Innocence Gone, But Not Forgotten

The characterization of the protagonist Miranda in Katharine Anne Porter’s “The Grave” helps to reinforce the theme that a young girl’s loss of innocence occurs when she realizes her feminine role in life. The first example of Miranda’s rich character is shown when she becomes smitten with the sight of the ring Paul found (326). The ring symbolizes marriage and commitment, and Miranda seems to wear it on her thumb proudly, no longer interested in hunting with her brother. Instead, she seems to be wondering why she dresses the way she does, outgrowing her family’s pragmatic sense of style. Miranda’s dynamic character continues to show itself as she has “vague stirrings of desire for luxury and a grand way of living …” (328). While Paul hunts, she wonders what it would be like to be more of a woman wearing talcum powder and a pretty dress and less like a little girl getting dirty and wearing overalls. Miranda slowly is realizing what becoming a woman is all about. Then when Paul shoots and kills a pregnant rabbit, (329) Miranda continues her transformation. She trembles with agitation because it dawns on her she could be a pregnant mother some day. While she little understands her maturation, it happens nonetheless. Twenty years later Miranda fully realizes that on that day playing in the grave with her brother, she began to change, mature, and discover her feminity.