

# Free research paper on mama day

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



### - Bibliographic Discussion of the Author

Gloria Naylor is an Africa-American literature author. She was born in the 1950's in the city of New York. She graduated from the University of New York with an English degree in 1981. Her Literature authorship was inspired by the ideas of African literature writes such as Alice Walker and Zora Hurston who had been authors to different literature works between 1980's and 1990's. Despite having written the master piece Mama Day, Gloria Naylor has had an interesting history in the field of authorship. Her first work was a novel entitled, *The Women of Brewster Place*. This novel focused on the plight of the African American woman, and the responsibilities that society bestowed in the African American woman. It was this novel that made Naylor prominent in the world of African American literature. Her novel won the American Book Award in the United States.

Motivated by the success of her first article, Gloria Naylor published her second novel entitled *Linder Hills* in 1985. Unlike the first novel, this new work focusses on the need for African Americans to embrace their racial history and heritage. This shows that Naylor was expanding her authorship from not only issues about gender to key social dynamics and paradigms within the African-American society. The third piece that Gloria Naylor wrote was the novel, *Mama Day*. This novel focused on the experiences of African Americans in Southern United States during the days of slavery, and after slavery. Naylor centered her novel of the idea that there was a need for African Americans not to forget their past and the painful history of slavery within the United States. Naylor explained in her novel, that African Americans, especially those living in urban areas were forgetting their

heritage as they became pre-occupied with urban life-styles. One the characteristic of Gloria Naylor is the fact that different characters arise in two different novels. For example, Gloria Naylor first created the character Mama Day in the novel Linden Hills, which she published in 1985.

- Themes, Settings and Literary Devices

- Theme of the Supernatural

First of all, Gloria brings about the theme of the Supernatural. In her novel, Mama Day is painted as having super natural powers that are not possessed by other characters in the novel. It is evident from the novel that Mama Day acquired supernatural powers from her great grandparents. Unlike other characters such as George who die. Mama Day remains an integral part of the novel throughout its plot. In fact, Naylor explains that as part of the contextual society's culture, people adopt the hoodoo religion which just as Mama Day's power is derived from their ancestors. One of the characteristic of the hoodoo religion is the fact that its adherents also believe in a supernatural being. This brings out the idea that Gloria Naylor uses the idea of supernatural as an important theme within her novel.

## **Theme of Change**

It is evident from Naylor's novel Mama Day that there are radical changes that happen in the lives of the characters presented. First of all, it is evident that Cocoa does not like George the first time she meets him.

Conventionally, we would expect that Cocoa would not relate well with George in the first place because she dislikes him. However, it is clear that this is not the case. Through a radical change from hatred to love, Cocoa finds herself in love with George. Their love goes to an extra mile of dating

and eventually having a baby together. The radical changes that happen to the lives of characters in this novel brings out the fact that Naylor in some way believes in the power of magic and miracle. As a highly religious individual, and the presence of religious themes within her novel, it is clear that her believe in a supernatural power in the heart of religion causes her to structure her characters in this way.

## **Foreshadow**

Gloria Naylor seems to have borrowed heavily from Shakespearian literature. The character Mama Day seems to have the same ordeal with the character Tampest. In the novel, Naylor uses foreshadow to explain some of the ordeals that have happened in the past. This style is meant to give the readers a better understanding about some of the key characters within the novel. For instance, Mama Day remembers about the desolate life that she and her family lived in Miranda. Naylor describes the experiences of the mama day's ancestors in the days of slavery, and the tragedies that her ancestors faced in the hands of her ancestors (Wilson 56). Naylor selects a melancholic narrator's voice of George to explain the problems that faced the African-American society in the hands of slavery masters. Ina addition, Naylor employs foreshadow to also explain the difficult life that Mama day lived in the coast of Georgia. It is through foreshadowing that readers are able to understand that Mama Day's life as a healer and medicine woman in Georgia was not smooth. Mama Day encountered tragic ordeals in her work, and the challenges that she faced in the past seen to have strengthened her as a character. In fact, as the novel progresses it is apparent that Mama Day has supernatural attributes that are not possessed by other characters within

the novel.

#### - Reviews and Critiques on the Book

Since its publishing, Naylor's novel has been subject to criticism both from its readers and from the scholarly world. One of the major criticisms that have been placed on Naylor's novel *Mama Day* is the fact that the book seems to create sets of two polarities throughout its plot. First of all, Naylor seems to draw a clear distinction between the North and the South (Whitt 44).

According to Naylor, the South is painted as being a place of suffering for the African American community. Dating back to the days of slavery, Naylor characterizes the South as not being a good place. Most of the tragic ordeals that happen with the course of the novel seem to happen to the south. The North on the other hand is viewed as a place of solace to the African American society.

One of the reasons why the North is viewed as being welcoming to the African American society is the fact that people in the North are not supportive of slavery. Therefore, the North is painted as being a place of emancipation from the various challenges that are facing the African American society both during slavery and during the post-slavery days. However, though *Mama Day* paints the North and the South as being polar opposites, the fact remains that the African American society also experienced some challenges in the North. As is evident from the novel, urbanization within cities such as New York posed the risk of causing African Americans to lose their heritage (Stave 34). The personalities and mentalities of African Americans about their former history were likely to be lost in the North. This means that the clear-cut line that Gloria Naylor seeks to draw

between the North and the South is not a complete description of how the situation is at the time. The fact remains that challenges continued to face the African American society both in the South and also in the North. I agree to a large extent with Naylor's inclination of the North as being a better place for the African American society at the time. However, the fact remains that the challenges that African Americans face in the North are not adequately painted in Naylor's novel therefore bring out the idea that Naylor as a writer is more biased towards the North.

In addition there is an apparent discrepancy that exists within Gloria Naylor's novel over the idea of modernity and civilization. This clash is evident as Naylor explains the difference between the western culture of Willow Springs and the rural life of the South. Mama Day's stationing in the South makes her less noticeable by most of the society because the low levels of technologies and the rural life of the south is viewed as being backwards(Naylor 28). As a main character within the novel critics argue that Naylor should have structured her plot in such a way that characters, though from the western life, respected the tradition themes and ideas that shaped the character Mama day.

#### - Elements of African Oral tradition

Some of the elements of African oral tradition that are evident within this novel is the use of dialogues in considerably large portions of the plot(Kelley 49). In many cases, African oral tradition was passed through the word of mouth. Therefore, the extensive use of dialogue puts narrative into practice. In addition, some of the incidences such as the use of flashback to explain some of the occurrences that happened are done by the use of narration. For

export, the voice of George in the grave is used to explain the tragic incidences that Mama Day and her family faced in Miranda as well as the oppression that her ancestors faced in the South as a result of the embracing of slavery in that part of the world

## **Works Cited**

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