

Noughtsandcrosses essay



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Racism is a severe problem in 21st century multicultural societies. A novel which deals with the serious aspect is 'Noughts & Crosses' by Malorie Blackman. This essay will investigate how the writer uses characterisation, theme, structure and the setting of a fictional dystopia to explore racism from both points of view. The story is set in a fantasy Britain. The roles of black and white have been reversed and amplified.

Noughts are second-class white people who on the poverty line. Crosses are empowered and rich black people. In the midst of this are Callum and Sephy who, as best friends, their relationship is frowned upon by society, a secret from Sephy's mother, and not approved by Callum's family. Their friendship goes from strength to strength and they develop an intimate connection.

However, as the racial problems increase it pushes this secret relationship to an ultimatum. This story follows the emotional rollercoaster of how these two young and very different people would stop at nothing to be together. Sephy Hadley is the main character of this novel. She is a 14 year old Cross, daughter of a prominent politician. Her father strongly objects to any contact with Noughts however Sephy takes no notice of her father intentions as she is very passionate in what she believes in. This character is compassionate and logical but can become easily depressed as she is very idealistic.

As Sephy is very young her naive personality shines through. Sephy finds herself in love with Callum, who has been her best friend all her life - as her father disagrees with this she becomes determined that she will stop at nothing to be with Callum. As Sephy arrives home one night after a secret meeting with Callum as she realises how amazing her life would be if only

she were allowed so see Callum without all the secrets and lies – “ My smile slowly faded as an unbidden thought crept into my head. There was just one thing that stopped by day from being entirely perfect. If only Callum and I didn’t have to sneak and creep around. If only Callum wasn’t a nought.

” Malorie Blackman highlights the perils of a divided society when she creates the scene in the schoolyard of Heathcroft High, the high school dominated by Crosses. The Crosses form a “ mob” and attack the Noughts, shouting ridiculous messages such as “ No blankers in our school” Sephy retaliates – “ Stop it, just stop it” Nothing. ‘ STOP IT! YOU’RE ALL BEHAVING LIKE ANIMALS’ I shouted so hard my throat immediately began to hurt. “ WORSE THAN ANIMALS – LIKE BLANKERS! ” The sound of the crowd slowly died away” This shows that to stop the crosses in their horrific battle to keep noughts out of their school, they have to be condemned as noughts themselves.

This is asinine as the noughts are the same as them in all ways except the colour of their skin, but they are treated like second class citizens. The book is written in first person narration with the narrator alternating to either Callum or Sephy between chapters, an X or O before the narrator’s name indicates their race. The author uses language as a tool to show the characters’ status in society as black or white. Various language techniques are used to display the classes of society. The words “ blanker” (used by blacks to describe whites) and “ dagger” (used by whites to describe blacks) are used repeatedly throughout the novel. This use of language reflects the intolerant attitudes towards one another.

There is a significant amount of symbolism used in these words. “Blanker” is used to describe a blank, worthless, brainless white person. And “dagger” is used to depict a weapon that is capable of scratching and severing, reducing and disconnecting a person, or even bringing them to an end completely.

This compelling novel makes us look more closely at the questions of colour, class and social injustice that still plague the world we live in.