

Toni morrison's recitatif literature review examples

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



In Toni Morrison's short story "Recitatif", the experiences of American American women are explored through the comparison of a white female and an African American woman. It is never fully explained which woman is of which race, but because of the cultural differences the reader is led to believe that the white woman is of higher social standing than that of the African American woman.

Although the story takes place in a more modern setting with laws in place to protect the rights of minorities, the story suggests that even in today's world racism still exists. This is due in part to society itself. There is still the teaching of prejudices that still run deep within society. Laws cannot be the solution to all our problems. For example, in the story the white woman's husband has a high paying job at IBM while the African American woman's husband is a firefighter that barely makes enough to get by (Morrison). While there may be laws in place to ensure equal employment, but if the employer harbors racist beliefs there is little way to regulate this law, this has helped people of all races gain rights in the work force as is suggested in Morrison's story.

The women both start out in the same social class, lower class children that were left at an orphanage called St. Bonneys (Morrison). The girls quickly became friends bonding over their shared experience. However as the girls age and eventually go their separate ways we begin to see how race affects their ability to rise up in social class. The women met again later while Twyla (presumably the African American woman) is working as a waitress in a restaurant. Roberta, (presumably the white woman) is one of her customers, indicating that African Americans are often thought of as service providers

and whites those that are to be waited on.

Later in the story, race becomes an even bigger player, when forced integration is placed upon their city. Twyla driving by a protest see's her former friend picketing in protest of the integration (Morrison). This racial tension show how two girls who start out in similar settings and were formerly friends can “ learn” racism over the course of their lifetime. This suggests that racism is a learned experience. Twyla reacts by joining a picket for the opposite side taunting Roberta with signs that counteract her own (Morrison). This seen is indicative of the struggle African American woman faced during the civil rights movement. Twyla put herself in danger to speak out against what she believed to be an act of hatred.

Roberta also brings up an incident from their past regarding a former acquaintance with “ sandy skin” named Maggie. Twyla is quick to point out that Maggie is not African American, because her skin color is not that of a white person, Roberta seems to think that it must mean that she is on the same level as African Americans and should be treated in the same manner. She later discusses it with Twyla years afterward but little is resolved (Morrison).

Overall, this short story shows the struggles of African American women around the time of the civil rights movement. By comparing two characters of different races but similar starting points, one is able to access the role of race in determine what ones social standing will be later on in life.

Works Cited:

- Baraka, Imamu Amiri, and Amina Baraka. Confirmation, an anthology of AfricanAmerican women. New York: Morrow, 1983. Print.