

# Homage to my hips essay



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Homage to My Hips Clifton's "Homage To My Hips" is a wonderful poem that has themes of feminism woven in each and every line, specifically emphasizing the woes of being a woman in a patriarchal society and the strength women have the potential to wield. She illuminates these ideas through the devices of imagery, metaphor and symbolism throughout the poem, making them more significant to the reader. Clifton is taking something with a negative connotation, "battleship hips", and makes them seem sexy, confident, and something to be proud of.

Since hips are associated with childbearing and are a very feminine feature, one can also gather that they are being used as a symbol for women. So, the ideas Clifton is bringing to light can be applied to all women, not just herself specifically, or women who are larger in size. She repeats the word "hip(s)" throughout the poem, showing she is not ashamed of them, and showing the importance of them. "These hips are big hips/they need space to/ move around in. /they don't fit into little petty places"(lines 1-4)—This is one of the more pertinent ideas in the poem.

Not only is the author addressing physical figure and how she shouldn't be expected to fit into spaces that are too small, which is a general expectation in her society (as well as ours still today), but also she is using these ideas to symbolize a bigger picture. The "petty places" she is describing are literally places that larger hips may be looked down upon being in, i. e. on a bus, in a crowded street, and also metaphorically symbolizes places like the kitchen, the home, the bedroom—places that women are expected to be in in her society.

Clifton believes women don't want to be in these places that won't get them anywhere in the world, they want to go out and do what they want and want to have some sense of fulfillment in their lives, working and being pertinent in society. " They need space to move around in" (2-3)— the speaker wants women to be confident in themselves and to be proud of who they are and to go make something for themselves. On a more literal note, she wants people to be able to accept she has larger hips, and she is going to need a little more wiggle-room than the women who may not be so portly and curvaceous as she is.

Clifton creates a hope for a future in these hips, and also establishes that they have a past—" these hips have never been enslaved, / they go where they want to go/ they do what they want to do" (8-10). This shows they've never been a prisoner in society (for being a woman OR for being larger than expected/wanted by society), and also goes back and touches on the author's heritage. The idea of the enslaving of the hips is very important here. Slavery was abolished because people were willing to go against what was expected of them socially, and did what they felt was right.

This is a message to women to be fearless, fierce, and to take a stand. These limitations of being a housewife can be " abolished" just as slavery was.

Clifton encourages women to go out and do something different, even if it hasn't been what they've been doing, or if it isn't exactly what society expects of them. If Clifton has become a poet and does what she wants, why couldn't her readers do the same thing? Even the fact that Clifton is an author is a supporting detail to the idea that women can become individuals.

Even though society in this time was dominated by a white patriarchy, Clifton is able to show that women do have power over men in a way they can't resist, " these hips are magic hips. / I have known them/ to put a spell on a man and/ spin him like a top! " (12-15) This grip women have on the intimacy between themselves and men is something of power; a woman can use it as a manipulative tool in order to get something she might want. In this way, women are able to have a sort of control over men, so the idea of them becoming empowered and independent isn't so far-fetched after all.

This excerpt also has another more literal meaning as well, Clifton is showing the benefits of being a woman who has a curvy, attractive body, and shows that being a bit larger in the hips isn't always something negative. Men want a woman with the shape of an hourglass or coke-bottle, something that's nice to look at and something to be able to brag about. This concept is why she can " put a spell on a man"—because no matter what society says, a man can still be attracted to a larger woman, even if he doesn't say it out loud and hides it.

Clifton is giving women confidence in this physical sexual way, and encouraging them to use the power that they have in a positive and productive way. " Homage to My Hips" is a message of hope and confidence to all women out there to take a stand, become independent, and love themselves for who they are and what they are capable of. Clifton is telling women all over the world of every shape and size to be an individual, and also telling women who are larger than they'd like to be to be confident in themselves, and to not let society's expectations get their attitudes pessimistic or negative.

Through her imagery, symbolism, and metaphor, Clifton is able to exemplify and illuminate her ideas of women's individuality and self-confidence with these devices, making the ideas more meaningful and giving them significance to her audience. Although short and simple, the piece addresses women's image during the author's time, and brings a positive outlook to not only larger sized hips, but to women as a whole.