

Chapter 1: How I Taught My Grandmother to Read

Complete Chapter Notes • NCERT Exercise Answers • Vocabulary

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Genre
Autobiographical story / memoir

Central Idea
The story shows that education brings confidence and independence, and that there is no age limit for learning.

1. Central Idea

The story shows that there is no age limit for learning. The grandmother, who had never attended school, develops a strong desire to become literate. She wants to read the Kannada novel Kashi Yatre by herself. Her granddaughter becomes her teacher. The story highlights the importance of education, determination, self-respect, independence, respect for teachers, and the loving bond between grandparents and grandchildren.

2. Beginning of the Story

The narrator tells us about her childhood in a village in North Karnataka. She lived with her grandparents. Every Wednesday, her grandmother eagerly waited for the weekly magazine Karmaveera, which carried a serialised novel called Kashi Yatre, written by the famous Kannada writer Triveni. The narrator would read the story aloud to her grandmother.

3. The Novel - Kashi Yatre

The novel is about an old woman who wants to go to Kashi and worship Lord Vishweshwara. There is also a young orphan girl who loves a boy but cannot marry him because she does not have enough money. The old woman ultimately gives her savings to the girl so that she can marry. The grandmother identifies with the old woman because she too had never been to Kashi.

Why is Kashi Yatre important?

It becomes the grandmother's favourite story and later becomes the motivation for her to learn to read independently.

4. Grandmother's Love for the Story

Every Wednesday, the narrator read the latest episode of Kashi Yatre to her grandmother. The grandmother listened with great interest and later discussed the story with other women at the temple. Although she could not read, she had a strong interest in literature and an excellent memory.

5. The Turning Point

One day, the narrator went to a neighbouring village for a wedding and stayed there for a week. During this time, her grandmother could not read the next episode of Kashi Yatre. When the narrator returned, she found her grandmother crying. The grandmother explained that she felt helpless because she could not read the story herself.

6. The Grandmother's Realisation

The grandmother realised that she was dependent on others because she had never learned to read. She decided that she wanted to become literate and independent. She did not care that she was 62 years old. She firmly decided to learn the Kannada alphabet.

7. The Granddaughter Becomes the Teacher

The narrator, who was only twelve years old, agreed to teach her grandmother. The grandmother was sincere, disciplined and hardworking. She practised regularly and gradually learnt to read. The story beautifully reverses the usual roles: the grandmother becomes the student and the granddaughter becomes the teacher.

8. The Grandmother's Determination

The grandmother's goal was not merely to memorise a few letters. She wanted to read Kashi Yatre independently. Her determination and hard work helped her achieve this goal.

Key Formula

Strong determination + hard work + proper guidance = success

9. The Dussehra Moment

After completing her learning, the grandmother gave her granddaughter a new sari as guru dakshina during Dussehra. She also touched her granddaughter's feet. This was unusual because younger people normally touch the feet of elders. Here, the grandmother considered her granddaughter her guru because she had taught her.

10. Why Did the Grandmother Touch Her Granddaughter's Feet?

- The granddaughter was her teacher.
- She had taught her how to read.
- The grandmother deeply respected education.
- She wanted to show respect and gratitude to her teacher.
- She believed that a teacher deserves respect regardless of age.

11. The Grandmother's Transformation

At the Beginning	At the End
Illiterate	Literate
Dependent	Independent
Unable to read	Confident and able to read

12. Character Sketch - Grandmother

- Determined: She decides to learn despite being 62 years old.
- Hardworking: She practises regularly until she succeeds.
- Emotional: She becomes upset when she cannot read the next episode.
- Self-respecting: She does not want to remain dependent on others.

- Humble: She accepts her granddaughter as her teacher.
- Respectful: She touches her granddaughter's feet.
- Strong-willed: She refuses to use age as an excuse.
- Loving: She shares a close bond with her granddaughter.

13. Character Sketch - Narrator

The narrator is caring, helpful, patient, responsible, sensitive and supportive. Although she is only twelve, she takes her responsibility seriously and teaches her grandmother patiently.

14. Character Sketch - Triveni

Triveni is the famous Kannada writer whose novel Kashi Yatre appears in the story. Her writing is presented as simple, interesting and connected with the psychological problems of ordinary people. Her novel becomes the inspiration that motivates the grandmother to become literate.

15. Major Themes

Importance of Education: Education gives independence and reduces dependence on others.

No Age Limit for Learning: The grandmother starts learning at 62, proving that learning can happen at any stage of life.

Determination: A strong will and continuous effort help the grandmother overcome difficulties.

Respect for Teachers: The grandmother touches her granddaughter's feet because she considers her a guru.

Intergenerational Bond: The grandmother learns reading from her granddaughter, while the granddaughter learns life values from her grandmother.

16. Why is the Title Appropriate?

The title is appropriate because the narrator teaches her grandmother how to read. It also has a deeper meaning: the granddaughter teaches the grandmother literacy, while the grandmother teaches the granddaughter determination, humility, respect and other values of life.

17. Important Symbols / Ideas

Symbol / Idea	Meaning
Book / Magazine	Represents knowledge and education.
Kashi Yatre	Represents the grandmother's love for literature and her desire to learn.
Dussehra	Represents achievement and a new beginning.
Touching the feet	Represents respect for the teacher and knowledge.

18. Important Vocabulary

Word	Meaning
Literate	Able to read and write
Illiterate	Unable to read and write
Independent	Able to do things without depending on others
Irrespective	Without considering something
Determination	Strong decision to achieve something
Convincing	Able to make someone believe something
Serialised	Published in parts
Psychological	Related to the mind and emotions
Orphan	A child whose parents are dead
Devotion	Deep love or dedication
Punya	Religious or spiritual merit
Independence	Freedom from dependence on others
Humility	Being modest and not proud
Inspiration	Something that motivates someone
Guru Dakshina	An offering given to a teacher as a mark of respect

19. Important Exam Questions

1. Why was the grandmother unable to read Kashi Yatre herself?
Because she had never attended school and did not know how to read.
2. Why did the grandmother cry when the narrator returned?
She had been unable to read the next episode of Kashi Yatre, which made her realise how dependent she was on others.
3. Why did the grandmother want to become literate?
She wanted to become independent and read Kashi Yatre herself rather than depending on someone else.
4. How old was the grandmother when she decided to learn?
She was 62 years old.
5. Who became the grandmother's teacher?
Her twelve-year-old granddaughter.
6. Why did the grandmother touch her granddaughter's feet?
Because the granddaughter was her teacher, and the grandmother wanted to express respect and gratitude.
7. What does the story teach us about age and education?
It teaches that there is no age limit for learning. A determined person can acquire knowledge at any stage of life.
8. What does the grandmother's behaviour reveal about her character?
It shows that she was determined, humble, self-respecting, hardworking and deeply respectful of education.

20. One-Line Revision

Grandmother → 62 years old → never went to school → loves Kashi Yatre → cannot read it herself → feels helpless → decides to learn → granddaughter becomes teacher → grandmother works hard → learns to read → gives guru dakshina → touches granddaughter's feet.

□ Biggest Exam Point

Education makes a person independent, and there is no age limit for learning.

The grandmother's journey from dependence to independence is the heart of the story.

21. NCERT Exercise - Answer the Following

1. Why do you think the grandmother felt embarrassed to ask someone else to read to her while the narrator was away?

Answer: The grandmother felt embarrassed because she was 62 years old but could not read. She had to depend on others to read Kashi Yatre to her. This made her feel helpless and ashamed, especially because she wanted to be independent.

2. Why does the narrator initially laugh at her grandmother's determination to learn at the age of sixty-two?

Answer: The narrator initially laughs because she finds it unusual and amusing that her 62-year-old grandmother, who had never been to school, wants to start learning the Kannada alphabet at such an advanced age. She does not immediately realise how serious her grandmother is about learning.

3. What significance does the story of Kashi Yatre have in both the grandmother's life and the story?

Answer: Kashi Yatre is very important because the grandmother loves listening to the story and identifies with its elderly female **protagonist**. When the narrator is away, the grandmother cannot read the story herself, which makes her realise her dependence on others. This motivates her to learn to read and become independent.

4. What does the grandmother's desire to learn the Kannada alphabet reflect about her?

Answer: Her desire reflects her strong determination, self-respect and willingness to learn. It shows that she does not allow her age or lack of formal education to become an obstacle. She wants to become **self-reliant** and believes that learning is possible at any age.

5. What lessons can we **infer** from the grandmother's action of touching the narrator's feet?

Answer: We learn that knowledge and the person who **imparts** it deserve respect, regardless of age. The grandmother considers her granddaughter her guru because she taught her to read. Her action also reflects her humility, gratitude and respect for education.

6. What does the following line tell us about the broader theme of the story? "For a good cause if you are determined, you can overcome any obstacle."

Answer: The line expresses the central message of the story. The grandmother overcomes her age, lack of schooling and initial difficulties through determination and hard work. The story teaches us that with a strong will and a good purpose, no obstacle is too great to overcome.

7. How effectively does the story highlight the value of education in supporting personal independence?

Answer: The story highlights this very effectively. The grandmother's inability to read makes her dependent on her granddaughter. She feels helpless when the narrator is away. After learning to read, she becomes confident and independent. Thus, the story shows that education not only provides knowledge but also gives a person self-confidence, dignity and independence.

22. Vocabulary Exercise - Match Column 1 with Column 2

Column 1	Correct Match + Meaning
1. sink or swim	(vii) succeed or fail without help
2. on and off	(v) sometimes, occasionally
3. mix and match	(i) put different things together to get a range of possibilities
4. all or nothing	(viii) something to be done completely or not at all
5. part and parcel	(ii) complete part of or belong to
6. pick and choose	(iii) choose only the best (things, people, etc.)
7. sooner or later	(iv) at sometime in the future
8. leaps and bounds	(vi) increase or develop very quickly

Final sequence

1-(vii), 2-(v), 3-(i), 4-(viii), 5-(ii), 6-(iii), 7-(iv), 8-(vi)

23. Phrases - Match Column 1 with Column 2

Column 1	Correct Match + Meaning
1. to hit the books	(iii) to study seriously
2. to draw a blank	(v) to be unable to remember
3. to learn the ropes	(vi) to understand how to do an activity
4. to rack one's brain	(ii) to think very hard
5. to learn by heart	(i) to memorise something
6. burn the midnight oil	(iv) to study or work late into the night

Final sequence

1-(iii), 2-(v), 3-(vi), 4-(ii), 5-(i), 6-(iv)

END OF CHAPTER NOTES