

THE LITTLE GIRL (CLASS IX)



The little girl always found Mother reading and Father stretched out on the sofa.



- Katherine
Mansfield



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

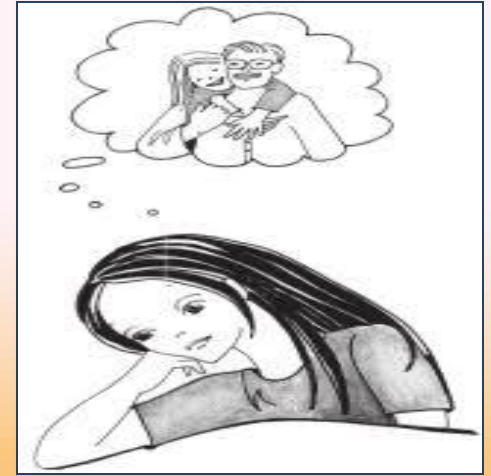
Katherine Mansfield was a prominent modernist short story writer and poet. She was born and brought up in colonial New Zealand. At the age of 19, she left New Zealand and settled in England, where she became a friend of writers such as D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf. Her new friends helped her develop a writing style of her own. Mansfield was diagnosed with extrapulmonary tuberculosis in 1917; the disease claimed her life at the young age of 34.

The Little Girl was first published as a short story in the year 1912.

14 October 1888 – 9 January 1923

Introduction to The Little Girl

The title of the story refers to the main character – the little girl named **Kezia**. The theme of the story is the relationship between children and their parents. The writer Katherine Mansfield, through her story conveys the very special and intricate bond of love with their parents. Young children often fail to understand the motives of their parent's actions and, hence, do not feel loved a lot of times. Their parent's strict actions seem unjustified and they feel rebellious. With the passage of time, children realise that each and every act of their parents aimed at nurturing them into better human beings and that beneath their strict façade lay a heart full of love for the children. Katherine Mansfield explores the same complex relationship through Kezia and her father, where Kezia fails to understand her father's annoyance over the torn off speech and the subsequent change in her father's character as he comforts her after her nightmare.



LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

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

Ans. Kezia was at home as she was down with fever. Her grandmother suggested that she make a surprise gift for her father as his birthday was approaching. Kezia and her grandmother planned that Kezia would make a pin cushion for him and her grandmother gave her a piece of yellow – coloured silk fabric for it. Kezia stitched the cushion from three sides and was looking for pieces of torn cloth or paper to stuff into the cushion.

As her grandmother was out in the garden, the innocent child reached her parents' room. She found a heap of paper lying on the bed table, tore the sheets of paper into tiny bits and stuffed it into the cushion. Kezia was glad that finally, the surprise gift was ready but, in fact she had committed a serious mistake of destroying her father's speech that he had prepared for the Port Authority.

Kezia's father was angry with her and wanted to teach her an important lesson, not to touch anything that did not belong to her. So, he hit Kezia's palms with a ruler to teach her a lesson.

2. 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, Kezia’s next door neighbour had five children. Kezia often saw them playing in the garden.

One day, she peeped through a gap in the fence and saw them having fun. Baby Mao was sitting on Mr. Macdonald’s shoulders, his two daughter stuck to his coat’s pockets and they ran all around the flower beds, laughing and having fun. His sons opened the hose on him and he tried to catch them.

This fun scene made her conclude that there were different kinds of fathers. Mr. Macdonald was different from her father. He was not strict, played with his children and they laughed all the while.

On the other hand, Kezia’s father was always angry at her. He remained busy with work and later, was too tired that he slept most of the time. He stared at her, scolded her for stammering and being silly.

His strict nature made Kezia wonder that what for had God made fathers.

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

Ans. One day, Kezia's mother was taken ill and went to the hospital. Grandmother too accompanied her. Kezia was left alone with the cook, Alice to look after her. At night, Alice put Kezia to bed but Kezia was reluctant to sleep without her grandmother as she would go to her in case she got scared by a nightmare. Alice put Kezia to sleep all alone and ordered her not to scream and disturb her father who was asleep in the next room. But she was again bother by the nightmare of a butcher with a knife, a rope and a dreadful smile. Kezia screamed and called her grandmother. Upon hearing her screams, her father woke up. He was holding a candle and lifted Kezia in his arms. He took her to his room and comforted her. He lay Kezia in his bed and told her to rub her feet against his legs to make them warm. Kezia felt his affection and snuggled towards him. At that moment, Kezia realized that her father worked really hard was a tired poor man who needed sympathy and concern. There was no one to look after him. Although he was big and not as soft as grandmother, Kezia realized that he loved her, and she had affection for him.

CREATING CHARACTER SKETCHES

Kezia was a sweet little obedient girl who would carefully bring paper to her father and take away his shoes. Her father's towering personality often made her feel nervous in his presence and she avoided talking to him. Her relationship with her father was restricted to the perfunctory kiss and his advise for her to be a good girl. On her grandmother's insistence, she tried to please her father by making a birthday gift for him. She ended up tearing her father's Port authority speech, inadvertently. She had no intentions of hurting her father, all she needed was something to fill the pin cushion. The angry father punished her and alienated her further. Kezia yearned for an affectionate and playful father just as Mr. McDonald. When Kezia's mother fell ill and was hospitalized, she was left alone at home under the care of the cook. She woke up screaming in the middle of the night only to find her father rushing to her aid. He, carefully, picked her up and carried her to his room. Kezia felt secure lying near her father. She realized that her father may have been as big as a giant but he had a loving heart. This moment became the most cherished moment of her life, for now she found herself close to her father.

Kezia's father is directly characterized by the girl herself in the text. He is described to have a figure to be feared and avoided. Her father had a loud voice and looked at her through his spectacles in a terrifying way. He never missed the perfunctory kiss and had a limited dialogue with her on being a good girl. He seems to believe in God as he visited the church, regularly. The author creates him as a perfectly round character, who evolves from being a strict and severe one to a caring and affectionate father. He did become the most hated character for expressing his wrath through the scale on Kezia's little pink palms and the only villain in Kezia's life. In the absence of Kezia's mother, he effectively takes up the role of the compassionate saviour from the dreadful butcher that Kezia dreamt of. His strict characterisation is almost forgiven with his perception as a hard-working and often too tired a man to indulge in fun games with his daughter.

Kezia's grandmother comes across as this kind and affectionate grandma who continuously tries to bridge the gap between Kezia and her father. Even when Kezia finds her father a formidable man, the grandmother strives to send Kezia to her father for umpteen reasons ranging from tea and newspaper to the father's shoes. She tries to erase the gap when she asks Kezia to make a pin cushion for her father's birthday, but the plan falls flat. The grandmother is the true refuge of solace and safety that Kezia sought in her own little world.

TASKS TO HELP REVISE

ASSIGNMENT – 1: Question II (Back exercises), page 38

ASSIGNMENT – 2: Long answer Questions III (Back exercises), Page 38
(Answers already given in slide no. 4, 5 and 6)

ASSIGNMENT – 3: **Adapted writing skill**

Q. Imagine yourself to be Kezia, the little girl. Write a diary entry expressing your feelings about your father at the end of the story. You may write about both the incidents that you go through.

ASSIGNMENT – 4: **Adapted writing skill**

Q. Write a bio sketch of your father including the vital information of his life (birth, parents, education, profession, personal life, achievements etc). Include his photograph and organise the information as **one single slide** of your Power Point Presentation and submit it through Google Classroom on 10 May 2020. (word limit: 200 words)

THE END