

Unit 1 Chapter 2

Any Woman (Poem)

Read and Respond



Question 1.

Mention the underlying ideas in the expression 'pillars of the house'.

Answer:

The pillars are the main supports of the house. It is not possible to have a house without pillars. The pillars support the weight of the house and make it stand without crumbling.

Question 2.

How does the poet portray the bond between a mother and her children?

Answer:

According to the poet, children get their love from their mother. She is their light of love. Without her, the children can't thrive. She is the twist that holds the children together in the sacred ring of the family. The children do not want to leave her and go away. The bond between a mother and her children can be compared to a stem and its branches.

Question 3.

Comment on the expression from 'floor to roof. Attempt to coin another expression without changing the meaning.

Answer:

Floor to roof means from the start to the finish, from the beginning to the end. All aspects of the home are connected with the woman, the mother of the house. Nothing in the home is away from her or unknown to her. Another expression with the same meaning would be 'from top to toe' or 'head to foot'.

Question 4.

What is the symbolic significance of 'wind and snow'?

Answer:

The symbolic significance of 'wind and snow' is the troubles and tribulations that come to life. Life is affected by problems of various sorts. They can be diseases, financial problems, emotional problems or some other tragedies. The mother tries to prevent all these things from entering the family and bothering its members.

Question 5.

Explain, in your own words, the concluding line of the poem.

Answer:

It is a prayer that the woman makes to Jesus Christ. Jesus is the person whom a woman (Mary) laid in the manger. The woman is praying to Jesus not to take away her life until her children have grown. She knows without her, her children won't be able to live and thrive in the world.



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Let'S Discuss

Question 1.

Woman: the focal point of the family.

Answer:

The woman is the focal point of the family. She is the pillar of the house. She is the keystone of the arch. Without her, the roof and wall will collapse. She is the heat upon the hearth. She is the heat that warms the home. Without her the home will be colder than a stone.

The children get their warmth from her. She is the light of their love. Without her, her children will not thrive. She holds the children together in the love ring of the home. They are tied together with the knots of love. The children would not like to break the thread and go away wandering.

The woman is everything in the house. She is the one filling the bed of the children with down (soft hair of animals) and covering them with leather. She is the wall that protects the members of the family against all kinds of dangers. She prevents dangerous winds and snow from harming the members. Without her a family is unimaginable.

Question 2.

The qualities a woman needs to face the challenges of life.

Answer:

A woman should have many qualities to face the challenges of life. First of all she should be educated. Education tells a woman her rights and duties. Secondly, she should have some employment which brings her some income. Income empowers her. Then she should have leadership qualities. These include wisdom, understanding, courage, determination, compassion, sympathy and empathy. Women should not remain the weaker sex. There is nothing 'weak' about them. They should dare the difference and come into leadership roles acquiring equality with men in all walks of life.

Think and Write

Question 1.

Analyse the theme of the poem keeping in view the plight of women in the Indian social scenario.

Answer:

The theme of the poem is the importance of the woman in the family. Without a woman, a family is simply unimaginable. This is more so in the case of Indian women. Women take care of the children, cook, wash and do all other household chores. Nothing at home happens without her knowledge or without her participation. She is the pillars, roof, walls and doors of the house. She is the one who gives love to all. It is the woman who makes home a sweet place.

Question 2.

Identify the major figure of speech used in the poem and describe its significance.

Answer:

The major figure of speech used in the poem is a metaphor. A metaphor is a comparison where one thing is seen as another. The entire poem is a metaphor because the woman thinks she is the pillars, walls, roof and doors of the house. She is the heat and light of the house. In fact she is the house!

Question 3.

What is the quantum of work done by a woman in the household? Can it be reduced?

How?

Answer:

The quantum of work done by a woman is tremendous. She cooks for everyone in the family. She washes the plates, pots and pans. She washes the clothes and irons them and keeps them in the cupboard. She has to clean the house and the yard. She has also to take care of the children's discipline as well as their education. Indeed, she has a lot to do.

Her work can be reduced in two ways. One way is taking mechanical help by using some modern labour-saving machines. But, more importantly, her work can be reduced by an understanding husband and loving children. They can lend a helping hand in the various jobs she is doing at home.

Activity I: (Composing lines)

Question 1.

Try writing a few lines on any one of the following topics/themes.

Answer:

Mother's Love

There is a saying that since God could not be everywhere at the same time, he created mothers. It shows the importance of mothers. Mother is a synonym for love. Their love is unconditional. They expect nothing in return for the love they give you. That is the most important thing about a mother's love.

Right from a child is formed in the womb, the mother starts loving her baby. Once the baby is born, its entire care is done by the mother. Feeding it, cleaning it, nursing it, making it sleep, making it comfortable – all this is done by the mother. When her child is sick, the mother keeps awake the whole night nursing her child. She knows without her the child will not live and grow comfortably. That is why we see her praying, "God don't take my life away until my children grow up!" Mother's love is unique and there is nothing that can be compared to it. What we are today is the result of our mothers' love.

Activity II (Appreciation)

Question 2.

Keeping in view the ideas discussed above, prepare an appreciation of the poem "Any Woman".

Answer:

Appreciation of the poem

The poem 'Any Woman' by Katharine Tynan speaks of the importance of the woman in the family. She is the pillars of the house. She is the keystone of the arch. She is the roof and walls. She is the fire upon the hearth. Without her, the home would be colder than a stone.

The children come to her for love and affection. She is the light of their love. The children could hardly thrive without her support. She is the one who holds the family together. No child wants to get away from the close-knit family group. She is all over the house, from the floor to the roof. Nothing happens without her knowledge. She decorates the house and makes the children's bed cosy and warm.

She also protects the children from all dangers. She is the door that guards against all kinds of troubles and tribulations that come to pester the inmates. At the end of the poem, the woman prays to Jesus to spare her life till her children are properly grown up.

The poem has simple language. The entire poem is an exquisite metaphor. The imagery is great. The woman doing all kinds of jobs and standing guard at the same time make us admire her capabilities. Her love is superb and there is utter unselfishness in her activities. At last we also see the birth of Jesus in the manger. We see the woman standing before Jesus praying to him to let her live till her children grow up. Katharine has painted a fine picture of a devoted mother with words.

The poem is in rhyme. Except in the first stanza, the rhyme scheme is abab.

Activity III (Comparison)

Question 3.

You are aware of the pivotal role of a woman, especially the mother at home. There are occasions when her self-effacing love is painfully missing, when the prayer 'Take me not till the children' has not been realized.

Answer:

Now, read the poem 'The Toys' by Coventry Patmore :

Meaning of The Poem :
In the poem a father is talking :

Lines 1 – 6: My little Son being dead.

My little son looked at me with thoughtful eyes. He moved and spoke as if he had grown up. He had disobeyed my instructions 7 times and so I beat him. I sent him away with hard words. I did not kiss him when he went to bed. His mother was a patient woman, but she is dead.

Lines 7 – 11: Then sobbing wet.

Thinking that his sorrow at my beating him and scolding him might prevent him from sleeping, I went to his bed. I found him in a deep sleep. But his eyelids were dark and his lashes were wet because of his earlier crying.

Lines 12 – 22: And I, sad heart.

I felt very sad at his condition and I too wept. I kissed away his tears but left my tears on his cheek. On a table near his head he had kept within his reach a box of counters (metal or plastic pieces), a stone with red lines, a piece of glass abraded (worn or rubbed by the sand on the beach) and six or seven shells, a bottle with bluebells (flowers) and two French copper coins which were arranged in an artistic manner. He had kept all these to comfort his sad heart.

Lines 23 – 34: When I prayed to God that night, I wept. I spoke to God something like this. When we lie with silent breath, not annoying you as we are dead, you may remember what toys made us happy when we were alive. We did not properly understand the good things you commanded us to do. But you are a much greater and more merciful father than I am, as I am made of clay. You will be not so angry like me when I beat and scolded my son. When you see our disobedience, you will only say, like a kind father, that how sorry you are for our childishness and not punish us harshly.

[Answer the following questions. They will add to your comprehension of the poem.](#)

Question 1.

What is the theme of the poem?

Answer:

The theme of the poem is Toys'. But in a deeper way the poem talks about mistakes and their punishments. We human beings tend to punish children when they make some mistakes; when they disobey us. But the poet believes that God will not punish us harshly for our disobedience.

Question 2.

Do you justify the father's action? Why?

Answer:

The father is a human being and it is natural that he gets angry when his orders are disobeyed by his son. The son had disobeyed him seven times. In the circumstances, I justify the father's action. The father is a loving father and that is why he goes to check if his son is sleeping. A loving father has to punish his son for disobedience, especially when it is repeated.

Question 3.

What is the symbolic significance of the toys?

Answer:

The symbolic significance of the toys is that they represent our pleasures. While children find pleasure in simple toys, grownups find pleasure in some undesirable and sinful acts.

Question 4.

Comment on these lines citing the importance of the mother in the family:

Answer:

- "Take me not till the children grow" (Any Woman)
- "His mother, who was patient, being dead." (The Toys)

Both the lines signify the importance of a mother in the house. Mother is the synonym of love. A child without a mother does not develop properly and that is why the mother in 'Any Woman' prays to God to spare her life till her children grow up. In the second example, we see how the son is beaten and scolded by the angry father. The boy's mother would not have done it because she was patient. Both poems stress the importance of a mother in the family, especially for the welfare of the children. She is the backbone which keeps everything tidy and neat and makes everybody comfortable and happy.

Question 5.

Now, compare the poem with 'Any Woman' and prepare a review focusing on the themes and their significance.

Answer:

The poem 'Any Woman' by Katharine Tynan speaks of the importance of the woman in the family. She is the pillars of the house. She is the keystone of the arch. She is the roof and walls. She is the fire upon the hearth. Without her, the home would be colder than a stone. The children come to her for love and affection. She is the light of their love. The children could hardly thrive without her support. She is the one who holds the family together. No child wants to get away from the close-knit family group. She is all over the house, from the floor to the roof. Nothing happens without her knowledge. She decorates the house and makes the children's bed cosy and warm. She also protects the children from all dangers. She is the door that guards against all kinds of troubles

and tribulations that come to pester the inmates. At the end of the poem, the woman prays to Jesus to spare her life till her children are properly grown up.

The poem has simple language. The entire poem is an exquisite metaphor. The imagery is great. The poem is in rhyme. Except in the first stanza, the rhyme scheme is abab.

The poem 'The Toys' is different from 'Any Woman'. Here the plight of a boy, whose mother is dead is depicted. The boy disobeys the father and he loses patience and beats up his won. He sent him away with hard words. He did not kiss him when the boy went to bed. The boy's mother was a patient woman, but she is no more. Thinking that the sorrow at his beating his son and scolding him might prevent him from sleeping, the father goes to the boy's bed. He found him in a deep sleep. But the eyelids were dark and his lashes were wet because of his earlier crying.

The father feels very sad at his condition and he too weeps. He kissed away the tears from the boy's cheeks but left his tears there instead. On a table nearthe boy's head he had kept within his reach a box of counters, a stone with red lines, a piece of glass worn by the sand on the beach and six or seven shells, a bottle with bluebells and two French copper coins. He had kept all these to comfort his sad heart. When the man prayed to God that night, he wept. He requested God to forgive his disobedience and not to punish him forthe sins he had committed in his life. He punished the boy for disobedience because he is made of clay. But God can forgive because God is love and not made of clay.

The poem uses simple language. It has fine imagery. The boy sleeping with dark eyelids and wet lashes, surrounded by toys, is an exquisite picture. The poem is in rhyme. In the first 6 lines the rhyme is aabbbb.

Between the two poems, I prefer 'Any Woman' as it has made a greater impression on me.

III. Read And Reflect

Question 1.

"There are two ways of spreading light...

Question 2.

To be the candle, or the mirror that reflects it."

Question 3.

Women should choose between being a candle or a mirror, and work for their own emancipation as well as that of the generation to come.



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Any Woman (Poem) Possible Questions and Answers

Question 1.

The poem 'Any Woman' ends with the prayer 'Take me not till the children grow!' Analyse this line in the Indian context where women sacrifice their lives for their children. Write a paragraph on the unfailing love of mothers, in about 100 words.

Answer:

It is often said that since God could not be everywhere at the same time, he created mothers. This is more so in the case of an Indian mother. In the Indian context, a mother lives and dies for her child. 'Any Woman' ends with the prayer "Take me not till the children grow!". The mother is praying like that not because she is afraid of death or because she wants to live long but to ensure that her children are grown up and they can stand up and face the world. The Indian woman will go to any extent to ensure the safety and welfare of her child.

Question 2.

Read the poem given below and write a note of appreciation comparing it with 'Any Woman' with reference to its theme, tone, rhyme scheme etc.

What Women Wanted

*Long before your grandma was young
Women's freedom was a song not yet sung
Men mostly said that women didn't get it
If you gave them a job they just forget it
They said a woman's job was cleaning house
And staying quiet as a nurse
But many women said we want more
We like our homes, but we want more than chores
We want the right to earn real pay
We work just as hard as men each day
And more than anything, please note
We want to have the right to vote
And after the marches and protests were done
All of that is just what they won
– (Anonymous)*

Answer:

The anonymous poem 'What Women Wanted' speaks about the needs of women and what they were able to achieve after all the marches and protests. Long ago there was no freedom for women. The men said that a woman's job is cleaning the house and looking after the children. But women wanted more. They wanted to get pay and they wanted to vote. They were able to get these things after a lot of struggle.

The poem 'Any Woman' by Katharine Tynan speaks of the importance of the woman in the family. She is the pillar of the house. She is the keystone of the arch. She is the roof and walls. She is the fire upon the hearth. The children come to her for love and

affection. She holds the family together. She is everywhere in the house – from floor to roof. She protects the children from all dangers. At the end, the woman prays to Jesus to spare her life till the children are grown up.

Both poems are in simple language. “What Women Wanted” stresses their rights whereas ‘Any Woman’ emphasizes the duties of a woman. The tone of “What Women Wanted” is playful and humorous whereas the other poem has a serious and sincere tone. The imagery in both the poems is good. Both poems have made use of metaphors. Both poems are in rhyme. The rhyming scheme in ‘Any Woman’ is abab except in the first stanza. In the other poem the rhyming scheme is aabb. Between the two poems, I prefer ‘Any Woman’ as it talks of the real feelings of a devoted mother.

Question 3

Read the poem ‘Sad Women’ by Daria Domitrovic and write a note of appreciation comparing and contrasting it with the poem ‘Any Woman’.

Sad Women

*Sad women always get up
To make breakfast for their children,
To tell him, “have a nice day”
And women go to work and always do their best,
They make lunch and always sit last,
Sad women buy groceries on the way home,
Make phone calls to hear someone’s voice,
They are faithful to their promises.
Sad women take upon other’s grief
Sad women comfort others and say “everything will be okay”,
They don’t let their sadness to come out,
Sad women don’t have time to be sad,
Sad women cry when lights go out.*

Answer:

Daria Domitrovic’s ‘Sad Women’ gives a beautiful portrayal of sad women who do not show their sadness in the open. They are destined for a hard life. They get up early in the morning to prepare breakfast for their children and to wish their husbands a happy day ahead. They then go to work and do their best. They make lunch but they are the ones who eat last. They make the purchases for home. They make phone calls and keep their promises. They empathise with others in their grief and comfort them. They never show their pain as they have no time to show it. But they cry in the nights when the lights are out and nobody sees them.

The poem ‘Any Woman’ by Katharine Tynan speaks of the importance of the woman in the family. She is the pillars of the house. She is the keystone of the arch. She is the roof and walls. She is the fire upon the hearth. The children come to her for love and affection. She holds the family together. She is everywhere in the house – from floor to



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roof. She protects the children from all dangers. At the end, the woman prays to Jesus to spare her life till the children are grown up.

Both poems are easy to understand. 'Sad Women' emphasizes the chores of a woman and how she suffers. But "Any Woman" is happy to do her duties and she does not complain. The imagery in both the poems is very powerful. The tone of "Sad Women" is that of sadness and complaint. But the tone in Any Woman is that of love and sincerity. 'Any Woman' is in rhyme and the rhyming scheme is abab except in the first stanza. The rhyming scheme in the other poems is erratic, although we can trace some rhyme in the last stanza of the poem. There the scheme is abbcdd. Between the two poems, I prefer 'Any Woman' as it talks of the real feelings of a devoted, non-complaining mother.

Question 4.

The speaker in 'Any Woman' is proud as a homemaker. Do you think the present day women are as proud as the mother in 'Any Woman'? Write your opinion in a paragraph of about 150 words.

Answer:

The speaker in 'Any Woman' is proud as a homemaker. But I do not think the present day women are as proud as the mother in 'Any Woman'. The present day mothers are not so sincere as the mother in the poem. I have often heard mothers complaining about their chores in their homes. Many of them do the work at home because they have no other way! They complain of disobedient and careless children and their unhelpful and domineering husbands who do not help them in their household chores. The sincerity shown by the mother in 'Any Woman' cannot be seen, in my opinion, in the modern women who would like to spend a lot of their time watching serials or spending time in their Women's Clubs. Generally speaking, the attitude of women has changed!

Question 5.

Read the following lines and answer the questions given below:

'Thou whom a woman laid in a manger, Take me not till the children grow!'

- (a) Who is the 'thou' referred to here?
- (b) What is the incident referred to?
- (c) What is the mother's prayer?

Answer:

- (a) Jesus Christ.
- (b) The birth of Jesus.
- (c) The mother's prayer is that she shouldn't die until her children grow.

Question 6.

Read the following lines from the poem 'Any Woman' and answer the questions given below.

'I am the fire upon the hearth I am the light of the good sun,
I am the heat that warms the earth ...

- (a) Identify the figure of speech employed in the above lines.
(b) Comment on the effectiveness of the figure of speech in conveying the idea.

Answer:

(a) The figure of speech employed here is a metaphor,

(b) A metaphor is a figure of speech like a simile where two things are compared. In a simile, we say one thing is like the other. But in a metaphor, we may one thing is the other. Thus “Chitra sings like a cuckoo” is a simile. But when we say “Chitra is a cuckoo in singing”, it is a metaphor. In the poem, the mother speaks of herself as the fire of the hearth, the light of the good sun, and the heat that warms the earth. They are beautiful metaphors and show the importance of the mother in a house.

Any Woman About The Author



– *Katherine Tynan*

Katherine Tynan (1859-1931) is an Irish poet and novelist. She has written more than 20 novels and 7 books of poetry. Her human sympathy is keen, tender, warm and constant. The poem ‘Any Woman’ shows that the woman is the soul and heart of the home.

കവിയെപ്പറ്റി

കാതറിൻ ടൈനാൻ (1859 - 1931) അയർലാന്റിൽ ജനിച്ച ഒരു നോവലിസ്റ്റും കവിയുമാണ്. അവർ 20 - ൽ അധികം നോവലുകളും 1 കവിതാസമാഹാരങ്ങളും എഴുതിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. അവർ ദയ, സ്നേഹം മുതലായ ഗുണങ്ങൾ ധാരാളം കാണിക്കുന്ന ഒരു വ്യക്തിയായിരുന്നു. "എനി വുമൺ" എന്ന കവിത കാണിക്കുന്നത് സ്ത്രീയാണ് കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ ആത്മാവും ഹൃദയവും ആണെന്നാണ്.

Any Woman Summary in English

Stanza 1: I am the pillars of the house. I am the keystone of the arch. If you take me away, the roof and wall will fall down and ruin me completely.

Stanza 2: I am the fire upon the hearth. I am the light of the sun. I am the heat that warms the earth. Without me the earth will be colder than a stone.

Stanza 3: The children get their warmth from me. I am the light of their love. Without me the hearthstone will be cold and the children will not thrive.

Stanza 4: I hold the children together in the love ring of the home. We are tied together with the knots of love. They would not like to break the thread and go away wandering.

Stanza 5: I am the bouse from floor to roof. I am the walls and the board. I am the one who opens and closes the curtains. I am the one filling the bed of the children with down (soft hair of animals) and cover them with leather.

Stanza 6: I am the wall that protects them against all kinds of dangers. I prevent dangerous winds and snow from harming my children. Lord Jesus, whom Mary delivered in the manger, please keep me alive till my children are grown up.



Any Woman Summary in Malayalam

സമ്മതി

സ്റ്റാൻസാ 1: ഞാൻ വീടിന്റെ തുണുകളാണ്. ഞാനാണ് ആർക്കിന്റെ മൂലക്കല്ല്, എന്നെ മാറ്റിക്കളഞ്ഞാൽ മതിലുകൾ ഇടിയും, മേൽക്കൂര - തകരും, അവ വീണ് എന്നെ മുഴുവനായും നശിപ്പിക്കും.

സ്റ്റാൻസാ 2: അടുപ്പിലെ തീയാണു ഞാൻ. സൂര്യന്റെ പ്രകാശത്തേ - കാൾ ഭൂമിയെ ചൂടാക്കുന്ന തീയാണു ഞാൻ. ഞാനില്ലെങ്കിൽ ഭൂമി തണുത്ത ഒരു കല്ലുപോലെ ആയേനെ.

സ്റ്റാൻസാ 3: എന്റെ കുട്ടികൾ എന്നിൽനിന്നുമാണ് അവരുടെ ചൂട് - സംഭരിക്കുന്നത്. അവരുടെ സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ പ്രകാശമാണു ഞാൻ. ഞാനില്ലാതെ അടുപ്പ് തണുത്തുകിടക്കും. കുട്ടികൾ ശരിയായി വളരു കയില്ല.

സ്റ്റാൻസാ 4: കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ സ്നേഹവലയത്തിൽ കുട്ടികളെ - ഞാൻ നിർത്തുന്നു. സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ കെട്ടുകൾകൊണ്ട് ഞങ്ങൾ ബന്ധി ക്കപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. ആ കെട്ടുകൾ പൊട്ടിച്ച് കുട്ടികൾ ഒരിക്കലും അലഞ്ഞുതിരിയുകയില്ല.

സ്റ്റാൻസാ 5: അടി മുതൽ മുകൾവരെ ഞാനാണ് വീട്, ഞാനാണ് - മതിലുകളും ബോർഡുകളും. ഞാനാണ് കർട്ടൻ തുറക്കുന്നതും അടക്കുന്നതും. കുട്ടികളുടെ കിടക്കയിൽ ഞാനാണ് രോമം നിറച്ച് അവയെ - തുകൽകൊണ്ട് പൊതിയുന്നത്.

സ്റ്റാൻസാ 6: എല്ലാവിധ അപകടങ്ങളിൽനിന്നും രക്ഷിക്കുന്ന മതി ലാണ് ഞാൻ, ഉപദ്രവകാരികളായ കാറ്റിനേയും, മഞ്ഞിനേയും ഞാൻ തടുത്തുനിർത്തുന്നു. ഈശോയെ, എന്റെ കുട്ടികൾ വളർന്നു വലുതാകുന്നതുവരെ എന്നെ ജീവിക്കാൻ അനുവദിക്കണമേ.

Any Woman Glossary

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Concept – idea, ഐഡിയ

Status – position, സ്ഥാനം

Ruin – destroy, നശിപ്പിക്കുക,

Utterly – completely, മുഴുവനായും

Hearth – fireplace, അടുപ്പ്

Tether – rope, കയർ

Warp and woof – the lengthwise and crosswise threads in a woven fabric, ഉഴും പാവം

Down – soft hair, feathers, രോമം, തൂവൽ

Manger- a trough, used to hold food for animals, പൂൽത്തൊട്ടി



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