

Context Questions

I. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

There was a pontoon bridge across the river and carts, trucks, and men, women and children were crossing it. The mule-drawn carts staggered up the steep bank from the bridge with soldiers helping push against the spokes of the wheels. The trucks ground up and away heading out of it all and the peasants plodded along in the ankle deep dust. But the old man sat there without moving. He was too tired to go any farther.

(i) What is a pontoon bridge? Why are many people crossing the bridge?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

(ii) Where is the old man sitting? Unlike others, why doesn't he move?

.....

.....

.....

.....

(iii) Who is the speaker in the above extract? Why is he there?

.....

.....

.....

.....

(iv) What is the first question that the narrator asks the old man? What does he answer? Why does the old man smile?

(v) Why is the old man the last one to leave his town? Describe his physical appearance.

II. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

He did not look like a shepherd nor a herdsman and I looked at his black dusty clothes and his gray dusty face and his steel rimmed spectacles and said, "What animals were they?"

(i) Who is referred to as *He* in the extract above? In what condition is *he*?

(ii) What all animals did *he* own? What kind of relationship did *he* share with them?

(iii) What did *he* do with the animals? What forced him to do so?

(iv) Why doesn't the old man cross the bridge and escape to a safer place?

(v) What do the incidents in the story show about the consequences of the war?
How does war affect the old man and his animals in the story?

III. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

"I am without politics," he said. "I am seventy-six years old. I have come twelve kilometers now and I think now I can go no further."
"This is not a good place to stop," I said. "If you can make it, there are trucks up the road where it forks for Tortosa."

(i) What does the old man mean when he states, "I am without politics"? What does he mention his age?

(ii) Describe the old man's appearance. What was he doing in San Carlos?

(iii) The narrator says "This is not a good place to stop." Which place is he referring to? Why is it not advisable to halt there?

(iv) What advice does the narrator give to the old man? How does the old man react to it?

(v) Explain why the old man finally resigns to his fate. What is the old man's fate symbolic of? Do you think the old man could have changed his fate? Give reasons to justify your answer.

IV. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

He looked at me very blankly and tiredly, then said, having to share his worry with someone, "The cat will be all right, I am sure. There is no need to be unquiet about the cat. But the others. Now what do you think about the others?"

- (i) Why does the old man look blank and tired? How can you say that the old man needed someone to talk to?

- (ii) What is the cause of old man's worry and guilt?

- (iii) Explain how the story brings out the conflict between man and his inner self.

- (iv) The old man seems to have given up on his life. Do you agree? Why?

- (v) How does the narrator try to relieve the old man of his worries? Does he prove successful? Support your answer with instances from the story.

v. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

“I was taking care of animals,” he said dully, but no longer to me. “I was only taking care of animals.”

There was nothing to do about him. It was Easter Sunday and the Fascists were advancing toward the Ebro. It was a gray overcast day with a low ceiling so their planes were not up. That and the fact that cats know how to look after themselves was all the good luck that old man would ever have.

- (i) Why does the narrator note that the old man spoke ‘dully’?

- (ii) What makes the narrator feel that “there was nothing to do about him”?

- (iii) State how both the narrator and the old man are depicted as helpless by the end.

(iv) What is "all the good luck that old man would ever have"?

(v) The story is set on an Easter Sunday, which symbolically shows renewal and peace. How is it ironical with reference to the events in the story? State another example of irony in the story.