

**ANNUAL PREPARATORY PROGRAMME FOR ENHANCEMENT IN
ACADEMICS AND REVISION (APPEAR)
CLASS XII, ENGLISH CORE - 301
MODULE - XV (MY MOTHER AT SIXTY-SIX)**

Module Detail	
Subject Name	English Core
Course Name	Annual Preparatory Programme for Enhancement in Academics and Revision (APPEAR) in English for Class XII
Module Name/Title	My Mother at Sixty-six
Module Id	lefl_Poem_10101
Pre-requisite	Knowledge of poetic devices and critical appreciation of a poem, Note Making
Learning Outcomes	<p>After carefully reading this poem and doing the suggested activities, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● relate to the theme of fear of loss and separation associated with advancing age, ● learn to identify the use of comparison and contrast, ● know more about poetic devices, and ● learn to critically appreciate the poem.
Keywords	Mother, ashen, wan, pale, winter's moon, fear, smile, etc.

2. Development Team

Role	Name	Affiliation
National MOOC Coordinator	Prof. Amarendra P. Behera	CIET, NCERT, New Delhi
Program Coordinator	Dr. Rejaul Karim Barbhuiya	CIET, NCERT, New Delhi
Course Coordinator	Dr. Ganga Mahto	NCERT, RIE, Bhopal
Course Co-Coordinator	Ms. Heman Mehlawat	CIET, NCERT, New Delhi
Subject Matter Expert	Ms. Sukanya Mishra	BJB College, Bhubaneshwar
Content Reviewer	Ms. Shatrupa Palit	NERIE, NCERT, Shillong

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INTRODUCTION

Activity-1

There is a picture given below. Look at the picture carefully. Think of the situation and the story behind it.



Now contribute your thoughts.

Did you think of these options?

- a. A mother is seeing off her daughter at the airport.
- b. A daughter is going away from her mother for higher studies or some work.
- c. A mother is seeing the bright future of her daughter where she is flying high.
- d. Both of them are sad for going away from each other.
- e. Both are concerned for each other's health and wellbeing.

Let us get into the poem, *My Mother at Sixty-six* based on this story and know more about it. This poem is written by Kamala Das, recognised as one of India's foremost poets. She is known for her originality, versatility and indigenous flavour of the soil. She is a sensitive writer capturing complex subtleties of human relationships in lyrical idiom, *My Mother Sixty-six* is an example.

LISTENING AND READING

Activity-2

Click on the link given below to access the audio format of *My Mother at Sixty-six*. Listen to the poem carefully and try to understand the tone of the poem.

<https://ciet.nic.in/pages.php?id=flamingo>

Chapter 10- My Mother at Sixty-Six Poem.

Activity-3

1. What is the tone of the poem?
 - a. Cheerful
 - b. Sad
 - c. Humorous
 - d. Playful
2. What is the poem about?
 - a. Separation
 - b. Reunion
 - c. Betrayal
 - d. Journey

Activity-4

Click on the link given below to access the textbook format of *My Mother at Sixty-six*. As you go through the poem, note down the new words to learn more about them.

(ashen, doze, sprinting, spilling out, ache, wan, etc.)

<https://ncert.nic.in/ncerts/l/lef1111.pdf>

Activity-5

Match the expressions with their appropriate meanings in the given table. Use a dictionary to find your answers.

Words	Meanings
i. Ashen	a) Looking ill or exhausted
ii. Doze	b) Coming out in large numbers
iii. Sprinting	c) Running fast
iv. Spilling out	d) Very pale
v. Ache	e) Light Sleep
vi. Wan	f) Pain

COMPREHENSION OF THE TEXT

Let us understand the poem.

Read the stanzas given below and answer the questions that follow each.

Section 1

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

Activity-6

Answer the following questions.

- (a) Who was sitting beside the poet when she was driving to Cochin?
- (b) What did the poet notice about her mother?
- (c) Why did her mother's face look like that of a corpse?
- d) Find words from the passage that mean:
 - (i) sleep lightly (ii) dead body (iii) pale

Section 2

.....and realized 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,

Activity-7

- (a) What did the poet realize? Why did she put that thought away?
- (b) What did she do then?
- (c) What did she notice in the world outside?
- (d) Find words from the passage that mean:
 - (i) running fast (ii) happy (iii) moving out

Section 3

....but after the airport's security check, standing a few yards away,
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.....

Activity-8

- (a) What did the poet do after the security check and why?
- (b) Why did the poet compare her mother's face to a late winter's moon?
- (c) What is her childhood fear?
- (d) Find words from the passage that mean:
 - (i) looking ill (ii) pale white (iii) pain

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

My Mother at Sixty-six is an emotional, a confessional and a representational work of Kamala Das. This poem confesses a daughter's fear of losing her mother. Firstly, the daughter, that is the poet, is surprised to realize that her mother is aging. Secondly, she notices how the rest of the world appears young and energetic. This is in **contrast** to her mother who continues to age. Thirdly, the poet expresses her apprehension over losing her mother. Finally, the poet says how she hides her true feelings and smiles outwardly. She wishes to show her love for her mother.

The poem, *My Mother at Sixty-Six*, brings out this ordinary but profound human nature through personal thoughts that death is inevitable but people are afraid of losing their dear ones. As the poet expresses, the bond between a mother and her child is special, and therefore, the anxiety in losing the relationship is also strong. As its **thematic** concern, the poem brings out the inner thoughts of a daughter for her mother. The whole poem is in a single sentence, punctuated by commas, which indicates a single thread of thought interspersed with observations of the real world and the way these are connected to the main idea.

The poem, *My Mother at Sixty-Six*, is confessional, such as a **first-person monologue**. The arrangement of the lines is free and fluid. The poem is rich in **imagery**. The poet first **compares** her mother's appearance to that of a corpse and then describes her mother as the winter's moon. Both the comparisons are in the form of **simile** and indicate to the imminent death of her mother. Next there are expressions like trees sprinting and merry children spilling out, shows the use of **metaphor**. The phrase, Young Tree, suggests the use of **personification**. The last lines of the poem **repeat** the word, smile, indicating that people display such positive gestures to express their

true feelings for their loved ones. It could also mean, the poet wants to reassure her mother that she is happy and they are going to meet again soon.

The **title**, *My Mother at Sixty-six* is very appropriate as the subject of the poem is, poet's aged mother. The poem explains the beautiful relationship between a daughter and her mother, where the daughter is worried about her mother's health, old age and perhaps, imminent death. The title prepares us for the context of the poem.

Activity-9

Read carefully the passage given below. Compare and contrast the situation and emotions of the characters in the passage with the ones in the poem, *My Mother at sixty-six*. Make notes of it and also give an appropriate title.

When I decided to go abroad for further studies, I was sure my grandmother would be upset. I would be away for five years, and at her age one could never tell. But my grandmother could. She was not even sentimental. She came to leave me at the railway station but did not talk or show any emotion. Her lips moved in prayer, her mind was lost in prayer. Her fingers were busy telling the beads of her rosary. Silently she kissed my forehead, and when I left, I cherished the moist imprint as perhaps the last sign of physical contact between us. (*The Portrait of a Lady*, Hornbill, NCERT, p. 5)

Format of Note Making

Title:

Notes:

1. Sub-Title

i. short points

ii. short points

iii. short points

iv. short points

2. Sub-Title

- i. short points
- ii. short points
- iii. short points
- iv. short points

3. Sub-Title

- i. short points
- ii. short points
- iii. short points
- iv. short points

Activity-10

On the basis of your reading and notes that you make, write a summary of your findings in about 80 words.

ANSWERS

Activity-1

- a. A mother is seeing off her daughter at the airport.
- b. A daughter is going away from her mother for higher studies or some work.
- c. A mother is seeing the bright future of her daughter where she is flying high.
- d. Both of them are sad for going away from each other.
- e. Both are concerned for each other's health and wellbeing.

Activity-3

1. (b) Sad 2. (a) Separation

Activity-5

i-d, ii-e, iii-c, iv-b, v-f, vi-a

Activity-6

- (a) The poet's mother was sitting beside her.
- (b) She noticed that her mother was dozing with her mouth open.
- (c) Her mother's face looked pale, faded and lifeless like a dead body because she had grown

old.

(d) (i) doze (ii) corpse (iii) ashen

Activity-7

(a) Her mother was getting old gradually. It pained her.

(b) The poet withdrew her thoughts from her mother and looked outside.

(c) The young trees growing outside went past as if they were sprinting. Happy children were coming out of their houses.

(d) (i) sprinting (ii) merry (iii) spilling.

Activity-8

(a) After security check, the poet stood a few yards away from her mother and looked at her face again.

(b) The late winter moon lacks brightness as well as strength. The pale and colourless face of the mother resembles the late winter moon.

(c) The fear of ageing and ultimate death/separation from her mother.

(d) (i) wan (ii) late winter's moon (iii) ache

Activity-9

Hints: Relationship between mother-daughter vs grandmother-grandchild, advancing age, fear of loss and separation, situation of going away, etc.

REFERENCES

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PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Why are the young trees described as sprinting?
2. Why has the mother been compared to the late winter's moon?
3. How do the parting words of the poet and her smile present a contrast to her real feelings?
4. Think of another suitable title for the poem.
5. Imagine you are going to hostel for higher studies and getting separated from your mother. Try to pen down your feelings through a poem.