

**Thesis:** In both *Nervous Conditions* and *Bone Black*, class based oppression is a central conflict. However, through the respective narrators' point of views, word choices, and use of imagery, readers learn that the narrators view their poverty differently.

I. **Body paragraph 1 & 2: Point of View**

- a. In the opening chapter of *Nervous Conditions*, Tambu communicates her individual experience of poverty through comparing her perspective to her brother's perspective.
  - i. "This was the walk that my brother detested! Truly, I could continue endlessly describing the possibilities that were in that walk, so I could not understand why he was so resentful of it" (4).
    1. Analysis of quote: Tambu, the novel's narrator, values certain aspects of her rural, poor lifestyle while Nhamo, her brother, complains and despises his home. After Tambu describes the walk using vast sensory details, she reiterates her brother's contrary position...
- b. In Chapter 2 of *Bone Black*, the narrator begins with using a collective "we," transitions to a 1<sup>st</sup> person narrator, and then subtly returns to using the collective voice.
  - i. "Because we are poor, because we live in the country, we go to the country school- the little white wood-frame building where all the country kids come" (4-5).
    1. Analysis of quote: Through use of the "we" as the central pronoun, the narrator communicates that poverty is often a shared experience.
  - ii. There are two specific occasions in chapter 2 where the narrative voice switches to 1<sup>st</sup> person to demonstrate a personalized experience.
    1. "It is there I learn to sing "Red River Valley." It is a song about missing and longing. I do not understand all the words, only the feeling- warm wet sorrow, like playing games in spring rain. After chapel we go to classrooms" (6).
      - a. Analysis of quote:
    2. "The day she brings cottage cheese I am not sure I want to try it. She makes me. She makes everyone try a little bit just in case they might really like it" (6).
      - a. Analysis of quote:

II. **Body paragraph 3 & 4: Word Choice**

- a. *Nervous Conditions*
  - i. Quote
    1. Analysis of quote
- b. Throughout Chapter 2 of *Bone Black*, the narrator repeats the phrase, "we do not understand..."
  - i. " We children do not understand that that means we are among the poor. We do not understand that the outhouses...We do not understand..." (4)
    1. The repeated phrase emphasizes that there are certain qualities in the children's lives that they do not associate with poverty. However, readers can infer that the narrator, as well as the other children, clearly understands now as a reflective adult.

III. **Body paragraph 5 & 6: Imagery**

- a. "The road wound down by the fields where there were always some people with whom to pass ten minutes of the day...there was always shade by the fields where clumps of trees were deliberately left standing to shelter us when we ate our meals..." (2).
- b.

**If I finished developing this outline, the structure of my essay would ultimately look like this:**

- I. Intro
  - a. Thesis (last sentence of intro)
- II. Point of View: nervous conditions
- III. Point of view: bone black
- IV. Word choice: nervous conditions
- V. Word choice: bone black
- VI. Imagery: nervous conditions
- VII. Imagery: Bone black
- VIII. Conclusion