

EXAM-DAY · 90-MIN REVISION CARD

The Portrait of a Lady (Hornbill)

Print this · Fold it · Carry to the exam-hall gate · Revise once · Then walk in.

FORMULAS & KEY RESULTS

AUTHOR: Khushwant Singh (the 'lady' = his own grandmother).
POEM: 'A Photograph' by Shirley Toulson.

THREE PHASES (lock these): (1) Village togetherness → (2) City distance caused by English/Science/Music education → (3) Going abroad + serene reunion → her death.

GRANDMOTHER'S TRAITS: deeply religious (always telling the beads) · serene ('expanse of pure white serenity', dressed in white) · loving to creatures (dogs in village, sparrows in city) · dignified & uncomplaining.

TURNING POINT / CLIMAX: at her death thousands of sparrows mourn in silence and REFUSE the bread crumbs — they do not eat, then fly away.

KEY DETAIL: her last evening she sang and beat an old drum to celebrate his homecoming (overstraining her heart), then returned to her beads to die.

THEMES: rural-urban shift · the bond eroded by modern Western education · spirituality & dignity of old age · selfless love returned by nature.

DEVICE (prose): vivid imagery + gentle contrast (rural calm vs city distance; serene grandmother vs noisy school).

A PHOTOGRAPH: a sea-holiday snapshot of the poet's MOTHER aged ~12 with cousins Betty & Dolly. **THREE** time-layers: dead sea / mother's later laughter / poet's present grief.

A PHOTOGRAPH key lines: 'terribly transient feet' (life is fleeting, sea endures) · 'both wry / With the laboured ease of loss' (OXYMORON — calm is hard-won) · ending 'silence

TOP 5 PYQ PATTERNS

1 Extract-based comprehension (RTC) from the prose

5 marks · 90% of years

Answer in the text's own words first, then add one inference line about the grandmother's serenity or the rural-urban contrast. Watch for a vocabulary MCQ ('which word means calm/dignity?').

2 Draw a character sketch of the grandmother

6 marks · 70% of years

Name 3-4 traits, give one textual proof each (beads, white serenity, dogs/sparrows, uncomplaining seclusion). Never call her 'beautiful' — say dignified/serene.

3 Trace the three phases of the relationship

6 marks · 60% of years

Village together → city distance (education!) → abroad + reunion → death & sparrows. Don't forget the abroad phase or the education cause.

4 How did the sparrows mourn her death and what does it reveal?

4 marks · 55% of years

Silent gathering → refused bread crumbs → flew away → reveals her love for living things returned by nature.

5 Central idea / key images of 'A Photograph'

4 marks · 55% of years

Three time-layers; theme of transience and loss; explain 'terribly transient feet' and the oxymoron 'the laboured ease of loss'.

90-MIN REVISION FLOW

0-15 min

Re-read the prose summary and lock the THREE phases and their order. Say the timeline aloud three times: village → city → abroad → death.

15-30 min

Write the grandmother's character in 120 words from memory: 4 traits + 1 example each. Check against the topper template.

30-45 min

Write the 'three phases' answer in your own words; underline that the city distance was caused by ENGLISH-SCHOOL education, not a quarrel.

45-60 min

Poem: write the central idea of 'A Photograph' (3 lines) + explain 'terribly transient feet' and 'the laboured ease of loss' (the oxymoron).

60-75 min

Take the 15-MCQ Quick Drill under a 20-minute timer. Target >= 12/15.

75-90 min

Review every wrong answer, re-read the matching notes-slide, and re-write the one answer you scored lowest on. Done.

silences' = grief beyond words.
Theme = transience & loss.

Confidence, not anxiety. You've practised this all year. Trust your steps. Don't change strategy on exam morning.
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