

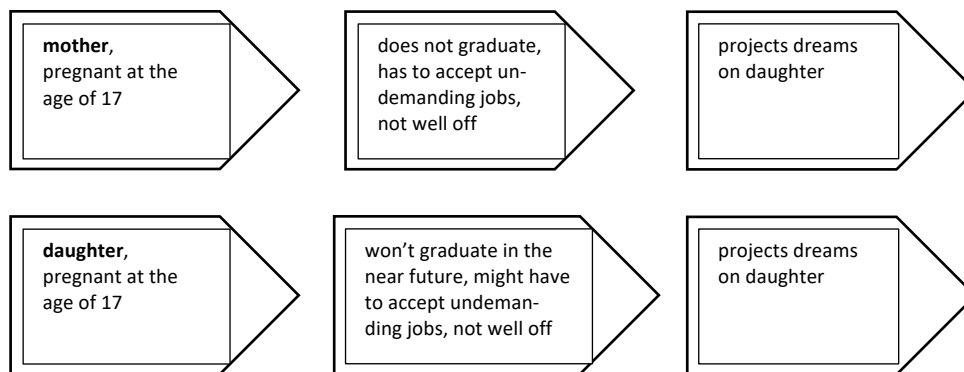
## LÖSUNGEN: 1 Being Black in "The Child": Teenage Pregnancy

Die Zeilenangaben aus "The Child" beziehen sich auf die Fassung in Green Line Oberstufe. Arbeitsheft Abiturthemen 2021. Klett Verlag. Da die Kurzgeschichte sehr kurz ist, können die Textstellen leicht auf die Fassungen des Cornelsen oder Westermann-Verlages übertragen werden.

- a) Before Karen leaves her home, she had a serious row with her mother about her pregnancy, which her mother had just discovered.

The reader learns that Karen's mother also became pregnant at such a young age. Moreover, it seems that she could not rely on Karen's father since she raised Karen on her own. Consequently, she had to work hard to make ends meet. She had big dreams for her daughter though and was happier than Karen when she was accepted at the *School for Fashion and Design* (II.100-102).

With Karen becoming pregnant at seventeen, her mother's story seems to repeat itself: Karen's child will probably grow up in a rather poor single-parent family. At the beginning of the short story Karen feels special about becoming a mother. However, when she starts having dreams for her unborn child, she realizes that her mother might have felt and dreamt like she does now but that it has never turned out that way. → a vicious circle?



- b) Julius Lester's short story "The Child" was published in 1993. At that time 100,3 out of 1,000 African American women who gave birth to a child were teenage mothers. This birth rate was more than twice as high than the one of white teenage mothers. The number of teenage mothers of Hispanic origin was slightly above the African American women's rate.

This result shows that Karen, as well as her friend Darlene (I.63), share the fate of 10 % of African American teenagers who became pregnant in the early 1990s.

Since 1993 this high number of teenage pregnancies has dropped steadily. The decrease becomes especially obvious after 2008 and has reached a birth rate below 30 per 1,000 teenage mothers. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) lists two consequences of teenage childbearing that do become very clear in Lester's short story: Teenage mothers are "less likely to finish high school" and they are "more likely to be poor as adults". The other consequences listed by the HHS are not explicitly mentioned but are closely connected to the ones present in "The Child". Again, it is indicated that these circumstances might trigger a vicious circle from which generations of mothers and daughters might find it hard to break free.

- c) The title "The Child" can easily be related to Karen's unborn child. This child makes her feel special (I.44, II.45-46). It can also be argued that Karen and her mother both were still 'a child' when they had/have their children. This becomes particularly obvious for Karen. She has just had her first experiences with sex and drugs. Sometimes Karen seems naïve like 'a child', e.g. when she dreams about driving to Hollywood to design clothes for the stars (II.145-150). However, she realizes this herself, which makes her cry. The title could also be referred to Philip.
- d) Karen is of the opinion that dreams that are about 'reaching the stars' might only be for white people who seem to have endless opportunities (II.83-86). In a second step she realizes that Black people should not dream since it almost inevitably leads to disillusionment and distress. When she still does have a dream for her unborn child, she states that one should not dream for one's

children (this is maybe what her mother once did for her [ll.95-96]). When she finally abandons herself in a dream about her personal successful future, i. e. in her *American Dream*, she ends up crying. This can be seen as her 'moment of recognition' – the more adult Karen becomes aware of the cruel truth that her dream is only wishful thinking.