

Class 11th English Hornbill Chapter 1 The Portrait of a Lady

Question Answers Gujarat Board

Understanding the Text

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

Answer:

The relationship of the author with his grandmother can be categorised in three phases. Namely: in the village, in the city and while he underwent music lessons.

In the village, since he was young, she took care of all his requirements, beginning with waking

him up early morning she got him ready for school. After providing him breakfast she escorted him to the school which was attached to the village temple. While the author studied she sat in the temple reading her scriptures. After school she brought him back home but on the way she fed the village dogs with the leftover stale chapatis.

The second phase deals with their relationship In the city where the author has joined an English school. She has now discontinued to escort him to the school as he goes to the school in a motor-bus. She is unable to help him in his studies also.

Learning music at school forms to be the third phase of their relationship. The knowledge of his learning music shocks her. According to her music is meant for people belonging to the lower category such as beggars and harlots. Time has now come where she rarely spoke to the author.

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

Answer:

Going to the city affected her routine of being of some help to the author. His going to the school in a motor-bus and she not being able to accompany him disturbed her. As time passed they saw less of each other. On returning from the school one day she learned from the author that he was taught several laws based on science. This made her unhappy as she could not help him with his lessons.

The fact that nothing about God was taught in the school disturbed her more. The most shocking aspect was the teaching of music in the school. According to her music was meant for the people belonging to lower categories such as beggars and prostitutes and not the gentlefolk. Though she said nothing her silence clearly displayed disapproval. After this incident occurred she rarely spoke to the author.



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

Answer:

The author's parents were comfortably settled in the city and they sent for him. This was the turning point in the relationship between him and his grandmother. In the village she used to feed the dogs. But now since there were no dogs in the city she took to feeding the sparrows in the courtyard with crumbs of bread. When the author went to the university, he was given a room for himself. Their friendship was snapped.

But she accepted being alone without any questions. She rarely left her spinning wheel and reciting of prayers. Feedings of sparrows was the happiest half hour of her day. Hundreds of little birds collected around her creating a lot of noise. Some of them perched on her legs the others on her shoulders. Some even sat on her head. But she never chased them away. When she was alone her fingers were always busy with her rosary and lips moved in prayers.

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

Answer:

In the evening of the first day of his arrival grandmother began to behave in a very strange way. She gathered the women of her neighbourhood, got hold of an old drum and playing on it she began to sing, in spite of people telling her not to overstrain. For the first time the author noticed that she did not pray.

Next morning she was taken ill. Though the doctor announced that it was a mild fever, she told that her end was near. She did not waste her time talking to anyone. She lay peacefully in her bed praying and telling her beads. Even before they could say something her lips stopped moving and the rosary fell from her lifeless fingers. A peaceful paleness spread over her face. They knew that she was dead.

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

Answer:

In the city, grandmother had taken to feed the sparrows. Hundreds of little birds collected around her. Some perched on her legs while others on her shoulders. Some even sat on her head. This used to be the happiest half an hour of the day for her. When grandmother died and was to be taken to the crematory thousands of sparrows sat scattered on the floor. There was no chirruping.

The author and others felt sorry for the birds. His mother fetched some bread for them. Breaking it into little crumbs she threw them to the sparrows. But the sparrows took no notice of the bread. When grandmother's dead body was carried away, the sparrows flew away quietly. In this way the sparrows expressed their sorrow.



Talking about the Text

Talk to your partner about the following:

Question 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 pious lady in the real sense of the word. Her lips always moved in prayers which were inaudible and one of her hands was always found telling the beads of her rosary. She never ceased reading the scriptures. She always advocated that children should be taught scriptures and about the existence of God. She was distressed when she came to know that no such education was imparted in the author's English school.

Another sign of being religious is also witnessed when she feeds the dogs and the sparrows. Prediction about her own end being near also denotes her pious nature. She refuses to talk to anyone and busies herself in constant meditation. The obvious fact was that she did not stop praying and telling her beads till the end of her life.

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

Answer:

The relationship between the author and his grandmother never underwent any changes in spite of the changes in circumstances. During their stay in the village she proved to be his best companion. She woke him up in the morning. After giving him bath she got him ready for school. She never left him while he was at school. She sat there till the school got over and then took him back home. When his parents had settled in the city they (author's parents) called them over. The author now joined the English school.

Being concerned she asked him about the studies. When she knew that there was no teaching of scriptures, she was distressed. The distance between them grew up but their love for each other continued to remain the same. The author's going abroad for further studies also had not reduced their love for each other. She hardly talked to him, but this also did not affect their affection for each other. When he came back after five years she took him into her arms. Though physically they were away, at heart they were very close.

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

Answer:

The author's grandmother possessed a very firm nature. She was a woman of determination. She possessed set beliefs. She did not deter from her faith. She practised certain religious values without caring for the views or criticism of others. One could always see her lips moving in prayers. She was always telling the beads of her rosary. She never deterred from practising a set routine whether it was in the village or city. In the village she fed the dogs and in the city she fed the sparrows. When the author went abroad for further

studies she was in complete control of her emotions. Even at the time of departure she was saying her prayers and telling the beads of the rosary.

Question 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:

Yes, I have known my grandfather, who loved me deeply and looked after me. He had served in the army before he retired as a colonel 20 years ago. When I was a school going kid, he was still active and smart. He was fond of walking, jogging and playing outdoor games. He inspired us to get up early in the morning. He believed that a healthy mind lives in a healthy body. He used to give us good physical exercises followed by milk and nourishing food and then asked us to study for a while before going to school.

In the afternoon, he would enquire what we had been taught at the school. He would help us in our home task and supervise our reading, writing and doing sums. He was gentle but firm. He laid stress on good habits and character building. He passed away when I had gone abroad for higher studies. I miss him a lot. A sense of loss fills me whenever I see his portrait on the wall. But his cheerful looks remind me to take heart and fight the struggle of life.

Thinking about Language

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

Answer:

The author's grandmother was not much educated. So, I think the author and his grandmother used to talk in their mother tongue-in this case Punjabi.

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

Answer:

My elderly relatives are well-versed in English and Gujarati, I feel at home greeting them in English but like to converse with them freely in Gujarati.

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

Answer:

The expression used in our language for a 'dilapidated drum' is 'Junu-fatelu dhol'.

Working with Words

Question 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 :

- A. make something known to someone in spoken or written words
- B. count while reciting
- C. be sure
- D. give information to somebody

Answer:

1 → B, 2 → D, 3 → C, 4 → A

Question 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 til: to suddenly become ill

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

Answer:

In the text, these phrases are used as under:

- 1. She took to feeding sparrows in the courtyard of our city house.
- 2. The next morning she was taken ill.

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

Select 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 referring to a manner of walking are: shuffle, stride, waddle, swagger, trudge, slog.

Noticing Form

Notice the form of the verbs italicised in these sentences:

- 1. My grandmother was an old woman. She had been old and wrinkled for the twenty years that I had known her. People said that she had once been young and pretty and had even had a husband, but that was hard to believe.
- 2. When we both had finished we would walk back together.
- 3. When I came back she would ask me what the teacher had taught me.
- 4. It was the first time since I had known her that she did not pray.
- 5. The sun was setting and had lit her room and verandah with a golden light.

These are examples of the past perfect forms of verbs. When we recount things in the distant past we use this form.

Other Examples for Practice

Notice the form of verbs highlighted In these sentences:

1. We understood the poem only when the teacher had explained It twice.
2. When the rain came, they had already reached their hotel.
3. We had worked together on that project for six months before she left me.
4. It was the first time since I had lived there that it began to snow.
5. The full moon was In the sky and had scattered its soft light all around.

Things to Do

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:

My Grandmother

I lost my grandmother when I was twelve, but I still recollect her. She loved me affectionately and I liked her a great deal. She was quite old then, but she could move about with ease. I was her constant companion during her visits to temple, market, garden or to the houses of friends and relatives. Other members of the family would taunt me as granny's watch dog. She was my shield.

I ran to her arms when my father or mother would get angry or thrash me; I miss the bedtime stories she used to tell me. Those highly fanciful stories were full of deeds of bravery or adventure and end on a note of success. They inspired me to do noble deeds in life. She was equally careful about my health and studies. She would make me drink milk and eat fruit to maintain a sound physique. She was good at drawing and helped me in writing alphabets.

She also gave ready-made solutions to all my problems. She would bless me whenever I got success in any field-studies, sports, song, poetic recitation, poster making or fancy dress competition. Sometimes I miss her a lot.

Class 11th English Hornbill Poem Chapter 1 A Photograph

Question Answers Gujarat Board

Think it Out

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

Answer:

The word cardboard denotes the photograph pasted on a hard thick paper. This word has been used to refer to a practice in the past when photographs were pasted on cardboard and framed with glass front to preserve them.

Question 2. What has the camera captured?

Answer:

The camera has captured the three girls -the poet's mother and her two cousins, Betty and Dolly, in their swimming dresses with the poet's mother in the middle and the two cousins on either side holding her hands and walking five feet in seawater.

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

Answer:

The sea has not changed over the years. Its waves are as fresh, shining and tireless as they were years ago. The changelessness of sea reminds us of the changes in human face with advancing age.

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

Answer:

This laugh indicated her joy at remembering an incident connected with her past life when she was quite young and free from the tensions and worries of life.

Question 5. What is the meaning of the line "Both wry with the laboured ease of loss"?

Answer:

The sea holiday and the laughter of the poet's mother are incidents of the past. There is a sense of loss associated with them. Both are amusing yet disappointing as the state of feeling comfortable or relaxed is unnatural or forced one,. This sense of loss is quite painful to bear.

Question 6. What does 'this circumstance' refer to?

Answer:

This circumstance refers to the death of the poet's mother.



Question 7. The three stanzas depict three different phases. Name them.

Answer:

1. The girlhood of the poet's mother – the period before the birth of the poet.
2. Her middle-age – the period during the childhood of the poet.
3. Period after the death of the poet's mother.

