

Dust of Snow

by Robert Frost

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Central Idea of the Poem

This poem expresses the significance of small things in changing one's mood. Through this poem, we get a message that we should hope for the best even in the worst of situations. We must also remember that nature and its objects have the ability to make one happy and come out of hopelessness.

Explanation of the Poem

Stanza 1

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Word Meanings

Shook – shake; Hemlock tree – a poisonous plant (tree) with small white flowers

Explanation In this stanza, the poet remembers a small incident that changed his mood. Once, the poet was in a depressed mood and was hopeless. He was standing (it is not clear whether the poet was standing or passing (the tree) under a hemlock tree. Suddenly, a crow sitting on the tree, shook it and some powdery snow from the tree fell on the poet.

Stanza 2

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued

Word Meanings

Rued – held in regret

Explanation The powdery snow which fell on the poet changed his mood to happiness. Earlier, he was depressed and sad. Till now the poet had spent a part of his day in sadness, but now he starts feeling refreshed. This incident saved some part of the poet's day which he would have spent in regret.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

- **Rhyme scheme** abob
- **Symbolism** Hemlock tree and crow are symbols that are generally associated with negative emotions and aspects. But the poet uses these symbols to bring about a positive change in him.
- **Alliteration** is the repetition of same constant sound in the nearby words.
 - Has given my heart
 - And saved some part

NCERT FOLDER

(Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

Thinking about the Poem (Page 14)

1 What is a 'dust of snow'? What does the poet say has changed his mood? How has the poet's mood changed?

Ans. The 'dust of snow' means the fine particles of snow. The sudden shower in the form of the dust of snow changed the poet's mood.

The poet's mood changed from the state of sadness to happiness. He felt refreshed and wanted to enjoy the rest of the day.

2 How does Frost present nature in this poem? The following questions may help you to think of an answer.

- What are the birds that are usually named in poems? Do you think crow is often mentioned in poems? What images come to your mind when you think of a crow?
- Again, what is 'a hemlock tree'? Why doesn't the poet write about more 'beautiful' tree such as a maple, or an oak, or a pine?
- 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?

Ans. Frost is often called the poet of nature. Unlike Wordsworth, he does not glorify nature but takes on an objective view. He describes the positive and negative aspects of nature. In the poem 'Dust of Snow' Frost presents a positive view of nature. His depressed and sad mood is changed in a happy one when a simple event happened with him. A crow shook down the dust of snow on him and changed his mood.

- Generally, poets take the birds which are known for their beauty and good qualities, like peacock, swan, cuckoo, mynah, etc.

But, here Frost has taken a totally different approach as he chose a crow. Crow is not often used in poems. Crow is black in colour and has a very harsh voice. It is believed to be a symbol of bad omen.

Thinking of a crow brings very depressing and sorrowful pictures to our mind.

- A hemlock tree is a poisonous plant with small white flowers.

The poet, Robert Frost, didn't choose to use an oak, maple or pine tree and instead, chose the hemlock tree so that he could present his depressed mood and feelings.

- The crow and hemlock tree represent sorrow and depression felt by the poet in this materialistic world.

The dust of snow is the symbol of natural joy and energy. The dust of snow that the crow shakes off from a hemlock tree is a sign of nature's blessing. It means that the poet is passing through the sad and depressing moments and is entering the time full of joy and optimism.

3 Have there been times when you felt depressed and hopeless? Have you experienced a similar moment that changed your mood that day?

Ans. Yes, there have been number of times when I felt depressed and hopeless. Sometimes such moments were a result of my own action and sometimes they were aroused by other people's behaviour and attitude.

Yes, I have experienced a similar moment that changed my mood. One day, I was very upset so I went out for a walk. I saw a small boy with one leg sitting in the park and enjoying with his friends. This sight and the joy that the boy was sharing with his friends changed my mood and I felt very happy for the rest of the day. I also joined him and enjoyed the company.

Exam Practice

Extract Based Questions

[2 Marks each]

Read the following extracts carefully and choose the correct option.

- 1 The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree
- 2 Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

- (a) What does the hemlock tree signify?
(b) How has the dust of snow affected the poet?

- (a) What does the poet try to suggest?
(b) What saved some part of the day?

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- Ans. (a) The hemlock tree signifies death and fear. It does not signify anything positive.
(b) The dust of snow changed poet's mood from bad to good and gladdened his heart.

- Ans. (a) The poet is trying to suggest that small things can bring big changes in life and unexpected happiness.
(b) The dust of snow shaken down by a crow from the hemlock tree on the poet saved his heart by making him feel happy. The poet felt better and more positive for the rest of the day.

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

[2 Marks each]

- 1 What does the poet Robert Frost want to convey through the poem 'Dust of Snow'?

Ans. Through the poem 'Dust of Snow' Robert Frost wants to convey a message that even little things can bring huge changes in our lives. An ordinary event also holds a capacity to bring about a major change in our mood.

Also, joys and sorrow always go hand in hand and we must never lose hope. In addition, the poet through the poem highlights the healing nature of the natural world.

- 2 How has the poet observed 'nature' in the poem 'Dust of Snow'?

CBSE 2011

Ans. The poet observed that nature has a healing power. Robert Frost is a nature lover. The crow and the hemlock tree are associated with bad omens or death and fear. But, Frost has presented them very beautifully.

They bring cheer to him and are a source of joy. Through his poem, he conveys that everything around us in nature is beautiful.

- 3 "And saved some part of a day, I had rued." Explain.

Ans. The poet was feeling depressed and hopeless. So, he was not in a good mood. He was passing by a hemlock tree when suddenly a crow shook dust of snow on him. This small and simple incident changed his mood. He realised that if he had not gone through such an incident, he would have regretted on spending his whole day in sad and depressed mood.

- 4 What difference do you find between Robert Frost and other nature poets?

Ans. All other nature poets are known for describing the well-known beautiful things. They have described the nightingale, the cuckoo, the snow-covered mountains etc. But, Robert Frost has described a crow and a hemlock tree. In addition, poets make selection from natural things, but Frost feels that every object in nature is beautiful. Such a unique thought makes him different from other poets.

- 5 The poem 'Dust of Snow' shows that human judgement can be misleading. How?

Ans. Robert Frost's poem 'Dust of Snow' shows how human judgement of certain issues can be misleading. There are certain objects, things that people associate with negativity. People overlook

these objects when in search of happiness and positivity.

The poet tries to alter this mindset through this poem by showing how a crow, sitting on a hemlock tree (both negative) shook dust of snow on him which instantly changed his mood.

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

[8 Marks each]

- 1 What are possible themes of this poem? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

Ans. The poem 'Dust of Snow' revolves around themes of hope, healing and a positive attitude. Through the poem, the poet highlights that one should never lose hope. The poet happily and quickly decides that some part of his day is saved because of the dust of snow that falls on him. He no longer thinks that his day is wasted and instead has a hope that his day can be saved.

Further, the poem highlights the nature's healing quality. He was depressed and sad because of something that had happened with him. But nature made him happy and joyful. In addition, the poem also revolves around positive perspective. Firstly, the poet's perspective changes with a small event. Because of his sad mood everything around him might be seen by him through a negative perspective, but it changes with the dust of snow. Secondly, the poet suggests that we can think either positively or negatively about an event or thing depending on our perspective. The images of crow and hemlock tree are negative images but the poet uses them positively to justify the theme of the poem.

- 2 Nature has the power to lift our mood even when we are highly despondent. Comment on the basis of your understanding of the poem 'Dust of Snow'.

Ans. The poem 'Dust of Snow' by Robert Frost is a poem which enlightens us on how small things of nature can refresh us and cheer us for the rest of the day.

Frost has beautifully depicted a crow and a hemlock tree, which are associated with bad-omens and fear. But they have been used by the poet Frost to uplift his mood and make him feel positive. Frost's writing skill as a poet lies in the fact that he is able to effectively convey to us how such a thing as the falling of dust of snow from the top of tree can have a refreshing effect on the mind of man.

So every aspect of nature be it a crow or a hemlock tree can be a source of positivity and can be helpful

in lifting a depressed mind. In other words, everything in the world is beautiful. Nature and its creations have the power to uplift our mood even when we are in depressed state of mind. A small incident of dust of snow falling, by the action of a crow (who is considered a bad omen) takes away the sadness from the poet's mind and refreshes him for the rest of the day.

- 3 Small things in life make significant changes in our life. Elaborate with reference to the poem 'Dust of Snow'.

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Ans. It is truly said that little things in life can make huge changes in our life. Even the small incidents can have a huge impact in our lives. The poem 'Dust of Snow' beautifully states this fact. In the poem, the poet's mood is transformed because of a small event. While he was passing by the hemlock tree, the dust of snow falls on him. Such an insignificant event changes his sad and depressed mood into a joyous one.

Just like the simple movement of the crow, the simple things that we do for others can make all the difference. Our random acts of kindness can brighten a person's day and sometimes change their future. Just like the poet, who had wasted some part of day in his sorrows, is enlightened by the event, we can also make our as well as others life happier. Noticing and appreciating the things of less importance can cause us to have a spirit that is willing to change and therefore succeed.

- 4 Comment on use of symbols in this poem. What is the purpose to use those symbols?

Ans. In the poem 'Dust of Snow', the poet has introduced three symbols i.e. the hemlock tree, the crow and the dust of snow. Hemlock is a tree that contains poison so the hemlock tree is a symbol of death. Second, the crow is considered to be the ugliest bird and is associated with bad omen. Another symbol dust of snow indicates natural joy and energy.

The poet uses two negative symbols to represent the negative aspect of mind. The falling of snow by the crow certainly improves his mood. Perhaps the poet is saying that even something that we generally associate with negativity can have a positive impact. So we can say that Frost's use of symbols is very profound and meaningful.

Self Assessment

Extract Based Question

Read the following extract carefully and choose the correct option.

- 1 The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree
- (a) Where and how do you find the poet in the beginning of the poem?
(b) Where is the crow at that time and what does it do to the tree?

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

- 2 Did the snow change the speaker's mood for better or for worse? Support your answer with examples from the poem.
- 3 How was the poet's mood changed?

Long Answer (LA) Type Question

- 4 Do you think that judging other people with a prejudiced eye makes us impervious to any goodness in them? Discuss in context of 'crow and hemlock tree' in this poem.

CHAPTER 02

Fire and Ice

by Robert Frost

Central Idea of the Poem

The poem 'Fire And Ice' by Robert Frost expresses the idea that the world would end in either of two ways, either by ice or by fire.

Fire here symbolises the intensity of human desires, cruelty, greed etc. Ice symbolises indifference in human relationships, hatred for others etc. The poet has the view that both fire and ice are equally competent in bringing the world to a complete end.

Explanation of the Poem

Stanza 1

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.

Word Meanings

Hold - to take side, favour, Favour - incline towards

Explanation In these lines, the poet analyses the views of the people and states that there can be two possible causes for the end of the world. On one side there are people who believe that the world will end because of fire. Here, fire represents the extreme desire, anger, greed etc present within human beings. On the other side, there are people who favour ice. Here, ice represents the human emotions of hatred, intolerance etc. The poet from his experience believes that the world will end with fire. Thus, the poet remains with those people who favour fire.

Stanza 2

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.

Word Meanings

Perish - die or destroy, Suffice - be sufficient, Destruction - wiping out

Explanation In these lines, the poet thinks that if the world had to end twice, ice would also be able to destroy it completely. For the poet ice (hatred) is as powerful as fire (desire). In human beings, hatred is long-lasting and it enters into their hearts. It remains through the life. Thus, the poet thinks that ice or hatred will be sufficient to bring an end to this world.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

Alliteration Repetition of initial consonant sounds in the same line.

- Some say the world will end in fire
Some say in ice
- I hold with those who favour fire

Paradox A true statement but which seems untrue

- But if it had to perish twice.

Symbolism

- Fire-a symbol for desire
- Ice-a symbol for hate

Imagery A figure of speech where an object, person or situation has another meaning other than its literal meaning.

- Fire and ice carry deep connotations.
- Fire elicits the feeling of heat and light, but also burning and pain.
- Ice elicits the feeling of coldness, but also indifference and intolerance.

Rhyme Scheme

ababcbcb

NCERT FOLDER

(Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

Thinking about the Poem (Page 15)

1 There are many ideas about how the world will 'end'. Do you think the world will end some day? Have you ever thought what would happen if the Sun gets so hot that it 'bursts' or grows colder and colder?

Ans. There are definitely many ideas about how the world will 'end'. I do believe that the world will end some day as anything that has a beginning will have an end. This stands true for the world also.

If the Sun got so hot that it burst, the whole of the Earth would be destroyed immediately. No part of the Earth would be able to bear the heat of that intensity. But even if the sun grew cold, everything will come to an end as without sunlight, life will end. Too cold would effect the life of all creatures on this planet. Thus, bringing an end to it.

2 For Frost, what do 'fire' and 'ice' stand for? Here are some ideas

greed	avarice	cruelty	lust
conflict	fury	intolerance	rigidity
insensitivity	coldness	indifference	hatred

Ans. 'Fire' stands for cruelty, greed, avarice, lust, conflict and fury.

'Ice' stands for intolerance, rigidity, insensitivity, coldness, indifference and hatred.

3 What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? How does it help in bringing out the contrasting ideas in the poem?

Ans. The rhyme scheme of the poem is a b a b c b c b.

This rhyme scheme helps in bringing out the contrasting ideas of 'fire' and 'ice' presented in the poem. The poet mentions that both fire and ice can bring this world to an end. He talks about how fire represents desire and can be the reason to destruction.

Frost also mentions ice in between to symbolise that the coldness and indifference towards one another will be enough to end the world.

Exam Practice

Extract Based Questions

[2 Marks each]

Read the following extracts carefully and choose the correct option.

1 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.

- (a) How will fire destroy for whole world?
(b) What is the contradictory opinion of public?
- Ans.** (a) In these situations, the world can be destroyed by fire
(i) Heating up of earth to a very high level.
(ii) The poet relates fire with passions and desires.

(c) The contradictory opinion of public is the debate whether the world will end in fire or ice.

2 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.

- (a) What does ice stand for?
(b) What would be the cause of destruction?

CBSE 2015

Ans. (c) Ice stands for coldness and hatred.

(d) Ice or fire would be the cause of destruction. World can be destroyed either by fire or ice.

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

[2 Marks each]

1 How has Frost brought out the contrasting ideas in the poem?

Ans. The poet has contrasted fire with ice. Fire is symbolic of man's desires, greed and lust. When a man wants to go after his desires caring about nothing else, world can be destroyed by this fire of desires.

On the other hand ice is symbolic of man's indifference and hatred or insensitivity.

These feelings also give rise to conflicts and stop us from being kind to others.

2 Write down the two different views about the end of the world.

CBSE 2012

Ans. There are two different views about the end of the world. Some people believe that the world will end with fire. Fire here represents one's passions and desires.

In contrast to fire, some people believe that ice can also be a great cause for the end of the world. Ice here represents hatred and insensitivity.

3 How does Robert Frost caution the common man?

Ans. Robert Frost cautions the common man and says that he should not forget the bitter reality that everything in this world is transitory and death is inevitable (can not be stopped). So man should avoid being too desirous or too indifferent.

4 Why does the poet side with those who favour fire?

Ans. The poet takes side with those who believe that the world will be destroyed by fire. Frost connects fire with desire. According to the poet, desire is powerful and can bring a quick end. He states that he has had personal experience with desire which leads him to conclude that the world will end because of fire.

5 Write the message that of the poem 'Fire and Ice' gives.

Ans. The message that the poet is trying to give is that nothing in this world is eternal. The poet first concludes that the world must end in fire because of his personal experience with desire and passion which are the emotions of fire.

But at the same time, ice or hatred can also bring total destruction of this world. We should thus, not forget this supreme reality and keep ourselves above all selfish matters.

- 6** Briefly write about the ideas about how the world will end. **CBSE 2016**

Ans. The world will end as a direct result of either fire or ice. Some scientists believed that the world would be incinerated (destroyed) from its fiery core, while others were convinced that the coming ice age would destroy all living things on the Earth's surface.

Frost introduces a more emotional side, associating desire with fire and hatred with ice.

- 7** To say that for destruction ice is also great for the poet, what does 'ice' stand for? How is it sufficient to bring destruction? **CBSE 2014**

Ans. Ice symbolises hatred and indifference.

While desire consumes, hatred can linger (stay) in one's mind and heart for a long time leads to fury and cruelty. One becomes hard hearted and insensitive to

the feelings of others. This insensitivity and hatred, slowly and gradually leads to the destruction of the world.

- 8** 'But if it had to perish twice'. How will the world perish twice?

Ans. According to the poet, the world would definitely come to an end due to fire. But, he states that if the world could end two times, then ice would also be a great cause. Ice is symbolic of hatred. The poet feels that there is enough hatred in the world that is sufficient to destroy the world.

- 9** Which age old question does the poem revolves around? **CBSE 2013**

Ans. The poem revolves around the age old question of whether the world will end in fire or in ice. This is similar to another age old question, whether it would be preferable to freeze to death or burn to death. The poet determines that either option would achieve its purpose sufficiently well.

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

[8 Marks each]

- 1** Discuss how extreme behaviour can hasten the end of the world with respect to 'Fire and Ice'. **CBSE 2013**

Ans. In the poem, 'Fire and Ice' the poet highlights that extreme behaviours can lead to the end of the world. The poet points out the two different views regarding the end of the world and associates the extreme behaviours to it.

The first view is fire which symbolises deep emotions of desire, passion, etc. Desire according to the poet can become so intense that it can make people lose their calmness. Fire of desires if left uncontrolled can lead to the destruction of humanity as well as the world.

The other view is ice which represents hatred, differentiation and insensitivity. Hatred, rigidity and icy reasoning give rise to contempt. It can end all positive human emotions such as human warmth, love, sympathy, kindness and consideration for others. This type of behaviour will only bring death to this world.

- 2** The poem 'Fire and Ice', carries with it very deep thematic ideas. Elaborate on these darkest traits of humanity.

Ans. Frost presents the two of the darkest traits of humanity i.e. the capacity to hate and the capacity to be consumed by lust or desire. Of the two, he attributes the greater of the two evils is desire. In giving desire the first position in regard to the destruction of the world, Frost is providing a powerful statement on the subject of greed and jealousy, saying that above all else, desire is the trait of humanity that is most likely to lead to its demise. Desire represents the greatest problem that attributes to the cause of the war.

Frost then attributes hatred with the same capacity to do harm. However, he lessens the importance of hatred but still presents it as having the ability to lead to the destruction of the world if it were to happen for a second time.

- 3** The poet presents two reasons which will lead to the destruction of the humanity. Elaborate

Ans. The poet provides and deals with two possible causes for the end of the world. He points more towards the emotional and sentimental side of the issue. As for him, fire denotes deep passion and burning desire, while ice is highlighted for hatred. He favours both the arguments and says that either the deep burning passion or the cold hatred and jealousy factor will lead to the path of destruction. The poet is sure of this destruction of humanity. He first talks about the destruction because of fire and in case this fails, then ice will end the world. The love that people have for one another will turn into hatred. In the race of climbing up and be better than one another, people will hate each other.

These negative emotions will become so strong that it will cross all the love and lead to the destruction of humanity.

- 4** How will the world end? Support your answer with scientific explanation. **CBSE 2014**

Ans. According to the scientists, the two reasons for the destruction of the world will be either fiery fire or the ice age. Some scientists believed that the world would be incinerated (destroyed) from its fiery core, while others were convinced that a coming ice age would destroy all living things on the earth's surface.

In other words, either the deep heat or fire under the earth beds will lead to natural calamities like volcano eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis which will one day end the world, or the melting of ice from the snowy mountains due to global warming will shrink the world. As a result, one day the entire world will die of the icy water.

Frost, thus, tries to warn people against the two greatest problems being faced by humanity and the consequences of human vices with an increased effectiveness.

Self Assessment

Extract Based Question

Read the following extract carefully and choose the correct option.

- 1** 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.
(a) How will the world end if it happens twice?
(b) What does 'suffice' mean?

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

- 2** How would you describe the speaker's worldview? Is it pessimistic, realistic or just indifferent?
3 Do you think the extremes of fire and ice could exist in a person at the same time?

Long Answer (LA) Type Question

- 4** We've got a pretty good handle on what it means to 'taste' desire, but what do you think it means to 'know enough of hate'? Are there many kinds of hatred that can together destroy the world. Justify your answer.

A Tiger in the Zoo

by Leslie Norris

Central Idea of the Poem

In this poem 'A Tiger in the Zoo', the poet tries to depict the poor condition of a caged tiger. He contrasts and compares the life of a caged tiger with a tiger living in his natural habitat i.e. a jungle. Through the poem, the poet tries to convey that wild animals should be allowed to live freely in their natural habitat. Freedom is loved by all living beings not just human beings.

Explanation of the Poem

Stanza 1

He stalks in his vivid stripes
The few steps of his cage,
On pads of velvet quiet,
In his quiet rage.

Word Meanings

Stalks - stride, to move quietly and slowly in a threatening way; Vivid - bright and clear; Pads - the soft part under the foot of the tiger; Rage - anger

Explanation In these lines, the poet is describing a tiger in a cage.

The tiger with bright and clear stripes moves inside the cage. The cage is very small so the tiger can hardly take a few steps along its length. His pads are soft like velvet so no one can hear the sound of his footsteps. In spite of being the most powerful creature, he is imprisoned inside a cage. This situation has made the tiger angry. But he is keeping quiet as he knows that he is helpless in the situation.

Stanza 2

He should be lurking in shadow,
Sliding through long grass
Near the water hole
Where plump deer pass.

Word Meanings

Lurking - hiding; Sliding - moving, walking with ease; Plump - fat

Explanation In these lines, the poet is filled with sorrow for the caged tiger. He feels that a tiger should be free in his natural habitat. He should be hiding in the shadows and quietly moving through the long grass near the water hole. He should be waiting for a fat and healthy deer to pass, in the hope of getting a heavy meal. The poet wants to convey that the actual life of a tiger is in a jungle and not in a cage.

Stanza 3

He should be snarling around houses
At the jungle's edge,
Baring his white fangs, his claws,
Terrorising the village!

Word Meanings

Snarling - growling or roaring; Baring - showing; Fangs - two long, sharp teeth at the front of the mouths of some animals; Claws - Paw; nails; Terrorising - frightening or threatening

Explanation In these lines, the poet explains what a tiger in his natural habitat should be doing.

According to him, a free tiger should be roaring around the houses located at the jungle's edge. He should be showing his sharp white teeth and his claws to terrorise the villagers.

Stanza 4

But he's locked in a concrete cell,
His strength behind bars,
Stalking the length of his cage,
Ignoring visitors.

Word Meanings

Concrete cell - a very small and unpleasant cage made of cement and stone; Stalking - moving slowly and quietly in a threatening way

Explanation In these lines, the poet's focus returns back to the angry tiger in the cage. The poet explains that unlike the tiger in the jungle, this tiger is not free. He is locked in the concrete cell.

His strength and power is of no use, behind the bars of the cage. He is moving in his cage ignoring the visitors who are continuously visiting to have a look at him.

Stanza 5

He hears the last voice at night,
The patrolling cars,
And stares with his brilliant eyes
At the brilliant stars.

Word Meanings

Patrolling - to go around an area at regular times to check that it is safe; Brilliant - very bright

Explanation In these lines, the poet says that even at night the tiger is disturbed. He hears the last sound of the patrolling cars of the zoo officials. The tiger stares at the brilliant stars shining brightly in the sky with his brilliant eyes which hopes for freedom.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

Repetition Repetition of words/phrases in the same line.

- velvet quiet, quiet rage
- brilliant eyes, brilliant stars

Alliteration Repetition of initial consonant sounds in the same line.

- He stalks in his vivid stripes
 - But he's locked in a concrete cell
- Personification** Attributing human qualities to non-human things.

- Tiger is referred as 'he'

Metaphor Comparison of two ideas without using 'like' and 'as.'

- Pads of velvet

Rhyme

The rhyme scheme for first, second and fifth stanza is abcb and for third and fourth stanza is abcd.

NCERT FOLDER

(Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

Thinking about the Poem (Page 30)

- Read the poem again and work in pairs or groups to do the following tasks.
 - Find the words that describe the movements and actions of the tiger in the cage and in the wild. Arrange them in two columns.
 - Find the words that describe the two places and arrange them in two columns.

Now try to share ideas about how the poet uses words and images to contrast the two situations.

Ans. (i) In the Cage	In the Wild
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stalks Few steps of his cage Quiet rage Locked in concrete cell Stalking the length of his cage ignoring visitors He hears the last voice Stares at the brilliant stars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lurking in shadow Sliding through long grass Snarling around houses Baring his white fangs his claws Terrorising the villagers
(ii) Cage	Wild
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few steps of his cage Locked Concrete cell Behind bars Visitors Patrolling cars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shadow Long grass Water hole Plump deer Houses at jungle's edge Village

- Notice the use of a word repeated in lines such as these
 - On pads of velvet quiet, In his quiet rage.
 - And stares with his brilliant eyes At the brilliant stars.

What do you think is the effect of this repetition?

Ans. This repetition is a poetic device used by the poet in order to increase the intensity of the tiger's rage and his helpless silence. 'Velvet quiet' refers to the quiet velvet pads of the tiger, which cannot run. They can only walk around the limited space in the cage. The use of 'quiet rage' symbolises the anger and ferocity that is building up inside the tiger as it wants freedom, but the rage is quiet because he is locked in the cage and is helpless.

The repetition of 'quiet' has, thus, brought immense beauty to the poem. Similarly, the use of 'brilliant' for the tiger's eyes as well as the stars also brings out the magnificence of these lines. The tiger stares at the brilliant stars with his brilliant eyes dreaming about how beautiful his life could have been in the forest.

The repetition thus, gives a wonderful effect to the poem.

- Read the following two poems one about a tiger and the other about a panther. Then discuss:
 - Are zoos necessary for the protection or conservation of some species of animals?
 - Are they useful for educating the public?
 - Are there alternatives to zoos?

The Tiger

The tiger behind the bars of his cage growls,
The tiger behind the bars of his cage snarls,
The tiger behind the bars of his cage roars,
Then he thinks.
It would be nice not to be behind bars all
The time
Because they spoil my view
I wish I were wild, not on show.
But if I were wild, hunters might shoot me,
But if I were wild, food might poison me,
But if I were wild, water might drown me.
Then he stops thinking
And...

The tiger behind the bars of his cage growls,
The tiger behind the bars of his cage snarls,
The tiger behind the bars of his cage roars.

Peter Niblett

The Panther

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,
has grown so weary that it cannot hold
anything else. It seems to him there are
a thousand bars and behind the bars, no world.
As he paces in cramped circles, over and over,
the movement of his powerful soft strides
is like a ritual dance around a centre
in which a mighty will stands paralysed.
Only at times, the curtain of the pupils
lifts, quietly. An image enters in,
rushes down through the tensed, arrested muscles,
plunges into the heart and is gone. **Rainer Maria Rilke**

Ans. Several species of wildlife are on the verge of extinction. There is a need to protect and conserve these species which include tigers, lions, etc. Many animals are hunted and poached while they are in the forest. Zoos are artificial habitats that can also develop into good scientific research centres. However, zoos are not the perfect substitute for forests since animals are confined in small cages. As a result their freedom to move around is restricted. Yes, there are human alternative to zoos which are wild life sanctuaries, national parks or bio-reserves where animals live in an open but protected environment. They are able to roam around freely yet, they are protected here from hunters and poachers.

Exam Practice

Extract Based Questions

[2 Marks each]

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow

1 He stalks in his vivid stripes,
The few steps of his cage,
On pads of velvet quiet,
In his quiet rage.

- What are the two qualities of the animal under reference?
- Why is he in quiet rage?

CBSE 2014

Ans. (a) The tiger has vivid stripes on his body and soft velvet pads. He looks majestic as he moves slowly and quietly in his cage.
(b) He is in quiet rage as he is locked and his freedom has been curtailed. He feels helpless so he feels agitated.

2 He should be lurking in shadow,
Sliding through long grass,
Near the water hole,
Where plump deer pass.

- What should the tiger be doing if he were in the jungle?
- Why does the poet suddenly shift the focus of the poem to the wild?

Ans. (a) The tiger would be lurking the shadows of trees. He would be either sliding through the tall grass or sitting by some water hole.
(b) The poet suddenly shifts his attention to the wild to show the contrast between the present state of the tiger and the natural place of its existence.

3 He should be snarling around houses
At the jungle's edge,
Baring his white fangs, his claws,
Terrorising the village!

- What does the poet try to suggest through these lines?
- How does the tiger scare the people?

CBSE 2015

Ans. (a) The poet is trying to suggest that the tiger should be allowed to live in his natural habitat.
(b) The tiger scares the people by growling at them and showing his teeth and claws.

4 But he's locked in a concrete cell,
His strength behind bars,
Stalking the length of his cage,
Ignoring visitors.

- Why does the tiger ignore the visitors?
- What is the tiger doing in the cage?

Ans. (a) The tiger ignores the visitors because he considers them devoid of feelings as none of them tries to help him out of the prison.
(b) The tiger is moving slowly and quietly along the length of the cage.

5 He hears the last voice at night,
The patrolling cars,
And stares with his brilliant eyes
At the brilliant stars.

- What do you mean by 'patrolling'?
- What is the effect of the repeated use of the word 'brilliant'?

Ans. (a) 'Patrolling' means to go around an area at regular times to check that it is safe.
(b) The repeated use of brilliant shows the contrast. The brilliant stars are free while the brilliant eyes of the tiger are inside the cage.

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

[2 Marks each]

1 Describe the tiger in the cage.

Ans. A tiger in the cage is imprisoned. He is not free. In the cage, the tiger can hardly move and his strength is useless. His situation makes him angry but he remains quiet as he is helpless in the situation.

2 Leslie Norris has described some of the activities of a tiger behind the bars of its cage. Write them.

Ans. Some of the activities of the tiger behind the bars of its cage include stalking along the length of the cage, ignoring visitors, hearing patrolling cars and staring at the brilliant stars shining in the sky.

3 Why does the tiger express his rage quietly?

Ans. The tiger expresses his rage quietly because he can do nothing from behind the bars of his cage. He is helpless as he cannot use his strength to get out of the cage. He is no longer free as he was in the jungle.

4 Describe the tiger in the wild.

Ans. The tiger in the wild is majestic. He freely lies under the shade and hunts for prey. He moves near the water hole because food is in plenty there. Sometimes he also growls and terrorises (scares) the villagers.

5 Where should the tiger have been according to the poet?

CBSE 2014

Ans. The poet thinks that the tiger should have been in the jungle, hiding in the shadow, quietly moving in the long grass near the water hole to prey on the deer. He should also be on the outskirts of the jungle growling around houses and terrifying the villagers.

6 How does a tiger create terror for the villagers?

or How does the tiger make his presence felt in the village?

CBSE 2015

Ans. The tiger creates terror for the villagers by roaring around their houses as they are situated near the jungle. He frightens them by showing his white teeth and claws.

7 What does the tiger do in his cage?

Ans. The tiger is locked in a concrete cell where he can hardly take a few steps along the length of the cage. He doesn't take any notice of the visitors who come there. With his brilliant eyes, he keeps staring at the brilliant stars in the sky.

8 Why should the tiger snarl around houses at the edge of the forest?

CBSE 2012

Ans. The tiger should snarl around houses at the edge of the forest for the following reasons

- Firstly, the villagers will not disturb the peace of the forest.
- Secondly, villagers will not kill the animals for money or just for fun.

9 What is the tiger doing? Why is he ignoring the visitors?

Ans. The tiger is slowly and quietly moving along the length of the cage in a threatening manner. He is ignoring the visitors because he considers them devoid of any feelings. None of them thinks of releasing him from his prison. Thus, he stops taking any notice of them.

10 Why do you think the tiger looks at the stars?

Ans. The tiger stares with hope at the brilliant stars shining in the sky as he feels very helpless in the cage. He hopes for the day when he would be able to run free in the wild. The brilliant stars, thus, provide him with some sort of comfort.

11 What does the poet convey through the poem?

Ans. The poet through the poem, tries to convey the miserable life led by the animals in the zoo. He compares the life of the tiger in the zoo with its life in its natural habitat. The animals have the right to freedom and should not be caged. They should be allowed to run free in the wild.

12 What type of rhetorical devices are used by the poet in this poem?

Ans. In this poem, the poet has used many rhetorical devices like personification, metaphor, alliteration and repetition. The poet personifies the tiger by calling it 'he'. The poet uses the device of metaphor in the 3rd line of the 1st stanza when he compares the pads of the tiger's feet with velvet.

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

[8 Marks each]

1 Love for freedom is the natural instinct of every living being. Comment.

CBSE 2014

Ans. It is true that love for freedom is the natural instinct of every living being in this universe. Freedom is liked by every living being. No one wants to live as a slave or in captivity. The tiger in this poem, has been kept in a cage. He feels helpless and yearns for freedom. He could neither rest nor walk freely while in the cage.

He ignores visitors as he knows that none of them will help him to be a free being. How could he be happy living in the cramped space where there is no space to move, no open area, no prey to stalk and kill as is available in the natural habitat. His wistful stare at the shining stars in the sky reflects his desire to be free.

We, as human beings should allow freedom to all other creatures as everyone yearns for freedom.

2 Is it right to confine wild animals into cages? Why or why not?

Ans. It is not right to confine wild animals into cages. Wild animals are meant to live in the wild. They are not meant to be caged and displayed in the zoos. We all know that the majestic species of tiger is on the verge of extinction. There used to be a time when they used to roam proudly and freely in the jungle. They are not meant to live a life in confinement. They also have the right to freedom like all other living beings.

Confinement leads to depression and misery. Moreover, their offsprings lose the hunting capabilities as they are not trained to hunt in the wild. As a result, they would not be able to feed themselves.

Furthermore, confining wild animals disturbs the whole ecological balance. We should, thus, let the animals run free in the wild. They belong to the forest and not to the cage.

Self Assessment

Extract Based Question

Read the following extract carefully and choose the correct option.

- 1 But he's locked in a concrete cell,
His strength behind bars.
Stalking the length of his cage,
Ignoring visitors.
- (a) Where is the tiger locked?
(b) Why is the tiger feeling helpless?

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

- 2 What should the tiger be doing if he were at the jungle's edge?
3 Why does the tiger express his rage quietly?

Long Answer (LA) Type Question

- 4 Animals also understand the language of love and love their freedom. But in the name of conserving wildlife, they are being put in the zoos, which deprives them of their natural habitat. Comment with reference to 'A Tiger in the Zoo'.

The Ball Poem

by John Berryman

Central Idea of the Poem

The poet John Berryman in this poem describes the grief of a boy over the loss of his ball. With that loss he senses his first responsibility in a materialistic world. The poet suggests that the people whom we love and our material possessions will not be with us forever. One has to understand the nature of loss and learn to cope up with the loss. The child has to learn that loss is a part of everyday life and still life goes on.

Explanation of the Poem

Stanza 1

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!
 No use to say 'O there are other balls':

Word Meanings

Merrily - happily; 'O there are other balls' - the words suggest that the loss is not important enough to worry about

Explanation The poem starts with poet looking at the boy who has lost his ball. The poet wants to know about him and his reaction after losing his ball. The poet himself saw the ball bouncing happily down the street and then falling into the water. The poet says that there is no use to tell the boy that there are other balls. Because, he would get many other balls, but he would never be able to get the lost ball and the memories associated with it.

Stanza 2

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. I would not intrude on him;
 A dime, another ball, is worthless.

Word Meanings

Ultimate - final; Shaking grief - sadness which greatly affects the boy; Rigid - stiff, like a statue; Trembling - shivering; Harbour - a place where ships load and unload goods; Intrude on - (here) to enter a situation where one is not welcome; A dime - a ten cent coin (U.S)

Explanation In these lines, the poet describes the condition of the boy after losing his ball.

The boy feels very sad by the loss of his ball. He is standing like a statue at one place, shivering and staring down the ball which symbolises the memories of his young days. He is filled with sorrow and just keeps standing in the direction where his ball is going. The poet says that he would not interfere in the boy's thoughts as he feels that through this experience, the boy will learn the meaning of loss.

The poet says that it is not worth to tell the boy that another ball can be bought for only a dime (ten cents). Because, he was very attached to his lost ball which was with him from his very childhood.

Stanza 3

..... Now
 He senses first responsibility
 In a world of possessions. People will take
 Balls, balls will be lost always, little boy.
 And no one buys a ball back. Money is external.

Word Meanings

Possessions - something that is owned or possessed; External - superficial, extrinsic

Explanation In these lines, the poet says that the boy is learning his first responsibility of taking care of his things and how to bear the loss of something in a world of possessions. The poet make a broad statement that people will take balls and these balls will be lost. In other words, the boy will keep losing things and would buy another one to replace the lost thing. But he would never be able to buy back that lost thing and the memories associated with it. Money is external as it can not buy memories nor can it replace the lost things.

Stanza 4

He is learning, well behind his desperate eyes,
 This epistemology of loss, how to stand up
 Knowing what every man must one day know
 And most know many days, how to stand up.

Word Meanings

Desperate - hopeless; Epistemology of loss - understanding the nature of loss or what it means to lose something

Explanation In these lines, the poet suggests that from the loss of the ball, the boy is learning the meaning of loss. He is also learning how to stand up from the loss. The poet says that knowing that every man has to stand up after such losses, the boy too will learn how to stand up and leave the losses behind. He would have understood the true meaning and nature of loss.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

Repetition Repetition of words/phrases in the same line

- What, what
- Balls, balls

Alliteration Repetition of initial consonant sounds in the same line

- What, what
- Balls, balls
- buys a ball back

Metaphor Comparison between two different objects without the use of comparison words. The lost ball here is a metaphor of the boy's childhood. With the loss of the ball, the childhood of the boy is also lost.

NCERT FOLDER

(Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

Thinking about the Poem (Page 47)

In pairs, attempt the following questions

1 Why does the poet say, "I would not intrude on him"? Why doesn't he offer him money to buy another ball? **CBSE 2020**

Ans. The poet says, "I would not intrude on him" because he does not want to interfere in the natural process of learning. He wants the boy to learn the meaning of loss on his own.

He also doesn't offer him money to buy another ball because that would be worthless. He wants the boy to learn the lesson of responsibility and accept that losses are a part of life.

2 ".... 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?

Ans. Yes, the boy has had the ball for a long time. It is linked to the memories of days when the boy played with it.

When it bounced into the water, all his memories of the days of childhood flashed in front of him. This led to a realisation that those moments would not come back, just like the ball. He can buy new balls and can similarly create new moments, but those which are gone would not return.

3 What does 'in the world of possessions' mean?

Ans. The phrase 'in the world of possessions' means that we are living in a world where every body is worried about material possessions. Today's world encourages materialism and a sense of possession. Every one is in the race of possessing more and more. So, if the boy has to grow up in this world, he must learn that loss is also an integral part of life. He must learn to bear any loss and control his emotions.

4 Do you think the boy has lost anything earlier? Pick out the words that suggest the answer.

Ans. No, it seems that the boy had not lost anything earlier.

The words that suggest so are 'He senses first responsibility in a world of possessions'.

5 What does the poet say the boy is learning from the loss of the ball? Try to explain this in your own words.

Ans. The poet says that the boy is learning to bear the loss of the ball. He is experiencing grief and learning to grow up in this world of possessions. He learns that there are so many things in life that are lost and cannot be brought back. He is sensing his first responsibility as he has lost the ball. The boy will learn how to stand up and leave the losses behind as he would have understood the true meaning and nature of loss.

Exam Practice

Extract Based Questions

[2 Marks each]

Read the following extracts carefully and choose the correct option.

1 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! No use to say - 'O there are other balls':

- (a) Why does the poet say 'No use to say - 'O there are other balls'?'
(b) Where did the ball go?

Ans. (a) The poet says so as the loss of the ball is of a major consequence to the boy.
(b) The ball went into the water.

2 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. I would not intrude on him, A dime, another ball, is worthless.

- (a) How has the loss affected the boy?
(b) Why was 'he' trembling, staring down?

Ans. (a) The boy is very much troubled at the loss of his ball. He stands still, trembling and staring at his ball.

- (b) He was trembling, staring down as he had lost his ball. He was very sad and unhappy.

3 Now He senses first responsibility In a world of possessions. People will take Balls, balls will be lost always, little boy. And no one buys a ball back. Money is external.

- (a) What does the word 'balls' signify?
(b) What does "In a world of possessions mean?"

Ans. (a) 'Balls' signifies 'the boy's innocence and happy young days.'
(b) It means that everybody loves to possess things or materials in their names.

4 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.

- (a) Why are boy's eyes desperate?
(b) What every man needs to know one day?

Ans. (a) Boy's eyes look desperate as he is sad to see his ball gone forever.
(b) Every man needs to know one day that loss may occur to him and he would have to bear it up.

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

[2 Marks each]

1 What does John Berryman want to convey through this poem? **CBSE 2011**

Or Write the sum and substance of the poem "The Ball Poem". **CBSE 2016**

Ans. The poet, John Berryman through the poem wants to convey the importance of loss and responsibility in life. We all should learn our responsibility and how to cope up with the loss. The poet also wants us to learn that things will get lost from time to time and money simply cannot replace them all.

2 How does the boy feel at the loss of his ball?

Ans. The boy is very much troubled at the loss of his ball. He experiences grief at the loss of his much

loved possession. Like a statue, he keeps staring at the ball with his desperate eyes. He finds it difficult to cope up with the loss.

3 Does the lost ball stand for the metaphor of the boy's lost childhood? How?

Ans. Yes, the lost ball stands as a metaphor of the boy's lost childhood. The boy has lost his ball and is saddened by the loss as it will never be found again. This loss will lead to the loss of childhood as the boy learns to take responsibility. The boy now understands that loss is a part of life and one must move on from it. This realisation makes the boy grow up and lose the childhood days that he cherished till now.

4 "Money is external". What does the poet mean by this expression? **CBSE 2014**

Ans. The poet says that 'Money is external' to make the boy understand about his responsibility and that the loss is immaterial.

By the phrase, the poet means that every loss can not be replaced by money. Money cannot buy the memories associated with a thing and cannot replace the things that we love, for example the boy's lost ball.

5 A ball is an easily available, inexpensive thing. Then why is the boy so sad to lose it.

Ans. Yes, a ball is an inexpensive thing and easily available but the specific ball that the boy has lost is very valuable to him.

His memories of younger days are associated with the ball. He had been playing with this ball for a long time. No other ball could take its place. So, he is sad to lose it.

Long Answer (LA) Type Question

1 Why is it important for everyone to experience loss and to stand up after it? **CBSE 2014**

Ans. It is important for everyone to experience loss and to stand up after it in order to be strong and to get on with life. One needs to stay strong no matter how much it hurts inside. Staying strong is the only way to survive. Moreover, one needs to learn to accept and let go and not cling to something that they can never have. One should understand that the past is gone and it will never come back. Experiencing loss sometimes helps us to grow up and face hardships. This helps us in breaking all the boundaries into freedom.

The poem teaches us a philosophy of life through the loss of ball i.e. "Loss is a universal truth in our life." We have to lose something at one point of time. Through the loss of ball, the boy learns real knowledge of the world.

If he is able to bear the loss, he will be able to face the difficulties of life courageously. The boy must know how to stand up after a loss.

It is very essential for every human being to be able to move on or stand up after being knocked down. Here, the ball signifies losing something valuable that can not be bought or replaced. The poet wants us to understand that loss is inevitable and everyone

6 Why did the poet not console the boy?

Ans. The poet did not console the boy for two reasons. One the boy was too shocked and grief stricken to listen to any consolation. The poet also wanted to make him understand that any loss is part of our life and money can not buy the lost thing. Moreover, the poet also observed that the boy was trying to somehow stand up or bear the loss on his own which is much more effective.

7 Why was the boy upset on losing his ball?

Ans. The boy was upset on losing his ball because it was his valued possession. It was a much loved possession which he had since his childhood. It had been with him for a long time and was linked to the memories of the days when he played with it.

Now, the ball was lost forever for him. He could buy a new ball but the memories with the lost ball is lost forever.

[8 Marks each]

must learn to cope up with the loss with patience and courage.

2 Why does the poet not offer money to the boy to buy another ball?

Ans. When a person is trying to come over his grief on his own, he is busy making himself understand certain things. In such a situation, if someone intrudes or disturbs, the chain of thoughts is broken which irritates the person. Moreover, self-consolation, realisation and understanding is more effective and lasting than when it is done by an external agency or a person.

These facts are proven in the poem, 'The Ball poem'. In the poem, the poet states that neither will he interfere in the boys sorrowful mood nor will he offer him any money. He believes that the boy will learn the harsh reality of loss on his own. The boy will learn to cope up with loss and move on by his own understanding. Further, he believes that the offer to buy another ball would be useless because he may get a new ball but he would not be able to get back the memories of his childhood that were attached to it. No other ball can take place of the old ball of the boy's childhood. So the poet does not offer money to the boy to buy another ball.

Self Assessment

Extract Based Question

Read the following extract carefully and choose the correct option.

- 1 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! No use to say 'O there are other balls':
(a) What happened to the ball?
(b) What do you mean by 'bouncing'?

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

- 2 What is the central idea of the poem 'The Ball Poem'?
- 3 What does 'in the world of possessions' mean? Why is money 'external'?

Long Answer (LA) Type Question

- 4 The poem teaches us to learn to accept and let go and not cling onto something that we can never have. Elaborate.

Amanda



Central Idea of the Poem

Amanda is a poem about child psychology. The poem tells us about a little girl, Amanda. Amanda is constantly and continuously being scolded and instructed most probably by her mother. But, Amanda is lost in her own world. She is not paying attention to what her mother is saying.

The poem then points that parents must give some freedom to growing children. Constant scolding may adversely affect a child's development.

Meaning of the Poem

Stanza 1

Don't bite your nails, Amanda!
Don't hunch your shoulders, Amanda!
Stop that slouching and sit up straight,
Amanda!

Word Meanings

Hunch – raise shoulders and bend the upper portion of body in forward position; **Slouching** – sitting in a lazy, drooping way

Explanation In these lines, Amanda, a little girl is being scolded and instructed by her mother for her actions.

Amanda is advised to stop biting her nails, which is a bad habit. Amanda is also told to sit up straight without bending her shoulders because her mother wants her to sit in the right posture.

The last word 'Amanda!' is used with an exclamation mark, which shows the irritation and frustration of Amanda's mother.

Stanza 2

(There is a languid, emerald sea,
where the sole inhabitant is me—
a mermaid, drifting blissfully.)

Word Meanings

Languid – reluctant to exert itself; **Mermaid** – an imaginary sea creature having a woman's head and body with a fish's tail instead of legs; **Drifting** – a slow and steady movement

Explanation Amanda is lost in her world of imagination while her mother is instructing her. In her world, she imagines that she is a mermaid who lives alone in the beautiful green sea. She imagines that as a mermaid she would move in the soft waves of the sea. She believes that as a mermaid, her life would be peaceful and relaxing.

Stanza 3

Did you finish your homework, Amanda?
Did you tidy your room, Amanda?
I thought I told you to clean your shoes,
Amanda!

Word Meanings

Tidy – arrange neatly and in order

Explanation In these lines, Amanda is being inquired about her work.

Amanda's mother is asking about whether she has finished her homework and whether she has cleaned her room. Amanda is also reminded that she was told to clean her shoes.

Stanza 4

(I am an orphan, roaming the street.
I pattern soft dust with my hushed, bare feet.
The silence is golden, the freedom is sweet.)

Word Meanings

Orphan – a child whose parents are dead; **Roaming** – to move about aimlessly, especially over a wide area; **Hushed** – very quiet and still

Explanation Again, Amanda is not paying any attention to her mother. Amanda is in her world of imagination. She imagines that she is an orphan child who is freely roaming around on the street. She has no shoes on her feet and is making patterns on the soft dust with her quiet and bare feet. She is loving the silence and freedom to do anything in her world of imagination.

Stanza 5

Don't eat that chocolate, Amanda!
Remember your acne, Amanda!
Will you please look at me when I'm speaking to
you, Amanda!

Word Meanings

Acne – common skin disease characterised by pimples, especially on face

Explanation In these lines, Amanda is instructed by her mother to not to eat chocolates. She is reminded that eating chocolates had previously caused her acne (pimples). However, as Amanda is lost in her own thoughts, she is not paying attention to her mother. So, her mother strictly asks her to listen to what is being told to her.

Stanza 6

(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!)

Word Meanings

Rapunzel – Rapunzel is the name of a girl in a German fairy tale who was made to live alone in a high tower and had very long, beautiful golden hair. She was held captive by a witch who used to come up to the tower by climbing her long hair; **Tranquil** – free from any trouble or anxiety, to be in a peaceful state of mind.

Explanation Amanda is still in her world of imagination. Now, she dreams of herself as Rapunzel (character of a German fairy tale) who lived alone in a tower. As Rapunzel, she will not have to worry about anything and her life would be calm and peaceful in the tower. She emphasises that unlike Rapunzel, she would never let her hair down and permit anyone to come to her in the tower.

Stanza 7

Stop that sulking at once, Amanda!
You're always so moody, Amanda!
Anyone would think that I nagged at
you, Amanda!

Word Meanings

Sulking – to be upset about something; **Nagged** – to irritate someone by complaining about his or her habits again and again

Explanation In these lines, Amanda is not reacting on her mother's instructions. It seems that she is annoyed due to constant instructions.

Amanda's mother is asking her to stop being upset and moody. She said that her (Amanda) upset behaviour will show anyone that she is disturbed due to her mother's constant instructions.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

Alliteration Repetition of initial consonant sounds in the same line

- Stop that slouching and sit up straight
- Stop that sulking at once, Amanda!

Allusion A reference to a statement, person, place, etc from history, religion, literature or any other field

- Mermaid - To be free. (Taken from fairy tales)
- Rapunzel - Who lived alone on a tower for a long time. (Part of a German fairy tale)

NCERT FOLDER

(Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

Thinking about the Poem (Page 62)

1 How old do you think Amanda is? How do you know this?

Ans. Amanda is a little, middle aged (8-12 years) school going girl.

We know this because of the reference of a mermaid and Rapunzel. Also, the instructions given to her, for doing homework, nail biting, correcting posture, etc are generally given to children of such an age group.

2 Who do you think is speaking to her?

Ans. Any one of Amanda's elder's or parents is speaking to her. From the instructions given to Amanda, one can say that it is most probably Amanda's mother or governess.

3 Why are stanzas 2, 4 and 6 given in parenthesis?

Ans. Stanza 2, 4 and 6 are given in parenthesis because they reflect the inner thoughts of Amanda. Amanda is lost in her dream world and is not listening to what her mother is asking/telling her.

4 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?

Ans. The speaker in stanza 2, 4 and 6 is the child, Amanda. No, Amanda is not listening to the speaker of stanza 1, 3, 5 and 7, as she is lost in the world of her imagination.

5 What could Amanda do if she were a mermaid?

Ans. If Amanda were a mermaid, she could be the only resident of the beautiful green sea where she would float in the soft waves of the sea. There, she could relax and enjoy her freedom.

Metaphor A device which compares two things or qualities which are unlike

- Languid, emerald sea - languid and emerald type qualities are assigned to the sea.
- Silence is golden
- Freedom is sweet

Repetition Repeating of a word or phrase for emphasis

- Use of the word 'Amanda'

Brackets Generally used to indicate the thoughts that are not spoken out loud

- Stanza 2, 4 and 6 are the inner thoughts of Amanda.

6 Is Amanda an orphan? Why does she say so?

Ans. No, Amanda is not an orphan, though she wishes to be an orphan.

She says so because she is upset at being scolded again and again by her mother. Thus, she thinks that if she had been an orphan, she would be free and her life would be peaceful.

7 Do you know the story of Rapunzel? Why does she want to be Rapunzel?

Ans. Rapunzel was a beautiful golden haired princess who lived in a tower. She had very long hair by which she used to allow people to come into her tower.

Amanda believes that Rapunzel's life in the lonely tower would be very happy. So, she wanted to be Rapunzel and wishes to live in such a tower, away from everyone. She even imagines that in order to live a happy life she would never allow anyone to come into her tower.

8 What does the girl yearn for? What does this poem tell you about Amanda?

Ans. The girl Amanda yearns or desires for freedom and peace in life.

According to the poem, Amanda feels that her freedom has been limited by her mother. She is fed up of the constant scolding and instructions by her mother. She wants to go away and live a peaceful life.

9 Read the last stanza. Do you think Amanda is sulking and moody?

Ans. No, Amanda is neither sulking nor she is acting moody. The speaker (her mother) of the last stanza thinks so because Amanda is not paying any attention to her instructions, rather she is lost in her own world.

Exam Practice

Extract Based Questions

[2 Marks each]

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1 Don't bite your nails, Amanda!
Don't hunch your shoulders, Amanda!
Stop that slouching and sit up straight,
Amanda!

- (a) Amanda is getting instructions for what purpose?
(b) What does the speaker of above lines instruct Amanda in the first stanza?

Ans. (a) Amanda is getting instructions as a part of her upbringing. Her conduct and manners are getting refined for future purposes.
(b) Amanda is getting instructed for biting her nails and sitting lazily with her shoulders bent.

2 (There is a languid, emerald sea,
where the sole inhabitant is me—
a mermaid, drifting blissfully.)
(a) Why are these lines given within brackets?
(b) What is the role of mermaid here?

Ans. (a) These lines are given within brackets because they reveal the inner thoughts of Amanda. Brackets are used for visual contrast between what Amanda is saying and what her mother is instructing.
(b) Mermaid is a part of Amanda's fantasy in her own created world. As mermaid sails in a sea carelessly and effortlessly, similarly Amanda longs to do so in a place where she is all by herself.

3 Don't eat that chocolate, Amanda!
Remember your acne, Amanda!
Will you please look at me when I'm speaking to you,
Amanda!

CBSE 2016

- (a) Why is Amanda not looking at the speaker?
(b) The speaker is so worried about acne. What does it show?

Ans. (a) Amanda is lost in her own thoughts and is paying no attention to instructions being given to her. That is why she is not looking at the speaker.

(b) The speaker being worried about acne shows how much importance is given to physical beauty in a household. Amanda is prepared for the unforeseen future. Natural experience such as acne is also taken care of at any cost.

4 (I am an orphan, roaming the street.
I pattern soft dust with my hushed, bare feet.
The silence is golden, the freedom is sweet.)

- (a) What does 'silence is golden' mean?
(b) What is Amanda upto in this stanza?

Ans. (a) Silence is shown golden using the poetic device metaphor. By making silence golden, the poet is estimating the worth of silence. For Amanda seeks peace and calmness, which is absent in her reality.

(c) Amanda is again taking refuge in her imagination. Here, she wishes to be an orphan, away from her nagging (scolding and questioning) parents. Amanda wants to roam aimlessly in streets and draw patterns using just her bare feet.

5 (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!)
(a) Does Amanda live on a tower?
(b) Why will Amanda not let down her bright hair?

Ans. (a) No, Amanda stays at her place. Here, she is imagining herself to be Rapunzel who lived in a tower.

(b) Amanda is aware about the story of Rapunzel. In the story of Rapunzel, all the mishappening and misfortunes are brought to her by letting down the hair. Amanda also wishes to live alone and carefree, without any disturbance.

- 6 Stop that sulking at once, Amanda!
You're always so moody, Amanda!
Anyone would think that I nagged at you,
Amanda!
- (a) Is Amanda really sulking?
(b) Why does the speaker care for others?

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

[2 Marks each]

- 1 Justify the title of the poem 'Amanda'.
- Ans.** The title of the poem 'Amanda' is very appropriate. The poem is about a little girl, Amanda who is constantly scolded by her mother. Throughout the poem, the focus is on Amanda and her world of imagination. In this world, she lives a free and peaceful life without any interruptions.
- 2 Why does Amanda wish to be a mermaid, an orphan, or Rapunzel?
- Ans.** Amanda wishes to be a mermaid, an orphan and Rapunzel to live a life of freedom. She is constantly scolded by her mother. So, she escapes into her own world of imagination wherein she lives a peaceful life, all alone. As a mermaid she would be the sole resident of a beautiful sea and as an orphan, she would enjoy freedom. Finally, as Rapunzel she would live a carefree life.
- 3 List the things about which Amanda's mother nag her.
- Ans.** Amanda's mother nag or scold her about the following things
- She continuously ask her to sit properly and to not bite her nails.
 - Amanda is instructed to not eat chocolates and to clean her room as well as shoes.
 - Amanda is also asked to finish her homework.
 - Amanda is also pointed out for not paying attention to her mother and for her sulking and moody behaviour.
- 4 Why does Amanda seem moody most of the time? CBSE 2016
- Ans.** Amanda seems moody most of the time because she is so involved in her world of imagination that she does

- Ans.** (a) Amanda is not sulking. She just doesn't care about instructions given to her as she is lost in a world of her own.
- (b) The whole poem revolves around the aspect that how one is presented in a society. The speaker doesn't wish to be regarded as a nagging parent in the society, so Amanda is expected to put up a happy face all the time.

- not pay attention to her mother. Amanda often escapes from reality into her world of fantasy to get away from the continuous scoldings. Her day dreaming makes her look moody and uninterested.
- 5 Do you think it is Amanda's fault in the poem? Justify your answer.
- Ans.** No, Amanda is not at fault. In the poem, Amanda is constantly instructed and scolded by her mother. Her mother restricts her freedom. Amanda desires the peace and freedom which is not granted to her. So, she escapes into her own world where she enjoys the calmness.
- 6 What is the central theme of the poem?
- Ans.** The central theme of the poem Amanda by Robin Klein is that children love freedom. They do not want any restrictions on their activities.
- The poem points out that in the endeavour to make their children well-behaved, parents often give too many instructions. Such a scolding behaviour is resented by children and adversely affects their development.
- 7 Does Amanda's mother have a nagging behaviour. Justify your answer.
- Ans.** Amanda's mother really have a nagging behaviour. She is always instructing Amanda and finding faults within her. Her mother constantly tell her the do's and don'ts.
- Such a nagging behaviour affects Amanda who feels that her freedom is restricted. Amanda's mothers responsibility to instill (develop) good manners in the child makes Amanda retreat (escape) into her imagination where she seeks peace and freedom.

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

[8 Marks each]

- 1 Discuss the importance of proper upbringing with reference to the poem 'Amanda' by Robin Klein.

Ans. Upbringing plays an essential role in personality development of a child. Whenever we wish to admire or criticise someone, we talk about the upbringing of that person. Robin Klein's poem 'Amanda' highlights the problems of 'proper' upbringing of a child. To instil good values and moral principles in a growing child is the foremost duty of the parents. However, the poem shows how a child feels upset because of constant instructions.

Amanda, the little girl in the poem goes through such a situation. She is instructed and scolded for her habits. She gets no freedom and space for herself. As a result, she enters her world of imagination. This world proves to be her defence against her scolding mother. In her world, she seeks freedom and peace. She imagines herself as a mermaid who is the sole resident of a beautiful sea.

Then, she imagines herself as an orphan who is free to do anything. Finally, she wants to be Rapunzel and live a peaceful life in a tower. Therefore, elders/parents must maintain a balance. While instilling good manners, they should also give some freedom to their children.

- 2 How does Amanda tackle the nagging nature of her mother? Explain with examples from the poem.
- Ans.** In the poem, 'Amanda', the little girl named Amanda often escapes into her own world. Her world of dreams give her the freedom and peace that she seeks in reality where she is constantly nagged by her elders. Her mother continuously instruct and scold her for her ill-manners and laziness. She is asked not to bite her nails, not to eat chocolates, to clean her room and so on. As Amanda's mother is giving her instructions, she is lost in her daydreams. The persistence of

Amanda's mother leave a harmful impression in her mind. Her retreat, then, is her way of tackling her mother. It is her shield and defence against the harsh realities that she goes through. In her reality, her freedom is restricted.

Her need for freedom and peace, finds expression in her dreams where she imagines a carefree and happy life as an orphan, mermaid and Rapunzel, without her mother. Amanda may seem moody and upset, to her mother, but is not really so. The nagging nature of her mother makes her escape into a world away from the realities of her life.

- 3 State the key points in the poem 'Amanda'. What do you learn from it? CBSE 2016
- Ans.** The key point highlighted in the poem 'Amanda' is that every child is special in itself and it requires a great amount of patience and love to make them understand this.

To create such an understanding, parents must give freedom to their children as they learn the best from their own experiences. In this process, children may learn some bad habits which needs to be removed. This undoing also requires a great level of understanding and the right approach. Parents judging each action of a child does more harm.

In the poem, the little girl Amanda goes through constant scoldings for her habits. Everything she does is corrected by her mother and she can't do anything at her will. Consequently, the girl seeks/desires freedom and a choice. The lack of freedom makes Amanda upset and moody as she escapes her world of imagination. She enjoys the things in her imagination, which she is deprived of in reality.

Therefore, in Amanda, we witness a failed approach of her parents and get a lesson that the parents need to take a more gentle/kind approach to teach their child.

4 Escapism is one way to run away from harsh realities. Discuss in the context of the poem 'Amanda'.

Ans. It is true that escapism is one way to run away from harsh realities. By going through the whole poem, we come to know that Amanda's mother keeps instructing her all the time. Amanda's mother's intention may be to discipline the little girl and make her a mature person. But, children need love and a caring attitude in their elders.

Advice in the form of nagging leaves a very harmful impression in the child's mind. The reality becomes harsh for them and they try to escape these realities by indulging in their own fantasy world.

Here in this poem, the life of Amanda is frustrating as she is forbidden to do anything without seeking permission. Continuous instructions of her mother and constant scoldings leave a very negative impact on a child's personality.

In such situation, Amanda adheres to a defence mechanism where she imagines herself to be free and without parents so that she is not nagged. She drifts into an imaginary situation to escape from the harsh realities of her life.

It is the mother's behaviour that is forcing her to do so. Thus, parents need to understand that their child also requires a certain amount of freedom which must be given to them.

Self Assessment

Extract Based Question

Read the following extract carefully and answer the questions that follow.

- 1 Don't eat that chocolate, Amanda!
Remember your acne, Amanda!
Will you please look at me when I'm speaking to you.
Amanda!
- (a) In what way, eating a chocolate would affect Amanda?
- (b) Where is Amanda looking while the speaker is scolding her?

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

- 2 'Anyone would think that I nagged at you'. Explain.
- 3 What idea does the reader form about Amanda?

Long Answer (LA) Type Question

- 4 Amanda loves to live in a dream world and does not appreciate any interference. A parent tries to bring her back to the real world. Therefore, there is always a conflict going on. Elaborate.

Animals



Central Idea of the Poem

The poem 'Animals' shows the poet's love for the animals. According to the poet, animals are better than human beings and have all the qualities that humans lack or have forgotten. The poet wants to turn into an animal and experience a life which is free of sins and sorrow.

The theme of the poem is not to say how good animals are, but to compare humans with them in order to highlight the flaws of human nature. The poet believes that probably a very long time ago, humans possessed all these qualities, but they have lost them now.

Explanation of the Poem

Stanza 1

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.

Word Meanings

Placid – quiet, calm; Self-contain'd – in full control of self

Explanation In these lines, the poet says that he wants to turn into an animal and wants to live with animals. According to the poet the animals look calm peaceful and self-controlled. They never complain for any problem.

Due to these qualities of animals, the poet wants to spend a long time with them. He stands and looks at them for a very long time.

Stanza 2

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.

Word Meanings

Sweat and whine – to complain/cry; Sins – misdeeds or immoral actions

Explanation In these lines, the poet says that animals do not complain and cry about their condition like humans do. Unlike humans, animals do not stay awake in the night and weep for the sins done by them. Here, the poet means that animals are different from human beings because they do not show anger or grief.

Further, he says that animals do not make him feel sick by discussing their duty to God. The poet here means that animals do not pray to God for forgiveness or ask God to fulfill their desires like humans do.

by Walt Whitman

Stanza 3

Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with
the mania of owning things,
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that
lived thousands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole
earth.

Word Meanings

Demented – affected with madness; Mania – obsession; Owning – possessing; Kneels – bends (as a sign of respect)

Explanation In these lines, the poet says that he does not find even a single animal that may appear to be dissatisfied. There is not single animal who suffers from the obsession of possessing more and more things. Animals do not show respect or bow their heads to other animals or to their ancestors like humans do. According to the poet, all animals are equal and they do not need to respect one another. So far the animals no one is respectable and unhappy on the earth.

Stanza 4

So they show their relations to me and
I accept them,
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince
them plainly in their possession
I wonder where they get those tokens,
Did I pass that way huge times ago and
negligently drop them?

Word Meanings

Tokens – innate qualities; Evince – to show a particular feeling, quality or attitude; Possession – ownership; negligently – carelessly

Explanation In these lines, the poet says that the animals show their similarities to him which he accepts happily. He feels that animals represent human beings in some way. They seem to have innate qualities, that humans once had, i.e. virtues like kindness, self-containment and innocence. Animals remind the poet of these qualities that symbolise the lost values of the humans. The poet wonders about how animals had got these qualities. The poet believes that the humans carelessly dropped these virtues a long time ago and have forgotten all about them in their madness to possess more things.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

Personification The poem has uniform personification.

Repetition Repetition of words/phrases in the same line.

- I stand and look at them long and long.
- They do not
- Not one is

Alliteration Repetition of initial consonant sounds in the same line.

- They do not make me sick.
- I wonder where they get those tokens.

Metaphor It compares two objects to give a clearer meaning to one of them.

- 'tokens' are innate qualities of humans.

Rhyme Scheme There is no rhyme scheme. The poem is in free verse.

NCERT FOLDER

(Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

Thinking about the Poem (Page 84)

1 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?

Ans. In this line, the poet wants to turn from a human into an animal. This turning represents the poet's desire to get away from the depressing, selfish and false world of humans and stay with animals.

2 Mention three things that humans do and animals don't.

Ans. Three things that humans do and animals don't are as follows

- Humans complain and cry about the miseries they face but animals do not do that.
- Humans lie awake at night thinking about their wrong doings but animals do not do that.
- Humans talk about their religiousness and duty towards God but animals do not do that.

3 Do humans kneel to other humans who lived thousands of years ago? Discuss this in groups.

Ans. Yes, humans kneel to other humans who lived thousands of years ago as it is a cultural tradition to respect elder persons. These persons could be their ancestors, saints or preachers whom they follow religiously.

(Students can discuss their own culture with their classmates and share the rituals and traditions of their culture and also get to know about other cultural practices).

4 What are the 'tokens' that the poet says he may have dropped long ago and which the animals have kept for him? Discuss this in class. (Hint: Whitman belongs to the Romantic tradition that includes Rousseau and Wordsworth, which holds that civilisation has made humans false to their own true nature. What could be the basic aspects of our nature as living beings that humans choose to ignore or deny?)

Ans. The tokens mentioned in the poem refer to the virtues and values possessed by animals. These virtues represent the true nature of human beings which humans have lost now. These are tokens of values such as kindness, innocence, self-containment, satisfaction, sharing, etc.

The poet, Walt Whitman belongs to the Romantic tradition of literature. He along with various other poets/authors believed that the virtues mentioned above represent the true nature of man and how man should be.

However, with civilisation and development man has denied or ignored them. Humans now have become full of false values such as selfishness, greed, possessiveness, etc. They have forgotten their true characteristics that animals have still retained.

Exam Practice

Extract Based Questions

[2 Marks each]

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1 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.

- (a) Which qualities of animals attract the poet?
(b) Explain the successive use of the word 'long' twice and bring out its significance.

Ans. (a) The poet is attracted to the calmness and poise of the animals.

- (b) The successive use of the word 'long' makes the line significant; the first 'long', denotes 'period/time' whereas the other, 'a desire'.

2 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,

CBSE 2015

- (a) Why do humans lie awake in the dark?
(b) What does the phrase 'make me sick' mean?

Ans. (a) Humans lie awake in the dark weeping for their sins.

- (b) The phrase means to make someone feel angry or upset.

3 Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented
with the mania of owning things,
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that
lived thousands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the
whole earth.

- (a) What does the poet call a mania here?
(b) How are the animals not dissatisfied?

Ans. (a) The habit of owning things by humans has been called a mania as people blindly copy each other.

- (b) Since animals do not have the desire to own anything, therefore they are never dissatisfied.

4 Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that
lived thousands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the
whole earth.

- (a) Who is the poet referring to that lived thousands of years ago?

(b) What does 'Kneel' symbolise here?

Ans. (a) The poet is referring to the ancestors of human beings who lived thousands of years ago.

- (b) Kneel is symbolic to praying in the above line.

5 So they show their relations to me and I
accept them,
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince
them plainly in their possession
I wonder where they get those tokens,
Did I pass that way huge times ago and
negligently drop them?

CBSE 2014

- (a) Explain the line: "They bring me tokens of myself".

(b) What similarities does the poet find between the human beings and the animals?

Ans. (a) The poet here means that the animals remind him of true values of the human nature such as kindness and innocence.

- (b) The poet finds that animals, like human beings do not trouble others unless they are compelled; they are equally kind and innocent.

6 I wonder where they get those tokens,
Did I pass that way huge times ago and
negligently drop them?

- (a) What does the poet wonder?

(b) Why does the poet say that he negligently dropped them?

Ans. (a) The poet wonders whether the animals get all their virtues from humans.

- (b) The poet believes that animals got their values from humans while they lost them a long time ago and have forgotten about them.

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

[2 Marks each]

1 Why does the poet like animals and why he himself wants to turn into an animal?

Or Why does the poet show a preference for living with animals?

Ans. The poet likes/prefers animals for their calm and self-controlled nature. He is impressed with animals because unlike human beings, they don't desire to own things and are satisfied with their lives. The poet wants himself to turn into an animal and live with animals as they have retained the basic good values lost by humans.

2 Explain the satisfaction that animals have and humans don't. CBSE 2014

Ans. Animals do not have the desire to possess worldly things and thus, are satisfied with what they have. They live happily in their natural surroundings. However, humans desire to own as many things as possible and thus, are dissatisfied forever.

3 What is the difference between animals and humans regarding their attitude towards sin and God?

Or Why do humans keep awake in the dark and weep for their sins while animals never do such things?

Ans. In the poem, the poet states that animals are simple and innocent creatures who commit no sins. Therefore, they do not have to worry about forgiveness from God. However, humans commit sins of greed, possession etc. As a result, they can't sleep peacefully all night and pray to God for forgiveness.

4 Explain "No One kneels to another... Not one is respectable ..."

Ans. In the poem 'Animals', "No one kneels to another... Not one is respectable..." refers to the good values possessed by animals.

It states that there is no concept of respect or insult among animals. They are all equal and don't get involved in unnecessary activities and formalities.

5 What is the relevance of 'tokens' in the poem 'Animals'? Who brings them to the poet?

Or Why does the poet say "They bring me tokens of myself"? Who owns those tokens?

Ans. In the poem 'Animals', the poet states the animals bring him/show him 'tokens' of himself. Tokens here refers to the good virtues which includes satisfaction, self-containment, innocence, etc. The poet believes that these virtues were present in both humans and animals but humans have forgotten them.

Animals still retain these tokens or virtues and remind the poet about them.

6 What message does the poet Walt Whitman want to give through this poem?

Ans. Through the poem, 'Animals', the poet Walt Whitman wants to convey the message of superiority of animals over humans. In the poem, the poet states that with advancement, humans have forgotten all the noble virtues. They have degraded themselves while animals still retain those noble virtues. So, they appear to be noble as compared to humans.

7 What is the central idea of the poem, 'Animals'? CBSE 2020

Ans. In the poem animals, Walt Whitman frankly tells that he feels more comfortable with animals rather than humans. According to him, humans have become corrupted and had lost all the good values of kindness, equality and peace. Animals have yet retained all the positive values and thus are superior to humans.

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

[8 Marks each]

1 Why do you think the poet has called the desire to own things, as a mania? Is the poet right in doing so? Write your own views.

Ans. In the poem 'Animals', the poet uses the word 'mania' to refer to the never-ending desire of human beings to possess things.

According to the poet, humans desire to possess as many things as possible and thus, never get satisfied.

The acquisition of material things is a rat race in which all human beings participate forever.

The more a human gets, the more he/she desires. There is no end to their greed.

Yes, the poet is right in doing so. The greed/desire to possess things drives all humans mad. They madly try to acquire more and more but are never satisfied. So the poet states, animals are better than humans. They do not have any desire to possess physical things and are happy with what they have.

Unlike animals, humans always worry and complain. Thus, the poet is right in calling the desire to own things as a mania.

2 "Human beings are called the most civilised species in the entire world. But sometimes they lack the virtues which are better exhibited by the animals." Elucidate with reference to the poem 'Animals'.

Ans. Human beings are called the most civilised species in the entire world, yet they lack good virtues. Human beings are devoid of virtues of being respectable, happy, self contained and calm. In the poem 'Animals', the poet believes that it is with civilisation that humans have lost their true nature. They have become selfish, jealous, restless, unhappy and greedy creatures. They always complain about their lives, cry over their sins and discuss their duty to God. They have become false to their true identity.

Unlike humans, animals are peaceful, self-contained, and happy. They are satisfied with their lives. They do not have the mania of owning things nor do they have the concept of respect or insult. Animals, thus retain all those good virtues that were present even in humans, very long time ago.

3 The key to happiness is 'Do not complain but accept the situation'. Elaborate it in the context of the poem 'Animals'. CBSE 2015

Ans. It is true that the key to happiness is 'Do not complain but accept the situation'. The poet, Walt Whitman in the poem 'Animals' justifies the given statement. In the poem, animals are compared to human beings to highlight the differences between them.

On the basis of their characteristics of happiness, equality, simplicity and many more 'tokens', animals have been ranked much superior and nobler to humans.

The poet explains his belief by stating that animals are simple creatures who never complain about their situations. They have accepted their natural surroundings and thus, are happy and satisfied with their lives. Humans, on the other hand, have never accepted nature. They are always complaining about it and so, try to change it. Thus, they lead an unhappy life.

The ever increasing expectations of human beings and their demanding, greedy and selfish nature leads to their unhappiness.

The Tale of Custard the Dragon

by Ogden Nash

Central Idea of the Poem

The Tale of Custard the Dragon' is a funny poem (ballad) that tells the story of a girl named Belinda and her four pets. The central character in the story is Belinda's pet dragon, Custard who is described as a coward. However, when a real danger comes, all the pets run away except Custard. Custard shows courage and bravery at the right moment and saves everyone's life.

Explanation of the Poem

Stanza 1

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.

Word Meanings

Wagon - a carriage, a cart; Realio - really (used in the poem for effect); Trulio - truly (used in the poem for effect).

Explanation Belinda lived in a little white house with her four pets - a little black kitten, a little grey mouse, a little yellow dog, and a little dragon. She also had a little red wagon. In the last line of the stanza, 'realio' and 'trulio' are used by the poet as an expression for the little dragon meaning 'really' and 'truly' respectively.

Stanza 2

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.

Word Meanings

Sharp - intelligent; Coward - someone who is not brave and avoids danger, difficulty or pain

Explanation The name of the little black kitten was Ink and the name of the little grey mouse was Blink. The name of the little dog was Mustard because its colour was sharp and yellow as mustard. The dragon was a coward and Belinda called him Custard.

Stanza 3

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.

Word Meanings

Spikes - a thin pointed structures on the body; **Scales** - small hard flat pieces of skin on the bodies of animals; **Fireplace** - the place where fire is burnt to keep the house warm; **Chimney** - a long pipe that opens on the roof to let out the smoke released from the fireplace; **Dagger** - small sword

Explanation Custard, the dragon has big sharp teeth, spikes on his top and scales on his stomach. His mouth has been compared to a fireplace because it is assumed by the poet that dragons can release fire from their mouth. His nose is compared to a chimney from which the smoke comes out. His toes are so pointed and sharp that they could cut anything like a dagger.

Stanza 4

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.

Word Meanings

barrel - drum (usually used for keeping liquids); **rage** - anger

Explanation In these lines, the poet compares the bravery of all the characters of the poem.

Belinda's bravery has been compared to the bravery of a group of bears. Ink and Blink, despite being so small in size, have the power to chase away lions down the stairs. Mustard's bravery has been compared with that of an angry tiger. But, Custard is completely opposite to all of them. He was a coward who always demanded a safe cage.

Stanza 5

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.

Word Meanings

Tickle - to touch (a body part) lightly to cause laughter; **Unmerciful** - cruel; **Percival** - a warrior in king Arthur's court; **Rudely** - not in a civil manner or mannerlessly

Explanation Belinda used to tickle Custard cruelly. Ink, Blink and Mustard made fun of Custard by comparing him to Percival who was one of the best knights of King Arthur's court who was known for his courage and bravery. All of them sat together in the little red wagon and made fun of Custard. They laughed at his cowardice (lack of bravery).

Stanza 6

Belinda giggled till she shook the house,
And Blink said Weeek!, which is giggling for a mouse,
Ink and Mustard rudely asked his age,
When Custard cried for a nice safe cage.

Word Meanings

Giggling - laughing

Explanation Belinda laughed a lot at the dragon. She laughed so hard that it seemed that the house was shaking due to her laughter. Blink, the mouse used to laugh and make a sound of 'Weeek'. Ink and Mustard rudely asked the dragon's age to make fun of him, while the dragon cried for a nice safe cage for himself.

Stanza 7

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 window.

Word Meanings

Nasty - unpleasant; **Growled** - the sound of growling as made by animals; **Pirate** - dacoit, robber; **Window** - window

Explanation While all of them were busy making fun of the dragon, they heard an unpleasant sound from the house. Mustard, the dog started growling and they all looked around. Ink cried 'Meowch' and Belinda cried 'Ooh' as they saw a pirate climbing the window of the house.

Stanza 8

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.

Word Meanings

Cutlass - a small sword with a slightly curved blade

Explanation The appearance of the pirate seemed very dangerous. He was carrying pistols in both hands and he was carrying a small sword between his teeth. He had black beard and his one leg was of wood. His looks made it very clear to the housemates that the pirate meant to harm the people and pets living there.

Stanza 9

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.

Word Meanings

Paled - became pale yellow due to fear; **Fled** - ran; **Yelp** - cry; **Trickled** - stepped down; **Strategically** - cleverly; **Mouseholed** - holes made by a mouse (it is not a word but has been made into a word to fit the rhyming scheme)

Explanation Belinda became pale with fear after seeing the pirate and cried for help. All her brave pets could not help her and everyone ran away from there. Mustard made a huge cry and ran away. Ink ran down towards the bottom of the house and Blink very smartly ran into his hole.

Stanza 10

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.

Word Meanings

Snorting - huge sound made through nose; **Clashed** - struck; **Dungeon** - an underground prison; **Clatter** and a clank and a jangling - sounds of two metals striking; **Squirm** - to move in a twisted manner; **Robin** - a bird.

Explanation When everyone ran away on seeing the pirate, it was the coward dragon, Custard, who came to rescue the Belinda and fought the pirate bravely.

He jumped in front of the pirate and made a loud and angry sound through his nose like an engine. He started to move his tail powerfully producing a sound like iron or metals striking in a dungeon (prison). With all these dangerous sounds, he followed the pirate like a bird follows a worm.

Stanza 11

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.

Word Meanings

Gaped - stared with mouth wide open; **Gulped** - swallowed; **Grog** - wine; **Flagon** - a container made of silver in which drink is stored; **Gobbled** - swallowed

Explanation The pirate was shocked by the dragon's reaction. He stared at Belinda's dragon with his mouth open. He drank some wine from a container that he carried in his pocket. The pirate then took out his pistol and fired two bullets at Custard. But, he failed to hit him. Finally, Custard swallowed or ate the pirate.

Stanza 12

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.

Word Meanings

Embrace - to hug; **Licked** - to touch with tongue; **Mourned** - to grieve; **Glee** - happiness; **Gyrate** - make circular movements.

Explanation Everyone celebrated the death of the pirate. Belinda hugged Custard and Mustard licked him affectionally.

No one felt sorrow for the pirate's death. Ink and Blink started dancing in joy around the dragon who had eaten the pirate.

Stanza 13

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

Word Meanings

Flustered - got nervous

Explanation The incident clarifies who is coward and who is brave. Mustard said that he would have been twice as brave as Custard if he had not been nervous. After this, Ink and Blink said that they would have been thrice as brave as the custard. Custard agreed and said that everybody there was braver than him.

Stanza 14-15

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.
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.

Explanation Stanza 14 and 15 are an almost repetition of Stanza 1 and 4. There is only one difference that stanza 1 and 4 present the condition of the housemates in the past and stanza 14 and 15 present their condition after the pirate incident. The situation has not changed at all. Everything has gone back to normal with Belinda and her three 'brave' pets making fun of the 'cowardly', pet dragon.

Exam Practice

Extract Based Questions

[2 Marks each]

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1 Belinda lived in a little white house,
With a little black kitten and a little gray mouse,
And a little yellow dog and a little red wagon,
And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon.

- (a) Where did Belinda live?
(b) How many pets did she have?

Ans. (a) Belinda lived in a little white house.
(b) She had four pets, a kitten, a mouse, a dog and a dragon.

2 Now the name of the little black kitten was Ink,
And the little gray mouse, she called her Blink,
And the little yellow dog was sharp as Mustard,
But the dragon was a coward, and she called him Custard.

- (a) What were the kitten and the mouse called?
(b) 'Blink' here is the name of a mouse but what actually the word means?

Ans. (a) The kitten was called Ink and the mouse was called Blink by Belinda.
(b) The word 'blink' means to shut and open eyes frequently in quick succession.

3 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.

- (a) What did the dragon look like?
(b) Why is the dragon's mouth called a chimney?

Ans. (a) The dragon had spikes on top and scales underneath. His mouth was like a fireplace and nose was like a chimney. He looked dangerous as his toes looked like daggers.

(b) Dragons can spit fire, therefore Custard's mouth has been called a fireplace.

4 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.

- (a) How brave were the kitten and the mouse?
(b) Why did Custard cry for a nice safe cage?

Ans. (a) The kitten and the mouse were so brave that they could scare away lions.
(b) Custard cried for a nice safe cage because he was a coward.

5 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.

- (a) Why did everyone laugh?
(b) What does realio, trulio mean?

Ans. (a) Everyone laughed at the dragon because Belinda tickled him unmercifully.
(b) Realio, trulio actually means really and truly. The words have been changed by the poet so as to give rhythm to the poem.

6 Belinda giggled till she shook the house,
And Blink said Week!, which is giggling for a mouse,
Ink and Mustard rudely asked his age,
When Custard cried for a nice safe cage.

- (a) What did shake the house?
(b) When did, Ink and Mustard ask for Custard's age?

Ans. (a) Belinda giggled so hard that it shook the house.
(b) Ink and Mustard asked for Custard's age when he cried to be inside a cage.

7 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 window.

- (a) Which poetic device is used in these lines?
(b) Why was everyone frightened?

Ans. (a) In the first line, the poet has used repetition in 'Suddenly, suddenly'.

(b) Everyone was frightened because a pirate was climbing up the window.

8 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.

- (a) How many weapons was the pirate carrying?
(b) Describe the physical appearance of the pirate.

Ans. (a) The pirate was carrying two pistols in each hand and a cutlass in his teeth.

(b) The pirate's beard was black and he had one wooden leg. He looked very frightening.

9 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.

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- (a) How did the people in the house react on seeing the pirate?
(b) What does 'mouseholed' mean?

Ans. (a) Belinda became pale with fear and the Mustard fled the scene. Ink went to the bottom of the house and Blink vanished in a mouse hole. They all cried for help.

(b) Mouseholed has been used by the poet to mean the hole made by the mouse in which it disappeared.

10 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.

- (a) What sounds did Custard's body make?
(b) What does dungeon mean?

Ans. (a) Custard's tail clashed like irons in a dungeon and he moved with a clatter and a clank and a jangling squirm.

(b) Dungeon means an underground prison cell.

11 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.

- (a) What did the pirate do on seeing the dragon?
(b) What did Custard do to the pirate?

Ans. (a) The pirate gulped some wine from his bottle.
(b) Custard swallowed the pirate and left no trace of him.

12 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.

- (a) What was everyone's reaction after Custard gobbled the pirate?
(b) Why is the pirate called a victim here?

Ans. (a) Everyone became happy and hugged Custard. Ink and Blink started to dance around him.

(b) The pirate is called a victim because he suffered death at the hands of Custard as he ate him up.

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

[2 Marks each]

1 Where did Belinda live and with whom?

Ans. Belinda lived in a little white house with her four pets and a red wagon. She had a black kitten named Ink, a grey mouse named Blink, a yellow dog named Mustard and a coward dragon named Custard.

2 Did Custard match his physical appearance?

Ans. No, Custard did not match his appearance, as he looked dangerous but actually he was a coward. He always cried for a nice and safe cage, while everyone laughed at him for his cowardice.

3 Describe the bravery of everyone in the house.

Ans. In the poem, everyone in the house except the dragon was brave. Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears. Ink and Blink were brave enough to chase lions away. Even Mustard was as brave as an angry tiger. It was only Custard, who was a coward.

4 'But Custard cried for a nice safe cage.' Who is Custard? Why did he cry for a 'nice safe cage'?

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Ans. Custard was Belinda's pet dragon.

He cried for peace and safety of a cage because of his meek (submissive) and cowardly nature.

5 Why was Custard, the dragon teased at Perival?

Ans. Custard, the dragon, is teased at Perival by Ink, Blink and Mustard for his timidity. They teased him as Perival because unlike Custard, he was a courageous and brave knight of King Arthur. Custard on the other hand, was meek (submissive) and always cried for a nice safe cage.

6 What did everyone do when the pirate came?

Ans. When the pirate came, Belinda, cried for help and became pale with fear. Mustard ran away with a terrified cry and Ink hid himself in the bottom of the house, while Blink disappeared in his hole.

It was only Custard who jumped in front of the pirate to fight him and showed the courage to face the pirate.

7 How did Custard face the pirate?

Ans. When the pirate came in Belinda's house, all of her pets except Custard hid themselves. Custard jumped in front of the pirate to fight him. He even dashed his tail. During this fight, the pirate shot two bullets at him which missed its aim. Finally, Custard ate him and left no trace of him.

8 How did everyone react after Custard ate the pirate?

Ans. After Custard ate the pirate, there was joy all around the house. No one mourned for the pirate and everyone was grateful to the dragon.

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

[8 Marks each]

1 The dragon, Custard was considered a coward. The humble dragon proved his bravery in adversity. Analyse that certain qualities like bravery and courage are situational and spontaneous. Express your views with reference to the poem, "The Tale of Custard, the dragon".

Ans. It is true that bravery and courage are situational and spontaneous. This fact has been aptly conveyed in the poem "The Tale of Custard the Dragon", wherein the dragon was considered a coward. He was laughed at for crying for a nice safe cage. He never boasted of his bravery and courage, unlike Belinda and her other pets do.

Belinda hugged Custard, while Mustard licked him. Ink and Blink started dancing around Custard.

9 How did the other three pets boast of their bravery?

Ans. When the pirate had been killed by the dragon, Custard, all other pets of Belinda started making excuses for their cowardice. Mustard said that if he had not been nervous he would have been twice as brave as Custard. Ink and Blink also boasted that they would have been thrice as brave as Custard.

10 Were Belinda and her pets grateful to Custard for killing the pirate? How did Custard react to their reactions?

Ans. Yes, Belinda and her pets were grateful to Custard for killing the pirate, but it was only temporary. Soon after expressing gratitude, Mustard, Ink and Blink started giving excuses for their cowardice and things went back to normal, as it was before the pirate incident.

Custard, the dragon reacted in a humble manner and accepted that all other pets are braver than him.

11 Was everyone really as brave as they claimed?

Ans. Belinda and her three pets, excluding Custard, were very proud of their bravery but, they were not really brave. It was only Custard, who had the courage to face the pirate and fight him. So, among all, only Custard was brave.

Everyone else, including Belinda, Ink, Blink and Mustard claim to be brave. They even made fun of Custard's cowardice. However, when the time to show their courage came, none of them could face the danger.

They hid themselves in some corner of the house. It was only Custard who dared to face the frightening pirate. He not only fought the pirate but also ate him up.

It was a dangerous situation to which Custard spontaneously responded. His courage and bravery came out in a threatening situation. Hence, it is true that qualities like courage and bravery are situational and spontaneous.

2 Do you think that one should be made fun of because of their preferences and choices in life? Explain in the context of Custard, the dragon.

Ans. According to me, one should never make fun of anyone on the basis of their lifestyle and their choices. One must always remember that choices and preference can depend on unexplainable factors. In the poem 'The Tale of Custard the Dragon', Custard makes one such choice of wishing for a 'nice safe cage'. He prefers comfort and safety. However, Belinda and her other pets always laugh at him.

They think of him as a coward for choosing to stay in cage and make fun of him. Custard, the dragon was proved that his choice of comfort doesn't make him a coward. In fact, instead of all the 'brave' pets of Belinda, it was Custard who fought the pirate, it was Custard who showed courage to face the pirate and kill him.

Therefore, one must never judge anyone for choice. Appearance may be deceptive, just like the dragon who appeared to be a coward but was actually courageous, another person might also be different from what show himself to be his/her preferences.