

Analysis of the poem what its like to be a black girl by patricia smith

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The poem "Child of America" by Aurora Morales involves an American coming from various mixtures of cultures, which compromise her real identity and heritage in having a complete identity as an American (McLeod, 1994), and having the privileges of having a pure and traceable background. The poem tells a story of an American who is at crossroads without a clear identity in the society; she struggles to define her identity from the mixture of several cultures, upon which she realizes it's futile. She is therefore satisfied by being 'an American,' though with a rich cultural mix. Comparing the two poems, both the narrators are involved in a struggle to define their real identity in a society, which portrays them to be different, despite being real Americans. The stories are therefore struggles of people at crossroads to define their real identities, as to have a sense of belonging in society. The first line of the poem by Morale holds the tone and mood of the entire poem. "I am a child of the Americans... a child of many Diaspora born into this continent at a crossroad." (Syamisi, 2003) The tone, in this case, is deep and portrays a case of being at crossroads and not really understating the identity of oneself. Though the narrator assents to the idea of being American, likewise, she assents to the idea of belonging to other cultures outside America, leading her into deep confusion regarding her real identity. The use of strong words with repetitions that seem contradictory further narrates the magnitude of the crisis facing many immigrants in America. As the narrator explains, "I am not African, Africa is in me.... Spanish is in my flesh.... I am not European; Europe lives in me....." (Syamisi, 2003) These are metaphors that portray confusion in search of an identity. In addition, is the integrated mix of culture that makes the audience view the narrator as a

true American. This is because; America is a land of many races and cultures, mainly consisting of Africans, Spanish, the Indians, and others. The narrator finds her indemnity with all these cultures to indicate her true belonging to the American land (Barnet, 2005). This tone is applied to explain the misguided notion that many people have concerning people like the narrator. The mood of the poem is a dull one, as the narrator tries to take the audience through what seems more like a riddle, as she finally consents to be at crossroads, " I was born at crossroads and I am whole". The poem is thus presented as a riddle for the audience to crack and describe her real identity; her identity seems elusive as she rules out going back to any of the cultures and races she mentions, due to her current deviation from such races. She is in a lost culture, which explains the real picture of the current American citizen. In " what it's like to be a Black girl" by Smith, the author starts with the first three syllables " First of all," to give a notion of a story; she prepares to narrate. The author utilizes jagged sentences with strong language to portray how serious her case is. This is because; being a black woman is intended to invoke the feelings of race and segregation (Harrison, 2009), meaning the narrator has to undergo many hardships in her urge to define her real identity in the society. This is portrayed by Smith as she explains, " it's being 9 years old and still feeling as you are not finished,..... like there is something, everything wrong." (Nunnigin Cicles, 2011) The harsh tone denotes the awkward situation she finds herself in, and portrays high hopes of better things to come, or having herself in a better, more accommodating society. The rejection that she is facing is observed as Smith elaborates, " it's dropping food coloring into your

eyes in order to make them blue and suffering their burns in silence. It's and pimping in front of your mirrors that deny your reflection."

(Marley, 2011) The tone in this poem is too deep as the narrator unfolds her ordeal in this society. As earlier argued at the beginning, Smith uses an introduction that puts the audience in the mood of a story. The tone of the story is too painful, with the narrator detailing her helplessness as she tries to change her looks to resemble others in society. She is sure of better treatment when she resembles the other girls and women. The above statement reckons the use of awkward methods to turn her color and eyes to correspond to those of other women and girls. However, she still remains the same despite the agony. This story indicates a society where white women with blue eyes and blonde hair are perceived to be the real identity of the society. The poem, therefore, presents a girl with an uncertain future in a developing society that still inhabits the thoughts of racial supremacy in preferring specific types of people as compared to others. Smith takes us through the story in a deep tone, and strong words denoting the painful ordeal of the girl as she grows to adulthood. Both " what it's like to be a Black girl" by Smith, and " I am a child of the Americans" by Morales are about the search of an identity of belonging in a society made of a rich mix of cultures, yet retaining prejudices in segregating some of these cultures as being inferior to others. Though Morales's story contains lighter notes from the narrator regarding her ordeal, Smith's story is one of a painful encounter of rejection and segregation. Therefore, the stories involve an elusive search of identity by many Americans, which mostly results in more confusion; many residents find themselves at crossroads. References Barnett (2005).