

Treasure Chest : A Collection of Poems

1. A Work of Artifice

(a) Text-based Multiple Choice Questions

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| 1. (b) | 2. (a) | 3. (b) | 4. (d) | 5. (d) |
| 6. (c) | 7. (d) | 8. (b) | 9. (b) | 10. (b) |

(b) Comprehension Passages

PASSAGE 1

- (i) The bonsai is a small decorative tree that is grown in a pot. It is prevented from reaching its normal size. In the poem it stands for a woman oppressed and suppressed in a male-dominated society.
- (ii) It could have grown fully outside in nature, on the side of a mountain. It could have grown there up to eight feet high. Its branches continue to be pruned. It prevents its growth.
- (iii) The gardener stands for a man – a lover or a husband – in the poem. He continues to prune the bonsai tree and does not let it grow. He believes that it has to remain small and weak to look attractive.
- (iv) The bonsai tree is not allowed to grow to its full potential deliberately. In the poem, it stands for a woman. Like the bonsai tree, woman in male-dominated world is prevented from growing and showing her capabilities fully. She is made to accept her subordinate position by keeping her confined to the four walls of her home.
- (v) The main idea projected in the poem is that if anything or anybody is not allowed to grow, it will remain underdeveloped and weak. This is true in the case of bonsai tree and a woman in the male-dominated society.

PASSAGE 2

- (i) The function of the gardener is to prune the branches of the bonsai tree to keep it small and attractive. The gardener, as a symbol of dominated male, prevents the growth of the woman, thus keeping her under his control. It is regressive and harmful for the woman and society in general.
- (ii) The gardener speaks in a happy and condescending tone. We think the ‘gardener’ is an arrogant and dominating person.
- (iii) The ‘gardener’ is wrong in the sense that everything and everybody has the right to grow. To keep something or somebody deliberately underdeveloped is definitely wrong.
- (iv) The last two lines suggest that in a male-dominated world man feels self-satisfied in his wrong belief that woman is by nature weak, small and domesticated, and that she should accept her position as such.

- (v) The word 'croons' means to sing quietly in a happy mood. It implies that the man, represented by the gardener, is happy and self-satisfied by keeping his woman weak and underdeveloped.

PASSAGE 3

- (i) The speaker is a gardener who stands for a domineering male. The bonsai tree is being addressed. The tree represents suppressed woman in a male-dominated society.
- (ii) In the metaphorical context of the poem, the pot comes to represent the limited space allowed to women to operate. A woman has to lead much of her life in the limited space of her home.
- (iii) Men condition women to accept their subordinate position in society. They prevail upon her to accept that she is weak by nature, born to do domestic chores. Thus, they prevent her natural growth.
- (iv) The last two lines are ironic. They convey the idea that conditioning of women to accept their servility should begin quite easily so that they come to accept their role easily and naturally.
- (v) Women play the stereotypical role as decoration pieces by making themselves look attractive to men, and do everything to please them. They are tricked to perform this role by making them accept that they are weak, small and domesticated by nature.

PASSAGE 4

- (i) Woman in male-dominated world is referred to here. Earlier, the focus was on the bonsai tree. There is, thus, clear shift in the poem here. The bonsai tree, we come to know, stands for the woman who is prevented from her normal growth.
- (ii) In some cultures, like the Japanese, women's 'feet' were bound to make them small and look pretty. The binding of feet here symbolises limiting the woman's opportunities to grow.
- (iii) Women are made to look attractive to please men, as also to keep them under delusion that their prime duty is to look pretty and attractive.
- (iv) Men do everything to limit the physical, mental and spiritual growth of women. Ironically, they look to women for loving and healing touch. Without women, they feel small and limited.
- (v) The poet seems to lament the fact that women accept their subordinate role in society willingly and even cheerfully. She expects women to realize their potentialities and break all mental shackles which prevent their growth.