

"The Quality of Mercy"

Comprehension I:

Question 1:

Mercy is compared to something in the first two lines of the poem. What is it? How is this comparison apt?

Answer:

Mercy is compared to gentle rain from heaven. This comparison is apt because, just like rain falls naturally and freely from the sky, mercy is spontaneous and cannot be forced. Rain nourishes the earth without discrimination, just as mercy benefits both the giver and the receiver.

Question 2:

The speaker says that mercy is twice as blessed. What does she mean by this?

Answer:

Mercy is "twice blessed" because it blesses both the one who gives it and the one who receives it. The giver is blessed with kindness and moral superiority, while the receiver benefits from compassion and forgiveness.

Question 3:

'Sceptre shows the force of temporal power'. In contrast, what or whose quality does mercy stand for?

Answer:

The sceptre symbolizes earthly power, authority, and fear. In contrast, mercy represents divine power, which is greater than earthly rule. While the sceptre commands fear, mercy commands love and respect and is a quality associated with God and just rulers.

Question 4:

Some traits or qualities are mentioned below. Classify them into two categories temporal power and divine (Godly) attributes.

(love, revenge, sympathy, tyranny, cruelty, miserliness, mercy, hatred, tit-for-tat attitude, compassion)

Temporal Power (Earthly) Divine Attributes (Godly)

Revenge	Love
Tyranny	Sympathy
Cruelty	Mercy
Miserliness	Compassion
Hatred	-
Tit-for-tat attitude	-

Read and appreciate**1. Work in pairs/groups and answer the following questions.****Question 1:**

Read the first two lines. Explain the simile (comparison) briefly.

Answer:

The speaker compares mercy to gentle rain from heaven. Just as rain falls naturally and nourishes the earth, mercy is given freely and benefits everyone. The comparison emphasizes that mercy is spontaneous, pure, and essential for life, just like rain.

Question 2:

How do you interpret the speaker's interpretation of mercy as twice blessed?

Answer:

The speaker explains that mercy is twice as blessed because it blesses both the giver and the receiver. The giver earns respect and moral superiority, while the receiver benefits from kindness and forgiveness. This idea reinforces that true power lies in compassion rather than control.

Question 3:

The speaker compares the power of the king with the power of mercy, saying that mercy is the mightiest of the mightiest. How does she justify this?

Answer:

The speaker argues that a king's sceptre represents temporal (earthly) power, which commands fear and obedience.

However, mercy is greater than this power, as it is divine and associated with God. A ruler who tempers justice with mercy reflects true greatness and moral superiority.

Question 4:

Can you think of any story wherein such virtues as mercy, compassion, or sacrifice are highlighted? If so, narrate them in class.

Answer:

- **Example: The Story of "Androcles and the Lion"**

Androcles, a runaway slave, comes across a wounded lion in the forest. Instead of running away, he shows mercy and removes a thorn from the lion's paw. Later, Androcles is captured and thrown into an arena with a lion. The same lion he helped recognizes him and spares his life. This story illustrates how acts of kindness and mercy are repaid in unexpected ways.

Question 5"

This poem has fourteen lines. But it is not a sonnet. Look at the ending of the lines and justify the above statement.

Answer:

The poem The Quality of Mercy does not follow the structure of a traditional Shakespearean sonnet. It lacks quatrains, a concluding couplet, and a fixed rhyme scheme. Instead, it is written in free verse, which follows the natural rhythm of speech. This suits its origin as an extract from The Merchant of Venice.

A Shakespearean sonnet has 14 lines, divided into three quatrains and a final couplet, with a rhyme scheme of ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. In contrast, a Petrarchan sonnet consists of an octave (ABBAABBA) and a sestet (CDCDCD or variant). These forms influence how themes are introduced and resolved.

The Quality of Mercy Summary



The Quality of Mercy is an extract from Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*, where Portia argues that mercy is the greatest virtue. Through her speech, Shakespeare highlights the power and divinity of mercy.

Mercy cannot be forced; it falls naturally, like gentle rain from heaven. It is twice blessed—benefiting both the giver and the receiver. Unlike worldly power, which instils fear and awe, mercy transcends authority, making a ruler truly great. While kings and emperors hold temporal power, mercy elevates them, bringing them closer to God.

Portia emphasizes that a king's majesty alone inspires fear, but if he rules with mercy, he earns love and respect. True

greatness lies not in domination but in compassion, making mercy a divine virtue. Those who embrace mercy reflect God's own nature and become truly powerful.

EasyLearnNow.com