

MOTHER'S DAY

By J. B. Priestley

Value Points

The job of a mother in a family is actually a twenty four hour job and the mother does not have the luxury of even enjoying any weekend, any holiday.

The popular conception is that only those who are in service have to work hard. The mother who stays at home has a leisurely life.

The other members in the family always take the work that the mother does at home for granted and gives no credit for that.

The children in a family go on to believe that the job of the mother is to keep herself in the beck and call of her children and so is the thinking of the husband of the family towards his wife.

The mother needs to be harsh and assertive every now and then with her children and husband, reminding them that the work she does is a round the clock work and is valued much more than theirs.

If the mother of the family turns out to be too soft with her attitude towards her children and husband, then the children are bound to be led astray and spoilt as is the case with Cyril and Doris Pearson.

Always a little bit of caution, cold looks, strong words and body language from the mother help the atmosphere of the family ordered and the health wholesome.

Short Answer Questions

1. What is Mrs. Fitzgerald's opinion about Charley Spence?

Answer: Mrs. Pearson opines that Charlie Spence is buck-toothed and half-witted and she would not like to be seen dead with a fellow like Charlie Spence.

2. What is Doris' idea what might have happened that made their mother behave so strangely?

Answer: Doris suggested to her brother Cyril that their mother could have hit her head against something and got a concussion and therefore she behaved in a strange way.

3. What does Mrs. Pearson tell George Pearson what people's conception about him in the Club is?

Answer: Mrs. Pearson, who is actually Mrs. Fitzgerald, tell her husband that he is a standing joke for the other club members and they call him Pompy-ompy Pearson as they think he is very slow and pompous.

4. What is Cyril's prime fault as expressed by Mrs. Pearson?

Answer: According to Mrs. Pearson, Cyril spends too much time and money at greyhound races and dirt tracks and ice shows.

5. What is Mrs. Fitzgerald's suggestion to Mrs. Pearson how she could maintain that atmosphere of discipline and realization that she created?

Answer: Mrs. Fitzgerald suggested that Mrs. Pearson was not to start any explaining or apologizing or it would spoil the good work that was done. She was asked to just give her children and husband a look, or a tone of voice off and on to suggest that she might be tough with them if she wanted to be.

Long Questions:

1. What are the issues that the play, 'Mother's Day' highlights?

Answer: The play 'Mother's Day' basically highlights the different real aspects related to the status of the mother in a family. In most families the mother is a house wife who stays at home while the father and in some cases the children go out for works. The popular concept is that only those who are in service have to work hard and therefore they need weekends and holidays for taking rest and after coming from work they need to be waited upon by the mother who is seen as living a life of leisure. The reality is that the job of mother in a family is a twenty four hour harsh job for which she cannot have the luxury of even enjoying any weekend and holidays.

That is the case with Mrs. Pearson in this play. Her two grown-up children Cyril and Doris Pearson and her husband George Pearson always take the work that Mrs. Pearson does at home for granted and gives absolutely no credit to her for that and they want her to be at their beck and call. However it is Mrs. Pearson whose love and care and concern and soft attitude and lack of any assertion at all towards those three members of her family that has created trouble for her and has spoiled them perfectly.

The mother needs to be harsh and assertive every now and then with her children and husband, reminding them that the work she does is a round the clock work and is valued much more than theirs. If the mother of the family turns out to be too soft with her attitude towards her children and husband, then the children are bound to be led astray and spoiled as is the case with Cyril and Doris Pearson. Ultimately Mrs. Fitzgerald's idea of changing bodies and personality with Mrs. Pearson brings reform to the errant family members.

2. How does Mrs. Pearson reform her spoiled family members?

Answer:

Value Points:

- Mrs. Fitzgerald is Mrs. Pearson's neighbour.
- She is domineering, practical, quite opposite to the character of Mrs. Pearson.
- Mrs. Pearson is soft, unassertive, too fond of her children and husband.
- She knows about their mistakes but cannot be harsh with them.
- Mrs. Fitzgerald compels her friend to agree to change body with her with magic to straighten her family members.
- So they change bodies.
- Mrs. Pearson first takes on her daughter Doris whom she scolds for her erratic behaviour.
- Next she takes on her son Cyril whom she scolds scathingly for preparing to go out for late night parties.
- Ultimately, she attends to her husband who has acquired very bad name in his club where he spends most of his time/
- Mrs. Pearson's behaviour is puzzling for the three confused family members.

- The three ultimately are made to be aware of Mrs. Pearson's actual status in her home.
- They promise to reform themselves.
- Mrs. Pearson and Mrs. Fitzgerald change back their bodies.

3. Make character sketches of Doris, Cyril and George Pearson.

-Doris is perfectly spoiled./ wants to be waited upon by her mother/takes no permission for going out with her boyfriend who according to her mother is worthless/ Weeps in every possible opportunity/highly immature.

-Cyril is equally pampered and immature/ wants to be waited upon by his mother/engrossed in outdoor life/ late night partying and betting on horse racing/

-George Pearson is haughty, pompous, arrogant and self important and uncivil/ careless of domestic duties/ unconcerned about his wife's wishes and pain/ engrossed in an outdoor life/ spends his time in the club where he has got a bad impression unknown to him/ ultimately is brought to the reality of his actual social situation.

4. What is Magic Realism? How has the dramatist used the device of Magic Realism in making the plot of the play believable for the reader?

Answer:

Value Points:

Magic realism is a modern method used in fiction where magical elements are intermixed with the realistic description of everyday affair in such a way that the magical elements are taken as realistic description which help in emphasizing some basic aspect where the writer wants to give focus.

Popularized by writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Salman Rushdie, Milan Kundera etc.

In this play, Mrs. Fitzgerald changes her body with Mrs. Pearson, something which is impossible in real life.

However, the reader does not object to this fantastic aspect in the plot line because this element has been used in such a way in the plotline that the reader overlooks the impossibility as his real focus is the real issues of the play which is highlighted by the dramatist.

5. Discuss some of the humorous situations of the play.

Answer:

Value Points:

- First is the scene where Doris is scolded for preparing to go out with Charley Spence.
- Mrs. Pearson's comments on Charley Spence and Doris' reaction to them/ Her weeping
- Doris and Cyril's hushed discussion between them as to the possible cause of -her mother's strange behaviour
- The scene where Mr. Pearson finds his wife drinking wine for the first time in his life and Mrs. Pearson's answers to his questions.
- Mrs. Pearson's comments about what others think about George in the club and George's reaction to them.
- Mrs. Pearson's threatening to beat up her husband as reaction to her husband's uncivil behaviour towards Mrs. Fitzgerald.

Questions for Practice:

Long Questions:

1. Do the two youths in the story exemplify typical youths of their age group? Or they have much more individuality?
2. What is the universal aspect of the story in the play?
3. What are the aspects of European society that the play mirrors?
4. Do you feel that Mrs. Pearson will really be able to keep her family members on track or you feel Mrs. Fitzgerald's good work will be wasted in due course of time?

Short Questions:

1. Is the title of the play proper? What other titles you can imagine for the play?
2. What do Mrs. Fitzgerald's magic words signify about the origin of those words?
3. How do Cyril and Doris justify their behaviour?
4. How does Mrs. Fitzgerald prove to Mr. Pearson that what she has opined about his actual status in the Clun is in fact true, a common knowledge?
5. What is the reaction of the Pearson youths and the father towards each other's predicament?

Value based Question:

1. Do you approve of whatever Mrs. Fitzgerald does for reforming the errant Pearson family?