

## Chapter- 3

# The Little Girl

**STUDY NOTES**

- Taken from “Something Childish and other Stories Collection”, the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator.
- From the beginning of the story, the reader realises that Mansfield may be exploring the theme of control.
- There is a sense that Kezia, her mother and the servants in the house, appear to be the responsibility of her father.
- He controls every individual.
- Each individual mentioned in the house, with the exception of Kezia’s father, is female.
- It is possible that Mansfield is attempting to highlight the control that the male exerts over the female.
- This attitude of her father is however, proving to be very detrimental to Kezia’s relationship with her father.
- She stutters when she talks to him as if she is in fear of him.
- This might suggest that rather than having a loving relationship or a close bond with her father, she lives in fear, unsure of how he might treat her.
- Through the reader does not know Kezia’s age, it can be assumed from the title of the story that she is still very small girl.
- One would expect her to live her life with an element of freedom due to the fact that she was a child.
- This was not the case.
- As soon as her father arrives home, she has duties to fulfil just like her mother and the servants in the house.
- All the time, her father’s needs were the top priority of the members of the household and none of the female characters in the story had the freedom to live their lives.

- Throughout the story, he exerts control, and it is accepted by all of the characters in the story.
- There are incidents in the story which may be important.
- Ever since Kezia was hit with the ruler by her father, she keeps her hands hidden behind her back in fear whenever she sees him.
- The introduction of the Macdonald to the story may also be important.
- Mansfield appears to deliberately situate them in a garden which suggests an idyllic environment in comparison to Kezia's, who is always kept in confinement.
- It is also possible that Mansfield is suggesting that a father will be closer to his children when he adopts a cordial relationship with them.
- And as a result the children will be happier.
- Environmentally, Kezia's father is close to her but does not play with his daughter.
- He treats her as he treats his wife and the servants.
- Kezia, as previously mentioned, is at his beck and therefore, does not have the time to be a child.
- The end of the story is also interesting as Mansfield appears to be exploring the theme of compassion and change.
- When Kezia finds it difficult to sleep, her father, rather than scolding her, allows her to sleep in his bed with him.
- For the first time in the story, he is allowing Kezia's feelings to take precedence.
- He is putting his child first.
- The fact that Kezia is also allowed to rub her feet against her father's legs may also be significant as it suggests that Kezia's father understands his daughter.
- He is connecting with her.

- How important this connection is to Kezia' is noticeable by the fact that the anger he had shown towards her was a result of him having had to work so hard.
- It is also interesting that Mansfield ends the story with the line, "What a big heart you've got father dear."
- Mansfield is suggesting that through Kezia's father did not display his love till the end of the story, he does have the capacity to love his daughter like Mr Macdonald.
- However, it is difficult to say whether the love is continuous as Mansfield ends the story without the reader knowing the response of Kezia's father to his daughter.

