

The Little Girl

Introduction

'The Little Girl' is a story, written by Katherine Mansfield, about the changing attitude of a girl towards her father. Her feelings for her father change gradually from fear to understanding and love.

Summary

Kezia was a little girl. She was afraid of her father and avoided him. She felt relieved when he left for his office. When father came home in the evening, he would call his daughter to bring tea, newspaper and slippers. Kezia would stammer while replying to him because of her fear.

On Sunday afternoons grandmother sent Kezia to the drawing room to have a nice talk with his father and mother. But she found her mother reading and her father sleeping on the sofa. There was no communication between them. One day Kezia's, grandmother told her that her father's birthday was next week. She suggested that Kezia make a pin-cushion as a gift for her father from a beautiful piece of yellow silk. She worked hard. She stitched three sides with a double cotton. Now, she wanted to stuff it with something. She wandered into her mother's bedroom to look for scraps. On the bed-table she discovered many sheets of fine paper. She gathered them and tore them to pieces and filled the pin-cushion and stitched the fourth side.

Those papers contained father's speech which he was to give at the Port Authority. Mother came to know that Kezia had torn it to pieces to fill the pin-cushion. Father was informed and he punished her by beating her with a ruler. This incident greatly affected Kezia and made her more fearful of her father.

One day Kezia observed the family next door.

Mr Macdonald, who had five children, was playing with them. There was laughter and joy. Kezia came to the conclusion that there are different types of fathers.

Then one day Kezia's mother was taken ill. So, she and grandmother went to hospital. Kezia was left alone with Alice, the cook. During the day she did not mind being alone but she was quite scared at night and did not want to sleep alone. She was worried that she might have a nightmare. However, Alice pacified her and made her sleep in her bed, alone. She had a nightmare—the butcher with a knife and a rope was coming to get her. She cried aloud and father, who was sleeping next door, came to her room. He carried Kezia to his room and carefully tucked her in his bed. She crept close to him and held his shirt tightly. He slept before Kezia. She felt, "Poor father works very hard. No one looks after him. He gets tired". She then understands her father's feelings and her fear fades away.

Message

This story conveys the message that parents love their children. At times they might appear to be strict but their strictness is for the good of their children only.



Extract Based Questions

1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

To the little girl he was a figure to be feared and avoided. Every morning before going to work he came into her room and gave her a casual kiss, to which she responded with 'Goodbye, Father'. And oh, there was a glad sense of relief when she heard the noise of the carriage growing fainter and fainter down the long road!

In the evening when he came home she stood near the staircase and heard his loud voice in the hall. 'Bring my tea into the drawing-room..... Hasn't the paper come yet? Mother, go and see if my paper's out there—and bring me my slippers.'

(a) Kezia felt relieved when her father left home because:

- (i) she didn't like her father
- (ii) she feared him
- (iii) she didn't want to hear his loud voice
- (iv) she didn't want to live with her father

(b) The action of Kezia's father that showed his love for Kezia is giving her a

(c) Choose the word opposite in meaning to 'glad'.

- (i) Joyful
- (ii) Dismayed
- (iii) Bliss
- (iv) Pleasant

(d) State whether the given statement is True or False. Kezia was afraid of her grandmother.

Answers

- (a) (ii) she feared him
- (b) casual kiss
- (c) (ii) Dismayed
- (d) False

2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

She never stuttered with other people—had quite given it up—but only with Father, because then she was trying so hard to say the words properly.

'What's the matter? What are you looking so wretched about? Mother, I wish you taught this child not to appear on the brink of suicide... Here, Kezia carry my teacup back to the table carefully.'

He was so big—his hands and his neck, especially his mouth when he yawned. Thinking about him alone was like thinking about a giant.

(a) 'Had quite given it up', Kezia had given up:

- (i) speaking harsh words to other people
- (ii) speaking politely with others
- (iii) trying hard to speak properly
- (iv) fearing about the things

(b) Kezia's father wanted Kezia to in a better way.

(c) 'What's the matter?' here means Kezia's father felt that there was..... with Kezia.

- (i) a nice feeling
- (ii) something wrong
- (iii) a happy situation
- (iv) a good condition

(d) Substitute the word 'alone' with one word similar in meaning in the following sentence:

Thinking about him alone was like thinking about a giant.

Answers

- (a) (iii) trying hard to speak properly
- (b) behave
- (c) (ii) something wrong
- (d) only

3. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

On Sunday afternoons, Grandmother sent her down to the drawing-room to have a 'nice talk with Father and Mother'. But the little girl always found Mother reading and Father stretched out on the sofa, his handkerchief on his face, his feet on one of the best cushions, sleeping soundly and snoring.

She sat on a stool, gravely watched him until he woke and stretched, and asked the time—then looked at her.

'Don't stare so, Kezia. You look like a little brown owl.'

(a) 'Nice talk with Father and Mother' here means:

- (i) discuss her problems
- (ii) have a formal get together
- (iii) spend time with parents
- (iv) talk too much with parents

(b) While Kezia was staring at her father, he would compare Kezia to a

(c) When Kezia used to meet her parents every Sunday afternoon in the drawing room, they were:

- (i) busy doing their own things
- (ii) busy sleeping and snoring
- (iii) doing party with their friends
- (iv) busy reading the newspaper

(d) Complete the analogy with a word from the extract. stare : gaze :: seriously :

Answers

- (a) (iii) spend time with parents
- (b) little brown owl
- (c) (i) busy doing their own things
- (d) gravely

4. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

One day, when she was kept indoors with a cold, her grandmother told her that father's birthday was next week, and suggested she should make him a pin-cushion for a gift out of a beautiful piece of yellow silk.

Laboriously, with a double cotton, the little girl stitched three sides. But what to fill it with? That was the question. The Grandmother was out in the garden, and she wandered into Mother's bedroom to look for scraps. On the bed-table she discovered a great many sheets of fine papers, gathered them up, tore them into tiny pieces, and stuffed her case, then sewed up the fourth side.

- (a) Before stitching the fourth side, Kezia filled the cushion with:
- cotton threads
 - pieces of paper sheets
 - pieces of cloth
 - newspapers
- (b) Kezia discovered many sheets of fine papers to stuff her cushion on the of her mother's bedroom.
- (c) The antonym of 'tiny' is:
- minute
 - small
 - puny
 - large
- (d) State whether the given statement is True or False. Kezia's mother told her about her father's birthday.

Answers

- (a) (ii) pieces of paper sheets
 (b) bed-table
 (c) (iv) large
 (d) False

5. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

The Macdonalds lived next door. They had five children. Looking through a gap in the fence the little girl saw them playing 'tag' in the evening. The father with the baby, Mao, on his shoulders, two little girls hanging on to his coat pockets ran round and round the flower-beds, shaking with laughter. Once she saw the boys turn the hose on him—and he tried to catch them laughing all the time. Then it was she decided there were different sorts of fathers.

- (a) When the little sons of Mr Macdonald opened the water pipe to make him wet:
- he became angry with them
 - he tried to catch them and was laughing
 - he began to slap his little sons
 - he began to have fun with them
- (b) When Kezia saw Mr Macdonald, she realised that he was quite opposite to
- (c) The word 'gap' means the same as:
- slot
 - closure
 - adjoining
 - adjacent
- (d) State whether the given statement is True or False. The Macdonalds lived adjacent to Kezia's house.

Answers

- (a) (ii) he tried to catch them and was laughing
 (b) her father
 (c) (i) slot
 (d) True

6. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

Tired out, he slept before the little girl. A funny feeling came over her. Poor Father, not so big, after all—and with no one to look after him. He was harder than Grandmother, but it was a nice hardness. And every day he had to work and was too tired to be a Mr Macdonald. She had torn up all his

beautiful writing..... She stirred suddenly, and sighed. 'What's the matter?' asked her father. 'Another dream?' 'Oh,' said the little girl, 'my head's on your heart. I can hear it going. What a big heart you've got, father dear.'

- (a) Kezia had torn up his beautiful writing. The beautiful writing was:
- his office papers
 - his important documents
 - the speech written by him
 - the letter to be given in office
- (b) Kezia had realised that her father also loved her and she complimented that he had a
- (c) Choose the word which is similar in meaning to 'tired'.
- Fresh
 - Energised
 - Exhausted
 - Vibrant
- (d) Complete the analogy with a word from the extract. beautiful : splendid :: playful :

Answers

- (a) (iii) the speech written by him
 (b) big heart
 (c) (iii) Exhausted
 (d) funny



Short Answer Type Questions

- Q 1. Why was Kezia afraid of her father?
 Ans. Kezia was a little girl. She was afraid of her father because he was very strict. He never played with her and always ordered her about. He never showed his affection towards her and punished her for her follies.
- Q 2. What did Kezia expect of her father?
 Ans. Kezia expected that her father should play with her and speak politely. She needed love and affection. She felt alienated due to her father's strict behaviour.
- Q 3. Why did Kezia always stutter while talking to her father?
 Ans. Kezia was a normal girl but whenever she was in front of her father she felt nervous. She was very afraid of her father. She would try hard to speak correctly but would end up stuttering.
- Q 4. How would Kezia's father behave in the evening after the work?
 Ans. In the evening Kezia's father would speak in a loud voice and order to get his tea in the drawing-room. He would ask for his slippers. He would also ask his mother for the newspaper.
- Q 5. How did Kezia react to her beating by her father?
 Ans. Kezia cried a lot and became more resentful of her father. She even asked her grandmother that why did God made fathers. She started fearing him more. After the incident, whenever she saw him she quickly put both hands behind her back for fear of more beating.

Q 6. How did Kezia's grandmother console her after her father had beaten her up?

Ans. Kezia's grandmother wrapped her up in a shawl and rocked her in the rocking chair. Kezia clung to her soft body. She consoled her and tried to put her to sleep.

Q 7. Who were the Macdonalds?

Ans. The Macdonalds were Kezia's neighbour. They had five children. The children played with their father. They enjoyed and laughed with each other. Mr Macdonald was a kind-hearted and caring father.

Q 8. Why did Kezia decide that there were different sorts of fathers?

Ans. Kezia's father was strict. He did not play with her and punished her for her follies. On the other hand, their next-door neighbour, Mr Macdonald played with his children and had a fun relationship with them. This led Kezia to infer that there were different kinds of fathers.

Q 9. In what ways did Kezia's grandmother encourage her to get to know her father better?

Ans. On Sunday afternoons grandmother sent Kezia to the drawing-room to have a nice talk with her father and mother. She also encouraged her to make a gift for her father. She thought that by doing these simple acts Kezia will get to know her father better.

Q 10. Why was Kezia alone at home?

Ans. Kezia's mother had taken ill, so she and her grandmother went to the hospital leaving Kezia alone at home.

Q 11. What was the nightmare that Kezia had?

Ans. Kezia always had a nightmare. It was about a butcher with a knife and a rope, who came nearer and nearer to her. The butcher used to have smile on his face. Kezia could only stand still. She used to cry out 'Grandma! Grandma!' in her sleep.

Q 12. What was Kezia's father's routine:

(i) before going to his office?

(ii) after coming back from his office?

(iii) on Sundays?

Ans. (i) He came into Kezia's room and gave her a casual kiss.

(ii) He asked to bring newspaper, tea, slippers into the drawing-room.

(iii) He laid on sofa to have a sound sleep.



Long Answer Type Questions

Q 1. Kezia decides that there are 'different kinds of fathers.' What kind of father was Mr Macdonald and how was he different from Kezia's father?

Ans. Mr Macdonald was Kezia's next-door neighbour. He had five children.

Mr Macdonald was a loving father. He spared time to play with his children in the evening. He played tag with his children. He ran round and round the flower-beds with them shaking with laughter. Once the boys even turned the hose on him, but he tried to catch them, laughing all the time.

Mr Macdonald was quite different from Kezia's father who had no time to play and talk with his only child. She was always afraid of her father. He beat her unkindly for tearing his papers.

Q 2. Kezia's efforts to please her father resulted in displeasing him very much. How did this happen?

Ans. Kezia was always afraid of her father. She always stuttered before him. She tried to please her father on various occasions but her efforts resulted in displeasing him very much. He would ask her if she had been a good girl while replying, she would stutter. The moment she stuttered, her father got irritated. He called her 'a little brown owl' because she used to stare at him while he slept, waiting for him to wake up so that she could spend time with him. Kezia wanted to please her father by making a pin-cushion for his birthday. But she used her father's important papers as scrap to fill in the pin-cushion. It displeased her father and she was punished for it.

Q 3. How does Kezia begin to see her father as a human being who needs sympathy?

Ans. One night Kezia was alone in her bed. Her mother and grandmother had gone to the hospital. Kezia had a nightmare. She cried out a loud. Her father heard her cry. He went to her bedroom and carried her to his bed. He tucked her up. He asked her to rub her feet against his legs to get them warm. Tired out, he slept before the little girl.

A funny feeling came over Kezia. She thought that there was no one to look after her father. Every day he had to work hard and was too tired to be a Mr Macdonald.

She feels that his heart is very big. He has a lot of love for her but does not express himself. She begins to feel that he is a human being who needs her sympathy.

Q 4. Write a short character-sketch of Kezia's father.

Ans. Kezia's father worked with the Port Authority. Every morning before going to work, he gave his daughter a casual kiss. He was too busy to spare time for Kezia. He therefore could not shower his love and affection on her. But he definitely cared for his daughter.

When she was frightened with the nightmare, he picked her up and laid her beside him close to his heart. Kezia's father was an introvert.

