

## MY MOTHER AT SIXTY-SIX

- KAMALA DAS

### Extract Based Questions

1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :

*"Driving from my parent's home to Cochin last Friday morning, I saw my mother, beside me, doze, open mouthed, her face ashen like that of a corpse and realised with pain that she thought away"*

**Questions:**

**(a) Where was the poet coming from ? Where was she going ?**

**Ans.** The poet had gone to her parent's home to visit them. She was now going to Cochin from where she had to board an aeroplane for her journey back home.

**(b) Where was the poet's mother ?**

**Ans.** The poet's mother was sitting beside her in the car. She was travelling with the poet to Cochin to see her off at the airport.

**(c) How does the poet describes her mother ?**

**Ans.** The poet describes her mother as old and pale. As she dozed off beside her, the mother looked almost like a corpse, for her face was colourless and seemed to have lost the fervour of life.

**(d) Who does 'she' refer to in the last line ? What thoughts had she driven away ?**

**Ans.** 'She' here refers to the poet's mother. Like all elderly people, she also suffered from the pain of loneliness and wanted her children to be with them. However, she seemed to have accepted her seclusion with quiet resignation, reconciling herself with the circumstances and compulsions of life.

2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :

*"but after the airport's security check,  
standing a few yards away,  
I looked again at her, wan,  
pale as a late winter's moon."*

**(a) Where was the poet standing?**

**Ans.** The poet was at the Cochin airport waiting to board the plane after the security check.

**(b) Who does 'her' refer to here? How did she look like?**

**Ans.** 'Her' here refers to the poet's mother. She was an aged lady and hence looked pale and colourless.

**(c) Why does the narrator 'look at her again'?**

**Ans.** The narrator looked at her mother once again for the last time before she left to reassure herself about the well being of her mother. She had tried to drive away the pain she had felt on seeing her weak and aged mother. One last time she looked at her to wish her goodbye.

**(d) Explain: " wan, pale as a late winter's moon."**

**Ans.** In this simile, the poet compares the mother's pale and withered face with the winter's moon. The moon seems to lose its brightness in the winter season as it is veiled behind fog and mist. The mother's face also seemed to have lost its radiance which was now misted by age. Winter symbolises death and the waning moon symbolises decay.

**3. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :**

*“but soon put that thought away,  
and looked out at young trees sprinting,  
the merry children spilling out of their homes”*

**(a) Who looked at the young trees?**

**Ans.** The poetess Kamala Das looked at the young trees.

**(b) Which thought did she put away?**

**Ans.** The thought that she put away from her mind was that of her ageing mother's decaying condition and the thought that this could probably be their last meeting.

**(c) What do young people sprinting trees signify?**

**Ans.** The young sprinting trees signify the energy of the youth and continuity of life in contrast to her thoughts related to her old-aged mother.

**(d) Identify the figure of speech used in line no. 4.**

**Ans.** Personification

**SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS:**

**Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:**

**Q.1 How does the poet's mother look like? What kind of images has the poet used to signify her ageing and decay ?**

**Ans.** The poet's mother is at sixty-six. She is sitting beside her. The mother is dozing as old people usually do during the journey. She keeps her mouth open. This is also a sign of old age. Her face looks pale and faded like ash. Actually, she is an image of decay and death. Her 'ashen' face looks like that of corpse.

**Q.2 Why does the poet feel her old familiar ache and what is her childhood fear?**

**Ans.** The sight of her mother's corpse-like face arouses ' that old familiar ache' in her heart. Her childhood fear returns. The fear is that with ageing comes decay and death. Ageing and decay are inevitable. No one avoid them. Perhaps she herself may have to face all these things. This idea is quite painful and fearful to her.

**Q.3 Describe the contrast of the scene inside the car with the activities going on outside. Describe the use of images that poet employs to strike that contrast.**

**Ans.** Inside the car sits an old mother beside the poet. She is sixty-six and ageing. Her 'ashen' face is pale and lifeless like a corpse. The world outside provides a stark contrast. The 'young' trees seem to be running past or sprinting. The children are making merry. The 'ashen' and 'corpse-like' is contrasted with the 'young' trees 'sprinting' outside and the merry children coming out of their houses.

**Q.4 What were the poet's feeling at the airport? How did she hide them?**

**Ans.** The poet experienced two opposite and contrasting feelings at the airport. The ashen and the pale face of her mother brought an image of decay and death. But she immediately hid her feelings. She composed herself and tried to look normal. She smiled continuously to assure her mother that they would meet again soon.

**Q.5 Describe the poetic devices used by Kamala Das in 'My Mother At Sixty-Six'.**

**Ans.** Kamala Das ' My Mother At Sixty-Six' is rich in imaginary. The use of simile is very effective. Her face has been described as 'ashen'. The ashen face is 'like that of a corpse'. Again the 'wan, pale' face of a mother is compared to 'a late winter's moon'. The poem excels in contrasts

## An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum

-Stephen Spender

### Extract Based Questions

1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :

*"Far far from gusty waves these children's faces.  
Like rootless weeds, the hair torn round their pallor:  
The tall girl with her weighed-down head. The paper-  
seeming boy, with rat's eyes. The stunted, unlucky heir  
Of twisted bones, reciting a father's gnarled disease,  
His lesson, from his desk. At back of the dim class  
One unnoted, sweet and young. His eyes live in a dream,  
Of squirrel's game, in tree room, other than this."*

### Questions

(a) What do 'gusty waves' mean?

**Ans.** Gusty waves signify the vibrance and the bounties of nature which are far removed from the reach of the children of the slum.

(b) What are the children like in the slum ?

**Ans.** The children hail from poor families. They are malnourished and look sickly.

(c) Explain 'reciting a father's gnarled disease'.

**Ans.** The lessons recited by the child are but mute tragic story of the abnormalities of the body. They continue to play havoc in their lives too (inherited disease).

(d) How do a child's eyes live in a dream ?

**Ans.** The child has a living dream in his eyes. It seems to be alive in his eyes despite the dismal life of the slum.

2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :

*" Unless, governor, inspector, visitor  
This map becomes their window and these windows  
That shut upon their lives like catacombs,  
Break O break open till they break the town  
And show the children to green fields, and make their world*

*Run azure on gold sands, and let their tongues  
Run naked into books the white and green leaves upon  
History their whose language is the sun. "*

### Questions

**(a) How can 'this map' become 'their window'?**

**Ans.** This map of the world is shaped and owned by the rich. It must also be thrown open to the poor and unfortunate children of slums. Only then will it become 'their window'. They will be able to peep inside it.

**(b) What have shut upon their lives like catacomb ?**

**Ans.** Their dirty surroundings have blocked their progress and growth. They have been shut inside them like the underground graves

**(c) Explain : '... till they break the town'.**

**Ans.** Till they come out of the dirty surroundings and slums of the town into the open.

**(d) What will happen if the children come out of the bonds that bind them?**

**Ans.** Then their world will be extended to the golden sands and azure waves and to the green fields.

### 3. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :

*"Open-handed map  
Awarding the world its world. And yet, for these,  
Children, these windows, not this map, their world,  
Where all their future's painted with a fog.  
narrow street sealed in with a lead sky  
Far from rivers, capes, and stars of words".*

**(a) What does the poet mean by 'a lead sky'?**

**Ans.** 'A lead sky' suggests a grey and dull sky which means that there is no hope for the slum children. They have a bleak future.

**(b) What does the poet say about the children's future?**

**Ans.** The children's future is bleak and dark. They nurture hopes for a better future but achieving these hopes is merely a dream for them.

**(c) What kind of world do we see on the map?**

**Ans.** The map of the world is symbolic of hopes and aspirations and a mere look at this world motivates the children to explore this world, which is full of the bounties bestowed by God.

**(d) Who are these children? What is their world like?**

**Ans.** These are school children living in dingy and dirty slums. Their world is foggy, narrow and polluted. It is far from the open sky, clean rivers and capes.

**4. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :**

*“On their slag heap, these children  
Wear skins peeped through by bones and spectacles of steel  
With mended glass, like bottle bits on stones  
All of their time and space are foggy slum.  
So blot their maps with slums as big as doom”.*

**(a) Which two images are used to describe these slums?**

**Ans.** The images used to describe these slums are: 'slag heap', 'bottle bits on stones' and 'slums as big as doom'.

**(b) What sort of life do these children lead?**

**Ans.** These children lead a life worse than death. The dirt and garbage of the slum is their world so their lives are pathetic, full of misery and poverty.

**(c) Which figure of speech is used in the last line ?**

**Ans.** A simile has been used in the last line where slums are compared to a living hell.

**(d) What blot 'their' maps?**

**Ans.** These living hells are the dirty slums. They are blots on the map of the civilised world. It is the world of the rich and great.

### **SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS:**

**Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:**

**Q.1 What is the message that Stephen Spender wants to give through the poem 'An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum'?**

**Ans.** In 'An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum', Stephen deals with the theme of social injustice and inequalities. There are two different worlds. Art, culture and literature have no relevance to slum children. They live in dark, narrow, cramped holes and lanes.

Unless the gap between the two world is abridged, there can't be any real progress or development.

**Q.2 What should governors, teachers, inspectors and other important and powerful persons do to improve the lot of children living in slums?**

**Ans.** Two world exists simultaneously. They are quite opposite and incompatible to each other. The gap between them must be abridged. Governors, teachers and powerful persons can play an important role in it. They can help in removing social injustice and class inequalities. All good things of life, the sea, the sun, and the fields should be within the reach of slum- children.

**Q.3 What does the poet wish for the children of the slums?**

**Ans.** The world of slum children is of want, miseries, dirt and hunger. Stephen Spender wants social justice and equality for them. The gap between the world of the rich and the mighty, and the hellish and the foggy world of slums must be abridged. Their lives can be changed if social injustice and inequalities be removed. All good things of life must be within the reach of slum children.

**Q.4 Why does Spender call Shakespeare 'wicked' and the map a 'bad example'?**

**Ans.** Spender calls Shakespeare 'wicked' because Shakespeare holds no interest and serves no purpose to the slum children. The map of the world drawn and bartered by the mighty and the rich has no relevance to them. They are not part of it.

**Q.5 Crushed under poverty, disease and miseries do the little school children of slums have any dreams or hopes? What are they?**

**Ans.** The children living in slums have to live in most miserable and sub-human conditions. The burden of poverty and disease crushes their bodies. They still have dreams. Their future is foggy and uncertain. They have kept their hopes alive. They dream of open seas and green fields. They dream of the games that a squirrel plays on the trees.

## KEEPING QUIET

-Pablo Neruda

### Extract Based Questions

1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :

*"What I want should not be  
confused  
with total inactivity.  
Life is what it is about;  
I want no truck with death.  
If we were not so single-minded  
about keeping our lives moving,  
and for once could do nothing,  
perhaps a huge silence  
might interrupt this sadness  
of never understanding ourselves  
and of threatening ourselves with  
death."*

**Questions:.**

**(a) What does the poet not want himself to be?**

**Ans.** The poet doesn't want himself to be confused with advocating total inactivity.

**(b) Explain: 'I want no truck with death'.**

**Ans.** Total inactivity brings death. The poet has no association with death. Hence, he is not advocating for death.

**(c) What were we not focussing on?**

**Ans.** It would have been better if we had not been focussing all the time on keeping our lives moving. We should have given ourselves rest sometime.

**(d) When can a huge silence do us good?**

**Ans.** When we were threatening ourselves with death, a silence can do us a lot of good.

**1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :**

*"Perhaps the Earth can teach us  
as when everything seems dead  
and later proves to be alive.  
Now I'll count up to twelve  
and you keep quiet and I will go."*

**Questions:**

**(a) What can earth teach us?**

**Ans.** The earth can teach a lesson to mankind how to live on it.

**(b) What lives alive when everything seems dead?**

**Ans.** Only the earth lives alive when everything else appears to be dead.

**(c) What does the poet ask us while he counts upto twelve?**

**Ans.** The poet asks us to keep quiet while he is counting upto twelve.

**(d) Name the poem and the poet of these lines.**

**Ans.** The name of the poem is 'Keeping Quiet' and the poet is Pablo Neruda.

### **SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS:**

**Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:**

**Q.1 Why does Pablo Neruda urge us to keep still ?**

**Ans.** Pablo Neruda considers that indecent haste and activities lead humanity to wars, violence and death. He urges us to keep still to enjoy a few moments of peace, rest and tranquillity. Sometimes keeping still gives us the much needed respite.

**Q.2 How can suspension of activities help ?**

**Ans.** Man's indecent haste has already caused a lot of problems. His activities have given birth only chaos, war, violence and miseries. Suspension of human activities can help in restoring the environment and health of this world. Suspension of undue haste and rush can help in bringing peace and tranquillity in the troubled world.

**Q.3 How will counting up to twelve and keeping still help us ?**

**Ans.** Man keeps his never relenting activities throughout the twelve hours of the day. This results in fresh turmoil and tensions. Violence, war and other mischiefs of man are the results of his undue and indecent haste and hurry. Keeping still can help him to buy

time for a positive approach and thinking. It can help in bringing this uneasy and turbulent world to peace and harmony.

**Q.4 How can there be life under apparent stillness ? How does the poet prove it ?**

**Ans.** Neruda doesn't equate stillness with total inactivity. Under this apparent stillness there is life. We can learn it from the earth. When everything seems dead, the earth remains still alive. It is never dead. The life on the earth goes on as usual under the apparent stillness.

**Q.5 How is 'stillness' not equal to total inactivity? Why does Neruda say : 'I want no truck with death' ?**

**Ans.** The Earth can teach us an important lesson. The earth is never dead. When everything seems to be dead, it remains still alive. 'Stillness' shouldn't be confused with total 'total inactivity'. Life goes on as usual. The poet doesn't advocate for total inactivity has no association with death.

**Q.6 Which sadness is Pablo Neruda worried about in his poem?**

**Ans.** The sadness that Pablo Neruda is worried about in his poem is the sadness of isolation that has made modern man its victim. This sadness has made man self-centred and uncaring to the needs of his fellowmen. He has sacrificed the needs of his emotional self in favour of materialism.

**Q.7 Do you think the poet, Pablo Neruda advocates total inactivity and death? Why/Why not?**

**Ans.** No, the poet Pablo Neruda does not advocate total inactivity and death. He wants to give mankind an opportunity of quiet introspection to know and realize how he has been harming himself and others. He makes it clear that stillness should be confused with inactivity. Stillness means halting of harmful human activities. He also wants mankind to understand that life is sprouting out of seemingly dead surroundings.

## A THING OF BEAUTY

-John Keats

### Extract Based Questions

1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :

*"A thing of beauty is a joy forever*

*Its loveliness increases, it will never*

*Pass into nothingness; but will keep*

*A bower quiet for us, and a sleep*

*Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing. "*

### Questions:

(a) "A thing of beauty is joy forever." Explain.

**Ans.** A thing of beauty is constant and everlasting source of joy and pleasure. Time can't fade its beauty as its loveliness increases with passage of time.

(b) Why does not a beautiful thing pass into nothingness?

**Ans.** A thing of beauty never passes into nothingness as its beauty is constant and eternal.

(c) What does the poet mean by "A bower quiet for us"?

**Ans.** As a pleasant place in the shade under trees provides peace and pleasure , a thing of beauty also does the same . It is like a 'quiet' bower.

(d) Name the poem and the poet.

**Ans.** The name of the poem is 'A Think of Beauty' and the poet is John Keats.

2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :

*"Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing*

*A flowery band to bind us to the earth,*

*Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,*

*Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,  
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall  
From our dark spirits."*

**Questions :**

**(a) What are we doing every day?**

**Ans.** We are weaving a flowery wreath every day to bind us to the beauties of this earth.

**(b) Describe bad and evil things that we possess in us.**

**Ans.** We suffer from disappointments, lack of noble qualities and unhealthy and evil ways.

**(c) 'In spite of all'. Explain.**

**Ans.** It means in spite of all these evil things mentioned above.

**(d) What removes the pall from our dark spirits?**

**Ans.** Some beautiful shape or a thing of beauty removes the pall of sadness from our hearts or spirits.

### **SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS:**

**Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:**

**Q.1 How is a thing of beauty a joy forever?**

**Ans.** John Keats, a great Romantic poet, considers that a thing of beauty is a joy forever. It is a constant source of happiness and pleasure. Its loveliness increases every moment. A thing of beauty is never devalued. It never passes into nothingness.

**Q.2 How do we bind us to the earth every morning?**

**Ans.** Like all the Romantic poets, Keats stresses the unbreakable bond of man with nature and the earth. The beauties of the earth fascinate man. Every object of nature is a source of beauty and happiness. Every day we are weaving a wreath through these beautiful things. This flowery band binds us with the earth.

**Q.3 Why does Keats associate 'grandeur' with 'the mighty dead'?**

**Ans.** The 'mighty dead ' were people of great power, authority and grandeur. They were wealthy, brave and awesome people. They are dead in their grave but their grandeur and glory survives. It is believed that they will be handsomely rewarded on the dooms day.

**Q.4 How is the pall of despondence moved away from our dark spirits?**

**Ans.** Man makes his life miserable by his own nature and actions. He faces miseries and pains. Amid these miseries and sufferings, a thing of beauty provides the only hope to humanity. A thing of beauty works wonders. It is a joy forever. It removes the pall of despondence and sadness from our 'dark spirits'.

**Q.5 What is the message that John Keats wants to give through 'A thing of Beauty'?**

**Ans.** The very first line of the poem conveys the message of the poet. John Keats was a worshipper of beauty. A thing of beauty is a joy forever. Beauty never fades. Nor is it devalued. It never passes into nothingness. A thing of beauty removes the pall of sadness and sorrows and gives us joy and pleasure.

**Q.6 Mention any two things which, according to Keats, give us pain and suffering.**

**Ans.** According to Keats man suffers from pain and suffering due to the inhuman death of noble natures on earth and due to the inhuman and hostile attitude that makes our days sad and darkness our ways with distress and wretchedness.

## AUNT JENNIFER'S TIGERS

-Adrienne Rich

### Extract Based Questions

1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :

*"Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance across a screen  
Bright topaz denizens of a world of green.  
They do not fear the men beneath the tree;  
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty."*

**Questions:**

**(a) How are Aunt Jennifer's tigers described?**

**Ans.** Aunt Jennifer's tigers are dynamic, sleek, and full of strength and chivalric grace.

**(b) Why are they described as denizens of a world of green?**

**Ans.** The tigers are the animals that live in forests. They live in the world of green surrounded by green trees and thick green vegetation.

**(c) Why are they not afraid of the men?**

**Ans.** They are not afraid of the men because they are not real. Even otherwise ferocious and strong tigers are never afraid of men.

**(d) Name the poem and the poet.**

**Ans.** The title of the poem is 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers' and the poet is 'Adrienne Rich'.

2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :

*"When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie  
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.  
The tigers in the panel that she made  
Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid. "*

**Questions:**

**(a) Why are Aunt Jennifer's hands terrified?**

**Ans.** Aunt Jennifer's hands are 'terrified' as they still bear the cruel burdens of not so happy wedded life.

**(b) What are the ordeals that Aunt Jennifer faced in her life?**

**Ans.** Aunt Jennifer didn't seem to have led a pleasant married life. The hard and bitter experiences of her married life lie heavy on her.

**(c) How are the tigers different from her?**

**Ans.** Aunt Jennifer's tigers provide a striking contrast. The old lady is weak and can't even move her terrified 'fingers'. On the other hand, her tigers symbolise strength, power and speed.

**(d) What will happen to her tigers after her death?**

**Ans.** The tigers will continue running unafraid in 'sleek' chivalry.

### **SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS:**

**Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:**

**Q.1 Describe the tigers created by Aunt Jennifer?**

**Ans.** Aunt Jennifer weaves and creates tigers in the panel. Her tigers symbolise strength, speed and splendour. They pace with confidence and certainty. They provide a striking contrast to the frail old lady who created them.

**Q.2 How does the poet describe Aunt Jennifer's tigers?**

**Ans.** The poet describe Aunt Jennifer's tigers as 'bright topaz denizens' of the forest. They are fearless. They pace in 'sleek' chivalry. They symbolise pace, power and strength. They provide a sharp contrast to the weak and old lady who created them.

**Q.3 What is the weight that lies heavy on her hand and how is it associated with her husband?**

**Ans.** Aunt Jennifer can't move even her fingers freely in the wool. Actually, she has some bitter experiences of her past married life. The memories of her married life with her husband have been quite unpleasant. The weight of the wedding band sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand. She finds it difficult even to pull the ivory needle easily with her weak fingers.

**Q.4 What kind of ordeals is Aunt Jennifer surrounded by?**

**Ans.** Aunt Jennifer is haunted and surrounded by the ordeals of her married life. The old memories of her married life don't give her any solace or happiness. On the other hand, her 'terrified hands' only 'ringed' with ordeals that were given by her unhappy married life. The unbearable and 'massive weight of Uncle's wedding band' made her fingers tremble and shake.

**Q.5 What will happen to Aunt Jennifer's tigers when she is dead?**

**Ans.** The tigers Aunt Jennifer has created will not die when she is dead. They will survive her. They will go on prancing, proud and afraid. Aunt Jennifer will die but her creations will survive. Art always survives death.

**Q.6 Describe the contrast between Aunt Jennifer and her creation, the tigers.**

**Ans.** Aunt Jennifer is totally victimised and suffers from oppression by her male counterpart. So she creates an alternate world of freedom in her art. The tigers she creates go on prancing menacingly, exhibiting their pride and fearlessness of any social or gender conflicts.