

Student's Name or Students' Names

Professor's Name

Course Name and Number

Assignment Due Date

### Miss Brill by Katherine Mansfield

*Miss Brill* is a short story authored by Katherine Mansfield. The story was first published in 1920. Miss Brill, an English teacher, lives alone near a public park in a French town. Every Sunday, without fail, she goes down to the park and sits on a bench to look at the people who come there. When seated on that bench, she observes the people seated beside her and those that pass by. She imagines them all as actors in a play she is part of. She is very observant and notices little details about the people she sees. When she notices their flaws, it boosts her self-esteem in that it makes her forget her shortcomings.

Her observance and attention to detail are evident throughout the story. She notices little detail about the band that plays in the park. She thinks to herself, "Wasn't the conductor wearing a new coat, too? She was sure it was new." (Mansfield 183). She does not know the conductor personally, but she notices these little things about him. Miss Brill likes to familiarize herself with such minor details to escape reality. She is growing older and is yet unmarried. She is scared of her loneliness and the prospect of growing old. This is evident in her disdain towards the elderly couple seated on the bench. Miss Brill dislikes how the old lady would not accept what the older man said to her. The numbness of their conversation annoyed her. She thinks to herself, "He'd suggested everything... No, nothing would please her" (Mansfield 184).

Miss Brill lives in a fantasy world of routine and familiarity. It is her only escape from solitude and pain. She has grown so accustomed to this life that she loves it so much. The author

says, "Oh, how fascinating it was!... How she loved sitting here, watching it all!... It was exactly like a play" (Mansfield 186). Despite this seemingly content life, she is afraid of what she is. She realizes this when she notes that she cannot bring herself to tell her pupils what she did on Sunday. And when the young couple sits beside her, and she overhears how they judge her, she can no longer hide from herself. The boy says, "But why? Because of that stupid old thing at the end there?" asked the boy. "Why does she come here at all - who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home?" (Mansfield 188).

Miss Brill's life is a thing that is relevant even in today's world. Many people live a life of pretense, hiding their pain in fantasies that can quickly fall apart. Many people sink into depression by living fictitious lives that are not fulfilling. Others resort to drugs and alcohol to mask their reality. However, all these are fleeting. Eventually, the truth sets in on them to face reality and accept who they are.

I felt sorry for Miss Brill. She has to resort to fantasizing about her life as a play to hide from her true self. It gave me a better understanding of loneliness, sorrow, and depression. I would encourage anyone to read the story because it can help them gain a fresh perspective on these issues. Depression is an ever-present reality that the world must come to terms with. Many people are Miss Brills. They lead pretentious lives and avoid facing reality and accepting who they are. The sooner they make their realizations, the sooner they can change. The short story is a masterful piece of art that truly captures the reality of our society. It subtly reveals what no one is ready to admit. Such kind of work is desperately needed in our communities.

Work Cited

Mansfield, K. *The garden-party and other stories*. Century, 1988.

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