



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH- (2024-25)

QUESTION BANK -MOTHER'S DAY– by J.B. Priestly

Class: XI

Sub: ENGLISH

THEME

The play 'Mother's Day' is a humorous and satirical depiction of the status of the woman in a family. The housewife serves the members of her family with complete devotion, sincerity and love. However, she is never given the regard, attention or thanks due to her. Her leniency and eagerness to please everyone reduces her to the rank of an unpaid domestic servant in her own house. Instead of being politely requested for a favour, she is ordered to do it. She gets no thanks in return. The play focuses on importance of prioritizing oneself, not allowing oneself to be exploited. It gives the message that; one must stand up for oneself

The theme is worked out by portrayal of the Pearson family. Mrs Pearson is the harassed mother. Her daughter Doris, son Cyril and husband George take her services for granted and have become thoughtless and selfish. The interchange of personalities and the harsh treatment meted out to them by the personality of Mrs Fitzgerald (in the body of Mrs Pearson) reforms them and they obey the mother willingly.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

- Mrs. Annie Pearson (Mother to Doris and Cyril; pleasant but meek and submissive)
- Mr. George Pearson (proud husband of Mrs. Pearson)
- Doris Pearson (20-year-old daughter)
- Cyril Pearson (demanding son)
- Mrs. Fitzgerald (Mrs. Pearson's neighbour; strong willed and bold)

I. Answer the following questions in brief.

1. How was the experience of the two women after the change of bodies?

Ans: The real Mrs. Pearson (now Mrs. Fitzgerald) had not enjoyed the experience as she had seen her family being treated roughly and rudely by Mrs. Fitzgerald. On the other hand, Mrs. Fitzgerald enjoyed the experience, as she had been able to teach Doris, Cyril and Mr. George Pearson a lesson to value Mrs. Pearson.

2. What was Mrs. Fitzgerald's advice to Mrs. Pearson after she had put back the family members in their proper place?

Ans: Mrs. Fitzgerald advised Mrs. Pearson not to be soft as she felt that this would waste all the effort which she had put in to change the attitude of her family for the better. Mrs. Pearson on the other hand is unsure how she would explain her behaviour. But Mrs.

Fitzgerald warns her not to yield.

3. What was the change that came over the Pearson family in the end?

Ans: When Mrs. Fitzgerald left, Mrs. Pearson's family was relieved to see her smile. Mrs. Pearson decided to stay home for a family game of rummy and have the children prepare dinner. They readily agreed and gathered around Mrs. Pearson at the end of the play.

4. What were the two slips that could have let out the real identity of Mrs. Fitzgerald?

Ans: Mrs. Fitzgerald, in her nervousness, addresses Mr. Pearson as 'George'. But Mrs. Pearson is quick to cover up for Mrs. Fitzgerald. Later, when Mrs. Fitzgerald attempts to slap George, following an argument, the real Mrs. Pearson exclaims and calls out to her 'Mrs. Fitzgerald', which confuses George.

5. Who is Mrs. Pearson and what role does she play in the story?

Ans. Mrs. Pearson is a central character who embodies the struggles of a woman seeking independence and respect within her family. She is portrayed as a devoted mother, but she also feels stifled by her domestic responsibilities and the dismissive attitudes of her family members. Mrs. Pearson is initially portrayed as a submissive and overworked mother. However, as the story progresses, she gains confidence and assertiveness, particularly after her interactions with Mrs. Fitzgerald. This evolution highlights themes of empowerment and self-worth.

6. How does George Pearson's character reflect societal expectations of men during the time?

Ans. George Pearson represents the traditional male figure who expects his wife to manage household duties while he focuses on work. His character illustrates the societal pressures on men to conform to specific roles, often leading to a lack of appreciation for the contributions of women.

7. What is the significance of Mrs. Fitzgerald in the narrative?

Ans. Mrs. Fitzgerald serves as a catalyst for change in the Pearson household. Her bold and confident demeanor inspires Mrs. Pearson to assert herself, challenging the status quo and encouraging family members to recognize and value one another's roles and feelings.

8. How does Mrs. Pearson propose to spend the evening? Is her proposal acceptable to the family?

Ans. Mrs. Pearson proposes that they would have a nice family game of rummy. Then children could get the supper ready while she has a talk with their father. Then looking sharply at the family, she asks them if they have any objection. All speak in one voice that it suits them. Thus, Mr. Pearson finally succeeds in keeping the family home that evening.

9. What fortune does Mrs. Fitzgerald predict for Mrs. Pearson?

Ans. Mrs. Fitzgerald is quite equivocal in her predictions. She says it could be a good fortune or a bad one. All depends on Mrs. Pearson's herself now. She asks her to decide firmly. Her fortune depends on it.

II. Answer the following questions in detail.

1. Write in your words the conversation between Mrs. Pearson and Mrs. Fitzgerald at the beginning of the play. What is the outcome of the meeting?

Ans: Mrs. Fitzgerald predicts her friend Mrs. Pearson's fate and tells her that it was high time she asserted herself as the head of the family. Mrs. Pearson says that it was not easy because she loves her family although they are very thoughtless and selfish. But Mrs. Fitzgerald insists that they ought to learn to appreciate her and treat her appropriately. She tells her not to run after them and oblige. Mrs. Pearson agrees with Mrs. Fitzgerald, but wonders if anything would affect them.

She is afraid of creating unpleasantness in the family. As Mrs. Pearson is about to rush off to prepare dinner for her family, Mrs. Fitzgerald comes up with an idea. She tells, Mrs. Pearson that they could exchange their bodies. She then holds her hand and asks her to keep quiet for a minute. They stare at each other and Mrs. Fitzgerald mumbles 'Arshtatt dum-arshtatta lam arshattatta lamdumbona...' and they assume each other's personality.

2. What does Mrs. Pearson have to say to Doris that disturbs her?

Ans: When Mrs. Pearson's daughter Doris returns and tells Mrs. Fitzgerald, in the body of Mrs. Pearson, to iron her yellow silk dress as she would like to wear it that night, her mother continues playing patience. Doris asks her what she is doing and she answers her smugly that she was not whitewashing the ceiling. She also says that there is no law against smoking. She informs Doris that she had already had her tea but had not made tea for the others. She had not cooked dinner either and would have her meal at the Clarendon. She tells Doris that she worked twice as hard as the others and got no wages or thanks for it. She then inquired from Doris where she wanted to wear the yellow dress. Doris tells her that she was going out with Charlie Spence. Mrs. Pearson tells her to find someone better than the buck-toothed and half-witted man. Doris is offended and runs out.

3. Describe Mrs. Pearson's conversation with Cyril when he walks in and his reaction.

Ans: Mrs. Pearson's son Cyril walks in and insists on Mrs. Pearson getting the tea and his clothes ready. He reminds her of the promise she made the same morning to mend his clothes. He is surprised to hear that she does not like mending and that she would not do anything that she did not want to do. Cyril could not believe his ears. Cyril again asks for tea, telling her that he had been working for an eight-hour day, to which Mrs. Pearson says that she had done her eight hours and henceforth she would work for only forty hours a week. On weekends, she would have her two days off. She might make a bed and do a bit of cooking as a favour but that would be conditional to the fact that they asked her very nicely and thanked her for everything and generally made a fuss of her. Cyril and Doris are surprised and wait for their father to arrive.

4. 'Sometimes it does people good to have their feelings hurt.' Who says this and what does she do to hurt Mr. Pearson?

Ans: When Mr. Pearson announced that he did not wish to drink tea, after he returned from work,

the real Mrs. Fitzgerald informs him that his tea was not ready. He is angry and she reminds him that he was annoyed because he did not get the tea that he did not want in the first place. She adds that if he did that at a bar-went up to the bar at the club and told them he did not want a glass of beer but got irritated because they had not already poured it out for him, they would laugh at him even more than they did already. George was indignant and she added that he was one of their standing jokes and was called 'Pompy-ompy Pearson' because they thought that he was slow and pompous. George checks with Cyril on the truth of the matter, and Cyril accuses his mother of not being fair and sensitive. To which, she replies that sometimes it does people good to have their feelings hurt.

III. TEXTUAL QUESTIONS.

Q1: This play, written in the 1950s, is a humorous and satirical depiction of the status of the mother in the family.

(i) What are the issues it raises?

Ans: Mother's Day is a comical satire. The story is a simple one, yet it strongly condemns unequal position of women in society. Our mothers and wives work hard daily, turning our houses into homes. They receive no wages and have no weekends off and work all day long, round the clock. Little do we realise the hard work they put in to make it all perfect. We take them for granted and never appreciate them or stop by to drop a word of 'thanks'. The story very clearly states that our mothers and wives have equal right to relax, enjoy their lives and deserve acknowledgement and appreciation. They sacrifice their whole lives building ours'. Husbands stay busy at work and kids are occupied in their own lives. Amidst all these women lose their identity-trying to contain our world.

(ii) Do you think it caricatures these issues or do you think that the problems it raises are genuine? How does the play resolve the issues? Do you agree with the resolution?

Ans: The issues that the story raises are genuine and we must heed them. In the story the major complaint of Mrs. Pearson is that her family does not spend time with her. The author has tried to highlight the fact that how lonely can a woman feel when all the members of her family leave early morning to work and then return in the evening just to get the supper and then leave again to socialise outside home. They pay her no time or attention. She selflessly makes the home and asks nothing in return. However, little do we realise that they also yearn for company and wish to spend time with their loved ones. In the play, Mrs. Fitzgerald, a determined lady who lives in the neighbourhood and a fortune teller, helped Mrs. Pearson by exchanging body with her and dealt with Mrs. Pearson's family. She made the Pearsons understand that Mrs. Pearson is a human after all and that even after working 24x7 she receives no acknowledgement and appreciation from her family members. She did not prepare the supper and did not iron the clothes and made George, Doris and Cyril realise that how dependent they are actually on Mrs. Pearson. She is the sole pillar who keeps their lives in place and keeps everything ready for them before even they have asked for it.

Finally, when the three receive such harsh treatment and see Annie sitting back and not doing household chores, they feel helpless and find it all difficult to manage on their own. They realise

that their lives are absolutely incomplete without Mrs. Pearson. The resolution was perfect and very well depicted. The Pearsons needed the harsh treatment after all else they would have never realised the blunder they were going on committing.

After what all happened and when Mrs. Fitzgerald and Mrs. Pearson exchanged the bodies back to the original ones, Annie tells George, Doris and Cyril to stay back and play cards with her and proposed that kids would do cooking while she could sit back and relax while talking to her husband, to which the three approved merrily.

Q2: If you were to write about these issues today what are some of the incidents, examples and problems that you would think of as relevant?

Ans: No matter that time has changed and women in today's society have become confident and aware about their rights. However, they still continue to be dominated in conservative societies like ours. Even in western world, one may find many such families, like Pearson's, where the lady of the house alone manages all for the rest of the members. They work round the clock, doing the house hold chores all by themselves without complaining and do not even receive appreciation. Our mothers take little liberty to enjoy or have their own leisure time. A woman is accepted only in the avatar of a home maker, we never can accept our mothers or wives going out with her friends. We all stereotype a woman as a lady who is going to cook food for us, iron our clothes, sit back at home all day cleaning our room and anxiously waiting for us to return in the evening. We behave as if she cannot have a life and is liable for our work. We must always keep it in mind that woman in our house needs our attention and appreciation and we must be grateful to her.

Q3: Is drama a good medium for conveying a social message? Discuss.

Ans: Drama or theatre is a perfect media to deliver social messages to the society. Now that we are in the digital era, we have various kinds of media, print, electronic and cyber. However, in the times when there were no TVs, the only media was theatre. Media not just reflects the society but also revolutionises the society. Jean Genet has made it very clear from his plays that the society dwells on images. Hence, what we show affects the society largely. So, in Drama or Theatre, when the characters come alive and equivocally make their point in front of the whole society, they raise questions, very strong and vital issues are highlighted, which otherwise remain ignored. People heed to what is displayed and learn and not just relate and get emotional. It is believed that in drama, comedy is best able to mark an effect on the audience. Comedy does not stimulate the audience emotionally; hence, there is no subsequent catharsis. Thus, the alienated audience is able to think rationally rather than getting emotional and is able to infer what the dramatist has been trying to convey. Thus, it opens the audience's mind and they begin to think about what has been suggested or portrayed in the story.

IV. EXTRACT BASED QUESTIONS

Extract 1. *MRS FITZGERALD: I did. Twelve years I had of it, with my old man rising to be Lieutenant Quartermaster. He learnt a lot, and I learnt a lot more. But will you make up your mind now, Mrs Pearson dear? Put your foot down, once an' for all, an' be the mistress of your own house an' the boss of your own family.*

MRS PEARSON: [smiling apologetically] That's easier said than done. Besides I'm so fond of them even if they are so thoughtless and selfish. They don't mean to be...

MRS FITZGERALD: [cutting in] Maybe not. But it'd be better for them if they learnt to treat you properly...

MRS PEARSON: Yes, I suppose it would, in a way.

Q i. List any two sensory details present in this extract.

Ans: Two sensory details present in this extract are "smiling apologetically" and "cutting in".

Q ii. Complete the sentence appropriately. The phrase "Put your foot down" suggests that

_____.

Ans: The phrase "Put your foot down" suggests that Mrs Fitzgerald wanted Mrs Pearson to be firmer and more assertive with her family.

Q iii. Explain any one possible inference that can be drawn from the line "He learnt a lot, and I learnt a lot more".

Ans: One possible inference that can be drawn from this line is that Mrs Fitzgerald was proud and confident of her own knowledge and experience gained from her husband's military career.

Q iv. Identify the line from the text that bears evidence to the fact that Mrs Pearson was fond of her family despite their flaws.

Ans: The line from the text that bears evidence to the fact that Mrs Pearson was fond of her family despite their flaws is "Besides I'm so fond of them even if they are so thoughtless and selfish".

Q v. What does the term 'in a way' indicate about Mrs Pearson's agreement or disagreement with Mrs Fitzgerald?

Ans: The term 'in a way' indicates that Mrs Pearson's agreement or disagreement with Mrs Fitzgerald was partial.

Q vi. Which of the following headlines best suggests the central idea of the extract?

- (a) A Woman's Advice to Her Friend on How to Be a Better Mother
 - (b) A Woman's Conversation with Her Friend on How to Deal with Her Family
 - (c) A Woman's Complaint to Her Friend on How Her Family Treats Her
 - (d) A Woman's Confession to Her Friend on How She Feels About Her Family
- Ans: The best headline that suggests the central idea of the extract is (b). A Woman's Conversation with Her Friend on How to Deal with Her Family.

Extract 2. You think it does 'em good when you run after them all the time, take their orders as if you were the servant in the house, stay at home every night while they go out enjoying themselves? Never in all your life. It's the ruin of them as well as you.

Q i. Who is the speaker in the above lines?

- a. Mrs. Pearson
- b. George
- c. Cyril
- d. Mrs. Fitzgerald**

Q ii. What message is the speaker trying to convey here? Tick the correct statement.

- a. A mother should take full responsibility of every household chore without thinking about herself because she is the epitome of sacrifice.
- b. A mother should stay at home and take orders from the family members because being a housewife she is inferior to them.

c. A mother should get the same rights and privileges as other family members because she is supporting the family by working selflessly for them.

d. Family members need not be thoughtful about the feelings, desires and needs of the mother as she is a mature enough to look after herself.

Q iii. What kind of a person is the speaker?

a. Bold and confident

b. Docile and subservient

c. Both (a) and (c)

d. None of the above

Q iv. Which word in the passage means the same as “something that leads to serious trouble”?

a. Orders

b. Servant

c. Ruin

d. enjoying

Extract 3. *It's not me that's being silly- and I must say it's a bit much when I've been working hard all day and you can't even bother to get my tea ready. Did you hear what I said about my yellow silk?*

Q i. Identify the speaker

a. Mrs. Fitzgerald

b. b. Mrs. Pearson

c. Cyril

d. Doris

Q ii. What do you learn about the speaker's behaviour from these lines?

a. Speaker is very hard- working and diligent

b. Speaker is very soft-hearted and caring

c. Speaker is kind and generous

d. Speaker lacks empathy and understanding

Q iii. Who is the speaker speaking to?

a. Cyril

b. George

c. Annie Pearson

d. Charlie Spence

Q iv. Which word in the passage is the antonym of “rational”?

a. Silly

b. bit

c. hard

d. bother

V. Assertion and Reason Based Questions:

Q1: Assertion: Mrs. Pearson's family is upset with her for not preparing tea and her daughter's dress.

Reason: Mrs. Pearson wanted to teach her family a lesson about being respectful.

- (a) Both assertion and reason are true, and the reason is the correct explanation of the assertion.
- (b) Both assertion and reason are true, but the reason is not the correct explanation of the assertion.
- (c) Assertion is true, but the reason is false.
- (d) Assertion is false, but the reason is true.

Ans: (b) While both the assertion and reason are true, Mrs. Pearson's actions were primarily to assert her role as a mother, not just to teach respect.

Q2: Assertion: Mr. Pearson got annoyed with his wife.

Reason: His wife told him that he was a joke among the club members.

- (a) Both assertion and reason are true, and the reason is the correct explanation of the assertion.
- (b) Both assertion and reason are true, but the reason is not the correct explanation of the assertion.
- (c) Assertion is true, but the reason is false.
- (d) Assertion is false, but the reason is true.

Ans: (a) Mr. Pearson gets annoyed because his wife exposes the truth about his reputation at the club.

Q3: Assertion: Mrs. Pearson exchanges bodies with Mrs. Fitzgerald.

Reason: Mrs. Pearson wants to teach her family a lesson by being in Mrs. Fitzgerald's body.

- (a) Both assertion and reason are true, and the reason is the correct explanation of the assertion.
- (b) Both assertion and reason are true, but the reason is not the correct explanation of the assertion.
- (c) Assertion is true, but the reason is false.
- (d) Assertion is false, but the reason is true.

Ans: (a) Mrs. Pearson indeed exchanges bodies to teach her family a lesson through Mrs. Fitzgerald's bold personality.

Q4: Assertion: Mrs. Pearson and her family decide to have dinner together.

Reason: They realize the importance of family after Mrs. Pearson and Mrs. Fitzgerald exchange bodies.

- (a) Both assertion and reason are true, and the reason is the correct explanation of the assertion.
- (b) Both assertion and reason are true, but the reason is not the correct explanation of the assertion.
- (c) Assertion is true, but the reason is false.
- (d) Assertion is false, but the reason is true.

Ans: (a) The family decides to have dinner together because they recognize the significance of family unity after the exchange.

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