

## **The Intrinsic Elements Of The Poem “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping” By Grace Nichols**

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### **Abstract**

Poetry as one type of literary works is a kind of imaginative art that does not only have function to entertain readers but also to give some kind of education or knowledge on certain things. In this paper, a poem entitled “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping” was chosen as the object of the study”. The poem was written by Grace Nichols. The main purpose of the analysis is to find out the intrinsic elements which are used by the poet. The data were taken through library research and from some books of literature. The theory used to analyze the poem is the theory of literature proposed by Sumardjo and Diyanni.

*Keyword: Poem, Intrinsic element, Black woman.*

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the study**

Poem is a piece of writing in which the words are chosen for their sound and the images they suggest, not just for their obvious meanings, the words are arranged in separate lines, usually with a repeated rhythm, and often the lines rhyme at the end. There are many things that can be analyzed in literature. They are intrinsic elements. We can study the setting, theme, plot, characters, etc and many things as the intrinsic elements.

The important aspect of literary work such as poem is its intrinsic elements. This writing analyzes a poem because it is very interesting and common among people in the society because it presents many things about life, and in our culture it is associated with thinness. Obese people do not have a place in fashion. In this study, the poem which is analyzed is “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping by Grace Nichols. I chose this poem since it has a deep meaning and it really touches my feeling as a woman.

This poem tells about a black woman who should face many difficulties because of her big body size and her complexion. Besides, the words that are used by the poet (Grace Nichols) are very common but seem to have a lot of hidden meaning, and I want to understand more about this poem.

## 1.2 Problems of the Study

Based on the background above, the research problems can be formulated as follows:

1. What is the theme of the poem?
2. What are the intrinsic elements used in the poem “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping” to construct the theme?

## 1.3 Aims of the Study

The aims of this study can be formulated as follows:

1. To find out the theme of the poem “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping”.
2. To know the intrinsic elements where by the poet (Grace Nichols) constructs the theme of the poem “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping”.

## II. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The material of this article is “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping” by Grace Nichols. The poem tells about a fat black woman shopping in London during the winter time. The woman went from store to store in London city in search of accommodating clothes for her body, that is, the fat black body of woman. But in the store, she found at the mannequins only clothes displayed for the slimming size, not for big size like the one suitable for herself, the fat black woman.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Intrinsic Elements of The Poem

The study of the intrinsic elements is necessary in order to get a closer look at the literary work, and it is believed that the existence of a literary work is determined by its internal structure formed by its intrinsic element. However, in this study only some of those intrinsic elements are discussed, which are relevant to interpret the meaning or

the theme of the poem. Among the various intrinsic elements the poem “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping“, the following are included in the analysis.

### 3.1.1 Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound, usually a consonant, at the beginning of words or stressed syllables in close proximity. In the case of the poem “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping” the analysis of the alliteration and repetition can be done in two lines as follows:

#### Line 3 :

Alliteration in this line is represented by the repetition of the sound / S / in “Store to Store”. “Store to store “suggests that The Fat Black Woman visited not just one, but as many stores (shops) found in London. She failed to get the dress of her size, and this intensified her disappointment because she failed not just in one shop but in all shops.

The alliteration in” store to store “ of the sound / S / above and also the alliteration of the sound / j / in “journeying and journeying “also show the repetition of lexical words “ store “and “journeying “. These repetitions make the tiring effect on The Black Woman.

### 3.1.2 Diction

Diction is the selection of words used in the poem, and it, of course, has some purposes. It could be to make it better in terms of sound, or to give a sensitive expression to the idea being conveyed. Diction also shows the individual characteristic or style of the work, besides providing meaning to the reader.

Some words and phrases in the poem “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping” which function as poetic diction in the poem are presented and described below. The words that can be identified as specific diction in this poem include the words printed in bold type :

Line 1:

Shopping in the **winter**

Line 2:

Is a read **drag** for the **fat black** woman

Line 4:

In search of **accommodating clothes**

Line 6:

Look at the **frozen thin mannequins**

Line 8:

And de pretty face **salesgals**

Line 15:

The fat black woman curses in **Swahili / Yoruba**

These words can be analyzed as follows:

The word **Winter** (line 1):

The words *winter that fat black woman feel when coming some store to store*, presents a suffering to her from the cold of winter time. She becomes exposed to coldness of winter time.

The word **Drag, Fat black** (line 2):

The words *drag and fat black* give a feeling of heavy burden that she suffers along with the load his fat body.

The word **Accommodating clothes** (line 4):

The words *accommodating clothes* suggest that she has the body which is very big and fat that hinders her from obtaining the right size, namely, the extra-large size clothes in London store.

The word **Frozen thin mannequins** (line 6):

The words *foreseen thin mannequins words* suggests that she feels to have the big and fat body which makes her difficult to hunt the right clothes because her size is extra large not available in the store. So, she likes frozen mannequins which stand up confused to hunt for some clothes.

The word **Salesgals** (line 8)

The word *salesgals* suggests that the black woman is very angry and disappointed. She expresses herself in the Negro dialect of English because she wants to show that she is not a Londoner.

The word **Swahili / Yoruba** (line 15):

The words *Sawilli/Yoruba* refer to the dialect spoken by the black people (negro) , the national language in her native country.

### 3.1.3 Symbol

Symbol is an image so loaded with significance that it is not simply literal, and it does not simply stand for something else. Symbol in the poem can be identified and its meaning is made clear by the full context of the poem. Symbol is the use of something on the concrete level, which symbolizes something else, either on the abstract or concrete level.

The symbols used in the poem “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping “are presented below. The symbols found in the poem show the contrast between the white culture (London) and the black culture (Negro) of the woman. The points of contrast can be shown as follows:

Table 1  
 Symbol in Poem

White Culture (Dominant)		Black Culture (Marginal / Inferior)
London = white skin	VS	Fat black = black skin, negro and fat body
Language = English		Swahili/Yoruba = the language or dialect of negro people
Size 14 = have a slimming size		Beyond size 14 = extra large size
Fashion shops, comfortable		Failure not comfortable

From the comparison of the two cultures in the table above we know that the fat black woman speaking in the poem was inferior to the white culture. Her inferiority is shown in the poem with her failure to get the dress of her size. All dresses found in London stores were fit only for other women. These other women were the white women of London.

### 3.1.4 Language Nuance

The English language of Negro dialect (“salesgals”) is used for the consolidation of Negro race identity from the poet (persona, “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping”). The Negro Dialect can refer to position for the identity the fat black woman

as black skin. The dialect contrasts with the English language which is more colorful English language of the native London people.

The language in the poem “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping” is much used to convey to the reader that the speaker is an immigrant to England. For example, “de” is used several times instead of “the”, and the speaker did a lot of cursing in “Swahili/Yoruba”, her native language under her breath.

Additionally, she refers to a desire for clothing that is “soft” and “bright” and billowing to flow like breezy sunlight and giving the impression that the speaker is African or Caribbean longing for their native climates as opposed to the frigid English winter. This represents her bad experience in London, in the white people’s city.

### **3.1.5 The Poet’s Viewpoint in The Poem.**

The poem “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping” makes me, as a reader sympathetic with the person in the poem. Why? The reason is that this poem explains discrimination and different race, a woman of black skin (Negro), namely, the fat black woman in London. In this poem, it is explained that the fat black woman finds it very difficult to obtain the fashion clothes, even when she goes from the store to store in London city, which only display size S not the extra large size. This causes ill heart, disappointment, anger and tired feeling. The woman (persona) feels this as a discrimination of race practiced by the white people in London.

Besides, this poem can be a reflection of real life colored by discrimination of black skin people in the country of which the majority of people are white skin (American and London). Long before that, the black skin becomes slavers of the white skin people in America. Then there happened liberation of the black skin proposed by Mr. Nelson Mandela of South Africa. He struggled for the black skin people to set them free from discrimination. So, now black people have the same opportunity for jobs as the white skin people without discrimination. For example, President America Barack Obama can be taken as a proof that black people can be the leader for the majority white skin people in the American country.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

After giving my analysis about the intrinsic elements of the poem "The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping", I can conclude the meaning of poem or its theme is the discrimination of black women in the white country, London. The intrinsic elements to analyze include alliteration, diction, symbol, language nuance, and the poet's viewpoint.

The theme of the poem is the disappointment and regret of the fat black women from Africa because she felt in her failure to get a dress of her size. The discrimination was racial. The woman in the poem is black (Negro). She found a lot of problems in London (the white country). The problem was it was difficult for her to get the dress of her size, extra-extra large, in London.

This poem tells about the discrimination not only in terms of race and complexion, but also in terms of fashion.

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