

# UNDERSTANDING OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN MAMA DAY

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## Abstract

*Focusing on Gloria Naylor's rhetorical strategies of storytelling in *Mama Day* (1988), this paper examines how unilateral communication is formed in the novel. The one-sided view seriously hinders the bridge connecting George Andrews and Miranda Day, but it is largely underrepresented in the discourse of crossing the opposite realms.*

*First, my research discusses the power of storytelling in terms of listeners, citing the frequently cited African-American folklore, tales of the Signifying Monkey, and her predecessor's work, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (*Their Eyes*), as precursory text. It examines how Naylor weaved the folk tale and *Their Eyes* into *Mama Day*.*

*The second and third chapters argue that the narrative presented by Miranda and George and the episode of Reema's boy are examples of miscommunication. I will look closely at the metaphor of hands in the figurative language Miranda utilizes, which causes a gap in Miranda and George, to demonstrate rhetorical strategies that the text suggests. In the case of Reema's boy, who investigates the vernacular speech pattern of "18 & 23" in the island, this paper will consider "18 & 23" as a metaphor, suggesting that the expression itself is also an example of loosening the connection between the past and present. Instead of reaching the point of being able to associate them, he made a one-sided interpretation of "18 & 23."*

*Mama Day can be read as a story of a lack of communication, more specifically, the inability to understand figurative language among black characters. Naylor depicted George and Reema's son as unreliable listeners, while adapting her predecessors' work, such as *Their Eyes*, the monkey tale, in which both storytelling and response to it serve significant roles. Because the black characters in *Mama Day* are diverse and have experienced and been immersed in a variety of environments, they cannot be familiar with or open to their tradition, such as signifyin(g) or rhetorical games, which results in their one-sided approaches.*

**Key words:** African American literature, rhetorical strategy, intertextuality