

KEEPING QUIET

IMPORTANT STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the stanzas given below and answer the questions that follow each:

1. Now we will count to twelve and we will all keep still.

Questions

- (a) Name the poem and the poet of these lines.
- (b) Why does the poet ask us to count to twelve?
- (c) Why does the poet ask us to keep still?
- (d) Find words from the passage which mean.
(ii) say number (iii) quiet and motionless.

Answers:

- (a) The name of the poem is Keeping Quiet. The name of the poet is Pablo Neruda.
- (b) There are only twelve signs on the clock to measure hours. Therefore, the poet asks us to count till the clock measures these hours.
- (c) Too much activity and rush has only brought misfortunes to mankind. Hence, it is better to be quiet and still.
- (d) (i) count (ii) still

2. For once on the face of the Earth let's not speak in any language, let's stop for one second, and not move our arms so much.

Questions

- (a) Name the poem and the poet of these lines.
- (b) 'Let's not speak in any language', says the poet. Why?
- (c) What should we not do for a second?
- (d) What do you understand by 'the face of the Earth'?

Answers:

- (a) The name of the poem is Keeping Quiet. The poet is Pablo Neruda.
- (b) The people of the world have been indulging in wars and bloodsheds on minor excuses. If they keep quiet, they may not indulge in reasoning, disputes and quarrels. So, let them keep quiet and not speak in any language. This will ensure peace and prosperity.
- (c) We should cease all activities for a second. Man has used his arms only to kill and destroy others. Therefore, let them not move their arms so much as to harm others.
- (d) The expression "the face of the Earth" refers to the various countries on the surface of the earth.

3. It would be an exotic moment without rush, without engines, we would all be together
in a sudden strangeness.

Questions

- (a) Name the poem and the poet of these lines.
- (b) What will happen if there is no rush or running of engines?
- (c) What sort of moment will it be?
- (d) How would all of us feel at that moment?

Questions

(a) What does the poet want? What should it not be confused with?

(b) Explain: 'I want no truck with death'.

(c) What do people pursue single-mindedly? Which is the better course the poet suggests?

(d) When can a huge silence do us good?

Answers:

(a) The poet is advocating for silence or stillness. Stillness should not be confused with total inactivity.

(b) Total inactivity brings death. The poet refuses to associate (or deal) with death. Thus, he is not advocating for death.

(c) People pursue single-mindedly on keeping their lives moving. ..The poet suggests that it would be better if they give themselves rest for sometime. For once they may do nothing.

(d) A huge silence can do us a lot of good when we are disappointed at not understanding ourselves or threatening ourselves with death.

7. Perhaps the Earth can teach us as when everything seems dead and later proves to be alive.

Now I'll count up to twelve

and you keep quiet and I will go.

Questions

(a) What can the Earth teach us?

(b) What remains alive when everything seems dead?

(c) Who is the poet? What does he want to do?

(d) What does the poet ask us to do?

Answers:

(a) The earth can teach us a lesson how to live on it.

(b) Only the earth remains alive when everything seems dead.

(c) The poet is Pablo Neruda. He wants to count up to twelve.

(d) He asks us to keep quiet while he is counting up to twelve.

QUESTIONS FROM TEXTBOOK SOLVED

Q1. What will counting up to twelve and keeping still help us achieve?

Ans: Counting up to twelve takes very short time. Keeping still for this brief interval of time gives us a momentary pause to introspect and review the course of action. It is generally observed that most of the ills and troubles of the world are caused by our rush or hurry. Violence is caused by anger. Keeping quiet and still will give us necessary respite and ensure peace.

Q2. Do you think the poet advocates total inactivity and death?

Ans: No, he doesn't advocate either total inactivity or death. He makes it quite clear that 'stillness' should not be confused with "total inactivity or equated to it. Total inactivity brings death. But Neruda has 'no truck with death'. His stillness means halting of harmful and hostile human activities.

★★★
★ **Q3. What is the 'sadness' that the poet refers to in the poem?**

★ **Ans:** Man's sadness is formed out of his own actions and thoughts. It is quite ironical that man who understands so much fails to understand himself and his action. Rash actions prove harmful and disastrous. Man is the creator of all disasters. He is always threatening himself with death because of his thoughts and actions. This is the tragedy of his life.

★ **Q4. What symbol from Nature does the poet invoke to say that there can be life under apparent stillness?**

★ **Ans:** The poet wants to prove that there can be life under apparent stillness. The poet invokes the earth as a living symbol to prove his point. The earth never attains total inactivity. Nature remains at work all the time even under apparent stillness. It keeps earth alive. This idea is beautifully illustrated by the following lines: "as when everything seems dead and later proves to be alive."

★ **Q5. Choose a quiet corner and keep still physically and mentally for about five minutes. Do you feel any change in your state of mind?**

★ **Ans:** Extension Activity: For self-study.

MORE QUESTIONS SOLVED

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS (Word Limit: 30-40 words)

★ **Q1. Why does Pablo Neruda urge us to keep still?**

★ **Ans:** Stillness is essential for calm reflection and quiet introspection. We hear the voice of conscience in moments of silence. The poet is convinced that most of human ills and miseries are caused by man's hurry and rush to do things. The poet wishes that we may withdraw ourselves from our undesirable actions and keep still for a moment.

★ **Q2. Why shouldn't we "speak in any language" and "not move our arms so much"?**

★ **Ans:** People of the world speak in different languages. They indulge in unnecessary debates and disputes. Most of these arguments lead to destructive wars. The poet urges people to stop speaking in any language. They must speak through their hearts. So far men have moved their arms only to harm others. Therefore, the poet wants that they should not move their arms so much. Let these arms rest for once. Let a feeling of mutual understanding, be created among human beings.

★ **Q3. Pablo Neruda says: "we would all be together in a sudden strangeness." When can we experience such a moment? Why will that be an exotic moment?**

★ **Ans:** Non-stop activity, unnecessary rush and noise have made our lives unpleasant and full of misery, pain and troubles. We must stop rushing, hurrying, worrying and running. Even the noise of engines and machines must stop for once. Then all of us will enjoy the sudden strangeness of that moment. It will be a unique moment. In that exotic or fascinating moment we shall feel totally relaxed, physically as well as mentally.

Ans: Neruda does not equate stillness with total inactivity. He believes that under this apparent stillness there is life. We can learn it from the earth. When everything seems dead, the earth still remains alive. The earth is never dead. The life on the earth goes on as usual under the apparent stillness.

Q12. Justify the title 'Keeping Quiet'.