REST OF THE SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM THE SUN RISING

1. How is the sun represented in the opening of the poem?

The sun is represented as a voyeur. A voyeur is a person who gets sexual pleasure from secretly watching other people’s sexual activities. There is a strong hint of the voyeuristic gaze of the sun as the sunrays ‘call on’ the lovers through ‘windows, and through curtains’ in the early morning. Helen Gardner has rightly pointed out that the sun is a ‘senile busy boy poking his nose in where he is not wanted and where he has no right to be’.

2. Why is the sun called an ‘unruly’ ‘old fool’?

The sun is ‘old’ because since the dawn of creation it has been functioning as the only source of warmth and vitality for the planet. From the lovers’ perspective, the sun is considered a fool as it does not know the significance or the blissful aspect of love. It is also considered ‘unruly’ for its seeming disobedience to the lovers. The sun is criticized for interfering in the realm of love.

3. ‘Must to thy motions lovers’ seasons run?’ What is the distinctive quality of the ‘lovers’ seasons’?

The lovers claim that, because of their unique status, they enjoy a certain kind of autonomy and therefore they seem to be in a position to defy the sun and ignore the constraints imposed by it. The lovers have a subjective interpretation of time in which the ‘intensity’ of experience is more important for them than the act of merely conforming to a schedule as a pre-given temporal context for structuring the mundane daily activities.

4. Who are the people directly controlled by the sun?

The agricultural workers, the sleepy apprentices opening up their masters’ shops and the noblemen are directly controlled by the sun as they are preoccupied with fulfilling certain responsibilities for survival.

5. Why does the speaker finally decide not to eclipse the sunbeams ‘with a wink’?

The speaker finally gives up the plan of eclipsing the sunbeams ‘with a wink’ simply because he does not want to withdraw his eyes from the face of his beloved. Like the traditional sonneteers and Elizabethan song-writers, the speaker does not find it necessary to initiate an extensive description of the physical beauty and gracefulness of the beloved. But this particular decision of the speaker is indicative of his obsessive engagement with the physical presence of the beloved.

6. What is so special about the way the poem begins?

The opening is daring as it allows the speaker to unleash a brutal verbal attack on the sun. The sense of drama is further heightened because of the abruptness of the opening of the poem.

7. What are the ‘rags of time’?

The hours, days and months are described as the ‘rags of time’ because the mechanical fragmentation of time in the public domain has absolutely no value for the lovers who in the initial section of the poem seem to celebrate a solipsistic mode of behavior.

8. Who is a ‘pedantic wretch’ and why is he addressed in such a way?

‘Pedantic’ is someone excessively concerned with petty unimportant things. ‘Wretch’ is an unfortunate, miserable person. Sun is unfortunate because it is devoid of the experience of lovemaking. The sun is ‘pedantic’ because it attaches undue importance to the act of regulating the conventional daily practices which are considered useless by the lovers.

9. What happens to the sun in the second stanza?

Though the sun is dismissed at a verbal level, it seems to be shining steadily. The speaker threatens to extinguish the sun and then withdraws. Since the sun is no longer ‘peering’ as a voyeur but shines fully, the speaker invites the sun to have a good look at things.

10. What is so unique about the lovers’ room?

As the lovers claim, the sun will find that nothing it sees on its diurnal tour of the universe will match whatever it can see in the lovers’ room. In the second stanza, the lovers’ room is transformed into an extraordinary space containing the world’s riches represented by the two Indias, the East of spices and the West of gold. This idea is further continued to suggest the contraction of the world into the lovers’ room in which the lovers’ bed functions as ‘center’ about which the sun must revolve and the four walls of the room are represented as the proper orbit of the sun.