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How would you classify the mother's advice? Is it nurturing and supportive? Is it condemning and admonishing? Is it both? What does the nature of the mother's advice tell you about growing up as a woman in Antigua?

In the short story, "Girl", by Jamaica Kincaid, I see a mother who has gone a long way of being taught how to act as a lady in Antigua. In the first few sentences, we see pretty normal rules to go by and obey, these being to "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". We get to certain rules that seem a bit off but have some meaning towards them like to "When buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse, be sure that it doesn't have gum on it, because that way it won't hold up well after a wash". Lastly we get to the types of commands that are a little too far for a conversation with your daughter, at least to the extent that she describes it. She tells her daughter to not walk around on Sundays like a slut, then states that she is becoming one if she does not change how she is doing so now.

We see that the mother does not feel scared to go into deeper topics with her daughter, even when she seems to be fine with how she responds. With that in mind, the daughter responds very few times to all her mother says to her, twice in the whole story. While these commands and rules may tend to go astray from a rule that makes sense, the lack of questioning and response seems to indicate that the daughter has respect for the mother and what she is doing for her, to an extent. She does not even respond to the comment on being a slut, she responds to her rule on not

singing benna on Sundays. Does she agree with what her mother is saying about her becoming a slut? Does she notice this much wrong with her that she will stay quiet to most everything she orders her about, or is this coming from a place of respect and allowing her mother to teach her, even to an extent as such? I think so, and this answer can go two ways. Either she really is like this, with all these rules needing to be place on her and these actions needing to be reminded to her, or her mother has corrupted her mind to the point where she thinks she has become a child who is not a proper lady from the constant comments and rules here mother places on her. I am more into the point where I feel like the mother has been too commanding and hard on her and how she is.

There are some of these rules/comments that do support her but I cannot find a single one that is nurturing, if that makes sense. For instance, most of them are quite specific but it can indeed help her like she states how to catch a fish, how to find fresh bread by squeezing it, and to not eat fruit on streets so no flies can bother her. These do indeed help her in some cases but very few can be applied to something she does regularly like how to clean clothes, to sew, and to buy food. This is from a whole two pages of commands that the mother gives her and most of them do not help the average person at all.

Certain rules/comments can be found extreme, unnecessary, condemning, and admonishing like the ones that claim she is a slut for doing them. They can be from as simple as walking to sewing back a dress to avoid looking like a slut. It is just an awful view to see a daughter being verbally abused by her own mother into thinking that she is a bad person, but in reality, her mother has poor views on ways of living, but did it just start with her? We do not see it, but maybe this was a case of the grandmother having these views and placing them onto the mother. Could the mother have been given the same treatment that she gives to her own

daughter? I do believe so. The mother clearly has more of a connection to the daughter seeing as we see rules/commands being taught to her that would seem to be what the father should teach her. Such things being how to fish, and how to fight a bully are all taught by the mom, not the father. She is able to place the lifestyle of what she received onto her daughter since the father does not seem to have an input on the daughter's "way to live", meaning no feedback on how she does it comes her way. So, with that being said, the mothers advice would be both supportive, but would definitely lean more into an area of condescending and admonishing to the daughter's mind.

While we could go far back into the ways all their mothers and fathers may have taught their kids how to live, we get to see now what may be the underlying reason of why this way of living is accepted by the daughter. While I do not know much about Antigua, it seems the root of this sort of teaching may come with the fact that Antigua may be a dangerous place for a woman. For instance, the way the mother comments on the little things she does as being a closer step into becoming a slut may sound awful to the audience at first glance, but seeing more and more context clues throughout the story we see deeper meaning into all the ways the mother has tried to protect her daughter. For all we know, this could be a very calm place where everyone is safe and that the mother is being very harsh on her daughter for the things she does. Looking deeper into the possibilities of where they live, this could also be a place where women are not treated equally and in fact, abused, sexually assaulted, and attacked for being a woman. The mother even comments on how to behave and not seem slutty in front of men who she does not know, meaning being able to present herself to people and see someone who does not want anything harmful coming her way. The reason she keeps commenting on the things she does as being slutty can be because she wants her daughter to be as safe as possible, allowing her daughter to

go out with the lowest chance of being abused just for food or some other small thing. Now, her methods of teaching her daughter how to be a lady may start to make more sense as we go down the list of rules/commands.

Next, we see how teaching her the way to fight a bully makes sense to be able to protect yourself, but the mother also teaches her the way bullies will act to her, implying that this may or will happen to her and that she must be prepared for it. This implies the idea that Antigua may be a dangerous place for people, especially women. Maybe this is why the mother seems to be teaching her daughter most things, because for all we know, she may have been a victim of abuse and we are just seeing the comments of the mother as condescending and unnecessary. With this idea of what may be the background of this story, we see a mother who wants the best for her daughter, the best chance of living the life with as little problems as possible. Sure, they may come out as extreme and hurtful to the daughter, but the mother cares for her daughter so much that the only way for her daughter to understand what can happen is the hard truth of life in Antigua.

My point still stands in which the mother has some level of teaching that can try to be more understandable to her daughter, but looking deeper into the context of the background and area, we start to picture a mother who truly cares for her daughter, who loves her daughter, and wants nothing but the life her daughter deserves. "Girl" by Jamaica Kincaid, I do believe has become one of my favorite readings I have read in this class so far. From my initial comments on the story, to having a complete turn around on the possible situation of this family, I was able to put to work the skills of deeper thought and to bring even the smallest words to paint a whole new picture. This right here, is a clear cut example of just seeing something at first glance may take away the very message of the creator, when just looking further, can make you see it.

Works Cited

Kincaid, Jamaica. "“Girl," by Jamaica Kincaid.” *The New Yorker*, The New Yorker, 19 June 1978, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1978/06/26/girl>.