

The color purple essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In this extract, Nettie is the first person narrator. She is writing to Celie from the Olinka encampment. She describes a lot of the Olinka's beliefs and attitudes, as well as telling Celie about her relations with Corrine, and the children. She also describes the setting, she tells Celie about the hut, and the camp. One major idea presented in the novel is the idea of sisterhood.

In this extract, sisterhood is illustrated between Nettie and Corrine; however, the extract does not emphasize the common view of women's attitudes at the time, and how they should stick together, but rather demonstrates the breakdown of this sisterly relationship, because of jealousy, one emotion that destroys bonds between women throughout the novel. Corrine is clearly bothered by Nettie, and the way she spends time with Samuel, and how the Olinka people see Nettie as Samuels's wife as well as Corrine, following their beliefs of polygamy.

Another thing bothering Corrine is how the children look so much like Nettie, the Olinka think they are Netties. So jealousy breaks down the relationship, and this is illustrated by dialogue. Corrine confronts Nettie, and tells her they should call each other sisters, they should not borrow each others clothes, and the children can't call her 'Mama Nettie'. Nettie tells us she is bothered by this, but does not say anything to argue with Corrine, only 'you feeling yourself?' This part of the extract shows that the usual sisterhood attitude of the women can at times be broken down by jealousy.

Another huge idea that is consistent throughout the novel is the suggestion that men are superior, and dominate over females. In this piece, Nettie tells us of the chief, and how he has many wives, they all work really hard for

him, and still think it an honour to be married to him. This is part of the Olinka's beliefs, and Nettie clearly disagrees with this thought, when she responds to Olivia's query as to why the women want to be the chiefs wife, she says ' that is as high as they can think'.

However, although Nettie disagrees with polygamy and the way the males dominate the culture, it is not all that different from back home, where, although polygamy isn't a part of society, adultery is, as illustrated with Mr__ and Shug. One more massive concept in the novel, and particularly the Olinka people, is religion. Religion plays an enormous part in the color purple, in Africa, or back home with Celie, religion is an integral part of society, and this extract shows how Christianity is forced upon the Olinka's.

It says how Samuel and Corrine have pictures of Christ, and crosses, hung up all over their hut, but it goes on to say that behind the Olinka's alter, and in their school, pictures of Jesus, and crosses, are also hung. This is not the Olinka's chosen religion, the missionaries are forcing it upon them, and making it a part of their society. The choice of words used in the extract portrays some interesting ideas, for example, when Corrine says ' some of them can't seem to get it through their think skulls', this is showing Corrine thinks less of the Olinka.

It perhaps shows that she thinks herself as higher, intellectually and perhaps of class. Its not just Corrine that puts across this idea either, because Nettie says ' that is as high as they can think' showing that she also believes that she is a higher class from the Olinkas, and that she is intellectually better than them. Furthermore, Nettie says to Olivia that she will grow up to be a

nurse or a teacher. This illustrates the attitude of Nettie, that she will want Olivia to do well, and make something of herself, unlike the Olinka people, whose greatest aspiration is to be the wife of the chief.

However, it also compares the change of time, not just between the scarlet letter but even more recently, between what life was like for women back home in America. It was very uncommon to see a woman school teacher or nurse in the times of the scarlet letter, or in America, where women were only seen as being good for marrying a man, and bearing children. One feature of language change is where Nettie says she ‘loves’ the hut. ‘Love’ in the color purple is a term thrown around loosely, and doesn’t have the same value as it does in the scarlet letter.

It is an expression that Nettie even uses for a hut! Whereas in the scarlet letter, it is very less frequently used. This shows a big language change in the use of the word love. The breakdown between Nettie and Corrine’s sisterly relationship goes against the general consensus in the rest of the novel. Mainly, throughout the color purple, women stick together, no matter what, as men are usually oppressing them, so the need to stick together is even greater. They look out for each other in most situations, and care for each other more than any man.

However, this is not always the case, as we have seen in this extract, the same thing happens a further 2 times in the book. The sisterly bond is broken down because of jealousy. The first example is when Harpo comes to Celie for advice on what to do about Sofia, but because Celie is jealous that Sofia gets treated nicely and she doesn’t, she tells Harpo to beat her. This

strongly goes against sisterhood. Another example is where Sofia punches Squeak, because Squeak is jealous of Sofia and Harpo, so she starts an argument and slaps Sofia.

On the whole though, sisterhood is a very important aspect in the color purple. Male domination is another key feature of the book. Polygamy is allowed in the Olinka tribe, however, back in America, even though polygamy isn't allowed, the men still have all the power. An example is when Mr__ is married to Celie and he cheats on her a lot with Shug. The shocking thing is, Celie doesn't even mind! One more example of disrespecting women, like the Olinkas, is when Pa rapes Celie, and tries to rape Nettie, even though he had a wife. So although polygamy isn't technically allowed, adultery is still present.

Religion is another feature throughout the novel, and we can see this right from the start, because all the letters are entitled - dear god. We can tell Celie is obviously very religious, and believes strongly in Christianity, but later in the novel, Shug makes her question Christianity, or rather; the white mans interpretation of Christianity. Shug questions Gods existence, not entirely, just as what the majority of people perceive it to be: a white old man with a beard. So we can see from this the white peoples beliefs and views have been forced upon Celie, much like they have been forced upon the Olinka.