

Film: "the color purple" – sociological analysis essay sample

[Sociology](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Film: “ The Color Purple” – Sociological Analysis Essay Sample

“ The Color Purple” is a very powerful film that tells the story of Celie, a poor black woman living in the old south. The film begins at her childhood and follows her up to old age. She was raped and abused by her father as a young woman and was sent to marry an equally abusive man, Albert. The various people in Celie’s household may seem strange in their actions to an outsider. However, if one examines the actions of the characters, their behaviors can be explained, and sometimes justified, by the systems theory, symbolic interactionism and finally, developmental theory.

The systems theory attempts to explain how groups of individuals interact as a system. Within this system, there are also subsystems. However, a change in one member will affect all of the other members in that system. The large system in the family is obviously the family itself. It is comprised of Celie, Albert, and Albert’s children. There are also two subsystems. The “ marital” subsystem is Celie and Albert and the sibling subsystem includes all of Albert’s children. Everyone in the family does everything they can to keep Albert happy. Celie never talks back to him (until the end) and the children obey his every order. If Albert becomes angry, the whole household feels it and he even goes as far as beating Celie. The greatest example of this theory comes when Celie finally leaves Albert. After Celie left, Albert’s home became a total wreck. One member of the family, Celie, had a very profound effect on the organization of the whole household. As Albert’s father stated, “ You need a young girl to fix up all this mess”. Albert had Celie, but lost her because of his tyrannical ways.

<https://assignbuster.com/film-the-color-purple-sociological-analysis-essay-sample/>

The theory of symbolic interactionism explains the behaviours of individuals based on the perceptions they have of themselves and of others. From a very young age, Celie was constantly abused and mistreated. This caused her to have very low self-esteem and also shaped her ideas about “ normal” interactions between men and women. She thought it was very normal for men to abuse women so when Harpo asked her what he should do about his wife’s attitude, she said, “ Beat her”. She did not mean harm to Sophia, Harpo’s wife, but she thought that it was the normal action that a man should take, based on her past experiences. It was not until she met Shug that she realized that she did not have to endure so much abuse.

The developmental theory explains that humans follow a pattern of change and growth throughout their life span. People must go through developmental tasks in order to grow. Celie was forced to marry at a very young age and was forced to mature much quicker than many girls. Her experiences taught her much about whatever she could. She learned to cook, clean, and sew, among other things, which ensured her place as an “ effective” wife at the time. Most importantly, she taught herself to read. When she met Shug, she learned that a woman did not have to be abused by men and one of her last developmental tasks was to leave Albert. Her past learning helped her survive after she left Albert. She used her sewing ability to open a store that sold elastic pants. If she had not learned these skills, she would not have been successful as an independent woman.

The system theory, symbolic interactionism, and the social exchange theory explain the actions of the characters in the story very well, within a

sociological perspective. Celie's family was a system with many subgroups and she was probably the most important member of the family. Her perceptions of life, which were imprinted on her from a young age, shaped her actions. She went through a process of growth throughout her life that eventually led to her liberation. For the most part, the Johnson family was very dysfunctional. Celie, possibly the most important member in the family, was often mistreated and chose to leave. The family could have been very successful if there had been more respect towards her and a greater acknowledgement of her importance and contributions to the family.