

The short story, "Nineteen Thirty-Seven," is a powerful and vivid story that follows the plight of a woman who has a mother in prison. She finds that her "Madonna," had shed a tear and figures that her mother has died. There are many strong symbols in the story such as the "Madonna" that the narrator, the woman, carries around and the river that she dips her wrist into as a child. One major theme though, was the mistreatment of Haitians by the neighboring Dominican Republic. According to the story, there was a huge massacre by the Spanish-speaking Dominican to all Haitians living there.

The narrator in "Nineteen Thirty-Seven" is a Haitian along with her mother whom she often refers to as Manman. The story itself takes place in Haiti. One piece of evidence of the bad blood between Dominican Republic and Haiti is the fact the main character is not allowed to say the name of the neighboring country because she was born on the day of the bloody massacre.

One common misconception of the Haitian people in the time period of the story is that many of them practice witchcraft. This was the reason that Manman was arrested, beaten, and malnourished, and imprisoned. In this prison, the narrator described the dehumanization of a people. They were fed bread and water during most meals, their heads were shaved in order to make the women have the appearance of men, and when they died they were cremated rather than buried so their spirits would not harm the well-being of the living.