

Chapter 4: Chivvy

Working with the Poem

Question 1:

Discuss these questions in small groups before you answer them.

(i) When is a grown-up likely to say this?

Don't talk with your mouth full.

(ii) When are you likely to be told this?

Say thank you.

(iii) When do you think an adult would say this?

No one thinks you are funny.

Answer:

(i) A grown-up is likely to say so when the child is talking in the middle of a meal.

(ii) A child is likely to be told so when somebody has given him a gift or offered him something to eat.

(iii) An adult would say so when the child has done some mischief and is finding it funny and hence, annoying everybody else.

Question 2:

The last two lines of the poem are not prohibitions or instructions. What is the adult now asking the child to do? Do you think the poet is suggesting that this is unreasonable? Why?

Answer:

In the last two lines of the poem, the adult is asking the child if he cannot make up his own mind about anything. The poet is suggesting that this is unreasonable because on the one hand the adult gives the child all sorts of instructions through constant nagging and on the other hand, the adult asks him to make up his own mind. The two actions are contradictory. All the child's actions on which he gets instructions from the adult to not to do it that way are actually from his own mind. That is what he thinks and therefore, does. However, the adults do not find those actions appropriate and hence, instruct him to do certain things in a certain way. The poet is suggesting that if the adults find the child's actions, which are a result of his thinking in his mind, incorrect, then they should not ask him if he cannot make up his own mind about anything. Or if this is what they want, then they should stop instructing and correcting him.

Question 3:

Why do you think grown-ups say the kind of things mentioned in the poem? Is it important that they teach children good manners, and how to behave in public?

Answer:

Grown-ups say the kind of things mentioned in the poem because they want their children to learn good manners and how to behave in public. It might seem like constant nagging to the kid as he/she does not care about manners or hygiene. However, it is necessary for the parents to teach him/her good manners for his/her own benefits. Actions such as picking nose, pointing or staring at someone, making noises, and dragging the feet are all bad manners. If parents would not teach the child good manners, then the child would not turn into a good and respectable person. Etiquettes such as saying thank you or sorry are part of a good behaviour

and it reflects on the personality of that person. Therefore, it is very important for parents to teach their children good manners and behaviour. However, they can achieve their objective of inculcating good manners in their children in a more understanding and loving way so that it does not turn into nagging.

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