

Fog

by Carl Sandburg



Central Idea of the Poem

In this poem, the natural phenomenon of 'fog' is described. The poet beautifully compares the coming and disappearing of the fog to a cat. The cat also comes to a place and disappears silently. Similarly no, one notices and get disturbed by the coming and disappearing of the fog.

Explanation of the Poem

The fog comes
on little cat feet.
It sits looking
over harbour and city
on silent haunches
and then, moves on.

Word Meanings

Harbour – port (a place where the ships load and unload goods); **On silent haunches** – sitting with knees bent

Explanation The poet says that the fog comes silently like a cat that comes on its little feet. Further, the poet says that, just like a cat sits silently by folding her knees and looks around the nearby places and things, the fog also sits over the harbour and the city covering everything. Then, after sometime just like the cat moves on silently, the fog also disappears from the harbour and the city quietly.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

Analogy Metaphor/Personification Comparison of fog to a cat

Rhyme Scheme No rhyme. The poem is in free verse.

NCERT FOLDER

Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

Thinking about the Poem (Page 115)

- What does Sandburg think the fog is like?
- How does the fog come?
- What does 'it' in the third line refer to? **CBSE 2012**
- Does the poet actually say that the fog is like a cat? Find three things that tell us that the fog is like a cat.

Ans. (a) Sandburg (the poet) thinks that the fog is like a cat.

- The fog comes silently like a cat on its small feet.
- 'It' in the third line refers to fog.

- The poet does not actually say that the fog is like a cat, but he uses the metaphor of a cat for comparison.

Three things that tell us that the fog is like a cat are

- It comes silently in the same manner like a cat comes on its small feet.

- Lines 3, 4 and 5 of the poem compare the fog with a cat that sits by folding its knees and looks around the nearby places silently.

- In the last line, the fog moves on quietly just like a cat.

2 You know that a metaphor compares two things by transferring a feature of one thing to the other.

- Find metaphors for the following words and complete the table below. Also try to say how they are alike. The first is done for you.

Storm	Tiger	Pounces over the fields, growls
Train		
Fire		
School		
Home		

Ans.

Storm	Tiger	Pounces over the fields, growls
Train	Snake	Long rope like body
Fire	Sun	Symbol of power
School	Temple	Teaches moral values, virtues
Home	Shelter	Safety, warmth

- Think about a storm. Try to visualise the force of the storm, hear the sound of the storm, feel the power of the storm and the sudden calm that happens afterwards. Write a poem about the storm comparing it with an animal.

Ans. For self-attempt

3 Does this poem have a rhyme scheme? Poetry that does not have an obvious rhythm or rhyme is called 'free verse'.

Ans. This poem does not have a rhyme scheme, as the lines in the poem do not end with like sounds. In this poem, there is no pattern of similarity in the sounds of the ending words of any of the lines. Such a poem is called free verse.

Exam Practice

Extract Based Questions

[5 Marks each]

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

- 1 The fog comes on little cat feet.
It sits looking over harbour and city
on silent haunches and then moves on.
- (i) Choose the option with qualities of the cat that Carl Sandburg applies to the fog?

1. Cats are independent animals, they don't follow rules, they slip and slide in and out of our lives as they please.
2. Cats are distrustful of strangers and can be jealous and moody.
3. Cats are stealthy, moving in slow motion at times and they appear to be moving in a mysterious fashion.
4. Cats often communicate with a combination of a distinctive sound and body language.
5. Cats like to move on at their own pace and before you know it, they've disappeared.

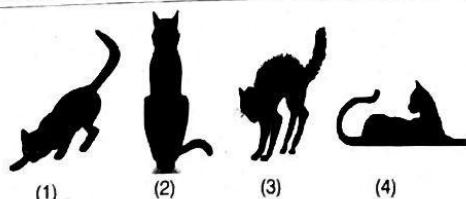
- (a) Only 1 (b) 2, 3 and 4
(c) 1, 3 and 5 (d) Only 4

- (ii) Which one/s of the following applies to the given lines?

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| 1. Personification is a literary device where you give an animal, object or natural phenomenon, qualities or abilities that only a human can have. | 2. Transferred epithet a literary device when an adjective usually used to describe one thing is transferred to another. |
| 3. Imagery is the language used by poets, and writers to create visual representation of ideas in the minds of the readers. | 4. Oxymoron is a figure of speech in which contradictory terms appear side by side. |

- (a) 1 and 4 (b) 2 and 3
(c) Only 1 (d) Only 3

- (iii) Pick the option that includes an image of the cat on its haunches.



- (a) Option (1) (b) Option (2)
(c) Option (3) (d) Option (4)
- (iv) Choose the option that DOES NOT list movement of the fog.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. It stole in on us like a foot-pad
Somewhere out of the sea and air...-E.J. Pratt | 2. The fog it tricks the eye
The wonder of the veil of white
Under the clear blue sky.-K.C.Cox |
| 3. A fog drifts in, the heavy-laden
Cold white ghost of the sea-Sara Teasdale | 4. ... comes gliding, rolling in at ground level, pressing its white featureless face against... -R.H.Grenville |

- (a) Option 1 (b) Option 2
(c) Option 3 (d) Option 4

- (v) The poet has used short lines to compose the given poem. Choose the option that lists the most appropriate explanation for the same.

- (a) By keeping the lines short, the poet keeps the liberty in stepping away from rule, traditional form, logic, or fact, in order to produce a desired effect.
- (b) By keeping the lines short, the poet wants the reader to omit some parts of a sentence, which gives the reader a chance to fill the gaps while reading it out.
- (c) By keeping the lines short, the poet wants to introduce ambiguity or contradiction into an otherwise straightforward sentence.
- (d) By keeping the lines short, the poet is controlling the pace to make the reader slow down thereby reflecting the slow rolling in of the fog.

Ans. (i) (c) 1, 3 and 5

(ii) (d) Only 3

(iii) (b) Option 2

(iv) (b) Option 2

(v) (d) By keeping the lines short, the poet is controlling the pace to make the reader slow down thereby reflecting the slow rolling in of the fog.

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

[2/3 Marks each]

1 How does the poet compare fog to a cat?
The poet compares the fog to a cat because of similarity in their movements. The silent steps of a cat and the way it sits by folding its knees are both very similar to the way fog comes and surrounds the city and harbour and looks over it.

2 What image does the poet give to the fog?
What are the similarities between that image and fog?

The poet looks at fog as a living creature and compares it to a cat. The fog covers a place suddenly and disappears in the same manner just like the coming and going of a cat.

The fog remains over any area like a cat sitting by folding her knees. Just like a cat who cannot sit and relax in one place, the fog is also a temporary visitor to a place. Both move on after some time.

3 The poem 'Fog' states/presents fog, as full of opposite forces. Do you agree? Justify your answer.

Ans. Yes, I agree that the poem 'fog' presents fog as full of opposite forces. In the poem, fog is conceived to come and go quietly and silently like a cat. In contrast to this secretive nature, fog is overpowering. It spreads over to the harbour and looks very carefully at the whole cityscape.

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

[5 Marks each]

1 Difficulties come but they do not stay forever. They come and go. Comment on this statement by referring to the poem 'Fog'.

Ans. In the poem 'fog', the poet presents the natural phenomenon of fog as a temporary visitor. It comes like a cat, looks/spreads over the harbour and city and soon leaves the place.

In other words, it leaves as quietly as it comes. It does not stay at a place and trouble anyone permanently.

Difficulties are also similar to fog. Just like fog, difficulties are temporary. They come in life but do not stay forever.

They also come and go like fog. Difficulties leave people hopeless and shattered. Often people give up and lose all their confidence in difficult situations.

It takes a lot of courage to face problems and solve them. In such a scenario, one must remember the inherent temporary nature of difficulties. One need not be hopeless or lose courage but rather think of it as fog which will disappear soon.

2 Nature has many wonders that people take for granted and never pay attention towards it. How is the poem 'Fog' different from this perspective?

Ans. Nature has many wonders and beauties. It is full of mysterious and fascinating sceneries and phenomenon. However, man has taken it for granted. They never pay any attention to it.

The poet of the poem 'Fog', Carl Sandburg differs in this perspective. He is a poet who is amazed at the wonders of the beautiful nature. He takes utmost pleasure in nature and its phenomenon.

One such natural phenomenon that captures his attention is fog. He is so amazed by fog that he not only wrote about it but also thought of its resemblance with other things. On close attention, he found the fog similar to a cat. He even describes this resemblance (the way a cat moves and sits) in his poem 'fog'. The fact that such a resemblance was found by the poet shows how connected he is to nature that others have taken for granted. The poem, then, acts as a motivation for people who do not pay any attention to nature, to find interesting similarities in everyday life.

Self Assessment

Extract Based Question

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

1 The fog comes
on little cat feet.
It sits looking
over harbour and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

- (i) Why poet has compared fog with cat?
 - (a) Both walk or enter silently.
 - (b) Both are unpredictable.
 - (c) Both are independent.
 - (d) All of these.
- (ii) What sits looking over harbour and city?
 - (a) The cat
 - (b) The visitor
 - (c) The fog
 - (d) None of these
- (iii) What is the theme of the poem?
 - (a) nature
 - (b) Silent fog
 - (c) Uncaring attitude of nature
 - (d) None of these
- (iv) Find a word from the passage which means "an area of water on the coast protected from the open sea by strong walls".
 - (a) Island
 - (b) harbour
 - (c) City
 - (d) All of these
- (v) Which poetic device has been used in the line? It sits looking over
 - (a) Simile
 - (b) Metaphor
 - (c) Paradox
 - (d) Alliteration

Short Answer (SA) Type Question

- 2 On what grounds does the poet compare the fog to a cat?

Long Answer (LA) Type Question

- 3 With what other things does the fog can be compared to? Give reasons for your comparison.