

Jo goodwin parker,
what is poverty essay



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Jo Goodwin Parker's essay, "What is Poverty?" is about Parker who has personally experienced rural poverty. She explains her story from childhood to adulthood. Parker's struggles are overwhelming; look at any sentence, the evidence of her daily struggle is there. From her underwear to living arrangements, and everything in between, Parker resides in poverty. In her essay, she says to listen to the story of what poverty is. Then she talks about the different aspects of poverty. Parker talks about the lack of health conditions she and her three children suffer from.

She decides to be a mother even though she has no ability to provide for them. She talks about the government only giving her a small amount of money per month. That is why she cannot afford nutritional foods and soap to clean her kids. She thinks that the outside world will not help and even criticize her for not doing something. After reading Jo Goodwin Parker's essay, I did not feel pity but instead I felt respect. She was in an unfortunate situation that forced her into a life not easy to live or deal with.

But, with three children to care for, plus herself, she continued on with her life no matter what obstacles kept jumping in her path. I had an idea of what poverty was but after reading Parker's essay, the ideas I had are shattered into a new realization of the true meaning of poverty. Her definition provides vivid images of what poverty truly means. Parker uses an angry tone, imagery, and repetition to inform readers the dehumanizing effects of poverty. She explains poverty in an angry tone so readers can understand the true meaning of being poor.

Parker is capable of causing the reader to feel many emotions, mainly guilt. She makes the reader feel guilty for the possessions we may have. " You say in your clean clothes coming from your clean house, anybody can be clean" (Parker 168). This causes the reader to feel guilty for having the opportunity to be clean when we know that she does not have the same. Parker then goes on talking about how she has no hot water for herself and her kids. " Hot water is a luxury. I do not have luxuries" (168). Here again, she makes the reader feel guilty that having hot water is a luxury.

I agree with her writing about middle class people having things she does not have because it makes the reader appreciate the things they have in life. People do not think about hot water being a luxury, but Parker explains that having things like soap and hot water are something extravagant. Even though Parker makes the readers feel guilty of her situation, I actually appreciate the things I have now.

Parker uses imagery in her essay to make the readers actually see what she is going through. She explains what her living situation is like. This is a smell of urine, sour milk, and spoiling food sometimes joined with the strong smell of long-cooked onions" (167). The smell of her home is overpowering and the reason is because she cannot wash the mattresses or bathe herself and her kids with soap. Her and her three kids live like this, it sounds miserable and unhealthy. It is just downright disgusting. I could not imagine living a life like hers, but she went through every moment taking care of herself and her children. She had no help, no husband, and no friends.

Parker puts all this in the readers mind; she makes you see the physical and mental effects of her life. Physically she looks older than she looks, her back is bent from washing clothes, and she has chronic anemia because of her poor diet. Mentally she is just tired of being poor. She is tired of having no capability to provide for herself and her children. She is always scared that something bad will happen. The use of imagery she uses in her essay shows the dehumanizing effects of poverty. The technique Parker uses in her essay is repetition.

She constantly restates what is poverty. " Poverty is getting up every morning from a dirt- and illness-stained mattress. " " Poverty is living in a smell that never leaves" (167). Parker uses repetition to hammer an idea, image, or relationship so the reader can pay attention. In this case, she wants the reader to pay attention to the odor and the dirtiness of her living. " Poverty is staying up all night on cold nights to watch the fire, knowing one spark on the newspaper covering the walls means your sleeping children die in flames. " Poverty is hoping it never rains because diapers won't dry when it rains and soon you are using newspapers" (168).

Here, Parker is explaining how she is scared that her children will be hurt if she does not keep one eye open and the inconvenience of rain that troubles her children. All of these phrases create a different image of poverty and each one is successful in evoking sympathy from the reader. Her technique is to force the reader to imagine poverty in a new way. Parker makes us realize how bleak poverty is and she shows us that there is no hope for the poor without understanding.

Parker gives outsiders a glimpse into what she goes through on a daily basis. Being a single mother and seeing your children sick and dirty is devastating. I cannot image having to go through this. I think the purpose in writing this is not to give them pity but to understand and help people who need it. I think Parker wrote this essay so we can open our eyes and see the truth. This is happening in our towns and most times people do not choose that type of lifestyle. This essay is devastating and is hard to read. I defiantly have a more clear understanding of what poverty truly means.