

Tender Heart High School, Chandigarh

Class X

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Subject: English Literature

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Contextual Questions.

Haunted Houses

Poem -1

2. Comprehension Passages

PASSAGE-1

- (i) In the first sentence of the extract the poet expresses the view that all the houses are haunted ones. It is so because men have lived and died there. It means that the poet considers the existence of ghosts a reality.
- (ii) All houses are haunted as ghosts move into and out of them. These ghosts visit the houses through the open doors. The presence of the ghosts makes these houses 'haunted'.
- (iii) The phrase 'harmless phantoms', is unusual as the general perception is that ghosts are dangerous. This phrase, on the contrary, points out that ghosts are harmless.
- (iv) In the later part of the poem, the poet conceives a spirit world which is delicate like atmosphere. It keeps floating around the human world of reality.
- (v) According to the poet, we can meet ghosts in all the houses where men have lived and died. They are not limited to some deserted and isolated places only.

PASSAGE-2

- (i) The ghosts earlier imagined by the poet are harmless phantoms moving on without making any noise. They simply glide through the atmosphere.
- (ii) We meet these ghosts on the doorway, the stairs and along the passages. No, they are not visible at all.
- (iii) The last two lines mean that the presence of the ghosts can be realized like some impression on the air. It makes us feel as if something is moving here and there.
- (iv) The poet here means that contrary to the traditional beliefs that ghosts visit deserted places only, their presence can be realized everywhere. Personification
- (v) They throng the well-lit hall and sit quietly among the invited guests.

PASSAGE-3

- (i) The uninvited guests at the table are the harmless ghosts.
- (ii) They are uninvited there because nobody would like to have ghosts as guests. Moreover, being invisible, ghosts can not be invited as guests like human beings.
- (iii) The surprising thing about the ghosts is that they come in large groups yet they do not make any noise. Another thing unusual and surprising about them is their being harmless. They are usually considered dangerous and horrible.
- (iv) The ghosts are silent. In the same way, the pictures on the wall do not make any noise. So it means that ghosts like pictures are voiceless. **Simile**
- (v) The ghosts on the table sitting like guests are visible to the poet only. The poet also realizes the way the ghosts throng the hall maintaining silence. It means, the poet, in away, is able to hear their sound. These things are not seen or heard by others.

PASSAGE-4

- (i) The first two lines make a contrast between the speaker 'I' and the stranger at his fireside. Whereas the speaker can see the forms of ghosts, the other person is not able to see them.
- (ii) The speaker seems to have extraordinary powers. He has the power to see the ghosts. The other people cannot see the ghosts as they lack the power to see them.
- (iii) In the given context, the speaker has told that the number of ghosts that he calls 'the forms I see', is much more than the guests at the table. The ghosts have come there in large numbers.
- (iv) He means to say that the ghosts present there are beyond the perception of the guests sitting beside him. But he, the speaker can see the ghosts clearly. There is no doubt in his mind about the presence of the ghosts there.
- (v) The 'he' in Line 3 is one of the guests of the speaker. He is unable to see the ghosts at the dining table as he is a normal human being unlike the speaker who has the ability to see the ghosts.

PASSAGE-5

- (i) The speaker has given the idea that ghosts can be seen and met everywhere. Their presence is not limited to some deserted places only. The speaker can see them sitting at the table beside him.
- (ii) The ghosts can be seen at the places where these persons used to live before their death. We can meet the departed spirits at their earlier habitats. They still live at their earlier estates.

- (iii) The people who are alive do not have the title deeds to houses or the lands of the dead people. These properties belong to the dead and their ghosts.
- (iv) The departed spirits claim their old estates. They do not want to leave that property to someone else. They come out of the grave to get their earlier land and property back.
- (v) The phrase 'hold in mortmain' means that the ghosts do not let go their sense of possession of their earlier houses. They keep them in mortmain *i.e.*, they have a sense of still possessing them. They believe that the land or property they owned earlier is in their possession even now. It cannot be separated or taken away from them.

PASSAGE-6

- (i) The poet describes all houses as haunted because there are ghosts everywhere. The ghosts always feel that they possess the houses even now though they are no longer alive. These houses are possessed or haunted by the ghosts.
- (ii) The poet describes the ghosts as floating beings without any concrete or solid body. They are like gusts of air that forms the atmosphere. They are like 'vital breath' of the ethereal air.
- (iii) The speaker can see the ghosts and hear the sounds created by the movements of the ghosts. The ghosts floating around are visible to him. He also hears the breath like sound produced due to their movements.
- (iv) The world of the spirits is like atmosphere around the earth. Their world is like an atmosphere of dense mists and vapours. Thus the poet describes the spirit world by comparing it with the atmosphere to give this world some shape.
- (v) The world of the spirits crosses through earthly mists and vapours. In other words, the ghosts forming this world pass through the earthly mists and vapours.

PASSAGE 7

- (i) In line one the lives of human beings have been referred to.
- (ii) Opposite attractions and desires bring balance in our short lives. A struggle between enjoyment and aspiration maintains a balance in human life.
- (iii) In the last two lines the struggle between the material world and the desire to achieve spiritual satisfaction has been indicated. Human beings want to enjoy worldly pleasure. They also aspire to have spiritual bliss. It results in a struggle between these two types of tendencies in human mind.

- (iv) The mental disturbances and anxieties are caused by our earthly desires. When they remain unfulfilled they become a reason for regrets sorrow and anxieties.
- (v) The 'bridge of light' is formed when moonlight falls on the sea. Human beings imagine the existence of a dark mysterious world from which this light comes. In the same way a bridge of light is related to the world of the spirits. This world of the spirits connects our world to the heavenly world.

PASSAGE-8

- (i) Our desires to enjoy earthly things and the aspirations to achieve spiritual bliss bring a balance in our lives.
- (ii) The metaphor of a jar has been used in these lines for the human mind in which 'perturbations' continuously keep on struggling. The two types of desires; the one earthly, and the other spiritual keep on struggling in human mind like two opposing things kept in a jar.
- (iii) In this stanza the earthly wants means the desires and ambitions for material achievements and success. On the other hand, high aspirations suggest the ambition to acquire spiritual satisfaction.
- (iv) Perturbations are opposite desires and ambitions that cause a conflict in the human mind. They result from two opposite kinds of desires.
- (v) Human desires and ambitions are determined by unseen forces in some undiscovered planet. It implies that human beings do not determine their own nature or desires and ambitions.

PASSAGE-9

- (i) The moon throws the rays on the floating waters of the sea. It develops a kind of bridge of light connecting the sea and the moon. Because of the floating light over the sea waves this bridge of light seems floating.
- (ii) This bridge functions to link human fancies to some unseen, mysterious world. It makes human beings fancy that there is some strange, unknown world above from which the rays of moon light are descending to the sea.
- (iii) The figure of speech used in the first two lines is personification. In these lines the moon is said to throw a bridge of light on the sea as if the moon is some person.
- (iv) Our fancy takes us to the mysterious unknown world. This world we imagine to be there above at some unknown place.
- (v) The poet here is talking about the realm of mystery night. This realm is not solid but only imaginary and unknown to human beings.
- v) abab

PASSAGE-10

- (i) The poet has told us that the world of the spirits is dark and mysterious. A bridge of light descends from this world connecting it with the earthly world.
- (ii) We can meet the departed souls in the stair cases, halls and at dining tables. In other words, we can 'meet' them everywhere. As the world of the spirits is floating like atmosphere, the departed souls move around in it.
- (iii) The importance of the word 'So' in the first line is that it develops a link between the ideas expressed in this stanza and the views presented about the bridge of light built by the moonlight. It also develops the thought that human beings are linked to the world of the moon through the world of the spirits.
- (iv) A bridge of light descends from the world of the spirits. It has been compared to a room with unsteady floor that sways and bends.
- (v) We often think of the dark abyss somewhere above as the abode of ghosts. We fancy that ghosts live in a dark, mysterious and deserted far off place.