

Chapter 1

The Portrait of a Lady

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Q. 1 The three phases of the author's relationship with his grandmother before he left the country to study abroad.

Answer:

The three phases of the author's relationship with his grandmother before he left the country to study abroad were –

- a. When both of them were in the village. Their bond was inseparable and strong.
- b. After coming to the city, they began to spend less time with one another because the author would go to an English school where grandmother couldn't accompany him.
- c. After the author went to college, he was given a separate room. The common thread of friendship was snapped between them. The grandmother accepted her seclusion with silence.

Q. 2 Three reasons why the author's grandmother was disturbed when he started going to the city school.

Answer:

Three reasons why the author's grandmother was disturbed when he started going to the city school are:

- a. The city school was a modern style school and grandmother couldn't accompany the author to school.
- b. Back from school when the author would talk about western science topics which grandmother was unable to understand.
- c. The city school also taught nothing about Gods. This too disturbed her.

Q. 3 Three ways in which the author's grandmother spent her days after he grew up.

Answer:

Three ways in which the author's grandmother spent her days after he grew up were-

- a. She would spend most of the day spinning.
- b. She would recite prayers.
- c. She would take a break from all this a bit in the evening when she would take to feeding the sparrows.

Q. 4 The odd way in which the author's grandmother behaved just before she died.

Answer:

Grandmother had called all the women and sang songs that welcomed the home coming of soldiers the entire day before she fell ill. Just the next day she fell ill. And although the doctor said that it was a mild fever and she would be well soon, grandmother knew that her end was near. So, she took to prayers completely.

Q. 5 The way in which the sparrows expressed their sorrow when the author's grandmother died.

Answer:

In the evening when the setting sun had lit grandmother's room, the sparrows came in. They were all waiting in the verandah but apparently, there wasn't any chirruping sound. No sparrow made a single sound. The author's mother then broke pieces of bread and threw at them but they took no notice. This shows that the sparrows were really mourning and were not at all interested in the food.

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

Q. 1 The author's grandmother was a religious person. What are the different ways in which we come to know this?

Answer:

The author's grandmother was a religious person. The different ways in which we come to know this is-

- a. She would recite prayers every morning while getting the author ready for school in the village.
- b. She would read scriptures at the temple while the author would study
- c. She would spend most of her time praying in the city house.

Q. 2 Describe the changing relationship between the author and his grandmother. Did their feelings for each other change?

Answer:

When both the author and his grandmother were in the village, they had a very inter-dependent lifestyle. They would do almost everything together. The entire day would be divided into several activities in which they would help each other.

But after they shifted to the city, there was a crack in their relationship. This was because Grandmother no longer understood the topics that the author would study in school. The medium too was English which made her completely aloof from the topics that the author was studying.

Later during college when their rooms were separated, the last thread of friendship was snapped.

Q. 3 Would you agree that the author's grandmother was a person strong in character? If yes, give instances that show this.

Answer:

Yes, the author's grandmother was a person strong in character. This becomes clear from the facts that she never complains about the fact that the amount of time that author spent with her has reduced after coming to the city. Although she felt lonely, she never expressed it. She rather engaged herself in productive work so as to compensate her emptiness. She would also constantly pray. While the author left the country, she was neither crying nor was she disturbed. She rather kept her calm and prayed for his betterment. All this shows that she is a strong character.

Q. 4 Have you known someone like the author's grandmother? Do you feel the same sense of loss with regard to someone whom you have loved and lost?

Answer:

I have known my great grandmother. She was exactly of the same traits that the author's grandmother. She too was a lady of strong character.

I lost her about seven years back. But her absence still haunts me. It is still unbelievable that she isn't among us all. Her liveliness and her charm are still alive in the form of memory.

THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE

Q. 1 Which language do you think the author and his grandmother used while talking to each other?

Answer:

The author and his grandmother must have used their native language while communicating.

Q. 2 Which language do you use to talk to elderly relatives in your family?

Answer:

I speak in Hindi/Bengali/Tamil (write your native language) to talk to elderly relatives in our family

Q. 3 How would you say 'a dilapidated drum' in your language?

Answer:

'A dilapidated drum' means that the drum is not in its best form. It is an old drum and has broken or is malfunctioning.

NOTE- Write this meaning down in your own native language.

Q. 4 Can you think of a song or a poem in your language that talks of homecoming?

Answer:

A poem that talks about homecoming is "Stopping by the woods on a snowy evening" by Robert Frost.

NOTE- You may think about any poem or song in your native language and write it.

WORKING WITH WORDS

Q. 1 Notice the following uses of the word 'tell' in the text.

1. Her fingers were busy telling the beads of her rosary.
2. I would tell her English words and little things of Western science and learning.
3. At her age one could never tell.
4. She told us that her end was near.

Given below are four different senses of the word 'tell'. Match the meanings to the uses listed above.

1. make something known to someone in spoken or written words
2. count while reciting

3. be sure

4. give information to somebody

Answer:

1. Ans. 2. count while reciting

2. Ans. 1. make something known to someone in spoken or written words

3. Ans. 3. be sure

4. Ans. 4. give information to somebody

Q. 2 Notice the different senses of the word 'take'.

1. to take to something: to begin to do something as a habit

2. to take ill: to suddenly become ill

Locate these phrases in the text and notice the way they are used.

Answer:

1. There were no dogs in the streets and she took to feeding sparrows in the courtyard of our city house.

Meaning - begin to do something as a habit

2. The next morning she was taken ill.

Meaning- to suddenly become ill

Q. 3 The word 'hobble' means to walk with difficulty because the legs and feet are in bad condition.

Tick the words in the box below that also refer to a manner of walking.

haggle	shuffle	stride	ride	waddle
wriggle	paddle	swagger	trudge	slog

Ans.

haggle	shuffle	stride	ride	waddle
wriggle	paddle	swagger	trudge	slog

THINGS TO DO

Q. 1 Talk with your family members about elderly people who you have been intimately connected with and who are not there with you now. Write a short description of someone you liked a lot.

Answer:

I was very connected to my great grandmother. She was a lady of her own terms. Even though she was born and brought up in an age when women were not allowed to study much, she learnt business from her husband. Her calculations were really to be amazed with. She was the leading lady of the jute business of my great grandfather. The entire business would run on her terms and all investments were done only on her permission. Her sense of business was much better than any average man. She was very affectionate too. She would never forget grandfather or his timing of food. Her hobby was to cook food for grandfather and feed him. We liked her a lot for her open mindedness and her steady personality.

A PHOTOGRAPH: THINK IT OUT

Q. 1 What does the word 'cardboard' denote in the poem? Why has this word been used?

Answer:

The cardboard denotes the hard paper on which the photograph was pasted and safely preserved since years. The word has been used to clarify the age of the photograph. The photograph is so old that the frame has shattered and only the cardboard to which it was stuck to remains.

Q. 2 What has the camera captured?

Answer:

The camera had captured the three cousins looking at the camera with wide smiles on their faces. They all were happy and the sea holiday was the time that they all really enjoyed.

Q. 3 What has not changed over the years? Does this suggest something to you?

Answer:

The sea has not changed much over the years. The sea is the only constant in all these years. All the other things have changed. The poet's mother was so charming, lively and young back then. Now she is no more. Neither is the sound of her laughter.

This suggests that only something as large as the sea doesn't change much over time. Other than that everything changes. People perish and life comes to an end.

Q. 4 The poet's mother laughed at the snapshot. What did this laugh indicate?

Answer:

This laugh indicates that she was such a lively person. She was recalling the memory of the sea-trip and laughing about the way everyone was dressed. She was apparently recalling all that happened back in those days of the trip and reliving the memories so as to make herself feel happy at present too.

Q. 5 What is the meaning of the line "Both wry with the labored ease of loss?"

Answer:

This line indicates two incidents

a. The sea holiday that her mother had experienced is her past.

b. The fact that the poetess had her mother beside her physically is her past.

So, both of them have lost something. The poetess has lost her mother whereas back in her days, her mother had lost her childhood. Both were not able to believe that the moment of happiness had already slipped out of their hands and were over. That is why both of them were struggling(laboring) to come to terms with the fact that these moments are now present only in the memories.

Q. 6 What does “this circumstance” refer to?

Answer:

“This circumstance” indicates the loss of the mother that the poetess had faced long back.

Q. 7 The three stanzas depict three different phases. What are they?

Answer:

The three stanzas depict three different phases. They are

a. Stanza1- The entire stanza talks about how three girls went to the sea shore with their uncle. It describes their jolly faces and their excitement filled attitudes. It also describes their uncle and how he went clicking the three girls and their happy faces.

b. Stanza2- This stanza talks about how her mother spoke to Betty and Dolly about their holiday. Everyone has grown up here. And they’re all discussing their childhood.

c. Stanza3- This stanza shows the poetess mourning about the death of her mother. She has gone to the same beach where her mom had clicked this photograph with two of her(mom’s) cousins. The poetess is very sad and is still not being able to come to terms with the fact that her mom is no more.