

***Kubla Khan* by S.T. Coleridge**

Model Questions:

1. What are the probable sources of 'Kubla Khan'? When was it composed and published?
2. What is the story behind the composition of the poem, as described in the *Preface* by Coleridge?
3. Which other compositions by Coleridge can be said to be companion pieces to 'Kubla Khan'? Name the 'demonic' triad of poems by Coleridge.
4. *"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree :
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea."* (lines 1-5)
 - Who was the real Kubla Khan? Is the poet referring to the historical figure here?
 - Where are the historical or mythical Xanadu and Alph located?
 - Which sea is being referred to as 'sunless'?
 - Which figures of speech have been used for poetic effect here?
5. *"So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery."* (lines 6-11)
 - What contrasts with the earlier lines has the poet set up here? (hint- gloomy caverns/pleasant bright surroundings, measureless/ five miles)
6. *"But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover!"* (lines 12-16)
 - What does the poet mean by 'savage place'?
 - What kind of atmosphere is the poet invoking through 'waning moon', 'woman wailing for her demon lover'?
7. *"And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:*

*And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.” (17-24)*

- Briefly describe the movement of the river as depicted by Coleridge.
 - Why do you think he mentions the sacred river (Alph) again?
8. *“Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!”*
- The poem attains a symmetrical pattern with the reference to five miles and lifeless ocean. Why then do you think does Coleridge not end it here but refers to Kubla Khan again?
 - Explain ‘ancestral voices prophesying war’.
9. What is the complete title of the poem?
10. Can you consider Kubla Khan as a unified whole? Discuss your answer with reference to the text.
11. Define the following words from the poem: *girdled, sinuous, chasm, athwart, and thresher.*
12. Illustrate the figures of speech used in the poem. (hint-alliteration, anaphora, simile)