

# How do the writers of charlotte o'neill's song

Literature



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The respective author's of Charlotte O'Neill's Song and Nothing's Changed writing from different experiences and circumstances both illustrate the injustice of people being discriminated against. Charlotte O'Neill's song was written by Fiona Farrell, about a seventeen year old girl called Charlotte O'Neill, who emigrated to New Zealand between 1850 and 1860 to work as a domestic servant. In comparison, Nothing's Changed was written by Tatamkhulu Afrika, who was an ex-member of a terrorist group in South Africa, where he felt strongly about the social and financial division between races at that time, called Apartheid.

Charlotte O'Neill's song talks of a domestic servant who worked doggedly for her ruthless and uncaring rich master, but now has gained independence and will no longer be carrying out his orders. The first stanza of the poem describes how Charlotte O'Neill followed her master's orders, and uses vivid imagery such as, 'and I scrubbed till my hands were raw. ' (Line 5). This makes the reader aware of all of the chores she was made to carry out, so that they are able to relate to the experiences she went through.

It is written in past tense, which makes it look as though working for her master is a thing of the past, and she will not allow such injustice to happen again. In the next stanza, Charlotte O'Neill protests about the discrimination against servants, by comparing her poor status to that of her rich master. For example, in lines 6 and 7, she says; 'You lay on a silken pillow. I lay on an attic cot. ' Here, Charlotte O'Neill protests about the injustice and discrimination by highlighting the separation of social classes through comparisons between the rich and the poor.

This stanza is also set in the past tense, showing that this injustice will no longer be accepted by Charlotte O'Neill. Later on in the poem, the third and fourth stanzas are set in the future. These stanzas tell of how Charlotte 'won't be there any more' (line 25), and she is leaving her master so that he can carry out his own chores. Here Charlotte O'Neill remonstrates against the inequality by rebelling against her wealthy master's regime. In *Nothing's Changed*, Tatamkhulu Afrika describes, using vivid imagery, the separation between whites and blacks in South Africa.

The second stanza of the poem describes how he can sense the separation; using his hands feet skin lungs and eyes. He is protesting about the discrimination against black people in this stanza by describing how without having actually been anywhere yet he can feel the divide between races. In Line 24, the phrase 'whites only inn' describes an inn from which black people are banned. This phrase could also have a double meaning, meaning 'whites only in'.

Here Tatamkhulu Afrika protests against racial discrimination just as Fiona Farrell did, by making the reader aware of the situation in which the injustice is occurring. This gives the reader an insight as to why the author's of the poems feel the need to protest against the inequity amongst the people they are surrounded by. Tatamkhulu Afrika uses another technique which was also adopted by Farrell in Charlotte O'Neill's *Song*. In the fourth stanza, Afrika describes what he can see of the 'whites only inn' through the pane of glass.

In the fifth stanza he then goes on to describe the 'working man's cafe', which black people are allowed into. There is a clear comparison between

the clean and sophisticated white's only inn and the rough dirty working men's cafe. This shows the reader that people who were not white were treated inhumanely and made to eat and socialise in less hospitable and sanitary areas, just as though they were a different species.

In lines 38 to 40, Afrika says; 'wipe your fingers on your jeans, spit a little on the floor, it's in the bone. This sarcastic phrase brings to the reader's attention the fact that many people in South Africa believed that only white people were civilised, and this is therefore another protest from Afrika at the way in which people are treated simply due to their skin colour. In the final stanza of the poem, Afrika says; 'I back from the glass, boy again,' lines 41-42 Here Afrika is showing that the situation of racial division has existed since he was a child, and now in his adult years it still remains an issue.

This therefore shows the reader that despite the campaigning of people, Apartheid still remained, and the discrimination against non-whites continued despite the unfairness of it. Both authors use comparative techniques to compare the discrimination of one person or group of people, to their counterparts who see themselves as supreme in some way. This technique is most effective as it shows readers of both poems the injustice of the way in which people are treated due to social class or skin colour.