

# **CHAPTER : THE MARK ON THE WALL**

## **Questions**

### **Understanding the Text**

1. An account of reflections is more important than a description of reality according to the author. Why?
2. Looking back at objects and habits of a bygone era can give one a feeling of phantom-like unreality. What examples does the author give to bring out this idea?
3. How does the imagery of (i) the fish (ii) the tree, used almost poetically by the author, emphasize the idea of stillness of living, breathing thought?
4. How does the author pin her reflections on a variety of subjects on the 'mark on the wall'? What does this tell us about the way the human mind functions?
5. Not seeing the obvious could lead a perceptive mind to reflect upon more philosophical issues. Discuss this with reference to the 'snail on the wall'.

### **Talking about the Text**

1. 'In order to fix a date, it is necessary to remember what one saw'. Have you experienced this at any time? Describe one such

incident and the non-chronological details that helped you remember a particular date.

2. "Tablecloths of a different kind were not real tablecloths'. Does this sentence embody the idea of blind adherence to rules and tradition? Discuss with reference to 'Understanding Freedom and Discipline' by J. Krishnamurti that you've already read.
3. According to the author, nature prompts action as a way of ending thought. Do we tacitly assume that "men of action are men who don't think"?

## **Appreciation**

1. Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of narration: one, where the reader would remain aware of some outside voice telling him/her what's going on; two, a narration that seeks to reproduce, without the narrator's intervention, the full spectrum and continuous flow of a character's mental process. Which of these is exemplified in this essay? Illustrate.
2. This essay frequently uses the non-periodic or loose sentence structure: the component members are continuous, but so loosely joined, that the sentence could have easily been broken without damage to or break in thought. Locate a few such sentences, and discuss how they contribute to the relaxed and conversational effect of the narration.

## ANSWERS

### Understanding the Text

1. According to the author the truths of reality as experienced by the humans are deeply hidden. We get a glimpse of the truth in the compositions written by the writers. She believes the new age writers will explore the realities in a different manner and discard the old definition of reality that we believe in now.
2. The time that has passed seems like it never happened. She feels the era that has passed is unreal and talks about Shakespeare and “Whitaker’s Table of Precedency” as an example. Shakespeare got his inspirations while sitting on a chair and stroking his forehead. She feels all this is unreal along with concepts of good and evil, god and devil, and also hell and heaven.
3. The author is trying to understand the life of a tree and a fish to elaborate on the idea of stillness of living, breathing thought. For the tree, she says that it grows without making a sound and unaffected by the noise around it. She continues to tell about her belief by talking about a fish, that it seems like they are suspended flags that are still due to the steam around them. Again she presents the image by stressing on the fact that the nature around us is so quiet and peaceful that it is left unnoticed.
4. The author is intrigued by the mark in the wall and tries to frame scenarios so as to know the cause of this mark. This

gives a glimpse into the mental process of a mind and how creatively it works. In search of answers, the narrator goes deep into history as far as Shakespeare and the traditional ways of life. It further probes her into the depths of societal constructs and even the universal laws of nature. This tells us how far a mind can go while looking for solutions.

5. It is true that not seeing the obvious could lead a perceptive mind to reflect upon more philosophical issues. We can take this story as an example. The plot is set by a mark on the wall but the story hardly revolves around it. All the inspection could have been done by getting up and examining the mark closely but the author decides to dive deep into the matter and solve it mentally. In this process, she travels back and forth in time and thinks about everything philosophically. The snail was the mark on the wall which would have been clearly evident but instead, we see a lot of mental and philosophical warm up.

## **Talking about the Text**

1. It was a day in February since the heat was unbearable with a sweater and you would freeze due to the stone-cold wind blowing around you. We were in the ground in our school taking pictures of everyone and with everyone. Normally we were not allowed to bring cell phones with us but everyone had a cell phone that day. There was a big crowd with everyone shouting and cheering and laughing. It was a fete organized by the school and we were about to pass out. The date was 28 Feb 2017.

2. Woolf and Krishnamurthi have spoken how blind adherence to traditions and rules affect the growth of an individual. The compulsions to follow these traditions and rules often lead to an individual's unfulfilled desires. Woolf also questions the set parameters for education and how these traditional means are not applicable to everyone. She comes up with her own theories of gaining knowledge and reality depiction.
3. Woolf believes that nature hampers thought process and therefore she continues to sit in a place and think. She feels it is nature's way to stop the mental processing to make us do the physical effort. Therefore, instead of standing up and solving the mystery, she sits and thinks. She chooses to solve the mystery of the mark on the wall by her thought process. Her thought process continues through various directions and phases of time. According to her those who act, don't think hence "men of action are men who don't think".

## **Appreciation**

1. Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall" is an example of a narration that seeks to reproduce, without the narrator's intervention, the full spectrum and continuous flow of a character's mental process. The whole story is her interpretations of the mark on the wall that she sees while sitting on a chair, smoking cigarettes. Her thought process while trying to solve the mystery of the mark leads the readers to think about her

thought process, as her thoughts are vastly unconnected. Although her thoughts are all over the place, she would have never realized the real cause i.e. a snail.

2. The author is smoking while sitting in a chair, trying to find the reason behind the mark in the wall. She refuses to solve the mystery within a few minutes and instead chooses to ponder on the reason, sitting. The broken tone gives a effect of a conversation and involves the readers in the story. It strikes the curiosity of a reader's mind and engages them in the story.

*I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts. To steady myself, let me catch hold of the first idea that passes... Shakespeare... Well, he will do as well as another. A man who sat solidly in an armchair, and looked into the fire, so—a shower of ideas fell perpetually from some very high Heaven down through his mind. He leaned his forehead on his hand, and people, looking in through the open door—for this scene is supposed to take place on a summer's evening—but how dull this is, this historical fiction! It doesn't interest me at all.*