

Animals

Answers to NCERT Questions

THINKING ABOUT THE POEM

1. Notice the use of the word ‘turn’ in the first line, “I think I could turn and live with animals” What is the poet turning from?

Ans: The poet compares animals and humans. He thinks that animals are better than human beings. So he thinks that he can turn away from human beings and go to live with the animals.

2. Mention three things that humans do and animals don’t.

Ans:

- i. Human beings cry about their conditions, but animals do not do so.
- ii. Human beings lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins, but animals do not weep for their sins.
- iii. Human beings make the poet sick by discussing their duty to God, but animals do not do so.

3. Do humans kneel to other humans who lived thousands of years ago? Discuss this in groups.

Ans: Yes, human beings do that. They do so to show respect to the elderly. It is a cultural/moral feature of our society.

4. What are the ‘tokens’ that the poet says he may have dropped long ago, and which the animals have kept for him? Discuss this in class. (Hint: Whitman belongs to the Romantic tradition that includes Rousseau and Wordsworth, which holds that civilisation has made humans false to their own true nature. What could be the basic aspects of our nature as living beings that humans choose to ignore or deny?)

Ans: The ‘tokens’ that Whitman speaks of are the tokens of love, affection, kindness, truth, honesty, sympathy, fellow-feelings, etc. towards one and all. It is sad that these good human virtues have disappeared. The poet feels very bad. He thinks that in this regard, animals are better than human beings.

Additional Questions

Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow: (4 Marks each)

1. I think I could turn and live with animals, they are

so placid and self-contained,

I stand and look at them long and long.

- a. What is the poet's wish?
- b. How do the animals appear to the poet?
- c. What does he do thereafter?
- d. Who does 'I' refer to in the first line?

Ans:

- a. The poet wishes that he could live with animals.
- b. The animals appear to be calm, peaceful and self-confident.
- c. He stands and looks at them for long.
- d. 'I' refers to the poet.

2. They do not sweat and whine about their condition,

They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,

They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,

- a. What is the attitude of the animals about their condition?
- b. Who lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins?
- c. Who makes the poet sick and why?
- d. What is the attitude of the animals for their sins?

Ans:

- a. The animals do not perspire or complain about their condition.
- b. Humans lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins.
- c. Men make the poet sick by discussing their duty to God.
- d. Animals do not weep for their sins.

3. Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with

the mania of owning things,

Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that

lived thousands of years ago,

Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

- a. What mania do human beings suffer from?

- b. What is the attitude of human beings about those who lived thousands of years ago?
- c. Who is unhappy over the whole earth?
- d. Who is the poet talking about?

Ans:

- a. Human beings suffer from the mania of owning things.
- b. They kneel to the images of those who lived thousands of years ago.
- c. Human beings are unhappy over the whole earth.
- d. The poet is talking about the animals.

4. So they show their relations to me and I accept them,

They bring me tokens of myself, they evince

them plainly in their possession

I wonder where they get those tokens,

Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them?

- a. Who are 'they' here in the first line?
- b. What are these 'tokens of myself'?
- c. What is the main point here?
- d. What does the poet wonder about?

Ans:

- a. Here, 'they' are the animals.
- b. These 'tokens of myself' are the love and affection of the animals towards the poet.
- c. The main point here is the difference between humans and animals.
- d. The poet wonders how the animals got these tokens of love and affection.

Short Answer Questions (30–40 words: 2 Marks each)

1. Why does the poet show a preference for living with the animals?

Ans: The poet says that it is better to live with animals as they show tokens of goodness. They are peaceful, self-contained and happy. Animals show innate goodness which is lacked in human beings. Animals do not grumble about their lives, or cry over their sins.

2. What is the relevance of 'tokens' in the poem, 'Animals'? Who brings them to the poet?

Ans: Animals show tokens of goodness. They are self-contained, peaceful, thankful and happy creatures. Animals are not unhappy and indeed, bring out tokens of man's good nature, lost long ago. Animals do not grumble about their lives.

3. What is the central idea of the poem, 'Animals'?

Ans: The central idea of the poem is the difference between human beings and animals. While they both were initially similar in their innate goodness, the man had lost it over the years, while animals remain the same. They show these tokens of goodness — peaceful, self-containment and happiness, and compel the poet to contemplate on man's lost goodness.

4. How are animals better than humans, according to the poet?

Ans: According to the poet, the animals are more humane than humans. They have no such bad qualities as humans have. In their world, all are happy, equal and content. They show their relations to the poet and he accepts them.

5. What is the theme of the poem, 'Animals'?

Ans: The theme of the poem is the superiority of animals' life over to human beings. The poet, Whitman, compares animals with human beings. He finds animals far better than human beings. The poet finds the reasons for human suffering. Human beings are always dissatisfied. All their actions are with a selfish motive. But animals are far-far away from these bad qualities. So the poet wishes to turn and live with the animals.

6. Why does the poet want to live with animals?

Ans: The poet thinks that animals are very peaceful and self-confident. They do not complain about their condition. They don't weep for their sins. That is why, he wants to live with the animals.

7. What is the difference between animals and humans regarding their attitude to their condition, sins and God?

Ans: Human beings cry about their condition. They lie awake at night in the dark and weep for their sins. They make the poet sick by discussing their duty about God. But animals do not do any of these things. That is why, the poet likes them.

8. How are animals different from humans about owning things or kneeling to one another?

Ans: Human beings are mad about possessing things. But animals do not care for possession. It is madness only for humans. Animals do not kneel to others as humans do. For them, all are equal.

Long Answer Questions (100–150 words: 8 Marks each)

1. “Human beings are called the most civilised species in the entire world. But sometimes they lack the values which are better exhibited by the animals”. Elucidate the statement with reference to the poem, ‘Animals’.

Ans: Human beings are called the most civilised species in the entire world. But sometimes, they lack the values which are better exhibited by the animals. Human beings lack the qualities of being respectable, happy, contented and peace-loving which is still reflected in animals. Animals do not grumble about their lives, lie awake at night, cry over their sins or discuss their duty towards God as humans do. Animals do not have a mania for “owning things”, nor do they kneel before others like humans. Moreover, the tokens of goodness, love, respect and happiness have been dropped by human beings.

2. The poem, ‘Animals’ tells us that civilisation has made humans false to their own true nature. Which values will help you revive your basic nature?

Ans: In the race of human civilisation, humans have lost their own nature. The men have dropped their innate goodness over the years. They have become selfish, jealous, restless, unhappy, cribbing and grumbling creatures. They grumble about their lives, lie awake at night, cry over their sins and discuss their duty towards God. In a race to earn more luxuries and comfort, they have lost their sound sleep. They have become unhappy and most of the time unable to enjoy even small joys and happiness in life. On the contrary, animals are peaceful, self-contained, thankful and happy creatures. They are not unhappy and indeed bring out tokens of man’s good nature lost long ago, when he possessed qualities like love, respect, contentment and happiness.

3. How is the poem ‘Animals’, a contrast between humans and animals?

Ans: Humans can be described as selfish, jealous, restless, unhappy, cribbing, and grumbling creatures. In contrast, animals are peaceful, self-contained, thankful and happy creatures. They do not grumble about their lives, lie awake at night, cry over their sins or discuss their duty towards God as humans do. Also, they don’t have a mania for “owning things; nor do they kneel before others. Animals, on the whole, are not unhappy and indeed bring out tokens of man’s good nature lost long ago, when he possessed qualities like love, respect, contentment and happiness.

4. “The more I know of humans, the more I love my pet”. With reference to the poem, ‘Animals’, elaborate the statement.

Ans: Whenever the poet thinks about animals, he has a feeling of being one among them. The lost human qualities of being respectable, happy, contented, and peace-loving could be still found reflected in animals. They don’t whine about their condition; nor do they cry for their sins. They don’t make others sick by discussing their duty to God, are not dissatisfied nor have the craze to own things. They may not be respectable, but they definitely do not kneel before others or be unhappy as a whole. For the poet, they bring the tokens of human qualities like love, respect, contentment

and happiness, which they themselves exhibit plainly. He thinks that perhaps the animals possessed these qualities naturally. The poet also wonders whether these tokens could have been negligently dropped by humans long ago. Whatever the case may be, while thinking about the overwhelming negativity of human beings, anyone may start loving his pet the more.

Self- Assessment Test

Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1. Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with

the mania of owning things,

Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that

lived thousands of years ago,

Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

- a. Name the poem and the poet.
- b. What do you understand by the word 'demented'?
- c. Whom is the poet praising?
- d. Do animals lead an unhappy life?

2. I think I could turn and live with animals,

they are so placid and self-contain'd,

I stand and look at them long and long.

- a. What is the poet's wish?
- b. What does 'I could turn' signify?
- c. Mention one quality of animals.
- d. What is the poet looking?

Short Answer Questions

1. What does the poet feel while thinking about animals?
2. What makes animals happy and contented?
3. Why is the poet impressed by animals?
4. What message is the poet trying to convey through the poem, 'Animals'?

5. How are animals superior to humans, according to the poet?

Long Answer Questions

1. Why does the poet say, 'I think I could turn and live with animals'? Explain in detail.
2. How has the poet compared humans and animals in the poem? Do you agree with the poet's point of view? Give reasons to support your answer.