



Notes

## 6

## MY GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE

What are the things your grandmother did for you when you were a child? What memories do you have of the time you spent with her?

Now, let us read the poem 'My Grandmother's House'. The poet remembers her grandmother and wishes that she were alive to love her, to make her feel wanted. Here is the poem.

There is a house now far away where once  
 I received love..... That woman died,  
 The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved  
 Among books, I was then too young  
 To read, and my blood turned cold like the moon  
 How often I think of going  
 There, to peer through blind eyes of windows or  
 Just listen to the frozen air,  
 Or in wild despair, pick an armful of  
 Darkness to bring it here to lie  
 Behind my bedroom door like a brooding  
 Dog... you cannot believe, darling,  
 Can you, that I lived in such a house and  
 Was proud, and loved.... I who have lost  
 My way and beg now at strangers' doors to  
 Receive love, at least in small change?

We will now divide the poem into three parts and read the first part once again.

- *Kamla Das*



Notes

**DISCUSSION**

There is a house now far away where once  
I received love..... That woman died,  
The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved  
Among books, I was then too young  
To read, and my blood turned cold like the moon.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.1**

Answer the following:

1. What happened to the house after the grandmother died?
2. Why was the poet not able to read the books?

**DISCUSSION**

Look at the expression “my blood turned cold like the moon”. The poet is comparing the coldness of blood with the moon.

She used the word like to make the comparison. A comparison of two things using like or as is called a ‘simile’. A simile is used to highlight a particular quality, characteristic or feature of something.

Example : He is as brave as a lion.

The place was silent like a grave.

Now, let us go on to the next part of the poem. Read it once or twice and answer the questions that follow.

How often I think of going  
There, to peer through blind eyes of windows or  
Just listen to the frozen air,  
Or in wild despair, pick an armful of  
Darkness to bring it here to lie  
Behind my bedroom door like a brooding  
Dog...

Peer : look very carefully

Despair : without hope

Brooding : thinking



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.2

1. Complete the following :

The poet wants to go back to the house

- (i) to peer .....
- (ii) to listen .....
- (iii) to pick .....

2. Look at the phrase 'blind eyes of windows'. Window is a non-living object. In the poem, the window has been given a human physical feature i.e. 'blind eye'. What do we call this poetic transformation? (You can go back to the poem 'Leisure' for a clue). Why are the eyes of windows described as blind?

3. Why is the air in grandmother's house described as frozen?

4. Pick out the correct alternatives in (a) and (b).

- (a) 'an armful of darkness' means .....

- (i) old memories of the grandmother's house.
- (ii) unhappy days.
- (iii) some dark object from the house.

- (b) 'to lie behind my bedroom door like a brooding dog' means that .....

- (i) the memories will always remain with the poet.
- (ii) the memories will lie uncared for in a corner.
- (iii) the memories are as unimportant as a dog.

## DISCUSSION

Now, we will read the third part of the poem and answer the questions that follow.

You cannot believe, darling,  
Can you, that I lived in such a house and  
Was proud, and loved.... I who have lost  
My way and beg now at strangers' doors to  
Receive love, at least in small change?



Notes



Notes

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.3**

1. (a) Which words tell you that the poet is talking to some one?  
(b) What is she telling him/her?
2. In the last three lines of the poem, the poet thinks of herself as a beggar.
  - (a) What is she begging for?
  - (b) What does she mean by 'small change'?

**OVERALL QUESTIONS**

1. 'Cold like moon' is a simile. Can you pick out another simile from the poem?
2. The poet thinks of her past. How is her present different from the past?
3. Pick out words from the poem which convey the sense of loss that the poet feels.
4. Read the following sentences:
  - a) Grandparents belong to a different generation and have ideas which may not fit in the modern context.
  - b) One day we too will become old and infirm. We would like to be treated with dignity and affection in our old age.

Suggest two or three ways in which you can show love and concern for the elderly.

**CHECK YOUR ANSWERS****Intext Questions 6.1**

1. The house withdrew into silence.
2. because she was too young.

**Intext Questions 6.2**

1. (i) through blind eyes of windows  
(ii) to the frozen air



Notes

- (iii) an armful of darkness
- 2. Personification. Nothing can be seen through them as there is darkness inside.
- 3. The house is absolutely silent. No one lives there. Even the air does not seem to be moving.
- 4. (a) old memories of the dark house  
(b) the memories will always remain with the poet

**Intext Questions 6.3**

- 1. (a) "You cannot believe, darling."  
(b) That she lived in such a house and was proud, and loved.
- 2. (a) She is begging for love.  
(b) a little love/love in small quantity.

**OVERALL QUESTIONS**

- 1. "...an armful of darkness to lie behind my bedroom door like a brooding dog".
- 2. She remembers her childhood in her grandmother's house when she was loved. She has a deep sense of sorrow in the present because no one loves her now.
- 3. that woman died,  
my blood turned cold,  
frozen air, wild despair,  
armful of darkness.