POETRY

Read the poems below and answer the questions that follow:

Poem 1

There is a little hut
Built across from here;
They've mudded two walls
And the rest stand unmade…
For they ran out of mud.

There is a deep gully
Running along the road;
They have filled it halfway
And the rest is still gaping…
For they ran out of mud.
There is a pot by the altar
That they began to mould;
They finished the base
But the neck remains undone…
For they ran out of mud.

Mud! Mud!
Who can find mud?
Maybe if it were gold
Someone would.

1. What is the poem about? (4 Mks)

2. What do the following physical objects represent? (6 Mks)
   a. The hut

   b. The deep gully running along the road

   c. The pot by the altar

3. Explain irony in the last stanza. (2 Mks)

4. Why does the persona refer to 'they' rather than 'you'? (3 Mks)

5. Identify and explain the tone of the poem. (3 Mks)

6. Apart from irony, identify any other stylistic devices used in the poem. (2 Mks)

Poem 2

The face of hunger

I counted the ribs on his concertina chest
Bones protruding as if chiselled
By a sculptor's hand of famine
He looked with glazed pupils
Seeing only a bun on some sky-high shelf
The skin was pale and taut
Like the glove of a doctor's hand
His tongue darted in and out
Like a chameleon's
Snatching a confetti of flies
O! Child
Your stomach is a den of lions
Roaring day and night.

1. What is the message of the poem? (3 Mks)

2. Why does the child see 'only a bun on some sky-high shelf' and why is the shelf 'sky-high'? (2 Mks)

3. Explain the following phrases as used in the poem. (3 Mks)
   a. …as if chiselled by a sculptor's hand of famine

   b. Like a glove on a doctor's hand

   c. Like a chameleon's

4. Comment on the poet's use of 'concertina chest' and 'a confetti of flies'. (4 Mks)

5. Comment on the effectiveness of the last two lines of the poem. (4Mks)

6. Comment on the use of imagery in the poem. (4 Mks)

ANSWERS

POEM 1

1. The poem is about unfinished tasks/negligence
   In stanza 1, the persona speaks about a little hut that has only two mudded walls and the rest remains unmade.
   In stanza2, he speaks about a gully that is halfway filled and the rest is gaping.
   In stanza 3, he speaks about a pot by the altar whose neck remains unmade.
2. The hut represents basic personal needs that have been neglected.
   The deep gully running along the road represents neglected social duties in the society.
   The pot by the altar represents neglected traditional religion/ respect for God/spirits
3. It is ironical that the speaker wonders if anyone can find mud, but feels that someone would find gold.
4. It is ironical that people find it easy to go for luxuries(represented by gold) rather than the readily available essentials (represented by mud)
5. Sarcastic/satirical- 'they ran out of mud'
   'who can find mud'
   'maybe if it were gold, someone would'
   People should not run out of mud, especially in a rural area, but the speaker says they did.
   Gold is more difficult to find than mud, but the speaker makes it appear easier to find gold.
6. Repetition- 'for they ran out of mud'
   'Mud! Mud!

   Ellipsis- ' but the neck remains undone…'

   Rhetorical question- ' who can find mud?'

POEM 2

1. It refers to a child who is suffering from the effects of hunger/ starvation
   He has grown thin and worn out
   He hallucinates about food that does not exist
   He looks helpless and uncared for
   Starvation can cause hallucinations
2. He imagines eating a 'bun' but cannot get it.
   It is not possible for him to get any food
   Food is out of reach
3. He is so emaciated/ thin- as if someone has cut his flesh away
   The skin is tight and pale
   The flickering tongue shows he is greedy
4. Like the ridges of a concertina, a musical instrument- one can count the ribs on his chest
   Coloured flies- of different colours
5. It is effective because a den of lions roaring refers to the rumbling stomach because the child is very hungry.
6. Simile 'like a glove…' refers to the emaciated skin of the starved child
   Metaphor 'your stomach is a den of lions'- refers to the sound emanating from the child's stomach.