

# Comparing nothing's changed and charlotte o'neil's song essay sample



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In this essay the two poems “ Nothing’s changed” by Tatumkhulu Afrika and “ Charlotte O’Neil’s Song” by Fiona Farrell are going to be compared. These two poems have been chosen because of the obvious rebellion of the characters, the inequality that they are describing, and the stylistic features similarities such onomatopoeia, emotive language, imagery and the styles.

### Content

In these poems the idea of unequal ness follows all of the way through. The character Charlotte O’Neill is discussing being overworked, and deals with the situation by going away to one of the British colonies to start a new life- leaving her employers to do their own chores. The poem “ Nothing’s Changed” however, is discussing the injustice on a much wider scale. It discusses the inequality of the black and the white people in South Africa.

He, unlike Charlotte O’Neill chooses a more aggressive means of breaking free from his oppression; he chooses to bomb the cafe. The discussion of the feeling of being unequal changes are the turning points “ I back from the glass, boy again” from Nothing’s changed and “ but I’ll never say sir” from Charlotte O’Neill’s song when they reveal to the reader their plans. They both have a bitter tone through out most of the poems, and similarly they sound very envious of the upper classes. They are both being treated very unfairly, simply because of their skin colour or jobs, respectively.

### The Poet’s Ideas

Both characters are very rebellious, the authority they are fighting against is lowering their quality of life. In Nothing’s Changed the character says “ I

know before I see them there will be crushed ice, white glass, linen falls, the single rose.” Then later the things that is on offer at the restaurant the black people go to: “ wipe your fingers on your jeans, spit a little on the floor” he then goes on to say “ it’s in the bone” meaning that it is how black people have been treated for so long .

He seems to have a bitter and hopeless tone, as though he thinks that that there is little chance that it will change as he also says “ it’s in the blood.” He carries on the hopelessness right up until the turning point where he says he wants to break the glass between him and the white people’s cafe. The glass represents the racial barrier, a clear wall that bars the black people from the lives that the white people are living. By bombing it as he says it would break the barrier, the white/black divide, and the white people would not have their up-market cafe, and the black people would have the same as the white people.

In Charlotte O’Neill’s song she also says that she is inadequate compared to her own upper class-her employers. She says “ you lay on a silken pillow. I lay on an attic cot. That’s the way it should be, you said. That’s the poor girl’s lot.” She has her unequal ness also ingrained, in a similar way to the black people in Nothing’s changed. The fact that she is poor means that by her employer’s philosophy the work and labour she has to do is what she ought to have. This is also brought up again later when it says “ the rich man earns his castle, the poor deserve the gate.” Whilst saying this statement it takes on a slightly mocking tone. Charlotte appears to work much harder than her employers but she still, in her employer’s eyes, is not worthy of as much as he or she, the rich one, is.

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## Mood or atmosphere

As I mentioned before, both poems display strong feelings of bitterness towards the ones affecting their lives. They do not appear aggressive apart from at the very end of *Nothing's Changed*. Fiona Farrell lists the chores that the character has had to carry out. She gives the impression that she is very over worked, and that she is stuck there. The character shows a lot of rebellion by deciding to leave-to go on the "Isabella Hercus" across the seas to the colonies. The atmosphere in this poem is set by the short, sharp sentences, which in most cases make you read faster. The author keeps it in the past tense until the third stanza, where she changes it to future. In this paragraph the character explains her plans, with the future tense adding a tone that suggests this is what will happen, this also makes her sound even more resentful about her past treatment.

The poem *Nothing's Changed* also expresses (what is until then) suppressed anger. This is shown as the writer sets the scene and then in the second stanza makes the character seem angry and focuses on his body, it is one characteristic of his body that disallows him the luxurious life enjoyed by a white person. He emphasises the differences, using the two inns as examples to show how unfairly the black people are being treated. He also puts two lines slightly apart from the rest of the stanza, as they are six stanzas, each with a uniform six lines apart from the separated sentence. "No sign says it is: but we know where we belong." This draws attention to the fact that although there are laws that say that the races are all equal, there is still no one to break the divide between white and black.

How they are written

To show the anger that Charlotte O'Neill feels Fiona Farrell gives examples of the amount of work she is doing for her master throughout the poem. These examples include: " you rang your bell and I answered. I scrubbed your parquet floor. I scraped out your grate, and I washed your plate and I scrubbed till my hands were raw." They almost appear to build up upon each other, putting the reader onto charlotte's side of the argument right from the beginning. She uses repetition and short one syllable words to add to the emphasis on it and make you read it more slowly.

Fiona Farrell also used a pattern of three, making her point, that it is not fair for her to be working that much for her employers, even more obvious. She resents having to do all of the work, and still get treated badly where as her master lives a life of luxury because she works for him, making everything easy for him.

In Nothing's Changed the writer uses repetition, onomatopoeia and emotive language to convey the anger and antipathy that he feels towards the white people's lifestyles. He repeats the word " and" several times, especially in stanza two. This gives a similar impression to the listing in Charlotte O'Neill's song. They build up the emotion and in Nothing's Changed invoke anger and in Charlotte O'Neill's Song the feeling that charlotte is getting treated unjustly. Nothing's changed gathers emphasis using onomatopoeia (crunch, click etc.) to set the scene. It also highlights the bad points of the character's situation to move the reader to his point of view of the issue.

Conclusion

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As I have said many times before, the people in these poems are angry and bitter about their mistreatment. Both characters play the underdogs, offered unfair lives due to their position in the world, which is decided simply because of one thing. These two things make them victims of people assuming that they are 'lesser beings'.

These poems are both have a message, no matter how different people seem they are really the same. Monetary and racial differences create huge divides, with the rich believing themselves better than the poor, and in some cases human being judging each other on a single unchangeable feature. The characters in the two poems both aim to break free of the oppression put upon them because of these differences. After all, how different can we all be?