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Mother-daughter Relationships in “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid and “Two Kinds” by Amy Tan

Both the stories “Girl” and “Two Kinds” present similar depictions of a mother-daughter relationship made strained and unhealthy by an overbearing and demanding mother. In both stories, much of the main conflict comes from the mother’s actions, in which she has certain expectations for her daughter. In turn, the daughter must make do in a cold and very tense relationship with a person who knows them the best in the world. In “Girl” the mother takes on a very cruel and condescending tone toward her daughter, her attitude in the conversation, that is just a series of orders, makes it her out to seem like a person who expect her daughter to obey and follow her every command. This makes their relationship seem like one devoid of love and affection, although most of what the mother warns against throughout the story can be perceived as advice for the good of her daughter. In “Two Kinds” we see less of a constant stream of orders and more of a control over her daughters’ life. In this story, the mother is determined to make sure her daughter’s life plays out the way she expects it to and forces her daughter to follow along and comply against her wishes.

In “Girl” there are very strong and insulting words used by the mother toward her daughter, such as “slut”, and all the orders she gives are strong commands that implies that she expects them to be followed. In “Two Kinds” there is a more pointed discussion on the topic of a daughter’s obedience towards her mother, her mother making it clear that she only expects obedience from a daughter who lives in her home. Both these mother’s expect perfection from their daughters, issuing orders and making sure her daughter understands what it expected of her. These two stories present common examples of the type of mother-daughter relationships that arise when there is a lack in the ability to communicated in a healthy and productive way. Examples of this can be found all over the world, but for me personally, I can see several of these mother’s actions in my own mother’s behavior toward me. Similarly, she is also a woman who expects certain goals from her children that may be unattainable or may cause pressure.

My favorite story from the two would be “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid as I enjoyed the unique way of storytelling and structure of the story. I thought presenting the story as just dialogue with basically only the mother talking, and all of that only being sharp orders with the occasional insults, very effective in producing an effect of overwhelming the reader and displaying how so much expectation placed on one person can feel. These two stories presented accurate and complete representations of flawed mother-daughter relationships, in unique and enjoyable ways.