



**INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH- CLASS X (2025-26)**  
**POEM-SNAKE BY D.H LAWRENCE**

**I. SUMMARY:**

In the poem, D.H Lawrence talks about the peaceful co – existence between man and the other creatures in the world. He also talks about man’s sins and the guilt which he has when he fails to perform his duty of respecting these other creatures which are God’s creations.

It being an extremely hot day, the poet comes to his water trough to quench his thirst. There he sees a golden-brown snake already drinking water. He is afraid and at the same time, welcomes his guest. He considers himself next in turn and waits patiently for his turn.

He is fascinated by this creation of God which seems harmless and whose only aim is to quench its thirst and retreat. The poet’s inner voice asks him to kill it as it being golden brown in colour, is considered to be poisonous.

The snake is unaware of the presence of the poet and in its natural way, quenches its thirst and withdraws into the hole in the wall.

When the snake is on its way into the hole, the poet is terrorized at the thought of the snake withdrawing into a world of darkness. He picks up a log of wood, hurls it at the snake. He misses it but the snake senses danger and disappears into the hole in a haste.

The poet is still fascinated by the snake, but a sense of guilt grips him. He regrets his act of trying to hit the snake. He finds a similarity between this feeling of repentance to that of the ancient mariner who had killed the Albatross. He considers his act to be wrongful, to hit his ‘guest’. He wishes that the snake comes back so that he can apologize and make amends for insulting the uncrowned king in exile in the underworld due to be crowned again.

**II. Literary Devices Used in “Snake”**

1. **Assonance:** Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in the same line such as the sound of /ee/ in “For he seemed to me again like a king” and the sound of /i/ in “Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?”.
2. **Consonance:** Consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line such as the sound of /n/ in “Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld” and the sound of /r/ in “And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.”
3. **Enjambment:** It is defined as a thought in verse that does not come to an end at a line break; rather, it continues to the next line. For example,

“I looked round, I put down my pitcher,  
 I picked up a clumsy log  
 And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.”

4. **Imagery:** Imagery is used to make readers perceive things involving their five senses. For example, “Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld”, “And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords” and “And I wished he would come back, my snake.
5. **Rhetorical Question:** Rhetorical question is a question that is not asked in order to receive an answer; it is just posed to make the point clear. For example, in the last part of the poem the author uses it emphasizes his point such as, “Into the burning bowels of this earth?” and “Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?”

6. **Simile:** It is a device used to compare something with something else to make the meanings clear. For example, in the second last stanza of the poem, “For he seemed to me again like a king/Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld”
7. **Symbolism:** Symbolism is using symbols to signify ideas and qualities, giving them symbolic meanings that are different from literal meanings. Here “lords of life” and “king” stand for the supremacy of that innocent creature.

**III. Answer the following by choosing the right option from those given below:**

**Q1. Who has written the poem ‘Snake’?**

- A. D.H. Lawrence
- B. W.B. Yeats
- C. Shakespeare
- D. None of these

**Q2. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?**

- A. AABBC DDEEF
- B. ABABA CDCDC
- C. Free verse
- D. ABCBD BCDCE

**Q3. What was the poet carrying to take water?**

- A. mug
- B. pitcher
- C. glass
- D. bucket

**Q4. Find a synonym for ‘pitcher’-**

- A. mug
- B. jug
- C. bottle
- D. tub

**Q5. Who was there at the trough when the poet reached?**

- A. His cousin
- B. a snake
- C. a cow
- D. God

**Q6. What was the snake doing at the trough?**

- A. catching a prey
- B. passing by
- C. drinking water
- D. admiring the beautiful garden

**Q7. What was the weather on that day?**

- A. snowy
- B. cold
- C. rainy
- D. hot

**Q8. What was the poet wearing?**

- A. trousers
- B. legging
- C. pyjamas
- D. shorts

**Q9. Why did the poet go to the trough in the garden?**

- A. to water plants
- B. to meet the snake
- C. to hit the snake

**D. to fetch water**

**Q10. What did the poet do when he saw the snake at the trough?**

- A. He tried to shoo it away

**B. He waited silently for his turn**

- C. He screamed for help
- D. He called the police helpline

**Q11. How did the snake try to harm the poet?**

- A. it attacked him
- B. it flew towards him
- C. it hissed and scared him

**D. it didn't do anything to harm him**

**Q12. What figure of speech is used-**

*"And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough*

*And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,*

*And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,"*

**A. Anaphora**

- B. Transferred Epithet
- C. Allusion
- D. simile

**Q13. Who has been personified in the poem?**

- A. carob tree
- B. Mount Etna

**C. Snake**

- D. All of these

**Q14. What figure of speech is used-**

*:And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken"*

- A. Anaphora
- B. Transferred Epithet
- C. Allusion

**D. simile**

**Q15. What figure of speech is used-**

*"And I thought of the albatross*

*And I wished he would come back, my snake."*

- A. Anaphora
- B. Transferred Epithet

**C. Allusion**

- D. simile

**Q16. 'Expiate' means-**

- A. to agree
- B. to amend**
- C. to judge
- D. to change

**Q17. In Sicily, what colour snakes are considered venomous?**

- A. All of them
- B. black

C. golden

D. white

**Q18. What does the poet confess?**

A. he was scared of it

B. he liked it

C. he detested it

D. all of these

**Q19. Who said –**

**“ If you were a man**

**You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.”**

A. the neighbour

B. poet's inner voice

C. poet's mother from inside the house

D. none of these

**IV. Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow:**

*A. snake came to my water-trough*

*On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas, for the heat.*

*To drink there.*

*In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob-tree*

**1. Who had come to the poet's water-trough?**

**Ans.** A snake had come to the poet's water trough.

**2. What do you mean by 'water-trough'?**

**Ans.** A watering trough (or artificial watering point) is a man-made or natural receptacle intended to provide drinking water to animals.

**3. Why was the poet going to the trough?**

**Ans.** It was a very hot day, so the poet was also going to the trough to collect water for himself.

**4. Where was the water-trough?**

**Ans.** The water trough was placed under the shade of the great dark carob tree.

**B Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:**

*I came down the steps with my pitcher*

*And must wait, must stand and wait, for there*

*he was at the trough before me.*

**1. Who is I?**

**Ans.** 'I' refers to the poet.

**2. What is the pitcher for?**

**Ans.** The pitcher is for filling water.

**3. Why must he wait? Wait is repeated, why?**

**Ans.** He had to wait because he did not want to disturb the snake who had come in first. Wait is repeated in must stand and wait" because the poet was so fascinated by the snake, he wanted to keep looking at it. He did not want to go away, but stand and wait, enjoying the ways of the snake, as it drank water.

**4. Why did the poet allow the snake to finish drinking water and not disturb him?**

**Ans.** The poet waited for the snake to finish drinking, because it had come there earlier and courtesy demanded that he waits for his turn.

**C Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:**

*He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom  
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down,  
over the edge of the stone trough  
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom.*

**1. How did the snake get there?**

**Ans.** It had come out of the dark interiors of the earth through a crack in the wall.

**2. Where did it rest its throat”?**

**Ans.** It rested its throat upon the bottom of the trough that was made of stone.

**3. How did it get there?**

**Ans.** It got there by crawling on its soft belly.

**4. Why had the snake come there?**

**Ans.** The snake had come there to drink water.

**D Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:**

*“And where the water had dripped  
From the tap, in a small clearness,  
He sipped with his straight mouth,  
Softly drank through his straight  
gums, into his slack long body. Silently”*

**1. Where did it drink water from?**

**Ans.** The snake drank water from the small clearness where the water had dropped from the tap.

**2. How did it drink?**

**Ans.** He sipped the water with his straight mouth and swallowed it softly through his straight gums.

**3. Did the snake cause any disturbance while drinking water?**

**Ans.** The snake did not create any disturbance, but crawled in lazily and drank the water in absolute silence.

**4. How was the snake's body?**

**Ans.** The snake's body was long and slack.

**V. Short Answer Questions:****Q1 Why does the poet experience conflicting emotions on seeing the snake?**

**Ans.** The poet experienced conflicting emotions because his head (education), and his heart (sensibilities) gave him different suggestions, opinions, on how to handle the snake. His heart did not want to listen to his mind that told him to kill the snake, if he were a man.

**Q2 What did voice of education say to the poet in the poem, 'snake'?**

**Ans.** Education had made him understand that snakes are poisonous and that it should be killed for survival. Snake poison could result in death. It had not taught him to understand, respect and protect another living being, that was in no way disturbing him.

**Q3 How does the poet describe the day and the atmosphere when he saw the snake?**

**Ans.** The poet says that it was a very hot day in July, probably as hot as the day when Mount Etna in Sicily had erupted, releasing excessive heat, fire and lava.

**Q4 Why did D.H. Lawrence, the poet, despise himself? How did he feel and describe his action?**

**Ans.** He despised himself for throwing a log at the snake. He felt extremely disgusted when he saw the snake escaping in a hurry. He regretted his paltry, vulgar and mean behaviour. He hated himself and the education that had told him that snakes are harmful and must be killed. He felt his action was responsible for depriving him of the opportunity of honouring a king.

**Q5 Why did the poet wait for the snake to quench its thirst first?**

**Ans.** The poet waits for the snake to quench its thirst because he considered it to be an honoured guest. Besides, as the snake had come before him, it was first in the order.

**Q6 How is the poet guilty of violating the rule of hospitality?**

**Ans.** The poet felt honoured when he noticed a majestic snake crawling towards his water trough, to quench its thirst. Later, he picked up a log and threw it at the harmless snake, while it was making a decent exit. The poet regretted his impulsive act and termed it as being, 'vulgar' 'mean' 'petty'; and rebukes the voices of human education. The poet believed that he ought to make amends for his unreasonable and undignified act. He experienced an acute sense of guilt for having violated the basic rules of hospitality.

**Q7 Do you think the snake was conscious of the poet's presence? How do you know?**

**Ans.** Not in the beginning. He drank, completely oblivious of the poet's presence there. Later on, when he looked at him, it showed no fear. Probably, it did not know that a man stood there in fascination with a very confused state of mind, that was giving him contrary instructions.

**Q8 How do we know that the snake's thirst was satiated?**

**Ans.** After drinking enough water, the snake took out its forked tongue, moved it and smacked its lips as the cattle do. This was an indication that its thirst was quenched.

**Q9 Why does the poet decide to stand and wait till the snake has finished drinking? What does this tell you about the poet? (Notice that he uses 'someone' instead of something for the snake.)**

**Ans.** The poet had not expected this encounter with the snake. He felt extremely honoured that the snake had come there seeking his hospitality. As it had come there before him, he decided to wait, without disturbing him. He uses 'someone, perhaps to personify the snake, by treating it as a guest.

**Q10 In stanza 2 and 3, the poet gives a vivid description of the snake by using suggestive expression. What picture of the snake do you form on the basis of this description?**

**Ans.** The poet is very vividly presenting the picture of a huge golden snake that had come in very peaceful and calmly, from its hot home beneath the earth. It was in no hurry, and moved about in a very lazy and harmless manner. The snake is also compared to cattle by the poet probably to highlight that it did not have any vicious intentions. It had just come in to drink water and tried to slip away with the same laziness into its hole.

**Q11. The poet is filled with horror and protest when the snake prepares to retreat and bury itself in the 'horrid black; 'dreadful hole. In the light of this statement, bring out the irony of his act of throwing a log at the snake.**

Though the poet is very fascinated by the snake, he feels compelled by the voice of his education, not to let it go away; so he picks up the log lying there and throws it at the snake to harm it, kill it or frighten it so that it may not appear again.

**Q12. 1.How does Lawrence explore the internal conflict in Snake?**

By portraying the narrator's struggle between his natural admiration for the snake and real-world conditioning to view it as a threat. The narrator's conflicting instincts lead to an impulsive act of violence, followed by regret, highlighting the tension between human instincts and society's expectations toward nature.

## **VI. ASSERTION AND REASON BASED QUESTIONS:**

**1. Assertion (A):** The poet feels guilty for throwing a log at the snake.

**Reason (R):** The poet believed it was his duty to act brave and kill the snake.

- a) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.
  - b) Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A.
  - c) A is true, but R is false.
  - d) A is false, but R is true.
- Answer:** a) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.

**2. Assertion (A):** The poet describes the snake as a guest.

**Reason (R):** The snake had entered the poet's house uninvited.

- a) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.
- b) Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- c) A is true, but R is false.
- d) A is false, but R is true.

**Answer:** c) A is true, but R is false.

**3. Assertion (A):** The poet throws a log at the snake after it retreats into the hole.

**Reason (R):** He wants to harm the snake out of pure cruelty.

- a) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.
- b) Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- c) A is true, but R is false.
- d) A is false, but R is true.

**Answer:** c) A is true, but R is false.

**4. Assertion (A):** The poet compares the snake to a king in exile.

**Reason (R):** The poet feels the snake has a majestic and dignified presence.

- a) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.
- b) Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- c) A is true, but R is false.
- d) A is false, but R is true.

**Answer:** a) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.

**5. Assertion (A):** The poet is conflicted between his natural instincts and societal teachings.

**Reason (R):** Society teaches him that snakes are dangerous and must be killed.

- a) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.
- b) Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- c) A is true, but R is false.
- d) A is false, but R is true.

**Answer:** a) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.

## VII. ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

**Q1 The poet has a dual attitude towards the snake. Why does he experience conflicting emotions on seeing the snake?**

**Ans.** The poet does get confused when he sees the snake. He experiences conflicting emotions because instinct and the mind tell him to react in different ways. His instinct makes him fascinated, admired, honoured, and respected, the snake who he feels is as majestic as God, an uncrowned king. But his mind guided by the myths of formal education, tells him to kill the snake, as man has arbitrarily certified all snakes as

poisonous.

**Q2 Whenever we act against the voice of our conscience, the result is suffering. Explain with reference to the poet's action against the snake and its consequences.**

**Ans.** The graceful and dignified presence of the snake that had come to quench its thirst had fascinated the poet and filled him with awe. The poet who had also gone to fetch some water waits patiently, with due respect for the 'guest'. However, the voice of education tells him that yellow snakes are venomous and urges him to throw a log at the receding snake. When the poet sees the harmless snake slithering in panic for safety into the bowels of the earth, he is filled with a sense of guilt and remorse. He despises himself for being petty and wishes that the snake would reappear to accept his hospitality and seek redemption for his evil act.

**Q3 In the poem "Snake", the poet experiences a conflict between his natural admiration for the creature and the moral lessons he has been taught by society. How does this internal conflict reflect the poet's struggle between instinct and education? Discuss with reference to the poem.**

**Ans.** In "Snake", D. H. Lawrence portrays his inner conflict as he watches a snake drink water. His instinct tells him the snake is harmless and majestic, deserving respect as a fellow creature of nature. However, his education and societal conditioning label the snake as evil and dangerous, something to be killed. This clash between natural instinct and learned fear creates deep guilt in the poet when he finally throws a log at the snake. The poem reveals Lawrence's belief that human beings have lost touch with their natural wisdom due to social prejudices. The poet's remorse shows that instinct and respect for nature are truer guides than blind obedience to inherited fears.

**Q4 The poet feels deep remorse after trying to harm the snake. What does this sense of guilt reveal about human nature and the poet's moral awakening?**

**Ans.** After attacking the snake, the poet feels ashamed and realizes he has committed a moral wrong against an innocent creature. His guilt represents humanity's tendency to destroy what it does not understand or fears. The act of striking the snake symbolizes human arrogance and the loss of harmony with nature. The poet's repentance is an awakening—a recognition that true nobility lies in coexistence, not dominance. His longing to see the snake again reflects his desire for redemption and reconciliation with nature. Through this experience, Lawrence shows that guilt can lead to self-realization and moral growth, transforming fear into respect and cruelty into compassion.

**Q5 Explain how the snake in the poem symbolizes both danger and divinity. How does the poet's attitude toward the snake change throughout the poem?**

**Ans.** The snake in Lawrence's poem carries a dual symbolism—it represents both fear and holiness. At first, the poet is cautious, viewing the snake as a potential threat, shaped by cultural beliefs that snakes are "evil." However, as he observes the creature's calm and dignified behaviour, the snake begins to appear sacred and god-like. Its slow

movements and peaceful presence evoke reverence in the poet, reminding him of ancient myths where snakes symbolized wisdom and rebirth. His attitude shifts from fear to admiration, but societal conditioning makes him act violently. The snake's silent retreat and the poet's guilt reinforce the idea that humanity often destroys what is divine in nature through ignorance and fear.

**Q6** Through the poem "*Snake*", how does D. H. Lawrence criticize mankind's relationship with nature? What lesson does the poet learn from his encounter with the snake?

**Ans.** Lawrence criticizes modern humanity's alienation from nature through the poet's encounter with the snake. Instead of living in harmony with natural creatures, humans are taught to dominate or destroy them out of fear or superstition. The poet realizes too late that his violent act towards the snake was unjustified. His remorse highlights the loss of innocence and respect that once existed between humans and nature. The poem urges readers to embrace empathy and coexistence rather than control and fear. Lawrence suggests that every creature, even one feared like the snake, has beauty and purpose. The poet learns that moral maturity lies in recognizing the sanctity of all life and acting with compassion toward the natural world.

**Q7 "Man is the most selfish animal on this earth, who has not spared any other species to satisfy his greed." Elaborate.**

**OR**

**Why can't man live and let others (wildlife in general) live in peace?**

**Ans.** Everything that grows, lives, breathes and procreates, fall under the category of living beings. God created all living beings. The only difference between man and other living things are that man has been endowed with the power of reasoning, while the other Living beings are guided by their instinct.

Now, what did man do with his power of reasoning? He started using it unreasonably. Animals kill only when they are hungry. But man kills to eat, for fun, for power, as a sport, in the name of religion. He just needs to hit upon a reason to be inhuman and unreasonable. Man has destroyed the earth given to us by God.

He has destroyed the ecological balance, by killing animals and birds and chopping down trees. All this to satiate his greed for wealth and power. For man the adage, "Live and let live" is not for him to practise. Allowing another being to stand up against him will be a definite crash of his ego, which he will not allow even if it means that he has to kill.

**Q8 Snakes generate both horror and fascination. Do you agree? Why/Why not?**

**Ans.** I agree with the fact that snakes generate both horror and fascination. Snakes are legless reptiles that glide their way through water and ground. They are carnivorous and thus, can be very dangerous. They can prey on objects larger than their heads which makes snakes a highly risky reptile to encounter. Of course, it is because of these traits that some people find it fascinating to keep snakes as their pet.

But the fear that has been instilled in our minds with regard to this creature is so severe that we tend to panic if we see even a harmless non-poisonous variety basking in the sun. Snakes are lovely to look at because of the varied colours and designs on their bodies. Patterns on different species of snakes symbolise their type and characteristics.

Different varieties of snakes can be seen held captive for no fault of theirs, and displayed

with their species name and features, in zoos across the world. T In short, formal education as said by the Poet D.H. Lawrence generates horror in our minds when we see the reptile, while our instinct directs us to look at it in fascination.

**Q9** The poem “*Snake*” by D.H. Lawrence brings out a deep conflict between the poet’s instinctive respect for nature and the learned values of human civilization. Based on the character sketches of both the poet and the snake, discuss how the poet’s inner conflict highlights the theme of the poem. What does this reveal about his attitude towards nature and civilization?

**Ans. Character Sketch of Poet (D H Lawrence):**

The poet does dual attitude towards the snake. His natural instinctive reaction is that of awe. He is fascinated by the snake’s movements. He also feels honoured and a streak of friendly bonding with the snake. But the voice of human education prompts him to kill it, as it was poisonous and hence harmful, it must be finished.

He has been described as an epitome of human civilisation. He represents the conflict of human mind and how ethics are sometimes overpowered by civil and corrupt minds of the society. The poet despises himself and calls his sin “pettiness” because he feels himself responsible for chasing away the snake with a stick. The three words to describe his action are: paltry, vulgar and mean. In the poem, the poet first treats him like a guest and calls him “like a god”. However, later, he is the same person who chases the snake away with a stick. The poet feels very sorry for his disgraceful, unacceptable and uncouth behaviour and action and rebuked the voices of education and civilisation that had shaped his thoughts and urged him to chase away the creature.

**Character Sketch of Snake:**

The snake was golden-brown in colour which is considered to be venomous or poisonous in Sicily. (usually yellow-coloured snakes refer to be poisonous). It had come from the depth of the brown earth. Very casually, fearlessly, it drank water, slowly sipping from the clearness of the water. It had a two-forked tongue that flickered. The snake has been described as yellow-brown sleek and soft-bellied. The poet looks upon the snake as a god because the latter is very unmindful and carefree about the lesser mortals like humans. The snake seems to be least bothered about the fact that the poet is waiting for its turn at the trough. He seems to rule like a god, his movement as graceful as him. It was a hot day, that is the day of the volcanic eruption from Mount Etna in Sicily.

