

GRANDMOTHER

BY SAMEENEH SHIRAZIE

**I hadn't asked her much,
just how she felt,
and she told me all about her day,
and how she'd washed the sheets,
and how she could not understand
why the towel got so heavy
when it was wet.**

**She'd also sunned the mattresses,
such tired bones and so much to do,
and my eyes filled with tears
when I thought of how I was simply
going to say "Salaam" and walk away
and so many words would have been
trapped inside her.**

**I would have passed by as if
what lay between those bedclothes
was just old life
and not really my grandmother.**

Pre-Reading Activities

1. Look at the following pictures.

Think about your mother and your grandmother. Which of the following sentences is true regarding your mother, which is true regarding your grandmother and which is true regarding both your mother and your grandmother? Circle the right answer according to your experience or perspective (viewpoint - what you think and believe in).



• Whom do you go shopping with?	Grandmother	Mother	Both
• Whom do you fight with?	Grandmother	Mother	Both
• Whom do you argue with?	Grandmother	Mother	Both
• Who punishes you (sometimes)?	Grandmother	Mother	Both
• Who shouts at you and tells you to tidy your room?	Grandmother	Mother	Both
• Whom do you get a hug or a kiss from?	Grandmother	Mother	Both
• Who buys you presents on holidays and on birthdays?	Grandmother	Mother	Both
• Who helps you with your homework?	Grandmother	Mother	Both
• Who listens to you and gives you advice when you have a problem?	Grandmother	Mother	Both

2. Is your attitude and relation to your mother different from that to your grandmother? If yes, how is it different, in what way?

3. From the questionnaire above, can you try and find out the differences between a mother's relations with her son/daughter and a grandmother's relations with her granddaughters and grandsons?

A grandmother.....

A mother....

4. Look at this picture of a grandmother. What qualities does this old woman have?



- 1. She is _____.
- 2. She wears _____.
- 3. In my opinion, she likes to _____.
- 4. _____.
- 5. _____.

Basic Understanding

Vocabulary

1. Match the following words and phrases (column A) with the Hebrew translation (column B):

A	Answer	B
a). washed the sheets		1. עצמות תשושות
b). towel		2. כלי מיטה
d). tired bones		3. אווררה את המזרנים
e). filled with tears		4. לכוד, כלוא
f). trapped		5. כבסה את הסדינים
g). pass by		6. התמלאו בדמעות
h). sunned the mattresses		7. מגבת
i). bedclothes		8. חלף ליד

2. Now match the words or phrases from the list above (column A) to the pictures below: (Write the words or phrases on the line below the picture).

			
			

3. Fill in the sentences with the words above:

1. After cleaning the bedroom, my mother _____ and _____.
2. I came out wet from the pool, and I looked for my _____.
3. The movie was so sad that my eyes _____.
4. He felt _____ in prison.
5. After the school trip, I felt my body was such a _____.
6. Every time I _____ the candy store, I forget about my diet.

4. Complete the following summary with a suitable word from the word bank (there are more words than spaces):

feels, human being, sufficient , appreciation, realization, encounter, opportunity thoughts, decision, planned, listen

In the poem, a young woman describes an _____ with her grandmother. She has not _____ on having a long conversation with her. However, when she asks her grandmother how she _____, her grandmother's unexpected but honest answer causes the speaker to come to an important _____. She becomes emotional and filled with guilt because she realizes that she was going to walk away, depriving her grandmother of the _____ to share her _____ and feelings with someone. The speaker realizes that a routine greeting is not going to be _____ and that elderly people, in this case her grandmother, may be lonely and need someone to _____. She realizes that she has to take the time to relate to her grandmother as a human being who deserves time, attention, respect and _____.

4. Answer the following questions:

1. Who is the speaker in the poem?

2. Who is the speaker talking about?

3. What is the setting of the poem?

4. Why do the speaker's eyes fill with tears? What did she realize?

5. Paraphrase the following words: "so many words would have been trapped inside her"

6. Describe "the day" of the grandmother. What does she do? Name 2-3 things.

7. Did the speaker intend to spend time with her grandmother? Quote the line supporting your answer.

8. What would have happened if the speaker hadn't stayed?

Poem Structure

- The poem "Grandmother" does not have rhymes or a rhyming scheme, so it does not have a pattern.
- It does not have clearly separated stanzas.
- It sounds more like someone talking, telling a story.

Rhythm and Sound

The poem does not have a certain rhythm or "beat" that is created by:

- repeating sounds and whole words (**alliteration**)
- repeating the same words and sentence form (**anaphora**)

1. How many times does the word "I" appear in the poem? _____
2. How many times does the word "she" appear? _____
3. How many times does a sentence start with "and"? _____

Look at this lines (which are examples of anaphora) and listen to the rhythm:

And she told me all about...

And how she'd washed...

And how she could not...

Look at the following words. Which sounds are repeated? Underline them.

"she'd washed the sheets"

"She's also sunned the mattresses / such tired bones and so much to do"



Literary Terms

Point of View

Point of view is the perspective from which the incident is told. We can find the point of view by asking: "Who is telling the story/poem?"

Every story/poem is told by someone. That person is called the narrator. There are several kinds of narrators:

1st person: The person telling the story/poem is a character in the story and uses the word "I" in his storytelling.

3rd person: The person may or may not be a character in the story/poem, but he tells the story/poem about other people not about himself.

Omniscient=knowing everything: The person telling the story is not in the story at all. This person knows everything about everyone (what they think or feel) and knows what is happening to everyone at every second of the story.

The poem has an interesting division of two points of view.

1. First 9 verses (1-9)

a). Who is the main subject of the first 9 verses?

b). What do these verses describe?

2. Last 9 verses (10-18)

a). Who is the main subject of the next 9 verses?

b). What is described in these verses?

HOTS:

Distinguishing Different Perspectives

Distinguishing Different Perspectives is identifying different points of view within the text. For example, you might be asked how different characters respond to a certain event in the story or how your understanding of the characters' actions changes as you read the story.

We learned the poem is told from the granddaughter's point of view.

1. What is the speaker's attitude towards her grandmother?

2. Did the speaker intend to stop and have a real conversation with her grandmother?
Which words in the poem help you decide?

3. What happened after the narrator stopped and asked her grandma how she felt?
How do you think both of them felt while talking to each other?

4. How does the speaker's perspective change at the end of the poem? Which words helped you decide?



Inferring

Forming an opinion that something is probably true based on available information ("reading between the lines").

- ❖ **I had just taken my seat on the bus when my cellphone rang. It was my wife calling to remind me to pick up a carton of milk on my way home from work. I promised that I would, put the bus into gear and drove off _____.**
- ❖ **I was sitting in my seat watching the basketball game. All of a sudden, one player fell and hurt his leg. I grabbed my bag, ran to the injured player and examined him _____.**

Application of Inference to Literature

- ❖ In literature the author gives us some information and we "read between the lines" to figure out how characters really feel or what kind of people they are.
- ❖ We may ask questions such as:
 - What do you think the character meant when she/he said, "....."?
 - What does (-)'s behavior suggest? What is the purpose or function of this information?
 - What different meanings can be inferred from this line in the poem?

Answer the following questions?

1. What could you infer if a woman in the story hides behind a wall when she sees another woman?

2. If a man who has little money wears a very expensive watch, what could we infer?

3. In the poem "Grandmother", what can you infer from a line "my eyes filled with tears"? How does the speaker feel?

Analysis and Interpretation: HOTS Questions

Setting refers to the place and time in which the events in the poem / story occur.

1. What is the setting in the poem?

A character is a person (or a thing presented as a person) in a literary text.

2. Describe two characters presented in the poem.

Comparing and Contrasting means:

- ❖ Finding similarities between two or more things (comparing).
- ❖ Finding differences between two or more things (contrasting).
- ❖ Drawing conclusions based on these similarities and differences.

3. How are the grandmother and grandchild different or similar? Use the HOTS "Comparing and Contrasting" to answer this question.

Inferring is forming an opinion that something is probably true based on available information ("reading between the lines").

4. What can you tell about their relationship in the poem? Use the HOTS of "Inferring" to answer this question.

Explaining Cause and Effect means:

- ❖ identifying the reasons why things happen (cause)
- ❖ identifying and describing the result (the effect) of specific actions and circumstances
- ❖ explaining connections between the two.

5. What caused a change in the grandchild's attitude to the grandmother?

The Theme of a poem/story is its central idea or message. We can usually find the theme by asking: "What is the poem/story about?" What do you think the theme of the poem is? What is the theme of the poem? Is it the same as its message?

6. What do you think the theme of the poem is?

Bridging Text and Context Activity

1. **Sameeneh Shirazie (1967)** was born in Karachi, Pakistan, and grew up in a close-knit family. Her own grandmother, who lived with the family, was an important figure in her childhood. The poem *Grandmother* was written out of love and admiration for her.

How does this information help you understand the poem better?

Now that I know that Shirazie's grandmother _____

and that Shirazie really _____

I understand that the poem was written in order to _____

And that _____

2. **In Pakistan, the grandparents, parents and children live together in the same house. The children show great respect for their parents and grandparents.**

How does this information add to your understanding of the poem, *Grandmother*?

Write 80-100 words.

