Racism Through a Child’s Eyes

A Postcolonial and Didactic Analysis of
The Bluest Eye and To Kill a Mockingbird

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Abstract

In this essay, I will analyse two main characters in The Bluest Eye and To Kill a Mockingbird based on their perspective on race. My main focus is on the use of a child’s point of view as a narrative technique. This essay also looks at how To Kill a Mockingbird and The Bluest Eye can be used to discuss racial issues in schools linked to national objectives for upper secondary education. The analysis will focus on how children’s points of view are used in conjunction with the themes of race and Otherness in To Kill a Mockingbird and The Bluest Eye. I will use previous research on related issues to add different perspectives and ideas to my discussion.

By using a close reading method and by employing a postcolonial theoretical perspective, I have come to the conclusion that the innocent perspective of Claudia and Scout as narrators is employed as a means of social and political critique against racial segregation in the America of the 1930s and 1940s. I come to the conclusion that teachers’ attitudes are important in transmitting equality values to students and that these books would work well in teaching situations which discuss racial stereotyping or similar issues.

Key words: Child’s point of view, otherness, teaching, race, stereotype
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1 Introduction

“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... until you climb into his skin and walk around it” Atticus Finch

As a teacher, I want my students to take this advice from Atticus in *To Kill a Mockingbird* to understand that they cannot judge a situation unless they view it from all perspectives, but also that in order to understand somebody they must hear their side of the story. However, since we cannot climb into another person’s skin, we can never really understand racism. Only the person who experiences it knows what it is like, but students can make an enormous difference by challenging prejudice and discrimination where they exist.

I believe that racial equality is an important issue to be addressed in schools so that the new generations become aware that there is inequality and racism in the world. Racism is morally and legally wrong and we all can and should fight it. This is particularly important as there is currently a vivid political debate about issues such as immigration and integration in Sweden today. The United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, states in its first and second article: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” and “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms … without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. The national objectives for secondary education also emphasize this aspect: “Education should impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values” (Skolverket 2013). The act of discriminating someone because of his or her race or ethnicity contradicts the principles of human rights and human dignity.

In *Children and Race* (1975), David Milner points out the effects of racial discrimination amongst black children. According to Milner, a number of studies have identified that children become aware of their racial differences at a very young age (80). These studies also indicate that children are able “to recognize and label these differences and also to identify oneself in racial terms” (80). Children developing views of racial differences are affected and shaped by others within their social world (Milner 83). The national objectives for secondary education in Sweden specify that schools shall transmit the values of “the inviolability of human life, individual freedom, integrity and the equal value of all people” (Skolverket 2013). The school is a good environment for this, because it can make
immense contributions toward a rightful society. Teachers can teach the children how to deal with racism and encourage children to reach across racial and ethnic lines.

The novels that will be analysed are *The Bluest Eye* written by Toni Morrison and Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*. These novels give a mixture of child and adult perspectives, given the adult version of the childhood recollections. I will argue that Morrison and Lee choose a child’s voice to narrate parts of their stories as a means of protest against racism and prejudice because the complicated issue of racism can be efficiently analysed from the point of view of a child narrator. The innocence with which these children narrate their stories give a concise and honest view of how horrifying racism and stereotyping is.

In my essay, I will specifically analyse the use of a child’s point of view as a narrative technique and will explore matters of racial discrimination and the concept of Otherness presented in these two books. I will first discuss how the child’s point of view is used as a way of undermining traditional ‘adult’ views on racial issues to demonstrate the negative impact of racism experienced through a child’s eye. I will additionally reflect on the role of the teacher because teacher attitudes are important in transmitting equality values to the students. I will also discuss some strategies that teachers can reflect on and use in order to educate the pupils to have an understanding about racial discrimination.

1.1 Theory and Method

In this section, I will present my method of analysis, which is a close reading approach. I will also give a short theoretical background with regard to the narratological terms and provide descriptions of a few terms that I will regularly use and refer to.

The close reading approach is the method used in this essay. Nancy Boyles explains in her article “Closing in on Close Reading” (2012) that this approach involves “reading to uncover layers of meaning that lead to deep comprehension” (36-41). Close reading is crucial for interpreting literature. Close reading means developing a deep perception and an accurate interpretation of a literary passage that is based on the words themselves (36-41).
1.1.1 Definitions

Here, I will give definitions of the terms that I will use regularly throughout the essay and that are of relevance for my analysis. I will give the definitions of racism and stereotype in a straightforward manner since these concepts are complex and difficult to define, not only because of their vagueness of the concepts of race and stereotype, but also because they can be specified in many different ways.

The word racism is defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2013) as “the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races”. Therefore, when I talk about stereotype, I mean “a person or thing that conforms to a widely held but oversimplified image of the class or type to which they belong” (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 2013). When talking about ethnic stereotyping, I mean a generalized representation of an ethnic group made of what is believed to be typical characteristics of the group or a member of the group.

1.1.2 Child Voice in Narratology

In works of fiction, most often, the author does not approach the reader directly. The narrator is the one who narrates the story. The narrator can be part of the story or merely tell it to the reader. Peter Barry, in his *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (2009) explains that according to the French narrative theorist Gérard Genette, there are two types of narrators, homodiegetic and heterodiegetic. A heterodiegetic or omniscient narrator is not a part of the story “since the story being told is that of somebody else” (226). This narrator knows everything about the novel characters. This narrator is always present and knows the feelings and thoughts of the characters, even when the characters are alone or silent. A homodiegetic narrator is the one telling his or her own story (Barry 226). Similarly to Barry, Manfred Jahn in his *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative* (2005) explains that, in a homodiegetic narrative, the story is narrated by a narrator who is also one of the story’s internal characters. Usually, but not always, the narrator uses the first-person pronoun to tell the story. The perspective of this type of narrator influences what the readers will see, hear, and know about the plot and other characters (Jahn 2005).
A very specific aspect of the fictionalization of childhood is the use of a child’s voice or perspective as a way of narrating a story. In her essay “Children’s voice in Holocaust Literature” within *Infant Tongues: The Voice of the Child in Literature* (1994), Naomi Sokoloff claims that, in the majority of literature about childhood, in which the adult voice speaks in the name of the children, the writer creates a dual child-adult perspective: “To impersonate young voices, or to represent their consciousness, the child vision is always mediated by that of someone more mature” (259). The adult narrator recollects earlier events so that a considerable time gap is established between the experiences and his or her narration. Through this time lapse, as Amy Faulds Sandefur, in her essay “Narrative Immediacy and First-Person Voice in Contemporary American Novels” (2003) states, “a novelist constructs a narrating persona clearly distinguishable from experiencing subject, even though the two are the same person” (147). Similarly, Alicia Otano in *Speaking the Past: Child Perspective in the Asian American Bildungsroman* (2004) explains ways in which the perspective of a child protagonist and the child narrator is, by nature, limited in means of expression and cognition. Otano further explains that the adult narrator has “higher narratorial authority” because the adult narrator has more information in retrospect and can choose to narrate the events or let the events speak for themselves (15).

Genette (qtd. in Barry 2009) suggests a distinction between the narrative voice (who tells the story) and the narrative perspective (who sees). Focalization is “the point of view from which the story is told” (Barry 224). There are three types of focalization; internal, external and zero focalization. The focalizer is whose point of view orients the narrative text. Zero focalization is an unlocated focaliser or an omniscient narration. The character through whose eyes the narrative is presented is termed internal focalizer (Barry 224-225). If the point of view is restricted to what is visible and perceivable from the outside, it is a case of external focalization (Jahn 2005). According to Otano, in narratives using child’s perspective “the focalizer is a character within a represented world which is narrated by an older ‘self’ thus giving way to an interplay of a dual perspective” (15). These two focalizers are separate agents and have two different identities. The narrator transmits the child’s perspective of the earlier self, and the older self controls the past, present, and future (Otano 15).

The main reason why I selected these concepts above for this essay is because the novels I will use for my analysis both use a child’s point of view to recall events from childhood in flashbacks as they experienced, saw, felt, and understood them at the time.
1.1.3 Postcolonial Theory

According to postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha the study of the Otherness, which is important for the study of racial bias, is one of the principal elements in the postcolonial study. In his chapter “The Other Question”, as contained within his book *The Location of Culture* (2004), Bhabha also claims that “an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness” (94), and the stereotype is its powerful colonial racist discursive strategy. Thus, the stereotype constructs a group or individuals as the Other (Bhabha 94). The person or group who is the victim of stereotyping is said to be essentially the Other. “As a form of splitting and multiple beliefs, the ‘stereotype’ requires, for its successful signification, a continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes” (Bhabha, 110). The construction of the Other as something clearly identifiable must be anxiously repeated. For example, “the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved” (95). Bhabha considers that repetition endangers the stereotype because it shows that what the stereotype claims cannot never be proved and instead must be repeated (95).

The Other is a person who is perceived by the powerful group as being different in some significant way. The dominant group sees itself as the model and judges those who are out of the ordinary in any way as the Other, needing basic qualities owned by the dominant group. The Other is always viewed as an insignificant or inferior being and is not treated equally by the powerful group. “The visibility of the racial/colonial other is at once a point of identity” (Bhabha 116), as in the case of black people whom the ruling white dominant culture defines as Other, their blackness represent their identity.

In many stories where the predominant theme is race, usually, the black people are Others in white-dominated societies. The whites are the ruling group that holds the power in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Otherness can also happen between people of the same race, excluding someone because that person is different and does not fit in and is considered as the Other as is depicted in *The Bluest Eye*.

I selected this theory for this essay because both books are coming-of-age novels in which children begin to understand themselves. To achieve this self-awareness: however, they must first understand the society around them and the Others as someone outside their own community.
1.2 Material

In this section, I will present my primary material, which is *The Bluest Eye* written by Toni Morrison and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. I will also give a short presentation of the authors.

**To Kill a Mockingbird**

Harper Lee was born in Monroeville, Alabama, in 1926. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lee’s only novel, was published in 1960 and awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1961. The book was adapted to the screen in 1962.

Despite being told from a child’s perspective, *To Kill a Mockingbird* deals with rape and racial prejudices. The novel is set in Maycomb, Alabama, in the 1930s, and narrated by the main character, a six-year-old white girl named Jean Louise “Scout” Finch. Her father, Atticus Finch, a widower raising his child alone, is a lawyer with high moral values who does his best to pass his values on to his children. Scout is a very intelligent girl. She tells her story in her own language, which is unmistakably that of a child, but she also explains the events from the perspective of an already adult person.

The story mainly focuses on a case about Tom Robinson, a black man who has been indicted of raping a white girl named Mayella Ewell. When Atticus agrees to defend Tom Robinson, his children are teased and harassed at school by the racist white society of Maycomb. The Finches all face criticism in racist Maycomb, but Atticus insists upon proceeding with the case since his conscience cannot let him do otherwise. The trial pits the testimony of the white Ewells against Tom’s testimony. According to the sheriff’s evidence, Mayella’s injuries were on the right side of her face. Tom Robinson’s left arm is dysfunctional because of an accident. With this evidence presented, Tom should have been released, but the jury declares him guilty. The jury decision revolts the Finch children. Atticus hopes for an appeal, but, unluckily, Tom attempts to escape from his prison and is shot to death. In the meantime, Mr. Ewell threatens Atticus after the trial. He gets his retaliation on Jem and Scout.
Toni Morrison was born in 1931, in Lorain, Ohio. Toni Morrison is a Pulitzer Prize-winner and the first black woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. Her first novel, *The Bluest Eye* was published in 1970 (Toni Morrison society). In the foreword of *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison explains her intention in writing the novel. She states that the idea to write this novel came from her childhood friend who wished to have blue eyes (Morrison viii). With this story, she wants to make a remark about the damage that internalized racism can do to a young girl.

*The Bluest Eye* gives a wide depiction of how racism affects life in a black community in Lorain, Ohio, in the 1940s. Morrison uses two narrative voices. The first and the predominant voice is of an omniscient narrator in the third person, responsible for the characterization of all the characters. The second is the voice of Claudia, whose memories frame the events of the novel. Claudia narrates her story from two distinct perspectives: a child’s and an adult’s voice. Nine-year-old Claudia and her sister, ten-year-old Frieda lives in Lorain, Ohio, with their loving parents. *The Bluest Eye* focuses on Pecola Breedlove, a lonely adolescent black girl in the late 1940s. When Cholly Breedlove, Pecola’s father, burns down his family’s house, his daughter is placed in the MacTeer house. Aware of Pecola’s situation, Claudia and her sister Frieda become her friends. Meanwhile, Pecola goes back to live with her family, and her life there is difficult because her parents constantly fight. Pecola begins to think that if she had blue eyes and was beautiful, her parents would be kinder to her. Therefore, she starts to pray for blue eyes. Pecola is not popular; she is ignored or despised by her community, by her parents, and at school, by teachers and classmates. One day, Pecola’s father comes home drunk and finds her doing the dishes, and he rapes her. Then Soaphead Church makes her believe that her wish to have blue eyes had been granted. Alone and pregnant Pecola falls into madness. She can no longer go to school and talks to her only imaginary friend in order to escape her sad reality, believing that everyone is envious of her new blue eyes. In the final section of the novel, Claudia remembers seeing Pecola searching the garbage after the baby was born prematurely and died and she became insane.
1.3 Previous Research on Child’s Point of View and Race in To Kill a Mockingbird and The Bluest Eye

With The Bluest Eye and To Kill a Mockingbird being read by millions of people worldwide, a lot has been written about these novels. In this section, I will present a couple of books that have been of interest to my analysis since they bring up topics of a child’s point of view on race matters in The Bluest Eye and To Kill a Mockingbird. Two of the topics that critics have discussed in relation to To Kill a Mockingbird and The Bluest Eye is the narrative technique and race. Nevertheless, stereotyping is almost an equally important aspect in these two novels. The divisions are clear. The role of race is intertwined with class and stereotypes, separating individuals from each other in these two works of fiction.

Madhu Dubey, in his book Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic (1994), argues that Morrison fails in destroying the black woman stereotypes, because most of her “novel characters conform to the stereotypes of earlier black fiction” (34). He is referring to Morrison’s apparent stereotyping with regard to the characters’ skin colour and the cultural background of the characters depicted in The Bluest Eye.

Brooks J. Bouson, in Quiet As It’s Kept: Shame, Trauma, and Race in the Novels of Toni Morrison (2000), argues that Morrison uses Claudia as a narrator because she needs to provide someone to empathize with Pecola, the main character (29). He further argues that “The Bluest Eye invokes shaming racist and class stereotypes that construct the black underclass family as uncivilized” (29). Bouson criticizes Morrison’s depiction of black parents as abusive in her novel, because it reinforces the stereotype of black parents not being civilized. He continues by concluding that “homogenizing images of white family normality and black family pathology have historically served to reinforce the essentialist racist construction of white superiority and black’s inferiority” (29). This author criticises the way Morrison depicts white families as more normal and socially acceptable than black families in The Bluest Eye.

Much of the literary criticism on To Kill a Mockingbird focuses on the novel’s treatment of sexuality and use of racially offensive language. Andrew Haggerty, in Harper Lee: To Kill a Mockingbird (2009), states that one of the major objections to To Kill a Mockingbird is the frequent appearance in the book of the ‘N-word’ which is of course highly offensive to African Americans” (48). On the other hand, Rachel Ballon, in her
Breathing Life Into Your Characters: How to Give your Characters Emotional and Psychological Depth (2003), states, “In To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee reveals the vast amount of prejudice and racism that existed in small Southern towns like Finch’s” (63). Ballon views Lee’s work as a testimony to the white prejudice that existed in the Great Depression era.

2 Analysis

The analysis will focus on how children’s points of view are used in conjunction with the themes of race and Otherness in To Kill a Mockingbird and The Bluest Eye. I will use previous research on related issues to add different perspectives and ideas to my discussion.

My analysis is divided into three parts. The first part is about the child’s perspective on race, where I will discuss the use of a child point of view on race as a means of political and ideological criticism.

The second part deals with the issues of race and Otherness. I will discuss To Kill a Mockingbird and The Bluest Eye as human stories of racial prejudice in two American communities where racism plays a significant role.

In the third part, I will discuss what the Swedish Curriculum for the upper secondary school states in relation to race equality teaching.

2.1 The Child’s point of view in To Kill a Mockingbird and The Bluest Eye

In To Kill a Mockingbird and The Bluest Eye, the reader is told the story from the perspective of the children as first-person experiencing narrators. Both Claudia and Scout are eyewitnesses to the events described in these two novels in a combination of a child and adult first-person retrospective narration, given the adult version of their childhood recollections. These children’s own simplistic perspective of racism play a central role in these two novels.

The innocent point of view of a child narrator is useful according to Otano because a “child’s disarming vision and voice serve to successfully unmask ambivalent aspects of an idealized society hitherto unquestioned” (9). Many American writers employ the child’s voice precisely in order to challenge the rules of society. According to Darrell B. Lockhart’s essay “Growing Up Jewish in Mexico: Sabina Berman’s La bobe and Rosa Nissán’s Noviaque te
voa” in *The Other Mirror: Women’s Narrative in Mexico, 1980–1995* (1997) a child’s voice seems to be particularly suited to such a task because a child’s voice can be employed “as a subversive means of criticism” (166). Lockhart further explains that through a child’s voice, an adult writer is able “to portray events and circumstances in a manner not affordable by an adult narrator” because a child narrator “enjoys more freedom of expression” (166). The adult narrator’s voices in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Bluest Eye* are used as a strategic way to make it clear that both narrators are reviving and narrating events of their childhood much later. The adult point of view appears when it is needed to fill in the narrative gap and to demonstrate the innocence of the child narrator, who cannot fully comprehend the adult world.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* is a coming-of-age novel, or Bildungsroman. In this type of novel, the character who usually is a youth moves from a state of innocence to one of maturity. From an adult point of view but with a child’s voice, the narrative provides a discerning vision of racial issues and power structures in the era of the Deep Depression in America. Scout is a homogedietic narrator because she is telling her own story, making the reader understand everything that happens through her own eyes. Lee’s use of the child’s narrative voice manages to combine both the narrative authenticity and the urgency of social and political critique on how the African American was treated and segregated in that time.

Scout, although she is a child and does not understand the racial prejudices that occur in Maycomb, she can only report what she has access to, and she shares her knowledge directly as the narrative unfolds. Lee deploys dual points of view where the child Scout is the narrator and one of the focalizers, and the adult perspective is present in the second focalizer. Separating the experiencing self from the one who narrates the events. The events in this literary fiction have already occurred, and the narrator goes back in time and brings them to life with an internal focalization. An example of this can be seen when Scout retells what happened when her brother Jem broke his arm: “When enough years had gone by to enable us to look back on them, we sometimes discussed the events leading to his accident” (Lee 3). Here, the narrator is the adult Scout while the focalizer is Scout, the child. This is another example of adult voice in *To Kill a Mockingbird*: “Mr. Underwood didn’t talk about miscarriages of justice, he was writing so children could understand” (Lee 323). Here is the adult Scout’s voice showing that Scout is too young to understand such a concept as “miscarriage of justice”.

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Having the adult perspective in the background is strategically used to appear when it is required. One may cite the description of Scout’s attitude to being criticized by her teacher for knowing how to read: “I mumbled that I was sorry and retired meditating upon my crime. I never deliberately learned to read, but somehow I had been wallowing illicitly in the daily papers” (Lee 22). According to Sandefur the exaggeration in the tone here implies that the thoughts are of the young Scout, but the vocabulary used is of the adult narrator (5). In this quote, the reader come to the conclusion that the narrator is not a six-year-old Scout, the use of words like “wallowing”, “illicitly” and “deliberately” do not come from a child, but from an adult talking ironically about the situation.

In her childish innocence, Scout does not understand why her father is defending a black man when all the white people in Maycomb think he should not. She asks her father “If you shouldn’t be defendin’ him, then why are you doin it?” (Lee 100). Assuming the role of her mentor Atticus tries to teach her the idea of moral values: “For a number of reasons” he said “the main one is if I didn’t I couldn’t hold up my head in the town” (100). Here, Scout’s father explains to the child how important it is to have integrity and to treat everybody as equal and never give up in defending the weak. By asking her father these questions, young Scout is literally reminding the readers that she is too young and need help to understand the world of adults.

Lee uses young Scout’s voice to narrate the story because with a child narrator, the story is told with an innocent and open-minded viewpoint, filled with honesty. By using Scout’s experience, Lee criticizes the ways in which white society treated black Americans in the 1930s. Scout learns many lessons, but one that really shows is that the society in which she lives treats people differently based on their race and class. An example of this is when Atticus teaches her an important lesson about the rules of American white dominant society: “As you grow older you’ll see white men cheat black men every day of your life, but let me tell you something and don’t you forget it — whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, how rich he is, of how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash” (Lee 295). Atticus’s lesson is connected with the novel’s central theme of racial discrimination.

In The Bluest Eye, Morrison shifts to varied narrative situations, which are: Claudia the first-person retrospective narrator and Claudia the first-person experiencing narrator. By
using this technique, Morrison shows the reader that Claudia is retelling her own story about the way she acquired her adult understanding of racial prejudices. She narrates the story from two different points of view. Adult Claudia narrates the events that happened in the past tense and the young Claudia narrates these events in the present tense through her child perspective. From the prologue of the novel, Claudia anticipates the events that the novel will describe: Pecola’s pregnancy by incest and her wish for the baby to live. She recalls her childhood memories that she and her sister Frieda blame each other for the unsuccessful attempt to grow marigolds that summer. Adult narrator Claudia here explains to the reader that when she was a child she believed that she and her sister Frieda could save Pecola’s baby by planting seeds. This scene illustrates Claudia as adult narrator while the focalizer is Claudia, the child: “It was a long time before my sister and I admitted to ourselves that no green was going to spring from our seeds” (Morrison 5). Claudia is helpless as a child to help her friend Pecola. Despite the story’s main focus being on Pecola, she is silent and just speaks once. Throughout the novel, Claudia is the one who narrates Pecola’s story.

There is also an omniscient narrator present in The Bluest Eye to narrate the story when Claudia is silent and cannot explain adult issues such as rape and incest. This narrator has zero focalization; he can freely narrate the thoughts and emotions of all the characters but is not a character of the story (Barry 225). The scene where Pecola’s father rapes her is one such example: “Cholly saw her dimly and could not tell what he saw or felt. Then he became aware that he was uncomfortable: next he felt the discomfort dissolve into pleasure” (Morrison 159). The reader gets this information through an unknown outsider, but the internal focalizer is Cholly. He is the one who sees and experiences this event. This narrator knows the story fully and gives the reader inside thoughts about how Pecola’s father and other characters within the novel feel.

In The Bluest Eye, the adult Claudia narrator appears to fill the gap of Claudia’s innocence about racial prejudice, which a young girl cannot explain. Claudia the child is outraged about Pecola’s and Frieda’s fixation on and worshiping of white womanhood, and the pictures of beautiful white Shirley Temple that she hated, but her adult voice explains how she “learned much later to worship her” (Morrison 21). Claudia, as a child, never really understands the adoration of the other girls to love white baby dolls, but she also lacks understanding of why the blue-eyed baby doll is adored even by the grown-ups in her black community. When she gets a white doll for Christmas, in attempting to discover the beauty
inside the doll, she destroys the doll and finds out that she can see only the disk with six holes that makes the white doll bleat:

I had only one desire: to dismember it. To see of what it was made, to discover the dearness, to find the beauty, the desirability that had escaped me, but apparently only me. Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs—all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. ‘Here,’ ‘they said, this is beautiful, and if you are on this day ‘worthy’ you may have it’. (Morrison 18-19)

Morrison, in this scene, uses the voice of child Claudia to criticize the common perception that light-skin is more beautiful than black, and the dominant ideal of white beauty which is culturally imposed on African Americans. Morrison uses the child’s viewpoint in this novel as a vehicle for social protest against the wide-spread cultural demands of what defines beauty can destroy the lives of innocent girls in early ages. Then, she uses the voice of adult Claudia to explain why the young Claudia destroyed the doll:

I did not know why I destroyed those dolls. But I did know that nobody ever asked me what I wanted for Christmas. Had any adult with the power to fulfil my desires taken me seriously and asked me what I wanted, they would have known that I did not want to have anything to own, or to possess any object.
(Morrison 19-20)

The scene reveals that, contrary to the belief of every adult in this work of fiction, not every black child wants a white doll. As the adult Claudia explains; the adults take it for granted that she would like to have one, but in reality she hated the doll. She stresses also that if the adults had asked her what she wanted, it would not have been a white doll, actually she did not want to have anything for Christmas.
2.2 Race and Otherness

Both Claudia and Scout are brave and courageous when it comes to racial discrimination. *To Kill a Mockingbird* looks at the whites versus African-Americans perspective on racism, and at the centre of the story is a black man who is persecuted by the white community simply on the basis of his skin colour. *The Bluest Eye*, on the other hand, presents a more complicated portrayal of racism. According to Morrison in the novel’s Afterword, the characters of her novel are victims of whiteness; therefore, they “internalize the assumptions of immutable inferiority” (206). *The Bluest Eye* looks at the internal racial issues and prejudice within the African American community because the blacks in this novel have internalize the notion of racial inferiority. The members of the black community internalize the fact that they are inferior in comparison to the white people.

Terry Goldie, in his essay “The Representation of the Indigene” (1995), point out the racial differences between the self and the Other in terms of distinct attributes, saying that “presumably the first instance in which one human perceived another as Other in racial terms came when the first recognized the second as different in colour, facial features, language” (235). Children develop their own selves by copying the values of people of his or her social surrounding, by learning social norms linked with particular colour values of his or her society. According to Milner, children at first learn “the social valency of skin colour, and later, as his intellectual world broadens he absorbs the more complex concepts involved in adult racial attitudes” (84). In this process children start to identify the differences between Other in relation to his or her own self, “so does his identification with his own group and preferences for it increase” (Milner 84).

*To Kill a Mockingbird*

When Harper Lee wrote *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the South was a hotbed of Civil Rights activity. The story is set in the era when blacks and whites were segregated; African Americans were considered as inferior and had no individual rights. The race issue introduced by the trial of Tom Robinson escapes Scout’s comprehension; Scout is an innocent girl, she knows that blacks are segregated but does not know much about the prejudices the black people experiences in her community before the trial. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a coming-of-age novel in which Scout begins to understand herself. To gain this self-awareness, however, Scout must first understand the rules of her community.
In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, there is an example of white people being the exclusive Other when Calpurnia, the black cook, takes the Finch children to her African-American church. The children are rejected in an ungracious manner by Lula, a member of the church who tells Calpurnia, “I want to know why you bringin’ white children to nigger church ... You ain’t got no business bringin’ white chillun here — they got their church, we got our’n. It is our church, ain’t it, Miss Cal?” (158). This is the first time Scout experiences being an outsider and an object of racism. After Lula’s statement, Scout realizes that she is unwanted in the African American church because she is white and considered as Other not belonging there, something that puts her in an uncomfortable situation. What Lula expresses here is that black and whites people have different worlds in Maycomb. The outsiders are considered the Other and are, therefore, unwanted in the group. Lula is an example of how racism can occur in both directions. I argue here that through this scene, Lee sets out to challenge some assumptions that only white people are racists. Lula responds with the same racism that is applied on her, by objecting to the appearance of the white children in her church. From their own experiences with Calpurnia and the way their own community treats black Americans, Scout learns that black people are different from themselves; they are Other in her community.

Scout’s father, Atticus Finch, is unlike other adults in his community and teaches his daughter that it is wrong to address others with offensive words, especially when the other is not of the same race (99). Scout’s tender age is revealed when she asks Atticus to define the term “nigger-lover” to her (144). However, young Scout throughout the novel repeats the prejudice and behaviour she has learned from people in her surrounding, by using the ‘N-word’, example of this can be found when Scout exclaims that she “ain’t ever heard of a nigger snowman” (89). Nevertheless, only her father can explain to her that the word ‘N-word’ is offensive and “common” (99). Scout replies by explaining that in her school, everybody says the word. Young Scout uses the ‘N-word’ as a result of the process by which individuals succumb to the rules of society. The construction of the Other as something clearly identifiable must always be repeated (Bhabha 110). In *To kill a Mockingbird* the ‘N-word’ is said over and over again as mutual recognition of difference between whites and the African Americans. The white people consider the black people as Others who do not belong to their society and do not share the same social rules because they are different. Because of that, they can use offensive words against them. The child naively just repeats the stereotypes she hears other people using in her surroundings.
The society of Maycomb is a bearing force in Scout’s life, and she sees it uncritically as a young girl and even shares their prejudices. According to Holly Blackford, in *Telling Children’s Stories: Narrative Theory and Children’s Literature* (2010), “The older Scout’s role as folklorist greatly contrasts with young Scout prejudice and misunderstandings, as she discovers the truth about the others” (178). Scout grows up during the story from a young immature girl to a more understanding and mature person. By the end of the story, Scout learns to accept everyone in her society for what they are and she becomes a tolerant and enlightened person, as she states in the end of the novel: “Atticus was right. One time he said you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them” (374). When Lee uses the voice of the adult Scout as a narrator, she never uses offensive words to address black people, she uses instead words like “colored” (218), showing that Scout has learned through the process of maturity and her father’s moral values that it is wrong to use words which can possibly offend someone.

Scout’s understanding and description of Robinson’s trial shows evidence of his innocence, and how he loses his life to Maycomb’s discrimination against African-Americans. During the trial, for instance, the reader is told of the segregation of the African Americans, even in the courthouse. Through Scout’s narrative, it is evident that in the courtroom, there is a separate area for the black people, which she calls “The colored balcony”; also, that the black people just can come into the courtrooms after the white people are inside: “The negroes, having waited for the white people to go upstairs, become to come” (218). Lee depicts this scene to show that in the 1930s, the system of segregation was in force in America. By law, the people of different racial groups were not allowed to mix in the public areas.

Harper Lee attacks the stereotype and misconception that all black men are rapists by presenting Tom Robinson’s innocence. Robinson represents the stereotypes that society has had for years about black males. Atticus implores the jury to look past these stereotypes and serve true justice, saying: “confident that you gentlemen would go along with them on the assumption— the evil assumption— that all Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro men are not to be trusted around our women” (273). Tom Robinson is not guilty because he has not raped Mayella Ewell, but becomes a victim of racial prejudice and sentenced to death because his word as a black man is less worth than that of the white people who accuse him. According to Joyce Milton in *Barron’s Book Notes: Harper
Lee’s *To Kill A Mockingbird* (1984), the reason why the jury find Robinson guilty is because “they feel that to take the word of a black man over two whites would threaten the system they live under, the system of segregation” (21). Eventually, Tom Robinson’s trial and death start Scout’s early questioning of racist behaviour. Young Scout recognizes that in her society, different rules apply to blacks and whites. As a girl, she does not ever question these rules because she is too young to understand and challenge the social rules imposed upon her. Scout witnesses racism from the outside because she is white and does not understand the full extent of the prejudice of the white people against the black people in Maycomb. She deals with racism with the guidance of her father and becomes a stronger person because of the bigotry that she has to witness.

*The Bluest Eye*

*The Bluest Eye* came about at a crucial time in the history of the American Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. Toni Morrison tries to discuss racial discrimination using the American society of the 1940s as a background. At this time, there was still inequality between whites and blacks. Discrimination of African Americans by white Americans resulted in segregation, separating one race or group from another. According to David R. Goldfield in his *Black, White, and Southern: Race Relations and Southern Culture 1940 to the Present* (1990) “segregation was a world framed by ‘white’ and ‘colored’-emblems meant not only to separate but to denote superior and inferior status” (11). At that time, there were different facilities that African Americans had to use, to not mix with whites. It was a period in which the American society judged people’s beauty based on their skin colour. African-American beauty did not exist in the media propaganda. This implies that the concept of what is beautiful is already decided in what is considered more desirable, like for example, being white and blue-eyed like Shirley Temple.

Claudia is affected by racism as she herself is discriminated against. Claudia is poor and lives on the edge of social acceptance. She cannot play in a park because “black people were not allowed in the park, and so it filled our dreams” (103). Here Morrison shows evidence of the segregation between the races in the South. Even black children, by being confronted with this social exclusion, start to perceive themselves as Other. Claudia deals with racial injustice and becomes brave and does not accept the limitations society has placed
upon her. Unlike Pecola, who is especially weak to the images of popular culture telling her that white beauty is superior, Claudia has a strong will and does not like the American white beauty standard because she can sense the destructiveness of these concepts of beauty. Claudia tries to actively resist the worship of blond hair and blue eyes. Instead, she identifies herself with childhood stars like Jane Withers with dark hair and brown eyes (Morrison 17).

Susan Willis in her essay “I Shop Therefore I Am: Is there a Place for Afro-American Culture in Commodity Culture?” In Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism (1997), states that “Morrison’s treatment of Claudia explores the radical potential inherent in the position of being ‘other’ to dominant society” (993). Claudia starts with a healthy, direct hatred of white superiority, just hating Shirley Temple and white baby dolls because they represent what the others adore and consider as a symbol of beauty opposite of what she is — a black girl. However, she gets hurt because she destroys the baby doll to discover “what made people look at them and say, Awwww” (20) but not for her. She gets reprehended by the adults: “How strong was their outrage ... The emotion of years of unfulfilled longing preened their voices” (19). This scene of the novel is very important because it shows that the black adults have internalized the notion of beauty of the white majority and disintegrated their own self-esteem: “all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured” (18). This implies that the concept of what is beautiful is already decided. Claudia is too young to fight against this concept of beauty stereotypes imposed on her, and cannot control the environment in which she is born. While the blacks in this book are no longer slaves, they are still victims of whiteness as being the standard of beauty. Black beauty is looked down upon or ignored, which inevitably results in their feelings of inferiority, especially because they live in an environment defined by white people in which they have to struggle for recognition. The members of the black community internalize the fact that they are unimportant beings and ugly in comparison to the white people.

When Maureen, a light-skinned black girl, insults Claudia and her friends using racial language, such as, “I am cute! And you are ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I am cute” (71), Claudia is conscious that Maureen believes she is prettier because of her light skin- society has told her so. She realizes then how far she is from that defined standard of beauty. The glorification of Shirley Temple, the common understanding that Maureen is prettier than the other black girls because of her light skin, and the glorification of white culture in the movies
are all examples of this definition of beauty. These definitions of beauty make the innocent young Claudia wonder what she lacks. If Maureen was cute, “and if anything could be believed, she was—then we were not. And what did that mean? We were lesser” (72). Here, Claudia realizes that African-Americans are the Others in a dominant white society. The use of the pronoun “we” reinforces the idea that Claudia is talking as a collective consciousness of—the black community’s protest—against the sense of inferiority imposed by the white dominant culture.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison clearly points out that African-Americans veneration of white culture, is a state of inferiority that is forced upon them “from every billboard, every movie, every glance” (Morrison 37). An implicit message that whiteness is beautiful is present in *The Bluest Eye*, including the white blue-eyed doll given to Claudia, the pictures of beautiful white Shirley Temple, the common perception that light skin is more beautiful than black and the dominance of white Western culture in the movies. The beauty icons that American society honours at this time are white. Claudia, however, is strong-minded and does not accept the rules of the dominant society imposes on her. Here is an example of what Claudia as an adult states by reaffirming that she feels comfortable being black: “We felt comfortable in our skins, enjoyed the news that our senses released to us, admired our dirt, cultivated our scars, and could not comprehend this unworthiness” (72). Here, Claudia expresses the feeling of not considering African-Americans inferior in comparison with the standard rules of the dominant white society. Claudia here speaks in the name of all blacks that are against the standards imposed on them by representing herself in a plural “we”. This makes her realize that the dangerous thing to fear is what makes the light-skinned Maureen beautiful, but not herself— the dominance of the white standard of beauty.

Claudia also tells the story of Pecola Breedlove in her struggle to understand the rules of society. Pecola whose family is poor and black, and commonly seen as the Others because they are considered the ugliest family in town, also by their own ethnic group. This situation, in turn, creates a boundary between the Breedlove family and the society in which they live. However, Claudia explains the reason why Pecola is treated that way:

All of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed. And all of our beauty, which was hers first and which she gave us. All of us — all who knew her— felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness (Morrison 203).
Pecola’s ugliness has made the other African-Americans in her own community feel beautiful, and they feel better about themselves by categorizing her as inferior. Pecola is a good example of an outsider because she is ostracized by people of her own race. She is used as a scapegoat for the entire community because she is not able to fulfil the standard of beauty that her community is longing for and she is considered the Other. Nevertheless, I would argue that it is Pecola’s relationship with the adults in her community, which is the primary cause of Pecola’s low self-esteem. The death of self-esteem can happen easily in children, it occurs quickly in youth with dismissive adults living in a world in which images reinforce despair and lead to destruction (Morrison viii). In fact, much of the suffering that Pecola bears comes from members of her own ethnic group who have internalized the notion of superiority of the white majority and disintegrated their own self-esteem.

The racism has a profound impact on Pecola’s life, above all in the sense that it misrepresents her beauty standards because the culture in which she lives believes that whiteness means beauty and happiness. “No one could have convinced them that they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly” (Morrison 36). I would add that the adults in this work of fiction fails in to guiding Pecola in the way she sees herself results in Pecola’s conviction that she is too ugly. According to Claudia, even when she become pregnant the adults show sorrow, they wished that the baby dies: “she be lucky if it don’t live. Bound to be the ugliest thing walking” (187). Pecola is too young to fight against this concept of beauty stereotypes imposed on her, and cannot control the environment in which she is born.

2.3 Race Equality Teaching

I would argue that The Bluest Eye and To Kill a Mockingbird are suitable for students in upper secondary schools because they are mature enough to appreciate and understand racial prejudices depicted within these novels. By reading these novels in schools, teachers can bring up the theme of racial discrimination into a classroom to explain and help students discover for themselves what racism is, how it works and what we all can do to change it. These two novels also can be used to discuss the power that the media beauty representation has on young girls, especially black girls. Although these two novels were written during the Civil Rights movement where issues of race and racism were at the forefront of public debate, there are still existing overt acts of racism today.
Teachers have to think about the value of what they are teaching. The teacher could create a context for the novel by reviewing the period of the Civil Rights movement in which the novel was written, and teaching the pupils the importance of this movement in bringing equality. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is set in the Great Depression of the 1930s, and *The Bluest Eyes* is set in Post-Depression era. The American Depression is a historical era to discuss because of the segregation situation that blacks experienced in America. Another important aspect of these two novels that the teacher could use in a classroom discussion is stereotypes. Stereotypes can be helpful in a classroom discussion to help learners understand how and why people are stereotyped. Teachers have to be aware of racial bias and stereotyping in order to create an understanding of why they occur. According to Jason G. Irizarry in his paper “Culturally Responsive Teaching” within *Classroom Teaching Skills* (2013) “teachers need to be familiar with the histories of various groups, know literature written by and about member of these groups and be skilled in using this ‘new’ content to transform the curriculum” (217). *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Bluest Eye* are novels replete with examples of racial stereotypes. By bringing up these books in a classroom discussion, teachers can make students realize that when they make assumptions about an entire group, it influences their attitudes toward that group and this leads to unfair treatment and discrimination.

The idea of race is a social concept. As adults, we can challenge this concept in the way young children cannot because they are too young to understand the social race hierarchy in our society. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout’s father is the adult that shows the least prejudice in the novel. He teaches Scout how to deal with prejudices and avoid racially offensive language; most of all, he teaches her to respect and treat everyone as an equal. Furthermore, at school, Scout learns from her teacher about democracy; her teacher explains that in America, contrary to Germany in Hitler’s rule, people “don’t believe in persecuting anybody. Persecution comes from people who are prejudiced” (Lee 329). She points out how she morally disapproves of Hitler’s persecution of the Jews. The teacher, by taking a stand against prejudice, transmits the values of equal rights to the children. According to Jane Shallice in her “Racism and Education” within *Challenging Racism*, a book written by All London Teachers Against Racism and Fascism (1984), “it is possible that teachers can begin to deconstruct the obvious and to present framework within which there is an increased knowledge of the issues involved” (13). It is important to introduce to the learners to a critical understanding of the society, so that they understand the relationship between social and
political context, adding that racism and prejudices are mainly power imbalances between people.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the same teacher that teaches about democracy and is against the persecution of Jews confuses Scout. She knows that her teacher wants Tom Robinson convicted when she hears her say, “It’s time to somebody taught ‘em a lesson, they were gettin’ way above themselves, an’ the next thing they think they can do is marry us” (331). This makes Scout wonder how her teacher can feel that the persecution of Jews by Hitler is wrong, but “then turn around and be ugly about folks right home” (331). Scout’s teacher has moved from another city to work in Maycomb, and I would argue here that she is an outsider trying to fit into her new city; therefore, to succeed, she has to succumb to the rules of the new society and adopt their prejudices to became accepted as a member in the community. On the other hand, with our modern standards, this teacher fails for not supporting the victim of racism and instead embraces racism publicly. She lacks a clear understanding of the white dominance and white privilege in which American education is deeply rooted. From an interview with Enid Lee in “Taking Multicultural, Antiracist Education Seriously” within *Rethinking our Classroom* (1994), she states that the only way for a teacher to know about race issues is “to look at how the dominant culture and biases affect your view of the non-dominant group in society” (21). Teachers have to be able to know when the educational curriculum is culturally biased and needs to be challenged, not only in the classroom, but everywhere. Racism is still a significant issue in our society and only when we gain awareness about it we can work to change it.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola, unlike Scout, does not have adult references with high moral values to teach her how to deal with prejudices. Pecola was “the only member of the class who sat alone at a double desk” (Morrison 43). The teachers “tried never to glance at her, and called on her only when everyone was required to respond” (43-44). Children are very sensitive to the attitudes of people toward them. The teachers in *The Bluest Eye* undermine Pecola’s self-esteem by ignoring her in the classroom. Pecola is the one who most needs encouragement to boost her self-esteem, but is actually the one who receives it the least. Pecola has very low self-esteem because of her appearance; she cannot consider herself beautiful because everybody around her identifies blackness with ugliness. “Long hours she sat looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates” (Morrison 43). Studies have
been done about the teacher-pupil relationship; these Studies show that “children who had the most favourable self-images were likely to perceive their teachers as being more favourable toward them than those who had negative self-image” (Milner 175). This clearly points out how important teachers attitudes are in the classroom. A negative attitude of teachers toward a student can bias the pupil’s self expectation, which in turn can be a primary cause of self-esteem problems. The Swedish Curriculum for the upper secondary school emphasizes this aspect and states that teachers should “reinforce each student’s self-confidence, as well as their willingness and ability to learn” (Skolverket 2013). Self-esteem is key for anyone to succeed in life. Every pupil deserves to be seen which gives the child self-esteem, while being ignored or denigrated undermine the student self-esteem. The teacher’s role is to encourage students to participate in all activities and interact with other students in an inclusive classroom environment; this will help students with low self-esteem to become more comfortable to interact with others within and outside of the classroom.

By embedding race equality into teaching and learning, teachers can ensure that the students acknowledge the experiences and values of the world’s diversity. The Swedish Curriculum for the upper secondary school states that “all tendencies to discrimination or degrading treatment should be actively combated. Xenophobia and intolerance must be confronted with knowledge, open discussion and active measures” (Skolverket 2013). As teachers, we need to define what racism is and recognise how it manifests itself to be able to confront it when needed. As ethnicity, race and racism are very complex terms, having a discussion with the pupils about the way To Kill a Mockingbird and The Bluest Eye approach these concepts may help them see different perspectives on race matters. Shallice states that as teachers, “we have responsibility to expose the illusions of racism, to engage in that fight against it and if we are not prepared to do this, we end up as agents in its perpetuation. We cannot take a neutral stance” (11). Sweden is a multicultural country, where people of different backgrounds can meet on a daily basis, especially in schools. As teachers, we need to support students exposed to racism and help them when they face bias. Nevertheless, it is also our duty to teach students everybody’s equal rights in our society.
3 Conclusion

National and international laws, as well as the Swedish Curriculum for the upper secondary school, emphasize the importance of race equality. There is no question that racism is an ideology of power based on domination and subordination. It can limit the potential and possibilities of people when sustained by practices in our society.

*The Bluest Eye* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* are coming-of-age novels where Claudia and Scout — two young girls — move from a state of girlhood to one of maturity and begin to understand themselves. However, to gain this self-awareness, they must first understand the rules of the society in which they live. These two novels contain several themes of race and stereotyping, but also give a mixture of child and adult narrative perspectives. From an adult viewpoint, but with a child’s voice, the narrative provides a discerning vision of racial issues and power structures in America. In this essay, I have chosen to focus on the use of a child’s point of view as a narrative technique, the theme of Otherness and race equality teaching linked to national objectives for upper secondary education.

The child’s perspective is used in these novels to demonstrate the negative impact of racism when experienced by an innocent child. Both Lee and Morrison create a dual child-adult perspective to represent a child’s consciousness; the child’s experience is mediated by that of someone more mature, the adult self. The innocent perspective of Claudia and Scout as narrators is employed a means of social and political critique against black segregation in the American 1930s and 1940s.

Lee also uses young Scout’s voice to criticize the ways in which white society treated black Americans in the 1930s. By growing up in a racist society, young Scout learns an important lesson: everybody is not treated equally in her society — blacks and whites are segregated. African-Americans are considered inferior and have no rights in the white-dominated society. Lee uses Scout’s innocence to emphasize the injustice that African Americans experienced and how they were treated as Others by the whites in Maycomb. Scout is very young in the beginning of the novel and naively repeats the stereotypes and prejudices she hears other people using around her. Nevertheless, she grows up during the story from a young immature girl to an understanding and mature person. By the end of the
story, with her father’s support and teachings, Scout learns to have integrity and treat everybody as equals.

Morrison uses Claudia’s young narrative voice to protest against the wide-spread cultural demands of what defines beauty, which can destroy the lives of young girls from an early age. Morrison uses Claudia’s innocent narrative voice to criticize the common perception that white is more beautiful than black, and the dominance of the white beauty culture imposed upon African Americans. Claudia retells her own story about the way she acquired her adult understanding of racial prejudices. Claudia, as a child, does not fully understand the relationship between whiteness and beauty. Morrison, through Claudia’s narrative, shows evidence of the segregation between the races in the South: how blacks confronted with this social exclusion start to perceive themselves as Others, inferior to the dominant white culture. Young Claudia starts by just hating white baby dolls because they represent what others in her society consider beautiful: the opposite of what she is—a black girl. However, at the end of the novel, she understands that what is worth criticizing is not the white people, but what makes the white people beautiful. Claudia deals with racial injustice and becomes brave and does not accept the limitations society has placed upon her.

With regard to the teaching of race equality, in doing my analysis, I constantly had the Swedish curriculum for the upper secondary school in mind. This document states that all who work in schools should “actively promote equality of individuals and groups” (Skolverket 2013). As teachers, we need to define what racism is and recognise how it manifests itself to be able to confront it when needed. By implanting race equality in teaching and learning, teachers can ensure that the students acknowledge the experiences and the values of the world’s diversity. Teachers’ attitudes are important in transmitting equality values to the students. Therefore, as teachers, we always have to take a stand against racism everywhere, not just inside the classroom. By reading these novels, teachers can bring up the theme of racial discrimination, stereotypes, the Civil Rights movement and the power of the media into a classroom, not only to educate the pupils about racial discrimination, but also to discuss the power that the media’s beauty representations has on young girls self-esteem. I have also reflected on the teacher’s role: our duty is to encourage students with low self-esteem to become more comfortable in interacting with others within and outside the classroom.
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