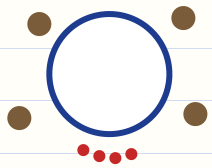
FREE SAMPLE | Buy the complete pack at notesbazar.in | page 1 of 13

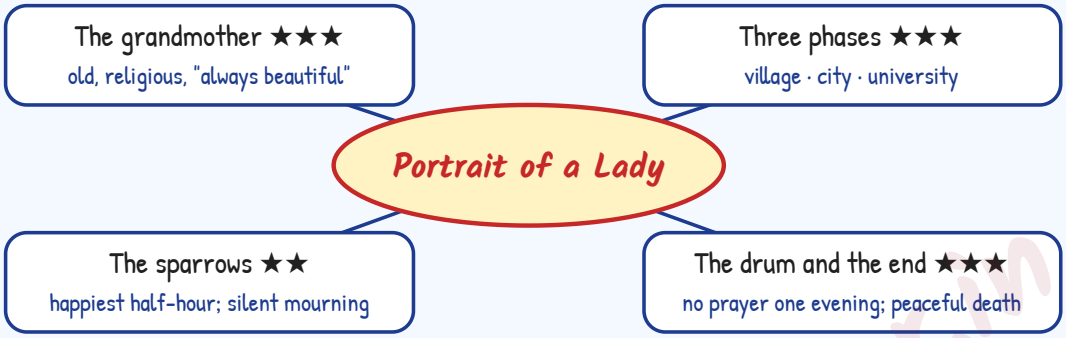
Chapter 1
The Portrait of a Lady



"pure white serenity"

Khushwant Singh · NCERT Hornbill, Reprint 2026-27 · CBSE 2026-27

Chapter map (★ = most important for exams)



About the author

Khushwant Singh (1915–2014) was a well-known Indian novelist, historian, journalist and humorist, editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, and author of *Train to Pakistan*. This is an affectionate **pen-portrait of his grandmother**, written from memory, tracing their changing relationship from his childhood in the village to her death.

What is inside

1. Concept notes: story in brief, themes, characters, key lines
2. NCERT exercises, fully solved
3. **Important exam questions, fully solved**
4. Quick-reference sheet and 3 extract-based sets; practice A–G, 20 MCQs, 6 A–R, answers, summary

Colour code used

red = key term green = definition
purple = sub-heading black = explanation
"*purple Kalam*" = a line quoted from the text

★ **Exam tip:** Class 11 exam pattern for Hornbill: one prose extract (3 marks), short answers (3 marks, 40–50 words) and a long answer (6 marks, 120–150 words). Most asked here: the three phases of the relationship, why the grandmother was disturbed, her character, the sparrows.

Theme in one line: a loving bond between a boy and his deeply religious grandmother, which loosens as he grows up and modern education separates them, but never loses its affection.

The three phases (NCERT asks this)

phase	where	relationship
1	village	constant companions: she wakes him, takes him to the temple school, feeds the village dogs

SAMPLE - notesbazar.in

2	city, English school	"a turning-point": she cannot help with lessons; dislikes science and music; feeds sparrows
3	university	he gets his own room: "the common link of friendship was snapped"; she accepts seclusion
after	abroad 5 years, return	no tears at parting; on his return she sings with a drum, then dies peacefully

I.1 The story in brief ★★

The grandmother

- The author's grandmother had been **old and wrinkled for the twenty years** he had known her. The idea that she was once young and pretty was **"almost revolting"** to the children; her stories of childhood games seemed absurd, like "the fables of the Prophets".
- His grandfather's portrait (big turban, long white beard) made him look **"at least a hundred years old"**, not the kind of man to have a wife and children.
- She was short, fat and slightly bent; her face **"a criss-cross of wrinkles running from everywhere to everywhere"**. She hobbled in **spotless white**, one hand on her waist, the other **telling the beads of her rosary**, lips moving in inaudible prayer. *"She could never have been pretty; but she was always beautiful."* She was like **"the winter landscape in the mountains, an expanse of pure white serenity breathing peace and contentment"**.

Phase 1 · The village

- His parents went to the city and left him with her; they were **good friends**. She woke him, recited her morning prayer while bathing and dressing him, gave him his slate, ink-pot and pen, and a stale chapatti with butter and sugar.
- She went with him to the school **attached to the temple**, read the scriptures inside while children learnt the alphabet and prayer, and fed **stale chapattis to the village dogs**, who followed them home growling and fighting.

Phase 2 · The city ("a turning-point")

- In the city he went to an **English school** by motor bus; she could not go with him. With no dogs in the streets, she took to **feeding sparrows** in the courtyard.
- She was unhappy with what he learnt: English words, **the law of gravity, Archimedes' Principle, the world being round**. She could not help him, did not believe in these things, and was distressed that there was **no teaching about God and the scriptures**.
- When he took **music lessons**, she was very disturbed: music had **"lewd associations"**, "the monopoly of harlots and beggars". Her silence meant disapproval; she rarely talked to him after that.

Phase 3 · The university

- At university he got a room of his own: *"The common link of friendship was snapped."* She **"accepted her seclusion with resignation"**, spinning at her **spinning-wheel** and reciting prayers from

Sample · notesbazar.in

sunrise to sunset.

- In the afternoon she fed the **sparrows**; hundreds gathered, **"a veritable bedlam of chirrupings"**, perching on her legs, shoulders and head. It was **"the happiest half-hour of the day"** for her.

Going abroad and coming back

- When he left for **five years** abroad, she showed no emotion at the station; her lips moved in prayer. She silently kissed his forehead; he cherished the **"moist imprint"** as perhaps their last physical contact.
- But she met him on his return, **"did not look a day older"**, clasped him while reciting prayers, and fed the sparrows longer, with **"frivolous rebukes"**.
- That evening **she did not pray**: she gathered the neighbourhood women and for hours **thumped the sagging skins of a dilapidated drum**, singing of the **home-coming of warriors**. It was the first time he had known her not to pray.

Her death and the sparrows

- Next morning she had a mild fever; the doctor said it would pass, but she said **her end was near**. Having omitted to pray, she would not waste more time talking. She lay praying and telling her beads until her lips stopped and the **rosary fell** from her lifeless fingers; **"a peaceful pallor"** spread on her face.
- She was laid on the ground in a **red shroud**. In the evening, in the golden light of sunset, **thousands of sparrows** sat silently on the verandah and in her room. **"There was no chirruping."** They ignored the bread the mother threw, and flew away quietly when the body was carried off. Next morning the sweeper swept the crumbs into the dustbin.

1.2 Themes, title and characters ★★★

Themes

1. **A changing relationship**: from inseparable companions to distance, but with lasting love.
2. **Generation gap**: traditional, religious values vs modern, Western, scientific education.
3. **Old age and acceptance**: she accepts loneliness and death with dignity and resignation.
4. **Faith and spirituality**: prayer, rosary, scriptures shape her whole life.
5. **Love for all creatures**: dogs, sparrows; and the sparrows' silent grief at her death.

Significance of the title

The story is a **"portrait"**, a vivid word-picture, of the author's grandmother: her looks, habits, faith and character. The word **"Lady"** shows respect: she is dignified, graceful and strong. Like the grandfather's portrait above the mantelpiece, this portrait preserves her memory.

> ★ ***Exam tip:*** For "Was she a strong character?" give instances: she accepts seclusion with resignation; shows no emotion at parting; disapproves silently but firmly; foretells her death calmly; dies praying.

Characters

The grandmother

Deeply religious (always praying, rosary, scriptures, temple school); **kind and loving** (cares for the boy,

feeds dogs and sparrows); **traditional** (dislikes English education and music); **dignified and strong** (accepts loneliness, shows no sentiment, faces death calmly); "always beautiful" in her serenity.

The author (Khushwant Singh)

As a child he loves her and depends on her; as he grows, modern education draws him away. Yet he remembers her with **affection, humour and deep respect**, and is moved by her death.

The sparrows

Her companions in loneliness; at her death thousands sit in silence and ignore the bread: a moving symbol of **love returned**.

The grandfather and the parents

The grandfather is only a portrait; the parents live in the city and later take the boy there.

Three reasons she was disturbed (NCERT)

- She could not help him with his lessons (English).
- She did not believe in Western science; there was no teaching about God and the scriptures.
- He was taught music, which she associated with harlots and beggars.

1.3 Key lines explained and words ★★

Lines the examiner loves

"As for my grandmother being young and pretty, the thought was almost revolting." The children could not imagine her as anything but old.

"Her face was a criss-cross of wrinkles running from everywhere to everywhere." Humorous exaggeration of her age.

"She could never have been pretty; but she was always beautiful." Her beauty was inner: serenity, faith and goodness.

"...like the winter landscape in the mountains, an expanse of pure white serenity breathing peace and contentment." Simile: white clothes, white hair, calm spirit.

"That was a turning-point in our friendship." The move to the city began the distance.

"The common link of friendship was snapped." At university they lived separate lives.

"My grandmother accepted her seclusion with resignation." She did not complain about loneliness.

"...a veritable bedlam of chirrupings." The noisy joy of the sparrows around her.

"...I cherished the moist imprint as perhaps the last sign of physical contact between us." He feared he would not see her again.

"There was no chirruping." The sparrows mourned her silently.

Words and expressions (NCERT "Notice these")

expression	meaning in the text
the thought was almost revolting	the idea was nearly disgusting, unacceptable
an expanse of pure white serenity	a wide, calm, peaceful whiteness

SAMPLE · notesbazar.in

a turning-point	a time of important change
accepted her seclusion with resignation	accepted loneliness without complaint
a veritable bedlam of chirrupings	a real uproar of bird calls
frivolous rebukes	light-hearted, playful scolding
the sagging skins of the dilapidated drum	the loose, worn skins of an old, broken drum
hobbled / puckered / pallor	walked with difficulty / wrinkled / paleness

Style and devices

- **Gentle humour**: the grandfather "looked as if he could only have lots and lots of grandchildren".
- **Simile**: like the winter landscape; **hyperbole**: wrinkles "from everywhere to everywhere".
- **Contrast**: pretty vs beautiful; prayer vs singing; noisy vs silent sparrows.
- **Past perfect** for the distant past ("She had been old…").

> ✗ **Don't do this:** She sang of the **home-coming of warriors**, not a festival. The sparrows were silent and **ignored** the bread. He went abroad for **five** years.

NCERT exercises, fully solved

Understanding the text: mention

1. The three phases of the author's relationship with his grandmother before he left the country to study abroad.

> **Ans.** (1) **Village**: constant companions; she got him ready, went to the temple school with him, and they fed the village dogs together. (2) **City**: a turning-point; she could not accompany him to the English school or help with lessons, and disapproved of science and music; they talked less. (3) **University**: he got his own room and "the common link of friendship was snapped"; she accepted her seclusion.

2. Three reasons why the author's grandmother was disturbed when he started going to the city school.

> **Ans.** (1) She could not help him with his lessons in English. (2) She did not believe in the Western science taught there and was distressed that there was no teaching about God and the scriptures. (3) He was given music lessons, which she associated with harlots and beggars.

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

> **Ans.** (1) Spinning at her spinning-wheel from sunrise to sunset. (2) Reciting prayers and telling the beads of her rosary. (3) Feeding the sparrows in the afternoon, the happiest half-hour of her day.

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

> **Ans.** On the evening of his return she **did not pray** for the first time; she gathered the neighbourhood women and for hours thumped an old drum, singing of the home-coming of warriors. Next morning, though the doctor called her fever mild, she said her end was near and, refusing to talk, prayed until she died.

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

> **Ans.** Thousands of sparrows sat **silently** on the verandah and in her room around her body; there was no chirruping. They ignored the bread crumbs thrown to them and flew away quietly when her body was carried away.

Talking about the text

1. The author's grandmother was a religious person. How do we know this?

> **Ans.** Her lips always moved in prayer; she told the beads of her rosary; she recited her morning prayer while getting him ready; she read the scriptures at the temple school; she disliked a school without teaching about God;

SAMPLE · notesbazar.in

she prayed while spinning; she prayed even at the station and on his return; she died praying, regretting the one evening she had missed prayer.

2. Describe the changing relationship between the author and his grandmother. Did their feelings change?

Ans. In the village they were inseparable friends. In the city the English school, science and music created distance. At university the link snapped and they lived separate lives. But their **feelings did not change**: she kissed him at parting, met him at the station after five years, celebrated his return with song, and he remembers her with deep love and respect.

3. Would you agree that the grandmother was a person strong in character? Give instances.

Ans. Yes. She accepted her seclusion with resignation; showed no emotion when he left for five years; disapproved firmly but silently of music; held to her faith in a changing world; foretold her death calmly and refused to waste her last hours; and died peacefully praying. Her strength lay in quiet dignity.

4. Have you known someone like the grandmother? Do you feel a sense of loss?

Ans. Sample: My grandfather, a retired teacher, woke at five, read the Gita, fed the pigeons on the roof and told me stories every night. As I grew busy with school he spent more time alone with his books. When he passed away last year, the pigeons kept coming to the roof for days. I miss his stories and his calm presence, and I feel the same loss the author describes.

Thinking about language

1–4. Language used with the grandmother; your own; "a dilapidated drum" in your language; a homecoming song.

Ans. (1) Most likely **Punjabi** (the family was Sikh and from Punjab), not English. (2) Sample: Hindi / the home language, which elders understand and which carries respect and affection. (3) Hindi: *"tuta-phuta dhol"* / *"jarjar dholak"*. (4) Sample: the folk song *"Ghar aaja pardesi"*, about a loved one returning home.

Working with words

I. Match the senses of "tell".

Ans. "telling the beads" = **count while reciting** (2); "I would tell her English words" = **make something known in words** (1); "at her age one could never tell" = **be sure** (3); "She told us that her end was near" = **give information to somebody** (4).

II. Locate "take to" and "take ill".

Ans. "she **took to** feeding sparrows in the courtyard of our city house" (began it as a habit); "The next morning she **was taken ill**" (suddenly became ill).

III. Tick the words that refer to a manner of walking.

Ans. shuffle, stride, waddle, swagger, trudge (also slog, in the sense of walking with effort). Not walking: haggle, ride, wriggle, paddle (paddle = walk in shallow water; also acceptable).

Noticing form

1. Notice the past perfect forms.

Ans. "had been old", "had known", "had once been", "had even had", "had finished", "had taught", "had lit": the past perfect (*had + past participle*) shows an action completed **before** another past time; it is used to recount the distant past.

SAMPLE · notesbazar.in

Things to do

1. Write a short description of someone you liked a lot.

> **Ans.** My Nani. My grandmother was a tiny woman with silver hair tied in a neat bun and spectacles that kept slipping down her nose. Every summer vacation I stayed with her in her old house in Ajmer. She woke at dawn, lit a lamp before the tulsi plant and hummed bhajans while making parathas for me. In the afternoons she taught me to play cards and cheated cheerfully when she was losing. Every evening she sat on the terrace and fed the squirrels, who knew her voice. She never raised her voice at anyone, yet everyone in the lane came to her for advice. She passed away three years ago, but whenever I smell ghee parathas I can still hear her humming.

Important exam questions, fully solved

Exam-style questions in the Class 11 pattern (prose extract 3 marks; short answer 3 marks, 40–50 words; long answer 6 marks, 120–150 words), each with a complete model answer.

A. Extract-based questions (3 marks)

> She had always been short and fat and slightly bent. Her face was a criss-cross of wrinkles running from everywhere to everywhere. No, we were certain she had always been as we had known her. Old, so terribly old that she could not have grown older, and had stayed at the same age for twenty years.

(i) What do "criss-cross of wrinkles running from everywhere to everywhere" suggest? (ii) Why were the children certain she had always been old? (iii) Identify the literary device in the second sentence. [3]

> **Ans.** (i) Her face was covered all over with deep, crossing wrinkles: she was very old. (ii) For the twenty years they had known her she had looked the same, so they could not imagine her young. (iii) Hyperbole (exaggeration, used humorously).

> When I went up to University, I was given a room of my own. The common link of friendship was snapped. My grandmother accepted her seclusion with resignation. She rarely left her spinning-wheel to talk to anyone.

(i) What was "the common link of friendship"? (ii) What does "accepted her seclusion with resignation" reveal about her? (iii) How did she spend her time now? [3]

> **Ans.** (i) The shared room and daily companionship that had kept them together. (ii) She accepted loneliness calmly, without complaint: she was strong and dignified. (iii) Spinning at her wheel and reciting prayers from sunrise to sunset, and feeding sparrows in the afternoon.

> 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. We felt sorry for the birds and my mother fetched some bread for them.

(i) Why were the sparrows there? (ii) What does "There was no chirruping" show? (iii) How did the sparrows react to the bread? [3]

> **Ans.** (i) They had come to mourn the grandmother who had fed them every day. (ii) The birds were silent in grief: they were mourning her. (iii) They took no notice of it and flew away quietly when her body was carried off.

SAMPLE · notesbazar.in

B. Short answer questions (3 marks, 40–50 words)

Why was the author's grandmother "always beautiful" though she "could never have been pretty"? [3]

Ans. Prettiness is outward, and she was old, bent and wrinkled. But she was beautiful in spirit: dressed in spotless white, with silver hair, praying constantly, she radiated peace and contentment, like "the winter landscape in the mountains, an expanse of pure white serenity". Her beauty came from her serenity and goodness.

Why was the move to the city "a turning-point" in their friendship? [3]

Ans. In the city he went to an English school by motor bus, so she no longer accompanied him. She could not help with his lessons, disapproved of science and music, and found no teaching of God there. They shared a room but spent less time together, and their friendship began to weaken.

How did the grandmother react when the author went abroad and when he returned? [3]

Ans. At the station she showed no emotion; her lips moved in prayer and she silently kissed his forehead. On his return after five years she met him at the station, clasped him while praying, fed the sparrows longer, and that evening celebrated by singing of warriors' home-coming on an old drum.

How did the grandmother know her end was near, and how did she face it? [3]

Ans. Though the doctor called her fever mild, she sensed her end, perhaps because she had missed her prayers the previous evening. She refused to waste time talking, lay peacefully praying and telling her beads until her lips stopped and the rosary fell. She faced death with calm faith and acceptance.

C. Long answer questions (6 marks, 120–150 words)

Draw a character sketch of the author's grandmother. [6]

Ans. The grandmother is the centre of Khushwant Singh's affectionate portrait. Physically she is short, fat, bent and deeply wrinkled, dressed in spotless white, yet "always beautiful" because of her serenity. She is **deeply religious**: she prays constantly, tells her rosary, reads scriptures and is upset that the English school teaches nothing about God. She is **loving and caring**: she brings up the boy in the village, takes him to school and feeds the village dogs and later the sparrows, which gather round her in hundreds. She is **traditional**, disapproving of Western science and of music. She is **strong and dignified**: she accepts her loneliness with resignation, shows no emotion at parting, and celebrates his return with joyful song. Finally she foresees her death calmly and dies praying, mourned even by the sparrows. She is a portrait of quiet faith, love and inner strength.

Trace the changing relationship between the author and his grandmother. Did their love change? [6]

Ans. The relationship passes through clear stages. In the **village** they were "good friends" and constantly together: she woke and dressed him, went with him to the temple school and shared the chapattis with the dogs on the way home. The move to the **city** was "a turning-point". He went to an English school by bus; she could not help with English or science and was disturbed by his music lessons, so they spoke less. At **university** he got a room of his own and "the common link of friendship was snapped"; she accepted her seclusion with resignation, spinning and praying. Yet their **love never died**. She kissed him silently when he left for five years and met him on his return; that evening she celebrated with a drum and song. The author's tender memory, and the sparrows' silent mourning, show a bond that changed in form but not in feeling.

SAMPLE · notesbazar.in

Quick-reference sheet

point	remember
author	Khushwant Singh; affectionate pen-portrait of his grandmother
looks	old for 20 years; short, fat, bent; wrinkles; spotless white; rosary
beauty	"never … pretty; but … always beautiful"; winter landscape simile
village	temple school; slate, ink-pot; stale chapattis; village dogs
city	"a turning-point"; English school, motor bus; sparrows
disturbed by	English, gravity, Archimedes, round world; no God; music
university	own room; "link … snapped"; seclusion with resignation; spinning-wheel
sparrows	"a veritable bedlam of chirrupings"; happiest half-hour
abroad	five years; no emotion; "moist imprint"
return	"did not look a day older"; frivolous rebukes
last evening	no prayer; drum; songs of home-coming of warriors
death	mild fever; prays; rosary falls; red shroud; silent sparrows

Extract-based practice

Set 1.

> My grandmother always went to school with me because the school was attached to the temple. The priest taught us the alphabet and the morning prayer. While the children sat in rows on either side of the verandah singing the alphabet or the prayer in a chorus, my grandmother sat inside reading the scriptures.

(i) Why did the grandmother go to school with the author? (ii) What did the priest teach? (iii) What was the grandmother doing meanwhile?

Set 2.

> One day I announced that we were being given music lessons. She was very disturbed. To her music had lewd associations. It was the monopoly of harlots and beggars and not meant for gentlefolk. She said nothing but her silence meant disapproval.

(i) Why was the grandmother disturbed? (ii) What does "lewd associations" mean? (iii) How did she show her disapproval?

Set 3.

> In the evening a change came over her. She did not pray. She collected the women of the neighbourhood, got an old drum and started to sing. For several hours she thumped the sagging skins of the dilapidated drum and sang of the home-coming of warriors.

(i) What was the "change"? (ii) Why did she sing of warriors' home-coming? (iii) Choose the meaning of "dilapidated": (a) new (b) old and broken (c) loud (d) decorated.

Practice set: test yourself *Exam-style*

Try every question before looking at the answers at the end of the chapter. 53 or more out of 66 means you are ready for the exam.

A. Fill in the blanks (1 mark each)

1. The author had known his grandmother as old and wrinkled for _____ years.

SAMPLE · notesbazar.in

2. The grandmother always dressed in spotless _____.
3. In the village, the school was attached to the _____.
4. The grandmother fed stale chapattis to the village _____.
5. In the city, she took to feeding _____.
6. At university the author was given a room of his _____.
7. The author went abroad for _____ years.
8. Her body was covered with a _____ shroud.

B. True or false? (1 mark each)

1. The children found it easy to imagine their grandmother young.
2. The grandmother helped the author with his English lessons.
3. She approved of the author's music lessons.
4. She cried at the railway station when he left for abroad.
5. Feeding sparrows was the happiest half-hour of her day.
6. On the evening of his return she sang instead of praying.
7. The doctor said her fever was serious.
8. The sparrows ate the bread thrown by the author's mother.

C. Very short answer (1 mark each)

1. How did the grandfather look in his portrait?
2. What did the grandmother give the author for breakfast?
3. How did the author travel to the English school?
4. Name two things taught at the English school that upset her.
5. What did she do from sunrise to sunset after he went to university?
6. What did the author cherish at the station?
7. What did she sing about on the drum?
8. What happened to the bread crumbs the next morning?

D. Short answer I (3 marks each)

1. Why did the author find it hard to believe his grandmother had once been young and pretty?
2. Describe the grandmother's routine with the author in the village.
3. Why did the grandmother stop talking much to the author in the city?
4. Describe the scene when she fed the sparrows.
5. Why did the author think the kiss at the station might be their last contact?
6. What is the significance of the title?

Answer in 40–50 words.

E. Long answer (6 marks each)

1. How does the story show the generation gap between the author and his grandmother?
2. "The grandmother was a person strong in character." Discuss.
3. Describe the last day of the grandmother's life and the sparrows' mourning.

Answer in 120–150 words.

Sample notesbazar.in

FREE SAMPLE | Buy the complete pack at notesbazar.in | page 11 of 13

F. Intertextual long answer (6 marks each)

1. Compare how "The Portrait of a Lady" and "A Photograph" treat memory and loss of a loved one.

G. HOTS (higher-order thinking)

1. Was the grandmother right to oppose music lessons? Give your view.
2. Why do you think the sparrows mourned her?
3. How can the young keep close to elderly family members?

★ **Exam tip:** Long answers: a direct opening line, three points with a quoted phrase each, a one-line conclusion.

Assertion–Reason (6)

(a) Both true, R explains A. (b) Both true, R does not explain A. (c) A true, R false. (d) A false, R true.

1. A: The grandmother went to school with the author. R: The school was attached to the temple.
2. A: The move to the city was a turning-point. R: She could no longer go to school with him.
3. A: She approved of music. R: Music was taught at the temple.
4. A: She accepted her seclusion with resignation. R: She was strong and dignified.
5. A: She did not pray on the evening of his return. R: She was celebrating his home-coming.
6. A: The sparrows ate the bread. R: They were hungry.

Key: 1 (a) · 2 (a) · 3 (d) · 4 (a) · 5 (a) · 6 (d)

My score (fill in after checking the answers)

Section	A /8	B /8	C /8	D /18	E /18	F /6	G (bonus)	Total /66
My marks								

Rough work

20 MCQs

1. "The Portrait of a Lady" is written by:
   (a) Ruskin Bond (b) R.K. Narayan (c) Khushwant Singh (d) Mulk Raj Anand
2. The grandfather in the portrait looked at least:
   (a) a hundred years old (b) fifty years old (c) seventy years old (d) young
3. The grandmother's face was "a criss-cross of":
   (a) lines of light (b) smiles (c) scars (d) wrinkles
4. She was compared to:
   (a) a summer garden (b) the winter landscape in the mountains (c) a river (d) a candle
5. In the village the school was attached to the:
   (a) gurdwara hall (b) temple (c) market (d) mosque
6. On the way to school she carried stale chapattis for the:
   (a) cows (b) beggars (c) sparrows (d) village dogs

SAMPLE · notesbazar.in

FREE SAMPLE | Buy the complete pack at notesbazar.in | page 12 of 13

7. The move to the city was called:
(a) a turning-point in their friendship (b) a happy change (c) a tragedy (d) a holiday

8. The author went to the English school by:
(a) cycle (b) tonga (c) motor bus (d) foot

9. She was distressed that the English school taught nothing about:
(a) sports (b) music (c) maths (d) God and the scriptures

10. To her, music was associated with:
(a) prayer (b) harlots and beggars (c) festivals (d) soldiers

11. At university:
(a) they grew closer (b) she visited daily (c) the common link of friendship was snapped (d) she moved in with him

12. She accepted her seclusion with:
(a) resignation (b) anger (c) tears (d) complaints

13. Her happiest half-hour was spent:
(a) praying (b) feeding sparrows (c) spinning (d) talking

14. The author went abroad for:
(a) three years (b) two years (c) five years (d) ten years

15. At the station she:
(a) wept (b) scolded him (c) did not come (d) showed no emotion and prayed

16. On his return she fed the sparrows with:
(a) frivolous rebukes (b) anger (c) silence (d) prayers

17. That evening she sang of the:
(a) home-coming of warriors (b) harvest (c) monsoon (d) gods

18. She knew her end was near and:
(a) called a doctor (b) left home (c) sang again (d) refused to waste time talking and prayed

19. Her body was covered with a:
(a) white sheet (b) red shroud (c) shawl (d) flag

20. The sparrows mourned her by:
(a) chirping loudly (b) flying away at once (c) sitting in silence and ignoring the bread (d) eating crumbs

1 (c) · 2 (a) · 3 (d) · 4 (b) · 5 (b) · 6 (d) · 7 (a) · 8 (c) · 9 (d) · 10 (b) · 11 (c) · 12 (a) · 13 (b) · 14 (c) · 15 (d) · 16 (a) · 17 (a) · 18 (d) · 19 (b) · 20 (c)

Answers

Extract sets. Set 1: (i) the school was attached to the temple (ii) the alphabet and the morning prayer (iii) sitting inside reading the scriptures. Set 2: (i) she thought music was not for respectable people (ii) suggestions of vulgarity, indecency (iii) by silence; she rarely talked to him after that. Set 3: (i) she did not pray; she sang with a drum (ii) to celebrate her grandson's return home (iii) (b).

A. 1. twenty 2. white 3. temple 4. dogs 5. sparrows 6. own 7. five 8. red

B. 1. F 2. F 3. F 4. F 5. T 6. T 7. F (mild) 8. F

C. 1. big turban, loose clothes, long white beard, at least a hundred years old 2. a thick stale chapatti with butter and sugar 3. by motor bus 4. any two: English words, the law of gravity, Archimedes' Principle, the world being round 5. spun at her spinning-wheel and recited prayers 6. the moist imprint of her kiss on his forehead 7. the home-coming of warriors 8. the sweeper swept them into the dustbin

D. 1. she had looked old for 20 years; grandfather looked 100; her childhood games seemed absurd 2. woke, bathed, dressed him with prayer; slate, ink-pot; breakfast; school; dogs 3. she could not help with English or science; disliked music; no God taught 4. hundreds of sparrows on legs, shoulders, head; "veritable bedlam"; she smiled 5. he would be away five years; she was very old 6. p. 3

SAMPLE · notesbazar.in

E. 1. temple vs English school; science vs scriptures; music; separate rooms 2. seclusion with resignation; no emotion at parting; firm silent disapproval; calm death 3. drum, singing, mild fever, prayer, rosary falls, red shroud, silent sparrows ignore bread

F. 1. both written from the memory of a dead loved one: grandmother, mother; the portrait / the photograph preserve them; the author's tender humour, the poet's "silence silences"; both show the pain of time and loss

G. 1. own view: her fear came from her time's beliefs; music is an art 2. she had fed and loved them daily; animals sense love 3. talk daily, share meals, learn from their stories, help with technology

Last-night summary

- Khushwant Singh's portrait of his grandmother: old for twenty years, wrinkled, in white, praying; "never … pretty; but … always beautiful".
- Village: companions; temple school; dogs. City: "a turning-point"; English school; sparrows.
- Disturbed by English, science (gravity, Archimedes), no God, and music ("harlots and beggars").
- University: "the common link of friendship was snapped"; seclusion with resignation; spinning-wheel; sparrows, "bedlam of chirrupings".
- Abroad five years: no emotion, a silent kiss; return: drum, songs of warriors' home-coming, no prayer.
- Mild fever; she foresees death, prays, dies; red shroud; thousands of silent sparrows ignore the bread.

SAMPLE · notesbazar.in