

2. THE ADDRESS

By – Marga Minco

About the Author:

Marga Minco is the pseudonym of **Sara Menco** (born 31 March 1920) is a Dutch journalist and writer. Her surname was actually Menco, but an official switched the vowel by mistake.

Biography

Born in Ginneken to an Orthodox Jewish family, Minco worked at the Breda Courant in 1938. In May 1940, by order of German-sympathising commissioners, she was fired even before the Germans issued their anti-Jewish measures proclamation.

At the beginning of World War II, she resided in Breda, Amersfoort and Amsterdam. Minco had a mild form of tuberculosis and ended up in hospitals in Utrecht and Amersfoort. In the autumn of 1942 she returned to Amsterdam and her parents, who were forced by the German occupiers to live into the city's Jewish Quarter.

Later during the war, her parents, brother and sister were taken away and she became the only survivor, as she had escaped arrest and spent the rest of the war hiding. Minco also received a new name: Marga Faes, of which the first name persisted. Minco married to the poet and translator Bert Feet (who died 1992) whom she had met in 1938 and hid with during the war. After the war, they worked at a number of newspapers and magazines. They have two daughters, one of whom is writer Jessica Feet.

Work

In 1957 published her first book, *The bitter herb* (Het bittere kruid), which the nameless character is going through war experiences reminiscent of the author's. The title of her second book was *An empty house*.

Awards

- 1957 - Novell contest of the Post Office and Addresses the Advertising mutators NV for *The address*
- 1958 - Vijverberg Prize for *The bitter herb*
- 1999 - Annie Romein Prize for her entire oeuvre

The Address- Introduction:

The story is about the human predicament that follows the pre-War and Post-War period. Mrs. S who was a Jew was a rich lady. Whereas, Mrs. Dorling was a non-Jew. The girl, daughter of Mrs. S, had lost her house and her mother during the war and now she had decided to come

back to take her possessions from Mrs. Dorling, an acquaintance whose address was given by her mother years ago. When she reached the house, the woman treated her with a cold reception and didn't let her into the house. She decided to go back anyway and then she met her daughter who let her in and told her to wait inside. When she saw all the possessions in front of her, she couldn't connect with them and decided to leave the house.

The Address - Summary:

The Address begins with a victim of war going back to her native place. It is about a daughter who returns to her home in Holland. She goes there to search for her mother's belongings after the war. When she reaches her native place, she does not receive a warm welcome. She follows the address she has on her. It is House Number 46 in Marconi Street. A woman opens the door and refuses to recognize the girl on the door. The author notices the woman wearing her mother's green knitted sweater. Thus, she became even surer that she was in the right place. However, the woman did not deny not knowing her mother.

Despite the author's resistance, the woman did not entertain her and close the door on her. The author was going back when she starts thinking about the bygone days. She got the address from her mother years ago. After returning to her home post-war, she notices a lot of things missing from the place. Thus, her mother gives her an address of Mrs Dorling. She learns that Mrs. Dorling is an old acquaintance of her mother. Thus, her mother handed over all their valuable possessions to Mrs. Dorling to keep them safe. Thus, after many years, the author thinks of going back to take them possessions. Thus, after being told to go away by Mrs. Dorling on her visit, she goes back once again. On her second visit, fifteen-year-old answers the door.

We learn that the mother was not at home. The author told her about her wish to meet her mother. The girl takes her in the house. To the author's surprise, she notices the room full of things her mother possessed. The room was not similar but the things were all very familiar. She started to feel so uncomfortable; she now had no desire to possess her mother's belongings. Thus, she leaves the home and thought of forgetting the address and the thought of ever getting those things back.

Conclusion of "The Address"

To sum up, The Address Summary, we learn the intricate emotions of humans like trust, hope and betrayal as well as the ill-effects of war.

The Address- Text and Explanation:

'DO you still know me?' I asked.

The woman looked at me searchingly. She had opened the door a chink. I came closer and stood on the step.

'No, I don't know you.'

'I'm Mrs S's daughter.'

She held her hand on the door as though she wanted to prevent it opening any further. Her face gave absolutely no sign of recognition. She kept staring at me in silence. Perhaps I was mistaken, I thought, perhaps it isn't her. I had seen her only once, fleetingly, and that was years ago. It was most probable that I had rung the wrong bell. The woman let go of the door and stepped to the side. She was wearing my mother's green knitted cardigan. The wooden buttons were rather pale from washing. She saw that I was looking at the cardigan and half hid herself again behind the door. But I knew now that I was right.

Chink – narrow opening

Fleetingly – for a short time

The protagonist asked the woman standing at the door if she still knew her. The lady had opened the door a little, the protagonist came closer to the door and stood there. The woman responded negatively and the protagonist still gave her introduction. She said she was Mrs. S's daughter. The woman had held the door tightly as she didn't want her to enter the house. She kept staring at the protagonist though she couldn't recognize her.

The protagonist thought maybe she had come to the wrong house. She had seen the woman only for a short time years ago. The woman who answered the door stepped aside and let go of the door. The protagonist recognized her mother's green knitted cardigan that the woman was wearing. The wooden buttons had become pale because of the washing. The woman noticed the protagonist looking at the cardigan. She hid behind the door. Now, the protagonist knew she had come to the right house.

'Well, you knew my mother?' I asked.

'Have you come back?' said the woman. 'I thought that no one had come back.'

'Only me.'

A door opened and closed in the passage behind her. A musty smell emerged.

'I regret I cannot do anything for you.'

'I've come here specially on the train. I wanted to talk to you for a moment.'

'It is not convenient for me now,' said the woman. 'I can't see you. Another time.'

She nodded and cautiously closed the door as though no one inside the house should be disturbed.

I stood where I was on the step. The curtain in front of the bay window moved. Someone stared at me and would then have asked what I wanted. 'Oh, nothing,' the woman would have said. 'It was nothing.'

Musty – stale

The protagonist asked the woman about her mother. The woman asked her if she had come back, she replied only to her and no one else came with her. The woman opened the door and a passage was behind her. A stale smell occurred all over. The woman told her that she could not do anything for her. The protagonist told her that she had come from far place on the train just to talk to her. The woman told her it is not convenient to talk right now and asked her to come back later. The woman closed the door as she didn't want anyone to get disturbed in the house. The protagonist was still standing on the step. She saw a curtain moving on the window bay. Someone was staring at her from inside the house. She thought it was nothing as the woman would have told her.

I looked at the name-plate again. Dorling it said, in black letters on white enamel. And on the jamb, a bit higher, the number. Number 46.

As I walked slowly back to the station I thought about my mother, who had given me the address years ago. It had been in the first half of the War. I was home for a few days and it struck me immediately that something or other about the rooms had changed. I missed various things. My mother was surprised I should have noticed so quickly. Then she told me about Mrs Dorling. I had never heard of her but apparently she was an old acquaintance of my mother, whom she hadn't seen for years. She had suddenly turned up and renewed their contact. Since then she had come regularly.

Enamel – an opaque or semi-transparent substance that is a type of glass

Jamb – side post of a window, fireplace or doorway

Acquaintance – stranger or social contact

The protagonist looked at the number plate again, it said Number 46. Dorling was written on the plate on white enamel. As she was going back to the station, she was thinking about her mother who gave her the address. It was the first half of the war. She was home for a few days and suddenly, it struck her that the room was different now. Various things were missing. Her mother was surprised that she noticed the changes a little later. It was that time when she told her about this woman, Mrs. Dorling. She was an old contact of hers whom she hadn't seen for years. Suddenly, she came to visit her and since then they had been in regular contact.

'Every time she leaves here she takes something home with her,' said my mother. 'She took all the table silver in one go. And then the antique plates that hung there. She had trouble lugging those large vases, and I'm worried she got a crick in her back from the crockery.' My mother shook her head pityingly. 'I would never have dared ask her. She suggested it to me herself. She even insisted. She wanted to save all my nice things. If we have to leave here we shall lose everything, she says.'

'Have you agreed with her that she should keep everything?' I asked.

'As if that's necessary,' my mother cried. 'It would simply be an insult to talk like that. And think about the risk she's running, each time she goes out of our door with a full suitcase or bag.'

Lugging – carry a heavy object with great effort

Pityingly – feeling sorrow

Crick – cramp or spasm in muscles

Her mother told her that whenever that woman came to visit her, she took something from the house with her. Table silvers, antique plates and she had trouble over carrying the large vase. She told her that the cramp in her back came from the crockery. Her mother shook her head in sorrow. The woman kept telling the protagonist's mother that she wanted to save her precious things. If they had to leave the place someday, they would lose everything.

She asked her mother if she really wanted her to take all the things with her. Her mother replied that even if she didn't, it would be an insult to ask her not to. She was going out with a risk herself, a suitcase full of items.

My mother seemed to notice that I was not entirely convinced. She looked at me reprovngly and after that we spoke no more about it.

Meanwhile I had arrived at the station without having paid much attention to things on the way. I was walking in familiar places again for the first time since the War, but I did not want to go further than was necessary. I didn't want to upset myself with the sight of streets and houses full of memories from a precious time.

In the train back I saw Mrs Dorling in front of me again as I had the first time I met her. It was the morning after the day my mother had told me about her. I had got up late and, coming downstairs, I saw my mother about to see someone out. A woman with a broad back.

'There is my daughter,' said my mother. She beckoned to me.

The woman nodded and picked up the suitcase under the coat-rack. She wore a brown coat and a shapeless hat.

'Does she live far away?' I asked, seeing the difficulty she had going out of the house with the heavy case.

'In Marconi Street,' said my mother. 'Number 46. Remember that.'

Reprovngly – critically

Beckoned – signaled

Her mother noticed that she wasn't convinced and looked at her critically. After that day, they never talked about the incident again. She reached the station without noticing any details on the way. She passed the familiar things after the war for the first time. She didn't want to upset herself with the familiar sights of houses and streets that reminded her of all the precious times.

Back in the time, she saw Mrs. Dorling in person a day after her mother told her daughter about her. She woke up late that morning and as she was going downstairs, she saw her 'the lady with broad back'. Her mother was seeing her out. Her mother introduced the protagonist to the lady. She signaled to her and the women responded with a nod. She picked the suitcase under the coat rack. She was wearing a brown coat and a shapeless hat. The protagonist asked her mother if she lived far away. The mother told her the address, 'Marconi Street, Number 46'. She remembered it.

I had remembered it. But I had waited a long time to go there. Initially after the Liberation I was absolutely not interested in all that stored stuff, and naturally I was also rather afraid of it. Afraid of being confronted with things that had belonged to a connection that no longer existed; which were hidden away in cupboards and boxes and waiting in vain until they were put back in their place again; which had endured all those years because they were 'things.' But gradually everything became more normal again. Bread was getting to be a lighter colour, there was a bed you could sleep in unthreatened, a room with a view you were more used to glancing at each day. And one day I noticed I was curious about all the possessions that must still be at that address. I wanted to see them, touch, remember.

After my first visit in vain to Mrs Dorling's house I decided to try a second time. Now a girl of about fifteen opened the door to me. I asked her if her mother was at home.

'No' she said, 'my mother's doing an errand.'

'No matter,' I said, 'I'll wait for her.'

Liberation – Liberty or Freeing

Endured – suffered

Vain – hopeless

She remembered the address but she took too long to visit the place. After the freedom, she was on one hand, not interested and on the other, was afraid. She was afraid of getting confronted with the past memories and connections that no longer existed. Connections were hidden in cupboards and boxes. It seemed that those memories were waiting in vain to put them back to their places as they had suffered all these years because they were only things.

Things were getting normal in the Protagonist's life, but one day, she got curious about all the things that were still at that address. She wanted to see them and touch them. After the first hopeless visit, she decided to try one more time. When she reached Mrs Morling's home, a girl of fifteen years opened the door. Protagonist asked her about her mother. She told her that she was outside doing some errands to which the protagonist decided that she would wait for her.

I followed the girl along the passage. An old-fashioned iron Hanukkah¹ candle-holder hung next to a mirror. We never used it because it was much more cumbersome than a single candlestick.

'Won't you sit down?' asked the girl. She held open the door of the living-room and I went inside past her. I stopped, horrified. I was in a room I knew and did not know. I found myself in the midst of things I did want to see again but which oppressed me in the strange atmosphere. Or because of the tasteless way everything was arranged, because of the ugly furniture or the muggy smell that hung there, I don't know; but I scarcely dared to look around me. The girl moved a chair. I sat down and stared at the woollen table-cloth. I rubbed it. My fingers grew warm from rubbing. I followed the lines of the pattern. Somewhere on the edge there should be a burn mark that had never been repaired.

'My mother'll be back soon,' said the girl. 'I've already made tea for her. Will you have a cup?'
'Thank you.'

Hanukkah – The Feast of Lights, a Hebrew festival in December

Cumbersome – unmanageable

Midst – middle

Muggy – humid

The protagonist followed the girl along the passage. There was a Hanukkah candle-holder hung next to a mirror. She remembered that she never used it as it was unmanageable. The girl asked her to sit down as she opened the door for the living room. She stopped and she was disturbed. She was standing in a room which she knew and she didn't. She was standing in the middle of things which she didn't want to see and they burdened her. Maybe because of the way things were arranged, or the humid smell in the room, or the ugly furniture, she was scared to look at everything. She sat down on a chair which the girl pulled out for her. She looked at the woolen table cloth. She rubbed it and her fingers felt warm. As she followed the lines of the pattern, she remembered a burn mark that was never repaired. The girl told her that her mother would be back soon and asked if she would like to have a cup of tea. She answered thank you.

I looked up. The girl put cups ready on the tea-table. She had a broad back. Just like her mother. She poured tea from a white pot. All it had was a gold border on the lid, I remembered. She opened a box and took some spoons out.

'That's a nice box.' I heard my own voice. It was a strange voice. As though each sound was different in this room.

'Oh, you know about them?' She had turned round and brought me my tea. She laughed. 'My mother says it is antique. We've got lots more.' She pointed round the room. 'See for yourself.'

I had no need to follow her hand. I knew which things she meant. I just looked at the still life over the tea-table. As a child I had always fancied the apple on the pewter plate.

'We use it for everything,' she said. 'Once we even ate off the plates hanging there on the wall. I wanted to so much. But it wasn't anything special.'

I had found the burn mark on the table-cloth. The girl looked questioningly at me.

Pewter plate – plate made of a gray alloy of tin

The protagonist looked up, she saw the girl put two cups of tea in front of her. She had a broad back just like her mother. She poured tea from the teapot and it had a gold border on the lid. She opened a box and took some spoons out of it. The protagonist complimented the girl about the box. She felt weird hearing her own voice. It was sounding different to her. As the girl turned to give her a cup, she asked if she knew about the box. Then she added that it is antique, according to her mother. She pointed around the room and said that there are more. She told her to see, although the protagonist didn't need to follow her direction. She knew what she was talking about. She glanced over the tea table, she remembered how she used to fancy the apple on the pewter plate. The girl shared that they use the plate for everything. Once they ate off the plates that were hanging on the wall. The girl wanted to eat off that plate too. But it wasn't anything special. The protagonist found the burn mark on the table cloth, the girl looked at her in a question.

'Yes,' I said, 'you get so used to touching all these lovely things in the house, you hardly look at them any more. You only notice when something is missing, because it has to be repaired or because you have lent it, for example.'

Again I heard the unnatural sound of my voice and I went on: 'I remember my mother once asked me if I would help her polish the silver. It was a very long time ago and I was probably bored that day or perhaps I had to stay at home because I was ill, as she had never asked me before. I asked her which silver she meant and she replied, surprised, that it was the spoons, forks and knives, of course. And that was the strange thing, I didn't know the cutlery we ate off every day was silver.'

The girl laughed again.

'I bet you don't know it is either.' I looked intently at her. 'What we eat with?' she asked.

'Well, do you know?'

She hesitated. She walked to the sideboard and wanted to open a drawer. 'I'll look. It's in here.'

The protagonist said yes and told her that when you are so used to touching things into your house, you hardly notice anything. You only notice when something is missing or it needs to be repaired or because you have lent it. She again found her voice to be unnatural. She continued, she told the girl that once her mother asked her if she would help her polish the silver. It was a long time ago and she was bored that day. She had to

stay that day maybe as she was ill. She asked her mother what silver she is talking about? Her mother said it was the spoons, knives, and forks. But she didn't know that it was silver. The girl laughed and said that she bet, she didn't know it was either with what they ate with. The protagonist asked if she knew. The girl hesitated and walked to the sideboard and opened a drawer. She said she would see if it was there.

I jumped up. 'I was forgetting the time. I must catch my train.'

She had her hand on the drawer. 'Don't you want to wait for my mother?'

'No, I must go.' I walked to the door. The girl pulled the drawer open. 'I can find my own way.'

As I walked down the passage I heard the jingling of spoons and forks.

At the corner of the road I looked up at the name-plate. Marconi Street, it said. I had been at Number 46. The address was correct. But now I didn't want to remember it any more. I wouldn't go back there because the objects that are linked in your memory with the familiar life of former times instantly lose their value when, severed from them, you see them again in strange surroundings. And what should I have done with them in a small rented room where the shreds of black-out paper still hung along the windows and no more than a handful of cutlery fitted in the narrow table drawer?

I resolved to forget the address. Of all the things I had to forget, that would be the easiest.

Jingling – ringing

The protagonist jumped and said she forgot the time as she had to catch the train. The girl asked her if she did not want to wait for her mother? The protagonist still replied with a no and said she must leave. The girl pulled the drawer open. The protagonist said she could find her way out and walked down the passage as she heard the ringing spoon of spoons and forks.

When she reached the corner of the road, she looked at the name-plate again. It said Marconi Street and she was standing at 46. The address was correct but she doesn't want to remember it anymore. She didn't want to go back as the things in there reminded her of memories linked with the familiar life of old times. But they lose the value when you are separated from them and you see them again in a strange environment. She thought of what she would have done with a small rented room where black-out paper hung over the window and no cutlery fitted in the narrow drawer. She finally resolved on forgetting the address as it would be easiest.

QUESTIONS FROM TEXTBOOK SOLVED

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:

Yes, this statement gives some clue about the story. During the early part of the war Mrs Dorling had shifted the important belongings of her acquaintance Mrs S. from her house to 46, Marconi Street. These included table silver wares, antique plates and other nice things such as the iron anukkah candle-holder, woollen table cloth and green knitted cardigan with wooden buttons. Since Mrs S. had died during the war, Mrs Dorling did not expect anyone to come back and claim her costly belongings as she thought no one else knew her address.

The statement indicates the greedy and possessive nature of Mrs Dorling. She did not open the door to the daughter of her former acquaintance nor did she show any signs of recognition. She did not let the girl in. She refused to see her then saying it was not convenient for her to do. The narrator had gone to this address with a specific purpose—to see her mother's belongings. Even when she told Mrs Dorling that only she had come back, the woman with a broad back did not soften a bit. Thus the clash of interests is hinted at by the aforesaid statement.

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:

During the pre-war times, the narrator lived in some other city far away from home and she visited her mother only for a few days. During the first half of the war the narrator's mother was always afraid that they might have to leave the place and lose all valuable belongings. The narrator lived in the city in a small rented room. Its windows were covered with blackout paper. She could not see the beauty of nature outside her room. The threat of death loomed large. After the liberation, everything became normal again. Bread was getting to be a lighter colour. She could sleep in her bed without any fear of death. She could glance out of the window of her room each day. One day, she was eager to see all the possessions of her mother, which she knew were stored at number 46, Marconi Street. She went to that address. She felt disappointed when Mrs Dorling neither recognised her nor let her in. She asked her to come again someday. It was evident she wanted to put her off. She was eager to see, touch and remember her mother's possessions. So, she had to take the trouble of visiting the place again.

Question 3:

Why did the narrator of the story want to forget the address?

Answer:

The narrator remembered the address her mother had told her only once. It was number 46, Marconi Street. Her mother's acquaintance Mrs Dorling lived there. She had stored the valuable belongings of the narrator's mother there. After her mother's death, the narrator had an urge to visit the place. She wanted to see those things, touch them and remember. She went to the given address twice. She was successful in her second attempt to enter the living room. . She found herself in the midst of things she wanted to see again. She felt oppressed in the strange atmosphere. Everything was arranged in a tasteless way. The ugly furniture and the muggy smell that hung there seemed quite unpleasant. These objects evoked the memory of the familiar life of former time. But they had lost their value since they had been separated from her

mother and stored in strange surroundings. She no longer wanted to see, touch or remember these belongings. She resolved to forget the address. She wanted to leave the past behind and decided to move on.

Question 4:

‘The Address’ is a story of human predicament that follows war. Comment.

Answer:

The war creates many difficult and unpleasant situations for human beings. Sometime it becomes difficult to know what to do. The human predicament that follows war is amply illustrated through the experience of the narrator. The war had caused many physical difficulties as well as emotional sufferings to her. She had lost her dear mother. She went to 46, Marconi Street to see her mother’s valuable possessions. How greedy and callous human beings can become is exemplified by the behaviour of Mrs Dorling. She had stored all the valuable belongings of the narrator’s mother, but she refused to recognise the narrator. She did not even let her in. The presence of her mother’s possessions in strange atmosphere pained her. Now these valuables had lost all their importance for her as they had been separated from her mother. She could get no solace or comfort from them.

MORE QUESTIONS SOLVED

A. Short Answer Type Questions

Question 1:

How did Mrs Dorling react when the narrator said, m Mrs S’s daughter”?

Answer:

Mrs Dorling held her hand on the door as if she wanted to prevent it opening any further. Her face showed no sign of recognition. She kept staring at the narrator without uttering a word.

Question 2:

What two reasons did the narrator give to explain that she was mistaken?

Answer:

She thought that perhaps the woman was not Mrs Dorling. She had seen her only once, for a brief interval and that too years ago. Secondly, it was probable that she had rung the wrong bell.

Question 3:

How did the narrator conclude that she was right?

Answer: The woman was wearing the green knitted cardigan of the narrator’s mother. The wooden buttons were rather pale from washing. She saw that the narrator was looking at the cardigan. She half hid herself again behind the door. Her reaction convinced the narrator that she was right.

Question 4:

What was the outcome of the interview between Mrs Dorling and the narrator?

Answer:

The interview was a flop as far as the narrator was concerned. Mrs Dorling refused to see her and talk to her in spite of the narrator's repeated requests.

Question 5:

Who had given the narrator the address, when and under what circumstances?

Answer:

The narrator's mother had given her the address, years ago during the first half of the war. The narrator came home for a few days and missed various things in the rooms. Then her mother told her about Mrs Dorling and gave her the address.

Question 6:

What did the narrator learn about Mrs Dorling from her mother?

Answer:

Mrs Dorling was an old acquaintance of the narrator's mother. The latter had not seen her for several years. Then she suddenly turned up and renewed their contact. Every time she left that place she took something with her—table silver, antique plates, etc. —

Question 7:

What reason did Mrs Dorling give for taking away the precious belongings of the narrator's mother?

Answer:

Mrs Dorling suggested to the narrator's mother that she should store her belongings at a safer place. She wanted to save all her nice things. She explained that they would lose everything if they had to leave the place.

Question 8:

What impression do you form of the narrator's mother on the basis of her conversation with (i) Mrs Dorling and (ii) the narrator?

Answer:

The narrator's mother was a kind-hearted, generous and liberal lady. She was fond of collecting valuable things. She is more worried about the physical risk to Mrs Dorling than losing them to her. She thought it an insult to tell her friends to keep those things for ever.

Question 9:

Did the narrator feel convinced about the views of her mother regarding Mrs Dorling? How do you know?

Answer:

The narrator did not feel convinced about her mother's concern for Mrs Dorling. The latter was keen on removing the precious possessions of the narrator's mother to her own

house. It seems that the narrator did not like Mrs Darling's excessive interest in her mother's belongings. It is evident from the questions she puts to her mother.

Question 10:

What does the narrator remember about Mrs Dorling as she saw her for the first time?

Answer:

Mrs Dorling was a woman with a broad back. She wore a brown coat and a shapeless hat. She picked up a heavy suitcase lying under the coat rack and left their house. She lived at number 46, Marconi Street.

Question 11:

Why did the narrator wait a long time before going to the address number 46, Marconi Street?

Answer:

Initially, after the liberation, she was not at all interested in her mother's belongings lying stored there. She was also afraid of being confronted with things that had belonged to her mother, who was now no more.

Question 12:

When did the narrator become curious about her mother's possessions?

Answer:

The narrator became curious about her mother's possessions as normalcy returned in the post-liberation period. She knew that those things must still be at the address her mother told her. She wanted to see them, touch and remember.

Question 13:

"I was in a room I knew and did not know," says the narrator in the story 'The Address'. What prompted her to make this observation?

Answer:

The narrator found herself in the midst of things she was familiar with and which she did want to see again. However, she found them in a strange atmosphere where everything was arranged in a tasteless way. The ugly furniture and the muggy smell created the feeling that she didn't know the room.

Question 14:

"I just looked at the still life over the tea table," says the narrator in the story 'The Address'. What does she mean by 'the still life'? What prompted her to make this remark?

Answer:

By 'the still life', the narrator means the things over the tea table such as the table-cloth, tea pot, cups and spoons. The reference to antique box and silver spoons prompted her to make this remark.

Question 15:

How was the narrator able to recognise her own familiar woollen table- cloth?

Answer:

The narrator first stared at the woollen table-cloth. Then she followed the lines of the pattern. She remembered that somewhere there was a bum mark which had not been repaired. At last she found the bum mark on the table-cloth. This helped her to recognise her own familiar article.

Question 16:

“You only notice when something is missing.” What does the speaker exactly mean? What examples does she give?

Answer:

The speaker says that one gets used to touching one’s lovely things in the house. One hardly looks at them any more. It is only when something is missing that it is noticed either because it is to be repaired or it has been lent to someone.

Question 17:

How did narrator come to know that the cutlery they ate off every day was silver?

Answer:

Once the narrator’s mother asked her if she would help her polish the silver. The narrator asked her which silver she meant. Her mother was surprised at her ignorance and replied that it was the spoons, forks and knives, i.e. the cutlery they ate off everyday.

Question 18:

Why did the narrator suddenly decide to leave?

Answer:

The narrator had visited 46, Marconi Street for a specific purpose—to see her mother’s belongings and touch them. However, these objects seemed to have lost their value in strange surroundings and on being severed from the life of former times.

Question 19:

How did the narrator reconcile herself to the loss of her mother’s precious belongings?

Answer:

The narrator felt that her mother had only lent them for safe custody and Mrs Dorling was not to keep everything. On seeing these objects, memories of her former life were aroused. She found no room for these precious belongings in her present life. So she reconciled to her fate.

Question 20:

“Of all the things I had to forget, that would be the easiest”. What does the speaker mean by ‘that’? What is its significance in the story?

Answer:

That’ here stands for the address. The words: number 46, Marconi Street, i.e. the address recur throughout the story. The address is important for the narrator at the beginning of the story. However, at the end of the story she resolves to forget it as she wants to break off with the past and move on with the present into the future.

Long Answer Type Questions

Question 1:

How did the narrator come to know about Mrs Dorling and the address where she lived?

Answer:

Years ago, during the first half of the war, the narrator went home for a few days to see her mother. After staying there a couple of days she noticed that something or other about the rooms had changed. She missed various things. Then her mother told her about Mrs Dorling. She was an old acquaintance of her mother. She had suddenly turned up after many years. Now she came regularly and took something home with her everytime she came. She suggested that she could save her precious belongings by storing them at her place. Mother told her address, Number 46, Marconi Street. The narrator asked her mother if she had agreed with her that she should keep everything. Her mother did not like that. She thought it would be an insult to do so. She was worried about the risk Mrs Dorling faced carrying a full suitcase or bag.

Question 2:

Give a brief account of the narrator's first visit to 46, Marconi Street. What impression do you form of Mrs Dorling from it?

Answer:

In the post-war period, when things returned to normal, the narrator became curious about her mother's possessions that were stored at Mrs Dorling's house. Since she wanted to see them, she took the train and went to 46, Marconi Street. Mrs Dorling opened the door a chink. The narrator came closer, stood on the step and asked her if she still knew her. Mrs Dorling told her that she didn't know her. The narrator told her that she was the daughter of Mrs S. Mrs Dorling kept staring at her in silence and gave on sign of recognition. She held her hand on the door as if she wanted to prevent it opening any further. The narrator recognised the green knitted cardigan of her mother that Mrs Dorling was wearing. Mrs Dorling noticed it and half hid herself behind the door. The narrator again asked if she knew her mother. Mrs Dorling asked with surprise if she had come back. She declined to see the narrator or help her.

Question 3:

In what respect was the second visit of the narrator to 46, Marconi Street different from the first one? Did she really succeed in her mission? Give a reason for your answer.

Answer:

The second visit of the narrator to 46, Marconi Street, was different from the first one in one respect. During the first visit, the narrator could not get admittance in the house, whereas during the second one, she was led to the living room, where she could see and touch some of the things she had wanted so eagerly to see. She had visited this place with a specific purpose—to see her mother's belongings. The touch and sight of familiar things aroused memory of her former life. These objects had now lost their real value for her since they were severed from their own lives and stored in strange circumstances. Thus her mission to see, touch and remember her mother's belongings was partly successful. She resolved to forget these objects, and their past and move on. This is clear from her decision to forget the address.

Question 4:

What impression do you form of the narrator?

Answer:

The narrator leaves a very favourable impression on us about her emotional and intellectual qualities. We find her an intelligent but devoted daughter. She loves and respects her mother, but does not approve of her soft behaviour towards her acquaintance, Mrs Dorling. She puts a pointed question, which her mother thinks impolite.

The narrator has a keen power of observation. She notices during her brief stay at home that various things are missing from the rooms. She has a sharp power of judgment. She once sizes up Mrs Dorling. Her persistent efforts to remind Mrs Dorling of her own identity and the latter's relations with her mother reveal her indomitable spirit. She visits 46, Marconi Street twice to see, touch and remember her mother's belongings. She is a realist, who doesn't like to remain tagged to the past. Her resolution to forget the address and move on shows her grit and forward looking nature. She has a progressive personality.

Question 5:

Comment on the significance of the title of the story The Address.

Answer:

The title of the story The Address is quite apt. It is the spring wheel of the action. In fact the whole action centres round it. The title is quite suggestive and occurs at the beginning, middle and end of the story. Marga Minco focuses the reader's attention on it by the narrator's doubt whether she was mistaken and her self assurance that she had reached the correct address.

The middle part of the story reveals how she came to know the address. It was her mother who informed her about the place where Mrs Dorling lived and asked her to remember it.

The story ends dramatically with the narrator's resolve to forget the address. The wheel comes full circle. She had remembered the address for so many years and now since the belongings of her mother stored there have lost their usefulness she finds that forgetting this address would be quite easy.
