

Sirsay marry me?”  
tobias wolff parallels  
the narrative



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

sirsay 1 A Point by Point Analytical View of Tobias Wolff's " Say Yes" " Say Yes" is an emotional story of love and its pitfalls. The husband loves his wife dearly but fails to really know that all she wants to hear is affirmation of her proposal of love despite the racial undertone involved. The Husband does not come to the realization of this concept until the end of the story when he accepts the proposal and puts forth the effort to " make it up" to Ann. The story begins around dusk, one evening in a nondescript kitchen on El Camino Street in some unnamed American ghetto. The mood of the evening soon changes for the worse. While a husband and a wife wash dishes they quibble about inter-racial marriage, specifically Caucasian and African.

Ann, the wife, proposes a question, "...I'm black, but still me, and we fall in love. Will you marry me?" Tobias Wolff parallels the narrative tone with the considerate loving attitude of the Husband, which makes the delicate subject matter of inter-racial marriage easier to confront in the short story " Say Yes". There are only two characters mentioned in the story.

The Husband has extensive knowledge of African-American culture, although not being of that particular race himself. He is considerate and devoted to his wife Ann. This is displayed while helping his wife with the dishes every night and assisting with the remainder of the housework. A friend of his wife's congratulated her on having such a considerate husband; it was true he " tried" to show consideration towards his wife through his works. The second individual is Ann. Wolff does not divulge Ann's everyday character, but displays Ann's " indifference" to her Husband's assessment of the subject matter.

As Ann turns “ the pages of a magazine.... she was too angry to be actually reading it, but she didn’t snap through the pages the way he would have done.”, displaying her displeasure at her Husband’s sentiment that it was wrong to marry out of racial classification. Wolff writes the short story from the first person perspective of the Husband who, “...went to school with blacks ... worked with blacks and lived on the same street with blacks and ... always gotten along just fine.

”, however; Wolff did not intend for the reader to perceive that the Husband is racist. Although his wife feels two cultures with two distinct backgrounds could “ know” one another; her Husband’s insight of multi-cultured relationships remained unchanged. Although in love, two people of differing races or cultures could never conceptually “ know” each other. The Husband loves his wife and the narrator writes through the tenderness of the Husband’s eye.

When Ann slices her finger re-washing the silverware, all animosity is lost as he scrambles up stairs to get her a Band-Aid as a peace offering to cease the argument. He finishes the cleaning in the kitchen and goes as far as to mop the floor while he waits for the frustration and anger to subside in his Wife. The author carefully crafts the story so that every detail contributes to a certain unique or single effect, whether it is as complex as irony or as simple as depiction of feelings.

The Husband describes his absolute love for Ann as he reminisces about the years he spent with her and how deeply he “ knows” her, “... his throat tightened so that he could hardly breathe. His face and neck began to tingle.

Warmth flooded his chest." This word picture vividly presents the picture of a man who in his heart loves his wife. There are examples exemplifying the sharp contrast between the Husband's perception that he and his wife "know" each other and the ironic certainty that his wife doesn't feel the same way. The husband states, " A person from their culture and a person from our culture could never really know each other.

" " Like you know me?" the wife asks. " Yes. Like I know you." the husband replies, yet he would still not marry her if she was African. In the conclusion of the story the Husband gives up and whispers to Ann that he would marry her even