

A Cup of Tea by Katherine Mansfield

TEXTUAL QUESTION ANSWERS

A. Choose the correct option:

1. **Rosemary Fell belonged to a/an –**
→ Upper-class family.
 2. **What did Rosemary Fell buy at the antique shop?**
→ A little enamel box.
 3. **What did Miss Smith ask Rosemary for?**
→ The price of a cup of tea.
 4. **What was the reaction of Rosemary's husband when he saw Miss Smith?**
→ He thought Miss Smith was pretty and complimented her looks.
 5. **Why did Rosemary give Miss Smith some money?**
→ She became insecure after her husband praised Miss Smith's beauty.
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B. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. **Who was Rosemary Fell?**
Answer: Rosemary Fell was a rich, fashionable, and sophisticated woman from high society. She was fond of luxury and had a romanticized view of poverty and charity.
2. **How did Rosemary feel when she first saw Miss Smith?**
Answer: Rosemary felt pity and excitement when she saw Miss Smith. She was fascinated by the idea of helping a poor girl and saw it as a romantic, generous adventure.
3. **How did Rosemary treat Miss Smith after bringing her home?**
Answer: Rosemary treated Miss Smith kindly at first. She

offered her tea, comfort, and a warm environment. However, this kindness was superficial and driven by vanity rather than true empathy.

4. How did Rosemary's husband react to seeing Miss Smith at their home?

Answer: Rosemary's husband, Philip, was surprised to see a strange girl in their home. He thought she was pretty and questioned Rosemary's intentions, indirectly triggering Rosemary's jealousy.

5. What made Rosemary ask Miss Smith to leave her house?

Answer: Rosemary became insecure and jealous when her husband praised Miss Smith's beauty. Fearing that Miss Smith might attract Philip, she gave the girl some money and asked her to leave.

C. Answer the following questions in about 40–50 words:

1. Why did Rosemary take Miss Smith home with her?

Answer: Rosemary took Miss Smith home because she wanted to perform a charitable act. She romanticized the idea of helping the poor and saw this as an exciting opportunity to prove her generosity and modern sensibility.

2. How did the meeting with Miss Smith end?

Answer: The meeting ended abruptly. After Philip complimented Miss Smith's beauty, Rosemary grew jealous and insecure. She handed Miss Smith some money and asked her to leave immediately.

3. What was Rosemary's state of mind at the end of the story?

Answer: At the end of the story, Rosemary was insecure and confused. She sought reassurance from her husband about her own beauty, indicating her fragile ego and superficial nature.

D. Answer the following questions in about 80–100 words:

1. What kind of person was Rosemary Fell?

Answer: Rosemary Fell was a wealthy and fashionable woman from high society. Though she pretended to be kind and charitable, her actions revealed her vanity and superficial nature. She liked to indulge in expensive shopping and was obsessed with maintaining a modern image. Her desire to help Miss Smith stemmed not from genuine compassion but from a romantic fantasy about charity. Her insecurity and jealousy surfaced when her husband admired Miss Smith, revealing her shallowness and emotional immaturity.

2. What is the theme of Katherine Mansfield's *A Cup of Tea*?

Answer: The story explores themes of class differences, superficiality of charity, vanity, and insecurity. It highlights how the upper class romanticizes poverty and uses charity to boost their self-image. The story also critiques the fragile ego and jealousy of the protagonist, Rosemary, revealing that her acts of kindness are driven more by pride than empathy.



ADDITIONAL SHORT & LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

◆ **Short Answer Questions (30–50 words)**

1. What does the title "A Cup of Tea" symbolize?

Answer: The title symbolizes superficial charity. The offer of a simple cup of tea represents the shallow generosity of the upper class and how they use such acts to feel virtuous without addressing real issues.

2. Why did Rosemary visit the antique shop?

Answer: Rosemary visited the antique shop to browse luxury

items. She was tempted to buy an expensive enamel box, reflecting her love for beautiful, rare, and costly things.

3. How did Miss Smith look when Rosemary first saw her?

Answer: Miss Smith looked cold, pale, and fragile. She was poorly dressed and visibly starving, which evoked a sense of pity in Rosemary.

4. What was Philip's opinion about Miss Smith?

Answer: Philip thought Miss Smith was "astonishingly pretty." His casual compliment triggered Rosemary's jealousy and insecurity.

5. How did Rosemary justify bringing a poor girl home?

Answer: Rosemary told her husband she brought Miss Smith home as an act of kindness and charity, believing it was a noble and modern thing to do.

6. What was the social class difference between Rosemary and Miss Smith?

Answer: Rosemary belonged to the wealthy upper class, surrounded by luxury. Miss Smith was poor, homeless, and struggling to survive, representing the stark contrast between their lives.

7. Why did Rosemary feel threatened by Miss Smith?

Answer: Rosemary felt threatened when her husband admired Miss Smith's beauty. She feared losing his attention and affection to the younger, prettier girl.

8. What role does vanity play in the story?

Answer: Vanity drives Rosemary's actions. Her desire to appear generous, her insecurity about her looks, and her reaction to Philip's compliment all reveal her self-centered mindset.

9. What does the story suggest about true kindness?

Answer: The story suggests that true kindness should be

selfless and empathetic. Rosemary's so-called kindness was shallow and motivated by pride, not genuine concern.

10. **Why does Rosemary ask her husband if she is pretty at the end?**

Answer: Rosemary's final question reveals her insecurity. After feeling threatened by Miss Smith, she seeks validation from her husband, showing that her self-worth is tied to appearance.

◆ **Long Answer Questions (120–150 words)**

11. **Discuss the theme of class consciousness in *A Cup of Tea*.**

Answer: *A Cup of Tea* highlights class consciousness through the contrasting lives of Rosemary and Miss Smith. Rosemary's interaction with Miss Smith reveals her patronizing attitude and superficial understanding of poverty. While she pretends to be generous, her treatment of Miss Smith is driven by vanity and pride. The story critiques the upper class for romanticizing poverty and using charity as a fashion statement. Miss Smith, in contrast, represents real suffering and desperation. Mansfield uses this disparity to expose the social divide and the emptiness of performative kindness.

12. **How does Katherine Mansfield use irony in the story?**

Answer: Mansfield uses irony to expose Rosemary's hypocrisy. Rosemary thinks she's being kind and modern, yet her motives are selfish. She quickly abandons her charitable act when her own insecurity is triggered. The irony lies in how a supposedly noble act turns into one of jealousy and self-preservation. Rosemary is more concerned with her husband's opinion than with Miss Smith's wellbeing.

13. **Compare and contrast the characters of Rosemary and Miss Smith.**

Answer: Rosemary is wealthy, privileged, and superficial. She views poverty as something romantic and exotic. Miss Smith, on the other hand, is genuinely poor, hungry, and in need. While Rosemary pretends to be kind, Miss Smith remains humble and grateful. Their contrast reflects the divide between social classes and the illusion of upper-class compassion.

14. **What does Rosemary's reaction to her husband's comment reveal about her?**

Answer: Rosemary's reaction to Philip's comment reveals her deep insecurity. Though she was confident while helping Miss Smith, a simple compliment from her husband shatters her sense of superiority. This exposes her fragile ego and suggests that her kindness was only a performance to feed her self-image.

15. **How does the story reflect the hollowness of upper-class morality?**

Answer: The story reflects the hollowness of upper-class morality through Rosemary's actions. She brings Miss Smith home not out of genuine concern, but to feel noble and modern. When her vanity is challenged, she quickly discards Miss Smith. The story shows how charity, when driven by ego and class pride, becomes meaningless.