

A ROADSIDE STAND

by Robert Frost

Extract 1

The little old house was out with a little new shed
In front at the edge of the road where the traffic sped
A roadside stand that too pathetically pled,
It would not be fair to say for a dole of bread,
But for some of the money, the cash, whose flow support,
The flower of cities from sinking and withering faint

Questions:

1. Where was the new shed put? What was its purpose?

A: It was put up in front of an old house at the edge of the road. It was put sell some cheap things.

2. Why does the poet use the word 'pathetic'?

A: The poet uses the word to underline the poverty and misery of the people in the countryside.

3. Who are referred to as 'the flower of cities'?

A: The rich people of the city life have been referred to as 'the flower of the cities'.

Extract 2

The polished traffic passed with a mind ahead,
Or if ever aside a moment, then out of sorts
At having the landscape marred with the artless paint
Of signs that with N turned wrong and S turned wrong
Offered for sale wild berries in wooden quarts.

Questions:

1. Explain the first line of the extract.

A: Magnificent cars with rich people seated in them passed with their eyes fix ahead. They looked neither right nor left but ahead only.

2. How did one who looked aside a moment feel?

A: He felt irritated that the beauty of the landscape had been marred.

3. What was thought to mar the landscape?

A: The artless paint of signs on the roadside stand was thought to mar the beauty of the landscape.

4. What thing was offered for sale?

A: Wild berries were offered for sale.

Extract 3

It is in the news that all these pitiful kin
Are to be bought out and mercifully gathered in
To live in villages, next to the theatre and the store,
Where they won't have to think for themselves anymore.

Questions:

1. Who have been referred to as 'pitiful kin'?

A: The poor farmers and other deprived classes have been referred to as "pitiful kin".

2. What is in the news?

A: It is in the news that the poor will be settled in villages close to the cities.

3. Who will be bought out and from where?

A: The poor farmers will be paid for their small holdings and taken away from there to be settled in villages close to the cities.

4. How will it help them to be near the theatre and the store?

A: It is said that then they would not have to think for themselves.

Extract 4

While greedy good-doers, beneficent beasts of prey,
Swarm over their lives enforcing benefits
That are calculated to soothe them out of their wits.
And by teaching them how to sleep they sleep all day,
Destroy their sleeping at night the ancient way..

Questions

1. Who have been called 'greedy good-doers'?

A: The selfish rich people who pretend to be worried about the poor are called 'greedy good-doers'.

2. What do 'beneficent beasts of prey' do?

A: They make a show of helping the poor but in fact exploit them for their own benefit.

3. Why are benefits enforced on the poor?

A: Benefits are enforced on the poor so that the real advantage of these benefits reaches the rich themselves in the end.

4. What are the poor taught to do?

A: They are taught to sleep peacefully at night, but in fact, all their sleep at night is robbed while the rich sleep peacefully all day.

Extract 5

Sometimes I feel myself I can hardly bear
The thought of so much childish longing in vain,
The sadness that lurks near the open window there,
That waits all day in almost open prayer
For the squeal of brakes, the sound of a stopping car,
Of all the thousand selfish cars that pass,
Just one to inquire what a farmer's prices are.

Questions

1. What can the poet not bear?

A: He can't bear the thought of the poor man waiting all day for some car to stop at his stand.

2. What gives sadness and to whom?

A: The poor farmer keeps sitting all day at his open window but none of the thousand cars passing that way stops at his stand. It leaves the poor man in sadness.

3. What does the poor man wait for?

A: He waits for the squeal of brakes or for the sound of a stopping car.

4. Why have the cars been called selfish?

A: The cars have been called selfish because none of them cares to think of the poor farmer's longing.

Extract 6

And one did stop, but only to plow up grass
In using the yard to back and turn around;

And another to ask the way to where it was bound;
And another to ask could they sell it a gallon of gas
They couldn't (this crossly); they had none, didn't it see?

Questions

1. Why did the first of the cars stop there?

A: It stopped there to use the yard in order to turn back.

2. Why did the second one stop there?

A: It stopped there to ask the way to where it was bound.

3. Why did the third one stop at the stand?

A: It stopped there to ask if they could give him a gallon of gas (petrol).

4. What made it cross?

A: It was cross when told that there was no gas at the stand.

Extract 7

No, in country money, the country scale of gain,
The requisite lift of spirit has never been found,
Or so the voice of the country seems to complain,
I can't help owning the great relief it would be
To put these people at one stroke out of their pain.

Questions

1. Explain the phrase 'the requisite lift of spirit'.

A: The poor need a better treatment at the hands of the rich ruling classes. But this lift of the spirit has not been found so far.

2. What does the voice of the country complain?

A: The voice of the country complains that nothing substantial has been done to improve their lot.

3. What could give the poet great relief?

A: He could get a great relief if the poor could be brought out of their pain at one stroke.

4. What is the central idea of these lines?

A: The poet feels sad at the miserable plight of the poor people. He says that some urgent steps should be taken to improve their lot. He says that it will give him great relief if it happens so.

SHORT-ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS (30-40 words)

1. The city folk who drove through the countryside hardly paid any heed to the roadside stand or the people who ran it. If at all they did it was to complain. Which lines bring this out? What was their complaint about?

A: The city people thought that the artless paint of signs made at the stand spoiled the beauty of the landscape. On seeing it, they felt out of sorts.

2. What was the plea of the folk who had put up the roadside stand?

A: Those who had put up a roadside stand were poor farmers. They hoped earn some money from the rich city people who kept going up and down in their cars all day. They did not want any dole of bread from them. They wanted only some money in return for the things they had to sell.

3. The government and other social service agencies appear to help the poor rural people, but do them no good. Pick out the words and phrases that the poet uses to show their double standards.

A: The poet calls such people greedy good-doers and beneficent beast of prey. They soothe the poor out of their wits. They teach them how to sleep, but in fact destroy all their sleeping at night. And they themselves sleep all day.

4. What is the 'childish longing' that the poet refers to? Why is it 'vain'?

A: The poor farmer keeps waiting all day for some car to stop at his stand. But hardly any car stops there. With a longing heart, he keeps sitting by the open window and waiting all day. His longing proves vain when no one comes to buy the things he has put up for sale.

5. Where was the roadside stand put up and what for?

A: The stand was in the shape of a new shed. It was built in front of an old little house. It was at the edge of the road. A lot of fast traffic went that way. The poor owner of the stand had some little things to sell. He hoped to earn a little money by selling these things.

6. What does the poet say about the polished traffic?

A: The rich people had polished or magnificent cars. They drove with their eye fixed forward. If ever anyone looked aside, he felt irritated. He was irritated to see the artless way in which the shed had been painted. He would feel that the artless paint marred the beauty of the landscape.

7. Why did no one stop to buy at the roadside stand?

A: People in the car had money in their pockets. Yet they did not stop at the stand to buy anything. They thought it mean to stop at such a place and shop there. So, they kept the money in their pockets and moved away.

8. What was it that pained the poet?

A: The poet saw how the poor man kept waiting for some car to stop at his stand. Thousands of cars passed that way but none stopped there to buy anything. Each car left the poor man waiting in sorrow. It was this pathetic wait that pained the poet.

9. What was the complaint about the artless paint of sign?

A: The stand-owner had got his shed painted. He had put up a few things for sale. He had made some signs in paint to indicate the things he had for sale. But the rich men going in their cars would say that the beauty of the landscape had been marred by the artless paint.

10. What has been in the news?

A: There are all sorts of false promises in the news. It is in the news that the poor farmers will be paid for their small holdings and settled in villages near the cities. They are assured that they won't have to worry about themselves. But in fact, such assurances are just to befool the poor.

11. What does the poet say about the 'greedy good-doers' and 'beneficent easts of prey'?

A: The poet calls the foxy politicians 'greedy good-doers' and 'beneficent beasts of prey'. These people befool the poor with their false promises. They take away all the peace and sleep of the poor while they themselves sleep during the day even.

12. What is it that the poet can hardly bear?

A: The poor man at the roadside stand keeps sitting by the open window all day. He keeps praying for one car at least to stop there. But when each of the thousand selfish cars passes by, the poor man is left in sorrow. It is this thought that the poet can hardly bear.

13. Why does Frost sympathise with the rural poor?

A: The poet sees how the poor man keeps waiting for some car to stop at his stall. The poor villager is left waiting in sorrow. His plight fills Robert Frost with sympathy. Thousands of cars pass that way but none stops there to buy anything. sympathy for the helpless rural poor.