

Water

Poem questions and answers for Second PUC

Comprehension I

1. The expression 'generations-old strife' suggests

- a. the bane of caste system.
- b. politics of revenge.
- c. differences among humans.

Answer: c. differences among humans.

2. "It also knows the sub-caste difference between leather and spool" 'leather and spool' stands for

- a. pure and impure.
- b. higher and lower.
- c. cobbler and weaver.

Answer: c. cobbler and weaver.

3. How is water a witness to the humiliation caused to the dalits?

Answer: 'Water' is a mute witness to the humiliation caused to the dalits.

4. What does the speaker remember when she sees water?

Answer: The speaker remembers how people in her 'wada' would thirst for a glass of water all day.

5. "circus feat" refers to

- a. hardship to fetch water.
- b. balancing the water pots on the head.
- c. efforts to secure basic needs.
- d. struggle surrounding water.

Answer: d. struggle surrounding water.

6. 'Water' is a

- a. liquid called water.
- b. catalyst for a movement.
- c. witness of strife.

- d. life-giver and destroyer.
- e. means to practice untouchability.
- f. profit making commodity.

Answer: c. witness of strife.

Comprehension II

1. Discuss the travails suffered by the Wada people while securing water.

Answer: The Wada people were treated unfairly by the upper castes. They had to wait near the well for a Shudra to help them fetch water. If no one came, they had to wait all day. They could bathe only once a week and often had to walk miles to reach irrigated canals for water.

2. 'For us, water is not simply H₂O' suggests

- a. its chemical significance.
- b. it is a common resource available for all.
- c. it is a symbol of the struggle against discrimination.

Answer: c. it is a symbol of the struggle against discrimination.

3. What does the contrast 'some taking bath once a week and others twice a day' connote?

Answer: This contrast shows the inequality between the Dalits and the upper caste people. The Dalits could only bathe once a week because they didn't have enough water, while the upper caste people could bathe multiple times a day. Dalits were not allowed to take water from wells themselves and had to wait for the Shudras to help them.

4. Why does water become a matter of dispute?

Answer: Water became a dispute when upper caste people intentionally polluted the Dalits' drinking water in Karamchedu. In Mahad, Mumbai, even though the municipality allowed Dalits to use the public tank, the upper caste people stopped them. To support the Dalits, Dr. Ambedkar led a rally, drank water from the tank, and asserted their right to use public water like everyone else.

5. Look at the expressions 'many a circus feat' and 'dances its way into the Pepsi man's bottle.' What contrast do you notice between the two?

Answer: The contrast shows how water is a struggle for the poor but a luxury for the rich. Poor people, especially the lower castes, must go through great effort, like a "circus feat," just to get water for drinking or farming. Meanwhile, water flows easily for the rich, becoming mineral water in Pepsi bottles. It is rare and expensive for the poor but abundant and accessible for the wealthy.

Comprehension III

1. How does the poem demonstrate the disparity and discrimination in our society using water as a symbol?

Answer: The poem uses water to highlight the inequality between upper and lower castes. While the upper castes have easy access to water, the lower castes struggle to get even basic drinking water, often traveling long distances. The wealthy enjoy luxuries like bottled water, while the poor lack enough water to extinguish fires or meet daily needs. Conflicts over water, like clashes between castes, symbolize the deep social discrimination. This led to movements by Dalits to demand their right to water and equality.

2. How are the poor affected by

- a. lack of water?
- b. denial of water?
- c. the fury of nature?

Answer:

a. Lack of water?

The poor face physical and mental challenges due to a lack of water. They do not get enough water for drinking or bathing, leading to diseases like cholera and dysentery. It also affects their productivity and quality of life.

b. Denial of water?

The poor suffer from social and economic inequalities. Denied access to water, they are exploited by upper-caste people and struggle to meet basic needs, which impacts their well-being and opportunities for progress.

c. The fury of nature?

The poor are the worst hit during natural disasters. They lack water to douse fires and face devastation during events like tsunamis, where entire villages are destroyed.

3. Trace the journey of water from ancient times as a symbol of purity to the age of multinational market where it is a commodity.

Answer: In ancient mythology, water was revered as sacred and pure, symbolized by the Ganga river, brought to earth by King Bhagiratha through penance to Lord Shiva. Bathing in holy rivers like Ganga, Narmada, and Kaveri was believed to cleanse sins, and rivers were worshipped as goddesses during festivals.

Over time, societal discrimination arose, with upper castes believing that untouchables polluted water by their touch. With increasing water scarcity, water transitioned from a sacred symbol to a tradable commodity. Today, it is sold in bottles as mineral water and Pepsi, marking its journey from purity to commercialization.