

# The motif of umbrella in daughters of the dust by julie dash

[Art & Culture](#), [Symbolism](#)



The visual imagery of the film contributes to the storytelling. There are many scenes lack of dialogue, but which emphasizes more about the relationships and emotional connections between the characters. This paper will argue that Julie Dash, in *Daughters of the Dust*, presents the umbrella and the element of the willow tree as two motifs to indicate the contradiction of the societal values endorsed by Gullah traditionalists and the societal values that the outsiders like Mary and Trula believes. To demonstrate this, I will be examining the motif of umbrella in a scene that Mary, Eula, and Trula find an old tattered umbrella buried in the sand as well as the willow tree in a scene that Mary along with Trula arrives back at the Island she grew up at the very first beginning of the film.

While walking along the water's edge, Yellow Mary and Trula embrace each other tightly. Walking with Eula, they find an old weathered umbrella buried in the sand. They open it up and stand beneath it. Then they sit on a fallen palm tree. Then later, some of the island children sitting underneath the umbrella and Snead takes photos of them. In this scene, on the beach, the three women walking on the edge of the water in pale white dresses, discover an old umbrella from the past together, lit up beautifully by the soft light of the setting sun.

Mary and Trula take Eula under their wings, protecting her and making her feel loved and accepted in spite of her trauma of being raped under the umbrella. The umbrella is a visual motif that recurs and represents the past, a transformation of something old into something beautiful and new and the protection and love from friends.

Mary and Trula sit in the willow tree when they first arrived at the island. They are a same sex couple, living outside the community of the Island. Far away from the traditions on the Island, they wear more modern clothes than the inhabitants of the Island. Laughing while sitting the willow tree, they show their ease of acquaintance and softness just like willow tree. Mary comes back with a certain concern for the narrow-mindedness of the habitant on the Island. She has lived outside of the island for many years, having a lot of experience away from the island. Therefore, she wishes to take her female lover back to where she grew up.

The shot of Mary and Trula, sitting on the willow tree in a relaxed position in pale dresses shows their comfort with being outsiders of the Island and at the same time to be willing to reconnect with her elders and spend time on the Island where she grew up. In summary, the film is shot beautifully, with many long shots of natural environments and traditions of African American's life.

Another important motif in the film is the ocean. The sunlight on the ocean usually creates a soft light and beautiful color when the characters sit on the beach or walk on the edge of the water. The connection between inhabitants of the Island and the ocean indicate the connection between Africa, the motherland of their slave ancestors and America.