

2.1 Song of the Open Road

ICE BREAKERS

Q. 1. Choose the mode of travel that you would like the most, for a journey.

- (a) Airways
- (b) Waterways
- (c) Railways
- (d) Roadways.

Give reasons for your preference.

(Note: The points for the reasons for all four modes of travel are given below. Students may choose their own mode of transport.)

Ans.

(a) Airways:

- 1) Time-saving even if costly.
- 2) Affordable nowadays due to economy airlines.
- 3) Useful to go all over the world if one can afford.
- 4) Can enjoy birds eye view of different places.

(b) Waterways:

- 1) Enjoyable way to travel.
- 2) Commuting on waterways is not common all over India.
- 3) In Kerala people use boats on canals and creeks for daily commute.
- 4) Long distance travel by cruise ship would offer new experiences on the oceans.
- 5) Can experience peace of mind and relaxation on long journey by waterway.

(c) **Railways:**

- 1) Safe, quick and cheap way to travel long distances.
- 2) Convenient for overnight journeys - no extra cost for night stay and rest.
- 3) Comfortable for individuals, families, large groups.
- 4) View of the passing landscape and communities living along the route.
- 5) Opportunity to meet people and even make new friends.
- 6) Work, family trips, pilgrimage, touring - all kinds of journeys are possible and affordable.

(d) **Roadways:**

- 1) Can travel through remote areas.
- 2) Travel by own vehicle gives more freedom.
- 3) Can enjoy the natural beauty greenery, mountains, water-bodies.
- 4) See various geographical features, flora, and styles of clothing, food and even language.

Q. 2. Discuss with your partner, the preparations you would like to make for the journey chosen.

(Note: Answer to Roadways is given below.)

Ans. (a) A journey by road will need a (virtual) map for the route to take. Road trips are unpredictable. Except for highways we do not know where food, water and facilities like restrooms or pharmacy may be available. One has to carry food, drinks and emergency medicines for unexpected situations. Umbrella or other rainwear, flashlight, spare tyre, tool box and jack are a must. Also when travelling by one's own vehicle we must have the vehicle serviced and in perfect shape for long distance travel.

(b) All documents related to the vehicle - driver's licence, registration papers and insurance papers must be updated and ready to be shown. All journeys require the traveller to wear suitable comfortable clothes. So one would have to wear

and pack clothes and accessories accordingly. One also has to foresee what weather conditions may be along the journey and carry suitable items for that.

(c) Since all of us own mobile phones and our family will want to know about our well-being, one must remember to carry the phone charger and even a power bank if possible. One must carry a list of emergency contact numbers on paper, in case one's phone is lost or does not work.

(d) If one decides to travel alone one must be in touch with their loved ones daily. at least once at a particular time. If one has company then the travellers should also discuss the budget, schedule, how to tackle emergencies and also what to do in unexpected situations.

Q. 3. Discuss the ways in which you would overcome the problems/hindrances/difficulties you face during the journey.

Ans. (a) In case of a problem or difficulty. I would go to the nearest place where I can try and resolve the problem.

(b) I would inform my family about the problem.

(c) I would take any steps needed to see that the problem does not become worse.

(d) I would ensure that I am safe till the problem is resolved and I can continue the journey/return home.

Q. 4. During every journey we have to observe certain rules. Discuss your ideas of the journey without any restrictions. You can begin like this-

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Ans.

(a) I would go with my friends since we work well as a team even though we have varied interests and skills. We are like minded about most things. We will share the costs and all of us drive well.

(b) My friends and I love to have fun but none of us is ever unruly. We do, always will, respect the law and are particular about others' safety and our own.

(c) We will be sure to never speed or drive rashly. None of us smokes nor consumes forbidden substances like alcohol.

(d) We will ensure that each gets some rest. We will also make sure we keep a log book to record our road trip for memories as well as a guide for later trips, so we can avoid the mistakes and fill in loopholes.

BRAINSTORMING

(A1) (i) Pick out the lines showing that the poet is prepared to enjoy every moment of his journey.

Ans.

- 1) 'Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road...
- 2) 'Healthy, free, the world before me.'
- 3) 'The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.'
- 4) 'Henceforth I ask not good fortune, I myself am good-fortune,'
- 5) 'Strong and content I travel the open road.'
- 6) 'The earth, that is sufficient,'

(ii) By 'old delicious burdens' the poet means --

- (a) The luggage
- (b) The food he carries
- (c) The stress he bears during the travels
- (d) Sweet memories of the past

Ans. (d) Sweet memories of the past.

(iii) The poet is a person who is free from all inhibitions. Discuss how the concept is expressed in the poem.

Ans. The poet is about to embark on a trip. He does not consider anything can restrict him, even his own hesitation or doubts. He says he is prepared 'afoot' and 'light-hearted'. He is physically fit and mentally without any dilemma. He is all set to follow the road to his dream/destination. 'Healthy and free He does not want to depend on good luck or fortune to be kind to him. He has his life, his destiny, in his own hands and is confident that is enough. 'I ask not good fortune, I myself am good- fortune'.

(Note: Most of the textual 'Wh' questions are converted to Activity Format.)

He is no longer going to delay his journey with complaints, criticizing that everything is not perfect. What is there is enough for him. 'I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,' 'The earth, that is sufficient'. His determination

is strong and he has decided to progress on his path in life. 'Strong and content I travel the open road.'

(A2) (i) Following are the activities of the poet related to his journey on the road. Divide them into two parts as 'activities the poet will practice' and 'activities he will not practice'.

(1) Walking along the road though he does not know where it reaches

(2) Complaining about the discomforts during the journey

(3) Postponing the journey

(4) Praying for good fortune

(5) Carrying the fond memories of the good people

(6) Creating contacts with famous and influential people

(7) Striving to achieve high and bright success

(8) Reflecting and developing his own 'self'

Ans.

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'Activities he will not practice'

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(ii) Write down the traits the poet exhibits through the following lines. One is done for you.

(a) Henceforth, I ask for no good fortune --

Ans. I myself am good fortune - Self-confidence

(b) Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing --

Ans. Positive and self-reliant

(c) I do not want the constellations any nearer --

Ans. Self-assured and independent

(d) I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them --

Ans. Clear-thinking and knowing his mind

(e) I am filled with them - I will fill them in return --

Ans. Aware and honest about himself

(iii) 'Healthy, free, the world before me.'

Express your views regarding the above line.

Ans. The poet is about to set out on life's journey. He is of healthy body and mind. He feels strong enough to meet challenges he may have to face on the way. His attitude seems positive, hopeful and determined - he says '*the world before me*' - showing this.

Hence we can say he is ready to make use of every opportunity the world can provide and he will not delay or complain, postpone or criticize, blaming others. He can make any dream come true.

(A3) The poet has used many describing words like 'healthy' in the poem. Make a list and classify them as --

(1) For the world :

(2) For himself :

(3) For the road :

Ans. (1) For the world : sufficient

(2) For himself : light-hearted, healthy free, good fortune, strong, content,

(3) For the road : open, long brown path

(A4) (i) Read the expression old delicious burdens. A burden cannot be delicious. The poet has used this combination of words to express that he has many sweet memories of the people and places which he would like to remember forever. The poet has used seemingly contradictory expressions to convey the meaning that his heart is full of sweet memories of good and kind people. Though he wants to be free from any type of attachment, he wants to cherish these sweet memories in his heart forever.

The expression contains opposite ideas that make it seem absurd or unlikely, although it may be true. This is called 'Paradox'.

Ans. Do it yourself.

(ii) The road in the poem does not mean only the road to travel. The poet wants to suggest the road of life. Explain the metaphor with the help of the poem.

Ans. In a journey we may go on, we plan on the mode of travel, and hope to have an enjoyable trip. We want to admire the scenes passing by. We may meet new people. Sometimes we may come across some difficulties, yet we complete the trip and return home to our normal routine.

For a trip, we make travel plans: decide the destination and so on. But life itself is a long journey. In our life we have family and friends. We don't know what will happen in future. We remember pleasant as well as sad situations of the past. We work hard, find success, face failure, and attain glory and defeat. So life goes on.

In both, a trip or in life, the attitude is important in how we make the Journey. One must go ahead with a positive and flexible mind-set. Unexpected situations will come up. We may have pleasant as well as unpleasant situations. But if we have self-belief, any difficulty can be faced. One must just be strong.

The poem also tells we have memories. We are held back by attachments. But we can carry the beautiful past as happy memories. We should always go forward in the journey of life.

(iii) Free Verse: Free Verse is a poetry that does not rhyme or have a regular rhythm. The features of Free Verse are --

It is a literary device that is free from limitations of regular metre or rhythm, does not rhyme with fixed forms, and still it provides an artistic expression. In this way, the poet can give his own shape to a poem as he desires and can use various poetic devices to create the effect he considers suitable for the piece.

As Free Verse gives greater freedom for choosing words and conveying their meanings to readers, it is free from artificiality of a typical poetic expression. This technique is commonly used in modern poetry.

Remember -

(a) Although Free Verse requires no metre, rhyme or other traditional poetic techniques, it is the use of internal pattern of sounds, the choice of exact words and their chosen places are the factors which attribute the Free Verse, its lyrical or rhythmic beauty.

(b) Free Verse is completely different from Blank Verse' which essentially has to occur in iambic pentameter. Blank verse is poetry written with regular metrical but unrhymed lines. It is described as the most common form of English poetry which has been influential since the 16th century.

(iv) There are certain words that are repeated in the poem.

For example, 'no more' (Line 7).

Find out other similar expressions. Explain the effect they have created in the poem.

Ans. There are several words that are repeated.

(1) 'open road' - Lines 1 and 7. Indicates the path in life is open wide for the poet person to make any choice he wants. The opportunities are unlimited.

(2) 'before me' - the poet is looking at the road ahead, his future life, his outlook for the upcoming journey (of life).

(3) 'Henceforth I' - lines 4 and 5. The poet conveys from that point onwards' he has decided to do or not do certain things.

(4) 'good-fortune'- he believes good fortune or destiny is not external. It is within one's power, in one's own hands.

(5) 'I know' - lines 11 and 12. This shows his full awareness.

(6) 'I carry' - lines 12, and twice in 13. Indicate the weight of the burdens though they may be delicious.

(7) 'they are' - line 10 emphasizes that entity (constellations or people with power) belongs where it is.

(v) The use of personal pronoun IT is evident and prominent in this poem. Give reasons.

Ans. The repetition of the pronoun T occurs fifteen times in as many lines of the poem.

This shows us how fully in charge the poet is of his life, his destiny, his actions, his decisions and the consequences.

The repeated use of T shows that he is confident of himself and is able to take his

life forward independent of other's support. He is going to stop complaining, criticizing.

He will approach the future on his own strengths. Ready to use the opportunities that he comes across, the poet is quite sure he does not need either luck or influential friends to help his attempts. He seems assured of his own capabilities.

(A5) (i) With the help of the following points, write a poetic appreciation of the poem 'Song of the Open Road'.

- 1) About the poem / poet and the title
- 2) The theme
- 3) Poetic style
- 4) The language / poetic devices used in the poem
- 5) Special features
- 6) Message, values, morals in the poem
- 7) Your opinion about the poem

Ans. 'The Song of the Open Road' by American poet, Walt Whitman is about optimism, energy and confidence. The world offers opportunities to anyone who wants to use them.

Walt Whitman's works were a powerful influence on other writers.

The poet himself struggled as a child of twelve. He dropped out of school to take up some job to help the family income. He worked as lawyer's assistant, printer's assistant, as a teacher and Journalist. He helped look after the wounded in the American Civil War.

The poem says 'open' road. It is about freedom. The poet wants to go out from restrictions and comforts.

The poet wants to be self-reliant. He is confident. The poem is in free verse. There are many poetic devices but no metre or rhyme. We immediately notice repetition. There is also Transferred epithet.

The poem is a dramatic monologue.

The poem inspires us to explore the world using our abilities. Comfort, complaints, criticisms and fate are not excuses for one's inaction.

(ii) Write four to six lines of Free Verse on the topic "The road that leads to my college'. Express that it is the road to knowledge and bright future. You may

begin like this: Every day I tread with the bag of books

Ans. "The Road That Leads to My College"

Every day I tread with the bag of books

And a hopeful step,

Into the space of light and hope, I can look for myself.

I go to become more ready

For tomorrow and the day after. Every day, every way

I Grow and grow thankful and wise, strongly hopeful.

(iii) Write a blog on the following topic.

(a) Man is Free by Birth.

Ans.

Man is Free by Birth.

The statement is true in every sense of the word 'free'. If someone does not have physical freedom, it is visible. But the freedom of the mind, thoughts, emotions, the spirit, the soul, is also vital for one to fully find satisfaction in life.

I remember an advertisement to bring up boys to be sensitive. Usually boys are discouraged from showing tears. It is thought tears of fear, anxiety, pain, and loss are signs of weakness when a boy cries. There should be no external signs of these emotions and parents compare the boy to a girl. They make fun of their sons to stop him crying. In this way they take away the child's freedom to express emotions. They take away his sensitivity!

Taking away of freedom is often done by adults to their children. The parents give guidance for the future but parents impose their own expectations on the kids and take away their freedom to choose a life-goal. The child's natural liking or strength is not considered. The herd mentality makes parents force their children to follow a field which other students are doing. They earn lots of money. But they don't notice their child does not like or is not good at it. So the child grows up leaving his passion.

Adults teach children that out of respect and good manners they must not question them. Children will grow up seeing injustice being done. They will notice bad things happening. But their desire to question is silent. They keep quiet and accept even bad things as normal.

I could go on. But let us ensure that freedom is alive and well. Let us allow everyone to be themselves, to follow their heart, to speak out when necessary, to fulfil their dreams. But we must ensure that this freedom never injures another or interferes with other people's freedom.

(iv) Expand the ideas suggested in the following lines:

(a) All roads lead to Rome.

Ans.

The road system in the Roman Empire was built in a way that a person could take a road from anywhere and he would reach Rome. This means that every matter can be approached differently.

Everyone has their own way to approach a matter. It could be doing some work or solving a problem. Each person has their way of doing things. It means that we should agree not to be narrow minded. We should appreciate the other person's way of doing things also.

We should not expect everyone to think exactly the same way as we do. We should allow individuals to follow their method. Sometimes some work is given. That person will complete the work in his way. When giving the task the method of doing it need not be forced. Even if it is completely new then the person may do it himself. If he is not able to do it he can ask for help.

When there is a problem many people may be trying to find a solution. We can discuss ideas. Many ideas may be put forward. There can be so many ideas that are useful for solving the problem. One may be quicker. Another may be cheaper. One may need more people. So all ideas can be pooled to finally solve the problem.

Even the head of the country has a team of ministers. The leader discusses and consults with the team for running the country. All of them play a role for successful running of the government.

This is true of teamwork and cooperation. We can all work for the same goal. The work may be so big that many are required to work together. It is not necessary for everyone to do exactly the same thing. But all work together in different methods so that we reach the desired goal.

(b) A man without liberty is a body without a soul.

Ans.

We think liberty' means only physical freedom. But even if a person is not physically free his mind is working freely. Actually the freedom to think, speak and act to fulfil our wishes and goals is more important.

A free man really means a free-thinking man. We have heard of men speaking out against powerful people. They were jailed. But even in jail they wrote books. They expressed their views. We know of many such famous personalities like Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and Nelson Mandela.

Many of our Indian freedom fighters were executed for their ideas. But they did not keep quiet. They spoke out and inspired Indians to rise up against the colonial rulers. Their minds were free though they were physically in prison.

Liberty is freedom to anything for oneself without hurting other people's liberty. We should not use freedom to do just anything we desire. That is not correct.

Hence we must be aware of what is happening and speak against wrongs. When there is life, there is mind. When we have an intelligent mind, we should think.

'Life, liberty, and thought-three persons in one substance, eternal, never-ending, and unceasing.' Khalil Gibran.

(A6) (i) Take help from the sources available on the internet and make a list of proverbs and quotations about 'road.'

Ans.

(1) "It is a rough **road** that leads to the heights of greatness."

(2) "If you don't like the **road** you're walking, start paving another one."

(3) "Nobody travels on the **road** to success without a puncture or two."

(4) "If you make the mistake of looking back too much, you aren't focused enough on the **road** in front of you."

(ii) Read the poem 'The Road Not Taken' by Robert Frost.

Ans. Do it yourself.