

1

How I Taught My Grandmother to Read

Summary

The story How I Taught My Grandmother to Read by Sudha Murty is a touching account of the bond between a young girl and her grandmother, and it highlights the importance of education and determination.

The narrator recalls her childhood when she lived with her grandparents in a village in North Karnataka. Her grandmother, Krishtakka, was illiterate because she never had the opportunity to attend school. Every week, the narrator would read aloud a popular Kannada novel Kashi Yatre, written by Triveni, to her grandmother. The grandmother became deeply interested in the story and eagerly waited for each new episode.

Once, the narrator went away for a week to attend a wedding. During her absence, the magazine arrived, but her grandmother could not read it. This made her feel helpless and dependent, and she even cried because she could not continue the story on her own.

Realizing the importance of literacy, the grandmother decided to learn how to read and write at the age of sixty-two. She showed great determination and made her granddaughter her teacher. She worked very hard, practicing daily with dedication.

By the time of the festival of Dassara, the grandmother successfully learned to read. As a mark of respect and gratitude, she touched her granddaughter's feet, considering her as her teacher. This emotional moment showed her respect for education and the teacher-student relationship.

Message of the Story:-

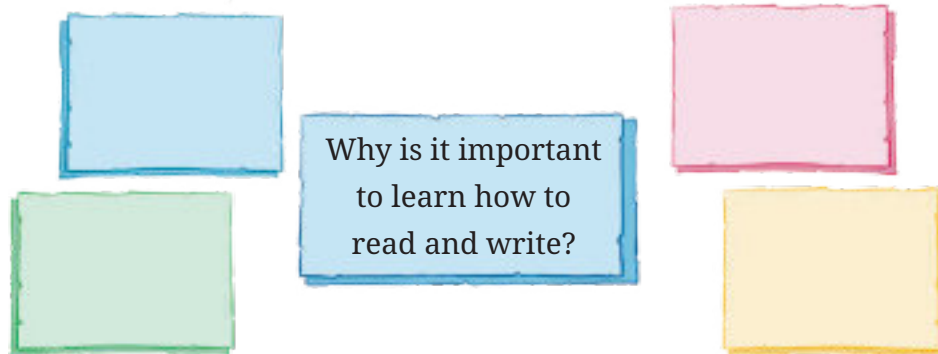
- There is no age limit for learning.
- Education gives independence and confidence.
- Determination and hard work can help overcome any obstacle.

New Terms

- **Protagonist** – the main character in a story
- **Episode** – a part of a story or series
- **Ardent** – having strong feelings or enthusiasm
- **Concentration** – full attention on something
- **Convincing** – believable or easy to accept
- **Debate** – discussion with different opinions
- **Eagerly** – with excitement and interest
- **Savouring** – enjoying something fully
- **Affectionate** – showing love and care
- **Determination** – strong will to achieve something
- **Obstacle** – something that blocks the way
- **Embarrassed** – feeling shy or ashamed
- **Unusual** – not common or different
- **Irrespective** – without considering something
- **Wrinkled** – having lines on the skin (old age)
- **Punya** – religious merit / good deed
- **Taken aback** – surprised and shocked
- **Namaskara** – respectful greeting (touching feet as a sign of respect)

Reflect and Respond

I. Complete the given word web.



Ans. literacy is important because:

- To gain knowledge and information
- To become independent in daily life
- To communicate effectively with others
- To read books, newspapers, and signs
- To get better education and jobs
- To build confidence and self-respect
- To participate actively in society

II. Read the questions given below and share your answers.

Q 1. Which language(s) do your grandparents or elderly relatives speak?

Ans. My grandparents speak Gujarati and Hindi. They are more comfortable speaking in Gujarati.

Q 2. How do they spend their time? How do you spend time with them?

Ans. They spend their time praying, reading religious books, watching TV, and talking to family members. I spend time with them by listening to their stories, helping them in small tasks, and watching TV together.

Q 3. What is your favourite experience with them?

Ans. My favourite experience is listening to their childhood stories and festivals they celebrated in earlier times. It is always interesting and enjoyable.

Q 4. What is something that the elderly in your family cannot do easily but enjoy watching you do?

Ans. They cannot use mobile phones or technology easily, but they enjoy watching me use the phone, play games, or show them videos.

III. Read the following passage. Match the highlighted words with their meanings given in the box below.

The casting for the (i) protagonist of our school's annual play was done after a lot of (ii) debate as many good actors had auditioned for the role. We had decided to present an (iii) episode from an inspirational story. It was a life story of a group of children who worked with the (iv) community to spread literacy. Every day, we reached school early to practise with (v) concentration. We waited (vi) eagerly for the final presentation. All of us played our roles in a very (vii) convincing manner as our theatre teacher had (viii) guided us well.

1. excitedly
2. believable
3. people living in one particular area
4. discussion
5. a part of a story
6. focus
7. main character
8. directed

Ans. Matching the Words with Their Meanings

- (i) Protagonist → 8. main character
 (ii) Debate → 4. discussion
 (iii) Episode → 5. a part of a story
 (iv) Community → 3. people living in one particular area
 (v) Concentration → 6. focus
 (vi) Eagerly → 1. excitedly
 (vii) Convincing → 2. believable
 (viii) Guided → 7. directed

Check Your Understanding

I. Complete the cause and effect table given below based on part I of the story. Share your answers with your classmates and teacher.

Cause	Effect
1.	(i) The morning papers arrived late in the day and weekly magazines would come one day late.
2. The grandmother, Krishtakka, never went to school.	(ii)
3.	(iii) She was deeply interested in the story and discussed it with her friends.
4. The narrator went to a wedding for a week.	(iv)
5.	(v) The grandmother never went to school.
6. The grandmother regretted not going to school.	(vi)

Ans. Completed Cause–Effect Table:-

Cause	Effect
• The grandmother started learning to read Kannada newspapers herself.	i. The morning papers arrived late in the day and weekly magazines would come one day late.
• The grandmother, Krishtakka, never went to school.	ii. (She was illiterate and could not read or write.
• The grandmother learnt to read Kannada.	iii. (She was deeply interested in the story and discussed it with her friends.
• The narrator went to a wedding for a week.	iv. The grandmother made good progress in learning Kannada during that week.
• There were no proper opportunities for girls' education in her childhood.	v. The grandmother never went to school.
• The grandmother regretted not going to school.	vi. She decided to learn to read and write later in life.

II. Do you think the narrator expected to see her grandmother in tears when she returned to the village? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Ans. No. The narrator was surprised because she had never seen her grandmother cry before, even in difficult times. Her grandmother was usually a very cheerful and smiling person, so seeing her in distress was unexpected.

III. How might the narrator help her grandmother to fulfil her desire to learn to read and write?

Ans. The narrator patiently taught her grandmother the Kannada alphabet step by step, giving her daily lessons and practice, starting from simple words and gradually moving on to sentences. She took on the role of her teacher and set Saraswati Puja during Dassara as the target, by which time Avva would be able to read a novel on her own.

Check Your Understanding

I. State whether the following sentences are True or False. Share your answers with your classmates and teacher.

1. The grandmother wanted to learn the Kannada alphabet to gain independence.	
2. The grandmother asked someone in the village to read <i>Kashi Yatre</i> to her while the narrator was away.	
3. The narrator was the grandmother's first teacher and taught her how to read Kannada.	
4. The grandmother believed that there was no age limit for learning.	
5. The grandmother touched the narrator's feet as a mark of respect for her as a teacher.	
6. The narrator was disappointed with the progress her grandmother made in learning to read.	

Ans.

1. The grandmother wanted to learn the Kannada alphabet to gain independence. → True
2. The grandmother asked someone in the village to read Kashi Yatre to her while the narrator was away. → False
3. The narrator was the grandmother's first teacher and taught her how to read Kannada. → True
4. The grandmother believed that there was no age limit for learning. → True
5. The grandmother touched the narrator's feet as a mark of respect for her as a teacher. → True
6. The narrator was disappointed with the progress her grandmother made in learning to read. → False

Critical Reflection

I. Read the extracts and answer the Questions.

Extract 1

When I came back to my village, I saw my grandmother in tears. I was surprised, for I had never seen her cry even in the most difficult situations. What had happened? I was worried.

"Avva, is everything all right? Are you okay?"

I used to call her Avva, which means mother in the Kannada spoken in North Karnataka.

She nodded but did not reply. I did not understand and forgot about it. At night, after dinner, we were sleeping on the open terrace of our house. It was a summer night, and there was a full moon. Avva came and sat next to me. Her affectionate hands touched my forehead.

(i) Complete the following sentence with the appropriate option.

The phrase 'never seen her cry in the most difficult situations' tells us that the grandmother was _____.

- A. strong-willed
- B. understanding
- C. considerate
- D. bold

Ans. A. strong-willed

(ii) Grandmother did not reply when the narrator asked if she was alright because she might have been too _____ (emotional/tired) to respond.

Ans. Emotional

(iii) Identify the clue from the extract that indicates a rural setting with traditional customs.

Ans. The clue is "sleeping on the open terrace of our house" and references to full moon night and traditional family setting, which show a rural lifestyle with simple customs.

(iv) Which lines of the extract establish a tender atmosphere?

Ans. The lines.

"Her affectionate hands touched my forehead."

These lines create a tender and loving atmosphere.

(v) Which of the following aspect is NOT emphasised in the given extract?

- A. the emotional turmoil of the grandmother
- B. the affectionate bond between the narrator and her grandmother
- C. the grandmother's regret over her lack of education
- D. the narrator's concern for her grandmother.

Ans. C. the grandmother's regret over her lack of education

Extract 2

"I have decided I want to learn the Kannada alphabet from tomorrow onwards. I will work very hard. I will keep Saraswati Puja day during Dassara as the deadline. By that day, I should be able to read a novel on my own. I want to be independent."

I saw the determination on her face, yet I laughed at her.

"Avva, at this age of sixty-two, you want to learn the alphabet? All your hair is grey, your hands are wrinkled, you wear spectacles, and you work so much in the kitchen..."

Childishly, I made fun of the old lady, but she just smiled.

"For a good cause, if you are determined, you can overcome any obstacle. I will work harder than anybody, and I will do it. For learning, there is no age bar."

(i) What does the grandmother's statement "I want to be independent" reveal about her character?

- A. She wanted to be literate.
- B. She desires self-sufficiency.
- C. She wants to prove her intelligence to others.
- D. She feels pressured by society to learn.

Ans. B. She desires self-sufficiency

(ii) The grandmother's determination shows that learning has no _____. (age limit/gender bias/cultural barriers)

Ans. age limit

(iii) The narrator laughs at her grandmother's decision to learn the alphabet at the age of sixty-two because _____.

Ans. The narrator laughs because she thinks it is too late and unrealistic for a 62-year-old woman to learn the alphabet.

(iv) List any two Qualities displayed by the grandmother.

Ans. The some Qualities displayed by the grandmother are.

- Determined
- Hard-working
- Self-motivated
- Confident

(v) How can we say that the narrator is making assumptions about her grandmother?

Ans. The narrator assumes that her grandmother cannot learn because of her old age, grey hair, wrinkled hands, and domestic routine, showing she underestimates her ability.

II. Answer the following Questions.

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

Ans. The grandmother felt embarrassed because she was uneducated and dependent, and in her time it was considered awkward for elders to admit illiteracy or ask for help.

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

Ans. The grandmother felt embarrassed because she was uneducated and dependent, and in her time it was considered awkward for elders to admit illiteracy or ask for help.

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

Ans. Kashi Yatre is important because:

- It deeply inspires the grandmother.
- It makes her realize the importance of reading.
- It becomes the reason she decides to learn Kannada.

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

Ans. It reflects her strong desire for independence, self-respect, and lifelong learning, proving her determination.

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

Ans. It teaches us respect for teachers and gratitude, showing that age does not matter when someone guides us with knowledge.

Q 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."

Ans. It shows the theme that determination and hard work can overcome any difficulty, especially in learning.

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

Ans. The story effectively shows that education gives independence, confidence, and dignity, as the grandmother becomes able to read on her own and feels empowered.

Vocabulary and Structures in Context

I. The expression 'hide and seek' is used in the text. This is called a binomial.

Binomials are expressions consisting of two words, usually linked by a conjunction like 'and' or 'or', that are commonly used together in a fixed order. For example: odds and ends, right or wrong.

Match the binomials in Column 1 with their meanings in Column 2. You may refer to a dictionary.

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

Now, use any five of the above binomials in sentences of your own.

Ans.

Column 1	Column 2
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

Sentences (any five binomials)

1. In exams, you must sometimes sink or swim on your own.
2. He studies on and off, not regularly.
3. We can mix and match clothes for different occasions.
4. Learning discipline is part and parcel of student life.
5. You cannot always pick and choose your opportunities.

II. Read the following words from the text given in the box below.

unhappy unusual unfortunately
irrespective independent

These words are made by adding suitable prefixes ('un', 'ir', and 'in') to give an opposite or negative meaning to the words.

Now, make words by adding the suitable prefixes given in the box to the words from the text in Column 1. Write the prefixed words in Column 2. One example has been done for you.

un im dis
in mis extra

Column 1	Column 2
1. popular	(i) unpopular
2. belief	(ii)
3. important	(iii)
4. respect	(iv)
5. correct	(v)
6. continue	(vi)
7. understand	(vii)
8. ordinary	(viii)
9. interesting	(ix)
10. possible	(x)

Ans.

1. **popular** → unpopular
2. **belief** → disbelief
3. **important** → unimportant
4. **respect** → disrespect
5. **correct** → incorrect
6. **continue** → discontinue
7. **understand** → misunderstand
8. **ordinary** → extraordinary
9. **interesting** → uninteresting
10. **possible** → impossible

III. Identify any five words with prefixes from the story and make sentences using each.**Ans.** Five words with prefixes (sentences)

1. Unhappy – She felt unhappy when she lost her book.
2. Independent – The grandmother wanted to become independent.
3. Incorrect – Your answer is incorrect.
4. Disrespect – We should not show disrespect to elders.
5. Extraordinary – It was an extraordinary performance.

IV. In the sentence, “I knew, then, that my student had passed with flying colours”, the phrase “passed with flying colours” is an idiom. It means outstanding performance. Now, match the idioms related to ‘learning’ given in Column 1 with their meanings in Column 2. You may refer to a dictionary.

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

Now, use these idioms in sentences of your own.

Column 1	Column 2
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

Ans.**V. Read the following sentences from the text and underline the verbs.**

1. Secretly, I bought Kashi Yatre which had been published as a novel by that time.
2. I knew, then, that my student had passed with flying colours

In sentence 1, verb 'bought' is in simple past tense. In sentence 2, verb 'had passed' is in past perfect tense.

We use **past perfect tense** to indicate two completed actions—one occurring earlier (later past) and the other more recently (recent past). The more recent action is expressed in the simple past, while the earlier action takes the past perfect tense.

Examples

- ✦ By the time I reached the party, everyone had finished eating.
- ✦ When she returned home, her brother had finished the project.

(i) Fill in the blanks with simple past and past perfect tense form of the verbs given in brackets.

- A. When the delegates _____ (arrive) at the conference, the keynote speaker _____ (already begin) the session.
Ans. arrived, had already begun
- B. After the students _____ (learn) how to identify fake news online, they _____ (start) verifying information before sharing it.
Ans. learned, started
- C. Before Kiran _____ (start) using digital payment platforms, she _____ (ensure) her understanding of online fraud prevention.
Ans. started, ensured
- D. By the time Varun _____ (recognise) the importance of budgeting, he _____ (exhaust) most of his savings.
Ans. recognised, exhausted
- E. When Raghu _____ (log in) to the cybersecurity webinar, the instructor _____ (already discuss) the importance of strong passwords.
Ans. logged in, already discussed

(ii) Fill in the blanks with the correct form of verbs.

Last year, my parents and I A. _____ (take) a financial planning course. When we B. _____ (review) our expenses, we realised we C. _____ (spend) too much on unnecessary purchases. After my parents D. _____ (discuss) ways to save, I E. _____ (open) a savings account. By the time we F. _____ (set) our budget, the course G. _____ (already introduce) investment strategies. We H. _____ (hurry) to take notes, but many participants I. _____ (complete) their financial plans. Despite that, we J. _____ (enjoy) learning how to manage money wisely.

Ans. Paragraph – Correct verb forms

Last year, my parents and I took a financial planning course. When we reviewed our expenses, we realised we had spent too much on unnecessary purchases. After my parents discussed ways to save, I opened a savings account.

By the time we set our budget, the course had already introduced investment strategies. We hurried to take notes, but many participants had completed their financial plans. Despite that, we enjoyed learning how to manage money wisely.

Answer key:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| A. took | B. reviewed | C. had spent |
| D. discussed | E. opened | F. set |
| G. had already introduced | H. hurried | I. had completed |
| J. enjoyed | | |

Listen and Respond

I. You will listen to a speaker talk about digital literacy. As you listen, complete the following sentences with one to three exact words that you hear. (Transcript for teacher on page 259)

1. Literacy these days includes the ability to use _____.
2. Digital literacy is also about protecting _____.
3. Digital literacy enables the elderly to _____.
4. Digital literacy encourages using the internet safely by helping us recognise _____ and _____.
5. The National Digital Literacy Mission helps people across the country by imparting _____.

Ans.

1. digital tools
2. personal information
3. connect with others
4. fake news and online scams
5. basic digital skills

Speaking Activity

Turncoat is a type of solo debate where the speaker argues for and against a topic, switching sides after a certain period of time.

I. Choose your topic and speak 'for' and 'against' for not more than one minute each.

Topic 1: It is important to learn a new language apart from your mother tongue.

Topic 2: Learning can happen only when you are young.

Use the guidelines given below.

- Begin with speaking 'for' the topic for one minute.
- Your teacher will signal that it is time to switch sides.
- Then speak 'against' the topic for one minute.



'For'	'Against'
† To begin with, I would like to speak 'for' the topic...	† On the contrary/On the other hand...
† My first argument in favour of...	† There are two sides to this topic...
† Most importantly I want to mention that...	† There's no doubt that ...
† In addition to that.../ Moreover, I feel...	† If I could make a point here...
† I strongly feel...	† I am pretty sure that...
† I have a reason to believe...	† Well, I am not sure whether you can really...
† There's no doubt that...	† So, to put it in a few words...

You may use the following sentence prompts.

Ans.

Topic 1: It is important to learn a new language apart from your mother tongue

For the Topic:-

To begin with, I would like to speak for the topic.

My first argument in favour of this idea is that learning a new language helps us communicate with more people. Most importantly, it opens doors to new cultures and opportunities. Moreover, I feel that it improves our thinking skills and confidence. I strongly feel that in today's global world, knowing more than one language is a great advantage. There's no doubt that learning a new language makes us more knowledgeable and broad-minded.

Against the Topic:-

On the other hand, there are two sides to this topic.

I am pretty sure that focusing too much on new languages may make us neglect our mother tongue. If I could make a point here, learning a new language can also be time-consuming and difficult. Well, I am not sure whether everyone really needs to learn multiple languages, especially if they can manage well with one. So, to put it in a few words, learning a new language is useful, but not always necessary.

Topic 2: Learning can happen only when you are young

For the Topic:-

To begin with, I would like to speak for the topic.

My first argument is that young minds are quick learners. Most importantly, children have more time and fewer responsibilities, which helps them focus on learning. In addition, I feel that memory is sharper at a young age. I strongly feel that learning habits formed early stay for life. There's no doubt that childhood is the best time to learn new things.

Against the Topic:-

On the contrary, there are two sides to this topic.

There's no doubt that learning is a lifelong process. If I could make a point here, many adults learn new skills successfully. I am pretty sure that interest and determination matter more than age. Well, I am not sure whether we can limit learning to youth alone. So, to put it in a few words, people can learn at any age if they are willing.

Writing Task

- I. **As a socially responsible citizen, you strongly believe that students can contribute significantly in promoting adult literacy. Write a letter to the Editor of a local newspaper emphasising the importance of student participation in adult literacy camps conducted by various organisations. Discuss the benefits of such initiatives for both students and society. Suggest effective ways to spread awareness and encourage more students to volunteer for this noble cause. A letter to the editor is a formal letter in which the writer gives suggestions and creates awareness on an issue of public interest or an issue already raised in an article/write-up/published letter.**

Ans.

To
The Editor
The Times of India
Ahmedabad

Date: 21 April 2026

Subject: Importance of Student Participation in Adult Literacy Campaigns

Respected Sir/Madam,

Through the columns of your esteemed newspaper, I would like to highlight the important role that students can play in promoting adult literacy. Even today, many adults in our society are unable to read and write, which limits their opportunities and independence.

Students, being educated and enthusiastic, can actively contribute by volunteering in adult literacy camps organised by various organisations. Their involvement can help adults learn basic reading and writing skills in a simple and friendly manner. At the same time, students develop a sense of responsibility, kindness, and social awareness.

These initiatives benefit society by empowering adults to become independent and confident. Literacy helps them understand important information, access better job opportunities, and improve their standard of living. An educated society leads to overall national development.

To spread awareness, schools can organise campaigns, rallies, and workshops. Social media and local community programmes can also be used to encourage more students to volunteer. Providing certificates and appreciation can further motivate students to participate in such noble activities.

I hope this issue will receive attention and inspire more students to come forward and contribute towards building a literate society.

Thanking you.

Yours sincerely,
Anamika Shah