

"miss brill," by katherine mansfield

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



The selected passage is from the end of the short story Miss Brill, beginning where Miss Brill sees the boy and girl who sits down on the bench near her right to the end of the story. In " Miss Brill," by Katherine Mansfield, we are introduced to the titular woman called Miss Brill who finds Sundays magical until she is forced to step out of her daydream and face reality. Every Sunday Miss Brill, who is presumed to be an English schoolteacher, goes to the Jardins Publiques and takes her " special seat" to look forward to listening to the conversations of others.

This lonely older woman eavesdrops on others and starts to view everything she observes on Sundays in the form of a choreographed theatrical performance in which everything, herself included, plays a role. This is a place where she feels as though she " belongs", in a sort of unreal drama that is conjured up in her own mind. However, one Sunday her fantasy is shattered by the inconsiderate and harsh remarks of a young couple. Mansfield shows us how hurtful the truth can be to people who haven't realized or accepted the reality in which they live.

The narrative is focalized through the character of Miss Brill and this allows the reader to see what the character sees and feel what the character feels. Katherine Mansfield exhibits a detailed characterization of Miss Brill. We see everything through the eyes of Miss Brill, and through dramatic irony we often see or comprehend situations differently and perhaps more accurately than she does. Through it, it can be seen that in reality, Miss Brill is constantly by herself, she sits alone on a bench with her old fur that she seems to treasure more than anything and watches the world pass before her.

The furpiece can be thought of as a symbol of the owner. Both are of an age and the appearance of the thing itself is wearing down, just as the frail Miss Brill is. She sees other people sitting on benches Sunday after Sunday and thinks of them as "funny... odd, silent, nearly all old... as though they'd just come from dark little rooms." Rather than see herself as one of them, she creates a fantasy world to escape facing the truth.

The two minor characters that appear in the excerpt are the boy and girl who sits down on the bench. They appear to be the "hero and heroine" of Miss Brill's imagination as they were described as being "beautifully dressed; they were in love. The hero and heroine, of course, just arrived from his father's yacht." Katherine Mansfield used the two characters to reveal the fragility of Miss Brill by having her "prepared to listen" to what they say, even though in the end the truth that they talk about hurts her deeply.

The young couple ridicules and make fun of the "stupid old thing at the end there," and in that instant her dream crumbles. They voice a reality that Miss Brill has been running away from and as they say "why does she come here at all - who wants her?" Through the minor characters, Miss Brill's delusional nature is revealed as she has been rejecting reality all this time, trying to hold on to her illusions. Yet also exhibiting her fragility when in after she hears the couple's conversation, she ceases to be able to carry on per usual.

After her fantasy world is shattered, Miss Brill solemnly walks home, passing up things that she used to look forward to like the slice of honey-cake that was her Sunday treat. She sits on her bed, puts the fur back in its box, and thinks she hears something crying. The fur is symbolic of something old and lonely that has lost its beauty over the years. The symbolism of putting the fur

back in its box is like placing dreams away. And in the end, it is not the fur that is crying, but Miss Brill. Her fantasy is over and the truth of her sad reality sinks in to her.