

Example of kindred argumentative essay

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



Literature

Dana, a modern black woman, was celebrating her twenty-sixth birthday with Kevin, her husband, when she was snatched abruptly from her home in Altadena, Los Angeles, California and transported to the antebellum South. Rufus, a young white boy, was drowning, and Dana jumped into the lake and rescued him. It was as though Dana had been summoned to rescue the boy. Dana was repeatedly drawn back to the early nineteenth century, to the slave quarters, where her stay grew longer and longer with each transit. Each visit grew longer, more arduous and equally dangerous for her. This continued, until, it became evident to whether or not Dana's life would end there. The story is about a young, twenty-six year old black woman, who at the behest of her husband, ventured into a place a little away from Los Angeles. Kindred can be seen as a weird travelogue that looks at the past to explore and experience familial connections, and the guide in Dana, a black African-American, and Butler's protagonist. Dana is the descendent of Rufus, a white American, and Alice, a black woman. She is a descendent of theirs, and it surprises her that Rufus married Alice. While the novel is about the present, most of the tale happens in the nineteenth century, when slavery was predominant, and blacks were tortured and made slaves.

Foster (2007); in ' Do I look like someone you can come home to from where you may be going? Re-Mapping Interracial Anxiety,' says that Octavia Butler, by presenting Kindred, occupied a privileged position among the African American literary group. She focused on a very sensitive, unconventional issue of inter-racial marriage and relationship. She had married Kevin, a white American, and Alice, a black female, married Rufus; a white male.

Butler, through her characters and their relationship, confronts her readers. The characters play out their roles in such a way that, readers get to see the conflict revolving around issues of race, inequality, gender, relational roles, and history. Her mystical transportation to the past and back allows Dana to compare and contrast the life of blacks; black women in particular, in the nineteenth century to that of black men and women in contemporary America. In her portrayal of the protagonists, Butler draws comparison between the nineteenth century Alice and Rufus, with modern day Dana and Kevin. Both, Alice and Dana are black women, while Rufus and Kevin are white. Dana feels that the way blacks were treated in the early nineteenth century, didn't change much till the mid-twentieth century, and it hasn't changed much today either. Even though she focuses her attention to the development of her protagonists; Alice and Dana, it is evident that she wanted to analogize the lives of the blacks then, and now. Butler, in fact, wanted to reveal the callous attitude and treatment meted to the blacks who were tortured and made to work as slaves. Juxtaposing this to the modern world, Butler suggests that black women continue to live and work as slaves, or as subordinate partners.

Butler's novel is a memory machine that looks to revisit African-American women's histories. As in much of her other works, Butler, mediates race and gender, and *Kindred* is an important precursor to some of the neo-slave narratives created by authors before she. On closer scrutiny it does seem as though Butler was using this story to reveal to her audiences, how race, gender, relationships, and history emerges when interlocked through a set of representations. The book follows the story of Dana, a young black African-

American struggling to make a name for herself as an author in present-day California. Mysteriously, she finds herself pulled through space and time to antebellum Maryland, where she comes face to face with slavery on the Weylin plantation, only to discover that she has gone back in time to be with her great ancestors.

On her second transportation to antebellum Maryland, which happened a few days after she came back to California, Dana, on stumbling upon a group of white patrollers beating a black slave being whipped says, “ I could literally smell his sweat, hear every ragged breath, every cry, every cut of the whip. I could see his body jerking, convulsing, and straining against the rope as his screaming went on and on. My stomach heaved, and I had to force myself to stay where I was and keep quiet. Why didn’t they stop!” (36). Butler wants her readers to relive the pain and hardship innocent people were subjected to just because they happened to be black. Dana claims that she had seen people beaten and tortured on television and in movies, but this was the first time she was a spectator to such brutalities in person. “ My face was wet with tears” (36) she ended when she saw Alice cry out helplessly. Such atrocities continue to haunt black African-Americans even today. Not much has happened over a century, and though such racist regimes have long disappeared, reports of racist attacks continue on the streets of twentieth century America.

African Americans and other minority groups in America experience various methods of discrimination and assimilation, and this is not new when one considers the impact mass media has on both, the dominant and the marginalized group. Call it racial discrimination or racist attacks, the modern

American society has always rebuked these people in the name of color and creed. In the US, scholars and most of the public view the human race as natural and separate divisions based on their visible physical differences. Thus, African Blacks, Asians and Hispanic groups are considered to be of different origin. With the advance in scientific studies, it is evident that the human populations are not the unambiguous, demarcated, biological groups as thought before. The American adult cartoon TV shows, 'The Simpsons,' 'Family Guy,' 'American Dad,' and 'South Park' is very popular among the young and old Americans and because of the wide coverage that this mass medium has, it is notoriously ambiguous in spreading cultural indifferences among diverse groups. While the dominant group in society calls such programs as mere entertainers, the marginalized group sees it directly attacking them. On the issue of race, Butler, through the eyes of Dana, revisits the revision of slavery and compares it to racism in the U. S today. When it comes to relationships, Butler's portrayal of a black female-white male relationship seems unassuming, but there is not much written to reflect on the relationship they had. It was more superfluous than conventional. Not much can be said of the relationship between Dana and Kevin, except that they were married and shared certain commonalities. The relationship between Rufus and Alice is also superfluous, even though, the rape could have had an effect on his conscience. Butler juxtaposes these relationships to prove that there is not much of a change in the way black women are treated by the whites, even though she does tell Rufus that black women do marry white men in her world. This point is highlighted by Hua (2011), in *Reproducing Time, Reproducing History: Love and Black Feminist*

Sentimentality in Octavia Butler's *Kindred* where she states “ there are anxieties felt while reading *Kindred*, as Dana is caught between societal and familial opposition to her and Kevin’s interracial relationship.” In each case; that of Dana and Kevin and Rufus and Alice, there is a strong message that asserts that “ mutually consenting heterosexual relationships between blacks and whites are abnormal and, so, should not be encouraged but, discouraged.” In justifying her observation, Hua recollects two incidents from the novel. The first, she says, occurs at the place where Dana and Kevin worked as temporary workers. Both of them had common interests and were discussing their writing and getting to know one another, when Kevin left abruptly to return to his work. At that moment, Buz, a white co-worker, sneaked up behind Dana and whispered to her, “ Hey! You two gonna get together and write some books? You gonna write some poor-nography together!” There is a hint of social stigma developing, and its complete when Buz returns later that day, and mutters, “ Chocolate and vanilla porn!” (56). While such barbaric scenes as witnessed by Dana in the antebellum South is confined to television and newspapers articles today, Buz’s attitude reflects the sentiment of a minority of whites in the United States today. After their encounter with Buz, their mutual anxieties only intensify, as, after deciding to marry, Dana and Kevin inform their respective relatives, only to be traumatized, but for very different reasons.

Gender or black feminist sentimentality has been touched upon by Butler quite emphatically. Hua (2011) believes “ black feminist sentimentality by racist capitalist securities reveal the history of violence forced on black women, in particular, and black persons in general.” By drawing Dana’s

parallelism in both, the nineteenth and twentieth century, Butler leaves a touching ambivalence that is replicated between Dana and Alice. Alice experiences the complexity of this negotiation, as she was abused by none other than Rufus, her childhood friend. She refuses to forgive him for taking up his privilege as master, and could find solace only in the company of her children when she remembers their status as slaves. In a conclusive act of rebellion, Alice takes her own life in protest of Rufus's staged sale of their children. Alice's death, followed by Dana's narrow escape from being raped, and when she refuses the condition of slavery for herself, she says, " I could feel the knife in my hand, still slippery with perspiration. A slave was a slave, and anything could be done to her" (260). This reflected her and women's helplessness when challenged by racist capitalist securities.

Having understood the various dichotomies in gender, race and relationship, it can be flexible in the present but would have been extremely difficult in the past. I wouldn't say that this could be artificial today, as inter-racial marriages have grown, and has become an acceptable norm in modern American society. On its usefulness, I would say that it is more of convenience.

References

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