

Society tells people



Society tells people, as a generation, how to act, talk, and dress in a way that is socially acceptable. In a racialized society, society tells people that they need to look a certain way in order to fit in with the crowd. In today's society, being a person having blonde hair and blue eyes is what is considered as beautiful. It is like living in a world where whiteness is used as a standard of beauty and anything other, African Americans for example, diminishes its value and affects people's perspective and judgement.

Their beauty and value seems not as important because they are constantly told they are ugly and are not socially acceptable. In the novel entitled *The Bluest Eye*, written by Toni Morrison, the protagonist, Pecola, struggles with her own identity because of her community's definition of beauty. Through the life of Pecola, it is established that African American suffer through the construction of femininity in a racialized society.

Pecola lives in a community where she is constantly put down thus affecting her state of mind and well being. Being told she was ugly from the moment she was born, it affects Pecola and how she acts now. In Pecola's community, it is established that there are few options that women can do with their lives. They can either get married, work for rich white families, or become prostitutes. Having been treated badly by her family and those around her, Pecola seeks out other ways where she can feel loved. She is not given a lot of options as that is how society views the worth of African Americans.

She seems to think the only way people will love her is by having blue eyes. Femininity tells women how they should be to be socially acceptable. Society is telling Pecola that the way that she is, is not fit for society. Morrison

states, You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question, (Morrison 39). A community is very influential on a person because others teach you different things and implement their own opinions onto the person. In this instance, it affects Pecola as her community's opinions are expressed to her. Their opinions start becoming her opinion thus leading her to drive herself mad.

Furthermore, Pecola suffers throughout the novel because of what and how society defines beauty in a person. Pecola became a different person because of her community and their impact on her. In Toni Morrison's other books, they share a common theme of community, roots and identity. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola struggles to deal with her identity. In most of Morrison's works, it explores the theme of identity and calls upon the treatment of self-image. Believing that she having blue eyes would give her an ideal life, Pecola drives herself to the point of insanity. African Americans are treated as inferior, thus, the superior being white Americans. The impact of feminism and race in her society affected Pecola and the way she perceives beauty.

Morrison states, Adult, older girls, shops, magazine, newspapers, window signs – all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured, 'Here,' they said, 'this is beautiful, and if you are on this day 'worthy' you may have it, (Morrison 20-21).

Growing up, it was implemented into Pecola's mind that she was not beautiful as she was given a perfect example of what beauty was. The belief

that she wasn't beautiful diminishes who she is as a woman. Based on the society and community she lives in, the concept of beauty is portrayed as a person with blue eyes and blonde hair. The constant comments from her family and her community affects her as she starts to believe the things they are saying.

Through different forms of media, it is shown to Pecola what the standard of beauty is and represents. For example, for children, the toys that young girls receive is barbie dolls. The barbie dolls represent what is socially acceptable in society. They promote dolls that are mostly caucasian who have blonde hair. Mostly, they do not represent a variety of different people of color but focus more on people having white skin. Society tells Pecola that she is not socially acceptable because of her dark skin and brown eyes

Pecola is a good example of how in society, the minority is not equally represented. She lives in a society where a person having blonde hair and blue eyes is the ideal when it comes to beauty. In today's society, it is harder for African American women because people seem to believe they do not meet the social norms. Women have to change themselves in order to be deemed as normal. According to the QZ, it states, The experience of a black woman differs from the experiences of Jewish and Irish women. In order to conform to the ideal of white femininity, black women characters despise their blackness which in turn leads to self hatred. Pecola hates the color of her eyes and begs for the bluest eyes thinking that it will offer her something better than the life she lived.

In *The Bluest Eye*, the protagonist, Pecola, suffers due to the construction of how society perceives women to be in a racialized society. Pecola suffers due to the repetition of hurtful words from those closest to her, thus, affecting her state of mind. Morrison challenges standards of beauty and demonstrates that the concept of beauty is socially constructed. In her novel, *Beloved*, it shares a common theme of loss of oneself and the loss of identity. Pecola is only one example of how African American women are perceived in today's society.