



THE VILLAGE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
"We Nurture Dreams"

Grade 12

My mother at sixty six

Question 1:

How does Kamala Das try to put away the thoughts of her ageing mother?

Question 2:

What was the poet's childhood fear?

Or

What were the poet's feelings at the airport? How did she hide them?

Or

What were Kamala Das' fears as a child? Why do they come back when she is going to the airport?

Question 3:

What do the parting words of Kamala Das and her smile signify?

Question 4:

Why has the poet's mother been compared to the 'late winter's moon'?

Question 5:

Why are the young trees described as 'sprinting'?

Question 6:

What do the parting words of the poet and her smile signify?

Question 7:

Why has the poet brought in the image of the merry children Spilling out of their homes?

Question 8:

What is the kind of pain and ache that the poet feels?

Question 9:

Ageing is a natural process; have you ever thought what our elderly parents expect from us?

Question 10.

Give the sum and substance of the Kamala Das's poem My Mother at Sixty Six.

Question 11.

All I did was smile and smile and smile. Why does the poetess repeat the word smile thrice ?

Question 12.

What is the significance of the parting word of the poet and her smile, in "My mother at Sixty-six?" ?

Long Answer Type Questions

Question 1:

Bring out the significance of the smile of the poet as she bade farewell to her mother.

Question 2:

Bring out the poetic devices used in the poem.

Value Based Type Questions

Question 1:

Analyse the concept of losing our dear ones on account of old age in the context of the poem.

Extra Questions Extract Based Type

I. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*"Driving from my parent's
home to Cochin last Friday
morning, I saw my mother, beside me
doze, open mouthed, her face ashen like that
of a corpse and realized with pain
that she was as old as she looked ..."*

Question 1:

Name the poem and the poet.

Question 2:

Where was the poet driving to?

Question 3:

What did she notice about her mother?

Question 4:

Why was her mother's face looking like that of a corpse?

II. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*saw my mother, beside me,
doze, open mouthed, her face ashen like that
of a corpse and realised with pain
that she was as old as she looked but soon
put that thought away,*

Question 1:

What worried the poet when she looked at her mother?

Question 2:

Why was there pain in her realisation?

Question 3:

Why did she put that thought away?

Question 4:

Identify the figure of speech used in these lines.

III. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*And looked out at young
trees sprinting, the merry children spilling
out of their homes, but after the airport's
security check, standing a few yards
away, I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter's moon and felt that old
familiar ache,*

Question 1:

How can the trees sprint?

Question 2:

Why did the poet look at her mother again?

Question 3:

What did she observe?

Question 4:

Identify the figure of speech used in these lines.

IV. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*... but soon
put that thought away, and
looked out at young
trees sprinting, the merry children spilling
out of their homes,...*

Question 1:

What thought did the poet drive away from her mind?

Question 2:

What did she see when she looked out of the car?

Question 3:

How do you know that the joyful scene didn't help her drive away the painful thought from her mind?

Question 4:

What does the phrase trees sprinting signify?

V. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter's moon and felt that old
familiar ache, my childhood's fear,*

Question 1:

Who is 'her'?

Question 2:

Why did the poet look at 'her' again?

Question 3:

What was the poet's childhood fear?

Question 4:

Identify the figure of speech used in these lines.

VI. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*"But after the airport's
security check, standing a few yards
away, I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter's moon."*

Question 1:

Who went for security check and who is 'her' in the above lines?

Question 2:

What does the poet compare her mother's face to and why?

Question 3:

Explain 'late winter's moon'.

VII. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter's moon and felt that did .
familiar ache, my childhood's fear,
but all I said was see you soon, Amma,
all I did was smile and smile and smile*

Question 1:

What was the poet's childhood fear?

Question 2:

What were the poet's parting words?

Question 3:

What is the poetic device used in these lines?

Question 4:

Explain, 'late winter's moon'.



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My mother at sixty six Answer Key

Short Answer Questions

Question 1:

How does Kamala Das try to put away the thoughts of her ageing mother?

Answer:

Kamala Das finds it hard to accept the fact of her mother growing old, as it brings back to her mind her childhood fear of losing her mother. She makes a deliberate effort to drive or put away such thoughts by looking outside the car at the sights passing by.

Question 2:

What was the poet's childhood fear?

Or

What were the poet's feelings at the airport? How did she hide them?

Or

What were Kamala Das' fears as a child? Why do they come back when she is going to the airport?

Answer:

During her childhood, Kamala Das was insecure about losing her mother just as all young children often are. The same old feelings come back to haunt her when she sees her mother's pale and lifeless face. She is tortured by the fact that she may not see her alive again. She hides her feelings by smiling.

Question 3:

What do the parting words of Kamala Das and her smile signify?

Answer:

The parting words of the poet reflect the poet's feeling that she wants to meet her mother again. But she wears a smile on her face to mask her pain and to give hope, happiness and reassurance to her mother.

Question 4:

Why has the poet's mother been compared to the 'late winter's moon'?

Answer:

Just as a 'late winter's moon' looks hazy and appears to lack brightness and lustre due to mist and fog, similarly, the poet's mother, who is now old, looks pale and devoid of exuberance. Her face looks dull and colorless due to old age.

Question 5:

Why are the young trees described as 'sprinting'?

Answer:

The car was moving when the poet looked outside at trees. They appeared to be 'sprinting' because the car was speeding past in the opposite direction. The 'young' trees represented life in contrast to her mother's approaching death.

Question 6:

What do the parting words of the poet and her smile signify?

Answer:

The poet's parting words, 'See you soon, Amma', signify hope and assurance, not only to her but to her mother also, that they will meet again.

Question 7:

Why has the poet brought in the image of the merry children Spilling out of their homes?

Answer:

The poet has used this imagery to bring out the contrast between children, who are energetic and full of life, and her mother, who is old, pale and lifeless.

Question 8:

What is the kind of pain and ache that the poet feels?

Answer:

The poet is pained to see her mother's dull and colorless face. She is hurt to see that her mother's face looks like that of a dead body. She is afraid of the fact that she may not see her alive next time.

Question 9:

Ageing is a natural process; have you ever thought what our elderly parents expect from us?

Answer:

Aged people usually undergo pangs of loneliness and need companionship. They long only for our love, care and attention. They expect their children to share the happenings in their lives with them and take their suggestions for making significant decisions. This will encourage them to live life enthusiastically.

Question 10.

Give the sum and substance of the Kamala Das's poem My Mother at Sixty Six.

Answer:

The mother of the poetess is not yet very old. She is sixty-six. But somehow because of illness or so, she looks pale and ash-coloured like a dead body. The poetess is in a hurry to catch her flight. She is deeply concerned about the aged woman. She can't be sure to find her alive on her next visit. She looks out of the car at the young trees children. By contrast, the sight of the mother looks critical. She casts a last look at the airport. In order to cheer up the old mother, she smiles and smiles to hide her own pain and promises to see the old woman again.

Question 11.

All I did was smile and smile and smile. Why does the poetess repeat the word smile thrice ?

Answer:

The smile of the poetess at the time of parting from her emaciated mother only hides her tears. She is not certain of meeting the old woman again. The mother is already ash-coloured like a dead body.

Question 12.

What is the significance of the parting word of the poet and her smile, in "My mother at Sixty-six" ?

Answer:

See answer in Textbook Questions (Page 226).

My Mother at Sixty-six Extra Questions Long Answer Type

Question 1:

Bring out the significance of the smile of the poet as she bade farewell to her mother.

Answer:

The poet smiles as she bids farewell to her mother and assures her that they would meet again. As she looks at her mother, who looks pale and weak due to old age, her heart is pained to think that her mother might not live long. She smiles, but her smile is only an effort to cover up the hidden fear and pain in her heart.

It is a smile put on deliberately to hide her tears. Her situation is quite ironical. Though she tells her mother that she'll see her soon, she doubts if she will ever see her alive again. The repetition of the word 'smile' shows that it is a long and cheerful one. The smile is also significant because it must have comforted both the mother and the daughter and kindled in them the hope that the mother would survive long enough for the two to meet again.

Question 2:

Bring out the poetic devices used in the poem.

Answer:

The poem 'My Mother at Sixty-Six' captures the complex subtleties of human relationships in a texture of symbols, imagery and other poetic devices.

The entire poem is structured in the frame of a single sentence, punctuated by commas. It indicates a single string of thought that runs throughout. There is a simile in the explicit comparison of the ashen face of her mother to that of a corpse. We find another simile in the comparison between the pale visage of her mother and the late winter's moon, as her face has lost its brightness.

There is the use of personification in the line "Trees sprinting", where trees are attributed with the quality of running swiftly, for enhancing the poetic effect. The poet has used alliteration in the use of the words 'familiar' and 'fear' with the repetition of the consonant sound [f]. It also suggests the poet's familiarity with her childhood fear and the sorrow of losing her mother to death.

My Mother at Sixty-six Extra Questions Value Based Type

Question 1:

Analyse the concept of losing our dear ones on account of old age in the context of the poem.

Answer:

The poem 'My Mother at Sixty-Six' brings out the natural complexities of the human mind and the natural fear of losing our parents, which is common to the hearts of all humans. Ageing is an indispensable part of human life which we have to accept, irrespective of the pain it cultivates in our hearts. The poet speaks about her mother who is growing old and has a pale and weak face.

Her mother sleeps while travelling, as we realize that she requires rest. The poet recalls how even as a child she has experienced the fear of losing her mother. Now her fear has changed into the fear of losing her mother to death. Her attention is arrested by her mother's failing health and yet she smiles, only with the hope of meeting her soon.

My Mother at Sixty-six Extra Questions Extract Based Type

I. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*"Driving from my parent's
home to Cochin last Friday
morning, I saw my mother, beside me
doze, open mouthed, her face ashen like that
of a corpse and realized with pain
that she was as old as she looked ..."*

Question 1:

Name the poem and the poet.

Answer:

The name of the poem is, 'My Mother at Sixty-Six' and the poet is Kamala Das.

Question 2:

Where was the poet driving to?

Answer:

The poet was driving from her parents' home to Cochin airport on a Friday morning.

Question 3:

What did she notice about her mother?

Answer:

The poet noticed that her mother was sleeping with her mouth open and the mother's face was the colour of ash, just like that of a dead body.

Question 4:

Why was her mother's face looking like that of a corpse?

Answer:

Her mother's face had lost all its glow and colour of youth due to ageing. It looked pale, faded and nearly lifeless. That was why it was looking like a corpse's face.

II. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*saw my mother, beside me,
doze, open mouthed, her face ashen like that
of a corpse and realised with pain
that she was as old as she looked but soon
put that thought away,*

Question 1:

What worried the poet when she looked at her mother?

Answer:

Her mother looked pale and faded, just like a corpse, which worried the poet. This indicated that her mother may die very soon. .

Question 2:

Why was there pain in her realisation?

Answer:

The poet felt pain in the realisation that she would not see her mother again, as she may die soon.

Question 3:

Why did she put that thought away?

Answer:

The poet put that thought away because she got distracted from driving the car by thinking about her mother's impending death.

Question 4:

Identify the figure of speech used in these lines.

Answer:

Simile is used in these lines when the colour of her mother's face is ashen, like that of a corpse.

III. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*And looked out at young
trees sprinting, the merry children spilling
out of their homes, but after the airport's
security check, standing a few yards
away, I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter's moon and felt that old
familiar ache,*

Question 1:

How can the trees sprint?

Answer:

The car was moving when the poet looked out so the trees appeared to be running in the opposite direction. Thus, the trees have been described as 'sprinting'.

Question 2:

Why did the poet look at her mother again?

Answer:

The poet looked at her mother again to bid her goodbye.

Question 3:

What did she observe?

Answer:

She observed that her mother looked lifeless and dull like a late winter's moon.

Question 4:

Identify the figure of speech used in these lines.

Answer:

The figure of speech used in these lines is simile; her mother's pale appearance is compared to that of a late winter's moon.

IV. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*... but soon
put that thought away, and
looked out at young
trees sprinting, the merry children spilling
out of their homes,...*

Question 1:

What thought did the poet drive away from her mind?

Answer:

The poet realised that her mother had become very old and her mother was pale and lifeless like a dead body. She drove this disturbing thought away from her mind.

Question 2:

What did she see when she looked out of the car?

Answer:

The poet saw the trees moving past the moving car and also saw the children rushing out of their homes to play. Both the trees and children were full of life in comparison to her mother, who was pale and lifeless beside her.

Question 3:

How do you know that the joyful scene didn't help her drive away the painful thought from her mind?

Answer:

We know that the joyful scene didn't help her drive away the painful thought from her mind because soon afterwards, at the airport, when she looked at her mother, the painful thought came back again.

Question 4:

What does the phrase trees sprinting signify?

Answer:

The phrase 'trees sprinting' signifies time, which has passed at a fast pace.

V. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter's moon and felt that old
familiar ache, my childhood's fear,*

Question 1:

Who is 'her'?

Answer:

'Her' refers to the mother.

Question 2:

Why did the poet look at 'her' again?

Answer:

The poet looked at 'her' again because of the insecurity of losing her mother.

Question 3:

What was the poet's childhood fear?

Answer:

The childhood fear was that of losing her mother.

Question 4:

Identify the figure of speech used in these lines.

Answer:

The figure of speech used in these lines is simile; her mother's pale appearance is compared to that of a late winter's moon.

VI. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*"But after the airport's
security check, standing a few yards
away, I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter's moon."*

Question 1:

Who went for security check and who is 'her' in the above lines?

Answer:

The poet, Kamala Das, went for security check at the airport. 'Her' in the above lines refers to the poet's mother.

Question 2:

What does the poet compare her mother's face to and why?

Answer:

The poet compares her mother's face to a late winter's moon. Just as a 'late winter's moon' looks colourless and dull because of mist and fog, the poet's mother's face looks pale and lacks brightness due to old age.

Question 3:

Explain 'late winter's moon'.

Answer:

'Late winter's moon' refers to the moon during the late winter season, which appears pale and lusterless because of mist and fog. The poet has compared her mother's face to the late winter's moon because it seems to have lost all its sheen.

VII. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

*I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter's moon and felt that did .
familiar ache, my childhood's fear,
but all I said was see you soon, Amma,
all I did was smile and smile and smile*

Question 1:

What was the poet's childhood fear?

Answer:

The poet's childhood fear was the insecurity about losing her mother. Looking at her mother's pale and dull face when leaving her, the poet was again gripped by the same insecurity.

Question 2:

What were the poet's parting words?

Answer:

The poet's parting words were, "See you soon, Amma", suggesting hope to herself and her mother that they will meet again.

Question 3:

What is the poetic device used in these lines?

Answer:

The poetic device used in these lines is simile; her mother's wan, pale face is compared to a late winter's moon.

Question 4:

Explain, 'late winter's moon'.

Answer:

The poet has compared her mother's face colour to the colour of a late winter's moon, which is pale, as her skin has lost all its sheen and looks pale.