

NCERT Solutions for Class 11 English Hornbill Chapter 1

Question 1.

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

Answer:

The author's grandmother was an extremely old lady with puckered face. The author enjoyed about twenty year's association with her. But during this period his relationship did not remain exactly the same. The initial and first phase of their relationship was when the author was living with her in the village. The relation was most cordial at that time. Rather they were good friends. She always used to accompany the author to his school. She used to get him ready for school.

She would bring his wooden slate, earthen inkpot and a red pen. She would tie them in a bundle and hand it to him. She would serve him breakfast of a thick stale chapatti with a little butter and sugar spread on it. The second phase of their relationship was when the author's parents called them to the city.

That was a turning point in their friendship. Though they shared the same room, his grandmother no longer came to school with him. The author went to an English school in a motor bus. There were no dogs in the streets. So she took to feeding sparrows in the courtyard of their city house. Gradually they started seeing less and less of each other.

For some time, the author's grandmother continued to wake him up to get ready for school. She silently disapproved his schooling and particularly when he started learning music lessons in school. She was distressed that there was no teaching about God and the scriptures. She rarely talked to the author thereafter.

The third phase of their relationship started when the author went up to university. He was given a room of his own. The common link of friendship had been snapped. She felt secluded and remained busy with her spinning-wheel, reciting prayers and feeding the sparrows.

Question 2.

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

Answer:

To the grandmother city school seemed to be totally different from the village school. In the village she would get ready the author for school, serve him with breakfast and always accompanied him to school. But she could not identify at all with what was taught to him at school. So obviously she was disturbed. She was disturbed because she did not believe in the things they taught him at school.

The English words and 'little things' of western science and learning like the law of gravity, Archimedes's principle and the world being round were beyond her comprehension. She felt unhappy because she could not help the author with his lessons.

Secondly, being an orthodox and God-fearing lady, she was distressed that in the city school there was no teaching about God and the holy scriptures. This made her deeply disturbed. But she was most disturbed when the author told her that he was being given music lessons. She was of the opinion that music was related to harlots and beggars only. It was not meant for gentle and civilized people. That is why she silently disapproved it. She nearly stopped talking to her grandson.

Question 3.

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

Answer:

The author's grandmother was an old, affectionate, orthodox and a deeply religious-minded graceful lady. While she was in the village, she would spend her days while looking after her grandson, reciting prayers and feeding the stray dogs. She used to get the author ready for the school. She used to accompany him to his school. She used to say her morning prayers in the hope that the author would learn it by heart.

She would serve him breakfast of a thick stale chapatti with a little butter and sugar spread on it. She would carry several chapattis to feed the village dogs on the way to school. The school was attached to a temple. The grandmother would sit inside the temple reading passages from religious books. Then she would come back to home alongwith her grandson. The dogs would accompany them fighting and growling for the bits of chapattis thrown to them.

When she came to the city, her activities became restricted. As the author went to school in a motor bus, she did not go to school with him. In the absence of dogs, she started feeding sparrows in the courtyard of their city house. She woke up her grandson initially for some time. But gradually she started talking rarely 'with her.

When the author went up to university, she remained secluded. From sunrise to sunset she sat by her wheel spinning and reciting prayers. Only in the afternoon she relaxed for a while to feed the sparrows. The sparrows would sit all over her body, but she never shoo'd them away. She rather enjoyed it.

While the author was going abroad, she came to see him off at the railway station. But her lips were moving in prayer and her mind was lost in prayer. Her fingers remained busy telling the beads of her rosary. While the author came back after five years, he found her reciting her prayers. On the first day of his arrival also her happiest moments were when she was feeding her sparrows.

Question 4.

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

Answer:

The author's grandmother was a God-fearing, orthodox and a religious-minded old lady. But a day before her death, a change came over her. She did not pray. Rather she broke her routine and collected the neighbouring women. She got an old dram and started to sing. For several hours she kept beating the dram. She sang songs about the home coming of warriors. They had to persuade her to stop so that she might not overstrain herself. The odd thing was that it was for the first time that she did not pray.

Question 5.

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

Answer:

When the grandmother had left for her heavenly abode, her dead body was laid on the ground and covered with a red shroud. In the evening they went to her room with a crude stretcher to take her to be cremated. They had to stop half-way in the courtyard. All over the verandah and in her room right up to where she lay dead, thousands of sparrows sat scattered on the floor.

The sparrows were not chirping at all. The author's mother fetched some bread for them. She broke it into little crumbs, the way her grandmother used to do. She then threw the crumbs to them. But the sparrows took no notice of the bread. When the corpse was carried off, the sparrows flew away quietly. Next morning the sweeper swept bread crumbs into the dustbin. This is how the sparrows expressed their sorrow.