

THE GRANDMOTHER

Ray Young Bear

RAY YOUNG BEAR (b.1950) is a Native American poet and novelist of the Mesquaki tribe of North America. Growing up on the Mesquaki Tribal Settlement in Iowa, he was encouraged to learn English by his maternal grandmother, and he began to translate his poems into that language. His work was first published in 1968. He often switches between English and the Meskwaki language to express himself more fully. In the present poem, "The Grandmother", he draws a picture of his grandmother, all-loving and all-inspiring.



A. Answer the following questions orally:

1. What do you call your mother's mother or father's mother?
2. How do you behave with your grandmother?
3. What is the role of a grandmother in a family?
4. Is your grandmother alive? How much are you attached with her?

THE GRANDMOTHER

if i were to see
her shape from a mile away
I'd know so quickly
that it would be her.
the purple scarf
and the plastic
shopping bag.
if i felt
hands on my head
I'd know that those
were her hands

5

10

warm and damp	
with the smell	
of roots	
if I heard	15
a voice	
coming from	
a rock	
I'd know	
and her words	20
would flow inside me	
like the light	
of someone	
stirring ashes	
from a sleeping fire	25
at night.	

B.1. Write 'T' for true and 'F' for false statement:

1. The speaker sees his grandmother from two miles away.
2. The grandmother's scarf was red.
3. The shopping bag was made of jute.
4. The poet felt hands on his head.
5. The grandmother's hands were too hot.
6. Her hands were warm with smell of roots.
7. A voice was coming from a mountain.

B.2. Fill in the blanks on the basis of your reading of the poem:

1. If I to see her from a mile away,
2. I know so that it be her.
3. If I hands on my
4. I know that those her
5. If I a voice coming a rock,
6. I know her words flow.

B.3. Answer the following questions very briefly:

1. From what distance does the poet recognise his grandmother?
2. What is the colour of grandmother's scarf?
3. What material the shopping-bag is made of?
4. What are the two things in first eight lines which the speaker associates with his grandmother?

What helps the speaker to recognise his grandmother from a mile? Name two identifying marks that the poet has mentioned in the poem.

5. In the poem, the poet feels the tender-touch of his grandmother. Explain the lines.
6. From where was the voice coming?
7. Where do the words of grandmother flow in the poet?

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

see (v): become aware of (sb/sth) by using the eyes; perceive; look at or watch.

shape (n): appearance; outline of a figure.

purple (adj): colour of red and blue mixed together.

scarf (n): piece of cloth worn for ornament or warmth round the neck (by women) or over the shoulders or hair.

damp (adj): slightly wet, moist.

smell (n): ability to smell, (v): notice by using the nose

root (n): part of plant that keeps it firmly in the soil and absorbs water and food from the soil; source or basis.

rock (n): part of the earth's crust; (here) hill

inside (n): inner side or surface; part within

light (n): kind of natural radiation that makes things visible; understanding; enlightenment

stirrings (v): causing to move, especially slightly

night (n): time of darkness between sunset and sunrise; evening on which a specified activity takes place.

C.1. LONG ANSWER'S QUESTIONS

1. 'The purple scarf' and 'the plastic shopping bag' suggest the social position of the speaker. Explain.
2. How does the poet express the close and emotional relationship with his grandmother? Discuss.
3. Explain the expression: 'With the smell of roots'.
4. Why does the speaker say 'a voice coming from a rock'. When does a voice come from a rock? Have you ever experienced your sound coming back to you?
5. What does 'sleeping fire' suggest in the poem? Explain.
6. What are 'stirring ashes' in the poem? Explain.
7. 'her words would flow inside me' shows the poet's insense closeness with his grandmother. Comment on the speaker's relation with his grandmother.
8. The speaker has shown his intimate relation with his grandmother using all his five senses. How? Explain.

C.2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in groups and pairs:

1. Distance does not affect intimate relation. Do you agree?

C.3. COMPOSITION

1. Write a letter to your grandmother expressing your deep love to her.
2. You are Abhijeet. Your grandmother is very sick and your mother is away on some business assignment. Send a telegram to your mother about your grandmother's sickness, asking her to come soon.

D. WORD STUDY

D. 1. Dictionary Use:

Correct the spelling of the following words:

wera	shaipe	queek	purpal	skarf
hed	thos	smel	ruts	rok
wods	floo	ligt	stiring	sleping
ashs	faire	nite		

D. 2. Write a synonym for each of the following:

away quick damp ash scarf

E. GRAMMAR

E.1. Use of Modal Auxiliaries

In English Grammar 'can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, ought, dare and need' are known as modal auxiliaries.

Most of the modal auxiliaries in English have more than one meaning. The multiple meanings of 'would' have been listed and illustrated below:

- Expressing futurity (in the past).
He wrote to say that he would be back on Friday.
- Expressing volition:
(a) Would you pass the salt?
(b) He wouldn't tell us where the money was hidden.
- Expressing probability:
(a) The French would be having a holiday today.
(b) That would be the policeman.

E. 2. Fill in the blanks with correct prepositions given below:

on with of from inside at

1. I feel hands my head.
2. Her hands were warm and damp the smell roots.
3. I hear a voice coming a rock.
4. Her words will flow me.
5. Someone is stirring ashes a sleeping fire night.

F. ACTIVITIES

1. Draw a diagram of family-relation.
2. Match the sense organs with the phrases from the poem.

Sense Organs

1. Eye
2. Ear
3. Nose
4. Tongue
5. Skin

Poem's Line

- (a) the purple scarf
- (b) the plastic shopping bag
- (c) smell of roots
- (d) roots
- (e) a voice coming from a rock
- (f) from a rock
- (g) her hands warm and damp.

G. TRANSLATION**Translate the following sentences into English:**

1. यदि मैं पक्षी होता तो आकाश में उड़ता।
2. यदि मैं राजा होता तो प्रजा की खूब सेवा करता।
3. यदि मैं संत होता तो शांति लाता, क्रान्ति नहीं।
4. यदि तुम ने भयादोहन करने की कोशिश की होती तो मैं ने पुलिस को सूचित कर दिया होता।
5. यदि उसने परिश्रम किया होता तो वह परीक्षा में सफल हो जाती।
6. यदि मैं वित्त मंत्री होता तो देश की आर्थिक स्थिति सुधार देता।
7. यदि तुम प्रधानमंत्री होते तो गरीबों के हित में क्या करते?
8. यदि मैं इस विद्यालय का प्रधानाध्यापक होता तो, छात्र परिषद का गठन करता।
9. यदि वह यहाँ होती तो मैं उसे उसके पिता की बात मानने पर मजबूर करता।
10. यदि मेरे पास तुम्हारा पता होता तो मैं तुम्हें अवश्य पत्र लिखता।