Cover



About this radio documentary

GRAMPS

Genre: Radio documentary

Register: Informal

Audience: Listeners of This American Life, those interested in the topic of inequality

Mode: Spoken

Purpose: to inform listeners of Melanie's experience with poverty and the inequality/unequal opportunities in the education system.

Subject: Melanie talks about running away after a trip to a wealthy school 3 miles away from her poor school in the Bronx. They address many issues, including the feeling of alienation when visiting the well-funded school and the frustration that comes with different social classes and unequal education opportunities.

Analysis

Pre-modifying adjectives: "blue-green hair" - creation of precise description.

Antistrophe: "If they could see me, they'd know I'm different. You know I'm different." - her appearance is different from the norm.

Description: "She's also wearing pink sweatpants [...] who you are, how you'll hear her" - adding details to Melanie's description to create further precise description.

Triad of lexical repetition: "She'd become a better writer, read, read, and read" - communicates her enthusiasm for learning. Creates pathos; doesn't stand a chance to make the most of her education due to her situation and underfunding of her school.

Rhetorical question: "Well, I remember going in. And I was just like, what is this? You know? Like, this has got to be a joke." - Expression of dismay at her school. Although young, she recognised the lack of opportunity that she's facing.

Emotive language: "Melanie was open to it. She wrote a sincere letter describing herself and her dreams." Structurally starts of as open/sincere, but the story ends with refusing to be engaged with them.

Contrast between wanting to learn, but doesn't have a chance ("we didn't have a library. And I love books.")

Adjacent: "So what happened when you went there?" - role of interview is to maintain the topic.

Colloquial language and low-frequency lexis: "we looked like a bunch of hooligans" - as soon as she arrived, she feels like she doesn't belong.

Imperatives: "Wait" (more than once) - slows down the conversation, encourages Melanie to expand on what she's just said. Not used in a powerful/intimidating way.

Anaphora: "I felt like", "I felt like" - sentences start with negative phrasing, a signal of her instant sense of exclusion.

Anaphora: "This is not", "this is something" - changing the ending to expand on what she's saying.

Interjection: "You thought that when you were at Fieldston?", "Woah. That's wild." expresses a realisation at what a child was thinking about 10-ish years ago.

Linguistic convergence: "So it was like when the shit hits the fan."

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