

## The First Meeting

A. Choose the correct option

**1. What does the poet mean by ‘the invisible snake’?**

c. The wind on her legs

**2. Which of the following does not tire the snake?**

d. the presence of the poet in the house where it seeks rest

**3. What does the snake want?**

d. to be treated as a friend

**4. Why does the poet run at the beginning of the poem?**

b. she is escaping from something she fears

B. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.

**1. How does the cobra respond to the people worshipping it?**

A: The cobra feels it is pestered by the worship that people offer wherever it goes. It is disturbed and irritated by such actions.

**2. What does the snake say about the snake-charmers making it perform in public places?**

A: The cobra is scared of being caught by the snake-charmers. They maltreat it by removing its fangs, stuffing it in a tiny basket and make it dance for the amusement of onlookers.

**3. What does the cobra really want?**

A: The cobra really wants to live in the poet’s garden, to visit her on those nights when she sings, to join her, to lie around her neck and to share a bowl of milk.

**4. Comment on the attitude of the poet to the snake.**

A: The poet is initially scared to see the snake. However, gradually her fear gives way to understanding and love.

**5. Why does the poet recoil from the surface of the lake?**

A: The poet recoils because she is scared to see green snakes swimming up to the surface when she is about to drink from the lake.

**6. Comment on the figure of speech used to describe the wind circling her legs.**

A: The poet uses the image of a snake to describe the wind circling up her legs. Just like a snake, wind coils her legs and she is unable to throw it away.

C. Answer the following questions in about 100 words

**1. Describe the grievances of the snake regarding the way it is treated by human beings.**

A: The cobra is not at all happy with the way in which human beings treat it. People pester it by worshipping it wherever it goes with their prayers and a hundred bowls of milk a day. It is disturbed and irritated by such actions. The cobra is scared of being caught by the snake-charmers. They maltreat it by removing its fangs, stuffing it in a tiny basket and make it dance for the amusement of onlookers. This pains and fatigues the cobra.

**2. How does the poet describe her experience as she runs through the groves of mango and eucalyptus?**

A: While running past groves of mango and eucalyptus, grass slips beneath her feet and wind circles up her legs. Just like a snake, wind coils her legs and she is unable to throw it away. The sky grows brighter as she runs up the hill almost blinded and reaches the other side. She is thirsty and reaches a lake to drink water. But when she is about to drink from the lake she sees green snakes swimming up to the surface and recoils in fear.

**3. Do you think that the first part of the poem properly fits in with the second part?**

A: Even though the two parts are apparently unrelated, there is an underlying thematic unity between them. The first anticipates the second and a snake figures in both. In the first, the snake appears metaphorically. The poet uses the image of a snake to describe the wind circling up her legs. Just like a snake, wind coils her legs and she is unable to throw it away. But in the second, the cobra opens her eyes to the intimate relationship between humans and animals. The poet is initially scared to see the snake. However, gradually her fear gives way to understanding and love.

D. Answer the following in about 300 words each

**1. Give an account of the poet's first meeting with the king cobra**

*Or*

**What light does the poem throw on nature-man relationship?**

A: The theme of the poem 'The First Meeting' is a strange and fanciful meeting between a human being and a cobra. It vividly describes some experiences that the narrative voice has and ultimately highlights the deep relationship between human beings and nature.

At the beginning of the poem, we see the poet run past trees and mango-groves. The grass slips beneath her feet and the wind circles up her legs, like an invisible snake from which she cannot escape. As she runs up the hill, the blue sky becomes brighter by the second. Then she runs down the other side of the hill. She feels thirsty. In order to quench her thirst, she goes to a lake. When she is about to drink, she sees green snakes swim up to the surface. She moves back horrified and runs back faster.

She reaches home and to her amazement finds a king cobra—the snake from which she cannot escape. It seems to smile, requests her to come inside, asks her not to run away and reveals that he lives in her garden. He chose the garden as his residence because of the fleshy tree stems, plump flowers and an abundant supply of mice. The poet asks what he wants and fears that his hood will expand any time and she will be bitten. But the snake reassures her of safety and proceeds to narrate his woes.

The snake is worshipped. Wherever he goes, people pester him with prayers and overfeeding. At the same time, human beings are cruel to snakes. They catch snakes, pull the fangs out, stuff them in tiny baskets and make them perform tricks for the amusement of others. The snake complains that he is exhausted.

The snake wishes to continue living in the garden and visit her, especially when she sings. He wants to join her and to lie around her neck once in a while.

