

ENGLISH NOTES

I BELIEVE THAT BOOKS WILL NEVER DISAPPEAR.

INTERVIEW WITH JORGE LUIS BORGES

COMPREHENSION I

1. 'I was educated by my father's library' says Borges. He Means _____
 - a) School or the university did not educate him.
 - b) He educated himself by reading on his own.
 - c) He learnt through private tuitions held in his father's library.

Answer b

2. Why did Borges feel guilty about his mother?
Borges feels guilty about his mother for not having been a happy man in order to have given her a deserved happiness and perhaps should have been more understanding of her.

3. According to the author, blindness is _____
 - a. Just a physical handicap.
 - b. Not a liability
 - c. Is actually a resource.

Answer c

4. Why does Borges prefer to believe that he is not blind?
Borges says that, in his case, the visible world has moved away from his eyes forever, but unfortunately, it has been replaced by other things. And his duty is that to accept and, as far as possible, and enjoy those things. Thus Borges prefers to believe that he is not blind.

5. Borges feels that when we read a book what matters is not the author's intention, but what sense we get out of it. True / False?
ANSWER: True

6. When does the poetic act happen, according to Borges?
According to Borges, Poetic act happens when the poet writes it, when the reader reads it, and that happens in a slightly different manner.

7. What cannot be defined without oversimplifying it?
Poetry cannot be defined without oversimplifying it.

8. Which is the most astounding invention of man?
Book is the most astounding invention of man.

COMPREHENSION II

1. What is the observation of Borges about his mother? Is it a common experience of everyone? (important)

Borges presents a realistic observation about his mother. He says that his mother was an extraordinary person. She was kind towards him. He also tells that he feels guilty for not having been a happy man in order to have given her a deserved happiness. He feels that he should have been more understanding of her. His mother was an intelligent and gracious woman who, he believes had no enemies

Borges suppose that it is a common experience of everyone that when our mother dies, we

feel that we have taken her for granted as we do with the moon or sun or the seasons: we feel we have abused her. Before her death, it doesn't dawn on us.

2. What, in your opinion, does Borges learn from Goethe's saying 'all that is near becomes far'? Here, Goethe refers to the evening twilight. Everything near becomes far. At nightfall, the closest to us seems to move away from our eyes. Goethe could be referring not only to twilight but also to life. All things go off, leaving us. And Borges learnt how to accept his blindness in an optimistic way, for the visible world has moved away from his eyes forever and it has been replaced by other things. He says that it is his duty to accept and enjoy those things.

3. Can humiliation and misfortune be transmuted?
Yes, by the example of Borges's life, one can transmute the humiliation and misfortune and use them as raw material to shape the future.

4. In what way do you think poetry is an aesthetic act?
According to Borges, poetry is something so intimate, so essential, that it cannot be defined without oversimplifying it. It would be like attempting to define the colour yellow, love, and fall of leaves in the autumn. Borges believes that Poetry is an aesthetic act; that poetry is not the poem, for the poem may be more than a series of symbols.
So, when we read poetry, it brings joy and happiness to the readers. It brings peace to the people who are sad. It gives inspiration to the people. It brings people close to the nature. It makes us to think creative.

5. Why is it important for poetry to use language precisely? What example does Borges use to demonstrate this aspect of poetic language?
It is important for poetry to use language precisely because they elicit the emotion. He demonstrates this aspect of poetic language taking the wonderful line from Emily Dickinson's poem, "This quiet dust was gentlemen and Ladies". The idea is banal. The idea of dust, the dust of death is a cliché; but what surprises is the phrase "gentlemen and Ladies", which gives the magic and poetic quality. If she had written "men and women", it would have failed as poetry; it would have been trivial. So, this choice of precise words is essential in writing poems.

6. Why does Borges say that the books will not disappear in spite of modern modes of communication?
Borges believes that books will never disappear and it is impossible to happen so. Because among the many inventions of man, the book is the most astounding: all the other are extensions of our bodies. He mentions some of the examples: The telephone, is the extension of our voice: the telescope and the microscope are extensions of our sight; the sword and plough are extensions of our arms. And only the book is an extension of our imagination and memory.

COMPREHENSION III.

1. 'A book goes beyond its author's intention.' Do you agree?
Yes, we can agree with this statement. Borges himself says that since a book goes beyond its author's intention...the author's intention is a meager thing – a fallible thing. He says that, in every book- there is a need for something more, which is always mysterious. When we read an ancient book, it is as though we were reading all time that has passed from the day it was written to our present day. According to Borges, a book can be full of errors, we can reject its author's opinions, disagree with him or her, but the book always retains something sacred, something mortal, something magical which brings happiness.

Borges also says that book is the only thing that is an extension of our imagination and memory. To conclude we can say that, when a book is written, readers do not interpret the book according to author but according to their own perception .so, the book goes beyond its author's intention. The author may have a different opinion while he was writing a book, but once the reader takes the book into his hands, his opinion becomes important.

2. 'Poetry is magical, mysterious and unexplainable'. How does Borges explain the strange aspect of poetry?

Borges believes that poetry is something so intimate, so essential, that it cannot be defined without oversimplifying it. It would be like attempting to define the colour yellow, love, and the fall of leaves in the autumn. Borges believes that poetry is the aesthetic act; that poetry is not the poem, for the poem may be nothing more than a series of symbols. Borges believes that poetry is the poetic act that takes place when the poet writes it, when the reader reads it, and it always happens in a slightly different manner. When the poetic act takes place, it seems to us that we become aware of it. Thus, poetry is a magical, mysterious, and unexplainable- although not incomprehensible- event. If one doesn't feel the poetic event upon reading it, the poet has failed.

3. What value does Borges see in literature? Why is it important for the future of mankind?

Borges states in a memorable passage that literature is a dream. And he says it is true. According to him literature is a dream, a controlled dream. Borges says "We owe literature almost everything we are and what we have been, also what we will be". Borges says that our past is nothing but a sequence of dreams. He asks that what difference could be between dreaming and remembering the past. Books are the great memory of all centuries. Their function, therefore, irreplaceable. If books disappear, surely history would disappear, surely man would disappear.

Literature is important for the future of mankind because it has had a major impact on the development of society. It has shaped civilizations, changed political systems and exposed justice. Literature gives us a detailed preview of human experiences, allowing us to connect on basic levels of desire and emotion. It is essential to expanding knowledge and understanding of the cultures and history of our existence on earth.

