

Chapter 8

Mirror

NCERT Question Answers

1. In pairs discuss the following questions:

(a) When do you generally use a mirror?

Answer

We generally use a mirror to check our appearance.

(b) Is a mirror essential for us?

Answer

Yes, a mirror is very essential for us, as it helps us look presentable before we meet people.

(c) Given below is a list of possible reasons why a person uses a mirror. Tick the ones you agree with:

- (i) to check one's appearance
- (ii) to look beautiful
- (iii) to make sure one is neat and tidy before going out
- (iv) to check for a pimple or grey hair
- (v) to apply make-up
- (vi) to make a phone call
- (vii) as a decorative item at home

Answer

- (i) to check one's appearance;
- (ii) to make sure one is neat and tidy before going out;
- (iii) to apply make-up.

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3. On the basis of your understanding of the poem, answer the following questions by ticking the correct choice

(a) When the mirror is being described as being 'unmisted by love or dislike' we understand that the mirror is

- i. not misted
- ii. not prejudiced
- iii. has four angles
- iv. silver in colour

Answer

- ii. not prejudiced

(b) The other word for 'contemplation' is.....

- i. contempt
- ii. meditation
- iii. mediation
- iv. thoughtful

Answer

- ii. meditation

(c) When the mirror says 'it has no preconceptions' it means that:

- i. it reflects back an image objectively
- ii. it modifies an image as it reflects it
- iii. it beautifies an image as it reflects it
- iv. it gives a biased view of a person/object

Answer

- i. it reflects back an image objectively

(d) The mirror has been called 'a four-cornered god' because:

- i. it is square shaped
- ii. like God it watches you unbiased and fair from all four angles
- iii. it reflects back all that it sees
- iv. it never stops reflecting

Answer

- ii. like God it watches you unbiased and fair from all four angles

(e) The 'speckles' refer to:

- i. a pink object
- ii. the opposite wall which has spots on it

- iii. a person with pink pimples
- iv. pink spots in general

Answer

- ii. the opposite wall which has spots on it

(f) The phrase 'agitation of the hand' suggests that the person is:

- i. Very ill
- ii. Very upset
- iii. Very angry
- iv. Very happy

Answer

- iii. Very angry

(g) By saying 'Now I am a lake' the narrator wants to show that

- i. the poem is not only about external beauty but also the inside of a person
- ii. the lake can also reflect surfaces
- iii. the depth of the lake is important
- iv. the lake does not show as exact an image as a mirror

Answer

- i. the poem is not only about external beauty but also the inside of a person

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4. Answer the following questions briefly

- (a) What is the poetic device used when the mirror says 'I swallow'?

Answer

'I swallow' personifies the mirror. The mirror seems to say that the image on it is deep enough to swallow everything, passively. The objectivity of the mirror is significant.

- (b) How does the mirror usually pass its time?

Answer

The mirror usually passes its time by constantly looking at the wall opposite to it.

- (c) What disturbs the mirror's contemplation of the opposite wall?

Answer

People's faces and the darkness disturb the mirror's contemplation of the opposite wall.

(d) Why does the mirror appear to be a lake in the second stanza? What aspect of the mirror do you think is being referred to here?

Answer

The mirror appears to be lake in in the second stanza because it has also the quality of reflecting the image of what appears before it like a lake. As whatever falls on the surface of the lake is drowned into it, the mirror also swallows whatever it sees. A new dimension, depth, is being referred here.

(e) What is the woman searching for in the depths of the lake?

Answer

The woman is searching for her lost youth, charm and beauty in the depths of the lake.

(f) How does the narrator convey the fact that the woman looking at her reflection in the lake is deeply distressed?

Answer

The narrator conveys the fact that women is deeply distressed because when she sees herself ageing in the mirror, she turns away to find her answers in the candles and the moon. She has tears in her eyes and her agitated hands express her distress.

(g) What makes the woman start crying?

Answer

The woman starts crying when she sees her own reflection in the mirror and realises that she has lost her charm, beauty and youth. She has grown old.

(h) What do you think the 'terrible fish' in the last line symbolizes? What is the poetic device used here?

Answer

The 'terrible fish' symbolises the bitter truth which puts human beings to a fatal end. The poetic device used here is a simile.

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5. Read the poem silently and answer the following questions:

(a) List out the adjectives that have been used to describe the mirror. Add a few more adjectives to the list.

Answer

Adjectives used in the poem to describe the mirror:
silver, exact, honest, faithful, unmisted, unbiased, four cornered

A few more adjectives for the same are listed below:
Deep, significant, reality, bitter, fair, honest

(b) In the second stanza why has the narrator replaced the mirror with a lake? What is he/she trying to focus on?

Answer

In the second stanza, the poetess has replaced the mirror with a lake to add a new dimension to it which is depth. The lake has depth. Both the mirror and the lake have the quality of reflecting the image of what appears before them. Just as anything falls and drowns into the lake, the youth and beauty of the woman seems to have drowned in the mirror.

6. Find the various instances of personification used in this poem.

Answer

The various instances of personification used in the poem are:

I am silver and exact.

I have no preconceptions

Whatever I see, I swallow immediately;

I am not cruel, only truthful;

Now, I am a lake;

The eye of a little god;

I am important to her.

7. Read the given lines and answer the questions that follow by ticking the correct choice:

*A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.*

a. What is the woman bending over?

- i. the mirror
- ii. the lake
- iii. the opposite wall
- iv. the moon and the candles

Answer

i. the mirror

b. Why have the candles and the moon been called 'liars'?

i. because they make people beautiful

ii. they hide the blemishes of people with their soft light

iii. they hide the blemishes and make people look beautiful in their soft glow

iv. they can't talk

Answer

iii. they hide the blemishes and make people look beautiful in their soft glow

c. Why does she turn to them in spite of calling them 'liars'?

i. the reality is too harsh for her to bear

ii. she is desperately looking for someone to comfort her

iii. she wants to be told that she is still beautiful

iv. she can hide her signs of graying in their light

Answer

i. the reality is too harsh for her to bear

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8. Imagine you are the mirror. Write a speech that you would like to deliver to the humans who come to see their reflection in you. You could begin like this....

Good Morning dear humans.

I feel honoured to have been given the opportunity to express my feelings and share my thoughts with you. As you know, all my life is spent in faithfully reflecting all that comes before my eyes.....

Answer

Good Morning dear humans,

I feel honoured to have been given the opportunity to express my feelings and share my thoughts with you. As you know, all my life is spent in faithfully reflecting all that comes before my eyes faithfully. I have been a silent spectator of zillions of lives. My vision is very objective. I don't respond to people when they search for themselves, in me. My passivity usually agitates them. However, I am glad to be loyal and honest to the onlookers, cruel it might seem. I don't have the power to manipulate or distort reality. That is why images on me are so significant to you.

9. Here is another poem on mirror. The narrator calls the mirror a 'fibber'. How is this poem different from the poem by Sylvia Plath? Have a class discussion on the comparison in terms of the theme, the tone and the language used.

MIRROR

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Can't you show me tall and slim?
Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Must I look so bloody grim?
Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
You're distorting my poor waist!
Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
And why the heck am I defaced?
Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Why have I a double chin?
Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
And what's the stupid, goofy grin?
Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Pointless asking 'Who's the fairest-?'
More bloody likely, 'Who's the queerest? '
Now look, I paid a big bucks for thee,
So why can't you be nice to me?
Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who's the fairest of them all?
Me, you say? Ah, that's better -
Mirror, mirror, bloody fibber!

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Answer

In the poem 'Mirror' by Sylvia Plath, the mirror has been personified. The mirror gives an autobiographical account of itself. It narrates experience whereas in this poem, the poet himself is the narrator and addresses the mirror directly. Sylvia Plath has presented the mirror as exact, truthful, faithful, unbiased, honest and unmisted by love or dislike. It reflects or shows whatever it sees in all its exactness. It does not hide, twist or distort whatever it sees. It gives the true picture of the woman who has grown old and is no longer beautiful and charming. But in the poem by Mark R Slaughter, the narrator calls the mirror 'fibber' - one who gives the untrue statement. Here the mirror shows a totally changed physical appearance of the narrator. It does not reflect the narrator's appearance exactly. It distorts his waist. It shows him as robust, grim, defaced and doubled chin.