

2nd PUC English Textbook Answers Springs Chapter 6 When You Are Old

When You Are Old Questions and Answers, Notes, Summary

When You are Old Comprehension I

The speaker is addressing

- a. a young woman he has loved
- b. an old woman that he has met now
- c. the woman that he has admired in his life.

Answer:

- (a) a young woman he has loved.

Inline two, the word 'book' refers to

- a. memories
- b. book of poems
- c. an album
- d. diary.

Answer:

- (a) memories.

The words 'glad grace' suggest

- a. her physical beauty
- b. her inner beauty
- c. her goodness.

Answer:

- (a) her physical beauty.

'Pilgrim soul' means the soul

- a. which is immortal
- b. that has gone on a pilgrimage
- c. which is questing for true love.

Answer:

- (c) which is questing for true love.

What does the phrase 'your changing face' suggest?

Answer:

It suggests that her youth and beauty will fade away. When she grows old her face will get



shrunk and will look different.

'Love fled' connotes

- a. the death of the man who loved her
- b. the fleeing of her lover to the mountains
- c. the loss endured by her.

Answer:

(b) the fleeing of her lover to the mountains.

When You Are Old Comprehension II

How is the 'one-man' different from the many others who loved the lady?

OR

How does the speaker distinguish/contrast his love from/with that of the others?

Answer:

The narrator/speaker asks his lady love to presume that she has grown old and grey and is sitting by the fire nodding. Then he asks her to read from her book of memories and reminisce her past when she was in her prime youth. While she is thus engaged in recalling her past, the poet reminds her that though she undoubtedly had a great many suitors who admired her beauty and elegance and professed 'love' which may be true or false, he alone loved her unconditionally.

He says that he loved her inner beauty and even the fading away of her youth and beauty. The phrase 'how many' in the first line (second stanza) stands in contrast to 'But one man', in the third line (second stanza). While many suitors loved her beauty and elegance, he alone loved her pilgrim soul as well as the sorrows of her changing face.

Question 2.

How does the poem bring out the transient nature of beauty as against the permanence of love?

Answer:

Yes. The poem, while making an attempt to persuade the young lady not to ignore him or his love, also incidentally highlights the transient nature of beauty as against the permanence of love. In fact, the speaker's argument is that, whereas all her suitors are merely attracted by her youthful beauty and elegance, he is attracted by her pilgrim soul. Furthermore, he claims that the love exhibited by her many suitors may not last long and might change as she grows old.

On the contrary, his love will remain constant and unconditional. He would love her 'pilgrim soul' as well as the changes in her face which appear as one grows old. Thus, the poet, using the phrase 'your moments of glad grace' in the first line of the second stanza in contrast with the phrase 'sorrows of your changing face' in the fourth line suggests that 'beauty' is transient in nature whereas 'love' is permanent.



When You Are Old Comprehension III

Question 1.

Comment on the usage of the time frame by the poet in 'When You Are Old'.

OR

'The speaker addresses a young lady in her old age'. Comment on the time sequence used by the poet.

OR

The speaker in 'When You Are Old' is not addressing an old lady. Explain.

Answer:

'When You Are Old' is a short love poem in which the poet uses a time frame in which the speaker addresses his lady love in the present, takes her to an unreal condition in the future, and asks her to recall her past memories. He does so, in order to persuade her or warn her not to ignore him and make a wrong decision.

The poet's point of view is the most compelling point of the poem. The narrator is calling upon a woman that is not yet through with youth to, once past her prime, recall the days he was in her life and very much in love with her. Obviously, he wants her to remember him for his unique and unconditional love for her, and how she is choosing to ignore it in the present. By writing this poem in this fashion, the woman, when the poet hopes that she grows old, will remember the days when she was young with happiness but will grow regretful that she did not take advantage of his love.

Alternatively, the woman, in the present will see what an opportunity she is missing by ignoring his love for her and leaving him to fade into the past. The speaker fears that his lady love will not act upon his love for her and that she will only remember him in the book of memories. He hopes that if, once old, she puts down the book of memories, she will grow chilly and sorrowful that she did not foresee how steadfast his love was but how foolish she was for taking no notice of it. He is already fearful that she will grow old without him, and this can be seen as he requests that she remember him a 'little sadly' and as a missed chance to have a happy future.

It is the time frame that the poet has used in this poem that facilitates the poet to write this sad and reminiscent poem which is not designed primarily to make an old woman regretful, but to keep a young woman from ignoring the narrator and making the wrong decision.

Question 2.

'When You Are Old' is a poem of contrasts. What purpose do they serve?

Answer:

'When You Are Old' was written to show the true and unforgettable love from the writer. The theme is a painful one of unrequited love, which the poet manipulates in an interesting manner. Instead of focusing upon the present or the past, Yeats looks to the future, a future

in which the two people in the poem are destined to be forever apart. The poet visualizes an unreal condition that the woman he loved became old and felt regret for refusing his true love.

To depict such a theme, the poet deploys elegant and quiet words and builds pictures of contrasts:

In the first stanza, there is a contrast between her elegant youth and her depressing old age. In the second stanza, there is a contrast between her many suitors who professed superficial love and the speaker or the lover who promises true love for her. In the third stanza, there is a contrast between the fleeting or transient love represented by her many suitors and the personified love of the poet.

There is a contrast between 'the sorrows of your changing face' in the second stanza and 'murmur a little sadly' of the third stanza. 'The sorrows' indicate passion or strong emotion is seen in young people and 'little sadly' reflects the listlessness of old people. There is a contrast between the 'beauty and elegance' sans her soul sought after by the suitors and the 'pilgrim soul' in the same lady cherished by the speaker. The many suitors who wanted to court her were attracted by her superficial beauty whereas this lover/speaker was attracted by her pilgrim soul, which symbolizes her inner self. These contrasts serve to build a strong argument to persuade the young lady not to ignore him now and regret later.

When You Are Old Additional Questions and Answers

I. Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase, or a sentence each:

Question 1.

To whom is the poem 'When You Are Old' addressed?

Answer:

To a young lady with whom the speaker is deeply in love.

Question 2.

What does the speaker want his beloved to do sitting by the fire?

OR

What does the speaker want his beloved to do when she is old?

Answer:

The speaker wants his beloved to sit by the fire and reminisce her memories of the past

Question 3.

Where, according to the speaker, had love hidden his face?

Answer:

According to the speaker, 'love' had hidden his face amid a crowd of stars.

Question 4.

Who, according to the speaker, will be 'nodding by the fire'?

Answer:

The speaker depicts his lady love as an old woman sitting beside the fire, nodding her head.

Question 5.

What does the speaker suggest his beloved to dream of?

Answer:

When she is old and grey, the speaker wants his beloved to dream of the soft look her eyes once had and the deep shadows they now have.

Question 6.

What does 'the sorrows of your changing face' refer to?

Answer:

The sorrows of your changing face' refer to the changes seen in her face as she grows older. Her face will have shrunk and wrinkles will have appeared on her forehead and face depicting the difficulties and sorrows faced by her over the years.

Question 7.

According to the speaker, in what way is his love for the lady different from that of others?

Answer:

While many suitors loved her beauty and elegance, he alone loved her pilgrim soul as well as the sorrows of her changing face.

Question 8.

Mention any one aspect that the speaker loved in his beloved.

Answer:

The speaker loved her 'inner beauty' and her 'pilgrim soul'.

Question 9.

According to the speaker, what will the woman regret in her old age?

Answer:

The woman will regret that she had rejected the speaker's, true love.

Question 10.

What is meant by 'pilgrim soul'?

Answer:

The phrase 'pilgrim soul' means the soul which is in quest of 'true love'.

Question 11.

What look did the woman's eyes have once in 'When You Are Old'?

Answer:

Soft look.

Question 12.

The speaker in 'When You Are Old' addresses

- (a) a young lady
- (b) an old lady
- (c) a little girl.

Answer:

- (a) a young lady.

Question 13.

When, according to the speaker in 'When You Are Old', will the lady be 'grey and full of sleep'?

Answer:

According to the speaker in 'When You are Old', the lady will be grey and full of sleep when she sits nodding by the fire.

Question 14.

According to the speaker in 'When You Are Old', what did many admire the lady for?

Answer:

According to the speaker in 'When You are Old', many suitors were mesmerized by her beauty and elegance.

Question 15.

In the poem "When You Are Old" many loved the lady's

- (a) huge wealth
- (b) physical beauty
- (c) pilgrim soul.

Answer:

- (b) physical beauty.

Question 16.

Who, according to the speaker in 'When You Are Old', loved the beloved's pilgrim soul?

Answer:

According to the speaker in 'When You are Old', it was he (the speaker) who loved her pilgrim soul.

Question 17.

Whose pilgrim soul did the speaker in 'When You Are Old' love?

Answer:

The speaker in 'When You are Old', loved the pilgrim soul of a young lady whom he is addressing in the poem and whose beauty and elegance mesmerized many suitors.

Question 18.

What did the speaker in "When You Are Old" love besides the pilgrim soul?

Answer:

The speaker in 'When You are Old', loved the pilgrim soul, as well as the changes that appeared in her face as she grew older.

Question 19.

Who, according to the speaker in 'When You Are Old', fled and hid his face?

Answer:

According to the speaker in 'When You are Old', 'Love' (personified 'love'] fled and hid his face.

Question 20.

Where, according to the speaker in 'When You Are Old', did love pace upon?

Answer:

According to the speaker in 'When You are Old', 'Love' paced upon the mountains for a while and then disappeared.

Question 21.

What, according to the speaker in 'When You Are Old', did love hide amid a crowd of stars?

Answer:

According to the speaker in 'When You are Old', 'Love' (personified love) hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

Question 22.

The speaker loved the _____ of his beloved's changing face in 'When You Are Old'.

- (a) grace
- (b) sorrows
- (c) soft look.

Answer:

- (b) sorrows.

Question 23.

In 'When You Are Old', the speaker suggests to his beloved to slowly read his book when she is

- (a) glad
- (b) old
- (c) proud.

Answer:

- (b) old.

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph of 80-100 words each:

Question 1.

Why does the poet ask his beloved to reflect upon the bygone days and the present moment?

OR

What does the speaker in 'When You Are Old' suggest to his beloved to reflect upon?

Answer:

The poet asks his beloved to reflect upon the bygone days and the present moment because he seems to be apprehensive that she will continue to ignore him, her beauty will vanish soon and she will be alone in her old age. That is why he is asking her to presume that she has grown old and grey and try to foresee her predicament in the future. He does so because he intends to persuade her to pay attention to his 'value' as a lover before it is too late.

Question 2.

Examine the theme of opposing stability of true love and the fickleness of false love in the light of the poem.

OR

How does the speaker express his longing for his beloved?

OR

Whose love in 'When You Are Old' is true and intense? Explain.

OR

How does the speaker in 'When You Are Old' bring out his love for his beloved against the changing circumstances and ravages of time?

Answer:

'When You Are Old' presents the moral dilemma faced by a sincere lover. The speaker/narrator is the sincere lover and his lady love is the one who is going to make a decision. The lady has attracted many suitors including the speaker. The speaker believes that the other suitors only love her physical charms, and not all of them are sincere in their love towards her. He means to say that they are fickle-minded and once she loses her charms they will desert her. On the other hand, he believes that he loves her truly and according to him true love is the love of the inner self and has a spiritual aspect in it. But, the lady has not responded to his love.

He feels frustrated and as a last attempt, he tries to tell her the reality. He wants her to realize that physical beauty is transient and love of the fickle-minded will also be transient. He wants to assure her that only his love will be stable and if she ignores him and makes a wrong decision she will regret it later. Thus the speaker tries to persuade his lover to make the right decision and receive his love, which is true and intense.

Question 3.

How does the poet express his feelings for his love in the poem?

OR

How is love that is not reciprocated by the speaker's beloved expressed in the poem?

Answer:

The poet asks his love, who is still young, to imagine a time when she is past her prime youth. She would then be an old woman with grey hair and sleepy eyes. When she is in such a state, he wants her to read a book of memories from her youth. As the woman sits beside the fire, nodding her head and leaves through her memories, she would recollect the 'soft looks' she once had and the sorrows she had suffered until then. When she recalls her faded beauty she would also recall how she was admired by many suitors who were infatuated with her physical charms. At the same time, she would also recall how there was one man who loved her unique soul which was in search of true love. She would also realize that her true love has lingered on for a while, disappeared from the earth and hid amidst a crowd of stars in heaven.

Question 4.

The poem 'When You are Old' highlights the feelings of a true lover. Explain.

OR

How is the speaker's passionate love for his beloved brought out in the poem?

Answer:

'When You are Old' highlights the writer's true and unforgettable love for a lady. It presents the concern of sincere love for the future predicament of his lady love. Instead of focusing upon the present or the past, the poet looks to the future, a future in which the two people in the poem are destined to be forever apart. The poet imagines that the woman he loved has become old and regrets her refusing his true love.

The poem begins with the presumption that an old and grey lady is sitting beside the fire nodding her head. When she recalls her memories, she remembers the soft look that her eyes had once, and the number of suitors who tried to court her, being charmed by her elegance and beauty. While admitting that many suitors were attracted by her youthful beauty, the speaker tries to tell her that he was the only lover who loved the pilgrim soul in her.

He wants her to know that unlike others he was attracted by the beauty of her inner self and his love would remain constant even in her old age. He assures her that he loves even the sorrows of her changing face. He wants her to understand that over a period of time her beauty will have faded away and she will have grown old, with her face having shrunk and her skin has been wrinkled, indicating that she has passed through many difficulties and sorrows.

The speaker concludes visualizing that she is now bending down beside the dying fire, and she tells herself in a whisper, in a regretful tone that her true love has fled and is hiding his face amidst a crowd of stars. Thus, the whole poem is the delineation of the intense feelings of a true lover.

III. Answer the following questions in about 200 words each:

Question 1.

The poem 'When You Are Old' conveys the message that true love is indestructible and constant. Elucidate.

OR

The poem 'When You Are Old' brings out the feelings of eternal love. Explain.

OR

'True love is related to the soul but not to the physical beauty'. How is this idea brought out in the poem 'When You Are Old'?

OR

Whose love in 'When You Are Old' is immortal? How does the poem present this?

Answer:

'When You Are Old' depicts the frustration and anxiety of a sincere lover. At the same time, it also presents the concern of sincere love for the future predicament of his lady love.

The lover's frustration and anxiety for her future find expression only because his love is genuine and constant. Though she has not responded to his 'love', the lover does not want to give up his attempts to persuade her. He tries to place before her a realistic, projected picture of her future only because he knows that she will be old, infirm, and companionless as years roll by. Furthermore, the poet seems to understand that she is not a flirt and a worldly lady who loves to indulge in the pleasures of life but one who has also been looking for someone who really loves her inner self more than her physical charms. Only someone who has a similar state of mind, and beliefs, and who is also yearning for a spiritual union with his lady love alone can write so.

From this, one can infer that true love is indestructible and constant. Had the speaker been interested in her physical charms only he would not have bothered to foresee his own future as well as the predicament of his lady love some twenty years hence. Thus it can be argued that the poem 'When You Are Old' conveys the message that true love is indestructible and constant and is not influenced by the vicissitudes of fortune.

Question 2.

"But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you". How does the speaker justify this?

OR

How does the poem distinguish the speaker's love from that of others?

Answer:

'When You are Old' is a love poem in which the poet addresses his lady love in the present, takes her to an unreal condition in the future, and asks her to recall her past memories. He does so, in order to persuade her or warn her not to ignore him and make a wrong decision. This timeframe is the most compelling point of the poem because he wants her to remember him for his unique and unconditional love for her.

The poet compares himself as a suitor with other suitors. He says, 'but one man loved the pilgrim soul in you'. He tries to distinguish himself from all the other suitors who tried to woo her. He argues that all the other suitors were only attracted by her physical and external beauty and naturally they would be put off by her looks of old age and might stop showing any interest in her. On the other hand, unlike other suitors, he loved her not for her physical beauty but for her 'pilgrim soul'.

The word 'pilgrim soul' has a reference to the biblical belief that every soul is a pilgrim on the way to salvation and redemption. The speaker, by referring to this aspect of the beloved rather than to her beauty and fame, seeks oneness with the inner spiritual self and not the external self.

Question 3.

'When You Are Old' makes the 'beloved' look back on her youth. Discuss.

Answer:

'When You Are Old' is a short love poem in which the poet uses a time frame in which the speaker addresses his lady love in the present, takes her to an unreal condition in the future, and asks her to recall her past memories. He does so in order to persuade her or warn her not to ignore him and make a wrong decision.

The poet's point of view is the most compelling point of the poem. The narrator is calling upon a woman who is not yet through with youth to, once past her prime, recall the days he was in her life and very much in love with her. Obviously, he wants her to remember him for his unique and unconditional love for her, and how she is choosing to ignore it in the present. By writing this poem in this fashion, the woman, when the poet hopes that she grows old, will remember the days when she was young with happiness but will grow regretful that she did not take advantage of his love.

Alternatively, the woman, in the present will see what an opportunity she is missing by ignoring his love for her and leaving him to fade into the past. The speaker fears that his lady love will not act upon his love for her and that she will only remember him in the book of memories. He hopes that if, once old, she puts down the book of memories, she will grow chilly and sorrowful that she did not foresee how steadfast his love was but how foolish she was for taking no notice of it. He is already fearful that she will grow old without him, and this can be seen as he requests that she remember him a 'little sadly' and as a missed chance to have a happy future.

It is the time frame that the poet has used in this poem that facilitates the poet to write this sad and reminiscent poem which is not designed primarily to make an old woman regretful, but to keep a young woman from ignoring the narrator and making the wrong decision.

When You Are Old by W.B. Yeats About the Poet:

William Butler Yeats (1865 – 1939) is an Irish poet and one of the foremost figures of 20th-century literature. His early poetry is part of the Celtic twilight or the Irish Literary Revival and it uses the history, myths, and heroic figures of Ireland. Yeats wrote plays, was one of the founders of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, and was witness to the revolutionary politics of Ireland. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1923. Later, under the influence of Ezra Pound, he began to write modernist poetry. He is one of the great love poets of the world.

In this love poem, the speaker (who is the lover) imagines his beloved in the future when she is old and reading the book of poems he is now writing. Reading the book she will remember the past, her youthful beauty, and the many who admired her. While the others loved her physical beauty and grace, only he loved her soul and her soul's search for something meaningful. However, she will also feel sad that that love also vanished. Note how love is personified in the last lines.

Background:

Most critics opine that this poem is a real description of the poet's love. In 1889 Yeats met his great love Maud Gonne, an actress, and Irish revolutionary. However, she married Major John Macbride in 1903, and this episode inspired Yeats to write down this heart-stirring poem. Many critics believe that the poem presents the resentment he feels towards her for not reciprocating his love. The ambiguity of the last stanza of the poem illustrates that the poem is not only about the regret the woman feels when she becomes aware of what she has lost, it also strengthens the argument that this work is actually about the resentment he wants the woman to perceive.

When You Are Old Summary in English

'When You Are Old' was written to express the writer's true and unforgettable love. The theme is a painful one of unrequited love, which the poet manipulates in an interesting manner. Instead of focusing upon the present or the past, the poet looks to the future, a future in which the two people in the poem are destined to be forever apart. The poet imagines an unreal condition that the woman he loved became old and felt regret for refusing his true love.

That is why the poem begins with the presumption that an old and grey lady was sitting beside the fire nodding her head. She is imagined to be reminiscing her memories when she recalls the soft look that her eyes had once, and how many suitors tried to court her, being charmed by her elegance and beauty.



While admitting that many suitors were attracted by her youthful beauty, the speaker tries to tell her that he was the only lover who loved the pilgrim soul in her. He wants her to know that he was attracted by the beauty of her inner self and his love would remain constant even after she grows old. He assures her that he loves even the sorrows of her changing face. He means to say that over a period of time her beauty will have faded away and she will have grown old with her face having shrunk and skin having been wrinkled indicating that she has passed through many difficulties and sorrows.

He concludes visualizing that she is now bending down beside the dying fire, and tells herself in a whisper in a regretful tone that her true love has fled and is hiding his face amid a crowd of stars.

Analysis of the Poem:

‘When You Are Old’ is a short, exquisite, love lyric of twelve lines. It is a sad and introspective poem and is written in a melancholic tone.

The poem is in the form of a direct address by a lover to his lady love. In the poem, there are three stanzas of four lines each with a constant rhyme. The rhyme scheme hints that the speaker/ lover tries to tell her that his love will remain constant even when she grows old.

The most important aspect of this poem is the point of view taken by the narrator. The narrator is asking a woman, who is still young, to imagine a time when she is past her prime youth.

When you are old and gray and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

The poet tries to put her mind in the future when she is an 'old and gray' woman, 'full of sleep', to 'slowly read' a book of memories from her youth. As the woman is 'nodding by the fire' she leafs through the book (her memories) and recollects her days of 'soft looks' and 'sorrows' as she changed.

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you.
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

She remembers her faded beauty that was admired by many but then recalls the only man, the narrator, who loved her for her unique soul. He loved her even as she grew less beautiful and as her personality changed in the fullness of time. The alliteration 'glad grace' expresses that when she is young, beautiful and in her best moments of life many will be interested in her, but their love for her will be just false or superficial love. However, the narrator (speaker) will love her anyway no matter what happens to her beauty.

The line "and loved the sorrows of your changing face" suggests that when she gets old her face gets shrunk. So her face looks different but he will just love her with the same love he always had. There is also a contrast between 'glad grace' and 'sorrows of your changing face', which suggests that while the others love her in her happy times, he will love her every time, including the worst ones.

The phrase 'pilgrim soul' in the line, "but one man loved the pilgrim soul in you," refers to the long walk that her soul has had, searching for real happiness, but really being alone. So, many lovers can love her for how she looks but only he can love her for who she really is. 'Pilgrim Soul' has reference to the Biblical belief that every soul is a pilgrim, on the way to salvation and redemption. The speaker, by referring to this aspect of the beloved rather than to her beauty and fame, evokes oneness with the inner and not the external self.

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

In this stanza, the speaker exhorts the loved one to remember him in later years as she sits beside the fire and bends over the embers of the fire. The onomatopoeic 'murmur' suggests a whisper that shows that she has no passion or zest left. This adds to the imagery of age and weariness. 'A little sadly' suggests that in later years, as she remembers the speaker, she should feel regretful. The poet uses the word 'love' in all the lines in the second stanza and in the third stanza, second line, he capitalizes the word 'Love', giving it much intensity. He personifies 'Love' in the second line. In the lines,

And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars

'pacing' suggests that she was given a chance as 'Love' waited for her; it also suggests the gradual diminishing of the love which may then loiter over mountains for a while and then disappear. Being on the 'mountains overhead' suggests that 'Love' waited on a higher plain than that which she inhabited. Capitalized 'L' for love suggests that it is not just a person that she has lost but the ultimate, true, and everlasting possibility of love. The phrase 'how love fled' refers to the possibility that the speaker's love would just fly far away because she is not receptive to his love.

Glossary:

- The pilgrim soul: questing soul
- The glowing bars: the bars of the fire place full of glowing coal ('Bars' refers to the bars of the iron grate in the fire-place)
- Nod: move one's head up and down repeatedly
- Murmur: a softly spoken or almost inaudible utterance
- full of sleep: drowsy due to old age
- moments of glad grace: the days of youth when she was graceful
- nodding: feeling sleepy; a sign of sleepiness
- pilgrim soul: a Biblical belief that every soul is a pilgrim, on the way to salvation and redemption.