



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH (2020-21)

QUESTION BANK – ON KILLING A TREE

Class: IX

Sub: ENGLISH

**I. Answer the following words in about 30-40 words-**

**1. In the phrase ‘consuming the earth’, who consumes the earth and how?**

**Ans:-** It is the tree that consumes the earth by drawing its nourishment from the soil through its root. The diet required by the tree lies deep inside the earth and the root sucks and absorbs nutrients and nourishes the tree.

**2. What is meant by ‘years of sunlight, air and water’?**

**Ans:-** Years of sunlight, air and water means that the tree takes years together to grow up fully. In this course of time, it draws energy from sunlight, air and water.

**3. What is ‘the most sensitive’ part of the tree? What is it sensitive to and why?**

**Ans:-** The root of the tree is its most sensitive part. It is sensitive to the heat and vagaries of weather on the open surface of the earth. It is so because it remains hidden safely under the earth.

**4. How is the exposed root affected by the sun and air?**

**Ans:-** Sun and air start drawing life out of the exposed root. It becomes discoloured, dry and hard. It starts withering and becomes gnarled and twisted. Devoid of all its moisture, it gradually becomes lifeless and the process of killing the tree is completed.

**5. How is the root of the tree to be pulled out? What is the result of this pulling?**

**Ans:-** The root of the tree is to be tied to a rope and pulled out with a great force. This pulling results in creating a cave-like hollow in the earth and exposes the root to the vagaries of weather that eventually cause the death of the tree.

**6. What is the meaning of “anchoring earth” and “earth cave”?**

**Ans:-** “Anchoring earth” means the earth which gives a firm grip to the tree and keeps it from falling. Just as a ship anchored in the sea stays in its place securely and steadily, similarly the tree stands secure and stable with the support of the earth. “Earth cave” refers to the depth under the earth where the root of a tree remains sheltered safely for years. It is firmly attached to this point and a cave-like hollow is created when the root is pulled out.

**7. What is the meaning of ‘bleeding bark’? What makes it bleed?**

**Ans:-** The ‘bleeding bark’ stands for the sap oozing out of the tree trunk when it is attacked with a knife or an axe. The word ‘bleeding’ is metaphorically used to compare the sap to the blood from a wound of a human being. It signifies the pain of the tree.

**II. Answer the following questions in about 100-150 words-**

**1. What relationship does the tree have with the earth?**

Ans:- A tree has a deep relationship with the earth. It owes its very existence to the earth. The seed germinates in the womb of the earth and the baby plant sprouts out over the surface of the earth. The tree draws nutrients for it from the soil. It is the earth that gives it support to stand erect and protects it from falling. Giving a firm grip to its roots, the earth gives it ground to grow and assume a massive size. The earth keeps root of the tree concealed, protecting it from exposure to the sunlight and the air which can prove to be very injurious for its existence. Thus, the earth helps a tree right from its birth to its survival. Even a chopped tree grows again out of the stump and gains the original, big size because the earth supports it.

**2. What does the root of the tree look like when it is pulled out of the earth-cave? What happens to it when it is left exposed?**

Ans:-The root of the tree is moist and white when it is pulled out of its hiding, the earth-cave. It is very tender and delicate as it has remained concealed for years together, away from sunlight and air. The root cannot tolerate the light and heat of the sun and the open air. When it is left exposed, it feels scorched and choked in the sun and the air. Initially, it starts changing its colour and becomes somewhat brown. Then it starts losing its tenderness. It becomes hard and its suppleness declines. Gradually, it withers away and becomes gnarled and twisted. Ultimately, life is completely drained out of it and it leads to the death of the whole tree. This is how exposure robs first the root and then the entire tree of its life.

**III. MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

**1. What does the poet symbolize a tree too?**

- (A) a good tradition  
(B) a deep-rooted evil  
(C) a noble thing  
(D) all of the above

Ans. (B) a deep-rooted evil

**2. What can alone kill a tree?**

- (A) hacking  
(B) chopping  
(C) hacking and chopping  
(D) none of the above

Ans. (D) none of the above

**3. What is needed to be pulled out to kill a tree?**

- (A) root  
(B) leaves  
(C) flowers  
(D) fruit

Ans. (A) root

**4. What happens to a tree's bleeding bark?**

- (A) it heals soon  
(B) it heals in a big time  
(C) it never heals  
(D) a tree's bark never bleed

Ans. (A) it heals soon

**5. What is related to the death of roots?**

- (A) pulling out  
(B) scorching  
(C) choking  
(D) all of the above

Ans. (D) all of the above

**IV. Read the extracts given below and answer the questions that follow-**

*It takes much time to kill a tree,  
Not a simple jab of the knife  
Will do it. it has grown  
Slowly consuming the earth,  
Rising out of it, feeding  
Upon its crust, absorbing  
Years of sunlight, air, water,  
And out of its leprous hide  
Sprouting leaves.*

**Questions :**

- (a) Name the poem and the poet.
- (b) Can we kill a tree just with a simple jab of the knife?
- (c) How does a tree grow up?
- (d) What does it absorb for years?
- (e) What does a tree symbolize in this poem?

**Answers :**

- (a) The name of the poem is 'On killing A Tree' and the name of the poet is 'Gieve Patel'.
- (b) No, we can't kill a tree just with a simple jab of the knife.
- (c) A tree grows up consuming the earth.
- (d) It absorbs sunlight, air and water.
- (e) It symbolizes a deep-rooted evil.

*Out from the earth-cave,  
And the strength of the tree exposed  
The source, white and wet,  
The most sensitive, hidden  
For years inside the earth.*

**Questions :**

- (a) What is taken out of the earth's cave?
- (b) What Is the source of the strength of a tree?
- (c) Where does the root remain hidden for years?
- (d) Name the most sensitive part of the tree.
- (e) How is the strength of the tree exposed?

**Answers**

- (a) The root of a tree is taken out of the cave.
- (b) Root is the source of the strength of a tree.
- (c) Under the earth.
- (d) The most sensitive part of the tree is its 'root'.
- (e) The strength of a tree is exposed by Pulling out its root.

*Then the matter  
Of scorching and choking  
In sun and air,  
Browning, hardening,  
Twisting, withering,  
And then it is done.*

**Questions :**

- (a) Name the poem and the poet.
- (b) What is scorching done by?
- (c) What is choking done by?
- (d) 'And then it is done'. What is done?
- (e) In this poem what is a symbol of a tree?

**Answers :**

- (a) The name of the poem is 'On Killing A Tree' and the name of the poet is Gieve Patel'.
- (b) Scorching is done by the heat of the sun.
- (c) Chocking is done by the absence of the air.
- (d) A tree is put to an end forever.
- (e) In this poem, the tree is a symbol of deep-rooted evil.

*Then the matter  
Of scorching and choking  
In sun and air,  
Browning, hardening,  
Twisting, withering,  
And then it is done.*

- (a) "Then the matter." What does 'Then' refer to?

Answer:

'Then' here refers to what happens to the root after it is exposed,

- (b) What role do the sun and air play in killing a tree?

Answer:

The sun and the air play a vital role in killing a tree by scorching and choking the root after it is pulled out.

- (c) "The strength of the tree exposed." Explain.

Answer:

The root, which is the strength of a tree, must be pulled out of its cave, in order to kill the tree.

- (d) What will happen if the miniature boughs are left unchecked?

Answer:

If the miniature boughs are left unchecked, they will expand to their former size.

*No,  
The root is to be pulled out –  
Out of the anchoring earth;  
It is to be roped, tied,  
And pulled out-snapped out  
Or pulled out entirely,  
Out from the earth-cave,  
And the strength of the tree exposed  
The source, white and wet,  
The most sensitive, hidden  
For years inside the earth.*

- (a) What does the poet mean by the word "No"?

Answer:

The poet says "No" in the beginning of the third stanza suggesting that a simple jab of knife will not kill a tree. It will grow again.

- (b) Why should the root be pulled out?

Answer:

Pulling out its root is the only way of killing a tree.

(c) What is the meaning of “anchoring earth”?

Answer:

Anchoring earth’ implies that the trees are held secure with the help of the roots in the earth. So long as the roots are firmly held by the earth, the tree is safe and cannot be killed by a simple jab of a knife.

(d) What is the condition of the root of the tree?

Answer:

The root of the tree looks wet and white.

### **Q1. Write the critical appreciation of the poem ‘On Killing a Tree’?**

The poem itself is modelled as a plant growing from the seed. The first line states “It takes much time to kill a tree.” Then the process of growth of the tree is described. It is presumed that the tree has grown from its seed.

The seed develops the root. The root works its way through the rocks and stones of the soil. The trees grows slowly by feeding upon the earth’s crust absorbing years of sunlight, air and water. There is a fight during the development of the tree which is suggested in the poem. The survival of the tree, in spite of the efforts to kill it, is shown by the lines. “And from close to the ground”.

### **Q2. Describe the pulling out of the roots and the various processes of withering and dying of a tree after it.**

The roots are the most sensitive parts of a tree. They remain hidden inside the earth for years. First root is to be pulled out of the anchoring earth. It is roped tied and pulled out entirely. The strength of the tree is totally exposed. Then starts the process of scorching and choking. The rootless tree is scorched in the sunlight. It is choked as it doesn’t get necessary oxygen for its survival from the air. Then the colour fades and hardens. It loses its proper shape. It twists and withers. Finally, it dies down.

### **Q3. After reading the poem, what similarities can we draw between trees and some great people of yesteryears?**

Trees go on live on for years. There are some trees in the Amazon forest which are said to be more than five hundred years old. We may take some lesson from them to spread our roots deep inside the earth. There had been some great people of yesteryears who still live in our memories. They had spread their roots inside our consciousness and as a result refuse to die. The hidden root gives all the sustenance to a tree. One needs to snap this source of life to kill a tree.

### **Multiple Choice Questions**

1. Who is the poet of the poem ‘On Killing a Tree’?

(a) Edward Lear

**(b) Gieve Patel**

(c) W.W.E. Ross

(d) William Wordsworth

2. What will again expand to a tree’s full size?

(a) roots

**(b) green twigs**

(c) fruit

(d) flowers

3. What is related to the death of roots?

(a) pulling out

(b) scorching

(c) choking

**(d) all of the above**

4. Where does the strength of a tree lie in?

(a) leaves

**(b) root**

(c) flowers

(d) fruit

5. What does the poet symbolize a tree too?

(a) a good tradition

**(b) a deep-rooted evil**

(c) a noble thing

(d) all of the above

### ***Summary***

It is a symbolic poem. It is a vague poem. In this poem the tree is a symbol of evil which is very deep-rooted and cannot be wiped off easily. The poet symbolises the evil as a tree. He says that merely cutting a tree will not kill it because it has the ability to sprout again after some time. He says that a tree cannot be killed by a simple jab of knife. It has grown very slowly by feeding itself on the earth. It indicates that evil is also deep rooted in the surroundings and cannot be uprooted so easily without changing the environment. For uprooting the tree, the poet says that we will have to tie the rope to it and then pull it out completely. Then it will come out of the cave and expose its white roots to the sunlight. After that the roots will get dry and the sun and the air will make the roots brown and hard. They will make it twist and wither slowly. Then only the tree will be killed.

### **Central Idea of the Poem**

In this poem, there is a beautiful ironic statement written by the poet about 'Killing' a tree. Actually, he means its opposite. He taunts how trees are to be 'killed' but they mustn't. He further says that a tree is hard to kill with the knife. The tree takes years to grow from the earth. He says that to 'kill' a tree, its roots must be pulled out entirely from the soil. This poem also conveys a message that the trees are our lifeline. So they must not be killed. He instructs how a tree is 'killed'. He gives out the message that trees are something pious and like human beings. He conveys that the tree is very deep rooted and cannot be wiped out easily. He indicates and compares it with the evil which also deep rooted in the surroundings and cannot be uprooted so easily without changing the environment. The poet considers the tree as a living organism. According to poet, it has the right to live like any other creatures. But the man is killing it with utmost cruelty and callousness. This poem indirectly gives out a strong idea that trees are our lifeline. So they mustn't be killed. The poet instructs how a tree is 'killed'. But actually he means its opposite. It implies that a person shall be a murderer if he 'kills' it this way. He says that a knife will not do harm to a tree. At last poet conveys

that if the tree is killed, it must be uprooted completely. On stating this the poet taunts the people cutting the trees. The message in the end is that trees are something pious and like human beings. They are precious so they must not be cut. The poet also conveys that the tree is deep rooted and cannot be removed easily. He compared it with the evils which he thinks are deep rooted and cannot be removed easily.

### ***On Killing a Tree Analysis***

***"It takes much time to kill a tree, not a simple jab of the knife will do it."*** The poem begins with the poet stating that it takes a lot of doing to kill a tree. He seems to be comparing it to the life of human beings. He says just like stabbing a human with a knife may not lead to death, the tree cannot be killed by merely attacking it with an axe. It takes a lot of time.

***"It has grown slowly consuming the earth,  
rising out of it, feeding upon its crust, absorbing Years of sunlight, air, water, and out of its  
leperous hide sprouting leaves."***

The poet explains that the tree has grown slowly over the years by feeding on the earth, absorbing water and getting nourished by the soil. It has also absorbed sunlight and oxygen for many years. "**Leperous hide**" refers to the discoloured bark of the tree which resembles a leper's skin and where small leaves start growing.

The poet speaks about the life of a tree by implying that just like we humans go through various stages in life from childhood to adulthood, the tree also takes years of nourishment to grow. Humans also need the same basic things like oxygen and water to survive.

Also, the poet might be referring to the other needs of humans like love, friends, family and society. A person's mind and soul is nourished by these things as one grows up.

***"So hack and chop  
But this alone won't do it.  
Not so much pain will do it.  
The bleeding bark will heal  
And from close to the ground  
Will rise curled green twigs,  
Miniature boughs  
Which if unchecked will expand again  
To former size."***

The mere act of hacking and chopping is not enough to kill a tree. The tree endures all the pain but continues to live as it heals over time. The bark which has been chopped will heal itself and the trunk of the tree near the ground will give rise to new green twigs and small branches which may grow to their former size again.

Even humans continue to live despite injuries or amputation of their limbs. They go through a lot of pain and suffering but get healed as time passes and continue to live.

***"No,  
The root is to be pulled out –  
Out of the anchoring earth;  
It is to be roped, tied,  
And pulled out – snapped out***

*Or pulled out entirely,  
Out from the earth-cave,  
And the strength of the tree exposed,  
The source, white and wet,  
The most sensitive, hidden  
For years inside the earth."*

To kill a tree, one has to attack the roots of the tree by pulling it out of the earth i.e. the source of its existence has to be destroyed by taking it out of its place of security and stability. The root should be tied with a rope and pulled out entirely from its safe place below the earth or it should be snapped out of there. The root, which is the source of strength for the tree, and also the most sensitive part as it is hidden inside the earth for years, must be exposed.

In humans, the source of existence is the heart which has to keep functioning for one to remain alive. A person may not die of injuries, broken bones or amputation of limbs, but if the heart stops, the person dies. The poet wants to convey that to kill anyone or anything, it must be killed at the heart or source of existence. Similarly, a person's family, friends and loved ones might be their source of strength. He may not be hurt on loss of materialistic things but if their loved ones or social status is snatched away, their soul is deeply hurt and they feel their life is shattered.

*"Then the matter  
of scorching and choking  
in sun and air,  
Browning, hardening,  
Twisting, withering,  
and then it is done."*

After the roots have been exposed, it is only a matter of getting burnt in the sun and choking in the air. Here, the burning or scorching may refer to the discolouring of the root and choking may refer to drying up. It goes through browning, hardening, twisting, withering and then it is finally killed.

A person may have to go through a lot of suffering before the heart finally comes to a stop and the person dies. Also, when a person is separated from his loved ones or the society, he goes through a lot of painful emotions and grief until he feels completely broken from within.

### Literary Devices

1. **No rhyme scheme is there in the poem.** It is written in free verse. There is no rhyme or rhythm.
2. **Enjambment:** When one sentence continues into two or more lines.

Not a simple jab of the knife  
Will do it. It has grown  
Slowly consuming the earth

Rising out of it, feeding  
Upon its crust, absorbing  
Years of sunlight, air, water,  
And out of its leprous hide  
Sprouting leaves.

The most sensitive, hidden  
For years inside the earth.



3. **Metaphor:** indirect comparison

**Leprous hide** - the uneven colour of the surface of the trunk of a tree is compared to the skin of a person suffering from leprosy.

**Bleeding bark** - the sap coming out of tree where it is cut is compared to the bleeding from the wound in a human's body.

4. **Alliteration:** repetition of a consonant sound in 2 or more closely places words.

Bleeding bark - 'b' sound

White and wet - 'w' sound

5. Repetition: a word or sentence is repeated to lay emphasis on it.

'Pulled out' is repeated