

St. Andrews Scots Sr. Sec. School

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Session: 2026-2027 Notes

Class : XI

Subject : English

Chapter- The Portrait of a Lady

Answer the following questions

Q1. Why was it hard for the author to believe that his grandmother was once young and pretty?

Ans: The author had always seen his grandmother as a very old woman. For the past twenty years he had seen her as an old lady with white hair and countless lines running across her face. Because his first impression about his grandmother was one of being aged, it was hard for the author to believe that his grandmother was once young and pretty.

Q2. What kind of bond did the author and the grandmother share in the village?

Ans: In the village, the grandmother woke him up every morning and got him ready for school. She would bathe and dress him. She gave him breakfast, got him his slate and ink pot and then accompanied him to school. While he studied at school, grandmother used to read the scriptures in the temple. When the school was over, they would walk back home together and feed the village dogs on the way. Thus, they shared a very strong bond in the village.

Q3. "That was the turning point in our friendship." What was the turning point?

Ans: The author used to live with his grandmother in the village, where they were always together. The turning point in their friendship came when the author's parents called them to the city. They shared the same room in the city but grandmother could no longer accompany him to school or help him in his studies. Gradually they saw less of each other.

Q4. What was the grandmother's reaction towards education in the English school?

Ans: The author's grandmother was unhappy as she could no longer help the narrator in his lessons. She didn't know English words or about Western Science. She was hurt to know that there was no teaching of God and scriptures in the English school. She didn't believe in the things that were taught at the English school. She was really upset when she came to know that the author was being taught music in the school. The grandmother thought that music was associated with indecent professions like prostitution and not meant for the gentlefolk.

Q5. " I was sure my grandmother would be upset." What was the author sure about? Was he right?

Ans: When the author decided to go to abroad for further studies, he was sure that his grandmother would be upset. But she was not even sentimental. She went to bid him goodbye at the railway station. However, she didn't talk or show any emotion. She was lost in prayer and her hands kept counting her beads.

Q6. *“All over the verandah and in her room right up to where she lay dead and stiff wrapped in the red shroud, thousands of sparrows sat scattered on the floor. There was no chirruping.... The sparrows took no notice of the bread. When we carried my grandmother's corpse off, they flew away quietly.”*

Animals recognize and value a relationship established with human beings. Explain this, keeping in mind the relationship established by Khushwant Singh's grandmother with animals.

Ans: Animals are said to have no intelligence but they do have feelings and it is out of feeling, concern or love for a human being that they let themselves be domesticated. They recognize relationships and bond well with humans. The relationship between Khushwant Singh's grandmother and the dogs as well as the sparrows is just one of them.

The grandmother was a very kind-hearted lady. She loved feeding the animals. In the village she used to carry stale chapattis with her and, on her way back from school, feed the stray dogs. The dogs loved the grandmother and there developed a bond between them.

In the city, there were no street dogs, so the grandmother took to feeding sparrows. The sparrows gathered around her and she threw little crumbs of bread to them. These sparrows sat on her head, legs and shoulders. It was their way of showing affection to her. When grandmother died, they came in huge numbers to mourn her death.

This shows that animals recognize and value relationships established with human beings. It also shows that they are more compassionate, more affectionate and more dependable than most human beings.

Q7. Discuss the advantages of the joint family system. What values do you think children learn from grandparents?

Ans 'The Portrait of a Lady' gives us a picture of human relationships in a joint family. It is a realistic account of how grandparents give all their time, attention and love to their grandchildren. Grandparents play an important role in inculcating good manners and values in the children. The children imitate their grandparents in a positive way and learn to be good individuals. They learn important human values such as love, compassion and respect from them.

Grandparents also imbibe religious and spiritual values in children. Children, thus, learn to love and respect God and all its creations. They also learn about their customs and traditions from their grandparents.. All this has a very positive role on their character development.

Grandparents share their life experiences with children in order to help them handle different situations.

Children thus face adverse situations with a positive attitude and learn to take challenges in their stride. Thus, the children become not only good human beings but also good citizens.