An Old Woman

Comprehension:

I.1. 'You' in the poem refers to
   a) The speaker.
   b) The passerby
   c) The reader
   d) Anyone
   Ans: c) The reader

2. What does the old woman offer to do?
   Ans: The old woman offers if we give fifty paise coin she would take to the horseshoe shrine.

3. What does she expect for her services?
   Ans: She expected a fifty paise coin.

4. The lines, 'You turn around and face her with an air of finality' suggest that he decided to
   a) Give her a fifty paisa coin and get rid of her.
   b) Allow her to take him to the shrine.
   c) End the farce.
   Ans: c) End the farce.

5. The old woman's eyes are compared to bullet holes.

6. 'You are reduced to so much small change in her hand. Here the speaker is suggesting that
   a) One is reduced to an insignificant position.
   b) One feels that one is being cheated.
   c) One feels a change in one's personality.
   Ans: a) One is reduced to an insignificant position.

II.

1. How is the plight of the old woman depicted in the poem?

   The old woman is not a beggar; she wants to live by doing work. Therefore she does the job of taking the visitors to the horseshoe shrine. Though the visitor has seen it already,
she hobbles along anyway and tightens her grip on his shirt. She is very adamant; she did not let him go away. She has no other ideas except guiding the visitors to see them.

2. The old woman in the poem is a self-appointed tourist guide, not a beggar. Do you agree? Give reasons.

Answer: The old woman is not a beggar, she is a hard working. Though she is old still she wants to earn money by working. She is a self-appointed tourist guide. She is well appreciated. She did not beg anyone. She is a model for others. Her character is highly respectful.

3. How does the speaker's attitude undergo a change?

Answer: In the beginning of the poem the speaker did not like the old woman. Because the speaker had not understood the woman properly. She did not allow him to go to the horse shoe shrine. The speaker started observing the character of the woman she is such a bold person. Therefore the speaker's attitude undergoes a change.

III.

1. 'The old woman reduces the self-esteem of the speaker and makes him feel that he is nothing more than "so much small change"'. Comment.

The old woman continued to ask him to go with her. So that she would get the money to survive. The speaker does not change himself initially but slowly he turns towards the words of the woman. In spite of his dignity he came down to hear the story of the old woman.

2. What is the speaker trying to convey through the lines 'and the hills crack, and the temples crack, and the sky falls'?

The speaker is shocked, looking at her face,. There are two deep sunken eyes that look like bullet holes. Her skin is wrinkled and cracks begin to appear around her eyes and spread beyond her skin. He feels that everything is falling apart. Everything is cracked and in ruins. The cracks spread beyond her skin to the hills and the sky. There is a catastrophe. The hills crack, the temples crack and the sky falls and shatters like a sheet of glass. But the old woman stands there as a symbol of all round degradation. The narrator feels ashamed. He is reduced to the small change in her hand. In a moment of realization the narrator/tourist finds himself reduced in his self-esteem. His awakening to the 'real' world makes him feel 'small'.

3. How do you relate the 'cracks around her eyes' to the crocking of hills and temples?

The old woman's eyes are just two gaping holes filled with empty air, with the hills and the sky. Then the cracks begin around her eyes, spreading beyond her skin and then the hills crack, the temples crack and the sky cracks and the sky finally shatters and falls like plate-glass. The old woman herself is shatter-proof and nothing happens to her .Only you get instantly reduced to small change in her hand .It is you who shatter because her eyes are already bullet-holes which are formed with cracks around the holes.
Do not ask me, My Love

Comprehension:

I.

1. When does the speaker realize what he thought about love was not true?

   The speaker saw the society there are other sorrows then love he finally understood that the love is an illusion.

2. 'That's the way I imagined it to be'. Suggests.

   a) That the speaker’s concept of love is naive.
   b) The speaker's realization of realities.
   c) The speaker’s view of love was just a wishful thinking.

   Ans: b) The speaker's realization of realities.

3. 'For there are other sorrows in the world than love,' here 'sorrows' refers to miseries.

   a) Generated by love.
   b) Caused by poverty and deprivation.
   c) Caused by jealousy and envy.

   Ans: b) Caused by poverty and deprivation

4. 'You are beautiful still, my love'. Here the speaker is expressing his

   a) Fidelity to his love.
   b) Inability to pay the same undivided attention to his love.
   c) Preoccupations with other issues in life than his love.

   Ans: a) Fidelity to his love.

II.

1. What does the line 'those dark and brutal curses of countless centuries' suggest?

   Ans: The line 'those dark and brutal curses of countless centuries' suggests that the colonialism id his country which had been there for more than four centuries. The people who struggled to fulfil their needs were not showing their love on others because the burden is still on their shoulders.

   The whites killed mercilessly even the women and children. People went on starvation. They had not enough food. The cruel authority of the colonial lords killed the innocent people. Those dead bodies heaped like a mountain. There were numerous bodies that are retrieved from the cauldron of diseases and the pus dripping from their festering sores.

2. What harsh realities of life have drawn the speaker's attention much more than the beauty of his beloved?

   Ans: The speaker paid attention to the realities of life rather than the beauty of his beloved. His own people struggled under the cruel authorities of the powerful countries. Everywhere dead bodies of the people are seen. The humans are sold in the markets. There were numerous bodies that are
retrieved from the cauldron of diseases and the pus dripping from their festering sores. The speaker’s eyes had seen all the sorrows of the native people so he had to turn towards them.

3. What transformation in the perception of love do you see in the poem?

Ans: Love transformed his life into bright, young and blooming. At that time the sorrow of his beloved was much more than any other pain. Her beauty gave the spring everlasting youth. There was a time he knew neither love nor sorrow of the people. Later he transformed his love into the social problems. Loyalty towards the nation made him a true hero who always concerns about the people.

III.

1. At the end of the poem we feel 'the speaker does not love his beloved less, but the suffering humanity more'. Do you agree?

Ans: This statement 'the speaker does not love his beloved less, but the suffering humanity more is true. The second half of the poem the speaker changed his mind towards the responsibilities he owes towards his country, nation and the people. By looking at the sufferings and the humiliation with which his countrymen are going through he started his focus on the suffering people who had cruelly been killed by the oppressed. The speaker advocated the cruel barbaric attitude of the foreign countries.

2. Many critics have pointed out in this poem 'the beloved' means not just a lover but Country and nationalism. With this observation, does the poem read differently?

Ans: The speaker loved his country more than his love. His patriotism has been spread throughout this poem. He cares for his people who suffered in the hands of the foreigners. He had given more importance to sorrows in the world rather than his personal love. He supposed to a social activist who can feel the situation and find the solution for it. He wished this country must turn towards freedom and prosperity as such.

**Frederick Douglass**

Comprehension:

I.

1. What prevented the slaves from knowing their birth days?

Ans: Most of the masters never wanted their slaves to know about their birth days.

2. How would the master look at the enquiries about the slaves’ birthday?

Ans: The large part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus Ignorant. He did not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. The white children could tell their ages. He was not allowed to make any inquiries of his master concerning it. He deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent and evidence of a restless spirit.

3. What was whispered about Douglass’ parentage?
Ans: He was admitted to be such by all he ever heard speak of my parentage. The opinion was also whispered. I hat his master was his father; but of the correctness of this opinion.

4. When was Douglass separated from his mother?
Ans: He was separated from his mother when he was an infant.

5. Douglass' mother was able to meet him only at night.

6. What was the penalty to the field hand for not being in the field at sunrise?
Ans: Whipping is the penalty to the field hand for not being in the field at sunrise.

7. How old was Douglass when he lost his mother?
Ans: Douglass was seven years old when he lost his mother.

8. Name the person who was believed to be both Douglass' father and master.
Ans: Anthony was the name of Douglass' father and master.

9. What was Mr. Plummer?
Ans: Mr. Plummer was a miserable drunkard, a profane swearer, and a savage monster.

II.

1. Why wasn't Douglass affected much by his mother's death?

He never saw his mother, to know her as such; more than four or five times in his life; and each of these times was very short in duration, and at night. He did not recollect of ever seeing his mother by the light of day. She was with him in the night. She would lie down with him. And get him to sleep, but long before he woke she was gone. Very little communication ever took place between them. He received the tidings of her death with much the same emotions he should have probably felt at the death of a stranger.

III.

1. What kind of hardships did the slave suffer at the hands of the slaveholder and his mistress?
Ans: The slaveholder was a miserable drunkard, a profane swearer, and a savage monster. He always went armed with a cow skin and a heavy cudgel. The speaker had known him to cut and slash the women's head so horribly, that even master would be enraged at his cruelty, and would threaten to whip him if he did not mind himself. He would at times seem to take great pleasure in whipping a slave. Douglass had often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of his, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cow skin.

2. How does the passage comment on the dreadful experience of slavery?
Ans: It is a miserable experience being a slave. The author was not seeing his mother very often even he never saw his mother, more than four or five times in his life. She lived about twelve miles from his home. She was hired by Mr Stewart.

She came to meet him very rarely; only in the night she made her travel to see him on foot. She was a field hand, and whipping is the penalty of not being in the field at sunrise, unless a slave has special permission from his or her master to the contrary. She seldom gets the permission. It is like a burning hell to live under slavery.

3. In spite of the hardships he suffered as a slave, why does the author say, ‘slavery would not always be able to hold me within its foul embrace’?

Ans: ‘Slavery would not always be able to hold me within its foul embrace’ this is the living word of faith and spirit of hope departed not from him, but he remained like ministering angels to cheer him through the gloom. This truly led him to go out of his slavery and be a model for all the slaves. He became the first one who was writing an autobiography on his own life. His faith had taken him a leader and a model for others. Through his power of words there were many changes taken place in the country. When he was in slavery he uses to think of the future life. The burning desire had not quenched for long. He made it possible act. He often thought of the freedom of the slaves.

The Farmer’s Wife

Comprehension:

1. Who do 'you' and 'I' in the poem refer to?

Ans: ‘You’ refers to the farmer and ‘I’ refers to the wife of the farmer.

2. Why has the speaker’s husband committed suicide?

Ans: Because his crop was destroyed. He was in debt. He could not be able to pay back the money lenders. Thus the farmer committed suicide.

3. What series of contrasts does the speaker draw between herself and her husband?

Ans: The speaker was not used to sell things. Not even go out to other's house and ask something for their house. But in contrast to that the farmer was unable to bend his head and stretch out his hand.

4. What expressions in the poem bring out the contrast between the speakers her husband's plight? What difference does this indicate?

Ans: "But in battle I must live I must embrace life not death embrace life and the struggle for life" these expressions show that the speaker has come out of the plight. She overcame the problem and negotiated the situation with a brave heart. She will win the battle of life which her husband could not do.

5. The farmer’s wife in the poem is

a) Complaining about her husband’s death.

b) Lamenting the death of her husband.
c) Angry that her husband has left her.

d) Bitter about her husband's act.

e) Worried about her future. I) All of the above.

Ans : f) All of the above.

6. What memories of her husband trouble her now?

Ans: Her husband used to be a drunkard. He used to abuse and revile her and kicked her. All the time she thought that he is just a man.

7. What does the phrase 'harvest of my womb' suggest?

Ans: The phrase suggests the four children she gave birth from her womb.

8. Why is their plight compared to 'worm-eaten cotton pod'?

Ans: The situation of the farmer's family is suffering with a severe economic crisis. The farmer's wife and their four children are there. But there is no hope for their life to rebuild. It is like the worm eaten cotton pod.

9. To what condition had her husband's act of committing suicide pushed her?

Ans: There was no crop. The dignity was come to the ground.

10. The poem ends with

a) An assertion.

b) A deep sense of failure and despondency

c) A will to survive against all odds.

Ans : c) A will to survive against all odds.

II.

1. Many times the tone suggests the attitude of the speaker. What kind of attitude are suggested by the words 'virtuous', 'poor sinner', 'he is but a man', 'what of this?', 'why is this?'.

Ans: The poem “The farmer's wife” by Volga depicts the struggle of the wife of a farmer after his death. The speaker sadly recorded the reality of the poor former’s story. Here is the wife of the dead farmer. She is a poor sinner remaining before the creditors. She has to face them because her husband borrowed money from them. The farmer could not succeed to sell the crops or pay back the money he has borrowed from the money lenders. She is asking question to the farmer now that knowing that she was born with a head bent. She is not familiar with selling the crop. But the farmer consumed poison and died. The life without the farmer is like a bitter experience.

The farmer is a drunker. He used to abuse, revile and kicked her. She thought that he is just a man. But there are no crop but the debt remains. The dignity had come down to the dust. Her hearts turned as water. He did not imagine that she would bear the burden of four children. The former saw only the loss of the crop but he did not think of their children.
She further urges that to die a moment is needed. But truly what we need is a firm heart. She now teaches her children to live not merely for a handful of rice but to live in the battle of life. This poem greatly explains the brave hearted woman who lost her husband and run a challenging life.

2. What kind of questions does the poem arise about the plight of farmers' widows? Do you think that these questions are only addressed to the speaker’s dead husband?

Ans: What of this?, Why is this? My back would bear the burden of four children? But our family? These questions the speaker asks not only to her husband but the people who are in that situation.

Two Gentlemen of Verona

Comprehension:

1. Where does the narrator first meet the two boys?

Ans: The narrator first meets the boys on the outskirts of Verona.

2. Why doesn't the driver approve of the narrator buying fruit from the two boys? Does he succeed?

Ans: The driver stopped the narrator buying fruits from the boys saying that they would get fruits much better in Verona.

No, he did not succeed. Finally the narrator bought the biggest basket of fruits.

3. List the different things the boys did to earn their living.

Ans: They shined shoes, sold fruit, hawked newspapers, conducted tourists round the town, ran errands, exploited every avenue which the troubled economy of the town left open to them.

4. In spite of working hard and earning money, the two boys still looked poor because.

a) They were saving money to go to America.

b) They had other plans.

c) Wanted to save the money for the medical expenses.

Ans : c) Wanted to save the money for the medical expenses.

5. What qualities in the two boys attracted the narrator?

Ans: The two boys proved extremely useful to him. If he wanted a pack of American cigarettes, or seats for the opera, or the name of a good restaurant that could provide good ravioli, Nicola and Jacopo could be relied upon to satisfy his needs, with their usual cheerful competence. Thus they won the heart of the narrator.

6. Nicola was not pleased when Jacopo asked the narrator to drive them to Poleta as he

a) Did not want a stranger to become involved with their plans.

b) Preferred going to Poleta by train so that he could enjoy the scenery.
c) Did not want to ask anyone for favours.

d) Did not want to take help from someone he did not know well.

Ans: d) Did not want to take help from someone he did not know well.

7. Why did the two boys go to Poleta and why did they want the narrator not to follow them?

Ans: The two boys went to Poleta to visit their sister. Because they did not want the narrator to know about the agony they were going through.

8. The narrator did not follow the boys because

a) He was not invited to join them.

b) He was not interested in knowing what the boys were up to.

c) He wanted to respect their privacy.

Ans: c) He wanted to respect their privacy.

9. What had made the two boys and their sisters homeless?

Ans: Due to the war the two boys’ father a widower, a well-known singer at La Scala, had been killed in the early part of the war. Shortly afterward a bomb had destroyed their home and thrown the three children into the streets.

10. What does the narrator learn from Lucia’s nurse?

Ans: The narrator learns from Lucia’s nurse that she was suffering from tuberculosis of the spine, contracted during the miseries of the war.

11. The author did not speak to the boys on their return journey because he thought

a) The boys would prefer to keep their secret.

b) The boys were ashamed of their sister’s condition.

c) They wouldn’t tell him the truth.

d) The boys might ask him for money for their sister’s treatment.

Ans: a) The boys would prefer to keep their secret.

II

1. In what different ways were the boys useful to the narrator?

Ans: The boys were extremely useful to him. If the narrator wanted a pack of American cigarettes, or seats for the opera, or the name of a good restaurant that could provide good ravioli, Nicola and Jacopo could be relied upon to satisfy our needs, with their usual cheerful competence.

2. What do you understand about the boy’s character from their action and behaviour?

Ans: The boys were really good in character. There is a purpose for their life. They were working very hard for that. They wanted to save their sister from the deadly disease.

3. The boys are evasive in disclosing their plan to the narrator in the story because.
a) They thought he could never understand their plight.

b) They did not want to share their problem with a stranger.

c) They did not want to gain anybody’s sympathy.

Ans: b) They did not want to share their problem with a stranger.

III.

1. Do you think the ending comes to you as a surprise? Why?

Ans: Yes, because the boys re-joined the narrator, sat beside him, not speaking, in a mood of quiet contentment. For his part, he did not say a word. The narrator knew they would prefer to feel that they had safely kept their secret. Yet this silent epic of youthful devotion had touched him deeply.

2. Had you been in the place of the narrator would you have behaved differently?

Ans: Yes, I could have done something to the two boys. I started speaking to them and consoled them for their worries.

3. ‘Appearances are deceptive’. How does the story bring out this idea?

Ans: The appearance of the two boys was shabby. One boy had on a worn jersey and cut-off khaki pants; the other a shortened army tunic gathered in loose folds about his skinny frame. Yet gazing at the two little figures, with their brown skins, tangled hair and dark earnest eyes, we felt ourselves strongly attracted. As the days passed on the completely had a close contact with the boys.

The narrator slowly started asking about the boy’s personal life. They spend nothing on clothes. They eat little enough, having a meal it’s usually black bread and figs.

4. ‘War army destroy one’s home but not one’s heart’. Discuss the statement with reference to the story of the two boys.

Ans: During the war the two boys lost their father, a well-known singer at La Scala. Shortly afterward a bomb had destroyed their home and thrown the three children into the streets. They had always known a comfortable and cultured life. Lucia had herself been training as a singer. And they had suffered horribly from near starvation and exposure to the cold Veronese winter. For moths they had barely kept themselves alive in a sort of shelter they built with their own hands amidst the rubble. Then German Elite Guard established headquarters in Verona and for three dreadful years ruled the city with ruthless severity. The boys grew to hate those harsh, unwanted masters and when the resistance movement began secretly to form, they were among the first to join.

The two boys came back to their beloved sister. And they found her suffering from tuberculosis of the spine, contracted during the miseries of the war.

These boys are living for their sister. They admitted her to the hospital for treatment. Though the army destroyed their home they have not lost their hope of life. They have a brave heart.

5. Do you think the story is a telling comment on the true character of a gentleman? Elaborate.
Answer: The narrator respects the boy's attitude. He saw a great hard work behind their life. The readiness of their duties is extremely good. It is really touching that they dedicate their life for their sister. He observed each and every character of the boys and helped them to go to America.

In spite of knowing the story of them, he did not even ask about it. The narrator sincerely respected their feeling. Theses show the true character of a gentleman.