

Depiction of a young girl growing in alice munro's short story boys and girls

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The short story Boys and Girls written by Alice Munro is a story about coming of age that allows us to follow a young child becomes a girl. At a very young age the child narrating the story becomes aware of gender roles, what is and what is not acceptable for a girl. We see the change in thought from a young girl to when she is grown up, as well as the change in the way she acts. She changes from a child who doesn't see the world as boys do certain things and girls to others, to seeing and following what is expected from her because she is a girl at the time period she grew up in.

Throughout the story we follow a girl who remains nameless and faceless who grows and develops tremendously from the start to the end of the book. At the start she describes dreams she has as a little girl. In these dreams she was always the hero, a strong independent girl. " These stories were about myself, when i had grown a little older; they took place in a world that was recognizably mine, yet one that presented opportunities for courage, boldness and self- sacrifice, as mine never did." At the end of the story she then tells the dreams she was having as an older girl. " A story might start off in the old way, with spectacular danger, a fire or wild animals, and for a while i will rescue people; then things would change around me, and instead somebody would be rescuing me."

In these dreams we see the way she starts to lean on others and become the damsel in distress instead of the strong independent women she dreamed about as a child. As a young girl she was strong in her dreams and saving people. There was no boys coming in to swoop her off the ground until she's older. In her dreams as a older girl she talks about boys, she says they are

the ones coming to save her. "...somebody else would be rescuing me. It may be a boy from our class, or even Mr. Campbell, our teacher, who tickled girls under the arms."

The dreams allow us to see her change in thought from a child to a older girl, not only does it show us her growth but the way she comes to realise gender roles. When she was a child she loved to help her dad on their fox farm. She doesn't see the difference between a girls job and a boys job and believed that she was helpful to her father working alongside him. She describes doing numerous task with her father such as, " Besides carrying water I helped my father when he cut the grass, and the lamb's quarter and flowering money-musk, that grew between the pens." Up until this point in her life she was never aware of the role of a girl or a boy. This becomes clear to her at a young age. She was so proud of the work she did and felt a sense of pride helping her father, others however did not see it that way. When the salesman comes to visit in the story she is called something that at the time didn't seem like anything but later on would be said again and make a bigger impact. Her father introduces her to the salesman as his " new hired man" to which the salesman answers back " ' could have fooled me' said the salesman ' I thought it was only a girl.' " This is when we learn that it is a girl narrating the story. The second time she hears it she is much older and this time it's from her own father. " She's only a girl," Her response " I didn't protest that, even in my heart. Maybe it was true". She comes to realise and in a way accept that she is a girl and she cant change that. She doesn't fight back or protest that her father is wrong. At the end we also see a big change

in the main character in the way she decorates her bedroom. Growing up she always shared a room with her brother and it was never a big deal. However when she is older that changes. She says towards the end “ Lately i had been trying to make my part of the room fancy”. As she become older she became more aware of the expectations from girls. She wants to do what every other girl does. She decorates so that it is clear that she is a girl and it much different then her brother. “ Spreading the bed with old lace curtains, and fixing myself a dressing-table”. These are just a few things she does to make the distinction clear between her and her brother. When she was young her grandmother told her things like “ Girls don’t slam doors like that” and “ Girls keep their knees together when they sit down.” Growing up she was constantly told how she should act because of her gender and in the end she realise that she is a girl and starts to act the way she is expected.

This story truly shows the expectations that young girls of the time period were faced with. It follows a young girl who grows tremendously over the years and goes from being a little child running around and helping her dad on the farm, into a girl who falls over boys and becomes aware of the fact that she is only a girl and must except that.