

## Reader Response Sandbox Essay

### “Girl” By Jamaica Kincaid

“Girl” portrays some stereotypical aspects of life of a girl, how to act, and the struggles of being one. Kincaid gives us these requests in a very traditionalist way. I believe this is coming from a motherly point of view and the mother is showing her daughter how to be successful in society.

This is one example of how reader response criticism can be used. We are never told that this is a mother and daughter but we make assumptions, develop relationships, and ask questions about the text to get a greater sense of comprehension. This could have been interpreted in different ways such as, this could have been a grandmother talking or just some random woman talking to a young child. However, the experiences are the same but we infer that this is a mother/conversation because it is info that would be passed down to help better someone’s life through personal experiences.

Reader-Response criticism makes us ask questions about “Girl.” Texts either move you or they don’t move you. This interaction with the text and the interpretations that you take from the text is the meaning of this form of modern criticism. This short story gives us an insight on the expectations of women in society to make sure the next generation in their family lives up to societal standards and brings honor to them. Kincaid says, “Always eat your food in such a way that it won’t turn someone else’s stomach; on Sunday’s try and walk like a lady.”

When I first read this, I was confused about the context. She didn’t explain who was talking, the time- period, or the culture that this was set in. This led me to create a diagram and chart about what was going on. At first, I had a lot of questions but at the end I was certain that this is a mother talking to her daughter. This just goes to show how important reputation is in society because having a good influences and role models go a long way in this world because they can help you on your own journey of discovery.

I was confused about the line, “Don’t throw stones at blackbirds because it might not be a blackbird at all.” This story is so unstructured that it made me cringe at some points. This is a good text to use an example of reader-response criticism because there are different interpretations and hidden facts that can be pulled out about the culture that are not apparent at the surface. The theme is love here and she shows us these images to give us a glimpse of the culture and I believe that there is some Japanese significance as well.

The aesthetic approach in this case is very popular and effective to understand the meaning of short stories such as this. This approach also shows the love for reading and using with “Girl” breaks down the underlying meaning that is fun to bring out. Just like the daughter, readers have

their whole lives to make mistakes and teachers act as motherly figures to be more successful In their reading lives just like mothers want their children to be successful in life.