

# 2nd PUC English Textbook Answers Springs Chapter 3 On Children

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## On Children Questions and Answers, Notes, Summary

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### On Children Comprehension I

And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, "Speak to us of Children." And he said: Here 'he' refers to

- a. her child.
- b. the Prophet
- c. the poet

Answer:

(b) the Prophet.

'Your children are not your children' means

- a. they do not belong to their parents only.
- b. the children should have their own space.
- c. parents should not be possessive of their children.

Answer:

(b) the children should have their own space.

'They come through you, but are not from you' means

- a. though parents give birth to their children they do not own them.
- b. children have independent personalities..
- c. parents should be indifferent to their children.

Answer:

(a) though parents give birth to their children they do not own them.

According to the prophet, what may be given to the children?

OR

What can be given to the children by their parents, according to the prophet?

Answer:

According to the prophet, the parents can give only their love and affection to their children.

'their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow' means

- a. children belong to the future.
- b. parents cannot shape their children's future.



c. children have a different vision of life.

Answer:

(a, c) children belong to the future/children have a different vision of life.

'The bows' and 'living arrows' refer to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Answer:

parents and children.

'For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable.' Discuss the contrast between the underlined words.

Answer:

In the last four lines of the poem, Gibran uses the metaphor of archer-bow-and-arrows to explain the role of parents in bringing up children. In this metaphor, God is the archer, the parents represent the bow, and the children are the living arrows. Like an archer, God bends the bows testing them for stability to aid the arrows as they try to reach their destination. "It is the archer who decides the target, which is marked upon the path of the infinite, and He bends the parents (bows) with His might that His arrows may go swift and far".

Children are life's longing for itself and it is the parents who serve as a passage for them to come to the earth. Once they are born, it is the parents' responsibility to see that the 'living arrows' (children) reach the intended target which has been decided by the archer himself. Each arrow is ready to fly but the bow must be able to withstand the strain or pressure caused on it and remain stable or firm so as to enable the arrow to reach its target. The arrows have to fly and the bow has to be stable because the bow must be flexible enough to bend according to the will of the archer. This contrast between the role of the arrows and the role of the bow is brought out in the last line of the poem in the word 'flies' which refers to the arrows and 'stable' which refers to the bows.

On Children Comprehension II

Why does the prophet categorically state "Your children are not your children"?

OR

Tour children are not your children'. How is this statement relevant with reference to 'On Children'? Explain,

OR

Tour children are not your children'. Why? What does the prophet mean by this?

Answer:

According to Kahlil Gibran, love occupies the most important place in God's creation. Love is not created by us but is sent from above and it directs everything in our life as it sees fit. In this poem, Gibran illustrates how love works in the intimate relationship of parenthood. Gibran wants us to understand that our role as parents is only 'stewardship' and nothing

else.

In the line 'Your children are not your children' Gibran tells parents to be aware that a child is not a thing to be possessed by us because we have not created 'life'.

A child is eternal life itself and is a gift from the abundance of existence. As parents we may have brought them to the earth. This has happened so because we have been chosen to be a vehicle and so we are nothing else but a passage. It is life's longing for itself that brings children to earth, as sons and daughters. Since children are not lifeless things we cannot possess them. That is why the prophet categorically states that 'Your children are not your children'.

What does the metaphor of bow and arrow signify with regard to the parent-children relationship?

OR

What do the bow and arrow signify in the poem 'On Children'?

OR

How is the parent-child relationship brought out using the metaphor of bow and arrows?

OR

Bring out the significance of the metaphors 'bows', 'arrows' and 'archer'.

OR

"Parents are bows, children are arrows and God is the archer". How does the poem 'On Children' highlight these images?

OR

'On Children' refers to children as arrows and parents as bows. Explain.

Answer:

In his sermon on children, in the first part, Gibran explains to parents how they should take care of their children as 'stewards'. In the last part of the sermon, Gibran uses the metaphor of the bow and the arrows to help parents visualize their role in bringing up children.

In this metaphor, God, or the supreme power, is the archer, parents are the bows and the arrows are the children. The archer uses the bow only as an instrument to send the arrows to their target. The archer decides the trajectory and the target on the infinite path and pulls the string with all his might. As he pulls the string, the bow has to bend and yet withstand the strain and pressure caused in shooting the arrow. The bow should not snap in two. From this metaphor, it becomes clear that parents serve only as an instrument or as a vehicle to help the arrow fly to its destination and parents cannot own them.

According to the prophet, what attitude should parents have towards their children?

OR

How does the poet describe the responsibility of parents in the poem 'On Children'?

Answer:

Kahlil Gibran tells the parents that they are not the owners of their children. He argues that children have come to this earth as Life's longing for itself and are born as sons and

daughters and they are not created by parents. Hence, parents cannot possess them. Parents should consider themselves as 'stewards' and their role is only stewardship. Gibran wants parents not to look upon their children as their puppets and so as not to impose their religion, politics, and ideas on the innocent children. Parents may give their own love but not their thoughts, because the children have their own souls. They have the free will to do as they please and have a mind of their own. They are free to think for themselves.

Parents merely act as 'guiding lights' for their children. They have the will to act as who they are and lead their own life and not how their parents want them to. The children have their own future, parents belong to the yesterdays, but children belonging to the tomorrows. We should only give as much love as we can and should let them grow according to their own potential. We may strive to be like them but we should never trust our past on them. We should resist the temptation of making our child a carbon copy of ourselves.

On Children Comprehension III

In this poem, 'parents could' stand as a metaphor for

- (a) the older generation
- (b) leaders
- (c) religious heads
- (d) teachers.

Having considered the above options, offer different readings of the poem.

Answer:

(a) In the poem 'On Children' by Kahlil Gibran, 'parents' could stand as a metaphor for the older generation. The poem could be taken as a dialogue between Almustafa, the prophet, and the older generation. As advised by the prophet, the older generation must understand that the children of this generation are born as life's longing for itself. They have their own souls. Therefore, the older generation must only strive to protect their bodies until they become adults so that they grow up as mature individuals and fulfil god's mission for which they have come to this earth. The older generation should not indoctrinate the younger generation to lead a life as their parents like because the souls of the younger generation dwell in the house of tomorrow to which the older generation cannot enter. However, their duty is to make the younger generation realize that they have been sent to the earth by God to fulfill his mission.

(b) Similarly, 'parents' could also be taken as a metaphor for 'leaders'. As leaders, they can only protect their children physically, until they come of age. They should not compel them to accept their ideologies and live to fulfill their mission. On the contrary, the leaders must understand that their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, and hence the ideas of the older generation leaders will only take them backward. But the leaders also are god's children and have been utilized by God as his instrument to send the children to the earth. Therefore, they must see to it that they protect the younger generation until they grow and become mature individuals. They must also be made aware of god's purpose in sending them to the earth.

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ಮಾಡಿ ಮತ್ತಷ್ಟು ಸ್ವಡಿ  
ಮೆಟಿರಿಯಲ್ ಪಡೆಯಿರಿ..!

(c) The word 'parents' could also be taken as a metaphor for religious heads. The poem can be taken as a dialogue between the prophet and the religious heads. The religious heads are also children of God. They must realize that God wants them to protect their children when they are young and lead them in such a way that the children should have full freedom to obey the yearnings of their souls. The religious teachers should not force their children to obey and accept their ideas of God and his creation. They must only make them realize that as children they have been sent by god to this earth to fulfil god's mission. Like his obedient children, they must be made aware that they have to fulfill god's mission on this earth.

(d) Similarly, the word 'parents' could be taken as a metaphor for teachers and the poem could be taken as a dialogue between Almustafa, the prophet, and the teachers. The teachers must understand that they are expected to serve only as guardians and protect their children until they grow up and mature into fully grown adults. As teachers, they should only make them aware that they have come down to fulfill god's mission. Teachers should not think that they should punish and make them do what he or she likes. On the other hand, their only job is to see that they are taken care of physically and are given complete freedom for their souls to grow and mature and understand god's mission in sending, them to this earth.

#### Question 2.

In light of the poem, think of different levels of freedom children must have in shaping their lives.

Answer:

The parents must understand that God expects them to work as guardians to protect their children physically until they grow up and mature and realize god's wishes. In their childhood, instead of getting overly attached to them, the parents should treat them as guests in their homes. They must love and respect them. They should help create an environment conducive for their growth and see that they grow and remain physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually healthy. All-round development is important.

Care for their mental health is equally important. Parents can do this by creating an environment allowing the inborn talent and goodness of the children to blossom. Children are not born bad, the environment makes them so. Therefore, it is necessary to create a healthy environment for the children at home, in school, and in society.

Parents should not treat their children as their puppets but shower their love as much as they can and take good care of them as we do to someone who is given to our charge. Parents should take care of their needs only and should not impose their thoughts and ideas on them.

The parents superimpose ideas, thoughts, and even their pride upon their kids. Instead of imposing philosophies and thoughts on the children, they should give them love and create an atmosphere for their inner talents to flower.

As they grow into adults, the parents must exercise all the more patience and give them the freedom to make their own decisions and let them do what they like for a living. They must also strive to make them aware of the pitfalls in their path if they choose the wrong path.

Finally, when they attain a marriageable age, parents should not influence their decisions by highlighting their lineage or wealth or caste. They must allow full freedom to love and marry a girl of their choice.

Question 3.

The poem 'On Children' does not focus merely on the lives of children but also talks about the responsibility of parents. Explain.

Answer:

The poem 'On Children' is a sermon on parents. It does not focus merely on the lives of children but also talks about the responsibility of parents. In the first part, Gibran argues that children take birth as life's longing for itself. Since we do not create children, we cannot possess them. However, Gibran argues that parents do have a role in the life of children. He says that we should give our children as much love as we can but never our thoughts. The children must be let free to think for themselves, and parents must not thrust their ideas on them.

Next, Gibran talks about the responsibility of parents. He states that God is the archer, and his parents are his bows. The archer decides on the target, bends the bow to suit his target, and shoots the arrows. The arrows are the children. Thus the archer wants the parents to serve as his instrument. If the bow remains rigid and inflexible, the arrows may not reach the desired destination. Therefore, as parents, it is our responsibility to be flexible enough to allow our children to live their own lives.

## **On Children Additional Questions and Answers**

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I. Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase, or a sentence each:

Question 1.

Who does the word "bows" refer to in the poem?

Answer:

To parents.

Question 2.

Who does 'living arrows' refer to in the poem?

Answer:

To children.

Question 3.

Who does 'archer' refer to in the poem?

Answer:

To God.

Question 4.

Who does God use as his instrument to send living arrows to the earth?

Answer:

Parents.

Question 5.

Why does God bend the parents with all his might?

Answer:

God bends the parents with all his might to test them for stability and strength so that the arrows (children) that they shoot travel far and reach their destination.

Question 6.

What brings children to the earth?

Answer:

Life's longing for itself.

Question 7.

Who dwells in the house of tomorrow?

Answer:

Children.

Question 8.

Who loves both the bow and the arrow?

OR

According to the speaker of 'On Children', the one who loves both the arrow and the bow is

- (a) the archer
- (b) the parents
- (c) the children.

Answer:

God, the archer.

Question 9.

What, according to the speaker, can parents not visit?

Answer:

The parents cannot visit the house/houses or the world in which their children are going to live. They also can't visit their houses even in their dreams.

Question 10.

In 'On Children', you may give them your love but not your

- (a) dreams
- (b) thoughts

(c) gladness.

Answer:

(b) thoughts.

Question 11.

What does the phrase 'the bow that is stable' refer to?

Answer:

The phrase 'the bow that is stable' refers to parents who serve God's wishes without fail and with conviction.

Question 12.

In 'On Children', God loves the arrow that flies as well as the bow that

(a) does not bend

(b) breaks

(c) is stable.

Answer:

(c) is stable.

Question 13.

Who asked the Prophet to speak on children?

Answer:

A woman asked the prophet to speak about children.

Question 14.

Where, according to the speaker, do the souls of children dwell?

Answer:

According to the speaker, the souls of children dwell in the house of tomorrow.

Question 15.

What should parents not give their children?

Answer:

Parents may give only their love for their children and should not give their thoughts.

Question 16.

What does not go backward, according to the speaker, in 'On Children'?

Answer:

Life.

Question 17.

Why does the archer bend his bow?

Answer:

The archer bends his bow so that His arrows might go swift and far.



Question 18.

Whose sons and daughters are our children, according to the speaker, in 'On Children'?

Answer:

According to the speaker in 'On Children', our children are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.

Question 19.

Who, according to the speaker in 'On Children', have their own thoughts?

Answer:

According to the speaker in 'On Children', the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself have their own thoughts.

Question 20.

Who, according to the speaker in 'On Children', are sent forth as living arrows?

Answer:

According to the speaker in 'On Children', our children are sent forth as living arrows.

Question 21.

Where, according to the speaker in 'On Children', does the archer see the mark?

Answer:

According to the speaker in 'On Children', the archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite.

Question 22.

Who, according to the speaker in "On Children", sees the mark upon the path of the infinite?

Answer:

According to the speaker in 'On Children', the archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite.

Question 23.

According to the speaker in 'On Children', life does not go \_\_\_\_\_

(a) swift

(b) backward

(c) forth.

Answer:

(b) backward.

Question 24.

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for \_\_\_\_\_. The right word from 'On Children' to fill in the blank is

(a) gladness

(b) longing

(c) striving.

Answer:

(a) gladness.

Question 25.

The house of tomorrow in 'On Children' cannot be visited even in \_\_\_\_\_

(a) thoughts

(b) ideas

(c) dreams.

Answer:

(c) dreams.

Question 26.

The 'archer' in 'On Children' refers to

(a) child

(b) God

(c) Prophet.

Answer:

(b) God.

Question 27.

According to the speaker in 'On Children', life does not tarry with

(a) today

(b) tomorrow

(c) yesterday.

Answer:

(c) yesterday.

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph of 80-100 words each:

Question 1.

How, according to the speaker, should parents look upon their children?

Answer:

According to the prophet Almustafa, parents should never believe that they own or possess their children. They should behave as though their role is that of being guards and/or 'stewards'. Parents should not treat their children as their puppets but shower their love as much as they can and take good care of them as we do to someone who is given to our charge. Parents should not impose their thoughts and ideas on them because our children belong to the future whereas we belong to the past generation.

Question 2.

How should parents raise their children, according to the speaker?

OR

How should parents take care of their children, according to the speaker in 'On Children'?

Answer:

Almustafa tells parents that they can only act as 'stewards' and their role is one of 'stewardship'; parents should not treat their children as their puppets but shower their love as much as they can and take good care of them as we do to someone who is given to our charge. Parents should take care of their needs only and should not impose their thoughts and ideas on them. They should not do so because our children belong to the future whereas we belong to the past generation.

Question 3.

What are the views of the Prophet on parents and children in the poem 'On Children'?

Answer:

According to the Prophet, a child is a gift from the abundance of existence and it is eternal life itself. Children are born as sons and daughters as 'life's longing for itself'. Parents do not create them and hence cannot possess them. Parents serve as a 'passage' or vehicle to bring the children to this world. Further, children have their own thoughts because they have the free will to do as they please. Whereas parents belong to the yesterdays, their children belong to the future. The children will have their own scriptures and saints; hence parents should only give them as much love as they can and not their thoughts. Parents should not thrust their past as an inheritance on their children but should let them grow according to their own potential.

Gibran uses the metaphor of archer-bow-and-arrows to explain the role of parents in bringing up children. In this metaphor, God is the archer, the parents represent the bow, and the children are the living arrows. Like an archer, God bends the bows testing them for stability to aid the arrows as they try to reach their destination. "It is the archer who decides the target, which is marked upon the path of the infinite, and He bends the parents (bows) with His might that His arrows may go swift and far".

Question 4.

How is the parent and children relationship brought out in Kahlil Gibran's poem 'On Children'?

Answer:

In his sermon 'On Children', Gibran assumes the persona of Almustafa and speaks to the people with the intention of enlightening them about 'children' and to guide them as to how they should bring up their children.

First, he says that 'children' are born to fulfill the 'longing' of life itself. They are a gift from the abundance of existence. God, the supreme power, uses parents as a vehicle or passage to bring children to this earth. Since parents do not create 'life', parents do not own children. They may house their bodies but not their souls.

Secondly, children have their own souls and are not non-living things. Therefore parents cannot possess them as puppets. Life's longing for itself brings forth children in the form of sons and daughters. Hence, our sons and daughters do not belong to us though we have borne them.

Thirdly, since parents bring children to this earth, they should also take care of children as 'stewards' and protect them, take care of their needs until they grow and mature and become fully developed individuals. Parents should take care of their needs only and should not impose their thoughts and ideas on them.

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

Question 1.

"Your children are not your children' How does the poet illustrate this truth in the poem?

OR

How does the poem bring out the relationship between parents and children?

Answer:

The poet firmly believes that life is a journey, and God is both the 'starting point' and the destination. This journey is an inner one, a spiritual one and we are born to undertake this journey. The whole poem serves to express this belief. The poet attempts to explain what role the parents should play in bringing up their children.

The speaker says that a child is a gift from the abundance of existence and it is eternal life itself. That is why the poet says that 'your children are not your children'. Then he makes our role clear. He tells the parents that they have brought their children to this world because they have been chosen to serve as a 'passage' or vehicle to bring them to this world.

Further, he tells us that since children belong to the future they have their own thoughts and the free will to do as they please. Then he tells us that we have to take care of our children as 'stewards' and give them 'love' and physical nourishment so that they grow up to serve their role.

Since God is the creator and the final destination, God is the archer, the parents his bow, and the children his arrows. We only serve to send the arrows swift and far and help it reach its destination. God loves both the bow and the arrows because God is the eternal creator of nature'.

Question 2.

'On Children' offers new insights into the parent-children relationships. Discuss.

OR

'On Children' persuades parents to see their children in a new light Elaborate.

Answer:

'On Children' is a sermon given by Almustafa to a woman holding a babe against her bosom. The fourteen-line poem is in the form of an imaginary conversation between a mother and

the prophet Of the fourteen lines, the first five lines are devoted to enlightening the parents about who the children are and the remaining lines explain the role of the parents in bringing up their children.

'On Children' offers new insight into the parent-children relationship, and rejects our traditional, time-honoured, and conservative ideas of bringing up children.

According to the speaker, a child is a gift from the abundance of existence and it is eternal life itself. Children are born as sons and daughters as life's longing for itself. Life longs to reproduce itself, and parents are its servants who execute that master plan. God uses parents as his instrument to send living 'arrows' to the earth. God, or the Supreme Being, is the archer, the parents are the bows and the children are the living arrows. Parents do not create them and hence they cannot possess them.

They are only the medium through which life expresses itself. Children have their own thoughts because they have the free will to do as they please. Parents can only act as 'stewards' and their role is one of 'stewardship'. Parents should not treat their children as their puppets but shower as much of their love as they can.

Parents should take care of their needs only and should not impose their thoughts and ideas on them because our children belong to the future, whereas the parents belong to the past generation. Therefore, parents should also not burden their children with their dead past, their scriptures, and their saints. Since life looks forward and does not linger on, parents should let their children build their future, realize their potential, and resist the temptation to force their children to be like their carbon copy.

Question 3.

The poem, 'On Children' rejects conservative upbringing of children. Explain.

Answer:

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Question 4.

We cannot keep pace with our children's lives and thoughts. How is this elaborated in 'On Children'?

Answer:

According to the speaker in 'On Children', a child is a gift from the abundance of existence and it is eternal life itself. Children are born as sons and daughters as 'Life's longing for itself'. Parents may have brought them to this world because they have been chosen to serve as 'passage' or vehicle to bring the children into this world.

Children are closer to the very source of life than old people. Children have their own thoughts because they have the free will to do as they please. Parents should not impose their thoughts and ideas on them because our children belong to the future, whereas parents belong to the past generation.

As parents, our days are over. We may try to be like our children, but our past acts like a barrier. Since parents belong to the yesterdays and their children belong to the tomorrows, parents cannot conceive of their future. The children will have their own scriptures and saints. The present is not only a meeting point but also a point of departure. Every day the gap between parents and their children will become wider and wider.

The children have their own future and we should let them grow according to their own potential. The children are closer to existence than we are. Life looks forward and does not linger on. Hence parents cannot keep pace with our children's lives and thoughts. Parents should let their children build their future, realize their potential and resist the temptation to force their children to be like their carbon copy.

### **On Children by Kahlil Gibran About the Poet:**

Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931) is a Lebanese-American artist and poet. His poems are considered 'poetic essays', as they do not adhere to the usual verification. 'The Prophet' is his best-known work and has been translated into more than 25 languages including

Kannada.

'On Children' is a selection from 'The Prophet', which offers a critique of the usual expectations of parents about their children and urges them to introspect.

Background:

'On Children' by Kahlil Gibran is an excerpt from 'The Prophet', one of his most popular works.

'The Prophet' occupies a unique place in world literature. It is a work of remarkable compassion, insight, hope and inspiration, with a timeless message that combines the dignity of the Christian Bible and the wisdom of the Sufis of Islam, phrased with simplicity and rhythmical quality that renders it accessible to a wider readership.

It represents an appeal for a return to and reconciliation with nature, emphasizing the relationship that binds individuals to their environment and their fellow creatures. They all become denizens of one world bound together by life and death. The speaker in 'The Prophet' speaks in the persona of 'Almustafa'. Almustafa sets out his own version of the golden rule common to all great religions that we must do as we would be done by. What he voices is not some unattainable ideal, but practical wisdom and simple moral and spiritual values.

The keynote of 'The Prophet' is pantheism. Its central article of belief is that God is latent within everyone as a Greater Self, and that, this is attained through aspiration, or 'yearning', which is comparable to prayer in religion, and also through successive reincarnations. Life is a journey, and God is both 'starting point' and 'destination'. The journey represents the condition of full awareness when the soul has embarked on the path leading to its desired union with God. The journey is an inner one, a spiritual one, in contrast to the travels of the twenty-first-century man or woman, which are all physical.

## **On Children Summary in English**

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'On Children' is an excerpt from 'The Prophet', one of Kahlil Gibran's most popular works. 'The Prophet' includes twenty-six sermons on varied topics like Love, Marriage, Children, Houses, Clothes, Laws, Crime and Punishment, Buying and Selling, etc. The sermons are given by Almustafa who speaks in the persona of the poet.

'Almustafa' means the 'chosen one'. The name also implies that he possesses spiritual knowledge and divine characteristics. Almustafa is a man of inner purity and is believed to be the 'Perfect man' or the universal man'.

In the opening sermon titled 'The Coming of the Ship', we learn that Almustafa has waited twelve years in the city of Orphalese for the ship that was to return and bear him back to the isle of his birth. The ship has arrived and he is about to go onboard. Before he boards the ship he is met by a woman named 'Almitra', who is a seeress. She prays to him to speak to

the people of Orphalese about all that he has been shown about what lies between birth and death. Each of the 26 sermons is the reply given by Almustafa to all those who request him to speak about a particular topic.



'On Children' is one such sermon given by Almustafa to a woman holding a babe against her bosom, when she asks him to speak to the people 'Of Children'. Almustafa begins his sermon with the opening line 'Your children are not your children'.

In this imaginary conversation, there are fourteen lines of which five lines are devoted to enlightening the parents about what / who the children are and the remaining lines to explaining what role the parents should play in bringing up their children.

Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself  
They come through you but not from you,  
And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.  
They have their own thoughts.

The speaker wants to make the parents aware that a child is a gift from the abundance of existence and it is eternal life itself. Just as we have seen eternal life flowing through mountains, through forests and through plains, children are born as sons and daughters as Life's longing for itself. Life longs to reproduce itself, and we are its servants who carry out that master plan.

Parents do not create them and hence parents cannot possess them. Parents may have brought them to this world because they have been chosen to serve as 'passage' or vehicle to bring the children to this world. They are only the medium through which life expresses



itself. Children are closer to the very source of life than old people. Furthermore, children have their own thoughts because they have the free will to do as they please. In the next few lines, the speaker educates parents as to how they should treat their children.

You may give them your love, but not your thoughts  
You may house their bodies but not their souls  
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams  
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you  
For life goes not backward nor carries with yesterday.

Almustafa tells parents that they can only act as 'Stewards' and their role is one of stewardship'; parents should not treat their children as their puppets but shower their love as much as they can and take good care of them as we do to someone who is given to our charge. Parents should take care of their needs only and should not impose their thoughts and ideas on them. They should not do so because our children belong to the future whereas we belong to the past generation.

As parents, our days are over. Parents may try to be like their children but their past acts like a barrier. On the contrary, children belong to the future. Since parents belong to the yesterdays, and their children belong to the tomorrows, parents cannot conceive of their future. Hence they should not burden their children with their dead past, their scriptures and their saints. The children will have their own scriptures and saints, parents should only give them as much love as they can. The present is a meeting point but also a point of departure. Every day the gap between parents and their children will become bigger and bigger.

And so, parents should not thrust their past as an inheritance on their children. The children have their own future and we should let them grow according to their own potential. The children are closer to existence than we are. Since life looks forward and does not linger on, parents should let their children build their future, realize their potential and resist the temptation to force their children to be like their carbon copy.

In the next few lines, Almustafa, the speaker, tries to give a visual account of how we should play our role as parents and how we can win God's love:

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth  
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far  
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so also He loves the bow that is stable.

Almustafa tells the parents that God uses parents as his instrument to send 'living arrows' to the earth. God or the Supreme Being is the archer, the parents are the bows and the children are his living arrows. An arrow does not have its own power nor does it create its own path of

direction. Both these are provided by God. The archer is God and the path is infinity. Just like the archer, God decides the mark on the infinite path for each child as its destination and using the parents as bows, shoots the arrows. Like an archer, God bends the bows (which are the parents) testing them for stability. The bows must help the arrows to reach their destination.

Existence wants parents to bend like a bow before their own children because they have to travel far and they have to give them strength. Parents should not despise the tests God provides in the image of children, for these tests only make God love the parents more. The speaker wishes us to know that existence loves both parents and children because parents are also children of the same existence. God loves not only parents who are stable, but he also loves children who as arrows will be bows in the future and shoot their own arrows.

At the end of the sermon, the speaker says that while the archer loves the arrows (the children), "He also loves the bow that is stable", which presents before the reader a paradox. As parents involved in the care of children, Gibran appears to be asking us to be strong and bendable at the same time.

This may seem like a contradictory idea, but if we examine the metaphor of the bow, it begins to make sense. The bow has to be able to withstand the force of its string being drawn back. To do this without snapping in two, the bow also has to have strength. This tensile strength allows the arrow being held on the string to be released with optimal energy as it creates balance through resistance and tension, not unlike the kind of discipline we try to adjudicate in the making and breaking of boundaries for our children either at home or in the classroom. Such discipline uses rules and regulations as guides that will hopefully enhance a child's sense of freedom by engendering a balanced sense of responsibility within him or her as well.

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrow that flies.  
So He loves also the bow that is stable.

These lines imply that God, the archer, loves parents who give their children roots to grow in and the freedom to fly when their time has come to do so. He loves those who slowly step back and set them free as their children grow up, encouraging them to learn from their own experiences and to dream their own dreams. He expects parents to do all they can to help their children to fulfill their own highest potential.

The archer expects wise parents to tell the children in their care that they are the children of God and that therefore each child is as precious and unique as the other. Further, God expects parents to respect their children because they know that even when a child is still

living in a smaller body than their own, it has nonetheless come into their world as a frilly developed soul and spirit in its own right, who may have a long history of evolution behind it that could have taken more lifetimes than those of its parents.

God expects wise parents to tell their children that they have come into this life to learn, evolve, and grow some more through their own experiences. When their children go to school, wise parents point out to them that they are learning for themselves and for life itself, not only for this lifetime but for Eternity. He expects wise parents to explain to their children the laws of the universe and that because of this, whatever anyone sends out to life has to return to them. Finally, God expects parents to teach children by their good example.

In conclusion, we may say that in this sermon ('On Children') Gibran illustrates how love works in the intimate relationship of parenthood.

Glossary:

- hoyse (v): shelter, protect
- tarry (v): linger, stay at one place
- archer: one who uses bow and arrow (here God)