

The bluest eye by toni morrison english literature essay

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" The dandelions at the base of the telephone pole. Why, [Pecola] wonders, do people call them weeds? [Pecola] thought they were pretty" (Morrison, 37). " Nobody loves ... dandelion" (38). Pecola Breedlove, in the novel *The Bluest Eye*, by Toni Morrison, believes she is just like the dandelions, "...ugly" (39) and nobody liked or wanted her. Pecola, a black girl with nappy hair and dark eyes, desperately yearns for "... blue eyes of a little white girl..." (137). Pecola, lives a life fraught with of violence and the belief that she is ugly and unwanted. Pecola's father, Cholly, now jailed for burning down their home and beating his wife; Pecola moves in with the MacTeer Family. Immediately becoming friends with Claudia and Frieda MacTeer, they share their secrets, desires and even the same bed. While sitting on the front steps, one Saturday in autumn, avoiding the ranting and raving of Mrs. MacTeer, contemplate what they should do to pass the time. " Suddenly Pecola bolted straight up, her eyes wide with terror. A brownish-red stain discolored the back of her dress. " Am I going to die?" she asked". She has begun "... ministratin'" (23). Frieda instructs Claudia to get some water to clean up the mess in the front steps. Frieda takes Pecola around the corner "...of the house where the bushes were thick. Frieda was on her knees; a white rectangle of cotton was near her on the ground" (24). While Frieda is helping Pecola, Rosemary hollers, " Mrs. MacTeer! Mrs. MacTeer!.... Frieda and Claudia are out here playing nasty!..." (25) Mrs. MacTeer rushes outside to see what's going on; reaching the girls see what's going on, she yanks "... Frieda by the shoulder..." spinning her around whips her legs shouting, " Gonna be nasty, huh? Naw you ain't!" (25) Now grabbing Pecola, Mrs. MacTeer, turning her around with every intention of whipping her also,

notices "... the napkin..." that has now come loose and asks what exactly is going on. Claudia explains, "[Pecola] was bleeding. We was just trying to stop the blood!" (25) Mrs. MacTeer, realizing that the girls are not doing anything wrong, pulls both Frieda and Pecola close to her apologizing trying to calm the girls down. The MacTeer family is the only family that has shown Pecola any form of love, but, sadly she must go back home when her father is released from prison. Pecola lives with her family in a store that has been converted into a living space, that has been separated into "... two rooms by beaverboard planks that didn't reach the ceiling" (28). Their house is anything but a home. The Breedloves are not a loving family that have cherished memories, to turn their house into a home. Pecola's house is filled with arguments and physical abuse. Pecola's mother never holds her hand or tells Pecola that she is a beautiful girl, never encouraging her or speaking to her in a loving manner. Pecola and her brother, Sam, do not call their Mother, Mommy or Mom; they are permitted to, they are forced to call her Mrs. Breedlove. Cholly, Pecola's father, more often than not, comes home drunk and is physically abusive to her Mother. This environment only severs Pecola's relationship with her family and serves to confirm her feels of being unattractive. Pecola longs to just "... disappear" (36) from this so-called family and life she lives. One nice spring day, Pecola goes to see Mrs. Breedlove at work to pick up the laundry to take home. Mrs. Breedlove works in a "...big white house..." "...by the lake" (71) "as an ideal servant" (88) for a well to do white family. While visiting Mrs. Breedlove, Pecola meets the pretty little white girl that Mrs. Breedlove tends to daily, with her pretty "... corn yellow..." hair, pretty "...pink sunback dress..." (74). While waiting in the

kitchen for Mrs. Breedlove, this cute little white girl starts calling for "Polly!..." (74). "Where's Polly?..." (74) the little white girl asks. Pecola stands in the kitchen wondering why this little white girl gets to call Mrs. Breedlove Polly when she is only allowed to call her Mrs. Breedlove. While waiting for Mrs. Breedlove to return with the laundry Pecola accidentally knocks over "...a deep-dish berry cobbler" (74). Returning to the kitchen Mrs. Breedlove, sees the mess that Pecola has made all over the kitchen floor and the little white girl's dress, rushes over to Pecola, not to console her or to comfort her, but to "...knock her to the floor" "...with the back of her hand..." (75). Mrs. Breedlove not only beats Pecola, she also chastises and demeans her, then orders her to take the laundry and go home. As Pecola leaves the house she hears Mrs. Breedlove speaking sweetly, caring and lovingly comforting the little white girl. Pecola wonders why Mrs. Breedlove can show love and affection to a little white girl, but can not show the same love and affection to her own daughter. Pecola walks away with the laundry wondering how Mrs. Breedlove would treat her if only she had blue eyes. Maureen Peal, a new girl in school, a light-skinned black girl with long brown hair in two braids with beautiful green eyes, captivates the whole school, "...teachers called on her, they smiled encouragingly. Black boys didn't trip her in the halls; white boys didn't stone her, white girls didn't suck their teeth when [Maureen] was assigned to be their work partner; black girls stepped aside ..." (46). One "... false spring day..." "a group of boys was circling and holding at bay a victim, Pecola Breedlove" (48) on the playground. "Black e mo. Black e mo. Yadaddsleepsnekked. Black e mo black e mo ya dadd sleeps nekked. Black e mo..." (48). Frieda and Claudia, on their way home, see the

commotion on the playground and rush to help Pecola. Frieda and Claudia's attempt to intervene does not seem to phase the group of boys in the least. They all banter back and forth calling each other names until Maureen Peal walks up. When " Maureen appeared ... the boys seemed reluctant to continue under her springtime eyes They buckled in confusion, not willing to beat up three girls under [Maureen's] watchful gaze" (49). Again, Pecola wonders how she would be treated if only she was beautiful. The only time Pecola feels she just might be beautiful is when she is with, China, Poland and Miss. Marie, the working girls who live upstairs from her. When she is with them she feels accepted, no longer feels like the ugly, too black girl who longs for lighter skin and blue eyes. If only Pecola could feel this acceptance at home, she may no longer feel the need to seek out the blue eyes she assumes will turn her beautiful. Pecola becomes fixated on reaching the so called standard of beauty she feels is all around her, in several shapes and forms such as blue eyed baby dolls, Maureen Peal, Greta Garbo, Ginger Rogers and Shirley Temple just to name a few. Pecola feels that beauty is the only way to solve her problems. Pecola feels that if only she could become beautiful, her parents would no longer fight, her family would no longer be poor, and her father would no longer want to rape her. Pecola believes that only through beauty will she ever gain the respect of others. If only Pecola could realize that beauty is only in the eye of the beholder, and true beauty comes from within a person's heart and mind, not from the way they look on the outside. If Pecola could only realize a person could have all the external beauty that would make society perceive them as beautiful, but if they do not possess inner beauty, confidence in oneself, love, caring and respect for

others, they too are ugly. If Pecola could just see the beauty that is within all the people around her she just might be surprised how much true beauty surrounds her.