

***Whirlpool* by Cate Kennedy**

Anna is a young girl on the brink of adolescence who is enduring another obligatory Christmas photo. She feels judged by her mother and escapes the stuffy, false air of the house, filled with conspiratorial looks and minor betrayals, into the cool, blue freedom of their above-ground pool.

Before Reading

What is needed to make a relationship successful?

What is a 'normal' family?

Why are physical and emotional connections so important to humans?

During Reading

- ◆ What strikes you immediately about the narrative point of view of this piece?
- ◆ What hints are there in the story about Anna's position within the family? How do they all feel about her? How does this make her feel about herself?
- ◆ What does the pool represent to the girls and their father?
- ◆ Consider the motif of water - water is known as a cleanser/healer, symbol of change and hope, but also of despair and drowning. What does water represent in the short story Whirlpool?
- ◆ Consider the symbol of a photograph - Camera/snapshots/creating art/watching and looking from different perspectives: capturing key moments, keeping up appearances, moments of change when characters can see themselves/their situation clearly and do something different. What does the Christmas photograph represent in the short story Whirlpool?

◆ Use the examples of each of the following literary techniques and explain the impact on the audience.

Literary technique	Example (include page reference)	Audience impact
Characterisation - Anna's mother Anna's father Anna Louise (Anna's sister)	'Your mother spends the hot summer days inside, watching tennis on TV, occasionally raising her frosted glass of iced coffee delicately to her temple.' - p2 '...your father nowhere -just a peripheral shadowy shape, stretched thin.' p1 'You feel yourself nod and smile again; a sickly, traitorous smile of concurrence.' p2 'It's just as well you have to wear a dress like a tent, anyway.....because you're so <i>fat</i> .' p4	
Silence	Father's minimal dialogue, only speaks when the photographer is present.	
Gap	Anna is self conscious about her body, but we do not know her reactions to the inconsiderate comments made by her sister and mother. p3/4	
Symbol	Whirlpool - p2/3	
Use of second person narrative	Throughout	
Italics to express thoughts	' <i>He's never going to answer.</i> ' p5	Emphasises the internal frustration that Anna's father is unwilling or unable to say what he really feels.

After Reading

- a. Anna's father finally speaks! He bursts with anger at his wife's constant disrespect. Write this conversation between them.

or

'He'll pay for that, that *trussed*.' p6 - Anna's mother is furious with her husband for this comment. She starts an argument with him once the girls return to the pool. Write this conversation between them.

- b. Anna looks in the mirror at her developing body. She wants a bra. She is uncomfortable about her looks, except when she is in the pool and hidden by the water. Write a selection of diary entries after she hears the inconsiderate and rude comments by her sister and mother.
- c. Anna pretends to give her mother a talking-to, expressing the thoughts she wishes she could say in response to her constant criticism of her father, Leanne and Chris, the photographs and Christmas. Write her diatribe.
- d. Use Kennedy's theme of disconnection and isolation in a family and apply it to a familiar aspect of your or another's life. Write this short story, anonymously of course! Give your story a symbolic title.