

A Letter to God

Oral Comprehension Check (Page 5)

Question 1:

What did Lencho hope for?

Answer:

Lencho had hoped for a downpour or at least a shower for his ripe corn fields as it was needed for a good harvest.

Question 2:

Why did Lencho say the raindrops were like 'new coins'?

Answer:

Lencho compared the raindrops to 'new coins', the big drops as ten cent pieces and the little ones as fives. As his crops were ready for harvest, he hoped that the rains would bring him prosperity so he felt the raindrops were like 'new coins'.

Question 3:

How did the rain change? What happened to Lencho's fields?

Answer:

The rain started pouring down. But suddenly a strong wind blew and very large hailstones, like frozen pearls, began to fall along with the rain. The hailstorm continued for an hour and destroyed Lencho's corn fields and washed away the flowers from the plants too.

Question 4:

What were Lencho's feelings when the hail stopped?

Answer:

After the hailstones stopped, Lencho's soul was filled with grief and dismay. He realised that everything was ruined by the hailstorm and nothing was left to feed his family for the entire year. He could visualize the bleak future of his family.

Oral Comprehension Check (Page 6)

Question 1:

Who or what did Lencho have faith in? What did he do?

Answer:

Lencho had strong faith in God. He believed that God's eyes see everything, even what is deep in one's conscience. Hence, he wrote a letter to God citing that he needed a hundred pesos to sow his field again

that was destroyed by the hailstorm.

Question 2:

Who read the letter?

Answer:

The postmaster read Lencho's letter addressed to God.

Question 3:

What did the postmaster do then?

Answer:

Initially, the postmaster broke out into laughter, but was soon moved by the seriousness of Lencho's faith in God. He didn't want to shake the writer's faith in the Almighty so he came up with an idea to collect money from his employees, friends and gave a part of his salary and sent it to Lencho.

Oral Comprehension Check (Page 7)

Question 1:

Was Lencho surprised to find a letter for him with money in it?

Answer:

No, Lencho was not at all surprised on receiving a letter from God with money in it. He was very confident and had firm faith in God that his request would definitely be taken care of by the Almighty.

Question 2:

What made him angry?

Answer:

When Lencho counted the money he found seventy pesos only, instead of hundred pesos demanded by him from God. He was confident that God could neither make a mistake in sending him less money, nor could he have denied Lencho what he had requested. Therefore, he came to the conclusion that the post office employees must have taken the remaining thirty pesos from the envelope.

Thinking about the Text (Page 7-8)

Question 1:

Who does Lencho have complete faith in? Which sentences in the story tell you this?

Answer:

Lencho had complete faith in God as he was instructed that God could see everything and helped whoever was in deep trouble. Given below are a few sentences which exhibit his faith in God:

1. But in the hearts of all who lived in that solitary house in the middle of the valley, there was a single hope help from God.
2. All through the night, Lencho thought only of his one hope: the help of God, whose eyes, as he had been instructed, see everything, even what is deep in one's conscience.
3. "God", he wrote, "if you don't help me, my family and I will go hungry this year".
4. He wrote 'To God' on the envelope, put the letter inside and still troubled, went to town.

5. God could not have made a mistake, nor could he have denied Lencho what he had requested.
6. It said: "God: Of the money that I asked for, only seventy pesos reached me. Send me the rest, since I need it very much".

Question 2:

Why does the postmaster send money to Lencho? Why does he sign the letter 'God'?

Answer:

The postmaster was deeply moved by Lencho's faith in God. Hence, he decided to send some money to Lencho in order to avoid shaking the latter's faith in God. So, he collected some money from his colleagues and friends and signed the letter as 'God'. The postmaster felt it was an ideal ploy to convey a message to Lencho that God has sent him the money and that God himself signed on it.

Question 3:

Did Lencho try to find out who had sent the money to him? Why/Why not?

Answer:

No, Lencho did not try to find out who had sent him the money because he was confident that God had sent it to him. Not for a moment did he suspect that someone else other than God could have sent the money to him. His faith in the Almighty was so rock-solid that he knew that nothing escapes God's eyes. Lencho felt that God was aware of the unfortunate incident faced by him and requested him to save him from this difficult situation.

Question 4:

Who does Lencho think has taken the rest of the money? What is the irony in the situation? (Remember that the irony of a situation is an unexpected aspect of it. An ironic situation is strange or amusing because it is the opposite of what is expected.)

Answer:

Upon counting the money, when Lencho found seventy pesos only in the envelope instead of hundred pesos that he had requested from God, he was confident that the Almighty couldn't have made such a big mistake. From this situation, he understood that the post office employees could have stolen the remaining thirty pesos from the envelope. Hence, he called them crooks.

The element of irony in this situation is that Lencho ends up suspecting those very people who helped him in his crisis, in order to avoid shaking his faith in God.

Question 5:

Are there people like Lencho in the real world? What kind of a person would you say he is? You may select appropriate words from the box to answer the question.

greedy	naive	stupid	ungrateful
selfish	comical	unquestioning	

Answer:

It is not easy to find people like Lencho in the real world as he has a naïve and unquestioning nature. From the story, we can conclude that he is not stupid and a literate person who wrote a letter to God without any address requesting for money. Lencho had deep faith in God and was confident that he would

definitely receive some financial help from the Almighty.

Question 6:

There are two kinds of conflict in the story: between humans and nature, and between humans themselves. How are these conflicts illustrated?

Answer:

The conflicts between humans and nature is shown in the story when Lencho's crops were destroyed by the hailstorm. He had expected some good rain for a good harvest. However, when his crops were damaged by the hailstorm, he lost all hope and became sad at the sight of his destroyed field.

However, the story also depicts conflicts of humans between themselves. The postmaster collected some money from his colleagues, friends and gave a part of his salary to help Lencho so that the latter's faith in God is not shaken. It was a beautiful act of selflessness and kindness on their part. Despite their noble act, when Lencho received the money, he blindly believed that God had sent him the money and he blamed the post office employees for stealing some money from the envelope. This implies that man lacks faith in his fellow human beings, which gives rise to conflicts amongst themselves.

Thinking about Language (Page 8-11)

Question 1:

There are different names in different parts of the world for storms, depending on their nature. Can you match the names in the box with their descriptions below, and fill in the blanks? You may use a dictionary to help you.

gale,	whirlwind,	cyclone,
hurricane,	tornado,	typhoon

1. A violent tropical storm in which strong winds move in a circle: ____ c ____
2. An extremely strong wind: ____ a ____
3. A violent tropical storm with very strong winds: ____ p ____
4. A violent storm whose centre is a cloud in the shape of a funnel: ____ n ____
5. A violent storm with very strong winds, especially in the western Atlantic Ocean: ____ r ____
6. A very strong wind that moves very fast in a spinning movement and causes a lot of damage: ____ l ____

Answer:

1. A violent tropical storm in which strong winds move in a circle: c y c l o n e
2. An extremely strong wind: g a l e

3. A violent tropical storm with very strong winds: t y p h o o n
4. A violent storm whose centre is a cloud in the shape of a funnel: t o r n a d o
5. A violent storm with very strong winds, especially in the western Atlantic Ocean: h u r r i c a n e
6. A very strong wind that moves very fast in a spinning movement and causes a lot of damage: w h i r l w i n d

Question 2:

Match the sentences in Column A with the meanings of 'hope' in Column B.

A	B
1. Will you get the subjects you want to study in college? I hope so.	– a feeling that something good will probably happen
2. I hope you don't mind my saying this, but I don't like the way you are arguing.	– thinking that this would happen (It may or may not have happened.)
3. This discovery will give new hope to HIV/AIDS sufferers.	– stopped believing that this good thing would happen
4. We were hoping against hope that the judges would not notice our mistakes.	– wanting something to happen (and thinking it quite possible)
5. I called early in the hope of speaking to her before she went to school.	– showing concern that what you say should not offend or disturb the other person: a way of being polite
6. Just when everybody had given up hope, the fishermen came back, seven days after the cyclone.	– wishing for something to happen, although this is very unlikely

Answer:

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Question 3:

Relative Clauses: Join the sentences given below using who, whom, whose, which, as suggested.

1. I often go to Mumbai. Mumbai is the commercial capital of India. (which)
2. My mother is going to host a TV show on cooking. She cooks very well. (who)
3. These sportspersons are going to meet the President. Their performance has been excellent. (whose)
4. Lencho prayed to God. His eyes see into our minds. (whose)
5. This man cheated me. I trusted him. (whom)

Answer:

1. I often go to Mumbai, which is the commercial capital of India.
2. My mother, who cooks very well, is going to host a TV show on cooking.
3. These sportspersons, whose performance has been excellent, are going to meet the President.
4. Lencho prayed to God, whose eyes see into our minds.
5. This man, whom I trusted, cheated me.

Question 4:

Using Negatives for Emphasis: Find sentences in the story with negative words, which express the following ideas emphatically.

1. The trees lost all their leaves.

2. The letter was addressed to God himself.

3. The postman saw this address for the first time in his career.

Answer:

1. The trees lost all their leaves.

Not a leaf remained on the trees.

2. The letter was addressed to God himself.

It was nothing less than a letter to God.

3. The postman saw this address for the first time in his career.

Never in his career as a postman had he seen that address.

Question 5:

Metaphors: In pairs, find metaphors from the story to complete the table below. Try to say what qualities are being compared. One has been done for you.

Object	Metaphor	Quality or Feature Compared
Cloud	Huge mountains of clouds	The mass or 'hugeness' of mountains
Raindrops		
Hailstones		
Locusts		
		An epidemic (a disease) that spreads very rapidly and leaves many people dead
	An ox of a man	

Answer:

Object	Metaphor	Quality or Feature Compared
Cloud	Huge mountains of clouds	The mass or 'hugeness' of mountains
Raindrops	Coins	The money that the good crops will bring when sold
Hailstones	Frozen pearls	Resembles the colour, hardness and brightness of pearls
Locusts	A plague of locusts	The destruction caused by plague and its consequences
Locusts	A plague of locusts	An epidemic (a disease) that spreads very rapidly and leaves many people dead

Lencho	An ox of a man	Strong and hardworking nature resembles the working of an ox in the fields
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Speaking (Page 11)

Question 1:

Have you ever been in great difficulty, and felt that only a miracle could help you? How was your problem solved? Speak about this in class with your teacher.

Answer:

Activity to be done by yourself.

Listening (Page 12)

Question 1:

Listen to the letter (given under 'In This Lesson') read out by your teacher/on the audio tape. As you listen fill in the table given below.

The writer apologises (says sorry) because	
The writer has sent this to the reader	
The writer sent it in the month of	
The reason for not writing earlier	
Sarah goes to	
Who is writing to whom?	
Where and when were they last together?	

Answer:

Activity to be done by yourself.

Writing (Page 12)

Question 1:

Lencho suffered first due to drought and then by floods. Our country is also facing such situations in the recent years. There is flood and there is drought. There is a need to save water through water harvesting. Design a poster for your area on how to save water during summer and when it is available in excess.

Answer:

Activity to be done by yourself.

Dust of Snow

Thinking about the Poem (Page 14)

Question 1:

What is a “dust of snow”? What does the poet say has changed his mood? How has the poet’s mood changed?

Answer:

The ‘dust of snow’ refers to the snowflakes and its fine particles. The poet’s mood changed due to the sudden shower of snowflakes. He was in dismay earlier, but it changed to a happy and joyful mood as he felt refreshed and energized to enjoy the rest of the day.

Question 2:

How does Frost present nature in this poem? The following questions may help you to think of an answer.

- (i) What are the birds that are usually named in poems? Do you think a crow is often mentioned in poems? What images come to your mind when you think of a crow?
- (ii) Again, what is “a hemlock tree”? Why doesn’t the poet write about amore ‘beautiful’ tree such as a maple, or an oak, or a pine?
- (iii) What do the ‘crow’ and ‘hemlock’ represent — joy or sorrow? What does the dust of snow that the crow shakes off a hemlock tree stand for?

Answer:

In the poem, Frost presents nature in a very unconventional manner.

- (i) Generally, poets consider birds and trees to represent beauty and positive qualities such as a parrot, peacock, cuckoo, etc. and trees consist of beautiful flowers and bear tasty fruits, etc. In this poem, Frost mentions a crow in this poem, which is often not used in poems by poets. Generally, a crow is a black colour bird that has a harsh voice and is considered a symbol of bad omen. Therefore, the word ‘crow’ in the poem depicts foreboding and depressing pictures to our mind.
- (ii) Frost mentions “a hemlock tree” that is a poisonous plant having small white flowers. The poet however, didn’t choose to use a maple, pine or oak tree that symbolize beauty and joyfulness. Instead, he chose the hemlock tree while leaving aside all the beautiful trees of nature to represent his sadness and regretful feelings.
- (iii) The ‘crow’ and ‘hemlock’ tree represent sorrow and depressing mood and feelings felt by the poet in this capitalistic world. The dust of snow symbolized a sense of natural joy and energy in him. The dust of snow that the crow shakes off a hemlock tree refers to the sad and depressing moments experienced by the poet initially which were gone as he enters into a joyful and optimistic feeling.

Question 3:

Have there been times when you felt depressed or hopeless? Have you experienced a similar moment that changed your mood that day?

Answer:

Yes, there have been innumerable times when I felt sad, depressed and hopeless due to some unavoidable circumstances in my life. Sometimes, such moments were caused due to indifferent behaviour and attitude of other people and sometimes due to my own conduct. On one occasion, I returned tired and upset from school. Upon reaching home, my puppy jumped and embraced me. This little joy literally changed my mood and I was overjoyed by such a nice gesture by the little creature and this uplifted my mood for the rest of the day. Soon I freshened up and played with my puppy for a while and caressed him with love and affection.



Fire and Ice

Thinking about the Poem (Page 15)

Question 1:

There are many ideas about how the world will 'end'. Do you think the world will end some day? Have you ever thought what would happen if the sun got so hot that it 'burst', or grew colder and colder?

Answer:

There are multiple theories about how the world will 'end'. Yes, I do believe that the world will end someday as we all know that every particular thing which begins also has an end to it. This holds true for the world too that if the Sun got so hot and it bursts, the entire life on Earth would perish immediately as the planet would not be able to tolerate the intensity of heat. On the contrary, if the Sun grew colder and colder, it is obvious that life will come to an end without sunlight. We are aware of the fact that sunlight is a rich source of energy to all the planets in the solar system.

Question 2:

For Frost, what do 'fire' and 'ice' stand for? Here are some ideas:

greed	avarice	cruelty	lust
conflict	fury	intolerance	rigidity
insensitivity	coldness	indifference	hatred

Answer:

'Fire' stands for greed, avarice, lust, conflict and fury. 'Ice' stands for cruelty, intolerance, rigidity, insensitivity, coldness, indifference and hatred.

Question 3:

What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? How does it help in bringing out the contrasting ideas in the poem?

Answer:

The rhyme scheme of the poem is: a, b, a, a, b, c, b, c, b.

This rhyme scheme helps in projecting the contrasting ideas of 'fire' and 'ice' that are presented in the poem. The poet, Frost mentions both fire and ice as the probable ends of the planet Earth. He talks about how 'fire' represents desire and might be a possible cause of the end of the world. The poet also mentions 'ice' in the poem to symbolize that the coldness and indifference that people might have towards one another will be a reason good enough to end the world. In the second stanza of the poem, the poet says that he knows of enough hate in this world and is sure that even destruction through ice would be sufficient and adequate to bring about an end of the planet Earth.