

Unit 9: Freedom by Langston Hughes

Synonyms

Bread: food, loaf; money, cash

Compromise: agreement, settlement

Course: flow, route, path

Fear: fright, dread, terror

Fellow: companion, man, person

Tire: exhaust, weary, fatigue

Question Answers

A. Answer the following questions:

- 1. Look at the title of the poem, *Freedom*. What do you think this poem will be about?**

Ans. I think the poem will be about the importance of freedom and people's desire to live without oppression. It may discuss how individuals struggle to gain their rights and dignity. The poem could also emphasize that freedom is a basic human need. It might encourage people to stand up against injustice.

- 2. Is it about personal freedom, social freedom, or something else?**

Ans. I believe the poem is about both personal and social freedom. Personal freedom allows individuals to make their own choices, while social freedom means living in a fair and equal society. The poet may show how these two types of freedom are connected. Everyone deserves freedom in both their private and public lives.

- 3. Do you think the poet will be happy, sad, or frustrated? Why?**

Ans. I expect the poet to express feelings of frustration, hope, and determination. Since freedom is often denied to some people, the poet may feel unhappy about injustice. At the

same time, he may remain hopeful that freedom can be achieved. These emotions can inspire readers to value and protect freedom.

4. Whose perspective is the poem written from? How does this perspective influence the poem's message?

Ans. The poem is written from the perspective of an African American who is denied freedom but wants it immediately. This perspective makes the poem's message stronger because it shows the frustration of waiting. By speaking from his own experience and the experience of other African Americans, Hughes makes the reader understand why delay is not acceptable and why freedom must come now.

5. How does Langston Hughes criticise those who believe in gradual change for freedom?

Ans. Langston Hughes criticises those who believe in gradual change for freedom by rejecting the idea of waiting patiently or accepting compromise and fear. In the poem, he says freedom will not come through these slow, cautious ways. He uses images like "*I cannot live on tomorrow's bread*" to show that delayed promises are useless when people need freedom now. Through this, Hughes makes it clear that gradual change is too slow and does not meet the urgent needs of those who are oppressed, especially African Americans.

6. Why does the poet reject the idea of 'tomorrow's bread'?

Ans. The poet rejects the idea of "*tomorrow's bread*" because people need food today, not tomorrow. In the same way, people need freedom now, not at some future time. The poet wants freedom immediately instead of waiting for it.

7. Do you agree with the poet's view that freedom should not be postponed? Why or why not? Support your answer with examples.

Ans. Yes, I agree with the poet's view that freedom should not be postponed. When people are denied freedom, they suffer every day. Waiting only means more years of injustice and pain. For example, in the past, African Americans in the United States were told to "wait" for equal rights, but this delay allowed racism and unfair laws to continue. Like the poet says, "*I*

cannot live on tomorrow's bread," freedom must come now so people can live with dignity and equality today, not in the distant future.

8. If you were in the poet's position, how would you express your demand for freedom?

Write a short paragraph.

Ans. If I were in the poet's position, I would speak clearly and strongly that freedom is my right and I need it now. I would tell the world that waiting only increases suffering and that life without freedom is not a full life. I would use simple but powerful words, like the poet, to show that delayed promises cannot feed the hungry or comfort the oppressed. My voice would demand action today, not tomorrow.

9. In the first stanza, Hughes states that freedom will not come through 'compromise and fear.' Why do you think the poet uses these words specifically? What might this say about his opinion on the current political or social climate at the time the poem was written?

Ans. Hughes uses the words “**compromise and fear**” to show that slow, cautious actions will not bring real freedom. At the time the poem was written, many leaders and politicians were afraid to demand full equality for African Americans, choosing to make small compromises instead. By using these words, Hughes shows his frustration with this attitude. He believed that fear of upsetting those in power and accepting partial rights kept African Americans oppressed. This suggests that he saw the political and social climate as too timid and unwilling to make bold changes for true justice.

10. The poem includes several contrasts between the speaker's view on freedom and the more passive stance of others (e.g., 'Let things take their course'). How does this contrast add to the power of the speaker's argument for immediate action?

Ans. The contrast between the speaker's urgent demand for freedom and the passive stance of others makes his argument stronger. When others say “*Let things take their course*” or believe change will happen slowly, it shows acceptance of the unfair present. In contrast, the speaker refuses to wait, insisting that freedom must come now. This difference highlights

how dangerous passivity can be. It allows injustice to continue. By showing the gap between patience and urgency, Hughes makes the need for immediate action clear and powerful.

11. Find an example of repetition, enjambment, and a metaphor in the poem. Explain how each contributes to the poem's meaning and impact.

Ans. 1. Repetition: "*Freedom*" is repeated several times. This stresses the central theme and shows how deeply the speaker desires it. The repetition makes the demand urgent and unforgettable.

2. Enjambment: A thought runs over from one line to the next without pause, for example: "Freedom is a strong seed." This keeps the poem's rhythm flowing and gives a sense of ongoing movement, like the unstoppable push for freedom.

3. Metaphor: "Freedom is a strong seed." Here, freedom is compared to a seed that can grow into something powerful and lasting. This image shows that freedom has the potential to create life, hope, and change if it is planted now.

12. B. Statement: 'Hughes uses direct language and strong imagery to clearly oppose the idea of waiting for freedom. His words do not suggest negotiation but demand immediate action.' Tell whether you agree with this statement. Provide two examples from the poem to support your answer.

Ans. Yes, I agree with this statement. Hughes speaks in clear, simple words that leave no room for negotiation or delay. For example he says: "*Freedom will not come through compromise and fear*" and directly rejects slow or cautious approaches. Similarly, in the line: "*I cannot live on tomorrow's bread,*" he uses strong imagery to show that delayed promises are useless when freedom is needed now. These lines make his demand for immediate action powerful and unmistakable.