



The Legend of Northland Questions & Answers

[The Legend of Northland](#)

Q1. Vocabulary:-

1. **Harness**- set of straps and fittings by which an animal is fastened to a cart
2. **Hearth**- floor of a fireplace.
3. **Scanty**- insufficient in quantity.
4. **Boring- the** act of drilling a hole

Summary:

A Legend of the Northland Summary – This is a ballad poem means it narrates a story in short paragraphs. Also, in a ballad, the entire paragraph contains four lines. And in total it has 16 stanzas that tell us a story. They are part of the folk culture or popular culture that orally passed from one generation to the next. However, folk culture is stories of an area that we know as a ballad. Besides, this is the story of the Northern area near the North Pole. The poet doesn't specify the exact place. But 'Northland' means the area in the northernmost part of the earth i.e., near the North Pole. Further, 'legend' refers to a historical story that is very old and has been orally passed from generation to generation.

Q2. Answer the following questions

1. **Which country or countries do you think “the Northland” refers to?**

Ans: It is a country in the north where days are short and nights are long.

2. **What did Saint Peter ask the old lady for? What was the lady’s reaction?**

Ans: Saint Peter asked the old lady for a piece of cake. The lady behaved miserly and kept decreasing the size of the cake. At last she did not give him anything to eat.

3. **How did he punish her?**

Ans: He cursed her and made her a woodpecker.

4. **How does the woodpecker get her food?**

Ans: The woodpecker bores the hard and dry wood to get its food.

5. **Do you think that the old lady would have been so ungenerous if she had known who Saint Peter really was? What would she have done then?**

Ans: No, she would not have done this. On the contrary, she would have given him a large piece of cake to make him happy with the greed to get a handsome return.

6. **Is this a true story? Which part of this poem do you feel is the most important?**

Ans: No, it is an imaginative story. It is a legend. The third stanza of the poem is very important.

7. **What is a legend? Why this poem is called a legend?**

Ans: A legend is a story from ancient times about people and events. The title of the poem tells that it is a legend. The poet himself says that ‘I don’t believe it is true’.

8. **Write the story of ‘A Legend of the Northland’ in about ten sentences.**

Ans: The poem is a story of an old woman. She is asked by Saint Peter for alms that have become weak because of fasting and travelling. But her greed forces her not to give him anything. He becomes angry and makes her a woodpecker that bores hard, dry wood to get food. Her clothes are burnt to ashes and she is left with a cap on her head. She continues boring into hard wood for her little food.

Short answer type questions

1. **Why was Saint Peter tired and hungry?**

Ans: Saint Peter was a holy man. He used to preach people. For his preaching he often made long journey. During the course of his journey, sometimes, he did not take food and water. Besides, he had to observe fasts also. Fasts and journey were the essential

part of his life. Hence, he was tired and hungry.

2. **What happened to the cake every time when the old lady tried to bake it?**

Ans: The old lady was a greedy woman. She had no desire to share her things with others. Once Saint Peter was tired and hungry. He arrived at her cottage to get something. The old lady tried again and again to bake a too small cake for Saint Peter. But the size of cake always appeared to her bigger and the lady was even unable to give this cake to the saint.

3. **What happened to the old lady when Saint Peter cursed her?**

Ans: Saint Peter became angry at her greed because she did not give a piece of cake to Saint Peter to satiate his hunger. When he cursed the lady, she turned into a bird. She flew through the chimney. Finally, she became a woodpecker. She wore a red cap and her body was black. Besides, she was bound to live in the forest with scanty food.

4. **Describe the landscape of the Northland as described in the poem.**

Ans: The Northland is far away in the north. In this land of snow and ice, the days are very short. The nights are too long. When it snows, they harness swift reindeer to the sledges. Children are packed with so many layers of clothes to protect from the cold. In their funny and furry clothes they look like cubs of bears.

5. **Why does the poet tell a story which he does not believe to be true?**

Ans: The poet wants to tell a 'curious' story. It is the story of St. Peter and a greedy little woman. The poet himself doesn't believe in the truth of the story. But still he is compelled to tell this story simply for one reason. The story gives a moral lesson. Greed is an evil trait in man. It is punished in the end. The greedy little woman who didn't want to give a small piece of cake to hungry St. Peter was cursed to be a woodpecker. She had to live with little food. We should show human qualities in our behaviour.

6. **Who was St. Peter and why did he come to the cottage of a little woman?**

Ans: St. Peter was a holy man and a Christian saint. He went around different places preaching the people. Too much travelling made him tired and hungry. He needed food and rest badly. Therefore, he came to the cottage of a little woman who was making cakes. He asked the woman to give one from her store of cakes to him.

7. **Why did the little woman knead another and still a smaller cake?**

Ans: St. Peter asked the little woman to give one cake from her store of cakes. The little woman made a very little piece of cake to give it to the hungry Saint Peter. However, even that little piece seemed too large to be given away. Therefore, the greedy little woman kneaded another and still a smaller cake.

8. **Why did the little old woman have to struggle for her scanty food after she was cursed to be a woodpecker?**

Ans: The greedy little woman denied hungry St Peter even a small piece of cake. She

made a very small piece of cake but it seemed too large to her to be given away. She went on making it still small and smaller. She was cursed by St. Peter to be a woodpecker. She was made to struggle even for her scanty food. As a woodpecker, she went on boring to get a small morsel of food.

Long answer type questions

1. **A holy man should not curse the lady. Justify this statement in the context of the poem 'A Legend of the Northland'.**

Ans: A holy man is known for his wisdom. He teaches moral lessons to the people whether they are liberal or greedy. All are equal in his eyes. In the present story, Saint Peter is a holy man. He is also famous for his preaching. He has preached and travelled a lot. So, he is hungry. He asks the lady for some food but she does not share her food with him. Finally, the saint becomes angry and curses her. In fact, he should have shown some mercy and the example of his w

2. **How can you say that the old lady was greedy?**

Ans: The old lady was running a bakery. Saint Peter was a wise saint. He had travelled and preached a lot so he was tired and hungry. He had arrived at her door for some food. Still the lady made him wait for the cake for a long time. Every time she tried to bake too small cake but unfortunately the cake often seemed to her of a bigger size. The old lady did not want to share the cake of this size with the saint. At last, the saint grew angry and cursed her. So, it can be said that her greed had no limit.

3. **Why was St. Peter forced to curse the greedy little woman? Do you justify the action of St. Peter?**

Ans: St. Peter was a holy man. He was a Christian saint. He spent his time moving around places and preaching the people there. Saints generally bless the people. They don't curse them. However, these holy men resort to cursing when people defy good sense and become evil. The little woman in the story was extremely selfish and greedy. After much travelling and preaching, St. Peter had become tired. He had become weak and hungry after the fast. He came to the cottage of the little woman for food. Seeing her baking cakes, St. Peter asked her to give one from her store of cakes. The greedy woman made a very little piece of cake for him. Even that small piece looked too large to be given away to the saint. Hence, she went on making it smaller and smaller. The hungry St. Peter cursed the selfish and greedy woman. She was cursed to be a woodpecker boring and struggling for her scanty food. St. Peter was justified in cursing her. She had deprived a tired and hungry saint even from a small piece of cake. She was rightly punished for her greed.

4. **Why was the little woman cursed particularly to be a woodpecker and not**

another bird? How did she struggle to get her scanty food?

Ans: The little woman aroused the anger of a holy man. The saint spends most of his time in travelling and preaching. Constant fasting had made him hungry and weak. Saint Peter asked for a small piece of cake when he saw a little woman baking cakes. The greedy woman could have easily given a piece of cake to the saint. But the selfish woman thought that even a very little piece was too large to be given away to him. She denied even this little offering. The saint cursed her to be a woodpecker. A woodpecker has to bore for a long time to get even a scanty food. She was cursed to labour hard by boring into the tree to get even her scanty food as she had made the saint to wait so long for such a small piece of cake.

Value based questions

1. What moral lesson do you get from this poem?

Ans: This poem teaches us that true happiness lies in sharing things with the persons who are in need. If we are greedy, we cannot have happiness in our life. On the other hand our charitable nature makes us think about pains and sorrows suffered by the other people. The charitable people have many friends and they are always connected with one another with a strong bond of sentiments. But the greedy people have hardly any friends and they often live alone in the world.

2. What quality do you find in saints?

Ans: Saints are wise people. They have gained heavenly power. Riches make no sense for them, for which people often hanker. They need only food to survive in this world. They travel far off land and give people moral lessons.

3. How is true satisfaction spoiled by greed?

Ans: True satisfaction lies in sharing things with others. Peace and satisfaction are the two sides of a coin. If there is satisfaction in our life, peace is bound to come in our life. However greed spoils both. If we are greedy, we cannot get satisfaction as well as peace in our life. In the poem, the old lady was greedy and she failed to give cake to the saint. If she had satisfaction, she would certainly have shown honour and regard to the saint. So, in the case of this little lady it can be said that her greed had spoiled her peace and satisfaction.

Actually, saints try to create such societies in which all the people shall be treated with equality and greed will have no room in them. With the help of teachings, they desire to bring down heaven on the earth.

Extract Based Questions

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

1: He came to the door of a cottage In travelling round the earth Where a little woman was making cakes And baking them on the hearth.

1. Who does "he" refer to in the first line?
2. What request did "he" make to the woman?
3. Was the little woman rewarded or punished? Why?

Answer:

1. "He" refers to Saint Peter in the first line.
2. "He" requested the woman to give him a cake.
3. The little woman was punished since she was highly stingy, miserly, greedy and mean.

Question 2:

**He came to the door of a cottage
In travelling round the earth
Where a little woman was making cakes
And baking them on the hearth.**

1. What was Saint Peter doing?
2. What was the little woman making?
3. What is a hearth? (Board Term 1,2012, ELI-022)

Answer:

1. Saint Peter was travelling.
2. The little woman was baking cakes.
3. Hearth is a fire-place.

Question 3:

**Then Saint Peter grew angry
For he was hungry and faint '
And surely such a woman Was enough to provoke a saint**

1. Why was Saint Peter about to faint?
2. How did the woman provoke Saint Peter?
3. What is the rhyming scheme of the given stanza?

Answer:

1. Saint Peter was about to faint as he had been preaching and fasting.
2. The woman provoked Saint Peter by not giving him the cakes that were baked for him.
3. abcb.

Question 4:

He came to the door of a cottage In travelling round the earth Where a little woman was making cakes And baking them on the hearth.

1. What was Saint Peter doing?
2. What was the little woman making?
3. What is a hearth? (Board Term 1,2012, ELI-022)

Answer:

1. Saint Peter was travelling.
2. The little woman was baking cakes.
3. Hearth is a fire-place.

Question 5:

**And being faint with fasting For the day was almost done
He asked her, from her store of cakes,
To give him a single one.**

1. Who is "He" in the extract?
2. What did he ask her to give him?
3. Trace a word from the extract that means "weak". (Board Term 1,2012, ELI-023)

Answer:

1. "He" referred to in the extract is Saint Peter.
2. He asked her to give him one cake from her store. '
3. Faint

Question 6:

**And being faint with fasting,
For the day was almost done,
He asked her, from her store of cakes,**

To give him a single one.

1. Who is "He" in the passage?
2. Why was he fainting?
3. What is meant by "the day was almost done" ? (Board Term 1,2012, ELI-024)

Answer:

1. "He" in the passage is Saint Peter.
2. He was fainting due to fasting.
3. "The day was almost done" means that the day had finished or passed.

Short Answer Type Questions (2 marks each)
(About 30-40 words each)

Q. 1: Why does the poet say that the hours of the day are few?

Ans: In the poem, the poet uses a name Northland. In the area of Northland, the nights are longer and the days are shorter. As a result there are very few hours in a day.

Q. 2: Who came knocking at the door of the old woman? Why was he there?

Ans: In the Northland an old lady lived in a cottage. She was baking cakes when St. Peter came knocking at her door. He had become weak with fasting and travelling. He was looking for food

Q.3: Is this a true story? Which part of the poem do you think is really important?

Ans:

This is a legend. It is not a true story. Even the poet feels that it is not true. The most important part of the poem is the point when we realize that the old woman is very greedy. She could not part with her cakes for a hungry man.

Q.4: Is this poem correct in being known as a legend? Explain.

Ans:

A legend is a semi true story which has been passed on from person-to-person through ages. This legend has an important meaning or symbolism for the culture in which it originates. A legend includes an element of truth or is based on historic facts but with mythical qualities. The saint in turn curses the old woman. This poem can also be regarded as a folktale which again is a story told from one generation to another.

Long Answer Type Questions (4 marks each)

(About 80-100 words each)

Q.1: What are the poetic devices in the ballad 'A Legend of the Northland'?

Ans: The major literary devices, also called poetic devices, in "A Legend of the Northland" by Phoebe Gary are so many which means repetition of vowel sounds, this appears in line 1: "Away, away.... Another striking literary element pertains to the structure of the quatrain stanzas (four lines per stanza) that have no end punctuation. Each line rolls to the other through enjambment. It works very well in most spots, although there are one or two places where the enjambment is clumsy, such as "Where a little woman was making cakes / and baking them on the hearth / .And being faint from fasting...." There is both an explicit speaker ("tell me a curious story") and an explicit addressee ("yet you might learn"). The rhyme scheme of the poem is alternate unrhymed lines with rhymed ones in an abebdefe, etc. pattern. The major literary technique is sensory imagery that includes vision, taste, and sounds as Saint Peter (the technique of Biblical allusion) approaches the cottage and witnesses the baking of the cakes, then turns the woman into a woodpecker that can be heard tapping on a tree.

Q.2: What is a dramatic narrative? Is our poem a form of dramatic narrative?

Ans: Poems with dramatic narrative are a form of poetry that has a plot and tells a story. Poems in this genre can vary in length from short to long and they can tell a complex story. Many times these poems use the voices of characters and narrator and usually the story is written in metered verse. This poem is a dramatic narrative told from inside a frame in which the speaker introduces. The story the far cold Northland a good Saint was wondering on the road. He nearly fainted as he was so hungry with fasting. The saint came to a cottage and within he saw a little old woman baking cakes. As he was starving, he asked a small cake for himself. The old lady baked the smallest cake for him but refused to even part with it. As a result the saint got angry with the old lady and cursed her. His curse transformed the old woman into a woodpecker. Today, everybody can see her in the forest where she lives in trees etching trees for her food.

This poem has a beginning and an end. The beginning is a simple narrative tone which ends in a dramatic form.

Value Based Questions

Q.1: Why did the woman bake a little cake?(Board Term 1,2013, 9KK 73AP)

Ans: The woman in the poem has been shown as a highly stingy, miserly, greedy and mean by nature. Whenever, she took out cake from the hearth, they appeared to be larger than the original size. Hence, she baked a very small cake for Saint Peter.

Q.2: Greed is a quality which God does not like. Discuss it in the context of the poem.

Ans: Greed is considered to be a sin. This has been clearly brought out in the poem. In a legend of the Northland greed has no end. This is evident in the behavior of the old lady when she was asked for a cake by St. Peter. She could not even give him a wafer-thin slice. This angered St. Peter and he cursed her to be a woodpecker. One should always be able to share with others as God has been so kind to give us so much.

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