

"Night of the Scorpion" by Nissim Ezekiel

Textual Question Answers – *Night of the Scorpion*

1. What is the poem "Night of the Scorpion" about?

→ The poem describes an incident from the poet's childhood when his mother was stung by a scorpion. It focuses on the reactions of the villagers, the father, and the mother herself.

2. How did the villagers react to the scorpion sting?

→ The villagers prayed, performed rituals, and recited religious verses to neutralize the poison and protect the mother from harm.

3. How did the poet's father respond to the incident?

→ The father, though skeptical of superstitions, tried every possible remedy—herbal treatments, burning incense, and even pouring paraffin on the wound.

4. How did the mother respond after the pain ended?

→ The mother was calm and grateful. She simply thanked God that the scorpion had stung **her** and **not her children**.

5. What is the tone of the poem?

→ The tone is **reflective**, with elements of **humor, irony, and compassion**, especially highlighting the **contrast** between superstitions and rationalism.



20 Short and Long Answer Questions with Answers

◆ Short Answer Type Questions (30–50 words)

1. **Describe the setting of the poem.**

→ The poem is set in a rural Indian village during a rainy night, where a scorpion has entered a house and stung the poet's mother.

2. **Why does the poet call the night “the night of the scorpion”?**

→ Because the entire night's events revolve around the scorpion's sting and the subsequent emotional, spiritual, and physical reactions.

3. **What does the phrase “the peasants came like swarms of flies” suggest?**

→ It compares the villagers to swarming flies, emphasizing their large number, curiosity, and perhaps a sense of helpless busyness.

4. **How do the villagers try to neutralize the poison?**

→ They chant mantras, use candles and lanterns to find the scorpion, and believe that the poison will move as the scorpion moves.

5. **What does the poet mean by “they buzzed the name of God”?**

→ The villagers continuously chanted God's name in hopes that it would relieve the mother's pain and protect her soul.

6. **How is the father portrayed in the poem?**

→ The father is portrayed as a **skeptical but loving and desperate man**, who tries both **traditional and modern remedies** to help his wife.

7. **What does the use of paraffin on the wound signify?**

→ It shows the father's desperation and readiness to try **painful folk remedies** when rational methods do not work.

8. **What is ironic about the mother's final reaction?**

→ Despite all the fuss, the mother says simply and selflessly, "Thank God the scorpion picked on me and spared my children."

9. **How does the poem reflect Indian rural life?**

→ It portrays rural beliefs in superstition, community involvement, family values, and a strong sense of religion.

10. **What kind of imagery is used in the poem?**

→ The poem uses **vivid sensory imagery** (touch, sound, sight) to describe the storm, villagers, and suffering, enhancing emotional impact.

◆ **Long Answer Type Questions (100–150 words)**

11. **Discuss the role of superstition in the poem.**

→ Superstition is central in the poem. The villagers believe that the scorpion's movement affects the spread of poison. They chant, burn incense, and recite mantras. These actions show

their **blind faith** in tradition and a lack of scientific understanding. The contrast between their beliefs and the father's rationalism highlights how **deeply superstition is rooted** in rural life.

12. **How is the theme of motherhood depicted in the poem?**

→ The poem ends with the mother's simple, selfless statement, which reflects **maternal love and sacrifice**. Despite her suffering, her only concern is her children's safety. This elevates her character, making motherhood the **noblest form of love** in the poem.

13. **Describe the contrasting reactions of the father and the villagers.**

→ The villagers rely on rituals and prayers rooted in **superstition**, while the father, a **rationalist**, uses **herbs, powder, and paraffin**. The contrast shows the **clash between traditional beliefs and modern thinking**.

14. **What poetic devices does Ezekiel use to enhance the narrative?**

→ Ezekiel uses **simile** ("like swarms of flies"), **imagery**, **alliteration**, **irony**, and **enjambment** to create rhythm and enhance the drama and emotional depth of the poem.

15. **How does the poem reflect Indian cultural values?**

→ It reflects values like **community support**, **religious faith**, **maternal love**, and the **blend of superstition and modernity** in Indian society.

