

# CHAPTER - 11

## KEEPING QUIET

### IMPORTANT STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the stanzas given below and answer the questions that follow each:

1. Now we will count to twelve and we will all keep still.

#### Questions

- (a) Name the poem and the poet of these lines.
- (b) Why does the poet ask us to count to twelve?
- (c) Why does the poet ask us to keep still?
- (d) Find words from the passage which mean:  
(ii) say number (iii) quiet and motionless.

#### Answers:

- (a) The name of the poem is Keeping Quiet. The name of the poet is Pablo Neruda.
- (b) There are only twelve signs on the clock to measure hours. Therefore, the poet asks us to count till the clock measures these hours.
- (c) Too much activity and rush has only brought misfortunes to mankind. Hence, it is better to be quiet and still.
- (d) (i) count (ii) still

2. For once on the face of the Earth let's not speak in any language, let's stop for one second, and not move our arms so much.

#### Questions

- (a) Name the poem and the poet of these lines.
- (b) 'Let's not speak in any language', says the poet. Why?
- (c) What should we not do for a second?
- (d) What do you understand by 'the face of the Earth'?

#### Answers:

- (a) The name of the poem is Keeping Quiet. The poet is Pablo Neruda.
- (b) The people of the world have been indulging in wars and bloodsheds on minor excuses. If they keep quiet, they may not indulge in reasoning, disputes and quarrels. So, let them keep quiet and not speak in any language. This will ensure peace and prosperity.
- (c) We should cease all activities for a second. Man has used his arms only to kill and destroy others. Therefore, let them not move their arms so much as to harm others.
- (d) The expression "the face of the Earth" refers to the various countries on the surface of the earth.

3. It would be an exotic moment without rush, without engines, we would all be together in a sudden strangeness.

#### Questions

- (a) Name the poem and the poet of these lines.
- (b) What will happen if there is no rush or running of engines?
- (c) What sort of moment will it be?
- (d) How would all of us feel at that moment?

#### Answers:

- (a) The name of the poem is Keeping Quiet. The poet is Pablo Neruda.
- (b) There will be peace all around if there is no rush or the sound of the running of engines and machines.
- (c) It will be a very enticing and beautiful moment.
- (d) All of us will enjoy the unusualness and sudden strangeness of that moment.

4. Fishermen in the cold sea would not harm whales and the man gathering salt would look at his hurt hands.

**Questions**

**(a)What do fishermen usually do in the cold sea?**

**(b)What does the poet ask fishermen not to do?**

**(c)What has happened to the man gathering salt?**

**(d) What should the man gathering salt do?**

**Answers:**

(a)Fishermen usually catch fish, particularly whales, in the cold seas.

(b)The poet asks fishermen not to hurt or injure the whales in the seas.

(c)The man gathering salt has injured his hands.

(d)He must take care of his hurt hands.

5. Those who prepare green wars,  
wars with gas, wars with fire,  
victory with no survivors,  
would put on clean clothes  
and walk about with their  
brothers  
in the shade, doing nothing.

**Questions**

**(a)Name the poem and the poet of these lines.**

**(b)What sort of wars are mentioned in the above lines?**

**(c)What kind of victory will it be?**

**(d) How should the lovers of war behave?**

**Answers:**

(a)The name of the poem is Keeping Quiet. The poet is Pablo Neruda.

(b)Green wars, wars with poisonous gases and wars with the fire are the different kinds of wars.

(c) It will be a victory where no survivors will be left to celebrate it. Such a victory will be meaningless.

(d) They should put on clean clothes and walk with their brothers under the trees leisurely doing nothing.

6.What I want should not be confused

with total inactivity. i Life is what it is about;

I want no truck with death.

If we were not so single-minded

about keeping our lives moving,

and for once could do nothing,

perhaps a huge silence

might interrupt this sadness of never understanding ourselves and of threatening ourselves

with

death.

## Questions

(a)What does the poet want? What should it not be confused with?

(b)Explain: 'I want no truck with death'.

(c)What do people pursue single-mindedly? Which is the better course the poet suggests?

(d)When can a huge silence do us good?

### Answers:

(a)The poet is advocating for silence or stillness. Stillness should not be confused with total inactivity.

(b)Total inactivity brings death. The poet refuses to associate (or deal) with death. Thus, he is not advocating for death.

(c)People pursue single-mindedly on keeping their lives moving. ..The poet suggests that it would be better if they give themselves rest for sometime. For once they may do nothing.

(d)A huge silence can do us a lot of good when we are disappointed at not understanding ourselves or threatening ourselves with death.

7. Perhaps the Earth can teach us as when everything seems dead and later proves to be alive.

Now I'll count up to twelve

and you keep quiet and I will go.

## Questions

(a)What can the Earth teach us?

(b)What remains alive when everything seems dead?

(c)Who is the poet? What does he want to do?

(d)What does the poet ask us to do?

### Answers:

(a) The earth can teach us a lesson how to live on it.

(b)Only the earth remains alive when everything seems dead.

(c) The poet is Pablo Neruda. He wants to count upto twelve.

(d) He asks us to keep quiet while he is counting upto twelve.

## QUESTIONS FROM TEXTBOOK SOLVED

**Q1. What will counting up to twelve and keeping still help us achieve?**

**Ans:** Counting up to twelve takes very short time. Keeping still for this brief interval of time gives us a momentary pause to introspect and review the course of action. It is generally observed that most of the ills and troubles of the world are caused by our rush or hurry. Violence is caused by anger. Keeping quiet and still will give us necessary respite and ensure peace.

**Q2. Do you think the poet advocates total inactivity and death?**

**Ans:** No, he doesn't advocate either total inactivity or death. He makes it quite clear that 'stillness' should not be confused with "total inactivity or equated to it. Total inactivity brings death. But Neruda has 'no truck with death'. His stillness means halting of harmful and hostile human activities.

**Q3. What is the 'sadness' that the poet refers to in the poem? [All India 2014]**

**Ans:** Man's sadness is formed out of his own actions and thoughts. It is quite ironical that man who understands so much fails to understand himself and his action. Rash actions prove harmful and disastrous. Man is the creator of all disasters. He is always threatening himself with death because of his thoughts and actions. This is the tragedy of his life.

**Q4. What symbol from Nature does the poet invoke to say that there can be life under apparent stillness?**

**Ans:** The poet wants to prove that there can be life under apparent stillness. The poet invokes the earth as a living symbol to prove his point. The earth never attains total inactivity. Nature remains at work all the time even under apparent stillness. It keeps earth alive. This idea is beautifully illustrated by the following lines: "as when everything seems dead and later proves to be alive."

**Q5. Choose a quiet corner and keep still physically and mentally for about five minutes. Do you feel any change in your state of mind?**

**Ans:** Extension Activity: For self-study.

## **MORE QUESTIONS SOLVED**

**SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS (Word Limit: 30-40 words)**

**Q1. Why does Pablo Neruda urge us to keep still?**

**Ans:** Stillness is essential for calm reflection and quiet introspection. We hear the voice of conscience in moments of silence. The poet is convinced that most of human ills and miseries are caused by man's hurry and rush to do things. The poet wishes that we may withdraw ourselves from our undesirable actions and keep still for a moment.

**Q2. Why shouldn't we "speak in any language" and "not move our arms so much"?**

**Ans:** People of the world speak in different languages. They indulge in unnecessary debates and disputes. Most of these arguments lead to destructive wars. The poet urges people to stop speaking in any language. They must speak through their hearts. So far men have moved their arms only to harm others. Therefore, the poet wants that they should not move their arms so much. Let these arms rest for once. Let a feeling of mutual understanding, be created among human beings.

**Q3. Pablo Neruda says: "we would all be together in a sudden strangeness."**

**When can we experience such a moment? Why will that be an exotic moment?**

**Ans:** Non-stop activity, unnecessary rush and noise have made our lives unpleasant and full of misery, pain and troubles. We must stop rushing, hurrying, worrying and running. Even the noise of engines and machines must stop for once. Then all of us will enjoy the sudden strangeness of that moment. It will be a unique moment. In that exotic or fascinating moment we shall feel totally relaxed, physically as well as mentally.

**Q4. What does the poet ask the fisherman and the man collecting salt to do? What does he exactly want to convey by this?**

**Ans:** Pablo Neruda is against any kind of violence. He addresses the fishermen and asks them not to harm whales living in the cold seas of the polar regions. He is also against any kind of self-torturing. The man who is gathering salt has hurt his hands. He asks this man to look after himself and take care of his injured hands.

**Q5. What are the different kinds of war mentioned towards war?**

**Ans:** The poet is against wars of all kinds. He wants a total stoppage of war. Green wars against the environment, wars with poisonous gases and wars with fire must be terminated (stopped) at once.

**Q6. What alternative does Pablo Neruda suggest instead of indulging in wars?**

**Ans:** Instead of indulging in wars, the people must come out in their best dresses with their brothers. They should go out for a walk under the shady trees and enjoy themselves doing nothing. This would bring the feeling of togetherness among them.

**Q7. How does the poet distinguish 'stillness' from 'total inactivity'? Why does Neruda say I want no truck with death?**

**Ans:** Pablo Neruda is in favour of stillness or silence. We remain still and quiet for sometime. On the other hand, total inactivity is a permanent suspension of work. It is just like death. 'Stillness' should not be confused with 'total inactivity'. Life goes on as usual. There can't be anything like total inactivity. The poet refuses to associate with death or deal with it.

**Q8. Why does the poet feel that we should not be so single-minded?**

**Ans:** People are generally single-minded. They want to focus on only one thing. They want to keep their lives going. They are ever busy in their pursuit. The poet wishes that they would not be so much absorbed with always remaining on the move. They must have some respite or rest. They too need peace or silence.

**Q9. Why do men become sad? How can this sadness be overcome?**

**Ans:** Men fail to understand themselves. They are always threatening themselves with death. When they realise their failure to understand themselves they become sad or helpless. Fear of death also makes them sad. Only a huge silence can interrupt this sadness. Such silence will do them good.

**Q10. How might a huge silence interrupt the sadness of men?**

**Ans:** Men never understand themselves. Nor are they ever sure of their actions. They face another tragedy. Due to their own actions, they are threatening themselves with death. This realisation makes them helpless and sad. Only a huge (long) silence might interrupt this sadness and do them some good.

**Q11. Under the apparent stillness there is life. Justify this statement giving an example from the poem 'Keeping Quiet'.**

**Ans:** Neruda does not equate stillness with total inactivity. He believes that under this apparent stillness there is life. We can learn it from the earth. When everything seems dead, the earth still remains alive. The earth is never dead. The life on the earth goes on as usual under the apparent stillness.

**Q12. Justify the title 'Keeping Quiet'.**

**Ans:** The title of the poem is quite appropriate and logical. It suggests the necessity of quiet introspection. The people of the world are overactive and always on the move. Their activities have caused untold troubles and sufferings. Keeping quiet will do them a lot of good. It will save them from many harmful and violent activities. Moreover, it will help in reflecting over the fate of man and help in creating a feeling of mutual understanding among human beings.

**Q13. Which is the exotic moment that the poet refers to in 'Keeping Quiet': [Delhi 201]**

**Ans:** The poet talks about the exotic moment when everyone keeps quiet. There will be no rush for a second. The machines must stop for a moment. That moment will be fascinating for all of us. All of us shall enjoy the sudden strangeness of the moment together.