

Amanda!

By Robin Klein

Thinking about the Poem

1. How old do you think Amanda is? How do you know this?

Answer: Amanda is must be about 9–10 years old. She is school going girl.

The things that her mother scolds her for are all typical instructions given to a 9 or 10 year old girl.

2. Who do you think is speaking to her?

Answer: Her mother is speaking to her.

3. Why are Stanzas 2, 4 and 6 given in parenthesis?

Answer: Stanzas 2, 4 and 6 are given in parenthesis because they are the thoughts of the child in between the instructions that she is being given by her mother, which are given in stanzas 1, 3 and 5. The scolding by the mother and the child's thoughts are placed in alternate stanzas by the poet.

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: In stanzas 2, 4 and 6, the speaker is the child, Amanda. No, she is not listening to her mother who is the speaker in stanzas 1, 3 and 5. She is lost in her own dreams and doesn't listen to what is being said to her.

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

Answer: If Amanda were a mermaid, then she would drift slowly on a languid emerald sea. She would be the sole inhabitant of the relaxed green sea and would move slowly on it.

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

Answer: No, Amanda is not an orphan. She says so because she wants to be alone. She wants to roam around in the street alone and pattern dust with her bare feet. She finds silence 'golden' and freedom 'sweet'. It is for this reason that she calls herself an orphan.

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

Answer: She wants to be Rapunzel because she wants to live alone. Rapunzel lived alone in a tall tower and had long, beautiful hair. She was held captive by her grandmother, who came up the tower by climbing her long hair. The girl also wants to live alone in a tower as she would not have to care about anything as life in a tower would be tranquil, peaceful and rare. However, she also decided that she would never throw down her hair for anyone to come up as she wanted to live alone always.

Long Answer Type Questions

Question 1. Why does Amanda imagine to be

(i) a Mermaid

(ii) an orphan, and

(iii) Rapunzel,

What does it show about her?

Answer: (i) Amanda imagines herself to be a mermaid so that she may drift in the silent sea and enjoy the loneliness and peace there. She yearns for freedom.

(ii) She wishes to be an orphan so that she may play bare feet in the dust without receiving several instructions or scolding. She wishes for her independence and freedom.

(iii) Amanda is fascinated by the lonely and tranquil life of Rapunzel in a closed tower. She wishes for such a life so that her nagging mother may not reach there. Here also, she yearns for her freedom from nagging.

Question 2. What message does the poet want to give through the poem, 'Amanda'?

Answer: The poet wants to convey that parents in their endeavour to make their children well-behaved, mannerly having good habits, give them too many instructions or nag (always finding fault) them. They should adopt positive measures, acceptable to children. Otherwise, they will stop listening to them and indulge in daydreaming as Amanda did.

Question 3. "Don't bite your nails, Amanda!

Don't hunch your shoulders, Amanda!"

Amanda's parents were over anxious about her. She often found their instructions very stifling. Reading the poem and based on Amanda's experience, write a paragraph on the topic "Should parents be allowed to control children?"

Answer: It goes without saying that no child can survive the early years of its life without the care and protection of its parents. But some parents are so over protective and over anxious about their children that they don't let their children live in peace. They don't allow them to explore and find out things on their own. Such parents kill the child's initiative in learning. These parents always boss around and irritate their children.

They don't trust their child's capability to do things independently. However, the parents may control the children and guide them as long as it is necessary. Equipped with knowledge and confidence they will be able to face the world boldly. Gradually the child should be allowed to grow on its own and be responsible for its actions. When parents give freedom to their children they gain confidence and learn to do things in a better way.

Question 4. What is the role/importance of punctuation marks in language? Why has the poet used the exclamation mark after Amanda? Comment on the title of the poem.

Answer: (i) Punctuation is an important part of grammar. It is used to create sense, clarity and stress in sentences. It is used to structure and organise our writing.

(ii) The exclamation mark is used after Amanda! to show the mother's surprise on seeing Amanda. Amanda is a sulky and moody girl which upsets the mother.

Question 5. It is said that excess of everything is bad. Excess of parental love may make a child pampered in the same way excess of nagging may throw a child into negativity. These statements are seen justified to some extent in the poem 'Amanda'. Explain.

Answer: None can refute the pious role of parents or elders or teachers in the proper grooming and holistic development of a child. Parent's personality resonates and reflects through the behaviours and personality of a child. Parents do every possible thing, they can do, to shape the character and habits of their child. But sometimes, in course of nurturing the kid, the parents cross the limits unknowingly.

They became either over caring or over protective or over anxious. They forget the fact that, when a matured mind cannot tolerate excess of dos and don'ts, how can they expect it from a child who is totally unaware of the worries and cares of the world. To a child the world means a world of imagination fancy and fairy.

If being nagged repeatedly she may form negative opinions about his/her mother and father. The same thing we find in the poem 'Amanda'. Amanda is a girl of around 8-11 year of age who lives in her own fairy land. She does not appreciate the constant scolding or nagging of her father/mother.

She feels that her freedom is punctuated. So, she instead of following the instructions, remains wandering in her own world of imagination. Excess of nagging has resulted into negativity as Amanda considers herself orphan. She sulks. She avoids eye to eye contact. Hence, parents must understand the line of boundary and act.