



My Native Land

He asked me, the old man by the street -
Blind, lonely, and poorer than me,
“Tell me what my land is like.”

“Breathe, Koka,” I said, “breathe deep!
The warm air that reminds you of your childhood friends
Is what your land is like.

The cool breeze on your face this morn
After last night’s endless thunder and rain
Is the peaceful breath of your land.

The contented gurgling of that little baby
Tied to her mother’s sturdy back
Is the soil of which your land is made

The chorus of the cuckoo and sparrows
As they play around the treetops near
Is what shapes your native land.

The distant roll of the *bihu dhol*
The *pepa* and *gogona* my neighbours play
The heady aroma of the *pitha* and *laroo*
The chant of the evening prayer
In the namghor, masjid, church
These make the soul of your beloved land”

The teacher will tell learners that *Koka* means grandfather, *dhol*, *pepa* and *gogona* are musical instruments, *pitha* and *laroo* are items of food, etc.

ACTIVITIES

1. Read the poem and answer the questions that follow:

- (a) What does the old man ask the poet?
- (b) Why does the old man ask the question to the poet?
- (c) How does the poet address the old man? What does that form of address mean?
- (d) Why does the poet ask the old man to breathe deep?
- (e) With what does the poet compare the cool breeze on the old man's face?
- (f) With what does the poet compare the contented gurgling of the little baby?
- (g) What does the chorus of the cuckoo and the sparrows do?
- (h) What are the things that create the soul of the poet's beloved country?

2. A brief summary of each of the stanzas of the poem has been given below. Match the stanzas with the given summaries. Mention the stanza number alongside the correct summary.

- (a) "My native land makes me feel as safe and secure as a baby carried on a mother's back.
- (b) The spirit of my native land can be understood in terms of its unity in diversity. Like different family members who have similarities and differences, yet belong to the same family and have the same home, in our native land, our family members practise different religions and traditions.
- (c) The lonely, blind old man in the street asked me to describe our native land.
- (d) Our native land is rich in its gift of nature and is brought to life by the birds and animals that playfully roam its rich green forests.
- (e) The touch of our native land is as peaceful as the cool, fresh breeze blowing after a night of thunder and rain.

3. Note that the poem is a series of information to a blind man on what his land is like. The girl provides the information by making use of the senses that are very strong in blind persons. These senses are:

- (a) touch
- (b) hearing
- (c) smell

- (i) Find out the examples that the poet uses to make the old man *feel* what his land is like. Here is an example: *the warm air*
- (ii) Find out the examples that the poet uses to make the old man *hear* the sounds to understand what his land is like.
- (iii) Find out the examples that the poet uses to make the old man *smell* what his land is like.
- (iv) Was the old man able to guess the season when the poet described what his land was like?

4. Here are some words from the poem. Match the words in column A with their meanings in column B:

(A)	(B)
thunder	satisfied
morn	the happy sound made by babies
contented	strong pleasant smell
gurgling	the loud explosive sound that follows lightning in the clouds
chorus	strong and firm
aroma	singing or speaking at the same time
sturdy	morning

Now make sentences of your own using the words.

5. (a) Practise pronouncing the following pairs of words. Then recite the poem with correct pronunciation.

(i)	sturdy	-	study
(ii)	breathe	-	breed
(iii)	warm	-	worm
(iv)	rain	-	ran
(v)	than	-	then
(vi)	church	-	search
(vii)	deep	-	dip
(viii)	land	-	lend

- (b) Here are a few more sentences for practice. Practise saying these sentences after your teacher.

- (i) The sturdy boys study hard.
- (ii) The worms come out when the weather is warm.
- (iii) Than and then do not mean the same.
- (iv) They lend me their plough to till the land.
- (v) People search for peace in the church.
- (vi) She ran in the rain, laughing in joy.
- (vii) The river is too deep to take a dip.

6. In the poem you will find the poet referring to three musical instruments that are used in the *husori* programmes of *Bihu*.

- (a) *dhhol*: a drum made especially for the *Bihu* festival and hence called the *Bihu dhhol* or *Bihu* drum



- (b) **pepa**: a type of pipe made out of buffalo horn played during *husori*



- (c) **gogona**: a type of stringed musical instrument belonging to the harp family



(There are many more musical instruments used in *husori* performances. Find more about them and write down the words naming the instruments and their meanings. Draw their diagrams as above and write a small paragraph of about six lines on the musical instruments that are used in the *Bihu* festival.)

7. Write a letter to your friend inviting him/her to your house during the *Rongali Bihu* holiday. Include in your letter what special food items will be made, what rituals will be followed and so on.

You may use the following format:

My dear..... (Your friend's name) (This is called salutation.)	Your address (This is called the heading.) Date
	(Body of the letter, which you may extend to more than one paragraph)
(Next paragraph)	
(Your friend's address)	(complimentary close) (Your name)

8. (a) (i) Your teacher will read aloud a passage about an American tourist. Listen to it carefully. As you listen, fill in the gaps in the passage below:

The _____ Mela is a _____ day community fair held by the _____ community in _____ at Jonbeel in Morigaon district over the weekend of the _____ Bihu. It is a fair in Morigaon, Assam organized by the _____ community. The American tourist _____ Gordon was delighted to know about Assam. He had heard of _____ and the rhinoceros. He wanted to visit the river island _____. He was in time to celebrate _____ Bihu.

- (ii) Answer the questions below by recalling the information from the passage read out by your teacher:

- a) What was the name of the American tourist?
 - b) Where did the author meet him?
 - c) What was the name of the author's travel agency?
 - d) Which places in Assam was the tourist keen to visit?
 - e) In which month was the tourist in Kolkata?
- (b) Now read the first passage at page 112 individually and in groups and write a dialogue between the tourist and the author. Use the information and enact it in the form of a role play before the class. You can add additional information to make the role play more interesting. The role play must begin with a proper introduction between the author and the tourist.

9. The poem 'My Native Land' refers to the "chorus of cuckoos and sparrows". The English language has a variety of words to denote the sounds made by birds and animals. For example cuckoos 'coo' and sparrows 'chirp'. These words are called onomatopoeic words because they sound similar to the actual sounds. Look at the onomatopoeic words in the box given below. Match them correctly with the pictures of the birds and animals given here.



Cow



Owl



Hen



Lamb



Parrot



Pigeon



Crow



Snake

cluck

caw

hiss

bleat

hoot

screech

coo

moo

10. Let's learn some grammar:

Read this sentence:

The old man said to me, "Tell me what my land is like."

Note that the reporting clause (*Tell me like*) is an imperative sentence. Imperative sentences express orders, requests, instructions, etc.

When we change imperative sentences to indirect narration we use 'to':

The old man asked me to tell him what his land was like.

Here are a few other sentences:

- (a) The teacher said to me, "Show me your homework."
The teacher asked me to show her my homework.
- (b) The teacher said to us, "Don't make a noise."
The teacher told us not to make a noise.
- (c) I said to the boy, "Please come tomorrow".
I requested the boy to come the next day.

Rewrite the sentences below in indirect speech in the same way as the sentences above.

- (a) The poet said to the old man, "Feel the cool breeze on your face."
- (b) The man said to me, "Listen to the gurgling of that little baby."
- (c) The teacher said to us, "Enjoy your holidays."
- (d) She said to me, "Tell me your mobile phone number."
- (e) My mother tells me, "Always obey your teachers."
- (f) I said to him, "Come to our house tomorrow."
- (g) She said to me, "Get me a glass of water, please."
- (h) The man said to me, "Please close the gate."

11. Work in pairs:

Share with your partner what inspires you the most about your native land. It could be the following:

- The gifts of nature that your native land has, like its rivers, forests, islands, wild life, etc.
- The beautiful people of your land, who have different cultures and celebrate different traditions, festivals, etc.

12. Let's make *Pitha*:

Ingredients:

- (i) 2 kgs of sticky rice (*Bora* rice)
- (ii) ½ kgs black sesame seeds (*Til*)
- (iii) 1 kg jaggery (*Gur*)

Directions to prepare the rice powder:

- (i) Wash and soak the rice for an hour.
- (ii) Strain rice and spread it out on a parchment paper or newspaper and let it dry partially.
- (iii) Grind the rice to a very fine powder.

Directions to make the filling:

- (i) For the filling, wash and strain sesame seeds, and let them dry.
- (ii) Roast the sesame seeds in a pan until they give out a nutty fragrance.
- (iii) Coarse grind the sesame seeds.
- (iv) Melt jaggery in a pan, and add it to the ground sesame seeds. The filling is ready.

Directions to make a *Pitha*:

- (i) Heat the flat frying pan.
- (ii) Take some of the prepared rice flour. Spread the rice flour on the pan in the shape of a circle or an oval. Press the flour gently with your fingers.
- (iii) Put some filling on the flour. Roll up the *pitha* to your desired shape and gently push it to the edge of the frying pan till the *pitha* is crispy. You can now start making the next *pitha*.



For the Teacher

This poem, written with an Assamese flavour, is meant to inculcate patriotism. It teaches learners to love and be grateful to one's native land. The poem reminds readers of the beauty and abundance which we receive from our motherland. The description of common events with a poetic flavour is also meant to sensitize learners to literary aspects of poetry.

While testing the learners' comprehension of the poem, you may use the different senses like that of touch, smell, and listening by incorporating innovative activities. Activities 1, 2 and 3 are designed to test the learners' comprehension. These are to be conducted orally before learners write them in their notebooks.

Activity 4 will help in building learners' vocabulary. Prior to reciting the poem, help learners to pronounce the words provided in Activities 5 (a) and (b) correctly. Draw students' attention to the thin line of difference in the pronunciation of words with different spellings. This exercise will help learners use words with similar pronunciation correctly while speaking in real life. Activity 5 (b) is especially meant to give learners practice in saying English sentences with confidence.

A format for writing an invitation letter is given in Activity 7. Learners will include names of food items that are made during *Rongali Bihu*.

Read aloud the passage for listening that has been provided at the end of the book in the section **Passages for Listening**. In order to test the listening and speaking skills of the learners, make them complete 8 (a) (i) while listening, and then ask them to answer the questions provided in 8 (a) (ii). Help learners to recall the information from the passage you have read by giving them enough clues. Provide opportunity to each student to speak clearly and appropriately.

Before you move on to the next lesson, allow learners to read the poem aloud with correct pronunciation.

Activity 9 is a fun activity. After learners have matched the words, encourage them to read them aloud. You can also make them use the words in sentences of their own.

Activity 10 (Let's learn some grammar) is a revision exercise to give learners practice to report speech in the imperative form. In addition to the sentences given for

practice, you can encourage learners, in pairs, to form more sentences. Other pairs can then be asked to correct mistakes, if any.

Arrange your class into pairs and help them to share their views about what inspires them the most about their native land. Provide them clues, besides the ones that are given in Activity 11.

You can explore Activity 12 by engaging learners to be creative and write their own recipes. They need to know that there can be different recipe formats. They are expected to learn to follow the directions in recipes, enjoy reading them and share their real life experiences.

Learning Outcomes:

The learner:

- responds to instructions and announcements in school and public places viz. railway station, market, airport, cinema hall and act accordingly
- reads excerpts, dialogues, poems, commentaries of sports and games speeches, news, debates on T.V., Radio and expresses opinions about them
- participates in different events such as role play, poetry recitation, skit, drama, debate, speech, elocution, declamation, quiz, etc., organized by school and other such organizations
- narrates stories (real or imaginary) and real life experiences in English
- reads textual/non-textual materials in English/Braille with comprehension
- identifies details, characters, main idea and sequence of ideas and events while reading
- infers the meaning of unfamiliar words by reading them in context
- communicates accurately using appropriate grammatical forms (e.g., clauses, comparison of adjectives, time and tense, active voice, passive voice, reported speech, etc.)
- writes e-mail, messages, notice, formal letters, descriptions/narratives, personal diary, report, short personal/biographical experiences, etc.