

doris lessing's and
margaret atwood's
spotty-handed
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Doris Lessing's *On Not Winning the Nobel Prize* (2007) and Margaret Atwood's *Spotty-Handed Villainesses* (1994) are both worthy speeches because they evoke a personal response in their intended audience and offer solutions to complex global issues. These issues are complex because they do not have a clear answer and hence, remains a controversial topic and reverberates across time. Therefore, the solutions offered by these speeches also resonates beyond the contextual audience and holds value for the modern responder. Lessing spoke to the general public, through the Nobel lectures, to discuss the issue of world poverty. She focused her speech on the relationship between education and poverty and as such, conveyed education as the means to escape poverty. Atwood's oration was delivered to a well-read audience and draws attention to gender inequality by examining the unfair representation of women in literature. The worth of Lessing's speech lies in her ability to evoke a response to world poverty, from her audience, through her emotionally gripping use of rhetoric.

The euphemistic allusion to the Nobel prizes in "I don't think many of the pupils of this school will get prizes" is especially confronting for her immediate audience, the Nobel Prize Committee, as it brings immediacy to the fact that, it is near impossible to overcome poverty without the tools of education. This adds realism to the issue of world poverty and thus, compels the audience to respond. In the African mother's narrative, Lessing appeals to pathos by depicting her children's throats as "full of dust". This emotionally symbolises the parched, stifled voices that helplessly await the nourishment of education and hence, creates an emotional response.

Through emotionally charged rhetoric, Lessing challenges the conventional

belief that the impoverished require monetary aid and evokes a common response to increase access to education. Hence, until world poverty no longer exists, Lessing's call for greater access to education will reverberate across time. Atwood's oration is worthy as she builds rapport with her audience to induce a personal reflection on gender inequality. The metaphor of ' cookie-cutting' and ' oversugaring' in "[literature has] the tendency to cookie-cut... and to oversugar on one side" highlights the repetitive, one-dimensionally ' good' female characters celebrated by second-wave feminists.

Second-wave feminists believe that ' bad' traits are conventionally male and as a result, restricts female characters to the painfully ' good'. This provides a contesting view of gender equality and gives gender inequality its complexity. Hence, Atwood challenges this second-wave perspective in the rhetorical questions, "[if women are] fully dimensional human beings... why shouldn't their many-dimensionality be given literary expression?" to provoke the realisation that due to feminist movements, literature had often disregarded the true depths of female nature. As a result, Atwood's figurative use of language connects to the audience to compel the realisation that women in literature have been oversimplified. Hence, Atwood's speech is worthy because her rhetoric induces a personal response to the complex global issue of gender inequality. Through the development of her argument, Lessing's ideas reverberate to today as she attempts to resolve world poverty, which remains a prominent, unsolved issue in societies across time.

The reference to Book Aid International which had " the intention of getting books into the villages" builds upon her prior call for increased access to <https://assignbuster.com/doris-lessings-and-margaret-atwoods-spotty-handed-villainesses-essay-sample/>

education by exemplifying Lessing's resolution to world poverty. The aside, "without this kind of support our supplies of books would have dried up" illustrates the organisation's need for more books and as a result, is Lessing's personal request for aid from her audience. Thus, Lessing develops on her value for increased access to education by explicitly giving her audience a method to expand access to education and therefore, fight world poverty. However, it is disappointing that, even in May 2014, BBC news reported that "only one in ten [South Africans] get good enough grades to go to university", exemplifying that poverty is still a complex issue that is entrenched into society. Since Lessing's cohesive argument aims to resolve world poverty, her speech will remain valuable until poverty is no more. Through a dialectic that examines the positives and negatives of changing the representation of women, Atwood establishes a logical answer to gender inequality that resonates across time.

In looking at the positives, Lessing speaks with the imperative 'need' in "female bad characters can also act as keys to doors we need to open" to accentuate the importance of unlocking more complex characters as they are inherently more interesting for both the author and reader, as they are a closer reflection of reality. Conversely, Atwood explores the possible ramifications of changing the depiction of women. Through the unlikely hypothetical, "if bad male characters meant that [men would lose their right to vote] all men would be disenfranchised immediately" Atwood highlights the absurd fear that new female characters will undermine the work of earlier feminists, who earned women the right to vote. Therefore, Atwood concludes that there are benefits but no major ramifications to developing a

more realistic representation of females in literature. By scrutinising her solution to gender inequality in literature, Atwood ensures the integrity of her argument and subsequently inspires changing female characters in the future of literature.

The emergence of Claudia Valentine, from “ The Life and Crimes of Harry Lavender”, whose voice is indistinguishable from a man’s exemplifies the progression of literature towards fair representation of the woman. Since gender inequality is complex and will remain unsolved for a very long time, Atwood’s step towards resolving literary gender inequality will always remain relevant. Consequently, both speakers address complex, unsolved issues by evoking a response in their intended audience and compelling them towards a solution. Both poverty and gender inequality have manifested throughout history and will remain deeply ingrained in our society because division, whether it is between social classes or genders, is simply part of human nature. Thence, by motivating a response in their audience and elucidating a solution to complex, global and deep-rooted issues, it is true that Lessing and Atwood’s speeches are worthy texts that display textual integrity and thus, will reverberate across time.