

Comparison essay between the narrative of mary rowlandson



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A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson
(Rowlandson, 1682/1996)

The setting was New England. The English had established settlements in the Eastern board of the present-day United States to expand England's trade routes in the Americas. The expansion was accompanied by mass conversion of Indians, whom the Europeans regarded as savage or uncivilized heathens. The missionary work though of Puritan pastors in New England was generally unsuccessful. The Indians associated the spread of new diseases and dissension with Christianity. The Puritan pastors were not prevented from preaching Christianity to the Indians because of military support from the colonial government. In 1675, Wampanoag Chief Metacomet became overcritical of the English over the issues of encroching tribal lands and of course, the preaching of Christianity.

He launched a series of raids in New England and captured many prisoners. One of them was Mary White Rowlandson, a wife of a Congregationist minister, and mother of three children. Mary Rowlandson became a prisoner of the Indians for several months. She and her children, while at captivity, were forced to work as members of the tribe. They were ransomed and freed before the end of the war. During her captivity, she wrote a narrative depicted her life as a prisoner of war and member of a tribe.

Rowlandson's narrative depicted first amd foremost the beliefs of the Puritan missionaries. Most of the Puritans in New England lived areligious and humble life. Because of their desire to convert the Indians, they were drawn to the wilderness and the " wild natives" who inhabit it. This mixture of piety

and adventure affected Puritan literature. The Puritans were portrayed as the pious servants of God, the Indians the prospect hostile Gentiles. In many passages of Rowlandson's narrative, the Indians were depicted as cannibalistic and enchanted. Thus, the narrative of Rowlandson served as a moral guidance to the English Puritan reader, a form of unwavering salute to God.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (Douglass, _/1999)

The life of an American slave during the colonial and pre-Civil War America was miserable and degrading. The distance between the white man and the African was so intense that even African language was discriminated. In addition, the increasing complexity of American economic life demanded cheap labor. Here, the Negroes served the purpose. There was no magnanimity on the part of the English and later American settlers to the Negroes. They were seldom treated as human beings.

In this narrative, Frederick Douglass showed the sufferings of the Negroes on rational and economic terms. Douglass treated discrimination as a form of social ill experienced by the Negroes. He argued that the properties of the whites were built on slave labor, a form of economic backslashing.

In his commentary on slave songs, he maintained distance between himself and slavery. In reality, he did not understand the meaning of the songs although he was a slave. Thus, he interpreted all slave songs as laments.

Here, Douglass made an error when he said that all slave songs were born out of hatred and ill comfort. In essence, many of the slave songs were songs of <https://assignbuster.com/comparison-essay-between-the-narrative-of-mary-rowlandson/>

joy, work, and adventure. The physical and social depravity of the Negroes forced them to enjoy work as it may deem fit. The adventures of their ancestors in Africa were told with gestures of joy and respect; a form of cultural appraisal.

Thus, when Douglas assumed himself as the mediator between the white and the Negroes, he himself embraced both cultures as if no essential defects were visible. Here, unlike Rowlandson, Douglas played as an objective narrator.

References

Douglas, Frederick. 1999. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, an American Slave*. Oxford; Oxford University Press.

Rowlandson, Mary White. 1682/1996. *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs.*