

2nd PUC English Textbook Answers Springs Chapter 8

To the Foot from its Child

To the Foot from its Child Questions and Answers, Notes, Summary

To the Foot from its Child Comprehension I

Question 1.

What would the foot like to be?

OR

Mention one of the things that the child's foot likes to be.

Answer:

The foot would like to be a butterfly or an apple.

Question 2.

'The child's foot is not yet aware it's a foot' (line 1 of the poem) conveys

- a. the immense possibilities of life
- b. the unrestricted nature of a child's imagination
- c. the child's ignorance of harsh realities.

Answer:

(b) and (c) the unrestricted nature of a child's imagination/the child's ignorance of harsh realities.

Question 3.

What does time teach the child?

Answer:

Time teaches the foot that it cannot fly and also cannot be a fruit on the branch of a tree.

Question 4.

The line 'stones and bits of glass, streets, ladders and the paths in the rough earth'

- a. indicates hardships one has to face in life.
- b. provides a mere description of a road.
- c. suggests the good and bad experiences of growing up.

Answer:

(a) indicates hardships one has to face in life.

Question 5.

Why does the child's foot feel defeated?

Answer:

The child's foot feels defeated because it has to live like a prisoner, condemned to live in a shoe, and it can never be free to escape from the difficulties of life.



Question 6.

Mention the words that convey the real experiences of the foot.

Answer:

The words 'stones and bits of glass, streets, ladders, and the paths in the rough earth' convey the real experiences of the child's foot.

Question 7.

Identify the lines in the poem that suggest the transformation of the foot.

Answer:

Lines 17 – 28 suggest the transformation of the foot.

"These soft nails

of quartz

.....

.....

a coarsening hard to accept."

Question 8.

"..... condemned to live in a shoe" suggests that the foot is

(a) a prisoner

(b) a criminal

(c) forced to give up its dreams.

Answer:

(a) and (c) a criminal/forced to give up its dreams.

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Question 9.

What does the line 'until the whole man chooses to stop' mean?

OR

When does the foot stop to walk in Neruda's poem?

Answer:

The line, 'until the whole man chooses to stop' means until the person dies.

OR

The foot stops to walk when the person dies.

To the Foot from its Child Comprehension II

Question 1.

We think of a foot as a part of the human body, but Neruda says 'To the Foot From its Child'.

Why?

Answer:

We think of a foot physically as belonging to a person but Neruda sees in a philosophical way and says "To The Foot From Its Child". Though it belongs to a person physically, philosophically like the child who is the symbol of innocence, the foot also does know about

its future. But in adulthood, it faces many challenges of life and gets an overall experience and leads a meaningful life until the end. Finally, it is attacked by diseases and surrendered to death.

Question 2.

Pick out the expressions that suggest the child's imagination is fertile.

Answer:

The expressions, 'to be a butterfly', or 'an apple', 'can not fly', 'cannot be a fruit bulging on the branch' suggest that the child's imagination is fertile.

Question 3.

What contrasting descriptions of the foot does the poem offer? Why?

Answer:

The poet Pablo Neruda presents a contrasting description of a child's foot and an adult's foot so as to delineate the changes that are seen in a person's life as he or she changes from an infant into an adult, until his death. Initially, the child or the infant's foot has soft nails of quartz and its toes are tiny, soft, and rounded at the tips like the petals of some flowers.

As the child learns to walk and starts walking on stones, bits of glass, streets, ladders and the rough surface of the earth, the child's foot becomes aware of its role. It learns that it is a foot and cannot become a butterfly or a bulging fruit on a tree. Once it realizes that it is a foot, it is defeated in realizing its aspirations and gets imprisoned in a shoe. Inside the shoe, it tries to understand the world in its own way, alone, like a blind man groping in the dark. During this period its soft nails of quartz become opaque, are bunched together, and look like eyeless reptiles with triangular heads, grow callused, and are covered with faint volcanoes of death.

These changes happen because, once the child's foot becomes an adult's foot, it walks as the foot of a man or woman and keeps walking in the fields as a farmer, or as a grocer in the markets, or as a miner in the mines or as a church minister or a government worker, until its death. Thus, the foot experiences the hardships of life and loses its 'soft' and flowery petal-like form.

Question 4.

The poem begins with the idea that a child's foot is not yet aware that it is a foot; at the end, the foot is unaware that it had ceased to be a foot. What is the poet trying to convey through these statements?

OR

Explain the similarity between the foot's early life and its end as depicted in 'To the Foot From its Child'.

Answer:

In this poem, 'foot' is a metaphor for 'life'. The poet Neruda using the foot as a metaphor to explore 'life' through its various stages from infancy through childhood until death.

When the poem begins, the 'foot' is the infant's foot which suggests man's 'childhood'. The child's foot does not know that it is a foot. This state refers to the innocence of childhood where 'Man' has many dreams and aspirations. The child's wish to become a butterfly or an apple stands for man's aspirations and dreams. Once the child's foot enters the real world, it starts walking over stones, bits of glass, streets, ladders, and the rough surface of the earth.

Thus, as the child grows over a period of time, the child's foot realizes that it is only a 'foot' and cannot become fruit or a butterfly. Then, since it has to serve its role as a foot, it is imprisoned in a shoe. Inside the shoe, it tries to understand the world alone, in isolation. The child's foot, as it grows old, serves as the foot of a man or a woman working in the fields, or market or mines or ministries and toils hard day and night until it dies. When it dies, the foot loses its human awareness and that is why when it is buried the foot again gets its child-like innocence. It again dreams of becoming an apple or a butterfly. It is this journey from childhood through adulthood and the final death that the poem focuses on.

Pablo Neruda is saying that life and death are part of a continuous cycle. Secondly, the poet wishes to say that the freedom of childhood is lost when a person becomes an adult and faces a life of constant work and struggle. Thus, life takes away people's free spirits until they are freed again by death.

Question 5.

How does Neruda describe the busy life of the individual as represented by the foot?

Answer:

The 'foot' is used as a metaphor for life and the foot refers to the foot of an individual. Once the child develops into an adult, the adult keeps on walking without respite either as a man or as a woman. The individual spends his life working either as a farmer in a field, or as a miner in mines, or as a salesperson in the market or as a government servant or as a church minister. This way the individual toils hard in society until his death.

Question 6.

What does the last stanza of the poem mean? Can you think of parallels in nature?

Answer:

In this poem, 'foot' is used as a metaphor for 'life'. Life refers to the life of a human being as seen from his infancy until his death. Pablo Neruda gives his view of 'life' and 'death' in this poem. The poem does not begin with the beginning of life in the womb of its mother but from the time after it has taken birth on the earth. The poem covers the period of its infancy to death and beyond. The 'foot' as portrayed in the poem refers to the child's foot. Since a child is not aware of its limitations and lives in a dream world of imagination, the child's foot wishes to fly like a butterfly or become a bulging apple on the branch of a tree. Over a period of time, it realizes that it is only a foot and its role is only to serve as a foot.

The poet then refers to the 'adult foot' after death of an individual after death. Once a human being dies, he or she is normally buried. It is this burial of the dead body of the individual that is expressed in the line "it descended underground unaware, for there, everything was dark". Once the 'foot' or the individual dies, it loses its human awareness and goes back to its child-like innocence. This is expressed in the sentence 'It never knew it had ceased to be a foot'. That is why, like a child's foot which is not aware that it is only a 'foot', it aspires to become a butterfly and fly or become an apple.

One can find several parallels in nature. All living beings born on the earth pass through the cycle of birth and death. A seed germinates to give a seedling. The seedling grows into an adult plant, may become a tree or a shrub, and die. Its seeds bring a similar plant to life again. Similarly, the eggs of animals hatch and bring forth their young ones which grow, mature, lay eggs and later die. Their eggs bring back similar animals to life again.

To the Foot from its Child Comprehension III

Question 1.

Examine how Neruda's poem works out the contrast between colourful dreams and the humdrum reality of life.

OR

The poem 'To the Foot From its Child' represents the conflict between illusion and reality. Elaborate.

Answer:

The poem, 'To the Foot from its Child', presents a contrast between colourful dreams and the humdrum reality of life. The poet conveys his view of life through his description of a foot. The foot is a metaphor for expressing the crushing of a child's spirit through the challenges and restrictions that life places upon him. One can undoubtedly infer that the poem is basically a criticism of how people force children to grow in society and forget all their dreams and imaginations.

With a view to delineating the forces that capture the child's freedom and aspirations, the poet begins the poem making a statement directly that the child's foot, which is not aware that it is a foot, would like to be a butterfly or an apple. From this one can infer that man's spirit dreams of enjoying unlimited freedom in this world but it comes to know that it cannot enjoy unlimited freedom and has to pass through several obstacles before it matures into an adult.

But, in time, stones and bits of glass, streets, ladders, paths in the rough earth go on teaching the foot that it cannot fly. As the infant is growing and developing into a mature adult, he is exposed to the harsh realities of life which are metaphorically expressed as stones, bits of glass, ladder, street, etc. These are the problems and obstacles an individual has to face. Thus, once the child becomes a boy, an adolescent, and an adult, the problems of life teach the individual that he is a 'mortal' and his powers are limited and can only serve

the society as a member like other human beings. This sense is expressed in the line 'that it cannot fly, cannot become a fruit and is defeated, falls in the battle, is a prisoner condemned to live in a shoe'. Here, the 'shoe' can be taken to mean the human society that regulates his mind and activities.

Wearing the shoe refers to the infant becoming a mature adult. Soon after entering adulthood, the individual explores 'life' within the shoe. He loses touch with the reality of the outside world but experiences the world through the eyes of society. This again means that a lot of restrictions are imposed on the individual. Now that he is an adult he keeps on walking without respite through the fields, mines, markets, and ministries. The line 'this foot toils in its shoe, scarcely taking time to bare itself in love or sleep' expresses the fact that once he realizes that he is a man destined to live in a society, he learns to face the humdrum realities of life. He has no time to let his human spirit indulge in 'love' and 'sleep'. He is a prisoner and keeps on working until he dies. Once he dies his spirit loses its human awareness and is once again as free as the children.

Question 2.

Neruda's poem is a salute to the ordinary human being, who continues with life braving all odds. Do you agree? Give reasons.

Answer:

Yes. In this poem, Neruda tries to delineate the journey of human 'life' from its infancy to death and beyond. With a view to expressing the changes that the 'life spirit' undergoes through its journey from an infant to an adult and beyond death, Neruda uses 'foot' as a metaphor. That is why he calls 'life' during infancy as the infant foot and the life spirit of an adult as the adult foot.

The whole poem can be summed up as the 'surrender' of life force to societal pressures. During infancy, the child's spirit dreams of infinite possibilities and hence dreams of becoming a fruit or a butterfly. Once it starts growing in society the harsh realities of life expressed as 'stones, bits of glass, ladder, and rough surface of the earth', teach the infant spirit that it is a 'foot' which means 'you have a role' to play in the society and 'you are an individual subservient to the whims and fancies of the society'. Once the infant spirit gradually accepts its defeat and tries to live in conformity with the norms of the society, it becomes an adult. This is expressed metaphorically as the 'foot being imprisoned in a shoe'.

Once you become a member of the society you learn to live like others, giving up your pleasures and gradually you get to know the realities of life. You go on slogging throughout your life without indulging in 'love and sleep' which symbolically represent your rights on this earth. You forego your rights and live like an adult and serve the society until you die and you get your freedom after your death. As long as your life spirit is in your body you have human awareness and you are aware of your limitations. Once you die you lose human awareness and your spirit is free to enjoy its freedom.

In the poem, Neruda does not speak of the possibilities of the human spirit 'rebellious'. Nor does he say that human spirit is being crushed by oppressive forces; the human spirit does not commit suicide. On the contrary, he describes the journey of the human spirit as an infant's foot until it becomes an adult foot and after its death how it becomes free again. From this, it can be argued that Neruda's poem is a salute to the human spirit for braving all odds and completing one's cycle of life and death peacefully, and not rebelliously.

Question 3.

Is Neruda criticizing how society crushes childhood dreams and forces people into rigid moulds?

OR

"Society crushes dreams of individuals and condemns them to live in captivity." Explain with reference to 'To the Foot from its Child'.

Answer:

Yes, to some extent. In this narrative-descriptive poem, Neruda has attempted to delineate the predicament of man as a prisoner enslaved by society. Using 'foot' as a metaphor for 'life', he narrates the journey of life from that of an 'infant foot' to an 'adult foot' until its death and after. In the first two lines itself, the poet declares the wish of childhood. The infant's foot is not aware that it is a 'foot' and hence would like to be a butterfly or an apple. These two objects – 'butterfly' and 'apple' – together suggest that the infant's foot thinks of complete freedom to become whatever it wants. Being born a human being it cannot aspire to become a butterfly or an apple.

From this, we can infer that there is some restriction imposed on us by birth itself. This is expressed in the line 'it is not aware that it is a foot'. The infant foot, once it starts growing, is exposed to the ways and means of the world. We live in human society and nature, the words 'stones, bits of glass, streets, ladders, and the paths in the rough earth' refer to man's ways of living. This exposure to man's style of living brings awareness in the child that it is a foot. The poet suggests that the infant's foot is engaged in a battle with the society and 'adults' crush the child's playful spirit and imprison it in a shoe. This stage refers to the way the child gets acclimatized to living in human society.

Once it wears the 'shoe', which means, it accepts its identity as 'man', a member of the human society, he starts exploring the human world alone, groping in the dark like a blind man. There is a difference in the way an adult explores the world. As a child, it thinks of infinite possibilities; but, as an adult, it is aware of its limitations. This means the society has been successful in crushing childhood dreams and forcing the life spirit into the rigid moulds of society.

Since the whole poem only describes various changes undergone by the human spirit, we cannot say that Neruda is criticizing society for its stranglehold on the human spirit. Secondly, Neruda also says that the child's foot does not know that it is a foot. This means, even Neruda knows that the child is born a human being and is going to live in human

society. Thirdly, nowhere in the poem does Neruda say anything against societal forces. However, Neruda sympathises with 'Man' at one point. He says, 'this foot toils in its shoe scarcely taking time to bare itself in love or sleep'. These lines indicate that Neruda only sympathises with man's predicament and does not criticize society.

Question 4.

'Foot' is a keyword in the poem. Comment on Neruda's skillful use of the word and its associations in terms of imagery to convey his ideas.

OR

Highlight the imagery used to bring out life's hardships that deform the child's foot.

Answer:

In this poem, as the title 'To the Foot from its Child' suggests, 'foot' is the keyword in the poem. The poet uses 'foot' as a metaphor for his view of 'life'. The poet personifies the 'foot' and focuses his attention on the 'life' of man, using the 'foot' as the protagonist. 'Life' begins in infancy and so even in the poem, 'life' begins as an infant's foot.

It is natural that children, who are naive and innocent, do not know that their foot is meant for walking and it has a function to discharge. Through the use of the 'foot' as a metaphor, the poet cleverly brings out the battle between harsh realities of life symbolically expressed as stones, streets, ladder, bits of glass, etc. The child dreams of becoming a butterfly or an apple. So naturally, the metaphor of foot helps the poet to convey his meaning through an imaginary battle fought between the child's foot and the surfaces on which the child is likely to walk.

The child's foot is sure to be hurt when it walks on a street laden with stones and bits of glass and paths in the rough earth and when it climbs the ladder pressing his soft foot on the pointed edges of the rungs of the ladder. Then it realizes that it is a 'foot'. Here, the poet wants the reader to know that the adult world fights against the spirit of the child and makes him become aware of his role as an individual in human society. At this stage, the foot is imprisoned in a shoe, which means, the child's consciousness reaches maturity and adulthood.

Adulthood is now represented as 'adult foot' enclosed in a shoe. The adult foot gropes in the dark and learns about the harsh realities of life like a blind man. Here, it means, unlike the child's foot which had more freedom than the adult's, the adult foot has to work in a rigid mould given by the society. The 'shoe' represents this framework given by society. Here again, the 'foot' as a metaphor comes to his help. Therefore, the poet chooses 'shoe' as representing societal norms and traditions.

The blind adult foot now walks and works without respite until he dies. The different professions of men are mentioned. The adult foot may be a man's foot or a woman's foot and keeps walking through fields, markets, mines, and ministries, and finally toils hard scarcely finding time to enjoy 'love' and 'sleep'. Here also the metaphor of the 'foot' facilitates the

expression in the line 'scarcely taking time to bare itself in love or sleep'. Finally, it ceases to be a 'foot' when a man chooses to stop working. Thus, the 'foot' as a metaphor has been skillfully used by the poet to evoke the right imagery to suit his meaning.

To the Foot from its Child Additional Questions and Answers

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

Question 1.

What did the foot find when it descended underground?

Answer:

Everything to be dark (or darkness).

Question 2.

What would like to be a butterfly or an apple in the poem 'To the Foot from its Child'?

Answer:

Foot/Child's foot.

Question 3.

What does the foot do throughout life?

OR

Mention any one of the places through which the foot walks, in 'To the Foot from its Child'.

Answer:

Throughout its life, the foot keeps walking without respite. It walks through fields, mines, markets, and ministries until death.

Question 4.

What does the phrase 'condemned to live in a shoe' mean?

Answer:

The phrase 'condemned to live in a shoe' means it has to live like other human beings, in human society.

Question 5.

Where did the foot descend after it ceased to be?

Answer:

It descended underground.

Question 6.

What did the foot find when it descended underground?

Answer:

When the foot descended underground, it found everything dark there.

Question 7.

What form do the detailed toes of a child take on as they grow?

OR

What form do the petal-like soft toes take inside the shoes?

Answer:

The petal-like toes of a child grow bunched and out of trim, take on the form of eyeless reptiles with triangular heads, like worms.

Question 8.

What do the soft nails of quartz change themselves into?

OR

How do the soft nails of the foot change as the child grows up?

Answer:

The 'soft nails of quartz' in the child's foot gradually grow hard and change themselves into an opaque substance 'hard as horn'.

Question 9.

Where is the child's foot condemned to live?

OR

Where is the defeated foot condemned to live?

Answer:

The child's foot is condemned to live in a shoe.

Question 10.

What teaches the foot that it cannot fly?

Answer:

As the child's foot grows in time and starts walking on stones and bits of glass, streets, ladders, etc., it learns that it cannot fly.

Question 11.

Where did the foot descend?

Answer:

The foot descended underground after its death.

Question 12.

What does the foot not realize at the end of the poem?

Answer:

At the end of the poem, the foot does not realize that it is dead and has ceased to be a foot.

Question 13.

What, according to the speaker, is the child's foot not yet aware in 'To the Foot from its Child'.

Answer:

In 'To the Foot from its Child', the child's foot is not yet aware that it is a foot.

Question 14.

What is out of touch with its fellow in the poem, 'To the Foot from its Child'?

Answer:

In the poem, 'To the Foot from its Child', the child's foot is out of touch with its fellow.

Question 15.

Who feels out life like a blind man in the poem, 'To the Foot from its Child'?

Answer:

The child's foot having been imprisoned in a shoe feels out life like a blind man.

Question 16.

What are the toes of the child compared to, in 'To the Foot from its Child'?

Answer:

In 'To the Foot from its Child', the tiny toes are compared to the petals of a flower.

Question 17.

What does the blind thing refer to, in 'To the Foot from its Child'?

Answer:

In 'To the Foot from its Child', the blind thing refers to the child's foot imprisoned in a shoe.

Question 18.

Mention any one of the places through which the foot walks, in 'To the Foot from its Child'.

Answer:

In 'To the Foot from its Child', the foot walks through markets.

Question 19.

How long does the foot walk, in 'To the Foot from its Child'?

Answer:

In 'To the Foot from its Child', the foot walks until the whole man chooses to stop and descends underground.

Question 20.

In 'To the Foot from its Child', the foot scarcely takes time to bare itself in

- (a) rest or peace
- (b) love or sleep
- (c) death or dream.

Answer:

- (b) love or sleep.

Question 21.

In 'To the Foot from its Child', when descending underground, the foot finds everything

- (a) dark
- (b) rough

(c) coarse.

Answer:

(a) dark.

Question 22.

In 'To the Foot from its Child', the paths in the rough earth go on teaching the foot that it cannot

(a) become a butterfly

(b) bunch together

(c) live in a shoe.

Answer:

(a) become a butterfly.

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

Question 1.

Bring out the contrast between illusion and reality in 'To the Foot from its Child'.

Answer:

Pablo Neruda presents his view of 'life' using the 'foot' as a metaphor for life. He explores life's experiences as a traveller beginning as a child's foot until it grows into an adult foot and finally dies. During the course of this journey from life to death as a cycle, the poet tries to delineate man's 'dreams' and how they get crushed in the world by outside forces.

Initially, the infant's foot is unaware that it is a 'foot' and is under the illusion that it can fly like a butterfly or be an apple on a tree. The very same infant's foot then realizes that it can only serve as a 'foot' and it cannot fly like a butterfly or be a fruit. This is the reality. The infant's foot thus, once it enters the society, is made aware of the reality and it loses its illusions.

Question 2.

Why does the poet refer to the foot' as being a blind man?

Answer:

The infant's foot tries to combat reality and faces stones, streets, bits of glass, ladder, paths in the rough earth, which teach the infant's foot that it is only a 'foot' and they take him 'prisoner'. The foot gets condemned to live inside a shoe. The shoe here stands for the society, the outside forces which discipline the individual in conformity with the norms and customs of the society. The poet refers to the 'foot as being a blind man' because once he is put inside the shoe he loses touch with its fellow and is not free to face reality as he »

Question 3.

Explain how the poet uses a foot as a metaphor for life.

OR

Describe how the foot represents an individual's life, according to the poem.

Answer:

In the poem, Neruda uses 'foot' as a metaphor for 'life'. We see different stages in life beginning with infancy or childhood, maturity, adulthood, old age, and finally death. These stages have been delineated in the poem using 'foot' as a metaphor. The poem begins with the infant's foot. Here, like all children, the infant's foot does not even know that it is only a foot. It has dream-like imagination and aspirations. That is why it dreams of flying like a butterfly with absolute freedom and enjoy the pleasures of life which are expressed as a wish to become an apple.

However, once the child's foot comes to face the external world, it becomes aware that it is only a 'foot' and cannot become a butterfly. Then it matures into an adult and from adulthood grows old and dies.

The poet describes how the child's foot which has soft, petal-like toes gets transformed into an adult foot which has toes which resemble eyeless reptiles, and are covered with nails which are calloused and bear faint volcanoes of death.

Finally, having become an adult, it slogs throughout life, relentlessly working in fields, markets, mines and ministries without respite and not enjoying the pleasures of life until it dies and is buried. Thus, the 'foot' as a metaphor serves the poet to express his view of life.

Question 4.

Why does the foot feel trapped and stifled inside the shoe?

OR

What happens to the foot when it is condemned to live in a shoe?

OR

Bring out the life of the foot in a shoe as presented in 'To the Foot from its Child'.

Answer:

The child's foot is born with a great deal of zest for life and hence it wishes to become an apple on a tree or fly like a bird. But, gradually, as it starts growing, it realizes that it is a 'foot' only and cannot become anything else. Then, its spirit loses its battle against the world. It is taken prisoner and is condemned to live in a shoe. Now, having been imprisoned in a shoe, it tries to understand the world, in its own way. It is alone and cannot communicate with its counterpart and gropes blindly in the dark like a blind man. Since it is not in the open, it is not in touch with reality directly.

The society decides what it should understand about 'life' or the world outside. Whatever ideas it forms about life have to be formed in the confined space of the shoe. It is here that the child's spirit becomes aware of its limitations as a human being and understands its role as a social being in human society. That is why it feels trapped and stifled inside the shoe.

Question 5.

Explain the instances that make the child's foot aware of the obstacles and hardships.

Answer:

The poem narrates the journey of a child's foot until it becomes an adult foot and beyond until it dies. The journey of the child's foot is similar to the 'journey of life'. The poet personifies 'foot' and focuses his attention on the 'life' of man, using the foot as the protagonist. 'Life' begins in infancy and so even in this poem, 'life' begins as an infant's foot. It is natural that children, who are naive and innocent, do not know that their foot is meant for walking and it has a function to discharge. But, in its innocence, the child dreams of becoming a butterfly or an apple. Therefore, when the child starts walking on a street laden with stones, and bits of glass and paths in the rough earth, the child's foot is naturally hurt.

Similarly, when it climbs the ladder pressing his soft foot on the pointed edges of the rungs of the ladder, it is hurt and it realizes that it is a foot. Thus, using the metaphor of 'foot', the poet conveys the imaginary battle fought between the individual and the realities of life one has to face in society. At this stage, the foot is imprisoned in a 'shoe'. The 'shoe' represents the societal norms and traditions. The 'blind' adult foot now walks and works without respite until it dies. The different roles or professions have taken up by an individual in society either as a man or woman are expressed metaphorically in the line:

"up above, down below, through fields, mines, markets, and ministries".

The individual toils hard, scarcely finding time to enjoy 'love and sleep'. Here also the metaphor of the 'foot' enables the poet to express his ideas as seen in the line:

"Scarcely taking time to bare itself in love or sleep".

The impact of life's hardships can be seen in the deformed toes of the child's foot.. The soft nails of quartz become opaque, are bunched together, and look like eyeless reptiles with triangular heads, grow callused, and are covered with faint volcanoes of death.

Question 6.

How are the contrasting image of a child's foot and foot confined to a shoe brought out in the poem?

OR

Society crushes childhood dreams and confines them to society and its norms. Explain with reference to the poem 'To the Foot from its Child'.

OR

Explain how the foot toils in its shoe until the whole man chooses to stop in 'To the Foot from its Child'.

Answer:

The child's foot is naive, and innocent and not yet aware that it is only a foot. That is why it wishes to be a butterfly or an apple. But, as the foot grows, it starts walking and it treads on stones, bits of glass, streets, ladders, and the paths in the rough earth. It soon realizes that it is only a 'foot' and it cannot fly or cannot become a bulging apple on a tree. It loses its state of innocence. Its spirit gets crushed and is defeated in realizing its aspirations.

With this awareness and maturity, the child's foot gets imprisoned in a shoe and gradually attains adulthood. Unlike a child, an adult cannot live as he/she likes. He/She has to live as a member of the society which imposes its own rigid framework on the individual. The shoe symbolizes societal norms and traditions. Inside the shoe, it tries to understand the world alone in isolation. It serves as the foot of a man or woman working in the fields, or market or mines or ministries and toils hard day and night until it dies. The poet wishes to say that the freedom of childhood is lost when a person becomes an adult and faces a life of constant work and struggle.

The impact of this life of struggle and hardships is seen in the differences one notices in a child's foot and the foot of an adult. The soft nails of quartz seen in an infant's foot become opaque, are bunched together, and look like eyeless reptiles with triangular heads, grow callused, and are covered with faint volcanoes of death.

Question 7.

How does the poet describe the monotonous life of the individual confined in a shoe?

OR

How does the poem 'To the Foot from its Child' bring out the plight of a person dictated by society?

It is natural that children, who are naive and innocent, do not know that their foot is meant for walking and the 'foot' has a function to discharge. Through the use of the 'foot' as a metaphor, the poet cleverly brings out the battle between harsh realities of life symbolically expressed as stones, streets, ladder, bits of glass, etc. The child dreams of becoming a butterfly or an apple. So naturally, the metaphor of foot helps the poet to convey his meaning through an imaginary battle fought between the child's foot and the surfaces on which the child is likely to walk.

The child's foot is sure to be hurt when it walks on a street laden with stones and bits of glass and paths in the rough earth and when it climbs the ladder pressing his soft foot on the pointed edges of the rungs of the ladder. Then it realizes that it is a 'foot'. Here, the poet wants the reader to know that the adult world fights against the spirit of the child and makes him become aware of his role as an individual in human society.

At this stage, the foot is imprisoned in a shoe, which means, the child's consciousness reaches maturity and adulthood. Adulthood is now represented as 'adult foot' enclosed in a shoe. The adult foot gropes in the dark and learns about the harsh realities of life like a blind man. Here, it means, unlike the child's foot which had more freedom than the adult's, the adult foot has to work in a rigid mould given by the society. The 'shoe' represents this framework given by society. Here again, the 'foot' as a metaphor comes to his help. Therefore, the poet chooses 'shoe' as representing societal norms and traditions.

The blind adult foot now walks and works without respite until he dies. The different professions of men are mentioned. The adult foot may be a man's foot or a woman's foot and keeps walking through fields, markets, mines, and ministries, and finally toils hard scarcely finding time to enjoy 'love' and 'sleep'. Here also the metaphor of the 'foot' facilitates the expression in the line 'scarcely taking time to bare itself in love or sleep'. Finally, it ceases to be a 'foot' when a man chooses to stop working. Thus, the 'foot' as a metaphor has been skillfully used by the poet to evoke the right imagery to suit his meaning.

Question 8.

Trace the stages of the foot's transformation as portrayed in 'To the Foot from its Child'.

OR

Bring out the changes that the foot undergoes after being condemned to live in a shoe in 'To the Foot from its Child'.

Answer:

'To the Foot from its Child' narrates the journey of a child's foot until it becomes an adult foot and beyond until it dies.

In the first stanza, there are only two lines which express the innocence of the child and its wishes. The child wants to be a butterfly or an apple, but society is harsh and forces the child to become a responsible adult doing responsible adult things.

In the next stanza, the child's foot walks in the real world and experiences the harsh realities of life. The words, 'stones, bits of glass, streets, ladders, paths in the rough surface of the earth' symbolize the forces in society.

When the child's foot encounters them in a battle, it learns that its role is that of a foot only and it cannot become a butterfly or an apple. The foot is now imprisoned in a shoe, where it grows into an adult. It gets exposed to reality as filtered through the shoe. It suffers loneliness and gradually learns the realities of life groping in the dark like a blind man.

During this life inside the shoe, it loses all the beauty of a child's foot. Its soft, nice, petal-like toes lose their beauty, become hard, callused, and look like eyeless reptiles.

The 'foot', now has grown into an adult foot, keeps on walking, works without respite in fields, markets, mines, and ministries. It toils hard giving up all its worldly pleasures and finally dies. It is then buried. But, as it descends into the ground, it loses its human awareness and does not know that it is not even a foot. So, in its spirit, it is like the child's foot and dreams of becoming a butterfly or an apple.

Thus, the poet depicts his view of life in the metaphor of a foot, with a clear progression from infancy, to maturity, to adulthood, old age, and finally death.

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

Question 1.

The poem 'To the Foot from its Child' depicts the progression from childhood through adulthood to old age and finally, death. Discuss.

OR

The poem 'To the Foot from its Child' is a comment on the journey of human life. Elucidate.

OR

Trace the stages of the foot's transformation as portrayed in 'To the Foot from its Child'.

Answer:

In the poem 'To the Foot from its Child', Pablo Neruda expresses his view of life using the metaphor of 'foot'. The poem begins with a description of the child's naivety. The child's foot does not know that it is a foot. It dreams of unlimited possibilities. It wants to become a butterfly enjoying unbridled freedom and enjoying the pleasures of life symbolized by the apple.

The poet expresses the experience of the child's foot when it is exposed to reality in the real world. It walks over stones, streets, ladders, bits of glass, paths in the rough surface of the earth. All these symbolically stand for obstacles, problems, difficulties, and hurdles that one encounters in real life. When the child's foot faces these realities, it attempts to fight them, and it becomes aware that it was in an illusory world and it does not have infinite possibilities in life but has to serve as a foot only.

It is also convinced that it cannot become a butterfly or an apple. The outside forces capture him and he is imprisoned in a shoe. Now, from that of an infant's foot, it has grown to be an adult and now the adult has been forced to live like any human individual.

Then, we get a description of the changes that the child's foot undergoes inside the shoe. Its nice, soft, petal-like toes lose their 'lustre' and the nails become harder, the toes grow bunched and look like eyeless reptiles, grow callused and are covered with faint volcanoes of death. Inside the shoe, the adult foot is like a blind man groping in the dark. This state depicts the helplessness of man when he faces the harsh realities of life as a member of society.

He slogs without respite and keeps on walking, until his death. He works in fields, markets, mines, and ministries either as a man's or a woman's foot. He does not find time to enjoy his rightful pleasures of life like 'love' and 'sleep'. Finally, one day the foot ceases to walk when the man dies.

When he is buried the foot goes underground. But now he does not know that he is no longer a 'foot'. In his consciousness, he is equal to the child's consciousness and hence he again dreams of becoming a butterfly or an apple. Thus, the poet depicts his view of life, tracing its characteristics through different stages like infancy, reaching maturity, adulthood, old age, and finally death. Thus, the poem also brings out a cyclical view of life – birth, infancy, maturity, adulthood, old age, death, and rebirth.

Question 2.

Describe the various stages that the foot goes through and what the foot learns and how it changes at each stage.

Answer:

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The poet expresses the experience of the child's foot when it is exposed to reality in the real world. It walks over stones, streets, ladders, bits of glass, paths in the rough surface of the earth. All these symbolically stand for obstacles, problems, difficulties, and hurdles that one encounters in real life. When the child's foot faces these realities, it attempts to fight them, and it becomes aware that it was in an illusory world and it does not have infinite possibilities in life but has to serve as a foot only. It is also convinced that it cannot become a butterfly or an apple. The outside forces capture him and he is imprisoned in a shoe. Now, from that of an infant's foot, it has grown to be an adult and now the adult has been forced to live like any human individual.

Then, we get a description of the changes that the child's foot undergoes inside the shoe. Its nice, soft, petal-like toes lose their 'lustre' and the nails become harder, the toes grow bunched and look like eyeless reptiles, grow callused and are covered with faint volcanoes of death. Inside the shoe, the adult foot is like a blind man groping in the dark. This state depicts the helplessness of man when he faces the harsh realities of life as a member of society. He slogs without respite and keeps on walking, until his death. He works in fields, markets, mines, and ministries either as a man's or a woman's foot. He does not find time to enjoy his rightful pleasures of life like 'love' and 'sleep'. Finally, one day the foot ceases to walk when the man dies.

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Question 3.

Bring out the stages of hardships faced by the foot after being confined in a shoe.

OR

Explain the various stages of hardships faced by the foot after being confined in a shoe.

OR

Describe the different stages of transformation of the foot after it is condemned to live in a

shoe.

OR

The foot is forced to play various roles and shoulder many responsibilities. Explain with reference to 'To the Foot from its Child'.

Answer:

As the child learns to walk and starts walking on stones, bits of glass, streets, ladders and the rough surface of the earth, the child's foot becomes aware of its role. It learns that it is a foot and cannot become a butterfly or a bulging fruit on a tree. Once it realizes that it is a foot, it is defeated in realizing its aspirations and gets imprisoned in a shoe. Inside the shoe, it tries to understand the world in its own way, alone, like a blind man groping in the dark. During this period its soft nails of quartz become opaque, are bunched together, and look like eyeless reptiles with triangular heads, grow callused, and are covered with faint volcanoes of death.

These changes happen because, once the child's foot becomes an adult's foot, it walks as the foot of a man or woman and keeps walking in the fields as a farmer, or as a grocer in the markets, or as a miner in the mines or as a church minister or a government worker, until its death. Thus, the foot experiences the hardships of life and loses its 'soft' and flowery petal-like form.

Question 4.

"The norms of the social control a man just as the foot is enclosed in a shoe". How is this depicted in 'To the Foot from its Child'?

Answer:

The poet Neruda uses the 'foot' as a metaphor and conveys his view of life. Thus, by personifying the foot, the poet expects the readers to compare the experience of the foot to the whole person's hopes and dreams as well as to the realities of everyday life. By and large, one can say that the poem is basically a criticism of how people force children to grow in society forgetting all their dreams and aspirations. The child wants to be a butterfly or an apple, but society is harsh and forces the child to become a responsible adult doing responsible adult things.

As a child's foot, it has relatively more freedom than the adult's foot. As the infant's foot starts walking in the real world outside, it steps over "stones and bits of glass, streets, ladders and the paths in the rough earth". It realizes that its role is that of a foot and it cannot become a butterfly or an apple. The moment it discovers that it is only a foot, its spirit loses its battle against the world. It surrenders itself to the dictates of the society. It is taken prisoner and is condemned to live in a shoe.

It also means that the child's spirit becomes aware of its limitations as a human being and understands its roles, duties, and responsibilities as a social being in human society. It is true that "the foot is a symbol for the helplessness of an individual in the vice-like grip of an insensitive system". This meaning is captured in the phrase 'condemned to live in a shoe'.

Once it gets imprisoned, it has to slog there until it dies. The society decides what it should understand about 'life' or the world outside. Gradually, the foot adapts itself to its world and learns to cope with the harsh realities of life.

The adult foot gets trapped in the routines of everyday life or the humdrum commonality of existence. It is now less capable of enjoyment and finds life difficult in every walk of life. It slogs and slogs either as a man's foot or as a woman's foot working in the field or market or mines or ministries day and night, scarcely finding time to enjoy the pleasure of love or sleep. It works without respite and finally meets with death.

To the Foot from its Child by Pablo Neruda About the Poet:

Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) is the pen name and, later legal name of the Chilean poet, diplomat, and politician Ricardo Eliecer Neftali Reyes Basoalto. In 1971 Neruda won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Neruda became known as a poet while still a teenager. He wrote in a variety of styles including surrealist poems, historical epics, overtly political manifestos, a prose autobiography, and erotically- charged love poems such as the ones in his 1924 collection 'Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair'.

Neruda's poetry is renowned for its fantastic imagery and surreal use of language. The surrealists attempted to express in art and literature the workings of the unconscious mind and to synthesize these workings with the conscious mind.

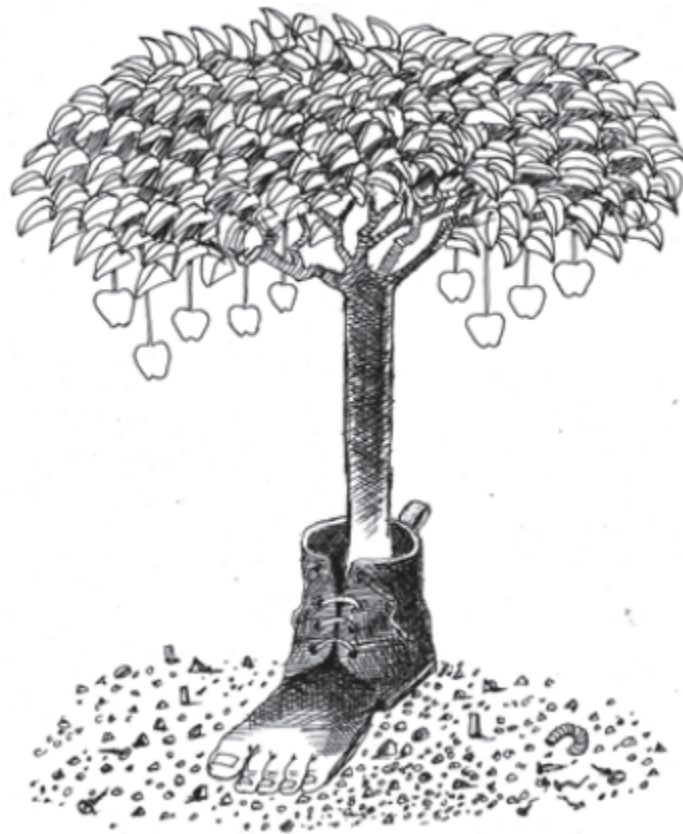
Neruda believes that our most intense experience of impermanence is not death, but our own isolation among the living. It is probably this idea that gets reflected in the poem 'To the Foot from its Child'. According to Neruda, "it was through metaphor, not rational analysis and argument, that the mysteries of the world could be revealed".

Background:

'To the Foot from its Child' is the translated English version of the original poem 'Al Pie Desde Su Nino' written by Pablo Neruda and translated into English by Alastair Reid. [The poem appears in the collection of poems titled 'Estravagaris' published in 1958. 'Extravagaris' (Book of Vagaries) is the English title given by Reid].

To the Foot from its Child Summary in English

'To the Foot from its Child' by Pablo Neruda is a narrative-descriptive poem which narrates the journey of a child's foot until it becomes an adult foot and beyond until it dies. Besides narrating the experiences of the adult foot until its death, the poem also describes the changes that the child's foot undergoes until it becomes an adult foot.



The journey of the child's foot is similar to the 'journey of life'. The poet uses the 'foot' as a metaphor and conveys his view of life. This metaphor helps the poet to convey the idea of how the child's spirit gets crushed through the challenges and restrictions that life places upon him. Thus, by personifying the foot, the poet expects the reader to compare the experience of the foot to the whole person's hopes and dreams as well as to the realities of everyday life. By and large one can infer that the poem is basically a criticism of how people force children to grow in society and forget all their dreams and aspirations. The child wants to be a butterfly or an apple, but society is harsh and forces the kid to become a responsible adult doing responsible adult things.

The transition of the child's foot into an adult foot and then until its death can be studied under four stages conveniently. The four stages are

1. Childhood
2. Experiencing Reality
3. Maturity and
4. Death and Rebirth.

A brief description of each stage is given below:

1. Childhood (Lines 1 – 2):

The first stanza describes the characteristic features of the child's foot. It is an infant's foot and it does not know that it is a 'foot' at all. It lacks awareness and hence it dreams of

unlimited possibilities. It would like to be a 'butterfly' or an 'apple'. The foot has an optimistic view of life.

2. Experiencing Reality (Lines 3 – 16):

Here the poet highlights the impact of time on the child. As the infant's foot starts growing in the outside world, it begins to experience the harshness and pain of life while walking. When it steps over, "stones and bits of glass, / streets, ladders / and the paths in the rough earth, it learns that its role is that of a foot the same way people become aware of their role in life. It realizes that it can neither fly like a butterfly nor become a bulged apple on the branch of a tree. The child's foot has now discovered that it is only a 'foot', its spirit loses its battle against the world, is taken prisoner, and is condemned to live in a shoe. It also means that the child's spirit becomes aware of its limitations as a human being and understands its role as a social being in human society.

Now, having been imprisoned in a shoe, it gradually tries to understand the world, in its own way. It is alone and cannot communicate with its counterpart, and gropes blindly in the dark like a blind man. The 'foot' is not in the open and whatever ideas it forms about life, are formed in the confined space of the shoe. Here, it means, it is not in touch with reality directly. The society decides what it should understand about 'life' or the world outside. Gradually, the foot adapts itself to its world and learns to cope with the harsh realities of life.

3. Maturity (Lines 17 – 46):

In this part of the poem the poet gives a graphic description of the changes seen in the child's foot during its transition from a child's foot to 'adult foot'. The 'soft nails of quartz' in the child's foot gradually grow hard and change themselves into an 'opaque' substance 'hard as horn'. The 'tiny petaled toes' of the child's foot 'grow bunched and out of trim'. The toes in the adult foot appear like 'eyeless reptiles'. Later they grow harder and become callused.

In this stanza, the poet attempts to let the reader know that as the child grows into an adult it becomes less open to reality. It also means that people grow harder both physically and emotionally. The phrase 'faint volcanoes of death' suggests that the foot comes to appreciate 'mortality'. Thus, we find that the child's foot has now been transformed from a beautiful form into a warped and ugly one.

The poet then describes the journey of an adult foot until its death. It is now like an eyeless reptile. Hence he calls it a 'blind thing'. The adult foot is now in the harsh world outside, suggesting that the adult gets trapped in the routines of everyday life or the humdrum commonality of existence. It is now less capable of enjoyment and finds life difficult in every walk of life. It slogs and slogs either as a man's foot or as a woman's foot working in the field or market or mines or ministries. It toils in the shoe, day and night, scarcely finding time to enjoy the pleasures of life or sleep. It works without respite and finally meets with death.

4. Death and Rebirth (Lines 47 – 53):

Soon after the death, the adult foot gets buried. It goes down into the underground. It finds everything dark there. It also does not know that it is dead and has ceased to be a foot. When the foot dies and is buried, its consciousness is childlike again. Therefore, the foot revisits the possibilities of flying like a butterfly or becoming an apple. Here it means that people consider the possibility of an after-life.

To sum up, the freedom of childhood is lost when a person becomes an adult and is exposed to a life of constant work and struggle. Outside, uncontrollable forces have the power to direct one's life and thus 'life' in society takes away people's free spirits until they are freed again by death. The human promise is not fulfilled by those whom society enslaves and mistreats.

The poet imagines that the naked foot of a boy, innocent still of the habituations of social society does not know that it is a foot, or a butterfly or an apple.

Only through a long process of denial of our embodied natures, beginning with the simple act of wearing shoes and thus denying contact with the earth does the boy become a man. However, upon being buried, he still does not know if he will fly or become an apple.

To the Foot from its Child Summary in Kannada

Glossary:

- Quartz: a hard white colourless mineral consisting of silicon dioxide
- Opaque: not transparent
- Petaled: like petals
- Callus: thickened and hardened part of the skin
- Respite: a short period of rest