A CONSIDERABLE SPECK

Multiple Choice Questions

1) "A speck that would have been beneath my sight" What does the phrase suggest about the poet's perspective?

(a) The speck was too insignificant to notice elsewhere.
(b) The poet deliberately ignored the speck.
(c) The poet usually observes all small details.
(d) The speck had a special purpose on the paper.

2) Why does the poet mention the paper as being 'so white'?

(a) To emphasise the purity of the paper.
(b) To show contrast and make the speck visible.
(c) To highlight the significance of his writing.
(d) To explain why the speck moved across it.

3) Which of the following options contains the same literary device that appears in the following line: ".....On any but a paper sheet so white....."

(a) Silver and blue as the mountain mist.
(b) He names the sky his own.
(c) The fir trees dark and high.
(d) Song and mother-croon of bird.

4) What did the mite drink or smell?

(a) Ink (b) Water (c) Sweat (d) None of these

5) What does the poet's ability to notice the speck reveal about his character?

(a) He is easily distracted.
(b) He values the finer details of life.
(c) He is highly critical of imperfections.
(d) He struggles to focus on his work.

6) How are the words of title 'A Considerable Speck' connected?

(a) Oxymoron (b) Personification (c) Paradox (d) Assonance

7) What does the phrase 'idly poised my pen in air' suggest about the poet's initial reaction?

(a) He was determined to destroy the speck.
(b) He hesitated out of curiosity.
(c) He was unsure whether the speck was alive.
(d) He was contemplating his next line of writing.

8) The poet observes the speck closely and realises that

(a) it is simply a speck of dust
(b) it is moving due to his breathing
(c) it is a living creature with agency
(d) it is irrelevant to his writing

9) Arrange the following in the correct order as they occur in the lines.

1. **The poet realises the speck has its own inclinations.**
2. **The poet notices a speck on the white paper.**
3. **The poet prepares to stop the speck with his pen.**
4. **The poet identifies the speck as a living mite.**

(a) 2, 4, 3, 1 (b) 3, 2, 1, 4 (c) 4, 2, 3, 1 (d) 2, 3, 4, 1

10) The poet's realisation progresses in a specific way. How does it progress?

(a) From curiosity to recognition of life to admiration.
(b) From frustration to curiosity to dismissal.
(c) From ignorance to destruction to regret.
(d) From observation to irritation to action.

11) Which of the following poetic devices is used in the title of the poem?

(a) Paradox (b) Metaphor (c) Personification (d) Oxymoron

12) Which characteristic trait of the speaker is revealed in the line uttered by him? 'Whatever I accorded it of Fate'.

(a) Arrogance (b) Annoyance (c) Superiority (d) None of these

13) Which figure of speech is used in the line given below? 'I have none of the tenderer-than-thou.'

(a) Personification (b) Metaphor (c) Simile (d) Alliteration

14) Why does the poet believe he is dealing with 'an intelligence'?

(a) The mite's movements are random but quick.
(b) The poet assumes all living things are intelligent.
(c) The mite's actions show purpose and awareness.
(d) The mite reacts unpredictably to the ink.

15) The mite's reaction to the ink reflect its intelligence in a way that _____.

(a) it flies away immediately without hesitation
(b) it carefully examines and rejects the ink, showing discernment
(c) it ignores the ink entirely, focusing on its path
(d) it shows curiosity but lacks awareness

16) What does the phrase 'paused as with suspicion of my pen' suggest about the speck's behaviour?

(a) It was aware of the poet's pen as a potential threat.
(b) It admired the pen's design.
(c) It was confused about its surroundings.
(d) It wanted to rest before continuing its journey.

17) The creature's movement is described as 'with terror and with cunning crept. What do you think it captures?

(a) It used both speed and stealth to survive. (b) It was unable to move without panicking.
(c) It hesitated before escaping. (d) It relied on deception to outsmart predators.

18) The literary device in the phrase 'ran with terror and with cunning crept' is

(a) Oxymoron (b) Antithesis (c) Personification (d) Imagery

19) The actions of the mite represent a certain idea. What does the following action represent? 'Cunningly creeping'

(a) confidence (b) fear (c) intelligence (d) relief

20) To express how much it didn't want to die. It ran with terror and with cunning crept. What mood do the given lines represent?

(a) The mood is optimistic, highlighting survival.
(b) The mood is tense, focusing on fear and desperation.
(c) The mood is indifferent, showcasing the creature's apathy
(d) The mood is triumphant, emphasising the creature's success

21) The word 'faltered' suggests that the creature

(a) moved quickly and confidently (b) was momentarily unsure or hesitant
(c) was physically injured (d) gave up immediately

22) The poet juxtaposes the creature's 'hesitation' with 'desperation' in the poem. This serves to

(a) Create suspense regarding the creature's next move.
(b) Highlight the inevitability of submission.
(c) Emphasise the cruelty of the speaker's actions.
(d) Contrast the creature's vulnerability with its cunning nature.

23) Which of the following statements reflects the same theme as 'whatever I accorded it of fate'?

(a) 'The king decides the destiny of his subjects.' (b) 'The bird flew freely, away from danger."
(c) 'Nature is both nurturing and unforgiving" (d) 'The Sun rose again, marking a new day.'

24) The speaker's attitude in the lines 'I have none of the tenderer-than-thou collectivistic regimenting love' can best be described as

(a) romantic and nostalgic (b) cynical and detached
(c) compassionate and empathetic (d) indifferent and apathetic

25) What do you think the term 'collectivistic regimenting love' refer to?

(a) Genuine love shared in small communities.
(b) Overwhelming, forced displays of affection in society.
(c) The nurturing care found in traditional families.
(d) The speaker's personal philosophy of love.

26) What does the phrase 'Since it was nothing I knew evil of reveal about the speaker's actions?

(a) The speaker is protective of anything unfamiliar.
(b) The speaker is reluctant to make moral judgements.
(c) The speaker seeks to avoid responsibility.
(d) The speaker's decision is based on a lack of prejudice.

27) From the speaker's perspective, 'modern world' is portrayed as

(a) a place filled with sincere love and genuine compassion.
(b) a progressive society guided by collectivistic ideals.
(c) a world swept by superficial and organised displays of emotion.
(d) a community united by shared responsibilities.

28) What does the speaker imply by expressing gladness at finding intellect on 'any sheet'?

(a) The speaker finds written expression particularly meaningful.
(b) The speaker prefers intellectual conversation over written communication.
(c) The speaker is critical of the lack of intellect in written works.
(d) The speaker values intellect only when it is explicitly expressed.

29) Choose the option that lists the sequence of events in the correct order.

(i) He changes his mind when he notices something unusual about it.
(ii) The poet realises that the speck is a living mite with preferences of its own.
(iii) He intends to use the tip of his pen, dipped in ink, to erase the speck.
(iv) The poet notices a speck on the white paper he is writing on.

(a) (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) (b) (iv), (ii), (iii), (i) (c) (ii), (iii), (iv), (1) (d) (iv), (iii), (i), (ii)

30) Select the option that shows the correct relationship between statements (1) and (2).

Statement 1 The poet concludes that the mite proves to be an intelligent creature.
Statement 2 The mite seems to dislike the ink as it quickly whirls around to fly away.

(a) Statement 2 is the cause for Statement 1.
(b) Statement 2 is true, and Statement 1 is false.
(c) Statement 1 and Statement 2 are independent of each other.
(d) Statement 1 is true, and Statement 2 is false.

31) What is the central idea in Frost's poem, 'A Considerable Speck'?

(a) The poet critiques society's disregard for smaller aspects of life.
(b) The idea is that every living being, no matter how small, has its own perspective and intelligence.
(c) The struggle between man-made creations and the natural world.
(d) The insignificance of individual thoughts in the grand scheme of the universe.

32) 'A Considerable Speck' captures

(a) the journey of a mite across the sheet of paper.
(b) the poet's determination to kill the mite.
(c) the poet's encounter with the gigantic fly.
(d) the mite's attempt to escape from the fly.

Extract Based Questions

Extract 1

A speck that would have been beneath my sight
On any but a paper sheet so white
Set off across what I had written there.

(i) Discuss the use of colour imagery in the phrase 'paper sheet so white'. How does it contribute to the visual and thematic aspects of the lines?

Ans. The poet uses colour imagery to contrast the whiteness of the paper with the black tiny dot. The white paper symbolises purity, clarity, or a blank canvas of thought. The introduction of the speck disrupts this purity, making it visually impactful.

This imagery enhances the theme of contrast-between perfection and imperfection, order and disruption.

(ii) What might the 'speck' symbolise in a broader sense? Could it represent external forces, imperfections, or distractions? Justify your interpretation.

Ans. The speck could symbolise distractions or imperfections that disrupt the poet's focus or peace It may also represent external forces or challenges that intrude on personal or creative endeavours.

This interpretation is supported by its movement across the writing. This signifies the idea of interference in a deliberate act of creativity

(iii) The title of the poem, 'A Considerable Speck' is oxymoronic. What does it imply?

Ans. The title of the poem reflects its focus on how a tiny 'speck', though seemingly insignificant, draws the speaker's attention. It highlights how even the smallest details can disrupt or influence our thoughts. The title suggests that contrasts, like the speck on the white paper, make certain things more noticeable.

This indicates how minor imperfections or distractions can take on greater importance. Overall, the title captures the theme of finding meaning in the small and often overlooked aspects of life.

(iv) Critically assess how the presence of the speck shifts the tone of the speaker's engagement with their writing. Does it introduce tension, distraction, or another mood?

Ans. The presence of the speck introduces a subtle tension and distraction. It shifts the tone from one of calm focus to one of mild irritation or introspection, as the speaker gets distracted with this minor intrusion. The mood reflects a broader human experience of being distracted by insignificant details.

(v) Comment on the structure of the poem.

Ans. The structure of the poem is simple yet effective in conveying its themes. It follows a free verse form, meaning it does not adhere to a specific rhyme scheme or meter.

The poem's lines vary in length, reflecting the speaker's shifting focus and thoughts.

This irregularity adds to the sense of spontaneity and unpredictability, as the speaker is momentarily distracted by the speck.

The poem's lack of rhyme or formal structure could also suggest a certain informality, as if the speaker is reflecting casually on an experience, allowing the thoughts to flow organically.

Extract 2

And I had idly poised my pen in air
To stop it with a period of ink
When something strange about it made me think,
This was no dust speck by my breathing blown,
But unmistakably a living mite
With inclinations it could call its own.

(i) What was strange about the speck that attracted the speaker's attention? What was it in reality? Describe the speaker's attitude towards the speck.

Ans. The speaker realised that it was not a speck of dust blown over by his breath.

In reality, it was a living mite, having its own feelings and decision-making power.

His attitude was one of curiosity and wonder. This led to a broad reflection on life and existence.

(ii) What made the speaker realise that the mite had a mind of its own as well as intelligence? Give three reasons to justify your answer.

Ans. It is evident that the mite had a mind and intelligence of its own. Three instances of the mite having its intelligence are :

(a) The mite had stopped running as if frightened by the speaker's pen.

(b) Again, it started running wildly and came up to the place on the paper where the ink had not yet dried, and it stopped.

(c) The mite drank and smelt the ink but it got a feeling of intense dislike. It turned again to move.

(iii) Analyse the speaker's decision to let the mite live. What does this reveal about his character?

Ans. The speaker's decision to let the mite live reveals a compassionate and thoughtful side to his character Despite its tiny size and potential insignificance, the speaker chooses not to kill the mite, showing a respect for life, even in its smallest form and intelligence. This action suggests that the speaker values even the most seemingly trivial creatures and recognises their right to exist.

It also indicates a sense of empathy and a reluctance to cause harm unnecessarily.

(iv) How would you evaluate the significance of the poem's ending? Why is the discovery of a 'display of mind' so important to the speaker?

Ans. The speaker feels delighted in finding intelligence and thought in unexpected places. He appreciates the display of mind in any written text highlighting life and reality.

It is important to the speaker as it affirms the presence of consciousness and life's value and intelligence beyond size and appearance.

(v) What is the central theme of the poem? How does the speaker's action illustrate the theme of the poem? If you have to give the poem a different title, what will it be? Give a reason for your answer.

Ans. The central theme of the poem is importance of the human faculty of mind, its imagination and creativity The poem also reflects on the value of small, often overlooked things and the speaker's reflection on imperfection and life. He gives importance to the intelligence displayed by the mite and refrains from killing it.

If I were to give an alternate title, it would be "The Speck of Creation'. This title reflects how something small and seemingly insignificant, like the mite or the speck, can become a focal point of thought and creativity. It ties into the poem's theme of how even the tiniest details can inspire reflection and creativity in the human mind.

Extract 3

It paused as with suspicion of my pen,
And then came racing wildly on again
To where my manuscript was not yet dry;
Then paused again and either drank or smelt-
With loathing, for again it turned to fly.
Plainly with an intelligence I dealt.

(i) What does the term 'intelligence' imply in the context of the poem? How does it apply to the mite's behaviour?

Ans. The term 'intelligence' in the poem implies that the mite exhibits a certain awareness or instinctual decision-making ability, despite its small size. The speaker suggests that the mite is not acting randomly but is instead reacting with a level of awareness, shown by its cautious behaviour and awareness of the manuscript. It indicates that even small creatures may possess some form of intelligence.

(ii) Analyse the contrast between the mite's 'wild' movement and its cautious pauses. What does this reveal about its character or the poem's theme?

Ans. The contrast between the mite's 'wild' movement and its cautious pauses illustrates the balance between impulsiveness and caution or intelligence. The 'wild' movement shows a lack of control or direction, while the pauses show a moment of reflection or evaluation.

This duality may reflect the unpredictable nature of the human creativity-where ideas may rush forward impulsively but require moments of careful consideration. It also highlights how even the smallest creatures are capable of complex responses.

(iii) What literary device is used in the poem when the poet gives human-like qualities of 'intelligence' to mite? How does this affect the reader's perception of the mite?

Ans. The poet uses anthropomorphism, where the mite is attributed human-like intelligence

This invites the reader to view the mite not just as an insect but as a creature with agency and purpose. This transforms the mite into more than a mere distraction, raising it to the status of a creature who is capable of conscious thought.

It also deepens the theme of creativity, suggesting that even the smallest, most insignificant things have a meaningful impact on the creative process.

(iv) How does the description of the mite's movements help build the theme of unpredictability in the poem? Give reason for your answer.

Ans. The mite's movements like pausing, racing, drinking smelling, and flying away, perfectly capture the unpredictable nature of the creative process. Just as the mite does not follow a predictable path, creativity can also be spontaneous and fluctuating, moving between moments of uncertainty, inspiration, and hesitation. This is because creativity and intelligence follow an unpredictable flow of ideas. Constant shifts occur during the process of writing or creating.

(v) Do you think the poem has philosophical undertones? Why? Justify with reasons.

Ans. Yes, the poem has philosophical undertones as it explores themes of existence, perception, and the creative process.

The speaker's interaction with the tiny mite raises questions about the value of small things and how we assign meaning to them. The unpredictable behaviour of the mite mirrors the unpredictability of creativity and life itself, suggesting that both are influenced by forces beyond our control.

It invites reflection on how we perceive the world, the significance of even the smallest elements, and the uncertainty inherent in creation and existence.

Extract 4

It seemed too tiny to have room for feet,
Yet must have had a set of them complete
To express how much it didn't want to die.
It ran with terror and with cunning crept
It faltered: I could see it hesitate;
Then in the middle of the open sheet
Cower down in desperation to accept
Whatever I accorded it of fate.

(i) How does the speaker describe the mite's behaviour? What does this suggest about the mite's state of mind?

Ans. The speaker describes the mite as hesitant, terrified, and desperate. It 'ran with terror' and 'crept with cunning' indicating fear and instinctive caution. The mite falters, hesitates, and 'cowers down' suggesting that it is in a state of distress, struggling to survive.

These actions show the mite's fear of its environment and possibly the impending danger.

(ii) 'It faltered: I could see it hesitate'. How does this line contribute to the tone of the poem? Justify.

Ans. The line 'It faltered: I could see it hesitate' contributes to the tone of uncertainty and tension in the poem. The mite's hesitation reflects its vulnerability and confusion about what to do next, which amplifies the sense of danger.

It adds to the theme of unpredictability in the creative process, where even the smallest, most insignificant elements can disrupt or alter the course of action..

(iii) What can we infer about the relationship between the speaker and the mite? Explain in brief.

Ans. The relationship between the speaker and the mite seems to be one of dominance and control. The mite is described as being at the mercy of the speaker, having to 'accept whatever fate' is given.

This suggests that the speaker holds power over the mite with the mite being unable to escape or influence its fate This could symbolise the human tendency to control or impose meaning on smaller, powerless entities in life.

(iv) Explain the meaning of 'Plainly with an intelligence I dealt'. What does it signify?

Ans. The phrase suggests that the speaker recognises the mite's behaviour as being more than just instinctive; it seems purposeful and calculated. The speaker is Implying that the mite's actions are not random but show some form of awareness or intelligence. This could signify that the mite is actively engaging with its environment and responding to the threat posed by the speaker's pen.

(v) Analyse the attitude of the speaker towards the mite. What does it symbolise in a broader context?

Ans. The speaker's attitude toward the mite is one of detached observation. While he acknowledges the mite's fear and struggle, he doesn't intervene or show strong empathy. Instead, he seems more focused on the mite's behaviour, recognising its 'intelligence' and survival instinct. The speaker allows the mite to accept its fate, reflecting a passive attitude toward its struggle.

In a broader context, this attitude symbolises how humans often ignore the struggles of weaker or smaller beings. It may also represent how individuals must sometimes accept larger, uncontrollable forces in life.

Extract 5

I have none of the tenderer-than-thou
Collectivistic regimenting love
With which the modern world is being swept.
But this poor microscopic item now!
Since it was nothing I knew evil of
I let it lie there till I hope it slept.

(i) 'I have none of the tenderer-than-thou collectivistic regimenting love'. What does the speaker mean by this phrase?

Ans. The speaker is rejecting the idea of the overly sentimental and controlling 'love' that is popular in modern society. The phrase 'tenderer-than-thou' suggests a pretentious or exaggerated form of love, while 'collectivistic regimenting love' refers to a love that forces conformity or order. The speaker contrasts this with a more individualistic, detached stance.

(ii) Do you think the speaker's detachment from the mite is justified? Why or why not?

Ans. The speaker's detachment could be seen as justified in the context of his rejection of modern societal ideals of forced love and intervention. He seems to prefer a more passive approach to life, allowing things to unfold naturally.

However, one could argue that a little more empathy or action might have been justified, as the mite is a living creature, and a more compassionate response could have been better.

(iii) How does the speaker's rejection of collectivistic regimenting love' reflect his broader worldview?

Ans. The rejection of 'collectivistic regimenting love reflects the speaker's broader worldview of individualism and independence. He resists societal pressure to be overly sentimental and prefers a more detached and personal approach to life This worldview aligns with his passive treatment of the mite, where he doesn't impose any artificial emotions or actions on it.

(iv) But this poor microscopic item now. Who does this line refer to? Why does the poet use this expression and what did he decide to do about it?

Ans. The line 'But this poor microscopic item now' refers to the mite, a tiny creature.

The poet uses this expression to show that the mite is small and vulnerable. The word 'poor' suggests sympathy, but the speaker does not show deep emotion.

The poet decides to let it lie there till I hope it slept', meaning he chooses not to harm it but simply allows it to rest. This shows that the speaker is detached and doesn't interfere with the mite's fate.

(v) What quality of the mite does the poet appreciate? Why?

Ans. The poet appreciates the mite's will to survive and determination. Despite its tiny size and vulnerability, the mite shows a strong desire to live. It is evident when it runs with terror, hesitates, and then cowers in desperation, accepting its fate. The poet acknowledges this instinctual drive for survival, even though the mite is powerless against the larger forces around it.

The poet seems to respect this quality because it reflects an inherent strength in the face of adversity, even in such a small, seemingly insignificant creature

Extract 6

I have a mind myself and recognize
Mind when I meet with it in any guise
No one can know how glad I am to find
On any sheet the least display of mind.

(i) What does the poet mean by 'I have a mind myself?

Ans. The poet is asserting his own intellectual capacity and awareness. By saying I have a mind myself, the poet is emphasising his ability to think, reason, and understand. It suggests that the poet is aware of his own intelligence and consciousness

(ii) Why does the poet express happiness upon finding 'the least display of mind on any sheet?

Ans. The poet's joy at finding the least display of mind reveals their appreciation for thought and intellect. The 'sheet' could refer to any surface where ideas are expressed. This suggests that the poet values intellectual engagement. The speaker/poet is glad to find even small instances of creativity or reasoning, indicating that they are significant

(iii) Do you agree with the speaker's idea that any display of mind is worth appreciating? Justify your answer.

Ans. Yes, I agree with the speaker's idea that even smallest display of creativity and intelligence should be appreciated. This is because it encourages recognising and valuing all forms of intellectual expression, no matter how small Appreciating even a small display of thought promotes a culture of creativity and learning.

(iv) Describe the actions of mite throughout the poem.

Ans. The mite appears as a tiny speck on the poet's paper. As the poet raises his pen to stop it, he notices its movement. The mite pauses, then runs wildly, showing signs of fear and intelligence. It hesitates, then cowers down, as if accepting its fate. The poet, realizing it is a living creature, decides to let it be, respecting its tiny will to survive

(v) What does the poet say about the modern world? How does it add to the theme of the poem?

Ans. The poet criticises the modern world for its tenderer-than-thou collectivistic regimenting love' meaning that society today is obsessed with controlling and insincere forms of love. This contrasts with the speaker's more individual and natural view, focusing on intellect and survival.

This critique ties into the poem's theme by showing a difference between artificial, societal values and the natural survival instincts of the mite. The speaker rejects the controlling love of modern society and values authenticity which is symbolised by the mite's struggle to live.

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