

# **The Trees**

## **TEXTUAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **Thinking about the poem**

**1. (i) Find, in the first stanza, three things that cannot happen in a treeless forest.**

**Ans:** In a treeless forest

(i) No birds can sit.

(ii) No insects can hide and

(iii) The sun cannot bury its feet in shadow.

**2) What picture do these words create in your mind : '..... sun bury its feet in shadow.....?' What could the poet mean by the sun's 'feet'?**

**Ans:** According to the poet the picture is of the sun. The sun's rays do not reach the earth. There is shadow on the earth. Sun's feet means the rays of the sun that are being prevented by the clouds or some other things.

**2. (i) Where are the trees in the poem? What do their roots, their leaves, and their twigs do?**

**Ans:** The trees in the poem are in tubs in the room. Their roots try to make themselves free of the cracks in the veranda floor. Their leaves go to the glass and the twigs under the roof.

(ii) What does the poet compare their branch to?

**Ans:** The poet compares their branches to newly discharged patients who are going unsteadily to the clinic doors.

**3. (i) How does the poet describe the moon :**

(a) at the beginning of the third stanza, and

(b) at its end? What causes this change?

**Ans:** (a) At the beginning the moon was full and shining in the open sky.

(b) At the end it is broken like a mirror.

*The movement of the trees causes this.*

**(ii) What happens to the house when the trees move out of it?**

**Ans:** When the trees move out of the house a change takes place in it. It's glass is broken and wind rushes with the smell of leaves to it.

**(iii) Why do you think the poet does not mention 'the departure of the forest from the house' in her letters?** *(Could it be that we are often silent about important happenings that are so unexpected that they embarrass us? Think about this again when you answer the next set of questions.)*

**Ans:** The poet does not mention the departure of the trees because it is very uncommon and also because she may have felt embarrassed.

**4. Now that you have read the poem in detail, we can begin to ask what the poem might mean. Here are two suggestions. Can you think of others?**

(i) Does the poem presents a conflict between man and nature? Compare it with A Tiger in the Zoo. Is the poet suggesting that plants and trees, used for 'interior decoration' in cities while forests are cut down, are 'imprisoned', and need to 'break out'?

(ii) On the other hand, Adrienne Rich has been known to use trees as a metaphor for human-beings; this is a recurrent image in her poetry. What new meanings emerge from the poem if you take its trees to be symbolic of this particular meaning?

**Ans:** (i) Yes, the poem presents a conflict between man and nature. Man has exploited nature for his self interest. Forests are cut relentlessly. Wild animals are imprisoned in cages in Zoos. In fact, plants and trees are also imprisoned. They should be allowed to grow naturally.

(ii) The new meaning is that man cannot be kept confined. Man will multiply and break the control. There will be disaster. The trees breaking the house means man disrupting the natural process and breaking the ecological balance. Our survival is threatened. Here the poet speaks of real danger to the mankind.

**5. You may read the poem 'On Killing a Tree' by Gieve Patel (Beehive - Textbook in English for class ix, NCERT). Compare and contrast it with the poem you have just read.**

**Ans:** Both the poems are related to trees. Man has cut forests but put plants inside his house to decorate his house. In 'On Killing a Tree' the poet says it is not easy to kill a tree. It would be liked totally otherwise it will grow again.

Both the poem describe man's cruelty towards trees.

### **Comprehension Questions and Answers**

***Q:- Read the extract and answer the question choosing the most appropriate options given below:-***

1. The trees inside are moving out into the forest,

the forest that was empty all these days

Where no bird could sit

no insects hide

no sun bury it's feel in shadow

the forest that was empty all these nights

Will be full of trees by morning.

**Question :-**

**1. The name of poet is-**

- a) Adrienne Rich.
- b) Walt Whitman.
- c) Robin Klein.
- d) Leslie Norris.

**Ans:** a) Adrienne Rich.

**2. The trees are now-**

- a) In the forest.
- b) Inside the house.
- c) In the seas.
- d) outside the house.

**Ans:** b) Inside the house.

**3. Why could no bird sit? Because –**

- a) It is night.
- b) Of storm.
- c) There were trees.
- d) There were no trees.

**Ans:** d) There were no trees.

**4. What was empty all these nights?**

- a) The house.
- b) The forest.
- c) The room.
- d) The woods.

**Ans:** b) The forest.

2. All night the roots work

to disengage themselves from the cracks

in the veranda floor.

The leaves strain towards the glass

small twigs stiff with exertion

long-cramped boughs shuffling under the roof

like newly discharged patients

half-dazed, moving

to the clinic doors.

**Question :-**

**1. Who work to disengage themselves from the cracks?**

- a) The leaves.

b) The trees.

c) The roots.

d) The stem.

**Ans:** c) The roots.

**2. The twigs move toward the-**

a) Veranda.

b) Glass.

c) Room.

d) Inside.

**Ans:** b) Glass.

**3. Where are the boughs shuffling?**

a) In the forest.

b) Outside the house.

c) Over the wall.

d) Under the roof.

**Ans:** d) Under the roof.

**4. The boughs are compared with-**

a) Patients in a hospital.

b) Newly discharged patients.

c) Sick people.

d) Walking people.

**Ans:** b) Newly discharged patients.

3. I sit inside, doors open to the veranda

Writing long letters

In which I scarcely mention the departure  
of the forest from the house.

The night is fresh, the whole moon shines  
in a sky still open

the smell of leaves and lichen

still reaches like a voice into the rooms.

**Question :-**

**1. Where is the speaker sitting?**

a) Inside.

b) Outside.

c) In the office.

d) In the field.

**Ans:** a) Inside.

**2. What is the speaker doing?**

- a) Sleeping.
- b) Working.
- c) Sitting.
- d) Writing letter.

**Ans:** d) Writing letter.

**3. How is the night?**

- a) Dark.
- b) Bright.
- c) Fresh.
- d) Cloudy.

**Ans:** c) Fresh.

**4. How does the smell of leaves and lichen enter the room?**

- a) Like a man.
- b) Like a thief.
- c) Like a voice.
- d) like a rain.

**Ans:** c) Like a voice.

4. My head is full of whispers

Which tomorrow will be silent



Listen. The glass is breaking.

The trees are stumbling forward

into the night. Winds rush to meet them.

The moon is broken like a mirror,

it's pieces flash now in the crown

of the tallest oak.

**Question :-**

**1. What will be silent tomorrow?**

- a) The room.
- b) The forest.
- c) The poet.
- d) The whispers.

**Ans:** d) The whispers.

**2. What are the trees doing?**

- a) Running.
- b) Remaining in their place.
- c) Stumbling forward.
- d) Walking ahead.

**Ans:** c) Stumbling forward.

**3. What rushes to meet the trees?**

- a) People.
- b) Birds.
- c) Clouds.
- d) The wind.

**Ans:** d) The wind.

**4. Where is the moon seen shining?**

- a) In the sky.
- b) On the top of the oak.
- c) On the field.
- d) Over the roof.

**Ans:** b) On the top of the oak.

**Short Answer Type Questions**

**1. Why cannot birds sit on the trees mentioned in the poem?**

**Ans:** The trees mentioned in the poem are mostly decorative plants and bushes. They are shown in pictures. Birds or insects cannot use them.

**2. Where is the poet now and what is she doing?**

**Ans:** The poet is sitting inside the room. She is writing long letters. But she does not mention the departures of the trees from the house in her letters.

**3. What happens when the trees stumble forward?**

**Ans:** When the trees stumble forward into the night the glass breaks and winds rush to meet the trees. The moon breaks and shines over the top of the tallest oak.