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What is poverty by jo goodwin parker theme

What is poverty? Jo Goodwin Parker gives her ideas about what poverty is. this story is written as an attack on human emotions. Her use of connotative language creates many harsh images of her experiences in a life of poverty. By using these images, Parker is able to cause the reader to feel many emotions and forces the reader to question his or her own stereotypes of the poor. With the use of connotative language and the ability to arouse emotion, Parker successfully forces the reader to examine his or her thoughts and beliefs about who the poor are. Parker's use of connotative language makes the reader feel a lot of emotion. Of these feelings, a prominent one is to blame. Parker is able to make the reader feel guilty for the possessions he or she has. For example, she uses the term you say in your clean clothes that come from your clean house, (Parker 237). This makes the reader feel guilty for having the opportunity to be clean when we all know she doesn't have the same thing. She calls hot water a 'luxury' (Parker 237). For those living in poverty hot water is a luxury. The poor take it for granted and never before considered it anything other than a basic possession. When the reader hears that someone else calls it a luxury that they can't afford, he or she can't help but feel guilty for having it as a basic possession. Parker also attacks the reader's guilt through stories about her children. She knows that some readers may not feel guilty for things that happen to her, but when children are introduced to the situation they will feel more guilty. She says: 'My kids have no spare books, no magazines, no extra pencils, or crayons, or paper...' (Parker 238). The reader can't help but feel guilty for having these basic things when her children who need them don't. Another thing Parker makes the audience feel guilty for having is health. She says, talking about her children, '... most importantly, that they do not have health. (Parker 238). She goes on to describe what's wrong with them. Parker says: They have worms, they have infections, they have pink-eye all summer(238). These descriptions of her children make the reader feel terrible for them. By making the reader feel this way, she is increasing the level of guilt the reader feels too. She is very successful in achieving this and this success makes her argument become very powerful. Not only does she make us feel guilty for having possessions that she can't, but Parker also makes us feel guilty about the stereotypes we have. She knows what society's stereotypes are, and she fights them successfully. Parker knows that society thinks the poor won't work. To attack this, she talks about why she can't work. have three children. Last time she had a job the babysitter she left them with not taking care of them. Hun Hun to find all three in dangerous situations. Her child had not been changed when she had left it there, her second played with a piece of sharp glass, and her eldest was playing alone on the edge of a lake (Parker 236-237). Her chances of finding a better babysitter are slim because she can't afford a kindergarten because she does too little (Parker 237). That's why she can't work. Her inability to work leads to many of the other stereotypes that society has of the poor. Society questions why the poor cannot be clean. She talks about how without money she can't afford any cleaning mats (Parker 237). Parker tells of how she saved for two months to buy a jar of vaseline, and when she had finally saved enough the price had gone up two cents (237). She cannot wash in soap because it must be stored to clean the child's diapers (Parker 237). She effectively shows how society's stereotypes are wrong. She is able to make the reader feel guilty for stereotypes and causes the reader to question why he or she has them. If the audience would just take some time to try to understand her situation, they would know how unfounded stereotypes are. Parker is also successful in eliciting sympathy from the reader. She uses connotative language to create disturbing images of what poverty is. For example, she calls poverty an 'acid that drips on pride until pride is worn away (Parker 239).' Not only is poverty bad, but it's an acid. An acid is a terrible thing. It burns and corrodes away at something until it no longer exists. With this reasoning, poverty destroys her life. This phrase forces the reader to regard poverty as something worse than they had ever thought before. She shows poverty as a curse, like a 'chisel, chips on honor until honor is worn away (Parker 239).' Parker starts almost every section with a new definition of what poverty is. Some examples are: poverty is tired (Parker 236), poverty is dirt (237), poverty asks for help (237), and poverty looks into a black future (238). All these sentences create a different image of poverty, and each one is successful in evoking sympathy from the reader. They all force the reader to imagine poverty in a new way. We all knew it was bad, but Parker makes us realize how bleak poverty is. She shows us that there is no hope for the poor without understanding. Parker is successful in getting her point through with her use of connotative language and her ability to create images. She has done a good job of attacking the reader and getting him or her to listen to what she has to say. Even if she attacks the audience, she does it in an appropriate way, while she doesn't come across as offensive. All in Parker has done a successful job of creating images and using readers' emotions to get an audience to listen to her situation and the fighting matches the other is in her situation. The following selection was published in America's Other Children: Public Schools Outside Suburbs, by George Henderson in 1971 by the University of Oklahoma Press. The author has requested that no biographical information be broadcast about her. The essay is a personal account, addressed directly to the reader, about living in poverty. You're asking me what's poverty? Listen to me. Here I am, dirty, smelly, and without proper underwear on and with the stench of my rotting teeth near you. I'll tell you. Listen to me. Listen without pity. I can't use your pity. Listen with understanding. Put yourself in my dirty, worn, ill-fitting shoes, and hear me. Poverty is getting up every morning from a dirt- and disease-stained mattress. The sheets have long since been used for diapers. Poverty lives in a smell that never leaves. This is a smell of urine, sour milk, and devastating food sometimes along with the strong smell of long-boiled onions. Onions are cheap. If you smelled this smell, you didn't know how it came. It's the smell of the outdoor privy. It's the smell of little kids who can't walk the long dark road at night. It is the smell of mattresses where years of accidents have happened. It is the smell of the milk that has gone sour because the fridge has long not worked and it costs money to have it corrected. It's the smell of rotting garbage. I could bury it, but where's the shovel? Shovels cost money. Poverty is getting tired. I've always been tired. They told me in the hospital when the last baby came that I had chronic anemia caused by poor diet, a bad case of worms, and that I needed corrective surgery. I listened politely - the poor are always polite. The poor always listen. They are not saying that there is no money for iron pills, or better food, or worm medicine. The thought of an operation is scary and costs so much that if I had dared, I would have laughed. Who takes care of my children? Restoring from an action takes a long time. I have three children. When I left them with Granny the last time I had a job, I came home to find the baby covered with flu stains, and a diaper that hadn't been changed since I left. When the dried diaper came off, pieces of my baby's flesh came with it. My second child was playing with a sharp bit of broken glass, and my eldest was playing alone on the edge of a lake. I was earning \$22 a week, and a good kindergarten costs \$20 a week for three kids. I quit my job. Poverty is dirt. You can say in your clean clothes that come from your clean house, anyone can be clean. Let me explain about household without money. For breakfast I give my children grunts without oleo or cornbread without eggs and oleo. This does not use many dishes. What dishes there are, I wash in cold water and without soap. Even the cheapest must be stored for the child's diapers. Look at my hands, then cracked and red. When I saved for two months to buy a jar of vaseline for my hands and the baby's diaper rash. Once I had saved enough, I went to buy it and the price had risen two cents. The baby and I suffered. I have to decide every day if I can bear to put my cracked sore hands in the cold water and strong soap. But you ask, why not hot water? Fuel costs money. If you have a wood burning stove it costs money. If you burn electricity, it costs money. Hot water is a luxury. I don't have luxury. I know you'll be surprised when I tell you how young I am. I look so much older. My back has been bent over laundry tubs every day for so long, I can't remember when I ever did anything else. Every night I wash all the stitches my child is wearing and just hope her clothes get dry in the morning. Poverty stays up all night on 'cold nights to see the fire know a spark on the newspaper covering the walls means your sleeping child dies in flames. In summer, poverty sees mosquitoes and flies devour your child's tears when he cries. The screens are torn and you pay so little rent, you know they will never be fixed. Poverty means insects in your food, in your nose, in your eyes, and crawling over you when you sleep. Poverty hopes it never rains because diapers won't dry when it rains and soon you use newspapers. Poverty is seeing your children forever with runny noses. Paper handkerchiefs cost money and all your wipes you need other things. Even more expensive are antihistamines. Poverty is cooking without food and cleaning without soap. Poverty is asking for help. Have you ever had to ask for help, knowing 6 your children will suffer unless you get it? Think about asking for a loan from a relative if this is the only way you can imagine asking for help. I'll tell you how it feels. You find out where the office is that you need to visit. You circle that block four or five times. When you think of your kids, you go in. Everyone is very busy. Finally, someone comes out and tells her you need help. It's never the person you need to see. You go see another person, and after wasting the whole shame of your poverty all over the desk between you, you discover that this is not the right office after all, you need to repeat the whole process and it never is easier in the next place. They have asked for help, and it has a price, after all. You'll be told to wait again. You'll be told why, but you don't really hear because of the red cloud of shame and the rising cloud of despair. Poverty is to remember. It's remembering to quit school in junior high because nice kids had been so cruel about my clothes and my smell. The officer in attendance came. My mom said I was pregnant. It was Not, but she thought I could get a job and help. I had jobs sometimes, until, never long enough to learn anything. Mostly I remember being married. I was so young at the time. I'm still young. For a while, we had all the things you have. There was a small house in another town, with hot water and everything. Then my husband lost his job. There was unemployment insurance for a while and what few jobs I could get. Soon all our good things were taken back and we moved back here. I was pregnant at the time. This house didn't look too bad when we moved in. Every week it gets worse. Nothing is ever fixed. We didn't have any money. There were a few odd jobs for my husband, but everything went for food back then, as it does now. I don't know how we lived through three years and three babies, but we did. I want to tell you something after the last baby I ruined my marriage. It had been a good one, but could you keep on bringing kids into this dirt? Have you ever wondered how much it costs for any form of contraception? I knew my husband left the day he left, but there was no goodbye between us. I hope he's been able to crawl out of this mess somewhere. He could never hope with us to drag him down. That's when I asked for help. When I got it, you know how much it was? It was and is \$78 a month for the four of us. That's all I can ever get. Now you know why there is no soap, no needles and thread, no hot water, no aspirin, no worm medicine, no hand cream, no shampoo. None of these things forever and ever and always. So you can see clearly, I pay twenty dollars a month rent, and most of the rest goes for food. For the grain and cornflour, and rice and milk and beans. I do my best to use only the smallest electricity. If I spend more, there is so much less for food. Poverty looks into a black future. Your kids don't want to play with my boys. They will turn to other boys who steal to get what they want. I can already see them behind bars in their prison instead of behind bars in my poverty. Or they will turn to the freedom of alcohol or drugs, and find themselves enslaved. And my daughter? At best, for her, there's a life like mine. But you're telling me there are schools. Yes, there are schools. My kids have no spare books, no magazines, no extra pencils, or crayons, or paper and most importantly, they don't have health. They have worms, they have infections, they have pink-eye all summer. They don't sleep well on the floor, or with me in my one bed. They don't suffer from starvation, my \$78 keeps us alive, but they suffer from malnutrition. Oh yes, I remember what I was taught about health at school. It doesn't do much good. In some places there is a surplus commodities program. Not here. The country said it cost too much. There is a school lunch program. But I have two children who will already be damaged when come to school. But, you tell me, there are health clinics. Yes Yes health clinics and they are in the cities. I live out here eight miles from the city. I can go that far (even if it's sixteen miles either way), but can my young children? My neighbor will take me when he goes; but he expects to get paid, somehow. You probably know my neighbor. He's the big man who spends his time at the gas station, barbershop, and corner shop complains about the government spending money on immoral mothers for illegitimate children. Poverty is an acid that drips on pride until all pride is worn away. Poverty is a chisel that chips on honor until honor is worn away. Some of you say that you would do something in my situation, and maybe you would, for the first week or the first month, but for year after year after year? Even the poor can dream. A dream of a time when there is money. Money for the right kind of food, for worm medicine, for iron pills, for toothbrushes, for hand cream, for a hammer and nails and a bit of screening, for a shovel, for a bit of paint, for some foil, for needles and thread. Money to pay in money for a trip to the city. And, oh, money for hot water and money for soap. A dream of when you ask for help doesn't eat away that last bit of pride. When the office you visit is as nice as the offices of other government agencies, when there are enough workers to help you quickly, when workers don't quit in defeat and despair. When you have to tell your story to only one person and that person can send you for other help and you don't have to prove your poverty over and over and over and over again. I have come out of my despair to tell you this. Remember I didn't come from somewhere else or any other time. Others like me are all around you. Look at us with an angry heart, anger that will help