

2

Keeping Quiet

Fastrack« Revision

Master Card

- ▶ The poet is addressing his fellow brethren and appeals to their reasoning, asking them to pause for a while their mad rush for more and more. He requests them to keep quiet for a while:
 - Not use any language to communicate.
 - Not use any form of gestures to draw attention.
 - Share a sense of togetherness in the quietness. The moment of quietness will give time for introspection.
 - Bring respite to the flora and fauna from the human onslaught.
 - Give time to humans to assess their damage.
 - Provide opportunity to people to absolve themselves from the guilt of killing so many.
 - Appease their conscience by wearing clean clothes (metaphorically).
 - Generate a feeling of brotherhood.
 - The poet clarifies that what he desires should not be confused with cowardice.
 - On the contrary he issues an ultimatum to warring agencies.
 - He is not ready to exchange anything with death.
- ▶ If people can stop being obsessed with victory, conquering more and more.
 - May be we will learn to understand ourselves better.
 - May be we will be able to break that blanket of sadness that clouds our perspective.
 - May be we will stop being a threat to ourselves.
 - May be we will learn from this earth that one can start afresh—that life can spring from death.
- ▶ **Nature can Teach Lesson**
 - The earth seems to be dead during winters.
 - In fact it is preparing for new life which becomes apparent on the onset of spring season.
 - Man while observing silence seems to be dead—but he is introspecting and after he comes out of the introspection he turns out to be a new human with a totally changed approach towards life.

Theme

- ▶ In the midst of growing materialism man has become a machine, without emotions, without feelings. In the

mad pursuit of his selfish goals, he is causing irreparable damage to life and environment. *Pablo Neruda* emphasises the need of introspection through silence. Silence, he believes, creates an exotic moment, where one gets close to oneself, where one realises the evils of wars, a feeling of universal brotherhood prevails. The poem is an exercise for meditation in complete stillness and silence when man can break the barriers of discrimination, hatred, violence and create an atmosphere of togetherness and self-judgement.

Literary Devices Used

► **Alliteration:** Alliteration is a figure of speech when one letter is repeated in a single phrase or a sentence to create rhythm in the poem.

► **Examples:**

- We will
- We would
- Sudden strangeness
- His hurt hands
- Wars with



Practice Exercise



Extract Based Questions

Directions: Read the extracts given below and answer the questions that follow:

1. 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.
It would be an exotic moment
without rush, without engines,
we would all be together
in a sudden strangeness.
(a) Why does the poet forbid all of us to speak?
(b) What does the phrase 'on the face of the earth' suggest?
(i) The entire globe
(ii) On the outer surface of earth
(iii) In front of the earth
(iv) In the water
(c) Who is the poet?
(i) Kamala Das (ii) Pablo Neruda
(iii) John Keats (iv) Adrienne Rich
(d) 'Not move our arms' means
(e) State whether the given statement is True or False.
The poet suggests that we should not speak in any other language, but only in our native language.
(f) Give an antonym of 'rush'.

Answers

- (a) The poet forbids all of us to speak to observe silence to introspect.
 - (b) (i) The entire globe
 - (c) (ii) Pablo Neruda
 - (d) cease our activity.
 - (e) False
 - (f) An antonym of 'rush' is 'dawdle or slowness'.
2. Fishermen in the cold sea
would not harm whales
and the man gathering salt
would look at his hurt hands.
Those who prepare green wars,

wars with gas, wars with fire,
victory with no survivors,
would put on clean clothes
and walk about with their brothers
in the shade, doing nothing.

- (a) What is suggested by 'Fishermen would not harm the whales'?
(i) The fishermen would not disturb the whales in water.
(ii) The people will not destroy wild animals and nature.
(iii) The fishermen will stop their business of fishing.
(iv) None of the above
- (b) What do you understand by 'the man gathering salt would look at his hurt hands'?
- (c) Explain 'green wars'.
(i) Warriors wear green clothes.
(ii) They hold green flags during war.
(iii) Deforestation/destruction of forests and plant life.
(iv) All of the above
- (d) Give a synonym of 'gathering'.
- (e) 'Wars with gas' here means
(f) State whether the given statement is True or False.
The poet is addressing his enemies.

Answers

- (a) (ii) The people will not destroy wild animals and nature.
 - (b) People will have time for their personal well-being.
 - (c) (iii) Deforestation/destruction of forests and plant life.
 - (d) A synonym of 'gathering' is 'collecting'.
 - (e) wars with chemical bombs.
 - (f) False
3. What I want should not be confused
with total inactivity.
Life is what it is about;
I want no truck with death.

(CBSE 2021 Term-1, Modified)

- (a) What does the poet want?
 (i) Fishermen should stop fishing at all
 (ii) People should wear clean clothes
 (iii) People should keep still and silent for a moment
 (iv) All of the above
- (b) What does the poet mean by 'Life is what it is about'?
 (i) Life is going to war (ii) Life is action
 (iii) Life is keeping still (iv) None of these
- (c) What does the poet mean when he says 'I want no truck with death'?
- (d) The poet refuses
- (e) What does 'confused' mean here?
- (f) State whether the given statement is True or False.

The name of the poet is Robert Frost.

Answers

- (a) (iii) People should keep still and silent for a moment
 (b) (ii) Life is action
 (c) The poet doesn't associate keeping silent with death
 (d) the idea of total inactivity.
 (e) Here 'confused' means 'misunderstood'.
 (f) False
4. If we were not so single-minded about keeping our lives moving, and for once could do nothing, perhaps a huge silence might interrupt this sadness of never understanding ourselves and of threatening ourselves with death.
- (a) In which activity does the poet not approve to be single-minded?
 (i) In studying
 (ii) In playing
 (iii) In keeping our lives moving
 (iv) None of the above
- (b) What will huge silence do in our lives according to the poet?
 (i) It will stop pollution
 (ii) It will revive our lost wealth
 (iii) It will kill our sadness
 (iv) All of the above
- (c) A word from the stanza which has the similar meaning as 'to stop the progress of something for a short while' is
- (d) State whether the given statement is True or False.
 The poet emphasises the need of introspection through silence.
- (e) Give an antonym of 'huge'.
- (f) What does the poet want us to do?

Answers

- (a) (iii) In keeping our lives moving
 (b) (iii) It will kill our sadness
 (c) Interrupt

- (d) True
 (e) An antonym of 'huge' is 'tiny or minuscule'.
 (f) The poet wants us to keep silent and stop our activities for some time and introspect.



Short Answer Type Questions

Q 1. What will counting upto twelve and keeping still help us achieve?

Ans. Counting upto twelve and keeping still will give us a quiet moment. We can introspect ourselves in this moment. We can understand ourselves. We can plan for better tomorrow.

Q 2. Do you think the poet advocates total inactivity and death?

Ans. No, the poet does not advocate total inactivity and death. Life is a continuous process. But we should find a moment of stillness to introspect ourselves. Total inactivity means death. He refuses to associate with death.

Q 3. What is the 'sadness' that the poet refers to in the poem?

Ans. The 'sadness' that poet refers to is of never understanding ourselves and of threatening ourselves with death.

Q 4. What symbol from nature does the poet invoke to say that there can be life under apparent stillness?

Ans. The poet invokes the symbol of 'Earth' that looks still from outside but it has immense possibility of life within it.

Q 5. Why does the poet want us to keep silence and suspend all activities for a while?

Ans. The poet wants us to keep silent and suspend all activities for a while so that we may introspect and understand ourselves.

Q 6. What does the poet predict to happen in the moments of suspended activity?

Ans. In the moments of suspended activity, a huge silence might interrupt the sadness of never understanding ourselves and of threatening ourselves with death.

Q 7. What is the theme of the poem 'Keeping Quiet'?

Ans. The theme of the poem 'Keeping Quiet' is that there is the necessity of quiet introspection and creating a feeling of mutual understanding among human beings.

Q 8. What lesson can the earth teach us?

Or

What according to Pablo Neruda in the poem 'Keeping Quiet' is the lesson that we should learn from mother earth?

(CBSE 2023)

Ans. The earth can teach us that we need rest and time to think for the bright future. In winter, everything on earth seems dead but everything becomes alive as the spring comes in.

Q 9. 'There can be life under apparent stillness.' Explain.

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Ans. The poet Pablo Neruda refuses the idea of total inactivity. In his poem *Keeping Quiet*, he doesn't associate keeping silent or stillness with death or total

inactivity. He says that nature reflects lessons to teach us. He takes the example of the earth which seems to be dead in winter but in fact it is preparing for new life which becomes apparent in spring season. Similarly, man may appear still when he is introspecting, but when he comes out of the introspection, he has a totally changed approach towards life.



Long Answer Type Question ↘

Q 1. What does the poet suggest us through the poem 'Keeping Quiet'?

Or

What do you think the poem 'Keeping Quiet' is about?

Ans. The poet suggests us all living on the surface of the earth to keep still, to keep silent and to suspend our activities. It will be an exotic moment for us all to feel together—oneness in a sudden surprise. This act will provide some moments to introspect quietly. It will help us in understanding ourselves. It will give us mutual understanding. We feel sad because we have never understood ourselves and we have threatened ourselves with death.

The earth can teach us that everything seems dead in winter but as the spring comes in, everything becomes alive. This period of winter gives rest and leisure to the earth. Hence, we all need rest and leisure for once to introspect quietly.



Chapter Test

Extract Based Question

Q 1. 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.

- (a) What lesson can Earth teach us?
(b) During what time does everything seem dead on earth?
(i) Monsoon (ii) Summer
(iii) Winter (iv) Spring
(c) When does everything prove to be alive on earth?
(i) Summer (ii) Winter
(iii) Spring (iv) Autumn

(d) The poet asks us to

(e) State whether the given statement is True or False.

The poet combines stillness with total inactivity.

(f) Give a synonym of 'seem'.

Short Answer Type Question

Q 2. What can we learn from earth?

Long Answer Type Question

Q 3. Give a brief description of the poem 'Keeping Quiet'.