

A role of main hero in the passing of grandison

[Sociology](#)



The Double Consciousness of Grandison

From a young age, one is self-aware. That is, one is aware of the separation of oneself from one's environment as a unique individual. One forms an identity with this awareness at its foundation. However, as the mind develops, one also becomes aware that others often have a differing view. The capacity to understand both one's own identity and that placed upon him by others is termed "double consciousness." Charles Chesnutt illustrates double consciousness through his character, Grandison, who was fully aware of his identity both as a slave and as a human deserving the right of freedom.

From the beginning of the narrative on page 594, we learn that Grandison is capable of hiding his emotions from his masters, the colonel and Mr. Richard. His introduction to the narrative begins with his master asking him if had been treated fairly. Grandison responds without any hesitation to suggest he would rather not be used to property. Grandison amuses his master and suggests that he is happier than a free black man because he knows to whom he belongs. Chesnutt then comments from the colonel's point of view that the abolitionists would be "heartless monsters" to break up the slave-owner relationship (Chesnutt 594-595). The reader knows that both the colonel and Grandison's lies are untrue by Grandison's escape into Canada at the end of the narrative. But until then, Grandison maintains his performance based on his identity as formed by his masters and the society of that time. He even goes to the extent to ask for permission to assault the abolitionists working for his freedom- his ultimate goal.

Throughout the narrative, Grandison keeps both readers and “ Mars Dick” on edge by passing-up opportunities to escape and maintaining his identity as a slave. First, Grandison is allowed and encouraged to socialize with the primarily black staff in the hotel at New York (Chesnutt 596). While the reader is led to infer that Grandison avoided them, there is plenty of time omitted from the story for Grandison to have made connections for his escape. While he presented his slave identity to his master, he could have also explored opportunities that oppose that identity’s supposed mindset.

Grandison is also confronted by abolitionists in the streets of New York, a plan organized by Mars Dick (Chesnutt 597). While Grandison admits to his master that the abolitionists are “ jes’ persterin’ de life out er” him (Chesnutt 597), his escape was too well thought out and executed to have been done by himself. He needed the help of the abolitionists, but he wanted to postpone his freedom and maintain his identity as a slave until he could secure the freedom of his family as well. Thus, even though he passed up opportunities for freedom, it was ultimately his double-consciousness that allowed him to secure his family’s freedom along with his own (Chesnutt 602).

In addition to refusing take the one hundred dollars placed in his care by his master (Chesnutt 597-598), Grandison initially refuses to leave his master’s side once legally free in Canada (Chesnutt 598). However, he does go missing once left alone for some time. The reader is led to believe that it is during this time that Grandison becomes acquainted with those who wish to help him with his plan for freedom. He does not take the previous route to

Canada, but instead travels through Ohio and traverses Lake Erie (Chesnutt 602).

Upon arriving at his master's plantation, Grandison resumes his display of his slave identity. He went to the extreme of resorting to crawl along the ground due to a broken a broken limb (Chesnutt 601). He continued to live under the authority of his masters for three weeks (Chesnutt 601), perhaps to regain his strength or to allow his master's attention to fade elsewhere.

Grandison understood the identity his masters envisioned in him and displayed it to the point of convincing them that he had never attempted to run away while in Canada. This illusion of this identity, at least for the colonel and Dick, was soon amended when Grandison escaped to Canada with his family. Or, in Chesnutt's words: " the colonel's faith in sable humanity was rudely shaken, and its foundations almost broken up..." (Chesnutt 602).