

The concept of the
evils of society in the
bluest eye by toni
morrison, two kinds...



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A person can change themselves or the people around them due to the pressure of society's interests and expectations. Throughout "The Bluest Eye" by Toni Morrison, "Two Kinds" by Amy Tan, and "I Want To Be Miss America" by Julia Alvarez, the main idea of the evils of society is constantly mentioned and explored. In "The Bluest Eye", Pecola desired to be accepted, but in the long run her interaction with people, such as Maureen and Junior, and the idea of beauty has negatively affected her self esteem thus degrading her idea of her own self worth. Similarly, in "Two Kinds", Jing-mei Woo didn't want to disappoint her mother and be a failure as her mother came to America for opportunities and to lead a better life. However, as she encountered Waverly, she realized what society expected of her, and knowing it was difficult for her to fulfill those expectations, it further degraded her self worth. Lastly, in contrast, "I Want to Be Miss America", displays how the idea of beauty can negatively affect one's self esteem as self doubt can come into play. Thus, the main character's interaction with other people and ideas negatively affect the main characters self esteem

In "The Bluest Eye" by Toni Morrison, the main character as well as the protagonist, Pecola Breedlove, is an eleven-year old girl who suffered two traumatic rapes as she is abused by almost everyone in the book. Trying to change her perspective on life, Pecola thinks being light skinned with blue eyes will give her a different lens on life as she feels that being African American brings nothing but bad luck in one's life. Pecola's interaction with the people around her and ideas had detrimental effects on her self worth by lessening her self value after being raped by her father. On page 63,

Maureen Peal is introduced as she has and deals with interactions with

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Pecola, and as they develop an argument through Maureen asking the question, " Did you ever see a naked man?" (Page 71). In self defense Pecola responded as " Nobody's father would be naked in front of his own daughter. Pecola at this point, started to regain vivid and descriptive details of her rape and the amount of shame that comes along with it. As an argument started to arise between Maureen and Frieda about Maureen being crazy about boys being naked, Pecola started to have a breakdown and denied that she never saw her father naked. Unfortunately this led to " Pecola tuck[ing] her head in a funny, sad, helpless movement" (Page 72). In addition, not only does Maureen demean Pecola but Junior does as well. Junior invites Pecola into his house saying that there are some kittens and being amazed by being able to pet it " He held the door open for her, smiling his encouragement" (Page 89). As he was giving the kitten to Pecola, he threw it in her face which left a scar on her face and as Pecola tries to leave, Junior says that she's his prisoner. Geraldine calls Pecola a " nasty little black b*****" (Page 92). By judging her and touching upon a sensitive topic to Pecola, her skin color, Geraldine lower's Pecola's self esteem and as a result she wants to fit in with society more, having blonde hair and blue eyes and being light skinned as she believes it can change her reality or the current situations she's in.

Similarly, in " Two Kinds" by Amy Tan, the narrator and the main character Jing-mei Woo, has recently moved to America after the Chinese Revolution had occurred in 1949 as her mother wanted a better life for both of them and let Jing-mei Woo have more opportunities to be successful and become a prodigy. Jing-mei Woo's mother wants nothing but the best for her and in order to prepare her to be a prodigy and be successful in America she

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started to compile an abundant amount of tests which ranged from predicting the daily temperatures of Los Angeles to multiplying numbers in her head. As time passed she saw her “ mother’s disappointed face... I hated the raised hopes and fail expectations... [and she] began to cry.” (Page 2, paragraph 14) The event of seeing her mother’s disappointed face ruins her daughter, Jing-mei Woo’s self esteem as her mother sees more potential in her than she does in herself. By being pushed and breaking her limits she starts to question whether or not she can be able to make her mother proud. In addition, Waverly, Jing-mei Woo’s cousin also known as “ Chinatown’s Littlest Chinese Chess Champion.” As the narrator is invited to play in the talent show to showcase her musical talents (playing the piano) Jing-mei thinks that she can wing it by not paying attention as long as she looked good on stage everyone would be clapping for her. Unfortunately, after the performance “ Waverly looked at [her] and shrugged her shoulders. ‘ You aren’t a genius like me,’” (page 4, paragraph 53- based upon page 1), which brought back those unpleasant moments in which case she failed her mother once again as she wasn’t a prodigy, a genius like Waverly.

In “ I Want To Be Miss America”, Julia Alvarez experiences the pain of being different in a society where beauty has a different value as their “ looks didn’t seem to fit in” (page 39). According to the text, she witnesses the Miss America Pageant on T. V. and the idea of being white and skinny was implemented into her mind as the beauty needed to become Miss America. As a result, they became self-conscious based upon the ideal standards of beauty set by society self doubt from within started to become present. They wanted to fit in but they were “ short, [their hair were] frizzed, and their

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figures didn't curve" (page 39) like others had. On page 44, the last paragraph, the narrator portrays how self doubt is nothing but an enemy to oneself. Since they have already been in America for three decades, Julia Alvarez "feel[s] like a stranger in what [she] now considers her own country" (Page 44). The constant self doubt further depreciates the self esteem of Julia as a woman and as an American due to her inability to match societal expectations.

Overall, at young ages, experiences and words have a profound impact on the development of self worth and self confidence. In "The Bluest Eye" by Toni Morrison, Pecola encounters Maureen and Junior and the concept of beauty which makes her feel worthless by degrading her self worth while being self conscious about herself. In addition, in "Two Kinds" by Amy Tan, the protagonist Jing-mei Woo is bombarded with workload and this negatively affects her self esteem as she keeps on disappointing her mother. Also, in "I Want To Be Miss America" by Julia Alvarez self doubt starts to form as a result of beauty standards. Therefore, the protagonists interactions with people and ideas start to degrade their self worth in a negative aspect.