

**Compare how Celie and Jeanette deal with the influence of Mr. \_\_\_\_ and Mother in 'The Color Purple' and 'Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit'. Refer to the way structure and language demonstrates their resilience.**

Both protagonists seek others for the comfort they are lacking from Mr. \_\_\_\_ and Mother, yet neither Shug nor Melanie or Katy are able to truly compensate for what they have lost. Shug's abandonment of Celie appears to hurt her more than Mr. \_\_\_\_'s physical abuse ever did: "My heart broke. Shug love somebody else." Celie does not need to be well educated, and Walker's language does not need to be sophisticated to show the pain that Celie is feeling. These two short sentences create enormous impact, particularly as they open one of the letters/prayers. It also evokes more sympathy here from the reader because of how much Shug means to Celie, "My life...stop with Mr. \_\_\_\_ ...but start up again with Shug." Celie, like Jeanette, loses little when her primary caregiver is insensitive, yet loses everything when her soul mate is, "I feel my heart begin to cramp...I cover it with my hand." This gesture is so achingly poignant because of its simplicity, and because it is so child-like; Celie has not been taught any other way to cope. Winterson's description, though more detailed, describes a strikingly similar reaction to loss from Jeanette: "We cried each other to sleep...sweating and crying with mixed up bodies and swollen faces." It is unsurprising that both characters react almost identically when suffering, due to not receiving the physical comfort they deserve from those that should provide it.

There is no doubt, however, that finding this comfort from another source does help Jeanette and Celie, even if it is only temporary, "I was delighted. She was my friend, and I wasn't used to that." This is particularly true in 'The Color Purple': Shug, throughout the novel, gives Celie passion, confidence, and reassurance, "For the first time in my life, I feel just right" and is everything that Mr. \_\_\_\_ is not. Walker's novel is so powerful because of the development we see in Celie, essentially because of Shug's support. At the beginning, Celie is fragile, with little optimism, yet after Shug, Nettie and Sofia act as inspiration, she is able to confront Mr. \_\_\_\_: "Your dead body just the welcome mat I need." This is such a contrast to Celie's earlier behaviour, but shows resilience rather than reluctant acceptance. Although not to the same degree, Jeanette finds similar physical comfort in Melanie that she lacks in her mother: "We never usually touched except in anger". Melanie, Katy and Miss Jewsbury however, are not inspiration for Jeanette, but merely figures in her life that will offer comfort. Celie and Jeanette differ in terms of confidence, yet not in their need for support: "Knowing Melanie was a much happier thing...I needed that kind of friend". Here, Winterson could be suggesting that Jeanette even recognised that she was lacking "that kind of friend", which is not unlikely, as Jeanette's language displays a certain wise, tolerant quality throughout the novel. The use of the adjective "much happier" clearly shows the positive influence Melanie has, and that Jeanette still believed that their relationship, in hindsight, was worthwhile.

Escapism forms a large part of Celie and Jeanette's ability to be resilient; through faith or fantasy, both characters find a way of distracting themselves from their undesirable reality: "Most times I pretend I ain't there". Celie's letters/prayers are evidence enough of her frequent escapism, and writing to God or Nettie is used as a release. Jeanette however, uses fairy tales and symbolic stories to express herself. The enormity of Mother's influence on Jeanette is shown in the way even the fictional characters she creates are based on reality. Even in fantasy, she cannot truly escape. The novel contains several references to accounts of Sir Perceval leaving King Arthur, as well as a prince's quest to find the perfect woman. The latter is clearly representative of Mother wanting Jeanette to be a saviour: "She would get a child, train it, build it, dedicate it to the Lord". This language is not typical of a mother's to a child, but rather describing some construction project; the child is not described as human, with specific and specialised needs, but instead an object to be put through a process. The verb "train" is not usually associated with motherhood, but has more military connotations, suggesting a definite lack of affection from Mother that is acknowledged by Jeanette.

Jeanette also refers to characters in literature as role-models, something Celie is unable to do because of her lack of education, "So I was alone. I thought of Jane Eyre, who faced many trials and was always brave". Similarly to the unrealistic expectations her mother has of her, Jeanette is basing her behaviour on a fictional character, expecting too much of herself: "I want a woman who is perfect." This is unusually naïve of Jeanette, a typically

objective character who seems far wiser than her years at times, but does show how her Mother has influenced her in terms of striving for something impossibly out of reach, "It must exist...because I want it". The desperation for perfection shown with the use of the modal verb "must" fully conveys the pressure Jeanette is under to conform to her mother's ideals. Escaping into a fantasy world is her only real opportunity to attempt to remain resilient.

One significant difference between the narrative voices in the two novels is the pressure they face to rebel or conform. While Celie is constantly being berated for not standing up to Mr. \_\_\_\_, Jeanette faces harsh criticism for straying from the strict boundaries of her religion: "You're a disgrace". Both protagonists eventually concede to this pressure, and Celie grows in strength while Jeanette accepts that arguing achieves nothing: "'No mum,' I replied, it's not like that at all.' But she wasn't listening." This significant lapse in communication is disappointing in a relationship that should be as close and supportive as that of a mother and daughter, and evokes sympathy from the reader towards Jeanette's character, as well as hostility for the character of Mother.

Even Jeanette's fantasies reflect her reluctance to argue with Mother: anyone who disagrees with the Prince, her fantasy parallel, is beheaded. Unlike Celie's feelings for Mr. \_\_\_\_, Jeanette does not speak about being in fear of her mother, but rather accepts that confrontation is not effective: "'Well that's that then,' I thought. And it was". The fact that Jeanette, as the narrative voice, can confirm that her earlier thoughts were correct, shows how often she must experience this. It also reflects a certain maturity at being able to assess a situation, and walk away if it cannot be resolved. Her explanation of Pastor Finch's whereabouts even shows wit at such a young age: "playing with the fuzzy felt", adding this embarrassing detail purely to show her maturity and eye for humour over the Pastor.

The use of first person narrative allows us to clearly see how Jeanette and Celie are finding ways of coping. Surprisingly, there is almost no use of denial by either protagonist: a typical coping technique. They are both very honest, and this narrative structure allows the reader to see their genuine feelings, with no reason to hide anything. Jeanette's reaction to Pastor Finch is not truthful; she does not tell him that she was "just beginning to enjoy a rewrite of Daniel in the lions' den", but instead acts as if it was a mistake, "putting on my best, blessed face". The adjective "best" could even suggest that she is so used to these situations that she has been practising, and now knows which one is the most effective. She is used to the behaviour of the adults in her life, and has learnt that protesting will only get her into more trouble.

One key contrast between Celie and Jeanette is their self-confidence. Jeanette, although defeatist at times, does seem to realise her potential, and is rarely self-pitying: "I cannot recall a time when I did not know that I was special". Celie, however, has a clear association between women and oppression, one that is only reinforced by the appalling treatment of Sofia, and one that doesn't ever seem to truly leave her. Her perceptive observation of Harpo emphasises this association: "He strong in body but weak in will. He scared. His eyes be sad and thoughtful. His face begin to look like a woman face." The detail of this description suggests that Celie recognises so much of herself in Harpo, the last line being particularly moving. It implies that through her experience, and Mr. \_\_\_\_'s influence, sadness has been inextricably linked to being a woman, particularly through the use of the verb "begin". Harpo's fear and dejection is only one aspect of the emotional isolation that Celie feels, making the reader question exactly what a "woman face" looks like to Celie, if fear and sadness form only the foundation.

The protagonists' love interests are both rude when they are first introduced, yet neither Celie nor Jeanette are discouraged by Melanie's "I've said no" and Shug's "You sure *is* ugly", despite their blunt and abrasive tone. Mr. \_\_\_\_ and Mother's constant emotional abuse leaves them expecting a lack of emotional support in a relationship, and results in them accepting that society will always treat them like this: "There was nothing for me to do but contemplate my fate and lie still." The use of the verb "contemplate" links to Jeanette's reliance on prayer, and the fact that there is nothing for her to do but be passive, emphasises that this is all she knows, and is the only comfort she can receive.

Religion plays such a significant part in both novels, as both an explanation for the behaviour of many of the characters, and a form of escapism for the two protagonists. Celie turns to God for comfort, whereas Jeanette turns because she is forced to: "[I had] enrage[d] my mother because I had abandoned biblical themes". There rarely seems to be a sense of real

therapy or enjoyment from Jeanette when reading the Bible, or learning about biblical stories, and instead she often adapts them, making her own versions. This could be showing that she doesn't want to conform to one idea of coping with their emotional abuse, or one set of beliefs: "I had all kinds of variations, but usually I drowned it." The use of casual violence connected on more than one occasion with these innocent biblical stories is humorous in places, yet conveys the stark message that Jeanette feels some sense of anger towards the people who are forcing her to believe these tales, and base her life around them. Pastor Finch even turns something as insignificant as Jeanette's age into a religious warning: "The demon can return SEVENFOLD".

Similarly, the incident with the fuzzy felt is evidence of how religion stifles Jeanette's imagination, and because her mother follows it so closely, she is as afraid as Pastor Finch is of over-crossing the boundaries, "But that's not right...Let's put it right shall we?" He puts the importance of copying the exact biblical image before the actual enjoyment for Jeanette, emphasising how patronising and controlling she views them as. Celie, however, is able to appreciate the value of faith because it is never imposed on her: "All this week I suffer. I turn to prayer." The verb "turn" emphasises how it is an escape for Celie, and that she is turning from something that is distressing. There is also no self-pity from her here, but simply 'I suffer' in the description of her pain, without any detailed melodrama. This conveys a real resilience from Celie: that she is able to move on without dwelling on the past. Unlike Jeanette, she finds a life without religion difficult, and needs faith to struggle through, "But it ain't easy trying to do without God. Even if you know he ain't there, trying to do without him is a strain."

One technique Celie certainly uses to deal with Mr. \_\_\_\_'s influence is to deflect her pain by ensuring she is not the only victim: "Beat her. I say." When she tells Harpo to beat Sofia, the reader sees an unfamiliar Celie, one with malice. However, her inability to allow it to leave her conscience stops the reader from ever really altering their respect or admiration for Celie's character, particularly when she justifies her behaviour: "I say it cause I'm a fool, I say. I say it cause I'm jealous of you, I say it cause you do what I can't. Fight." At this point in the novel, Celie is not strong enough to fight Mr. \_\_\_\_, and so uses Sofia as a proxy. The repetition of "I say" shows Celie's anxiety and evident uneasiness with being this cruel, though her behaviour is not unforgivable, given the trauma she has suffered, and her hasty change in attitude: "You still bothering Sofia? Sofia love you. I don't know what more you want."

Like her mother, Jeanette begins to enforce religious ideas on the people around her, and instead of being praised like she would be at home, she is criticised at school: "You have been talking about Hell to young minds". It seems to be saying that despite this very Christian idea of hell, telling young children about it is wrong for fear it might corrupt them. The phrase, "young minds" implies this, in the way that they could be moulded, perhaps suggesting a fear of Satanism within society, which is certainly reflected throughout the novel: "Parents, watch your children for the signs". This is also ironic in that a religious idea is not fit for exposure to a young, pure, mind, and contrasts with so much of Mother's behaviour, "Whatever it is, it's not holy."

There is the sense, with both novels, that society plays a major part in Celie and Jeanette's lack of freedom: "All my life I had to fight". The two protagonists are not the only ones experiencing this kind of oppression, nor are Mr. and Mother the only ones enforcing it. In Jeanette's case, it is her religion's boundaries that restrict her, and with Celie, it is the social ones. Mother and Mr. \_\_\_\_ are merely representative of the figures in society that are so controlling, and are certainly not rare. This explains, in part, why there is so little abhorrence felt by the protagonists towards Mr. \_\_\_\_ and Mother. They are not used to being treated any differently, and so ultimately, instead of trying to physically escape, both characters learn to be resilient: "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly...but I'm here."

2419 words.