

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 6: AMANDA



AMANDA

~Summary~

-by Robin Klein

Stanza- 1

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

Explanation: In the above lines, Amanda is getting instructed, most probably by her parents for biting nails and sitting lazily with her shoulders bent. The tone of instructions here is not a friendly one and thus fails to make any sense to Amanda. The poet here, focusses on the aspects related to the upbringing of a child (girl) and how parents go to any limit to bring proper sense to their child. Amanda is thus, getting trained for the society she is a part of. The pressure of making oneself presentable to the society triumphs over every other behaviour and manners. The last phrase or word 'Amanda!' is used with an exclamation mark which shows the irritation and frustration of the parent.

Stanza- 2

There is a languid,
emerald sea,
where the sole inhabitant is me
a mermaid,
drifting blissfully.

Explanation: It is to be noted that the above lines are given within brackets. Brackets are used to provide more meaning to the phrase. Here the poet uses it to present the imagination of the little girl, the free-flow of pure thoughts. Amanda uses her imagination as an escape point from day-to-day commands of her parents. She feels suffocated in the real world and thus finds peace in her very own created world where there are no restraints. She imagines herself to be a joyful mermaid sailing without any confines alongside soft waves of the green sea. This world of Amanda is free and contained in itself and her happiness doesn't require any other human being. For a child, mermaid is a symbol of freedom and wonder.

Stanza- 3

Did you finish your homework, Amanda?
Did you tidy your room, Amanda?
I thought I told you to clean your shoes,
Amanda!

Explanation: Amanda is now being asked about whether she has finished her homework, or tidied up her room and also whether she has cleaned her shoes. This set of instructions marks a shift from the instructions given in Stanza 1. Now Amanda is being coached about the things that are related to her surroundings. The pattern of instructions explains that how every aspect of her is related to questioning and proper guidance. She is being disciplined for every little thing, making her lose of her freedom. Her innocence is eventually getting lost with passage of time. The way these instructions are delivered points out the regular nature of these lessons. Her name being called again with an exclamation mark shows that the parents seem to be losing their cool and are troubled.

Stanza- 4

I am an orphan, roaming the street.
I pattern soft dust with my hushed, bare feet.
The silence is golden, the freedom is sweet.

Explanation: In this stanza, we once again see Amanda's reaction to her mother's harsh words. Amanda withdraws into another imaginary world. The very first line is awfully depressing where Amanda imagines herself to be an orphan suggesting how much frustrated she is with continuous questioning of her parents specially her mother. She has no shoes on her feet and instead she is getting them even dirtier by making designs on the dusty ground with them. However, she makes no sound while making these dusty designs. She cherishes the silence as well as the freedom to do as she likes that world of her imagination. Her love for silence is as a result of the shouting and yelling of her parents.

Stanza- 5

Don't eat that chocolate, Amanda!
Remember your acne, Amanda!
Will you please look at me when I'm speaking
to you, Amanda!

Explanation: The set of instructions provided here indicate how much essential it is for Amanda to understand the value of external beauty, and steps to be taken to preserve it from a very tender age. Amanda is stopped by her parents from eating a chocolate as previously that had caused her acne. Here, we see how a child is made conscious of a natural experience such as acne. However, Amanda is still lost in her own thoughts and doesn't care enough to look up to her scolding parents. This carelessness further angers the parents and they ask for her attention when she is being scolded. The role of appearance in the society is given more significance than the basic values and creativity.

Stanza- 6

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!

Explanation: Amanda is still lost in her own dreams. She pictures herself to be the long golden-haired Rapunzel who lived in a castle and had no care about anything. Amanda imagines that the life of Rapunzel must have been very peaceful and fantastic in the tower. But she wishes to evade the fate that was met out to Rapunzel as she is unwilling to let her hair down. Amanda doesn't want her peace to be disturbed anyhow. She seeks a life which is away from any other human form. We can see here how the presence of her parents and their inhuman behaviour had made her against any human connection. Hence, she only wanted to live by herself as the presence of another being in her life would require her to act in a certain way. Amanda wanted to live as a free and happy person.

Stanza- 7

Stop that sulking at once, Amanda!
You're always so moody, Amanda!
Anyone would think that I nagged at
you, Amanda!

Explanation: The parents keep instructing Amanda on the dos and don'ts, but Amanda remains lost in her own dreams. The parents believe that Amanda is not reacting because she is annoyed. Amanda's behaviour has made her parents look bad and they are worried about their image. They are concerned about how society will perceive them if their child always remains in a foul mood. They want to prove themselves as responsible parents who manage to balance out what the child wants and what the society expects out of Amanda. However, they have already failed in their efforts.

Conclusion of Amanda

This poem conveys the moral that children need to be allowed more freedom. Excessive nagging may make them disobedient and hence they may develop a type of dislike for real life.

NCERT SOLUTION

Questions (Page No. 62)

(THINKING ABOUT THE POEM)

Question 1: How old do you think Amanda is? How do you know this?

Answer: Amanda is a young girl who is around 9-10 years old. She is being rebuked by her parents with typical instructions that is quite common for children of her age. Her parents are trying to inculcate good manners and etiquette in her for own good as she is very naive and innocent.

Question 2: Who do you think is speaking to her?

Answer: Amanda is being spoken to by one of her parents. It is most likely that it's her mother. Generally speaking, a mother is the first teacher for a child. She always tries to guide and instruct her child to follow the righteous path. Hence, from the range of instructions given to Amanda, it exhibits that the speaker is her mother.

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

Answer: Stanzas 2, 4 and 6 are given in parenthesis because they exhibit the inner thoughts and reaction of Amanda as she receives instructions from her mother given in stanzas 1, 3 and 5. As there is an alternate sequence of scolding by Amanda's mother, she gives a corresponding reaction to it on the following stanzas in parenthesis. Thus, the parenthesis is used by the poet to convey the friendly tone of the poem.

Question 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: The speaker of the stanzas 2, 4 and 6 is the child, Amanda herself. No, she is not listening or paying heed to her mother's words in stanzas 1, 3 and 5 as she is lost in her own dream world. Her imagination lets her escape from reality as she is lost in her own world.

Question 5: What could Amanda do if she were a mermaid?

Answer: If Amanda were a mermaid, she could drift away slowly and carelessly on a languid emerald sea. She wished if she could be the sole inhabitant of the green sea and would slowly move on it. She longs for a place where she can be all by herself and depend on anybody else for her happiness. Amanda desired to be a mermaid because a mermaid symbolises liberty and wonder, according to her.

Question 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 on her own. She feels that she is being constantly nagged by her parents to follow their instructions. Being a little girl, she seeks 'golden' silence and 'sweet' freedom and wants to break all the norms. She wishes to roam around the streets alone and draw dust patterns with her bare feet. She thinks if she were an orphan, she could do all of it without being nagged or rebuked by anyone and be all by herself.

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

Answer: The story of Rapunzel revolves around her life on a high tower. She was locked in that tower by an evil witch. In due course of time, she got used to living there. She was very happy and content with her life in the tower. She had very long blonde hair which was used by the witch to climb the tall tower. One fine day, a prince came to meet her as he climbed the tower using her hair. When the witch came to know about it, she punished both of them by separating them. Finally, after many years the couple united together forever. Similarly, Amanda wishes to live her life like Rapunzel on a high tower on her own, away from everyone. She yearns for freedom, peace and harmony. Due to this reason, Amanda wants to be like Rapunzel. However, she also states that since she doesn't want to be disturbed, she would never let her bright hair down for anyone to climb to her. She simply desires a happy and satisfied life with no disturbance from others.

Question 8: What does the girl yearn for? What does this poem tell you about Amanda?

Answer: Amanda is a young girl who yearns for freedom and wants to be on her own. With constant scolding from her parents, she realises that she is incapable of fulfilling their expectations. Generally, children of Amanda's age have similar feelings, irrespective of class, colour or nationality. We all know that traditional societies always demand a well-mannered behaviour from every person and the training of children by their parents play a significant role in moulding their personality. However, most parents tend to ignore the innocence and understanding level of their children and the young minds face tremendous pressure from their elders that impacts their imaginative power and thoughts.

Question 9: Read the last stanza. Do you think Amanda is sulking and is moody?

Answer: No, Amanda is neither sulking nor moody. She simply longs for her freedom as she is fed up of following the instructions given by her parents. She has a strong imaginative power as she visualizes herself to the likes of Rapunzel's story and she wants to lead a carefree life free from all nagging and scolding from her parents who are always trying to teach manners and inculcate good habits in her.