

ENGLISH · CHAPTER 1

The Portrait of a Lady (Hornbill)

A 1-page guide for parents · 90-second read.

EXPECTED MARKS

A well-prepared student should score 8-10 out of 10 on this lesson's questions. Below 5 usually means the student has read the lesson but never practised writing structured answers (point + evidence + explanation).

TIME TO MASTER**5-6 hrs****HELPLINE****70330 05444****WHAT THIS CHAPTER IS, IN PLAIN ENGLISH**

Your child is studying the first prose lesson of the Class 11 English Core reader — a warm, true memoir by the famous Indian writer Khushwant Singh about his own grandmother. The piece traces their relationship through three stages: their close, loving life together in the village (where she took him to school and fed the dogs); the growing distance in the city, where he went to an English school that taught Science and Music she could not relate to; and finally his going abroad and the serene reunion before her death. The most moving moment comes at the end: the hundreds of sparrows the grandmother fed every day gather silently when she dies and refuse to eat the bread crumbs thrown to them. Alongside this prose your child also studies a short poem, 'A Photograph' by Shirley Toulson, about an old seaside snapshot of the poet's own mother — a quiet meditation on how time takes everyone we love. Together the lesson and poem carry roughly 8-10 marks in the Literature section.

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD

- Who is the 'lady' in the title, and why is it a slightly ironic title?
- What were the three phases of the author's relationship with his grandmother?
- Why did they grow apart in the city — was it a quarrel? (Answer: no — it was modern English-school education.)
- What did the sparrows do when the grandmother died, and what does it show?
- In 'A Photograph', whose photograph is it, and what does 'the laboured ease of loss' mean?

WEAK-SPOT INDICATORS

- Thinks the 'lady' is a young, beautiful woman rather than the grandmother.
- Says the city distance was caused by a fight, not by modern education.
- Gets the sparrow ending wrong (says they ate the crumbs / chirped happily).
- Reads 'A Photograph' as being about the poet herself, not her mother; cannot explain the oxymoron 'laboured ease of loss'.

WHEN TO WORRY — AND WHAT TO DO

If your child cannot, in five minutes, write a 120-word portrait of the grandmother WITH two textual examples and explain the three phases, they will lose 5-6 marks here. Literature marks are easy to secure with structured practice. The fix is writing model answers by hand, not just re-reading the chapter.

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