

# Malcolm x analysis

Sociology



Malcolm X has had a lot of events happen early in his life that has affected/shaped him throughout his entire life. For example, there was that time when the welfare workers came to Malcolm's house to split up his family and send his mom to an insane asylum (Kalamazoo). In addition, Malcolm was put with a white family whom treated him like an over glorified dog.

He never could feel as if he was one of them, but always felt that he was beneath them. Furthermore, Malcolm's teacher telling him that he could not become a lawyer because of his color really had an impact on him. All of these events gave Malcolm a good reason to become a Civil Rights leader. These events were the wood to his fire and Elijah Muhammad was his flint and steel. \* Anonymous ? on August 20, 2012? Reply? Malcolm experienced and observed many things in his life that helped form his personality and beliefs about society starting from when he was born.

Malcolm's mom was part white, so Malcolm was born the lightest of all the children and experienced discrimination within his family. His father was brainwashed to think that anything closer to being white was better, so he treated Malcolm the best while his mother, hated the fact that she had "white rapist blood" in her and treated Malcolm the worst, because he was a constant reminder of it. When he moved to Boston, he saw all around him, a bunch of brainwashed black people. They prided themselves on being incomparably more "cultured," "cultivated," "dignified," and better off than their black brethren down in the ghetto, which was no further away than you could throw a rock" (Haley 42). Malcolm had very strong opinions about white people and black people, and liked to spread what he believed in

which made him fit to be a Civil Rights leader. -Pearl Tenay? \*\* Anonymous ? on August 24, 2012? Reply?? Riki Walter- Malcolm's early experiences in life taught him how to deal with people, and get what you want from them, and make them listen to you, which helped him become a successful civil rights leader. If it weren't for his early life hustling he wouldn't have acquired such skills, like how to make a black man listen, and how a white man's ego's so big he would never think a black man is capable of coming up with a plan to outwit. Eventually, his jobs such as selling drugs and valeting for women pimps gave him the fundamentals of how he should go about convincing followers around the world.? Malcolm X (1925 – 1965) was born as Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1925. His father was a Baptist minister and a strong devotee of the Black leader Marcus Garvey.

Garvey's message, as many readers will be familiar, was that Black people in America would never be able to live in peace and harmony with white Americans and their only hope of salvation was to move as a people back to their roots in Africa. Malcolm's father died when he was six and his mother was put in a mental home when he was about twelve. As a result, his many brothers and sisters were split up and put into different foster homes. Malcolm left school early and eventually drifted North and finally settled in Harlem, New York, on his own, at the age of 17.

In Harlem, he soon slipped into a life of crime. He became involved in hustling, in prostitution, in drug dealing. He became a cocaine addict and a burglar. Finally, at the ripe old age of 19, he was arrested and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. It was while he was in prison that his whole life changed. He first learned of the existence of the Honourable Elijah

Mohammed and of the movement known as the Black Muslims from his brothers and sisters outside the prison. They had become converts to the movement and asked Malcolm to write to Elijah Mohammed.

In Chapter 11 of his autobiography, Malcolm writes that “ at least twenty-five times I must have written that first one-page letter to him, over and over. I was trying to make it both legible and understandable. I practically couldn’t read my handwriting myself; it shames me even to remember it. My spelling and my grammar were as bad, if not worse”. This chapter in his autobiography is extremely moving as it documents a man’s desperate pursuit of an education. Homemade education Malcolm became a letter writer and as a result he says that he “ stumbled upon starting to acquire some kind of homemade education”.

He became extremely frustrated at not being able to express what he wanted to convey in letters that he wrote. He says that “ in the street I had been the most articulate hustler out there ... But now, trying to write simple English, I not only wasn’t articulate, I wasn’t even functional”. His ability to read books was severely hampered. “ Every book I picked up had few sentences which didn’t contain anywhere from one to nearly all of the words that might have been in Chinese”. He skipped the words he didn’t know and so had little idea of what the books said.

He got himself a dictionary and began painstakingly copying every entry. It took him a day to do the first page. He would copy it all out and then read back aloud what he had written. He began to remember the words and what they meant. He was fascinated with the knowledge that he was gaining. He finished the A’s and went on to the B’s. Over a period of time he finished

copying out the whole dictionary. Malcolm regarded the dictionary as a miniature encyclopedia. He learned about people and animals, about places and history, philosophy and science.

As his word base broadened, he found that he could pick up a book “ and now begin to understand what the book was saying”. He says that “ from then until I left that prison, in every free moment I had, if I was not reading in the library, I was reading in my bunk. You couldn’t have gotten me out of a book with a wedge”. He preferred to read in his cell but one of the problems he had was that at 10 o’clock each night when ‘ lights out’ was called he found that it always seemed to coincide with him in the middle of something engrossing.

Fortunately, there was a light on the landing outside his particular cell and once his eyes got accustomed to the glow, he was able to sit on the floor by the cell door and continue his reading. He found that the guards would come around once every hour so that when he heard their footsteps approaching, he would rush back to his bunk until they had gone past and pretend to be asleep. As soon as they had gone, he would be back by the door reading. This would continue until three or four every morning. He says that “ three or four hours of sleep a night was enough for me.

Often in the years in the streets I had slept less than that”. Malcolm read and read and read. He devoured books on history and was astounded at the knowledge he obtained about the history of black civilizations throughout the world. He read books by Gandhi on the struggle in India, he read about African colonization and China’s Opium Wars. He found within the library’s collection some bound pamphlets of the Abolitionist Anti-Slavery Society and

was able to read for himself descriptions of atrocities committed against the slaves and of the degradations suffered by his forbears. I never will forget how shocked I was when I began reading about slavery's total horror ... Book after book showed me how the white man had brought upon the world's black, brown, red and yellow peoples every variety of the sufferings of exploitation". His reading was not limited to history, however. He read about genetics and philosophy. He read about religion. He relates that " ten guards and the warden couldn't have torn me out of those books ... I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading opened to me.

I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life". Conclusion Malcolm went on to become a major figure in the fight against racism in the United States. He became a dynamic spokesman for the Black Muslims. He was feared by many, he was respected by many. He never stopped wanting to learn. Just before his death in 1965, he maintained that one of the things he most regretted in his life was his lack of an academic education. He stated that he would be quite willing to go back to school and continue where he had left off and go on to take a degree. I would just like to study. I mean ranging study, because I have a wide-open mind. I'm interested in almost any subject you can mention". When he left the Black Muslims and formed his own organization, one of the roles he performed was that of a teacher. He ran a regular class for young people where he told them " We have got to get over the brainwashing we had ... get out of your mind what the man put in it ... Read everything. You never know where you're going to get an idea. We have to learn how to think ..."

How does Malcolm X's understanding of racial identity change over the course of his life? Consider the different phases of Malcolm's life. Answer for Study Question 1 ;; During his life, Malcolm has as many attitudes toward his identity as he has names, and he experiences a significant transformation over the course of the autobiography. Early on, Malcolm learns that there is no way to escape his black identity. As a child he is called " nigger" so often that he believes it is his given name. At school in Lansing, he finds a social barrier between himself and white girls.

Even as Malcolm earns top grades and is elected class president, a teacher discourages him from becoming a lawyer, because Malcolm is black, and teaches him racist propaganda. Malcolm leaves Michigan because he knows that he cannot escape the limiting racial identity that society imposes on him. In the Harlem underworld, Malcolm remakes himself in the lawless and isolated image of the black hustler. His few interactions with whites are shallow and exploitative: he uses his white girlfriend Sophia for status, just as she uses him; he bootlegs liquor for a Jewish nightclub owner; and he guides white men to black prostitutes.

After years of study in prison, Malcolm reconsiders his racial identity in the light of history and philosophy, and discovers answers to his questions about race in the pro-black rhetoric of the Nation of Islam. His acceptance of the Nation's belief that black people are an original and good people, and whites an aberration meant to spread evil in the world, reverses Malcolm's understanding of blacks and whites. Later, in Mecca, Malcolm learns to see beyond America's race problems even as he digs more firmly into his black identity.

Feeling brotherhood with white-skinned Muslims, he returns to the United States with a message of racial tolerance and an impartial commitment to truth and justice. Still, he believes the most promising allies of American blacks are the oppressed, nonwhite peoples of the world, not American whites. Nevertheless, he has developed, by the end of his life, a broader perspective on racism. Though he initially interprets the hatred that whites direct toward him as a personal attack that he must fend off for himself, he now understands that racism is a worldwide force that all must unite to combat.