

Chapter 2: The Mark on the Wall

NCERT · Class 12 · English · Kaleidoscope · Non Fiction

Questions

Question 1

An account of reflections is more important than a description of reality, according to the author. Why?

Solution

Answer. The author, Virginia Woolf, can only reflect the deeply hidden truths of human realities through characters created by the writers. Existence often requires the radiance of emotions, and a description of reality often fails to evoke the author's feelings through their work. While reflections, on the other hand, help people to examine their thoughts or feelings. According to the author, future writers will look into the depths, explore the facts, pursue their illusions, and leave behind the ancient detailed depiction of reality. Hence, according to the author, an account of reflections is more important than a description of reality.

Question 2

Looking back at objects and habits of a bygone era can give one a feeling of phantom-like unreality. What examples does the author give to bring out this idea?

Solution

Answer. The author takes Shakespeare, the most famous Elizabethan playwright, as an example to describe the objects and habits of the past era, which brings only a ghostly unreality to the author. The renowned writer, Shakespeare, sat in an armchair by the fireplace, clutching his forehead and the sky above his head, full of incredible and suspicious ideas and inspirations. She believes that a person will naturally be inspired by the environment or experience rather than some inspiring phenomenon. The author collected some examples from 'Whitaker's Table of Precedency' to describe this untrue spirit. Traditional concepts such as good and evil, heaven and hell, and God and the devil are invalid and seem to be describing untrue.

Question 3

How does the imagery of (i) the fish and (ii) the tree, used almost poetically by the author, emphasise the idea of stillness of living, breathing thought?

Solution

Answer. The narrator looks at the life of the tree, while the fish emphasises the stillness of life and the breath of thought. She says, "Wood is a pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree, and trees grow, and we don't know how they grow." Trees grow independently without any external factors affecting them, which describes how nature works soundlessly without disturbing the world around them. Further, she explains it using the imagery of a fish, saying, "I like to think of the fish balanced against the stream like flags blown out," describing the still life present in a current world that is often left undiscovered.

Question 4

How does the author pin her reflections on a variety of subjects on the 'mark on the wall'? What does this tell us about the way the human mind functions?

Solution

Answer. In this chapter, the author attempts to describe the "Stream of mindfulness." First of all, the author thinks deeply about solving the mystery of the marks on the wall, representing the interest of the individual's mind and the height of the human psychological process. In order to solve a small mystery, the human mind plunges into an unimaginable depth. A smaller secret, "The mark on the wall," allows her to delve into history, Shakespeare's writings, traditional norms, etc. All these ideas will enable her to look deeper into the future. Thus, she discusses how nature penetrates our thought processes and stimulates us to take action, and tells us the infinite nature of human thought in terms of action.

Question 5

Not seeing the obvious could lead a perceptive mind to reflect upon more philosophical issues. Discuss this with reference to the 'snail on the wall'.

Solution

Answer. Yes, it is true that not seeing the obvious can lead a perceptive mind to reflect upon more philosophical issues. For example, the story "The Mark on the Wall" revolves around the mark present on the wall from the author's vision. The mark on the wall, which is the main plot of the story, could

have easily been solved by the narrator, examining the mark more closely but she instead investigates using several mental processes to solve the mystery behind it. Instead, she reflects upon more philosophical issues. She goes back to ancient times, to the future and is in a fluctuating state of mind reflecting upon philosophies and, at the same time, trying to solve the mystery behind the mark. At the end of the story, it is revealed that it's just the snail who made the mark, creating a plot. However, with her interpretations and perspective, the author reflected upon many philosophical issues throughout the entire process.

Talking about the Text

Question 1

'In order to fix a date, it is necessary to remember what one saw.' Have you experienced this at any time? Describe one such incident and the non-chronological details that helped you remember a particular date.

Solution

Answer. The author says, "In order to fix a date, it is necessary to remember what one saw." Our minds are more receptive to images than writings, so one has to mark any important dates. But, on the other hand, there are chances that we may still forget about it. So, the visual images that happened on that particular day may help backtrack to the date of the day.

Yes, I, too, got to experience the same situation. I once got to see a bus coming crashing into a building near my house on my birthday. Unfortunately, no one was harmed. This unforgettable incident keeps flashing in my mind on every birthday, reminding me of the day it happened. It provokes me to philosophise life and open my mental process to endless thoughts. Hence, the author rightly said, "In order to fix a date, it is necessary to remember what one saw."

Question 2

'Tablecloths of a different kind were not real tablecloths.' Does this sentence embody the idea of blind adherence to rules and tradition? Discuss with reference to 'Understanding Freedom and Discipline' by J. Krishnamurti that you've already read.

Solution

Answer. Both the authors, J. Krishnamurti and Virginia Woolf, have restructured the concept of freedom in many of their works. Both authors are against the idea of blind adherence to rules without

questioning their purpose and intention. They both have talked about how the traditionally set rules have hindered individual freedom and the compromises they have made in their life. Woolf also questioned the importance given to knowledge and learning and the depiction of reality by Shakespeare. She rejects all these traditional set norms and sets up her own thoughts on education and truth with reality.

Question 3

According to the author, nature prompts action as a way of ending thought. Do we tacitly assume that 'men of action are men who don't think'?

Solution

Answer. The author Woolf assumes nature creates interference to end her thought process with all the obstacles in between. She took this up as a test and did not give in to her appeal to stand up from her chair and solve the mystery behind the mark on the wall in less than a minute. Instead, she used her continuous thinking process to unlock the secrets imprinted on the wall unhurriedly. As a result, she comes out with a lot of countless ideas. Thus, for the narrator, knowledge is related to thinking ability, and nature creates obstacles for us. Therefore, according to the narrator, in the story's context, the actors do not believe that it is correct to say that people are indeed non-thinking people.

Appreciation

Question 1

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of narration: one, where the reader would remain aware of some outside voice telling him/her what's going on; two, a narration that seeks to reproduce, without the narrator's intervention, the full spectrum and continuous flow of a character's mental process. Which of these is exemplified in this essay? Illustrate.

Solution

Answer. Virginia Woolf's 'The Mark on the Wall' is a perfect example of a Stream of Knowledge. The story's narrator seeks to represent the full spectrum of a character's mental process and constant flow without the narrator's intervention. Although the narrator tries to focus on the ideas to solve the mystery behind the mark on the wall, the author uses various unconnected ideas and opinions throughout the entire story. These perceptions influence the reader to imagine and stimulate their mental process. But unfortunately, the abundance of thoughts that the mark on the wall bothers the narrator's mind is

unrealistic because the real reason behind it is the snail's mark. Thus, the author's different opinions of several myriad ideas set the narrative technique of the essay.

Question 2

This essay frequently uses the non-periodic or loose sentence structure: the component members are continuous but so loosely joined that the sentence could have easily been broken without damage to or break in thought. Locate a few such sentences and discuss how they contribute to the relaxed and conversational effect of the narration.

Solution

Answer. The following set of sentences from the text is an excellent example of the continuous structure of loosely coupled sentences. This narrative structure gives the narrative a relaxed tone – the image of the narrator sitting in a chair and smoking a cigarette, trying to solve the problem. The secret behind the mark on the wall was that he hesitated to get up and reveal the mystery in less than a minute, creating an inert atmosphere in the scene. So the reader is fully involved and knows that the narrator is talking to them. In addition, if the reader knows the mysterious mark on the wall, this kind of shadow will bring a specific exotic flavour to the reader.

Here are a few sentences from the text:

"I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts. To steady myself, let me catch hold of the first idea that passes... Shakespeare... Well, he will do as well as another. A man who sat solidly in an armchair, and looked into the fire, so— A shower of ideas fell perpetually from some very high Heaven down through his mind. He leaned his forehead on his hand, and people, looking in through the open door, —for this scene is supposed to take place on a summer's evening—But how dull this is, this historical fiction! It doesn't interest me at all."
