

Unit 7

The Aged Mother

A Japanese Folktale (by Matsuo Basho,)

Students Learning Outcomes

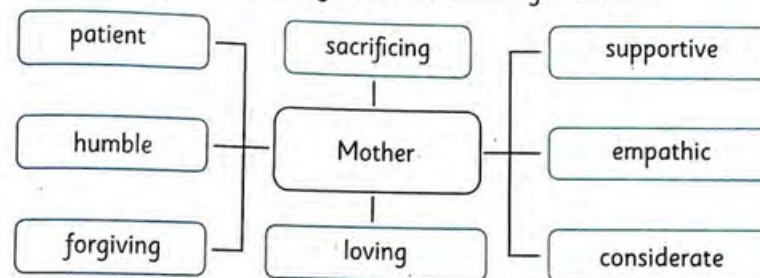
After reading the lesson the students will be able to:

- use pre-reading strategies to predict the content of a text from topic / picture, title / headings, key words and visuals etc. by using prior knowledge, asking questions and contextual clues.
- use dictionary to:
 - choose appropriate word definition.
 - identify part of speech.
 - recognize abbreviation used in a dictionary.
 - locate entry and guide words.
- analyze passages in the text to identify the theme / general subject, key idea / central thought (a statement about general subject), and supporting details.
- apply critical thinking to interact with text and use intensive reading strategies to scan to answer short questions.
- use summary skills to extract salient points and develop a mind map to summarize a text.
- recognize and use appropriate transitional words within and beyond paragraphs for better coherence and cohesion.
- translate passages from English to Urdu:
 - use the knowledge of literal and figurative meaning, grammatical gender and syntax to translate passages from English to Urdu.
 - understand that most phrases and idioms do not translate literally from one language to another.
- remonstrate heightened awareness of conventions and dynamics of group discussion and interaction to Offer and respond to greetings, compliments, invitations, introductions and farewells.
- illustrate use of pronouns learnt earlier.
- identify, and demonstrate use of relative pronouns.
- recognize the rules for using indefinite pronouns.
- illustrate use of pronoun-antecedent agreement.

The Aged Mother

Pre- reading

- Look at the mind map and guess what the story is about.



Reading

Once there lived at the foot of a mountain a poor farmer and his aged, widow mother. They owned a bit of land that supplied them with food. They both led a happy, peaceful and humble life.

Shinano, the town where they lived, was governed by a despotic leader who though a warrior, had a great and cowardly shrinking from anything suggestive of failing health and strength. This caused him to send out a cruel proclamation. The entire province was given strict orders to immediately put to death all the aged people. The days were barbarous, and the act of abandoning old people to die in isolation was not strange. The poor farmer had immense love and reverence for his aged mother and the order filled his heart with sorrow. No one could even think to refuse to obey the mandate of the governor. With many a deep and hopeless sighs, the youth prepared for the kindest mode, he could kill his mother with.

At twilight, when his day's work ended, he took a quantity of unwhitened rice, the principal food for the poor. He cooked and dried the rice and tied it in a square cloth making a pack of it. The bundle was swung around the neck along with a gourd filled with cool sweet water. He then, lifted his helpless old mother to his back and set out on his painful journey up the mountain. Paths made by hunters and woodcutter, crossed and re-crossed the long, steep and narrow road at several places. At some places he was confused and lost, but he paid no

heed. One path or another, it mattered not for him. On he went, climbing blindly upward – ever upward towards the high bare summit of what was known as Obatsuyama, the mountain of the “abandoning of the aged”.

The eyes of the old mother had still light in them and they noted the reckless hastening of her son from one path to another. Her loving heart grew anxious because her son did not know the mountain's paths and his return might be one of dangers. She stretched forth her hand to snap twigs from brushes as they passed by. She quietly dropped a handful of twigs every few steps as they climbed up. Thus the narrow path behind them was dotted at frequent intervals with tiny piles of twigs. Weary and heart sick, at last he reached the summit. The son gently released his burden and silently prepared a place of comfort as his last duty to his beloved old mother. He gathered some fallen pine needles and made a soft cushion and tenderly lifted her onto it. He wrapped padded coat closely around her stooping shoulders and said her farewell with aching heart and tearful eyes.

The trembling mother's voice full of unselfish love delivered her last injunction. “Let not thine eyes be blind, my son.” She said. “The mountain road is full of dangers. Look carefully and follow the path which holds the piles of twigs. They will guide you to the familiar path farther down”. The surprised son looked back to the path and then to the hands of the poor old lady. They were shriveled, scratched and soiled. His heart broke within and bowed to the ground crying aloud: “oh, honorable mother, your kindness breaks my heart! I will not leave you. Together we will follow the path of twigs, and together we will die!”

Once again he shouldered his burden (how light it seemed now) and hastened down the path, through the shadows and the moonlight, to the little hut in the valley. Beneath the kitchen floor was a walled closet for food, which was covered and hidden from view. There the son hid his



mother and supplied her with everything she needed, watching and fearing if she would be discovered. Time passed and he began to feel safe when again the governor sent forth messengers bearing another senseless order, seemingly a pride in his power. His demand was that his subjects should present him with a rope of ashes.

The entire province again went into a state of fear. Who in all Shinano could make a rope of ashes? Yet the order had to be obeyed. One night, in great distress, the son whispered the news to his hidden mother. “Wait!” she said. “I will think. I will think” Next day she told him how to make a rope of ashes. “Make a rope of twisted straw,” she said. “Then stretch it upon a row of flat stones and burn it on a windless night.” He summoned all the people and did what she had said. After the blaze died down, there lay a rope of ashes upon the stones, with every twist and fiber looking perfectly intact.

The governor was pleased at the wit of the youth and praised him, but he insisted to know where he got his wisdom. “Alas! Alas!” cried the farmer, “the truth must be told!” With deep bows he related his story. The governor listened to him and meditated in silence for a while. Then he lifted his head. “Shinano needs more than strength of youth,” he said gravely. “Ah, that I should not have forgotten the well-known saying, “with the crown of snow, there cometh wisdom!” That very hour the cruel law was abolished, and the custom drifted so far into past that only legend remain.

Glossary

Words	Meaning
despotic	connected with or typical of a ruler with great power, especially one who uses it in a cruel way
suggestive	reminding you of something or making you think about something
proclamation	an official statement about something important that is made to the public; the act of making an official statement
barbarous	extremely cruel and shocking

abandon	to leave somebody, especially somebody you are responsible for, with no intention of returning
isolation	the act of separating somebody/something; the state of being separate
tender	kind, gentle and loving
reverence	a feeling of great respect or admiration for somebody/something
mandate	the authority to do something, given to a government or her organization by the people who vote for it in an election
snap	to break something suddenly with a sharp noise; to be broken in this way
twig	a small very thin branch that grows out of a larger branch on a bush or tree
frequent	happening or doing something often
summit	the highest point of something, especially the top of a mountain
cushion	a cloth bag filled with soft material or feathers that is used, for example, to make a seat more comfortable
stooping	to bend your body forwards and downwards
injunction	an official order given by a court which demands that something must or must not be done
hasten	to say or do something without delay
shriveled	to become or make something dry and wrinkled as a result of heat, cold or being old
closet	a small room or a space in a wall with a door that reaches the floor, used for storing things
senseless	having no meaning or purpose

legend	a story from ancient times about people and events, that may or may not be true / a very famous person
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Exercise

Comprehension

A. Answer the following questions.

1. Why did the farmer decide to take his mother on the summit?
2. Why did the son hide his mother in the closet?
3. What does the phrase "with the crown of snow, there cometh wisdom!" mean?
4. What is the theme of "The Aged Mother"?
5. What is the climax of the story "The Aged Mother"?
6. Why did the farmer disclose his secret?
7. What are the elements of the story "The Aged Mother"?
8. What is the setting of the story?
9. Why did the leader issue the proclamation?
10. How does the poor youth feel about the proclamation?
11. How did the youth carry out the order?

B. Choose the correct option.

1. Shinano, the town where they lived, was governed by a despotic leader. In this sentence the word "despot" means that _____.
 a) the governor was a kind person b) the governor was an intelligent man
 c) the governor was a cruel man d) the governor was a wise fellow
2. He lifted his helpless old mother to his back and set out on his painful journey up the mountain. The journey was painful because _____.
 a) the farmer had the burden of his mother
 b) the mountain was steep
 c) the mountain was steep and he was to abandon his mother
 d) he could face the soldiers of the king on his way

3. The son decided to take her mother back to his hut because _____
- the mountain was not a proper place for living
 - she did not want to stay there
 - the governor abolished the law
 - he was greatly moved by the pains she took to guide him back his home
4. The saying "with the crown of snow, there cometh wisdom" means that _____
- whoever wears a silver crown is wise
 - wisdom comes with the passage of time
 - the snow always falls on the wise
 - the king is always wise
5. His demand was that his subjects should present him with a rope of ashes. Using the contextual clue, the word subjects in this sentence means _____
- man
 - citizens
 - they
 - issues

Vocabulary

Use dictionary to:

- find meaning of the following words.
- identify part of speech of the word through abbreviation used.
- find guide and entry words for the following words.

strength reverence comfort frequent humble barbarous hunter twig

Writing

A. Write a summary of any other story that you have read about mother.

B. Translate the following passage from English to Urdu.

The trembling mother's voice full of unselfish love delivered her last injunction. "Let not thine eyes be blind, my son." She said. "The mountain road is full of dangers. Look carefully and follow the path which holds the piles of twigs. They will guide you to the familiar path farther down". The son surprised and looked back to the path and then to the hands of the poor old lady. They were

shriveled, scratched and soiled. His heart broke within and bowed to the ground crying aloud: "oh, honorable mother, your kindness breaks my heart! I will not leave you. Together we will follow the path of twigs, and together we will die!"

- Analyze the last paragraph in the text to identify the theme / general subject, key idea / central thought (a statement about general subject), and supporting details.
- Discuss respect for clerks / parents with reference to today's youth.
- Write a paragraph of at least 100 words.
- Write down the summary of the lesson 'The Aged Mother'.

Listening and speaking

Role-play: In pairs present a dialogue in front of the class to offer and respond to greetings, compliments, invitations, introductions and farewells.

Grammar

Modal Verbs

A. Choose the correct answer about the function of the modal verbs in following sentences.

- May I use your mobile phone?
 - to make a prediction
 - to express possibility
 - to make a semi-formal request
 - to express permission
- You mustn't walk on grass.
 - to make a command
 - for prohibition
 - to make a conjecture
 - for suggestions
- He should come to the meetings on time.
 - to convey the idea of an obligation
 - to make a suggestion or advice
 - for prohibition
 - to form polite questions

4. Can you help me with this exercise?
 a) to show inability or impossibility
 b) to express or inquire about willingness
 c) to show possibility
 d) to express permission
5. You needn't take your umbrella. It isn't raining.
 a) expressing prohibition
 b) expressing obligation
 c) expressing lack of necessity
 d) expressing ability
6. Could you say it again more slowly.
 a) to make a request
 b) to give a suggestion
 c) to show ability in the past
 d) to identify a possibility
7. The weather will be hot enough to go to the beach this weekend.
 a) to express intention
 b) to make a prediction
 c) for habitual behavior
 d) to show willingness or interest
8. The dog would bark every time the doorbell rang.
 a) to request permission.
 b) for preferences
 c) for requests
 d) to show habitual activity
9. Shall I help you with your luggage?
 a) for suggestions
 b) for offering someone help
 c) for asking what to do
 d) to indicate a promise

B. Choose the most appropriate answer to express the idea specified in parentheses.

1. You don't look well. You _____ see a doctor. (**Advice**)
 a) are to b) could c) need to d) should
2. _____ take a message please? (**Request**)
 a) May you b) Could you c) Shall you d) Need to
3. Whose book is this? I am not sure. It _____ be Anam's. (**Possibility**)
 a) might b) must c) should d) would
4. She _____ have stayed home yesterday because her little son was sick. (**Necessity**)
 a) could b) would c) must d) should
5. You _____ leave work at 3:30 today. (**Permission**)
 a) can b) could c) might d) will

Teacher's guideline:

Revise functions of modal verbs with the students.

Ability	Possibility Probability	Permission (ask/refuse)	Request	Offer
▶ Can ▶ Could ▶ Was able to ▶ Couldn't ▶ Wan't able to	▶ Might ▶ May ▶ Must ▶ Could ▶ Can't be ▶ Can he be?	▶ Can ▶ Could ▶ May ▶ Might ▶ Mustn't ▶ Can't	▶ Can ▶ Could ▶ Will ('ll)	▶ Would you like? ▶ Shall I/we? ▶ Will?
Suggestion	Advice Strong Obligation	Obligation Necessity	Absence of necessity	Prohibition
▶ Could ▶ Shall I/we...?	▶ Should ▶ Ought to Had better	▶ Must ▶ Have to ▶ Have got to	▶ Needn't ▶ Don't need / don't have to ▶ Didn't / didn't have to	▶ Mustn't ▶ Can't