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**A Photograph**

**By**

**Shirley Toulson**

1. **Extract based Questions:**
2. ***The cardboard shows me how it was***

***When the two girl cousins went paddling***

***Each one holding one of my mother’s hands,***

***And she the big girl- some twelve years or so.***

***All three stood still to smile through their hair***

***At the uncle with the camera.***

1. What does the cardboard refer to?

The cardboard refers to the photograph.

1. Who was the big girl and how old was she?

The big girl was the poet’s mother who was thirteen years old back than.

1. Who does ‘all three’ refer to here?

All three refers to the poet’s mother and her two cousins.

1. Why did they smile through their hair?

They were smiling through their hair as their Uncle was taking their picture.

1. What had the camera captured?

The camera had captured the picture of the beach holiday the poet’s mother had.

1. Who had taken the photograph?

The poet’s mother’s Uncle had taken the photograph.

1. ***A sweet face, my mother’s that was before I was born***

***And the sea, which appears to have changed less***

***Washed their terribly transient feet.***

1. Where was the poet’s mother when the photograph was clicked?

*The poet’s mother was at the beach when the photograph was taken.*

1. When did this incident take place?

*The incident took place when the poet’s mother was young.*

1. How is the poet able to remember her mother’s childhood?

*Through the photograph taken at that time*

1. What has stood the passage of time and what has not?

*The photograph has stood the passage of time but not the people in the photograph*.

1. What has not changed over the years?

*The sea has not changed over the years.*

1. ***Some twenty- thirty- years later***

***She’d laugh at the snapshot. “See Betty***

***And Dolly,” she’d say, “and look how they***

***Dressed us for the beach.”***

1. Who would laugh at the snapshot after twenty – thirty years?

*The poet’s mother would laugh at the photograph twenty-thirty years later.*

1. How did the mother remember her past?

*The mother remembers the joyful past when she sees the old photograph of hers.*

1. Who were Betty and Dolly?

*Betty and Dolly are the mother’s two cousins.*

4. The poet’s mother would have laughed at the snapshot. What did this laughter indicate?

*The poet's mother laughed at the happy memories of the moments that had passed long back. She looked back to her childhood with nostalgia and remembered the innocent joys of her childhood days.*

1. ***The sea holiday***

***Was her past, mine is her laughter. Both wry***

***With the laboured ease of loss.***

1. Who went for the sea holiday in the past?

*The Poet’s mother and her two cousin sisters.*

1. What does ‘both’ refer to?

*Both refer to the laughter of the mother and her cousins and the mother’s laughter on seeing the photograph.*

1. How does the poet feel when she remembers her mother?

*The poet remembers her mother’s smile and misses her.*

1. Explain, “Both wry with the laboured ease of loss.”

*Both refer to mother’s smile in the photograph and her smile when she sees the photograph some years later. Both the smiles are disappointing as the mother misses the carefree smile of her childhood and the poet misses her mother’s smile as she sees the photograph. Both the mother and daughter had come into terms with their losses with passage of time.*

1. How does the poet feel when she remembers her mother’s sea holiday?

*The poet feels sad on seeing her mother’s photograph as she misses her.*

***5.Now she’s dead nearly as many years***

***As that girl lived. And of this circumstance***

***There is nothing to say at all***

***Its silence silences.***

1. Who does she refer to in the above lines?

She refers to the poet’s mother.

1. How many years has ‘she’ been ‘dead’?

The poet’s mother has been dead for twelve years.

1. What are the poetic devices used in the last line?

Alliteration (repetition of ‘s’ in the words) and personification (silence has been personified)

1. What is the ‘circumstance’ referred to here?

The ‘circumstance’ referred to is the death of the poet’s mother.

**SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS**

***1) What does the word 'cardboard ' denote in the poem? Why has this***

***word been used?***

The word 'cardboard’ suggests a very stiff cardboard. Here the cardboard is a part of the frame that keeps the photograph intact. Its use in the poem is ironical. It keeps the photograph of that twelve-year-old girl safe who herself was “terribly transient”. She had died years ago. But the sea is unchanged.

***2) What has the camera captured?***

The camera has captured all the three girls when they had gone for sea holiday. It has captured the pretty face of the poetess’ mother who was twelve year old. The camera has captured the smiling faces of two girl cousins Betty and Dolly. They were holding the hands of the poetess’ mother in their hands.

***3) What has not changed over the years? Does this suggest something to you?***

The sea has not changed over the years. It brings out the ‘transient' nature of man when compared to nature and its elements. Time spares none. The pretty faces and the feet of the three girls are 'terribly transient' and they had grown older when compared to the unchangeable sea.

***4) The poetess’ mother laughed at the snapshot. What did this laugh indicate?***

The poetess’ mother laughed at the snapshot that was taken years ago. In the photograph she as well as her girl cousins stood at the beach. She laughed at the way all of them were dressed up for the beach. Perhaps they looked funny in their swimming dresses. Her laugh indicates that she was very happy to remember her childhood memories.

***5) What is the meaning of the line "Both wry with the laboured ease of***

***the loss"?***

Both the Poetess’ mother and the Poet suffer a sense of loss. The mother has lost her childhood memory and experience of her past. For the Poetess the smile of her mother has become a thing of the past. Ironically, both suffer to bear this loss with ease.

***6) What does "the circumstance" refer to?***

'This circumstance' refers to the death of the poet's mother. The photograph of the dead mother brings sad feelings in the poetess. But

she has nothing to say at all about this circumstance.

***7) The three stanzas depict three different phases. What are they?***

In the first stanza the poetess’ mother is shown as a twelve-year-old girl with a pretty and laughing face. There she went paddling with two girl cousins. This phase is before the poetess birth. The second phase describes the middle-aged mother laughing at her own photograph. The third phase describes the agony of silence that the death of the mother has left in her life.

***8. The poet talks about a particular cardboard. How is it special to her?***

The poet talks about a particular cardboard to which is pasted her mother’s photograph taken at the sea beach. The mother seems to have been enjoying her sea holiday. The photograph is special as she has lost her mother sometime back and looking at the photograph makes her happy as well as sad.

***9. What can you say about the childhood of the poet’s mother?***

The childhood of the poet’s mother must have been filled with fun and happiness. This is clear from the snapshot of the sea holiday. They are enjoying their holiday. The mother of the poet laughs when looking at the snapshot even after many years have passed since the sea holiday. All this shows us that it was a very pleasant childhood.

***10. What moment does the photograph depict?***

The photograph clicked by. the uncle of the poet’s mother depicts a sea-holiday being enjoyed by the poet’s mother and her two cousins Dolly and Betty. They are full of smiles in their beach dresses, not worrying about their flying hair.

***11. Were the three cousins camera friendly? Who was taking their photograph?***

The three cousins appear to be camera-friendly as they stood at the sea beach without moving when the uncle took the photograph.

***12. The poet’s mother would laugh looking at the photograph?***

The poet’s mother was in middle age when she looked at that photograph and used to laugh remembering those golden days of her childhood, enjoying a sea holiday. She would also laugh at the beach dresses which looked weird after many years.

***13. What impression do you form about the poet’s mother? 7. The sea ‘appears to have changed less’ in comparison to the three girls who enjoyed the sea holiday. Comment.***

The poet’s mother was very pretty at the age of twelve. She enjoyed the sea holiday. This is indicated by the happiness that she gets in middle age after looking at her childhood photograph.

***14. The sea ‘appears to have changed less’ in comparison to the three girls who enjoyed the sea holiday. Comment.***

The poet compares the mortal nature of human beings with the eternal nature of the sea or natural objects. With the passage of time, the poet’s mother died but the vast sea has remained as it was since the photograph was taken.

***15. Why does the poet feel nostalgic?***

The poet sees an old photograph of her mother in which she was standing on the beach with her two cousins — Dolly and Betty. They were enjoying themselves. The photograph captured her mother’s sweet and smiling face. At that time, she was around twelve years old. The poet remembers how her mother used to laugh whenever she looked at that old photograph. But time has passed and now the poet has been left only with the memories of her mother. Thus, she feels nostalgic.

***16. What does the poet say about her mother’s face?***

The poet remarks that her mother had a sweet face, smiling and caring for her cousins who were younger to her. The poet also says that her mother used to enjoy these sea holidays, and would laugh heartily, later on when she saw the photograph.

***17. How does the poet react to her past? Why has she not mentioned anything about her mother’s death?***

The poet remembers with sadness her mother’s laughter which she cannot hear any more. The poet is full of a sense of loss and does not mention about her mother’s death, as it may bring more gloom to her and make her speechless.

***18. Does the poet appear to be grieving?***

The poet is certainly filled with a sense of loss. Her mother is long dead and though the poet has adjusted to her absence, she is not able to completely overcome her loss. She remembers how it used to be when her mother was still with her. The last line is an apt depiction of her state of mind. The loss has filled her life with silence.

***19. Comment on the tone of the poem.***

The tone of the poem is that of sadness. Shirley Toulson looks at an old photograph of her mother and is sadly reminded of her mother who is no more. She mentions about death of her mother indirectly only but this photograph has made her speechless and silent.

***20. Why does the poet feel emotional on seeing the photograph?***

The poet sees happy pictures of her mother enjoying a seaside holiday. Her mother is no longer with her. She has been dead for twelve years.

***21. How has the poet expressed her sense of loss?***

The poet feels a sense of loss by looking at an old photograph of her mother. She remembers her mother’s reaction to that photo later in life. These memories make her personal loss acute.

***22. The poem ‘A Photograph’ contains the line ‘And the sea, which appears to have changed less, washed their terribly transient feet’. The idea conveyed is that human life is subject to change in terms of age and circumstances. A philosopher once said, “Nothing is permanent except change.” Briefly express your views on how a human being should handle change.***

One should handle change by recounting the past, as did the poet in the poem ‘A Photograph’ where she refreshes memories of her dead mother through a photograph taken on a beach holiday.

***23. How did the three girls face the camera?***

They were in their beach clothes. The wind had blown their hair across their faces. They were grinning through their hair.

***24. How did the poet’s mother look then? How did the sea look?***

The poet’s mother looked like a big girl then. She looked beautiful with a sweet face. It was before the poet’s was born. The sea seemed to be washing their feet which are subject to death. However, the sea appears not to have changed.

***25. Why do you think, does the poet’s say nothing about her mother’s death?***

The poet’s has no words to express her reaction to this solemn and painful incident. Death silences everyone. The extensive quietness and prevailing gloom silences her.