

Grade X

Poem 8 The Trees

Main Points of the Poem

- ❖ The trees are coming out of their artificial glasshouses.
- ❖ They are moving out into their natural habitat - the forest.
- ❖ The trees are metaphors of nature itself.
- ❖ Without trees forests have become empty.
- ❖ No trees are left in the forest where birds can perch themselves on their tops.
- ❖ Even insects have lost the place where they could hide themselves in.
- ❖ The poetess is hopeful that the forests will be full of trees 'by morning.'
- ❖ To free themselves, the roots continue working all night.
- ❖ They struggle to come out from the cracks in the veranda floor.
- ❖ Small twigs become tough and branches move their positions under the roof.
- ❖ The night is fresh. The moon is shining and the smell of leaves and lichen is spreading out into the rooms.
- ❖ The poet is sitting inside but the struggle of the roots, leaves and branches continues to free themselves.
- ❖ The struggling trees have come out breaking the glasshouse and are marching towards the forest victoriously.

Extract-based Question

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

1. Long-cramped boughs shuffling under the roof

Like newly discharged patients
half-dazed, moving
to the clinic doors.

- a. What does the poet compare the branches to?
b. Name the figure of speech used in these lines.
c. What does the word 'shuffling' mean?

- Ans.** a. The poet compares the branches of the tree to newly discharged patients, moving out of the clinic in a half-dazed state of mind.
- b. The figure of speech used in these lines is 'Simile', because a comparison is made between two different things - 'long cramped boughs and newly discharged patients'.
- c. 'Shuffling means 'changing place'.

2. 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

- a. Which three things cannot happen in a treeless forest?
- b. Why was the forest empty?
- c. Which word here means 'hide from view'?

- Ans.** a. In a treeless forest, three things that cannot happen are: First, no bird could sit, no insect could hide, and no sun could bury its feet or in shadow.
- b. The forest was empty because man had utilised the trees to build homes making the forest bare.
- c. 'Bury' means 'hide from view'.

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.

- a. Who is 'I'?
- b. What is he doing?
- c. Where are the trees in the poem?

- Ans.** a. 'I' is the poet.
- b. He (the poet) is writing long letters.
- c. The trees are in the veranda of the poet's house.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Why are the tree moving out into the forest?

Ans. In the poem, the tree are presented as a metaphor for human beings. As humans value freedom, nature can't be subdued and controlled by man. The trees have been brought to the artificial glasshouses. The natural habitat of trees is the forest. Therefore, after a long and hard struggle, they are coming out of the artificial barriers. They are marching victoriously towards the forest which is their original habitat.

2. What will be the condition of a treeless forest?

Ans. No one can imagine a forest without trees. They are the life-line of a forest. Without trees, there will be no activity of birds, insects as well as of the sun. The birds will have no place to perch on. The insects will have no place to hide in. Even the scorching sun will lose the shade to cool itself in the absence of trees.

3. Why is the poetess hopeful that the empty forest will be full of trees by the morning?

Ans. The poetess is quiet optimistic. The natural barriers to contain and subdue nature created by man will be broken. The trees which have been deprived of their natural habitat will struggle to free themselves from the clutches of man. The struggle of these trees will not go in vain. By morning, they will be marching victoriously to the forest. The forest will be full of trees by morning.

4. Describe the struggle of the roots, leaves, small twigs and long boughs of free themselves and break open the artificial barriers created by man.

Ans. Every part of the confined trees rises in revolt and struggle hard to free itself. The roots struggle all night to break free from the cracks in the veranda floor. The leaves struggle to come out of the glass. Small twigs have become hard due to overwork. Long cramped boughs are trying to break open the roof and come out.

5. Describe the comparison between boughs and the newly discharged patients in the last lines of the second stanza.

Ans. Freedom is the common theme. The cramped branches of the trees put in the artificial glasshouses, want to be free. They are shuffling hard to come out in the open. They want to be free. Similarly, the newly discharged patients are impatient to escape to freedom. They don't want to be confined to the beds of the hospital. They run towards the doors of the hospital to have a taste of freedom again.

6. Why doesn't the poetess make any mention of the struggle waged by the trees to free themselves to move towards the forest in her long letters?

Ans. The poetess is sitting inside her room writing long letters. She is witnessing what is going on in her house. The struggle of the leaves, twigs, boughs and roots of the trees to free themselves takes place in her presence. However, she ignores such a historical event. Perhaps she is shocked and embarrassed by the sudden and unexpected happenings.

7. Describe the pleasant night when 'the forest' departed from the house.

Ans. The struggle was going on. The trees were struggling to depart to the forest, their natural habitat. But outwardly the night was fresh. The full moon was shining in the open sky. The smell of leaves and lichen was reaching into the room like a voice.

8. What are the whispers that fill the head of the poet?

Ans. The head of the poetess is full of whispers. These are the whispers of the silent struggle that is going on in her house. The trees have been waging a heroic struggle to free themselves from the bondage of man. They are moving to their original home - the forest. The poetess is a witness to all that is happening in the house.

9. Describe the sound and fury of the victorious march of the trees to the forest.

Ans. Now the silent struggle gets more vocal and visible. The artificial glasshouse that imprisoned them has been broken to pieces. The trees are stumbling forward towards the forest. Winds rush in to meet them. Even the full moon is covered by the full grown up oak tree. Only a fragmented moon is visible through its expanding leaves and boughs.

10. Why is the full moon broken to pieces like a mirror in the last lines of the poem?

Ans. previously it was a peaceful night hiding the struggle that was going on silently. The moon was full. The full grown up tree like oaks with their boughs spreading out all around have obstructed the sight of the moon. The full moon is fragmented and partly visible only through the top boughs and leaves of a huge oak tree.

11. What is the message that the poetesses want to give to the readers through the poem 'Trees'?

Ans. Adrienne Rich uses trees as a metaphor for human beings, more particularly women. In a male dominated society, nature, represented by trees and forests, is struggling to escape itself from the onslaughts of man to destroy it. The victorious march of the trees gives a message of hope that nature can't be tamed or subdued by the onslaughts and arrogance of man.

12. What changes can be seen in the moon during the course of the poem "The Trees"?

Ans. Initially, it was full moon shining in a clear sky. Then the moon is broken like a mirror. Its rays fall on the top of an oak tree. The branches of an oak fragment the full moon. It is broken into pieces like a mirror.

13. What are the tree things that can't happen in a treeless forest?

Ans. The three things that can't happen in a treeless forest are:

- i. the sitting of a bird on trees
- ii. the hiding of insects and
- iii. the sun burying its feet in the shadow of the forest.

14. In the poem, 'The Trees', where are the trees? What are their roots, twigs, etc. trying to do?

Ans. In the poem 'The Trees', the trees lie in the veranda of the poet's house. The roots try to free themselves from the cracks of the veranda's floor. The twigs are trying to come under the roof and the leaves try to come near the glass.

15. What happens to the house when trees move out of it?

Ans. When the trees move out of the house it becomes silence everywhere. The leaves of the trees are fallen all around. It makes the poet restless.

Long Answer Type Questions

1. How does Adrienne Rich use trees as a metaphor for men? Isn't the struggle of the trees to free themselves and go to the forest is the struggle of crushed men, particularly of woman against the powerful and atrocious men?

Ans. The poet Adrienne Rich uses trees as a metaphor for men, particularly the struggling woman. Nature, itself is represented by trees and forests in the poem. Man's foolish and atrocious attempts to exploit, subdue, team and control nature have led to disastrous results like deforestation. Forests have become empty. The futile attempt of humans to put tree and forests in the artificial glasshouses fails miserably. The trees, their roots, leaves, twigs and boughs wage a long and hard struggle to come out of the artificial barriers. Ultimately, the trees and forests reach where they should be. The victorious march of the trees to the forest tells the saga of nature's victory over the onslaughts of man.

Like the trees, the liberation of the crushed and the woman is based on the same theme. In a male dominated society, women are struggling to come out of the clutches of men to gain freedom. It is hoped that like the trees in the poem, they will be liberated in the end.

2. The poem 'The Trees' present a conflict between man and nature. Describe the struggle of the trees and their victorious march to their natural habitat-the forest.

Ans. The poem 'The Trees' is based on the universal and age-long theme - the conflict between man and nature. Nature has endowed in numerous blessing on man. However, the greed, arrogance and foolishness of man have constantly tested the patience of otherwise peaceful nature. When nature can't bear any more, it revolts and causes havoc on man in the form of storms, droughts and floods. Man's greed leads to deforestation. Forests without trees have become a curse for birds, insects can't be redeemed.

Any attempt to subdue and control nature will end in failure. Uprooting trees from their original habitat, the forests and confining them to artificial glasshouses will end in failure. The trees rise against the onslaughts of men and wage a long and hard struggle to liberate themselves from the bondage of man. Ultimately, they are victorious. They return to their original home where they should be. Ultimately, nature asserts itself and repulses man's attempt to exploit, subdue and tame it.

SELF ASSESSMENT

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Where are the trees moving out and why?
2. What are the results of a treeless forest?
3. How do roots work throughout the night and what is their aim?
4. Describe the struggles of leaves, twigs and boughs.
5. How are the cramped boughs compared to the newly discharged patients from a hospital?
6. Why does the poetess ignore the struggle of trees in her long letters?
7. Why is the moon first shown as full and why is it fragmented in the end?
8. What are whispers that the poetess is hearing in her head?
9. Describe the victorious march of the trees to their natural habitat the forest.

Long Answer Type Questions

1. Describe the conflict between man and nature through the struggle of the trees to liberate themselves from the clutches of man.
2. Why does a forest become treeless and what are unpleasant results? Describe the struggle of the trees to liberate themselves to go to original natural habitat.



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