



INDIAN SCHOOL DARSAIT DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



Subject : English Lesson : My Mother at Sixty - Six

Date of Worksheet : March 2019

Name of the Student : _____ Date: _____

Class & Div : X Roll Number : _

1. Read the following extracts 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,
but all I said was, see you soon, Amma,
all I did was smile and smile and smile””

- Who looked wan and pale? Why?
The poet’s mother looked wan and pale due to her old age.
- What is the comparison in the stanza?
The mother’s wan and pale face has been compared to the late winter’s moon.
- What was the childhood fear that now troubled the poet?
As a child the poet was insecure about losing her mother and the same fear has come again now when her mother has grown old.
- Which figure of speech is used in the second line?
Simile – as a late winter’s moon.
- How does she comfort/ console her mother?
She smiled and promised to see her mother soon.
- What is the significance of the parting words?
These words signify hope and expectation to see her again.
- What kind of pain/ ache does the poetess feel?
She feels pain on seeing wan and pale face of her mother. It appears she will not live long.

2. “.....I 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, and looked out at young
Trees sprinting, the merry children spilling
out of their homes.....”

- Where was the poet driving to? Who was sitting beside her?
The poet was driving from her parent’s home to the Cochin airport. Her mother was sitting beside her.
- What did the mother look like?
Her old mother looked sick, drowsy and pale like a dead body.
- What thought did she put away? (Board 2019)
The poet drove away the painful thought of the distressing reality that her mother was getting old and she might die anytime.
- What do the sprinting trees signify?
The “sprinting trees” signify the vitality of youth.



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- e) What are “the merry children spilling out of their homes” symbolic of?
The “merry children spilling out of their homes” are symbolic of carefree childhood when all time is playtime.
- f) How do you know that the joyful scene didn’t help her drive away the painful thought from her mind? (Board 2019)
As the poet passed through security check at the airport and happened to look at her mother, she was again haunted by the same fear of losing her to death. This shows that the joyful scene earlier didn’t help drive away the painful thought from her mind.
- g) Why are the trees described as sprinting? (Board 2019)
As the poet looked outside the window of her moving car, the trees appeared to be moving fast in the opposite direction. So, they are described as sprinting.

3. “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 ”

- a) Where was the poet driving to?
The poet was driving from her parent’s home to Cochin last Friday.
Why was her mother’s face looking like that of a corpse?
- b) The poet’s mother was aged. At sixty – six, it was not clear how long she would live. Moreover, she was sleeping inside the car with her mouth open and her skin looked colourless as that of a dead body. Thus, mother’s face looked like that of a corpse.
- c) What did the poet notice about her mother?
The poet noticed that her mother was dozing next to her, with her mouth open. She also realized that her mother was as old as she looked.
- d) Name the poem and the poet.
My Mother at Sixty Six by Kamala Das

II Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

1. How does the poet describe her mother in the poem?
The poet describes her mother as an old woman who has become pale, weak and worn out. She often dozes and remains unconscious about herself like a dead body.
2. Why does the poet look outside? What activities does the poet see outside the car window?
The poet feels very sad thinking that her mother is nearing death. This painful thought makes her worried and anxious. So in order to divert her attention from her mother, she looks outside. The poet sees young trees running past them. She also sees little children coming out of their homes in a merry mood. She sees life and vitality in the outside world.
3. Why is the mother compared to the late winter’s moon?
The mother is compared to the late winter’s moon because like the moon of winter season, the poet’s mother also looks pale, dull and greyish.
4. What childhood fears do you think, the poet is referring to in the poem?
The poet feels uneasy and unprotected with the thought of losing her mother. She does not expect to see her mother again on her return. Therefore, she shows a childish unwillingness to leave her mother.
5. Why has the poet brought in the image of the merry children ‘spilling out of their homes’?
The poet has used the image of merry children spilling out of their homes to bring a contrast between the old age and childhood. Her mother’s pale, colourless face stands for old and fading age. Merry children symbolize the spring of life, vigour and happiness. They also symbolize spontaneity of life in contrast to the passive and inactive life of her aged mother.



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6. The poet compares her mother to many things. Pick out two similes which reinforce this comparison.
The two similes are: “Her face ashen like that of a corpse”
“I looked again at her wan, pale as a late winter’s moon”
7. What do the parting words of the poet and her smile signify?
The poet’s parting words, ‘see you soon, Amma’ are expressive of the dilemma and confusion in her mind. They not only hide her anxiety and fear about her mother’s rather frail health but reflect also a faint hope that the old woman would survive long enough for the two to meet again.
8. Cite an example of one device of contrast that the poet uses in the poem.
The device of contrast that the poet uses in the poem is old age of her mother and the young trees and children playing merrily representing youth, energy, vitality and jubilation of childhood.
9. “My Mother at sixty six” is an emotional account of the poet about her old mother. Discuss.
“My Mother at sixty six” is an emotional account of the poet about her old mother. She feels very sad and depressed on seeing her pale, weak and worn out. She tries her best to divert her thought but remains unsuccessful and this thought haunts her mind every now and then. Till the end of the poem, she feels very sad and disappointed about the declining age of her mother. She is unable to express her fears and emotions to her mother with the thought of disheartening her. She bids goodbye to her mother by just smiling in order to hide her hurt feelings.