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AM I A CHILD ?

Am I a child or an adult ?
 No ! Not a child now - my dolls are gone;
 My dream world has rippled¹ away.
 I am tall, I understand adult talk,
 But does that mean that I am an adult ?

Am I an adult or a child ?
 No ! Not an adult – I couldn't look after myself;
 The understanding is just not there.
 I pay a half fare on a bus to school,
 But does that mean that I am a child ?

Am I a child or an adult ?
 No ! Not a child now - it's not a teddy I love;
 His cherished² position is taken.
 Just because my toys have lost their value,
 Does that mean that I am an adult?

Am I an adult or a child ?
 No ! Not an adult - I do not see
 The reasons for adult disputes³;
 I am safe in non- understanding.
 But does that mean that I am a child?

Well, am I a child or an adult ?
 No ! Not one or the other now;
 One pace in front of childhood,
 And one behind an adult.
 Soon I shall stride⁴ into a new world,
 The world of adult life.



 **Margaret Lawrence**

1. ripple - /'rɪpl/(v) - to move or to make something move in very small waves
2. cherish - /'tʃerɪʃ/(v) - protect and care for someone or something
3. dispute - /dɪ'spju:t/(n) - a disagreement between two people, groups or countries
4. stride - /straɪd/(v) - to walk with long steps in a particular direction

About the poem

In this simple but beautiful poem Margaret Lawrence traces the feelings of youngster who has just left behind childhood but has not yet stepped into adulthood. (such a youngster is called an 'adolescent'.) This youngster's childhood fantasies are gone and the childhood toys fascinate no longer. The adolescent has started taking interest in the adults' talk but does not yet understand why the adults have disputes. He or she is not yet mature enough and needs to be looked after. But soon the youngster is going to step into the new world of adulthood. Expressed here, though not in so many words, is both a twinge of regret in the passing away of the childhood and air of expectation in the approaching adulthood.

EXERCISES

Word Power

(a) Match these words with their meanings :

- | | | |
|---------|---|---|
| ripple | - | to walk somewhere quickly with long steps |
| cherish | - | the distance you move when you take a single step |
| dispute | - | to protect and care for someone or something that is loved very much. |
| stride | - | to move or to make something move in very small waves |
| pace | - | a serious disagreement |

(b) Write antonyms of the following words :

- | | | |
|----------|---|-------|
| lost | - | _____ |
| adult | - | _____ |
| behind | - | _____ |
| life | - | _____ |
| love (n) | - | _____ |
| half | - | _____ |
| now | - | _____ |
| away | - | _____ |

tall - _____
new - _____

How Much Have I Understood ?

(a) Answer these questions in one or two sentences :

- (1) What do you mean by 'my dream world' ?
- (2) What does the poet find herself unable to see ?
- (3) What will happen to the poet soon ?
- (4) Write any two lines of the poem you like most.

(b) Answer the following questions in three to four sentences :

- (1) Write the things that indicate that the poet is still a child.
- (2) Write the things that indicate that the poet is on the threshold of an adulthood.
- (3) The poet is unable to understand the reasons of the disputes among adults. Why? Think and answer.
- (4) Write the central idea of the poem.

Listening Time

Listen to the lines of the poem read by your teacher and supply the missing words:

- (a) Am I an _____ or a child ?

No ! Not an adult - I do _____ see

The _____ for adult disputes;

I am _____ in non-understanding,

- (b) Am I a child or an adult ?

Not ! not a _____ now - it's not a _____ I love;

His cherished _____ is taken,

Just _____ my toys have lost their _____

Does that mean that I _____ an adult ?

Speaking Time

Using the given words, speak a few sentences :

doll, teddy, dispute, honest, parents, child, look after, friend, responsibility, adult, games, play, helping, dream world, marks, doubt.

e.g. A child plays with a doll and a teddy. He/she remains in his/her dream world till he/she becomes an adult. His/her parents look after him/her.

Writing Time

1. Make a list of things (games / food items / toys etc.) You liked when you were quite small and the things you like to do now. Compare it with your friends.
2. Write the poem 'Am I a Child' in your own words.

Things to do

1. How can you help the adults in solving their disputes ? List the ways in which you can help the adult.
2. Discuss with your friends and list their views on the following :
 - (a) Things that we gain or learn from our adults.
 - (b) Things that we don't like but we have to listen to.
3. Collect information about the faculties of studies pertaining to different careers.



Note : The teacher should arrange a debate among the students on the subject, "Adolescence : the age for building our character and career" or other such topics.