

# Analysis of harlem story in sonny's blues



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"Sonny's Blues", written by James Baldwin is a short fiction story published in 1957. The story takes place at the beginning of the civil rights movement. It describes the relationship between two brothers, one that has fallen in the drug cycle of Harlem, and the other who tried to not repeat the same pattern and become a successful man. Nonetheless, throughout the beginning of the story, we can understand that the setting (Harlem), has a significant impact on their relationship, as they describe their problem. Because the cycle of drugs in Harlem, among the African American community was why sonny ended where he was at the time because he wanted to escape the feeling of being trapped by his surroundings, compare to his brother who was able to break it. Throughout the story, the reader can tell that instead of people venturing into Harlem with hopes of changing their life, Harlem turned into a rundown, poor city.

A place that was thought of as a place for people to run away to, was a place that trapped people. In "Sonny's Blues" Baldwin described Harlem depicts this entrapment. He makes it known that a lot of people are no longer happy there, but for those with no money and who have already fallen under the weight of the city's bad habits it was extremely hard to get out. The most obvious example was Sonny's addiction to heroin. The narrator also seemed to be trapped in Harlem as well, despite his college degree, and the fact that he did not give in to the pressures of drugs. Baldwin also mentions a failing school system and a lack of resources that may have also kept residents in Harlem. The town's success which was turned to poverty and sorrow was also illustrated in Baldwin's story. He speaks a lot about the darkness of the events, people, and the town itself, and all of the tragedies that hunt the

memories of the characters. Sonny's Blues bops the reader over the head with Billy's clubs of proliferation tragedies: the uncle's murder, the estranged brothers, Sonny's arrest, the daughter's sudden death by polio, the eternal recurrence of heroin addiction, and all the other tales submerged in the passing references to the background characters that populate the story's Harlem scene.

However, the darkness that fills Harlem during this time can also be associated, with the racism that African Americans have been running from and thought they'd escaped by going to Harlem was catching up to them. They're now realizing there is a large African American population concentrated in one area that is almost set aside. After believing that Harlem would be fulfilling, the African American citizens are beginning to see that it was a place for the dominant white culture to prison them. Overall, it's important to understand the history behind Harlem when inquiring " Sonny's Blues" because Baldwin conveys the hardship of racism, drug and alcohol abuse, and impoverishment that filled Harlem at this time between the prosperous Harlem Renaissance, the battles of World War I, the Great Depression, the Great Migration and the Civil Rights Movement. Baldwin also mimics through his characters that, through the tragic lives they lived they were able to become more appreciative and respectful of life.