

# Nineteen fifty five” by alice walker essay sample

[Literature](#), [Fiction](#)



Short story analysis In this analysis I will look at a short story called Nineteen Fifty-Five from You cant keep a good woman down written by Alice Walker. I will analyse the short story by looking at the title, characters, theme, point of view, plot, structure/form and the style.

The title Nineteen Fifty-Five is the first heading of the short story. This year is a base for the rest of the story, because the dates following all depend on the information given in 1955. In 1955 two whites, Traynor and his deacon, visit Gracie Mae Still to ask her if they can record one of her songs. Traynor loves her records and he loves to sing and dance. After Gracie Mae Still agrees to that, they ask her whether they can buy up all the records of one particular song with the reason When we buy up all of them records you gonna git royalties. And thats gonna make all them race record shops sit up and take notice of Gracie Mae Still. After 1955 we get to know the developments of Traynor and the song. He becomes famous and very rich. So Nineteen fifty Five is the year in which Traynors and Gracie Mae Stills lives changed. Traynor becomes very famous and rich after Nineteen Fifty-five, and Gracie Mae Still starts a better life by trying to lose weight and is now less poor since she gets a lot of money and expensive gifts from Traynor.

There are two main characters in the story. Gracie Mae Still is the protagonist. We get to know a lot about her, but she doe not really develop. The antagonist is Traynor. I dont think it is exactly right to call him a antagonist, because there is not a strong hero versus opponent feeling in this story. The antagonist and protagonist are not enemies, they get along

quite alright. The antagonist does develop in the story. He develops from a shy boy (picking his thumbnail) to a famous person.

The short story is set in the South of America. The language is written in a southern way. This can be noticed by the way some words are spelled. Examples of this are git, forgit sung, gonna, em, but also sentence structures tend to be different. Examples of this are I done sung that song seem like a million times this year, He goes in the house and dont come back. The verb tenses are different, we would rather say He goes in the house and doesnt come back. Another indication that this short story is set in the South, is when Traynors deacon says What makes you think were sellin and Gracie Mae Still reacts saying he asks, in that hearty Southern way that makes my eyeballs ache. Gracie Mae Still actually states the word Southern is such a way, that we can be convinced that the story is set in Southern America.

The theme of this story and also straight away a moral lesson is to always be yourself and not to fool yourself. Be aware of what you are doing. Traynor copied a song from Gracie Mae Still and became very famous. He had fame, fans, money, everything he could have wished for. Several times he got the question They ask me all the time what do I think it means, really. I mean, they want to know just what I want to know, but he didnt know what the song was about. He didnt know what he was singing (Ive sung it and sung it, and Im making forty thousand dollars a day, and you know what, I dont have the faintest notion what the song means). He also cant write a song himself and keeps asking Gracie Mae Still for another song (Ive been thinking about writing some songs of my own but every time I finish one it dont seem to be

about nothing Ive actually lived myself, I wonder if you are writing any more songs). He didnt only copy Gracie Mae Stills record, but actually everything Gracie Mae Still did (And he sings it just the way he always did. My voice, my tone, my inflection everything).

At a certain moment Traynor is so famous and has so many fans that he doesnt know how to cope with them (They getting the flavor of something, but they aint getting the thing itself. They like a pack of hound dogs trying to gobble up a scent). He cant be himself anymore, he does everything to please the public, even if that means he should not be himself. Gracie Mae Still tries to get him on the right road again by saying Try to make the people you know happy. She notices that Traynor needs some encouraging and reassuring, because Traynors problem is the same problem a friend of Gracie Mae had, Couldnt be nothing worse than being famous the world over for something you dont even understand. Traynor keeps struggling with this problem and Gracie Mae Still notices hes not himself (It was dark but seems like I could tell his eyes werent right. It was like something was sitting there talking to me but not necessarily with a person behind it), which in the end this led to his death.

Another theme can also be that money does not make you happy. Traynor got everything, but hes still not really happy. He cant keep a marriage up and hes just confused because I could never really squeeze any of my own life either into it or out of it , You meet em for no reason. You date em for no reason. You marry em for no reason. I do it all but I swear its just like somebody else doing it. I feel like I cant remember life. . Traynor also keeps

on buying things for Gracie Mae still, but she doesnt need them and want them (Really, we have more than enough for everything. The Lord is good to us and we dont know Want). She knows that money does not always make happy, and therefore does not want to have all those expensive things.

The authors attitude towards the theme is neither negative nor positive. In this short story he indirectly, by using characters, wants to make clear that when youre not yourself, things can work out the way you do not want them to be. Be aware of your life and what youre doing to make the best out of it.

The writer has used the first person point of view in this short story. The I person, whom we know later to be Gracie Mae still, talks from her position. She tells us what she feels (Traynor is mad as hell) and what she observes (He hits the table with his fist). We also get a lot of description given by Gracie Mae Still (he is maybe sixty, with white hair and beard and white silk shirt, black linen suit, black tie and black shoes). The I person gives us more information, so that we can make a picture out of it, imagine what shes seeing. As said before, we get to know a lot about the I person, but not as much about Traynor. We get to know more about his outside and looks (His head was pitched over forward over his lap, his hands holding his glass and his elbows on his knees), than his thoughts and feelings (Hell, there were five floors, They like a pack of hound dogs trying to gobble up a scent).

A short summary of the plot is that a white becomes famous, because he sings a blacks song. He cant cope with the fame, doesnt understand things anymore and isnt himself anymore. This leads to his death. Although some might argue that the short story has an surprising ending, there are several

indications in the text which foreshadow the ending. Examples of this are Traynor seemed to be aging by the minute, They was all in long black cars that looked like a funeral procession, Traynor was talking very dreamily. It was dark but seems like I could tell his eyes werent right. It was something sitting there talking to me but not necessarily with a person behind it. The central character tries to help Traynor to get a grip on his life again ( I dont know why but it seemed like the boy needed some encouragingbut what the hell, by now I feel something for the boy. After she had said that it looks like everything s going to be fine. She tries to help him al the way through, but then after her dream, theres nothing she can do anymore. Suddenly out of nothing this sentence In the morning we heard Traynor was dead is put down. This as to me a surprising sentence, although I had expected his death. The fact that it is suddenly stated gives you a bit of a shock.

As explained at the beginning, the first piece of text under the heading 1955 is an exposition. The characters are introduced and a basis is laid for the rest of the story. The first point of excitement is when Gracie Mae Stills grandbaby calls her up and says theres a white man one the television singing one of your songs. At that moment you start to wonder what Gracie Mae still is going to do. Is she going to get angry or leave it just the way it is now The Complication starts at the moment that Gracie Mae Still says Traynor seemed to be aging by the minute. This is the point where we get to hear about Traynors problems of not being able to cope with fans, fame, money and life.

The complications are stressed by several sentences including I dont have the faintest notion of what the song means, They was all in long black cars that looked like a funeral procession, Traynor is mad as hell. Hes supposed to sing something like a love ballad. But instead he takes the mike, turns to me and says: Now see if my imitation still holds up. The complications build up, but there isnt really a climax. The climax and the denouement actually share the same sentence (In the morning we heard traynor was dead). The difficulties have reach there highest point, but also the final outcome has been revealed. After that sentence the denouement goes on till the end.

The story is build up in paragraphs, with each a new heading. Between the headings theres an enter. Each heading is again build up of paragraphs, which can be recognised by the text which springs in.

This short story contains a lot of descriptive language, especially when talking about a person or an object. Examples of these are he is maybe sixty, with white hair and beard, white silk shirt, black linen suit, black tie and black shoes, Im thinking of those sweaty-looking eyeballs of his, it was rapped in gay Christmas paper the thick, rich kind. The writer also used a lot of similes to show us what he compares that particular ting with. Examples of this are looked like a funeral procession, women were on him like white on rice, He looks like a Loosianna creole. The writers also likes to play with colours.

He often stresses the words whites (what white man, little white girls) and blacks/coloured (and dont even need to mention coloured), but he also likes

to label an object or person with a colour (black cars ~ funeral procession, gray eyes, gold caddy keys). This style is also known as imaginary language. A colour represents an object or person. Black is known as mourn, whereas gray is known as sombre and not happy. The reason why the writer has stressed the blacks and the whites so much, is because there was a difference between the blacks and the whites in America around that period, and there still is. Blacks were known as another kind of people and were granted less rights than the whites. To the writer it was apparently important to stress the difference in this story.

In short we can say that the writer has succeeded in making the story a short story. The story is brief and there are only a few characters. The story relates to one event in the protagonist's life. To make the reading more attractive the writer has used several writing styles. Although the language has a Southern accent, the words the writer uses are not difficult. The storyline is not difficult, but you do need to stay focussed on the story in order to understand it.