

CBSE CLASS X

English Language & Literature (184)

ANSWER KEY

From previous CBSE Board Exam questions

Code: SNICZI

Questions: 22

Maximum Marks: 96

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SELECTIONS USED

Source	Previous-year board
Subject	English Language & Literature
Lessons	Bholi
Year	2022-2026
Questions selected	22

Composition — Types: 10 Short · 9 literature_long · 3 Long

Q1.

[3]

Mention any two reasons that substantiate that Bholi's mother was a negative presence in her life. (Bholi)

Previously asked in: 2026 2/1/1 Q9 III

♦ Bholi

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Model Answer

Bholi's mother was a negative presence in her life in the following ways:

- 1. Neglect and indifference:** Bholi's mother never got new clothes made for her; she wore old, unwashed hand-me-downs from her sisters. No one cared to mend or wash them, showing how her mother ignored her basic needs.
- 1. Using her as a burden to dispose of:** When Ramlal consulted his wife about sending daughters to school, she coldly said, "Send Bholi to school. As it is, there is little chance of her getting married... Let the teachers worry about her." She treated Bholi not as a daughter to nurture but as a liability to be shifted elsewhere. She also called her "a dumb cow" and a "witless one," showing complete lack of love and respect.

Source: *Bholi*, Chapter 8

Explanation

For 3 marks, examiners expect **two clearly stated points** supported by **textual evidence**. Each point should name the negative behaviour and back it with a quote or detail from the text. Avoid vague statements like "she didn't love her" — always cite what the mother *said* or *did*. Here, the two strongest points are: (1) neglect of Bholi's clothing/physical care, and (2) the callous remark about sending her to school. The quote about "dumb cow/witless one" adds bonus support to point 2.

Q2.

[3]

Why did Bholi's teacher feel like an artist admiring her masterpiece? (Bholi)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/1/1 Q9 (ii)

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

Bholi's teacher had transformed her completely — from a stammering, neglected, and frightened girl into a confident, educated, and courageous young woman. When Bholi boldly refused to marry the greedy Bishamber and spoke without any stammer, the teacher realised her efforts had borne fruit. Just as an artist feels deep satisfaction on completing a masterpiece, the teacher felt proud seeing her most challenging student become a self-reliant and dignified person. Bholi was her masterpiece — shaped with patience, encouragement, and faith.

Source: *Bholi*, Chapter 8 (Read and Find Out – Part 3 / closing paragraph)

Explanation

The key phrase is directly from the last paragraph of the story: "*the light of a deep satisfaction that an artist feels when contemplating the completion of her masterpiece.*" Examiners expect you to **explain the transformation of Bholi** (stammering → confident) as the reason for the teacher's pride, and connect it to the artist-masterpiece metaphor. Avoid vague answers — be specific about what Bholi did (refused the marriage, spoke without stammering) to show the transformation was complete.

Q3.

[3]

Education acts as a catalyst for a significant transformation in Bholi. Comment. (Bholi)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/5/1 Q9 (i)

♦ Bholi

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Model Answer

Education acts as a catalyst for Bholi's transformation from a stammering, frightened girl into a confident, self-reliant woman.

Before school, Bholi was neglected, ridiculed for her pockmarks and stammer, and considered a "dumb cow." Her teacher's encouragement — praising her smallest efforts and promising her respect through learning — filled her heart with "a new hope and a new life."

Over the years, education gave her the courage to reject the greedy Bishamber at the wedding itself, speaking "without the slightest stammer." The same girl once dismissed as witless now resolved to serve her parents and teach in her school — a complete transformation.

Source: Chapter 8 — Bholi

Explanation

- The question asks you to **comment**, so give 2–3 developed points, not a list.
- Examiners look for: Bholi's state *before* education → the teacher's role → the final outcome (wedding refusal + decision to teach).
- Quote briefly from the text (e.g., "new hope and a new life," "without the slightest stammer") to show textual grounding — this earns full marks.
- Do not retell the whole plot; keep it analytical and concise.

Q4.

[6]

Destiny had been cruel to Bholi yet she made a place for herself in a conservative society. Discuss.

Previously asked in: 2023 2/6/1 Q11(a)

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

Destiny was indeed cruel to Bholi (Sulekha). She fell off a cot as an infant, damaging her brain; suffered smallpox that left her face disfigured with pockmarks; and stammered badly. Her own family saw her as a burden — she was sent to school only because no one expected her to marry.

Yet education transformed her completely. Her teacher encouraged her with warmth: "Put the fear out of your heart and you will be able to speak like everyone else." This gave Bholi confidence, hope, and a new identity.

When the greedy Bishamber Nath demanded ₹5,000 dowry at the wedding ceremony, Bholi did not bow to social pressure. She flung the garland into the sacred fire and refused him in a clear, stammer-free voice: "I will not have such a mean, greedy and contemptible coward as my husband."

Finally, the girl once called a "dumb cow" resolved to serve her parents and teach at her own school — carving a dignified, independent place for herself in a conservative society.

Source: Chapter 8 — Bholi, K.A. Abbas

Explanation

- Examiners look for: cruelty of fate (physical disabilities + neglect), role of education/teacher as turning point, the wedding scene as climax where Bholi asserts herself, and her final resolution — these are the four pillars of a complete answer.
- Use direct textual evidence (quotes or events) — it earns full marks.
- Avoid vague moralising; keep points specific to the story.
- "Sulekha" reclaiming her name at the end signals full transformation — worth mentioning.

Q5.

[3]

"In time you will be more learned than anyone else in the village. Then no one will ever be able to laugh at you." What effect did her teacher's words have on Bholi? Elaborate.

(Bholi)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/2/1 Q9 (iii)

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

The teacher's encouraging words had a profound and transforming effect on Bholi. Until then, she had been mocked and neglected all her life due to her stammer and pockmarks. The teacher's promise that education would earn her respect and silence all laughter gave Bholi a completely new sense of hope.

As the text describes: *"Bholi felt as if suddenly all the bells in the village temple were ringing and the trees in front of the school-house had blossomed into big red flowers. Her heart was throbbing with a new hope and a new life."*

Education indeed transformed Bholi — she grew confident, overcame her stammer, and ultimately became bold enough to reject a greedy, unworthy bridegroom in public.

Source: Chapter 8 — *Bholi*, Read and Find Out (Parts 1–3)

Explanation

Examiners look for **three elements** in a 3-mark answer here:

1. **Bholi's prior condition** — mocked, stammering, neglected (sets context).
2. **Immediate effect** — the quotation about temple bells and blossoming trees showing inner joy and renewed hope.
3. **Long-term effect** — education made her confident and self-reliant (evidenced by the wedding scene).

Quoting or paraphrasing the "temple bells" line directly from the text is a reliable way to score full marks. Keep the answer focused; don't drift into biography or general commentary.

Q6.

[3]

The teacher built up Bholi's confidence on her first day at school. Discuss. (Bholi)

Previously asked in: 2026 2/2/1 Q9 (iii)

♦ Bholi

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Model Answer

On Bholi's first day at school, the teacher noticed her crying after the other girls laughed at her stammering. Instead of ignoring her, the teacher spoke to her in a **soft, soothing voice**, which Bholi had never experienced at home. She gently encouraged Bholi to say her name, saying "Well done!" and patting her affectionately. She assured Bholi that she would learn to speak without stammering and become more learned than anyone in the village. This kind treatment filled Bholi with a **new hope and a new life**, making her eager to return to school.

Source: Chapter 8 – Bholi, Read and Find Out (Part 2)

Explanation

- Examiners look for **3 distinct points**: the teacher's gentle tone, her encouragement/words of praise, and her promise about Bholi's future.
- Quote or closely paraphrase the text ("soft and soothing voice," "Well done," "no one will laugh at you") to show textual support.
- End with Bholi's emotional response — it completes the point about confidence being built.
- Avoid retelling the whole story; focus only on the teacher's actions and their effect on Bholi.

Q7.

[3]

What makes Bholi believe that the place where she was taken was better than her home ? (Bholi)

Previously asked in: 2026 2/3/1 Q9 (iii)

♦ Bholi

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Model Answer

Bholi began to believe she was being taken to a better place when, for the first time, she was given a clean dress to wear and her hair was oiled and combed. Throughout her life, she had been neglected — she only ever wore her sisters' old, unwashed clothes, and no one cared to maintain her appearance. This small act of care and attention — being bathed, dressed decently, and groomed — was so unusual for Bholi that it made her feel valued, convincing her that the place she was going to must be better than her home.

Source: Bholi, Chapter 8, Read and Find Out (Part 2)

Explanation

The examiner expects you to identify the **specific details** from the text: the clean (though shrunken) dress, the bath, and the oiling of her matted hair. These are contrasted with her usual neglect at home. The key phrase from the passage is: "*Only then did she begin to believe that she was being taken to a place better than her home!*" — make sure your answer reflects this cause-and-effect clearly. Avoid padding; 3 marks = 3 focused points woven into a short paragraph.

Q8.

[3]

Do you think Bholi could have confidently refused to marry Bishamber if she wasn't educated? Give reasons. (Bholi)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/3/1 Q9 (i)

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

No, Bholi could not have confidently refused to marry Bishamber without education. Education transformed her completely:

1. **Self-confidence:** Her teacher encouraged her, saying, "Put the fear out of your heart and you will be able to speak like everyone else." This built her inner strength.
2. **Power of expression:** Education cured her stammering; at the wedding she spoke "in a clear loud voice without the slightest stammer," firmly saying, "I will not have such a mean, greedy and contemptible coward as my husband."
3. **Independent thinking:** She could distinguish right from wrong and plan her future — choosing to serve her parents and teach in school rather than depending on marriage.

Without education, she would have remained a "dumb-driven cow," unable to assert herself.

Source: *Bholi*, Chapter 8

Explanation

- The examiner expects you to **take a clear stand** (Yes/No) and support it with **2–3 reasons from the text**.
- Key evidence: the teacher's role in building confidence, Bholi speaking without stammer at the wedding, and her final decision to become a teacher.
- Avoid general statements — always link back to specific moments in the story.
- At 3 marks, 3 distinct points with brief support is ideal. Do not write an essay.

Q9.

[6]

Answer in about 100-120 words : Imagine you are Bholi and write a diary entry, explaining how you dare to take such a bold step of refusing to marry Bishamber. (Bholi)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/5/1 Q11(a)

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

Diary Entry

Date: ____

Dear Diary,

Today I did something that shocked everyone — I refused to marry Bishamber Nath. Yes, I, Bholi — the stammering fool, the dumb cow — found my voice at last.

I heard my parents say that I was witless and ugly, that no decent man would have me. So they agreed to give me to a greedy old man who demanded five thousand rupees just because my face bears pock-marks. Pitaji placed his *izzat* at Bishamber's feet and wept — all for a man who only wanted money!

At that moment my teacher's words rang in my mind: "*Put the fear out of your heart.*" I flung that garland into the sacred fire. I will not be sold. I am educated now. I will serve my parents and teach in my school. That is enough for me.

Sulekha

Source: *Bholi*, Chapter 8, *First Flight* (CBSE Class 10)

Explanation

What examiners look for in a diary entry:

- **First-person voice** with emotional authenticity — write as Bholi/Sulekha, not about her.
- **Specific references** from the text: the ₹5000 demand, parents calling her a "dumb cow," the garland flung into the fire, the teacher's influence — these show reading comprehension and earn marks.
- **Transformation arc**: Show she moved from a fearful, neglected girl to a confident woman — this is the thematic core examiners want.
- **Diary format**: Date + salutation ("Dear Diary") + sign-off is expected and earns presentation marks.
- Stay within ~120–150 words. Do not pad with flowery sentences.

Q10.

[3]

How does Bholi get the confidence to defy the blackmailer/dowry seeker?

Previously asked in: 2023 2/2/1 Q9 (b)

♦ Bholi

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Model Answer

Bholi gains confidence to defy Bishamber through the education and encouragement she receives from her teacher. Her teacher consistently motivated her, telling her she would be "more learned than anyone else in the village" and that people would "listen to her with respect." This transformed Bholi from a stammering, fearful girl into a self-assured young woman. At the wedding, when Bishamber demands dowry, Bholi recognises his greed and cowardice, and boldly rejects him, speaking "without even the slightest stammer" — proving that education gave her both voice and courage.

Source: Chapter 8 — Bholi (K.A. Abbas), Read and Find Out (Parts 2 & 3)

Explanation

The examiner expects you to link Bholi's confidence **directly to her teacher's role** — that is the core of the chapter's theme. Three key points to hit:

1. The teacher's encouragement built her self-belief.
2. Education gave her the ability to judge right from wrong (Bishamber's greed).
3. The physical proof — she speaks without stammering at the critical moment.

Avoid vague statements like "she became brave." Always connect courage to *education* specifically, as that is what CBSE rewards here.

Q11.

[6]

Education is always a great asset in the life of a woman. How did Bholi, an educated girl, face the challenge posed by Bishamber's greed?

Previously asked in: 2023 2/1/1 Q11(a)

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

Education gave Bholi the confidence and courage to stand up against Bishamber's greed at her own wedding. Bholi's parents accepted Bishamber's proposal because he was well-to-do and was not asking for dowry, despite being old and lame. They considered Bholi lucky, as her pock-marks and supposed lack of sense made her difficult to marry.

However, at the wedding, when Bishamber saw her pock-marks, he shamelessly demanded ₹5,000 from Ramlal, or he would leave. A humiliated Ramlal paid the money. Bholi had earlier agreed to the match for her parents' izzat, but when she saw Bishamber's greed and contempt, she refused to be sold. She flung the garland into the sacred fire and boldly declared, **"I will not have such a mean, greedy and contemptible coward as my husband."**

Remarkably, she spoke without any stammer — proof of her education's transformation. She calmly resolved to serve her parents and teach in the village school, showing true independence and self-respect.

Source: *Bholi, Chapter 8 (First Flight — Supplementary Reader)*

Explanation

- The examiner wants: (1) context of the proposal, (2) Bishamber's greedy demand, (3) Bholi's bold refusal with a quoted line, (4) how education enabled this courage.
- Quoting the exact line ("mean, greedy and contemptible coward") scores well and shows textual knowledge.
- End with her positive resolution — it rounds off the "education as asset" theme the question asks about.
- Avoid retelling the whole story; stick to the challenge and her response.

Q12.

[6]

Answer in about 100-120 words.

It is truly said that a good teacher is the light that helps one cross even the darkest of paths through honing their inherent qualities which enable them to shine bright and strong in life. In what ways, does Sulekha's teacher epitomize this saying? How did she become the pillar of support and strength for Sulekha? (Bholi)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/6/1 Q11(b)

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

Sulekha's teacher proved to be a true guiding light in her otherwise dark and neglected life. From the very first day, when Bholi sat sobbing in a corner, humiliated by her stammer, the teacher approached her with a soft, soothing voice and genuine warmth — something Bholi had never experienced at home.

The teacher did not mock her stammer; instead, she patiently encouraged her, saying "Well done" for every small effort and affectionately patted her. She instilled confidence by promising, "Put the fear out of your heart and you will be able to speak like everyone else."

She gave Bholi a colourful book and the vision of a learned future, assuring her that people would one day listen to her with respect. This promise filled Bholi's heart with new hope and a new life.

By recognising Bholi's hidden potential and nurturing it with kindness, the teacher transformed a neglected, fearful child into the confident Sulekha who eventually stood up against an unjust marriage — epitomising a true teacher's transformative power.

Source: *Bholi*, Chapter 8, *First Flight* (Supplementary Reader — *Footprints Without Feet*)

Explanation

- Examiners look for: (1) the teacher's warm, encouraging behaviour on Day 1, (2) specific textual evidence (soft voice, "Well done", patting, the colourful book, the promise of learning), and (3) the long-term impact — Bholi's transformation into confident Sulekha.
- Link the opening quote directly to the teacher's actions; this shows you have understood the thematic connection the question is drawing.
- Quoting short phrases from the text (e.g., "Put the fear out of your heart") earns credit and shows textual grounding.
- Do not exceed ~150 words; keep points crisp and connected.

Q13.

[3]

Bholi's heart was brimming with "fresh optimism and a renewed existence." What significance does the expression "a new hope and a new life" hold for Bholi?

Previously asked in: 2025 2/4/1 Q9 I

♦ Bholi

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Model Answer

The expression "a new hope and a new life" is deeply significant for Bholi because it marks a turning point in her life of neglect and ridicule. Bholi had always been mocked for her stammering and pockmarks, treated as worthless even at home. However, her teacher's gentle encouragement — promising that she would become learned, speak without stammering, and earn respect — gave Bholi the first real sense of hope she had ever felt. For someone who had known only rejection, the teacher's words opened the possibility of a dignified future, making school feel like the beginning of a completely transformed existence.

Source: Chapter 8 — Bholi, Read and Find Out (Part 2)

Explanation

- The examiner wants you to link the phrase directly to Bholi's background (neglect, ridicule, stammering) and what the teacher's promise specifically offered her.
- Avoid vague statements like "she felt happy." Be specific: education = overcoming stammer + earning respect + dignity.
- 3 marks = roughly 3 clear points woven into 2–3 sentences or a short paragraph. Don't pad beyond ~80 words.

Q14.

[4]

The credit of Bholi's transformation to Sulekha goes to her teacher. Elaborate with reference to the text.

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

♦ Bholi

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Model Answer

Bholi's teacher played a crucial role in transforming the timid, stammering simpleton into a confident, self-respecting woman.

On Bholi's very first day at school, when she stammered and wept, the teacher spoke to her in a **soft, soothing voice** and encouraged her with "Well done." She patted her affectionately and promised, *"Put the fear out of your heart and you will be able to speak like everyone else."* This gave Bholi her first ray of hope and self-belief. The teacher further inspired her by saying that one day she would be more learned than anyone in the village and people would respect her. This motivation drove Bholi to educate herself over the years.

At the wedding, it was Bholi who confidently refused the greedy Bishamber — speaking without a stammer. The teacher, watching from a corner, smiled with the satisfaction of "an artist contemplating the completion of her masterpiece." Thus, the teacher's encouragement, affection, and faith transformed Bholi (Sulekha) completely.

Source: Chapter 8 — Bholi, Read and Find Out (Part 2) and Part 3

Explanation

Examiners look for: (1) how the teacher encouraged Bholi on the first day (soft voice, praise, patting), (2) the promise/vision the teacher gave her about education and respect, and (3) the outcome — Bholi's confident refusal at the wedding and the teacher's reaction described as an "artist's satisfaction." Quote directly from the text wherever possible; it strengthens your answer. Stick to 4 focused points for a 4-mark question.

Q15.

[3]

Based on your understanding of the story, how do you assess Bholi's father ? (Bholi)

Previously asked in: 2026 2/4/1 Q9 (ii)

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

Ramlal, Bholi's father, is a weak and self-centred man who prioritises social obligations over his daughter's welfare. He neglects Bholi throughout her childhood and sends her to school not out of care, but because he fears disobeying the Tehsildar. He agrees to marry her to an old, lame man simply to avoid the "burden" of an unmarried daughter. When Bishamber demands dowry at the wedding, Ramlal humiliates himself completely rather than protecting Bholi's dignity. Overall, he represents a typical patriarchal father who treats his daughter as a problem to be disposed of, not a person to be valued.

Source: *Bholi*, Chapter 8

Explanation

Examiners expect a **balanced critical assessment** — not just listing events, but **judging** the father's character with supporting evidence. Three marks means three distinct points: (1) neglect/indifference, (2) self-interest in the school/marriage decisions, and (3) spinelessness during the wedding. Use words like "weak," "self-centred," "patriarchal" to show character analysis. Avoid retelling the whole story — pick key moments as evidence only.

Q16.

[4]

[The lesson/story about village girls — question about the role it plays for village girls.] Discuss.

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

♦ Bholi

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Model Answer

Role of School/Education for Village Girls (as seen in 'Bholi')

1. **Opens new opportunities:** The primary school gave Bholi, a neglected girl with no prospects, access to education and a chance to build her own future.
1. **Builds confidence:** The teacher's encouragement helped Bholi overcome her stammer and low self-esteem, transforming her from a "dumb cow" to a confident, articulate woman.
1. **Challenges social barriers:** Bholi's education empowered her to reject a greedy, humiliating match — something unthinkable for an uneducated village girl.
1. **Offers independence:** At the end, Bholi chooses to teach at the same school, gaining financial and social independence rather than depending on marriage.

School thus plays a liberating role for village girls by giving them voice, dignity, and self-reliance.

Source: Chapter 8 – Bholi, Think about it / Read and Find Out sections

Explanation

- Examiners expect **4 distinct points** for a 4-mark answer — one point per mark is the safe structure.
- Ground every point in **story events** (the teacher's encouragement, Bholi rejecting Bishamber, her decision to teach) — don't write vaguely.
- The question is essentially about the **theme of girls' education**, so connect each point to that theme.
- Avoid retelling the plot; instead, **interpret** what each event shows about the role of school.

Q17.

[4]

Imagine you are Bholi and you have been invited to give a speech on the importance of girl child education at a seminar on 'Girl Education and Empowerment'.

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

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

Speech by Bholi (Sulekha) on Girl Child Education

Respected teachers and dear friends,

I am Sulekha — once called Bholi, the simpleton. I was considered worthless, with no future. But one day I stepped into a classroom, and my life changed forever.

Education gave me a voice. It taught me to speak without shame, to think with confidence, and to refuse injustice. When I was about to be married to a greedy, contemptible man who demanded dowry, it was education that gave me the courage to say, "I will not."

Every girl deserves this courage. A girl who is educated cannot be silenced. She can serve her family, her community, and herself with dignity.

Educate the girl child — because an educated girl is never a burden; she is a strength.

Source: Bholi, Chapter 8

Explanation

- The question asks you to **write as Bholi** — so use first person and draw directly from her experiences: her stammer, neglect, the teacher's encouragement, and her rejection of Bishamber.
- Examiners look for: relevant content from the story, a clear message about girl education, and proper speech format (brief greeting + body + conclusion).
- Do **not** write a generic essay — personalise it with Bholi's story details.
- 80–100 words is the target; going much beyond loses marks for relevance.

Q18.

[6]

Education is the most important tool for empowering women in society. It plays an important role in social and cultural development. Prove the above statements in the light of the story 'Bholi'.

Previously asked in: 2023 2/5/1 Q11(a)

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

Education as a Tool for Empowering Women — 'Bholi'

Bholi (Sulekha) was neglected from childhood due to her pockmarks, stammering, and low intelligence. She was considered a burden and sent to school only because her parents felt no one would marry her. This reflects the regressive social attitude towards girl children.

However, education transformed Bholi completely. Her teacher encouraged her with kindness, built her confidence, and promised that learning would earn her respect. Slowly, Bholi overcame her stammer and became educated.

Culturally, education gave her the courage to reject a greedy, exploitative bridegroom — Bishamber Nath — who demanded ₹5,000 dowry and insulted her family. She spoke clearly, without any stammer, showing her inner strength.

At the end, Sulekha resolves to serve her parents and teach at the very school that empowered her — proving that education enables women to contribute meaningfully to society.

Source: Chapter 8 — Bholi, K.A. Abbas

Explanation

- **Examiners look for:** a clear link between education and Bholi's transformation, specific textual evidence (teacher's role, rejection of Bishamber, final decision to teach), and a brief mention of the social attitudes her story challenges.
- **Key points to cover:** neglect before school → teacher's encouragement → confidence gained → rejection of unjust marriage → decision to be self-reliant and serve society. These map directly onto both statements in the question.
- **Avoid:** retelling the entire story. Pick only evidence that proves the two statements given.
- The shift from "Bholi" back to "Sulekha" at the end signals her true identity restored through education — worth mentioning for top marks.

Q19.

[6]

How is Bholi shown to be a fearless, bold and confident girl?

Previously asked in: 2023 2/2/1 Q11(b)

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

Bholi, initially a stammering, neglected girl, gradually transforms into a fearless and confident young woman, largely due to her teacher's encouragement.

At school: Though terrified on her first day, Bholi responds to her teacher's kindness. When the teacher gently encourages her, she manages to say her name and even says "Yes" aloud — astonishing herself. This small victory plants the seeds of confidence.

At the wedding: Bholi's true courage shines when the greedy bridegroom Bishamber demands ₹5,000 dowry, humiliating her father. Bholi strikes down the garland into the sacred fire and boldly declares, *"I will not marry this man."* She speaks without the slightest stammer — a remarkable change.

Facing society: When taunted as a "dumb cow," she confronts the crowd fearlessly: *"The dumb cow is now speaking."*

Planning her future: She calmly tells her father she will serve her parents and teach in the same school — showing independence and purpose.

Source: *Bholi*, Chapter 8

Explanation

Examiners look for **4–6 specific points** drawn directly from the story, covering both the school episode and the wedding scene. Mention the transformation clearly — from a frightened, stammering child to a bold woman who speaks without a stammer and rejects a greedy match. Use brief quotes to strengthen your answer. Avoid retelling the whole story; focus on evidence of **fearlessness, boldness, and confidence** specifically.

Q20.

[6]

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

Imagine that Bholi writes a diary entry, exploring the themes of self-discovery, empowerment and transformation, in the context of her own experiences. Write this diary entry, as Bholi.

(Reference: Bholi)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/5/1 Q11(a)

♦ Bholi

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Model Answer

Date: (A quiet evening after the wedding that never was)

Dear Diary,

Today I finally understood who I truly am — not Bholi, the simpleton, but Sulekha.

For years I lived in silence and shame. My pockmarked face, my stammer — they made everyone treat me like a dumb cow. Even my own parents sent me to school only because no one would marry me.

But my teacher changed everything. She spoke to me with kindness no one ever had. She said, "*Put the fear out of your heart.*" Slowly, I learned to read, to think, to dream.

Today, when Bishamber demanded money to accept me, I saw him for what he was — greedy and contemptible. I flung the garland into the sacred fire and spoke — clearly, without stammering — for the very first time in a crowd.

I will not be sold. I will teach instead. I am no longer Bholi. I am Sulekha.

Source: *Bholi*, Chapter 8

Explanation

- This is a creative/imaginative question, but it must be **grounded in the text** — the teacher's encouragement, the wedding scene, Bholi rejecting Bishamber, and her final resolve to teach.
- Examiners look for: **three themes — self-discovery, empowerment, transformation** — reflected through specific story events.
- The shift from "Bholi" to "Sulekha" is crucial; the textbook itself signals this name change marks her true transformation.
- Keep the diary personal, first-person, and emotional but concise. Avoid padding.
- Aim for 120–130 words in the exam.

Q21.

[6]

A character arc is the transformation or development of a character throughout a story and refers to the changes a character undergoes as a result of his/her experiences, challenges and interactions with other characters. In the light of the above information, trace the character arc of Bholi in K.A. Abbas' 'Bholi'.

Previously asked in: 2024 2/4/1 Q11(b)

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

Bholi's Character Arc in K.A. Abbas' 'Bholi'

Beginning — Neglected and Fearful:

Bholi, whose real name is Sulekha, begins as a deeply disadvantaged child. Damaged by a fall and disfigured by smallpox, she stammers, is mocked by other children, and barely speaks. She is neglected at home, given cast-off clothes, and sent to school merely because no one expects her to marry.

Development — Hope and Education:

Her teacher's kindness transforms her. Instead of ridicule, Bholi receives encouragement and affection. The teacher's gentle words — "Put the fear out of your heart" — plant a seed of confidence. Education gives Bholi hope, a voice, and self-worth.

Climax — Assertion and Courage:

At her own wedding, when the greedy Bishamber demands a dowry, Bholi boldly refuses to marry him. She calls him out publicly, returning his garland. She declares she will serve her parents and teach in the village school instead.

End — Sulekha Reclaimed:

She is finally called *Sulekha* again — her true self — signifying that the simpleton "Bholi" no longer exists. She has become a confident, self-respecting woman who defies unjust social norms.

Source: *Bholi*, K.A. Abbas, *First Flight* (Chapter 8)

Explanation

- Examiners look for a **clear arc**: beginning (weakness/neglect) → middle (catalyst/teacher) → climax (courage at wedding) → end (transformation complete).
- Mentioning the name change **Bholi** → **Sulekha** is a key textual detail that earns marks.
- Keep each stage brief but specific — name the teacher's role, the dowry incident, and her final decision.
- Avoid retelling the whole story; trace the *change* in character.

Q22.

[6]

Discuss how Bholi evolves through the story. What are the qualities that contribute to her transformation from a timid girl to a confident young woman?

(Bholi)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/3/1 Q11(a)

◆ Bholi

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Model Answer

Bholi, born Sulekha, begins as a neglected, stammering girl with pockmarks, mocked by everyone. Her family considers her a burden with no marriage prospects.

Key stages of transformation:

1. **School as turning point** – Her teacher's warm encouragement ("Put the fear out of your heart") replaces neglect with hope. Bholi begins to trust and speaks without shame.
2. **Education builds confidence** – Years of schooling gradually replace her stammer and timidity with knowledge and self-worth.
3. **Initial acceptance** – She agrees to marry the elderly, limping Bishamber out of duty to family honour — showing her selflessness.
4. **Final assertion** – When Bishamber demands ₹5,000 for her pockmarks, she rejects him with cold contempt, speaking clearly without a stammer for the first time.
5. **Self-reliance** – She calmly decides to teach in her school and care for her parents, showing maturity and independence.

The qualities driving her transformation are **courage, self-respect, and gratitude for education**. Significantly, she is called "Sulekha" again at the end — her true self has finally emerged.

Source: *Bholi*, Chapter 8, *First Flight*

Explanation

Examiners look for: (1) brief background on Bholi's initial state, (2) the teacher's role as catalyst, (3) the wedding scene as the climax of transformation, and (4) the significance of the name "Sulekha" returning. Avoid retelling the whole plot — frame each point around a **quality or milestone** that shows growth. The ₹5,000 demand scene is essential for full marks. End with the teacher's role and Bholi's final decision for a strong conclusion.

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