

Zulfikar Ghose
Decomposition
Easier questions to cut your teeth on!

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1. "I have a picture I took in Bombay
of a beggar asleep on the pavement:
grey-haired, wearing shorts and a dirty shirt,
his shadow thrown aside like a blanket."
 - Where is Bombay? What is its name today? (2)
 - What figure of speech or language device is found in the phrase "his shadow thrown aside like a blanket"? (1)
 - Explain how this language device works, i.e. what is being compared to what -- and what is the effect of this comparison? (4)
 - How would you describe the style of the poet's writing? (4)

2. "His arms and legs could be cracks in the stone
routes for the ants' journeys, the flies' descents.
Brain-washed by the sun into exhaustion,
he lies veined into stone, a fossil man."
 - Why does the poet compare the beggar's arms and legs to "cracks in the stone" and as being "veined into stone"? (4)
 - What is meant literally by "a fossil man"? (2)
 - What is "brain-washed"? (2)
 - What has caused the beggar to be brain-washed? (2)

3. "Behind him, there is a crowd passingly
bemused by a pavement trickster and quite
indifferent to this very common sight
of an old man asleep on the pavement."
 - What is a "pavement trickster"? (2)
 - Why should the pavement trickster be more interesting than the beggar? (4)

4. "I thought it then a good composition
and glibly called it The Man in the Street,
remarking how typical it was of
India that the man in the street lived there."
 - What is the meaning of "a good composition"? (4)
 - Why does the poet call his picture "The Man in the Street"? (4)

5. "His head in the posture of one weeping
into a pillow chides me now for my
presumption at attempting to compose
art out of his hunger and solitude."
 - What is it about the sleeping man's posture that "chides" the poet now? (4)

6. Why does the poet call this poem "Decomposition"? (6)

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