When Great Trees Fall

Multiple Choice Questions

1) Identify the figure of speech that the phrase 'rocks on distant hills shudder' primarily uses.

(a) Personification (b) Simile (c) Oxymoron (d) Irony

2) The poet use animals like lions and elephants to convey the theme of loss. What could be the probable reason?

(a) To show their dominance in nature despite disruptions
(b) To highlight their vulnerability in the face of great changes.
(c) To compare their strength to that of falling trees.
(d) To emphasise the insignificance of the trees' fall to wildlife

3) How does the line "elephants lumber after safety" contribute to the poem's tone?

(a) It adds a sense of urgency and movement.
(b) It contrasts the stillness of the trees with the activity of animals
(c) It conveys a feeling of hopelessness and fatigue.
(d) It emphasises the resilience of life in times of loss.

4) The lions and elephants react to the death of great personalities by

1. running here and there **2. lumbering**
3. roaring and making sounds **4. crouching**

(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3 **(c) 2 and 4** (d) 3 and 4

5) The broader theme does the poet hint at through the reactions of nature and animals to the falling trees is

(a) The inevitability of destruction and its universal impact.
(b) The cyclical nature of life and death in ecosystems.
(c) The chaos caused by the loss of foundational figures.
(d) The harmony and balance maintained despite great loss.

6) What does the phrase "small things recoil into silence" suggest about the reaction of smaller creatures?

(a) They become cautious to avoid predators.
(b) They experience a deep sense of shock and stillness.
(c) They find comfort in silence amidst chaos.
(d) They actively hide to protect themselves.

7) How does the poet create a tone of solemnity in the second stanza?

(a) By using vivid imagery of destruction and chaos.
(b) By focusing on the silence and sensory depletion of small beings.
(c) By describing the loudness of the falling trees.
(d) By portraying a balance between life and death in nature.

8) Which words from the stanza 2 reflect that the senses are numb?

(a) Recoil into silence
(b) Erode beyond fear
(c) Small things
(d) Fall in forests

9) We see atmospheric changes when great souls die. Complete the phrase based on this inference. The air around us becomes light _____.

(a) rare and sterile
(b) purer and fresh
(c) polluted and silent
(d) rare and sceptic

10) The poet suggests that after great souls die, our memories _____.

(a) focus on joyful moments shared.
(b) become overwhelmed by unspoken regrets and missed opportunities.
(c) fade away to ease the pain.
(d) provide us comfort through their permanence.

11) 'We breathe, briefly. /Our eyes, briefly, /see with a hurtful clarity.' Which figure of speech is used in the above lines?

(a) Personification (b) Anaphora (c) Assonance **(d) Enjambment**

12) The poet uses the phrase 'kind words unsaid'. What does it symbolise?

(a) The power of silence during grief.
(b) Missed chances to express love or gratitude.
(c) The indifference of the speaker towards the departed.
(d) The futility of communication after loss.

13) The repetition of the word 'briefly in the poem suggests

(a) the fleeting nature of grief and its emotions.
(b) the immediate and overwhelming shock of loss.
(c) the temporary clarity and reflection brought by grief
(d) the insignificance of loss in the broader context of life

14) The poet uses the line 'our reality, bound to them...' What does it signify?

(a) Relief that great souls are gone
(b) Dependence on influential figures.
(c) Immediate sense of loss
(d) Emotional imbalance

15) The line "Our minds, formed and informed by their radiance, fall away" implies that _____.

(a) the influence of great souls is temporary.
(b) the guidance of great souls is vital for intellectual and emotional growth.
(c) minds cannot function independently of others.
(d) loss completely destroys one's ability to think and reason.

16) The poet compares the state of being after great souls die to

(a) a life full of light and hope.
(b) an existence in dark, cold caves of ignorance.
(c) a gradual return to normalcy and joy.
(d) a journey through radiant memories.

18) Identify the figure of speech in 'peace blooms, slowly and always irregularly'.

(a) Simile (b) Metaphor **(c) Personification** (d) Hyperbole

19) The poet concludes that the existence of great souls _____.

(a) serves as a constant reminder of human limitations.
(b) offers hope and motivation to strive for improvement.
(c) creates a burden of living up to their standards.
(d) leaves us yearning for their physical presence.

20) How does the poet suggest that the legacy of great souls inspires us?

(a) By stating that their lives lead to despair and reflection.
(b) By encouraging us to live better and honour their memory.
(c) By showing the impossibility of matching their greatness.
(d) By advocating for forgetting and moving on quickly.

21) The line 'They existed. They existed' is an example of _____.

(a) anaphora (b) epiphora **(c) repetition** (d) antithesis

22) Which theme is most prominent in the poem's conclusion?

(a) The inevitability of death.
(b) The resilience of humanity in the face of loss.
(c) The permanence of grief and sorrow.
(d) The futility of remembering the past.

23) The poet explores the relationship between grief and inspiration. How does she do so?

(a) By showing how grief erases memories of the deceased
(b) By portraying grief as a transformative and motivating force
(c) By emphasising the struggle to recover from loss
(d) By stating that grief leads only to despair

24) The tone of the poem as it transitions from grief to hope can be described as

(a) gradually uplifting and reflective (b) abruptly celebratory and jubilant
(c) consistently mournful and somber (d) hesitantly critical and skeptical

25) Select the option that shows the correct relationship between (1) and (2).

Statement 1 : The falling of a great tree shocks both big and small creatures.
Statement 2 : The death of a great person madden their loved ones.

(a) Statement 1 is true, and Statement 2 is false.
(b) Statement 1 is false, and Statement 2 is true.
(c) Statement 1 is an analogy for Statement 2.
(d) Statement 1 is the reason for Statement 2.

26) The five stages of grief are described as shock, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Which of these stages is expressed in the following lines? "And when great souls die, after a period peace blooms,"

(a) Shock (b) Anger (c) Depression **(d) Acceptance**

27) The central idea of Angelou's poem When Great Trees Fall is that _____.

(a) when a gigantic tree falls, it affects all the trees in the jungle
(b) the death of an ancient tree disturbs all the animals in the jungle
(c) the impact of the death of a loved one on those struggling to cope with the loss
(d) life will never be the same after the loss of a loved one

28) The theme of Maya Angelou's poem 'When Great Trees Fall' is _____.

(a) the impact of the death of a loved one on those left behind.
(b) the effect of felling trees on the environment.
(c) how the death of trees affects humanity.
(d) the impact of natural calamities on a forest.

Extract Based Questions

Extract 1

"When great trees fall,
rocks on distant hills shudder,
lions hunker down
in tall grasses,
and even elephants
lumber after safety."

(i) How does the poetic genre enhance the expression of ideas in these lines?

Ans. The poetic genre allows for the use of rich imagery and symbolism, which deepen the emotional response of the ideas. Here, the poet uses free verse to evoke an understanding of the majesty of loss and its consequences. The conciseness of poetry emphasises the weight of each image, making the message more impactful.

(ii) Why does the poet use animals like lions and elephants in these lines?

Ans. The poet uses animals such as lions and elephants to symbolise strength and majesty. They seek safety which illustrates that the repercussions of falling of 'great trees' are felt by all. Even the strongest and most powerful creatures are rendered vulnerable, highlighting the magnificence of the fall.

(iii) Evaluate the effectiveness of the imagery in conveying the gravity of loss.

Ans. The imagery is highly effective in conveying the gravity of loss. By comparing the fallen great souls to great trees, the poet draws a parallel between their Importance and the essential role. The reactions of rocks, lions, and elephants further emphasise the widespread and profound effects of their absence, making the idea of loss relatable and universal

(iv) What can be inferred about the poet's perspective on loss from these lines?

Ans. The poet views loss as a powerful, all-encompassing force that affects not just individuals but the world at large. The poet sees the fall of great souls as a disruption in the natural order, with widespread and long-lasting consequences.

(v) Describe the effect on the people when great souls die, according to the poet.

Ans. According to the poet, when great souls die, their absence causes a deep sense of loss and disruption. People feel disconnected, as their souls shrink and their minds fall into ignorance.

However, after the initial sorrow, peace gradually returns, though irregularly. As people reflect on the deceased, their memories become sharper, and they regret missed opportunities. Over time, the legacy of the great souls inspires others to 'be and be better. motivating them to live more meaningfully. The effect is both sorrowful and transformative, ultimately leading to personal growth.

Extract 2

"When great trees fall in forests,
small things recoil into silence,
their senses eroded by fear."

(i) What effect does the falling of 'great trees' have on distant hills and animals in the jungle?

OR

What effect does the falling of a 'great tree' have on the creatures of the forest?

Ans. The falling of 'great trees' causes a profound effect on the distant hills and animals in the jungle. The poet describes how the rocks on distant hills 'shudder', indicating that even the most solid and immovable elements of nature react to the loss.

Animals, like lions and elephants, seek safety, with lions hunkering down in tall grasses and elephants lumbering away. This suggests that the loss of great souls has a universal and far-reaching impact affecting even the strongest and most stable forces in nature.

(ii) Explain in your own words the line, 'small things eroded by fear'.

Ans. The line 'small things... eroded by fear' suggests that the smaller, more vulnerable aspects of life-whether it be people, emotions, or elements of nature-become overwhelmed and weakened by the fear caused by the loss of great souls. The small creatures withdraw into silence and they are too terrified to make a sound.

The word 'eroded' conveys the idea of something gradually worn down or destroyed. In this context, it implies that their senses are eaten up by fear. They are overwhelmed at the magnitude of the loss.

(iii) How is one's memory affected by the death of a great soul?

Ans. The death of a great soul sharpens one's memory. According to the poet, after the death, people become more aware of things they may have overlooked before, such as 'kind words unsaid' or promised walks never taken'. The loss brings sudden clarity, making one reflect on the unspoken and the unfulfilled, often leading to regret.

This heightened awareness and emotional reflection cause the memory to become more vivid and intense, as people revisit moments and feelings they may have taken for granted when the great soul was alive.

(iv) What analogy does Angelou use to describe the death of a great soul? Give two reasons to show that this analogy is appropriate.

Ans. Angelou uses the analogy of the fall of 'great trees' to describe the death of a great soul. This analogy is appropriate for two main reasons

(a) The fall of a tree, like the death of a great soul creates a significant and lasting impact on the surrounding environment.

(b) The poet highlights that when great trees fall, even distant hills and animals in the jungle are affected. Similarly, the death of a great soul disrupts not only the immediate circle but also has

far-reaching consequences on the lives of many others symbolising the universal impact of such a loss.

(v) Trace the stages of grief and coming to terms with the loss of a loved one that Maya Angelou describes in her poem "When Great Trees Fall'.

Ans. In Maya Angelou's poem, the stages of grief are :

(a) Shock : The loss causes immediate disruption symbolised by rocks shuddering and animals seeking safety.

(b) Fear/Denial : People retreat into silence, overwhelmed by fear and struggling to accept the reality of the loss.

(c) Regret/Remorse : There is reflection on 'kind words unsaid and missed opportunities, leading to feelings of regret.

(d) Sense of Loss : The loss creates a deep emptiness, with reality feeling distant and people feeling diminished.

(e) Acceptance : Over time, peace slowly returns, and the memory of the departed inspires others to live better lives in their honour.

These stages represent the emotional journey from shock to eventual acceptance.

Extract 3

"When great souls die,
the air around us becomes
light, rare, sterile.
We breathe, briefly.
Our eyes, briefly
see with
a hurtful clarity."

(i) How does the death of a great soul affect the lives of those left behind in the immediate aftermath of their passing?

Ans. In the immediate aftermath of a great soul's passing those left behind experience a deep sense of loss and disruption.

The poet describes how their reality seems to take leave of them, suggesting a feeling of disorientation and emptiness. The death causes a profound shift, leaving those affected feeling smaller and more vulnerable, as if their minds fall into ignorance and their souls shrink.

There is a moment of clarity but it brings with it regret for things left unsaid and promises unfulfilled. The immediate effect is sorrow and confusion.

(ii) What long term effect does the death of a 'great soul' have?

Ans. The long-term effect of the death of a 'great soul' is a gradual return of peace and inspiration. While the immediate aftermath is filled with grief and loss, over time, a sense of calm begins to emerge, though it is slow and irregular.

The memory of the departed soul sharpens one's awareness and motivates the living to improve themselves. People are inspired to be better as the legacy of the great soul continues to guide and influence them.

(iii) What feeling is being expressed by the following lines/phrases?

(a) Small things recoil into silence

(b) Kind words/unsaid

(c) Be and be/better. For they existed

Ans.

(a) ‘Small things recoil into silence’ : This line expresses a feeling of fear and shock. It suggests that, in the face of loss, those who are vulnerable or sensitive retreat into silence, overwhelmed by the magnitude of the grief.

(b) 'Kind words unsaid’: This phrase expresses a feeling of regret or remorse. It reflects the sorrow and self-blame felt by individuals when they realise that they did not express their feelings or appreciation when they had the chance

(c) 'Be and be better For they existed’ : This line expresses a feeling of inspiration and renewed purpose. It conveys the idea that the legacy of the departed great soul motivates the living to strive for personal growth and to live better lives in honour of their memory.

(iv) What is 'Great tree' a metaphor for? What is the central message of Angelou's poem, ‘When Great Trees Fall'?

Ans. In the poem, the 'great tree' is a metaphor for a great soul or an influential, exceptional individual whose presence profoundly impacts the world and the lives of those around them. The fall of a 'great tree' represents the death or loss of such an individual.

The central message of Maya Angelou's poem, When Great Trees Fall', is about the far-reaching impact of the loss of a great soul. The poem explores the emotional journey through grief, reflecting on the sorrow, regret, and sense of disorientation experienced by those left behind. It also conveys that, in time, peace and healing slowly return, and the legacy of the departed soul continues to Inspire and encourage others to live better lives in their honour.

(v) Can the experiences of the poet be related to personal loss? What differences can you notice in the two situations?

Ans. Yes, the experiences described by the poet in 'When Great Trees Fall' can be related to personal loss. The emotions expressed in the poem, such as shock, grief, regret, and a sense of emptiness, are common feelings experienced when one loses a loved one.

The difference is that the poem focuses on the loss of a great soul, affecting many, whereas personal loss typically impacts an individual's immediate circle. In the poem, healing is slow and irregular, with inspiration from the departed. In personal loss, healing can be unpredictable, and not everyone may find renewal or motivation.

Extract 4

“Our souls,
dependent upon their nurture,
now shrink, wizened.
Our minds, formed
and informed by their
radiance, fall away.”

(i) How does the genre of free verse help convey the emotions in the poem 'When Great Souls Die'?

Ans. The use of free verse in 'When Great Souls Die' allows the poet to express emotions and ideas without the constraints of a regular rhyme or meter. This free-flowing style mirrors the chaos, confusion, and emotional turbulence that follows the loss of a great soul. The lack of structure

reflects the disorientation and loss of stability experienced by those mourning the death, allowing the poet to capture the raw, unfiltered emotions tied to grief and remembrance.

(ii) What is the significance of the phrase, "reduced to the unutterable ignorance of dark, cold caves"?

Ans. The phrase "reduced to the unutterable ignorance of dark, cold caves" metaphorically suggests that the loss of a great soul leaves individuals in a state of confusion and ignorance. The 'dark, cold caves' represent a place of emotional and intellectual darkness, where understanding, clarity, and guidance are lost.

The phrase underscores the feeling of being cut off from enlightenment and wisdom, leaving the mourner in a state of helplessness and despair, unable to fully comprehend or navigate life without the great soul's influence.

(iii) The poet uses several words and phrases to establish the dependence of the bereft on great souls in the poem. What are such words?

Ans. In the poem, the poet highlights the dependence of the bereft on great souls through phrases like bound to them", which suggests an inseparable connection, and dependent upon their nurture', which indicates an emotional and spiritual reliance

Additionally, "formed and informed by their radiance' shows how the great souls shape and enlighten the minds and spirits of those around them. These expressions convey that the bereft are deeply reliant on the influence of great souls, and their absence creates a profound sense of loss.

(iv) How does Maya Angelou use the concept of 'light' and 'radiance' in the poem to depict the influence of a great soul on the lives of others?

Ans. Maya Angelou uses the concepts of "light" and radiance to symbolise the wisdom, guidance, and moral clarity provided by a great soul. These qualities illuminate the lives of those around them, shaping their thoughts and actions. When the great soul passes away, the 'radiance' fades, leaving a void in the lives of those left behind.

(v) The poem has been carefully crafted to make it reflective and philosophical. How does the language enhance the understanding of grief and loss?

Ans. The reflective and philosophical genre of the poem allows Maya Angelou to explore grief and loss on a deep, intellectual level. The use of introspective language invites readers to consider the profound emotional and spiritual effects of losing a great soul.

This genre gives the poet the freedom to express complex feelings of disorientation, sorrow, and eventual acceptance, making the poem not just about personal loss but about the broader human experience. of mourning and moving forward.

Extract 5

"And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. . . .
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed."

(i) How does the poet depict the eventual healing process after the death of a great soul in the lines, "after a period peace blooms, slowly and always irregularly"?

Ans. The poet portrays the healing process as slow and unpredictable, symbolised by peace blooms, slowly and always irregularly. This suggests that recovery from the loss of a great soul is not instant but gradual and the path to peace may be uneven

The irregularity indicates that each individual may experience grief and healing in their own way, with no set timeline or order. This reflects the emotional complexity of mourning and the unique nature of every person's response to loss.

(ii) According to you, what does the phrase 'soothing electric vibration' mean in the context of the poem?

Ans. The phrase soothing electric vibration symbolises the subtle yet powerful sense of comfort that begins to fill the spaces after the initial mourning period. The word electric implies an almost tangible, energising force, while 'soothing' suggests that this force brings calm and peace

This could represent the gradual restoration of hope, the inspiration left behind by the great soul, or the quiet, enduring influence they had. The 'vibration' conveys the idea that even in their absence, the presence of the great soul continues to affect those left behind, in a gentler form.

(iii) Do you agree with the poet's idea that, despite the loss, we can 'be and be better' because 'they existed'? Justify your answer.

Ans. Yes, I agree with the poet's idea that we can be and be better because they existed. The legacy of a great soul often inspires others to strive for greatness themselves, offering guidance, wisdom, and motivation even after their death.

The poet suggests that the memory and influence of a great soul can bring about positive change in those left behind, encouraging them to live more fully and meaningfully. The words 'be and be better' imply that the greatness of others can be a powerful force for personal growth, transformation, and hope in the face of loss.

(iv) Comment on the tone of the poem.

Ans. The tone of the poem is reflective, mournful, and contemplative. Maya Angelou meditates on the profound loss of great souls, expressing sorrow and a sense of helplessness in the face of their death. The lines evoke grief, as the poet describes the emotions and intellectual void left behind. However, the tone shifts slightly towards hope and resilience as the poem progresses

(v) The poet uses the metaphor of 'falling trees' for the loss of great souls. Do you think it shows any social impact? How does it demonstrate the idea that we should be resilient in the face of adversity?

Ans. Yes, the metaphor of 'falling trees in the poem can be interpreted to have a social impact. The great trees represent, influential individuals, often seen as pillars of society, whose contributions shape the lives of many When these trees fall, it signifies the loss of a guiding figure or leader, and this loss can cause a sense of disarray or uncertainty within the community or society

The poet suggests that despite the grief caused by their loss, peace eventually returns, symbolising resilience. The gradual healing process shows that while the loss is painful, people can adapt, rebuild, and grow stronger. The phrase 'we can be. be and be better' highlights the idea that the memory and legacy of the great soul inspires individuals to rise above adversity and continue moving forward.

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