

Chapter 1

The Portrait of a Lady

Solutions of Questions on Page No 3:

Question 1:

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

- the thought was almost revolting
- an expanse of pure white serenity
- a turning-point
- accepted her seclusion with resignation
- a veritable bedlam of chirrupings
- frivolous rebukes
- the sagging skins of the dilapidated drum

Answer:

- **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.
- **an expanse of pure white serenity** – It refers to the calm, peaceful and serene character and conduct of the author's grandmother. She is compared to the peaceful winter landscape in the mountains.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.

- **frivolous rebukes** – It refers to the casual and light-hearted rebukes of the grandmother to the sparrows.
- **the sagging skins of the dilapidated drum** – It points to the shabby and deteriorated condition of the drum.

Solutions of Questions on Page No 6:

Question 1:

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 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 turns to wheel-spinning and reciting prayers all day long. She accepts her seclusion with silence.

Question 2:

Mention three reasons why the author's grandmother was disturbed

when he started going to the city school.

Answer:

The author's grandmother was unhappy after knowing that the things taught to him at school were related to western science and learning. Secondly, she did not believe such things that were taught at his new school. She was disturbed that there was no teaching about God and scriptures. Thirdly, she was unhappy with the idea of music lessons being given at school. She considered music suitable only for the people with low dignity. The disapproval of the grandmother was visible in her silence.

Solutions of Questions on Page No 7:

Question 1:

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, belongs to Punjab, the language used by them might be Punjabi.

Question 2:

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

Answer:

I speak in Hindi to talk to the elderly relatives in my family.

(A model answer has been provided for students' reference. It is strongly recommended that students prepare the answer on their own.)

Question 3:

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

Answer:

In Hindi, we would call 'a dilapidated drum' as 'phata-hua dholak'.

(A model answer has been provided for students' reference. It is strongly recommended that students prepare the answer on their own in pertinence with the languages used by them.)

Question 4:

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

Answer:

(This question is to be answered on the basis of students' own understanding and experience. It is strongly recommended that students prepare the answer on their own.)

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.

- 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. Make something known to someone in spoken or written words: I would tell her English words and little things of western science and learning.

2. Count while reciting: Her fingers were busy telling the beads of her rosary.

3. Be sure: At her age, one could never tell.

4. Give information to somebody: She told us that her end was near.

Question 3:

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

Answer:

The author's grandmother "accepted her seclusion with resignation". She spent her days of loneliness by engaging herself in the wheel-spinning activity, reciting prayers and feeding the sparrows.

Question 4:

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

Answer:

She had omitted to pray, she was not going to waste any more time

talking to us. She lay peacefully in bed praying and telling her beads. Even before we could suspect, her lips stopped moving and the rosary fell from her lifeless fingers.

Question 5:

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

Answer:

The author's grandmother shared a unique bond with the sparrows. She seemed at her happiest self while feeding the sparrows. The day the author's grandmother died, thousands of sparrows sat scattered around her dead body. They sat there in utter silence mourning the death of the grandmother. They took no notice of the bread crumbs thrown at them and flew away silently after the body was carried for the final rites. Next morning, the bread crumbs were swept away into the dustbin by the sweeper.

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 religious lady with a kind heart. She moved about in the house "telling the beads of her rosary". Her lips constantly moved in "inaudible prayer". She said her morning prayers in monotonous sing-song hoping that the author would learn it by heart. Everyday, she went along with the author to his school and sat in the temple that was attached to it, reading the holy books for hours. She believed in the teachings about God and scriptures and did not like that her grandson was not taught about them in the city school. Gradually, she turned to reciting prayers throughout the day. Before dying, she stopped talking to her family members and turned to prayers, and counting the beads.

Question 2:

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

Answer:

The story describes the entire phase of relationship shared by the author and his grandmother. In his early childhood, the author shared a strong bond with his grandmother. However, that tie of friendship loosened a little when they both shifted to his parents' city house. She no longer accompanied him to the school and could not help him with his lessons. There was a further crack in the relationship when the author joined university as he was given a private room and the common link between them was snapped. They were further distanced from each other when the author went abroad for five years.

In spite of changes in the course of the relationship (due to the demands of the situation), their feelings for each other remained unchanged. Though she did not display her emotions, when the author was leaving for abroad, she wholeheartedly celebrated his homecoming when he returned.

Question 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. The instances to prove this are given below.

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

(A model answer has been provided for students' reference. It is strongly recommended that students prepare the answer on their own.)

Solutions of Questions on Page No 8:

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 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.

1. "... 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.

2. "The next morning she was taken ill." This phrase refers to the author's grandmother's sudden illness.

Question 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

Answer:

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

shuffle

stride

waddle

paddle

swagger

trudge

slog