

GRADE 10 ICSE POETRY PORTIONS

1. I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS
2. THE PATRIOT
3. ABU BEN ADEM
4. NINE GOLD MEDALS

I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS

1. Who are referred to as free bird and caged bird in the poem “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” by Maya Angelou? Why?

Ans- In the poem “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”, the free bird referred to is the White American community while the ‘caged bird’ refers to the African Americans. Through the portrayal of the free bird in the poem Angelou essentially indicates to the privileges that the White Americans enjoyed. The free bird “dares to claim the sky” and even “names the sky his own”. This signifies how the White people could do whatever they wished to. They even made rules according to their will and devoid the African-American people of their basic rights, as indicated through the portrayal of the caged bird. Angelou, with the metaphor of birds, represents the inequality of justice seen in the society of her time which differentiates between the African-American community and its White American counterpart.

2. What is the grave of dreams? Why does a caged bird stand on the grave of dreams

The caged bird has no freedom. His feet are tied and wings are clipped. He stalks down the narrow cage and can seldom see through the bars of the cage. In this condition, all his dreams seem to be unachievable in his life. He has probably given up on his dreams of liberty and flying freely in the sky. His dreams are now ‘dead’. That is why the poet says that the bird ‘*stands on the grave of dreams / his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream*’.

3. Why is the caged bird’s singing heard on a distant hill?

Ans- A caged bird longs for freedom which is a mystery for them. Song is the only weapon a caged has to express themselves and claim for freedom. As they have a

strong affinity for freedom he sings himself loudly with a shrill voice which is strong enough to represent their sorrows and hopelessness even on distant hill.

4. Why does the caged bird sing with a fearful trill?

Ans- 'Fearful trill' refers to the song of the caged bird. 'Trill' means a quavering or vibratory sound, especially a rapid alternation of sung or played notes. It was fearful because of all the uncertainty of his life, whether he would be free someday, whether he will get the unknown things that he longs for like a smooth and free ride on the back of winds that the free bird enjoys.

5. Give the meaning and significance of the lines "his wings are clipped and his feet are tied so he opens his throat to sing"?

Ans- The above-quoted lines taken from Maya Angelou's poem "Caged Bird" speaks of the lack of liberty suffered by a caged bird. It indicates to the distressed life of the African Americans in contrast to their White counterparts. The bird's wings are clipped and feet are tied. It refers to the limitations put on him. But he doesn't give up hope. He opens up his throat to sing. This song is actually a medium of protest as well as an expression of hope. This is the only way open to the caged bird and he utilizes it to communicate to others who are in similar condition. Angelou thus depicts the miserable life of the African American people when there was nothing left except the voice to sing of hope or to raise a voice against the ill-treatment they received.

6. What is meant by 'sighing trees' in The Caged Bird?

Ans- The soft trade winds when passes through the trees, it relaxes the trees which makes the trees take a deep breath or sigh. The tree is personified as it given the human ability of sighing by the poet.

THE PATRIOT

1. In Robert Browning's poem 'The Patriot' who is reminded of past happenings and why?

Ans- In Browning's poem, the speaker, a patriot is reminded of his past. This is because his condition has changed to exact opposite of what he had gone through just one year ago. At that time he enjoyed people's trust and admiration which is now gone and he has now been adjudged a traitor and is sentenced to death. All the roses and fame have now been reduced to shame and death. Hence, the patriot reminds of his glorious past to ponder upon how short public memory is and how fickle human praise and glory are.

2. What was the significance of scattering myrtle leaves over the path of reception in the poem "The Patriot"

Ans- myrtle originates in the Mediterranean region, where it held an important place in ancient cultures. Athenian judges wore it as an emblem of honour and authority. The wreaths worn by Greek and Roman victors, although generally described as laurel wreaths, were at first made from myrtle.

Myrtle is also alluded to in ancient religious scriptures, which associate it with the Garden of Eden. It remains important in Judaism, being one of four plants used in observing the thanksgiving festival of Succot.

So, myrtle leaves are used here as a part of the religious and cultural customs and as an aromatic to fragrant the glorious journey of the patriot in the poem.

3. Illustrate the theme of rise and fall of fortune in the poem "The Patriot".

Ans- Robert Browning's poem "The Patriot" vividly depicts the theme of rise and fall of fortune and glory by presenting two contrasting pictures from the patriot's life through the narration of the patriot himself.

The poem starts with the patriot describing an event – a grand public welcome – that took place a year ago on that very same day. He is reminiscing the past, and he builds a picture for us as he remembers that day. His walking path was covered with lots and lots of rose petals, with myrtle mixed with them. The path was festooned with those flowers for him.

People standing on the roofs of their houses cheered for him as he passed by. They were overjoyed to see him. The spires of the church were covered with flaming flags that the people had put up for a celebration. People were overwhelmingly delighted to greet their hero and were enthusiastic to see him as he passed by. People were rejoicing by ringing bells and the entire atmosphere was thick with its noise. They were standing on some kind of old structure and cheering for the patriot with their cries rocking the walls.

It is only logical to assume that this grand celebration must be as a result of some achievement on the speaker's part. Perhaps it was a victory in war or the assemblage for fighting one, or winning a popular election to an office, or being nominated as a ruler, or maybe something else. It can be assumed that it concerned the common people highly, and they were happy on the occasion. The patriot is seen as a public hero who is greeted with much love and affection by the commoners.

Then the speaker returns to the present and talks about what he sees. He describes the present setting and contrasts it with the one on the same day a year before. Now he has been convicted and is being led to the gallows to be put to death.

As opposed to the setting a year ago, now the place is all empty. Now there's nobody on the roof-tops cheering for him. Only old men who are taken down by palsy and unable to cross the threshold of their houses are watching the patriot as he marches towards his death.

The reason why no one is there to see the speaker is because people have gathered at the Shambles' gate, the gate of the gallows, to see him die. The people want to be where the action is. The speaker further makes the heart-touching comment that the best sight is at the gate of the slaughterhouse, or at the very foot of the scaffold.

It is raining as the speaker walks towards the scaffold. His hands are tied behind by a rope – so tight that it cuts his wrists. As he is walking, he thinks he is bleeding from his forehead. He can only feel the trickling of blood. People throwing stones at him are causing the injuries.

So stones have replaced the petals of roses! The fall overshadows the rise. There is a sense of universality to it as history has witnessed the rise and fall of many such 'patriots' throughout its course — a grim reminder that life is uncertain!.

4. "I am safer so" – What irony is involved here?

Ans-The irony is the fact that the patriot is about to meet his death which is commonly considered as a danger or a threat. However, he feels that he is going to feel safer after his death which would mean that he is facing a situation in which he is going to die but he still feels it to be safe. Thus by saying the words "*I am safer so*", he is implying that he will feel safer after being hung.

5. What are the misdeeds that the patriot has done?

Ans- In the poem, people are throwing stones at the patriot and wants his death apparently because of some misdeeds he has done in the last one year. But from the tone and the language used by the speaker, especially towards the end of the monologue where he keeps faith in God and hopes to be repaid by the God, it seems that he is actually innocent and his good works have been misunderstood by the masses. It might be so that he is guilty of some things he did which he thought were right.

The patriot might have taken some tough decisions in the government for the long-term benefits of the people but it caused difficulties in the short term. He might have made some stricter rules for the good of the country but people misunderstood it. He might have made some wise movement in the right direction but it was against the public sentiment. Anyway, we cannot be sure about what his misdeeds were, but that was something he thought right, but the masses thought wrong.

6. "The Patriot" by Robert Browning is a dramatic monologue: Discuss.

Ans- A dramatic monologue is a narrative poem in which a single speaker (who is not the poet) speaks, often revealing the speaker's character traits and motives in relation to the situation. In most dramatic monologues there is also a silent listener who doesn't directly speak but we know of his/her presence through the single speaker.

Now, Robert Browning's poem "The Patriot" has almost all the elements of a dramatic monologue. The poem is narrated in the first person from the patriot's perspectives. Here the speaker narrates his tale to the readers as he has been taken to the scaffold to be executed publicly for his 'misdeeds'.

He tells us of his situation: how he was once well loved by everyone, and how he is now despised by the same people. The patriot believes that he is innocent of having done any misdeeds, and it is only out of the misunderstanding of the people that he is being put to death. His death sentence is for the wrong reason, and he will get justice in heaven where God should repay him. Thus the poem also reveals the speaker's attitude and motive in the particular situation of life he is in. The only thing missing is the listener. Still, 'The Patriot' qualifies as a dramatic monologue in its form.

3. ABU BEN ADEM

1. Comment on the theme/ message/ central idea of Leigh Hunt's poem "Abou Ben Adhem".

Ans-In his poem "Abou Ben Adhem", Leigh Hunt presents an innocent man named Abou Ben Adhem drawn from the Arabial folklore to deliver his message that Loving one's fellowmen is perhaps more virtuous, if not at par, with loving the Almighty Himself.

In the Islamic month of Nous Sha'aban, God takes the golden book of mankind and chooses those dear to Him to call them in the following year. Hunt uses this storyline as his base for conveying the central theme of the poem.

In the poem, Abou Ben Adhem's sleep is disturbed one night with the bright light of an angel in his room. He calmly asks the angel what it is doing. The angel replies that it is making a list of those who loves God. When Abou comes to know that his name is not in the list, he requests the angel to include his name as one who loves his fellow men. When the angel appears again the following night, it is found that Abou's name tops the list chosen by the God.

Through this simple and unequivocal plot, the poet presents the theme of "love of men" in this poem.

2. What attitude does the poet / narrator show towards Abou Ben Adhem in Leigh Hunt's poem?

Ans-The poet or the narrator in Leigh Hunt's poem 'Abou Ben Adhem' has shown great admiration and respect for the protagonist. In fact, he has used a parenthesis "*may his tribe increase!*" within brackets in the very first line as a gesture to cast his blessings on Abou and to declare that this man is indeed worth remembering for generations to come.

3. Who was Abou Ben Adhem in Leigh Hunt's poem of same name? What does Abou see when he wakes up one night?

Ans-Abou Ben Adhem in Leigh Hunt's poem with the same name refers to the Sufi Saint, Ibrahim ibn Adham.

Upon awakening from his 'deep dream of peace', Abou encounters an angel writing something on a book of gold. In the presence of the angel, his room was brightly lit.

4. Why was Abou's name not in the book of gold?

Ans-The angel was making a list of those who loved God. But Abou Ben Adhem was not a man popularly known for the love of God, but for his love for the fellow human beings. That is why his name did not feature in the angel's book of gold.

5. Give a description of the angel in Abou Ben Adhem.

Ans-As presented in the poem, the angel is a diving messenger. The very presence of the angel has effected a transformation of the room, gilding it, making it look like a 'lily in bloom'. The angel is writing something in a golden book. When Abou throws his question, the angel raises its head 'and with a look made of all sweet accord', answers his questions. She even complies Abou's request to write down his name on the divine book. When the angel came again the next night, it again lit the room with a 'great wakening light'. The light of the angel can be interpreted to have a symbolic effect to enlighten the human mind.

6. What makes the poem 'Abou Ben Adhem' seem as if it belonged to the realm of supernatural?

Ans-The poem "Abou Ben Adhem" has many supernatural overtones. The angel is referred to as a "vision" or a "presence" making it seem mystical and paranormal. The setting of the poem, which is at night with the moonlight making Ben

Adhem's room rich, also contributes to this feeling. The angel was writing in a book of gold, and when Ben Adhem asked it to write his name down as a person who loved their fellow men, it disappeared. The next night it reappeared with a "great wakening light" or the light of enlightenment. This contributes to the supernatural feeling of the poem.

7. Briefly describe the second vision of Abou Ben Adhem.

Ans-When Abou Ben Adhem encountered the angel in his second vision, it came with great wakening light. It showed Abou the list of the names whom God has blessed for their love of God. But to his great surprise, Abou saw that his name led all the rest. God had placed him at the top for his love for the fellow men.

4.NINE GOLD MEDALS

1. What message does the poem Nine Gold Medals give?

Ans- The poem Nine Gold Medals is a beautiful poem depicting the companionship of all the 8 athletes. The runners have truly justified the spirit of Special Olympics with their gestures of empathy, sportsmanship and consideration. According to me the message of the poem Nine Gold Medals by David Roth is it doesn't require for people to be from a country or a place to show kindness and sportsmanship. It also gives us a message that being selfless and helping others can do a lot of good not only to the person who is being helped but also to the person who is helping.

2. Which Olympics and which event are referred to in the poem Nine Gold Medals?

Ans- Special olympics are referred to in the poem. It's (special olympics) the world's largest sports organisation for the people with disabilities. This organisation help those people to develop self confidence and social skills and conducts special olympics every two years and provide training to these people. The 100 meter race of nine athletes is the event referred to the poem.

3. What were the dreams of the fallen athlete?

Ans- The dreams of the runner were to participate in and win the race and win bronze, silver and gold medals as symbol of excellence in the Special Olympics.

4. Is Nine Gold Medals only a poem about special Olympics? Comment Critically.

Ans- The poem "Nine Gold Medals" is not really about a special Olympic event but about the human compassion and cooperation and about the sportsmanship the eight athletes showed in that particular event when they stopped and came back to help the fallen runner stand on his feet and all went to the finishing line walking hand in hand.

In an age of growing competition and enmity, the poet merely uses this incident to deliver his message that the world now needs more cooperation than competition. By giving the nine athletes one gold medal each, the authority wanted to convey that true sportsman spirit should always be rewarded. So, in its theme and message, the poem transcends the boundaries of time and space.

5. Who gets a silver medal?

Ans- In the poem "Nine Gold Medals", all the athletes link their arms and finish the race together. All the participants are thus awarded a gold medal, and no silver and bronze are awarded. Also this is how the poem gets its name, NINE GOLD MEDALS.

6. How does the poem Nine Gold Medals show brotherhood?

Ans- The poem, seemingly recalls/revives in us the affinity for camaraderie and sportsmanship, which unluckily is deteriorating in this futile society. The poet in his poem, "Nine Gold Medals", speaks of the celebration of fraternity and empathy which bores the testimony vividly when the nine intellectually disable personalities persisted for a palatable attempt at brotherhood, which establishes the poem nearer to the mark.