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Plan / Outline

In order to reflect the challenges that has been faced by the African-American literature, the paper plans to compare the content of two poems. One poem is written in the 1950's era which was a difficult and crucial period for the African Americans, while the other one has been written in the contemporary era to highlight the work of the poet of that poem and how African American literature survived in America. The essay has also quoted examples from the essay to make it more simple and explainable.

- Introduction

- This paper aims to compare and contrast two mentioned poems; The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America: Something Like a Sonnet for Phillis Wheatley” with Phillis Wheatley’s poem, ‘ On Being Bought from Africa to America’.

- Thesis

- Wheatley has discussed subject of African American struggle in her poems.

- Wheatley managed to come to the forefront and mark her presence through her remarkable poetry.

- About the Poets;

- Phillis Wheatley

- Phillis Wheatley is the second published African-American poet while the first published African American woman that received huge fame during the 17th century.

- She has portrayed the African culture through her poem and the how the issue of classicism has created problems for the community in the country.

- June Jordan

- Jordan was also one of the many black poets who made it to the frontline of the American poetry and literature by writing numerous great pieces of poetry and books.

- She took an active part in the civil rights movement and wrote greatly for antiwar, feminists, light movements.

- Body

- The poem ' on being brought to America from Africa', by Phillis Wheatley shows that she is not an ordinary poet, but she has continuously worked for the American Revolution and for the uplifting of the African American community.

- Wheatley further tells the reader that every individual has the ability to read and write provided with opportunities. If they are correctly refined, then they can achieve glory without any obstacles.

- On the other hand, June Jordan has discussed in her poem, ' The difficult miracle of black poetry in America' and highlighted the struggle and life of Phillis Wheatley in a very effective manner.

- Conclusion

- ' On being brought from Africa to America' is one of the many great poems written by Wheatley, that has discussed her concern towards the subject and when she was only as young as fourteen years old.

- June Jordan has very effectively discussed the life of Phillis Wheatley and how she managed in the brutal and selfish American society.

- Both poems have highlighted the same idea, however, there is a slight difference in the underlying meaning of both of them.

Comparing June Jordan's prose poem, " The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry

in America: Something Like a Sonnet for Phillis Wheatley” with Phillis Wheatley’s poem, ‘ On Being Bought from Africa to America’.

Introduction

Words help us in apprehending, categorizing, thinking, feeling, and knowing the world around us. It was also through words that God created this universe (Brownlee). The most significant experiences in life are often expressed through words. For example, the feeling of love, different writers and poets from the very beginning have expressed sorrow, and pain in terms of words. Different poets have used poetry to fight for freedom and for their rights. The African American community in this regard has always been on the forefront when it comes to freedom and literature. The African American history has evidenced many great writers, scholars, poets, thinkers, and freedom fighters who worked for independence for their community, majorly through their writing.

Phillis Wheatley is the second published African-American poet while the first published African American woman that received huge fame during the 17th century. She had also been expressing the African culture through many of her poems in her unique manner. Since, she was a very influential poet, therefore, her writing influenced many other poets. June Jordan is between one of the many poets who were influenced by the writing style and structure of Wheatley. This paper aims to compare and contrast two of the aforementioned poems “ The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America: Something Like a Sonnet for Phillis Wheatley” by June Jordan and ‘ On Being Bought from Africa to America’ by Phillis Wheatley.

‘ The difficult miracle of black poetry in America’ has discussed the life of

Phillis Wheatley in brief. Wheatley has discussed subject of African American struggle in her poems. In the midst of the difficulties faced by the African American community in America during the 16th and 17th centuries, Wheatley managed to come to the forefront and mark her presence through her remarkable poetry.

Phillis Wheatley

Born in 1773, Phillis Wheatley was the second African American poet who was honored to have his work published and the very first published African American woman in the African American literature history (Carretta).

Wheatley was a religious person and believed in God more than her fellow community members. She also believed that the power of poetry is immense and very strong. She had portrayed her personal ideas and thoughts through her poetry (Doak).

She was brought to America from Africa, and was considered as a slave. However, her luck worked in her favor, and she was fortunate that her masters allowed her to read and write and test her poetic skills. She started writing her life experiences through her poems (Carretta) (Doak). Majority of her poems used three major factors i. e. Christianity, hierophantic solar worship, and classicism. She has portrayed the African culture through her poem and the how the issue of classicism has created problems for the community in the country (Carretta).

Because of her great contribution towards literature and the African American society and American Revolution, Wheatley became the most famous African on the surface of earth (Carretta). She has received many honorary awards while her honorary statue is present at the Boston

Women's Memorial on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. She also has the honor to be the first African woman to make her living by writing and publishing a book (Carretta) (Doak).

June Jordan

A well-known poet, social activist, teacher, journalist, and an essayist of the 19th century, June Jordan was born in Harlem, New York in the year 1936. Jordan was also one of the many black poets who made it to the frontline of the American poetry and literature by writing numerous great pieces of poetry and books (Kinloch). Her tone was very influential, and her charisma attracted the attention of many readers. For this reason, she tried to raise awareness towards the subject of international political perspectives and human morality. For the purpose of liberation of humanity, she travelled a lot (Burrell) (Kinloch).

Jordan was a dynamic and courageous personality who never feared the outcomes of what she writes or say. She took an active part in the civil rights movement and wrote greatly for antiwar, feminists, light movements. Jordan has written more than twenty-five influential major pieces of poetry, fiction, books and essays. She has received various honorary awards. She has also taught at some major universities as a professor of poetry and African American studies. Being considered as lyrical catalyst for revolution, June Jordan is a true definition of change. She died in 2002 (Kinloch).

The poem ' on being brought to America from Africa', by Phillis Wheatley shows that she is not an ordinary poet, but she has continuously worked for the American Revolution and for the uplifting of the African American

community. This poem has served her revolutionary cause in the most silent subtle way (Wheatley and Mason Jr.).

‘ Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,

Taught my benighted soul to understand.

Remember, Christians, Negros, black as Cain,

May be refin’d, and join th’ angelic train.’ (Wheatley and Mason Jr.).

Wheatley in the opening lines refers to the readers regarding her being brought to from her native land to America. She is also thanking and is delightful for coming here as she has known Christianity from a closer perspective in America (Gates, Eggers and Gates). Her underlying idea is not that Africa or Africans are weak or deprived or less intelligent people, but they are not completely provided with proper opportunities and great things such as Christianity and education (Gates, Eggers and Gates) (Jordan, Some of us did not die : new and selected essays).

She further tells the reader that every individual has the ability to read and write provided with opportunities. If they are correctly refined, then they can achieve glory without any obstacles (Jordan, The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America). This indicates that Wheatley herself did not initially know how to read and write but when she was brought to America from Africa she was taught to read and write which allowed her to explore her skills and capabilities and eventually she became one of the best poets of the American revolutions (Levernier)(Gates, Eggers and Gates).

On the other hand, June Jordan is also considered as one of the famous poets. Being on the frontline of the American poetry, she loved to write for civil rights and feminists’ movements (Jordan). In her poem ‘ The difficult

miracle of black poetry in America' she has discussed and highlighted the struggle and life of Phillis Wheatley in a very effective and breath-taking manner (Jordan, Some of us did not die : new and selected essays).

June Jordan had her very own style of poem writing. Because of this reason, one cannot compare the writing structures of the two poems i. e. ' the difficult miracle of black poetry in America' with Phillis Wheatley's ' On being brought from Africa to America' (Kinloch). However, Jordan in her detailed Sonnet has further elaborated what Wheatley has written and described in her short and precise poem for Wheatley (Jordan, Some of us did not die : new and selected essays).

The poem by June Jordan has not only highlighted the struggle done by Wheatley, in fact, it has also discussed how African American community managed to come to the forefront of the American literature and how the Black poetry survived and marked its presence in the American literature history with the existence of many great African American poets (Gates, Eggers and Gates). Jordan has grabbed the attention of her readers with her opening lines by telling the condition of the African American slaves and how they were treated. These were worst scenarios in which they had to live and survive and make their living (Wheatley and Mason Jr.).

“ A poet is somebody free. A poet is someone at home.

How should there be Black poets in America?” (Jordan, The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America).

Wheatley was very strategic and concise with what she writes. It was during her era that sudden reaction from the public was very common as a result of publications, speeches and conversations (Gates, Eggers and Gates).

Therefore, Wheatley decided to do it in a mild way, though she was very influential and her readers always got her point (Jordan, Some of us did not die : new and selected essays).

Wheatley also tried to portray the idea that Africans / blacks should not be seen with inferiority and should not be considered or treated as slaves (Burrell). Just because they are black and the Americans are white does not allow the society to discriminate the two segments on such baseless elements. (Kinloch)

Two lines of her poem says:

“ Some view our sable race with scornful eye

Their color is a diabolic die.” (Wheatley and Mason Jr.)

If we compare the two poems precisely, we will have an idea that even though both poems presented same idea of African American treatment and brutality and the freedom of poets, both poems differ from each other slightly (Carretta) (Jordan, Some of us did not die : new and selected essays).

On closely evaluating the two pieces of poetry one can have an idea that the poem ‘ On being brought from Africa to America’ by Phillis Wheatley has talked about the difficulties suffered by the African American community and that, as a part of humanity, it is not reasonable (Kinloch). While on the contrary, June Jordan has tried to highlight this idea of African American struggle by highlighting the case of Phillis Wheatley in her poem ‘ The difficult miracle of black poetry in America’ (Wheatley and Mason Jr.) (Jordan, The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America).

She tried to clear the idea and vision of some critics who did not like the work of Phillis Wheatley and her style / structure of writing. June Jordan says

a poet is someone who is completely free to write and express his or her feelings in his / her own way and own language (Wheatley and Mason Jr.). He has the freedom to write for his own people and his own community. If he wants, he can always share his own vision and thoughts with his readers. Thus, saying that a poet is free, completely free (Jordan, The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America).

She has described the publishing of Wheatley's poetry in America as miracle. She has also emphasized on the fact, being sarcastic, saying Wheatley is also black human being. Jordan has highlighted the life of Wheatley and how at the age of fourteen she wrote her first poem. And at the age of sixteen she wrote additional three poems. These additional three poems also included the poem, ' On being brought to America from Africa (Wheatley and Mason Jr.)'.

One can truly have the idea that at such an early age of 14, Wheatley was able to write such great poetry and was able to address the audience in a mature yet influential manner. This was the greatness of Wheatley, which brought her on the forefront of the American poetry (Wheatley and Mason Jr.). And this also one reason why June Jordan has also highlighted her greatness in her poem and has appreciated her work and has called it as a miracle because of the inhumane nature of the American society of that era (Jordan, The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America).

Conclusion

If we thoroughly go through the work of Phillis Wheatley we will get an idea that she was more than a poet, a writer, and a social activist. She was a great human and she always had the courage to change the perspectives of

people towards African Americans and their way of treating the blacks.

Because of this reason, she used her words to express her feelings and ideas to reach the audience to bring a change and to be a sound part in the American Revolution.

‘ On being brought from Africa to America’ is one of the many great poems written by Wheatley, that has discussed her concern towards the subject and when she was only as young as fourteen years old. Many writers and poets have admired her work and her greatness, but in ‘ The difficult miracle of black poetry in America’ June Jordan has very effectively discussed the life of Phillis Wheatley and how she managed in the brutal and selfish American society.

She has highlighted her work and her poetry and has claimed it as a miracle in black poetry in American literature as according to her it was completely impossible for a black person to achieve such a great honor during that era. Both poems have highlighted the same idea, however, there is a slight difference in the underlying meaning of both of them i. e. Wheatley is trying to highlight that black should be treated equally and their color and cast should not matter while Jordan has also emphasized on the same fact but referring to Wheatley and discussing her case.

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