

fence

Eddie Tay

skyscrapers
all eyes looking at the centre

henry aspires to havard business
and throws away his harmonica

5 jenny is driving a car
into her global spider networked future

jonah unfurls like a creased carpet
on the eighth floor to watch voodoo tv

10 someone is working on her tablet cv
on winning beans and influencing people

dorcas must pass her abrsn
she bangs on her piano or else her mother

skyscrapers, fence
all eyes looking

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Suggested Questions and Answers

1. What do you think “skyscrapers” and “fence” symbolise in the poem?
2. In Stanza 2,
 - (a) identify the alliteration used
 - (b) work out what the “harmonica” in line 4 symbolises
3. Identify two comparisons in Stanzas 3 and 4.
4. In Stanza 5,
 - (a) explain why the name of the person is not provided
 - (b) work out what “winning beans” may mean
5. How would Dorcas’ mother react if Dorcas failed to pass her piano exam? Complete the following sentence.
Her mother would _____.
6. Discuss the use of repetition in the last stanza of the poem. What effect does it achieve?

Suggested Questions and Answers

1. What do you think “skyscrapers” and “fence” symbolise in the poem?
 - “Skyscrapers” may symbolise people’s high ambitions, goals, dreams and aspirations in life.
 - “Fence” may refer to some barriers/obstacles or boundaries/limits to live with.
2. In Stanza 2,
 - (a) identify the alliteration used
henry, havard, his, harmonica
 - (b) work out what the “harmonica” in line 4 symbolises
interest/hobby
3. Identify two comparisons in Stanzas 3 and 4.
 - “Future” is compared to a “highway” as both are pathways leading to a destination.
 - How Jonah unwinds herself is compared to the smoothing of a creased carpet as both were folded.
4. In Stanza 5,
 - (a) explain why the name of the person is not provided
The name is not provided possibly because the character is too typical in the city and many people are doing the same thing every day.
 - (b) work out what “winning beans” may mean
It may mean making money.
5. How would Dorcas’ mother react if Dorcas failed to pass her piano exam? Complete the following sentence.
Her mother would be angry/upset/disappointed // blame her for not trying hard enough.
6. Discuss the use of repetition in the last stanza of the poem. What effect does it achieve?
 - “Skyscrapers” and “all eyes looking” are repeated in the last stanza to echo the opening. The closure may suggest a sense of entrapment, with the middle stanzas about different people’s stories being enveloped, as encompassed by a fence.
 - The title word “fence” is repeated in the last stanza. It suggests that while people are living in or surrounded by skyscrapers with their eyes focusing on

high aims and achievements, there are also barriers that come in between.

7. What is special about the use of punctuation marks and capitalisation in the poem?
 - There is a general lack of punctuation marks in the poem. The only punctuation mark used is the comma between the “skyscrapers” and “fence” in line 13. It separates the “skyscrapers” with the “fence”, which signifies the barrier to someone’s dream.
 - All words, including the names of the characters, are in lower case. The use of lowercase letters for names is special, suggesting that the names mentioned are not proper nouns but may refer to anyone in the world.

8. Do you think the “fence” in the poem is surmountable? Does the poem present an optimistic or pessimistic outlook on life?
 - I think the fence in the poem is surmountable as a fence is usually not very high and comes with holes. In the poem, people can still see the skyscrapers, which symbolise their dreams and goals, through the fence.
 - I think the poem largely presents an optimistic view on life. Most of the characters have high aspirations for the future and they work hard in pursuit of success.