Theme Paragraph Exemplar

Alice Munro’s “Boys and Girls” centres around a girl deciding who she truly is as she grows up in a world defined by gender roles. Her struggle to defy these gender roles and her ultimate surrender to them proves that although one may fight gender roles, they can never truly be rid of them. This is demonstrated through the main character’s initial fight against becoming a girl, her slow transition from tomboy to girl, and her final acceptance of being a girl. To begin, the main character fights tirelessly against her mother and grandmother to resist the label of “girl”. She crosses gender lines and actively resists the direction her mother and grandmother give her concerning how she should act by “[continuing] to slam the door and sit as awkwardly as possible, thinking that by such measures [she] kept [herself] free” (Munro 52). Her refusal to act like a girl demonstrates her fight against gender roles and her attempt to be free of them, an attempt she ultimately fails. Although she repeatedly works to be rid of the gender stereotypes associated with being a girl, she slowly finds herself transitioning into that world. After seeing her father kill a horse, she “felt a little ashamed, and there was a new wariness, a sense of holding-off, in [her] attitude to [her] father and his work” (55-56). Her reaction to the true nature of her father’s work and her gradually distancing herself from it as a result prove that even though she fought against the gender role of a girl, she could never truly be rid of it. Furthermore, when faced with the option of helping her father’s operation or hindering it, she let her feelings interfere with her better judgement and truly “became” a girl in the eyes of her father. After her father finds out she intentionally left the gate open and allowed the horse to escape, he “absolved and dismissed [her] for good” by saying, “She’s only a girl” (59). At this point, the narrator accepts his proclamation of who she truly is, and agrees that “Maybe it was true” (59), proving her attempts to fight gender roles were futile. In conclusion, the narrator’s tireless attempts to avoid gender stereotypes, her slow transformation into them, and her final admittance of their truth, prove that no matter how hard one fights gender roles, they can never be rid of them. Although the attempt may be honourable, sometimes society wins in a world defined by gender roles.