Directions: ***Review the samples below. Notice how I took my quick-write and used it to help create my focus for my more formal argument essay 1st draft. As you read the essay below, highlight and annotate ideas worth stealing and borrowing for your own argument essay first draft.***

***\*\*\*Realize this argument essay will soon transfer into a digital essay; HOWEVER, don’t worry about the digital essay elements until later on…***

Brainstorm: (Quickwrite format)

Girl seems to argue that all young women are forced into overwhelming and unrealistic expectations. Girls fight stereotypes and some of the most common are seen in Kincaid’s story: woman are housewives or woman are sluts. It seems apparent that these stereotypes are damaging and devastating towards women and obviously are both limited and overwhelming. Kincaid’s use of syntax—one long sentence reveals her tone towards these stereotypes. She doesn’t agree with them, hence the long list and use of the word “slut,” which slaps the reader in the face. The short story also seems to argue the lessons in life most woman will face. Lessons of housekeeping, husbands, abuse. Although this story seems to have a geographic specific theme with its diction, it can be easily applied to any and all woman—regardless of its colloquialism. Overall Kincaid really is drawing attention to what girls are stereotyped.

The Roles We Women Face

Girl, girly, no matter how we put, the term “girl” strikes up an image most of us can easily envision: Young, sweet, inexperienced, foolish, pretty and so on. Often times the connotation behind the word is playful, mirroring the very nature of female adolescence, but this image is easy to forget once a girl turns into woman, and the playfulness after that transition is sometimes lost. Jamaica Kincaid expresses this idea of “girlhood” and presents her version of a girl in her short story of the same name. “Girl” has a distinct style and organization that stands out and further enhances Kincaid’s overall message. The author argues that many young women are forced into overwhelming, unrealistic, and often rudimentary stereotypes related to their gender. These stereotypes are dangerous and hurtful, and it seems all too clear in her fictional narrative.

Virgin Mary or Whore? Housewife or radical bra-burning feminist? These two contrasts of female identity have plagued and intrigued humanity for centuries and Kincaid doesn’t shy away from these two classic female stereotypes. She hits on the idea of the domestic woman heavily by including a series of commands for her main character throughout her entire story; the “girl” is ordered to, “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 (1). The reader is strike by images of laundry in the very first line—and laundry is often considered a woman’s domain, and a woman’s responsibility, especially when it comes to the homestead. Kincaid’s further explores this stereotype of the housewife with other chores related to setting the table, ironing, and cooking.

Ultimately, Kincaid reveals that this stereotype of a woman as the housewife is depressing, harmful, and overwhelming. The girl is given order after order, and Kincaid mimics that brilliantly with her syntax and organization. This entire story is essentially one long list, and one long sentence—just like some domestic women’s’ lives. And while some women may enjoy this industrious lifestyle, it is clear the main character does not. As she is given command after command, she tires, unsuccessfully, to say something but is overrun by other instructions. She is asked, “is it true that you sing benna is Sunday school?” (1) and she tries to answer, “but I don’t sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school” (1), but the irony of it all is her response is said later—after two more orders are given about speaking to “wharf-rat boys” and eating “fruits on the street” (1). It seems apparent the “girl” is no heard, and her voice is drowned out by the endless series of directions that Kincaid prescribes. In the end, it is clear—the syntax, the repetition, the tremendous multitude of domestic orders—this domestic label is dangerous: it takes over the young girl’s voice and identity.

Kincaid also explores the traditional conflict of women as being chastely vessels or dangerously flirting with promiscuity—so is this “girl” the “Virgin Mary” or a “whore?” One of Kincaid’s strongest diction choices, “slut,” reveals how the main character is facing one of the worst female typecasts. The “girl” is given several instances of how she can be classified as a slut including, “how to hem a dress” (1) in order to prevent becoming the “slut you are so bent on becoming” (1). The way the sentence is said—a declarative statement, and one that is repeated three times in the story—reveals Kincaid’s tone towards this stereotype: it is overused, offensive, and wrong. The girl is faced with one of society’s worst judgments—sexual prejudice.

(ADD MORE)

Kincaid is clearly a voice for all women, and although her story has distinct colloquialism that reminds us of geography far away from America, her messages still apply to the whole world. Many women will face these moments of prejudice—what identity will they have to choose? What identity will they mistakenly be classified in? (ADD MORE).

Reactions and Reflections: *What did I do that you liked?*