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Character Analysis of Sylvia in the Lesson

"The Lesson" by Toni Bambara is a short story told by Sylvia, who grows up in Harlem. The primary idea in this narrative is to expose African American problems on social equality. The story happens in Summer when Miss Moore asks children through the mailbox whether they know what money is (Bambara 99). Sylvia is the narrator and protagonist, and the story begins by describing daily activities that end up together with neighboring children to spend time with Miss Moore. As a protagonist, Sylvia is associated with a lot of events as a way of developing the plot. The neighboring parents do not like Miss Moore but pawn off their children to get an education. Sylvia is stubborn and rebellious fights awareness of new teaching by ridiculing and mocking other characters. Throughout the story, she does not show signs of change even after the lesson from Miss Moore.

Sylvia is stubborn and rebellious and always wants to control her life. On several occasions, Silvia clashes with Miss Moore since she resents her college education. Additionally, she demonstrates little interest in learning social justice issues and does not listen to Miss Moore's lessons on economic quality and racial discrimination. Sylvia's behaviors and personality include contradictory elements like competing with other colleagues. Throughout the

story, Sylvia expresses powerless feelings using anger. However, her resentment and anger are direct to Miss Moore. Sylvia does not like the idea that society can control her through restriction. "What kind of society it is which some people can spend on a toy what it would cost to feed family of six or even seven"(Bambara 103). Sylvia is powerless since society placed her in the slums and could not buy toy boats.

Sylvia's response to social discrimination is reprisal. Everything that uplifts her acknowledgment on poverty becomes a threat. She resisted the notion of a new world by ridiculing and mocking other characters in the story who agrees with it. The relations between Miss Moore and other kids makes Sylvia disdainful. For example, when Sugar concludes on Miss Moore's teaching, “This is not much of a democracy if you ask me,” Sylvia responds, “I am disgusted with Sugar’s treachery"(Bambara 103). Additionally, when Mercedes informs Miss Moore about Stationery, she joins up and starts mocking by says "Who wants to know about your smelly–ass stationery (Bambara 100). Accusing those who support Miss Moore is one way of disputing the lesson.

Throughout the story, she does not show signs of change even after the lesson from Miss Moore. She lacks understanding about the world and life through her attitudes at the beginning of the story. She continued to battle with emotions, anger, confusion, envy, and denial. Notably, she distances herself from acknowledging poverty. For example, her responses on the prices of toys show her confrontation with Miss Moore's teachings. However, as Sylvia understands social inequality more, she becomes angry. According to Sylvia, attaining class consciousness is hurting enlightenment. Sylvia would rather deny the truth than accepting.

Summing up, Sylvia is stubborn and rebellious, fights consciousness of new teaching by ridiculing and mocking other characters, and throughout the story, she does not show signs of change even after a lesson from Miss Moore. Throughout the story, Sylvia expresses powerless feelings using anger. However, her resentment and anger are direct to Miss Moore. Sylvia condemns those who support Miss Moore to discredit her lesson. Sylvia does show any signs of changing her rebellious character even after attending Miss Moore's lessons. She distances herself from acknowledging the poverty. Attaining class consciousness is hurting enlightenment, and Sylvia would rather deny the truth than accepting.

Work Cited

Bambara, Toni Cade. “The Lesson”. New York: Random House, 1972. 98-103