

**BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE, PRAYAGRAJ**  
**ENGLISH LITERATURE CLASS IX ASSIGNMENT- 1**

**SECTION A- POETRY**

**THE HEART OF THE TREE**

-Henry Bunner

What does he plant who plants a tree?

He plants a friend of sun and sky;

He plants the flag of breezes free;

The shaft of beauty, towering high.

He plants a home to heaven anigh

For song and mother-croon of bird

In hushed and happy twilight heard—

The treble of heaven's harmony—

These things he plants who plants a tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree?

He plants cool shade and tender rain,

And seed and bud of days to be,

And years that fade and flush again;

He plants the glory of the plain;

He plants the forest's heritage;

The harvest of a coming age;  
The joy that unborn eyes shall see—  
These things he plants who plants a tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree?  
He plants, in sap and leaf and wood,  
In love of home and loyalty  
And far-cast thought of civic good—  
His blessing on the neighborhood  
Who in the hollow of His hand  
Holds all the growth of all our land—  
A nation's growth from sea to sea  
Stirs in his heart who plants a tree.

The poem ‘The heart of the Tree’ consists of three stanzas. Each stanza opens with the poet asking a question to the readers and immediately answering the same in the next line. This expression is known as ‘hypophora’, which is a figure of speech.

### **Stanza 1**

What does he plant who plants a tree?

He plants a friend of sun and sky;

He plants the flag of breezes free;

The shaft of beauty, towering high.

He plants a home to heaven anigh

For song and mother-croon of bird

In hushed and happy twilight heard—

The treble of heaven’s harmony—

These things he plants who plants a tree.

### **Explanation**

The poet asks a question and then answers it in the first stanza by saying that the person who plants a tree, plants a friend of the sun and the sky. He also means that when the tree grows big it becomes close to the sky and the sun like a friend. The sun in return provides energy to the tree to grow. The one who plants a tree plants a natural flag that flies freely in the air. The leafy branches of the high grown tree are compared to the flag that flutters in the sky.

When a tree is planted, a home for the sweet singing birds is planted near the heaven. Heaven here, is the sky. The pitch of the singing birds, adds to the harmony of the universe and the heaven. In the peaceful and happy twilight these birds sing in their homes, to create harmony, in heaven and also on earth.

### Word Meaning

1. shaft – pole/stick
2. anigh – near/ close
3. treble – high pitch of the birds

- ‘In hush and happy twilight heard’. Here, the poet personifies twilight.

**Personification** is a figure of speech where a non human thing or idea, is given human characteristic features.

### Stanza 2

What does he plant who plants a tree?

He plants cool shade and tender rain,

And seed and bud of days to be,

And years that fade and flush again;

He plants the glory of the plain;

He plants the forest’s heritage;

The harvest of a coming age;

The joy that unborn eyes shall see—

These things he plants who plants a tree.

### Explanation

In the second stanza also the poet asks a question and answers it immediately. He says that the one who plants a tree provides shade and adds greenery as trees are effective in bringing rain. The tree that is planted will produce seeds and buds in future for the generations to come. Days and time in forms of years will pass and people will be born, and be subjected to death. He who

plants a tree, plants the main resources of the plains, that is, the trees add to the beauty of the plains, by their greenery.

Forests are our heritage, and the man who plants a tree is effective in beautifying the earth, and also adding to the greenery, which is the ultimate source of prosperity for a nation. The tree is not just beneficial for today's generation but it also benefits future generations. It will bring happiness and prosperity to the generations that are yet to be born, eyes that are yet to be opened. The benefits of planting a tree are listed by the poet in this stanza.

### Word Meaning

1. days to be – future/days to come
  2. ‘fade and flush again’- symbolic of birth and death
- The figure of speech used in, ‘fade and flush again’, is alliteration. **Alliteration** is a figure of speech where in which a repetition of consonant appears. (fade and flush).

### Stanza 3

What does he plant who plants a tree?

He plants, in sap and leaf and wood,

In love of home and loyalty

And far-cast thought of civic good—

His blessing on the neighborhood

Who in the hollow of His hand

Holds all the growth of all our land—

A nation's growth from sea to sea

Stirs in his heart who plants a tree.

## **Explanation**

The last stanza of the poem also opens with the same question, by the poet. He answers by saying, that the one who plants a tree, plants a sapling and in that sapling he plants wood, which has endless uses, and leaves, which bring glory, shade and prosperity to mother earth. Such a man, who plants a tree, loves his nation and mother earth. He is filled with loyalty towards earth and his fellow beings. He is a far sighted human, with a great sense of responsibility and loyalty. His presence is like a blessing for the people who are there in his surroundings.

When he holds a sapling in his hand, to plant it, he holds the growth of the land, the growth of his nation, from one end to the other. This is his main concern.

The word ‘His’ in the phrase ‘who in the hollow of His hand’ indicates that such a man is powerful and can change the destiny of a nation and thus, is Godly in nature.

## **Word Meaning**

1. far-cast – far sighted
2. hollow – empty
3. sea to sea – from one end to the other
4. stirs – disturbs

## **Answer the following questions:**

1. Name the figure of speech used in an expression where the poet raises a question and answers it immediately.
2. How and why is a tree planter a friend of the sun and sky?
3. List any three benefits of planting a tree given by the poet Henry Bunner in his poem ‘The Heart of the Tree’.
4. How can a tree, that is planted today bring joy to the future generation?
5. Why is the person who plants a tree described as loyal and far-sighted with a good civic sense?

6. What does the poet mean by “His blessings on the neighborhood”?

## **SECTION B- PROSE**

### **A FACE IN THE DARK**

-Ruskin Bond

Mr. Oliver, an Anglo-Indian teacher, was returning to his school late one night, on the outskirts of the hill-station of Simla. From before Kipling's time, the school had been run on English public school lines; and the boys, most of them from wealthy Indian families, wore blazers, caps and ties. Life magazine in a feature on India, had once called it the 'Eton of the East'. Mr. Oliver had been teaching in the school for several years.

The Simla Bazaar, with its cinema and restaurants, was about three miles from the school; and Mr. Oliver, a bachelor, usually strolled into the town in the evening, returning after dark, when he would take a short cut through the pine forest.

Where there was a strong wind, the pine trees made sad eerie sounds that kept most people to the main road. But Mr. Oliver was not a nervous or imaginative man. He carried. A torch, and its gleam- the batteries were running down- moved fitfully down the narrow forest path. When its flickering light fell in the figure of a boy, who was sitting alone on a rock, Mr. Oliver stopped. Boys were not supposed to be out after dark.

'What are you doing out here, boy?' asked Mr. Oliver sharply, moving closer so that he could recognize the miscreant. But even as he approached the boy, Mr. Oliver sensed that something was wrong. The boy appeared to be crying. His head hung down, he held his face in his hands, and his body shook convulsively. It was a strange, soundless weeping, and Mr. Oliver felt distinctly uneasy.

'Well, what's the matter?' he asked, his anger giving way to concern. 'What are you crying for?' The boy would not answer or look up. His body continued to be racked with silent sobbing. Come on, boy you shouldn't be out here at this hour. Tell me the trouble. Look up!' The boy looked up. He took his hands from his face and looked up at his teacher. The light from Mr. Oliver's torch fell on the boy's face - if you could call it a face.

It had no eyes, ears, nose, or mouth. It was just a round smooth head- with a school cap on top of it! And that's where the story should end. But for Mr. Oliver it did not end here.

The torch fell from his trembling hand. He turned and scrambled down the path, running blindly through the trees and calling for help. He was still running towards the school buildings when he saw a lantern swinging in the middle of the path. Mr. Oliver stumbled up to the watchman, gasping for breath. 'What is it, Sahib?' asked the watchman. 'Has there been an accident? Why are you running?

'I saw something-something horrible- a boy weeping in the forest- and he had no face!'

'No face, Sahib?'

'No eyes, nose, mouth-nothing!'

'Do you mean it was like this, Sahib?' asked the watchman, and raised the lamp to his own face. The watchman had no eyes, no ears, no features at all- not even an eyebrow! And that's when the wind blew the lamp out.

## **Explanation**

*Mr. Oliver ..... for several years.*

A Face in the Dark is a short thriller by Ruskin Bond. It revolves around Mr. Oliver who is an Anglo-Indian teacher in an English medium school on the outskirts of Simla. The school from Kipling's time, was run on English public school lines. The boys mostly belonged to wealthy Indian families and wore blazers, caps and ties. It was called as the "Eton of the East" by *Life* magazine.

## **Word Meaning**

1. Eton- a boys' public school in southern England

*The Simla Bazaar ..... pine forest.*

The Simla Bazaar was about three miles away from the school. Mr. Oliver, who generally walked to the town in the evening, would return taking a short cut through the pine forest.

## **Word Meaning**

1. strolled- walk in a relaxed manner

*When there ..... after dark.*

The atmosphere of the pine forest is described as sad and frightening. This was why everyone preferred the main road, which was, though a longer route, but Mr. Oliver was different. He was not a nervous or imaginative man. He used to carry a torch and take the short cut through the forest. That evening, in the dim and unsteady light of his torch, he saw a boy's figure sitting alone on a rock. He stopped as boys were not supposed to be out after dark.

## **Word Meaning**

1. eerie- strange and frightening
2. gleam- bright

3. flickering- unsteady
4. fitfully- not regular or continuous

***What are you ..... distinctly uneasy.***

In spite of moving closer to the boy, Mr. Oliver could not recognize him. He could sense something was wrong as the boy was crying with his head hung down. He was holding his face in his hands and his body shook in a jerky manner. The boy's strange, soundless cry made Mr. Oliver uneasy.

**Word Meaning**

1. miscreant- one who does something wrong
2. convulsively- jerky, like a fit

***Well, what's the matter ..... call it a face.***

When despite Mr. Oliver's continuous approach, the boy did not respond, Mr. Oliver's concern grew. He asked him what the matter was and what he was weeping for. He told him he should not be there at that hour and he should look up and tell him what the matter was. When the boy removed his hands from the face and looked up at his teacher in the dim light of the torch, the teacher saw the boy's face, if it was a face at all.

**Word Meaning**

1. racked- pained
2. sobbing- crying

***It had no ..... it did not end here.***

The face of that boy was a simple round smooth head with no features, that is, no eyes, ears, nose or mouth. The boy had a school cap on the top of his smooth faced head. We all might guess that the story would end here, but it did not, for Mr. Oliver.

***The torch fell ..... you running.***

Mr. Oliver, on seeing the boy's face, got so scared that the torch fell from his hand as he was trembling with fear. He turned and quickly started running blindly through the trees, calling out for help. As he was still running towards the school building breathlessly, he saw a lantern and reached near a watchman who was holding it. The watchman asked him why he was running and that if there had been an accident.

**Word Meaning**

1. scrambled- moved quickly
2. stumbled- tripped
3. gasping- trying to catch one's breath with an open mouth due to fear, pain or nervousness

***I saw something ..... blew the lamp out.***

Mr. Oliver told him about the faceless boy, gasping for breath. The watchman lifted the lamp to his own face, and asked Mr. Oliver if the boy's face resembled his face. The watchman also had no features- eyes, ears, nose or mouth, not even eyebrows, just like the boy Mr. Oliver saw in the pine forest. Just then, the wind blew the lamp out.

**I. Answer in brief:**

- a. Who was Mr. Oliver and what was his profession?
- b. How far was the Simla Bazaar from the school?
- c. What adjectives has the author used for Mr. Oliver?
- d. Whom did Mr. Oliver meet that evening first?
- e. Why could Mr. Oliver not recognize the boy?

**II. Answer in detail:**

- a. Why did people generally avoid the shortcut to the Simla Bazaar?
- b. Why was Mr. Oliver uneasy by the boy's crying?

- c. Who was the second character Mr. Oliver met that evening? In what situation did he meet the character?
- d. Do you like the ending of the story? Give reasons to support your answer.