

How to date a
brown girl black girl
white girl or halfie:
how to treat girls



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In the story “ How to Date a Brown Girl” by Junot Diaz, instructions are given as to how to treat girls while taking them out. Through the main character Yuniors, he is able to classify them in groups, which in turn, builds a stereotype. This stereotype on how to treat them is based on the ethnicities of the girls he dates. By taking a “ how to” approach, the narrator exerts a sense of control that contributes to the theme of Dominican masculinity. Yuniors finds the need be able act out this masculinity, yet ironically, it is revealed throughout the text that he has very little experience with women to begin with. Through his writing tactics used in this “ guide to dating,” intended for Dominican teenage males, Junot Diaz reveals to the audience a sexist character that covers up his insecurities through his acts of promiscuity and categorization of these girls.

The story is centered around a young teenage boy named Yuniors, giving instructions about readiness for a date. Coming from a low income family living in New Jersey, he starts off by removing obvious signs of Dominican ghetto culture such as the “ government cheese”. He then gets ready as the girl makes her way over to his house using the directions he hand wrote. He takes the girl out to eat while maintaining small talk throughout the meal. They then make their way back to the house, with hopes from Yuniors that he is going to get laid. Throughout the story however, the narrator’s actions rely on the ethnicities and residencies of the females.

Junot Diaz is able to convey the themes of masculinity and stereotypes of women through his unique writing style. Written in second person point of view, the story is presented as an instruction manual. As told by the Atlantic journalist Joe Fassler, “ By displaying his stylistic range, Diaz reminds us just <https://assignbuster.com/how-to-date-a-browngirl-blackgirl-whitegirl-or-halfie-how-to-treat-girls/>

how subjective Yunior's brutishness is." The narrator instructs the reader himself (intended for Dominican males) on how to date woman of different ethnic background. By writing in this view point, the reader gets a very clear perspective into the life of the narrator and gains in depth knowledge of the narrator's inner struggles. Another writing device that Junot Diaz uses to make his writing style unique is his use of diction. He goes back and forth between New Jersey influenced English and broken Spanish, which blends Yunior's two identities. This key element is used to reveal Yunior's background and Dominican influence.

While at first glance the narrator may seem full of himself, it can be discovered that his acts of promiscuity act as a mask to hide his background. His socioeconomic status is brought up to the reader when stated " Clear the government cheese from the refrigerator. If the girl's from the Terrace stack the boxes behind the milk. If she's from the Park or Society Hill, hide the cheese in the cabinet above the oven, way up where she'll never see"(143). He attempts to hide anything that reflects any signs of poverty. He continues to list where to hide the cheese depending if the girl lives in the same apartment complex, or is an outsider. Yunior also refers to hiding photos of him and his cousins back in Dominican Republic that reflects his former lifestyle. " Take down any embarrassing photos of your family in the campo... Hide the pictures of yourself with an Afro"(143). He struggles to recognize his identity as a Dominican-American youth. Due to having African roots, being second generation Dominican, and living in an area surrounded by Caucasians, he struggles to classify himself with one particular ethnic group. As expressed by writer Marisel Moreno, " Dominicans simultaneously

struggle to integrate and to protect their distinctive cultural identities” (110). The reader is shown this conflict through his misguided attempt at being attractive to girls from all races and backgrounds, maybe in an attempt to find identity within those relationships. He is not easily identified as black, brown, white or “ halfie” himself. Since his Dominican self does not fit easily into any one category, he allows the girls he dates to put him into a category of their choosing. For example, in the story it reads “ She’ll say, I like Spanish guys, and even though you’ve never been to Spain, say, I like you”(148). When she calls him “ Spanish”, he does not correct her. His silence can be interpreted as a rejection of his Dominican roots. Also, the “ whitegirls” use of the term “ Spanish” reflects the general lack of awareness regarding ethnic diversity among Latinos.

In this story, Diaz also shows how female stereotypes can control the actions of males seeking intimacy. This builds expectations for the males of how females will act while out on a date. Diaz includes bits of advice in his instructions as to what to expect with different girls, such as “ A local girl may have hips and a thick ass, but she won’t be quick about letting you touch” compared to a white girl who “ might just give it up right then” (147). Diaz highlights these stereotypes by implying potential accuracy of one’s behavior due to their race. According to Torstenson, “ To deal with another human being as a racial or social archetype rather than as an individual is to trade in stereotypes.” The narrator’s advice is based on his subjective experience of social groups rather than the consideration of women being individuals with behaviors unique to them. Later in the story however, Diaz includes a moment where the narrator’s advice falters and the girl’s actions

move beyond the realm of stereotypes and into that of individuality: “ She will cross her arms, say, I hate my tits. Stroke her hair but she will pull away. I don’t like anybody touching my hair, she will say. She will act like somebody you don’t know” (148). The girl acts like someone the narrator does not know, someone who does not fit neatly into a racial stereotype. Her behavior is different than what Yunior expected, which proves that not all stereotypes are accurate. Being an individual who possesses her own unique personality and behavior confounds the advice of the narrator. While the short story focuses on varying instructions towards the ultimate goal of reaching physical intimacy with a girl depending on her ethnicity, Diaz proves that men cannot always predict the behavior of females through racial stereotypes.

By masking his identity and creating stereotypes towards girls, the narrator feels as if he is empowering his masculinity. According to Riofrio, “ Masculinity, like other forms of identity—race, sexuality, disability and class—is a social construct intimately connected to its social and historical context.” As a second generation Dominican who lives in poverty surrounded by Anglo-Americans, one’s identity can be lost, which may contribute to low self-esteem. The narrator combats this by putting up a front which he feels affirms his manhood: he objectifies girls as a mere subject of sex. This idea can be supported through Riofrio’s statement that “ Poverty and desperation drop out of the masculine memory and all that remains is a gloating sexual past which only serves to further confirm a masculine identity which sees sex and the bravado of sexual conquest as the most concrete and salient ways in which to obtain and affirm manhood”(34). By making predictions

based on preconceived ideas, the narrator gains a sense of control as to how to obtain the ultimate goal of sex, which in turn he feels confirms his masculine identity.

“ How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie” by Junot Diaz is a complex story that explores the idea of affirming masculinity through masking identity and creating stereotypes. Therein lies one of the primary strengths of Diaz’s story: by utilizing his unique writing style to highlight these characteristics in a way the audience can relate, he forces the reader to question both the accuracy and the validity of the information given. Though the story covers all of its points under the concept of sexual intimacy, it nonetheless allows the reader to not only consider the ways one manipulates appearances in social contexts, but also the way in which one’s own expectations can determine behavior. The narrator, Yunion, struggling to identify himself translates into how he perceives the girls of color that he dates, which then allows him to come up with behaviors due to preconceived ideas.