

Chapter Review

- "The Trees" is by Adrienne Rich. It shows trees trying to break out of a house and go back to the forest.
- The first stanza describes the forest. In a treeless forest, a bird cannot sit, insects cannot hide, and the sun cannot 'bury its feet in shadow'. The trees are now in the poet's house, in pots.
- In the second stanza, the roots work all night to leave the cracks in the veranda floor. The leaves push towards the glass, and the twigs grow stiff. The cramped branches move like newly discharged patients from a hospital.
- In the third stanza the moon is full and bright. As the trees move out, the glass breaks and the smell of leaves and lichen enters the house like a voice. The moon looks broken like a cracked mirror over the tall oaks.
- The poet sits writing letters and does not mention the departure of the forest. She is filled with a strange joy and fear as she is seeing the trees leave.
- The poem shows the conflict between man and nature, and nature's desire to be free. It may also mean that humans want to be free of their confined lives.

Key Terms

Veranda – A covered open space along a house.

Lichen – A small plant growing on rocks and trees.

Twigs – Small thin branches.

Discharged – Allowed to leave a hospital.

Cramped – Squeezed in a small space.

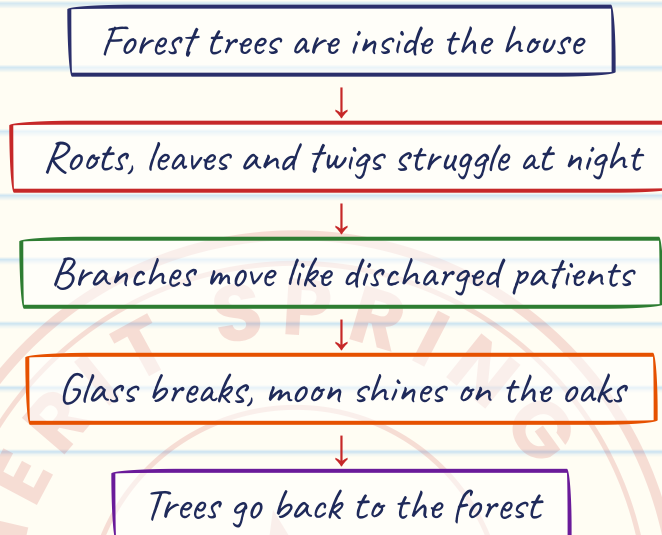
Departure – Leaving.

Metaphor – Calling one thing another to show likeness.

Symbol – A thing representing an idea.

Diagrams / Flowcharts

The Trees Break Out



Two Ways to Read the Poem

Man vs Nature

- Trees imprisoned for decoration
- Forests are cut for homes
- Nature wants freedom

Trees as Humans

- People are trapped in routine
- Want to break free
- Wish for open, natural life

About the Poet

- Adrienne Rich (1929-2012) was an American poet and feminist. She often used trees as a metaphor for human beings.

Poetic Devices

- Personification: roots 'work', leaves 'press' and branches 'move' like humans.
- Simile: branches are like patients from a hospital; the moon is like a cracked mirror.

- Imagery: sound, smell and sight in the third stanza.
- Free verse: no regular rhyme.
- Symbolism: trees stand for nature, and also for human beings.

Theme

- Freedom and nature's right to live naturally. Humans should protect forests and not keep nature imprisoned.
- It also suggests that people want to leave restricting lives.

Textbook Exercise Questions

Q.1 (i) Three things that cannot happen in a treeless forest. (ii) What picture do the words 'sun bury its feet in shadow' create?

Ans. (i) A bird cannot sit on a tree; insects cannot hide in the trees; the sun cannot bury its feet in the shadow of the forest.
(ii) The 'feet' mean the sun's rays. In a thick forest, shadow hides the rays so the sun seems to bury its feet. Without trees there is no shadow.

Q.2 (i) Where are the trees in the poem? What do roots, leaves, twigs do? (ii) What are the branches compared to?

Ans. (i) The trees are within the limits of the poet's house. The roots work all night to free themselves from the cracks of the veranda floor, the leaves push towards the glass, and the twigs grow stiff with effort.
(ii) The cramped branches are compared to newly discharged patients from the hospital, who are weak and confused as they move towards the doors.

Q.3 (i) How does the poet describe the moon in the third stanza at the beginning and end? What causes the change? (ii) What happens to the

house when trees move out? (iii) Why does the poet not mention the departure of the forest in her letters?

Ans. (i) At first the full moon shines in the open sky. At the end it breaks into pieces like a cracked mirror over the tall oaks, because the moving trees cover the moonlight.

(ii) The glass breaks and the smell of leaves and lichen enters the rooms like a voice.

(iii) She thinks people don't care about nature, and may not be interested. She also feels something so unexpected and wonderful that it is better kept quiet.

Q.4 Does the poem present a conflict between man and nature? Compare with 'A Tiger in the Zoo'. What new meaning comes if trees symbolise human beings?

Ans. Yes, humans cut forests and confine plants in homes, denying nature's freedom. Like the tiger in the zoo, the trees want to be free. If trees stand for human beings, it means people also want to break free of restricting routines and enjoy peaceful nature.

Board Exam Questions (Important)

Q.1 Why do the trees want to move out of the house? (3-4 lines)

Ans. The trees are confined in the house like prisoners and are cramped. They want to return to the forest to live freely in the open air.

Q.2 Reference to context: "I sit inside, doors open to the veranda, writing long letters in which I scarcely mention the departure of the forest from the house." Who says so, and why?

Ans. The poet, Adrienne Rich. She does not mention the trees' departure as she feels people do not care for nature, and the event is too personal and wonderful to share.

Q.3 What message does the poem give about nature? (Value-based)

Ans. Nature should be free and protected. We must stop deforestation and respect trees. Both trees and humans need freedom to grow.

