“Girl” essay one

The story that I am going to use for this essay one is “Girl”, by Jamaica Kincaid. You can’t really tell whether or not it is the author speaking or a fictional character speaking, because the story does not give you that much information. It makes a difference for the reader because it makes the reader wonder more about the story. It also makes the reader wonder whether or not Jamaica Kincaid, the author, had this really happen to her, or if it is just a fictional one. I will state what I think are three important words and three important quotes from this one and I will try to connect them. In the story “Girl”, by Jamaica Kincaid, a girl gets told what to do by a mother/grandmother figure.

A summary of what happens in this one would be that an older lady talks to a younger one in kind of a run~on conversation, with the young girl only interrupting the older one two times. You get the impression that the older lady is the mother of the younger one, or her grandmother. This seems to be true because several times, the older lady warns the younger one about “the slut you are so bent on becoming” (Kincaid one). I would assume only a maternal figure such as a mother or a grandmother speaking to a daughter or a granddaughter would use such strong words like these ones. The older lady talks to the younger one about all kinds of rules and all kinds of ways to behave like a “proper young woman” in society. You get the impression that this story was written about an earlier time period, such as maybe the 1930s or the 1940s or the 1950s. The reason you would think this one is because some of the things the older lady tells the younger one are somewhat outdated, such as “when buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse”, or “on Sundays try to walk like a lady” (Kincaid one). These ones are outdated because girls wear more comfortable clothes nowadays, even when they go to church on Sundays. Some people do not even go to church on Sundays, although they should be going there. Also, people do not usually make blouses or other clothes anymore. Most people nowadays buy their clothes from a store and they pay for them. You also know that the older lady and the younger one are both from the Caribbean, because they mention “benna” (calypso songs from that one) and they mention some of the Caribbean foods (Kincaid one).

The 3 key words or terms from this story I would say are important ones would be “girl”, “slut”, and “benna” (Kincaid one). The word “girl” is an important one because for one, it is the title of the story, and also, it shows that the younger lady in the story is not quite an adult yet. She is still probably a teenager; she is still a “girl”. That is why the older lady thinks she has to teach the younger one all of these things to her. She wants to teach her to do well in society, because she is still just a girl; she is still learning about what women are supposed to do. The word “slut” is an important one because the older lady continuously warns the younger one about “the slut you are so bent on becoming”, indicating that the younger one wants to be like a “slut” (Kincaid one). The younger lady does not want to know about or she does not care about all of the things that the older one is telling her to do. And also, the word “benna” is an important one because it lets the reader know where the older lady and the younger one are both from, because it is a word meaning “calypso songs”, which is the music of the Caribbean, which is the culture of both the older lady and the younger one (Kincaid one).

One important quote in this one would be “but I do not sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school” (Kincaid one). This quote is an important one because it shows the culture that they are from; the Caribbean one. It also gives us more information about the girl, saying that she goes to Sunday school, and it shows the reader that the older lady was mistaken whenever she thought that the younger one was singing benna in Sunday school. Another important one would be when the older lady says “like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming” (Kincaid one). This quote is an important one because it shows that the young lady does not want to listen to or she does not care about the things that the older one is telling her to do. She wants to do her own things in ways that the older lady thinks is like being a “slut” (Kincaid one). She wants to be more modern, and the older lady wants her to be more like her in the “older time”. It also shows you that this story was not written for the modern era. This story deals with a time period earlier than the current one. Lastly, the third important one would be “you mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker will not let near the bread?” (Kincaid 2). This quote is an important one because it is the last one, and also because it kind of evokes a “double meaning” in the story. When the older lady tells the younger one to make sure to feel the bread from the baker, I think the older lady was talking about bread and the baker and saying it literally. However, when the younger one says, “but what if the baker will not let me feel the bread?’, I think she is talking about something different; it may be a sexual reference (Kincaid 2). Jamaica Kincaid (the author) does not really say who meant which one, but this is what I think was meant by the older lady and by the younger one. I think that everyone who reads this one may have a different opinion about what was meant in the last three lines of the story, and this is why this last quote, (really all three of them) are very important ones. The way that these three quotes are connected is that they all have to do with the older lady telling the younger one about how to behave properly in the society and in the culture and in the time in which they live in. They all refer to things that are particular to their culture and to their society in their time, which is different than the current one.

The culture expressed in this story is the Caribbean one. I do not really think this particular culture has anything to do with my own one. I do not go to Sunday school, and I am not really familiar with Caribbean customs and Caribbean ways. However, some of the ways in which their culture is similar to my one is within some of the things that the older lady tells the younger one to do. Some examples would be the one about making clothes, which people in those days had to do in whichever culture that they were coming from, and the one about “the baker” and “the bread” (Kincaid 2), which is something anyone would do or could do, whether the reference to “the baker” and “the bread” (Kincaid 2) is a literal one or whether it is a sexual one.

In conclusion, this is why I think these phrases and words in particular are the most important ones in this one. I think this story is a very interesting one because it gives you a little bit of a look inside what life was like back then at the time that this one was written. It is interesting and fun to see how different life was in their time compared to this one.