

Class: XII	Department: ENGLISH	Flamingo
Question Bank	Topic: A ROADSIDE STAND - ROBERT FROST	Note:

About the Poet

Robert Frost (26 March 1874-29 January 1963) was an American poet. He was born in San Francisco and lived there until the age of eleven. In 1911, in an attempt to attract the attention of prominent and influential members in the literary world, he moved with his family to England. There he befriended Ezra Pound, who helped publish and promote his works.

Poet Name	Robert Frost
Born	26 March 1874, San Francisco, California, United States
Died	29 January 1963, Boston, Massachusetts, United States
Poems	The Road Not Taken
Awards	Robert Frost Medal, Pulitzer Prize for Poetry

Theme

The poem ‘A Roadside Stand’ is the poet’s plea for consideration for the simple people of the countryside whose lives have shown no progress. He expresses his pain at their sadness and sorrow and seeks support and relief for them. He hopes someone would work unselfishly for their rehabilitation and not exploit them. He brings out the wide disparity between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ with pitiless clarity and humanity and seems to suggest that the economic well-being of a country depends on a balanced development of villages and cities.

Summary

'A Roadside Stand' portrays the poor country people whose earnest desire is to rise above their wretchedness. They attempt to do this by putting up roadside stands and trying to sell whatever they can to improve their lives. But the city people just speed by in their cars and do not even notice them, and when they do, it is with irritation at their having spoiled the natural landscape with their badly written signs.

Frost very aptly portrays the country people's anger at the selfishness of the city dwellers for all they want is to attain the standard that they have seen promised to them in movies, but which they feel is being denied to them by the present government.

They do not want charity and the poet makes it very clear that the donors are actually ruining their lives by calling these so-called benevolent people greedy and beasts of prey. They move them to countryside to live near theatres and shops and encourage them to live idle lives, which will take away their peace and wits.

The poet feels pain on seeing the country people's intense longing for a better life and their sadness at the non-fulfilment of their dreams when not even one car stops to inquire about the goods they are selling. The city dwellers are projected as being involved in the own lives with no thought for anyone else.

The poem shows the heartlessness of the city dwellers through the poet's insane desire to put an end to the country people so that there would be relief from their complaints about the lack of upliftment of their lives. The poem ends with the poet's remorse at these feelings when he realizes how he would feel if someone were to try to end his pain in the same way.

Introduction

In 'A Roadside Stand', the poet Robert Frost describes the miserable condition of the people living in the countryside. The city people who drive through the countryside hardly stop at the roadside stand nor do they care for the people who run it. If at all they do stop, they do so to criticise the place and the people. Frost describes the lives of the poor people with pitiless clarity and with deepest sympathy and humanity.

A Roadside Stand Explanation

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 supports
The flower of cities from sinking and withering faint.
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

Pathetically: In a way that arouses pity, especially by displaying sadness
Dole of Bread: a tiny portion of bread
Marred: Spoilt

There was a small house with a new shed outside it. The road was busy with cars and other vehicles moving here and there. The shed was built to display items on sale and the owner expected the passing vehicles to stop by and buy the things or at least have a look at them. The condition of the shed aroused one's pity because it displayed the sad feelings of the owner who was desperate to earn some money. They did not seek any favour or piece of bread from the city people but wanted some money because the flow of money helps everyone to use it and benefit from it. Just like the money with the city people helps them lead a better life, similarly, if it will flow from their pockets into the pockets of the shed owner, it will benefit his life too. The cars that pass by are sparkling but they never notice the shed. They are thinking of their destination only. If by chance they do stop at the shed, they just complain that the shabby paint of the huts and sheds there has spoiled the beauty of the landscape.

Of signs that with N turned wrong and S turned wrong
Offered for sale wild berries in wooden quarts,
Or crook-necked golden squash with silver warts,
Or beauty rest in a beautiful mountain scene,
You have the money, but if you want to be mean,
Why keep your money (this crossly) and go along.
The hurt to the scenery wouldn't be my complaint

Squash: here, a fruit

Warts: A small growth on the outer surface

Crossly: In an annoyed or angry way

Here the poet says that as the people living in these sheds are poor their surroundings are not well-maintained. The signboards indicating directions of north and south are pointing towards the wrong directions. The sheds have farm produce on sale – wild berries, golden squash fruit with silver coloured marks on it, kept in wooden baskets. The place is beautiful and people should stop here and enjoy the mountain scenery. If they have money then they should buy some things but if they are selfish then they should keep their money with themselves and not stop there. The poet says that he does not complain that the sheds have spoiled the scenery of the place.

So much as the trusting sorrow of what is unsaid:
Here far from the city we make our roadside stand
And ask for some city money to feel in hand

To try if it will not make our being expand,
And give us the life of the moving-pictures' promise
That the party in power is said to be keeping from us.

The poet says that these people who have opened the shed are keeping faith in a promise which was never done to them. Here, the promise is their expectation that the cars passing by will stop at the shed and buy some stuff from them. They have built this shed far from the city and they expect that the city people will flow some money out of their pockets into the hands of the shed owner. The shed owner wants to feel the money on his hands. Just like they see in pictures that the one who works hard achieves quick success and money, they have laid their trust on these ideas and expect to get some money. Frost adds that the political party in power has stopped the flow of cash from the city dwellers to the rural people.

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,
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.

Kin: one's family and relations

Beneficent: generous or doing good

Beasts of Prey: an animal killing other animal

Out of their wits: their perplexed or terrified state

It is in news that soon all these sheds and huts will be bought by the government and these people will be relocated to the villages. Near their houses there will be movie theatre and grocery store. They will be so happy there that they will not worry about their future. The poet says greedy good-doers and beneficent beasts i.e. such people who show to be doing good deeds but are actually greedy and are animals of prey who show that they are benefitting the other persons but in reality, they destroy them. The rich people and politicians are described as greedy good-doers and beneficent beasts because they show that they are helping the poor shed owners but in reality nothing like that is done. Actually, they are encircling their lives and forcefully giving them such benefits which have been well planned and will put these poor people in a confusion. These people cannot decide what is good for them and what is harmful. These selfish people tell to the poor that now they can relax but in reality, they themselves sleep all day long. Also, they destroy their sleep at night too as has been happening since the past.

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

In vain: without success or a result

Lurk: be or remain hidden so as to wait in ambush for someone or something

Plow: move in a fast and uncontrolled manner

The poet says that this kiddish desire in the hearts of these shed owners is useless. He cannot tolerate their sadness which they go through when they open the window of the shed, waiting for a car to stop and buy something. They wait there the whole day and it seems that they are doing a prayer seeking a buyer for their goods. They pray for the vehicles to step on the brakes and want to hear a car stop by. There are many cars carrying selfish people but hopefully, some may stop by just to ask the prices of the produce grown by the farmers there. One car did stop there but just to disturb the grass when they back their car 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?
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.
And then next day as I come back into the sane,
I wonder how I should like you to come to me
And offer to put me gently out of my pain.

Requisite: required / needed

Sane: sensible / realistic

Some stop by to ask directions of their destination. Some cars stop by to buy fuel for their cars. Poet gets annoyed and says that do they not have any idea that these poor people cannot afford to sell fuel. He adds that the kind of work these villagers do and the kind of things they sell, it cannot lead to the required upliftment. The resources are too less to help them get rid of their problem. Their situation demands such a solution which would be a relief to put them out of their problems in one go. The next day, the poet thinks that when he is realistic then he expects the rich to visit and help them get rid of their problem in one go, perhaps with death.

Figures of Speech

Transferred Epithet: (a) Polished traffic (b) Selfish cars

Personification: 1) A roadside stand that too pathetically pled

Metaphor: Trusting Sorrow

Oxymoron & Alliteration: ‘Greedy good-doers’ and ‘beneficent beasts’ of prey.

Question and Answers

1. **The city folk who drove through the countryside hardly paid any heed to the roadside stand or to the people who ran it. If at all they did, it was to complain.**

Which lines bring this out? What was their complaint about?

Ans. The lines that indicate this are as follows-
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

They complained about the shabby paint on the walls of these sheds that has spoiled the beauty of the landscape.

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

Ans. They pled for flow of cash from the pockets of the city dwellers into their hands so that they can also make good use of the money. They want to feel the money on their hands.

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

4. **What is the ‘childish longing’ that the poet refers to? Why is it ‘vain’?**

Ans. The desire of the shed owner that some cars will stop by to buy something or at least to enquire the prices of the farmer’s produce is the childish longing. It is vain or futile because no car stops by. They wait with windows open and pray all day but the effort is wasted.

5. **Which lines tell us about the insufferable pain that the poet feels at the thought of the plight of the rural poor?**

Ans. These lines indicate the poet’s feeling-

I can’t help owning the great relief it would be
To put these people at one stroke out of their pain.

Answer each of the following questions in about 30-40 words:

1. Why do the people who run the roadside stand wait for the squeal of brakes so eagerly? (2003 Delhi)
The “squealing of brakes” means that a car has stopped at their roadside stand. It

raises their hopes that the city-folk have stopped there to buy something from their roadside stand and some city money will come into their hands.

2. Explain: "soothe them out of their wits" with reference to the poem 'The Roadside Stand'. (2005 Delhi)

The powerful men approach the country folk with false promises of providing them with better living conditions and a better life. These innocent and simple rustics repose blind faith in their false claims and feel soothed and satisfied. They fail to see through their crookedness and selfishness.

3. Why does Robert Frost sympathise with the rural poor? (2009 Delhi; 2011 Comptt. Outside Delhi)

Robert Frost feels an unbearable agony at the plight of the rural poor who are ignored and neglected by the rich politicians. The Government and the party in power are indifferent to their welfare. They fool them by making false promises and then fully exploit them to suit their own selfish interests.

4. What was the plea of the folk who had put up the roadside stand? (2008 Delhi; 2011 Delhi; 2013 Delhi)

The folk who had put up the roadside stand pleaded to the city dwellers to stop and buy their wares so as to enable them to earn some extra money for a decent living. They wanted that the rich people who passed from there in their cars should stop there and buy some goods from them. The money that these folks would earn from the rich people would help them to lead a better life.

Question 5.

What is the 'childish longing' of the folk who had put up the roadside stand? Why is it 'in vain'? (2011 Comptt. Delhi)

Answer:

The 'childish longing', the poet refers to, is the dreams and desires of the rural folk who have a child-like longing for a better life that they hope to live with the help from the city dwellers. Their longing is in vain because the city folk are not willing to help them and so their 'childish longings' are not likely to be fulfilled.

Question 6.

Why didn't the 'polished traffic' stop at the roadside stand? (2012 Delhi)

Answer:

The 'polished traffic' conveniently overlooks the roadside stand and does not stop there as their mind is focussed only on their destination. Moreover, they were critical of the poor decor of the stand, its artless interior and paint.

Question 7.

What news in the poem 'A Roadside Stand' is making its round in the village? (2013 Outside Delhi)

Answer:

The news making its round is about the resettlement of the poor, rural people who will be resettled in the villages, next to the theatre and the store. They would be close to the cities and will not have to worry about themselves any more.

Question 8.

Why do people at the roadside stand ask for city money? (2013 Comptt. Delhi)

Answer:

The rural people running the roadside stand are poor and deprived, unlike the people of the city. They thus ask for city money so that they too can lead a life of happiness and prosperity. This much-needed city money can give them the life that had been promised to them by the party in power.

Question 9.

What does Frost himself feel about the roadside stand? (2011 Comptt. Outside Delhi)

Answer:

The poet is distressed to see the interminable wait on the part of the shed owners for their prospective buyers. He is agonised at the 'childish longing in vain' of the people who have put up the roadside stand.

2. Read the extract and answer the questions that follow:

Question 10.

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
supports
The flower of cities from sinking and withering faint.

1. Where was the new shed put up? What was its purpose?
2. Why does the poet use the word 'pathetic'?
3. Explain: 'too pathetically pled'
4. Who are referred to as 'the flower of cities'? (2009 Outside Delhi; 2010 Comptt. Delhi; 2012 Comptt. Delhi)

Answer:

1. A little house at one side of the road was extended and a shed was added to it to put up a road stand. It was set up to attract passer-by to buy things from them so that they could earn some money.

2. By using the word 'pathetic' the poet emphasizes on the fact that the condition of the shed was most humble and that it presented a rather pitiable sight.

3. It was as if by putting up the shed the owner was desperately pleading to the rich city folks to stop by at his roadside stand and buy things from there so that they could earn some extra money.

4. 'The flower of the cities' here refers to the rich and wealthy city-dwellers who can afford the best things.

Question 11.

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,

1. What does the poet mean by 'with a mind ahead'?
2. What are N and S signs?
3. Why have these signs turned wrong? (2010 Comptt. Outside Delhi)

Answer:

1. The phrase 'with a mind ahead' suggests that the people who pass the roadside stand in their polished cars conveniently overlook the roadside stand as their mind is focussed only on their destination.
2. The N and S signs stand for the North and the South direction.

3. These signs have turned wrong because they have been painted in the wrong way and so these signboards are wrongly presented.

Question 12.

Or beauty rest in a beautiful mountain scene,
You have the money, but if you want to be mean,
Why keep your money (this crossly) and go along.
The hurt to the scenery wouldn't be my complaint
So much as the trusting sorrow of what is unsaid

1. What attraction does the place offer?
2. What should one do if one wants to be mean?
3. What does the poet not complain about?
4. What do you think is the real worry of the poet? (2010 Outside Delhi)

Answer:

1. The place offers a scenic view of the beautiful mountains.
2. If one wants to be mean he can keep his money and move on ahead.
3. The poet does not complain about the landscape which has been spoilt because of the artless painting done on the building.
4. The poet's real worry is the unexpressed sorrow of the people who have put up the roadside stand.

Question 13.

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,
While greedy good-doers, beneficent beasts of prey,
(2000; 2007, Delhi)

1. Name the poem and the poet.
2. Explain why merciful have been called 'greedy good-doers' and 'beneficent beasts of prey'?
3. Why won't these poor people have to think for themselves any more?

Answer:

1. The poem is 'A Roadside Stand' by Robert Frost.
2. The merciful are the crooked politicians, greedy people pretending to be good, who only pose as beneficiaries. These powerful men are actually beasts of prey in the guise of beneficiaries who ruthlessly exploit the common people.
3. These poor people are now in the hands of the so-called 'merciful beneficiaries', who will actually do them more harm than any good, so they will not have to think about themselves any more.

Question 14.

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.

1. What cannot be borne by the poet and why?
2. What is the 'childish longing'?
3. Why the longing has been termed as 'vain'?
4. Why do the people driving in the cars stop sometimes? (2004 Delhi; 2011 Outside Delhi)

Answer:

1. The poet cannot bear the thought of how these country folks are lured with false promises which are never going to be fulfilled because he feels genuinely sad about so much deprivation to these innocent people.
2. Like children, these country folk have many unfulfilled wishes and desires. So they keep their windows open expecting some prospective customers to turn up so that some good fortune can fall into their share.
3. The longing has been termed as 'vain' because it will never be fulfilled.
4. The people driving in the car stop sometimes either to just enquire about the way to their destination or to ask for a gallon of gas if they ran short of it.

Question 15.

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,

1. Why is the longing called childish?
2. Where is the window?
3. Why does sadness lurk there? (2012 Comptt. Outside Delhi)

Answer:

1. Like children, these rural folk nurture many unfulfilled dreams and desires which might never be satisfied. They crave in vain like children waiting for their wishes to be fulfilled.
2. The window is a part of their roadside stand where they wait expectantly.
3. Sadness lurks there because no car halts there to buy anything from their roadside stand and the rural folk are unable to earn some extra money.

Question 16.

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 a farmer's prices are.

1. Which open window is referred to? Why does sadness lurk there?
2. What does the farmer pray for?
3. Is the farmer's prayer ever granted? How do you know? (2012 Outside Delhi)

Answer:

1. The open window is that of the roadside stand where they wait expectantly for a car to stop by. Sadness lurks there because no city dweller halts there and thus the hopes of the country folk are belied as no customer stops there.
2. The farmer prays that the city folks apply the brakes of the car and halt at their roadside stand to buy something from there.
3. The farmers' prayers are not granted. The poet tells us that even if city folk do stop at the roadside stand it is only to enquire about the prices of the goods.