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Class 12 English (Vistas) Notes

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD



Key Notes and Important Questions with Answers

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

–By Zitkala Sa and Bama

PART-1

THE CUTTING OF MY LONG HAIR

Zitkala Sa was a native American Indian who penned down her experiences at the Carlisle Indian School. Her first day at the School was a bitter-cold one. The customs and rules of the place were strange and new to her. She was forced to wear clothes that she considered undignified. She felt uncomfortable because she did not know the table manners at breakfast. Her worst nightmare was when her friend told her that her hair would be cut. She tried to resist by hiding under the bed, but was dragged out, tied to a chair and her long hair chopped off. The forced cutting of her hair made her suffer tremendous agony and she lost all spirit.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. That was the first day of the narrator in a new school.
2. A large bell rang to call the children for breakfast and then there was a lot of movement in the corridors.
3. Zitkala-Sa felt humiliated as her dress was very tight and her blanket was removed.
4. A small bell was tapped to draw the chairs from under the tables.
5. There was another bell to make them take their seats.
6. The narrator was new to the system of the bell so she sat down at the first bell only.
7. She was noticed by the higher authorities, which frightened her a lot.
8. Late in the evening her friend Judewin told her that they are going to cut her hair.
9. The narrator decided to struggle before submitting.

10. She disappeared and crept up stairs.

11. She hid herself under the bed in a large room.

12. She heard people searching for her.

13. She was scared but was not ready to surrender.

14. She resisted by scratching wildly.

15. Ultimately she was dragged from there and her hair was shingled. She wept and remembered her mother.

16. It was the beginning of her miseries as she was treated like an animal.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What were the indignities that the new girls were subjected to at Carlisle Indian School?

Ans. The girls were scrutinized thoroughly and supervised by a grey-haired woman. They were made to wear tight fitting immodest clothes and stiff shoes. During breakfast a systematic and regimental discipline was observed. The girls with long hair had to get them shingled and they had to submit to the authorities who were strong, unfeeling and cruel.

2. How had Zitkala – Sa been subjected to extreme indignities?

Ans. Since the day she was taken from her mother Zitkala had suffered many indignities. She was stared at and tossed like a wooden puppet. Her long hair was shingled like a coward's. In her pain when she cried for her mother no one came forward to comfort her. She was just like one of the animals driven by a herder.

3. What did Judewin tell the narrator? What was the effect?

Ans. Judewin who could understand a little English informed the narrator that the strange woman intended to cut her long hair. But the narrator had learnt from her mother that the enemy cut the hair of the unskilled warrior when they are captured and among their people mourners wear short hair and cowards have shingled hair. So, she decided to resist. She hid herself under a bed in a dark room.

4. Why was Zitkala-Sa so averse to having her hair cut?

Ans. It was an age old tradition among the people of her tribe, to which Zitkala-Sa belonged, to maintain their long shining and beautiful hair. It was believed that only the warriors or the mourners get their hair shingled. Short hair were worn by cowards as per their tradition. So, obviously Zitkala-Sa never wanted her hair to be cut short.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. How was the environment in Zitkala-Sa's new school different from the environment in other schools?
2. Why did Judewin's information frighten Zitkala-Sa?
3. Why was Zitkala-Sa scared in the dining room?
4. How did Zitkala-Sa try to save her long hair?
5. Why was Zitkala-Sa punished?

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. Give the character sketch of Zitkala-Sa.
2. Give a detailed description of the hair cutting incident.
3. What efforts were made by Zitkala-Sa to resist punishment?
4. "We should raise our voice against injustice and indignities." What qualities are required to face challenges in life?

PART –2

2. WE TOO ARE HUMAN BEINGS

–By Bama

Bama is a Tamil Dalit woman. She experienced untouchability very early in her life. One day she saw an elderly person carrying food packet with the help of strings as he was not supposed to touch the food because of his caste. She found the whole incident funny, but when she narrated it to her brother, he told her that the man held the packet by its strings because he was an untouchable. He also added that they too belonged to a lower caste. He told Bama to work hard in order to win honour and dignity for herself. Bama was inspired to fight back the injustices through education and sheer hard work. She studied hard and stood first in her class.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. When Bama was in class third, she was too innocent to know about untouchability.
2. She enjoyed her life in observing things and events on her the way.
3. She took about an hour in while coming home watching the events on her way home.
4. She watched all the fun and games, novelties and oddities in the streets, shops and market place.
5. She would watch puppet show, snake charmer, chopping up of onion, pouring of coffee and all such interesting things.
6. One day she saw a threshing floor where the people were driving cattles in pairs round and round.
7. Just then she saw an elderly person of the village holding a packet by its string in a funny manner.
8. She was surprised and amused at the manner he carried that packet.
9. She reported about the funny incident to her brother.
10. Her brother told her that the elderly man was not funny. He was carrying the packet in that strange manner as he could not touch it.

11. He explained to her that the man was an untouchable so he was humiliated.

12. He advised her to work hard in her studies, if she wanted to be respected.

13. Bama took that lesson seriously and worked hard throughout her life.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Why did Bama take half hour to an hour to cover the distance to her home that would normally take only ten minutes?

Ans. She walked very slowly and watched every scene, shop, snake charmer, man paddling his bicycle to win prizes and so on. She liked to see the Maariyatta temple, the Pongal celebrations, the statue of Gandhi and the sweet and snack stalls. Everything stopped her and attracted her attention. She also stopped to see the processions of the political parties, street play or a puppot show or a stunt performance.

2. How did Bama first come to know of the social discrimination faced by the people of her community?

Ans. She saw an elder carrying a small packet by its string without touching it. The elder went straight to the landlord. He bowed low and extended the packet towards him. The landlord opened it and started eating. She was amused to see the incident. On reaching home, she narrated the incident to her elder brother Annan. But her brother was not amused. He explained that the man was from a low caste and the landlord was from the upper caste. Everybody believed that they would be polluted if they were touched by the low caste people.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. How did Bama feel when Annan told her about 'Untouchability'?

2. Which words of her brother made a deep impression on Bama?

3. Why did Bama feel like laughing on seeing the way in which the elderly man was carrying a packet?

4. What advice did Annan give to Bama?

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. Both Bama and Zitkala-Sa are victims of discrimination that is practised in the society. What kind of experience did both of them go through?

2. What oppression and discrimination did Bama experience during her childhood? How did she respond to her situations?