

## Influence of Family in Shaping a Person's Character Through the Novel *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri

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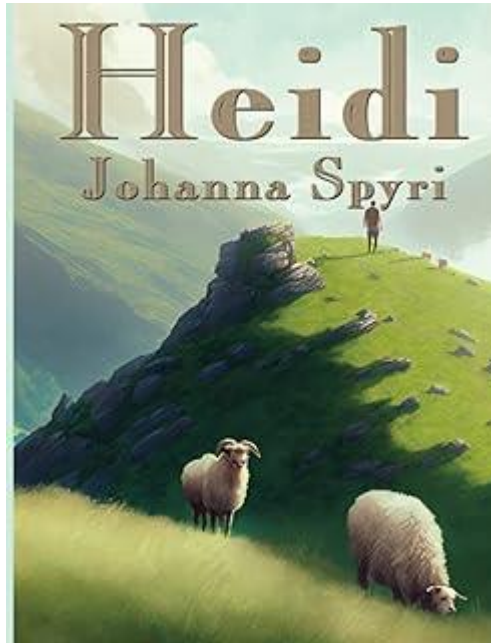
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### Abstract

This article focusses on the main character, Heidi, and analyses the family values that shaped her character, which is portrayed in the book. It reveals the family values in Heidi which

include a sense of intimacy, generosity, values, customs, estimation and thirst for knowledge, connection, conversation, and duty. These values have a significant impact on Heidi's personality, making her open minded, faithful, optimistic, sacred, sympathetic, and enthusiastic. Her family's influence and values are creating an impact on her character and behaviour. Kindness, respect, empathy, sympathy, communication, sharing, caring etc. are the qualities that she has acquired through family relations. Heidi is a kind-hearted girl, who not only considers people as a part of her family, but also animals, especially goats. This story tells about Heidi's thirst, in order to found out a peaceful family atmosphere and to imbibe the value of family in one's life. Having an intention to have a family value means to have generous behaviour, thinking, affection, courtesy, and the attitude of treating others with respect and generosity. This novel has a lighthearted ambience, presenting a pleasant and feel-good atmosphere. This study reveals the influence of family on Heidi's life and also reveals how it is creating a change in one's character.

**Keywords:** *Heidi*, Family, character, behaviour, nature, imbibe, generosity



Johanna Spyri, 1879

Courtesy: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johanna\\_Spyri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johanna_Spyri)

## Introduction

Family is the major component in moulding a strong community. Family atmosphere and childhood that decides your character and identity within society. Family plays a crucial role when the individuals require a gathering of faithful supporters. The thing is what we think, and feel would no one cares around us, except the individuals of our families. The social intercourse within the community is the main purpose of a creator in modifying the craftsmanship of an intelligent to a proper working thing when it feels within the genuine lifestyle. Consequently, interpretation, climax, lifestyle, and miracle happening within the society will be generated inside the craftsmanship of a creator. Every writer reflects their own feelings and thoughts about society, purposely, in order to create a consciousness about society among the readers. Johanna Spyri has also done the same. By analyzing the real social condition and views, Johanna Spyri points out the real face of human life. Also, in her novel, Johanna Spyri reflects the role of family within society, in molding a human character and behaviour. In this thesis, the novel *Heidi* is presenting as an account of family relations and values.

## Life of Heidi

Johanna Spyri's novel *Heidi* is a children's fiction, which tells the story of a young, orphaned girl named Heidi. After her parent's death, she was under the care of her aunt Dete. Then, her aunt makes her stay with Heidi's paternal grandfather, Alm uncle. Grandfather is a very stubborn man, who dislikes connecting with other men or the villagers. So, he settled in an odd place away from the villagers, near the mountain side. He initially didn't accept the arrival of Heidi, but her aunt cunningly makes her stay with the grandfather. Heidi soon gets into the conversation with him, and it softens his nature towards her. She also befriends Peter, a goatherd in the village. After three years, Dete, her aunt, came again to bring Heidi to Frankfurt, in order to make her a companion for a girl named Clara, who is disabled. Heidi reluctantly goes with her and stays in Frankfurt as a companion for Clara. The rude and strict housekeeper, Miss Rottenmeir, shows dislike towards Heidi, as she didn't follow the manners and rules of the city lifestyle. Soon, Heidi became homesick, and eagerly wanted to go home. He was involved in the learning of reading and writing only because she wanted to read books for Peter's blind grandmother. Her homesickness affects her mentally and physically, and it leads to sleepwalking. Clara's doctor

suggested sending Heidi back to her mountain side towards her grandfather. Her homecoming makes the loved ones feel like, are getting relief from a heavy burden. Through the letters, Heidi decides to keep in touch with her companion, Clara. The doctor that Heidi met in Frankfurt came to visit her mountainside that gives an idea for him to suggest Heidi's village's atmosphere for Clara's relief. Heidi begins to teach Peter to read and write.

Clara came and stayed with Heidi for a season, this makes Peter jealous of her. Clara became stronger with fresh goat milk and fresh air. Peter's jealousy makes him want to destroy Clara's wheelchair. It forced Clara to stand by herself without anybody's help. Heidi supported her to recover. Clara's attempt to walk, finally met with success. Clara's recovery gave joy and happiness to her grandmother and father. Clara's family made a promise to grandfather that they will take full responsibility and care of Heidi, if her grandfather is no more alive.

Heidi's story is about family values and relationships. How the environment plays a role in the recovery of mental and physical disability is a major study in this novel. How family relationships and values influence one's character and behavior, is reflected through the characters Heidi and Clara.

### **Family as a Reflection in Heidi's Character**

Family values are reflected through the life events of Heidi and Clara. Through the dialogues and actions, we can understand how much they are attached to the people they love, through the affection of Heidi towards her mountainside, Grandfather, Peter, and the goats, we can understand how much she is connected to that atmosphere. Heidi has a sense of belonging and loving towards everybody. Mainly, it can be seen in her connection with Peter's blind grandmother. Even though she only met her a few times. Heidi created a good image in front of her. Heidi used to read her books because she is blind. So, it helps grandmother, at least, feel a sense of pleasure. Heidi came to know about her difficulty, because of the damaged atmosphere in her home, she insisted her carpenter grandfather fix that.

When she went to Frankfurt as a companion for Clara, she also focused on the thought of collecting some white bread for Peter's blind grandmother, as she asked for it. In Frankfurt, she met Clara's grandma, who is soft in behavior. Heidi finds comfort in her, and grandma's presence reminds her about the mountain, Peter's blind grandmother, and the promise that she gave to her. Before returning to the village, she collected white bread as per her promise. Unfortunately, Peter's blind grandmother passed away then. That news broke her heart. The feeling of belonging and loving towards grandmother sees in her character. The respect and obedient behavior of Heidi towards her grandfather shows love for Heidi towards her family. Heidi obeys her grandfather's words, while she goes with Peter to the mountainside. When he asks to eat dinner on time, she obeys his words respectfully. She always followed his instructions and ideas. It molded her character and behavior towards other people. She even gave respect to the elderly; it can be seen in her interaction with Peter's blind grandmother. She often went to see her, as per her wishes. She had a huge respect and love towards grandma. Heidi also shows her respectful character towards Clara's grandma, Mrs. Sesemann and towards Miss Rotenmeier, the housekeeper.

Another quality of Heidi is kindness towards human beings and other creatures like animals. When she met her grandfather in his house, he felt like this child would be an interruption for his living and even with his job. But gradually he understood that Heidi had a kind heart and empathy towards nature and its creatures. She is very kind towards her grandfather, so she obeyed him well and did nothing harm for him. She is very kind towards goats. Heidi took an interest in knowing their names. She felt like they were also a part of her daily life, Heidi called them by their names as they were also a member of her family. When Peter beat them for not obeying him, she felt empathy towards them. Heidi offered her food to Peter, to make the goats free from his beating. She didn't even feel like it was a loss.

Heidi's empathy towards Peter's blind grandmother is a notable thing. When she came to know that grandmother has insecurities at her own home, Heidi tried to resolve it with her grandfather. Heidi gets the help of her grandfather to fix the furniture and doors at her house. Heidi's empathy towards others also paved a way to cultivate kindness in grandfather's heart. Curiosity and excitement towards everything is another quality of Heidi. She always asks questions to her grandfather like a child of curiosity. When she went to the mountain for the first time, she

was curious to know about the golden shade of the mountain during sunset. Her curious mind only gets shut down, when she gets the proper and satisfying answer from her grandfather. Heidi was curious to know the names of goats, she even asks how they got the names. Curiosity and the quest for knowledge in a growing up child can be seen in her.

The connection that she created with others through communication is another example of a thing that builds her character. Peter's grandmother is blind, knowing that she is always involved in a conversation with her, so that she can inform her and to give her a proper image about the surroundings. Even though grandmother is blind, Heidi wants her to imagine the things that she explains. Grandmother also gets relief from the communication that she gets involved with Heidi. In Frankfurt, Heidi's explanation about mountains and goats cultivated excitement in Clara. Even though Clara didn't see her village, she also felt some kind of attachment to the mountainside from the conversation of Heidi. A sense of responsibility within the family can be seen in the character Dete, grandfather, Miss. Rottenmeier, Peter and Heidi. Dete has a responsibility in taking care of her sister's daughter after her death. Grandfather has the responsibility in taking care of Heidi, without anybody around her. Because of Dete's responsibility, she again came to take Heidi back with her. Miss Rottenmeier has the responsibility of taking care of the house, and Clara's education, as well as Heidi's education. As a home keeper, she is responsible for that in the absence of the Sesemann family. Peter is the bread maker of his family, so he worked hard to earn money for food. Heidi has the responsibility to obey her grandfather's words, she also felt like her responsibility is to keep the promise with Peter's blind grandmother. That's why she returned to her village with white bread for Peter's grandmother, as she asked for it. Family plays an important role in shaping Heidi's character.

## **Conclusion**

The value of a family is reflected through the character, Heidi. Her behaviour in every situation is an example of how much she gets attached to the values that she got from her family. The kindness, politeness, respect, empathy, communication, quest for knowledge, etc. are some of the qualities that she received from the family she is around with. Heidi is a young orphan girl,

who was under the care of her aunt. And later she was in the care of her grandfather, near a mountainside. There she was surrounded with nature, flowers, trees, animals, especially goats. She considered them as a part of her family. She befriends everybody with kindness and softness in her behaviour. For Heidi, all the creatures in the world are a part of her family. The qualities that shaped her character are not only derived from the people around her, but also from nature and surroundings. Her life became an example of what we have acquired and adapted and will be reflected in our character. It is important to be surrounded by a healthy family atmosphere, to shape a good character.

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