

Getting Her Lessons

Length: Five minutes

Monologue for a girl ten or maybe twelve years old

(She has books on the table in front of her, and a tablet and pencil in her hand. She is working her arithmetic problems.)

One and ten are eleven, and eight are nineteen and five are twenty-four, and—I'm tired of lessons anyway. Where was I? Oh, yes, twenty-four and eight? Twenty-four and eight? *(Calls.)* Mother, how much are twenty-four and eight? –Think it out myself? I have thought and thought. *(Puts hand to head.)* Twenty-four and eight. Well, I don't know what it is. *(Counts on fingers.)* Twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two—that's it, thirty-two. Thirty-two and nine? Oh, I'm going to stop studying arithmetic and study my language. *(Puts one book on table and picks up another, turns the pages as if hunting lesson.)* What is the lesson anyway? I know, here it is. “Tell, or write a story about some pet animal.” We have to write our story. *(Studies.)* What will I write about? *(Picks up tablet and writes again, speaking slowly while writing.)*

We have a dog. His name is Rover. Rover will run and pick up a stick whenever I tell him to. Rover runs the cat. He don't seem to like cats very well. One day he chased our cat up a tree. Rover barked and growled, and the cat put up her back like she does when she is angry and just spit at him, she did. *(Speaks without writing.)* Now look what I have done, I went and put that “she did” at the end of that sentence, and now teacher will make me write it all over. She said she did not like me to use it that way, she did. There it goes again. Oh dear! Anyway, I'm not going to write it all over now. I can't help it if I did leave that old cat up a tree! Suppose I take it down when I decide to finish my language. *(Laughs.)*

I'm going to practice my music now. *(Calls.)* Mother, may I practice my music now? –No, Mother, not quite. I've my arithmetic and my language. I have my reading to do yet, but I'll finish it after I practice. *(Goes to piano, sits down, runs a scale or two, then whirls about on stool.)* Now I'm going to play I'm big sister and that I am to play the piano like she did at her recital last week. *(Rises, smooths hair and dress, goes to table and finds a powder-puff, shakes some powder over face, gets it in nose and eyes. Coughs and blows and makes a face.)* Whew! That stuff's awful. *(Calls.)* Yes, Mother, I am practicing. –You don't hear me? Why, I—I—I'm studying the notes. *(Runs back to piano, smooths out dress, smiles and bows affectedly to audience, then plays a little piece, putting on many airs as she does so.)* That's the way my sister does it. *(Goes back to table and picks up a book.)*

Now I will study my reading-lesson and then I will be through—Here it is. *(Stands in a careless, slouchy attitude, and reads in a sing-song voice and very rapidly.)*

“The Mountain and the Squirrel”

By Ralph Waldo Emerson

The mountain and the squirrel
Had a quarrel,
And the former called the latter "Little Prig."
Bun replied:
"You are doubtless very big,
But all sorts of things and weather
Must be taken in together
To make up a year
And a sphere
And I think it no—no—"

(Calls.) Mother, what does d-i-s-g-r-a-c-e spell? Disgrace? Oh, yes, that's it. What's that? –Why Mother, I am *not* reading like that. I'm reading like we do at school. –Why, Mother, I am standing straight. *(Straightens up.)* Yes, Mother, I do know better and I will try again. And if I get it right, may I go out and play? –Thanks. *(Finishes the reading as well as she can read.)*

"And I think it no disgrace
To occupy my place.
If I'm not so large as you.
You are not so small as I,
And not half so spry.
I'll not deny you make
A very pretty squirrel track.
Talents differ, all is well and wisely put.
If I cannot carry forests on my back,
Neither can you crack a nut."

(Calls.) Wasn't that better, Mother? –May I go now? –Thanks. *(Looking about.)* Where's my skates? *(Picks them up from a corner.)* Here they are. Now for some fun. *(Blows a kiss at books.)* Goodbye, old books. I'm very glad to leave you. *(Swings skates over shoulder and skips off.)*