

A photograph of an astronaut in a white space suit with a large black helmet, floating in space. The astronaut is positioned on the left side of the frame, with their body angled towards the right. The background is a plain, light color.

Off to Outer Space Tomorrow Morning

- Norman Nicholson

Notes and Solved Textbook Questions

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Chapter Summary

Theme

Imagined journey through the mind of an astronaut who is preparing for a solo trip into outer space

Setting

The astronaut is due to leave on a Space Mission to outer space the next morning.

Although he might be excited, he also feels apprehensive and nervous.

Behaviours on Earth that will change for the astronaut:

- Cross off name on telephone book.
- No writing letters or posting mail.
- No visitors or friends.
- Not giving a damn about people on Earth.

New changes for the astronaut in Outer Space:

- No calendar or clock.
- Daylight will be on the switch and winter under lock.
- Sleep whenever he is sleepy and wake up without anyone prompting.
- Feeling of solitary confinement like in prison.
- Teacups circling him like planets around the Sun.

Phrase	Figure of Speech
1. a. "...you can take a last look..." b. "...helmet from its plastic hook..." c. "There won't be any calendar, there won't be any clock;"	Alliteration - The /l/, /h/ and /c/ sounds are repeated in their respective lines.
2. "In solit'ry confinement as complete as any gaol"	Simile - The loneliness faced by the astronaut on the space ship is compared to a prison with the use of 'as'.
3. "...tea cups circling round me like the planets round the Sun..."	Simile - The teacups floating in zero gravity around the astronaut is compared to the planets revolving around the sun.
4. "...my upward shooting star..."	Metaphor - The space capsule or rocket is compared to a shooting star.

Understand the Poem Questions - Solved

1. Pick out two phrases from line 1 which suggest the final moments for the launch of the rocket.

Answer: The phrases "start the Count Down" and "take a last look" suggest the final moments for the launch of the rocket.

2. With what feelings is the speaker flying out of the earth?

- a) despair
- b) lack of confidence
- c) apprehension
- d) doubt about his return to the earth
- e)

Choose your response from the ones given above or give your own. Say which line or lines in the first stanza support your response.

Answer: c) apprehension

The lines *"For with nobody to visit me and not a friend in hail,
In solit'ry confinement as complete as any gaol"* support the feeling of apprehension.

3. State the reason for the poet to say "calendars and clocks" are useless in space (stanza 2).

Answer: Calendars and clocks are useful to measure time on Earth, however it wouldn't really have meaning in Outer Space as time would function differently. The speaker would need to make his own routine based on tasks that needed done and there wouldn't be any Earthly night or day in Space. Hence, the speaker says that 'calendars and clocks are useless in space' and he wouldn't be keeping track of the time, date or day

4. The expression "winter under lock," means, that in space,

- a) there is no change of seasons.
- b) seasons change frequently.
- c) weather is chill always.
- d) weather is very hot always.

Answer: c) weather is chill always.

5. The speaker has the feeling that he is imprisoned. What might have been the reason for him to have such a feeling? (Read lines 9 to 12)

Answer: When the speaker is in Outer Space, he would be isolated from people and wouldn't be in contact with his friends or family. His movements would be restricted, and he would need to follow a prescribed routine. He also would need to remain confined in his spaceship. Hence poet Norman Nicholson describes the speaker feeling imprisoned in space.

6. The speaker says, "Teacups circling round me like the planets round the sun." Why does it happen only in space and not on the earth?

Answer: There isn't any gravity in space unlike earth. Hence, objects like teacups would float around the speaker.

7. Read stanza 5, and identify the indirect comparison (metaphor) in it.

Answer: In stanza 5, the speaker says that people can track his "my upward shooting star". His rocket or space capsule taking off to space is compared to an upward shooting star.

8. The speaker in the line (19) says "But you needn't think I'll give a damn for you." This is same as saying

a) I don't think I will have time to think about you.

b) I don't think I will have no time to think about you.

Answer: a) I don't think I will have time to think about you.

Read and Appreciate Questions - Solved

1. The tone of the poem is one of

- a) mourning []
- b) jubilation []
- c) disappointment []
- d) sadness []
- e) humour []
- f) anger []
- g) protest []

You may think more than one is appropriate. Mark (✓) if you think so, and mark (*) if you do not. Justify your choice in your group.

Answer: According to me, the tone of the poem is one of

- a) mourning [*]
- b) jubilation [✓]
- c) disappointment [*]
- d) sadness [✓]
- e) humour [*]
- f) anger [*]
- g) protest [*]

At the beginning of the poem, the poet mentions the astronaut asking for his plastic helmet, talking about the Countdown and asking people to take a last look. This suggests an air of excitement and eagerness to set off on the journey. Hence, I chose jubilation.

Later in the poem, the poet seems to spend some time reflecting on his life in Outer Space and realises that his timings, contact with people and solitude will all be new experiences. The comparison of his solitude to solitary confinement in prison suggests that the astronaut might be sad about this change in lifestyle.

2. Do you think that the repetition of the last line of every stanza is intentional? What might have been the purpose behind it? What does it suggest? Sing it aloud and try to find out the answer.

Answer: Yes, I think the repetition of the last line in every stanza is intentional. This might've been done for emphasis about the nearness of his journey. His excitement and apprehension are amplified given that the journey is to take place so soon.

3. The poem is not full of figures of speech. Yet the poem has two similes. Pick them.

Answer: The similes in the poem are:

- "In solit'ry confinement as complete as any gaol" - The speaker's solitude in Space is compared to solitary confinement in prison.
- "tea cups circling round me like the planets round the Sun" - The speaker likens the floating of teacups in zero gravity around the astronaut to planets revolving around the Sun.

4. Pick some instances of daily routine mentioned in the poem. Do you think the speaker doesn't want to do these things?

Answer: Some instances of daily routines mentioned in the poem are:

- Being reached using a telephone book
- Use of clocks and calendars
- Sleep at a specific time at night
- Wake up to knocks or at daylight

- Write letters
- Post mail
- Receive friends for visits

There are some instances which feel like the speaker is glad to not have to do these things, however at others, I think the speaker is going to miss these daily routines.

5. A group of rhyming words has been given to you. Write down the remaining ones. You may practise them with proper pronunciation with the help of your teacher. Look, hook, book.

Answer: The rhyming words are:

- Clock, lock, knock
- Mail, hail
- Begun, Sun, one
- Afar, star, are
- Hop, stop, top

6. The rhyme scheme in the poem is a a a b. Do you find any other rhyme scheme in the pattern of the poem? Look at the last line of all the stanzas, and find it out.

Answer: The rhyme scheme of the poem is a a a b for the first stanza, c c c b for the second stanza, d d d b for the third stanza and so on because of the repetition of the word 'morning' at the end of the last line of every stanza.
