



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH (2022-23)

QUESTION BANK – **THE TREES-** by Adrienne Rich

Class: X

Sub: ENGLISH

Introduction

This poem presents a conflict between men and nature. The poetess Adrienne Rich suggests here that the trees and plants used in the interior decoration in cities are as imprisoned. They need freedom. These trees want to move out to the forest where trees are decreasing day by day due to deforestation. The poetess says that everything has a deep desire for freedom. It is necessary for growth and wellbeing.

Summary

In the first stanza, the poetess says that the forest is the actual home of trees. So, all the trees are moving into the forest, which was empty for a long time. Here, trees are used as a metaphor by the poetess to show how drastically humans have destroyed the forests. They have cut down the trees to fulfill their needs and have confined these trees to the walls of their houses. But now, these trees have started their movement and are moving towards the forest. Since the forest was empty, no birds can sit on the branches of trees, no insects can hide in the trees and the sunlight can never disappear under the shadow of the trees. However, now that the trees have started moving, the empty forest will be filled by the trees by the next morning.

The second stanza explains the effort put by trees to free themselves from the boundaries of humans' houses. The poetess says that the roots of the trees work all night to separate themselves from the cracks of the veranda floor. The leaves of the tree try to put pressure on the glass so that they can break the glass ceiling. The small stems of the tree have become hard due to the continuous effort to free themselves. The long branches of the tree have shrunk because of the less space available for them to expand under the roof. Trees move slowly from home and look like newly discharged patients from the hospital. They are a little confused while moving to the clinic door as they are not able to believe that they are coming back to their actual home in the forest.

In the third stanza, the poetess says that she sits inside the home in the veranda and keeps the doors open. She writes long letters in which she hardly mentions the departure of trees to their empty forest. It's night time and the moon is shining in the sky. The poetess can smell the odour of leaves and lichen coming to her. The smell of trees reaches her in a similar way as a voice reaches a room.

In this stanza, the poetess listens to the whisper of the trees leaving the house. The trees reach the empty forest the next day and the house will become silent. Now, the poetess can hear the sound of glass breaking. As the glass breaks, the trees move in a hurry due to which they fall on each other. The trees feel that the wind is blowing faster as it wants to meet them soon. The trees are

so tall that they break the moon into pieces like a mirror. Now, the moon looks like a crown on the head of the oak trees.

POETIC DEVICES

1. RHYME SCHEME: No rhyme scheme. It is written in **free verse**.

2. PERSONIFICATION -

*The trees inside are moving out into the forest
no sun bury its feet in shadow
small twigs stiff with exertion
The trees are stumbling forward
Winds rush to meet them*

3. ALLITERATION - The repetition of the letter -

L in "*long letters.*"

F in "*forest from.*"

S in "*sky still.*"

L in "*leaves and lichens.*"

4. SIMILE -

like newly discharged patients
still reaches *like a voice into the rooms*
The moon is broken *like a mirror*,

5. ENJAMBMENT - The sentence is being continued to the next line without a break –
(the forest that was...trees by morning).

6. ANAPHORA - It is the repetition of a word at the start of two or more consecutive lines -

(no insect hide

no sun bury its feet in shadow).

7. IMAGERY –

trees inside are moving out into the forest

small twigs stiff with exertion

Night is fresh,

Smell of leaves and lichen

Head is full of whispers

I. Read the following extract carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1. The trees inside are moving out into the forest,
the forest that was empty all these days
where no bird could sit
no insect hide
no sun bury its feet in shadow

the forest that was empty all these nights
will be full of trees by morning.

- (a) What does the poet mean by empty forest? Why is it empty?
- (b) 'No sun bury its feet in the shadow', explain this line.
- (c) Which word in the stanza means "unoccupied"?
- (d) How will the empty forest be full of trees by morning?

Answer:

- (a) Empty forest means forest with no trees and Ans. it is so because humans have destroyed the forests for building cities and other uses.
- (b) Since the forests were empty, sunlight could reach the grounds directly and could ever hide under the shadows of the trees.
- (c) The word is 'Empty'.
- (d) The poet imagines that the trees are moving to the empty forest to settle there forever. This will enable the forest to be full of trees.

2. All night the roots work
to disengage themselves from the cracks
in the veranda floor.
The leaves strain toward the glass
small twigs stiff with exertion
long-cramped boughs shuffling under the roof
like newly discharged patients
half-dazed, moving
to the clinic doors.

- (a) Why do the roots work all night?
- (b) Why do the twigs get stiff?
- (c) Which word mean "to get free" in the stanza?
- (d) Which poetic device has been used in "like newly discharged patients" of the poem?

Answer:

- (a) The roots work all night so that they can free themselves from the walls put around them by humans.
- (b) The twigs get stiff due to the pressure they apply on the glasses.
- (c) The word is 'Disengage'.
- (d) 'Simile' has been used here using 'like' for comparison.

3. My head is full of whispers
which tomorrow will be silent.
Listen. The glass is breaking.
The trees are stumbling forward
into the night. Winds rush to meet them.
The moon is broken like a mirror,

its pieces flash now in the crown
of the tallest oak.

- (a) Why would the whispers be silent tomorrow?
- (b) Why are the trees stumbling?
- (c) Which word in the stanza means the same as 'Quiet'?
- (d) Which poetic device has been used in the sixth line of the stanza?

Answer:

- (a) The whispers will be silent because the trees will move out
- (b) The trees are stumbling because they hurry to move outside after breaking the glass.
- (c) The word is 'Silent'.
- (d) Simile has been used using 'like' for comparison

II. Answer the following questions in 30-40 words.

1. Where are the trees at present? What do their roots, and leaves do?

The trees are in the house. The roots try to free themselves from the cracks of the veranda floor, and the leaves make efforts to move towards the glass perhaps in search of light. The small branches become stiff as they try to pull themselves towards the light.

2. Why is the description of the moon different in the beginning and at the end of the third stanza?

At the beginning of the third stanza, the poet says that one can see the whole moon shining in the open sky but in the end, the moon seems to be broken like a mirror and its pieces shine in the crown of the tallest oak tree. The change is caused by the shifting of the trees outside.

3. How does the poetess describe the night? How does she feel?

It is night time. The night is fresh. In the open sky, the full moon is shining. The poetess feels the smell of leaves and lichen reaching inside the room. Her head is full of whispers. But she thinks that the next day these whispers will be silent.

4. Why are the trees described in the first stanza not useful for birds or insects?

The trees described in the first stanza are either decorative plants kept inside a house, or they are shown only in a painting or picture. Therefore, they are not useful for birds or insects. Birds cannot sit on their branches. Insects cannot hide in them.

5. Why is the poetess hopeful that the empty forest will be full of trees by the morning?

The poetess is quite optimistic. The natural barriers to contain and subdue nature created by man will be broken. The trees which have been deprived of their natural habitat will struggle to free themselves from the clutches of man.

6. Justify the revolt of the trees and state two values which the man should possess to stop the revolt.

Answer: The trees inside the house get suffocated as they grow. They try to free themselves from the cracks of the veranda floor and the leaves stretch out as if to move towards the glass. They are justified in their revolt. Men should learn the importance of trees.

7: How does the poet describe the night? How does she feel?

Answer: It is night time. The night is fresh. In the open sky, the full moon is shining. The poet feels the smell of leaves and lichen reaching inside the room. Her head is full of whispers. But she thinks that the next day these whispers will be silent.

8: What happens to the roots and leaves of these trees at night?

The roots of these trees are engaged into the cracks of the veranda floor. At night, these roots try to free themselves from the cracks. The leaves try to move towards the glass. Twigs become harden and the boughs try to expand under the roof.

9: How does the poet describe the growth of the trees inside the house?

Answer: These trees grow in pots and pans. So their roots feel cramped. These roots try to free themselves from the cracks of the veranda floor. The leaves need light. So they move towards the glass. The twigs are stiff and the boughs are like the newly discharged patients coming out of clinic doors.

10: Why does the poet use the metaphor of newly discharged patients?

A patient feels depressed in a hospital. As soon as he recovers, he is eager to leave the hospital. He rushes towards the clinic doors. In the same way, the plants in the pots feel suffocated. They are deprived of adequate light. So they stretch themselves towards the glass door, in the hope of finding the light.

III. Answer the following questions in 100-120 words.

1. The poem ‘The Trees’ present a conflict between man and nature. Describe the struggle of the trees and their victorious march to their natural habitat—the forest.

The poem ‘The Trees’ is based on the universal and age-long theme — the conflict between man and nature. Nature has endowed innumerable blessings on man. However, the greed, arrogance and foolishness of man have constantly tested the patience of otherwise peaceful nature. When nature can’t bear any more, it revolts and causes havoc on man in the form of storms, droughts and floods. Man’s greed leads to deforestation. Forests without trees have become a curse for birds, insects and even for the sun. This disaster can’t be redeemed.

Any attempt to subdue and control nature will end in failure. Uprooting trees from their original habitat, the forests and confining them to artificial glass houses will end in failure. The trees rise against the onslaughts of men and wage a long and hard struggle to liberate themselves from the bondage of man. Ultimately, they are victorious. They return to their original home where they should be. Nature asserts itself and repulses man’s attempt to exploit, subdue and tame it outside to the forest.

2. Conflict between human and nature is always there. Nature is also rebelling against civilization and becoming destructive. Explain.

OR

A conflict between man and nature is going on, in this civilization pursuit, men are disregarding the natural growth of plants and trees. In total confinement, nature also rebels against civilization and becomes destructive. Elaborate.

Answer: Man has been destroying nature due to personal and material pursuits. He is endlessly playing havoc with nature. He is trying to harness wind, solar energy and flora. In this pursuit man has forgotten that excessive destruction can carry us to any situation. Man is cutting trees and destroying the natural habitat. This is causing global warming with overall rise in temperature. If these practices go unchecked, we might soon be drowned due to melting of ice from polar caps. Man should wake up and save the planet earth from destructive forces of nature.

3. The trees in the poem stretch out their branches, break remove common barriers and struggle hard even out in the open in their natural environment. Analyze the efforts one puts into breaking sway captivity and striving for freedom.

OR

Freedom is the basic theme of happiness for all creatures as well as plants. Explain this statement with reference to the struggle of the branches to come out in open in the veranda of the poet's house.

Answer: It is true that freedom is the basic theme of happiness in this universe. Freedom is the true law of nature. This idea can be found everywhere and in all spheres, even the palace of gold is useless without freedom. We have read about so many national heroes who have sacrificed their everything for freedom and to make their country free. Freedom is the very first need for all for human beings as well as for animals.

In this poem, the poet has described the deep feelings of the trees that want to become free from human beings' prison. The description of struggle made by the branches to come out in open from the floor is too real and heart touching. The trees don't want to live in these surroundings. So they do their best to come out of the floor and window.

4: 'Departure is painful'. So is the departure of the trees for the poet. What will happen after their departure?

Just like the departure of someone close to us is painful, so also is the departure of a tree. When they are planted as a sapling, they look nice and enhance the beauty of our surroundings. But as they grow and spread out their branches, they look wild and require more space for their growth. The roots create cracks in the floor and the leaves stretch out as if to move towards the glass, perhaps in need of sunlight. The soft twigs become strong and stiff. So the trees need to be removed from the house. No more do the leaves cover the sky, but the trees breathe and they are welcomed by the wind. The moon resembles a broken mirror, reflecting off the leaves. The poet reveals that she will feel lonely after the trees' departure.

5: How does the poem 'The Trees' make a strong plea against deforestation?

Answer: The poem, 'The Trees' sends home a strong message against deforestation. It highlights the importance of trees when the poet says that without trees there will be no shadow, no forest, no place for birds to sit, no place for insects to hide. As a sapling, the plant adds to the beauty of the surroundings when it spreads its branches, leaves and roots around. It gets the suit

house. Thus, in the poem, the trees are welcomed by the strong winds and the moon. The poet does not want to mention the departure of the forests as she feels guilty for merely looking silently at them as they depart. This way, she subtly points out the thanklessness of man towards forests.

6: Explain the phrase “the forest that was empty all these days”. After reading the poem, for whom do you think are the forests needed? Imagine yourself like a tree in a forest.

In the poem, ‘The Trees’ poet Adrienne Rich subtly drives home the message about the importance of trees. Without trees, the birds would not have a place to sit, insects will have no place to hide and the sun would not bury its feet in shadow. As saplings, we enjoy the beauty of plants as they adorn the surroundings. But slowly, the tree spreads its roots, its branches and leaves, and seems to yearn to go outside where it can live and grow without any restrictions. No more does the tree look attractive indoors. The trees are however welcomed into nature by strong winds and the moon. The poet hereby emphasises that trees need to be kept alive, but should not be ‘imprisoned’ inside the house as they look more beautiful, and tend to thrive outdoors that is where trees belong.