



#### QUESTIONS FROM TEXTBOOK SOLVED

Q1. Tick the item which best answers the following.

- (a) The tall girl with her head weighed down means The girl  
(i) is ill and exhausted  
(ii) has her head bent with shame  
(iii) has untidy hair.
- (b) The paper-seeming boy with rat's eyes means The boy is  
(i) sly and secretive  
(ii) thin, hungry and weak  
(iii) unpleasant looking.
- (c) The stunted, unlucky heir of twisted bones means The boy  
(i) has an inherited disability  
(ii) was short and bony.
- (d) His eyes live in a dream. A squirrel's game, in the tree room other than this means The boy is  
(i) Full of hope in the future  
(ii) mentally ill  
(iii) distracted from the lesson.
- (e) The children's faces are compared to 'rootless weeds'  
This means they  
(i) are insecure  
(ii) are ill-fed  
(iii) are wasters

Ans:

- (a) (i) is ill and exhausted  
(b) (ii) thin, hungry and weak  
(c) (i) has an inherited disability  
(d) (i) full of hope in the future  
(e) (i) are insecure.

Q2. What do you think is the colour of 'sour cream'? Why do you think the poet has used this expression to describe the classroom walls?

Ans: The colour of 'sour cream' is off white. The poet has used this expression to suggest the decaying aspect. The deterioration in the colour of the classroom walls symbolises the pathetic condition of the lives of the scholars—the children of this slum school.

Q3. The walls of the classroom are decorated with the pictures of 'Shakespeare' 'buildings with domes', 'world maps' and beautiful valleys. How do these contrast with the world of these children?

Ans: The pictures that decorate the walls hold a stark contrast with the world of these underfed, poverty-stricken, slum children living in cramped dark holes. Obstacles hamper their physical and mental growth. The pictures on the wall suggest beauty, well-being, progress and prosperity—a world of sunshine and warmth of love. But the world of the slum children is ugly and lack prosperity.

Q4. What does the poet want for the children of the slums? How can their lives be made to change?

Ans: The poet wants the people in authority to realise their responsibility towards the children of the slums. All sort of social injustice and class inequalities be ended by eliminating the obstacles that confine the slum children to their ugly and filthy surroundings. Let them study and learn to express themselves

freely. Then they will share the fruit of progress and prosperity and their fives will change for the better.

## MORE QUESTIONS SOLVED

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS (Word Limit: 30-40 words)

Q1. In the opening stanza the imagery is that of despair and disease. Read the poem and underline the words /phrases that bring out these images.

Ans: The following words/phrases bring out these images of despair and disease:

‘Rootless weeds’; ‘the air tom round their pallor’;

The tall girl with her weighed-down head’;

The paper-seeming boy, with rat’s eyes’.

‘The stunted, unlucky heir of twisted bones’.

‘gnarled disease’.

Q2. Why does Stephen Spender use the images of despair and disease in the first stanza of the poem and with what effect?

Ans: He uses the images of despair and disease to describe the miserable and pathetic fives of the children living in slums. The faces of these children are pale and lifeless. They and their hair are like ‘rootless weeds’. The burden of fife makes them sit with their head ‘weighed down’. The stunted growth is depicted by ‘the paper-seeming bo/ and ‘the stunted unlucky heir of twisted bones’. Their weak bodies recite their fathers’ ‘gnarled disease’.

Q3. In spite of despair and disease pervading the lives of the slum children, they are not devoid of hope. Give an example of their hope or dream.

Ans: The burden of poverty and disease crushes the bodies of these slum children but not their souls. They still have dreams. Even their foggy future has not crashed all their hopes. They dream of open seas, green fields and about the games that a squirrel plays in the tree room.

Q4. How does Stephen Spender picturise the condition of the slum children?

Ans: Stephen Spender uses contrasting images in the poem to picturise the condition of the slum children. For example:

“A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky Far far from rivers, capes and stars of words.”

The first line presents the dark, narrow, cramped holes and lanes closed in by the bluish grey sky. The second line presents a world of beauty, prosperity, progress, well-being and openness.

Q5. What is the theme of the poem ‘An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum’ ? How has it been presented?

Ans: In this poem Stephen Spender deals with the theme of social injustice and class inequalities. He presents the theme by talking of two different and incompatible worlds. The world of the rich and the ‘civilized’ has nothing to do with the world of narrow lanes and cramped holes. The gap between these two worlds highlights social disparities and class inequalities.

Q6. What message does Stephen Spender convey through the poem ‘An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum’ ? What solution does he offer?

Ans: Stephen Spender conveys the message of social justice and class equalities by presenting two contrasting and incompatible worlds. He provides a way out. For achieving any significant progress and development the gap between the two worlds must

be abridged. This can be done only by breaking the barriers that bind the slum children in dark, narrow, cramped holes and lanes. Let them be made mentally and physically free to lead happy lives. Only then art, culture and literature will have relevance for them.

Q7. Who tried to divide the world and how? What does this world contain?

Ans: The conquerors and dictators change the map of the world according to their whims and will. They change the boundaries of various nations and shape the 'map'. Their fair map is of a beautiful world full of domes, bells and flowers, rivers, capes and stars.

Q8. The poet says. 'At least for these Children, these windows, not this map, their world'. Which world do these children belong to? Which world is more realistic to them?

Ans: The world of stinking slums is the world that belongs to these poverty-stricken, ill-fed, under-nourished children. The narrow lanes and dark, cramped, holes or hovels make their world. The world of 'domes', 'bells' and 'flowers' meant for the rich is inaccessible to them. They can only dream of rivers, capes and stars.

Q9. Which images of the slums in the third stanza present the picture of social disparity, injustice and class inequalities.

Ans: The slum dwellers slowly turn in their 'cramped holes' from birth to death i.e. 'from fog to endless nights'. Their surroundings are 'slag heap'. Their children "wear skins peeped through by bones." Their spectacles are "like bottle bits on stones." The image that sums up their harsh existence reads: "All of their time and space are foggy slum."

Q10. So blot their maps with slums as big as dooms," says Stephen Spender. What does the poet want to convey?

Ans: The poet notices the creation of two different worlds—the dirty slums with their narrow lanes and cramped houses which are virtual hells. Then there are islands of prosperity and beauty where the rich and powerful dwell. The poet protests against the disparity between the lives of the people in these two worlds. He wants that the poor should enjoy social equality and justice. The fair 'map' of the world should have blots of slums as big as dooms. The gap must be reduced between the two worlds.

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