

## Chapter - 15 The Mark On The Wall

### Stop And Think Page-141

**Question 1.**

What is the string of varied thoughts that the mark on the wall stimulates in the author's mind?

**Answer:**

The mark on the wall stimulates various thoughts in the author's mind and hence can be seen as a perfect example of 'stream of Consciousness. At first, she thinks of it as a result of a nail but then while rejecting this idea she starts to think about the personalities of the previous occupants of the house. Then thinking about the hole as an ink mark and not a hole she starts to philosophise about the idea of death. Again, she changes her interpretation and sees the mark as just a shadow while pondering over the writings of Shakespeare and the art character composition.

**Question 2.**

What change in the depiction of reality does the author foresee for future novelists?

**Answer:**

According to the author, the future novelists will no more rely on deadened traits and realities to compose their characters. They will look deeper into the realms of reality and depict the hard-hidden reality which is not talked about and is left unseen.

### Stop And Think Page-144

**Question 1.**

What is the author's perception of the limitations of knowledge and learning?

**Answer:**

For the author, knowledge has nothing to do with education. One can gain knowledge when he/she starts to think, anyone under any circumstances can think. She says, "A world which one could slice with one's thought as a fish slices the water with his fin." The author does not favour blind pursuits of knowledge and leaning. She suggests a life, "without professor or specialists".

**Question 2.**

Describe the unbroken flow of thoughts and perceptions of the narrator's mind, using the example of the colonel and the clergy.

**Answer:**

Through her thoughts and views upon the mark on the wall, the narrator philosophises vast aspects in various ways. This leads to an unbroken flow of thoughts and perceptions in her mind and while thinking of mark as a hole she wonders the profession of an antiquary, who without any evidence cannot prove any truths. For this, she uses the example of the colonel, who has to look at both the sides of the coin and then incline himself towards his camp. Giving the example of a retired colonel she says "Retired Colonels, for the most part, I daresay, leading parties of aged labourers to the top here, examining clods of earth and stone, and getting into correspondence with the neighbouring clergy".

## Understanding The Text

**Question 1.**

An account of reflections is more important than a description of reality according to the author. Why?

**Answer:**

For the author, the deep hidden truths of human realities can only be reflected through characters composition by writers. According to her the future authors will look into the depths and explore the realities and will pursue their phantoms and leave behind the age-old descriptive depiction of reality.

**Question 2.**

Looking back at objects and habits of a bygone era can give one a feeling of phantom-like unreality. What examples does the author give to bring out this idea?

**Answer:**

In order to describe the objects and habits of the bygone era, which is nothing more than unreality to the author, gives the example of the most well-known Elizabethan dramatist Shakespeare. A great writer like him is sitting by the fireplace on his chair, his hand supporting his forehead and the heavens above are showering him with ideas and inspirations. Then she picks up the examples of 'Whitaker's Table of Precedency' to describe this unrealistic phantom. For her traditional ideas of Good and Evil, Devil and God, Hell and Heaven are worthless and depict unreality.

**Question 3.**

How does the imagery of (i) the fish (ii) the tree, used almost poetically by the author, emphasising the idea of stillness of living, breathing thought?

**Answer:**

The narrator contemplates the life a tree and a fish to emphasise upon the idea of stillness of living, breathing thought. She says "*Wood is a pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree, and trees grow, and we don't know how they grow*" to describe how the still nature works silently without paying attention to the world around. Then she further explains it using the imagery of a fish saying, "I like to think of the fish balanced against the stream like flags blown out" to describe the still life that is present in a parallel world around us that is often left unseen. Everything around us is moving, falling, slipping and vanishing or as the narrator says, "*There is a vast upheaval of matter*".

**Question 4.**

How does the author pin her reflections on a variety of subjects on the 'mark on the wall'? What does this tell us about the way the human mind functions?

**Answer:**

The author swims into vast oceans of thoughts in the attempt of solving the mystery behind the mark on the wall. This tells about the curiosity of a human mind and the heights of the human mental process. In order to solve a petty mystery, a human mind in the process of thinking can go into various aspects. The mark on the wall makes her dig into the history, as far as Shakespeare, the traditional norms and then these thoughts provoke her to further look into the future. Then she discusses nature and how nature intervenes and encourages action to hamper our process of thinking. This tells us about the vastness and limitlessness of a human mind when it comes to action.

**Question 5.**

Not seeing the obvious could lead a perceptive mind to reflect upon more philosophical issues. Discuss this with reference to the 'snail on the wall'.

**Answer:**

Yes, it is true that not seeing the obvious can lead a perceptive mind to reflect upon more philosophical issues and the story 'Mark on the Wall' is its perfect example. Although the mysterious mark on the wall sets a plot to the story its content revolve in a very different direction. The narrator could have easily solved the mystery by standing up and inspecting the mark more closely in less than a minute but she chose to solve the mystery without any physical effort. So, she chooses to spend the time to think of the various possibilities that could have caused this mark, and while guessing these fanciful guesses she finds herself lost in some serious philosophical thoughts. The snail is identified just at the end of the story but is the titular hero who provides a plot to this story. The vast streams of consciousness are a result of this snake sitting on the wall and the narrator sitting on her chair.

## Talking About The Text

### Question 1.

'In order to fix a date, it is necessary to remember what one saw'. Have you experienced this at any time? Describe one such incident and the non-chronological details that helped you remember a particular date.

### Answer:

I still remember waking up in Kashmir on the 26th January morning. The city popularly known as the Heaven on earth was under a strict curfew and the military took over the roads. I had my flight that morning from Kashmir to Delhi and the military joined us on our way to the airport. The airlines were so strict that day that they checked our luggage 5 times and did not allow a single handbag into the plane. The city which captured my heart the day before traumatized me the very next morning. So, it is rightly said that 'In order to fix a date, it is necessary to remember what one saw.' Every Republic Day I still recall those memories that provoke me to philosophize life and open my mental process to endless thoughts.

### Question 2.

'Tablecloths of a different kind were not real tablecloths'. Does this sentence embody the idea of blind adherence to rules and tradition? Discuss with reference to 'Understanding Freedom and Discipline' by J. Krishnamurti that you've already read.

### Answer:

Both Woolf and Krishnamurti have raised their voice against the blind adherence to rules and tradition in many of their works. Woolf in 'Mark on the Wall' and Krishnamurti in 'Understanding Freedom and Discipline' have talked about how the traditionally set rules have hampered the individual freedom; and the compulsions that they pose because of which people have to compromise on their desires. Woolf has also questioned the traditional importance that is given to knowledge and learning, the concept Shakespearean depiction of reality and by rejecting these long set norms comes up with her own theory on gaining knowledge and depiction of reality.

### Question 3.

According to the author, nature prompts action as a way of ending thought. Do we tacitly assume that 'men of action are men who don't think'?

### Answer:

Woolf assumed that nature is creating distractions to end the mental process that is making her think. She takes this as challenge and does not give in her temptation to stand

up and solve the mystery behind the mark on the wall in less than a minute. Instead she chooses to take her own time and solve the mystery with her powerful mental process. This leads to a flood of thoughts in vast directions. For the narrator, knowledge is all about the ability to think and nature sets hurdles for us. Those who act, don't think according to the narrator and therefore in the context of the story it is right to say that, 'Men of actions are men who don't think'.

## Appreciation

### Question 1.

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of narration: one, where the reader would remain aware of some outside voice telling him/her what's going on; two, a narration that seeks to reproduce, without the narrator's intervention, the full spectrum and continuous flow of a character's mental process. Which of these is exemplified in this essay? Illustrate.

### Answer:

'The mark on the wall' is a perfect example of Virginia Woolf's 'Stream of Consciousness', Which is a narration that seeks to reproduce, without the narrator's intervention, the full spectrum of and continuous flow of a character's mental process. Throughout the story, the narrator centred her interpretations of the mark that she sees on the wall while smoking a cigarette sitting on a chair from some distance. In this process of solving the mystery behind the mark, the narrator comes up with a collection of vast unconnected thoughts and opinions. These thoughts persuade the reader to think and stimulate his/her mental process. The flood of thoughts that the mark provokes in the narrator's mind is so un-relatable to the actual reason behind the mark- the snail.

### Question 2.

This essay frequently uses the non-periodic or loose sentence structure: the component members are continuous, but so loosely joined, that the sentence could have easily been broken without damage to or break in thought. Locate a few such sentences, and discuss how they contribute to the relaxed and conversational effect of the narration.

### Answer:

The following set of sentences drawn from the text is a perfect example of the continuous loosely joined sentence structure. This sentence formation technique is used to give the story a relaxed tone. The narrator is sitting on her chair, smoking her cigarette and trying to solve the mystery behind the mark on the wall but is too lazy to stand up and solve the mystery in less than a minute. This tone depicts a sort of confusion and flood thoughts that the mark provokes in the mind of the narrator. At the same time the broken tone is adding up a conversational effect to the text, so the reader is totally involved in it and knows that the narrator is actually talking to him/her. This tone adds a sort of curiosity in the mind of the readers to know about the mysterious mark on the wall.

*"I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts. To steady myself, let me catch hold of the first idea that passes... Shakespeare... Well, he will do as well as another. A man who sat solidly in an arm-chair, and looked into the fire, so— A shower of ideas fell perpetually from some very high Heaven down through his mind. He leaned his forehead on his hand, and people, looking in through the open door,—for this scene is supposed to take place on a summer's evening—But how dull this is, this historical fiction! It doesn't interest me at all."*