Poem – Amanda

By – Robin Klein

About the Poet

Robin Mc Maugh Klein is an Australian author of books for children. She writes Children’s and young adult fiction. Some of her famous books are Hating Alison Ashley, People might hear you, etc.

Introduction to the Poem

Robin Klein has expressed the views of a little girl, Amanda who is constantly pointed out by her mother for making mistakes. Mistakes which she considers so as they are not part of the code of good conduct laid out by the society in which we live.

Poem and explanation

Don’t bite your nails, Amanda!
Don’t hunch your shoulders, Amanda!
Stop that slouching and sit up straight,
Amanda!
(There is a languid, emerald sea, where the sole inhabitant is me—a mermaid, drifting blissfully.)

Hunch: bend
Slouching: sitting in a lazy way
Languid: relaxed  
Emerald: here, green color  
Inhabitant: resident  
Drifting: carried slowly by the water  
Blissfully: happily

The poet is describing Amanda, a little girl who is always pointed out by her mother for her mistakes and how she imagines her life to be. The poet says that the mother is pointing out Amanda for biting nails which is a bad habit. Next she asks her to sit straight without bending her shoulders. Amanda who has habit of bending her shoulders and sitting lazily is being pointed out because her mother wants her to sit in the right posture. At this point of time, when she is being scolded by her mother, she imagines herself to be in a deep green sea. She says that she wants to be the only resident of this beautiful green sea. She imagines herself like a mermaid who is alone there and leads her life in a very relaxing way. She says that she wants to be carried away by the current of water and feel the relaxing environment there.

Literary devices:
Anaphora: Repeated use of a word at start of two or more lines (don’t bite… don’t hunch)
Assonance: use of vowel sound ‘o’ (don’t hunch your shoulders)
Rhyme: aaba ccc (Amanda, Amanda, straight, Amanda, sea, me, blissfully)
Metaphor: use of word emerald sea for green colour of sea being similar to the colour of emrald
Repetition: use of word ‘Amanda’
Imagery: drifting blissfully
Alliteration: ‘Stop that slouching and sit up straight’ - ‘s’ sound is being repeated at the start of closely placed words.
Allusion: ‘mermaid’ is a well known imaginary creature.

Did you finish your homework, Amanda?  
Did you tidy your room, Amanda?  
I thought I told you to clean your shoes, Amanda!  
(I am an orphan, roaming the street.  
I pattern soft dust with my hushed, bare feet.  
The silence is golden, the freedom is sweet.)

Orphan: A child whose parents are dead  
Hushed: quiet and still place
Here the poet says that Amanda’s mother is inquiring her about whether she has done her homework or not? And then she asks her whether she has cleaned her room or not. Moreover she is also reminded to clean her shoes. So, here we can see that the mother is constantly asking her questions regarding her homework being done or not or whether she had cleaned up her room and shoes or not. But on the other hand, while Amanda is listening to her mother’s instructions, she imagines herself to be an orphan who is roaming in the streets. This means that she imagines if she would have been without parents she would have walked freely in the streets. She would have drawn designs on the soft dust with her uncovered feet very quietly. So, we can see that she thinks opposite to her mother. Her mother wants her to keep everything neat and clean. But Amanda wants to play in dust with her bare feet. Moreover, she is so fed up of these constant instructions from her mother, that she says silence is golden which means that silence is very crucial and precious. She further says that freedom is sweet. This means she never feels free when she is with her mother.

**Literary devices:**

**Anaphora:** Repeated use of a word at start of two or more lines (did you finish….did you tidy)

**Rhyme:** Rhyme scheme is aada eee (Amanda, Amanda, shoes, Amanda, street, feet, sweet)

**Assonance:** use of vowel sound ‘o’ (Thought, told, you, your, shoes)

**Repetition:** use of word ‘Amanda’

**Metaphor:** silence is golden - silence is said to be glorious like golden colour

freedom is sweet - freedom is said to be sweet in taste.

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

**Acne:** Pimples

**Rapunzel:** A girl in the fairy tale by Brothers Grimm

**Tranquil:** calm, quiet

**Rare:** uncommon
Next, Amanda’s mother is disallowing her to eat chocolates. She reminds her of pimples that Amanda faces due to eating chocolates. At last she scolds her for not paying attention to what her mother says. At this moment Amanda imagines herself to be Rapunzel. Rapunzel was a character from a fairy tale that was captured in a tower by a witch. The witch used to climb the tower with the help of long hair of Rapunzel that were let down by her through the window. So, now Amanda wants to be Rapunzel because she feels that life in the tower will be peaceful and unusual. She thinks she will be free and live in a peaceful environment in the tower. She also confirms to herself that she will never let her hair down to anyone so that nobody could come to her in the tower.

**Literary devices:**
- Allusion: use of famous fairy tale character Rapunzel
- Rhyme: rhyme scheme aafa ggg (Amanda, Amanda, you, Amanda, care, rare, hair)
- Assonance: use of vowel sound ‘e’ and ‘o’ (Will you please look at me when I’m speaking to you)
- Consonance: use of sound ‘r’ (I am Rapunzel; I have not a care …..Bright hair)
- Repetition: use of word ‘Amanda’

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

**Sulking: be in a bad mood**
**Moody: unstable**
**Nagged: harass**

Amanda’s mother now warns her for behaving in a very odd manner. She asks her to stop being in a bad mood. Moreover she blames her of having such an unstable mood. She also scolds her by saying that her behavior will one day make people think that Amanda was constantly being harassed by her mother. So, here we can say that though Amanda is always pointed out by her mother on every small thing but she can’t react to this. If she reacts towards this by getting emotional her mother takes this against her sense of pride and scolds her that she should not behave like this as others would think that Amanda’s mother is very dominating towards her child.
Summary of the poem ‘Amanda’

The poem describes a girl named Amanda and her mother who is nagging her for her mistakes. She is first pointed out most probably by her mother for biting her nails and for not sitting in the right posture. The mother also feels that Amanda sits in a very lazy manner. To this, Amanda imagines herself as a mermaid who lives a calm and relaxing life in the beautiful green sea. Further, she is nagged for not cleaning her room and shoes and also for not doing her homework. She then imagines herself to be an orphan because she is now fed up of being watched by her parents continuously. She says that she would have enjoyed her freedom then, by making the patterns of her bare feet on the sand and would live a peaceful life. Next, Amanda is scolded for eating too many chocolates as this causes pimples. She is also scolded for not listening to her mother. So, now Amanda thinks of being Rapunzel, a character from a fairy tale and wants to live in a huge tower like her. In the tower she will be alone and will live a peaceful life and will never allow anyone to come in. Finally, the mother asks her to stop being moody because she doesn’t want anyone to blame her for harassing her daughter. At this time the poet has not written any reaction from Amanda’s side. This constant nagging has made her so sad that she has even stopped to imagine herself as someone else. She used to do so in order to escape from the continuous harassment and dominance of her parents.

Question and Answers

Q1- How old do you think Amanda is? How do you know this?
A1- Amanda’s age could be between 10-12 years old. We can guess this because of the reference to mermaid or Rapunzel. These stories are read by children of age group of 10-12 years.

Q2- Who do you think is speaking to her?
A2- One of her parents is speaking to her. We think that probably it could be her mother. We think this because it’s a general perception that children are taken care of by their mothers at home.
Q3- Why are Stanzas 2, 4 and 6 given in parenthesis?
A3-Parenthesis is a remark that is added to a sentence, often to provide an explanation. So, in stanzas 2, 4 and 6 parenthesis is used to describe the reaction of child Amanda towards her mother’s continuous nagging.

Q4- 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?
A4- The speaker in Stanzas 2, 4 and 6 is Amanda. No, she is not paying any attention to what her mother says. She is lost in her own thoughts. She imagines herself as a mermaid, an orphan and Rapunzel.

Q5- What could Amanda do if she were a mermaid?
A5- The little girl Amanda wants to be a mermaid and the only resident of the beautiful green sea. She thinks that her life will be very relaxing in the sea and she will be taken away with the currents of water. She will be able to enjoy her freedom.

Q6- Is Amanda an orphan? Why does she say so?
A6- No, Amanda is not an orphan as she is constantly being pointed out by one of her parents in the poem. She said so because she is sad and depressed because of the continuous scolding and nagging which she faces because of her parents. Therefore, she feels that it would have been much better and peaceful if she would have been an orphan.

Q7- Do you know the story of Rapunzel? Why does she want to be Rapunzel?
A7- The story of Rapunzel is of a girl who is captured by an old witch in a tower. The old witch climbs up the tower with the help of Rapunzel’s very long hair which she lets down for her through a window of the tower. One day, a Prince visits her by climbing the tower with the help of her long hair. When the witch comes to know this, she separates both of them. But both Rapunzel and Prince meet after a gap of many years and then live their life happily. Amanda wants to be Rapunzel because she knew that in the story, there was no staircase to enter the tower. It was only possible with the help of Rapunzel’s long hair that she would let down to help others to climb. Amanda feels that life in the tower will be very calm and nice and also makes it a point to never let her hair down for anyone as she doesn’t want to get disturbed by visitors.

Q8- What does the girl yearn for? What does this poem tell you about Amanda?
A8- The girl Amanda yearns for freedom and peace in her life. She is constantly reminded of her mistakes. Her parents want her to follow the code of conduct of good behavior. They are
doing so because they want their child to be well mannered and obedient. But while doing this they forget that she is a child and should be allowed some freedom. The poet has drawn the reader’s attention towards the condition of children who are constantly oppressed by their elders in the name of good behaviour.

Q9- Read the last stanza. Do you think Amanda is sulking and is moody?
A9- In our sense, Amanda is not moody. She feels oppressed because of her mother’s constant nagging. She doesn’t want to be pointed out for such small things like cleaning the room, sitting straight, cleaning her shoes, completing her homework, etc. She feels that she is not free and is under a constant pressure of trying to be a well behaved girl as per her parent’s demand.