

### 3.1 Night of the scorpion

#### Warming Up

1. Get into pairs and discuss the following with your partners and complete the table. Many people are superstitious. This means that they have belief for which they have no logical reason. An example of superstition is that walking under a ladder brings bad luck.

In pairs, list any superstitions that you know of.

Superstation	What it implies
(1) Walking under a ladder	1. Brings bad luck.
(2) Smashing a mirror	2. Brings seven years of bad luck.
(3) A black cat crossing your path	3. A bad omen.
(4) Twitching of the eye	4. Brings bad luck.
(5) Sweeping your house after sunset	5. Goddess Lakshmi will walk out.
(6) Going near a peepal tree at night	6. The ghosts will kill you.
(7) Putting a black dot on your child's face	7. Will ward off the evil eye.

2. Brainstorm what you know about Scorpions. Use the points given below. (To see the diagram layout refer Pg.100)

#### Scorpions

1) **How they attack:** either crush their prey or inject it with venom; or they attack using their pincers to hold down the prey: then they sting it. If you step on a scorpion it will sting you straight away.

2) **Their appearance:** have 8 legs, a pair of pincers and a narrow, segmented tail ending in a venomous stinger

3) **Any more information about them:** most people associate them with poisonous stings; however, most of the stings do not present a serious threat and most healthy people do not even need medical treatment after being stung. They have long life-spans; can survive anything, a year without food; eat anything; glow in the dark.

4) **Where they live:** found on all continents except Antarctica; live everywhere except in very cold places; hide under logs, rocks, clutter, trees and sand; also live in burrows.

#### Workshop

1. After reading the poem; complete the following. What happens? There are three main parts of the poem. Do you know what they are about? The first one is done for you.

Lines	What is happening?
1-7	1) The scorpion comes into the home to escape the rain and stings the poet's mother.
8-33	2) The villagers sympathize with the mother and offer consolation in various ways. They sit round the floor with the mother in the centre. More neighbours came in to help, with more candles and more lanterns.



34-48	3) What is happening The father is desperate and though he is a rationalist, he tries all sorts of things to cure the mother. He calls a holy man to perform rites and even sets fire to the bitten toe. After twenty hours the scorpion loses its sting. All that the mother says is that she is thankful to God that the scorpion picked her and spared her children.
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## 2. Complete the following tables.

<u>Background/setting of the poem.</u>	
type	Evidence (Quote lines from the extract)
Rural/Urban	1) "The peasants came like swarms of flies" (2) 'and buzzed the name of God a hundred times'. (3) To paralyse the evil one'. (4) With candles and with lanterns' (5) on the mud-baked walls' (6) His poison moved in Mother's blood, they said. (7) "They sat around on the floor with my mother in the center. (8) 'More candles, more lanterns'. (9) groaning on a mat (10) trying every curse and blessing powder. mixture, herb and hybrid. (11) I watched the holy man perform his rites

<b>B. Scorpion</b>	
Many images of the scorpion contrast in the opening lines of the poem. Find examples of each and add them to the columns below.	
Timid	Dangerous
(1) Hides <u>beneath a sack of rice</u>	(1) Diabolic <u>tail</u>
(2) <u>Is afraid of the people and goes</u> back	(2) <u>The Evil One</u>

<b>C. Imagery</b>	
Look at the description of the village peasants. What does the imagery suggest about them?	
The image	What the image suggest



1) They came like swarms of flies.	(1) They came in very large numbers, a huge crowd of people moving towards the house, like a swarm of flies.
2) They buzzed the name of God.	(2) They kept repeating the name of God softly and continuously, like the buzzing of bees.
3) They threw giant scorpion shadows on the mud-baked walls.	(3) The carried lanterns they threw shadows on the walls, which looked like huge scorpion shadows to the frightened villagers.
4) They clicked their tongues.	(4) They made sorrowful and frightened sounds with their tongues.

### 3. Choose the correct alternative.

#### 1. The child is afraid but admires

**Ans.** The bravery of his mother

#### 2. His father and the villagers panic and hastily suggest

**Ans.** Religious remedies to help

#### 3. The poet seems to see the villagers as impractical and almost irritating which suggests

**Ans.** The poet is critical of tradition

#### 4. This is a poem as it tells a story.

**Ans.** Narrative

#### 5. Using the first person gives the feeling that is told from

**Ans.** Personal experience

#### 6. The scorpion picked on me. And spared my children depicts

**Ans.** Selfish and unconditional love of mother

#### 7. The poem does not have a rhyme scheme, which means the poem is a perfect example of a

**Ans.** Free verse

#### 8. The poem is titled 'Night of the Scorpion', for, the major part of the poem,

**Ans.** The scorpion is the victor

#### 9. The peasants chant the name of God to

**Ans.** Nullify the stinging experience



# 10. The click of tongues reflects their to the predicament.

**Ans.** Collective response

4. From the poem provide evidence for the following:

Stages	Evidence (lines from the poem)
(a) the attempts by the peasants to help alleviate the mother's pain	And buzzed the name of god a hundred times, to paralyse the Evil One.
(b) the action of these same peasants to kill the scorpion	With candles and with lanterns, throwing giant scorpion shadows.
(c) the reaction of the rational father.	My father, sceptic, rationalist, trying every cures and blessings, powder, mixture, herb and hybrid, He even poured a little paraffin
(d) the various superstitions versus the "scientific	trying every cures and blessings, My father, sceptic, rationalist
(e) evil versus good.	They searched for him: he was not found, They clicked their tongue

5. Read the poem and complete the table showing the qualities of the father and mother giving sufficient evidences from the poem.

Qualities	
Father	Mother
Sceptic, rationalist loving Desperate	Patient, long suffering brave, self-sacrificing Selfless.
<b>Lines as evidence:</b> My father sceptic, rationalist, Trying every curse and blessing Powder, mixture, herb and hybrid He even poured a little paraffin Upon the bitten toe and put a match to it. I watched the holy man perform his rites to tame the poison with an incantation	<b>Lines as evidence:</b> My mother twisted through and through, groaning on a mat. My mother only said Thank God the scorpion picked on me and spared my children.

6. (A) Match the Figures of Speech with the correct definition.

Figures of speech	The use of the same sound at the beginning of words.
(1) Metaphor	An implied comparison.
(2) Alliteration	A word which resembles the sound it represents.
(3) Onomatopoeia	A comparison between two different things, especially a phrase, containing the words



	'like' or 'as'.
(4) Simile	The use of the same sound at the beginning of words.

**(B) Find examples from the poem that contain:**

**Ans. Simile:** The peasants came like swarms of flies. The peasants are compared directly to swarms of flies, with the use of the word 'like'.

**Metaphor:** 'to paralyse the Evil One'. The scorpion is implicitly compared to the devil.

**Onomatopoeia:** (1) and buzzed the name of God' The word 'buzzed' indicates sound.

(2) They clicked their tongues." The word 'clicked' indicates sound.

**7. Expand the flow-chart given on page 105 of the textbook and write a paragraph in your own words.**

**(Answer are given directly) (*To see the diagram layout refer Pg. 105*)**

**Ans.** The poet's mother is bitten by a scorpion and is in great agony. She fights the venom of the scorpion with the help of her husband and the villagers. She is unable to say anything, but only groans in pain. Finally, the poison is tamed after twenty hours. In the end, the mother thanks God that she has survived the ordeal, and that the scorpion had picked on her and spared her children.

**8. The poet has used various kinds of imagery to create an image which appeals to our senses. Pick out various kinds of imagery and complete the table:**

Visual imagery appealing to eyes	Tactile imagery (sense of touch)
(1) Scorpion crawling beneath a sack of rice	(1) I watched the flame
(2) With Candles and lanterns throwing giant scorpion shadows on the mud-baked walls.	(2) feeding on my mother

*(Table is continued here)*

Sound imagery	Internal sensations, feelings and emotions
(1) buzzed the name of God	(1) fear
(2) They clicked their Tongues	(2) pain

**9. Write an appreciation of the poem in a paragraph format.**

**(Refer to page no. 5.)**

**Ans.** Paragraph Format

The poem "Night of the Scorpion by Nissim Ezekiel depicts the selflessness and



unconditional love of a mother who is stung by a scorpion. It also explains the care and affection of the villagers and their efforts to comfort the pain of the mother,

The poem is written in free verse without any rhyme scheme or metre followed throughout the poem. There are many figures of speech e.g. Onomatopoeia and 'buzzed the name of God a hundred times'. Here, we feel we can actually hear the buzzing of the prayers of the many peasants. The other figures of speech are Metaphor, Alliteration, Simile, Antithesis, etc.

The special feature of this poem is the imagery. We get a clear and vivid picture of what is happening in the house. In the end, the poet depicts the selfless and unconditional love of a mother, who, even when she is in intense pain, first thinks of her children. The poem is a narrative poem. The use of the first person gives the feeling that it is told from personal experience. My favourite line is : 'Thank God the scorpion picked on me and spared my children'. I like the line because it shows the selflessness and unconditional love of the mother for her children.

I like the poem because of the imagery and the sensitive ending.

## 10. PROJECT

• **Prepare a presentation (on paper or on a PC) as a piece of reference to other students. Make use of the following points:**

**(1) Title page** (Write the title of the poem in decorative letters/font)

**(2) Introduction of the poet** (Write the name of the poet and give a brief introduction, as given on page 101 of the textbook)

**(3) The complete poem** (All 48 lines)

**(4) Learning objectives** (To understand and appreciate an emotional piece of writing, to recognize the use of literary devices, figures of speech, etc.)

**(5) Style of writing** (This is a narrative poem in the first person, lines of irregular length, free verse-absence of rhyme and metre, enjambement Style is free and colloquial. There is repeated use of indirect speech, Imagery, use of similes, metaphors, alliteration, repetition and onomatopoeia.) (Note: Enjambment in poetry is the continuing of a sentence from one line of a poem into the start of the next line.)

**(6) Scorpion lines** (Lines 1-7)

**(7) The peasants** (Their behaviour, their concern for the mother, their superstitions, their prayers)

**(8) The poet's father** (sceptic, rationalist. anxious, worried)

**(9) The poet's mother** (brave, patient, selfless, loving)

**(10) Vocabulary** (simple, easy-to-understand)

**(11) Credits** (positive aspects) (simple, touching good imagery)

