

## Memories of Childhood (Vistas Supplementary Reader)

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1. Zitkala-Sa says, "Eating by formula wasn't the hardest trial in that first day." What does she mean by 'Eating by formula'? (2024)

Ans.

- pattern of eating
- ringing the bells to regulate eating
- first bell to move into the dining room, second bell to draw chair and start praying, third bell to sit and use cutlery / fork and knife to eat

### Previous Years' CBSE Board Questions

SA I (2 marks)

1. "I felt like sinking to the floor," said Zitkala-Sa. When did she feel so and why? (2020)
2. Why did Bama reach home late after school? (Delhi 2014)
3. Which words of her brother made a deep impression on Bama? (Delhi 2014)
4. Why was Zitkala-Sa in tears on the first day in the land of apples? (AI 2014)
5. What is common between Zitkala-Sa and Bama? (Delhi 2014C)
6. Why did Zitkala-Sa resist the shingling of her hair? (AI 2014C)

SA II (3 marks)

7. What frantic efforts did Zitkala-Sa make to save her hair from being cut? (AI 2019)
8. At the dining table why did Zitkala-Sa begin to cry when others started eating? (AI 2016)
9. How did Zitkala-Sa's first day in the land of apples begin? (AI 2016)

10. According to Zitkala-Sa what does 'eating by formula' mean?  
(AI 2016)

SA III (4 marks)

11. When I was studying in the third class, I hadn't yet heard people speak openly of untouchability. But I had already seen, felt, experienced and been humiliated by what it is.

I was walking home from school one day, an old bag hanging from my shoulder. It was actually possible to walk the distance in ten minutes. But usually, it would take me from half an hour to an hour to dawdle along watching all the fun and games that were going on, all the entertaining novelties and oddities in the streets, the shops and the bazaar.

(i) The narrator was humiliated because \_\_\_\_\_.

(ii) The narrator 'dawdled along' as she \_\_\_\_\_.

(a) enjoyed looking at the various sights

(b) was getting late for school

(c) she didn't like going home

(d) she enjoyed haggling and shopping

(2023)

(iii) On the basis of the extract choose the correct option with reference to the two statements given below.

(I) The distance from school to home was very short.

(II) She was feeling upset and so dawdling her way home.

(a) (I) can be inferred from the extract but (II) cannot

(b) (II) can be inferred from the extract but (I) cannot

(c) Both (I) and (II) cannot be inferred from the extract

(d) Both (I) and (II) can be inferred from the extract

(iv) The word 'novelties' in the passage most nearly means

(a) colourful trinkets

(b) wooden toys

(c) unique and interesting items

(d) expensive souvenirs

### LA I (5 marks)

12. Bama and Zitkala-Sa, though victims of a system that crushes their aspirations, are determined to break out. Comment. (2023)

13. What activities did Bama witness on her way back home from school? (AI 2014C)

### LA II (6 marks)

14. How do Bama and her brother Annan differ in their approach to fight discrimination against the untouchables? (2019 C)

15. Why did Bama stroll in the market place instead of hurrying back home? Describe the sights she enjoyed seeing there. (Delhi 2019)

16. It may take a long time for oppression to be resisted, but the seeds of rebellion are sowed early in life. How did Zitkala-Sa face oppression as a child and how did she overcome it? (2018)

17. Untouchability is not only a crime; it is inhuman too. Why and how did Bama decide to fight against it? (Delhi 2017)

18. 'We too are Human Beings' highlights high caste-low caste discrimination in society. How do low caste people suffer on account of this? What advice is given to Bama to overcome this problem? (Foreign 2015)

19. How did the scene she saw in the market place change Bama's life? (Delhi 2015C)

## CBSE Sample Questions

### LA I (5 marks)

1. Both Bama and Zitkala Sa experienced the harsh reality of discrimination in their childhood. Instead of letting it pull them down, they both found a way to overcome it. You wish to include a cameo\* of both in your upcoming blog post.

As a part of the research, compare and contrast the experiences faced by the two and their response/s to these experiences, in 120-150 words.

[Clue: Include the similarities and differences in the discrimination they faced - their feelings - determination to overcome - success]

\*a short description that neatly encapsulates someone or something (2022-2023)

## ANSWERS

### Previous Years' CBSE Board Questions

1. It was her first day in school, Zitkala-Sa was marching into the dining room with other girls in a line. She tried to be conspicuous because she felt she was modestly dressed as her blanket has been removed from her shoulders hence, she felt like sinking to the floor.
2. Bama spent time watching games and other entertaining sights, which came along the way. She enjoyed herself looking at the shops and bazaar, at the novelties and oddities. All this made Bama reach home late after school.
3. After hearing from Bama what happened on her way home, Bama's elder brother told her that although people do not get to decide the family they are born into, they can outwit the indignities inflicted upon them if they are well read and successful. This left a deep impression on her.
4. Zitkala-Sa felt quite uncomfortable at the dining table. She was not used to eating by formula i.e., wait for the sound of the bell to commence eating. Moreover, the noise and the bedlam of languages and the Matron continuously staring at her, all of it disturbed her. ZitkalaSa felt embarrassed and out of place. This is why she began to cry at the dining table when others started eating.
5. Both Zitkala-Sa and Bama came from marginalised communities. In their childhood, both women had to face discrimination on the basis of race and caste respectively. Miffed by the social injustice since they were young, they protested against it. They both became writers when they grew up and used their education to fight against discrimination.
6. Zitkala-Sa resisted the shingling of her hair because in her culture, long hair was valued. In her culture, it was only the warriors captured by the enemy, cowards and mourners who wore their hair shingled or short.
7. Zitkala-Sa tried all that she could do to save her hair from being cut. When she heard that her hair was going to be chopped off, she ran upstairs into a room where the windows were covered with dark coloured curtains. She hid herself under a bed, but was caught. She cried and resisted with all her might and kept shaking her head all the while her hair was being cut. She lost spirit when she heard the scissors snip off one of her thick braids.
8. Zitkala-Sa felt quite uncomfortable at the dining table. She was not used to eating by formula i.e., wait for the sound of the bell to commence eating. Moreover, the noise and the bedlam of languages and the Matron continuously staring at her, all of it disturbed her. ZitkalaSa felt embarrassed and out of place. This is why she began to cry at the dining table when others started eating.

9. It was a bitter-cold day. The snow still covered the ground. A large bell rang for breakfast. The peace of the morning was disturbed by the annoying clatter of shoes, constant clash of harsh noises and an undercurrent of many voices murmuring in an unknown language.

10. On the very first day, in the city of apples, ZitkalaSa came across 'eating by formula', which was the fixed procedure for breakfast. Once everyone was in the dining room, the sound of the first bell indicated all pupils to pull out their chairs. At the second bell, all had to sit down. At the far end of the dining hall, a man said the prayer and the pupils bowed their heads. Finally, at the sound of the third bell, everyone started eating with forks and knives. This made her feel out of place and overwhelmed her.

11. Bama and Zitkala-Sa are two women from socially marginalized sections in two different parts of the world. Zitkala-Sa is Native American who faces discrimination by the European Staff. They decide to cut her long hair as a means to oppress her since short hair were only worn by mourners and cowards in her culture. Bama witnessed discrimination due to caste system. Her brother told her that being from lower castes is very disadvantageous position. They were never given any honour, dignity or respect. He suggested that the only way to improve their position in society is through education.

Although we see both the women were faced with discrimination, they were both determined to break through the shackles of oppression and discrimination. Zitkala-Sa decides to rebel against the staff when they tried to cut her hair. She hid herself as long as she could. When they found her, she cried out loud and shook her head until she had to give up. Bama also paid heed to her brother's advice and worked hard to learn as much as she could and went on to have an illustrious career.

12. (i) The narrator was humiliated by untouchability because she had already seen, felt and experienced it.

(ii) (a) enjoyed looking at the various sights

(iii) (a) (1) can be inferred from the extract but (II) cannot.

(iv) (c) unique and interesting items

13. On her way back home from school, Bama witnessed many activities, which truly caught her attention. Instead of hurrying back home, Bama she strolled through the bazaar. She saw many fun activities and games. She saw a monkey performing, a snake charmer putting his snake on display, a cyclist who had been cycling for three days non-stop. When the narrator walked past the Maariyata Temple she saw the huge bell tower. She saw Pongal offerings being prepared. She even heard the politician's speech. As she walked a little further, she saw the

dried fish stall near Gandhi statue. The narrator was amazed to see the Narikkuravan hunter gypsies with a wild Lemur in a cage. She enjoyed her walk back home from school.

**14.** Bama and her brother Annan belong to the dalit community, the lowest caste in the caste hierarchy. But that wasn't really understood by Bama until that day when she narrated her funny encounter with an elderly man from her community.

On her way back from school, Bama saw the elderly man carrying a small packet containing vadai for the landlord. The way the old man carried it, holding it by its strings made her laugh so much that she narrated the whole thing to her brother. But instead of finding it hilarious like her, Annan told her about the reality of being from the dalit community, the outcaste among all of them. He told her about the atrocities meted out to the members of her community in the name of caste.

Annan also revealed the injustice he experienced when he had come home for the holidays. He revealed that on his way from the neighbouring village's library, the landlord's men approached him and asked from which street he belonged. The name of the street would reveal the caste of the resident, thereby acting as an indirect form of identification. On knowing the street, the men would treat them accordingly. This was the type of injustice and prejudice the lower caste were subjected to. So, he instructed her to study hard, make her own identity and then people will come to her on their own accord. To Annan, education is the key to fight the injustice against them and make them equal with the others.

**15.** On her way back home from school, Bama witnessed many activities, which truly caught her attention. Instead of hurrying back home, Bama strolled through the bazaar. She saw many fun activities and games. She saw a monkey performing, a snake charmer putting his snake on display, a cyclist who had been cycling for three days non-stop. When the narrator walked past the Maariyata Temple she saw the huge bell tower. She saw Pongal offerings being prepared. She even heard the politician's speech. As she walked a little further, she saw the dried fish stall near Gandhi statue. The narrator was amazed to see the Narikkuravan hunter gypsies with a wild Lemur in a cage. She enjoyed her walk back home from school.

**16.** Zitkala-Sa's experience in 'Memories of Childhood' is that of a victim of the racial discrimination. Zitkala-Sa is a native American girl sent to a convent school, where she is treated badly at the hands of white people who consider themselves a superior race. Zitkala-Sa has to abide by many rules and regulations, which overwhelm her on the very first day of her school. She, along with others, is made to 'eat by formula' and it distresses her. It is the cutting of her long hair, which makes her hysterical. In her community, only mourners and cowards wear their

hair short. So, when it is her turn to get her hair shingled, she decides, she is not going to submit without a struggle. When she is dragged out from under the bed and carried downstairs, she resists by kicking and scratching wildly. She fights getting her hair cut by shaking her head while her hair is being shingled. Later, Zitkala-Sa goes on to become a powerful writer and uses this power to voice her opinion and fight oppression by the so-called superior race.

**17.** Bama saw one of the elders from her village coming down the street holding a small packet of vadai meant to be given to the landlord. The aged man was being careful not to touch it; he held the packet by its string. An amused Bama, narrated the incident to her older brother. He told her that the old man, being adalit, was not allowed to touch the vadai brought for the landlord. Bama learnt from her brother that day, about the atrocities and discrimination meted out to the members of her community in the name of caste. He told her to study hard and learn as much as possible; people would come to her on their own. Bama did exactly what Annan had urged her to do. She studied well and became a famous contemporary writer who raised her voice against the caste inequalities.

**18.** In 'We Too are Human Beings; Bama highlights the high caste-low caste discrimination prevailing in the society. The high caste people have a firm social standing and enjoy every benefit they can derive because of it. On the other hand, having been segregated and marginalised, the low caste people have to suffer in every walk of their life.

They have to face prejudices and social stigma of being born in a low caste community. Whether a child or an adult, man or woman belonging to the backward sections of the society, has to suffer humiliation in some way or the other.

In her childhood when Bama felt the indignation caused by learning about untouchability and discrimination, her elder brother advised her to work hard and learn as much as possible because only education can uplift her. It would help her in establishing an identity and thus, a position in the society.

**19.** Bama was in school when she first came to know of the social discrimination faced by the people of her community. On her way back home from school she saw an elderly man carrying a small packet containing some eatables; he was holding it by its strings and not at all touching it. She found it funny at first but, soon, was shocked to know from her brother that it was a form of discrimination the people of their community had to face because they were Dalits.

Her brother advised her to study hard and told her that it was the only way to change their lives. Bama did exactly that. She studied well and became a famous contemporary writer. She used her writings as a medium to raise her voice against the caste discrimination and inequalities.

## CBSE Sample Questions

1. Two experiences of discrimination in childhood Zitkala-Sa's experience in 'Memories of Childhood' is that of a victim of the racial discrimination. Bama, on the other hand, experienced discrimination on the basis of her caste. Zitkala-Sa is a native American girl sent to a convent school, where she is treated badly at the hands of white people who consider themselves a superior race. Zitkala-Sa has to abide by many rules and regulations, which overwhelm her on the very first day of her school. She, along with others, is made to 'eat by formula' and it distresses her. It is the cutting of her long hair, which makes her hysterical. In her community, only mourners and cowards wear their hair short. So, when it is her turn to get her hair shingled, she decides, she is not going to submit without a struggle. When she is dragged out from under the bed and carried downstairs, she resists by kicking and scratching wildly. She fights getting her hair cut by shaking her head.

A slightly different, but equally disturbing struggle, Bama has had already seen, felt, experienced and been humiliated by what untouchability is/was. The discrimination, in the beginning, is not quite evident to Bama until she sees an elder member of her community carry a packet of eatables by a string for a man of upper caste. It is from her older brother that she comes to know about the ill-treatment meted out to the Dalits by the members of the upper castes. This information terribly saddened and infuriates Bama as she feels that such discrimination is unfair and unjustified. Even after facing discrimination in their respective lives, Bama and Zitkala-Sa both became powerful writers and used this power to voice their opinion and fight oppression by the so called superior caste or race.