

### **Analysis of Désirée's Baby**

- In the short story "Désirée's Baby", the author explores the theme of the short story is the gender disparity in a patriarchal society and the economic inequalities between different classes, both of which were widely prevalent and socially accepted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- The story also showcases the slave culture and the racism that was well established and accepted within the society.
- If we were to analyze the racism in the white French Creoles, we need to look at the setting of the story. Desiree's Baby is set to have occurred in the 1800s, which was before the civil war. It was common and prevalent in that era for white French Creoles to be wealthy slave-owning families who were very racist and separated themselves from their slaves.

### **Analysis of love**

- From an analysis perspective another theme that can see is the contrast of love. A stark contrast is seen between the love exhibited by Desiree's parents, Armand and Armand's father.
- Armand falls in love suddenly with Désirée just as his father had done with his mother "like a pistol shot".
- It is implied that Armand's father had loved his mother dearly. The difference between him and his father is that Armand fell out of love just as quickly because his love was based only on ownership.
- Armand stops loving Désirée because she might have African roots. He only cares about himself and nobody else. He does not love Désirée but owns her as he would own or purchase a slave.
- His father married his mother and did not care about her background. He never viewed his wife to be unworthy. Armand on the other hand views Désirée as unworthy similar to the slave La Blanche.
- The Valmondés adopted Désirée with happiness and loved her without any condition.
- Armand's parents show that they love him and want to protect him. They keep Armand's roots a secret so that he would not be blemished with having African roots in a world where they would become a slave. Armand is cruel and does not protect his son or his wife from this fate.

### **Analysis of La Blanche**

- La Blanche is a character who does not appear in the story but is mentioned. Nevertheless it is a very important character since it advances the plot of the story and influences Désirée's decision to suicide along with her child.

- So who is La Blanche. La Blanche is hinted at being a black slave who Armand had a sexual relationship with. La Blanche's cabin is mentioned in the story to show that Armand did have sexual congress with her because she is his slave and his "property."
- Note how, in a sense, Désirée is also his "property" as a wife whom he "bought" with gifts and wealth, though of course slavery is even more pernicious and awful than the "traditional" gender norms of the time.
- The slave boy who's task is to fan the baby also looks white although he has black roots. But nevertheless because he has black roots, he is forced to be a slave.
- Désirée's realizes that her child looks exactly like the slave boy and hence will suffer the same fate and will never have the comfort and wealth which she has.
- In the end of the story, it is shown that Désirée's shame and fear at her son being black is great. It is great so much that she commits suicide taking her child's life as well instead of returning to her loving mother.

#### **Analysis of Armand's Parents**

- In the end, Armand is shown as having African roots because of his mother. He is part of the race that he considers as slaves and inferior.
- He rejects his son and his wife while in reality it was himself that he should have rejected.
- It was his parent's choice to not reveal Armand's past to hi. They did so in order to protect him as we have seen in the case of La Blanche. This in turn led him to become a racist and kill his wife and his child.
- Ironically, by protecting Armand, his parent's end up ruining his life.