Toni Morrison, in her afterword, criticizes numerous elements of her own work, telling the reader that she fails in three important ways: to "move" the reader to interrogation of him or herself instead of to mere pity of the characters, to write in a style that is "indisputably black," and to infuse a "feminine subtext" throughout the narration of the novel. However, while Morrison recognizes these issues, she is incorrect in her interpretation of them. The elements of her novel that she finds fault with actually strengthen the ideology that she is trying to propagate. Morrison explores racial issues in her novel, *The Bluest Eye*, and successfully represents the struggles of African-Americans; furthermore, she writes in multiple perspectives and imbues her novel with characteristically human dilemmas and emotions, moving even a reader who does not identify with the black culture to empathy.

Pity plays an important role in the novel, even if Morrison describes it as merely being able to "touch" readers, not "move" them. For it is pity that leads the reader to self-interrogation. It was pity, after all, that led Claudia and Frieda to plant the marigolds for Pecola's baby. Claudia says, "...we were embarrassed for Pecola, hurt for her, and finally we just felt sorry for her... And I believe our sorrow was the more intense because nobody else seemed to share it" (190). It is this same pity that leads the reader to feel a closeness to Pecola. Without this pity, the extraordinary and "crippling" events of her life would not invoke in the reader any feeling at all. The occurrences are, after all, fiction.
But the inability of Pecola to take action, the distinctly human hopelessness and helplessness in her situation, are ones that every reader can recognize in his or her own life. This empathy is what makes the reader read on. This empathy is what led Claudia to sow the marigold seeds and bury her money, and ultimately, to look back upon the events recounted in the novel so many years later.

Why is this pity so important? First of all, rendering the black characters in the novel distinctly human underscores their similarities to whites. At first glance, this seems counterintuitive to Morrison's purpose of characterizing and beautifying African American culture. However, by highlighting traits common to all humans, Morrison shows that culture is simply the color and texture to the otherwise identical human fabric. Race, after all, is not the product of choice, and culture is solely an exercise in self-expression. Furthermore, by writing the novel from multiple perspectives -- mainly from Claudia's as a child, but also the omniscient narrator's, and with pieces by Mrs. Breedlove-- Morrison explores the differences that exist within a culture, the way different individuals are impacted by race, and how they interact with others of their race. In this way, she pulls apart the generalization loaded upon African Americans. By giving so many characters a voice and by omnisciently examining the actions and thoughts of others, she is separating a group of overly stereotyped people into individuals, into humans.

Her eloquent text underscores this idea. While she indeed fails to create a novel that is written in "distinctly black" language, this failure only contributes to the universal propagation of her ideology. The richness and art of her words lead the novel to be considered a classic and to be read by all races and applicable to all individuals. This
universality does not detract from the exposure of African American culture, however. Morrison is clearly influenced by her ethnicity in her choice of words (many references to color), choice of description (contrast between appearance and reality), and choice of stories to tell (those of different kinds of black people: Geraldine, Soaphead Church, Pauline Breedlove). Furthermore, the ample dialogue in the novel maintains the black culture, identifying it and preserving it. But Morrison doesn't provide just conversation in her novel, but also examination. And this examination is what cannot be colloquially recounted; this analysis, too complex for the simple minds of the characters, must be strung into more lofty sentences.

While Morrison's self-evaluation in the afterword speaks of her own frustration in her text, the reader does not share this dissatisfaction. The reader does not miss the constant feminine undertone and distinctly black language that Morrison feels lacking, and finds self-interrogation because of pity not despite it. Morrison broadens her audience by rendering the novel more universal instead of "race-specific." Indeed, this lack of race specificity is what ultimately allows the reader to see all the characters, including Pecola, as beautiful, not despite their race or because of their race, but because they're so helplessly human.