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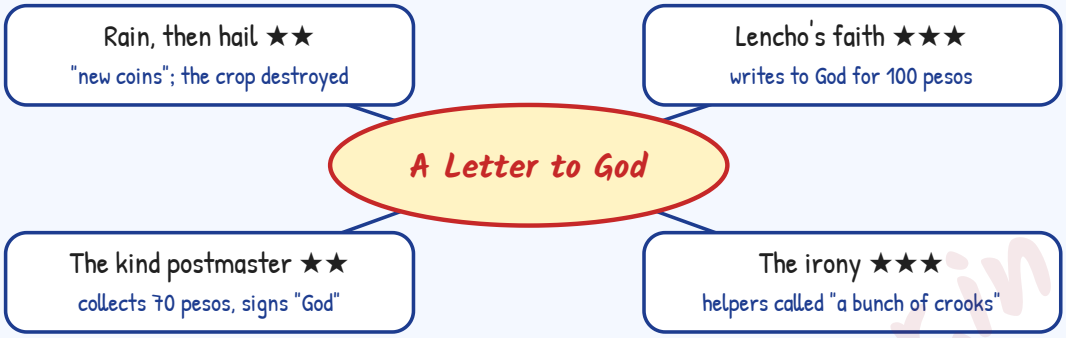
Chapter 1
A Letter to God



"I need a hundred pesos"

G.L. Fuentes · NCERT First Flight, Reprint 2026-27 · CBSE board 2027

Chapter map (★ = asked often in CBSE papers 2024–2026)



About the author

Gregorio López y Fuentes (1897–1966) was a Mexican novelist, poet and journalist who wrote about the lives of poor farmers and village people of Mexico. The story is set in a **remote valley in rural Mexico**, which is why the money is in **pesos**.

What is inside

1. Concept notes: story in brief, themes, characters, key lines
2. NCERT exercises, fully solved
3. **CBSE PYQs 2024–2026, fully solved**
4. Quick-reference sheet and 3 extract-based sets; practice A–G, 20 MCQs, 6 A–R, answers, summary

Colour code used

red = key term green = definition
purple = sub-heading black = explanation
"*purple Kalam*" = a line quoted from the text

★ **Exam tip:** CBSE asks this story as an extract (Q6, 5 marks), as a 40–50-word answer (Q8, 3 marks) and very often in 100–120-word answers that compare Lencho with Kisa Gotami ("The Sermon at Benares"). Learn the irony and the key lines.

Theme in one line: the power of simple, unquestioning faith, and the irony of a man who blames the very people who helped him.

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I.1 The story in brief ★★

A. Hope of rain

- Lencho's house, **"the only one in the entire valley"**, sits on the **crest of a low hill**. From there he sees the river and his **field of ripe corn** dotted with flowers that always promised a good harvest.
- The earth needs only **"a downpour or at least a shower"**. Lencho, who knows his fields **"intimately"**, watches the sky towards the **north-east** all morning. His wife answers his hope with "Yes, God willing."
- During dinner big drops of rain fall. Lencho goes out just to feel the rain and says, *"These aren't raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins. The big drops are ten cent pieces and the little ones are fives."*

B. The hailstorm

- Suddenly a strong wind blows and **very large hailstones** fall, resembling **"new silver coins"**. The boys run out to collect the **"frozen pearls"**.
- For an hour the hail falls on the house, garden, hillside, cornfield and the whole valley. The field is **"white, as if covered with salt"**; **not a leaf** remains on the trees; the corn is totally destroyed.
- Lencho tells his sons, *"A plague of locusts would have left more than this. The hail has left nothing."* The night is sorrowful: "All our work, for nothing." "We'll all go hungry this year."

C. The letter to God

- The family's single hope is **help from God**, whose eyes, Lencho has been taught, "see everything, even what is deep in one's conscience".
- Lencho is **"an ox of a man"**, working like an animal in the fields, but he can write. On Sunday he writes: *"God, if you don't help me, my family and I will go hungry this year. I need a hundred pesos..."* He writes **"To God"** on the envelope, stamps it and posts it.

D. The postmaster's kindness

- A postman shows the letter to the **postmaster, "a fat, amiable fellow"**, who laughs, then turns serious: *"What faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter."*
- So as **not to shake the writer's faith**, he decides to answer it. He collects money from his employees, gives part of his own salary and asks friends to give "for an act of charity". He manages only **a little more than half** (seventy pesos), and signs the letter **"God"**.

E. The ironic ending

- Next Sunday Lencho shows **"not the slightest surprise"** at the money, such is his confidence, but becomes **angry** when he counts it: God could not make a mistake.
- He writes again: *"Of the money that I asked for, only seventy pesos reached me. Send me the rest, since I need it very much. But don't send it to me through the mail because the post office employees are a bunch of crooks."*

Setting and narration. Place: a lonely farmhouse in a valley in rural Mexico, and the post office in the nearby town. Time: harvest season, over about two weeks (two Sundays). Narrator: third person. Currency: pesos. Lencho's

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family: his wife, older boys who work in the field and smaller children.

1.2 Themes, title and characters ★★★

Themes

1. **Faith in God.** Lencho's faith is complete and childlike. He writes to God as to a person and never doubts the reply. The story asks gently: what should we put our faith in?
2. **Humans and nature.** Nature first raises hope (the rain) and then destroys it (the hail). A farmer's whole year depends on the weather.
3. **Kindness and charity.** The postmaster and his staff help a stranger and take no credit; true goodness works quietly.
4. **Irony.** Lencho blames the post-office employees, "a bunch of crooks", the very people who collected the money for him.
5. **Ingratitude born of innocence.** Lencho is not wicked; his faith in God is so total that he cannot imagine human help.

Significance of the title

The title is apt and catchy. The whole plot turns on Lencho's **letter to God**: it shows his faith, sets the postmaster's kindness in motion and leads to the second letter and the irony at the end. A letter addressed "To God" is also unusual, and it arouses the reader's curiosity at once.

★ ***Exam tip:*** For "Explain the irony", name both sides: (1) what was expected: Lencho should thank the helpers; (2) what happened: he calls them crooks and asks God not to use the mail.

Characters

Lencho (the farmer)

Hard-working ("an ox of a man"), he knows his fields intimately and can read the sky. He has **unshakeable, unquestioning faith** in God. He is **simple and naive**: he writes to God and expects money by post. He is also **proud and quick to suspect**: he shows no surprise at the money, gets angry at the shortfall and calls the employees crooks. He is not greedy; he asks only for what he needs to sow again and live.

The postmaster

A **"fat, amiable fellow"**. He laughs at first, but at once turns serious and respects Lencho's faith ("What faith!"). He is **kind, generous and humble**: he gives part of his salary, collects money from others and signs the letter "God", seeking no credit. He feels "the contentment of a man who has performed a good deed".

Lencho's wife

A hard-working, God-fearing woman ("Yes, God willing") who comforts the family: "no one dies of hunger".

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The postman

An employee who also helps at the post office; he laughs heartily at the strange address and later hands Lencho the letter.

1.3 Key lines explained, words and devices ★★

Lines the board loves

"These aren't raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins." For a farmer, rain means a good harvest, and a good harvest means money. The metaphor shows Lencho's joy and hope.

"The field was white, as if covered with salt." A simile for total ruin: the hail covers everything, and salted land grows nothing.

"A plague of locusts would have left more than this." Even locusts, which destroy whole crops, leave something behind; the hail left nothing.

"...whose eyes, as he had been instructed, see everything, even what is deep in one's conscience." Shows the source of Lencho's faith: he was taught that God sees and knows all.

"What faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter." The postmaster admires Lencho's faith and decides to protect it.

"...to answer it he needed something more than goodwill, ink and paper." He needed money; goodwill alone was not enough.

"Lencho showed not the slightest surprise on seeing the money; such was his confidence..." He was sure God would answer.

"...the post office employees are a bunch of crooks." The heart of the irony: the helpers are accused of theft.

Words and expressions

word	meaning in the story
crest	top of a hill
intimately	very closely, in every detail
draped	covered (as with cloth): "a curtain of rain"
locusts	insects that fly in big swarms and destroy crops
conscience	an inner sense of right and wrong
peso	currency of several Latin American countries
amiable	friendly and pleasant
resolution	firm decision
contentment	satisfaction
crooks	dishonest people, cheats

Devices

- **Metaphors**: raindrops = "new coins"; hailstones = "frozen pearls"; clouds = "huge mountains"; Lencho = "an ox of a man"; hail = "a plague".
- **Similes**: "white, as if covered with salt"; hailstones "resemble new silver coins".
- **Irony** of situation: the ending.

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- **Negatives for emphasis**: "Not a leaf remained"; "nothing less than a letter to God"; "Never in his career…".

> **X Don't do this:** Do not write that Lencho got "seventy dollars" or "half" the money: he got **seventy pesos**, "a little more than half" of a hundred.

NCERT exercises, fully solved

Activity: the money order form

1. Complete the statements: (i) In addition to the sender, the form has to be signed by the _____. (ii) The "Acknowledgement" is sent back by the post office to the _____ after the _____ signs it. (iii) The "Space for Communication" is used for _____. (iv) The form has six sections; the sender fills out _____ and the receiver _____.

> **Ans.** (i) **receiver (payee)**, who signs to show he has received the money. (ii) the **sender**, after the **receiver** signs it. (iii) writing a **short message** to the receiver (what the money is for, a greeting). (iv) the sender fills out **four** sections (amount, receiver's details, sender's details, space for communication / the addresses on the acknowledgement); the receiver fills out **one** (his signature on the acknowledgement); the remaining section is for official use.

Oral comprehension check (1)

1. What did Lencho hope for?

> **Ans.** He hoped for **rain**, a downpour or at least a shower, because his field of ripe corn needed it for a good harvest.

2. Why did Lencho say the raindrops were like "new coins"?

> **Ans.** The rain would give him a good harvest, and a good harvest would bring him money. So each drop seemed as valuable as money: the big drops were "ten cent pieces" and the little ones "fives".

3. How did the rain change? What happened to Lencho's fields?

> **Ans.** A strong wind began to blow and very large hailstones fell with the rain. For an hour hail fell on the whole valley. The field became white, as if covered with salt; not a leaf remained on the trees, the flowers were gone and the corn was totally destroyed.

4. What were Lencho's feelings when the hail stopped?

> **Ans.** His soul was filled with **sadness**. He felt helpless and worried about the future: the hail had left nothing, there would be no corn that year and the family would go hungry.

Oral comprehension check (2)

1. Who or what did Lencho have faith in? What did he do?

> **Ans.** He had faith in **God**, whose eyes, he believed, see everything. He wrote a letter to God asking for a hundred pesos to sow his field again and to live until the next crop, wrote "To God" on the envelope and posted it.

2. Who read the letter?

> **Ans.** The **postman** found it and showed it, laughing, to his boss; the **postmaster** then opened and read it.

3. What did the postmaster do then?

> **Ans.** Not wanting to shake the writer's faith in God, he decided to answer it. He collected money from his employees, gave part of his own salary and asked friends to contribute for "an act of charity". He could gather only a little more than half the amount, put it in an envelope addressed to Lencho with a letter signed "God", and sent it.

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Oral comprehension check (3)

1. Was Lencho surprised to find a letter for him with money in it?

Ans. No. He showed **"not the slightest surprise"**, because he was fully confident that God would answer him.

2. What made him angry?

Ans. When he counted the money, he found only **seventy pesos** instead of a hundred. Sure that God could not make a mistake or refuse him, he concluded that the post-office employees had stolen the rest, and this made him angry.

Thinking about the text

1. Who does Lencho have complete faith in? Which sentences in the story tell you this?

Ans. He has complete faith in **God**. The sentences: (1) "But in the hearts of all who lived in that solitary house... there was a single hope: help from God." (2) "All through the night, Lencho thought only of his one hope: the help of God, whose eyes, as he had been instructed, see everything, even what is deep in one's conscience." (3) "It was nothing less than a letter to God." (4) "Lencho showed not the slightest surprise on seeing the money; such was his confidence." (5) "God could not have made a mistake, nor could he have denied Lencho what he had requested."

2. Why does the postmaster send money to Lencho? Why does he sign the letter "God"?

Ans. He is moved by Lencho's faith ("What faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter") and does not want it to be shaken; so he collects money and sends it. He signs it "God" so that Lencho will believe the reply has come from God himself, which keeps his faith alive. It also shows the postmaster's humility: he wants no credit.

3. Did Lencho try to find out who had sent the money to him? Why/Why not?

Ans. No. He was absolutely sure that **God** had sent it, so there was nothing to find out. His faith was so complete that the question of a human sender never entered his mind.

4. Who does Lencho think has taken the rest of the money? What is the irony in the situation?

Ans. He thinks the **post-office employees** have taken the remaining thirty pesos. **Irony:** the postmaster and his staff had given their own money to help him and to save his faith. Instead of being thanked, they are called "a bunch of crooks". Lencho's faith in God is unshakeable, yet he has no faith in the very human beings who did God's work for him. The reader expects gratitude; the result is an accusation.

5. Are there people like Lencho in the real world? What kind of a person would you say he is? (greedy, naive, stupid, ungrateful, selfish, comical, unquestioning)

Ans. Yes, there are many simple people with Lencho's kind of faith. Lencho is **naive** (he writes to God and expects money by post) and **unquestioning** (he never doubts that God sent the money). He seems **ungrateful** to the post-office employees, but only because he does not know they helped him. He is not greedy or selfish: he asks only for what he needs to sow his field and feed his family. His second letter is a little **comical**.

6. There are two kinds of conflict in the story: between humans and nature, and between humans themselves. How are these conflicts illustrated?

Ans. **Humans and nature:** Lencho depends on nature for his living. The rain brings hope, but the hailstorm destroys his whole crop in an hour, leaving the family facing hunger. A farmer is helpless against nature. **Humans and humans:** Lencho distrusts the post-office employees and calls them "a bunch of crooks", though they had helped him. The conflict lies in his suspicion and in the gap between their kindness and his judgement of them.

Thinking about language

I. Match the names of storms with their descriptions: gale, whirlwind, cyclone, hurricane, tornado, typhoon.

Ans. 1. violent tropical storm with winds moving in a circle: **cyclone** 2. an extremely strong wind: **gale** 3. violent tropical storm with very strong winds: **typhoon** 4. violent storm whose centre is a funnel-shaped cloud: **tornado** 5.

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violent storm with very strong winds, especially in the western Atlantic: **hurricane** 6. very strong wind that moves fast in a spinning movement: **whirlwind**

II. Match the uses of "hope" with their meanings.

Ans. 1. "I hope so" (subjects in college): **wanting something to happen, and thinking it quite possible**. 2. "I hope you don't mind my saying this...": **showing concern that what you say should not offend; a way of being polite**. 3. "...new hope to HIV/AIDS sufferers": **a feeling that something good will probably happen**. 4. "hoping against hope that the judges would not notice": **wishing for something to happen, although this is very unlikely**. 5. "in the hope of speaking to her": **thinking that this would happen (it may or may not have happened)**. 6. "everybody had given up hope": **stopped believing that this good thing would happen**.

III. Join the sentences using who, whom, whose, which.

Ans. 1. I often go to Mumbai, **which** is the commercial capital of India. 2. My mother, **who** cooks very well, is going to host a TV show on cooking. 3. These sportspersons, **whose** performance has been excellent, are going to meet the President. 4. Lencho prayed to God, **whose** eyes see into our minds. 5. This man, **whom** I trusted, cheated me.

IV. Find sentences with negative words that express these ideas emphatically: (1) The trees lost all their leaves. (2) The letter was addressed to God himself. (3) The postman saw this address for the first time in his career.

Ans. 1. "**Not** a leaf remained on the trees." 2. "It was **nothing less than** a letter to God." 3. "**Never** in his career as a postman had he known that address."

V. Complete the metaphor table (object, metaphor, quality compared).

Ans. Cloud: **huge mountains**: the mass or hugeness of mountains. Raindrops: **new coins**: value; rain brings a crop, and a crop brings money. Hailstones: **frozen pearls**: their shape, colour and shine (white, round, cold). Locusts: **a plague** (an epidemic): they spread rapidly and destroy everything, as a deadly disease kills many. An ox of a man: **Lencho**: the ox's strength and capacity for hard work in the fields.

Speaking

1. Have you ever been in great difficulty and felt that only a miracle could help you? How was your problem solved?

Ans. Model talk: Last year, on the morning of my Class 9 final examination, I left my admit card on the bus. The bus had gone and the exam was to start in forty minutes; I felt only a miracle could save me. My father called the bus depot, and a conductor, a stranger, found the card on the seat and rode back on his scooter to the school gate to give it to me. I reached my seat two minutes before the bell. I learnt that "miracles" often come through kind people, just as Lencho's help came through the postmaster.

Listening

1. Listen to the letter and fill in the table.

Ans. The writer apologises because: she **has not written for a very long time**. The writer has sent this to the reader: **a birthday card** (her last message). Month: **September 2005**. Reason for not writing earlier: **they have just moved house**. Sarah goes to: **"Little Feet" school**, close to their new home. Who is writing to whom: **Jaya to Arti**. Where and when were they last together: **at Bangalore, last year** (2005).

Writing

1. Design a poster for your area on how to save water during summer and when it is available in excess.

Ans.

EVERY DROP COUNTS · SAVE WATER, SAVE LIFE

In summer: turn off taps while brushing; use a bucket, not a shower or hose; fix leaking taps; water plants in the evening; reuse RO and washing water for floors and gardens.

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In the rainy season: harvest rooftop rainwater; recharge borewells through soak pits; clean drains; build check-dams and ponds; store water in covered tanks.
"Lencho waited for rain. Let us not waste it when it comes."
Issued by: Eco Club, Resident Welfare Association, Sector 12

Extra questions from the text (exam-style)

1. Why did Lencho's wife say "no one dies of hunger"? What does it show about her?

Ans. She wanted to comfort her husband and children after the hail destroyed the crop. Though the loss was total, she tried to keep hope alive. It shows that she was a calm, God-fearing and supportive woman who stood by her family in hard times.

2. How do we know that Lencho was an experienced farmer?

Ans. He "knew his fields intimately". All morning he watched the sky towards the north-east and correctly predicted rain ("Now we're really going to get some water"). His flowers "always promised a good harvest", which shows he knew the signs of a good crop.

3. Why did the boys run out during the hailstorm? How did their joy contrast with Lencho's feelings?

Ans. The boys ran out, exposing themselves to the rain, to collect the hailstones, the "frozen pearls", as if they were a treat. For the children it was fun, but Lencho knew the hail was ruining his crop and exclaimed, "It's really getting bad now." Innocent joy contrasts with an adult's worry.

4. What did the postman do when he saw the letter, and how was the postmaster's response different?

Ans. The postman went to his boss "laughing heartily", because never in his career had he known that address. The postmaster also laughed at first but almost immediately turned serious; he saw the strength of Lencho's faith and decided to protect it. One saw a joke, the other saw faith.

5. How did the postmaster raise the money? Why could he not collect a hundred pesos?

Ans. He asked his employees for money, gave part of his own salary and made several friends give something "for an act of charity". They were ordinary working people with limited means, so he could gather only a little more than half, seventy pesos.

6. Describe how Lencho wrote his second letter.

Ans. He asked for paper and ink at the window and wrote at the public writing-table "with much wrinkling of his brow", because expressing his ideas was hard for him. Then he bought a stamp, licked it and fixed it to the envelope "with a blow of his fist", which shows his anger.

7. "God could not have made a mistake, nor could he have denied Lencho what he had requested." What does this tell us about Lencho's thinking?

Ans. Lencho's faith in God was absolute. When the amount fell short, he did not question God but looked for a human culprit. His reasoning was simple: if God is perfect, the fault must lie with the people who handled the money, the post-office employees.

8. What message does the story give to readers?

Ans. It shows that faith gives strength in times of loss, and that God's help often comes through kind human beings. It also warns against judging people hastily: Lencho calls his helpers crooks. Finally, it praises quiet charity, like the postmaster's, done without expecting thanks.

CBSE board questions 2024–2026, fully solved

Every question on this chapter from the 16 papers (2024 2/1/1–2/5/1, 2025 2/1/1–2/6/1, 2026 2/1/1–2/5/1), quoted with complete model answers. Questions that join two texts appear in both chapters.

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A. Extract-based questions (5 marks)

CBSE 2025 · 2/1/1 Read the extract and answer the questions.

> Not a leaf remained on the trees. The corn was totally destroyed. The flowers were gone from the plants. Lencho's soul was filled with sadness. When the storm had passed, he stood in the middle of the field and said to his sons, "A plague of locusts would have left more than this. The hail has left nothing. This year we will have no corn." That night was a sorrowful one. "All our work, for nothing." "There's no one who can help us." "We'll all go hungry this year." *(A Letter to God)*

(i) Why were there no leaves left on the trees? (A) The locusts ate them up. (B) An earthquake had occurred. (C) There was a hailstorm. (D) The animals grazed on them.

(ii) Lencho felt _____ (jubilant / devastated) when he saw his destroyed corn fields.

(iii) When Lencho says, "All our work, for nothing," what does he refer to? (about 40 words)

(iv) Why would Lencho have preferred a plague of locusts to a hailstorm? [5]

> **Ans.** (i) **(C)** There was a hailstorm.
>
> (ii) **devastated**.
>
> (iii) He means that all the hard work the family had put into ploughing, sowing and tending the cornfield for a whole season had been wasted in a single storm. With the crop destroyed they would earn nothing and would go hungry all year.
>
> (iv) Locusts would at least have **left something** of the crop; the hail left nothing at all.

CBSE 2026 · 2/3/1 Read the extract and answer the questions.

> The postmaster – a fat, amiable fellow – also broke out laughing, but almost immediately he turned serious and, tapping the letter to his desk, commented, "What faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter. Starting up a correspondence with God!" So, in order not to shake the writer's faith in God, the postmaster came up with an idea: answer the letter. *(A Letter to God)*

(i) Justify the statement: "What faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter."

(ii) The postmaster turned serious because he realised the writer had _____ (immense / limited) faith in God.

(iii) Examine the portrayal of the postmaster in the extract. (2 marks)

(iv) Why did the postmaster at first laugh on seeing the letter? (A) It was a blank sheet. (B) He lacked faith in God. (C) He had received such letters earlier. (D) He had never known such an address. [5]

> **Ans.** (i) Only a man with complete, childlike faith would write a letter to God and post it, expecting a reply; the postmaster admires and envies such belief.
>
> (ii) **immense**.
>
> (iii) He is fat and **amiable** (good-natured). Though he first laughs, he quickly becomes serious and respectful. He is **kind and generous**: to protect Lencho's faith, he decides to answer the letter, collects money from his staff and gives part of his own salary.
>
> (iv) **(D)** He had never known such an address ("To God").

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B. Short answer questions (3 marks, 40–50 words)

CBSE 2024 · 2/2/I What idea does the postmaster come up with? What did he do to stick to his resolution? (A Letter to God) (40–50 words) [3]

Ans. To protect Lencho's faith in God, the postmaster decided to answer the letter. As he could not raise a hundred pesos, he asked his employees for money, gave part of his own salary and friends contributed. He put the seventy pesos in an envelope signed "God" and sent it to Lencho.

CBSE 2024 · 2/3/I Explain the irony in "A Letter to God". (40–50 words) [3]

Ans. The postmaster and his staff kindly collected seventy pesos to save Lencho's faith. Yet Lencho, sure that God could not make a mistake, accused the very people who helped him, calling them "a bunch of crooks" who had stolen the rest. The helpers were blamed; that is the irony.

CBSE 2025 · 2/4/I In what manner did Lencho's cornfield suffer damage? Did he have any expectations of receiving assistance? (A Letter to God) (30–40 words) [3]

Ans. A heavy rain was followed by a hailstorm; hailstones "as large as new silver coins" fell for an hour, destroying the corn and flowers completely. Lencho had one hope: help from God. With strong faith, he wrote to God for a hundred pesos and expected a reply.

CBSE 2025 · 2/5/I Illustrate Lencho's unwavering faith in the Divine. (A Letter to God) (30–40 words) [3]

Ans. After the hail destroyed his crop, Lencho's only hope was "the help of God". He wrote to God for a hundred pesos and posted it. Receiving seventy, he was not surprised and never doubted God; he wrote again, blaming the post-office employees as "a bunch of crooks".

CBSE 2026 · 2/1/I Lencho's last letter to God shows astute faith on one level and irony on another. Bring out the faith and the irony. (A Letter to God) (40–50 words) [3]

Ans. Faith: Lencho never doubted that God had sent the money; he wrote again asking for the remaining thirty pesos. Irony: he asked God not to send it by mail, because the post-office employees were "a bunch of crooks", the very people who had collected the seventy pesos for him.

C. Long answer questions (6 marks, 100–120 words)

CBSE 2024 · 2/4/I Grief is natural to all loss. Present an analysis of the approaches of Lencho and Kisa Gotami in dealing with their losses, comparing them. You may begin: "One acknowledges that Lencho had unwavering faith in God whereas Kisa Gotami in her grief, believed that her son …, however …" (A Letter to God and The Sermon at Benares) (100–120 words) [6]

Ans. One acknowledges that Lencho had unwavering faith in God, whereas Kisa Gotami in her grief believed that her son could be brought back to life; however, the two found very different kinds of comfort. When hail destroyed Lencho's crop, he wrote a letter to God for a hundred pesos. His faith was so strong that when he received seventy, he did not doubt God but blamed the post-office employees. His approach was hopeful but innocent; he expected material help. Kisa Gotami carried her dead son from house to house and finally to the Buddha. Asked to fetch mustard seed from a house where no one had died, she discovered that death is universal. Her grief turned into wisdom and acceptance. Lencho sought relief; Kisa gained understanding, which is the deeper lesson.

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CBSE 2025 · 2/2/I Analyse and evaluate the role of faith in "A Letter to God" and "The Sermon at Benares". (100–120 words) [6]

Ans. Faith guides the central characters of both texts, but in different ways. **Lencho** has unshakeable, simple faith in God. When hail destroys his crop, he writes to God for a hundred pesos, and when the postmaster sends him seventy, he does not doubt God at all; instead he blames the post-office employees as "a bunch of crooks". His faith is complete but innocent and unquestioning. **Kisa Gotami** goes to the Buddha with faith that he can revive her dead son. The Buddha does not perform a miracle; he sends her to find mustard seed from a house where no one has died. Her search leads her to understand that death is common to all. Lencho's faith brings material help; Kisa's faith leads to wisdom and acceptance. Faith comforts both, but only Kisa's leads to enlightenment.

CBSE 2025 · 2/3/I Comment on the reactions and feelings of Lencho and Nelson Mandela when they faced challenges in their lives. (A Letter to God and Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom) (100–120 words) [6]

Ans. Both men face great hardship with firm belief and courage. When a hailstorm destroys **Lencho's** crop, he is sad but does not despair. His faith in God is so complete that he writes to God for a hundred pesos. When he receives only seventy, he is angry, not with God, but with the post-office employees, whom he calls "a bunch of crooks". His reaction is innocent and emotional. **Mandela** faced the far greater challenge of apartheid, which denied freedom to his people. He felt anger and pain but turned them into a lifelong struggle, accepting prison and separation from his family. He learnt that courage is "the triumph over fear" and that both oppressor and oppressed must be freed. Lencho relies on God; Mandela on struggle and sacrifice, but both refuse to give up.

CBSE 2025 · 2/4/I Analyse the similarities and differences between the young seagull ("Two Stories about Flying") and Lencho ("A Letter to God"), and explain the role faith plays in difficult situations. (100–120 words) [6]

Ans. **Similarities**: both face a crisis that threatens their survival: the seagull is hungry and alone on the ledge; Lencho has lost his whole crop. Both finally overcome it. **Differences**: the seagull lacks faith in himself; he believes his wings will not support him and must be pushed by hunger and his mother's trick to discover his ability. Lencho has complete faith in God from the start; he calmly writes asking for help and is sure it will come. **Role of faith**: faith gives hope and courage when all seems lost. The seagull's success shows the power of faith in oneself; Lencho's shows faith in a higher power, which moves even strangers to help him. In adversity, faith keeps us going until help or strength arrives.

CBSE 2026 · 2/2/I How do Lencho ("A Letter to God") and Kisa Gotami ("The Sermon at Benares") respond to suffering and loss? How did they overcome their losses? (100–120 words) [6]

Ans. Both suffer a heavy loss but respond differently. **Lencho** loses his entire corn crop to a hailstorm. Though sad, he does not lose hope; with complete faith in God he writes a letter asking for a hundred pesos. The postmaster and staff send him seventy pesos, and he overcomes his loss through this help, though he blames the post-office employees for the missing money. **Kisa Gotami** loses her only son and, mad with grief, carries his body from house to house seeking medicine. The Buddha asks her to bring mustard seed from a house where no one has died. She finds none and realises that death is common to all. She overcomes her grief through **understanding and acceptance**. Lencho is helped from outside; Kisa finds peace within.

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CBSE 2026 · 2/4/I Compare "A Letter to God" and "The Black Aeroplane". Examine how both stories show that help can come in unexpected forms. (100–120 words) [6]

Ans. In both stories someone in crisis receives help from an unexpected source. **Lencho** loses his crop to hail and writes to God for a hundred pesos. The help actually comes from the **postmaster and his staff**, who collect seventy pesos so as not to shake his faith; Lencho never knows who helped him and even blames them. In **"The Black Aeroplane"**, the pilot is lost in a storm with failed instruments and little fuel. A **mysterious black aeroplane** appears and guides him to a runway. Later the control-room woman says no other aeroplane was flying, so the helper remains unexplained, perhaps divine. In both stories help arrives from where it is least expected, rewarding faith and trust, and in both the helper remains unknown or unthanked.

CBSE 2026 · 2/5/I How does Lencho's faith in God in "A Letter to God" contrast with the scepticism of Kisa Gotami in "The Sermon at Benares"? Support your answer with details. (100–120 words) [6]

Ans. **Lencho** has unquestioning faith. When hail destroys his crop, he writes directly to God for a hundred pesos, sure that God will help. When he gets seventy, his faith remains intact; he suspects the post-office employees of stealing the rest. **Kisa Gotami**, by contrast, is driven by grief and doubt. Unwilling to accept her son's death, she goes from house to house seeking medicine; people think she has lost her senses. She approaches the Buddha hoping for a cure, and his task, mustard seed from a house where none has died, slowly removes her denial and leads her to accept that all who are born must die. Lencho's faith never changes and expects a miracle; Kisa's searching doubt ends in wisdom and inner peace.

What the board asked (16 papers, 2024–2026)

Type	2024	2025	2026	Total
Extract-based questions	0	1	1	2
Short answer questions	2	2	1	5
Long answer questions	1	3	3	7

Quick-reference sheet

point	remember
author, genre	G.L. Fuentes (1897–1966), Mexican; short story, third person
setting	a lone house on the crest of a low hill in a valley in rural Mexico
hope	rain for the ripe corn; looked at the sky to the north-east
rain = ?	"new coins": big drops ten cent pieces, little ones fives
hail = ?	"new silver coins", "frozen pearls"; field "white, as if covered with salt"
loss	not a leaf left; corn destroyed; "A plague of locusts would have left more"
the letter	Sunday; asks God for 100 pesos to sow again and live till the crop
postmaster	fat, amiable; "What faith!"; staff, own salary, friends
sent	a little more than half: 70 pesos; signed "God"
reaction	no surprise; angry at the count; second letter

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irony	helpers called "a bunch of crooks"; "don't send it through the mail"

Extract-based practice

Set 1.

> The man went out for no other reason than to have the pleasure of feeling the rain on his body, and when he returned he exclaimed, "These aren't raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins. The big drops are ten cent pieces and the little ones are fives."

(i) Why did Lencho go out? (ii) Name the figure of speech in "they are new coins". (iii) Why did he compare raindrops to coins? (iv) Choose the correct option: Lencho's mood here is (a) anxious (b) joyful (c) angry (d) sad.

Set 2.

> All through the night, Lencho thought only of his one hope: the help of God, whose eyes, as he had been instructed, see everything, even what is deep in one's conscience. Lencho was an ox of a man, working like an animal in the fields, but still he knew how to write.

(i) What was Lencho's "one hope"? (ii) Explain "an ox of a man". (iii) Find a word that means "an inner sense of right and wrong". (iv) What did Lencho do the following Sunday?

Set 3.

> It was the postman himself who handed the letter to him while the postmaster, experiencing the contentment of a man who has performed a good deed, looked on from his office. Lencho showed not the slightest surprise on seeing the money; such was his confidence — but he became angry when he counted the money.

(i) Why did the postmaster feel contentment? (ii) Why was Lencho not surprised? (iii) Why did he become angry? (iv) Choose the word from the extract that means "satisfaction".

Practice set: test yourself *Exam-style*

Try every question before looking at the answers at the end of the chapter. 29 or more out of 36 means you are ready for the board.

A. Fill in the blanks (1 mark each)

1. Lencho's house sat on the _____ of a low hill.
2. Lencho looked at the sky towards the _____.
3. The big raindrops were "ten cent pieces" and the little ones were _____.
4. The boys ran out to collect the "frozen _____".
5. After the hail the field was white, as if covered with _____.
6. Lencho asked God for a hundred _____.
7. The postmaster was a fat, _____ fellow.
8. The postmaster could send only _____ pesos.

B. True or false? (1 mark each)

1. Lencho's house was one of many in the valley.
2. The hail fell for about an hour.
3. Lencho said locusts would have left more than the hail.
4. Lencho could not read or write.
5. The postmaster laughed at the letter and threw it away.
6. The postmaster gave part of his own salary.
7. Lencho was surprised to receive the money.

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8. Lencho asked God to send the rest by mail.

C. Very short answer (1 mark each)

1. What crop was Lencho growing?
2. What did Lencho's wife reply to "we're really going to get some water"?
3. What destroyed the crop?
4. What was the family's "single hope"?
5. On which day did Lencho write his letter?
6. What did Lencho write on the envelope?
7. How did the postmaster sign the reply?
8. How did Lencho fix the stamp on his second letter?

D. Short answer (3 marks each)

Answer in 40–50 words.

1. Describe the hailstorm and its effect on Lencho's field.
2. Why did Lencho need a hundred pesos?
3. Why did the postmaster turn serious after laughing at the letter?
4. "He needed something more than goodwill, ink and paper." Explain.
5. What does Lencho's reaction to the money show about him?
6. What did Lencho write in his second letter?
7. Why is the postmaster's contentment at the end touching?
8. What is the significance of the title "A Letter to God"?

My score (fill in after checking the answers)

Section	A /8	B /8	C /8	F /12	G (bonus)	Total /36
My marks						

Rough work

E. Long answer (6 marks each)

Answer in 100–120 words.

1. "Faith can move mountains." How does "A Letter to God" illustrate this?
2. Write a character sketch of the postmaster.
3. Describe how Lencho's hopes rise and fall in the course of the story.
4. Imagine you are the postmaster. Write a diary entry on the day you read Lencho's second letter.

F. Intertextual long answer (6 marks each)

1. Compare the way Lencho ("A Letter to God") and Kisa Gotami ("The Sermon at Benares") deal with loss.

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2. Help comes from unexpected quarters in "A Letter to God" and "The Black Aeroplane". Compare.

G. HOTS (higher-order thinking)

1. Was the postmaster right to sign the letter "God"? Give your view.
2. Why do you think Lencho trusted God completely but did not trust people?
3. What do you think the postmaster felt when he read the second letter?

★ **Exam tip:** In 100–120-word answers, open with one line that answers the question directly, give three points with a quoted phrase each, and end with a one-line conclusion. Examiners mark content, organisation and accuracy of language.

20 MCQs

1. Lencho's house was:
   (a) in the middle of a town (b) beside a river (c) the only one in the entire valley (d) one of many on the hill

2. The only thing the earth needed was:
   (a) a downpour or at least a shower (b) fertiliser (c) sunshine (d) seeds

3. Lencho knew his fields:
   (a) slightly (b) from books (c) not at all (d) intimately

4. Lencho compared the raindrops to:
   (a) pearls (b) new coins (c) diamonds (d) tears

5. "The field of ripe corn … draped in a curtain of rain" means the field was:
   (a) dry (b) covered with rain (c) flooded (d) burnt

6. The hailstones truly resembled:
   (a) salt (b) stones (c) cotton (d) new silver coins

7. For how long did the hail fall?
   (a) an hour (b) a few minutes (c) all night (d) two days

8. "The field was white, as if covered with salt" is a:
   (a) metaphor (b) personification (c) simile (d) hyperbole

9. Lencho said a plague of _____ would have left more than this.
   (a) rats (b) floods (c) birds (d) locusts

10. The family's single hope was:
    (a) the government (b) help from God (c) a bank loan (d) their neighbours

11. "An ox of a man" suggests Lencho was:
    (a) foolish (b) lazy (c) very hard-working (d) cruel

12. Lencho asked for the money in order to:
    (a) sow his field again and live until the crop came (b) buy a house (c) pay a debt (d) go to town

13. "Amiable" means:
    (a) angry (b) friendly and pleasant (c) greedy (d) fat

14. The postmaster answered the letter so as to:
    (a) earn praise (b) play a joke (c) not shake the writer's faith in God (d) punish Lencho

15. The postmaster could collect:
    (a) the full hundred pesos (b) ten pesos (c) nothing (d) a little more than half

16. On seeing the money, Lencho showed:
    (a) not the slightest surprise (b) great surprise (c) fear (d) tears of joy

17. Lencho became angry because:
    (a) the money was less than he had asked for (b) the letter was late (c) the postman was rude (d) the stamp was wrong

18. Lencho called the post-office employees:
    (a) angels (b) fools (c) kind people (d) a bunch of crooks

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19. The ending of the story is an example of:
(a) suspense (b) irony (c) flashback (d) tragedy

20. The story is set in:
(a) Spain (b) India (c) Mexico (d) France

1 (c) · 2 (a) · 3 (d) · 4 (b) · 5 (b) · 6 (d) · 7 (a) · 8 (c) · 9 (d) · 10 (b) · 11 (c) · 12 (a) · 13 (b) · 14 (c) · 15 (d) · 16 (a) · 17 (a) · 18 (d) · 19 (b) · 20 (c)

Assertion–Reason (6)

(a) Both true, R explains A. (b) Both true, R does not explain A. (c) A true, R false. (d) A false, R true.

1. A: Lencho compared the raindrops to new coins. R: Rain would bring him a good harvest and money.
2. A: The postmaster signed the letter "God". R: He wanted Lencho to know who had helped him.
3. A: Lencho was not surprised to receive the money. R: He was confident that God would answer his letter.
4. A: Lencho thanked the post-office employees. R: They had collected money for him.
5. A: The family felt sorrowful that night. R: The hail had destroyed the whole crop.
6. A: Lencho blamed the employees for the missing money. R: He believed God could not make a mistake.

Key: 1 (a) · 2 (c) · 3 (a) · 4 (d) · 5 (a) · 6 (a)

Answers

Extract sets. Set 1: (i) only for the pleasure of feeling the rain on his body (ii) metaphor (iii) rain meant a good harvest, and the harvest meant money (iv) (b). Set 2: (i) the help of God (ii) he was strong and worked very hard in the fields, like an ox (iii) conscience (iv) he wrote a letter to God asking for a hundred pesos and posted it in town. Set 3: (i) he had done a good deed: saved Lencho's faith and helped him (ii) he was sure God would send the money (iii) the money was seventy pesos, not a hundred (iv) contentment.

A. 1. crest 2. north-east 3. fives 4. pearls 5. salt 6. pesos 7. amiable 8. seventy

B. 1. F (the only one) 2. T 3. T 4. F (he knew how to write) 5. F (he answered it) 6. T 7. F 8. F (not through the mail)

C. 1. corn 2. "Yes, God willing." 3. a hailstorm 4. help from God 5. the following Sunday 6. "To God" 7. "God" 8. with a blow of his fist

D. 1. strong wind, large hailstones for an hour; field white as salt, no leaves, corn and flowers destroyed 2. to sow his field again and to feed his family until the next crop 3. he was moved by Lencho's faith ("What faith!") and wished he had it 4. he needed money; goodwill alone could not answer the letter 5. complete confidence in God; naive; quick to suspect people 6. only seventy pesos reached him; send the rest, not by mail; employees are crooks 7. he helped quietly, took no credit, and was happy only to have done good 8. p. 3

E. 1. Lencho's faith makes him write to God; it moves the postmaster to collect money; the "mountain" of loss is partly overcome; faith works through people 2. amiable, sensitive, generous, humble, respects faith; gives his salary, signs "God", content with a good deed 3. hope (rain) → joy (new coins) → despair (hail) → hope (God) → confidence (money) → anger (seventy pesos) 4. diary: date; joy last Sunday; shock and hurt at "a bunch of crooks"; laughs at the irony; no regret: his faith is safe

F. 1. Lencho trusts God for material help and gets it from people; Kisa seeks a miracle but finds wisdom: death is common to all; one gets relief, the other understanding 2. Lencho's help comes from the postmaster; the pilot's from a mysterious black aeroplane; both helpers stay unknown; help comes where least expected

G. 1. own view: yes, it saved his faith and avoided embarrassment; or: it was deception, though kind 2. his faith was learnt and total; he had no experience of the employees' kindness; poor people often distrust officials 3. hurt, then amused; satisfied that Lencho's faith was still unshaken

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Last-night summary

- G.L. Fuentes; rural Mexico; Lencho's lone house on a hill; ripe corn needs rain.
- Rain = "new coins"; then an hour of hail ("frozen pearls"): field white as salt, corn destroyed.
- "A plague of locusts would have left more than this"; single hope: help from God.
- "An ox of a man" writes to God for 100 pesos; postman and amiable postmaster read it: "What faith!"
- Postmaster collects 70 pesos (staff, own salary, friends), signs "God", feels contentment.
- Lencho: no surprise, then anger; second letter: send the rest, not by mail, employees are "a bunch of crooks".
- Themes: faith, humans vs nature, kindness, irony; conflicts: human–nature, human–human.

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