

PROSE

Chapter - 1

THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

-Khushwant Singh

MAIN POINTS

- The author is Khushwant Singh.
- The author draws a life - like pen portrait of his grandmother
- The grandmother and the narrator were good friends.
- His parents left him with her when they went to live in the city.
- She went to school with him because the school was attached to the temple .
- The narrator's parents sent for them to settle in the city with them.
- It was a turning point in their friendship.
- When the narrator went to the university , their common link (of sharing same room) was broken.
- From sunrise to sunset she sat by her spinning wheel spinning and reciting prayers.
- She came to leave him at the railway station when the narrator went abroad for further studies.
- She collected the women of the neighbourhood and celebrated the homecoming of her grandson by thumping an old drum and singing songs. She even forgot to pray.
- She overtired herself and fell ill.
- She laid peacefully in bed praying and telling her beads. She died in the afternoon.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. **Who is the author of 'The Portrait of a Lady'?**
a. Kamala Das b. Vikram Seth
c. Khushwant Singh d. V.S. Naipaul
2. **How long has the author known his grandmother ?**
a. 30 years b. 20 years
c. 10 years d. 40 years
3. **Whose pen-portrait has been drawn by the author ?**
a. His friend b. His father
c. His mother d. His grandmother
4. **What does the author find hard to believe ?**
a. The grandmother was young and pretty
b. The grandmother was ugly
c. The grandmother was young
d. The grandmother was short and fat
5. **Where was the grandfather's portrait hung ?**
a. Below the mantelpiece
b. On the mantelpiece
c. Above the mantelpiece
d. None of the above
6. **Who is the main character of the chapter 'The Portrait of a Lady'?**
a. Father b. Sister
c. Grandfather d. Grandmother
7. **What did the grandfather wear?**
a. Shirt and trousers
b. Tight fitting clothes
c. Big turban and loose fitting clothes
d. None of the above
8. **How did the grandfather look in the portrait?**
a. Hundred years old
b. Fifty years old
c. One hundred and twenty years old
d. Sixty years old
9. **According to the author , what sort of person the grandfather looked like ?**
a. A carefree person
b. A loving person
c. A strict person
d. A person who could have lots and lots of grandchildren

10. **What ‘thought was almost revolting ‘ , according to the author ?**
 - a. Grandmother being young and pretty
 - b. Grandmother being old
 - c. Grandmother being calm
 - d. Grandmother being careless
11. **What seemed quite absurd and undignified of the grandmother ?**
 - a. The songs she sang
 - b. The games she used to play as a child
 - c. The clothes she used to wear
 - d. The way she used to speak
12. **How did the author treat the things the grandmother told him about her childhood when he was a child ?**
 - a. Treated them like stories
 - b. Did not believe them
 - c. Treated them like the fables of the prophets
 - d. Believed them to be true
13. **How did the grandmother look ?**
 - a. Short and fat
 - b. Thin and tall
 - c. Short, fat, and slightly bent
 - d. Short and thin
14. **How was the grandmother’s face ?**
 - a. Criss - cross of wrinkles
 - b. Soft and beautiful
 - c. Rough and full of pores
 - d. Old and dry
15. **How did the grandmother move ?**
 - a. She walked straight
 - b. She walked slightly bent
 - c. She hobbled about with one hand resting on her waist
 - d. None of the above
16. **Why did the grandmother’s lips constantly move ?**
 - a. Moved in inaudible prayer
 - b. She sang songs
 - c. Her lips trembled
 - d. She continuously spoke
17. **How was the author’s relationship with his grandmother when they lived in the village ?**
 - a. Good friends
 - b. Not good friends
 - c. were not in talking terms
 - d. None of the above
18. **Where were the author’s parents ?**
 - a. Village
 - b. City
 - c. Abroad
 - d. Other state
19. **How did the grandmother say her morning prayer ?**
 - a. Quietly
 - b. In monotonous sing song
 - c. Loudly
 - d. None of the above
20. **Why would the grandmother accompany the author to his school ?**
 - a. To help him in school
 - b. To keep an eye on him
 - c. She wanted to see him study
 - d. Because of the temple attached to school
21. **What did the author eat for breakfast ?**
 - a. Bread with butter
 - b. Thick and stale chapatis with little butter and sugar spread on it
 - c. Porridge
 - d. Rice
22. **What was the turning point of the friendship between grandmother and author ?**
 - a. When he became an adult
 - b. When he went to the English school
 - c. When his parents called them both to the city
 - d. When they stopped talking
23. **Why didn’t the grandmother like music ?**
 - a. She thought music was the monopoly of harlots and beggars
 - b. She liked only religious songs
 - c. She thought it was not good for him
 - d. She liked traditional music
24. **Why was the grandmother distressed ?**
 - a. Because there was no teaching about God and the scriptures in school
 - b. Because the school was in English medium
 - c. Because the author went to school on a motor bus
 - d. Because she saw less of the author
25. **How did the grandmother spend her time in the city ?**
 - a. Feeding dogs

- b. Reading scriptures
- c. Spinning the wheel
- d. Sitting in the temple

26. How did the grandmother spend her afternoon everyday ?

- a. By praying
- b. By taking a nap
- c. By feeding hundred of sparrows
- d. By reading scriptures

27. What was the grandmother's reaction when the author decided to go abroad ?

- a. Upset
- b. Not even sentimental
- c. Emotional
- d. Sad

28. What happened when the author moved abroad to study for five years ?

- a. No one came to see him
- b. Grandmother bid goodbye by silently kissing his forehead
- c. Grandmother went with him
- d. Parents moved to the village

29. What change came in the grandmother's behaviour in the evening ?

- a. She collected the women of the neighbourhood
- b. She went for a walk
- c. She slept early
- d. She went to the temple

30. How did the sparrows express their sorrow at the death of the grandmother ?

- a. They sat in the verandah and chirruped
- b. They came and sat silently in the verandah
- c. They ate the bread crumbs
- d. They flew over the verandah

ANSWER KEY

1-c, 2-b, 3-d, 4-a, 5-c, 6-d, 7-c, 8-a, 9-d, 10-a, 11-b, 12-c, 13-c, 14-a, 15-c, 16-a, 17-a, 18-b, 19-b, 20-d, 21-b, 22-c, 23-a, 24-a, 25-c, 26-c, 27-b, 28-b, 29-a, 30-b

VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Who is the author of the chapter?

Ans. Khushwant singh

2. Whose pen-portrait has been drawn by the author?

Ans. The author has drawn the pen portrait of his grandmother.

3. What did the grandmother often tell the author?

Ans. The grandmother often told the author of the games she used to play as a child.

4. Why were the author and his grandmother good friends?

Ans. They were good friends because the author's parents left him with the grandmother when they went to live in the city and so they were constantly together. The grandmother looked after the author.

5. When did the author's parents send for them?

Ans. When the author's parents were settled comfortably in the city, they sent for them.

6. When was the common link of friendship between the author and his grandmother broken?

Ans. When the author went to the university and he was given a room of his own, the common link of friendship was broken.

7. When was the happiest time for the grandmother?

Ans. The half hour when the grandmother fed the sparrows was the happiest time for her?

8. How did the author think his grandmother would react when he decided to go abroad for further studies?

Ans. The author thought that his grandmother would be upset.

9. When was the first time the author did not see his grandmother pray?

Ans. When the author returned back home from abroad after five years, he did not see his grandmother pray.

10. What did the grandmother think when she fell ill the next morning?

Ans. The grandmother thought that her end was near.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What does Khushwant Singh describe in 'The Portrait of a Lady'?

Ans. In 'The Portrait of a Lady' Khushwant Singh draws a pen-picture of his grandmother. He describes how he spent his childhood with her in the village.

He also describes the changes that came in their relationship in the city.

2. Why did the grandmother keep one hand on her waist?

Ans. The grandmother was very old. She was slightly bent. She had to keep one of her two hands on her waist. She did so to balance her stoop.

3. How were the grandmother and the narrator good and intimate friends?

Ans. The grandmother and the narrator were like good and intimate friends. They spent most of the time together. She woke him up early in the morning and got him ready for school. She gave him a breakfast of stale bread with a little butter and sugar spread on it. She accompanied him to his school.

4. What was the turning point in their friendship?

Ans. The narrator's parents sent for them in the city. It was a turning point in their relationship. The city life and the English school made all the difference. She didn't accompany him to his school. Nor could she help him in his studies. She didn't like the new English school either. They saw less of each other.

5. How was the common link of their friendship broken?

Ans. In the village they had a very intimate relationship. But a turning point came when they were sent for in the city. The narrator went up to the university. Now he was given a room of his own. It made all the difference. The common link of their friendship was broken. They saw very less of each other now.

6. What were the happiest moments of the day for the grandmother?

Ans. The grandmother would sit in the verandah breaking the bread into little bits for the sparrows. Hundreds of sparrows would gather around her. They would perch on her legs, shoulders and even on the head. Feeding the sparrows was the happiest half-hour of the day for her.

7. How did the grandmother react when the narrator decided to go abroad?

Ans. The grandmother appeared to be quite normal. She knew that her grandson would be away for five years. She looked composed and did not show any emotion. She came to see him off at the station. She kissed him lightly on his forehead before departing.

8. How did the grandmother celebrate the homecoming of her grandson?

Ans. The grandmother was really very excited and happy when the narrator returned from abroad. She came to the station to receive him. She took him in her arms. She was in a mood for celebration. She collected the women of the neighbourhood in the evening. She continued beating an old drum and sang for hours. She even forgot to pray.

9. Why did the grandmother stop talking to anybody before her death?

Ans. The grandmother was taken ill. She had a mild fever. The doctor told them that she would be all right soon. But the grandmother declared that her end was near and that she did not pray last evening, so she was not going to waste any more time talking to them.

10. How did the sparrows mourn the death of the grandmother?

Ans. The sparrows also joined the mourning. They sat in thousands around her dead body. They did not chirrup. Nor did they touch the crumbs of bread thrown to them. They flew away quietly when the dead body was carried off for cremation.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Describe in brief the pen picture of the narrator's grandmother highlighting her noble qualities.

Ans. The narrator's grandmother was a true picture of love, affection and care. She had all those virtues which grandmothers generally have for their grandsons. She was highly religious, kind hearted but a conservative lady.

The grandmother presented a picture of peace and contentment. Her spotless white dress and her silver hair reflected her spiritual beauty. The grandmother was not physically very attractive. She had deep love and affection for her grandson. She got him ready for school. She accompanied him to his school, stayed there and came back home with him.

She was a very religious lady. She was always telling the beads of her rosary. She had compassion even for animals and birds. She fed the village dogs. She took to feeding the sparrows in the city. But the grandmother was a conservative lady. She did not like the English language and science. She hated music. She associated music with harlots and beggars.

2. Describe how the common bond of friendship was broken when the narrator's parents sent for them in the city?

Ans. The narrator and his grandmother had developed a unique relationship in the village. He was completely dependent on her but soon a turning point came in the relationship. His parents sent for them to come and live in the city with them. He went to an English school by bus. The grandmother's role was now marginalised. She could not accompany him to his school as she did in the village nor could she help him in his studies. She had no knowledge of English and science. She hated music. She was very sad that they gave lessons in music at the school. She rarely talked to him after that.

The narrator went up to the university. It separated them even more. They now saw less of each other. In the end, she accepted her loneliness quietly. She did not show any emotion when he left for abroad. So she accepted the separation without any complaints or regrets.

3. Describe the unique relationship of the grandmother with the sparrows. How did the sparrows mourn her death?

Ans. The grandmother had love and compassion even for animals. In the village, she fed the street dogs. In the city, she took to feeding the sparrows. She would sit in the verandah. She would break the bread into small bits. She used to throw the crumbs to the sparrows. Hundreds of sparrows would gather around her. Some of them perched on her legs and shoulders. She never shooed them away. It was the happiest half an hour of the afternoon for her.

The sparrows paid their silent tribute on her death. They gathered around her dead body. They were in a mourning mood. They did not chirrup as usual, nor did they take any notice of the crumbs of bread thrown to them. They flew away silently when the dead body was carried off on a wooden stretcher for cremation. In this way, they paid their silent love and tribute to the old lady.