

POETRYCHAP. - 02 An Elementary School  
Classroom in a SlumStephen Spender

ABOUT THE POET :- Stephen Spender was a poet and English essayist. Spender had keen interest in politics and so, he declared himself as socialist and pacifist. His work concentrated on themes of social injustice and the class struggle.

SUMMARY :- This poem by Stephen Spender gives a vivid description of a school classroom in a slum and the children in the class.

The faces of the children are dull. The children have gloomy faces. Their heads hanging low in sadness due to being poor. At the dim end of the room, sits one child who has bright eyes which seem to dream of playing outside with squirrels. He is different from the others in dim, dark room.

The walls of the classroom are dirty. To these children the world is not the one shown in these pictures, but it is the one they see out of the class room window. They are trapped in the slums. Their future is dim and hopeless. They have a dark future as their options in life are limited and are covered with dismay. They are far away from the bright light of

Knowledge.

The children are so skinny that their clothes are like a skin and their skeleton is visible through them. This is due to lack of nutrition. They have worn looking glasses made of steel which are sharp, heavy and uncomfortable. The Government system which makes these slums is the reason for these people to live in them. They are not given the right to dream beyond these slums. They have been restricted to the slums.

The poet requests the authorities to allow these children to go out of these slums so that the maps on the walls of the class room become a reality for them. The poem ends with a powerful line - those who make history are the ones who shine like the sun.

### SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTION :-

Q17 What do you think is the colour of "sour cream" why do you think the poet has used this expression to describe the classroom walls?

Ans I think that the colour of sour cream is pale yellow. The poet has used this expression to describe the classroom walls because the colour of the walls has become pale and greasy. He wants to contrast the classroom walls with the world of the children of the slums. He wants to represent the condition of the slum children.

Q21 What does the poet want for the children of the

Q37. Slums? How can their lives be made to change?  
 Ans. The poet presents a grim picture of the lives of poor slum children. The poet wants social justice and class equality for the children of the slums. Their lives can be changed if they are shown green field, their world can be made to run azure on gold sands. Their tongues are let run naked into books.

Q38. How does the pictures contrast with the world of these children?

Ans. The walls of the classroom are decorated with the pictures of Shakespeare, buildings with domes, world maps, and beautiful valleys. These things contrast with the world of these children as their condition is miserable and worst. They are very ill and exhausted. Some of them are thin, hungry and weak. Some others suffer from inherited disability. Their basic needs are food, security and houses. They have nothing to do with these beautiful things. Thus, these things contrast with the world of these children.

## IMPORTANT STANZAS

### STANZA - 01

"Far far from gusty waves these children's faces  
 Like rootless weeds, the hair torn round their pallor  
 The tall girl with her weighted-down head. The paper  
 seeming boy, with rat's eyes."



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i) Who is the poet of these poem & what is ~~its~~<sup>the</sup> name of the poem?

Ans Poet - Stephen Spender  
Poem - An elementary School class room in a slum.

ii) How do the children studying in a slum look like?

Ans They look like rootless weeds.

iii) Describe the boy referred to in the passage.

Ans The paper seeming boy is very weak, lean and thin. His eyes look like a rat's eyes.

X

X

X