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POETRY

Amanda

— Robin Klein





'Amanda' is a poem about the mental state of a young school-going girl who is constantly nagged by her elders, probably her mother. Amanda is given instructions a long list of dos and don'ts that she is asked to follow. The poem deals with child psychology and the lack of understanding on the part of parents. Parents suppress their children and pressurize them that leads to a negative impact on children's state of mind.

Topic Notes

 Characters in Brief

 Chapter in Detail

 Poetic Devices

 Learnings

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Poem in Detail

Stanza – 1

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

Interpretation

In this stanza, the poet had shown the relationship between a mother and a daughter. The mother constantly checked on and scolded her daughter Amanda for biting her nails and hunching her shoulders. The mother further rebuked her for sitting in a slouching posture. She wanted Amanda to sit straight.

Stanza – 2

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

Interpretation

In this stanza, Amanda spoke to herself thoughtfully. She was fed up of her mother's constant naggings and instructions and wanted to escape into a world where she would be free to do anything. Amanda thought about an emerald green sea that had soft lazy waves where she would be lazing around into the water happily in the form of a mermaid, all alone in the sea.

Stanza – 3

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

Interpretation

In this stanza, Amanda is transported back to her reality when her mother scolded her for not finishing her homework and tidying up her room. Her mother further rebuked Amanda for not listening to her when she asked the girl to clean her shoes. The mother's authoritative tone and constant nagging is clearly seen in the stanza.

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.)*

Interpretation

In this stanza, Amanda seemed quite frustrated by constant blabbering of her mother that she thought

to be an orphan who had no one to restrict her freedom. She imagined of wandering on the street bare feet, making patterns on the dusty path. She was longing for silence and freedom so much so that she didn't mind being an orphan to get freedom.

Example 1. Is Amanda an orphan? Why does she say so? [NCERT]

Ans. No, Amanda is not an orphan but she imagines being one as she wants to be alone and have freedom to roam in the streets.

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!*

Interpretation

In this stanza, the mother was still rebuking Amanda sternly for eating chocolates as it would aggravate Amanda's acne. Amanda was so annoyed at her mother's repeated poking that she didn't look at her mother while she scolded her. Thus, the mother commanded Amanda to look at her while she was speaking to her.

Example 2. How old do you think Amanda is? How do you know this? [NCERT]

Ans. Amanda is probably a school-going girl entering her teens. The reference to homework and acne tell us about this.

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!)*

Interpretation

In this stanza, Amanda again escaped from the reality of her mother scolding her. Amanda thought of being Rapunzel, a princess who locked alone inside a tower by a witch. Unlike Rapunzel, Amanda won't let her bright hair down because she didn't want anybody to come up holding onto her hair. She didn't want anybody to invade her privacy and silence.

Stanza – 7

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

Interpretation

In this stanza, Amanda's mother still nagged at her. She didn't only rebuke her but also asked her to stop sulking as it would make people think that she nagged her daughter. She didn't realize that she had been constantly nagging her. The stanza shows that mother didn't care for Amanda's feelings but she was conscious of what people might think of her as a mother.

Example 3. Extract Based:

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

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

- (A) "I am an orphan". Why did Amanda say so?
- (a) to escape her mother's nagging and rebuking
 - (b) it was a fact of her life
 - (c) she described a character she liked
 - (d) she was an adopted child
- (B) What does the phrase "The silence is golden" mean?
- (a) it shines bright like gold
 - (b) it saves from much trouble and is indeed precious.
 - (c) it is not worthy
 - (d) it is unrequited
- (C) Pick the correct example of metaphor in the extract:
- (a) I am an orphan
 - (b) the silence is golden

- (c) freedom is sweet
- (d) I pattern soft dust

(D) Choose the correct rhyme scheme of the extract:

- (a) abb
- (b) aab
- (c) aaa
- (d) aba

(E) Which word does NOT relate to 'sweet'?

- (a) memories
- (b) fruits
- (c) love
- (d) jealousy

Ans. (A) (a) to escape from her nagging and rebuking

Explanation: Amanda was fed up of her mother's constant nagging. So, to escape the reality, she imagined being an orphan free to move on street. Hence, (a) is the right answer.

(B) (b) it saves from much trouble and is indeed precious.

Explanation: The word 'golden' is used by the poet to show the value of silence for Amanda. Hence, (b) is the right answer.

(C) (b) The silence is golden.

Explanation: Metaphor is a poetic device used to compare two things without using the words 'like' or 'as'. Here, silence is compared to a thing made of gold. Hence, (b) is the right answer.

(D) (c) aaa

Explanation: The words 'street', 'sweet' and 'feet' rhyme in the extract. Hence, (c) is the right answer.

(E) (d) jealousy

Explanation: Options (a), (b) and (c) can all be sweet but (d) jealousy is never sweet. Hence, (d) is the right answer.



Poetic Devices

- (1) **Alliteration:** Alliteration is repetition of the same sound at the beginning of the closely placed words.
- *Stop that slouching and sit up straight,*
 - *Stop that sulking at once, Amanda!*
- (2) **Repetition:** Repetition is a poetic device used to repeat single words, phrases or even stanzas at intervals, to create a musical effect in order to make the poem more appealing.
- In the poem, the word 'Amanda' has been used several time by the poet.
- (3) **Metaphor:** Metaphor is a literary device that is used to represent a comparison without using the words "like" or "as".
- The poet had used metaphor in the stanzas 2, 4 and 6 where he had compared Amanda to a 'mermaid', and 'Rapunzel'.
- (4) **Allusion:** Allusion is a poetic device that is used to make a reference to any person, statement or thing from historical, mythological, cultural, literary or political backgrounds.
- **Mermaid:** It is a mythological character that has a body of half girl and half fish.
 - **Rapunzel:** She was a princess character in a German fairytale that had bright long hair through which, a prince climbed up the tower she was locked in and rescued her. She was enslaved in a tower by an evil witch.
- (5) **Rhyme scheme:** The rhyme scheme for stanzas 1, 3, 5 and 7 is 'aaba' while the rhyme scheme for stanzas 2, 4, and 6 is aaa.



Learnings

- (1) Children should be given their share of privacy and freedom by their parents.
- (2) Excessive nagging turns children defiant and they start escaping the reality through imaginations as they do not like their parents snatching away their freedom.
- (3) Parents should develop a friendly and healthy relationship with their children.



Dictionary

Word	Meaning	Synonyms	Antonyms
Hunch	raise one's shoulder	arch, bend	straighten, erect
Slouching	sitting in a droopy way	humpy, curvy	straight, erect
Languid	lazy	relaxed, listless	energetic, active
Drifting	carried slowly by the current of air or water	floating, tramping	rushing hurriedly, carried away
Hushed	very quiet and still	silence, quiet	noisy
Sulking	to be angry in a childish manner	mope, pout	happy, calm, satisfied

OBJECTIVE Type Questions

[1 mark]

Extract Based Questions

1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

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

[CBSE Question Bank 2021]

- (A) The tone of the given lines is:
- (a) analytical (b) despairing
 - (c) peaceful (d) nervous
- (B) Read the statements A and B given below, and choose the option that correctly evaluates these statements.
- Statement (A) – The figure 'I' imagines a less than realistic view of being an orphan.
- Statement (B) – The figure 'I' does not like the speaker.
- (a) (A) is true, (B) is false, according to the extract
 - (b) (A) is true, (B) cannot be clearly inferred from the extract.
 - (c) (A) cannot be clearly inferred from the extract, (B) is false.
 - (d) (A) is true and can be inferred from the poem, (B) is true too.
- (C) The golden silence is contrasted with the
- (a) chaos of the street.

- (b) constant instructions received.
- (c) sweetness of freedom.
- (d) hushed, bare feet.

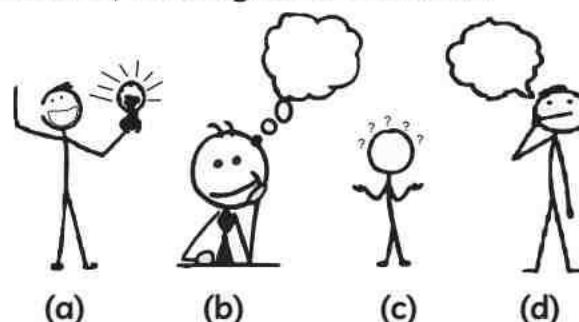
- (D) The rhyme scheme 'aaa' in the above extract is followed in all other stanzas of the poem that are written in parenthesis, i.e. (). Why?

Read the reasons given below, and choose the option that lists the most accurate reasoning:

- (1) It shows the simplicity of the child's thoughts.
- (2) It reflects the harmony and rhythm of the child's inner world.
- (3) It mirrors a child's expression.
- (4) It highlights the poet's aesthetic sensibility.

- (a) (1) & (4) (b) (1) & (2)
- (c) (2) & (3) (d) (3) & (4)

- (E) Which image corresponds to what Amanda, is doing in this extract?



Ans. (A) (c) *peaceful*.

Explanation: The speaker of the extract is Amanda. As her mother constantly nagged her, Amanda escaped into imagination. It is clear from her tone that she longed for peace and freedom. Hence, (c) is the right answer.

(B) (b) (A) is true, (B) cannot be clearly inferred from the extract.

Explanation: Statement (A) is true as Amanda wasn't an orphan in reality as her mother existed but she imagined being one while statement (B) cannot be clearly inferred from the extract as it is nowhere mentioned that "I" didn't like the speaker. Hence, (b) is the right answer.

(C) (b) constant instructions received.

Explanation: Amanda was fed up of her mother's constant nagging and hence, she tried to escape reality. That's why she imagined the 'golden silence' in the extract. Hence, (b) is the right answer.

(D) (c) (2) & (3)


Explanation: The simple 'aaa' rhyme scheme of the extract shows the (ii) harmony and (iii) simple expressions of a child. Hence, (c) is the right answer.

(E) (b)

Explanation: Amanda escaped the reality and went away with her thoughts and imaginations as her mother was constantly checking upon her. Hence, (b) is the right answer.

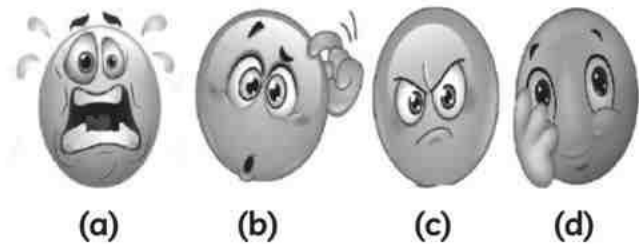
2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

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

(A)  The purpose of the speaker's words in the given extract is to:

- (a) show the speaker's power over the listener.
- (b) make the listener a better human being.
- (c) advise the listener as an elder.
- (d) improve the listener's posture and habits.

(B) Pick the option that lists the image which correctly corresponds to the speaker's mood in the extract.



(C) Alliteration is a literary device used in the extract. Which of the following options DOES NOT include examples of this literary device?

- (a) The moon and the shimmering stars watched over us
- (b) With that charming chat, Catherine chose comfort
- (c) Away ran the pathetic pooch pouting like a princess
- (d) Dee dee was driving down day after day

(D) What does the repetition of "Amanda!" at the end of each line reflect?

- (a) It describes who the speaker is talking to.
- (b) It represents the absent-mindedness of the listener.
- (c) It shows the frustration of the speaker.
- (d) It helps create a rhyme scheme.

(E) Select the option that fits with the following: slouching : straight:: _____ : _____

- (a) transparent: translucent
- (b) lazy: agile
- (c) forgetful: lively
- (d) generous: liberal

Ans. (B) (c)

Explanation: The speaker is angry at Amanda for sitting in a bad posture. Option (3) correctly represents the emotion of anger. Hence, (c) is the right answer.

(C) (a) The moon and the shimmering stars watched over us

Explanation: Alliteration is a poetic device that has words with similar starting sounds. Here, option (a) has no similar sounding words with no similar beginning sound. Hence, (a) is the right answer.

(D) (c) It shows the frustration of the speaker.

Explanation: The speaker is Amanda's mother who is angry at Amanda for having bad habits like biting nails and slouching. She calls out her name angrily, every time she instructs her. Hence, (c) is the right answer.

(E) (b) lazy: agile

Explanation: The words (b) lazy and agile

are opposite to each other in the same way as slouching and straight. Hence, (b) is the right answer.


SUBJECTIVE Type Questions

Short Answer Type-I Questions (SA-I) [2 marks]

Answer the following questions in 20-30 words:

3. Would you call Amanda a disrespectful child? Provide one reason to justify your opinion.

Ans. No, I wouldn't call Amanda a disrespectful child because she didn't answer back to her mother even after being fed up of her constant nagging. Amanda found a way to escape the reality rather than arguing with her mother.

4.  What kind of an image does "languid, emerald sea" evoke?

5. Why does Amanda seem moody most of the time? [CBSE 2016]

Ans. Amanda's mother constantly keeps a check on her activities and habits and scolds her all the time for correcting her ways of life. That's why, Amanda gets fed up and escapes into the world of imagination, so she seems moody most of the time.

6. The reader sympathises with the speaker in the poem. Support this opinion with a reason.

Ans. The readers of the poem might sympathize with the speaker as she is the mother of a school-going girl named Amanda and a mother can never scold her daughter for wrong reasons. Amanda has bad habits so her mother wants to correct her as an elder.

7. What do you think is the significance of the exclamation mark in the title of the poem 'Amanda!'?

Ans. The title of the poem 'Amanda!' has an exclamation mark in it to emphasize the frustration that the mother of this school-going girl named Amanda is inflicting upon her. The poet has used this exclamation mark with Amanda's name throughout the poem just to make readers feel that Amanda's mother called out her name angrily.

8.  Why does Amanda imagine being an orphan?

9. Justify the title of the poem 'Amanda'.

Ans. The title of the poem 'Amanda' is apt as the poem solely revolves around the life of a school-going girl named Amanda. Amanda's mother constantly nags at her and instructs her to correct her habits.

10. What does the line "never let down my bright hair" tell us about Amanda?

[CBSE Question Bank 2021]

Ans. The line "never let down my bright hair" tells us that Amanda longed for freedom and privacy so much so that imagining herself as Rapunzel, she wouldn't let her hair down because she didn't want anybody to come and invade her privacy and freedom.

Short Answer Type-II Questions (SA-II) [3 marks]

Answer the following questions in 40-50 words:

11. How would you characterise the speaker in the poem 'Amanda!'? List any two qualities, supporting the reason of your choice, with evidence from the poem.

Ans. The speaker in the poem is Amanda's mother. She is a nag and lacks understanding on her part of being a mother. It is clear from the poem that she constantly keeps on nagging Amanda for biting her nails, sitting in a slouching posture, eating chocolates, etc. She doesn't understand the psychology of her daughter's mind. In fact, she asks Amanda to stop sulking because she was conscious of what people might think of her as a mother.

12. Why had Amanda's mother asked her to look at her while she was speaking to Amanda?

Ans. Amanda's mother rebuked Amanda sternly for eating chocolates as it would aggravate Amanda's acne. Amanda was so annoyed at her mother's repeated instructions and advices that she didn't look at her mother while she scolded her. Thus, she commanded Amanda to look at her while she was speaking to Amanda.

13. What impression of Amanda do you get from the poem 'Amanda'?

Ans. Amanda is a little school-going girl. She is constantly nagged by her parents, especially her mother. She keeps asking Amanda to do this or that but poor Amanda longs to be free and live life in her own ways. She is fed up of her mother's constant scolding.

14. What is Amanda asked 'to do' and what 'not to do'?

Ans. Amanda is asked not to bite her nails, hunch her shoulders and eat chocolates. She is asked to sit up straight, finish her homework, clean her room and clean her shoes. In fact, she is constantly asked 'to do' this and 'not to do' that.

15. 'Amanda is alone but not lonely in the world she envisions.' Justify the statement with reference to any one image she pictures in her mind.

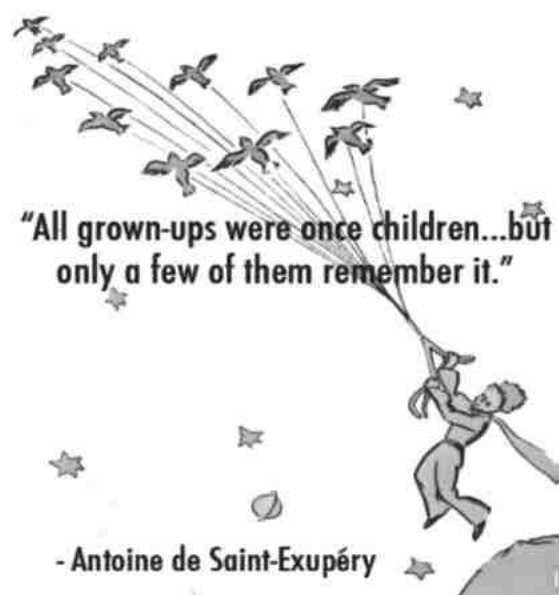
Ans. Amanda often imagines herself to be one of the fictional characters in order to escape from the reality of her mother's forced instructions on her. One such reference was her being an orphan. She imagined being an orphan who lives alone as she has no parents. But at least the orphan is free to move wherever and with whomever she wants to.

Long Answer Type Questions (LA)

[5 marks]

Answer the following questions in 100-120 words:

16. Read the quote given below carefully. Based on your understanding of the poem, explain how and why this quote can be applied to the poem. [CBSE Question Bank 2021]



Ans. This quote can perfectly be applied to poem 'Amanda' because it's a fact that what all children do, has been already done by their

parents when they were kids. We all go through the same stages of infancy, childhood, teenage and finally an adult. What all parents should remember is that they should give their child the same freedom and privacy in life as they themselves wanted from their parents in childhood. Parents often tend to forget that a child is a child. She/he makes mistakes or misbehave at times. However, forced advices and constant nagging will only make a child defiant. Rather, parents should try and build a friendly relationship with their children and provide them sufficient freedom to live their own way.

17. Why did Amanda imagine being an 'orphan'?

Ans. Amanda was a school-going girl who was fed up of constant nagging of her mother regarding her habits and activities. Her mother kept on telling her what to do and what not to do. Amanda was so frustrated by her mother's constant blabbering that she thought of being an orphan who had no parents to restrict her freedom. She imagined of wandering on the street bare feet, making patterns on the dusty path with it. She was longing for silence and freedom so much so that she didn't mind being an orphan to get her freedom.

18. What advice might "chatterbox" Anne (Frank) has for the quietly imaginative Amanda? Present this as a conversation between the two. You may begin this way:

Anne: Gosh! You do run off into some strange worlds, don't you?

Amanda: (nods) Well...

Ans. Anne: Gosh! You do run off into some strange worlds, don't you?

Amanda: (nods) Well...You see its important for me because my mom keeps on nagging me for no reason. I am fed up of her advice.

Anne: If that's the case...I would suggest you to rather have a deep conversation about this with your mom, Amanda. Perhaps, she isn't getting what you feel at her nagging. It happened to me with my dad and I had a conversation with him about it. After that, the problem with the two of us was solved forever.

Amanda: Exactly! If she would have known that her advice and nagging are only making me more defiant day by day, she won't do it further.

Anne: Yes. So, have a healthy conversation with her. She is your mom. She will definitely understand your take on this.

Amanda: Thanks Anne.