**Girl by Jamaica Kincaid**

In Girl by Jamaica Kincaid we have the theme of powerlessness, domesticity, independence, identity, inequality, sexuality, freedom, tradition and control. Narrated in the first person by an unnamed narrator (mother) the reader realises after reading the story that Kincaid may be exploring the theme of powerlessness. There is a sense that the narrator’s daughter is powerless when it comes to the instructions given to her. She is not allowed to have an opinion on how she should do things. This might be important as Kincaid by removing the daughter’s voice may be highlighting the fact that the daughter is being taught how to adhere to tradition. A tradition which may or may not be beneficial to the daughter. She is after all being taught to live a life of domesticity and appears to be under the complete control of her mother. It is also interesting that the daughter is being advised against any exploration of her sexuality with her mother considering any deviation from how she is being taught as being the actions of a slut. This may be significant as the mother appears to wish to mould her daughter in her own likeness. Something which would further play on the theme of control and also on the theme of identity.

Though the daughter’s voice can only be heard twice in the story it may be important that when she speaks her mother disregards what the daughter has said. It is as though the mother is imposing her will on her daughter. There is no sense that the daughter has a choice. If anything she has no freedom. Which may be the point that Kincaid is attempting to make. She may be suggesting that the following of tradition is fine but an individual still needs to be allowed to have their independence. In the latter half of the story the mother is automatically assuming that the daughter will marry and as such instructs her on how to love a man. It is as though there is an imbalance when it comes to gender. With the daughter due to the fact that she is female not being allowed a voice or choice. She is to be subservient to the male. Just as the daughter is silent throughout most of the story. Likewise there is a sense that she is to be silent or submissive in life. Particularly should she marry. Which may leave many readers to believe that the mother is condoning or accepting that there is an inequality between the sexes.

If anything the daughter’s life is being mapped out for her by her mother and she is to be both a housewife and mother. Any aspirations that the daughter might have to be something different are not entertained. Tradition is being adhered to at the cost of the daughter’s independence. The title of the story may also be important as it reminds the reader that the daughter is still only a girl. She is not a woman. Yet her mother is predefining what her role in life will be. If anything there is a sense that the daughter is not being allowed to live her life. It is as though the mother forgets that her daughter is still just a girl or child. She is being made to conform to her mother’s way of life before she has had the chance to grow up and decide upon which type of life she herself might like to live. The whole story is also similar to a to-do list with the reader aware that the mother is instructing her daughter on how to live her life. Before the daughter has even lived her life.

It is also interesting that the daughter does not rebel against her mother. She asks her two questions but appears to accept everything that her mother has said to her. Which leaves the reader thinking that rather than finding her own place in life the daughter will do as her mother has instructed her to do. There is no sense that the daughter has any choice. Where one would expect an individual to rebel in some way against their parents. This is not the case with the daughter. She is compliant with everything that her mother tells her. Which may leave some critics to suggest that the daughter respects her mother. However it is more likely that Kincaid is highlighting the fact that the daughter is under the complete control of her mother. Just as her voice is limited in the story. Likewise in life the daughter’s voice is also being limited. If anything the mother is dictating a set of rules to her daughter all of which must be adhered to and the daughter appears to be accepting of these rules. The reader left suspecting that should the daughter live her life to her mother’s instructions she will be living the life her mother wants her to live. Which may not necessarily be the same life that the daughter really wants to live.