

How structure, syntax, and diction help to illustrate gender roles in jamaica kin...

[Literature](#)



Jamaica Kincaid illustrates a demanding mother setting rules for her daughter in the story *Girl*. A myriad of requests and commands are made within this short story. Though the story lacks elaboration, the structure, syntax, and diction of the passage helps to efficiently deliver overall impression that Kincaid aims at.

The structure of *Girl* is unique in that it is continuous. The entire story is comprised of one sentence peppered with numerous semicolons. A voluminous list of “dos” and “do nots” is all that this story really is. Yet, this list effectively gives the reader an impression of an overwhelmed young girl living in world with many barriers against women. The story punctuates the endless limitations that are imposed upon women of such cultural background by not including any punctuation at all. Although the structure is rather simple, it delivers the intended message about the vast amount of unspoken rules women are forced to live within.

Every single sentence is supposed to be unique; however, the syntax of *Girl* is extremely simple and repetitive. Observing each sentence, one can easily find certain common characteristics. One overlapping trait is that the verb of each sentence is located at or near the beginning. Such repetitive placement implies that the syntax was intended to allow the reader to sympathize with the supposed young girl in the story. In sentences like “cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil” and “soak salt fish overnight before you cook it”, the verb placement gives a imperative tone to each sentence. As a result, readers also sense a type of urgency and importance within these whimsical commands. Therefore, through imperative sentence usage,

Kincaid conveys a sense of urgency to follow the rules of women and also implements the dark consequences if the girl chooses not to do so.

The diction of the passage is also basic. Vocabulary is not a strong suit of this narrator. “ This is how to make a good medicine for a cold” and “ This is how you smile to someone you like completely” are examples of sentences with elementary vocabulary. The usage of “ good” and “ like completely” suggest certain traits about the women of the story. Deprivation of education is one trait that can be inferred from such diction. Also the diction symbolizes the simplicity that these women are forced to live in. Although the flood of commands may make their lives seem complicated, the command adheres to one major command: keep the household running. The use of simple vocabulary within Girl shows the women’s lack of education as well as their constrained social roles.

All in all, Kincaid employs structure, syntax, and diction to give their respective messages about gender roles within Girl. Intertwining these three fundamental literary devices, Kincaid presents readers with a captivating insight into how social pressure and tradition have led to extremely limited amount of freedom to women.