

# Teenage class struggle: the ruling class essay sample

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As young women budding towards the full bloom of femininity, teenage girls undergo personal battles that contribute to the shaping and strengthening of their characters. Such battles and internal conflicts in works of literature may appear juvenile and even somewhat exaggerated to more mature, if not cynical, readers, but are rather appealing to adolescent girls since they can relate to its context.

The Ruling Class by Francine Pascal is one such book wherein teenage girls can find themselves in the limelight. The piece is actually one of Pascal's many works about teenage life and its many faces, such as the Sweet Valley High and Fearless series, to name a few. The intended audience can easily be deduced as teenage girls, what with the hardcover and paperback covers bearing images that spell "teen." However, given the context of class struggle and the non-physical brutality that comes along with it, the book is more advisable for girls from middle to late teens.

The Ruling Class tells the story of Twyla Gay Stark, the new girl in school who did not fit in because she is poor, unfashionable, and unpopular. She came face-to-face with the elite and popular crowd called The Ruling Class, for having been asked out by Ryder Mcquaid, whom Jeanette Sue, the leader of the clique, thinks of as her property. The heroine then struggles with the vicious and cruel bullying of the group, especially of its ringleader, since The Ruling Class had that "power" to pick on anyone. Twyla, with her friend Deena, wanted to seek revenge and so they fought back.

The Ruling Class was based on a contemporary and upper class setting (Dallas), thus rendering it almost non-fictional, especially for readers who

can fully relate to Twyla Gay's struggle against Jeanette Sue and her clique (Sorocco, 2004). In the story, each of the two aforementioned characters represented a stereotype that completes the opposition between the two sides to a class struggle. Twyla Gay represented the poor protagonist while Jeanette Sue played the rich, popular villain.

The other supporting characters also represented particular stereotypes, such as the naïve and suck-up Myrna Fry, the handsome male lead Ryder Mcquaid, and Deena, the heroine's sidekick who was also a victim of the vicious Ruling Class and was labeled a slut. The stereotypes in the story are starkly distinct from one another, and Pascal had their stories interwoven in such a way that each of them completes the ideal group of stereotypical personalities often present in a typical high school setting. In the Ruling Class, it is evident that the author aims to shed light on the brutalities of the kinds of people that inevitably exists in every school, which inflicts wounds on their fellow teenagers' souls.

The story of the Ruling Class includes several issues on teenage struggle that ranges from the trivial to the meaningful. The stereotypes present in the novel can easily be identified and are keys to understanding one of the more meaningful issues, that is, the amateur class struggle between these rich and poor youngsters. The class struggle actually works as an umbrella theme, as it covers and also brings about the other teenage issues. The issue on class, for instance, pushes Myrna Fry, in all her naiveté and ignorance, to make it her absolute life's dream to belong to the Ruling Class.

Another more significant factor is Myrna's idiotic racism, which also falls under the category of struggle. The issue on class also provided the reason for the mean Jeanette Sue to pick on Twyla Gay, for the heroine was a far cry from the likes of the Ruling Class. This predicament, in turn, made Twyla's high school life a struggle to fit in, as her disposition and romance with Ryder—who was thought of as Jeanette Sue's property—automatically made her an outcast, not to mention a person whose life was a target for the “mean girls” to make hell.

The book is actually a typical account of one teenage girl's struggle against, and revenge on, the elite and cruel high school crowd. Only, when the juvenile façade is penetrated, the novel reveals the teenager's take on cruelty, superficiality, prejudice, and even revenge that can truly reach its teenage audience.

The style of the narrative that is, alternating between Myrna Fry and Twyla Gay with the occasional narration of Jeanette Sue herself gave a balance between the different characters within the novel; thus making the reader feel for not only the heroine in the story. Also, with *The Ruling Class*, the author played with the concept of power. Only, the power she granted upon *The Ruling Class* was quite excessive and a little exaggerated, especially since not even the adults can get in the way of this clique. Nevertheless, the power struggle that is born of the difference between classes in the story is remarkable, given the effect that it could have on teenage lives.

All in all, although it is not really a groundbreaking piece, the book is a worthwhile read. It may seem shallow and immature when a more mature reader first delves into it, but it gives insights that are implicit but cannot be missed. Furthermore, it explores teenage struggles that truly exist and are significant to each teenage audience as they are being shaped into more mature individuals that are bound to face advanced versions of the issues tackled within the book. More importantly, the novel encourages the other Twylas out there, and gives them the much needed assurance that they are not alone, that such things do happen, and that they can take on it if they only try.

Sorocco, E. (2004). *Wonderful True to Life Fiction Novel for Teens* [Electronic Version]. Retrieved May 17, 2007 from <http://www.amazon.com/Ruling-Class-Francine-Pascal/dp/0689873328> .