

# THE POT MAKER

*by Temsula Ao*

Question & Answer

## ♦ HIGHER ORDER THINKING (HOT) QUESTIONS

**Q1. "True learning is not imposed but discovered." Discuss this idea with reference to the story.**

The story strongly supports the idea that true learning is discovered rather than imposed. Sentila struggles when her mother directly teaches her, as she is unable to grasp the techniques despite repeated attempts. However, when guided by Onula, she gains confidence and learns through understanding and observation. Her final success comes not from forceful instruction but from internal realisation and practice. This suggests that learning is a personal journey that requires emotional readiness and self-discovery. The story emphasises that effective learning occurs when the learner actively engages with the process rather than passively following instructions. It also highlights the importance of encouragement and emotional support in nurturing talent. Sentila's transformation proves that genuine learning emerges naturally when passion, patience, and confidence work together.

**Q2. "Tradition survives through adaptation and continuity rather than rigid control." Explain in the context of the story.**

The story illustrates that tradition continues when it is shared and adapted across generations. The village council insists that pot making must be passed on, highlighting its communal importance. However, Sentila's journey shows that learning cannot be forced; it must evolve naturally. While Arenla initially resists, she eventually allows Sentila to learn. Sentila's success represents the continuation of tradition in a new form. The story suggests that traditions remain alive when individuals embrace them willingly, adapting them to their own experiences rather than following them rigidly. It also shows that cultural practices survive through openness and transmission instead of being restricted by fear or hardship. Through Sentila, the craft gains a renewed future, ensuring that the community's heritage remains preserved and meaningful.

## ◆ SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

**Q1. Describe the process of pot making followed by expert pot makers, as observed by Sentila.**

Sentila closely observes that pot making involves several careful stages. Clay is collected, soaked, and pounded to achieve the right consistency. The potter then inserts the left hand into the clay while rotating it, shaping it skillfully with a spatula in the right hand. The rhythmic tapping helps form the pot. After shaping, the pots are refined, dried in the sun, and then fired in a kiln. Precision is essential, as improper firing can ruin the entire batch.

**Q2. What warning was given to Mesoba by the village council?**

The village council warned Mesoba that traditional skills like pot making must be passed down to the next generation. They emphasised that such knowledge does not belong to an individual but to the entire community. If Arenla failed to teach Sentila, the tradition might disappear over time. They reminded him that artisans have a responsibility to preserve and share their craft, not only with their children but also with anyone willing to learn.

**Q3. How did Sentila feel when she failed at pot making even after a year of training with her mother?**

Sentila felt deeply frustrated and ashamed after repeatedly failing to master pot making despite prolonged effort. Her inability to shape the clay properly made her lose confidence and question her abilities. She compared herself to her skilled mother and felt inadequate. This emotional struggle reflects her intense desire to succeed and the disappointment of not achieving her goal despite sincere effort and dedication.

**Q4. 'Onula stood there for a long time as if trying to absorb a new phenomenon'. Explain.**

Onula's reaction signifies her recognition of a remarkable transformation. When she sees two identical rows of pots, she realises that Sentila has finally mastered the craft to the level of her mother. The 'new phenomenon' refers to the emergence of talent and continuity of tradition. It also symbolises the mysterious moment of learning, where skill is internalised.

Onula understands that something profound has occurred beyond ordinary teaching.

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**Q5. 'The tradition and history of the people did not belong to any individual,' — what does this symbolise?**

This statement symbolises the idea that cultural knowledge is a collective heritage rather than personal property. Skills like pot making represent the identity and continuity of the community. By sharing and preserving them, people ensure the survival of their traditions. It also reflects a sense of responsibility among individuals to pass on knowledge, emphasising that heritage belongs to everyone and must be protected collectively.

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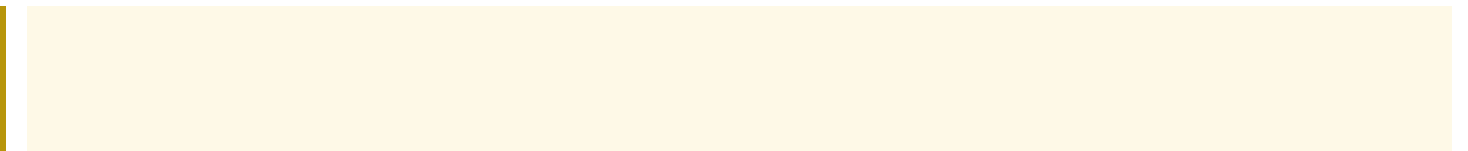
**Q6. What is the significance of the concluding line of the story, 'A new pot maker was born'?**

The concluding line symbolises both loss and renewal. While Arenla's death marks the end of one generation, Sentila's mastery of pot making signifies the continuation of tradition. It highlights the idea that knowledge and skills survive through transmission. The phrase also represents Sentila's transformation from a learner to a creator. Thus, the ending emphasises continuity, rebirth, and the enduring nature of cultural heritage.

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**Q7. What is the role of perseverance in pursuing one's dreams? Elaborate with reference to Sentila.**

Sentila's journey shows that perseverance is essential for achieving one's dreams. Despite repeated failures and lack of encouragement, she continues to learn and practice pot making. Her determination helps her overcome self-doubt and gradually improve her skills. Even when she feels discouraged, she does not give up. Ultimately, her persistence leads to success. The story highlights that dedication and consistent effort are crucial in turning aspirations into reality.



## ✦ ADDITIONAL SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

**Q8. In what way can the story be seen as presenting learning as a gradual and internal process?**

The story shows that learning does not happen instantly but develops over time through observation, practice, and reflection. Sentila struggles despite direct teaching but eventually succeeds when she gains confidence and internalises the process. This suggests that true learning involves understanding rather than imitation. It also highlights the importance of patience and emotional readiness in mastering a skill.

**Q9. To what extent does mentorship differ from formal teaching in the story?**

While Arenla provides formal instruction, Onula offers emotional support and guidance. Onula identifies Sentila's tension and helps her relax, enabling effective learning. This contrast shows that mentorship involves understanding the learner's mindset, not just teaching techniques. It highlights that encouragement and confidence-building are essential components of learning, often more impactful than strict instruction.

**Q10. Consider the role of economic practicality in shaping personal choices in the story. How far is this evident?**

Arenla prefers weaving because it is less physically demanding and more profitable. Her perspective reflects the economic realities of survival. However, Sentila's passion for pot making shows that personal interest may differ from practical considerations. This conflict highlights how economic pressures shape decisions while also showing that passion can persist despite such constraints.

**Q11. In what sense does the story bring out the idea of silent transmission of knowledge?**

Much of Sentila's learning occurs through observation rather than direct instruction. She watches potters carefully and later recalls her mother's techniques. This silent transmission reflects traditional methods of learning where skills are absorbed through experience. It emphasises that

knowledge can be passed on without explicit teaching, especially in artistic practices.

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**Q12. How far can failure be regarded as a stepping stone to success in the story?**

Sentila's repeated failures initially discourage her, but they ultimately contribute to her growth. Each failed attempt helps her understand the process better. Her eventual success shows that failure is not an endpoint but part of learning. The story reinforces that perseverance through failure leads to mastery and self-realisation.

