

10. An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum

Think It Out

1. Tick the item which best answers the following.

(a) The tall girl with her head weighed down means

The girl

- (i) is ill and exhausted
- (ii) has her head bent with shame
- (iii) has untidy hair

(b) The paper-seeming boy with rat's eyes means

The boy is

- (i) sly and secretive
- (ii) thin, hungry and weak
- (iii) unpleasant looking

(c) The stunted, unlucky heir of twisted bones means

The boy

- (i) has an inherited disability
- (ii) was short and bony
- (d) His eyes live in a dream, A squirrel's game, in the tree room other than this means

The boy is

- (i) full of hope in the future**
- (ii) mentally ill**
- (iii) distracted from the lesson**
- (e) The children's faces are compared to 'rootless weeds'**

This means they

- (i) are insecure**
- (ii) are ill-fed**
- (iii) are wasters**

Answer:

- (a) (i) is ill and exhausted
- (b) (ii) thin, hungry and weak
- (c) (i) has an inherited disability
- (d) (i) full of hope in the future
- (e) (i) are insecure

2. 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?

Answer:

The colour of 'sour cream' is white. This expression used by the poet explains the aspect of decaying. The colour deterioration of the walls of the classroom indicates the pathetic situation of the scholars' life and the students of the school in the slum.

3. The walls of the classroom are decorated with the pictures of 'Shakespeare', 'buildings with domes', 'world maps' and beautiful valleys. How do these contrast with the world of these children?

Answer:

The pictures which decorate the walls of the classroom hold a sharp contrast with the world of these poverty-stricken, underfed, slum children who live in cramped, dark holes. These obstacles hamper their mental and physical growth. The pictures present on the classroom walls indicate well-being, beauty, prosperity and progress – warmth of love and a world of sunshine. But the world in which these slum children live is ugly and without prosperity.

4. What does the poet want for the children of the slums? How can their lives be made to change?

Answer:

The poet wants the people having authority to understand their responsibility towards the children who live in the slum. All kinds of class inequalities and social injustice should be put to an end by the elimination of obstacles which confine the slum children to their filthy and ugly surroundings. Let them freely learn and express themselves. They will then share the success of prosperity and progress, and their lives will change forever.