

Growing up as Boys and Girls

1. Are the statements given below true or false? Support your answer with the use of an example :

- (a) All societies do not think similarly about the roles that boys and girls play.
- (b) Our society does not make distinctions between boys and girls when they are growing up.
- (c) Women who stay at home do not work.
- (d) The work that women do is less valued than that of men.

Answer: (a) It is a true statement. In most societies, the work boys do is given more importance than the work girls do.

(b) It is a false statement. Our society makes distinctions between boys and girls even while they are in growing phase. From the very early age, boys are taught to be tough and serious, while girls are taught to be mild and soft. Boys are given toys like cars, guns to play with while girls are given dolls.

(c) It is a false statement. Women who stay at home, do a lot of household chores. They cook food, wash clothes, sweep floor, and numerous other works; some of which are very strenuous.

(d) It is true statement. Women do a lot of work. The main responsibility for housework and care-giving tasks lies with women. Yet, the work that they do with the home is not recognised as work. It is assumed that this is something that comes naturally to women. It, therefore, does not have to be paid for. This is the main reason why our society devalues women's work.

2. Housework is invisible and unpaid work.

Housework is physically demanding.

Housework is time consuming.

Write in your own words what is meant by the terms 'invisible', 'physically demanding' and 'time consuming'? Give one example of each based on the household tasks undertaken by women in your home.

Answer:

1. Invisible. It means the work that is not seen from our eyes. For example, the main responsibility for housework and care-giving tasks, like looking after the family, especially children, the elderly and sick members, lies with women. There are such works or tasks which are often not recognised as works and therefore remain invisible.
2. Physically demanding. Very tough and difficult tasks. For example, women do a lot of work inside the home. Some of these works such as carrying heavy headloads of firewood, fetching water from a far-off place, washing clothes of the entire family members etc. are very tough and difficult. Still women do them regularly without making any complaints.
3. Time-consuming. Household works that take much time. For example, women's routine begins from early morning and continues upto late night. During this period they are seen busy in fulfilling the needs and wishes of their family member. They often sit with their children and help them in completing their homework. This is a good example of time-consuming work.

3. Make a list of toys and games that boys typically play and another for girls. If there is a difference between the two lists, can you think of some reasons why this is so? Does this have any relationship to the roles children have to play as adults?

Answer: List of toys and games that boys play with: cars, guns, swords, buses, railway trains, lions, etc. (toys), cricket, kabaddi, hockey, football etc. (games).

List of toys and games that girls play with: dolls, cooking items, etc. (toys), badminton, table-tennis, hide and seek, etc. (games).

These games are also played by the boys. From the above description we can infer that there is a difference between the toys with which boys play and the toys with which girls play.

The reason behind this is that our society makes clear distinctions between boys and girls.

Boys are taught to be tough while girls are taught to be mild. Boys are expected to do works which highlight their manly features but girls are expected to remain in limit with all feminine virtues. All these are ways of telling children that they have specific roles to play when they grow up to be men and women. Later in life this affects even the subjects they can study or the careers they can choose.

4. If you have someone working as a domestic help in your house or locality talk to her and find out a little bit more about her life – Who are her family members? Where is her home?

How many hours does she work? How much does she get paid? Write a small story based on these details.

Answer: Sharda has been working in my house for several years as a domestic help. She hails from a small village in West Bengal. She lives here in Delhi with her husband and one daughter who is in her teens. She comes to my house in the early morning at 5.30 and gets retire from the days work in the night at 8 p.m. In between she goes to her house for tw hours. She does every work very efficiently and skilfully. She never gives a moment of complains. Due to this fact we have developed a very cordial relations with her and her family. We regard her as our family member. We also pay her handsome amount. She gets Rs. 3000/- per month with all other facilities like foods, clothes, medicines, etc. Her husband is a rickshaw puller who also manages to earn a good amount everyday. Thus, Sharda leads a very happy life with us and her family members.

VERY SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. What was a very important activity on the Samoan islands in the 1920s?

Answer: Fishing was a very important activity on the Samoan islands in the 1920s.

2. How was the girls' school in Madhya Pradesh in the 1960s designed differently from the boys' school?

Answer: Girls' school had a central courtyard where girls played in total seclusion and safety from the outside world. The boys school had no such courtyard.

3. As these girls walked on the streets, they looked so purposejul'. What does the word 'purposeful' refer to?

Answer: Their only intention was to get home safe and as soon as possible.

4. Why do we give boys and girls different toys to play with? [V. Imp.]

Answer: We want to tell them that they will have different futures when they become men and women.

5. What do we teach boys and girls in their early childhood? [Imp.]

Answer: We teach boys that they need to be tough and masculine. On the contrary we , teach girls that they need to be soft and mild.

6. Why did Harmeet develop a notion that her mother did not work?

Answer: In our societies, the work that women do within the home is not recognised as work. It is assumed that this is something that comes naturally to women. It is therefore, Harmeet developed such notions and said that her mother did not work

7. Why are the wages of domestic workers usually low? [V. Imp.]

Answer: It is because the work that domestic workers do, does not have much value.

8. What is the daily schedule of a domestic worker?

Answer: A domestic worker's day usually begins at five in the morning and ends at twelve in the night.

9. How are domestic workers treated by their employers? [V. Imp.]

Answer: Domestic workers are often not treated well by their employers. Despite the hard work they do, their employers often do not show them much respect.

10. What do you mean by the term 'double burden'? [Imp.]

Answer: Several women today work both inside and outside the home. This is often referred to as 'double burden'.

11. Housework commonly involves many different tasks. Name some of them.

Answer: Washing clothes, cleaning, sweeping, cooking etc.

12. Why do girls like to go to school together in groups?

Answer: Girls like to go to school together in groups because in group they feel secured.

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. What did boys do every evening, once the school was over?

Answer: Every evening, once the school was over, boys watched as hundreds of school girls crowded the narrow streets. The girls walked on the streets in groups and their only intention was to get straight home. On the contrary the boys used the streets as a place to stand around idling, to play, to try out tricks with their bicycles. They never reached home in time.

2. Why does our society devalue the work women do inside the home? [V. Imp.]

Answer: Women discharge a lot of responsibilities inside their home. They look after the

family, especially children, the elderly and sick members. They manage the entire activities so efficiently. They cook food by standing for hours in front of hot stoves, wash clothes, maintain cleanliness, etc. In rural areas women and girls carry heavy headloads of firewood. These works are not considered as real works in our families and societies. The work that women do within the home is not recognised as work. It is assumed that this is something that comes naturally to women. Due to this fact, it does not have to be paid for. Our society devalues such work.

3. Our constitution does not discriminate between male and female. But inequality between the sexes exists. What does the government do to remedy the situation? [Imp.]

Answer: The government recognises that burden of childcare and housework falls on women and girls. This naturally has an impact on whether girls can attend school. It determines whether women can work outside the house and what kind of jobs and careers they can have. The government has set up Anganwadis or childcare centres in several villages in the country. It has passed laws that make it mandatory for organisations that have more than 30 women employees to provide creche facilities. The provision of creches helps many women to take up employment outside the home. Girls have also been benefited through this provision. More and more girls now have started attending schools.

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Give an account of growing up in Samoa in the 1920s.

Answer: A research took place on Samoan society in 1920s. According to the reports of the research, Samoan children did not go to school. They engaged themselves in many different activities. They learnt from their elders how to take care of children or do housework. Fishing was an important activity on the Samoan islands. Young people learnt to undertake long fishing expeditions.

Both boys and girls used to look after their younger siblings. But, by the time a boy was about nine years old, he joined the older boys in to learn outdoor jobs like fishing and planting coconuts. Girls had to continue looking after small children or do errands for adults till they were teenagers. They enjoyed much freedom during teenage. After the age of fourteen or so, girls also went on fishing trips, worked in the plantations, learnt how to weave baskets. Boys had to do most of the work associated with cooking. After they prepared the meal, girls helped them.

2. Write a brief note on the lives of domestic workers with an example. [V. Imp.]

Answer: The lives of domestic workers are full of hardships. They do a lot of work in their employer's house. They sweep and clean, wash clothes and dishes, cook different varieties of food, look after young children or the elderly. Their day usually begins at five in the early morning and ends at twelve in the night. During this span they do not sit even for a while. Most domestic workers are women. Sometimes, even young boys and girls are employed to do all these works. Despite the hard work they do, their employers often do not show them much respect. They are often scolded by them even at a minor mistake. So far their wages are concerned, they are very low. The reason behind this is that domestic work does not have much value.

Melani is a domestic worker who leads a very hard life in spite of her hard labour. Her employer is not at all sympathetic to her. She shouts at her every now and then. She does not give her sufficient food to eat. Even during severe winters she does not allow her to wear chappals in the house. Melani feels very humiliated. As she has no other option, she has to bear all the hardships. But she, like her employer, also wishes to be respected.