

ICSE
Class X English Literature
Board Paper – 2016 Solution

SECTION A - DRAMA

The Merchant of Venice: Shakespeare

Question 1

(i) Portia and Bassanio are inside the chamber where the three boxes (caskets) were kept. Bassanio has just selected the lead box. As this box contains Portia's portrait, he has won her as his bride. The inscription on the lead box was "Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath."

While the scroll inside the box read

"You that choose not by the view,
Chance as fair and choose as true.

Since this fortune falls to you,
Be content and seek no new.

If you be well pleased with this
And hold your fortune for your bliss,
Turn you where your lady is
And claim her with a loving kiss."

(ii) Bassanio praises the artist who captured the delicate and enrapturing beauty of Portia so accurately. Looking at the portrait, he praises her eyes by saying that they look so real that it appears as if they move every time he moves his own eyes. He calls her lips tender and parted with sweet breath. He calls her hair a golden mesh which entraps the hearts of men faster than gnats are entrapped in cobwebs.

(iii) While Bassanio rejoices in anticipation of his approaching marriage, he receives a letter from Antonio delivered by Salerio. The letter informs him that all of Antonio's ventures have failed and that he is now obliged to pay Shylock with his pound of flesh. This news caused Bassanio tremendous grief since he was responsible for the debt. On hearing this news Portia advised Bassanio to pay the Jew twenty times more than what Antonio owes him using the gold she would give him. She asks him to first marry her before leaving for Venice.

(iv) Balthazar is a servant in Portia's household. She entrusts him with a letter to be delivered to her cousin Doctor Bellario who lives in Padua. She also asks him to bring the cloths and the notes which he gives to the common ferry which travels to Venice.

(v) Portia plans to go to Venice disguised as a Doctor of Law in order to save Antonio from Shylock. In addition to being wealthy, the two are smart and confident characters and extremely close to Bassanio. Portia is also extremely beautiful, gracious and kind she shares her wealth almost immediately with Bassanio and also goes the extent of contacting her cousin so as to do everything in her power to save Antonio. She is a confident and shrewd woman unlike the women of her age; she boldly faces Shylock in the courtroom and pleads for mercy on his behalf and when her appeal is rejected, she uses her wit to trap Shylock in his own case and frees Antonio.

Question 2

(i) Portia, disguised as a Doctor of Law, says the mentioned words to Shylock. She appeals for mercy on behalf of Antonio because he confessed to Shylock's claim over a pound of his flesh. In the same scene, the Duke appeals to Shylock to be merciful by mentioning how he could not expect to be shown mercy in his life if he too didn't show mercy to others.

(ii) Mercy cannot be constrained or forced. One cannot be forced into showing mercy to others. It has to be shown through one's free will. It touches the lives of everyone alike just like the rain which comes from heaven and falls on the earth. It is twice blessed since it blesses the one who receives mercy as well as the one who shows mercy to others.

(iii) The meaning of 'But mercy is above this sceptred sway' is that mercy is more powerful than the sceptre. A scepter stands for the earthly power of a king but mercy is a quality of God himself. Shylock turns down Portia's plea for mercy by stating that he will bear the consequence of his actions. He insists on taking the pound of flesh as a rightful way of closing the bond.

(iv) Bassanio is ready to make another bond agreeing to pay twice or even ten times the amount that Antonio owes Shylock. For this he is ready to give his hand, his head or even his heart as security. Portia disguised as a clerk has another plan to save Antonio and therefore she snubbed Bassanio explaining that an established decree cannot be changed. If such thing was done, there would be rampant misuse of the law.

(v) Shylock shows relentlessness and a revengeful attitude which are highlighted in the scene. These two traits are interrelated. Shylock wants revenge for the public humiliation he faced due to Antonio and for his daughter being taken away from him by one of Antonio's friends. He is determined to take his revenge despite being offered a huge sum of money as a bargain. He uses the deed as a proof of their contract and demands his rightful pound of flesh. He is determined to have what belongs to him. Despite pleas from different people he is focused on his prize and does not waver from it.

Loyalties : John Galsworthy**Question 3**

(i) De Levis told the inspector that he locked the door and left the key in. Put back his sponge and took off his dressing-gown and put it on the foot rails of the bed. Then he drew the curtains again.

(ii) De Levis realised that his pocket book felt thinner therefore he opened it to check its contents. On opening the book he found that the notes were gone. On discovering the theft he immediately went to Mr Winsor.

(iii) Robert was Winsor's footman. Robert's room was on the ground floor at the other end of the right wing. He took De Levis' clothes and boots at ten o' clock.

(iv) The Inspector's final theory is that the thief entered the room and hid below the bed before it was locked, around dinner time. He then stole the notes and used the creeper at the left corner of the balcony for support as he jumped down and escaped.

(v) De Levis accused young Dancy, a soldier and a gentleman of stealing his money. His reasons for making this accusation were the balconies of the two rooms were very close and not too high from the ground either. He believed that Dancy entered his room through his balcony and stole the notes. He then went out the same way wrenched the creeper, jumped back and escaped.

Question 4

(i) Mabel and Dancy are in their sitting-room when they have this conversation. Mabel had just woken up and had a bottle of smelling-salts in her hand. She was reading one of the many newspapers when Dancy entered the room.

(ii) Mabel had been following the theft case in which her husband was involved. She suspected that she may have to testify in the court. Therefore, she asked the mentioned question. Dancy uses the word 'spun' to indicate that the case has ended and that the culprit was found.

(iii) By the word 'notes' Dancy is referring to the money he stole. In the lines following the mentioned extract, Mabel angrily demands to know what caused Dancy to commit such an offence. She deduces that he must have owed money to some woman and therefore stole from De Levis.

(iv) Towards the end of the play, Dancy leaves a note for Major Colford, his best friend. In the note he exclaims that killing himself is the only decent thing that he can do now. He says that all of it is too unfair to his wife. He trivialises the affair by calling it 'just another jump.' He also says that 'A pistol keeps faith.' which means it doesn't fail a person. Finally he ends his note by giving love to Colford and his wife Mabel.

(v) In the end Dancy shoots himself to death. He does this because he cannot see any other decent way out of the arrest he is going to go through.

Although Dancy is previously called a soldier and a gentleman we see different sides of his personality as the play progresses. He not only leaves a woman to marry Mabel but also hides this fact from Mabel. He steals the money so as to pay the woman but is not bold enough to face the consequences of his actions. Nevertheless, he loves his wife dearly and cannot bear to see her suffer any further.

Mabel is a loving and forgiving wife. She is loyal to her husband till the end. Despite knowing that he was to marry another woman whom he left in order to marry her (Mabel) and he had stolen money to pay her as a debt of honour, she forgives him and readily agrees to follow him wherever he goes.

SECTION B -- POETRY**A Collection of Poems****Question 5**

(i) The narrator or 'I' referred to in the extract is a traveller who is passing through the woods with his horse on a snowy evening. The poet uses phrases such as 'snow covering the woods' in the second stanza and 'a frozen lake' in the third to indicate that it is winter season.

(ii) His horse has made him aware of his mistake. The horse attracts the attention of the speaker by shaking the harness bells, as if inquiring whether they have reached the wrong place because there is no farmhouse in sight.

(iii) The three sounds heard are the ringing of the horse's harness bells, the sweeping of the blowing wind and the sound of the falling snowflakes.

(iv) The speaker says that he knows whom the woods belong to and also mentions that the owner lives in the village. He says that the owner will not know that he (the speaker) has stopped to enjoy the beauty of the woods.

(v) The words 'lovely, dark and deep' suggest that the woods are attractive but dangerous at the same time. The repetition of the last two lines indicates that although the traveller may want to isolate himself from the rest of the world and stay in the woods it is his moral duty to return to his family.

Question 6

(i) The incident described in the poem occurred in Japan. The atomic bombs which were dropped on Japan during WW2 had caused the flashes. Soon after, his house collapsed into timber and debris.

(ii) There was a wound on the Doctor's thigh; it had a splinter jutting out of it. His right side was bleeding and his cheek was torn.

(iii) His wife's name was Yecko-san. The house standing before them tilted, swayed and finally toppled, crashing on the ground.

(iv) He describes the people as shadowy forms; some ghosts like some like scarecrows but all were wordless, dumb and naked. The people were walking with their hands away from their bodies, silently shuffling towards the hospital.

(v) As a result of the bombings, people were in pain and shock. It appeared as if their skin was melting which is the reason why they were walking with their hands away from their bodies. The message conveyed by the poem is that war only leads to destruction and leaves scars in the lives of people forever.

SECTION C -- PROSE
A Collection of Short Stories

Question 7

(i) The king changed the names of his daughters multiple times because he wanted all of them to have names which were easy to remember and handle.

(ii) Since Princess September was the last daughter her name had not been changed. She grew up normally as a sweet little girl. She was charming and graceful. In contrast to her, her sisters whose names were changed so many times resented the practice and disliked being called by a different name every other day. Their personalities were distorted and it made them bitter.

(iii) King of Siam practiced a habit of gifting the people who came to felicitate him on his birthday. He refused to accept the gifts that they brought for him and instead gave them the precious gifts that eminent citizens and Mayors had earlier given him. Finally when he had nothing more to give, he gave his each of his daughters a parrot in a golden cage.

(iv) Princess September put the Nightingale in a cage since she feared that it would fly away one day and never return. Moreover, her eight sisters had also put fear in her heart about the same. She hid her true intention by insisting that she was in fact trying to save the bird from the palace cat.

(v) On being locked in the cage, the bird became silent as it was overcome by grief. It had lost the zeal to sing. It constantly pleaded with the princess for freedom. The bird's mood remained gloomy and pensive even when the princess took its cage into the palace garden. The message of the story is art or artistic qualities cannot blossom when they are trapped in any way.

Question 8

The short story 'The Last Leaf' begins with two artists Sue and Johnsy meeting each other and becoming good friends. The two are fond of each other and look out for each other right from the start. They share a studio apartment soon after and their bond grows stronger as the story progresses.

When Johnsy falls ill with pneumonia and wishes to die, Sue is extremely concerned for her. She does not want her friend to die. She takes good care of her and constantly tries to cheer her up. They are like sisters to each other. The doctor asks Sue to keep Johnsy happy. She tries to do this by singing to her but her efforts are not successful. She mentions having to complete her painting for the magazine so that she can earn money and get good food for herself and Johnsy.

The theme of self-sacrifice is developed through the character of Behrman. He is an old man and a painter too. His aim is to paint a masterpiece which he is unable to accomplish in the sixty years of his life. The motivation he needs to achieve this goal comes from Johnsy's fear that when the last leaf on the vine falls, she will die. He goes out in the raging storm at night to paint an imitation of the last leaf outside Johnsy's window. Despite knowing that this could cost him his life, he climbs

the ladder on that stormy winter night and paints his masterpiece. His persistence and effort bear fruit when drawing courage from the one leaf, Johnsy decides to give life a second chance.

Animal Farm -- George Orwell

Question 9

(i) Napoleon a large Berkshire boar, Snowball, a more vivacious pig and Squealer, a small fat porker pig were the three who elaborated on Old Major's teachings.

(ii) They held their secret meetings in the barn several nights in a week after Mr. Jones had gone to sleep. The meetings always ended with singing of 'Beasts of England'.

(iii) The Old Major called the lives of the animals 'miserable, laborious, and short'. He said that they were fed the bare minimum that could keep them alive and forced to work till the last atom of their energy was spent. And in spite of doing so much, the moment their usefulness ended, they were mercilessly killed. No animal in England was free or has lived a happy life or a life of leisure after turning a year old. An animal's life was full of misery and slavery.

(iv) The two cart-horses, Boxer and Clover were the most faithful disciples. They accepted the pigs as their teachers and absorbed everything they taught. They then passed on the teachings to other animals by simple arguments. They dedicatedly attended all the secret meetings and led the singing of 'Beasts of England' at their end.

(v) When the animals woke up the next day, they could not believe that they were indeed free. They all raced out into the pasture together. They gambolled round and round, they hurled themselves into the air with great excitement. They rolled in the dew, they cropped mouthfuls of the sweet summer grass. They kicked up clods of the black earth and snuffed its rich scent.

Question 10

Napoleon and his companions Snowball and Squealer were the shrewd-minded pigs who fooled the animals into believing things based on what suited them best. When the news spread that the cows' milk and the ripe apples were being mixed with the pigs' mash, Squealer explained that this was done only to preserve the health of the pigs as it was proved by science that animals that use their brains need better nutrition. He insisted that none of them liked apples or milk and that they ate it only to keep themselves healthy so that they could look after the farm better.

At one point, Napoleon took away nine puppies from their parents to breed them privately. Everyone forgot about them until the day when the argument about windmill arose. Snowball believed that the farm urgently needed a wind mill. He suggests that stacks of hay or even eggs could be sold to collect money to build the windmill. Here again the animals faintly recollected a commandment which forbade any dealing with men or money. But the four small pigs who dare to raise a feeble objection were silenced by the dogs who were summoned by Napoleon.

Napoleon, who strongly opposed Snowball's suggestion made a high-pitched whimper of a kind and at once nine huge dogs as fierce-looking as wolves, wearing brass-studded collars came

bounding into the barn. They wagged their tails at Napoleon and followed his every command. They drove Snowball out of the farm and made Napoleon the absolute monarch of the place. Following this, freedom of speech and every other kind was lost forever. No one was able to approach him or counter his commands since he spent most of his time in the farm house, the doors of which were guarded by the dogs at all times. When the hens began to rebel, he forced them to make false confessions and once these were spoken his dogs instantly ripped their throats thus silencing them forever. He even cancelled the public gatherings.

To Sir With Love: E.R. Braithwaite

Question 11

(i) The 'I' in the above lines in Mr E. R. Braithwaite. He is in the classroom. He was in a positive mood using a friendly tone to speak to the students.

(ii) At the moment, he expected his students to listen to what he had to say without interruption. He assured them that after he was done he would allow them to speak too and would hear them out without interrupting them.

(iii) Soon after this, Miss Pamela Dare flung open the classroom door and rushed in breathlessly to take her seat.

(iv) His challenge urged her to leave the class and re enter with the courtesies of a well mannered woman, just like a queen. He then explained that the ladies should learn to show themselves as both worthy and appreciative of the courtesies that the men showed them. He took the help of Mrs Dale-Evans for this.

(v) The narrator expected the boys to observe cleanliness: cleaning their teeth, hands and faces. He explained that as they were the top class, it was up to them to set a good example for the younger students. The children readily accepted most of it but they also questioned the narrator what he thought about a fellow teacher who did not follow these etiquettes.

Question 12

The first instance of racial discrimination encountered by Braithwaite is after his six years in the English air-crew ended. While he served in the air-crew, his colour was never questioned. However, after this when he went to England with the hope of landing an engineering position, his application was rejected time and again despite his excellent qualifications. He gradually realised that his application was rejected due to his black skin and not because of his skills. It was also openly mentioned to him by one of the employers. Another reason given for rejecting his application was that if he was accepted, he would be placed in a very low position and this would not befit his high standard of education and ability.

The second instance of discrimination is seen when he is out with his students on a field trip. While he is with his students in a train two ladies enter and audibly call "our shameless young girls and these black men." This instance of discrimination is countered by Pamela Dare who stands up against the ladies by pointing out their mistake and informing them that he is their teacher.

The third instance of discrimination is seen when Braithwaite and his fiancée, Miss Gillian Blanchard visit a restaurant named Le Poisson d'Or to celebrate her birthday. Here too they are ignored for a very long time by the waiters. Finally when they are served, the waiter carelessly spills soup on Braithwaite and instead of apologising or amending his mistake, he faintly sneers at him. This instance makes Gillian very angry and they leave the restaurant instantly. He receives acceptance in his resident surrounding and at school, but the same is not the case beyond those limits.