



**INDIAN SCHOOL DARSAIT
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**



Subject : English Lesson : An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum Date of Worksheet : April 2019

Name of the Student : _____ Date: _____ Class & Div : XII Roll Number :

Summary

In this poem the poet focuses on the theme of social injustice and inequalities. He presents the pathetic and miserable picture of the elementary classroom in a slum. These children have pale and lifeless faces. They are like rootless weeds which are uncared and unwanted with their disorderly hair torn around their faces. They are depressed and oppressed with the burdens of life and keep their heads down. They have stunted growth. They inherit the diseases of their father. Some of them do have dreams. A sweet young boy is sitting at the back of the dim classroom. He is dreaming of a squirrel's game in the trees and probably other interesting things. The walls are dirty and creamy and on them are hung the donations given by the rich and also Shakespeare's portrait. A civilized dome found in the cities and Tyrolese valleys with beautiful flowers are also put up. The map on the wall shows the children, the beautiful world outside; but for these children of the slum, it is meaningless. The children studying in these schools do not have the means to go and explore the world. For them what they see through their classroom windows, the narrow street and the lead sky is the world. Shakespeare is wicked for them as he has written only about the rich, beautiful world tempting them to steal. The map is of no interest to them because it does not reflect the world they live in, cramped and dark lanes. Their lives start in darkness and ends in utter darkness. They are under-nourished and their poverty has distorted their vision as they spend their whole time in foggy slums. The poet feels that the map which shows beautiful and exotic places should be replaced with slums as it is not the world they live in. Unless the governor inspector and visitor play a vital role in bringing about a change, their lives will remain in dark. The slum children will be able to peep through the window only when the gap between the two worlds is bridged. They should break the barriers and come out of the dirty surroundings and their world should be extended into the green fields, golden sands and bright world. They should have the freedom of expression and their outlook be broadened. For, only the educated and learned people can create history whose language has strength and power.

I Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow:

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(1)

“The stunted, unlucky heir of twisted bones, reciting a father’s gnarled disease, His lessons from his desk. At back of the dim class one unnoted, sweet and young. His eyes live in a dream, of Squirrel’s game, in tree room, other than this.”

(a) Who is the unlucky heir? Why is he called unlucky?

Ans. The thin slum boy is the unlucky heir. He is so called because he has inherited poverty, despair and disease from his parents.

(b) Who sits back unnoted? Why?

Ans. A young boy sits at the back. This boy is different from the others as ‘his eyes live’ in a dream – he is dreaming and probably thinking about a better future. He is lost in his own world, therefore, not sad like the others. This boy thinks of the ‘squirrel’s game’. He wants to enjoy and play freely like the squirrel in the garden outside.

(c) Pick two images each of despair and disease from these lines.

Ans. The images are – ‘unlucky heir’, ‘dim class’, and that of diseases are – ‘twisted bones, gnarled disease’.

(d) Name the poem and the poet.

(2)

*“And yet, for these
Children, these windows, not this map, their world,
Where all their future’s painted with a fog,
A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky
Far far from rivers, capes and stars of words.”*

4

(a) Who are these children? Ans. These are the slum children.

(b) What is their world like?

Ans. The school windows are their world because they cannot move beyond them.

(c) What kind of future does the poet foresee for them?

Ans. The future of these children is quite dim. As we can’t see things in the fog, in the same way the future of these children is looming under darkness. Their future is bleak.

(d) Why does the poet say that the narrow street is sealed?

Ans. The narrow street is sealed as these provide no opportunity to make an access to the outer world of wisdom.

(3)

*“Break O break open till they break the town
And show the children to green fields, and make their world
Run azure on gold sands, and let their tongues
Run naked into books, the white and green leaves open
History theirs whose language is the sun.”*

(a) What should they break?

Ans. They should break all barriers and obstructions that hinder the school children’s growth.

(b) What kind of a world does the poet imagine for these children?

Ans. The poet imagines a world where these children run around in the fields or on sea beaches in a carefree manner. They should also enjoy freedom of knowledge and expression.

(c) What does the ‘sun’ symbolize?

Ans. ‘Sun’ symbolizes light and brightness which, comes from education. Proper education alone can improve the lives of these slum children.

(4)

*“Unless, governor, inspector, visitor,
This map becomes their window and these windows
That shut upon their lives like catacombs,
Break O’ break open till they break the town
And show the children to green fields, and make their world*

Run azure on gold sands, and let their tongues
Run naked into books, the white and white green leaves open
History theirs whose language is the sun.”

(a) Who can improve the lot of the poor slum children?

Ans. The rulers, the educationists, the teachers and the general public can pool their efforts to give a better life to the poor slum children.

(b) What kind of life do they live?

Ans. They are shut up in their dim classrooms and small hovels like dead bodies in the grave.

(c) What is the poet's appeal to the upper class people?

Ans. The poet urges them to bring some light into the lives of the slum children. They may be imparted education in a healthy atmosphere.

(d) What is the poet's advice?

Ans. The poet suggests that the slum children should not only be educated properly but also removed from their dirty surroundings to sunny and green fields.

(e) Explain: “History is theirs whose language is the sun.”

Ans. The language that has warmth and power of the sun only can mould and write history.

(5)

*“On their slag heap, these children
Wear skins peeped through by bones and spectacles of steel
With mended glass, like bottle bits on stones.
All of their time and space are foggy slum.
So blot their maps with slums as big as doom.” (BOARD 2018)*

(a) Which image is used to describe the poverty of these children?

Ans. The images used to describe the slums are: (i) slag heap (ii) bottle bits on stones (iii) foggy slums. These images convey the misery of the children and the poverty of their dirty and unhygienic surroundings.

(b) What sort of life do such children lead?

Ans. In the dirty and unhygienic surroundings the slum children lead very pathetic and miserable lives full of woes, wants, diseases, poverty and uncertainty.

(c) Identify and name the figure of speech used in line 3.

Ans. Simile With mended glass, like bottle bits on stones.

(d) What blot their maps?

Ans. These living hells i.e. these dirty slums blot their maps. These are the maps of the civilized world—the world of the rich and great.

(e) What does the poet convey through ‘So blot their maps with slums as big as doom’?

Ans. The poet conveys his protest against social injustice and class inequalities. He wants the islands of prosperity to be flooded with the dirt and stink of the slums.

II. **Answer any four of the following questions in 30-40 words each:**

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1. What is the theme of the poem?

This poem deals with the theme of social injustice and class inequalities. The poet presents it by talking of the two different and incompatible worlds- the world of the rich and the civilized and the world of the poor and the deprived. This gap can be bridged by the administrative authorities and through education.

2. ‘So blot their maps with slums as big as doom’. What does the poet want to convey?

The poet is angry at the social inequalities in the world. There are two worlds – the dirty slums and the prosperous and the beautiful world of the rich. The poet wants the map of the world should also have blots of slums as big as the ‘doom’. In reality he wants the gap to be reduced.

3. History is theirs whose language is the sun'. Explain.
This statement means that those who have the courage and conviction to break free from the constraints of life are the ones who create history. One can make a mark only if one can outshine others. Education only can give them power and strength like the sun which will bring about a change in the lives of the people.
4. Why does Stephen Spender say that the pictures and maps in the elementary school classroom are not meaningful?
The pictures that have been put up on the classroom walls depict the civilized world. The portrait of Shakespeare is useless to the slum children because they never read his works. The world shown in the map is not their world. Their world is confined to the walls of their classroom.
5. What does the poet want for the children of slums? How can their lives be made to change?
The poet wants these children to get a real and meaningful education that would open up a world of opportunities for them. He wishes that these children ought to be brought out of their dark and dingy world. He wishes these children to come out and play into green fields and golden sands.
6. Describe the slum children mentioned in the poem?
The slum school children are ill-fed and under-nourished. Their faces lack the spark of life. Their hair hang about their pale faces like rootless weeds. They look weak and tired. Some of these children have inherited their parent's diseases. They lack vigour and vitality and show no interest in their lessons.

II. PRACTICE QUESTIONS: Read the stanza and answer the questions that follows:

4

- (a) *"Surely, Shakespeare is wicked, the map a bad example,
With ships and sun and love tempting them to steal-
For lives that turn in their cramped holes
From fog to endless nights."*

- (i) Why has Shakespeare been described as wicked? (ii) Why is the map a bad example?
(iii) What tempts them to steal? (iv) How do the children continue to live? (v) Explain: 'From fog to endless night.'

*"The stunted, unlucky heir
Of twisted bones, reciting a father gnarled disease
His lesson from his desk. At the back of the dim class
One unnoted, sweet and young. His eyes live in a dream
Of squirrels game, in tree room, other than this."*

- (i) Who is being referred to in the first two lines?(ii)Explain 'father's gnarled disease'.(iii) Who sit at the back of the class? How is he different from others?(iv) Explain his eyes live in a dream? (v) What is the comparison drawn with squirrels game?

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- 1.** What is that these children inherit from their parents? What does it signify? **2.** How has the poet described the colour of the wall and why? **3.** The poet presents two different worlds. What are they? **4.** What picture of the slum children does the poet draw? **5.** Where does the poet see hope and relief? **6.** What does the poet mean by saying, 'Let their tongue run naked into books'? **7.** How does the poet bring to light the brutalities of slum life **8.** Explain 'Open handed map, awarding the world its world'. **9.** How does the poet see the children as victims of social injustice? **10.**Who award the world its world and how? What does the world contain? **11.**What is the theme of the poem? How has it been presented? **12.** Why does Stephen Spender use the images of despair and disease in the first stanza of the poem and with what effect?

