

Traits Play From Trauma To Triumph: Maya Angelou's Autobiographical Novel I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

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ABSTRACT : There is close relationship between psychology and literature. Psychology deals with the study of observable patterns of human's behavior. Literature exhibits how humans behave with their problem and society. Character in novels and plays are judged by us to be psychologically true. Based on character behavior in particular situation, the reader can identify the traits of the character. Especially the protagonist's character traits which is taken the story to next level. The story includes happiness, sorrow, twist, trauma, triumph and tragic flaw exposed by character and their traits. This paper analyses the character by traits in particular situation. The researcher selected Maya Angelou's I Know why the caged bird sings, autobiographical novel which is discussing about real life character traits. The readers may go through self analyses of their own traits.

KEYWORDS: Character Traits, Behaviorism, Psychological approach

Date of Submission: 05-02-2018

Date of acceptance: 23-02-2018

I. Introduction

Character traits refer to a person's behaviors and attitudes that make up the person's personality. Every human's have both positive and negative character traits. Even character in books, novels, poetry and drama have character traits. It is shown in descriptive adjectives like ambitious, courageous, reliable, dairy and psychotic. The study of personality consists of recognizing and understanding the traits in a person in particular situations. Without using concepts of specific character traits we would be unable to continue to communicate with our friends, relatives, students and colleagues. Person's character traits are important factors in developing moral reasoning and moral decision making. The characters are more important for every genres of literature. The readers emotionally travel with the characters when they read the real stories. While reading an African American literature the readers must get a hope to change the wrong perception associated with their life and struggle, especially women writers and their autobiographies. Black feminist not only focuses freedom, inequality, sexism and racism. They explore all struggling, abusing and traumatic situation in their life and overcomes all with the help of their own character traits. This paper identifies the situation where the author reveals her character traits. The researcher choose the author Maya Angelou and her first autobiographical novel *I know why the caged bird sings* (1970).

II. Aim Of The Study

This paper examines the character traits of the Maya Angelou that helps to overcome from her struggling and challenging life. Her first autobiography extracts the story from the age of three to seventeen. During that time, she met many people, bitter experience sand traumatic situation too. From the author memoir the researcher focuses the character traits of the protagonist. Her traits are the reason for trauma and triumph of protagonist.

III. Review Of Literature

'We may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated' Maya Angelou.
I know why the caged bird sings Angelou uses the metaphor a bird struggling to escape from the cage and singing the freedom song, it a central image throughout all of her autobiographies. Zora Neale Hurston and Era Bell Thompson represent the first Generation of black female autobiographers, their works turn away from all restrictions and limitations, searching self-identity and personal fulfillment. Maya Angelou self-described as 'six foot, black and female' (1985:9), no limitations in her writings too. As feminist scholar Maria Lauret indicate Angelou and other writers in 1970s used the autobiographical writing is about women's lives and identities in male –dominated society. Lupton has stated the unifying theme in Angelou's all autobiographical novels 'the mother- child pattern' (1999:131)
Most reader of autobiographies have clear expectation about the characteristics of the genre. In general black feminists are explored all suppression and success in their self narrative works. Maya Angelou has unique character traits throughout her all autobiographies.

I know why the caged bird sings by the African American Maya Angelou's character represents the characteristics and aspect of her period. Angelou's real childhood story states sequential tough events that happened to her and how she over comes those psychological trauma. Her character traits played main role for her success from the childhood. Angelou found herself between the love of her grandmother and the segregated American southern society. There is trauma and triumph in her life. Between this there are many psychological impacts and social issues such as Teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse, segregation, racism, inferiority, and white dominated society. The way she struggling and over come from it and what makes? who insist her to come out from it? The protagonist found her own rights to deal and overcome from that situation. A trait can refer to thoughts, feelings or behavior. People can recognize other people by their traits.

IV. Loneliness

"My looks don't fit the current fashion in terms of feminine beauty; I am a woman who is black and lonely" Maya Angelou

Loneliness is a kind of complex and unpleasant emotional, anxious feelings, lack of communication and longing for concealing love. Every human will pass over this trait once in their life. Even though loneliness creates more stability in her life. It leads her to success. Maya experiences loneliness from her childhood.

"Would laugh and eat oranges in the sunshine without children. (42)"

This paper identifies some character traits of Maya Angelou as a protagonist. In the beginning of the story she expresses the loneliness of her childhood memory. In her age of three and her brother at four they sent alone to Arkansas by train. Their parents divorced and children longing for parents love wanted to spent time with them happily. Their grandmother's unconditional love is the only medicine for their loneliness. . Children expect special care and affection and childhood is memorable one. Especially daughters are more sentimental and emotional bonding with their mother than sons. So here Maya Angelou always dreams about her mother unable to accept the fact that they have been abandoned, loneliness occupies in her childhood and throughout her life journey.

V. Self-Consoling

'Nothing will work unless you do' Maya Angelou

A person can console themselves from grief. Only matured person can have this self-consoling in their life when they get bitter experiences. Maya from her childhood itself learned this. In her whole life she met many struggles and depressions. Self- consoling helps for her triumph.

"I could cry anytime I wanted to by picturing my mother (I didn't know what she looked like) lying in her coffin. Her hair, which was black, was spread out on a tiny little pillow and her body was covered by a sheet. The face was brown, like a big O, and since I couldn't fill in the features I printed MOTHER across the O, and tears would fall down my cheeks like warm milk (50-51)."

Once she receives her mother's first Christmas presents the tea set and a doll with blue eyes, rosy cheeks and yellow hair all symbols of a white world foreign to the child's experiences. Not only her mother alive, as the present proves. In this way she consoles herself to survive.

VI. Inferiority

Generally inferiority is a feeling that not good, not intelligent, not attractive as others. Those who born and brought up from black community having more inferior. The experiences and incidents where black people mentally and physically harassed by whites, there they black people forced to feel themselves more inferior. The protagonist have inferior in her childhood days at Stamps.

"Segregation was so complete that most black children did not really know what whites looked like (24)"

Majority of the black people especially women or having inferiority complex. Racial discrimination plays a vital role in this character.

Angelou recalls that end stamps. The incidents involves three young white girls who are known to nettle black and who have come onto grandmother property to taunt the older black women with their rudeness, to ape her posture and mannerism and to address her insolently by her first name. Little Maya who observes this painful scene from inside the store and suffers humiliation for her grandmother, wants to control the girls directly but she realizes that she is

"As clearly imprisoned behind the scene as the actors outside confined to their roles. (30)"

VII. Self-Identity

As humans, all are searching our own identity from society. When particular community of people forced to isolate from society, where self- identity arise. The protagonist's childhood fills oppression by parents, dominant society and culture. So she is searching her own identity.

Her grandmother and Maya were insultingly rejected from a white dentist. The dentist who is ironically named Lincoln refuses to give treat the child, even though he is indebted to mamma for a loan she extended to him during the depression.

"Annie, my policy is I'd rather stick my hand in a dog's mouth than in a nigger's.(184)"

Lincoln the dentist who holds a policy doesn't give treatment to the black but doesn't refuse to accept money from black, this made Maya to think over money and humanity.

VIII. Self-Blaming

'Forgive yourself for not knowing what you didn't know before you learned it' Maya Angelou
Self-blaming is common reaction to stressful events. In common rape, victim all can feel mental depression. The protagonist Maya too and feel guilt about the death. The impact of self-blaming destroys her communication with society for some years.

Mr. Freeman embraces eight year old girl and he rapes her, the rape and excruciatingly painful act which involves Maya in ambiguous complicity produced confusion, shame and guilt. Later when Mr. Freeman is found murdered, Maya convinced that he is dead because of her so as to protect others; she convinces herself that she must stop talking.

"Just my breath, carrying my words out, might poison people and they'd curl up and die like the Black fat slugs that only pretended" (85).

Acting on this conviction, Maya becomes voluntary mute, Mr. Freeman's death having provoked not only Maya's spiritual death but also her isolation from her world. A psychological difficulty of eight years old girl has been traumatized by rape.

IX. Stability

Stability remains stable and balanced of the person. During the struggle or after the incidents how the person overcome with stable mind. For children stability is inject from parents. The protagonist Maya Angelou recovers from muteness with the help of others. In her life there is some people always boost up and playing her parents role.

Maya was mute for years, drifting along and not saying anything to anyone other than Bailey. She mentions Bertha Flowers, probably the most prominent and graceful of Stamps' black citizens; she is proper and kind, and Maya admires her very much. She reminds Angelou that

"Language is man's way of communicating with his fellow man and it is language alone which separates him from the lower animals. (95)"

Mrs. Flowers advises her to learn from the people around her, and that having a formal education does not mean a person has real intelligence or wit. Mrs. Flowers sends Maya home with A Tale of Two Cities and a book of poetry, expecting her to read the works aloud in order to enjoy the language and regain her voice. Maya finally regains the will to speak, and feels very special at being noticed and taught by Mrs. Flowers.

X. Discussion

This paper examines the different traits of the protagonist. From her childhood to adult she met so many challenges and trauma. Loneliness taught her self-consoling. Inferiority feelings give self-identity. Self-blaming results in muteness; it's broken with mental stability till her death. In her first autobiographical novel the protagonist have low range of traits and high range of traits in her character.

XI. Conclusion

The paper concludes that psychological development of a protagonist in her life. It gives how she overcomes it and manage to survive. Even as little girl, she encountering so many problems in her life. She never gave up and kept on working hard for prosperity of her life. She teaches us to pick ourselves up through hard times and never lose hope no matter how bad the situation might be.

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International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI) is UGC approved Journal with SI. No. 4593, Journal no. 47449.

B.Geetha; Traits Play From Trauma To Triumph: Maya Angelou's Autobiographical Novel I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings" *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)* 7.1 (2018): PP 18-20