

# The bluest eye by tony morrison essay



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The portrayal of racism and its destructive consequences in literature serves the purpose of emphasizing the need to transform our society and respect the diversity of cultures. Tony Morrison is the author of the novel titled *The Bluest Eye*, which presents an overview of an African-American girl's life and the challenges she encountered. This paper aims to summarize this novel, provide an assent of central themes and characters described by Morrison, and present a personal view of the topic discussed in this work.

The events described by Morrison occur during the Great Depression, which affected all states of the country equally. The main focus is on a family living in Ohio that had two daughters and a temporary foster child. This child, Pecola, suffers from bullying in her neighborhood since people around tell her that she is not beautiful. As a result, the girl desires to have one thing she associates with beauty - blue eyes. Morrison (1990, 18) describes this issue in the following manner - " it had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes...were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different." Perhaps such influence on her emerged as a result of seeing dolls with white skin and blue eyes that were considered beautiful by children around Pecola.

The girl is living with foster parents because her father burned down their house. In general, the depiction of Pecola's family suggests that the girl encountered many difficulties while growing up. Her parents were always fighting, and her father suffered from fits of anger as a result of his alcoholism. Moreover, Cholly, who is Pecola's father, raped the girl and ran away, leaving her pregnant. At this point, the commune's perception of Pecola changed because of these events. At the end of the novel, Pecola's

child dies, and she becomes insane due to the difficulties and traumatizing experiences she went through. The final reflection of Pecola's foster-sister Claudia provides insight into the main themes that Morrison aimed to highlight in his novel.

The title of the novel provides some insight into the theme that the author aims to describe. As was evident from the summary provided in the previous paragraph, Morrison seeks to depict the destructive consequences of the perceptions of African-American prevalent in society during the Great Depression. The fact that a young girl suffered from an inferiority complex is terrible on its own, but the implications of such events are frightening. It is because the main character of the book, Pecola, believed that she was not pretty, and to become more beautiful, she needed to have blue eyes. The idea that the girl had was fostered by her perception of white skin and other attributes associated with it. Hence, the primary theme that Morrison aims to disclose is the adverse impact that society's stereotypes regarding race and appearance.

The beauty standard that Pecola chooses based on the appearance of her fair-skinned and blue-eyed doll is another theme, which is relevant to contemporary society as well. Although currently, manufacturers of popular child toys aim to improve the diversity of their products and depict people of different races, Rice et al. (2016) argue that these dolls still harm a child's perception of beauty. Therefore, Morrison's novel serves as an essential example of hurtful consequences that can affect a child's perception of self-image.

When reflection upon Pecola's life and the events that occurred throughout the novel, Claudia mentioned the innocence as a wrong approach. The girl states that "our innocence and faith were no more productive than his lust or despair" (Morrison 1990, 60). Hence, the idea that the author aims to convey here is that innocence with which these African-Americans approached discrimination did not produce a good result.

As was mentioned, the main character of this novel is Pecola, a young African-American girl who suffers from self-loathing and misery because of the perception of one's appearance. Rosenbaum (2017) argues that the central theme of this work is the interception of race, gender, and personal identity, which is discussed using the example of Pecola. The race is an essential aspect of this novel because the author shares the experience of growing up as an African-American in a predominantly white community. While there are many examples of improper treatment of African-Americans due to their skin color and appearance in general, the author stresses the impact that such attitudes have on one's mental health. This is especially hurtful for women as, according to Rosenbaum (2017), the intersection of race and gender and society's perceptions of beauty subject African-American women to discrimination. Hence, Morrison's work serves as a representation of difficulties and issues prevalent in the African-American community and allows us to emphasize the need for changing attitudes towards race.

The main characters of the novel are Pecola, her father Cholly, and her mother, Pauline. Throughout the majority of the timeframe depicted by Morrison, Pecola lives with her foster parents, who also accommodate

Claudia and Freida, two African-American girls. Other vital characters that affect the events discussed by the author are the Fisher family, who employ Pecola's mother as a servant, and Geraldine, who is an upper-class African-American woman. Morrison also describes Pecola's other relatives, such as her brother Sam or grandfather Samson. Out of the people that bullied the girl and contributed to her faulty perception of herself, one should mention Louis Junior and Mr. Yacobowski.

The themes of violence and self-perception of African-American women, discussed in *The Bluest Eye* provide an understanding of many difficulties that arise as part of the inability to accept diversity. One can argue that the novel can be challenging to read since the author depicts events such as bullying or rape. However, being able to understand that these issues exist will allow society to focus on improving the attitudes towards African-Americans. As Abdullah (2019) states, Pecola serves as an example of the distrustfulness caused by a community, cautioning people from making similar mistakes. Therefore, from a personal perspective, the novel allows one to reevaluate opinions regarding beauty and the impact of other people's opinions, which is essential for maintaining a healthy self-image.

Overall, Morrison's novel provides an essential insight into the issues of discrimination that are experienced by many African-Americans. The example of a young girl and the depiction of the hurtful consequences of the community's views regarding African-American body image affect Pecola's mental health. Despite many changes, modern society is still subjected to these damaging effects of beauty perception, one example being the impact of dolls on children's self-esteem.

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