

The bluest eye: analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the book, *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison, writes about a young African American girl named Pecola Breedlove who is convinced she is ugly because she does not have blue eyes. Through Pecola Breedlove, Claudia MacTeer, and several other characters in the book, Morrison demonstrates the result of the Western's culture standard of beauty which leads to internalized racism and self-hatred. The standard of beauty created through advertisements and other media outlets has made it difficult to grow up in America as an African American.

Throughout *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola's physical attributes affects her self-esteem because she is only exposed to a certain type of beauty due the exposure that she has access to. In the beginning of the novel, Morrison asserts, Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs- all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. (20) Even at such a young age it was ingrained in the brains of little black girls that this was what a beautiful woman should look like. Although, this is not the reality of it, it just goes to show you how much of an affect media has.

Claudia's character does not show much or if any self-hatred that her other peers may have, she very much so realizes the prejudice ideal of beauty going on. For example, she asserts that I destroyed white baby dolls The truly horrifying thing was the transference of the same impulses to little white girls. (22) She even goes on to say, What made people look at them and say, Awwwww, but not for me? (23) This is one of the only times she questions her own beauty by comparing it white females. Claudia's character

tries to resist glorifying the dolls and white girls but even though she does the white beauty standard is still there.

Morrison demonstrates internalized racism that divides part of the African American community throughout the novel. Characters like Pecola, Claudia, and Frieda show signs of jealousy towards Maureen Peal, who is a light-skinned, wealthy, well off African American girl. Maureen represents the obvious division of classes within the African Americans society. The girls were so envious of her they even claimed, We looked hard for flaws to restore our equilibrium, but had to be content at first with uglying up her name, changing Maureen Peal to Meringue Pie. (63) These self-conscious girls took it upon themselves to look for flaws in order to make themselves feel better about being less pretty and being considered lower class.

As tensions arise Maureen reveals her internalized racist thoughts by yelling at Claudia, Frieda, and Pecola, I am cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I am cute! (73) Maureen believes she is more attractive because she is of a lighter skin tone, she associates being whiter as being more beautiful. She also uses the word black as an insult, she is calling those girls uglier because they are blacker than her, yet Maureen is still a black girl. Morrison implies that the world they live in is that not only are whites superior but lighter and wealthier African Americans are too. Another character who displays internalized racism is Geraldine, who is also a lighter skinned, middle-class African American.

Geraldine clearly shows racism when she is explaining to her son the difference between colored people and niggers Colored people were neat

and quiet; niggers were dirty and loud. (87) Geraldine's character represents that same-race racism that is common throughout this novel and it can occur to all ages. She even acts as if other black people are of a separate race by telling her son the differences and by doing so she is establishing a racial stereotype. The differences in class and skin tone in the African Americans community has led to same-race racism due to this Western culture's standard of beauty and superiority.

Pecola correlates being beautiful with those who have blue eyes and she believes she can only achieve this beauty if she has blue eyes. Morrison distinctly states, It has occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights- if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different. (46) By different she means she would see herself as pretty instead of the ugly girl she sees when she looks at herself in the mirror. Her self-hatred stems from the beauty standards that are created through the white people's society.

Growing up as an African American in this society is definitely difficult and unhealthy. Imagine being a young black girl such as Pecola who feels a ton of pressure to comply with this unrealistic standard of beauty. Pecola was so intrigued by the white icons during her time that they knew she was fond of the Shirley Temple cup and took every opportunity to drink milk out of it just to handle and see sweet Shirley's face. (23) Pecola drinking milk comforts her in a false means because it lets her believe in flawed values. Her obsessiveness with drinking milk from the Shirley Temple shows the pedestal she puts these white values of beauty on and it later leads to her strong

desire for blue eyes. Pecola also goes to store to buy a certain kind of candy so she can idolize this white girl with blue eyes on the front of the wrapper. Every time something negative happens to Pecola she wishes for blue eyes, believing that it would solve all of her problems. The ideas white society has created is damaging to young black girls growing up because they then have an unsuitable definition of real beauty.

In the novel, Morrison uses dandelions as a symbol for the less privileged African American society. Mainly called weeds, dandelions represent the lower-class black society as unattractive, ineffective, and undesirable. Pecola who is consider of the less privileged society is similar to the dandelion and she even thought they were pretty. (47) Morrison implies that Pecola seeing beauty in the dandelions is her actually seeing beauty in herself.

This beauty depicts the underlying beauty that people do not notice. People generally perceive weeds as unpleasant because they are inconvenient, but people don't realize that they can be beautiful in their own way. Pecola, Claudia, and Frieda, are the dandelions in the sense that they too are seen as ugly because they do not represent the Western's culture standard of beauty. Pecola only begins to think dandelions are ugly when Mr. Yacobowski makes her feel ugly by actions such like not wanting to touch her hand. (49) and displaying the total absence of human recognition. (48) Mr. Yacobowski repulsiveness towards Pecola makes her now think dandelions are ugly. They are weeds. (50) So now Pecola hates herself again for not having blue eyes and the feelings of anger take over her body. This shows how society as a whole can shape a young person's thoughts and opinions into thinking what is beautiful and what is not beautiful. The ideals of the white society make

characters like Pecola want to conform to this beauty standard even though it is unattainable. Morrison draws connection between nature and racism because both can be looked at as inevitable.

Toni Morrison conveys that the Western's culture standard of beauty results in internalized racism and self-hatred largely among the African American community. The social norm of beauty in this novel which is light skin and blue eyes has caused young girls like Pecola to question her identity along with her beauty which is similar to what happens to young children growing up in America today. The definition of physical beauty in America effected the confidence of Pecola and other characters in the novel. Morrison sheds light on same-race racism in characters like Maureen and Geraldine by showing how it is a direct outcome of this social structure that white and lighter is more superior. Racism whether it is internalized or not has made it difficult to grow up in America as an African American.