**Grandmother** by Sameeneh Shirazie

Summary

The poem describes a visit that a granddaughter pays to her grandmother. However, we do not know that the speaker is a granddaughter describing her grandmother – this is only revealed to us in the last line of the poem. We also do not know where and when the poem takes place, but we can assume that it is in the grandmother’s room or house because the speaker goes to visit her. We can also infer that the time is the end of the day because the grandmother describes all the chores she has done during the day.

In the first stanza of the poem, we can see that the granddaughter does not really care about her grandmother’s feelings and thoughts. She admits that she “hadn’t asked her much just how she felt”. However, her grandmother tells her granddaughter what she has done throughout the day, for example, “how she’d washed the sheets… she’d also sunned the mattresses”. When she describes these actions, the grandmother describes how she felt and the questions that she asked while doing them. For example, the grandmother, just like a child, “could not understand why the towel got so heavy when it was wet, and after sunning the mattresses, describes her bones as “tired”, and yet, she still has much more to do.

These descriptions change the granddaughter’s perspective of her grandmother. She admits that “her eyes filled with tears” when she thought that she would only say “Salaam’ and walk away” without paying much attention to her grandmother and her condition. The granddaughter realizes that if she had only said this short Salaam, then “so many words would have trapped inside her” grandmother. In other words, her grandmother would not been able to tell anyone what she felt about her day – these thoughts would have been stuck inside her.

At the end of the poem, the granddaughter admits that she “would have passed by” if the person whom she had been describing in the poem had not been her grandmother. It is also very important to notice that in the last lines of the poem, the granddaughter describes her grandmother as an inanimate object (using “what” instead of who”). She does this in order to emphasize the neglected condition of her grandmother – not described as a person, but only a thing that was left lying between bedclothes.

**VOCABULARY**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Productive**  | **Receptive**  |
| wash the sheets  | washed the sheets |
| towel  | towel |
| old  | tired bones |
| go away  | walk away |
| sad, cry  | filled with tears |
|  understand  | understand  |
| trapped  | trapped  |
|  pass by  | pass by |
| sun the mattresses  | sunned the mattresses |
| bedclothes  | Bedclothes  |
| feel  | feel  |
| thoughts  | thoughts  |
| appreciate  | appreciation |
| person  | human being |
| realize  | realization |
| opportunity  | opportunity |
| decision  | decision |
| plan  | planned |
| listen  | listen |
| heavy  | heavy |
| sufficient  | sufficient |

**QUESTIONS**

1. Describe your favorite part of the poem “Grandmother.” Explain why you like this part the most? Give examples from the poem
2. How would the poem be different if told by someone who is not related to the grandmother?
3. How does the poem end? Do you feel this was the best way to end it? Why or why not?
4. Describe how the poet feels about stopping to speak to Grandmother, explain why you think the poet feels this way.
5. Grandmother says her bones are tired, why do you think she says this? Do you agree or disagree with her complaint about tired bones?
6. Who is telling us what is happening in the poem? Is this the best person to tell it? Why do you think this person is the best or not?