

# Miss brill

Linguistics, English



Response Paper Prompt - Miss Brill The story "Miss Brill" narrated by Katherine Mansfield, while describing the Sunday time-pass routine of Miss Brill is based on the theme of loneliness, prevalent in the life of Miss Brill who is a middle-aged teacher, living alone. The story-writer, Katherine develops the theme of loneliness through Miss Brill's experiences, while sitting on the benches of the Public Gardens. Miss Brill enjoys her habit of observing people and listening to their talk, as if they are characters of some play, doing their act. Miss Brill comes to realize the loneliness of her life when she listens to the talk of two young lovers, finding her presence nearby, obstructing their love-making. Both the young boy and his girl-friend express their emotions; the boy refers to Miss Brill, as "the stupid old thing," stating further, "Why does she come here at all—who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home?" (Mansfield 857).

The plot of the story provides meaning to the theme of loneliness, starting from Miss Brill "decided on her fur...Dear little thing! It was nice to feel..." Relatively, there were more people than the previous Sunday. She shares her talk to herself alone about the various characters of the play she feels she is also a part. In a way, the storyline reveals the tragedy of a middle-aged teacher who assumes to be an active participant to the whole scenario of people and the company of band. She feels that she can relate herself to the surrounding, as she enjoys listening and guessing the responses of other characters but the lover couple shatters her belief when the girl giggles, "It's her fu-ur which is so funny." The theme is beautifully stated till the end of the story in third person (Mansfield 857).

Characterization and setting extends the theme of loneliness, rejection, and

isolation beautifully. The performance of musical band also depended on the setting. If the season was on, tunes were played without any callousness, but during out-of-season times, the performance of the band was as if “ there weren’t any strangers present” (Mansfield 855). The conductor also wears “ a new coat...flapped his arms as if a rooster about to crow.” The musicians were also full of spirit due to the new season. The narrator reveals her mind through the character of the Englishman’s wife whom her husband insists to wear gold rims covering her ears so that her glasses do not fall down, and she negates the idea, remarking, “ Theyll always be sliding down my nose!” Miss Brill also wanted to do the same (Mansfield 855).

Other characters sharing her “ special” seat include a good-looking old man wearing a velvet coat while his hands firmly gripped on the walking-stick, accompanied by a big old woman, sitting straight with a roll of knitting yarn on her embroidered clock. Miss Brill feels dismayed at the silence of her neighbors, as she feels that she excels in the art of listening while pretending as if she is not (Mansfield 855).

Other characters extend the story, as the previous Sunday was also disappointed in the sense that the English couple did not discuss any thing worth. There was no dearth of people for Miss Brill, as the crowd included the children, the little beggar, and the tiny tot, landing out of nowhere, “...into the open from under the trees...” The characterization of the people in the Public Gardens also builds on the theme of loneliness and isolation, derived from the “ funny” observation of Miss Brill that most of the people sitting every Sunday on the benches “ were odd, silent, nearly all old, and from the way they stared they looked as though theyd just come from dark little

rooms or even cupboards! (Mansfield 855). Ironically, she finds herself the same in her room, as if she is in her cupboard.

Thus, the theme and characterization lend full support in taking the storyline of Miss Brill to the end.

#### Work Cited

Mansfield, Katherine. "Miss Brill." 1920. 854-857.