

The Portrait of Lady

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Question:

Notice these expressions in the text. Infer their meaning from the context.

- i) The thought was almost revolting
- ii) An expanse of pure white serenity
- iii) A turning-point
- iv) Accepted her seclusion with resignation
- v) A veritable bedlam of chirruping's
- vi) Frivolous rebukes
- vii) The sagging skins of the dilapidated drum

Answer :

- i) The thought was almost revolting – The thought that the author's grandmother was once young and pretty raises a doubt in the mind of the author. He finds it too hard to believe as he had always seen her as an old lady.
- ii) An expanse of pure white serenity – It refers to the calm, peaceful and serene character and the conduct of the author's grandmother. She is compared to a peaceful winter landscape in the mountains. She almost looked like a snow covered mountain in her silvery hair and spotless white clothes.
- iii) A turning-point – It refers to the point where the author's relationship with his grandmother changes drastically after they move to the city-house.
- iv) Accepted her seclusion with resignation – This shows the author's grandmother's passive submission to her secluded life after she gradually loses touch with her grandson.
- v) A veritable bedlam of chirruping – It refers to the noise, confusion and chaos caused by the chirruping of the sparrows that scattered and perched around the author's grandmother.
- vi) Frivolous rebukes – It refers to the casual, non serious and light-hearted scoldings of the grandmother to the sparrows.
- vii) The sagging skins of the dilapidated drum – It points to the shabby and deteriorated condition of the drum.

Page No: 6 Understanding the Text**Question:**

Mention 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 are given below.

The first phase was the period of the author's early childhood. During this phase, he used to live with his grandmother in the village. The grandmother used to take care of him from waking him up and

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getting him ready to accompanying him to the school. Both shared a good friendship with each other. The second phase was the time when the author and the grandmother moved to the city to live with author's parents. This was a turning-point in their friendship because now they 'saw less of each other'.

The third phase was the time the author joined University. He was given a room of his own and the common link of their friendship was snapped. The grandmother turned to wheel- spinning and reciting prayers all day long. She accepted her seclusion with silence.

Question:

Mention three reasons why the author's grandmother was disturbed when he started going to the city school.

Answer :

The author's grandmother was disturbed when he started going to the city school because:

- (i) She could not help him with his lessons in English, science. She didn't believe in them.
- (ii) No teaching of God and scriptures in the author's English medium school.
- (iii) She was unhappy with the idea of music lessons being given at school. She considered music suitable only for the people with low dignity.

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Question:

Mention three ways in which the author's grandmother spent her days after he grew up.

Answer :

The three ways in which the author's grandmother spent her days after he grew up are by spinning wheel, reciting prayers and feeding the sparrows.

Question:

Mention the odd way in which the author's grandmother behaved just before she died.

Answer :

The grandmother told the family that her end was near. She told everyone that as she had omitted to pray in the last phase of her life so she was not going to waste any more time talking to them. She lay peacefully in bed praying and telling her beads.

Question:

Mention the way in which the sparrows expressed their sorrow when the author's grandmother died.

Answer :

The sparrows and the grandmother had developed an intimate relationship so the sparrows also mourned her death. When the grandmother died, thousands of sparrows expressed their sorrow by sitting scattered in the verandah in mourning while grandmother's dead-body lay there. They did not chirrup. Author's mother threw some pieces of bread but they showed no interest in the bread crumbs. When they carried grandmother's corpse off, they flew away quietly. Thus, the sparrows mourned her

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death and paid their silent tribute to the grand old lady in a very unique manner.

Talking about the Text**Question:**

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 lady with a kind heart. Her one hand was always busy in telling the beads of her rosary. Her lips constantly moved in an inaudible prayer. She used to get up early in the morning. She did her morning prayer in "a monotonous sing-song". Everyday, she went along with the author to his school and while narrator studied she sat in a temple and read scriptures. Later, in the city she was unhappy that there was no religious teaching at school. Before dying, she stopped talking to her family members and turned to prayers, and telling the beads.

Question:

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

Answer :

The changing circumstances did have a bearing on the relationship between the author and his grandmother. The author and his grandmother lived as intimate friends in the village. A turning point came in their relationship when they came to the city to live with the author's parents. The author joined an English school in the city. She remained confined to home as here she could not accompany him to the school. In the new English school she could not help him in studies. She did not like the kind of education being given to the author at the English school. The grandmother became disturbed as there was no teaching about God and scriptures in the new school. She reconciled herself with spinning and taking to feed the sparrows. When the narrator grew up, he went up to university. He was given his own room. The common link of friendship between the author and his grandmother was snapped. His grandmother accepted her seclusion with resignation.

No, their feelings for each other did not change though distances grew between them.

Question:

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. The instances to prove this are given below.

- The author's grandmother was a person strong in character. She was a picture of contentment but she had firm convictions about certain things in her life.
- She had her own thoughts about the learning at school. She considered the teaching of scriptures to

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be more fruitful than science and music.

- In her phase of loneliness and seclusion, she took to wheel-spinning and feeding sparrows. She appeared composed and did not display any emotion when the author decided to go abroad for studies.
- Ignoring everyone who tried to stop her, she sang for several hours celebrating the home-coming of her grandson.
- During the last few hours of her life, ignoring the protests of her family members, she stopped talking to everyone and took to reciting prayers and telling her beads.

Question:

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 :

Yes, I knew someone like the author's grandmother. It was my own grandmother who passed away recently. The intense sense of loss is very heart-wrenching as I spent almost fifteen years of my life with her.

OR

No, I have never known someone the way the author knew his grandmother. Thus, I have never felt the sense of grief presented in the story.

Thinking about the Language**Question:**

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

Answer :

The author and his grandmother might have used their mother-tongue to converse with each other. As the author, Khushwant Singh, belonged to Punjab, the language used by them might be Punjabi.

Question:

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

Answer :

Your Mother tongue (Could be English, Hindi, Telgu, Bhojpuri etc.)

Question:

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

Answer :

Know your meaning in mother tongue (In Hindi it is 'phata-hua dholak'.)

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Working with Words**Question:**

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

Answer :

- i). Her fingers were busy telling the beads of her rosary.
- ii). I would tell her English words and little things of Western science and learning.
- iii). At her age one could never tell.
- iv). She told us that her end was near.

Question:

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

- i). make something known to someone in spoken or written words
- ii). count while reciting
- iii). be sure
- iv). give information to somebody

Answer :

- i). Make something known to someone in spoken or written words: I would tell her English words and little things of western science and learning.
- ii). Count while reciting: Her fingers were busy telling the beads of her rosary.
- iii). Be sure: At her age, one could never tell.
- iv). Give information to somebody: She told us that her end was near.

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Question:

Notice the different senses of the word 'take'.

- i). to take to something: to begin to do something as a habit
- ii). to take ill: to suddenly become ill

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

Answer :

The instances where these phrases have been used in the story are given below.

- i) "... she took to feeding sparrows in the courtyard of our city house".
This phrase refers to the daily activity that the author's grandmother took up when they shifted to the city.
- ii) "The next morning she was taken ill."
This phrase refers to the author's grandmother's sudden illness.

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Question:

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

Answer :

The words that also refer to a manner of walking are:

shuffle

stride

waddle

paddle

swagger

trudge

slog