

Keeping Quiet

(2025)

1. Read the following extracts and answer the questions :

(6 Marks) (2025)

It would be an exotic moment
without rush, without engines.
we would all be together in a sudden strangeness
Fishermen in the cold sea
would not harm whales
and the man gathering salt
would look back at his hurt hands.

(i) How according to the poet can we create this exotic moment?

(ii) Choose the correct option:

The outcome of fisherman's activity led to the _____ (destruction / protection) of environment.

(iii) What is the common outcome of this exotic moment?

- (A) No rush and no mechanization
- (B) Men would be gathering salt.
- (C) There would be a strangeness among warring nations.
- (D) Fisherman will look at his hurt hands.

(iv) Choose the correct option:

The tone of the poet is _____ (appealing / introspective) in the line "and the man gathering salt would look back at his hurt hands."

(v) The poet uses the expression 'sudden strangeness' to suggest _____ .

(vi) Read the assertion and the reason below, with reference to the given extract:

Assertion: The poet advocates for taking a break to introspect the damage inflicted by man.

Reason: Introspection will make man's life better.

Choose the correct option regarding their relationship:

- (A) Both the Assertion and Reason are true, but the Reason is not the correct explanation.
- (B) Both the Assertion and Reason are true, but the Reason is correct explanation of the Assertion.
- (C) The Assertion is true, but the Reason is false.
- (D) The Assertion is false, but the Reason is true.

2. Answer the following questions in 40-50 words each : (2 Marks) (2025)

How can Earth play the role of a teacher according to Pablo Neruda?

Answers

1. (i)

- by keeping quiet and enjoying the moment of silence and stillness
- through self-reflection and introspection
- by suspending all activity and not rushing

(ii) Destruction

(iii) (A) No rush and no mechanization

(iv) Introspective

(v) unusual experience/ uniqueness of the experience/ universal peace/ brotherhood/harmony

(vi) (B) Both the Assertion and Reason are true, but the Reason is correct explanation of the Assertion.

2. Earth teaches us

- the power of gathering strength from within
- taking a break is not the end, it is to come back with new strength
- to inculcate self-restraint and patience

- need for regeneration and rejuvenation of ideas
- the importance of a period of stillness and silence for a better/improved, transformed life

Previous Years' CBSE Board Questions

MCQ (1 mark)

1. 'would put on clean clothes.' What does Pablo Neruda mean by 'clean clothes'?

- (a) white dress to reflect peace.
- (b) mind without courage and confidence
- (c) mind without confusion and fear
- (d) mind without hatred and prejudice

(Term I, 2021-22)

SA I (2 marks)

2. What according to Pablo Neruda in the poem 'Keeping Quiet' is the lesson that we should learn from mother earth? (2023)

3. Which is the exotic moment that the poet refers to in 'Keeping Quiet'?

(Delhi 2014)

4. What is the sadness the poet refers to in the poem 'Keeping Quiet'? (AI 2014)

5. How, according to Neruda, can keeping quiet change our attitude to life?

(Delhi 2014C)

6. Which images in the poem 'Keeping Quiet' show that the poem condemns violence?

(AI 2014C)

SA II (3 marks)

7. What will counting upto twelve and keeping still help us achieve? (Delhi 2015)

8. Which symbol from nature does the poet invoke that there can be life under apparent stillness?

(Delhi 2015)

9. 'Life is what it is all about, ... How is keeping quiet related to life? (AI 2015)

10. Why does one feel 'a sudden strangeness' on counting to twelve and keeping quiet?

(AI 2015)

11. How will 'Keeping Quiet' protect our environment?

(AI 2015)

12. What will possibly be the effect of keeping quiet?

(Foreign 2015)

13. What does the poem, 'Keeping Quiet' teach us?

(AI 2015C)

SA III (4 marks)

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

14. Now we will count to twelve
and we will all keep still.
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.

- (a) What is the significance of the number 'twelve'?
- (b) Which two activities does the poet want us to stop?
- (c) What does the poet mean by 'let's not speak in any language'?
- (d) Describe the pun in the word, 'arms. (AI 2016)

15.
perhaps a huge silence
might interrupt this sadness
of never understanding ourselves
and of threatening ourselves with death.

- (a) How can we bring about a 'huge silence'?
- (b) Why is silence called 'huge'?
- (c) What do we do for lack of understanding?
- (d) What does this lack ultimately lead to? (Foreign 2016)

16. It would be an exotic moment
without rush, without engines,
we would all be together
in a sudden strangeness.

- (a) Which exotic moment is referred to in these lines?
- (b) Why would that moment be strange?
- (c) What does the poet advocate in the poem?

(d) What does the poet mean by the word, 'engines'?

(AI 2015C)

17. 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) Whom does 'we' refer to in the above lines?

(b) Why does the poet want us to 'do nothing' for once?

(c) What is the 'Sadness' that the poet refers to in the poem? (AI 2014C)

LA I (5 marks)

18. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

What I want should not be
confused
with total inactivity
Life is what it is about;
I want no truck with death.
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.

(i) The poet's intention in the first line is to

(a) give warning to the readers

(b) give right direction to the readers

(c) give choice to the readers

(d) give a clarification to the readers

(ii) Select the option that best explains the stand of the poet in the expression:

"I want no truck with death".

(a) He advises people to escape death.

(b) He asserts that death is inevitable.

(c) He assures that he does not advocate death.

(d) He expresses his desire not to die.

(iii) Select the option that aptly describes the tone of the poet in the expression:

"If we were not so single minded".

(a) regretful

(b) critical

(c) encouraging

(d) friendly

(iv) According to the poet who is to blame for the condition of threatening ourselves with death?

(a) Stressful life

(b) Keeping quiet

(c) Lack of understanding

(d) State of confusion

(v) The tone of the poet in the expression "perhaps a huge silence might interrupt this sadness" is

(a) unsure yet optimistic

(b) sure and confident

(c) poetic and melodramatic

(d) hopeful but not confident

(Term I, 2021-22)

CBSE Sample Questions

MCQ (1 mark)

1. In 'Keeping Quiet' the poet does not want the reader to confuse his advice for _____ with total inactivity.

- (a) experimentation
- (b) relaxation
- (c) isolation
- (d) introspection

(Term I, 2021-22)

2. Identify the tone of Pablo Neruda in the following line:

Perhaps the earth can teach us

- (a) Confident and clear about the future events.
- (b) Dramatic about the prediction he made.
- (c) Convinced about the sequence of events to follow.
- (d) Uncertain, yet hopeful about the possibility.

(Term I, 2021-22)

SA I (2 marks)

3. What does Neruda mean by 'an exotic moment without rush' in his poem, 'Keeping Quiet'?

(2020-21)

ANSWERS

Previous Years' CBSE Board Questions

1. (d) mind without hatred and prejudice
2. In his poem 'Keeping Quiet', the poet Pablo Neruda believes that we should learn to remember to remain inactive or in a latent state, just like the mother earth. But that doesn't mean we are to be inactive forever. When the environment is conducive, like a seed that is submerged, we will germinate and then grow and bloom. We can learn to correct our mistakes and make the earth a better place, not only for ourselves but also for others. Mother earth can teach us that there is always a way to rectify our mistakes and learn from them.
3. The poet talks about the exotic moment when everyone quietens and becomes still. In that moment, no language must be spoken and there must be no movement; it must be a moment of introspection. It would be a moment free from all types of violence and madness of the world.
4. The poet refers to the 'sadness' of failing to understand nature and oneself in the monotonous everyday existence. He also finds it sad that the humanity is moving towards its own ruin, owing to its unanalysed actions. He regrets the rush of outdoing others that has made one forget the values of humanity.
5. Silence will give us time to think, to introspect, evaluate our actions and act more responsibly. According to Neruda, this is how keeping quiet can change our attitude towards life.
6. "Fishermen not harming Whales", "Wars with gas", "Wars with fire", "Victory with no survivors" are the images in the poem, 'Keeping Quiet' that shows the poet condemns violence.
7. Counting upto to twelve and keeping still for this brief interval of time would give us a momentary pause to introspect and understand oneself and each other better. It would also give us an opportunity to stop and think before taking any reckless decision. As a result, we will find inner peace.
8. The earth is taken as a symbol from nature, which the poet invokes that there can be life under apparent stillness. It is only earth that nurtures life even after death.
9. Keeping quiet must not be confused with total inactivity. Take the example of earth, how it seems still yet, it nurtures life under apparent stillness. This is how keeping quiet is related to life.

10. On counting to twelve and keeping quiet makes one feel 'a sudden strangeness' because everything comes to a standstill. In this stillness one can enjoy the exotic moment and introspect.

11. Keeping quiet will protect our environment because in that moment of inactivity, man will not exploit nature for his vested interests, fishermen will not harm the whales, there will be no green wars and no wars with gases.

12. The possible effect of keeping quiet would calm us down, help us to introspect, help us live in peace. It will halt destruction and make us realise the need to be happy and united. Keeping quiet teaches us to live in close proximity with nature without harming it.

13. The poem 'Keeping Quiet' teaches us about how quietness leads to stillness, which further leads to peace and calmness in the world. It also teaches us about the importance of introspection.

14. (a) The number twelve represents the twelve hours mark on the clock to measure time.

(b) The poet wants us to not speak in any language and stop for one second and not move our hands so much.

(c) The poet means that different languages symbolises difference. Keeping silent will ensure peace and give one the chance to introspect.

(d) The word 'arms' in the extract refers to both the hands and weapons.

15. (a) We can bring about a 'huge silence' by keeping quiet and counting upto twelve or by halting all activities.

(b) Silence is called 'huge' because it is an exotic moment when every person on earth has become quiet.

(c) For lack of understanding, we must keep quiet and introspect.

(d) This lack ultimately leads to death.

16. (a) The exotic moment referred to in these lines is the moment when everyone keeps quiet and there are no movements.

(b) The moment would be strange because there would be no rush and no noise. It will bring the whole humanity together.

(c) In this poem, the poet advocates keeping quiet for twelve seconds and in that time, everyone should introspect. This would save mankind from disaster.

(d) By 'engines' the poet means machines, automobiles, factories, etc.

17. (a) 'We' in the above lines refers to the people of the world.

(b) The poet wants us to 'do nothing' for once because he wants us to stop and introspect and, in the process, take stock of our actions.

(c) 'Sadness' that the poet refers to in the poem is the due to causing so much destruction to the world and people.

18. (i) (d) give a clarification to the readers

(ii) (c) He assures that he does not advocate death.

(iii) (b) critical

(iv) (c) Lack of understanding

(v) (a) unsure yet optimistic

CBSE Sample Questions

1. (d) introspection

2. (d) Uncertain, yet hopeful about the possibility.

3. Pablo Neruda wishes for that exotic moment when mankind will be free from greed, cruelty and harmful actions. Unnecessary rush and noise have caused unpleasantness and troubles. The poet wishes the noise of engines and machines should cease and peace and tranquility should prevail.