

CBSE CLASS 9 ENGLISH LITERATURE (BOOK - KAVERI)

CHAPTER: NINE GOLD MEDALS — DAVID ROTH

Comprehensive Solutions • Competency-Based Additional Short Questions • HOTS Long Answers

SECTION 1: TEXTBOOK EXERCISE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q1. Describe how the setting established in the first two stanzas of the poem create a vivid atmosphere for the events that follow.

Answer: The first two stanzas construct a tense and highly expectant atmosphere by contrasting months of arduous preparation with the electric anticipation of the crowd. Athletes from across the country gather, having dedicated vast time and effort toward this single moment. Meanwhile, spectating crowds line the field, cheering passionately. This vivid backdrop heightens the emotional stakes, making the upcoming athletic climax and unexpected twist deeply resonant.

Q2. How do you think the youngest athlete might have felt when he fell?

Answer: When the youngest athlete stumbled and fell onto the asphalt, he felt overwhelming devastation, acute disappointment and helpless agony. Having undergone months of relentless training for this pinnacle moment, watching his dreams instantaneously shatter caused him to cry out in deep frustration. His fall represented not merely physical pain, but the sudden crushing loss of hope, self-worth, and personal ambition right at the starting line.

Q3. Why were the athletes eager to begin the race?

Answer: The athletes were immensely eager because the hundred-yard dash represented the culmination of many grueling weeks and months of rigorous training. Each contender had poured relentless dedication, hope, and determination into preparing for this specific event. As they stood poised at the starting line, awaiting the explosive signal, their heightened adrenaline and passion drove a compelling desire to prove themselves and claim the coveted victory.

Q4. What does the transformation of the hundred-yard dash to a walk symbolise?

Answer: The transformation of a fierce competitive dash into a deliberate, collective walk symbolizes a profound paradigm shift from individual ambition to universal human empathy. By relinquishing speed and personal glory to assist a fallen peer, the runners elevated togetherness above competition. This transition highlights that true victory lies not in outrunning others, but in uplifting one another through

solidarity, kindness, compassion, and shared human dignity.

Q5. How might the poem be different if the focus was solely on individual achievement rather than collective support?

Answer: If the poem focused solely on individual achievement, it would depict a standard athletic contest defined by intense rivalry, personal triumph, and heartbreak for losers. The emotional core would center on solitary glory, celebrating one winner while ignoring the fallen runner. By shifting toward collective support, the narrative transcends routine sports coverage, converting a standard race into a moving tribute to empathy, human connection, and unity.

Q6. How does the poet's use of language and tone enhance the reader's engagement with the poem?

Answer: The poet employs simple, narrative language combined with vivid, emotive imagery to build suspense and dramatic tension throughout. Words like 'frustration,' 'anguish,' and 'dashed' evocative of deep distress contrast starkly with 'joined hands' and 'beaming faces.' The initial tense, competitive tone smoothly transitions into an uplifting, heartwarming atmosphere, engaging readers emotionally and prompting profound reflection on true sportsmanship, compassion, and moral greatness.

Q7. What might be the poet's purpose of writing this poem?

Answer: David Roth wrote this poem to redefine traditional concepts of success and competitiveness in modern society. By showcasing special athletes who sacrificed personal gold medals to assist a fallen peer, the poet underscores that human values like empathy, unity, and kindness far surpass individual glory. His purpose is to inspire readers to prioritize compassion over selfish ambition, proving that true heroism lies in uplifting others.

SECTION 2: COMPETENCY-BASED ADDITIONAL SHORT QUESTIONS

Q1. Explain how the line 'The eight other runners pulled up on their heels' highlights an instantaneous moral choice rather than a calculated decision.

Answer: The immediate stopping of the eight athletes highlights an instinctive, deeply ingrained moral compass rather than a calculated strategy. Without exchanging words or deliberating the loss of their individual medal prospects, they automatically paused in unison. This spontaneous reaction demonstrates that true empathy is an innate human value. Their unhesitating choice demonstrates that compassion for a suffering peer took immediate precedence over personal glory.

Q2. How does the poem redefine the traditional meaning of 'winning' and 'sportsmanship' in contemporary sports?

Answer: The poem redefines winning by replacing individual superiority with collective triumph and selflessness. In conventional sports, winning demands defeating opponents at all costs. However, here, true sportsmanship is exemplified when nine competitors cross the finish line together hand-in-hand. By choosing mutual support over isolation, every participant is awarded a gold medal, establishing that honoring human dignity represents the highest form of victory attainable.

Q3. What significance does the banner reading 'Special Olympics' hold in understanding the behavior of the runners?

Answer: The 'Special Olympics' banner signifies a realm where empathy supersedes hyper-competitiveness. Differently-abled athletes often endure immense physical and societal hardships, making them uniquely attuned to suffering and frustration. Recognizing the fallen boy's heartbreak, the runners felt shared vulnerability rather than ruthless rivalry. The banner underlines that true athletic spirit in Special Olympics thrives on inclusion, mutual respect, and shared triumph over hardship.

Q4. Analyze the significance of the phrase 'beaming faces' in the concluding stanza of the poem.

Answer: The phrase 'beaming faces' symbolizes pure joy, moral satisfaction, and collective fulfillment that far exceeds individual pride. Though they walked instead of ran, their radiant expressions reflect the internal light of compassion and shared success. Receiving gold medals together validated their noble choice, demonstrating that true happiness stems from uplifting others. Their beaming faces capture a victorious moment where human warmth transcended competition.

Q5. Why does the poem conclude with the profound statement 'Said more than these words ever will'?

Answer: The line emphasizes that profound human actions transcend verbal description. While poetry can recount events, the sight of nine runners holding hands, completing the race together, and celebrating unified victory conveys an emotional depth beyond language. The athletes' silent gesture of compassion communicated universal love and sportsmanship powerfully. Their actions left a lasting moral imprint on spectators that words alone could never fully articulate.

SECTION 3: HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILLS (HOTS) LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q1. "True glory in life lies not in never falling, or in reaching the finish line first, but in lifting others when they fall." Analyze how David Roth's poem 'Nine Gold Medals' illustrates this philosophical statement, contrasting traditional competitive mindsets with empathetic sportsmanship.

Answer: David Roth's "Nine Gold Medals" brilliantly illustrates that true glory stems from collective empathy rather than ruthless competitive triumph. In standard athletic contests, success is strictly measured by individual speed, personal dominance, and defeating opponents. However, when the youngest athlete stumbles, the remaining eight runners make a revolutionary choice: they abandon their individual quest for single-handed glory to lift their distressed peer. By turning back, raising the boy to his feet, and joining hands to walk across the finish line together, they redefine heroism. This selfless act demonstrates that human compassion transcends personal ambition. Awarding nine gold medals signifies societal recognition that moral integrity and unity represent a higher achievement than solitary victory. Ultimately, the poem challenges competitive norms, proving that lifting others creates a lasting legacy of love, empathy, and shared human dignity far superior to individual medals.

Q2. In contemporary society, success is frequently measured by outperforming others, yet David Roth's 'Nine Gold Medals' presents an alternative paradigm of shared triumph. Contextually analyze how the poem critiques hyper-competitive individualism and reinforces empathy and solidarity as higher human virtues.

Answer: In contemporary culture, competitive endeavors often reduce success to solitary achievement, fostering a climate of relentless rivalry and isolation. David Roth's "Nine Gold Medals" offers a profound contextual critique of this hyper-competitive mindset through the lens of the Special Olympics. When the youngest runner falls, the immediate instinct of the remaining eight contestants to halt their pursuit of individual glory reveals a deeper truth: empathy transcends personal ambition. By turning back, raising their fallen peer, and walking hand-in-hand toward the finish line, the athletes transform a zero-sum contest into a celebration of human solidarity. Their collective action challenges traditional societal benchmarks of victory that glorify singular winners while ignoring shared vulnerability. Ultimately, the poem establishes that true greatness is not defined by standing alone at the pinnacle, but by standing together in mutual compassion, proving that collective upliftment represents humanity's highest triumph.