

## Mother's Day – Important Questions

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**Q. What picture of Mrs. Pearson emerges in the opening of the play 'Mother's Day'?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Pearson is in her forties. She is a pleasant looking woman. She is a typical housewife. She takes delight in serving her family, though they take no notice of her. Even if they are thoughtless and selfish, she is very fond of them. She bears with them patiently as she does not want any unpleasantness in the house.

**Q. What fortune does Mrs. Fitzgerald predict for Mrs. Pearson?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Fitzgerald is quite equivocal in her predictions. She says it could be a good fortune or a bad one. All depends on Mrs. Pearson's herself now. She asks her to decide firmly. Her fortune depends on it.

**Q. What difficulties does Mrs. Pearson face while dealing with the various members of her family?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Pearson loves her husband and children too much. She does not find enough courage to discuss the problem with them. She only keeps dropping hints. She hates any unpleasantness. She does not know where to start from. She doesn't know how to begin discussion with the other members of the family.

**Q. What is Mrs. Pearson's problem? What advice does Mrs. Fitzgerald give her?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Pearson's problem is that her family takes no notice of her, though she is extremely fond of them. She runs after them all the time, takes their orders as if she was the servant in the house. She stays at home every night while they go out enjoying themselves. Mrs. Fitzgerald advises her that she should assert herself as the mistress of the house if she wants them to treat her properly.

**Q. 'Then let me do it,' suggests Mrs. Fitzgerald. How does Mrs. Pearson react to it?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Fitzgerald offers to deal with the family of Mrs. Pearson and teach them to treat her properly. Mrs. Pearson feels flustered. She thanks her saying that it wouldn't do at all. They would resent being ill-treated by somebody else and wouldn't listen.

**Q. How does Mrs. Fitzgerald perform the trick of changing her personality with that of Mrs. Pearson?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Fitzgerald holds the hands of Mrs. Pearson and asks her to keep quiet and not to think about anything. Then she recites a spell. After the spell has been spoken, the two women got relax, as if the life had been drained out of them. Then both come to life. Now, Mrs. Pearson has the personality of Mrs. Fitzgerald and Mrs. Fitzgerald has of Mrs. Pearson.

**Q. What changes come over Mrs. Pearson and Mrs. Fitzgerald when they change personalities?**

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**Ans.** After Mrs. Fitzgerald tells her spell, she and Mrs. Pearson mutually changed personalities. Now, Mrs. Fitzgerald is nervous and confused. On the other hand Mrs. Pearson is dominating, aggressive and bossy.

**Q. How does mother make fun of Charlie Spence?**

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**Ans.** Charlie Spence is Doris' boyfriend. She intends to go out with him that evening. But mother makes fun of Charlie Spence. She says that Charlie has buckteeth and he is half-witted. She wonders why Doris could not find anyone better than Charlie Spence.

**Q. Mention three things in the behaviour of mother that astonish Doris.**

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**Ans.** First, mother, has not got tea ready for her as usual. Secondly, mother's smoking. Thirdly, she is not in mood to iron her silk that she intends to wear that evening.

**Q. What, according to Doris, could be the reason for mother's strange behaviour? Does Cyril agree with her?**

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**Ans.** According to Doris, mother has hit her head or something that could have been the cause of her strange behaviour. Cyril agrees that his mother's behaviour was rather odd but Doris' idea seems too farfetched to him.

**Q. Why does Doris ask mother whether she had fallen or hit herself with something? How does mother react to it?**

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**Ans.** Doris asks mother whether she had fallen or hit herself with something because she is under the impression that mother had gone barmy because of some violent shock. Mother becomes aggressive to hear this and asks her to behave properly and stop asking such silly questions.

**Q. Why is Cyril Pearson astonished at mother's behaviour?**

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**Ans.** First, mother has not got tea ready for him, as usual. Secondly, she has not got his things ready though she had promised in the morning to look through them in case there was any mending. Obviously, he is astonished at strange behaviour of the mother. Then, mother asks him whether there is any stout left in the house. He wonders why his mother needs stout.

**Q. 'That's a nice way to talk what would happen if we all talked like that ?' says Cyril. In what context does he say so? What argument does he get in return?**

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**Ans.** When, Mrs. Pearson tells her son Cyril that she has decided now that she doesn't like mending, Cyril objects to her words. Mrs. Pearson gives him a taste of his own medicine by saying that all of them talk like that. If there's something at home, they don't like to do they don't do it. If it is something at their work, they get the union to bar it. She has now joined the movement.

**Q. 'Well, that ought to be a nice change for you' says Mrs. Pearson. What change does she refer and how does George react to it?**

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**Ans.** George finds his wife Annie (Mrs. Pearson) drinking stout at the wrong time of the day. Moreover, he has never seen her doing it before. Naturally, he is confused and surprised. When he remarks that he doesn't like her drinking and it doesn't look right. Mrs. Pearson remarks about the 'change' in her style.

**Q. How is Doris taught a lesson in behaviour?**

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**Ans.** When Mrs. Fitzgerald remarks that Doris is going out with Charlie Spence that night. Doris feels annoyed and retorts that she has got nothing to do with it. Mrs. Pearson rebukes Doris harshly and tells her to answer Mrs. Fitzgerald properly. She adds that she won't have her daughter behaving rudely with anyone.

**Q. Why does Mrs. Pearson rebuke Doris in the presence of Fitzgerald?**

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**Ans.** When Doris enters the room, Mrs. Fitzgerald greets her and ask her whether she is going out with Charlie Spence. Doris tells her impudently that it is none of her business. Mrs. Pearson rebukes her and asks her to answer Mrs. Fitzgerald properly.

**Q. Why does Mrs. Pearson threaten to slap her husband?**

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**Ans.** George feels angry at being humiliated in the presence of his neighbour. He loses his temper and asks his wife if she has gone mad. This is too much for Mrs. Pearson to bear. She jumps up and threatens to slap George if he shouts at her again.

**Q. Why did George Pearson gets astonished when Mrs. Fitzgerald calls him 'George'? How does Mrs. Pearson make fun of him?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Fitzgerald is their neighbour. Obviously, George Pearson is astonished when she informally calls him 'George.' Mrs. Pearson makes fun of him by saying that his name is, after all, George and then asks him mockingly whether he thinks he is Duke of Edinburgh.

**Q. How does Mrs. Pearson make fun of her husband? How does he respond to it?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Pearson tells her husband that they laugh at him at the club and call him Pompy-Ompy Pearson because they think he is so slow and pompous. When his son, Cyril, also confirms it, he is shocked and staggers out of the room.

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**Q. How does Mrs. Pearson teach her children to be responsible adults?**

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**Ans.** First she scolds them for their guffawing and giggling. Then she has a dig at their lifestyle. They just come in, ask for something, go out again and then return as there's nowhere else to go. When Doris and Cyril boast of doing their work all day Mrs. Pearson tells them that she has also done her eight hours work. She threatens to have two days off at the weekend.

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**Q. How does the stern treatment reform the spoilt children?**

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**Ans.** The children look apprehensively at Mrs. Pearson. However, they smile back at her as she smiles. Since they are not going out, she suggests having a nice family game of rummy. She tells the children to get the supper ready while she has a talk with their father. The spoilt children meekly obey her.

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**Q. How does Mrs. Pearson propose to spend the evening? Is her proposal acceptable to the family?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Pearson proposes that they would have a nice family game of rummy. Then children could get the supper ready while she has a talk with their father. Then looking sharply at the family, she asks them if they have any objection. All speak in one voice that it suits them. Thus, Mr. Pearson finally succeeds in keeping the family home that evening.

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**Q. What last warning did Mrs. Fitzgerald give to Mrs. Pearson?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Fitzgerald advises Mrs. Pearson not to go soft on them again. She must not start giving explanations for her bad behaviour or asking for apologies. She should keep firm. Now and then, she should give them a look or a tone of voice to suggest that she might be tough with them if she wanted to be.

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**Q. What advice did Mrs. Fitzgerald give to Mrs. Pearson, to her husband, son and daughter?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Fitzgerald advised Mrs. Pearson to be firm with her family and not to give in to their demands. She also taught the family how to treat their wives and mothers.

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**Q. Compare and contrast Mrs. Pearson and Mrs. Fitzgerald on the basis of the play 'Mother's Day'.**

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**Ans.** The two ladies are sharply contrasted. Mrs. Pearson is pleasant but worried looking woman in her forties. She speaks in a light, flurried sort of tone with a touch of suburban cockney. Mrs. Fitzgerald is older, heavier and has a strong and sinister personality. She smokes. She has a deep voice rather Irish tone.

**Q. What is the problem confronted by Mrs. Pearson? Who helps her solve this problem and how?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Pearson's problem is that she is neglected by her husband and children. She is very fond of her family. She runs after them all the time, takes their orders as if she was the servant in the house and stays at home every night while they go out enjoying themselves. She takes no holiday. They have come to believe that she is there simply to look after them and wait for them. So they take, no notice of her. Her neighbour, Mrs. Fitzgerald, helps her solve this problem. She advises Mrs. Pearson to assert her rights as the mistress of the house if she wants them to treat her properly. Mrs. Pearson says that she does keep dropping a hint now and then but she can't be harsh with them as she does not want any unpleasantness in the house. Mrs. Fitzgerald asks her to let her do it. Mrs. Pearson wonders how it is possible. Mrs. Fitzgerald tells her that they would change their personalities with each other. She had learnt this trick when she was in East. Mrs. Pearson hesitates but she finally agrees. The two women change their personalities. Now, Mrs. Pearson with Mrs. Fitzgerald's personality, puts the members of her family in their proper places. They begin to give her due regard and consideration.

**Q. What role did Mr. Fitzgerald play to make Mr. Pearson the boss of the family?**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Pearson's problem is that she is neglected by her husband and children. She is very fond of her family. She runs after them all the time, takes their orders as if she was the servant in the house and stays at home every night while they go out enjoying themselves. She takes no holiday. They have come to believe that she is there simply to look after them and wait for them, so they take, no notice of her. Her neighbour, Mrs. Fitzgerald, helps her solve this problem. She advises Mrs. Pearson to assert her rights as the mistress of the house if she wants them to treat her properly. Mrs. Pearson says that she does keep dropping a hint now and then but she can't be harsh with them as she does not want any unpleasantness in the house. Mrs. Fitzgerald asks her to let her do it. Mrs. Pearson wonders how it is possible. Mrs. Fitzgerald tells her that they would change their personalities with each other. She had learnt this trick when she was in East. Mrs. Pearson hesitates but she finally agrees. The two women change their personalities.

**Q. How does Mrs. Pearson make her daughter Doris miserable?**

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**Ans.** Doris Pearson enters the room violently and orders her mother to iron her yellow silk as she has to wear it that night. She is astonished to find her mother smoking. She finds mother's behaviour rather unusual. When she asks about tea mother says casually that she has not got her tea ready. She is surprised to hear that mother is thinking of going out and get a meal at the Clarendon. Mother always iron her clothes ungrudgingly but now she seems to be in no mood to iron her yellow silk for her. Formerly, mother never objected to her going out with Charlie Spence. Now, when Doris tells her that she is going out with Charlie Spence, mother severely asks her whether she should not find anybody better than buck teeth and halfwitted Charlie Spence. This is too much for Doris. She runs out of the room with tears in her eyes.

**Q. What is the reaction of Doris and Cyril to the unusual behaviour of their mother?**

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**Ans.** Both Doris and Cyril are astonished at the unusual behaviour of their mother. She has always been very kind and affectionate, meek and submissive. But now she is very cold and indifferent, and seems to be in a defiant mood. She has not bothered to get tea ready for them and asks them to help themselves. When Doris asks her to iron her yellow silk, mother refuses to oblige. She has not cared to put Cyril's things out though she had promised that morning to look through them in case there was any mending. They are astonished to hear that mother, who has been running after them all the time taking their orders, now proposes to work forty hours a week and have two days off from household chores. They stand against to see her going to the kitchen to fetch stout of herself. As far as they know her she has never tasted stout. They thought that they had done something wrong and mother was offended with them. But now they realise there is something wrong with the mother. Doris thinks mother might have hit her head and got some violent shock, but her idea seems too far-fetched to Cyril. Nevertheless, they laugh to think how she would behave when Dad comes home.

**Q. The play 'Mother's Day' is a humorous and satirical depiction of the status of the woman in a family. Bring out briefly the elements of humour and satire.**

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**Ans.** The play 'Mother's Day' is a humorous and satirical depiction of the status of the woman in a family is shown in its serious theme treated in a light-hearted manner. The humour in the play springs from an unusual situation where the personalities of two ladies exchange bodies. Their subsequent behaviour, which is in total contrast to their previous one, is a very powerful source of laughter. The importance of the character about the personality they are facing also creates humour. The following dialogues also provides a lot of fun:

"Mrs. Pearson if you had to love my life it wouldn't be so bad. You'd have more fun as me than you've had as you."

"It's that silly old bag from next door Mrs. Fitzgerald."

"Tickling her off now, are you, Annie?"

"They call you Pompy-Ompy Pearson because they think you're so slow and pompous."

The actions, gestures and reactions of the characters also provide humour. The housewife being given orders, treated like dirt and forced to stay home every night while other members go out to amuse themselves in sharply contrasted with the position at the end of the play where she is the mistress of the house. The play also satirises the eight hour work culture and threats to go on strike. Even the housewife adopts this weapon.

**Q. Throw light on Mrs. Fitzgerald's efforts to reform Mr. Pearson's family.**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Pearson does not have the courage to stand up for her rights. Therefore, Mrs. Fitzgerald suggests a novel approach— exchange of personalities. Now, as Mrs. Pearson, with the personality of Mrs. Fitzgerald, she puts the plan of formation in action. She smokes, drinks and plays cards. All this is unusual for the family. She further shocks them by being tough with them in words and action. She asks them to look after themselves. She clearly tells them that she has already worked for more than eight hours that day. She tells them plainly how they behave at home and work place. She is equally blunt with Mr. George Pearson, who goes away every evening to the club, leaving his wife alone at home. She reveals to him how the people at club make a fun of him. In short, she makes them realize their responsibility toward the mother. In the end she performs the exchange of personalities once again. Thus, Mrs. Fitzgerald makes the family members of Mrs. Pearson learn that she deserves respect and responsible behaviour from them.

**Q. How does Mrs. Pearson behave towards her husband after she changes her personality with that of Mrs. Fitzgerald?**

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**Ans.** When George enters the room, he is astonished to see her sipping stout as he has never seen her doing it before. He informs her that he doesn't want any tea as he would have supper at the club. His wife tells him impudently that there is no tea ready. He is annoyed to know that his wife didn't get tea ready for him. She laughs at his childishness and remarks that if he behaved like that the club would laugh at him even more than they do now. He is surprised to hear that they laugh at him at the club. Mrs. Pearson continues that he is one of their standing jokes and they call him Pompy-Ompy Pearson because they think he is so slow and pompous. She wonders why he wants to spend so much time at a place where they are always laughing at him behind his back and calling him names. George is horrified at the revelations. Later, Mrs. Fitzgerald visits their house. Since, she addresses him informally as 'George' George is annoyed. Making fun of him, Mrs. Pearson remarks it makes a little difference whether he is addressed as 'George Pearson' or 'George.' Then she asks him whether he thinks he is Duke of Edingburg. George stands against at this disparaging behaviour of her wife.

**Q. Write a note on the role of Mrs. Fitzgerald in the play.**

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**Ans.** Mrs. Fitzgerald plays a very important role in the play. She is introduced as a fortune teller and the next-door neighbour of the Pearsons. It is through the initial conversation between her and Mrs. Pearson that we come to know the problems that Mrs. Pearson faces. Mrs. Fitzgerald analysis the situation quite objectively and becomes the playwright's mouthpiece. She also suggests the ways and methods of tackling the situation. Since, Mrs. Pearson does not have the guts to stand for right Mrs. Fitzgerald suggests a novel approach— exchange of personalities. Now, as Mrs. Pearson, with the personality of Mrs. Fitzgerald, she puts the plan of formation in action. She smokes, drinks and plays cards. All this is unusual for the family. She further shocks them by being tough with them in words and action. She asks them to look after themselves. She clearly tells them that she has already worked for more than eight hours that day. She tells them plainly how they behave at home and work place. She is equally blunt with Mr. George Pearson, who goes away every evening to club, leaving his wife alone at home. She reveals

to him how the people at club make a fun of him. In short, she makes them realize their responsibility toward the mother. In the end she performs the exchange of personalities once again. Thus, she is the main spring of initial action, climax.

**Q. Sketch the character of Mrs. Pearson.**

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**Ans.** The character of Mrs. Pearson can be best studied in three parts: (a) before she changes her personality with that of Mrs. Fitzgerald; (b) After she changes her personality with Mrs. Fitzgerald; and (c) After she becomes her proper personality.

Before Mrs. Pearson changes her personality with that of Mrs. Fitzgerald she is an ideal housewife. She spends all her time in looking after her family, waiting on them like a servant and meeting all their needs. She suffers in silence and does not express her resentment for fear of creating any unpleasantness in the house.

After changing her personality with Mrs. Fitzgerald she is bold and defiant. She refuses to obey their orders. She speaks to them impudently and shows them their proper place in the family.

After Mrs. Pearson become her proper personality, we note a marked change in her behaviour. She is no longer meek and submissive and docile. She knows how to suggest to them with a look for a tone of voice that she is mistress of the house and she could be tough with them if she wanted to be.

**Q. What do you think is the theme of the play? Or What is the main idea of the play 'Mother's Day'? Has it been brought out effectively by the writer. Discuss.**

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**Ans.** The theme of the play is the status of women in their own household. The housewife serves the members of her family with complete devotion, sincerity and love. However, she is never given the regard, attention or thanks due to her. Her leniency and eagerness to please everyone reduces her to the rank of unpaid domestic servant in her own house. Instead of being politely requested for a favour, she is ordered to do it. She gets no thanks in return.

The theme is worked out by the portrayal of the Pearson family. Mrs. Pearson is the harrassed mother. Her daughter Doris, son Cyril and husband George take her services for granted and have become thoughtless and selfish. The interchange of the personalities and the harsh treatment meted out to them by the personality of Mrs. Fitzgerald (in body of Mrs. Pearson) who reforms them and they obey the mother willingly.

**Q. Write a note on the title of the play 'Mother's Day'.**

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**Ans.** The title of the play is quite appropriate. It sums up theme of the play which suggests that the actions of the play revolves around a mother. The playwright confronts us at the outset with the problems the mother faces from her grownup children and their father. The novel technique employed to tackle the spoilt children and the grown up man



is quite amusing and thought provoking. The bold and dominating mother is thought, acts tough with the children and makes them realize the need of proper attention towards their mother. They are made to learn lessons in courtesy and polite behaviour not only towards the mother but towards the visiting neighbour also. The mother certainly has her day as the children learn to treat her properly. The supper being prepared by the children, their stay at home and the family game of rummy, is a rare gift that the mother receives on the important day.

**Q. What social message does the play 'Mother's Day' convey? How relevant is it in the present day context?**

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**Ans.** The play 'Mother's Day' raises a serious issue. The treatment is humorous. Mother plays a lot of roles and performs all the duties with patience. Her excessive love, and concern should be respected by the members of family. She should not be taken for granted as she is the backbone of the family. Women face physical torture and mental anguish in today's society. This play conveys the message to resolve the issues to harmonise the society.