

Consider the similarities and differences in the presentation of Culture in  
“Veronica” and “Stench of kerosene”

In both the Stories “A Stench of Kerosene and “Veronica “ have the same message to get across which is the role of women and they have both presented two different cultures. The two authors have practically the same opinions about the role of women in a society and have tried to display this in their own way as the two stories are from different parts of the world. Both the stories focus on the fact that men in society dominate women and also their elders influence those women.

The stories have shown us that women are treated similarly over the world no matter what culture they are. As there are some similarities there are also differences, which have yet to be discovered.

In both the stories there has been a fight and struggle for equal rights in a culture or a society. As the two stories are both based in rural parts of India and Africa they both have strong impressions of their cultures compared to a city where the cultural influence are minor.

In the story ‘Veronica’ the author has tried to give the impression that women are born to grow up, get married and take care of the family evidence for that” I have to go cook my father will be home soon”. The author shows that women are not supposed to be given the choice of an education and career. In ‘Veronica’ it provides us with the information that Women in Africa have been brought up in a way that from childhood they have been told not to have a qualification or a career, as it says “No the city is for you not for me what will I do once I get there? I have no qualifications, not even a standard six”, this specifies that Veronica doesn’t have the will to opt for a career as she is brought up in that way.

The author tries to show that woman are dominated by men and are not given any rights as it says, “Her father was a brute and her mother was weak”.

In ‘Veronica’ it shows that Veronica has very strong Family ties and has a responsibility towards home life and also involved in the household whereas in a city a women would make career her first choice. In the story it shows that Veronica is happy with her whatever she has as she has a very simple lifestyle, she tends to welcome her guests even though she is not that well off. The author shows that for a woman in such a society has nothing left in the world as her husband and child are dead, and that there is no future for her without her family as written “My husband is dead and my child also. There is nothing left for me in this world “.

Similarly in the story “A Stench of Kerosene”, the author tries apply the fact that women are born to get married and have children evidence to that “Manak and Guleri had been married for seven years but she was had never borne a child and Manak’s mother had made a resolution that she would not let it beyond the eighth year”. The author tries to show that the women are bound to have children immediately after marriage and don’t have the freedom to decide whether they want a child or not. In an Indian culture the family has to have a child after the marriage other wise. According to the story Manak’s mother decides whether he should get married again because his wife doesn’t produce a

child after 7 years of marriage. The author is trying to point out that a woman in an Indian culture is bound to have an arranged marriage. In Indian tradition women are supposed to have children to continue their family going, this is one of the main reasons of Guleri problems. The story takes a turn when Manak gets married to someone else and consequences to that Guleri decides to kill herself in agony, this indicates that women in an Indian society have strong ties to their family and cannot continue their life without their husband.

In both the cultures women have strong family ties and are very much emotionally attached to their family. In the two stories the protagonists lose something and the reason for that are different but leading to the same point. Like Veronica loses her husband and child for a war on the other hand in 'A Stench of Kerosene' Manak loses his wife for his mother. Both make the same point about the role of women being focused on family values.

The two authors try to give the message that opportunity for women in the rural places in India and Africa are very less. In 'Veronica' Veronica pays cultural respect to others by staying in the village and in 'A stench of kerosene' Guleri pays respect to her parents by going to their house.

As they similarities in their cultures there are differences in the similarities such as the households being dominated by someone elder in the family like in 'Veronica' it is controlled by the father of the house which is patriarchal and in 'A Stench of Kerosene' it is controlled by the mother in law,

The main parts the two authors are trying to explore are that why do women have to sacrifice their dreams to fulfill someone else's dream? And how different cultures bind women from freedom. These two stories combined together basically give the same idea of how women from different cultures can relate to the same issue.

The stories try and persuade the reader to believe that cultures can stop people's thoughts as well as ideas. Even though the stories consider the role of a woman being a housewife it also shows that women can also try to adjust with what they have and try and be positive, as Veronica invites Okeke inside even though her house was ruined and she about to die. The two stories focus on the different culture and the role of women, this is why they relate to one another.

I feel that Adawale Maja-Pearce has tried to give a very negative impression of her culture because she refers to women in her culture being very weak and with very less rights. The author makes it sound very negative as she refers to women managing household instead of going for a career.

The writer of "A Stench of Kerosene" has also made a very pessimistic impression of her culture as she is mentioning the negative side of a woman's position in an Indian society. She mentions that women have no right to choose their lifestyle, whether it is for marriage or having a child, this makes the story's tone very depressing. Evidence from both the stories shows that the two authors are basically criticizing their cultures instead of celebrating their cultures. In both societies women are blamed for the consequences and mistakes like in "A Stench of Kerosene" they convey a message that

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Guleri is blamed for not producing a child and Maja-Pearc has shown that Veronica is blamed for not continuing her studies and not having a career.

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