

# Secret life of bees theme analysis essay



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The 1960s come to mind when these words are heard. This time period was filled with prejudice and extreme racial segregation. The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd presents various messages of prejudice in the characters everyday lives.

African Americans were denied many rights and were treated with great disrespect even after the Civil Rights Act was established. Also, African Americans were downgraded by society. In addition, it was very looked down upon to be in any sort of relationship with a Negro if one was white. To begin, one instance of prejudice in The Secret Life of Bees was when Lily is discussing future career choices with Zach. " I've Just never heard of a Negro lawyer," (Kidd 121).

In this situation, Lily learns that Zach wants to become a lawyer after college. The Civil Rights Act was barely being enforced, and before then it was never spoken of to have African Americans do the important jobs that are held by the whites. The incorporation of blacks to the everyday American community was extremely resisted and not welcome yet. It was not yet recognized that Negroes had the same academic and intellectual possibilities as white people.

In addition, another example of prejudice in the novel was after Mays death, while police officer Eddie Hazelwurst was questioning Lily. As Hazelwurst said, " I'm Just saying it's not natural, you shouldn't be...

well, lowering yourself," (Kidd 198). The police officer says that Lily should not be residing with black people, as it was " unnatural". In this time period,

Negros were considered “ lower” or “ beneath” whites. In this case, Lily was considered to be “ lowering” herself by living with the Boatwright isters.

Whites had very strong resentment toward African Americans and thought of them as less than whites. Lastly, it was highly unacceptable for a black person to be in any relationship with a white person. In the novel, Zach, being black, and Lily, being white, were romantically interested in each other. They could not be together though, as Zach said, “ Lily, I like you better than any girl IVE ever known, but you have to understand, there are people who would kill boys like me for even looking at girls like you,” (Kidd 35). It was true.

It was looked down upon for a black person, whether a male or female, to have any romantic relations with a white person. The whites thought so lowly of African Americans that in society it was very dangerous to be in a relationship with a black person if one was white. In finalization, prejudice was an overruling factor in *The Secret Life of Bees*. Although the Civil Rights Act was established, most whites still acted negatively towards African Americans and denied them various privileges and Jobs, such as Zach wanting to be a lawyer but not being taken seriously. Also, it was considered “ downgrading” to live with Negro as Lily did, because they were thought lowly of by society. Lastly, it was unacceptable to society for a white person to be in a shows how whites in the 1960s were heavily attached to the ideas that society wanted them to follow.

As one can see, prejudice had a strong presence in *The Secret Life of Bees*. Prejudice is extremely wrong and unjust, although it still continues toward other groups in present-day society.