

The Image of Racism and its Effects in

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

B.A Dissertation

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B.A. (Honours) in English by

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Declaration

I declare that the work presented in the Dissertation entitled 'The Image of Racism and Its Effects in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*' being submitted to the Department of English, School of Languages, Doon University, Dehradun for the award of Bachelor in (English) is my original research work.

The Dissertation embodies the results of qualitative research carried out by me. I have neither plagiarized any part of the dissertation nor have submitted the same work for the award of any other degree/diploma anywhere.

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Certificate

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled ‘The Image of Racism and Its Effects in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*’ submitted by Mr. Kartikey Kutiyal has been done under my supervision. It is also certified that the work in this Dissertation embodies original research and hard work of the candidate.

The assistance and support received during the course of investigation and all the sources of literature have been fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

'The Bluest Eye' is Toni Morrison's first novel. The overall theme of the novel is racism. Toni Morrison in this novel, challenges the social norms of beauty and illustrates the disastrous effects of enforcing white ideas of beauty on a young African-American girl. Through this novel Toni Morrison conveys that racism and socially constructed white standards of beauty destroys the self-image of African-American people. This research paper will be analyzing the image of racism and its effects. It will also define racism and its portrayal in the novel.

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Chapter I Introduction

American Literature

“American literature, the body of written works produced in the English language in the United States”(Blair 1). American Literature consists of works from larger parts of English-language literature and various works from different traditions written in many immigrant languages in The United States. In addition, there exists a strong and long heritage of storytelling amongst the native tribes. Like any national literature, American literature reflects the history of the country from which it originated. America was only a group of colonies for about 150 years and became the United States after a successful rebellion against the motherland. Between 1870 and 1920, American literature matured in terms of both how it was written and how it was viewed. American literature began to set itself apart from the European tradition at this time, both artistically and thematically, from which it had been disparagingly compared for more than a century. As literary critics inside and outside of the academia started to recognize the inherent advantages of American poetry and prose, American authors likewise acquired more and more respect as genuine artists in the decades that followed the Civil War. The birth of American literature took place with the coming of Europeans in what is now U.S of America. Initially American literature was written by Englishmen, who thought and wrote in English, and inherently colonial in nature. The earliest European in North America started recording their experiences in writing in 1600's. Writers such as John Smith, Nathaniel Ward, and John Winthrop primarily produced useful nonfiction during the 1600's. The declaration of independence in 1776 gave birth to a new era and a significant

amount of new writings that were focused on the future of the nation. American literature was heavily influenced by British publications and a huge portion of what Americans read came from Great Britain. A truly American literature started to appear around the beginning of the nineteenth century. The literary works from the 1800 to 1820s started to show American society and delve into American geography in an unmatched way. Then followed the romantic age, which is generally regarded as the greatest in American writing. Important writers include Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. They are credited with influencing many later writers and shaping literature. Poe, James Russell Lowell, and William Gilmore Simms are also credited with establishing American literary criticism during this time period. “During the 1850s, as the United States headed toward civil war, more and more stories by and about enslaved and free African Americans were written. William Wells Brown published what is considered the first black American novel, *Clotel*, in 1853” (Luebering 3). The American Civil War caused significant upheaval in American ideals and self-awareness, and these changes were reflected in American literature. Some of the idealistic notions of the American Renaissance were replaced with realistic portrayals of American society, such as those in the writings of Mark Twain, William Dean Howells and Henry James. This very short period was characterized by its focus on portraying life as it actually is, greater than what the realists had done in the decades before. The Modern Period, which began in the 1800s, is the secondmost significant period in terms of artistic significance for American writers, next to the American Renaissance. The Jazz Age, the Lost Generation, and the Harlem Renaissance were some important movements of this period. A lot of these authors, particularly the Lost Generation expatriates were impacted by WWI and the subsequent disillusionment. Since WWII, style, theme and purpose of

American Literature has diversified. Since 1939, a number of significant authors have produced works that have already achieved classic status and are on the verge of being canonized. One of these authors is Toni Morrison, who has been hailed as one of the 20th century's most powerful writers for her books that tackle racism, sexism, and inequality issues.

African American Literature

The subcategory of American literature known as African-American Literature covers works created in the country by authors of African heritage that specifically address the lives and perspectives of African-Americans. African American writers have had a productive, though frequently tense, relationship with American literature from the pre-Revolutionary War era. As a result, writing that provides insightful analyses of American identities and history is rife with expressive nuance and social insight. Though Toni Morrison and other African American writers have received worldwide praise since 1970, this literature has been appreciated on a global and national level from its inception in the late 18th century.

The Harlem Renaissance

An African-American movement known as the Harlem Renaissance with Harlem in New York City as its symbolic center, first emerged in the 1920s. It was a period of intense creativity in the performing, visual, and literary arts, but it is thought to have had the greatest impact on African American literature. Participants tried to rethink "the Negro" in a way that was distinct from the white preconceptions that had shaped Black people's relationships to their history and to one another. This was done through incorporating literary, musical, theatrical, and visual arts. The

Harlem Renaissance, which was included in the early 20th century's New Negro Movement, in some respects served as the precursor to the civil rights movement that would take place in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The social foundation for this movement was the African-American's migration to urban areas from the South to the North, as did the sharp increase in literacy rates, the establishment of national organizations devoted to advancing the civil rights of African Americans, leading to "racial uplift and socioeconomic opportunities, as well as the development of racial pride, including pan-African sensibilities and programmes."

About the novel

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, published in 1970, is a ground-breaking book which examines issues of race, class, and ideals of beauty. In it, a young Afro-American girl, Pecola Breedlove, expresses her desire for *The Bluest Eyes*, which, in her opinion, would make her more attractive in terms of white cultural norms of beauty. Throughout this journey, Pecola dissolves into madness, which is described in the book along with the injustices she endures from her family and society. *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison is a story of a little girl who is obliterated by the society she lives in while also criticizing the culture and social stratification that causes this destruction. It is distinguished by a varying point of view, an unconventional structure, and an inventive style. *The Bluest Eye* takes place in Lorain, Ohio, during the Great Depression. The book shows a variety of households in Lorain and how they vary in terms of wealth, class, and race. The social stratification serves as a backdrop for Pecola's tragic story by contrasting each individual with the others. By highlighting the hardships of Black families within white culture, the neighborhood of Lorain serves as a microcosm for all of America. Additionally, *The Bluest Eye* highlights the economic

challenges that make it more challenging to escape poverty, particularly at a time when a large portion of the nation was experiencing financial hardship.

Historical Context of The Book

Although the story takes place before the Civil Rights Movement gained traction, *The Bluest Eye* was written at the height of the movement in the 1960s, and many of the novel's themes examine the issues black people were fighting for at the time. Another movement known as the Black is Beautiful Movement emerged during the 'Civil Rights Movement'. The 'Black is Beautiful' Movement sought to dispel the myth that black people are inherently unattractive due to their skin tone, facial features, and hair. In addition, the movement urged black people to accept their unique features rather than straightening their hair or attempting to bleach or lighten their skin. The movement aimed to disprove the widespread notion that white people were more attractive and desirable than black people at the time.

About Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison was an American novelist, born on 18th February. Her birth name was Chloe Anthony Wofford Morrison. *The Bluest Eye*, her debut book, was released in 1970. She became well-known across the country after publishing the highly regarded *Song of Solomon* (1977), which also earned the "National Book Critics Circle Award". Toni Morrison was raised in Lorain, Ohio. She completed her graduation with a BA in English in 1953 from Howard University. In 1955 Toni Morrison completed her masters from Cornell University in American literature. She enrolled at Howard University once more in 1957, got married, and gave birth to two kids before becoming divorced in 1964. In the late 1960s, Morrison became the first female fiction editor at

Random house in New York in the 1970s and 1980s, she established her own literary reputation. In 1998 a movie based on her work *Beloved* was released, Morrison's writing is appreciated for confronting the terrible effects of racism in the US and the Black American experience. In 1949 She applied at Howard University in Washington, D.C., because she wanted to be around other black intellectuals. She initially came to see racially segregated eateries and buses while attending Howard. After receiving her English B.A. from Cornell University in 1953, she continued on to complete a Master of Arts degree there in 1955. In Syracuse, New York, Morrison started working as an editor for L. W. Singer, a textbook branch of Random House. Two years later, she changed jobs and joined Random House in New York City, where she rose to the position of fiction department's first senior black woman editor. In that position, Morrison significantly contributed to the popularization of Black literature. The ground-breaking *Contemporary African Literature* (1972), a compilation of works by Nigerian authors Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, and South African playwright Athol Fugard, was one of the first publications she worked on. *The Greatest: My Own Story*, the controversial boxing champion Muhammad Ali's 1975 autobiography, was also published by her. Additionally, she published and promoted the writings of Henry Dumas, a little-known novelist and poet who had been fatally murdered in the New York City Subway in 1968 by a transit guard. *The Black Book* (1974), an anthology of images, drawings, essays, and records of black life in America from the era of enslavement through the 1920s, is one of the publications Morrison created and edited. As a member of an unofficial group of poets and writers at Howard University who convened to discuss their work, Morrison started creating fiction. In one meeting, she brought a short story about a black girl who yearned for blue eyes. Morrison eventually expanded on the tale in her debut book, *The Bluest Eye*, writing every morning at four in the morning while solely responsible for raising

two children. In 1970, when Morrison was 39 years old, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston released *The Bluest Eye*. John Leonard gave it a positive review in *The New York Times*, praising Morrison's writing for having "a prose so precise, so loyal to speech, and so packed with grief and wonder that the novel becomes poetry... But *The Bluest Eye* is also a work of music, history, sociology, folklore, and nightmare.

Objective

The objective of this research is to analyze and observe the image of racism and its effects. I have selected *The Bluest Eye* by Tony Morrison for this research.

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative study. There are three chapters in this research project. The research is introduced in Chapter 1 with an emphasis on the history of American and African American literature. There are several sections in this chapter. The first section discusses the history and different periods of American and African-American literature. The second section introduces the selected literary work for this novel, the historical context and the author of the book. Chapter 2 consists of a basic introduction to racism and its origin. The chapter analyzes the effects of racism under the lens of white standards of beauty. This chapter also discusses about sexism and black feminism in the novel. Chapter 3 consists of the Conclusion to the research work.

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Chapter II

Images of Racism and Its Effects in *'The Bluest Eye'*

According to Hernton racism as a man-made phenomenon can be defined as:

All of the learned behavior and learned emotions on the part of a group of people towards another group; whose physical characteristics were dissimilar to the former group behavior and emotions that compel one group to ... treat the other on the basis of its physical characteristics alone, as if, it did not belong to the human race.

(Hernton 9)

Racism is essentially defined as the idea that one race is superior to another, which results in prejudice and discrimination against individuals based on their race or ethnicity. However, it no longer has a single definition. It is defined by more than just words, beliefs, and actions. It includes all barriers to dignity and equality that people face because of their race. It addresses the idea that people may be classified as inferior or superior and separated into distinct groups based on their disparate social behaviors and intrinsic abilities. There are several instances of the ideology that caused the mass murder of millions of South Africans. The worst types of racial prejudice and atrocities against people of colour are presently on the rise in the United States, despite the fact that they were mostly prevalent in the 19th century.

Basically, racial discrimination was introduced with the advent of colonialism as colonialism brings exploitation, annexation, and conquest along with it and its hegemonic powers are based on the creation of binary oppositions such as self and other, white and black, good and

evil, superior and inferior, etc. The relationship between settlers and native people during the colonial era is comparable to that of a master and a slave. Native Americans were treated as second-class citizens in their own country, and racism allowed for this treatment by designating Africans as "black" and Indians as "brown". Indigenous peoples suffered greatly in colonial states because they were not treated the same as so-called "whites" and could not pose a danger to their cruel rule. Regardless of the fact that colonialism is no longer implemented, the West still continues to occupy the ideal state position in the eyes of the people who were once colonized.

Most post-colonial novelists made racial discrimination their primary concern. In addition to expressing themselves, African American writers have also portrayed their race and culture. With the help of their exceptional writing, they attempt to define their African-American identity. The well-known author Toni Morrison, who identifies as African-American, has addressed this issue in her novels on behalf of racial victims and has tried to understand the complex lives of black slaves and other people who live in America in extremely terrible and neglected conditions. In addition to being hated by white Americans, they also receive treatment that is worse than that of animals. Toni Morrison has established herself as the voice of the colored community with her writings which accounts the oppression of the colored community in a patriarchal society dominated by white people. Her novels demonstrated how racism stood for the traumatizing circumstances that African-Americans experienced in white America. Black people's degradation was brought on by more than just their wretched poverty, hunger, and clumsy behavior. Their color was by far the most important factor, which made them repulsive to white society. They were presented as a commodity for sale in the white market. Despite the fact that they were no longer considered slaves, black people still had to work for white masters to earn their livelihood because the majority of them lacked education. According to her, the problem with racism is that African

Americans begin to believe that European Americans are superior in beauty, intelligence and morality. This can be better understood with reference to the concept of double consciousness, often associated with W.E.B Du Bois.

Double-consciousness is a concept in social philosophy referring, originally, to a source of inward 'twoness' putatively experienced by African-Americans because of their racialized oppression and disvaluation in a white-dominated society. (Pittman 1)

In *The Bluest Eye* Morrison focuses on this issue as it affects blacks and their psychological mechanisms. *The Bluest Eye*, is a moving depiction of a black woman's search for her ideal self. Morrison's novel is inspired by her childhood conversation with a black girl. *The Bluest Eye* is a dreadful tale of a black girl child who yearns to have the bluest eyes because they represent for her what it means to be beautiful and thus deserving of respect in society as:

Pretty eyes. Pretty blue eyes. Big blue pretty eyes. Run, Jip, run. Jip runs, Alice runs. Alice has blue eyes. Jerry has blue eyes. Jerry runs. Alice runs. They run with their blue eyes. Four blue eyes. Four pretty blue eyes. Blue-sky eyes. Bluelike Mrs. Forrest's blue blouse eyes. Morning-glory-blue-eyes. Alice-and-Jerryblue-storybook-eyes. Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something as wonderful as that happen would take a long, long time. (Morrison 44)

The novel explores how dominant-group ideologies influence the formation of black people's self-images, thereby exposing the devastation caused by white cultural dominance in the

lives of Afro-American people. One of *The Bluest Eye's* most powerful targets for criticism is the connection between western ideals of female beauty and the psychological repression of black people. The focus of the entire book is on racism, the shade of evil or everything negative is represented by Black. For example:

You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question.

(Morrison 37)

They themselves believe that they are repulsive and imagine that white people are superior in beauty and intelligence. People are drawn to them because of their ugly appearance, but no one is exactly aware of what about their bodies add to their ugly appearance.

While on the other hand the mark of good, virtue, innocence, honour, etc. is represented by white. For example, the first instance of portrayal of white as a mark of good is when the cup with Shirley Temple's picture is introduced.

Frieda bought her four graham crackers on a saucer and some milk in blue-and-white Shirley Temple cup. She was a long time with the milk, and gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple's dimpled face. Frieda and she had a loving conversation about how cute Shirley Temple was. (Morrison 17)

Shirley Temple is portrayed as an image of an ideal white girl, described as full of sweetness and beauty, making every girl question their own self-image as they want to be like her. Moreover, the white and blue colour of the cup symbolises white skin and blue eyes which Pecola desires. Other instances of discrimination can be observed when Pecola, the central character of

the novel, gets treated differently and ignored by teachers and other students at school because they thought of her as ugly.

She was the only member of her class who sat alone at a double desk. The first letter of her last name forced her to sit in the front of the room always. But what about Marie Appolonaire? Marie was in front of her, but she shared a desk with Luke Angelino. Her teachers had always treated her this way. They tried never to glance at her, and called on her only 45 when everyone was required to respond.

(Morrison 43-44)

Young Junior's cruel act toward Pecola is another example of racism in *The Bluest Eye*. Young Junior invites Pecola to his house to show something. She agrees and Young Junior shows her his wicked side by pulling her into another room and making her a prisoner. After seeing the Pecola trapped in her home, Geraldine also verbally abuses her, "Get out, she said, her voice quiet. You nasty little black bitch. Get out of my house" (Morrison 90).

Racism in *The Bluest Eye* affects the people's perception of their self-image. The central character of the book Pecola believes that having blue eyes will make the problems and cruelty disappear from her life because she associates beauty with being loved. White beauty standards undoubtedly affect Pecola's suffering, and her hopeless desire ultimately drives her to madness. She experiences racism from both her own race and from white people. She has been made aware on numerous occasions by both kids and adults that she does not meet the social standards for beauty. Pecola is a symbol of the negative effects that a racialized self-image can have.

Pecola believes she would receive different treatment from everyone if she had blue eyes. She wants to be appreciated by the community and her family and she thinks that it is only possible when she replaces her blackness and becomes someone else. This is clear evidence of self-hatred

due to racism. "If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they'd say: Why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes" (Morrison 44).

This suggests that the main motivation behind her wanting blue eyes is to be treated differently by her family and that her main concern is escaping domestic violence and neglect. As Pecola hasn't experienced love and affection at home, she tries to get her parents to love her by getting the blue eyes. The lack of love from Pecola's parents starts her journey from being troubled to becoming insane. The troubled girl is reminded again and again that she is not loved and not wanted. Her already fragile self-esteem must have been negatively impacted by being ignored by her own mother. This lack of love is due to the inferior self-image of black people due to social norms. Pauline likes the white fisher girl with blue eyes more than her own daughter. This shows how racism and social norms of beauty affects people's thinking and makes them consider their own community as inferior.

Pecola eventually goes mad after being molested by her own father, Cholly, and finding out she's pregnant. His repeated rape of his daughter is related to an incident from his youth. Two white men caught Cholly having sex and forced him to continue in their presence. The men being white fits the racial theme of the novel. According to Morrison, racism's effects are not limited to the present. The person who experiences them internalizes their shame and resentment, and when they are expressed, other people will be harmed. Therefore, Pecola is harmed at the hands of Cholly. As the book draws to a close, she feels as though she has gained the blue eyes which she desired for but it didn't change anything in her surroundings or in her treatment by others, so she fears that if someone else has bluer eyes than her she will be slid back to her old existence. In the end Pecola's sufferings, indirectly due to racism, drives her insane.

Social Norms of Beauty

The Bluest Eye places a great deal of emphasis on whiteness as a pure and spiritual symbol.

Using whiteness as a measure of beauty fosters deadly internal racism. In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison illustrates the disastrous effects of imposing white standards of beauty on a juvenile African American female character developing a sense of who she is as a woman to challenge the western standards of beauty. Eurocentric beauty standards such as fair skin, light coloured hair, and blue eyes, which the black girl did not have, were used for judging and certifying beauty, instilling hatred in blacks for their own dark colour because it contradicted supreme western ideals.

The opening scene of the book describes Dick and Jane's perfect white family who lives with a lovely dog and a cat in a nice, comfortable home.

Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane live in the green-and-white house.

They are very happy. Here is the house it is green and white it has a red door it is very pretty here is the family mother father dick and jane live in the green-andwhite house they are very happy Here. (Morrison 1)

In the beginning phase of the novel, it can be seen that Pecola displays too much interest in Shirley Temple when Frieda brings her white-blue Shirley cup. She uncontrollably consumed three quarts of milk a day from that cup. Pecola imagines that she is consuming white colour when she drinks milk from the cup featuring a picture of Shirley Temple. She dreams that by performing the ritual every day, she will also get white. Pecola, as a result, denies her own identity and her desire to possess the characteristics that are admired by her community. This may be interpreted as an effort on her side to internalise the principles of white society or as a symbol of her yearning for

blue eyes. Pecola wishes to be like Shirley Temple, and for this reason she was in denial of her own existence and individuality. The reason for Pecola's desire for blue eyes is that she associates beauty with being loved and thinks that if she has them, everyone will treat her differently and all the brutality and hatred she has experienced will be replaced by love. At the novel's conclusion the white beauty standards turns out to be the cause for Pecola's suffering which ultimately turns into madness

Example of another character who accepts the white standards of beauty is Pecola's mother Pauline Breedlove. She built a habit of watching movies and believed that one can only be beautiful if he/she looked like a white movie star. Pauline liked to be surrounded by cleanliness, beauty and calmness. But in her house, she would only spot dirt, chaos and ugliness. She used to escape the ugliness of her house and family by watching movies. She spent most of her time in the white household where she worked as a servant. Mrs. Breedlove was more fond of the white Fisher's girl than her own daughter Pecola.

Sexism And Black Feminism

Sexism is referred to the discrimination between individual based on their gender, mostly against women or girls. Sexism is the idea that one sex is superior or more valuable than the another. The problems of Toni Morrison's female black characters are given more attention in *The Bluest Eye*. The novel's characters openly discuss their experience of sexism. Pauline (Pecola's mother), in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, recalls how the medical staff treated her at the hospital where she gave birth to one of her children. "When he got to me he said now these here women you don't have any trouble with. They deliver right away and with no pain. Just like horses" (Morrison 122).

Thus, the black woman is less valuable than others in the eyes of the white doctor and the wider white community.

The black female characters in the book experience double oppression. They are repressed by both Whites and the men of their own race. The central character of the novel, Pecola Breedlove, and her mother, face oppression at the hands of both whites and the men of their own community. The actions of sexist oppression are seen through the character of Pecola's father, Cholly Breedlove. Cholly, who experiences self-defeat in a predominantly white society, deals with this feeling by abusing his wife and daughter by beating them both severely. He rapes his own daughter and, ironically, sees it as a loving gesture toward her. Pecola becomes pregnant after getting raped by Cholly, her own father. This type of behavior by Pecola's father illustrates how Black men rule over Black women.

Cholly was once caught having sex with his friend Darlene by two white men. He felt humiliated as the said: "Go on," they said. "Go on and finish. And, nigger, make it good" (Morrison 41).

He was reduced to the level of a forest animal mating in the wild after being stripped of every last bit of privacy a person requires. His internalized shame and resentment came out on his wife when he, "poured out on her the sum of all his inarticulate fury and aborted desires" (Morrison 40).

Black feminism is a feminist movement that prioritizes the rights of black women. Black feminism is defined as the belief that "Black women are inherently valuable, that [Black women's] liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's but because our need as human persons for autonomy." (Zillah 364).

Toni Morrison has reflected the black feminist theory throughout the novel. In her novel, *The Bluest Eye* she portrays how the white dominated society causes black women to suffer. In the novel Morrison depicts the rejection faced by the black people, especially black women as they faced rejection from both white and black people. The people of black community have internalised the white standards of beauty to such a level that they themselves believe that they are inferior to the white community. Morrison in this novel tries to tell how the socially constructed norms of beauty have led to black peoples lowered self-image.

Because it addresses the prejudice and mistreatment that black women experience as a result of being both women and of colour, the Black Feminist Movement is significant. Toni Morrison in her novel has tried to tell the African-American communities about the true value of black. Morrison started writing *The Bluest Eye* during the peak years of Black is beautiful movement. She has perfectly depicted the need of this movement in her novel through its characters.

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Chapter III Conclusion

The conclusion of this paper is drawn from the analysis of Images of racism and the effect it has on the characters of the novel. It defines racism and how it is portrayed in *The Bluest Eye*. This research paper describes racism and how the advent of colonialism introduced racial discrimination. It implies that racism destroys the self-respect and self-image of Afro-American people and particularly Afro-American women. According to Toni Morrison the problem lies with the black community because they begin to consider themselves inferior to the white community. She tells how the ideologies of white people influence the self-image of black people. Black is represented as the shade of evil and white as the mark of good. Through this novel Toni Morrison conveys that racism and socially constructed white standards of beauty destroys the self-image of African-American people. This research paper analyzes the image of racism and its effects. It also defines racism and its portrayal in the novel.

The Bluest Eye shows how the main character, Pecola Breedlove's self-image is affected by the social norms of beauty. She desires blue eyes like white people as she believes it will make people treat her differently and her problems will disappear. This hopeless desire ultimately drives her insane. The lack of love from her parents reminds her again and again that she is not wanted. Ultimately getting raped by her father makes her insane.

In the novel Toni Morrison challenges the white beauty norms and illustrates the disastrous effects of imposing supreme ideals of white beauty on a young African-American girl's developing sense of identity. Morrison also recalls instances of sexism faced by the female characters in the novel First the incident at the hospital with Paulina and then Cholly's physical and sexual abuse

with Paulina and Pecola. Lastly this research paper discusses how black feminism is reflected throughout the novel and why 'black is beautiful' movement is important.

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