

## Comprehension 11: CSS 2012

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

Human Beings feel afraid of death just as children feel afraid of darkness; and just as children's fear of darkness is increased by the stories which they have heard about ghosts and thieves, human beings' fear of death is increased by the stories which they have heard about the agony of the dying man. If a human being regards death as a kind of punishment for the sins he has committed and if he looks upon death as a means of making an entry into another world, he is certainly taking a religious and sacred view of death. But if a human being looks upon death as a law of nature and then feels afraid of it, his attitude is one of cowardice. However, even in religious meditation about death there is something a mixture of folly and superstition. Monks have written books in which they have described the painful experience which they underwent by inflicting physical tortures upon themselves as a form of self-purification. Such books may lead one to think that, if the pain of even a finger being squeezed or pressed is unbearable, the pains of death must be indescribably agonizing. Such books thus increase a Man's fear of death.

Seneca, a Roman Philosopher, expressed the view that the circumstances and ceremonies of death frighten people more than death itself would do. A dying man is heard uttering groans; his body is seen undergoing convulsions; his face appears to be absolutely bloodless and pale; at his death his friends begin to weep and his relations put on mourning clothes; various rituals are performed. All these facts make death appear more horrible than it otherwise.

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(4 marks each)

**Questions:**

1. What is the difference between human beings' fear of death and children's fear of darkness?
2. What is a religious and sacred view of death?
3. What are the painful experiences described by the Monks in their books?
4. What are the views of Seneca about death?
5. What are the facts that make death appear more horrible than it would be otherwise?

## Comprehension (CSS 2012)

Answer 1: The difference between human beings' fear of death and children's fear of darkness is that the former is an inevitable <sup>reality</sup> from which nobody can escape, while the latter is based on fabricated stories, carved out by parents, in order to make their children behave properly. Moreover, the fear of the latter is not based on facts, in contrast to the former.

Answer no 2: The religious and sacred view of death is that it is the ultimate reward of a person's wrong deeds in this life. In addition, according to the view in question, death is a threshold leading to an eternal or after life.

Answer no 3: The painful experiences described by the monks in their books are about the corporal punished which they had ~~got~~ inflicted upon their selves in order to attain self-purification. They had discussed in great length about the agony which they had experienced during this process. Such kind of facts and narratives exacerbate the fear of death.

Answer no 4: The views of Seneca about death is that it itself is not so horrendous or painful, as much as the situations and <sup>the</sup> rituals attached to it. When a person faces acute pain and agony because of some injury or sickness, when s/he involuntarily contract his/her muscles and <sup>is</sup> close to death, this situation inspires horror <sup>in</sup> the spectators. Like wise, various rituals such as wearing mourning clothes and other related acts enhance the fear in people about death.

Answer no 5: The facts that make death appear more horrible than it would be otherwise are the voices that come out of the man close to death, the sporadic and involuntary coiling because of pain, the paleness of his face, the sobbing of his relatives and the mourning clothes worn by his relatives.