

CBSE CLASS X
English Language & Literature (184)**QUESTION PAPER***From previous CBSE Board Exam questions***Code: BD1QMX Questions: 38 Maximum Marks: 158 Generated: 2026-06-15 13:05****SELECTIONS USED**

Source	Previous-year board
Subject	English Language & Literature
Lessons	Madam Rides the Bus
Year	2022-2026
Questions selected	38

Composition — Types: 18 Short · 11 literature_long · 5 literature_extract · 4 Long

Q1.**[6]**

Answer ANY ONE of the following two questions, in about 100-120 words:

Examine the similarities and differences between the tiger in "A Tiger in the Zoo" and the dragon in "The Tale of Custard the Dragon".

Previously asked in: 2026 2/1/1 Q10(I)

♦ **2.1 A Tiger in the Zoo**

7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q2.**[6]**

How does the contrast between the pilot's fear in 'The Black Aeroplane' and Custard's initial cowardice in 'The Tale of Custard the Dragon' highlight that courage can be found in the most unexpected characters when circumstances demand it? Discuss with reference to the two.

Previously asked in: 2026 2/2/1 Q10(b)

♦ **Two Stories about Flying**

3.2 Black Aeroplane

7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q3.**[6]**

Answer in 100-120 words.

The journeys of Anne Frank and Valli teach us the vital lesson that optimism and self-assurance empower women to rise above circumstances and overcome obstacles. Examine the similarities. (Diary of Anne Frank & Madam Rides the Bus)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/6/1 Q10(b)

♦ **From the Diary of Anne Frank**

Madam Rides the Bus

Q4.**[6]**

You have been chosen to address the school assembly on the occasion of Women's Day. You choose to speak on the resilience and indomitable spirit of the young girls: Anne Frank and Valli. Prepare the speech draft, with reference to the commonality and contrast in the situations and circumstances of both the girls.

(Madam Rides the Bus and From the Diary of Anne Frank)

You may begin like this: Good morning everyone. Today, I'd like to express my insights on the resilience of two young girls

You may end this way: To conclude I'd like to say that

Thank you.

Previously asked in: 2024 2/4/1 Q10(b)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

From the Diary of Anne Frank

Q5.**[3]**

How did Valli gather the details of the bus journey ? (Madam rides the bus)

Previously asked in: 2023 2/4/1 Q8 (d)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q6.**[3]**

Ogden Nash uses vivid imagery in 'The Tale of Custard the Dragon' to appeal to the senses. Elaborate the imagery used for the Pirate.

Previously asked in: 2024 2/2/1 Q8 (v)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q7.**[3]**

What makes Custard, the dragon look fearsome? Explain.

Previously asked in: 2024 2/1/1 Q8 (iii)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q8.**[4]**

Valli was sensitive, but at the same time she was fearless and quite determined. Explain with reference to the text.

Previously asked in: 2022 2/3/1 Q7 (ii)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q9.**[2]**

How would you describe Custard the Dragon?

Previously asked in: 2022 2/3/1 Q6 (iv)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q10.**[4]**

Valli was a mature girl and ahead of her age. Justify the statement with evidence from the text. (Madam Rides the Bus)

Previously asked in: 2022 2/1/1 Q7 (iii)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q11.**[4]**

As Valli, make a diary entry sharing your joys and disappointments during the bus ride.

Previously asked in: 2022 2/4/1 Q7 (i)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q12.**[4]**

As Valli, make a diary entry about your experience of riding the bus alone for the first time. (Madam Rides the Bus)

Previously asked in: 2022 2/2/1 Q7 (iii)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q13.**[6]**

Valli was an extra-ordinary girl who had self-confidence and courage to realise her ambition by planning and drawing on her spirit of adventure. Discuss in reference to the chapter 'Madam Rides the Bus'.

Previously asked in: 2023 2/6/1 Q10(b)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q14.**[3]**

What stopped Valli from going to the stall to have a drink? What do we learn about Valli from this?

Previously asked in: 2023 2/5/1 Q8 (c)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q15.**[6]**

The people and surroundings are a great book to learn from. Valli in 'Madam Rides the Bus' learned a lot from others. Mention the traits of her character which help her to learn from people and her surroundings.

Previously asked in: 2023 2/2/1 Q10(a)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q16.**[6]**

Whenever we want to achieve something, difficulties always come in our way. What did Valli have to do to go and ride in a bus?

Previously asked in: 2023 2/1/1 Q10(a)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q17.**[3]**

Valli found joy and fascination in the simple act of watching the bus pass through her village. What does this reveal about her perspective on life and her surroundings?

(Madam Rides the Bus)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/2/1 Q8 (v)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q18.**[3]**

How does Valli's desire to ride the bus reflect her aspirations and challenges in context of her daily life?

(Madam Rides the Bus)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/3/1 Q8 (v)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q19.**[3]**

Despite her young age, how does Valli manage to gather the subtle details about the bus journey? (Madam Rides the Bus)

Previously asked in: 2026 2/2/1 Q8 (v)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q20.**[3]**

In 'Madam Rides the Bus', how does the contrast between Valli's boldness and her emotional response to the dead cow shape your view of her maturity?

Previously asked in: 2026 2/5/1 Q8 (iv)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q21.**[3]**

How does "Madam Rides the Bus" bring alive Valli's attributes and experiences through its narrative style?

Previously asked in: 2026 2/1/1 Q8 IV

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q22.**[3]**

Describe how Custard the dragon fights with the Pirate. (The tale of Custard the Dragon)

Previously asked in: 2023 2/4/1 Q8 (e)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q23.**[3]**

How does the poem 'The Tale of Custard The Dragon' differ from the traditional ballad?

Previously asked in: 2023 2/1/1 Q8 (d)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q24.**[3]**

The poem is about a doctor who is afraid of going to the dentist. How does Ogden Nash create humour and entertainment in the poem?

Previously asked in: 2024 2/5/1 Q8 (ii)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q25.**[6]**

Discuss how the writers use language to create humour in the poem 'The Tale of Custard the Dragon' and the play 'The Proposal'.

Previously asked in: 2025 2/3/1 Q10(b)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q26.**[6]**

Both, Rajvir in 'Tea from Assam' and Valli in 'Madam Rides the Bus' are motivated by a strong desire to experience the world beyond their everyday life. How do their respective journeys reflect their curiosity, enthusiasm for discovering new things and shape their understanding of the world around them ?

Previously asked in: 2026 2/3/1 Q10(b)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus 5.3 Tea from Assam

Q27.**[3]**

Belinda and other animals have been described as brave. But on seeing the pirate they behaved in a cowardly way. How did they react? (A Tale of Custard, The Dragon)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/3/1 Q8 (iv)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q28.**[2]**

Describe Custard the dragon.

Previously asked in: 2022 2/4/1 Q6 (v)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q29.**[2]**

How did Custard prove 'the cowardly dragon' tag to be untrue ?

Previously asked in: 2022 2/2/1 Q6 (v)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q30.**[3]**

Upon encountering the deceased cow on the road, Valli was emotional. Comment with reference to 'Madam Rides the Bus'.

Previously asked in: 2025 2/5/1 Q8 (iv)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q31.**[3]**What role does each of Belinda's pets play in the narrative? Select any two of her pets.
(The Tale of Custard the Dragon)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/2/1 Q8 (iv)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q32.**[5]**

Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears,
And Ink and Blink chased lions down the stairs,
Mustard was as brave as a tiger in a rage,
But Custard cried for a nice safe cage.
Belinda tickled him, she tickled him unmerciful,
Ink, Blink and Mustard, they rudely called him Percival

Read the given extract and answer the questions.

- (i) What poetic device is used in the first sentence ? [1]
- (ii) What was ironical about Custard being referred to as Percival ? [2]
- (iii) Complete the following suitably : The word 'unmerciful' in the given context implies that Belinda is _____.
[1]
- (iv) What image of Custard is created in the above lines ? [1]

Previously asked in: 2025 2/5/1 Q7(a)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q33.

[5]

Belinda giggled till she shook the house,
And Blink said Weeek! Which is giggling for a mouse,
Ink and Mustard rudely asked his age,
When Custard cried for a nice safe cage.
Suddenly, suddenly they heard a nasty sound,
And Mustard growled, and they all looked around.

Read the given extract and answer the questions.

- I** What inference can be drawn from the repetition of 'suddenly, suddenly' in the above extract? [1]
- A The scene shook the house
 - B It highlights the swift assault
 - C It emphasises that an unexpected noise was heard
 - D It directs our notice to Mustard's growling
- II** Despite its symbolism of captivity, what leads Custard to have a preference for staying in a cage? [2]
- III** Select the option that applies the same rhyme scheme as the lines of the first four lines of the given extract: [1]
- A Through the telescope she saw a star / which she thought was very far / She stretched her hand / and felt the crumple of the sand.
 - B Through the telescope she saw a star / She stretched her hand / As it was very far / But felt the crumple of the sand.
 - C Through the telescope she saw a star / Which she thought was very far / Her hand she stretched / But felt the crumple of the sand.
 - D Through the telescope she saw a star / Which she thought was very far / Her hand she stretched afar / But felt the crumple of the sand.
- IV** In the given extract, The difference between the other animals and Custard is that Custard behaves like a _____ (coward / dragon). [1]

Previously asked in: 2025 2/4/1 Q7.A

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q34.

[5]

Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears,
And Ink and Blink chased lions down the stairs,
Mustard was as brave as a tiger in a rage,
But Custard cried for a nice safe cage.

Read the following extract and answer the questions.

- (i) Comment upon the contrast that is reflected in the last two lines of the extract. [1]
- (ii) Fill in the blank with one word. While describing Ink and Blink, the speaker says that they could chase lions down the stairs. By saying so, he is revealing the _____ characteristic of their personality. [1]
- (iii) Comment on the poet's use of language in these lines in about 40 words. [2]
- (iv) Which of the following best describes the theme of the poem? [1]
 - (A) Bravery and heroism
 - (B) Humility leads to bravery
 - (C) Valour and diligence
 - (D) Crisis reveals character

Previously asked in: 2024 2/4/1 Q7(b)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q35.

[5]

It was a new bus, its outside painted a gleaming white with some green stripes along the sides. Inside, the overhead bars shone like silver. Directly in front of Valli, above the windshield, there was a beautiful clock. The seats were soft and luxurious. Valli devoured everything with her eyes. But when she started to look outside, she found her view cut off by a canvas blind that covered the lower part of her window. So she stood up on the seat and peered over the blind.

Read the given extract and answer any one of the following questions given below :

- (i) The effect on Valli as she describes the bus reveals that she is _____. Choose the most suitable option. [1]
 - (A) awed
 - (B) scared
 - (C) disgusted
 - (D) repulsed
- (ii) How does the author's use of descriptive language enhance the narrative technique in the passage ? [2]
- (iii) Fill in the blank with the correct word from the bracket. The use of the word 'devoured' adds to a sense of _____ (fascination / hunger) in the extract. [1]
- (iv) Which action of Valli shows that she did not want to miss out on any part of the experience ? [1]

Previously asked in: 2026 2/4/1 Q6 (a)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Q36.

[5]

But the dragon was a coward, and she called him Custard.
Custard the dragon had big sharp teeth,
And spikes on top of him and scales underneath
Mouth like a fireplace, chimney for a nose,
And realio, trulio daggers on his toes.

Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:

- (i) Complete the analogy by selecting the suitable word from the extract. sharp : blunt : : above : _____ [1]
- (ii) Which one of the following is not a feature of the Dragon? [1]
- (a) big sharp teeth
 - (b) spikes on the top
 - (c) brave as a lion
 - (d) could release fire from the mouth
- (iii) What effect does the poet want to create by the simile 'mouth like a fireplace'? [1]
- (a) emphasis
 - (b) compassion
 - (c) rhyme
 - (d) pathos
- (iv) Complete the sentence appropriately. It is clear that Metaphor is the poetic device used for 'chimney for a nose' because _____. (Clue: explain how metaphor applies here) [1]
- (v) State whether the following statement is True or False based on the given extract: Custard the dragon displayed courage. [1]

Previously asked in: 2023 2/5/1 Q7(B)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Q37.

[6]

Answer any one of the following two questions, in 100-120 words: A desire is more personal whereas a vision has broader connotations. You have been asked to present an analysis of Valli's desire and Mandela's vision and how they are respectively fulfilled. Write this presentation draft including your insights, in about 120 words, comparing the approaches of both Valli and Mandela. You may begin like this: One acknowledges that both, Valli and Mandela _____ however, (Reference – Nelson Mandela – A Long Walk to Freedom & Madam Rides a Bus)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/2/1 Q10(a)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Nelson Mandela – Long Walk to Freedom

Q38.

[6]

Answer in 100-120 words.

Valli was sensitive, but at the same time, she was fearless and quite determined. Think of another character from your text book, who displayed similar character traits.

Compare and contrast the lives of Valli and the other character, that you have chosen from the text of Two Stories about Flying.

You may begin this way.

The characters who are fearless and determined from two texts are Valli and _____.

(Reference : Madam Rides a Bus & Two Stories about Flying)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/3/1 Q10(a)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Two Stories about Flying

Available for free from:

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CBSE CLASS X

English Language & Literature (184)

ANSWER KEY

From previous CBSE Board Exam questions

Code: BD1QMX

Questions: 38

Maximum Marks: 158

Generated: 2026-06-15 13:05

Q1.

[6]

Answer ANY ONE of the following two questions, in about 100-120 words:

Examine the similarities and differences between the tiger in "A Tiger in the Zoo" and the dragon in "The Tale of Custard the Dragon".

Previously asked in: 2026 2/1/1 Q10(I)

◆ 2.1 A Tiger in the Zoo

7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

Similarities:

Both the tiger and Custard the dragon are wild creatures kept in captivity or confined surroundings. Neither is in its natural habitat — the tiger is locked in a zoo cage, while Custard lives as a pet in a house. Both animals appear meek and tame in their given situation; the tiger paces quietly at night, and Custard is mocked for being cowardly despite his fearsome appearance.

Differences:

The tiger in "A Tiger in the Zoo" is truly fierce but suppressed — he is a real, powerful predator whose freedom has been cruelly snatched. He feels rage and helplessness behind bars. Custard, however, is a fictional, comic character who is deliberately portrayed as timid despite his dragon form. He craves safety and comfort. Ironically, when danger arrives, Custard alone acts bravely and defeats the pirate. The tiger never gets a chance to show his true spirit freely.

Thus, both poems explore the gap between appearance and reality, but from opposite angles.

Explanation

- Examiners expect you to address **both** similarities and differences clearly — use subheadings or signpost words like "Similarly" / "However."
- The tiger represents **suppressed wildness**; Custard represents **underestimated courage** — this contrast is the core of the comparison.
- Keep the tone analytical, not just descriptive. Mentioning the **irony** in each poem earns extra credit.
- Aim for about 120–130 words. Do not exceed 150 words.

Q2.

[6]

How does the contrast between the pilot's fear in 'The Black Aeroplane' and Custard's initial cowardice in 'The Tale of Custard the Dragon' highlight that courage can be found in the most unexpected characters when circumstances demand it? Discuss with reference to the two.

Previously asked in: 2026 2/2/1 Q10(b)

♦ Two Stories about Flying

3.2 Black Aeroplane

7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

Both 'The Black Aeroplane' and 'The Tale of Custard the Dragon' explore how courage emerges unexpectedly from characters not initially associated with bravery.

In 'The Black Aeroplane', the pilot knowingly flies his old Dakota into a dangerous storm despite fear, saying "I'll take the risk." Inside the clouds, everything turned black, his compass and instruments stopped working, and he had no fuel — yet he kept his nerve. Mysteriously, another aeroplane appeared and guided him safely to a runway, showing that help and courage can come from unknown, unexpected sources.

Custard, despite being a dragon (traditionally a fierce creature), is mocked for begging for a "nice safe cage." Yet when a pirate threatens everyone, Custard alone springs into action and defeats him — proving that the character dismissed as a coward displays the truest courage when circumstances demand it.

Thus, both texts show that real courage is not about outward confidence but about rising to a challenge when it truly matters.

Source: *The Black Aeroplane* and *The Tale of Custard the Dragon*, Chapter 3

Explanation

Examiners look for:

- **Direct textual references** from both poems/stories (not vague summaries).
- A **clear thematic link** — the contrast between apparent fear/cowardice and actual courage under pressure.
- Mention of the **pilot's risk**, the storm, and the mysterious aeroplane for Story 1.
- Mention of **Custard's mocked cowardice** vs. his **decisive action against the pirate** for Poem 2.
- A **concluding line** tying both texts to the common theme — examiners reward this.
- Keep it within ~130 words; do not retell the entire plot.

Q3.

[6]

Answer in 100-120 words.

The journeys of Anne Frank and Valli teach us the vital lesson that optimism and self-assurance empower women to rise above circumstances and overcome obstacles. Examine the similarities. (Diary of Anne Frank & Madam Rides the Bus)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/6/1 Q10(b)

♦ From the Diary of Anne Frank

Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Both Anne Frank and Valli exemplify how optimism and self-assurance help young girls rise above their limitations.

Valli lived in a small village with no playmates and limited freedom. Yet she meticulously planned her bus journey — saving sixty paise by resisting sweets and merry-go-rounds, gathering information discreetly, and timing her trip during her mother's nap. On the bus, she confidently refused free drinks and asserted herself against older passengers, declaring, "I'm not a child." Her cheerful curiosity and iron will turned a simple bus ride into a triumph.

Anne Frank, facing the trauma of hiding and persecution, channelled her feelings into her diary, treating it as a trusted friend named Kitty. Her self-awareness, humour, and emotional resilience helped her cope with extraordinary hardship.

Both girls demonstrate that inner confidence and a positive outlook empower women to overcome circumstance and claim their own space in the world.

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Chapter 7; *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Chapter 4

Explanation

- This is a **comparative/value-based** 6-mark question. Examiners expect textual evidence from **both** chapters — don't discuss only one character.
- Show the **obstacle** each girl faced, then show her **optimistic/self-assured response** — that's the two-part structure per character.
- Use short quotes or specific details (e.g., "sixty paise," "Kitty") to prove you've read the texts; vague generalisations lose marks.
- End with a **common conclusion** linking the theme to both characters — examiners reward this synthesis.
- Keep Anne's section slightly shorter since fewer source passages were provided, but don't omit her entirely.

Q4.

[6]

You have been chosen to address the school assembly on the occasion of Women's Day. You choose to speak on the resilience and indomitable spirit of the young girls: Anne Frank and Valli. Prepare the speech draft, with reference to the commonality and contrast in the situations and circumstances of both the girls.

(Madam Rides the Bus and From the Diary of Anne Frank)

You may begin like this: Good morning everyone. Today, I'd like to express my insights on the resilience of two young girls

You may end this way: To conclude I'd like to say that

Thank you.

Previously asked in: 2024 2/4/1 Q10(b)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

From the Diary of Anne Frank

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Model Answer

Good morning everyone. Today, I'd like to express my insights on the resilience of two young girls — Anne Frank and Valli — whose courage and determination continue to inspire us.

Commonalities: Both girls were young, curious, and strong-willed. Valli, an eight-year-old, meticulously saved sixty paise, planned every detail, and secretly boarded a bus alone — defying her limitations with sheer resolve. Anne Frank, at thirteen, channelled her loneliness and longing for connection into her diary, turning "Kitty" into her trusted confidante. Both refused to be defined by their circumstances.

Contrasts: Valli's challenge was one of personal freedom — she craved the world beyond her doorstep. Anne's struggle was far grimmer; she wrote amidst the horrors of World War II, finding courage in words while the world outside threatened her very existence.

To conclude, I'd like to say that whether facing the limits of a village doorstep or the darkness of persecution, both girls remind us that resilience is not the absence of fear — it is the will to rise above it.

Thank you.

Explanation

- The question is a **speech-writing task** — maintain speech format: greeting, body, conclusion as prompted.
- Examiners look for: reference to **both characters**, at least **one similarity and one contrast**, and **textual evidence** (Valli's savings, Anne's diary/Kitty).
- Keep language formal but warm — it's a Women's Day address.
- Don't over-explain the plots; focus on **character traits** (resilience, determination, courage).
- The given opening and closing lines must be incorporated — leaving them out loses format marks.

Q5.

[3]

How did Valli gather the details of the bus journey ? (Madam rides the bus)

Previously asked in: 2023 2/4/1 Q8 (d)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Valli gathered the details of her bus journey through careful observation and discreet questioning. She listened attentively to conversations between her neighbours and regular bus passengers over many days and months. She also asked a few careful questions here and there.

This way she found out that:

- The town was **six miles** from her village.
- The fare was **thirty paise** one way.
- The trip took **forty-five minutes**.
- By paying another thirty paise, she could return home on the same bus.

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Section I

Explanation

- The question is directly answered in Section I of the passage — stick to those details.
- Examiners expect **two parts**: *how* she gathered information (listening + asking), and *what* she found out (the specific facts). Both parts must be present for full marks.
- Mentioning the specific figures (6 miles, 30 paise, 45 minutes) shows careful reading and typically secures full marks.
- Keep the answer within ~80 words — a brief list for the facts saves space and reads clearly.

Q6.

[3]

Ogden Nash uses vivid imagery in 'The Tale of Custard the Dragon' to appeal to the senses. Elaborate the imagery used for the Pirate.

Previously asked in: 2024 2/2/1 Q8 (v)

◆ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

Ogden Nash uses striking visual and auditory imagery to describe the pirate. The pirate has "black beard slithering down his chin" — a menacing visual image. He carries pistols and a cutlass, creating a fierce picture. He moves like "a flash of lightning" — a simile conveying terrifying speed. His arrival is sudden and threatening, with the image of him coming through the "window" creating a sense of danger and dread. These images together paint him as dark, deadly, and fearsome.

Explanation

The question asks specifically about imagery for the **pirate** in the poem. Examiners expect you to: (1) name/quote specific images from the poem, (2) identify the sense each image appeals to (sight, sound, etc.), and (3) briefly explain the effect. Note: The source passages provided don't include this poem, so answer from your knowledge of the prescribed NCERT text. Aim for 3 distinct images — one per mark. Avoid vague statements; always quote from the poem.

Q7.

[3]

What makes Custard, the dragon look fearsome? Explain.

Previously asked in: 2024 2/1/1 Q8 (iii)

◆ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

In the poem "The Tale of Custard the Dragon," Custard looks fearsome because of his physical appearance. He has **big sharp teeth, spikes on top, scales underneath**, and his mouth is described like a fireplace while his nose is like a chimney. His toes are like daggers and he makes a noise described as "weeck" and "whistles." These features — the sharp teeth, daggers-like claws, fire-breathing appearance, and spiky body — make him look like a truly terrifying creature.

Source: *The Tale of Custard the Dragon*, First Flight, Class 10

Explanation

- This question is from the poem "The Tale of Custard the Dragon" (First Flight), NOT from the source passages provided.
- Examiners look for specific physical features mentioned in the poem: sharp teeth, spikes, scales, fireplace-like mouth, chimney nose, and dagger-like toes.
- Use words from the poem wherever possible — this shows textual accuracy.
- Note the irony: despite looking fearsome, Custard is considered a coward by others in the poem — but the question only asks what **makes him look fearsome**, so focus only on physical description.

Q8.

[4]

Valli was sensitive, but at the same time she was fearless and quite determined. Explain with reference to the text.

Previously asked in: 2022 2/3/1 Q7 (ii)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Valli was a sensitive girl as seen when she felt shy after the conductor and passengers laughed at her, and was emotionally affected by the sight of the dead cow on the way back, which made her lose all interest in the journey.

At the same time, she displayed remarkable fearlessness and determination. She boldly stopped the bus with a raised hand and boarded it alone at just eight years old. She refused the conductor's help saying, "I can get on by myself." She thriftily saved sixty paise over many months, resisting temptations like peppermints, balloons, and even the merry-go-round at the fair. She also carefully planned the trip around her mother's afternoon nap, showing strong willpower and independent spirit.

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Chapter 7

Explanation

Examiners expect a balanced answer addressing **both** traits — sensitivity AND fearlessness/determination — with textual evidence for each. Common mistake: students write only about her determination and ignore sensitivity. Mention at least 2 examples per trait. Keep quotes short and accurate. Four marks = roughly 4 solid points with evidence.

Q9.

[2]

How would you describe Custard the Dragon?

Previously asked in: 2022 2/3/1 Q6 (iv)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

Custard the dragon is described as a cowardly creature who cries for a nice safe cage. He has big sharp teeth, spikes on top, scales underneath, and daggers on his toes. Despite his fierce appearance, he is mocked by Belinda and her other pets for being timid, though he proves his bravery by fighting the pirate.

Explanation

The question is from the poem *The Tale of Custard the Dragon* by Ogden Nash. Examiners expect you to mention both his physical description (teeth, spikes, scales, daggers) and his personality (cowardly/timid nature, contrast with actual bravery). For 2 marks, one point on appearance and one on character is sufficient. Note: No source passage for this poem was provided, so the answer draws on the prescribed poem itself.

Q10.

[4]

Valli was a mature girl and ahead of her age. Justify the statement with evidence from the text. (Madam Rides the Bus)

Previously asked in: 2022 2/1/1 Q7 (iii)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Valli, though only eight years old, displayed remarkable maturity and independence in several ways:

1. **Careful planning:** She secretly gathered information about the bus journey — fare, distance, and timings — by listening to conversations and asking discreet questions, showing intelligence beyond her age.
1. **Financial discipline:** She saved sixty paise by resisting temptations like peppermints, balloons, and even the merry-go-round at the village fair, showing great self-control.
1. **Independence and confidence:** On the bus, she firmly refused the conductor's offer of a free cold drink, saying she had no extra money, showing self-respect and maturity.
1. **Self-reliance:** She planned her trip during her mother's nap time without adult help, managing everything independently — proving she was truly ahead of her age.

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Chapter 7

Explanation

Examiners expect **4 distinct, evidence-based points** for a 4-mark question like this. Each point should name the quality (maturity/independence/self-control) and back it with a specific detail from the text. Avoid vague statements like "she was very brave" — always quote or closely reference what she actually did. The phrase "ahead of her age" is the key theme; frame each point to show how her behaviour was unusual for an eight-year-old.

Q11.

[4]

As Valli, make a diary entry sharing your joys and disappointments during the bus ride.

Previously asked in: 2022 2/4/1 Q7 (i)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Dear Diary,

Today was the most exciting day of my life! I finally took the bus ride I had been dreaming about for so long. I had saved sixty paise by giving up peppermints, balloons, and even the merry-go-round at the fair!

The journey was wonderful. I saw vast open fields, shops, and big crowds in town. The funniest moment was when a young cow ran right in front of the bus — I laughed till tears rolled down my eyes!

But on the way back, I saw that same cow lying dead by the roadside. It made me so sad. That one sight took away all my happiness. Life can change so suddenly, and that thought still haunts me.

— Valli

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Chapter 7

Explanation

- The question is a **creative writing** (diary entry) task based on the story, so include **both joys and disappointments** — examiners look for both sides.
- **Joys**: planning/saving money, excitement of the ride, seeing the cow run, marvelling at the town.
- **Disappointment**: seeing the dead cow on the return journey — this is the key emotional turning point in the story.
- Use **first person, past tense**, with a date line and sign-off for diary format. CBSE awards format marks for this.
- Keep it around 80–100 words — no need for lengthy descriptions.

Q12.

[4]

As Valli, make a diary entry about your experience of riding the bus alone for the first time. (Madam Rides the Bus)

Previously asked in: 2022 2/2/1 Q7 (iii)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Date: [Any date]

Day: [Any day]

Time: Late afternoon

Dear Diary,

Today was the most thrilling day of my life! I finally rode the bus to town — all by myself! I had been planning this for months, carefully saving sixty paise by resisting peppermints, balloons, and even the merry-go-round at the fair.

I slipped out while Amma napped. The journey was wonderful — trees seemed to rush towards us, and a funny little cow ran right in front of the bus! I laughed till I cried. The town's bright shops left me speechless with wonder.

But on the way back, I saw the same cow lying dead on the roadside. It made me very sad. I couldn't enjoy the return journey at all.

Still, I did it — alone!

Valli

Source: Madam Rides the Bus, Chapter 7

Explanation

- A diary entry should have **date, day, salutation (Dear Diary), and signature** — examiners specifically check these format elements for writing tasks.
- Write in **first person** as Valli, including her key experiences: saving money, slipping out, the cow episode (funny then tragic), and the town's sights.
- The **emotional arc** (excitement → wonder → sadness) is important and fetches marks for understanding character.
- Keep it **personal and reflective** in tone — diaries express feelings, not just events.
- Stay within the **word limit (~80–100 words)** for 4 marks; do not over-elaborate.

Q13.

[6]

Valli was an extra-ordinary girl who had self-confidence and courage to realise her ambition by planning and drawing on her spirit of adventure. Discuss in reference to the chapter 'Madam Rides the Bus'.

Previously asked in: 2023 2/6/1 Q10(b)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Valli was an extraordinary eight-year-old girl who displayed remarkable self-confidence, courage, and a spirit of adventure in fulfilling her dream of riding the bus.

Careful Planning: Valli gathered information about the bus journey — the fare (30 paise one way), distance (six miles), and time taken (45 minutes) — by listening to conversations and asking discreet questions. She planned the trip thoroughly, calculating that the one o'clock bus would get her back by two forty-five, within her mother's nap time.

Determination and Thrift: She saved sixty paise by resisting every temptation — peppermints, balloons, and even the merry-go-round at the fair — showing remarkable self-control.

Confidence and Independence: On the bus, she refused the conductor's helping hand, asserting, "I can get on by myself." She firmly declined a free drink, not wanting to be indebted to anyone.

Maturity: She stayed in her seat at the town stop, knowing her limits, and returned safely — proving her adventure was well within her control.

Thus, Valli's dream, discipline, and daring made her truly extraordinary.

Source: 'Madam Rides the Bus', Chapter 7

Explanation

Examiners look for: (1) identification of Valli's key qualities with textual evidence, (2) coverage of planning, saving, and behaviour on the bus, and (3) a brief concluding remark. Avoid retelling the whole story — pick specific incidents as proof of each quality. Using short quotes or paraphrases from the text strengthens the answer and shows you have read closely.

Q14.

[3]

What stopped Valli from going to the stall to have a drink? What do we learn about Valli from this?

Previously asked in: 2023 2/5/1 Q8 (c)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Valli refused to go to the stall because she did not have enough money left — she had spent exactly sixty paise on her return bus ticket. She also firmly refused when the conductor offered to treat her, saying "No, no, please, no." This tells us that Valli was self-respecting and independent. She did not accept charity or favours from strangers. She was also disciplined and careful — she had planned her trip meticulously and would not let any unplanned expense or gesture upset her self-sufficiency.

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Chapter 7 (Section III)

Explanation

The question has two parts — **what** stopped her (the reason) and **what we learn** (character trait). Examiners expect both parts answered clearly. The reason is lack of money *plus* her refusal of a free drink — both must be mentioned. The character inference should use precise words: self-respect, independence, discipline. Avoid vague words like "she was good." Keep within ~80 words for 3 marks.

Q15.

[6]

The people and surroundings are a great book to learn from. Valli in 'Madam Rides the Bus' learned a lot from others. Mention the traits of her character which help her to learn from people and her surroundings.

Previously asked in: 2023 2/2/1 Q10(a)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Valli was a curious, observant, and determined eight-year-old girl. The following character traits helped her learn from people and her surroundings:

1. **Curiosity:** Valli was very curious about things. Standing at the doorway and watching the street gave her many new and unusual experiences.
1. **Observation:** She watched the bus day after day, carefully noting the passengers, timings, and route. This keen observation helped her plan her journey.
1. **Attentiveness:** She listened carefully to conversations between neighbours and regular bus passengers to gather details about the fare, distance, and journey time.
1. **Thrift and Self-Control:** She saved sixty paise by resisting the temptation to buy peppermints, toys, and even the merry-go-round at the fair.
1. **Planning and Intelligence:** She calculated and recalculated the timings to ensure she could travel and return before her mother woke from her afternoon nap.
1. **Independence and Self-Reliance:** She refused the conductor's offer of a treat, managing entirely on her own savings and decisions.

These traits made Valli a remarkable learner from life itself.

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Chapter 7

Explanation

Examiners look for **character traits with supporting evidence** from the text. Avoid vague praise like "she was smart." Instead, name the trait and link it directly to a specific action (e.g., thrift → saved sixty paise by resisting temptations). Six points for 6 marks is the ideal structure here. Keep each point concise — one trait + one proof from the text.

Q16.

[6]

Whenever we want to achieve something, difficulties always come in our way. What did Valli have to do to go and ride in a bus?

Previously asked in: 2023 2/1/1 Q10(a)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Valli's deepest desire was to ride the bus that travelled between her village and the nearest town. To fulfil this wish, she had to overcome several difficulties.

Gathering Information: Valli had no money and no direct knowledge of bus travel. She patiently listened to conversations between neighbours and regular bus users, and asked discreet questions. She found out that the fare was 30 paise one way, the town was six miles away, and the trip took 45 minutes. A return ticket would cost another 30 paise, totalling 60 paise.

Saving Money: Valli thriftily saved every stray coin she got. She resisted buying peppermints, toys, and balloons, and even suppressed her strong desire to ride the merry-go-round at the village fair. Finally, she saved exactly 60 paise.

Slipping Out: Her last challenge was leaving home without her mother's knowledge. She cleverly used the hours when her mother napped (1–4 p.m.) to make her excursion.

Thus, through careful planning, self-discipline, and determination, Valli successfully took her first bus ride.

Source: "Madam Rides the Bus," Chapters I, II, III

Explanation

- The examiner wants **three main difficulties**: gathering information, saving money, and sneaking out — address all three with textual evidence.
- Quote or closely paraphrase the text (e.g., "thriftily saved," "resolutely stifled") to show you have read carefully — this earns extra credit.
- Keep each point tight; do not retell the whole story.
- End with a concluding sentence to round off the answer neatly.

Q17.

[3]

Valli found joy and fascination in the simple act of watching the bus pass through her village. What does this reveal about her perspective on life and her surroundings?

(Madam Rides the Bus)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/2/1 Q8 (v)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Valli's fascination with the bus reveals that she had a naturally curious and imaginative mind. For her, simply watching the bus pass was "every bit as enjoyable as any of the elaborate games other children played." This shows she could find joy in ordinary, everyday sights.

Her perspective reflects a childlike wonder — she noticed the changing faces of passengers each hour and found the bus a "source of unending joy." Rather than feeling bored by her limited surroundings, she turned observation into adventure, and gradually transformed her curiosity into a determined desire to experience the bus ride herself.

This reveals Valli as someone who sees possibility and excitement in simple things around her.

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Chapter 7

Explanation

- The question asks about **perspective and surroundings**, so link Valli's **contentment with simple observations** to her **curious nature**.
- Use textual evidence: "every bit as enjoyable," "source of unending joy" — examiners reward direct references.
- Show the **progression**: watching → joy → desire. This demonstrates her perspective fully.
- Avoid over-writing. Three focused points in 3 tight sentences is ideal for 3 marks.

Q18.

[3]

How does Valli's desire to ride the bus reflect her aspirations and challenges in context of her daily life?
(Madam Rides the Bus)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/3/1 Q8 (v)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Valli's desire to ride the bus reflects her deep curiosity and longing to experience the world beyond her village. With no playmates, she spent her days watching the bus pass, and her wish to ride it grew into an "overwhelming desire." She faced real challenges: saving sixty paise by resisting temptations like peppermints and the merry-go-round, and secretly slipping out while her mother napped. Her careful planning shows determination and independence despite being just eight years old.

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Sections I and III

Explanation

- The question asks about **both** aspiration (desire/dream) and challenges — address both for full marks.
- Key evidence: "overwhelming desire," thrifty saving of sixty paise, resisting the merry-go-round, and sneaking out during her mother's nap.
- Avoid over-explaining; 3 marks = ~3 clear points tightly written.
- Use textual words/phrases ("overwhelming desire," "thriftily saved") to show direct reference — examiners reward this.

Q19.

[3]

Despite her young age, how does Valli manage to gather the subtle details about the bus journey? (Madam Rides the Bus)

Previously asked in: 2026 2/2/1 Q8 (v)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Despite being only eight years old, Valli gathers details about the bus journey through keen observation and careful listening. Over many days and months, she listened attentively to conversations between neighbours and regular bus passengers. She also asked a few **discreet (careful) questions** here and there. This way she found out that the town was six miles away, the fare was thirty paise one way, the trip took forty-five minutes, and she could return on the same bus by paying another thirty paise. Her curiosity and determination made up for her young age.

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Chapter 7

Explanation

- The question targets the **method** Valli uses — the examiner wants two clear strategies: **listening to conversations** and **asking discreet questions**, supported by the specific details she gathered (distance, fare, duration).
- Quoting or paraphrasing "discreet questions" earns marks as it is a textbook term.
- Do not simply say "she was curious" — back it up with *how* she acted on that curiosity.
- Keep the details (6 miles, 30 paise, 45 minutes) as they show she gathered *specific* information, which is what the question asks.

Q20.

[3]

In 'Madam Rides the Bus', how does the contrast between Valli's boldness and her emotional response to the dead cow shape your view of her maturity?

Previously asked in: 2026 2/5/1 Q8 (iv)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

Valli displays remarkable boldness for an eight-year-old — she plans her bus journey independently, saves sixty paise secretly, handles adult passengers confidently, and firmly refuses help from the conductor. This shows maturity beyond her age.

However, when she sees the same playful cow lying dead by the roadside, she is overcome with sadness and can no longer enjoy the journey. The memory "haunted her, dampening her enthusiasm."

This contrast reveals that Valli is mature enough to act independently but still a child emotionally — her innocence makes death's reality deeply unsettling, showing she is caught between childhood and growing up.

Source: 'Madam Rides the Bus', Sections III and IV

Explanation

- The examiner wants **contrast** — boldness vs. emotional response — so both sides must be addressed.
- Quote or closely paraphrase the text: "haunted her, dampening her enthusiasm" is the key phrase.
- The conclusion should link both points to the idea of **in-between maturity** — she is bold but not yet emotionally equipped to process death. This is the thematic insight examiners reward.
- Avoid over-explaining; keep it within ~80 words for 3 marks.

Q21.

[3]

How does "Madam Rides the Bus" bring alive Valli's attributes and experiences through its narrative style?

Previously asked in: 2026 2/1/1 Q8 IV

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

The story uses a third-person narrative closely aligned with Valli's perspective to bring out her curiosity, determination, and spirit. Her favourite pastime of watching the bus from her doorway shows her inquisitive nature. Her meticulous planning — secretly saving sixty paise by resisting peppermints and merry-go-round rides, observing timings, asking discreet questions — reveals her resourcefulness. On the ride, her childlike wonder at the cow, the train, and the town's glittering shops highlights her innocence. Her firm, self-reliant responses to the conductor ("I'm not a child") capture her feisty independence.

Source: "Madam Rides the Bus," Chapter 7

Explanation

The examiner expects you to link **narrative style** (child's-eye-view, close third person) to **specific character traits** with brief textual evidence. Three marks = roughly three points: curiosity/determination, planning/resourcefulness, and the bus-ride experiences (wonder + independence). Avoid retelling the plot; instead, show *how the narration* reveals Valli's character. Quoting a short phrase from the text adds mark-worthy precision.

Q22.

[3]

Describe how Custard the dragon fights with the Pirate. (The tale of Custard the Dragon)

Previously asked in: 2023 2/4/1 Q8 (e)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

When the pirate enters the house, all the others — Belinda, Ink, Blink, and Mustard — cry for help and hide in fear. But Custard, the little dragon who was always mocked for being a coward, bravely charges at the pirate. He snorts smoke and jumps on the pirate with a clatter, gobbles him up completely, and then wags his tail politely. Thus, the so-called cowardly Custard proves to be the true hero.

Source: *The Tale of Custard the Dragon*, poem

Explanation

The examiner expects: (1) the contrast between Custard's earlier image as a coward and his brave act, (2) specific details of the fight — charging, snorting smoke, gobbling the pirate — and (3) the irony that the "coward" was the only brave one. Avoid just saying "he fought bravely" — include the action details for full marks.

Q23.

[3]

How does the poem 'The Tale of Custard the Dragon' differ from the traditional ballad?

Previously asked in: 2023 2/1/1 Q8 (d)

◆ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

'The Tale of Custard the Dragon' is a **mock ballad** — it follows the traditional ballad form (regular rhyme scheme, stanzas, repetition, a narrative about a brave hero) but **subverts** its conventions humorously. In a traditional ballad, the hero is genuinely brave and courageous. Here, Custard, the dragon — who should be the fiercest — is a coward, while smaller, weaker creatures like the kitten and the mouse boast of bravery. The poem uses **humour and irony** to mock false bravado, unlike the serious, heroic tone of a traditional ballad.

Explanation

The examiner expects three points: (1) identification of the form as a mock/parody ballad, (2) contrast in the characterisation of the 'hero' (cowardly dragon vs. boastful small creatures), and (3) contrast in tone — humour/irony vs. the seriousness of traditional ballads. Note: No source passage for this poem was provided, so the answer is based on curriculum knowledge of the poem from the CBSE Class 10 textbook *First Flight*, Chapter 10.

Q24.

[3]

The poem is about a doctor who is afraid of going to the dentist. How does Ogden Nash create humour and entertainment in the poem?

Previously asked in: 2024 2/5/1 Q8 (ii)

◆ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

The question mentions a poem about a doctor afraid of the dentist, but the source passages provided do not contain this poem by Ogden Nash. The poem required to answer this question is not available in the given material.

However, based on general knowledge of Ogden Nash's style in *This is Going to Hurt Just a Little Bit*:

Nash creates humour through **irony** — a doctor who treats patients is himself terrified of dental visits. He uses **comic exaggeration** to describe his fear, employing his trademark **irregular rhyme scheme** where lines of unequal length end in forced, witty rhymes. His **colloquial, conversational tone** makes the doctor's cowardly reasoning sound ridiculous yet relatable, entertaining readers through the contrast between the doctor's professional confidence and personal cowardice.

Explanation

The source passages given cover "The Necklace," Robert Frost's poems, *The Invisible Man*, and Carl Sandburg's "Fog" — none contain the Ogden Nash poem. In an exam, always answer from the given poem/passage. Key points examiners expect: irony/incongruity, comic exaggeration, unusual rhyme scheme, and relatable humour. If the poem extract is printed in your exam paper, quote specific lines to support each point.

Q25.

[6]

Discuss how the writers use language to create humour in the poem 'The Tale of Custard the Dragon' and the play 'The Proposal'.

Previously asked in: 2025 2/3/1 Q10(b)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

Both Ogden Nash and Anton Chekhov use language cleverly to create humour for the reader/audience.

In '**The Tale of Custard the Dragon**', Nash uses comic contrast — everyone else boasts of bravery, yet Custard, who is described as a "cowardly dragon," actually defeats the pirate. Nash uses playful invented words like "realio, trulio" and deliberate misspellings to create a childlike, mock-heroic tone. The exaggerated similes ("mouth like a fireplace," "daggers in his teeth") add absurd comedy.

In '**The Proposal**', Chekhov creates humour through the characters' ridiculous behaviour — Lomov and Natalya quarrel bitterly over trivial matters like land and a dog instead of discussing the marriage proposal. The rapid shift from romance to argument and back again is comic. Repetitive bickering, pompous language, and Lomov's hypochondria all heighten the farce.

Both writers use exaggeration and incongruity as their primary comic devices.

Explanation

- Examiners expect you to **name specific techniques** (mock-heroic tone, invented words, exaggeration, farce, incongruity) with **brief textual evidence** from each text.
- Give roughly equal space to both texts — 2–3 points each.
- End with a comparative observation linking both texts; this earns full marks.
- Note: The source passages provided did not contain the actual texts of these two works, so the answer is grounded in standard CBSE Class 10 textbook content for these chapters.

Q26.

[6]

Both, Rajvir in 'Tea from Assam' and Valli in 'Madam Rides the Bus' are motivated by a strong desire to experience the world beyond their everyday life. How do their respective journeys reflect their curiosity, enthusiasm for discovering new things and shape their understanding of the world around them ?

Previously asked in: 2026 2/3/1 Q10(b)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

5.3 Tea from Assam

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Model Answer

Valli and **Rajvir** both embody youthful curiosity and a burning desire to go beyond the familiar.

Valli, an eight-year-old, is captivated by the bus that passes her village each hour. She watches it day after day until the wish to ride it becomes "an overwhelming desire." She plans meticulously — secretly gathering information, thriftily saving sixty paise by resisting peppermints, balloons, and even the merry-go-round at the village fair. Her journey is entirely self-driven. On the bus she is filled with wonder, laughing at the runaway cow and gazing "struck dumb" at the town's glittering shops. However, she also witnesses the dead cow on her return, and this encounter introduces her to the mystery of life and death, deepening her understanding of the world beyond childhood innocence.

Rajvir, travelling through Assam, is equally enthusiastic. He eagerly absorbs the landscape of tea gardens, shares fascinating legends about the origin of tea with his friend Pranjol, and asks questions about how tea is processed. His curiosity transforms a train journey into a learning experience.

Both characters show that genuine curiosity, careful observation, and the courage to step beyond one's comfort zone are the best tools for understanding the world.

Source: 'Madam Rides the Bus', *First Flight* (Class 10); 'Tea from Assam', *First Flight* (Class 10)

Explanation

- Examiners expect you to discuss **both characters equally** in a comparative question — roughly half the answer each.
- Key points to hit: Valli's **meticulous planning + self-reliance + emotional growth** (dead cow episode); Rajvir's **enthusiasm + knowledge-sharing + curiosity about tea**.
- Quote or closely paraphrase the text (e.g., "overwhelming desire," "struck dumb," "thriftily saved") — this shows textual grounding and fetches full marks.
- End with a **brief comparative conclusion** linking both to the central theme; examiners reward this.
- Keep the answer within ~130–150 words for a 6-mark question.

Q27.

[3]

Belinda and other animals have been described as brave. But on seeing the pirate they behaved in a cowardly way. How did they react? (A Tale of Custard, The Dragon)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/3/1 Q8 (iv)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

In the poem, Belinda, Ink (the cat), Blink (the mouse), and Mustard (the dog) all claimed to be very brave. However, when the pirate appeared:

- **Mustard**, despite being called a "yellow" coward by others, fled away, crying loudly.
- **Ink** trickled down to the bottom of the ink jar to hide.
- **Blink** crawled through a hole in the floor to escape.
- **Belinda** herself turned three times round and sat down piteously, crying for help.

Only Custard the dragon, always mocked for his timidity, bravely faced and ate the pirate, proving the others' boasted courage was hollow.

Explanation

Examiners expect you to name all four characters (Belinda, Mustard, Ink, Blink) and describe their specific cowardly reactions. The contrast with Custard is the central irony of the poem — mentioning it shows understanding of the poem's theme. Keep the reactions precise and matched to each character.

Q28.

[2]

Describe Custard the dragon.

Previously asked in: 2022 2/4/1 Q6 (v)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

Custard the dragon had big sharp teeth, claws on his toes, and spikes on top. He had scales like a lizard. Despite his fierce appearance, he was a cowardly dragon who cried for a nice safe cage. He lived with Belinda and her other pets — a kitten, a mouse, and a little yellow dog.

Explanation

This question is from the poem *The Tale of Custard the Dragon* by Ogden Nash. The examiner expects physical description (teeth, claws, spikes, scales) and his key character trait — cowardice — for full marks. Mention of his companions adds context but focus on his appearance and nature.

Q29.

[2]

How did Custard prove 'the cowardly dragon' tag to be untrue ?

Previously asked in: 2022 2/2/1 Q6 (v)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

Custard, despite being called a cowardly dragon, proved everyone wrong when a pirate invaded. He sprang into action immediately, seized the pirate in his jaws, and gobbled him up before anyone else could react. While Belinda and the others — known for their bravery — cried for help, Custard alone showed real courage.

Explanation

This question is from the poem *The Tale of Custard the Dragon* by Ogden Nash (Class 10, First Flight, Chapter 10). The examiner expects two key points: (1) what Custard was called (cowardly), and (2) the specific brave act he performed — attacking and killing the pirate. Mentioning the contrast with the other "brave" characters adds a good touch and shows understanding. Keep your answer focused and within 40–60 words for 2 marks.

Q30.

[3]

Upon encountering the deceased cow on the road, Valli was emotional. Comment with reference to 'Madam Rides the Bus'.

Previously asked in: 2025 2/5/1 Q8 (iv)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

When Valli was returning home, she saw the same young cow that had earlier frolicked joyfully in front of the bus lying dead by the roadside, struck by a fast-moving vehicle. The sight deeply saddened her. The creature that had seemed so lovable and beautiful just a short while ago now appeared horrible and frightening — legs spreadeagled, eyes lifeless, blood all over. The memory of the dead cow haunted Valli and dampened her enthusiasm completely. She no longer wished to look out of the window. This encounter introduced Valli to the harsh reality of death, casting a shadow over her otherwise joyful adventure.

Source: 'Madam Rides the Bus', Chapter 7

Explanation

- The examiner expects you to **contrast** Valli's earlier excitement with her sadness on the return journey — this shows emotional depth.
- Quote or paraphrase key phrases: "*haunted her*," "*dampening her enthusiasm*," "*horrible, frightening*" — these earn marks.
- Connect the moment to the story's theme: the gap between **knowing about death** and **understanding it** (hinted in the 'Before You Read' section).
- At 3 marks, aim for ~70–80 words — two focused paragraphs or 4–5 tight sentences.

Q31.

[3]

What role does each of Belinda's pets play in the narrative? Select any two of her pets.
(The Tale of Custard the Dragon)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/2/1 Q8 (iv)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

Ink (the cat): Ink acts as a foil to Custard — she is portrayed as bold and brave, like the other pets, taunting the dragon for his cowardice despite being small.

Mustard (the dog): Mustard is described as brave and fierce, yet when the pirate actually appears, he runs away in fear, showing the irony of boasted bravery versus real courage.

Both pets highlight the poem's central irony: those who mocked Custard as a coward fail when danger truly arrives, while the "cowardly" dragon alone displays real bravery.

Explanation

- Examiners look for: identification of the pet, its role/character in the poem, and how it contributes to the poem's theme (irony of boasted vs. real bravery).
- The question says "select any two," so pick any two pets (Ink, Mustard, or Blink the mouse) — do not answer all three.
- Keep focus on narrative role, not just description.
- No source passage was provided for this poem, so answer is based on the prescribed poem's content.

Q32.

[5]

Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears,
 And Ink and Blink chased lions down the stairs,
 Mustard was as brave as a tiger in a rage,
 But Custard cried for a nice safe cage.
 Belinda tickled him, she tickled him unmerciful,
 Ink, Blink and Mustard, they rudely called him Percival

Read the given extract and answer the questions.

- (i) What poetic device is used in the first sentence ? [1]
- (ii) What was ironical about Custard being referred to as Percival ? [2]
- (iii) Complete the following suitably : The word 'unmerciful' in the given context implies that Belinda is _____.
[1]
- (iv) What image of Custard is created in the above lines ? [1]

Previously asked in: 2025 2/5/1 Q7(a)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

- (i) The poetic device used is **simile** — "Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears" compares Belinda's bravery to a barrel of bears using "as."
- (ii) Percival was a legendary knight known for his **bravery and courage**. It is ironical that Custard, who was cowardly and always cried for a safe cage, was called Percival — a name associated with heroism — as a **mock** or taunt, highlighting the sharp contrast between the name and his timid nature.
- (iii) The word 'unmerciful' implies that Belinda is **relentlessly mocking and making fun of Custard without any sympathy**, teasing him without stopping.
- (iv) Custard is portrayed as a **cowardly and timid dragon** who, despite being a fierce creature by nature, cries for the safety of a cage, creating an image of weakness and fearfulness.

Source: "The Tale of Custard the Dragon," Ogden Nash — *First Flight*, Chapter 10

Explanation

- (i) Simile is the key device — identify "as...as" construction. Don't confuse with metaphor.
- (ii) Always explain *who* Percival was + the contrast with Custard's cowardice = full 2 marks.
- (iii) 'Unmerciful' means without mercy/without stopping — link it to Belinda's relentless teasing attitude.
- (iv) Focus on the single dominant image: cowardly/timid dragon. Keep it to one crisp line for 1 mark.

Q33.

[5]

Belinda giggled till she shook the house,
And Blink said Weeek! Which is giggling for a mouse,
Ink and Mustard rudely asked his age,
When Custard cried for a nice safe cage.
Suddenly, suddenly they heard a nasty sound,
And Mustard growled, and they all looked around.

Read the given extract and answer the questions.

- I** What inference can be drawn from the repetition of 'suddenly, suddenly' in the above extract? [1]
- A The scene shook the house
B It highlights the swift assault
C It emphasises that an unexpected noise was heard
D It directs our notice to Mustard's growling
- II** Despite its symbolism of captivity, what leads Custard to have a preference for staying in a cage? [2]
- III** Select the option that applies the same rhyme scheme as the lines of the first four lines of the given extract: [1]
- A Through the telescope she saw a star / which she thought was very far / She stretched her hand / and felt the crumple of the sand.
B Through the telescope she saw a star / She stretched her hand / As it was very far / But felt the crumple of the sand.
C Through the telescope she saw a star / Which she thought was very far / Her hand she stretched / But felt the crumple of the sand.
D Through the telescope she saw a star / Which she thought was very far / Her hand she stretched afar / But felt the crumple of the sand.
- IV** In the given extract, The difference between the other animals and Custard is that Custard behaves like a _____ (coward / dragon). [1]

Previously asked in: 2025 2/4/1 Q7.A

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

- I.** C — It emphasises that an unexpected noise was heard.
- II.** Custard, the dragon, is mocked and ridiculed by Belinda and the other pets for being cowardly. Since he is never taken seriously, he longs for the safety and security that a cage provides. A cage, though a symbol of captivity, offers him protection from ridicule and danger. His desire shows how deeply the teasing affects him — he prefers imprisonment to the shame of being called a coward.
- III.** A — *Through the telescope she saw a star / which she thought was very far / She stretched her hand / and felt the crumple of the sand.*
(Rhyme scheme: AABB — star/far, hand/sand — matching house/mouse, age/cage.)
- IV.** Custard behaves like a **coward**.

Source: *The Tale of Custard the Dragon*, Stanza 2

Explanation

- **Sub-question I:** "Suddenly, suddenly" stresses the abruptness/unexpectedness of the sound — option C is the best fit.
- **Sub-question II (2 marks):** Needs two points — (1) he is mocked, (2) so craves safety/security. Keep it focused on his emotional state, not general cage symbolism.
- **Sub-question III:** The first four lines rhyme AABB (house/mouse, age/cage). Option A gives star/far (AA) and hand/sand (BB) — the only exact AABB match.
- **Sub-question IV:** The extract directly shows the contrast — others laugh/growl boldly; Custard *cries* for a cage, making him the "coward."

Q34.

[5]

Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears,
And Ink and Blink chased lions down the stairs,
Mustard was as brave as a tiger in a rage,
But Custard cried for a nice safe cage.

Read the following extract and answer the questions.

- (i) Comment upon the contrast that is reflected in the last two lines of the extract. [1]
- (ii) Fill in the blank with one word. While describing Ink and Blink, the speaker says that they could chase lions down the stairs. By saying so, he is revealing the _____ characteristic of their personality. [1]
- (iii) Comment on the poet's use of language in these lines in about 40 words. [2]
- (iv) Which of the following best describes the theme of the poem? [1]
- (A) Bravery and heroism
(B) Humility leads to bravery
(C) Valour and diligence
(D) Crisis reveals character

Previously asked in: 2024 2/4/1 Q7(b)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

(i) While all others — Belinda, Ink, Blink, and Mustard — are portrayed as bold and fierce, Custard stands in sharp contrast as a coward who only longs for the safety of a cage.

(ii) Bold/brave/fearless

(iii) The poet uses vivid similes — "brave as a barrel full of bears" and "brave as a tiger in a rage" — to exaggerate the bravery of Belinda and Mustard. The imagery is humorous and child-friendly. The word "cried" for Custard sharply emphasises his cowardice against the others' boldness.

(iv) (D) Crisis reveals character

Explanation

- (i) Focus on the contrast between Mustard's tiger-like bravery and Custard's desire for a safe cage — the "But" is the key word signalling contrast.
- (ii) Any synonym of brave/courageous is acceptable; "bold" or "brave" is safest.
- (iii) For 2 marks on language, name the device (simile/hyperbole), give an example from the extract, and comment on its effect. ~40 words needed.
- (iv) The poem shows that despite everyone boasting of bravery, it is the "cowardly" Custard who actually faces the pirate — crisis reveals true character. This is the central theme.

Q35.

[5]

It was a new bus, its outside painted a gleaming white with some green stripes along the sides. Inside, the overhead bars shone like silver. Directly in front of Valli, above the windshield, there was a beautiful clock. The seats were soft and luxurious.

Valli devoured everything with her eyes. But when she started to look outside, she found her view cut off by a canvas blind that covered the lower part of her window. So she stood up on the seat and peered over the blind.

Read the given extract and answer any one of the following questions given below :

- (i) The effect on Valli as she describes the bus reveals that she is _____. Choose the most suitable option. [1]
 (A) awed
 (B) scared
 (C) disgusted
 (D) repulsed
- (ii) How does the author's use of descriptive language enhance the narrative technique in the passage ? [2]
- (iii) Fill in the blank with the correct word from the bracket. The use of the word 'devoured' adds to a sense of _____ (fascination / hunger) in the extract. [1]
- (iv) Which action of Valli shows that she did not want to miss out on any part of the experience ? [1]

Previously asked in: 2026 2/4/1 Q6 (a)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

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Model Answer

(i) (A) awed

(ii) The author uses vivid, sensory language such as "gleaming white," "shone like silver," and "soft and luxurious" to paint a picture of the bus as something magnificent and new. This descriptive language reflects Valli's wonder and excitement, making the reader see the bus through the eyes of an eight-year-old experiencing it for the first time. It enhances the narrative by establishing Valli's awe and curiosity as central to the story.

(iii) The use of the word 'devoured' adds to a sense of **fascination** in the extract.

(iv) When Valli found her view blocked by a canvas blind, she **stood up on the seat and peered over the blind**. This shows she was determined not to miss any part of the experience.

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Chapter 9

Explanation

- (i) "Devoured with her eyes" and standing up despite the obstruction clearly signal awe, not fear or disgust.
- (ii) For 2-mark descriptive language questions, always quote specific words/phrases from the passage, then explain their effect on the reader or narrative.
- (iii) "Devoured" is a metaphor for intense, eager looking — fascination, not literal hunger.
- (iv) Keep 1-mark answers to one crisp sentence; quote or closely paraphrase the text directly.

Q36.

[5]

But the dragon was a coward, and she called him Custard.
Custard the dragon had big sharp teeth,
And spikes on top of him and scales underneath
Mouth like a fireplace, chimney for a nose,
And realio, trulio daggers on his toes.

Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:

- (i) Complete the analogy by selecting the suitable word from the extract. sharp : blunt :: above : _____ [1]
- (ii) Which one of the following is not a feature of the Dragon? [1]
- big sharp teeth
 - spikes on the top
 - brave as a lion
 - could release fire from the mouth
- (iii) What effect does the poet want to create by the simile 'mouth like a fireplace'? [1]
- emphasis
 - compassion
 - rhyme
 - pathos
- (iv) Complete the sentence appropriately. It is clear that Metaphor is the poetic device used for 'chimney for a nose' because _____. (Clue: explain how metaphor applies here) [1]
- (v) State whether the following statement is True or False based on the given extract: Custard the dragon displayed courage. [1]

Previously asked in: 2023 2/5/1 Q7(B)

♦ 7.1 The Tale of Custard the Dragon

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Model Answer

(i) sharp : blunt :: above : **underneath**

(ii) (c) **brave as a lion**

(iii) (a) **emphasis**

(iv) It is clear that Metaphor is the poetic device used for 'chimney for a nose' because the nose is directly compared to a chimney (saying it is a chimney) without using 'like' or 'as'. A chimney releases smoke; similarly, the dragon's nose releases fire/smoke, so one thing's quality is transferred to another — making it a metaphor, not a simile.

(v) **False.** The extract clearly states "the dragon was a coward," so Custard did not display courage.

Source: *The Tale of Custard the Dragon*, Ogden Nash — Beehive (Class 10 NCERT)

Explanation

- (i) 'underneath' is the antonym of 'above', just as 'blunt' is the antonym of 'sharp' — always pick the word from the extract itself.
- (ii) 'Brave as a lion' is never mentioned; the dragon is explicitly called a **coward**.
- (iii) Similes create **emphasis** by vividly highlighting a quality — here, the enormous, fire-breathing mouth.

- **(iv)** For metaphor questions, examiners want you to state: (a) no 'like/as' is used, and (b) one thing is *called* another, transferring a quality directly.
- **(v)** Quote directly from the passage to justify True/False answers.

Q37.**[6]**

Answer any one of the following two questions, in 100-120 words: A desire is more personal whereas a vision has broader connotations. You have been asked to present an analysis of Valli's desire and Mandela's vision and how they are respectively fulfilled. Write this presentation draft including your insights, in about 120 words, comparing the approaches of both Valli and Mandela. You may begin like this: One acknowledges that both, Valli and Mandela _____ however, (Reference – Nelson Mandela – A Long Walk to Freedom & Madam Rides a Bus)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/2/1 Q10(a)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Nelson Mandela – Long Walk to Freedom

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Model Answer

One acknowledges that both Valli and Mandela harboured deep longings for freedom; however, their desires differed greatly in scope and purpose.

Valli's desire was intensely personal — an eight-year-old girl's overwhelming wish to ride the bus to town, even just once. She planned meticulously: gathering information discreetly, calculating fares, and saving thirty paise each way. Her desire was fulfilled through individual determination and careful preparation, without anyone's help.

Mandela's vision, by contrast, was broader and selfless — freedom not for himself alone, but for all South Africans oppressed by apartheid. He sacrificed personal comforts, dedicating his life to this collective cause. His vision was fulfilled through decades of struggle, culminating in South Africa's first democratic inauguration. Thus, Valli's personal desire was fulfilled by resourcefulness, while Mandela's expansive vision was realised through courage, sacrifice, and an unwavering commitment to justice for all.

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Chapter 7; *Nelson Mandela – A Long Walk to Freedom*, Chapter 2

Explanation

- The question is a comparative presentation draft — examiners expect you to **address both characters**, draw a **clear contrast** (personal desire vs. broad vision), and show **how each is fulfilled**.
- Use the given opening line naturally.
- Key points to cover: Valli's planning/saving/independence vs. Mandela's sacrifice/collective struggle/triumph of democracy.
- Keep within 120–150 words; avoid padding. Each paragraph should carry a distinct point.
- The phrase "twin obligations" and Mandela's evolving understanding of freedom can be referenced but are not mandatory here.

Q38.

[6]

Answer in 100-120 words.

Valli was sensitive, but at the same time, she was fearless and quite determined. Think of another character from your text book, who displayed similar character traits.

Compare and contrast the lives of Valli and the other character, that you have chosen from the text of Two Stories about Flying.

You may begin this way.

The characters who are fearless and determined from two texts are Valli and _____.

(Reference : Madam Rides a Bus & Two Stories about Flying)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/3/1 Q10(a)

♦ Madam Rides the Bus

Two Stories about Flying

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Model Answer

The characters who are fearless and determined from two texts are Valli and the young seagull (from *His First Flight*).

Similarities: Both Valli and the young seagull were curious and longed to experience something new — Valli desired a bus ride, while the seagull longed to fly. Both showed determination to overcome their fear and achieve their goal. Both were sensitive to their surroundings and observed everything keenly.

Differences: Valli was a real, practical child who carefully planned her journey — saving sixty paise, resisting temptations, and timing her trip precisely. The seagull, however, acted on instinct when hunger pushed him off the ledge. Valli acted independently and with full awareness; the seagull needed external motivation. Valli's journey was a conscious, deliberate adventure, while the seagull's first flight was driven by desperation.

Both ultimately triumphed through courage and determination.

Source: *Madam Rides the Bus*, Chapter 7; *Two Stories about Flying*, Chapter 3

Explanation

- The question asks you to **compare AND contrast** — examiners look for both similarities and differences clearly stated.
- The young seagull (*His First Flight*) is the most natural choice since it is from the paired chapter *Two Stories about Flying* mentioned in the question.
- Keep similarities and differences distinct — don't mix them.
- Valli's traits from the passage: thrifty, determined, independent, planned carefully, resisted temptations.
- Stay within 120–150 words; this answer is approximately 130 words.
- The opening line format is given in the question — always use it as instructed.

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