

# Theory essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Bambara & Freire; An Analysis to Theory March 2013 The Lesson is written by Toni Cade Bambara and is a fictional narrative. The significance of this short story is deepened when we apply Paulo Freire's story Pedagogy of the Oppressed because he talks about the different kinds of teaching methods that relate to the characters in The Lessons and the society that they live in. In Freire's story he deliberates about the society we live in, which uses the banking method rather than the problem posing method of teaching.

I believe that this is what Miss. Moore is trying to show her students in The Lesson by taking them to the ' rich' part of town when they go into the toyshop. In Freire's story he gives two terms: the oppressor, which in my opinion is the white people in The Lesson and the oppressed which is Sylvia and her classmates. In The Lesson, you meet a young girl who goes by the name of Sylvia. Sylvia is brought up in a ' slum' area and is resentful towards her teacher, Miss Moore.

Sylvia feels that her teacher is better than everyone else in her community because she has a college degree, and doesn't care to listen to anything Miss. Moore has to say. The story starts off by Miss Moore bringing the group of children to this toyshop, which is where I believe she is trying to expose them to this banking system concept, to show them what is wrong with their society. The banking system concept is when " the teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable.

Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students" (Freire 52). In other words the banking system where the teachers believe only they can be the ' knowledgeable other', the knowledgeable other is someone who has more experience and knows what

they are doing which makes them the one who holds all the knowledge. They don't believe the students can teach them anything new. Using this type of system will result in the student's only being as good as what they're taught.

The problem posing method on the other hand is where the teachers and the students work together, that they can learn from each other and respect one another's thoughts, ideas, questions and wonders. A great example of the banking method that Freire writes is "the more completely she fills out the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are" (Freire 53).

In *The Lesson* the white people are the oppressors and Sylvia and her classmates are the oppressed. Freire explains the oppressed "The oppressed receive the euphemistic title of "welfare recipients". They are treated as individual cases, as marginal persons who deviate from general configuration of a "good, organized, and just" society" (Freire 55). This is saying how poor people are treated as separate people in society. The students in *The Lesson* did not know they were seen as this 'separate' part of society.

According to Freire he doesn't believe this is the case, he sees everyone as equals "The oppressed are not "marginal", are not people living "outside" society. They have always been "inside" (Freire 55). Once Sylvia and her classmates arrive at this toyshop they notice a toy sailboat that catches them off guard, but it's not the sailboat, it is the price tag that is attached to it, Sylvia exclaims "Who are these people that spend that much for performing clowns and \$1000 for toy sailboats? What kinda work they do and how they live and how come we ain't on it? (Bambara 425). I believe that by

bringing the children to this new environment she was trying to open the children's eyes to this 'separate' society. Miss Moore embodies the idea of problem posing. From Freire's point of view, a teacher that poses these traits should "from the outset, her efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization" (Freire 56). Miss. Moore does this when she asks a question to deepen Sugar's thought about why adults would play with a kid's toy.

A great metaphoric description between the two methods that Freire uses, quoting Fromm is that the banking system causes people to be 'necrophilia' versus the problem posing method, which is causing people to be 'biophilious'. "While life is characterized by growth in a structured, functional manner, the necrophilous person loves all that does not grow, all that is mechanical. The necrophilous person is drive by the desire to transform the organic into the Memory rather than experience, having, rather than being, is what counts.

The necrophilous person can related to an object- a flower or a person- only if he loses the possession he loses contact with the world... He loves control; in the act of controlling he kills life" (Fromm 58). I feel that this quote strengthens the issue that the children have around this expensive boat. In my point of view the children are more biophilious, this is backed up when it shows that they do not see the importance of an expensive boat when they could use that money to feed an entire family. They aren't bound by materialistic items.

During The Lesson you read about Sylvia getting mad at her friend Sugar for engaging in conversation with Miss Moore regarding the toy sailboat. This

displays that Sylvia is unintentionally still bound by the banking system because if they were in the problem posing method this would be seen as harmful to one another's learning. You notice that Miss Moore is trying to get the students to critically think for themselves in a problem-posing manner, but it is apparent that they are all in some matter constricted by this banking system method that they live in.

The whole idea of the banking system with the roles of the oppressed and the oppressor is that it stops people from becoming fully human, as Freire says " no one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so" (p. 66). References: Bambara, Toni Cade. " The Lesson. " 2nd. Edition, Beverly. Boston: Bedford/St Martins, 2004. 419-427 print. Freire, Paulo. " Pedagogy of the Oppressed. " Rev edition. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. Continuum/New York, 1995. 52-67 print.