

Tituba, black witch of salem: oppression and feminism

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



It is because of this that the most prominent themes of this novel to me are that of oppression and feminism, which I find to be constantly tied together throughout the novel. Tuba, as well as many other female characters in this book are constantly pushed around and abused simply because they are women. It seems like anytime a woman in this novel tries to defend her rights as a human being they are punished for it in the most extreme ways. Tuba's mother Bean is the first example we see of this type of oppression.

As I have previously stated Tuba is a child of rape and it is because of this that Bean has always been distant from her daughter. Bean was a beautiful woman and this tatty gets her unwanted attention from her owner who attempts to rape her. Bean defends herself and fights him off and it is because of this that she is hung and killed. This is where you truly see how being a woman during this time seemed to be a curse because of how little respect and compassion women received from men. Bean is treated like she has no rights at all.

She is treated like a piece of property who is supposed to do what she is ordered to do no matter what it is. Simply because Bean decided to defend her rights not only as a woman, but as a human being she is executed. This is one of the reasons why I feel feminism and oppression are constantly linked in this novel, Bean tries to defend herself from not only being raped but from being raped in front of her daughter and has to pay the ultimate price for it. The second a woman tries to stand up for herself she is shutdown immediately and refused her right to a voice, freedom, and respect. On page 6 Tuba states, " My mother sorely regretted that I was not a boy. It seemed

to her that a women's fate was even more painful than a man's. " When you read this novel it is unfortunate how true that statement proves to be to Tuba and several there women. Women of this time lived in constant fear of the men in their world. When Tuba meets John Indian, the spirit of her mother and Mama Way warn her not to fall In love with him or any other man. On page 14 Mama Way tells Tuba, " Men do not love. They possess. They subjugate. " It is in that moment when you see the first hint of feminism in the book.

Mama Way and Bean see that a woman does not need a man and that Tuba should have pride in her independence. To me they seem to act as Tuba's conscience, as if she knows what they are saying to be true but she cannot help but fall into temptation. If only Tuba had listened her future men around them. They give up their own independence for the companionship of a man, which is what Tuba does with John Indian. The men in this novel control the women and the women live in fear of not only the men themselves, but of the men leaving them.

There is no sense of power for women without a man by their side. An example of this is Elizabeth Paris' constant fear of her abusive and terrible husband, Samuel Par's. On page 38 Elizabeth shows her fear in a conversation with Tuba, are most fortunate if you believe that a husband can be a pleasing companion ND if touching his hand does not send shivers up your spine. ' There she stopped as if she had said too much. " It is this fear that bonds Tuba and Elizabeth giving Tuba her first real bond with a woman

other than her mother or Mama Way, which in turn gives her a small sense of comfort.

The most prominent character for feminism and oppression in this book is Hester Prynne, Tuba's cellmate and the star of the book *The Scarlet Letter*. I find that Hester is a symbol for feminism and a reminder for Tuba that she does not need John Indian, nor any other man for that matter, to make her strong. Hester is a strong minder of the hardships that women have to face and the consequences of not abiding by the rules that the men have set up for them. She rejects all the ideas that are forced upon women in society, even how women are named.

During Hester and Tuba's discussion it dawns on Tuba, " She was yet another case of a victim being branded guilty. Are women condemned to such a fate in this world? " (page 98). Hester Prynne stands as a symbol for feminist thought, hope, and equality for women. The Salem Witch Trials are responsible for many innocent women's deaths. During these trials so many women were wrongfully accused of practicing witchcraft and they were never even given the chance to defend themselves. All it took was one doubt and the women would be executed.

The Salem witch trials took away all the rights of the women accused and stripped them of their voice. Oppression and feminism are constantly butting heads throughout this book. When feminism begins to rise there always seems to be a man or an obstacle waiting to tear it down again. A woman during this time was forbidden from fighting the restraints that were

constantly against them. Women were property and had no real rights in the eyes of a man, especially a black woman. Tuba faces many struggles during her time. Everything seems to work against her and force her into a world of darkness, tragedy, and despair.

Unfortunately Tuba was one of many women who lived in a world ruled by man's law. There was no choice other than to abide by those laws or pay the price with their lives. Unfortunately throughout this novel that is what happened to almost every woman, starting with Bean, then Hester, then the women of the witch trials, and finally Tuba herself. Feminist rights just simply did not exist in this time but it is the fearless women like the ones shown in this novel that I believe are the reason women have the rights that they do today.