



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH (2026-27)
CLASS – X
QUESTION BANK-NOT MARBLE NOR THE GILDED
MONUMENTS

THEME

1. Immortality Through Poetry - Shakespeare argues that poetry is more enduring than physical monuments. Buildings and statues will decay, but poetry will keep the memory of the beloved alive.
2. The Power of Time and Destruction - The poem contrasts time's destructive nature (which ruins statues and memorials) with the preserving power of poetry, which defies time and destruction.
3. The Inevitability of War and Chaos - The sonnet acknowledges that wars destroy even the most impressive works of masonry, but poetry remains untouched because it is an intellectual and emotional legacy rather than a physical one.
4. The Role of the Beloved - While the poem does not describe the beloved in detail, it emphasizes that the subject's memory and virtues will be immortalized through poetry rather than through material structures.

SUMMARY

Shakespeare's Sonnet 55 presents a strong argument that poetry has the power to immortalize the subject's memory beyond time, war, and death. While monuments and statues erode, poetry remains, allowing future generations to remember and admire the beloved. The poet believes that his verses are stronger than time, making his beloved's legacy eternal. It tells about the limitations of worldly glory and grandeur (impressiveness). All the great monuments, memorials and statues erected by princes, rulers and the rich to perpetuate (maintain) their memory are subject to decay, destruction and deterioration. The ravages of time and the agents of destruction destroy and damage all such monuments and memorials. Only the powerful rhyme of the poet and great poetry will survive the ravages (destruction) of time. Through the written words of this poem, the poet will immortalize the memory of his friend till the day of the Last Judgment.

SONNET

A sonnet is a poetic form which originated in Italy. The term sonnet is derived from the Italian word 'sonetto' which means little poem. Before Shakespeare the word Sonnet meant simply 'little song', i.e., a short lyrical poem. It changed towards the 16th century. Sonnet contains 14 lines. The three Quatrains of 4 lines each and a couplet of 2 lines. The themes are revealed in the Quatrains whereas the Resolution or Conclusion is projected in the Couplet.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Lines 1-4

*'Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme,
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone besmear'd with sluttish time.'*

The speaker in ‘Sonnet 55: *Not Marble, Nor the Gilded Monuments*’ says that this poem will survive longer than the marble statues and monuments of the rich and powerful. With the passage of time, these monuments would wear a neglected look, and unfaithful time would take its toll and leave the monuments perishing. The word ‘marble’ in the above lines stands for the ornate statues of the princes, which were built to immortalize them. In the fourth line of this sonnet, when telling about the degeneration of the monuments, the speaker refers to time with a derogatory term, i.e., “Sluttish,” to further devalue the statues of the princes. The ornate monuments and statues erected for immortality and legacy after death eventually, are decayed and destroyed by war or ravages of time. However, according to the speaker, time won’t be able to obliterate the impact of poetry.

Lines 5-8

*‘When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war’s quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.’*

The destructive wars’ chaotic effect would ruin the statues and monuments. However, “your” (the addressee’s) memory recorded in this sonnet would outlive the delicate works of architecture, and both the sword of the God of war (Mars) and the war’s fire cannot destroy the “living record of your memory” etched in this sonnet as it is likely to be read and felt by people.

Lines 9-12

*‘Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.’*

In these lines, the speaker says that despite death and the enemies’ hatred, the addressee will continue to be praised and will live in the memory of the future generations who will live in this world till it comes to an end. It implies that all the generations to come before they are wiped out on the doomsday will remember the addressee.

Lines 13-14

*So, till the Judgement that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers’ eyes.*

Through the last couplet, the speaker says that on the day of judgement, the addressee will resurrect with the rest of the souls. Till then, the addressee will stay alive in this sonnet and in the eyes of the lovers who will read it.

The use of the word “this” in the line “You live in this” is self-referential and refers to this sonnet itself and the phrase “dwell in lovers’ eyes” means that the memory of the addressee will survive through the admirers or readers of this poem.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The sonnet '*Not Marble, Nor the Gilded Monuments*' by William Shakespeare opens the eyes to the great truth of life that nothing in life is permanent except the immortality that one can achieve through literature. Often, successful people seek to immortalize their greatness and fame by erecting statues and monuments for themselves. Sadly enough, such memories are destroyed by the ravages of time that spare none however great or trivial.

There are numerous such historic pieces of evidence lying neglected throughout the world.

Often, they are destroyed in wars, riots, etc. The warmth of love and reverence generated in the human heart through literature continues to live forever.

The ideas of great authors, like Shakespeare, and countless others, continue to resonate with readers even today. They do not need evidence of their greatness through monuments.

'Sonnet 55' is part of the Fair Youth sequence wherein the speaker addresses a young man known as Fair Youth. It resonates with the themes of death, immortality, beauty, and praise of the beloved often found in other sonnets. Its central concern is the age-old theme of art's immortality in the face of changing times and the ravages of history as the speaker tells the addressee that this sonnet will immortalize their memory.

POETIC DEVICES

1. Alliteration: "*wasteful war*," "*shall shine*,"
2. Personification:
 - "*sluttish time*" – Time is portrayed as careless or dirty.
 - "*Mars his sword*" – War is personified through the Roman god Mars.
 - Time, war, and fire are treated like living, powerful enemies.
3. Metaphor: "*The living record of your memory*" – the poem is a metaphorical living monument.
4. Contrast: Physical monuments (which decay) vs. poetry (which endures),
War vs. Poetry destructiveness of war vs. the endurance of poetry
5. Imagery: Rich visual images of marble, gilded tombs, crumbling statues, war, and fire create vivid scenes of destruction—against which poetry stands strong.
6. Repetition – 'shall' and 'nor' repeated to create musical effect
7. Epithet – an adjective or adjectival phrase used to describe a distinctive quality of a person or thing. 'Sluttish' describes time, 'besmeared' describes statues, 'wasteful' describes wars.
8. Tone: Confident and reverent – Shakespeare is absolutely certain that his verse will grant immortality.
9. Rhyme Scheme: The rhyme scheme is abab cdcd efef gg

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

On the basis of your understanding of Shakespeare's sonnet, answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

Q1. The rich and powerful got ornate monuments made in order to _____
(a) show off their wealth
(b) display their power
(c) show their artistic talent
(d) be remembered till posterity

Q2. The poet addresses his sonnet to _____
(a) time
(b) war
(c) the person he loves
(d) powerful rulers

Q3. In the line 'The living record of your memory', living record refers to
(a) the sonnet the poet has written for his friend
(b) an existing statue of his friend
(c) his friend who lives in the poet's memory
(d) the autobiography of the poet's friend

Q4. The poet's tone in the poem is
(a) despairing
(b) optimistic
(c) loving
(d) admiring

Q5. The poem is set in
(a) the place where the poet meets his friend
(b) a battlefield where Mars is fighting a battle
(c) a city ravaged by war
(d) the poet's study where he is writing

ANSWERS Q1-D, Q2-C, Q3-A, Q4-B, Q5-D

EXTRACT BASED QUESTIONS

Read the following Extracts and answer the given questions.

1. *'Not marble, nor the gilded monuments*

Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme'

(a) What does the poet mean by marble?

Ans. – The poet refers to statues and monuments made of marble.

(b) Who are the people who get gilded monuments made?

Ans. – Princes/ kings/ important statesmen get gilded monuments made.

(c) What will happen to 'marble' and 'gilded monuments'?

Ans. – They will be destroyed by the passage of time or by the ravages of war.

(d) What is more powerful than 'marble' and 'gilded monuments'? Why?

Ans. – The poet's rhyme is more powerful as it will outlive marble statues and gold-plated monuments.

(e) Name a poetic device used in the above lines.

Ans. –Alliteration; 'Not marble, nor the gilded monuments

2. *'But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time.'*

(a) Who is 'you'?

Ans. –It is the poet's friend, to whom the sonnet is addressed to.

(b) Explain 'than unswept stone'?

Ans. – A stone monument that is covered with dust or left uncared for is the 'unswept stone'.

(C) Why does the poet refer to Time as being sluttish?

Ans. –Time is 'sluttish' as it is unclean and careless. Time cares for no individual, it is immoral and will pass.

3. *'When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.'*

(a) What are the works of masonry?

Ans. –Statues and monuments built by masons is being referred to here.

(b) Who is Mars?

Ans. –Mars is the god of War.

(c) What can Mars not destroy?

Ans. – Mars cannot destroy the memory of the person enshrined in the poem.

4. *'Gainst death, and all oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wears this world out to the ending doom.'*

(a) What are the things that may destroy a person's memory?

Ans. – Death and decay, caused by the passage of time may destroy a person's memory.

(b) How will 'he' live on in people's memory?

Ans. – He will live on in people's memory because he has been immortalised in the poet's rhyme.

(c) Explain 'That wears this world out to the ending doom.'

Ans. – This line refers to all that will survive until the end of humanity.

5. *'So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.'*

(a) Who is 'you'?

Ans. – The person to whom the sonnet is addressed is being referred to, in these lines.

(b) How will he 'live' on?

Ans. – He will live in the poet's poetic creation.

(c) Explain 'judgment

Ans. –The Day of Judgment or Doomsday is being referred to here.

(d) What does the expression ‘So, till the judgment, that yourself arise’ mean?

Ans. – ‘so, till the judgment, that yourself arise’ means rising to the heaven after the last judgment is given.

6. *When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,*

(a) Name the poetic device used in line 1.

Ans. – The poetic device used in line 1 is alliteration.

(b) In this stanza, what does the word ‘broils’ mean?

Ans. -In this stanza, the word ‘broils’ means quarrels that result into fights, disturbances.

(c) What does the phrase ‘the work of masonry’ imply?

Ans. – ‘The work of masonry’ implies great admirable pieces of architecture reflecting skilled work.

7. *Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.*

(a) Which literary device is used in line 1?

Ans. –The literary device used in line I is personification. Here poet assigns an ‘eye’ to posterity thus personifying it by endowing human traits.

(b) What shall be found even in the eyes of all posterity?

Ans. –The praise of the poet’s beloved friend shall be found in the eyes of all posterity.

(c) What does the poet mean by ‘the eyes of posterity’?

Ans. –The ‘eyes of posterity’ means people of the future generations.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q1. What is the theme of the sonnet ‘Not Marble nor the Gilded Monuments’?

Ans. This is a poem about time and immortalization. The poet claims that his poem will immortalize his dear one whereas all monuments and statues will meet the dust.

Q2. In what way is the poet stronger than powerful rulers?

Ans. The creation of powerful rulers, i.e. statues and monuments are destroyed by time but the poet is more powerful than these rulers because time cannot destroy his creation, i.e., his poetry.

Q3. Why does Shakespeare refer to war as ‘wasteful war’?

Ans. Shakespeare refers to war as devastating – destructive – force. He is here describing war destroying stone structures, which relates back to the ‘marble’ and ‘gilded monuments’.

Q4. How will the poet’s friend and patron find a permanent place in the hearts of coming generations and lovers?

Ans. Poetry will outlive mankind. It will not be ravaged by time. This poem will immortalize his friend. He will stay in the eyes of lovers till doomsday.

Q5. In the poem, “Not Marble.....”, what difference does the poet bring out between his rhyme and the monuments?

Ans. Rhymes are eternal, they can't be destroyed. They are unaffected by wars and time. Monuments are destroyed with passage of time and wars.

Q6. How has the poet personified time?

Ans. The poet has personified time as someone who is unfaithful. Time is never the same for a person. Even great men are forgotten with the passage of time.

Q7. How does the poet pay tribute to friendship?

Ans. The poet pays tribute to friendship by writing a poem for his friend. The poem will be the living record of his friend's memory. Neither time nor war will be able to destroy his memory. His friend's praise will remain in the hearts of future generations.

Q8. What according to the poet transcends time in the poem, ‘Not marble, nor the Gilded Monuments’?

Ans. The poet's verses which immortalize his beloved will outlive the grand memorials or monuments built by princes in their memory. All signs of worldly power, glory and grandeur will fade away with the passage of time. All gold-plated monuments, memorials and statues will fall to utter neglect, decay and deterioration. The words of poet's ‘powerful rhyme’ will be a living record of the memory of his beloved.

Q9. How will the ‘living record’ of the poet's beloved and his memory be more powerful than wasteful wars?

Ans. The words of this poem written in praise of the poet's beloved will survive as a living record of his beloved's memory. His beloved will be remembered by the coming generations through the words of this poem. Neither the wasteful wars, nor conflicts nor tumults will diminish or dim the shining glory of these words. The words of this sonnet will immortalize the poet's beloved's memory.

Q10. Why do rich people get their statues erected?

Ans. The poet says that rich men try to get their statues erected and rich monuments made, so that they would be remembered but none of these survive the ravages of time and the men are forgotten.

Q11. The poet says that neither forces of nature, nor war can destroy his poetry. What quality of the poet is revealed through these lines?

Ans. The poet is proud of creating art and literature. These are immortal whereas the material achievements of man are temporary. The poet is known for his self-confidence and also for his contempt for arrogant rulers.

Q12. How long does the poet feel can the lover live in the rhyme written by him?

Ans. According to the poet, the lover can live in the rhyme till the world comes to an end, i.e., the Judgement Day. He is very sure that poetic art is immortal and lives forever.

Q13. What message does the poet wish to convey through his poem 'Not Marble.....'?

Ans. The poem conveys the message that the great and noble souls leave an indelible impact on their fellow beings and are remembered for a long time. Poet feels his poem will outlive the ravages of time. According to him, marble and stone monuments fail to immortalize rich and the powerful. He claims his poem will live longer than any man-made monuments.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q1-“The poem ‘Not Marble, nor the Gilded Monuments’ is all about love and immortality.”
Comment.

Ans. Shakespeare's sonnet 55 deals with the idea that his friend, his love will be made immortal in these verses, though everything else will be lost through war, “sluttish” time, or other violent forces. Shakespeare considers poetry as superior and the only assurance of immortality in this world, but lowers this particular sonnet itself as being unworthy of his friend. Thus, his theme is that everything will be destroyed and forgotten except the friend, who will be praised forever, because he is immortalized in these lines. This, he proves by comparing his verse with marbled, gilded monuments of the princes. He is glad to declare that these great monuments too have been ravaged by time and are in a state of neglect. But neither time nor any other mode of destruction can reduce the effect of his powerful rhyme' in which his friend has been shining through ages. The poet goes on to say that wars and broils too have done great damage to the great statues and great buildings of architecture a result, these once popular buildings and statues will be destroyed. But neither Mars, his sword nor any devastating fire resulting from the wars can burn the verses in which the poet has immortalized his friend.

His love for his friend is imminent when he ensures that death or any sort of enmity would not rue his friend as he 'shall pace forth' to be remembered till posterity until the day of last judgment. Thus, the poet immortalizes his friend forever in his verses.

Q2. Shakespeare, in this poem talks about two destructive forces. What are those and how does he manage to save his love from their clutches?

Ans. Time and war are the two destructive forces that the poet talks about in this poem. The very first quatrain of his sonnet revolves around the theme of the ravages made by the passage of time. The poet says that the once acclaimed and well known durable marbled and gilded monuments of princes too have been tarnished and left uncared by the 'sluttish time'. In the second quatrain, he goes on to talk about yet another destroyer called war. These wars, over the ages have overturned great statues and rooted out great 'works of masonry'.

However, the poet is comfortable when he ensures that his verse, as well his beloved friend has no threat from either sluttish time or from the sword of Mars. His poetry shall outlive all the ravages of time and his friend shall shine brighter than the gilded monuments of the princes. Even the Mars or his 'quick fire' shall not be able to burn the living record (the poem) in which the poet has immortalized his friend.

Q3. How does the poet immortalize his verse along with glorifying his friend?

Ans. – The poet immortalizes both his friend and his verse together, and this process unfolds side by side throughout the sonnet. In the very first quatrain, when the poet says, “But you shall shine brighter in these contents,” he is praising not only his friend but also the power of his own poetry to preserve that glory.

Again, in the second quatrain, he strengthens this idea by stating that his friend’s memory will live on in the “living record” of his verse. This suggests that poetry becomes the medium through which the friend is remembered and celebrated.

Towards the end of the sonnet, the friend takes centre stage as he is shown “to pace forth,” meaning to walk proudly into future generations, earning respect and admiration from those yet to come. The poet makes it clear that his friend will live on in memory until the very end of time. In short, Shakespeare presents poetry as a powerful force that can grant immortality. While he praises the lasting nature of verse, he humbly suggests that even his poetry may not be worthy enough of the friend he glorifies. This way, he elevates both his friend and his verse but gives the friend a greater share of immortality.

Q4. Imagine you are the poet’s friend. Write a letter of thanks to the poet for his love towards you.

19, Red Square
Stratford at Avon

20 June, 1590

Dear Shakespeare

Some feelings are better expressed in writing than in words spoken face to face. When we met yesterday, I wanted to thank you from the bottom of my heart—but I was so overwhelmed, I couldn’t find the right words. So, I’m writing to you now.

Thank you, first and foremost, for the beautiful poem you dedicated to me. Reading it moved me deeply. You’ve done something truly remarkable—through your words, you’ve honoured me in a way I could never have imagined. Your poem lifts a mortal being into something timeless, something enduring. I felt humbled and honoured, especially by the way you portrayed me—stronger than death, untouched by enmity. It made me reflect on my own life.

Your belief in me, your affection and admiration, are clear in every line. To say I’ll be remembered by generations to come is no small thing. I don’t know if I deserve such honour, but I do know that your expectations of me are high—and I promise to do my best to live up to them.

I will treasure this poem as a keepsake. It will always remind me of the special bond we share. I pray that your verses too will stand the test of time, and that future generations will read them with the same admiration that I do today.

With gratitude

Your friend (name)

PREVIOUS YEARS BOARD QUESTIONS

Short Answer (2 Marks)

- **2017:** Why does Shakespeare believe poetry will outlast marble monuments?
- **2018:** What does the poet mean by calling Time “sluttish”?
- **2019:** How does the poet immortalize his beloved in the sonnet?
- **2020:** Explain the contrast between monuments built by kings and the poet’s verse.
- **2021:** What is the central idea of *Not Marble, nor the Gilded Monuments*?
- **2022:** How is the pen mightier than monuments according to Shakespeare?
- **2023:** What qualities of Time are highlighted in the poem?
- **2025:** Why and how is poetry indestructible compared to monuments?

Long Answer (8 Marks)

- **2011:** You were extremely impressed to read the poem 'Not Marble, nor the Gilded Monuments'. Write a letter to a friend telling her about the poem and your newfound interest in poetry. (The letter should highlight that art is immortal while time is a powerful destroyer that leaves marks on everything else)
- **2014:** “Materialistic things don't really last. What matters most are the people we care about and the values we live with.” Explain this with reference to the poem *Not Marble, nor the Gilded Monuments*. (150 words)
- **2018:** Discuss how Shakespeare portrays the destructive power of Time in the poem.
- **2019:** Compare the immortality of poetry with the mortality of human achievements.
- **2020:** How does the poet’s verse ensure that his beloved will be remembered forever?
- **2024:** Compare the treatment of Time in *Ozymandias* and *Not Marble, nor the Gilded Monuments*. (150 words)
- **2025:** Explain how Shakespeare conveys the superiority of poetry over material monuments.