

Explore the role of children in the novel 'The English Teacher'

One of the roles of children in 'The English Teacher' is the way they often bring adults together. For example, Leela prevents Susila and Krishna from having an argument by asking 'Are you fighting?' prompting the adults to stop.

Comment [K1]: Clear 'straight-in' start and good opening sentence which makes the point of this paragraph clear.

Comment [K2]: This point, although valid, is too short and more examples of children uniting adults are needed to make it convincing

Additionally, children are also presented as something to worry about. This is shown by Narayan making both Susila and Krishna constantly anxious over the state of their child. For example, Susila says as she and Krishna are going out 'If she starts crying no one can stop her.' (the implication being that only the mother of a child can comfort her daughter). The fact that Susila comments on this as she is going shows the importance of Leela in her life and the way she worries about her. Similarly, Krishna is very much the same, however, he spoils Leela more than worries about her, this is highlighted by Krishna wanting to give Leela 'just a little of his tiffin.' This daily routine also shows how much he thinks of Leela with 'mild affection' and this 'mild' liking for his own daughter turns into anxiousness as he worries that the food she is eating will make her 'sick'.

Comment [K3]: True, but a slightly strange point as it doesn't sound like a very positive thing – on closer reading the point seems to be about how children create love as they prompt the adults to love them, this 'source of love' idea may have been a better way to make this point

Comment [K4]: Nice explanatory phrase

Comment [K5]: Good detailed explanations following the quotation

Moreover, in 'The English Teacher' children are also sources of innocence and joy. This is especially apparent at the Headmaster's school where he remarks children are a 'real source of joy.' and occupies many of his hours to make books for them. Additionally, the joy that children exude is made apparent by Narayan's long lists of images about the school with connotations of happiness. Narayan may have made children such a source of innocence and joy to contrast with the adults in the book and the less imaginative ideas that they have.

Comment [K6]: It would be better here to point out that Krishna has moved on from the merely 'mild' affection he felt for Leela at the start of the novel and now truly loves her.

Comment [K7]: Good use of connectives to link points together

Comment [K8]: Clear topic sentences make the point of this paragraph really clear

Comment [K9]: Good smooth use of quotations

Comment [K10]: Good use of connectives to help develop this point by adding more ideas

Comment [K11]: A specific quotation is definitely needed here to support his claim

Comment [K12]: Good use of a tentative phrase to make it clear that this is an adventurous idea

Comment [K13]: A really good point that would be great if it were supported by a quotation but that cuts to the heart of the matter and links nicely to the idea that they are the real teachers

Comment [K14]: Good use of speech marks to make it clear that this is an informal phrase.

Comment [K15]: Again, the point is well developed using a connective

Another important role for children, especially Leela, in the novel is the way they are the only beings keeping Krishna emotionally 'alive' as his 'one aim in life is to make sure that she [Leela] did not feel the absence of her mother.' indicating that Leela is the only person giving Krishna a purpose. Similarly, children also stop Krishna from committing suicide as he implores god to 'send me to those [funeral] fires' and he only stops himself by the thought of 'The child! The child! Leela.'

Comment [K16]: Good personal evaluation and saving this point until last helps create a sense of conclusion

However, although children have many important roles within the novel, the most important is the one they hold as teachers. The Headmaster states that adults 'can learn a great deal' from children and that only after becoming 'qualified' can adults 'enter their world' showing how children can teach adults other lessons like being open-minded and that questions are worth asking even if they do not have obvious answers. This is one of the lessons that Leela teaches Krishna through her constant questions such as 'Why are you closing your eyes?' and 'Why is that door closed?' These questions teach Krishna to develop his way of thinking so that he can answer questions that adults have never thought to ask.

Comment [K17]: Good smooth use of quotations – the original quotation is broken up so that it fits sensibly into this sentence

Comment [K18]: It would have been brilliant if a specific example of these kinds of questions had been given – the key thing is that Krishna begins challenging routines, challenging the assumptions that work should be a 'pain' and challenging the rules that everyone else lays down for him about acceptable behaviour. Essentially he realises that it's ok to do what you want without fear of what other people will think.