

Racism, Resistance, and Human Values in Malorie Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses*

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Abstract:

Noughts & Crosses by Malorie Blackman is a dystopian novel that focuses on the social structure of racial discrimination. In this novel, the Crosses are the individuals of the racially dominant group, while the Noughts are the underclass, deprived and exploited group. Blackman shows in the novel that the effects of racial supremacy are not limited to the social and economic spheres, but are also visible on the psychological, emotional and moral levels. This study examines the elements of structural apartheid, human values (compassion, justice, moral courage), individual and collective antagonism in the novel using postcolonial theory. In the novel the Crosses are members of the dominant group who maintain complete control over the judiciary, educational resources, employment and social opportunities, while the Noughts are the beneficiaries of this system. The story explores social inequality, moral dilemmas, and personal struggles through the experiences of Colum McGregor and Sephy Hadley. The research shows how human values can be used to resist oppression, how to maintain an ethical perspective in conflict, and how literature can play a role in social change. This study is not only an analysis of the novel's plot, but an in-depth analysis of Racial Discrimination, Othering, Subaltern Agency and Social Justice Education. It gives readers a sense of empathy, justice, moral courage and social awareness. The aim of this research is to focus on the educational and social importance of literature and explain how the novel defends the values of humanity.

Keywords: Racism, Resistance, prejudice, identity, Human values.

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Introduction:

Malorie Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses* is a highly influential novel that deeply analyzes the social, psychological, and moral consequences of racial discrimination. In the novel, the Crosses are the figures of the racially dominant group, whose social, educational, economic, and judicial dominance is evident, while the Noughts characters are dispossessed, deprived, and socially weak (Blackman 73). This social construct is a very clear example of how racial inequality operates at structural, cultural and institutional levels, and affects every element of society. Blackman not only describes the experience of individuals, but presents a deeper view of the psychological, emotional and social consequences, giving the reader an insight into the class struggles experienced.

In this novel caste discrimination is revealed not only at the individual level but also at the social level. For example, the dominance of the Crosses group in schools, the judiciary, and employment is evident, while Noughts characters are disadvantaged by these systems. This discrimination is not only economically or socially limited, but has profound effects on a person's moral judgment, social participation and mental health. Blackman paints a vivid picture of structural injustice, social inequality, and personal moral dilemmas in this story, making the reader aware of the real consequences of racial injustice.

The novel highlights the importance of human values, particularly compassion, justice, moral courage and social responsibility. Through the experiences of Callum McGregor and Sephy Hadley, readers understand the interpretation of individual and collective struggle in social conditions of racial injustice. From the perspective of the column, Noughts can analyze the characters' psychological struggles, moral dilemmas, and the consequences of social inequality. Blackman shows that characters need to be equipped not only physically and socially, but also psychologically, morally, and emotionally to combat oppression using empathy and justice. Through this novel, readers understand the importance of individual moral decisions and forms of resistance for social change. Postcolonial theory points out how important power, othering, and subaltern agency are in explaining structures of social dominance. *Noughts & Crosses* is a clear example of how a novel is not only for entertainment but also a tool for social awareness, education of moral values and promotion of basic values of humanity.

Human Values: Justice, Compassion, Courage and their Importance in Plot

Malorie Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses* has human values central to the plot, particularly justice, compassion, and courage.

Because of these values, the novel not only depicts the social consequences of caste discrimination, but also inspires the readers to think and act against social injustice. The value of justice allows characters to make moral decisions to oppose the injustices of their dominant groups. For example, Callum McGregor makes a decision to save the Noughts community, at his personal risk (Blackman 115). These decisions highlight the value of justice and social equality, and readers understand that human values are important for social change.

The value of empathy allows characters to understand each other's pain, suffering, and struggles. Sephy and Callum's relationship shows that empathy creates a social bridge through which caste injustice can be fought not only at the individual but also at the collective level. Empathy increases the social sensitivity of the characters, and makes it clear to the reader that a human perspective is important in situations of oppression. The value of courage is very important in every struggle. Courage is seen in the collective action of the column and the Noughts community, where the characters face physical, mental and emotional risks. Courage makes the characters stand up for their moral and social values, and teaches readers that courage is indispensable when fighting against social injustice. Blackman shows that it is difficult to fully understand the novel's social and moral messages without a study of these three values. The plot serves social awareness, moral reflection, and propagation of human values because of its values of justice, compassion, and courage. This makes *Noughts & Crosses* not only an entertaining story, but an educationally useful material for studying racial injustice, psychological conflict, and human values.

Objectives:

- Examining Structural Apartheid and Social Dominance in *Noughts & Crosses*.
- Explaining human values such as compassion, justice, and moral courage.
- Understanding the psychological and moral effects of racial injustice on characters.
- Demonstrate that the novel enhances cultural understanding, moral thinking, and social awareness.

Research Questions:

How is structural apartheid presented in *Noughts & Crosses*?

How are human values such as compassion, justice, and moral courage presented in the novel?

How do Colum McGregor and Sephy Hadley make moral decisions in social situations of racial injustice?

How individual and collective opposition presented and what is are its moral implications?

How does the novel promote cultural understanding and awareness of universal human values?

Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory is useful in analyzing racial discrimination in *Noughts & Crosses*. The dominance of the Crosses group in the novel and the lived experience of the Noughts is illustrated by Othering, Binary Opposition and Subaltern Agency. A postcolonial perspective looks at how structures of power and oppression function, as well as the importance of small-class community struggles. Callum and Noughts' community struggles are profound examples of individual and collective opposition, which illustrate how the fight against injustice in society takes place from a moral point of view.

Analysis:

1. Racial social structure and dominance:

In *Noughts and Crosses*, the dominance of the Crosses group is evident in every sphere of society. Crosses have control over schools, employment, the judiciary, and public resources, while Noughts characters suffer a lack of social opportunities, limitations in education, and abuse in the judiciary (Blackman 45). Blackman shows that this social structure is designed to maintain upper class dominance, which affects the Noughts' mental health, self-esteem, and future social participation. From the point of view of postcolonial theory, this process of Othering presents the Noughts as a privileged and disadvantaged group, allowing the reader to understand the wider implications of inequality in society.

2. Psychological and emotional effects:

The impact of character inequality on Noughts characters is profound on a psychological and emotional level. Callum McGregor's experience illustrates the effects of stress, loss of self-confidence, moral conflict and social division. For example, Callum suffers constant humiliation from Crosses in school and in group work, which deeply affects his self-esteem (Blackman 62). It shows that caste discrimination is not only limited to social or economic level but also affects a person's mental health, emotional stability and personality development.

3. Demonstrating moral and human values:

The novel has a clear display of compassion, justice, and courage. The characters Colum and Sefi understand each other's sufferings, make decisions from a point of view of justice, and show courage in the face of conflict. For example, Colum's decision puts him at personal risk, but Noughts continues to fight for the good of the community and moral values (Blackman 115). This episode illustrates how human values can be used to fight oppression and achieve personal development of characters.

4. Individual and collective opposition:

Callum McGregor struggles on a personal level, challenging Crosses' dominance with education. His decisions affect not only him, but also the lower class community in the society. The collective action of the Noughts community shows how collective opposition can be effective for social change, although it also involves risks and

psychological conflict (Blackman 142). The interpretation of this opposition is important from the point of view of Postcolonial Theory, as it shows how power is challenged through subaltern agency and social struggle.

5. Hybridity, Liminality, and the Politics of Mixed Identity:

Apart from the overt forms of resistance, *Noughts & Crosses* also shows social struggle through the forms of subtle resistance, from the point of view of mixedness and marginality. The relationship between Callum McGregor and Persephone Hadley exemplifies the complex dynamics of mixed identities within a rigid caste chain. Based on postcolonial theory, particularly Homi K. Bhabha's concept of "mixedness", their relationship can be understood as being in a "third space", where the boundaries between traditional self-identity and foreigner/foreigner are destabilized. This liminal space is not merely symbolic; it actively challenges the socially structured ideals of binary racial oppositions. Diversity in the plot functions as both a site of conflict and potential transformation.

Callum and Sephy's relationship symbolize the tension that arises when crossing socially determined caste boundaries. While the Cross class is culturally privileged, the Notts class is systemically oppressed; Yet their interaction calls the assumption of immutable chains into question. The existence of their offspring, born of this union, symbolizes a marginal identity simultaneously included in and outside of dominant social classes. Such mixing illustrates that caste duality is not natural but socially constructed. Also, the marginal position that Callum and Sephy occupy, also reveals the psychological and social cost.

Callum experiences the struggle of blending into cross society and resisting its oppressive structures. Sephy, despite her cross priorities, faces ethical complications and social isolation, which reveal the weak side of the theoretical basis of primacy. It shows that miscegenation is not an absolute position, but a politically sensitive position that destabilizes dominant norms and leaves those within it vulnerable to social oppression and violence. Blackman presents a postcolonial critique of caste power structures in *Noughts & Crosses*. Mixedness is a form of resistance that destabilizes binary chains, calls into question the legitimacy of systemic oppression, and underscores the power of humanity over socially constructed difference. As such, this study of diversity and marginality enriches the thematic framework of the narrative, connecting individual experiences with broader social critiques and highlighting the importance of human values in resistance to injustice.

6. Cultural understanding and social messages:

The novel makes readers aware of racial discrimination, explains the moral and cultural aspects of inequality in society. For example, the conflict between *Noughts and Crosses* gives the reader a sense of compassion, justice, courage, and human values (Blackman 190). It shows that stories are not just for entertainment, but a tool for social, moral and cultural education. Using Postcolonial Theory, it is realized that literature can be an effective tool for social change, justice and dissemination of human values.

Discussion:

The novel *Noughts & Crosses* illustrates how structural apartheid and social dominance have profound effects on individuals and communities in society. Blackman shows in the novel that racial discrimination is not limited to the social or economic level, but also affects mental health, moral judgment, emotional stability, and personal relationships. From the point of view of Postcolonial Theory, it can be seen that Crosses' dominance and Noughts' enjoyed position is evident through Othering, Binary Opposition and Subaltern Agency, giving readers a wider and deeper experience of inequality in society.

Drawing from the conflict experiences of Callum McGregor and Sephy Hadley, the novel illustrates the effects of individual and collective resistance, the use of moral values for social change, and the importance of courage against oppression.

Human values such as compassion, justice, and courage are constantly highlighted in the novel. The characters' experiences make it clear that making moral decisions, fighting against oppression, and being aware of personal values are crucial to fighting injustice in society. For example, Callum's struggles place him at personal risk, yet his decisions are important to the Noughts community and social justice. Also, the collective action of the Noughts community demonstrates that social change is possible through collective struggle, albeit with psychological stress, social pressure, and danger. The novel also makes it clear to the readers that literature is not only for entertainment, but can be an effective tool for raising social, moral and cultural awareness.

By using Postcolonial Theory, it is realized that structures of social dominance, Othering processes, and Subaltern agency can be deeply analyzed, allowing readers to gain an awareness of human values and social justice through literature.

Conclusion:

Mallorie Blackman's *Noughts & Crosses* provides a profound look at racial discrimination, conflict, and human values. The novel illustrates the dominance of the Crosses group and the position enjoyed by the Noughts characters, giving the reader a deeper experience of structural social inequality, with psychological and moral consequences. Postcolonial theory is useful for this study because it explains how power, dominance, othering, and subaltern agency are expressed in the novel and how they are reflected in social conflict.

The novel teaches readers about empathy, justice, moral courage, social responsibility, and awareness of human values. Callum and Sephy characters' struggles, use of moral values, and forms of collective and individual resistance show how injustices in society are fought against. *Noughts & Crosses* literature is not limited to entertainment, but has social, moral, and educational significance. It can be concluded from this study that the novel

creates awareness against caste discrimination, inspires moral thinking for social change, and highlights the importance of human values. The novel inspires readers to fight against social injustice by upholding the basic values of humanity, and illustrates the use of literature as a tool for academic, moral, and social education. Therefore, *Noughts & Crosses* is very useful for the study of racial injustice and human values in modern society.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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