

Question:1

Infer the meaning of the following words from the context.

Padding	transient
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Now look up the dictionary to see if your inference is right.

Solution:

Paddling: To move a boat by means of paddles.

Transient: Something that stays at a place for a short time-period.

Question:2

What does the word 'cardboard' denote in the poem? Why has this word been used?

Solution:

In the poem, the word 'cardboard' stands for the frame that supports and borders the photograph. The photograph shows the poet's mother as a twelve year old girl with two of her cousins, Betty and Dolly. The word 'cardboard' has been used to depict that the photograph is many years old. The use of cardboard as a photo frame was common in old times.

Question:3

What has the camera captured?

Solution:

The camera has captured a happy moment from the childhood days of the poet's mother. The photograph was taken when the poet's mother (at the age of twelve or so) went to a beach holiday with two of her cousins, Betty and Dolly. The captured picture serves as a preserved memory both for the mother as well as the poet.

Question:4

What has not changed over the years? Does this suggest something to you?

Solution:

The lines, 'And the sea, which appears to have changed less' depicts that the sea have stayed the same over the years. It has not changed at all.

These lines suggest a sharp contrast to the mortal human life. Human life is transitory and temporary whereas the sea symbolizes permanence, immortality and eternity. The poet makes use of the phrase 'terribly transient feet' to highlight the ephemeral nature of human life.

Question:5

The poet's mother laughed at the snapshot. What did this laugh indicate?

Solution:

The poet's mother laughed while recalling a moment of her past captured in the photograph. She looks back at her

childhood days with nostalgia and recollects her innocent joys. Looking at the picture years later brings in her mind the fond memories. She laughs at the way they were dressed up for the beach holiday.

But in the midst of these pleasant memories, lies the pain of loss. The pain comes from the acknowledgement that the lovely days of her childhood will never come back to her.

Question:6

What is the meaning of the line "Both wry with the laboured ease of loss".

Solution:

The context of the above lines is the mother's recollection of her childhood days and the poet's recollection of her mother's laughing face.

The mother has fond memories of her past but there is a sense of loss in recalling those moments as they make her realise that the good old times of her childhood will never come back. For the poet, the 'loss' refers to the loss of her mother. She has fond memories of her dead mother but she misses her laughter and her presence that will never return to the poet. Thus, both remember their pasts with a laugh that conceals sadness as none can re-live those lost moments.

Question:7

What does "this circumstance" refer to?

Solution:

'This circumstance' refers to the present situation of the poet wherein the poet is absorbed in the painful memory of her dead mother. Looking at the photograph and thinking of her mother's laughter, the poet also realises that it has been the same number of years since her mother died as her mother's age in the photograph.

Question:8

The three stanzas depict three different phases. What are they?

Solution:

The first stanza refers to the childhood days of the poet's mother when she was twelve years old or so. The stanza depicts a photograph of her mother when she went for a beach holiday with her cousins and uncle.

The second stanza refers to the poet's childhood days when her mother had become an adult. It depicts her mother recalling her childhood days while looking at the old photograph of hers (mentioned in the first stanza).

In the last stanza, the poet's adult life is described in which her mother is not with her anymore. She has been dead for almost twelve years. The stanza depicts the poet's looking at the same photograph and recollecting her mother's laughter. The loss of her mother puts her in utter grief. She has no words to describe the terrible pain of her mother's death.