

QUESTIONS

1. What can the reader infer about Montresor's social position and character from hints in the text? What evidence does the text provide that Montresor is an unreliable narrator?
2. Who is the auditor, the "You," addressed in the first paragraph of "The Cask of Amontillado"? When is the story being told? Why is it being told? How does your knowledge of the auditor and the occasion influence the effect the story has on you?
3. What devices does Poe use to create and heighten the suspense in the story? Is the outcome ever in doubt?



JAMAICA KINCAID

(b. 1949)

Girl

Raised in poverty by her homemaker mother and carpenter stepfather on the small Caribbean island of Antigua, Elaine Potter Richardson was sent to the United States to earn her own living at age seventeen, much like the protagonists of her first novels, *Annie John* (1983) and *Lucy* (1990). Working as an au pair and receptionist, she earned her high-school equivalency degree and studied photography at the New School for Social Research and, briefly, Franconia College in New Hampshire. Returning to New York, she took the name of a character in a George Bernard Shaw play, at least in part out of resentment toward her mother, with whom she had once been very close. After a short stint as a freelance journalist, Kincaid worked as a regular contributor to the *New Yorker* from 1976 until 1995, in 1979 marrying its editor's son, composer Allen Shawn, with whom she would eventually move to Bennington, Vermont. "Girl," her first published story, appeared in the *New Yorker* in 1978 and was later republished in her first collection, *At the Bottom of the River* (1983). Subsequent novels include *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996), paradoxically the least autobiographical of her books, and *Mr. Potter* (2002), a fictionalized account of her efforts to understand the biological father she never knew. Kincaid's equally impressive nonfiction includes *My Brother* (1997), a memoir inspired by her youngest brother's death from AIDS, and *A Small Place* (1988), an essay exploring the profound economic and psychological impact of Antigua's dependence on tourism.

Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry; don't walk barehead in the hot sun; cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil; soak your little cloths right after you take them off; when buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse, be sure that it doesn't have gum on it, because that way it won't hold up well after a wash; soak salt fish overnight before you cook it; is it true that you sing benna¹ in Sunday school?; always eat your food in such a way that it won't turn someone else's stomach; on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming; don't sing benna in Sunday school; you mustn't speak to wharf-rat boys, not even to give directions; don't eat fruits on the street—flies will follow you; *but I don't sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school*; this is how to sew on a button; this is how to make a buttonhole for the button you have just sewed on; this is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming; this is how you iron your father's khaki shirt so that it doesn't have a crease; this is how you iron your father's khaki pants so that they don't have a crease; this is how you grow okra—far from the house, because okra tree harbors red ants; when you are growing dasheen, make sure it gets plenty of water or else it makes your throat itch when you are eating it; this is how you sweep a corner; this is how you sweep a whole house; this is how you sweep a yard; this is how you smile to someone you don't like too much; this is how you smile to someone you don't like at all; this is how you smile to someone you like completely; this is how you set a table for tea; this is how you set a table for dinner; this is how you set a table for dinner with an important guest; this is how you set a table for lunch; this is how you set a table for breakfast; this is how to behave in the presence of men who don't know you very well, and this way they won't recognize immediately the slut I have warned you against becoming; be sure to wash every day, even if it is with your own spit; don't squat down to play marbles—you are not a boy, you know; don't pick people's flowers—you might catch something; don't throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all; this is how to make a bread pudding; this is how to make doukona;² this is how to make pepper pot; this is how to make a good medicine for a cold; this is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child; this is how to catch a fish; this is how to throw back a fish you don't like, and that way something bad won't fall on you; this is how to bully a man; this is how a man bullies you; this is how to love a man, and if this doesn't work there are other ways, and if they don't work don't feel too bad about giving up; this is how to spit up in the air if you feel like it, and this is how to move quick so that it doesn't fall on you; this is how to make ends meet; always squeeze bread to make sure it's fresh; *but what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?*; you mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won't let near the bread?

1. Caribbean folk-music style.

2. Spicy pudding, often made from plantain and wrapped in a plantain or banana leaf.