

CBSE CLASS X

English Language & Literature (184)

ANSWER KEY

From previous CBSE Board Exam questions

Code: PMPRC1	Questions: 33	Maximum Marks: 131	Generated: 2026-06-15 12:52
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SELECTIONS USED

Source	Previous-year board
Subject	English Language & Literature
Lessons	A Letter to God
Year	2022-2026
Questions selected	33

Composition — Types: 20 Short · 8 literature_long · 5 literature_extract

Q1.

[6]

Answer any one of the following two questions in 100–120 words:

Analyse and evaluate the role of faith in 'A Letter to God' and 'The Sermon at Benares'.

Previously asked in: 2025 2/2/1 Q10 (a)

♦ A Letter to God

The Sermon at Benares

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Model Answer

Role of Faith in 'A Letter to God' and 'The Sermon at Benares'

In *A Letter to God*, Lencho's faith in God is absolute and unquestioning. When hailstorms destroy his crops, he writes directly to God asking for a hundred pesos, never doubting that God will respond. His faith is so blind that when he receives money sent by the postmaster and workers, he suspects them of stealing the rest — he cannot imagine God sending less than what he asked for. His faith, though admirable in its purity, reveals his naivety.

In *The Sermon at Benares*, the Buddha teaches a different kind of faith — faith rooted in acceptance and wisdom. He does not deny grief but shows Kisa Gotami that suffering and death are universal. True faith lies in understanding life's impermanence, not in miraculous relief.

Both stories show faith as a powerful force, but one that must be guided by wisdom rather than blind expectation.

Source: Chapter 1 — *A Letter to God*; Chapter 8 — *The Sermon at Benares*

Explanation

- **Examiners look for:** comparison of both texts, reference to specific events, and a concluding observation linking both.
- **Key contrast:** Lencho's faith is personal, blind, and somewhat selfish; the Buddha's teaching replaces blind grief with reasoned acceptance.
- **Avoid:** retelling the full plot — analyse *how* faith functions in each story.
- **Word count tip:** This is 6 marks / ~120–150 words — three tight paragraphs is ideal.

Q2.

[3]

What idea does the Postmaster come up with? What did he do to stick to his resolution? (A Letter to God)

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

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

The postmaster came up with the idea of **answering Lencho's letter** so as not to shake the writer's faith in God.

To stick to his resolution, he collected money from his employees, gave part of his own salary, and asked several friends to contribute "for an act of charity." Though he could not gather the full hundred pesos, he sent Lencho a little more than half the amount in an envelope signed simply as "God."

Source: *A Letter to God*, Chapter 1

Explanation

This question tests reading comprehension from the story. The examiner expects two clear parts:

1. **The idea** — answering the letter to preserve Lencho's faith.
2. **Steps taken** — collecting from employees, contributing own salary, asking friends.

Mention that he couldn't gather the full hundred pesos; this detail is often asked as a follow-up and shows complete understanding. Keep the answer concise and factual — no personal opinion needed here.

Q3.

[6]

How does Lencho's faith in God, as shown in 'A Letter to God' contrast with the skepticism of Kisa Gotami in 'Sermon at Benares'. Support your answer with details from the two texts.

Previously asked in: 2026 2/5/1 Q10(A)

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

Lencho's Unquestioning Faith vs. Kisa Gotami's Initial Skepticism

Lencho, a poor farmer in 'A Letter to God', displays absolute, unquestioning faith in God. When a hailstorm destroys his crops entirely, he does not despair permanently but writes directly to God asking for a hundred pesos. He never doubts that God will respond — "such was his confidence" that he showed no surprise on receiving money. His faith is so blind that he even accuses the post office employees of stealing, rather than questioning whether God could have sent less than asked.

Kisa Gotami, in 'Sermon at Benares', initially refuses to accept her son's death and desperately seeks a cure — a sign of denial rather than faith. Only after wandering from house to house, finding none untouched by death, does she gain wisdom and accept the universal truth of impermanence.

Thus, Lencho's faith is unconditional and never wavers, while Kisa Gotami's understanding develops gradually through lived experience and the Buddha's compassionate guidance.

Source: Chapter 1 — A Letter to God; Chapter 5 — Sermon at Benares

Explanation

- The examiner wants a **comparison** — spend roughly equal space on both characters.
- Key contrast: Lencho's faith is **static and absolute** (never questioned); Kisa Gotami's belief is **dynamic** — she transforms from skepticism/denial to acceptance.
- Always **cite textual evidence**: "such was his confidence" for Lencho; the mustard-seed episode for Kisa Gotami.
- Irony in Lencho's faith (calling honest helpers "crooks") adds depth — worth one line.
- Do not exceed ~130–140 words in the exam; this answer models that length.

Q4.

[3]

Why did the night after the rains turn sorrowful for Lencho ? (A letter to God)

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

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

The night after the hailstorm turned sorrowful for Lencho because the hail had completely destroyed his cornfield. Not a leaf remained on the trees and the flowers were gone from the plants. He had hoped the rains would bring a good harvest, but instead the hailstones wiped out everything. His family feared they would go hungry all year. He lamented, "All our work, for nothing," and felt there was no one to help them.

Source: *A Letter to God, Chapter 1*

Explanation

Examiners expect three clear points for 3 marks: (1) the hail destroyed the crops entirely, (2) contrast with Lencho's earlier joy/hope, and (3) his despair about hunger and helplessness. Include at least one quote from the text to show close reading. Avoid padding — keep it tight and factual.

Q5.

[3]

Explain the irony in the chapter, "A Letter to God".

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

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

The central irony in "A Letter to God" is that Lencho, who has absolute faith in God, ends up accusing the very people who acted as God's instruments to help him. The postmaster and employees sacrificed their own money out of genuine kindness to send Lencho seventy pesos. Yet Lencho, receiving less than the hundred pesos he asked for, concludes that the post office employees are "a bunch of crooks" who stole the rest — completely unaware that these very people were his benefactors. Those who helped him became the ones he suspected.

Source: *A Letter to God, Chapter 1*

Explanation

The examiner expects you to:

- Identify the **ironic situation** (not just retell the plot)
- Explain clearly: helpers = accused thieves
- Use the textbook's own hint: "An ironic situation is strange or amusing because it is the opposite of what is expected."

Keep it focused — don't just summarise the story. One crisp explanation of the unexpected twist earns full marks.

Q6.

[3]

Illustrate Lencho's unwavering faith in the Divine. (A Letter to God)

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

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

Lencho had complete, unshakeable faith in God. After the hailstorm destroyed his entire crop, he did not despair but turned to God for help. He wrote a letter directly addressed "To God," asking for a hundred pesos to resow his field. He was so confident in God's help that he showed **no surprise** on receiving money. When he found only seventy pesos instead of a hundred, he did not doubt God — he was certain God could neither make mistakes nor deny his request. He immediately wrote a second letter to God, blaming the post office employees for stealing the rest, never once questioning God's ability or willingness to help.

Source: *A Letter to God*, Chapter 1

Explanation

- The examiner looks for **three clear points** (3 marks): (1) Lencho's faith shown through writing the letter, (2) no surprise on receiving money, (3) second letter still addressed to God blaming postal employees, not doubting God.
- Use textual evidence: "God could not have made a mistake" is a key quote to include or paraphrase.
- Avoid retelling the whole story — focus only on moments that **illustrate faith**.

Q7.

[3]

In what manner did Lencho's cornfield suffer damage? Did he hold any expectations of receiving assistance? (A Letter to God)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/4/1 Q8 IV

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

Lencho's cornfield was completely devastated by a severe hailstorm. Initially, it rained heavily, which Lencho welcomed. However, suddenly strong winds brought large hailstones that destroyed the crops for an entire hour. Not a leaf remained on the trees, the corn was totally destroyed, and the flowers were gone. The field looked white, as if covered with salt.

Despite this loss, Lencho did not expect help from any human being. His wife said, "There's no one who can help us." However, Lencho had complete, unshakeable faith in God. He wrote a letter to God requesting a hundred pesos to sow his field again and survive until the next harvest.

Source: *A Letter to God*, Chapter 1

Explanation

- The question has two parts: **how** the damage occurred + **whether** he expected help. Address both.
- Key detail: first rain was welcome, then **hailstorm** caused total destruction — mention this contrast.
- For the second part, stress that he expected **no human help** but had **absolute faith in God** — this is the central theme examiners look for.
- Avoid over-quoting; paraphrase with one or two short direct quotes for effect.

Q8.

[6]

Forgiveness is the foundation of a cordial relationship. Do you agree? How does Lencho's act of writing a letter to God highlight the importance of faith in 'A Letter to God'?

Previously asked in: 2023 2/5/1 Q10(a)

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

Yes, forgiveness and faith are both central to harmonious relationships. In *A Letter to God*, Lencho's unshakeable faith in God beautifully illustrates how belief can sustain a person through the darkest times.

Lencho, a simple farmer, loses his entire crop to a devastating hailstorm. Facing hunger and despair, he turns to God as his only hope. He writes a letter asking for a hundred pesos — an act that reflects his complete, unquestioning faith. As the text states, he believed God's eyes "see everything, even what is deep in one's conscience."

The postmaster, moved by Lencho's faith, collects money from employees and sends it, signing the letter 'God' — an act of forgiveness and charity to protect Lencho's belief.

Ironically, when Lencho receives only seventy pesos, he accuses the post office employees of being "crooks," never suspecting their kindness. His faith in God remains intact, yet he shows no gratitude — highlighting that while faith is powerful, it must be paired with forgiveness and humility for truly cordial relationships.

Source: *A Letter to God*, Chapter 1

Explanation

- The question has two parts: (1) agree/disagree on forgiveness, and (2) how Lencho's letter highlights faith. Address both.
- Examiners expect textual evidence — quote or closely paraphrase the story (e.g., "bunch of crooks," "see everything in one's conscience").
- The irony (Lencho mistrusting the very people who helped him) is a key examiner expectation for this chapter.
- End with a connecting conclusion linking faith + forgiveness = cordial relationships, as the question demands.

Q9.

[3]

What did Lencho hope for and why?

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

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

Lencho hoped for rain to ensure a good harvest. He was a farmer, and his ripe cornfield desperately needed water. When it finally rained, he was overjoyed, comparing the raindrops to new coins. However, the rain soon turned into a hailstorm that completely destroyed his crops — the corn was ruined, flowers were gone, and not a leaf remained on the trees. Lencho feared his family would go hungry, so he hoped for help from God, the only source of support he believed in.

Source: *A Letter to God, Chapter 1*

Explanation

This question has two parts embedded in one: (1) what Lencho hoped for **before/during the rain** — a good harvest through rainfall, and (2) what he hoped for **after the hailstorm** — divine help. Examiners expect both points for full marks. Quote or closely paraphrase the text (e.g., "new coins," "help from God") to show textual grounding. Avoid writing a long essay — 3 marks = ~3 clear points in brief.

Q10.

[3]

Who read the letter sent by Lencho? What did he do then?

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

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

The postmaster read the letter sent by Lencho. When he read it, he first laughed but then turned serious, admiring Lencho's deep faith in God. He decided to answer the letter so as not to shake Lencho's faith. He collected money from his employees, contributed part of his own salary, and asked friends to donate. Though he could not gather the full hundred pesos, he put a little more than half in an envelope addressed to Lencho and signed it 'God'.

Source: *A Letter to God, Chapter 1*

Explanation

- The question is 3 marks, so cover **three key points**: (1) who read it, (2) his reaction, (3) what action he took.
- Mention the postmaster's motivation — **not to shake Lencho's faith** — as examiners look for this reason.
- Note that he signed the letter '**God**' — a detail often asked separately but relevant here too.
- Keep it within ~75 words; avoid listing every detail of the story.

Q11.

[3]

Lencho's last letter to God depicts astute faith on one level and irony on the other. Bring about the element of faith and irony in the situation. (A Letter to God)

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

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

Faith: Lencho had unshakeable faith in God. When the hailstorm destroyed his crops, he wrote a letter directly to God asking for 100 pesos. When he received 70 pesos, he showed no surprise — such was his unwavering confidence that God would help him. He immediately wrote a second letter requesting the remaining amount, proving his blind, absolute trust in God.

Irony: The irony lies in the fact that the very people — the post office employees — who collected money out of charity and kindness to strengthen Lencho's faith, are called "a bunch of crooks" by Lencho himself in his second letter. The ones who helped him became the suspects in his eyes.

Explanation

- The examiner expects **two distinct points** — one on faith, one on irony — clearly labelled or separated.
- Quote or refer to specific moments from the story (second letter, 70 pesos) to show textual grounding.
- The word "irony" must be explained as the *unexpected reversal*: helpers accused as thieves.
- Avoid padding; 3 marks = roughly 3 key points across both parts.

Q12.

[3]

What are the raindrops compared to and why ?

Previously asked in: 2023 2/6/1 Q8 (b)

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

In the story "A Letter to God," the raindrops are compared to **new coins** by Lencho. He exclaims, "These aren't raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins. The big drops are ten cent pieces and the little ones are fives."

This is a **metaphor** — a quality of one thing is transferred to another. Lencho compares the rain to coins because, as a farmer, rain meant prosperity and a good harvest. Just as coins bring wealth, the rain would ensure a good crop, making it as valuable as money to him.

Source: *A Letter to God, Chapter 1*

Explanation

- The examiner expects you to: (1) name what raindrops are compared to, (2) quote from the text, and (3) explain *why* — i.e., the significance/reason behind the comparison.
- Note this is also classified under **Metaphors** in the Language Study section (Section V), so using the word "metaphor" and explaining the quality being compared adds marks.
- Don't just quote; always explain the reason — that's where most students lose marks.

Q13.

[5]

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree
Has given my heart
A change of mood

Read the following extract and answer the questions:

- (i) Fill the blank to complete the sentence. Shaking down of dust of snow gave the speaker a change of heart by _____. [1]
- (ii) How does the interaction between the natural elements (crow, snow, hemlock tree) contribute to the speaker's emotional transformation in the poem? Answer in about 40 words. [2]
- (iii) 'Dust of Snow' is referred to as: [1]
- A mist
B dust of branches
C snow residue
D snowflakes
- (iv) The crow and the hemlock tree represent _____. 1. sorrow 2. elation 3. hope 4. anxiety 5. enthusiasm [1]
- A 1 only
B 2, 3 and 5
C 4 only
D 1, 4 and 5

Previously asked in: 2025 2/3/1 Q7(a)

◆ 1.1 Dust of Snow

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Model Answer

(i) Shaking down of dust of snow gave the speaker a change of heart by **lifting his spirits and saving the rest of his day from being wasted in regret.**

(ii) The crow, traditionally a symbol of gloom, and the hemlock tree, associated with sorrow, are unconventional agents of change. When the crow shakes snow onto the speaker, this simple, unexpected natural act breaks his dark mood and brings him a moment of joy, showing that even gloomy elements can have a positive effect.

(iii) **D — Snowflakes**

(iv) **A — 1 only**

The crow and the hemlock tree are traditionally associated with sorrow/ill omen, not with elation, hope, anxiety, or enthusiasm.

Source: *Dust of Snow*, Robert Frost (First Flight, Class 10)

Explanation

- (i) The answer should reflect the idea of mood upliftment — the snow falling on him snapped him out of his gloomy state.

- **(ii)** Examiners want you to identify the symbolism (crow = gloom, hemlock = sorrow) AND explain how they paradoxically cause a positive emotional shift. Both elements must be mentioned.
- **(iii)** "Dust of snow" refers to fine, light snowflakes — not mist or residue. Option D is correct.
- **(iv)** Both crow and hemlock carry negative/dark connotations in literature. Only "sorrow" (Option 1) fits. Option A is correct. Do not be misled by the positive outcome of the poem — the symbols themselves remain dark.

Q14.

[5]

Not a leaf remained on the trees. The corn was totally destroyed. The flowers were gone from the plants. Lencho's soul was filled with sadness. When the storm had passed, he stood in the middle of the field and said to his sons, "A plague of locusts would have left more than this. The hail has left nothing. This year we will have no corn." That night was a sorrowful one.
 "All our work, for nothing."
 "There's no one who can help us."
 "We'll all go hungry this year."

Read the following extract and answer the questions.

(i) Why were there no leaves left on the trees ? [1]

- A The locusts ate them up.
- B An earthquake had occurred.
- C There was a hailstorm.
- D The animals grazed on them.

(ii) Fill in the blank with the correct word from the brackets. Lencho felt _____ (jubilant/devastated) when he saw his destroyed corn fields. [1]

(iii) When Lencho says, "All our work, for nothing," what does he refer to ? Explain in about 40 words. [2]

(iv) Why would Lencho have preferred a plague of locusts to a hailstorm ? [1]

Previously asked in: 2025 2/1/1 Q6(a)

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

(i) C — There was a hailstorm.

(ii) Lencho felt **devastated** when he saw his destroyed corn fields.

(iii) Lencho refers to all the hard labour he and his family had put in throughout the farming season — ploughing, sowing, and tending the crops. The violent hailstorm destroyed the corn completely, making all their effort utterly worthless. They would earn nothing and face hunger.

(iv) Lencho says a plague of locusts would have left more than the hail because locusts eat only the crops but do not destroy every single leaf, flower, or plant entirely. The hailstorm, however, left absolutely nothing — stripping the trees bare and wiping out the corn completely. A locust attack would have caused less total devastation than the hailstorm did.

Source: *A Letter to God, First Flight (Chapter 1)*

Explanation

- (i) The extract clearly states "Not a leaf remained on the trees" due to the hailstorm — option C is directly supported.
- (ii) "Devastated" fits because "Lencho's soul was filled with sadness." "Jubilant" means joyful — the opposite.
- (iii) 2-mark answer needs ~40 words: identify *what* work (farming labour) and *why* it is wasted (hailstorm destroyed everything). Don't just restate the quote.
- (iv) Key contrast to draw: locusts damage crops partially; the hailstorm left *nothing* at all — use Lencho's own words as evidence. One crisp paragraph is enough for 1 mark.

Q15.

[5]

The postmaster — a fat, amiable fellow — also broke out laughing, but almost immediately he turned serious and, tapping the letter to his desk, commented, "What faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter. Starting up a correspondence with God!"

So, in order not to shake the writer's faith in God, the postmaster came up with an idea: answer the letter.

Read the following extract and answer the questions.

- (i) Justify the following statement : What faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter. [1]
- (ii) Fill in the blank with a correct word from the brackets. The postmaster turned serious on seeing the letter addressed to God because he realized that the writer had _____ (immense/limited) faith in God. [1]
- (iii) Examine the portrayal of the postmaster in the given extract. [2]
- (iv) Why did the postmaster initially laugh on seeing the letter ? [1]
- (A) It was a blank sheet of paper.
(B) He lacked faith in God.
(C) He had received such letters earlier.
(D) He had never known such an address.

Previously asked in: 2026 2/3/1 Q6(a)

♦ A Letter to God

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Model Answer

(i) Lencho had unshakeable faith in God. He addressed a letter directly to God asking for 100 pesos, firmly believing God would help him. The postmaster admired this extraordinary, absolute trust which he himself lacked.

(ii) immense

(iii) The postmaster is portrayed as a **fat, amiable** (good-natured) man who first laughs at the amusing idea of a letter addressed to God. However, he quickly turns serious, showing his sensitivity and depth of character. He genuinely admires Lencho's faith and, not wanting to shatter it, generously takes the initiative to collect money and reply as God. This reveals him as a kind, empathetic, and thoughtful person.

(iv) (D) He had never known such an address.

Source: *A Letter to God, First Flight (CBSE Class 10)*

Explanation

- (i) Justify means explain *why* the statement is valid — link it to Lencho's act of writing to God directly.
- (ii) Straight from the extract — the postmaster marvels at the faith, so it must be "immense."
- (iii) 2-mark character sketch: pick **two distinct traits** with textual evidence each (amiable + empathetic/kind). Avoid padding.
- (iv) The postmaster laughed because the address "God" was unprecedented — option D. Options B and C contradict the text; A is invented.

Q16.

[5]

Some say the world will end in fire some say in ice.
 From what I've tasted of desire
 I hold with those who favour fire.
 (Stanza 1)

But if it had to perish twice,
 I think I know enough of hate
 To say that for destruction ice
 Is also great
 And would suffice.

Read the given extracts and answer the questions for ANY ONE of the two given:

- I** Complete the following suitably: According to Robert Frost, fire refers to _____. [1]
- II** Why does the poet believe both fire and ice can destroy the world equally? [2]
- III** Fill the blank with one word: In the line "But if it has to perish twice", 'it' refers to the _____. [1]
- IV** Select the option with same rhyme scheme as lines in Stanza 1: [1]
- A They are all gone away, The House is shut and still, There is nothing more to say.
 B Tell me not, in mournful numbers, Life is but an empty dream! For the soul is dead that slumbers.
 C The dog chased the ball down the lane, He ran with such incredible speed, His tail was a blur, a joyful glee.
 D The Sun is high, The clouds drift past, In the blue sky which is so vast.

Previously asked in: 2026 2/1/1 Q7(A)

◆ 1.2 Fire and Ice

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Model Answer

- I.** According to Robert Frost, fire refers to **desire** (human greed, passion, and intense longing).
- II.** The poet believes fire symbolises desire — a burning, consuming passion that can destroy the world. Ice symbolises hate — cold, indifferent, and equally destructive. Just as fire can burn everything, hate (ice) can make the world perish through cruelty and bitterness. Both emotions are extreme and capable of causing complete destruction, making them equally devastating.
- III.** In the line "But if it has to perish twice," 'it' refers to the **world**.
- IV.** The rhyme scheme of Stanza 1 is **ABA** (fire–desire–fire pattern: fire/ice/desire = ABA).
 The correct option is **A**:
- "away" / "still" / "say" → ABA rhyme scheme, matching Stanza 1.
- Source: *Fire and Ice*, Robert Frost — *Class 10 First Flight, Chapter 2*
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Explanation

- **I:** "Desire" is directly stated in the poem — examiners expect this exact word.
- **II:** 2-mark answer needs both symbols explained with their effect — fire = desire, ice = hate, both destructive.
- **III:** "It" clearly refers to the world — the subject of the entire poem.
- **IV:** Stanza 1 rhymes: fire(A), desire(B), fire(A) — that's ABA. Option A follows the same ABA pattern (away/still/say = A/B/A). Options B and C do not match.

Q17.

[5]

Some say the world will end in fire
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favour fire.

Read the following extracts and answer the questions for any one of the given two, (a) or (b):

- (i) The speaker offers evidence to support his preference for one theory over the other. Mention the evidence. [1]
- (ii) What is the prediction of the poet about how the world will come to an end? Answer in about 40 words. [2]
- (iii) "Fire" and "Ice" are used in the poem as _____. [1]
- (A) similes
(B) metaphors
(C) repetition
(D) oxymorons
- (iv) Comment on the overall mood of the extract. [1]

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

◆ 1.2 Fire and Ice

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Model Answer

(i) The speaker's personal experience of **desire** (passion/craving) serves as evidence. He says "From what I've tasted of desire," meaning intense desire feels like consuming fire, so he supports the fire theory.

(ii) The poet predicts the world will end in fire, caused by human desire and greed. However, he also acknowledges that if the world were to end twice, ice — symbolising hatred and indifference — would be equally destructive and sufficient to bring about destruction.

(iii) (B) Metaphors

(iv) The overall mood of the extract is **reflective yet grim/dark**. The speaker calmly contemplates the destruction of the world, using a detached, matter-of-fact tone that makes the idea of the world's end feel inevitable and unsettling.

Source: "Fire and Ice" by Robert Frost, *First Flight* (Poem 2)

Explanation

- (i) The key phrase is "tasted of desire" — this is the speaker's personal evidence. One line is enough for 1 mark.
- (ii) For 2 marks (~40 words), cover **both** fire (desire) and ice (hate) as predicted causes, even though the extract shows only the first stanza. The poem is the source.
- (iii) Fire = desire, Ice = hate — these are **metaphors** (indirect comparisons without "like/as"). This is a direct concept question.
- (iv) "Reflective and grim" captures the calm yet dark contemplation. Avoid vague words like "sad" — be precise.

Q18.

[6]

Comment on the reactions and feelings of Lencho and Nelson Mandela when they faced challenges in their lives.
(A Letter to God and Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom)

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

♦ A Letter to God

Nelson Mandela – Long Walk to Freedom

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Model Answer

Lencho's Reaction (A Letter to God):

Lencho was a hardworking farmer who had complete, unquestioning faith in God. When a hailstorm destroyed his entire crop, he was devastated but not hopeless. Instead of despairing, he wrote a letter directly to God asking for 100 pesos to survive. When he received only 70 pesos (sent by the postmaster and his staff), he felt angry and cheated. Ironically, he accused God's "helpers" — the very post office employees who had helped him — of stealing the rest. His faith was naive and blind, making him ungrateful and incapable of recognising human kindness.

Mandela's Reaction (Long Walk to Freedom):

Mandela faced decades of oppression under apartheid. Rather than surrendering, he was transformed by suffering. He understood that oppression deepens one's hunger for freedom and creates "heights of character." His personal freedom became inseparable from his people's freedom. He believed courage was not the absence of fear, but conquering it. His hunger for freedom changed him from a frightened young man into a bold leader who sacrificed his family life and personal comfort for his nation.

Contrast: Lencho's faith was passive and self-centred; Mandela's resolve was active, selfless, and grew stronger through hardship.

Source: Chapter 1 – A Letter to God; Chapter 2 – Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom

Explanation

- Examiners expect **equal treatment of both texts** — roughly half the answer for each character.
- Key contrast: Lencho represents **blind, naive faith** that turns into ingratitude; Mandela represents **courage and selflessness** born from suffering — this contrast is the heart of the answer.
- Use textual evidence: "depths of oppression create heights of character," Lencho calling helpers thieves, etc.
- Avoid retelling the plot — focus on **reactions and feelings** as the question demands.
- The concluding comparison line earns the final mark for synthesis.

Q19.

[3]

What mood of the poet is reflected in the poem 'Dust of Snow' initially? What images are used by the poet to bring about the effect? Comment.

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

◆ 1.1 Dust of Snow

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Model Answer

Initially, the poet is in a **sad and regretful mood** — he says he had "rued" the day, suggesting he was unhappy and hopeless.

The poet uses two dark, gloomy images to reflect this mood:

- **The crow** — a bird associated with ill-omen and negativity, unlike the gentle birds usually found in poetry.
- **The hemlock tree** — a poisonous plant, symbolising death and sorrow, rather than a beautiful, cheerful tree.

These images of the crow and hemlock together create an atmosphere of gloom and despair, perfectly mirroring the poet's depressed state of mind at the beginning of the poem.

Source: *Dust of Snow*, Chapter 1

Explanation

- Examiners expect you to identify the initial mood (sad/regretful), name both dark images (crow + hemlock), and briefly explain what each symbolises.
- The word "**rued**" (regret) is your textual evidence for the mood — mention it or paraphrase it.
- Don't describe the change of mood at length here; the question asks about the **initial** mood and the images. A brief mention of why these images (not a robin or an oak) were chosen shows deeper understanding.
- 3 marks = mood (1) + images named (1) + brief comment on effect (1).

Q20.

[3]

In the poem "Dust of Snow", the 'hemlock tree' and the 'crow' hold specific meanings. Elaborate on how these symbols are utilized within the context of the poem.

Previously asked in: 2025 2/4/1 Q8 III

◆ 1.1 Dust of Snow

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Model Answer

In "Dust of Snow," the **crow** and the **hemlock tree** are unconventional, dark symbols that Frost deliberately chose over cheerful alternatives.

The **crow** is typically associated with ill omen and gloom, unlike birds such as the sparrow or dove that usually appear in poems. It represents darkness and sorrow.

The **hemlock tree** is a poisonous plant, traditionally linked to death and misfortune, rather than a beautiful maple, oak, or pine.

By using these negative symbols together, Frost shows that even gloomy, inauspicious elements of nature can bring an unexpected positive change. The crow shaking snow from the hemlock transformed the poet's regretful, depressed mood into a lighter one — suggesting that joy can arise from the most unlikely sources.

Source: *Dust of Snow, First Flight (Class 10)*

Explanation

- Examiners look for: identification of both symbols + their traditional negative connotations + how they paradoxically create a positive effect.
- Key contrast: dark symbols → positive outcome. This is the central irony of the poem.
- Don't just define the symbols — explain *how* Frost **uses** them (i.e., what purpose they serve in the poem's meaning).
- Avoid listing definitions; connect each symbol to the poem's mood shift.

Q21.

[2]

Do you agree with the poet Walt Whitman's perception of animal life. Justify. (Animals)

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

♦ 1.1 Dust of Snow

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Model Answer

Yes, I agree with Walt Whitman's perception of animal life. In the poem *Animals*, he admires animals for being calm, self-contained, and free from greed, sins, and dissatisfaction. Unlike humans, animals do not weep for their sins or complain about their conditions. They live peacefully and honestly, which makes them truly admirable.

Source: *Animals, First Flight – Class 10*

Explanation

- This is a **value-based/opinion question**, so begin with "Yes, I agree..." and justify with points from the poem.
- Key ideas examiners expect: animals are **placid, self-contained, free from sin, greed, and dissatisfaction** — contrasted with flawed human nature.
- Do not write a long essay; 2 marks = 2–3 crisp points in about 40–50 words.
- Even though the source passages here don't include the *Animals* poem directly, your answer must draw on that poem's content as it is the prescribed CBSE text.

Q22.

[2]

Why does the poet wish to 'turn' and live with animals? (Animals)

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

♦ 1.1 Dust of Snow

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Model Answer

In the poem *Animals*, the poet wishes to turn and live with animals because animals are calm, self-contained, and do not complain about their condition. They do not weep for their sins, feel dissatisfied, or kneel to worship. The poet finds animals more honest and peaceful compared to restless, hypocritical humans.

Explanation

This question is from Walt Whitman's poem *Animals*, not the passages provided. Examiners expect two clear reasons: (1) animals are content and do not suffer moral/spiritual anxiety, and (2) they possess virtues (calmness, honesty) that humans have lost. Mention both points for full 2 marks.

Q23.

[3]

'Dust of Snow', by Robert Frost is a poem about nature and simplicity. Elaborate.

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

◆ 1.1 Dust of Snow

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Model Answer

"Dust of Snow" is a short, simple poem that captures a small moment in nature — a crow shaking snow off a hemlock tree — yet carries deep emotional significance.

Frost deliberately chooses ordinary, even gloomy images: a crow (associated with dark omens) and a hemlock tree (a poisonous plant). These symbols represent sorrow and negativity. Yet the tiny, unexpected action of snow falling on the poet instantly lifts his spirits, saving "some part / Of a day I had rued."

The poem's simplicity lies in its language and setting, while its greatness lies in showing how nature, even in its humblest form, can heal the human spirit.

Source: *Dust of Snow*, Chapter 1

Explanation

- Examiners look for **three key points**: (1) identification of simple/ordinary natural imagery, (2) the symbolic meaning of crow and hemlock, and (3) the theme — nature's small acts can change human mood.
- Avoid over-writing. At 3 marks, ~75 words with clear points is ideal.
- The phrase "saved some part of a day I had rued" is important — quote it to show close reading.
- Frost's own quote ("a little thing touches a larger thing") perfectly supports the answer but comes from the passage notes, so it is safe to reference.

Q24.

[3]

How does the short structure of poem 'Dust of Snow' enhance its message about emotional renewal? Support your answer briefly.

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

◆ 1.1 Dust of Snow

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Model Answer

The poem 'Dust of Snow' contains only eight short lines, yet conveys a powerful message. The brevity mirrors the nature of the experience itself — a single, fleeting moment when a crow shakes snow from a hemlock tree onto the poet. This tiny incident instantly transforms his sorrow into relief, suggesting that emotional renewal need not come from grand events. The compact structure reinforces the idea that small, unexpected moments can have large significance. Had the poem been lengthy, the impact of that sudden mood-change would have been diluted.

Source: *Dust of Snow*, Chapter 1

Explanation

- Examiners look for: connection between form (short structure) and theme (sudden emotional shift).
- Key point: the brevity of the poem **reflects** the brevity of the moment — quick, unplanned, yet transformative.
- Mention the dark imagery (crow, hemlock) briefly to show you understand the contrast that makes the renewal meaningful.
- Avoid padding; 3 marks = ~70 words max.

Q25.

[3]

"Dust of Snow" presents the polar opposites black and white in a colour pallet. Justify, that 'black' and 'white' signify something deeper than the superficial meaning in the poem.

Previously asked in: 2026 2/4/1 Q8 (iv)

◆ 1.1 Dust of Snow

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Model Answer

In "Dust of Snow," black and white go beyond mere colours to symbolise contrasting emotional states.

Black is represented by the **crow** and the **hemlock tree** — both associated with darkness, death, and ill-omen. They symbolise the poet's gloomy, despairing mood at the start of the poem.

White is represented by the **dust of snow** — pure, light, and refreshing — symbolising hope, positivity, and renewal.

Ironically, it is the black crow shaking white snow that triggers the mood change. Thus, black (despair) and white (hope) together signify that even in the darkest moments, a small joyful incident can restore one's spirit and save a ruined day.

Source: *Dust of Snow*, Chapter 1

Explanation

- Examiners expect you to identify the two symbols (crow/hemlock = black = despair; snow = white = hope) and explain the **irony** — that a dark agent brings a bright change.
- Don't just list meanings; connect them to the **poet's mood change** — that's the core of the 3-mark answer.
- Use terms like *symbolise*, *represent*, *ironically* to show literary awareness.

Q26.

[6]

Answer in 100-120 words.

Examine the role of Nature in the poems 'The Dust of Snow' and 'Fog'.

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

◆ 1.1 Dust of Snow

6.1 Fog

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Model Answer

In '**The Dust of Snow**', Frost uses nature as a healing force. The crow and the hemlock tree — both traditionally associated with darkness and sorrow — become unexpected agents of joy. A simple act, a crow shaking dust of snow onto the poet, lifts his mood and saves a day he had regretted. Frost shows that even the darker, "ordinary" elements of nature — a black crow, a poisonous tree — can bring positive change. Nature acts quietly but powerfully.

In '**Fog**', Sandburg personifies fog as a cat, arriving on "little cat feet," sitting silently on "haunches," surveying the harbour and city, then moving on. Nature here is mysterious, silent, and unhurried. The extended metaphor gives fog a living, animal quality.

In both poems, nature is presented as subtle yet significant — it observes, touches human life, and moves on without announcement.

Source: *First Flight* — Chapter 1 (*Dust of Snow*); Chapter 6 (*Fog*)

Explanation

- The question asks you to **examine the role of nature** in both poems — not just describe them. So connect each nature image to its effect/meaning.
- For Frost: highlight that crow + hemlock are **unconventional, dark** nature symbols, yet bring relief — examiners expect this contrast.
- For Sandburg: the **extended cat metaphor** is the key literary device; name it and explain it briefly.
- End with a **comparative point** linking both — that's what "examine" demands and earns full marks.
- Stay within 120–150 words; this answer is approximately 140 words.

Q27.

[3]

It is our attitude towards a situation that makes it positive or negative. Do you agree with it? Express your views with reference to the poem, 'Dust of Snow'.

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

◆ 1.1 Dust of Snow

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Model Answer

Yes, I agree that our attitude determines whether we perceive a situation as positive or negative.

In 'Dust of Snow', the poet Robert Frost is in a sad, regretful mood. A crow shakes dust of snow from a hemlock tree onto him — both the crow and hemlock are traditionally associated with gloom and bad omen. Yet, the poet does not view this negatively. Instead, this small, simple incident changes his mood completely. It saves "some part of a day" he had "rued." His positive attitude transforms an apparently unpleasant moment into one of joy and hope.

Thus, the poem beautifully illustrates that the same situation can be uplifting or depressing depending entirely on how we choose to see it.

Source: *Dust of Snow*, Chapter 1

Explanation

- Examiners expect a clear **yes/no stance**, followed by evidence from the poem.
- Mention the key images — crow, hemlock, dust of snow — and explain why they seem negative but become positive through the poet's attitude.
- Quote or closely paraphrase "saved some part / of a day I had rued" — this is the key line showing attitude changing the outcome.
- Avoid going off-topic into Fire and Ice or other poems; the question specifies 'Dust of Snow'.

Q28.

[3]

How far would you agree that one's positivity can bring in a spark of brightness even in adverse circumstances?

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

◆ 1.1 Dust of Snow

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Model Answer

One's positivity can indeed bring brightness in adverse circumstances, as seen in the stories we have read. Horace Danby, despite being caught red-handed, stayed calm and even engaged in polite conversation about his hay fever, showing how composure helps in difficult situations. Similarly, Richard Ebright's positive, curious mindset transformed setbacks into scientific breakthroughs. As Mr. Weiherer noted, Ebright competed "for the right reasons" — wanting to do the best job possible. A positive attitude thus transforms challenges into opportunities.

Source: *A Question of Trust* (Chapter 4); *The Making of a Scientist* (Chapter 6)

Explanation

- The question is value-based/opinion type, so you must **agree or partially agree** and support with textual evidence.
- Examiners expect 2 relevant examples from the chapters + a concluding line linking positivity to the theme.
- Avoid vague general statements; anchor every point to a character or event from the text.
- Keep it within 3–4 sentences for 3 marks — this answer is approximately 80 words, which is ideal.

Q29.

[3]

The poet considers grief as temporary. Explain with reference to the poem.

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

◆ 1.1 Dust of Snow

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The question asks about a **poem**, but the source passages provided do not include a poem that treats grief as temporary. The closest relevant passage is **Tagore's extract**:

> "Say not in grief that she is no more / but say in thankfulness that she was. / A death is not the extinguishing of a light, / but the putting out of the lamp because the dawn has come."

I will base my answer on this.

Model Answer

In the extract by Tagore, the poet considers grief as temporary by shifting the focus from loss to gratitude. He urges us not to mourn the death of a loved one but to be thankful that the person lived. The image of a lamp being put out not because the light has ended, but **because the dawn has come**, suggests that death is a natural transition, not a permanent darkness. This implies that grief, like night, gives way to a brighter perspective — thankfulness and acceptance — making sorrow a passing phase rather than a permanent state.

Source: *Extended Reading, Chapter 8*

Explanation

- The examiner expects you to quote or closely reference the poem's imagery — the **lamp and dawn** metaphor is central.
- The key idea: grief → temporary because the poet replaces it with **thankfulness**; death = dawn, not darkness.
- Avoid writing generally about grief; anchor every point to the poem's specific lines/images.
- At ~80 words, this fits the 3-mark length perfectly.

Q30.

[6]

Answer any one of the following two questions in 100–120 words:

You have been chosen to address the school assembly, to speak on the epistemology of loss and the resilience of the human spirit during times of crisis. Prepare the speech draft, with reference to the prescribed poems and/or prose that offer a powerful insight into how to deal with loss and the resilience of the human spirit required during times of crisis.

You may begin this way: Good morning everyone. Today, we are going to explore poems and/or prose that offer a powerful insight into how to deal with loss and the resilience of the human spirit required during times of crisis.

You may end this way: Thank you.

Previously asked in: 2024 2/5/1 Q10(b)

◆ 1.1 Dust of Snow

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Model Answer

Good morning everyone. Today, we are going to explore poems and/or prose that offer a powerful insight into how to deal with loss and the resilience of the human spirit required during times of crisis.

Loss is universal — yet how we face it defines us. Amitai Etzioni, in *Good Grief*, teaches us there is no "right" way to grieve. His family found consolation not in following prescribed stages, but in doing things *for one another* — calling, caring, holding each other through pain. This is resilience in its truest form.

Kahlil Gibran reminds us that "the deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain." Sorrow is not our enemy; it shapes us.

Tagore urges us: "Say not in grief that she is no more, but say in thankfulness that she was." Loss need not extinguish hope — it can become gratitude.

Resilience, as Nelson Mandela showed, defies the imagination. Even decades of oppression could not destroy the human desire for dignity and freedom.

Let us carry these lessons: grieve honestly, support one another, and transform pain into strength. Thank you.

Explanation

- The examiner awards marks for: a clear speech format (opening/closing), **direct references** to at least two prescribed texts, and a coherent central idea linking loss and resilience.
- Key texts used: *Good Grief* (Etzioni), Gibran's *Joy and Sorrow*, Tagore's verse, and Mandela's autobiography — all from the source passages.
- The phrase "resilience that defies the imagination" echoes the textbook vocabulary from Chapter 2, which earns textual accuracy marks.
- Keep the tone personal and motivational — it's a speech, not an essay.

Q31.

[3]

In the poem 'Fire and Ice', how does the intense human emotion symbolised by fire, lead to the destruction of the world?

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

♦ 1.2 Fire and Ice

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Model Answer

In the poem, fire symbolises **desire** — intense human emotions like greed, lust, and passion. The poet says, *"From what I've tasted of desire / I hold with those who favour fire."* Just as fire spreads rapidly and consumes everything, human desire, when unchecked, becomes all-consuming. It drives people toward greed, conflict, and fury, ultimately destroying relationships, values, and civilisation itself. Frost believes this burning intensity of desire is powerful enough to bring about the complete destruction of the world.

Source: *Fire and Ice*, Chapter 1

Explanation

- The key link examiners want is: **fire = desire**, and desire leads to destruction.
- Quote at least **one line** from the poem — this earns a mark.
- Name specific emotions fire symbolises (greed, lust, fury) — these come from the textbook's suggested list.
- Don't spend time on ice; the question asks only about fire.

Q32.

[6]

Answer in about 100-120 words: Analyse the similarities and differences between the young seagull from "Two stories about flying" and Lencho from "A Letter to God", and provide a rationale for the significant role faith plays in challenging and adverse situations in life.

Previously asked in: 2025 2/4/1 Q10.II

♦ Two Stories about Flying

A Letter to God

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Model Answer

Similarities:

Both the young seagull and Lencho face desperate, seemingly hopeless situations. The seagull is paralysed by fear of flying; Lencho's crops are destroyed by hail, leaving his family starving. Both are driven by a basic need — hunger — and both ultimately overcome their crisis through an act of faith and trust.

Differences:

The seagull's faith is instinctive; he trusts his wings only when hunger forces him to dive. Lencho's faith is conscious and unwavering — he believes so completely in God that he writes a letter asking for money, never doubting he will be heard.

Role of Faith:

In adversity, faith acts as the driving force that pushes individuals beyond their limits. Without the seagull's instinctive trust in his wings, he would have starved. Without Lencho's absolute faith in God, he would have surrendered to despair. Both stories show that faith — whether instinctive or spiritual — gives courage to act when circumstances seem impossible.

Source: *His First Flight*, Chapter 3; *A Letter to God*, Chapter 1

Explanation

- Examiners look for **both** stories addressed equally, a clear **similarity + difference structure**, and a concluding point on **faith**.
- Mention hunger as the common trigger — it is textually supported in both stories.
- The key contrast is *instinctive/physical* faith (seagull) vs. *conscious/spiritual* faith (Lencho) — this earns the analytical marks.
- Keep your conclusion on faith concise but purposeful; it carries the final 1–2 marks.

Q33.

[6]

How do Lencho in 'A Letter to God' and Kisa Gotami in 'The Sermon at Benares' respond to their experiences of suffering and loss? How did they overcome their respective losses?

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

♦ The Sermon at Benares

A Letter to God

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Model Answer

Lencho's Response (A Letter to God):

Lencho, a farmer, suffers great loss when a hailstorm destroys his crops. His response is rooted in deep, unquestioning faith in God. Rather than despairing, he writes a letter directly to God asking for 100 pesos. When he receives 70 pesos (sent by the postmaster and employees), he writes again, accusing "a bunch of crooks at the post office" of stealing the rest. His faith never wavers, but ironically, he shows ingratitude toward the very humans who helped him.

Kisa Gotami's Response (The Sermon at Benares):

Kisa Gotami is devastated by her son's death and desperately seeks medicine to revive him. The Buddha sends her to fetch mustard seed from a house untouched by death. Finding no such house, she realises that death is universal. She overcomes her grief by surrendering selfishness and accepting that death is the common fate of all mortals.

Comparison:

Lencho overcomes loss through blind faith in God. Kisa Gotami overcomes it through wisdom and acceptance of life's reality. Both find consolation — one through belief, the other through enlightenment.

Source: Chapter 1 — A Letter to God; Chapter 8 — The Sermon at Benares

Explanation

- **What examiners look for:** Both characters must be discussed with equal weight; the question has two parts — response to suffering AND how they overcame it.
- **Lencho's irony** is a key point — his faith is absolute, but he is ungrateful to human helpers. Mention this for full marks.
- **Kisa Gotami's arc** — first trip (denial/desperation) → second trip (realisation) → acceptance — must be clear.
- Avoid retelling the full story; focus on the *response* and *resolution*.
- A brief comparative line at the end earns the synthesis mark.

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