

Kindred



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Butler's "Kindred" includes one of her favorite themes: how people at different levels of power exercise control over one another and end up depending on each other. Demonstrate through the story. "Kindred" talks about power in several dimensions. It ranges from the racist practices, struggle to control the women, struggle amongst the women and finally even between the slaves who want to prove superiority over each other for better attention and life. Dana time travels back into 1800 to save her ancestor's life. The book starts with the basic premise of controlling and protecting the kid's life for her own existence. The initial relationship between Rufus and Dana is based on equality. Rufus although coming from white race, treats Dana with some respect and love. Rufus is dependent on her for his life and is in awe with her because of her sophistication and education. Rufus calls her 'Nigger' which he doesn't realize or feel to be offensive. It is also an example how power was taken for granted by white men and the culture of the society. His compliance to Dana's request that he would call her 'black woman' is a surprise considering this background. He grows up to be a violent, tyrannical and spoilt young man because he emulates his father. Weylins believe in the racial superiority and exercise through the power they have over their household and plantation. The physical brutality is exercised to keep the household in control and to demonstrate the centre of the power. Rufus also has this streak but feels that his people should also love him and think of him to be a good master, makes him spend for them. It is often noticed in the book that people who exercise power also feel the need of love they want in return. There are evident examples of this in the relationships between, Alice and Rufus, Dana and Rufus. In all of these one is dominant and the other submits to dominance against the will. However

irrespective of his cruel dominance over both the women, Rufus manages to create affection and expects affection from both of them, partly because they both are alike, but also because they both understand him. The relationships amongst the women in the book are also power driven. Alice despises Dana, but knows that she needs Dana for her survival. Dana herself doesn't exercise control over anybody, but feels that she can control Rufus and mould him to be unlike his father. She needs Rufus because he is the father of her ancestor. Hence she feels the ties severed the moment Hagar is born. Here the dimension of power changes completely. Till this point in the book, Rufus is in control over his, Alice's and Dana's life. Dana feels free the moment she realizes Hagar can survive on her own. The mutual control over each other is shattered through this realization. Rufus throughout realizes that he cannot completely have his say and power over Dana, and Dana realizes that Rufus will never really harm her because of the affection he seeks from her although he is capable of simply forcing the relation on her. Alice also confirms to the reader that it is possible to have affection for someone who has been committing atrocities on one's life. The book is finely balanced between these two points and various other power dimensions depicted in multiple relationships