

Chapter 7. A Doctor's Journal Entry for Aug 6, 1945 [Poem]

Passage 1

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

The morning stretched calm, beautiful, and warm.
Sprawling half clad, I gazed out at the form
Of shimmering leaves and shadows. Suddenly
A strong flash, then another, startled me.
I saw the old stone lantern brightly lit.

Who is the narrator of this journal entry? What does this entry record?

Answer:

The narrator of the journal entry is a doctor who lives with his wife in Hiroshima. It records the horrific aftermath of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima on 6th of August 1945, during WW II.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

The morning stretched calm, beautiful, and warm.
Sprawling half clad, I gazed out at the form
Of shimmering leaves and shadows. Suddenly
A strong flash, then another, startled me.
I saw the old stone lantern brightly lit.

Describe the scene as noted by the narrator before seeing the flashes of light.

Answer:

Before seeing the flashes of light, the day began with a calm morning. The narrator describes the day as beautiful and warm. The sun was up and the narrator gazed at the shimmering leaves and shadows before him.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

The morning stretched calm, beautiful, and warm.
Sprawling half clad, I gazed out at the form
Of shimmering leaves and shadows. Suddenly
A strong flash, then another, startled me.
I saw the old stone lantern brightly lit.

What startled the narrator? Why?

Answer:

The narrator's peaceful morning was disrupted by two sudden strong flashes of light. The sudden flares startled the narrator because he did not know what caused them and suddenly the old stone lantern before him was up in flames.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

The morning stretched calm, beautiful, and warm.
Sprawling half clad, I gazed out at the form
Of shimmering leaves and shadows. Suddenly
A strong flash, then another, startled me.
I saw the old stone lantern brightly lit.

Which part of speech is most used in this extract and to what effect?

Answer:

This extract uses adjectives and verbs to describe the calm morning as experienced by the narrator before the blast took place.

Passage 2

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

Magnesium flares? While I debated it,
The roof, the walls and, as it seemed, the world
Collapsed in timber and debris, dust swirled
Around me – in the garden now – and, weird,
My drawers and undershirt disappeared.

Why does the poet use hyphens in the second last line of the extract?

Answer:

The poet uses hyphens for poetic effect in the second last line of the extract. They are pauses which reflect the disorientation caused by the sudden flashes of light.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

Magnesium flares? While I debated it,
The roof, the walls and, as it seemed, the world
Collapsed in timber and debris, dust swirled
Around me – in the garden now – and, weird,
My drawers and undershirt disappeared.

What do the words 'Magnesium flares' refer to? Why did the narrator mention them?

Answer:

The poem is set during the time of Second World War. In this war, magnesium was commonly used in explosives. Therefore, the sudden flashes of light prompted the narrator to think that they were caused by magnesium.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

Magnesium flares? While I debated it,
The roof, the walls and, as it seemed, the world
Collapsed in timber and debris, dust swirled
Around me – in the garden now – and, weird,
My drawers and undershirt disappeared.

What happened while the narrator processed everything and debated on what to do next?

Answer:

As the narrator debated on what to do next everything around him began to crumble and fall. He saw the roof and the walls of his house collapse into debris. By the time he stepped out and reached the garden, he could see dust all around him.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

Magnesium flares? While I debated it,
The roof, the walls and, as it seemed, the world
Collapsed in timber and debris, dust swirled
Around me – in the garden now – and, weird,
My drawers and undershirt disappeared.

What was weirder than the flashes of light and the collapsing of buildings? Why does the poet call it 'weird'?

Answer:

The disappearance of the narrator's drawers and undershirt was weirder than the flashes of light and the collapsing of buildings. The poet calls it weird because the narrator could not come up with any logical explanation for such a thing to happen.

Passage 3

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

A splinter jutted from my mangled thigh.
My right side bled, my cheek was torn, and I
Dislodged, detachedly, a piece of glass,
All the time wondering what had come to pass.
Where was my wife? Alarmed, I gave a shout,
'Where are you, Yecko-san?' My blood gushed out.
The artery in my neck? Scared for my life,
I called out, panic-stricken, to my wife.
Pale, bloodstained, frightened, Yecko-san emerged,
Holding her elbow. 'We'll be fine,' I urged –

Describe the narrator's appearance after the flashes of light. How did the narrator's wife look when she emerged?

Answer:

After the flashes of light, the narrator was covered with wounds, dust and blood, and his clothes had disappeared. A splinter jutted from his mangled thigh. There was blood on his right side and his cheek was torn. The narrator's wife looked pale and frightened and was bloodstained when she emerged. She was also holding her elbow which was an indication that she too was injured.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

A splinter jutted from my mangled thigh.
My right side bled, my cheek was torn, and I
Dislodged, detachedly, a piece of glass,
All the time wondering what had come to pass.
Where was my wife? Alarmed, I gave a shout,
'Where are you, Yecko-san?' My blood gushed out.
The artery in my neck? Scared for my life,
I called out, panic-stricken, to my wife.
Pale, bloodstained, frightened, Yecko-san emerged,
Holding her elbow. 'We'll be fine,' I urged –

Why did the narrator not understand what had come to pass?

Answer:

The flashes of light and the destruction that followed all happened so soon that the narrator did not understand what had come to pass.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

A splinter jutted from my mangled thigh.
My right side bled, my cheek was torn, and I
Dislodged, detachedly, a piece of glass,
All the time wondering what had come to pass.
Where was my wife? Alarmed, I gave a shout,
'Where are you, Yecko-san?' My blood gushed out.
The artery in my neck? Scared for my life,
I called out, panic-stricken, to my wife.
Pale, bloodstained, frightened, Yecko-san emerged,
Holding her elbow. 'We'll be fine,' I urged –

How do the adjectives for fear used in the stanza portray the narrator? The narrator mentions being scared for his life, why then does he call out to his wife?

Answer:

Words such as 'alarmed', 'scared' and 'panic-stricken' have been employed in the extract to describe the narrator's fear. In the lines before these words the narrator clearly describes his own condition but when he cannot understand the cause of the explosion and is unable to find his wife, he panics further. This shows that he loves and cares for his wife dearly.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

A splinter jutted from my mangled thigh.
My right side bled, my cheek was torn, and I
Dislodged, detachedly, a piece of glass,
All the time wondering what had come to pass.
Where was my wife? Alarmed, I gave a shout,
'Where are you, Yecko-san?' My blood gushed out.
The artery in my neck? Scared for my life,
I called out, panic-stricken, to my wife.
Pale, bloodstained, frightened, Yecko-san emerged,
Holding her elbow. 'We'll be fine,' I urged –

What words did the narrator use to console his wife? Was she the only one being consoled?

Answer:

The narrator used the words 'We'll be fine,' to console his wife. When the narrator used these words he realised that he was consoling himself more than her by doing this.

Question 5.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

A splinter jutted from my mangled thigh.
My right side bled, my cheek was torn, and I
Dislodged, detachedly, a piece of glass,
All the time wondering what had come to pass.
Where was my wife? Alarmed, I gave a shout,
'Where are you, Yecko-san?' My blood gushed out.
The artery in my neck? Scared for my life,
I called out, panic-stricken, to my wife.
Pale, bloodstained, frightened, Yecko-san emerged,
Holding her elbow. 'We'll be fine,' I urged –

Evaluate the narrator's relation with his wife based on the extract given above.

Answer:

The narrator shares a close bond with his wife. This is evident when he nervously searches for her all around amidst the dust and the debris. When she finally emerges out of the dust, he notices her frightfully pale face and tries to console her. When he remembers that he has to do his duty as a doctor, his first thought is to send his wife to a safe place. He instructs her to go ahead without him and tells her that he will join her later. We don't know if the two reunite since the widespread devastation caused by the atomic explosion left almost everyone shattered and lost. However, the poet clearly explains to the readers that even in those trying times, the doctor chooses to look for his wife instead of fleeing to a safer location.

Passage 4

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

'Let's get out quickly.' Stumbling to the street
We fell, tripped by something at our feet.
I gasped out, when I saw it was a head:
'Excuse me, please excuse me -' He was dead:
A gate had crushed him. There we stood, afraid.
A house standing before us tilted, swayed,
Toppled, and crashed. Fire sprang up in the dust,
Spread by the wind. It dawned on us we must
Get to the hospital: we needed aid –
And I should help my staff too. ...

What did the narrator stumble over on his way out?

Answer:

On his way out the narrator stumbled over the head of a dead man who had been crushed by a gate.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

'Let's get out quickly.' Stumbling to the street
We fell, tripped by something at our feet.
I gasped out, when I saw it was a head:
'Excuse me, please excuse me -' He was dead:
A gate had crushed him. There we stood, afraid.
A house standing before us tilted, swayed,
Toppled, and crashed. Fire sprang up in the dust,
Spread by the wind. It dawned on us we must
Get to the hospital: we needed aid -
And I should help my staff too. ...

What effect did it have on him and his wife?

Answer:

The narrator and his wife were shocked and distressed to see the mangled remains of the dead man.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

'Let's get out quickly.' Stumbling to the street
We fell, tripped by something at our feet.
I gasped out, when I saw it was a head:
'Excuse me, please excuse me -' He was dead:
A gate had crushed him. There we stood, afraid.
A house standing before us tilted, swayed,
Toppled, and crashed. Fire sprang up in the dust,
Spread by the wind. It dawned on us we must
Get to the hospital: we needed aid -
And I should help my staff too. ...

What dawned on the narrator when they were on the street?

Answer:

When they reached the street, it dawned on the narrator that they had to get to the hospital. They needed medical help but more urgently the narrator, who was a doctor, had to assist his staff at the hospital in looking after the casualties.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

'Let's get out quickly.' Stumbling to the street
We fell, tripped by something at our feet.
I gasped out, when I saw it was a head:
'Excuse me, please excuse me -' He was dead:
A gate had crushed him. There we stood, afraid.
A house standing before us tilted, swayed,
Toppled, and crashed. Fire sprang up in the dust,
Spread by the wind. It dawned on us we must
Get to the hospital: we needed aid -
And I should help my staff too. ...

Why does the narrator use the word 'dawned'?

Answer:

The narrator uses the word 'dawned' for two things; firstly to indicate that he was too shaken by the blast to remember that his and his wife's injuries needed medical attention. Secondly, as he saw people marching towards the hospital, he suddenly realised that he was a doctor who should be at the hospital treating the injured people.

Question 5.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

'Let's get out quickly.' Stumbling to the street
We fell, tripped by something at our feet.
I gasped out, when I saw it was a head:
'Excuse me, please excuse me -' He was dead:
A gate had crushed him. There we stood, afraid.
A house standing before us tilted, swayed,
Toppled, and crashed. Fire sprang up in the dust,
Spread by the wind. It dawned on us we must
Get to the hospital: we needed aid -
And I should help my staff too. ...

What was going on around the narrator and his wife as they walked about looking for safety?

Answer:

As the narrator and his wife looked for safety they saw a house which was standing before them tilt, sway, topple, and crash to the earth. Then there was fire which sprang up from the dust and was quickly spreading by the wind.

Passage 5

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

...(Though this made
Sense to me then, I wonder how I could)
My legs gave way. I sat down on the ground.
Thirst seized me, but no water could be found.
My breath was short, but bit by bit my strength
Seemed to revive, and I got up at length.
I was still naked, but I felt no shame.
This thought disturbed me somewhat, till I came
Upon a soldier, standing silently,
Who gave the towel round his neck to me
My legs, stiff with dried blood, rebelled. ...

What did the shock of the blasts do to the narrator?

Answer:

The shock of the blasts paralysed the narrator in his spot. His legs gave way and brought him down to the ground. He felt thirsty and his breath quickened for a while.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

...(Though this made
Sense to me then, I wonder how I could)
My legs gave way. I sat down on the ground.
Thirst seized me, but no water could be found.
My breath was short, but bit by bit my strength
Seemed to revive, and I got up at length.
I was still naked, but I felt no shame.
This thought disturbed me somewhat, till I came
Upon a soldier, standing silently,
Who gave the towel round his neck to me
My legs, stiff with dried blood, rebelled. ...

Why do you think the narrator felt no shame although he was naked?

Answer:

The narrator was not the only person who was naked. The explosion was so intense that it caused the skin and clothes of people to melt away. The narrator could see many others walking naked on the street trying to fathom what had happened.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

...(Though this made
Sense to me then, I wonder how I could)
My legs gave way. I sat down on the ground.
Thirst seized me, but no water could be found.
My breath was short, but bit by bit my strength
Seemed to revive, and I got up at length.
I was still naked, but I felt no shame.
This thought disturbed me somewhat, till I came
Upon a soldier, standing silently,
Who gave the towel round his neck to me
My legs, stiff with dried blood, rebelled. ...

What thought disturbed the narrator? When did it subside?

Answer:

The thought that he was naked and yet felt no shame disturbed the narrator. This thought subsided when the narrator met a soldier standing silently. The soldier noticed the narrator and gave him a towel that he had around his neck.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

...(Though this made
Sense to me then, I wonder how I could)
My legs gave way. I sat down on the ground.
Thirst seized me, but no water could be found.
My breath was short, but bit by bit my strength
Seemed to revive, and I got up at length.
I was still naked, but I felt no shame.
This thought disturbed me somewhat, till I came
Upon a soldier, standing silently,
Who gave the towel round his neck to me
My legs, stiff with dried blood, rebelled. ...

Why are the soldier and the other people in the poem silent?

Answer:

The atomic explosion threw the citizens into shock, which is the reason why there was silence all around. The blast took away everything that the innocent people owned; their loved ones, their houses and their jobs. Moreover, the people were injured and scarred for life. The pain of these wounds was so unbearable that the people chose to endure it silently than to add to the chaos. There was no one they could turn to for support as every single soul in the city was running for his life.

Question 5.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

...(Though this made
Sense to me then, I wonder how I could)
My legs gave way. I sat down on the ground.
Thirst seized me, but no water could be found.
My breath was short, but bit by bit my strength
Seemed to revive, and I got up at length.
I was still naked, but I felt no shame.
This thought disturbed me somewhat, till I came
Upon a soldier, standing silently,
Who gave the towel round his neck to me
My legs, stiff with dried blood, rebelled. ...

How much time must have passed since the attack? Are there indications of time passing in the extract?

Answer:

Through the narration, we can deduce that the narrator took some time to come out of his crumbling house and reach the open space where he is now. Apart from this there is no indication of the amount of time that passed.

Passage 6

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

...I said
To Yecko-san she must go on ahead.
She did not wish to, but in our distress
What choice had we? A dreadful loneliness
Came over me when she had gone. My mind
Ran at high speed, my body crept behind.
I saw the shadowy forms of people, some
Were ghosts, some scarecrows, all were wordless dumb –
Arms stretched straight out, shoulder to dangling hand;
It took some time for me to understand
The friction on their burns caused so much pain

What did the narrator instruct his wife to do? What reason did he have for such a request?

Answer:

The injuries of the narrator stopped him from keeping up with Yecko-san, his wife. The narrator instructed his wife to go on ahead and find a safe place for herself. He also requested her to go ahead because he wanted to go to the hospital and look after the injured.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

...I said
To Yecko-san she must go on ahead.
She did not wish to, but in our distress
What choice had we? A dreadful loneliness
Came over me when she had gone. My mind
Ran at high speed, my body crept behind.
I saw the shadowy forms of people, some
Were ghosts, some scarecrows, all were wordless dumb –
Arms stretched straight out, shoulder to dangling hand;
It took some time for me to understand
The friction on their burns caused so much pain

Why did the narrator's wife not want to leave? What did the narrator feel when his wife left him?

Answer:

The narrator's wife did not want to leave him because she knew there was no certainty of them meeting again. When his wife finally left the narrator felt a dreadful loneliness overcome him.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

...I said
To Yecko-san she must go on ahead.
She did not wish to, but in our distress
What choice had we? A dreadful loneliness
Came over me when she had gone. My mind
Ran at high speed, my body crept behind.
I saw the shadowy forms of people, some
Were ghosts, some scarecrows, all were wordless dumb –
Arms stretched straight out, shoulder to dangling hand;
It took some time for me to understand
The friction on their burns caused so much pain

Why does the narrator say that his body did not keep up with his mind?

Answer:

The narrator's mind was grasping everything at full speed. However, the severity of the situation pushed the narrator's body into inactivity. He saw and felt everything but he could not get his body to react to any of it.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

...I said
To Yecko-san she must go on ahead.
She did not wish to, but in our distress
What choice had we? A dreadful loneliness
Came over me when she had gone. My mind
Ran at high speed, my body crept behind.
I saw the shadowy forms of people, some
Were ghosts, some scarecrows, all were wordless dumb –
Arms stretched straight out, shoulder to dangling hand;
It took some time for me to understand
The friction on their burns caused so much pain

**What are the phrases used by the narrator to describe the people he encountered?
What image does he paint with such description?**

Answer:

The narrator uses the phrases 'shadowy forms', 'ghosts' 'scarecrows' and 'wordless dumb' to describe the people he encountered. These phrases are generally used for the dead. By using these phrases, the narrator is trying to describe how morbid the situation had become after the explosion.

Question 5.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

...I said
To Yecko-san she must go on ahead.
She did not wish to, but in our distress
What choice had we? A dreadful loneliness
Came over me when she had gone. My mind
Ran at high speed, my body crept behind.
I saw the shadowy forms of people, some
Were ghosts, some scarecrows, all were wordless dumb –
Arms stretched straight out, shoulder to dangling hand;
It took some time for me to understand
The friction on their burns caused so much pain

Why were the arms of the people stretched straight out?

Answer:

The arms of the people were stretched straight out to prevent them from scraping or rubbing against the wounded parts of their bodies. The pain caused by the burns was so intense that the people feared to even touch themselves.

Passage 7

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

They feared to chafe flesh against flesh again.
Those who could, shuffled in a blank parade
Towards the hospital. I saw, dismayed,
A woman with a child stand in my path –
Both naked. Had they come back from the bath?
I turned my gaze, but was at a loss
That she should stand thus, till I came across
A naked man – and now the thought arose
That some strange thing had stripped us of our clothes.

What did the people fear? What does the word 'chafe' mean?

Answer:

Even a slight touch to their body caused such pain that the people feared to chafe flesh against flesh. The word 'chafe' means 'rub against something or cause friction'.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

They feared to chafe flesh against flesh again.
Those who could, shuffled in a blank parade
Towards the hospital. I saw, dismayed,
A woman with a child stand in my path –
Both naked. Had they come back from the bath?
I turned my gaze, but was at a loss
That she should stand thus, till I came across
A naked man – and now the thought arose
That some strange thing had stripped us of our clothes.

Why did the narrator turn his gaze? What did the narrator wonder?

Answer:

The sight of the naked woman and the child disturbed the narrator greatly therefore he turned his gaze. On seeing them the narrator wondered if they had come from a bath.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

They feared to chafe flesh against flesh again.
Those who could, shuffled in a blank parade
Towards the hospital. I saw, dismayed,
A woman with a child stand in my path –
Both naked. Had they come back from the bath?
I turned my gaze, but was at a loss

That she should stand thus, till I came across
A naked man – and now the thought arose
That some strange thing had stripped us of our clothes.

Which gruesome reality does the stripping of the clothes represents?

Answer:

The mention of 'stripping of clothes' can be seen as an indication of the extent of destruction caused by the ruthless bombing. By the bombing, innocent people lost each and every thing that they held dear to them.

Question 4.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

They feared to chafe flesh against flesh again.
Those who could, shuffled in a blank parade
Towards the hospital. I saw, dismayed,
A woman with a child stand in my path –
Both naked. Had they come back from the bath?
I turned my gaze, but was at a loss
That she should stand thus, till I came across
A naked man – and now the thought arose
That some strange thing had stripped us of our clothes.

What does the poet convey by the two hyphens used in this extract?

Answer:

The hyphens in this extract are either preceded or followed by the mention of naked people. It therefore highlights the shock and the discomfort of the narrator on seeing people in such a state.

Question 5.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

They feared to chafe flesh against flesh again.
Those who could, shuffled in a blank parade
Towards the hospital. I saw, dismayed,
A woman with a child stand in my path –
Both naked. Had they come back from the bath?
I turned my gaze, but was at a loss
That she should stand thus, till I came across
A naked man – and now the thought arose
That some strange thing had stripped us of our clothes.

In the extract does there seem to be an order in the chaos?

Answer:

Yes. A certain order can be noted by the phrase 'shuffled in a blank parade towards the hospital' used in the extract.

Passage 8

Question 1.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

The face of an old woman on the ground
Was marred with suffering, but she made no sound.
Silence was common to us all. I heard
No cries of anguish, or a single word.

Explain the over powering theme of silence in the poem. What kind of silence is it?

Answer:

The strangest part of the poem is the silence which the narrator describes repeatedly. He mentions people injured and chafed because of the blast. However, the deafening silence which follows the blast is even more harmful. It brings out the extent of shock and pain that the innocent people had to bear. The people were wounded both physically and mentally to such an extent that they could not even express their agony audibly. It is also a representation of the doom which the people were pushed into, as they lost everything they had in the blast.

Question 2.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

The face of an old woman on the ground
Was marred with suffering, but she made no sound.
Silence was common to us all. I heard
No cries of anguish, or a single word.

How many people does the narrator come across through the poem? What does he note about them all?

Answer:

Apart from his wife and the crowd of people walking like shadowy forms of ghosts, the narrator comes across a soldier, a woman with a child and an old woman on the ground. He noted that all these people had lost their clothes by some unknown force. He also noticed the silence that prevailed after the blast. No one cried or screamed.

Question 3.

Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

The face of an old woman on the ground
Was marred with suffering, but she made no sound.
Silence was common to us all. I heard
No cries of anguish, or a single word.

What is the tone of the poem? Is it in keeping with the title?

Answer:

The poem does not follow any poetic devices. Apart from the short lines, there is no similarity between it and any other form of poems. On the contrary it closely follows the pattern of a diary entry. It is written in the first person. It is descriptive and contemplative. And finally, it records a past event.