

Collegedunia NCERT Notes

NCERT Revision Notes

Chapter 15: For Elkana

For Elkana class 11 English notes cover family communication, understatement and humour.

They also give clear NCERT answer frames for quick revision.

Also see for this chapter: [NCERT Solutions](#)

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1 Chapter Snapshot

Nissim Ezekiel turns a small family moment into a comic poem.

The scene begins in calm evening air. It shifts into household complaint and ends in shared laughter.

1.1 Core Facts

The poem is built from ordinary speech and ordinary gestures.

Its power comes from how quietly Ezekiel observes the family.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Poet	Nissim Ezekiel, major Indian English poet.	Use in the opening line.
Setting	A warm April evening on a lawn.	Use for idyllic scene.
Characters	The speaker, his wife and their seven-year-old son.	Use for family pattern.
Conflict	The child wants dinner immediately.	Use for plot summary.
Ending	The wife's laughter joins all three.	Closure cue.

One-line summary

The poem shows how a family moves from silence to irritation, then to humour and togetherness.



1.2 NCERT Focus Areas

NCERT asks us to notice communication, understatement and the child's logic.

It also asks us to notice beauty beside daily life. These are connected points.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Communication	Speech, silence, looks and laughter carry meaning.	Question 1.
Understatement	Big feelings are shown through small remarks.	Question 2.
Idyllic and daily	The pleasant lawn meets a broken window-pane and dinner.	Question 3.
Unusual rapport	The parents share one unspoken thought about discipline.	Question 4.
Capital letters	Children Must be Disciplined sounds like a family rule.	Question 5.
Logic	The child's hunger creates a neat argument.	Question 6.

Fast start

Begin most answers with the domestic situation. Then add the device or theme asked in the question.

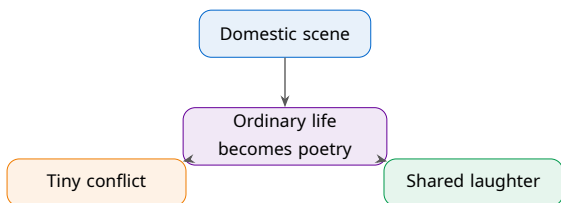
1.3 Why the Poem Feels Natural

Ezekiel writes as if the reader is watching a family from very close range. The lines are short, and the speech is direct.

- **Natural order:** evening, chairs, silence, comment, demand, verdict and laughter.
- **Natural speech:** the wife, child and speaker sound different.
- **Natural comedy:** no event is huge, but every turn is recognisable.
- **Natural ending:** laughter solves more than argument can solve.

Common error

Do not call the poem a serious quarrel. The tension is mild and comic.



2 Scene and Movement

The poem moves like a small scene in a play.

Place, body positions, voices and pauses show how the family works.

2.1 Opening Evening

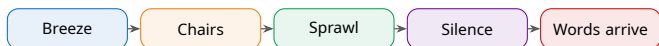
The opening gives us warmth, breeze and leisure.

The couple brings chairs to the lawn and sits in silence.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Warm April	The season gives ease and softness.	Shows the idyllic mood.
Breezes	The air seems gentle and inviting.	Use for atmosphere.
Dragging chairs	A daily act enters the poem.	Shows plain realism.
Sprawl	The couple is relaxed, not formal.	Use for tone.
Silence	Words are expected, but delayed.	Links to communication.

Family evenings

Many homes have moments where peace and chores sit together. Ezekiel uses that familiar mix to make the poem believable.



2.2 Shift from Beauty to Chore

The wife notices a broken window-pane. This single detail brings the household back from beauty to work.

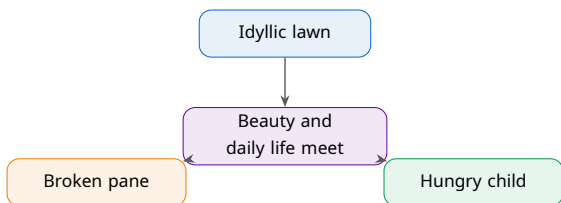
Scene Shift Pattern

Beautiful setting + domestic repair = comic contrast.

- *The lawn creates leisure.*
- *The broken pane creates responsibility.*
- *The husband's inward escape creates humour.*

Idyllic and pedestrian

The idyllic is the pleasant evening. The pedestrian is the small repair and dinner demand.



2.3 Plot Flow

The action is slight, but carefully arranged.

Each speech changes the family balance.

1. The wife comments on the broken pane.
2. The speaker avoids argument by turning inward.
3. The son demands dinner now.
4. Both parents silently agree that discipline is

needed.

5. The child gives a surprisingly logical reply.
6. The wife's laughter gathers the family again.

Plot answer

For a summary answer, write the six steps in order. Do not retell every line.



3 Family Communication

The poem studies how family members speak and avoid speaking. It also shows how looks, habits and laughter can say as much as words.

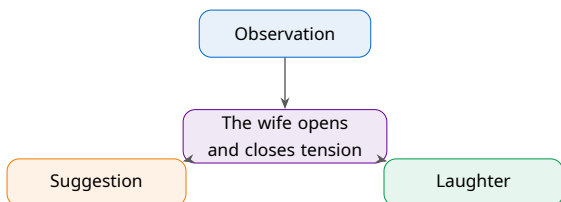
3.1 The Wife's Voice

The wife speaks through comments and suggestions. She is practical, observant and confident in her judgement.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Surveys the scene	She notices what must be fixed.	Shows practical mind.
Broken pane	Her detail is exact and domestic.	Use for pedestrian detail.
Suggests	She expects the husband to act.	Shows marital pattern.
Always right	The speaker accepts her force with humour.	Use for understatement.
Laughter	Her final response repairs the tension.	Use for ending.

Do not flatten her

Do not describe the wife only as nagging. She is also warm, alert and able to laugh.



3.2 The Husband's Aside

The speaker does not openly argue.

He admits that his wife is right, then escapes into an inner view.

Aside

An aside is a small private comment. In this poem, it lets us hear the husband's comic self-awareness.

- **He avoids dispute:** this keeps the tone light.
- **He knows the family pattern:** the remark feels lived-in.
- **He turns inward:** the inner view shuts out the wife's voice.
- **He returns through the child:** the boy's logic brings him back.

Knows

the wife is right

Avoids

open dispute

Turns

towards inner view

Hears

the child's demand

Admits

the boy is like him

Returns

through family unity

3.3 The Child's Speech

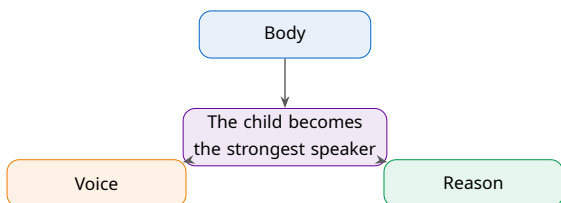
The son speaks with firmness. His request is simple, but the poem presents it like a formal declaration.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Small legs apart	Body language shows resolve.	Use for dramatic effect.
Chin uplifted	The child looks determined.	Use for comic seriousness.
Hard eyes	The demand becomes intense.	Use for tone.
Now	The repeated word creates urgency.	Use for logic.
I am hungry	The reason is plain and powerful.	Use for answer conclusion.

Child logic

Children often argue from immediate need.

The poem respects that logic while keeping the scene comic.



4 Humour, Understatement and Irony

The poem is funny because it stays quiet.

Ezekiel lets small phrases expose the family rhythm.

4.1 Understatement

Understatement means saying something in a low-key way when the feeling is larger. Ezekiel uses it to make the scene more comic.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Always right	The husband accepts defeat lightly.	Marriage humour.
Unusual rapport	The parents agree without speaking.	NCERT Q4 ironic phrase.
Verdict	A dinner delay sounds like a court order.	NCERT Q5 mock seriousness.
Little one	Tender phrase near stubborn speech.	Tone contrast.
Child's logic	Hunger now needs dinner now.	NCERT Q6 argument.
Delightful laughter	The ending is soft, not dramatic.	Ending and family unity.

Device answer

For understatement, quote one small phrase and explain the larger family meaning behind it.



4.2 Irony in the Parents' Unity

The parents agree that the child must wait. Yet the father secretly admires the child's argument.

Irony Pattern

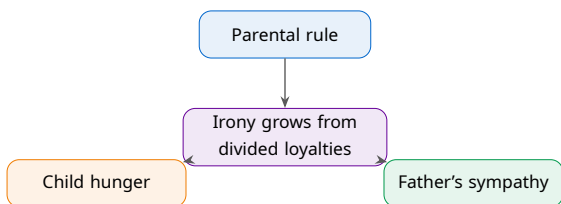
Public role: *parent supports discipline.*

Private feeling: *father recognises himself in the child.*

Comic result: *discipline weakens before logic and laughter.*

Unusual rapport

The phrase is funny because both parents agree just before the child defeats their rule.



4.3 The Word "Bastard"

The harsh word surprises the reader.

The tone is affectionate and comic. It shows the father's amused surrender.

- **It is not hatred:** the next thought praises the child's logic.

- **It marks intimacy:** the father speaks privately to himself.
- **It sharpens humour:** the formal logician and the naughty child meet.
- **It shows likeness:** the boy resembles the father in stubborn reasoning.

Tone error

Do not treat this word as proof that the father dislikes his son. The context shows affection.

Shock

the word is strong

Context

the father loves him

Humour

anger turns playful

Logic

the argument wins

Self-image

the child
mirrors him

Ending

laughter softens all

5 Character Notes

Each character has a clear function.

The wife brings practical reality. The husband brings inward comedy. The child brings urgent logic.

5.1 Speaker as Husband and Father

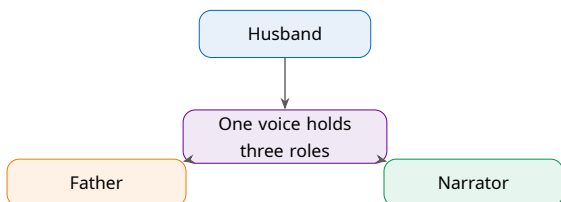
The speaker is not heroic. He is ordinary, self-aware and gently comic about his own

weakness.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
As husband	He avoids a repair argument.	Shows family pattern.
As observer	He notices voice, posture and silence.	Shows poetic eye.
As father	He wants discipline, then feels sympathy.	Shows divided role.
As self	He sees the child as like himself.	Shows affection.
As narrator	He controls tone through asides.	Shows craft.

HOSFA

Remember the speaker as Husband, Observer, Self-aware voice, Father and Amused narrator.



5.2 Wife as Practical Centre

The wife begins with a practical detail and ends with laughter. She is the strongest organising presence in the poem.

Character balance

The wife is neither a comic villain nor a silent figure. She gives the poem order, pressure and warmth.

- **She sees the broken pane:** she reads the scene practically.
- **She gives a verdict:** she tries to discipline the child.
- **She laughs:** she releases the tension.
- **She holds the family:** the ending depends on her response.

Sees
what needs repair

Speaks
with confidence

Judges
the child's demand

Waits
five minutes

Laughs
at the logic

Joins
the family again

5.3 Son as Logician

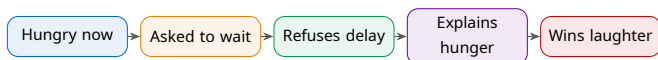
The son is only seven, yet his speech is the turning point.

He speaks from appetite, but his reason is precise.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Demand	He wants dinner now.	Shows urgency.
Reason	He is hungry now.	Shows practical logic.
Counter-reply	In five minutes, hunger may pass.	Shows comic reasoning.
Effect on father	The father admires him.	Shows likeness.
Effect on family	The wife laughs.	Shows resolution.

Child logic answer

Use the words now and five minutes. They show the child's time-based argument.



6 Themes and Devices

The poem works through everyday themes rather than grand declarations.

Its devices are quiet: contrast, capital letters, free verse, asides and tone shifts.

6.1 Domestic Life as Poetry

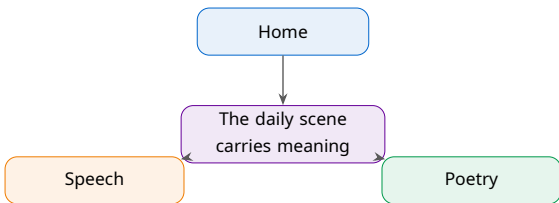
Ezekiel shows that poetry can grow from chairs, lawns, repairs and dinner.

The ordinary is not treated as small.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Chairs	Bodies enter the scene.	Concrete detail.
Broken pane	Household duty interrupts leisure.	Comic contrast.
Dinner	Need defeats adult theory.	Plot trigger.
Finger wag	Gesture becomes authority.	Dramatic detail.
Laughter	Emotion becomes structure.	Ending cue.

Why students recognise it

The poem feels close to home because it turns a familiar dinner-time scene into art.



6.2 Capitalisation

The line *Children Must be Disciplined* uses capital letters to imitate a rule. It sounds official, but the situation is comic.

Capital Letter Effect

Capital letters + family rule + comic situation = mock authority.

- **Children:** the child is placed inside a general rule.
- **Must:** the word makes the rule sound strict.
- **Disciplined:** adult order is set against childish hunger.
- **Comic effect:** the grand rule faces a small dinner demand.

CMD

CMD helps recall the capitalised line: Children, Must, Disciplined.



6.3 Free Verse and Conversational Rhythm

The poem does not depend on a fixed rhyme pattern.

Its rhythm follows pauses, speech and shifts in attention.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Short lines	They copy quick domestic movement.	Use for form.
Line breaks	They slow or sharpen key moments.	Use for effect.
Direct speech	It gives the child force.	Use for realism.
Asides	They reveal the father's inner voice.	Use for humour.
Ending line	The family moves indoors together.	Use for closure.

Answer form trap

*Do not search for a strict rhyme scheme here.
The poem's music is conversational.*

Pause
silence before words

Speech
wife and child

Aside
father's private view

Break
line-end emphasis

Tone
comic control

Closure
shared movement

7 Line-wise Meaning and Close Reading

Close reading means explaining how small words create a larger effect. In this poem, small details matter more than big statements.

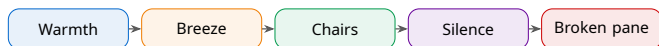
7.1 Opening to the Broken Pane

The first movement sets peace beside duty. The lawn and breeze invite rest, while the broken pane reminds the couple of unfinished work.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Warm April evening	Soft time and pleasant weather.	Opening atmosphere.
Tempts us	Nature invites the couple outside.	Personification cue.
Drag our chairs	The action is ordinary and physical.	Realism.
Words begin to come	Silence is part of family talk.	Communication.
Broken window-pane	Domestic duty breaks the mood.	Contrast.

Close-reading clue

The poem does not reject beauty. It places beauty inside normal household life.



7.2 The Child Enters

The son's entrance changes the poem's energy.

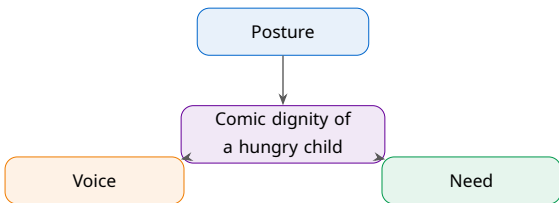
His posture is almost heroic, although the demand is only for dinner.

- **Small legs apart:** he takes a firm stance.

- **Chin uplifted:** he appears proud and determined.
- **Eyes hard and cold:** the child's seriousness is comic.
- **Speak his truth:** the need for dinner becomes a declaration.

Image answer

When asked about the child, combine posture with speech. Body language proves his determination.



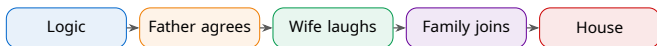
7.3 Ending with Laughter

The final laughter matters because it is not forced. It accepts the child, the father and the wife in one moment.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Appeals to me	The father accepts the child's reasoning.	Use for logic.
Deserves dinner	The father turns hunger into reward.	Use for humour.
Delightful laughter	The wife releases tension.	Use for closure.
Three of us	The family becomes one unit.	Use for rapport.
Go into the house	The conflict ends in action.	Use for ending.

LARA

LARA recalls the ending: Logic, Acceptance, Rapport and Action.



8 Answer Writing Practice

Exam answers need clear focus. Use the poem's small details, then connect them to communication, tone and family feeling.

8.1 How to Answer NCERT Questions

Start with the question word.

If it asks “comment”, give a point and support it with a poem detail.

Three-part Answer Frame

1. *Name the idea: communication, understatement, irony or logic.*
2. *Add one poem detail: broken pane, unusual rapport, capital letters or five minutes.*
3. *Explain the effect: humour, family warmth or contrast.*

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Comment	Make a judgement, then support it.	Use 2 or 3 points.
Discuss	Explain examples in a linked way.	Use device plus effect.
Explain	Unpack the given phrase closely.	Stay near the quoted line.
Compare	Show both sides of a contrast.	Use idyllic and pedestrian.
Evaluate	Say why the device works.	End with effect.

Quote control

Use short quoted phrases only. Explain them more than you quote them.

8.2 Model Paragraph Bank

These short answer blocks can be adapted to different NCERT questions. Keep them focused and do not memorise them word for word.

Communication paragraph

The poem captures family communication through speech, silence and gestures. The wife comments on the pane, the husband avoids dispute, and the child states hunger. The final laughter moves beyond argument.

Understatement paragraph

Ezekiel uses understatement when the husband admits that his wife is always right. The line is comic because it hides a whole marriage pattern inside a small remark. The phrase unusual rapport also reduces a family rule to a quiet shared thought.

Logic paragraph

The child's demand seems logical because it is based on present hunger. He argues that hunger felt now may not exist after five minutes. The father admires this neat reasoning and calls him a logician.

Point

state the idea

Detail

add poem evidence

Effect

explain impact

Tone

name humour

Link

return to question

Close

one clear sentence

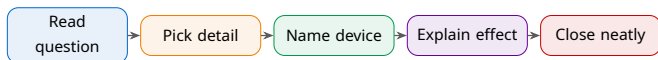
8.3 Common Mistakes

Most weak answers either retell the poem or overstate the conflict. The poem needs a balanced reading.

Focus	What it means	Use in answers
Only summary	No device or effect is explained.	Add theme words.
Calling it tragic	The tone is comic and affectionate.	Name humour.
Ignoring wife	Her laughter closes the poem.	Discuss her role.
Ignoring child	His logic turns the scene.	Discuss demand.
Long quotes	They reduce analysis time.	Use short phrases.

Exam warning

Do not write that the poem is only about discipline. It is about communication, affection and comic timing.



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9 Quick Reference Summary

Use this section for last-minute revision.

It condenses plot, themes, devices and answer cues into fast tables.

9.1 One-page Revision Table

Area	Key point	NCERT link
Theme	Family communication through words, silence and laughter.	Question 1.
Device	Understatement and asides create comic effect.	Question 2.
Contrast	Beautiful evening meets chores and dinner.	Question 3.
Rapport	Parents share a silent discipline rule.	Question 4.
Capitalisation	The rule sounds official and comic.	Question 5.
Logic	The child argues from present hunger.	Question 6.

Final takeaway

For Elkana is a poem about a family recognising itself. The comic ending matters because laughter turns friction into closeness.

9.2 Theme Web

The main ideas overlap. A good answer should show how one idea leads to another.

Communication
speech and silence

Humour
small domestic
comedy

Discipline
adult rule

Logic
child's argument

Contrast
lawn and chores

Affection
shared laughter

CHDLA

*Remember the poem through CHDLA:
Communication, Humour, Discipline, Logic and
Affection.*

9.3 Final Checklist

Before you finish an answer, check whether it names the speaker, the family scene and the exact device asked in the question.

- Mention Nissim Ezekiel and the poem's domestic setting.
- Use one precise detail from the poem.

- Explain tone: comic, affectionate and understated.
- Connect child logic with family rapport.
- Avoid making the scene harsher than it is.

Revision use

Read the summary table once, then practise two short answers.

This gives better recall than rereading the whole poem many times.

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