

Class XI
The Portrait of a Lady
Hornbill Ch -1

Talking about the text

Q1.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.

Q2.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.

(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.

Q3.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

Q4.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 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.

Q5.Mention the way in which the sparrows expressed their sorrow when the author's grandmother died.

Answer

The sparrows and the grandmother developed an intimate relationship in this manner. 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 did not eat them. When they carried grandmother's corpse they flew away quietly. Thus, the sparrows mourned her death and paid their silent tribute to the grand old lady in a very unique manner.

Understanding the text

Q1.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 counting the beads.

Q2.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. 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 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 could 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 and then went abroad. 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.

Q3.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 the 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.

Q4.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?

(Write your own answer.)