

My Mother at Sixty-Six (Poetry)

1. It is said that the 'Face is a mirror of one's emotions.' Why did the poet 'smile and smile' ? (2024)

Ans.

- wanted to hide her own emotions from her mother
- reassured herself and her mother
- concealed her fear and anxiety of losing her mother
- tried to put up a brave front

2. Create a comprehensive comparison of the themes present in 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers' and 'My Mother at Sixty-six'. Specifically discuss the different ways each poem addresses the concept of struggle and resilience. (2024)

Ans.

Aunt Jennifer's tigers :-

- suppressed by patriarchal society
- endures the ordeals of her marriage
- desirous of strength and freedom
- resilience able to express herself beautifully through her art - creation of tigers
- tigers symbolic of freedom and chivalry / fearlessness and pride

My Mother at Sixty Six :-

- reflects true struggle of fulfilling worldly duties and duties as a daughter
- leaves her mother with reassurance
- hides her emotions through her smile
- makes a promise to see her soon
- mother's ageing and appearance reflects her struggle and resilience

Previous Years' CBSE Board Questions

MCQ (1 mark)

1. The poet Kamala Das brought in the image of 'spilling children' with the intention
- (a) of praising children.
 - (b) of reminiscing her childhood.
 - (c) of bringing in a contrast to the mood of the poet.
 - (d) of making her mother happy and cheerful.
- (Term I, 2021-22)

SA I (2 marks)

2. Why has the poet mentioned 'merry children spilling out of their homes' in the poem? (2020)
3. How does Kamala Das try to put away the thoughts of her aging mother? (Delhi 2014)
4. What was the poet's childhood fear? (AI 2014)
5. Why has the poet's mother been compared to the 'late winter's moon'?

(Delhi 2013)

SA II (3 marks)

6. What does the poet's smile in the poem, 'My Mother at Sixty-six' show? (2018)
7. Why are the youngsters described as springing? (Delhi 2017)
8. What were the poet's feelings as she drove to Cochin airport? (Delhi 2015C)

SA III (4 marks)

Read the extracts given below and answer the questions that follow:

9. 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 realised with
pain
that she was as old as she
looked

- (a) Where was the poet driving to? Who was sitting beside her?
- (b) What did the poet notice about her mother?
- (c) Which thought made the poet feel painful?
- (d) Name the figure of speech used in the expression: 'her face ashen like that of a corpse. (2020)

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

- (a) Name the poem and the poet.
- (b) What thought did the poet put away?
- (c) Why are the young trees described as sprinting?
- (d) How do you know that the joyful scene did not help her drive away 'that thought' from her mind? (AI 2019)

11. 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...

- (a) Name the poet and the poem.
- (b) What was the poet's childhood fear?
- (c) What is the poetic device used in lines 1-2?
- (d) Explain : 'late winter's moon'.

(Delhi 2019)

12. 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

- (a) What does the phrase, 'familiar ache' mean?
- (b) What was the poet's childhood fear?

(c) What do the first two lines tell us about the poet's feelings for her mother?

(d) What does the repeated use of the word, 'smile' mean? (Delhi 2016)

13. I saw my mother
beside me,
doze, open mouthed, her face
ashen like that
of a corpse and realised with
pain

(a) Who is 'I'?

(b) What did 'I' realise with pain?

(c) Why was the realisation painful?

(d) Identify and name the figure of speech used in these lines. (AI 2016)

14. 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,

(a) What worried the poet when she looked at her mother?

(b) Why was there pain in her realisation?

(c) Why did she put that thought away?

(d) Identify the figure of speech used in these lines. (Delhi 2015)

15. looked out at young
Trees sprinting, the merry children spilling
out of their homes, but after the airport's
security, I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter's moon and felt that old
familiar ache,

(a) How can the trees sprint?

(b) Why did the poet look at her mother again?

(c) What did she observe?

(d) Identify the figure of speech used in these lines. (AI 2015)

16. I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter's moon and felt that
old

familiar ache, my childhood's fear,

.....

(a) Who is 'her'?

(b) Why did the poet look at 'her' again?

(c) What was the poet's childhood fear?

(d) Identify the figure of speech used in these lines. (Foreign 2015)

17. 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

(a) Name the poem.

(b) What was the poet's childhood fear?

(c) What does her smile signify?

(d) What does the word 'ache mean'. (AI 2015C)

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

(a) What thought did the poet drive away from her mind?

(b) What did she see when she looked out of the car?

(c) What did she see that the joyful scene did not help her drive away the painful
thought from her mind? (Delhi 2014C)

LA II (6 marks)

19. Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:

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,

(i) Identify the phrase that indicates youthful energy.

(ii) Which thought is the poet trying to put away?

(a) missing the flight

(b) fear of losing her mother

(c) leaving her mother behind

(d) reaching Cochin

(iii) The poet's mother is described as 'open mouthed' because _____ .

(a) she is curious

(b) she is surprised

(c) she was dead

(d) she was dozing

(iv) Complete the following analogy:

children spilling: metaphor :: _____: personification

(v) The sight of the trees and the children helped the poet _____.

(vi) In the given extract, the phrase 'realised with pain' indicates the poet's

(a) anxiety

(b) desperation

(c) troubled past

(d) ill-health

CBSE Sample Questions

MCQ (1 mark)

1. The sight of young trees and merry children, on the way to Cochin, is _____ the poet's aging mother.

- (a) like a divine assurance for
- (b) in sharp contrast to
- (c) a distraction from pain for
- (d) the bridge between the poet and

(Term I, 2021-22)

SA I (2 marks)

2. Kamala Das speaks of 'an old familiar ache? What do you think is the reason for this feeling?

(2020-21)

ANSWERS

Previous Years' CBSE Board Questions

1. (c) of bringing in a contrast to the mood of the poet.
2. The poet saw children running out of their houses, into the playground, they looked happy and unbothered full of life and energy. She used the paraphrase as a contrast to her aging mother who sat next to her.
3. Troubled by the thoughts of her aging mother, Kamala Das tries to distract herself by not looking at her mother's old, ashen face. Instead, she looks out of the car window at young trees sprinting and happy children running out of their homes.
4. Poet Kamala Das, in her poem, 'My Mother at Sixty-six' says that since childhood, she feared separation from her mother. The thought of losing her mother has been making her uncomfortable ever since she was a little girl.
5. The poet's mother looks pale and worn out, devoid of the energy and enthusiasm of youth. In the twilight of her life, she appears as lackluster as the winter moon.
6. The poet's smile is a deliberate attempt to hide her anxiety and fear of losing her mother and the final separation. Alternatively, it also shows that the poet hopes to see her mother again soon.

7. The youngsters in the poem, 'My Mother at Sixty-six' are described as springing because they are symbolic of youth, liveliness and joy. In contrast to the poet's frail and aging mother the children appear to be young and spirited.

8. As she drove to Cochin airport, the thought that her mother looked old and withered, disturbed the poet. Her childhood fears haunted her again.

9. (a) The poet was driving to Cochin. Her mother was sitting beside her.

(b) The poet noticed that her mother was dozing with her mouth open and she looked pale.

(c) The thought of her aging mother made the poet feel painful.

(d) The figure of speech used in the given expression is that of a simile.

10. (a) The poem is 'My Mother at Sixty-six' by Kamala Das.

(b) The poet put the thought of her aging mother away. It pained her to see her mother's declining health and impending death.

(c) The young trees are described as sprinting because they are full of youth, energy and activity.

(d) As the poet looked at her mother's face again, she experienced the same old ache and her fear of losing her mother surfaced again. Even the joyful scene outside cannot help her drive away from that pain.

11. (a) My Mother at Sixty-six by Kamala Das.

(b) The poet's childhood fear was that of losing her mother; the pain of ultimate separation.

(c) Simile

(d) The poet's mother looks pale and worn out, devoid of the energy and enthusiasm of youth. In the twilight of her life, she appears as lackluster as the late winter's moon.

12. (a) The pain that her mother was growing old and the fear of separation.

(b) The poet's childhood fear was that of her mother growing old and final separation.

(c) The poet loves her mother a lot and she feared losing her.

(d) The word 'smile' was repeatedly used as the poet hid her feeling from her mother by smiling and reassuring herself.

13. (a) 'I' in the above extract is the poet narrating the incident from a daughter's point of view.

- (b) The poet realised with pain that her mother is nearing old age.
- (c) The poet is pained by the realisation because her mother now looked as old as she was, her bodily infirmities that have come, show that she was approaching her death and it was a hard fact to accept for the poet.
- (d) The figure of speech used is simile and the line is, 'ashen like that of a corpse!'

14. (a) The poet was worried about her mother's advancing age and she feared final separation from her mother.

(b) There was pain in the poet's realisation because her mother now looked as old as she was, her bodily infirmities that comes with old age were visible on her face. The poet was having a hard time accepting the thought of finally losing her mother.

(c) The poet put that thought away because she was going away from her mother and the thought of separation was too painful for her to bear. The realisation that old age was quickly approaching her mother filled her mind with unpleasant thoughts about losing her, which saddened and scared her deeply.

(d) The figure of speech used is a simile- "Like that of a corpse".

15. (a) The trees seem to sprint because as the car moves ahead, the movement of the trees is backward.

(b) The poet's feeling of anxiety and fear for her mother's health made her look again at her mother.

(c) She observed her mother's pale appearance, resembling the late winter's moon.

(d) Simile – Pale as a late winter's moon.

16. (a) 'Her' is the poet's mother.

(b) The poet looked at her mother again due to anxiety and worry.

(c) The poet's childhood fear was that of losing her mother, the pain of ultimate separation.

(d) Simile – Pale as a late winter's moon.

17. (a) The name of the poem is 'My Mother at Sixty-six'.

(b) Since childhood, the poet feared her ultimate separation from her mother.

(c) She smiles in order to hide her true feelings, fear and anxiety.

(d) The word ache means pain.

18. (a) The poet drove away from her mind the thought of her mother's impending death.

(b) When the poet looked out of car, she saw sprinting trees, happy children coming out of their homes to enjoy themselves.

(c) The poet looked at her mother's face once again and experienced the old familiar ache, the childhood fear of losing her mother. She gazed at her mother's pale appearance the joyful scene did not help her drive away the painful thoughts from her mind.

19. (i) Trees sprinting, the merry children spilling/out of their homes,

(ii) (b) fear of losing her mother

(iii) (d) she was dozing

(iv) Trees sprinting

(v) To divert herself from the thought of losing her mother

(vi) (a) anxiety

CBSE Sample Questions

1. (b) in sharp contrast to

2. That "old familiar ache" refers to the agony and pain of separation from her mother that the poet felt in her childhood. The reason for this feeling is because she sees her mother is old and not keeping well. Now as adult she understands there's nothing, she can do about it and the pain and hurt she felt as a child fearing being separated from her mother seems likely so. This is why she refers to this feeling like revisiting her past again.