

## The Roller . . .

reaches 15 years of age, her parents give her and the dowry away to a husband. This custom signifies the start of the husband's dominion over the young wife. At first, Sheila envies Munnia and even considered her lucky. Unlike her, Munnia does not have to deal with the complexities of acquiring education, nursing a career and determining what she wants from life, Munnia's fate rests solely on her husband and their traditions. Sheila ponders

these experiences and her resoluteness as a young woman surfaces. This will be very evident in what she does with her life when she returns to England.

All these occurrences and the conversations with her grandparents made her comprehend that no matter what society's expectations are she still has her own identity. In this case, she is an Indian because that was where she was born and she loves her heritage, and, she is an English girl

because she already adopted this country as home.

Finishing this book, I really admired the author, *Indi Rana*, for shedding light on topics like karma, dharma, Hinduism, racism, adolescence in different cultures and the caste system from a young adult's point of view and language. I returned to the bookshop eager to find the other titles on 'teens in other cultures' which are actually books for grown ups too. Adolescent books such as this one are highly

recommended for uncovering facades and differing perspectives and thus help in raising critical thinkers. ♀



Mylene Soto-Sol Cruz

RPM

## Of Dorcas and Violet and Nettie and Celie - of Alice and Toni, a personal reflection on the works of two outstanding women writers, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison.

by Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, Isis International Communications Program.



Lynn Lee

Mavic Cabrera-Balleza

All Saints Day is something we look forward to in the Philippines but not for the solemnity of the occasion (on the contrary, it has become more and more festive), nor anything about the costume parties and the spooky trick or treat games. Rather, it's the long weekend that goes with it.

Looking forward to a restful but productive weekend, I borrowed an *Alice Walker* and a *Toni Morrison* book from the Isis Resource Center. Embarrassing as it may be for one who is said to be or who claims to be an 'active'

feminist, it was the first time that I was going to read these two Pulitzer prize winners Toni also won a Nobel!

The journey through *Alice Walker's The Color Purple* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* was far more exciting and fascinating than I had expected. While the former revolves around an African-American woman's (Celie) struggle against a patriarchal and feudal society's set norms, the latter reveals the cruel reality of female genital mutilation and why and how it is translated from misogyny. Now I think all the raves about this 'woman writer who can stand proudly beside *Faulkner*' were an understatement.

My reading of *Toni Morrison's Jazz* and *Sula* laid bare the normally unimaginable capacity of women to love and hate at the same time. Violet's character in *Jazz* showed how women can hate each other so much that one will be able to harm a

dead woman - she went to Dorcas' funeral and slashed her face. Dorcas is Violet's husband's lover. *Sula*, on the other hand, revealed the intertwined lives of remarkably strong and aggressive women.

Reflecting on this 'serious reading', I need to thank these two great writers. They allowed me to look into the lives of African-American women. I can see a bit of myself in each of the characters, and in the events and circumstances they write about are bits and pieces of my own life. Reading these books gave me the chance to see the lives of women we know, as some of the experiences they talk about are experiences women all over the world go through.

*Alice's* writing is like rich, intricate weaving - it is as colorful and beautiful as it is enlightening, poignant and moving. Whereas *Toni's* works may be likened to the wrong side of an elaborate embroidery,

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Alice Walker from Ms., June 1988

you get a feel of the color and texture as you go through the process of untangling the threads that make up the story. These stories show that writing about our lives is an important way of sharing our tears, laughter and hope with other women. As Nettie told Celie in *The Color Purple*, "all things look brighter because I have a loving soul to share them with."

To *Alice* and *Toni* - many thanks for showing me that it is all right to be so mad and to be so in love, at times. I look forward to meeting more Sulas, Dorcas and Violet as I am anticipating an encounter with other Celies, Netties and Tashis.