



CHIVVY

by Michel Rosen

SUMMARY

The poem 'Chivvy' by Michael Rosen is based on the idea that people constantly order someone to do something. The poem focuses on how adults are always instructing and imposing rules on the children. As the children are being ordered to behave in certain ways in each and every activity, the poet questions how the children can be decisive individuals when they are always being instructed by adults.

Stanzawise Explanation

Stanza 1

Grown-ups say things like:

Speak up

Don't talk with your mouth full

Don't stare

Don't point

Don't pick your nose

Explanation: The poem opens with the poet complaining about the things that adults say on a daily basis. The grown-ups would ask children to speak. They also tell the children not to talk when they have food in their mouth, not to stare and point fingers at others. Children are strictly told not to pick their noses.

The grown-ups seem to be telling these things to children for their safety and hygiene. However, since the children are young, they do not understand the logic behind the constant instructions. Adults ask children to speak up so that they can express their thoughts. Talking while eating are ill manners, staring and pointing fingers are considered rude and picking one's nose is unhygienic so children are advised not to do these things.

Stanza 2

Sit up; Say please; Less noise
Shut the door behind you
Don't drag your feet
Haven't you got a hankie?
Take your hands out of your pockets

Explanation: The poem continues with another set of instructions. Children are told to sit up while talking to someone and say 'please' when they need something. They are also asked not to make noise and close the door behind them when they leave the place. Children have a habit of dragging their feet while walking but adults dislike it. They are always reminded to carry a handkerchief around and asked not to put their hands inside their pockets.

The lines imply that each and every activity of a child is being monitored by the grown-ups.

Stanza 3

Pull your socks up; Stand up straight
Say thank you; Don't interrupt
No one thinks you're funny
Take your elbows off the table
Can't you make your own mind up about anything?

Explanation: The poet further narrates the instances in which grown-ups give instructions. They would ask them to pull the socks up, to stand up straight, to say thank you and to not keep their elbows on the table. Adults tell the children not to interrupt when others are speaking or doing other activities. They would say that the kids are not funny. However, the adults would ask if the children can take their own decisions.

The adults seem to be telling the children to pull their socks up, stand up straight and not to put their elbows on the table so that they look smart and active. The last two lines of the poem contradict the previous lines. After being told the do's and don'ts the whole time, the children are asked if they can make any decision on their own. The poet finds this ironic as all their life children are constantly instructed to do things. As a result, when it is time to take important decisions, children are not able to do so. Parents then, scold the children for not being able to take their decisions properly.

Word - Meaning

Word	Meaning
Stare	Looking intensely at someone or something for a long time with eyes
Drag	To pull
Interrupt	To disturb/halt an ongoing process

