Ref. 1. Sprawling half clad, I gazed out at the form
Of shimmering leaves and shadows. Suddenly
A strong flash, then another, startled me.
I saw the old stone lantern brightly lit.
Magnesium flares? While I debated it, .......

1. Who is the narrator? State the theme of the poem?
The narrator is a medical doctor who describes his experiences, when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6th, 1945. It is an anti-war poem vividly describing the scene of fire, destruction, blood, loss of limbs and death, through the doctor’s horrific experience of undergoing the ordeal.
The poem is a lyric with a regular rhyme scheme. It depicts the sorrow and suffering afflicted on the victims after the devastation. Victims suffered physical agony, mental trauma as well as psychological shock.

2. Describe the fateful morning?
The doctor writes a journal entry of the day August 6th 1945, which began as a calm, beautiful, and warm morning when the Japanese city of Hiroshima was bombed.

3. What was the doctor doing when this incident took him by surprise?
The doctor lay sprawled half-clad in drawers and undershirt, gazing at the leaves that were shimmering and casting shadows.

4. What startled him? Why was he debating it?
A sudden strong flash, followed by another, startled the doctor and he saw the old stone lantern brightly lit. He debated whether these flashes were magnesium flares as they appeared extremely bright.

5. What plight was he in? Why had dust swirled around him? Which figure of speech describes vividly the impact of the explosion on the narrator?
The doctor’s drawers and undershirt disappeared as they had got burned due to the bomb explosion.
The roof and the walls, in fact the entire world had collapsed in timber and debris, swirling dust around him, in the garden now.
The poet has used hyperbole to describe vividly the impact of the explosion on the narrator.
Ref. 2. 

……and I
Dislodged, detachedly, a piece of glass,
All the time wondering what had come to pass.
Where was my wife?...

1. In what state of mind was the doctor? Give an account of the injuries sustained by him.
The doctor was alarmed, scared, and panic-stricken.
A splinter jutted from the doctor’s thigh, his right side bled, his cheek was torn and blood gushed out from the artery in his neck when he called out to his wife.

2. What was his wife’s name? What did he notice when she appeared?
The doctor’s wife name was Yecko-san.
She emerged holding her injured elbow, looking pale, blood-stained and frightened.

3. How did the doctor reassure his wife?
The doctor told her that they would be fine and suggested that they should get out quickly.

4. Describe their encounter as they stepped into the street? How did the doctor react?
As they stumbled into the street they fell, tripped by something at their feet. The doctor gasped out as he saw that it was a head; it was a man crushed to death by a gate.
The doctor apologized to the dead man for stepping on him.

Ref. 3. 

My legs gave way. I sat down on the ground.
Thirst seized me, but no water could be found.
My breath was short, but bit by bit my strength Seemed to revive, and I got up at length.
I was still naked, but I felt no shame.

1. What further destruction, frightened doctor and his wife, immediately before this extract?
A house standing before them tilted, swayed, toppled, and crashed and fire sprang up in the dust, spread by the wind.

2. Why did they want to hurry to the hospital?
It dawned on them that must get to the hospital as they were both badly wounded and needed aid.

3. And I should help my staff too. (Though this made Sense to me then, I wonder how I could) Explain these lines.
The doctor soon realized he had to reach the hospital to do his duty as his staff would need help in attending to the victims who suffered injuries or loss of limbs due to the violent explosion.
Unfortunately the doctor himself had become a patient in need of medical aid. He too had suffered injuries and his legs could not carry him to the hospital.
4. What prevented the doctor from accompanying his wife to the hospital? How did he justify his decision?
As the doctor’s legs were stiff with dried blood, they gave way and he sat down on the ground. Thirst seized him, but no water could be found and his breath was short.
The doctor told his wife that she should go ahead to the hospital as she needed aid. She did not wish to leave husband behind in that condition, but in their distress, they had no choice.

5. How has the poet depicted the quality of human goodness in spite of extreme suffering?
In spite of intense suffering and chaos, the goodness in human nature does not vanish.
There is hope and concern in the attitude of the doctor, who bleeds and wants to extend help to his staff, but is helpless. A soldier too offers a towel to help the doctor cover up his nakedness.

6. Explain the symbolism of the above lines considering the post-war history of Japan.
These lines depict the horrors of a nuclear war and the after effects on humanity. It exposes the humiliation and the nakedness caused by the bombing. The doctor was disturbed at the thought of not being ashamed of his nakedness. These lines are symbolic of how man is reborn and shows the strength of the human-being to withstand the worst of calamities. It was the indomitable will, spurred by determination, with which the Japanese were able to rebuild their shattered city and transform Japan into one of the leading countries of the world.

Ref. 4.

……A dreadful loneliness
Came over me when she had gone. My mind ran at high speed, my body crept behind.
I saw the shadowy forms of people,…..

1. What were the narrator’s feelings after his wife went ahead to the hospital?
Name and explain the figure of speech in the narrator’s feelings.
A dreadful loneliness came over the doctor after his wife had gone.
The figure of speech is Personification. A dreadful loneliness is used to describe the helpless condition of not only the doctor but all the survivors.

2. ‘My mind ran at high speed, my body crept behind’ Explain the disparity shown between the body and the mind?
The doctor’s body was weak, exhausted and injured and his stiff legs failed to get him to the hospital, but his mind raced ahead as he started imagining blurred shapes of people looking like ghosts and scarecrows.

3. How does he describe the shadowy forms of people?
The shadowy forms of people appeared as ghosts as they were dead, some appeared as scarecrows, all were wordless dumb. He heard no cries of anguish, silence was common to all.

4. Where were these people headed to?
These people shuffled in blank parade towards the hospital.

5. What thoughts occupied his mind as he watched them pass by?
It took some time for the doctor to realize that the friction on their burns caused so much pain, they feared to chafe flesh against flesh and therefore these people walked with their arms stretched straight out.

6. Which scenes made him realize that something strange had happened?
The doctor was dismayed on seeing a woman with a child stand in his path. Both naked and he wondered if they had come back from the bath. He then came across a naked man and this made him realize that something strange had stripped them of their clothes.

7. What was the expression on the old woman’s face?
The face of an old woman on the ground was marred with suffering, but she made no sound.

8. Which examples show that the narrator failed to hear cries of anguish? Why was silence common to all?
The soldier who has a touch of humanity was standing ‘silently’, the ghosts and scarecrows were ‘wordless dumb’, those who could, shuffled in ‘blank parade’, and the old woman on the ground made ‘no sound’.
There is the silence of death and deep psychological shock that was common to all.