

Narrative struggle between multiple authors in foe



**ASSIGN
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“ Hitherto I had given to Friday’s life as little thought as I would have a dog’s or any other dumb beast’s—less, indeed, for I had a horror of his mutilated state which made me shut him from my mind, and flinch away when he came near me.” (Coetzee 32)

This passage was noteworthy because it brought forth a consistent characteristic between Susan’s narrative and Robinson Crusoe’s. Alongside, these few sentences included one of the main themes, and an implication of a larger problem pertinent to the time period of Foe. Based what was literally happening in the chosen paragraph, Susan was giving her personal view on Friday, their relationship, and interactions. However, her perspective of him could be skewed by fear of what his mutilation—the cut out tongue—represented, discussed later in the following paragraphs. Overall, this passage related to the themes of suppression and highlighted the struggles of narration between Crusoe and Susan.

Susan’s apathy towards Friday was only slightly colder than the way Crusoe perceived him. Although Crusoe mentioned, from his point of view in his narrative, that he was like a father to Friday. However, there was evidence from the way Friday was treated that proved the perspectives of Susan and Crusoe didn’t differ too much in Friday was second class to them, “[Crusoe speaking] [Friday] has known no other master. He follows me in all things.” (Coetzee 37). The significance of that example led to one of the main themes of the novel, and as discussed in lecture—narrative suppression—represented by how voices of racial minority and women were left out in the well-known tale of Robinson Crusoe. Friday’s mutilation, as described in the passage, was erased from Crusoe’s narrative, possibly because it wasn’t

important to Crusoe. Susan, having privileges between Friday and Crusoe, took note of this detail because she was more sensitive to narrative rights, which Crusoe took for granted. Susan's battle for her story to be heard along with Friday's perpetual silence were symbolism of the suppressed voices during that period of time. This passage also implied a larger problem brought up within this novel. Susan's coldness towards Friday could be representing a majority of European perspective towards racial minorities during that time frame. Friday's cut out tongue could be symbolic of the societal pressure to shun those who had less power because of their unknown past or background; what Friday's mutilation represented was something that terrified Susan, and that was the reason for her coldness towards him. Perhaps, Friday's disability also reminded Susan of her own struggles and limited power in society.

Another theme included in this passage was the rare agreements between Susan's and Crusoe's narratives, especially involving Friday. Crusoe and Susan both saw Friday as a servant, not as an equal, as this passage implied, but their perspectives on him were very different. Susan regarded Friday as a victim who longed to tell the truth; she even suspected that Crusoe was the one who cut Friday's tongue, "[Susan speaking] Is that the truth, Friday?" I pressed him, looking deep into his eyes: " Master Crusoe cut out your tongue?" (Coetzee 68). Crusoe, on the other hand, saw Friday as someone content, grateful even, to be under his rule, and that Friday was meant to work for him, " If Providence were to watch over all of us," said Crusoe, " who would be left to pick the cotton and cut the sugar-cane?" (Coetzee 23). Based on what he claimed, one could understand why Crusoe

would leave out Friday's lack of a tongue in his narrative if that were true. He consistently insisted that Friday was meant to work for him—that Providence had decided on Friday's fate. As he mentioned that Friday's beginning would be marked from his arrival on the island, I also felt as though Crusoe didn't see his companion as an actual person. Susan at least tried to retrieve Friday's history and his side of the story, although at times her comments and beliefs about him, such as the passage above, were in line with Crusoe's.

Lastly, this passage related to the entire novel because it brought light to one of the many discrepancies between Susan and Crusoe's narrative, which constituted a major theme of this novel: narrative struggle between multiple authors. However, at times, Susan's perspective of Friday was similar to Crusoe's, and this was representative to a large majority of those who had more power. Further elaborating on that note, the unfairness to which voices were heard was also a significant message in *Foe*; although this passage only related to Friday's silence, this novel was also served as a tribute to Susan's under-representation.

Coetzee, J. M.. *Foe*. Penguin Books, 1987.