

Comparison of "prayer of a black boy" and "telephone conversation"



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These two poems, "Telephone Conversation" by Wole Soyinka and "Prayer of a black boy." Guy Tirolien. Are both about how a black person coped in the white man's part of the world. Both these poems highlight the problems of racial and cultural differences.

Prayer Of a Black Boy

The "Prayer of a Black Boy" poem is showing how a small boy coped, in the "White man's world." This whole poem is a prayer to God from a small boy. The boy wants to go back to where he is from, with his dad.

The boy pleads with God that he doesn't have to go to a white people's school. "Lord I do not want to go into their school. Please help me that I need not go again". The boy would have rather been in his home country with his father. He must have spent a lot of time at home before he came to this "world" as he remembers very well what it is like at home. He refers to the nature and how much he would like to "follow father into the cool gorges" he also says he wants to "lie down to sleep beneath a mango tree" and wake when only he wants to.

He states the difference between the two cultures by using the word walking "barefoot" down the red-hot paths. When he says the red-hot paths it shows that he can still remember what the heat was like.

The boy describes the factory on the sugar fields as a ship. "The ship spits its crew of black workers on to the landscape". He says this because when the factory closes, the entire workforce, of black slaves come out of the factory and disappear, home as a ship would, when it landed on the land and

the crew disembarked. The boy later pleads with god again not to go to the school. He believes that he should go but he would rather " stroll along the sugar stores" he says he would rather go where the tight sacks are piled with brown sugar. The boy uses personification when he says," With brown sugar, brown like my skin".

The boy would much rather prefer a simple life the same as his ancestors. The boy says He would rather listen into the moon whispering then an old man who smokes, all the time. The boy pleads with god once again. " Lord, the Negroes have had to much work already" he believes that his ancestors have done the work to keep his community alive and they have had to learn their ways of life. And now they must learn a different culture that they have never seen. He doesn't want to learn from " foreign books". He says that the these true gentlemen " do not know how to dance by the light of the moon" or " Not even know how to walk on the flesh of there own feet" and even " Tell the tales of their fathers". He says all this because back in his own country he is so used to it. This would all be normal for him in his own country. He uses a lot of repetition at the end of the play when he says all the things that gentlemen do not know what to do. The last thing he begs for again is not to go into the white boys schools again.

Telephone Conversation

This poem is about how a black man, is trying to get a room for a night over the phone.

The man saw the advert and the price was reasonable, and the location was all right. but best, the landlady swore she lived of premises. This all seemed

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very good so he decided to phone. The times must have been so bad for racial and cultural differences because before he even asked for a room he knew that he had to state he was African. The man must have been very worried because he knew what it was like. The man was worried of self-confession. He told the landlady " Madam, I hate to waste a journey – I am African". The direct response was " how dark" and then she said, " Are you light or very Dark" The lady puts emphasis on the words Light and dark.

The man seemed shocked as it says, " I had not misheard". At first the man seemed to see if he was dreaming as he mentioned everything around him as if doing a check. He describes the mouthpiece on the phone as having " rancid breath of public hide and speak." He uses these words because it is as if a game of hide and seek as the person on the other side of the phone can not see who it is, so it is as if he is hiding from the lady. " Red booth." He checks that the phone box he is in is red. " Red pillar box" " Red double tiered omnibus squelching tar" the man then said " It was real" the man had checked to see if all this just wasn't in his head.

As the man is silent as he compares all these things, the woman asks once more the same question, the man uses sarcasm to try and simplify her question he describes it as being " plain or like White Chocolate" Then the man looks at his passport to get the exact description of himself and, describes himself as West African Sepia. The lady does not seem to worry about where he is from just what colour skin he has. When he tells the lady he is West African Sepia her reply is " What's that?" He answers brunette.

The lady replies, " That's dark, isn't it." He says his face is brown but the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet are, " a peroxide blonde". By now the man has guessed that the landlady isn't very clever. He uses sarcasm to describe his bottom black. His reason is " friction caused by sitting down." He tells that the lady is shocked as he is sensing the " receiver rearing on the thunderclap, so he asks for one more moment. He pleads with the lady " Wouldn't you rather see for yourself". This man seems of a very high intellectual, as he is very quick with his comments and sarcasm.

Both of these poems seem to be set along time ago. When racism was a big part in their society. Both people know that the world is very racial and different. As the man comes straight out and tells the landlady he is African and the boy pleads not to go to a school full of white children.

The two males think that the white people, (The landlady, and the factory owner) are very stupid and of a low capability as the man uses a lot of sarcasm on the landlady and the boy says how they don't know how to do certain things like walk barefooted.

I think that the author Guy Tirolen goes into a lot more depth into the background of the boy, and how his life used to be like before he came to the white man's world. It seems to be very descriptive and detailed. Where Wole Soyinka is quite descriptive in the describing of the telephone box, but not a lot anywhere else. Both Black Males seem as if they just want an easy simple life. You can see this by the way the man says " I hate a wasted journey - I am African" and by the way the boy keeps begging God to let him go back to the " Cool Gorges" with his father.

The two Males are both asking for something in the prayer but one not as extortionate as the other. One boy asks for a whole new life, or his old one back. The boy seems to have a lot more problems than the man. The man is only asking for a room to stay for the night. But I think it is a lot harder for the black boy to survive in those times. This is because a lot of the Adults feel as if they control smaller people than them. And find it harder to control men that would be able to fight back.