

By Sylvia Plath

SUMMARY

This poem is written in free verse and does not depend on any rhythm to convey the message. It is a poem describing a woman's struggle against the falsity of lies and the truthful harshness of her own image from the perspective of an unsympathetic mirror. 'I' in the poem represents the mirror as Sylvia Plath is trying to see the mirror's view of herself.

The poem is written in the style of a monologue. Sylvia Plath was suffering from severe depression and she had very little compassion for herself. This poem shows how she is really scared of the truth the mirror is reflecting. Unlike other people, the mirror is free from any preoccupations or prejudices. Unlike human beings, it is free from any likes and dislikes and reflects only the truth. It is omniscient like the God, and sees everywhere. The mirror has God-like powers over the woman. The mirror constantly gazes at the wall opposite to it and the wall has pink spots of age, or discoloration on it. The view in the mirror is interrupted by the 'to and fro' movements of the woman. This refers to the passing of time and the young girl ageing into an old woman.

The image of the sea and water is a foreboding motif in many poems of Sylvia Plath. In this poem also the mirror is compared to a lake. The mirror is able to 'swallow' like a lake and the lake gives a seemingly crystal clear image like a mirror. The lake can also refer to the creatures, who exist in the lake because time flies too soon. The mirror of the lake unemotionally observes how the woman is shaken by its reflection. Not everyone is ready to accept the reality depicted by the mirror, so people prefer to live in a world of illusions, in the dim light of candles or moonlight, which hides their flaws. The mirror is unsympathetic, it is unmindful of the tension of people and continues to reflect their true selves.

The mirror is supposed to be cruel but the woman cannot do without it. Repeated viewing of the mirror and seeing her own reflection leads to self-loathing as Sylvia Plath sees less and less of the young girl and more of the old woman. The old woman reflected in the mirror is reminded of her past youth and she feels herself trapped in the cruel jaws of time like a fish. In the last lines the poetess has incorporated mythology into her poem. 'Drowned' apparently refers to the Greek prince Narcissus who was very handsome. He kept gazing at his reflection

in the lake for so long that he drowned. So the poem is about a woman who is torn between the true picture of herself and the distorted image that others see of her. She wants to escape from the reality of harsh ugliness that time inflicts upon her.

सारांश

यह कविता मुक्त छंद में रची गई है और लय आदि पर संदेश देने के लिए निर्भर नहीं है। यह कविता नारी के झूठ के विरुद्ध संघर्ष और उसके अपने यथार्थवादी प्रतिरूप छवि की गाथा एक संवेदनहीन दर्पण की जुबानी है। कविता में "मैं" दर्पण का प्रतीक है। कवियत्री सिल्विया प्लाथ दर्पण के दृष्टिकोण से स्वयं को देखने का प्रयत्न कर रही हैं।

कविता 'एकालाप' की शैली में है। सिल्विया प्लाथ बहुत अधिक मानसिक तनाव और खिन्नता का शिकार थीं और उन्हें अपने आप से कोई हमदर्दी नहीं थीं। कविता दर्शाती है कि किस तरह उन्हें डर था कि दर्पण कौन से सत्य को दिखाएगा। और लोगों से हटकर दर्पण किसी भी अच्छे-बुरे दृष्टिकोण से स्वतन्त्र है। मनुष्यों की तरह वह पसंद-नापसंद नहीं दर्शाता - केवल सत्य को दिखाता है। वह ईश्वर की तरह सर्वज्ञ है और सब कुछ देखता है। उसके पास ईश्वर तुल्य शक्तियाँ हैं। दर्पण एक टक सामने वाली दीवार को देखता है - दीवार पर गुलाबी धब्बे या बदरंगे धब्बे हैं - दर्पण में नजर आने वाले दृश्य में नारी के हिलने-डुलने के कारण बार-बार बाधा पड़ रही है। इसका इशारा नारी का लड़की से बूढ़ी स्त्री बनने की प्रक्रिया को दर्शाता है।

सागर और पानी की छवि सिल्विया प्लाथ की कई कविताओं में एक चेतावनी हेतु है। इस कविता में भी दर्पण की तुलना एक झील से की गई है। दर्पण झील की तरह निगलने की योग्यता रखता है और झील दर्पण की तरह निर्मल दिखती है। झील उन प्राणियों का प्रतीक भी हो सकता जो उसके अन्दर रहते हैं क्योंकि समय जल्दी बीत जाता है। झील का दर्पण भावुकता-रहित होकर गौर से देखता है कि नारी दर्पण में दिख रही अपनी छवि से प्रभावित है। हर कोई दर्पण में दिखने वाले सत्य को देखने के लिए तैयार नहीं। इसलिए मनुष्य अधिकतर भ्रांति का शिकार हो मिथ्या संसार में विचरना पसंद करते हैं। चाँदनी या मोमबत्ती की धुँधली रोशनी उनकी त्रुटियों पर पर्दा डालती है। दर्पण को सहानुभूति नहीं है उसे मनुष्यों के तनावों से कोई सरोकार नहीं और इसलिए वह सदा सत्य को दर्शाता है।

कहा जाता है दर्पण निष्ठुर है परन्तु नारी उसके बिना नहीं रह सकती। लगातार दर्पण में अपने को निहारने से उसे अपने आप से घृणा हो गई है क्योंकि सिल्विया प्लाथ अपने अंदर की लड़की को कम और बूढ़ी स्त्री को अधिक देखती है। बूढ़ी स्त्री बार-बार बीते यौवन को याद करती और अपने आपको निष्ठुर समय के जबड़ों में फँसा पाती है मानो वह कोई मछली हो। अंतिम पंक्तियों में कवियत्री पौराणिक कथा का सहारा लेती है। 'Drowned' का संकेत-यूनानी राजकुमार Narcissus

की तरफ़ है जो बहुत सुंदर थे। वह टकटकी लगाकर अपनी छवि को झील की सतह पर देखते-देखते पानी में डूब गये। अतः कविता एक ऐसी नारी पर आधारित है जो सत्यता पर आधारित अपनी छवि और मिथ्या छवि के बीच में फैसला नहीं कर पाती। वह समय के निष्ठुर परन्तु, सत्य-यथार्थ से बचना चाहती है जो कुरूप है।

WORD-MEANINGS

- **preconceptions** : pre-conceived notions or ideas
- **swallow** : absorb ● **unmistaken** : not affected
- **meditate** : contemplate ● **speckles** : some blemishes or spots
- **flickers** : hazy ● **agitation** : to be angry or upset

EXPLANATION OF SOME EXPRESSIONS

1. *I am silver and exact.....*

Explanation ...

Many mirrors have an electroplated thin sheet of silver to reflect light.

2. *I have no preconceptions.....*

Explanation ...

Human beings are coloured and biased in their judgement of others and they have pre-conceived notions about others. The mirror only reflects the truth without prejudice.

3. *Whatever I see I swallow immediately.....*

Explanation ...

The mirror is able to absorb whatever it sees and it in return reflects the picture clearly.

4. *I am not cruel, only truthful.....*

Explanation ...

The mirror reflects the reality, the true image and gives no illusion. It may be considered cruel but it is truthful. It does not hide any flaws.

5. *The eye of a little god, four-cornered.....*

Explanation ...

The mirror is like a world with its four directions. The four corners of the mirror make it look like a microcosm of the world.

6. *Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.....*

Explanation ...

The mirror constantly keeps gazing on the opposite wall and appears to be contemplating deeply. The wall has become a part of the life of the mirror.

7. *It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long.....*

Explanation ...

The opposite wall is of pink colour with patches of discoloration. This also implies the young girl whose fresh glow of youth has given way to the freckles, and other visible signs of old age on her face.

8. *Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me.....*

Explanation ...

The mirror and a lake are similar. The lake also gives a crystal clear image like a mirror. Just as mirror does not hide age and reality, similarly a lake also depicts true reality. 'Lake' is used because even away from the mirror, the woman is forced to see the reality through nature.

9. *Searching my reaches for what she really is.....*

Explanation ...

This refers to the extent of the lake's reach. The woman who bends to see her reflection in the lake explores the depth of time, goes into the depth of her past and bemoans the loss of her youth.

10. *Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.....*

Explanation ...

Candles and moonlight are associated with romance. Now with age, there is no romance left. The candles and the moonlight are dim and they help in hiding one's flaws. So these are called 'liars' for they offer illusions to women about their beauty or youth. The candles and moon only reveal shadows and not the true picture. These are just distractions to avoid the essential self.

11. *She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.....*

Explanation ...

The mirror is unsympathetic. It reveals the ugly reality, so the only reward it gets is tears and agitation over the loss of youth. The mirror reinforces the belief that reality is bitter to accept.

12. *I am important to her. She comes and goes.....*

Explanation ...

It is an accepted fact that a mirror is a woman's companion and is indispensable to her. A woman needs a mirror all the time and she cannot do without it.

13. *In me an old woman rises towards her day after day.....*

Explanation ...

No matter how much the woman wants, the mirror only reveals her old face. Every morning, the woman looks in the mirror, full of hope, but she only gets to see her old wrinkled and lustreless appearance.

14. *In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman.....*

Explanation ...

This refers to the myth of the Greek prince Narcissus, who kept looking at his handsome appearance in the lake for so long that he drowned into the lake. The poetess regrets the loss of youth which is associated with 'drowning'. 'Drowning' indicates the consequences of vanity. The poet uses this metaphor to show that the little girl that used to look in the mirror has drowned and an old woman has replaced her.

15. *Rises toward her day after day like a terrible fish.....*

Explanation ...

This is reminiscent of Sylvia Plath's repeated viewing of her own reflection which leads to self-loathing as she sees less and less of the young girl and more of the old woman. The fish epitomises a creature's inability to escape from the sea of time.

It is interesting that Plath chose a fish instead of any other animal. When she used a lake in place of a mirror, she may have needed a creature that lived in the lake to compare her feeling of living in the mirror. She is trying to make a point that a fish depends on water, the same way, a woman depends on the mirror.

Use of Literary Devices

1. Personification

It is a kind of metaphor and is one of the most frequently used resources of poetry. It represents inanimate objects or abstract ideas or objects as persons, endowed with personal attributes. The mirror is presented as a person ('I am not cruel, only truthful'), then as a 'Lake'. Candles and moon are called 'liars'.

2. Symbolism

Symbolism is the use of one object to represent another. In this poem the poet feels herself trapped in the sea of time, like an ugly fish. She feels helpless like a fish who cannot cross the sea of time and regain her lost youth.

3. Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech used for comparison but in this, words 'like' and 'as' are not used. The poet does not say that one thing is like another. For example,

'Now I am a lake'.

In this context lake is a metaphor of mirror or reflection.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS (SOLVED)

Answer the following questions briefly

(a) *What is the poetic device used when the mirror says 'I swallow'?* [C.B.S.E., 2011 (T-1)]

Ans : It is personification because the mirror swallows images like an animal or any other living being.

(b, c) *How does the mirror usually pass its time? What disturbs the mirror's contemplation of the opposite wall?*

Ans : The Mirror keeps gazing at the wall opposite to it. This view is sometimes interrupted by the 'to' and 'fro' movements of the woman.

(d) *Why does the mirror appear to be a lake in the second stanza? What aspect of the mirror do you think is being referred to here?*

Ans : The mirror and lake are similar. The lake also gives a crystal clear image like a mirror. Just as the mirror

does not hide deformities, similarly the lake also projects a true reflection, without hiding any flaws.

(e) *What is the woman searching for in the depths of the lake?*

Ans : The woman explores the depths of time, goes to the depth of her past and regrets the loss of her youth.

(f) *How does the narrator convey the fact that the woman looking at her reflection in the lake is deeply distressed?*

Ans : The woman bending over the lake is not happy to see her reflection which is full of flaws. The lake presents a true picture of the woman. So to give mental solace, she turns to dimlight and candles, who present a better picture. The narrator wishes to convey that the woman turns to distractions to avoid the essential reality.

(g) *What makes the woman start crying?*

Ans : The mirror is unsympathetic. It reveals the ugly reality. So the only reaction of the woman is tears and agitation over the loss of youth. The mirror reinforces the fact that one must accept the reality now or ever.

(h) *What do you think the 'terrible fish' in the last line symbolises?*

Ans : The poet compares herself to a fish to point out that just as a fish depends on water, she depends on mirror. The poet used 'fish' to depict a creature that lives in the lake and cannot escape from it.

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. What lesson does the poem 'Mirror' teach us? Discuss.

Ans. This poem is an emotional expression of human suffering due to the process of ageing. Beauty, youth are just transitory and it is very difficult for women to accept it. Illusions, lies and falsehood are adopted to run away from the ugly reality. Most of us are too judgemental and we are prejudiced by our likes and dislikes. We need to see things in the right perspective. We must accept that real beauty is not just physical and we should try to transcend these physical barriers. Beauty of the soul is permanent and we should never allow ourselves to be obsessed by our physical looks, otherwise we will also become 'trapped' in the physicality of this world. Then there is no salvation for us.

2. Why is the mirror like a god and a lake? [C.B.S.E., 2011 (T-1)]

Ans. The mirror is powerful like a 'God' and it has a powerful hold over the women. It is unbiased, omniscient like a God and encapsulates the entire universe. The lake is also like the mirror because it also reflects the image of things truthfully. There are many creatures that live and survive in the lake, they are trapped in it and have no other existence outside the lake. Similarly, the mirror also acts as a trap because the woman is obsessed by it, even if she does not like what it reflects. So both God and the lake are honest in reflection and are unbiased.

3. What characteristics of 'Mirror' are pointed out in the poem? Discuss.

Ans. The mirror is a symbol of truth, reality and objectivity. It is silver-plated and reflects the reality in its true form. The mirror is unprejudiced, 'unmistaken' and it is not swayed by love or hatred. It is unemotional, dispassionate and is unmoved by the tears, worries or the anxieties of the viewers. The mirror is like a God, omniscient and unbiased. It watches over all in a fair manner. The mirror is considered cruel because it doesn't hide any flaws. Still it is indispensable for the woman, who turns to it, again and again. The mirror is too reliable and shatters all the illusions which a woman weaves about herself.

4. What is the theme of the poem 'Mirror' by Sylvia Plath? [C.B.S.E., 2011 (T-1)]

Ans. Throughout the poem, there is a theme of the truth and lies. Sylvia Plath is torn between the true picture of herself and the distorted image others see of her. The mirror represents the truth as it is described as 'exact' 'just as it is' 'only truthful'. Human beings are prejudiced, coloured by preconceived notions of love or dislike but the mirror is 'unmistaken'.

The mirror in the poem symbolises truth. Truth is a powerful tool in the poem. If a person has flaws, the mirror displays them without any hesitation. The mirror has godlike power and there is an obsessive relationship between the mirror and the woman because she looks to the mirror for comfort but is confronted with her ugly reality. Even though 'candles and moon' are liars, still the woman wants to embrace them and live in illusion.

Then away from the mirror, the woman is forced to face reality through nature. Lake is similar to the mirror as they both reveal honest reflection. The candles and the moon are just distractions to find the essential self. 'In me she has drowned a young girl' depicts that it is difficult for a woman to accept her aging process.

Sylvia compares herself to a fish to point out that just as fish depends on water, she depends on mirror. When the poet used a lake in place of a mirror, she may have needed a creature that lived in the lake to compare her feeling of living in the mirror. The poetess realises that she cannot escape reality, even outside her home. Even the 'lake' reveals the same transformation.

So the poem shows how the woman was scared of the truth and reality that the mirror represents. Throughout the poem there is talk of truth, lies, illusions and reality. So this poem juxtaposes the somewhat harsh, clear cut mirror-given image of a woman against false witnesses and how this seeming obsession with physical beauty leads to escapism in a world of illusion and distractions.

REFERENCE TO CONTEXT – MCQs

Read the following and write the most appropriate option from the ones given to you.

1. *I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions:
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful.*

[C.B.S.E., 2011 (T-1)]

- (i) The use of 'I' is there because the poem is presented in the form of a :
- (a) Soliloquy (b) Dialogue
(c) Monologue (d) Autobiography
- (ii) How is 'I' different from the other human beings?
- (a) Mirror is made of metal
(b) It can be stuck on the wall
(c) It is not prejudiced and has no pre-conceived notions
(d) It has a wide frame
- (iii) What makes the mirror cruel?
- (a) Because it cannot speak
(b) It cannot praise
(c) It does not hide ugliness
(d) cannot be carried everywhere
- (iv) Human beings are 'misted' by love or dislike. What does this expression reflect about their nature?
- (a) They are cruel
(b) They are emotional
(c) They are hypocrites
(d) They are truth-loving

Answer : (i) (c) (ii) (c) (iii) (c) (iv) (c)

2. *The eye of a little god, four-cornered.
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.*

[C.B.S.E., 2011 (T-1)]

- (i) What do the four corners of the mirror symbolise?
- (a) four corners
(b) four walls
(c) four rooms
(d) four directions of the entire universe

- (ii) Why is the mirror compared to a god?
- (a) It is beautiful
(b) It looks awesome
(c) It has heavenly colour
(d) It is unbiased and has strong influence over women
- (iii) The gazing of the mirror on the opposite wall is termed as 'meditate.' Why?
- (a) It has no choice
(b) It loves that wall
(c) It gazes steadily
(d) There is a lot of intensity in that look
- (iv) 'Pink speckles' has double meaning. What does it symbolise?
- (a) Pink colours
(b) Patches of discoloration
(c) Disappearance of youthful flush and glow
(d) Embarrassment

Answer : (i) (d) (ii) (d) (iii) (c) (iv) (b)

3. *Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.*

- (i) Who is 'I' in the above stanza?
- (a) woman (b) lake
(c) mirror (d) the poetess
- (ii) Why does the woman bend over the lake? What is she searching for?
- (a) her ring (b) her make-up
(c) her lost beauty and youth
(d) her future
- (iii) The candles and moon are called 'liars.' Why?
- (a) They get extinguished quickly
(b) They are dim and dull
(c) They hide the reality
(d) They bring darkness
- (iv) What is the poetic device used here?
- (a) Simile (b) Personification
(c) Metaphor (d) Allegory
- (v) What does the mirror reflect 'faithfully'?
- (a) her clothes (b) her wrinkles
(c) her jewellery (d) her youth
- (vi) How is the mirror rewarded for 'truthful

reflection'?

- (a) It is hugged
- (b) It is cleaned and put decoratively
- (c) It results in cries and agitation
- (d) It is thrown down and broken

Answers : (i) (b) (ii) (c) (iii) (c) (iv) (b) (v) (b) (vi) (c)

4. *I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces
the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an
old woman
Rises toward her day after day like a terrible fish.*

- (i) Why is the mirror indispensable for the woman?
 - (a) It has been her constant companion
 - (b) It has truthfully reflected the changes

- (c) It flatters her
- (d) It degrades her

- (ii) Explain 'drowned'.
 - (a) drowning in the lake
 - (b) forgetfulness
 - (c) loss of balance
 - (d) permanent loss of youth
- (iii) Why does the woman compare herself to a 'terrible fish'?
 - (a) Because of the beautiful skin
 - (b) Because of quick movements
 - (c) Because she is fond of the lake
 - (d) Because like a fish she is trapped in the sea of time

Answers : (i) (a) (ii) (d) (iii) (d)

REFERENCE TO CONTEXT – NON-MCQs

1. Read the given extracts and answer the questions that follow :

*A woman bends over me
Searching my reaches for what she really is
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the
moon* [C.B.S.E., 2011 (T-1)]

(a) What is the woman bending over?

Ans : The woman is bending over the lake.

(b) Why have the candles and the moon been called "liars"?

Ans : The candles and the moon hide the reality and the flaws or wrinkles on the woman's face.

(c) Why does she turn to them in spite of calling them 'liars'?

Ans : The woman wants to nurture illusions about herself. She is afraid to confront the reality of her aging.

2. *I am not cruel, only truthful*

*The eye of a little god, four-cornered
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall*

(a) Why does the mirror say, "I am not cruel"?

Ans : The mirror is not cruel because it is unbiased. Its intention is not to hurt but to tell the exact reality to the person.

(b) Why has the mirror been called a 'four - cornered' god?

Ans : The mirror comprises the entire universe for the woman, it is like a world with four directions and it has God-like powers over women.

(c) How does the mirror spend its time?

Ans : It keeps gazing at the wall opposite and keeps looking at the wall with pink spots and discoloration.

3. *In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an
old woman*

Rises towards her day after day like a terrible fish

(a) What does the word drowned indicate?

Ans : The loss of youth is associated with 'drowning'. The poet uses this metaphor to show that the little girl in the mirror has drowned and an old woman has replaced her.

(b) What does the fish signify?

Ans : The poet has used 'fish' to indicate that just as fish depends on water, the same way, a woman depends upon the mirror.

(c) Why does the woman call herself a terrible fish?

Ans : The fish indicates the creature's inability to escape from the sea of time and the poet is also caught up in the web of age.

4. *I am important to her. She comes and goes.*

*Each morning it is her face that replaces the
darkness.*

(a) Why is the mirror important to the woman.

Ans : The woman depends on the mirror and it is her constant companion. Any woman cannot do without a mirror.

(b) Explain the second line.

Ans : The mirror is blank without the face of the woman. It is only bright when the woman looks into it.

(c) Why does the woman come and go away?

Ans : The woman cannot continuously keep gazing at the mirror. Many times she goes and then comes again as a routine.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Why is the old woman compared to a terrible fish in the poem, 'Mirror?'

Ans : Sylvia Plath chose the metaphor of the fish because seeing her own reflection leads to self-loathing and she sees less of young girl and more of the old woman in the mirror. She feels herself trapped in the cruel jaws of time like a fish. Just as a fish depends on water, the woman depends upon the mirror.

2. Why is the mirror's reflection unacceptable to most of the people?

Ans : The mirror is unbiased in its reflection. It presents the flaws and signs of aging truthfully. Truth, ugliness, signs of aging are unacceptable to most women. That is why the woman gets agitated to look at her wrinkles and does not feel like accepting the reality.

3. Do you agree that the poem 'Mirror' presents a pessimistic view of life?

Ans : Truth is often cruel. The poem is unbiased, blunt and too frank in its statement. Truth when it is unmisted, often hurts. So the poem is frank, confessional from the point of women, though sad in nature. It does present grim reality of life. It depends upon the individual, how he accepts the reality. So the poem cannot be called pessimistic.

4. Why does the woman turn to the moon and the candles?

Ans : Women are most concerned for their physical appearance and it is difficult for women to digest the truth of their aging. The mirror and the lake present a true reflection of the woman with signs of age and flaws. So to live in a world of illusion, the woman turns to the moon, candles, dim light which hide her flaws and give her temporary solace.

5. What does the poem reveal about the character of the woman?

Ans : The woman dwells too much on physical beauty, she is almost obsessed by it. She appears to be vain and never accepts aging as a natural outcome of life. She looks for illusions, escapism from the world of reality, which will never benefit her. The woman is fickle with shallow values and does not realise that life cannot be lived on the basis of temporary distractions.

6. Why does the woman not like the mirror?

[C.B.S.E., 2011 (T-1)]

Ans : The mirror in the poem symbolises truth, reality and objectivity. If a person has flaws, the mirror displays them without any hesitation. The woman looks into the mirror for comfort but is confronted with her ugly reality, so she does not like the mirror.

7. Why does the mirror state that the pink coloured, opposite wall is a part of its heart?

Ans : The mirror constantly gazes at the wall opposite to it and appears to be contemplating deeply. The wall has pink spots of discolouration on it. When no one is around these pink spots get reflected in the mirror and have become a part of the life of the mirror.

8. The poet describes the mirror as a little four cornered God. Why?

Ans : The mirror is like a world with its four directions. The four corners of the mirror make it look like a microcosm of the world. It is omniscient like God, free from any prejudices or preoccupations any likes and dislikes and reflects only the truth. Thus the poet describes mirror as little four cornered God.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. In what way is the mirror different from the people who view it? How does it affect the people?

Ans : The mirror is truthful, unbiased. It reflects the reality as it sees. It is cruel, blunt and frank whereas the people who view the mirror are hypocrites who cannot

accept the reality. They are not truthful, are biased, have preconceived notions. Women and men who view the mirror, have double standards and they lead artificial lives. They seek to escape from reality, they prefer to hide their flaws in dim light. If a person has flaws, the mirror reflects it without hesitation. The human beings are most reluctant

to state the reality or accept it.

2. Discuss the obsessive relationship between the mirror and the woman.

OR

The poem ‘Mirror’ shows the problems of an ageing woman. Elaborate in 100-125 words.

Ans : Age is the most cruel factor for any woman, especially for those women who lay great store on physical beauty. Physical beauty is temporary and one cannot escape the ravages of age. Most women are afraid to confront the reality of their ugliness or wrinkles. So they prefer to present themselves in dim light. Such women forget that the ultimate aim of life should be salvation and spiritual upliftment, rather than the trap of youth or beauty. One needs to transcend such physical barriers and see the beauty of the soul. So women should protect themselves from being obsessed by the charms of youth. Any woman should hanker after permanent pleasures of life like one’s spiritual elevation.

3. “In me she has drowned a young girl.” Explain the significance of ‘drowned.’ What does it refer to?

Ans : ‘Drowned’ means “swallowed”. Apparently this refers to the Greek prince Narcissus, who was very handsome. He kept gazing at his reflection in the lake for so long that he drowned. So the poem is about a woman

who is torn between the true picture of herself and the distorted image that others see of her. ‘Drowning’ also indicates the consequences of vanity. The poet uses this metaphor to show that the little girl that used to look in the mirror has drowned and the old woman has replaced her. Basically the woman is obsessed of her looks and when she gazes in the mirror or in a lake, she feels cheated. So the woman gets upset that the lake has swallowed the image of the young girl.

4. “The world of illusion and flights of fancy give happiness. The stark world of reality is too depressing and ugly. The only way out is escapism.” Why/Why not?

Ans : The world of imagination and fancy is always so glorious and bright. But one cannot dwell in it for long. Anything that takes one away from reality should not be accepted. Women and men many times take recourse to flights of fancy to escape reality. But for how long? Life has to be lived not on temporary basis but on the hard ground of reality even if it is ugly or harsh. The ultimate aim of life is to face the realities bravely and find new challenges. Illusions and escapism are the diversions of the weak-willed or the hypocrites. So one must grow and groom oneself into the real world and take on life in its true spirit or colour. Then only life will prove to be worthwhile.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

1. Locate the complete works of Sylvia Plath.

Make a **PROJECT** on it.

2. Answer the following from Sylvia Plath’s biography.

QUIZ

- (a) Sylvia Plath’s pen-name _____
- (b) Prize she won for the poetry _____
- (c) She was married to _____
- (d) Her father died when she was _____
- (e) She gave up her life on _____

3. Write a short poem on “Mirror & Me” expressing you ideas.