**AMANDA – ROBIN KLEIN**

**SUMMARY**

Poem Amanda by ROBIN KLEIN depicts a child’s feelings about the restrictions his parents put on him/her. Children feel their parents don’t let them do many things they want to do. In the poem Amanda feels her mom nags her a lot and is constantly instructing her about the do’s and don’ts. She feels suffocated and trapped and thus to escape from the harsh reality she escapes in her fantasy world where she enjoys freedom and solitude.

Her mother scolds Amanda for biting her nails, hunching her shoulders, and not sitting straight. Amanda does not like it.  On the contrary Amanda lives in her dream world. In her fantasy she feels like a mermaid swimming freely and joyously in the light green sea.  The mother drags Amanda out of her dream by asking whether she has completed her homework or not. She also asks her whether she has tidied her room; she tells her to clean and polish her shoes.  Amanda has another reverie in which she herself as an orphan roaming freely, barefoot in golden silence and uninterrupted freedom.  Her reverie is broken by the mother’s nagging complaints. The mother instructs Amanda not to eat chocolates because of her acnes and pimples. She also scolds her for not looking at her when she is talking to her.  Amanda is enjoying another dream; she fantasizes herself as Rapunzel living peacefully in her tower; she feels she will never let down her hair from the tower.  Her mother again reprimands her for sulking and being moody. And the mother feels others will think that she is always pestering her.

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - Thinking about the Poem (Page 62)**

**Q 1.** How old do you think Amanda is? How do you know this?  
**Answer:** Amanda is about a 9-10 year old school going girl. She is being scolded for things typical for that particular age. Her parents are trying to inculcate in her good manners and etiquettes. Amanda is very innocent and immature.

**Q 2**.Who do you think is speaking to her?  
**Answer:** One of her parents is speaking to her. Most probably it is her mother. In a traditional household mother is held responsible for the conduct of the child. In this case also, the range of instructions suggests that the speaker is Amanda’s mother.

**Q 3.**Why are stanzas 2, 4 and 6 given in parenthesis?  
**Answer:** Stanzas 2, 4 and 6 are given in parenthesis because they reflect the inner thoughts of Amanda. They can be taken as the reaction of the child for the instructions given in stanzas 1, 3 and 5. Here, there is an alternate sequence of scolding of the mother, and corresponding reaction to it given by the child. Also, parenthesis is used here to make the reading of ‘ the poem friendly

**Q 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?  
**Answer:** Speaker of the stanzas 2, 4 and 6 is the child, Amanda. No, she is not paying any attention to the speaker of stanzas 1, 3 and 5 as she is lost in a world of her own. Her imagination provides her an escape from her sorry reality.

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

**Answer:** Amanda wishes to be a mermaid so she could carelessly move along on a languid emerald sea. She just wishes to be carried away by the green sea waves slowly and gradually. Amanda longs for a place where she is all by herself as her happiness is not dependent on any other human being. Hence, she desires to be a mermaid because for a child, mermaid is a symbol of freedom and wonder.

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

**Answer:** No, Amanda is not an orphan, though she wishes to be one. She is so much stressed with the continuous nagging of her parents that she imagines herself to be better without them. The mere presence of her parents around her depresses her. Amanda is a little girl who seeks ‘golden’ silence and ‘sweet’ freedom. She wishes to roam around streets and draw patterns with her bare feet. Indeed it is horribly depressing that Amanda expects being an orphan.

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

**Answer:**  (Rapunzel’s story revolves around her life on a tower Rapunzel was made to live on a high tower by a witch. She eventually got used to living there. She was happy and satisfied with her life. Rapunzel had very long golden hair, using which the witch used to pay her a visit. The fate of Rapunzel took a turn when one day a prince came to meet her using her hair. The witch had punished both of them by separating them. Finally they met after a couple of years only to be united forever this time). Amanda wishes to live like Rapunzel on a high tower away from everyone. She seeks peace and solitude. That is the reason Amanda wishes to be like Rapunzel. However, she also makes a point that in order to avoid being disturbed she would never let her hair down for anyone to climb to her. She needs no one to make her life happy.

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

**Answer:** A girl like Amanda yearns for freedom and space for herself. She is incapable to fulfil the expectations of her parents. Amanda is no less than a symbol for all the children who face similar fate irrespective of class, colour or nationality. Traditional societies demand a certain type of behaviour from the individuals and the training to produce such begins at a very young age. Parents ignore the innocence and understanding level of their children and thereby the young ends up killing their imagination and thoughts.

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

**Answer:** No, Amanda is neither sulking nor moody. She is simply not interested enough in the nagging business of her parents. Amanda cares more about her imagination and thought process over the manners her parents are trying to inculcate into her.

**EXTRA QUESTIONS**

**Question 1 :** Write a short note on the title of the poem?

**Answer :** The title of the poem is Amanda as it revolves around the upbringing of a little girl named Amanda. Her life is full of struggles where she is denied freedom and expression. Amanda is so much irate (angry) that she escapes reality by living in her imaginative world. Through this gateway she experiences calmness, away from her nagging parents.

**Question 2** : Why does Amanda seem moody most of the times?

**Answer :** Amanda seems moody most of the times because she is trying to make an escape from her sorry reality where she is nagged most of the times. It is indeed a sorry state for a small child like Amanda to bear. Here the only defence against such reality is her imagination where she often escapes to. Hence, it makes her look moody and uninterested.

**Question 3 :** What is the central theme of the poem Amanda?

**Answer :** The poem Amanda by Robin Klein highlights the importance of upbringing of a child. It points out that upbringing doesn’t involve making a child responsible and fit for the society only. It is important to note that upbringing involves understanding from both the sides. One cannot just force a child to be civilized and good mannered. Love and proper care is required in nurturing of a child.

**Question 4 :** Discuss the importance of proper upbringing with reference to the poem Amanda by Robin Klein.

**Answer :** Upbringing plays an essential role in personality development of an adult. Whenever we wish to admire or criticise someone, we question the upbringing of that person. Robin Klien’s poem highlights the tension in the ‘proper’ upbringing of a child. To instill good values and moral principles in a growing child comes as a foremost duty for the parents. However, the poem Amanda shows how a child feels trapped within the cluster of instruction. Amanda is no less than a victim in this situation. No proper space is given to her creativity. She is instructed for everything. As a result, she feels trapped and seeks an escape. Her imagination proves to be her escape and also her defense against her nagging parents. Situation of Amanda is so worse that she wishes to be an orphan, in order to get rid of her parents. She imagines enacting various roles varying from mermaid to Rapunzel. Amanda wishes to live alone and carefree. It is very important to understand the situation of Amanda where her freedom is cut short by constant instructions and guidelines. Proper balance should be maintained when dealing with such delicate issues. Love and care should always be part of this two way transaction.

**Question 5 :** Escapism is one way to run away from harsh realities. Discuss in context to the poem.

**Answer :** By going through the whole poem, we come to know that Amanda’s parents, specially her mother, keeps on instructing Amanda all the time. Amanda’s mother’s intention may be to discipline her daughter and make her a mature person. But very frequent checking and instructing using so many do’s and don’ts , leave no space for the child. Children need love and caring attitude of their elders. An advice in the form of nagging leaves a very harmful impression on the child’s mind. The reality becomes harsh for them and they try to escape these realities by indulging in their own fantasy world.

Here in this poem, life of Amanda is quite frustrating as Amanda is forbidden to do anything without seeking permission. Continuous instructions of her mother and correcting her all the time leave a very negative impact on a child’s personality. In such situation the child adheres to a defense mechanism where she imagines herself to be free and without parents so that no nagging is done. Amanda drifts into an imaginary situation to escape from the harsh realities of her life. The parent’s behaviour is forcing her to do so, as a result there will not be a balanced development of her personality. Parents need to understand that their child also requires freedom and his/her own space. If no space is given, the child will develop one or the other complex which may hamper his/her normal growth.