

**ENGLISH HL 14 JUNE 2025**

**GRADE 12 LITERATURE: POETRY REVISION POEM 4-6**

**POEM 4**

**POEM OF RETURN ROCHA**

\* **Form / Structure**:

\* A **protest poem - Colonialism**

\* A **free verse**

\* The poem has **14 lines and but does not conform to the strict Italian Sonnet form**.

(Although there is a distinct division between stanzas 3 and 4, separating the ‘octave’

from the ‘sestet’.)

\* It does not have a rhyme scheme and is not written in iambic pentameter, common to

the Sonnet form .It is written in free verse, more typical of contemporary poetry.

**Poetic Devices:**

**Anaphora – *When I return -repeated***

The **personification of dawn** in verse two demonstrates how the **sorrow that Nature** observed distressed even it.

The final stanza's **imagery alludes to the heroes who perished just as change was about to take place** ("day-break").

The repeat of the first two sentences emphasizes his argument that he is not a hero.

Those people never experienced the freedom of change they fought for with such ferocity.

The use of **alliteration in the words "dews," "dawns," and "dramas" emphasizes how shocked and saddened Nature was by the enslavement of her people.**

**Tone – Grief to Anger**

**Themes: Freedom, protest, Justice, acknowledgment of suffering**

**Questions and Answers**

1. Why does the speaker not want flowers upon his return? (3)

*(****Flowers are superficial****. He* ***does not want superficial things****, he wants* ***emotion.*** *He also does not believe himself to be a hero who deserves flowers or accolades upon his return. He fled and left the others to fight.)*

1. What does the speaker want instead of flowers? Why? (3)

*(He* ***wants tears, hunger, intimacy, mourning and sleeplessness****. Flowers are generally* ***celebratory,*** *and this is definitely* ***not a time for celebration****. He wants, instead,* ***an acknowledgement of suffering****. His return is indicative of something much bigger than just himself.)*

1. Comment on the description of the speaker’s “host country” as the “***land of exile and silence***”. (2)

*(Exile – he fled there to escape from oppression;* ***silence*** *–* ***perhaps he did not speak the new country’s language.*** *He could also have* ***been alone*** *there /* **isolated / unhappy / no communication** *with home country or his people.)*

1. Identify and comment on the effectiveness of the figure of speech in “***tears of dawns***”. (3)

*(****Personification*** *– even the* ***“dawn” is crying****. Even* ***Nature is upset at the atrocities*** *committed by people.)*

1. Why are the mothers “***bereft of sons***” (line 8)? (2)

*(Due to the political strife of the time, many young men (the sons) were* ***imprisoned or killed.*** *Some young men also went* ***into exile****. Some* ***mothers also couldn’t have sons because their husbands/partners were killed or imprisoned****. Thus, mothers were denied the presence of sons.)*

1. Comment on the figurative interpretation of the “***day-break***” in line 12. (2)

*(The brink of change – the* ***new day symbolises his hope*** *that things will change / they will get justice / freedom. It could refer to* ***those who died so shortly before the oppression ended.)***

1. Comment on the effectiveness of the anaphora (“***When I return***…”). (3)

*(The title is echoed in the* ***anaphora****, “When I return”. This emphasises the context of an individual who probably had been forced to flee his home country and had to live in a foreign country for a while. This emphasises the prospect of coming home and his anticipation at the welcome he would get. It is clear that the speaker* ***feels guilty about having gone into exile whilst his compatriots fought the oppressive system.)***

1. Discuss the change in tone from stanza 2 to 3. Quote in support of your answer. (3)

*(In* ***stanza 2*** *there is a tone of* ***longing and yearning*** *– the grief is immense. He cries out for the homeland to meet him with ‘real’ emotions, not flowers, nothing superficial. In the* ***3rd stanza*** *the tone shifts to* ***anger and bitterness****. Although he is happy to be home, he realises the* ***enormous sacrifice made by some in the struggle for liberation.)***

1. How does the last stanza successfully convey the speaker’s intention? (3)

*(Cleverly chosen* ***diction – “anger” and “snaking****” – implies that although the speaker is happy to be home, he still carries an enormous amount of anger and* ***resentment towards their oppressors****. He is definitely not forgiving. He seeks and demands* ***justice for all those who were scarred/killed*** *in the fight for freedom. “****Snaking****” alludes to something dangerous and poisonous – he will* ***expose the atrocities*** *and get justice for*

*all. There is definitely* ***an ominous tone.)***

**POEM 5**

**TALK TO THE PEACH TREE**

**Structure** and style -**Colloquial diction** - **conversational tone** to the poem

The poet addresses the reader directly engages them with the **pronouns “us” in “Let’s”**

**Form/Structure: Free verse** – no recognisable poetic form. Indents in the fourth and fifth stanzas - commentary on the overall situation.

**Poetic Devices**: **Absurdities** of the speaker’s suggestion -**personification** throughout the poem. This emphasizes how **useless/futile the suggestions** are.

**Tone**: Lines 1-3 **Light-hearted /humour** Lines 4-6 **Harsh /Unforgiving**

**Themes**: **Oppression, Apartheid, Peace, Equality**

Decent **conversation needs to happen between white and black people** for things to change

1. Explain the underlying meaning of the actions/instructions in lines 1-6. (2)

*(****Although the literal actions are quite absurd, the underlying message is serious: what do you know about us? During Apartheid there was little or no opportunity to understand or communicate with people from other races. One group of people was always superior and had a ‘voice’, whilst the other had to remain silent.)***

1. Why would swallows be a good source of information about ‘other countries? (2)

***(Swallows migrate for the summer. They would be able to ‘talk’ about the other countries.)***

1. Discuss what the speaker is saying in stanza 4. (3)

***(He states that ‘words have lost their meaning’ – this means that talking has become useless. ‘Misused notations’ refers to communication tools which have become so warped that their original intentions have become lost. Words have literally lost their meaning. Language has been twisted and used to convey lies, propaganda and cannot be trusted.)***

1. Discuss the connotations of the word “whining” (line 10). (2)

***(‘Whining’ has negative connotations of high-pitched complaining. This would be unpleasant.)***

1. Why does the speaker describe the heat as “paralysing” and “merciless” (stanza 6)? ***(paralysing – implies that the oppression (the heat) renders a person unable to do anything. ‘merciless’ implies exactly that – no empathy/mercy/compassion for the oppressed people.)***
2. Although similar in style to stanzas 1-3, how do lines 11-14 differ in tone and intent from lines 1-6? (3)

***(Stanzas 1-3 were light-hearted and humorous in their absurdity. Lines 11-14 is anything but humorous. The heat is ‘merciless’ which alludes to the oppression faced by Black people during Apartheid. The tone is harsh and unforgiving. The words ‘rubbish heap’ and ‘stench’ implies the attitude towards black people. The tone is serious and the intention is the describe the reality of the situation for black people under white oppression.)***

1. Discuss why the speaker chooses to “talk to the peach tree”. Consider the other ‘things or concepts he talks about in the poem. (3)

***(The peach tree is rooted in a permanent place in the garden, unlike the other items/things he proposed with which to have a conversation. The tree will tell him how it feels to be rooted and fruitful in a place you can call your own. The connotation of rooted is permanence and fruitful implies productive and successful.)***

1. Identify and comment on the tone in the last stanza. (3)

***(The tone could be one of relief – for so long there has been no communication. Now the speaker looks forward to a conversation between the two parties. This conversation, albeit with the devil himself, is long overdue and***

***needs to happen to facilitate change. The speaker implores the reader to have the needed conversation.)***

1. Who is the ‘devil’ in the last stanza? (1)

***(Oppressors / Apartheid System)***

1. How is the register of the poem appropriate and effective in delivering its message? (2)

***(The colloquial register is lighter and less demanding than formal register. It gives the poem a tone much like a casual conversation. The poet addresses the reader directly and engages them with the pronouns “us” in “Let’s”. Sepamla’s style of criticism is subtle and accessible to all readers. The message is clearly that decent conversations need to happen between white and black people and that all should be treated fairly and equally. People must see all things from BOTH perspectives.)***

**POEM 6**

**PRAYER TO THE MASKS**

**Form/Structure:**

The poem is structured with **no breaks for stanzas**. The **line lengths** are **varied**. **Short sentences** emphasize the **speaker’s intent**. The speaker, at **first**, **addresses the masks** and then expands the message of the poem. The (rhetorical) questions are answered by the speaker at the end of the poem.

**Poetic Devices:**

The **direct speech** used in the poem allows the reader to “eavesdrop” on the ‘**conversation the speaker is having with the masks**. The speaker uses the **1st person pronoun** “you” to engage the reader. Despite answering the **rhetorical questions** at the end of the poem, these questions also engage the reader and evokes their responses. The **simile** of **sacrificed lives** being compared to the poor man giving up his “last garment” is effective. The poet uses **hyperbole** in stating that the “world that has died of machines and cannons”.

**Tone -Pleading/Desperate/Respectful/Commanding**

**Themes: Relation to Ancestors, French Imperialism vs Post Colonialism**

1. Briefly explain the connotations of the words “Prayer” and “masks” as used in the title. (3)

*(Prayers – appeal to a* ***higher power*** */* ***ancestors – positive connotation****. ‘masks’ – traditional* ***masks as worn in African culture*** */ to* ***hide real emotions / hide true intentions****. The title implies a ‘****thank you’ to those who have been wearing the masks and to the masks themselves for being able to hide true feelings.)***

1. Why does the speaker greet the masks “in silence”? (2)

*(Words are* ***unnecessary in this instance*** *– a slight gesture will suffice.)*

1. Why does the speaker use the first person “I”? (2)

*(It adds* ***a personal, intimate and sincere*** *element to the poem. It is subjective.)*

1. How could an ancestor be “lion headed” (line 4)? (2)

*(This could refer to a* ***traditional African mask in the shape of a lion’s dead****. It could also be* ***symbolic of strength, boldness and bravery****. The* ***Senegalese national anthem*** *is also entitled “****The Red Lion”.)***

1. Discuss the choice in diction in metaphor “altar of white paper” (line 8). (3)

*(****white paper*** *could refer to* ***bureaucracy*** *– it takes an immense amount of* ***paperwork to create laws / set up political alliance****s etc. The* ***‘altar’*** *suggests that something is being* ***worshipped/praised****.)*

1. Identify the **tone** in “In the name of your image, listen to me!” (1)

*(****A pleading, desperate tone****. Or a* ***respectful command filled with authority****.)*

1. What does the speaker mean when he states that Europe and Africa are “connected through the navel”?

*(This image reminds the reader of the* ***connection of Africa to Europe****,* ***much like a baby is connected to its mother via the umbilical cord – nourishment, blood flow*** *etc. The* ***colonial powers in Europe were referred to as the ‘mother country’****. However, this* ***connection is a negative one*** *– Europe colonised many countries in Africa. There* ***was mass exploitation of people, resources and land****. Greed and corruption by the colonisers left* ***Africa damaged****. The* ***severing of the connection is necessary but difficult.*** *Colonisers would not want to sever this connection – then they lose their wealth/resources/land/labour force etc.)*

1. Identify the figure of speech and explain the effectiveness thereof in the phrase “rebirth of the world” (line 14). (3)

*(****Personification*** *– now that the* ***colonisers have left / have no more power over the country****, it has the chance to be reborn, to start afresh. It can now create its own government / future.)*

1. How has the world “died of machines and cannons”? (2)

*(****Our over-reliance on technology and machinery*** *has caused the* ***spiritual soul to wither*** *and die.* ***The world has lost its ability to feel deeply*** *and give expression to joy.)*

1. Is there any optimism in this poem? Quote in support of your answer. (2)

*(“world that has died” – shows that the* ***old reality is gone/dead****. There is a semblance of* ***hope (“torn hope”) despite the damage, destruction and violence.****)*

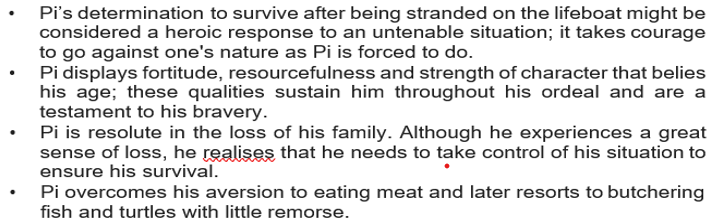
11.Discuss the effectiveness of the last two lines of the poem as a conclusion. (3)

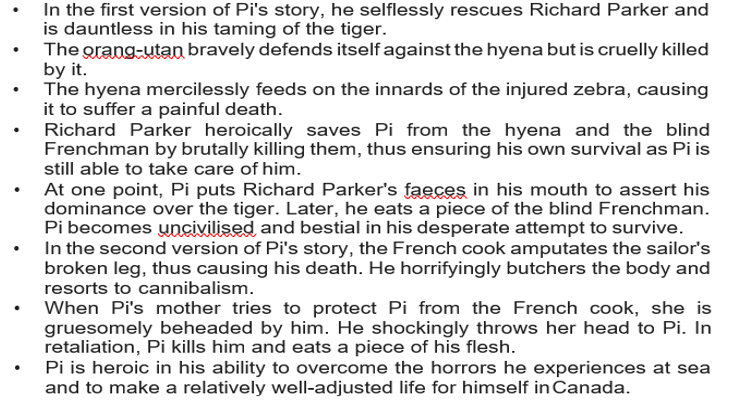
*(These lines are* ***emphatic and strongly connected*** *to the* ***earth****. The people are involved in a traditional dance and they appear* ***strong and resilient****. This dance symbolises their new-found freedom and how they will regain their identity and* ***take pride in their culture.*** *They will share this culture and pride with the rest of the world.)*

***Life of Pi,* both the human and animal characters commit deeds of heroism and gruesomeness to survive. Nov 2019**

**Critically discuss the extent to which you agree with the above statement.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Heroic** | **Gruesome** |
| Pi – Determination- untenable position  Courage – against nature. Able to overcome hunger/thirst/threat of death – Theme Survival | Hyena – mercilessly attacks -Zebra  Orange Juice |
| Pi - resourcefulness – despite age – creative problem solving – solar still. Taming of R.P | Pi – eats R.P – Faeces – assert domination |
| Pi – loss of family – take control of the situation -incredible emotional strength | 2nd Story – Cook – kills Sailor – Bait –  Cannibalism  Kills Pi’ mother |
| Pi – Aversion to meat |  |
| 1st Story – Animal Story – Dauntless- taming  Tiger | Cook – Beheads Pi’s mother -tried – protect Pi |
| Orangutang – fearlessly defends | End – Well-adjusted – Canada |
| R.P- Indirect Heroism - saves – Pi – Hyena -Blind Frenchman- Provided motivation – Pi’s vigilance/ companionship | Human Story – Pi – kills cook- self-defense & revenge -mother  Creates Alter ego – natural – predators but gruesome -humans |
| Maintains Hope and Faith – Theme – Religion | Butchering of animals- Pi -kill/ butcher fish/turtles/birds/sea creatures |





In Yann Martel's novel "Life of Pi," the intertwined survival stories of humans and animals indeed present a complex tapestry of heroism and gruesomeness. The journey of Pi Patel, stranded on a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger, serves as a profound exploration of the primal instincts and moral dilemmas faced in extreme circumstances. Both humans and animals exhibit acts of bravery and brutality, highlighting the multifaceted nature of survival.

Pi's survival story is marked by significant acts of heroism. Despite being thrust into an unimaginably dire situation, he exhibits resilience, ingenuity, and an unyielding will to live. Pi's resourcefulness in devising ways to procure food and water, his perseverance in establishing a territory on the lifeboat, and his tenacity in training Richard Parker are all testaments to his heroic spirit. His efforts to coexist with the tiger not only ensure his survival but also showcase his remarkable adaptability and courage.

However, Pi's journey is not devoid of gruesome acts. The necessity of survival pushes him to the limits of his humanity. The act of killing a fish, which he initially finds repugnant, becomes a stark example of the lengths to which he must go to stay alive. Pi's narrative also includes a more disturbing episode of cannibalism, illustrating the horrifying choices one might face in the struggle for survival. These acts, while grim, underscore the harsh realities of life and death in extreme conditions.

The animals in "Life of Pi" similarly display both heroic and gruesome behaviors. Richard Parker, the tiger, embodies the raw survival instinct. His presence on the lifeboat is both a constant threat and a source of companionship for Pi. While Richard Parker's actions are driven purely by instinct, they can be seen as both brutal and necessary for his survival. His killing of the hyena, which had previously murdered the zebra and orangutan, serves as an example of the natural law governing their microcosm – survival of the fittest.

Yet, the tiger's relationship with Pi evolves into a delicate balance of mutual dependence. Richard Parker's restraint, influenced by Pi's dominance and training, could be viewed as a form of heroism within the animal kingdom. The tiger's presence keeps Pi alert and focused, indirectly aiding his survival. This interdependence blurs the lines between human and animal behavior, illustrating that the drive to survive transcends species.

In conclusion, "Life of Pi" masterfully portrays the duality of heroism and gruesomeness inherent in the survival instinct, regardless of species. Both Pi and Richard Parker exhibit behaviors that reflect the extremes of their circumstances, demonstrating that the will to live can manifest in both noble and horrifying ways. Martel's narrative challenges readers to reconsider their perceptions of heroism and morality in the context of survival, ultimately suggesting that the instinct to survive can lead to actions beyond conventional moral boundaries.