

MIRROR

-Sylvia Plath

SUMMARY OF THE POEM:

In this poem the mirror is personified.

1. The mirror is silver and exact with no preconception; (meaning - an opinion or conception formed in advance of adequate knowledge or experience, especially a prejudice or bias).
2. It swallows immediately whatever it sees. Just as everyone sees it, it is unmisted; (meaning - something that does not dim, obscures, or blurs: a haze before the eyes that does not dim the vision; by love and dislike). It is never cruel but only truthful. It is like the eye of a little god which is placed in a four-cornered dimension.
3. Most of the time the mirror meditates on the opposite wall which is pink and filled with speckles; (meaning - a small speck, spot, or mark, as on skin: speckled coloring or marking: to mark with or as with speckles).
4. It has stared endlessly at the pink wall day in and day out that now the wall has become part of the mirror's heart. However the wall flickers: (meaning - to burn unsteadily, an unsteady flame or light, a flickering movement: a brief occurrence or appearance); and the faces of people and darkness separate them over and over again.
5. At present the mirror is a lake. A woman bends over it searching for the reaches of the deep waters to discover who she really is. Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon. The mirror sees her back and reflects her true identity very faithfully. In return the woman rewards her with tears and an agitation; (meaning - the act or process of agitating; state of being agitated, sometimes occurring as a symptom of severe depression or other mental disorder).
6. The mirror is important to her. It is the woman's face that replaces the darkness. In the mirror, the woman has drowned her image as a young girl and in the mirror the old woman rises towards her day after day like a terrible fish.

Answer the following questions:

1. Question: How does the mirror spend its time?

Answer: The mirror spends its time by meditating on the opposite wall but sometimes it gets disturbed by human faces and darkness!

2. Question: Why the mirror is called the four cornered god?

Answer: Mirror is called as a four cornered god because it is very truthful and treats everyone equally like a god.

3. Question: Why has the mirror been described as being "unmisted"? What is the image that the poet is trying to convey about the nature of the mirror?

Answer: The mirror has been described as unmisted, as it has no confusion or any bias towards anything. It reflects truthfully. 'Image' refers to - truthful, faithful, honest and dependable.

4. Question: What is the woman searching for in the depths of the pool?

Answer: The woman is desperately searching in the depths of the pool with a hope to regain her teenage beauty as she always wanted to look young and beautiful. But as she grows older, wrinkles and freckles fill her face and skin like a fish in a terrible condition.

5. Question: why is it called a terrible fish?

Answer: she behaves like a "terrible fish" because she is now old. The term 'terrible fish' means the act of the lady growing older day by day and losing her youthful beauty. Now that she is actually old, she agitates her hand in anger and sadness at her age, like a terrible fish.

6. Question: what is the difference between the mirror and the moon/candle?

Answer: The mirror is silver, exact and unbiased, dispassionate. But the moon and the candles are partial and biased or "liars". Because, they do not show the truth in their partial lightening and can even reflect the ugly and old haggard person as beautiful.

7. Question: why is mirror important to her?

Answer: Because the mirror is the only one who tells her the truth.

Give the explanation of the following expressions:

1. 'Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall'

ANSWER: *The mirror constantly keeps gazing on the opposite wall and appears to be contemplating deeply. The wall has become the part of the life of the mirror.*

2. 'Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me.'

ANSWER: *The mirror and a lake are similar. The lake also gives a crystal clear image like a mirror and doesn't hide any age and reality. 'Lake' is used because even away from the mirror, the woman is forced to see the reality through the nature.*

3. 'She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.'

ANSWER: *The mirror is unsympathetic. It reveals the ugly reality. So the only reality it gets is tears and agitation over the loss of youth. The mirror reinforces the belief that reality is bitter to accept.*

4. 'In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman.'

ANSWER: *This refers to the Myth of the Greek prince Narcissus, who kept looking at his handsome appearance in the lake for so long that he drowned into the lake. The poetess regrets the loss of youth which is associated with 'drowning'. 'Drowning' indicates the consequences of vanity. The poetess uses this metaphor to show that the little girl used to look in the mirror has drowned and an old woman has replaced her.*

5. 'Rises toward her day after day like a terrible fish.'

ANSWER: *This is reminiscent of Sylvia Plath's repeated viewing of her reflection which leads to self-loathing as she sees less and less of the young girl and more of the old woman. The fish epitomises a creature's inability to escape from the sea of time. The poetess is trying to make a point that a fish depends on water, the same way, a woman depends on the mirror.*

6. 'I am not cruel, only truthful'

ANSWER: *The mirror reflects the reality, the true image and gives no illusion. It may be considered cruel but it is truthful. It does not hide any flaws.*

REFERENCE TO CONTEXT:

Q.1. *A woman bends over me*

searching my reaches for what she really is

Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon

- a. *What is the woman bending over?*
- b. *Why have the candles and the moon been called 'liars'?*
- c. *Why does she turn to them in spite of calling them 'liars'?*

Q.2. *I am important to her. She comes and goes*

Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness

- a. *Why is the mirror important to the woman?*
- b. *Explain the second line*
- c. *Why does the woman come and go away?*

Q.3. *I am cruel, only truthful*

The eye of a little god, four-cornered

Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall

- a. *Why does the mirror say, 'I am not cruel'?*
- b. *Why has the mirror been called a 'four-cornered' god?*
- c. *How does the mirror spend its time?*

USE OF POETIC DEVICES

1. Personification: It represents inanimate objects or abstract ideas or objects as persons, endowed with personal attributes. The mirror is presented as person (I am not cruel, only faithful), then as a lake. Candles and moon are called liars.

2. Symbolism: It represents the use of one object to represent another. In this poem the poetess feels herself trapped in the sea of time, like an ugly fish. She feels helpless like a fish that cannot cross the sea of time and regain her lost youth.