“Girl”

Introduction

In an endeavor to define an ideal woman, we compare two Literature works which are the Kincaid’s short story “Girl” and Jane Martin’s play, “Rodeo”. Comparing these two works, we see two contrasting definitions of an ideal woman as they are brought out in different settings. In the Kincaid’s short story, “Girl”, we notice for instance that a girl should live a humble life that is respectful to all the people and avoid wearing in such a manner that they could appear as a slut. On the other hand, to the contrast of this, in the Jane Martin’s play, “Rodeo”, we meet a very materialistic girl who wears in such a manner that is attractive to men so that she can gain material things. This essay will be comparing between these two, in a bid to define an ideal woman.

*Ideal woman in Kincaid’s short story “Girl”*

In the Kincaid’s short story “Girl”’ a mother is giving advice to her daughter at a very high speed. It is pretty sure that the mother does not even gasp through the whole session. She tells the girl about living a nice life that is admirable to everyone, about cooking in her home, about keeping herself clean, about how to handle men and also how to keep reputation from one astonishment to the other. This is in a bid to make her daughter grow into an admirable ideal woman to everyone. Although the place where all this takes place is not mentioned in the whole story, through the word rhythm and the girl specifics, portray that this takes place in the West Indies. Only twice that the daughter butts in to the mom’s stream of advice. One of the instances is where she was defending herself, “ but I don’t sing benna on Sunday at all and never in Sunday school”, and the second part is where she is posing a question that leads to the end of the text. Here were are getting the insight that an Ideal woman should always be very keen to listen and not interrupt when another person is talking to her. The other thing is that an ideal woman should always keep her words down when talking to her seniors.

In this story, we get the idea that an ideal woman should always be very hard working. In an advice, we see the daughter being told that, “We don't just mean the makeup and the high heels. We mean cleaning the house. The whole house. And looking [dainty](http://zeldalily.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/mopping_woman1-500x722.jpg%20) while doing it”. This was meant to show the daughter, in the effort of trying to become hard working, she should not only strive hard to be good looking physically, but all her environment should appear clean as well. In this story also, it is clear that being a woman is synonymous with housekeeping and also keeping the inhabitants of the house clean and also the environment. A woman, who does not achieve this goal according to this story, will be basically committing a social suicide. This is why these things that the mother tells the daughter to do so as to keep their lady card are always passed from the mother to the daughter in the form of a motherly advice. So also to be an ideal woman the story suggest that one has to perform these roles of passing these advice to their daughters.

In the “Girl” sexuality is taken to be a very big deal just as it is in the real life. A girl should always try as much as possible to refrain from that so as to avoid the danger of becoming a slut. This is a not to do thing for any ideal woman. It seems like anything from walking funny to fashion malfunction can lead you to this. In this story, the mother seems to know this from her personal experience, and in many occasions, she had the word slut thrown to her direction. So in order to mould the girl and save her from this situation, she gives her this advice that would see her become an ideal woman. All the ladies should walk this tightrope of appropriate sexuality carefully so that they could become better wives and ideal women from the mom’s advice.

# There is also the class and social standing view in this short story that an ideal woman should posses. This has been there since way back when someone was required to have way more shiny rocks than everyone else. In this story, it is not the shiny rocks alone, but the quality of the woman table setting, the color of one’s skin along with the evenness of the hem. In the colonial times where the British culture was always valued over the native one, the Antigua of a descent girl like the Kincaid are seen at the bottom of the hierarchy. If they allow themselves to be rung down one more time, then they will be seen to be out of the league. So a girl o rather a woman should always maintain high standards. It is very clear in this story that it is very easy to lose your social standing and also very hard to recollect yourself out of these situations. So it is important for one to be always careful not to lose the social standing. Hence to be an ideal woman, we should listen to the mom’s advice.

In this story also, we see the mother teaching the girl about the traditions. A tradition is crucial as it is said that it is how people keep their balance. It will help the girl to navigate the world. And make things easier for her to grow as an ideal and an upright woman. She should be very careful here as tradition could be outdated, plain dumb and stifling. Tradition will help the girl to grow to become a proper lady and consequently become an ideal woman. Traditions will also help a lady to keep any bad luck from finding her.

*Ideal woman definition in Jane Martin’s plays “Rodeo”*

On the other hand, to the contrary of all these advices in the “Girl”, the play by Jane martin, “Rodeo, we see it dominated by the desire to acquire material things. For instance we notice a girl by the name Lurlene becoming unsuitable for the Rodeo as she did not dress like a show girl and also wear material things. Also in the scene opening, there are several stereotypical props that are used to portray the cowboy image, beer drinking and hard working with a characteristic of playing music as an added touch. In most scenes, people are familiar with these kinds of traits being presented by men characters. But to the contrary, we find a tough smart and opinionated woman with a distinctively country name by Lurlune with a typical cowboy kind of nickname by Big eight. By digging into the true character of this woman, one will realize that she is not different from the average woman in today’s workforce. The lady is just feeling the discrimination and frustration and also the push out of the only lifestyle that she comprehends by “them” (1967). This is a contrary character to the mom’s advice to the girl, who advised her to avoid funny dressings so that she could not be identified as a slut. This was due to the changing traditions.

The most evident similarity that can be noticed in these two is the change in the traditions. The mom in the short story “Girl”, had warned the “Girl” to be more careful to the changes in the traditions. In the play, we find Big eight having a lot of problems adjusting to the employed changes. Although she is not adapting very well to the arriving sponsors, she is not all that comfortable with the changes in the dress codes. She does not even though comprehend that dressing women in fancy outfit would be a strategy of attracting audiences when the rodeo is merely supposed to be about the rides. Her believe is rooted in the thinking that it does not matter what one dresses but rather how she rides. She notices that the “Big crowds” (1667) is mostly made up of the city people in “designer jeans and day-glo Stetsons,” (1667) there ain’t hardly no ranch people, no farm people,” (1667) any more. As “these” came into the sport and take over, it was like a small company being overtaken and assimilated by a big company.

*Conclusion*

In these two literature works, the definition of an ideal woman is all the same but in different setting. In the short story, “Girl”, it portrays the ancient times when the women were constrained by many factors and the men were considered as the only bread winners with the woman being merely a domestic worker. In the play “Rodeo” we see that the setting was in the revolutionized world where the man and woman are all bread winners and they all struggle to make their world better through all means.

Reference

1. Kincaid’s short story “Girl”
2. Jane Martin’s play “Rodeo”