



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

## IDENTITY CRISIS IN TONI MORRISON NOVEL 'THE BLUEST EYE'

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<https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.7119.469>



### ABSTRACT

Toni Morrison is one of the well-known Afro-American women novelist and she is a powerful voice in the field of African American society. Along with the prestigious Pulitzer price, she also received Nobel Prize for literature in 1993. Her novels have been subjected to multiple readings. Toni Morrison's commitment to her people, their lives and art is evidenced in all that she has written. Morrison novel enter the literary scène at the end of a long discourse on African American literature, the debate over aesthetics that is still prevalent today. Her novels deal with the sufferings, humiliation, and exploitation of the Blacks in general and Black women in particular. The themes like feminism, racism, sexism, classicism, quest for identity weave the fabrics of her novels. *The Bluest eye*, her first novel has been read variously for different critics. The novel will critically read the significance of gaze in construction identity and subjectivity of Afro American women. She has tried to redefine beauty and the identity crisis of the black women out of their specular American psychological system into a racial authenticity. The identity crisis makes a sense of self-loathing inferiority in the mind. And this situation creates the quest for self. Morrison focuses on the Black's attempt of identity formation which fails ultimately, ends in embracing a identity considering themselves not as Blacks but the Whites. *The Bluest Eye*, which novel the ground reality that attempt of Blacks, particularly females to find out their true self remains unfulfilled and ends in identity.

**Keywords:** sufferings, feminism, identity, humiliation, racism, classicism.

### Introduction

The term "identity" refers to one's rights, equality, and dignity, equal opportunity in work and education and equal pay. Toni Morrison is regarded as one of the greatest living writer that has brought new life to African American Literature. Many women writers like Zora Neale Hurston have naturally emerged to focus their identity and

autonomy on the literary horizon. The writers of all races have recognized the inexhaustible literary potential of African- American self-exploration. Identity is often regarded as a function of place. There is a strong relationship between the environments into which the inexorable fate placed them and their own definition of the sense of female identity and self-assertion. Morrison has become a

representation for the black and her works considered as the fantastic masterpiece highlighting of the problem of racism, subjugation of women, enslavement, struggle, and the crisis of identity of black community. Raynor Deidre and Buttler Johnella mentioned in their book, "*Morrison and The Critical Community*" that:

Critical responses to Morrison's work focus on her audience, stylistic technique, and major themes, and explore the role she plays as a precursor to new voices in American literature, especially African American women's literature. (2007, pp. 175-183)

*The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison examines the perspective view the black community about the beauty and the psychological damages it created to the black women. In the novel offers a stunning story of two black families namely Breed love and Mac Teers. The condition in which they lived indicates the subordinate status of the Blacks in racist America. Pecola Breedlove, the black adolescent protagonist and daughter of Cholly breed love and Pauline. She craves for blue eyes, a sign of white standard of beauty with which she want to avoid ugliness. She longs to be loved and accepted by her own community as well as in a world in a world which rejects and diminishes the value of the members of her own race and defines beauty according to an Anglo Saxon cultural standard. She yearns for her identity among the white community. Pecola, searches painfully for self-esteem as a means of imposing order on the chaos of her world, because a sense of self-worth and the correlative stability that would accompany it are unavailable to her in the familial or wider environment, she creates a subjective world of fantasy. Hence, she determines to achieve beauty and acceptance by acquiring blue eyes. The case of her quest for blue eyes in described thus:

"Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she has prayed. Although somewhat Discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something. As wonderful as that happen

would take a long, long time." (*The Bluest Eye* 4)

Pecola believes that it is blue eyes alone which will help her in restoring her self-respect. As she has no blue eyes, she suffers from self-scorn that creates a kind of scar on her heart. The novel describes a continual variation between one thing and wanting its opposite. A black woman fails to understand their own race in terms of beauty for they believe beauty means white. The search their identity in being white because they are scared of being discriminated by their surroundings. Pecola has very little sense of self-worth, however that her fury quickly turns back to shame, an overwhelming, self-blaming, self-hating emotion and passion. Pecola suffers an inferiority complex since from her childhood because she is ugly and black and nobody loves her. Many people looked down on Pecola, treated he differently. This led to her isolation. Long hours she sat looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made ignored at school, teachers and classmates and alike. Pecola to have to go to school know that her teachers despise her do not care for her in the least. In addition, after school one day, a group of boys circle around Pecola and begin making fun for her chanting,

"Black e mo. Black e mo. Yaddaddsleepsnekked. Black e mo. Black e mo..." (*The Bluest Eye* 50)

Here we see her schoolmates name her darker shade of skin as too ugly to accept. With both her teacher and classmates being so cold to her, it is inevitable that Pecola would feel alone and isolated. She loses self-respect and thinks that if she would become pretty and beautiful then everybody can love her and give respect to her. Pecola's obsession for blue eyes makes her believe in magical tales. Morrison reveals to the novel emphasizes the ideal of whiteness that is, when these girls Pecola, Claudia, and Frieda grow up with through the stories as well as "Shirley Temple", ridicule their adoration. Her pitiful desire for love is resolved in her significant image o the imaginary identification "Shirley Temple".s Fanon asserts that "Black skin, White masks", in which gives a psychoanalytic account of

inferior complex suffered by the colonized societies. The belief that black was not valuable or beautiful was, however, one of the cultural hindrances to black people throughout their history in America, and this belief informs the tragedy of Pecola Breedlove. But Pecola's mother Pauline fight gives her an identity. Her alienation is complete as she is accepted by a few as her 'real' self a poor Black girl, even her mother Pauline rains on her, her own frustration and worthlessness. Pauline alienation is much greater and intense to these purblind her own affection and love for her child. Pecola's tragedy is due to her alienation from family, friends and the Black community of Loraine, Ohio. Pauline considers herself a good Christian woman loaded by a worthless husband as punishment from god. She often speaks to Jesus about cholly's sins. He is described as most irresponsible father as the white society. As he is black, he is ugly and slave of the white people. He is making violence suffer of the rape his own daughter, is the ultimate result. So he is adopted the white concept in negative way. The black gazed by the whites in the way, from their identity as inferior to them and the quest for self continues.

At end of the novel, Pecola gets friend and gets the blue eyes but not only through her imagination and insanity. Alone, with no one to turn to, she creates an imaginary friend, someone who will listen while she talks about her blue eyes. Pecola has been destroyed by racism that wholly negates the dreams and aspirations of black skinned, brown eyed people. The devastating power of racial contempt and self-hatred has caused Pecola to literally self-destruct in her quest for love, self-worth, and identity.

## CONCLUSION

Toni Morrison has penetrated deeply into the traumatic effects of identity of African American and its people. In *The Bluest Eye* Morrison reflects how pecola quest for true women identity which according to socially structure culture is being white with blue eye. Pecola longing to belong to that dominant group causes her eventually destruction. Pecola's desire for blue eyes in her search for the

American myth of beauty and self-virtue. The main theme of the novel is quest for individual identity and the influences of the family and community in that quest. Morrison aptly displays how social identities are formed and replicated in a personal life. The story of Pecola creates an excellent framework for understanding how difficult the fight for a positive social identity and self-esteem. Pecola tries to confirm to the hegemonic ideology of beauty and utterly fails. She suffers from identity crisis which leads her to quest for self. The novel tries to deconstruct the hegemonic ideology and racially identity constructed by gaze and blindness to reconstruct a dignified identity for the twentieth-century African-Americans.

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