

**II Semester B.Com/ B.Com (E-Com)
(S.E.P SCHEME)**

SEP Syllabus for II Semester B.Com

Prose

- A Simple Philosophy – Seattle
- Girls- Mrinal Pandey
- Neech - Razia Sajjad Zaheer
- Advice to Youth - Mark Twain
- Cabuliwallah-Tagore

Poetry

- Shakespeare's Sonnet 116- 'Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds'
- Once Upon a Time- Gabriel Okara
- Sandals and I – Mudnakudu Chinnaswamy
- Bluebird- Charles Bukowski
- Mirror- Sylvia Plath

Prose

A Simple Philosophy

Seathl

Brainstorming

- Do you think indigenous people have a right over their land and its natural resources? Discuss.
- How does the relationship of those who live with their land differ from those who live in cities? Discuss.
- If you were to speak of the place that you live in and love, how would you speak of it?

Introduction to Author

Chief Seattle was the most eminent leader, warrior and diplomat of the Pacific Northwest native Suquamish Tribe. His fame rests on his popular speeches made against the white people who tried to eliminate the Red Indian tribes in order to get their lands. Seattle was born between 1780 and 1786 to a Suquamish leader and a Duwamish woman. His exact birthplace is disputed. According to some historians, as well as the tradition of the Suquamish Tribe, Seattle was born on Blake Island. According to the Duwamish Tribe, Seattle was born at his mother's village on the Black River, near what is now the city of Kent, Washington.

As Seattle aged, he earned a reputation as a leader and a strong warrior. After the death of his son and his conversion to Christianity, Seattle began to seek cooperation with American settlers, retiring from fighting. He welcomed pioneers, inviting them to settle and trade with his people. Seattle began seeking contacts with businessmen and community leaders and gained a reputation as a "friend of the whites" among settlers. The city of Seattle, in the state of Washington, was named after him.

About the Text

In 1854, Seattle, the Chief of the Native American Suquamish tribe of the State of Washington, addressed the letter reproduced below to President Franklin Pierce of the United States. The pioneering white people were taking over more and more of the North American continent from the Native Indian tribes as they progressed Westward. This letter expresses the 'simple philosophy' of Chief Seattle's people. It also describes the decline and resignation of the Native American people (earlier known as 'Red Indians'), and indirectly warns the white people of the future, environmental and social consequences of human recklessness. Many aboriginal cultures have always lived in harmony with nature, while their more 'civilised' and 'developed' counterparts have

destroyed the earth in attempting to mine its wealth. Nothing illustrates this fact better than this letter.

Glossary

- Mist : cloud of tiny water droplets suspended in the atmosphere limiting visibility
- Humming : low, steady continuous sound
- Devour : swallow or eat hungrily, quickly
- Savage : fierce, violent
- Rustle : soft, muffled, crackling sound
- Clatter : continuous rattling sound
- Whippoorwill : medium-sized bird from North America; named onomatopoeically after its song
- Dart : move, run suddenly, rapidly
- Pine : evergreen coniferous tree with clusters of long needle-shaped leaves
- Prairie : grassland
- Smoking iron horse: steam powered railway locomotive
- Contaminate : make something impure by exposing to poison, pollution
- Contempt : disregard
- Slaughter: kill animals for food
- Blotted : stained, damaged
- Talking wires: telegraph, symbolising the encroaching technology and communication networks of the White settlers
- Exempt : free from obligation or liability
- Destiny : fate; events happening in the future naturally

Comprehension

I. Answer the following in about 100 words each:

- 1) Why does Chief Seattle find the White man's offer strange?
- 2) How does the essay highlight the differences between the behaviour of the red Indian and the White man?
- 3) Bring out any 5 differences between the Red Indian and the White man towards nature.
- 4) What is the essence of the letter 'A Simple Philosophy'?
- 5) What is Seattle's plea to the White man?
- 6) How does the letter highlight the Red Indians' oneness with nature?
- 7) Examine how Chief Seattle uses figurative language to convey his message.

- 8) What is precious to the Red Indian in the essay? Why?
- 9) What does the author hold sacred to his tribe?
- 10) What does the author want the White man to teach his children?
- 11) How does the author suggest preserving the beauty of Nature for the coming generations?

II. Answer the following in about 200 words each:

- 1) What is Chief Seattle's belief regarding the ownership of land?
- 2) Analyse the ecological concerns in 'A Simple Philosophy'.
- 3) How does Chief Seattle's speech portray the relationship between humans and the world of nature?
- 4) How does Seattle's philosophy challenge the idea of land ownership?
- 5) Comment on the title of the essay 'A Simple Philosophy'.
- 6) How does the author highlight the White man's atrocities against nature in his letter?
- 7) What are Seattle's views on the White man's ambitions?
- 8) What is Seattle's request to the White man?
- 9) Analyse the profundity of Chief Seattle's letter.
- 10) How does Chief Seattle bring out the sanctity of nature in the letter 'A Simple Philosophy'?

Extended Reading:

- Vandana Shiva – Ecology and the Politics of Survival
- Rachel Carson - Silent Spring

Girls

Mrinal Pande

Brainstorming

- Do you think Indian families discriminate between the girl child and the boy child? Discuss.
- What impact does discrimination have on a girl's self-esteem and mental health?
- How can communities, schools and families promote equality between boys and girls?

Introduction to Author

Mrinal Pande was born in 1946, in Tikamgarh, Madhya Pradesh. She was the editor of the popular women's magazine *Vama* from 1984-87. Till 2009 she worked as the executive editor of the Hindi edition of *Daily Hindustan*. She studied English and Sanskrit

literature, ancient Indian history, archaeology, classical music and visual arts. Her first story was published in the Hindi weekly *Dharmayug* at the age of 21. Mrinal Pande writes both in Hindi and English and has authored many short stories, novels and dramas. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 2006 for her services in the field of journalism

About the Text

This is a powerful story highlighting the deep-seated gender discrimination prevalent in many parts of Indian society. By narrating the story from the perspective of a young girl, Lali, the author, Mrinal Pande, successfully conveys the raw and painful emotions of a girl who is constantly seen as a burden rather than as a cherished member of the family.

The narrative reflects the societal preference for male children, where girls are often seen as lesser or inferior. The mother's repeated complaints about her daughters and the anticipation of giving birth to a boy reveal the societal mindset that a girl is an inconvenience. The powerful emotions of the young narrator convey the frustration, confusion, and sadness that many girls experience as a result of discrimination within their own families.

In the story, Baabu and Ma are the father and mother of the narrator, Naani is her grandmother, Maama is her mother's brother, Maami the Maama's wife, and Maasi is mother's sister. Bari and Chhoti are elder and younger respectively. The dai is the midwife or birth attendant who will attend to her mother.

The ritual referred to at the end of the story takes place on the Chaitya Shukla Ashtami day of the Hindu calendar, usually some time in March or April, when young girls (kanyakumari, virgin goddesses) are worshipped as the living incarnations of Devi, or the divine feminine principle. A roli spot or tikka of red powder is put on the girls' foreheads, the aarti ceremony is done by waving the sacred flame around their faces, and prasad, food given to the devotees after worship, is distributed to all the participating women.

Glossary

- Nani : maternal grandmother in Hindi
- Eavesdrop : secretly listen in on someone else's conversation, without their knowledge or consent
- Nauseous : the feeling of being sick, the sensation that you might vomit
- Unison : to do something at the same time or in harmony
- Reprimand : scold or criticize
- Obstinate : doing something in a stubborn or determined way
- Prise it : to pry or force something open, usually with a tool

- plagues my life: constantly bothers, frustrates, or causes difficulty
- Coax : gently persuade or encourage someone to do something
- Chaitya Shukla Ashtami: a day in the Hindu calendar celebrated by worshipping young girls, who are regarded as incarnations of the goddess Durga
- Retort : a sharp, quick, or witty reply
- Flurry : a rapid, brief burst of activity or movement

Comprehension

I. Answer the following in about 100 words each:

- 1) What is reflected through the young girl's hesitation to enter Nani's home?
- 2) How is the child narrator discriminated against in her Nani's house?
- 3) Why do the women in Nani's house sympathise with Lali?
- 4) Why do the women get rid of the children in the afternoon? What is the child narrator's response to this?
- 5) Why does the episode of Chaitya Shukla Ashtami leave the child narrator feeling confused?
- 6) How does the child narrator reveal the hypocrisy in the Chaitya Shukla Ashtami ritual?
- 7) Describe the relationship between the child narrator and her sister.
- 8) What secrets of the women's world are revealed through the protagonist's eyes?
- 9) How is the intimacy among the women in the family described in the story "Girls"?
- 10) What is challenged by the child narrator on the day of Ashtami? How does the story end?

II. Answer the following in about 200 words each:

- 1) What issues regarding gender are raised in Mrinal Pande's 'Girls'?
- 2) Pande's work 'Girls' highlights the situation of a woman in a patriarchal Indian household. Elaborate
- 3) Describe how Lali is treated in her mother's home?
- 4) How does Lali's treatment of her daughters reflect her submission to patriarchy?
- 5) Would you agree that even though Lali is oppressed by patriarchy she too discriminates against women? Give reasons for your answer.
- 6) What do the rituals, like the tikka ceremony, represent in the story? How do they show the hypocrisy of a society that deifies women while treating them badly?
- 7) Why does the child narrator react strongly when her mother calls her a 'nuisance'? What does this tell us about the emotional impact of gender discrimination on girls?
- 8) How is gender discrimination within a patriarchal society brought out through the use of a child narrator?

Extended Reading:

- We Should all be Feminists – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- Why Loiter? – Shilpa Phadke

Neech

Razia Sajjad Zaheer

Brainstorming

- Do you think women in the past bowed down to societal pressure and sacrificed their dreams? Discuss.
- Today's women are more ambitious than men. Discuss.

Introduction to Author

Razia Sajjad Zaheer (1918 –1979) was an Indian writer and translator of Urdu and a prominent member of the Progressive Writers Association. She won the Uttar Pradesh Sahitya Akademi Award and the Soviet Land Nehru Award. Since childhood, she has contributed short stories to journals like *Phool*, *Tehzib-e-Nisvaan*, and *Ismat*. She has translated about 40 books into Urdu, including Bertold Brecht's 'Life of Galileo', Siyaram Sharan Gupta's 'Nari', and Mulk Raj Anand's 'Saat Saal'. 'Zard Gulab' and 'Allah De Banda Le' were two of her short story collections published posthumously. Her short stories explore gender relations and women's oppression by men and other women, the development of a modernist identity among women, and the effects of poverty and ostracism on marginalized women.

About the Text

The story 'Neech', meaning low-born, portrays the lives of two women, one belonging to the upper-class and the other to the lower-class, whose paths cross for only a little while, yet evoking emotions that linger on. Despite facing challenging circumstances, they live life on their own terms.

Glossary

- Cringe : bend one's head and body in fear or apprehension or in a servile manner
- Pout : push one's lips or one's bottom lip forward as an expression of petulant annoyance
- Unrestrained : uncontrolled, unchecked
- Vitality : the state of being strong and active

- Wantonness : reckless, intentional bad behaviour, lewd
- Strew : spread
- Slander : defame, insult
- Sardonicly : sarcastically
- Turmoil : chaos, confusion
- Spurn : reject, scorn
- Prod : push gently
- Abashed : embarrassed, ashamed
- Alcove : a small recessed section of a room, an arched opening as in a wall
- Vicious : cruel
- Berate : scold, criticize
- Tirade : outburst, rant

Comprehension

I. Answer the following in about 100 words each:

- 1) What had Sultana heard about low-born women in her childhood?
- 2) Why did Shyamali tell Sultana that her husband was dead?
- 3) What information about Shyamali does the cook give Sultana and how does she react to it?
- 4) Write a note on the incident that took place during Holi.
- 5) Who was Ram Avatar and why was he to be dismissed?
- 6) What did Sultana think about Shyamali and Ram Avatar and how did she think of helping them?
- 7) Why did Shyamali run away from Ram Avatar?
- 8) Write a note on the people who stayed in the servant quarters.

II. Answer the following in about 200 words each: Bottom of Form

- 1) How does her class upbringing influence the narrator's perspective on Shyamali, in the story 'Neech'?
- 2) Analyze the portrayal of caste discrimination in 'Neech'.
- 3) Examine the internal conflict faced by Sultana in 'Neech' and its significance to the overall narrative.
- 4) Sketch the character of Shyamali.
- 5) How does Razia Sajjad Zaheer convey the message of human dignity and social equality in the story 'Neech'?
- 6) How different is Shyamali from Sultana? Elaborate.
- 7) What does Sultana think about Shyamali initially and how does her opinion change at the end?
- 8) What is the significance of the title 'Neech'?

- 9) Would you agree that Shyamali is a woman with a mind of her own? Elucidate..
- 10) Do you feel that Shyamali was a woman of strength? Substantiate your answer from the story 'Neech'.

Extended Reading:

- Untouchable - Mulk Raj Anand
- The Prisons We Broke - Baby Kamble

Advice to Youth

Mark Twain

Brainstorming

- Do you think the youth of today need or heed advice? Justify.

Introduction to Author

Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910), better known as Mark Twain, was a distinguished novelist, fiction writer, essayist, journalist, and literary critic. He is considered as 'The Father of American Literature'. His novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) is generally considered his masterpiece. His novels *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), and *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), are also highly regarded. Twain's travelogues *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) and *Roughing It* (1872) are prized for their humorous insights into American life in the late 19th century.

About the Text

The purpose of Mark Twain's "Advice to Youth" is to convey the message that because of the rules set in place for them, children cannot experience their youth properly. In his essay, Mark Twain uses satire to convince adults that their expectations for youth are preventing children from living their life. Twain's essay encourages children to enjoy their youth despite the rules adults set for them.

Glossary

- Didactic : educational
- Beseeching : pleading
- Dynamite : an explosive
- Lark : a song bird

- Temperate : moderate
- Diligence : carefulness
- Tedious : dull or tiresome
- Immortal : permanent
- Preposterous : unbelievable or silly
- Slander : insult
- Heedless : careless or rash
- Battered : Injured or beaten
- Precepts : guidelines or instructions
- Gratified : satisfied

Comprehension

I. Answer the following in about 100 words each:

- 1) How, according to Mark Twain, should children treat their parents, superiors and strangers?
- 2) How should the young treat their parents?
- 3) What advice does Mark Twain give the young on violence and lying?
- 4) What is Mark Twain's opinion on getting up early.
- 5) How, according to Mark Twain, can the young achieve perfection and eminence?
- 6) Why does Mark Twain say that handling of firearms by the young can be deadly?
- 7) What is Mark Twain's advice to the youth on reading books?
- 8) What advice does the speaker give with regard to building one's character?

II. Answer the following in about 200 words each:

- 1) What is the advice that Mark Twain gives to the youth?
- 2) Mark Twain's essay is a criticism of adults rather than advice to the young. Explain.
- 3) Would you agree that 'Advice to Youth' is an appropriate title for Mark Twain's essay? Give reasons for your answer.
- 4) Why does Mark Twain say that lying is an art? How does he link it to the Boston monument episode?
- 5) Comment on the use of satire and humour in the essay 'Advice to Youth'.
- 6) How does the writer use irony to critique the norms of the society?

Extended Reading:

- What is Man? – Mark Twain

The Cabuliwallah

Rabindranath Tagore

Translated by Mohammad A. Quayum

Brainstorming

- Narrate incidents detailing the bond between your parents and you.
- Do you think children can make friends more easily than adults? Discuss.

Introduction to Author

Rabindranath Tagore (1861 – 1941) was an Indian Bengali polymath who worked as a poet, writer, playwright, composer, philosopher, social reformer, and painter of the Bengali Renaissance. Author of the "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful" poetry of *Gitanjal*. In 1913, Tagore became the first non-European to win a Nobel Prize in any category, and also the first lyricist to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. He was referred to as "the Bard of Bengal".

Tagore wrote poetry as an eight-year-old. At the age of sixteen, he released his first substantial set of poems under the pseudonym *Bhānusiṃha* ("Sun Lion"). By 1877 he graduated to his first short stories and dramas, published under his real name. An ardent critic of nationalism, he denounced the British Raj and advocated independence from Britain. As an exponent of the Bengal Renaissance, he produced a vast canon that comprised of paintings, sketches and doodles, hundreds of texts, and some two thousand songs; his legacy also endures in his founding of Visva-Bharathi University.

About the Text

'Cabuliwallah' is a Bengali short story by Rabindranath Tagore about a fruit seller from Afghanistan who forms a bond with a young girl in Calcutta. The story explores themes of friendship, separation, and the enduring bond between parents and children. The story is set in early twentieth-century Kolkata. It is a love that knows no bounds in terms of race, religion, or language.

Glossary

- Vexed: annoyed, angry
- Prattle: inconsequential or foolish talk
- Dart: to run or move suddenly
- Contrive: created deliberately
- Pedlar: a person who sells goods from place to place or door to door
- Precarious: not held securely or in position

- Startle: sudden shock or alarm
- Demur: to raise objections, show reluctance
- Impending: about to happen
- Quaint: unusual, old-fashioned
- New-fangled: different from what one is used to
- Euphemism: mild or indirect expression to refer to something unpleasant
- Formidable: inspiring fear or respect
- Arid: dry, barren
- Defile: damage to purity or appearance of, desecrate
- Caterpillar: larva of a butterfly or moth
- Bebagged: take trousers off as a joke or punishment
- Throb: pulsate
- Bhairav: Hindustani classical tune often played in the morning or at the end of a concert
- Pervade: spread through
- Canopy: ornamental cloth covering hung over something
- Chandelier: large, decorative hanging light
- Parvati: Goddess Parvathi; Sanskrit origin meaning 'daughter of the mountains'
- Apparition: remarkable or unexpected appearance, ghost-like image of a person

Comprehension

I. Answer the following in about 100 words each:

1. Write a note on the special bond shared between Mini and Rahmun the Cabuliwallah.
2. Why does the speaker hesitate to allow Mini to meet Rahmun at first?
3. What led to the arrest of Rahmun?
4. How does Rahmun convince Mini's father to allow him to meet Mini when he returns from Jail?
5. Why does the speaker have a change of heart about Rahmun meeting Mini before her wedding?
6. What are Mini's mother's apprehensions about Rahmun the Cabuliwallah? How does she warn her husband about it?
7. Write a note on Rahmun the Cabuliwallah.
8. Why was Mini afraid of meeting Rahmun at first? How does she overcome her fear?
9. How does the writer describe Rahmun the Cabuliwallah when he first saw him?
10. Write a note on Mini.

II. Answer the following in about 200 words each:

- 1) What is the central theme of the story 'Cabuliwallah'?
- 2) What conflict does Rahmun land in? How is it resolved?
- 3) How does Rahmun's relationship with Mini change over time?
- 4) How does 'Cabuliwallah' explore the themes of friendship and heartbreak?
- 5) Comment on the changing relationship between Mini and Rahmun the Cabuliwallah. Why was Rahmun so attached to Mini?
- 6) Sketch the character of the Cabuliwallah.
- 7) Describe the friendship between Cabuliwallah and Mini.
- 8) Why does Mini's father encourage Rahmun to return to his land finally?
- 9) Justify the title 'Cabuliwallah'.
- 10) Describe the meeting of Rahmun and Mini before his arrest and after his release.
- 11) 'Age, religion or language is no barrier for true friendship'. Elaborate with reference to the story 'Cabuliwallah'.
- 12) How does Tagore evoke the nuances of human relationship between Mini and Rahmun?

Extended Reading:

- The Postmaster – Rabindranath Tagore
- Thoughtlessness – Rabindranath Tagore

Poetry

Sonnet 116: Let me not to the Marriage of True Minds

William Shakespeare

Brainstorming

- What is your concept of 'True Love'? Discuss.

Introduction to Poet

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was an English playwright, poet and actor. He is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon" (or simply "the Bard"). His works consist of 39 plays, 154 sonnets, three long narrative poems and a few other verses. Shakespeare wrote sonnets on a variety of themes such as beauty, love, immortality and time. Most of his sonnets are addressed to a Young man. He also introduces the Dark Lady. Shakespeare

remains arguably the most influential writer in the English language, and his works continue to be studied and reinterpreted.

About the Poem

Sonnet 116 is one of Shakespeare's most famous love sonnets. Its structure and form are a typical example of the Shakespearean sonnet or the English sonnet. It has three quatrains, followed by a final rhyming couplet. It follows the typical rhyme scheme of the form *abab cdcd efef gg* and is composed in iambic pentameter. The primary theme of Sonnet 116 is the constancy of love. The other themes include time, age and the nature of relationships. The speaker of the poem says that true love remains steady throughout a lifetime, no matter what changes the lovers might undergo.

Glossary

- impediment : a hindrance or obstruction in doing something
- alter : change in character or composition
- tempest : a violent windy storm
- wand'ring bark : ship or boat that is wandering and possibly lost
- sickle : harvesting tool
- doom : death, destruction

Comprehension

I. Answer the following questions in about 100 words each:

- 1) What according to the speaker is "the marriage of true minds"?
- 2) Why does the speaker feel that love is not love that "alters when it alteration finds"?
- 3) Why does the poet compare true love to a 'pole star'?
- 4) What are the characteristics of true love according to the speaker?
- 5) How is the constancy of true love described in the sonnet?
- 6) The speaker argues that "love's not time's fool". What does he mean by this?
- 7) How does the poet prove that love is not destroyed by time?

II. Answer the following in about 200 words each:

- 1) True love, as visualized in Sonnet 116, is an ideal form of love. Discuss.
- 2) How is the permanence of true love proved in Shakespeare's sonnet?
- 3) What are the essential elements of true love as defined in Shakespeare's sonnet?
- 4) Elaborate on the theme of 'Sonnet 116'.
- 5) How does Shakespeare immortalize love in Sonnet 116.?

- 6) Describe Shakespeare's depiction and glorification of true love in Sonnet 116.
- 7) How is time shown as an adversary to love in Sonnet 116?

Suggested Reading

- Shall I Compare Thee (Sonnet 18) – William Shakespeare
- When in Disgrace with Fortune and Men's Eyes (Sonnet 29) – William Shakespeare

Once Upon a Time

Gabriel Okara

Brainstorming

- Do you think That we lose our innocence as we grow older? Discuss.
- Do you think politeness is a kind of insincerity? Discuss.

Introduction to Poet

Gabriel Okara was a Nigerian poet, novelist, and one of the prominent figures in African literature. Born in 1921 in Nigeria, Okara is best known for his work that blends indigenous African traditions with modern forms of Western literature, highlighting themes of identity, cultural conflict, and the impact of colonialism.

His poetry and prose often focus on the struggles between traditional African values and the pressures of Western influences, capturing the tension between these two worlds. Okara was known for writing in English but often incorporated elements of Nigerian languages and folklore, giving his works a unique voice that resonates with readers across different cultures.

One of his most famous works, *The Voice* (1964), is a novel that examines the clash between tradition and modernity in postcolonial Nigeria. As for his poetry, he uses vivid imagery and lyrical language, often expressing deep reflections on human nature, societal changes, and personal identity. In "*Once Upon a Time*," Okara addresses themes of disillusionment and the erosion of innocence, which is something many of his works delve into.

About the Poem

"*Once Upon a Time*" by Gabriel Okara, explores the theme of loss—particularly the loss of innocence and authenticity as one grows older. The speaker laments how people's laughter and gestures, once genuine and full of warmth, have become superficial and

cold over time. They long for the sincerity and truthfulness of their younger self, before societal pressures and experiences wore away the pure emotions they once had.

The poem speaks to the challenge of reconciling the person we once were with the person we become as we navigate the complexities of life. It paints a vivid picture of how societal expectations can alter our expressions, making us wear masks that hide our true feelings. The speaker's plea to the son—asking for a return to authenticity and the joy of untainted laughter—captures a poignant desire for renewal.

Glossary

- Ice-block-cold eyes : eyes that are cold and unfeeling, lacking warmth or emotion
- Cocktail face : an artificial smile or expression appropriate for a party
- Conforming : behaving according to socially acceptable conventions
- Portrait : a picture depicting the face
- Good-riddance : expression of relief at being free of an unwanted person or thing
- Muting : deaden, turn off
- Fang : canine tooth of a dog or wolf; tooth of a venomous snake by which poison is injected

Comprehension

I. Answer the following questions in about 100 words each:

- 1) How does the speaker distinguish between "laugh with their hearts" and "laugh with their teeth"?
- 2) What are the artificialities that the poet has learnt?
- 3) What is the significance of the phrase "ice-block-cold eyes"?
- 4) What are the many faces that the poet has learnt to wear and what are the occasions for which he wears them?
- 5) What is the impact of social masks, like "homeface" or "officeface," on the speaker's sense of self?
- 6) In what way does the poem suggest a conflict between being oneself and meeting societal expectations?
- 7) What does the speaker mean by saying "I want to unlearn all these muting things"?
- 8) Why does the speaker long to laugh and smile like his son?
- 9) What are the key changes that the speaker has observed in people's behaviour?

II Answer the following questions in about 200 words each:

- 1) How is the contrast between genuine and superficial expressions of emotion depicted in the poem 'Once Upon a Time'.
- 2) Elaborate on the speaker's reference to his son as a symbol of innocence and authenticity.
- 3) Analyse the impact of societal expectations on the speaker's identity and emotions.
- 4) How does the poem criticise the artificiality of social interactions?
- 5) Discuss the speaker's desire to "unlearn" the behaviours he has adopted over time.
- 6) How does the speaker discuss the putting on of social masks?
- 7) Analyse the speaker's longing to return to a simpler time when he was like his son.
- 8) How does the poem critique modern society?
- 9) Comment on the significance of the title 'Once Upon a Time'.
- 10) The poem displays the pain of growing up and the loss of innocence. Discuss.
- 11) Describe how experience has replaced innocence in the poem 'Once Upon a Time'.

Suggested Reading:

- The Second Coming - W.B. Yeats

Sandals and I

Mudnakudu Chinnaswamy

Brainstorming

- Do you think we need to question the hierarchies of caste? Discuss.
- What are the evils of the caste system? Discuss.
- Do you think caste is very important for our sense of identity? Discuss.

Introduction to Poet

Mudnakudu Chinnaswamy is a Kannada poet and writer from Bengaluru, India. He is a prominent Dalit voice who writes about the struggles of marginalized people. He was born in 1954 in the village of Mudnakudu, Chamarajanagar District of Karnataka state. He witnessed the oppression of Dalits, including his own family. He wrote poetry, essays, plays, and short stories. His work captures the social milieu of India and the exclusion of Dalits. His poems often feature nature as a motif that reflects the nature of caste

discrimination. His works have been published in English, Spanish, and other Indian languages. He received the Kendra Sahitya Academy award in 2022. The Government of Karnataka published his Complete Works in four volumes in 2018. His work has been presented at international poetry conferences.

About the Poem

The poem 'Sandals and I' reflects the evils of the caste system that prevailed in India and the atrocities faced by the Dalits until 1955 when the Protection of Civil Rights Act came into being. The speaker who is a cobbler describes the atrocities of untouchability that he was subjected to in his society. The poet advocates the virtues of logic, morality and reasoning to promote harmonious co-existence as all are equal in the eyes of God.

Glossary

- Cobbler : a person who repairs or makes shoes and other types of footwear
- Surge : sudden powerful forward or upward movement
- Diadem : a jewelled crown or headband worn as a symbol of sovereignty
- Perambulate : walk or travel through or round a place or area

Comprehension

I. Answer the following questions in about 100 words each:

- 1) How is the character of the cobbler portrayed in the poem 'Sandals and I' ?
- 2) How is the theme of untouchability presented in the poem 'Sandals and I' ?
- 3) How are the devotees who come to the temple described in the poem 'Sandals and I' ?
- 4) How does the poem 'Sandals and I' highlight the inner feelings of the cobbler?
- 5) How does the speaker express his devotion to God in the poem 'Sandals and I'?
- 6) Why does the speaker consider himself a true devotee in the poem 'Sandals and I'?
- 7) How do the devotees behave in the sanctum, according to the speaker in the poem 'Sandals and I'?

II. Answer the following questions in about 200 words each:

- 1) Critically analyse the poem 'Sandals and I'.
- 2) What picture of the practice of untouchability do you get from a reading of the poem 'Sandals and I'?
- 3) Analyse the poem 'Sandals and I' in your own words.

- 4) How does the poet criticise the evil practice of untouchability through this poem 'Sandals and I'?
- 5) Comment on the title of the poem 'Sandals and I'.
- 6) Discuss the major themes of the poem 'Sandals and I'.
- 7) How are the sufferings of Dalits portrayed in the poem 'Sandals and I'?
- 8) How does the poem 'Sandals and I' reflect on the deep-rooted prejudices in Indian society?
- 9) How does the poem 'Sandals and I' highlight the striking contrast between the devotees thronging the temple and the speaker?
- 10) How does the speaker advocate the virtues of logic, morality and reasoning in the poem 'Sandals and I'?

Suggested Reading:

- Still I Rise – Maya Angelou
- Supernova – Gautam Vegda

Bluebird

Charles Bukowski

Brainstorming

- Men who cry are looked down upon. Do you agree? Discuss.

Introduction to Poet

Henry Charles Bukowski (1920-1994), was a German-American poet, novelist, and short story writer. His writing was influenced by the social, cultural, and economic ambiance of his adopted home city of Los Angeles. Beginning in the early 1940s and continuing through the early 1990s, Bukowski published extensively in small literary magazines and with small presses. Bukowski wrote thousands of poems, short stories, and six novels. Over half of Bukowski's collections have been published posthumously.

About the Poem

The poem is a meditation on the human tendency to hide and stifle the most vulnerable emotions. It utilizes poetic techniques such as personification, repetition and enjambment to describe the existence of a 'bluebird' in the speaker's 'heart' that represents his kinder and gentler side, which cannot be expressed in the open for fear of being tagged 'weak'.

Glossary

- Bluebird : medium sized song birds native to America
- Whore : sex worker
- Bartender : a person who serves alcoholic drinks at a bar
- Mess someone up : cause someone emotional or psychological problems
- Blow : destroy, damage
- Pact : formal agreement between two parties

Comprehension

I. Answer the following questions in about 100 words each:

- 1) Why does the speaker want to hide the bluebird from the outside world?
- 2) How does the speaker describe his emotions toward the bluebird?
- 3) What does the speaker want to do with the bluebird?
- 4) What does the poem reveal about the speaker's inner conflict?
- 5) How does the speaker's external persona contrast with his internal feelings?
- 6) Why does the speaker let the bluebird out at night?
- 7) What is the significance of the bluebird being "hidden" during the day?
- 8) Write a note on the speaker's emotional state throughout the poem.

II. Answer the following questions in about 200 words each:

- 1) How does Bukowski use the metaphor of the bluebird to express his turmoil in the poem?
- 2) How does the poem contribute to the overall theme of emotional conflict and self-denial?
- 3) Discuss how the poem critiques traditional masculine ideals and offers insight into the vulnerabilities men may face in a society that discourages emotional expression.
- 4) The speaker's decision to "let the bluebird out" at night suggests a temporary release of his repressed emotions. What does this reveal about confronting one's emotional world?
- 5) How does the poem reflect the internal struggle of the speaker?
- 6) What is the bluebird symbolic of in the poem? Elaborate.
- 7) What does the bluebird stand for and how does the speaker treat the bluebird?
- 8) How does the poem explore the themes of vulnerability and repression?
- 9) How does Bukowski exemplify the themes of alienation, vulnerability, and the realities of human experience in the poem?
- 10) Explore the tension between freedom and confinement, both in terms of the speaker's relationship with his emotions and his place in the world.

Extended Reading

- If – Rudyard Kipling
- To Men – Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Mirror

Sylvia Plath

Brainstorming

- Do you think external appearance is important in shaping one's identity? Discuss.
- Do you think ageing is traumatic? Discuss

Introduction to Poet

Sylvia Plath (1932–1963), an American poet, novelist, and short story writer, known for her confessional style that explores themes of mental illness, depression, and identity. Born in Boston, Plath was a talented student and began writing poetry early. Her personal struggles, including the death of her father and battles with mental health, deeply influenced her work. Plath's most famous works include the poetry collection *Ariel* and the novel *The Bell Jar*, which is semi-autobiographical. In 1956, she married poet Ted Hughes, and their troubled relationship shaped much of her poetry. Plath tragically took her own life in 1963 at the age of 30. Despite her short life, her work has had a lasting impact, and she is remembered as one of the most important poets of the 20th century.

About the Poem

One of her notable poems, "*Mirror*", explores themes of self-reflection, aging, and identity through the perspective of a mirror that reveals the harsh truth without sympathy. The poem captures the woman's struggle with her changing appearance and the emotional pain of confronting the inevitable passage of time.

Glossary

- Preconceptions : Opinions formed before knowing actual facts
- Meditate : consider deeply
- Speckles : spots
- Flickers : shine unsteadily
- Silvered : covered with a thin layer of silver, reflective coating on mirrors
- Compassionate : sympathetic or showing kindness
- Terrible fish : ugly; symbolizes the aging process

Comprehension

I. Answer the following questions in about 100 words each:

- 1) What does the poem suggest about the relationship between self-perception and aging?
- 2) Why do you think Plath uses a mirror and a lake as metaphors for self-reflection? How do their qualities differ?
- 3) How does the imagery of the "terrible fish" contribute to the poem's tone and themes?
- 4) How would you compare the portrayal of self-perception in *Mirror* with your own experiences with mirrors or self-reflection?
- 5) What does the image of the "terrible fish" at the end of the poem suggest about the woman's emotional state or self-perception?
- 6) How is the mirror personified in the poem?
- 7) Write an appreciation of the poem 'Mirror'.

II. Answer the following questions in about 200 words each:

- 1) The poem talks about the woman growing older. How does Sylvia Plath use the mirror and other images to show the woman's fear of aging?
- 2) Explore the relationship between truth and terror in the poem. How does the mirror's objectivity contribute to the emotional tension in the poem?
- 3) The woman in Plath's poem is depicted as struggling with the loss of her youth and the onset of aging. Discuss.
- 4) Discuss how the mirror in Plath's poem reminds the woman looking at it, of the passage of time.
- 5) Elucidate how the woman in '*Mirror*' struggles with the image that she sees of herself.
- 6) Why is the mirror called as the "eye of a little god"?
- 7) How does the woman see and react to her coming old age in the mirror?
- 8) How does 'The Mirror' provide an insight into the trauma women undergo at the thought of ageing?

Suggested Reading:

- In the Waiting Room - Elizabeth Bishop
