

## 2.6 The Planners

### ICE BREAKERS

- (i) **You have heard the proverb ‘Plan your work, work your plan’. It means—**
  - (a) Planning of the work is important.
  - (b) Without planning work cannot be accomplished.
  - (c) Make planning and work according to that plan.
  - (d) Planning and work are two sides of same coin.
- (ii) **Choose the proper alternatives from the statements given below which would explain why town planning is essential-**
  - (a) To develop the city according to the guidelines.
  - (b) To get the ‘Best City Award’.
  - (c) To attract the tourists.
  - (d) To use and develop the land available in the city for the interest of the citizens.
- (iii) **Given below are various professions in column A and in column B, the nature of work in respective professions. Match the columns.**

A	B
(i) Anaesthetist	(a) Specialist in the treatment of problems concerning the position of teeth and jaws.
(ii) Pharmacist	(b) A person who designs buildings and supervises the process of constructing them.
(iii) Orthodontist	(c) A person who is in charge of a newspaper or of a part of a newspaper.
(iv) Dermatologist	(d) The medical study of the skin and its diseases
(v) Architect	(e) A person who has been trained to prepare medicines and sell them to public.
(vi) Chartered Accountant	(f) A person whose job is to give drugs which make the person not to feel pain especially in preparation for a medical operation.
(vii) Editor	(g) A person who is engaged in the profession of accounting and examining the statements and records of accounts.



**Boey Kim Cheng** (born in 1965) is a Singapore-born Australian poet. He is of Chinese descent. He is widely regarded as one of the most promising Singapore poets to emerge in the 1990s. Boey has published four collections of poetry. For his artistic achievements, he received the 'National Arts Council Young Artist Award' in 1996. He taught for thirteen years at the University of Newcastle in Australia. In 2016, he joined Nanyang Technological University as an Associate Professor at its School of Humanities and is currently head of English Department. He is the co-editor of the anthology 'Contemporary Asian Australian Poets' published in 2014. Boey's works are highly regarded by both the academic and writing communities in Singapore.



The poet begins the poem by stating what the planners do. As the poem proceeds we come to know how the planners achieve what they aim for. Towards the end of the poem the poet depicts how the planning has affected the poet. Boey Kim Cheng is talking about fast-developing modern Singapore. He laments on the loss of humane element in his surrounding. He becomes nostalgic about his bonding with the old city. We all can hear the echoes of his words in our own hearts when we come across such modernization around us. We may sympathise with the poet when he declares at the end of the poem that the harsh realities of modernisation have numbed his heart. The free verse form of the poem is suitable to the free expressions of the poet's feelings.

*The space has been gridded by .....*

**permutation** : a variation in the order of a set of things

*Many times the word 'they' is used in the poem. Explain the use of 'they' in this context.*

**blemishes** : a mark of fault spoiling something that is otherwise beautiful or perfect

**dexterity** : skill in using one's hands

## The Planners

They plan. They build. All spaces are gridded  
Filled with **permutations** of possibilities.

The buildings are in alignment with the roads  
which meet at desired points  
linked by bridges all hang  
in the grace of mathematics.

They build and will not stop.  
Even the sea draws back  
and the skies surrender.

They erase the flaws,  
the **blemishes** of the past, knock off  
useless blocks with dental **dexterity**.  
All gaps are plugged



with gleaming gold.

The country wears perfect rows  
of shining teeth.

**Anaesthesia, amnesia, hypnosis.**

They have the means.

They have it all so it will not hurt.

So history is new again.

The piling will not stop.

The drilling goes right through  
the **fossils** of last century.

But my heart would not bleed  
poetry. Not a single drop  
to stain the **blueprint**  
of our past's tomorrow.

– Boey Kim Cheng

**anaesthesia:** a state of controlled, temporary loss at sensation or awareness

**amnesia** : inability to remember past events for a period of time

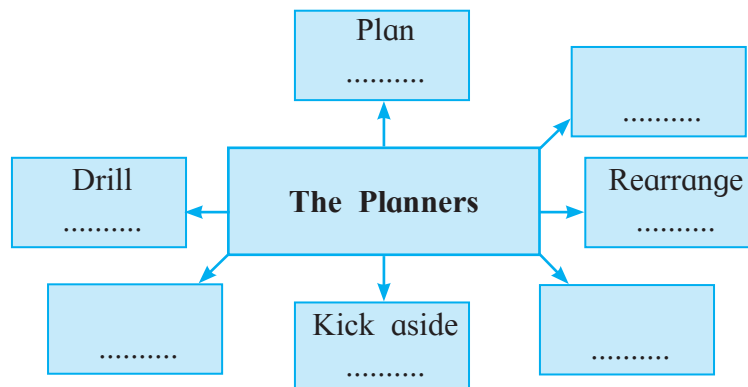
**hypnosis:** a trance-like state with heightened focus and concentration

**fossil** : the remains of an animal or a plant which have hardened into rock

**blueprint** : a photographic print of building plans with white lines on a blue background a detailed plan or scheme

## BRAINSTORMING

(A1) Read the poem and complete the web about the activities the planners do.



(A2) Go through the poem and state whether the following statements are true or false.

- (a) Planners plan to construct buildings wherever they find place.
- (b) Planners take public consent for the alterations they make in the old structures of the city.
- (c) Planners are concerned about the environment of the area.
- (d) Planners make their plans mathematically perfect, at the same time they calculate their profit.

- (e) Planners deliberately find drawbacks in the old city planning.
- (f) The newly planned city looks modern and amazingly beautiful.
- (g) Planners paint beautiful pictures of the upcoming changes in the city which charm the citizens.
- (h) Planners make tactful changes so that citizens do not recognise the familiar landmarks.

**(A3) Read the expression:**

**‘the blueprint of our past’s tomorrow’. Consider in a group why the poet has not mentioned ‘the present’. It is because of the planners who have possessed our ‘present’ in order to change ‘our past’ into the ‘future’ they desire. Go through the poem and write the lines which support this thought.**

- (a) The buildings are in alignment with the roads which meet at desired points.
- (b) .....
- (c) .....
- (d) .....
- (e) .....
- (f) .....

**(A4) The term ‘anaesthesia’ in the poem means - ‘The planner gives beautiful pictures of the new modern city’. Now find out what **amnesia** and **hypnosis** are in the given context.**

**(A5) Pick out the statements which aptly depict the theme of the poem.**

- (a) In the poem the speaker memorises the past.
- (b) In ‘The Planners’ the poet describes the unstoppable force of modernisation.
- (c) The poet talks about the replacement of natural environment by the concrete jungle.
- (d) The poet proposes to stop modernisation.
- (e) The poet laments helplessly.

**(A6) The tone of the poet is sarcastic. When he writes ‘All spaces are gridded filled with permutations of possibilities’ he intends to indicate the efforts made by the planner to exploit every available piece of land without any consideration of harming nature or violating attachments of people to places. Make pairs/groups and find out some more sarcastic lines having the same effect.**

**(A7) (i) Write an appreciation of the poem.**

**(ii) Write a summary of the poem.**

**(Both appreciation and the summary can be written with the help of the points given in previous poems.)**



(A8) Read the first and second stanza of the poem. We understand that the poet wants to suggest the powerful dominance of the planners who shape the town according to their selfish desires. Make a list of such expressions. You may begin with -

- (a) All the spaces are gridded, filled with permutations of possibilities.
- (b) .....
- (c) .....
- (d) .....

(A9) (i) Read the expression 'permutation of possibility'. The consonant sound 'P' at beginning of the successive words creates a sonorous effect. This is an example of Alliteration. Find out more examples of Alliteration from the poem.

(ii) Explain the extended metaphor related with dentistry in the poem.  
Give suggestions to protect our national heritage monuments.

(A10) Complete the following table.

No.	Figure of Speech	Line of the poem	Explanation
1.	.....	.....	The sky is imagined to act like a human being.
2.	.....	with gleaming gold	.....
3.	Oxymoron		
4.	.....	The country wears perfect rows of shining teeth. Anaesthesia, amnesia, hypnosis	.....
5.	Paradox	.....	.....

(A11) Compose four lines expressing the grief of having lost nature due to modernisation.

(A12) Imagine that a person who has returned to his native place after long time is talking to his old friend about the changes that have taken place in the village. Write a dialogue between two friends who have become nostalgic about their old village.

(A13) (i) Write in short about at least five cities in India that are considered to be the most developed cities.

(ii) Your examinations are only two months ahead. Plan your schedule of studies and write in your notebook.

(iii) Read 'The City Planners' by Margaret Atwood.

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