

2.8 Small Towns and Rivers

ICE BREAKERS

Q. 1. (i) Most of the civilizations have flourished on the banks of the rivers. Discuss the reasons in the class.

Ans. Points :

(a) Availability of water

(b) Fertile soil for agriculture

(c) Fishing ground

(d) Transport

(ii) Write down the names of the famous cities that are situated on the banks of the rivers given below.

(The answer is given directly and underlined.)

River	City
Ganga	Varanasi
Yamuna	Mathura
Godavari	Rajahmundry
Varada	Sagara
Krishna	Vijayawada
Tapi	Surat

(iii) Write down the names of the rivers on the banks of which following cities have prospered:

City	River
London	Thames
Cairo	Nile
New York	Hudson
Paris	Siene

Q. 2. (i) Divide your class into groups and discuss the changes that might have taken place when the cities grow on the banks of the rivers.

Ans. The students can use the following pointers to build their discussion:

1. There is an increase in population due to immigration.

2. Industries are built and more employment opportunities are generated.

3. The sanitation of the growing town or city keeps getting poorer due to increased congestion.

(ii) Share your views in the class on the topic "Conservation of Rivers and Development of the Cities'.

Ans. The following pointers can be considered by the students while sharing their views on Conservation of Rivers and Development of the Cities:

1. The two parts of the topic are interlinked.

2. Many of the cities. Both big and small, are located on river banks, which is of great commercial significance to those cities.

3. They provide water for human consumption and as raw material for industries located on those rivers.

4. It's of paramount importance to keep these rivers in good state for ensuring the welfare of the people in cities that depend on them. They must be kept clean by ensuring that no human waste or industrial effluent is led untreated into them. Also, the water from the rivers should not be overdrawn.

5. 'Rally for Rivers' is an example of a recent mass-campaign for river conservation in India.

BRAINSTORMING

(A1) Discuss and state the importance of Nature in the lives of the people from the North-eastern part of India as expressed in the poem with reference to

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Ans.

(a) Flowers - Tuberoses are woven into wreaths to be placed on the body of a departed as a mark of love and respect.

(b) River - The people believe the river has a soul. They respect their rivers and even revere it as divine as its waters are immortal.

(c) Bamboo - The poet says 'in the cool bamboo'. The colour is a cool green. The place where the bamboo grows is also cool.

(d) East - The direction of sunrise is very important for the people of Arunachal Pradesh. They ensure the dead are placed pointing west so that their soul directly enters the golden house of the sun. They believe that finally souls must attain the sun's abode in the east.

(A2) (i) The poet has described her small town in Arunachal Pradesh. Pick out from the extract, the lines that describe the poet's town.

Ans. (1) 'My hometown lies calmly amidst the trees',

(2) 'It is always the same
In summer and winter
With the dust flying
Or the wind howling down the gorge'

(3) The town has 'A shrine of happy pictures' to mark the days of childhood.

(4) Small towns grow with anxiety for the future.

(5) Like her town, 'small towns' are 'by the river'.

(ii) Make a list of natural elements mentioned in the extract.

Ans. River, Earth, Mountaintops, Sun, Sunlight, Bamboo, trees, winter, summer, wind, tuberoses, life, land, river, fish, stars.

(iii) 'The river has a soul.' Elaborate the concept in your words as the poet has explained in the extract.

Ans. When the poet says 'The river has a soul' she personifies the river. The river flows with great force – 'like a torrent of grief'. The river flowing with great force can be like a person pouring out grief in a storm of emotion. The river also seems to be holding its breath, maybe because it is choking with filth. There are no fishes. It is not clear and sparkling. So the poet says – 'I think it holds its breath seeking a land of fish and stars'.

The poet states the river has a soul. The soul is deathless. The water that flows in the river came from the drops of rain. The water evaporated, rose as mist to the mountaintops. Then it formed clouds and poured down as rain to the dry earth and flowed again. Thus the river goes on, immortal, deathless.

(iv) The poet is convinced with the thought of immortality of water. Pick out the relevant lines from the extract.

Ans.

(1) The river has a soul.

(2) From the first drop of rain to dry earth.

(3) Mist on the mountaintops.

(4) The immortality of water.

(v) The poet has used some unconventional expressions. Illustrate them in your words.

(a) Torrent of grief.

Ans. The poet describes the river flowing in summer with great speed. Just like someone becomes emotional in great sadness, the force of the water seems to be like the outpouring of sorrow of the river.

(b) The land of fish and stars.

Ans. The poet says she thinks the river is holding its breath. One has to hold one's breathe when he/she is unable to breathe or does not want to breathe. The river may be choking with garbage and is not able to breathe. The river may be stinking and may not be able to breathe.

As the river is so filthy there are no fish. It is dirty; the water is not sparkling in the day and cannot reflect the stars at night.

So the river is in search of a land where there it can flow clean, it will have fish and where its clear water will sparkle in the sun and glitter with stars at night.

(c) Shrine of happy pictures.

Ans. There is a shrine probably in the town which has pictures inside. The pictures may be those of the happy moments experienced by the people in the town. Those memories are so sacred that it is a shrine to them. They protect and guard it because they have only sad and grim things happening at present.

(vi) The poet is anxious about the existence of natural beauty of her town in the future. But she touches the strings of the hearts while appealing to conserve Nature. Explain the way she has expressed it in the first and the last line of the poem.

Ans. In the first line of the poem 'small towns always remind me of death' the poet says that for her, the small towns are reminders of death. Her tone is sombre, as she thinks about the permanency of the small towns, come summer or winter, and she compares this to the permanency of death.

However, in the last line "in small towns by the river / we all want to walk with the gods" she persuades the reader to think favourably of the need to conserve nature, for the reason that we, the inhabitants of the small towns on the riverbank, all want to live a quality life. In other words, 'we all want to walk with the gods'. So, there is a shift in tone from anxiety to optimism from the opening to the closing lines.

(vii) The poet has connected the need to preserve Nature with the belief of particular community and her childhood memories.

Write down the measures you would take to convince the people regarding the need to conserve the Nature.

Ans. We have to make people at large realize that we are a part of the nature not

apart from the nature. Saving nature is to save ourselves. To bring about this realization I can address my steps to two sections. The first would be the children. Saving water would be the first thing to teach children. Story-telling, poems, songs, games, cartoons and can easily bring the conservation ideas to young minds. I would take my ideas to schools, parks, malls and try to spread this to the young ones.

The other section is of course the adult public across economic and social levels. The well off people must not be careless if they can afford to pay bills they can waste resources. I will do everything possible. I will use social media to spread various messages/ mottos.

(A3) (i) Write down the expressions related to 'the seasons' from the extract.
Ans.

(1) Summer or winter

(2) 'In the summer'

(ii) Match column 'A' with column 'B'.

A	B
(1) Cool	(a) Silence
(2) Happy	(b) Earth
(3) Dreadful	(c) Bamboo
(4) Dry	(d) Pictures

Ans. (1) Cool - bamboo

(2) Happy - pictures

(3) Dreadful - silence

(4) Dry – earth

(A4) (i) Read the expression 'a sad wreath of tuberose'.

'Is the wreath sad?' Explain the figure of speech.

Ans. The figure of speech is transferred epithet.

The sad mourners have placed the wreath of tuberose on the dead. The emotion of sadness has been transferred to the flowers for effect.

(ii) List and explain the metaphorical expressions from the extract.

Ans. (1) 'torrent of grief'. The river sweeps along with great speed as if it is pouring out sorrow.

(2) 'Wind howling down the gorge'. The wind blowing through the narrow gorges creates a sound exactly like howling.

(3) 'The river has a soul'. The river is spoken of as a living being, a human.

(4) 'It holds its breath'. The river may be choking with debris and filth.

(5) Small towns 'Grow with anxiety'. This means when small-town communities expand, growth and prosperity bring the negative points also. If the town has to grow something of nature in the surroundings has to be destroyed. The eco-system is upset. So even if the growth means prosperity, there is also reason to worry about the damage we cause.

(6) 'Want to walk with the gods'. The poet says that the people want to live in peace, among nature which god created. In the middle of natural surroundings, one feels god's presence. Living there feels like living in god's presence.

(iii) 'The river has a soul.'

'Life and death.'

These are the two expressions that are repeated in the poem; but both of them indicate different figures of speech. Find out and discuss.

Ans.

(a) 'Life and death'

In the first usage it is used as antithesis, to emphasize the beginning and end.

In the second instance it is irony to indicate that neither life nor death is permanent. Ironically the rituals are permanent.

(b) 'The river has a soul'

In the first instance it is used to personify the river. Several human-like qualities are attributed to the river;

= it cuts through the land

= it is cascading in grief

= it holds its breath

= it seeks a land

[Note: Please refer to A4 (2) in extract 2]

'The river has a soul'

In the first instance it is used to personify the river. Several human-like qualities are attributed to the river;

= it cuts through the land

= it is cascading in grief

= it holds its breath

= it seeks a land

In the second usage it is used as a metaphor for immortality.

= as the river

= as rain

= as the mist at the top

= as the river again

The cycle is unending just as the soul is deathless.

(iv) Find out the beauty of the free verse reflected in this poem.

Ans. "Small Towns and Rivers" is written in free verse. Since there are irregular lengths of lines and no rhyme, the reading of the poem is almost like a story-telling. Each stanza has a different number of lines and there is no order for mixing up the short and long lines.

The poem is not confined by an obvious rhythm so we feel there is a kind of freedom. We are free to imagine the widespread setting of the North-eastern terrain of mountains and rivers, mists, golden sunlight and the town by the river.

(A5) (i) Prepare the arguments for group discussion on the topic

'A balanced progress never harms the Nature'.

For:

- 1) Growth should be planned to take place in stages
- 2) Planning vital for the growth
- 3) Sustainability must be ensured
- 4) Pros and cons of the damage to environment must be weighed
- 5) Short-term gains in progress must not harm long-term eco-factors

Against:

- 1) Growth must not be halted for issues of environment
- 2) Costs will go up due to delays
- 3) Delays in progress will slow down economy and employment
- 4) Slowdown in economy will cause public to protest
- 5) Sacrifices have to be made – one can't have the cake and eat it too.

(ii) Compose 4 to 6 lines on 'Gift of the Seasons'.

Ans. Gift of the Seasons

Each season brings a sweetly wrapt gift;

We can gift her back: no water pollution in the season of the Sun.

No air pollution when

The rains come down.
And no degradation the rest of the year!

(iii) Write an appreciation of the poem 'Small Towns and Rivers'. Use the points given below:

- 1) About the poem/poet/title
- 2) Theme
- 3) Poetic devices, language, style
- 4) Special features — tone and type
- 5) Values, message
- 6) Your opinion about the poem

Ans. The poem 'Small Towns and Rivers' written by Mamang Dai is a beautiful word-picture. It is also a lament of the poet about her beautiful native land of Arunachal Pradesh.

This theme shows in the way she begins the poem that small towns remind her of death. It is shocking. She implies the town is unchanging in all weathers, but development comes along and changes everything. There is irony in that the cycle of life and death shows that life is not permanent, but the rituals are permanent.

She uses metaphor that the rivers are not only alive like us humans, but actually immortal. She personifies the river by way the river 'holds its breath' because it is choking. It is flowing in search of a place where it will flow clean and clear. The poet uses metaphor of the water-cycle to illustrate the river has a soul and its waters are immortal.

The poet builds a climax with 'shrine of happy' childhood memories. This becomes growing up – 'grow with anxiety'. Then she speaks of how the dead are placed pointing west so the soul can ascend directly into the sun's golden home in the east. This tells us about the traditions of her region.

The poem is in free verse and seems to be in easy language, but we can understand the full depth of meaning only after reading it more than once.

The poem is a lament about the destruction of nature for development.

We all will feel the sorrow of the poet when we read about how nature's beauty is damaged for man's greed called 'progress'.

(iv) Write a dialogue between two friends on 'Importance of the rivers'

Ans. Priya : Jai, it goes without saying that fresh, clean water is essential for humans and nature to survive. Rivers are precious sources of fresh drinking water for people across the world. And when rivers are so badly polluted by industry or by poor water management practices, it can be a case of life-or-death. This unfortunately happens across the world.

Jai : Yes Priya. Freshwater habitats account for some of the richest biodiversity in the world, and rivers are a vital, vibrant ecosystem for many species. Only those who live by the river know about this wealth of nature. Those who live far away

and damaging the system with the poisons are not aware.

Priya : People depend on rivers for their way of life and their livelihoods. From fishing to agriculture, the way our waterways are managed has a direct impact on people's lives. There are millions of people who follow their ancestors' way of living and earning a livelihood. But modern technology has wrecked the very source of these.

Jai : Rivers are absolutely vital: for fresh drinking water, for people's livelihoods and for nature. Unfortunately, they're still threatened. We must commit to recovering freshwater biodiversity, restoring natural river flows and cleaning up polluted water for people and nature to thrive.

Priya : Yes Jai. I agree. It is the crying need of the day.

(A6) (i) Collect information about rivers in Maharashtra.

Ans. The students can use the following pointers. One is done for you as a reference.

The major rivers of Maharashtra are:

1. Godavari:

1465 km, originates at Trimbakeshwar, flows through Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh before draining into the Bay of Bengal.

2. Krishna

3. Narmada

4. Koyna

5. Mula-mutha

6. Nira

7. Pavana

8. Patalganga

9. Ulhas

10. Vaitarna

11. Wainganga

(ii) Further reading :

'The River Poems' - Mamang Dai