



## **“Resistance and Survival in Crossing the River by Caryl Philips”.**

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### **Abstract**

The present paper focuses on the study of resistance and survival in the life of the Caribbean island. These thematic experiences being related to the nationwide belonging and identities concerned through those who have sold the children for the different perspectives in the novel *Crossing the river* by Caryl Philips. This research paper shows that the people of the Caribbean countries they have been fighting for the life struggle and throughout the countries people they don't know that whatever the identities of the different nation and what type of the struggle in between the boundaries and the different nations. Some of the biographical information in the novel *Crossing the river* may serve to introduce who Philips is and situate within the different resistance and survival in the diasporic experience of which he speaks and it may also perhaps explain and importance of those who have suffered for the perspectives of resistance and survival.

**Keywords: - resistance, survival, slavery identity, displacement, Migration, exile**

*Crossing the River* can be viewed through the lens of resistance to colonial forces and the dehumanizing impacts of slavery. The novel presents the stories of individuals who are either directly or indirectly affected by colonial and slave systems. The characters, such as Nash, interact with forces that strip away their agency, and their resistance can be seen in their efforts to reclaim their identities and dignity. One of the key instances of resistance is the characters' psychological resistance to the dehumanization they face, whether through acts of survival or personal reflection that defy the roles imposed upon them by colonial powers. Survival is not just about physical endurance but also about the forging of a new identity. Phillips explores how survival in the face of harsh conditions leads to the formation of complex identities. Characters have to adapt, often abandoning parts of their culture, and yet, through survival, they create new ways of being. The story of the enslaved Africans crossing the Atlantic symbolizes survival as the act of clinging to one's humanity in an inhuman system. This survival is deeply tied to the need to hold onto personal and cultural identity despite the trauma.

Resistance and survival in *Crossing the River* are not just about physical actions but are deeply psychological. The novel reveals how the characters' internal struggles and mental resilience play an essential role in their survival. Displacement, trauma, and the destruction of the sense of home are key factors that challenge the characters' sense of self and history. The character of Martha, who is separated from her family and community due to the slave trade, showcases how displacement leads to a profound loss of belonging, and yet survival becomes an act of redefining oneself within an alien environment. Phillips explores how the resistance and survival of one generation are passed down to the next. The legacies of colonial violence and enslavement don't end with the physical survival of individuals; they also shape the consciousness and actions of future generations. The different narratives presented in the novel, such as those of Nash and others who are affected by the slave trade, show how the traumatic memories and acts of resistance are inherited, highlighting how past injustices continue to affect future generations.

"Survival is not enough. It is the struggle to hold onto

The parts of yourself that matter most,

Even when the world tries to strip them away."

One of the primary forms of resistance in *Crossing the River* is through the act of storytelling and memory. By recalling their experiences, the characters resist being silenced by history. Memory becomes a method of preserving cultural identity and ensuring that history is not erased. Phillips uses multiple perspectives and voices in the novel to demonstrate how storytelling itself is a powerful tool for resistance. The characters narrate their personal histories to assert their identity, even in the face of an oppressive system that would otherwise render them invisible. Survival is intrinsically tied to the quest for a sense of belonging. The

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novel explores how the characters' search for physical survival often overlaps with their search for emotional and cultural homeostasis. The character of Joseph, who embarks on a journey of self-discovery, highlights how survival is not just about making it through hardship, but also about finding a place where one belongs, either through relationships or returning to roots, symbolizing a psychological and physical quest for a "home" that has been taken from them.

Phillips challenges the conventional understanding of freedom and survival, questioning whether survival in a world shaped by slavery and colonialism can ever truly be understood as "freedom." The characters' search for freedom is an ongoing struggle that is often as much about personal inner liberation as it is about external circumstances. The novel critiques the assumption that physical freedom alone equates to true survival. The psychological burden of past trauma and the social constraints of being a former slave or a colonized individual complicate the idea of survival and freedom. Despite the oppressive forces they face, the characters in *Crossing the River* resist by holding onto cultural practices, values, and traditions. These become symbols of resistance, as survival often means preserving one's cultural heritage in the face of colonial efforts to erase it. The novel presents various forms of resistance through characters who try to maintain connections to their African roots, demonstrating how survival is inextricably tied to cultural preservation.

"The scars of the past run deeper than the skin,  
And they do not heal with the passing of time."

*Crossing the River* by Caryl Phillips, the themes of resistance and survival are central to the experiences of the characters. The quote you've shared—"Survival is not enough. It is the struggle to hold onto the parts of yourself that matter most, even when the world tries to strip them away."—captures the essence of what many of the characters face in the novel. Throughout the book, characters experience various forms of oppression and hardship, whether it's slavery, displacement, or exile. Survival is a basic instinct, but for many of them, it's not just about staying alive physically. It's about retaining their humanity, their sense of identity, and their connection to their past and culture in the face of a dehumanizing world.

In *Crossing the River*, we follow different characters from various historical contexts—enslaved Africans, African Americans, and displaced persons. These characters face external struggles: they're forced to confront harsh environments, systemic racism, and violence. However, the deeper struggle lies in their internal fight to preserve what makes them who they are, despite the world attempting to strip them of their dignity, culture, and personal identity. Survival, in this context, becomes not just about physical endurance but about resisting the forces that seek to erase the inner self. Take the character of Martha from the novel. She's an enslaved woman who is forced to cross the river to escape slavery. Her journey is not just about surviving physically, but about holding onto the memories and the parts of herself that define her, even though she is constantly subjected to the brutal realities of slavery. The river she crosses can symbolize a barrier between who she was and who she is forced to become. Yet, her struggle to maintain her sense of self is what makes her journey meaningful beyond mere survival.

Similarly, the character of James grapples with the struggle of defining his identity in the face of displacement and loss. His struggle to understand who he is, beyond the labels placed on him by society, reflects the internal conflict between survival and identity. His survival isn't enough; he must also navigate his way back to a sense of belonging and selfhood in a world that constantly tries to deny him both. In the broader context of the novel, the struggle to resist and to maintain one's identity amid a harsh and oppressive world speaks to the resilience of the human spirit. Phillips illustrates how survival, while crucial, is not a sufficient response to the deep trauma and loss experienced by marginalized individuals. Their resistance is not only against physical death or violence but against the erasure of their cultural and personal histories. In sum, in *Crossing the River*, survival is a starting point, but it's the struggle to preserve one's dignity, identity, and sense of self—against all odds—that truly matters. The



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world may try to strip these things away, but resistance is about holding on to what makes us human, even when survival alone is not enough.

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