

# Amanda!

## Introduction

This poem has been written by Robin Klein. It depicts the state of a little girl's mind who is constantly instructed about what to do and what not to do by her elders.

## Summary

The little girl is told not to hunch her shoulders and to sit up straight. She is told to finish her homework and tidy her room. She is forbidden from eating a chocolate for fear that she might have acne. She is also accused of sulking. But all the time, the little girl Amanda keeps dreaming of a life of freedom in the open. She dreams that she is a mermaid in the sea, that she is roaming barefoot in the dusty street and that she is Rapunzel who lives alone in a high tower. The poem is set in four different settings. The first setting is that of the real world, in which Amanda's mother is always correcting her behaviour. The other three settings are fanciful, which are being constructed by Amanda in her own mind.





## Message

The poem brings forth the inner feelings of a little girl when she is instructed by her elders. Her feelings convey the fact that she does not like being ordered about. The poet wants to convey the fact that parents should be sensitive to the feelings of their children.



### Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow:

1. Don't bite your nails, Amanda!  
Don't hunch your shoulders, Amanda!  
Stop that slouching and sit up straight,  
Amanda!

- (a) Who is the speaker here?  
(b) Amanda is a:  
(i) fairy (ii) mermaid  
(iii) young girl (iv) princess  
(c) Complete the analogy with a word from the extract:  
bite : chew :: crouch : .....  
(d) What has been Amanda told?

### Answers

- (a) Amanda's mother is the speaker here.  
(b) (iii) young girl  
(c) hunch  
(d) Amanda has been told—not to bite her nails, not to hunch her shoulders, not to slouch and to sit up straight.
2. Don't eat that chocolate, Amanda!  
Remember your acne, Amanda!  
Will you please look at me when I'm speaking to you,  
Amanda!  
(I am Rapunzel, I have not a care;  
life in a tower is tranquil and rare;  
I'll certainly never let down my bright hair!)  
(CBSE 2023)
- (a) The speaker's tone is:  
(i) loving (ii) hopeful  
(iii) instructive (iv) indifferent  
(b) Complete the analogy with a word from the extract:  
rare : uncommon :: peace : .....  
(c) State whether the following statement is True or False:  
Amanda did not want anyone to invade her privacy and silence.  
(d) Select the appropriate option:  
Amanda's mother is continuously ..... Amanda.  
(i) encouraging (ii) reprimanding  
(iii) motivating (iv) disappointing  
(e) Which word in the extract is opposite in meaning to the word 'dull'?  
(i) Dreary (ii) Shady  
(iii) Bright (iv) Angry

### Answers

- (a) (iii) instructive  
(b) tranquil  
(c) True  
(d) (ii) reprimanding  
(e) (iii) Bright



### Short Answer Type Questions

Q 1. Why does Amanda wish to be a mermaid?

(CBSE 2022 Term-2)

Ans. Amanda's mother is constantly instructing Amanda on her behaviour. Being fed up, Amanda wishes to be a mermaid because then she would be living in the sea without any restrictions. She would lead a life of complete freedom. She would drift along the flow of water happily.

Q 2. What is the theme of the poem 'Amanda'?

Ans. As the girls reach adolescence, they are expected to act and behave in a certain preconceived manner. They are expected to do their own work and be prim and proper in their behaviour. In the poem, Amanda's mother is scolding and pushing her to become an ideal young lady. However, these expectations are a burden for Amanda. She wants to postpone the process of growing up. So, she withdraws into the childhood world of fantasies and fairy tales.

Q 3. What could Amanda do if she were a mermaid?

Ans. If Amanda were a mermaid, she would have blissfully drifted in the sea. She would have enjoyed the green sea peacefully, without any disturbance.

Q 4. Is Amanda an orphan? Why does she say so?

Ans. Amanda is not an orphan. She only imagines herself to be an orphan because she would then be able to roam the streets freely and do as she desires.

Q 5. Why is Amanda asked not to eat chocolates?

Ans. Amanda is asked not to eat chocolates because she suffers from acne, and eating chocolate can aggravate her problem.

Q 6. How old do you think Amanda is? How do you know this?

Ans. I think Amanda is a teenager. This is clear from the fact that she has acne on her face. Usually, children at this age have acne on their faces.





**Q 7. Amanda's mother gives her a list of dos and don'ts. What impact does this have on Amanda?**

(CBSE 2023)

**Ans.** Amanda sulks and becomes moody when her mother gives her a list of dos and don'ts. She does not want to follow them but she can't dare to ignore them either, so she sulks.

**Q 8. Describe Amanda's behaviour in the first stanza. What does the speaker ask her to do?** (CBSE 2016)

**Ans.** In the first stanza, Amanda is biting her nails, hunching her shoulders and slouching. The speaker asks her to stop biting her nails, not to hunch her shoulders and to sit up straight.

**Q 9. What impression do you form about Amanda in the poem?** (CBSE 2023)

**Ans.** The poem tells us that Amanda is a young and restless girl with a vivid imagination. Even as she is being scolded by her mother, Amanda's mind wanders to imaginary scenarios where she is a mermaid, an orphan or Rapunzel.

**Q 10. Comment on the tone of the speaker when she says 'Will you please look at me when I'm speaking to you, Amanda!'** (CBSE 2022 Term-2)

**Ans.** Amanda was lost in her thoughts and not paying attention to her mother. Her mother's tone is laced with frustration and disappointment. She is irritated that Amanda isn't looking at her when being spoken to.

## Long Answer Type Questions

**Q 1. State the key points in the poem 'Amanda'. What do you learn from it?** (CBSE 2018)

**Ans.** In this poem, the poet shows us how difficult it can be for a young girl to grow up.

As girls reach the age of adolescence, they are expected to behave in a certain way and to be

the very epitome of elegance. It is because of this Amanda's mother instructs her not to bite her nails, to sit up straight, to do her homework, to tidy up her room, not to eat chocolates and to stop sulking. However, such expectations seem burdensome to Amanda. So, she drifts in a world, where she imagines herself to be a leading a carefree life as a mermaid, an orphan and as Rapunzel.

She yearns for freedom and choice. Her mother doesn't understand the fact that Amanda is innocent and naive, and that she is too small to understand the benefits of advice. We learn that we should be patient with children in their growing up years. We also realise that children do not like being coaxed all the time.

**Q 2. Do you know the story of Rapunzel? Why does she want to be Rapunzel?** (CBSE 2017)

**Ans.** Rapunzel is the story of a beautiful princess who lived in a tower which had neither any steps nor a door. Rapunzel was held captive at the topmost chamber of the tower, which had only one window, by a witch. Rapunzel had long golden hair. Whenever the witch visited her, she used to call out, "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair, so that I may climb the golden stair". Rapunzel used to let down her hair and the witch used to climb up, using Rapunzel's hair as a rope. One day, a prince happened to come that way. He hears Rapunzel singing and is enchanted by her voice. One day he sees the witch asking Rapunzel to let down her hair. After she leaves, he asks Rapunzel to let her hair down. He climbs up and fall in love. They somehow manage to escape from the tower and then lived happily ever after. Amanda wants to be Rapunzel so that she could live a peaceful life in a tower, where no one gives her instructions to lead her life.