

Answer all questions.

Section - A

Answer with reference to the context:

- (ii) Exult O shores, and ring O bells !
But I with mournful thread.
Walk the deck my captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

The lines you quoted are from "O Captain! My Captain!", a famous poem written by Walt Whitman in 1865. The poem is an extended metaphor, mourning the death of President Abraham shortly after the end of the Civil War in the United States.

Context:

The speaker is reflecting on the nation's victory and the tragic loss of the "Captain", who led the country through its most difficult period but was assassinated before he could fully enjoy the peace he helped bring about.

- "Exult O shores, and ring O bells!": This line expresses the joy and celebration of the nation's victory. The "shores" and "bells" symbolize the people rejoicing over the success.
- "But I with mournful tread, Walk the deck my captain lies, Fallen cold and dead": Here, the speaker contrasts the nation's celebration with his own grief. He walks the deck where his "Captain" lies dead, unable to join in the joy because of the deep personal sorrow for the leader's death.

The poem as a whole reflects the bittersweet moment in American history: the triumph of the Union and the end of slavery, but at the cost of Lincoln's life.

iii Far or forget to me is near;
Shadow and Sunlight are the same;
The vanquished Gods to me appear;
and one to me are shame and fame.

Ans The lines you quoted are from "The Triumph of Time", a poem by Algernon Charles Swinburne. In this poem, the speaker reflects on themes of loss, time and the transience of life and love. Swinburne, a Victorian poet, often explored existential and melancholic themes, emphasizing the fleeting nature of human experiences.

Context :

These particular lines reflect a sense of indifference or resignation towards the usual dichotomies of life - distance and proximity, shadow and light, success and failure, glory and disgrace.

- "Far or forget to me is near;": This suggests that the speaker has reached a point where the concepts of distance and memory no longer hold meaning. Whether something is far away or forgotten, it is equally close to him emotionally or mentally.
- "Shadow and sunlight are the same": Shadow and sunlight have lost their distinctions for the speaker. He views both with detachment or as equally insignificant.
- "The vanquished Gods to me appear;": The "vanquished Gods," could symbolize former ideals or belief that have been lost or overthrown. To the speaker, these defeated deities still appear, indicating that even though they are no longer powerful or relevant, they persist in his mind.
- "And over to me are shame and fame;": Fame and shame are viewed as equal and meaningless to the speaker. He has become indifferent to external judgments and societal

measures of success or failure.

(iii) A Thought went up my mind today
That I have had before
But did not finish some way back
I could not fix the year.

Ans The lines you provided are from a poem by Emily Dickinson, often titled "A Thought went up my Mind Today". Dickinson's poetry frequently delves into themes of memory, introspection, and the elusive nature of thoughts and emotion. In this poem, she contemplates a fleeting thought that she had before but cannot quite grasp or place in time.

Context :

- "A thought went up my mind today": The speaker is reflecting on a thought that suddenly rises to the surface of their consciousness. This kind of involuntary memory or realization is a common theme in Dickinson's work.
- "That I have had before": The speaker recognizes the familiarity of the thought, acknowledging that it is not new but something previously experienced or pondered.

- "But did not finish some way back": The thought is unfinished, suggesting that it may have been abandoned or left unresolved in the past. The speaker might have tried to comprehend or complete the thought before, but it eluded them.
- "I could not fix the year": The speaker cannot pinpoint when this thought first occurred. The inability to "fix the year" reflects Dickinson's recurring exploration of time and memory + how moments and thoughts can blur together, making it difficult to distinguish when certain realizations or reflections first surfaced.

(iv) But O heart! heart! heart!
 O the bleeding drops of red,
 Where on the deck my captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead

Ans:- The lines you quoted are from Walt Whitman's famous elegy, "O Captain! My Captain!", written in 1865. The poem mourns the death of Abraham Lincoln, who was assassinated just as the Civil War ended. Whitman uses an extended metaphor of a ship's captain who led his crew through a difficult journey but died before fully witnessing the victory.

Context :

- "But O heart! O heart! heart!": This repetition emphasizes the deep, overwhelming grief the speaker feels. It is an expression of intense sorrow and emotional pain, underscoring the devastation caused by the Captain's death.
- "O the bleeding drops of red": This line is both literal and metaphorical. The "bleeding drops of red" suggest Lincoln's fatal injury, but they also symbolize the bloodshed and sacrifice of the Civil War itself. The use of vivid imagery paints the scene as tragic and raw, conveying the depth of loss felt by the speaker.
- "Where on the deck my captain lies": The image of the captain lying on the deck of the ship invokes a sense of finality. The captain has fallen after steering the ship to safety, suggesting that Lincoln, after successfully leading the nation through its most perilous time, has died. The "deck" becomes the space where the Captain has made his ultimate sacrifice.
- "Fallen cold and dead": The repetition of "cold and dead" serves to emphasize the permanence of death. The body of the captain is lifeless, highlighting the tragic nature of the

situation - the leader who guided the nation
the guided the nation through its
darkest time is now gone.

Section - B

Answer the following in about 300 words each:

- Q ① Write an extended note on the poetic devices used in "O captain! My Captain!".

Ans In "O captain! My Captain!" Walt Whitman uses a variety of poetic devices to convey his grief over the death of President Abraham Lincoln while celebrating the end of the Civil War. The poem is rich with metaphor, imagery, and sound devices that amplify its emotional impact.

1. Extended Metaphor :

The central poetic device in the poem is an extended metaphor that compares Lincoln to a "Captain" and the United States to a ship. The "fearful trip" represents the Civil War, with the "prize" being the preservation of the Union. The Captain's death symbolizes Lincoln's assassination just as the nation reaches safety. This metaphor allows Whitman to express both

national triumph and personal loss.

2. Repetition :- It is used extensively to create emphasis and evoke emotion. In lines such as "O captain! My Captain!" and "heart! heart! heart!", the repetition conveys the speaker's intense grief and disbelief. The repeated refrain "fallen cold and dead" reinforces the finality of death and the weight of the loss.

3. Imagery : Whitman uses vivid imagery to paint emotional scenes. Phrases like "bleeding drops of red" evoke powerful images of Lincoln's death and the bloodshed of the war. The description of the Captain lying "on the deck" creates a stark visual of death in the midst of celebration, contrasting life and death.

4. Symbolism :- The Captain symbolizes Lincoln, while the ship represents the United States. The "prize" symbolizes the reunification and peace achieved after the war. The contrast between celebration and mourning symbolize the tension between the nation's victory and Lincoln's tragic death.

5. Rhyme and Meter : Unlike most of Whitman's free verse and poetry, "O Captain! My Captain!", follows a more structured rhymed scheme (AABBCDED) and meter. The regularity of the form mirrors the

stability that Lincoln brought to the nation, while the irregularities in rhythm suggest the disruption caused by his death.

6. Alliteration and Assonance :- The employs alliteration and assonance to create musicality, as seen in the line "for you the flag is flung", where the repetition of the 'f' sounds adds rhythmic flow of the reading.

Q2 Write a critical appreciation of the poem "Because I could not stop for death".

Ans Emily Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death" is a profound meditation on death and the afterlife, characterized by its calm, reflective tone and innovative use of imagery and personification. In this poem, Dickinson presents death as a natural and inevitable part of life, employing unique metaphors to reshape the way we think about dying.

Theme: The central theme is morality, but unlike traditional depiction of death as fearful, Dickinson portrays it as a courteous suitor who "kindly stopped" for her. The speaker journey with death is calm, and there's a sense of resignation rather than terror.

Structure and form:- The poem is composed in six quatrains, following an ABCD rhyme scheme. This structure lends the poem a steady, almost hypnotic rhythm, mirroring the slow, deliberate pace of the carriage ride with Death. The dashes Dickinson often uses create pauses that make the reader reflect on the significance of each moment, enhancing the contemplative tone.

Personification:- Death is personified as a gentleman who takes the speaker on a carriage ride, a metaphor for the journey towards the afterlife. This personification transforms death into something familiar and civil, subverting the traditional view of death as a frightening or painful experience.

Imagery:- The poem uses vivid imagery to depict different stages of life. The passing "school" represents childhood, "grazing grass" suggests maturity, and the "setting sun" symbolizes the end of life. The imagery shifts from the earthly to the eternal as the speaker reaches her final destination: a "house" in the ground, representing her grave.

Tone:- Despite the subject matter, the tone remains calm, detached, and contemplative. The speaker's quiet acceptance of death suggests an understanding of its inevitability and perhaps, a belief in the soul's continuity after death.

Q₃

Critically evaluate the poem "Death Sets a Thinking Significant".

Ans

Emily Dickinson's poem "Death Sets a thing Significant" reflects on how death imbues otherwise ordinary objects with profound emotional meaning. The poem explores the human tendency to attach significance to mundane items after someone dies, symbolizing memory, loss, and the enduring emotional impact of mortality.

Theme: The central theme of the poem is how death transforms the value of everyday objects.

Dickinson suggests that the significance of objects isn't inherent but is conferred upon them by the emotional weight of the memories and associations connected to the deceased.

Structure and Form: The poem consists of four quatrains, with irregular meter and slant rhyme, a hallmark of Dickinson's style. This irregularity creates a sense of unease, reflecting the emotional disarray caused by loss.

Imagery: Dickinson employs powerful, simple imagery to convey her message. The "ring" or the "curl" mentioned in the poem represent personal belongings that gain importance after the person associated with them has passed away. These

ordinary items, once overlooked, become symbols of the lost person's life and presence.

Tone: The tone is contemplative and introspective, underscoring Dickinson's characteristic philosophical musing on morality. There's a quiet reverence in how the speaker regards these objects, implying that death doesn't just end life - it transforms the material world, assigning emotional weight to things that once seemed inconsequential.

Critical Evaluation:- In "Death Sets a Thing Significant", Dickinson explores the emotional residue of death through the lens of memory and materiality. The poem reveals a profound truth about human nature: our need to find meaning in loss. The physical objects left behind become symbols of the deceased, offering comfort and a connection to the past.

Through this, the poem invites reflection on how we interact with morality and remembrance, making it a poignant meditation on death's lasting influence.

Q4 Discuss major themes as explored in Hemingway's short stories.

Ans Ernest Hemingway's short stories are known for their simplicity of style, but they delve deeply into

complex human emotions and universal themes. His works often reflect his experience and worldviews, focusing on themes such as alienation, masculinity, death, and the 'human condition'.

1. Alienation & Isolation: One of the recurring themes in Hemingway's stories is alienation where characters often find themselves disconnected from society, others, or even their own emotions. In stories like "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place", the old man and the older waiter both grapple with loneliness and the search for meaning in a world that feels indifferent to their existence. The theme of existential isolation frequently ties into Hemingway's exploration of disillusionment following World War I, referred to as the "Lost Generation".

2. Masculinity and Stoicism: Hemingway's male protagonists are often characterised by their stoicism, physical endurance, and adherence to a personal code of honor. This theme of masculinity is apparent in stories like "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber", where the protagonist struggle with notions of bravery, courage and failure.

3. Death and Mortality: Death, both literal and metaphorical, is a central theme in many of Hemingway's stories. In "The Snows of

"Kilimanjaro", the protagonist reflects on life and impending death, lamenting his unfulfilled ambitions. Hemingway often presents death as inevitable, a natural part of life that must be faced with dignity. His characters frequently grapple with the proximity of death.

4. The Human Condition: Underlying many of Hemingway's works is a broader meditation on the human condition - the fleeting nature of life, the search for meaning, and the struggle of existence. His stories often convey an existential view, where life is inherently unfair, but individuals can find meaning through personal courage and acceptance of life's inevitable hardships.

BEGC-105
American Literature
July 2024 & January 2025 Sessions
(Based on Blocks 1 - 4)

TMA 01/2024-25
Max. Marks: 100

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Section A

Answer with reference to the context: **5x4=20**

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- (iii) A thought went up my mind today
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But did not finish some way back
I could not fix the year.
- (iv) But O heart ! heart ! heart !
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead

Section B

Answer the following in about 300 words each:

5x4=20

- 1. Write an extended note on the poetic devices used in "O Captain ! My Captain !".
- 2. Write a critical appreciation of the poem "Because I could not stop for death".
- 3. Critically evaluate the poem "Death Sets a Thing Significant".
- 4. Discuss major themes as explored in Hemingway's short stories.