

Transition to adulthood

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Full Transition to Adulthood Quinceañera among Latin Americans is the celebration of a 15-year old lady's birthday commemorating her transition from childhood to adulthood. In the poem with the same title, Judith Ortiz Cofer uses a 15-year old narrator to express her feelings about her memorable day. She opens with a comment about her dolls being like dead children kept in a chest. Such keeping of dolls means she has to put away her childish ways. The days of playing and pretending to be a mother to her dolls are over. She has to keep them and learn about real responsibilities. The chest is to be carried with her when she marries. This means that she will only have her hands again on the dolls when she has her own daughter who will play with them. This also implies that there is somehow a wheel of events that is to be followed in this practice. She once used to play with her dolls as her mother taught her. In time she will also teach her daughter to play with the dolls and keep them when she turns fifteen as well. Such is the responsibility of a mother reflected in the poem.

On the next sentence, the poet talks about her additional satin undergarment. She compares its softness to the touch of her inner thigh. The 15-year old girl now becomes more aware of her clothes and body. She starts realizing the changes she is going through. She is not the carefree girl she used to be who did not have to worry about anything or anyone. She is now starting to become concerned about her looks and feelings.

Furthermore, she speaks of her mother's hairpins nailing her hair to her skull. This mention of her mother's hairpin is an allusion to her becoming and acting like her mother. She is now an adult and has to learn her place and responsibilities.

When she describes her mother twisting her hair into a bun, she does not

simply describe it like an ordinary circumstance. She mentions that her mother's hand stretched her eyes open even suggesting it was a deliberate act. However, as one continues to read, it can clearly be seen that her mother's hand is actually on the hair, never touching the eyes. However, as she pulls the young girl's hair, her eyes are stretched. This description may imply that with what the mother is doing to her daughter in preparing her for her fifteenth birthday, her eyes are being stretched to see beyond the obvious.

Later, she explains that she is now given the responsibility of taking care of her personal things. She will not expect her mother anymore to be cleaning after her. She has to wash her own beddings especially when she soils them during her monthly period. At this point she concentrates on her bodily discharge, commenting how she feels of her being given the task of cleaning them up because it is shameful otherwise they are treated like poisons by other people. Then, she trails off to the blood of Christ. Such change of perception and discussion shows how the young girl's mind is also maturing. She now learns to ponder on things and question her observations. Again, she changes her topic and brings the readers' attention back to the changes in her body. She is now feeling her womanhood, her breasts swelling and her body contouring. She is now a woman who is just waiting for her time to completely be so when she is finally released to the next stage of her life.