

"Boys And Girls" by Alice Munro - Worksheet

Questions and Answers - Boys and Girls – Set 1

1. Question: How does the narrator, a young girl, perceive her role within her family at the beginning of the story?

- Answer: At the beginning of the story, the narrator sees herself as an assistant to her father, helping with tasks around the farm. She identifies more with her father's work and the responsibilities traditionally associated with males.

2. Question: How does the narrator's perception of her identity and role change as the story progresses?

- Answer: As the story unfolds, the narrator becomes increasingly aware of societal expectations regarding gender roles. She grapples with the pressure to conform to traditional feminine roles and experiences a growing sense of rebellion against the limitations placed on her due to her gender.

3. Question: What is the significance of the fox farm in the story?

- Answer: The fox farm is a central element in the story, symbolizing the traditional roles assigned to men and women in the narrator's society. The fox farm represents the father's domain, while the household chores symbolize the mother's domain. The narrator's resistance to working in the house and her desire to be involved in the fox farm reflect her struggle against societal expectations.

4. Question: How does the relationship between the narrator and Laird (her younger brother) evolve throughout the story?

- Answer: Initially, the narrator sees Laird as an ally in her father's world. However, as Laird begins to embrace his expected role as a boy, the distance between them grows. The story highlights the impact of societal expectations on familial relationships and the inevitable separation that occurs as children conform to prescribed gender roles.

5. Question: What role does the horse play in the story, and how does it contribute to the narrator's understanding of gender roles?

- Answer: The horse represents a bridge between the narrator's desire for freedom and her recognition of societal expectations. Riding the horse allows the narrator to experience a sense of liberation, but the realization that she cannot keep the horse underscores the limitations imposed on her due to her gender.

Questions and Answers - Boys and Girls – Set 2

6. Question: How does the title "Boys and Girls" encapsulate the central theme of the story?

- Answer: The title reflects the story's exploration of gender roles and societal expectations. It emphasizes the distinctions and constraints placed on individuals based on their gender,

highlighting the challenges the narrator faces as she navigates the expectations associated with being a "girl" in her community.

7. Question: How does the narrator's relationship with her mother evolve throughout the story, and what role does the mother play in shaping the narrator's understanding of gender roles?

- Answer: Initially, the narrator shares a closer bond with her father, but as she becomes aware of societal expectations, her relationship with her mother takes on new significance. The mother represents the traditional female role, and the narrator's observations of her mother's duties contribute to her growing awareness of the limitations imposed on women.

8. Question: What is the significance of the pelt-cutting scene in the story, and how does it mark a turning point for the narrator?

- Answer: The pelt-cutting scene is a pivotal moment where the narrator realizes the consequences of resisting traditional gender roles. Her father's disappointment and disapproval following this incident make her aware of the societal consequences of challenging prescribed norms, marking a turning point in her understanding of her role.

9. Question: How does the changing seasons and the arrival of winter contribute to the story's themes and the narrator's experiences?

- Answer: The changing seasons symbolize the progression of time and the inevitability of change. Winter, in particular, represents a harsh reality and serves as a metaphor for the societal expectations that become increasingly stringent, forcing the narrator to confront the limitations placed on her as a girl.

10. Question: Discuss the symbolism of the foxes in the story and their connection to the narrator's struggle with identity and societal expectations.

- Answer: The foxes represent the wild and untamed aspects of the narrator's identity. The juxtaposition of the domesticated foxes on the farm and the wild foxes in the wilderness mirrors the narrator's internal conflict between conforming to societal expectations and embracing her own untamed spirit.

Questions and Answers - Boys and Girls – Set 3

11. Question: How does the ending of the story reflect the narrator's acceptance of her prescribed gender role, and what does it suggest about the cost of conformity?

- Answer: The ending sees the narrator conforming to her expected role as a girl, participating in domestic tasks and abandoning her earlier desire for freedom. This conclusion highlights the societal pressure to conform and suggests that embracing prescribed gender roles often comes at the cost of sacrificing one's individuality and desires.

12. Question: In what ways does the story explore the theme of loss, and how does the narrator grapple with the losses she experiences?

- Answer: The story explores various forms of loss, including the loss of personal freedom, the loss of the horse, and the loss of the narrator's own sense of identity. The narrator grapples with these losses as she navigates the expectations imposed on her, highlighting the emotional toll of conforming to societal norms.

13. Question: How does the narrator's perception of femininity change as she becomes more aware of societal expectations?

- Answer: Initially, the narrator associates femininity with confinement and limitation. As she becomes more aware of societal expectations, her perception of femininity evolves, and she realizes the strict roles assigned to women in her community. This realization prompts her internal conflict and rebellion against these expectations.

14. Question: Discuss the role of the horse in the story as a symbol of freedom and rebellion. How does the horse impact the narrator's understanding of her own desires?

- Answer: The horse represents freedom and serves as a symbol of rebellion for the narrator. Riding the horse allows her to break away momentarily from the prescribed gender roles and experience a sense of liberation. The horse becomes a catalyst for the narrator's understanding of her own desires and the limitations imposed by societal expectations.

15. Question: Explore the significance of the narrator's involvement in the "boy's work" on the fox farm. How does this challenge traditional gender roles, and what impact does it have on the narrator's sense of identity?

- Answer: The narrator's involvement in "boy's work" challenges traditional gender roles, as it goes against the expected division of labor. This experience allows the narrator to momentarily step into a role typically reserved for boys, providing her with a sense of identity and purpose that deviates from societal norms.

Questions and Answers - Boys and Girls – Set 4

16. Question: How does the story address the theme of conformity and the societal pressures to adhere to gender roles?

- Answer: "Boys and Girls" delves into the theme of conformity by portraying the societal pressures placed on individuals to adhere to prescribed gender roles. The narrator grapples with the expectations of being a "girl" and the consequences of resisting these expectations. The story serves as a commentary on the societal norms that dictate behavior and identity.

17. Question: Discuss the role of the foxes' escape in the story and its connection to the narrator's desire for freedom.

- Answer: The escape of the foxes symbolizes the narrator's own longing for freedom and autonomy. The wild foxes breaking free from confinement mirror the narrator's internal struggle to break away from societal expectations. The event underscores the universal desire for independence and the challenges of achieving it within a rigid societal framework.

18. Question: How does the story use the narrator's relationships with her father and Laird to explore gender dynamics and expectations within the family?

- Answer: The relationships with the father and younger brother, Laird, illustrate the gender dynamics within the family. The father, representing the traditional male role, is the authority figure, while Laird begins to conform to societal expectations for boys. These relationships contribute to the narrator's evolving understanding of gender roles within her familial context.

19. Question: Consider the symbolism of the title, "Boys and Girls." How does the title encapsulate the central themes of the story?

- Answer: The title captures the central themes of the story by highlighting the strict divisions and expectations associated with gender. It emphasizes the societal norms and expectations placed on individuals based on their gender, encapsulating the challenges and conflicts faced by the characters in negotiating their identities within these constraints.

20. Question: How does the story address the complexity of individual identity within the context of societal expectations?

- "Boys and Girls" explores the complexity of individual identity by depicting the internal conflict of the narrator as she grapples with societal expectations. The story delves into the challenges of maintaining a sense of self while navigating the pressures to conform to prescribed gender roles, providing a nuanced exploration of identity within a societal framework.