

Captivity narratives american literature essay sample

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Question: Both captivity narratives were written by women. In your opinion, does that give a unique perspective towards the natives? Do not forget to explain your answer. Finally, which narrative did you prefer and why?

Captivity Narratives What shapes our viewpoints of other people? I believe that there are many different ways for us to have a viewpoint of something or someone. In the two captivity narratives of Mary Rowlandson and Mary Jemison, some people argue that because both authors are women, they give a unique perspective toward to the Native Indian people. I don't agree so.

In my opinion, I think our points of view in life are more complex than just because of our sex type. As in the two narratives of Rowlandson and Jemison, although both the writers are women, they gave some different perspectives toward the Indian because they met different people, they were at different ages, and they had different experiences. First of all, the types of people we meet can play an important role to our attitude about them. If we are lucky and meet positive people in our lives, our attitude of life can be more positive. Mary Jemison is an example for that.

She was very lucky when she was captured by Seneca Native people in a raid in Pennsylvania, was adopted by a nice Indian family and was treated as a member of them. They grew her up with their love and made her think she is a "white Indian". As she mentioned in her narrative essay "

Notwithstanding all that has been said against the Indians, in consequence of their cruelties to their enemies—cruelties that I have witnessed, and had abundant proof of—it is a fact that they are naturally kind, tender and peaceable towards their friends, and strictly honest...".

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Her Indian family nurtured a positive perspective about the Native in her mind. On the other hand, Mary Rowlandson was not lucky like that. Her knowing of wrong people made her have a negative viewpoint about the Indian. The Indian people Rowlandson met were not kind to her. They did not feed her well, they killed her children, and they treated her like a prisoner. Both the writers are women, but they have different viewpoints toward the Native is because the people they met were different. One more reason made the two authors have unique points of view about the Native is their ages.

At the different ages, we will have a different view about life. I think this is true in Rowlandson and Jemison situations. When Rowlandson was captured, she was older and had her own family and values. It was hard for her to accept a new change in life and to adapt also. She always kept in her mind about her old life when she had had a family, Christian friends, and freedom. All the set values inside her made her more upset about her current situation. Contrary to Rowlandson, Jemison was a young girl when she was captured. Since she did not have strong values yet, it was easier for her to adapt in a new live.

She started her life over with an Indian family and became an Indian wife. Jemison learned everything from beginning so she considered everything either as good or bad and saw the Indians and white people have both good and bad qualities. They have opposite perspectives about the Indian partly because they viewed life from different ages. The two narratives have two sides of view not because they are women, but because the experiences

they had are not similar. Even when both of them are women, they still have different experiences which, I believe, have made strong affection on their perspectives toward the Native.

To Rowlandson, all she had were sad memories and hurts. She wrote " I went with a very heavy heart, and down I sat with the picture of death in my lap". There were many times she wanted to end her miserable life when she had to see her child's death, and were treated poorly. I think nobody can stay still in front of their children's death, but Rowlandson turned to Bible so she can move on. Indian people in her mind are the people who murdered her family, destroyed her hometown, made her a captive and caused the most miserable time of her life.

All that experiences made she put in her mind that Indian are all bad, only white people are good. Jemison's story is in contrast because she did not remember too much about her time before being captured and she lived very well in an Indian family; therefore, in her mind, they are good people. As a child, Jemison grew up with both the good and evil views about the Native. She stayed in the tribe because that was where she chose to live. With Jemison, Indian became her native people, and she wanted to spend her life with them. Some people can say that women and men have different input perspectives to people, which may be true.

However, every perspective is based on individual experiences. Everyone will have his or her own perspective based on different life experiences. The two authors Rowlandson and Jemison are examples. They are both women but have different viewpoints toward the Native. Between the two narratives, I

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preferred Jemison's one because I think that her point of view is more balanced. She did not conclude who is bad or good. She wrote on her logic to convince her readers that every nation has bad and good people. Through Jemison's narrative, I accept even more that everything has strengths and limitations.

In conclusion, the two narratives were written about the lives of two women when they were captured by the Indian people who reflect their unique perspectives toward the native people. I do not agree that the perspectives are unique because they are both women; but in my opinion, they are unique as the result of the people they met, the ages they were, and the experiences they had. Although people can say that everything in life can be changed if we change our perspectives, I believe some people have more tragedies in life than others. Therefore, I feel thankful for so many peaceful things I have in my life.