

## Chapter 3: Night of the Scorpion

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### WARMING UP [PAGE 100]

#### Warming Up | Q 1 | Page 100

**Get into pairs and discuss the following with your partners and complete the table.**

Many people are superstitious. This means that they have a belief for which they have no logical reason.

An example of superstition is that - walking under a ladder brings bad luck. In pairs, list any superstitions that you know of.

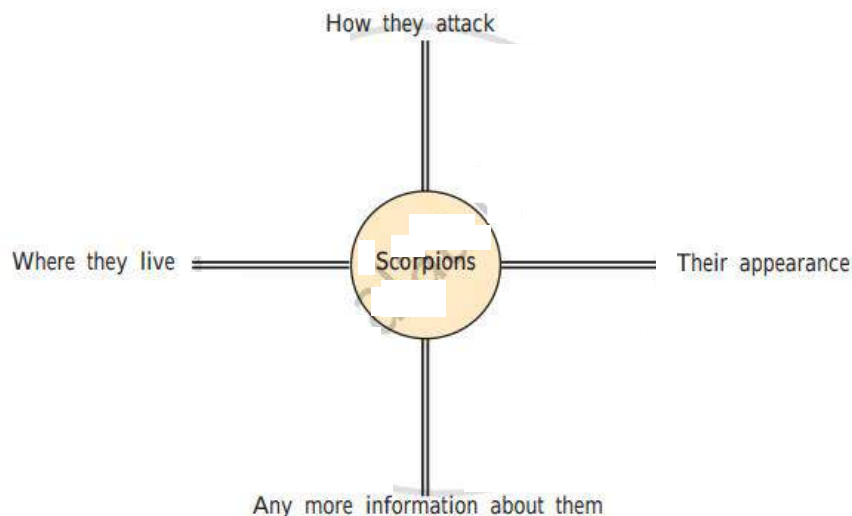
Superstition	What it implies
(1) Smashing a mirror	Brings seven years of bad luck.
(2)	
(3)	
(4)	
(5)	

### SOLUTION

Superstation	What it implies
(1) Walking under a ladder	1. Brings bad luck.
(2) Smashing a mirror	2. Brings seven years of bad luck.
(3) A black cat crossing your path	3. A bad omen.
(4) Twitching of the eye	4. Brings bad luck.
(5) Sweeping your house after sunset	5. Goddess Lakshmi will walk out.
(6) Going near a peepal tree at night	6. The ghosts will kill you.
(7) Putting a black dot on your child's face	7. Will ward off the evil eye.

#### Warming Up | Q 2 | Page 100

**Brainstorm what you know about Scorpions. Use the points given below.**



## SOLUTION

### Scorpions

**1) How they attack:** either crush their prey or inject it with venom, or they attack using their pincers to hold down the prey: then they sting it. If you step on a scorpion it will sting you straight away.

**2) Their appearance:** has 8 legs, a pair of pincers, and a narrow, segmented tail ending in a venomous stinger

**3) Any more information about them:** most people associate them with poisonous stings; however, most of the stings do not present a serious threat and most healthy people do not even need medical treatment after being stung. They have long life-spans; can survive anything, a year without food; eat anything: glow in the dark.

**4) Where they live:** found on all continents except Antarctica; live everywhere except in very cold places; hide under logs, rocks, clutter, trees, and sand; also live in burrows.

## ENGLISH WORKSHOP [PAGES 102 - 106]

### English Workshop | Q 1 | Page 102

After reading the poem, complete the following. What happens? There are three main parts of the poem. Do you know what they are about? The first one is done for you.

Lines	What is happening?
1-7	The scorpion comes into the home to escape the rain and stings the poet's mother.
8-33	
34-48	

**SOLUTION**

Lines	What is happening?
1-7	1) The scorpion comes into the home to escape the rain and stings the poet's mother.
8-33	2) The villagers sympathize with the mother and offer consolation in various ways. They sit around the floor with the mother in the centre. More neighbours came in to help, with more candles and more lanterns.
34-48	3) What is happening The father is desperate and though he is a rationalist, he tries all sorts of things to cure the mother. He calls a holy man to perform rites and even sets fire to the bitten toe. After twenty hours the scorpion loses its sting. All that the mother says is that she is thankful to God that the scorpion picked her and spared her children.

**English Workshop | Q 2. (a) | Page 103**

Complete the following table.

Background/setting of the poem	
Type	Evidence (Quote lines from the poem)
Rural/Urban	_____

**SOLUTION**

Background/setting of the poem.	
type	Evidence (quote lines from the extract)
Rural/Urban	1) "The peasants came like swarms of flies" (2) 'and buzzed the name of God a hundred times'. (3) To paralyse the evil one'. (4) With candles and with lanterns' (5) on the mud-baked walls' (6) His poison moved in Mother's blood, they said. (7) "They sat around on the floor with my mother in the center. (8) 'More candles, more lanterns'. (9) groaning on a mat (10) trying every curse and blessing powder. the mixture, herb, and

	hybrid. (11) I watched the holy man perform his rites
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### English Workshop | Q 2. (b) | Page 103

Complete the following table.

Scorpion	
Many images of the scorpion contrast in the opening lines of the poem. Find examples of each and add them to the columns below.	
Timid	Dangerous
(1) hides _____ (2) _____ back	(i) Diabolic _____ (ii) _____

### SOLUTION

B. Scorpion		
Many images of the scorpion contrast in the opening lines of the poem. Find examples of each and add them to the columns below.		
Timid	Dangerous	
(1) Hides <u>beneath a sack of rice</u>	(1) Diabolic <u>tail</u>	
(2) <u>Is afraid of the people and goes</u> back	(2) <u>The Evil One</u>	

### English Workshop | Q 2. (c) | Page 103

Complete the following table.

Imagery	
Look at the description of the village peasants. What does the imagery suggest about them?	
The Images	What images suggest
They came like swarms of flies.	
They buzzed the name of God.	

They threw giant scorpion shadows on the mud-baked walls.	
They clicked their tongues.	

### **SOLUTION**

<b>C. Imagery</b>	
<b>Look at the description of the village peasants. What does the imagery suggest about them?</b>	
<b>The image</b>	<b>What the image suggests</b>
1) They came like swarms of flies.	(1) They came in very large numbers, a huge crowd of people moving towards the house, like a swarm of flies.
2) They buzzed the name of God.	(2) They kept repeating the name of God softly and continuously, like the buzzing of bees.
3) They threw giant scorpion shadows on the mud-baked walls.	(3) The carried lanterns they threw shadows on the walls, which looked like huge scorpion shadows to the frightened villagers.
4) They clicked their tongues.	(4) They made sorrowful and frightening sounds with their tongues.

### **English Workshop | Q 3. (1) | Page 103**

#### **Choose the correct alternative.**

The child is afraid but admires \_\_\_\_\_.

1. the initiative of the peasants
2. his father trying every way to cure
3. **the bravery of his mother.**

### **SOLUTION**

The child is afraid but admires **The bravery of his mother.**

### **English Workshop | Q 3. (2) | Page 103**

#### **Choose the correct alternative.**

His father and the villagers panic and hastily suggest \_\_\_\_\_.

1. to take her to the hospital.

2. ayurvedic treatment.
3. **religious remedies to help.**

### **SOLUTION**

His father and the villagers panic and hastily suggest religious remedies to help.

### **English Workshop | Q 3. (3) | Page 103**

**Choose the correct alternative.**

The poet seems to see the villagers as impractical and almost irritating which suggests that \_\_\_\_\_.

1. the poet is critical of caste
2. the poet is critical of religion
3. **the poet is critical of tradition.**

### **SOLUTION**

The poet seems to see the villagers as impractical and almost irritating which suggests that the poet is critical of tradition.

### **English Workshop | Q 3. (4) | Page 104**

**Choose the correct alternative.**

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ poem as it tells a story.

1. reflective
2. imaginative
3. **narrative**

### **SOLUTION**

This is a Narrative poem as it tells a story.

### **English Workshop | Q 3. (5) | Page 104**

**Choose the correct alternative.**

Using the first person gives the feeling that it is told from \_\_\_\_\_.

1. **personal experience**
2. public experience
3. private experience

### **SOLUTION**

Using the first person gives the feeling that it is told from Personal experience.

### **English Workshop | Q 3. (6) | Page 104**

**Choose the correct alternative.**

'The scorpion picked on me. And spared my children' depicts \_\_\_\_\_.

1. mother's bravery
2. mother's endurance
3. **the selfless and unconditional love of a mother.**

### **SOLUTION**

'The scorpion picked on me. And spared my children' depicts **the Selfish and unconditional love of a mother.**

#### **English Workshop | Q 3. (7) | Page 104**

**Choose the correct alternative.**

The poem does not have a rhyme scheme, which means the poem is a perfect example of a \_\_\_\_\_.

1. Ballad
2. Sonnet
3. **Free verse**

### **SOLUTION**

The poem does not have a rhyme scheme, which means the poem is a perfect example of a **Free verse.**

#### **English Workshop | Q 3. (8) | Page 104**

**Choose the correct alternative.**

The poem is titled 'Night of the Scorpion', for, the major part of the poem \_\_\_\_\_.

1. the mother remains triumphant at the end.
2. **the scorpion is the victor.**
3. the father succeeds in curing the mother.

### **SOLUTION**

The poem is titled 'Night of the Scorpion', for, the major part of the poem **the scorpion is the victor.**

#### **English Workshop | Q 3. (9) | Page 104**

**Choose the correct alternative.**

The peasants chant the name of God to \_\_\_\_\_.

1. **nullify the stinging experience**
2. praise God.
3. appease God.

### **SOLUTION**

The peasants chant the name of God to **nullify the stinging experience.**

#### **English Workshop | Q 3. (10) | Page 104**

**Choose the correct alternative.**

The click of tongues reflects their \_\_\_\_\_ to the predicament.

1. individual response
2. **collective response**
3. group response

**SOLUTION**

The click of tongues reflects their **collective response** to the predicament.

**English Workshop | Q 4 | Page 104**

From the poem provide evidence for the following :

Stages	Evidence (lines from the poem)
(a) the attempts by the peasants to help alleviate the mother's pain.	
(b) the action of these same peasants to kill the scorpion	
(c) the reaction of the rational father.	
(d) the various superstitions versus the 'scientific'	
(e) evil versus good.	

**SOLUTION**

Stages	Evidence (lines from the poem)
(a) the attempts by the peasants to help alleviate the mother's pain	And buzzed the name of god a hundred times, to paralyse the Evil One.
(b) the action of these same peasants to kill the scorpion	With candles and with lanterns, throwing giant scorpion shadows.
(c) the reaction of the rational father.	My father, sceptic, rationalist, trying every cures and blessing, powder, mixture, herb and hybrid, He even poured a little paraffin
(d) the various superstitions versus the "scientific"	trying every cures and blessing, My father, sceptic, rationalist
(e) evil versus good.	They searched for him: he was not found, They clicked their tongue

**English Workshop | Q 5 | Page 105**

Read the poem and complete the table showing the qualities of the father and mother giving sufficient evidence from the poem.

Qualities
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Father	Mother

### SOLUTION

Qualities	
Father	Mother
Sceptic, rationalist loving Desperate	Patient, long-suffering brave, self-sacrificing Selfless.
<b>Lines as evidence:</b> My father sceptic, rationalist, Trying every curse and blessing Powder, mixture, herb, and hybrid He even poured a little paraffin Upon the bitten toe and put a match to it. I watched the holy man perform his rites to tame the poison with an incantation	<b>Lines as evidence:</b> My mother twisted through and through, groaning on a mat. My mother only said Thank God the scorpion picked on me and spared my children.

### English Workshop | Q 6. (a) | Page 105

Match the Figures of Speech with the correct definition.

Poetic Devices	
Figure	Definition
(1) Metaphor	(a) The use of the same sound at the beginning of words
(2) Alliteration	(b) An implied comparison.
(3) Onomatopoeia	(c) A comparison between two different things, especially a phrase, containing the words 'like' or 'as'
(4) Simile	(d) A word that resembles the sound it represents.

### SOLUTION

Figures of speech	The use of the same sound at the beginning of words.
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(1) Metaphor	An implied comparison.
(2) Alliteration	A word that resembles the sound it represents.
(3) Onomatopoeia	A comparison between two different things, especially a phrase, containing the words 'like' or 'as'.
(4) Simile	The use of the same sound at the beginning of words.

### English Workshop | Q 6. (b) | Page 105

**Find examples from the poem that contains:**

Simile : \_\_\_\_\_

Metaphor : \_\_\_\_\_

Onomatopoeia : \_\_\_\_\_

#### **SOLUTION**

**Simile:** The peasants came like swarms of flies. The peasants are compared directly to swarms of flies, with the use of the word 'like'.

**Metaphor:** 'to paralyse the Evil One'. The scorpion is implicitly compared to the devil.

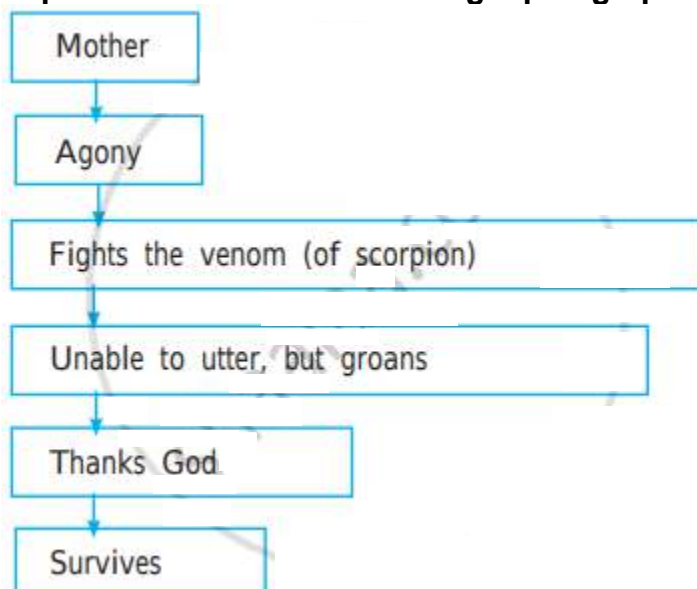
**Onomatopoeia:**

(1) and buzzed the name of God' The word 'buzzed' indicates sound.

(2) They clicked their tongues." The word 'clicked' indicates sound.

### English Workshop | Q 7 | Page 105

**Expand the flow-chart in writing a paragraph in your own words.**



### SOLUTION

The poet's mother is bitten by a scorpion and is in great agony. She fights the venom of the scorpion with the help of her husband and the villagers. She is unable to say anything, but only groans in pain. Finally, the poison is tamed after twenty hours. In the end, the mother thanks God that she has survived the ordeal, and that the scorpion had picked on her and spared her children.

### English Workshop | Q 8 | Page 106

The poet has used various kinds of imagery to create an image that appeals to our senses. Pick out various kinds of imagery and complete the table.

Visual imagery appealing to the eye	Tactile imagery (sense of touch)	Sound imagery	Internal sensations, feelings, and emotions
(1) Scorpion crawling beneath a sack of rice	(1) _____ _____ _____	(1) buzzed the name of God	(1) fear
(2) _____ _____ _____	(2) Father pouring paraffin on the toe	2) _____ _____ _____	2) _____

### SOLUTION

Visual imagery appealing to the eye	Tactile imagery (sense of touch)	Sound imagery	Internal sensations, feelings, and emotions
(1) Scorpion crawling beneath a sack of rice	(1) <u>I watched the flame</u>	(1) buzzed the name of God	(1) fear
(2) <u>With Candles and lanterns throwing giant scorpion shadows on the mud-baked walls.</u>	(2) feeding on my mother	2) <u>They clicked their Tongues</u>	2) <u>pain</u>

### English Workshop | Q 9 | Page 106

Read the following poem and write an appreciation of it with the help of the given points in paragraph format.

#### Night of the Scorpion

I remember the night my mother was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours

of steady rain had driven him  
to crawl beneath a sack of rice.  
Parting with his poison – flash  
of diabolic tail in the darkroom –  
he risked the rain again  
The peasants came like swarms of flies  
and buzzed the name of God a hundred times  
to paralyze the Evil One.  
With candles and with lanterns  
throwing giant scorpion shadows  
on the mud-baked walls  
they searched for him: he was not found.  
They clicked their tongues.  
With every movement that the scorpion made his poison  
moved in Mother's blood, they said.  
May he sit still, they said  
May the sins of your previous birth  
be burned away tonight, they said.  
May your suffering decrease  
the misfortunes of your next birth, they said.  
May the sum of all evil  
balanced in this unreal world  
against the sum of good  
become diminished by your pain.  
May the poison purify your flesh  
of desire, and your spirit of ambition,  
they said, and they sat around  
on the floor with my mother in the center,  
the peace of understanding on each face.  
More candles, more lanterns, more neighbors,  
more insects, and the endless rain.  
My mother twisted through and through,  
groaning on a mat.  
My father, sceptic, rationalist,  
trying every curse and blessing,  
powder, mixture, herb, and hybrid  
He even poured a little paraffin  
upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.  
I watched the flame feeding on my mother.  
I watched the holy man perform his rites to tame the  
poison with an incantation.  
After twenty hours  
it lost its sting.  
My mother only said  
Thank God the scorpion picked on me  
And spared my children.

-Nissim Ezekiel

you can use the following points while appreciating the given poem:

- i. Title
- ii. Poet
- iii. Theme/Central idea
- iv. Rhyme scheme
- v. Figures of speech
- vi. Special features (type the poem, imagery, implied meaning if any etc.)
- vii. Favorite lines
- viii. Why I like/don't like the poem.

### **SOLUTION 1**

#### **Appreciation of the poem 'The Night of the scorpion'**

The poem 'The Night of the scorpion' by Nissim Ezekiel, revolves round the sting of a scorpion that the poet's mother experienced on a rainy night. The poem follows the narrative style of storytelling where an incident is narrated in a free verse having no fixed rhyme scheme. The poem is enriched using various figures of speech such as Alliteration, Antithesis, Hyperbole, Inversion, Metaphor, Onomatopoeia, Oxymoron, Repetition, Simile, and transferred Epithet. An example of personification from the poem is "I watched the flame feeding on my mother" as the flame is given the human quality of 'feeding'. The poem is a first-person account of how a son (the poet) watches helplessly as his mother suffers from a scorpion's sting. The villagers' blessing and curses, a holy man's chants and the rational husband's experiments cannot bring relief to the poet's mother. It shows how the behaviour of the villages is characterised by their illiteracy and the lack of medical facilities, which thereby results in blind beliefs and superstitions. Nissim Ezekiel's night of the scorpion is a strong yet simple statement on the power of self-effacing love. The ironic twist in the poem comes when in the end the mother who suffered in silence opens her mouth. She says 'Thank God the scorpion picked on me and spared my children.' yes, I like this poem because of this poem mention the bond between the mother and son.

### **SOLUTION 2**

The poem "Night of the Scorpion" by Nissim Ezekiel depicts the selflessness and unconditional love of a mother who is stung by a scorpion. It also explains the care and affection of the villagers and their efforts to comfort the pain of the mother,

The poem is written in free verse without any rhyme scheme or metre followed throughout the poem. There are many figures of speech e.g. Onomatopoeia and 'buzzed the name of God a hundred times'. Here, we feel we can actually hear the buzzing of the prayers of the many peasants. The other figures of speech are Metaphor, Alliteration, Simile, Antithesis, etc.

The special feature of this poem is the imagery. We get a clear and vivid picture of what is happening in the house. In the end, the poet depicts the selfless and unconditional love of a mother, who, even when she is in intense pain, first thinks of her children. The poem is a narrative poem. The use of the first person gives the feeling that

it is told from personal experience. My favourite line is: Thank God the scorpion picked on me and spared my children'. I like the line because it shows the selflessness and unconditional love of the mother for her children.  
I like the poem because of the imagery and the sensitive ending.

### English Workshop | Q 10 | Page 106

**Prepare a Presentation (on paper or on a PC) as a piece of reference to other students. Make use of the following points.**

- (1) Title page
- (2) Introduction of the poet
- (3) The Complete poem  
(All 48 lines)
- (4) Learning objectives
- (5) Style of writing
- (6) Scorpion lines (1-7)
- (7) The peasants
- (8) The poet's father
- (10) The poet's mother
- (11) Vocabulary
- (12) Credits (positive aspects)

Narrative poem/  
first person/ Poet's role-

lines of irregular length/  
Absence of rhyme and metre  
Enjambement

Free style/colloquial  
Repeated use of indirect speech  
Repeated imagery/Use of similes,  
metaphors, alliteration, repetition  
and onomatopoeia.

### **SOLUTION**

#### **(1) Title: Night of the Scorpion**

**(2) Introduction of the poet: Nissim Ezekiel** (1924-2004) was an Indian Jewish poet, actor, playwright, editor, and art critic. He was a foundational figure in postcolonial India's literary history, specifically for Indian writings of a wider range.

The poem depicts the selfless love of a mother, who is stung by a scorpion.

#### **(3) The complete poem:**

##### **Night of the Scorpion**

I remember the night my mother  
was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours  
of steady rain had driven him  
to crawl beneath a sack of rice.

Parting with his poison – flash  
of diabolic tail in the darkroom –  
he risked the rain again

The peasants came like swarms of flies  
and buzzed the name of God a hundred times  
to paralyze the Evil One.

With candles and with lanterns  
throwing giant scorpion shadows  
on the mud-baked walls  
they searched for him: he was not found.  
They clicked their tongues.  
With every movement that the scorpion made his poison moved in Mother's blood, they  
said.  
May he sit still, they said  
May the sins of your previous birth be burned away tonight, they said.  
May your suffering decrease the misfortunes of your next birth, they said.  
May the sum of all evil balanced in this unreal world against the sum of good become  
diminished by your pain.  
May the poison purify your flesh of desire, and your spirit of ambition,  
they said, and they sat around on the floor with my mother in the center,  
the peace of understanding on each face.

More candles, more lanterns, more neighbors,  
more insects, and the endless rain.  
My mother twisted through and through,  
groaning on a mat.  
My father, sceptic, rationalist,  
trying every curse and blessing,  
powder, mixture, herb, and hybrid  
He even poured a little paraffin  
upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.  
I watched the flame feeding on my mother.  
I watched the holy man perform his rites to tame the poison with an incantation.  
After twenty hours it lost its sting.

My mother only said  
Thank God the scorpion picked on me  
And spared my children.  
-Nissim Ezekiel

**(4) Learning objectives:** My mother only said  
Thank God the scorpion picked on me  
And spared my children.  
I watched the flame feeding on my mother.  
I watched the holy man perform his rites to tame the poison with an incantation.

**(5) Style of writing** (This is a narrative poem in the first person, lines of irregular length, free verse-absence of rhyme and meter, enjambement Style is free and colloquial. There is repeated use of indirect speech, Imagery, use of similes, metaphors, alliteration, repetition, and onomatopoeia.)

**(6) Scorpion lines**

I remember the night my mother was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours of steady rain had driven him to crawl beneath a sack of rice. Parting with his poison - a flash of diabolic tail in the darkroom -  
he risked the rain again.

**(7) The peasants:** The peasants came like swarms of flies  
and buzzed the name of God a hundred times  
to paralyze the Evil One.

**(8) The poet's father** (sceptic, rationalist. anxious, worried)

**(9) The poet's mother** (brave, patient, selfless, loving, understanding)

**(10) Vocabulary:** The poem is simple, easy-to-understand. The poem is enriched using various figures of speech such as Alliteration, Antithesis, Hyperbole, Inversion, Metaphor, Onomatopoeia, Oxymoron, Repetition, Simile, and transferred Epithet. An example of personification from the poem is " I watched the flame feeding on my mother " as the flame is given the human quality of 'feeding'.

**(11) Credits:** The ironic twist in the poem comes when in the end the mother who suffered in silence opens her mouth. she say's 'Thank God the scorpion picked on me and spared my children.' yes, I like this poem because of this poem mention the bond between the mother and son.