

## Black Women in Literature

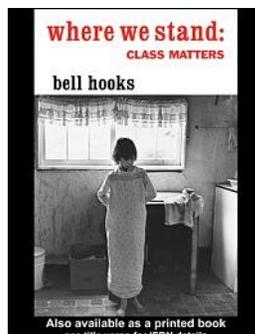
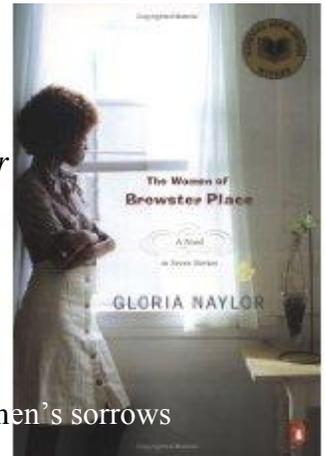
There are many great black women writers in the world of literature such as Toni Morrison and Gloria Naylor. These authors often refer to themes that are related to black culture; more precisely to black women's culture. For instance, Gloria Naylor's novel *The Women of Brewster Place* talks about segregation, slums and women's sorrows which are issues that black women had and sometimes still have:

“Vibrating with undistinguished emotion, *The Women of Brewster Place* springs from the same roots that produced the blues. Like Them, Naylor's book sings of sorrows proudly borne by black women in America” (back cover of Gloria Naylor's novel)

This critique from *The Washington Post* refers to the theme of black women's sorrows which is explored in a positive way in the novel. This fictional work seems to reflect black women's real-life struggles and experiences.

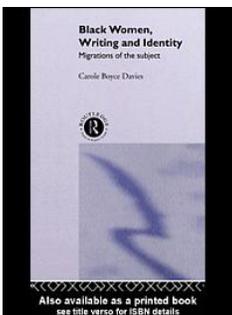
In fact, in her text Gloria Naylor introduces seven female characters who, with different backgrounds, experiences and life stories, end up in 'Brewster Place' which is a place that can be considered a slum. This place is segregated from the rich white people, since the women living there are black and poor. Thus, the issue of social class also takes place in the novel as it does in real life: “Of course once class was placed on the agenda, women had to face the intersections of class and race. And when they did, it was evident that black women were clearly at the bottom of this society's economic totem pole”

(Hooks 2000).



As Bell Hooks mentions in her text *Where We Stand: Class Matters*, when it comes to class, black women were considered to be the lowest in the hierarchy. Gloria Naylor explores this issue in her novel; still she shows how these seven women did not deserve to end up in the segregated area of ‘Brewster Place’. Through seven different stories, she talks about each woman’s life and the reasons why they all had to move to ‘Brewster Place’. This aspect of the novel can be considered as realistic since some black women still have to live in such segregated, lower class areas.

Also, another theme related to black women’s culture is explored in Gloria Naylor’s text *The Women of Brewster Place*:



“The historical construction of the Black woman as the “great mother”, negatively embedded in the “mammy” figure of Euro-American imagination, is confronted with practical realities of mothering in recent Black women’s writing. As consumers of hegemonic popular and literary culture, we are recipients of these contradictory narratives of motherhood.”(Davies 135).

In Gloria Naylor’s novel, there are two opposite mother figures. First, there is Mattie Michael who is portrayed as the positive mother to all the women. She helps them, gives them advice and she is seen as having good judgement. Then, there is Cora Lee, who may be considered by the readers as a bad mother since she has too many children and she only seems to love them when they are babies. Thus, once again Gloria Naylor refers to black women’s culture in her fictional text. She refers to issues that are related to black women and, consequently, that refer to her own culture since she is a black woman writer.

In conclusion, black women's culture is very important in literature because it refers to many important elements of history. Women writers like Gloria Naylor are great in writing realist novels that refer to the life and experiences of black women in different social classes.

## Bibliography

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