England, the narrator, a young pilot, finds himself surrounded by huge, dark, stormy clouds. He does not have sufficient fuel to fly up and over them or to fly around them to north or south. Left with two options - either to fly back to Paris or to accept the challenge of the threatening storm - he decides to choose the latter. He decides this because he is headed home to be with his family for a holiday and to enjoy the sumptuous English breakfast. The result of this risk is fruitful but not without the life-threatening dangers that the pilot encounters. Inside the storm, all the safety devices, like the radio and the compass in his old Dakota plane, get jammed and he begins to lose control over the plane. Finally, his survival is miraculously guided by a mysterious black aeroplane. The pilot of this plane lifts one hand and waves, signalling the pilot of Dakota to follow him. The narrator obeys his mysterious guide like an obedient child and eventually gets out of the storm clouds to land safely.

- Q2. Describe the narrator's horrifying experience as he flew the aeroplane into the storm.** Or (Textual)

**Why did the narrator feel helpless inside the cloud?**

Or

**How did the black aeroplane rescue the Dakota pilot?**

As the narrator flew his old Dakota plane straight into the storm, he got surrounded by blackness all around him. It became impossible for him to see anything outside the aeroplane. His old plane jumped and twisted in the air. He looked unbelievably at the compass that turned round and round and jammed. He realized that it had gone dead and would not work. The other instruments too went dead suddenly. Even the radio failed. Just then he saw, in the black clouds near him, another aeroplane which did not have lights on its wings but the pilot could be seen. This sight filled the narrator with some relief. Like an obedient child, he at once followed the other pilot's gesture to trail him. After half an hour he suddenly came out of the clouds to land safely.

- Q3. Why does the narrator say, "I landed and was not sorry to walk away from the old Dakota..."? (Textual)**

The narrator was not sorry to walk away from the old Dakota, because he had just had a brush with death. His safe landing was nothing short of a miracle. His visibly 'safe flight' actually turned out to be a harrowing experience when a storm caused him to lose control over his plane and left all the safety devices dead, too. The fury of the cloud-storm that he had headed into was beyond his capacity to manage. He was totally dependent on the ability of his plane to take him to safety but the machine failed at the most crucial time. Had another plane not helped him mysteriously, his old Dakota perhaps would never have landed safely. So, the narrator was not at all sorry to rush away from his old Dakota that could have become the cause of his death.

- Q4. What made the woman in the control room look at the narrator strangely? (Textual)**

The woman in the control room looked at the narrator strangely on two counts. Firstly, because he had landed successfully and safely in the furious storm when no other planes were flying that night. Secondly, she was surprised at his strange queries regarding the black aeroplane. She had not seen any plane other than the narrator's old Dakota on the radar. The narrator's query thus puzzled her and she looked at him strangely. As it is, the miraculous escape of the narrator from the storm and his safe landing were enough of a surprise for her. His queries make the situation all the more confusing. The woman in the control room did not have the faintest idea about the black aeroplane that had guided the narrator to safety. So, she looked at him strangely when the narrator said that he wanted to thank the pilot of the black aeroplane.

**Q5. What were the narrator's thoughts when he was flying his old Dakota over Paris?**

When the narrator was flying his old Dakota aeroplane over Paris, it was one thirty in the morning. He was very happy to find clear weather and hoped to reach back home in England for a sumptuous English breakfast. He was dreaming about his holiday and was excited over the prospect of meeting the members of his family. The guidelines from the Paris control room, his map and the compass, the fuel tank of his old Dakota – everything was in a desirable condition. Such an appropriate situation made him relaxed and happy. These thoughts, however, lasted only until he encountered the stormy dark clouds, which eventually gave a harrowing experience. After heading straight into these clouds, all his joyous thoughts ended, and worry and fear engulfed him completely.

**Q6. Why does the narrator think of going back to Paris after seeing the**

**mountain-like storm clouds? What makes him take the plunge of going ahead?**

The narrator thinks of going back to Paris when he encounters threatening mountain-like storm clouds, because the visibility was very poor and flying through the clouds was full of risks. The possibility of going round them to prevent passing through had also to be ruled out since the plane did not have sufficient fuel to do so. The other option that crossed his mind was of going back to Paris, which was barely 150 kilometres behind. But, he rejected this choice as well since he was keen to be with the members of his family at the earliest. He also missed home cooked tasty English breakfast. Impelled by his desire to be home, coupled with his misjudgement about the enormity of the situation, he decides to take the plunge and fly through the storm-clouds.

**Q7. Why does the narrator ask himself, "Who was the pilot on the strange black aeroplane, flying in storm, without lights?"**

The narrator had survived a seriously life threatening situation in a miraculous way. Flying one's plane without radio, without compass and other instruments with negligible visibility is nothing short of a miracle. The narrator is able to perform this feat with the help of a strange and mystifying pilot steering a black aeroplane without lights. Had the narrator not met his saviour, he would have lost his way in the storm and crash-landed to his death. Thus, the narrator owes his life to this God sent angel. Feeling indebted to his saviour, the narrator asks the woman at the control centre about him. Finding no answer, he justifiably wonders about the identity of his saviour. He cannot conclude right away that it could have been some kind of a supernatural force because he had seen him himself. So, he

wonders whether the pilot on the strange black aeroplane, flying in storm, without lights was an illusion or a reality.

**Q8. Who came as a ray of hope for the narrator during the storm? How did he/she help him?**

A mysterious figure came as a ray of hope for the narrator during the storm. The narrator was trapped in the black clouds with all the safety instruments in his old Dakota having gone dead. At this time a ray of hope reached him in the form of a pilot-guide in a black aeroplane that he could see flying next to him. This strange black plane did not have any lights but the narrator could see the pilot's face. He lifted his hand and waved to the narrator. He was telling him to follow him. The narrator understood that the mysterious pilot knew that he had got lost and was trying to help him. He turned his aeroplane slowly to the north in front of the narrator's Dakota so that it would be easier for him to follow. The narrator followed him like an obedient child. After flying behind him for about half an hour, the narrator suddenly came out of the clouds and saw the lights of the runway in front of him.

**Q9. Do the two stories namely "His First Flight" and "The Black Aeroplane" suggest that God helps those who help themselves.**

The two stories certainly suggest that God is always on the side of those who strive to change their destiny by committed hard work. Success comes to those who have the courage to take risks. The young seagull, maddened by hunger, risked his life and jumped at the fish in his mother's beak. Having missed his target, he started falling down. But he did not give up. He tried his best and providence came to his rescue helping him to discover his natural flair to fly. The adventurous pilot too, chose to dare the storm. His miscalculation about the enormity of the situation entangled him in a very risky situation. However, he tried his

best to make use of all that was available at hand. Just when he lost hope of survival, God sent a mysterious black aeroplane to guide him to safety. Together, it is the courage and faith that enrich both these experiences and God's help reaches as soon as their individual efforts begin.

So, it is rightly said that God helps those who help themselves.

**Q10. What is common in the theme between the story of the young seagull and the pilot of the old Dakota?**

The two anecdotes (i) His First Flight and (ii) The Black Aeroplane are based on the theme that unless one takes the plunge, one cannot achieve. Certain decisions seem risky but cannot be avoided. Both, the young seagull and the experienced pilot take risky decisions but eventually gain success. The seagull's decision is risky because he suddenly fell off the ledge in his attempt to take the fish from his mother's beak. If he had failed to gather courage to spread his wings, he could have met a sad end. The pilot's decision is risky because he flew into stormy clouds with inadequate knowledge. The young seagull was compelled by his hunger while the pilot's decision was driven by his circumstances. However, once they both decided, there was no looking back. In the end, the bird-flight and human-flight met thematically at the point of courage.

□□□

## 4. From the Diary of Anne Frank

(Anne Frank)

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### ABOUT THE CHAPTER

#### *Introduction*

The extract is an excerpt from the personal diary of a thirteen-year-old Jewish girl who witnessed the horrors of the Nazi rule at the time of World War II. She wrote this diary while hiding in an attic with her family and four others in Amsterdam during the German occupation of Netherlands. This excerpt is not a traditionally recorded diary but is an insight into the thoughts of a young girl and her ability to write creatively.

#### *Summary*

Anne Frank considers diary writing to be a strange experience. She gives two reasons for this. Firstly, she has never written anything earlier and secondly, she thinks that neither she nor anyone else would be interested in the thoughts of a teenager. However, she feels an inner compulsion to write, so she decides to pen down her thoughts.

One day, when Anne was feeling unhappy and depressed, she recalled the saying that 'paper has more patience than people'. She continued to brood about this thought and concluded that it was indeed right. She decided that she would not let anyone, other than a true friend, read what she would write in the stiff-backed notebook – her 'diary'.

She records that the reason which prompted her to write a diary is that she does not have any friend. Clarifying the absence of a true friend in her life, Anne says that she might have seemingly friendly people around her (loving parents, a sixteen-year-old elder sister, thirty friendly people, and loving aunts) but a true close friend is missing. She can talk only about ordinary things to these people but

she cannot share intimate secrets with anyone of them. She accepts that her reserved nature prevents her from having any close friends. She decides to write a "diary" as she feels that her nature is not likely to change.

She considers her diary to be her imaginary "long-awaited" friend and names it 'Kitty'. She also resolves to adopt a novel method of writing it because nobody would understand a single word of what she writes, if she begins writing straight away. So, she gives a brief sketch of her family in the beginning.

Anne writes that her father is an adorable man and had married her mother when he was thirty-six and she was twenty-five. Her elder sister, Margot, was born in Frankfurt, Germany in 1926 and she herself was born on 12 June 1929. She lived in Frankfurt until the age of four and in September 1933, her father emigrated to Holland accompanied by her mother, Edith Hollander Frank. Meanwhile Anne and her sister were sent to Aachen to live with their grandmother. However, in December that year, her elder sister joined her parents while she reached later on Margot's birthday.

In Holland, she was admitted to the Montessori nursery school. Giving an interesting description of her school life, Anne makes a special mention of Mrs Kuperus, her teacher in the sixth form and the headmistress of the school. She was so dear to her that they both had a tearful farewell at the end of the year.

Anne's grandmother fell ill in the summer of 1941 and had to be operated upon. So, Anne had a simple birthday celebration that year. Sadly, her grandmother died in January 1942. Remembering her fondly and lovingly, Anne's birthday celebration in June 1942 had a candle lit for her grandmother along with the rest.

Anne next writes about June 20, 1942 - an account of her classroom experiences. She writes in her diary that her entire class was terrified

and nervous because the school teachers were going to have a meeting to discuss the annual results. However, Anne and her friend G. N. had a hearty laugh at the two boys sitting behind them - C. N. and Jacques. These boys had put at stake their entire holiday savings betting their respective results. Their silly arguments irritated Anne but neither her angry outbursts nor her friend's pleading glances had any effect on the two boys.

Here, Anne records her observation that her class had quite a few dumb students and nearly a quarter of the class needed to be kept back. She also observes that teachers are "the most unpredictable creatures" so the results could not be guessed.

Anne was not worried about herself and her girlfriends. She was sure they would all make it to the next grade. Although she was a bit doubtful about Mathematics, they all waited patiently and tried to encourage and cheer up each other.

Anne was quite friendly with all her teachers except, the "old fogey" Mr Keesing, her Mathematics teacher, who always remained angry with her because of her talkative nature. He warned her constantly to give up this habit. When all his warnings failed, he punished her by assigning extra homework. Anne was asked to write an essay on "A Chatterbox". She did not know what to write but noted down the topic and tucked it in her bag. After that she tried to remain quiet in the class.

In the evening, after finishing her routine home work, she thought about the topic 'chatterbox'. She decided to write convincing arguments for being a 'chatterbox' in place of rambling and writing haphazardly. In her three page assignment, she wrote that talking is natural to all students. Talking becomes more compulsive for her as her mother is a habitual talker and one cannot do much about inherited traits.

Mr Keesing, her teacher, had a good laugh at her arguments and Anne resumed talking through the next lesson. The teacher then gave her another assignment as punishment - "An Incurable Chatterbox." Anne handed over this assignment and things remained fine for the next two lessons. However, during the third lesson, Mr Keesing lost patience and told her to write an essay titled, "Quack, Quack Quack, Said Mistress Chatterbox." This made everyone, including Anne, laugh. However, she felt that she had already written enough about the topic, so she must write something new. Sanne, one of her friends, who was good at writing poetry, offered to write the entire essay in verse. This overjoyed Anne because she wanted to play the joke on her teacher who was trying to make her write on a ridiculous topic. The poem turned out to be a beautiful one. It was about a mother duck and a father swan with "three baby ducklings" who quacked and quacked and quacked. This angered the father swan and he bit the ducklings to death. The joke obviously was on Mr Keesing. He was amused to read the poem and took the joke sportingly. He read it to the entire class and several other classes, adding his own comments. From then on, Anne was never given assignment as punishment and was also allowed to talk in the class. Mr Keesing too was a changed man and always cracked jokes.

#### TITLE

The title of the extract is simple and clear. "From the Diary of Anne Frank" states that the excerpt is from the diary written by Anne Frank, a victim of holocaust. This extract gives an insight of the firsthand experiences of a Jew during the Nazi rule. Although Anne's real purpose behind writing her diary was that she wanted a true friend in whom she could confide, but today her diary has become an important historical record. This makes the title of the extract both informative and relevant.

**THEME**

The extract describes the honest expressions of a young teenager. She is a reserved person who reveals her inner self to her diary whom she treats as a true friend. In the process, she records the sweet relationship shared by teachers and students. The anxiety of students before results and the irritation caused to the teacher when the students talk too much are common situations in every part of the world. So, the theme of the extract moves between the plain thoughts of a young girl and her opinion about school life.

**MESSAGE**

The extract gives the message that writing a diary helps one to be honest because a diary makes up for the absence of a sincere and dependable friend. It never betrays you and always keeps the secrets entrusted to it close to its heart. It has more tolerance and patience than people in general.

Another message given by the extract is that teachers should discipline their students but should also allow them to retain their individuality. They should keep a balance between awarding punishment and inspiring creativity.

**HUMOUR**

Anne Frank has a knack of using uncommon expressions that amuse the reader a great deal. To cite a few examples, one finds the expression "the stiff-backed notebook grandly referred to as a diary" quite interesting. The use of the expression "plunge right in" too makes interesting reading. One can't help laughing when she writes, "... I was plunked down on the table as a birthday present ...." The entire class "quaking in its boots" too is an enjoyable expression. The use of the word "dummies" for unintelligent students is also interesting. The statement regarding teachers being "the most unpredictable creatures on earth" is certainly very funny. The reader

also feels like laughing at the use of the expression "old fogey" for the mathematics teacher.

One also comes across quite a few amusing situations in the extract that tickle the reader. The author feeling lonely amidst a host of people makes the reader smile at her frankness. The pitiable condition of the students awaiting the verdict of the unpredictable teachers also amuses the readers. In addition, the description of the class and the activities of the classmates are really enjoyable. The idea of giving additional homework as punishment for excessive talking in the class too is unique and amusing. The topics assigned as extra homework – "Chatterbox", "An Incurable Chatterbox" and "Quack, Quack, Quack, Said Mistress Chatterbox" – are innovative and funny. The description of Mr Keesing, his unpredictable behaviour, and the way the author turns the tables on him creates plenty of humour.

## CHARACTERS

### *Mr Keesing*

Mr Keesing, the Mathematics teacher, is an interesting character and Anne Frank jokingly calls him an "old fogey". Though he is basically good at heart, he is strict and wants to maintain proper discipline in the class. He does not allow Anne to talk excessively in the class. As a dedicated teacher, he remains firm in improving her behaviour because he wants his students to do well in life. When all his persuasions fail to change the girl, he thinks of a unique method to correct her. He assigns her additional homework and tells her to write an essay on the topic "A Chatterbox". This shows that he is an ideal teacher who knows the skill of channelizing the energies of his students in a positive way. He continues to assign 'additional homework' on this topic till Anne comes up with a creative poem.

Mr Keesing is a genuine and warm person, so he takes Anne's jokes very sportingly. He laughs at the poem about the father swan biting

his talkative ducklings to death and even reads it to other students. He admires Anne's creative skill and allows her to talk in the class without holding any angst against her. His tough outward appearance has a tender heart inside. He is a teacher who always has the welfare of his students in his mind and loves them dearly.

In sum, he is a lovable character having some pardonable shortcomings.

### **Anne Frank**

Anne Frank was a Jewish girl, who spent many years living in fear of oppressive Germans and died at the tender age of about fifteen. A part of her life was spent in hiding and part in a concentration camp. She is "one of most renowned and discussed ... Holocaust victims."

Anne had a reserved nature and she did not confide easily in others. Even amid friends and family, she could not reveal her true self because of her reserved nature. This compelled her to seek companionship in her 'Diary' whom she treated like her very close friend and therefore gave her a name 'Kitty'.

Anne was a creative person, so she did not record her experiences in a common manner. She invented her original style that had witty remarks, lively descriptions, and honest observations. She expressed everything in a straight forward manner without mincing words.

Anne had a loving nature. She admired her family and particularly missed her grandmother after the latter's death. She was a great fan of her father and considered him to be the "most adorable" individual. She considered her family to be a very important part of her identity and gave a description about all the members before proceeding to write anything else in her diary.

Anne was only thirteen years old but was mature enough to assess correctly other people's nature and behaviour. She rightly sums up that teachers are unpredictable by nature.

Anne's subtle sense of humour is remarkable. She uses quite a few

expressions that make her descriptions funny. The entire incident about Mr Keesing, her mathematics teacher, displays her intelligent sense of humour.

The diary entries of this young girl reveal that she had a very balanced mind and could argue convincingly. Her argument that one couldn't do much about one's inherited traits is an example of her mature thoughts.

On the whole, Anne was an intelligent girl who could have become an interesting writer if the heartless Nazi rule hadn't killed her.

### EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION

*Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.*

(I)

Oh well, it doesn't matter. I feel like writing, and I have an even greater need to get all kinds of things off my chest.

(a) Who is 'I' here?

'I' here is Anne Frank, the young teenager who wrote a diary about her experiences as a Jew under the Nazi rule.

(b) What does 'it' here refer to? Why does 'it' not matter?

'It' refers to the possibility that neither Anne nor anyone else would read her diary. It does not matter because Anne does not consider the 'musings' of a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl to be significant.

(c) What does she/he decide to write?

Anne decides to write such things that she cannot share with anyone else.

(d) What kind of things do you think she/he had to get off her/his chest?

The possible things that Anne had to get off her chest could be her

views about her friends, her family, teenage problems, the attitude of adults towards children and other such matters concerned with her generation.

## (II)

I don't want to jot down the facts in this diary the way most people would do, but I want the diary to be my friend, and I'm going to call this friend...

## (a) Who is 'I' in these lines?

'I' in these lines is Anne Frank.

## (b) Which diary is 'I' referring to?

Anne Frank is referring to her personal diary, in which she wrote about her experiences as a Jew under the Nazi rule.

## (c) Why doesn't 'I' want to write this diary like most people?

Anne doesn't want to write this diary like most people because it is not a mere book to her. She considers it to be her true friend in whom she can confide.

## (d) What name does 'I' give to his/her 'friend'?

Anne gives her diary the name "Kitty".

## (III)

No one knows how often I think of her and still love her. This birthday celebration in 1942 was intended to make up for the other...

## (a) Who speaks these words and why?

Anne Frank speaks these words because she is sad at having lost her dear grandmother.

## (b) Whom does the speaker think about often? Why doesn't anyone know about this?

Anne often thinks about her grandmother. No one knows about this because she is a reserved girl and does not share her true feelings with anyone.

- (c) **Which birthday was intended to make up for in 1942? Why?**

In 1942, the birthday of 1941 was intended to be made up for, since grandma was ill in 1941 and had to be operated upon. So, that birthday had passed with little celebration.

- (d) **What was done during the birthday celebrations in 1942? Why?**

Grandma's candle was lit along with the rest during Anne's birthday celebrations of 1942. It was done so to pay a tribute to Grandma who was no more.

#### (IV)

The four of us are still doing well, and that brings me to the present date of 20 June 1942, and the solemn dedication of my diary.

- (a) **Who speaks these words?**

The speaker of these words is Anne Frank.

- (b) **Who are the 'four of us'? Name them.**

The four of us are Anne Frank, her elder sister Margot, their father Otto Frank, and their mother Edith Hollander Frank.

- (c) **What 'diary' is the speaker talking about?**

Anne is talking about her diary 'Kitty' in which she recorded her experiences as a Jew under the Nazi rule.

- (d) **Why is that diary so important even today?**

Anne's diary is important even today as it gives us an authentic first-hand account of the plight of the Jews during World War-II.

#### (V)

If you ask me, there are so many dummies that about a quarter of the class should be kept back, but teachers are the most unpredictable creatures on earth.

- (a) **What do you think the word 'dummies' means here? Why does the speaker say there are so many of them in the class?**

Here the word 'dummies' means students who fair poorly in

class. Anne says that there are many dummies in her class because most of the students were dull and weak in studies.

- (b) **What does the speaker mean by 'should be kept back'?**

Anne means to say that the poor performers should not be given the pass certificate to go to the next grade.

- (c) **Why do you think the writer considers teachers to be the 'most unpredictable creatures on earth'?**

Anne considers teachers to be the 'most unpredictable creatures on earth' because they keep scolding the children when they are careless but still promote them to the next class.

- (d) **Which one of her teachers did the speaker find 'unpredictable'? Why?**

Anne found Mr Keesing, her maths teacher, to be 'unpredictable' because he was angry with her for talking too much, and still allowed her to talk after she wrote a poem about a chatterbox.

(VI)

– what can you write about that? I'd worry about that later, I decided. I jotted down the title in my notebook, tucked it in my bag and tried to keep quiet.

- (a) **What does 'that' here refer to?**

Here 'that' refers to the topic 'A Chatterbox' that Mr Keesing had assigned as extra homework to Anne.

- (b) **Who is 'I' here? Why did she/he decide to worry about 'that' later?**

Here 'I' is Anne Frank. She decided to worry later about the topic 'A Chatterbox' because she had just been punished for talking.

- (c) **What 'title' did she/he jot down in her notebook?**

Anne jotted down the title 'A Chatterbox' in her notebook.

- (d) **Why did the speaker decide to 'keep quiet'?**

Anne decided to keep quiet because she did not want to give her maths teacher, Mr Keesing, another reason to get upset with her.

## (VII)

That evening, after I'd finished the rest of my homework, the note about the essay caught my eye, I began thinking about the subject while chewing the tip of my fountain pen.

- (a) **Who is the speaker of these lines?**

Anne Frank is the speaker here.

- (b) **Which 'note' caught the speaker's eye?**

The note that caught Anne's eye was the one in which she had jotted down the topic assigned to her as extra homework by her mathematics teacher, Mr Keesing.

- (c) **What was the subject of the 'note'?**

The subject of the note was "A Chatterbox".

- (d) **Why did the speaker begin to think about the subject of the 'note'?**

Anne began to think about the subject of the 'note' because she wanted to write down convincing arguments in support of her talkative nature.

## (VIII)

Anyone could ramble on and leave big spaces between the words, but the trick was to come up with convincing arguments...

- (a) **Who makes this observation? When?**

Anne Frank makes this observation when she sits down to write about the topic 'A Chatterbox', assigned as extra homework by her maths teacher, Mr Keesing, for talking too much in the class.

- (b) **Why does the speaker want to come up with convincing arguments?**

Anne wishes to come up with convincing arguments because she wants to justify her talkative nature and does not want to finish the assignment just for the sake of it.

- (c) **What is the 'subject' of argument?**

The subject of the argument is 'A Chatterbox'.

**(d) What do these lines tell us about the speaker?**

These lines tell us that Anne was a cheerful, yet sensitive girl who paid complete attention to every little task assigned to her.

**(IX)**

Mr Keesing was trying to play a joke on me with this ridiculous subject, but I'd make sure the joke was on him.

**(a) Who writes these words and how is Mr Keesing related to her/him?**

Anne Frank writes these words about Mr Keesing who was her mathematics teacher.

**(b) Why does 'I' feel that Mr Keesing was trying to play a joke on her?**

Anne feels that Mr Keesing was trying to play a joke on her because he was repeatedly assigning her extra homework on the same topic - "Chatterbox".

**(c) How does 'I' ensure that joke was on Mr Keesing?**

To ensure that the joke was on Mr Keesing, Anne wrote the assignment in verse describing the story of a father swan biting his three baby ducklings to death because they quacked too much.

**(d) What does this extract tell you about the character of Mr Keesing?**

This extract tells that Mr Keesing was a very wise teacher who could think of unique ways to make his students realize their shortcomings.

**(X)**

Since then I've been allowed to talk and haven't been assigned any extra homework. On the contrary, Mr Keesing's always...

**(a) Who is 'I' in the above extract?**

In the above extract, 'I' is Anne Frank.

**(b) Why has the speaker been allowed to talk?**

Anne has been allowed to talk in the class since she had come up

with interesting arguments in a creative way defending her talkative nature.

- (c) **What 'extra homework' was she assigned earlier on?**

Earlier Anne was assigned extra homework to write assignments on the topics "A Chatterbox", "An Incurable Chatterbox" and "Quack, Quack, Quack, Said Mistress Chatterbox."

- (d) **What impression do you form of the speaker's character from this extract?**

This extract shows that Anne is a cheerful girl who devotes complete attention even to the most insignificant tasks.

#### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 30 – 40 words each)

- Q1. **What made writing in a diary a strange experience for Anne Frank?** Or **(Textual)**

**Why was writing a diary a strange experience for Anne?**

Writing in a diary was a strange experience for Anne Frank because she had never written anything before. In addition, she thought that later on nobody, including herself, would be interested in the musings of a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl.

- Q2. **Why did Anne decide to write even though she felt that no one, including herself, would be interested in the musings of a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl?**

Anne decided to write because it did not matter to her whether anyone read her diary or not. Besides, she wanted to write about such things which she could not share with anyone else. She felt a great need to get the burden of these things off her chest.

- Q3. **Why did Anne want to keep a diary?** **(Textual)**

Anne wanted to keep a diary because she did not have any true

friend in whom she could confide. Besides, she believed that paper had more patience than people. So she could write her innermost thoughts and feelings in the diary without worrying about the opinion of others.

- Q4. "I'm not planning to let anyone else read this stiff-backed notebook grandly referred to as a 'diary'." Why do you think Anne wouldn't like anyone to read her diary?**

Anne wouldn't let anyone to read her diary because she was a very reserved person. She did not feel confident about sharing her innermost thoughts with any of the people she knew.

- Q5. Why does Anne think she can confide more in her diary than in people?** Or (Textual)

**What does Anne wish to convey by saying that 'paper has more patience than people'?**

Anne feels she can confide more in her diary than in people, because she believes that paper has more patience. She can pour all her feelings out on it without worrying about the type of things she would share with it. This would relieve her of the burden of such things which she cannot share with people.

- Q6. Why does Anne Frank say that she does not have a friend? Is she really all alone?**

Anne says that she does not have a friend because, to her, a friend is someone who is very close to the heart and in whom one can confide. However, she isn't really all alone since she has a family, loving parents, an elder sister and friends with whom she has a "good time".

- Q7. How far do you think Anne Frank is responsible for her feeling of loneliness?**

Anne Frank is wholly responsible for her feeling of loneliness because she admits that she has a reserved nature. This prevents

her from opening up her true self to others and thus makes her unable to find a true, patient and trustworthy friend.

- Q8. Why does Anne provide a brief sketch of her life before formally writing her diary?** Or (Textual)

**Why does Anne need to give a brief sketch of her family? Does she treat 'Kitty' as an insider or an outsider?** (Textual)

Anne provides a brief sketch of her life before formally writing her diary 'Kitty' because she believes that in the absence of a background, nobody would be able to understand a word of her stories to 'Kitty'. She confides in her diary like a true friend and so it becomes 'an insider' for her.

- Q9. How was Anne's relationship with her father? Support your answer with textual evidence.**

Anne had a very strong and loving relationship with her father. She admired him a lot and felt that he was excellent as a father. Appreciating him, she writes in one of her diary entries, "My father, the most adorable father I've ever seen."

- Q10. How were Anne's birthday celebrations different in 1941 and 1942?**

Or

**What tells you that Anne loved her grandmother?** (Textual)

Or

**Why did Anne's birthday in 1941 pass with little celebrations?**

Anne's grandmother had to be operated upon in 1941 so Anne's birthday passed with little celebrations that year. Unfortunately, grandma passed away in January 1942 and her death made Anne very sad. She missed her terribly, so she lit grandma's candle along with other candles on her birthday in 1942 as a tribute to her.

- Q11. Describe Anne's early schooling in Holland.**

Anne was sent to a Montessori nursery school when she joined

her family in February 1934 in Holland. She stayed there until the age of six at which time she started in the first form.

**Q12. Who was Mrs Kuperus? How was Anne's relationship with her?**

*Or*

**Why was Anne in tears when she left the Montessori nursery school in Holland?**

Mrs Kuperus was Anne's loving and affectionate teacher in her sixth form. She was also the headmistress and was devoted to her students. Anne was really fond of her and the two of them had a tearful farewell when the year ended.

**Q13. Why was Anne's entire class 'quaking in its boots'?**

*Or*

**How did Anne's class feel about the form results?**

*Or*

**Why was Anne's entire class anxious and nervous?**

Anne's entire class was 'quaking in its boots' because everyone was unsure about the upcoming results that were to decide which student had passed and which one had failed to get promotion to the next form. The anxiety and nervousness thus made the entire class 'quake in its boots'.

**Q14. What made the boys of Anne's class stake their entire holiday savings?**

*Or*

**'Half the class is making bets'. What were Anne's classmates making bets on?**

The teachers of the class had to meet to discuss the final result of the students. It was a day when the success or failure of every student was to be decided. This made the boys stake their entire holiday savings making bets on who would pass and who would fail.

**Q15. Why wasn't Anne worried about herself or her girl friends?**

Anne was not worried about herself or her girlfriends because

she was sure they would make it to the next class. Of course, they too were doubtful regarding the result of a particular subject like mathematics, but were not insecure like the boys who had staked their savings on the result.

**Q16. Who was Mr Keesing? Why was he annoyed with Anne? What did he ask her to do?** *(Textual)*

Mr Keesing was Anne's mathematics teacher. He was a strict disciplinarian and did not permit any disruption during the class. However, Anne talked so much that Mr Keesing got annoyed with her. After several warnings, he assigned her to write an essay on the subject 'A Chatterbox' as extra homework.

**Q17. Why did Anne not want to just "ramble on and leave big spaces between the words."?**

Anne was an intelligent student, and though she was naturally talkative, she did not want to create a poor impression in the class. So, she decided to come up with valid arguments justifying her talking instead of rambling to complete the assignment.

**Q18. How does Anne justify her being a chatterbox?**

*Or*

**What arguments does Anne present in the essay 'A Chatterbox'?**

*Or*

**What does Anne write in her first essay?** *(Textual)*

In her first essay, 'A Chatterbox', Anne argued that talking is a student's trait and that she would do her best to keep her talking under control. But she would never be able to cure herself of this habit since she had inherited this from her mother who too talked a lot.

**Q19. How did Mr Keesing respond to Anne's first assignment?**

*Or*

**What was Mr Keesing's reaction to Anne's first essay 'A Chatterbox'?**

Mr Keesing responded to Anne's first assignment in a sporting way. He had a good laugh at her arguments but when she continued to talk through the next lesson, he assigned her another essay as extra homework.

**Q20. What were the second and the third assignments give by Mr Keesing to Anne?**

The second and the third assignments that Mr Keesing gave Anne were "An Incurable Chatterbox" and "Quack, Quack, Quack, Said Mistress Chatterbox" respectively. He assigned Anne these essays because she did not keep her promise to remain quiet in the class, that she had made in her first essay, "A Chatterbox".

**Q21. Why did the entire class laugh loudly when Anne was asked to write the third essay as punishment for talking too much in the class?**

The entire class laughed loudly because the topic of the essay, "Quack, Quack, Quack, Said Mistress Chatterbox", was very funny. It was the third punishment for Anne to stop her from talking too much in the class but it actually invited arguments about extreme talking.

**Q22. Why was Anne's third assignment 'something original'?**

*Or*

**Comment on the way Anne dealt with the third topic Mr Keesing had asked her to write on.**      *Or*

**Why did Anne want her essay entitled "Quack, Quack, Quack, Said Mistress Chatterbox" to be unique?**

Anne wanted to come up with something 'unique and original' to respond to Mr Keesing's ridiculous punishment. So, she wrote her third assignment in the form of poetry with the help of her friend, Sanne. This poem was a kind of joke on her teacher

Mr Keesing as it described a mother duck and a father swan with three baby ducklings who were bitten to death by the father because they quacked too much.

**Q23. Do you think Mr Keesing was a strict teacher?** (Textual)

Mr Keesing was a disciplinarian who wanted his students to concentrate during the lesson. He devised unusual ways of instilling discipline in them and encouraged their original thoughts. The funny topics that he assigned Anne as punishment show that he was a liberal teacher.

**Q24. What made Mr Keesing allow Anne to talk in the class?** (Textual)

Anne made her point about her talkative nature in her third assignment by narrating the story of a cruel father swan biting his ducklings to death for quacking too much. This made Mr Keesing soften his stand on Anne and he allowed her to talk in the class.

**Q25. How does Anne turn the table on Mr Keesing in the end?**

In the end, Anne finally turns the table on her mathematics teacher, Mr Keesing, by drawing a parallel between him and the cruel father swan who bites the three ducklings to death for quacking too much. This made her teacher realize that talking is as natural to students as quacking is to ducklings.

**Q26. What change came about in Mr Keesing after Anne submitted her third assignment?**

*Or*

**Do you think the rapport between Mr Keesing and Anne improved after Anne completed the three tasks assigned by him?**

*Or*

**What was Mr Keesing's reaction after reading Anne's poem on the topic "Quack! Quack, Quack, Said Mistress Chatterbox"?**

After Anne submitted her third assignment, Mr Keesing took

the joke the right way. He read Anne's poem about the ducklings to the class, adding his own comments. He also read it to several other classes. After that he did not assign any extra homework to Anne, allowed her to talk in the class and also started making jokes.

### LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

*(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)*

- Q1. Was Anne right when she said that the world would not be interested in the musings of a thirteen-year-old girl? (Textual)**

Anne Frank wrote her diary while in hiding with her family and four friends in Amsterdam during the German occupation of the Netherlands in World War II. The diary was given to her for her thirteenth birthday and chronicles the events of her life from 12 June 1942 until its final entry of 1 August 1944. When Anne set off to write this diary she intended it to be the 'musings of a thirteen-year-old girl' and felt that later on no one, including herself, would be interested in it. However, this document is such a unique record that it was eventually translated from its original Dutch into many languages and became one of the world's most widely read books. Many films, television and theatrical productions, even an opera, have been based on this diary. Described as the work of a mature and insightful mind, the diary provides an intimate examination of daily life under Nazi occupation. Anne's diary, which she fondly called "Kitty", is not an ordinary piece of writing but a creative work that has generated interest in people from all age groups and all nationalities.

- Q2. There are some examples of diary or journal entries in "Before You Read" section. Compare these with what Anne writes in her diary. What language was the diary originally written in? What way is Anne's diary different? (Textual)**

Technically speaking a diary is a book having a separate page for each day in which one writes down one's thoughts and feelings or about what had happened on that day. A journal, on the other hand, is "a full record of a journey, a period of time, or an event, written everyday." What is written in the examples in the section "Before you read" follow the conventional format of diary and journal. However, this extract is different in the sense that it does not give a chronological day-to-day account of the writer's activities. This diary was originally written in Dutch language and the present extract is just a small excerpt from the main text. Anne adopts an unconventionally personal style of writing her diary. She records such thoughts that she is reluctant to share with anyone else. Therefore, Anne's diary is a peculiar genre crafted by a writer who was not formally trained in the art of writing.

- Q3. What tells you that Anne loved her grandmother?**

*Or*

**What kind of relationship did Anne have with her grandmother?**

Anne loved her grandmother dearly. The present extract has quite a few instances that show the immense love Anne had for her grandmother. When her parents emigrated to Holland in 1933, this four-year-old child, left in the charge of her grandmother in Aachen, did not raise any objections at all. It is too tender an age to be torn away from parents. But Anne loved her grandmother and was comfortable with her.

In the summer of 1941, Anne willingly did not have elaborate

birthday celebrations because her grandmother was unwell and had to be operated upon.

After her grandmother's death, Anne lit a candle along with her birthday candles in 1942, to pay tribute to her dear grandmother. Referring to her grandmother in one of her diary entries, Anne writes that "No one knows how often I think of her and still love her." All these instances show that Anne really loved her grandmother.

- Q4. How does Anne feel about her father, her grandmother, Mrs Kuperus and Mr Keesing? What do these things tell you about her?** *(Textual)*

Anne considers her father to be the "most adorable" father she had ever seen. She loves her grandmother dearly and lives happily with her even at the tender age of four in the absence of her parents who had already emigrated to Holland.

Anne has immense regard and love for her headmistress, Mrs Kuperus. It was heartbreaking when she separated from her at the end of her sixth form. She lovingly considers her Mathematics teacher, Mr Keesing, to be an unpredictable "old fogey", but eventually wins his love.

All these things show that Anne was a cheerful young girl who viewed everyone around her optimistically. She was loving and appreciative about her elders and strengthened her relationships with affection. Her bond with the people she loved and respected was very strong and stable. This unique trait indicated Anne's level of maturity.

- Q5. Anne says teachers are the "most unpredictable creatures on Earth." Is Mr Keesing unpredictable? How?** *(Textual)*

Talking in general about teachers, Anne says, "Teachers are the most unpredictable creatures on earth." When the student is

unsure about passing a test, the teachers pass him, and when he is confident, they fail him. In a way, Mr Keesing too has an unpredictable nature. At one stage, he gets so annoyed with Anne for being a chatterbox that he assigns her extra homework. Anne's arguments supporting her talkative nature amuse him but he punishes her further when she resumes talking. However, when Anne expects punishment for indirectly mocking at him, he takes it lightly and allows her to talk in the class. Besides, he reads out her poem to the other students adding his comments and also begins to make jokes. Surely, Mr Keesing, too is an unpredictable teacher.

**Q6. What do the following two statements tell the reader about Anne Frank as a person? (Textual)**

- (i) We don't seem to be able to get any closer, and that's the problem. Maybe, it's my fault that we don't confide in each other.
- (ii) I don't want to jot down the facts in the diary the way most people would, but I want the diary to be my friend.
- (i) The first statement tells us that Anne is a reserved and introvert child who, in spite of having a friendly family and group, hesitates to confide in anyone. She avoids sharing her secrets with others and does not feel comfortable while expressing her true self. However, she is a very modest girl who owns up her shortcoming as the primary reason behind the absence of a true friend in her life.
- (ii) The second statement tells us that Anne does not believe in copying the standard way of writing and wants to be original in her purpose and style. She is innovative and treats her diary like a very close, alive and throbbing friend. Therefore, she even gives it a name 'Kitty'. Anne, thus comes out as a mature and sensible teenager.

- Q7. What idea do you form about the writer from her use of the statement, "Margot went to Holland in December, and I followed in February, when I was plunked down on the table as a birthday present for Margot." (Textual)**

The statement reveals Anne's subtle sense of humour. Her elder sister Margot, after staying in Aachen with their grandmother and Anne for some time, went to Holland in December 1933 to live with their parents who had emigrated in September 1933. Anne was younger, so she joined the family later in the month of February. Her day of arrival in Holland coincided with her sister Margot's birthday. But Anne does not record this event in her diary in a simple way. Instead she uses the expression that "I was plunked down on the table as a birthday present for Margot". This is indeed original and generates laughter because it aptly describes the situation where a younger sibling is thrust upon and tends to overshadow an elder sibling's birthday. The entire expression is innovative and the use of the word "plunked down" has a lasting impact on the reader's mind.

- Q8. Write what you learn about Anne from her statement, "If you ask me, there are so many dummies that about a quarter of the class should be kept back, but teachers are the most unpredictable creatures on earth."? (Textual)**

Anne's observation that, "a quarter of the class should be kept back" because they are dummies, tells us that she herself is intelligent and good at studies. She has a good sense of assessment that helps her to observe with clarity and certainty that about one fourth of her classmates do not deserve to be sent to the next form. However, she is not certain about the criterion according to which the teachers would decide promotion of students. That is why she calls them the 'most unpredictable

creatures'. This statement tells the reader that Anne analyses and weighs things objectively. She has a mind of her own and forms her opinions based on her keen sense of observation about people around her. She does not follow blindly the conventional information handed down to younger people.

- Q9. What idea do you form about Anne from her observation "Anyone could ramble on and leave big spaces between the words, but the trick was to come up with convincing arguments to prove the necessity of talking."? (Textual)**

The statement tells us that Anne was a perfectionist and did not like to finish her task just for the sake of it. She had a sense of commitment and devoted herself to every bit of work with sincerity. The statement also tells us that Anne believed in herself and could justify her actions with convincing arguments. In addition to this art of validating her behaviour, she also had a sense of humour. She could have resorted to the easy way of completing her extra homework that she got as punishment for talking in the class like a chatterbox. She could have simply rambled about the subject and could have left spaces and gaps to complete the essay, but she did not do anything like this. Instead, she thought of strong arguments to justify her talkative nature. She argued that talking is a natural trait of every student and she, in particular, had inherited it from her mother. Both these arguments stand valid and also generate humour.

- Q10. Give an account of Anne's early life and family as written by her in her diary.**

Anne's family consisted of five members - her grandmother, her parents, her elder sister and she herself. Her father, Otto Frank, was the 'most adorable' one for Anne. He married her

mother, Edith Hollander Frank, when he was thirty-six and she was twenty-five. Margot, her elder sister, was born in 1926 while Anne herself was born three years later on 12 June 1929. Her father and mother emigrated to Holland in September 1933, while she and her sister were sent to their grandmother in Aachen. Margot went to Holland in December and Anne joined the family a couple of months later in February on Margot's birthday. Anne started with Montessori nursery school right away. She stayed there until she was six, at which time she started in the first form. She had a loving teacher in the sixth form, Mrs Kuperus, who was also her headmistress. She bid her a tearful farewell to her at the end of school.

Anne loved her grandmother dearly and was very sad after her death in 1942 which was preceded by a period of illness. In July 1942, this family had to go into hiding to escape persecution by the Nazi government of Germany. Anne, her sister and their mother died while in concentration camps. However, her father survived the holocaust.

**Q11. When and why did Anne start writing her diary?**

*Or*

**Anne found a true friend in the form of her diary. Discuss.**

Anne Frank started writing her diary in June 1942 until she wrote its final entry on 1 August 1944. Anne was a very sensitive girl with a reserved nature and could not share her innermost thoughts with the family or friends around her. She had a loving family and a group of friends with whom she could laugh and have fun, but she could not confide in any of them. So, she always felt the need of one 'true friend' who had the patience to listen to all her musings. Her diary was given to her as a gift on her thirteenth birthday. She believed that 'paper had

more patience than people', so she considered her diary to be her 'true friend' whom she had been seeking for so long. She gave it a name "Kitty" and started recording her feelings and observations on a variety of subjects, unlike the traditional manner of diary-writing. Therefore, she found a true friend in the diary who listened to her patiently and kept all her secrets to itself.

**Q12. Anne believes that 'Paper has more patience than people'. Do you agree with this statement? Why/Why not?**

Anne's belief that 'Paper has more patience than people' is true. Paper is a passive and silent receptor that does not get restless like human beings if anything is written on it. It allows the writer to record as many and as varied thoughts as required by him/her. Anne had a loving family and a group of friends with whom she could have fun. But she could not confide in any of them because her reserved nature did not allow her to open up to others. She felt that her musings were not of any interest to people around her and they would lose patience if she would talk to them about her feelings and observations. So, she opted to write her thoughts in her diary that she lovingly named as "Kitty". This helped her to express herself freely without worrying about responses. "Kitty" was all paper and had unlimited patience to listen to all the relevant or irrelevant things Anne told it. So, the statement that 'Paper has more patience than people' is completely agreeable.

**Q13. Who was Mr Keesing? How and why did he punish Anne? How did Anne respond to these punishments? What character traits of Anne does her response highlight?**

Mr Keesing was Anne's mathematics teacher. Anne considered him to be an 'old fogey' who was much annoyed with her

because she talked too much. He gave her several warnings but when Anne still continued to talk, he assigned her extra homework as punishment. He told her to write an essay on the topic "A Chatterbox". Anne did not finish this task by rambling about and leaving big spaces in the essay. Instead she wrote valid arguments justifying her talkative nature. She wrote three pages and argued that talking is a student's trait and that she would do her best to keep it under control. However, she also wrote that she would never be able to cure herself of the habit since her mother talked as much as she did and there wasn't much that could be done about inherited traits. Mr Keesing had a good laugh at Anne's arguments, but when she proceeded to talk her way through the next lesson, he assigned her a second essay. This time it was on the topic "An Incurable Chatterbox". Anne dutifully handed in the assignment on time. All went well for two whole lessons. However, during the third lesson he finally lost patience and told Anne that as punishment for talking in class she had to write an essay titled "Quack, Quack, Quack, Said Mistress Chatterbox". In response, Anne took help from her friend, Sanne, who was good at poetry, and wrote the entire essay in verse.

The three assignments submitted by Anne highlight that she was a very lively and cheerful girl. She never took any task lightly and gave a serious thought to the topics every time. She was a very creative and intelligent girl and made extra efforts to complete her tasks.

**Q14. What was Anne's third essay? Whose help did she take in writing it? What effect did it have on Mr Keesing?**

*Or*

**How did Anne's third essay amuse Mr Keesing?**

Anne's third essay was on the topic "Quack, Quack, Quack, Said Mistress Chatterbox." She took help from her friend Sanne, who was good at poetry, to write this entire essay in verse. Anne was delighted when she completed this essay. She knew that Mr Keesing was trying to play a joke on her with that ridiculous subject, but she had made sure that the joke was on him. She wrote a beautiful poem about a mother duck and a father swan with three baby ducklings who were bitten to death by the father because they quacked too much. This way she indirectly hinted at Mr Keesing who was trying to stop Anne from her natural habit of talking. Luckily, Mr Keesing took the joke the right way. He read the poem to the class, adding his own comments, and to several other classes as well. Since then, Anne was allowed to talk and wasn't assigned any extra homework either. On the contrary, Mr Keesing was so amused that he himself started making jokes.

□□□

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## 5. The Hundred Dresses-I

(El Bsoor Ester)

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### ABOUT THE STORY

#### *Introduction*

The story, "The Hundred Dresses," is about the discrimination encountered by a young school girl of Polish origin in America. Her classmates mock her because she is always clad in the same light blue ill-fitting dress. They realise their mistake only after this talented girl quits school and moves to another place with her parents. The author has sensitively and artistically highlighted the issue that people form opinions about others on the basis of appearance and possessions. Creativity and talent often go unnoticed, although these two qualities make an individual worthy.

#### *Summary*

On a particular Monday, Wanda Petronski did not attend her class, and her seat was empty. Even Peggy and Madeline, her classmates who usually made fun of her, did not notice her absence. Wanda used to sit in the last but one row in Room Thirteen. She sat in a corner seat adjacent to the ones occupied by the rough boys who fared badly in the exams, made a lot of noise by scuffling their feet, brought a lot of dust and mud with their shoes, and laughed the loudest at anything funny.

Wanda wasn't noisy; instead, she was reserved by nature and hardly laughed. Nobody knew why she used to sit in that corner. She sat there perhaps because she came from Boggins Heights, an area where poor people lived, and her feet were usually "caked with dry mud." Nobody really bothered about Wanda and sometimes a few girls waited for her only to make her an object of ridicule.

Wanda missed school on the second day also.

On Wednesday, her absence was noticed by Peggy and Maddie. The two girls made good grades in the exams, did not carry mud into the class and occupied front seats. The rich Peggy was beautiful, was very popular and wore elegant clothes. Peggy and Maddie were bosom friends. They noticed Wanda's absence because they used to wait for her while coming to school in order to have some fun at her expense.

The students of the class had simple names like Thomas, Allen, and Smith etc. whereas Wanda Petronski's name was rather unfamiliar and complicated. It seemed funny and difficult. She always wore a faded blue dress that was not properly ironed. Wanda was considered an outsider, so she did not have any company or friend at school. She walked to school and back home all alone.

Sometimes, the girls of Wanda's class would gather around her and make fun of her. Peggy led this group and in a mockingly courteous manner would ask Wanda as to how many dresses she had in her closet. Wanda would promptly answer "A hundred." The girls talked to her about the colours and materials of her dresses and Wanda stolidly answered all their queries. The girls would also ask her how many shoes she had. Wanda would then say "Sixty pairs. All lined up in my closet." When Wanda walked away, the girls would have a hearty laugh at her. Peggy and Maddie made maximum fun of her and were the last to leave. This silly game to humiliate Wanda was started by Peggy.

Although Peggy had a tender-heart and would weep bitterly when she saw an animal being treated cruelly, still, she did not consider teasing Wanda as a cruel act. Actually, she did not like anyone telling a lie and she knew for certain that Wanda was lying about her hundred dresses or sixty pairs of shoes. However, Maddie felt upset at this nasty game that was repeated every day, because she was herself poor and usually wore second hand old clothes discarded by others. However, she felt lucky that she did not live in a cheap and

dirty locality like Boggins Heights, and that she did not have a funny name like Wanda Petronski. She was poor, but not as poor as Wanda. Still she did not like the way Wanda insisted on claiming that she had a hundred dresses. Maggie thought that if Peggy and others played the joke on her, she would not lie like Wanda. Even then she wished that Peggy would stop teasing Wanda.

Maddie analysed her feelings about the entire matter but dared not talk to Peggy about it. She even started writing a note to Peggy about this, but stopped suddenly at the thought that she too might be made a butt of ridicule in the school yard. Peggy might ask her about her dress and where she had got it from. In fact, Maddie was wearing one of Peggy's old dresses that had been given a new look by her mother with the help of new trimmings. So, Maddie finally decided to keep quiet and left it to Peggy to stop making fun of Wanda.

While Maddie was thinking about Wanda and the hundred dresses, she started wondering as to who would be the winner of the "drawing and colouring contest" for girls and the contest for designing of motorboats among boys. Peggy was considered to be very good at drawing and everyone expected her to win the prize.

Peggy and Maddie went to school the next day, in a drizzle, without waiting for Wanda. The moment they entered the classroom they were surprised to find drawings all over the room. These were of dresses with lavish designs with dazzling, brilliant colours. They were at least a hundred of them. The drawings were admired by everyone. When the class assembled, Miss Mason, the class teacher, announced the winners. Jack Beggles was the winner amongst the boys for his design for an outboard motor that was exhibited in Room Twelve. In Room Thirteen, one particular girl had submitted as many as one hundred designs; they were all different from each other and were extremely beautiful. The judges considered their designer, Wanda Petronski, to be the winner of the girl's medal.

Peggy and Maddie were particularly attracted by the blue and the green dresses. Peggy, in particular, was all praise for the green one and wished she herself could draw as beautifully.

In this way, Wanda proved that she was richer than all other girls in her class as she was endowed with a rare talent to draw creatively.

### THEME

"The Hundred Dresses" is a story that criticises materialism. The author is convinced that judging people on the basis of their riches and worldly possessions is wrong. Moreover, appearances can be deceptive. The appearance of an individual may have a shabby look, but that does not reflect his/her inner self. A genius is always quietly at work without boasting about his/her creativity. Wanda's claim of being the proud owner of a hundred dresses is eventually proved true, when everybody looks at the exquisite hundred designs crafted by her. One may be poor in terms of money but one can have an inner richness that is difficult to achieve.

Another theme dealt in this story is the discrimination that is faced by immigrants because they come from a different race/creed. This often leads to their bullying at school which is not only humiliating but also disheartening. Wanda was a very talented girl but was without friends at school because she was of Polish origin.

### MESSAGE

The story conveys the message that young students should not indulge in insensitive actions like mocking and jeering at those who are different. Such a behaviour is harmful, disheartening and totally unjustified. Realisation comes quite late and usually after the damage has been done. Peggy ridicules Wanda, and Maddie remains a mute spectator. However, they both are equally responsible for discriminating against a girl from a different race. The writer's message is thus loud and clear that we should rise above the narrow

walls of ethnicity and learn to accept each other with all the differences. It is important for us to acknowledge and accept each other wholeheartedly as latent qualities cannot be estimated from outward appearance. Wanda was a very plain-looking girl who always wore the same faded blue dress to school and her feet were usually 'caked with dry mud.' However, this 'poor' outward appearance did not mean that the girl did not have any worth. In fact, she was 'richer' and more talented than Peggy, who was considered to be the best girl in the class.

#### TITLE

"The Hundred Dresses-I" is an appropriate title as the entire story is based on Wanda's insistence that she is the owner of a hundred dresses. Her classmates treat this claim to be a blatant lie and make fun of her. Wanda's claim to hundred dresses arouses curiosity because she actually wears the same faded ill-fitting blue dress to school everyday. She lives in Boggs Heights, a locality for poor people, and still tells her classmates that her hundred dresses are "all lined up" in her closet.

However, Wanda is justified in saying that she has a hundred dresses as her closet is really full of the hundred dress-designs prepared by her for the contest. Thus, it is the hundred dresses that are the main subject of the story.

#### CHARACTERS

##### *Wanda Petronski*

Wanda Petronski is a Polish girl whose parents have immigrated to America. She lives in an ill-equipped locality called 'Boggs Heights' with her parents. It is a locality where the poorest of the poor live. Wanda is a quiet, well-behaved girl, who rarely says anything at all. Nobody has ever heard her laugh out loud. Only sometimes she twists her mouth into a crooked sort of a smile.

Her feet are always mud-laden as the track leading to Boggins Heights is muddy. She is reserved by nature and always takes the corner back seat in the class. She has no friends and other girls make fun of her because of her poverty and strange name. She always wears the same faded ill-fitting blue dress everyday to school. She takes the bullying from her classmates, especially from Peggy and Maddie, and moves up the street with dull eyes, mouth closed and hitching her left shoulder every now and then.

Wanda Petronski's outward appearance belies her inner strength to create beautiful dress designs. She is endowed with a rich imagination that she used to create a hundred brilliant, lavish designs with dazzling colours. Eventually, she proves that she is the 'richest' and the 'most creative' girl in the class, who actually has a 'hundred dresses'.

### *Peggy*

Peggy belonged to a well-to-do family and did well in her studies also. She was a front bencher in the class. She was pretty and was the most popular girl in school. Her hair was curly and attractive. She was always dressed smartly and had a variety of pretty dresses.

She had a tender-heart and could not tolerate small children being bullied. So, she always protected them. She loved animals and wept bitterly whenever she saw animals being maltreated. However, in the case of Wanda, whom she teased, ill-treated, and made fun of, she did not feel that she was bullying or teasing her. In fact she was convinced that Wanda was telling a lie, when she insisted that she had a hundred dresses lined up in her closet and that she owned sixty pairs of shoes. Peggy disliked liars so she kept harassing Wanda.

Peggy was very talented and was the favourite choice of the entire class for winning the girls' medal for designing dresses. She drew better than others and could copy picture in a magazine or some film star's head perfectly.

On the whole, Peggy was a lovable girl who never tried to flaunt her riches. Her ridiculing Wanda seems cruel, but actually she does not intend to hurt her. She instantly admires Wanda's creativity when she witnesses the hundred dresses designed by her. She generously praises the green dress in particular and acknowledges that Wanda draws much better than her.

### *Maddie*

Maddie, a bosom friend of Peggie, is portrayed as a young girl with human emotions of pity and consideration. She belonged to a poor family and usually wore other's "hand-me-down clothes", modified by her mother to give them a 'new look.' She had short blonde hair and was kind-hearted. She never liked Peggy making fun of Wanda or her poverty. However, she was not a very courageous girl and did not dare to tell Peggy frankly that she should not make fun of Wanda. Maddie was acutely conscious of her poverty and wanted to hide it at all costs. However, she considered herself lucky, as she was not forced to live in the poor locality of "Boggins Heights."

Maddie was good at studies and, like Peggy, was always a front bencher. She felt that Wanda was doing something wrong by telling lies and was sure that if ever she found herself in a similar position, she would have more sense and would not insist like Wanda that she has a hundred dresses in her closet. Still, she feels guilty because she cannot do anything to stop Wanda's bullying. She is remorseful and hopes that Wanda's ill-treatment would end soon.

### EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.

#### (I)

Today, Monday, Wanda Petronski was not in her seat. But nobody, not even Peggy and Madeline, the girls who started all the fun, noticed her absence.

**(a) Who was Wanda Petronski?**

Wanda Petronski was an American schoolgirl of Polish origin.

**(b) Who were Peggy and Madeline?**

Peggy and Madeline were Wanda's classmates. Peggy was a pretty, intelligent rich girl with curly hair. She wore pretty dresses and was the most popular girl of the class. Madeline was Peggy's closest friend who was equally intelligent, but not as rich as Peggy.

**(c) Why were they more likely to notice Wanda's absence?**

Peggy and Madeline were more likely to notice Wanda's absence because these two girls had started the fun game of mocking Wanda over her owning a closet of hundred dresses and sixty pairs of shoes.

**(d) What does 'all the fun' here refer to?**

'All the fun' here refers to the pleasure that Wanda's classmates drew by making fun of Wanda for always wearing the same faded ill-fitting blue dress, despite claiming that she had hundred different dresses in her closet.

#### (II)

Cries of exaggerated politeness greeted this. "All alike?"

"Oh, no. Every pair is different. All colours. All lined up.

**(a) Who would speak with exaggerated politeness? To whom and why?**

Peggy, Maddie and the other girls at school would speak with exaggerated politeness to Wanda because they enjoyed mocking this simple Polish girl.

**(b) What does 'this' refer to here?**

'This' refers to Wanda's answer, "Sixty pairs. All lined up in my closet," to the question by Peggy about the number of pairs of shoes she had.

**(c) Which 'pair' is being talked about?**

The pair of shoes being talked about is the one owned by Wanda.

**(d) Why does the speaker of the second line emphasise that every pair is different?**

Wanda emphasises that every pair of shoes owned by her is different because she was actually talking about the different designs of shoes that she had created in her drawings.

**(III)**

Anybody could tell that that was a lie. Why did she want to lie? And she wasn't just an ordinary person, else why did she have a name like that? Anyway, they never made her cry.

**(a) Whose thoughts are these?**

These are the thoughts of Maddie.

**(b) Who is 'she'? What 'lie' has she supposedly told?**

'She' is Wanda Petronski and is supposed to have lied about owning a hundred dresses and sixty pairs of shoes.

**(c) In what sense is 'she' not an ordinary person, according to the speaker?**

According to Maddie, Wanda was not an ordinary person because she had a name that was unlike American names. Maddie actually means to say that Wanda was not an American.

- (a) **What feelings or emotions does the speaker have when she says 'Anyway, they never made her cry.'**

Maddie's emotions at this time are of a sense of relief. She feels that Wanda's bullying is not so bad that it would push the hapless Polish girl to tears.

(IV)

Of course she would have more sense than to say she had a hundred dresses. Still she would not like for them to begin on her. She wished Peggy would stop teasing Wanda Petronski.

- (a) **Who is 'she' here?**

'She' here is Maddie, Peggy's best friend.

- (b) **In what sense 'she' would have more sense?**

Maddie would have more sense than Wanda who wore the same blue dress everyday yet told the class that she has a hundred dresses, all of different colours.

- (c) **Who are 'them' here? What does 'she' fear they would do to her?**

Here 'them' are the girl students of Room Thirteen. Maddie fears that they would mock at her because she wore the dresses that were handed down to her by well-off people and were trimmed by her mother to give them a new look.

- (d) **How would Peggy tease Wanda Petronski?**

Peggy would tease Wanda Petronski by asking her in a mocking polite voice about the number of dresses and pairs of shoes she had.

(V)

She wished she had the nerve to write Peggy a note, because she knew she never would have the courage to speak right out to Peggy.

- (a) **Who is 'she' here? Who is Peggy?**

Here 'she' is Maddie, Peggy's closest and inseparable friend. Peggy is the most popular girl in school. She has curly hair and is pretty. She also has many different dresses.

**(b) What 'note' did she want to write to Peggy?**

Maddie wanted to write a note to Peggy to ask her to stop bullying Wanda and stop asking her about her dresses or shoes.

**(c) Why did she not have the courage to write the 'note'?**

Maddie did not have the courage to write the note because she could not speak to Peggy in a straight forward manner. The two of them were close friends and Maddie did not want to risk their friendship.

**(d) What 'fear' does she begin to have?**

Maddie begins to have the fear that Peggy and other girls would make her their 'new target' in the school yard. They would divert their attention from Wanda and would begin to ridicule her for wearing 'hand-me-down' clothes.

**(VI)**

Naturally, on a day like this, they didn't wait for Wanda Petronski on the corner of Oliver Street, the street that far, far away, under the railroad tracks and up the hill, led to Boggins Heights. Anyway, they weren't taking chances on being late today, because today was important.

**(a) '...on a day like this...' What kind of day was it?**

It was drizzling on that day.

**(b) Who are 'they' here? Why did they not wait for Wanda Petronski that day?**

Here 'they' are Peggy and Maddie. They did not wait for Wanda Petronski that day because it was drizzling and the two of them just had Peggy's umbrella.

**(c) Where were they going?**

Peggy and Maddie were going to school.

**(d) Why could they not afford to get late?**

Peggy and Maddie could not afford to get late because it was an important day when Miss Mason, their teacher, was going to announce the winners of the drawing and colouring contest.

**(VII)**

"Do you think Miss Mason will announce the winners today?" asked Peggy.

"Oh, I hope so, the minute we get in," said Maddie. "Of course, you'll win. Peg."

**(a) Who was Miss Mason?**

Miss Mason was the teacher of students in Room Thirteen. Peggy, Maddie and Wanda were her students.

**(b) What winners were to be announced by Miss Mason?**

Miss Mason was to announce the winners of the contest for designing dresses by girls and the contest for designing motorboats by boys.

**(c) Why does Maddie think that Peggy would win?**

Maddie thinks that Peggy would win because she drew better than anyone else in the class. She could copy a picture or an image almost exactly similar.

**(d) What do Maggie and Peggy see the minute they get in?**

The minute they set in their classroom, Peggy and Maddie are amazed to see dazzling, colourful, brilliant, lavish designs drawn on great sheets of wrapping paper displayed on every ledge and windowsill.

**(VIII)**

These must be the drawings for the contest. They were! Everybody stopped and whistled or murmured admiringly.

**(a) What drawings are being referred to here?**

The drawings of a hundred colourful lavish patterns are being referred to here.

**(b) Who had made them?**

Wanda Petronski, an American schoolgirl of Polish origin, had made these drawings.

**(c) Who does 'everybody' refer to? Why did 'everybody' stop and whistle or murmur admiringly?**

'Everybody' refers to the students of Room Thirteen. They gasped at the sight of such beautiful, colourful and vibrant designs. So they stopped and whistled or murmured admiringly at them.

**(d) Where had these drawings been displayed and why?**

These drawings had been displayed on every ledge and windowsill of the classroom. It had been done so because there were a hundred designs that covered the entire space when put on display.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 30 – 40 words each)*

**Q1. Where did Wanda usually sit in the class and why? Or**

**Where in the class did Wanda sit and why? (Textual)**

Wanda usually sat in a corner of the last but one seat in the last row of Room Thirteen. She sat there because her feet were caked with dirt as she walked the muddy path from her home to school. Besides, she was a very quiet girl of Polish origin who was not accepted by her American classmates.

**Q2. What kind of a girl was Wanda?**

According to the author, Wanda was a quiet girl who hardly

ever spoke to anybody. Nor did she ever laugh loudly. Sometimes her face wore a smile with her lips crooked but generally she remained reserved.

**Q3. How was Wanda different from other back benchers in the class?**

The other back benchers were rough, noisy and mischievous. They scuffled their feet and laughed very loudly at funny things. Wanda, on the contrary, was quiet and reticent. She was never heard laughing loudly. She only smiled gently sometimes.

**Q4. Why, do you think, Peggy and Maddie did not notice the absence of Wanda on Monday and Tuesday?**

Peggy and Maddie did not notice the absence of Wanda on Monday and Tuesday because Wanda was a very quiet girl. She sat in the last row, next to the last seat never talking to anybody or laughing loudly. Therefore, her absence did not make any difference and went unnoticed.

**Q5. When and why do Peggy and Maddie notice Wanda's absence?**

*(Textual)*

The two girls notice Wanda's absence on Wednesday, when they get late for school. As always, they had waited for Wanda on that day to have some fun by mocking her about the hundred dresses that Wanda claimed she had all lined up in her closet. But Wanda didn't turn up for school that day.

**Q6. What do you think "to have fun with her" means? *(Textual)***

"To have fun with her" means to ridicule and mock her. It is a sadistic way to draw pleasure by deriding someone. Wanda's classmates Peggy and Maddie in particular had fun with her by mocking her simple, single, blue dress that she wore everyday in school.

**Q7. "They often waited for Wanda Petronski to have fun with her." What does this tell you about Peggy and Maddie?**

This tells us that Peggy and Maddie were like most school children who either have fun by bullying others or remain silent when they witness someone being bullied. Such children indulge in bullying thoughtlessly without realizing the harm they cause to others.

**Q8. Who was Peggy? How does the author describe her?**

Peggy was a young American schoolgirl. The author describes her as the most popular girl in school who was not cruel and protected small children from bullies. She was pretty and her hair was curly. She had many dresses and she loved animals, too.

**Q9. Why did Peggy and Maddie sit in the front of the class?**

Peggy and Maddie would sit in the front of the class because they used to get good marks and all other children who scored well used to sit in the front. Besides, they lived in a cleaner locality and didn't have to walk on muddy tracks to reach school.

**Q10. How was Peggy different from Wanda?**

Peggy was an American, while Wanda was a Polish girl. Peggy was an intelligent girl who always sat in the front row of her class. She was rich and pretty, had curly hair, wore beautiful dresses and was the most popular girl in school. Wanda on the other hand, was a poor girl who wore the same faded ill-fitting blue dress to school everyday. She sat in the last row of her class and rarely laughed or talked to anyone.

**Q11. Why didn't Wanda have any friends?**

Wanda did not have any friends because she was unlike other American children in her class. She was a Polish immigrant who lived in poor suburb Boggs Heights. Her name was strange, funny and was difficult to pronounce. Her appearance was much too simple and she always wore an ill-fitted faded blue dress. She was shy and quiet, and rarely talked to anyone.

**Q12. Where does Wanda live? What kind of a place do you think it is?**

*(Textual)*

Wanda lives at Boggins Heights which is an unclean and poor locality. It has a muddy approach track and the people who walk on it get their feet caked with dry mud. Mostly Polish immigrants live here.

**Q13. Describe Wanda's appearance and the dress she wore to school everyday.**

Wanda always wore a faded blue dress to school that didn't fit her well. It was clean but looked as if it had never been ironed properly. She came to school all alone on foot from Boggins Heights, so her feet were usually caked with dry mud.

**Q14. In what way was Wanda different from the other children?**

*(Textual)*

Wanda was a very shy and quiet girl as compared to other children. She was a Polish girl with an unusual name that was difficult to pronounce for the American children. She was always dressed in the same faded ill-fitting blue dress and did not have any friends. She came to school alone and went home alone.

**Q15. How does Wanda feel about the dresses game? Why does she say that she has a hundred dresses?**

*(Textual)*

*Or*

**Does Wanda have a hundred dresses? Why do you think she says she does?**

*(Textual)*

Wanda feels humiliated when the girls play the dresses game with her. She insists that she has hundred dresses to counter the other girls' mocking. In fact she does not lie about having a hundred dresses lined up in her closet because she actually has the designs of a hundred dresses in her imagination.

**Q16. Peggy was not a cruel girl, still she teased Wanda. Why?**

Peggy did not think that it was cruel on her part to tease Wanda because she did not like Wanda's telling lies that she had a hundred dresses and sixty pairs of shoes in her closet. She did not feel guilty mocking at a person who told lies.

**Q17. How did Peggy and Maddie bully Wanda?**

Or

**Why were Peggy and Maddie the last ones to leave the school yard?**

Peggy would bully Wanda by asking her in a pretended courteous manner about her hundred dresses and sixty pairs of shoes. She would mock Wanda when the latter would insist that her dresses were of velvet and silk and every pair of her shoes was of a different colour. Maddie would simply stand as a mute spectator to this bullying. Both the girls would leave the school yard after Wanda and the others had gone home.

**Q18. How did Maddie feel about teasing Wanda?**

Or

**Why did Maddie wish that Peggy should stop teasing Wanda Petronski?**

Maddie felt very bad when Peggy made fun of Wanda. In fact, she would feel so embarrassed and uneasy that she would pretend to study the marbles in the palm of her hand, rolling them around and saying nothing herself. She became so uncomfortable that she wished Peggy would stop teasing Wanda Petronski.

**Q19. Why didn't Maddie ask Peggy to stop teasing Wanda? What was she afraid of? Or (Textual)**

**Why did Maddie not ask Peggy to stop teasing Wanda?**

Maddie didn't ask Peggy to stop teasing Wanda, although she felt bad, because Peggy was her best friend and she didn't want to lose her friendship. She was also afraid that if she tried to stop

Peggy, she might become a new target of Peggy and other girls' ridicule and mockery, as she too was poor like Wanda and wore old clothes that her mother had remodelled to look new.

**Q20. Maddie was poor like Wanda, still her classmates did not tease her. Why? Or**

**Where did Maddie get her dresses from?**

Although Maddie was poor like Wanda, her poverty was not obvious as she did not wear the same dress everyday like Wanda did. Like Wanda, she did not claim to have a hundred dresses. The dresses of Maddie were old hand-me-down ones but her mother modified them in such a way that nobody could know that they were old ones. Moreover, she did not live in a poor locality like Boggins Heights and also did not have an unfamiliar name like Wanda.

**Q21. How was Maddie not so different from Wanda?**

Maddie was not so different from Wanda because she too could not afford to buy many dresses. The clothes worn by Maddie were hand-me-down ones and were simply remodelled by her mother. Maddie too was poor like Wanda.

**Q22. What 'note' did Maddie begin to write? Why did she later tear it into pieces?**

Maddie began to write a note to Peggy to say that they should stop making fun of Wanda by asking her how many dresses she had. However, she later tore the note into pieces because she shuddered at the thought of becoming the new target for Peggy and the girls who could ask her about one of Peggy's old dresses that she had worn after her mother had disguised it with new trimmings.

**Q23. Who did Maddie think would win the drawing contest and why?**

**Or**

**(Textual)**

**What was the drawing contest in Wanda's school about? Who did Maddie think would be its winner?**

The drawing contest in Wanda's school was about designing dresses. This contest was only for girls and Maddie as well as all other girls were sure that Peggy would win it. Actually Peggy was considered to be better than everyone else in Room Thirteen and could copy a picture in a magazine almost perfectly.

**Q24. Who won the drawing contest? What had the winner drawn?**

*Or* (Textual)

**Whom did Miss Mason announce as the drawing contest winner?**

**Was the winner present to receive the medal? Why/Why not?**

*Or*

**What kind of drawings had Wanda made?**

Miss Mason announced Wanda as the winner of the drawing and colouring contest among girls. Wanda had drawn a hundred brilliant lavish designs of dazzling colours. But she was not present to receive the medal as she had stopped coming to school after the day of the contest.

**Q25. What does Miss Mason think of Wanda's drawings? What do the children think of them? How do you know?** (Textual)

*Or*

**How does everyone react to Wanda's drawings?**

*Or*

**Why does Wanda truly deserve to win the drawing competition medal?**

*Or*

**What is the opinion of judges about Wanda's designs?**

Miss Mason is all praise for Wanda's drawings. She admires the one hundred designs of dresses submitted by her and considers them exquisite and full of variety. In the opinion of the judges, any one of Wanda's drawings was worthy of winning the prize.

The children are wonder struck at the beauty of the designs as they gasp, whistle and murmur admiringly on viewing them.

**Q26. What did Peggy and Maddie think about Wanda's drawings?**

Peggy and Maddie were amazed to see Wanda's drawings. They stopped short and gasped in amazement when they saw her drawings displayed all over the room, on every ledge and windowsill. The brilliant, lavish designs and dazzling colours impressed them. Peggy especially admired the green dress and Maddie the blue one. Peggy even admitted that Wanda drew better than she did.

**Q27. How did Wanda prove that she was 'humble and rich' in talent?**

Wanda proved that though financially poor, she was richer than any other student of her class. She had the wealth of talent to create lavish designs. Although she wore the same faded dress to school every day, she was gifted with a rich imagination with which she could create and colour her designs.

**Q28. What idea do you form about Miss Mason as a teacher?**

Miss Mason was a wise teacher who paid equal attention to all her students. She generously praised Wanda's creative designs without worrying about the most popular girl Peggy. She favoured talent over things like nationality or financial background of her students.

**Q29. Explain in your own words Peggy's remark "Boy, and I thought I could draw."**

These words show that Peggy had deep admiration for Wanda's drawings. Earlier she used to believe that her drawing skills were the best, but now she was happy to see that Wanda was much more talented than her.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

**Q1. Why is Maddie embarrassed by the questions Peggy asks Wanda?**

**Is she also like Wanda, or is she different?**

*(Textual)*

Maddie feels embarrassed because Peggy talks to Wanda in an insulting manner. She ridicules the poor Polish girl because she does not ever wear an elegant dress. Wanda is always clad in a simple blue dress that is faded and does not fit her well. It also seems that her dress has never been ironed. Maddie, in some respects is like Wanda, as she too is poor, though not as poor as Wanda. Her parents, too can't afford new dresses for her but she wears slightly altered "hand-me-down-clothes" which are better than Wanda's. However, she is a shade different from Wanda, in the sense that she is an American; she doesn't live in 'Boggins Heights' and her feet are never muddy like Wanda's. Wanda is a quiet and shy girl who does not have any friends while Maddie is friendly with most girls in her class.

She feels that she is different because if somebody ever asked her about how many dresses she had, she would never tell a lie like Wanda and give others a chance to mock her for telling lies.

**Q2. How is Wanda seen as different by the other girls? How do they treat her?**

*Or*

*(Textual)*

**Who was Wanda Petronski? How and why was she considered different by other children?**

The other girls consider Wanda to be different because she has a peculiar, unfamiliar name – Wanda Petronski – that is difficult to pronounce. Moreover, they are Americans and Wanda has Polish origin making her ethnically different from them. Wanda does not belong to a well-to-do family and is always dressed in the same faded blue clothes. Her dress does not even 'hang right'

shoes she had. When Wanda would reply that she had a hundred dresses and sixty pairs of shoes all lined up in her closet, the girls considered her to be a liar. They would make Wanda an object of ridicule because actually Wanda wore only one faded, ill-fitted, blue dress everyday to school. Wanda's ethnicity, appearance and name made her a victim of discrimination by her classmates.

**Q6. Do you think Peggy was a cruel girl? If not, why did she ill-treat and tease Wanda?**

Peggy was not basically a cruel girl. In fact, she had a tender-heart and protected small children from bullies. She couldn't tolerate even animals being treated cruelly. She would weep for hours if she saw an animal being tortured. However, she didn't consider her treatment of Wanda to be cruel although she was the front-runner in teasing and humiliating the poor Polish girl. She did so, because Wanda insisted that she had a hundred dresses and sixty pairs of shoes all lined up in her closet. On the face of it, this was a blatant lie as Wanda wore only one faded blue dress everyday to school. Peggy hated liars. Therefore, she did not feel that she was wrong in teasing Wanda as she believed that she was teasing a liar.

**Q7. Did Maddie really enjoy Peggy's game of hundred dresses and the teasing of Wanda? If not, why? Did she really appreciate Wanda's apparent lies?**

Maddie didn't like Peggy making fun of Wanda. In fact, she didn't like anybody's poverty being mocked at. When Peggy would ask Wanda in a mocking polite voice about her dresses, an embarrassed Maddie would study the marbles in the palm of her hand. However, the real reason of her disliking the ill-treatment was that she herself was poor and always wore "hand-me-down" clothes. She shuddered at the idea that she too could become a

target of ridicule by her classmates as she was poor like Wanda. Her classmates could easily mock her for wearing hand-me-down clothes.

However, she didn't appreciate Wanda's persistent and obvious lies. She felt that if she were placed in a similar position she would have behaved with more sense than to say that she had a hundred dresses.

- Q8. Give a detailed account of the manner in which Peggy makes fun of Wanda regarding the hundred dresses.**

Or

**What game had Peggy thought up? Was it a 'fun' game? Describe what used to happen at school during this game.**

Peggy thought up a game to mock Wanda for wearing the same faded ill-fitting blue dress everyday to school. It was intended to be a 'fun' game that was enjoyed at Wanda's expense. Peggy was not having 'fun with' Wanda but was actually making 'fun of' Wanda. To begin the game Peggy and other girls would surround Wanda in the school yard when she would be standing there to watch the little girls play hopscotch. Peggy would approach Wanda and ask her in a pretended courteous manner about the number of dresses she had claimed to have had. Peggy would then give a nudge to one of her friends and wait for Wanda's response who would say 'A hundred' without displaying any emotions. All the little girls would exclaim 'A hundred' and Wanda would reaffirm that all her hundred dresses were lined up in her closet. Peggy would then prod Wanda further if those dresses were of silk, velvet or of different colours. Wanda would answer each of these questions with a 'yes' and then leave. However, before she'd gone very far, Peggy and other girls would burst into peals of laughter. As this game

advanced Peggy also started asking Wanda about the number of pairs of shoes she had. The simple Polish girl would respond that she had 'sixty pairs' that were all of different colours and lined up. So, Peggy would make fun of Wanda who claimed to have a hundred dresses and sixty pairs of shoes but actually wore the same faded ill-fitting blue dress everyday.

**Q9. How did Wanda surprise everyone in the dress designing competition?**

Wanda surprised everybody by her hundred exquisite and lavish designs with beautiful and dazzling colours. No student had ever expected that an ill-clad, quiet and passive girl could have such talent and skill. The moment the students entered the class they gasped with wonder at the large number of designs displayed all over the room, on every ledge and windowsill. No other girl had presented more than two designs but Wanda had submitted an amazing collection of hundred designs with dazzling colours. Everybody was surprised even more when their teacher, Miss Mason, told them that in the opinion of the judges, each one of the hundred designs deserved a prize. Even Peggy and Maddie were spellbound when they saw Wanda's creative designs. Peggy, too, realized that Wanda was much better than her in drawing creatively and beautifully.

**Q10. Compare and contrast the characters of Peggy and Maddie.**

Peggy and Maddie studied at the same school, in the same class and were very close friends. However, the two were not alike in most ways. Peggy was pretty and rich, while Maddie was plain and poor. Both girls were good at studies and sat in the front of the class. Peggy belonged to a well-to-do family and had many lovely dresses. Maddie could not afford expensive clothes and would wear 'hand-me-down' outfits that were reshaped by her

mother to give them a new look. Peggy was the most popular girl in school and no one could draw better than her. Maddie adored Peggy a lot and did not dare to upset her at any cost. Maddie was more compassionate than Peggy and did not approve of Wanda's bullying. In fact, she felt embarrassed when Peggy would ask Wanda about her dresses and shoes in a mocking polite voice. However, she could not muster up enough courage to tell the vain Peggy that her attitude towards Wanda was inappropriate. Still the two girls always remained together and their friendship stayed intact.

**Q11. How do we judge the people around us - by their money, wealth and possessions? Or is there something of more enduring value to look for in a person?**

The world has become extremely materialistic and the tendency to judge and value others "by their money, wealth and possessions" is on the rise. The girls of Room Thirteen in this story too are affected by this demon and tease Wanda because she is poor. However, these worldly possessions and riches may give one social standing for a while but they are not lasting. The really enduring thing in life is one's personal worth and usefulness to society. Wanda will always be remembered for her rare talent and her gift to design a hundred dresses. The story indicates that poor people may not have the gift of material wealth but can have the gift of extraordinary talent. The poor Wanda, who owns only one dress, has a mind with sharp imagination and can create designs of a hundred dresses with different patterns and dazzling colours.



## 6. The Hundred Dresses - II

(El Bsor Ester)

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### ABOUT THE STORY

#### *Introduction*

"The Hundred Dresses - II" is a sequel to "The Hundred Dresses - I". It continues the story of Wanda Petronski, an American schoolgirl of Polish origin who had to quit her school because her classmates mocked at her plain appearance. Describing the total reversal of the attitude of her classmates towards Wanda, the author writes about Peggy's and Maddie's feeling of guilt and repentance. The story also confirms the view that children have an impressionable mind and can be easily moulded.

#### *Summary*

As the class was going round the room and watching the hundred dresses, Miss Mason received a letter from the Principal's office written by Jan Petronski, Wanda's father. The letter showed that Mr Petronski was really angry about the ill-treatment meted out to his daughter. He further informed the teacher that Wanda would no longer come to school as they were shifting to a bigger town where nobody would make fun of her name. Miss Masson read this letter to the students of Room Thirteen and advised them never to hurt the feelings of any person. She further hoped that whatever had happened in the past was a thoughtless action and asked the students to think about the entire issue.

Maddie was greatly affected and 'could not put her mind on her work.' She felt sick. She felt guilty because she had remained quiet and not protested against the maltreatment meted out to Wanda. She considered herself to be a coward for behaving in this manner and in fact shuddered at the thought of being in Wanda's position. She

further thought that she could at least tell Wanda that she did not mean to hurt her feelings. She pledged to herself that irrespective of what Peggy thought, she would try her utmost to find Wanda, who might not have left yet. Maddie resolved that she would tell Wanda that she had won the contest and that all her designs very really beautiful.

After school hours in the afternoon, Peggy casually suggested to Maddie to help her find whether Wanda was still there. The two girls hurried up the track leading to Boggins Heights in the damp and dismal weather. Peggy too was preoccupied with the thought that she had never teased Wanda for belonging to a different nationality and for having a strange name. Now, she realised that Wanda was not dumb and could draw wonderfully.

Maddie earnestly wished to find Wanda at Boggins Heights because she wanted to apologise to her for their bad behaviour and request her not to leave the school. She further planned to promise that Peggy and she herself would fight any student who would try to tease Wanda.

With these thoughts, the girls reached a little white house, and guessed that the Petronskis lived there. The pathway was not really welcome and the house wore a modest look but was neat and clean. However, no one was there in the house. The Petronskis had left and the two girls felt sorry that now they would not be able to make amends. Disappointed, they returned home. Peggy felt sorry for not being able to apologise for her rude behaviour, but consoled herself with the thought that Wanda could get such good ideas for her drawings probably due to bullying. Wanda might not have won the contest if she had not mocked her.

Maddie spent a troubled and sleepless night. She, simultaneously thought about Wanda's faded dress, her little house and the hundred glowing dresses lined up in the classroom. She firmly resolved that in future she would not remain a silent spectator to such teasing

incidents. She also resolved that if anyone teased a person, she would raise her voice and even challenge her best friend Peggy. She wouldn't mind losing Peggy's friendship if it would be for the sake of stopping someone to tease.

The two girls spent one Saturday afternoon, writing a letter to Wanda. They meant it to be a letter of apology but it turned out to be just a friendly letter in which they informed Wanda that she had won the contest and admired the beauty of her drawings. They sent the letter to her Boggins Heights' address and marked it 'Please Forward' on the envelope.

They did not get any reply from Wanda and concluded that perhaps Wanda was annoyed with them, but they knew that they could not blame her.

Peggy had started forgetting about the whole business, but Maddie, being more sensitive, used to make speeches at night, before going to sleep, in defence of Wanda.

On the last day of school before the Christmas holidays their teacher informed the class that she had received a letter from Wanda and felt glad that now she would be able to send Wanda her medal. Everybody listened intently to the contents of the letter. Wanda had requested the teacher to tell the girls to keep those hundred dresses as she had made another hundred dresses in her new house all lined in her closet. She further asked the teacher that the green dress designed by her for the competition should be presented to Peggy and the blue one be given to her friend Maddie. Peggy and Maddie carried the drawings back home carefully. Both the girls were thinking about Wanda, and Peggy concluded that Wanda really liked them and that she had received their letter. However, Maddie felt sorry that she would never be able to meet the tight lipped Polish girl.

On reaching home, Maddie looked carefully at the drawings and she

appreciated the vivid colours of the dress. Suddenly, she observed that the face on the dress looked like hers. She ran to Peggy's house excitedly and had a look at her drawing. It too had a face that resembled Peggy's. Both girls reached the conclusion that Wanda really liked them. Tears would well-up in Maddie's eyes whenever she thought about Wanda and the bullying that she had to tolerate.

#### THEME

The theme of the story is that talent and genius of an artist can never be curbed. Wanda created a hundred colourful designs for a competition at school and gifted away all of them only to create a hundred more. The story also deals with the theme of thoughtless actions that become part of school-life. Maddie remains a mute spectator to Wanda's bullying because it is a routine matter for children of her age to bully those who are defenceless. The writer develops this theme to make the readers understand that such 'thoughtless' actions should be rejected straight away. Children should be helpful and loving to each other. They should be bold enough to make amends for their mistakes and should respect people from other cultures as well.

#### MESSAGE

The story conveys a beautiful message of compassion and forgiveness. Wanda is a victim of bullying, still she pardons those who harass her. Her magnanimity brings a deep sense of realisation in Peggy and Maddie who resolve never to indulge in such senseless actions again. The story also conveys the message that we should not hurt or ridicule others simply because they are different from us. Mutual respect and love are the only things that can help us live in harmony. We should not only abstain from making others miserable but should also speak up boldly whenever we see any wrong being done. Life must be lived cordially and this lesson should be instilled right at school.

### TITLE

The title "The Hundred Dresses - II" is justifiable as the story is a continuation of the first part. The hundred dresses and their designer Wanda, remain the main concern of Peggy and Maddie. The story reaches a positive end when Wanda gifts her designs to the girls through a letter. So, the plot of this part of the story also moves around a hundred dresses. These dresses are actually the beautiful designs created by Wanda and they hold significance because they highlight the creative aspect of the simple Polish girl who did not have any friends at school.

### CHARACTERS

#### *Miss Mason*

Miss Mason, the class teacher, has all the qualities of head and heart that a good teacher should have. She is affectionate and loving and always has the welfare of her students uppermost in her mind. She fully understands the psychology of the children. She knows the art of connecting with young boys and girls. She decides to make them realise their mistake in place of scolding or punishing them. After sharing the letter she received from Wanda's father, she expresses the regret that a student of her class was maltreated. However, she does not get annoyed and instead takes the opportunity to advise the students to desist from such activities in future. The pause given by her after reading the letter has a telling effect on the students. The manner in which she advises her students leaves a lasting effect on them. Miss Mason's reaction to Wanda's letter shows that she is above class and creed. She treats and loves all her students equally. She is indeed happy to learn about Wanda's welfare. Moreover, she is glad that now she can send Wanda's well-deserved medal to her at her new address. However, Wanda's observation that her "new teacher does not equalise with her" is really very meaningful. It clearly shows that Miss

Mason is a wonderful human being besides being an excellent teacher. In sum, Miss Mason is an ideal teacher who understands the emotions of her students and has great regard for their talent.

### **Maddie**

Maddie matures after she hears the letter written by Wanda's father. Her sensitive heart now bleeds at the tortures inflicted by Peggy and her on Wanda. She is remorseful and holds herself responsible for Wanda's misery. She rehearses speeches of apology at night and exhibits the moral courage to make amends for the wrong done to Wanda. She sincerely wishes that Wanda has not left the town yet. Struck by a sense of guilt, she even pays a visit to Boggins Heights along with Peggy. She undergoes a transformation and is prepared to sacrifice her friendship with Peggy and challenge her if she or anyone else ill treats others. She makes a firm resolve to stand up against the wrong.

### **Peggy**

The letter by Wanda's father jolts Peggy and she regrets having maltreated Wanda. Though she tries her best to hide her feelings and makes an effort to be casual, her suggestion to visit Boggins Heights reveals that she was keen to apologise to Wanda. She realises that Wanda was not a dumb and dull girl as she had thought her to be. In reality, Wanda was very intelligent, sharp and sensitive. So, Peggy joins Maddie in writing a letter to Wanda. She learns an important lesson about the damage that bullying can do to a person. Therefore, the writer develops Peggy's character to convey the message that most children indulge in cruel actions without realising the damage that is inflicted by these actions. Peggy is not cruel but is simply a normal schoolgirl who is unaware of the seriousness of her casual actions.

**EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION**

*Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.*

**(I)**

Her manner indicated that what was coming – this letter from Wanda's father – was a matter of great importance. Everybody listened closely as Miss Mason read the brief note.

**(a) Who is 'her' in the above extract?**

Here 'her' is Miss Mason, the teacher of students in Room Thirteen.

**(b) Who was Wanda? Why did Wanda's father have to write a letter to Miss Mason?**

Wanda was a Polish girl who was bullied at school by her American classmates. Her father had to write a letter to Miss Mason because he was deeply hurt by the ill-treatment meted out to his daughter. He wanted to put on record his displeasure at the discrimination faced by his children in school.

**(c) Why did children listen to Miss Mason intently?**

The children listened intently to Miss Mason because they knew from her demeanour that whatever she was saying was really important and should be listened to with complete attention.

**(d) How did the class react on hearing what Miss Mason had to say?**

There was a deep silence in the class after Miss Wanda finished reading the letter written by Wanda's father.

**(II)**

Maddie tried to prepare her lessons, but she could not put her mind on her work. She had a very sick feeling in the bottom of her stomach. True, she had not enjoyed listening to Peggy ask Wanda...

**(a) What made Maddie unable to put her mind on her work?**

Maddie had just listened to the letter written by Wanda's father and a deep sense of guilt was troubling her conscience. So she was unable to put her mind to work.

**(b) Why did Maddie have a very sick feeling?**

Maddie had a sick feeling because she was troubled by the fact that she had become an equal 'partner in crime' by remaining a silent spectator to Wanda's bullying by Peggy.

**(c) What did Maddie think of herself at this time?**

Maddie had negative thoughts about herself at this time. She disliked herself because she had failed to show the courage to stand up against the wrong done by Peggy and others.

**(d) What would Peggy ask Wanda? Why did Maddie not enjoy listening to it?**

Peggy would ask Wanda how many dresses she had in her closet. Maddie did not enjoy listening to it because she disliked such ill-treatment of a classmate.

**(III)**

She had stood by silently, and that was just as bad as what Peggy had done. Worse.

**(a) Who is referred to as 'she' here?**

Here 'she' refers to Maddie.

**(b) What had Peggy done?**

Peggy had bullied Wanda for her simple appearance. She had humiliated the poor Polish girl for having worn the same faded, ill-fitting blue dress everyday to school.

**(c) Why had 'she' stood by silently?**

Maddie had stood by silently because Peggy was her closest friend and she did not wish to lose her for the sake of someone who lied about having a hundred dresses. Besides, she was afraid

that if she raised her voice against Peggy, she could be the next target of ridicule as she too was poor like Wanda and wore 'hand-me-down' clothes.

**(d) Why was it worse than what Peggy had done?**

Maddie's silence was even worse than Peggy's bullying of Wanda because Maddie was poor like Wanda and knew that the Polish girl was not at fault for wearing the same dress everyday. She should have supported Wanda.

**(IV)**

She had to find Wanda Petronski. Maybe she had not yet moved away. Maybe Peggy would climb the Heights with her, and they would tell Wanda she had won the contest, that they thought she was smart and the hundred dresses were beautiful.

**(a) Who is 'she'? Why does she have to find Wanda Petronski?**

Here 'she' is Maddie. She has to find Wanda to make amends for having been a silent spectator to her bullying.

**(b) What 'Heights' are referred to here? Why does 'she' feel that Peggy would climb the 'Heights' with her?**

The Heights referred to are 'Boggins Heights', a poor and backward area where Polish immigrants like Wanda used to live. Wanda feels that Peggy would climb the Heights with her because she knew that Peggy too was feeling bad after knowing that Wanda had quit school because of their insensitive behaviour.

**(c) What contest had Wanda won? Why would 'she' and Peggy like to break the news to Wanda?**

Wanda had won the contest for girls for designing colourful dresses. Maddie and Peggy would like to break this news to Wanda because they want to convey to her that they admire her creativity.

- (d) Which hundred dresses are referred to here? What did 'she' and Peggy think of these dresses earlier on?**

The hundred dresses referred to here are the ones that Wanda had designed for the school competition. Earlier, Peggy and Maddie used to think that these dresses did not exist and Wanda was lying to them.

**(V)**

There was no doubt about it. The Petronskis were gone. How could they ever make amends?

- (a) Who are referred to as 'they' here?**

Here 'they' refers to Peggy and Wanda.

- (b) Why were 'they' in no doubt that the Petronskis were gone?**

Peggy and Maddie had visited the Petronskis' house at Boggins Heights. The deserted look of the house confirmed that the Petronskis had gone.

- (c) Where had the Petronskis gone? Why?**

The Petronskis had gone to a big city which had many immigrants like them. They had gone there because it was a big place where nobody would make fun of them for belonging to a different race.

- (d) For what did 'they' want to make amends?**

Maddie and Peggy wanted to make amends for having bullied Wanda to such an extent that she had to quit the school as well as the town.

**(VI)**

If she ever heard anybody picking on someone because they were funny looking or because they had strange names, she'd speak up.

- (a) Who is 'she' here?**

Here 'she' is Maddie.

- (b) What would 'she' speak up about? Why?**

Maddie would speak up if she found anyone ridiculing or bullying any child. She would do so because she did not want to encourage this insensitive practice by remaining a silent spectator.

- (c) What had prompted her to make this decision?**

She was prompted to make this decision by the sad events that had happened due to Wanda's bullying at school.

- (d) What has 'she' been guilty of so far?**

So far, Maddie had been guilty of having remained a silent spectator to Wanda's bullying by Peggy and other girls.

### (VII)

"It shows she got our letter and this is her way of saying that everything's all right. And that's that."

- (a) Who is the speaker? Whom is he/she talking to?**

Peggy is the speaker and she is talking to her closest friend Maddie.

- (b) What is 'our letter', according to the speaker?**

According to Peggy, 'our letter' is the one that she and Maddie had written to Wanda to inform her that she had won the contest.

- (c) Who is 'she'? How did she convey that 'everything is all right'?**

Here 'she' is Wanda. She had gifted the dress-designs drawn by her to Peggy and Maddie. This way she had said the 'everything is all right.'

- (d) What does the speaker indicate by the expression "that's that"?**

This expression means that Wanda did not have any grudge or ill-feeling towards Peggy and Maddie for having bullied her.

## (VIII)

Tears blurred her eyes and she gazed for a long time at the picture. Then hastily she rubbed her eyes and studied it intently.

(a) **Who is referred to as 'she' here?**

Here 'she' refers to Maddie.

(b) **Which picture did she gaze at?**

Maddie gazed at the picture of the blue dress designed and gifted to her by Wanda.

(c) **Why did tears blur her eyes?**

Tears blurred Maddie's eyes because she was overwhelmed by Wanda's loving gesture of gifting her a specially designed dress.

(d) **What did she discover on studying the picture intently?**

On studying the picture intently, Maddie discovered that the head and face in the picture resembled hers.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 30 - 40 words each)*

**Q1. What did Miss Mason do before reading the letter written by Wanda's father to the class?**

Miss Mason read the note brought to her by the monitor from the principal's office several times and studied it thoughtfully for a while. Then she clapped her hands to draw the attention of the class and waited for everyone to be quiet. She then announced that she had received a letter from Wanda's father and adjusted her glasses slowly and deliberately before reading it to the class.

**Q2. What message did the letter from Wanda's father contain?**

*Or*

**Why did Jan Petronski write a letter to Miss Mason? What did he write in the letter?**

*Or*

**What did Mr Petronski's letter say?** *Or* *(Textual)*

**What did the letter from Wanda's father say?**

Jan Petronski, Wanda's father, wrote a letter to Miss Mason to express his displeasure and annoyance at the bullying faced by his daughter in the school. He informed Miss Mason that Wanda and Jake have quit school and their family would move to a big city where there are enough immigrants who are not looked down upon by the other Americans.

**Q3. How did the class react on hearing the contents of the letter written by Wanda's father?** *Or*

**How did the letter written by Wanda's father affect the children in Room Thirteen?**

The moment Miss Mason finished reading Jan Petronski's letter of complaint, the entire class was hushed to deep silence. The class felt guilty for having bullied Wanda and having compelled her to quit the school as well as the town.

**Q4. What did Miss Mason tell her class after reading Jan Petronski's letter?** *Or*

**What did Miss Mason want her class to think about? Why?**

*Or*

**In what manner did Miss Mason address her class after reading Wanda's father's letter? What did she urge the class to do?**

After reading Jan Petronski's letter, Miss Mason told the class that she was certain that no one had hurt Wanda's feelings purposely or deliberately. She expressed faith that it was all said in 'thoughtlessness'. She urged the class to think that it was

unfortunate and sad to hurt someone's feelings simply because the person had a long, unfamiliar name.

- Q5. How did Maddie feel after listening to the note from Wanda's father?** *Or* *(Textual)*

What was the impact of Jan Petronski's letter on Maddie?

*Or*

Why could Maddie not concentrate on her work in the study period?

*Or*

Why did Maddie have a 'sick feeling in the bottom of her stomach'?

Maddie felt miserable after listening to the note from Wanda's father. She could not put her mind to work in the study period and had a very sick feeling in the bottom of her stomach. She felt bad that she had remained a mute spectator to Wanda's bullying even when she knew that the poor Polish girl could not afford fancy dresses.

- Q6. Why did Maddie think that 'she was a coward'?**

*Or*

Maddie thought her silence was as bad as Peggy's teasing. Was she right? *(Textual)*

Maddie was certainly right in thinking that her silence was as bad as Peggy's teasing because she did not have the courage to stop the wrong that was being done in her presence. She felt that she was a coward who neither supported Wanda nor told Peggy that her action was insensitive.

- Q7. Why did Maddie want to apologise to Wanda?**

*Or*

Why was Maddie keen to find out Wanda after hearing the views of her father? *Or*

What did Maddie long to tell Wanda? Why?

Maddie wanted to apologise to Wanda to make amends for not

supporting her. She wanted to clarify to Wanda that she had never meant to hurt her feelings. She also wanted to tell her that she had won the contest for designing those beautiful hundred dresses.

- Q8. "So Peggy had had the same idea! Maddie glowed." What idea did both Peggy and Maddie have? Why?**

Both Peggy and Maddie had the idea to visit Boggins Heights and find Wanda before her departure to the big city. They had this idea because they were feeling guilty that their insensitive action had compelled the poor Polish girl to quit school and leave the town as well.

- Q9. In what kind of weather did Peggy and Maddie climb Boggins Heights? Why?**

Peggy and Maddie climbed Boggins Heights on a November afternoon when it was drizzling, damp and dismal. They went there to see if Wanda had left the town or not.

- Q10. Why did Peggy and Maddie go to Boggins Heights?**

Peggy and Maddie went to Boggins Heights to find Wanda before she had left the town and tell her that she had won the contest. They also wanted to tell her that they thought of her as a smart girl and that the hundred dresses designed by her were very beautiful.

- Q11. What kind of thoughts crossed Maddie's mind as she walked towards Boggins Heights along with Peggy?**

All through the way, Maddie hoped to find Wanda and thought that she would tell Wanda that they were sorry to have picked on her. She would also tell her that the whole school thought she was wonderful and would request her not to move away. Besides, she would assure her that everybody would be nice and she and Peggy would fight anybody who would bully her.

**Q12. What kind of house did Wanda live in? What did it remind Maddie of? Why?** Or

**Why does Wanda's house remind Maddie of Wanda's blue dress?**

Or (Textual)

**What reminded Maddie of Wanda's dress? And why?**

Wanda lived in a little white house with wisps of old grass stuck up here and there along the pathway. The house and its sparse little yard was shabby but clean. It reminded Maddie of Wanda's faded blue cotton dress that was not ironed but was neat and tidy.

**Q13. What excuses did Peggy think up for her behaviour and why?**

Or (Textual)

**How did Peggy justify her insensitive behaviour towards Wanda?**

Justifying her insensitive behaviour towards Wanda, Peggy found excuses because she was feeling guilty. She said that when she was asking Wanda about all her dresses, she was probably getting good ideas for her drawings. She might not have even won the contest, if Peggy had not bullied her.

**Q14. "After a long time, she reached an important conclusion." What 'important conclusion' did Maddie reach?**

Or

**What did Maddie think hard about? What important decision did she come to?** (Textual)

Maddie thought hard about the entire sequence of events that had compelled Wanda to quit the school and move to a big city. She came to the important decision that she would speak up if she ever heard anybody picking on someone for a funny look or a strange name. She would not bother even for her friendship with Peggy in doing so. She resolved never to bully or make fun of others.

**Q15. What did Peggy and Maddie write to Wanda?** (Textual)

Peggy and Maddie wrote a friendly letter to Wanda telling her that she had won the drawing and colouring contest. They also told her that her drawings were very pretty and enquired where she was living, and if she liked her new teacher and her new home.

**Q16. Why didn't Peggy and Maddie say sorry to Wanda in their letter?**

Or

**Despite feeling apologetic, Peggy and Maddie ended up writing 'just a friendly letter' to Wanda. Why?**

Peggy and Maddie did not apologise to Wanda in their letter because they considered Wanda as their friend. Every good friendship allows space for some harmless fun at each other's cost. So, they let bygones be bygones and wrote the letter as it is written to any good friend, signing it with lots of X's for love.

**Q17. What were Maddie's and Peggy's feelings when they did not get any reply from Wanda?**

Or

**Did Peggy and Maddie get a reply from Wanda? Who was more anxious for a reply? How do you know?** (Textual)

Days passed and Peggy and Maddie did not receive any reply from Wanda. They thought that Wanda was deeply hurt and angry at them. Maddie was more anxious about it than Peggy as the latter gradually started forgetting about the entire business. However, Maddie would put herself to sleep at night making speeches about Wanda, defending her from the great crowds of girls who tried to tease her about her dresses.

**Q18. What did Wanda write in her letter to Miss Mason?**

In her letter to Miss Mason, Wanda wrote that the girls in Room Thirteen could keep the hundred dress-designs she had

submitted for the contest as she had a hundred new ones. She gifted the green dress to Peggy and the blue one to Maddie. She also wrote that she missed her school and her new teacher wasn't equal to Miss Mason.

**Q19. Why was Miss Mason glad to receive a letter from Wanda?**

Miss Mason was glad to receive a letter from Wanda because now she knew her address and could send her the medal she had won for the dress designing contest. She was also glad because the letter showed that Wanda was happy and had not discontinued her studies after her bullying experience in her previous school.

**Q20. What Christmas gift did Wanda give to Maddie and Peggy? Why?**

Wanda gifted Peggy and Maddie the dress-designs that she had specially created for them. She gave Peggy the green dress and Maddie the blue one. She gave them these gifts as a token of her acceptance of their friendship and to convey that she liked them in spite of her unfortunate bullying by them.

**Q21. How did Peggy and Maddie realize that Wanda used to like them?**

*Or*

**How did the girls know that Wanda liked them even though they had teased her?** *(Textual)*

The girls learnt that Wanda actually liked them in spite of the fact that they teased her because the dress-designs that she had gifted them for Christmas had the heads and faces similar to theirs. The head and face of the blue dress-design gifted to Maddie looked like hers while the green one resembled Peggy's.

**Q22. How was the town decorated at Christmas?**

At Christmas time there was snow on the ground. Christmas bells and a small tree decorated the classroom. All the houses had wreaths and holly in the windows. Hundreds of Christmas

trees were stacked outside the grocery store. Candy peppermint sticks and cornucopias of shiny transparent paper were strung in the grocery windows. The air smelled like Christmas and the light shining everywhere reflected different colours on the snow.

**Q23. What peculiar thing did Maddie notice about Wanda's gift to her? Was Peggy's gift equally peculiar? Why/Why not?**

*Or*

**What was special about the drawings that Wanda gifted to Peggy and Maddie?**

Maddie noticed that Wanda's gifts to her and Peggy were special. They had brilliant colours and the faces and heads of their respective dress-designs resembled their own. The blue one looked like Maddie while the green one looked like Peggy. This showed that Wanda had drawn these especially for both of them.

**Q24. Why did Maddie have tears in her eyes at the end of the story?**

Maddie was overwhelmed to receive such a special Christmas gift from Wanda. She was touched by the large hearted gesture of the Polish girl who had not only forgiven their insensitive behaviour but had also reciprocated their friendship. So, an emotional Maddie had tears in her eyes.

**Q25. Do you think Wanda really thought that the girls were teasing her? Why/Why not?** *(Textual)*

Wanda was an intelligent girl. She knew that the girls were teasing her, still she put up with all their nonsense. She was actually a very mature person and opted to ignore the insensitivity of the girls. That is why she did not hold any grudge against anyone and responded by gifting her designs to the girls.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

**Q1. Is Miss Mason angry with the class or is she unhappy and upset?**

*(Textual)*

Miss Mason has mixed feelings about her class. She is unhappy and upset over the entire issue related to Wanda's teasing, and is also a shade angry with them. However, she is wise enough to hide her feelings and takes the opportunity to make the students realise their folly. She tells the students that she believes no student of Room Thirteen, boy or girl, had knowingly hurt someone's feeling by teasing him or her for a long and unfamiliar name. She also tells the class that, she believes that whatever had been said or done was done in thoughtlessness and now is a thing of the past which will never be repeated. Moreover, she wants all boys and girls to reflect over the whole issue so that they may realize that it is both unfortunate and sad that such a thing had happened.

**Q2. How did Maddie feel after listening to the note from Wanda's father?** Or *(Textual)*

**What effect does Wanda's father's letter have on Maddie?**

After listening to the note from Wanda's father, Maddie had a very sick feeling in her stomach and she could not concentrate on her lessons. Actually, she had never liked Peggy teasing Wanda about the latter's hundred dresses and was now feeling miserable as she had chosen to be a silent spectator to all this ill-treatment of a poor girl. She considered herself to be a coward who failed to speak up against the wrong-doing for fear of losing her friend. She felt that she should have supported and defended Wanda and that she should have put herself in Wanda's shoes and should have protested strongly. She believed that she was as

much a culprit as Peggy, since she did not make any attempt to protect Wanda from the jibe and ridicule she suffered at the hands of Peggy and other girls in the school. Deeply hurt and upset, she decides to make amends and walks to Boggins Heights to apologise to Wanda and request her not to go away.

**Q3. What are Maddie's thoughts as she and Peggy go to Boggins Heights? (Textual)**

Maddie was feeling guilty as she walked towards Boggins Heights along with Peggy. She sincerely wished to find Wanda at her home. She was keen to apologise to her for remaining a silent spectator to the ill-treatment meted out to her by Peggy and the other girls. She further wanted to tell Wanda that the entire school considered her to be a wonderful girl. Besides, she wanted to request her not to move away to the big city. She further decided to inform Wanda that, in future, if anyone tried to bully or insult her, Peggy and she would always stand by her. In fact, the feeling of guilt weighed so heavy on Maddie's mind that she felt that Wanda's ill-treatment had forced her to leave the school. She wanted to compensate Wanda for the damage with her love.

**Q4. What does Maddie think about the night after her visit to Boggins Heights? What important conclusion does she reach at?**

*Or*

**What important decision does Maddie make? Why does she have to think hard to do so? (Textual)**

On the night after her visit to Boggins Heights, Maddie is not able to sleep properly. She thinks hard about the entire sequence of events that compelled Wanda not only to quit school but also shift to a big city. She feels really bad about it. She also thinks about the shabby looking faded blue dress of Wanda and the house she lived in. Her thoughts also hover around the hundred

beautiful dress designs lined up in the classroom. That night she pledges to herself that in future, if she finds some bully picking on anyone because of the latter's looks or funny name, she is going to challenge him/her. She resolves to forego even Peggy's friendship for this sake. She decides not to remain a silent and passive spectator to the injustice meted out to an innocent person.

**Q5. What did Peggy and Maddie write to Wanda? (Textual)**

As Maddie and Peggy had not been able to meet Wanda on the Boggins Heights, they had not got an opportunity to apologise to her. Therefore, on Saturday, Maddie and Peggy spent the afternoon, writing a letter to Wanda. They intended it to be a letter of apology, but, somehow ended up writing a friendly letter. They told Wanda about the contest and that she had won the medal. They admired the wonderful designs created by her and asked her how she felt in her new school. They also expressed their deep love for Wanda and signed the letter with a number of X's for love. They addressed the letter to Wanda's Boggins Heights' residence with a remark on the envelope to forward the same to Wanda's new address. Thus, instead of expressing their regret or apology, they expressed their friendship and love for Wanda in their letter.

**Q6. Why do you think Wanda's family moved to a different city? Do you think life there was going to be different for their family?**

*(Textual)*

Wanda was ill-treated by the girls of the school because of her strange name and her poverty. They made fun of her because she wore the same faded blue dress to school everyday. Wanda's father was offended because his daughter and son were mocked simply because they were different from other American children. He decided that the family should move to a bigger city

because it offered better prospects. Moreover, life in a big city is so busy and self-centred that people do not have time to bother about others. Besides, a big city has many people with unfamiliar names, so the children could heave a sigh of relief as nobody would tease them the way Wanda was teased in that small town. Still, every big city has its own set of challenges. So life in a big city would be different but not necessarily easy.

- Q7. Peggy says, "I never thought she had the sense to know we were making fun of her anyway. I thought she was too dumb. And gee, look how she can draw!" What led Peggy to believe that Wanda was dumb? How did she change her opinion later? (Textual)**

Peggy's observations that Wanda didn't have the sense to know that she was being made fun of and that she was too dumb were based on the fact that Wanda never reacted to Peggy's arrogant taunts. Instead she chose to ignore them by remaining quiet and stolid. It was not because she was unintelligent or dumb, but because Peggy's mocking taunts regarding a hundred dresses made her firmly resolve of completing hundred dress-designs for the contest. So Wanda answered Peggy not in words but through her actions. However, Peggy who had totally misunderstood Wanda, changed her opinion later when she was amazed by the beautiful designs of hundred dresses created by Wanda. She realized that Wanda was a talented artist and much better at drawing than she herself was. It had become obvious to her than Wanda was a sensitive, intelligent girl who understood how other girls mocked at her but chose not to get involved in a state of conflict. Now Peggy regretted having ridiculed Wanda and tried to make amends by going to Boggins Heights to apologise to Wanda. She even wrote a friendly letter to her, expressing her love, friendship and admiration for Wanda.

**Q8. Why do you think Wanda gives Maddie and Peggy the drawings of their dresses? Why are they surprised? (Textual)**

By presenting drawings of dresses to Peggy, her prime tormentor, and Maddie, whom Wanda misunderstands to be Peggy's mute accomplice, the artist in Wanda takes her revenge in a sweet and noble manner. Basically, Wanda is a gentle, good-natured girl who never boasts of her talent. She has painted the faces of Maddie and Peggy in the drawings thus revealing that she likes them even though they have mocked at her. Moreover, she has, most probably, received the letter written by Maddie and Peggy to her and has come to know that they are apologetic and love her. So, she gracefully gifts the drawings of dresses to them and silently acknowledges their friendship. Both Peggy and Maddie are surprised at Wanda's mature response because they had thought her to be a dumb girl who could not understand that she was being bullied. But, now they had realised their folly and were convinced that Wanda was a creative and intelligent girl who liked them in spite of their cold and insensitive attitude.

**Q9. Contrast the atmosphere of the class before and after the arrival of Jan Petronski's letter.**

Jan Petronski was Wanda's father who was very upset because his daughter was bullied at school. The atmosphere of the class, Room Thirteen, before the arrival of Jan's letter was full of activity. The students were circling the room and no one had any idea about what had happened to Wanda. Almost everyone had forgotten her and did not think even once that bullying has compelled a simple girl to quit the school as well as the town. This atmosphere changed drastically after Miss Mason read Jan Petronski's letter to the class. There was a deep silence as Miss Mason spoke in a very low voice to her students. She expressed

her opinion that the unfortunate episode of Wanda's bullying was perhaps not deliberate. It was a thoughtless action and she urged all students to think about it. Maddie, in particular, was gravely affected by the letter and she could not put her mind to work. Other students too were sombre because they had never imagined that their thoughtless action could have caused so much harm to Wanda and her family.

**Q10. "Appearances can be misleading." Support this statement with reference to Wanda's character in the story "The Hundred Dresses."**

Wanda, a plain looking Polish girl who had immigrated to America with her parents, found it difficult to adjust in the new country because her American classmates bullied her for her simple appearance. Wanda used to wear the same faded ill-fitting blue dress everyday to school. She used to live in a very poor locality, Boggs Heights, and her feet were usually caked with mud as the path leading to her house was muddy. Wanda had an unusual name which was difficult to pronounce for her American classmates. She used to remain very quiet and would sit in one corner of the last row in the class amid rowdy boys. Wanda's 'appearance' misled other students, especially Peggy to think of her as a dumb girl. So, they would bully Wanda and when the simple girl would not cry or show any hurt to the bullying, everyone thought that the Polish girl did not even understand that she was being mocked. However, the truth was that Wanda Petronski was a very creative designer, much better than Peggy. She was also very mature and sensible, and forgave Peggy and Maddie for the ill-treatment they meted out to her because they misjudged her as a dumb girl solely on the basis of her appearance.



## 7. Glimpses of India

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### ABOUT THE CHAPTER

#### Introduction

The lesson "Glimpses of India" deals with a lesser known aspect each of Goa, Coorg and Assam. Goa is known for its churches, culture, music, beaches and scenic beauty. But the important role played by the baker in a traditional Goan village, is not really known to outsiders.

Similarly, the author provides information about, Coorg, its valorous people and its scenic beauty.

Assam, is described for the vastness of the lush green tea-gardens found here.

The authors provide three unique glimpses of India by describing the essence of each of these places.

### I. A Baker from Goa

(Lucio Rodrigues)

#### Summary

Lucio Rodrigues, the author, tells us that his elders usually thought fondly of the old Portuguese days when a baker used to play a very important role, and the loaves of bread were a part and parcel of the Portuguese bakeries. The Portuguese are gone, but the bakers are still there and so are their mixers, the moulders and the furnaces. The baker still parades the streets of some Goan villages with the 'thud and jingle' of his traditional bamboo in the morning. The sons of the old bakers still carry on the family business and are known as paders even today.

The author fondly remembers that when he was a child, the baker would visit the streets twice daily, once in the morning when he started his selling mission and again on his return trip after emptying

his basket. The children loved the jingling thud of his bamboo and ran to welcome him. They would run out for the sweet bread-bangles and selected them very carefully from the baker's basket.

The baker presented an interesting sight in the morning carrying his huge basket of loaves. The jingling sound of his bamboo stick brought out the lady of the house and if the children flocked round the baker, they were rebuked and pushed back. However, the stubborn children managed to peep into the basket by climbing on a bench or the parapet.

Marriage gifts had no meaning without sweetbread called *bol*. Thus, the baker was a very important part of a village. The lady of the house was expected to prepare sandwiches at the time of her daughter's engagement. During Christmas and other festive occasions, cakes and *bolinhas* were essential.

The bread-sellers of the good old days always wore a single-piece long frock called the *kabai*. Afterwards, the bakers started wearing shirts and three quarter pants. This dress became synonymous with them to such an extent that anyone who wears a half-pant, that reaches below the knees, is called a *pader*.

The author further states that the baker would receive his payment for the supply of bakery goods at the end of the month. In the good old days, bakery-business were quite profitable and the bakers and their families were prosperous. So any person who is roundish and plumpish is still compared to a baker.

#### THEME

"A Baker from Goa" is based on the theme that a baker is a legacy of the Portuguese and is of vital importance in a traditional Goan village. The account describes the variety of bakery items like bread-bangles, *bol*, *bolinhas*, and the like, prepared on ceremonial occasions by the Goans. The presence of the baker's activities is thus an integral part of all festive occasions in Goa. Whether it is marriage or a

daughter's engagement ceremony, Christmas or other festivals, the baker and his furnace are absolutely essential for the people of Goa.

#### TITLE

"A Baker from Goa" is an appropriate title for this memoir because it deals only with the bakers of Goa. Not only was the baker or the *pader* a part and parcel of the Portuguese life and their bakeries, but even after the liberation of Goa, the *paders* maintain the tradition of selling the bakery items door to door. Moreover, a Goan baker's and his oven's presence is felt on all important festivals in Goa. Thus, we can say that "A Baker from Goa" is an apt title for this piece.

#### MESSAGE

The author Lucio Rodrigues wants to impress upon the reader that every area, state or a region has one peculiarity or another which is not known by most people. In this sense, the *pader*, with his peculiar dress occupies a pride of place in Goan life, and no Goan can think of a life without him. He is there at the door-step in the morning just like the newspaper. The institution of the *pader* has become so wedded to the Goan life that it will always remain immortal. Indirectly, the author suggests to revive and preserve our old traditions that add to the rich diversity of India.

#### PEN PORTRAIT OF A GOAN BAKER

A baker in Goa is a person who marks his arrival with the thud and jingle of his bamboo. He gives a wake-up call in the morning to supply bread and any other bakery item to the residents of the village. A baker can be seen twice a day - once in the morning, with his basket full of bakery goods and again in the afternoon after his basket is empty. The 'jhang, jhang' music of his bamboo-stick is a signal for children and they rush to relish the bread-bangles baked by him. The Goan baker makes his musical entry by stamping his specially made

bamboo staff on the ground with one hand and supporting the basket on his head with the other. He would greet the lady of the house with 'Good morning' and then place his basket on the vertical bamboo. He would bring loaves for the elders and bangles for children.

A baker in Goa is known as *pader*. In the good old days, he used to wear a peculiar dress called *Kabai*, which was a single-piece frock reaching down to the knees. However, later on bakers started wearing shirts and three quarter length trousers.

The Goan bakers were happy and prosperous people. Even today, a baker is a part and parcel of the life of a common Goan.

#### EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.

(I)

Those eaters of loaves might have vanished but the makers are still there.

(a) Who are 'those eaters of loaves'?

The Portuguese who lived in Goa in the olden days are 'those eaters of loaves'.

(b) Why have 'those eaters of loaves' vanished?

The Portuguese have vanished because they had to return to Portugal after the liberation of Goa in 1961.

(c) Who are the 'makers'?

The 'makers' are *paders*, the traditional bakers of Goa since the times of Portuguese.

(d) Why are the 'makers' still there?

The 'makers' or the *paders* are still there because they are an essential part of Goan life even today.

## (II)

The thud and jingle of the traditional baker's bamboo, heralding his arrival in the morning, can still be heard in some places. Maybe the father is not alive but the son still carries on the family profession.

(a) **Who uses the traditional baker's bamboo? How is it used?**

*Paders* or the Goan bakers use the traditional baker's bamboo. They stamp it on the ground to make a thudding and jingling sound that announces their arrival.

(b) **Where is the baker's bamboo used?**

The baker's bamboo is used in traditional Goan villages.

(c) **Which 'family profession' is referred to in this extract?**

The 'family profession' referred to in this extract is that of baking a variety of breads.

(d) **Why is this family profession so important in the area being described here?**

This family profession is important because the bakery items prepared by these bakers are an essential part of Goan culture and customs.

## (III)

The jingling thud of his bamboo woke us up from sleep and we ran to meet and greet him. Why was it so? Was it for the love of the loaf? Not at all.

(a) **Who does 'him' refer to in this extract?**

Here 'him' refers to the *pader* or the traditional Goan baker.

(b) **Who were woken up by the jingling thud of the bamboo?**

The author and the other children in his family during his childhood days were woken up by the jingling thud of the bamboo.

(c) **Did they mind being woken up?**

No, the children did not mind being woken up because they

would get the chance to eat delicious bread-bangles brought by the baker.

**(d) Whom did they run to meet and greet? Why?**

The children would run to meet and greet the *pader*. They would do so not because of the love of the loaf but because the baker's arrival would fill their household with activity. As small children, they enjoyed this excitement.

**(IV)**

I can still recall the typical fragrance of those loaves. Loaves for the elders and the bangles for the children.

**(a) Who is 'I' in this extract?**

In this extract 'I' is the author, Lucio Rodrigues.

**(b) Which loaves is the speaker talking about? How were these loaves prepared?**

Lucio Rodrigues is talking about the loaves baked by the *paders* or the traditional Goan bakers. They would prepare them in the old Portuguese way.

**(c) How were these loaves delivered?**

To deliver the loaves, the bakers would put them in huge baskets that they would carry on their heads. On reaching a household, they would stamp a specially made bamboo staff on the ground to make a musical '*jhang, jhang*' sound and announce their arrival after which the loaves were delivered to the maid of the house.

**(d) Which 'bangles' would the children get and why?**

The children would get bread-bangles because they were a kind of treat for them, especially when they were made of sweet bread.

**(V)**

Even today, anyone who wears a half pant which reaches just below the knees invites the comment that he is dressed like a *pader*!

**(a) Who speaks or writes these words?**

The author Lucio Rodrigues writes these words in the extract "A Baker from Goa" from the chapter "Glimpses of India."

**(b) What or who is a 'pader'?**

A 'pader' is a traditional Goan baker who inherited the profession from his ancestors who had learnt this skill from the Portuguese.

**(c) How would a 'pader' normally dress?**

A 'pader' would normally dress in a 'kabai' which was a single-piece long frock reaching down to the knees.

**(d) Why is any person wearing a half pant called a 'pader'?**

The usual dress worn by 'paders' would reach just below the knees. Half pants too give a similar appearance; so any person wearing a half pant is called a 'pader'.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 30 - 40 words each)

**Q1. How do the elders in Goa remember a baker? Or**

**What are the elders in Goa nostalgic about? (Textual)**

The elders in Goa remember nostalgically the good old Portuguese days and the famous loaves of bread. The baker held an esteemed position in Goa during the Portuguese regime as the Portuguese were very fond of eating bread. Though the Portuguese left for good, but the mixers, the moulders and the furnaces of a baker are still there in Goa.

**Q2. Why did the children consider the baker to be their friend, companion and guide? Or**

'During our childhood in Goa, the baker used to be our friend, companion and guide.' Why does the author say so? Or

**How often did the baker visit the author's house? How did he announce his arrival?**

The children treated the baker to be their friend, companion and guide, because his arrival used to fill the household with activity and excitement. He used to come at least twice a day and announce his arrival by the musical '*jhang, jhang*' sound made by the stamping of his special bamboo staff that would wake up the children from sleep. They would then get the treat of mouth-watering bread-bangles from him.

**Q3. How does the author describe the typical visit of a traditional baker in his area?**

The baker would announce his arrival in the author's area by the musical '*jhang, jhang*' of his bamboo staff. He would support the huge basket of bread on his head with one hand and bang the bamboo on the ground with the other. He would greet the lady of the house with "Good morning!" and place his basket on the vertical bamboo. The loaves of bread would be delivered to the servant of the house amid pushing and shoving of the children trying to chose the bread-bangles from his basket.

**Q4. How did the arrival of the baker excite the kids? Or**

**Why would the children rush to meet the baker as soon as he arrived?**

The baker would arrive even before the kids had woken up. The jingling of his bamboo excited the children because they knew that he had brought the delicious bread-bangles for them. They would rush to peep into the baker's basket and relish their favourite bread without bothering to brush their teeth.

**Q5. "The tiger never brushed their teeth." When and why does the author make this observation?**

The author makes this remark when he eagerly rushes to grab

the sweet bread-bangles from the baker's basket and eat them without having brushed his teeth. He makes this observation because children are carefree and do not understand the need for brushing. Besides, the author does not like the unpleasant task of plucking the mango-leaf to brush his teeth. He considers himself a tiger that does not care to brush his teeth.

**Q6. Is bread an important part of Goan life? How do you know this?**

Or

(Textual)

**In what ceremonies is bread important for a Goan village? Why?**

Bread is surely an important part of Goan life. A sweet bread *bol* is an essential part of every marriage gift. Cakes and *bolinhas* are a must for Christmas as well as other festivals. Sandwiches are necessary at the time of a daughter's engagement.

**Q7. Do you agree when the author says "the presence of the baker's furnace in the village is absolutely essential"?**

The presence of the baker's furnace in the village is absolutely essential since no social or religious activity in a Goan village is considered complete without the inclusion of bakery items. *Bol* is served as a marriage gift; a party or a feast does not have charm without bread; sandwiches are prepared for a daughter's engagement; and cakes and *bolinhas* are essential for Christmas and other festivals.

**Q8. What did the baker wear: (i) during the Portuguese days (ii) when the author was young?**

Or

(Textual)

What was the '*kabai*'? Describe it briefly. Or

**How did the baker's dress evolve over time in Goa?**

During the Portuguese days the baker wore a peculiar dress known as the '*kabai*'. This used to be a single-piece long frock reaching down to the knees. This dress was later modified and during the author's childhood days the bakers wore shirts and

three-quarter pants that were shorter than full-length ones and longer than half pants.

**Q9. Who invites the comment 'dressed like a pader'? Why?**

Anyone who wears a longish half pant reaching below the knees invites the comment 'dressed like a pader'. It is so because the paders also used to wear such long half pants.

**Q10. Where were the monthly accounts of the baker recorded?**

Or

(Textual)

**How were the accounts maintained and settled between the Goan baker and his clients? Why do you think they adopted this way?**

The monthly accounts of the baker were recorded on some wall in pencil. The baker generally collected his bills at the end of a month. The accounts were maintained and settled in this manner because the baker would supply different types and varying quantities of bread throughout the month. The wall would be an easy place to keep this record.

**Q11. What does a 'jackfruit-like' appearance mean? Why is a person with such an appearance compared to a baker? (Textual)**

A 'jackfruit-like' appearance means that a person has a plump physique and a round belly. Any person with such an appearance is compared to a baker because in the good old days baking was a profitable profession and a baker used to be a prosperous, plump man with a happy family and servants.

**Q12. 'Baking was indeed a profitable profession in the old days'. Why does the author form this opinion?**

Or

**Why did the baker and his family always look happy and prosperous?**

The author forms this opinion because the baker, his family and servants used to look happy and prosperous in the old days.

They never starved and the baker's plump physique proved that his profession was a profitable one.

**Q13. Tick the right answer. What is the tone of the author when he says the following?** (Textual)

- (i) The thud and the jingle of the traditional baker's bamboo can still be heard in some places. (*nostalgic, hopeful, sad*) **nostalgic**
- (ii) Maybe the father is not alive but the son still carries on the family profession. (*nostalgic, hopeful, sad*) **hopeful**
- (iii) I still recall the typical fragrance of those loaves. (*nostalgic, hopeful, naughty*) **nostalgic**
- (iv) The tiger never brushed his teeth. Hot tea could wash and clean up everything so nicely, after all. (*naughty, angry, funny*) **naughty**
- (v) Cakes and *bolinhas* are a must for Christmas as well as other festivals. (*sad, hopeful, matter-of-fact*) **matter-of-fact**
- (vi) The baker and his family never starved. They always looked happy and prosperous. (*matter-of-fact, hopeful, sad*) **matter-of-fact**

### LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

**Q1. How important is the baker for a Goan village?**

A baker or a *pader* is very important for a Goan village because every social and religious ceremony over here remains incomplete without bakery items. No marriage gift can be given without including a sweet bread known as *bol*. Christmas as well as other festivals necessarily require cakes and a special bakery item called *bolinhas*. Every mother has to prepare sandwiches at the time of her daughter's engagement. Similarly, a party or a feast loses its charm without bread. Besides, the daily life-cycle of a Goan household begins with the arrival of a baker. His musical

'*jhang, jhang*' awakes children from sleep and they rush to meet and greet him. He is like a friend, companion and guide to them. He visits his clients at least twice a day and the children excitedly choose their bread-bangles from his huge basket. The accounts of stuff bought from him are maintained on some wall of the house which marks his presence all the time. His peculiar dress and plump physique are such strong elements of identity that any person bearing this appearance is called a '*pader*'.

**Q2. Is bread-making still popular in Goa? How do you know?(Textual)**

Bread-making is still very popular in Goa. We know this because the mixers and the moulders are still put to active use. The age-old and time-tested furnaces still work effectively. Those who bake the loaves are also an integral part of life in a traditional Goan village. The thud and jingle of the *pader* or the baker awakes the children from sleep. The '*jhang, jhang*' of the specially made bamboo staff of the baker makes the Goan morning musical. The fragrance of freshly baked loaves makes even the air delightful. The baking profession is being carried forward by the sons of those bakers who learnt this skill in the times of Portuguese. Different types of bread and other bakery items are still delivered from door to door by them. No religious ceremony or social function becomes complete unless the bakery stuff is added to it. A plump appearance and a dress that reaches below the knee is still equated to a baker. All this shows that bread-making is still popular in Goa.

**Q3. What is a baker called? When would the baker come everyday? Why did the children run to meet him? (Textual)**

A baker is called a '*pader*' in Goa. He would come to the author's house at least twice everyday - once when he would set out in the morning on his selling round with his basket full, and again

when he returned after having emptied his huge basket. The author and other children like him were woken up by the jingling thud of the bamboo staff of the baker. He was a great friend, companion and guide of the children. The moment he came, they would all run to meet and greet him. They loved the entire exercise of being pushed away by the household servant while trying to pick out their share of bread-bangles from the huge basket of the baker. Sometimes these bread-bangles would be made from special sweet bread. It was a mouth-watering delicacy for the children and it made them look forward to the baker's arrival every day.

- Q4. Imagine you are Simon Cowell. Your grandson Tim, wants you to share with him your childhood memories of the Portuguese era and their famous bakery items.**

**Write your letter in about 120 words describing:**

- (i) the appearance of the paders – traditional village bakers
- (ii) their significance in Goan life
- (iii) how you enjoyed the famous loaves of bread, especially your favourite bread-bangles

17 Court Hill Road  
Vasco, Goa

12 October, 20xx

Dearest Tim

While I write this letter, I feel nostalgic about the good old days of my childhood. When I was your age, Goa was ruled by the Portuguese. The peculiar habit of the Portuguese was that they loved eating bread, and bakers enjoyed great esteem in society at that time. They were called 'paders' and they used to wear a particular kind of dress – the 'kabei' – a single-piece long frock which reached below their knees. However, this dress changed

later. I have memories of them wearing a shirt and trousers longer than half pants.

I still remember vividly how we used to wake up every morning to the musical sound of the bamboo staff stamped on the ground by the baker. He was like a friend to us, and would bring mouth watering bread-bangles for us.

The '*paders*' are still an essential part of Goan life and their baking mixers, moulders and furnaces can still be found in villages. Every important event and festival remains incomplete without the bakery items. Marriage gifts include a sweet bread known as *bol*, while cakes and *bolinhas* are essential for Christmas and other festivals. The baking profession is still a good business opportunity. I think the Portuguese have left a rich legacy of this art of baking.

Next time when you come to Goa, I would buy you the delicious bakery items made here.

Your loving Grandpa  
Simon Cowell

## II. Coorg

(Lokesh Abrol)

### Summary

Coorg, lying halfway between Mysore and the coastal town of Mangalore, is a small district with heavenly beauty. The author describes this beautiful land situated amongst wavy hills, inhabited by a 'proud race of martial men, beautiful women and wild creatures.'

Coorg or Kodagu, is the smallest district of Karnataka. It has evergreen forests and is known for its spices and coffee. About thirty per cent of the area of Coorg is covered with the evergreen forests. Monsoons bring in a lot of rain here.

The best time to visit Coorg is between September and March when the air is refreshing and the weather is perfect. The place teems with coffee estates and bungalows canopied by huge trees.

The Coorgis are fiercely independent people. It is believed that they are either Greek or Arabic in origin. According to one story, a part of Alexander's soldiers did not return and chose to move to Coorg in the South. They married local girls and settled here. Since the martial temper of Coorgies, and the practices followed by them during marriages and religious rites are quite distinct from those of the Hindus, it shows that their origins are from the land of Alexander. The Arab-origin theory is supported by the traditional dress of the people of Coorg. They wear a long black coat tied with an embroidered waist-belt called *kuppia*, a dress similar to the *kuffia* worn by the Arabs.

Coorgis are a very hospitable and valorous race. The Coorg Regiment of the Indian Army has the maximum decorations. The first Chief of the Indian Army, General Cariappa was a Coorgi. Coorgis are the only people in India who are allowed to carry fire arms without a licence.

River Kaveri flows through Coorg. The district is rich in flora and fauna. River rafting, canoeing and rappelling are popular water

sports here. One can also enjoy rock climbing and mountain hiking. When one reaches the top of Brahmagiri hills, one sees the panoramic view and walking over the rope bridge takes one to the sixty-four-acre island of Nisargadhama. The largest Buddhist Tibetan settlement is in Bylakuppe in Coorg.

#### THEME

The theme of the section on Coorg is the unique richness of this place and its people, the Coorgis who are the pride of India. These 'fiercely independent' people have drawn their origin and valour from either the Greeks or the Arabs. They maintain such traditions that are distinct from the Indian mainstream, yet they are patriotic to the core. Any Indian would feel proud of the Coorg Regiment. The flora and fauna of this small place are a treat to watch. The article explores all these aspects of Coorg to emphasise the theme.

#### TITLE

"Coorg" is an appropriate title for this short article, because the author has managed to condense all relevant information about this place, its culture, climate and people. Lokesh Abrol, the author, talks only about Coorg and its people. Starting with its size, its location and its ravishing natural beauty, he talks about its valorous inhabitants. He gives ample details about their descent and their invaluable contribution to the Indian Army. The reader is also informed about the evergreen rainforests, spices, and coffee plantations of Coorg. In sum, one gets a glimpse of Coorg. So, "Coorg" is a befitting title for this write-up.

#### MESSAGE

Through the write-up "Coorg", Lokesh Abrol gives the message of unity in diversity. He shows that it is possible for any community to be a part of the mainstream and yet maintain its unique identity. Coorgis stick to their traditions of marriage and religious rituals, yet

are a part and parcel of India. Coorg Regiment is one of the most decorated ones in the Indian Army.

### PEN PORTRAIT OF AN AVERAGE COORGI

Coorgis belong to a martial race. It is believed that they have either a Greek or an Arab origin. They like to maintain their distinct traditions of marriage and religious rites that are different from those of Hindu mainstream. The traditional dress worn by Coorgis is a long black coat having an embroidered belt. It is called the *kuppia* and it resembles the Arab *kuffia*. Coorgis are hospitable by nature and are known for their valour. They are the only people in India who are permitted to carry fire arms without a licence. The Coorg Regiment of the Indian Army is one of most awarded unit.

In sum, inspite of their distinct traits, Coorgis are thoroughly patriotic and every inch an Indian.

### EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.

#### (I)

Midway between Mysore and the coastal town of Mangalore sits a piece of heaven that must have drifted from the kingdom of god.

(a) What is described here as a 'piece of heaven'?

Here, the district Coorg in the Indian state of Karnataka is described as a 'piece of heaven'.

(b) Why does the author think the place must have 'drifted from the kingdom of god'?

The author thinks so because the picturesque beauty and tranquility of Coorg is heavenly.

(c) What is the place famous for?

Coorg is famous for a proud race of martial men, beautiful women and diverse flora-fauna.

- (d) **What image do these words create in the mind of readers?**

These words create the image of a paradise-like place on earth.

### (II)

Evergreen rainforests cover thirty per cent of this district. During the monsoons, it pours enough to keep many visitors away. The season of joy commences from September and continues till March.

- (a) **Which district is being described here? Where is it located?**

The district being described here is Coorg which is located in Karnataka.

- (b) **How do monsoons support the vegetation of this area?**

The Coorg district receives heavy downpour in monsoons that helps in the growth of evergreen rainforests.

- (c) **What does the author mean by 'the season of joy'?**

By the season of joy, the author means the season of good weather, tourism and festivities in Coorg.

- (d) **What type of weather is experienced during the 'season of joy'?**

The 'season of joy' experiences perfect weather with some showers thrown in for good measure. The air too is full of fragrance of refreshing coffee.

### (III)

The theory of Arab origin draws support from the long, black coat with an embroidered waist-belt worn by the Kodavus. Known as kuppia, it resembles the kuffia worn by the Arabs and the Kurds.

- (a) **Which theory of 'Arab origin' is being talked about here?**

The theory supporting the claim that Coorgis have Arab origins is being talked about here.

**(b) What evidence is given to support the theory of 'Arab Origin'?**

The theory of 'Arab Origin' is supported with the evidence that the long, black coat with an embroidered belt worn by the Kodavus resembles the 'kuffia' that is worn by the Arabs and the Kurds. Its Coorgi name 'kuppia' is also similar to 'kuffia'.

**(c) Which other theory of origin is popular about the people being talked about here?**

The other popular theory about the origin of the Coorgis is that these fiercely independent people are of Greek descent.

**(d) According to the other theory of origin, why did the people being talked about here settle down in Coorg?**

According to the Greek theory of origin, a part of Alexander's army did not return as it had become impractical to do so. So they moved south along the coast and settled down in Coorg and married amongst the locals.

**(IV)**

Birds, bees and butterflies are there to give you company. Macaques, Malabar squirrels, langurs and slender loris keep a watchful eye from the tree canopy. I do, however, prefer to step aside for wild elephants.

**(a) Who do you think these lines are addressed to?**

These lines are addressed to the prospective visitor to Coorg.

**(b) Which lesson of 'First Flight' have they been taken from?**

These lines have been taken from the text "Coorg" from the chapter "Glimpses of India."

**(c) Who is 'I' in the above extract?**

'I' in the above extract is the author Lokesh Abrol.

**(d) Where can one find the wildlife being described here?**

The wildlife being described here is found in the evergreen forests in the district of Coorg, Karnataka.

### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 30 – 40 words each)

**Q1. Where is Coorg?** (Textual)

Coorg is situated midway between Mysore and the coastal town of Mangalore on the Western Ghats of the Karnataka state. It is about 250 kilometres from Bangalore and about 135 kilometres from Mangalore.

**Q2. How far is Coorg from Bangalore and how can one reach there?** (Textual)

Coorg is about 250 kilometres from Bangalore by road. One can reach there from Bangalore either via Mysore, which is the most frequented route or via Neelamangal, Kunigal, Chanrayanapatna.

**Q3. What do you know about the people of Coorg?** (Textual)

The people of Coorg are fiercely independent. They are a proud race of martial men and beautiful women who love to tell stories of their valour to their children. They are the only people in India who are allowed to carry fire arms without a license. These hospitable people have descended from either the Greeks or the Arabs.

**Q4. Why does the author call Coorg a 'piece of heaven'? Do you agree with the description?**

The author regards Coorg as a 'piece of heaven' that must have moved away from the kingdom of gods and settled on earth. This description is apt since Coorg is snugly placed amid lush evergreen rainforests and has a perfect weather. It has a variety of flora and fauna and vast coffee estates and colonial bungalows. Its hilly topography makes it a land of rolling hills inhabited by beautiful and brave people.

**Q5. When is the weather perfect for people to visit Coorg? Or**

**Why is September to March the peak tourist season in Coorg?**

The best weather conditions to visit Coorg are from September till March. The author calls this period as 'the season of joy'. The weather is perfect during this time and light showers keep the air cool which is already laden with the invigorating fragrance of coffee.

- Q6. What are the main crops and vegetation of Coorg? (Textual)**

The main crops of Coorg are spices and coffee while the vegetation includes evergreen rainforests that cover thirty per cent of this area.

- Q7. What does the author, Lokesh Abrol say about the coffee estates of Coorg? Or**

**Why do you think the coffee estates and colonial bungalows are situated in prime corners?**

The author, Lokesh Abrol, tells the reader that Coorg abounds in large coffee plantations and the air here is full of its invigorating fragrance. These estates are in prime corners of the district and are owned by affluent people who live in colonial bungalows under tree canopies. .

- Q8. What are the two stories about the origin of Coorgis? Or**

**What is the story about the Kodavu people's descent? (Textual)**

One theory says that Coorgis have descended from Greeks. According to it, a part of Alexander's army drifted down south to Coorg when return became impossible. They married locals and settled down. The other theory talks about the Arab origin since the traditional long, black coat with an embroidered waist-belt, *kuppia*, worn by Coorgis resembles the *kuffia* worn by the Arabs and the Kurds.

- Q9. What do you learn about the Coorgi hospitality and valour from Lokesh Abrol's account? Or**

**How have the Coorgis contributed to the Indian Army?**

*Or*

**The people of Coorg are full of valour. Discuss.**

*Or*

**The people of Coorg have a tradition of courage and bravery. How has it been recognised in modern India?**

Lokesh Abrol's account tells us that Coorgi homes have a tradition of hospitality. They take pride in their valour and recount numerous tales of bravery related to their sons and fathers. The Coorg Regiment of the Indian Army is one of the most decorated ones and the first Chief of Indian Army, General Cariappa, was a Coorgi. Even now, Kodavus are the only Indians permitted to carry firearms without a licence.

**Q10. What do the langurs and the squirrels that live near Kaveri river do with the fruit they eat? Why?** *Or*

**Why do the langurs and the squirrels that live near Kaveri river drop partially eaten fruit into the water?**

The langurs and the squirrels living near the river Kaveri drop their partially eaten fruit into the water. They do so out of mischief and enjoy the splash and the ripple effect that is created when these half-eaten fruits are dropped in the river water.

**Q11. What sports does Coorg offer to tourists?** *(Textual)*

*Or*

**Coorg is a tourist's delight. Discuss.**

Coorg offers a number of water sports to tourists. Here, one can enjoy river-rafting, canoeing and rappelling. Rock climbing and mountain hiking are additional attractions. Besides, numerous walking trails in this region also draw in tourists.

**Q12. Name the animals one is likely to see in Coorg.** *Or* *(Textual)*

**Describe the wildlife of Coorg.**

One can see a variety of animals in Coorg. The river Kaveri teems with mahaseer fish and kingfishers dive for their prey. Atop the trees, one can see macaques, Malabar squirrels, slender loris and langurs. Mountain trekkers come across birds, bees, butterflies, and wild elephants.

**Q13. Who, according to the author, would participate in high energy adventures and why?** *Or*

**What kind of adventure activities can a visitor enjoy at Coorg?**

According to the author, the most lethargic and laidback individuals would participate in high-energy adventures when in Coorg. They would do so because they would be inspired by the scenic beauty here and would actively get involved in adventure sports like river rafting, canoeing, rappelling, rock climbing and mountain hiking.

**Q14. Why does the author say that he would prefer to step aside for wild elephants?**

A trained elephant under the charge of a mahout is generally docile while that in the forests is aggressive and unpredictable. The author would like to step aside at the sight of the wild elephants to avoid any unpleasant encounter with the untamed beasts.

**Q15. Why does Lokesh Abrol recommend a climb to the Brahmagiri hills?** *Or*

**How is a climb to Brahmagiri hills rewarding?** *Or*

**What do you learn about a Tibetan settlement near Coorg from Lokesh Abrol's account?**

Lokesh Abrol recommends a climb to the Brahmagiri hills because they provide a panoramic view of the entire misty landscape of Coorg. This is a rewarding experience that takes the visitor to the sixty-four-acre island of Nisargadhama after

walking across the rope bridge. Close to the island is India's largest Tibetan settlement at Bylakuppe, where one can see Buddhist monks in red, ochre and yellow robes.

**Q16.** Here are six sentences with some words in italics. Find phrases from the text that have the same meaning (look in the paragraphs indicated). (Textual)

(i) **During monsoons it rains so heavily, that tourists do not visit Coorg. (para 2)**

During the monsoons, it pours enough to keep many visitors away.

(ii) **Some people say that Alexander's army moved south along the coast and settled there. (para 3)**

As one story goes, a part of Alexander's army moved south along the coast when return became impractical.

(iii) **The Coorg people are always ready to tell stories of their sons' and fathers' valour. (para 4)**

The Coorg people are more than willing to recount numerous tales of valour related to their sons and fathers.

(iv) **Even people who normally lead an easy and slow life get smitten by the high-energy adventure sports of Coorg. (para 6)**

The most laidback individuals become converts to the high-energy adventure sports of Coorg.

(v) **The theory of the Arab origin is supported by the long coat with embroidered waist-belt they wear. (para 3)**

The theory of Arab origin draws support from the long, black coat with an embroidered waist-belt they wear.

(vi) **Macaques, Malabar squirrels observe you carefully from the tree canopy. (para 7)**

Macaques, Malabar squirrels keep a watchful eye from the tree canopy.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

**Q1. What is the story about the descent of Kodavus? (Textual)**

Coorgis or the Kodavus are fiercely independent people. There are two theories about their descent. One theory says that they have descended from the Greeks. It is believed that a part of Alexander's army did not return because at that time it was an impractical choice. So, they moved down south to Coorg, married the locals and settled here making Coorg their permanent home. The present day Coorgis are supposed to be the descendants of these Greeks and have their own marriage and religious rites which are distinct from those of the mainstream Hindus.

The other version claims that Kodavus are descendants of Arabs. This theory is formed on the basis of the dress worn by Kodavus. It is a long, black coat with an embroidered waist-belt. It is called *kuppia* and resembles the *kuffia* worn by the Arabs and the Kurds. The claims of both these theories are accepted since Coorgis are a very special martial race of India.

**Q2. Where is Coorg situated? How does Lokesh Abrol describe the natural beauty and the people of Coorg?**

Coorg is situated halfway between Mysore and the coastal town of Mangalore on the Western Ghats of Southern India. This is the smallest district of Karnataka. The author is so fascinated by its beauty that he calls Coorg a 'piece of heaven that must have drifted from the kingdom of god'. Coorg is known for its spices, coffee plantations and evergreen rainforests. These forests cover almost thirty per cent of the area of Coorg and the coffee plantations are found in the prime corners of the district. Hence, this place teems with greenery.

The people of Coorg are a martial race and are 'fiercely

independent'. However, they are very hospitable and are proud of their valour. They often relate the stories of the brave deeds of their fathers and sons. The Indian Army has a regiment specially named after the Coorgis. It is one of the most decorated army units that gave India her first Chief of Army Staff, General Cariappa. In recognition of their valour, Coorgis remain the only Indians who are permitted to carry fire arms without any licence.

**Q3. How does the river Kaveri contribute to the life in Coorg?**

River Kaveri is fed by the water from the hills and forests of Coorg. It, in turn, contributes in a significant way to the lives of Coorgi people. The river abounds in Mahaseer – a large freshwater fish. The Coorgis relish it a lot. Kingfishers feed themselves by diving in the Kaveri waters for their catch. The river is also a source of enjoyment for the langurs and squirrels that throw half-eaten fruit in its water and enjoy the splash and ripple effect thus created. The elephants in Coorg enjoy being bathed and scrubbed by their mahouts in the waters of Kaveri. Even the most laidback people enjoy adventure sports like river rafting, canoeing, and rappelling in the waters of Kaveri.

Thus, the river Kaveri is a source of sustenance as well as enjoyment for humans and animals alike. It adds life to the throbbing environment of this heaven-like district of Karnataka.

**Q4. How is Coorg or Kodagu a place of great tourist interest?**

*Or*

**"Coorg is a paradise for travellers." Discuss.**

Coorg or Kodagu, the smallest district of Karnataka is a paradise for tourists because it is a land of rolling hills that offers abundant scenic beauty. The sprawling coffee estates and the colonial bungalows that stand tucked under tree canopies in prime corners make Coorg a unique tourist destination. The tourist

season that spans from September till March offers perfect weather. The air breathes of invigorating coffee and some showers keep it cool during these months. The rich flora and fauna supported by the river Kaveri are a major attraction for tourists. The river has abundant Mahaseer – a large freshwater fish. Kingfishers, squirrels, langurs, Macaques and elephants along with a variety of birds, bees and butterflies can also be seen here in their natural habitat of Evergreen rainforests that cover thirty per cent of this district. The river waters provide the opportunity for high-energy adventure sports like river rafting, canoeing, rappelling, rock climbing and mountain biking. Trekking is another attraction for tourists visiting Coorg. The panoramic view from the Brahmagiri hills and a visit to India's largest Tibetan settlement at Bylakuppe are added bonuses for a visitor to Coorg.

Thus, a visit to Coorg is both delightful and rejuvenating as it helps to experience the heart and soul of India.

### III. *Tea from Assam*

(Arup Kumar Datta)

#### *Summary*

Pranjol, a young boy from Assam, and Rajvir are classmates in a school in Delhi. Pranjol's father is a manager of a tea garden in Assam. Rajvir is travelling to Assam along with Pranjol to spend his summer holidays with Pranjol's family.

The train halts at a station. A vendor shouts '*chai-garam, garam-chai*'. The two boys order tea for themselves and enjoy sipping it. Almost all the passengers in the compartment are enjoying hot tea. Rajvir informs Pranjol that eighty crore cups of tea are consumed daily throughout the world.

As the train moves forward, Rajvir is excited to see the magnificent scenic beauty of the vast expanse of tea estates. At the back one can see dense hill forests and in front of the hills there are vast stretches of tea bushes.

Rajvir is thrilled to see the tea gardens. However, it is a routine sight for Pranjol as he was born and brought up in these surroundings. He tells Rajvir that Assam has the largest concentration of the tea plantations in the world. Rajvir also tells Pranjol that he has read a great deal about tea and knows about a few legends regarding the origin of tea. One story is about a Chinese emperor who always used to drink boiled water. Once a few leaves of the twigs burning underneath the water fell into it. The emperor found the flavour delicious and its leaves got the name tea.

Rajvir also tells of an Indian legend about Bodhidharma, a Buddhist ascetic who was troubled by sleep during meditation. So, he cut off his eyelids and ten tea plants grew out of those lids. Drinking the leaves of these plants, when put in hot water, kept a person awake.

Tea was drunk in China for the first time around 2700 B.C. Rajvir further adds that *chai*, *chini* etc. are Chinese words and stand for tea. Tea was introduced to Europeans in the sixteenth century and they drank it more as a medicine than as a beverage.

The train halted at Mariani junction. The boys collected their baggage and got down to the crowded platform. Pranjol's parents were there to receive them. They drove towards Dhekiabari, the tea-garden managed by Pranjol's father. After an hour's drive, they entered the estate.

Tea pluckers, carrying bamboo baskets on their backs were plucking freshly sprouted tea leaves. Rajvir asked Pranjol's father, Mr. Barua, if it were the second-flush or sprouting period which lasts from May to July and gives the best yield. Mr. Barua was impressed by the young

boy's knowledge and he complemented him for it. A happy Rajvir acknowledged this appreciation and expressed hope to learn a lot more about tea.

### THEME

Arup Kumar Gupta, through the travelogue "Tea from Assam" wants to acquaint his reader with a few facts and beliefs regarding tea. He also wants the reader to know about the contribution of Assam to the field of tea and its share in the supply to tea drinkers.

He writes about the vast stretches of tea bushes, the legends surrounding the origin of tea, and other interesting facts regarding its cultivation and consumption.

### TITLE

"Tea from Assam" is an appropriate title for the travelogue. The entire account deals with Assam, its tea and tea plantations. The author gives generous details about the vast stretches of tea-bushes spread across the landscape of Assam. The reader gets ample information about tea, its origin and the legends connected with tea or its journey to Europe from China.

So, the title "Tea from Assam" is appropriate.

### MESSAGE

The writer wants to convey the message that pleasure and scholarship can be combined to make knowledge effective and lasting. Rajvir is on a summer holiday trip to Assam with his friend, Pranjol, and gathers a lot of information about tea and tea plantations of Assam. He does a lot of research before he goes to the tea-estate managed by Pranjol's father, Mr. Barua. It shows that doing one's homework before any new venture is a very valuable activity. Everybody, particularly the young people, should try to emulate Rajvir.

**CHARACTER****Rajvir**

Rajvir, who has stayed all through his life in Delhi, has a novel experience of the vast stretches of lush green tea gardens in Assam.

He has a scholarly bent of mind and loves to gather information about new things and new ventures. The information given by him regarding legends about the origin of tea and sprouting period at tea-plantation are quite revealing.

He is a curious boy who observes a lot and is keenly interested in new things. He is a lover of nature and enjoys every opportunity to admire it. He notices all details during his train journey and makes his experience fruitful.

On the whole, Rajvir is one of those young people who love to learn and are inquisitive.

**EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION**

*Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.*

**(I)**

"Do you know that over eighty crore cups of tea are drunk every day throughout the world?"

**(a) Who speaks these words to whom?**

Rajvir speaks these words to Pranjol.

**(b) Where were the speaker and the listener during this conversation?**

During this conversation, Rajvir and Pranjol were in a train that was heading towards upper Assam.

**(c) What do you think made them talk on the subject of tea?**

The sight of almost everyone in their compartment sipping hot

tea including the boys themselves, made them talk about this subject.

**(d) Where were they going?**

They were going to a tea estate in Upper Assam that was managed by Pranjol's father.

**(II)**

In the distance was an ugly building with smoke billowing out of tall chimneys.

"Hey, a tea garden!" Rajvir cried excitedly.

**(a) What was the ugly building in the distance?**

The ugly building was the tea-factory with chimneys amidst the tea garden.

**(b) Why do you think smoke was coming out of its chimneys?**

Smoke was coming out of the chimneys of the building because tea was being manufactured there.

**(c) Why did Rajvir cry excitedly?**

Rajvir cried excitedly because he had never seen such vast expanse of greenery that was presented by the tea bushes stretching against the backdrop of densely wooded hills.

**(d) Who did not share this excitement? Why?**

Pranjol did not share Rajvir's excitement because he was born and brought up on a plantation. This scenic view was not new to him.

**(III)**

The train clattered into Mariani junction. The boys collected their luggage and pushed their way to the crowded platform.

**(a) Who are the boys mentioned here?**

Rajvir and his friend Pranjol are the boys mentioned here.

**(b) Why did the boys come to Mariani junction?**

Rajvir and Pranjol came to Mariani junction because Pranjol's

parents were waiting there to pick them up.

**(c) Where were the boys coming from?**

Rajvir and Pranjol were coming from their school in Delhi.

**(d) What was their final destination?**

The final destination was the Dhekiabari tea-gardens that were managed by Pranjol's father.

**(IV)**

"You seem to have done your homework before coming," Pranjol's father said in surprise.

**(a) Who had done his/her homework? How?**

Rajvir had done his homework. He had already collected a lot of information about tea cultivation, including its sprouting period.

**(b) Why was Pranjol's father surprised?**

Pranjol's father was surprised because he did not expect a school boy to be so curious about tea.

**(c) What does this conversation tell you about Rajvir?**

This conversation tells us that Rajvir was an inquisitive boy who enjoyed learning new things.

**(d) Where are the speaker and the listener?**

They are at Dhekiabari Tea Estate, that was managed by Pranjol's father.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 30 – 40 words each)

**Q1. With whom was Rajvir going to Assam and why? Or**

**How did Rajvir plan to spend his summer vacation?**

Rajvir, a student of a Delhi school, was going to Assam with his friend and classmate Pranjol whose father worked as a manager in a tea-garden in Upper Assam. He was going with Pranjol to spend his summer vacation there, and to learn new things about tea and tea cultivation.

**Q2. How many people in Rajvir's compartment were drinking tea? Why?**

Almost everybody in Rajvir's compartment was drinking tea because most people enjoy sipping the steaming hot liquid. Besides, the train was passing through Assam which is famous for its quality tea.

**Q3. What fascinated/excited Rajvir the most during the train journey to Assam?**

During the train journey, Rajvir was particularly attracted by the vast expanse of greenery. He had never seen so much greenery before. It was a magnificent view of tea bushes stretched as far as the eye could see against the backdrop of densely wooded hills.

**Q4. Why was Rajvir excited to see a tea-garden but Pranjol was not? Or**

**What excited Rajvir? Why did Pranjol not share his excitement?**

Rajvir was excited to see a tea-garden because he was amazed at the vast expanse of tea bushes stretched against the backdrop of densely wooded hills. He had never seen such a view in his life before. Pranjol, however, did not seem much excited because he was born and brought up on a plantation. The natural beauty of this place was a familiar sight for him.

**Q5. How does the landscape change as the train moves?**

As the train moves, the landscape changes from soft green paddy fields of lower Assam to tea plantations of upper Assam. The tiny tea plants in orderly rows of bushes seemed like dwarfs in the mid of tall sturdy shade-trees against the backdrop of densely wooded hills.

**Q6. Why do you think the author calls the smoke bellowing building as ugly?**

The author calls the smoke bellowing building as ugly because it looked very odd with its chimneys amid the natural greenery all around it. It also looked ugly since its chimneys were emitting smoke which polluted the otherwise clean atmosphere of the plantation.

**Q7. How is tea said to have been discovered in China? Or**

**What is the Chinese legend regarding tea? Or**

**What is the history of tea in China?**

Tea is said to have been discovered by a Chinese Emperor who always boiled water before drinking. Once, a few leaves of the twigs burning under the pot fell into the water giving it a delicious flavour. These were tea leaves. That is how tea was discovered in China.

**Q8. What evidence does the author give to prove that tea travelled to India from China? When was it introduced in Europe and what did Europeans drink it as?**

To prove that tea travelled to India from China, the author tells us that the Indian words like 'chai' and 'chini' are from the Chinese. Thus, tea must have reached India from China.

Tea was introduced in Europe as late as the sixteenth century. The Europeans used tea more as a medicine than as a beverage.

**Q9. What does the Indian legend say about the discovery of tea?**

According to the Indian legend, a Buddhist ascetic, Bodhidharma, had cut off his eyelids because he felt sleepy during meditations. Ten tea plants grew out of those eyelids. The leaves of these plants when put in hot water and drunk banished sleep.

**Q10. Where did Pranjol and Rajvir get down from the train? Where did they go next?**

Pranjol and Rajvir got down at Mariani junction. They picked up their luggage and rushed down to the platform where Pranjol's parents were waiting for them. The four of them then drove for an hour in the car of Mr Barua, Pranjol's father, to reach the Dhekiabari Tea Estate.

**Q11. How does Arup Kumar Dutta describe Dhekiabari Tea Estate?**

*Or*

**How far was Dhekiabari Tea Estate from the Mariani junction? What did Rajvir see there?**

Dhekiabari Tea Estate was about an hour's drive from the Mariani junction. It was off the main road and could be reached only after crossing a cattle-bridge. It had acres of tea bushes on either side of the gravel-road. The bushes were neatly pruned to the same height and groups of tea-pluckers, with bamboo buckets on their backs, were plucking the newly sprouted leaves.

**Q12. Why was Mr Barua surprised with Rajvir? *Or***

**What did Rajvir say that surprised Mr Barua? What does this tell us about Rajvir?**

Mr Barua was surprised with Rajvir because he was only a schoolchild, yet he knew interesting facts about tea cultivation. He told Mr Barua that it was the second-flush or the sprouting period of tea leaves and it lasted from May to July yielding the best tea. This shows that Rajvir was a curious child who enjoyed learning new things.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)*

- Q1. Compare and contrast the attitudes of Rajvir and Pranjol as they journey to Upper Assam in a train.**

Rajvir and Pranjol studied together in a Delhi school. Pranjol was born and brought up in Assam where his father was the manager of a tea estate. Rajvir had accompanied Pranjol during their summer holiday to explore this part of the country. Since Rajvir was visiting Assam for the first time, he was very excited. He looked admiringly at the view of vast greenery visible from his compartment. Pranjol, on the other hand, remained engrossed in his detective novel. The attitudes of the two boys are diametrically opposed to each other because the tea plantations and the view offered by them were a routine affair for Pranjol, whereas Rajvir found this scenic view as a novel and a rare experience. So he enjoyed the natural beauty of soft paddy fields, sea of tea bushes, tiny tea plants amid tall sturdy trees against the backdrop of densely wooded hills.

- Q2. Describe the two legends related to the origin of tea. Or**

**What two legends did Rajvir tell about the discovery of tea?**

There are two legends about the origin of tea. One is a Chinese legend while the other is an Indian legend. According to the Chinese legend, tea was discovered by a Chinese emperor who always boiled water before drinking. Once, a few leaves of the twigs burning under the pot fell into the water giving it a delicious flavour. These were tea leaves that later became a popular beverage in China and the rest of the world.

According to the Indian legend, a Buddhist ascetic, Bodhidharma, had cut off his eyelids because he felt sleepy during meditations. Ten tea plants grew out of these eyelids. The leaves of these plants banished sleep when drunk after putting them in hot water.

Thus, tea is supposed to have been discovered by chance and was found as a deliciously flavoured beverage that helped to put away sleep.

**Q3. Give an account of the history of tea and its journey from China to Europe, and to India.**

Tea was drunk for the first time in China around 2700 B.C. It is supposed to have been discovered by a Chinese emperor who used to boil water before drinking. Once, certain leaves under the pot of water fell into it giving the water a delicious flavour. These leaves were from a tea plant and gradually tea became a popular beverage in China. Tea travelled from China to Europe in the sixteenth century and was initially drunk over there as a medicine rather than a beverage. Tea also came to India from China. The author says that the Indian words like *chai* and *chini* have Chinese origin that shows tea came to us from China. However, an Indian legend claims that we got tea from the eyelids of a Buddhist ascetic, Bodhidharma, who cut off his eyelids as he felt sleepy during meditations. Presently, Assam in India has the largest concentration of plantations in the world. One can see here enough tea gardens to last a lifetime.

**Q4. Why did Rajvir want to visit a tea garden? How did he come prepared to Dhekiabari Tea Estate? What does this tell you about him?**

Rajvir wanted to visit a tea garden because he had never been to a tea plantation before. He was a curious boy who loved to learn new things. So, he took the opportunity by accompanying his friend Pranjol to Upper Assam during summer holidays. Pranjol's father was a manager at a tea estate over here. Before reaching Dhekiabari Tea Estate, Rajvir had learnt about the sprouting period of tea leaves. He also knew about the time when

the best tea was yielded. The excitement and inquisitiveness of Rajvir tells that he is a good pupil who does some self-study before learning anything new. He is happy to collect as much information as possible and takes keen interest in finer details. He observes deeply and listens carefully. To him, knowledge is not a burden but a pleasure that is drawn from practical experiences. He watches the vast sea of tea bushes from the window of his train compartment itself. He thus uses both the faculties of sight and sound to gather information about a subject.

- Q5. Imagine you have spent your summer vacations with your friend, Pranjol's family amongst tea gardens in Assam. Write a diary entry regarding your impressions about the visit.**

Saturday, 17th July 20xx

10.00 p.m.

Dear Diary

What a vacation I have had this summer! It was an exciting journey to Assam, the tea country. I am glad I decided to go with Pranjol to Dhekiabari Tea Estate where his father is a manager. The magnificent view of the tea bushes, stretching as far as the eye could see, and the backdrop of the densely wooded hills was really captivating. The tea-gardens were dotted with tall, sturdy trees which added charm to the vast vista. The tea-bushes were so neatly pruned that the onlooker was forced to admire the skill of the tea-pluckers. The group of tea-pluckers carried bamboo-baskets on their backs and donned plastic aprons. Watching them meticulously plucking newly sprouted tea leaves was a real treat!

I have returned home richer in knowledge about tea, its origin, its cultivation and its popularity.

I must surely visit another fascinating part of India during my next break.

*Rajvir*

**ADDITIONAL LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)*

- Q6. Compare and contrast the natural beauty found in Coorg and Assam as described in two travelogues "Coorg" and "Tea from Assam."**

The natural beauty of both Coorg and Assam is open and vast. Both these places are abundant in greenery and have huge stretches of plantations. The chief crop in each of these places is a beverage popular for its flavour. While Assam gives us the best tea in the world, Coorg offers a deliciously fragrant coffee. The visual delight that one gets after visiting both these places is equally rewarding. However, the difference in the geographic location of Coorg and Assam lend some differences to the types of vegetation found in these places. Coorg has evergreen rainforests while Assam has densely wooded hills. The tall and sturdy trees in the tea plantations find counterparts in the canopies of greenery in coffee plantations of Coorg. Still, they both are delightful places for tourists and offer a lovely glimpse of the soul and heart of India.

- Q7. Goan bread, Coorgi culture and Assam tea - all have foreign origins but have assimilated into Indian culture and traditions. Do you agree? Give reasons in support of your answer.**

There is no denying the fact that Goan bread, Coorgi culture and Assam tea - all have foreign origins but have assimilated into Indian culture and traditions. The Goan bread is the legacy that the Portuguese invaders and erstwhile rulers of Goa have left behind. Coorg got its culture of valour and customs from the Greeks or the Arabs. The Assam tea, too, came to India from China.

Although each of these items travelled to us from other parts of the world but now they are an essential part of our life. A

traditional Goan village cannot imagine life without 'paders' and their Portuguese way of baking special loaves. Coorgis have cultures and customs distinct from the mainstream Hindus but they form one of the most decorated units of Indian Army. Assam has the largest concentration of tea plantations in the world. All these places have their unique identity but are essentially Indian in character.

**Q8. Justify the title of the chapter "Glimpses of India."**

A glimpse is a brief or a partial view of an object, a place, or a person. The chapter "Glimpses of India" offers three passages that give a view of particular aspects of three places – Goa, Coorg and Assam. India is a vast country with twenty-nine states and seven Union Territories. Each of these have rich traditions and cultural heritage. Still there is an underlying bond of unity that keeps such diversity held together as a strong nation. The present chapter discusses only peculiar and unique things about three different Indian places. So, the reader gets a glimpse of India and its vivid characteristics. The three accounts focus on giving a glimpse of the vegetation, the people, the theories of origin and the unique qualities of Goa, Coorg and Assam. The title, therefore stands apt and justified.

## 8. Mijbil the Otter

(Gavin Maxwell)

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### ABOUT THE CHAPTER

#### *Introduction*

"Mijbil the Otter" is an account of the relationship between a pet and his master. A pet otter named Mijbil, filled the void created in his master, Maxwell's life due to the death of his dog, Jonnie. Maxwell relates interesting accounts about how he obtained Mijbil, how the two of them travelled from Iraq to England, the domestication of Mijbil and the general unawareness of people about otters.

#### *Summary*

Maxwell travelled to Southern Iraq early in 1956. He had recently lost his dear dog, Jonnie and he was too sad to keep another dog as a pet. At this time, he thought about experimenting to keep an otter as a pet. Maxwell used to live in Camusfearna which was close to water and appeared to be a suitable place for keeping this sea animal. He mentioned this idea to one of his friends who had accompanied him to Iraq. The friend advised Maxwell to find an otter from the Tigris marshes, a place that had countless otters often tamed by Arabs.

Maxwell and his friend were on their way to Basra to the Consulate-General to collect and answer their mail from Europe. It so happened that his friend's mail had arrived but Maxwell had to wait for his mail for another five days. Meanwhile his friend left and when Maxwell returned with his mail to his room, he found two Arabs waiting for him. They handed him a note from his friend which said "Here is your otter...". The otter was in a sack. On opening it, Maxwell saw the animal which appeared to him like a very small, mediievally-conceived, dragon. It was thoroughly mud-smearred and Maxwell

took a month to remove all the traces of mud from its chocolate coloured coat. Maxwell named the otter, Mijbil.

Mij remained aloof during the first twenty-four hours. He slept on the floor as far as possible from Maxwell. However, he soon became quite friendly and the very next day, hopped into Maxwell's bed and slept in the crook of his knees. Maxwell then made a body-belt for him and led him to the bathroom. The sight of water brought immense joy to Mijbil. He rolled and plunged in the bathtub, creating quite a commotion. By observing Mijbil's behaviour in water, Maxwell learnt that playing with water is a characteristic of otters. They love to splash it around and cannot resist the sight of it. Two days after Mij's first visit to the bathroom, Maxwell was surprised to see that he had not only managed to get into the bathroom but had also turned the tap on with his paws. Soon, Mij learnt to follow his master without a lead and started responding to his name.

Mijbil enjoyed playing with a rubber ball, dribbling it all over the room and throwing it up powerfully to a great distance. At times, he would lie on his back and roll two or more marbles on his belly without letting them fall off his body. Then it was time to leave Basra.

Maxwell was worried about transporting his pet otter to England since the British airline to London did not fly animals. So, he had to book a flight via France and even this flight required the otter to be flown in an 'eighteen by eighteen' inches box to be placed on the floor at the passenger's feet. Maxwell got this box ready and put Mij into it an hour before leaving for the airport to familiarize him with the closed area. Then he left to have a quick meal. However, on his return, he was shocked to see that the otter had badly ripped the inner lining of the box and had injured himself in a bid to wriggle out. It took Max a long time to remove the shredded lining of the box. He then put Mij back into the box and made the driver of his car rush to the airport at a bullet's speed. He was left with barely ten minutes to cover the

distance of five miles to the airport. On reaching there, he found the aircraft waiting to take off. The angry officials rushed Maxwell through. However, Maxwell felt lucky as he had been booked a seat at the extreme front. He covered the floor around his feet with newspapers and shared his worries about Mij with an air hostess. She suggested to try carrying the pet on his knee. Max was overwhelmed at this suggestion but little did he know that an otter out of the box could be difficult to manage.

As soon as Max opened the box, Mij dashed towards the seated passengers and created an awful confusion and panic in the aircraft. It wasn't easy to get him back to his place, but fortunately he soon returned on his own and snuggled up to Max.

Mijbil lived with Maxwell in his flat in London for nearly a month. The pet otter would keep himself busy and entertained with different 'toys' like ping-pong balls, marbles, rubber fruit, and a terrapin shell. He would invent his own games that would keep him occupied for up to half an hour at a time. Maxwell exercised Mijbil on a lead like a dog. The otter developed certain 'compulsive habits' while walking in the streets of London with his master. On his way home after the walk, he would jump on the low wall of the single-storied primary school opposite Maxwell's flat. This would distract the students as well as the teachers because Mij would gallop the full length of thirty yards.

Another thing that Maxwell learnt was that an average Londoner is unfamiliar with otters. He was really amused at the wild guesses people in the streets made about Mijbil's species. Some thought it to be a baby seal while others thought it to be a squirrel. Still others guessed that it was a beaver, a walrus, a bear cub, a leopard or even a hippopotamus. The most surprising was when a labourer digging a hole in the street laid down his tool, stared at the otter and inquired from Maxwell "what is that supposed to be?"

**TITLE**

"Mijbil the Otter" is an apt title for the chapter, as it informs the reader about Mijbil, the otter. The author describes the sequence of events that first led him to keep an otter as a pet and then the strong bond of trust and love that developed between the two of them. He presents insightful information about Mijbil's likes and dislikes, its irresistible desire to play with water, its eventful journey in a plane, and the curiosity it aroused in the onlookers.

Thus the chapter deals with nothing else except the otter and its pranks. So, "Mijbil the Otter" is a befitting title for the write-up.

**THEME**

The account "Mijbil the Otter" is based on the theme that keeping a pet is a serious responsibility, especially if the pet is an unusual animal like an otter. The author, Gavin Maxwell, introduces the reader to the habitat of this quaint animal, its characteristic love for water, its playful nature, and its love for toys. He also informs that otters are intelligent enough to invent games of their own and are very affectionate. In this way, he elaborates the theme of caring about pets by sharing his experiences.

**MESSAGE**

The chapter "Mijbil the Otter" gives its readers the message that animals respond to love and tender care shown to them by human beings. The author wins over the confidence of Mijbil, his pet otter, by looking after him in an affectionate and loving way. He ensures the otter's safety and provides him a suitable environment. The otter responds to the kindness of his master by surrendering himself fully. Gradually, a strong bond of trust and love is built between the animal and his owner that brings immense mutual joy. The playful antics of an unusual and unpleasant looking creature endear him not only to his master but also to the onlookers.

## HUMOUR

The entire account is replete with subtle humour. This humour arises out of the interpretation done by the author, Maxwell, of the situations in which he finds himself because of his pet otter. His 'thralldom' amuses the reader endlessly. The manner, in which the otter is 'presented' to him in a sack, is funny. Adapting to its new environment by Mijbil is not only interesting but also humorous. Its childlike activities in the bathtub as well as the commotion it creates in the aeroplane give rise to abundant laughter. The manner in which he gallops the low boundary wall of the school is really funny. Besides, the wild guesses that the Londoners make about the species of Mijbil is yet another source of humour. People think him to be anything but an otter. Some consider him to be a baby seal while others think that he is a squirrel. Still others guess that he is a beaver, a walrus, a bear cub, a leopard or even a hippopotamus.

## CHARACTER

### *Gavin Maxwell*

Maxwell is a great lover of pets. So much so, that he finds it very difficult to accept the death of his pet dog, Jonnie. But he is an animal lover in the true sense. That is why he opts to keep an unusual animal like an otter as his pet. Maxwell is also a responsible and a caring pet owner. He looks after Mijbil, the otter, with a great sense of dedication. He makes sure that he is comfortable and happy at all times.

Maxwell is highly observant and trains the otter carefully allowing him to enjoy. He lets Mij play in the bathtub and splash water as much as he liked. His skill as a trainer of animals can be noted from the fact that a mute being begins to trust him completely.

Another trait of Maxwell's character is that he has immense patience. When his mail doesn't arrive in time at the Consulate in Iraq, he waits for five days without complaints or cribbing. Again, when people make weird queries about Mij, he does not get irritated but is rather amused.

Maxwell has yet another sterling quality – he does not panic even in difficult situations. So, whether he is dangerously late for the airport, or is running a race against time hurriedly ripping the shredded inner lining of a box, or is chasing Mijbil in the aircraft, he always keeps his cool. At no stage does he get irritated with Mij, despite being embarrassed and put to inconvenience by his naughty little pet.

#### PEN-PORTRAIT OF MIJBIL

Mijbil is a cautious, naughty and playful otter. He doesn't like the idea of being put in a sack when he is brought to Maxwell. He squirms and wriggles inside it till he is released. Although he adapts well to his new surroundings, still he takes some time before building trust for his owner. Initially, he views Maxwell with a sense of suspicion and stays aloof for an entire day. However, he intelligently assesses that his new owner would not harm him, so he climbs on to his bed and sleeps in the crook of his knees.

Mijbil is a sharp learner. He starts responding to Maxwell's tender care and begins to understand his commands within two days. He is very smart and learns to open taps, too. Like other otters, he loves splashing water. He is also a sensitive and active animal. He devises his own game with an old suitcase and balls. When put in a small box for his journey by air, Mijbil panics and injures himself while struggling to break open the box. He loves Maxwell and nuzzles his neck in the aeroplane to express his affection.

Although an animal, Mijbil's temperament is like that of a young child. Like a small boy, he loves playing with toys. He would tug Maxwell to the low wall of the school opposite his flat. He would jump on to it, and gallop its full length of thirty yards distracting the students as well as the teachers. He eventually grows up into an intelligent and a playful creature who could invent his own games, amusing not only himself but also his master.

## EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.

## (I)

I carried it to my bedroom to read, and there, squatting on the floor, were two Arabs; beside them lay a sack that squirmed from time to time.

(a) Who is 'I' here?

Here 'I' is the author, Gavin Maxwell.

(b) What did he/she carry to his room to read?

He carried to his room the mail that he had received from Europe.

(c) Why were the Arabs in his/her room?

The Arabs were in Maxwell's room because his friend had sent them to him with an otter.

(d) What did the sack contain? Why did it squirm from time to time?

The sack contained an otter from the marshes of Tigris. It squirmed from time to time because the otter was restless inside the sack and tried to free itself.

## (II)

With the opening of that sack began a phase of my life that has not yet ended, and may, for all I know, not end before I do.

(a) Who is 'I' in this extract? Where is he/she?

Here 'I' is the author, Gavin Maxwell. He is in his room at the Consulate in Iraq.

(b) What did he/she find inside the sack? What did this thing resemble?

He found a little otter inside the sack. It resembled a very small, medievally-conceived, dragon.

(c) Which 'phase' is the speaker referring to?

Maxwell is referring to the phase when he developed love and

interest in unusual animals like otters.

**(d) Why does the speaker say that this 'phase' may not end?**

Maxwell says that this phase may not end because he is still keenly interested in otters. He does not see any possibility of the decrease in this interest either.

**(III)**

I made a body-belt for him and took him on a lead to the bathroom, where for half an hour he went wild with joy in the water,...

**(a) Who is 'I' in these lines? For whom did he/she make a body-belt?**

Here 'I' is the author, Gavin Maxwell. He made the body-belt for his pet otter, Mijbil.

**(b) Why did the speaker make a body-belt?**

Maxwell made a body-belt because it would have helped him to direct the otter to any place that he wanted to take him to.

**(c) Who went wild with joy in the water? Why?**

Mijbil, the otter, went wild with joy in the water. It was so because otters are sea-animals and have a characteristic love for water.

**(d) What did 'he' do in the water?**

He plunged and rolled in water, shooting up and down the length of the bathtub. He made enough slosh and splash like a hippo.

**(IV)**

I had a box made, and an hour before we started, I put Mij into the box so that he would become accustomed to it, and left for a hurried meal.

**(a) Who is 'I' these lines? Why did he/she get a box made?**

'I' here is Maxwell, the author of the chapter "Mijbil the Otter." He got a box made to keep Mij in it while travelling from Basra to London by air.

- (b) **Who are 'we' in this extract, and where did they have to start for after an hour?**

Here 'we' are the author, Maxwell, and his pet otter, Mijbil. After an hour, they had to start for the airport at Basra.

- (c) **How big was the box? Why did the speaker put Mij in it?**

The box was eighteen inches by eighteen inches. Maxwell put Mij in it because he had been directed by the airlines to do so.

- (d) **Why did the speaker decide to have a hurried meal?**

Maxwell had to reach the airport after an hour, so he decided to take a hurried meal to avoid missing his flight.

(V)

When I returned, there was an appalling spectacle. There was complete silence from the box,....

- (a) **Who is 'I' in these lines? Where had he/she returned from?**

'I' here is Maxwell, the author of the chapter "Mijbil the Otter." He had returned to his room after having taken a hurried meal.

- (b) **Which box does the speaker talk about here?**

Maxwell talks about the small box in which he had put Mijbil before leaving the room to take a hurried meal.

- (c) **Why was there complete silence from the box?**

There was complete silence from the box because Mijbil had injured himself while attempting to come out of it. Perhaps, he was now both tired and scared.

- (d) **Which 'appalling spectacle' is the speaker referring to?**

Maxwell is referring to the 'appalling spectacle' when he saw dried blood that had trickled out of the airholes and chinks of the box in which he had put Mij before leaving his room to have a hurried dinner.

## (VI)

I sat in the back of the car with the box beside me as the driver tore through the streets of Basra like a ricocheting bullet.

(a) **Who is 'I' here? Where is he/she going?**

Here, 'I' is Gavin Maxwell, the author of the chapter "Mijbil the Otter." He is going to the airport at Basra to catch a flight back to London via Paris.

(b) **What does the expression, "like a ricocheting bullet" suggest?**

This expression signifies the extremely fast speed of the car that Maxwell took to reach the airport at Basra.

(c) **Why was 'I' in such a hurry?**

Maxwell was in such a hurry because he was left with just ten minutes to cover the distance of five miles to reach the airport.

(d) **Who or what was there in the box?**

Maxwell's pet otter, Mijbil, was there in the box.

## (VII)

He disappeared at high speed down the aircraft. There were squawks and shrieks, and a woman stood up on her seat screaming out...

(a) **Who is 'he' here? Where is 'he' and with whom, according to this extract?**

Here, 'he' is Mijbil, the pet otter of Gavin Maxwell. He is with his master in the aircraft that was flying them to London via Paris.

(b) **Where does he disappear?**

Mijbil disappears down the aircraft under the seats of other passengers.

(c) **Why does the woman stand up on her seat?**

The woman stands up on the seat because she is scared to see an unusual animal like an otter in the plane.

**(d) What does the woman scream?**

The woman screams "A rat! A rat!".

**(VIII)**

...like the rituals of children who on their way to and from school must place their feet squarely on the centre of each paving block; must touch every seventh upright of the iron railings, or pass to the outside of every second lamp post.

**(a) Who is the author of this extract and what is he describing here?**

The author is Gavin Maxwell. He is describing the compulsive habit of Mijbil, his pet otter, to climb and gallop the boundary wall of the primary school every day after walk.

**(b) Why does the author compare the description to that of children?**

Maxwell compares Mijbil's compulsive habit with that of children because he would tug the author to the wall like a naughty child.

**(c) When and where did all the activities described here take place?**

The activities described here took place every day when Max and Mij would be on their way home after the walk.

**(d) What does the author think of the person or creature doing these activities?**

The author thinks that Mij is childlike, naughty and fun-loving.

**(IX)**

As I drew nearer I saw his expression of surprise and affront, as though he would have me know that he was not one upon whom to play jokes. I came abreast of him; he spat, glared, and then growled out, "Here, Mister – what is that supposed to be?"

**(a) Who are 'I' and who gave him/her an expression of surprise?**

Here, 'I' is Maxwell, the animal lover, and the labourer who was digging a hole in the street gives him an expression of surprise.

**(b) Why was 'he' surprised?**

The labourer was surprised because he had never seen an animal like Mijbil. He did not know what it was.

**(c) "Here, Mister - what is that supposed to be?" What does 'it' refer to here?**

Here 'it' refers to Mijbil, the pet otter of Maxwell.

**(d) Why was the author amused to hear this question?**

Maxwell was amused to hear this question because the labourer didn't acknowledge Mij as a living being. He thought it to be some object or a toy.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 30 - 40 words each)*

**Q1. Why did Maxwell decide to keep an otter rather than a dog as a pet?**

Maxwell decided to keep an otter rather than a dog as a pet because the death of his pet dog Jonnie made him extremely sad. He could not think of keeping a dog again as a pet. But he felt that his life could be lonely without a pet, so he decided to keep an otter as a pet.

**Q2. What unusual pet did the author wish to keep in place of a dog? Why did Camusfearna appear to be an eminently suitable spot for this experiment? Or**

What thought had crossed the author's mind when he travelled to Southern Iraq? Or

What experiment did Maxwell think Camusfearna would be suitable for? *(Textual)*

The author, Maxwell, used to live in Camusfearna which was very close to the sea. So, when he travelled to Southern Iraq a thought

crossed his mind that Camusfearna would be an eminently suitable place for the experiment to keep an otter as a pet. Otters are aquatic mammals and love to spend time in water, so the sea near Camusfearna would be suitable for his new pet.

- Q3. What took Maxwell and his friend to Basra? Why did Maxwell have to stay back in Basra longer than his friend? Or**

**Why were Maxwell and his friends going to Basra?**

Maxwell and his friend went to the Consulate-General in Basra to collect their mail from Europe and to answer it as well. Maxwell had to stay back as his mail didn't arrive in time. He couldn't even contact England over the phone and had to wait for five days to get his mail.

- Q4. What was the author's experience when he tried telephoning England? Or**

**Why didn't Maxwell leave Basra along with his friend?**

Gavin Maxwell's experience wasn't very good when he tried telephoning England from Basra. He had to book the call twenty-four hours in advance. On the first day, the line was out of order. On the second day, the exchange was closed for a religious holiday while on the third day, there was another breakdown. So, he could not leave Basra along with his friend and had to wait for five days to get his mail.

- Q5. Why and how did the author's friend help him in getting an otter?**

Maxwell had casually mentioned to his friend that he planned to keep an otter as a pet in place of a dog and felt that Camusfearna, his hometown, would be suitable for this experiment. His friend knew that the Tigris marshes had abundant otters, so he arranged one for Max with the help of two Arabs.

- Q6. What did Maxwell see when he entered his bedroom to read his mail?**

Maxwell carried his mail to his bedroom to read, and there he saw two Arabs squatting on the floor. A sack lay beside them that squirmed from time to time. They handed him a note from his friend that said: "Here is your otter..."

**Q7. How did the author feel on seeing the otter?**

The author experienced an instant attraction for the otter when he saw him. He felt as if it were some sort of thralldom of otters; a kind of otter fixation that every person, who had ever owned an otter, felt.

**Q8. How does Maxwell describe the otter's appearance as he first saw him? Why could he not see the animal's true colour?**

Or

**Describe Mijbil's appearance as he first emerged from the sack.**

The otter's first appearance seemed to Maxwell like a very small, mediievally-conceived dragon. He was coated with symmetrical pointed scales of mud armour from his head to the tip of his tail. His soft velvet like fur like that of a chocolate-brown mole was hardly visible under the cover of mud.

**Q9. Why was the otter named "Maxwell's Otter"?** (Textual)

Or

**Why is Mij's species now known to the world as Maxwell's otter?**

(Textual)

Most people did not know about the species of otters until Maxwell brought Mijbil to England. In fact, his race was previously unknown to science. Since it was spotted for the first time with Maxwell, zoologists called it *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli*, or Maxwell's otter.

**Q10. How did Mijbil behave initially?** (Textual)

Or

**How did Mijbil behave during the first twenty-four hours?**

Mijbil remained aloof and indifferent in the initial twenty-four hours. He was neither hostile nor friendly and chose to sleep on the floor as far as possible from Maxwell's bed.

**Q11. How did Mijbil behave on the second night with Maxwell?**

On the second night, Mijbil came on to Maxwell's bed in the early hours and remained asleep in the crook of his knees until the servant brought tea in the morning.

**Q12. How did Mij respond on entering the bathroom for the first time?**

*Or*

**How did Mijbil behave when Maxwell took him on a lead to the bathroom for the first time?**

Mij was beside himself with joy on entering the bathroom for the first time. He plunged and rolled in the bathtub and shot up and down its length. In his characteristic style, he splashed and sloshed a lot of water just like a hippo.

**Q13. "This, I was to learn, is a characteristic of otter." What special characteristic of otter does the author learn?**

Maxwell learns that playing with water is a characteristic of otters. They love to spread about every drop of water by either overturning the container or by sitting in it and splashing in until it overflows. They enjoy to keep water moving. They feel that if water is static, it is wasted and provoking.

**Q14. What did Mij do in the bathroom when he visited it all by himself?**

*Or*

**Where did Mijbil escape one day from the author's room in the Consulate? What did the author see him doing?**

*Or*

**Give an example from the text to show that Mijbil is an extremely intelligent animal.**

*Or*

**What sight amazed Maxwell when Mijbil escaped into the bathroom on his own, a couple of days after his arrival?**

One day Mij escaped from the author's room in the Consulate and reached the bathroom. There he managed to reach up on the end of the tub and fumbled at the chromium taps with his paws. The author was amazed to see that the extremely intelligent otter took less than a minute to turn on the taps to produce a slow trickle at first and a full flow a moment later.

**Q15. Why would Mijbil sometimes chitter with irritation in the bathroom?**

Sometimes Mijbil would chitter in the bathroom with irritation and disappointment because he could not open the tap. Actually, he would sometimes screw up the tap still tighter in the wrong direction while trying to turn it on.

**Q16. How did Mij play with a rubber ball?**

Mij would spend hours shuffling the rubber ball round the room like a four-footed soccer player. He used all four feet to dribble it and could also throw it with a powerful flick of the neck to a surprising height and distance.

**Q17. Apart from playing with a ball, what other pastime did Mij have?**

*Or*

**What were Mij's favourite toys for pastime? How did he play with them?**

Apart from playing with a ball, Mij enjoyed juggling with small objects between his paws when lying on his back. However, his favourite toys were the marbles. He would roll two or more marbles up and down his wide, flat belly without ever dropping one to the floor.

**Q18. How was Mij to be transported to England?**

*(Textual)*

*Or*

What arrangements did the author make to take Mijbil along with him to England? Or

Which airline did the author use to transport Mij? What did the airline insist on?

The British airline does not fly animals, so Max booked a flight to Paris on another airline and from there to London. This airline insisted that Mij should be put in a box not more than eighteen inches square and placed at Max's feet during the flight. So, Max got this box made in order to transport Mij to England.

**Q19. Why did Max put Mij into an eighteen inches square box an hour before the flight?**

Max put Mij into an eighteen inches square box an hour before the flight because he wanted to familiarize Mij to the closed space of the small box before boarding the plane. He had to use the box since it was insisted upon by the airlines.

**Q20. What did Mij do to the box, and to himself?**

Or

What did Mij do to the box? Or (Textual)

What happened to Mij when he was put in the box for the first time?

Mij tore the lining of the box to shreds in his attempt to come out of it. In the process, he exhausted himself thoroughly and injured his body so much that blood trickled out of the airholes and chinks of the box.

**Q21. Why did Maxwell put the otter back in the box? How do you think he felt when he did this? (Textual)**

Maxwell put the otter back into the box because there was hardly any time left for him to catch the flight. However, he must have felt really bad while doing so because Mij was injured badly and looked miserable at that time.

**Q22. How did Maxwell get late for his flight?**

Maxwell got late for his flight because he took time to carefully remove all the shreds of the lining of the box torn by Mij while attempting to come out of it. Before putting back Mij in the box, Max ensured that no cutting edges were left and this delayed him.

**Q23. How did Maxwell reach the airport for his flight?**

To reach the airport, Maxwell sat in the back of the car with Mij beside him in the eighteen inches square box. As he was left with only ten minutes to cover the five mile distance to the airport, his driver tore him through the streets of Basra like a ricocheting bullet.

**Q24. Why were the airport officials infuriated with the author? Or Why did Maxwell have to face the infuriated staff at the Basra airport?**

The airport officials were infuriated with Maxwell because he had reached when the aircraft was already waiting to take off. His late arrival had therefore delayed the flight a little.

**Q25. Why does Maxwell say the airhostess was "the very queen of her kind"? (Textual)**

In the flight, Maxwell took the airhostess into his confidence and told her everything that Mij had done during the past half an hour. The beautiful lady cooperated with him and advised him to take Mij out of the box and put him on his knee. This kind-hearted suggestion made Max consider that the airhostess was "the very queen of her kind".

**Q26. What happened when the box was opened at the airhostess' suggestion? Or (Textual)**

What happened when the author opened Mij's box on the flight?

Or

**What commotion did Mijbil create inside the aircraft?**

The moment Max opened Mij's box, the otter jumped out of it in a flash and disappeared at high speed. The passengers in the aircraft got scared and a woman stood up on the seat screaming out "A rat! A rat!". Max tried to catch Mij but missed him and landed with his face in the curry. Meanwhile, Mij slid beneath the legs of a portly white-turbaned Indian. There were squawks and screams all around.

**Q27. How did Mijbil pass his time in London?**

In London, Mijbil lived with Maxwell for nearly a month. During this stay, he would play for hours with a selection of toys, ping-pong balls, marbles, rubber fruit, and a terrapin shell that Maxwell had brought back from Mijbil's native marshes of Tigris.

**Q28. In London which interesting game did Mijbil invent with a ping-pong ball?**

Or

**What game had Mij invented?**

(Textual)

Mij invented a ping-pong ball game. He used a damaged suitcase with a slanting lid for this. He would roll the ball from the high end down the length of the suitcase. Before the ball went down the slope, he would dash around to the other end and stop it, hide from it, crouching to spring up and take it by surprise. Then he would grab it and trot off with it to the high end again.

**Q29. How did Mij distract the students as well as the teachers of the primary school opposite Maxwell's flat?**

Or

**What 'compulsive habits' did Mijbil develop on his walks in the London streets?**

On his way back home after a walk with his master, Mijbil would tug Max to the low boundary wall of the primary school opposite

their flat. He would then jump on to the two feet wall and gallop all along its full length of thirty yards. The students as well as the teachers would be distracted by this funny compulsive habit of Mijbil.

**Q30. What group of animals do otters belong to? (Textual)**

Otters belong to a rather small group of animals popularly known as 'Mustellines'. The badgers, the mongoose, weasels, stoat and minks also come in the same category.

**Q31. What guesses did the Londoners make about Mijbil? (Textual)**

*Or*

**How did the Londoners react to the sight of Mijbil?**

Mijbil was a strange sight for Londoners. They made wild guesses about him. Some of them thought him to be a baby seal while others thought that he was a squirrel. Still others thought that he was a walrus, a beaver, a bear cub, or a leopard. Some even thought him to be a hippopotamus.

**Q32. What similarity do you find in a child and in Mijbil?**

Mijbil was playful like a child who invented his unique games with whatever toys he came across. He was as restless as a child and could not stick to a game for more than half an hour. He also had compulsive habits like children and would gallop the low boundary wall of the primary school every day.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

- Q1. Why does the author go to Basra? How long does he wait there and why?** (Textual)

The author, Gavin Maxwell, goes to Basra to the Consulate-General to collect and answer his mail from Europe. He goes there with his friend who too makes this visit to check whether his mail has arrived or not. Maxwell learns that his mail has not yet arrived while his friend gets his mail in time. So, Max sends a cable to England to which he does not get response even three days later. He then tries to contact telephonically. The call has to be booked twenty-four hours in advance. On the first day, the line is out of order and on the second day the exchange is closed for a religious holiday. On the third day there is another breakdown. Therefore, he is forced to wait at the Consulate for five days after which his mail arrives.

- Q2. How does the author get the otter? Does he like it?** (Textual)

Maxwell was very sad when his pet dog Jonnie died. He felt so miserable that he could not think of keeping a dog again as his pet. He used to live in Camusfearna which was very close to the sea and an idea crossed his mind that he should keep an otter as a pet. He casually mentioned this to his friend who was accompanying him to Basra. This friend knew that the Tigris marshes had abundant otters and he sent one to Max through two Arabs.

The Arabs brought the otter in a sack and placed it on the floor of Max's bedroom in the Consulate. Max took fancy to the animal the moment the sack was opened. He admitted that this started an endless phase in his life where he adored and loved otters. So much so that he developed a thralldom to otters which was something like otter fixation. He spent one full month to clean the

mud from the otter's fur to reveal his real soft, shining, chocolate-coloured coat. He loved him and cared for him as one cares for a child. He thus developed a strong liking for it.

- Q3. What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? What did Mijbil do two days later?** *(Textual)*

Maxwell made a body-belt for Mijbil and took him on a lead to the bathroom. The animal was beside himself with joy when he saw water. He plunged and rolled in the bathtub, and shot up and down its length splashing and sloshing water all over. It appeared as though the water had been spilled by a huge hippo rather than by a small otter. Mijbil was an otter, a species that has characteristic fascination for water. Otters love to scatter and spread every drop of water. They feel tempted to overturn every bowl of water.

Two days later, Mijbil escaped into the bathroom and climbed to the end of the bathtub to reach the chromium taps. He managed to turn them on using his paws to first get a trickle and then a full flow.

- Q4. During Maxwell's stay in London, what game did Mij invent for himself? What light does this invention reflect on him?**

*Or*

**How did Mij pass his time in London with the author? What became his favourite game?**

During Maxwell's stay in London, Mij invented a game with the ping-pong ball. For this, he used one of Max's suitcases that had got damaged. The lid of the suitcase remained at a slope from one end to the other when closed. Mij used to place the ping-pong ball on the high end to let it slide down the length of the suitcase. Before the ball went down the slope, he would dash around to the other end and stop it, hide from it, crouching to spring up and take it by surprise. Then he would grab it and trot off with it to the

high end again. He would keep himself engrossed in this game for up to half an hour at a time.

The invention of such a game shows that Mijbil was a very intelligent creature who loved to have a lot of fun.

- Q5. What are compulsive habits? What, according to Maxwell, are the compulsive habits of: (i) School children (ii) Mijbil, the otter**

*(Textual)*

Compulsive habits are the actions that are performed repetitively and regularly simply because the individual cannot hold himself from not doing them.

These habits are like rituals that are performed effortlessly, frequently and involuntarily. An example is that children place their feet squarely on the centre of each paving block and touch every seventh upright of the railing on their way to and back from school. Similarly, Mijbil also got into the habit of jumping on to a two feet high boundary wall of the primary school opposite Maxwell's flat. He would tug his master towards the wall, climb it and gallop over its full length of thirty yards. He did this every day on their way back home after the walk.

- Q6. What things does Mij do which tell you that he is an intelligent, friendly and fun-loving animal who needs love?** *(Textual)*

There is no doubt that Mij is an intelligent, friendly and a fun-loving animal who is also affectionate. His intelligence is proved from the fact that he does not surrender himself to the author till he finds him trustworthy. He stays aloof and away from him for the first twenty-four hours. The ping-pong ball game that he invents for himself also shows that he is intelligent. His ability to turn on the taps with his paws is another evidence of the brilliance of his mind.

His fun-loving nature is revealed when he splashes water by

plunging and rolling in the bathtub. This aspect of his nature becomes clearer when he ambushes the sliding ping-pong ball and hides from it to take it by surprise.

His warm friendliness is obvious throughout the entire story. The way he bounds on the author's knees in the plane and nuzzles his face and neck show that he is friendly and loving.

**Q7. What are some of the things we come to know about otters from this text?** *(Textual)*

The account tells us that otters are found in abundance mainly in the Tigris marshes of Iraq. These animals have a compulsive weakness for water. They love to splash and play with it. They are cautious while befriending human beings but once they begin to trust, they develop permanent affection and friendship. Otters are fun-loving, childlike creatures and are intelligent enough to invent their own games. They are curious and soon learn new things. They love to spend their time in playing with toys. They have a strong sense of survival and try hard to protect themselves. They are friendly, loving and loyal and are fit to be adopted as pets. In due course of time they start responding to their names. They eat fish and can be trained like dogs.

**Q8. Give an account of Mijbil's stay with Maxwell in Iraq.**

The moment the author saw the otter, he developed a sort of a fixation for it. The mud-laden creature was cleaned by Maxwell with love, care and patience. The otter took some time before befriending Max. During the first twenty-four hours he remained aloof and indifferent. He stayed as far as possible from the author's bed. However, the very next day, he chose to sleep in the crook of Max's knees. Soon, he started taking a keen interest in his surroundings. When the author took him to the bathroom, he was beside itself with joy at the sight of water. He played

splashing and sloshing it. Two days later, he learnt to turn on the tap with his paws. He would chitter with irritation and disappointment whenever he would turn the tap the wrong way and tighten it. All through his stay in Iraq, the otter played with toys like a rubber ball and marbles. He would lie on his back and juggle with small objects between his paws.

**Q9. Give an idea of the eventful journey of Mijbil from Basra to London.**

*Or*

**What did Maxwell do to transport Mijbil to England? How did Mijbil behave during his flight?**

*Or*

**What happened to Mij before the flight to Paris? What commotion did he create in the aircraft?**

After having finished his work in Basra, Maxwell decided to return to London. But he was faced with the difficulty to transport Mijbil with him since the British airways did not fly animals. Maxwell then booked a flight to Paris with another airline and from there to London. This airline however, told Maxwell to put Mij in an eighteen inches square box and place it at his feet during the flight. So Max got the box made and put Mijbil in it an hour before leaving for the airport to familiarize him to the closed box. Mij, however, didn't like this confined place and struggled to get out. In doing so, he ripped the inner lining of the box to shreds and hurt himself badly. Max spent some time removing all sharp shreds and carried Mij in the same box to the airport. In the plane, on the airhostess' suggestion, Max opened the box to carry Mij on his knees. But, the otter rushed out towards other passengers the minute the box was opened. It created a lot of commotion in the plane. A scared woman got on her seat and screamed "A rat! A rat!" and there were shrieks and squawks all over. Max tried to dive at Mij to catch him but missed the otter and landed with his face in the curry. However, the kind airhostess calmed down

Max and told him to get seated while she tried to get back Mij. A while later, the naughty otter returned to Max and bound to his knee making a distressed chitter and nuzzling his face and neck. Thus, the eventful journey from Basra to London via Paris became a memorable one not only for Maxwell but also for his co-passengers.

**Q10. Maxwell in the story speaks for the otter, Mij. He tells us what the otter feels and thinks on different occasions. Here are few things the otter does. In the opinion of the writer what does Mij feel and think.**

*(Textual)*

#### WHAT MIJ DOES

- (a) Plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splash
- (b) Screws the tap in the wrong way
- (c) Nuzzles Maxwell's face and neck in the aeroplane

#### WHAT MIJ FEELS OR THINKS

- (a) When the otter plunges and rolls in the water and makes it slosh and splash, the writer believes that the otter is overjoyed and splashes enough water that a hippo is capable of splashing.
- (b) Whenever the otter screwed the tap the wrong way and screwed it tighter rather than opening it, it chattered with irritation and disappointment thinking that the tap was not co-operating with him.
- (c) The otter nuzzles Maxwell's face and neck in the aeroplane because he had lost him for a while and on finding him again gives a "distressed chitter of recognition and welcome". He feels happy on finding his master again. His gesture indicates that he gets a sense of security when he is close to his master.

□□□

## 9. Madam Rides the Bus

(Vallikkannan)

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### ABOUT THE STORY

#### Introduction

"Madam Rides the Bus" is a sensitive story, narrated in a simple and chaste language, describing the long cherished first bus journey of an eight-year-old village girl. It also talks of her first experience of the dazzle and glittering display of merchandise in the shops in a nearby town. Towards the end, this girl is brought face to face with the mystery of death and she returns home sober and wiser.

#### Summary

##### (I)

This sensitive story gives an account of an eight-year-old village girl's first bus journey to a town near her village. In the absence of any playmates, this girl, Valliammai or Valli, used to stand in the doorway of her house to see what all went on in the street. She experienced many unusual things as she watched the life outside her home.

The most exciting experience for her was the hourly appearance of a bus that shuttled between her village and the nearest town. She developed a desire for riding the bus. This wish became stronger and developed into an overwhelming desire. Whenever the bus passed her house, she looked longingly at the passengers and dreamt of having a bus ride as soon as possible.

For months, she listened to the conversation between her neighbours and other people who frequently undertook the bus journey. She used to put various questions to them about their experiences and thus gathered sufficient and relevant information about how to ride a bus. She learnt about the approximate distance between the town and her village, the time that the journey between the village and town

took, and the amount charged for one way fare. She also came to know, that if she took the one-o'clock bus, and returned without alighting, she could be back home by about two forty-five. So, she made detailed calculations and plans to fulfil her desire to ride a bus.

### (II)

One fine spring day, Valli sneaked out of the house without her mother's knowledge and boarded the bus. The conductor volunteered to help her get into the bus but a confident Valli declined the offer. She showed him the bus fare, that she was carrying, and got into the bus. The conductor was amused by her actions and manner of conversation. He jokingly called her "madam" and asked the other passengers in the bus to make way for her. Everybody was looking at her, so Valli felt shy and hurriedly walked to a vacant seat.

The bus was new and its outside was painted white with green stripes on the sides. Valli looked curiously at everything. The outside view was, however, cut off because of a canvas blind covering the lower part of the window near Valli's seat. So, she stood up to have a good look at the outside world. She observed everything minutely. She was so engrossed that she immediately snubbed the gentleman who advised her to sit down lest she should hurt herself. Although, she was only eight years old, she did not like to be addressed as 'a child' or as 'madam'. She made this quite clear to the conductor and her co-passengers. Valli insisted upon standing on her seat but she sat down after a while for fear of losing it to other passengers who had started getting into the bus.

### (III)

Valli enjoyed the sight of the trees and fields passing by the bus but what interested her the most (and sent her into peals of laughter) was a cow (with her tail high up in the air) running in the middle of the road in front of the bus. At last, the cow moved off the road and soon

the bus reached the town after having crossed the railroad gate. Valli was thrilled to see the "bright looking shops" laden with a lot of merchandise. All this made the little girl very happy. Amidst all this excitement, the bus came to a standstill and all, except Valli, got off. When the conductor asked her why she was not getting down the bus, she told him that she would not alight but go back to her village by the same bus. She took out another thirty paise from her pocket to pay the fare for her return journey.

#### (IV)

There weren't many passengers in the bus during the return journey as well. The conductor asked if her mother would worry about her and look for her when he gave her the return ticket. A defiant Valli responded that no one would be looking for her. Valli enjoyed her return journey too looking at the same sights that had amused her a great deal while riding to the town.

However, she received a real shock when she saw that the cow that had run ahead of the bus during her onward journey was lying dead by the roadside. Sadness overcame her. The sight of the dead cow, that had looked so lovable and beautiful just a little while ago, left her shocked. This sad incident haunted her and dampened her excitement. She no longer wanted to look out of the window and remained stuck to her seat till the bus reached her village at three forty. After a brief chit chat with the conductor, Valli got down the bus.

When she reached home, she found one of her aunts, who was a chatterbox, talking to her mother. The two ladies were talking casually about matters of the outside. Valli's mother was telling that it was not possible for ladies like them to know everything that happened outside. She further added that even if they did come to know about such matters, they couldn't understand them fully. Valli responded to her mother's observation by saying, "Oh, yes". This surprised both her

mother and her aunt. When her mother asked Valli to clarify, she just smiled mysteriously.

#### TITLE

"Madam Rides the Bus" is a befitting title for the story. Valli is just an eight-year-old girl, but she conducts herself like a woman. She turns down the conductor's offer to help her climb the bus and snubs everyone who tries to counsel her. Her woman-like behaviour earns her the title 'Madam' from the conductor. The core action of the story remains the bus ride undertaken by Valli, the Madam. Therefore, the title aptly puts spotlight on 'Madam' Valli and her experience of the bus ride.

#### THEME

The story is based on the theme that children are not as ignorant or as vulnerable as the adults think them to be. They are curious to explore the unknown areas of life around them and are keenly observant about things that catch their interest. Valli's attention is captured by the bus that used to pass through her street each hour. She gradually gathered information about its fare and the time it took to cover the distance from her village to the nearest town. Although a small girl of eight, Valli confidently undertook the bus ride all by herself. She remained in complete control of the situation throughout her new experience and reached back home safely.

Another sub-theme of the story is that life and death are integral to each other. Valli is delighted and amused to see the young cow run for its life right in front of the bus. However, she is sad and horrified to see the same cow's death on the road. The story thus conveys that life brings joy, and death makes us sad.

#### MESSAGE

Amongst all the banter and light-hearted situations, the story gives us

the serious and philosophical message about the mystery of life and death. It tells that life is beautiful, while death is horrifying. The death of the cow makes the girl realize the transience of life and the inevitability of death. However, the story makes it clear that life never comes to a standstill. It goes on and on, endlessly and rhythmically.

### HUMOUR

The entire story "Madam Rides the Bus" is interspersed with humour. The title itself becomes amusing, when one comes to know that the "Madam" who rides the bus, is a child of a girl, just eight years old. Valli's using the English word "Proud! proud!" out of sheer jealousy and without understanding the real meaning of it, is amusing. The use of high-flown expressions like 'overwhelming desire', 'staring wistfully at the face, of passengers', 'kindle longings in the child's heart' also generate humour arising out of pedantic language. The little girl's calculation and planning of a simple bus journey of about two hours, also makes the reader smile.

An eight-year-old child behaving like a grown up lady too makes the situation humorous. The manner in which Valli rejects the help offered by the conductor to get in the bus and the conductor repeatedly addressing her as 'Madam' adds to the humour of the story. Again, the jocular conversation between Valli and the conductor makes one laugh. One also feels amused at the little child's flaunting the sixty paise, that she possesses, for the ticket and her behaving like an all important person.

And finally, Valli's smile towards the close of the story at the ignorance of her mother and her aunt about her exploit, amuses the reader. In short, the entire story makes a light hearted and enjoyable reading.

### CHARACTERS

#### *Valli*

Valliammai, or Valli for short, is an eight-year-old girl and the central

character of the story. She has many qualities that make her an amazing young person. For example, she is a happy child, although she does not have any playmates. She is very observant and keeps watching the scenes in the street outside her house. The same sense of observation is perceptible when she views the interior of the bus, the scene outside the window, the sight of the cow in panic, the scene of the town market, and the cow lying dead by the side of the road.

Valli is essentially a dreamer who makes efforts to realize her dreams. She dreams of going on a bus journey to the nearest town and plans it intelligently. She saves money for it and executes her plan neatly without her mother getting even a hint of it.

Valli has a very confident and a nonchalant demeanour. Her speech exudes confidence that looks odd but fascinating for a girl of her age. She considers herself grown up, and speaks with the conductor and fellow passengers with panache. However, she easily gets annoyed and irritated if others poke their noses in her business and ask her too many questions. In particular, she chooses to give the old woman passenger a piece of her mind when the latter keeps probing her. At times, she appears to be rude, haughty and commanding, but at heart she is very sensitive and fun-loving.

She is easily affected by what goes on around her. If the sight of the cow running in panic with its tail up in the air can fill her with joy, she becomes very serious and sad on seeing the same cow dead by the roadside.

Valli plans cleverly and saves meticulously. She resists all sorts of temptations in order to save enough money for her bus ride. Her plan of the journey is flawless and her ability to take care of herself is exceptional. She has the courage to say 'no' whenever necessary. For example, she turns down the conductor's offer of a cold drink.

Overall, Valli is a delightful girl who is intelligent, mature and

capable of looking after herself. She is cheerful and curious by nature and has her way with the people as well as her plans.

### *The Conductor*

The unnamed bus conductor in the story is a man of cheerful disposition. Not many conductors are as helpful as he is. He is surprised to find an eight year Valli wanting to travel all by herself. He greets her cheerfully and helps her board the bus. He is truly impressed with her self-confidence and assertiveness. That is why he calls her a 'Madam'. On the way to the town, he tries his best to keep her in good humour and does not mind when she gets irritated and annoyed on account of the fun he has at her expense.

Once the bus reaches the town, he is surprised to find out that the girl does not want to get down to go around the town market and that she intends to return home by the same bus. Thinking that she must be tired and thirsty, he even offers to buy her a cold-drink, which she declines. On the way back, he readily answers all her questions about the dead cow. This shows that he loves children and is patient with them.

In short, the conductor is a good-natured, cheerful man who enjoys his work and who knows how to take care of his passengers, especially child-passengers. He is very nice to Valli and takes good care of her. He even invites her to come again for another bus ride.

**EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION**

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.

**(I)**

Her favourite pastime was standing in the front doorway of her house, watching what was happening in the street outside.

- (a) **Who is 'her' in this extract?**

Here 'her' is Valliammai or Valli, an eight-year-old girl.

- (b) **What was her favourite pastime?**

Valli's favourite pastime was standing in the doorway of her house and watching what was going on in the street outside.

- (c) **Why did she stand in the doorway to watch the activities outside?**

She stood in the doorway of her house because she did not have anything else to do. She had no companions or playmates either.

- (d) **What did she usually get to watch?**

She usually got to watch the bus that travelled between her village and the nearest town.

**(II)**

There were no playmates of her own age on her street, and this was about all she had to do.

- (a) **Who is referred to as 'she'?**

Valliammai or Valli is referred to as 'she'.

- (b) **How old is she?**

Valli is eight years old.

- (c) **What was 'all' that she had to do?**

She had only to stand in the front doorway of her house, watching what was happening in the street outside.

- (d) **Did she enjoy doing it?**

Valli was very curious about things and watching the street was as enjoyable as any of the elaborate games played by other children. Besides, it gave her many new unusual experiences.

### (III)

This wish became stronger and stronger, until it was an overwhelming desire. Valli would stare wistfully at the people who got on or off the bus when it stopped at the street corner. Their faces would kindle in her longings, dreams, and hopes.

**(a) Which 'wish' is being talked about? Whose wish is it?**

The wish is of Valli. She had a strong desire to ride the bus that shuttled between her village and the town nearby.

**(b) How did the wish continue to grow?**

Valli's wish continued to grow as she listened to her neighbours, other people and her friends talk about their experiences of the bus journey. The very sight of the bus coming and going also made her desire to ride the bus, grow stronger and stronger.

**(c) What did Valli do on seeing the bus stop at the street corner?**

Whenever the bus stopped at the street corner, Valli would stare wistfully at the faces of the people boarding or getting down from the bus.

**(d) What would watching the faces of the passengers do to 'her'?**

Watching the faces of the passengers boarding or alighting from the bus would kindle in Valli the longing to ride the bus one day.

### (IV)

"Never mind," she said, "I can get on by myself. You don't have to help me."

**(a) Who is the speaker of this line? Whom does he/she speak to?**

Valli speaks this line to the conductor of the bus that travelled between her village and the nearest town.

**(b) Why do you think, the speaker was a bit curt and told, "You don't have to help me."?**

Valli was curt because she believed that she could manage on her own. Being fiercely independent, she disliked the idea of taking help or being instructed just because she was a child. She thought she was grown up enough to take care of herself.

- (c) **What light does the speaker's statement throw on his/her personality?**

Valli's statement shows that she has exceptional self-confidence. This sense of confidence has a tendency to make her sound rude and curt at times but on the whole she is a delightful child.

- (d) **What help had the listener offered to the speaker?**

The listener, the conductor of the bus, had offered to help Valli, board the bus.

(V)

Suddenly she was startled by a voice. "Listen, child," said the voice, "you shouldn't stand like that. Sit down."

- (a) **Who is 'she' referred to in this excerpt?**

'She' is Valli, an eight-year-old village girl who goes on a bus ride all alone.

- (b) **Why was she startled?**

She was busy viewing the outside scene from her bus window when a stranger's voice startled her.

- (c) **Who told the child to sit down?**

An elderly man, a fellow passenger, told Valli to sit down.

- (d) **Why did the speaker ask the child to sit down?**

The elderly man was concerned about Valli's safety and asked her to sit down lest she should get hurt in the event of the bus braking suddenly.

(VI)

"There's nobody here who's a child," she said haughtily. "I've paid my thirty paise like everyone else."

- (a) **Who speaks these words? Why does he/she speak haughtily?**

Valli, an eight-year-old girl, speaks these words. She speaks haughtily because she dislikes being treated like a helpless child.

- (b) **Whom is the speaker talking to?**

The speaker is talking to an elderly man who was her co-passenger in the bus.

- (c) **Why had the speaker paid 'thirty paise'?**

Valli had paid thirty paise as fare for the bus ride.

- (d) **Where was the speaker headed to? Why?**

Valli was headed to the town nearest to her village because she wanted to experience a bus ride.

#### (VII)

Valli found the woman absolutely repulsive – such big holes she had in her ear lobes, and such ugly earrings in them! And she could smell the betel nut the woman was chewing and see the betel juice that was threatening to spill over her lips at any moment. Ugh! – who could be sociable with such a person?

- (a) **Which woman is Valli talking about?**

Valli is talking about an elderly woman co-passenger who asked her, "Are you alone, dear?"

- (b) **Why did Valli find the woman repulsive?**

Valli found her repulsive because she did not have a good looking appearance. Her ears lobes had really big holes with ugly earrings. She smelt of the betel nut that she was chewing and the betel juice was threatening to spill over her lips at any moment.

- (c) **Was Valli justified in considering her to be 'repulsive'?**

No, I don't think Valli was justified in considering the woman to be repulsive. One must not accept or reject a person on the basis of his/her looks.

**(d) Explain the last line of the excerpt.**

The last line suggests that Valli did not find the woman worth talking to and interacting with. Clearly, Valli was put off by the woman's unpleasant appearance.

**(VIII)**

"Yes, I'm travelling alone," she answered curtly. "And I've got a ticket too."

"Yes, she's on her way to town," said the conductor. "With a thirty-paise ticket."

**(a) Who is 'she' in this extract? What has she got the ticket for?**

'She' in this extract is Valli. She had got the ticket for her bus-ride from her village to the nearest town that was six miles away.

**(b) Who does 'she' speak to in this extract?**

Valli speaks to the old woman who was her co-passenger in the bus and had come and sat beside her.

**(c) Why does the conductor make this remark?**

The conductor says so to humour the confident attitude of the eight-year-old Valli.

**(d) What does 'she' tell the conductor to do when 'she' hears his remark?**

Valli tells the conductor to mind his own business and then laughs along with him.

**(IX)**

"Isn't that the same cow that ran in front of the bus on our trip to town?" she asked the conductor.

**(a) Who speaks these words and to whom?**

Valli, an eight-year-old girl, speaks these words to the conductor of the bus that she was riding in.

**(b) Which 'cow' is the speaker referring to?**

Valli is referring to the cow that she had seen on her onward journey to the town. The cow was running in front of her bus in the middle of the road with its tail high up in the air.

- (c) **Which trip is referred to as 'our trip' by the speaker?**

The trip from her village to the nearest town in the bus that passed her street everyday is referred to by Valli. She calls it 'our trip' because the conductor was with her in that bus.

- (d) **What could be the possible state of the speaker's mind when she says those words?**

Valli is quite upset and sad to see the dead cow since she had seen it alive and sprightly just a little while ago.

(X)

"Oh," said Valli, "I was just agreeing with what you said about things happening without our knowledge."

- (a) **Whom was Valli agreeing with?**

Valli was agreeing with her mother.

- (b) **What had the person said?**

Valli's mother had said that there are so many things in our midst and in the world outside that can neither be known about nor be completely understood.

- (c) **Why did Valli agree with the person?**

Valli agreed with her mother because she had had a recent experience of taking a bus ride without her mother's knowledge.

- (d) **What do you know about Valli's understanding of 'things happening without our knowledge'?**

Valli understood that things happen without our knowledge as she had enjoyed a hearty laugh to see a cow running with its tail held high and had been very sad to see the same cow lying dead some time later.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 30 – 40 words each)

- Q1. What was Valli's favourite pastime?** (Textual)

Valli's favourite pastime was to stand in front of the doorway of the house and watch the activities outside on the street. This gave her immense joy and many unusual experiences.

- Q2. Why do you think standing in front of her doorway and watching what was happening on the street became Valli's favourite pastime?** Or

**Why did Valli watch the happenings in the street?**

Valli had no playmates of her own age in the neighbourhood. So, watching the activities of the street became her favourite pastime and it gave her many rich and unusual experiences.

- Q3. What was the source of unending joy for Valli? What was her strongest desire?** Or (Textual)

**What was the most fascinating thing for Valli to watch?**

Or

**One thing in particular caught Valli's fancy as she looked out of her doorway every day. What was it? And why?**

Every time the bus loaded with passengers passed by her house, it made Valli experience an unending joy. Her strongest desire was to have a ride in the bus that travelled between the village and the nearest town.

- Q4. Give two reasons that prompted Valli to plan her bus ride.**

Valli was a curious child. She would observe things minutely and gather information from different sources. The two reasons that prompted her to plan her bus ride were her eagerness to experience the journey and her strong self-believe to undertake the journey alone.

- Q5. What did Valli say whenever a friend tried to give details of the bus journey? Did she understand the expression?**

*Or*

**Why was Valli jealous of her friends?**

Whenever a friend of Valli, who had the experience of the bus journey, tried to give details of it, she felt jealous and would boo her by saying "Proud! proud!". She had absolutely no idea about this expression, but often used it to show her disapproval.

- Q6. What did Valli find out about the bus journey? How did she find out these details?** *Or* *(Textual)*

**What small details about the bus ride did Valli pick up over many days and months?**

Valli found out small details about the bus journey from conversations between her neighbours and the passengers who regularly used the bus. She came to know that the distance between the village and town was six kilometers, and that the one-way bus fare was thirty paise. She also learnt about its daily schedule and the time that each trip took.

- Q7. What do you think Valli was planning to do?** *(Textual)*

Valli had a strong desire to undertake the bus journey from her village to the nearest town. She used to think a great deal about it and would make elaborate calculations, recalculations, plans and preplans about how she could fulfil this overwhelming desire.

- Q8. Why did Valli have to make so many calculations before riding the bus?**

Valli required a sum of sixty paise for her bus ride to the town and back to the village. The sum as such was very meagre but for Valli, who hardly ever got to see so much money, it was a fortune. Hence, she had to make such calculations.

- Q9. Why does the conductor call Valli 'madam'?** *(Textual)*

Or

**Why does the conductor refer to Valli as 'madam'? (Textual)**

The conductor calls Valli 'madam' because of her haughty and over confident manner. Though she is just eight, she talks like a grown-up person and does not show any hesitation while talking to him or to the other co-passengers.

**Q10. How did Valli conduct herself before and after entering the bus for a ride?**

Or

**Why did Valli avoid everyone's eyes and walk quickly to take her seat?**

Valli conducted herself with dignity and confidence before entering the bus for a ride. She raised her tiny hand commandingly to stop the bus and got in without taking anyone's help. Instead the bus, Valli was overcome with shyness when she noticed that everyone was looking at her. So, she avoided everyone's glance and walked quickly to an empty seat and sat down.

**Q11. Describe the bus Valli got on.**

The bus Valli got on was a new one. It was painted a gleaming white on the outside with some green stripes along the sides. Inside, the overhead bars shone like silver and directly in front of Valli, above the windshield, there was a beautiful clock. The seats of the bus were soft and luxurious.

**Q12. Why does Valli stand up on the seat? What does she see now?**

Or

(Textual)

**Why does Valli initially stand during her bus ride? What does she see as the bus goes along the bank of a canal?**

Valli is rather short and she finds her outside view cut off owing to the canvas blind that covered the lower part of her window. So, she stands up on her seat to be able to look over the blind and

see the view outside. On one side, she sees the canal and palm trees, grassland, distant mountains and the blue sky beyond it. On the other side, she sees a deep ditch and acres and acres of green fields.

**Q13. What does Valli tell the elderly man when he calls her a child?**

Or

(Textual)

**What did the elderly man on the bus tell Valli? How did Valli respond to him?**

When the elderly gentleman calls Valli a child and asks her to sit down, the little girl is extremely annoyed and irritated. To show her displeasure she tells him that she is not a child as she is already eight years of age. Besides, she has paid her thirty paise to buy the ticket like every other passenger.

**Q14. Why didn't Valli want to make friends with the elderly woman?**

Or

(Textual)

**What did Valli think about the old woman who sat beside her on the bus?**

Or

**Describe the elderly woman who boarded the bus. Why did Valli behave curtly with her?**

The elderly woman was ugly and dirty. She smelt of betel nut that she was chewing and the betel juice was threatening to spill out of her mouth. Valli found her big ear lobes with gaping holes and ugly earrings very repulsive. So, she did not want to socialise and make friends with her.

**Q15. How did the elderly woman irritate Valli with her endless drive? How did Valli retort?**

Valli was a fiercely independent girl and was therefore irritated when the elderly woman asked her if she were all alone. Valli answered back curtly that she was travelling alone and had got a ticket, too. She told the woman not to bother her as she could take care of herself.

- Q16. How did Valli save up money for her first journey? Was it easy for her? Or (Textual)**

**How did Valli save money for the bus journey?**

Valli made careful, painstaking and elaborate plans to save up money for her first journey. It was not easy for her and she had to thrifty save every stray coin that came her way and resisted every temptation to buy peppermints, toys, balloons and riding the merry-go-round.

- Q17. How did Valli plan to sneak out of the house for her bus 'excursion' without the knowledge of her mother?**

Valli's mother used to sleep after lunch for a few hours – from one to four or so. Valli planned to sneak out of the house for her bus 'excursion' during this time. This would have kept her mission a secret from her mother.

- Q18. How did the bus move as it made the journey towards the town?**

The bus rolled on cutting across a bare landscape rushing through a tiny hamlet on an old wayside shop. Sometimes, the bus seemed to gobble up another vehicle coming towards it or a pedestrian crossing the road. Still it passed on smoothly and safely leaving behind all obstacles.

- Q19. What did Valli see on her way that made her laugh? (Textual)**

The sight of a young cow running very fast in the middle of the road in front of the bus with her tail high up in the air made Valli laugh and clap her hands with glee.

- Q20. How did the train seem to Valli from the bus?**

Valli saw the train from her bus when they reached the railway crossing gate. The train seemed like a tiny speck in the distance and it grew bigger and bigger as it drew nearer. When it crossed the gate, its tremendous roar shook the bus that Valli was riding.

**Q21. Describe the shopping street that Valli saw as the bus entered the thoroughfare.**

The thoroughfare was a wide one with big and bright-looking shops. These shops had glittering displays of clothes and other merchandise. Big crowds of people thronged this place.

**Q22. Why didn't Valli get off the bus at the bus stop? (Textual)**

Valli did not get off the bus at the bus stop firstly because she was to go back by the same bus, and secondly because she was too afraid to go out all by herself in the shopping street.

**Q23. Why didn't Valli want to go to the stall and have a drink? What does this tell you about her? (Textual)**

Valli did not want to get down and go to a stall to have a drink because she was a bit too afraid. Also because she had just enough money to buy the ticket for her return journey. This shows that she was a cautious girl and avoided undue risks.

**Q24. Why did Valli decline the conductor's offer to get her a cold drink?**

Valli declined the cold drink because she was a self-respecting girl who knew how to say a firm 'NO' and resist temptations. Even though the conductor volunteered to offer a drink free of charge, she declined to accept any obligation.

**Q25. Why do you think the conductor asks the girl, "Won't your mother be looking for you?"**

Valli is just eight years old and in fact a bit too young to venture alone on a bus journey. This journey keeps her absent from her house for about two hours. So, the conductor asks her this question.

**Q26. How do you know that Valli enjoyed/did not enjoy her ride?**

(Textual)

**Q2. How did Valli plan her bus ride? What did she find out about the bus, and how did she save up the fare? Or (Textual)**

**What elaborate calculations and preparations did Valli make for undertaking her first bus journey?**

Valli planned and replanned her journey to the town and made discreet queries about it gathering all possible information. She also listened to the conversation between regular commuters and her neighbours. She learnt that the town was six miles away from her village and the bus took about two hours while going to town and coming back, and that the two way fare was sixty paise. She took days and months to save this money. She saved thriftily every single coin that she came upon without succumbing to the temptation of buying toys, balloons and peppermints. Having done that she decided to board the one-o'clock afternoon bus and return home on the same bus by about two forty-five. She planned so well that no one could get to know about her adventure and her mother too would be enjoying a nap during that time.

**Q3. How did Valli conduct herself during her bus journey? Or Valli's conduct in the bus amused the conductor as well as her fellow passengers. How?**

One fine spring afternoon, after having secured the bus-fare, Valli walked up to the point where the bus turned into the main highway. As the bus approached her, she shouted commandingly for the bus to stop. A bit too excited at the prospect of fulfilling a long cherished desire, she was beside herself with joy. As she was about to step into the bus, the conductor of the bus offered to assist her. However, Valli, who considered eight years to be an age where an individual could look after oneself, declined his offer. Very conscious of the fact that she had paid for her ticket,

she didn't want to be bossed around by anyone. She snubbed the elderly man who advised her not to stand on her seat. She formed a negative opinion about the elderly woman who sat near her. Her conduct and way of speaking amused others in the bus and the conductor jokingly addressed her as 'Madam'. On reaching the town, she chose to remain seated in the bus and refused to listen to the conductor's advice to get off and go over to the stalls or take a cold drink. Hence, Valli conducted herself very confidently and independently without allowing anyone to dictate to her.

**Q4. Why do you think the author says that Valli made careful, painstaking and elaborate plans for the journey? Or**

**Give instances from the text to show that Valli was a meticulous planner?**

Valli was faced with a multitude of problems to undertake the journey. The most important one was to arrange the 'huge' sum of sixty paise as fare for her two-way journey. She had to make many sacrifices for this and resist temptations like buying toys, balloons and peppermints. During the village fair she did not ride even the merry-go-round and saved that money. In order to make her bus ride a successful venture, Valli also collected many details regarding the journey like inquiring about the bus fare, the time taken by the bus to go to the town and its return to the village. She had to plan the excursion without her mother's knowledge, so the timing of the bus ride was also very important. Valli had to adjust it in such a way that it would coincide with the timing of her mother's afternoon nap between one to four or so. So, she had to make many painstaking, careful and elaborate plans.

**Q5. Give an account of Valli's experience with the woman who sits beside her in the bus. Why does Valli not like to socialise with her?**

Or

**"Valli found the woman absolutely repulsive." Who did Valli find absolutely repulsive and why? How did she behave with her?**

During her onward journey, when the bus stopped at a place, an 'absolutely repulsive' woman boarded the bus and sat beside Valli. The child did not like this woman at all as she was ugly and dirty. Her ear lobes with big holes had equally ugly earrings in them. She smelt of betel nuts and the betel juice was about to spill over her lips. Valli found her to be very disgusting. The elderly woman asked her questions that Valli did not want to answer. The old woman continued with her drivel and pestered Valli with many questions, but Valli disliked her so much that she snubbed her very bluntly. Valli made it very obvious that she was not interested in talking to her and turned her face towards the window.

**Q6. What made Valli's journey to the town thrilling? Why?**

Or

**How did Valli enjoy her first bus ride?**

Or

**What did Valli see through the bus window during her bus ride that amused her?**

Valli's journey to the town was very thrilling. She saw a lot of interesting images through the windows of bus. She enjoyed it so much that she stood up on her seat to have a clearer view of the canal, the palm trees, the mountains and the green fields. She saw the traffic on the narrow road and it seemed to her as if her bus was gobbling up another vehicle or pedestrian coming towards them. However, everything passed smoothly and all obstacles were left behind safely. Trees seemed to be running towards them but stopped as the bus reached them. They simply stood for a moment and then seemed to rush away in the other direction.

But what really tickled her and gave her maximum joy was the cow incident. A cow suddenly appeared and started running in front of the bus when the bus rolled ahead across the bare landscape through a tiny hamlet past a wayside shop. It ran as fast as it could in the middle of the road with her tail up in the air. Her tail went up out of sheer fright but this amused Valli so much that she laughed and laughed till she had tears in her eyes. The more the driver honked his horn, the faster the cow ran. The animal was utterly confused and for a while did not know what to do. All this gave Valli a lot of joy and she clapped her hands with glee.

**Q7. Give an account of Valli's experience at the railway crossing and the market of the town.**

After the cow moved off the road, the bus came to a halt. A short while later, the bus reached the railway crossing gate that was closed because a train was to pass. In the distance, Valli saw the train as a tiny speck. It grew bigger and bigger as it drew nearer. It crossed the gate with a tremendous roar shaking the bus. Then the bus passed the train station and moved through a busy well-laid-out shopping street to reach a wider thoroughfare. Valli saw that the shops were very big and were laden with a display of clothes and other merchandise. She was impressed by the huge crowd and gazed at everything in amazement. It was here that everybody got off the bus but Valli was much too afraid to roam around in the market place all by herself. Hence, she remained seated in the bus and bought herself another ticket for her return journey.

**Q8. Give an account of the change of mood that Valli experienced after she saw the cow lying dead on the roadside. Or**

**What horrifying experience did Valli have during her return journey by bus?**

Or

**What make Valli sad and dispirited on her journey back home?**

During her onward journey, Valli was immensely excited and enjoyed every moment of the journey. When the bus commenced the return journey she still had the same mood and her joy had not subsided. However, she experienced a sudden change of mood on seeing the young cow that lay dead by the roadside. She was overcome by sadness at this painful sight. She reflected thoughtfully that what had been a beautiful and lovable creature a little while back, that had been a source of so much amusement to her, was now lying lifeless and looking so horrible and frightening. The blood smeared body and the fixed stare in its lifeless eyes upset Valli. The dead cow's memory haunted her and she remained glued to her seat during the rest of her journey. She did not even look out of the window for fear of seeing something more horrifying.

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## 10. The Sermon at Benares

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### ABOUT THE CHAPTER

#### *Introduction:*

"The Sermon at Benares" is an essay with two distinct parts. The first part, biographical in nature, lays bare the first phase of prince Siddhartha's life that was lived in luxury. This part also includes his encounter with the sufferings of human life. The second part brings out the enlightened state of Gautama Buddha where he teaches Kisa Gotami and the world at large how to overcome grief and suffering. This part is the actual sermon at Benares.

#### *Summary:*

Gautama Buddha - initially called prince Siddhartha - lived the first phase of his life in luxury. He had his schooling, got married, had a son and lived a life of royalty with his family. However, at the age of twenty-five he renounced his palace, family and all possessions and went into the world in search of enlightenment after an encounter with the sufferings of the world in the form of sickness, old age, death and a monk begging for alms.

After seven long years, he sat under a peepal tree resolving to get up only after achieving enlightenment. In a span of seven days, he got enlightened and he moved on to impart his knowledge to the world. To alleviate the sufferings of mankind, Buddha gave his first sermon at Benares. This sermon reflects his deep insight and wisdom. It was given by Buddha to Kisa Gotami not through a long discourse but through a personal experience that left an indelible impact on the young mother who had lost her son. Unable to reconcile to the death of her only son, Kisa ran from house to house asking people to give some medicine to revive her dead child. All the neighbours could offer her nothing but pity. However, one man directed her to

Sakyamuni, the Buddha, assuring her that only he could be of help to her under the circumstances.

Kisa Gotami approached Buddha who directed her to get a handful of mustard-seed from a house where no near and dear one had ever died. Kisa again went from house to house. Everyone was ready to provide her with a handful of mustard but she found no house where no beloved had ever died. At long last, she realised that death was common to all. She also became aware of the fact that she had been selfish in her grief. She reconciled to her child's death and concluded that one could be led to immortality only by surrendering all selfishness.

Buddha declared that death is inevitable for all mortals, wise or foolish, young and old. Every single being is subject to death. Peace of mind and bliss come when one gets over lamentation and sorrow.

#### TITLE

'Sermon' means an advice or a discourse on a religious or moral subject. The title "The Sermon at Benares" is an apt one. The inclusion of the word 'sermon' in the title makes it appropriate as it directly points at the moral discourse by an enlightened soul, Buddha that forms the entire extract. Benares fits in perfectly well because this sermon was delivered at Benares. Thus the title "The Sermon at Benares" is fully justified.

#### THEME

The theme of the account "The Sermon at Benares" is the inevitability of death. Anything that comes in this mortal world is bound to perish. The sermon at Benares reflects the Buddha's wisdom and he brings home the point that the principle of appearing and finally disappearing applies to every phase of life. The light that brightens must be consumed by darkness. In sum, everything in this world is subject to decay.

### MESSAGE

The message that the extract gives its readers is that, life is full of sufferings, physical as well as mental; and sooner or later one is bound to become aware of them. It also brings home the idea that death is inevitable and one must submit to it. If one wants to rise above the life of frustration and desolation, one must shed all selfishness. The sermon also teaches us that it is futile to grieve over the departed ones. Grief makes one sick and our lamentations are never able to save the dead or bring them back. In order to be blessed, one must keep oneself free from sorrow.

### CHARACTERS

#### *Gautama, the Buddha*

Gautama, the Buddha (563 B.C. – 483 B.C.) was born in a royal family of northern India, but was destined to enjoy the life of princely luxury for only twenty-five years.

He was sent away for schooling in the Hindu sacred scriptures at the age of twelve. Four years later, he returned home and got married to a princess. Soon after a son was born to them and Siddhartha lived a royal life for ten years.

Very sensitive by nature, he renounced the world of luxury on coming across human suffering, sickness, old age and death. His strong will power made him leave behind his family, his palace and a life of comfort in the prime of life. He attained enlightenment after undergoing a long period of renunciation and hardships. He wandered for seven long years and finally sat down under a peepal tree. He stayed in meditation for seven days after which he attained enlightenment and came to be known as the Buddha.

A very selfless soul, he gave the benefit of his wisdom and enlightenment to humanity at large by helping to relieve it of its suffering. Having a deep psychological insight, he handled Kisa Gotami's

uncontrollable grief not only by uttering words of wisdom but by making her realise the reality of birth and death through a personal experience. Buddha's sermon remains a source of comfort to humanity even in the present times.

### *Kisa Gotami*

Kisa Gotami was a simple woman whose only son had died. She was so grieved by this loss that she carried her dead child to all her neighbours, asking for medicine to cure him. Everybody thought that the woman had lost her senses since a dead person could not be revived. However, Kisa was so driven by her love for her son that she went to Sakyamuni, the Buddha, when a man suggested her to meet him. The Buddha knew that it would not be easy to make Kisa understand that death is universal and inevitable. So, he asked her to bring a handful of mustard-seed from a house where no one had lost a dear one to death. Kisa was such a determined lady that she set out right away to bring the mustard-seed in order to bring life to her son. Having wandered from house to house, she finally realized that she had been selfish, in her grief. So, she decided to surrender all selfishness, and accept that Death is common to all.

## EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.

## (I)

These sights so moved him that he at once went out into the world to seek enlightenment concerning the sorrows he had witnessed.

(a) **Who does 'he' stand for in the passage?**

'He' stands for Prince Siddhartha who later came to be called Gautama Buddha.

(b) **Which sights moved 'him'?**

The sight of human suffering in the form of a sick and an aged man, a funeral procession and a monk begging for alms moved him.

(c) **When did he witness these sights?**

Siddhartha witnessed these sights at the age of twenty-five when he was away from his protected life on a hunting expedition.

(d) **On being moved by the 'sights', what did he do?**

'He' decided to renounce a life of luxury and go into the world in search of enlightenment so that he could alleviate human suffering.

## (II)

It reflects the Buddha's wisdom about one inscrutable kind of suffering.

(a) **What does 'it' refer to?**

'It' refers to the first sermon given at Benares by Gautama Buddha.

(b) **Which particular suffering is being talked about?**

It is death that is being talked about.

(c) **Why has this suffering been referred to as 'inscrutable'?**

This suffering *i.e.* death is being referred to as inscrutable because though every being that comes into this world has to die but nobody knows about the mysteries of death.

**(d) In what way does 'it' reflect on Buddha's wisdom?**

Buddha's first sermon reflects on his wisdom as it helped the inconsolable Kisa Gotami to reconcile herself to her son's death and get enlightened about the inevitability of death.

**(III)**

And the girl said, "Pray tell me, sir; who is it?" And the man replied, "Go to Sakyamuni, the Buddha."

**(a) Who is the 'girl' referred to here?**

The 'girl' referred to here is Kisa Gotami, who had lost her only son.

**(b) Why did the man send 'her' to the Buddha?**

Having lost her only son, Kisa Gotami almost lost her senses and went from person to person asking for some medicine that would revive the child.

Since no person could have given her such a medicine, the man asked her to contact the Buddha who with his wisdom could find out some way to solve her problem.

**(c) In what way was the girl benefitted by contacting the Buddha?**

Though, even after contacting the Buddha, the mother could not get back her dead child, she got enlightened about the inevitability of death and she was able to reconcile herself to it.

**(d) What is the meaning of 'Buddha'? Why did people call Sakyamuni, the Buddha.**

'Buddha' means 'the Awakened or the Enlightened' one. People called Sakyamuni, the Buddha as he had attained wisdom to guide humanity after wandering for seven years and meditating for seven days.

**(IV)**

"Alas! the living are few, but the dead are many. Do not remind us of our deepest grief."

(a) **Who is the speaker of these words?**

The speaker of these words are the people whom Kisa Gotami asked for a handful of mustard-seed.

(b) **Who are these words been addressed to, and in what context?**

These words are addressed to Kisa Gotami who asked people for a handful of mustard-seed. They spoke these words when she told them that she would accept the mustard if no near and dear one of their family had died.

(c) **What idea is conveyed by the phrase 'living are few, but dead are many.'**

Each family Kisa Gotami visited had more of their members among the dead than among the living. There was no family who had not experienced the death of their loved ones.

(d) **In what way were 'they' being reminded of their deepest grief?**

Kisa Gotami's request for mustard seeds reminded the people of the grief of having lost their near and dear ones to death.

(V)

"How selfish am I in my grief!"

(a) **Who is 'I' in the above excerpt?**

Kisa Gotami is 'I' in the above excerpt.

(b) **What grief is he/she referring to in this statement?**

Kisa Gotami is referring to the death of her only child that gave rise to her grief.

(c) **Why did 'I' consider himself/herself to be selfish in his/her grief?**

Kisa Gotami considered herself to be selfish in her grief because blinded by her grief she had forgotten all about the inevitability of death and indulged in self-pity. She did not think that death was common to all.

- (d) How did the realisation of being selfish in his/her grief help the speaker?**

Realising that she had been selfish in her grief, Kisa Gotami understood that death is common to all. Yet those who surrender all selfishness find a path that leads to immortality.

**(VI)**

So the world is afflicted with death and decay, therefore the wise do not grieve, knowing the terms of the world.

- (a) Why don't the wise grieve?**

The wise do not grieve because they realise the inevitability of death. Hence, they face it with a sense of perfect equanimity.

- (b) What are the terms of the world?**

The terms of the world are that whosoever is born must one day die. Death is inevitable and universal in nature and the sooner one learns to reconcile to it, the better.

- (c) What brings grief to common people who are not enlightened and wise? Why?**

Death and decay bring grief to the ordinary people as by overlooking the terms of the world and the inevitability of death they do not face such situations with a sense of equanimity.

- (d) Explain the phrase: 'the world is afflicted with death and decay'.**

The phrase means that world is affected by suffering, disease, pain and death. These things are a source of grief.

**(VII)**

He who has drawn out the arrow and has become composed will obtain peace of mind.

- (a) Which arrow is being referred to in this excerpt?**

It is the arrow of lamentation, complaint and grief when a loved one departs.

**(b) How can this arrow be drawn out?**

This arrow can be drawn out by understanding the terms of the world and reconciling to the inevitability of death.

**(c) How would the drawing out of the arrow affect an individual?**

Drawing out of the arrow will free one of sorrow. He would become composed and experience peace of mind and be blessed.

**(d) What would happen if no effort is made to draw out the arrow?**

If the arrow of lamentation is not drawn out, one would suffer from great pain. Such a person would make himself pale and sick and would be of no help to the departed soul as his lamentation would not be able to bring back the dead.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 30 - 40 words each)*

**Q1. Write a brief note on Siddhartha Gautama's early life?**

Siddhartha Gautama's early life was spent as a prince in northern India. He was sent away for schooling in the Hindu sacred scriptures at the age of twelve and four years later he returned to marry a princess. They had a son and Siddhartha lived a royal life for ten years with his family. He came out of this shielded life at the age of twenty-five when he went out on a hunting expedition.

**Q2. What prompted Prince Siddhartha to renounce the world?**

*Or*

**What scenes made Gautama Buddha seek enlightenment?**

The sights of a sick man, an aged man, a funeral procession and a monk begging for alms so moved Prince Siddhartha that he decided to renounce the world to seek enlightenment.

**Q3. How did Siddhartha feel immediately after becoming aware of human suffering for the first time? What did he do?**

Or

**What was the effect of the sufferings of the world on the Buddha?**

Immediately after coming across a few suffering people, Siddhartha felt very upset to see so much of grief and sorrow in the world. He left the comforts of his palace, became an ascetic and went out into the world to experience the pangs of suffering and to seek enlightenment.

**Q4. After wandering for seven years, what did Siddhartha do?**

Or

**When and where did Siddhartha Gautama get enlightenment?**

After leading the life of a mendicant for full seven years, Siddhartha eventually sat under a peepal tree, and pledged that he would stay there till he got enlightenment. He got enlightenment after seven days.

**Q5. How did life change for Prince Siddhartha after being enlightened?**

Prince Siddhartha's life underwent a drastic change after he got enlightened. He started preaching and sharing the peace and bliss, that had been bestowed upon him, with his ignorant fellow beings.

**Q6. Why was Gautama known as the Buddha?**

Gautama was known as the Buddha because he had attained enlightenment after spending years as an ascetic and through deep meditation. Buddha means 'the Awakened or the Enlightened'. Gautama meditated for seven days under a peepal tree, that he renamed as the Bodhi tree or the Tree of Wisdom, till he understood the cause of human suffering and came to be known as the Buddha.

**Q7. What did Kisa Gotami do immediately after her only son's death and why?**

Or

**What happened to Kisa Gotami's son? What did she ask her neighbours to give her? Or**

**Why was Kisa Gotami grief-stricken? How did she react to her grief?**

Kisa Gotami was overcome by grief when her only son died. Unable to reconcile to this terrible loss, she lost her sense of reasoning. In utter desperation, she carried her dead child all about her neighbourhood and asked everybody to give her some medicine that would bring the child back to life.

**Q8. When her son dies, Kisa Gotami goes from house to house. What does she ask for? Does she get it? If not, why? (Textual)**

When Kisa Gotami's only son dies, she goes from house to house asking for some medicine to revive her dead son. However, she does not get it because there is no medicine that can bring the dead to life again.

**Q9. Who sent Kisa Gotami to Sakyamuni, the Buddha and why?**

Maddened by her grief on the death of her only son, Kisa Gotami went from person to person asking for some cure for her dead child. In this search, she came across a man who expressed his inability to help her but was confident that Sakyamuni, the Buddha would be able to find a way out. Hence, he sent her to Buddha.

**Q10. What did Kisa Gotami say to Gautama Buddha? What reply did Gautama give to her? And why? Or**

**What did the Buddha ask Kisa Gotami to bring and why? What condition did he impose?**

When Kisa Gotami requested Buddha to give her the medicine that could cure her child, Buddha told her to bring a handful of mustard-seed but only from a house where no one had lost a dear one to death. He did so because he wanted Kisa to

understand that death is common to all and grief makes a person sick and pale; so, one should not be selfish in one's sorrow.

- Q11. Kisa Gotami again goes from house to house after she speaks with the Buddha? What does she ask for the second time around? Does she get it? Why not? (Textual)**

After she speaks to the Buddha, Kisa Gotami once again goes from house to house asking for a handful of mustard-seed. Buddha had asked her to get some mustard seeds from a house which has not suffered any death. However, Kisa Gotami fails to find any such house where death has not claimed a life.

- Q12. Why do you think Buddha asked Gotami to bring a handful of mustard-seed from a house that had not been afflicted with death?**

*Or*

**How did the Buddha teach Kisa Gotami the truth of life?**

Buddha advised Gotami to bring a handful of mustard-seed from a house that had never been afflicted with death because he wanted her to learn the inevitability of death from her own experience. The enlightened Buddha knew that the grief-stricken mother would understand this truth of life better through her experience rather than his words.

- Q13. What followed after Gotami went from house to house in search of a handful of mustard-seed from a family who had never lost any near and dear one?**

After going from house to house in search of a handful of mustard-seed, Gotami realised that every house had lost some or the other member to death. She realised that death is inevitable and common to all. So, she should not be selfish in her grief. This made her reconcile to the death of her only son.

- Q14. What lessons did Gotami learn from her futile venture regarding the mustard-seed? Or**

**What did Kisa Gotami realise about the fate of men? How did this realisation come about?**

Gotami learnt that, she had been selfish in her grief because any person young or old, who dies cannot be brought back to life and that none can escape the claws of death. Death is inevitable and common to all. She also learnt that in life there is more pain than pleasure. Living beings face the danger of death like ripe fruits are in danger of falling. The world is afflicted with death and decay, therefore the wise do not grieve. The one who seeks peace should not lament, complain or grieve.

**Q15. How do you usually understand the idea of 'selfishness'? Do you agree with Kisa Gotami that she was being 'selfish in her grief'?**

*(Textual)*

Selfishness means thinking of one's own interests, needs and suffering, without any concern for others. Kisa was so deeply grieved by the death of her only son that she did not realise the sufferings undergone by others. She was extremely pained by her own sorrow and like a selfish person kept lamenting her loss.

**Q16. In what respect do you think Kisa Gotami is a wiser woman after her meeting with the Buddha?**

Kisa Gotami becomes a wiser woman after her meeting with the Buddha because she now knows that death is inevitable. She also realises that no person is spared by misery and so far she had been selfish in thinking only about her personal grief.

**Q17. What did Buddha say about the mortals?** Or

**What parallel does Buddha draw between mortals and a ripe fruit and earthen vessels?**

Buddha said that the life of mortals in this world is troubled and brief, and combined with pain. Young and old, wise and otherwise all fall to the power of death and are subject to decay. Everything

that takes birth has to meet death one day. The life of mortals ends in the same way as all earthen vessels made by the potter end in being broken, and all ripe fruits fall to their end.

**Q18. Why doesn't death bring grief to the wise? Or**

**According to the Buddha, why do the wise not grieve?**

The wise know that the world is afflicted with decay and death. No one can save a dear one from death. All mortals are carried off by death just like an ox that is led to the slaughter. Knowing the terms of the world, the wise reconcile themselves to death. Hence, death doesn't bring grief to them.

**Q19. How does weeping and grieving affect an individual?**

One would find no peace of mind by weeping and grieving. Instead it would increase one's pain and make the person sick and pale. Neither would one be able to bring the dead back to life, nor would one find solace for oneself. Instead, the pain would become greater and the body would suffer.

**Q20. How can one become free from sorrow? Or**

**Who can obtain the peace of mind?**

In order to become free from sorrow and obtain peace of mind, one will have to draw out the arrow of lamentation, complaint and grief. Such a person will become composed and attain peace of mind. He will overcome all sorrow and be blessed.

**Q21. What message did Buddha's first sermon at Benares give?**

Buddha's first sermon at Benares taught the world about the inevitability of death. It also advised them not to be selfish in one's grief as surrendering all selfishness can lead one to the path of immortality. The path to peace required getting rid of lamentation, complaint and grief. Only those who overcome sorrow become free from it and are blessed.

**Q22. Have you heard of the Sermon on the Mount? Who delivered it?**

**Who do you think delivered a Sermon at Benares? (Textual)**

Yes, I have heard about the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon was delivered by Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples, in the form of Ten Commandments or the ten 'dos' and 'don'ts' of life. The Sermon at Benares was given by Lord Buddha.

**Q23. What sterling qualities of Buddha made him different from common man?**

Buddha was 'the Awakened or the Enlightened' one. He told humanity about the cause behind human suffering. He had the sterling qualities of a peaceful soul and calm, composed mind. He understood the real cause behind human suffering. He learnt that death is common to all and is inevitable. According to Buddha, the life of mortals is short-lived like the earthen vessels made by the potter and the ripe fruits on trees. He found that to obtain peace of mind, one must get rid of lamentation, complaint and grief.

#### LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

*(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)*

**Q1. Give a brief account of the early life of Siddhartha Gautama as detailed in the lesson "The Sermon at Benares."**

Siddhartha Gautama was born in 563 B.C. in a royal family of northern India. At the age of twelve he was sent out to study Hindu sacred scriptures. After four years he returned to his palace. He was married to a beautiful princess who bore him a beautiful son. During this time, deliberate efforts were made to shield him from all sorrows of the world. So, he never got to see the pain of sickness, old age, want or death.

Siddhartha led a life of luxury for about ten years. However, once, when he was twenty-five and was on a hunting expedition, he chanced upon a sick man, an aged man, a funeral procession and a monk begging for alms. The sufferings of these people upset him. He was so moved by these sights that he decided to renounce the life of luxury and go into the world to seek enlightenment to understand the causes of sorrows and sufferings of mankind.

**Q2. What induced Siddhartha Gautama to renounce his home? How did he attain enlightenment?**

Siddhartha had never seen sickness, old age, death and want. He lived a life of comfort and luxury and was totally oblivious of the human suffering.

Hence his chance encounter with a few suffering individuals affected him so much that he decided to renounce his life of luxury to seek enlightenment concerning sorrows and sufferings of mankind. He wandered for full seven years and led the life of an ascetic. Thereafter, he decided to sit under a peepal tree and stayed there till he attained enlightenment which came to him after seven days of meditation. He named the fig tree *the Bodhi Tree* (Tree of Wisdom). After being enlightened he started sharing his wisdom with people at large and came to be known as the Buddha. He delivered his first sermon in Benares that reflected his wisdom about one inscrutable kind of suffering.

**Q3. Describe in your words Kisa Gotami's experience of her only son's death.**

Or

Who was Kisa Gotami? Why did she come to Gautama Buddha? How did the Buddha make her realise the inevitability of death?

Or

What does the Buddha make Kisa Gotami understand and how?

Or

**Who was Kisa Gotami? What lesson does she learn after following the instructions of Gautama Buddha?**

Kisa Gotami lost her only son and grieved beyond measure. She went from one neighbour to the other requesting them to give her some medicine for his cure. Neighbours considered her mad as the child was already dead. A kind gentleman advised her to meet Sakyamuni, the Buddha regarding her problem. Gotami went rushing to Buddha and asked him to revive her son. The Buddha, being enlightened, knew that no amount of sermonizing would help Gotami understand the inevitability of death. Hence, he told her to bring mustard seeds from a house that had never suffered pangs of death. However, all her efforts failed as there was not a single house that had not suffered death of a loved one. Though futile, the exercise made Gotami reconcile herself to the death of her only son. She understood that she was being selfish in her grief. Death, which is inevitable, is common to all. It is imperative to surrender all selfishness to get on to the path of immortality.

**Q4. What does Kisa Gotami understand the second time that she failed to understand the first time? Was this what the Buddha wanted her to understand? (Textual)**

Gotami's first visit to people around her gave her nothing but weariness, frustration and sorrow. She neither learnt any lesson from this exercise nor got over her desire to see her dead child revived. However, on her second visit she became wiser and she was able to reconcile herself to her loss.

Having failed to find a house that had not lost any near or dear one to death, Kisa Gotami got the revelation on her second visit that death is inevitable. She realised that life is like the light that flickers, brightens up and eventually extinguishes. She came to

know that none can escape death. Her second visit gave her the wisdom that she was being selfish in her grief. It also dawned on her now that immortality lay in selflessness. The Buddha wanted her to learn all this through a personal experience and he was able to put across to her the inevitability of death and the significance of selflessness.

- Q5. Why do you think Kisa Gotami understood this only the second time? In what way did the Buddha change her understanding?**

*(Textual)*

During her first visit, Kisa Gotami was under the impression that the grief of the death of her son was peculiar to her and that nobody else had any experience of it. However, on her second visit, when she failed to find a single house that had not suffered pangs of separation owing to death of some loved one or the other, she came to understand that death does not spare anyone. The Buddha changed her attitude and understanding in the sense, that she now realised that grief and separation are common to all and that death is inevitable. He made her realise the significance of selflessness. This transformation helped her realise the fact that her only son could not be revived. Thus, she was able to accept death as the reality of human existence.

- Q6. "The Sermon at Benares" also deals with the enlightenment of Kisa Gotami. Discuss. Or**

**How do you usually understand the human attribute of 'selfishness'? Do you agree with Kisa Gotami that she was being 'selfish in her grief'?**

Gotami was a naive and ignorant young mother who felt that heavens had fallen with the death of her only son. Self-pity helplessness, sorrow and the urge to revive the dead child led her from house to house asking people to give her some medicine to

cure her child. The neighbours could offer her nothing but pity. However, later, when directed by Buddha to get a handful of mustard-seed from a house that had never seen death, she couldn't come across a single such house. It was then that she got enlightened and realised the inevitability of death. She could now clearly see her own selfishness in her grief. She became far wiser than before. Hence, she was now able to reconcile to her loss and surrender all her selfishness. The usual idea of selfishness is to think solely about one's own requirements. Kisa Gotami was certainly being 'selfish in her grief' as she desperately wanted to revive her dead son.

**Q7. Give in your own words the gist of the first sermon of the Buddha regarding death.**

*Or*

**What does the chapter "The Sermon at Benares" teach us about life and death?**

*Or*

**What lesson on death and suffering does the Buddha teach Kisa Gotami in the chapter "The Sermon at Benaras"?**

*Or*

**What does Buddha say about death and suffering? Explain by giving examples from the text.**

In his first sermon at Benares regarding death, the Buddha says that human life is full of suffering, and that pain and separation are an essential part of life. Anyone who takes birth must necessarily meet his end and there are no means by which one can escape death. Mortals are compared to a fruit, which once ripe, must eventually fall down. The sermon reiterates this fact by referring to the earthen vessel made by the potter. All these vessels eventually get broken.

In the words of Buddha, "... the world is afflicted with death and decay, therefore the wise do not grieve, knowing the terms of the world." Weeping and grieving rob one's peace of mind and

lamentation cannot bring back the dead or alleviate pain. In fact, suffering makes the body sick and pale. Therefore, those who seek peace should draw out the arrow of lamentation, complaint and grief. Only then can they overcome sorrow and be blessed.

**Q8. What solution does the Buddha suggest to get over grief? Or According to the Buddha, how can one obtain peace of mind?**

In the Buddha's words, weeping and grieving over the departed lead one nowhere. Rather than giving solace, lamentations add to one's physical and mental pain and make one sick. No amount of lamenting is going to bring the departed ones back. For peace of mind, the needles of lamentation must be pulled out. Death is common to all. It is wrong to be selfish in one's grief. It is only by surrendering all selfishness that one finds the path that leads to immortality. In order to get composure, one must overcome grief and become free from sorrow and achieve His blessings. Indirectly, the Buddha wants man to live like a stoic, who always remains indifferent to pain or pleasure.

**Q9. What is a sermon? Is it different from a lecture or a talk? Can this word also be used in a negative way or as joke as in "my mother's sermon about getting my work done on time ...?" (Textual)**

A sermon is a talk on a moral or religious subject. It is given by those who are knowledgeable, elevated, experienced and wise. Clergymen, godmen, saints and sages give sermons to common people to live life in a better manner. It is different from a lecture in the sense that a lecture can cover a variety of subjects including non-serious ones. The tone of a lecture can be satirical, rhetorical or amusing depending upon the topic that the lecture is based on, but a sermon has something solemn and serious about it. A talk is always given on some serious topic. The word sermon is never used in a negative way or as a joke. For instance, a mother would

never give a sermon to her children to finish their work on time. She would advice or instruct them. A sermon is about preaching morality through a discourse.

**Q10. Valli in "Madam Rides the Bus" and Kisa Gotami in "The Sermon at Benares" learn an invaluable lesson about the life of mortals. Discuss.**

Valli is an eight-year-old who ventures alone on a bus ride to experience the six mile journey from her village to the nearest town and back. During her onward journey she is amused when she sees a cow running right in the middle of the road ahead of her bus, with its tail high up. This sight amuses Valli and she laughs heartily to see the scared animal. However, during the return journey she happens to see the same cow lying dead in a pool of blood on the roadside. The little girl feels miserable to see that a creature that was alive and kicking some time ago was now gone. She learns an invaluable lesson that death comes suddenly and life is not permanent.

Kisa Gotami is a young mother who loses her only son to death. She is acutely grieved by her loss and loses her sense of reasoning. She moves from door to door seeking medicine that could cure her son. However, when the Buddha asks her to bring a handful of mustard-seed from such a house where no dear one had been lost to death, she understands that death is common to all. Sinking oneself in personal grief only makes one pale and sick. So, one should be wise and should accept death as a natural end of life that cannot be avoided.

Therefore, both Valli and Kisa Gotami learn the lesson that all mortals have to meet their end one day. This lesson is invaluable and makes one appreciate that life should be lived appropriately since death can bring it to a sudden an abrupt end.

## 11. The Proposal

(Anton Chekov)

### ABOUT THE PLAY

#### *Introduction:*

"The Proposal" written by Anton Chekov, a famous Russian playwright, is a highly humorous play which satirises marriages of convenience that are solemnized without any feeling of love or affection between the partners. The play, with three quarrelsome characters, is replete with comic situations that generate a lot of humour.

#### *Summary:*

"The Proposal" is a humorous play where a thirty-five year old bachelor, Ivan Lomov, comes to his neighbour, Stepan Chubukov, to propose to his twenty-five year old daughter, Natalya Stepanovna. Both Lomov and Natalya are desperate to get married. Though Lomov doesn't consider Natalya to be an ideal match for him, yet knowing his own limitations, he decides to take this step. Not only is Natalya fairly good looking and well-educated, she is an excellent house-keeper too. As far as Lomov is concerned, in the first place he is at a critical age of thirty-five years, secondly his nervousness, lack of confidence and fragile health leave him with no option but to propose Natalya.

Natalya, on the other hand, is more than eager to be proposed to by someone.

When Lomov tells Chubukov, Natalya's father, about the purpose of his visit, the old man who feels it a burden to be the father of a grown up daughter, gets very excited. He is absolutely certain that Natalya would readily give her consent for the proposal. He rushes in to call out Natalya. However, when Natalya comes to the drawing room, she is surprised to see Lomov in a formal dress as she doesn't know

the purpose of his visit. After exchanging a few pleasantries, when Lomov is just on the verge of proposing to the girl, there crops up a controversy between the two of them regarding the ownership of a piece of land 'Oxen Meadows'.

Both Lomov and Natalya claim to be the real owner of this property. Initially both of them claim it very politely. However, soon the argument becomes very heated and they start shouting at each other. Lomov insists that the documents prove that Oxen Meadows belong to him, although at one time they were a subject of dispute. Natalya counters this claim by telling that their land extended till Burnt Marsh, which meant that the Oxen Meadows were theirs. In the meantime, Chubukov also makes his entry and he joins the two in the argument. After a lot of accusations and mudslinging at each other's family, the flared up Lomov becomes unwell and his heart starts palpitating dangerously. He leaves the father and daughter in a fit of temper.

Soon after he leaves, Natalya gets to know from her father that he had come to propose to her. Instantly she creates a scene. In hysterics, she tells her father to get back Lomov immediately. Both the father and the daughter accuse each other of driving Lomov out. However, the father runs after Lomov and gets him back.

This time Natalya is very sweet to Lomov but she doesn't know how to make him propose to her. Unfortunately, there is yet another argument between the two before the proposal is made. This time they start quarrelling over the superiority of their respective dogs. Natalya finds faults with Lomov's dog 'Guess', whereas Lomov feels that 'Guess' is a far better dog than the Chubukovs' 'Squeezer'. Soon both of them flare up once again and Chubukov also joins them. They abuse and accuse each other repeatedly. Lomov, too frail to continue the argument, falls into a chair exhausted!

Natalya, taking the unconscious man to be dead, starts wailing.

Chubukov is thoroughly unnerved, but the moment he realises that Lomov is not dead, with all his presence of mind, he puts Lomov's hand into his daughter's hand and gives consent for the wedding on Natalya's behalf. He gives his blessings and makes them kiss each other. He rushes to get the entire drama through so that the weight of marrying Natalya is off his shoulder. However, though the proposal matures, Lomov and Natalya still continue to argue with each other about the superiority of their dogs.

When the curtain drops, the reader is left guessing about the fate of this couple after the two get married.

#### TITLE

"The Proposal" is a play in which Lomov, a thirty-five year old bachelor, apprehensive of never getting a bride of his choice, comes to propose to Natalya - his next door neighbour. Natalya too, at the age of twenty-five, is more than eager to be proposed to by someone. However, the first attempt to make a formal proposal fails miserably and so is the fate of the second attempt. Despite these failures, the proposal is forcibly turned into a marriage by the intervention of the girl's father Chubukov. The title "The Proposal" therefore clearly lays out the content of the play - the proposal by Lomov to Natalya.

#### THEME

The theme of the farcical play "The Proposal" is the fate of marriages that are solemnised with a deceitful intent on the part of both partners. In such marriages of convenience, love always takes a backseat. An ideal marriage is a union of two hearts as well as families; but in "The Proposal" it is neither the union of two loving hearts, nor the union of two families. At the thematic level, the author aims at condemning such marriages and artistically hints at his own concept of an ideal marriage that is the result of true and selfless love.

### MESSAGE

"The Proposal" is a farce and it may be defined as a funny play for the theatre, based on ridiculous situations and events. Obviously, such a play is not supposed to be giving any message as such. However, a masterly playwright like Chekhov, will not write anything just for the sake of it, even if it happens to be a farce. Thus, "The Proposal" indirectly presents the author's reflection on how not to commence one's married life. Marriage is a solemn bond between two persons which must be based on mutual respect and love. Thus, we should not spoil the sacred relationship of marriage by quarrelling and by being mean and selfish. Marriage is pious and there must be a perfect accord between the partners who should be free from all prejudice and selfishness. Short-temper, rage, intolerance, vain pride and unnecessary arguments ruin relationships. So, these should be controlled and kept under check.

### HUMOUR

The one act play, "The Proposal" is a farce. The basic qualities of a farce are 'the ridiculous and unlikely situations' and absurdity. One finds them in abundance in this play. As Lomov enters Chubukov's drawing room, the latter's suspicions about his visit make a comical reading. The pretence of love and affection on the part of Chubukov is also amusing. Initially both Lomov and Chubukov flatter each other by singing praises about each other's family, but later on accuse not only each other, but also their ancestors. Again, the reasons put forward by Lomov to himself, for proposing to Natalya really make a funny reading. The assertions of Lomov and Natalya regarding the ownership of 'Oxen Meadows' and the quarrel that ensues makes the situation ridiculous.

A variety of ailments that Lomov is afflicted with and his nervousness make him a very comical character. The hysterics of Natalya, when

she learns that Lomov intended to propose to her, but that she had missed the opportunity, provoke much laughter. Again, the reader can't help laughing at the folly of the three, when after Lomov's return, they once again start quarrelling, this time over the claim of the relative superiority of their respective hunting dogs. The all important issue of the marriage proposal once again recedes into the background.

In short, the events, situations and the odd behaviour of the characters all through the play, and the manner in which the proposal is finally presumed to have been made and accepted, make the play absolutely farcical. Above all, exaggeration and Chubukov's repetitive use of "and so on" also add to the humour in the play.

#### CHARACTERS

##### *Ivan Vassilevitch Lomov*

Lomov, a suspicious landowner is a well-to-do unmarried man in his mid-thirties. He suffers from a variety of ailments. He starts trembling when he is nervous. He also suffers from palpitations, is easily excitable and always gets awfully upset. At such a moment his lips tremble and there's a twitch in his right eyebrow.

Lomov has been looking for a perfect marriage partner for himself but has failed to meet an ideal match. He does not consider Natalya to be ideally suited for him, but being practical, he takes into account his advancing age and decides to make a compromise by proposing to her. However, he lacks self-confidence and keeps beating about the bush instead of stating matters clearly.

Lomov is quarrelsome by nature and starts arguing about the rightful ownership of the "Oxen Meadows", whereas his actual purpose was to propose to Natalya. He is a comical character who has not learnt the wise lesson of proper discrimination between the relative importance

of different situations. Instead of concentrating on the topic of proposing romantically, he keeps on foolishly asserting his claim over "Oxen Meadows". He is childish, unintelligent and foolish who stubbornly keeps on arguing with the lady, who seems to be the only person he could marry. He does not even hesitate to hurl abuses at the Chubukov family when he gets into heated arguments over Oxen Meadows and the dogs. His stubbornness and immaturity almost ruin the sole prospect of his marriage.

### *Natalya Stepanovna*

Natalya is the twenty-five year old daughter of Stepan Chubukov, a landowner. She is a garrulous, quarrelsome and money-minded woman, who is so possessive by nature that in no case, is she prepared to leave her claim, rightful or otherwise, over "Oxen Meadows", a stretch of land.

She has reached a stage where she is so desperate to get married that she would accept anybody as her husband. According to her father, Chubukov, "She is a lovesick cat." But when it comes to quarrelling, in a fit of agitation, she forgets that her foolish behaviour could project her as a bad-tempered woman and jeopardise her prospect of matrimony. Lomov considers her to be an excellent housekeeper, not bad looking and well-educated.

Natalya's basic aim is to tie the nuptial knot, even if her husband is an ailing and stubborn person like Lomov. However, egoist, as she is, she picks up a quarrel once again with Lomov regarding the superiority of her dog, Squeezer, forgetting all about the proposal which needed to be given the top priority. This shows that Natalya is foolish, short-sighted and immature. Her behaviour is childish and she treats Lomov really bad. But when there is a threat to her matrimonial prospect, she pretends to swoon. Thus, Natalya is every inch a comical character.

### *Stepan Stepanovitch Chubukov*

Chubukov is a wealthy, but greedy person past his prime and father of an unmarried daughter. He is a stupid and quarrelsome individual, who is rather unfriendly towards Lomov, his immediate neighbour. Chubukov is adept in the art of pretence. On seeing Lomov at his door, he pretends to be happy and asks him the reason of his visit. He conjectures to himself that Lomov has come to borrow money but asserts he "shan't give him any." However, he is a hypocrite and feigns to be very cordial and asks him, "What is it, beauty."

As a father, Chubukov feels it his responsibility to marry off his daughter. He cares for her but many times, in the heat of the moment, he overlooks her interest and behaves in an immature manner. He hurls abuses at the man who has come to propose to his daughter, Natalya.

Chubukov is a short-tempered fellow. Natalya's hysteria on learning that Lomov had come to propose to her but has gone away annoyed, makes him lose his cool, and out of sheer anger he curses himself and all fathers of grown-up daughters. However, towards the end of the play, when a bit of sanity prevails over him, he hurriedly makes the proposal materialize without the proper consent of Lomov and Natalya.

**EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION**

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.

**(I)**

CHUBUKOV : (Interrupting) My dear fellow... I'm so glad, and so no... Yes, indeed, and all that sort of thing. [Embraces and kisses Lomov] I've been hoping for it for a long time. It's been my continual desire.

**(a) What makes Chubukov so happy?**

Chubukov is the father of a grown up daughter and has always been worried about her marriage. When Lomov tells him that he has come with a proposal of marriage for Natalya, Chubukov feels extremely happy.

**(b) What had been the 'continual desire' of Chubukov?**

Chubukov tells Lomov that it had been his continual desire to see his daughter, Natalya, married to Lomov.

**(c) What has Chubukov been hoping for a long time?**

Chubukov claims that he has been hoping for a long time that Lomov would come and propose to his daughter Natalya.

**(d) Why does Chubukov kiss and embrace Lomov?**

On learning that Lomov had come to propose to Natalya, Chubukov is not only moved but is also overcome with the feeling of gratitude for Lomov. By embracing and kissing Lomov, he expresses this feeling.

**(II)**

LOMOV : It's cold.... I'm trembling all over, just as if I'd got an examination before me. The great thing is, I must have my mind made up.

**(a) Why does Lomov tremble all over?**

Lomov trembles all over because it is extremely cold. Moreover,

he is very nervous, and lack of confidence makes him tremble before he makes a proposal to Natalya.

**(b) Why does Lomov tell himself that he must make up his mind?**

Lomov tells himself that he must make up his mind because if he hesitates in making a proposal he may never be able to marry.

**(c) What is Lomov's state of mind as he stands trembling all over?**

A state of uncertainty has robbed all of Lomov's confidence. As such this man lacks self-confidence. When he is about to propose to Natalya, a bout of nervousness leaves him absolutely weak and indecisive.

**(d) What 'great thing' is Lomov talking about?**

By 'great thing', Lomov means the importance of making a decision about whether he would like to take Natalya as his bride or wait for an opportunity to get himself an ideal partner.

**(III)**

Then smoke. Here are the matches. The weather is splendid now, but yesterday it was so wet that the workmen didn't do anything all day.

**(a) Who is speaking to whom?**

Natalya is speaking to Lomov.

**(b) Why do you think the speaker asks the listener to smoke?**

Lomov has come as a formal visitor. When offered lunch, he tells that he has already had his lunch. Therefore, Natalya asks him to smoke.

**(c) Why is the speaker talking about weather?**

Natalya doesn't have anything worthwhile to talk to Lomov. Since he is visiting them after a long time, it appears that they don't have any common topic to discuss. Hence, she is talking about weather.

**(d) What was the ill-effect of the weather being bad the previous day?**

The ill-effect of the bad weather the previous day was that the

workmen could do nothing in the fields and remained idle for the whole day.

## (IV)

I can make you a present of them myself, because they're mine!

## (a) Who is speaking to whom?

Natalya is speaking to Lomov, her next door neighbour.

## (b) What does 'them' stand for?

'Them' stands for Oxen Meadows, a piece of property that is being claimed by each of the neighbours as their own.

## (c) Why does the speaker say that he/she can make a present of them?

Insisting that 'Oxen Meadows' belong to her and that she is not bothered much about their value, Natalya declares that she can gift this piece of land to Lomov.

## (d) Do you think the speaker was serious about making a 'present' to the listener? Why/why not?

When Natalya says that she can make a present of Oxen Meadows, she does not really mean it because the play reveals that she is a miserly, money-minded girl who will not part with what belongs to her. She is declaring it just to prove that the property belongs to her.

## (V)

Dear one, why yell like that? You won't prove anything just by yelling. I don't want anything of yours, and don't intend to give up what I have. Why should I? And you know, my beloved, that if you propose to go on arguing about it, I'd much sooner give up the Meadows to the peasants than to you. There!

## (a) Who is the speaker of these lines? Who yells at him/her and why?

Chubukov speaks these lines because Lomov, his neighbour, yells at him because they are quarrelling over the ownership of

argument forcing Lomov to raise his voice.

**(b) What does the speaker not intend to do?**

Chubukov does not intend to take what belongs to others. Nor does he intend to give anything that he possesses.

**(c) What is the speaker's warning to the listener?**

Chubukov warns Lomov that if the latter goes on arguing about the ownership of the Oxen Meadows, he would give them away to the peasants instead of giving them to him.

**(d) What does the speech reveal about the character of the speaker?**

The speech reveals that Chubukov, though excitable, is firm in his ideas. He knows how to protect his right. Hence, he is not ready to relent when there is a dispute about the ownership of Oxen Meadows.

**(VI)**

NATALYA : There's some demon of contradiction in you today, Ivan Vassilevitch.

**(a) Whom does 'you' stand for in the above statement?**

'You' stands for Lomov, Natalya's next door neighbour.

**(b) Why is Natalya addressing the listener as Ivan Vassilevitch?**

Fully disagreeing with Lomov's claims, Natalya addresses Lomov formally with his full name to sound angry and firm. She is trying to affirm that by behaving in this manner he had estranged himself and he didn't deserve to be addressed in a familiar manner.

**(c) What makes Natalya comment that "there's some demon of contradiction" in Ivan?**

Natalya is making this statement to prove that no person in his right senses would make such weird and baseless claims. So, she declares that it must be some demon who had possessed Ivan Vassilevitch Lomov and was making him make such false claims.

**(d) What 'contradiction' is Natalya referring to?**

Natalya is referring to Lomov's claims that the Oxen Meadows belong to him and that his dog Guess is better than their Squeezer.

(VII)

Don't excite yourself, my precious one. Allow me. Your Guess certainly has his good points. He's purebred, firm on his feet, has well-sprung ribs, and all that. But, my dear man, if you want to know the truth, that dog has two defects;....

(a) **Who is speaking to whom?**

Chubukov is speaking to Lomov.

(b) **What or who is the speaker talking about and why?**

Chubukov is talking about the shortcomings of Lomov's dog 'Guess' in order to prove the superiority of his dog 'Squeezer' over 'Guess'. To avoid annoying him, he also mentions some good points of Guess.

(c) **Why does the speaker ask the listener not to excite himself?**

Chubukov advises his guest Lomov not to get excited because it is just a trifle that is being discussed. Moreover, he suggests that Lomov's claim about his dog is baseless, hence it is not worth getting worked up about it.

(d) **Why does the speaker address the listener as 'my precious one'?**

Knowing fully well that the gentleman had come to propose to his daughter, Chubukov doesn't want to annoy him. Hence, to diffuse the situation, he addresses him lovingly and calls him, 'my precious one.'

(e) **Which two defects in the dog does the speaker talk about?**

Or

**According to the speaker, what is the truth about the dog?**

Chubukov is of the opinion that Guess is old in age and his muzzle is short.

## (VIII)

Yes really, what sort of a hunter are you, anyway? You ought to sit at home with your palpitations, and not go tracking animals. You could go hunting, but you only go to argue with people and interfere with their dogs and so on. Let's change the subject in case I lose my temper. You're not a hunter at all, anyway!

**(a) Who speaks these lines to whom?**

Chubukov speaks these lines to Lomov.

**(b) Why does the speaker tell the listener that he is not a good hunter?**

Lomov feels very nervous while arguing with Natalya and Chubukov about the superiority of their respective dogs and his foot gone numb. Natalya feels that Lomov is not capable of being a fox-hunter and Chubukov supports the idea.

**(c) Why should the listener, according to the speaker, not go tracking animals?**

According to Chubukov, Lomov is a weakling who has frequent palpitations. So he satirically tells him that instead of chasing animals, he should sit at home.

**(d) Why does the speaker want to change the subject?**

Chubukov is much offended by the arguments of Lomov to prove the superiority of his dog Guess over Squeezer, Chubukov's dog. He thinks that he may lose his temper if the argument continues. Therefore, he wants to change the subject.

## (IX)

It means he's dead, and all that. I'm the most unhappy of men! Why don't I put a bullet into my brain?

**(a) What does 'it' refer to in this statement?**

When Natalya wailed that Lomov was dead, Chubukov tried to make him drink some water. However, Lomov didn't drink it. 'It' here refers to this incident.

- (b) What light does the first sentence of the dialogue throw on the speaker?**

These words bring out Chubukov's immaturity. Without confirming the facts, he jumps to a hasty conclusion that is proved wrong in no time.

- (c) Why does the speaker call himself an unhappy man?**

Chubukov calls himself an unhappy man because with Lomov's death the dream of his marrying off Natalya would remain unfulfilled.

- (d) Why does the speaker talk about putting a bullet in his brain?**

Chubukov finds the situation so grim that he feels that he should commit suicide as there was no other way out of this mess.

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### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 30 – 40 words each)

- Q1. Why do you think, Lomov visits his neighbour donning a formal evening dress?**

While going on a mission of vital importance it is a usual custom, almost over all the world, to wear a formal dress. Lomov visits Chubukov with the express purpose of proposing to his daughter, Natalya. So, he wears a formal evening dress.

- Q2. What answer does Lomov give to Chubukov's query, "Can you be going anywhere, my treasure?"**

To Chubukov's query whether he is going to some special place, Lomov simply answers that he is not going anywhere and that he has just come to meet him and to give him some trouble.

- Q3. What does Chubukov suspect that Lomov has come for? What is his resolve?** Or (Textual)

What guess does Chubukov make about the purpose of Lomov's visit? How does he plan to treat him?

Or

What is Chubukov's guess about Lomov's purpose of visit? What does he say to himself about it?

Or

Initially, what did Chubukov think about Ivan's intentions? How do you know that?

On seeing Lomov in his house, Chubukov is suspicious about the visit. He guesses that Lomov has come with the intention of borrowing some money from him. He gives out his mind through 'Aside' that he is not going to accede to Lomov's request and 'shan't give him any' money.

- Q4. How does Chubukov treat Lomov when he visits his house?**

Chubukov treats Lomov by pretending to be courteous with him.

Actually, he suspects that Lomov has come to borrow money, so he resolves to himself not to give any money to Lomov. He simply keeps making sweet-talk with him for a while.

- Q5. Why is Lomov so hesitant in disclosing the purpose of his visit? What light does this behaviour throw on his personality?**

Lomov is hesitant in disclosing the purpose of his visit to the Chubukovs because he lacks self-confidence and is a nervous wreck. He cannot muster up enough courage and put forth his mind in clear words. He keeps beating about the bush and goes round and round till Chubukov asks him to 'Spit it out'. This shows that Lomov has low self-esteem and is not confident about his abilities.

- Q6. How does Chubukov react when he comes to know that Lomov has come to seek his daughter's hand in marriage?**

Or

**How does Chubukov react to Ivan's proposal of marriage to his daughter?**

Chubukov feels extremely happy and tells Lomov that he has been 'hoping for it for a long time.' In fact, extreme joy throws him a little off his balance and in his excitement he rushes in to send his daughter out to see Lomov.

- Q7. Is Chubukov sincere when he says, "And I've always loved you, my angel, as if you were my own son?" Or (Textual)**

**How do you learn that Chubukov is a hypocrite and he doesn't have any amiable feelings towards Lomov?**

Chubukov is a hypocrite and doesn't have any amiable feelings towards Lomov. In fact, he hates him and views him with suspicion. The extent of Chubukov's hatred becomes clear later in the play when he joins his daughter in condemning and abusing Lomov and his family.

- Q8. On learning about Lomov's purpose of visit, Chubukov says about Natalya, "..... as if she won't consent!" Why is he so sure that Natalya is going to accept the proposal?**

Chubukov is certain that his daughter Natalya is going to accept the proposal, because being single at the age of twenty five, she is desperate to get married. Thus, Chubukov knows that his daughter is going to grab the opportunity without any sense of hesitation.

- Q9. Has Lomov come to propose to Natalya out of a feeling of love for her or are there some other reasons for it?**

*Or*

**Why did Lomov choose to marry Natalya?**

Lomov thinks that Natalya is an excellent housekeeper, is not bad-looking, and is well-educated. This shows that he does not love her. However, he is afraid that his advancing age and poor health might deprive him of marriage to anyone else, so he comes to propose to Natalya.

- Q10. Write a brief note on Lomov's health.**

*Or*

**How does Lomov behave when he is excited?**

*Or*

**What ailments does Lomov suffer from?**

Lomov is not a healthy man. He suffers from palpitations, is excitable and always gets awfully upset. His lips tremble and he has a twitch in his right eyebrow when he gets excited. He has a disturbed sleep and he always feels that his left side gives him a pull when he begins to go off in bed. He can feel it in his shoulder and head and he jumps up like a lunatic, walks about a bit and lies down again.

- Q11. Do you think Natalya has really understood the hidden meaning of her father's words, "Go; there's a merchant come for his goods." Give reasons for your answer.**

Chubukov meant that somebody has come to seek her hand in

marriage, but Natalya fails to read between the lines. She meets Lomov while dressed in her apron and *neglige* and begins to talk of casual matters like shelling peas for drying.

**Q12. What idea do you form about the real purpose of marriage amongst Russians from Chubukov's statement "Go; there's a merchant come for his goods."**

The statement shows that Russians, during Chekov's age, were materialistic and the basic purpose behind matrimonial alliances, particularly amongst the rich, was to enhance their economic standing. That is why Chubukov talks of a merchant (Lomov) seeking his 'goods' (Natalya).

**Q13. Why was Natalya surprised to see Lomov in evening dress?**

Lomov was Natalya's neighbour and she did not expect a formal visit from him. She first thought that he was going to a ball and then admired him as he looked better in his evening dress. The thought that he had come to propose to her did not cross her mind even once since she did not have any romantic feelings for him. So, she eventually asks him why was he 'got up like that'.

**Q14. What causes the first quarrel between Lomov and Natalya?**

Or

**What was 'Oxen Meadows'? Why did Lomov and Natalya quarrel over it?**

Lomov's rigmaroling about his landownings and particularly his statement that his inherited piece of land "Oxen Meadows" touch Chubukovs' "birchwoods" is the cause of the first quarrel between Lomov and Natalya.

**Q15. During his first address to Natalya, Lomov says "The Lomovs and the Chubukovs have always had the most friendly and the most affectionate regard for each other." Do you really believe that he is speaking the truth?**

No, Lomov is not speaking the truth. He is simply being polite because he has come with a marriage proposal and he does not want any discontent to disrupt his plans to marry Natalya. In fact, "Oxen Meadows" had always been a subject of dispute between the two families, even in the times of their respective great-grandfathers.

- Q16. According to Lomov why did the peasants of Stepan Chubukov's grandfather get "into the habit of regarding the Oxen Meadows as their own"?** Or

**How did Lomov assert that the 'Oxen Meadows' were his?**

Or

**What did Lomov tell the Chubukovs about the disputed land's ownership?**

Lomov argued that his aunt's grandmother gave the free use of the Oxen Meadows to the peasants of Natalya's father's grandfather in return for which they were to make bricks for her. Natalya's family had the free use of the Meadows for forty years, and had therefore got into the habit of regarding them as their own. He further offered to show Natalya the documents that proved his ownership.

- Q17. How does Natalya try to convince Lomov that "Oxen Meadows" belong to them?**

Natalya asserts that her ancestors used to claim that their land holdings extended as far as the Burnt Marsh, which, according to her included the Oxen Meadows. So, she believes that there is nothing to argue about her claim.

- Q18. Why does Lomov say, "Then, you make out that I'm a landgrabber."?**

Lomov questions Natalya if she thought him to be a landgrabber because she accuses him of trying to give back her own land. She tells him in strong words that this was not a neighbourly action

but an impudent one. She also reminds him that they had lent him their threshing-machine and had put off theirs till November like a good neighbour. He, on the other hand, was trying to 'make a present' of her own land.

- Q19. Why does Natalya tell Lomov that she will send her mowers to Oxen Meadows? How does Lomov threaten to treat them?**

Natalya tells Lomov that she will send her mowers to Oxen Meadows to prove that the land belongs to her family. Lomov threatens that he would give it to the mowers in the neck if they come to the Oxen Meadows.

- Q20. Both Lomov and Natalya claim to be generous enough to make a present of Oxen Meadows to each other. Why then are they quarrelling? Do you think they really mean what they say about making a present?**

Their offer to make a present of the "Oxen Meadows" is a sham. Actually, both of them are greedy and want to grab the land by hook or by crook. However, outwardly they pretend to be acting on principle.

- Q21. Why does Chubukov say that he would prefer to give the Oxen Meadows to the peasants than to Lomov? Why does Lomov claim that Chubukov will not be able to do that?**

Chubukov claims that he doesn't want anything of Lomov's but doesn't intend to give up what is his. So, if Lomov proposed to go on arguing about the ownership of Oxen Meadows, he would give up the Meadows to the peasants than to him.

Lomov claims that Chubukov would not be able to do this because he does not have the right to give away somebody else's property.

- Q22. What objection does Chubukov have to Lomov's manner of speech? How does he want Lomov to speak to him?**

Chubukov finds Lomov's manner of speech to be highly objectionable. He does not approve of Lomov's yelling and his tone of voice. He reminds Lomov that he was twice his age and tells him to speak without agitating himself.

**Q23. Why does Lomov threaten to Stepan Stepanovitch to go to the court?**

Lomov threatens Stepan Stepanovitch to go to the court because the latter vehemently refuses to give up his ownership of the 'Oxen Meadows'. Lomov claims to have papers of ownership but Chubukov does not acknowledge this evidence. So, Lomov opts to prove his claim by taking the matter to court.

**Q24. Who is a 'pettyfogger'? Why does Chubukov call Lomov a 'pettyfogger'?**

A 'pettyfogger' is a person who uses underhand or disreputable methods to prove his point. Chubukov calls Lomov a 'pettyfogger' because the latter threatens to take the matter of the ownership of Oxen Meadows to the court. Lomov claims that he has papers to prove the ownership in his favour, whereas Chubukov believes that there is no such document and Lomov is just on a look-out for a chance to go to court.

**Q25. Why does Lomov accuse Chubukov of being an 'intriguer'?**

Chubukov accuses Lomov of being an 'intriguer' because he is livid with anger at the stubbornness of Lomov over the ownership of Oxen Meadows. In the verbal duel that follows their argument, Lomov hurls abuses at the Chubukov family. He accuses Chubukov's grandfather of embezzlement and calls his mother hump-backed. In retaliation, the enraged Chubukov calls Lomov a malicious, double-faced intriguer.

**Q26. What happens to Natalya when she hears from her father that Lomov had come to propose to her?**

Natalya gets the shock of her life when she hears from her father that Lomov had come to propose to her. She falls into an easy-chair and wails urging her father to bring back Lomov. She pretends as if she would die and wails hysterically to get Lomov back immediately. She keeps on wailing and blames her father for cursing, abusing and driving Lomov out of their house.

**Q27. Why does Chubukov think it is a burden to be the father of a grown-up daughter?**

Chubukov thinks that it is a burden to be the father of a grown-up daughter because it was not an easy task to find a suitable boy for such a girl. Chubukov was a wealthy landlord and wanted an equally wealthy groom for his daughter as per the trend that prevailed in his society. Besides, Natalya was an ill-tempered girl who was already twenty five years old.

**Q28. 'I did it on principle.' What did Lomov do on principle? What did he do, according to this principle?**

Lomov got into a heated argument with Natalya and Chubukov on the principle of being the rightful owner of Oxen Meadows. He had come to propose to Natalya but had got into an unpleasant discussion because he believed that although the land was of little worth to him, he should fight for it.

**Q29. What does Natalya want Lomov to talk about when he returns? Why does he not start the conversation that she wants to hear?**

Natalya wants Lomov to talk about the proposal to marry her. Lomov, on the other hand, does not start the conversation that she wants to hear because he keeps defending his earlier argument over the ownership of Oxen Meadows. He keeps referring to the evidence he has and that his grandmother gave the land to Stepan's grandfather's peasants.

**Q30. What is the bone of contention between Lomov and Natalya after Lomov's revisit?**

After Lomov's second visit, Lomov and Natalya start quarrelling again. This time the basic cause is the relative superiority of their respective hunting dogs - Lomov's 'Guess' and Natalya's 'Squeezer'.

**Q31. How do Natalya and Lomov defend their dogs?**

Natalya and Lomov defend their respective dogs Guess and Squeezer by claiming their superiority over each other. Natalya claims that Squeezer was heaps better than Guess. He was young and was of the best pedigree - a thoroughbred animal. Lomov claims that his dog Guess was the very best and he had paid 125 roubles to buy him which was a very cheap amount for a first-rate dog like Guess.

**Q32. Give details about the merits and demerits of Guess, the hunting dog of Lomov, as described by Chubukov?**

Chubukov concedes that Guess has a few good points. He is purebred, strong on his feet and has well-formed ribs. However, he finds two shortcomings in him. Firstly, he has a short muzzle and secondly he is old.

**Q33. How does Lomov compare his Guess with Chubukov's Squeezer? What does Chubukov say in response?**

Speaking in praise of his Guess, Lomov says that he is a very fast runner and on the Marusinsky hunt Guess 'ran neck-and-neck with the Count's dog', whereas Squeezer trailed far behind during the hunt. In response, Chubukov tells Lomov that Squeezer was hit by the Count's whipper-in that led him to trail behind.

**Q34. What do Natalya and Chubukov say about Lomov's hunting skills? Why do they say so?**

Or

**What do Natalya and Chubukov ask Lomov to do because he is not a good hunter?**

Natalya teases Lomov by telling him that he does not deserve to be a hunter and that he should catch black beetles in his kitchen. Chubukov suggests Lomov to sit back at home and nurse his palpitations and not go tracking animals. Natalya also rebukes Lomov that he couldn't even sit on a horse and claimed to be a hunter.

**Q35. Are the two parties in the play "The Proposal" able to resolve their differences about the relative superiority of their dogs amicably?**

The issue of the relative superiority of their hunting dogs is not resolved amicably. The discussion becomes loud and noisy with both the parties sticking to their stand. They once again indulge in hurling abusive language at each other.

**Q36. How does Natalya react when Lomov falls into an armchair out of sheer exhaustion?**

Natalya is full of worry and anxiety when Lomov falls into an armchair out of sheer exhaustion. She behaves in this manner because she is afraid that if Lomov dies, she will not be able to get married.

**Q37. What does Chubukov do when Lomov regains consciousness towards the end of the play?** Or

**How does Chubukov hurriedly get Natalya and Lomov married? Why?**

Lomov falls into an armchair towards the end of the heated argument regarding the superiority of his dog over that of Natalya. For a while, Chubukov thinks that he is dead. But when Lomov regains consciousness, Chubukov seizes the opportunity

to marry off his daughter Natalya hurriedly to him. He puts Natalya's hand in Lomov's and quickly 'gives his blessings. He himself announces that she is willing and asks them to kiss each other.

**Q38. If Lomov and Natalya really get married, what sort of a life do you expect them to be leading?**

Lomov and Natalya are selfish, mean, short-tempered, impatient, quarrelsome and rash. Such persons, when constrained to live together as husband and wife, will always be quarrelling and arguing over trifles. They are very likely not to lead a peaceful and cordial life.

**Q39. The three characters in the play are a pack of fools. Who, according to you, is the most foolish?**

Lomov is foolish because instead of proposing he is talking about petty land holdings. Natalya is no less. She too shows her childishness and immaturity in both the arguments. However, the most foolish of the lot is Stepan Chubukov, who is expected to behave in a more sensible manner as he is happy about Lomov's marriage proposal for his daughter, who was not only twenty five years of age, but also very desperate to get married.

**Q40. In the end of the play, why does Chubukov drown Natalya's voice by shouting "Champagne! Champagne!"?**

Chubukov conducts a hurried ceremony to marry off Natalya to Lomov while the latter is still not completely conscious. However, soon Lomov becomes alert and once again gets into an argument with Natalya over the superiority of his dog.

Chubukov tries to drown their argument by shouting "Champagne! Champagne!" and announcing the start of their family bliss.

## LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

**Q1. What idea do you get about Lomov and Chubukov's relationship as neighbours?**

Lomov and Chubukov have been neighbours since generations. It appears that initially, in the times of Stepan Chubukov's grandfather, and Lomov's aunt's grandmother the two families had a cordial relationship. However, with the passage of time, as their descendants became more materialistic, hypocrisy, meanness and selfishness affected their relationship. Now neither they were ready to extend any help to each other nor had they any trust in each other. The ownership of Oxen Meadow remained a bone of contention between the two families. Both were landed families and considered themselves to be superior to each other. So much so, that they argued about the superiority of their dogs, too. They posed to be very warm and affectionate towards each other but in reality their hatred became obvious the moment their masks of courtesy slipped and their ugly faces were revealed. They could stoop to any limit and humiliate abuses not only at each other but also at their ancestors. Despite having such an approach, they don't mind talking of matrimony, as it served the interest of both the families. Hence, not bothering about any principles or emotions the two families blow hot and cold as it suits them.

**Q2. What idea do you get about Chubukov from the conversation that takes place between him and Lomov until the latter reveals the real purpose of his visit?**

The first conversation between Chubukov and Lomov reveals Chubukov's hypocrisy and meanness. As Lomov enters his house, outwardly Chubukov shows a lot of affection for him. He

uses several 'dears' and 'darlings' in his speech. In fact, all his dialogues are interspersed with endearing addresses like 'my angel', 'my treasure', 'my precious', 'my beauty'. However, this hypocrite is not ready to render any help to his neighbour. He suspects that Lomov has come to borrow money. In an 'aside', Chubukov clarifies that he won't lend any money to Lomov. Lomov's hesitation to reveal the purpose of his visit irritates Chubukov, hence after waiting for a while for the revelation, he asks Lomov not to 'go round and round' and just 'spit out' the request that he wants to make. The scene shows that he is a double-faced person who does not deserve to be trusted as a neighbour.

**Q3. How does Chubukov react when Lomov tells him the real purpose of his visit? Why does he behave in this manner?**

The moment Lomov reveals that the real purpose of his visit was to ask for Natalya's hand in marriage, Chubukov gets extremely excited. He hugs and kisses Lomov and calls him 'my angel', my son and sheds a tear. He admits that he is behaving in an idiotic manner and he is absolutely off his balance. He blesses, from the core of his heart, the couple to be engaged and he makes a move to go and call his daughter Natalya.

He behaves in such a manner because he is extremely excited on learning that the burden of a grown-up daughter is soon going to be off his shoulders. Being a father, he is very keen to get his twenty-five-year-old daughter married as soon as possible. Now that the opportunity is close at hand, he is beside himself with joy.

**Q4. How does Lomov behave on his arrival at Chubukov's place and after the latter goes out to call his daughter?**

Lomov seems to be visibly nervous and ill confident on his arrival at Chubukov's place. He tries to be extra respectful and

courteous to Chubukov. Each time he addresses him he uses the prefix 'honoured' with Chubukov's name. Once he even stammers and mispronounces his name as Honoured Stepanitch and then Stepan Honouritch. He is hesitant to reveal the purpose of his visit and keeps on beating about the bush till Chubukov forces him firmly to 'spit out' what he wanted to say. In his excitement and nervousness, Lomov utters broken sentences and he has to summon a lot of courage to eventually blurt out what he has come for. He doesn't feel absolutely relieved even after Chubukov goes to call his daughter. A constant debate goes on in his mind. He feels cold and nervous as though he had 'got an examination before him'. He shivers all over, his lips tremble and there is a twitch in his right eyebrow. He keeps getting noise in his ears from excitement and begins telling about his ailments and weird mannerisms. His entire behaviour is comical and rather silly.

**Q5. Why did Chubukov tell Natalya "Go; there is a merchant come for his goods"?**

Chubukov, who was very keen to get his daughter married off at the earliest as she was already twentyfive years of age, was extremely excited to learn that Lomov had come with a proposal for marriage. Hence, when he went inside to call out Natalya, he could not tell his daughter in plain words that time had arrived for her to pack up and go to her husband's place. He wanted the element of suspense to be there, so that Natalya could get to hear from Lomov himself that he wanted to marry her. He knew that hearing it from the horse's mouth would give Natalya far more joy than she would get on hearing this news from her father. So, he conveyed it to her in a rigmarole. Besides, the Russian customs consider a daughter like goods that are given away in marriage.

**Q6. Though Lomov tells Chubukov that he had come to propose to Natalya shortly after coming to his place, why does Natalya get to know about it so late?**

Shortly after coming to Chubukov's place (though with a great sense of hesitation) Lomov discloses the purpose of his visit to Chubukov. The father is very happy and excited to get this news. He can imagine that it would make Natalya equally happy and excited. However, he does not break this news to her directly as he wants her to experience the maximum joy of this moment by hearing it from Lomov himself. So, he just tells her 'Go; there is a merchant come for his goods'. Thus Natalya, ignorant about Lomov's purpose of visit, gets into a heated argument with him about the ownership of Oxen Meadows and fails to know the real purpose of his visit till the news is accidentally broken to her by her father after an angry Lomov goes away.

**Q7. How does Natalya's ignorance about the purpose of Lomov's visit in the first half of the play result in a heated argument between the two of them that led to Lomov's returning home?**

As Natalya was not aware of the fact that Lomov had come to propose to her, she immediately flares up when Lomov talks about being the owner of the Oxen Meadows. She argues violently and refuses to give up her family's claim over the meadows. She arrogantly tells Lomov that the meadows weren't of much worth to her but she could not stand unfairness. Had she known the purpose of Lomov's visit, she would have definitely ignored his claim and would have preferred to be proposed to rather than quarrelling about the ownership of the Oxen Meadows. Lomov tried to keep his cool in the beginning but the moment he realises that the lady was crossing all limits he forgets courtesy and both of them start shouting at each other. Natalya tells Lomov firmly

to shout himself hoarse in his own house, but restrain himself in her house. Chubukov also joins them and they all hurl abuses at each other. Finally Lomov has no choice but to leave Chubukov's house forgetting all about the purpose of his visit.

- Q8. Describe the arguments between Lomov and the Chubukovs over the ownership of 'Oxen Meadows'?**

*Or*

**Explain the dispute over 'Oxen Meadows'?**

'Oxen Meadows' was a piece of land that was claimed to be their family property both by Lomov and Natalya. This property touched the birchwoods that belonged to Chubukovs. It was wedged in between the birchwoods and the Burnt Marsh.

The dispute over the ownership begins when Lomov casually mentions that Oxen Meadows belong to him. A fiery Natalya objects to this claim and soon a heated argument follows. Lomov tells that he has documents to prove his ownership. He agrees that once the Meadows were a subject of dispute but now they are legally his property. He clarifies that his aunt's grandmother had given the free use of the Meadows to the peasants of Natalya's father's grandfather in return for which they were to make bricks for her. These peasants made free use of the Meadows for forty years and had got into the habit of regarding them as their own.

Natalya disagrees with this argument and asserts that both her grandfather and great grandfather reckoned that their land extended to Burnt Marsh, which meant that Oxen Meadows were theirs. She claims that they've had the land for nearly three hundred years and although they weren't of much worth to her she could not stand unfairness.

Both refuse to give up their respective claim over the Meadows.

when Chubukov enters. He too claims that the ownership of the Oxen Meadows lay with their family. He tells Lomov not to yell at him in that 'tone'. The argument heats up further and Lomov threatens to take the matter to court. This is followed by a series of abuses that Lomov and Chubukov hurl at each other. Natalya joins her father in fighting Lomov tooth and nail. Finally, an agitated Lomov leaves.

**Q9. How do Lomov and Chubukov insult each other?**

Lomov and Chubukov get into a heated argument while proving their respective ownership of Oxen Meadows. An agitated Lomov calls Chubukov a landgrabber and threatens to take the matter to court. In retaliation, Chubukov calls Lomov and all his people as pettifogger. Lomov then insults Chubukov's grandfather by telling that he had been tried for embezzlement. To this, Chubukov retorts that Lomovs have had lunacy in their entire family. He calls Lomov's grandfather a drunkard and shames him by telling him that his younger aunt ran away with an architect. Lomov then insults Chubukov by telling that his mother was hump-backed. Chubukov responds by calling his father a guzzling gambler and Lomov a malicious, doublefaced intriguer, the villain, the scarecrow, blind hen and turnip-ghost.

**Q10. Describe the verbal fight between Lomov, Natalya and Chubukov over their respective dogs?**

*Or*

**What argument does Lomov and Natalya have about their dogs Guess and Squeezer? What role does Chubukov play in furthering that argument?**

Lomov had a dog named 'Guess' and Natalya's dog was called 'Squeezer'. The couple begin a normal conversation about their respective pets and end up arguing bitterly about their superiority

over each other. Lomov tells Natalya that Guess has gone lame as his leg must have got twisted or bit by some other dog. He claims that his dog is the very best and expensive too as he had paid 125 roubles to Mironov for him. Natalya says that the price is too much as her dog Squeezer cost 85 roubles and he is heaps better than Guess. She asserts that Squeezer is young and his pedigree is better than anything that even Volchanetsky has got.

Lomov cannot tolerate this praise and tells Natalya that Squeezer is overshot and an overshot dog means it is a bad hunter. An irritated Natalya says that she has heard her dog being called overshot for the first time. Lomov still insists that Squeezer's lower jaw is shorter than the upper. Natalya loses her temper and tells Lomov that her dog is a thoroughbred animal, the son of Harness and Chisels, while Guess does not have any pedigree at all. She calls Guess old and as ugly as a worn-out cab-horse. An angry Lomov tells Natalya that he wouldn't take five Squeezers for Guess and dogs like Squeezer could be found under every bush. He further ridicules the dog by saying that twenty-five roubles would be a handsome price to pay for a dog like Squeezer. Natalya asserts that her Squeezer is a hundred times better than the silly Guess who is half-dead already.

Chubukov too joins the argument and recounts some fine qualities of Guess just to please Lomov. He calls it purebred, firm on his feet with well-sprung ribs, but also lists the dog's defects. Chubukov says that Guess is old and he's short in the muzzle. Lomov cannot take this insult and he begins recounting Squeezer's follies when on the Marusinsky hunt Guess ran neck-and-neck with the Count's dog, while Squeezer was left a whole verst behind. He also makes fun of Squeezer who had started worrying a sheep while other dogs were running after a fox.

This fight again heats up and leads to an attack of palpitations on Lomov amid personal accusations.

**Q11. Initially Lomov and Chubukov try to sound very sweet and courteous. How do the arguments on Oxen Meadows and their dogs, Guess and Squeezer, reveal their real selves?**

Initially when Lomov comes to Chubukov, the two gentlemen treat each other with immense courtesy. Each time Lomov addresses Chubukov, he uses the prefix 'honoured' before his name. Chubukov too uses several 'dears' and 'darlings' in his speech. Though in the heart of his hearts, he has no intention of helping Lomov if he asks for money with endearing addresses like 'my angel', 'my treasure', 'my precious' and 'my beauty'.

However the moment arguments start on the ownership of Oxen Meadows and the superiority of their respective dogs, the masks of gentleness start slipping and their ugly faces are revealed. They abuse and accuse not only each other but also their ancestors. Lomov calls Chubukov a landgrabber and not a neighbour. He threatens to take the matter to court. Chubukov, in turn, calls Lomov a 'pettifogger' and tells him that all his family has been lunatic. He calls his grandfather a drunkard and shames him by saying that his aunt ran away with an architect. Soon, all their decency vanishes into thin air and they start sounding as though they are illiterate, mannerless people who neither have any respect and regard for each other, nor are they bothered about how indecent and uncouth they sound while shouting themselves hoarse in a bid to drown each other's voice.

**Q12. What do you understand by a marriage of convenience? Would you consider Lomov and Natalya's union to be a marriage of convenience? If so, why? Give reasons for your answer.**

A marriage of convenience is the one when some specific

purpose is planned to be gained through matrimonial alliance. It could be a financial or a political motive and such a marriage does not involve two loving partners. Even the merits and demerits of the bride and grooms are overlooked in such a union. Lomov and Natalya too are on the verge of getting into such a relationship. When Lomov realises that at the age of thirty-five it was unlikely for him to get a bride of his choice, he decides to propose to Natalya. Natalya too, at the age of twenty five, is very desperate to get married. Hence, she overlooks the fact that Lomov has a very frail health and she just wants this man to propose to her at any cost. Chubukov knows it very well that had Lomov been really interested in his daughter, he would have proposed to her years back. However, he too, wishing to get the weight of a grown-up daughter off his shoulder, is very keen to see this proposal materialize. Hence, this union is nothing but a marriage of convenience.

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## FIRST FLIGHT (POETRY)

### 1. *Dust of Snow*

(Robert Frost)

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#### ABOUT THE POEM

##### *Introduction*

"Dust of Snow" is a short poem consisting of just two stanzas. However, the poem has got the beauty of a miniature painting. In the fewest possible words, the poet has given the details of a landscape. A snow-laden hemlock tree, with a crow flying out of it, scattering the soft snow all over the poet passing by under the tree, make a perfect, balanced and complete winter landscape.

##### *Summary*

Dejected and depressed, in a very sullen and melancholic mood, the poet had spent a part of his day, feeling absolutely out of sorts and spirits when unexpectedly a seemingly small occurrence lifted the weight off his mind and made him experience a joyous mood.

The poet describes how when he was passing by under a snow-laden hemlock tree, a crow perched on it shook some flakes of snow which fell on him. This little incident brought about a big and positive change in his mood. The sudden contact with nature set in a strong sense of joy in the poet and made all his melancholy disappear.

#### THEME

The small poem "Dust of Snow" is based on the idea that nature is a

perennial source of joy. The poet reveals that contact with nature provides a healing touch and relieves us of depression, sadness and gloom. Even those objects of nature which we tend to treat as having negative, inauspicious associations can be effective in dispelling the gloom in a person's mind. Therefore, the poem contains the idea that nothing in nature is ugly, inauspicious, or unpleasant. Even a crow, a handful dust of snow, and a poisonous tree like hemlock can be instrumental in turning melancholy into cheerfulness. The poem, thus emphasizes that sometimes seemingly insignificant events can bring about a significant change in our lives.

#### TITLE

'Dust' is something that is modest, unassuming and humble, yet the poet has chosen to call the poem "Dust of Snow" in order to bring home the idea that it is not only glamour, grandeur and splendour of nature that fascinate the human mind; even its most humble, ordinary and simple aspects like a handful of snow have the capacity to deeply impact us. As the poem narrates how a handful of fine particles of snow falling on to the poet swept away all his melancholy and replaced it with joy and hope, the title is appropriate and well-chosen.

#### MESSAGE

The poem conveys the message that nature has a romance about it which can transform our mood and take away all the gloom from our spirits. Nature treats every creature and object impartially. Everyone and everything in nature has the power to impact the minds of human beings. Snow spreads itself all over evenly and it can make even an inauspicious crow and a poisonous tree like hemlock its instrument to set in a joyous mood, in a person burdened with tensions and sorrows.

The poem conveys another message that we should never lose hope and optimism, and never let gloom overpower our minds. Joys and

sorrows are inevitable. Therefore, we must adopt an optimistic attitude towards life.

### LITERARY DEVICES

#### Alliteration

Alliteration is the occurrence of the same sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. It creates a musical effect and enhances the pleasure of reading a literary work.

#### Examples:

- ♦ *Has given my heart*  
Here 'h' sound has been repeated.
- ♦ *And saved some part*  
Here the repetition of 's' sound makes the line musical.

#### Enjambment

Enjambment as a literary device refers to the practice of running lines from one to the next without using any kind of punctuation marks to indicate a pause (*full stop, comma etc.*).

This poem is an excellent example of enjambment. Each of its lines runs on to the next without any punctuation mark and the thought ends with the last line. The full stop comes only at the end.

#### Symbolism

Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. Generally, it is an object representing another, to give an entirely different meaning that is much deeper and more significant.

The poet has used three symbols - 'a crow', 'a hemlock tree' and 'a dust of snow'. All the three symbols are conventionally associated with sorrow. A crow is considered ugly and inauspicious which portends ill-fortune. A hemlock tree is poisonous and, therefore, has direct

association with death and the snow represents hardships.

The poet has associated these negative symbols with his dark, depressed and gloomy mood. However, he makes these symbols instrumental in bringing about a deep, positive change in his mood. The crow, while fluttering away from the hemlock tree makes some snow fall on the poet passing by. This contact with nature dispels the gloom of despair and sets in a positive and joyous mood.

The negative associations of the three symbols are, in this way, replaced by positive connotations.

### **Imagery**

Imagery in poetry refers to the mental pictures or images which are evoked in the minds of the readers through words in a literary work. Imagery makes a poem graphic and more appealing.

The small poem "Dust of Snow" is full of visual imagery of the winter landscape. It presents the landscape of the forest with snow-covered trees, a crow perched on the hemlock tree and a lonely traveller (*the poet himself*) passing by. The imagery corresponds with the mental state of the poet.

### **RHYME SCHEME**

Each of the two stanzas in the poem "Dust of Snow" follow the same rhyme scheme *i.e. abab*.

## STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.

## (I)

The way a crow  
Shook down on me  
The dust of snow  
From a hemlock tree

In this stanza, the poet narrates his contact with nature in the form of the snow-flakes falling on him from a tree.

The poet was passing from near a hemlock tree when a crow perched on the tree moved, and in the process, made the flecks of snow fall on him. However, it is significant that while presenting a sight of nature, the poet has chosen a poisonous tree like hemlock, instead of the traditionally chosen trees like oaks, maples and pines. Similarly, he has chosen a crow instead of a nightingale or a cuckoo. The season presented is not spring or summer, but snowy, winter season.

The 'crow', the 'snow', and the 'hemlock tree' represent the world of nature. All the three symbols are associated with harsh aspects of nature and symbolize death. The crowing of a crow is regarded as a bad omen and the hemlock tree, being poisonous, stands for 'death'. Similarly, snow symbolizes barrenness and lack of life. The poet uses these symbols to emphasize his sad and depressed mood.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS****SET - I**

(a) Where was the crow perched?

The crow was perched on a snow-covered hemlock tree in a forest.

(b) How did the crow shake off snow from the hemlock tree?

The crow shook off the snow from the hemlock tree unintentionally in the course of flying off from there. As it took off from a branch

of a hemlock tree, it displaced the powdery snow scattering it all over the poet passing from under the tree.

**(c) Who does 'me' stand for? In what kind of mood is 'he'?**

'Me' stands for the poet. He is in an utterly dejected and sombre mood.

**(d) What do you understand by 'dust of snow'?**

'Dust of Snow' means the small particles of soft, unsolidified snow.

**SET - II**

**(a) What does 'snow' represent in this stanza?**

Although snow generally symbolizes difficulties and barrenness, in this stanza, 'snow' represents nature. It is with snow falling on the narrator that he comes in contact with nature.

**(b) What are 'crow' and 'hemlock tree' usually symbolic of?**

'Crow' and 'hemlock tree' are usually symbolic of the unpleasant aspects of nature. 'Crow' is not a sweet singing bird and is considered to be inauspicious, and 'hemlock' is a poisonous tree symbolizing death.

**(c) Explain the imagery used in the stanza.**

The imagery used in the stanza is that of a winter landscape with a hemlock tree laden with snow and a crow perched on its branches.

**TYPE - II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

**(a) The crow shook down on the poet a bit of**

- |           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| (i) dust  | (iii) snow  |
| (ii) sand | (iv) poison |

**(b) The crow was perched on a branch of a .....**

**(c) The hemlock tree is usually**

- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| (i) fragrant   | (iii) snow-clad |
| (ii) colourful | (iv) poisonous  |

(d) The rhyme scheme of the stanza is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) (iii) snow (b) hemlock tree (c) (iv) poisonous (d) abab

(II)

Has given my heart  
A change of mood  
And saved some part  
Of a day I had rued.

In this stanza, the poet reveals that contact with nature is highly effective in soothing the sad, sorrowful mind of a person.

When the particles of snow fell on the poet when he was passing by near a hemlock tree, his mood was drastically transformed. He had been in a gloomy and foul mood throughout the day. He felt bad that sorrow had spoilt a major part of the day. But as he came in the lap of nature, he could spend the rest of his day with happy spirits. Even snow can bring about a complete change in the mood of a person.

The poet has employed unusual imagery and symbols here. The 'crow' usually is considered to be a harsh bird and the 'snow' represents difficulties of life. Similarly, the 'hemlock tree' is venomous. But the poet transforms all the three into effective, pleasant symbols of pleasure giving objects of nature, which have the power to uplift the drooping spirits of a person.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(a) **What state of mind did the poet have in the beginning of the poem?**

In the beginning of the poem, the poet was in very low spirits. He had spoilt a good part of the day brooding pensively as his mind was filled with depressing, negative thoughts.

(b) **How did the poet's mood change at the end of the poem?**

The poet became relieved and cheerful. He no longer had any regrets. Having got out of his depressive mood, he meant to spend the rest of his day in a happy, uplifted mood.

(c) **What brought about a change in the poet's mood?**

Or

**What does the poet say has changed his mood?**

Or

**What has given the poet 'a change of mood'?**

A very insignificant incident brought about a change in the poet's mood. Particles of snow displaced by a crow from a hemlock tree fell on him as he was passing by. This direct contact with nature soothed and pacified his troubled mind and changed his mood.

(d) **Explain: 'And saved some part/Of a day...?'**

The poet had a very dull and a dreary day clouded with gloom and cheerlessness. But before the end of the day, a fall of dust of snow over him set in a joyous mood. It was like a blessing from heaven and the rest of the day was saved from being ruined.

(e) **Which literary devices have been used in the above stanza?**

The literary devices used here are 'enjambment' *i.e.* each line runs on to the next and carries on the idea till the last line ends with a full stop, and 'alliteration' *i.e.* there is repetition of 'h' and 's' sounds in the first and the third line respectively.

(f) **What is the rhyme scheme of the stanza?**

The rhyme scheme of the stanza is *abab*.

#### **TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) The poet had spent the major part of his day in
- |             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| (i) delight | (iii) merriment |
| (ii) regret | (iv) meditation |
- (b) The incident in the poem made the poet .....
- (c) Who/What is responsible for the change in the poet's mood?
- (d) The poem shows that the poet
- |                           |
|---------------------------|
| (i) does not enjoy nature |
|---------------------------|

- (ii) keeps complaining about nature
  - (iii) is indifferent to nature
  - (iv) loves contact with nature
- (e) The extract seems to suggest that little things in our life can make us happy or sad. (True/False)

**ANSWERS** (a) (ii) regret (b) happy (c) dust of snow  
(d) (iv) loves contact with nature (e) True

### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 40 words each)

- Q1. What is a 'dust of snow'? What does the poet say has changed his mood? How has the poet's mood changed? (Textual)**

'Dust of Snow' means powdered snow or small particles of snow. The poet explains that a sprinkle of dust of snow over him caused by a crow's sudden flight from a hemlock tree changed his mood. In fact it was the suddenness of this contact with nature that shook him out of his gloomy and pensive mood and set in some joy and cheerfulness.

- Q2. What are the birds that are usually named in poems? Do you think a crow is often mentioned in poems? What images come to your mind when you think of a crow? (Textual)**

The birds usually mentioned in poems are peacocks, parrots, larks, nightingales, cuckoos, skylarks which are associated with love, good luck, beauty and melodious singing. A crow hardly ever finds a place in poetry because the crow is neither a sweet-singing nor a good-looking bird. Moreover, it is considered to be inauspicious or a bad omen. The images evoked by a crow are of harshness and cunningness. Here the image goes well with the sad and dejected mood of the poet.

- Q3. What is 'a hemlock tree'? Why doesn't the poet write about a more 'beautiful' tree such as a maple, or an oak, or a pine? (Textual)**

'A hemlock tree' is a poisonous tree with white flowers. The poet has deliberately dropped beautiful trees like maple, oak or pine because he wants the imagery to represent his sorrow-stricken and depressed mind well. But the same tree becomes an instrument of change from sadness to happiness in the poet's mind. The poet wants to emphasize that every object of nature, even a poisonous tree, can be helpful in bringing about pleasure.

- Q4. What do the 'crow' and 'hemlock' represent - joy or sorrow? What does the 'dust of snow' that the crow shakes off a hemlock tree stand for? (Textual)**

Crow, which is a lacklustre bird and hemlock that has poisonous flowers cannot be associated with joy. Hence, they represent sorrow. Here, they represent the sorrow-laden mood of the poet. Snow also stands for hardships but here it plays a catalytic role in lifting the mood of the poet and liberating his mind of tension and depression. It becomes symbolic of the force of nature.

- Q5. How did the crow shake down the dust of snow?**

The crow shook down the dust of snow from the branch of the hemlock tree on which it was perched. As it made some movement or flew out of the tree, the snow got displaced and its fine particles flew all over like small grains of dust.

- Q6. What role does the crow play in lifting the spirit of the poet?**

The crow plays a very significant role in lifting the spirit of the poet by making the dust of snow fall on him. The snow makes the poet have a direct contact with nature which relieves him of all sorrow and uplifts his spirit. The crow, in this way, may be regarded as a catalyst that makes a change possible.

**Q7. What are the 'crow', the 'hemlock' and the 'snow' symbolic of in the poem?**

The 'crow', the 'hemlock' and the 'snow' symbolize the world of nature in the poem. Although traditionally, all the three stand for unpleasant, harsh aspects of nature – a 'crow' symbolising jarring music and impending sorrowful events; 'hemlock' symbolizing death and 'snow' symbolizing barrenness and suffering. But in this poem, they all have been transformed into objects of nature that relieve gloom and sadness. The poet has used these symbols as catalysts in shifting his mood from despair to cheerfulness.

**Q8. What is the poet's purpose of introducing an unglamorous tree like hemlock and a lacklustre bird like crow in the poem?**

By introducing the two not-so-attractive objects of nature in the poem, the poet means to impress upon us the glory of nature even in the most humble and unglamorous aspects. Nature, in all its aspects, gives pleasure though we sometimes fail to realize it.

**Q9. What is the significance of 'dust of snow'?**

'Dust of snow' signifies the joys that nature bestows upon us. Nature with all its simplicity and spontaneity and snow-like coldness, can bring us a blissful state of mind.

**Q10. What was the poet's mood in the beginning? When and how did it change?**

Or

**What brought about a transformation in the poet's mood?**

In the beginning, the poet was in a very depressed, tense, and gloomy mood though there are no details as to why he was sad. But as he was passing by near a snow-laden hemlock tree, some dust of snow fell on him when a crow moved or flew away from

its branches. This contact with nature drove away all the sadness and transformed the poet's mood completely.

**Q11. How could a handful of dust of snow save 'some part of a day'?**

Dust of snow in all its whiteness, purity and soothing coolness came like a blessing from heaven which pacified the poet's agitated mind. The suddenness and spontaneity of the fall drove away all his gloom, leaving the poet to spend the rest of the day happily. Thus, the rest of the day was saved.

**Q12. Explain: "Of a day I had rued".**

The expression means that the poet's melancholic mood had spoiled his day by making it dull, dreary and sad. But his bad mood is immediately uplifted when the powdery snow showers down on him from the branches of the hemlock tree.

**Q13. Why do you think the poet had rued the day?**

One rues when one views life negatively, and rather than counting one's blessings one focuses all attention on the troubles and difficulties. The poet too must have rued brooding over some such incidents of life or some sorrowful incident might have left a deep impact on his mind to make him rue the day.

**Q14. Why do you think the poet has written the poem in just two stanzas? Do you think the poem could have been an elaborate piece? Why didn't the poet do so? Or**

**Why do you think the poet has kept the poem short and simple?**

The beauty of the poem "Dust of Snow" lies in its brevity. Though the poem could have been elaborated, the poet didn't do so as he was able to bring out the larger significance of this small and simple incident very vividly in just two stanzas. Hence, he didn't feel the need for any further elaboration.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

**Q1. How does Frost present nature in this poem? (Textual)**

Robert Frost's treatment of nature in the poem "Dust of Snow" is unconventional. Although, like the conventional nature poets, Frost believes that nature provides relief from the sorrows and troubles of the world, he does not present some beautiful landscape with green trees or flower-laden plants. Nor does he talk about some sweet singing birds like a cuckoo, a lark, or a nightingale. He presents a winter landscape – a hemlock tree with poisonous flowers all covered with snow and a crow sitting on it. In fact, the three symbols have been used to present effectively the mental state of the poet.

The poet who has been in a depressed and melancholy mood for the whole day happens to pass by near a snow-laden hemlock tree with a crow perched on it. But when the crow shakes down on him some particles of snow, this gentle shower is enough to lift his mood. He is transported from a sad, dejected mental state to one of relief and pleasure. The remaining part of the day is marked by happiness and a light mood.

Therefore, although hemlock tree and crow are not traditionally associated with pleasing emotions, still they, being part of nature, can be instrumental in imparting happiness. Similarly, snow is symbolic of difficult times or suffering, but snow can also liberate a person from the mood of sadness. Nature always provides pleasure. Such is the bond between human beings and nature that whenever human beings come into the lap of nature, they are certainly blessed with relief, delight and pleasure.

**Q2. How does a simple incident in the poem convey a significant idea?**

Or

**How does the poem reveal that sometimes small, insignificant events can bring about a significant change in our state of mind?**

The poem "Dust of Snow" by Robert Frost is a small poem consisting of just eight lines that narrate a simple incident. The poet narrates how one day he was in a depressed, dejected mood and had spent a large part of the day with his mind sunken in melancholy. But, by chance he passed by a snow-covered hemlock tree. A crow sitting on the tree moved and as a result some snow fell on the poet. This small chance happening had a deep impact on the poet's mind. He was at once transported from a depressed state of mind to that of delight and happiness. His mind was relieved of the burden of melancholy.

The seemingly insignificant event, in this way, proved to be so effective that it absolutely changed the poet's mood and state of mind. Moreover, it left an important message that sometimes trivial happenings may have a deep, serious significance. Such incidents are sometimes forceful enough to bring about a drastic change in the life of a person. Even a bird like a crow sitting on a poisonous tree covered with snow can be instrumental in bringing about a profound change in the attitude of a person. A small incident can reveal how one feels relieved of the worldly burdens in the lap of nature. Even the so-called harsh and frosty aspects of nature can impart solace and delight.

**Q3. What kind of imagery has been used by Robert Frost in the poem "Dust of Snow"?** Or

**How do you think the poem "Dust of Snow" is full of unconventional images?** Or

**"Dust of Snow", though small, is rich in imagery. Discuss.**

Robert Frost's poem "Dust of Snow", though very small, is replete with imagery from the world of nature. The poet has beautifully portrayed a winter landscape with snow-laden trees, a crow perched on a hemlock tree and a traveller (the poet himself) passing through the snowy land. The poem is picturesque, as the poet has painted a very vivid picture which the readers can visualize very clearly. The images are not taken from the store-house of earlier poets. Robert Frost has used the images which other poets have not considered to be worthy of being parts of poetry. Unlike the conventional poets, Frost has opted for a winter season instead of spring though traditionally winter is symbolic of difficulties, sorrows and sufferings. The tree chosen is not a banyan, or oak, or birch, or elm; it is hemlock - a poisonous tree. Similarly the poet has not brought in a sweet-singing lark, cuckoo, or nightingale to soothe his depressed spirit. It is a crow, a harsh singing bird who becomes instrumental in transforming drastically the mood of the poet. The snow scattered by the crow falling on the poet brings him in direct contact with nature and the touch of nature has a healing impact on the troubled mind of the poet. Thus, the imagery employed is unconventional, but it conveys the conventional message that nature is a rich source of pleasure.

□□□

## 2. *Fire and Ice*

(Robert Frost)

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### ABOUT THE POEM

#### *Introduction*

"Fire and Ice" is a short poem consisting of two stanzas – dealing with two possibilities of destruction of the world. The two different stanzas deal with two different schools of thought about the destruction of the world – one with 'fire' and the other with 'ice'. However, the poet has used the two elements both literally and symbolically.

#### *Summary*

The poem presents two contradictory views about how the world would see its end. The idea is based on the scientific theories that the world will come to its doom either because of the excessive, fiery heat or because of the freezing ice. Some scientists are of the view that the world would be scorched because of global warming while others hold an entirely contradictory view that it would be frozen to its end in an ice age in the future.

The poet subscribes to the first view that it would end in 'fire'. But he uses 'fire' and 'ice' symbolically, associating each with a different emotion. 'Fire' is used as a symbol of violent, fiery passions like anger, cruelty, brutality etc. The poet is of the opinion that human beings are so much overpowered by these destructive passions that they may cause the end of the world. These emotions, in their intensity, have the potential to consume the world.

Similarly, 'ice' has a symbolic significance in the poem and represents cold feelings like hatred, indifference, jealousy, apathy, self-centredness etc. The poet, who finds violent passions to be a potent threat to the existence of the world, is not blind to the rampant cold emotions. People have lost the warmth of human affection, kindness

and sympathy. The icy feelings of selfishness and self-centredness have suppressed human values and have so strongly overpowered human beings that they are a potent danger to the world. They may spell the doom of the world because they are sufficiently destructive forces.

Thus, the poet does not rule out the probability of 'ice' being a potential deadly force which can annihilate the world completely. While 'fire' consumes the world quickly, 'ice' is like a slow poison to lead the world gradually to its end.

#### TITLE

The title "Fire and Ice" is short, crisp and meaningful. It contains in itself the whole gist of the poem. 'Fire' and 'Ice' are used symbolically for two contrary sets of emotions. Robert Frost shows the prevalence of fiery passions like fury, cruelty, violence and greed as well as of the cold feelings like hatred, indifference and insensitivity. 'Fire' and 'Ice', though contrary in nature, have a similar ability to destroy.

#### THEME

Robert Frost's poem "Fire and Ice" is based on the idea that the world is likely to encounter two different destructive forces – 'fire' and 'ice', either of which will spell its end because of its intensity. The poet uses 'fire' and 'ice' at literal as well as symbolic levels. Literally, the world may move gradually towards excessive global warming or towards excessive coldness which will bring about its doom. Symbolically, 'fire' and 'ice' represent contrasting emotions – 'fire' symbolizing violent passions like anger, cruelty, brutality etc. and 'ice' signifying hatred, jealousy, insensitivity, indifference etc. Both the fiery and the cold emotions, in their intensity, can prove to be a cause of the destruction of the world since they suppress human values and alienate people from one another.

### MESSAGE

The poem conveys the message that if human emotions of anger, lust, jealousy, greed, hatred and indifference keep rising, the world will sooner or later move towards a total destruction. Both the fiery and cold temperaments have the power to destroy the world and such temperaments must be controlled for the world to survive. The poet indirectly emphasizes the need of sustaining human thoughts and feelings for the survival of the world. The poem contains a warning for mankind to be alert and aware of the danger in letting loose any such emotions.

### LITERARY DEVICES

#### *Alliteration*

Alliteration is the occurrence of the same sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. It creates a musical effect and enhances the pleasure of reading a literary work.

Robert Frost employs this device to make the lines musical and emphatic.

#### **Examples:**

- *Some say the world will end in fire.*

In this line 's' and 'w' sounds are repeated which gives a musical quality to the line.

- *I hold with those who favour fire.*

In this line the poet repeats 'f' sound making the expression musical.

#### *Assonance*

Assonance is a close repetition of same vowel sounds within a group of words. Assonance occurs when vowel sounds, not letters, are repeatedly used in a line.

**Example:**

- ◆ *But if it had to perish twice*

Here 'i' sound is repeated which makes the line soft and musical.

**Anaphora**

Anaphora is a poetic device in which a word or group of words is used repeatedly at the beginning of sentences or clauses to create a special effect or to emphasise something.

**Example:**

- ◆ *Some say the world will end in fire*  
*Some say in ice.*

Here the expression 'Some say' has been used successively in two lines to emphasize the difference of opinion.

**Symbolism**

Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. Generally, it is an object representing another, to give an entirely different meaning that is deeper and more significant.

**Examples:**

- ◆ 'Fire' is used as a symbol of emotions of anger, lust, greed and violence.
- ◆ 'Ice' is symbolic of hatred, indifference, apathy and lack of consideration.

**Enjambment**

Enjambment is a poetic device in which an idea does not end with a line, but is carried on to the next line or lines without any punctuation marks - comma or full stop.

**Examples:**

- ◆ *Some say the world will end in fire*  
*Some say in ice.*

- *From what I have tasted of desire  
I hold with those who favour fire.*
- *I think I know enough of hate  
To say that for destruction ice  
Is also great  
And would suffice.*

In all these examples, a line runs on to the next without any punctuation mark to show a pause or a stop.

### **Imagery**

Imagery in poetry refers to the mental pictures or images which are evoked in the readers' minds through words in a literary work.

Imagery makes a poem picturesque and more appealing.

In this poem the images used are of 'fire' and 'ice' and evoke the pictures of the world engulfed in fire or covered with deadly ice.

### **RHYME SCHEME**

The poem consists of only nine lines divided into two unequal stanzas and the rhyme scheme is not uniform.

In the first stanza, the rhyme scheme is *abaa*, whereas in the second stanza, it is *ababa*.

## STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.

(I)

Some say the world will end in fire  
 Some say in ice.  
 From what I've tasted of desire  
 I hold with those who favour fire.

In this stanza, the poet, Robert Frost states that there are two schools of thought holding contrary opinions about how the world would meet its end.

Some people are of the view that it would end because of intense heat as there is increasing global warming. In other words, the deep heat or fire deep in the earth will lead to natural calamities like volcanoes, earthquakes and tsunamis, which will one day end the earth. The sun may emit scorching rays and the world may burn down. But there are others who believe that the sun might lose its heat leaving the world frozen to end. However, from his own experience, the poet subscribes to the opinion of those who think that the world would end in fire.

Here 'fire' and 'ice' have not been used only literally, they also have a symbolic significance. 'Fire' stands for fierce, fiery and violent passions like anger, lust, cruelty and ruthlessness. 'Ice,' on the other hand, is symbolic of cold feelings like jealousy, hatred, indifference and self-centredness. Though the two elements are contrary in nature, they both possess enormous destructive power.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) How do some people think that the world will end in fire? Or  
 Explain: "Some say the world will end in fire."

Some people are of the opinion that violent feelings like cruelty, enmity, anger and fury will bring the world to a fiery end. It would be destroyed completely because of the violent tendencies of people in the modern world.

**(b) Explain: "Some say in ice".**

In the poem, 'Ice' is used symbolically to signify the cold, feelingless attitude of people who are greedy, insensitive and indifferent towards others. Such a lack of warmth and affection leads to inhuman actions which may spell the end of the world.

**(c) What has the poet tasted of desire? What is the significance of the word 'tasted' here?**

The poet is referring to his experience of man's selfish and self-centred desires. Here, 'desire' implies strong feelings and passions and 'tasted' implies that the poet has attained first hand experience and knowledge of these passions.

**(d) Explain: 'I hold with those who favour fire'.**

Or

**What does the poet favour and why?**

Human tendency to engage in cruel, lustful and brutal conflicts makes the poet favour the idea that these emotions will cause utter destruction of the world. His belief comes from his personal observations and experiences in the world.

**(e) What does 'fire' signify literally and symbolically?**

Literally, 'fire' implies the burning heat and refers to the global warming which has the power to turn the earth into a big fireball. Symbolically, 'fire' stands for the heat of desires, love and passion. It also signifies human violence, ruthlessness and cruelty.

**(f) What is 'ice' here symbolic of?**

'Ice' symbolises cold feelings like hatred, apathy, indifference, jealousy, self-centredness and insensitivity.

**TYPE - II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) People believe that the world will end either in ..... or in .....

- (b) 'Desire' in the third line stands for
- |                     |                             |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| (i) happy memories  | (iii) uncontrolled passions |
| (ii) noble purposes | (iv) bare necessities       |
- (c) 'I' in the stanza refers to .....
- (d) Here to 'favour fire' implies that fire is a/an ..... element.
- |               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| (i) essential | (iii) favourable |
| (ii) pleasant | (iv) destructive |

**ANSWERS** (a) fire; ice (b) (iii) uncontrolled passions (c) the poet  
(d) (iv) destructive

(II)

But if it had to perish twice,  
I think I know enough of hate  
To say that for destruction ice  
Is also great  
And would suffice.

In this stanza, the poet continues his idea that the world will perish but the force of destruction is completely in contrast to the force in the first stanza.

Although the poet is of the opinion that the global warming may lead to the destruction of the world, he is not unaware of the lack of the emotional warmth in the world. He thinks that people have lost affection, love, kindness, consideration, and sympathy – the emotions considered to be warm. These emotions have been replaced by the cold emotions of hatred and jealousy. So rampant and so intense is the feeling of hatred that the poet feels that it can be a potential cause of the destruction of the world. The end of the poem suggests that it doesn't matter which is stronger – fire or ice – both carry the destructive elements which may annihilate the world.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

**SET - I**

- (a) What does the poet mean by 'if it had to perish twice'?

The poet means that if the world had to get destroyed twice, each time by an absolutely different force.

- (b) **The poet feels that he 'knew enough of hate'. What would this hate result in?**

The poet feels that there is so much of hatred in this world that it can result in complete annihilation of human emotions and can lead to the destruction of the world.

- (c) **For destruction 'ice is also great'. Why has the poet used the word 'also' in the line?**

The poet means that the obvious factor for the destruction of the world is fire (anger) but ice (hatred) too can bring the world to an end. Since, the poet is talking about two different elements of destruction, and speaks of fire in the first stanza, he has used 'also' in the second one.

- (d) **Why does the poet call the ice 'great'?**

The poet has used the word 'great' in a satirical way. Usually the word stands for something grand and positive. Here, the poet is using the adjective in the context of destruction.

#### SET - II

- (a) **What does the poet associate 'ice' with?**

The poet associates 'ice' with hatred, apathy, insensitivity and lack of human affection.

- (b) **Why are 'ice' and 'hatred' placed side by side?**

'Ice' has a freezing power which in its intensity may be as destructive as fire. 'Hatred' is a cold emotion which freezes human emotions and can prove to be a destroyer of human values and can bring about an end of the world. Therefore, the poet has placed 'ice' and 'hatred' side by side.

- (c) **Explain: "And would suffice."**

The poet believes that hatred is very widespread and very intense. It is so destructive a force that in itself it is sufficient to destroy the world.

(d) What is the rhyme scheme of the above stanza?

The rhyme scheme of the above stanza is *ababa*.

### TYPE-II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) 'It' in the first line represents .....
- (b) By 'ice is also great,' the poet means to suggest that 'ice' has as much ability to ..... as the fire has.
- (c) 'Ice' here represents
- |             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| (i) winter  | (iii) hatred |
| (ii) beauty | (iv) purity  |
- (d) A word in the extract that means the same as 'destroy' is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) the world (b) destroy (c) (iii) hatred (d) perish

### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 40 words each)

**Q1. There are many ideas about how the world would 'end'. Do you think the world will end some day? Have you ever thought what would happen if the sun got so hot that it 'burst,' or grew colder and colder?** (Textual)

The theories about the destruction of the earth seem to be very probable as whatever is created must perish some day. In the event of the sun getting excessively hot or growing absolutely cold the earth would not remain a habitable planet. In the first case, intensity of heat will burn the world to cinders and life will come to an end. In the second probability, ice may be so intensely cold that the world will be frozen, leaving no survivors.

**Q2. For Frost what do 'fire' and 'ice' stand for? (Textual)**

'Fire' for Robert Frost represents fiery, violent passions of cruelty, lust, greed, avarice, fury and conflict which can quickly consume a relationship and cause the end of the world. 'Ice' stands for cold emotions like coldness, insensitivity, indifference, intolerance, hatred and rigidity which may suppress good human values and can bring the world to its doom.

**Q3. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? How does it help in bringing out the contrasting ideas in the poem? (Textual)**

The rhyme scheme of the poem is *abaa* in the first stanza and *ababa* in the second stanza. The two stanzas put forward two contrasting ideas. The first stanza talks of fire. The variation in the second stanza is to show the contrasting element of destruction, that is 'ice'.

**Q4. 'Some say the world will end in fire, some say in ice.' Why is there a difference of opinion regarding the 'end' of the world?**

There is a difference of opinion regarding the end of the world because scientifically speaking, neither of the possibilities can be ruled out as there has been an apprehension that the global warming may burn the world out. Similarly people fear that excessive cold may spell its doom. So, different people have different view-points.

**Q5. What makes the poet agree with those that the world will end in 'fire'? Or**

**How do you think the poet supports the idea of fire leading to the destruction of the world? Or**

**Frost favours fire over ice for the end of the world. Justify.**

The poet's personal experiences and observations make him agree with those who are of the view that the world will end in fire. He has witnessed how fiery passions like anger, cruelty,

lust and violence govern the thoughts and actions of people and may lead to the doom of the world.

**Q6. The world can be destroyed in two ways - by fire and by ice. What does the poet think of each of these ways?**

The poet is of the opinion that the world would be consumed by fire. He is of this view as he has seen a lot of cruelty, lust, anger and violence in this world. So powerful and so rampant are these emotions that they may lead the world to its end. These uncontrolled emotions make human beings brutal and they indulge in deadly fights and wars. But he does not forget that cold feelings like hatred, jealousy, insensitivity and indifference are equally destructive to bring about its doom.

**Q7. How, according to the poet, will ice suffice to destroy the world?**

Or

**What does the ending of the poem suggest?**

The poet considers violent passions to be a powerful destructive force. But in the last line he suggests that cold feelings like insensitivity and lack of empathy are so rampant in the world and so intense that they are capable of destroying the whole world by suppressing human values and mutual affection. They are like a slow poison that will gradually consume the world.

**Q8. Why are 'ice' and 'hate' juxtaposed in the poem?**

'Ice' has been used both literally and symbolically in the poem. Ice is a concrete force that can destroy the world through its intensity. Symbolically, 'ice' represents the cold feelings of hatred, jealousy, apathy, selfishness etc. which can turn human beings into beasts who will readily destroy one another. Thus, 'ice' and 'hate' are juxtaposed in the poem as forces of destruction.

**Q9. What debatable idea does the poet present through the poem?**

The poet presents the debatable idea whether 'fire' or 'ice' can be a cause of the complete annihilation of the world. The debate is presented at two levels – literal and symbolic. At the literal level, 'fire' stands for intolerable and intense heat and 'ice' for equally unbearable and freezing coldness.

Symbolically, 'fire' and 'ice' present emotional levels and the poet discusses whether violent emotions or cold emotions can bring about the end of the world.

**Q10. What, according to Frost, would happen if the world were to perish twice?**

Frost is of the opinion that 'fire' will engulf the world and destroy it completely. But if it comes to life again, it will be destroyed by ice. 'Ice' literally implies excessive cold which may freeze the world. Symbolically, it stands for cold feelings of jealousy, hatred and selfishness which have the power to drive the world to its end.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)*

**Q1. Write about the symbolic significance of the poem "Fire and Ice".**

*Or*

**How are 'Fire' and 'Ice' used as symbols of the various human emotions?**

*Or*

**What are the two contrasting views about the end of the world as projected in the poem "Fire and Ice"?**

Robert Frost's small poem "Fire and Ice" is rich in symbolic significance. The poet uses the words 'Fire' and 'Ice' to present two contrasting and contradictory opinions of people regarding the end of the world. Some people uphold the idea that the

world will be burnt to cinders because of the global warming caused by the sun getting intensely hot. On the other hand, there is a contrasted view that the sun will lose its heat and the world will come to an end because of the ice which will freeze every form of life in the world.

In the poem 'Fire' signifies not only the extreme heat of the sun, but also the intensity of passions like lust, anger, violence and cruelty which can destroy good human values. These violent passions provoke people to indulge in inhuman actions. Not only individuals, even nations go to wars only because of greed, intolerance and selfishness. Similarly, 'Ice' is used as a symbol for lack of human feelings like love, affection, sympathy, consideration and kindness. The hearts of people lose the warmth of emotions and become cold and stony because of the feelings of hatred, jealousy, insensitivity and indifference. These negative emotions become so powerful that the consequences are destructive. The poet believes that 'ice' may consume the world slower than 'fire', but it has the potential to bring the whole world to an end.

**Q2. Although there is a contrast between 'fire' and 'ice', the poet reveals some similarity between them. What is it? Or**

**How are 'fire' and 'ice' both dissimilar and similar in the poem "Fire and Ice"? Or**

**What do 'fire' and 'ice' in the poem symbolise? How are they interlinked?**

'Fire' and 'Ice' are certainly different and contrary elements. Symbolically too, 'fire' and 'ice' represent emotions which have a glaring contrast between them. 'Fire' represents the fiery emotions of lust, anger, intolerance, violence and cruelty and 'ice' stands for coldness of attitude caused by jealousy, indifference, selfishness and self-centredness.

However, the poet reveals that in their intensity, they share an attribute of the destructive power. 'Fire' can burn the world away with its excessive heat getting out of control; similarly, 'ice' can freeze life out of living beings and destroy the world. As both fire and ice are equally destructive and have the ability to annihilate the world, they are similar in a way despite a dichotomy between them.

'Fire' and 'Ice,' at a symbolic level, too have the common ability to cause destruction. Not only are the violent passions destructive of human sensibility, even cold emotions of hatred, indifference and jealousy can cause the same destruction. In this way, the poem brings out the common feature of 'Fire' and 'Ice' *i.e.* the destructive power latent in them.

**Q3. How can Robert Frost's poem "Fire and Ice" be read as an extended metaphor?**

A metaphor is a departure from the literal use of language; it is an implicit comparison between two different objects. The poet compares the disparate things without using the words of comparison.

Robert Frost's poem "Fire and Ice" is certainly an extended metaphor because the poet uses both fire and ice, not literally, but as metaphors for various human emotions. 'Fire' represents violent passions like lust, cruelty, fury, intolerance etc. whereas 'ice' symbolizes hatred, lack of affection, self-centredness, indifference, jealousy etc. The poet presents both 'fire' and 'ice' as destructive forces implying thereby that the intensity of 'desire' and 'hatred' have the same destructive potential to annihilate the world.

The poem opens with the metaphorical usage of 'fire' and 'ice' and continues the metaphors till the end. Through these

metaphors, the poet wants to convey the idea that violent emotions turn people into cruel and brutal individuals who pose a threat to the world. Similarly, cold feelings like jealousy and hatred suppress human feelings and are in no way less dangerous for the existence of the world. But whereas 'fire' may engulf and incinerate the world quickly, 'ice' is slow in leading the world to its end. The poet seems to suggest that fiery people express their enmity and kill others in anger but people with cold feelings spread hatred throughout the world which acts as a slow poison. But it is sufficient in itself to drive the world towards total annihilation.

**Q4. What message do you think Robert Frost's poem "Fire and Ice" gives to mankind?**

Robert Frost's poem "Fire and Ice" is an appeal for ending all fiery emotions like anger, cruelty, violence, and intolerance, and icy emotions like hatred, jealousy, and apathy, for they destroy the very fabric of human society and relationships. They are responsible for the loss of countless lives and they have caused irreparable damage to races, countries, and the environment. He believes in the oneness of mankind and envisions a world full of love, peace, and harmony. Destruction is easy but the more challenging and daunting task is to create and maintain a world wherein all peoples can mutually co-exist. At an individual level, the poem seems to convey the message that obsession with unhealthy ambitions like greed, lust and power or a life full of jealousy and hatred will destroy all peace of mind and charm of life. Thus, the poem sounds a warning that human beings must learn to check negative or destructive feelings and emotions for a great future of mankind.



### 3. A Tiger in the Zoo

(Leslie Norris)

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#### ABOUT THE POEM

##### *Introduction*

The poem brings about a contrast between a tiger's life in the narrow confines of a zoo and his life in his natural habitat of a forest where he doesn't only wander about without any restrictions but also strikes terror among the people in the villages located at the edge of the jungle. The poem arouses the readers' sympathy for the enslaved, encaged and constrained tiger deprived of his freedom, as well as of his natural self.

##### *Summary*

The tiger angrily paces up and down in the narrow confines of his cage, noiselessly, on his soft padded paws.

Actually, the tiger is supposed to be seen in the dark jungles pushing his way through the tall and thick vegetation approaching the water body where he could come across a plump deer or some other animal to prey upon.

In his natural environment, he is expected to be roaring loudly, baring his teeth and causing terror with his sharp claws among the villagers living on the periphery of the forest.

But unfortunately, he is locked in a concrete cell that stands in complete contrast to his natural habitat. This powerful creature stands helplessly behind the bars. Suffering the misery of his slavery, he is indifferent to the visitors who come to see him.

When the dull and miserable day comes to an end, he listlessly listens to the patrolling cars that make their final rounds before retiring to make sure that everything is in order. The tiger longingly looks at the brilliant stars with his eyes which shine in the darkness of the night and

express his strong yearning for the unlimited freedom of his natural habitat.

#### THEME

The poem brings forth the idea that it is unfair and unjustifiable on the part of man to enslave and entrap the wild animals and to impose on them a life of bondage and confinement. The animals put into the cramped spaces of the zoo are deprived of their natural habitats and it causes suppression of their natural, essential behaviour. The tiger in the poem presents a pathetic sight as instead of enjoying the open expanse of the forest and preying upon other animals, he moves about only a few paces in the cage and behaves in an unnaturally quiet manner.

#### MESSAGE

Leslie Norris, in his poem, wants to convey the idea that wild animals must be left free to enjoy in their natural environments. A wild animal, enslaved and put in a cage in a zoo is not only deprived of the freedom in the jungle but also of his natural, essential self. The natural instincts and the natural behaviour of an animal in a zoo are suppressed and he is kept only as an object of entertainment for the visitors. It is cruel of man to snatch away the natural habitat of the animals. The pathetic sight of the tiger in the zoo, thus conveys the message that wild animals survive better in natural habitats than in the confines of a zoo. Therefore, Man must let them lead a natural life in a natural environment.

#### TITLE

The title of the poem "A Tiger in the Zoo" is quite appropriate as the poem deals with the physical and mental state of the tiger who has been put into the cramped space of a cage in a zoo. The poem also presents a picture of the absolutely contrasting life of a tiger in his natural habitat of a forest. The title directly presents the first setting of

the poem – the behaviour of a tiger in a zoo, but contains in itself the other picture – the tiger in a forest. Since the poet wants to portray the mental state and the helplessness of a tiger in a zoo, and emphasize that zoo is not his natural home, the title is suitable and justifiable.

### LITERARY DEVICES

#### Alliteration

Alliteration is a literary device in which the same sounds occur at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. Poets employ alliteration to make lines lyrical or to emphasize certain points.

#### Examples:

- ◆ *stalks in his vivid stripes* (Here 's' sound has been repeated)
- ◆ *locked in a concrete cell* (Here 'k' sound has been repeated)
- ◆ *His strength behind bars.* (Here 'b' sound has been repeated)

All these lines have an element of lyricism because of alliteration.

#### Repetition

Poets often repeat single words or phrases, lines, and sometimes, even whole stanzas at intervals to create musical effect, to emphasize a point or to lend unity to a piece.

The poet has also made use of repetition in the poem.

#### Examples:

- ◆ 'velvet quiet' and 'quiet rage'

In stanza 1, the poet has repeated the word 'quiet' to emphasize the silence in the zoo against the noise in the forest.

In the expression 'velvet quiet', 'quiet' refers to the movement of the padded paws of the tiger which are soft like velvet and make no sound while he paces in the cage.

In 'quiet rage', the anger is shown to be 'quiet' because the imprisoned

tiger in the zoo has been forced to give up his natural behaviour and does not rave or roar in rage, but keeps silent which is against his essential temperament.

- ♦ '*brilliant eyes*' and '*brilliant stars*'

In the last stanza the word '*brilliant*' has been repeated. There is brilliance of the stars shining at night and the tiger has his eyes shining in the darkness of the night expressing his longing for the freedom that the stars enjoy in the vast, unlimited expanse of the sky.

### **Oxymoron**

An oxymoron is a figure of speech where two contradictory words or ideas are put together. This figure of speech is used to draw attention to apparent contradiction. Its usage makes writing smooth and crisp.

#### **Example:**

- ♦ *quiet rage*

Here, '*quiet*' and '*rage*' are contradictory as one is loud in a rage, not quiet. But the tiger is silent as he suppresses the expression of rage.

### **Transferred Epithet**

Transferred Epithet is a poetic device in which an adjective is used not with the noun which it normally qualifies but with some other noun.

#### **Example:**

- ♦ *quiet rage*

Here, it is not the rage that is quiet but the tiger. Therefore, the modifier '*quiet*' is a transferred epithet.

### **Imagery**

Imagery refers to the usage of language in such a way as to create vivid pictures or images through words. It makes a poem picturesque.

"A Tiger in the Zoo" is rich in imagery as the readers can visualize a tiger with a striped body walking quietly in his cage in the zoo. It

contrast, there is also imagery of the forest showing a tiger gliding stealthily through tall, thick vegetation, or threatening people with his terrifying teeth and sharp claws, and of a plump deer near a water body.

The poet has also painted the picture of a star-studded sky that the tiger looks at during the night.

### **Metaphor**

A metaphor is a figure of speech that is used to make a comparison between two things that aren't alike but do have something in common. Unlike a simile, where two things are compared directly using 'like' or 'as', a metaphor's comparison is more indirect, usually made by stating 'something is something else'. A metaphor is very expressive; it is not meant to be taken 'literally'.

#### **Example:**

- *On pads of velvet quiet*

Here the poet compares the pads of tiger's feet with velvet since both are soft and smooth to touch.

#### **RHYME SCHEME**

All the five stanzas consisting of four lines each consistently follow the same rhyme scheme *i.e.* *abcb*.

## STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.

(1)

He stalks in his vivid stripes  
The few steps of his cage,  
On pads of velvet quiet,  
In his quiet rage.

In the opening stanza, the poet portrays a tiger, a beast of the forest, confined within the cage in a zoo and its restricted movements in the cramped space.

With his striped body which is his identifying mark, he moves about in the cage but the small space allows him to take only a few steps. His feet with velvet-like pads pace around without creating any sound, but he is full of rage as he has been separated from his natural habitat and bound in the cramped space of the cage. He does not roar or cry, but remains silent in anger. The poet implies that in the restricted space, the tiger has suppressed his emotions and basic temperament. Therefore, he does not roar in rage as he is expected to do.

## TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

## SET - I

(a) Who is 'he' in this stanza?

'He' in this stanza refers to a tiger.

(b) Which two distinctive qualities of 'he' are mentioned in the stanza?

'He' has sharp, clear stripes on his body and his paws are soft and padded.

(c) Where is 'he' now?

He is in a cage in a zoo.

(d) Why can 'he' walk only a few steps?

The cage is very small and cramped. It provides only a little space for the tiger to walk in. Therefore, he can take only a few steps.

- (e) What is 'his' mood and why?

The tiger is in a very angry mood as he feels offended at having been trapped, enslaved and taken away from his natural habitat.

### SET - II

- (a) Explain: 'pads of velvet quiet'.

The underside of a tiger's paws is as smooth and soft as velvet, so they do not create any sound when the tiger walks about.

- (b) Why is the tiger in a rage?

The tiger is in a rage at having been captured and put in a cage.

- (c) Why has his 'rage' been called 'quiet'?

The tiger is not able to express his anger loudly because he is not in a forest but in a small cage in a zoo, where his freedom is curtailed. Feeling helpless, he suppresses his emotions and keeps quiet. Therefore, his 'rage' has been called 'quiet'.

- (d) Which poetic device has been used in 'quiet rage'?

The poetic device used in 'quiet rage' is 'oxymoron' as the two opposite terms have been put together. It is also a 'transferred epithet' as it is not the rage that is quiet, but the tiger.

- (e) What is common in the two expressions - 'velvet quiet' and 'quiet rage'?

The poet uses the word 'quiet' twice - 'velvet quiet' and 'quiet rage' - and in both the expressions the word is used to lay emphasis on the silence of the zoo which is disturbed neither by the footsteps of the tiger (because his paws are padded) nor by his anger (because the tiger has suppressed his natural expression of violent roaring when angry).

### TYPE - II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) 'He' in the above extract is .....

- (b) 'He' in this extract is in a/an ..... mood.
- (i) calm (iii) happy  
(ii) angry (iv) satisfied
- (c) 'He' walks only 'few steps' because he is
- (i) lazy (iii) engaged  
(ii) sleepy (iv) afraid
- (d) The expression 'quiet rage' is an example of which literary device?
- (i) metaphor (iii) personification  
(ii) simile (iv) oxymoron

**ANSWERS** (a) the tiger (b) (ii) angry (c) (iii) engaged (d) (iv) oxymoron

(II)

He should be lurking in shadow,  
Sliding through long grass  
Near the water hole  
Where plump deer pass.

The poet pities the enslaved tiger and contrasts his life in a zoo with what it would have been in a forest. He suggests that the cage is not a proper place for the tiger. The tiger is a wild animal who is supposed to live in the forest which is his natural habitat. Usually while in forest, he moves around in the shadows of the thick, dense trees hiding behind some bushes or long grass near a stream or water hole waiting for his prey. As soon as he sees fat deer (or other animals) coming there to drink water, he slides gently through the grass, attacks them and kills them. In other words, the tiger should be left in the wild to hunt and gather his own food, rather than be fed by the zoo authorities.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) Where does the poet think the tiger should have been? Where is 'he' in reality?

The tiger should have been in a jungle where he could wander

freely without any restraints. But he has been captured and enclosed in a cage in a zoo.

(b) What should the tiger be doing?

Or

Where should the tiger be 'lurking'?

The tiger should be lurking in the dense vegetation of the forest and moving stealthily to pounce upon the prey if he finds one nearby.

(c) Explain the significance of the words 'lurking' and 'sliding'?

'Lurking' and 'sliding' show the stealthy movements of the tiger when he is on the look out for a prey for himself.

(d) What do 'water hole' and 'plump deer' suggest?

'Water hole' and 'plump deer' suggest a forest – the natural habitat of the tiger where he would be able to live freely and where nature would provide him with plenty of food and water.

(e) What message does this stanza convey?

The stanza suggests that wild animals should be left free and they should not be deprived of their natural habitats.

#### TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) At present the tiger is in a ..... , whereas he should be in a .....  
 (b) The tiger should be wandering about in the shadow of .....  
 (c) Two movement words in the above extract are ..... and .....  
 (d) The tiger should hide near the water hole in order to .....

**ANSWERS** (a) cage/zoo; jungle/forest (b) long grass  
 (c) lurking; sliding (d) hunt deer/hunt for food

#### (III)

He should be snarling around houses  
 At the jungle's edge,

Baring his white fangs, his claws,  
Terrorising the village!

In this stanza, the poet continues with the description of the natural habitat and the natural behaviour of a tiger which he is deprived of when imprisoned in a cage in a zoo.

In his natural state, the tiger should be running around near the houses at the edges of the jungle. He should be growling in his low intimidating voice to terrify people. His dangerous, sharp teeth and claws should be sending fear in the hearts of people living in the village on the outskirts of the jungle.

#### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(a) Why does the poet use the words 'should be' in the first line?

The words 'should be' present the expected natural activities and behaviour of the tiger in a forest from which he has been separated while enslaved in a zoo.

(b) What, according to the poet, would the tiger do at the edges of the jungle?

The tiger would feel very much at home even at the edge of the jungle. He would go about roaring angrily around human habitations fearlessly.

(c) How would the tiger terrorise the villagers?

The tiger's snarling, his sharp teeth and threatening claws would terrorise the villagers because the tiger is a beast of prey and could assault the villagers.

(d) What could the tiger in his natural habitat do to the villagers?

In his natural habitat, when the tiger is free to exercise his strength without any restrictions, he is capable of frightening men which he cannot do in a zoo.

**(e) What does a tiger do by baring his white fangs?**

A tiger shows his anger and threatens the people on the borders of the forest by showing his dangerous, sharp, terrifying white teeth.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) The houses that the poet refers to are in the periphery of a
- |          |                  |
|----------|------------------|
| (i) city | (iii) water hole |
| (ii) zoo | (iv) forest      |
- (b) The tiger should be baring his fangs and claws to frighten
- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| (i) deer       | (iii) zoo-keepers |
| (ii) villagers | (iv) visitors     |
- (c) The imagery used in the extract indicates the ..... behaviour of the tiger.
- |             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| (i) calm    | (iii) timid    |
| (ii) gentle | (iv) ferocious |
- (d) A word in the stanza that means the same as '*sharp, pointed teeth*' is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) (iv) forest (b) (ii) villagers (c) (iv) ferocious (d) fangs

**(IV)**

But he's locked in a concrete cell,  
His strength behind bars,  
Stalking the length of his cage,  
Ignoring visitors.

Here, the poet contrasts the life of a tiger in a wild forest to that in a zoo. He stops imagining the tiger's alternative life and returns to its real one, i.e. in a zoo, where he is locked up, like a prisoner, within a small cell made of concrete. All his strength to frighten people is suppressed as he is forced to live behind the bars unable to assault and frighten people. Thus, the poet says that the tiger's strength is locked behind bars.

Hundreds and thousands of people come to the zoo every day to see the tiger, but he does not pay any heed to them. He resents being an object of public entertainment and, therefore, shows indifference towards the visitors. Instead, he prefers to walk quietly in the limited space of the cage by himself.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS****SET - I**

- (a) **Bring out the significance of the word 'But' in the first line.**

'But' signifies that the creature who has the capability of frightening men finds himself left helpless behind the bars of the cage in the zoo.

- (b) **Why is the tiger locked in a concrete cell?**

The tiger has been captured, captivated, and put in a cage in a zoo which is like a cramped cell and locked up to keep him away from other animals and visitors.

- (c) **How has being locked in a concrete cell affected the tiger? Or**

**How does the tiger feel behind the bars of a cage?**

Having been locked in a concrete cell, the tiger cannot exercise his strength to frighten people. The bars of the cage have restricted his movement and power.

- (d) **What two disadvantages does the tiger have in the cage?**

Firstly, the cage doesn't let the tiger live a free life in a natural environment. Secondly, his movement is restricted in the cramped space of the cage.

**SET - II**

- (a) **Why does the tiger stalk the length of the cage?**

The tiger has been captured and locked in the concrete cell of the cage in a zoo. The length of the cage is the only space he can walk about. Therefore, he stalks only the length of the cage.

**(b) Why do you think the tiger ignores the visitors?**

Pained by his own imprisonment, the tiger feels uneasy, angry and uncomfortable in the cage and shows no interest in human visitors.

**(c) Which poetic device has been used in the second line?**

The poetic device used in the second line is alliteration as 'b' sound is repeated in 'behind bars'.

**(d) What is the rhyme scheme of the above stanza?**

The rhyme scheme of the above stanza is *abcb*.

**TYPE-II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) The 'concrete wall' refers to the .....
- (b) A line in the extract that suggests that the tiger is 'helpless or powerless' is ..... (Quote the line)
- (c) The tiger's attitude towards the visitors is one of  
 (i) warmth (iii) indifference  
 (ii) hatred (iv) hostility
- (d) The poetic device used in the second line is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) cage in the zoo (b) His strength behind bars  
 (c) (iii) indifference (d) alliteration

(V)

He hears the last voice at night,  
 The patrolling cars,  
 And stares with his brilliant eyes  
 At the brilliant stars.

In this stanza the poet describes how the tiger remains disturbed even at night. He stays awake till the very last voice of the zookeeper locking up and going home can be heard. All night the zoo authorities keep a watch over the surroundings while driving in their official cars. The noise of these patrolling cars represents the

civilized world which stands in sharp contrast to the medley of sound in a forest. So the tiger keeps staring at the beautiful stars shining brightly in the night which for him, represent the free world of nature.

### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) What does the poet mean by 'the last voice'? Or

What is the 'last voice' heard by the tiger at night?

The 'last voice' that the tiger hears in the zoo is the sound of the cars that go about patrolling the zoo to make sure that everything is in order.

- (b) Why do you think the tiger stares at the stars?

The tiger, who is confined within his concrete cell, cannot see much of nature from his cage. Hence, with the fall of the night, he stares at the stars longingly, yearning for the freedom and open space.

- (c) Which two things does the poet call 'brilliant' and why?

The tiger's eyes and the stars have been called 'brilliant'. The tiger's eyes shine during the night. Probably, they are brilliant because of his strong longing for a free life in the open natural world represented by the star-studded, open sky.

- (d) Why does the poet use the word 'voice' instead of sound of the patrolling cars?

The poet wants to emphasize that in the zoo the tiger cannot hear the voices of other animals as he could do in a forest. The poet uses the word 'voice' ironically for the sound of cars.

### TYPE - II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) 'He' in the above lines is .....

- (b) 'He' hears the voice of

- (i) deer      (ii) guards      (iii) wind      (iv) villagers

- (c) In this extract, 'he' is in a state of .....
- (i) prayer and thankfulness      (iii) despair and longing  
(ii) calm and happiness      (iv) anger and restlessness
- (d) A literary device used in the last two lines is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) the tiger (b) (ii) guards (c) (iii) despair and longing  
(d) repetition

### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 40 words each)

- Q1. Find phrases from the poem that describe the movements and actions of the tiger in the cage and in the wild? (Textual)**

Phrases like 'stalks in his vivid stripes', 'quiet rage', 'ignoring visitors', 'locked in a concrete cell', 'stalking the length of his cage', 'stares with his brilliant eyes' suggest the movements and actions of the tiger in the cage.

The following is the list of phrases used to describe his actions and movements in the jungle:

'lurking in shadow', 'sliding through long grass', 'snarling around houses', 'baring his white fangs' and 'terrorising the village'.

- Q2. Notice the use of a word repeated in lines such as these:**

(i) On pads of velvet quiet,

In his quiet rage.

(ii) And stares with his brilliant eyes

At the brilliant stars.

**What do you think is the effect of this repetition? (Textual)**

- (i) Repetition of the word 'quiet' emphasises the silence that pervades the tiger's cage. This silence is not disturbed even by the footsteps of the tiger as he has padded paws, soft like velvet, which produce no sound. Moreover, the tiger does

not roar in anger because he has suppressed his natural self in the unnatural confines of the cage. So, instead of roaring to threaten people as he would do in the forest, he keeps quiet.

- (ii) The lustre of the tiger's eyes as well as that of the stars becomes more pronounced due to the darkness of the night. The poet wants to underline the fact that a look at the vast, open, natural expanse of the sky makes the tiger long for the open world and the strong desire brightens his eyes.

The repetition of 'brilliant' emphasizes the tiger's yearning to be in the world of nature represented by the bright stars.

**Q3. How does the poet describe the tiger's appearance?**

The tiger looks majestic with sharp, clear stripes all over his body. The stripes are very distinct as they stand in complete contrast to the colour of his coat. He moves about in a royal, stately manner and has been called 'noble,' though actually he is a beast of prey.

**Q4. Why is the tiger angry? Why does he express his anger quietly?**

The tiger is angry as he has been imprisoned in a cramped space of the cage. He can neither move about at will nor exercise his strength. This enrages him. But being caged, he feels helpless and cannot avenge himself. Therefore, he suppresses his natural behaviour and does not roar fiercely.

**Q5. 'He should be lurking in shadow'. Why should the tiger be lurking in shadow? Or**

**What should the tiger be doing if he were in the jungle?**

'Shadow' signifies the thickness of trees and density of tall grass in the dark jungle. The thick vegetation provides the tiger a cover to hide himself while on a look out for a prey which he usually finds near a water body. It is the natural behaviour of a

tiger to pounce on other animals and to kill them to satisfy his hunger.

**Q6. "Near the water-hole". What does 'water-hole' signify?**

'Water-hole' stands for that pond which all the animals of the jungle visit to quench their thirst. Many times the tiger finds his prey near the pond. In fact, it signifies the natural habitat of the wild animals.

**Q7. "Where plump deer pass." What is the significance of the word 'plump' in the sentence?**

The poet is referring to the deer as a prey of the tiger. The deer would become all the more tempting for the tiger, if it were 'plump' as it would provide sufficient food. Hence, the poet has chosen this adjective deliberately to contrast the tiger's food in the zoo with the food he would have got by hunting well-fed and fat animals like deer.

**Q8. What should the tiger be doing if he were at the end of the jungle?**

If the tiger were at the end of the jungle, he should be snarling loudly and frightening people living around the jungle by threatening them with his deadly, terrifying teeth and sharp claws with which he could maul and maraud them.

**Q9. What should the tiger be doing while in the forest to frighten people? Why can't he do it in the zoo?**

The tiger is a beast of prey and can frighten people living on the borders of the forest by his loud snarling, ferocious teeth and sharp claws. He cannot do so because he is imprisoned in a cage and cannot come out to attack people. Therefore, he suppresses his natural behaviour and does not roar at people although he is angry at being deprived of his freedom.

**Q10. What happens to the tiger's strength when he is thrown behind the bars?**

Or

**What does the expression: "His strength behind bars" emphasize?**

The poet implies that the strength of the tiger has been oppressed as he is a helpless, enslaved and encaged animal who cannot exercise in a zoo his strength to charge at people and to frighten them. The bars of the cage restrict his movement and his power.

**Q11. How does a tiger manage his food in a forest? How is it different in a zoo?**

A tiger is a predator - a beast of prey and it is natural for him to hunt other animals and to kill them to gorge on their flesh. The 'plump deer' in the poem represents all animals that a tiger can attack and kill. In the zoo, on the other hand, the tiger has to depend on what is provided to him by the authorities.

**Q12. How is the voice that the tiger is forced to hear in the zoo different from what he would have heard in the jungle?**

In the zoo, the tiger is forced to listen to the sound of the patrolling cars making their rounds at night. In the jungle, he might have heard the whistling of the wind, rustling of the leaves, hooting of an owl or the flapping of the wings of some night bird, or the voices of wild animals.

**Q13. What do the two settings in the poem - the zoo and the forest - signify?**

Or

**How does the poet contrast the tiger in a zoo with the tiger in a forest?**

The poet has used two settings in the poem - the zoo and the forest - to present, through juxtaposition, a contrast between the life of a tiger when encaged in a zoo and the life in a forest. The life in a zoo represents slavery as the movements and the behaviour of the tiger are restricted and his natural self is

suppressed. On the contrary, the forest provides unlimited freedom to live a life of his choice in a natural habitat.

**Q14. Why do you think the tiger looks at the stars at night?**

At night, the tiger looks at the stars as the star-studded expanse of the sky represents the freedom of the natural world which is denied to him in a cage in the zoo. He strongly yearns for this world of nature free from all restrictions and his eyes brighten up with this strong desire.

**Q15. What is the attitude of the tiger towards the visitors?**

The tiger shows utter indifference towards the visitors in the zoo. He ignores them because he cannot terrify them or pounce upon them as he is imprisoned behind the bars. His natural ferocity, which frightens people, is of no use as he cannot exercise it. Moreover, he is probably offended at being treated merely as an object of entertainment by the visitors.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)*

**Q1. How does the poet present a tiger in a cage in a zoo?**

Leslie Norris, the poet, portrays the tiger in a cage in a zoo as an unhappy, helpless creature full of rage because he has been separated from his natural habitat. A tiger is known for his strength, freedom and ferocity. He moves around freely and fearlessly in the wild environment of the forests. But he is denied the natural environment in a zoo. He is outraged at being cramped within the limited space of the cage where he can pace only a few steps at one time in one direction. The tiger resents his slavery but does not roar in his anger. He suppresses his anger as he cannot exercise his ferocious strength from the

cage. He feels cramped in a concrete cell, where he cannot frighten the villagers living on the fringes of the forests. His fierce teeth and sharp claws cannot perform their natural function of killing other animals.

Instead of listening to the medley of voices in the jungle at night, the tiger in the cage can hear only the sound made by the cars on patrolling duty. It is only looking at the star-studded sky that he looks out in the open environment and his eyes brighten up looking at the brilliant stars because he yearns for such a free, unrestricted world.

**Q2. What is the natural behaviour of the tiger? How is it different from his behaviour in the zoo?** Or

**How is the tiger's behaviour in the zoo in absolute contrast to his behaviour in the forest?**

A tiger is a ferocious beast of prey whom nature has created to live in a wild atmosphere. He satisfies his hunger by preying upon other animals. He is not made for living a life of slavery in a cage in a zoo. He lives in his natural habitat of thick forests teeming with a variety of wild animals and birds. He moves around freely in the areas covered with long grass, and goes to the natural pond to quench his thirst. He is provided sufficient food by nature in the form of animals like deer. When he snarls loudly at the fringe of the forest, people living in villages nearby are struck with fear at his ferocity. His dangerous teeth and sharp claws terrorise the villagers.

The tiger's behaviour in the forest is absolutely in contrast to his behaviour in the zoo. As the zoo is not his natural habitat, his behaviour too becomes unnatural in such a place. Being cramped in a closed cage, he finds space to move only a few steps at one time. He fails to move around freely searching for

food. Therefore, he is outraged and expresses his annoyance by suppressing his natural violent roar and keeping quiet.

**Q3. What are the things that the tiger in the zoo is deprived of?**

*Or*

**The tiger engaged in the zoo misses many things. What are they?**

The tiger engaged in the zoo is deprived of a number of things he would enjoy in a forest. The tiger is bereft of the open, large space to wander about. In the zoo, he can move about only a few paces within the length of the cage. His free movement is suppressed. Secondly, the tiger lacks freedom that he would have enjoyed in the forest. He is not free to prey upon other animals to satisfy his hunger and to frighten people with his ferocious teeth and sharp claws. He is kept in captivity, enclosed and locked away from people so that he should not assault anybody. In the forest, he would have frightened people living on the outskirts of the jungle.

Moreover, the tiger in the zoo is left without his natural habitat where he could enjoy the company of other animals. In the zoo, he is without any contact with other creatures of his kind. He is kept alone in the cage day and night and must be feeling alienated. Furthermore, the tiger misses out his fundamental, natural self. His behaviour in the cage is completely unnatural. He cannot camouflage behind the dense vegetation to pounce upon and kill animals who gather to drink water at some water body. He has to eat whatever is served to him in the cage. Therefore, the tiger is angry but instead of roaring with rage, he keeps quiet and, thus, suppresses his natural behaviour.

**Q4. What two settings does the poet provide in the poem?**

Leslie Norris in the poem "A Tiger in the Zoo" presents two contrasting settings within which the actions, the movements

and the behaviour of the tiger are presented. The tiger is shown to be encaged in a cell where he is an object of entertainment for the visitors. The poet dwells upon the other setting - the forest which is the natural habitat of the tiger. This natural environment in which the tiger could be his natural, essential self, has been snatched away from him and he has been put behind the bars in the zoo where he is alienated away from his wild companions.

In the zoo, the tiger is imprisoned in a small, cramped cell, and can pace only a few steps in one direction. Had he been in the forest, he would have wandered about in the large expanse without any restraint or restriction.

In the zoo, the tiger feels stifled and, therefore, suppresses his natural behaviour as well. As he cannot prey upon other creatures, cannot roar and snarl to frighten people and cannot prey upon other animals in the forest, he has learnt to suppress his natural behaviour. Although he is angry at his slavery, he does not give an expression to his anger by raving or thundering. The tiger, in the zoo, has to survive on the food provided to him in the cage, whereas in the forest he would have accompanied other animals to the pond to drink water and would have gorged on the victims. The tiger has no natural sights to enjoy in the zoo except for the open star-studded sky. He has no sounds of the world of nature to hear at night, but the sound of the patrolling cars.

Thus, the two contrasting settings emphatically convey the message that the wild animals must be allowed to thrive and survive freely in their natural habitats.



with their distinctive physical and behavioural traits. Each living being has its own peculiar and unique characteristics which distinguish it from other animals. These peculiarities are the identification features of these animals. A person, if aware of these distinct features, may easily identify the animals though it is very dangerous to be in close proximity to them and one needs to be cautious. However, the knowledge provided by the poet may prove to be of much help in case one visits a forest teeming with wild animals.

### LITERARY DEVICES

#### Alliteration

Alliteration is the occurrence of the same sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. It creates a musical effect and enhances the pleasure of reading a literary work.

#### Examples:

- *Or if some time when roaming round*  
Here 'r' sound is repeated.
- *If when you're walking round your yard*  
*You meet a creature there.*  
Here the poet repeatedly uses 'y' sound.

#### Repetition

Repetition of words or phrases is a literary device that a poet employs for the purpose of emphasis.

#### Examples:

- *He'll only lep and lep again.*  
Here there is repetition of 'lep' which emphasizes how a leopard leaps upon his prey.
- *Who hugs you very, very hard.*  
Here repetition of 'very' emphasizes the tightness of the hug of a bear which may prove fatal.

### Paradox

Paradox is a figure of speech in which a statement appears to contradict itself but as we study deeper, we find that the statement is true and the contradiction is resolved.

#### Example:

- *If there is nothing on the tree.  
'Tis the chameleon you see.*

Although having nothing and seeing something seem contradictory, in the case of a chameleon, it is true as one feels that there is nothing because the chameleon camouflages and mixes up with the surrounding. It is there on the tree though one cannot easily trace it.

### Poetic License

Poetic license is a device in which a poet takes liberty with language changing the spellings or violating grammatical rules with the purpose of rhyme scheme, lyricism, rhythm or emphasis.

#### Examples:

- *If he roars at you as you're dyin'  
You'll know it is the Asian Lion.*

Here the spellings of 'dying' have been changed to *dyin'* to make it rhyme with 'Lion' both phonetically and visually.

- *As soon as he has lept on you,  
You'll know it is the Leopard.  
'Twill do no good to roar with pain,  
He'll only lep and lep again.*

In these lines, the poet has altered the spellings of 'leapt' and 'leap' because 'lept' and 'lep' blend better with 'leopard' than 'leapt' or 'leap'.

- ◆ *A novice might nonplus*

Here, the poet takes liberty with grammar and uses 'nonplus' for 'nonplussed' to make it rhyme with 'thus'.

### **Humour**

Humour is a literary device in which the poet tries to make the writing witty by provoking laughter. Usually poets employ exaggeration, understatement, imagery, irony, satire etc. to make the situation or the language humorous.

The poem "How to Tell Wild Animals" is full of humorous images.

#### **Examples:**

- ◆ *Just notice if he eats you.*

Here the poet gives a comical situation with a person being eaten up by a tiger and still trying to recognize which animal it is.

- ◆ *He'll give you just one more caress.*

Here the poet uses 'caress' for the fierce slap or swat of a bear on its victim. A 'caress' is soft and gentle whereas a bear's stroke is violent and fatal.

- ◆ *If there is nothing on the tree,  
'Tis the chameleon you see.*

In these lines, the humour lies in paradoxical statement that there is nothing to be seen on the tree but there is a chameleon sitting there.

### **Irony**

Irony has various implications but usually it is a difference between the surface meaning of something that is said and the underlying meaning. Writers employ this device with the purpose of creating humour or satirizing somebody or something.

#### **Examples:**

- ◆ *A noble wild beast greets you*

Here the Bengal Tiger has been called 'noble' ironically because actually it is a ferocious beast who will kill anybody.

- *He'll give you just one more caress.*

This line refers to the strong, fatal stroke of a bear on the victim as 'caress,' a term used for gentle, affectionate stroke.

### RHYME SCHEME

All the six stanzas in the poem have the same rhyme scheme *i.e.* *ababcc*.

### STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.

(I)

If ever you should go by chance  
To jungles in the east;  
And if there should to you advance  
A large and tawny beast,  
If he roars at you as you're dyin'  
You'll know it is the Asian Lion...

In this stanza, the poet presents a true picture of an Asian Lion and shows how it can be identified by the readers. The poet states that one can come across a huge and dull yellowish-brown coloured beast in the forests of eastern countries. If this wild animal roars loudly, and violently frightens a person to death, it is certainly an Asian Lion. Thus, an Asian Lion can be recognized by its enormous body with dull, brown skin and by its terrifying roar.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) Who is the speaker in these lines? Whom does he/she address as 'you'?

The poet, Carolyn Wells, herself is the speaker in these lines. She addresses the readers directly as 'you'.

- (b) How does the poet describe the physical appearance of the Asian Lion?

The poet describes the Asian Lion as huge in size and dull yellowish-brown in colour.

- (c) Where may one come across an Asian Lion? Or  
Where does the Asian Lion live?

One may come across an Asian Lion in the forests of the eastern countries.

- (d) How can an Asian Lion be identified?

The poet states that a lion can be identified by its large body with dull, brown colour. He can be identified further by his loud roaring which frightens a person to death.

- (e) Why does the poet use 'dyin' instead of 'dying'?

The poet uses poetic license and taking liberty with language, uses 'dyin' instead of 'dying' to make it rhyme with 'Lion' in the next line.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) "You" in this stanza refers to
- |                 |                     |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| (i) the poet    | (iii) the tiger     |
| (ii) the reader | (iv) the Asian Lion |
- (b) According to the extract, the Asian Lion is found in the forests in .....
- (c) The Asian Lion can be recognized by his large body and ..... colour.

- (d) The poet has altered the spellings of 'dying' to 'dyin' to make it rhyme with .....

**ANSWERS** (a) the reader (b) East Asian Countries/Eastern Countries  
(c) tawny/yellowish-brown (d) lion

(II)

Or if some time when roaming round,  
A noble wild beast greets you,  
With black stripes on a yellow ground,  
Just notice if he eats you.  
This simple rule may help you learn  
The Bengal Tiger to discern.

In this stanza, the poet Carolyn Wells reveals how one can identify a Bengal Tiger because of its peculiar physical features and its behaviour. The poet describes it as a noble, majestic animal. It has its distinctive yellow skin with white stripes on it. Moreover, a person can know that it is a Bengal Tiger if it tries to eat up the person. There is wit in the statement that a person should see if the beast eats him only to know if it is a Bengal Tiger or not. The facts are blended well with humour.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) Which 'noble' beast does the poet talk about in this stanza? Why, do you think, she calls him noble?

The poet refers to the Bengal Tiger as a noble beast. The Bengal Tigers are called Royal Bengal Tigers and nobility stands for royalty. That is why the poet calls it 'noble'.

Moreover, the 'noble beast' has been used ironically to create humour as the Bengal Tiger is a brutal beast of prey and will kill anybody for food.

- (b) How does the poet describe the Bengal Tiger?

The poet describes the Bengal Tiger as a noble, majestic wild beast. The tiger has yellow skin with stark black stripes on it.

(c) What does 'yellow ground' refer to?

'Yellow ground' refers to the yellow-coloured skin of the Bengal Tiger.

(d) Which 'simple rule' does the poet suggest to recognize a Bengal Tiger?

The poet, in a very humorous manner, suggests to the reader to recognize the Bengal Tiger by the simple rule of noticing whether the beast eats him/her or not. If it eats him/her, it is the Bengal Tiger.

(e) Explain the humour in the expression: "Just notice if he eats you."

The expression 'Just notice if he eats you' contains subtle humour as one cannot wait to be assaulted and eaten up only to ascertain the identity of the beast.

(f) Which poetic device has been used in the first line of the stanza?

There is alliteration in the first line of the stanza, as 'r' sound has been repeated in "roaming round."

(g) What is the rhyme scheme of the stanza?

The rhyme scheme of the stanza is *ababcc*.

#### TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

(a) The poetic device used in the first line is .....

(b) The Bengal Tiger can be identified from the ..... on its ..... coat.

(c) The "yellow ground" refers to

- (i) the colour of the Bengal Tiger's skin (iii) an enclosure in a zoo  
(ii) the grass in a park in Bengal city (iv) the dry grass in a forest

(d) 'This simple rule' here refers to

- (i) The Bengal Tiger roams around  
(ii) The Bengal Tiger will eat you  
(iii) The Bengal Tiger is a noble beast  
(iv) The Bengal Tiger greets you

- (e) A word in the stanza that means the same as 'identify' or 'recognise' is .....

- ANSWERS** (a) alliteration (b) black stripes; yellow  
 (c) (i) the colour of the Bengal Tiger's skin  
 (d) (ii) The Bengal tiger will eat you (e) discern

## (III)

If strolling forth, a beast you view,  
 Whose hide with spots is peppered,  
 As soon as he has lept on you,  
 You'll know it is the Leopard.  
 'Twill do no good to roar with pain,  
 He'll only lep and lep again.

This stanza describes the appearance and habits of a leopard. The poet comes out with an accurate description of the distinctive body of a leopard which has dark spots on its light-coloured body. The spots on the body make a peppered pattern. The leopard can be easily identified because of the spotted skin and because of its habit of leaping on the person it encounters. The poet takes liberty with language and alters the spellings of 'leapt' and 'leap'. The usage of 'lept' and 'lep' makes the sound correspond with the pronunciation of 'leopard'. If the beast leaps on a person again and again, he can be certain that the animal is a leopard. If a person on being assaulted by the leopard, roars in pain, it is a futile effort because the leopard will not spare the victim and continue to attack him/her.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) When are you likely to come across a leopard?

We are likely to come across a leopard while roaming about leisurely in a forest.

- (b) Which physical trait helps people to recognize a leopard?

A leopard's skin, covered with spots, which gives it a salt-and-pepper pattern helps people to recognize it.

**(c) How does a leopard behave towards human beings?**

A leopard is a beast of prey and pounces upon his preys to kill them to satisfy his hunger.

**(d) Why, according to the poet, it is no use to cry with pain?**

Or

**Explain the last two lines of the stanza.**

The last two lines of the stanza explain the behaviour of a leopard towards its victim. According to the poet, it is no use to cry with pain because even loud cries of the victim will not prevent the leopard from attacking him/her again and again. On the contrary, the cries of the victim might further excite the animal.

**(e) Why does the poet use the spellings 'lep' instead of leap?**

The poet takes liberty with language and spells 'leap' as 'lep' so that it sounds like the first syllable of the word 'leopard' and creates a special poetic effect.

### TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

**(a) A leopard can be recognized by**

- (i) its loud roar                      (iii) its unique movement  
(ii) the pattern of its stripes      (iv) the spots on its body

**(b) One may come across a leopard while**

- (i) walking in one's yard      (iii) wandering about here and there  
(ii) hiding behind trees      (iv) one is in a garden

**(c) A person may know that the beast is the leopard if he ..... on him/her.****(d) It is no use crying in pain because**

- (i) the leopard will be frightened  
(ii) the leopard will leap on you again and again  
(iii) the leopard will spare you  
(iv) the leopard will hug you hard

- (e) Two words which have been spelt incorrectly in the stanza are ..... and .....
- (f) A word in the extract that the poet has used to convey the meaning 'scattered' or 'sprinkled with' is .....

- ANSWERS** (a) (iv) the spots on its body  
 (b) (iii) wandering about here and there (c) leaps  
 (d) (ii) the leopard will leap on you again and again  
 (e) lept; lep (f) peppered

## (IV)

If when you're walking round your yard  
 You meet a creature there,  
 Who hugs you very, very hard,  
 Be sure it is a Bear.  
 If you have any doubts, I guess  
 He'll give you just one more caress.

This stanza describes the behaviour of a bear. The poet makes no statements about the appearance of a bear and emphasizes on its behaviour.

A person may come across a bear while strolling in a courtyard. He/She can know at once that it is a bear if it gives him/her a tight, strong and friendly hug. It will fondle and embrace a person till the person is assured of its identity as a bear because of its famous bear-hug. The poet humorously uses the word 'caress' for the slap or swat of the bear to use the symbol of love to go with 'hug'. Both the 'hug' and the 'caress' of the bear are dangerous for the victim.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS****SET - I**

- (a) Where is a person likely to meet a bear?

A person is likely to meet a bear while walking round his/her courtyard.

**(b) How will you be sure it is a bear?**

One may be sure that it is a bear if it hugs the victim tightly. A bear is known for giving a very tight and strong hug to a person which is highly dangerous and may prove fatal for the victim.

**(c) What doubts could a person have?**

A person could have doubts as to whether the beast who is hugging him/her is a bear or not.

**(d) How will the doubts be cleared?**

The doubts will be cleared if the bear who is hugging the victim caresses him/her. The poet uses the word 'caress' for the dangerous slap or swat.

**SET-II****(a) Why would the bear hug you 'hard'?**

The bear has its own strategy of killing a person by grasping the victim tightly and choking him/her to death. Therefore, it hugs a person hard.

**(b) For what does the poet use the word 'caress'?**

The poet uses the word 'caress' for the slap or swat of the bear on his victim. In fact, the term 'caress' accords well with 'hug' as the two are the words of love. The usage of 'caress' is ironical but the 'caress' by the bear is certain to prove fatal instead of being an affectionate and gentle stroke of love.

**(c) Why does the bear give one more caress to the victim? Or**

**Explain the last line of the stanza.**

When a victim is tightly hugged by the bear but is still alive, the bear gives the last stroke to ensure that the victim is killed. The usage of 'caress' is ironical as the stroke of the bear is in no way like a gentle, affectionate light stroke of love, but a fatal one that kills the victim.

(d) Which poetic device has been used in the first line of the stanza?

In the first line of the stanza, the poet uses alliteration as 'y' sound is repeated in "your yard".

### TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) The distinctive behaviour of a bear is that it ..... a person very hard.
- (b) The poetic device used in the first line is  
(i) repetition (ii) poetic license (iii) alliteration (iv) metaphor
- (c) A word in the stanza that means 'a gentle or loving touch or stroke' is .....
- (d) The tone in the last two lines is  
(i) serious (ii) humorous (iii) critical (iv) satirical
- (e) The rhyme scheme of the stanza is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) hugs (b) (iii) alliteration (c) caress (d) (ii) humorous  
(e) ababcc

(V)

Though to distinguish beasts of prey

A novice might nonplus,

The Crocodile you always may

Tell from the Hyena thus:

Hyenas come with merry smiles:

But if they weep they're Crocodiles.

In this stanza, the poet presents a contrast between the behaviour of a hyena and that of a crocodile. Even a novice, who is a beginner and has no knowledge about beasts, can identify them from their distinct habits. A hyena, while gobbling its prey, seems to be smiling. On the contrary, a crocodile sheds tears profusely. The smiling and the weeping face will make it certain that the animals are a hyena and a crocodile respectively. The poet continues the humorous tone as the hyenas never smile happily, nor are the tears of crocodiles genuine.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) **Who is a novice? What can make a novice 'nonplussed'?**

A novice is a beginner who has not yet got much knowledge or experience. A novice's lack of knowledge or his/ her inability to differentiate between a hyena and a crocodile might leave him/her confused or nonplussed.

- (b) **Which 'beasts of prey' does the poet talk about in the stanza?**

The poet talks about two beasts of prey – a crocodile and a hyena. He emphasizes the distinguishing features of the two through contrast.

- (c) **According to the poet, how can one identify a hyena?**

One can identify a hyena by its face which seems to be smiling all the time.

- (d) **How does a crocodile stand in sharp contrast to a hyena? Or**

**How can you differentiate a crocodile from a hyena?**

A crocodile stands in sharp contrast to a hyena in that a hyena's face seems to wear merry smiles all the time, whereas a crocodile is always shedding tears.

- (e) **Which poetic device has been used in the second line of the stanza?**

The poetic device used in the second line is 'alliteration' as the poet uses 'n' sound repeatedly.

- (f) **How is the second line an example of 'poetic licence'?**

In the second line we find 'poetic licence' as the poet takes liberty with language and uses 'nonplus' for 'nonplussed' to make it rhyme with 'thus'.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) While distinguishing one animal from another, a novice may feel
- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| (i) frightened | (iii) amazed |
| (ii) happy     | (iv) puzzled |

- (b) The unique feature of a hyena is that
- (i) it frightens people                      (iii) it weeps quietly  
(ii) it has a smiling face                      (iv) it has beautiful eyes
- (c) A crocodile can be recognized by its habit of .....
- (d) In the above stanza, both the hyena and the crocodile have been referred to as .....
- (e) A word in the extract that means the opposite of 'an expert or experienced person' is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) (iv) puzzled (b) (ii) it has a smiling face  
(c) shedding tears (d) beasts of prey (e) novice

(VI)

The true Chameleon is small,  
A lizard sort of thing;  
He hasn't any ears at all,  
And not a single wing.  
If there is nothing on the tree,  
'Tis the chameleon you see.

In these lines, there is a description of a chameleon – a small creature who closely resembles a lizard. Its body has no ears projecting out of it and no wings. The creature has the ability to change its colour to match with the colour of its surroundings. It can so well camouflage itself that though it is seated on a tree, a person cannot easily trace it. The poet humorously states a paradox that if there is nothing on a tree, there is a chameleon sitting on it. The humour lies in the idea that there is something where there is nothing.

**TYPE – I** VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) How does a chameleon look? What is peculiar about its appearances?

A chameleon is small in size and looks quite like a lizard. The

peculiar feature of a chameleon is that it has no ears and no wings on its body.

- (b) **Why does one not see anything on the tree, though a chameleon is perched there?**

A chameleon is known for its ability to camouflage by changing its colour according to the surroundings. Because of the similarity of colour, a chameleon mingles with the tree and it is difficult to trace it.

- (c) **Which poetic device has been used in the last two lines?**

The poetic device used in the last two lines is 'paradox' *i.e.* the statement which seems contradictory but is not so. It seems contradictory that there is a chameleon when there is nothing but it is true as one fails to detect the chameleon because it hides its presence by blending itself with its surroundings.

- (d) **What is the rhyme scheme of the stanza?**

The rhyme scheme of the stanza is *ababcc*.

#### **TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) A chameleon's physical appearance is peculiar as it has neither any ..... nor any .....
- (b) A chameleon resembles a ..... in appearance.
- (c) The poetic device in the last two lines is  
 (i) paradox (ii) repetition (iii) anaphora (iv) simile
- (d) Despite the presence of the chameleon on a tree, there seems nothing because he can easily  
 (i) climb very high (iii) hide in his nest  
 (ii) hide behind the leaves (iv) merge with the surroundings

**ANSWERS** (a) ears; wings (b) lizard (c) paradox  
 (d) (iv) merge with the surroundings

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 40 words each)*

**Q1. How does the poet describe the appearance of the Asian Lion?**

*Or*

**What are the distinctive features of the Asian Lion as described in the poem?**

The poet presents a true picture of the Asian Lion as a beast with an immense size and a dull, yellowish-brown colour. Its loud and ferocious roar frightens a person to death.

**Q2. Where is one likely to find an Asian Lion?**

As the name 'Asian Lion' suggests, it is to be found in the wild forests of the eastern countries of the globe. As eastern jungles are the habitats of the Asian Lions, one is likely to come across them while on a trip to these forests.

**Q3. What kind of a picture of the Bengal Tiger is portrayed in the poem?**

*Or*

**How does the Bengal Tiger look? What is so distinct about its appearance?**

The Bengal Tiger is shown to be a stately, majestic wild beast who has a yellow skin with black stripes on it.

**Q4. What 'simple rule' does the poet suggest to the reader to recognize a Bengal Tiger?**

The poet in a humorous manner gives a simple rule that if a beast with yellow skin and black stripes tries to eat a person, he/she should know at once that it is the Bengal Tiger. There is subtle humour as a person will not put his/her life in danger to be the prey of a tiger just to identify it.

**Q5. How does the poet compare and contrast the Asian Lion with the Bengal Tiger?**

Both the Asian Lion and the Bengal Tiger are beasts of prey and

kill other animals and human beings while hunting for food. However, they differ in their appearance. An Asian Lion is an animal having a large body with brown skin, whereas a Bengal Tiger has a yellow body with black stripes on it.

- Q6. How can a person identify a leopard? How does it behave when it sees someone?** Or

**What are the distinguishing features of a leopard?**

A person can identify a leopard by the pattern of spots on his body which forms a salt-and-pepper pattern. Moreover, it will assault the person leaping on him. It will keep leaping even though the victim cries with pain.

- Q7. Why has the poet misspelt the word 'leapt' and 'leap' in the third stanza?**

The poet takes liberty with language and misspels some of the words to emphasize the basic temperament of a leopard. He uses 'lept' instead of 'leapt'. Similarly, instead of 'leap and leap,' she uses 'lep and lep'. These misspelt words match better with 'leopard' and make the description of the leopard light and humorous.

- Q8. How does the poet describe the behaviour of a bear?**

The distinctive feature in the behaviour of a bear, according to the poet, is its habit of grasping its victim very tightly in order to scare or choke him/her to death. The bear continues to thus 'hug' the victim again and again until the threat is neutralized. Its manner of hugging its victim is awkward and crude and has given us the expression 'bear-hug'.

- Q9. How can one distinguish between a leopard and a bear?**

A leopard can be identified by its body with black or brown spots and by the way it leaps on its victims. A bear, on the other

hand, has a black body and can be known by its habit of hugging animals or people who fall prey to it.

**Q10. Why can a novice feel nonplussed/confused while differentiating between two wild animals?**

Since a novice is just a beginner or a learner and does not have a deep and minute knowledge of the appearances and behaviours of different animals, he/she may feel confused while differentiating between two wild animals.

**Q11. How do hyena and crocodile differ from each other?**

Or

**How does the poet describe the hyena and the crocodile?**

A hyena and a crocodile are both beasts of prey but have distinct looks and habits. A hyena appears to be smiling while eating its prey whereas a crocodile is in the habit of weeping and shedding tears while swallowing its victim. The smile of hyena and the tears of crocodile make them different from each other and from other animals in the forest.

**Q12. How has a chameleon been described by the poet?**

The poet has described a chameleon as a small creature resembling a lizard. It has no ears and no wings on its body and has the ability to change its colour according to the background. It can so easily blend itself with the surroundings that it is nearly impossible to notice its presence.

**Q13. Why does a person not see anything on the tree even when a chameleon is present there?**

A chameleon has the ability to camouflage as it can change its colours according to the colour of its surroundings. While perched on a tree, it hides itself by blending itself perfectly with the colour of the tree.

**Q14. How does the poet caution the readers regarding the dangers of animals?**

The poet indirectly cautions the readers against the dangers involved in going near wild animals. As most of the wild animals like lions, tigers, bears, crocodiles, hyenas and chameleons are all beasts of prey and are always on a look out for victims, it may be dangerous to go very near them.

### LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

*(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)*

**Q1. According to the poet, how can we identify an Asian Lion, a Bengal Tiger and a Leopard?**

An Asian Lion, a Bengal Tiger and a Leopard are all ferocious wild beasts of prey who kill other animals for food. People usually living away from forests cannot identify them easily. The poet, Carolyn Wells, presents these wild animals as distinct from each other because of their different physical appearances and their behaviours. The Asian Lions, found in the eastern countries, are huge in size and have a dull, brown skin. They can frighten a victim to death as they roar loudly.

A Bengal Tiger can be distinguished from other animals by its yellow skin having black stripes on it. Very humorously, the poet remarks that if the beast comes to eat a person, he can be very definite that it is no other animal except a Bengal Tiger. It pounces upon its prey for food.

A leopard can be identified by its skin having spots. The pale straw coloured coat with solid dark spots makes a peppery pattern. The animal can be recognized as a leopard if it jumps on the victim again and again. The poet wittily remarks that it is a leopard because it 'leaps' and 'leaps' on a person implying that it

leaps repeatedly on the person it encounters till the person is killed.

Thus, the poet presents a vivid description of an Asian Lion, a Bengal Tiger and a Leopard to help the reader to identify them and beware of them.

**Q2. How does the poet portray a bear, a hyena, a crocodile, and a chameleon?**

Or

**What behavioural traits of a bear, a hyena, a crocodile and a chameleon are described by the poet?**

The poet does not discuss the physical appearance of a bear, a hyena and a crocodile; there are only brief remarks about the physical looks of a chameleon. The poet's emphasis is on the behavioural traits of these animals. A bear is known for its very strong and tight hug. A person can clearly identify a bear if he/she is hugged again and again by it.

A crocodile and a hyena are different from each other and can be recognized because of their distinct behaviours. A hyena, while swallowing its victim, keeps smiling merrily. A crocodile, on the other hand, seems to shed tears while eating up its victim. Therefore, even a novice can know that the smiling creature is a hyena and the weeping one is a crocodile.

A chameleon closely resembles a lizard and has neither ears nor wings on its body. Its peculiar trait is that it changes its colours according to the colour of the surroundings so as to merge with the background to avoid being detected easily. It may be seated on the branch of a tree but can be so camouflaged that a person may not be able to discern it.

In this way, the poet briefly and humorously presents the distinct behavioural characteristics of some wild animals.

**Q3. Write a note on the element of humour in the poem "How to Tell Wild Animals."** *Or*

**How does the poet create humour in the poem "How to Tell Wild Animals"?**

The poem "How to Tell Wild Animals" is both informative and humorous. The poet has couched factual descriptions in the mould of wit and humour. Humour has been created through both the descriptions and language. Even the poet's caution to the readers against the dangers of wild animals has been made through humorous statements.

The descriptions of the Asian Lion and the Bengal Tiger are full of wit as in both the cases, the way of identifying these wild beasts is interesting. One has to encounter a roaring Asian Lion to know it and be a prey to the Bengal Tiger to be able to identify it. Similarly, the way to recognize a bear is to be tightly embraced by it. The smiling face of a hyena is contrasted with the weeping face of a crocodile in such a way that it provokes laughter. The paradoxical statement about a chameleon that when there is nothing on the tree, there is a chameleon is full of wit, for the beast has the ability to camouflage and blend with its surroundings.

The language used by the poet at some places is replete with humour. The poet has used poetic license to make the language interesting. For example, the word 'leap' is spelt as 'lep' and the word 'leapt' is spelt as 'lept' to make them sound like the first syllable of the word 'leopard'. The final fatal stroke of the bear on the embraced victim has been humorously and ironically called a 'caress'.

Thus, the poet has made factual statements in a highly humorous manner. There is a beautiful synthesis of the serious and the non-serious.



## 5. *The Ball Poem*

(John Berryman)

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### ABOUT THE POEM

#### *Introduction*

The poem is about how small and insignificant incidents of life yield significant lessons and prepare one gradually to face the harsh realities of life. It vividly captures a young boy's state of mind whose playful activities are suddenly interrupted as his ball is lost. He gets a sudden jolt. Nothing can comfort his mind. But this insignificant incident is not something meaningless. It has a larger meaning which prepares one to face those intense moments when life snatches what is very dear to us.

#### *The Setting of the Poem*

A place near a harbour forms the setting of the poem. The boy was playing with a ball near a harbour when it rolled away from him into the water from where it could not be retrieved. The narrator too was near the harbour and witnessed the ball rolling away, leaving the boy grief-stricken.

#### *Summary*

The poem talks about the miserable condition of a boy on losing his ball. Not knowing what to do, he feels grieved, shaken and helpless. The poet sees the ball going down the street into the water. It seems to be rolling away and jumping into the water very happily, unmindful of the impact of the loss on the boy. The poet makes no effort to console the boy because he feels that it's no use trying to convince the boy saying he can get another ball, a new one. He believes that nothing will pacify him as he seems to be overwhelmed with grief. The loss seems to have upset him immensely.

The poet doesn't want to convince the boy that his loss is negligible as

the ball is something inexpensive and he could very well get another one. In fact, a truth of life has been experienced by him. Materialistic possessions are quite often lost in life. They cannot be substituted. Money cannot bring the lost things back, it can only buy new ones to replace them. The boy is getting the first hand knowledge of what it feels on losing something dear to one's heart and how one has to summon moral courage to be able to bear the loss and get reconciled to the fact of losing the possessions one is fondly attached to.

The whole poem may be regarded as an extended metaphor as the ball has been used as a metaphor for the materialistic possessions of a person, the loss of which is a painful experience.

#### THEME

The theme of the poem is much deeper than it appears to be on the surface. The poem narrates an incident in the life of a child when his ball is lost and cannot be retrieved. The loss leaves the boy grief-stricken as it is his first experience of the loss of a possession. The poet, who has witnessed the experience, leaves the boy alone instead of consoling him because he wants the boy to learn how to take life in its stride and bear the losses bravely.

The poem, in fact deals with the philosophy of loss and is based on the idea that people possess a number of things, some of which get lost sometimes. But loss is an inevitable part of life and should not give an emotional setback to the loser. One must know how to put up with a loss without losing heart and hope, because loss of one thing is not the end of life. One must courageously move on leaving the loss behind.

#### MESSAGE

The poem has a very clear message that the process of learning the ways of the world starts at a very young age. When a young child loses a

valuable possession, he/she is overpowered by grief. However, the loss starts the journey towards maturity. The child learns a lesson of how to be careful about possessions in this materialistic world. Moreover, if the child is not consoled and the lost object is not replaced by a new one, the child gets a training in how to put up with a loss and move further overcoming the grief, as well as in how to be careful about his/her belongings.

The poem also conveys a message that one must not be emotionally attached to materialistic things. A loss must not leave a person sorrow-stricken. One must know how to bear the loss bravely and move on.

#### TITLE

The title chosen by the poet does not give much of an idea about the theme of the poem. The title evokes the curiosity of the reader about the contents of the poem. The poem does deal with a ball being lost but overall it conveys a much deeper meaning. It deals more with the process of learning to face a sudden loss in life and reconciling to it than with a simple story of a ball. In fact, the simplicity of the title belies the seriousness of the content.

#### LITERARY DEVICES

##### **Alliteration**

Alliteration is the occurrence of the same sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. It creates a musical effect and enhances the pleasure of reading a literary work.

##### **Examples:**

- ♦ *Balls, balls will be lost always...*

Here the poet has repeated 'b' sound.

- ♦ *And no one buys a ball back.*

Here the poet has used 'b' sound repeatedly which makes the expression musical.

### Transferred Epithet

Transferred Epithet is a poetic device in which an adjective is used not with the noun which it normally qualifies but with some other noun.

#### Example:

- ♦ *shaking grief*

Here, it is not the grief that shakes but the boy.

### Repetition

Repetition is using a word, phrase, or clause a number of times with the purpose of emphasis or to provide unity to the poem.

#### Examples:

- ♦ *What, what is he to do?*

Here the repetition of the word 'what' emphasizes the helplessness of the boy who cannot retrieve the lost ball.

- ♦ *Balls, balls will be lost always, little boy.*

Here the word 'balls' has been repeated to emphasize the idea that 'balls' stand for the possessions of a person.

- ♦ *Knowing what every man must one day know  
And most know many days, how to stand up.*

Here 'know' is repeatedly used to emphasize that the incident has given a lesson to the boy about the hard fact of life that one has to suffer losses from time to time and one should know how to accept the losses bravely without being shaken by them.

- ♦ *The epistemology of loss, how to stand up  
Knowing what every man must one day know  
And most know many days, how to stand up.*

The poet repeats the expression 'how to stand up' to bring home the idea that one must accept a loss bravely and move on in life.

### **Symbolism**

Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities, by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal meaning. Generally, it is an object representing another, to give an entirely different meaning that is much deeper and more significant.

In this poem, 'ball' has been used as a symbol of the possessions a person may have. It is also symbolic of the childhood innocence of the boy.

### **Personification**

Personification is a literary device in which the poet associates human attributes with some abstract idea or an inanimate object or a natural phenomenon.

#### **Example:**

- ♦ *merrily bouncing down the street*

Here the ball has been personified, as the expression "merrily bouncing" presents the inanimate ball jumping happily like a human being.

### **Anaphora**

Anaphora is a literary device in which the writer repeats the same beginning of a clause or a sentence, chiefly with the purpose of emphasis on the repeated element, but also to bring rhythm in the writing.

#### **Examples:**

- ♦ *What is the boy now, who has lost his ball,*

*What, what is he to do? I saw it go*

Here the poet starts the first and the second line with 'What' to arouse the curiosity of the reader about the reaction of the boy to the loss of the ball.

- *Merrily bouncing, down the street, and then  
Merrily over – there it is in the water!*

Here each of these two lines begins with 'Merrily' to present the ball moving away happily, which is contrasted with the sad mood of the boy.

### **Enjambment**

It is a poetic device in which a line runs on to the next line or lines carrying on the idea without a punctuation mark (a comma, or a full stop) at the end of a line.

#### **Examples:**

- *What, what is he to do? I saw it go  
Merrily bouncing, down the street, and then  
Merrily over – there it is in the water!*
- *An ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy  
As he stands rigid, trembling, staring down  
All his young days into the harbour where  
His ball went.*

In both these examples, lines run on to the next without a punctuation mark at the end to show a pause.

### **RHYME SCHEME**

The poem doesn't have any rhyme scheme as it is written in free verse.

## STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.

(I)

What is the boy now, who has lost his ball,  
 What, what is he to do? I saw it go  
 Merrily bouncing, down the street, and then  
 Merrily over - there it is in the water!

The opening stanza of the poem introduces the situation presented in the poem. A young boy has lost his ball and fails to understand how to retrieve it. But it cannot be got back because the narrator has witnessed how it went jumping down the street and then, across the street and ultimately into water, from where it cannot be retrieved. The ball is shown to have rolled away merrily which is contrasted with the gloomy mood of the boy at the loss of the ball.

## TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(a) What has the boy lost and how?

The boy has lost his ball. He has lost it while playing with it near the harbour when it bounced and rolled away into the water.

(b) What is the boy's state of mind?

The boy is in a very gloomy, sad state of mind. Feeling very helpless at his first experience of a loss, he doesn't know what to do in his misery

(c) Who is 'I' in the stanza? What did 'I' see?

'I' in the stanza is the poet. He saw the boy's ball rolling down the street and eventually falling into the water.

(d) What is the significance of repetition of the word 'what'?

The repetition of the word 'what' shows the boy's utter helplessness and desperation on losing the ball.

(e) Why has the poet used the word 'merrily' twice in the stanza?

The poet has tried to capture the movement of the ball as it rolled down the street. It seemed to be bouncing joyfully, forgetful of the pain that it caused to the boy. In fact, the word 'merrily' emphasizes, through contrast, the sadness of the boy.

### TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) 'What' in the first line refers to the boy's  
 (i) lost ball (ii) mental state (iii) location (iv) age
- (b) 'I' in the second line is .....
- (c) The word 'merrily' has been used to describe the  
 (i) the poet (ii) the boy (iii) the ball (iv) the water
- (d) The ball ultimately fell into the water of the .....
- (e) "I saw it go/Merrily bouncing....." These words contain an example of  
 (i) alliteration (ii) metaphor  
 (iii) simile (iv) personification

**ANSWERS** (a) (ii) mental state (b) the poet (c) (iii) the ball (d) harbour  
 (e) (iv) personification

### (II)

No use to say 'O there are other balls':  
 An ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy  
 As he stands rigid, trembling, staring down  
 All his young days into the harbour where  
 His ball went.

This stanza presents the mental state of the young boy who has lost his ball. The narrator does not try to soothe him because he knows that the boy is so grief-stricken that nothing can console him. He cannot be pacified by the fact that there are other balls to play with. He is trembling with a deep sense of sorrow and keeps

staring down the way the ball has gone. He is reminded of all the days of the past when he had played with the ball. Here, the ball becomes symbolic of the childhood days of the boy. It is also symbolic of the loss of the childhood innocence of the boy that leaves him maturer.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) Why is it no use to say, 'O there are other balls'?

The boy is so grief-stricken at the loss of that particular ball that he will not respond to reasoning. To his mind, no other ball can be a substitute for the one that has been lost.

- (b) Explain the expression: 'ultimate shaking grief'.

'Ultimate' means 'final', 'eventual'. Here the boy is so shocked at the loss of the ball that he feels that nothing can be more grievous than the loss that he has faced, and the thought of the big loss makes him shake with grief.

- (c) What makes the boy rigid? Why does he 'tremble'?

The helplessness at having lost his ball forever makes the boy rigid. He trembles because of the utter grief that has overtaken him.

- (d) Why is the boy staring down into the harbour?

The boy's ball has gone across the street into the water body. This has so overwhelmed him that he is gazing with sorrow at the point where the ball was last seen.

- (e) Which poetic device has been used in 'shaking grief'?

The poetic device used in 'shaking grief' is transferred epithet as it is the grief-stricken boy who shakes, not the grief itself.

- (f) What does the ball symbolize in this stanza?

In this stanza, the ball is symbolic of the boy's young days – the days of childhood when he played with the ball. It also symbolizes the childhood innocence of the boy.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) The loss of the ball has made the boy  
 (i) indifferent (ii) excited (iii) happy (iv) sad
- (b) The ball has gone to  
 (i) the street (ii) the park (iii) the harbour (iv) the well
- (c) Why is it no use to say, 'O there are other balls'?
- (i) The boy does not have the money to buy another ball  
 (ii) The boy knows that the ball can be retrieved  
 (iii) The boy wants only the ball he has lost  
 (iv) The poet wants the boy to experience what loss is
- (d) The poetic device used in the second line is .....
- (e) The expression 'All his young days' refers to the ..... days of the boy he had played with the ball.
- (f) The boy has been left ..... and ..... by the loss of the ball.

**ANSWERS** (a) (iv) sad (b) (iii) the harbour (c) (iii) The boy wants only the ball he has lost (d) transferred epithet  
 (e) childhood/younger (f) rigid; trembling

**(III)**

I would not intrude on him;

A dime, another ball, is worthless. Now

He senses first responsibility

In a world of possessions. People will take

Balls, balls will be lost always, little boy.

The narrator does not intend to interfere with the emotions of the young boy by consoling him with the arguments that the ball was not worth much or that he will buy him another ball. He believes that the loss of the ball teaches a lesson to the young boy about how to take care of one's possessions in this materialistic world. Moreover, the boy must know that loss is a part of life and one has to put up with it bravely.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) Who is 'I' in the stanza? What does he/she mean by 'intruding'?

'I' stands for the poet. By 'intruding' he/she means 'interfering'. The poet will not like to interfere with the child's intense emotions on having lost something so dear to him.

- (b) Why doesn't 'I' wish to intrude on 'him'?

The poet is aware of the fact that no argument about the insignificance of his loss will convince the child for whom the ball was a precious possession. Hence, he doesn't wish to intrude on him. He wants the child to be aware of the hard fact that things get lost if one is not careful. Moreover, the child must know that losses are a part of life and should be accepted boldly.

- (c) Why does the poet think it will be useless to offer the boy another ball?

The poet thinks it will be useless to offer the boy another ball because the new ball will not be the original lost one, it will only replace it. Moreover, the poet wants the boy to face the loss himself without any compensation, so that he may develop a sense of responsibility.

- (d) How does the boy sense his 'first responsibility' in a world of possessions? Or

**Explain: 'He senses first responsibility.'**

The boy realises for the first time in his life as to how one feels on losing one's possession and how one has to be more cautious in keeping one's possessions safe. The loss of the ball is a lesson in responsibility for the boy.

- (e) What does "In a world of possessions" mean?

"In a world of possessions" implies the realities of the materialistic world where people gather things and get attached to them.

- (f) What does the poet wish to convey through the expression, "People will take/Balls, balls will be lost always"?

Or

What advice does 'I' give to the little boy in the last line?

The poet is trying to convey the universal nature of loss. People will always keep on amassing possessions and these possessions will not stay for ever. Once lost they can never be replaced. Therefore, one must know how to accept the losses boldly.

### TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) 'I' in the first line is .....
- (b) Another ball cannot console the boy because it is  
 (i) cheap (iii) worthless  
 (ii) dull-coloured (iv) not the original ball
- (c) An important lesson that the poet feels the boy will learn is that  
 (i) losses are avoidable (iii) losses are inevitable  
 (ii) losses are necessary (iv) losses are welcome
- (d) The loss of the ball is the first lesson in ..... for the young boy.
- (e) The poetic device used in the last line is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) the poet (b) (iv) not the original ball

(c) (iii) losses are inevitable (d) responsibility

(e) repetition

### (IV)

And no one buys a ball back. Money is external.

He is learning, well behind his desperate eyes,

The epistemology of loss, how to stand up

Knowing what every man must one day know

And most know many days, how to stand up.

In these lines, the poet reveals how seemingly small incidents in life contain in themselves very deep lessons of life. The loss of the ball for the boy is, of course, a saddening experience as he will not get back the ball that he has lost. But more significant thing is the lesson he has learnt – his first lesson as to how to cope up with the loss and stand up to move on. The boy has learnt a lesson of the reality of life that people do lose things in life, but that does not bring life to a halt. People tolerate the losses and advance further to achieve again and, perhaps, to lose again.

### TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) 'And no one buys a ball back'. Explain what the poet wants to convey to the boy?

Or

Why does no one buy a ball back?

It is a harsh fact of life that whatever is once lost cannot be recovered as such. The poet wishes to convey to the child that losses are a part of life and one has to encounter them every now and then.

- (b) Explain: "Money is external." Or

How is money 'external'?

Money is external because it can buy a thing to replace the lost one but cannot bring the original lost thing back.

- (c) What is the boy's loss teaching him? Or

What is the boy learning?

The boy's loss is teaching him what it means to lose something. This loss has a larger meaning. It is preparing him to face life with all its ups and downs.

- (d) Why are his eyes desperate?

The young boy is having his first experience of loss. He had never tasted the pain of loss earlier. In an utter state of helplessness, he is desperate to have his ball back.

- (e) Why is it important for a child to know 'the epistemology of loss'?

Knowing the epistemology of loss and understanding that losses are a part of life will impart a maturity of thought to the child and prepare him to take life in its stride. Loss is something that everyone faces and some of us face recurrently. But one has to put up with the loss and muster strength to move on.

**(f) What is it that everyone must know one day?**

Everyone must know one day that loss is a part of life. One has to face many losses but one has to put up with them and advance further.

**(g) Explain the expression, "how to stand up."**

The expression implies how to tolerate a loss and gather strength to start moving again.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) The poetic device used in the first line is .....
- (b) "Money is external" because it cannot  
 (i) teach the boy any lesson (iii) buy back the lost ball  
 (ii) buy a new ball (iv) make the boy responsible
- (c) There is an expression of ..... in the boy's eyes.
- (d) According to the poet, the boy must learn how to  
 (i) not to forget the losses he suffers in life  
 (ii) compensate himself for the loss  
 (iii) avoid suffering losses in life  
 (iv) bear the loss and make a new beginning
- (e) A word in the extract that means '*philosophy or study of knowledge*' is .....

- ANSWERS** (a) alliteration (b) (iii) buy back the lost ball (c) desperation  
 (d) (iv) bear the loss and make a new beginning  
 (e) epistemology

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 40 words each)*

- Q1. Why does the poet say, "I would not intrude on him"? Why doesn't he offer him money to buy another ball? *(Textual)***

The poet understands the intensity of pain that the boy is experiencing on his first loss. He knows that buying another ball would be no consolation and it would be the best approach to leave the boy alone so that he should develop a sense of responsibility and maturity, and know how to face losses in life boldly. So, he doesn't offer him money to buy another ball.

- Q2. "... staring down / All his young days into the harbour where / His ball went ...." Do you think the boy has had the ball for a long time? Is it linked to the memories of days when he played with it? *(Textual)***

The boy seems to have possessed the ball for a long time. That is why when the ball goes bouncing into the water the memories of all his young days come to his mind and he stands sad and gloomy facing the loss of the object so dear to his heart. The words "All his young days into the harbour" indicate that throughout his young days the boy possessed the ball.

- Q3. What does "In the world of possessions" mean? *(Textual)***

"In the world of possessions" refers to the materialistic world, a world where people are so possessive about, and emotionally attached to things that they don't easily share them with others. Rather they are possessive about what belongs to them and try to accumulate more and more things.

- Q4. Do you think the boy has lost anything earlier? Pick out the words that suggest the answer? *(Textual)***

The boy has not lost anything earlier which is indicated by the words, "He senses first responsibility / In a world of possessions".

Phrases like 'ultimate shaking grief,' 'he stands rigid, trembling' show the rude shock that the loss of the ball has given him which also suggests that it is his first experience of a loss.

- Q5. What does the poet say the boy is learning from the loss of the ball? Try to explain this in your own words. (Textual)**

The boy is learning a sense of responsibility to keep his possessions more cautiously and safely. He is learning the nature of loss and also how to face it because losses are an inevitable part of life. The loss of the ball imparts a lesson to him regarding how to cope up with losses without losing heart and equip himself to take life in its stride, so that he may stand up and move on.

- Q6. Which moment in the life of the boy does the poem present?**

- The poem presents a very important moment in the life of the boy - the moment he has lost his ball. In fact, the moment is important because it marks a shift in the life of the boy from innocence to maturity at the realization that loss is a part of life.

- Q7. How does the boy react to the loss of the ball? Or**

**What are the boy's feelings at the loss of his ball?**

The boy is deeply affected by the loss of the ball as he looks desperately at the harbour where the ball is lost and trembles with grief when he realizes that the ball cannot be retrieved. His deep sorrow is caused by the fact that it is his first experience of a loss and he has yet to learn how to accept losses.

- Q8. How does the loss of the ball bring a sense of responsibility to the boy?**

The loss of the ball brings a sense of responsibility to the boy because for the first time he has experienced the pain of loss and it will make him realize that it is his responsibility to take care of his possessions.

**Q9. How did the poet feel on seeing the ball rolling into the water?**

The poet viewed the loss of the ball very objectively till he saw the boy's reaction. He didn't bother much about it as he thought it to be something inexpensive and insignificant. But the sadness of the boy made him feel that this first loss of the boy has given him a shocking setback. He realizes that the loss will make him learn the reality of life that things are often lost and losses have to be accepted.

**Q10. What does the phrase 'O there are other balls' suggest?**

The phrase suggests that the loss of the ball should not make the boy so sad because the loss can very well be compensated. One loss should not bring life to a standstill because there are other possessions and one must move on to gain more.

**Q11. 'I would not intrude on him'. Who is 'I' in this line and what idea about his attitude do you form from this statement?**

'I' stands for the poet, who has witnessed the young boy's ball roll away and jump into the deep water. The line reflects his psychological insight that makes him decide to leave the boy alone in the moments of intense grief to decide his own reactions and learn the philosophy of loss.

**Q12. '..... balls will be lost always'. How is the poet so sure that the balls will always be lost?**

The poet is an experienced man. He has seen much more life than the little boy. He knows that the possessions of people to which they are deeply attached get lost quite often. His observations and experiences make him sure that losses are an unavoidable part of life.

**Q13. Explain: 'Money is external'.**

The expression means that money can buy a new thing but

cannot bring back something that is once lost. Nor can money compensate for the emotional setback a person suffers after having lost something dear and precious.

**Q14. What does the ball symbolize in the poem?**

In the poem, the ball is symbolic of the materialistic possessions in the world. It also symbolizes the young days of the boy when he is full of innocence and does not understand what it means to lose something precious.

**Q15. What did the loss of the ball mean for the boy?**

For the boy, the loss of the ball meant the loss of a valuable possession. It also meant the loss of his younger days because most probably the boy had owned the ball for a long time and having played with it, he associated his younger days with it. Moreover, with the loss of the ball he has lost his childhood innocence and gained a mature outlook on life.

**Q16. What epistemology of loss does the poem contain?**

The poem contains the epistemology of loss as it brings forth the fact that loss is an essential part of life in this materialistic world. People suffer losses quite often and feel dejected at these losses. But it is advisable to face the losses bravely and move on without letting grief get over one's mind.

**Q17. What would have happened if the narrator had offered money to the boy?**

If the narrator had offered money to the boy, the latter would have bought another ball with it and would have forgotten the loss. He would not have learnt the lesson that one should be responsible and careful regarding the possessions one has. He would not have attained maturity and learnt how to face losses bravely to be able to advance further in life.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

**Q1. How do you think the poem contains a deep philosophy of life?**

*Or*

**What, according to the narrator, is the lesson of life that the boy will learn after the loss of the ball?**

*Or*

**Is the poem just about a lost ball? What lessons of life does the poem teach us?**

The narrator believes that the boy, after losing his ball, will learn that life has many difficult situations for a person and that one has to put up with many losses in life. The narrator has seen the boy sorrow-stricken after his ball has fallen in water. But the loss of the ball is symbolic of the big losses in life. The boy will learn that a loss of something precious should not bring life to a standstill. Life has to go on and one has to put up with the loss bravely to advance further in life to achieve more.

The narrator does not try to console the boy, nor does he think of buying another ball for him. He believes that the boy should learn how to be careful of his possessions in this materialistic world. And if he has to encounter a loss, he should know how to deal with the situation boldly and how to overcome his grief. The narrator feels that the first realization of the loss of a possession begins the process of maturity in life. Even a small incident like the loss of a ball may prepare a person for the journey of life where there will be many losses.

The poem, in this way, contains a deep philosophical truth that losses form a significant part of one's life. It carries a significant lesson that we must take things in their stride and cope up with losses without feeling dejected and sad.

**Q2. What is the boy's reaction to the loss of his ball? How does the narrator view this loss?** Or

**What is the impact of the loss of the ball on the boy's mind? What does the narrator think about the loss?**

The loss of the ball has left the young boy utterly dejected. He has received a strong setback and is gloomy and grief-stricken. His sorrow is caused by the fact that this is his first experience of the loss of a possession. He had never tasted the bitterness of loss earlier and having lost his precious possession, he is much shocked. For him, the ball has been a very valuable thing with which have been associated the memories of his young, innocent days. It is not only a materialistic loss, but also a painful emotional experience. He is desperate to retrieve the ball but the fact that it cannot be recovered makes him feel helpless and frustrated.

The narrator, who has witnessed the ball bounce into the water, remains detached and makes no effort to soothe the troubled mind of the boy. He does not argue that the ball was not expensive or that he has many other balls to play with. Nor does he promise to buy another ball for him. He remains indifferent purposely because he is of the opinion that the boy should learn a lesson that in this materialistic world, one has to be very cautious and responsible. And if there is a loss, one has to bear it bravely. If a person deals with a loss courageously, he/she may advance further in life. The narrator regards the loss of the ball the beginning of the journey of the boy from innocence to maturity. He handles the situation rationally, thinking that the boy will have to encounter losses in life and must learn how to be emotionally detached from the possessions.

**Q3. How is the loss of the ball a shift in the life of the boy from innocence to maturity?** Or

**How can you regard the theme of "The Ball Poem" as loss of innocence and beginning of maturity?**

"The Ball Poem" presents a very crucial moment in the life of a young boy who has lost his ball and has experienced a loss for the first time in life. The ball is, in fact, symbolic of the worldly possessions and the loss of any of these possessions leaves a person grief-stricken. The ball also represents the innocent days of childhood when one is not aware of the risks and responsibilities in life. The boy has realized for the first time that it was his responsibility to take care of the ball.

The experience of loss has brought about a big shift in the boy's life - the shift from innocence to maturity. The seemingly insignificant incident has taught him a harsh reality of life that everyone has to encounter losses in life but one must cope with these losses without letting sorrow overpower one's mind. Life has to be taken boldly and losses accepted without losing hope, because life is dynamic and new possessions can be gained through a matured approach to life. The boy has learnt the philosophy of loss and will be more cautious, careful and responsible in future. The poem, in this way, shows the beginning of the journey towards maturity.

- Q4. "Sometimes seemingly insignificant events have a deep and far-reaching significance." Discuss in relation to the poem "Dust of Snow" and "The Ball Poem".** Or

**What common philosophical idea do you find in "Dust of Snow" and "The Ball Poem"?**

The poems "Dust of Snow" by Robert Frost and "The Ball Poem" by John Berryman bring forth a common philosophical idea that sometimes the events that seem to be trivial and insignificant leave deep impressions on our minds and teach us significant lessons of life.

In "Dust of Snow," the poet, who is in a depressed and dejected state of mind, happens to pass from near a snow-covered hemlock tree on which a crow is perched. But as he walks past the hemlock tree, a sudden fall of the dust of snow on him brings about a profound and positive change in his mental state. It dispels away all his gloom and dejection, and sets in delight and satisfaction. The incident seems to be petty and insignificant but conveys an important message that nature always imparts pleasure, and pacifies the frustrated, downcast and dejected minds of people.

Similarly, in "The Ball Poem", the poet seems to be narrating a commonplace incident. A young boy, while playing with a ball on the banks of a harbour, loses his ball as it rolls away to fall irretrievably into the deep waters of the harbour. This incident seems to be trivial, as the ball is not very expensive, and the boy could be consoled with some other ball, yet the loss of the ball contains in itself a significant lesson for the boy – how to cope up with losses in life and muster strength to move forward. This encounter with the first loss in life has prepared the young boy to face the harsh fact that losses are an inevitable part of life.

Thus, both the poems carry the message that sometimes seemingly insignificant incidents have very significant lessons of life.

□□□

## 6. *Amanda!*

(Robin Klein)

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### ABOUT THE POEM

#### *Introduction*

"Amanda!" is a short poem about the mental state of a young school-going girl, who is always checked and instructed by her elders, most probably by her mother and is given a long list of do's and don'ts. Feeling annoyed, she brushes aside the instructions and finds escape in dreams of a life full of liberty, where she may live according to her own whims and fancies.

#### *Summary*

The poem gives us a peep into the psyche of a young girl who is not allowed to enjoy a life of her own choice. In this poem, Amanda feels that her liberty is curtailed by her mother who keeps rebuking her for one thing or the other. For example, she is commanded not to bite her nails and to sit erect without slouching.

Offended by her mother's instructions, Amanda, defiant as she is, finds an escape into the world of imagination and considers herself to be a mermaid, swimming blissfully in a calm, green sea, all by herself with nobody around to disturb her.

From the world of dreams, she is pulled back when she is asked if she has done her homework, whether she has tidied her room and why she has not cleaned her shoes. Feeling sick of so many questions, the child turns a deaf ear to them and again imagines herself to be an orphan with no one to check and nag her. She visualises herself roaming about in the street bare-footed where there are no nagging voices and pestering individuals to curtail her freedom.

Being defiant, Amanda looks away while she is asked not to eat

chocolates as they are not good for her acne. The mother immediately commands her to look her in the face when she is being talked to. This triggers more defiance in Amanda and in her imagination, she prefers to be Rapunzel, a character from the German fairy tale who was imprisoned in a tower by a witch. Rapunzel had long, golden hair which she let out of the window to her prince so that he could climb up. The idea of being a captive doesn't bother Amanda; she rather feels that this life of solitariness would be so blissful that unlike Rapunzel she would never let down her bright hair through the window to enable some prince to liberate her.

But her blissful dream is interrupted when her mother scolds her for being moody and commands her to stop sulking. The mother fears that people will wrongly get the impression that she has been nagging her daughter.

In this way, the young Amanda keeps shifting from reality to imagination and back to reality again.

#### *Style of the Poem*

The poem has a conversational style where only one speaker, that is the mother, voices her views. The thoughts of the child which are put in parenthesis are not uttered. The child seems to be listening in silence but in reality her imagination, which is fast at work, transports her from her home, to sea, to the roadside, to an old castle and thus she wishes to escape the perpetual nagging by the mother.

In the five stanzas uttered by the mother, Amanda's name appears twelve times. Each of these stanzas gives jolts and jerks to the child, hence the stanzas spoken by the mother are written in free verse but the poet has used rhyme scheme for the thoughts of the child, who imagines a blissful life full of liberty and joy.

#### **THEME**

The poem deals with child psychology as well as the lack of insight on

the part of elders to understand children's thought process. The poem seems to suggest that the more children are suppressed, the more defiant they become. Such children start finding reality to be harsh and find escape in day-dreaming or imagination, so much so that they start wishing for a life without parents around them to curtail their liberty. The poem indirectly advises the parents to have healthy and friendly relations with children which may be more effective in grooming them properly.

However, the poem also indirectly emphasizes the need for children to listen to the advice of their elders and not to escape reality. Children can learn to do so if they are treated with affection and given some liberty, for suppression results in defiance.

#### TITLE

The poem centres around Amanda. Therefore, the poet has rightly titled this poem after the chief character. The title is followed by a mark of exclamation which indicates that Amanda is being addressed and commanded. The punctuation mark reveals the authoritative, dominating, unsympathetic tone adopted by the mother in addressing her daughter.

#### MESSAGE

The poem conveys the message that children need to be allowed more liberty. Excessive nagging makes them defiant and they turn a deaf ear to the instructions of the elders. They develop a kind of dislike for real life and start escaping into the world of dreams and imagination. In fact, the poem indirectly emphasizes the need of a healthy bond between parents and children. Parents should understand the psychology of children, who in turn, should be respectful and responsible to their parents.

## LITERARY DEVICES

### Alliteration

Alliteration is the occurrence of the same sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. It creates a musical effect and enhances the pleasure of reading a literary work.

#### Examples:

- ◆ *Stop that slouching and sit up straight.*  
Here 's' sound has been repeated which makes the line musical.
- ◆ *Stop that sulking at once, Amanda!*  
Here 's' sound has been used repeatedly.

### Repetition

Poets often repeat single words or phrases, lines, and sometimes, even whole stanzas at intervals to create a musical effect; to emphasize a point; to draw the readers' attention or to lend unity to a piece.

#### Example:

- ◆ In the poem the name of 'Amanda' has been repeatedly used to emphasize the commanding manner in which the mother addresses the young girl.

### Anaphora

Anaphora is a poetic device in which a word or group of words is used repeatedly at the beginning of sentences or clauses to create a special effect or to emphasise something.

#### Examples:

- ◆ *Don't bite your nails, Amanda!*  
*Don't hunch your shoulders, Amanda!*  
Each sentence in this example starts with "Don't" which stresses the authoritative tone of the mother.
- ◆ *Did you finish your homework, Amanda?*  
*Did you tidy your room, Amanda?*

Here, each line begins with 'Did you' and emphasizes the harsh treatment of Amanda at the hands of her mother.

### Allusion

Allusion means an indirect reference or suggestion. It is a figure of speech in which a passing but significant reference is made to a well-known person, place, thing or idea of a historical, mythological, cultural, literary or political significance. It does not describe in detail the person or thing it refers to.

There are two allusions in the poem.

#### Examples:

- *a mermaid, drifting blissfully*

Here a reference is made to a mermaid who in folklore is presented as an aquatic creature with the head and upper body of a female human and the tail of a fish.

- *I am Rapunzel, I have not a care;  
life in a tower is tranquil and rare;  
I'll certainly never let down my bright hair!*

Here the poet alludes to Rapunzel, a golden-haired young girl in a German fairytale. Rapunzel was imprisoned in a tower by a witch. She let her long hair down through the window of the tower. Her prince climbed up the hair, entered the tower and rescued her.

### Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech that is used to make a comparison between two things that aren't alike but do have something in common. Unlike a simile, where two things are compared directly using 'like' or 'as', a metaphor's comparison is more indirect, usually made by stating 'something is something else'. A metaphor is very expressive; it is not meant to be taken 'literally'.

The poet uses metaphors in stanzas 2, 4 and 6 as he compares Amanda to a mermaid, an orphan and Rapunzel respectively. Amanda imagines herself to be gliding over the sea like a mermaid. Then she dreams that she is an orphan roaming about freely without any restraints, and finally she imagines that she is Rapunzel living a solitary life in a tower.

### STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.

#### (I)

Don't bite your nails, Amanda!  
 Don't hunch your shoulders, Amanda!  
 Stop that slouching and sit up straight,  
 Amanda!

In this stanza, the speaker is probably the mother of a young school-going girl, Amanda. The stanza reveals the relationship between the mother and the daughter. The mother is in the habit of constantly checking and scolding her daughter. She, in an authoritative tone, prohibits Amanda from biting her nails. She further rebukes her for bending her shoulders and for sitting in a slouching posture. The mother instructs the daughter to sit in an erect posture.

#### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(a) Who is speaking to Amanda here? What is the tone of the speaker?

Most probably, Amanda's mother is speaking to her. She is giving her several instructions in a very sharp, commanding tone.

(b) What is Amanda asked not to do?

Amanda is asked not to bite her nails, not to bend her shoulders, and not to sit in a lazy, drooping posture.

**(c) What is Amanda instructed to do?**

Amanda is instructed to sit in an erect posture without bending her shoulders or back.

**(d) Why has Amanda's name been repeated three times in the stanza?**

The repetition of the name Amanda suggests that the mother is nagging the child and asking her to do or not to do particular things at every step.

**(e) What idea do you get about the speaker from the above lines?**

The speaker, Amanda's mother is good at heart and while repeatedly checking the child, she feels that she is being a responsible mother. However, her approach to improve the behaviour of her daughter is not appreciable. Her authoritative and commanding tone is certain to annoy the young girl.

**(f) Which literary device has been used in the third line?**

The literary device used in the third line is alliteration as 's' sound has been repeatedly used.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

(a) The speaker of these lines is most probably .....

(b) The speaker speaks in a ..... tone.

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| (i) affectionate | (iii) considerate |
| (ii) commanding  | (iv) patronising  |

(c) Amanda is probably a/an

- |              |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| (i) infant   | (iii) young woman |
| (ii) toddler | (iv) teenager     |

(d) A literary device used in the third line is .....

(e) The speaker instructs Amanda to

- |                          |                                |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (i) bite her nails       | (iii) sit in an upright manner |
| (ii) hunch her shoulders | (iv) sit in a slouching manner |

- (f) A word in the extract that means '*sitting in a drooping, awkward posture*' is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) Amanda's mother (b) (ii) commanding (c) (iv) teenager  
(d) alliteration (e) (iii) sit in an upright manner (f) slouching

(II)

(There is a languid, emerald sea,  
where the sole inhabitant is me—  
a mermaid, drifting blissfully.)

In this stanza, Amanda, the young girl is the speaker though her thoughts are not expressed openly. She is so much fed up with the constant instructions from her mother that she mentally drifts into the world of her imagination – the world of absolute liberty. She dreams of a sea with emerald green water and slow, lazy waves. She imagines that she is the only person dwelling in this beautiful world without anybody to restrict her movements. She dreams that she is a mermaid – the mythical creature with the head and body of a woman and the tail of a fish. Her imagination makes her feel that she glides over the sea, like a mermaid, in a delightful and blissful mental state.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) Explain the expression: "languid, emerald sea."

"Languid, emerald sea" refers to a calm sea with green water which forms a peaceful, free atmosphere set against the suffocating environment at Amanda's home, where she suffers constant chiding by her mother.

- (b) Who is 'me' in the stanza? What is his/her mood?

'Me' in the stanza is Amanda, a young school-going girl, who tired of the elder's nagging, fantasises and imagines herself to be a mermaid. Therefore, she is in a happy, delightful mood as she has forgotten the irritating instructions of her mother.

**(c) Why are these lines put in brackets?**

These lines are about the thoughts and dreams of Amanda which are not openly expressed by her. They are to be distinguished from the words of the other speaker. That is why they are put within brackets.

**(d) Where does 'me' want to be?**

Amanda wants to be on the waves of a calm sea drifting all alone freely without anybody to meddle with her and curb her liberty.

**(e) Why does 'me' imagine herself to be a mermaid? Or**

**What does 'me' imagine herself to be? And why?**

Amanda imagines herself to be a mermaid. As she is sick and tired of being perpetually nagged by her mother, she wishes to live a life of isolation, where she would be left to herself without being rebuked by her elders.

**(f) What sort of life does 'me' imagine for herself as a mermaid? Or**

**What does 'me' imagine herself to do in the sea?**

Amanda imagines a very peaceful life, where, all alone she would be surrounded by a calm green sea and she would glide gleefully in the placid sea.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) 'Me' in this stanza refers to .....
- (b) 'Me' imagines herself to be the sole inhabitant
- |                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| (i) in her house | (iii) on a sea |
| (ii) in a castle | (iv) in a boat |
- (c) 'Me' in this extract compares himself/herself to a .....
- (d) 'Me' likes to live a life
- |                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (i) full of friends           | (iii) of a wanderer        |
| (ii) in the company of nature | (iv) of peace and solitude |

- (e) A word in the extract that means the opposite of 'active' and 'hurried' is .....
- (f) The poetic device used in these lines is a .....

**ANSWERS** (a) Amanda (b) (iii) on a sea (c) mermaid  
(d) (iv) of peace and solitude (e) languid (f) metaphor

### (III)

Did you finish your homework, Amanda?

Did you tidy your room, Amanda?

I thought I told you to clean your shoes,  
Amanda!

From the world of imagination, Amanda is transported back to her real life when her mother sternly asks her if she has finished her homework or if she has cleared and cleaned her room. The mother rebukes Amanda for not having obeyed her when she asked her to clean her shoes. The stanza further emphasizes the authoritative tone of the mother while talking to Amanda and her strict behaviour while handling the girl.

#### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) Who poses questions to Amanda?

One of Amanda's parents, most probably her mother, poses questions to Amanda.

- (b) What different queries is the speaker making?

The mother wishes to know whether Amanda has finished her homework and whether she has made her room tidy.

- (c) What do you think Amanda has not done?

Amanda has been told earlier to clean her shoes which, to the great irritation of the speaker, she hasn't bothered to do.

(d) What idea do you get about the speaker's attitude towards Amanda?

The speaker seems to be very much concerned about Amanda. But, though her intention is good, her approach is not. She is excessively dominating and asserting, and does not understand the psychology of the young girl.

(e) Which poetic device has been used in the first two lines?

The poetic device used in the first two lines is 'anaphora' as each line begins with "Did you".

### TYPE - II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) The speaker in these lines is .....
- (b) A line in the stanza that shows that Amanda is a school girl is ..... (Quote the line)
- (c) The extract seems to suggest that Amanda is a/an ..... girl.  
 (i) fast and smart (iii) lazy and slow  
 (ii) obedient and responsive (iv) respectful and quick
- (d) The speaker in this extract speaks in a/an ..... tone.  
 (i) encouraging  
 (ii) rebuking  
 (iii) appreciative  
 (iv) argumentative
- (e) The first two lines of the stanza begin with "Did you". This literary device is called .....

**ANSWERS** (a) Amanda's mother (b) "Did you finish your homework?"  
 (c) (iii) lazy and slow (d) (ii) rebuking (e) Anaphora

### (IV)

(I am an orphan, roaming the street.  
 I pattern soft dust with my hushed, bare feet.  
 The silence is golden, the freedom is sweet.)

Amanda is so much frustrated by the continuous nagging by her mother that she imagines herself to be an orphan wandering about in the streets freely with no parent to scold her for walking in the dusty path. The shouting of the mother at Amanda makes the girl crave for a life of silence and liberty. She does not mind being an orphan if that can provide her freedom and peace of mind.

### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) Who is 'I' in these lines?

In these lines, 'I' is Amanda, a young school-going girl.

- (b) What does 'I' imagine herself to be and why?

Amanda imagines herself to be an orphan. Her mother's persistent nagging irritates her and she feels that life would be enjoyable if she were an orphan with no parent to curb her freedom.

- (c) What would 'I' do as an orphan?

Amanda would roam about bare-footed in the streets. There would be no one shouting at her and she would enjoy absolute freedom.

- (d) Why would 'I' like to do so?

Amanda would like to do what she has been forbidden to do and when free from instructions, she would enjoy doing what she wants to.

- (e) Why is the silence 'golden' and freedom 'sweet' for the speaker?

The speaker, Amanda feels fed up with the noisy, dominating commands of her mother and feels stifled and suffocated because she is given no freedom to exercise her sweet will. Therefore, she craves for calmness and liberty and regards silence to be 'golden' and freedom to be 'sweet'.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) 'I' in this extract is .....
- (b) The speaker would like to live like a/an ..... and ..... the streets barefooted.
- (c) The poetic device used in the second line is .....
- (d) 'I' hopes to enjoy a life of
- (i) silence and stillness                      (iii) hardwork and solitude
- (ii) silence and hardwork                      (iv) solitude and freedom

**ANSWERS** (a) Amanda (b) orphan; roam (c) transferred epithet  
(d) (iv) solitude and freedom

(V)

Don't eat that chocolate, Amanda!  
Remember your acne, Amanda!  
Will you please look at me when I'm speaking to you,  
Amanda!

As Amanda's mother handles her daughter sternly, always instructing and rebuking her, this stanza further reveals the behaviour of the mother. She prohibits Amanda from eating chocolates because that may aggravate her acne. As Amanda, being annoyed, looks away, her mother commands her to look at her when she is talking to her.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) Who is the speaker in these lines?

The speaker in these lines is one of the parents of Amanda, most probably her mother.

- (b) Why doesn't the speaker want Amanda to eat chocolate?

The speaker is worried about Amanda's acne. She knows that the chocolate will aggravate her skin problem. Therefore, she tells her not to eat it.

- (c) **Why do you think Amanda does not look at the speaker?**

Or

**How does Amanda react to the speaker's instructions? Why?**

Amanda is extremely irritated and annoyed at her mother's constant criticism and unnecessary interference. So she defies her mother's orders and refuses to look at her when the latter is speaking to her.

- (d) **Why does the speaker ask Amanda to look at him/her while he/she is speaking to her?**

It is discourteous not to look at the speaker when one is being talked to, as it is insulting for the former. Moreover, it shows lack of interest and defiance on the part of the listener. Therefore, the mother asks Amanda to look at her when she is speaking to her.

- (e) **What is the speaker's mood in this stanza?**

The speaker seems to be annoyed as her daughter Amanda eats chocolates despite her acne problem. She is further angered by the defiance shown by Amanda by not looking at her when she is addressing and instructing her.

- (f) **Why does the speaker use the word 'please' when she asks Amanda to look at her?**

The speaker says 'please' when she asks Amanda to look at her in order to let the girl know how angry and displeased she is with her. There is an element of anger, irritation and sarcasm in the use of the word 'please' here.

#### **TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) The speaker in this extract is .....
- (b) According to the speaker, Amanda has got ..... due to her habit of eating .....
- (c) The third line shows that Amanda is ..... the speaker.

- (i) obeying (iii) scolding  
(ii) ignoring (iv) teasing

(d) The speaker's tone here is

- (i) loving (iii) empathetic  
(ii) affectionate (iv) authoritative

**ANSWERS** (a) Amanda's mother (b) acne; chocolates  
(c) (ii) ignoring (d) (iv) authoritative

(VI)

(I am Rapunzel, I have not a care;  
life in a tower is tranquil and rare;  
I'll certainly *never* let down my bright hair!)

Amanda again escapes to the world of imagination away from the real world where she is subjected to constant scolding by her parents. She has a strange fantasy that she is Rapunzel (the young girl in a German fairy tale who was snatched away from her parents and locked in a tower by an evil witch). Amanda feels that her life as Rapunzel will be full of peace. She thinks that unlike Rapunzel, she will not let her golden, magical hair down to enable somebody to enter the tower. Moreover, she does not want anyone to interfere in her life by entering the tower with the help of her hair.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(a) Who imagines herself to be Rapunzel?

Amanda, a young school going girl imagines herself to be Rapunzel, a golden-haired girl in a German fairytale.

(b) Why does 'I' wish to be Rapunzel? How would it help him/her?

Amanda wants to be Rapunzel, the long-haired beautiful girl in a German fairytale who was locked up by a witch in a tower with a single window. Her isolation in the tower would relieve her of the constant nagging of her mother.

**(c) What sort of life does 'I' imagine to have in the tower?**

Amanda imagines herself to live an absolutely care-free life in the tower. She expects to experience a quiet, peaceful time there, as there would be no one to check her.

**(d) Why does 'I' plan never to let down his/her bright hair?**

It was Rapunzel's bright hair which helped the prince climb up into the tower through its only window to rescue the miserable girl from the clutches of the witch. Amanda would never like to leave the life of solitude. So she would not let her hair down.

**(d) Which poetic device has been used in the stanza? Explain it.**

The poetic device used in the stanza is 'allusion' as the poet alludes to Rapunzel, a golden-haired girl in a German fairy tale who was imprisoned in a tower by a witch and rescued by a prince who entered the tower climbing up the long hair let down by her through the window.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) ..... imagines herself to be Rapunzel.
- (b) Rapunzel is a ..... in a German fairy tale.  
 (i) schoolgirl (iii) wicked witch  
 (ii) golden-haired girl (iv) beautiful queen
- (c) Rapunzel was forced to live in a  
 (i) crowded house (iii) solitary tower  
 (ii) haunted house (iv) large city
- (d) The poetic device used in the first line is .....
- (e) 'I' would like to live a ..... life free from all care.

**ANSWERS** (a) Amanda (b) (ii) golden-haired girl  
 (c) (iii) solitary tower (d) allusion (e) peaceful/tranquil

## (VII)

Stop that sulking at once, Amanda!  
 You're always so moody, Amanda!  
 Anyone would think that I nagged at you,  
 Amanda!

Amanda's mother not only rebukes her, but also does not want people to think that she has rebuked her. She, in a commanding and strict tone, tells Amanda to stop sulking at once. She thinks that her daughter Amanda is much too moody. By her sullen face she will show people that her mother has scolded her. This indicates that the mother does not realize that she has been scolding Amanda and is conscious of what people think about her.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) **Who is the speaker in this stanza? What is his/her tone?**

Amanda's mother is the speaker in this stanza. She has her usual dominating, nagging tone as she is annoyed with Amanda.

- (b) **What gave the speaker the idea that Amanda is sulking?**

When Amanda refused to look at her mother while the latter was talking to her, she thought that Amanda was sulking.

- (c) **What does the speaker accuse Amanda of? How is this accusation 'ironic'?**

The mother accuses Amanda of being moody. This accusation is ironic as it is the mother's constant nagging only that has made Amanda moody and defiant.

- (d) **Why does the speaker want Amanda to stop sulking?**

Though the mother has constantly been nagging Amanda, she is not at all conscious that she has annoyed her daughter. She, however, is aware of the fact that nagging a child is something shameful, so she stops Amanda from sulking so that people might not think that the mother is nagging the child.

(e) What do you think is the cause of Amanda's sulking?

The cause of Amanda's sulking is the constant chiding by her mother that annoys her very much. The fact that Amanda can do nothing according to her sweet will makes her sulk.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) 'I' in this extract is .....
- (b) The speaker does not want Amanda to ..... and throw tantrums.
- (c) The poetic device used in the first line is .....
- (d) The speaker is more worried about ..... than anything else.  
 (i) Amanda's image      (iii) her relationship with Amanda  
 (ii) her own image      (iv) Amanda's habit of staying alone
- (e) The speaker does not realize that she has been really ..... Amanda.

**ANSWERS** (a) Amanda's mother (b) sulk (c) alliteration  
 (d) (ii) her own image (e) nagging

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**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

*(to be answered in about 40 words each)*

**Q1. How old do you think Amanda is? How do you know this? (Textual)**

Amanda is obviously a little school-going girl, which is clear from the fact that her mother tells her to finish her homework. She has childish habit of biting nails but she is old enough to have acne, and to imagine ways of escaping from her irritating environment. She could be in her early teens.

**Q2. Who do you think is speaking to Amanda? (Textual)**

One of the parents, most probably her mother, is speaking to Amanda. She is a strict mother who wants her daughter to develop into a well brought-up girl, and rebukes her for what she finds to be wrong in her. She perpetually instructs and commands her.

**Q3. Why are stanzas 2, 4 and 6 given in parenthesis? (Textual)**

The three stanzas mentioned above are in parenthesis as the poet wishes to convey to the reader that they record the child's thoughts and imagination which are not expressed vocally and should be distinguished from the mother's words.

**Q4. Who is the speaker in stanzas 2, 4 and 6? Do you think this speaker is listening to the speaker in stanzas 1, 3, 5, and 7? (Textual)**

Amanda is the speaker in stanzas 2, 4 and 6. She is deliberately turning a deaf ear to what her mother is saying in stanzas 1, 3, 5, and 7 as she wants to escape her perpetual nagging by indulging in wishful dreams.

**Q5. What habits of Amanda does her mother find annoying?**

Amanda's mother is annoyed with her daughter's habit of biting nails, sitting in a slouching position, not doing her homework or not tidying her room or cleaning her shoes. She also resents

Amanda's eating chocolate despite her acne and feels bad about Amanda's defiance and sulking.

**Q6. What could Amanda do if she were a mermaid? (Textual)**

Amanda would enjoy herself in the calm, still, placid water of the green sea if she were a mermaid. She would be all by herself with nobody to disturb her. She would have a blissful life.

**Q7. Is Amanda an orphan? Why does she say so? (Textual)**

Amanda is not an orphan. Her mother speaks to her all through the poem. However, irritated with the mother's constant scoldings and criticism, she would prefer being an orphan. Therefore, she imagines herself to be an orphan, so that she can live her life according to her own whims and fancies without being checked by anyone.

**Q8. What does Amanda's wish to be an orphan reveal about her?**

Amanda's wish to be an orphan reveals her strong desire to enjoy unfettered freedom. She wants to do what she is forbidden to do by her parents like walking around in the dust bare feet. In fact, the constant rebukes by her mother have an adverse effect on her psychology and she has developed a desire for a life of absolute freedom and won't mind even being an orphan if it can give her liberty.

**Q9. Do you know the story of Rapunzel? Why does Amanda want to be Rapunzel? (Textual)**

Rapunzel is a German fairy tale of a beautiful girl who was imprisoned by a witch in a tower with no doors and a single window. The witch herself used to climb up and down with the help of Rapunzel's long golden hair that she let down out of the window. After a few obstacles, a prince climbed up her long hair into the tower and rescued the girl from the captivity and married her.

Amanda wishes to be Rapunzel because like the captive girl, she wants to live a life of peace and isolation with nobody to scold and interfere in her life.

- Q10. What does the girl yearn for? What does this poem tell you about Amanda?** (Textual)

Amanda is an easy-going child who yearns for a life of freedom and solitariness. The poem describes how Amanda is tired of being instructed and checked by the elders. She turns defiant and stops listening to her mother. She is very imaginative and finds an escape into the world of her fancy.

- Q11. Read the last stanza. Do you think Amanda is sulking and is moody?** (Textual)

Amanda's mother thinks that she is sulking and commands her not to sulk. But actually Amanda is neither sulking nor is she moody. Irritated with her mother's constant nagging, she has simply withdrawn herself from the world of reality and has transported herself into a world of imagination, where she may enjoy a life of unlimited freedom and recreation.

- Q12. What indicates that Amanda's mother wants to develop in her a sense of cleanliness?**

Amanda's mother had told her to tidy up the room, and to clean her shoes. Earlier she had told her not to bite nails as it is a dirty habit. All this indicates that Amanda's mother wants her daughter to develop a sense of cleanliness.

- Q13. Do you think Amanda's mother is a concerned mother? Do you appreciate her treatment of Amanda?**

Amanda's mother is certainly a concerned mother who wants to improve her daughter's habits and behaviour. She wants her to give up bad habits like biting nails or sitting huddled. She wishes her to keep her room tidied up, her shoes well-polished

and her home work done. She wants Amanda to listen to her elders attentively. But, the mother's nagging behaviour cannot be appreciated as it annoys the child and hampers her free development.

**Q14. Why doesn't Amanda's mother let her eat chocolate?**

*Or*

**Why does Amanda's mother rebuke her for having chocolate?**

The mother doesn't want Amanda to eat chocolate, as the child has acne and chocolate would certainly aggravate the problem.

**Q15. What behaviour of Amanda irritates the mother while she is talking to her?**

Wishing the daughter to grow-up into a well-behaved child and to develop good habits, the mother keeps on giving her instructions, but irritated with mother's constant interference Amanda responds coldly and looks the other way. This irritates the mother as it is discourteous not to pay attention to someone who is talking.

**Q16. What impression do you form about Amanda's mother from the poem?**

Amanda's mother keeps a close eye on her daughter and constantly keeps on instructing her with do's and don'ts. She is sensitive to what others think about her and doesn't want to be criticized by anyone. Hence, she asks Amanda not to look glum and give an impression to others that she is being nagged by the mother.

**Q17. Do you admire Amanda's habits? Why/Why not?**

Amanda's habits cannot be admired because there is nothing appreciable about a young girl biting her nails, or sitting with shoulders hunched, or not doing homework, or not tidying up her room or not polishing her shoes. She is careless about her

health and appearance and eats chocolate despite her acne problem. Moreover, it is certainly disrespectful and discourteous not to listen to her mother's instructions. But she arouses sympathy as she is constantly chided by her mother.

**Q18. Why does Amanda wish to be a mermaid, an orphan and Rapunzel?**

*Or*

**How do we know that Amanda wishes to escape from the real world into a world of fantasy?**

Amanda feels stifled and suppressed by her mother's perpetual rebukes and instructions. She is so much fed up that she escapes into a world of her fantasy where she imagines herself to be an orphan or a mermaid or Rapunzel. All the three characters have a life of freedom without any interference from others. So, Amanda wishes to glide on the open sea just like a mermaid. As an orphan or Rapunzel, she longs for a life of absolute freedom, solitariness and peace.

**Q19. Whatever the mother tells Amanda is for her own good but the daughter doesn't seem to take it in the right spirit. Do you blame Amanda for it? Give reasons.**

Amanda's mother certainly has a good intention in rebuking and instructing her daughter, whom she wants to be well-mannered and well-groomed. But Amanda fails to understand the concern and care of her mother and becomes defiant. However, we cannot blame Amanda for her defiance because the approach of Amanda's mother to improve the manners of her daughter is certainly wrong. Continuous rebukes and instructions are likely to annoy a girl in her teens who needs some liberty to grow on her own. Amanda's mother should have developed a healthy, friendly relationship with her daughter.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

- Q1. How is Amanda treated by her mother? How does she feel about it?**

*Or*

**What is it that Amanda does not like about her mother?**

Amanda is a young, school-going girl who is treated strictly by her over cautious mother. Amanda's mother expects a highly disciplined life from her and is obsessed with an obedient, docile, disciplined behaviour from her young daughter. Her obsessive concern results in her continuous scolding of her daughter without her realization that even a young child must be given space to breathe freely in. The mother forgets that free thinking and imagination are essential for the proper physical and mental growth of a child. She fails to observe that if a child is not given independence, he/she may feel stifled and may try to escape reality.

Amanda's mother rebukes her for biting her nails and for hunching her shoulders while sitting. She wants Amanda to finish her homework, to clear her room and clean her shoes. She takes her to task for not having done things as she is been instructed. The mother prohibits Amanda from consuming chocolates without thinking about her acne. She chides the girl for not having an eye contact with her when she is talking to her.

Amanda does not like to be instructed, scolded, or checked all the time. She feels too restricted and suppressed and usually finds refuge in dreams. She, in her imagination, leads an absolutely different life – the life of complete independence when she is the master of her own will.

- Q2. What kind of world is the world of Amanda's imagination? Why does she like this world?**

*Or*

**How does Amanda lead a double life – the life of reality and the life of imagination?**

*Or*

**Where does Amanda find refuge from the continuous nagging by her mother?**

Amanda leads a double life – the life of reality on one hand and the world of imagination on the other. The world of imagination is in sharp contrast to the world of reality. In her real life, she is allowed no freedom of thoughts and actions; she is constantly rebuked by her mother for one reason or another. There are so many instructions – so many do's and don'ts that she grows sick of this life.

Usually, Amanda finds an escape from real life into the world of imagination. In her dreams, she reaches a sea with calm waves of emerald coloured water. She feels she is the only dweller there who glides on the waves like the mythical mermaids. She feels that she herself is a mermaid living away from the sound and fury of her real life. Amanda is so sick of her mother's nagging that she feels that had she been an orphan, she would have enjoyed both silence and freedom. She imagines herself to be an orphan who walks freely on the dusty path with her bare feet with nobody to scold her. Amanda further imagines herself to be Rapunzel, the beautiful young girl with long, golden, magical hair in a German fairy tale. As Rapunzel was imprisoned in a tower by a witch, she led a lonely life. Amanda wants to be freed from the persistent scolding by her mother and would prefer the solitary life of Rapunzel.

Thus, Amanda's world of imagination is a world of solitude and freedom in contrast to the real world where she is subjected to excessive scolding and orders of her parents.

**Q3. What things in Amanda's behaviour annoy her mother? How does the mother try to improve her? Do you appreciate her approach?**

Amanda's mother is annoyed with a number of things she finds objectionable in the behaviour of Amanda, a young school-going girl. The mother feels so bad that she constantly instructs and rebukes her and leaves no space for Amanda's own will and free development. The mother rebukes her for biting her nails and for slouching. Further, Amanda's mother asks her in an authoritative manner if she has finished her homework and tidied up her room. Amanda is chided if she forgets to clean her shoes. The girl is forbidden to eat chocolate as it may aggravate her acne. She is also rebuked for sulking because the mother does not want anyone to know that she has been nagging her daughter.

The mother, thus, tries to improve the manners of Amanda by constantly rebuking or instructing her, which makes Amanda feel miserable. Though the intention of the mother is to better the behaviour of her daughter, her approach cannot be appreciated. Continuous nagging makes Amanda flee from reality into the world of dreams and imagination where she finds herself free. She does not mind even being an orphan if that can provide her freedom of thought and action.

The mother should have developed friendly relations with her daughter and convinced her that she should improve her manners. It would have been more effective.

**Q4. What is the central idea of the poem "Amanda"?**

*Or*

**How does the poet present the idea of parent-children relationship in the poem "Amanda"?**

Robert Klein has beautifully woven his poem "Amanda" around

the central idea of parent-children relationship. The poet emphasizes upon the need of a healthy, friendly and cordial relationship. The poem brings forth the idea that continuous rebuking and constant instructing, instead of improving the behaviour of the children, has an adverse effect on their psychology. Sometimes they become defiant or rebellious and refuse to accept the authority of the parents or they become escapists and try to shun reality indulging in day-dreaming or imagination.

In the poem "Amanda," the young Amanda has to suffer a regular nagging of her mother and too many restrictions are imposed on her. Amanda feels that her freedom is curbed by her mother and instead of listening carefully to the advice of her mother, she starts dreaming of a life free from all kinds of restraints. She dreams of herself being a mermaid gliding over the calm waters of the sea. She even imagines herself to be an orphan wandering about without any authority of the parents to check her freedom. She further imagines herself to be Rapunzel, the golden-haired girl in German folk lore who was imprisoned in a tower by a witch. Amanda craves for a life of calm and solitude.

In fact, the poem reveals that too many instructions and restrictions impact the mind of a young child adversely and severs the bond between parents and children.



## 7. *Animals*

(Walt Whitman)

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### ABOUT THE POEM

#### *Introduction*

"Animals" is a poem written by Walt Whitman where the poet admires the animals for being calm, composed and self-satisfied and contrasts their qualities with those of human beings. He finds the animals to be free from all greed, ego and servility as well as more humane than human beings. He would prefer to shun the world of human beings and live with animals.

#### *Summary*

The poet is such a staunch admirer of animals that he can go on observing them for hours together. He finds them to be so calm and composed that he longs to turn into an animal in order to live in their midst.

He admires the animals' sense of self-contentment, for they have no grudges or grievances and are never heard complaining about their circumstances. They have a clear conscience and they suffer no sense of guilt, for the concept of what is right and what is wrong does not exist in their world. Having no hypocrisy, they do not discuss their duty to God. They neither have any trace of discontentment, nor do they have any craze for amassing material possessions.

The animal world is so full of equality and so free from superstition and dogma that none of them kneels to the other or worships his ancestors. No one is considered to be superior to the others nor is anyone unhappy due to social oppression, for such an oppression simply does not exist as it does in the human society.

Animals maintain and enjoy relationships of mutual respect and equality, which is something that the poet greatly admires. Animals

possess some noble traits that once belonged to human beings. The poet wonders whether animals have picked up those qualities that have been negligently shed by men over the passage of time.

#### THEME

The poem brings out a contrast between men and animals. In the good old days men possessed god-like qualities, which they shed with the passage of time. The animals still retain the virtues that have been lost by human beings. Thus, one would feel more at home with animals rather than with human beings. Animals lead a life free from greed, jealousy, ego and discontentment. Their world is marked by peace, equality and contentment.

#### MESSAGE

The poem "Animals" by Walt Whitman seems to suggest that human beings, the crowning glory of God's creation, have shed their noble virtues and values, and turned into uncivilized beasts, whereas animals seem to exhibit qualities that befit human beings. If this is true, it is better to live like animals than human beings whose society is marred by hypocrisy, greed, ego, insincerity, hatred, discrimination and materialism. The poet seems to give the message that human beings must try to rediscover and imbibe the virtues which they have lost in the process of civilization. They ought to return to a state of innocence and sincerity and learn to stay calm and contented with who they are and what they have got. They should shed their false sense of respectability and refrain from practising any discrimination in the name of God or religion. They must also learn to stay away from the mania of owning things.

#### TITLE

The whole poem deals with the admirable traits of animals. So the poet has chosen to call his poem "Animals". He feels more at home

with animals than humans. Moreover, human beings behave more like animals than like the homosapiens. Hence the poet has rightly given the poem the title "Animals", though it is very short and does not give a clear clue regarding the contents of the poem. It contains no hint of the poet's dislike for human behaviour in the materialistic world.

### LITERARY DEVICES

#### *Alliteration*

Alliteration is the occurrence of the same sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. It creates a musical effect and enhances the pleasure of reading a literary work.

#### **Examples:**

- ♦ *I stand and look at them long and long.*  
Here 'l' sound has been repeated.
- ♦ *I wonder where they get those tokens.*  
Here 'w' and 'th' sounds are repeated.

#### *Repetition*

Poets often repeat single words or phrases, lines, and sometimes, even whole stanzas at intervals to create a musical effect; to emphasize a point; to draw the readers' attention or to lend unity to a piece.

#### **Example:**

- ♦ *I stand and look at them long and long.*  
Here the word 'long' is repeated to emphasize the length of the time the poet looks at the animals.

#### *Metaphor*

A metaphor is a figure of speech that is used to make a comparison between two things that aren't alike but do have something in common. Unlike a simile, where two things are compared directly

using 'like' or 'as', a metaphor's comparison is more indirect, usually made by stating 'something is something else'. A metaphor is very expressive; it is not meant to be taken 'literally'.

**Example:**

- *They bring me tokens of myself...*

Here, the word 'tokens' has been used metaphorically for human qualities of innocence, honesty and contentment but the comparison is indirect without the words of comparison.

**Anaphora**

Anaphora is a literary device in which the writer repeats the same beginning of a clause or a sentence, chiefly with the purpose of emphasis on the repeated element, but also to bring rhythm in the writing.

In the poem, the expression 'They do not' has been repeated three times to emphasize the absence of some evil qualities in animals which we find in human beings.

Similarly the poet has repeated the expression 'Not one' two times. This is an anaphoric expression and emphasizes the prevalence of equality and contentment among animals.

**Pun**

Pun is a literary device in which a poet plays upon a word using it to mean different things at the same time to create a humorous or rhetorical effect.

**Example:**

- *I stand and look at them long and long.*

The word 'long' that has been used twice has been punned upon. The poet means that he stands and looks at the animals for a long time and he longs to be one with them.

### RHYME SCHEME

The poem does not have a definite rhythm, but it doesn't have any regular rhyme scheme. It is written in free-verse.

### STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.

(I)

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are  
so placid and self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them long and long.

In this stanza, the poet expresses his desire to turn away from human beings and live with animals because he feels that animals are calm, quiet and contented. The poet indirectly comments on the restlessness, greed, and dissatisfaction among human beings. He is so much impressed by the natural qualities of animals that he prefers to live among them. He gazes at the animals for a very long time and desires to be with them.

### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(a) Who does 'I' stand for? What could 'I' turn from?

'I' stands for the poet who is so fascinated by the animals that he would like to turn from the human world and start living with them.

(b) What qualities in the animals fascinate the poet?

The qualities of quietness, calmness and contentment among animals fascinate the poet. In fact, this fascination is the result of his observation of a glaring dearth of these qualities in human beings.

- (c) What does the expression, "I could turn" signify? Or

Why does the poet say "I could turn"?

The poet uses the expression 'I could turn' to suggest that it is better to live like animals than as human beings because unlike human beings, animals remain quiet, calm and contented. They do not hanker after material possessions just as human beings do.

- (d) Explain: "I stand and look at them long and long". Or

What does standing and looking at them 'long and long' suggest?

The poet is so much fascinated by the admirable traits of animals that he keeps looking at them for a long time appreciating them and wishing that he should live amongst them.

- (e) Which poetic device has the poet used in the last line of the stanza?

The poet has used a pun on the word 'long'. He means that he admiringly looks at the animals for quite a long time and he yearns to live with them. Thus, two different meanings of the word 'long' have been played upon.

There is also alliteration as 'l' sound is repeatedly used.

Also there is repetition as the poet repeats the word 'long' to emphasize the length of time for which he looked at the animals.

#### TYPE - II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) 'I' in the above extract is .....
- (b) 'I' would like to live with animals because they
- |                             |                                  |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (i) are helpful             | (iii) can be domesticated        |
| (ii) are calm and contented | (iv) live away from human beings |
- (c) These lines seem to suggest that
- |   |
|---|
| (i) human beings are affectionate                 |
| (ii) human beings exploit animals                 |
| (iii) animals are more powerful than human beings |
| (iv) human beings are restless and discontented   |

- (d) Two literary devices used in the last line of the extract are .....  
and .....
- (e) A word in the extract that means the same as 'calm and peaceful'  
is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) the poet/Walt Whitman (b) (ii) are calm and contented  
(c) (iv) human beings are restless and discontented  
(d) alliteration; repetition (e) placid

## (II)

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with  
the mania of owning things,

The poet continues with his appreciation of animals in contrast to human beings. The animals, according to Walt Whitman, are satisfied about their lot and never crave for anything. As they are innocent, they do not have to spend sleepless nights because they do not commit crimes or sins and, therefore, they do not have to repent their actions. Because animals have clear conscience, they do not pray to God for forgiveness. All the animals are contented and do not hanker after worldly, materialistic possessions. The stanza is, in fact, a comment on the materialistic race among human beings to accumulate more and more.

### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) Who are 'they' in this stanza?

In this stanza, 'they' refers to the animals the poet admires.

- (b) What sort of an attitude do 'they' have about their condition?

'They' are very self-satisfied and self-contained. They have such a stoic attitude towards their condition that they do not grumble at all about it.

**(c) Why don't 'they' lie awake and weep for their sins?**

Unlike human beings, animals don't commit sins or crimes. Their conscience, being clear, doesn't prick them. No sense of guilt robs them of their sleep and makes them shed tears in the darkness of the night.

**(d) Who or what makes the poet sick? Why?**

Any discussion on human beings' duty towards God makes the poet sick because such discussions often lead to disputes, hatred and violence among the people professing different faiths. Animals, on the other hand, are free from this hypocrisy.

**(e) What does 'demented' mean?**

It means unable to think or act clearly because of extreme worry, anger or excitement.

**(f) What traits of 'they' does the poet admire in the last line of the stanza?**

The poet finds the animals to be self satisfied. They are not maddened by the materialistic pursuit. The craze for possession doesn't disturb their peace of mind.

**(g) Explain: "the mania of owning things."**

The mania of owning things refers to the materialistic race to possess and accumulate more and more things which maddens human beings and makes them restless.

**TYPE-II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) 'They' in the above extract are .....
- (b) The poet finds 'they' to be ..... with their condition.
- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| (i) intolerant   | (iii) contented   |
| (ii) indifferent | (iv) discontented |
- (c) 'They' are free from a sense of ..... and are not worried about being ..... to God.
- (d) "Me" in the above extract is .....



The animals don't have any special regard for their ancestors. They don't bow in their memory before their images, as human beings do.

**(c) What does the poet 'accept'? What does he mean by accepting?**

The poet 'accepts' the social relationship of equality that exists among the animals. The word 'accepting' stands for the poet's approval and appreciation.

**(d) What does the poet imply by "tokens of myself"? Which poetic device has been used here?**

By "tokens of myself," the poet implies the virtues of human beings like contentment, equality, calmness, sincerity and innocence which, according to him, human beings have abandoned and animals have acquired.

The poetic device used here is '*metaphor*' as the poet uses '*tokens*' for human qualities and there is an implicit comparison without the usage of '*like*' or '*as*'.

**TYPE-II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) By the statement, "Not one kneels to another," the poet means that animals
- (i) have no sense of courtesy (iii) treat one another as equals  
(ii) are utterly uncivilized (iv) are much too self-centred
- (b) Animals, according to this extract, do not have to worry about things like getting or giving ..... or having a sense of .....
- (c) An expression that the poet uses to refer to 'human qualities or tendencies' is .....
- (d) The poetic device used in the first two lines is .....
- (e) A word in the extract that means the opposite of '*hide*' or '*conceal*' is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) (iii) treat one another as equals (b) respect; happiness  
(c) tokens of myself (d) anaphora (e) evince

## (IV)

I wonder where they get those tokens,  
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them?

In this stanza, 'I' stands for not only the poet or the narrator, but for human beings in general. The poet believes that in good old times, human beings had the virtues of modesty, contentment, innocence, selflessness etc. which they have lost completely with the passage of time. Now these qualities are to be found among animals. The poet remarks that animals have picked up these virtuous traits which were dropped down by human beings. The poet implies that animals have acquired the admirable traits while human beings have abandoned them completely.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(a) Who is 'I' in the extract?

'I' here is the poet, Walt Whitman who represents human beings in general.

(b) What 'tokens' does the poet talk about here?

The poet metaphorically uses the word 'tokens' for the original traits like innocence, quietness, equality, and contentment that human beings once had.

(c) What does the poet wonder?

The poet wonders how animals have come to acquire the qualities that were exclusive to human beings once upon a time.

(d) Why does the poet ask the question in the last line?

The poet asks the question in the last line as a guess about the possible ways in which animals got the human qualities. He believes that Man must have dropped his virtues and values

negligently ages and ages ago, and animals must have picked them up.

**(e) Which poetic device has been used in the first line?**

The poetic device used in the first line is alliteration as 'w' sound has been repeated.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) 'They' in the above extract refers to
- (i) virtues
  - (ii) animals
  - (iii) human beings
  - (iv) olden times
- (b) The poet believes that 'they' possess the qualities which
- (i) animals have given to one another
  - (ii) human beings also possess
  - (iii) human beings have developed over time
  - (iv) human beings abandoned a long time back
- (c) The expression "those tokens" refers to noble .....
- (d) The expression "that way" in this extract refers to
- (i) the passage leading to heaven
  - (ii) the passage leading to human beings
  - (iii) the passage leading to animals
  - (iv) the path of modern civilization

**ANSWERS** (a) (ii) animals (b) (iv) human beings abandoned a long time back (c) human virtues/qualities (d) (iii) the passage leading to animals

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 40 words each)

- Q1. Notice the use of the word 'turn' in the first line, 'I think I could turn and live with animals....' What is the poet turning from?**

(Textual)

The poet is turning away from the human world that is marred by materialism, to the animal world. In fact, he is turning away from the world of falsehood, hypocrisy and greed to the world of truth, honesty, selflessness and contentment. According to the poet, the qualities once considered to be human are no longer found in human beings; they have been acquired by animals. Therefore, he turns to the animal world and wants to live in their company.

- Q2. Why does the poet look at the animals 'long and long'?**

Fascinated by the animals' genuineness, simplicity, calmness and contentment, the poet looks at the animals for a long time in great admiration and then longs to live with them because he finds a glaring lack of these qualities among human beings. The repetition of 'long' shows the length of time that the poet looks at animals, considering his decision to turn to them.

- Q3. What, according to the poet, makes animals calm and contented?**

According to the poet, animals are free from greed and remorse. Unlike human beings, they are not lost in a materialistic race for acquiring more and more. They are contented with what nature has provided them.

They are calm because they commit no sins or crimes; they do not want to put others down nor do they bow in servility to others. All this makes them quiet, at peace with themselves and self-satisfied.

**Q4. Mention three things that human beings do and animals don't.**

*(Textual)*

Human beings bow to their ancestors, but among the animals, a sense of equality prevails. Human beings shed tears of remorse for their sins, but animals are without any feeling of guilt and they are self-satisfied. Human beings run madly after materialistic possessions which animals do not do. Also humans keep grumbling about their condition, but animals do not.

**Q5. Why, according to the poet, do animals not weep for their sins?**

The poet believes that animals are completely innocent. They do not indulge in sinful or criminal activities. Their conscience is free and relieved. In fact, they have no sense of the right and the wrong. They lead a happy, contented life as they do not have to repent and weep for anything.

**Q6. In what way does the poet find animals to be better than humans?**

*Or*

**Why does Whitman admire animals?**

Satisfied with what life gives them, animals neither brood over their past sins nor their present conditions. They neither complain about their circumstances nor have any remorse about their deeds. Their contentment, innocence and calmness make them better than human beings who are given to materialistic pursuits. This is what makes Walt Whitman admire them.

**Q7. Do humans kneel to other humans who lived thousands of year ago? Support your answer.**

*(Textual)*

Human beings do kneel to their ancestors. They raise many of them to the level of gods, saints and prophets and worship their images or idols.

- Q8. What are the 'tokens' that the poet says he may have dropped long ago, and which the animals have kept for him? (Textual)**

Contentment, peace of mind, innocence, clear heartedness, honesty, loyalty and brotherhood are some of the virtues that have disappeared from among human beings but animals have acquired and retained them. We have given up the basic aspects of our nature as human beings, but animals have developed these virtues.

- Q9. What is the poet's attitude towards animals? Or**

**Why does Whitman want to live with animals?**

The poet is full of admiration for animals whom he considers to be better than human beings. He appreciates them for their attributes of quietness, innocence and contentment. He is so appreciative of animals that he prefers to live among them rather than with human beings.

- Q10. How does the poet reveal that there exists a sense of equality among animals?**

The poet states that in the world of animals, no animal has to go down on knees before others considered to be superior or stranger. There is neither ego, nor servility among animals. No one claims respect from others. This indicates that in the animal world, there is a sense of equality which we fail to find in the world of human beings.

- Q11. What is considered by the poet as a 'mania'? Who does suffer from this 'mania'?**

The poet considers the materialistic pursuits to acquire more and more as 'mania'. It is human beings in the modern world who suffer from this mania because they have grown very greedy and discontented. They are engrossed in fretful, restless activities because of their materialistic approach towards life.

**Q12. What is the attitude of the animals towards their ancestors?**

Animals show no special regard towards their ancestors. They do not worship the idols or images of their forefathers. Nor do they kneel before them in supplication.

**Q13. What makes the poet feel sick? Or****What traits of human beings make the poet sick?**

The poet feels sick at the hypocrisy of human beings who commit sins and crimes and then pretend to be pious souls by discussing their duty towards God. This pretentiousness annoys the poet so much that he wants to live with animals who are free from such hypocrisy.

**Q14. When, according to Walt Whitman, did human beings drop the 'tokens' that animals have picked and retained?**

According to Walt Whitman, human beings dropped the tokens – the qualities of innocence, contentment, and honesty – a long time back. He implies that when people became materialistic and human values crumbled with craze for more and more, the 'tokens' were dropped which animals picked and have carried on.

**Q15. What vices does Walt Whitman notice in human beings?**

In their frenzied race of materialism, human beings have not only lost their peace of mind but also their basic human nature. The mania to earn more and more has made them discontented, greedy and impatient. They have given up the virtues of innocence, sympathy and kindness. They pretend to have faith in God though they are given to wicked and sinful ways. Their lives are full of hypocrisy and pretence.

**LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

**Q1. Which qualities of animals does the poet admire? Or**

**Why does the poet long to live among animals?**

The poet, Walt Whitman, finds a number of admirable qualities among animals and is of the view that these virtuous qualities once were human traits but human beings, out of selfishness and materialism have given them up. First of all, the poet thinks that animals, unlike human beings, are calm, cool, and self-satisfied. They are so contented that they do not cry over their lot, nor do they repent anything. They are innocent and commit no sins. Therefore, they are not tormented by the feelings of guilt and are able to enjoy sound sleep at night with clear conscience. They do not preach any faith in God or discuss their spiritual duties because they are not hypocritical like human beings.

Animals are free from greed and are not lost in a frenzied race to acquire and accumulate more and more things. They are satisfied with what they have and do not hanker after more possessions. The world of animals is governed by a feeling of equality. No animal has to grovel before others of his species; they live in the present and do not bow before their ancestors who lived thousands of years before. Because they enjoy equality, no one is more respectable than others. The poet is much fascinated by the virtues among the animals which, he believes, human beings lack utterly. The poet is of the view that human beings have become so materialistic that they have given up human qualities of contentment and calmness; they are always occupied with hectic, restless activities. These reasons make the poet desire to live among animals turning away from human beings.

**Q2. How is the poem "Animals" an indirect reflection on the behaviour of human beings? Or**

**How does the poet contrast animals and human beings?**

*Or*

**The poem "Animals" by Walt Whitman is a comparison between animals and humans. Discuss.**

The poem "Animals" by Walt Whitman projects a number of admirable qualities of animals and, in a way, indirectly condemns the behaviour of human beings. Although the poet apparently discusses animals, his remarks about animals carry a serious commentary on some despicable qualities of human beings. As the poet emphasizes the calmness and self-satisfaction among animals, he implies that human beings have lost these virtues as they are engaged in race of materialism. They have become selfish and greedy and lost peace of mind. They are full of regrets and keep sulking about their condition. As human beings, in contrast to animals, have lost innocence and indulge in sinful acts, their guilty conscience pricks their minds and they fail to enjoy a sound, peaceful sleep at night. They have to pray to God for forgiveness. On one hand, human beings commit sins and on the other hand, keep discussing their duties towards God. Animals do not have to pray to any authority like God because they do not indulge in sinful deeds.

According to the poet, there is no sense of equality among human beings as the weaker people have to grovel before the stronger. Unlike the animals who live in the present, human beings cling to the past and bow before their ancestors. Among the animals of one species, no one claims respect over others. Human beings try to dominate and exploit others. The poet, therefore, prefers animals to human beings and wishes to turn his back on the world of human beings and live among animals.

**Q3. How does the poet in "Animals" suggest that animals enjoy their present while human beings live in the past or future?**

In the poem "Animals," Walt Whitman emphasizes that animals lead a blessed and happy life of innocence and contentment. They are satisfied with what nature has provided them and do not crave for more and more possessions. They do not try to amass things for their future or coming generations. This satisfaction makes them free from greed, regrets, and worries. They do not cling to their past, shedding tears for their evil deeds because they are innocent and do not indulge in sinful activities. Animals detach themselves easily from their ancestors and do not idolise them.

Human beings, on the contrary, are discontented and are always lost in materialistic pursuits. Instead of enjoying their present, they regret their past and worry about future. They keep up their bond with the dead ancestors and worship them, instead of maintaining a relationship of love with the living fellow human beings. Human beings suffer from a mania for materialistic possessions and in their fretful, restless race for amassing wealth, they lose their quietness and satisfaction. They are maddened by this craze for more and fail to enjoy what they are blessed with.

Thus, human beings have abandoned their present pleasures in worrying more about the past or future but animals enjoy their present. They are not bothered about their past or future.

**Q4. What is the central idea of the poem "Animals"?**

The central idea of the poem "Animals" by Walt Whitman is a critique of human society marked by materialism in modern times. The poet indirectly emphasizes the need for man to return to a life of innocence, simplicity, and contentment. The message has been conveyed through the projection of animals

as better creatures than human beings and the poet's wish to live with them.

The poet portrays animals as satisfied, innocent beings who enjoy their present because they are free from greed, ego, and pride. They are contented with what they possess and enjoy sound sleep without any regrets for the past or worries about the future. The discussion of these admirable qualities of animals, in fact, forms an indirect commentary on the despicable traits of human beings. The poet tries to show that human beings, in their frenzied race of materialism, have lost not only their peace of mind but also their basic human nature. The mania to earn more and more makes them discontented, greedy, and impatient. They have given up the virtues of kindness, sympathy and innocence. Their wicked and sinful deeds leave their conscience guilt-stricken which shatters their peace of mind. The poet regrets the prevalence of hypocrisy and pretence in human society where people pretend to have faith in God though they are given to sinful and wicked ways. He wants to shun this evil human world and enter the simple innocent animal world.

Thus, the poem forms a commentary on the evil practices prevalent in human society.



## 8. The Trees

(Adrienne Rich)

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### ABOUT THE POEM

#### Introduction

"The Trees" by Adrienne Rich is a symbolic poem in free verse that focuses on the movement of trees that are initially indoors but are seeking to escape to freedom in the forest. The trees in the poem represent not only nature, but the nature of being also, particularly womanhood. The power of nature as symbolised by trees is unconquerable. It may be suppressed or stunted or confined for a while, but sooner or later it finds a way to reassert and resurrect itself. So is true of women, too.

#### Summary

The poem opens with a strange image of some trees moving out of the confines inside an enclosure or a house or an unnatural environment, into the forest, where they really belong. Devoid of trees, the forest was lifeless with no birds sitting and insects hiding there. Even the sun rays could not play there, for no shades and shadows could be formed in the absence of trees. The very same forest is all set to be full of trees in a short time, for trees have started moving into it and soon it will be full.

Trees have been working silently all night, *i.e.* all this while, to break free from the unnatural barriers and boundaries and confinements. The roots take full advantage of the cracks in the confinements and disengage themselves from the ground and the leaves sprout out and rise towards the glass ceiling. Twigs and branches that have become stiff and cramped due to the long confinement break free, too. The branches that were until now struggling for life, appear to be newly discharged patients who are still under the influence of medicine or

weak due to their sickness, and are trying to move out of the clinic. The whole imagery symbolizes women breaking free from their confinements, restrictions, taboos, prejudices and discriminations.

The poet or the persona in the poem, who is sitting inside and engrossed in writing long letters, has watched this scene or development unfold itself in front of her eyes, but chooses not to mention it in her communications. It is night time and the moon is shining in the sky that is still open, clear and full of new possibilities. The time is perfect for the transformation and transition that trees and/or women are striving to usher in. There is hope in the air that smells like newly sprouting leaves and fresh foliage.

The poet's heart is aflutter with whispers, some of which may be voices of caution and scepticism and others may be of encouragement, enthusiasm, excitement and hope. These voices will be silent soon. It is not the time to say 'no' or 'stop'; it is time to let happen what should have happened long time ago. All boundaries, all shackles, all restrictions and all limits symbolized by the 'glass', are bound to be broken soon. The trees and/or women have already set out on a march at night and soon a new freedom, a new world order, a new equilibrium in nature will set in. Winds of change and hope are rushing forward to meet those trees or women to express their solidarity with them and to walk with them in unison.

The moon, seen through the branches of the trees, appears to be broken in pieces as it seems to sit on the top of a tall oak tree, indicating the completion of the journey of the trees towards the forest.

Read at the level of trees only, the poem presents a conflict between Man and Nature in which the latter seems to come out victorious in spite of all the damage that Man has inflicted upon her.

#### THEME

The poem can be read at various levels as it has a number of sub-texts.

On the superficial level, the poem deals with the theme of the conflict between Man and Nature. Man tries to curtail the freedom of nature by removing natural objects from their natural habitat and thus disturbs ecological balance. Nature always strives for its freedom and tries to break free from the confinement imposed on it by human beings. The trees, plants and animals require a free environment for their proper growth. On a deeper level, the poem also emphasizes the need of giving freedom to people of all genders, races and classes. Particularly, the poem metaphorically emphasizes the need of freedom for women who have been subjugated to slavery in the patriarchal society.

#### MESSAGE

The message of the poem is loud and clear. It is not easy to suppress nature, animals or human beings. You may confine them, suppress them, obstruct their growth, restrict their freedom and progress, but they will find a way to break free of all their shackles and charter their own path of freedom and glory. Trees symbolize human beings, particularly women. When trees come together, they make a forest – a world of their own, a world of freedom and equality for all. Similarly when women come together, they make a movement, they create a united front of resistance, regeneration and renaissance. Nothing and nobody can stop the growth of natural objects and human beings. Therefore, instead of stiling their growth by suppressing them, it is essential to provide them a conducive environment.

#### TITLE

The title "The Trees" is very simple, brief and relevant because the poem deals with trees, though they are treated not only literally but also symbolically. The title, however, does not provide any clue to what the poet has to say about the trees and how they are to be used

allegorically. The title does not point out the theme of the poem – the conflict between man and nature. Nor does it give even an idea that the indoor trees are treated as symbolic of the dominated, exploited, and enslaved people, particularly women who have been the victims of injustice and slavery in the male-chauvinistic society. But the title arouses the curiosity of the readers about what the poet wants to convey through the poem.

### LITERARY DEVICES

#### *Personification*

Personification is a figure of speech in which a thing – an idea or an animal – is given human attributes.

The non-human objects are portrayed in such a way that we feel they have the ability to act like human beings.

#### **Examples:**

- ◆ *The trees inside are moving out into the forest*

Here trees are personified, as men can move, not trees.

- ◆ *...no sun bury its feet in shadow*

Here the sun is personified as a living creature with feet.

- ◆ *All night the roots work*

Here roots are personified as they are shown to be working.

- ◆ *Winds rush to meet them*

Here winds are personified as living beings, who extend a welcome to the trees.

#### *Simile*

A simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison, showing similarities between two different things. Unlike a metaphor, a simile draws resemblance with the help of words 'like' or 'as'. Therefore, it is a direct comparison.

**Examples:**

- ◆ *like newly discharged patients*

Here, the poet compares the branches of the tree to the patients recently discharged from a clinic.

- ◆ *still reaches like a voice into the rooms*

Here the smell of leaves and lichen is explicitly compared to a voice.

- ◆ *The moon is broken like a mirror*

The moon hidden behind the branches and leaves of the oak tree appears to be a shattered mirror.

**Repetition**

Poets often repeat single words or phrases, lines, and sometimes, even whole stanzas at intervals to create a musical effect; to emphasize a point; to draw the readers' attention or to lend unity to a piece.

In the first stanza, the poet repeats the line "the forest that was empty all these..." to emphasize the emptiness of the forest.

**Anaphora**

Anaphora is a literary device in which the writer repeats the same beginning of a clause or a sentence, chiefly with the purpose of emphasis on the repeated element, but also to bring rhythm in the writing.

**Example:**

- ◆ *no insect hide*

*no sun bury its feet in shadow*

These two lines start with 'no' which shows that the forest was without trees and without its usual activities.

**Metaphor**

A metaphor is a figure of speech that is used to make a comparison between two things that aren't alike but do have something in

common. Unlike a simile, where two things are compared directly using 'like' or 'as', a metaphor's comparison is more indirect, usually made by stating 'something is something else'.

A metaphor is very expressive; it is not meant to be taken 'literally'.

**Example:**

- ♦ *its pieces flash now in the crown  
of the tallest oak.*

Here the word 'crown' is used for the top of the oak tree. The comparison is made but without the use of 'like' or 'as'.

The term "extended metaphor" refers to a comparison between two unlike things that continues throughout a series of sentences in a paragraph, or lines in a poem. It often comprises of more than one sentence, and sometimes consists of a full stanza or paragraph.

The poem "The Trees" has extended metaphors of trees (stanzas 1 and 2), the forest (stanza 1), the night (stanza 3 and 4) and the moon (stanza 3 and 4).

**Enjambment**

It is a poetic device in which a line runs on to the next line or lines carrying on the idea without a punctuation mark (*a comma, or a full stop*) at the end of a line.

Each stanza in the poem has examples of enjambment.

**Examples:**

- ♦ *the forest that was empty all these days  
where no bird could sit  
no insect hide  
no sun bury its feet in shadow  
the forest that was empty all these nights  
will be full of trees by morning.*

Here each line runs onto the next without any pause in the form of a comma or full stop till the last line.

- ◆ *All night the roots work  
to disengage themselves from the cracks  
in the veranda floor.*

Here, the first line continues and runs onto the second, and the second onto the third.

### Imagery

'Imagery' is a poetic device in which a poet creates many mental pictures through words. It makes a poem picturesque. The poem "The Trees" is rich in imagery as the poet has created many visual pictures.

#### Examples:

- ◆ *The trees inside are moving out into the forest*  
The poet has created an imaginary picture of trees moving.

- ◆ *the forest that was empty all these days  
where no bird could sit  
no insect hide  
no sun bury its feet in shadow*

Here there is the picture of a forest without trees.

- ◆ *like newly discharged patients  
half-dazed, moving  
to the clinic doors*

One can clearly visualize the patients moving towards the doors of a clinic.

- ◆ *The night is fresh, the whole moon shines  
in a sky still open*

Here there is a skyscape with the moon shining at night in the vast sky and making the night fresh.

#### RHYME SCHEME

The poem has been written in a free verse with varying lengths of lines and there is no rhyme scheme.

**STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION**

*Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.*

**(I)**

The trees inside are moving out into the forest,  
the forest that was empty all these days

Here the poet presents the picture of a forest from where the trees have been removed by people either to decorate their houses or for commercial reasons.

The trees planted in the confined spaces of homes now rebel against their imprisonment and move out towards their natural habitat, the forest.

On a deeper level, the poet metaphorically presents the struggle of women against the slavery imposed on them for centuries in a patriarchal society.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(a) **Where are the trees at the moment?**

At the moment, the trees are in the cramped space of the narrator's house.

(b) **Where are the trees going now?**

The trees are going to the forest which is their natural habitat from which they were separated.

(c) **Why was the forest 'empty all these days'?**

The forest has been empty all these days because the trees had been removed and planted into the house.

(d) **Which poetic device has been used in these lines?**

The poetic device used in these lines is personification as the trees are shown to be moving like men.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

(a) "Inside" in the first line refers to .....

- (b) The poetic device used in the first line is .....
- (c) The forest has been devoid of
- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| (i) people   | (iii) birds |
| (ii) animals | (iv) trees  |
- (d) The trees move to the forest to
- |                                      |                                |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (i) be in their natural habitat      | (iii) provide shelter to birds |
| (ii) enjoy the shade of bigger trees | (iv) provide fruit to people   |
- (e) 'The trees' here symbolize
- |  |
|--|
| (i) the rich and affluent people         |
| (ii) the liberated and prosperous people |
| (iii) the cultured and cultivated people |
| (iv) the exploited and enslaved people   |

**ANSWERS** (a) the poet's house (b) personification (c) (iv) trees  
 (d) (i) be in their natural habitat  
 (e) (iv) the exploited and enslaved people

(II)

where no bird could sit  
 no insect hide  
 no sun bury its feet in shadow  
 the forest that was empty all these nights  
 will be full of trees by morning.

With the trees away from the forest, the forest failed to provide shelter to birds and insects. There were no branches and leaves to make the sunlight filter to the ground. But now the trees are going to occupy their original place and by the morning, the forest will be teeming with trees.

Here the trees are used both literally and symbolically. They are the symbols of human beings, who are dominated, exploited and enslaved. Particularly, they symbolize women who have suffered enslavement at the hands of men. However, they ultimately strive for their emancipation and try to be free from the shackles.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) What could birds and insects not do in the forest and why?

Birds and insects failed to find shelter in the forest because the trees were away in the house.

- (b) What does the sun's 'feet' refer to? What could the sun not do?

The sun's feet refers to its rays. The forest was without trees and there was no shadow. So the rays of the sun reached the ground without being filtered by the leaves and branches of trees to form a pattern of light and shade.

- (c) How will the forest be 'full of trees' by morning?

As the trees, during the night, are breaking down their confinement and liberating themselves to move out of the house to their natural habitat in the forest, the forest will be full of trees by the morning.

- (d) Which poetic device has been used in the third line?

The poetic device used in the third line is personification as the sun is shown to be a person trying to bury his feet in the shadow of trees.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) Birds could not sit in the

(i) high buildings

(iii) city parks

(ii) kitchen gardens

(iv) empty forest

- (b) "The feet of the sun" means the

(i) heat of the sun

(iii) rim of the sun

(ii) rays of the sun

(iv) halo of the sun

- (c) "The sun could not bury its feet in shadow" because

(i) the clouds in sky blocked its light

(ii) the trees were inside the building

(iii) there were no trees to trap its light

- (iv) the trees had moved away from the sun
- (d) Which two lines in the extract convey the idea of 'regeneration' or 'renewal'?
- (i) lines 1-2 (iii) lines 3-4
- (ii) lines 2-3 (iv) lines 4-5
- (e) The ..... has been personified in the stanza.

**ANSWERS** (a) (iv) empty forest (b) (ii) rays of the sun  
 (c) (iii) there were no trees to trap its light  
 (d) (iv) lines 4-5 (e) sun

(III)

All night the roots work  
 to disengage themselves from the cracks  
 in the veranda floor.

The poet now narrates how the different parts of the tree strive to liberate themselves from the cramped environment of the house to move towards their natural habitat.

The roots of the tree struggle to break themselves free from the cracks formed in the floor of the veranda of the house.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) What are the roots shown to be doing? Or

How do the roots work all night?

The roots are shown to be striving all night to free themselves from the concrete floor of the house. In their struggle, they have caused cracks in the veranda floor and are jutting out of them.

- (b) Why do the roots want to 'disengage themselves'?

The trees want to leave the cramped space of the unnatural habitat of the house and move to the forest. They can move only if

roots are freed. Therefore, the roots try hard to uproot themselves from the house.

**(c) What might have caused cracks in the veranda floor?**

The struggling roots make a great effort to separate or detach themselves from the ground and cause cracks in the veranda floor.

**(d) Which poetic device has been used here?**

The poetic device used is personification. The roots are shown to be at work like men.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) The roots work all night to
- |                  |                                      |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (i) be deeper    | (iii) be free                        |
| (ii) be stronger | (iv) prop up the tree in the veranda |
- (b) The cracks have been formed by the ..... trying to come out of the floor.
- (c) The veranda referred to is in the .....
- (d) 'The roots work.' A literary device used in this expression is .....
- (e) A word in the extract that means the same as '*detach*' or '*separate*' is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) (iii) be free (b) roots (c) narrator's/poet's house  
(d) personification (e) disengage

**(IV)**

The leaves strain toward the glass  
small twigs stiff with exertion  
long-cramped boughs shuffling under the roof  
like newly discharged patients  
half-dazed, moving  
to the clinic doors.

The leaves try to come out of the glass enclosure as the twigs grow stiff because of the strain they have to put in for freedom. The long branches move restlessly under the roof trying to get out of it. The poet compares the branches to the patients who have been discharged from a clinic and move towards the door to come out of their confinement. The patients are half-dazed because they are still under the impact of medicines and/or anaesthesia.

Symbolically, the stanza shows how the dominated, exploited and enslaved people, particularly women, struggle to break free from their confinements, restrictions and discriminations to attain freedom.

### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) What does 'the glass' symbolise?

'The glass' here means the glass ceiling or the glass walls or a greenhouse made of glass. It symbolises the enclosure which obstructs the advancement of women. It also stands for a make-believe world where they seemingly have freedom but are actually confined.

- (b) Why do 'leaves strain toward the glass'?

The 'glass' symbolizes slavery of the trees as well as of women. The leaves try to move toward the glass to break it and liberate themselves. Similarly, women try to break down the barriers and come out in the free environment.

- (c) Why have the twigs become 'stiff'?

Or

Why are 'small twigs stiff with exertion'?

As all the parts of the tree have been striving for freedom, the twigs feel stiff because of the hard struggle they have put up. Symbolically, it implies that women have to exert hard to find freedom.

- (d) Why have the boughs become 'cramped'?

The trees could not find sufficient space in the house for their proper growth. The branches, which should have expanded freely, were 'cramped' in the congested space. The cramped branches are symbolic of the stilted growth of women in a gender-biased society.

- (e) **What are 'long-cramped boughs'? Why are they shuffling under the roof?**

'Long-cramped boughs' refer to the stunted branches of a tree that have been forced to grow in a confined place. Symbolically, 'long-cramped boughs' refer to women who have been long denied their freedom and have been forced to live a life of confinement and restrictions.

The boughs have been shuffling because of restlessness in the cramped space of the house while trying to move out. Allegorically, it implies that the confinement of women makes them fretful and restless.

- (f) **What have the boughs been compared to? Which poetic device has been used here?**

The boughs have been compared to the patients who have recently been discharged from a hospital and are moving towards the door slowly as they are still under the influence of anaesthesia or medicines.

The poetic device used here is a simile, as there is an explicit comparison between the boughs and the newly discharged patients.

#### **TYPE-II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) This extract describes the
- struggle of the trees to get free
  - condition of the patients in hospitals

- (iii) atmosphere inside confinement  
 (iv) freedom that trees are about to get
- (b) The phrase 'the glass' here symbolizes the  
 (i) rich interiors of the poet's house (iii) strength of a building  
 (ii) barrier in the way to freedom (iv) beauty of a building
- (c) A literary device used in the last four lines is a .....
- (d) The effort to get free has ..... the twigs.
- (e) The branches of the tree have been compared to .....
- (f) A word in the extract that describes a '*dragging movement of feet*' is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) (i) struggle of the trees to get free  
 (b) (ii) barrier in the way to freedom (c) simile  
 (d) stiffened (e) newly discharged patients (f) shuffling

(V)

I sit inside, doors open to the veranda  
 writing long letters  
 in which I scarcely mention the departure  
 of the forest from the house.

The narrator has been sitting in the room opening on to the veranda and has been engrossed in writing letters, while the tree has been trying to break free out of the cramped space to go to the forest. But the narrator shows indifference and does not mention the trees in the letters.

The lines, metaphorically bring forth the indifference of society towards the hard struggle of women for their liberation.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(a) Who is 'I' in this stanza?

'I' here is the poet, Adrienne Rich.

**(b) Where does 'I' sit?**

The poet sits inside the room, the doors of which lead to the veranda.

**(c) What is 'I' doing?**

The poet is busy writing letters.

**(d) What is the attitude of 'I' towards the trees moving out?**

The poet remains indifferent to the trees moving out and shows no interest in mentioning them in his letters.

**(e) Which poetic device has been used in the last line?**

The poetic device used in the last line is alliteration as 'f' sound has been repeated.

**TYPE-II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) Who or what can the poet see in the veranda?
- (b) At a deeper level, the expression 'the forest' here symbolizes
- trees in the veranda
  - women struggling for freedom
  - chaos and lawlessness
  - the poet's wild thoughts
- (c) The poet does not mention the departure of forest in her letters most probably because she
- is afraid
  - wants the movement to remain a secret
  - does not want to disturb the trees
  - is indifferent to the movement of the trees
- (d) The poetic device used in the second line is .....

- ANSWERS** (a) 'trees' on the move (b) (ii) women struggling for freedom  
 (c) (iv) is indifferent to the movement of the trees  
 (e) alliteration

## (VI)

The night is fresh, the whole moon shines  
 in a sky still open  
 the smell of leaves and lichen  
 still reaches like a voice into the rooms.

It is a full-moon night and there is freshness all around. The leaves of the tree and lichen emit fragrant smell which the narrator can feel in the room. The moon is whole as there are no trees to obstruct its view or filter its light.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) What kind of a night is it?

Or

How does the poet portray the night?

It is a full-moon night and there is freshness all around because of the bright light of the full moon and the fragrance of leaves and lichen.

- (b) What kind of imagery has been used?

The imagery used is from the world of nature as the skyscape is painted with the full moon spreading its light in the open sky and the fragrance of leaves and lichen adding to the freshness.

- (c) What is the significance of the 'whole moon' shining?

The whole moon shining symbolises the attainment of a goal or happiness or a feeling of being whole and complete. Here it may suggest women's achievement of freedom from all sorts of bondage.

The whole moon shines because it is a full moon night and the trees are not there to stand between the poet and the moon as the trees have departed leaving behind the house that imprisoned them.

- (d) What does the word 'still' signify in the last line?

The word 'still' signifies the time after the departure of the trees from the house towards the forest. The smell of the trees – leaves and lichen – is still around as the trees have left a deep impact behind, which will not vanish away easily.

- (e) **What is the smell of leaves and lichen compared to? Which poetic device does the poet use to make this comparison?**

The smell of the leaves and lichen is compared to a voice as the poet can experience the smell and hear the voice of birds and insects on the trees while sitting in her room.

The poetic device the poet has used to make this comparison is a 'simile'.

- (f) **Which poetic device has been used in the second and third lines?**

There is alliteration in the second and third lines as 's' and 'l' sounds have been repeated respectively.

#### TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) The poet can see the 'whole moon' because there is no ..... to obstruct the view.
- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| (i) building | (iii) tree   |
| (ii) wall    | (iv) veranda |
- (b) The poetic device used in the second line is .....
- (c) The smell of leaves and lichen is because of
- |  |
|--|
| (i) the trees growing outside          |
| (ii) the plants growing in the garden  |
| (iii) the trees that have died         |
| (iv) the trees that have just departed |
- (d) The smell of leaves and lichen is compared to a .....
- (e) The expression 'the whole moon shines' suggests that women
- |                                 |
|---------------------------------|
| (i) have achieved their freedom |
| (ii) have been promised freedom |



- (c) **Why will the whispers be silent 'tomorrow'?** Or

**Why does the narrator feel that the whispers will be silent 'tomorrow'?**

As the trees are departing from the house and moving towards the forest where they will reach in the morning, 'tomorrow' there will be no sounds or whispers of the leaves, birds, or insects.

At the symbolic level, it implies that the whispers will be silent tomorrow because all the voices of fear, disbelief, doubt and scepticism will be silenced, once women achieve freedom and prove that struggle ultimately is conducive to success.

- (d) **What does the poet want us to listen to?**

The poet wants the reader or listener to listen to the sound of the glass ceiling shattering and trees and/or women marching on their way to freedom.

- (e) **Why is the glass breaking?**

The leaves and twigs of the trees had been trying to break open the glass ceiling to liberate themselves. Eventually, they have succeeded in their struggle and the glass is breaking. It also implies that women, struggling for liberation, are advancing towards success.

- (f) **Which poetic device has been used in the first two lines?**

The poetic device used in the first two lines is 'enjambment' as the idea in first line is carried on to the second without any punctuation mark to show pause.

#### **TYPE-II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) At a deeper level, the 'whispers' here symbolise
- the poet's fears and apprehensions
  - the sound of the rushing winds
  - the groaning sounds of newly discharged patients
  - the sounds of the veranda floor and the glass roof shattering

- (b) 'The breaking of the glass' symbolizes
- (i) beginning of a struggle                      (iii) aiming for a goal  
(ii) shattering of a dream                      (iv) breaking of a barrier
- (c) The word 'Listen' is addressed to the .....
- (d) The poet would like the listener to listen to the sound of the .....
- (e) At a deeper level, 'the trees' here symbolise ..... on their way to achieving liberation.

**ANSWERS** (a) (i) the poet's fears and apprehensions

(b) (iv) breaking of a barrier (c) reader

(d) glass breaking (d) women

(VIII)

Winds rush to meet them.

The moon is broken like a mirror,  
its pieces flash now in the crown  
of the tallest oak.

Trees liberated from the glass enclosure are warmly welcomed by winds. The moon, seen through the leaves at the top of the oak tree, looks like a mirror broken into pieces as against the full moon seen earlier without the presence of trees.

These lines point towards the completion of the journey of the trees towards the freedom of the forest and present the beautiful image of the light of the moon been filtered by the branches of the trees.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) What does 'them' refer to in the first line?

Or

Whom do winds rush to meet?

In the first line, 'them' refers to the trees which have broken their confinement and moved towards the forest. They are received warmly by the winds in the forest.

**(b) What is the moon compared to?**

The moon here is compared to a mirror broken into several pieces. In fact, the moon seen through the branches and leaves of trees appears to be broken.

**(c) Why does the moon appear to be 'broken'?**

The moon is seen through the leaves and branches of the tree. The whole moon cannot be seen through them. Therefore, it looks like a broken glass. In fact, it makes the landscape of the forest complete, as the trees have occupied the space that was empty and the moon shines over the trees.

**(d) How was the moon shining earlier and why?**

Earlier the whole moon was shining as the trees were imprisoned in the house and there were no leaves and branches to obstruct the view of the moon. The trees had been removed from their natural habitat and there was nothing between the ground and the moon.

**(e) What does the crown of the oak imply?**

Or

**What is referred to as the 'crown'?**

The 'crown' of the oak implies the top of the oak tree and the poet presents the image of the moon throwing its light on its top. A crown is worn by a king/queen on his/her head symbolizing the authority to rule. An oak is a mighty tree and its top has been called 'the crown'.

**(f) Which poetic device has been used in "the crown / of the tallest oak"?**

The poetic device used here is metaphor as the top of the tree has been compared to a crown without using the words of comparison 'like' or 'as'.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) Who are 'them' in the above extract?
- (b) A line that conveys the idea of 'extending a warm welcome' is .....  
(Quote the line)
- (c) The moon here is compared to a .....
- (d) The moon appears to be broken because it is ..... behind the leaves and branches of the oak tree.
- (e) A poetic device used in 'the crown/ of the tallest oak' is a .....

**ANSWERS** (a) trees (b) "Winds rush to meet them"  
(c) broken mirror (d) hidden (d) metaphor

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(to be answered in about 40 words each)

- Q1. Which trees does the poet refer to in the poem? What do they symbolize?**

The poet refers to the trees that have been removed from the open forests and planted into the closed, cramped spaces of the houses where they feel suppressed and stifled. The trees symbolize all those objects and living beings who have been separated from their natural habitats. In fact, the poem has a deeper meaning and the trees signify women who are not allowed to grow freely in a male-dominated society.

- Q2. Find, in the first stanza, three things that cannot happen in a treeless forest.** (Textual)

The three things that cannot happen in a treeless forest are – one, the birds cannot perch on the trees; two, the insects cannot hide themselves and three, the rays of the sun cannot form any shadow.

- Q3. What picture do these words create in your mind "... sun bury its feet in shadow ...."? What could the poet mean by the sun's feet?**

*(Textual)*

These words create an image of the sun shining brightly with no trees to obstruct the passage of its rays. The sun's feet have been used metaphorically for its rays. The rays of the sun filter through the leaves of the trees creating a pattern of shade and light. But in the absence of trees, there is no cool shade.

- Q4. Where are the trees in the poem?** *(Textual)*

In the poem, the trees are in the unnatural environment of the small, cramped spaces of the houses or other buildings. The particular tree fighting to go out is grown in the veranda of the narrator's house.

- Q5. How do the roots try to disengage themselves?**

*Or*

**"All night the roots work." How do the roots work?**

The roots of the tree growing in the veranda of the narrator's house work all night to try hard to break the floor. The cracks have been formed out of which the roots make great efforts to come out to be liberated from the cramped space.

The struggle of the roots is symbolic of the struggle of women for freedom in a gender-biased society as women try to uproot their enslavement by men.

- Q6. What do the leaves and twigs do?**

Both the leaves and the twigs try to break free from the cramped space they are imprisoned in. The leaves struggle to move towards the glass enclosure to break it and move out into the open space. Similarly, the twigs have been cramped for a long time and ultimately move towards freedom.

The poet, through the struggle of leaves and twigs, wants to emphasize that women have to put up struggle at various levels to find freedom, and only a collective effort will take them towards their goal.

**Q7. Why does the poet compare the branches with patients?**

*Or*

**What does the poet compare the branches of the trees to and why?**

The poet compares the branches of the trees to the patients as the branches are cramped under suppression of the enclosure and move clumsily to break the glass ceiling to get out into the open. Similarly, the patients have been in the hospital, away from their homes. When they are discharged, they walk unsteadily towards the door as they are still under the impact of anesthesia or medicines. Both the branches and the trees leave their unwelcome environment to go to their natural habitats.

**Q8. Why do you think the narrator does not mention "the departure of the forest from the house" in her letters? (Textual)**

*Or*

**Does the narrator oversee the departure of trees? Why/Why not?**

The narrator does not oversee the departure of trees because she is too much engrossed in writing long letters. She does not even mention "the departure of the forest from the house" and remains indifferent. The poet wants to show that people are so much engaged in their own activities that they remain indifferent to what happens in the world of nature. It is as if the tree growing in the veranda or moving out of it is of no significance to the narrator.

**Q9. What picture of the night has been presented in the poem?**

*Or*

**What does the poet feel at night?**

The poem presents a full-moon night when the moon spreads its light around in the open sky. Moreover, the air is laden with the smell of leaves and lichen. The poet feels the freshness of the night because of the bright light and fragrant smell.

**Q10. Why does the moon appear to be broken like a mirror?**

*Or*

**How does the whole moon break like a mirror?**

The narrator looks at the moon through the leaves and branches of the tree. Therefore, the whole of the moon is not visible. Different parts of it seen through the leaves look like pieces of a broken glass.

**Q11. How does the poet describe the moon in the third stanza and at the end of the poem? What causes this change? (Textual)**

In the third stanza, the moon is shown to be full and whole shining in the open sky at night. At the end of the poem, it is shown to be broken into pieces like a shattered mirror. The change is caused by the fact that the narrator looks at the moon in the third stanza directly from the room without any tree standing in between. But at the end of the poem, it is seen through the leaves and the whole of it cannot be seen. Its parts look like the pieces of a glass. The movement of the trees towards the forest has partially blocked the moon and brought about this change.

**Q12. What is the reaction of the winds as the tree moves out?**

*Or*

**Who welcomes the trees when they move out of the house?**

The winds are delighted and rush to give a warm welcome to the trees to their natural habitat of the open space.

**Q13. What whispers does the narrator hear? What will happen to these whispers the next day? Or**

**What change, according to the narrator, will take place after the departure of the trees?**

The narrator can hear the whispering, low sounds of the rustling of the leaves, the chirping of birds and the buzzing of insects because the trees are still in her house. But as the trees are moving out leaving the confinement of the house, there will be no trees the next day, nor will there be birds and insects, for they will move away with the trees. Therefore, there will be no sounds for the narrator to hear.

**Q14. "The forest was empty." What would happen if the forest remains empty?**

A forest exists only because of trees. If the trees are not there, the forest will be bare, empty, dry ground only. As trees in the forest provide shelter to beasts, birds and insects, these living beings will lose their habitat and will not survive long. The ecological balance will be disturbed and there will be natural calamities like floods, earthquakes, tsunamis etc.

**Q15. What is common in the activities of the roots, leaves, and twigs of the trees in the poem? Or**

**What do the roots, the leaves and the twigs of the trees in the poem do? Or (Textual)**

**What does each part of the tree try to do? What is their common objective?**

The trees in the poem are trying to break free from their confinement in the cramped space of the house. All parts of the tree contribute to the efforts for freedom by struggling against the forces that cramp and confine them. The roots try to come out of the floor through the cracks, the leaves make efforts to break the glass and the twigs exert themselves along with the leaves to get out of the glass enclosure. The effort to achieve

freedom is common in the activities of these parts of the tree. In fact, the various parts of the tree put up a collective struggle to attain freedom.

**Q16. What do trees symbolize in the poem?**

The trees in the poem have been removed from their natural environment and imprisoned in the artificial environment of the house. They represent all the human beings who are denied human rights of free development, particularly women, who are enslaved, ill-treated and exploited in a male-dominated society. They will have to struggle to rebel against their slavery to be able to enjoy the freedom given to them by nature.

**Q17. What happens to the house when the trees move out of it? (Textual)**

As the trees move out of the house, their impact is still felt. The veranda floor is left cracked and glass is shattered. However, the fragrance of the lichen and the leaves, and the sounds of the birds and insects still linger in the mind of the poet, which she feels will soon fade away.

**Q18. How are the trees personified in the poem?**

The trees are personified in the poem as they are projected as human beings, especially women, who feel suppressed and cramped in the closed space and who work to attain freedom. The various parts of the tree – the roots, the leaves, the branches – work like human beings and ultimately are shown to move away to be embraced by the winds.

## LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

- Q1. How does the poem present a conflict between man and nature? Is the poet suggesting that plants and trees used for 'interior decoration' in cities while forests are cut down, are imprisoned, and need to 'break out'?** Or (Textual, Modified)

**The poem "The Trees" shows the conflict between man and nature. Discuss.**

The poem "The Trees" by Adrienne Rich presents a conflict between man and nature by presenting the plight of the trees that have been removed from the forests to be planted in houses for interior decoration. Man, because of his selfish purposes, tries to spoil and confine natural things. Man causes serious damage to nature by cutting down trees from forests – the natural habitat of the trees, which provides an appropriate environment for their growth. Moreover, forests are essential for maintaining the ecological balance. Forests provide shelter to numerous beasts, birds and insects.

When trees are removed from their natural environment and planted in the scanty, cramped, and closed spaces of buildings in the cities, they feel stifled and confined. Away from their natural habitat, they feel uprooted and alienated. They put up a rebellion against their domination by man and struggle to achieve freedom in order to breathe in the open, fresh air.

The imagination of the poet that the roots, leaves, twigs and boughs of the tree growing in the veranda of her house are putting up a struggle to achieve freedom conveys a message that collective efforts are required for achieving freedom.

- Q2. How can you compare the poem "The Trees" with "A Tiger in the Zoo"?** Or

**What is common about the poems "The Trees" and "A Tiger in the Zoo"?**

The poems "A Tiger in the Zoo" by Leslie Norris and "The Trees" by Adrienne Rich share the common central idea that the natural habitat is essential for the proper growth of living beings. Both the poems present the cruelty of man in meddling with the natural environment by separating the natural inhabitants of forests from the natural atmosphere.

"A Tiger in the Zoo" presents the pitiable plight of the tiger who feels uncomfortable in the concrete cell of the zoo when separated from the forest. Similarly, the trees feel unhappy and uncomfortable imprisoned in the house, away from the forest. Both the trees and the tiger are the natural inmates of forests. They want to live their natural life in the open environment of the woods. The tiger feels imprisoned in a cramped space of the cage, his movement is restricted and his natural self is suppressed. He cannot roar violently as he would do in a forest. The tree, too, feels restrained and enslaved while growing in a house and wants to break free from the shackles.

Both the poems convey the message that trees and animals must be provided their natural environment. Man must stop his cruel attack on nature for selfish purposes.

- Q3. Adrienne Rich has been known to use trees as a metaphor for human beings; this is a recurrent image in her poetry. What new meanings emerge from the poem if you take its trees to be symbolic of this particular meaning? (Textual)**

*Or*

**Do you think the poem "The Trees" is an allegory that treats another subject under its surface subject?**

*Or*

**What is the symbolic significance of the poem "The Trees"?**

The poem is certainly an allegory and has two layers of meanings. Trees have been treated both literally and symbolically. In fact, Adrienne Rich, the great feminist, has frequently used trees to symbolize human beings, particularly women. She has raised her voice against the exploitation of women in male-dominated, patriarchal societies. She is against slavery - whether of natural objects or of human beings.

In the poem, the tree which has been grown in the unnatural environment of a house, craves for freedom so that it can go back to the open environment of the forests. All the parts of the tree - the roots, leaves, twigs and boughs try to break free from the stifling space. The narrator is confident that the tree will move out to the forest and attain freedom.

The poem, on the deeper level, is a voice against the exploitation and domination of weaker human beings by the stronger ones. All human beings should have a right to grow and live freely in the open environment. It is really cruel to enslave and exploit other human beings. No human being wants a life of slavery. If suppressed and dominated, the down-trodden people are likely to rebel and throw away the chains of slavery. The chains of class, caste, race, and gender imprison human beings. But ultimately the sufferers try to break these shackles to claim their right to equality which they achieve through collective struggle.

The trees particularly symbolize women who have suffered domination and slavery in the male-chauvinistic society and want to escape to the world of freedom. However, they have now raised their voice against their ill-treatment by men and are fighting for their freedom and equality.

**Q4. How do the different parts of the tree in the veranda of the poet's house struggle for freedom. What message does it convey?**

The tree in the veranda of the poet's house feels stifled, suppressed, and enslaved in the cramped environment away from its natural habitat, the forest. The tree ultimately tries to claim freedom by breaking open the enclosing walls. In this struggle for freedom, each part of the tree – its roots, leaves, and twigs – contribute in its own way.

The roots of the tree try hard to pop out of the concrete floor through the cracks which they have already created. Similarly, the leaves move towards the glass enclosure and strive to break the glass so that they may liberate themselves from their prison. The twigs too toil for freedom along with branches and their struggle makes them stiff. Thus, different parts of the tree join the campaign for freedom which the tree ultimately achieves.

The poem conveys a message that nature cannot be suppressed for long. Ultimately it rebels against the restrictions imposed on it by men. Therefore, human beings, instead of assaulting and confining natural objects, should leave them to grow freely in their natural environment.

The poem also conveys the message that the enslaved, exploited and dominated people will have to put up collective efforts at different levels to achieve freedom. It is only when people join hands that they can fight for their rights.

□□□

## 9. Fog

(Carl Sandburg)

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### ABOUT THE POEM

#### *Introduction*

"Fog" is an extremely short poem consisting of six lines divided into two sentences. The poet captures a natural phenomenon - the appearance and disappearance of fog over harbour and city; and presents it in a metaphorical manner. The movements of the fog are compared to those of a cat. However, the poem is replete with beautiful imagery.

#### *Summary*

The poet observes the harbour and the city getting shrouded in fog which has come stealthily like a cat moving silently on its feet and reaching its destination without prior warning. The comparison between the fog and the cat continues as the poet portrays the fog settle over the harbour and the city just as a cat sits quietly looking around. Again, the fog disappears imperceptibly just as the cat leaves one place and moves towards another in a silent, quiet manner. Cats, like fog, never stay for long at one place and are ever ready to move on to their next destination.

The poem presents the images of the fog hovering over the surroundings and then disappearing as well as the picture of a cat sitting on its haunches, looking around and then moving away. Through the usage of metaphor, personification and imagery, the poem vividly portrays a phenomenon of nature.

### THEME

The poem records the poet's observation of the fog quietly appearing over the city and harbour of Chicago, its hovering over the

surrounding for a short time and then its quick and quiet retreat. The poem shows how a complete natural phenomenon can be vividly portrayed in a few words. The fluid movements of the fog have been appropriately compared to the stealthy and swift movements of a cat. The metaphor of the cat for the fog and the imagery used make the poem a rich, literary feast.

#### MESSAGE

The poem does not have any message to convey. It only presents the elusive nature of fog which dawns on a place, stays for some time and then retreats as stealthily and swiftly as it had appeared. The poem is based on the poet's experience of the fog which engulfed the harbour and city of Chicago for a short time and then disappeared. The poet has recorded the experience in a literary, metaphorical manner by comparing the movements and manners of the fog to those of a cat.

#### TITLE

The whole poem tells the story of the fog that appears, lingers on and then gradually vanishes from the scene. The poem has rightly been given the title 'Fog'. The poet could have extended the metaphor of the cat in the title itself and cat could have also found a place in the title but probably keeping in view the brevity of the poem, the poet has chosen a brief crisp title "Fog".

#### LITERARY DEVICES

##### *Metaphor*

A metaphor is a figure of speech that is used to make a comparison between two things that aren't alike but do have something in common. Unlike a simile, where two things are compared directly using 'like' or 'as', a metaphor's comparison is more indirect, usually made by stating 'something is something else'. A metaphor is very expressive; it is not meant to be taken 'literally'.

The whole of the poem "Fog" is an extended metaphor. The poet compares the fog to a cat in the second line:

**Example:**

- ◆ *The fog comes  
on little cat feet*  
and continues the comparison till the end.

**Imagery**

Imagery in poetry refers to the mental pictures or images which are evoked in the minds of the readers through words in a literary work. Imagery makes a poem graphic and more appealing.

The poem "Fog," though small, is rich in imagery. The following images are noteworthy:

- ◆ *The image of the city and the harbour engulfed in fog.*
- ◆ *The image of a cat sitting on its haunches looking at the city.*
- ◆ *The image of the cat moving away stealthily.*

**Transferred Epithet**

Transferred Epithet is a poetic device in which an adjective is used not with the noun which it normally qualifies but with some other noun.

**Example:**

- ◆ *on silent haunches*  
Here it is the cat that is silent, not the haunches.

**Enjambment:**

It is a poetic device in which a line runs on to the next line or lines carrying on the idea without a punctuation mark (*a comma, or a full stop*) at the end of a line.

**Examples:**

- ◆ *The fog comes  
on little cat feet.*

Here the first line rolls on to the next without full stop or comma at its end.

- ◆ *It sits looking  
over harbour and city  
on silent haunches  
and then moves on.*

Here there is no pause at the end of first three lines and the full stop comes only at the end of the fourth line.

#### RHYME SCHEME

The poem has no rhyme scheme as it is written in free verse. There is a unique compatibility between the theme and the style of the poem. Just as fog is something indistinct and formless, the poet has deliberately not given any specific rhyme scheme to it.

#### STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION

*Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.*

(I)

The fog comes  
on little cat feet.

In these two small lines, the poet presents a natural phenomenon – the silent, stealthy, and quick arrival of fog as it descends without any prior indication. The fog, being fluid, moves quietly through gliding movements. The poet compares its arrival to that of a cat as the cat too is creepy and moves in a sneaky manner while stalking. The feet of the cat, which refer to its padded paws, are shown to be little to emphasize the silence of its movements. The lines present the image of fog descending down and surrounding some place.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) What is the arrival of the fog compared to?

The arrival of the fog is compared to the movement of a cat walking on its little paws.

- (b) What is common about the movement of the fog and that of the cat?

The silent, swift, and stealthy manner is common about the movement of the cat and that of the fog.

- (c) Which poetic device has been used in the second line?

The poetic device used is metaphor as the fog is compared to a cat without using 'like' or 'as'.

- (d) What does 'little' in 'little cat feet' emphasize?

'Little' emphasizes the quiet and stealthy movement of the fog, which is comparable to the silent movement of a cat.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) The fog has been compared to a .....
- (b) A literary device used in the first line is .....
- (c) The expression 'cat feet' suggests the ..... movement of the fog.

**ANSWERS** (a) cat (b) personification (c) silent

**(II)**

It sits looking  
over harbour and city  
on silent haunches  
and then moves on.

The poet continues the metaphorical description of the fog comparing its movements to those of a cat. The fog engulfs the city and the harbour and lingers over it for some time just as a cat sits on its haunches silently looking around. The fog does not stay over the city and harbour for long. It retreats as stealthily as it had

arrived. The poet emphasizes the sneaky, creepy movements of the fog and those of the cat to which it is compared.

These lines create the imagery of a city and harbour shrouded in thick fog and that of a cat sitting on its haunches and then silently moving away.

### TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) What does 'it' refer to?

'It' refers to the fog.

- (b) What is 'it' being compared to?

'It' is being compared to a cat.

- (c) Where does 'it' look? What does 'looking' signify?

It looks at the harbour and the city on its banks. Here 'looking' signifies the fog's surrounding and hovering over the city & harbour.

- (d) Which poetic device has been used in "silent haunches"?

The poetic device used is transferred epithet as it is the cat (and the fog) that is silent, not the haunches.

- (e) What does 'it' do at the end?

At the end 'it' vanishes as silently as it had descended.

### TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) Quote the line(s) that convey the idea that the fog engulfs its surroundings.
- (b) A literary device used in the extract is ..... as one line runs on to another without a punctuation mark.
- (c) Quote the expression that conveys the meaning 'the fog lifts or clears' is .....
- (d) The poetic device used in the third line is .....
- |                         |                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| (i) transferred epithet | (iii) allusion  |
| (ii) alliteration       | (iv) repetition |

**ANSWERS** (a) It sits looking/over harbour and city (b) enjambment  
(c) then moves on (d) (i) transferred epithet

### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 40 words each)

**Q1. What does Sandburg think the fog is like?** (Textual)

The poet finds a marked resemblance between a cat and a fog. Just as a cat appears and disappears quietly, the fog also comes and goes without any noise.

**Q2. How does the fog come?** (Textual)

The fog comes quietly and stealthily. It comes absolutely unnoticed as it appears noiselessly. Its creepy, sudden, stealthy and swift and sneaky movements are comparable to those of a cat. There is no prior warning or indication of the arrival of the fog.

**Q3. Does the poet actually say that the fog is like a cat? Find three things that tell us that the fog is like a cat?** (Textual)

No, the poet does not directly say that the fog is like a cat. He compares the two in a metaphorical manner stating that fog arrives on its 'little cat feet.'

The fog and the cat are similar in their movements and behaviour. The fog descends on a city suddenly, stealthily and silently just as a cat arrives at some place without any warning. The fog settles down on some place and stays there for some time just as a cat sits on its haunches for some time looking at the surrounding quietly. Again, the fog disappears silently and imperceptibly just as a cat leaves a place to go to another.

**Q4. How does the poet capture the stealthy, sneaky movements of the fog?**

The poet emphasizes the stealthy and sneaky movements of the

fog by showing that its arrival, stay and disappearance are silent and imperceptible like those of a cat. It comes on the 'little cat feet' which are padded and soft making no sound of footsteps.

It hangs over the city silently like a cat sitting on its haunches and it retreats as silently and stealthily as it came without anybody noticing its disappearance.

**Q5. How does the poet present 'fog' as a living being?**

Fog is a natural phenomenon which occurs as per natural laws but it is inanimate. It is the poet's imagination to present it as a living being which he does by comparing it to a cat. The poet uses the words 'comes,' 'sits' and 'moves on' to project fog as a living being. It comes stealthily like a cat, sits over the city and harbour just like a cat looks at the surroundings and then retreats just as a cat goes away quietly.

**Q6. What kind of visual imagery is found in the poem "Fog"?**

Carl Sandburg's poem "Fog", though very small, is replete with visual imagery. The poet portrays the harbour and the city engulfed in fog. There is also the picture of a cat coming stealthily, sitting on its haunches and moving away. In fact, the whole poem consists of the images of fog over the city and of a cat.

**Q7. How does the poet emphasize the silence of the city and the harbour?**

Although Carl Sandburg's poem "Fog" has a city and harbour as its perspective, no activities and no sounds are a part of the scene. The city and the town are portrayed to be shrouded in fog which hovers over the place for some time and then disappears. The silence of the city is not disturbed by the fog as it arrives, lingers on, and then retreats quietly and stealthily. The poem is like a still-life painting of the fog-covered city and harbour.

**Q8. How does the poet present the retreat of the fog?**

The poet shows that the retreat of the fog is as silent, sudden,

and sneaky as its arrival is. The fog moves away from the city and harbour imperceptibly without anybody noticing its departure. It goes away as quietly as a cat does on its padded paws.

### LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

**Q1. What three stages of fog does the poem "Fog" present?**

Carl Sandburg's exceptionally small poem "Fog" presents in a few words the three stages of fog – its descent over the city and harbour (the city and harbour of Chicago), its stay there for some time, and its ultimate retreat. In all these three stages, the poet metaphorically compares its movements and behaviour to those of a cat. The poet narrates how the fog keeps the city and the harbour so imperceptibly under its cover that no one notices the movement of its arrival. It appears as suddenly as a cat does, moving on its little, padded feet.

The fog shrouds the city and the harbour and keeps hanging over them for some time as if gazing at them. Again the poet shows its stay to be like the sitting of a cat on its haunches and looking around.

However, the stay of the fog is short and ultimately it moves away. The fog retreats without disturbing the silence pervading all around. It goes away as silently as it came – like the cat leaving one place to go to another in a stealthy manner.

Thus, the small poem describes with the help of vivid images the arrival, the stay, and the departure of the fog. It is a brief, but clear description of a natural phenomenon – a scientific fact presented in a poetic style.

**Q2. How is the poem "Fog" an example of extended metaphor? Or  
How is the fog compared to a cat in the poem?**

The small, six-lined poem "Fog" by Carl Sandburg is a beautiful

example of an extended metaphor. The poet narrates the arrival and departure of the fog on the harbour and the city. The coming of the fog, its stay, and its departure are expressed through a comparison in a metaphorical way to the movements of the cat. The fog comes down quietly like a cat moving on its little, padded feet without making any noise. The fog shrouds the harbour and the city. (The city referred to is Chicago and the harbour is Chicago Harbour. The poet had actually seen the fog while crossing from near the Grant Park) The fog lingers on for sometime as if looking at the city and the harbour just as a cat sits on its haunches looking around. After some time, the fog disappears again silently – just as a cat, after sitting for some time, goes away.

Thus, the whole poem is an extended metaphor as the movements of the fog are compared to the movements of a cat.

**Q3. What kind of imagery has been used in the poem? Or**

**Write a short note on the images created by the poet?**

The poem "Fog", though exceptionally short, is rich in imagery and poetic devices. The poem is an extended metaphor as the fog over the city and harbour of Chicago is compared to a cat. Therefore, there are two kinds of images in this small poem. The poet creates the picture of the city and harbour of Chicago shrouded in fog. There is the image of the fog coming down and then disappearing. At the same time, there is the imagery of a cat walking quietly on its soft, little, padded feet. Then follow the image of the cat sitting on its haunches looking fixedly in one direction and the image of the cat moving away silently. The poem, in this way, captures the city and the harbour covered in fog through the visual imagery. He describes the arrival and the disappearance of the fog with the help of some images of sneaky movements of a cat.

## 10. *The Tale of Custard the Dragon*

(Ogden Nash)

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### ABOUT THE POEM

#### *Introduction*

"The Tale of Custard the Dragon" is an amusing poem written in the form of a ballad. A ballad is a narrative poem in short stanzas usually having four lines. Ballads narrate tales of heroism and courage. This poem also reveals the heroism of a dragon, but it is written in a light vein to show that appearances are deceptive. In its humorous treatment of the subject, the poem resembles a parody.

#### *Summary*

"The Tale of Custard the Dragon" narrates the story of Belinda, her pet dragon called Custard, and a few of her other pets.

Belinda lived in a little white house with several pets. She had a black kitten called Ink, a grey mouse called Blink, a yellow dog – Mustard, and a small dragon whom she called Custard. She possessed a red-coloured wagon also.

Custard, the dragon had a very horrifying appearance. It had big sharp teeth, spikes all over its back and scales underneath its belly. Its big mouth resembled a fireplace and the nose looked like a chimney. It also had sharp toes like daggers. But Custard was considered to be a coward by Belinda as well as her other pets, as he always wished to be enclosed in a nice and safe cage.

Belinda as well as her pets claimed to be very brave and bold. Belinda's strength was compared to the ferocity of a barrel full of bears. Her kitten and mouse chased the lions away. Mustard's bravery reminded one of a tiger in a fit of temper.

Belinda used to tickle Custard ruthlessly, and the kitten, the mouse and the dog ridiculed him by comparing him with "Percival", the

brave knight of King Arthur who was renowned for his strength and fighting prowess. Sitting in the red wagon, all of them made fun of this dragon.

Suddenly their fun was interrupted when a bearded pirate with an artificial leg climbed into the white house. They all were startled to see the intruder with a pistol in each hand and a short, broad sword caught between his teeth.

Each one of those present in the room was terrified. Belinda turned pale and cried for help. Mustard ran for his life, Ink fled into the basement and Blink hid himself in a rat hole.

Custard, on the other hand, faced the crisis very boldly and lashing his tail, he charged at the pirate. Absolutely frightened by this fierce assault, the pirate drank a few mouthfuls of grog (an alcoholic drink) that he was carrying. He then fired two shots at Custard but in his nervousness he missed his aim. Custard did not spare him; he ate up the whole of his body.

There was a great rejoicing in the white house. Belinda embraced Custard and the other pets also started celebrating. No one bothered about the pirate's death.

However, rather than feeling ashamed of their cowardice, Ink, Blink and Mustard again started boasting of their bravery. They claimed that they could have been braver than Custard, had they not been unnerved by the sudden turn of events. Ignoring their bragging, Custard admitted that everyone was braver than him.

Belinda continues to live in her white house along with her pets till today. Ironically, they still claim to be brave and full of courage. Custard too continues his demand for a nice and safe cage.

#### THEME

The theme of the poem is that appearances are deceptive. The assessment of people about themselves and others is not always true.

This hard fact has been brought forth in the poem through the narrative in which Belinda and her pets Ink, a kitten, Blink, a grey mouse and Mustard, a yellow dog have a poor opinion of Custard, the dragon, who is ridiculed as a coward. However, the true characters of Belinda and all her pets prove to be contrary to their claims when they have to face a pirate carrying two pistols and a sword. It is only Custard, the dragon who gives a fierce fight to the pirate and rescues the so-called brave Belinda and her pets.

#### MESSAGE

The poem conveys the message that we must not judge people from their appearances or from their own claims because appearances usually prove to be deceptive and claims prove to be false. A true evaluation of a person can be made only in times of adversity. Another message the poem gives is that those who are really brave, need not boast of their bravery. Their mettle is proved only when they encounter a dangerous situation.

#### TITLE

Custard is the central character of the story narrated in this ballad. The views and activities of the rest of the characters of the story are related to those of the dragon through contrast. Hence, the poem has appropriately been titled "The Tale of Custard the Dragon". The title also gives a clue that the poem is full of wit and humour because the name Custard is quite funny for a ferocious animal like a dragon. There is also a hint that it is going to be a narrative poem, a 'tale' which is usually a ballad.

#### RHYME SCHEME

The poem consistently follows the same rhyme scheme in all the stanzas *i.e.* 'aabb,' except for the last but two stanza *i.e.* stanza 13, which is a six-line stanza with the rhyme scheme 'aabbcc'.

## LITERARY DEVICES

### Alliteration

Alliteration is the occurrence of the same sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. It creates a musical effect and enhances the pleasure of reading a literary work.

#### Examples:

- ◆ *Belinda lived in a little white house*  
Here 'l' sound has been repeated.
- ◆ *Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears*  
Here, 'b' sound has been repeatedly used.
- ◆ *And he held in his teeth a cutlass bright*  
Here we find the repetition of 'h' sound.
- ◆ *With a clatter and a clank*  
Here there is repetition of 'k' and 'l' sounds.
- ◆ *He gulped some grog from his pocket flagon*  
'g' sound has been repeated in this line.

### Simile

A simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison, showing similarities between two different things. Unlike a metaphor, a simile draws resemblance with the help of words 'like' or 'as'. Therefore, it is a direct comparison.

#### Examples:

- ◆ *And the little yellow dog was sharp as Mustard*  
Here the poet compares Belinda's dog with Mustard because of its sharpness as Mustard seeds have sharp, pungent taste.
- ◆ *Mouth like a fireplace*  
Here the mouth of Custard, the dragon is compared to a furnace.
- ◆ *Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears*

Belinda's bravery is compared to that of a group of bears.

- ◆ *Mustard was as brave as a tiger in a rage*

Here the bravery of Mustard, the dog is compared to the bravery or ferociousness of a tiger in anger.

- ◆ *Snorting like an engine*

The loud snorting of Custard is compared to the sound of an engine.

- ◆ *Clashed his tail like irons in a dungeon*

The tail of the dragon is compared to the chains in prison.

- ◆ *He went at the pirate like a robin at a worm*

The attack of Custard on the pirate is compared to that of the bird 'robin' on a worm.

### Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech that is used to make a comparison between two things that aren't alike but do have something in common. Unlike a simile, where two things are compared directly using 'like' or 'as', a metaphor's comparison is more indirect, usually made by stating 'something is something else'.

A metaphor is very expressive; it is not meant to be taken 'literally'.

#### Examples:

- ◆ *Chimney for a nose*

Here the poet compares the dragon's nose with a chimney because it jutted out sharply like a chimney. No word of comparison 'like' or 'as' has been used.

- ◆ *And realio, trulio, daggers on his toes*

Here the poet compares the sharp nails on the toes of the dragon to daggers without using 'like' or 'as'.

### Repetition

Poets often repeat single words or phrases, lines, and sometimes,

even whole stanzas at intervals to create a musical effect; to emphasize a point; to draw the readers' attention or to lend unity to a piece.

### Examples:

- ◆ The word '*little*' has been used six times in stanza 1, three times in stanza 2, and six times in stanza 13 to emphasize that the white house of Belinda and all its inmates were small in size. It also makes the lines musical and lyrical.
- ◆ *Belinda tickled him, she tickled him unmerciful.*  
Here the repetition of '*tickled*' shows the repeated action of tickling.
- ◆ *Pistol in his left hand, pistol in his right.*  
Here, the repetition of '*pistol*' emphasizes that the pirate was well-armed. The repetition lends a rhythm and musicality to the line.
- ◆ In the last stanza '*as brave as*' is used twice to mock at the false bravery of Belinda and Mustard.
- ◆ *Suddenly, suddenly they heard a nasty sound*  
The word '*suddenly*' has been repeated to emphasize that the sound heard by everyone was sudden and unexpected.
- ◆ The self-coined words '*realio*' and '*trulio*' have also been repeated four times.
- ◆ The first and the fourth stanzas appear at the end of the poem once again with change in the tense to show that life still goes on without any change for Belinda and her pets. However, the repetition has irony underlying it as it emphasizes the incorrigible nature of Belinda and her pets.

### Anaphora

Anaphora is a literary device in which the writer repeats the same beginning of a clause or a sentence, chiefly with the purpose of emphasis on the repeated element, but also to create rhythm in the writing.

**Example:**

- ◆ In stanza 1, lines 3 and 4 begin with 'And,' and in stanza 2 lines 2 and 3 begin with 'And the little...'

**Allusion**

Allusion means an indirect reference or suggestion. It is a figure of speech in which a passing but significant reference is made to a well-known person, place, thing or idea of a historical, mythological, cultural, literary or political significance. It does not describe in detail the person or thing it refers to.

**Example:**

- ◆ *Ink, Blink and Mustard, they rudely called him Percival*

Here is a reference to the legendary knight Percival, one of the knights of King Arthur, who was renowned for his strength and fighting prowess. The poet alludes to Percival to mock at the cowardly demand of the dragon for a nice, safe cage. The contrast makes the poem humorous.

**Onomatopoeia**

Onomatopoeia (sometimes called echoism) is a figure of speech in which words imitate the sound or sounds they describe. In other words, the sound an onomatopoeic word produces is the meaning it intends to convey. 'Bang', 'pop', 'hiss' etc are some onomatopoeic words.

**Examples:**

- ◆ *And Blink said Weeck!*

Here the poet uses the word 'weeck' to describe the sound the mouse makes while giggling.

- ◆ *Meowich! cried Ink*

'Meowich' gives the sense of mewing of a cat.

- ◆ *With a clatter and a clank and a jangling squirm*

The words '*clatter*', '*clank*' and '*jangling*' give the impression of a metallic object hitting the floor or another object.

### *Poetic Licence*

Poetic license is a convention that allows a poet to take liberty with language by changing the spellings or violating grammatical rules with the purpose of creating rhymes, lyricism, rhythm, emphasis or humour.

#### **Examples:**

- *And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon*

Here for 'really', the word coined is '*realio*' and '*trulio*' is for 'truly'.

- *For there was a pirate, climbing in the winda.*

Here the spellings of '*widow*' have been changed to '*winda*' to make it rhyme with '*Belinda*'.

### *Exaggeration*

Exaggeration is a statement that makes something worse, or better than it really is. It is used to create humour or to emphasise something.

Overstatement is another word that means almost the same thing.

#### **Examples:**

- *Belinda giggled till she shook the house*

Here the giggling of Belinda is shown to shake the house which is an overstatement or an exaggeration.

- *And Ink and Blink chased lions down the stairs*

Here the bravery of Ink, the cat and Blink, the mouse is exaggerated as they are shown to be fearlessly chasing lions.

### *Transferred Epithet*

Transferred Epithet is a poetic device in which an adjective is used not with the noun which it normally qualifies but with some other noun.

**Examples:**

- ◆ *But Custard cried for a nice safe cage*

Here it is not the cage that is to be safe but the dragon. The adjective 'safe' is transferred from the dragon to the 'cage'.

- ◆ *But Mustard fled with a terrified yelp*

Here it is Mustard, the dog who is terrified at the sight of the pirate, not the yelp. The epithet 'terrified' has been transferred from Mustard to 'yelp'.

**STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION**

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.

(I)

Belinda lived in a little white house,  
 With a little black kitten and a little grey mouse,  
 And a little yellow dog and a little red wagon,  
 And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon.

This opening stanza introduces the characters in the poem. Belinda, the owner of a small, white house had four pets. Among these pets were a small black kitten, a small mouse of grey colour, a small yellow dog and a real, true dragon. Belinda also had a small wagon of red colour.

The words 'realio' and 'trulio' for 'really' and 'truly' prepare the reader for an element of humour in the poem.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) What do you learn about Belinda's lifestyle?

Or

Where did Belinda live?

Belinda lived in style in a little white house. She had four pets and a little red wagon.

- (b) Which four different pets did Belinda have? Which pet do you find to be the most unusual and why?

Belinda had a mouse, a kitten, a dog, and a dragon as pets. The most unusual pet was the dragon. Neither its size nor its looks make it a suitable creature to be a pet.

- (c) What different colours have been mentioned in the first stanza?

Belinda's house was white. Her kitten was black, the mouse was grey, the dog was yellow and she had a red wagon.

- (d) What is meant by 'realio' and 'trulio'? Why has the poet used these words?

'Realio' and 'Trulio' are two words coined by the poet to mean 'really' and 'truly'. The poet has used these words for enhancing the comical effect of the poem.

#### TYPE - II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) Belinda had as many as ..... pets.
- (b) The poetic device used in the first line is .....
- (c) The repetition of 'a little' emphasizes that
- the white house was too little for the pets
  - the pets could not do anything because of their small size
  - Belinda's pets were as small in size as she was
  - everything associated with Belinda's house was small in size
- (d) The poet has deliberately changed the spellings of ..... and ..... to 'realio' and 'trulio' respectively.

**ANSWERS** (a) four (b) alliteration (c) (iv) everything associated with Belinda's house was small in size (d) really; truly

## (II)

Now the name of the little black kitten was Ink,  
 And the little grey mouse, she called him Blink,  
 And the little yellow dog was sharp as Mustard,  
 But the dragon was a coward, and she called him Custard.

Introducing the characters further, the poet tells that the little, black kitten was named Ink and the tiny mouse was given the name Blink. The little dog of yellow colour was sharp and was, therefore, called Mustard (which is known for its sharp, pungent taste), and the dragon who was a timid, weak creature, was called Custard because of his cowardice.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) **What different names were given to the pets?**

The kitten was called Ink and the mouse Blink. The dog was called Mustard and the dragon had an unusual name Custard.

- (b) **Whom does 'she' stand for? How were the animals mentioned in the stanza related to 'her'?**

'She' stands for Belinda. The animals mentioned in the stanza lived with her in the little white house. They were all her pets.

- (c) **Why do you think the kitten and the mouse were named 'Ink' and 'Blink'?**

The cat was named 'Ink' because of its dark colour and the mouse was named 'Blink' to rhyme with Ink and also because of its habit of blinking its eyes. Moreover, these funny names add to the humour in the poem.

- (d) **Give reasons why the dog was named 'Mustard'?**

The dog was sharp, though little. His colour was yellow. The mustard seeds are very small in size, bright yellow in colour and have sharp pungent taste. That is why the dog was named 'Mustard'.

**(e) Why was the dragon called 'Custard'?**

The dragon was thought to be lazy and coward who always demanded a nice, safe cage. Hence, Belinda gave him a funny name Custard. His timidity is contrasted with the sharpness of Mustard. Mustard has a pungent taste and Custard is sweet and limp without any sharpness.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) 'She' in the above lines is .....
- (b) The kitten was named Ink because ink is usually ..... in colour.
- (c) The dog was called Mustard because of
- the small size of mustard seeds
  - his colour and sharpness
  - comic element in his character
  - his small size
- (d) The coward dragon was called Custard most probably because just like Custard he supposedly lacked
- sharpness
  - sweetness
  - bitterness
  - firmness

**ANSWERS** (a) Belinda (b) black (c) (ii) his colour and sharpness  
(d) (iv) firmness

**(III)**

Custard the dragon had big sharp teeth,  
And spikes on top of him and scales underneath,  
Mouth like a fireplace, chimney for a nose,  
And realio, trulio daggers on his toes.

The poet, in this stanza, gives a description of the appearance of Custard, the dragon. His looks, like those of any dragon, were fierce as he had big teeth which

were not only big, but also sharp. On the top of his body, there were spikes and under him there were scales. The poet uses similes to describe the fierce appearance of the dragon. His fiery red mouth appeared to be breathing out fire like a furnace, and the nose was big and sharp like a chimney. His nails on the toes were sharp like daggers. The poet has coined words 'realio' and 'trulio' for 'really' and 'truly' to give a comic effect to the poem.

### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) **Who was Custard? How does the poet describe Custard?**

Custard was Belinda's pet dragon and was called Custard satirically because of its timidity and laziness. His big sharp teeth, pointed spikes and thick dry scales gave him an intimidating appearance. He also had a big fiery red mouth and a long sharp nose.

- (b) **Which literary device has been used in the third line? Explain it.**

The literary device used in the third line is a simile *i.e.* 'mouth like a fireplace'. The dragon's mouth has been compared to a fireplace because it spits fire.

- (c) **Why is the dragon's nose called a 'chimney'?**

The mouth of the dragon is compared to a furnace and the simile is extended when the sharp, long nose of the dragon is compared to a chimney, the part of furnace that gives an outlet to smoke.

- (d) **What does the poet mean by 'daggers on his toes'?**

The poet uses the metaphor 'daggers' for the sharp toes of Custard which had claw-like projections that were as sharp as daggers.

- (e) **Explain: "realio, trulio".**

The poet uses poetic licence and has coined words 'realio' and 'trulio' for 'really' and 'truly'. The words have a comic impact in keeping with the tone of the poem.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) Although Custard was little, he had ..... teeth.
- (b) Custard's body had ..... on the top, and ..... underneath his body.
- (c) Custard's mouth is compared to a .....
- (d) The dragon's nose was like a chimney because it was  
 (i) flat (iii) black  
 (ii) sharp and long (iv) red
- (e) The poetic devices used in line 3 and line 4 respectively are a ..... and a .....

**ANSWERS** (a) big, sharp (b) spikes; scales (c) fireplace  
 (d) (i) sharp and long (e) simile; metaphor

**(IV)**

Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears,  
 And Ink and Blink chased lions down the stairs,  
 Mustard was as brave as a tiger in a rage,  
 But Custard cried for a nice safe cage.

The poet, in this stanza, describes certain characteristics of the inmates of the white house. Belinda, the owner of the house was so brave that her bravery matched that of a large number of bears put together in a barrel. In an alliterative way, the poet tells that Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears. Both the cat 'Ink' and the mouse 'Blink' were brave enough not to feel afraid of a lion. They could give a chase to lions. The dog, Mustard, for his bravery was comparable to a tiger in anger. But the dragon, Custard was a weak, timid and comfort-loving creature who always demanded a nice, safe and secure cage.

Both the bravery of the cat and the mouse and the cowardice of the dragon are exaggerated for the sake of humour.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a)
- With whom has Belinda's bravery been compared?**

*Or***What does the poet say about Belinda?**

Belinda's bravery has been exaggerated in the stanza. The poet says that she was as brave as a number of bears put together in a barrel. The comparison makes Belinda a humorous character.

- (b)
- How brave were the kitten and the mouse?**

The kitten, Ink and the mouse, Blink were fearless and brave. They were not terrified by a lion whom they could bravely chase down the stairs. The bravery of the kitten and the mouse is overstated.

- (c)
- Bring out the humour in the line 'And Ink and Blink chased lions down the stairs'?**

The very idea of a little kitten and a small mouse chasing a lion is a ridiculous one. Usually it is the lion that chases its victims. Here, the reversal of roles lends humour to the line.

- (d)
- How has the poet conveyed that Mustard was very brave? Or**

**How does the poet describe Mustard? Or****Which literary device has been used in the third line? Explain it.**

The poet has made use of a simile to show that the dog Mustard was very brave. His bravery has been compared to the bravery of an outraged tiger.

- (e)
- Bring out a contrast between Custard and the rest of the pets? Or**

**How was Custard different from other pets? Or****Why did Custard cry for a nice safe cage?**

The rest of the pets, though far smaller in size were brave and fearless. The kitten, Ink and the mouse, Blink were so bold that they could chase a lion. The dog, Mustard was ferocious like an

enraged tiger. The dragon, Custard on the other hand, despite the ferocity of its looks, timidly demanded a safe cage for himself and was considered to be weak-hearted and coward.

- (f) **What literary device has been used in the first line of the stanza and to what effect?**

In the first line of the stanza the poet has used 'alliteration' where the 'b' sound is repeated several times. This repetition not only gives a musical effect to the poem but it also lends it a comical effect.

There is also a 'simile' in the first line, as Belinda's bravery has been compared to that of a group of bears large enough to fill a barrel.

#### TYPE-II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) There is a repetition of ..... sound in the first line and this literary device is called .....
- (b) Ink and blink are portrayed as  
 (i) timid      (ii) brave      (iii) sharp      (iv) intelligent
- (c) A tiger in rage is  
 (i) calm      (ii) encaged      (iii) helpless      (iv) violent
- (d) The poetic device used in the first and third line is a .....
- (e) All that Custard needed was a .....

**ANSWERS** (a) 'b'; alliteration (b) (ii) brave (c) (iv) violent (d) simile  
 (e) nice safe cage

#### (V)

Belinda tickled him, she tickled him unmerciful,  
 Ink, Blink and Mustard, they rudely called him Percival,  
 They all sat laughing in the little red wagon  
 At the realio, trulio, cowardly dragon.

Belinda who had a bad opinion about the dragon, Custard and considered him to be a coward, used to tickle him too much. So much tickling verged on cruelty. The other pets – the cat, the mouse and the dog used to make fun of him jokingly calling him Percival, the legendary brave knight among the Round Table Knights of King Arthur. Belinda and the three pets used to sit in the red wagon that Belinda owned. They used to laugh at Custard, the dragon, for being so afraid all the time.

### TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(a) Who did Belinda tickle?

Belinda tickled Custard, the dragon who was considered to be a coward by everyone.

(b) Did Belinda tickle 'him' to amuse 'him'? If not, why did she tickle him?

Neither Belinda nor her pets had any regard for Custard. They ridiculed him and looked down upon him as a coward. Hence, Belinda tickled him not to amuse him, but to amuse the rest of the company.

(c) Who are Ink, Blink and Mustard? How did they treat Custard?

Or

Who are 'they' in the above stanza? Who did 'they' rudely call 'Percival' and why?

Ink, Blink and Mustard were Belinda's pets. They ridiculed Custard by satirically calling him 'Percival', one of the adventurous legendary brave knights of King Arthur. They sat together with Belinda and laughed uncontrollably. In fact they all mocked at the meek and coward dragon by telling him how unlike Percival he was.

(d) Who did Belinda, Ink, Blink and Mustard laugh at? Why?

Belinda, Ink, Blink and Mustard laughed at Custard as they considered him to be an absolute coward who cried for a nice and safe cage because he wanted only a comfortable living without any challenges to his safety.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) Belinda tickled Custard to ..... herself.  
 (i) hurt (iii) amuse  
 (ii) exercise (iv) ridicule
- (b) Percival was a  
 (i) handsome groom (iii) royal prince  
 (ii) timid soldier (iv) knight of King Arthur
- (c) The other pets called Custard 'Percival' to ..... him.  
 (i) appreciate (iii) console  
 (ii) ridicule (iv) please
- (d) 'They' all laughed at  
 (i) Custard's looks (iii) Custard's size  
 (ii) Custard's spikes (iv) Custard's cowardice
- (e) The poetic device used in the first line is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) (iii) amuse (b) (iv) knight of King Arthur  
 (c) (ii) ridicule (d) (iv) Custard's cowardice (e) repetition

**(VI)**

Belinda giggled till she shook the house,  
 And Blink said Weeck! which is giggling for a mouse,  
 Ink and Mustard rudely asked his age,  
 When Custard cried for a nice safe cage.

Belinda used to laugh so loudly at the cowardice of the dragon, Custard that her laughter shook the whole house. Blink, the mouse also laughed at him. When Custard demanded a comfortable and safe cage to live in, Ink and Mustard made fun of him by asking him how old he was that he was scared of every little thing, meaning thereby that he behaved like a baby.

The poet exaggerates the impact of the loud laughter of Belinda to create humour.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) What made Belinda giggle? Or

**How did Belinda shake the house?**

Belinda enjoyed making fun of the dragon. She was joined by others in mocking at him. This made her laugh so loudly and uncontrollably that it shook the entire house.

- (b) What did Blink say and what did he mean?

Blink joined Belinda in giggling but it being a mouse giggled in a different way. He said 'weeck' which is an onomatopoeic expression of giggling of the mouse.

- (c) Who were Ink and Mustard? Why was it rude on their part to ask Custard his age?

Ink was Belinda's pet kitten and Mustard was her little pet dog. It was rude on their part to ask Custard's age as it was obvious that they looked upon his request for a safe cage as a very childish one and wanted to tell him that he was not a baby to be scared and demand a safe, comfortable cage.

- (d) How did Custard surprise everyone later in the poem?

Custard had always been ridiculed by Belinda and her other pets for being timid. He was given the name Custard because of his cowardice only. He had wanted only a nice, safe cage. But his brave encounter with the pirate surprised everyone. Whereas Belinda and other pets were terrified by the ferocious pirate, Custard single-handedly attacked him and ate him up. This left Belinda and her other pets utterly surprised.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) Belinda and Blink giggled because they

- (i) liked Custard's behaviour
- (ii) approved of Custard's demand of a nice, safe cage

- (iii) found Custard's appearance laughable  
 (iv) made fun of Custard's cowardice
- (b) Ink and Mustard asked Custard's age to show that his demand of a safe cage was
- (i) justified (iii) childish  
 (ii) innocent (iv) unfulfilled
- (c) The poetic device used in the first line is .....
- (d) The rhyme scheme of the stanza is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) (iv) made fun of Custard's cowardice (b) (iii) childish  
 (c) exaggeration (d) aabb

### (VII)

Suddenly, suddenly they heard a nasty sound,  
 And Mustard growled, and they all looked around.  
 Meowch! cried Ink, and ooh! cried Belinda,  
 For there was a pirate, climbing in the winda.

One day, all the inmates of the white house heard an evil, frightening sound at which Mustard, the dog sensing trouble started growling. The cat, Ink mewed and Belinda cried out of fear. In fact, all of them were terrified to see a pirate climbing into the house through a window.

The stanza shows that the brags of bravery by Belinda, Ink, Blink and Mustard proved to be hollow when face to face with the pirate.

### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) Why has the word 'suddenly' been used twice?

The word 'suddenly' indicates that Belinda, Ink, Blink and Mustard were startled at an unpleasant sound that came unexpectedly. The repetition of the word 'suddenly' shows how they were taken unawares.

**(b) Why did Mustard growl?**

Mustard growled to express his anger at being disturbed by a sudden unpleasant sound. Probably, he also tried to hide his fear by growling.

**(c) How did 'they all' react to the unpleasant sound?**

Mustard made a guttural sound angrily. They all turned round to see what was causing the unexpected and unpleasant disturbance. Belinda and Ink cried out half frightened and half startled.

**(d) What was the reason behind the sudden 'nasty sound'?**

The sudden nasty sound was caused by a pirate who was intruding into the white house through the window.

**(e) Why does the poet use the spellings 'winda' for 'window'?**

The poet uses poetic licence and alters the spellings of 'window' to 'winda' to make it rhyme with 'Belinda'.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) The sound 'they' heard was of
- |                      |                               |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| (i) Mustard, the dog | (iii) Belinda, the brave lady |
| (ii) Ink, the cat    | (iv) a nasty pirate           |
- (b) 'They' all looked around because they
- |                    |                                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| (i) were happy     | (iii) were taken unawares       |
| (ii) wanted to run | (iv) wanted to greet the pirate |
- (c) The repetition of 'suddenly' emphasizes that the appearance of the pirate on the scene was
- |              |                 |                  |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|------------|
| (i) expected | (ii) acceptable | (iii) unexpected | (iv) early |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|------------|
- (d) 'Meowch' of a cat and 'ooh' of Belinda express their
- |         |           |               |                |
|---------|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| (i) joy | (ii) fear | (iii) bravery | (iv) readiness |
|---------|-----------|---------------|----------------|
- (e) The poet has changed the spellings of 'window' to make it rhyme with.....

**ANSWERS** (a) (iv) a nasty pirate (b) (iii) were taken unawares  
(c) (iii) unexpected (d) (ii) fear (e) Belinda

(VIII)

Pistol in his left hand, pistol in his right,  
And he held in his teeth a cutlass bright,  
His beard was black, one leg was wood;  
It was clear that the pirate meant no good.

This stanza shows that the pirate had a very fierce and frightening appearance. He carried a pistol in each hand and a small shining sword between his teeth. He supported a black beard and was crippled, for one of his legs was wooden. His sinister appearance indicated that he had evil intentions.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(a) How many weapons was the pirate carrying?

The pirate was carrying two pistols, one in each hand. Apart from it he had a short sword with a broad blade which he held with his teeth.

(b) How does the poet describe the pirate?

The poet describes the pirate as a sinister looking person. He supported a black beard. He had a wooden leg and along with a pistol in each hand and a cutlass between his teeth, he wore a very threatening expression on his face.

(c) What made it clear that the 'pirate meant no good'?

The pistols and the cutlass were very threatening. So were the expressions on the face of the pirate. Hence, it was clear that he had come with wicked intentions.

(d) Which poetic device has been used in the second line?

The poetic device used in the second line is alliteration as 'h' sound has been repeated.

(e) What is the rhyme scheme of the stanza?

The rhyme scheme of the stanza is *aabb*.

### TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) Each hand of the pirate was armed with a .....
- (b) The appearance of the pirate was
- |           |                  |
|-----------|------------------|
| (i) cool  | (iii) wicked     |
| (ii) soft | (iv) fascinating |
- (c) A word in the extract that means the same as 'a short sword' is .....
- (d) The poetic device used in the first line is .....
- (e) 'One leg was wood' shows that the pirate
- |                         |                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| (i) had a walking stick | (iii) was crippled           |
| (ii) wore wooden shoes  | (iv) carried a secret weapon |

**ANSWERS** (a) pistol (b) (iii) wicked (c) cutlass (d) repetition  
(e) (iii) was crippled

(IX)

Belinda paled, and she cried Help! Help!  
But Mustard fled with a terrified yelp,  
Ink trickled down to the bottom of the household,  
And little mouse Blink strategically mouseholed.

At the terrifying sight of the pirate, Belinda was so much frightened that she cried for help. But Mustard, instead of coming to her help, ran away crying with fear. Ink also failed to show any bravery, as he fled to hide himself in the basement of the house. Blink too proved to be a coward and found a shelter in a hole instead of chasing the pirate.

The stanza shows that the cat, the mouse and the dog, who always boasted of their bravery, were actually timid and weak.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) Why did Belinda go pale and cry for help?

Belinda who was supposed to be as brave as a barrel full of bears, paled at the sight of the pirate. She got so panicky that she started crying for help.

- (b) How did Mustard react on seeing the pirate?

Mustard, who had always ridiculed Custard for his cowardice was terrified at the sight of the pirate. Yelping in fear, he ran for his life.

- (c) Explain: "Ink trickled down to the bottom of the household."

Ink, who was supposed to be chasing lions, got so terrified to see the pirate that he ran into the basement of the house and hid himself there. As Ink is liquid and flows on the floor, his running away has been called trickling.

- (d) What do you understand by the expression: "strategically mouseholed"?

Like Belinda, Mustard and Ink, Blink also beat a hasty retreat. He hid himself in the safety of a mouse hole on seeing the armed pirate intruding into the house.

**TYPE - II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) The pirate's sight left Belinda

(i) excited (ii) delighted (iii) frightened (iv) angry

- (b) Mustard's 'yelp' was full of

(i) appreciation (ii) affection (iii) fear (iv) courage

- (c) The expression 'trickled down' is used in relation to Ink because Ink is

(i) blue (ii) solid (iii) colourful (iv) liquid

- (d) The expression 'mouseholed' means

(i) acted like a mouse (iii) nibbled like a mouse  
(ii) made a hole (iv) hid in a hole

(e) The poetic device used in the second line is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) (iii) frightened (b) (iii) fear (c) (iv) liquid  
(d) (iv) hid in a hole (e) transferred epithet

(X)

But up jumped Custard, snorting like an engine,  
Clashed his tail like irons in a dungeon,  
With a clatter and a clank and a jangling squirm,  
He went at the pirate like a robin at a worm.

This stanza, full of poetic devices, shows that very contrary to his reputation as a coward, Custard, the dragon faced the wicked-looking pirate very bravely. He snorted loudly producing a loud sound like that of an engine. He struck the floor with his tail producing a sound like that of iron chains hitting against each other in a prison. Making sharp loud ringing sounds, he twisted his body in order to attack the pirate just as a robin bird pounces upon a worm.

The poet has used a simile in the first, second and fourth lines and onomatopoeia in the third line.

#### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(a) Why did Custard 'snort' like an engine? Or

Why did Custard jump?

The dragon jumped at the sight of the pirate. He started breathing violently like an engine, which showed that he was very angry.

(b) What did Custard do with his tail?

The dragon lashed the floor with his tail noisily. The sound produced by this violent movement was like that of iron fetters striking against each other in a prison.

(c) What is common in the words 'clatter', 'clank' and 'jangling' used in the third line?

All the three words – clatter, clank and jangling are onomatopoeic words, *i.e.* the sounds of these words help convey their meanings.

**(d) How did Custard attack the pirate?**

The dragon charged at the pirate as a predator pounces on his prey, and ate him up as ruthlessly as a robin gobbles a worm.

**(e) Which literary device has been used prominently in this stanza?**

The literary device prominently used in the stanza is 'simile'. There are three similes – 'Snorting like an engine', 'Clashed his tail like irons ...' and '... went at the pirate like a robin at a worm'.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

(a) In the expression, "snorting like an engine," 'snorting' refers to

- (i) speed (iii) looks  
(ii) noise (iv) smoke

(b) "Irons in a dungeon" stand for iron

- (i) tongs (iii) locks  
(ii) doors (iv) chains

(c) The poetic device used in the third line is .....

(d) The poet has used 'simile' in lines ....., ..... and .....

(Write the line numbers)

(e) A word in the extract that has been used to mean 'twist something' is

- (i) clank (ii) clatter (iii) squirm (iv) jangling

**ANSWERS** (a) (ii) noise (b) (iv) chains (c) onomatopoeia

(d) 1, 2 and 4 (e) (iii) squirm

**(XI)**

The pirate gaped at Belinda's dragon,  
And gulped some grog from his pocket flagon,  
He fired two bullets, but they didn't hit,  
And Custard gobbled him, every bit.

When Custard, the dragon charged at the pirate, the latter stared at him and was so stricken with fear that he took out the bottle of drink from his pocket to consume some of it to overcome his fear. He shot two bullets at the dragon but was so nervous and afraid that his bullets missed the aim. The dragon mustered all his courage, killed him and ate up every part of the pirate's body.

Thus, he turned out to be the bravest of all the pets, proving that appearances are deceptive.

### TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) Why did the pirate 'gape' at Belinda's dragon?

The pirate didn't expect such a violent reaction from the dragon. He couldn't withstand such a reaction and stared at the dragon with a mouth open in fear and disbelief.

- (b) How did the pirate respond to the dragon's violent reaction?

The pirate was so shocked at the dragon's response that he stared at him in wonder. To overcome his fear and anxiety, he took out his bottle of grog and gulped a few mouthfuls of the drink. Summoning all his courage, he fired two shots but missed the aim in his nervousness.

- (c) How did the pirate meet his end?

The pirate fell a victim to the fury of the dragon. The dragon angrily pounced at the pirate, killed him and ate him up.

- (d) What idea do you get about the dragon from this stanza?

Contrary to the belief of Belinda and her pets, the dragon was a very fierce creature. In the moment of crisis, he shed all his cowardice. He succeeded in resisting the pirate's attack and eventually killed him.

- (e) Which poetic device has been used in the second line?

The poetic device used in the second line is alliteration as 'g' sound has been repeated, which makes the line lyrical.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) The pirate was ..... to see Custard's bravery.
- (i) amused (iii) surprised  
(ii) confused (iv) energised
- (b) The pirate took a drink from his bottle because he was
- (i) very happy (iii) very serious  
(ii) quite confident (iv) extremely frightened
- (c) The pirate missed the aim because he was
- (i) overjoyed (iii) nervous  
(ii) overzealous (iv) unwell
- (d) Custard, the dragon, saved the inmates of the white house by ..... the pirate.
- (e) The poetic device employed in the second line is .....
- (f) A word in the stanza that means 'a large bottle or vessel used for a drink' is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) (iii) surprised (b) (iv) extremely frightened  
(c) (iii) nervous (d) gobbling/eating up (e) alliteration  
(f) flagon

**(XII)**

Belinda embraced him, Mustard licked him,  
No one mourned for his pirate victim.  
Ink and Blink in glee did gyrate  
Around the dragon that ate the pirate.

Belinda realized that the dragon was the most courageous of his pets and had encountered the pirate fearlessly saving Belinda and her pets. She hugged him out of love and gratitude. The dog, Mustard appreciated his bravery by licking him. Nobody lamented the death of the pirate who had fallen a victim to the fierceness of the dragon. The cat and the mouse were so delighted that they ran around the dragon in circles, who was busy eating the flesh of the pirate.

**TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

- (a) Who did Belinda embrace and why?**

The sight of the pirate had frightened Belinda beyond her wits. When she saw that Custard had put up a fierce fight, killed the pirate and rescued them all, she embraced him lovingly to express her appreciation and gratitude.

- (b) What was Mustard's reaction?**

Mustard was so overwhelmed with surprise and joy at the bravery of Custard, the dragon that he started licking him out of love and admiration.

- (c) How did Ink and Blink behave after the pirate was eaten up?**

Or

**How did Ink and Blink express their happiness?**

Ink and Blink danced around the dragon in circles in a joyous mood which showed that they were feeling very happy and relieved.

- (d) Why did no one mourn the pirate's death?**

The pirate was the enemy of Belinda and her pets. He had intruded into the white house with the evil purpose of looting and killing them. The death of an enemy is a matter of rejoicing, not mourning. Therefore, no one mourned his death.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) Belinda and Mustard showed their appreciation and joy at Custard's bravery by ..... and ..... him respectively.
- (b) Nobody mourned the death of the pirate because he was
- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| (i) old   | (iii) evil |
| (ii) sick | (iv) poor  |
- (c) Ink and Blink expressed their happiness by
- |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (i) running around Belinda | (iii) licking the dragon    |
| (ii) embracing the dragon  | (iv) running around Custard |

(d) A word in the extract that means the opposite of 'rejoiced' is .....

**ANSWERS** (a) embracing; licking (b) (iii) evil  
(c) (iv) running around Custard (d) mourned

(XIII)

But presently up spoke little dog Mustard,  
I'd have been twice as brave if I hadn't been flustered.  
And up spoke Ink and up spoke Blink,  
We'd have been three times as brave, we think,  
And Custard said, I quite agree  
That everybody is braver than me.

The dog, the cat, and the mouse of Belinda, even after their cowardly behaviour, kept bragging about their bravery. The dog, Mustard said that he would have shown bravery, twice that of Custard if he had not been agitated. The cat and the mouse too remarked that they would have shown thrice the bravery of the dragon. But Custard, who had proved himself to be the bravest through his fearless deed, refrained from boasting and modestly remarked that all the others in the group were braver than him.

**TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

(a) What did Mustard say and why?

Mustard again started bragging. He said that he would have acted twice as bravely, if he hadn't been agitated. He said so, for he didn't feel happy when Custard was being admired for his bravery. Moreover, Mustard was a hardened braggart and could not help boasting despite his real show of timidity.

(b) What did Ink and Blink claim? Why?

Ink and Blink boasted that they would have been three times braver than Custard. They were undoubtedly making false claims because when it was time to prove their bravery, both of

them were so terrified that they had hid themselves in the basement and a mousehole respectively. They tried to hide their cowardice behind their boasts.

(c) **What did Custard agree to?**

When Mustard, Ink, and Blink boasted of their bravery, Custard agreed with them and modestly remarked that they all were braver than him. The poet makes Custard state so to add to the element of irony in the poem. It is really ironical that the pet who has proved to be the bravest admits that others are braver than him.

(d) **What is the irony in Custard's remark that 'everybody is braver than me'?**

Custard acknowledged everybody's bravery satirically. He had proved his worth and had also seen everybody else's courage vanish away on seeing the pirate. Therefore, when he said that everybody was braver than him he was ridiculing them. In fact, there is irony in his remark because he means the opposite of what he says.

**TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- (a) Mustard claimed that he would have been twice as brave as  
 (i) Belinda (ii) the pirate (iii) Custard (iv) a lion
- (b) As evident in this extract, a common character trait of Ink, Blink and Mustard is their  
 (i) bravery (iii) humility  
 (ii) boastfulness (iv) cowardice
- (c) Custard agreed that  
 (i) he was the bravest  
 (ii) he had killed the pirate  
 (iii) he had saved all others  
 (iv) he was not as brave as others were
- (d) The rhyme scheme of the stanza is .....

(e) The word '*flustered*' means

- (i) gathered      (ii) confident      (iii) excited      (iv) confused

**ANSWERS** (a) (iii) Custard (b) (ii) boastfulness (c) (iv) he was not as brave as others were (d) aabbcc (e) (iv) confused

(XIV)

Belinda still lives in her little white house,  
With her little black kitten and her little grey mouse,  
And her little yellow dog and her little red wagon,  
And her realio, trulio little pet dragon.

After the incident of the pirate breaking into the house and being killed by the dragon, Belinda still lives in the white house with her pets as she lived earlier. There is the black kitten, Ink, the grey mouse, Blink, the yellow dog Mustard and her really, truly pet dragon, Custard. Belinda still has the red wagon.

The stanza is a repetition of the opening stanza and it gives unity to the poem. It also shows that life for Belinda and her pets has returned to normalcy after the pirate incident.

(a) What does the word '*still*' signify?

The word '*still*' signifies the time after the intrusion of the pirate who was killed by Custard.

(b) What does the repetition of '*little*' signify?

The repetition of '*little*' emphasizes the small size of everything – from Belinda's house to her pets.

(c) Which poetic device has been used in the last two lines?

The poetic device used in the last two lines is '*anaphora*' as each line starts with '*And her*'.

(d) Who does Belinda refer to as '*realio, trulio pet dragon*'? And why?

Belinda refers to the dragon, Custard as '*realio, trulio pet dragon*' taking liberty with language and using '*realio*,' '*trulio*' for '*really*'

and 'truly'. The line emphasizes that though a dragon is a dangerous creature, still it was a real true pet of Belinda who proved his mettle in the hour of need.

## (XV)

Belinda is as brave as a barrel full of bears,  
And Ink and blink chase lions down the stairs,  
Mustard is as brave as a tiger in a rage,  
But Custard keeps crying for a nice safe cage.

Repeating the fourth stanza, here the poet satirically remarks that Belinda has the bravery equal to that of a number of bears. Ink and Blink are considered to be brave enough to be able to give a chase to the lions down the stairs. Mustard's bravery may be compared to that of an angry tiger. And Custard, the dragon still longs for the comfort of a nice safe cage.

Here, the satire is obvious as the cat, the mouse and the dog have cut a sorry figure at the critical hour when their help is needed. But Custard, considered to be timid hearted like a baby, has displayed exemplary bravery and saved the life of all the inmates by killing the pirate.

The stanza shows that Belinda, the cat, the mouse and the dog are incorrigible braggarts. The dragon, on the other hand, is modest. After the pirate incident, the remarks about Belinda and her pets are ironical.

## (a) Which 'time' does the stanza show?

The stanza shows the time after the pirate was killed by the dragon.

## (b) Why has the tense changed in this stanza to the present from the past of the first stanza?

The time expressed in this stanza is present as it refers to their general, everyday life which they still live after the past event is over. It also indicates that life has come back to normalcy after the terrifying incident of the pirate.

- (c) **Does the poet really mean that Belinda is brave like a barrel full of bears?**

No, she has been called brave ironically after her cowardice in the presence of the pirate. The poet, through the ironical remark, emphasizes the cowardice of Belinda.

- (d) **What does the last line show about Custard?**

The last line shows that Custard is very modest. Despite killing the pirate and saving the lives of all the inmates of the house, he remains a humble creature and does not brag about his bravery. Probably he is not aware of his own courage. He is incorrigibly modest as others are braggarts.

#### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

*(to be answered in about 40 words each)*

- Q1. **Who are the characters in this poem? List them with their pet names?** *(Textual)*

Belinda and her four pets are the five main characters in the poem. Her black kitten was called Ink and the grey mouse was named Blink. The dog was called Mustard due to his sharpness and the dragon, who was considered to be cowardly, was called Custard. Another character is the pirate who appears for a short time but is significant because an encounter with the pirate brings forth the central idea of the poem - appearances are deceptive.

- Q2. **Why did Custard cry for a nice safe cage? Why is the dragon called 'cowardly dragon'?**

Custard never pretended to be brave. On the contrary, he showed that he wanted a secure and comfortable life away from all dangers. Therefore, he wanted a nice safe cage.

He was called 'cowardly dragon' because of his never-ending demand for a nice safe cage. Belinda as well as her other pets thought that Custard was a weakling and afraid of dangers.

- Q3. "Belinda tickled him and tickled him unmerciful..." Why? (Textual)**

*Or*

**How and why did Belinda tickle Custard?**

Belinda didn't have a favourable opinion about Custard. Considering him to be a lazy coward, she had given him the funny name Custard. She tickled him repeatedly not to amuse him but to make fun of him because of his so called cowardice and to make other pets laugh at his cost.

- Q4. "Custard the dragon had big sharp teeth." What other features and traits of the dragon have been described in the poem?**

*Or*

**How does the poet describe the appearance of the dragon? (Textual)**

Custard has been described as a meek and cowardly dragon, albeit with a terrifying appearance. He had big sharp teeth, spikes on his body and scales beneath his belly. His reddish, fiery mouth looked like a furnace and his long nose resembled a chimney. His claws were sharp like daggers.

- Q5. Where does the action of the 'tale' take place? Or**

**What is the setting of the poem?**

The action of the 'tale' is set in the white house, the small house of Belinda where she lives with her pet animals. The time of the tale is unspecified.

- Q6. How has the bravery of Belinda been described? Did she prove her bravery? Or**

**"Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears." Was Belinda really brave? Give reasons in support of your answer.**

Belinda is described to be as brave as a barrel full of bears. She

considered herself to be bold and courageous. That is why she made fun of Custard, the dragon for being a coward and tickled him hard only to ridicule him.

However, Belinda was far from being brave. When the pirate came to assault her, she could not face him bravely. In fact she was so terrified that she turned pale out of fear and cried for help. All her boasts of bravery proved to be hollow.

**Q7. How did Ink and Mustard make fun of the dragon? Or**

**"Ink and Mustard rudely asked his age." Why did they ask the dragon's age?**

Ink and Mustard considered the dragon to be a meek, timid and weak-hearted creature. When the dragon cried for a nice, safe cage, they thought that he wanted to escape dangers and lead a life of ease and comfort. They made fun of him by asking him his age because they thought that he was too old to cry like a child for a safe, comfortable cage.

**Q8. Who was 'Percival'? Why did the pets call the dragon 'Percival'?**

Percival was one of the king Arthur's legendary Knights of the Round Table. There are many stories of his adventures and bravery. The pets called the dragon Percival satirically making fun of his cowardice and timidity because he always demanded a comfortable, safe cage. In fact they compared him with Percival to show how unlike he was from the brave knight, who fearlessly went on dangerous adventures.

**Q9. How have Ink, Blink and Mustard been described? How was Custard different from them?**

Ink was a little black kitten and Blink was a little grey mouse. They both have been shown to be so brave that they could chase lions down the stairs. Mustard was the name of a yellow, sharp dog. He has been described to be as brave as a tiger in rage is.

But Custard, the dragon was different from all of them, as he never showed his bravery and wanted only a nice, safe cage. Although he had a terrifying appearance, he wanted only an easy, safe life.

**Q10. How does the poet describe the pirate's appearance? Or**  
**Briefly describe the pirate's sinister appearance.**

The pirate appeared to be a wicked, sinister person who had come to harm the pets because he carried a pistol in each of his hands and a small sword between his teeth. He supported a black beard and his one leg was wooden. With all this, the pirate seemed to be a wicked fellow with evil intentions.

**Q11. How did Belinda and her pets behave at the appearance of the pirate?**

Belinda was so terrified by the sinister appearance of the pirate that she turned pale with fear and cried for help. Mustard, the dog yelped out of fear and ran away. Ink, the cat ran to the bottom of the house to hide herself and Blink, the mouse, took shelter in his hole. It was only Custard, the dragon who faced the pirate bravely, killed him, ate up his body and rescued all the inmates of the white house.

**Q12. How did Custard, the dragon confront the pirate? Or**  
**Describe the encounter between Custard and the pirate? Or**  
**How did Custard prove to be a brave dragon?**

The generally meek and cowardly Custard proved to be fearless and brave when he came face to face with the pirate. The moment, he saw the pirate, he charged at him and began to snort loudly. He then thrashed the floor with his tail making a loud clattering sound. This frightened the pirate who shot two bullets at the dragon but missed his aim in panic and nervousness. The brave dragon then attacked him and gobbled him up alive. Thus, Custard emerged as a 'braveheart' by killing the pirate.

**Q13. What did the pirate do when Custard, the dragon attacked him fiercely?**

*Or*

**Was the pirate afraid of the dragon? Why/Why not?**

When Custard, the dragon attacked the pirate fiercely, the latter panicked and became nervous. He took out his bottle of wine and drank some grog to calm himself. But he was so confused that he missed his aim when he twice shot bullets at the dragon. Eventually he succumbed to the brave attack of the dragon, who gobbled him up alive.

**Q14. How did all the inmates of the white house celebrate the victory of the dragon over the pirate?**

*Or*

**How did Belinda and other pets rejoice when the pirate was killed?**

The inmates of the white house were extremely happy at the victory of Custard, the dragon. Belinda embraced him out of joy and admiration, and Mustard, the dog licked him lovingly, appreciating his brave deed. While Ink, the cat and Blink, the mouse circled around Custard in jubilation, the dragon was busy gobbling the pirate alive. Thus, everybody celebrated the killing of the sinister pirate.

**Q15. What excuses did Ink, Blink and Mustard give for showing cowardice in front of the pirate?**

Ink, Blink and Mustard proved to be extremely timid in front of the pirate and ran away to safety instead of facing the danger boldly. However, they could not admit that they had behaved in a timid manner and found lame excuses to justify their behaviour. Mustard, the dog argued that he would have shown twice the bravery of the dragon but he was flustered and agitated. Therefore, he could not show his courage. Ink and Blink, too came out with the same excuse and stated that but for their agitation, they would have faced the pirate with thrice the bravery of Custard.

**Q16. Is there any change in the life and behaviour of the inmates of the white house after the pirate incident?**

There is no change in the life and behaviour of the inmates of the white house after the pirate incident. Belinda still pretends to be as brave as two barrels full of bears. Mustard believes that he is bold and fearless like an angry tiger. Ink and Blink, have not stopped the false claims that they can chase a lion down the stairs.

Custard, the dragon that encountered the pirate and saved all others by killing him, still behaves like a comfort-loving, lazy, and weak creature who wants a nice, safe cage.

**Q17. Despite killing the pirate, Custard agreed that everybody was braver than him? What does this show about Custard's character?**

The dragon, Custard, had killed the terrifying pirate bravely and rescued Belinda and her other pets. But he never boasted of his bravery and, as earlier, kept up his demand for a nice, safe cage. It indicates that the modesty of the dragon was as hardened and incorrigible as the false boasts of Belinda and her other pets was. He did not realize that he was capable of brave deeds and could act fearlessly in case the situation demanded. Therefore, his behaviour did not undergo any change after the pirate incident.

**Q18. Why does the poet repeat 'stanza 1' and 'stanza 4' at the end of the poem?**

The poet repeats 'stanza 1' and 'stanza 4' with the purpose of providing unity to the long poem and to emphasize the incorrigible nature of Belinda and all her pets. The repetition of 'stanza 1' shows that the life at the White House has become normal again after the pirate incident. The repetition of 'stanza 4' makes the poem humorous with the irony that despite their timid behaviour in the presence of the pirate, Belinda, the cat

and the mouse brag about their bravery. The dragon who has killed the pirate wants only a nice, safe cage.

**Q19. What is the central idea of the poem, "The Tale of Custard the Dragon"?**

The central idea of the poem is that our judgments should be based on the real deeds of people, not on their self-recommendations. Appearances may be deceptive and claims may be hollow. Moreover, people with true virtues need not indulge in false pretences; their brave acts speak volumes about their characters.

**Q20. How can "The Tale of Custard the Dragon" be considered as a ballad?**

A ballad is a narrative poem relating the adventures and brave deeds of the protagonist in a simple language. It is usually written in short four-line stanzas.

"The Tale of Custard the Dragon" falls in the category of the parody of a ballad as it narrates the brave fight of the dragon against a pirate in a humorous manner. It has four-lined stanzas and simple language. But, there is a twist as the protagonist is not a brave human being but an animal – a dragon.

#### LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

*(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)*

**Q1. How has the author created humour in the poem, "The Tale of Custard the Dragon"? Or**

**Write about the element of wit and humour in the poem?**

"The Tale of Custard the Dragon" is a humorous poem – a parody in the ballad form. The poet, Ogden Nash has created humour through the language, characters and situations. He has also employed the devices of exaggeration, irony and satire to provoke

laughter. The poem narrates how a character considered to be the weakest in a group ironically proves to be the bravest when a critical situation arises. Belinda, a lady, living in a white house has a number of unusual pets – a kitten, a mouse, a dog, and a dragon, with quite interesting names. The black kitten is called Ink and the grey mouse is named Blink. Similarly, the names of the dog and the dragon rhyme together as they are named Mustard and Custard respectively. Custard, the dragon is ridiculed by Belinda as well as other pets and is considered to be a coward as he is always demanding a cosy, safe cage.

The kitten and the dog are considered to be so brave that they can chase a lion and the dog is regarded to be as brave as a tiger in rage. However, when face to face with a pirate, all the bravery of these pets dissipates into thin air and only the dragon can assault and kill the pirate. The wide gap between the appearance and reality is really hilarious and ironical.

The usage of language is quite humorous. The poet has coined words like 'realio', 'trulio', 'winda' and 'mouseholed' which make the poem a humorous one. Ink's running away at the sight of the pirate has been called trickling – "Ink trickled down to the bottom of the household" and the hiding of the mouse is narrated in an equally witty manner – "And little mouse Blink strategically mouseholed". The image of the pirate feeling afraid of the dragon and drinking grog is quite humorous.

The poet provokes laughter by satirically remarking that the kitten, the dog, and the mouse continue their boasts of bravery, even after they have acted cowardly before the pirate, and Custard, the dragon, even after his brave deed, demands a nice, safe cage.

Thus, the characters, the language and the situations, and the poetic devices in the poem contribute to the element of wit and humour in the poem.

**Q2. What traits of the different pets of Belinda have been portrayed in the poem?**

Belinda has a bunch of pets consisting of a kitten, a mouse, a dog and a dragon. The kitten, named Ink, is small in size and black in colour. She is considered by Belinda to be bold and brave, so much so that she thinks that the kitten can chase a lion down the stairs. But its bravery vanishes as soon as there is a pirate in the house. However, the kitten persists in bragging its fearlessness although it has shown cowardice at the time when its bravery was most needed.

The mouse, grey in colour, is humorously named Blink to rhyme with Ink, the kitten. Like the kitten, the mouse is also deemed to be bold and courageous. Like Ink, Blink has the reputation of being bold enough to chase a lion. But the reputation crumbles as it runs to hide itself in a burrow as soon as the pirate is there. But the bragging of Blink continues even after it has proved to be a coward.

Belinda has named the dog as Mustard and it was little and yellow, and sharp like the pungent taste of Mustard seeds. It is considered as brave as a tiger in rage. However, at the appearance of the pirate, Mustard feels frightened and cries out of fear. Still it does not give up bragging as it declares that if it had not been flustered, it would have been twice as brave as Custard.

Custard, the dragon has a fierce look with sharp teeth, spikes on the back, scales under the belly, mouth as red as a furnace and its long sharp nose like a chimney. The dragon is regarded to be a coward, the weakest member of the group because it always demands a nice, safe cage for itself. But when it encounters the pirate, it proves to be the bravest of the lot. Whereas Belinda and all other smaller pets run away feeling afraid, the dragon

pounces upon the pirate and gnaws away every bit of his body. Even after the brave deed, it does not brag about its courage and wants only a nice, safe cage.

- Q3. How does this humorous poem convey a serious message that appearances are deceptive? Or**

**How does the poet blend the comic and the serious in the poem?**

*Or*

**What is the central idea of the poem? How is it conveyed?**

The poem "The Tale of Custard the Dragon" is replete with comic elements but underneath the comic narration, there is a significant and serious message that appearances are deceptive. Through humorous language, characters and situations, the poet reveals that those who boast of their bravery usually cut a sorry figure while encountering a critical situation.

The kitten, the mouse, and the dog brag about their bravery and the dragon always demands a nice, safe cage. The dragon is a butt of ridicule and Belinda and her pets keep mocking at it. However when the pirate breaks into the white house, Belinda who is brave "as a barrel full of bears" is extremely frightened and cries for help. The kitten, the mouse and the dog too flee in fear and hide themselves. Their boasts of bravery prove to be hollow. It is only the dragon who violently resists the pirate and is able to kill and eat him up. The seeming fierceness of the pirate vanishes away easily and he falls a victim to the dragon.

Even after their cowardice, Ink, Blink, and Mustard keep boasting of their bravery, whereas Custard only remarks that they all are braver than him and still longs for a nice, safe cage. All this indicates that we must not judge people by their words but by their deeds. Appearances are not always true and are quite often deceptive. The comic narration, thus, has a serious

message on a deeper level and teaches a lesson that a book must not be judged by its cover.

- Q4. Despite their display of cowardice while facing the pirate, Belinda and her pets Ink, Blink and Mustard continue to brag about their bravery. What does it indicate about their characters?**

Belinda and her pets – Ink, Blink and Mustard – are incorrigible braggarts who continue to boast about their bravery, although they had run away like cowards in the presence of the pirate. Mustard declared that if he had not been flustered, he would have shown twice the bravery of the dragon. Ink and Blink claim that they too would have been three times braver than the dragon.

Ironically, Belinda too claims that she is brave like a barrel of bears. Ink and Blink still boast that they can chase a lion down the stairs. Mustard has not stopped pretending that he is bold and fearless like an outraged tiger. It is only Custard, the dragon who does not indulge in pretence of bravery despite his killing the pirate and rescuing the other inmates of the white house. He still demands a comfortable, safe cage like a child.

The behaviour of Belinda and her pets other than Custard shows that they are hypocrites and their claims of bravery are hollow and false. They, in fact, conceal their cowardice in the veil of boasts. Custard, on the contrary, is really brave and does not have to pretend to be brave. He has proved it through his fierce fight against the pirate. It indicates that true people do not resort to false airs.

- Q5. "Do not judge a book by its cover." Discuss with reference to Custard's character in the poem "The Tale of Custard the Dragon".**

Or

**"In the end, Custard emerges as a 'brave heart'." Discuss.**

The humorous poem "The Tale of Custard the Dragon" has a serious message to convey that judgements must not be based on the external appearances and the self-recommending claims of people, because there is a wide gulf between appearance and reality. A person evaluating a book by its captivating cover may be deceived as the cover may belie the content.

The message has been conveyed through an interesting narration of the fierce fight that Custard puts up against the evil pirate. The dragon has been named so by Belinda because he lacks firmness and strength and is limp like Custard. He is the subject of mockery for Belinda and her other pets because he, instead of claiming to be brave, keeps demanding only a nice, safe cage. His demand indicates that he is chicken-hearted like a baby who wants safety from all kinds of dangers.

However, when the terrifying, sinister-looking pirate intrudes into Belinda's house, Custard, unlike Belinda and her other pets, refuses to run away to safety. He fearlessly threatens the pirate who becomes so nervous that he misses the aim while shooting bullets at the dragon. He loses all nerve and drinks grog to regain courage but fails to do so. Custard gobbles up each bit of the body of the pirate proving that real virtue does not resort to false pretences. The real acts of people speak for their essential character. Appearances must not be the basis of the judgements about people. A book having a catchy title and cover may have dreary, dull content.



## 11. *For Anne Gregory*

(William Butler Yeats)

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### ABOUT THE POEM

#### *Introduction*

"For Anne Gregory" is a conversation between the poet and a young girl named Anne Gregory, who happens to be the grand-daughter of a family friend Lady Gregory. The conversation is about true love and true lovers. While the poet believes that men will be interested in her physical charm, the girl wants men to love her for who she is and for the quality of her inner-self. The poet, rather despondently remarks that only God is capable of loving people for who they are.

Thus, the poem reads like a piece of advice for the young girl about the kind of man she should find as a lover.

#### *Summary*

A young man, most probably the poet himself, meets a young beautiful girl with golden yellow or blonde hair and the two start talking. Describing her hair on her face as 'honey-coloured' and comparing it to a high wall of a fort or castle, the poet wishes that she should get a true lover who loves her for her real inner-self, and not for the beautiful locks that she has, which is what most men, pining for love, are likely to fall for.

The girl, who seems to know the kind of man she wants as a lover, tells the poet that she can dye her hair in brown, black or carrot colour so that men do not fall in love with her because of her hair but because of her qualities of head and heart.

The poet is rather sceptical about the existence of such true lovers and quotes a religious man's reference to a scripture that said that only God loves human beings for who they really are - a quality that is missing in most human beings, for their love is superficial and is

moved by physical charms only, and not by the inner, real beauty and worth of a person. Thus, the poem concludes with the idea that love beyond physical appearance is divine in nature.

#### THEME

The poem centres on the age old question of what true love is – love for the physical charm or love for the real inner beauty which is more enduring and of divine nature. Most men fall for women who are physically attractive and charming, whereas most women perhaps would like to be loved for their inner beauty, their virtues and the qualities of their head and heart more than for their physical beauty.

#### MESSAGE

The poem seems to give the message that true love is not confined to mere physical charm. True love rises above all selfishness and goes beyond the superficial and physical self. It looks for a beauty that is more enduring and charming – the beauty of the inner-self of a human being. When worldly love attains that stature, it has the potential of becoming divine or sublime love like God's love for all his creation. Therefore, it is important for human beings not to judge others on the basis of their outward appearance or physical charms, but value them for their virtues and qualities of head and heart.

#### TITLE

Although there is no mention of Anne Gregory in the poem, the title still appears to be appropriate, for it refers to the meeting that the poet had with Anne Gregory. It also suggests that the poet had written the poem specifically for her and seems to offer a friendly piece of advice as to what kind of man she should take as a lover. Although the poem is for Anne Gregory, it has a universal appeal *i.e.* it is a poem for any young girl. The title also suggests that the poem was dedicated to Anne Gregory.

**LITERARY DEVICES****Alliteration**

Alliteration is the occurrence of the same sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. It creates a musical effect and enhances the pleasure of reading a literary work.

**Examples:**

- ♦ *Love you for yourself alone.*  
Here 'y' sound is repeated.
- ♦ *And not your yellow hair.*  
Here 'y' sound is repeated.

**Repetition**

Poets often repeat single words or phrases, lines, and sometimes, even whole stanzas at intervals to create a musical effect; to emphasize a point; to draw the readers' attention or to lend unity to a piece.

**Examples:**

- ♦ The expression "*yourself alone*" has been repeated twice to emphasize the inner self of the beloved.
- ♦ The expression "*your yellow hair*" has also been repeated twice to stress on the physical beauty of Anne Gregory.

**Metaphor**

A metaphor is a figure of speech that is used to make a comparison between two things that aren't alike but do have something in common. Unlike a simile, where two things are compared directly using 'like' or 'as', a metaphor's comparison is more indirect, usually made by stating 'something is something else'. A metaphor is very expressive; it is not meant to be taken 'literally'.

**Example:**

- ♦ *By those great honey-coloured  
Ramparts at your ear*

Anne Gregory seems to have long straight golden-coloured hair that would fall on her face and shoulders and would appear to the poet like the tall, strong wall of a fort or castle. Just like a high wall protects a castle, Anne Gregory's hair seemed to be guarding the castle of her beauty *i.e.* her face.

### Enjambment

It is a poetic device in which a line runs on to the next line or lines carrying on the idea without a punctuation mark (a comma, or a full stop) at the end of a line.

#### Example:

- ◆ *Thrown into despair*

*By those great honey-coloured  
Ramparts at your ear,*

The first line carries on the idea to the second and third lines, without any punctuation mark at the end.

- ◆ *But I can get a hair-dye*

*And set such colour there,*

Here the first line rolls on to the second.

- ◆ *I heard an old religious man*

*But yesternight declare*

*That he had found a text to prove*

*That only God, my dear,*

Here comma comes only at the end of the fourth line.

### Metonymy

It is a literary device in which a part or one attribute stands for the whole thing.

#### Example:

- ◆ *And not your yellow hair*

Here 'yellow hair' stands for the whole physical beauty of Anne Gregory.

### Symbol

A symbol is a literary device in which a thing stands for another. It does not have only a literal meaning.

#### Example:

- ◆ *Love you for yourself alone  
And not your yellow hair.*

Here, the 'yellow hair' stands not for golden hair only but for the physical beauty on the whole. It is a symbol of physical charm.

### RHYME SCHEME

Each of the three stanzas of the poem follows the same rhyme scheme i.e. *abcdbd*, as the second, fourth and sixth lines rhyme together.

### STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines each.

#### (I)

"Never shall a young man,  
Thrown into despair  
By those great honey-coloured  
Ramparts at your ear,  
Love you for yourself alone  
And not your yellow hair."

In this stanza, the poet advises Anne to watch out for men who claim to be desperately in love with her for her beautiful 'honey-coloured' golden hair, which symbolise her physical beauty. Falling on her ears, the hair looks like the protective

wall of a castle. The poet seems to suggest that such men will be loving her for her physical charm only and not her true self.

Thus the first stanza expresses the poet's view that physical charm attracts lovers more than the real, inner beauty.

### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) **Who is speaking to whom in this stanza?**

The poet WB Yeats says these words to a beautiful young girl, Anne Gregory.

- (b) **What do you think throws young men into despair?**

Young men are thrown into despair when they fall in love with a beautiful woman. They continue to pine and crave for her physical charm, e.g. her golden hair, but their advances are spurned by the lady in question because she wants to be loved for her inner, true beauty and not merely for her outward, physical beauty.

- (c) **Explain: "honey-coloured/Ramparts at your ear." Or**

**How are the charming locks of the lady's hair described here?**

Honey-coloured refers to the golden yellow colour of a woman's hair that fall on her face and shoulders. Their strands falling on the sides of her face and covering her ears appear to be the protective wall of a beautiful citadel

- (d) **What, according to the speaker, would young men thrown into despair never do?**

The young men thrown into despair would never love the young lady for her own sake. They would love her only for her physical beauty.

- (e) **What does 'yellow hair' suggest?**

'Yellow hair' symbolises the woman's physical beauty. Her golden hair looks very pretty. They fascinate the young men so much that they fall in love with her.

- (f) Which poetic device has been used in the expression: "Ramparts at your ear"?

The poetic device used in the expression "Ramparts at your ear" is 'metaphor', as the golden locks of hair of Anne are compared to ramparts without the use of 'like' or 'as'.

### TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) In this stanza, ..... is being addressed.
- |                   |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| (i) the poet      | (iii) a young lover     |
| (ii) Anne Gregory | (iv) a spiritual person |
- (b) A young man, according to the speaker, is more likely to fall for the listener's
- |             |                       |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| (i) virtues | (iii) physical beauty |
| (ii) wealth | (iv) inner beauty     |
- (c) "Ramparts at your ear" refers to listener's
- |                                      |                         |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| (i) hair falling on her ears         | (iii) moles on her ears |
| (ii) earrings dangling from her ears | (iv) crown on her head  |
- (d) Quote a line from the extract that conveys the idea 'true love and selfless love is rare to find.'
- (e) The poetic device used in the expression, "Ramparts at your ear" is a .....
- (f) The rhyme scheme of the extract is .....

- ANSWERS** (a) (ii) Anne Gregory (b) (iii) physical beauty  
(c) (i) hair falling on her ears (d) "Love you for yourself alone"  
(e) metaphor (f) *abcbdb*

### (II)

"But I can get a hair-dye  
And set such colour there,  
Brown, or black, or carrot,

That young men in despair  
 May love me for myself alone  
 And not my yellow hair."

The second stanza expresses Anne's response to the poet's view that men would love her only for her outward appearance.

Quite aware of what she should be loved for, Anne remarks that if men love her for her golden yellow hair, she would have it dyed in any other colour – brown, black or carrot – so that men did not find her attractive enough to fall in love with her. In fact, she would like to be loved for who she really is, and not for her physical beauty alone.

#### TYPE – I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- (a) Who is the speaker in the above lines? Who does she talk to?

The speaker is Anne Gregory, a young lady of independent views. She is talking to a young man (the poet).

- (b) What does 'but' signify?

'But' signifies the difference of opinion of Anne from that of the poet.

- (c) What will the speaker do to her hair and why?

Or

What kind of dye will the speaker apply on her hair? Why?

The golden hair is just one part of the speaker's whole being. She would like to be loved for who she really is and not just for the colour of her hair. She would like to get her hair dyed in brown, black or carrot colour to see if a man can love her for the person she is and not how she looks.

- (d) What idea do you get about the speaker from the stanza?

The speaker is very assertive. She has a mind of her own and she has a logical approach to love.

- (e) Does the speaker have any feeling of remorse for having thrown young men into despair?

The young lady has no sense of guilt as she doesn't feel responsible for throwing young men into despair. Hence, she has no feeling of remorse.

### TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) 'I' here refers to .....
- (b) 'I' would like to dye her hair in brown, black or carrot to
- look more beautiful
  - keep false lovers at bay
  - attract more lovers
  - go with the current fashion
- (c) "Young men in despair" are more likely to love her for her .....
- (d) 'I' is in conversation with
- a lover
  - the poet
  - herself
  - her mother

**ANSWERS** (a) Anne Gregory (b) (ii) keep false lovers at bay  
(c) outer/physical beauty/yellow hair (d) (ii) the poet

### (III)

"I heard an old religious man  
But yesternight declare  
That he had found a text to prove  
That only God, my dear,  
Could love you for yourself alone  
And not your yellow hair."

The third and the concluding stanza of the poem expresses the poet's view of true love. He believes that God alone loves people for who they really are. Human beings are not capable of showing this kind of sublime love. To bring home his point to

Anne Gregory, the poet tells her about what he had heard about true love from a religious man who quoted a text from a scripture that God's love alone is selfless. Human love most often is restricted to the outward or physical charm only.

Thus, the poet advises Anne Gregory to beware of men who love her for her physical beauty or outward charm. She should look for someone who loves her selflessly for the qualities of her head and heart.

### TYPE - I VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

#### SET - I

(a) **Who is speaking to whom in this stanza?**

In this stanza, the poet is speaking to Anne Gregory.

(b) **When did the speaker meet "an old religious man"?**

The speaker met an old religious man the previous night.

(c) **Who had found the text? What did the text say?**

A religious man had found the text. The text said that only God can love someone for who he or she really is.

(d) **Who loved whom for yellow hair?**

The lover who was fascinated by the physical charm of Anne loved her for her yellow hair.

#### SET - II

(a) **What is it that only God could do?**

Only God could love someone for who he or she really is. God's love is selfless, irrespective of how someone looks.

(b) **What does 'yellow hair' symbolize?**

'Yellow hair' symbolizes physical beauty of Anne Gregory.

(c) **Which poetic device has been used in 'yellow hair'?**

The poet has used 'metonymy' as a part (yellow hair) stands for the whole (physical beauty).

(d) What is the rhyme scheme of the stanza?

The rhyme scheme of the stanza is *abcdbb*.

### TYPE – II OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- (a) The speaker in this extract believes that the worldly love is
- |              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| (i) true     | (iii) selfless |
| (ii) selfish | (iv) rare      |
- (b) 'You' in the above extract is .....
- (c) 'He' in line 3 is a/an .....
- (d) A two-word expression in the extract that symbolises 'physical beauty' is .....
- (e) The 'text' (line 3) proved that
- |  |
|--|
| (i) one should love oneself                      |
| (ii) God's love alone is pure                    |
| (iii) young lovers pine for physical beauty only |
| (iv) God does not like selfish lovers            |

**ANSWERS** (a) (ii) selfish (b) Anne Gregory (c) old religious man  
(d) yellow hair (e) (ii) God's love alone is pure

### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 40 words each)

Q1. What does the young man mean by "great honey-coloured / Ramparts at your ear?" Why does he say that the young men are "thrown into despair" by them? (Textual)

The expression "great honey-coloured ramparts" refers to the woman's beautiful locks of golden hair. The long strands of golden-yellow hair that fall on both sides of the lady's face and cover her ears look like the wall of a fort.

Young men, according to the poet find Anne Gregory's physical charm as symbolized by her golden-yellow hair so irresistible that they fall in love with her. Such men, he says, will be smitten with her physical beauty only and not her true, inner beauty. Since Anne is interested in men who can look beyond her physical appearance, she does not respond to their advances. This throws them into despair and gloom.

- Q2. What colour is the young woman's hair? What does she say she can change it to? Why would she want to do so? (Textual)**

The young woman's hair is golden-yellow in colour. She says she could dye it black, brown, or carrot colour. She wants to change the colour of her hair to see if men would still love her without her beautiful golden-yellow hair. In fact, she wants someone who could really love her for who she is and not for her physical charm.

- Q3. Explain: "Love you for yourself alone."**

"Love you for yourself alone" means loving someone for who she is as a person *i.e.* loving someone for her internal beauty and her inner qualities, not for her physical charm.

- Q4. Why is the poet so emphatic about his view of the young men not loving 'you for your sake alone'?**

Having seen the world, the poet knows that human love is inspired by physical beauty alone and most men are not interested in the qualities of a woman's head and heart. However, he would like the lady in the poem to find true and selfless love.

- Q5. Usually people dye their hair to enhance their beauty. With what intention does Anne Gregory wish to dye her hair?**

Or

Why would the lady change the colour of her hair?

When told that most young men would love her for the golden-yellow colour of her hair, Anne Gregory says that she would like to change the colour of her hair by getting it dyed brown, black or carrot to find out if she was still irresistible for those men. Actually, she would like to be loved for her inner beauty than her outward appearance.

**Q6. "Young men may love me for myself alone." Why does Anne Gregory wish to be loved for her sake?**

The young lady wishes to be loved for her own sake because such a love will be real and selfless and accept her for who she is in totality, not just her physical beauty. Physical beauty is perishable; it is nine days' wonder and will decay with the passage of time.

**Q7. How is divine love different from human love?**

Divine love is everlasting and transcends physical beauty whereas human love is restricted to physical or outward charm only. In divine love the beauty of the soul is given priority whereas human love gives priority to body, not virtues and qualities of head and heart.

**Q8. According to the poet, why will young men love Anne Gregory?**

According to the poet, young men will be fascinated by her physical charm and will love her for her external beauty only. They may not be interested in who she really is and what virtues and values she possesses.

**Q9. Which stereotyped concept of beauty is presented in the poem? Is it accepted in modern times?**

The poem has a stereotyped, conventional idea that women with blonde, golden hair are more beautiful than those with black, brown, or red hair. That is why, the poet describes how

the golden yellow locks of Anne Gregory captivate young lovers. However, in modern times there is a celebration of beauty of dark complexion, and women with black, brown, and red hair are considered as beautiful as those with golden hair.

**Q10. What do black, brown or carrot coloured hair signify in the poem?**

Beauty has conventionally been associated with golden, blonde hair and fair complexion. If the woman in question dyes her hair in black, brown or carrot colours, she will not meet the stereotypical idea of a beautiful woman and appear to be less appealing or desirable.

**Q11. How does the poet describe the lady's golden hair?**

The lady's hair is beautiful and golden yellow in colour. The poet describes it as 'honey-coloured'. As it falls on the sides of her face and cover her ears, it looks like the rampart or wall of a fort.

**Q12. Whose love is selfless? How is it different from that of human beings?**

God's love is selfless, complete and divine in nature. It does not depend on physical beauty of a person. The love of human beings, on the other hand, is superficial and selfish in nature and is actuated by physical charm only.

**Q13. What impression do you form of the lady in the poem?**

The lady in the poem is a very beautiful young woman who has long golden-yellow hair. She is assertive and has a mind of her own. She has a rational approach to love and would like to be loved for her inner beauty.

**Q14. What bothers the lady in the poem?**

The lady is bothered by the fact that most men seek to love women only for their physical beauty and not for their qualities of head and heart.

## LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

**Q1. What is the poet's opinion of love?**

"For Anne Gregory," propounds W. B. Yeats' idea of true love – love that is selfless and all-embracing; love that accepts a person who he or she is and is not restricted to the physical charm of the person being loved.

Unfortunately, most young men believe that it is the physical charm or beauty that makes a woman worth loving. Therefore, it is important for women to look beautiful – have beautiful faces, beautiful hair and beautiful figures.

The poet tells the young woman in the poem that young lovers will pine in love for her beautiful locks of golden, yellow hair which enhance her beauty. He cautions her that no young lover will love her for her true, inner self – something that she yearns for.

Only God's love is pure and selfless and accepts a person as he or she is. It is not affected by the colour or the skin or the looks and human beings ought to imbibe or emulate such love in themselves.

**Q2. Do you think the lady's view of love significantly differs from that of the poet? Give reasons in support of your view.**

I do not think that there is any significant difference in the poet's and the young girl's view of love. Both seem to agree that love is a basic need of human beings. Both value true love and both are aware that true love is not easy to find. Both of them also agree that most lovers experience despair when they are in love and love a woman more for her physical beauty or charm than for who she really is. They find a woman lovable only if she is good looking.

The girl would like to test whether men love her true self by changing the colour of her hair from golden yellow (which the

poet believes is the reason why most men would fall in love with her) to brown, black or carrot colour. She hopes there are young men who would love her for who she really is and not for the colour of her hair.

It is here that the poet seems to differ with her. He claims to have heard from a religious man about a spiritual text which says that only God's love is selfless, unprejudiced and pure. Mortal beings are not capable of showing that sublime love.

**Q3. "Beauty is only skin deep." How does the poem "For Anne Gregory" by W B Yeats bring out this message? Or**

**Is it justified to judge others on the basis of their physical appearance? Discuss with special reference to W B Yeats' poem "For Anne Gregory".**

It is often said that beauty is only skin deep, and that it is a nine days' wonder meaning thereby that external beauty is something superficial and transient and short lived. Therefore, love that is directed towards the outward or physical beauty is shallow and unreal, for it is based on selfishness and lust. It will wane away as the beauty decays.

However, at a sublime level, beauty is everlasting and emanates from an individual's inner self - his or her virtues, values and thoughts - that make him or her beautiful. Love that seeks such inner beauty is true love. There is something divine about this love, for it is free from all greed, selfishness and prejudices.

Thus, W B Yeats' poem "For Anne Gregory" brings home the idea that physical beauty is superficial and is not as important as a person's intellectual, emotional and spiritual qualities are. Therefore, we should not judge others on the basis of their physical appearance. Instead, we should value and love others for their inner beauty, values, virtues and noble thoughts.