
Analysis of the Essay "Double Identity" by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston

I recently read the essay Double Identity, by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston. The essay discussed the way that the authors life was as she grew up. She discusses how she had to live two separate lives, do to the strict family rules and also the influence society had on a young mind. Houston wrote the essay in narrative form.

The title fit the essay well. It describes how Houston felt when she was growing up. Since she had to live practically two separate live, do to her strict family rules, Houston did have double Identities.

One identity was used when she was around her family. The type of family she lived in was a traditional Japanese family. When she was around them she acted very much like a women that was in raised in Japan (similar to her mother). She was timid, not very outspoken, and respected the men of the house greatly. The other identity was used around her young Caucasian friends. When she was around them she was outspoken and not as timid. Later in her life she began having problems with her husband. She also had problems deciding how she should raise her children.

I enjoyed the way Houston described her family and her identities. I felt that through a description of those characters you could determine a feel for them. From what she told of her brother, how the taught her how to ride a bike, and drive a car, and they also took her to her first dance and how they told her to watch out for the Caucasian boys and that all they want is sex, you could they that they were very loving to her and protective of her. When she describes her father and his strict ways you can see that he was a good man that wanted the best for his family. He as well was protective of his daughter because she talks about how he never liked the boys she dated and never let her wear the same clothes the Caucasian girls wore.

Houston also discusses the relationship she had with her siblings. She had five older sisters, and four older brothers, and she was the youngest. She describes how her older sisters used to help her mother, and her brothers used to help her father with his fishing business. To her the women were always meant to stay in the house to cook, and clean, while the men worked. Not until later in her life did she see that things dont have to be like that. It was her other lifestyle, the one she used with her Caucasian friends that opened her eyes to that.

An emotional decision that she went through her life was dating. She liked Caucasian men and

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she liked Japanese men. She wanted a man that was like her father, in the ways that he was unpredictable, dominant, and brilliant-yet sensitive and poetic, a blonde Samurai (Pg 314). She was also worried about whether her family would approve. Her other siblings that married had married Japanese mates and she didn't know if she would. She was also afraid of the way her father would react. When she met her husband though her father had passed away, and her mother accepted the marriage openly.

When Houston married she was unsure on how she should act with her husband. She was scared that if she acted like a Japanese wife (like her mother, serving her husband dutifully, and being totally subjected to him) he would take advantage of her. She was also scared that if she acted too much like an American, modern wife that he and she might be dissatisfied with the way the marriage turned out. She herself though states I did not want to be the authority. (Pg. 316), meaning that she didn't want to be in charge of the relationship, to her that would be humiliating for the both of them.

When her children were born Houston was faced with another problem, how should she raise her children. Houston was torn between raising them traditionally, with her family's beliefs strong in mind, or if she should raise them with American beliefs. She didn't want to raise them like her mother raised her because it was a different time and a different world. She states my world is radically different from my mother's world, and all indications point to an even wider difference in our world from our children's (Pg. 317).

I thought that Houston worked well with the audience. I believe her voice was casual, and flowed, like in a conversation. At times in the essay I was able to tell when she wanted to get a point across because the tone, or voice, would get serious. I felt that the connection with the audience was comfortable as well.

The essay's clarity, I feel could have been refined. At times in the essay you see that the author contradicts herself. If you read in to the sections, you can see why she is doing that. The essay itself is a contradiction, so in seeing contradictions you see what the author herself is going through. Even though the essay could have been a bit clearer, I feel that the contradictions were important to have and the essay was clear, all together.

I believe that the author's purpose in this essay was to show what it was like growing up in a traditional family and dealing with her peers. Maybe this essay was a form of venting out old emotions. I think her authorization for writing this essay is verified. Due to her personal experiences she seems like she knows what she is writing about in this essay.

Double Identity was a very well written essay. It truly gave me a sense of what the author was discussing. There are also many people that had to deal with the same kind of difficult decision

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making that the author had to deal with. Its interesting to see how she went about handling the decisions. The decisions were very important and definitely affected the rest of her life.

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