

Essay on what maisie knew

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



The novel begins and relates to the post divorce battle for the custody of the only child produced by the marriage of Ida and Beale Farange. The novel focuses on the emotional aspects of what divorce brings about in regards to children. In this case the author James uses Maisie as the protagonist, by describing her life from when she is a little girl until her maturity to a young woman. Maisie's parents divorced and custody of the child was given to the father, Maisie knew that her father loved her but failed in showing of his love. After their divorce her parents remarry and here she now has to watch over her actions and learn to keep her emotions. The author points out on how in that period of the 19th century, children were seen more as a possession. The Faranges used Maisie for their own revenge toward each other as this excerpt explains " they had wanted her not for any good they could do her, but for the harm they could, with her unconscious aid, do each other".

Maisie's need for affection is now twisted up with her aggravated attempts to understand the concealed meanings, following the language of the adults surrounding her. In this chapter the author describes the adults as wielding power over Maisie by manipulating both her emotions and capacity to comprehend. The Embraces and touches speak painfully of the unexpected messages which invoke Maisie's desire to please in order to maintain their power over her. Beale's " tremendous pats", James suggests are eminently communicative. In the novel the author continues to reveal the use of touch where the phrase ' lay hands upon' shows the power of touch. The author relates the touches by the adults as an attempt to control and manipulate Maisie, however, in the case of Sir Claude who's ' laying of hands' is conveyed as freedom.

When Sir Claude is introduced into her life she now feels that she is loved. His nurturing aspect toward her reveals a more distinct affection and respect, which are more genuine than those of her parents. As at the end of the novel all this affection provides a basis for Maisie's independence and freedom. Claude places Maisie on an equal footing with himself. The relationship is clear that his honest commitment to her independence and his astute recognition of her intelligence ultimately empower upon her freedom. At the end of the novel, Maisie chose to accompany Mrs. Wix instead of any other parents for her new life. From the narrator, describes that even though she did so for Maisie to take place of her dead child, she gives Maisie the care that others didn't give her. Growing up in the world full of different adults, little Maisie had probably learned to see people's intentions and what is better for her.

In the modern age the effects of the post divorce are more crucial in the period itself. Divorce in modern age is mostly ended with one party having control over the whole situation. Custody of the child in this case falls in the hands of a more deserving party. What Maisie knew is mostly focused on the tribulations that a young child goes through in her life after her parents' divorce. The tribulations that Maisie faces are no different in the modern age as many young adult in such cases of divorce go through the same. This in real sense shows the type of emotional imbalance she goes through on account of her parents. At the end of the novel Maisie is faced with a decision that may affect her future, by choosing Mrs. Wix she reveals her dislike of how her parents treated her. The end of the novel brings in itself a new beginning for Maisie away from the manipulations of her parents and step

parents. In modern ages divorce breaks the family as a unit and children are left in the middle of an emotional battle as parents use this chance to outweigh each other. In the case of maisie it was no different as she was also used as a revenge tool by her own parents.

Works cited

James, Henry. *what maisie knew*. mineola: NY: dover publications, 2010.