

A classification division of boys and girls essay

[Countries](#), [Canada](#)



In the short story “ Boys and Girls” written by Alice Munro, Margret is the narrator and the main character of the story.

Munro illustrates a tremendous growing period into womanhood for this young tomboy living on a fox farm in Canada. The main idea of the story can be better comprehended in multiple ways using psychological, feminist, and existential approaches. From a psychological standpoint, Margret comes of age naturally. She is a tomboy who takes pride in helping her father carry out tasks around the fox farm.

She is honored to work under his eyes and feels threatened by her younger brother Laird. They both engage in sibling rivalry, fighting for their father’s recognition, praise, and approval. It is obvious that Margret does not want Laird to take her place of helping their father by minimizing Laird’s contribution to the work that has to be done. “ Laird came too, with his little cream and green gardening can, filled too full and knocking against his legs and slopping water on his canvas shoes. I had the real watering can, my father’s” (pg.

112). Margret also manipulates her brother in different ways. She coerced him to watch their dad shoot “ Mack” the horse, as well as bringing him into the barn and telling him to climb the ladder to the top beam, only to get him in trouble by their parents. Margret has masculine dreams and identifies with males. In the story she recalls a particular dream in which she “ rescued people from a bombed building and shot two rabid wolves who were menacing through the schoolyard” (111-112). She even wants to participate in masculine recreation. “ I really was learning to shoot, but I could not hit

anything yet, not even the tin cans on the fence posts” (112). However, at the end of the story, Margret changes.

She “ planned to put up some kind of barricade” (120) between her bed and Laird’s to keep her section separate from his, and the details of her dreams focused more on her appearance and being rescued than on her being the one who is doing the rescuing. From a feminist perspective, Margret is forced to become a proper girl. Because she comes from a patriarchal family, men are privileged and even though both men and women have strict and important roles, Margret wants the male role.

She reveals her disdain for being inside the house by saying, “ As soon as I was done I ran out of the house, trying to get out of earshot before my mother thought of what she wanted me to do next” (114). Margret views working outside as more significant because she says, “ It seemed to me that work in the house was endless, dreary and peculiarly depressing; work done out of doors, and in my father’s service, was ritualistically important” (114). It is apparent that Margret has conflicting feelings about her mother.

In her eyes, she “ was not to be trusted” (114). Although she knew her mother loved her, she was “ also her enemy” (114) and was plotting to get her to stay in the house more and from working for her father. Margret becoming a proper girl was very important to the women around her. She reveals her grandmother coming to stay with her for a few weeks and being told, “ Girls don’t slam doors like that” and “ Girls keep their knees together when they sit down” (116). She rebelled against her grandmother’s constructive advice as a way of keeping herself free. Margret identifies with “

Flora” the horse as being trapped. She knew Flora was going to be shot for food so she instinctly took advantage of the opportunity to free her; “ Instead of shutting the gate, I opened it as wide as I could. I did not make any decision to do this; it was just what I did” (121).

After her father is informed of her disobedient actions, her spirit is crushed when he says, “ She’s only a girl” (121). Margret felt “ dismissed” by these words and knew in her heart that it was true. Existentially speaking, Margret is a little girl who is becoming more human. In the beginning of the story, she is selfish; she wants to be the only one to have her father’s attention.

She longs to have patriarchal privileges and puts her father on a pedestal because of his important job as a fox farmer and the bread winner of their family. However, after she witnesses her father shoot Mack, she has a sudden epiphany and realizes she does not want to be like her dad anymore. She say she felt “ a little ashamed, and there was a new sense of wariness, a sense of holding off” (119) in her attitude regarding her father and his work. Margret also realizes that setting Flora free was a moral choice. She knew that her father would no longer trust her and that she “ was not entirely on his side” (120) and accepts the consequences of her actions. As fate would have it, Margret becomes her own person; more human.

Throughout the story, Margret experiences different situations that cause her to come into realization that she is becoming a proper female. She is initially a tomboy who favors masculine roles and wants to be like her father, but ends up embracing the feminine behaviors she once tried to avoid. These

three critical approaches can help the reader better understand the meaning of the main idea in more than one way.