

"Boys and Girls" by Alice Munro - Character Sketches

"Boys and Girls" by Alice Munro features several characters who contribute to the exploration of gender roles and societal expectations. Here are character sketches for some of the key figures in the story:

1. The Narrator:

- *Description:* The unnamed narrator is a young girl on the cusp of adolescence, navigating the challenges of growing up in a rural setting. She is spirited, curious, and initially embraces the physically demanding tasks traditionally associated with boys.
- *Character Development:* As the story unfolds, the narrator undergoes significant development. Her initial enthusiasm for "boys' work" gives way to a growing awareness of societal expectations and the limitations imposed by gender roles. The internal conflict she experiences becomes a central focus, highlighting the complexities of identity formation in the face of societal norms.

2. The Father:

- *Description:* The father is a traditional figure of authority on the fox farm. He oversees the outdoor tasks, particularly the handling of the foxes, embodying the stereotypical male role in the family and society.
- *Role in the Story:* The father's role is pivotal in reinforcing gender norms. His expectations for Laird, the narrator's younger brother, to conform to traditional male roles mirror the societal pressures faced by the narrator. The father's disappointment during the pelt-cutting scene marks a turning point in the story, symbolizing the clash between individual desires and societal expectations.

3. Laird (Younger Brother):

- *Description:* Laird is the younger brother of the narrator. Initially, he joins his sister in defying gender norms, engaging in imaginative play and subverting societal expectations.
- *Character Development:* As the story progresses, Laird undergoes a transformation. He begins to embrace the expected behaviors of a boy, conforming to the traditional roles set by society. This shift highlights the inevitability of societal pressures and the impact of gender expectations on individual development.

4. The Mother:

- *Description:* The mother is portrayed as the traditional homemaker, managing domestic tasks within the household. She represents the expected female role in the family and, by extension, societal norms.
- *Role in the Story:* While the mother's character is not as explicitly developed as others, her adherence to traditional roles contributes to the narrator's growing awareness of gender

expectations. The mother's unspoken acceptance of her role foreshadows the challenges the narrator will face in negotiating her own identity within the confines of societal norms.