



Class: VIII

QUESTION BANK 2020-21

Sub: ENGLISH

Topic: The Portrait of a Lady

Answer these questions:

1. Describe how the narrator's grandmother looked.

The narrator's grandmother was short, fat and slightly bent with wrinkles crisscrossing her face. Her silvery hair was untidy around her face that was puckered. She looked very old in a beautiful kind of way.

**2. Did the grandmother like what they taught at the school in the city?
How did she feel?**

The grandmother did not like what they taught at the school in the City because there was no teaching about God and the scriptures.

3. What did the grandmother do during the 'happiest half-hour of the day'?

During the 'happiest half-hour of the day' the grandmother fed the sparrows little pieces of bread.

4. How did the grandmother's daily routine change when she shifted from village to a city?

The grandmother's daily routine changed when she shifted to the city because she no longer dropped the narrator to school.

5. What did the sparrows do when the grandmother died?

When grandmother died the sparrows came and sat around her in silence, refusing to eat the bread the narrator's mother gave them.

Reference to the context:

People said that she had once been young and pretty and had even had a husband, but that was hard to believe.

- a. Who is 'she' being referred to in the above sentence?**
- b. Why was it 'hard to believe' that she had a husband?**
- c. How did her husband look like?**

- a. The 'she' is the grandmother.
- b. It was hard to believe that she had had a husband because as a child the narrator could not imagine things he had not seen about people in his life.
- c. Her husband wore a big turban and had a long white beard. He wore loose fitting clothes and looked very old.

.....I was sure, my grandmother would be upset.

- a. Why did the narrator think his grandmother would be upset?**
- b. Was the grandmother upset? How did she react?**
- c. What did the narrator take as the 'last sign of physical contact' with his grandmother?**

- a. The narrator thought his grandmother would be upset because he was going away for five years to study and he wasn't sure his grandmother would be alive when he returned.
- b. The grandmother was neither upset nor sentimental, coming to the station to see him she muttered prayers over his head.
- c. The narrator took as the 'last sign of physical contact' 'with his grandmother the moist kiss she planted on his forehead.

That was the first time since I had known her that she did not pray.

- a. Who is 'she' being referred to in the above sentence?**
- b. What did she do instead of praying?**
- c. How did she feel the next morning?**

- a. The 'she' being referred to in the sentence is the grandmother.
- b. Instead of praying she collected the woman of the neighborhood and drummed out on an old drum until her family stopped her for fear she was straining herself.
- c. The next morning, she fell ill.

Additional Questions:

Q.1 “That was a turning point in our friendship.” What was the turning point?

Ans: The turning point in their friendship came when they shifted to the city. The narrator went to an English school in a bus. Grandmother could no longer accompany him to school. Although they shared the same room, they saw less of each other.

Q.2 Draw a comparison between village school education and city school education.

Ans: Elementary education was given in village school. The pupils were taught alphabet and multiplication tables. It was quite simple—confined to the three R's—reading, writing and arithmetic. In the city school, English, Science and Music were taught. Unlike village school there was no teaching about God and scriptures.

Q.3 Describe the friendship ‘between Khushwant Singh and his grandmother’.

Ans: Khushwant Singh's grandmother was closely involved in bringing him up when the author lived with her in the village during his early life. She used to wake him up early in the morning. While bathing and dressing him, she sang her prayers.

She hoped that the young boy would learn it by heart. She then gave him breakfast—a stale chapatti with butter and sugar. Then they would go together to the temple school. While the author learnt his lesson, the grandmother would read holy books. They returned home together.

A turning point came in their friendship when his parents called them to city. Although they shared a room, she could not help him much. She hated music, Science and Western education. The common link of their friendship was gradually snapped.

Q.4 What image of the grandmother emerges from ‘The Portrait of a Lady’?

Ans: Khushwant Singh’s grandmother has been portrayed as a very old lady. She was short stature, fat and slightly bent. Her face was wrinkled and she was always dressed in spotless white clothes. She was a deeply religious lady. Her lips were always moving in a silent prayer. She was always telling the beads of her rosary. She went to the temple and read the scriptures.

The grandmother was a kind lady. She used to feed dogs in the village. In the city she took to feeding the sparrows. She had great affection for her grandson. She looked after him in the village. She could not adjust herself to the Western way of life, Science and English education. She hated music and was distressed to know that there was no teaching about God and holy books at Khushwant’s new English school. On the whole, she was a nice, kind-hearted and religious lady.

Q.5 The grandmother herself was not formally educated but was serious about the author’s education. How does the text support this?

Ans: The grandmother was quite serious about the author’s education. She woke him up in the morning and got him ready for school. She washed his wooden slate. She plastered it with yellow chalk. She tied his earthen ink-pot and reed pen into a bundle. She took him to school. He studied in school. She waited for him in the temple reading scriptures.

In the city, the author went to an English school in a motor bus. When he came back she would ask him what the teacher had taught him. She could not help him with his lessons. She did not believe in the things taught at the English school. She was distressed to learn that her grandson was being taught music. She considered it unfit for gentle folk.

Think and answer:

Writing task for students:

1. Do you feel happy or sad at the way the narrator's relationship with his grandmother evolved? Quote examples from the text to support your answer.

2. Why did the Sparrows not eat anything the day the grandmother died?