



EVERYDAY BEHAVIOUR AS A MEANS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISATION IN THE SHORT FICTION OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD AND NODIRA IBROHIMOVA

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 03rd September 2026

Accepted: 05th September 2026

Online: 07th September 2026

KEYWORDS

everyday behaviour, female character, psychological characterisation, repetition, hesitation, observation, agency, perception, Katherine Mansfield, Nodira Ibrohimova

ABSTRACT

This article comparatively examines everyday behaviour as a means of psychological characterisation in the short fiction of Katherine Mansfield and Nodira Ibrohimova. Preparing, observing, waiting, hesitating, withdrawing, and repeating an ordinary act are treated as narrative evidence of an inner position rather than as neutral actions. The analysis argues that the psychological meaning of behaviour emerges through its recurrence, modification, and relation to the heroine's perception of what is possible.

Introduction. Short fiction often creates character under conditions of extreme formal economy. A novelist can explain a protagonist's history at length; a short-story writer frequently has to make a gesture, routine, pause, or repeated action carry information that biography would otherwise supply. For this reason, behaviour in the short story is not simply what happens between more important psychological passages. It can itself become a mode of psychological representation.

In narratives centred on women, the interpretive value of behaviour is particularly evident when social expectation, family obligation, emotional attachment, or uncertainty limits open action. The heroine's inner position may then be registered in minor conduct: how carefully she prepares, how long she waits, whom she watches, what she postpones, or whether she repeats a familiar routine after its emotional basis has begun to collapse. Such signs allow the reader to infer motive without reducing character to a fixed label.

This article compares Mansfield and Ibrohimova through a deliberately narrow question: how does an ordinary action become evidence of character? Rather than treating behaviour as a catalogue of gestures, the discussion follows three mechanisms – repetition, observation, and hesitation/change – and asks what each reveal about the heroine's relation to her own possibilities. In narratological terms, character is reconstructed from textual indicators rather than delivered as a complete psychological statement [6].

Repetition and the Emotional Investment of Routine

In Ibrohimova's "Chorshanba uchun ko'ylak", preparation is psychologically significant because it is attached to recurrence. The dress and the anticipated Wednesday form a routine whose value exceeds the practical act of getting ready [1]. The heroine does not merely perform the same action more than once; she repeatedly invests it with the possibility of

recognition, attention, and emotional confirmation. Repetition therefore converts a mundane activity into a record of persistence.

The important distinction is between repeated action and repeated meaning. At first, preparation can preserve hope. As expectation becomes prolonged, the same routine can also expose vulnerability, uncertainty, and the cost of waiting. The behaviour remains recognisable, but its emotional function changes. This shift makes character visible without the narrator having to announce that the heroine has become disappointed or internally strained.

Such behavioural repetition also establishes a temporal rhythm. The reader understands the heroine's emotional persistence because an ordinary act is tied to a recurring day. The action condenses duration: instead of narrating every interval of waiting, the story allows one routine to stand for a longer psychological history. The economy of the short form is therefore achieved not by removing psychological complexity, but by concentrating it in repeated conduct.

Observation as Participation and Self-Positioning

Mansfield often turns observation into a form of action. In "Miss Brill", the protagonist's Sunday routine is outwardly modest: she goes to the park, listens, watches, and interprets the people around her [3]. Yet these acts are central to characterisation because observation is how Miss Brill constructs a place for herself in a social environment from which she is otherwise detached.

Her watching is therefore not passive in psychological terms. She arranges the scene into a performance and imagines herself as one of its participants. The behaviour compensates for isolation by converting spectatorship into belonging. When the young couple's dismissive remarks interrupt this interpretation, the meaning of the routine alters. Returning from the park is no longer simply the conclusion of a habitual outing; it registers the collapse of the social role she had created through observation.

The narrative significance lies in the fact that Miss Brill is never reducible to the label 'lonely woman'. Her loneliness becomes legible through what she does with it. She observes, edits, and imaginatively reorganises the public world. The action gives form to a strategy of self-preservation. Mansfield's modernist technique is especially effective here because perception itself becomes part of action, and character is produced through the heroine's active interpretation of the scene [5].

Hesitation, Inaction and Internalised Limits

Psychological characterisation also emerges from actions that do not occur. "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" demonstrates how hesitation can function as narrative evidence rather than as an empty pause. After the father's death, Josephine and Constantia are formally free to make decisions, yet their conduct shows how deeply paternal authority has been absorbed into everyday habits [3]. Their difficulty in acting independently reveals an internal boundary that survives the external source of control.

Calling the sisters merely indecisive would therefore flatten the story. Their inaction has a history. It is made visible through unfinished plans, interrupted thoughts, and the inability to sustain a decision long enough for it to become action. The psychological fact is not simply that they fail to choose, but that the range of choices they can imagine has been narrowed by a relationship that remains active in memory and habit.

Ibrohimova's heroines likewise reveal inner limits through delayed or redirected behaviour. In "Voz kechilgan kitoblar", the renewed importance of books is significant because the heroine's relation to them has changed [2]. The books are not dramatic objects; their meaning lies in the possibility that a previously displaced intellectual need may again enter everyday life. Behavioural change here is small, but it marks a new relation to the self.

This distinction prevents agency from being defined only as decisive action. In both writers, a heroine may act, hesitate, withdraw, or revise a routine. Each form can be psychologically meaningful when the text shows what possibilities the character perceives and what makes a particular response available or unavailable.

Behavioural Change as a Measure of Psychological Movement

A single action can remain ambiguous; a change in action is often more revealing. When a heroine treats the same object, place, or routine differently from before, the modification can signal an alteration in her inner position. Such change need not produce a complete transformation of life. In short fiction, a slight behavioural deviation may be enough to show that the earlier psychological equilibrium no longer holds.

In "Bliss", Bertha's behaviour is inseparable from the heightened interpretation through which she experiences the evening [4]. Her attentiveness to people and objects is coloured by a sense of emotional plenitude. As the story undermines her assumptions, the reader is compelled to reassess the meaning of her earlier conduct. Free indirect discourse intensifies this effect because it gives access to Bertha's interpretive confidence while simultaneously allowing that confidence to become unstable [7].

Likewise, Laura's movement in "The Garden Party" from the protected space of the party toward the dead workman's home is behaviour with psychological consequences [3]. The physical journey does not automatically make her socially enlightened, but it exposes her to a reality for which her previous manners and categories are insufficient. Behaviour functions here as a bridge between environment and recognition.

Ibrohimova tends to make such changes more closely connected with continuity – a repeated day, an object returned to attention, a habit reconsidered. Mansfield more often turns behaviour into a test of perception. The difference is one of emphasis rather than an absolute opposition: in both writers, the reader learns character by following how conduct acquires and then revises meaning.

Comparative Interpretation

The comparison suggests that everyday behaviour becomes psychologically productive through four relations: action and expectation, action and social position, inaction and internalised limit, and behavioural change and re-evaluation. These relations are more precise than a general claim that the writers 'show character through actions', because they identify how narrative meaning is generated.

Ibrohimova's behavioural patterns frequently gain force through emotional continuity. Preparing, waiting, returning to an object, or revisiting a need connects present conduct with memory and attachment. Mansfield more often places action within unstable perception: watching, hosting, moving through social space, or failing to decide exposes the heroine's uncertain relation to others. Yet both writers use behaviour as indirect evidence and resist reducing psychological life to explanatory commentary.

This is especially important for comparative work on female character. Behaviour should not be read as proof of a predetermined cultural trait – patience, passivity, independence, or emotionality. Its meaning is local to the narrative situation. The same outward act may signal hope in one context, self-protection in another, and internalised restriction in a third. Characterisation becomes convincing when interpretation remains sensitive to these differences.

Conclusion

Everyday behaviour is a major means of psychological characterisation in the short fiction of Katherine Mansfield and Nodira Ibrohimova because it makes the heroine's inner position visible without requiring sustained authorial explanation. Repetition can preserve or exhaust expectation; observation can create a compensatory sense of belonging; hesitation can reveal internalised limits; and a slight change in routine can register psychological movement.

Ibrohimova often gives behaviour meaning through continuity with memory, attachment, waiting, and neglected personal needs. Mansfield frequently places conduct within perceptual instability, social observation, and the tension between imagined participation and external judgement. These different emphases nevertheless share one principle: an ordinary act becomes psychologically significant only through its changing relation to consciousness.

Accordingly, behaviour in the short story should be read not as a simple inventory of what a woman does, but as a structured field of possibilities. What the heroine repeats, avoids, notices, postpones, or does differently from before allows the reader to reconstruct a character whose complexity exceeds any fixed psychological label.

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