

Jamaica Kincaid's girl – a proper way for women to act in society

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The story of “ Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid is a short story about a mother telling her adolescent daughter about the proper way to act and behave as a grown up to that will impress and please society which at that time, a masculine dominated world. The mother is listing off different commands and instructions telling her daughter about the ways to sew, cook, clean, and etc. The main theme of the story of this story is that females have an abnormal number of standards that society expects them to uphold and the failure to uphold these they are immediately looked down upon by men.

A majority of the section of the story is a set of instructions given to the daughter about how the proper way to sew and the proper care of clothing of her family. The author uses “ This is how to sew on a button; this is how to make a . . . the hole for the button . . .” (Kincaid). It can be seen that the author is stating a very common stereotype and expectation of a female about knowing how to maintain clothing that could suffer wear and tear throughout the ages. The author is using sewing as an example for a decent section of the story as most everyone believes a girl should know the proper way to sew clothing. The author goes on to say “ This is how to hem a dress . . . to prevent yourself from looking like a slut . . .” (Kincaid). The author again uses a reference back to sewing as an expectation but also brings in that a female who does not or cannot take care of their clothing, than society will begin looking down upon and judging the woman for simply not knowing how to sew and iron.

The author uses three separate references to the word slut. The author begins the references by saying “. . . try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming” (Kincaid). A reader can easily see that the <https://assignbuster.com/jamaica-kincaids-girl-a-proper-way-for-women-to-act-in-society/>

author is using the part “. . . walk like a lady . . . ” as a symbol of just the proper way to behave as a lady. A lady is expected to act and behave a certain way and if such lady does not then they are looked down upon in the world, or as the author says “. . . like the slut . . .” This word might seem as if it is just a way to describe the adolescent to viewers but it is a way that the author is trying to get a point across to viewers discreetly that a female who does not act properly and live up to expectations than the society will look down on the woman and society will see her as a no good female that does not seem to take care of herself and has no self-esteem and care for anyone or anything and therefore could not make a proper wife and mother.

One of the final ways the author is trying to convey the theme is by mentioning the baker. As the author brings the story to a close in the last lines she mentions a baker saying “ always squeeze the bread to make sure it's fresh; what if the baker doesn't let me . . .?; after all are you really going to be the kind the baker won't near the bread?”(Kincaid). Reading this it seems the author is trying to say that females should stand up and fight the society breaking themselves from the constraints they have been placed in. specifically at this point in the story, “. . . really going to be the kind . . .” the reader can see the author is actually trying to say that females that tried to fight that current system, of the time, that society would look down on, label, and shun the woman, all because she simply yearns for wanting a difference in the world

After reading this story one can conclude that the author's main theme of the story is about the expectations that society forces on women as they

grow older; for example, such as taking care household chores, children, and husbands. When a female cannot live up to these expectations than the society in which she lives in looks down upon her and places negative labels upon her. These labels could easily lead the woman to live a poor and unhappy life as no man of this time would want such a woman. The lack of a husband and having children could result in the woman living in a depressed state of mind that might result in her being a menace to the society which as labeled her.