



## 2.2 The Sower

### ICE BREAKERS

**(1) Make a list of words related to agriculture.**

**Ans.** Farmer, crop, fields, sow, reap, plough, Irrigate, rainfall, bumper-harvest are some words related to agriculture.

**(2) Discuss the activities carried out by a farmer.**

**Ans:**

**Ploughing \_ sowing \_ irrigating \_ harvesting**

**(3) Make a list of occupations/professionals that make a significant contribution to the society but do not get their due**

**(The answers are given directly and underlined.)**

**Ans:**

1. **Farmer** • highly unpredictable economic gains.
2. **Conservancy Workers** • engaged in occupations involving health-risks,  
• in unsanitary conditions,  
• without required work-gear and equipment.
3. **House-help** • no paid time off,  
• no minimum wage assured,  
• no old age benefits.  
• unsafe work-conditions,  
• arbitrary-wages,  
• gender inequality,
4. **Daily wage Labourers** • no housing,  
• no proper education for offspring,  
• no healthcare,  
• greedy labour-contractors.
5. **Street-vendors** • uncertain income,  
• harassment.

**(4) Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy'. Fill in the boxes supporting this statement:**

**(The answers are given directly and underlined)**

**Ans:**

### **Agriculture - the backbone of India**

- **A large part of the Indian population is involved in agriculture.**
- **India's entire population of more than a billion depend everyday on the food crops grown by our farmers.**
- **Survival of the population without other industries like IT or automobile is possible, but not without agriculture.**
- **Diverse geography and climate of India allows a variety of crops to be grown, suited to the local conditions.**

### **Paraphrase**

The poet is seated in the front of her house watching the evening scene before her. The sun is setting. Twilight has set in; daylight is fast fading as night falls upon the earth. Working hours are almost over, but in the dimness of dusk, she sees a farmer still among his fields.

She describes him as old and poor, patiently surveying the land around him. She perceives a feeling of respect for the peasant, his figure, dark against the evening skies, towers over the ploughed soil. He is ready for the task at hand.

He is going to sow the seeds, which, sometime in the future, he will harvest. The old farmer walks up and down and scatters the seeds, methodically, under the darkening sky. The poet, deep in thought watches him. He is a noble and impressive figure. He seems to touch the starry sky from where she is watching.

### **FACTUAL UNDERSTANDING:**

**Q. Read the poem given below and do the activities that follow:**

#### **Poem**

**Sitting in a porchway cool,  
Sunlight, I see, dying fast,  
Twilight hastens on to rule.  
Working hours have well-nigh past.  
Shadows run across the lands:  
But a sower lingers still,  
Old, in rags, he patient stands.  
Looking on, I feel a thrill.  
Black and high, his silhouette  
Dominates the furrows deep!  
Now to sow the task is set.  
Soon shall come a time to reap.  
Marches he along the plain  
To and fro, and scatters wide  
From his hands the precious grain;  
Muse I, as I see him stride.  
Darkness deepens. Fades the light.  
Now his gestures to mine eyes  
Are august; and strange; his height  
Seems to touch the starry skies.**

#### **Glossary**

- **porchway** - a veranda or a covered shelter in front of a building.
- **twilight** - dusk, Sundown, half-light, nightfall.
- **well-nigh** - almost but not completely or exactly, just about.
- **sower** - the person who plants the seed.
- **lingers**- hangs around, remains.
- **silhouette** - shape, outline of someone against a brighter background.
- **furrows**- line, trench, channel.
- **muse (verb)** - rest in thought, reflect.
- **Stride** - to walk with long steps.
- **august** - noble, dignified, impressive.
- **Dominates** - commands, reigns supreme.
- **gestures** - movements.

#### **A1. Factual Understanding:**

**(1) Pick out from the poem the words that the poet uses to describe the sower/ farmer.**

**Ans.** Old, patient, slow, hard-working, confident, decisive, noble, hopeful, disappointed.

**(2) Now to sow the task is set'. Who has set the task, and who has to do it?**

**Ans.** The old farmer has set the task for himself. Though poor, he is hardworking. He is his own master and decides what has to be done.

#### **A2. Interpretation/Understanding of Poetic Devices**

**(1) The word 'Marches' suggests... (Interpretation)**

**Ans.** The poet describes the peasant as someone who is in command of the land and fields around him. The word '**marches (he along the plain)**' in the line indicates he is in charge of the place and controls the activities that take place there. He knows what has to be done.

**(2) The poet says about the lone figure in the field- (Interpretation)**

**Ans:**

Black and **high**, his silhouette **Dominates** the furrows deep',

Now his gestures to mine eyes Are **august**;

..his height Seems to touch the starry skies’.

**(3) Select the option(s) that would describe the poet’s view of the farmer.(Interpretation)**

- (a) He is admirable.
- (b) He is respectable.
- (c) He is noble.
- (d) t seems as if he is touching the sky.
- (e) He is figuratively a giant.

**Ans. All of the above.**

**(4) The poet has observed the sower closely. Express in your own words the reverence the poet has for the sower. (Interpretation)**

**Ans.** The poet observes that the old farmer is still at work at dusk. He does not end his work just because it is twilight, or because others may have ended their working day. She feels wonder and respect (I feel a thrill’) at his dark shape, alone in the field, looming over his land. He dutifully plods up and down sowing, as she is lost in thought (Muse I’). She is awed at his diligence, for he works alone in order that many may eat.

**(5) In the line - ‘Old, in rags, he patient stands.’ What qualities of the sower does the poet want to convey? (Interpretation)**

**Ans.** The word ‘old’ shows age and experience. The words in rags’ indicate the harsh, hard-working life a farmer leads, always

toiling. The word patient’ conveys that he must wait for the crop to grow. He knows the various things (vagaries of weather or pestilence) that could render his labour futile, yet he must wait hoping for the best. In all, his many years of tilling the land have taught him to bide his time, anticipating the harvest, plentiful or otherwise.

**(6) The poet is prompted to call the sower an ‘august personality’ which means who**

**has reached the highest position in his workplace. Explain this one using the following points:**

**(a) Hard work**

**(b) Perseverance**

**(c) Dedication.**

**(d) Dignity in poverty. (Interpretation)**

**Ans.**

**(a) Hard work** - The farmer has to labour, every day from sun up to sundown, preparing the land, sowing, weeding, fertilizing, irrigating pestilence, poachers, animals, constantly fearing bad weather, praying for rain and shine at the right stage for his fields of standing crops, and, if all goes fending off stray well he may be able to harvest it. He must again get a good price for his toils to eke that a livelihood. There are so many things th could go wrong in spite of his back-breal king toils.

**(b) Perseverance:** The farmer, in the course of things encounters many adversities Too much rain or too little, wild winds or animals, sickness of the plants or his family are threats. Above all this the never ending attention and work demanded by famine as an Occupation, requires enormous determination. He perseveres nevertheless, tending to the land so that its bounty will feed not his family alone, but his fellowmen too. The inner courage to face the difficulties and challenges and the determination do to hard labour shows the farmer's perseverance.

**(c) Dedication:** Only the farmer who is dedicated to work on his beloved land can face the multiple challenges. He must love the land, the labour and consider the harvest his reward. For an onlooker it might be frightening to think of so many things that could bring ruin. It is easier to leave this to 'someone else' and buy the supply of food one needs. But only the dedicated son of the earth will give his sweat and blood to nurture the earth, season after season, year after year.

**(d) Dignity in poverty:** The farmer, in spite of the labour he has to put in, and the simple life he leads, lives in dignity. He bows t Mother Nature and calls no one master He expects reward only for his toils and more. Sometimes he is unfortunately denieu even a good crop as an honest payment. feeds not himself and his family alone but He able to feed his

fellows. He looks up to the Sun, looks for rains and looks down lovingly at his earth. He lives in his humble home but gold can feed hungry men. He demands not but commands our gratitude and respect. He is king of his lands. Without his toils no go

**(7) Pick out the examples of alliteration from the poem and write them down. (Poetic devices)**

**Ans.**

But a sower lingers still, ..

Seems to touch the starry skies." The sibilant occurs in the same line. The letter 'S' begins three words of the six in a line From his hands.. The letter 'h' begins adjacent words Darkness deepens'. Adjacent words begin with the letter 'd'.

**(8) Seems to touch the starry skies'. The poet has used word imagery. Describe the idea and pick out other similar examples from the poem. (Poetic devices)**

**Ans.** 'Sunlight, I see, dying fast, Twilight hastens on to rule'.

The imagery created is when one ruler dies, the next comes to fill the place - here night takes over from day, darkness takes over from light. There is symbolism. The line also tells of the farmer toiling both day and night - unceasing in his labour.

**(9) The poet has used antithesis for effect. Pick out the line and explain. (Poetic devices)**

**Ans.** 'Shadows run across the lands But a sower lingers still,'

There is antithesis for effect. Shadows are said to 'run' to indicate the fast approaching darkness. And the sower is said to 'linger' showing he is patient, in no hurry to stop work and is going to do his work as it should be done regardless of the hour. Also the word 'still' has two meanings - unmoving/ yet. Running/still are opposites.

### **A3. Appreciation /Personal Response**

**(1) Twilight hastens on to rule. Explain in your own words. (Personal Response)**

**Ans.** The daylight is fading, and as the poet is watching the scene, darkness is quickly blanketing the earth in its shadows.

**(Personal response)**

**(2) There are a number of challenges a farmer in India faces. Discuss with your friend, how it is possible to improve the condition of farmers.**

<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
1.	<b>Water Scarcity</b>	Rainwater Harvesting
2.	<b>Credit and Indebtedness</b>	Implement policies for farmers' easier bank-borrowing
3.	<b>Land Issues</b>	Govt. intervention to support poor farmers
4.	<b>Climatic changes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education and awareness among farmers to take insurance for poor yields due to natural calamities</li><li>• Public policies to improve environment and stop destruction of forest spaces for industries.</li></ul>
5.	<b>Social Groups</b>	Formation of appropriate social groups to get information about government policies/best seeds/best market prices, etc.
6.	<b>Lack of advanced</b>	Latest developments in Agri-tech must be brought to farmers' co-ops. technology especially for cold storage, transport, marketing, value addition and preserving-technology for perishable produce.
7.	<b>Diversification</b>	Education of farmers to grow a variety of crops suited to the local conditions/ market demands
8.	<b>Market Risks</b>	(Support price) MSP, value addition, equipment and know-how for cold storage, food-processing technology, must be provided to instill confidence in farmers
9.	<b>Soil deterioration/ depletion</b>	Spreading awareness & encouraging crop-rotation, using organic manure-pesticides, prevention of soil-erosion, and how follow sustainable practices. Set up agro-research projects/colleges to promote/ propagate sustainable practices
10.	<b>Natural calamities like drought/ floods/ cyclone</b>	Govt. initiative to rehabilitate and revive lost property; provide monetary and material support to re-establish agriculture in affected areas

**A4 Poetic Creativity**



**Compose a poem on a farmer in 4 to 6 lines in continuation of the following**

He sweats.....

He does not fret.... ..

He sows.....

To the soil he bows

**Ans.**

He sweats **in the haze of the midday blaze**

He does not fret **if it forgets to rain**

He sows **and ploughs, over years and days**

To the soil he bows, **his Mother, the furrowed plain.**

### **APPRECIATION OF POEM**

**Write an appreciation of the poem considering the following points**

**(1) About the poem/ poet / title.**

**Ans.** The poem "The Sower" is a description of a lone farmer, toiling in his fields, as the poet watches, even after sundown. Toru Dutt, in her translation of Victor Hugo's poem, speaks in praise of his dedication.

**(2) Theme**

**Ans.** The poem is woven around the theme of the farmer surveying his land, taking upon himself the hard work to till it, and plodding on into the night, even after the day is done. He seeks neither help nor company but does what needs doing.

**(3) Poetic devices, language, style.**

**Ans.** The poet has used devices like alliteration, imagery and symbolism to create the scene in the reader's mind. The rhyme-scheme is **ab, ab**, providing a pleasing rhythm to read aloud. The language comprises words used in a manner to create a commanding figure of

the farmer, in order to emphasize the importance of his occupation and the toil it entails.

Black and **high**, his silhouette **Dominates** - symbolizing a huge figure against the sky **Marches** he along. I see him **stride.**' - a confident figure in charge his **height Seems to touch the starry skies**- a figure to respect.

The poet herself is in awe and sets the tone in the reader's mind to look at the farmer with the respect or reverence which we must give him.

#### **(4) Special features/ novelties/ focussing elements.**

**Ans.** There IS emphasis on **two aspects**

**(i) hard work which the farmer** performs uncomplainingly day and night. Some examples are a sower lingers to sow the task/ Marches he.

**(ii)** The other aspect is the vivid description of the **dusk, the setting sun** and the figure against the sunset.

Sunlight, I see, dying fast/ Twilight/ Darkness deepens /his silhouette Dominates There is use of poetic language adding to the novelty and beauty. This is not the ordinary language.

Well-nigh/mine eyes/he patient stands/Muse I/

In several lines the words are in a different order from what is used normally Furrows deep/ Marches he along/ Fades the light.

**Inversion** as the poetic device adds effect.

#### **(5) Values, message**

**Ans.** The poem gives a very important message. It brings into focus the importance of the farmer and his unrecognized service to Society. [How ever much money one may possess, one cannot eat the money.] one needs the farmer for one's very survival.

#### **Your opinion about the poem.**

**Ans.** The poem is effective in creating a positive, respectful picture of the farmer. His simple life and stoicism is seen in the way the poet describes his actions.

## **SUMMARY WRITING**

**Write a summary of the poem using the following points:**

### **(1) Title**

**Ans.** The poet Toru Dutt is sitting in the porch of her house watching the sunset. In the fading twilight she sees a farmer The Sower - still working late.

### **(2) Introductory paragraph (about the poem, type, nature, tone)**

**Ans.** It is descriptive poem, about the a surroundings as well as what the poet perceives about the central character and her views on him. It is enhanced by imagery and symbolism. It comprises 20 lines in ab, ab, rhyme-scheme and is not divided into stanzas.

### **(3) Main body (central idea, gist of the poem)**

**Ans.** Two main aspects stand out. One is the poet's vivid imagery of the sunset and dusk. Words like dying sunlight /the black silhouette/ running shadows/ darkness deepens - are some of them. This also may be hinting at the twilight world of the farmer - unrecognized and in the shadows, toiling yet poor, willing to work yet unappreciated. This evokes immense respect, sorrow and sympathy for him. The farmer himself is an old man in rags, showing his poverty in spite of his labours. It brings to mind those who don't do a fraction of his work and live in lavish comfort. This perhaps is intentional by the poet to focus on the thankless position of the most important contributor to society.

### **(4) Conclusion (opinion, views, appeal)**

**Ans.** The poem will appeal to the hearts of those who respect the farmers who live close to nature and make an occupation of providing food. It will evoke respect for those who haven't grasped the vital nature of the farmer in society. It is a simple yet beautiful poem praising the father of the people - he provides the bread.

## **WRITING SKILLS**

**Imagine that you are a farmer from a drought-prone area. Write a letter to a newspaper editor, discuss the problems and suggest possible solutions.**

Deepak Shinde

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17 June, 2019

The Editor

The New Day

6, Tilak Road

Marine Lines

Mumbai - 400 001

Maharashtra.

Sub: The drought-ridden farmer.

Dear Sir,

This is to bring to the limelight the condition of the farmers in the several drought-prone districts of Maharashtra, through your respected newspaper.

This is the third consecutive year that has gone by without rains. No sowing has taken place for six-growing seasons. The farmers are staring at starvation and many children are sick with malnutrition - related illnesses. Though this is a natural calamity, it is partly man-made. Steps need to be taken immediately to help.

I have suggestions for long term and short term measures. Short term measures would be to gather distressed farmers and their families into areas with food and basic necessities provided for such time as their physical and mental health is safe. They are landowners who have themselves lived not only with dignity but also fed the country's population. They need support urgently in this hour of crisis.

If and when the rains arrive, there should be water-harvesting and conservation methods

undertaken. The necessary infrastructure and education of farmers should be started in the meantime. Afforestation is needed to replace the ecosystem destroyed by excessive tree-cutting that has occurred in these areas.

The government authorities at several levels have to take immediate action for surveying, planning and carrying out these steps or at least take some steps to save the farmers from ruin. Farmer suicides are happening regularly and it should not be allowed to happen in this instance

I hope the authorities concerned will take action at the earliest and save the sons of the soil.

Thanking you,

Yours truly,

Deepak Shinde