

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 1: THE ADDRESS



THE ADDRESS

~Summary~

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Mrs Dorling's Indifferent Attitude Towards the Narrator

The narrator knocked at the door of a house, but the door was opened only a little. She asked the owner if she knew her. The narrator told her that she was Mrs S daughter. But the owner of the house, Mrs Dorling, denied knowing her. Mrs Dorling's face gave absolutely no sign of recognition and she kept staring at her without speaking any word.

The narrator thought that perhaps she was mistaken and had rung the wrong bell. Then the narrator got a glimpse of her mother's green knitted cardigan which Mrs Dorling was wearing. This confirmed to her that she had reached the correct address. But Mrs Dorling excused herself by saying that she could not talk to the girl that day and she should come again later. Then she shamelessly closed the door.

Someone Watching the Narrator from the Window

The narrator stood for some time on the steps even after the door closed. Someone was watching her from the bay window. The girl presumed that someone other than Mrs Dorling must be watching her and must have asked why the narrator came there.

The Narrator Remembers What her Mother had Told her

After this refusal, the narrator walked back to the station thinking about her mother. Her mother had given her Mrs Dorling's address years ago. It had been in the first half of the war. The narrator's mother told her about Mrs Dorling, an old acquaintance.

She also informed her that every time when Mrs Dorling came, she took something home with her. The reason Mrs Dorling gave for her actions was that she wanted to save all the good things, as the narrator's mother would not be able to save everything if they had to leave suddenly. The narrator's mother had accepted the idea. She was rather obliged towards Mrs Dorling that she was carrying such heavy luggage every time she visited, as it was really risky during the war.

The Narrator Remembers When She Met Mrs Dorling

The narrator arrived at the station without having paid much attention to things on the way. She was walking in familiar places again for the first time since the war. She didn't want to upset herself with the sight of streets and houses full of memories from a previous time. In the train she remembered the first time when she had seen Mrs Dorling. It was the morning after the day

her mother had told her about Mrs Dorling, who was wearing a brown coat and a shapeless hat. The narrator had asked from her mother if she lived far away, as she was carrying a heavy case. Her mother told her that Mrs Dorling lived at Number 46, Marconi Street.

Initially the Narrator was Reluctant to See the Family's Old Belongings

The narrator had remembered the address, but waited a long time to go there. Initially after the war was over, she was not interested in all their belongings lying with Mrs Dorling. She was afraid to see the things that had belonged to her dead mother. She did not want to see their belongings lying in Mrs Dorling's house in boxes and cupboards and needing to be put back in their old places again. She was scared that the things might make her very nostalgic. But gradually her life became normal again and one day, she became curious to know about all the possessions.

The Narrator Decides to Visit Again

After her first visit did not yield any result, she decided to visit a second time. This time a girl of about fifteen opened the door, as her mother was not at home. The narrator asked about Mrs Dorling. She was told that Mrs Dorling was not at home. She followed the girl along the passage. She noticed an old-fashioned iron candle-holder which they never used. They went into the living-room.

The narrator was horrified. She found herself in the midst of their old belongings, but they oppressed her as they were kept in strange surroundings and in a very tasteless manner. She was hurt to see her family's belongings lying in a tasteless way with the ugly furniture and muggy smell. The table cloth, the silver cutlery and even the still life showing the apple on the tin plate belonged to her family.

The Narrator's Keen Observation of Mrs Dorling's Daughter

She was keenly observing the girl, who had a broad back similar to that of Mrs Dorling. The girl was placing teacups for tea to be served. She was pouring tea from a white teapot which had a gold border on the lid and then she took out some spoons from the box. All this crockery and cutlery belonged to the narrator's family, but perhaps the girl was not aware of this fact. She cracked a joke about eating dinner in those antique plates. The narrator also found a burn mark on the table cloth. The narrator indirectly hinted to the girl that they missed things which are either missing from their original place or have been loaned to somebody.

The Narrator Remembers About Polishing the Silver Cutlery

The narrator remembers the time when her mother was alive and the narrator was at home either bored or ill. Her mother asked her to polish the silver cutlery. She was surprised to hear

that the cutlery that they were using was made of silver and even Mrs Dorling's daughter was surprised to hear that they were using silver cutlery for everyday eating.

The Narrator's Final Resolution

The narrator decided that she could not stay there any more. The address was correct but the narrator didn't want to remember it any more. She felt that the objects were linked to a memory of a time which no longer existed. They had lost their value in the strange surroundings. She comforted herself by thinking that her present house was too small to accommodate all the old stuff. She left the house, leaving all her family's belongings behind.

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NCERT SOLUTIONS

Questions (Page No. 15)

(Reading with Insight)

Question 1. 'Have you come back?' said the woman. 'I thought that no one had come back.' Does this statement give some clue about the story? If yes, what is it?

Answer: This statement gives us a hint that both the woman and the narrator know each other. The narrative revolves around a girl trying to find her mother's ancient possessions with an adult lady. This girl's mother knew about an upcoming fight and so had gradually moved all her valuable belongings to the residence of her acquaintance, Mrs. Dorling. As her mother had expired during the battle, the woman Mrs. Dorling did not expect anyone to come afterwards and claim the precious belongings. When the girl came to collect them, she was shocked. The given statement shows that the lady is selfish and does not want to share the antiques that do not even belong to her. She doesn't even recognize the girl of her past acquaintance and refuses to let her inside the home.

Question 2. The story is divided into pre-War and post-War times. What hardships do you think the girl underwent during these times?

Answer: The account "The Address" is divided into post-war and pre-war times. The girl belonged to a rich family. The girl's family had a lot of valuable things. There is clear evidence of the difficulties which the storyteller had to experience through these times. During the pre-war times, the girl lived in another place distant from her mother and visited her very rarely. During those times, her mother was worried that her precious things would be lost in the war. They were worried that they would have to leave the house. The girl was in a small hired house with its shutters overlaid with blackout paper. She was unable to see anything outside and the threat of death was also upon them. However, during the post-war, everything returned to normalcy. The girl could open the shutters of her room and look outside without worrying about anything. She had a powerful urge to look at her mother's properties and so also visited Mrs. Dorlings.

Question 3. Why did the narrator of the story want to forget the address?

Answer: The narrator desired to forget the address as it prompted her to remember the tender remembrances of her mother, their home and valuable belongings, and her earlier life before the war, which she could never have back. She, therefore, decided to forget the address and move on.

Question 4. 'The Address' is a story of human predicament that follows war. Comment.

Answer: War brings death and destruction with it. The story The Address describes a girl's life in post-war and pre-war times. The war created many obstacles for the reciter both physically and emotionally. She lost her house where they lived and also lost her mother. Her valuable belongings were carried away from them by a stranger who refused to return them. Many pre-war post-war perceptions can be seen in the story. Starting from the loss of life to the selfish and cruel nature of a woman, so many varied emotions are portrayed through this short story.

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