

## GIRL by Jamaica Kincaid

Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry; don't walk bare-head in the hot sun; cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil; soak your little cloths right after you take them off; when buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse, be sure that it doesn't have gum in it, because that way it won't hold up well after a wash; soak salt fish overnight before you cook it; is it true that you sing benna in Sunday school?; always eat your food in such a way that it won't turn someone else's stomach; on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming; don't sing benna in Sunday school; you mustn't speak to wharf-rat boys, not even to give directions; don't eat fruits on the street—flies will follow you; *but I don't sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school*; this is how to sew on a button; this is how to make a buttonhole for the button you have just sewed on; this is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming; this is how you iron your father's khaki shirt so that it doesn't have a crease; this is how you iron your father's khaki pants so that they don't have a crease; this is how you grow okra—far from the house, because okra tree harbors red ants; when you are growing dasheen, make sure it gets plenty of water or else it makes your throat itch when you are eating it; this is how you sweep a corner; this is how you sweep a whole house; this is how you sweep a yard; this is how you smile to someone you don't like too much; this is how you smile to someone you don't like at all; this is how you smile to someone you like completely; this is how you set a table for tea; this is how you set a table for dinner; this is how you set a table for dinner with an important guest; this is how you set a table for lunch; this is how you set a table for breakfast; this is how to behave in the presence of men who don't know you very well, and this way they won't recognize immediately the slut I have warned you against becoming; be sure to wash every day, even if it is with your own spit; don't squat down to play marbles—you are not a boy, you know; don't pick people's flowers—you might catch something; don't throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all; this is how to make a bread pudding; this is how to make doukona; this is how to make pepper pot; this is how to make a good medicine for a cold; this is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child; this is how to catch a fish; this is how to throw back a fish you don't like, and that way something bad won't fall on you; this is how to bully a man; this is how a man bullies you; this is how to love a man, and if this doesn't work there are other ways, and if they don't work don't feel too bad about giving up; this is how to spit up in the air if you feel like it, and this is how to move quick so that it doesn't fall on you; this is how to make ends meet; always squeeze bread to make sure it's fresh; *but what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?*; you mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won't let near the bread?

**Directions:** Answer any 3 of the questions between 1 and 8. You **must** answer #9 and #10 (so do 5 questions in total). Answer on a separate piece of paper.

PICK ANY 3 OF THE FOLLOWING TO ANSWER:

1. Where do you think this story takes place? What are the clues? Even if you aren't familiar with the culture, why do the mother and daughter feel familiar?
2. Who are the characters? What type of people are they (**characterization**)? How can you tell?
3. What do you notice about the **point of view**? What is the effect?
4. How would you read "Girl" differently if it were titled "Mother"?
5. If the girl in "Girl" were a boy, what would the mother be telling him? What if the father were talking instead?
6. What is the importance of food in this story?
7. Why are two sentences in italics?
8. What sentence structure is repeated (**syntax**)? What effect does this have on the **mood** and **tone** of the story?

ANSWER BOTH OF THE FOLLOWING:

9. How many sentences make up this story (**syntax**)? What is the effect of that number? What mood does it create?
10. What is the theme of this story? What do you think the author is saying about tradition and gender (**theme and tone**)?

**Syntax:** Syntax is a set of rules in a language. It dictates how words from different parts of speech are put together in order to convey a complete thought.

Syntax and Diction

Syntax and diction are closely related. Diction refers to the choice of words in a particular situation while syntax determines how the chosen words are used to form a sentence. In combination, syntax and diction help writers develop tone, mood and atmosphere in a text along with evoking interest of the readers.

**Point of View:** Point of view is the manner in which a story is narrated or depicted and who it is that tells the story. Simply put, the point of view determines the angle and perception of the story unfolding, and thus influences the tone in which the story takes place.

- first person POV - from a character's view; uses "I" and "me"
- second person POV - speaking directly to reader; uses "you"; least common
- third person POV - from a narrator; can be limited to one character's perspective or omniscient in which the narrator knows all.