



"The Color Purple": How is the development of Celie portrayed throughout the novel?

Frieda Meyer

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Seminar paper from the year 2012 in the subject American Studies - Literature, University of Hamburg,
course: African- American Literature, language: English, abstract: First published in 1983, the story of Alice
Walker's *The Color Purple* is set in rural

Georgia in the 1930's. It is narrated through the letters of Celie, the protagonist, who begins to write to God in order to tell him about her life, since her step-father sexually abused her and told her to never tell anyone but God about it. When Celie starts to write, she is 14 years old. Through the epistolary style of the novel, the reader gains a good, more personal and subjective impression of Celie's mental and physical condition, and also of the situation she is growing up in, as she writes down everything she can not tell anyone else. Also, the fact that Celie writes as she speaks intensifies the impression that the reader is in a conversation with her. She is not trying to impress anyone with what she writes down, but to deal with what happened to her.

In the course of the novel, the reader is introduced to the characters that play a role in her life, as well as the relationships she has with them. Interestingly, she never gives away the names of male persons like her step-father or husband, but calls them „He“ or „Pa“ or „Mr___“. The names of males that are younger than her are mentioned.

Celie is exposed to undergoing a major change in her personality and situation, that in the end lead to her financial, emotional and spiritual independence and freedom.

In this exam paper, I want to focus on the indications that make it possible for Celie to develop her personality in such many directions, and I want to have a look at what or who might bar her from doing so. Therefore I am first going to analyse the relationships between Celie and the characters that are important for this topic and second have a look at the symbols and indicators that are used by the author throughout the novel in order to show that a change is going on.

After displaying this, I want to draw a conclusion from it, sum up my findings and give a short reading response.

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