

Collegedunia NCERT Notes

NCERT Notes for Class 11 English (Woven Words) (2026-27 Syllabus)

Chapter 20: My Three Passions

My Three Passions class 11 english (woven words) notes explain Bertrand Russell's reflective prose essay through its central ideas, structure, imagery, themes, and exam answer patterns.

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

Contents

1 Chapter Snapshot and Context	2
1.1 Text at a Glance	3
1.2 About Bertrand Russell	4
1.3 Form and Tone	4
2 The Three Passions in Detail	5
2.1 Love: Joy, Companionship, and Vision	5
2.2 Knowledge: Curiosity with Moral Depth	6
2.3 Pity: Compassion That Pulls Him Back	7
2.4 How the Passions Work Together	8
3 Structure, Imagery, and Language	8
3.1 Opening Simile: Passions Like Great Winds	9
3.2 Upward and Earth-Bound Movement	10
3.3 Key Words and Phrases	10
3.4 Literary Devices	11

4 Themes and Philosophical Ideas	12
4.1 Life Worth Living	12
4.2 Knowledge and Compassion	12
4.3 Russell and King's Agape	13
4.4 Personal Essay as Moral Argument	14
5 Quote Analysis and Answer Writing	14
5.1 Quote-Analysis Ladder	15
5.2 Understanding the Text Questions	16
5.3 CBSE Paragraph Patterns	16
5.4 Value-Based and Long Answers	17
6 Common Mistakes and Practice Support	18
6.1 Common Misreadings	18
6.2 Practice Questions	19
6.3 Vocabulary Revision	20
6.4 Sample Answer Bank	20
7 Quick Reference Summary	21
7.1 One-Page Concept Map	21
7.2 Theme and Device Table	22
7.3 Last-Minute Answer Templates	23
7.4 Exam Checklist	23

1 Chapter Snapshot and Context

Bertrand Russell presents his life as a movement shaped by three deep forces. The essay is brief, but it joins personal confession with moral philosophy. Read it as a self-portrait, not as a story with events.

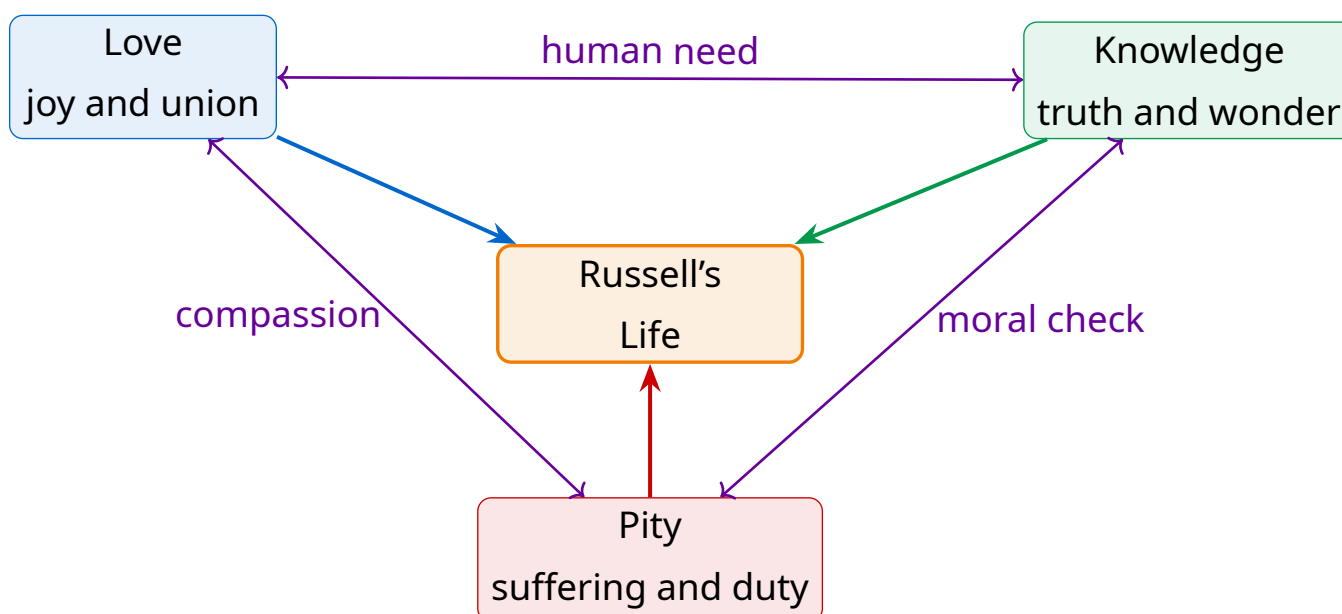
1.1 Text at a Glance

The chapter is an extract from Russell's autobiography. Its core claim is direct: love, knowledge, and pity have governed his life. Each passion gives a different pull to his inner world.

Core Reading

Russell does not describe success, fame, or comfort as the centre of life. He chooses three inward forces:

- **Love:** the need for joy, union, and relief from loneliness.
- **Knowledge:** the wish to understand people, nature, and number.
- **Pity:** the pain caused by human suffering.



Opening Sentence Tip

If a question asks for the main idea, begin with the three passions. Then add that they are simple in name but powerful in effect. NCERT anchors: Q1 asks why they are simple, Q2 asks how they act like winds, and Q6 asks about the quality of life they create.

1.2 About Bertrand Russell

Russell was a British philosopher, mathematician, public thinker, and Nobel Prize winner in Literature. His style in this extract is plain, balanced, and intense. He writes like a thinker who also feels deeply.

Aspect	Use in the Chapter
Philosopher	He asks what makes life meaningful.
Mathematician	He values order, number, and knowledge.
Humanist	He cannot ignore poverty, cruelty, and loneliness.
Autobiographer	He explains his life through inward motives.

Why This Essay Still Matters

Students often hear that life should be measured by marks, career, or status. Russell offers a different scale. He asks whether a life has loved, learned, and cared.

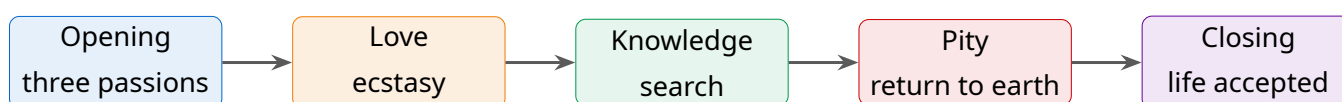
1.3 Form and Tone

The passage is a reflective essay. It is not a plot-based prose lesson. The movement is inward: the writer names his passions, explains each one, then judges his life as worth living.

Essay Movement

Life force → personal experience → moral insight → final acceptance

Use this chain to organise long answers.



Do Not Treat It as a Biography

Do not write a long life story of Russell. The NCERT extract asks how he understands life. Keep the focus on love, knowledge, pity, and their effect.

2 The Three Passions in Detail

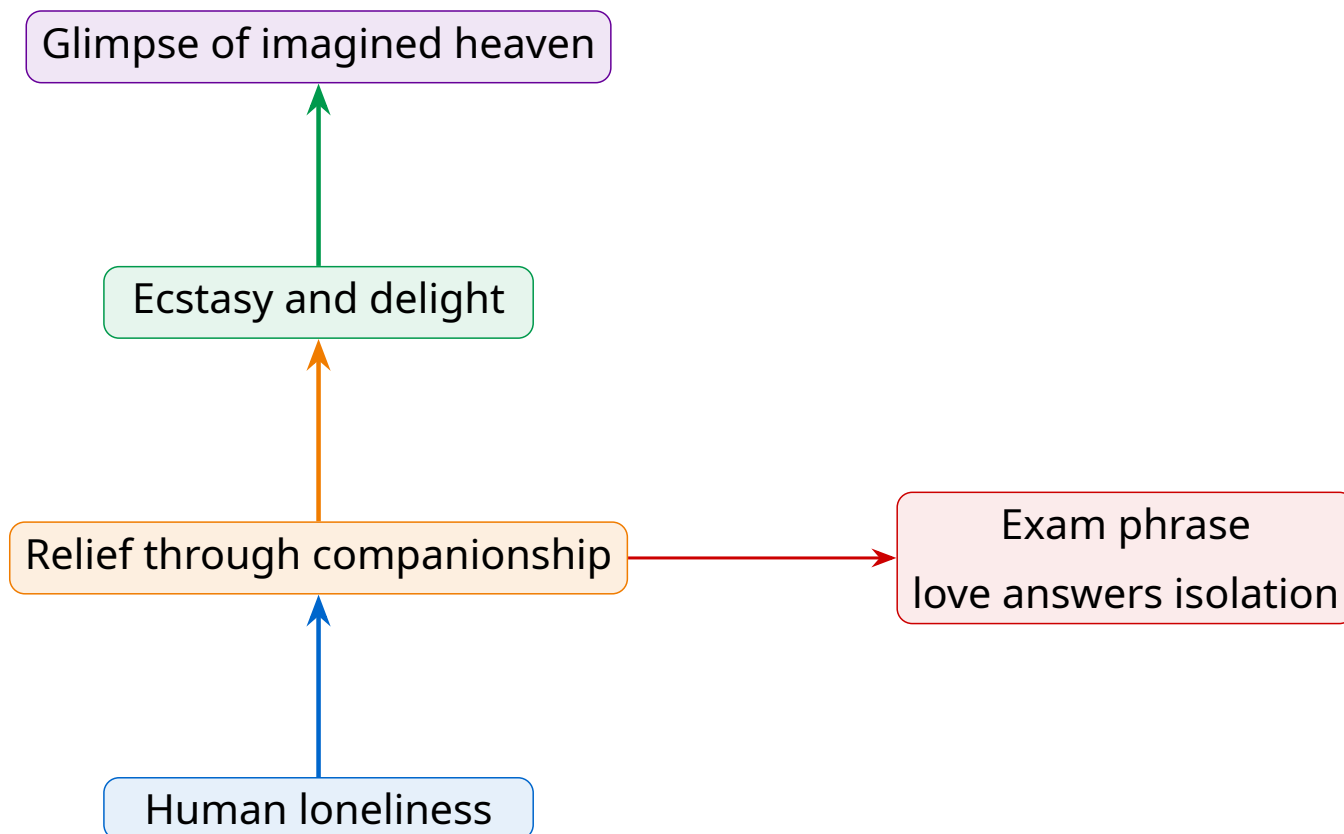
This section studies the three passions one by one. Russell gives each passion a role. Love lifts the self, knowledge expands the mind, and pity brings the thinker back to human suffering.

2.1 Love: Joy, Companionship, and Vision

Russell seeks love for three reasons. It gives intense joy, saves him from loneliness, and gives a glimpse of spiritual fulfilment. His idea of love is personal, emotional, and almost sacred.

Three Reasons for Love

- **Joy:** love brings a rare height of happiness.
- **Relief:** love reduces the loneliness of one separate self.
- **Vision:** love hints at a higher state imagined by saints and poets.



Love Answer Frame

For NCERT Understanding the Text Q3, use three short points: joy, relief from loneliness, and a vision beyond ordinary life.

2.2 Knowledge: Curiosity with Moral Depth

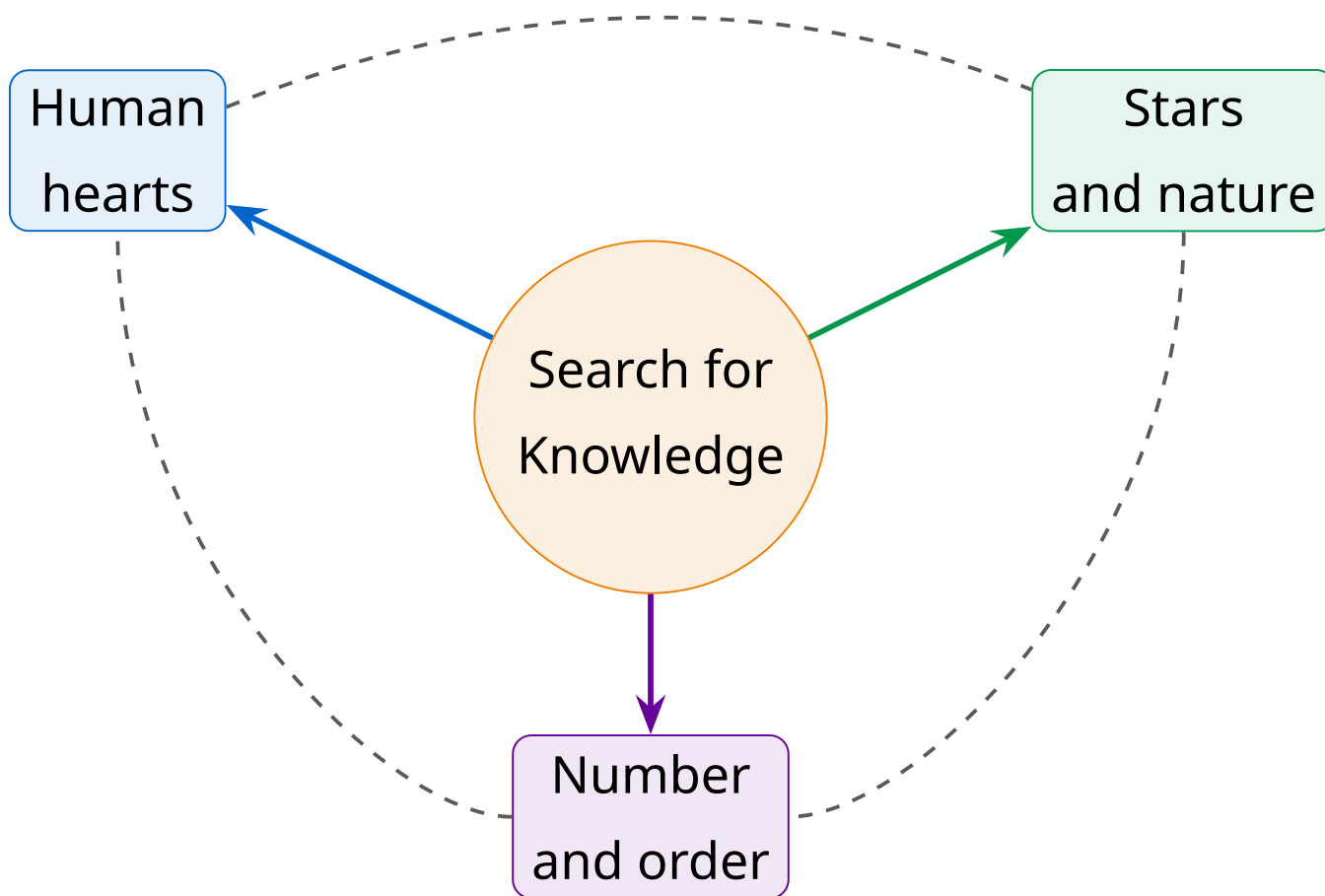
Russell's knowledge is wider than textbook learning. He wants to understand human hearts, the stars, and the power of number. His search joins psychology, science, and mathematics.

Area of Knowledge	Meaning in the Essay	Answer Cue
Human hearts	Understanding motives, love, fear, and pain	human nature
Stars	Wonder about the physical universe	scientific curiosity
Number	Order beneath changing reality	mathematical vision

Knowledge Chain

Wonder + discipline + humility = Russell's search for knowledge

He admits that he achieved only a little of what he desired. NCERT anchor: Q4 asks how Russell's idea of knowledge differs from ordinary information.



Knowledge Beyond Marks

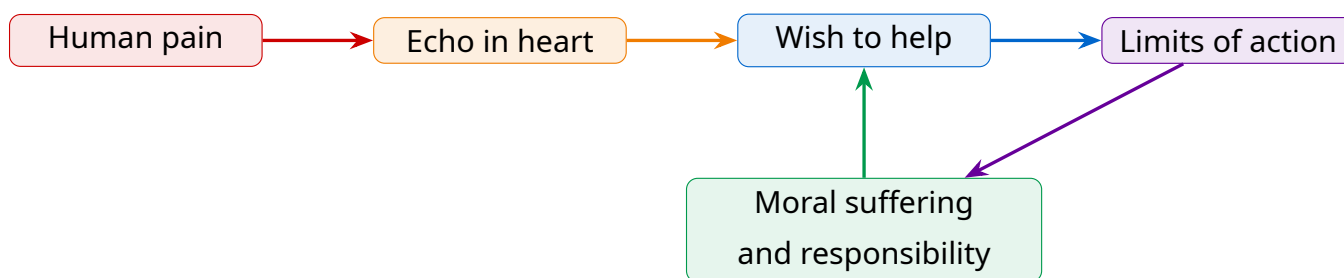
Russell's idea of knowledge helps in every subject. Good learning asks why people act, how nature works, and what patterns hold changing things together.

2.3 Pity: Compassion That Pulls Him Back

The third passion is pity for suffering people. Russell sees famine, oppression, old age, loneliness, poverty, and pain. This pity does not give easy comfort. It makes him suffer with others.

Why Pity Is Earth-Bound

Love and knowledge can make Russell feel lifted toward beauty and truth. Pity brings him back to harsh human reality. It reminds him that private joy is incomplete while others suffer. NCERT anchor: Q5 asks why pity is earth-bound while love and knowledge are elevating.



Pity Is Not Weakness

Do not call pity mere sadness. In this essay it is moral awareness. Russell suffers because he wants human life to be better.

2.4 How the Passions Work Together

The three passions are not separate chapters of his life. They act together. Love and knowledge give height, while pity gives ethical seriousness.

Passion	Direction	Gift	Limit
Love	Upward and inward	Ecstasy, union, relief	Can remain private
Knowledge	Upward and outward	Understanding and wonder	Always incomplete
Pity	Downward to earth	Moral concern	Brings pain

LKP Memory Aid

Remember the order as **LKP**: Love lifts the heart, Knowledge lifts the mind, Pity keeps both humane. NCERT anchor: Q6 uses this full set to judge the quality of Russell's life.

3 Structure, Imagery, and Language

Russell's essay is short because its design is tight. The opening names the three passions. The middle explains each force. The ending judges the whole life as meaningful despite suffering.

3.1 Opening Simile: Passions Like Great Winds

Russell compares his passions to strong winds by using the word “like”. The simile suggests force, movement, and lack of full control. It also prepares us for the mixture of joy and anguish in the essay.

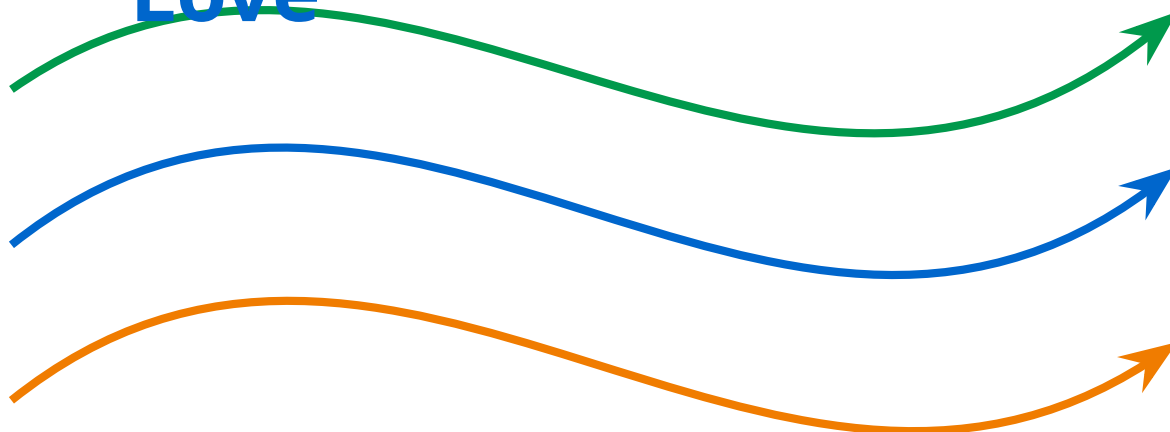
How to Explain the Simile

Use four words in your answer:

- **Force:** the passions are powerful.
- **Movement:** they carry his life along.
- **Restlessness:** the course is not calm.
- **Risk:** passion brings pain as well as meaning.

Knowledge

Love



ocean of anguish **Pity**

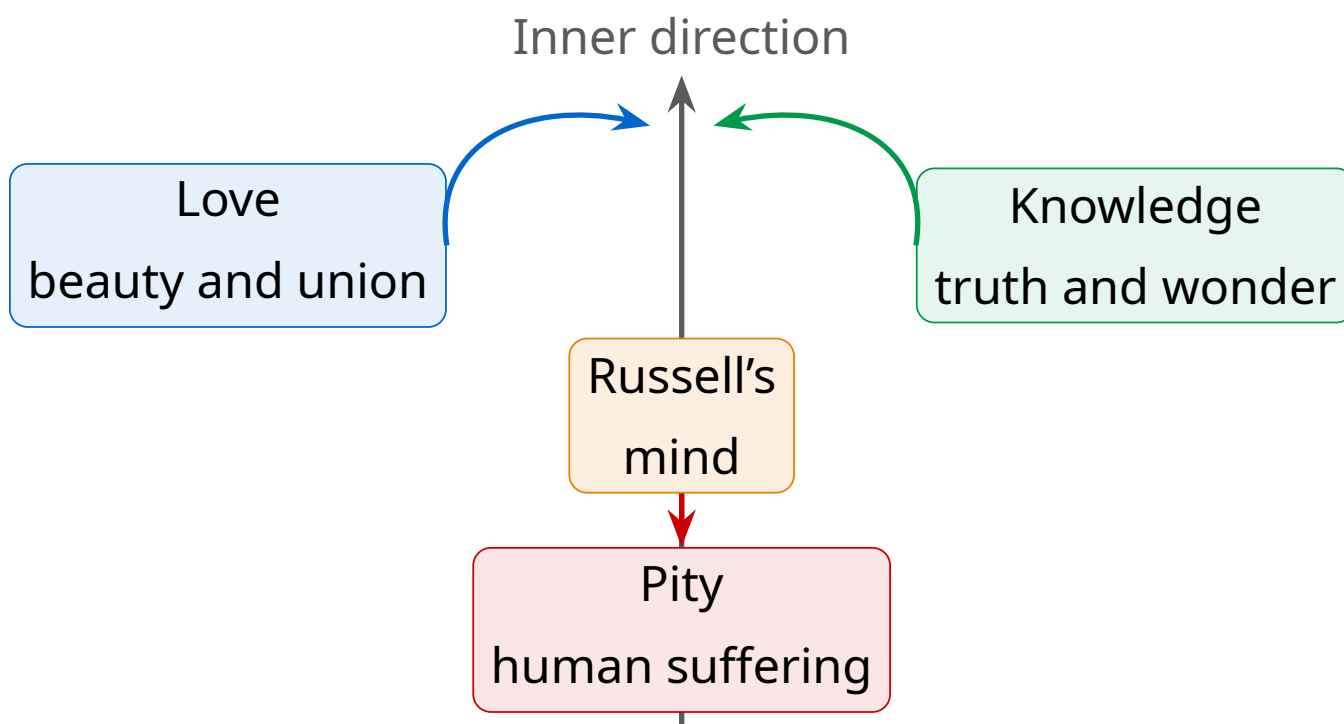
Wayward course
through joy and anguish

Simile Answer Tip

Do not stop at "the passions are strong". Add that they direct his life and sometimes drive him near despair.

3.2 Upward and Earth-Bound Movement

The essay uses vertical movement as a major pattern. Love and knowledge lead upward. Pity brings Russell back to earth. This contrast creates the emotional balance of the passage.

**Contrast Pattern**

Love + Knowledge = ascent, Pity = return to earth

This pattern is useful for theme and value-based answers.

3.3 Key Words and Phrases

NCERT asks students to infer meanings from context. These words create the emotional field of the essay. Most of them point to movement, suffering, depth, or insight.

Word or Phrase	Context Meaning	Memory Cue
wayward course	an uneven, uncontrolled path	not straight
ocean of anguish	deep emotional suffering	vast pain
verge of despair	edge of hopelessness	almost despair
mystic miniature	small spiritual preview	tiny vision
unfathomable	too deep to measure or understand	beyond depth
abyss	deep emptiness or void	dark depth
apprehend	understand or grasp	catch meaning
reverberate	echo again and again	repeated sound

WA-V-MUAR

For the vocabulary list, group the words by feeling: **WAV** for wayward, anguish, verge; **MUAR** for miniature, unfathomable, abyss, apprehend, reverberate.

3.4 Literary Devices

The prose is direct, yet it uses strong literary devices. Russell depends on simile, contrast, repetition, and imagery to make inner life visible.

Device	Where It Appears	Effect
Simile	passions compared to winds with “like”	shows force and movement
Repetition	“I have sought” pattern	gives rhythm and emphasis
Contrast	heaven and earth movement	balances joy with pain
Imagery	loneliness, abyss, cries of pain	makes feeling concrete
Climax	final judgement on life	gives closure and dignity

Device Naming Error

Do not call the wind comparison a plain metaphor in a device-identification answer. Russell writes “like great winds”, so it is a simile that grows into a larger wind image.

4 Themes and Philosophical Ideas

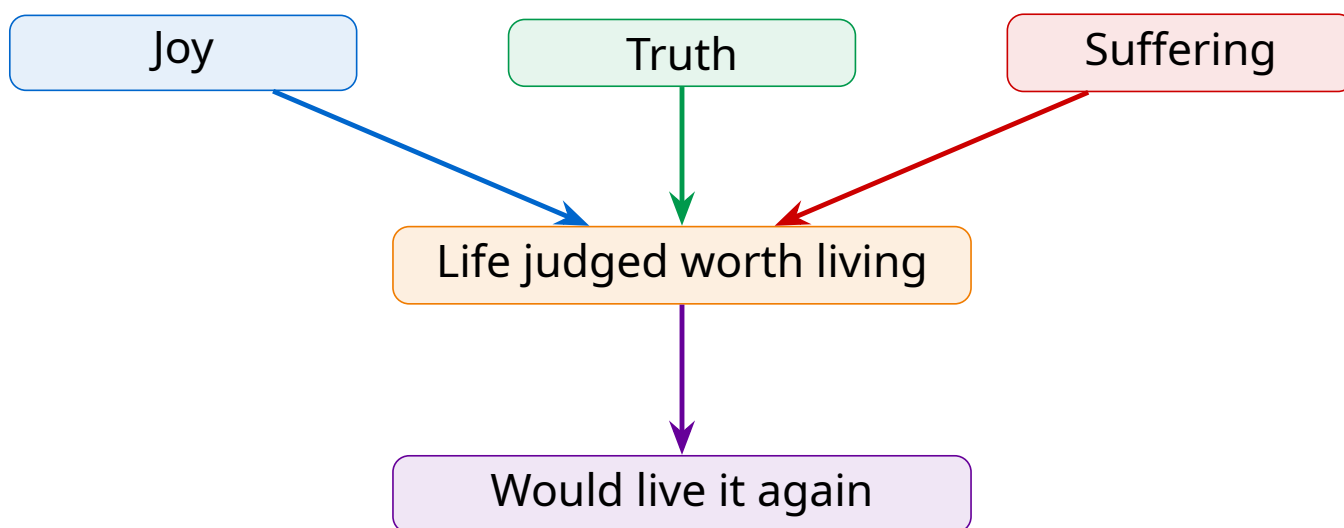
The essay asks what makes life worth living. Russell's answer is not easy happiness. A worthy life includes joy, wonder, and pain felt on behalf of others.

4.1 Life Worth Living

Russell ends by saying that his life has been worth living. This is striking because he has also described anguish, despair, and helpless pity. The ending does not erase pain. It places pain inside a meaningful life.

Theme Statement

A meaningful life is not a painless life. For Russell, life becomes worthy when the self can love deeply, seek truth honestly, and feel the suffering of others.



Value Link

This theme fits value-based questions. A student can connect it to empathy, intellectual curiosity, social responsibility, and emotional honesty.

4.2 Knowledge and Compassion

Russell does not treat knowledge as cold intelligence. His search for knowledge sits beside compassion. The essay suggests that thought must remain connected to human suffering.

Only Knowledge	Only Pity	Russell's Balance
May become detached	May become helpless grief	Thought with moral feeling
Seeks truth	Sees suffering	Uses truth to understand life
Can lift the mind	Pulls the heart to earth	Keeps the thinker humane

Theme Pair

When asked for Russell's philosophy, pair knowledge with pity. This shows that he values both intelligence and compassion.

4.3 Russell and King's Agape

NCERT places a passage on Martin Luther King after Russell's essay. The comparison asks how Russell's love and pity connect with King's agape. Both writers value love that goes beyond private attachment.

Russell	King	Common Ground
Love relieves loneliness	Agape heals broken community	Love answers separation
Pity feels human pain	Agape seeks another's good	Love becomes moral action
Suffering disturbs him	Hate must be answered by love	Compassion resists cruelty
Life gains worth through concern	Community must be restored	Private feeling grows social

Comparison Answer

Russell's love begins as personal joy, but his pity opens it toward humanity. King's agape is already social. It means active goodwill that seeks to restore community.

Community Reading

The comparison with King is useful for discussions on non-violence. Love is not only affection. It can become a way of resisting hatred and rebuilding trust.

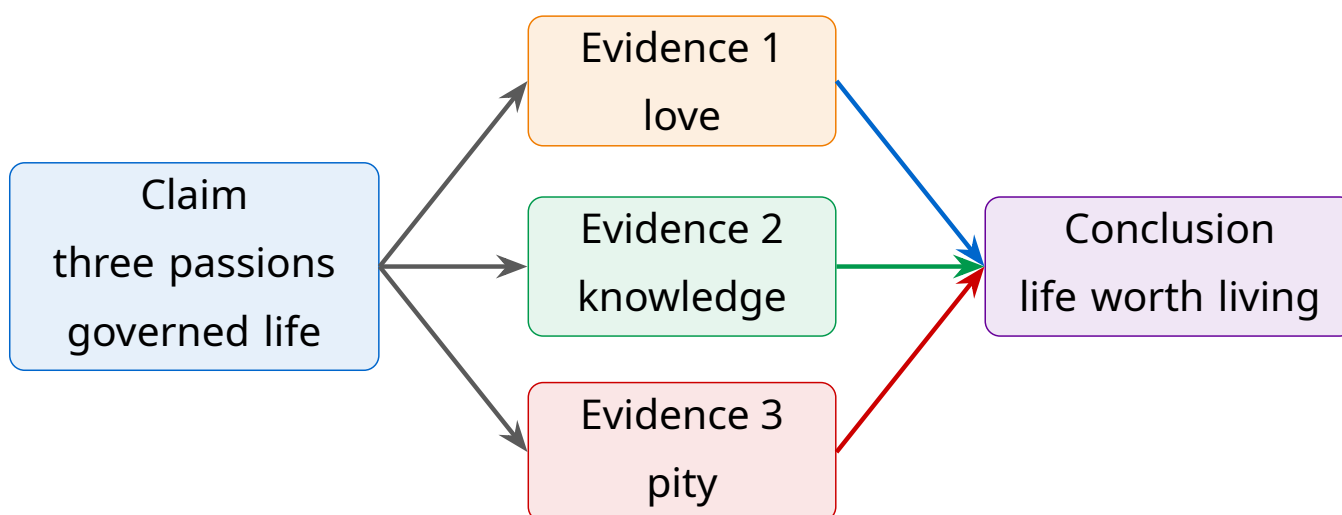
4.4 Personal Essay as Moral Argument

The essay feels personal, but it also makes an argument. Russell uses his own life as evidence for a larger claim: a good life needs emotional depth, intellectual hunger, and compassion.

Argument Map

Personal experience → three passions → human value → life worth living

This is the cleanest way to summarise the chapter.



Heart, Head, Hand

Use **Heart, Head, Hand**: love is the heart, knowledge is the head, pity asks the hand to help.

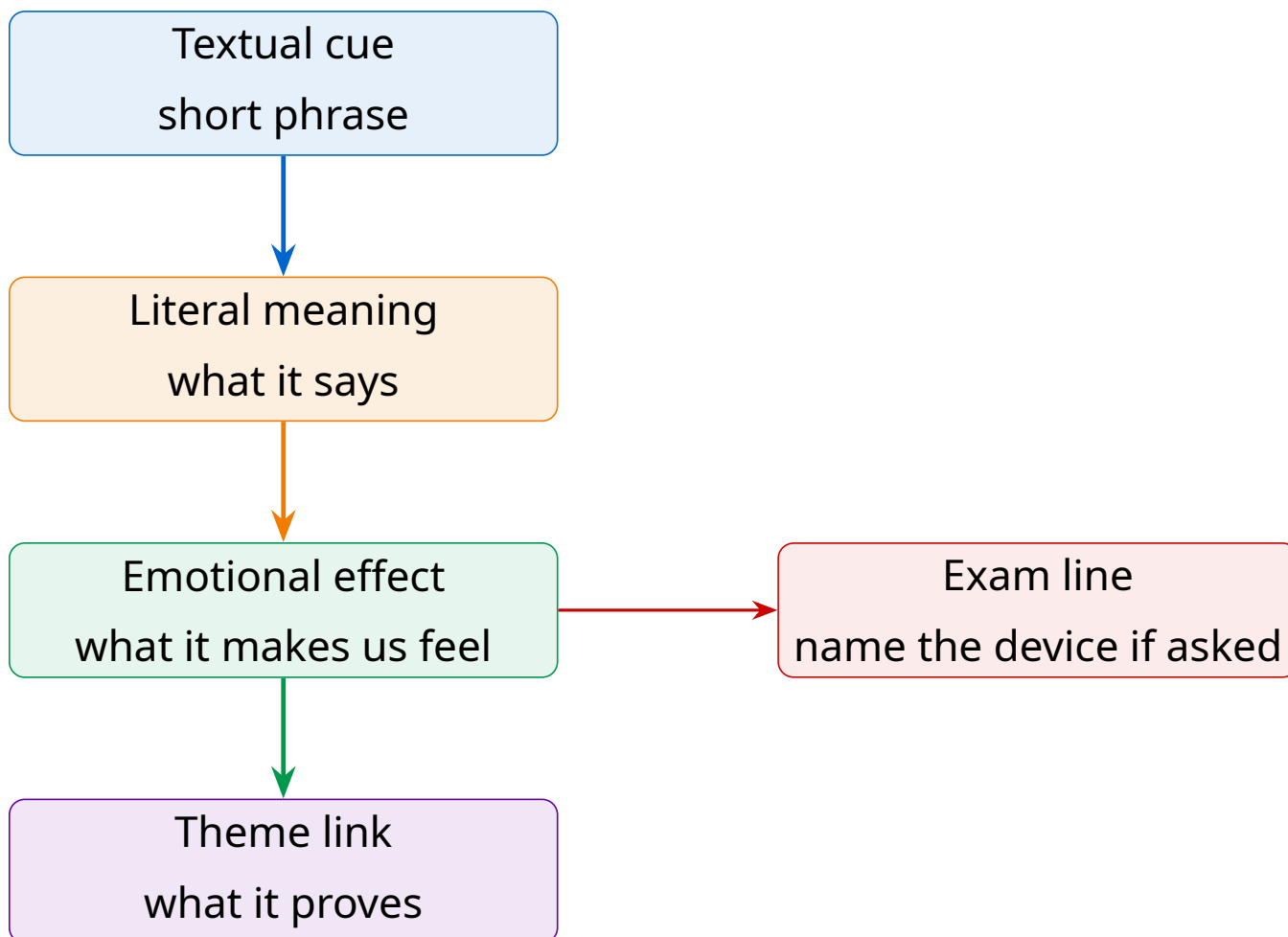
5 Quote Analysis and Answer Writing

Good answers for this chapter need close reading. Use short textual cues, explain the idea, and connect it to Russell's larger view of life.

Source anchor. This section is school-practice support anchored to NCERT Understanding the Text Q1-Q6 and the Russell-King agape comparison task. It is not presented as a published PYQ list.

5.1 Quote-Analysis Ladder

For literature answers, never drop a quotation without explanation. A strong answer climbs from phrase to meaning, then to theme. Short quoted fragments are enough.



Sample Ladder

- **Cue:** "great winds".
- **Meaning:** his passions are powerful forces.
- **Effect:** the image shows both energy and danger.
- **Theme:** a meaningful life can be restless and painful.

NCERT anchor: Q2 asks why Russell compares the passions to great winds.

5.2 Understanding the Text Questions

NCERT asks six core questions. Most can be answered through the same central map. First identify the passion, then explain its effect on Russell's life.

Q	Question Focus	Best Answer Route
1	why the passions are simple	basic, natural, universal drives
2	why passions are winds	force, movement, lack of calm control
3	importance of love	joy, relief from loneliness, spiritual vision
4	definition of knowledge	human hearts, stars, number, deeper truth
5	why pity is earth-bound	suffering pulls him back from private ascent
6	quality of life	the three passions make life intense and worthy

NCERT Answer Order

Use the order of the passage. Start with love, then knowledge, then pity. This mirrors Russell's own structure and keeps the answer clear.

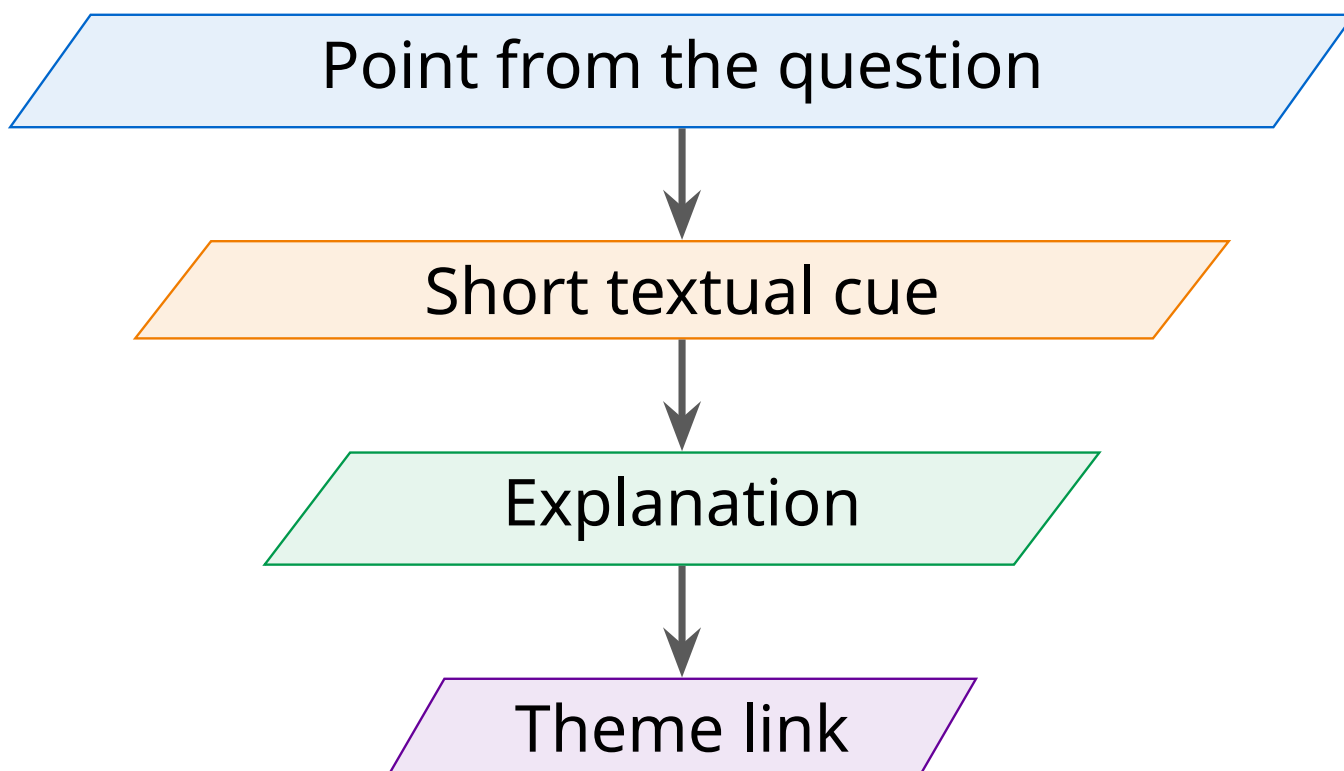
5.3 CBSE Paragraph Patterns

For 3-mark answers, write one compact paragraph with three clear ideas. For 5-mark answers, use a short opening line, two or three explanation points, and a concluding sentence.

Answer Formula

Point + Textual cue + Explanation + Theme link = complete answer

This works for direct, theme-based, and value-based questions. NCERT anchors: use Q1-Q6 for direct answers and the agape task for comparison answers.

**Unsupported Claim**

Do not write that Russell found perfect happiness. He clearly mentions anguish and helpless suffering. The correct claim is that he found life worth living despite pain.

[Download the Full NCERT Solutions PDF →](#)

5.4 Value-Based and Long Answers

Value-based answers should move from Russell to a wider human lesson. The safest values are empathy, curiosity, courage, humility, and service.

Long-answer anchor. For this chapter, value-based practice should still return to NCERT Q6 or to the Russell-King agape comparison. Treat any extra prompt here as school practice, not as a claimed board PYQ.

Value	Link to Russell	Possible Answer Line
Empathy	pity for suffering people	A sensitive life feels another person's pain.
Curiosity	search for knowledge	Learning should go beyond exams.
Humility	admits limited achievement	True thinkers know how much remains unknown.
Responsibility	desire to reduce evil	Feeling must lead toward social concern.
Hope	life worth living	Pain does not cancel meaning.

Writing for School Exams

Teachers reward clarity. Use two or three precise textual cues, then explain them in your own words. Avoid very long quotations.

6 Common Mistakes and Practice Support

This chapter looks easy because it is short. Students lose marks when they write vague moral statements. The safer approach is to stay close to Russell's exact movement of thought.

Practice source anchor. The practice below is mapped to NCERT Understanding the Text Q1-Q6 and the agape comparison task. It is school-practice support, not a declared PYQ set.

6.1 Common Misreadings

The most common error is to simplify Russell into a happy moral teacher. He is more complex. The essay joins ecstasy with anguish, and hope with helplessness.

Weak Reading	Better Reading	Why It Matters
Love means romance only	Love also relieves loneliness and gives vision	wider answer
Knowledge means school facts	Knowledge means understanding life and the universe	deeper answer
Pity means sadness only	Pity is moral concern for suffering	value answer
The ending is simple happiness	The ending accepts life despite pain	mature answer

One-Word Themes

Do not list themes as single words only. Instead of writing "love, knowledge, pity", write what each one does in Russell's life.

6.2 Practice Questions

Use these questions to revise the chapter. The first group checks direct understanding. The second group prepares longer literature answers.

Question anchor. Direct prompts map to NCERT Q1-Q6. The comparison prompt maps to the Russell-King agape task after the passage.

Direct Questions

1. Why does Russell call the passions simple?
2. What are the three reasons for which Russell seeks love?
3. How is Russell's idea of knowledge wider than common learning?
4. Why does pity bring him back to earth?
5. What makes Russell say that his life has been worth living?

Long Answer Questions

1. Show how the essay balances personal feeling with social concern.
2. Explain the wind metaphor and its effect on the reader.
3. Compare Russell's love and pity with King's idea of agape.

4. Discuss the role of contrast in the essay.
5. Write a character sketch of Russell as revealed in the passage.

6.3 Vocabulary Revision

Vocabulary questions should be answered from context. The word may look difficult, but the surrounding idea usually gives its force.

Word	Likely Meaning	Context Clue
wayward	not controlled or straight	life blown by passions
anguish	deep pain	linked with despair
unfathomable	too deep to understand	abyss image
apprehend	grasp with the mind	linked to knowledge
reverberate	echo repeatedly	cries of pain in the heart

Vocabulary Method

Read one sentence before and after the word. Then decide whether the word carries movement, pain, depth, or understanding. NCERT anchor: the vocabulary box before the passage asks for these contextual meanings.

6.4 Sample Answer Bank

These short model points can be expanded in an exam. Keep the language simple and support each point with the chapter's idea.

Prompt	Model Point
Three passions	Russell's life is governed by love, knowledge, and pity. These are simple in name but very powerful in effect.
Love	Love matters because it gives joy, removes loneliness, and offers a glimpse of spiritual fulfilment.
Knowledge	Russell seeks knowledge of people, stars, and number. This makes his search intellectual and humane.

Pity	Pity makes him aware of hunger, oppression, loneliness, poverty, and pain. It keeps his vision tied to earth.
Life worth living	Russell accepts life because the three passions gave his life depth, direction, and moral meaning.
King comparison	Russell's pity and King's agape meet in the idea that love must move beyond the self toward community.

Related Collegedunia Resources

Same chapter, other resources:

- [NCERT Solutions](#)
- [NCERT Book PDF](#)
- [Handwritten Notes](#)

Continue learning:

- [Ch 19: Ajamil and the Tigers](#)
- [Ch 21: Patterns of Creativity](#)
- [Class 11 English Woven Words - All Chapters](#)

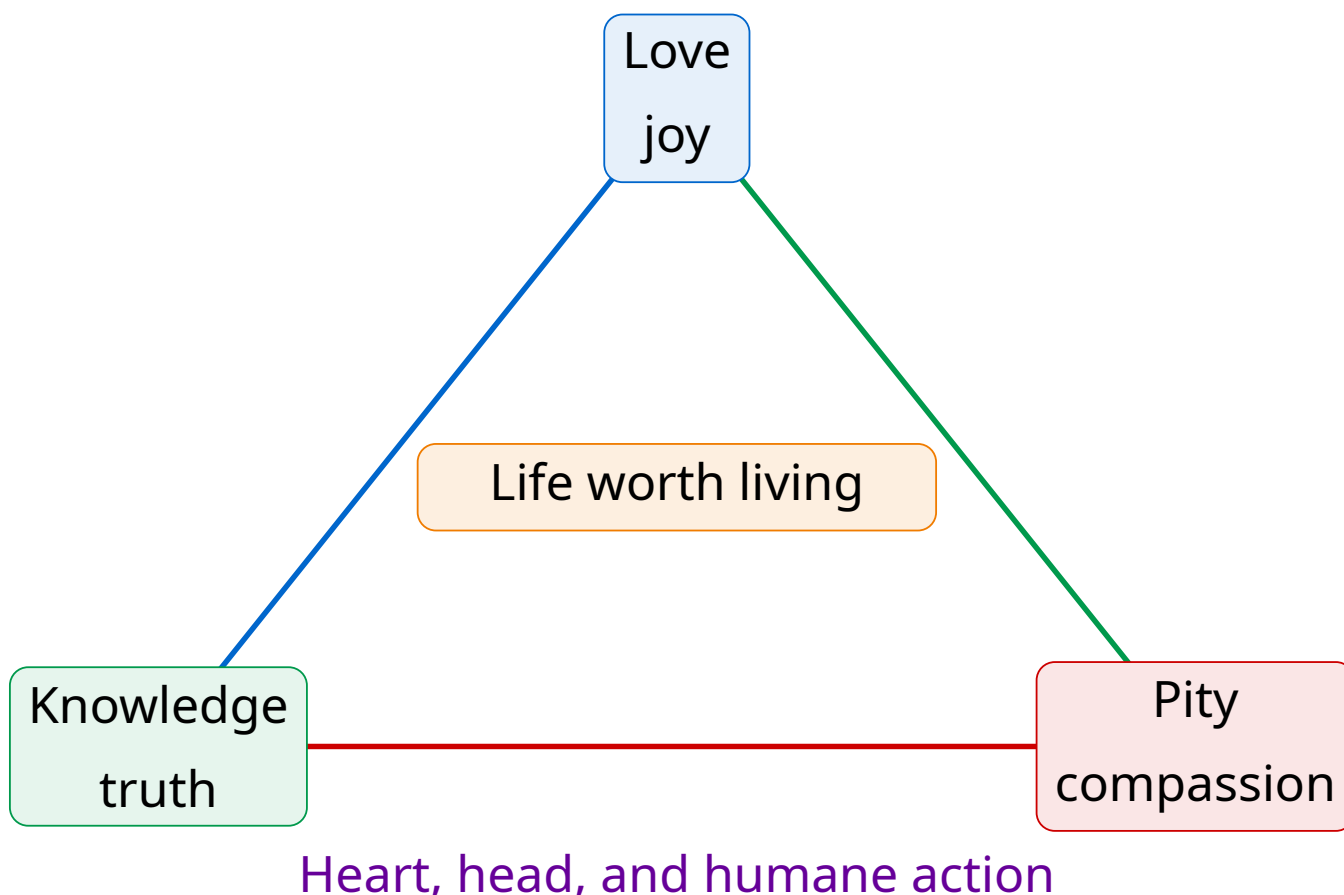
7 Quick Reference Summary

Use this section for last-minute revision. It compresses the chapter into theme lines, device cues, and answer-ready points. Revise the maps first, then practise one long answer.

Quick-reference anchors. Use Q3 for love, Q4 for knowledge, Q5 for pity, Q6 for life quality, and the agape task for comparison. These are NCERT anchors, not claimed PYQs.

7.1 One-Page Concept Map

The whole chapter can be revised as a triangle. Love, knowledge, and pity are the three points. The centre is Russell's belief that life remains worth living.



Fast Summary

Russell's essay says that a worthy life is shaped by love, knowledge, and pity. Love and knowledge lift him upward; pity returns him to human suffering. NCERT anchor: Q6 asks how these passions shape the quality of his life.

7.2 Theme and Device Table

This table is enough for a quick literature revision. Read each theme with its matching device so that answers do not become abstract.

Theme	Device or Pattern	Exam Cue
Meaningful life	three-part structure	love, knowledge, pity
Loneliness and union	abyss imagery	love relieves isolation
Truth and wonder	list of knowledge desires	wider meaning of knowledge
Compassion	cries of pain image	pity is earth-bound
Acceptance	closing sentence	life worth living
Comparison	agape passage	Russell and King

7.3 Last-Minute Answer Templates

Use these sentence frames when you are short on time. They keep the answer focused and close to the passage.

Templates

- **For love:** Russell values love because it gives joy, relieves loneliness, and opens a higher vision of life.
- **For knowledge:** Russell's knowledge is not mere information; it is a search for human, natural, and mathematical truth.
- **For pity:** Pity is earth-bound because it returns Russell from private happiness to the suffering of mankind.
- **For structure:** The essay moves from declaration to explanation and finally to acceptance.
- **For comparison:** Russell's pity and King's agape both move love beyond the self.

Final Revision Order

Revise in this order: three passions, three reasons for love, three knowledge areas, pity examples, and final judgement on life.

7.4 Exam Checklist

Before writing, check the command word. A question may ask for explanation, comparison, theme, or device. Shape the answer to match that demand.

If Asked	Do This	Avoid This
Explain	Give meaning and effect	only retelling the passage
Compare	Use both Russell and King	writing about only one writer
Discuss theme	Add value and idea	listing single-word themes
Analyse device	Name device and effect	vague praise of language
Write long answer	Use short paragraphs	one large block of prose

Final Takeaway

Russell's essay is honest about height and hurt. Love and knowledge make life rise; pity makes it responsible. Together, they make life worth living.