

# 3

## POETRY



# The Voice of the Rain

—Walt Whitman



The poem, 'The Voice of the Rain' written by Walt Whitman is a conversation between the poet and the rain. The poet signifies the role that the rain plays in nurturing, and purifying the various elements of the earth. The rain calls itself the poem of the Earth. It explains its eternal journey to its birth place, i.e., the earth.

## Topic Notes

-  About the Poet
-  Poem in Detail
-  Poetic Devices
-  Significant Morals
-  Dictionary







## About the Poet

Walt Whitman was born on May 31, 1819. He was an American poet, who was regarded as one of the most relevant poets in the history of America. His book "Leaves of Grass," is a masterpiece of American literature. The poems in the original edition were inspired by the things Whitman found interesting: the crowds of New York, the cutting-edge innovations that the people admired and many other things. Apart from creating poems, Whitman worked as a journalist and volunteered in military hospitals.



## Poem in Detail

### Stanza 1

*And who art thou? said I to the soft-falling shower,  
Which, strange to tell, gave me an answer, as here  
translated:*

*I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain.*

### Interpretation

The poem begins with the poet asking the soft-falling shower its identity. Surprisingly, for the poet, the rain replies to his question, and the poet translates it for his readers. The rain, tells the poet that she is the poem of the Earth. By this comparison, the rain is trying to say that, as poetry gives pleasure to human beings, the rain gives happiness to the Mother Earth.



### Poet's Mood

→ Surprised

### Example 1. Extract Based:

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

*And who art thou? said I to the soft-falling shower,  
Which, strange to tell, gave me an answer, as here  
translated:*

*I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain.*

- (A) What is, strange, in the given extract?
- The poet is asking a question to the rain.
  - The rain is answering the question.
  - The rain is calling itself, the poem of Earth.
  - That the poet could translate the voice.
- (B) The rain calls itself, the poem of the Earth because:
- it is beautiful.
  - it has a purpose.
  - it travels back to its origin.
  - it gives beauty to the earth.
- (C) Fill in the blank with an appropriate answer.  
'as here translated' indicates that .....
- (D) "I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain."  
Identify the poetic device in the given line.
- (E) State whether the following is TRUE or FALSE.  
The poet becomes panicky when the rain answers his question.

**Ans. (A)** (b) The rain is answering the question.

**Explanation:** The poet felt shocked and strange when the softly - falling rain gave a reply to his question. When the poet asked the rain, 'Who art thou?' the rain replied, 'I am the Poem of Earth'. The poet didn't expect the rain to give an answer.

**(B)** (d) it gives beauty to the earth.

**Explanation:** The rain calls itself the poem of the earth because exactly like a beautiful poem, it gives joy and pleasure to everybody. It provides life, pleasure, beauty, and happiness to the earth.

**(C)** the poet is translating the rain's response

**Explanation:** In the given extract, 'as here translated' means that the poet is translating the response given by the rain for his readers.

**(D)** The poetic device used in the given line is personification. The rain addresses itself like a human being with the pronoun "I". The poet has used this device to effectively communicate his intimacy with the rain.

**(E)** False

**Explanation:** The poet gets surprised as the rain has answered his question.

### Stanza 2

*Eternal I rise, impalpable out of the land and the  
bottomless sea,  
Upward to heaven, whence, vaguely form'd,  
altogether changed, and  
yet the same*

### Interpretation

The poet says that being an eternal process, rain takes different forms at different times. It evaporates from the land and the sea in the form of intangible water vapour and goes up to the sky. There, it takes the form of the clouds.

Although it changes its form or shape, its core matter remains the same. As both vapour and clouds contain



water, they can be transformed into each other. The words 'impalpable' and 'eternal' indicate that nature is not fully understood and that some part of it always remains beyond our reach.



### Poet's Mood

→ Observant

**Example 2.** Identify the poetic device used in 'Eternal I rise, impalpable out of the land'.

**Ans.** The poetic device used in the given line is personification. The rain has been personified as it refers itself as 'I'. It has been given a voice of its own.

### Stanza 3

*I descend to lave the droughts, atomies, dust-layers  
of the globe,*

*And all that in them without me were seeds only,  
latent and unborn.*

### Interpretation

The raindrops on the earth wash away droughts and dust layers enveloping Earth which satisfies the thirst of the dry earth and heals the lifeless. The rain also acts as a source for new life to being as it helps in the germination of seeds that were lying dormant due to a dry spell.



### Poet's Mood

→ Observant

### Stanza 4

*"And forever, by day and night, I give back life to my  
own origin,*

*And make pure and beautify it;*

*(For song, issuing from its birth-place, after fulfilment,  
wandering Reck'd or unreck'd, duly with love returns.)*

### Interpretation

The rain gives life to Mother Earth by providing water to dormant seeds and making the earth more beautiful and full of greenery. It also helps in enhancing the beauty of the earth as, the absence of water turns everything dull or lifeless and dust accumulates everywhere.

The last two lines are the poet's own words and his reflections upon the answers given by the rain. The poet observes that the rain is similar to that of a Poem or song as the poem or song has the power to calm, heal, rejuvenate, transform, and thrill, similarly, repeated evaporation and condensation As a song or poem has the power to purify the rain. The rain drenches the entire environment which settles down the dust particles and there is greenery everywhere. The poet also draws a parallel between rain and music, as both have rhythm and the ability to thrill. Both of them have the power to rejuvenate and beautify life.



### Poet's Mood

→ Introspecting

**Example 3.** What is the 'birth-place' of the rain?

**Ans.** The rain rises from the ground and the bottomless sea in the form of intangible vapours. It goes to the sky and changes its form.



## Poetic Devices

- (1) **Personification:** The attribution of human qualities to inanimate objects is called personification. The rain has been personified as it has been given a voice in the poem. It replies to the question asked by the poet, leaving him surprised.
- (2) **Metaphor:** It is a figure of speech in which one thing represents the another. "I am the Poem of the Earth" is an example of metaphor used in the poem. The poet has used this metaphor to compare rain to poem.
- (3) **Parallelism:** Parallelism means a parallel construction in which similar words or phrases appear. In the last two lines, the poet has drawn a parallel between the rain and a song.
- (4) **Hyperbole:** It means to exaggerate a line or a phrase in a way that it sounds exciting than it really is. 'Bottomless Sea' is an example of hyperbole. The poet describes the sea as bottomless, which is an exaggerated statement to bring out the desired effect.
- (5) **Imagery:** Visually descriptive, especially in a literary work is called imagery. In the first line of the poem, 'soft-falling shower' gives the reader an image of gentle rain or drizzle.
- (6) **Oxymoron:** A figure of speech which combines incongruous and apparently contradictory words and meanings for a special effect. Example - day and night, reck'd and unreck'd.
- (7) **Paradox:** An apparently self - contradictory statement which on closer inspection is found to contain the truth reconciling the conflicting opposites. Example - "I give back life to my own origin".





## Significant Morals

- (1) The rain plays an everlasting role in nourishing, quenching the thirst, purifying, and nurturing the different elements of Mother Earth.
- (2) Poetry is as important in society as rain on the earth. Both serve their purpose.
- (3) The rain makes it possible for life to exist and flourish on the earth.
- (4) Poetry brings awareness to society. It flows from person to person, who appreciate as well as criticize it. But in the end, it brings back love for the person.



## Dictionary

Word	Meaning	Synonym	Antonym
<i>Vaguely</i>	not clearly	ambiguously	clearly
<i>Lave</i>	wash	bathe	dry
<i>Latent</i>	hidden/buried	dormant	active
<i>Impalpable</i>	which cannot be touched	intangible	palpable
<i>Eternal</i>	never-ending	ever-lasting	transient
<i>Descend</i>	come down	drop	ascend
<i>Beautify</i>	make beautiful	adorn	spoil
<i>Fulfilment</i>	completing the cycle	attainment	incomplete
<i>Reck'd</i>	cared about	bother	ignore
<i>Duly</i>	properly	rightly	wrongly
<i>Bottomless</i>	very deep	unlimited	limited

## OBJECTIVE Type Questions

[ 1 mark ]

### Multiple Choice Questions

1. Why are the last two lines of the poem given in bracket?

- (a) To represent the thoughts of the poet.
- (b) To represent that it is not a part of the conversation.
- (c) To represent what others have to say about rain.
- (d) Both (a) and (b)

**Ans.** (d) Both (a) and (b)

**Explanation:** The last two lines are put within brackets because they do not form the voice of the rain or the poet. They only contain a general observation made by the poet about the course of a song. Hence, (d) is correct.

2. The line, 'I give back life to my own origin' indicates:

- (a) the origin of the rain on the earth.
- (b) the life giving quality of rain.
- (c) the permanent nature of rain.
- (d) cyclical nature of rain.

**Ans.** (d) cyclical nature of rain

**Explanation:** The given line is related to the water cycle as it says, "I give back life to my origin". Water evaporates from the earth and comes back to the earth in the form of rain. It comes back to its origin and beautifies the surroundings. Hence, (d) is correct.

3. What is the meaning of 'reck'd' or 'unreck'd' in the poem?

- (a) Enrichment or no enrichment.
- (b) Cared for or not cared for.
- (c) To purify or not to purify.
- (d) To wash or not to wash.

**Ans.** (b) Cared for or not cared for



**Explanation:** 'Reck'd or unreck'd' in the poem means whether you cared for the sound of the rain or not, whether somebody listened to the sound the rain created or not, it does not affect the rain and neither does it affect the poet. In both the cases, the sound is cherished by the poet with love. Hence, (b) is correct.

**4. Why does the rain tell the poet that it cannot be touched?**

- (a) Because it is invisible.
- (b) Because it rises in the form of water vapour.
- (c) Because it is in the form of clouds.
- (d) Because it keeps on changing its form.

**Ans.** (b) *Because it rises in the form of water vapour.*

**Explanation:** The rain tells the poet that it cannot be touched as it rises in the form of water vapour from the land and the bottomless sea. It changes its shape, yet it remains the same. The vapour changes into clouds due to condensation. The poet also compares the rain with a song, as they both share a common journey. Hence, (b) is correct.

**5. What is the purpose of the poem?**

- (a) To talk about the natural process of rain.
- (b) To celebrate rain.
- (c) To talk about the benefits of rain.
- (d) To relate to the process of singing.

**Ans.** (b) *To celebrate rain.*

**Explanation:** The purpose of the poem is to celebrate the rain and its accompanying cyclic movement that supports the various beings on the earth. Hence, (b) is correct.

## Extract Based Questions

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

*Eternal I rise impalpable out of the land and  
the bottomless sea,  
Upward, to heaven, whence, vaguely form'd,  
altogether changed, and  
yet the same.*

**(A) What does the word 'eternal' indicate in the given lines?**

- (a) A sequence      (b) A continuation
- (c) A permanency   (d) Mortality

**(B) Fill in the blank with an appropriate answer.**

The word 'impalpable' in the given extract can be replaced by .....

**(C) In the given extract, what does the phrase 'altogether changed, and yet the same' refer to?**

**Ans.** (A) (b) *A continuation*

**Explanation:** In the above stanza, the word 'eternal' refers to the never ending journey of the rain and how it beautifies all the things present on the earth.

**(B) intangible**

**Explanation:** Impalpable means unable to be touched. The water rises from the land and bottomless oceans in the form of vapours. These vapours cannot be touched, and also, cannot be comprehended as its state keeps changing but the core remains the same. Intangible is the synonym of palpable. Hence, it can be replaced by the latter.

**(C) The rain informs the poet that it rises towards the sky in the form of water vapour, and then it changes its form. It also says that although its form changes, its core remains the same. This is the meaning of the given phrase.**

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

*I descend to lave the droughts, atomies, dust-layers of the globe,*

*And all that in them without me were seeds only, latent, unborn;*

*\*And forever, by day and night, I give back life to my own origin.*

*And make pure and beautify it;*

**(A) The word 'lave' in the given extract can be replaced by:**

- (a) wash                      (b) remove
- (c) purify                    (d) fill

**(B) Why does the poet draw a parallel between rain and song?**

**(C) State whether the following is TRUE or FALSE.**

The poetic device used in 'day and night' is paradox.

**Ans.** (A) (a) *wash*

**Explanation:** The word 'lave' in the extract means to wash or clear something.

**(B) The poet draws a parallel between rain and song to bring out the similarities between pleasures gained from them. Both originate from a source, rise up, reach fulfilment, wander about whether cared about or not and finally return to source of origin with love.**

**(C) False**

**Explanation:** The poetic device used in 'day and night' is Oxymoron. It is a figure of speech which combines incongruous and apparently contradictory words and meanings for a special effect.



## SHORT ANSWER Type Questions (SA)

[ 2 marks ]

Answer the following questions in about 40 - 50 words:

8. There are two voices in the poem. Who do they belong to? Which line indicate this?

[Delhi Gov. QB 2022]

**Ans.** The two voices in the poem are the voice of the poet and the voice of the rain. The line which indicate the voice of the poet is 'And who art thou? said I to the soft- falling shower'. The line which indicates the voice of the rain is 'I am the Poem of Earth'. The rain gives an answer to the question asked by the poet.

9. Justify the title of the poem 'The Voice of the Rain'

**Ans.** In the poem, 'The Voice of the Rain, the poet has explained the significance of rain through the conversation between himself and the rain. He begins the poem by asking the rain to reveal its identity. From the response given by the rain, the readers come to know about the life cycle of rain, and how it beautifies and purifies the earth.

10. Why has the poet used the phrase 'strange to tell'?

[Delhi Gov. QB 2022]

**Ans.** The poet has used the phrase 'strange to tell' because he felt strange and unusual when the rain replied to his question. The poet asked the rain to reveal its identity.

11. Explain the life cycle of rain.

**Ans.** The poet says that the rain is an eternal process. It rises in the form of water vapours from the land and the bottomless sea. It goes to the sky where it takes an indistinct shape in the form of clouds. It falls down to earth in the form of water droplets and purifies it.

12. How is the cyclic movement of rain brought out in the poem?

[Delhi Gov. QB 2022]

**Ans.** The rain tells the poet that she rises in the form of water vapour from the land and the bottomless sea. It rises up in the sky and changes its shape, yet its crust remains the same. It wanders and returns back to the earth to provide water to areas that are facing drought and to make the earth free from dust. It also gives, life to the seeds present in the

earth and helps them grow. The rain says that it continuously provides life and enrichment on earth. It works day and night to enrich its birth place, the Mother Earth. The rain keeps on enhancing the beauty of the earth. It prepares a life cycle for itself.

13. Rain gives life to the undeveloped seeds. Explain.

**Ans.** The seeds require water to grow and germinate. Without rain, the seeds would eventually become dried up. The water droplets help the seeds to germinate and change into a little sapling.

14. Behind the apparent simplicity, the poem hides a deeper meaning. What exactly do the lines convey to the reader?

[Delhi Gov. QB 2022]

**Ans.** The poem is not merely a description of the never ending cycle of rain. It has a deeper meaning. Rain is a thing of beauty on our Mother Earth and so is the song. The rain is being compared to song as both of them make the earth more beautiful and pure. Both rain and song, calm our mind and provide a sense of relief. The poet has portrayed the beauty of rain drops falling on the ground. It nurtures the various elements of the earth.

15. Why does the rain call itself. The Poem of the Earth? [Delhi Gov. Term - 2 SQP 2022]

**Ans.** The rain calls itself the poem of the earth because when it falls on the earth, it brings life and enrichment on earth. It is like a song that originates from the heart of the singer. It travels across to fulfil its purpose. Whether it is liked or not, it returns with a lot of love to its birth place. The rain purifies and beautifies the earth, wanders and comes back with a lot of love.

16. What is the central idea of the poem?

**Ans.** The central idea of the poem is the importance of rain and the benefits that it provides. It enhances the beauty of the earth. The entire environment gets drenched in the rain, dust particles settle down, and there is greenery everywhere which makes the whole earth beautiful to look at. Without rain, the Mother Earth would look dull and without any charm.



# LONG ANSWER Type Questions (LA)

[ 5 marks ]

*Answer the following questions in about 120 - 150 words:*

- 17. There is a parallel drawn between rain and music. Which line indicate this? Explain the similarity between the two.**

[Delhi Gov. QB 2022]

**Ans.** The line that indicates the parallel between rain and music is 'For song, issuing from its birth-place, after fulfilment, wandering reck'd or unreck'd, duly with love returns'.

The poet compares the life cycle of the rain and the song. The rain is like a song that originates from its birth-place. It is like a song that originates from the heart of the singer. It travels across the world and fulfils its purpose. Whether it is liked or not, it returns with a lot of love to its birth-place. The rain purifies and beautifies the earth, wanders, and comes back with a lot of love.

- 18. Rain performs its functions without regard for praise. Describe the great lesson hidden in this.**

**Ans.** Rain is the song of the earth which is its birthplace and so its mother. It does not forget its mother and relentlessly works to make her green, happy, and worth living. It washes away the layers of dust and helps the seeds sprout again. It gives life to dry earth and dried plants. In a way, it makes all earthly things clean, pure, fertile, and beautiful. It fulfils the purpose of its birth by doing different duties, then finally returns to its mother and rests in her lap. These services rendered by the rain are taken for granted, and the rain does not mind it. All this contains a hidden message for mankind.

Human, must do whatever they can to enhance the beauty and splendour of this earth, which is their mother. But in reality, they leave no stone unturned to destroy their mother. They are always ready to exploit her and leave her destitute. They forget that by doing so, they are destroying their Mother Earth, leaving nothing for their future. They should respect the natural resources and give them some space for renewal.

- 19. Natural elements such as air does no discrimination and bless everyone equally. Comment on class discrimination and inequality, which are entirely human creation.**

**Ans.** Humans' existence on this earth is short-lived as they are mortal beings, but even in this short span, they are responsible for many wrongdoings towards each other. God has created everyone equal. But it is very unfortunate that humans have divided this society on the basis of class, caste, and other factors.

Humans must learn from the elements of nature, which provide them with fresh air, heat, and water, without discriminating. Whether a person is wealthy or not, the elements of nature perform their job well and bless everyone equally. Their main goal is to beautify the surroundings and make it come alive. Unfortunately, in human society, class, caste, colour, religion, inequality, and many other forms of discriminations exist in large numbers.

Human beings should learn from nature and adopt universal brotherhood for the betterment of the society.

- 20. How does the rain justify its claim 'I am the Poem of Earth'?**

[Delhi Gov. Term-2 SQP 2022]

**Ans.** The rain calls itself the Poem of the Earth because the poem rendered by the poet has the task of bringing joy, happiness, and life to its readers. Similarly, when the rain falls down a rhythm or music is created. That's why the rain calls itself the Poem of Earth.

Just like a poem leads to happiness, joy, and direction in the life of a reader. Likewise, when the rain pours down from the sky, it brings a certain music which brings joy, and happiness to the earth. The soothing and musical sound of the rain is just like a beautiful poem. Whether a person desires it or not, the rain does its job really well and beautifies the earth. Both rain and poetry have the capability to soothe our minds and provide the utmost relief.

- 21. Imagine that you are sitting near your window, watching the rain drops pouring from the sky. You had a bad day, but the sound of the rain has given you relief and now you feel better. Write your feelings in a diary.**

**Ans.** 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2020

Monday

Dear Diary,

I am by myself in my room, near the window. I can see the raindrops pouring down from the



sky. To be honest, watching the raindrops land on the ground gave me the greatest amount of satisfaction. I had a terrible day today. I didn't submit my homework and got scolded by my teacher. I was humiliated in front of the entire class. As I sobbed next to my window, I heard the sound of the water droplets. It's like Mother Earth is singing a poem to uplift my mood. The

plants in my garden that were gradually drying out have now regenerated. The surrounding area looks so fresh and vibrant, as though the earth has been born again. This is surreal. I can hear this sound the whole day and have the most blissful sleep. I thank Mother Earth for this wonderful sight.

Shweta

