

Free racism and appearance in the bluest eye research paper example

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



English

The *Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison is a novel which delves into the serious issue of discrimination on the basis of appearance and race. Delving deeply into this novel raises serious issues with respect to cleanliness, order and beauty (Baillie, 21). The author attacks the fundamental western ideas and ideologies with respect to racism by quoting the philosopher Count Joseph de Gobineau. In order to display the manner in which globalised doctrine on race has been accepted by Elihue Micah Whitcomb and her family, the author quotes "all civilizations derive from the white race, that none can exist without its help and that a society is great and brilliant only so far as it preserves the blood of the noble group that created it" (Morrison, 133). The book has brilliantly criticized the vices of discrimination on the basis of appearance and race by portraying their sufferings, alienation and despair. This study will try to understand the themes of racism and appearance in *The Bluest Eye*.

The thesis will use the following literary works to find the manner in which the writer has been directly and indirectly displayed the vices of appearance and racism in *The Bluest Eye*

Kuenz, J. *The Bluest Eye: notes on history, community, and black female subjectivity*. *African American Review*, 27. 3(1993): 421 - 431. Print.

The journal piece by Kuenz tries to deeply analyze certain themes in the book including the subjectivity of females which has been coming down from history in certain backward communities. This journal focuses on *The Bluest Eye* and the manner in which black women has been subjected to the horrors of oppression and discrimination on the basis of appearance and race.

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The appearance associated with the color black has been used as a form of subjugation of the African American community and at the same time feminist subjugation. The sexual perils that Claudia and then Pecola mostly depicts the black women bodies thereby reproducing the complicated subjugation of the blacks in particular. The entire novel is a literary piece displaying the harrowing conditions of women and gender experiences on the basis of appearance and race. The author helps the reader to virtually see the subjugation of black females belonging to a culture disintegrated by the breakdown of economic and social values.

This literary piece will help in trying to analyze the manner in which feminine subjugation in the African American communities still continue. Dating way back in history, the female gender has always had to endure the bitter vices of society and the historical background of race in this community will further help in analyzing the core themes of appearance and race in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*.

Bump, J. Racism and appearance in *The Bluest Eye*: a template for ethical emotive criticism. *Project Muse*, 37. 2(2010): 147 - 170. Print.

This literary piece has delved deep into the associated emotions which have been used to convey the discrimination and oppression on the basis of race and appearance. The novel emphasizes on the aspect of ugliness by superbly linking it to 'black' and the desire of Pecola to have blue eyes. It strives to bring about bitter feelings experienced by individuals who have been discriminated on the basis of appearance, color of skin, hierarchies in race and diverse narratives reinforcing these emotions (Baum, 153). The manner in which the black family girls have been oppressed and viewed to

be inferior by the white community consistently reverberates in this novel. The Latin word “ peccatum” literally translates to sin, mistake or error and this has been depicted by the name Pecola, which further signifies ‘ shame’ for being a black African American who is constantly sneered and looked down for her appearance (Baum, 153). On the other hand, the emotion of shame may be related to the fact that Pecola was born out of incest.

This journal article will help in trying to analyze the manner in which subtle feelings, emotions and expressions have been used all through the book to convey the oppression of women in this novel. Another important aspect shows is the cultural disintegration and the move to assimilate with the white culture. The article will help in analyzing these subtleties and thereby trying to find out the contribution of appearance and race in bringing about social disintegration.

Ogunyemi, C. O. Order and disorder in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*.

Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction, 19. 1 (1977): 112 - 120. Print.

In this novel, *The Bluest Eye*, the main protagonist is the centripetal force which helps in shaping the stories of other characters and bringing them together. The novel strongly depicts the belief of superiority of white children as compared with blacks in the manner in which Pecola silently agrees when her mother maintains that she is ugly. This has been portrayed repeatedly in the novel. The hatred and yet accepting the beauty of Maurine by Claudia also hints that the African American community will always consider Pecola to be ugly (Ogunyemi, 114).

Subtle narratives of the white shopkeeper ignoring Pecola and the manner in which Pecola, when afflicted with schizophrenia, “ sees” that she has blue

eyes. The novel has throughout subtly depicted the manner in which individuals have been despised, taunted and hated on the basis of skin color which has eventually caused crisis in maintaining the identity of the blacks (Ogunyemi, 116). This has been showcased by the author that physical differences between black and white children has been created by the society and love does not help in guiding the black child especially during tough times. The black child has learnt to endure and be oppressed by the fairer race for having a darker skin color.

This article will help in reviewing the novel to find out the manner in which appearance and race plays an important role in determining the status of women in this culture. Certain instances of oppression and enduring by the black child and the manner in which it totally devastates them will be analyzed.

Baillie, J. Contesting ideologies: deconstructing racism in African - American fiction. *Women - a cultural review*, 14. 1(2003): 20 - 37. Print.

The writer first analyzes the racial discourses that were present way back in the nineteenth century by quoting from eminent philosophers and then delving into novels like *The Bluest Eye*. This literary piece critiques *The Bluest Eye* by reviewing the manner in which Toni Morrison institutionalized ideology and white language by excellently developing a critique in the manner of a story which analyzes deeply institutions like culture, religion and education and its contribution in employing discrimination on the basis of appearance and race on the black African American community. A simple story of a small girl who wants to be accepted and loved by her family aspires for blue eyes as a sign of whiteness. The character of Shirley Temple

and its relevance with appearance and race especially the manner in which it influenced Pecola Breedlove has been excellently written in this journal piece. Morrison also uses another character Claudia in order to display the devastating and devaluing impact of racial ideology on the protagonist, Pecola, as well as the entire African American community in general. The construction of a hierarchy based on the color of the skin has been depicted by the manner in which Junior's mother tells him to mix up with boys having lighter skin color or the manner in which Soapchurch's family has always preferred to retain the lighter shades of skin color.

The use and influence of advertisement, movies and idols and the manner in which it influences and shapes the aspirations of the black child to be one among the superior white child will be analyzed by means of this piece. In this context, special emphasis will be paid to analyze the role of skin color in shaping the aspirations of the protagonist, Pecola.

Douglas, C. What The Bluest Eye knows about them: culture, race, identity. *American Literature*, 78. 1(2006): 141 - 168. Print.

This literary piece tries to find the inner meanings and devastating impact of racism and appearance which have been vividly reflected in this book. The breakdown of culture and values on account of race and appearance has been sketched in the form of Geraldine. Toni Morrison aesthetically displays to the reader the manner in which many African American families are losing their values and culture due to racial ancestry. The diverse associations and subtle implications of taunt on the basis of appearance and color have been dominated by this novel. The racial order which existed in the United States of American during 1941 has been portrayed by the manner in which Junior

behaves with Pecola but throwing the cat at her face. This is an act of oppression under the garbs of racial hierarchy which was dominant during these times. The skin colors black and brown have been used to depict the two contesting paradigms of identifying a group by means of color during the 1940s. One framework was cultural and tried to assimilate the racial minorities and the other framework was based on race being the central authority and origin for cultural identity. Several allusions depicting the segregation of black from brown has been depicted in social and educational institutions. This work of literature tries to find out the manner in which the racial hierarchy has been formed on the basis of skin color and appearance by using certain studies on the color Brown.

Another literary piece focusing on the breakdown of social and educational institutions and the manner in which the black female of the African American community has to cope up with these vices will be analyzed. This piece will help to review the contribution of race and appearance in totally devastating Pecola.

Kohzadi, H., Azizmohammadi, F. & Afrougheh, S. “ A study of black feminism and womanism in Tony Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* from the viewpoint of Alice Walker”. *International Journal of Academic Research*, 3. 2 (2011): 1307 – 1312. Print.

This literary piece tries to compare the ideologies on black feminism of Alice Walker and Toni Morrison. The manner in which both the author and the literary writer stresses on the black African American community to stress on certain emotions of love for themselves, their race, culture and values has been all through reflected in the book, *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison also shows

that those who wither away from their culture to assimilate with the “superior” white culture or white beauty eventually fades into non existence as is the case with the protagonist, Pecola Breedlove. The girl’s immense desire for blue eyes, her fascination of Shirley Temple and her inner desire to be loved by the ones near her and be treated at par with the whites have all been displayed to support the ideology of black feminism. The book has used deeper meanings in appearance and race in order to reflect the ideologies of Alice Walker. Walker has strongly hinted on the association of black women as being the victims of both racism and sexism and this has been depicted in the book by Toni Morrison.

The journal piece has evaluated the three characters Claudia, Freida and Pecola. It has shown that Claudia and Freida are impulsive and stress on their very beliefs rather than going by the judgment of other people. This is not the case with Pecola. She judges herself through the eyes of others and desires an appearance which is reminiscent of the American white beauty. The book depicts devastating consequences of Pecola whereas Claudia and Freida are able to cope up with the diverse issues of appearance and race in this black African American community and survive.

The main reason for choosing this journal is to find out the impact of race and appearance in three characters Pecola, Freida and Claudia. Special emphasis has been provided to analyze the reasons as to why Pecola is devastated and why Claudia and Freida manage to cope up with the diverse issues of oppression associated with race. The article will be used to find out certain emotional and characteristic strengths and weaknesses of these three essential characters.

Conclusion

The above six literary journal critics of the book will be used to form the thesis for *The Bluest Eye* and it will depict the manner in which race and appearance forms a central emphasis on the lives of the African American community. The manner in which the skin color and race has been used to portray the diverse feelings of alienation and the gradual deconstruction of culture and values in a complex educational and social institution will be studied in this thesis.

Works cited:

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