

1.4

All the World's a Stage

- William Shakespeare

Central Idea :

'All the world's a stage' is an excerpt from Shakespeare's play 'As you like it'. The poem is also popularly known as 'The seven Ages of Man'. It compares life to a stage and each one of us to actors, playing our parts. There are seven stages or acts, viz. infancy, childhood, teenage, youth, middle age, old age and dotage that each have their own characteristics. We enter the stage when we are born and we take an exit when we die. The poem highlights the transient nature of life and the futility of man's attempts to amass wealth and gain fame for we leave this world empty handed and as helpless as we had entered it. Living life by accepting what is and leaving with grace and dignity is the best way to play our parts. The poem also underlines the inevitable change that one has to undergo to finally meet one's death which is imminent.

Summary :

The poet narrates the seven ages of life by comparing the world to a stage and each one of us to actors playing an individual role on that stage of life. Our entrance is our birth and our exit is our death. In a lifetime, each one of us plays many parts and each part is compared to an act in a play. The first stage is that of an infant who cries, vomiting milk on the nurse's arms. In the second stage, as a schoolboy he drags himself unwillingly to school. In the third stage, man as a lover, sighs in separation and writes poems about his beloved's beauty. As a soldier, in the fourth stage, he is ready to take strange oaths. The poet compares him to a fierce leopard who is jealous of others' honor and is very quick to quarrel. He is ready to risk his life for short-lived reputation by jumping in front of a cannon. The fifth stage, is the justice stage, well-fed with chicken. His appearance is formal and he looks mature. He uses wise sayings, proverbs and examples from the modern age. This is where he has reached the middle age and gained maturity. Old age is the sixth stage of man's life, where he wears pantaloons and slippers on his feet. He is now thin, lean and weak, and his eyesight too has become weak. His manly voice has turned into the shrill voice of a child. When he speaks it appears as if he were playing upon a pipe or as if he were whistling (due to gaps in his teeth, some of which have fallen out). The last stage of man's life is dotage. In this stage, he is somewhat senile, completely dependent on others and helpless like a child as he is now nearing death. This is the stage of second childhood, as like a child, at this stage a man needs help with everything. He loses his teeth, eye sight and taste and becomes forgetful. This completes his part in the play of life, as after this he leaves the stage, or in other words, he dies.

MASTER KEY QUESTION SET - 1.4

Warming Up!

(1) Pair work

- Talk to your friend about all the things related to 'Seven.'

For example: Seven wonders of the world..

- Pair up with your partner and name those given below all of the under :

Ans:

- The seven wonders of the world: Great Wall of China, Christ the Redeemer Statue, Machu

Picchu, Chichen Itza, The Roman Colosseum, Taj Mahal, Petra.

- The seven continents: Asia, Antarctica, North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Australia.
- The seven colours of the rainbow: Violet, Indigo, Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, Red.
- The seven notes of the music: Shadja, Rishabh, Gandhar, Madhyam, Pancham, Dhairat, Nishadha.
- The seven seas of the world: The Pacific Ocean, The Atlantic Ocean, The Indian Ocean, The Arctic Ocean, The Mediterranean Sea, The Caribbean Sea, The Gulf of Mexico.

***Q.2. Life is often compared to many things. Write down 7 things that life can be compared to and justify the comparison. For example,**

Ans:

- (i) Life is a keyboard, because if you press the right keys you have typed a good destiny.
- (ii) Life is a rollercoaster ride, sometimes it takes you up and sometimes it takes you down. But it's a fun ride in the end, and full of exciting experiences.
- (iii) Life is a canvas, you get to choose the colours and paint it the way you like.
- (iv) Life is a mountain, you have to work hard to get to the top, but the view from there is worth the climb.
- (v) Life is like a flute. It all depends on how you play it.
- (vi) Life is like a song with notes that are high and low. But it takes both to make it melodious.

Q.3. Match the approximate ages with the stages.

Age-group	Stages
(1) Birth to 2 years	(a) teenage/adolescence
(2) 3 years to 12 years	(b) old age/second childhood
(3) 13 years to 17 years	(c) middle-age
(4) 18 years to about 44 years	(d) baby hood/infancy
(5) About 45 years to 60 years	(e) senior citizen/elderly person
(6) 65 years up to 75 to 80 years	(f) adulthood
(7) Above 80 years	(g) childhood

Ans. (1 - d), (2 - g), (3 - a), (4 - f), (5 - c), (6 - e), (7 - b)

Reading Skills, Vocabulary and Poetic Devices

Q.1. Read the extract and answer the questions:

Extract - I (Textbook Page No. 24)

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad*

*Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.*

Glossary

- (1) **merely** (*adv*) - just, only
- (2) **mewling** (*v*) - crying of a baby
- (3) **puking** (*v*) - throwing up, vomiting
- (4) **whining** (*adj*) - give a long, high-pitched complaining cry
- (5) **satchel** (*n*) - school bag
- (6) **snail** (*n*) - a creature that moves very slowly
- (7) **sighing** (*v*) - emitting a long, deep, audible breath expressing sadness or satisfaction
- (8) **furnace** (*n*) - an enclosed structure in which material can be heated
- (9) **woeful** (*adj*) - sorrowful, sad
- (10) **woeful ballad collocation** - sad poem or song
- (11) **mistress** (*n*) - (here) beloved
- (12) **pard** (*n*) - poetic short form of 'leopard'
- (13) **cannon's mouth** (*phr*) - facing great danger to life
- (14) **players** (*n*) - actors

A.1. Factual Questions:

(1) **What does the poet compare the world to?**

Ans. The poet compares the world to a stage.

(2) **Which stages of life find a mention in the extract?**

Ans. The first four stages of life viz infant, schoolboy, lover and soldier find a mention in the extract.

(3) **What are the characteristics of an infant?**

Ans. The infant is dependent and helpless. He mewls and pukes i.e. cries and vomits.

(4) **Why is the school boy whining?**

Ans. The school boy is whining because he does not want to go to school.

*** (5) What do 'exits' and 'entrances' refer to?**

Ans. 'Exits' refer to the death of people or their departure from this world and 'entrances' refer

to their birth, or entry into the world. This is an extension of the metaphor 'the world is a stage'.

*** (6) Why is reputation like a bubble?**

Ans. Reputation is like a bubble because it doesn't last for a long time and can burst any time.

A.2. Interpretative/Complex/Inference questions:

(1) Describe the lover.

Ans. The lover sighs in separation like a furnace and writes a poem of praise for his beloved, describing her beauty.

(2) What is the soldier like?

Ans. The soldier is like a leopard; fierce and strong. He is jealous of others' honour and is short tempered. He picks quarrels easily and looks for short-lived fame. For this, he is willing to risk his life as well.

(3) The poet has called 'the world a stage'. Justify using lines from the poem.

Ans. The poet through the first four lines of the poem compares the world to a stage. Just as in a play, there are actors who play their respective parts; we also have come to this world to play our part. When we are born, we take our entry into this play called 'life' and we make an exit when we finally die. There are seven stages in a man's life which are like seven acts of a play. Human beings are merely players who play their roles and depart.

(4) Should the schoolboy whine? How can the scene be changed?

Ans. No, a school boy should not whine as he has so much to look forward to in school. However, most first time school goers do complain and cry. The scene can be changed by explaining to him how he can make new friends and learn new things, if he goes to school. He can be shown how studying will make him wiser. It can also be changed by making learning in school a fun-filled experience, something that he will look forward to every morning.

A.3. Poetic Device Questions:

(1) What is the tone of the poem?

Ans. The tone of the poem is sombre, philosophical and reflective.

(2) What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? What is such a poem called?

Ans. There is no rhyme scheme in the poem. Such a poem is called a free verse.

(3) Name and identify the figure of speech.

(i) All the world's a stage.

Ans. The figure of speech used in the given line is Metaphor as the world has been indirectly compared to a stage.

(ii) Men and women merely players.

Ans. The figure of speech in the given line is Metaphor as men and women are indirectly compared to players.

(iii) Creeping like snail.

Ans. The figure of speech used in the given line is Simile as the schoolboy is directly compared to a snail.

(iv) Sighing like furnace.

Ans. The figure of speech used in the given line is Simile as the sighing of the lover is compared to a furnace for a better poetic effect.

(v) With a woeful ballad.

Ans. The figure of speech is Alliteration as two words 'with' and 'woeful' begin with the letter 'w' and produce a similar sound for a better poetic effect.

(vi) Bearded like the pard.

Ans. The figure of speech is Simile as the soldier is directly compared to a leopard for a better poetic effect.

(vii) Quick in quarrel

Ans. The figure of speech in the given line is Alliteration as two words 'quick' and 'quarrel' begin with the same letter 'q' and produce the same sound.

(viii) Seeking the bubble reputation.

Ans. The figure of speech in the given line is Metaphor as reputation is indirectly compared to a 'bubble' due to its short-lived nature.

(ix) Even in cannon's mouth.

Ans. The figure of speech is Metaphor/Personification as 'cannon' here represents 'danger and risk'.

(4) What is the other meaning of stage? How does it apply to this poem?

Ans. The word stage has two meanings. One a raised floor or platform, especially in a theatre, on which actors, speakers and entertainers perform; Second- a point or step in the process of development. Both the meanings apply well to the poem. The poet compares the world to a stage with all of us as actors. And as the poem discusses the seven stages in the development of a man, right from infancy to old age, the second meaning too holds good.

Q.2. Read the extract and answer the questions:

Extract - II (Textbook Page No. 24 and 25)

And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Glossary

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| (1) with good capon lined (phr) | - with excess fat from careless eating habits |
| (2) saws (n) | - Proverbs or maxims, sayings |
| (3) instances (n) | - examples |
| (4) lean (adj) | - thin |
| (5) youthful hose (adj) | - closefitting leggings/slacks / stockings. |
| (6) shank (n) | - the part of the leg between the knee and ankle |
| (7) treble (n) | - a high-pitched voice, (here) three times weaker than before |
| (8) eventful (adj) | - marked by an interesting or exciting event |
| (9) second childishness (phr) | - a return to the helpless, ignorant state of a child; second childhood |
| (10) oblivion (n) | - the state of being unaware/unconscious of one's surroundings and happenings |
| (11) sans (prep) | - without |

A.1. Factual Questions:

(1) How does the poet describe the Justice?

Ans. The poet says that the Justice has a round belly, well-fed with chicken. He has severe eyes and his beard has a formal cut. He uses wise sayings, proverbs and modern day examples.

(2) How does the poet compare the last stage?

Ans. The poet compares the last stage to second childishness as at this stage, man is as helpless and dependent as a child.

(3) Describe a man in his sixth age.

Ans. In his sixth age, the man shifts from middle age to old age. He wears a pantaloons and slippers. His poor eyesight now requires spectacles and his once well-fitting pants are now loose, because his legs have shrunk and become lean. His big manly voice has now transformed into a shrill child-like voice. Due to his fallen teeth, his speech appears as if he were playing upon a pipe or as if he were whistling, as the air passes through the gaps in his teeth when he speaks.

* (4) What is the major difference noticed in the 5th and 6th stage of life?

Ans. The major difference between stages 5 and 6 is the change in physical appearance as man goes from having a belly to becoming extremely thin and he has a changed voice as well.

A.2. Interpretative/Complex/Inference Questions:

(1) Describe the fourth and fifth stage of life.

Ans. In the fourth stage, the man is a soldier, as fierce as a leopard. He loves fame and is willing to risk his life to get it. He is short – tempered and quickly gets into quarrels. He is jealous of others honor. In comparison, as a justice in the fifth stage of his life, the man displays maturity. He has turned fat, has severe eyes and a formal beard. He uses wise proverbs, sayings and modern day examples. He is not quick to judge or comment, like he did when he was a soldier.

(2) Can the last stage be joyful? Explain.

Ans. Yes, surely the last stage can be joyful by accepting change gracefully. If we enjoy every moment of our lives to the fullest and spread joy all around, we will have nothing to regret when we get old. Besides, one needs to accept that we are all puppets in the hands of God, and all we need to do is play each part of our life with utmost sincerity and zest. At the same time, one will be in a better position to accept death if one remembers that death is inevitable, so all that is born will die one day. This will help one embrace death with cheer.

(3) The last two stages are full of melancholy. What message does the poet want to convey?

Ans. The poet through the last two melancholy stages wishes to convey that change is inevitable. The same young, fierce man turns into a lean, weak old man and he in turn loses his reflexes and

senses. He reaches finally his second childhood, as he is dependent and helpless like a child, before he meets his death. The poet wishes to convey the concept of mortality of human nature.

A.3. Poetic Device Questions

(1) Identity and explain the figures of speech:

- (i) with eyes severe and beard of formal cut.

Ans. Inversion, as the word order is changed. The correct word order is 'With severe eyes and beard of formal cut.'

- (ii) His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide.

Ans. Alliteration, as three words 'well', 'world' and 'wide' begin with the letter 'w' and produce the same sound for a better poetic effect.

- (iii) And whistles in his sound.

Ans. Onomatopoeia, as the word 'whistles' denotes a sound, similar to the one made when a person without all his teeth tries to speak.

- (iv) For his shrunk shank.

Ans. Alliteration, as the two words 'shrunk' and 'shank' begin with the same letters 'sh' and produce the same sound.

- (v) Is second childishness.

Ans. Metaphor, as 'old age' is compared to 'second childhood' for a better poetic effect.

- (vi) Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Ans. Repetition, as the word 'sans' is repeated for a better poetic effect.

(2) Pick out two examples of imagery.

- Ans.** (i) In fair round belly.
(ii) With spectacles on nose.

(3) What message does the poem convey?

Ans. The poem conveys the message that life is transient and we are all here to play our part and depart when our role is over. There is nothing that we brought with us when we came and there is nothing that we will take with us when we leave. Hence, accepting life as it comes and playing our roles in the best possible way is the key to a contented and happy life. Besides, it also tells us that change is inevitable as that is the only constant thing and there is nothing as sure as death.

Q.3. Read the poem again and write an appreciation of the poem in a paragraph format.

Ans. Title: All The World's A Stage

Poet: William Shakespeare (from his play 'As you like it')

Shakespeare has compared the stages in the life of man to a role an actor would play on a theatre stage. All men and women, take an entrance as they are born and exit the stage of life as they die.

There is no rhyme scheme but the poem is in iambic pentameter.

Figures of speech:

Simile 'sighing life furnace', 'bearded like the pard';

Metaphor 'And all the men and women merely players';

Alliteration 'with a woeful ballad', 'quick in quarrel'

Personification/ Metaphor 'Even in cannon's mouth'

Inversion 'with eyes severe and beard of formal cut' add to the beauty of the poem.

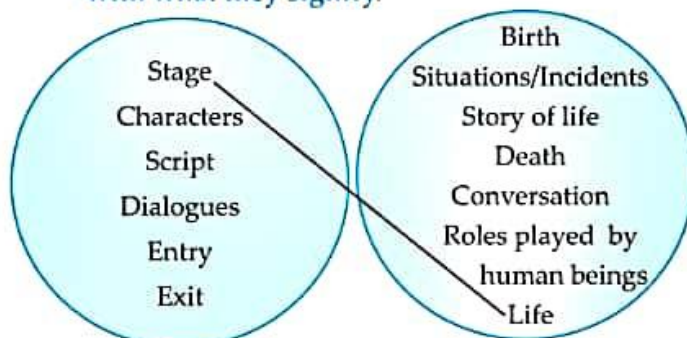
The poem is satirical and humourous in tone. Shakespeare has vividly described all the stages of man comparing him to a snail, leopard, soldier and justice, among other things. This gives a rich visual feel to the poem. The poem implies the meaning that man should not be too proud when young as he has to grow old.

My Favourite lines are 'And all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances'

I like the poem because it is a beautifully descriptive allegory that teaches us how to enjoy and appreciate every stage and moment of our lives and make the most of what we have.

ENGLISH WORKSHOP

(1) Read the words in given clouds. Match them with what they signify.



Ans. Stage – Life

Characters – Roles played by human beings

Script	- Situations/Incidents
Dialogues	- Conversation
Entry	- Birth
Exit	- Death

(2) Read the poem carefully and complete the following table.

Ages of Man	Role	Qualities / Actions
1	Infant	1. mewling 2. puking
2	School boy	1. whining 2. creeping like a snail
3	Teenager (Lover)	1. sighing like a furnace 2. writing a woeful ballad
4	Youth (Soldier)	1. jealous in honour, short tempered and quick to quarrel 2. willing to do anything to gain reputation
5	Middle age (Judge)	1. severe eyes, formal beard 2. uses wise sayings and modern examples
6	Old age	1. lean, wears loose pants and spectacles and carries a pouch 2. childish whistling voice
7	Dotage (Second Childhood)	1. second childishness 2. without teeth, eyesight and taste

(3) Write down in your own words the differences between the following stages of a man's life.

Ans. 2nd stage and 4th stage: In the second stage, as a school boy, he carries his school bag and creeps unwillingly to school whining all the way. In contrast, as a soldier, he takes strange oaths and has a beard like a leopard. He is jealous of others' successes and gets into quarrels at the drop of a hat. He is willing to put his life in danger to gain temporary reputation.

3rd stage and 5th stage: In the 3rd stage, as a lover he sighs like a furnace in separation. He writes sad poems and describes his beloved's beauty.

In the 5th stage, however, he is the justice who has a fair round belly, as he is well fed and full. He has severe eyes and his beard is formal. He uses wise sayings and gives examples to explain his points.

1st (stage) and 7th (last stage): In the first stage, the infant mewls and vomits on the nurse's arms. In the last stage, i.e. old age, he experiences second childhood. He is without proper eyesight and taste. He needs help with everything he does just like he did as an infant. Therefore, these two stages are strangely similar. It is like going back to the first stage one started from when one was born.

(4) Pick out lines that contain Imagery (a picture created in mind by using words) of the following people.

Ans.

- (i) **School boy (2nd stage)** - Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel, and shining morning face, creeping like snail unwillingly to school.
- (ii) **Soldier (4th stage)** - Bearded like the pard, sudden and quick in quarrel.
- (iii) **Judge (5th stage)** - In fair round belly with good capon lined, with eyes severe and beard of formal cut.
- (iv) **Senior citizen (6th stage)** - Into the lean and slippered pantaloons, with spectacles on nose and pouch on side.

(5) You will notice that there is no Rhyme-scheme in the poem. It appears similar to the poem 1.1 'Where the Mind is without Fear' by Tagore.

However Tagore's poem has no steady rhythm/meter either it is called Free Verse. Shakespeare uses lines with a steady rhythm of 5 beats in each. It is termed as Blank Verse. (No rhyme-scheme but uniformity in rhythm) Copy the lines from "And all the men and women merely players" to "sudden and quick in quarrel". Put a stress mark on each of the syllables stressed in the lines as - for example, And all the men and women merely players;

Ans. And all the men and women merely players
They have their exits and their entrances
And one man in his time plays many parts
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant
Mewling and puking in the nurses arms
Then the whining schoolbag with his satchel
And shining morning face creeping like snail.
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover

Sighing like a furnace with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress eyebrow. Then a soldier
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard
Jealous in honour sudden and quick in quarrel

(6) **Think and write on your own.**

(i) **What is the theme/central idea of this poem?**

Ans. The theme/central idea of the poem is that just like characters in a play perform their role and make an exit, in life, we must play our parts and make an exit. Our entrance and exit in this world is predetermined and we have no control over it but we can do our best with what we have control over i.e. choose to play our parts or roles well. The duration of our role is not important; what is important is the impact we leave on everyone's heart and mind while we are here by playing our parts well.

(ii) **Which two stages of man described by Shakespeare sound humorous? Say why.**

Ans. The fifth stage when the man is a justice and the sixth stage are humorous. Shakespeare has used vivid imagery to describe these two stages. The sight of a round-bellied justice using wise sayings and examples invokes humour. Similarly, we can actually visualize the senior citizen in loose pantaloons, spectacles on the nose and a pouch on his side. This adds humour to the otherwise serious poem.

(iii) **The last (7th) stage of life sounds very sad and miserable. How can you make old age also cheerful and happy?**

Ans. We can make old age cheerful and happy by living our lives to the fullest right from the time we are young. We should make sure to create enough cheerful memories when we are young, so that when we visit the older days in our minds in old age, we have a smile on our face. Moreover, knowing that death is inevitable and accepting old age with grace is the way to a happy life.

7. (A) The poem is entirely metaphorical. Pick out the comparisons from the poem.

Ans.

(a) world	– stage
(b) actors	– men and women
(c) birth and death	– entrance and exit
(d) school boy	– snail
(e) the lover's sigh	– furnace
(f) spotted leopard	– soldier
(g) last stage (old age)	– second childhood

(B) Pick out from the poem two examples of each.

Ans.

(i) **Simile:**

- (a) creeping like snail
- (b) And then the lover sighing like furnace

(ii) **Onomatopoeia:**

- (a) Then the whining schoolboy
- (b) And whistles in his sound

(iii) **Alliteration:**

- (a) His youthful hose, well saved a world too wide
- (b) Made to his mistress' eyebrows

(iv) **Metaphor:**

- (a) all the world's a stage
- (b) And all men and women merely players

(v) **Inversion:**

- (a) And one man play many parts in his time
- (b) Creeping like snail, unwillingly to school

(vi) **Transferred epithet:**

- (a) Made to his mistress eyebrow
- (b) Into the lean and slippered pantaloons

(8) Read the summary of the play 'As You Like It' by William Shakespeare using the Internet. Find out which character has narrated the above poem and on what occasion. Also, make a list of all the characters of the play.

Ans. Students are expected to do this activity on their own.