

Point-by-Point Structure Comparison

Paragraph Mentor Text

Prompt: Compare the expectations for men in "How to be a Man" by Simar Singh and "We Should All Be Feminists" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Provide specific evidence and carefully explain your thinking.

Both the poem "How to be a Man" by Simar Singh and the TED Talk "We Should All Be Feminists" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reveal the unrealistic and harmful expectations that society places on males to be unemotional breadwinners. In the poem, Singh says, "This is what they've / been taught since centuries. / That men don't feel and men don't cry" (lines 7–9). This highlights that men are held to unrealistic expectations because they are discouraged from expressing vulnerable emotions. Likewise, Adichie says, "We teach boys to be afraid of weakness, of vulnerability. We teach them to mask their true selves, because they have to be, in Nigerian speak, 'hard man!'" (10:31–11:01), suggesting that boys are pressured to be strong even if doing so is harmful. Both Singh and Adichie highlight that men are taught to pretend they do not feel pain, which causes harm to both them and those around them. Another similarity between the two texts is the idea that men are expected to be the providers of the family. In the poem, Singh shares that he was told he would be the man of the house "while [he] was just 6 years old" (line 5). Furthermore, while he would "make a decent writer," others thought "an engineer sounds more wise" (lines 18–19). These lines reveal the expectation that, from a young age, males are instructed to follow a certain career path. They become breadwinners, rather than following their passions. In her TED Talk, Adichie speaks to a similar expectation. She observes that in Nigeria "the boy would be expected always to pay, to prove his masculinity." Adichie goes on to challenge this notion: "What if the attitude was not 'the boy has to pay' but rather 'whoever has more should pay?'" (11:26–11:33). Adichie pushes back against the idea that masculinity and money need to be tied to one another. Together, Singh and Adichie address that when the financial burden is placed on men, it limits their choices and reinforces inequality between genders. Ultimately, by questioning these unrealistic expectations, both Singh and Adichie hope to change people's attitudes about how men are perceived and treated.