

# Sweat by zora neale hurston essay sample

[Life](#), [Love](#)



'Sweat' is an acclaimed short story written by Zora Neale Hurston which was published in the year 1926. The story gives a glimpse of contemporary society, condition of women and relations between men and women. This paper intends to discuss short story and examines literary aspects of the story.

The story revolves around Delia and her husband, Sykes. Delia works as a washerwoman in a village and resides with her unemployed husband Sykes. Sykes does not work but keeps resenting that his wife washes clothes of white people. He also keeps her frightening with snakes as he is acquainted with her phobia with snakes. Delia is not happy as she is regularly beaten by her husband. Delia remembers how beautiful she was and how she became dull due to sufferings in her marriage. Delia realizes that she is the one who runs the house and there is no need for her to tolerate these sufferings. On the other hand her husband, Sykes is also exhausted with Delia and feels to be free of her. He plants one poisonous rattle snake in clothes of Delia but was himself bitten by the snake. Delia sits under a chinaberry tree, refuses helping him and waits till he dies.

Zora Neale Hurston appears portraying a self reflection in her story. Delia realizes that she is suffering in her own house and her husband does not love her. She analyses everything with a new perspective (Lupton). Delia realizes that she runs the house and feeds her husband. She earns the money and fulfills all requirements of her husband. Delia realizes that her husband mocks her even after he is dependent on her for every requirement of his life.

Delia realizes how she had been suffering all these years after her marriage

with Sykes. As soon as she realizes all these things, she decides to stop all these things. When her husband tries to kill her by planting an extremely rattle snake in her clothes and gets bitten by the snake himself, she refuses to help him. Delia refuses to pay attention on his pleas and refuses to show any kind of mercy which he constantly pleaded till he died.

Self reflection inspires readers to introspect about their beliefs, injustices and surroundings. Further it helps people in redefining as well as strengthening their weaknesses. Fictitious characters connect to readers and help them in evaluating their choices to deal with any given situation. Delia also inspires readers to get rid of their sufferings in a suitable manner. Self reflection is prominently visible in ‘Sweat’ and it helps readers in realizing good, bad and ugly and further provides them the chances to improve or change the situation (Hurston).

‘Sweat’ portrays the self in a different demeanor which is not generally found. The self, portrayed in this story is more practical and author does not hesitate from using horrifying manner to portray about the self. The self is so prominent that the character does not help her dying husband and the story was deliberately ended in a tragic way. If author had ended the story in a comic way by helping the dying husband, the self would not have become prominent as it is in its present form.

Stephen K. George opines about self in these words, “The first proposition about selfhood that ethical criticism rests on is the assumption that there are ethically better and worse versions of our selves always pending and always being realized” (George 53). The ethical aspect has not been given importance but the importance is given to the self in this story. Author does

not suggest to compromise from the idea of self merely for the sake of any relation. Self is portrayed above everything by the author. Delia did not even bother to comfort her even after his several supplications of mercy, once she realizes her sufferings by her husband (George 53).

Having observed succinct analysis of the above mentioned subject, it can be concluded that self is very prominently portrayed in the story, 'Sweat'. The author has portrayed self through the character and placed it above everything else in the story. It appears that author is suggesting readers to break all kinds of bonds but not to compromise with self. 'Sweat' puts it to readers that 'Self' is the most important aspect of a human being and everything else comes after the self.

## **Works Cited**

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Hurston, Zora Neale. *Sweat*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997.

Lupton, Mary Jane. "Zora Neale Hurston and the Survival of the Female." *The Southern Literary Journal* 15(1) (1982): 45-54.