

“A Roadside Stand” by Robert Frost

TEXTUAL QUESTION ANSWERS

(From Flamingo Textbook)

Think it Out

1. The city folk who drove through the countryside hardly paid any heed to the roadside stand or to the people who ran it. If at all they did, it was to complain. Which lines bring this out? What was their complaint about?

Answer: The lines are:

“The polished traffic passed with a mind ahead,
Or if ever aside a moment, then out of sorts
At having the landscape marred with the artless paint
Of signs that with N turned wrong and S turned wrong.”

The city folk complained that the poorly painted signs and the presence of the roadside stand spoiled the beauty of the countryside landscape.

2. What was the plea of the folk who had put up the roadside stand?

Answer: The poor rural people wanted city folk to stop and buy their goods, so they could earn a bit of money. Their plea was for some support and recognition from the city people and the government to improve their lives and not be left in poverty.

3. The government and other social service agencies appear to help the poor rural people, but do not actually do so. How does the poem bring this out?

Answer: The poet criticizes the promises made by the government and politicians who talk about improving the lives of the rural poor but never fulfill them. They plan to relocate the poor and make decisions for them without understanding their needs or involving them in the process.

4. What is the ‘childish longing’ that the poet refers to? Why is it ‘vain’?

Answer: The ‘childish longing’ refers to the poor villagers’ innocent hope that city people will stop at their stand and buy something. It is ‘vain’ because their hope is rarely fulfilled—the city folk mostly ignore or complain about the stand.

5. Which lines tell us about the insufferable pain that the poet feels at the plight of the rural people?

Answer: The lines are:

“Sometimes I feel myself I can hardly bear
The thought of so much childish longing in vain,
The sadness that lurks near the open window there,
That waits all day in almost open prayer...”

These lines reflect the poet’s deep sorrow and empathy for the villagers’ unfulfilled hopes and suffering.



ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS (SHORT & LONG ANSWERS)

◆ **Short Answer Questions (30–50 words)**

1. What is the central theme of “A Roadside Stand”?

Answer: The central theme is the socio-economic divide between urban and rural populations. Frost highlights the indifference of city dwellers and politicians toward the rural poor, and the latter’s desperate hope for a better life.

2. Why did the rural people set up the roadside stand?

Answer: They set up the roadside stand in the hope that wealthy city people would stop to buy their goods, giving them some income and improving their poor condition.

3. How does the poet describe the reaction of city people to the stand?

Answer: The poet describes the city people as indifferent or annoyed. They either ignore the stand or complain that it spoils the scenery.

4. What does the poet mean by “artless paint”?

Answer: “Artless paint” refers to the simple and unskilled signs painted by the poor villagers, which lack artistic appeal but reflect their innocence and desperation.

5. What does the poet criticize about modern political promises?

Answer: Frost criticizes how politicians make false promises to help the poor but never actually improve their lives. They treat rural people as if they can be controlled and relocated like objects.

6. What is meant by “The sadness that lurks near the open window there”?

Answer: It refers to the villagers waiting all day in hope for customers. Their longing is met with disappointment, and the open window symbolizes their exposed vulnerability and silent suffering.

7. How does Frost express empathy for rural people in the poem?

Answer: Frost expresses empathy through his sorrowful tone and by exposing the false hope and neglect the poor face. He feels their pain and criticizes those who exploit or ignore them.

8. What kind of future did the government promise to the rural poor?

Answer: The government promised to relocate them to places with better amenities, but these promises remained empty. They treated the poor like passive recipients, stripping them of agency.

9. Why does the poet feel unable to bear the thought of the villagers’ plight?

Answer: Because their innocent hopes are constantly shattered. Their “childish longing in vain” and the silent suffering near the roadside deeply trouble the poet.

10. What kind of life do the rural poor live, according to the poem?

Answer: They live a life of poverty, struggle, and false hopes. They are neglected by urban society and often exploited under the guise of development.

◆ **Long Answer Questions (120–150 words)**

11. How does Frost portray the disconnect between rural and urban life in “A Roadside Stand”?

Answer: Frost presents a stark contrast between the rural poor and urban elites. The villagers are hopeful yet helpless, relying on roadside stalls for survival. Meanwhile, city dwellers pass by without care, sometimes expressing annoyance. This emotional and economic gap symbolizes how the privileged are detached from the struggles of the underprivileged.

12. Discuss the poet’s tone in “A Roadside Stand.”

Answer: The tone is sympathetic and critical. Frost shows deep empathy toward the poor, expressing frustration over how they are ignored and manipulated by the rich and powerful. His language conveys sadness, sarcasm, and a plea for justice and compassion.

13. What role do politicians and planners play in the rural people’s lives, according to the poem?

Answer: Politicians and planners falsely claim to help the poor but actually control and mislead them. They make empty promises and relocate the villagers without their consent, treating them as passive recipients rather than empowered citizens.

14. How does the poem reflect the theme of exploitation?

Answer: The villagers are exploited by being given false hopes of progress and development. They are made to believe that their lives will improve, but in reality, they are manipulated for votes or ignored. The roadside stand becomes a symbol of their unmet dreams.

15. What is the significance of the roadside stand in the poem?

Answer: It symbolizes the villagers' desire for economic independence and hope. It is a physical representation of their silent plea for dignity, recognition, and a better life.

16. Explain the meaning of "greedy good-doers, beneficent beasts of prey."

Answer: This phrase refers sarcastically to politicians and planners who pretend to help the poor but actually exploit them for their own gain. They act benevolently while causing harm.

17. How is the title "A Roadside Stand" symbolic?

Answer: The title symbolizes the rural poor's small effort to gain attention and survive in a world dominated by urban wealth and indifference. It is both literal (a physical stand) and metaphorical (a stand against neglect).

18. Describe the villagers' hopes and how they are crushed.

Answer: The villagers hope city people will stop, buy goods, and support them. However, their stand is ignored, mocked, or met with complaints. Their hopes are continuously crushed, leaving them disappointed and forgotten.

19. How is nature used in the poem to contrast with human behavior?

Answer: While the countryside offers natural beauty and simplicity, human behavior—especially from the urban elite—is harsh, selfish, and uncaring. The contrast shows how human actions spoil the serenity of nature.

20. What message does Frost want to convey through "A Roadside Stand"?

Answer: Frost highlights the need for compassion, equity, and real support for the rural poor. He criticizes shallow promises and calls for a more humane and understanding society.

