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F.Y.B.A.

ENG 101 T: English for Beginners (General English/ Optional English)

(NEP 2024 Pattern CBCS) (Semester- I)

IMPORTANT QUESTION FOR EXAM

UNII 1: CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS

Poems:

1. *Mending Wall* - ROBERT FROST
 2. *La Belle Dame sans Merci* - JOHN KEATS
 3. *Sympathy* PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR
 4. *The Man He Killed* THOMAS HARDY
 5. *My Grandmother's House* - KAMALA DAS
 6. *The Bangle-Sellers* - SAROJINI NAIDU
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Question: Answer the following each question for 5 marks

1. Mending Wall - ROBERT FROST

1) Explain a central theme of the poem "Mending Wall".

OR

Explain a central Idea of the poem "Mending Wall".

Answer: The central idea of Robert Frost's "*Mending Wall*" revolves around the concept of boundaries, both physical and emotional, and the conflict between tradition and personal growth. The poem depicts two neighbours who meet each year to repair a wall that divides their properties. One neighbour insists on maintaining the wall,

believing "Good fences make good neighbours," a traditional saying suggesting that boundaries preserve peaceful relationships. However, the speaker challenges this belief, questioning why they need a wall at all, especially when nature itself disrupts it with stones rolling away. The speaker sees no reason to keep the wall, suggesting that it only serves to create unnecessary separation. The poem reflects on how societal norms or inherited ideas—like maintaining physical or emotional barriers—can limit deeper connection and understanding. Frost leaves the question open, inviting readers to reflect on whether boundaries in human relationships are truly necessary.

2. La Belle Dame sans Merci - JOHN KEATS

1) How does the setting of the poem "*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*" contribute to mood and meaning.

Answer: The setting of "*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*" by John Keats plays a crucial role in establishing the poem's eerie and melancholic mood, while also deepening its themes of love, longing, and abandonment. The poem is set in a desolate landscape—an "a land" where nature itself seems to reflect the speaker's inner turmoil. The knight is described as wandering in "meads" surrounded by fading flowers and "wild" elements. The cold, barren setting mirrors the knight's emotional desolation after being entranced by the beautiful yet merciless lady. The imagery of a "pale" and "haggard" knight contrasts sharply with the earlier vivid descriptions of the lady, symbolizing his decline and loss of vitality. The lonely, deserted environment amplifies the sense of isolation and doom, enhancing the poem's sense of tragic love and the destructive power of unattainable desire. This desolation highlights the poem's exploration of love's transient and sometimes cruel nature.

2) How does the knight describe the lady, and what does his reveal about her character in the poem "*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*"

Answer: In "*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*," the knight describes the lady as enchanting and otherworldly, emphasizing her beauty and allure. He recounts their meeting in a "mead" where she appears as a "faery's child," with "wild" eyes and a seductive

demeanour. Her speech is "sweet" and "honeyed," and she sings a "faery's song," luring the knight into a dreamlike, trance-like state. However, as the poem progresses, the lady's true character is revealed to be merciless and deceptive. Though she captivates the knight with her beauty and charms, she ultimately abandons him, leaving him "alone and palely loitering" in a desolate landscape. This abandonment highlights her cruel nature, as she takes advantage of the knight's infatuation, leaving him drained and despondent. Through the knight's descriptions, the lady emerges as both a symbol of unattainable beauty and a representation of love's potential for manipulation and heartache.

3) What are the Symbols used in the poem "*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*".

Answer: In "*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*," several symbols contribute to the poem's themes of unattainable love, enchantment, and abandonment. The lady herself symbolizes idealized, unattainable love. Her beauty and ethereal qualities represent the allure of passion, while her merciless actions, leaving the knight in a desolate state, illustrate the destructive power of love that is unreciprocated or manipulative. The knight symbolizes the vulnerable lover, consumed by desire, whose physical and emotional decline reflects the consequences of surrendering to such an illusory love. The "meads" and "wild" flowers represent the fleeting beauty of life and love; the initial vibrancy of the landscape contrasts with the knight's eventual isolation, symbolizing the loss of vitality and hope. Additionally, the "pale" moon serves as a symbol of coldness and distance, reinforcing the supernatural and heartless nature of the lady's power, as well as the emptiness left in the knight's wake after his encounter with her.

***3. Sympathy* PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR**

1) Describe the contrasting images in the poem "*Sympathy*".

Answer: In Paul Dunbar's poem "*Sympathy*," the contrasting images of freedom and confinement poignantly highlight the speaker's struggle with oppression. The central image of the caged bird, with its wings "bruised" and "beaten," symbolizes the

speaker's sense of entrapment and the harsh realities of racial and social limitations. The bird's longing to fly free from its cage contrasts with its inability to do so, illustrating the deep frustration and emotional pain of being trapped. This confinement mirrors the experience of Black people, especially during Dunbar's time, facing systemic barriers to freedom. In contrast, the open sky, where the bird yearns to soar, represents freedom, hope, and the possibility of release from oppression. The stark opposition between the bird's physical restraint and its emotional yearning emphasizes the deep yearning for liberation and the suffering caused by unfulfilled desire, conveying the speaker's emotional and existential struggle for freedom.

2) What scene does the poet describe in the first stanza of the poem “Sympathy?”

Answer: In the first stanza of Paul Dunbar's poem "*Sympathy*," the poet describes a scene in which a bird is trapped in a cage, struggling to free itself. The bird is confined and its wings are "bruised" and "beaten," suggesting that it has been hurt in its attempts to escape. The bird repeatedly flutters against the bars of the cage in an effort to fly but is unable to break free. The poet emphasizes the bird's suffering and frustration as it is denied the freedom to soar through the sky, symbolizing a sense of entrapment and oppression. This scene sets the tone for the poem, conveying the painful longing for freedom and the emotional toll of being confined, which is also a metaphor for the poet's own experience of racial and social restrictions.

4. *The Man He Killed* THOMAS HARDY

1) Explain how the title of the poem aptly focuses on the central idea in the poem “The Man He Killed”.

Answer: The title of Thomas Hardy's poem "*The Man He Killed*" aptly reflects the central theme of the poem, which explores the senselessness and tragedy of war. The title draws attention to the pivotal action in the poem: a soldier killing another man, whom he acknowledges he had no personal reason to harm. The poem is a monologue in which the speaker, a soldier, reflects on the irony and futility of war. He admits that

if he had met the man in any other setting—such as at a bar—they would have likely become friends. However, the context of war turns them into enemies, and the soldier kills the man, not out of hatred, but because it is his duty. The title highlights the absurdity of killing someone who, under normal circumstances, would be a companion, underscoring the poem’s message about the pointless destruction and human cost of war.

2) Explain significance of the title in the poem “*The Man He Killed*”.

Answer: The title of Thomas Hardy's poem "*The Man He Killed*" is significant because it encapsulates the central theme of the poem—the futility and tragedy of war. The title draws attention to the act of killing, but it is the context of this act that gives the poem its emotional depth. The speaker, a soldier, reflects on how he killed another man in battle, but this death was not born from personal enmity or hatred. The soldier acknowledges that if they had met under different circumstances, such as in a social setting, they might have become friends. The title underscores the senselessness of war, where individuals, who might have shared a bond, are turned into enemies by the violence of conflict. Hardy uses the title to highlight the inherent absurdity and the devastating human cost of war, where ordinary people are forced to kill others for no personal reason, just because it is their duty.

5. *My Grandmother's House* - KAMALA DAS

1) Comment on the theme of love in the poem “*My Grandmother’s house*”

Answer: In "*My Grandmother's House*" by Kamala Das, the theme of love is explored through the speaker’s nostalgic and emotional reflection on her childhood and the affection she experienced in her grandmother's home. The poem captures a sense of warmth, safety, and unconditional love that the speaker associates with her grandmother's house. The speaker recalls the love-filled environment where her grandmother's presence was nurturing and comforting, offering a stark contrast to the complexities of her adult life. The deep bond between the speaker and her grandmother is reflected in the vivid, affectionate memories of the house, which evoke

a sense of longing and loss. The speaker's yearning for the love she once felt is heightened by the absence of her grandmother, symbolizing a deep emotional void. Overall, the poem conveys how love, especially familial love, can create a lasting sense of belonging and emotional security, even when it is no longer physically present.

2) How does the poet convey the theme of longing in the poem “My Grandmother’s House”?

Answer: In *"My Grandmother's House,"* Kamala Das conveys the theme of longing through the speaker's emotional recollection of her grandmother's house, which symbolizes a place of warmth, safety, and unconditional love. The speaker vividly remembers the house as a nurturing space where she once felt secure and loved, and this memory contrasts sharply with her current sense of emotional emptiness. The longing is expressed through her intense desire to return to the house, a place where she experienced a pure, comforting affection. The speaker's sorrowful reflection on the loss of this connection is heightened by the use of imagery, such as "the house" that now stands "locked," which evokes a sense of abandonment and separation. The speaker's yearning is further underscored by her admission that, as an adult, she no longer experiences the same love, leaving her with a deep sense of nostalgia and longing for the lost warmth of her grandmother's presence.

6. The Bangle-Sellers - SAROJINI NAIDU

1) Discuss central idea in the poem “Bangle Sellers”.

Answer: The central idea of *"Bangle Sellers"* by Sarojini Naidu revolves around the symbolism of bangles and their connection to the stages of a woman's life. The poem describes the vibrant and colorful bangles sold by the sellers, each bangle representing different phases and emotions in a woman's journey. The bangles are described in various colors and materials, symbolizing youth, marriage, motherhood, and the different moods and aspirations of women. The poem contrasts the innocence and joy of a young bride, represented by bright, sparkling bangles, with the more subdued,

earthy tones that symbolize maturity and motherhood. Through the imagery of these bangles, Naidu emphasizes the cultural and societal roles assigned to women and the passage of time. The central idea reflects both the beauty and the complexity of womanhood, highlighting the traditional values, the role of women in society, and the symbolic significance of these ornaments in representing life's various stages.

2) Discuss similes used in the poem "Bangle Sellers".

Answer: In "*Bangle Sellers*" by Sarojini Naidu, the poet uses several vivid similes to bring the bangles to life, enhancing the imagery of the poem. One prominent simile is when the bangles are described as "like the sun's fiery splendor," comparing the bright, radiant bangles to the sun's vibrant and powerful light. This simile emphasizes the vivid, youthful energy of bangles meant for young brides, symbolizing the brightness and joy of youth. Another simile compares the bangles to "like the flowers that bud," highlighting the freshness and innocence of young womanhood. This evokes the sense of blossoming, new beginnings, and the beauty of youth. In contrast, when describing the bangles for older women, the poet uses the simile "like the flame of a fire," linking them to the warmth and strength associated with maturity and motherhood. These similes vividly connect the colors and qualities of the bangles to different stages of a woman's life, adding depth to the poem's exploration of womanhood.

3) Explanation of the Third Stanza of "*Bangle Sellers*"

Answer: In the third stanza of "*Bangle Sellers*," the speaker describes the bangles intended for mature women—those who are mothers. These bangles are characterized by deeper, more muted colors, such as "purple" and "red," symbolizing the richness of experience, strength, and stability that come with maturity. The poet compares these bangles to "the burnished gold of autumn" and "the flame of a fire," evoking imagery of warmth, strength, and the enduring quality of motherhood. The simile of autumn suggests the wisdom, grace, and dignity that come with age, while the reference to "the flame of a fire" conveys the passionate yet calm nature of a mother's love. These

images highlight the depth, resilience, and nurturing aspects of women in their later years, emphasizing the continuity of life through motherhood.

4) Explanation of the Second Stanza of "*Bangle Sellers*"

Answer: The second stanza of "*Bangle Sellers*" describes the bangles meant for young brides. The poet uses bright, vivid imagery to evoke the colors of the bangles, associating them with the vibrant emotions of youth and the joy of marriage. The bangles are described as being like "the flush of the newborn's dawn" and "the joy of the maiden's dreams," which highlights the freshness, optimism, and excitement of a young woman embarking on her new life as a bride. The use of these similes—comparing the bangles to the early morning light and the dreams of youth—conveys the feelings of hope, happiness, and purity that surround this stage of life. The colors of the bangles, therefore, symbolize the enthusiasm, brightness, and emotional freshness of youth, making them perfect for the symbolic transition into married life.