

The Sermon at Benares

— Betty Renshaw



OBJECTIVE Type Questions

[1 mark]

Extract Based Questions

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

Not from weeping nor from grieving will anyone obtain peace of mind; on the contrary, his pain will be the greater and his body will suffer... He who seeks peace should draw out the arrow of lamentation, and complaint, and grief. He who has drawn out the arrow and has become composed will obtain peace of mind."

[CBSE Question Bank 2021]

- (A) If Buddha were a counsellor, which of the following options would you find in a brochure of his service?

<p>TO LIVE IN HEARTS WE LEAVE BEHIND IS NOT TO DIE. —THOMAS CAMPBELL</p>	<p>IN ANOTHER TIME, IN A HAPPIER PLACE, YOU WILL MEET AGAIN. —UNKNOWN</p>
(a)	(b)
<p>DEATH, AFTER ALL, IS THE COMMON EXPECTATION FROM BIRTH. NEITHER HEROES NOR COWARDS CAN ESCAPE IT. —ELLIS PETERS</p>	<p>THE 5 STAGES OF GRIEF— 1. DENIAL, 2. ANGER, 3. BARGAINING, 4. DEPRESSION, 5. ACCEPTANCE</p>
(c)	(d)

- (B) Which of the following statements cannot be attributed to the Buddha based

on the given extract?

- (1) Pain and grief are unavoidable and necessary.
- (2) The inevitability of death makes grieving futile.
- (3) Universality of grief and pain makes us sad.
- (4) Understanding that life is finite leads to wisdom.

- (a) (1) & (2) (b) (1) & (3)
(c) (3) & (4) (d) (1) & (4)

- (C) Chose the option that appropriately completes the following—

lamentation : grief :: _____ : _____

- (a) laughter : joke
(b) discomfort : fear
(c) celebration : joy
(d) resignation: loss

- (D) According to the Buddha, peace of mind is attainable by those who:

- (a) renounce worldly life like the Buddha.
(b) take out the arrow and become strong.
(c) grieve, suffer and then move on.
(d) recognise terms of life and let go of complaint.

- (E) The given extract is paraphrased below. Choose the option that includes the most appropriate solutions for the blanks.

The act of _____ is not only pointless but rather _____, causing pain and suffering. It only serves to _____ peace of mind. _____ without complaint is crucial to well-being and peace.

- (a) grief, harmful, destroy, accepting
(b) grieving, counterproductive, take away, acceptance
(c) weeping, productive, take away, lamentation
(d) grieving, harmful, destroy, lamenting

Ans. (A) (c)

Explanation: As Buddha had impeccable wisdom about life and death and he taught the world about the inevitability of death, option (c) is apt for the brochure if he were

a counsellor. Options (a), (b) and (d) do not relate to Buddha's sermons.

(B) (b) (1) & (3)

Explanation: Buddha never taught that (1) Pain and grief are unavoidable and necessary or (3) Universality of grief and pain makes us sad. He taught that (2) The inevitability of death makes grieving futile and (4) Understanding that life is finite leads to wisdom. Hence, (1) and (3) can't be attributed to Buddha. Hence, (b) is the right answer

(C) (c) *celebration : joy*

Explanation: Here, the pair of words describes a cause and effect relationship. A person laments only due to grief. A person never laughs only due to a joke; gets discomfort due to fear or resign due to loss. But he celebrates due to joy. Hence, (c) is the right answer.

(D) (d) *recognise terms of life and let go of complaint*

Explanation: According to Buddha, peace of mind is attainable by those who 'take out the arrow of lamentation, and complaint, and grief'. It's not sufficient to (a) renounce worldly life, (b) take out the arrow and become strong, or to (c) grieve, suffer and then move on. It's important to (d) recognize terms of life and let go of complaint. Hence, (d) is the right answer.

(E) (b) *grieving, counterproductive, take away, acceptance*

Explanation: Option (b) is most apt for paraphrasing the paragraph as other options do not fit the blanks appropriately. Hence, (b) is the right answer.

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

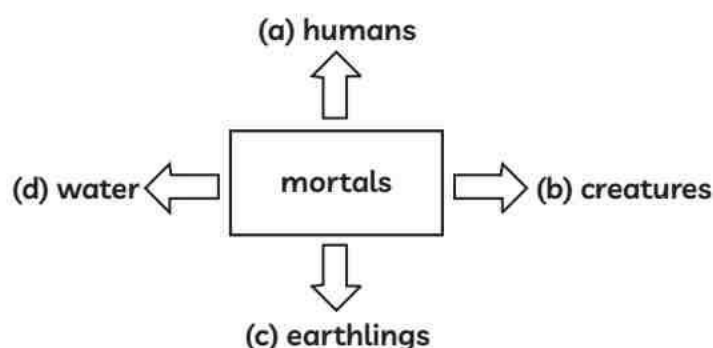
The Buddha said, "The life of mortals in this world is troubled and brief and combined with pain. For there is not any means by which those that have been born can avoid dying; after reaching old age there is death; of such a nature are living beings. As ripe fruits are early in danger of falling, so mortals when born are always in danger of death."

(A) "The life of mortals in this world is troubled and brief and combined with pain." The term 'brief' means:

- (a) short
- (b) complex

- (c) exciting
- (d) dejected

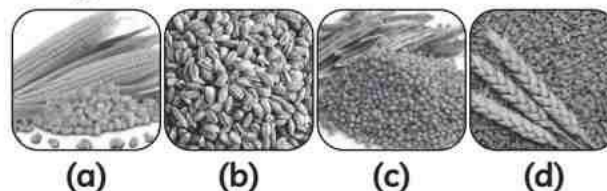
(B) Pick the word that DOES NOT relate to the term 'mortals'.



(C) A person has to always live in the fear of:

- (a) ill health
- (b) death
- (c) old age
- (d) fragility

(D) Choose the option that represents the seeds that Buddha asked Kisa Gotami to bring.



(E) Which word is NOT similar in meaning to the term 'ripe'?

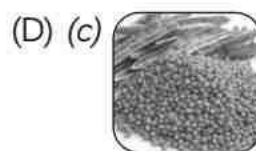
- (a) mature
- (b) grown
- (c) mallow
- (d) unready

Ans. (A) (a) short

Explanation: The term 'brief' means short. Here, (b) complex means difficult, (c) exciting means thrilling and (d) dejected means sorrowful. Hence, (a) is the right answer.

(B) (d) water

Explanation: The term 'mortals' means a living thing subjected to death. Here, (a) humans, (b) creatures and (c) earthlings are all subjected to death while (d) water is an element that is non-living and doesn't relate to 'mortals'. Hence, (d) is the correct answer.



Explanation: Buddha asked Kisa Gotami to bring 'mustard seeds' from the house of those who have not lost their loved ones. Here option (c) represents mustard seeds. So, (c) is the correct answer.

(E) (d) unready

Explanation: The term 'ripe' means full-grown or seasoned. Options (a), (b) and (c) are all similar in meaning to the term 'ripe' while option (d) unready means not matured or prepared. Hence, (d) is the right answer.

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

GAUTAMA Buddha (563 B.C.– 483 B.C.) began life as a prince named Siddhartha Gautama, in northern India. At twelve, he was sent away for schooling in the Hindu sacred scriptures and four years later he returned home to marry a princess. They had a son and lived for ten years as befitted royalty. At about the age of twenty-five, the Prince, heretofore shielded from the sufferings of the world, while out hunting chanced upon a sick man, then an aged man, then a funeral procession, and finally a monk begging for alms.

(A) Choose the statement that is NOT true:

- (a) GAUTAMA Buddha began his life as a prince.
- (b) At ten, he was sent away for schooling in the Hindu sacred scriptures.
- (c) Four years later he returned home to marry a princess.
- (d) He had a son.

(B) The prince's life was:

- (a) protected from worldly sufferings.
- (b) filled with miseries.
- (c) filled with fake love.
- (d) protected from all worldly possessions.

(C) Pick the incorrect pair:

- (a) beggar : alms

- (b) rich : money
- (c) funeral : death
- (d) old age : strength

(D) Which word does NOT relate to 'sacred'?

- (a) holy
- (b) wordly
- (c) blessed
- (d) sanctified

(E) Which word does NOT relate to 'alms'?

- (a) landlord
- (b) beggar
- (c) tramp
- (d) vagrant

Ans. (A) (b) At ten, he was sent away for schooling in the Hindu sacred scriptures.

Explanation: It is clear from the extract that (a) GAUTAMA Buddha began his life as a prince, (c) four years later he returned home to marry a princess and (d) He had a son.

But he was sent away for schooling in the Hindu sacred scriptures at the age of twelve, not ten. Hence, (b) is the right answer.

(B) (a) protected from worldly sufferings

Explanation: It is clear from the extract that the prince's life was shielded from the (a) sufferings of the world. Hence, (a) is the right answer.

(D) (b) wordly

Explanation: The term 'sacred' means holy. Here, options (a), (c) and (d) means the same as 'sacred' while (b) worldly means not completely free from sins. Hence, (b) is the right answer.

(E) (a) landlord

Explanation: The term 'alms' refer to the money given for free to the beggars. Options (b), (c) and (d) means beggars who ask for alms while (a) a landlord doesn't ask for alms. Hence, (b) is the right answer.

SUBJECTIVE Type Questions

Short Answer Type-I Questions (SA-I) [2 marks]

Answer the following questions in 20-30 words:

4. According to Kisa Gotami, what is the greatest grief of life? [CBSE 2014]
5. Elucidate any one quality that Siddhartha demonstrated when he gave up his status and family. Explain your choice.

Ans. By giving up his status and family, Siddhartha demonstrated a quality of selflessness. He

was born as a prince into a royal family but he gave all that riches and worldly pleasures in order to seek enlightenment to understand the causes of sorrows and sufferings of human life.

6. Do you think being enlightened placed a far greater responsibility on the Buddha than being king would have? Justify your stance.

Ans. Yes, I think that being enlightened placed a far greater responsibility on the Buddha than being king would have because after attaining

enlightenment, it was Buddha's responsibility to guide people on the right path. He was supposed to teach people about the real aim of life and death as a monk.

- 7. The Buddha renounced his worldly life to attain enlightenment. How might the sermon at Benares have helped Siddhartha Gautama's wife if she had heard it?**

[CBSE Question Bank 2021]

Ans. If Siddhartha Gautama's wife had heard his sermon at Benares, she might have too renounced her worldly life and joined her husband to attain enlightenment. She would have also understood that real peace comes when a person rises above the worldly pleasures of life.

- 8. How can death be considered an equaliser?**

Ans. Death is certainly an equalizer as it creates a balance of life. New lives start on earth only after the old lives are gone. If mortals won't die, there will be no place for new lives. Moreover a person gets new life after leaving the old one. So, death is required to keep the circle of life going.

- 9. How did Kisa Gotami realize that life and death is a normal process?** [CBSE 2019]

Ans. Kisa Gotami realized that life and death is a normal process after Buddha asked her to get a handful of mustard seeds from a house where no loved one had ever died. When she went to all the houses, she realized that there is no one in the world whose dear ones hadn't died. Death is common to all.

- 10. ② How does Kisa compare the city lights to the fate of men?**

- 11. Who, according to Buddha, will obtain peace?**

Ans. According to Buddha, one who seeks peace should draw out the arrows of lamentation, complaint and grief from one's heart. He, who has become composed, will finally obtain peace of mind.

- 12. When her son dies, Kisa Gotami goes from house to house. What was the result?**

Ans. When her son dies, Kisa Gotami goes from house to house asking for medicine to cure her son. She does not get any because there is no medicine to bring back a dead person to life.

- 13. How did Prince Siddhartha get exposure to spiritual knowledge?**

Ans. Once, Prince Siddhartha went on a hunt. There he came across a sick man, an old man, a monk asking for alms and a funeral procession. Unable to find out the reason for those sufferings, he went in search of spiritual knowledge.

Short Answer Type-II Questions (SA-II)

[3 marks]

Answer the following questions in 40-50 words:

- 14. Kisa understood the temporality of life as she sat at the wayside watching the city lights. Can you think of any other object or phenomenon, natural or man-made, that might similarly reflect the fragile nature of human life? Justify your choice.**

[CBSE Question Bank 2021]

Ans. I believe the water bubbles reflect the fragile nature of human life. They develop fully though for a few seconds only; then they burst and become water again. Human life is also transitory. A person comes to life on earth, fulfils his/her obligation of life and then finally leaves this world to start a new journey.

- 15. Grief is often seen as a measure of love. Do you think the Buddha's sermon undermines a mother's love? Justify your response.**

Ans. I think that Buddha's sermon doesn't undermine a mother's love for his child. It aims to make the person who is grief-stricken realize that grief and lamentation lead to destroying peace of mind. It never helps the person. Instead, accepting the loss and letting go of the complaints bring solace to the grieved person.

- 16. What message might the Buddha's story hold for those who are in positions of power and privilege?**

Ans. The story of Buddha is an eye-opener for those who are in positions of power and privileges. Materialistic possessions can never give peace of mind to anybody. A person's real aim in life is to attain inner peace and love for God. People who hold power and positions are always engrossed in worldly pleasures. They are unknown to the sufferings of human life.

- 17. ② Why did the Buddha choose Benares to preach his first sermon?**

- 18. What was Gautam Buddha's life before he became Buddha?**

Ans. Buddha was a prince named Siddhartha Gautama, in northern India. At twelve, he was sent away for schooling in the Hindu sacred

scriptures and four years later, he returned home to marry a princess. They had a son and lived for ten years as befitted royalty.

19. What does the Buddha say about the world ? [CBSE 2012]

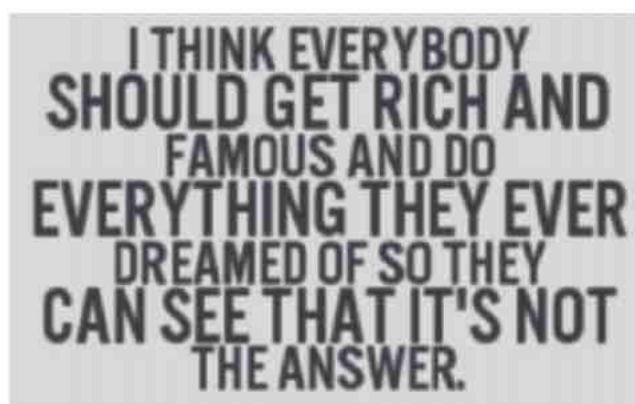
Ans. Buddha says that everything in this world is transitory. Those who are born, have to die someday. Humans of the world are suffering from a lot of pains and problems. Yet everybody is engrossed in the worldly pleasures of possessions.

Long Answer Type Questions (LA)

[5 marks]

Answer the following questions in 100-120 words:

20. Read the given quote by actor Jim Carrey.



Can you relate this to the Buddha's life before and after he attained enlightenment? Provide examples from the text to support your answer. [CBSE Question Bank 2021]

Ans. Siddhartha Gautama, in his youth, had never seen any suffering of human life like weakness, diseases, old-age and death. He was born as a prince in a royal family. He lived a luxurious life and was oblivious to the common sufferings of the people. When he saw sufferings of people one day, he realized that nobody is spared by such sorrows. Money and materialistic things can't stop one from reaching death. Buddha then decided to give up all his riches and comforts of life in search of enlightenment concerning the sorrows and sufferings of human life. However, after enlightenment, Buddha achieved his aim of life and learnt that one must rise above all the worldly pleasures to attain peace of mind.

21. In the story 'The Sermon at Benares', Kisa Gotami runs from house to house in search of a medicine for her dead child.

Imagine yourself as the writer of the story and write an imaginary conversation Kisa Gotami had with a lady of the house that Kisa went to ask for the medicine.

Ans. Kisa Gotami: (*anxiously*) Is anybody at home? Please help me!

Lady: Oh dear! Who are you? And what do you need?

Kisa Gotami: My son is dead.....he is my only child. I need a medicine to cure him and bring him back to life. Please help me!

Lady: I am so sorry to hear about your loss, lady. I wish I could help you but alas! No one can help you in this. Your son is no more. Please accept this harsh reality and have patience. No medicine can bring him back, dear.

Kisa Gotami: (*crying*) Nooooo.....he will be alright if someone gives me the medicine to cure him. Tell me if you have else I may ask other people. I don't have a lot of time.

Lady: I am sorry. I can't help you, dear!

22. ② "*The life of mortals in this world is troubled and brief and combined with pain.....*" With this statement of the Buddha, find out the moral value that Kisa Gotami learnt after the death of her child.

23. Life is full of trials and tribulations. Kisa Gotami also passes through a period of grief in her life. How does she behave in those circumstances? What lesson does a reader learn from the story of her life? Give any two points how you would like to act in the midst of adverse circumstances.

Ans. Kisa Gotami's only son had died. Grief-stricken, she went about asking people for medicine to revive her dead son. At the behest of a man, she went to the Buddha who said he would cure her son only if she could gather some mustard seeds from a house where no death had ever taken place.

After knocking several doors and being unsuccessful, she realised that death was common to all and it could not be avoided. No one can save anyone, so, weeping over a dead soul was fruitless. It was wise to stop grieving and accept the truth. Grieving over what is lost would only cause more pain and suffering and even then, cannot bring one back to life. Accept life as it comes, be grateful and live it to the fullest with peace of mind and good health.

24. '*Buddha wandered aimlessly for seven years in search of enlightenment.*' Comment on how Buddha attained enlightenment. What did his first sermon reflect?

Ans. Siddhartha Gautama wandered aimlessly for seven years in search of enlightenment. Finally one day, he sat under a peepal tree and after meditating for seven days, he attained enlightenment. The peepal tree came to be known as 'Bodhi Tree', the tree of wisdom. After achieving enlightenment, Siddhartha came to be known as 'Gautama Buddha'. He started giving sermons and spiritual wisdom to people. He gave his first sermon in the city of Benares, to a lady named Kisa Gotami. His sermon reflected his wisdom about life and death.

25. In the story 'The Sermon at Benares', a man tells Kisa Gotami to go to Buddha for helping her bring her dead son back to life.

Imagine yourself as the writer of the story and write an imaginary conversation between Kisa Gotami and the man.


Ans. Kisa Gotami: (*anxiously*) Please help me. My son is not responding. People are saying that

he is dead. I don't believe this. That cannot happen. Give me a medicine to cure him.

Man: Oh dear lady! Relax. Calm down. People are right. Your son is really dead and now no medicine can cure him or bring him back to life. It is a harsh reality of life.

Kisa Gotami: (*shreiking*) Nooooo...I can't accept it. This is not true.

Man: In that case, only one person can help you, Lord Buddha. He has a cure for everything. Go to him. He might help you, dear!

26.  Siddhartha Gautama was shocked to see the sufferings faced by people in the story 'The Sermon at Benares'.

Imagine yourself as the writer of the story and write an imaginary conversation between Siddhartha Gautama and an old man who asked him for alms.

