



THE TREES

Explanation of the Poem:

Stanza 1

The trees inside are moving out into the forest,
the forest that was empty all these days
where no bird could sit
no insect hide
no sun bury its feet in shadow
the forest that was empty all these nights
will be full of trees by morning.



Explanation: The poet imagines trees from her house moving to the previously empty forest, which was devoid of life. These trees, initially brought indoors for decoration, are now returning to nature, suggesting a cycle of human interaction with the environment.

Stanza 2

All night the roots work
to disengage themselves from the cracks
in the veranda floor.
The leaves strain toward the glass
small twigs stiff with exertion
long-cramped boughs shuffling under the roof
like newly discharged patients
half-dazed, moving to the clinic doors.

Explanation: The poet envisions trees silently working at night to break free from the house. Roots crack the veranda floor, leaves press against windows, and branches, constrained indoors, slowly emerge like patients leaving a clinic, adjusting to newfound freedom.

Stanza 3

I sit inside, doors open to the veranda
writing long letters
in which I scarcely mention the departure of the
forest from the house.
The night is fresh, the whole moon shines in a sky
still open
the smell of leaves and lichen
still reaches like a voice into the rooms.

Explanation: The poet, seated in her house, writes letters on a fresh night with a full moon. The scent of leaves and lichen reaches her like a voice from within.

Stanza 4

My head is full of whispers
which tomorrow will be silent.
Listen. The glass is breaking.
The trees are stumbling forward
into the night. Winds rush to meet them.
The moon is broken like a mirror,
its pieces flash now in the crown
of the tallest oak.

Explanation: The speaker hears tree sounds that will vanish as they move into the forest overnight. Breaking glass signals their rush, colliding and getting stuck. In the open, the wind meets them eagerly. In the forest, tall trees stand, branches covering the moon, resembling a broken mirror.

Extract Based Questions:

1. I sit inside, doors open to the veranda writing long letters in which I scarcely mention the departure of the forest from the house.

- (a) Find the word from the passage which means 'hardly'.
- (b) What is she doing?
- (c) Where are the trees in the poem?
- (d) What do you mean by veranda?

Answer:

- (a) The word is scarcely.
- (b) She was writing long letters.
- (c) The trees are inside the house in the poem.
- (d) Veranda means a platform with an open front built on the ground floor of a home.

2. My head is full of whispers which tomorrow will be silent. Listen. The glass is breaking. The trees are stumbling forward into the night. Winds rush to meet them. The moon is broken like a mirror, its pieces flash now in the crown of the tallest oak. [CBSE 2016]

- (a) Why would the whispers be silent tomorrow?
- (b) Why are the trees stumbling?

(c) Which word in the stanza means the same as 'Quiet'?

(d) Which poetic device has been used in the sixth line of the stanza?

Answer:

(a) *The whispers will be silent because the trees will move outside to the forest.*

(b) *The trees are stumbling because they hurry to move outside after breaking the glass.*

(c) *The word is 'Silent'.*

(d) *Simile has been used using 'like' for comparison.*

Top 10 PYQs:

Short Answer Questions (40-50 words each)

1. i) Find three things in the first stanza, that cannot happen in a treeless forest.

(ii) What picture do these words create in your mind: —... sun bury its feet in shadow..? What could the poet mean by the sun's feet?

Answer: (i) The three things mentioned in the first stanza that cannot happen in a treeless forest are:

a. Birds sitting on the tree branches.

b. The hiding of insects in the branches of trees

c. The sun's its feet in the shadow of the trees in the forest.

(ii) The sun's feet are the rays of the sun that reach the earth after falling on the leaves of the trees and finally, reach the earth's surface.

2. Why do you think the poet does not mention the forest's departure from the house in her letters? (Could it be that we are often silent about important happenings that are so unexpected that they embarrass us? Think about this again when you answer the next set of questions.)?

Answer: The poet did not mention the departure of the forest from her house because it is a part of human nature to ignore the important matters of their life. We all know that trees are so important for our survival on earth. But still, human beings are cutting them to make profits without even thinking of the aftermath.

3. Does the poem present a conflict between man and nature? Compare it with A Tiger in the Zoo. Is the poet suggesting that plants and trees, used for interior decoration' in cities while forests are cut down, are 'imprisoned' and need to break out'?

Answer: Yes, the poem presents a conflict between man and nature. Man is causing deforestation by cutting down trees for his own use. On the other hand, he decorates his house with the trees. We are damaging our environment without even thinking about the end results. By clearing up the forests, we are endangering ourselves. So is with the animals too. We are ruining their natural habitat and killing them for our fun or food but on the other hand, we are keeping them in the cages on the pretext of safeguarding them by making sanctuaries and zoos. So, it is true that we are in a direct conflict with nature and making the other living beings prisoners, be it the trees or animals

4. On the other hand, Adrienne Rich has been known to use trees as a metaphor for human beings; this is a recurrent image in her poetry. What new meanings emerge from the poem if you take its trees to be symbolic of this particular meaning?

Answer: If trees are to be taken as a symbol for human beings, then the poem will define the efforts of humans to free themselves from the clutches of the desire to achieve everything. All the human beings are under a constant pressure of being at the top in every field

If trees are to be taken as a symbol for human beings, then the poem will define the efforts of humans to free themselves from the clutches of the desire to achieve everything. All the human beings are under a constant pressure of being at the top in every field

5. What is the central theme that runs through the poem?

Answer: The central theme of the poem revolves around the dynamic relationship between nature, human presence, and the cyclical processes of life. The poet intricately captures the movement of trees from the confines of a house into an initially barren forest, highlighting the interconnectedness of the natural world.

6. Can you elaborate on the poet's depiction of the forest during the nighttime?

Answer: Certainly. During the nighttime, the poet portrays the forest as a desolate space, lacking the usual vibrant life one associates with nature. Birds are absent from their branches, insects refrain from hiding, and the sun fails to cast its shadows on the forest floor. This nocturnal emptiness sets the stage for the transformative journey the trees embark on, promising to fill the forest with life by the break of dawn.

7. How does the poet characterize the process of the trees leaving the house?

Answer: The departure of the trees is depicted as a laborious and deliberate process. Throughout the night, the roots of the trees work persistently to disentangle themselves from the cracks in the veranda floor. The leaves strain toward the glass, small twigs become stiff with exertion, and long-cramped boughs shuffle under the roof, akin to newly discharged patients navigating the doors of a clinic. This vivid imagery illustrates the arduousness of the trees' journey from confinement to freedom.

8. What symbolic significance does the breaking glass hold in the poem?

Answer: The breaking glass serves as a pivotal moment in the poem, symbolizing the urgency and determination of the trees to break free. As the glass shatters, the trees hurry to move outside, colliding and getting stuck in their haste. This breaking point marks a transition, a moment of liberation for the trees, and signifies the transformative power of nature in asserting its presence.

9. How does the poet employ the moon as a metaphor in the poem?

Answer: The moon serves as a powerful metaphor in the poem, particularly when the trees move into the forest. Described as broken like a mirror, the moon symbolizes a profound transformation in the landscape. This metaphor suggests that the arrival of the trees in the forest alters the established order, much like the fragments of a broken mirror refracting light, creating a new and evolving perspective on the natural world.

10. What is the significance of the poet's choice to focus on the sense of smell and its connection to the departure of the forest from the house?

Answer: The poet, in emphasizing the smell of leaves and lichen, introduces a sensory dimension to the poem. This olfactory imagery not only engages the reader's senses but also symbolizes a lingering presence. The scent acts as a voice that reaches into the rooms, suggesting a connection between the departing forest and the memories or traces it leaves behind. It adds a layer of emotional depth, prompting contemplation on the lasting impact of nature's departure from the domestic space.