

Comprehension Passages

Passage 1

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

There was a time when our people covered the land as the waves of a wind-ruffled sea cover its shell-paved floor, but that time long since passed away with the greatness of tribes that are now but a mournful memory. I will not dwell on, nor mourn over, our untimely decay, nor reproach my paleface brothers with hastening it, as we too may have been somewhat to blame.

Youth is impulsive. When our young men grow angry at some real or imaginary wrong, and disfigure their faces with black paint, it denotes that their hearts are black, and that they are often cruel and relentless, and our old men and old women are unable to restrain them. Thus it has ever been. Thus it was when the white man began to push our forefathers ever westward. But let us hope that the hostilities between us may never return. We would have everything to lose and nothing to gain. Revenge by young men is considered gain, even at the cost of their own lives, but old men who stay at home in times of war, and mothers who have sons to lose, know better.

Question 1.

What does Chief Seattle tell about the condition of his people earlier?

Answer:

Chief Seattle says that earlier his people occupied the land in large numbers just like water of the sea covers the sea bed.

Question 2.

What hint does he give regarding the cause for the depletion of his race?

Answer:

Chief Seattle said that he did not blame the aggression of the white man for the depletion of his race but he does hint at it being the most plausible reason.

Question 3.

What happened when the tribal young man became angry?

Answer:

Seattle said that youth is impulsive and the young men of his race were no exception. When the young men grew angry at some real or imaginary wrong and they painted their faces with black paint, it denoted that their hearts were up to no good, and then they were often cruel and relentless.

Question 4.

When did the hostilities between the Tribes and the White men begin?

Answer:

The hostilities began when the White men started pushing the Tribes out of their land and occupying it and the Tribes were forced to move westward.

Question 5.

Why did Seattle want to end up the hostilities?

Answer:

Seattle wanted the hostilities to end because no one would have any gain rather everything would be lost as the young men considered revenge as gain, even at the cost of their own lives.

Passage 2

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

To us the ashes of our ancestors are sacred and their resting place is hallowed ground. You wander far from the graves of your ancestors and seemingly without regret. Your religion was written upon tablets of stone by the iron finger of your God so that you could not forget. The Red Man could never comprehend or remember it. Our religion is the traditions of our ancestors — the dreams of our old men, given them in solemn hours of the night by the Great Spirit; and the visions of our sachems, and is written in the hearts of our people.

Your dead cease to love you and the land of their nativity as soon as they pass the portals of the tomb and wander away beyond the stars. They are soon forgotten and never return. Our dead never forget this beautiful world that gave them being. They still love its verdant valleys, its murmuring rivers, its magnificent mountains, sequestered vales and verdant lined lakes and bays, and ever yearn in tender fond affection over the lonely hearted living, and often return from the happy hunting ground to visit, guide, console, and comfort them.

Day and night cannot dwell together. The Red Man has ever fled the approach of the White Man, as the morning mist flees before the morning sun. However, your proposition seems fair and I think that my people will accept it and will retire to the reservation you offer them. Then we will dwell apart in peace, for the words of the Great White Chief seem to be the words of nature speaking to my people out of dense darkness.

Question 1.

How do the tribal men regard the ashes of their ancestors?

Answer:

The tribal men regard the ashes of their ancestors as sacred and respect them. The ground where their dead are buried is considered holy by them.

Question 2.

How do the White feel about their dead people?

Answer:

The white people have no respect for their dead and leave their graves unattended.

Question 3.

Where was the religion of the White people written?

Answer:

The religion of the white people was written on stone slabs so that they would never forget but they could never understand its significance.

Question 4.

What is the religion of the Tribal men? How is it different?

Answer:

The religion of the tribal people is the traditions of their ancestors — the dreams of their old men, given to them in solemn hours of the night by the Great Spirit, their God, and is written in the hearts of our people.

Question 5.

Why do the dead of the Tribals never forget them or this beautiful world?

Answer:

The dead of the Tribals never forget this beautiful world that gave them being. They still love its verdant valleys, its murmuring rivers, its magnificent mountains, sequestered vales and verdant lined lakes and bays, and always yearn in tender fond affection over the lonely hearted living, and often return from the other world to visit, guide, console, and comfort their people.

Passage 3

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

It matters little where we pass the remnant of our days. They will not be many. The Indian's night promises to be dark. Not a single star of hope hovers above his horizon. Sad-voiced winds moan in the distance. Grim fate seems to be on the Red Man's trail, and wherever he will hear the approaching footsteps of his fell destroyer and prepare stolidly to meet his doom, as does the wounded doe that hears the approaching footsteps of the hunter.

A few more moons, a few more winters, and not one of the descendants of the mighty hosts that once moved over this broad land or lived in happy homes, protected by the Great Spirit, will remain to mourn over the graves of a people once more powerful and hopeful than yours. But why should I mourn at the untimely fate of my people? Tribe follows tribe, and nation follows nation, like the waves of the sea. It is the order of nature, and regret is useless. Your time of decay may be distant, but it will surely come, for even the White Man whose God walked and talked with him as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. We will see.

Question 1.

How does Seattle predict the future of his tribe to be?

Answer:

Seattle predicts that his tribe might not survive for long. He says that he can see a bleak future for his people without a single star of hope. Sad-voiced winds moan in the distance and a grim fate seems to be in store for them. But he is sure his people will prepare stolidly to meet their doom whenever they hear the approaching footsteps of their fell destroyer.

Question 2.

How does the speaker differentiate his tribal people from the white people?

Answer:

Seattle feels that although the decay of his people might come earlier, the white people will also not be spared. They too would perish, the only difference being that they might survive a little longer.

Question 3.

How does the speaker realize that he should not mourn the untimely fate of his people?

Answer:

The speaker realizes that he should not mourn the untimely fate of his people because tribe follows tribe, and nation follows nation, like the waves of the sea. The cycle of life continues and change is the law of nature. It is the order of nature, and regret is useless.

Question 4.

Why does Seattle say that they may be brothers after all?

Answer:

Seattle says that they may be brothers after all because a common fate in the form of ultimate decay awaits both. The decay and death for the white race may be distant, but it would surely come, for even the White Man whose God walked and talked with him as friend to friend, could not be exempted from the common destiny that is death and decay. So being bound by a common destiny made them brothers after all.

Passage 4

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

We will ponder your proposition and when we decide we will let you know. But should we accept it, I here and now make this condition that we will not be denied the privilege without molestation of visiting at any time the tombs of our ancestors, friends, and children. Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove, has been hallowed by some sad or happy event in days long vanished. Even the rocks, which seem to be dumb and dead as the swelter in the sun along the silent shore, thrill with memories of stirring events connected with the lives of my people, and the very dust upon which you now stand responds more lovingly to their footsteps than yours, because it is rich with the blood of our ancestors, and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch. Our departed braves, fond mothers, glad, happy hearted maidens, and even the little children who lived here and rejoiced here for a brief season, will love these somber solitudes and at eventide they greet shadowy returning spirits. And when the last Red Man shall have perished, and the memory of my tribe shall have become a myth among the White Men, these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe^ and when your children's children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, upon the highway, or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone. In all the earth there is no place dedicated to solitude. At night when the streets of your cities and villages are silent and you think them deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled them and still love this beautiful land. The White Man will never be alone. Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead, did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds.

Question 1.

What is the condition laid by the speaker before he accepts the white man's proposition?

Answer:

The condition laid by the speaker before he accepts the white man's proposition is that they will not be denied the privilege of visiting at any time the tombs of their ancestors, friends, and children as it was sacred ground for them.

Question 2.

How is every part of the soil sacred to his people?

Answer:

Every part of the soil is sacred to his people because every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove, has been hallowed by some sad or happy event in days long gone by. Even the rocks, which are now dumb and dead are connected with memories of events from the lives of his people, and the very dust upon which they stand responds lovingly to their footsteps because it is rich with the blood of their ancestors, and their bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch

Question 3.

When will the shores swarm with the invisible dead of the speaker's tribe? Why?

Answer:

The shores will swarm with the invisible dead of the speaker's tribe when the white man's children's children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, upon the highway, or in the silence of the pathless woods, but they will not be alone. And they will not be alone because in all the earth there is no place dedicated to solitude. At night when the streets of the white man's cities and villages are silent and they think that they are deserted, the fact would be that the streets throng with the returning spirits of his people that had once filled them and still love this beautiful land.

Question 4.

What does the speaker say about death? Explain.

Answer:

The speaker says that death is inevitable and is the destiny of both the races, whether the Indians or the white people. They all have to die one day one may decay earlier than the other but the ultimate fate is death. So he feels that death unites them and they are like brothers. He says that in fact there is no death, only a change of worlds.

Question 5.

What plea does the speaker make to the white men?

Answer:

The speaker pleads with the White men to be just and kind to his people.

Assignment

Question 1.

Show how the author uses tone and style to reinforce his memories and make an impact upon his audience.

Answer:

Few speeches have captured the imagination of both Europeans and Americans . . . i Chief Seattle's legendary address has. It was originally made in the Suquamish language as Chief Seattle could not speak English. Reputedly delivered in the 1850s to Isaac Steven' the governor of the Washington Territory, it took on a life of its own in the late 20th century when several different versions, many with an emphasis on the environment, surfaced.

Chief Seattle shares his precious land's memories by forming two different tones. Chief Seattle creates a passionate and a sorrowful tone through diction and imagery. He made his speech passionate and sorrowful to move the audience's heart and hoping that the people would take care of the land like the chief did.

The first part of Seattle's speech of the land is packed with memories and what they mean to his people. He says that if he sells the land everybody must remember that they should treat "every" part of the land as if they were their "brothers". The tone of his words is sorrowful because he focused on what he's going to lose, the things and values that are precious to him – everything in his memory, his brothers.

Every detail of the land, part of the land came from his memories. Seattle uses detailed words or imagery such as every "shining" pine needle, every "humming" insect, and every "perfumed" flower. Seattle uses detailed words to describe a scene that had impacted him. His imagery centers and puts deeper meanings to his speech that he is going to miss the land.

The second part of Seattle's speech presents is not his memory – it is what Seattle wants the inherent of the land to do and not to do and what the land means to him. He says to love and to care for the land because it is precious to everyone and all things are united and harming the land is the same thing as to have contempt for its creator. The tone of his words is passionate because the land is very precious to him and he wants everyone to take care of the land. Seattle uses repetition of "love" and "care" in the sentence: "love it as we have loved it, care for it as we have cared for it." Repeating the two words emphasizes them and it makes it sound that he is really passionate about the land. Seattle says that "No man, be he Red Man or White Man can be apart."

Question 2.

Mention and discuss the versions of Chief Seattle's speech.

Answer:

The speech given by Chief Seattle in January of 1854 is the subject of a great deal of historical debate. The most important fact to note is that there is NO VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT IN EXISTENCE. All known texts are second-hand.

Version 1 appeared in the Seattle Sunday Star on Oct. 29, 1887, in a column by Dr. Henry A. Smith. He makes it very clear that his version is not an exact copy, but rather the best he could put together from notes taken at the time. There is an undecided historical argument on which native dialect the Chief would have used, Duwamish or Suquamish. Either way all agree the speech was translated into the Chinook Jargon on the spot, since Chief Seattle never learned to speak English.

Version 2 was written by poet William Arrow smith in the late 1960s. This was an attempt to put the text into more current speech patterns, rather than Dr. Smith's more flowery Victorian style. Except for this modernization, it is very similar to Version 1.

Version 3 is perhaps the most widely known of all. This version was written by Texas professor Ted Perry as part of a film script. The makers of the film took a little literary license, further changing the speech and making it, into a letter to President Franklin Pierce, which has been frequently reprinted. No such letter was ever written by or for Chief Seattle.

Version 4 appeared in an exhibit at Expo '74 in Spokane, Washington, and is a shortened edition of Dr. Perry's script (Version 3).

Question 3.

How does Seattle justify his religion as opposed to what the white men had said about it?

Answer:

Chief Seattle also responds to the charge of "godlessness" circulated by the conquerors by comparing his religion with Christianity. He exclaims, 'Your God is not our God! Your God loves your people and hates mine! ... If we have a common Heavenly Father He must be partial, for He came to His paleface children. We never saw Him. He gave you laws but had no word for His red children.'

These statements highlight the absurdity of expecting the American Indians, having been isolated from the Europeans for thousands of years, to have adopted the same religion. In place of Christianity, Seattle introduces the religion of his people: "Our religion is the tradition of our ancestors... ". He points out several areas in which his religion is superior to Christianity. He says, "Your religion was written upon tablets of stone... so that you could not forget... Our religion... is written in the hearts of our people". Similarly, "Your dead cease to love you... Our dead never forget this beautiful world that gave them being". These comparisons pose a direct challenge to the earlier portrayals of the Indians as godless and devil-worshipping. Furthermore, Chief Seattle also responds to the Euro-American belief that the Indians had no claim to the land by expressing their profound attachment to it. He declares, "The very dust upon which you now stand responds more lovingly to [our] footsteps than yours, because it is rich with the blood of our ancestors." In direct opposition with Euro-American representations, Seattle demonstrates that the Natives, like the Europeans, have a complex religion and culture.

Question 4.

Discuss trans-culturation as represented in Seattle's speech.

Answer:

It has elements of trans-culturation. Although Seattle tended to emphasize the differences between Native Americans and Euro-Americans, the Euro-American idea that the Native Americans were going to become extinct surfaced throughout his speech. This idea of the inevitable extinction of the Native Americans as a race originated from the colonists. This idea served the colonists quite conveniently. It justified what Ring calls the "transfer of real estate," the process in which European settlers gradually moved into established Indian communities as the Indians "disappeared". Apparently, killing and stealing from an already-doomed race was easier to accept.

Throughout his speech, Chief Seattle indicates his acceptance of this belief that the Native Americans would become extinct. He refers to their "untimely decay" and laments, "It matters little where we pass the remnant of our days. They will not be many", although he does not provide any concrete reasons for these sentiments. Instead, Seattle settles with the warning, "When the last Red Man shall have perished... these shores will throng with the invisible dead of my tribe... The White Man will never be alone". In accepting the ultimate defeat of the Indians, Chief Seattle adopted an element of the dominant, Euro- American thought, demonstrating the trans-culturation predicted