

Free essay on sweat by zola neale hurston

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The short story entitled "Sweat" written by Zola Neale Hurston narrated the travails of the main character, Delia Jones. She was depicted as a washwoman who collects soiled clothes from white folks and washes them clean for subsequent delivery. Her husband, Sykes, was illustrated as an abusive womanizer, who was indifferent to Delia's challenges and openly condones her work as a washwoman. The story is replete with symbols which includes the title of the story, sweat, as symbolizing the struggles and difficulties sustained in the life of Delia; the snake, as a symbol of evil and death; and the whip as a symbol of oppression and infliction of pain .

The story begun through narrating Delia as busy sorting the clothes she collected on a Sunday night, just after having attended services at church. From the description, the main character was evidently illustrated to have an immense fear of snakes, from the whip that she mistakenly perceived as one. The reaction of her husband, Sykes, as enjoying the fact that Delia expressed her great fear of snakes exemplified his disdain for her; in conjunction with the fact that she continues to support them through her means of livelihood. Sykes was noted to hate having white people's clothes in the house, which is an indication of the obvious perception of racial divide. Likewise, Sykes also disclosed his hate for skinny women, to supposedly justify his disdain for Delia and to rationalize his womanizing.

The next scene apparently pictured the village men of one of the men's porch conversing over Delia, Sykes, and his other woman, Bertha. The men have acknowledged the abusive character of Sykes and how he unfairly treats Delia, who was regarded as a very hardworking and sacrificing woman; who had to contend with living with an unfaithful husband. In one

instance, it was relayed that Sykes and Bertha apparently arrived; as Sykes indicated to Bertha his admiration for her and how he lavishly provides her with anything that she wants. It was likewise revealed that Sykes was even paying for Bertha's rent as she had only been in town for the past three months.

The story evolved with the decision of Sykes to bring home a rattlesnake, placed in a soap box. Again, the snake symbolized evil, as Sykes really intended to instill fear and even death to Delia, with an inner objective of replacing her with Bertha. Delia apparently implored to Sykes to remove the rattlesnake as she acknowledged immense fear of the reptile. Sykes stood ground and vehemently refused to remove the snake from their home. The spouses had an open exchange of words that evidently expressed their mutual disgust and disdain for each other.

Finally, the climax of the story evolved with the snake allegedly got out from the soap box and was found by Delia to be in her basket and eventually moved to their bed. Her immediate impulse and reaction was to run to the barn, far from this source of evil - a threat to her life. Eventually, Sykes was heard to be scampering in their home in the midst of the darkness. Due to his intoxicated state, he was bitten by the rattlesnake, a symbol of evil and death that he wished to have been inflicted on Delia. Thus, the fate that he received was only wrought from his own evil intent.

Work Cited

Hurston, Zola Neale. "Sweat." n. d. massey. ac. nz. <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/fms/Colleges/College%20of%20Humanities%20and%20Social>

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