

The Portrait of a Lady by Khushwant Singh

Pre-reading Questions

1. What do the grandparents expect from the family? What are the reasons for their loneliness?
2. Present a pen picture of your grandparents describing their qualities you admire and appreciate the most?

While-reading questions

- Q1. How long had the narrator known his grandmother—old and wrinkled? What did people say? How did the narrator react?
- Q2. How did the narrator’s grandfather appear in the portrait?
- Q3. Explain: “as for my grandmother being young and pretty, the thought was almost revolting”.
- Q4. The narrator’s grandmother ‘could never have been pretty, but she was always beautiful’. Explain the importance of the statement.
- Q5. Why was it hard for the author to believe that his grandmother was once young and pretty?
- Q6. The narrator’s grandmother looked like the ‘winter landscape in the mountains’. Comment.
- Q7. How did the narrator and his grandmother become good friends?
- Q8. Why could the grandmother not walk straight? How would she move about the house?
- Q9. Describe how the grandmother spent her time while the narrator sat inside the village school.
- Q10. The grandmother was a kind-hearted woman. Give examples in support of your answer.
- Q11. “that was a turning point in our friendship.” What was the turning point?
- Q12. Draw a comparison between village school education and city school education.
- Q13. How did grandmother react to the narrator’s receiving education in English school?
- Q14. What led to the gradual distancing of the narrator from his grandmother in the city? Give three reasons.
- Q15. Why was the narrator’s grandmother so much allergic to music? Or
Why was the grandmother disturbed when she came to know that music lessons were being given at school?
- Q16. When was the common link of friendship between the narrator and his grandmother finally snapped?
- Q17. How did the grandmother spend her time when the narrator went up to university?
- Q18. Why did the grandmother take to feeding sparrows in the courtyard of their city house?

Post-reading questions

1. Mention the three phases of the author's relationship with his grandmother before he left the country to study abroad.
2. Mention three reasons why the author's grandmother was disturbed when he started going to school?
3. Mention three ways in which the author's grandmother spent her days after he grew up.
4. Mention the odd way in which the author's grandmother behaved just before she died.
5. Mention the way in which the sparrows expressed their sorrow when the author's grandmother died.