

# Maud Martha

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## Maud Martha

Gwendolyn Brooks was a black poet from Kansas who wrote in the early twentieth century. She was the first black woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize. Her writings deal mostly with the black experience growing up in inner Chicago. This is the case with one of her more famous works, Maud [Martha](#). [Maud Martha](#) is a story that illustrates the many issues that a young black girl faces while growing up in a 'white, male driven' society. One aspect of Martha that is strongly emphasized on the book is her low self-image and lack of self-esteem. Martha feels that she is inferior for several reasons, but it is mainly the social pressures that she faces and her own blackness that contribute to these feelings of inferiority. It is through these depictions that we are able to identify with the feelings of the writer. Gwendolyn Brooks wrote an autobiography that reveals many her attitudes, tendencies and criticisms. Martha, in Brooks' stories has a low self-esteem. This lack of self is directly related to her being black. Brooks' experiences growing up are the key influence in the writing of Maud Martha

Martha's self-image is very low because she feels that being black will not get her anywhere in society. She feels as though she is backed into a corner when it comes to the

problems that the black culture faces from day to day. Martha is a very dark [shade](#) of black. She thinks that because she is this shade she is not as beautiful as her friends who are a lighter shade of black or obviously, white. These issues exist and are perpetuated by her family, friends and even her boyfriend. Brooks also discusses similar issues in her autobiography. She talks about skin color and how people are attracted to bright people. By bright she is not referring to their intelligence or wit, but the color of their skin. She also says that in order to be respected as a black person you have to be a light shade of black and not have many of the characteristics of a black person. She believes that in order to be beautiful, a girl cannot have hair that appears to be straightened by a hot comb; rather you should have curly hair. And you must be dressed well. In her opinion it helps if your mother is a schoolteacher, because then you will probably have nice clothes and be somewhat intelligent.

Brooks talks about holidays as well. She discusses how they ar...

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...ded them, but when the lights came on they would be seen for what they really are, black. This story is one that illustrates her strongest point. It is almost as though Brooks uses the theatre as a symbol of the world and Martha and Paul are a few black people swimming in a sea of white people and wanting more than anything to just not stay afloat, but to swim.

The issues in Maud Martha are issues that unfortunately still exist today. There are still many issues that deal with race. They are underlying issues not only in society but in Brooks' writing as well. Brooks uses these issues in her writing to convey her own feelings of frustration towards the colorism that exists in regards to race and culture. Through her depictions in Maud Martha, one might conclude that despite her prestige as a writer, Brooks is not proud of the black culture. In both her writings and her autobiography, Brooks seems to accept the fact that blacks are inferior and there is nothing that she can do to change this. She feels as though blacks are not regarded as equals in our white society. She believes that to be successful and beautiful, you must be white just to be given the opportunity.

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