

About the Poet

Robin Klein was born on 28 February, 1936 in Kempsey, New South Wales. She was educated at Newcastle Girls' High School. She worked in number of jobs before becoming an established writer. She had her first short story published at the age of sixteen. In 1981, she was awarded a Literature Board grant for writing, and since then, she has had more than twenty books published.

THEME

The central theme of the poem is the upbringing of a child. While it is important for parents to teach their children what is right and wrong, and instil good manners in them, they need to be sensitive of the individuality of the child. Children resent too many instructions and too much control. They get bored and fed up. Then they listen to their parents half-heartedly and indulge in fantasising. Excessive nagging makes them defiant and they turn a deaf ear to the instructions of the elders.

Summary

Childhood is a time when we indulge in our fantasies and we do as we please. But as soon as we reach adolescence, we are expected to abandon such practices and do as we are told. Amanda has reached that midway age between childhood and adulthood. The poet shows this in a subtle manner, through the growth of acne on her face. Because she is no longer a child, her mother expects her to fulfil certain responsibilities, such as finishing her homework on time, or cleaning her room and her shoes. However, Amanda wants to postpone the process of growing up. So, she withdraws into the childhood world of fantasies and fairy tales.

As girls grow into women after puberty, they are expected to act and behave in certain ways. They are expected to sit up straight, to take care of their appearance, and to always be sweet and smiling. This is exactly what Amanda's mother wants her to do, and she is willing to scold Amanda and even take away her chocolates to make her become the woman, she is expected to be – prim, proper and radiant. However, these expectations are just a burden to Amanda and she would much rather be left alone. That is why, all her fantasies place her in a world that is away from other human beings and their expectations. As a mermaid, she is alone in the sea; as an orphan, she is alone on the street; as Rapunzel, she is alone in her tower. Amanda thinks that it is only in the realm of her own imagination that she can be free of all the expectations that are put on young girls of her age.

Explanation of the Poem

1. Don't bite your nails, Amanda!
 Don't hunch your shoulders, Amanda!
 Stop that slouching and sit up straight,
 Amanda!

Exp- In these lines, the speaker is asking Amanda not to bite the nails, not to bend the shoulders, to stop sitting in a lazy way and to sit up straight.

2. (There is a languid, emerald sea,
 where the sole inhabitant is me—
 a mermaid, drifting blissfully.)

Exp- The above lines are spoken by Amanda. Here, she says that there is a calm, emerald sea whose only inhabitant is me. She says that she is a mermaid—a creature with a woman's head and body, and a fish's tail instead of legs—who moves freely and happily in the sea water.

3. Did you finish your homework, Amanda?
 Did you tidy your room, Amanda?
 I thought I told you to clean your shoes,
 Amanda!

Exp- In the above lines, the speaker is asking Amanda if she has done her homework and cleaned her room. The speaker had also asked Amanda to clean her shoes.

4. (I am an orphan, roaming the street.
 I pattern soft dust with my hushed, bare feet.
 The silence is golden, the freedom is sweet.)

Exp- These lines are spoken by Amanda. She says that she is an orphan who roams in the street freely, making different patterns on the soft dust with her bare feet. This experience of roaming free and doing things as she likes is golden and sweet for her.

5. Don't eat that chocolate, Amanda!
 Remember your acne, Amanda!
 Will you please look at me when I'm speaking to you,
 Amanda!

Exp- In the above lines, the speaker instructs Amanda not to eat chocolates. The speaker makes her remind of the acne on her face. Again, the speaker asks Amanda to look at him when he is speaking to her.

6. (I am Rapunzel, I have not a care;
 life in a tower is tranquil and rare;
 I'll certainly never let down my bright hair!)

Exp- These lines are spoken by Amanda. Here, she says that she is a Rapunzel. But she doesn't want everything what Rapunzel has. She only loves the life of Rapunzel in the tower which is care-free, peaceful and unique. She says that she will never let her bright hair let down as she wants to stay in the tower forever.

7. Stop that sulking at once, Amanda!
You're always so moody, Amanda!
Anyone would think that I nagged at you,
Amanda!

Exp- In these lines, the speaker is asking Amanda to stop looking angry at once. The poet says that Amanda is so moody and sulky that anyone would think that the speaker had scolded her.

POETIC DEVICES

Rhyme Scheme

The rhyme scheme of the poem is as follows:

The words spoken by her mother: aaba

The words said by Amanda (her imagination): aaa

Anaphora

The repetition of the same word at the beginning of two or more lines.

“Don't” repeated in lines 1 and 2 of first stanza; ‘Did’ repeated in lines 1 and 2 of third stanza.

Repetition

The name ‘Amanda’ has been repeated in stanza 1, 3, 5, & 7.

Parenthesis

It is a remark that is added between sentences or verses to provide an explanation or an insight into the mind of the protagonist or the writer. Here, it has been utilised to describe the attitude of the child towards the constant nagging her mother indulges in.

Metaphor

This poetic device is used when a covert comparison is made between two different things or ideas. In this poem, the poet uses the device of metaphor in the 2nd, 4th and 6th stanzas as Amanda compares herself first with a mermaid, then with an orphan in the street and finally with Rapunzel.

Allusion

In the poem, this is a mythological allusion and this allusion is the mermaid. Amanda imagines herself to be a mermaid. Mermaid is a mythological creature who had a body and head of a woman, and a tail of a fish instead of legs.

Alliteration

This poetic device is used in the following lines of the poem.

- Stop that slouching and sit up straight (the sound ‘s’ is repeated).
- Life in a tower is tranquil and rare (the sound ‘t’ is repeated).

ANSWERS TO NCERT QUESTIONS

THINKING ABOUT THE POEM

1. How old do you think Amanda is? How do you know this?

Ans. I think Amanda is a teenager, that is, around 12 or 13. She has acne on her face. Usually, boys or girls at this age have them on their faces.

2. Who do you think is speaking to her?

Ans. It is either her mother or her father speaking to her.

3. Why are Stanzas 2, 4 and 6 given in parenthesis?

Ans. Stanzas 2, 4 and 6 are given in parenthesis because they are not spoken by the speaker. Hence, there is a change in narration. These stanzas reflect the thoughts of a day-dreaming girl, that is, Amanda.

4. Who is the speaker in Stanzas 2, 4 and 6? Do you think this speaker is 'listening to the speaker in Stanzas 1, 3, 5 and 7?

Ans. In stanzas 2, 4 and 6, the speaker is Amanda. In stanza 2, the speaker is Amanda in the form of a mermaid, in stanza 4 she is in the form of an orphan and in stanza 6, she is in the form of a fairy. She does not listen to the speaker in stanzas 1, 3, 5 and 7 as she is a day-dreaming girl.

5. What could Amanda do if she were a mermaid?

Ans. If Amanda were a mermaid, she could move about in the green sea blissfully.

6. Is Amanda an orphan? Why does she say so?

Ans. No, Amanda is not an orphan, wandering in the street. It is clear in stanza 4. She says so because she wants to have freedom which perhaps she does not have to be a parental child.

7. Do you know the story of Rapunzel? Why does she want to be Rapunzel?

Ans. Rapunzel is a character taken from a fairy story. She is a beautiful girl with long hair, who is imprisoned in a tall tower by a witch. In the story, a handsome prince comes and is able to climb to the top of the tower to meet her. He calls out to her. "Rapunzel. Rapunzel, let down your long hair." Amanda wants to be up in the tower like Rapunzel because she wants to live in peace. She wants to enjoy tranquility by being all alone. Unlike Rapunzel, she has no intentions of letting down her hair, or letting anyone up to join her in the tower.

8. What does the girl yearn for? What does this poem tell you about Amanda?

Ans. The girl yearns for freedom. She wants to lead her life the way she likes. Perhaps, she does not get freedom in her house. That is why, in her day-dreams, she imagines her to be free and charming.

9. Read the last stanza. Do you think Amanda is sulking and is moody?

Ans. The poet thinks that Amanda is sulking. In fact, Amanda is not happy with her surroundings. She often escapes to the world of day-dreams. That is why, when she comes back from those dreams to the world of harsh reality, she seems to be sulking.

Ans. (a) Anaphora has been used in the line 'Did you finish your homework..... Did you tidy your room'. This poetic device is used when a sequence of words are used repeatedly in consecutive lines.

- (b) (ii) Transferred epithet
 (c) True
 (d) (i) authoritative

3.

Don't eat that chocolate, Amanda!

Remember your acne, Amanda!

Will you please look at me when I'm speaking to you,

Amanda! (I am Rapunzel, I have not a care; life in tower is tranquil and rare, I'll certainly never let down my bright hair)

(CBSE Question Paper, Code 2/4/3; 2022-23)

- (a) **The speaker's tone is:** (1)
 (i) loving (ii) hopeful
 (iii) instructive (iv) indifferent
- (b) **Why is Amanda asked not to eat chocolate?** (2)
- (c) **State whether the following statement in TRUE or FALSE:** (1)
Amanda did not want anyone to invade her privacy and silence.
- (d) **Select the appropriate option:** (1)
Amanda's mother is continuously _____ Amanda.
 (i) encouraging (ii) reprimanding
 (iii) motivating (iv) disappointing

Ans. (a) (iii) instructive
 (b) Amanda is asked not to eat chocolates because whenever Amanda eats chocolates, she gets acne and her mother is very particular about that. Her mother wants Amanda to look pretty.

- (c) True
 (d) (ii) reprimanding

4.

(I am Rapunzel, I have not care ;

life in a tower is tranquil and rare ;

I'll certainly never let down my bright hair!)

- (a) **Who was Rapunzel?** (1)
- (b) **What does the girl in the given lines want to do?** (1)
 (i) She wants to live like a princess.
 (ii) She wants a life like Rapunzel's.
 (iii) She wants to live like a witch.
 (iv) She wants to live like an enchantress.
- (c) **What does Amanda plan to do with her bright hair?** (1)
 (i) Never cut them (ii) Never tie them
 (iii) Never let them down (iv) To let them rustle with the wind

(d) How would life in a tower be different from the life anywhere else? (2)

- Ans. (a) Rapunzel was a princess.
(b) (ii) She wants a life like Rapunzel's.
(c) (iii) Never let them down
(d) The life in a tower would cut off Amanda from the rest of the world and also be away from her parent's constant nagging. She would be alone and be left undisturbed.

5. Stop that sulking at once, Amanda!
You're always so moody, Amanda!
Anyone would think that I nagged at you,
Amanda!

(a) Complete the sentence appropriately. (1)

_____ is the major theme of the poem Amanda.

(b) Amanda efforts to escape her realities of controlling over her and turns to daydream. These daydreams represent: (1)

- (i) her submissive behaviour (ii) her insolent behaviour
(iii) her sulking behaviour (iv) her desire for freedom

(c) Do you think Amanda is moody and sulky? (2)

(d) What does the poet indicate through the last line of the given extract? (1)

- (i) The nagging and controlling nature of the adult speaker
(ii) Amanda's sulky behaviour
(iii) The nagging and controlling nature of a novice
(iv) Sheer negligence and carelessness

- Ans. (a) Upbringing of a child
(b) (iv) her desire for freedom
(c) It does not seem that Amanda is sulking, though she could be moody. She is completely lost in her thoughts and is not even listening to her mother. Her mother perceives her to be sulking as she does not react to her instructions at all.
(d) (i) The nagging and controlling nature of the adult speaker

6. (I am an orphan, roaming the street.
I pattern soft dust with my hushed, bare feet.
The silence is golden, the freedom is sweet.) (CBSE Question Bank)

(a) Is Amanda an orphan? Why does she say so? (2)

(b) Read the statements A and B given below, and choose the option that correctly evaluates these statements. (1)

Statement A – The figure 'I' imagines a less than realistic view of being an orphan.

Statement B – The figure 'I' does not like the speaker.

- (i) A is true, B is false, according to the extract
(ii) A is true, B cannot be clearly inferred from the extract.
(iii) A cannot be clearly inferred from the extract, B is false.
(iv) A is true and can be inferred from the poem, B is true too.

Short Answer Questions

(40–50 words: 3 Marks each)

1. Is the purpose of someone constantly giving instructions to Amanda being fulfilled? Explain.

Ans. No, Amanda sulks and becomes moody when her mother gives her too many instructions. She does not listen to her mother and does not care to follow them, but she can't dare to ignore them either, so she sulks. Parents in their endeavour to make their children well-behaved, give them too many instructions.

2. Amanda imagines herself to be Rapunzel, yet would not like to do what all she did. Identify and state the reasons for her decision.

Ans. Amanda wants to be Rapunzel because she wants to live a peaceful life in a tower, where no one gives any instruction and she doesn't have to do any work. But she doesn't want to escape with a prince like Rapunzel. She never wants to escape and leave such a peaceful atmosphere, with no instructions and no work to do.

3. What message does the poet want to give through the poem, 'Amanda'?

Ans. The poet wants to convey that parents in their endeavour to make their children well-behaved, and well-mannered give them too many instructions or nag (always finding fault) them. They should adopt a more appealing approach to 'reform' their children. Otherwise, they will stop listening to them and indulge in day-dreaming as Amanda did.

4. Who was Amanda? What idea do you form of her through the poem?

Ans. Amanda was a little school-going girl. She seems to love fairy tales, stories like Rapunzel and mermaids. She does not like too many instructions or nagging which makes her sulk and become moody. This makes her slip into a world of fantasy where life seems to be more pleasant.

5. Why does she dream to be an orphan?

Ans. She thinks orphans lead a care-free life. There is no one to pester them with instructions. They can wander in a street and make patterns in the soft dust with their bare feet. They don't have to clean the shoes or room or do the homework.

6. How is Amanda seen behaving when the poem starts? What does the speaker ask her not to do?

Ans. When the poem begins, we find that Amanda is biting her nails. She is hunching her shoulders. She is sitting in a slouching posture. That is why, the speaker asks her to behave normally. He asks her not to bite her nails and hunch her shoulders. She should sit up straight.

7. What does Amanda say, "I am Rapunzel"? What does she promise not to do?

Ans. Rapunzel was a beautiful girl with long hair. She was locked up in a tower by a witch. In her imagination, Amanda thinks herself to be like Rapunzel who led a peaceful life. She promises never to let down her bright hair.

8. What is the central idea of the poem?

Ans. The central idea of the poem is that children love freedom. They do not want any restrictions on their activities. Secondly, they have a dream world of their own. They like to spend most of their time in that dream world. But the elders are always destroying that dream world by ordering them around.

9. How would you characterise the speaker in the poem 'Amanda!'? List any two qualities, supporting the reason of your choice, with evidence from the poem.

(Competency-based Question) (CBSE Question Bank)

Ans. The speaker is a perfectionist and a nagging mother. She wants her child to learn social etiquettes and present herself in a socially acceptable manner. At the same time, she is

afraid of how society would react to know that the mother is constantly nagging her child.

10. 'Amanda is alone but not lonely in the world she envisions.' Justify the statement with reference to any one image she pictures in her mind. (CBSE Question Bank)

Ans. Amanda wants to live alone and away from her parents' dos and don'ts. She imagines herself as a mermaid who is drifting happily in the sea. She envisions herself enjoying her solitude, whereas a lonely person feels sad and upset. That's why, it is said that she wants to live alone and not lonely.

11. What is the role of punctuation in language? Why has the poet used the exclamation mark after Amanda? Comment on the title of the poem. (Competency-based Question)

Ans. Punctuation is an important part of language. It is used to create sense, clarity and stress in sentences. It is used to structure and organise the writing. In the poem, the exclamation mark is used after Amanda to show the mother's surprise on seeing Amanda. Amanda is a sulky and moody girl which upsets the mother.

12. Why is Amanda forbidden to eat chocolate? How does Amanda behave when she is addressed by the speaker?

Ans. Amanda already suffers from acne, a skin disease. If she eats chocolate, it will aggravate her problem further. That is why, she is asked not to eat chocolate. When the speaker is addressing Amanda, all she does is to listen without raising her face to look up. Her expression and her behaviour is like a typical teenager.

13. Justify the poet's allusion to Rapunzel in 'Amanda'. (CBSE Sample Paper, 2021)

Ans. It is justified as Rapunzel lived with a witch who was always vigilant on her and had several rules to be followed. Amanda too, feels caged by the impositions. She desires peace in isolation like Rapunzel had in her tower; clarifying she will not let her hair down for anyone.

14. Comment on the tone of the speaker when he says, 'Will you please look at me, I'm speaking to you, Amanda!'. (CBSE Sample Paper, 2022; Term 2)

Ans. The tone of the speaker in the given line is irritated, frustrated, annoyed and exasperated. Throughout the poem, the speaker's attitude towards Amanda is very nagging. The speaker is one of the parents who is teaching her how to be presentable and acceptable in the society. But in doing so, the speaker is taking away the freedom and imagination of the child.

15. Mention any two issues over which Amanda was nagged and scolded? (CBSE Question Paper, 2022; Term 2)

Ans. Amanda was constantly being nagged and scolded by her mother for various reasons.
(any two)
(a) Amanda was frequently chided for biting nails.
(b) She was reprimanded to clean her shoes and keep her room tidy.
(c) She was scolded for not finishing her homework.
(d) She was also instructed by her parent not to eat chocolates in order to avoid acne on her face.
(e) She was taught to sit properly.

Long Answer Questions

(100-120 words: 6 Marks each)

1. Bringing up teenagers can be both a challenge and fun. How far do you agree? Express your views with reference to Amanda's life. (Competency-based Question)

Ans. Bringing up teenagers is truly challenging and fun. Teenagers can be rebellious and apparently hot-headed with a highly independent perspective. In such circumstances,

yelling at them, and nagging them, as done in the poem with Amanda, will only make matters worse. Forcing decisions on them only make them more detached, as we see in Amanda's case, where she wishes to be the sole mermaid, an orphan, or the lonely Rapunzel. To make things fun, one must become a friend where needed. Sometimes, one needs to get into the mind of a teenager, reflect on one's own teenage period, and empathise with the child. Life would be simpler and worthwhile, for both the parents and the teenagers.

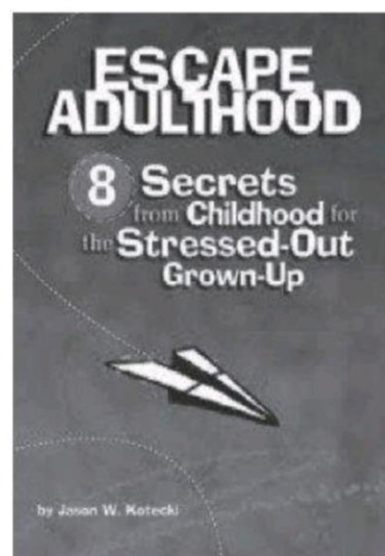
2. What does the girl yearn for? What does this poem tell you about Amanda?

Ans. Most of the children feel that they are controlled and instructed not to do one thing or the other by their parents. So, the child or the girl yearns for freedom, to live her life peacefully, in her own way. Nobody should give her any instructions and tell her what to do and what not to.

Amanda is fed up of getting instructions and being nagged by her mother. She wants to escape all this. She is a moody, imaginative girl who loves fantasy and wants to live in her world of imagination.

3. Look at the given image of a book cover. If the author, Jason Kotecki were to ask a grown-up Amanda to help with his book by writing one of the 8 secrets based on her experiences, what might she share? Elaborate based on your understanding of the poem.
(Competency-based Question) (CBSE Question Bank)

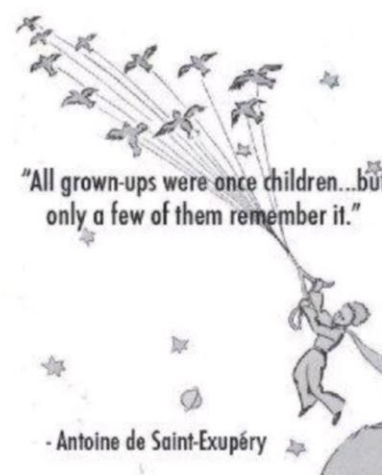
Ans. Amanda would share that she had gone through a distressing childhood. Her mother always expected a perfect behaviour from her. Though Amanda never denied to complete her daily tasks but her mother wanted her to perform everything according to her will and time. Her mother never understood that she wanted to enjoy her life in solitude. Amanda was fed up with all the repeated naggings that she wanted to live alone as an orphan. She wanted to enjoy her life but was not allowed. Sadly, now her childhood has passed. She will never be able to enjoy that childhood fun for the rest of her life.



4. Read the quote given below carefully. Based on your understanding of the poem, explain how and why this quote can be applied to the poem.

(Competency-based Question) (CBSE Question Bank)

Ans. "All grown-ups were once children, but only a few of them remember it." The same message has been conveyed to all the parents in the poem 'Amanda!'. There is a wide gap between the behaviour of adults and children. Parents set limitations on children's thoughts and behaviour. In the race of social show off, they forget that every child has his own likes and dislikes. He or she should be left free to live his life. Parents instill good values into their children at the cost of their happiness. They should know how to strike a balance between maintaining responsibilities and taking good care. They must examine their narrow-mindedness and see the world through their child's eyes.



QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

Extract-based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1. I am an orphan, roaming the street.
 I pattern soft dust with my hushed, bare feet.
 The silence is golden, the freedom is sweet.

- (a) Why does the speaker want to be an orphan? (1)
 (i) So that she could live among trees
 (ii) So that she could sleep under the stars
 (iii) So that no one would constantly nag her
 (iv) So that she can live alone
- (b) Explain, 'the silence is golden, the freedom is sweet'. (2)
- (c) What is Amanda doing with her feet? (1)
- (d) What is sweet for Amanda? (1)
 (i) Her life (ii) Her dreams
 (iii) Her freedom (iv) Her plans for the future

2. I am Rapunzel, I have not care;
 Life in a tower is tranquil and rare;
 I'll certainly never let down my bright hair!

- (a) What did she do with her bright hair? (1)
- (b) What did Rapunzel do with her bright hair? (1)
 (i) She let them down. (ii) She never let them down.
 (iii) She combed them daily. (iv) She cut them.
- (c) Why do you think Amanda fantasises Rapunzel's life? (2)
- (d) Apart from peace, which of the following does Amanda wish to attain? (1)
 (i) Bright hair (ii) A tall tower
 (iii) Solitude (iv) A mermaid's tail

Short Answer Questions

(40-50 words)

1. What message is the poet trying to convey through the poem, 'Amanda'?
2. What is the fear of the speaker that is explained in the last stanza?
3. Why does Amanda wish to be a mermaid? (CBSE Question Paper, Code 2/6/1; 2022-23)
4. List the things which Amanda's mother doesn't want her to do.

Long Answer Questions

(100-120 words)

1. Give a character sketch of Amanda with reference to the poem.
2. Throughout the poem, Amanda is constantly day-dreaming. Describe her dreams in detail.

