

Chapter 4: The Last Bargain

Working with the Poem

Question 1: Who is the speaker in the poem?

Answer: The speaker in the poem is a man who is looking for work.

Question 2: “The king, sword in hand” suggests

- (i) wealth
- (ii) power
- (iii) more power than wealth

Mark the appropriate item in the context of stanza 1.

Answer: “The king, sword in hand” suggests power.

Question 3: The old man offered the speaker a lot of money.

Why did he turn down the offer?

Answer: The old man offered the speaker a lot of money. However, he turned it down because he realised that money cannot give him what he actually desires. He had not till then realised that what he actually desired was happiness. When the old man was counting the gold coins, the speaker realised that once the money was finished or the work the old man wanted to hire him for was done, he would again be out of work. More than that, he would be bound in this bargain. It did not satisfy him and therefore, he turned it down.

Question 4: Find in the poem, lines that match the following. Read both one after another.

- (i) I have nothing to give you Except goodwill and cheer.
- (ii) Her happiness was no more Than sorrow in disguise.
- (iii) The king’s might was not worth much.

Answer:

- (i) ‘I hire you with nothing.’
- (ii) ‘Her smile paled and melted into tears.’
- (iii) ‘But his power counted for naught.’

Question 5: How did the speaker feel after talking to the child on the beach?

Answer: The speaker felt free after talking to the child on the beach. The child was playing with shells and he ‘hired’ the speaker for nothing. This showed that he did not want any work from the speaker. In turn, he offered to give him nothing but happiness and cheer. This bargain brought him what he could not find with the king, old man, or the fair maid. This was because power, money, and beauty all go away, but happiness is something that stays and does not cost anything either. Happiness is the true asset of any human being. Power, money, and beauty cannot buy everlasting happiness. That is why the speaker was not bound with the child by any terms or conditions. Hence, he felt free after striking that bargain with the child.