Chapter 7: Carrier of Words

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Exercise 7.1 — Check Your Understanding — Carrier of Words (I)

Q1 Khetaram needs to submit information about himself for getting an identity card. Fill up the following information sheet for Khetaram: Name, Position, Employer, Official address, Mode of transport used, Key responsibilities (three points each starting with V).

SOLUTION

Based on the passage, the information sheet can be filled as follows:

Name: Khetaram
Position: Gramin Dak Sewak (GDS); sole postman of Somarad Branch Post Office
Employer: India Post (Department of Posts)
Official address: Somarad Branch Post Office, near Indo-Pakistan border, Rajasthan
Mode of transport used: On foot (walks through sand beds and dunes; even bicycles cannot ply on the soft sand)

Key responsibilities:
V Carrying and delivering mail from Jodhpur (approx. 330 km away) to far-flung hamlets (dhaanis) near the Indo-Pakistan border within 24 hours of dispatch
V Ensuring mail load does not exceed 28 kilos as per regulations
V Reading out letters and drafting replies on behalf of villagers who seek his help

Answer: Khetaram is sole postman of Somarad Branch Post Office under India Post; travels on foot to deliver mail within 24 hours to border hamlets; also reads and drafts letters for villagers.

Q2 Discuss with your teacher. 1. Why do you think Khetaram has taken up this challenging job? 2. How do you think Khetaram would feel about taking up this challenging task every day?

SOLUTION

1. Khetaram took up this job out of economic necessity. As he says, 'Akaal or famine is a way of life here. In a good year, I get one crop of bajra. That cannot feed my family of five. We would starve without this job.' The post of GDS also gives him an assured income alongside farming.

2. Khetaram would likely feel a deep sense of duty and pride alongside physical hardship. Despite the 50-degree heat, sandstorms, and heavy mailbag, he delivers consistently. His words 'Main tayyar hoon' (I'm ready) and his gratitude at

being able to serve even after 60 suggest he finds meaning and dignity in his role as the sole link for isolated communities.

Answer: He took the job due to famine and inability to feed his family from one crop. He feels a strong sense of duty and pride despite extreme hardship.

Exercise 7.2 — Check Your Understanding — Carrier of Words (II)

Q1 Complete the table given below. Column 1 (situations): (a) When the temperature is recorded as 50 degrees celsius and above, a state holiday has to be declared. (b) Khetaram can dwell on any threshold. (c) BSF always gave Khetaram a lift. Give the reasons from Column 2 for each situation.

SOLUTION

(a) Situation: Khetaram records the temperature as 49.9 degrees celsius even when it has actually crossed 50 degrees celsius.
Reason: Because if the temperature is officially recorded at 50 degrees celsius or above, a state holiday would be declared, which would stop mail delivery. Khetaram delivers even on such days.

(b) Situation: Khetaram is welcomed at every doorstep.
Reason: Because he is a trusted, warmly received figure — he can read out letters and draft replies in his slightly shaky hand, making him indispensable to the villagers who place great confidence in him.

(c) Situation: The BSF (Border Security Force) always gives Khetaram a lift.
Reason: Because Khetaram distributes the dak (mail) of the BSF camp as well. Since their camp arrived in the area the previous year, they give him a cup of tea and transport as a gesture of goodwill and appreciation.

Answer: (a) Recording 50°C triggers a state holiday halting delivery. (b) He is trusted to read/write letters for all. (c) He delivers their mail; they reciprocate with lifts and tea.

Q2 Why was a piece of jaggery offered in the village when he brought news of a birth or weddings?

SOLUTION

In the remote desert villages near the Indo-Pakistan border, people live in extreme poverty — famine is a way of life and resources are very scarce.

A piece of jaggery is a simple, affordable sweet that the villagers could offer. It symbolises joy and the sharing of good news. When Khetaram brought letters announcing a birth or a wedding, the villagers had little else to offer as a token of happiness and gratitude, so jaggery — modest yet meaningful — was what they could give.

It reflects both the poverty of the region and the warmth with which Khetaram was welcomed as the bearer of happy tidings.

Answer: The villagers are too poor to offer more; jaggery is a simple, affordable sweet that symbolises joy and gratitude when Khetaram brings happy news.

Q3 How would phone lines help Khetaram in his job?

SOLUTION

Phone lines were only 50 km away from Khetaram's area at the time of the article.

Once phone lines arrive, Khetaram hopes to become a Gramin Sanchar Sewak. In that role, his duty would entail carrying a cell phone along with the post and delivering both from home to home.

Phone lines would help him stay connected with the postal network and residents, enable faster communication, and potentially reduce his physical burden of solely walking long distances with heavy mailbags. The cell phone would add a communication service dimension to his delivery role, making him even more valuable to the isolated communities he serves.

Answer: Phone lines would make Khetaram a Gramin Sanchar Sewak, adding a cell phone to his delivery rounds — enabling faster communication for remote villagers alongside postal delivery.

Exercise 7.3 — Critical Reflection — Carrier of Words (Extract 1)

Q1 Read the extract: 'Akaal or famine is a way of life here. In a good year, I get one crop of bajra. That cannot feed my family of five. We would starve without this job,' he says. And for each family which resides in this arid land, survival is partly dependent on money orders remitted by a relative.
(i) Complete the sentence: 'One crop of bajra makes a little difference for people like Khetaram because _____'.
(ii) Why did Khetaram term famine as 'a way of life'?
(iii) Give one reason why Khetaram had to take up a job to help his family to survive.
(iv) Complete the analogy: Other families: Money orders :: Khetaram: _____
(v) What would 'a good year' signify?

SOLUTION

(i) One crop of bajra makes a little difference for people like Khetaram because it is not enough to feed his family of five, leaving them dependent on other means of income to avoid starvation.

(ii) Khetaram termed famine as 'a way of life' because in the arid Thar desert region, droughts and food scarcity are not occasional disasters but a persistent condition. Even in a good year, he can only harvest one crop of bajra, which is insufficient for survival. The hardship is so regular that it has become a normal part of existence for people there.

(iii) One crop of bajra was not enough to feed his family of five, so without the income from his GDS job, the family would starve.

(iv) Other families: Money orders :: Khetaram: job (his GDS salary is his equivalent of the money order — the assured income that keeps his family from starvation).

(v) A 'good year' would signify a year with sufficient rainfall for the desert to yield even one crop of bajra — the minimum agricultural outcome possible in that harsh environment. It contrasts with years of total crop failure due to drought or famine.

Answer: (i) ...it cannot feed his family of five. (ii) Drought/food scarcity is a permanent condition, not an exception. (iii) One bajra crop was insufficient for five people. (iv) Job/salary. (v) A year with enough rain to yield at least one bajra harvest.

Q2 Read the extract: 'There is one letter delivery he dreads. The envelope with the right corner torn off, which signifies that the missive bears news of death. "Ashubh Samachar cannot be carried into the house," says Khetaram. So, he stands outside, reads out the letter twice, then tears it to bits. "Bad news must be destroyed," he mutters philosophically.'
(i) Choose the correct option: Who could have torn the right corner of the envelope?
A. Khetaram B. Sender of the letter C. Receiver of the letter D. The postmaster
(ii) Complete the sentence: 'The most likely reason for Khetaram reading the letter twice is because _____'.
(iii) What was Khetaram's philosophy regarding bad news, and how did he act upon it?
(iv) State whether true or false: Khetaram's action of tearing the letter differed from his beliefs.
(v) Mention any one aspect of Khetaram's temperament which is revealed through this extract.

SOLUTION

(i) B. Sender of the letter. The right corner is torn before the letter is dispatched as a signal to the postman that it carries news of death, so the family can be mentally prepared before hearing it read aloud.

(ii) The most likely reason for Khetaram reading the letter twice is because he wants to ensure the grieving family hears and fully understands the news of the loss before he destroys the letter, so no detail is missed.

(iii) Khetaram's philosophy was that bad news is inauspicious and harmful, and therefore must be destroyed so it cannot cause further sorrow. He acted on this belief by standing outside the home (not entering), reading the death-news letter aloud twice, and then tearing it to pieces, muttering 'Bad news must be destroyed.'

(iv) False. Khetaram's action — tearing the letter to bits — was fully consistent with his belief that 'bad news must be destroyed.' His action and belief were aligned, not different.

(v) Khetaram is compassionate and emotionally sensitive. He dreads delivering news of death, handles it with a respectful ritual (standing outside, reading twice, destroying the letter), and his philosophical muttering shows he has developed a thoughtful way to cope with the emotional burden of his role.

Answer: (i) B — the sender. (ii) ...to make sure the family hears all details before the letter is destroyed. (iii) Bad news must be destroyed; he stood outside, read it twice, then tore it. (iv) False — action matched belief. (v) Compassionate and emotionally sensitive.

Exercise 7.4 — Critical Reflection — Carrier of Words (II)

Q1 Justify the statement made by Postmaster-General, Rajasthan Western Region stating that the role of GDS is 'invaluable'.

SOLUTION

The Postmaster-General stated: 'The role of GDS is invaluable, since they deliver in interior areas that are often inaccessible by any means besides foot.'

This is fully justified by Khetaram's example:
- He delivers mail 120 km beyond the last railhead at Barmer, 50 km beyond the last phone, and 10 km beyond where the road crumbles into soft sand — territory no vehicle can reach.
- He ensures mail reaches the Indo-Pakistan border within 24 hours of dispatch from Jodhpur (330 km away), connecting isolated families to the outside world.
- GDS territories include extreme and varied geographies — the frozen Ladakh desert, Lakshadweep islands, and northeast riverine communities — all inaccessible by normal transport.
- No other government service (the proposal to hand duties to patwaris was 'summarily rejected') could perform this role.

The GDS are thus truly without equal in connecting India's most remote populations.

Answer: GDS deliver on foot to areas unreachable by any vehicle — from Thar desert border hamlets to Ladakh and Lakshadweep — making them the only link for isolated communities, which no substitute (e.g., patwaris) could replicate.

Q2 How was the purpose of India Post different from that of the British postal system?

SOLUTION

The British postal system set up in India was designed to relay company dak (official mail) between administrative centres — it served the colonial government's bureaucratic and commercial needs, not the general population.

After independence, the mandate of India Post was fundamentally different: to bring the entire population within the mailing ambit — that is, to ensure every person in India, regardless of how remote their location, had access to postal services.

This shift is reflected in the growth from 25,000 post offices in 1947 to more than a lakh and a half today, and in the creation of the GDS network to serve the most inaccessible corners of the country.

Answer: The British system relayed administrative mail between centres; post-independence India Post aimed to include every citizen — growing from 25,000 to over 1.5 lakh post offices, with GDS reaching the most remote areas.

Q3 People trusted Gramin Dak Sewaks. Support this statement with any two instances from the text.

SOLUTION

Instance 1: Rural depositors entrust their monthly savings to the post office in their area. Every post office has many operational accounts, which reflects the people's absolute confidence in the postal system. As Mulk Raj Anand noted in 'Story of the Indian Post Office': 'In no other country a person in remote villages is so dependent on the post office for transmission of small sums of money.'

Instance 2: Khetaram is personally trusted by the villagers to the point that everyone feels comfortable asking him to read their letters and draft replies. He 'can dwell on any threshold' — meaning no home turns him away. This personal trust extends so far that when a scheme to replace GDS with patwaris was proposed, village elder Budh Singh rejected it outright: 'We knew they would not be able to do the job.'

Answer: 1. Villagers entrust monthly savings to post offices, showing financial trust. 2. Khetaram is welcomed at every threshold to read and draft letters — and villagers rejected a scheme to replace GDS with patwaris.

Q4 Infer the most likely reason that Khetaram was grateful to continue as GDS, even after the age of 60.

SOLUTION

Khetaram says: 'I am grateful that as a Gramin Dak Sewak, I can serve the people even after 60.'

The most likely reason for his gratitude is economic. In the Thar desert, famine is a way of life and one crop of bajra cannot feed his family of five. His GDS salary is the assured income that keeps his family from starvation.

GDS rules allow service up to age 65 (unlike regular government employees who retire at 60), which means Khetaram can continue earning for five more years. Given the harsh desert conditions and lack of alternative livelihood, this extended service provides crucial financial security for him and his family.

Answer: Famine is his normal condition and one bajra crop cannot feed his family; the GDS salary is his only assured income. Continued service past 60 (up to 65) provides vital financial security.

Q5 Explain why the author pays tribute to people like Khetaram.

SOLUTION

The author concludes: 'People like Khetaram are a part and parcel of our social fabric, and are a great support! Our salute to all the people like Khetaram!'

The tribute is paid because people like Khetaram:
- Perform an essential service under extraordinarily difficult conditions — 50°C heat, sandstorms, 20 km walks, loads up to 28 kg — with unwavering commitment.
- Serve as the sole link between isolated communities and the outside world, carrying not just mail but money orders that enable survival.
- Go beyond their official duty — reading letters, drafting replies, and handling death news with compassion and ritual care.
- Contribute to national integration by reaching every corner of India regardless of terrain, embodying the post-independence mandate of inclusive development.

Khetaram's quiet dedication — summed up in 'Main tayyar hoon' (I'm ready) — exemplifies unsung civic heroism that holds society together.

Answer: Khetaram and GDS workers serve isolated communities under extreme hardship, going beyond duty to read/draft letters and deliver within 24 hours — they are the unseen social fabric connecting remote India to the nation.

Exercise 7.5 — Vocabulary and Structures in Context — Carrier of Words (I): Phrase me

Q1 Study the phrases in Column 1 and match them with their meanings in Column 2.

1. crumbles into sand — (i) get a chance / continue living
2. give a new lease of life — (ii) carrying letters to less populated areas
3. turn into a trickle before drying out — (iii) disappears in the desert
4. bearing words across this desolate geography — (iv) lessen gradually and then finally stop

Now use the phrases from Column 1 in sentences of your own.

SOLUTION

Matches:

1. crumbles into sand — (iii) disappears in the desert
2. give a new lease of life — (i) get a chance / continue living
3. turn into a trickle before drying out — (iv) lessen gradually and then finally stop
4. bearing words across this desolate geography — (ii) carrying letters to less populated areas

Model sentences using the phrases:

1. crumbles into sand: The ancient fort wall crumbles into sand a little more with every monsoon.
2. give a new lease of life: The scholarship gave Meena a new lease of life after years of struggling to continue her education.
3. turn into a trickle before drying out: Tourist footfall in the hill town used to turn into a trickle before drying out every winter.
4. bearing words across this desolate geography: The satellite phone was the only device capable of bearing words across this desolate geography.

Answer: 1-(iii), 2-(i), 3-(iv), 4-(ii).

Exercise 7.6 — Vocabulary and Structures in Context — Carrier of Words (II): Alliteration

Q1 Identify examples of alliteration and metaphor in the extract: 'Khetaram's khaki turban and uniform are his only protection against the desert's furies, the scorching summer winds and swirling sandstorms which turn him into a walking sandman.'

SOLUTION

Alliteration (repetition of initial consonant sounds):
- 'Khetaram's khaki' — repetition of the 'k' sound
- 'scorching summer' — repetition of the 's' sound
- 'swirling sandstorms' — repetition of the 's' sound

Metaphor (implied comparison without 'like' or 'as'):
- 'desert's furies' — the desert's harsh winds and sandstorms are metaphorically compared to furious, raging forces, giving the desert a violent, almost living personality.
- 'a walking sandman' — Khetaram, covered from head to toe in sand after walking through sandstorms, is metaphorically called a 'walking sandman', comparing him to a figure made of sand. It vividly conveys how completely the desert engulfs him.

Answer: Alliteration: 'Khetaram's khaki' (k), 'scorching summer' (s), 'swirling sandstorms' (s). Metaphors: 'desert's furies' (desert as a raging force); 'walking sandman' (Khetaram as a figure of sand).

Exercise 7.7 — Vocabulary and Structures in Context — Carrier of Words (III): Word mea

Q1 Match the words in Column 1 to what they suggest in Column 2 in the context of the chapter.

1. arid — (i) interest rate for the farmers
2. concessional — (ii) corner of the world
3. gaunt — (iii) farmland without much yield
4. remote — (iv) desert stretching far and wide
5. desolate — (v) farmer waiting for the rains

Now use the words from Column 1 in sentences of your own.

SOLUTION

Matches (as the words suggest in the chapter's context of drought, desert, and remote rural life):

1. arid — (iii) farmland without much yield (the arid Thar desert yields at best one crop of bajra)
2. concessional — (i) interest rate for the farmers. (Note: 'concessional' does not appear in the passage; by its standard meaning — offered at a special or reduced rate — it best fits the concessional interest rates typically offered to farmers.)
3. gaunt — (v) farmer waiting for the rains (a gaunt, lean farmer in the desert, reduced by famine)
4. remote — (ii) corner of the world (the hamlets Khetaram serves are in a remote corner near the border)
5. desolate — (iv) desert stretching far and wide (the desolate geography Khetaram crosses)

Model sentences:

1. arid: The arid landscape of Rajasthan supports very little vegetation.
2. concessional: The government offers concessional loans to farmers affected by drought.
3. gaunt: Years of drought had left the farmers gaunt and exhausted.
4. remote: The remote village had no road connection until recently.
5. desolate: The desolate dunes stretched endlessly under the afternoon sun.

Answer: 1-(iii), 2-(i), 3-(v), 4-(ii), 5-(iv).

Exercise 7.8 — Vocabulary and Structures in Context — Carrier of Words (IV): Present P

Q1 Match the underlined verbs in Column 1 with their functions in Column 2:
1. She has found her book. — (i) finished actions (past event – present result)
2. I have just eaten a mango. — (ii) recently completed action
3. Have you ever seen a play before? — (iii) life experiences
4. I have finished my project. — (iv) accomplishment
5. Ajay has become a good bowler in five years. — (v) changes over time
6. I have seen this book in the library many times. — (vi) multiple actions at different times
7. I have studied in this school for six years. — (vii) action completed in the past but has its impact in present

Then fill in the blanks using the present perfect form of the verbs in brackets to complete the paragraph: 1. I _____ (has/have) just _____ (get) a collection of postage stamps from my grandfather. He 2. _____ (collect) these stamps over a period of 20 years. I 3. _____ (study) most of the stamps in his collection and loved all of them. I 4. _____ (begin) my own collection of postage stamps. Grandfather 5. _____ truly _____ (inspire) me.

SOLUTION

Matches:

1. She has found her book. — (i) finished actions (past event – present result)
2. I have just eaten a mango. — (ii) recently completed action
3. Have you ever seen a play before? — (iii) life experiences
4. I have finished my project. — (iv) accomplishment
5. Ajay has become a good bowler in five years. — (v) changes over time
6. I have seen this book in the library many times. — (vi) multiple actions at different times
7. I have studied in this school for six years. — (vii) action completed in the past but has its impact in present

Paragraph with present perfect tense filled in:

1. I have just got a collection of postage stamps from my grandfather. He 2. has collected these stamps over a period of 20 years. I 3. have studied most of the stamps in his collection and loved all of them. I 4. have begun my own collection of postage stamps. Grandfather 5. has truly inspired me.

Answer: Matches: 1-(i), 2-(ii), 3-(iii), 4-(iv), 5-(v), 6-(vi), 7-(vii). Paragraph: 1. have / got; 2. has collected; 3. have studied; 4. have begun; 5. has / inspired.

Exercise 7.9 — Vocabulary and Structures in Context — Carrier of Words (V): Active and

Q1 Khetaram's nephew wants to join the GDS. Khetaram gives him the following advice in active voice:
(i) You will need a lot of stamina for this job.
(ii) Practise reading clearly as some of the villagers will expect you to read out the letters.
(iii) Write words neatly as some villagers will ask you to draft replies.
(iv) Wear full-sleeved shirts and trousers to protect yourself from the heat.
Complete the following paragraph, rewriting the advice in passive voice. One example is done: 'To begin with, a lot of stamina will be needed for this job. Next, reading clearly A. _____, as you B. _____ to read out the letters by some of the villagers. Words C. _____ neatly as you D. _____ to draft replies by some villagers. Full sleeved-shirts and trousers E. _____ to protect yourself from the heat.'

SOLUTION

When changing from active to passive voice, the object becomes the subject and receives the action. 'has/have + past participle' becomes 'will be + past participle' for advice/instruction.

Completed paragraph:
To begin with, a lot of stamina will be needed for this job. Next, reading clearly A. will need to be practised, as you B. will be expected to read out the letters by some of the villagers. Words C. will need to be written neatly as you D. will be asked to draft replies by some villagers. Full sleeved-shirts and trousers E. will need to be worn to protect yourself from the heat.

Answer: A. will need to be practised; B. will be expected; C. will need to be written; D. will be asked; E. will need to be worn.

Exercise 7.10 — Check Your Understanding — Words (Poem by Charles Swain)

Q1 Fill in the blanks with one word from the poem 'Words' by Charles Swain. In this poem, the poet reflects that words fail to truly satisfy what the heart wants to convey. Words are compared to summer birds who 1. _____, leaving nothing behind. The heart, is equated to a 2. _____ who finds that words are as worthless as 3. _____ when needed. He feels that a few sincere words can bring more 4. _____ than many meaningless ones. He adds that a voice that brings happiness to a 5. _____ place does not say much, but the few words it does, are very precious. Moreover, if words could satisfy us, the 6. _____ would celebrate but words often fail to do that. The poem ends on the note that empty words may look impressive with lots of flowers, but they cannot produce anything valuable, like a 7. _____.

SOLUTION

Answers drawn directly from the poem:

1. depart (stanza 1: 'But words, like summer birds, depart / And leave but empty air')
2. pilgrim (stanza 2: 'The heart, a pilgrim upon earth')
3. weeds (stanza 2: 'That words are of as little worth / As just so many weeds')
4. joy (stanza 3: 'Can deeper joy impart / Than hosts of words')
5. lonely (stanza 4: 'A lonely home to cheer')
6. world (stanza 5: 'The world might hold a feast')
7. fruit (stanza 6: 'But whose poor nature cannot grow / One particle of fruit')

Answer: 1. depart 2. pilgrim 3. weeds 4. joy 5. lonely 6. world 7. fruit

Exercise 7.11 — Reading for Appreciation — Words (Poem)

Q1 Read the poem 'Words' again. Find any four sets of rhyming words and also write the rhyme scheme of the poem.

SOLUTION

Four sets of rhyming words from the poem:
1. heart / depart (stanza 1, lines 1 and 3)
2. care / air (stanza 1, lines 2 and 4)
3. needs / weeds (stanza 2, lines 2 and 4)
4. impart / heart (stanza 3, lines 2 and 4)

Rhyme scheme: Each stanza follows the pattern ABAB.
For example, Stanza 1:
Line 1: heart (A)
Line 2: care (B)
Line 3: depart (A)
Line 4: air (B)

This ABAB pattern holds consistently across all six stanzas of the poem.

Answer: Rhyming sets: heart/depart, care/air, needs/weeds, impart/heart. Rhyme scheme: ABAB in every stanza.

Q2 Read the following phrases and sentences from the poem 'Words'. Identify the poetic device in each and explain what the poet wants to communicate through their usage.
(i) But words, like summer birds, depart…
(ii) heart, a pilgrim upon earth…
(iii) words are of as little worth / As just so many weeds
(iv) If words could satisfy the chest … Oft satisfy the least!
(v) The world might hold a feast…
(vi) Like plants that make a gaudy show / All blossom to the root
(vii) But whose poor nature cannot grow / One particle of fruit!

SOLUTION

(i) 'But words, like summer birds, depart…' — Simile. The poet compares words to summer birds that come and go without leaving anything behind. Just as summer birds depart leaving only empty air, hollow words vanish without touching or satisfying the heart.

(ii) 'heart, a pilgrim upon earth…' — Metaphor. The heart is compared to a pilgrim — a wanderer on a spiritual journey — always searching for genuine connection and meaning but rarely finding it through words alone.

(iii) 'words are of as little worth / As just so many weeds' — Simile. Words are compared to weeds: just as weeds are unwanted, useless growths in a garden, empty words have no real value and can even clutter meaningful communication.

(iv) 'If words could satisfy the chest … Oft satisfy the least!' — Irony / Paradox. The poet uses a conditional 'if' to highlight the gap between the promise of words and their reality. Despite the expectation that words should satisfy deeply, they most often fail to do so — they satisfy the least when tested.

(v) 'The world might hold a feast…' — Metaphor / Hyperbole. If words truly satisfied, the whole world would celebrate with a feast. The image of a global feast is hyperbolic, emphasising how wonderful it would be — but the following lines undercut this with the reality of words' failure.

(vi) 'Like plants that make a gaudy show / All blossom to the root' — Simile. Empty, showy words are compared to plants that flower brilliantly but exist only for display — all surface, no substance. The 'gaudy show' of blossoms represents impressive-sounding words with no real meaning.

(vii) 'But whose poor nature cannot grow / One particle of fruit!' — Metaphor. The same plant metaphor continues: despite all the blossoms (many words), there is no fruit (no real outcome or emotional impact). The poet conveys that hollow words, no matter how plentiful or impressive, produce nothing of value.

Answer: (i) Simile — hollow words vanish like departing birds. (ii) Metaphor — heart as wandering pilgrim seeking meaning. (iii) Simile — words as useless weeds. (iv) Irony/Paradox — words promise satisfaction but deliver least. (v) Hyperbole/Metaphor — world-feast of words that never comes. (vi) Simile — showy words like flowering plants with no fruit. (vii) Metaphor — empty words bear no fruit.

Q3 Which words are repeated in the poem 'Words'? Why does the poet use repetition?

SOLUTION

The most prominently repeated word in the poem is 'words' itself — it appears in nearly every stanza.

Other repeated words and phrases include:
- 'heart' — repeated across stanzas 1, 2, 3, and 4
- 'satisfy' (and 'satisfy the') — appears in stanzas 1, 5, and 6
- 'If words could satisfy' — stanza 1 begins 'If words could satisfy the heart' and stanza 5 echoes 'If words could satisfy the chest'

Why the poet uses repetition:
The poet repeats these words and phrases to reinforce his central argument — that despite how much we rely on words and how often they promise to fulfil emotional needs, they consistently fall short. The repetition of 'words' keeps the theme sharply in focus. The echo of 'If words could satisfy the heart / chest' across two stanzas creates a structural parallel that emphasises the gap between expectation and reality. Repetition also gives the poem a lyrical, almost incantatory quality, making the message feel inevitable and deeply felt.

Answer: 'Words', 'heart', 'satisfy', and the phrase 'If words could satisfy' are repeated. Repetition reinforces the central argument that words repeatedly promise but fail to fulfil emotional needs, and lends a lyrical, emphatic quality.

Q4 The stanzas 4, 5, and 6 end with exclamation marks. Choose the option that displays the emotions being expressed through them.
(i) 4. disillusionment 5. admiration and 6. frustration
(ii) 4. frustration 5. admiration and 6. disillusionment
(iii) 4. admiration 5. frustration and 6. disillusionment
(iv) 4. frustration 5. disillusionment and 6. admiration

SOLUTION

Stanza 4 ends: 'But, oh! those few, how dear!' — The poet marvels at how precious the rare, sincere words of a warm voice are to a lonely person. This is admiration — wonder at the value of genuine, few words.

Stanza 5 ends: 'But words, when summoned to the test, / Oft satisfy the least!' — Despite the hope that words could 'hold a feast', they fail most when most

needed. This is frustration and disillusionment at words' inadequacy.

Stanza 6 ends: 'But whose poor nature cannot grow / One particle of fruit!' — The exclamation closes the poem's extended plant metaphor: all blossom, no fruit. This is disillusionment — the final, emphatic conclusion that words are all show and no substance.

Option (iii): 4. admiration 5. frustration and 6. disillusionment — this best matches the poem.
Answer: (iii)
Stanza 4 ends 'But, oh! those few, how dear!' — an expression of admiration. So stanza 4 = admiration, stanza 5 = frustration, stanza 6 = disillusionment; the correct option is (iii).

Answer: (iii) — Stanza 4: admiration ('those few, how dear!'); Stanza 5: frustration ('satisfy the least!'); Stanza 6: disillusionment (all blossom, no fruit).

Exercise 7.12 — Reading for Appreciation — Words (Poem): Hyperbole

Q1 Identify examples of hyperbole from the lines: 'If words could satisfy the chest, / The world might hold a feast.' Then complete the following sentences with hyperboles using the hints: 1. I have _____ things to do on this weekend. (lots of/tonnes of) 2. The player missed the basket by _____. (a mile/an inch) 3. My mother is so tired that she can sleep for a _____. (night/decade) 4. I will be back in _____. (five minutes/two seconds)

SOLUTION

Hyperbole in the poem: 'The world might hold a feast' is a hyperbole. The idea that the entire world would throw a celebratory feast if words could truly satisfy is a vast, impossible exaggeration used to stress how transformative it would be — and by contrast, how completely words fail this expectation.

Completing the sentences with hyperboles (the more exaggerated option in each pair is the hyperbole):

1. I have tonnes of things to do on this weekend.
2. The player missed the basket by a mile.
3. My mother is so tired that she can sleep for a decade.
4. I will be back in two seconds.

Answer: Hyperbole in poem: 'The world might hold a feast.' Sentences: 1. tonnes of; 2. a mile; 3. a decade; 4. two seconds.

Exercise 7.13 — Critical Reflection — Words (Poem, Extract 1)

Q1 Read the following lines and answer the questions:

'The heart, a pilgrim upon earth,
Finds often, when it needs,
That words are of as little worth
As just so many weeds.'

(i) Why has the poet referred to the heart as 'a pilgrim'?
(ii) When would a heart 'need' words?
(iii) Complete the sentence: 'The words are like weeds because _____'.
(iv) Mention two emotions the heart might be experiencing when it finds words to be of 'little worth'.
(v) What do these lines suggest about the nature of communication?

SOLUTION

(i) The poet refers to the heart as 'a pilgrim' because a pilgrim is a wanderer journeying in search of something sacred or deeply meaningful. Similarly, the human heart is always on a journey — seeking genuine connection, understanding, and emotional fulfilment. Just as a pilgrim searches for the divine, the heart searches for words that can truly express or satisfy its deepest feelings, but often finds the search in vain.

(ii) A heart 'needs' words at moments of intense emotion — in grief, longing, love, or joy — when it desperately seeks to communicate what it feels or to hear something that resonates deeply. These are the critical moments when words should rise to the occasion but, according to the poet, they most often disappoint.

(iii) The words are like weeds because they are numerous, unwanted, and serve no real purpose — just as weeds grow abundantly in a garden but contribute nothing of value and may even crowd out what is truly meaningful.

(iv) Two emotions the heart might be experiencing:
- Disappointment: after hoping that words would provide comfort or expression, the heart finds them hollow and inadequate.
- Loneliness: realising that despite the abundance of words around it, the heart cannot find any that truly touch or understand it.

(v) These lines suggest that communication is often inadequate when it matters most. The nature of communication, the poet implies, is that words are surface-level tools that may fail to carry the depth of genuine feeling. True

connection may lie beyond language — in the unspoken, the sincere, or the few words spoken with real feeling.

Answer: (i) Heart as wandering pilgrim seeking meaningful connection. (ii) At moments of grief, love, longing — intense emotion. (iii) ...they are numerous but worthless and serve no real purpose. (iv) Disappointment and loneliness. (v) Words often fail to communicate deep feeling; true connection may lie beyond language.

Q2 Read the lines: 'If words could satisfy the chest,
The world might hold a feast;
But words, when summoned to the test,
Oft satisfy the least!'
(i) How can words 'satisfy the chest'?
(ii) How can words be 'summoned to the test'?
(iii) What does 'the world' holding 'a feast' imply?
(iv) Complete: 'The poet mentions that words satisfy the least because _____'.
(v) Select the word that does not mean the same as 'oft': A. always B. usually C. frequently D. often

SOLUTION

(i) Words can 'satisfy the chest' (the seat of emotions and breath) by fulfilling one's emotional needs — when they comfort, console, inspire, or express what the heart feels so precisely that the person feels heard and at peace.

(ii) Words are 'summoned to the test' when they are called upon in critical moments of emotional need — in times of grief, conflict, confession, or deep longing — when they must prove their capacity to convey genuine meaning and provide real solace.

(iii) 'The world holding a feast' implies that if words could truly satisfy human emotional needs, it would be cause for universal celebration — a joyous occasion for all of humanity. The hyperbole suggests this would be an extraordinary, nearly miraculous achievement. By contrast, the following lines reveal that words fail this test, making the feast an impossibility.

(iv) The poet mentions that words satisfy the least because they are hollow and superficial — they sound impressive (like plants full of blossoms) but contain no real substance or emotional depth, and consistently fall short of fulfilling what the

heart truly needs.

(v) A. always — 'oft' means frequently/often, not always (without exception). 'Always' implies universality with no exceptions, which is stronger than 'oft'.

Answer: (i) By perfectly expressing or consoling emotional needs. (ii) Called upon in critical moments of grief/love/longing. (iii) Universal celebration if words truly satisfied — an impossible ideal. (iv) ...they are superficial, like showy blossoms with no fruit. (v) A. always.

Exercise 7.14 — Critical Reflection — Words (Poem, II)

Q1 What is the comparison that the poet draws between words and 'empty air'?

SOLUTION

In stanza 1, the poet writes: 'But words, like summer birds, depart, / And leave but empty air.'

The comparison is that words, like summer birds that fly away at the end of the season, are transient and leave nothing behind — only 'empty air.' Words may be spoken or heard, but if they lack genuine feeling or depth, they vanish without trace or impact, much like birds that disappear leaving the sky empty.

The 'empty air' is a powerful image: after all the words have been said, there is a hollow emptiness — no comfort, no fulfilment, no lasting impression. The comparison underscores the poet's argument that words without genuine feeling are as insubstantial as air.

Answer: Like summer birds that depart and leave only empty air, words vanish without lasting impact when they lack genuine feeling — leaving nothing but hollowness behind.

Q2 According to the poet, meaningful words are more precious than a lot of them. Explain.

SOLUTION

The poet states in stanza 3: 'A little said, and truly said, / Can deeper joy impart / Than hosts of words, which reach the head, / But never touch the heart.'

And in stanza 4: 'The voice that wins its sunny way, / A lonely home to cheer, / Hath oft the fewest words to say; / But, oh! those few, how dear!'

These lines make the contrast clear: a multitude of hollow words ('hosts of words') may be intellectually registered ('reach the head') but fail to move or console ('never touch the heart'). In contrast, a few words spoken with sincerity and genuine feeling can bring 'deeper joy' and cheer a lonely person far more than a torrent of empty speech.

The value of words, the poet argues, lies not in quantity but in authenticity. Fewer, truly felt words are precious precisely because they are rare and because they accomplish what all the other words cannot — they reach the heart.

Answer: 'A little said, and truly said, can deeper joy impart than hosts of words which reach the head but never touch the heart.' Sincerity of feeling, not quantity, determines a word's worth.

Q3 Do you agree that the poet presents contrasting ideas related to 'words' in the poem? If yes, why? If no, why not?

SOLUTION

Yes, the poet presents contrasting ideas related to words throughout the poem.

The central contrast is between the potential and the reality of words:
- Potential: 'If words could satisfy the heart' / 'if words could satisfy the chest' — words have the capacity to comfort, connect, and fulfil emotional needs.
- Reality: 'words, like summer birds, depart, and leave but empty air' / 'words are of as little worth as just so many weeds' / 'words, when summoned to the test, oft satisfy the least!'

A secondary contrast is between quantity and quality of words:
- Many words: 'hosts of words, which reach the head, but never touch the heart' — a large number of hollow words fails.
- Few sincere words: 'A little said, and truly said, can deeper joy impart' / 'Hath oft the fewest words to say; but, oh! those few, how dear!' — a handful of genuine words succeeds where thousands fail.

The closing plant metaphor (stanzas 5–6) also contrasts the gaudy show of blossoms (empty, impressive-sounding words) with the absence of fruit (no real emotional outcome).

These contrasts are the poem's structural and argumentative engine — they allow the poet to critique the overuse of hollow language while affirming the irreplaceable value of sincere, sparse words.

Answer: Yes — the poem contrasts words' potential (to satisfy, to cheer) with their reality (they depart like birds, satisfy least when tested). It also contrasts many hollow words (reach the head only) with few sincere ones (touch the heart and bring deep joy).

Q4 The theme of loneliness hovers over the poem. Support this statement with examples from the text.

SOLUTION

The theme of loneliness is present throughout the poem:

1. Stanza 2: 'The heart, a pilgrim upon earth, / Finds often, when it needs…' — The image of the heart as a wandering pilgrim on earth evokes profound solitude. A pilgrim is alone on a journey, searching for something that feels perpetually out of reach.

2. Stanza 4: 'The voice that wins its sunny way, / A lonely home to cheer…' — The phrase 'a lonely home' directly names loneliness. The most precious words are those that reach a lonely, isolated person and bring warmth where there was none.

3. Stanza 1: 'And leave but empty air' — The aftermath of hollow words is emptiness, which is the condition of loneliness — being surrounded by sound (words) yet feeling entirely alone.

4. Stanza 3: 'hosts of words, which reach the head, but never touch the heart' — The inability of words to reach the heart implies a persistent isolation of feeling — one can be surrounded by communication yet remain emotionally unreached and alone.

The poem suggests that loneliness is not just the absence of people, but the absence of words that truly connect — making it a meditation on emotional solitude.

Answer: Loneliness is seen in: the heart as a wandering pilgrim; the 'lonely home' a warm voice must cheer; empty air left behind by hollow words; and words that reach only the head and never the heart — all images of emotional isolation amid abundant language.

Q5 How does the poet convey the superficial nature of words? What ought to be done to address this?

SOLUTION

The poet conveys the superficial nature of words through a series of vivid comparisons:

1. Summer birds (stanza 1): Words depart like summer birds, 'leaving but empty

air' — they are fleeting and leave nothing of substance.
2. Weeds (stanza 2): Words are 'of as little worth as just so many weeds' — abundant, but useless and unwanted.
3. Words that 'reach the head but never touch the heart' (stanza 3): They remain at the surface level of intellectual understanding without penetrating to genuine emotional connection.
4. Gaudy plants with all blossoms and no fruit (stanzas 5–6): Words make a 'gaudy show' — they appear impressive but 'cannot grow one particle of fruit', meaning they produce no real outcome or meaningful impact.
5. Satisfying 'the least' (stanza 5): Despite being summoned to fulfil emotional needs, hollow words prove least effective.

What ought to be done:
The poet implies throughout that the solution is sincerity and restraint — 'A little said, and truly said, can deeper joy impart.' Words should be chosen carefully, spoken from genuine feeling, and few in number. The voice that cheers 'a lonely home' speaks the fewest words, but those words are 'dear' — precious because they are authentic. The poet advocates quality over quantity: words must come from the heart to reach the heart.

Answer: Through similes of summer birds (depart leaving empty air), weeds (worthless though plentiful), and gaudy plants bearing no fruit — all showing words as surface show with no substance. The remedy: speak few, sincere words ('a little said, and truly said') that come from and reach the heart.

Exercise 7.15 — Vocabulary in Context — Words (Poem I): Figurative phrases

Q1 The poet has used some figurative phrases. Match the phrases in Column 1 with their correct meanings in Column 2. Use each phrase in a sentence of your own.

Column 1: 1. satisfy the heart 2. depart and leave but empty air 3. hosts of words 4. never touch the heart 5. wins its sunny way 6. plants that cannot grow fruit

Column 2: (i) many words (ii) cheers up a person (iii) there is no outcome (iv) makes one happy (v) does not appeal to our emotions (vi) makes no impact

SOLUTION

Matches:

1. satisfy the heart — (iv) makes one happy
2. depart and leave but empty air — (vi) makes no impact
3. hosts of words — (i) many words
4. never touch the heart — (v) does not appeal to our emotions
5. wins its sunny way — (ii) cheers up a person
6. plants that cannot grow fruit — (iii) there is no outcome

Model sentences:

1. satisfy the heart: A heartfelt letter of apology can truly satisfy the heart.
2. depart and leave but empty air: His long speech about helping others departed and left but empty air — nothing changed.
3. hosts of words: She used hosts of words in her essay but said very little of substance.
4. never touch the heart: Politicians who never touch the heart of the people often lose elections.
5. wins its sunny way: A kind teacher who wins her sunny way into every student's life is remembered for decades.
6. plants that cannot grow fruit: His promises were like plants that cannot grow fruit — impressive on paper, empty in practice.

Answer: 1-(iv), 2-(vi), 3-(i), 4-(v), 5-(ii), 6-(iii).