

Jamaica Kincaid's Girl essay example

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



THESIS: The tone of Jamaica Kincaid's " Girl" is one of the most important and telling aspects of this poem - both Mama's and the daughter's tone of voice (the daughter's voice implied) indicate a dramatic sense of hypocrisy and resentment on the part of the mother.

I. Introduction-

Synopsis of Poem

Thesis

II. Main Supporting Point: Mother is overbearing (bossy & strict). She tells her daughter how to set a table for different meals, how to cook things and how to pick out bread.

(Examples to support)

A. Example: " This is how to make a bread pudding / This is how to make doukona."

B. Example: " like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming."

II. Main Supporting Point: The girl barely speaks and when she does she shows resentment towards her mother.

(Examples to support)

A. She cannot do anything but listen to her mother speak.

B. She has no power to refuse what her mother says.

IV. Main Supporting Point: The mother's language is implied to keep her from revisiting the mother's mistakes.

(Examples to support)

A. " This is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child."

B. She constantly uses 'dont's to discourage past behaviors, either by the daughter or herself.

V. Conclusion

THESIS: the tone of the poem " Girl" is one of both overprotectiveness and stifling admonishment of the daughter by the mother.

- This is important in order to understand the motives behind passive-aggressive parenting, and to reveal that the sins of parents are often visited on children.

- People should recognize this as an intriguing reasoning behind very strict motherhood and the impetus behind generational gaps.

In Jamaica Kincaid's " Girl," a mother speaks to her daughter about the things she needs to do to become a woman. It is effectively a list of 'do's and 'don'ts' imparted on the daughter, which also allows the mother to express her own frustrations with the daughter and herself. The tone of Jamaica Kincaid's " Girl" is one of the most important and telling aspects of this poem

- both Mama's and the daughter's tone of voice (the daughter's voice implied) indicate a dramatic sense of hypocrisy and resentment on the part of the mother.

The mother in the story is incredibly overbearing in the poem, always harping on her daughter regarding what she should and should not do.

Kincaid's poem " Girl" reads like a laundry list of instructions for how to be a good woman. Some of them are innocuous - " this is how to make a bread

pudding / this is how to make doukona," and they mostly have to do with behaving in housewifely or practical duties. They alternate between mundane tasks, which are all mentioned once, with refrains of certain phrases, all of which admonish the girl for bad deeds she either has already done or may do again. Frequently, the mother tells her to do something "like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming"; the mother, in imparting this advice, has already presumed that the girl will grow up to repeat her own mistakes. The mother already presumes this destiny, because of the way in which she sits and walks, as well as the fact that she sings benna (which are Antiguan folksongs) in Sunday school. There is a repeated motif of her disbelief and incredulity that her daughter does these unladylike things, and that she should be ashamed of this.

On the other end of the conversation, the daughter is silent throughout the conversation. The reader only has the mother's account of what the daughter says as proof of her perspective. That being said, the few things that the mother recalls indicate resentment toward her mother. For example, this resentment may come from the fact that she cannot do anything but listen to her mother speak; as a result, she absolutely cannot refute what is said about her. With that in mind, a very negative view of her is expressed, one that the daughter is likely angry about.

The mother couches her strict instructions and admonishments in somewhat patronizing tones, but with the condition that these are things that "a lady does." With this poem and the mother's advice, there is a great emphasis placed on respectability and hard work around the house. In this way, the

mother already has a pessimistic view of how her daughter will end up - she presumes that the daughter really wants to become "a slut," and so will work to do that anyway. This means that the mother's advice is given under the presumption that it will not be heeded. However, the fact that it is given anyway suggests a deeper caring for her little girl than is conveyed in the writing. This mother in the poem is a very traditional mother; she places great regard on domesticity and etiquette, thinking a lady should not necessarily be socially progressive. All she wants is to see her daughter married off to a nice man, and to see her take care of the house and give the mother grandchildren.

The mother of 'Girl' simply wants to teach her the ways of being a respectable lady, while fighting against the increasing feminism of the times. Much of her fear of her daughter's impending promiscuity comes from her own illicit experiences in the past; this is implied in her knowledge of elixirs that can induce abortion - "this is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child" (Kincaid, 1984). One can take this to mean that the mother feels guilt at the poor decisions she made in the past, decisions which she regrets.

In conclusion, the tone of the poem "Girl" is one of both overprotectiveness and stifling admonishment of the daughter by the mother. These words speak to old-fashioned ideas of chastity and politeness that are typical between generations. This poem is an indicator of one traditional female perspective toward their daughters - extremely protective, often judgmental, and concerned with their reputation. This tone is representative of a very

strict mother who does not want to jeopardize her daughter's sanctity - the mother is overbearing, the daughter is forced into silence, and the statements made are apparently meant to create a more positive, chaste and polite women.