

Ch 4.2 - Amanda !

- Robin Klein

Central Idea of the Poem

The poem deals with the upbringing of a small child, Amanda. It highlights the struggles faced by the child. Poet Robin Klein makes an important point that a child should never be denied freedom.

Though it is parents who are responsible for proper upbringing of their child but that should not make a child feel trapped. Here, Amanda is prepared to be acceptable in society, and this training needs her freedom to be cut short. Her imagination is not given enough space, thus making her so angry that she wishes to be an orphan. The continuous nagging has, thus, made her moody.

Theme

Childhood is a time when we indulge in our fantasies and we do as we please. But as soon as we reach adolescence, we are expected to abandon such practices and do as we are told. Amanda has reached that midway age between childhood and adulthood. The poet shows this in a subtle manner, through the great growth of acne on her face. Because she is no longer a child, her mother expects her to fulfill certain responsibilities such as finishing her homework on time, or cleaning her room and her shoes.

However, Amanda wants to postpone the process of growing up. So she withdraws into the childhood world of fantasies and fairy tales. Message Robin Klein's 'Amanda' is a poem to which every young girl can relate. We have all felt pressurized to be perfect, and more often than not, that pressure has come from our mothers. Perhaps we have also dealt with the pressure in the same way that Amanda has - slowly but surely resisting it. However, our mothers haven't stopped nagging us, because they feel that it is for our own good. Hence, the entire trajectory of this poem is something with which we are.

Questions and Answers

1. How old do you think Amanda is? How do you know this?

A Amanda's age could be between 10-12 years old. We can guess this because of the reference to mermaid or Rapunzel. These stories are read by children of age group of 10 - 12 years.

2. Who do you think is speaking to her?

A One of her parent is speaking to her. We think that probably it could be her mother. We think this because it's a general perception that children are taken care of by their mothers at home.

3. Why are Stanzas 2, 4 and 6 give in parenthesis?

A Parenthesis is a remark that is added to a sentence, often to provide an explanation. So, in stanzas 2, 4 and 6

parenthesis is used to describe the reaction of child Amanda towards her mother's continuous nagging.

4. Who is the speaker in stanzas 2, 4, 6? Do you think this speaker is listening to the speaker in stanzas 1, 3, 5 and 7?

A The speaker in stanzas 2, 4, 6 is Amanda. No, she is not paying any attention to what her mother says. She is lost in her own thoughts. She imagines herself as a mermaid, an orphan and Rapunzel.

5. What could Amanda do if she were a mermaid?

A The little girl Amanda wants to be a mermaid and the only resident of the beautiful green sea. She thinks that her life will be very relaxing in the sea and she will be taken away with the currents of water. She will be able to enjoy her freedom.

6. Is Amanda an orphan? Why does she say so?

A No, Amanda is not an orphan as she is constantly being pointed out by one of her parents in the poem. She said so because she is sad and depressed because of the continuous scolding and nagging which she faces because of her parents. Therefore, she feels that it would have been much better and peaceful if she would have been an orphan.

7. Do you know the story of Rapunzel? Why does she want to be Rapunzel?

A The story of Rapunzel is of a girl who is captured by an old witch in a tower. The old witch climbs up the tower with the help of Rapunzel's very long hair which she lets down for her through a wide window of the tower. One day, a Prince visits her by climbing the tower with the help of Rapunzel's very long hair, which she lets down. When the witch comes to know this, she separates both of them. But both Rapunzel and Prince meet after a gap of many years and then live their life happily. Amanda wants to be Rapunzel because she knew that in the story, there was no staircase to enter the tower. It was only possible with the help of Rapunzel's long hair that she would let down to help others to climb. Amanda feels that life in the tower will be very calm and nice and also makes it a point to never let her hair down for anyone as she doesn't want to get disturbed by visitors.

5. What does the girl yearn for? What does this poem tell you about Amanda?

A The girl Amanda yearns for freedom and peace in her life. She is constantly reminded of her mistakes. Her parents want her to follow the code of conduct of good behaviour. They are doing so because they want their child to be well mannered and obedient. But while doing this they forget that she is a child and should be allowed some freedom. The poet has drawn the reader's attention towards the condition of children who are constantly oppressed by their elders in the name of good behaviour.

9. Read the last stanza. Do you think Amanda is sulking and is moody?

A In our sense, Amanda is not moody. She feels oppressed because of her mother's constant nagging. She doesn't want to be pointed out for such small things like cleaning the room, sitting straight, cleaning her shoes, completing her homework, etc. She feels that she is not free and is under a constant pressure of trying to be well behaved girl as per her parent's demand.