

11th Standard- English

Snapshots-Mother's Day Summary

'Mother's Day' is a hilarious drawing room comedy by J.B. Priestley. It raises a serious issue and deals with it in a humorous manner. The comic undertone, however, does not belittle the importance of the issues raised in the play.

The play centres round Mrs Annie Pearson, a devoted wife and doting mother. She is a pleasant but worried looking woman in her forties. Her neighbour, Mrs Fitzgerald, is a fortune teller. She tells Mrs Pearson to make up her mind and assert herself if she wants to be the mistress of her own house and the boss of her own family. At present Mrs Pearson is reduced to the status of an unpaid domestic servant who does all the domestic chores without even being requested for them or thanked later on. She is taken for granted and ordered about.

Mrs Fitzgerald tells her that husbands, sons and daughters should take notice of wives and mothers, not giving them orders and treating like dirt. Mrs Pearson endures the ill-treatment because she is very fond of her husband and children though they are quite thoughtless and selfish. She tries her best to have it out with them but does not know how to begin. She wants to get tea things ready as the members of her family are about to drop in. Mrs Fitzgerald asks her to let them wait or look after themselves for once.

Since Mrs Pearson is too soft towards her family, Mrs Fitzgerald offers a way out. She suggests a change of personalities for a short duration.

Mrs Pearson is doubtful about the success of the plan, but yields. With the help of magic spell learnt in the East, Mrs Fitzgerald carries out an interchange of personalities. Now Mrs Pearson having the personality of her neighbour, becomes bold and dominating and Mrs Fitzgerald is nervous and fluttering.

Doris Pearson, a pretty girl in her early twenties is the first to face the cool and incisive mother. As usual, Doris, the spoilt girl, asks her mother about her yellow silk dress. Mrs Pearson keeps on smoking. Doris is astounded.

However, she asks if they are having tea in the kitchen. Mrs Pearson tells her politely to have it wherever she likes. Doris angrily asks her if it isn't ready. Mrs Pearson tells her that she has had what she wanted. She surprises her with the remark that she might go out later and get a square meal at the Clarendon. When Doris angrily asks her mother again whether she has ironed her yellow silk dress, Mrs Pearson tells her that she puts in twice the hours she does and gets no wages or thanks for it. She criticizes her boyfriend Charlie Spence for having buckteeth and being halfwitted. She tells Doris frankly that at her age she would have found somebody better than Charlie Spence.

Now it is the turn of Cyril Pearson, the spoilt brat, who asks for tea as soon as he enters. Since he has got a busy night that night, he asks his mother if she has put his things out. He reminds her of her promise. She tells him that she doesn't like mending. He objects to her talking like that. Mrs Pearson gives him a bit of her mind. She tells him that they all do talk like that. If there's something at home he doesn't want to do, he doesn't do it.

If it is something at his work place, he gets the union to bar it. She says that she has also joined the movement. She then asks if they have any stout left. She goes to the kitchen to bring a hottle, as she wants to drink.

Cyril and Doris go into a huddle and whisper about the behaviour of their mother. Doris states that she could not believe her eyes as she found her mother smoking and playing cards when she came in. Cyril had asked her if she was feeling off-colour and she said she wasn't. Doris observes that she is suddenly all different. She made her cry not aly by what she said but by the way she said it and looked. Doris thinks that she has a concussiuon as a result of falling. Cyril asks if she has become slightly crazy.

Meanwhile Mrs Pearson comes back. She is carr ing a bottle of stout and half-filled glass. Cyril and Doris try to stop their guffawing and giggling. Irs Pearson regards them with contempt and asks them to behave according to their age. She finds nothing funny in their jokes. Doris is tearful again. She wants to know what they have done. Mrs Pearson at once tells them that they have done nothing. They simply come in, ask for something, go out again and then come back when there's nowhere else to go. Cyril tells her aggressively that he'll find something to eat himself if she won't get tea ready. Mrs Pearson tells him to help himself. When Cyril and Doris say that they have been working all day. Mrs Pearson says that she has also done her eight hours. She further says that now it will be forty-hour week for all and she will have har two days off at the weekend.

George Pearson, a solemn, self-important and pompous looking man about fifty unters. He notices Doris in tears and then his wife sipping stout.

He is bewildered at her behaviour. He informs her that he won't have any tea as there is a special snooker match at night the club and a bit of supper. Mrs Pearson informs him that there isn't any tea. He is surprised at her answer. She tells him that people laugh at him at the club and call him Pompy-Ompy Pearson because he is slow and pompous. George is horrified. She wants to know why he wants to spend so much time at a place where t'ey are always laughing at him behind his back and calling his name. He leaves his wife alone at home each night. George is dazed and asks Cyril for confirmation. He staggers as Cyril confirms it.

Cyril tells his mother that it is not fair of her to hurt his or his father's feelings. Mrs Pearson remarks that sometimes it does people good to have their feelings hurt. The truth oughtn't to hurt anybody for long. If he didn't go to the club so often, perhaps people would stop laughing at him. Cyril doubts it. His mother tells him that he knows nothing. He spends a lot of time and money at grey hound races, dirt tracks and ice shows.

Mrs Fitzgerald is at the door. Cyril calls her 'silly old bag'. Mrs Pearson tells him to ask her in and address her properly Mrs Fitzgerald is shocked to see how Mrs Pearson is treating her husband and children.

George re-enters and sits aside in arm chair smoking his pipe. Mrs Pearson takes George to task for being impolite. George flares up as she rebukes him in the presence of their neighbour. He asks her if she has gone mad. Mrs Pearson threatens to slap his face if he says that again. George is intimidated. She mockingly asks him to leave for the club.

All this is too much for Mrs Fitzgerald (with Mrs Pearson's personality) to bear. She requests Mrs Fitzgerald for a reversal to the original state. With the chanting of the magic spell, they regain their original personalities. As a parting advice, Mrs Fitzgerald asks Mrs Pearson to be a bit strict with her looks and tone sometimes to suggest that she might be tough with them if she wanted to. This formula will work. Mrs Pearson says that she wants them to stop at home sometimes, give her a hand with supper and play a nice game of rummy. Mrs Fitzgerald is about to leave. She is glad to see Mrs Pearson handling her family firmly. The trick works and all the members of the family agree to do whatever she says.

