



Grade VIII

Lesson 2. Geography Lesson

Poetry

Soul of the Poem

The poem is written from the perspective of a person who is observing the city from above, seeing it seated in a jet plane. As he ascends the heights in the sky, he is able to understand the real meaning of geography.

As the plane took off from the ground and went into the sky, it becomes clear why the city was developed in a certain way. From a certain height, the city started to look smaller in size. A mile was reduced to six inches on the scale. But, what looked haphazard and without logic on the ground, seemed inevitable and necessary when viewed from the sky.

When the plane attained ten thousand feet of height, the logic of geography unravelled itself. The speaker is able to comprehend that it is land and water that attract man or habitation. And therefore, many cities developed where the rivers were flowing and the valleys, too, were populated for similar reasons.

As the plane attained another six miles, it became amply clear that the earth was round and there was more water than land. However, the logic of geography failed to answer one question. The speaker was unable to understand why people hate and kill each other. Why was there a need to build walls across the cities. Even from that height, the causes behind human hatred remained unclear.

Stanzawise Explanation of The Poem

Stanza 1

When the jet sprang into the sky,
it was clear why the city
had developed the way it had,



seeing it scaled six inches to the mile.
There seemed an inevitability about what on
ground had looked haphazard, unplanned
and without style
When the jet sprang into the sky.

Reference :

The above lines have been taken from the poem, 'Geography Lesson' composed by Zulfikar Ghose.

Context :

The poet in the above lines shares his perspectives about the city when viewed from a certain height.

Explanation :

When the plane took off from the ground, set to touch the sky, the poet could view the city in a miniature. An area spread over a mile was reduced to six inches on the scale, when viewed from above. Seeing a city in its wholesome perspective, the poet is able to understand why the city is designed in the way it is. What appeared haphazard and unplanned on the ground gained clarity and order when viewed from that height.

Stanza 2

When the jet reached ten thousand feet,
it was clear why the country,
had cities where the rivers ran
and why the valleys were populated. The logic
of geography-t
that land and water attracted man-
was clearly delineated

When the jet reached ten thousand feet.

Reference :

Same as above.

Context :

The poet, in this stanza feels enlightened to comprehend the logic of geography.



Explanation :

Soon, the plane attained ten thousand feet in height. It was no longer difficult for the poet to understand the logic of geography or the way the geographical and territorial spaces were designed. He understood that water and land were essential for human existence. Therefore, the areas near the rivers were abundantly populated. The fact, that water and land attracted man was made visible from this height.

Stanza 3

When the jet rose six miles high,
it was clear the earth was round
and that it had more sea than land.
But it was difficult to understand
that the men on the earth found
causes to hate each other, to build
walls across cities and to kill.
From that height, it was not clear why.

Reference :

Same as above

Context :

The poet in these lines shares mankind's shame at not being able to understand the mystery behind human hatred.

Explanation :

As the plane attained another six miles, it was easier to understand that the earth was round and there was more water than land. But, what he just could not understand was that why men hated and killed each other. He could not understand the reason behind building high walls and harbouring ill feelings towards others. Geography was never about borders, barriers, territorial differences when seen from above. Man had given these meanings to geography and why man did that he just couldn't gather.



NCERT Corner

Working with the Poem

1. Find three or four phrases in stanzas one and two which are likely to occur in a geography lesson.

The following phrases usually occur in a geography lesson.

Stanza 1

- (a) Scaled six inches to a mile

Stanza 2

- (a) It was clear why the country had cities where the river ran and why the valleys were populated.

- (b) Land and water attracted man

- (c) Clearly delineated

2. Seen from the window of an aeroplane, the city appears

- (i) as haphazard as on ground.

- (ii) as neat as a map.

- (iii) as developed as necessary.

Mark the right answer.

- (iii) as developed as necessary.

3. Which of the following statements are examples of "the logic of geography"?

- (i) There are cities where there are rivers.

- (ii) Cities appear as they are not from six miles above the ground.

- (iii) It is easy to understand why valleys are populated.

- (iv) It is difficult to understand why humans hate and kill one another.

- (v) The earth is round, and it has more sea than land.

- (i) There are cities where there are rivers.

- (iii) It is easy to understand why valleys are populated.

- (v) The earth is round and it has more sea than land.

4. Mention two things that are

- (i) clear from the height.

- (ii) not clear from the height.



(i) It becomes clearer from the height that the earth is round and that land and water attract man.

(ii) Even from the height it was not clear why men hate and kill each other and build walls across the city.

Chapter Practice

Very Short Answer Type Questions

1. From a certain height a mile got reduced to inches.

From a certain height a mile got reduced to six inches.

2. Why did the city look haphazard on the ground?

The city looked haphazard on the ground because it was impossible to get a wholesome view of the city.

3. The poet failed to find answers to certain questions. What were these questions?

The poet failed to understand why men hated men. Why men were ready to kill each other. He also could not comprehend why men built walls around the city.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. What were the poet's thoughts when he sees the city from the sky?

On seeing the city from a certain height in the sky, the poet was able to understand why the city had developed in a certain way. The city was developed in accordance to the needs of man and therefore, though it looked haphazard on the ground, adhered to a logical plan.

2. Discuss the tone of the poem.

In the opening stanzas of the poem, the poet adopts a fairly descriptive tone. He describes the landscape the way he views it from a certain height. He meticulously records the height that the plane attains and the way that alters his view of the city.

However, as the poem progresses, especially in the final stanza, the tone of the poet becomes meditative and philosophical. He meditates upon the reasons as to why man has become an enemy of man, why is he willing to kill people of his own species and so on.



3. Comment on the title of the poem.

The poem has been titled, "Geography Lesson" and has been titled quite suitably. The poet learns a lesson from the geography. He was able to understand that the city that looked unplanned when viewed from the ground had been developed in accordance with the needs of the man. It was, therefore, not unplanned, but beyond the understanding of the common man. Therefore, rather than continuously criticising their city, man should be thankful for the comforts that he has. Man should, on the other hand, try to derive answers to the mystery behind man's hatred and animosity towards another man.

Value Based Questions

1. What is the central theme as conveyed by the poet?

The poet wishes to convey the irrational and illogical grudges and grievances that people nurture for each other. The poet fails to understand why people discriminate and judge on the basis of regional and territorial lives when geography and nature does not establish these differences.

Extract Based Questions

Extract 1

Directions (Q. Nos. 1-6) Read the extract given below and answer the following questions.

When the jet rose six miles high,
It was clear the earth was round
and that it had more sea than land.
But it was difficult to understand
that the men on the earth found
causes to hate the each other.

1. What was the height that the jet attained?

- (a) Ten thousand feet (b) Six miles (c) A few hundred feet (d) Ten thousand miles
(b) Six miles



2. What does the poet learn about the earth?

- (a) That the earth was round (b) That the earth had boundaries
(c) That the earth had no land (d) That the earth was entirely made of water
(a) That the earth was round

3. Who posed a threat to the poet's understanding of the logic of geography?

- (a) Men (b) Animals (c) Water (d) Land
(a) Men

4. What, according to the poet, was beyond the logic of geography?

According to the poet, the reason why men hated and killed each other was beyond the logic of geography.

5. State one thing that becomes clear and one thing that remains unclear to the poet.

It becomes clear to the poet that the earth was round. It, however, remained unclear why men were full of negative feelings like hatred and animosity.

6. Make a list of the rhyming words from the above mentioned stanza.

Round/found land/understand.

Extract 2

Directions (Q. Nos. 1-6) Read the extract given below and answer the following questions.

When the jet reached ten thousand
feet,
it was clear why the country
had cities where the rivers ran
and why the valleys were populated.
The logic of geography-
that land and water attracted man-
was clearly delineated
when the jet reached ten thousand feet.

1. Name the poet of the poem from which these lines have been extracted.

- (a) Ted Hughes (b) TS Eliot (c) Rabindranath Tagore (d) Zulfikar Ghose
(d) Zulfikar Ghose

2. What attracted the man?

- (a) Country (b) Cities (c) Land and water (d) Hills and valleys
(c) Land and water



3. The word delineated means

- (a) clearly shown (b) confused (c) hatred (d) complexity
(a) clearly shown

4. How much height did the jet attain?

The jet attained a height of ten thousand feet.

5. What became clear as the jet attained that height?

As the jet attained that height it became clear why cities had developed near the flowing rivers.

6. What became obvious on seeing the city from that height?

Seeing the city from that height, it became obvious that land and water were essential for habitation.



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