

A House is Not A Home - Zan Gaudioso

Answers to NCERT Questions

THINK ABOUT IT

1. What does the author notice one Sunday afternoon? What is her mother's reaction? What does she do?

Ans: One Sunday afternoon, while the author was sitting and doing her homework at the dining table, she smelled something strange and noticed smoke pouring in through the seams of the ceiling and began filling the room at great speed, and everything was engulfed in smoke, barring normal vision. The family got out on to the front yard. Her mother ran out with a small box that was full of important documents. She ran back again, probably to rescue the pictures of her dead husband. As for the author, she ran to the neighbour's house to request them to call for the fire department.

2. Why does she break down in tears after the fire?

Ans: The author burst into tears, when she realised that her cat was no where to be seen. The loneliness, she experienced in her new school, the unfortunate fire, the sorrow of seeing one's house being brought down to ashes, uncertainty of the future, and her missing cat, was too much for the teenager to bear. She burst into tears as she could not control her bursting emotions any more.

3. Why is the author deeply embarrassed the next day in school? Which words show her fear and insecurity?

Ans: The author and her mother had moved to their grandmother's house after the tragedy. She had no clothes or shoes to wear as everything was swallowed by the fire. Her mother would not allow her to stay at home, so she went to school wearing clothes in which she looked weird. She felt embarrassed because of this, and also because she did not have a bag or books to work with. She expresses her insecurity by saying, "Was I destined to be an outcast and a geek all my life?.... I just wanted to curl up and die. All the security, she had known, had been ripped away.

4. The cat and the author are very fond of each other. How has this been shown in the story? Where was the cat after the fire? Who brings it back and how?

Ans: The author would go every day while the rubble was being cleared in the hope that she would find her vulnerable little kitten. She was recollecting their interaction every morning and missing her immensely. One day, as she sat with her friends on the curb, she noticed a lady coming up with a kitten in her hand. The author leapt up and grabbed her off the lady's arms, and hugged her. The little one had run off because of the fire. The lady enquired, who the cat belonged to, and returned her to the rightful owner.

5. What actions of the schoolmates change the author's understanding of life and people, and comfort her emotionally? How does her loneliness vanish and how does she start participating in life?

Ans: The author had gone to the school with a lot of bitterness and hesitation. She was however in for a great surprise, when all her schoolmates had donated school supplies, notebooks, and different kinds of clothes, when they got to know about the tragedy. Zan was overwhelmed, and it felt like Christmas. It would not be wrong to say that the fire had ironically brought a positive change in the child. She developed a better understanding of life, and people. She gathered friends and began living life to its fullest. The actions of her schoolmates created a very significant change in her.

6. What is the meaning of "My cat was back and so was I? Had the author gone anywhere? Why does she say that she is also back?"

Ans: As the author sat with her friends and the cat curled up in her lap, all the overwhelming feelings of loss and tragedy seemed to diminish. She felt grateful for her life, her new found friends, the kindness of the lady, who rescued her cat, and the purr of her beloved four legged friend, her cat. The line above means that she had secured and recovered her original identity once more. She was once again the junior school girl who loved life. She had not gone anywhere physically, but mentally had got lost in a lonely world with depression as her only companion. With the arrival of her cat, she feels that she has also come back to being herself in every sense.

Additional Questions

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

1. Is it normal to feel lost and lonely in new surroundings?

Ans: It is normal for one to feel lost and depressed in unfamiliar surroundings. Just like Zan did, when she moved from her junior school to the higher school. She felt detached from everyone, and probably did not make an attempt to interact and communicate with her peers as she should have. It needed a major tragedy to change the course of her life.

2. Who provided immediate financial help to the author and her mother? Why?

Ans: The author's mother had lost all her credit cards, and cash in the fire. Having lost all proof of identity, she could not go and withdraw money from the bank. So in their state of despair and severe crisis, it was her grandparents who helped them financially, emotionally and physically.

3. Justify the title, 'A House Is Not a Home.'

Ans: A house is defined as a structure made for human habitation, while a home is the place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household.

There is love, happiness, sorrow, birth, and death, in a home. Emotions make a house a home. In this lesson, the house had burnt, but the love of her mother, the support and empathy from her friends, neighbours and teachers, and the little kitten, enabled them to overcome the loss of the house because home was what they finally acquired. Thus, the title aptly fits the story of the author's life.

4. What was unusual and strange in the school the next day?

Ans: The news of the tragedy had spread like wild fire and everybody in the school knew about it. This made her feel uncomfortable, as though, she was responsible for their plight. People at school were looking and behaving with her in a strange and unusual way, and were milling around her. This was not the kind of attention she was looking forward to. She was in for a great surprise, that paved the way to a better life.

5. What was the sight that shocked the author? Why was there no time to grieve?

Ans: As she walked past her house, while returning from school, she was shocked to see the pathetic condition of her house. Everything had been reduced to ashes. If not for her mother's presence of mind, all their documents and photo albums too, would have got burnt. She had lost her cat which made her feel extremely sad. Despite all the losses, they did not have time to grieve because they had to secure themselves, till such time, they set their house in order.

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

1. What is the most important aspect in the story that appealed to you?

Ans: This true story, that was a turning point in the author's life, appeals very strongly to one's emotions. It touches the right cord in our heart. The unfortunate tragedy, accompanied by the mental discomfort of the teenager, churns within us the feelings of sorrow, empathy and brotherhood. A child who was a new entrant into the portals of the high school, had no friends at school or in the neighbourhood. She was in a state of extreme depression. But the reaction and support provided by her schoolmates is really commendable. The young girl who felt all alone and desolate, suddenly feels overwhelmed and emotional with the way she was absorbed by her peers and society. Her life takes a turn for the better, and she identifies with her true self.

2. Make a diary entry of the day that changed your life for the better. You are Zan.

Ans: Thursday, 14 July 20XX

10 p.m.

Dear Diary,

I was up in the morning at the usual time. I missed kitty a lot. Mom forced me to go to school. I hesitated as I did not have shoes and clothes. Aunt gave me my cousin's

clothes, that were ill-fitting and looked weird on me. Feeling very low and desperate, I walked down to school. When I reached, I observed the unusual looks that the students were giving me. Little bit I realised what was in store for me. In the course of the day, I was shocked to see, as I was being pushed into the gym, a table filled with stuff donated by my friends. I was overwhelmed. These were the people who had hardly interacted with me. They had got to know about my tragic situation, and worked as a team to help in rehabilitating me and my family. This was a turning point in my high school life. I developed a wonderful relationship with everyone. Life became enjoyable once again. Thank You God!!

Good Night

Self- Assessment Test

Short Answer Questions

1. Why did the author feel isolated?
2. Write a short note on Zan's relationship with the teachers of her old school.
3. What was the relationship, the author shared with her cat? How did she get her back after the tragedy?
4. How did the fireman handle the author, when she was in a state of anxiety?
5. Give a brief character sketch of Zan's mother.

Long Answer Questions

1. "A friend in need is a friend in deed. Explain with reference to the lesson, 'A House Is Not a Home'.
2. As Zan, write a letter to the Head of your school, thanking her and all your schoolmates for their support in the worst moment of your life.
3. The fire blazed throughout the colony.....little Jan.....and her father..... Complete the story and provide a suitable title to it.